



## NRF AWARDS 2024

### SPECIAL AWARDS CATEGORIES

### NOMINATIONS PROCESS - A GUIDE FOR NOMINATORS

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## 1. Background

The core business of the National Research Foundation (NRF) is to support knowledge generation and human capacity development, in science, technology and innovation through a variety of interventions. These interventions are key to the growth, sustainability and societal impact of the knowledge enterprise. Four pillars have been identified by the NRF has identified four pillars that are critical for the success of the knowledge enterprise. These are Transformation, Impact, Excellence and Sustainability (TIES). In recognition of the excellent research carried out by the research community, the NRF awards individuals or groups who have demonstrated extra-ordinary investment and achievements relating to these pillars. The areas of recognition include: knowledge generation; human capacity development; public engagement with research; and scientists who are considered by their peers to be leading international scholars in their fields/disciplines.

The “NRF Awards Event” is an annual highlight in the NRF’s calendar. At this event, awardees selected through the process defined herein, as well as scientists who have just attained their A and P ratings through the separate NRF Rating process, are celebrated. The 2024 NRF Awards Event is planned for August/September 2024.

The NRF special awards for 2024 will cover the following categories:

- i. Lifetime Achievement Award
- ii. Public Engagement with Research Award
- iii. Hamilton Naki Award
- iv. Research Excellence Award for Next Generation Researchers
- v. Research Excellence Award for Early Career / Emerging Researchers
- vi. Champion of Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award
- vii. Science Team Award

This document presents information on the Special Awards categories, the criteria to qualify for the awards and processes involved in identifying and selecting awardees. Please note that the scope of this document excludes the rating process.

In addition to the specific criteria for nominations, applicable to the different categories, the following applies across all categories:

- i. Only NRF-recognised research institutions (Higher Education Institutions, National Research Facilities and Science Councils) may submit nominations for the awards;
- ii. An NRF rating is not a requirement for any of the awards presented in this document; and
- iii. Nominated individuals should be from the following research areas: natural, engineering, social, humanities, indigenous knowledge, etc.
- iv. All Nominees should be registered on the NRF Connect system with Updated CVs

## 2. Award Categories

### 2.1 Lifetime Achievement

The Lifetime Achievement award honours a deserving South African individual who is recognised nationally and internationally for his/her outstanding or extraordinary contribution(s) to the development of science in and for South Africa, what he/she stands for as a South African, and for the extent to which his/her work has positively touched and shaped the lives and views of many South Africans.

#### **Criteria for nomination and assessment**

A candidate nominated for the Lifetime Achievement award must satisfy the following criteria:

- i. Be a South African citizen or permanent resident, above 60 years of age;
- ii. His/her science/innovation-related contribution and/or achievements in and for South Africa must be of international standard and have been recognised internationally;
- iii. Must have contributed to the lives of South Africans, through his/her science/innovation-related work and achievements that can be categorised as being significant, recognisably developmental, beneficial and have made a significant impact; and
- iv. Need to be associated with a research or higher education institution at the point of being recognised for this award.

### 2.2 Public Engagement with Research Award

This award recognises researchers/scientists who make, or have made, outstanding contributions to public engagement with research over a sustained period. The aim of the award is to encourage academics, while teaching and researching in their fields of expertise, to be committed to enhancing the public's engagement with science and contribute substantially to the public's understanding of the sciences and their applications in society (including natural sciences, engineering, technology, innovation, the social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge).

For the purpose of this award, *public engagement* covers the various interactions that provide opportunities for mutual learning. *Public engagement with Research* refers to the many ways that the various publics can be involved in the design, performance or dissemination of the research process and its outputs/products. There is an understanding that researchers often communicate to inform and inspire the public with research, consult and listen to the public in two-way conversations about research and/or collaborate with the public in processes of co-creation, co-production (including citizen science) and sharing of knowledge for positive societal change. High quality engagement therefore is considered as that which involves mutual, beneficial interactions between researchers and relevant public audiences or participants, and ultimately shaping or enhancing the quality or impact of the research. Engagement can often be achieved in partnership with other organisations and networks.

The Award is thus looking to recognise scientists/researchers who:

- i. Can demonstrate meaningful and active collaboration and engagement across the stages of the research life cycle, including incorporating 'public user' insights into production, design and technology for maximum impact.

