



***AFRICAN ORIGINS PLATFORM
(AOP)***

FUNDING INSTRUMENT

KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT

Framework Document and Funding Guide

February 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

The National Research Foundation (NRF) recognises that for South Africa to be internationally competitive and to meaningfully contribute to the global economy, the country must have the capability to understand the knowledge it produces, and that produced by others. This understanding can best be developed in part through producing new knowledge and translating and developing existing knowledge. Publicly funded basic and applied research is thus critical for innovation and potentially, international competitiveness.

The NRF views support for basic disciplinary, multi- inter-and transdisciplinary research as an investment in the country's learning and knowledge production capabilities and capacities. Such research is considered critical for innovation and potentially, international competitiveness. The African Origins Platform (AOP) is a discipline-and transdisciplinary based, demand-driven funding instrument. It is restricted to the field of palaeosciences, widely defined.

1.1 Description of Funding Instrument

The African Origins Platform (AOP) is a highly competitive, discipline-specific funding instrument which supports research, skills development, and infrastructure in the palaeosciences¹. South Africa's obvious geographic advantage in palaeontological, palaeoanthropological and archaeological research necessitates that the country emerges as a globally leading center for research excellence in these fields of study. The AOP has the potential to bring unparalleled opportunities for cutting edge research, African and other international collaboration, innovative teaching and training programmes, and the development of early career researchers. The AOP is also uniquely placed to facilitate the public understanding of the story of life on Earth, and to contribute to nation-building by detailing the story of humankind in a way that appeals to all sectors of society. This, in turn, will stimulate an interest in palaeosciences, which

¹ Within this framework document the term palaeosciences includes palaeontology, palaeoanthropology, archaeology and related disciplines, unless stated otherwise.

will stimulate *inter alia* palaeo-tourism, thus contributing directly to poverty alleviation through job creation.

As a competitive funding instrument, funding will be prioritized to the top scoring applications. The NRF also takes into consideration the strategic imperatives of the NRF and the Department of Science and Innovation such as transformation, societal impact, alignment with the research and public engagement goals as detailed in the 2012 South African Strategy for the Palaeosciences (The Palaeo Strategy). The Palaeo Strategy highlights 5 goals, and outlines implementation plans for each. The implementation plans represent the Department of Science and Innovation's (DSI) aims to widen the reach of the field of palaeosciences to ensure a better understanding of the story of life on Earth. This includes the story of humankind, which is an important endeavour for nation-building. The African Origins Platform represents a grouping of interventions that support some of these strategic goals, thus facilitating palaeosciences advancement in South Africa. The strategic goals of the Palaeo Strategy are as follows:

- **To transform the minds of South Africans;**
- **To support the country's universities;**
- **To empower museums to increase research;**
- **To resource South Africa's heritage agencies; and**
- **To make SA the destination of choice for palaeo-tourism**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the goals of the Palaeo Strategy and to integrate these innovatively into their research proposals. Proposals that do not integrate one or more of the goals of the Palaeo Strategy will not be prioritised for funding.

1.2 African Engagements

Within the context of the above, the African Origins Platform funding instrument will ring-fence **a total of R 1 000 000 per year (R 3 000 000 for the funding period 2025-2027)** for research or research-based activities and the associated human capacity development in collaboration with African counterparts. Applications will comply with all

the eligibility criteria and rules of participation detailed for the African Origins Platform funding instrument. This allocation has been set aside by the DSI to encourage collaboration with African partners in Palaeosciences research and to create an enabling environment for South African researchers to engage with their African counterparts in the field. Successful applications will show evidence of a coordinated and proactive engagement with counterparts on the African continent (outside of South Africa). Applications conducting research with SADC partners will be prioritized. Such partnerships require research to be done, at least in part, in South Africa. Research conducted solely outside of South Africa will not be considered for support under this funding instrument.

Applicants wanting to access this ring-fenced funding should note the following:

The African Engagement allocation includes grant holder-linked post-doctoral support and should not **exceed R 1 000 000 per year**.

The allocation is **only** for the financial support for researchers based in or associated with South African institutions (and as per conditions of eligibility) and students based at public research institutions in South Africa as recognised by directive of the Minister of Science and Innovation.

