# Cover

**African Origins Platform**

**Open Call for Funding for 2013**

**Managed by the Knowledge Fields Development (KFD) Directorate of the NRF**

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**Framework document**

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**2. The African Origins Platform**

The African Origins Platform (AOP) was originally established as a research programme aimed at integrating and coordinating scientific research conducted in South Africa[[1]](#footnote-1). Over a three year period, from 2008-2010, a number of research projects and postgraduate students were successfully funded under the inaugural programme, thereby addressing two fundamental requirements of the AOP: human resource development and knowledge generation.

During 2009 and 2010, the DST embarked on a consultative strategy development process for Archaeology, Paleontology and Palaeoanthropology, the result of which is the gazette South African Strategy for Palaeosciences.

**An improvement on the African Origins Platform Strategy, this strategy provides direction on a holistic approach towards the development of Palaeosciences and related disciplines. This strategy addresses issues on public engagement, human resources, challenges faced by Universities and museums as research institutions and repositories for collections, the legal landscape and tourism development in palaeosciences.**

While the adoption of the strategy is being concluded during the course of 2012, the Department of Science and Technology has concomitantly allocated interim funding for a further three years during the transition period.

**3. The African Origins Platform Call 2013-2015**

The **African Origins Platform Open Call for Funding** is open to all fields in the Palaeosciences and Archaeology and is not theme-driven.

**The African Origins Platform Open Call has 3 overarching objectives, namely:**

* To respond to the current skewed demographics by actively addressing issues of equity and redress in all aspects;
* To build multidisciplinary research that achieves international visibility, demonstrated research leadership and encourages mentorship and research capacity development;
* To support training and skills development programmes that promote economic empowerment, local job creation and the optimalisation of human capital;

This call document provides the framework for the three discrete funding categories earmarked for support by the DST interim funding strategy from 2013-2015:

* Support for **research** and associated **student bursaries**
* Support for **research equipment** under the rubric of the **National Paleontological Equipment Programme (NPEP)**
* Support for **technical skills**

**Key points to note:**

* Applicants have the opportunity to apply for funding support in all of these three funding categories. They may also apply to only one particular category, or two categories, as relevant.
* This is a competitive call; and each funding category application will be regarded as a stand-alone submission, which will be adjudicated independently of the others. **This means that successful appraisal in one funding category will not automatically guarantee success in the other two.**
* Applicants who request support in more than one funding category are therefore advised not to structure and submit proposals that are dependent on successful appraisal in another category.
* ***As an example:*** *If the research portion of the proposal is dependent on the acquisition of specific equipment, failure to succeed in the equipment category will automatically disqualify the research portion for support.*
* The awarded funds will be ring-fenced per the category, and may be used solely for the purposes detailed in the submitted application and final appraisal decision. The funds are thus not transferable to other activities.
* Student bursaries will be funded for the commensurate duration of support as commitments; and will be honored beyond the three year funding period as relevant.

**4. Funding Categories**

**4.1. Research Support and Student Bursaries**

**Key considerations of the research category**

* Human resource development and knowledge generation are the fundamental requirements of the AOP plan. For effective outputs, researcher networks are to be encouraged, in order to foster consortia type initiatives. Researchers are encouraged to form integrated groups nationally and to establish collaborative partnerships on the continent.
* Applicants to the research category will be required to outline a public awareness and outreach plan that extends beyond the scientific community.
* Applicants to the research category will be required to demonstrate local community participation and engagement in their research projects. Projects which do not articulate a clear and comprehensive plan for engaging communities will not be eligible for funding.

**4.2. Research funding categories**

There are two categories of research funding, namely: Advanced and Intermediate.

**4.2.1. Advanced category**

Advanced projects are for researchers who have been conducting research for at least 5 years and are working at an NRF recognized research institution.

Applicants must be South African citizens and the projects **must** demonstrate the following elements:

* Multi-institutional collaboration
* Interdisciplinary research involving areas currently not engaged with palaeoscience research projects
* Human resource development
* Where applicable, industry participation
* Capacity building for researcher succession
* Public engagement and awareness plan on the proposed research project.

