



## **Application and Funding Guide for NRF Postdoctoral Fellowships 2026**

**Directorate: Next Generation and Emerging Researchers**

**Date: February 2025**

# Table of Contents

---

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Registering and accessing the system.....	5
3. Personal Details.....	7
4. CV section .....	8
4.1. Sections of the CV .....	10
4.1.1. Career History .....	10
4.1.2. Qualifications / Certifications .....	10
4.1.4 Research Outputs - Primary or Secondary Outputs and Patents .....	10
4.1.5 Student Supervision.....	10
5. Navigation and Controls.....	10
5.1. Drop-down List Control.....	10
5.2. Upload Control .....	11
5.3 Calendar Control .....	11
5.4 Toggle Control.....	11
6. Creating the application .....	12
6.1 Fellowship to be Funded .....	15
6.2 Basic Information.....	16
6.3 Ethical Clearance.....	16
6.4 Details of Research.....	17
6.5 National Infrastructure Platforms.....	18
6.6 Science Engagement.....	18
6.7 Application Support Input.....	18
6.8 Attachments.....	19
6.9 Preferred Panel.....	20
6.10 Person History.....	21
6.11 Possible Reviewers.....	22
6.12 Participating Members.....	22

7. Tracking the application.....	23
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## Contact Details

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**For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours from 08:00 to 16:30 Monday to Friday.**

E-mail: [supportdesk@nrf.ac.za](mailto:supportdesk@nrf.ac.za)

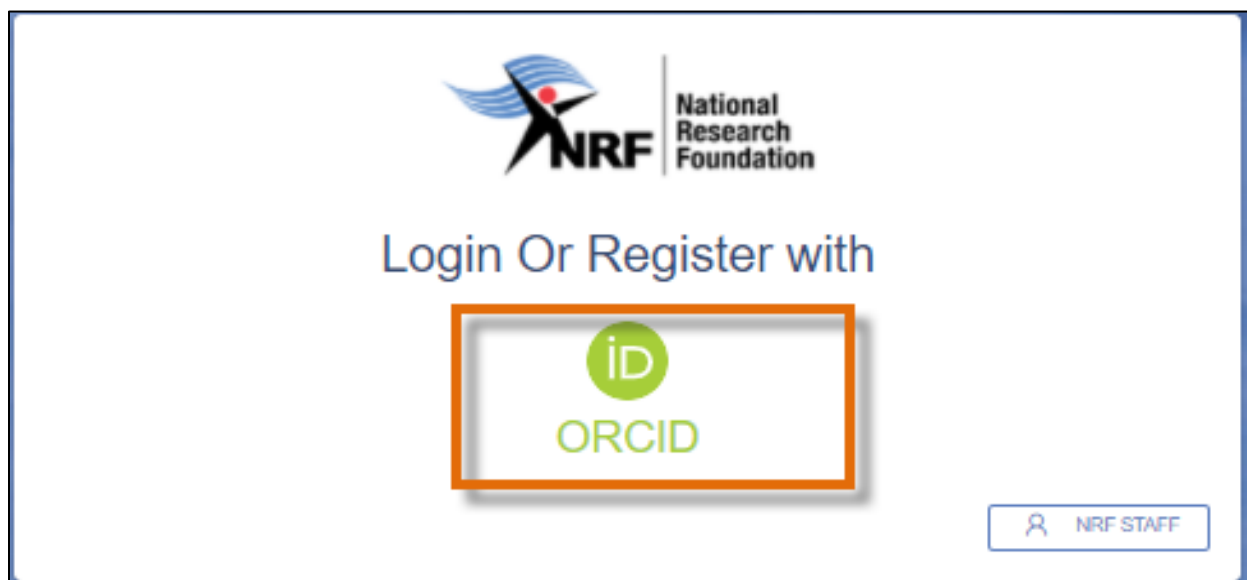
## 1. Introduction

This document provides an overview of the application process and funding guidelines for the Freestanding, Innovation, and Scarce Skills (FISS) Postdoctoral Fellowships funding instrument for funding in the 2026 academic year. An understanding of the application process is critical to successfully submitting your application.

This document should be read in conjunction with the **NRF Postdoctoral Fellowships Framework for Funding in the 2026 Academic Year** attached to the current call. The Framework document provides detailed information with respect to objectives of the funding instrument, eligibility criteria and other relevant information for applicants. This document does not, however, constitute a complete set of the policies, procedures or systems used by the NRF.

## 2. Registering and accessing the system

Application forms must be completed on the NRF Connect System at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. Applicants must click the **ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) icon to login or register** as shown in the image below.