In addition to the funding categories outlined in Section 5.2, successful applicants accessing this ring-fenced funding will be eligible to apply for:

- Controlled access to fossil sites, collections and data within South Africa or in the rest of Africa;
- Conferences, seminars and/or workshops within the African continent; and
- Per diem costs for African collaborators and students, when these **are in South Africa**

Applicants wanting to access this ring-fenced funding will NOT be eligible to apply for the following:

- Research-related costs for African collaborators;
- Salaries or stipend costs for African collaborators

- Bursaries or stipend costs for students not registered at a recognized South African institution.

Applicants wanting to access this ring-fenced funding MUST indicate this on the NRF Connect application form as part of the application title.

2 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The mandate of the NRF is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation, and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge and thereby to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people of the Republic (NRF Act, 1998).

In support of its purpose, the NRF's *Strategy 2025, and the NRF Vision 2030*, aspire to contribute to the development of *a vibrant and globally connected national system of innovation*.

Strategy 2025

NRF Strategy 2025 is centered on the NRF's desire to contribute to national development through research **with impact**. The strategic outcomes include:

- i. A transformed (internationally competitive and sustainable) research workforce;
- ii. Enhanced impact of the research enterprise;
- iii. Enhanced impact of science engagement; and
- iv. A transformed organisation that lives its culture and values.

Vision 2030

The overall objectives for 2030 are to shape, influence and impact the national research system; to establish the NRF as a thought leader and source of knowledge within the science sector; to create a clear causal relationship between research and national development; to have a transformative effect on the national research enterprise and the relationship between science and society; and to enable, initiate, facilitate and perform

excellent research with direct and indirect impact, whether immediate or long-term, that extends the frontiers of knowledge and addresses national challenges.

2.1 Environmental scan

The AOP funding instrument resonates with the NRF mandate by being cognisant of the role that research plays in the innovation and the commercialisation value chain, and hence the socio-economic development of the country.

The NRF continues to support self-initiated bottom-up research ideas and research that address national strategic initiatives as reflected in national strategies like the National Development Plan, the DSI Decadal Plan, and those that embed the importance of South Africa's national graphic advantage areas. The NRF also supports the African Union Agenda 2063 priorities and the Sustainable Development Goals as contained in the United Nations 2030 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2.2 Objectives

The objectives of the funding instrument are:

- To contribute to knowledge production about South Africa's palaeosciences in the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and the Humanities;
- To achieve world-class research in the palaeosciences, including a renewed prioritization of previously identified vulnerable or critical skill areas (as per the 2012 Palaeosciences Strategy);
- To advance or develop paradigms, theories and methodological innovation relating to the palaeosciences;
- To develop a comprehensive pipeline of human capacity in the palaeosciences, from past graduate training to emerging researchers, to established researchers;
- To ensure meaningful public awareness activities so-as-to raise the national and international visibility of South African palaeosciences research;

- To develop sustainable and inclusive community engagement activities; and
- To support research endeavours that demonstrate the potential for socio-economic impact in the short, medium, or long term.

2.3 NRF Perspective

The AOP Funding Instrument is a demand-driven funding instrument; will serve to develop and expand palaeosciences research excellence. This is in line with the NRF's view that support for research is an investment in South Africa's learning capabilities.

2.4 Financing support

Funding for the AOP Funding Instrument is made possible through contract funding from the DSI. The DSI will fund a three-year cycle of research funding from 2025-2027. As a demand driven funding instrument, there is no limit to the amount an applicant can request (except for the African Engagement as detailed in Section 1.2 above). Having said this, the financial requests need to be in line with requirements and accurately reflect the financial needs of the proposed work. **Excessive budget requests are not well received by the review panels.** Applications will be scored according to a scorecard (see **Annexure 1**). The final number of successful applicants that will be supported will be determined by the available budget, which is approximately R 15 000 000.00 (fifteen million Rand) per year for 2025-2027. This amount includes a 30% allocation for postgraduate student support. As such, a total of R 10 500 000.00 (one million five hundred thousand Rand) will be allocated to research.