**4.2.2. Intermediate category**

Intermediate projects are for recently qualified researchers in the field, with a minimum of a PhD qualification obtained in the past 3 years; and working at a recognized research institution.

These projects must demonstrate the following elements:

* Multi-institutional collaboration
* Interdisciplinary research involving areas currently not engaged with scientific research projects
* Human resource development
* Public engagement and awareness plan on the proposed research project

**Note: DST funding criterion:** Sixty percent (60%) of the funding will be allocated to Black researchers and sixty percent (60%) to female researchers.

**4.2.3. Early Career Research grants**

Applicants to the Advanced and Intermediate categories also have the opportunity to apply for Early Career Research grants, on behalf of early career researchers (ECR) whom they wish to mentor in an internship scenario.

The aim of these grants is to enable recently qualified graduates who are unemployed, but who wish to pursue a research career path in the palaeosciences, to develop their research experience; and thereby improve their chances of employment in the science and technology system. The grants are for research work for degree purposes, or for gaining research experience in their chosen field.

These grants are to be awarded to South African citizens, who express an interest in developing a research career in the Palaeosciences, by undertaking research and where applicable, teaching work in palaeosciences at host science councils, higher education institutions, heritage agencies and NRF recognized national facilities.

These grant awards are embedded within the Advanced and Intermediate categories and are **not** a stand-alone category of their own. This means that applicants to the Advanced and Intermediate categories can apply for an early career research grant as part of their application.

**4.2.3.1. Eligibility criteria for early career research grants:**

* Potential candidates must be South African citizens and graduates at Masters or PhD level.
* Potential candidates should have a demonstrated academic track record of high merit
* Potential candidates should be unemployed
* Potential candidates should be committed to developing a research career path in the palaeosciences or archaeology.

**4.2.3.2. Conditions of the grant**

* Applicants in the Advanced and Intermediate category can apply for early career research grants on behalf of the ECR candidate and this must be reflected in the budget requests.
* The grant cannot be held in conjunction with an NRF bursary.
* Potential candidates must be South African citizens with a minimum of a Master’s degree and use the grant towards a PhD degree; or at PhD level for a postdoctoral fellowship.
* Successful candidates will be required to demonstrate a scientific output (accredited journal article) at the completion of the grant period.

**Note: DST funding criterion:** Sixty percent (60%) of the funding will be allocated to Black students and sixty percent (60%) to female students.

**4.2.3.3. Structure of the grant**

The Early Career Grants are comprised of a stipend and research running costs as follows:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Level** | **Stipend allocation** | **Research costs** |
| PhD (3 years) | R100 000 per annum | R50 000 per annum |
| Postdoctoral fellow (2 years) | R125 000 per annum | R75 000 per annum |

* The stipend will be managed as a scholarship, which will be awarded to the nominated candidate. The Principal Investigator (PI) will nominate the ECR candidate on the NRF system against their Advanced or Intermediate project and then allocate the funds to the candidate.
* The research costs component will be ring-fenced for sole use by the candidate, but held by the PI, against their research grant.

**4.3. Who may apply for funding?**

* Full time employees at an NRF recognized research institution[[2]](#footnote-2) in South Africa.
* Part-time employees on contract at an NRF recognized research institution in South Africa, but on condition that the appointment is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for in the submission. The length of the contract should be stated in the application form. Salaries must be paid by the research institution and the primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution. A contract researcher appointed at a university, university of technology or research institute/council on behalf of a third party to fulfill a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support.
* Retired researchers provided that:
  + There must be demonstration of institutional support in the form of an employment contract, office space, administrative support, access to research equipment and space.
  + The researcher must have a good past and current track record in the successful training of research students; and especially women and black students.
  + The institution ensures that a minimum of reasonable time is spent at the facility for the purpose of research and research capacity development.

