



# **STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK**

## **RESEARCH EQUIPMENT RELATED TRAVEL AND TRAINING GRANTS**

**May 2013**

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## 1. Strategic Context

Research infrastructure is a key enabler for advancing research and postgraduate training. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) has identified five categories for research infrastructure investment in South Africa. These are research equipment, cyber infrastructure, specialised laboratories, large high-end infrastructure and global infrastructure.

The Research Equipment Related Travel and Training Grants funding instrument is funded by the Department of Science and Technology (DST), through a contractual agreement with the National Research Foundation (NRF). The programme seeks to improve the competitiveness of South African research by advancing the national research agenda contained in the National R&D Strategy, the Ten-Year Innovation Plan; and the strategic objective of the NRF. Collectively, these seek to promote and support research through human resource development and facilitate access to state of the art research equipment.

The NRF through the funding instruments, the National Equipment Programme (NEP) and the National Nanotechnology Equipment Programme (NNEP) supports the acquisition, upgrade and development of state-of-the-art research equipment at universities, Science Councils (SCs), National Research Facilities (NFs), museums and other publicly funded research institutions, such as the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (Necsa).

While the NEP and NNEP have, over the past five years, made inroads in addressing the research infrastructure needs of the country the following challenges have been encountered by the NRF:

- Specialised multi-user research equipment, is not equitably distributed across the various research institutions in South Africa;
- Researchers in South Africa continue to require access to specialised equipment located at institutions nationally and abroad. Such equipment may not currently be available within their research institution and/or in South Africa;
- Researchers from South Africa will in the short, medium-term and long-term continue to require access to selected global research infrastructure such as synchrotron radiation facilities; and
- Optimal access and utilisation of the available research infrastructure is dependent on the availability of funding support for:
  - Hosting of workshops that focus on training of technicians, operators and other users;
  - On-site training of researchers and postgraduate students by instrumentation specialists; and

- Outbound and inbound access to specialised equipment and global research infrastructure located at other institutions in South Africa and abroad.

In light of the aforementioned challenges the NRF has, over the past several years, funded both national and international travel costs in order to support researchers who require access to equipment that is not available either regionally or nationally. This document provides a framework for the implementation of travel and training grants geared towards addressing the aforementioned challenges.

## 2. Scope

The rationale for the mobility grants is to make funds available to support the broader science community to access state-of-the-art equipment that is not available at the home research institution, regionally or nationally. This will also include access to synchrotron facilities and other global research infrastructures. The mobility grants are divided into two portfolios, namely:

- Equipment related **Travel Grants**; and
- Equipment related **Training Grants**.

### 2.1 *Equipment Related Travel Grants*

The objective is to provide financial support for researchers to access state-of-the-art equipment, within South Africa and abroad, that is not available at their own research institution, regionally or nationally. This funding instrument is subdivided into two categories, namely:

- 2.1.1 General Equipment Travel Grants, which makes funds available to researchers requiring access to specialised equipment that is not available regionally or nationally. The grant will cover national or international travel and subsistence costs as required.
- 2.1.2 Travel grants to Access Global Infrastructures; which includes travel to access:
  - **Outbound Global Infrastructures** located outside of South Africa such as Joint Institute of Nuclear Research (JINR) in Dubna, Russia, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) in Geneva, Switzerland and European Synchrotron Radiation Facilities (ESRF), Grenoble, France. Currently research cooperation agreements between South Africa and JINR, CERN and ESRF respectively are in place. However, access to other synchrotron radiation facilities and global research infrastructure will also be considered for support.

- **Inbound Global Infrastructures** located in South Africa such as the South African Large Telescope (SALT), MeerKAT, the International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biology (ICGEB) and the National Facilities, to name a few.

## **2.2 Equipment Related Training Grants<sup>1</sup>**

This intervention makes funds available for researchers to host and attend workshops focussed on training technical staff, postgraduate students and other users of specialised and state-of-the-art equipment that are acquired either through NEP or NNEP grant awards. In addition, funds will be made available to support access to and hosting of training workshops on other feeder equipment that complements the capabilities of state-of-the-art research equipment. This will include practical training and short courses on the use of specialised research equipment.

## **3. Objectives**

The travel and training grants aim to support world-class research, enhance research collaborations nationally and internationally and, support the development of specialised skills required to sustainably manage and operate state-of-the-art research equipment.