- ii. Make exceptional efforts to communicate their science in ways that engage, inform and inspire the public;
- iii. Make extra efforts to engage with audiences outside of their research domain and prioritise the rural and marginalized communities; and
- iv. Find innovative ways to mesh engagement activities with research programmes.

**Criteria for nomination and assessment:**

- i. Open to researchers/scientists employed at all NRF-recognised public research institutions.
- ii. Applications must refer to public engagement through research projects that are either currently funded by the NRF, or whose funding from the NRF may have ended within 3 years of the 2024 NRF Award application deadline.
- iii. Physical implementation of funded project outcomes should be progressed enough to demonstrate achievement of objectives. Priority will be given to sustained engagement approaches through the research lifecycle, as opposed to once-off activities.

**Additional guidelines to assist with nomination:**

- i. Former recipients of the NRF Excellence in Science Engagement Award are not eligible.
- ii. Nominators must clearly indicate all public engagement activities including strategy for the public engagement, nature of partnerships and quality of materials/resources used. Activities should demonstrate new approaches, creativity of tools and use of resources or the development of significantly improved ways to engage or communicate research with public audiences.
- iii. Nominators must Motivate/explain how the researcher, while working in her/his field, has also contributed substantially to the public engagement with, as well as public understanding of STEM and/or SSH over the past three years. In doing this, she/he should indicate the broad audience categories reached by the nominee's contributions and cite examples of where this contribution included especially the girl child, women and persons from the designated groups.
- iv. With reference to science communication as part of the research programme, only materials produced over the past three years for general audiences, as opposed to professional audiences, ought to be considered. This could include works intended for children. Creative activities to be considered include: books, collections of poems, magazine and newspaper articles including commentary and opinion pieces; broadcasting; public lectures; exhibit design; TV programmes, films, online videos, radio segments, podcasts and works of new media; theatre productions, and other public outreach activities (local, national, and/or international).
- v. Nominators must assess the impact of the work undertaken and supply direct supporting evidence or proxies that attest to impact. This should include benefits to the researcher, their research programme and any other researchers involved; benefits to the public audiences/communities/business etc., as well as any other benefits, outcomes or impacts that occurred as a result of the engagement.
- vi. Priority will be given to candidates whose contributions include broad audiences, especially women and poor communities and/or demonstrate considerations of reach into rural areas.
- vii. Material will be evaluated on innovative character of the engagement activities/programme; scientific content, influence, innovation, evaluation; and feedback and assessment of impact on society.

## 2.3 Hamilton Naki Award

This award was named after Mr Hamilton Naki, a self-taught Black<sup>1</sup> surgeon who developed his career against all odds. The category honours the challenge of attracting more Black scientists to advance towards world class research performance by providing recognition for their efforts to advance their careers in science, despite considerable challenges. The award is also focused on transforming the science cohort to be more representative of South African demographics.

### Criteria for nomination and assessment

The nominee for the Hamilton Naki award must:

- i. Be a Black South African citizen or permanent resident;
- ii. Be an active researcher at a South African research institution in any area of research qualifying for these awards;
- iii. Have an impressive research performance record as indicated by the standard research performance indicators and/or judged by peers; and
- iv. Show evidence of having to overcome severe challenges in attaining the world-class research achievements.

## 2.4 Research Excellence Award for Next Generation Researchers

The NRF provides funding to postgraduate students in order to address skills shortages in all the sciences including the natural sciences, engineering, technology, the humanities and social sciences. One of the objectives of supporting Next Generation researchers is to increase the prospect of retaining suitably qualified young researchers and thus increasing the pool of researchers and knowledge workers in the National System of Innovation (NSI). This award recognises excellence in research performance by doctoral students from any discipline who are currently funded by the NRF.

Eight awards will be made under this category, which includes one female doctoral candidate and one male doctoral candidate in each of the following knowledge fields:

- i. Social Sciences, Humanities and Law;
- ii. Life Sciences;
- iii. Physical Sciences; and
- iv. Engineering.