If not registered on ORCID, click 'Register now' and follow the steps. Continue with the ORCID registration as prompted. If users are already registered on ORCID, they must sign in using one of the following options:

- ORCID iD
- Email address linked with your ORCID profile

- GMAIL account linked with your ORCID
- Facebook account linked with ORCID


## Sign in


example@email.com or 0000-0001-2345-6789


**SIGN IN**

**Forgot your password or ORCID ID?**  
Don't have an ORCID iD yet? **Register now**

or

 **Access through your institution**

 **Sign in with Google**

 **Sign in with Facebook**

If you are currently registered on the NRF Online Submission System, you will be automatically logged in with the ORCID profile.

When the ORCID registration process is complete, new users will be redirected to NRF Connect login screen to register on the system.

**Register a new account**  
Already have an account? [Login now](#)

**Personal details**

**Unique Registration**

- Kindly note that this registration process should be completed only once.
- You need to complete all the required fields (indicated with \*) before you will be able to submit your registration.
- After you have registered, you will need receive an email with a link and instructions on how to set your password

LOGIN REGISTER

**Contact details**

Email Address \*

Mobile Number

Please include Country Code +27 962 123 1234

CANCEL REGISTER

Complete the missing fields and click **Register** to complete the process and the system will automatically log the user in.

**Register a new account**  
Already have an account? [Login now](#)

**Personal details**

ID: <https://sandbox.orcid.org/0000-0002-8226-4581>

First Name \*  
Maserube

Surname \*

As per your birth certificate

Birth Date \*

As per your birth certificate

**Contact details**

Email Address \*

Mobile Number

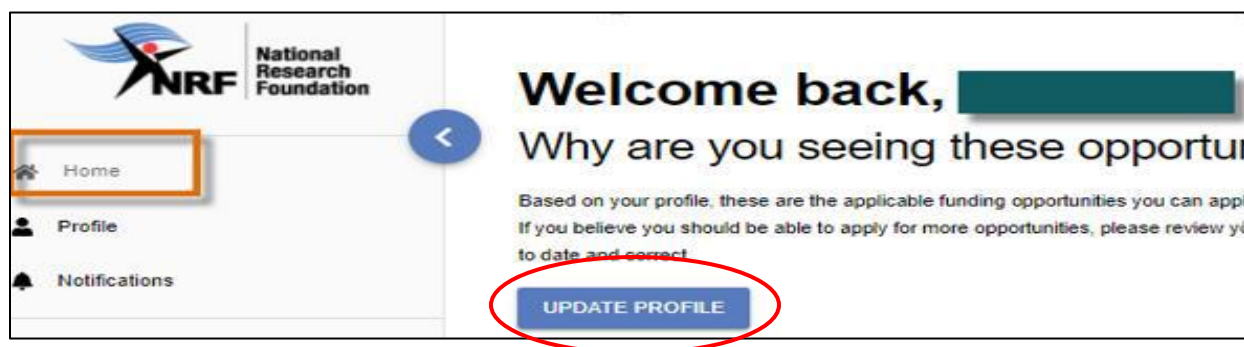
Please include Country Code +27 962 123 1234

CANCEL REGISTER

### 3. Personal Details

Applicants must first complete or update the section **'My Profile'**. South African citizens and permanent residents must attach a certified copy of their South African Identity Document while foreign nationals must attach a certified copy of their valid Passports. These documents must be attached under the Personal Details only, **please do not attach these documents under the**

**attachment section.** Should the above-mentioned documents not be attached, the application will be rejected without undergoing the review process.



**\*If the ID copy or passport is not certified, the application will be rejected as this is an audit requirement.**

#### 4. CV section

##### Migrating the CV from the NRF Online Submission System

Should the user have an existing profile on the NRF Online Submission System, there is a functionality to migrate the CV from the previous system. Click **Verify** to link to the relevant account on the NRF Online Submission System.



Provide the ID/Passport number and password used on the NRF Online Submission System.



## Enter your Old Nrf Submission Details

ID Number \*

---

ID/Passport

Password \*

---

Your Old Password

---

[CANCEL](#)
[SUBMIT](#)

Once the verification of the two accounts has been completed, confirmation will appear at the bottom of the screen.

### Sync Your CV

Migrate your CV from the previous system

[NOT NOW](#)
[SYNC NOW](#)

### For new users

The 'MY CV' sections on the left side of the NRF Connect screen must also be completed before applicants can complete the application.

**MY APPLICATIONS**

- Applications
- MY CV**
- Career History
- Qualifications/Certifications
- Research Expertise
- Research Outputs
- Student Supervision
- Sign Out

**Funding Opportunities**

Infrastructure Bridging Funding  
Infrastructure Bridging Finance

[APPLY](#)

NRF Postdoctoral Grants  
Postdoctoral Grants

[APPLY](#)

SA / France (PROTEA) Call for Joint Proposals  
Research Grants

[APPLY](#)

Foundational Biodiversity Information Programme (FBIP) - Small Grants  
Research Grants

[APPLY](#)

SA / USA (NSF) Biodiversity on a Changing Planet (BoCP)  
Research Grants

[APPLY](#)

Thuthuka  
Research Grants

[APPLY](#)

## **4.1. Sections of the CV**

The sections under “MY CV” needs to be completed and should always be up to date since the information under this section forms part of the review process. The CV includes the following sections:

### **4.1.1. Career History**

The applicants must provide information about employment history, accomplishments, awards, prizes, as well as any period that the applicant was absent from research.

