

Research Funding Opportunity with Norway

2025 – 2028

Contents

1. Background	2
2. Supported areas of cooperation between South Africa and Norway.....	2
3. Duration of the projects.....	3
4. Eligibility criteria.....	3
5. Eligible research activities.....	4
6. Funding regulations	5
7. Application procedure and submission deadline.....	6
8. Projects follow-up and reporting.....	6
9. Science engagement	7
10. Intellectual property	7
11. Ethical Clearance.....	7
12. Protection of Personal Information	7
13. Contact details	8

1. Background

The long-term scientific and technological partnership between South Africa and Norway, co-funded by the South African Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and implemented by both the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the Research Council Norway (RCN), began in 2002 with the launch of the SANCOOP initiative for research cooperation on climate change, the environment, and sustainable energy. The SANCOOP program ended in 2017 and was followed by the SANOCEAN initiative which ran from 2018 to 2023. Improved knowledge-based policies and decisions for sustainable development in the fields of oceans and ocean space, climate change, and sustainable energy were the overall goals of the SANOCEAN programme which contributed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); increased opportunities to improve research cooperation within the selected thematic areas; and strengthened the quality of research and capacity building at both institutional and individual levels. Based on the successes of SANOCEAN, the two countries have agreed to continue the collaboration and expand the thematic areas of focus.

This announcement provides details on the first Call for Proposals under the renewed commitment for South Africa-Norway partnership.

The RCN will serve as the Secretariat for the first Call for proposals, and the call will follow the call requirements and administrative procedures described on the RCN call website.

Note that South African researchers must adhere to the eligibility criteria outlined in this announcement, see **Section 4**.

2. Supported areas of cooperation between South Africa and Norway

The full call text is available on the RCN website:
<https://www.forskningsradet.no/utlysninger/2024/samarbeidsprosjekt-samfunn-naringsliv/#sub97066>

The call will provide funding for projects that develop knowledge for holistic and sustainable use and management of land. Projects supported through this call must fall under at least one of these research areas:

- Effective co-existence between different societal considerations, interests, and business activities
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Reduced consumption of natural resources in a circular economy
- Societal security, emergency preparedness and prevention, security of supply
- Social and cultural dimensions of sustainable and holistic land use and management
- Sustainable use and management of cultural environments in the face of spatial challenges

3. Duration of the projects

Projects will be supported for a maximum duration of 48 months starting in 2025. See Table 1 below for a tentative schedule of this programme.

Table 1: Planned Call Schedule

Call Process	
November/December 2023	Launch of the funding opportunity.
November 2023 – January 2024	Information Webinars.
13 March 2024	Research proposal submission deadline on RCN portal.
22 March 2024	Submission deadline for South African PI to submit to NRF.
April – July 2024	Processing of application (eligibility checks and reviews).
August 2024 – February 2025	Decision-making, awards and signing of contracts with successful candidates.
March 2025	Start of funded collaborative research projects.

The NRF reserves the right to amend the abovementioned dates without prior notification to applicants.

4. Eligibility criteria

This funding opportunity 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 or science council. The South African applicant must be in possession of a PhD.

An application must designate two Principal Investigators (PIs), one in South Africa and one in Norway, who will bear the main responsibility for the project activities, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as scientific and financial reporting. Therefore, proposals submitted to the NRF without a research partner based in Norway will be marked ineligible and will not be submitted for review.

It is mandatory for researchers to include research partners from non-academic/research institutions. These can be partners from either private companies/industries, SMEs, or NGOs. Researchers cannot use more than 10% of the budget to support activities by non-academic/research partners. Also, it is important to note that non-academic/research partners cannot serve as Principal Investigators (meaning lead researchers).

Projects must include or be led by applicants based at a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI). Applicants based at an HDI, science council (including any of the NRF research facilities), and South Africa's two new universities (i.e. Sol Plaatje and Mpumalanga) can act as PIs and submit proposals without the involvement of and/or partnering with researchers based at historically advantaged institutions if they so wish. Proposals submitted by a PI based at a Historically Advantaged Institution without a research partner

from a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI) will be ineligible and will not be submitted for review. The research partner from an HDI in this case can serve as a co-applicant in the proposal. Please note that co-applicants are also required to be in possession of a PhD.

Only the following eight universities will be recognised as HDIs in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) November 2021 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), and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU).

Additional research partners (including postdoctoral researchers) based in South Africa and/or in Norway can also participate in the collaborative projects and form part of the research team provided there is a strong motivation for value add.

Projects must demonstrate potential for promoting human capacity development, equity, and redress through the involvement of emerging researchers and historically disadvantaged individuals (female and disabled). In this regard, the NRF aims to facilitate sustainable institutional links between partnering countries by building on existing, outstanding and established research partnerships; fostering new linkages and engagements with small cohorts of emerging researchers for new linkages; and supporting actual research, human capacity development, mobility and research exchanges between researchers within a collaborative research project.

Each South African PI is allowed to submit only one proposal meaning that a researcher cannot serve as a PI on more than one proposal.

The eligibility of the Norwegian research partners must be checked directly with the RCN on the contact details provided in **Section 13** below.

5. Eligible research activities

Funding is made available for the following research activities undertaken as part of the collaborative research project.

