



DST- NRF FREE-STANDING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS

Framework

Directorate: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this framework document is to outline the funding principles and implementation of the DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowship for research in South Africa and abroad. Specifically, this document outlines the objectives of the funding instrument, eligibility criteria, funding principles and application processes, governance including management of the funding instrument.

2. Background and Rationale

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is an agency mandated by an act of Parliament (Act no 23 of 1998), for the implementation of human capital development initiatives, knowledge production and the provisioning of research infrastructure. Through the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the NRF receives funding in order to fulfill its mandate and vision. The National Research and Development Strategy of 2002 identified the need for a new generation of scientists to underpin the central thrust of innovation. The South African academic system is faced with a challenge of having an ageing productive scientific population. Strategic interventions are needed to deal with these trends in order to ensure correct positioning of the country for competing in the global arena. In response, the NRF commits an annual investment towards the development of Postdoctoral Fellows in order to promote research and research capacity development in all knowledge fields, including innovation and technology, through the DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowships.

3. Objectives

The funding instrument supports Postdoctoral Fellows who wish to pursue research at South African public Higher Education Institutions (HEI's), Science Councils and National Research Facilities as well as Postdoctoral Fellows who wish to pursue research abroad.

The objectives of the DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowships funding instrument are to:

- Increase the number and quality of Postdoctoral research Fellows in South Africa;

- Enable South African Postdoctoral Fellows to obtain international research exposure;
- Encourage outstanding international Postdoctoral research Fellows to undertake research in South Africa; and
- Enable South African Postdoctoral Fellows to obtain international research exposure.

4. Areas of Support

Applications from candidates intending to pursue Postdoctoral research in the following specific areas will be considered:

- Natural Sciences;
- Engineering;
- Technology;
- Social Sciences; and
- Humanities.

In allocating funds for Postdoctoral Fellowships at South African public institutions, priority will be given to Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines. The percentage of Fellowships awarded towards the SET domain will be between 70 – 80%; and 20 – 30% for the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

While fund allocation for Postdoctoral Fellowships abroad will give preference to applications aiming to undertake postdoctoral research in a vulnerable discipline, emerging research area or where there exists a paucity of research infrastructure and/or suitably qualified research experts in South Africa.

5. Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria will apply:

- **DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowships for research in South Africa:** Fellowships are open to **South African citizens and permanent residents as well as international candidates** who intend to undertake

research at a public research institution in South Africa. Applicants must have obtained their PhD within five (5) years of submitting an application to the NRF;

- **DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowships for research abroad:** Fellowships are open to **South African citizens and permanent residents only**. Applicants must have obtained their PhD from a South African institution within 5 (five) years of submitting an application to the NRF;
- Applicants still in progress should complete their Doctoral degree by 31 December 2016;
- Applicants who are currently completing their Doctoral dissertation for submission may apply however, **awards that are not taken up by 30 June 2017 will be cancelled by the NRF**;
- Applicants who are applying for a third NRF Postdoctoral research placement **are not** eligible; and
- Full- time employees of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) or other research institutions are only eligible to apply **if they intend to take unpaid leave for the duration of the Postdoctoral Fellowship**.

Section 6-7 below relates to applications for the DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowships for research in South Africa.

6. Application Requirements

- Fellowships will preferably be awarded to individuals that will be undertaking research on a new research project; in a different department; or at a different institution to that where the previous study was undertaken;
- Special consideration will be given to applicants who are applying for a first NRF Postdoctoral research placement where the individual's research training and outputs may be enhanced by continuing with Postdoctoral research at the same institution; department; or under the same mentor. In such instances the applicant must provide a **strong motivation** describing the benefits to the applicant and for advancing research and innovation. **Failure to provide a motivation will result in a rejection without review**;

- Applicants must attach certified copies of their ID/passport as well as proof of their Masters and Doctoral qualification to their application. For those who are still in the process of completing their doctoral degree, a letter of confirmation from their current institution must be attached to the application;
- Applicants who are applying for a second NRF Postdoctoral research placement under the same project are not eligible for further support unless they are starting a new project; and
- Any information that should have been completed as part of the application, but is submitted as an attachment, will render the application incomplete resulting in a rejection without review.

7. Value of the Fellowship

Successful applicants will receive funding for a maximum period of three (3) years based on the initial commencement date of the project. Female Postdoctoral Fellows that take maternity leave during the tenure of the Fellowship, are eligible for an additional four (4) months of support beyond the three year period.

The Postdoctoral Fellowship package for 2017 is broken down as follows:

R155 000 per annum	non-taxable stipend
R45 000 per annum	contribution towards research costs
R15 000 per annum	compulsory institutional contribution

Host institutions will be expected to supplement the Fellowship with a minimum of R15 000.00 per annum as part of the institutional commitment. In addition, the host institutions will ensure the provision of an enabling environment for Fellows' research training and skills development.

