

often generalised and unrelated to the product or service being offered. Retraining rarely takes place to address the cooperative's values, principles and policies that govern its success. As cooperatives are further faced by economic challenges brought on by pandemics such as COVID-19 as well as droughts, floods, and other weather hazards, they are often unable to adapt. To prevent the Weskusmandjie from heading in the same direction as other South African cooperatives it is proposed that they receive training on food product and business development to ensure business sustainability and adaptability while simultaneously contributing to poverty alleviation and job creation as contextualised within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

North West University

Project Leader: Professor Lesley Wood

Academic Disciplines: Education, and collaboration with other faculties as determined by needs as they arise (e.g. Computer Sciences, Health Sciences, Law, Natural and Agricultural Sciences etc.)


There are two major interrelated issues currently facing education in South Africa. The first is the poor quality of education for most learners, and the other is that learners exiting the system find it increasingly hard to compete against their more privileged peers to access higher education and/or employment. This situation was further exacerbated at the height of COVID-19, which highlighted the educational fault line between privileged and underprivileged sections of society, as school closure deprived children in township and rural contexts of education. The participatory research approach by the NWU addresses both issues by mobilising unemployed township youth and unemployed university graduates to lead community action to provide alternative educational opportunities to complement and enhance formal education, not only in this time of crisis, but on a sustainable basis. The project will generate knowledge about how to enable relevant learning to continue, whenever formal education is failing to equip learners to learn and develop to a level required for them to improve their life opportunities. Furthermore, the project addresses another pressing issue, that of young people who have completed formal education but are unable to

access further training or employment (commonly referred to as NEET). Through its existing research partnership with a youth skills development agency (a non-profit organisation) in Khuma, an impoverished township in the North-West Province, researchers will seek to take a unique approach of taking the Science Shop facility to the community.

University of Pretoria

Project Leader: Dr Carin Combrinck

Academic Disciplines: Architecture; Family Medicine; Public Health; GeoInformatics; Social Entrepreneurship; Leadership; Sustainable Development

Rapid urbanisation in South Africa is exacerbating the socio-spatial inequities of apartheid planning, resulting in the emergence of informal settlements across the urban landscape. Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, policies have been established to assist in this process, most of which have not been implemented successfully. Most concerning is the impact on women and children growing up in these settlements, where pending citizenship status and economic migration intersect with inadequate essential primary care including maternal and child health, dietetic and sanitation facilities and a lack of education opportunities, resulting in the perpetuation of these cycles of poverty and despair (Kittay 2002). These daily frustrations and survivalist strategies undermine the possibility of social cohesion and agency, contributing to a decrease in governance and accountability. Without a collective seat at the table, residents of informal settlements cannot make a meaningful contribution towards the co-production of space as described by Lefebvre (1991), thus their voices cannot be included in the implementation of policies pertaining to them. High-level data collection, surveys and imposed intervention strategies fail to include the communities themselves in unpacking the micro-scale challenges and potential solutions that could serve to address immediate concerns. Through the continued exclusion of communities in the process of research and production of knowledge, policy instruments remain ineffective in addressing the most pressing concerns of human dignity and safety in these settlements. 

New approaches to engage communities and society across the full cycle of NRF funded research



NRF Engaged Research Framework

Strengthening the Delivery of Excellent Research for a Better Society

New approaches to engage communities and society across the full cycle of NRF-funded research

Science systems across the world are increasingly recognising the importance of the broader societal impact of research, which includes the interdependent dimensions of social, economic, and environmental impact. Given the significant shifts over time, both nationally and internationally, in considerations of knowledge production; the roles of the university as a public institution; the nature of the relationship between science and society; social responsiveness; and societal impact (among others), the NRF has adopted the “Engaged Research Framework” to

underpin the organisation’s Vision 2030 of ‘Research for a better society’.

Engagement in the research process can be realised across the full cycle of research: Upstream of research during identification and development of research priorities and strategies, and the formulation of research questions and proposals; Midstream of research through the involvement of publics and communities within the research process itself; and downstream of research through ensuring the utilisation of research and innovation outputs and impacts via engagement with communities once >

research projects have been concluded.

What is Engaged Research?

The NRF defines Engaged Research as research that:

- Integrates considered approaches to engage communities and society in, and with, the research across its full cycle, to ensure communities are primary stakeholders, active contributors, as well as beneficiaries of research.
- Encompasses the multitude of ways researchers interact with stakeholders and communities over the various phases of research, from the identification of research questions and the (co) production of knowledge, to its dissemination, application, and impact; and
- Aims to improve the democratisation of science through the inclusive participation of societal stakeholders in the research process and thus improve public trust in science.

Principles of Engaged Research

The NRF has established five key principles of Engaged Research which can be embedded across the full cycle of research, and these principles are:

Active Citizenship

Engaged Research is driven by the active citizenship of researchers and research institutions for the common good of humanity, through (co)production of socially inclusive and robust knowledge that is anticipatory, inclusive, responsive, and reflexive to the needs, challenges, and aspirations of society. Unlocking this active citizenship of researchers and research institutions requires integrated resourcing and capacity development approaches.

Reciprocity

Engaged Research approaches that are guided by principles of reciprocity for mutual benefit, genuine and equal standing amongst all actors, and pursuing a knowledge (co)production approach that builds capacity and capability in communities along the research value chain, towards a strengthened knowledge democracy. These principles are informed by a shared philosophy of Ubuntu, which incorporates the values of trust, honesty, empathy, and accountability.

Trans- and Inter-Disciplinary Knowledge Production

Engaged Research encourages trans- and inter-disciplinary knowledge (co)production driven by researchers from diverse academic disciplines while also being cognisant of the need for active transformation towards inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development. This will foster a systematic, multi-perspective approach that will enhance Engaged Research towards more impactful deliberations between researchers and communities.

Ethics and Sustainability

Engaged Research is governed by ethical standards that are applicable across academic disciplines; relevant to the social engagement processes throughout the research lifecycle; and act towards the intent of beneficence (do good) and non-maleficence (do no harm) within the interdependent dimensions of a triple bottom line, including people, planet, and profit. Engaged research seeks to ensure the sustained longevity and transferability, across multiple contexts, of the desired beneficial impact of research, while ensuring that all participants, through a process of informed consent, have an unconditional right of withdrawal.

Relationship Building

Engaged Research requires relationship and partnership building (initiated prior to research being conducted and is sustained downstream of knowledge production) over an often-extended period towards a long-term and future-oriented vision. Engaged Research requires capacity building throughout the full research value chain, which is retained as a basis of future engagement.

Given the critical role of the NRF in ensuring that science is trusted, valued and an essential component of society, the adoption of the NRF Engaged Research will better position the organisation to execute its mandate in supporting, promoting, and advancing research for greater societal benefit and knowledge impact.

Read the comprehensive NRF Engaged Research Framework [here](#).



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