**4.4 Rules of Participation**

***Principal Investigators:***

The principal investigator (i.e. the applicant) must be an active researcher who takes intellectual responsibility for the project, its conception, any strategic decisions called for in its pursuit, and the communication of results. The principal investigator must have the capacity to make a serious commitment to the project and cannot assume the role of a supplier of resources for work that will largely be placed in the hands of others. He/she will also take responsibility for the management and administration of resources allocated to the proposal. The principle investigator is responsible for compliance with NRF reporting requirements.

A principal investigator should not submit a research proposal on behalf of a student where the student in the main will be carrying out the research

***Co-Investigators:***

A co-investigator is an active researcher who provides significant commitment, intellectual input and the relevant expertise into the design of the research proposal and will be involved in all or at least some well-defined research activities within the scope of the proposal. Please note that:

Co-investigators who are employed as permanent/contract research staff members at recognized research institutions in South Africa may receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

Post-doctoral fellows, students and technical and support staff should **NOT** be listed as co-investigators.

***Research Associates / Collaborators:***

These are individuals or groups who are anticipated to make a relatively small butmeaningful contribution to the research endeavors outlined in the proposal, but who havenot actively participated in the design. Depending on their contribution, they may or maynot require funding requested within the proposal. These can include, for example,researchers nationally and internationally in higher education institutions, museums, NGOs,industry, and science councils who may provide for example, samples or specific technicaladvice/input.

**4.5. What can be funded?**

4.5.1 Grant holder linked student support

Applicants applying to the AOP Open Call for Funding for 2013 are invited to apply for an appropriate number of grant holder-linked student bursaries. The following levels of study qualify for support at the set values:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **LEVEL** | **VALUE OF SUPPORT**  **(per annum)** | **MAXIMUM PERIOD OF SUPPORT** |
| Honours (full time) | R 25 000 | 1 Year |
| Masters (full time) | R 40 000 | 2 Years |
| PhD (full time) | R 65 000 | 3 Years |
| Postdoctoral | R 110 000 | 2 Years |

* Bursaries will be activated once the students are registered at the institution and nominated using the standard NRF nomination process
* 90% of bursaries are reserved for South African Citizens only and 10% for foreign students. Postdoctoral fellows can be of any nationality.
* Student bursary and fellowship commitments beyond the 12 month funding period will be carried as commitments by the funding programme.

**4.5.2 Research-related operating costs**

These costs include: materials and supplies, national and international travel (including conferences) and subsistence, equipment to the value of 50 000 and research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance. Sabbaticals to other research organizations and institutions of higher learning may be included within the context of the project proposals.

These costs should be justified and commensurate with the planned outputs, as they will be assessed on the criteria provided in the framework/guide.

**4.5.2.1. Materials and Supplies**

Generally, the NRF **does not** provide financial support for:

* Basic office equipment including computers and consumables unless the computer is required for the research itself or the applicant/team member is based at a museum.
* Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools or the applicant/team member is based at a museum.
* Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs, book costs unless the applicant/team member is based at a museum.
* Telephone, fax and internet costs unless the applicant/team member is based at a museum.

**4.5.2.2. Travel and Subsistence**

**International conference attendance:**

Generally the NRF restricts this amount to R50 000 per application per year for a team proposal i.e. for principal investigators, co-investigators (local only) and local post-graduate students. This amount may be reduced proportionately if there is no team member and/or post-graduate student involvement.

**International visits:**

These will be considered on a case by case basis. Such visits must be integral to the research plan and strong motivations should accompany these requests. Realistic funding allocations will be based on the requested activities. Both incoming and outgoing visits will be considered depending on the availability of funding.

**Local conference attendance:**

Generally the NRF restricts expenditure against this item to R5 000 per person (all costs). Support for local conference attendance could be requested for all listed co-investigators and postgraduate students. The applicant should detail the benefits of attending more than one local conference per annum if so requested

**Local travel:**

The NRF does not stipulate any rate for mileage as this will depend on the research institutions’ rate which varies per institution. Applicants are requested to provide details of this rate as well as the estimated distance to be travelled within the given year.