Successful candidates are also eligible for a travel grant of up to R15 000, for local travel, and up to R45 000, international travel. The travel grants may be used to contribute towards the costs of attending local or international conferences; workshops; visiting a laboratory or; any other activity that supports the beneficiaries' research

training. This is the maximum amount permitted over the tenure of the Fellowship. Postdoctoral Fellows who wish to access the travel grant must complete a travel grant application form for submission and approval by the institution and the NRF. The travel application form can be accessed on NRF Online Submissions (<https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>) and should be submitted three months prior to travelling.

Section 8-9 below relates to applications for the DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowships for research abroad.

8. Application Requirements

- Applicants must attach certified copies of their ID/passport as well as proof of their Masters and Doctoral qualification to their application. For those who are still in the process of completing their doctoral degree, a letter of confirmation from their current institution must be attached to the application; and
- Any information that should have been completed as part of the application, but is submitted as an attachment, will render the application incomplete resulting in a rejection without review.

9. Value of the Fellowship

The value of the award will be calculated as the equivalent of the United States Dollar (USD) of 26 000 per annum, for a maximum of two (2) years, and will be paid out in the currency of the country in which the postdoctoral research will be undertaken.

In addition, the NRF will cover the cost of:

- A single economy airfare for travel to the country in which the postdoctoral research will be undertaken; and
- A single economy airfare to return to South Africa upon completion of the postdoctoral research abroad.

The NRF **will not** cover any costs for accompanying family members or any other related costs associated with the postdoctoral research. The applicant will be responsible for securing additional funding to cover any shortfall in funding required to undertake his/her postdoctoral research abroad.

10. Conditions of the DST-NRF Free-standing Postdoctoral Fellowships

- The Fellowship shall be held as the primary funding for the Postdoctoral research training;
- Fellowships may not be held simultaneously with a Fellowship from any other government or NRF source or NRF administered source;
- Postdoctoral Fellows are permitted to spend a maximum of 20% of their time undertaking lecturing and student supervision;
- Postdoctoral Fellows may not concurrently hold the Fellowship with any full-time salaried employment position; and
- Postdoctoral Fellows may hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to the institutional capped value.

11. Equity and Redress

In line with the national imperative of equity and redress, the bursary scheme prioritises support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups *viz.* black (African, Indian, Coloured), female and persons with disabilities, while ensuring that only applications that meet the NRF merit review and selection criteria are supported. The set equity targets are 80% blacks, 50% women and 4% students with disabilities.

With respect to citizenship of successful applicants, the awards will be allocated in line with the following percentages:

- 87% to South African citizens and permanent residents; and
- 5% Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries
- 4% Other African countries
- 4% Non-African

12. Application Process

The NRF will invite applications from candidates who wish to pursue Postdoctoral research at South African public universities and public research institutions. All candidates must apply through the NRF Online Submissions system. Further instructions on the application process will be made available in the **2017 Postdoctoral Fellowships Application and Funding Guide for DST-NRF Free-standing, DST-NRF Innovation, DST-NRF-DHET Scarce Skills Development Fund.**

13. Review Process

All applications will be screened based on the eligibility criteria and application requirements. Should an application not be eligible it will be rejected without review. All eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to a competitive merit review process. The reviewers are selected by the NRF from existing reviewer databases and other sources and may include the reviewers suggested by the applicant. In assessing the proposals, the reviewers' reports are referred to, and agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard during the panel review process.

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications in order to determine applicants' that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding are evaluated according to the predetermined criteria. Each area is given a weighting to indicate its relative importance as indicated in the table as follows:

Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Postdoctoral Fellowships

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weight (Total = 100%)
Track Record of Applicant	Applicant expertise/training that will enable the applicant to successfully undertake the proposed research.	10%
	The applicant's research track record which could include peer reviewed publications, conference proceedings, research prizes and awards.	10%
Scientific and Technical quality of proposed research	Literature review with citations, significance of the research in terms of the problem statement, aims and objectives. Scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge to be generated.	20%
	Research design, methodology developed to address aims of the research. Provision of workplan and feasible timelines and milestones for the research.	20%
	Alignment with national and institutional research priorities.	5%
Institutional Support	Institutional support for the Postdoctoral Fellowship through infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.	10%
Potential Research Outputs and Impact of the research	Details of envisaged realistic outputs of the research such as publications, conference proceedings, toolkits, policy documents.	5%
	Contribution to Postdoctoral research skills development in a priority research area (human capacity development of the applicant)	10%
	Potential for socio-economic impact of the research in South Africa	10%
		100%

14. Reporting

For continuous monitoring of progress, the awardees will be required to submit an Annual Progress Report (APR), in a format provided by the NRF, against deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed Conditions of Grant.

15. NRF Contact Persons

When making an enquiry, please use “NRF Free-standing-Scarce Skills-Innovation Postdoctoral Fellowship Call” as the email subject line.

For funding instrument related enquiries, please contact:

Ms Nompumelelo Thwala

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Telephone: 012 481 4232

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For NRF Online Submission application and grants management related enquiries, please contact:

Ms Melissa Govender

Professional Officer: Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA)

Telephone: 012 481 4311

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