The objectives of this programme are to make funds available to support:

- The larger research community to access state-of-the-art equipment (not necessarily NRF supported) that is not available regionally and/or nationally;
- Researchers and postgraduate students in South Africa to access global research infrastructure such as synchrotron radiation facilities; and
- Research institutions hosting training workshops on the use of specialised equipment that is acquired through NRF equipment grants or feeder equipment that is complementary to that acquired through NRF equipment grants.
- The larger research community to access training workshops on the use of specialised equipment that is acquired through NRF equipment grants or feeder equipment that is complementary to that acquired through NRF equipment grants.

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<sup>1</sup> The initial training that forms part of the commissioning of new equipment will not be covered by this training grant as this may be factored into the purchase price of the equipment.

## 4. Application Process

### 4.1 Eligibility criteria

All applicants must be **full-time staff member** at a public research institution, including Universities, SCs, NFs, museums and corporations such as Necsa. In addition, the following programme-specific criteria apply:

Travel Grants: Full-time masters and doctoral students, registered at South African universities, and postdoctoral fellows are also eligible for support, on condition that the supervisor is the applicant and will be accountable for the conditions of the grant award.

Training Grants: Support will also be afforded to researchers hosting visiting scientists, who will be able to train South African students and researchers on the technical capabilities of high-end research equipment.

### 4.2 Exclusion criteria

Undergraduate and honours students are not eligible to apply for equipment related travel and training grants. In addition, the following programme-specific exclusions are applicable.

Travel Grants: Requests for funding to support:

- Research that advances private enterprise;
- Outbound visiting scientists;
- Attendance of conferences and/or non-equipment training workshops; and
- Testing the functional capability of equipment that an applicant may procure through NEP and/or NNEP grants. This must be achieved by the applicant in partnership with the supplier.

Training Grants: Requests for funding to support:

- Training that addresses the applicant's institutional needs only; and
- Basic training of operators and technicians, provided by

the supplier as part of equipment acquisition.

Grantholders who do not submit post-travel/training reports within two months after completion of a trip will not be considered for further funding in this programme.

***Grants awarded are not transferable.***

**4.3 Application requirements**

The submitted proposal must address the following:

<b>General Equipment Travel and Training Grants:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There must be a clear indication that the equipment the applicant proposes to access is not available in the applicant's own institution, regionally or nationally. This may include letters from other institutions explaining that similar equipment will not be able to support the research activities of the applicant;</li><li>• Applications must be supported by the designated authority at the research institution; and</li><li>• Travel grants to support access to research equipment nationally may not exceed R30 000 (thirty thousand rand) per individual grantholder unless strongly motivated for by the applicant and designated authority at the research institution. An applicant traveling with students will be awarded R10 000 (ten thousand rand) per student, to a maximum of two post graduate students. The maximum budget will therefore amount to R50 000*.</li><li>• International travel grant maximum per individual applicant is not to exceed R50 000 (fifty thousand rand) unless strongly motivated for by the applicant and designated authority at the research institution. An applicant traveling with students will be awarded R15 000 (fifteen thousand rand) per student for a maximum of two post graduate students with a maximum contribution of R80 000* (eighty thousand rand).</li></ul> <p><b>Where the cost of the trip exceeds R50 000 (fifty thousand rand) for a national trip and R80 000 (eighty thousand rand) for an international trip, the applicant must clearly demonstrate that co-applicants will accompany the applicant and that additional funding has been secured to cover the full cost of travel.</b></p> <p><b>*see budget guidelines</b></p>
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<p><b>Synchrotron Travel Grants</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A strongly motivated proposal that includes supporting documentation such as invitations, training and an access schedule from the synchrotron radiation facility that the applicant proposes to visit;</li> <li>• Applications for students must be submitted by the supervisor who will be accountable for the conditions of the grant award; and</li> <li>• Applications must be supported by the designated authority at the research institution; and</li> <li>• The maximum request per individual applicant is not to exceed R50 000 (fifty thousand rand) unless strongly motivated for by the applicant and designated authority at the research institution. An applicant traveling with students will be awarded R15 000 (fifteen thousand rand) per student, for a maximum of two post graduate students with a maximum contribution of R80 000* (eighty thousand rand).</li> </ul> <p><b>Where the cost associated with an international synchrotron radiation facility visit of two weeks exceeds R80 000* (eighty thousand rand), the applicant must clearly demonstrate that co-applicants will accompany the applicant and that additional funding has been secured to cover the full cost of travel.</b></p> <p><b>*see budget guidelines</b></p>
<p><b>Training Grants</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate motivation must be provided for the need for the training, which must have either regional and/or national impact;</li> <li>• The proposed programme must include the training of researchers based at historically disadvantaged institutions, black and female researchers as well as postgraduate students;</li> <li>• Where the cost of hosting the workshop exceeds R50 000 (fifty thousand rand), the applicant must clearly demonstrate that additional funding has been secured to cover the full cost;</li> <li>• Where the cost of attending the workshop exceeds R30 000 (thirty thousand rand) for a national trip and R50 000 (fifty thousand rand) for an international trip, the applicant must clearly demonstrate that additional funding has been secured to cover the full cost; and</li> <li>• It is encouraged that applicants engage with suppliers for such training workshops.</li> </ul>