Local accommodation costs should not exceed a three-star rating establishment, per night per person.

**4.5.2.3. Research / Ad hoc Assistants:**

Requests for research/*ad hoc* assistance should be treated with caution. Generally the NRF would encourage applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research assistants. This guideline however does not apply when specific and/or highly specialized research/technical expertise is required. This should be **CLEARLY** motivated for in the proposal.

**Please note: Administrative assistance does not qualify as technical assistance.**

**4.5.2.4. Staff development grants**

Applicants may apply for Staff Development grants for South African staff members at recognised institutions, who are not grant-holders in their own right, at their own or other institutions. These staff members **must be** registered for Masters or Doctoral degrees and supervised by the grant-holder or a team member. They must be directly involved in the NRF approved project.

These grants can be used to contribute towards the operating costs for research undertaken at the supervisor's facility, as well as the cost of travel and accommodation to enable staff members to meet with (co)/supervisors. These grants are awarded to a maximum of

**R30 000**, depending on the nature of the research and the proximity of the student in relation to the supervisor. Grant-holders themselves are **not** eligible for staff development grants. The maximum period of support is three years for a Master’s degree and up to five years for a Doctorate from a valid grant.

**4.5.2.5. Funding to cater for disabilities**

Additional funding support to cater for disability will only be allocated to people with disabilities as specified in the Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities as in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998.

**5. Assessment process**

# 5.1. Assessment of Proposals

All proposals will be assessed in **a two–tiered process:**

* **A postal peer-review process:** where proposals will be sent to six reviewers with the intention of receiving at least three review reports per proposal. The postal peer reviewers will be specialists within the ambit of the respective proposals. These reviewers will be requested to provide a narrative assessment of the proposal, as well as the scorecard.
* **A panel assessment process:** where the specialist reviewers’ recommendations will be considered. The panel will consider the peer review reports and scorecards and will then come to a collective agreement on the final scores. To do this, they may provide motivations for shifts in the raw ranking on the scorecards that may differ from the views of the specialist reviewers. The panel will also be requested to make funding recommendations to the NRF.

The postal peer reviewers and panel members will assess the proposals and make recommendations to the NRF using the following criteria:

**5.2. Panel Assessment Scorecard**

A constituted review panel will be tasked to assess and adjudicate proposal submissions using the criteria and scoring system below:

**5.2.1. Advanced category assessment scorecard**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals** | | | | | |
| **AOP Advanced category** | | | | | |
| **Criteria** | **Sub-Criteria** | **Details** | **Score / 4** | **Weighted (Total = 100%)** | **Weighted score (Total = 4)** |
| **Track record of applicant** | Applicant - Advanced | Has PhD and > 5 years of research track record | Yes/No | 0% | Hurdle |
| Past students (graduated) See applicant's CV | Postgraduate degrees |  | 3% | 0.00 |
| Past research outputs See applicant's CV | Research outputs |  | 3% | 0.00 |
| **Proposal** | Alignment with programme | Does the proposal address scientific & scholarly research/ enquiry in the Palaeosciences? | Yes / No | **0%** | **Hurdle** |
| Ethical Research | If relevant, have ethical considerations been addressed? [i] | Yes / No | **0%** | **Hurdle** |
| Scientific merit | **Reflect on:** • The scientific/scholarly objectives, are these interdisciplinary? (10%) • Are the approach and methods suitable to the research objectives? (10%)  • Has knowledge of relevant literature been articulated? (10%) |  | **30%** | **0.00** |
| Feasibility | Is the research well-planned and achievable within the stipulated timeframe? |  | 5% | 0.00 |
| **Equity and redress** | Of applicant | “Young” is defined as five years after the first academic and/ or professional appointment (please refer to Equity Scoring) |  | 2% | 0.00 |
| Has the applicant declared that they are differently able? If so, score =4, regardless of race or gender. | 0.00 |
| Of students supervised | Race and gender of M and D students trained. (Criterion not necessarily for young researchers) |  | 2% | 0.00 |
| **Collaboration** | Rate the collaborative approach adopted for this project. | This will include collaborations at national, continental and international level: Is there multi-institutional collaboration? Is there industry participation (if applicable)? |  | 12% | 0.00 |
| Is the nature of the collaboration clearly articulated *iro* the roles of the collaborators? | 0.00 |
| **Impacts** | Expected research outputs | Scientific products, e.g., publications, patents, etc. as relevant in each case. |  | 5% | 0.00 |
| Impact on knowledge production/field | How does the research advance discovery and understanding in the field/s? |  | 8% | 0.00 |
| Public awareness and community participation | Evaluate the public awareness plan outlined in the proposal. Is there evidence of local community or general public participation outside of the scientific community? |  | 10% | 0.00 |
| Human research capacity development | Reflect generally on the potential for human capacity development in the project: And specifically evaluate whether.  • Students are appropriately embedded in the research proposal?  • The proposed research will further the academic development of junior researchers? |  | 20% | 0.00 |
| **Totals** | | | | **100%** | **0.00** |

