



**DST-NRF-DHET SCARCE-SKILLS DEVELOPMENT FUND
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 Postdoctoral Fellowships supported through the DST-NRF-DHET Scarce Skills Development Fund (SSDF) and financed by the National Skills Fund (NSF). 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 South African government passed the Skills Development Act (Act no. 97 of 1998), which provides a framework for addressing the severe shortage of skills. The legislation provides guidelines on how to increase the overall level of skills in the country and to improve access to quality learning, especially for the previously disadvantaged sectors of the population. It also aims to ensure that the learning system is more responsive to the skills requirements and needs of industry. Emanating from the above mentioned Act, the Departments of Labour (DoL), Education (DoE) and Science and Technology (DST) were mandated to ensure training in scarce skills at higher education and training institutions. In response to this mandate, the DoL, allocated funding from the National Skills Fund (NSF), and entered into a contractual agreement with the National Research Foundation (NRF). The NRF was tasked with management of a postgraduate student funding, the Scarce Skills Development Fund (SSDF). The SSDF supports students at the Honours', Masters and Doctoral levels and, Postdoctoral Fellows. The NSF has since migrated to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and funding for postgraduate and Postdoctoral training is made available to the NRF through annual proposals submitted to the DHET.

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.

The objectives of the **DST-NRF-DHET Scarce Skills Development Fund** Postdoctoral Fellowship are:

- To continue increasing the number and quality of South African postgraduate students in specified scarce skills areas; and
- To continue working towards increased race and gender representation; and in conjunction with the higher education sector and industry, to support the development of postgraduate courses and research to meet specific needs of the country.

4. Areas of Support

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

- **Management:**
Financial Management
- **Financial sector:**
Accounting, Auditing, Statistics, Actuarial Science
- **Biological sciences:**
Biotechnology
- **Physical sciences:**
Mathematical Sciences, Physics, Geology, Computer Science, Information systems, Chemistry
- **Engineering:**
All fields of Engineering
- **Sector specific:**
Agricultural Sciences, Transportation Studies, Tourism, Demography

5. Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria will apply for the **DST-NRF-DHET Scarce Skills Development Fund** Postdoctoral Fellowship:

- Fellowships are open to **South African citizens and permanent residents only**;
- Applicants must have obtained their PhD within five (5) 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**.

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:

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|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| R255 000 per annum | non-taxable stipend |
| R50 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 R25 000, for local travel, and up to R50 000, for 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 3 months prior to travelling.

8. Conditions of the Fellowship

- 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 other full-time employment position; and
- Postdoctoral Fellows may hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to the institutional capped value.

9. 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 85% blacks, 54% women and 4% students with disabilities.

10. Application Process

The NRF will invite applications from candidates who wish to pursue Postdoctoral training at a South African public university or research institution. 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.**

11. 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's. 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 that 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 work plan 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% |

12. 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.

13. 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

Professional Officer: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development (HICD).

Telephone: 012 481 4232.

E-mail: nompumelelo.thwala@nrf.ac.za

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

Ms Melissa Govender

Professional Officer: Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA)

Telephone: 012 481 4311

E-mail: Melissa.govender@nrf.ac.za

Ms Zodwa Mahlangu

Liaison Officer: Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA)

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