### Criteria for nomination and assessment:

The nominee for the Next Generation Researchers award must:

- i. Be a South African citizen or permanent resident registered for full-time doctoral studies and be currently funded by the NRF;
- ii. Be registered for full-time doctoral studies at a public university in South Africa. Students pursuing split-site doctoral studies and registered at a public university in South Africa and at an institution abroad are also eligible for nomination;
- iii. Have an impressive research performance record, as indicated by the standard research performance indicators (number, quality and impact);
- iv. Have evidence of peer-reviewed publications outputs, with clear articulation of the nominee's contribution;

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<sup>1</sup> Black includes African, Coloured, and Indian.

- v. Be judged on the novelty/innovativeness, and national or global relevance of her/his research topic; and
- vi. Have the potential to make a contribution to research in their field.

**Required supporting document for nomination:**

The nomination must include:

- i. Summary of the nominee's research project, written for a wider audience (maximum of 200 words); and
- ii. Two letters of recommendation attesting to the nominee's research capabilities and achievements.

## 2.5 Research Excellence Award for Early Career / Emerging Researchers

The NRF aspires to develop and enhance the research stature of Early Career / Emerging Researchers, prioritising Black, female and people with disabilities as part of its transformation agenda, which among others, aims to redress historical imbalances in the South African researcher cohort. This award recognises outstanding research performance by current Early Career / Emerging Researchers in any discipline, who are NRF grant holders.

Eight awards will be made under this category which includes one female candidate and one male candidate in each of the following knowledge fields:

- i. Social Sciences, Humanities and Law;
- ii. Life Sciences;
- iii. Physical Sciences; and
- iv. Engineering.

**Criteria for nomination and assessment:**

The nominee for the award for Early Career / Emerging Researchers must:

- i. Be a South African citizen or a permanent resident;
- ii. Have completed a PhD degree within eight (8) years of the time of nomination;
- iii. Be a current NRF grant holder, and not already holding an NRF rating above a Y-rating;
- iv. Be a current NRF funded postdoctoral research fellow or currently employed in an academic or research position in South Africa.
- v. Have an impressive research performance record as indicated by standard research performance indicators (number, quality and impact), of national and/or global relevance;
- vi. Be judged on a synopsis of their career path and research performance over the past six years, with evidence of: emerging independence (e.g. publications not authored with doctoral supervisor); first/single authored publications; and/or student supervision (emphasis on masters-degree level students);
- vii. Have demonstrable achievements of research excellence, through research outputs, clearly indicating the specific contributions of the nominee; and
- viii. Be judged on outcome and/or impact of the research.

**Required Supporting Documents for nomination:**

The nomination must include:

- i. Summary of the nominee's research project, written for a wider audience (maximum of 200 words); and

- ii. Two letters of recommendation attesting to the nominee's research and scholarly capabilities and achievements.

## 2.6 Champion of Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award

This category recognises individuals within the research community who contribute to the transformation and thus diversity of South Africa's science cohort through the research students they supervise. The aim of the award is to encourage and promote those researchers who have identified and are mentoring young scientists to becoming highly productive academics of the future and even international leaders in their areas of scientific expertise. The focus is on Black, especially Black female, and preferably South African postgraduate students who have been trained and graduated by the nominee. It should be noted that the award is dependent on the number of students from these groups, who have been trained and graduated by the nominee, as well as the quality and impact of research outputs of the students.

### Criteria for nomination and assessment:

The nominee for the Champion of Research Capacity Development and Transformation award must:

- i. Have graduated, through supervision, a large number of Black, preferably Black female, and majority South African, masters and doctoral students, over the last three years;
- ii. Present quality research outputs by students under her/his supervision, published in peer-reviewed journals, over the last three years;
- iii. Be a permanent or contracted employee at the public research institution that makes the nomination;
- iv. Be characterised by her/his peers as an active researcher, in any discipline;
- v. Be acknowledged to have made, or to be making, a significant contribution to:
  - the identification of research talent within Black and especially Black female students;
  - the nurturing of this talent;
  - the moulding and developing of research excellence; and
- vi. Have a track record of success in achieving the applicable transformation for at least the past three years.

### Required Supporting Documents for nomination:

The nomination must include:

- i. Two letters of recommendation from peers, attesting to the nominee's research and scholarly capabilities and achievements, aligned to the above criteria.

## 2.7 Science Team Award

In recognition of the contributions, creativity and achievements of a science team towards extending the boundaries of scientific research in Africa, producing science outcomes which have positively impacted society and for the role they played in raising South Africa's international stature as a world-class research destination.