### **4.1.2. Qualifications / Certifications**

Applicants must have graduated with their Doctoral degree within five (5) years of submitting an application to the NRF. If the Doctoral degree is “in progress”, then the degree should be completed by the 31 December 2025. The highest qualification certificate should be attached to the application.

### **4.1.3. Research Expertise**

Select the relevant primary research field and secondary research from the drop-down list. To search for a field of specialisation, please start typing any part of the word in the appropriate space.

### **4.1.4 Research Outputs - Primary or Secondary Outputs and Patents**

Click on Research Outputs menu to select the relevant output type. Should the outputs have been synched from NRF online submission, a list of outputs will be available for editing or deletion.

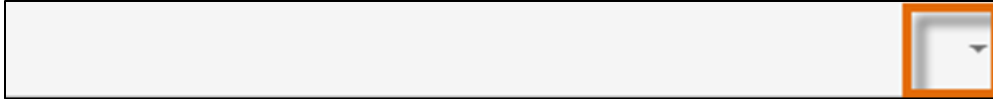
### **4.1.5 Student Supervision**

This section is for capturing the student supervision track record.

## **5. Navigation and Controls**

### **5.1. Drop-down List Control**

Click on the arrow on the drop-down to see a list of options. Then click on the relevant option(s) to select.



## 5.2. Upload Control

Click on the **Attachment** icon to upload required document(s).

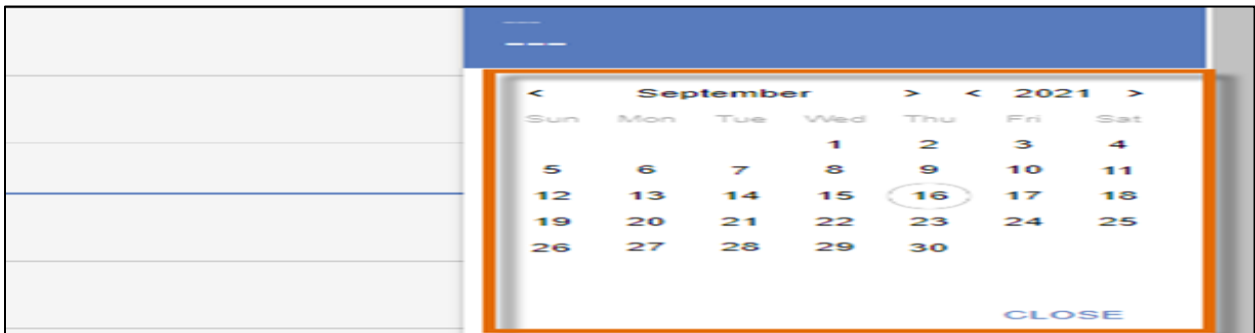


## 5.3 Calendar Control

Click on the **Calendar** icon to select the date, where a date is required.



A full **Calendar** will be displayed to allow for selection of the relevant date (follow the sequence as follows: year, month, day).

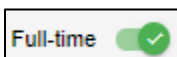


## 5.4 Toggle Control

Toggle to indicate **No**.



Toggle to indicate **Yes**.



Are you disabled in any way?

Please make sure that the toggle has fully marked no or yes based on your selection. Toggle not fully selected will not allow the section to complete.

