

South Africa and Switzerland, [NRF / Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF)] Lead Agency

Background

The NRF is committed to promote international collaboration in advancing research excellence, reflected through agreements with a number of strategic partners. Informed by the long-standing knowledge engagement between South Africa and Switzerland, the NRF has formalised a Lead Agency Procedure (LAP) agreement with the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). The principle of the Lead Agency is to allow research funding organisations from two (or more) countries to engage in a cooperation in which one of the organisations involved – the Lead Agency – takes a leading role. The Lead Agency organisation would therefore lead the review and evaluation process to recommend applications for approval. The partner organisation makes its formal funding decision on the basis of the review documentation and the recommendation of the Lead Agency. The respective project parts are then financed by the individual organisations nationally, so that no funds need to be transferred across borders. In the framework of this Lead Agency Procedure agreement the SNSF will be the Lead Agency for this application round, with a deadline in 2021. In this round, the SNSF will implement the entire evaluation and selection procedure in 2021. The NRF will act as the Lead Agency in 2022.

The Lead Agency procedure is not a new programme with additional funds, and forms part of existing funds already committed between South Africa and Switzerland.

Topic priorities:

There are no thematic restrictions.

Who is eligible?

- Only working researchers/scientists residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised South African public higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology or science council are eligible to apply.
- Private higher education institutions, SMEs, private companies/industries, and NGOs are not eligible to apply for this opportunity.
- It is *mandatory* for South African Principal Investigators based at historically advantaged institutions, to include, as part of the research team, a research partner from any of the historically disadvantaged

institutions. Proposals submitted by an applicant based at a historically advantaged institution without a research partner from a historically disadvantaged institution will be ineligible to apply on the NRF side. Please note that only the following eight universities will be recognised as historically disadvantaged in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training's November 2015 Ministerial Statement on university funding:

- University of Limpopo (UL)
 - University of Fort Hare (UFH)
 - University of Venda (Univen)
 - Walter Sisulu University (WSU)
 - University of the Western Cape (UWC)
 - University of Zululand (UniZulu)
 - Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT)
 - Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU).
- Applicants based at historically disadvantaged institutions can act as Principal Investigators and submit proposals without the involvement of and/or partnering with researchers based at historically advantaged institutions.

Duration:

In both countries the maximum project duration is 3 years.

Submission procedure:

The NRF and the SNSF have agreed to alternate as the Lead Agency on a yearly basis. The SNSF will be the Lead Agency for this application round with a deadline of 1 April 2021.

South African researchers must submit their applications by Thursday, 1 April 2021. Please note that this deadline is for DA submission to the NRF. South African researchers must consult their institutions for their respective internal closing dates. If researchers miss this deadline, the next submission will only be possible in 2022.

Even though the Swiss partners are allowed to choose their own starting date within a year of the funding decision, it is recommended that the different research groups coordinate the starting phase.

The full application must be submitted by the Swiss partner at the SNSF. South African researchers are also required to submit their research proposals to the NRF through the official NRF Online Submission System: <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za/>.

Ethical clearance and intellectual property:

It is the responsibility of the South African researcher, in conjunction with their 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>

Funding regulations:

From the NRF side, funding will be made available for the following research activities:

- Research-related costs

Activities to be supported may include expenses relating to research operating costs, field work such as conducting interviews / surveys / laboratory experiments, small equipment, consumables and accessories, and research-related trips. Airfare, accommodation, ground transport and subsistence should be calculated using rates as stipulated in institutional travel policies.

- Staff exchange programmes

Short term mobility or travel expenses (i.e. transport, accommodation, subsistence, visa and health insurance costs) of the research teams between the partnering countries.

- Doctoral research placements

The placements should enable the postgraduate students within the project to learn valuable new skills or techniques; access facilities or resources not readily available at home; build relationships with potential new collaborators; and advance complementary collaborative research. The duration of each placement is expected to be 3-6 months with flexibility to split the placement into several shorter visits. Longer placements may be undertaken where this would add value and these should be justified within the application. Placements must enhance, not replace, the standard training and study support that the postgraduate students receive. These placements must be managed to fit within the original funded period of the studentship. Additional funding will not be made available through this Call to support

studentship extensions for those undertaking international placements. Applicants should include information about how these exchanges will be managed within their proposal.

- Knowledge sharing costs (science engagement and research uptake)

In support of activities organised by the partners, such as joint workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia, lecture presentations, capacity building sessions, meetings, local/regional dissemination of results aimed at involving stakeholders, and/or end-users from outside the consortium. Airfare, accommodation, ground transport and subsistence should be calculated using rates as stipulated in institutional travel policies.

The following *will not* be funded from the South African side: consultant's fees, salaries, temporary staff fees, bursaries/scholarships, and large equipment.

The total amount requested from the NRF should not exceed R1.5 mil per project. Funding will be made available for a maximum of 3 years, to be paid in annual instalments (R500 000 per annum) and exclusively for research activities commencing in 2022.

Reporting:

Successful submission of annual Progress Reports is an *obligatory* condition of funding in subsequent years. South African researchers should follow the reporting format/structure, rules and regulations of the NRF as outlined on the NRF Online Submission System. All reports by South African researchers must mention project outputs as compared to the objectives and aims of the proposal. South African researchers are expected to submit a final project report (in English) no more than 3 months after the end of the project.

Contact Details:

For further details on this funding opportunity South African researchers can contact Teuns Phahlamohlaka on tel. +27 12 481 4385 or email. teuns.phahlam@nrf.ac.za.

For technical questions about the NRF electronic application system researchers can contact Stephen Dlamini on tel. +27 12 481 4037 or email. dlamini@nrf.ac.za OR the NRF Support Desk on email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za.