



**Call for Proposals: Supporting the Implementation South
Africa's Space Programmes**

Expression of Interest

Directorate: RIISA: International Grants and Partnerships (IGP)

Date: 15 April 2026

1. Overview

This framework outlines a collaborative strategy by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) in partnership with the South African National Space Agency and other strategic partners. The strategy, which is implemented by the Nation Research Foundation (NRF), aims to support the implementation of South Africa's space programmes at South African Universities, Universities of Technology, Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. The strategy also aims to advance capacity development in the space science and technology (SST) sector by facilitating effective coordination, stakeholder engagement, and knowledge exchange.

2. Rationale and Strategic Alignment

South Africa's SST sector is recognised as a critical enabler for national development, economic growth, disaster preparedness, climate monitoring, and innovation. South Africa's advancement in space science and technology is not merely a scientific endeavor; it is a strategic imperative for national development. The rationale for this framework stems from the recognition that space-based technologies have become essential to modern life. From satellite imagery for agriculture and disaster monitoring to telecommunications, environmental management, and national security, the socio-economic benefits of space science are vast and transformative.

The realisation of these benefits depends on the South Africa's ability to develop, attract, and retain highly skilled professionals in the space sector. Currently, there is a critical gap in the availability of technical and scientific human capital; particularly from HDIs, TVET colleges, and Universities of Technology. This initiative is designed to close that gap by building an inclusive, coordinated ecosystem for skills development and stakeholder engagement. This framework aligned to:

- The Science , Technology and Innovation Decadal Plan
- The National Development Plan 2030
- The National Space Strategy
- NRF Vision 2030

The space science programme initiative is intended to position South Africa as a regional leader in space sciences through inclusive and skills-driven development.

3. Objectives

South Africa's space programme, delivered through the DSTI-NRF Space Science Partnership Programme, seeks to develop critical expertise in space science and technology, and related disciplines across TVET colleges, Universities of Technology, and HDIs. The success of this programme hinges on robust coordination among key stakeholders, including government, academia and industry.

This call invites higher education institutions to establish and manage a stakeholder coordination and monitoring national committee to ensure cohesive collaboration and seamless execution of space-related programmes. The appointed institution will be responsible for:

- Establishing a structured coordination body for all stakeholders (including DSTI, NRF, SANSA, TVETs, Universities of Technologies, HDIs, and industry partners)
- Facilitating regular stakeholder engagement through meetings, workshops, and progress reviews.
- Ensuring alignment with national policies (e.g. the STI Decadal Plan) and international standards.
- Identifying and resolving bottlenecks in collaboration, resource-sharing, and programme implementation

4. Scope of work

Among others, the successful institution will:

- Create a knowledge-sharing platform – digital hub for resources, best practices, and research/innovation findings, including the development of a short programme to support capacity building and uptake.
- Monitor partnership effectiveness – track collaboration outcomes and recommend improvements.
- Ensure Inclusivity – promote participation of HDIs
- Develop a stakeholder engagement roadmap – define roles, communication channels, and collaboration protocols
- Establish a coordination committee – comprising DSTI, NRF, Universities of Technology, TVETs, and industry representatives
- Organise quarterly stakeholder forums – to review progress, share updates, and address challenges

5. Deliverables

The successful institution(s) will be expected to deliver the following:

- Implementation plan for space science programme
- Stakeholder engagement roadmap
- Coordination committee framework & meeting reports
- Knowledge-sharing platform
- Annual collaboration assessment reports

6. Submission requirements

Interested institutions must submit:

- A completed application form
- A budget with a detailed breakdown of the costs
- CVs of Key Personnel
- Past Experience (similar stakeholder coordination projects)

7. Eligibility

Institutions eligible to apply include:

- Traditional Universities
- Universities of Technology
- Comprehensive Universities

Please note that consortia that include HDIs as co-lead institutions will take priority and have an added advantage. Institutions must have demonstrated capacity to manage complex stakeholder coordination and reporting processes

8. Application process

- All applications must be submitted to N.Makhanya@nrf.ac.za
- Please submit the required documents in PDF format
- Remember to submit your application form upon completion

- Incomplete applications will not be considered
- All applications should be submitted by 15 April 2026. No application will be accepted beyond this date

9. Budget

Applicants may apply for a maximum of R3 million over a period of 3 years

10. Contact Details

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