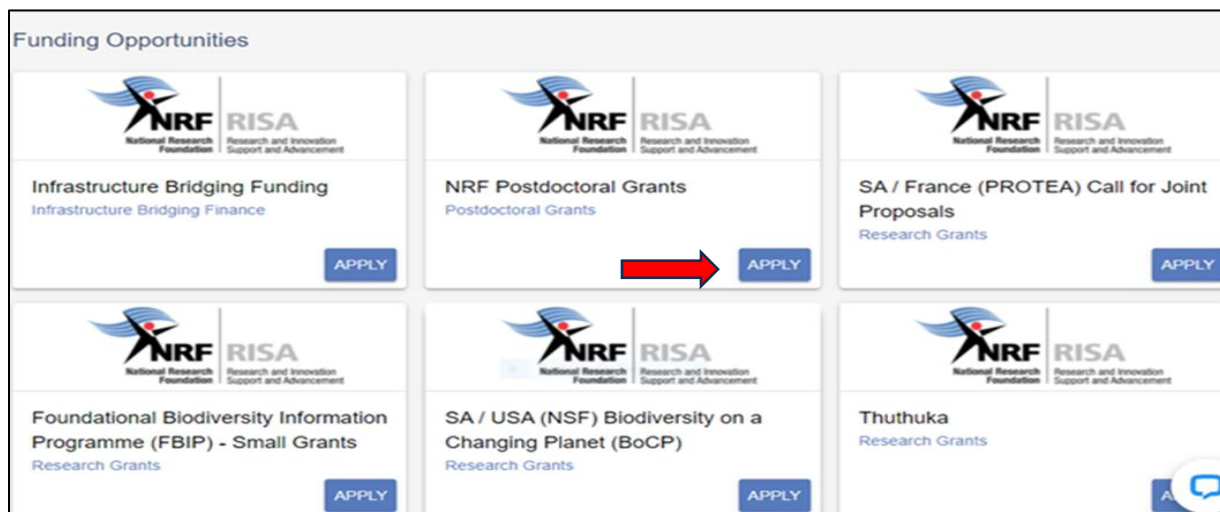
## 6. Creating the application

An application can be created from the **Home/Landing page** or from the **My Applications** menu.

### Create Application from Home/Landing Page

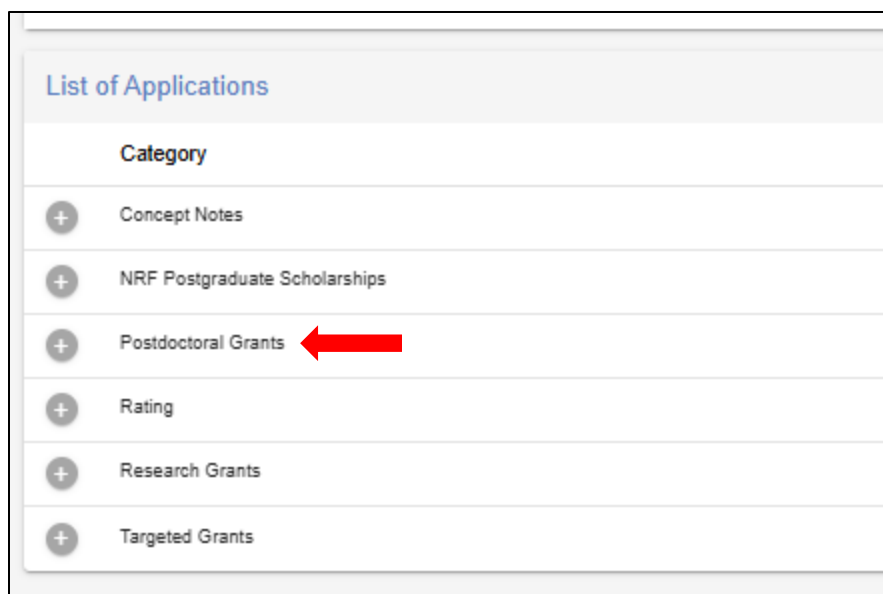
The Funding Opportunities listed under your profile will be those that the applicant might be potentially eligible to apply for based on the information captured under the CV section.

You can click on the “apply” icon to start an application.



### Create Application from My Applications Menu

Click the expand icon next to the relevant Category to see the Calls associated with the Category. Then Click Create next to the relevant Funding Opportunity to create a new application.



To continue working on an application, click **Edit** on the funding call you want to edit.



## Sections of the application

- Please note that some sections (e.g. Personal Details, CV Details) will be pre-populated, if they were completed on **Update Profile** and **MY CV** sections.
- Most application screens have application specific instructions to help you work through the section. Please read the instructions carefully before completing the section.

- Completed sections will be indicated by a green tick (✓) on the main menu, while incomplete sections will have a red cross (✗). Please ensure that you press the “save” button after completing information in a section, before returning to the application.
- All sections marked with a red asterisk (\*) are compulsory sections in the application. These sections must be completed for the final submit button to be active.

## My Applications

### Edit Application

Category: Postdoctoral Grants  
Funding opportunity: NRF Postdoctoral Grants  
Reference: PSTD240123202577  
Applicant closing date: 29/02/2024

BACK TO APPLICATIONS

PSTD240123202577
PREVIEW

Section	Complete	Updated	Edit
Personal Profile *	✓	22/05/2023	
Qualifications/Certifications *	✓	23/01/2024	
Career History *	✓	23/01/2024	
Research Expertise *	✗		
Research Outputs *	✗		
Student Supervision	✗		
Patents	✗		

Basic Information *	✗	
Additional Information	✗	
Ethical Clearance *	✗	
Details of Research *	✗	
National Infrastructure Platforms *	✗	
Science Engagement	✗	
Application Support Input *	✗	
Attachments *	✗	
Reviewer *	✗	
Preferred Panel *	✗	
Person History *	✗	
Other Sources of Funding *	✗	

CANCEL
SUBMIT

Please ensure that you complete and submit your application by the closing date of the call. The system will not allow applicants to submit nor make any edits after the call has closed. **Should you have any queries related to the application process, please ensure that your query is sent to the NRF’s Supportdesk at least one week prior to the application closing date. The NRF will not be held responsible for not responding to queries that were not submitted**

timeously in order to afford the NRF the opportunity to resolve the query or issues related to the application.