*[i] Ethical considerations and clearances for grant proposals are the responsibility of the research institute and/or institution of the applicant. Where such ethical considerations and clearances are required, grant applicants will be required to submit signed statements and/or copies of clearance certificates to the NRF, before any grant funds are released.*

**5.2.2. Intermediate category assessment scorecard**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **AOP Intermediate category** | | | | | |
| **Criteria** | **Sub-Criteria** | **Details** | **Score / 4** | **Weight (Total = 100%)** | **Weighted score (Total = 4)** |
| **Track record of applicant** | Applicant - Intermediate | Has PhD obtained in past three years? | Yes/No | 0% | Hurdle |
| Past research outputs See applicant's CV | Research outputs |  | 3% | 0.00 |
| **Proposal** | Alignment with programme | Does the proposal address scientific & scholarly research/ enquiry in the Palaeosciences? | Yes/No | 0% | **Hurdle** |
| Ethical Research | If relevant, have ethical considerations been addressed? [i] | Yes/No | 0% | **Hurdle** |
| Scientific merit | **Reflect on:** • The scientific/scholarly objectives, are these interdisciplinary? (5%)  • Are the approach and methods suitable to the research objectives? (10%)  • Has knowledge of relevant literature been articulated? (10%) |  | 25% |  |
| Feasibility | Is the research well-planned and achievable within the stipulated timeframe? |  | 10% | 0.00 |
| **Equity and redress** | Of applicant | “Young” is defined as five years after the first academic and/ or professional appointment (please refer to Equity Scoring) |  | 2% | 0.00 |
| Has the applicant declared that they are differently able? If so, score =4, regardless of race or gender. | 0.00 |
| **Collaboration** | Rate the collaborative approach adopted for this project. | This will include collaborations at national, continental and international level: Is there multi-institutional collaboration? Is there industry participation (if applicable)? |  | 20% | 0.00 |
| Is the nature of the collaboration clearly articulated *iro* the roles of the collaborators? | 0.00 |
| **Impacts** | Expected research outputs | Scientific products, e.g., publications, patents, etc. as relevant in each case. |  | 10% | 0.00 |
| Impact on knowledge production/field | How does the research advance discovery and understanding in the field/s? |  | 10% | 0.00 |
| Public awareness and community participation | Evaluate the public awareness plan outlined in the proposal. Is there evidence of community participation? |  | 10% | 0.00 |
| Human research capacity development | Reflect generally on the potential for human capacity development in the project: And specifically evaluate whether.  • Students are appropriately embedded in the research proposal? |  | 10% | 0.00 |
| **Totals** | | | | **100%** | **0.00** |

*[i] Ethical considerations and clearances for grant proposals are the responsibility of the research institute and/or institution of the applicant. Where such ethical considerations and clearances are required, grant applicants will be required to submit signed statements and/or copies of clearance certificates to the NRF, before any grant funds are released.*