2.5 Key stakeholders

The key stakeholders in this funding instrument are persons doing research in the fields of palaeosciences, based at public research institutions that are recognised by the directive of the Minister of Science and Innovation. These include Public Universities, Museums and Science Councils.

2.7 Information sources

National Government 2012. *National Development Plan 2030: Our future, make it work.*

https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/ndp-2030-our-future-make-it-workr.pdf

The Department of Science and Technology, 2012. *The South African Strategy for the Palaeosciences*. https://www.gov.za/sites/default/files/gcis_document/201409/ndp-2030-our-future-make-it-workr.pdf

The Department of Science and Technology, 2013. *The ministerial guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of DST/NRF bursaries and fellowships*.

The Department of Science and Technology, 2015. *Science Engagement Strategy* https://www.dst.gov.za/images/Science_Engagement_Strategy_-_SES.pdf

The National Research Foundation, 2020. *2025 Strategic Plan of the National Research Foundation*.

The National Research Foundation, 2020: *NRF Vision 2030. Reimagining the Future*.

The African Union, 2015. *Agenda 2063*, https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/36204-doc-agenda2063_popular_version_en.pdf

United Nations, 2016. *Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>

3 MODUS OPERANDI

3.1 Call for proposals

All application materials **must** be submitted electronically via the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>

All applications **must** be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant before submission to the NRF. It is the responsibility of each applicant to familiarise himself / herself with the **internal closing dates** set by each institution to meet the NRF closing date included in the “General Application Guide 2024”. **Incomplete OR late submissions will not be accepted for review.**

3.2 Eligibility

- A PhD is not an applicant prerequisite.
- Rated and unrated researchers can apply for three years funding (2025-2027) in this call,
- Applicants must be doing palaeontological research in South Africa and must be employed by public research institutions as recognised by the directive of the Minister of the Department of Science and Innovation;
- Full-time **employees** at recognised research institutions in South Africa are invited to apply;
- Contract **employees** on contract at recognized research institutions in South Africa may apply, on condition that their appointment is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for in the submission. The length of the contract should be stated in the application form. If there is an intention to renew or extend the contract, a document from the Institution stating the intention to extend or renew should be attached.
- Salaries must be paid by the research institution and the primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution. A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfill a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support.
- Retired academics/researchers if they meet all set criteria as stipulated below:
 - are resident in SA;

- are formally affiliated to a South African Higher Education Institution (e.g., appointed as an emeritus professor);
 - are active researchers with a distinguished track record in research and postgraduate student supervision;
 - are actively mentoring/training postgraduate students/young research staff; and
 - spend a minimum of 6 months at the institution per year for the purpose of research and research capacity development.
- **Students, including PhD Candidates and Post-doctoral Fellows are NOT eligible to apply or be listed** as principal investigators, co-investigators, or collaborators in this call. They may, however, find support for their proposed research by embedding this into applications submitted by eligible principal investigators as detailed above. ***Applications for own degree purposes will not be considered.***

3.3 Ethical clearance

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with their institution, to ensure that all research activities conducted 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.

Please refer to the “Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices” on the NRF website at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices>.

3.4 Application assessment

The assessment of applications will be guided by a Panel Assessment Scorecard (**see Annexure 1**) and scored according to the Proposal Grading (**see Annexure 2**). **Annexure 3** details the pre-selected equity scores for each applicant, as applied to South African citizens and Permanent Residents. Non-South Africans and Non-Permanent Residents will not be counted as transformation candidates, and will score as White Males or Females, as appropriate.

Application assessment will occur by way of a two-tiered process:

- **Remote peer review**

The remote peer reviews are performed by national and international experts in the ambit of the respective proposals. Remote peer reviewers are requested to submit written reviews. Applicants will be requested to provide between 6 to 15 possible reviewers. It is in the applicant's best interest to ensure that the selected reviewers are aware of the submission and are thus likely to respond. It is also in the applicant's best interest to ensure that selected reviewers **have no possible conflict of interest** (project partners, academics in the same department, close personal, or professional relationships, etc.) in submitting a review; as such review reports are dismissed without consideration. On average, a 30% response rate is achieved by the NRF in requesting any postal peer reviews.