## 6.1 Fellowship to be Funded

The ***Fellowship to be Funded*** section is a compulsory section. Please complete the section accurately and keep the following in mind: (1) Applicants must undertake Full-time Postdoctoral research; and (2) The Fellowship cannot be held concurrently with any Full-time salaried employment.

The screenshot shows a web form titled "Fellowship to be Funded". It contains several input fields and checkboxes arranged in two columns. The left column includes: "Fellowship for which you are applying \*" (dropdown), "Date of commencement of postdoctoral research" (calendar icon), "Was your Masters degree upgraded to Doctoral? \*" (radio button), "Student number (if applicable)" (text), "Department/School for Postdoctoral research \*" (text), and "Indicate what you are doing presently \*" (text). The right column includes: "Provide a short description of current and previous research..." (text), "Full-time \*" (radio button), "Does any financial support received for previous studies bind you to a service contract? \*" (radio button), "Discipline of Postdoctoral research \*" (dropdown), and "Faculty for Postdoctoral research \*" (text). At the bottom right, there are "CANCEL" and "SAVE" buttons.

This call is **ONLY** for candidates who will be conducting research at a South African institution.

Applicants intending to apply for the Freestanding, Innovation, Scarce Skills Postdoctoral Fellowship must select **"General Postdoctoral Fellowship"**. This can be selected from the dropdown under the **"Fellowship for which you are applying for"** field.

**\*Please note that once the application has been submitted to the NRF, no changes under this field can be accommodated.**

**Fellowship to be Funded**

Fellowship for which you are applying \*

- General Postdoctoral Fellowship
- Professional Development Programme (PDP)
- SARAO Postdoctoral Fellowship

Was your Masters degree upgraded to Uctorate? \*

Student number (if applicable) \*

Department/School for Postdoctoral research \*

Indicate what you are doing presently \*

Provide a short description of current and previous research study \*

Full-time \*

Does any financial support received for previous studies bind you to a service contract? \*

Discipline of Postdoctoral research \*

Faculty for Postdoctoral research \*

CANCEL SAVE

## 6.2 Basic Information

The **Basic Information** section requires you to select the proposed institution. Please select the proposed institution for Postdoctoral research in South Africa from the dropdown list. Please note that it is the applicant's responsibility to find an institution and supervisor/mentor in South Africa that is willing to host them for the duration of the fellowship.

**Basic Information**

Institution \* Title \*

Type part of the institution name to search Maximum 100 0

Descriptive title/abstract \*

Maximum 2000 0

Funding start year 2024 Select max funding years \*

CANCEL SAVE

Please note that the maximum funding period is two (2) years for the General Postdoctoral Fellowship. Do select the funding period accordingly.

## 6.3 Ethical Clearance

The **Ethical Clearance** section is a compulsory section. It is the responsibility of the applicant, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A



research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigour of all research prior to the commencement of the research.

### Ethical Clearance

Does this project require ethical clearance?

Has ethical clearance been obtained?

Additional comments on ethical clearance \*

Maximum 500

Click here to upload the relevant document \*

EDIT FILE

CANCEL

SAVE

**\*Note:** If your application is successful and ethical clearance is required for your research, then the ethical clearance certificate must be sent to the institution. The institution will have to provide the clearance certificate to the NRF, if required.

## 6.4 Details of Research

The **Details of Research** Section is one of the most important sections of the application and is evaluated during the review process (please refer to the detailed review scorecard in the Framework document). This section is made up of multiple sub-sections that must be completed with as much detail as possible. Character limitations are indicated in each sub-section.

Details of Research *			
Section	Complete	Updated	Edit
Problem Statement *	x		
Aims and Objectives *	x		
Rationale and Literature Review *	x		
Proposed Activities/Methodology/Work Plan *	x		
Anticipated Outputs *	x		
Potential Impact and Outputs *	x		
Alignment to National Imperatives *	x		

**\*Please note that the Details of Research section will only mark as complete (✓) when all the sub-sections are completed.**

## 6.5 National Infrastructure Platforms

The **National Infrastructure Platforms** section is a compulsory section for reporting purposes. If you will not be accessing any infrastructure platforms, please select: “*No plan to access platforms*” and save.

The screenshot shows a web application interface for the 'National Infrastructure Platforms' section. At the top right, there is a 'BACK TO APPLICATION' button. Below the header, there is a 'CREATE NEW' button. The main table has three columns: 'National Infrastructure Platform', 'Type of Platform', and 'Planned Usage'. A message 'No data available' is displayed above the table. Below the table, there is a text input field with the placeholder text 'No plan to access platforms' and a circular arrow icon. At the bottom right, there are 'CANCEL' and 'SAVE' buttons.

