



science & innovation

Department:
Science and Innovation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



National
Research
Foundation



MINISTRY OF SCIENCE
AND TECHNOLOGY OF
THE PEOPLES' REPUBLIC
OF CHINA

South Africa / China Joint Research Programme

12th Call for 2021 Joint Research Project Proposals (JRP)

A maximum of 15 joint projects will be funded under the Joint Research Programme

Closing Date: Consult the General Application Guide 2022

*Please note that the NRF Online Submission System will open on 8 February 2021 for submission of applications. Researchers **must** consult their institutions for internal closing dates.*

Formal diplomatic relations between South Africa and the People's Republic of China were established in January 1998. The relations were given impetus in 2001 through the creation of a Bi-National Commission (BNC) to champion bilateral relations in seven sectoral committees, including science and technology. In line with this agreement we are pleased to announce the 12th call for joint research project proposals between South African and Chinese researchers. Researchers are invited to submit proposals no later than the date indicated.

Aims of the Programme

This Programme aims to:

- contribute to scientific advancement in both countries by funding researchers' mobility in the frame of joint research projects in specified research fields;
- provide an opportunity for researchers to cooperate in an international setting and to develop their scientific careers, especially for early-stage, mid-career as well as female researchers;
- support the advancement of basic and applied research; and
- contribute meaningfully to research capacity development.

Areas of cooperation

Applicants interested in applying are invited to submit their joint research proposals in the following designated thematic areas prioritised by South Africa and China:

- Smart Manufacturing
- Educational Science and Technology (ICT for Education)
- Renewable Energy
- Transportation Technology

Please note:

- Only one application per applicant will be accepted and evaluated by NRF and MOST.
- Joint projects with the potential to lead to future bilateral and multilateral co-operations will be favourably considered.
- Also, the joint projects by young and emerging researchers/scientists and those that pay particular attention to a balanced involvement of female and male researchers (gender equality), will be positively considered.

Duration of the projects

The projects will be supported for a period of two years (starting in early 2022).

Who may apply?

- an application must designate two Principal Investigators (PIs), one in South Africa and one in China, who will bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as scientific and financial reporting;
- project proposals submitted by young, early-stage or mid-career researchers as well as project proposals with involvement of doctoral students and/or female researchers will be prioritised for funding by both sides; and
- the focus of the Programme lies on new international partnerships. Therefore, follow-up proposals with the same research partners will not be prioritised for funding (if they have already been funded under this Programme).

South Africa:

This call is open to working researchers residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology, science council, museum or other recognised research institutions as declared by the Department of Science and Innovation. Commercial institutions and private education institutions are not eligible to apply under this programme. The South African applicant must be in possession of a PhD. In terms of human capital development, South African applications from previously disadvantaged individuals and the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education institutions will be prioritised.

China:

This call is open to working researchers residing in Mainland China and affiliated with a recognised Chinese higher education university/college, research institution, or enterprise.

How do I apply?

The onus is on the applicant to find their own research partner. Proposals must be received in both South Africa and China. Proposals which have only been received in either South Africa or China, but not both, will not be considered for funding. The call process is highly competitive; therefore submission of an application does not guarantee funding. The availability of funds and the evaluation of applications from both countries should be positive for projects to be considered for funding. The NRF will not be held responsible for non-submission, administration or evaluation of the application in the partner country.

South Africa:

Applications must be submitted making use of the NRF Online Submission System at: <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/>. Applicants must attach the required documents in PDF format in the following order:

- CV of Partner Principal Investigator; and
- the budget of the Partner Principal Investigator

Failure to submit compulsory documents will result in the disqualification of the application.

Applicants are advised to consult the NRF General Application Guide 2022 available at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/framework-documents/funding-framework-documents> for details on how to apply for this opportunity (and for making use of the NRF Online Submission System).

China:

Application forms and guidelines for Chinese applicants could be found through the following link: <http://www.cistc.gov.cn/>. OR http://www.most.gov.cn/mostinfo/xinxifenlei/fgzc/gfxwj/gfxwj2019/201909/t20190930_149079.htm.

Which activities may I apply for?