- **Panel-peer review**

The adjudication panel will be broadly constituted to include senior academics, selected based both on their respective knowledge fields and their research standing. The panel meeting will be held at a central location or by way of tele- or videoconferencing. Panel members will deliberate on submitted written reviews and will be expected to offer their own expert opinions. Panel members will score applications by consensus in accordance with the criteria detailed on the Panel Assessment Scorecard.

Applicants **must** ensure that their Curriculum Vitae are updated on the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. These Curriculum Vitae are used in the assessment processes, and incomplete or outdated inputs will jeopardise the success of the application.

3.5 Rules of participation

a) Principal Investigator

Only researchers based at NRF recognized research institutions in South Africa (as defined above) are eligible to apply as principal investigators (PI) and co-investigators (CI) in this funding instrument.

The principal investigator (i.e. the applicant) must be an active researcher who takes intellectual responsibility for the project, its conception, any strategic decisions required in its pursuit, and the communication of results. The PI must have the capacity to make a serious commitment to the project and cannot assume the role of a supplier of resources for work that will largely be placed in the hands of others. The PI will take responsibility for the management and administration of resources allocated to the grant award, and for the meeting of reporting requirements.

The research team may also include:

b) Co-investigators

A co-investigator (CI) is an active researcher who provides significant commitment, intellectual input and relevant expertise into the design and implementation of the research application. The CI will be involved in all or at least some well-defined research activities within the scope of the application. The role of each CI in an application must be clearly detailed in the application. Only South Africa-based co-investigators based at recognized institutions will be eligible for funding in successful grant applications.

It is important to note that post-doctoral fellows, students, technical and support staff DO NOT qualify as co-investigators.

c) Collaborators

These individuals or groups make a relatively small, but meaningful contribution to the research endeavour as outlined in the application, but do not participate in the research design. They are not considered as part of the core research team and are **not eligible** to receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

3.6 Data management and use

A data management Plan (DMP) is a **formal document** that describes the data you expect to acquire or generate during a research project, how you will manage, describe, analyze, and store those data, and what mechanisms (including digital data storage) you will use at the end of your project **to share and preserve** your data. This may be

included as an attachment to the application, or the information can be placed into the application template text, as preferred.

The findings reported in a journal article or conference paper should be deposited in accordance with the NRF Open Access Statement. It is acknowledged that some data generated are more sensitive than others. Before initiating the research, it is the grant holder's responsibility to consider the following: confidentiality, ethics, security, and copyright. Possible data sharing challenges should be considered in the DMP with solutions to optimise data sharing.

Researchers should note that publicly funded research data should be in the public domain, with free and open access, by default. Collaborators and co-investigators in the research project should be informed by the applicant that due to public funding and funder-mandate, one is expected to share research data as openly as possible. The Data Management Plan should indicate which data will be shared. If (some) research data is to be restricted, an appropriate statement in the DMP and subsequent publication should explain why access to data is restricted, and for how long.

The National Research Foundation has adopted and is given permission to use the [DCC Checklist for Data Management Plan](http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/DMP/DMP_Checklist_2013.pdf), and this can be used as a guide for developing the DMP. (http://www.dcc.ac.uk/sites/default/files/documents/resource/DMP/DMP_Checklist_2013.pdf)

3.7 Science Engagement

The NRF supports science engagement through its coordination and implementation of the DSI's Science 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. Within this context, science engagement refers to activities, events, 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. Science engagement is an overarching term for all aspects of public engagement with science, science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aim to develop and benefit individuals and society. Researchers funded by the NRF are required to contribute to science engagement and report the related outputs in their project's Annual Performance Report. The impact of science engagement activities must be measurable, and the method for such measurement must be indicated in the application.

4 FINANCIALS

4.1 Funding model

The grants of this funding instrument are to be primarily used for research purposes and for the development of associated human resources under the auspices of the NRF standard grant and finance policies. The money is released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her employing institution. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

Postgraduate student support

The NRF has developed a new Postgraduate Student Funding Policy that will use postgraduate student funding as a lever to address the challenges of inequity of access, success, and throughput. The policy is underpinned by the pursuit of research excellence in all its dimensions and has transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Its purpose is to retain **high academic achievers** in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level, as part of a national drive to grow the next generation of academics to sustain South Africa's knowledge enterprise. The NRF is prioritising postgraduate students with research inclination, with the aim to grow the pool of early career researchers. Another motivation for this policy is to fast-track the development of postgraduate students in high-impact, priority, and vulnerable disciplines critical for national socio-economic development.