## 6.6 Science Engagement

The **Science Engagement** section is a compulsory section for reporting purposes. Science engagement relates to activities where the applicant will communicate their science to the public. Should applicants not be hosting any science engagement activities, they must move the ‘Toggle’ to the left.

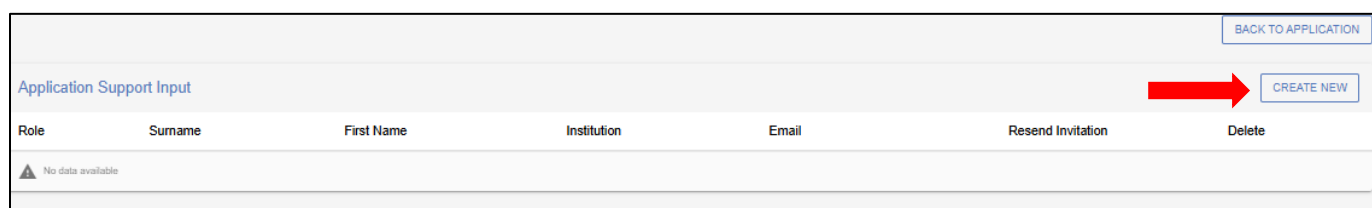
The screenshot shows a web application interface for the 'Science Engagement' section. At the top right, there is a 'BACK TO APPLICATION' button. Below the header, there is a 'CREATE NEW' button. The main table has five columns: 'Category', 'Engagement to be undertaken and desired outcome', 'People / audiences', 'Intended engagement with audiences', and 'Plan to assess broader impact(s)'. A message 'No data available' is displayed above the table. Below the table, there is a text input field with the placeholder text 'No science engagement planned' and a circular arrow icon. At the bottom right, there are 'CANCEL' and 'SAVE' buttons.

## 6.7 Application Support Input

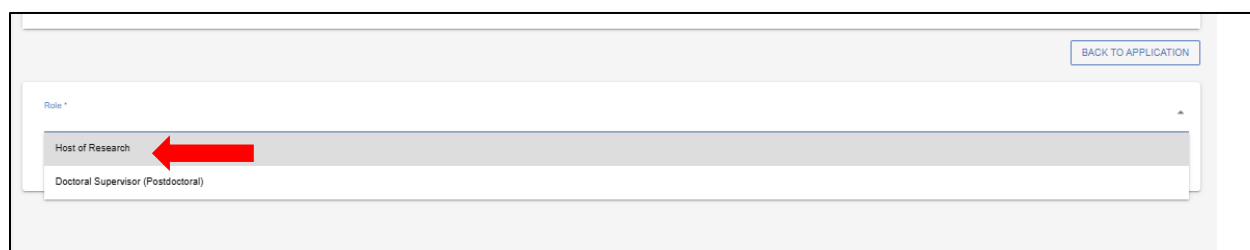
It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that the referee email is correct and that the referees have responded by the deadline date indicated in the notification, as this category is assessed in the application. The applicant **must** review their application PDF prior to submitting it to the NRF, to check if their referee has responded to the request for support. Required references are from the proposed Supervisor/Host and/or Doctoral supervisor.

Applicants who have not finalised their PhD are required to provide details of their PhD supervisor as a referee and all applicants should provide details of their potential host of the postdoctoral study under this section. It is important that the supervisor and the host provide support for the application within the deadline date indicated.

Note: The applicant must confirm with the proposed Supervisor/Host and Doctoral supervisor that the email address used in the application is the one utilised by the latter on their NRF Connect profile.



Role	Surname	First Name	Institution	Email	Resend Invitation	Delete
No data available						



*Herewith find steps the proposed Supervisor/Host and Doctoral supervisor to access the report:*

- Login on NRF Connect and on the left-hand side on the Menu, the Supervisor should have REPORTS.
- If so, click on Feedback on Submission
- Click on +sign before the category to expand
- Click on View Report, complete and Submit.

## 6.8 Attachments

The following documents are compulsory for the NRF Postdoctoral Fellowships application:

- Proof of Masters and Doctoral qualifications (if Masters was upgraded to Doctoral this needs to be clearly stated in your application).
- If your Doctoral degree is still “in progress”, a formal letter of confirmation from your institution, stating that your Doctoral qualification will be completed by December 2025, **must** be attached.

- If the institution, department and/or supervisor remains the same as your Doctoral study or first postdoctoral placement, a motivation letter **must** be attached.
- Official postdoctoral acceptance letter from the host institution (signed, stamped and on an official letterhead), **must** be attached. The letter should include details of the availability of specialised equipment, infrastructure and resources to enable the fellow to conduct their research.
- If you are a fellow with a disability, you **must** also upload a medical certificate in support of your disability. This can be done under the Personal Details section of the application.
- Proof of South African National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) or University financial aid scheme funding (if applicable).

