

# **NRF-TWAS POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS**

## **Framework**

**Directorate: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development**

**Date: April 2016**

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## 1. Background

The core mandate of the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, is to promote and support research through funding, human capital development and the provision of the necessary facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of research. In order to realise this mandate, the NRF has made substantial commitment and investment towards supporting emerging researchers to intensify and strengthen African and global networks. This is in line with the National Development Plan 2030, and the national priorities as set out in the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MSTF). The continuous improvements in research and innovation set South Africa on a competitive platform globally to leverage effective partnerships and funding.

The NRF and The World Academy of Sciences (TWAS) partnered to pursue this goal through the establishment of the **NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship funding instrument**. TWAS is based in Italy and operates as a programme of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) for the advancement of science in developing countries. The parties entered into a contractual agreement to support postdoctoral fellows from Africa and developing countries who will be funded per annum for a maximum of three (3) years to pursue full-time research training in South Africa. There will be an intake of 10 postdoctoral fellows each year for three (3) years. The first intake was in 2016.

## 2. Rationale

International strategic partnerships remain the vehicle for development, within the context of the advancement of research and human capacity development. Through this funding instrument, South Africa will contribute to effective science collaboration on the African continent and globally. In particular, ensuring capacity development of promising next generation and emerging researchers in developing countries will make headways towards exchange of knowledge and improving the quality of research leading to innovative ideas for socio-economic development.

## 3. Objectives

The objectives of the NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship funding instrument are to:

- Increase the number and quality of postdoctoral research fellows in Africa and other developing countries;

- Foster collaboration in order to increase the supervisory capacity of postdoctoral students and fellows in South Africa and other developing countries;
- Foster scientific and technological cooperation by facilitating brain circulation between countries;
- Attract young scientists and professionals of the highest calibre from developing countries to access world class strategic and applied research opportunities in South Africa in order to advance their professional competitiveness; and
- Support human capacity needs and thus position the developing countries for global competitiveness in scientific and technological fields.

#### 4. Areas of Support

The NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship funding instrument will support fellows to undertake full-time research at any South African public research institution including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Science Councils and National Research Facilities.

For details of Recognised HEIs [click here](#) and for other Public Research Institutions [click here](#).

Applicants who wish to pursue research under Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) disciplines will be supported through the fellowship.

#### 5. Eligibility

In selecting applicants for consideration for the NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowship, the following criteria will apply:

- Fellowships are open to **citizens and permanent residents in a developing country other than South Africa**. Refer to Appendix 1 for the list of eligible developing countries;
- The following individuals are **not eligible** to apply:
  - South African citizens;
  - Foreign citizens who hold permanent residence permits of South Africa;
  - Foreign citizens who are already resident in South Africa or any developed country and, hold temporary residence permits including includes study permits;
  - Citizens and permanent residents of any developed country;
  - Foreign citizens who were previously employed or studying towards a degree or undertaking research in South Africa, and have returned to their country of origin, but have been residing in their country of origin for less than two (2) years.

- Applicants must have obtained their Doctoral qualification within five (5) years of applying for this postdoctoral fellowship; and
- Applicants should be a regular employee in a developing country, other than South Africa, and hold a research assignment; and Visa and immigration laws of the applicant's home country and South Africa must be met by the applicant.

## 6. Application Requirements

- Applications from individuals that are employed must provide an official letter of release from their employer to authorise absence for the full duration of the fellowship. **Applications that do not have an official letter of release will be automatically disqualified;**
- Applicants must provide an official letter from their South African host institution, department or laboratory and motivation from the applicant's host. **It is the responsibility of the applicant to contact the respective institution to apply for acceptance. Applications that do not have an official letter of support will be automatically disqualified;**
- The research project must be approved by the host institution and included in the letter from the prospective host supervisor must be attached to the application;
- Applicants must include as attachments to their application: a certified copy of their passport as well as all undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications; and
- Applicants must have all foreign qualifications, i.e. those obtained from universities in countries other than South Africa, evaluated by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). A SAQA evaluation certificate must be submitted with the application. Further information on the process can be accessed by logging on to [www.saqa.org.za](http://www.saqa.org.za).

## 7. Selection Criteria

Applications that meet the eligibility criteria, application requirements and are completed appropriately, will be subjected to a competitive merit review process. If any information that should have been submitted as attachments is not included in the application, it will be rendered incomplete resulting in a rejection without review. The reviewers are selected by the NRF from existing reviewer databases and other sources and may include reviewers suggested by the applicant. TWAS may also submit names of potential reviewers to the NRF.

The feasibility and merit of the research projects will be assessed in line with the scorecard published together with the call documents on the NRF website.