#### 4.3.1 *\*Budget Guidelines*

	<b>Maximum National Travel/Training Support</b>	<b>Maximum International Travel/Training Support</b>	<b>Maximum Synchrotron/ other Global Infrastructure</b>	<b>Maximum to host a workshop</b>
Applicant	R30 000	R50 000	R50 000	R50 000
Applicant plus one Co-applicant	R40 000	R65 000	R65 000	N/A
Applicant plus two Co-applicants	R50 000	R80 000	R80 000	N/A

#### 4.4 *Application Submission Process*

Applications submitted may be for a single researcher/student or multiple researchers/students and retrospective funding will be considered for the period from which the previous call was closed. A call for applications will be opened three times a year and the proposed call will be open during the months of February; June; and October of each year.

#### 4.5 *Equipment-Related Training and Travel Grants Score Card*

The following score card will be used to evaluate all applications for equipment-related training and/or travel grant.

Criterion	Details	Weight	Poor	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Good	Very Good
Scientific Merit 30%	<b>Scientific motivation</b> of proposed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel request;</li> <li>• Training attendance; or</li> <li>• Hosting of workshop.</li> </ul>	30%	1	2	3	4	5
Impact 30%	<b>Proposed impact</b> on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human capital development (staff and postgraduate training);</li> <li>• Research publications; and/or</li> <li>• Other outputs</li> </ul>	30%	1	2	3	4	5
Collaboration 10%	<b>Collaboration</b> with <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HDI's,</li> <li>• Regional,</li> <li>• National; and/or</li> <li>• International</li> </ul>	10%	1	2	3	4	5
Financials 30%	Feasibility of proposed budget	30%	1	2	3	4	5

Descriptor	General guiding notes
<b>Poor</b>	The proposal provided insufficient information regarding the requirements of the funding programme, and has numerous inconsistencies for a fair evaluation to be conducted.
<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	The proposal only partially addresses the requirements of the funding programme and has significant issues that should be addressed by the applicant.
<b>Satisfactory</b>	The proposal meets all minimum requirements of the funding programme however; there are minor issues that should be addressed by the applicant. .
<b>Good</b>	This is a strong proposal that fully addresses the entire requirements of the funding programme.
<b>Very Good</b>	This is an exceptionally strong proposal that is well thought through and strongly motivated, as well as exceeds all the requirements of the funding programme.

Programme Requirement refers to: Scientific motivation, proposed impact, collaboration/s and feasibility of budget.

#### 4.6 Application documentation

**Applications, where applicants fail to complete NRF Online Registration and Curriculum Vitae (CV) sections, will not be considered for funding.**

For further information refer to the NRF Online Submission System (<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>).

All applicant's must submit the following documentation:

- A completed NRF application form, that has been endorsed by the designated authority at the research institution;
- A confirmation letter, from the institution to be visited, of allocated time on the equipment; and
- A detailed budget indicating how additional funds have been secured.

The following additional information is required for Synchrotron Travel Grants and Equipment-Related Training Grants:

Synchrotron Travel Grants	Equipment-Related Training Grants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A letter indicating the outcome of the peer review process; and</li><li>• A confirmation of allocated beam time from the host synchrotron facility.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A letter of confirmation indicating that a trainer has been appointed by the supplier/manufacture for a specific date, time and venue; and</li><li>• A <i>Curriculum Vitae</i> of the trainer.</li></ul>

### 5. General

The grant award must be taken up within the financial year (1 April to 31 March) in which the grant is awarded and may not be carried over to the next financial year.

The maximum value of the grants will be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted for inflation linked-increases as required.

These grants are to be used for research purposes only, under the auspices of the NRF standard grant management and systems administration and financial policies. The money is released on acceptance of the conditions of grant that must be signed off by the applicant and his/her designated authority at the research institution.

## 5.1 Reporting

All grantholders are required to submit a report to the NRF no later than 60 (sixty) days after a trip has been completed. The following types of outputs are expected to emanate from the visit:

- Scarce skills development on the use of specialised equipment and analytical systems;
- Training of black and female researchers, as well as researchers from historically disadvantaged institutions; and
- Research outputs:
  - Publications,
  - Conference Proceedings,
  - Collaborations,
  - Improved laboratory processes, and
  - Other (explain).