**\*Please note that should any of the required documents not be uploaded to the application, the application will be rejected during the screening process and will not be reviewed.**

Documents

Academic record/transcript  
0.0B / 0.00%

Acceptance letter  
0.0B / 0.00%

Supporting Documents  
0.0B / 0.00%

BACK TO APPLICATION

CANCEL SAVE

## 6.9 Preferred Panel

Indicate the most suitable panel that your project should be evaluated under.

Preferred Panel

Primary Panel \*      Discipline \*

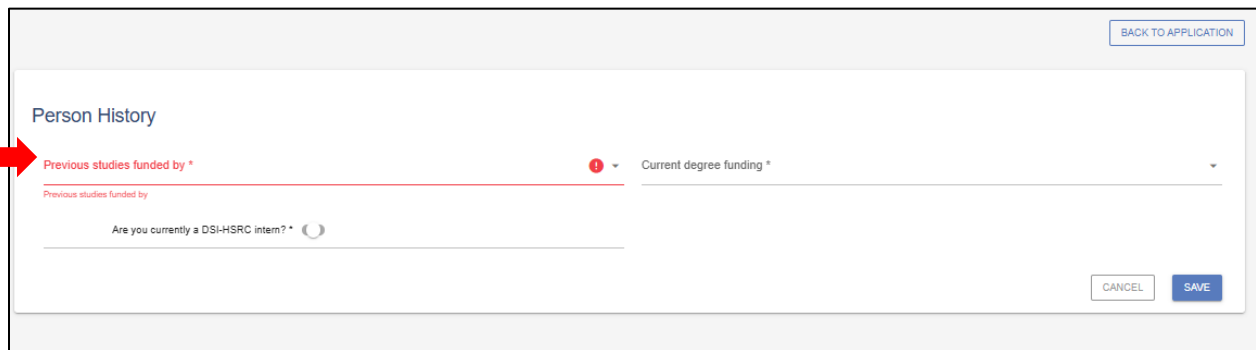
Secondary Panel      Discipline

BACK TO APPLICATION

CANCEL SAVE

## 6.10 Person History

The **Person History** section is required for statistical purposes by the NRF. It allows the NRF to ascertain who previously received NSFAS funding. Please also indicate if you were funded by the NRF for your Doctoral studies, an international donor etc.



Person History

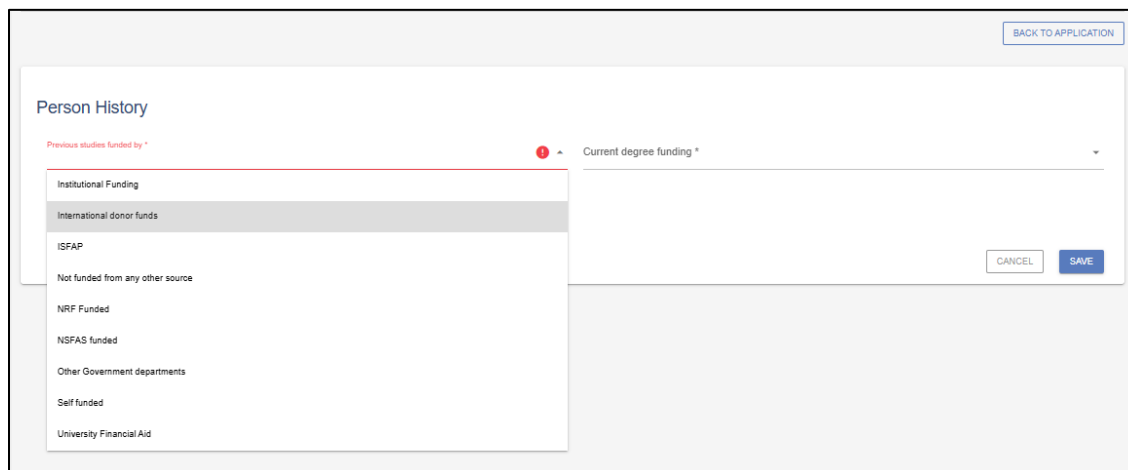
Previous studies funded by \* 1 Current degree funding \*

Previous studies funded by

Are you currently a DSI-HSRC intern? \* ☐

CANCEL SAVE

BACK TO APPLICATION



Person History

Previous studies funded by \* 1 Current degree funding \*

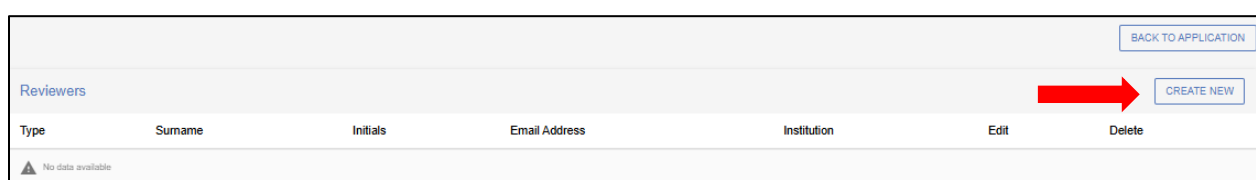
- Institutional Funding
- International donor funds
- ISFAP
- Not funded from any other source
- NRF Funded
- NSFAS funded
- Other Government departments
- Self funded
- University Financial Aid