## **8. Awarding Principle**

Fellowships will be awarded based on the following principles:

- Priority will be given to applicants from the 81 states endorsed by TWAS for priority in capacity development in Science and Technology. Refer to Appendix 2 for the list of TWAS endorsed developing countries;
- The target is to support 50% of fellows from developing countries on the African continent; and
- As part of gender mainstreaming, the target is to award 50% of fellowships to female fellows.

## **9. 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 TWAS, South African government 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 in South Africa;
- Postdoctoral fellows may hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to the institutional capped value;
- Successful applicants must provide a written undertaking to return to their home country upon completion of the fellowship; and
- Postdoctoral fellows must meet the following requirements of the English Language Proficiency Academic test:  
IELTS 6.5 (no band less than 6.0); or TOEFL (paper) 575 (TWE 4.5); or TOEFL iBIT (min. 20); or Cambridge minimum 58. Information on the IELTS tests can be obtained from the British Council in home country or accessed on: [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org). Further information on the TOEFL test can be accessed on: [www.toefl.com](http://www.toefl.com).  
Applicants may consult the British Council in their home country for assistance.

## 10. Value of the Fellowship

The duration of postdoctoral fellowships will be for a minimum of six (6) months and a maximum of three (3) years. For fellowships with a duration of six (6) months to 12 months, stipends and research costs will be paid on a pro-rata basis depending on the duration of the fellowship.

The breakdown of the postdoctoral fellowship award will be as follows:

Category of support	Value (Rand)	Duration
Stipend	255 000	Per Annum
Research costs	50 000	Per Annum
Compulsory institutional contribution	15 000	Per annum
Cost towards mobility of the fellow	15 000	Once off, per single economy airfare

Host institutions will be expected to supplement the fellowship with a minimum of R15 000 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.

The costs for the mobility of the fellow will include the following:

- Travel visa and study visa subject to submission of proof of expenditure;
- A single economy airfare for travel from the fellows' home country to South Africa to the maximum value of R15 000; and
- A single economy airfare from South Africa to the fellow's home country, upon completion of the postdoctoral research fellowship, to the maximum value of R15 000.

Postdoctoral fellows that take up the fellowship for more than one year, are also eligible for a once-off 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 available on the NRF Online Submission System (<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>).

## 11. Responsibilities of Fellows

It is the responsibility of the fellow to:

- Obtain the appropriate visas;
- Secure a supervisor at a South African institution who is willing to host them for the duration of the fellowship; and
- Arrange their own accommodation in South Africa for the duration of the fellowship.

The fellowship **does not** cover the following:

- Financial expenses of accompanying family members.
- Fellows must also ensure that accompanying family members have the correct documentation for entry and stay in South Africa; and
- Comprehensive medical insurance for the period of their stay to meet any untoward incidents and major ailments during travel and stay in South Africa.

## 12. Application Process

The NRF will invite applications from candidates who wish to pursue postdoctoral training at any South African public research institution including Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Science Councils and National Research Facilities. Applications will be submitted *via* the NRF Online Submission System. Further instructions on the application process will be made available in the **Grants Management and Systems Administration NRF-TWAS Postdoctoral Fellowships Funding Guide for 2017**.

## 13. Review Process

All eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to a competitive merit review process. Any information submitted as attachments that should have been completed as part of the application renders the application incomplete resulting in a rejection without review. 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 detailed in the table that follows.

## Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Postdoctoral Fellowships

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weight (Total = 100%)
<b>Track Record of Applicant</b>	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%
<b>Scientific and Technical quality of proposed research</b>	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%
<b>Institutional Support</b>	Institutional support for the postdoctoral fellowship through infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.	10%
<b>Potential Research Outputs and Impact of the research</b>	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 the funding instrument the fellows 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. All fellows will be requested, to submit an exit report to the NRF - TWAS, upon completion of their Postdoctoral research, on their overall experience, achievements and outputs.

## 15. NRF Contact Persons

When making an enquiry, please use “NRF-TWAS 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](mailto: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](mailto:melissa.govender@nrf.ac.za)

Ms Zodwa Mahlangu

Liaison Officer: Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA)

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## ELIGIBLE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