All postgraduate students are required to apply separately from the research application on the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. Successful

honours, Masters' and PhD students will not reflect on the grant award for the AOP application, if successful.

A financial means test will be conducted by the Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP) and will in part determine whether postgraduate students will be funded either at Full Cost of Study (FCS) or Partial Cost of Study (PCS) under the new policy. To ensure equity of access to postgraduate studies, financially needy students (i.e., those whose combined household income is R350 000 per annum or less) and students with a disability will be funded at FCS. Academic "*high-fliers*" achieving a distinction or first-class pass will also be eligible for funding at FCS. International students as well as any other South African students who are not eligible for FCS will be eligible for PCS funding. It should be noted that strict eligibility criteria apply. These are outlined in **Table 1**.

The demand for postgraduate bursaries far outstrips the financial resources of the NRF, and eligibility is not a guarantee of support.

Study Level	Full Cost of Study <i>(South African Citizens and Permanent Residents only)</i>		Partial Cost of Study <i>(South African Citizens; South African Permanent Residents and 5% Non-South African Citizens)</i>
	Exceptional Achievers	Financially Needy & Students with Disability	Other
Honours	≥ 75% Mark in Final Year of study	≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study	≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study
	<p>Honours students must be 28 years of age or younger in the year of application.</p> <p>Non-South African Citizens are not eligible for Honours Scholarships.</p>		
Masters	≥ 75% Mark for Honours Completed honours in one year	≥ 65% Mark for Honours Completed honours in one year	≥ 65% Mark for Honours Completed honours in one year
	<p>Masters students must be 30 years of age or younger in the year of application.</p>		
Doctoral	75% Mark for Masters Completed Masters in two years	65% Mark for Masters Completed Masters in two years	65% Mark for Masters Completed Masters in two years
	<p>Doctoral students must be 32 years of age or younger in the year of application.</p>		

Table 1: Eligibility criteria for NRF postgraduate funding for FCS and PCS

In cases where a grade is not indicated, the application will not be considered for funding by the NRF.

The NRF will allocate all postgraduate bursaries under its management control as follows:

- 95% South African citizens and permanent residents.
- 5% students from SADC countries and from the rest of the world, and
- 55% women.

The NRF disaggregates these targets for South African citizens and permanent residents as follows:

- 90% Black (African, Coloured, and Indian).
- 10% White; and
- 1% students living with a disability.

Applicants are encouraged to identify postgraduate students that have a potential to complete their honours, Masters', and Doctoral degree with a minimum pass mark of 65%, and who are interested in pursuing research in the proposed project. The interested students must apply on the NRF Connect System by accessing the link: <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>, and **should include the reference number of your application** in their applications. This will enable the identification of the students' applications for consideration for funding by the NRF. Should your application be unsuccessful, the student's chances of being funded will not be affected. In a situation where the students are not successful, you may contact the Postgraduate Office at your institution to identify students who succeeded to get the NRF bursaries, and who may require a supervisor. The success of the applications for your targeted students is not a guarantee that all of them will receive NRF bursaries. Student bursary approval will depend on the available budget and will be made in consideration of the NRF's key performance targets.

4.2 Funding ranges

The allocation of funds is demand-driven, and as such there is no maximum or minimum proposal request. The number of applications that will be supported overall will depend on the availability of resources and the financial requirements of those successful applications. If successful applications have high financial requirements, fewer applications will be supported. The application assessment process will consider proposed budget items in terms of cost, risk, and reward ratios. The NRF Connect system (<https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>) uses a single template for all research grants. Not all sections will apply to AOP. All awards will be made in line with the detailed AOP funding rules and guidelines as outlined below. Although specific funding categories are outlined in the application form, awards will be collapsed into the following categories: running, research equipment, technical support personnel (non-students) and post-doctoral fellow bursaries on the award letters. A detailed budget is required during the assessment process. Awards will be made in line with the NRF funding rules and guidelines as outlined in **Section 4.3**.