CANCEL SAVE

BACK TO APPLICATION

## 6.11 Possible Reviewers

The **Possible Reviewers** section is compulsory in this call. The section requires that you add the names of possible reviewers in your field of research that will be able to provide a neutral review of your proposed research project. These may be reviewers that you have interacted with through conferences or other academic fora. A minimum of six (6) and a maximum of ten (10) possible reviewers are required. Please use the appropriate 'tab' to enter relevant information.



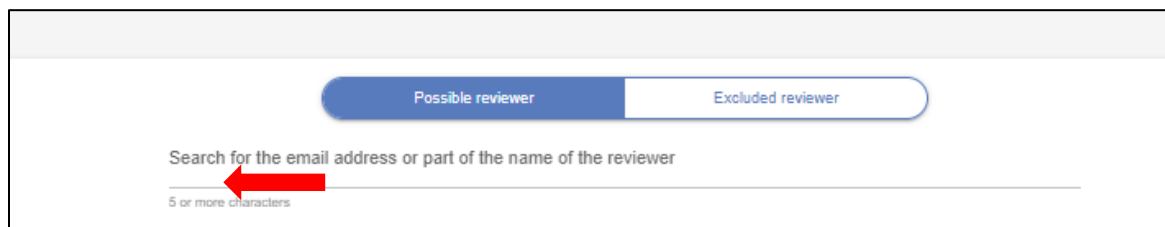
Reviewers

CREATE NEW

Type	Surname	Initials	Email Address	Institution	Edit	Delete
No data available						

BACK TO APPLICATION

You can search for the reviewer on the system by typing part of their email address.



Should a reviewer not be found, please select the 'Not found' tab to add the reviewer details.

## 6.12. Participating Members

Add the details of additional people e.g., collaborators, who will be involved in the research project, if any.

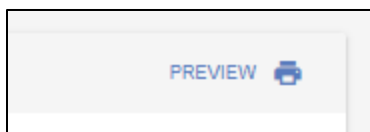
Designated Authorities (DAs) at institutions must ensure that all proposals are screened and approved through internal institutional processes **before** submitting applications to the NRF. The NRF assumes that the DAs are satisfied with the standard of all proposals validated and submitted, and that the institution approves and supports the proposed research.

**The final submit button will appear only if all compulsory sections are complete. Press 'OK' to submit your application.** If all the compulsory sections are complete and the final submit button does not appear, select any section and re-save to refresh the application; you will then see the final submit button. **A submitted application is automatically routed to the DA in the Research Office of the institution that you selected, for internal review and validation. Late applications, additional supporting documentation or information received after the cut-off date will not be accepted or considered.**

**The NRF will not process applications that are incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect details, or fail to follow instructions.**

Such applications will be rejected. The application must be completed with sufficient details to allow for a comprehensive review and evaluation by external reviewers. In addition to the electronic application and required attachments, the NRF may request additional information or documentation to support an application if required. Failure to supply such information or documentation upon request may result in the rejection of the application.

An applicant can preview their application before they submit it. Click on the 'Preview' button at the top right side of the page to access a Pdf copy.



## 7. Tracking the application

This section explains different application statuses to assist the applicant track their application. The status of your application will determine the stage of the application.

Applicants should direct queries to the Institution Research/Postgraduate Office if the application is still with the institution i.e., not yet submitted to the NRF.

<b>Application in progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Applicant has created an application.</li></ul>
<b>Application complete</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application is complete but has not been submitted to the institution yet.</li></ul>
<b>Submit application to institution</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application has been submitted to the selected institution.</li></ul>
<b>Designated authority submission review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application received by institutional designated authority (DA) and currently under review.</li></ul>
<b>Designated authority submission eligibility review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• DA has completed review but still needs to complete eligibility criteria check.</li></ul>
<b>Internal screening submission</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Application has been submitted to the NRF by the DA.</li></ul>
<b>Internal screening approval</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NRF screening process to check eligibility and application requirements.</li><li>• If rejected, the applicant will receive a notification with the reason for rejection.</li></ul>
<b>Funding decision allocation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eligible application now under awarding stage.</li><li>• Unsuccessful applications will remain at this stage.</li></ul>
<b>Award accepted</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Successful application i.e., an award has been made against the application. Awardee can log into NRF Connect to accept/reject the award.</li></ul>