### Criteria for nomination and assessment:

The team nominated for the Science Team Award must:



- i. Be comprised of a number of researchers providing complementary interdisciplinary expertise, each of whom have made separate, substantive and quantifiable contributions to the research being recognized. The majority of the members of the team must be based at South African public research institutions.
- ii. Have achieved exceptional scientific accomplishment, breakthrough(s) or contribution(s) to research, as a team, which is/are acknowledged at national and international levels.
- iii. Have gained respect and recognition as a team, from their peers, for the work for which they are nominated.
- iv. Have produced science research outcomes which have already had some demonstrable uptake and/or impact in society.
- v. Have contributed towards extending the boundaries of scientific research in Africa, as well as achieved breakthrough which played a role in our country being recognised as an international research destination; and
- vi. Have reached a broad audience which included especially the girl child, women and persons from the designated groups.

### 3. Financial Value of Awards

Awardees will receive grants to the values as reflected in the **Table** below.

No.	Award	Financial Value
(i)	Lifetime Achievement Award	R500 000 grant
(ii)	Public Engagement with Research Award	Cost for attendance of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) Conference
(iii)	Hamilton Naki Award	R200 000 grant
(iv)	Research Excellence Award for Next Generation Researchers	R50 000 grant for research-related activities of the awardee.
(v)	Research Excellence Award for Early Career / Emerging Researchers	R50 000 grant for research-related activities of the awardee.
(vi)	Champion of Research Capacity Development and Transformation Award	R300 000 research grant
(vii)	Science Team Award	R500 000 research grant. The distribution, terms and conditions for this award will be defined by the NRF and will depend on the nature of the Team and their research.

### 4. Call for Nominations

The process for the identification of nominees comprises the following steps:

- i. The NRF will communicate a call for nominations through various platforms and institutional contact points. This call will stipulate opening and closing dates.
- ii. An appropriate internal nomination and screening process should be employed by the institution. Institutions are urged to do a thorough screening of the nomination and to not submit any nomination that does not fully satisfy the relevant criteria.
- iii. To be eligible as a Nominator or as a Nominee, all participants must be registered on the NRF Connect System and with a fully updated CV. Follow the link below to register on the NRF Connect System

and/or to update your CV: <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. All nominations must be completed on the NRF Connect System and submitted through the research offices of an NRF-recognised research institution by the NRF Approved Designated Authorities.

- iv. Written motivations, as well as the curriculum vitae (CV) of the nominee, and that of the team members in the case of the Science Team category should be included with each nomination, and submitted on <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>).

## 5. Outcome

Soon after the nominations have been reviewed and decisions have been finalised, the outcome of the selection process will be communicated to all nominators, nominees and the institutions of the successful nominees. The formal announcement of awardees will be made at the annual NRF Awards function. If you have not heard from the NRF Team by the end of September 2024, note that your nomination was unsuccessful.

## 6. Definitions

### Research

For purposes of the NRF, research is defined as original investigation undertaken to gain knowledge and/or enhance understanding.

Research specifically includes:

- i. The creation and development of the intellectual infrastructure of subjects and disciplines (e.g., through dictionaries, scholarly editions, catalogues and contributions to major research databases);
- ii. The invention or generation of ideas, images, performances and artefacts where these manifestly embody new or substantially developed insights; and
- iii. Building on existing knowledge to produce new or substantially improved materials, devices, products, policies or processes.

It specifically excludes:

- i. Routine testing and analysis of materials, components, instruments and processes, as distinct from the development of new analytical techniques; and
- ii. The development of teaching materials and teaching practices that do not embody substantial original enquiry.

### Early career researcher

Early career/emerging researcher nominees will be active researchers that have held a research doctorate for no more than eight years at the time of nomination.

DAs should set their own internal closing dates to enable them to submit to the NRF by the closing date as indicated below.

Closing Date for Nomination is Friday, **12 April 2024**

REFER QUERIES TO	
For Submissions	For Eligibility
Ms Mpai Motsei Tel: 012 481 4078 Email: <a href="mailto:ML.Motsei@risa.nrf.ac.za">ML.Motsei@risa.nrf.ac.za</a>	_Mr Lebogang Mpetle Tel: 012 481 4052 Email: <a href="mailto:ML.Mpetle@risa.nrf.ac.za">ML.Mpetle@risa.nrf.ac.za</a>