Successful applications will receive funding that accommodates the following budget items:

- a) Postdoctoral fellow support
- b) Research-related operating costs, including:
 - Materials and Supplies
 - Travel and subsistence
 - Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants
 - Research Equipment

Decisions relating to budget items will be governed by the overall funding instrument funds available for the period. Awards will be made in line with the NRF funding rules and guidelines as outlined in **Section 4.3**.

4.3 Funding support

a) Postdoctoral fellows

Applicants may request funds to support postdoctoral fellows. These fellows are awarded for a maximum of 2 years only. Bursaries for postdoctoral fellows are awarded at R 230 000.00 per annum on a pro-rata basis.

b) Full-time technical skills personnel

Support for full-time technical skills personnel will continue into 2025-2027 to enable South African researchers have access to the required technical skills and support personnel in the palaeosciences, thus ensuring their competitiveness in the global arena. Free-standing technical skills personnel **will not** be awarded under the AOP funding instrument. Consultants **do not** qualify as technical skills personnel under this funding instrument and such requests will not be considered.

Technical skills support in this context will be exclusively for:

- Casting technicians @ R 100 000 pa **cost to company** (*pro rata* per month);
- Excavators @ R 120 000 pa **cost to company** (*pro rata* per month);
- Preparators @ R120 000 pa **cost to company** (*pro rata* per month);
- Rock art tracing/digitization @ R120 000 pa **cost to company** (*pro rata* per month)

The amounts for technical skills personnel are cost to company. This is thus inclusive of any deductions. This applies to all recognized research institutions, including museums.

Applicants will quantify their technical skill personnel requirements under the research/tech skills/ad hoc assistants funding category on the NRF Connect system's application template but must clearly state that these are technicians in this specific context. The Curriculum Vitae (CV) of each person must accompany the application.

No technical skills personnel funding will be released without the accompanying CV. The applicant must submit a detailed justification for each position, including how each will be embedded into the current research proposal. The justification must include

the impact each person will make on both research and human capacity development within the proposed research proposal. Applicants may request new or recurring technical skills awards for the award period.

c) Research-related operating costs

These costs include materials and supplies, local and international travel (including conferences) and subsistence, equipment and research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance. These costs should be justified and commensurate with the planned outputs, as they will be assessed on this basis. The amount awarded within this framework can be used at the discretion of the applicant but must comply with the NRF funding rules.

General guidelines

Sabbaticals

The AOP funding instrument **does not** provide support for sabbaticals.

Lecture replacement

The AOP funding instrument **does not** provide support for lecture replacement.

Materials and Supplies *

Support for the running expenses of the proposed application. These items would be used in the normal course of operations in all fields of palaeo-related research. The AOP funding instrument does not provide financial support for:

- Basic office equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for high end computing for the research itself.
- Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research design (for example survey costs).
- **Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs and book costs.**
- Telephone, fax, and internet costs.
- Editing costs

PLEASE NOTE:
These restrictions do not apply to a PI and/or CI's based at a museum

Travel and subsistence

- International conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts this amount to R 25,000 per person to a **maximum of R 50,000 per application per year** for a team application i.e. for principal investigators and co-investigators (local only) and local post-graduate students.
- International visits: These will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Such visits must be integral to the research plan and strong motivations should accompany these requests. Realistic funding allocations will be based on the requested activities. Only outgoing visits will be considered depending on the availability of funding.
- Local conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts expenditure on this item to **R 5,000 per person (all costs)**. Support for local conference attendance could be requested for all listed co-investigators and postgraduate students. The applicant should clearly motivate for the benefit of attending more than one local conference per annum, and for the number of people attending each local conference.
- Local travel: The NRF does not stipulate any rate for mileage as this will depend on the rate which varies per institution/organisation. Applicants are requested to provide details of this rate as well as the estimated distance to be travelled within the given year. This travel should be well motivated and excludes travel to conferences mentioned above.
- Local accommodation costs should not exceed a 3-star establishment. This relates to local travel for research purposes. An estimation of accommodation cost for each trip should be clearly presented in the motivation.