The purpose of the programme is to support the research mobility of researchers between the two countries to carry out joint research projects. In this regard, funding will be made available for visits and exchanges (mobility) of researchers/ scientists conducting joint research in the abovementioned thematic areas.

Please note:

In the case of meetings, research visits and exchanges of scientists, personnel and experts, as well as reciprocal visits undertaken as part of joint research projects and the attendance of workshops, seminars, symposia and other meetings funded under this partnership, the sending side will be responsible for expenses associated with international travel (flights), visas, medical insurance and subsistence while the receiving party covers accommodation costs, local/ground transport and all expenses associated with hosting of events, e.g. venue for workshops, etc.

The following will **NOT** be funded from the funds allocation:

- Consultant's fees
- Project management fees
- Educational expenses (scholarships and/or bursaries, etc.)
- Large equipment
- Salaries and temporary staff fees.

Funding modalities

Funding will be available for a maximum of two years for collaborative research projects jointly developed and completed by researchers on both sides. In both countries, all the approved projects will get funding support from the two parties in terms of the cost of activities mentioned above. Apart from the financial support from the two parties, institutions and universities in both countries are encouraged to solicit other funding resources.

Funding limits

South Africa:

The total amount requested from the NRF, should not exceed **R300 000** per project. Funding will be made available for a maximum of two years, to be paid in annual installments (R150 000 per year) and exclusively for research activities commencing in 2022.

China:

The total amount requested from MOST, should not exceed **RMB 2 mil.** Funding will be made available for a maximum of two years to be paid in annual installments. Reimbursements will be paid to the implementing institutions. Reimbursements will be received upon submitting annual scientific and financial reports to MOST. A Guideline of Implementation shall be provided after selection to the projects endorsed by the Programme.

How are applications evaluated?

Following the closing date indicated below, applications will be submitted to recognised national experts in the various fields of research represented by the proposals received. These experts will evaluate each proposal based on the following broad criteria:

- Scientific quality of the intended research project including the feasibility of the joint research plan and the adequacy of the scientific method.
- Alignment with national priorities in each country.
- Reasonableness of the described further cooperation perspective.
- Project proposals submitted by young, early-stage or mid-career researchers.
- Project proposals with the involvement of doctoral students and female researchers.
- From the South African side: researchers from previously disadvantaged communities.

Please note that other national criteria may be applicable in line with the national policies and regulations of the partnering countries. Following national evaluation, a shortlist of projects to be funded will be constituted through consultations between the two Parties based on the results of the expert evaluations done in both countries. The project selection will be carried out at the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) Meeting. The minutes of this meeting (indicating approved joint projects for funding) shall be signed by both Parties to indicate a joint consensus on projects to fund.

Project follow-up and reporting

- A final scientific and financial report has to be submitted in English by both the South African and the Chinese PIs no more than 3 months after the end of the project.
- From both the South African and Chinese sides, successful submission of the first annual report is an **obligatory** condition of funding in subsequent years.
- All project reports must mention project outputs as compared to the objectives and aims of the proposal.
- The funders reserves the right to make the final reports available to researchers within and outside this programme in similar disciplines.
- The joint publications by researchers must mention the support from the funders (i.e. the South African Department of Science and Innovation, the South African National Research Foundation, and the Chinese Ministry of Science and Technology).

Intellectual property

The researchers of each country, particularly the PIs, must take adequate steps to ensure protection and sharing of the intellectual property that could result from the joint projects.

Ethical clearance

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant. The awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant. Please also refer to the “Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices” on the NRF website at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/media-room/news/statement-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices>.

Closing date for applications

The deadline for submission to MOST by the Chinese researchers was on **04 December 2020**. Therefore, it is important for South African researchers to ensure that their Chinese partners have submitted their application to MOST prior to applying through the NRF Online Submission System.

The deadline for DA submission to the NRF is **31 March 2021**. South African researchers **must** consult their institutions for internal closing dates.

Applications received after the closing dates will not be considered for funding. Please note that neither the NRF nor MOST will be held responsible for applications that were not received. Researchers are also advised to ensure that their research partners’ applications are submitted and have also been received in the partner country.

Contact details for queries and further information

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