- **Research-related costs:** Activities to be supported may include expenses relating to actual research costs such as research field work; conducting interviews, surveys, laboratory experiments; research-related trips of the research teams between the partnering countries, etc. Airfare, accommodation, ground transport, subsistence, visa, and health insurance costs should be calculated using rates as stipulated in institutional travel policies.
- **Postgraduate student Support:** Researchers can utilise the grant to support one doctoral (for maximum of three years) and one postdoctoral (for maximum of two years) positions within the collaborative project. The support should be equivalent to the NRF Freestanding doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships. Please note that the responsibilities for the postdoctoral position may

go beyond research and include activities such as the management and administration of the collaborative project.

- **Non-academic/research partners:** The project **must** have at least two partners that are not academic or research organisations. These partners must come from Norway and South Africa. Therefore a portion of the funds should be utilised to support the participation of these partners (see **Section 6** below).
- **Knowledge sharing and capacity building:** Funds can be used in support of activities organised by the partners, such as joint workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia and lecture presentations; capacity building sessions such as participation in winter/summer schools and master classes; setting up of joint experiments; accessing each other's research infrastructure; local/regional dissemination of results aimed at involving stakeholders, and/or end-users from outside the funded project; project meetings; etc.
- **Small equipment, consumables and accessories:** Up to a maximum of 20% of the budget may be budgeted for this item.

The following will **NOT** be funded:

- Consultants' fees
- Large equipment
- Project management fees
- Overheads
- Salaries and temporary staff fees

6. Funding regulations

Funding will be available for a maximum period of four years. In both countries, apart from the financial support from both the NRF and the RCN, institutions and universities are encouraged to solicit other funding resources as needs be.

Please note:

- Should you be successful you will only be funded for activities within the scope of these guidelines.
- Scientific and financial reporting is an obligatory condition of funding in subsequent years.

The NRF funding total amount should not exceed **R3 million**. These funds should be used exclusively for research activities commencing in 2025. Funds should be utilised as follows:

- R1 500 000 per project for research activities, mobility costs of the research team, small equipment, and knowledge sharing costs per project.
- R940 000 for postgraduate support (doctoral and/or postdoctoral positions per project).
- R560 000 per project for non-academic/research partners.

Research should ensure that their budget request is divided into four instalments for the 4-year period of the project. Funding regulations for the Norwegian research partners must be checked directly with the RCN on the contact details provided in **Section 13** below.

7. Application procedure and submission deadline

All proposals must be submitted via the RCN website by a Norwegian research institution. South African researchers/institutions must be included as partners in the proposal sent to the RCN by **13 March 2024** as stated on the RCN website.

Please note that the South African PIs are also expected to submit their proposals through the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. Rejected applications during the screening phase will be given a maximum of three working days from date of email receipt to query the outcomes thereof. Please make use of the 'General Application Guide 2023' for assistance on the steps to follow when applying for international research grants. The link to the guide will be published on this web page: https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/nrf_calls. Submission to the NRF must be done by **22 March 2024**. The NRF will not consider any applications submitted after this deadline.

South African PIs **must** attach the following **compulsory documents** in PDF format:

- Budgets of the Norwegian Principal Investigator.
- Budget division of the South African team, in particular budget sharing between the historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged institutions.
- Successful South African PIs will be requested to submit the CV of their Norwegian Principal Investigators prior to the release of the grant.

8. Projects follow-up and reporting

Principal Investigators are expected to submit progress reports to the NRF. Scientific and financial reporting on the project is an **OBLIGATORY** condition of funding. A final scientific and financial report should be submitted no more than 3-months after the end of the project.

South African PIs will be advised on how to submit progress reports line with the reporting schedule for all NRF grants. The report should mention the outputs of the projects compared with the objectives and aims of the proposal.

Joint publications by the researchers should mention the support from all the funders (i.e. NRF and RCN). Funders reserve the right to make the final reports available to researchers within and outside this programme in similar disciplines.

9. Science engagement

Science engagement refers to scientific and initiative activities, events, interventions, or interactions characterised by mutual learning and dialogue among people of varied backgrounds, scientific expertise, and life experiences, who articulate and discuss their perspectives, ideas, knowledge, and values. It is an overarching term for all aspects of public engagement through suitable communication channels with science, science awareness, science education, science communication, and science outreach, aiming to develop and benefit individuals and society.

The NRF supports science engagement by coordinating and implementing the Department of Science and Innovation's Engagement Strategy. The strategy embraces a broad understanding of science, encompassing systematic knowledge spanning (natural and physical sciences, engineering sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities, technology) all aspects of the innovation chain and indigenous knowledge. Therefore, researchers funded through the NRF programmes must contribute to science engagement and report the related outputs in their project's progress report.

10. Intellectual property

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

11. Ethical Clearance

In conjunction with the institution, it is the responsibility of the grant-holders 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 (CoG). Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website <https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/>.

12. Protection of Personal Information

The National Research Foundation ensures compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Act 4 of 2013, committing to ensure the privacy of those submitting applications and proposals to the NRF on the NRF Connect System (<https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/>). The National Research Foundation will protect the personal information provided by applicants or the third party against misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure. The Privacy Policy of the NRF outlines the practices

relating to the protection of personal information and can be accessed on the NRF website at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/privacy-policy>.

13. Contact details

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