All reports must be submitted to:

Ms Vireshni Moonsamy

Liaison Office: Capacity & Strategic Platforms Grants

Grants Management & Systems Administration

Email: [vireshni.moonsamy@nrf.ac.za](mailto:vireshni.moonsamy@nrf.ac.za)

Telephone: +27 12 481 4352

OR

Ms Lindiwe Thabede

Programme Officer: Strategic Platforms Programme

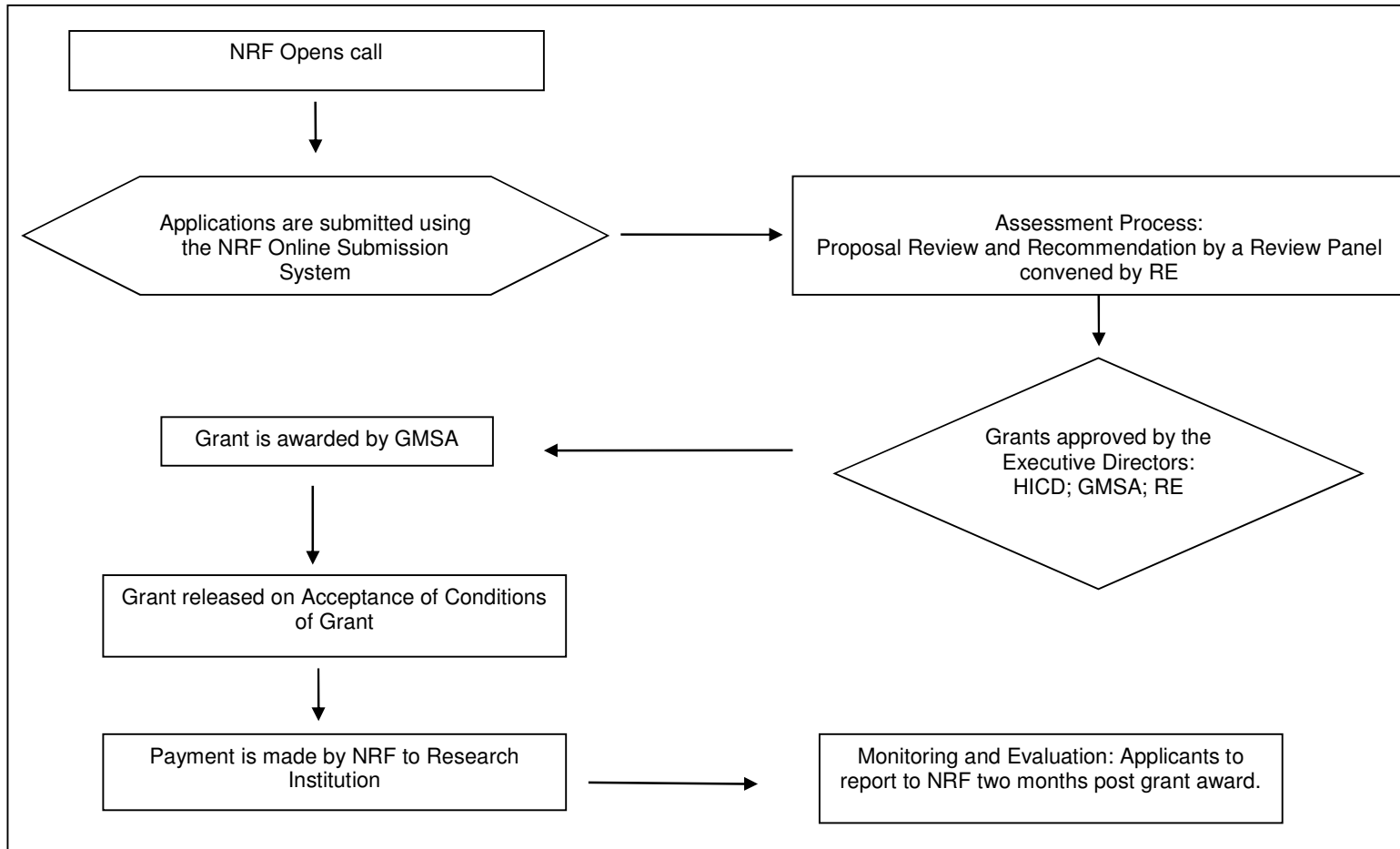
Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development

Email: [lindiwe.thabede@nrf.ac.za](mailto:lindiwe.thabede@nrf.ac.za)

Telephone: +27 12 481 4110.

## 6. NRF Granting Process

The grant management process for Equipment related travel and training Grants is described in the flow diagram shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Application process flow diagram for Mobility Grants.