155 ELIGIBLE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES					
1	Afghanistan	53	Grenada	105	Palau
2	Albania	54	Guatemala	106	Palestine, State of
3	Algeria	55	Guinea	107	Panama
4	Angola	56	Guinea-Bissau	108	Papua New Guinea
5	Antigua and Barbuda	57	Guyana	109	Paraguay
6	Argentina	58	Haiti	110	Peru
7	Armenia	59	Honduras	111	Philippines
8	Aruba	60	Hong Kong, SAR	112	Qatar
9	Azerbaijan	61	India	113	Romania
10	Bangladesh	62	Indonesia	114	Rwanda
11	Bahamas	63	Iran, Islamic Rep.	115	Samoa
12	Bahrain	64	Iraq	116	São Tomé and Príncipe
13	Barbados	65	Jamaica	117	Saudi Arabia
14	Belarus	66	Jordan	118	Senegal
15	Belize	67	Kazakhstan	119	Serbia
16	Benin	68	Kenya	120	Seychelles (Transitional)
17	Bhutan	69	Kiribati	121	Sierra Leone
18	Bolivia	70	Korea, Dem Rep.	122	Solomon Islands
19	Bosnia and Herzegovina	71	Kosovo	123	Somalia
20	Botswana	72	Kuwait	124	South Sudan
21	Brunei	73	Kyrgyz Republic	125	Sri Lanka
22	Brazil	74	Lao PDR	126	St. Lucia
23	Bulgaria	75	Lebanon	127	St. Vincent and the Grenadines
24	Burkina Faso	76	Lesotho	128	Sudan
25	Burundi	77	Liberia	129	Suriname
26	Cabo Verde	78	Libya	130	Swaziland
27	Cambodia	79	Macedonia, FYR	131	Syrian Arab Republic
28	Cameroon	80	Macau	132	Taiwan, China
29	Central African Republic	81	Madagascar	133	Tajikistan

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30	Chad	82	Malawi	134	Tanzania
31	Chile	83	Malaysia	135	Thailand
32	China	84	Maldives	136	Timor-Leste
33	Colombia	85	Mali	137	Trinidad and Tobago
34	Comoros	86	Marshall Islands	138	Togo
35	Congo, Dem. Rep	87	Mauritania	139	Tonga
36	Congo, Rep.	88	Mauritius	140	Tunisia
37	Costa Rica	89	Mayotte	141	Turkey
38	Côte d'Ivoire	90	Mexico	142	Turkmenistan
39	Cuba	91	Micronesia, Fed. Sts.	143	Tuvalu
40	Djibouti	92	Moldova	144	Uganda
41	Dominica	93	Mongolia	145	Ukraine
42	Dominican Republic	94	Montenegro	146	United Arab Emirates
43	Ecuador	95	Morocco	147	Uruguay
44	Egypt, Arab Rep.	96	Mozambique	148	Uzbekistan
45	El Salvador	97	Myanmar	149	Vanuatu
46	Eritrea	98	Namibia	150	Venezuela
47	Ethiopia	99	Nepal	151	Vietnam
48	Fiji	100	Nicaragua	152	Western Samoa
49	Gabon	101	Niger	153	Yemen, Rep.
50	Gambia, The	102	Nigeria	154	Zambia
51	Georgia	103	Oman	155	Zimbabwe
52	Ghana	104	Pakistan		

**TWAS ENDORSED COUNTRIES**

TWAS has identified 81 developing countries whose capacity in science and technology is still lagging. For this reason, TWAS is focusing special attention on capacity-building efforts in these countries.

<b>LIST OF 81 TWAS ENDORSED COUNTRIES</b>		
1. Afghanistan	28. Gambia	55. Niger
2. Angola	29. Ghana	56. Nigeria
3. Azerbaijan	30. Guatemala	57. Papua New Guinea
4. Bangladesh	31. Guinea-Bissau	58. Paraguay
5. Belize	32. Guinea	59. Peru
6. Benin	33. Guyana	60. Rwanda
7. Bhutan	34. Haiti	61. Samoa
8. Botswana	35. Honduras	62. São Tome and Principe
9. Burkina Faso	36. Indonesia	63. Senegal
10. Burundi	37. Jamaica	64. Sierra Leone
11. Cambodia	38. Kenya	65. Solomon Islands
12. Cameroon	39. Kiribati	66. Somalia
13. Cape Verde	40. Korea DPR	67. South Sudan
14. Central African Republic	41. Kyrgyzstan	68. Sudan
15. Chad	42. Lao PDR	69. Suriname
16. Comoros Islands	43. Lesotho	70. Tajikistan
17. Congo, Dem. Rep.	44. Liberia	71. Tanzania
18. Congo, Rep.	45. Madagascar	72. Timor-Leste
19. Côte d'Ivoire	46. Malawi	73. Togo
20. Djibouti	47. Maldives	74. Tuvalu
21. Dominican Republic	48. Mali	75. Uganda
22. Ecuador	49. Mauritania	76. Uzbekistan
23. El Salvador	50. Mongolia	77. Vanuatu
24. Equatorial Guinea	51. Mozambique	78. Vietnam
25. Eritrea	52. Myanmar	79. Yemen
26. Ethiopia	53. Nepal	80. Zambia
27. Gabon	54. Nicaragua	81. Zimbabwe