Research / Technical / Ad hoc Assistants

Requests for research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance should be treated with caution. The NRF encourages applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research consultants. **However, the NRF will not pay for students to contribute to the research endeavour.** The NRF will consider support when specialised research/technical expertise is required. This should be **CLEARLY** motivated for in the application.

Administrative assistance does not qualify as technical assistance.

Research Equipment

Funding for equipment will be limited to R 200 000 per application. Requisitions for large equipment items should be submitted through the NRF's Equipment Programme. Applications that exceed this limit may not be considered for support, unless it is clear from the application that the research can proceed without the requested equipment.

d) Funding to cater for disabilities

Additional funding support to cater for disabilities can be requested to support people with disabilities as specified in the Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities as in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998.

4.4 Financial control and reporting

Upon receipt of the signed Conditions of Grant letter, the NRF will release the awarded amount for the year. Grant holders will then be required to comply with the standard NRF financial management procedures, including the submission of an Annual Progress Report. These are to be submitted before the deadline in February of the following year and are a prerequisite for the release of the subsequent year's funding for **ALL current NRF awards**. Failure to submit an Annual Progress Report (or late submissions thereof) will result in the cancellation of ALL current grant awards held by the defaulting principal investigator.

5 CONTACT DETAILS

Technical challenges and queries must be submitted via the support desk

(supportdesk@nrf.ac.za)

For funding instrument queries please contact:

Mrs Tracy Klarenbeek

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7 LIST OF ACRONYMS

AOP	African Origins Platform
DMP	Data Management Plan
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
FCS	Full Cost of Study
FCS	Full Cost Study
ISFAP	Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme
NRF	National Research Foundation
PCS	Partial Cost of Study
PCS	Partial Cost Study
PI	Principal Investigator
RIISA	Research, Innovation, and Impact Support and Advancement
SADA	South African Data Archive
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals

ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard - AOP				
Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Details	Score / 4	Weight
Proposal	Scientific merit and feasibility	Reflect on the proposed rationale, approach and methodology Is the proposal feasible as proposed? Has knowledge of relevant literature been adequately articulated?		45%
Equity	Of applicant	Race / Gender / Years post PhD ²		10%
Transformation	Early career researchers/ postgraduates	Reflect on the historical compliance with transformational objectives		10%
Science Engagement	Plans for science engagement	Is there evidence of a science engagement strategy? Are the appropriate target groups adequately articulated?		10%
Impact	Wider Impact	Has economic/ societal/ environmental impact been embedded in the proposal? Is it clear how such impact will be measured?		15%
Data management and use	Plans for digital data storage, usage and/or dissemination	Has appropriate consideration been given to digital data storage, usage and/or dissemination beyond the immediate project team?		10%
			Total	100%

² This score is predetermined in accordance with an NRF-approved scale – see Annexure 3

ANNEXURE 2: Proposal Grading - AOP

Score	Meaning of score	Notes
4	Excellent	Application demonstrates evidence of outstanding performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
3	Above average	Above average performance across all criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
2	Average	Application demonstrates average performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
1	Below average	Below average performance across all the criteria, as determined by panel and relative to knowledge field
0	Poor	There are major shortcomings or flaws within and across the stated criteria, with particular emphasis on the scientific/scholarly merit

Context:

Proposal grading is done with sensitivity to the context within which each application is submitted. The score of each criterion for each application will be contextualised to accommodate variability in such things as knowledge fields, institutional capacity, etc. Should a criterion not be applicable to a specific application (e.g. plans for digital data storage; collaborations; etc.), the weighting of that specific criteria will be made to equal zero, and the overall score normalised.

ANNEXURE 3: Pre-set equity scores

Equity Status	Pre-set Equity Score
Disabled	4
Black female; Black male, young ³	4
Black male, not young	3
White female, young	3
White female, not young	2
White male, young	2
White male, not young	1

³ "Young" refers to 5 years post-PhD as per the applicant's CV. Applicants will be classified as "young" if their graduation date is less than 5 years prior to the date of assessment.