**5.3. PROPOSAL GRADING**

Each criterion (where applicable) is gradedon a sliding scale of 1-4 where 1= Poor and 4 = Excellent. If the criterion is not applicable to a proposal, the weighting of the criterion will equal zero. The score of each criterion for each proposal will be contextualized to accommodate variability in knowledge fields, institutional capacity, etc.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Score** | **Meaning of score** | **Notes** |
| 4 | Excellent | Application demonstrates evidence of outstanding performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration |
| 3 | Above average | Above average performance across all criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration |
| 2 | Average | Application demonstrates average performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration |
| 1 | Below average | Below average performance across all the criteria, as determined by panel and relative to knowledge field |
| 0 | Poor | There are major shortcomings or flaws within and across the stated criteria, with **particular emphasis** on the scientific/scholarly merit |

**5.4. Equity grading scale**

The scoring for the criterion of equity and redress of applicant is as follows:

|  |
| --- |
| **EQUITY AND REDRESS SCORE** |
| Black female= 4 (including young as defined above) |
| Black male, young = 3.5 |
| Black male, not young = 3 |
| White female, young = 2.5 |
| White female, not young = 2 |
| White male, young = 1.5 |
| White male, not young = 1 |

**6. FUNDING-DECISION PROCESS**

In general, the NRF’s funding decisions are informed by the review panels’ accumulative grading of each assessed application as per the above assessment criteria. The final funding decisions and level of funding are subject to the budget available to the specific programme.

**7. HOW TO APPLY?**

All applications must be submitted via the NRF’s Submission System <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. The application system for research project submissions will open on 11 June 2012

Please select the **AOP Call** under **Create New Application**. The NRF closing date for validated applications is **31 July 2012.** All applications must be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant. Incomplete and/or late submissions will not be accepted by the NRF. It is anticipated that the process will be finalized by **October 2012.**

**The NRF closing date for validated applications is 31 July 2012. Institutions must set their own internal closing date for DAs to validate applications before the closing date.**

**8. National Palaeosciences Equipment Programme (NPEP)**

**Background**

In line with its constitutional mandate as the custodian of innovation, the Department of Science and Technology (DST), seeks to ensure that South African researchers have access to modern and relevant research infrastructure that ensures their competitiveness in the global arena; and, maximizes return on investments in research and innovation, such as the development of new products, technologies and services.

The National Palaeosciences Equipment Programme (NPEP) is an initiative designed to ensure the establishment of world-class research infrastructure in the National System of Innovation (NSI). It enables researchers to perform cutting edge research, through the development of much needed advanced technology infrastructure. This programme also contributes to the advancement of human capital development and the promotion of national and international research collaboration in the palaeosciences.

**8.1. Objectives**

The key objectives of this initiative are to:

* Support the acquisition or upgrade of state-of-the-art research equipment to enable national research institutions to undertake world class research,
* Provide infrastructure for human capital and skills development, mainly post-graduate student training and technical staff development,
* To build human resource capacity and infrastructure capacity in the areas of paleontology, paleoanthropology, archaeology, genomics and related disciplines
* Make provision for the development of technologically advanced research with far-reaching scientific effects
* Assist in creating a long-term planning culture around research equipment,
* Promote the development of research collaboration through the placement of research equipment,
* Support and promote institutional, national and regional research priorities in the palaeosciences
* To promote regional, national and international research collaborations in palaeosciences and
* To support the creation of new and novel devices for the application of palaeoscience research

In addition to ensuring the realization of the aforementioned strategic objectives, this initiative will also be used to address historical imbalances of research equipment acquisition and placement, in terms of race, historical background and geographic distribution. It is in light of this that the following criteria have been developed, against which the proposed projects will be assessed.

**8.2. Criteria for assessment**

The project proposal should demonstrate **ALL** of the following:

**Human Capital Development**.

As human capital development is one of the key drivers of the acquisition of research equipment, the application should demonstrate how the project/programme will drive human capital development, skills training, equity and transformation.

**Multi-Disciplinary Palaeosciences Research.**

The applicant/s must demonstrate how the project will straddle various research disciplines.

**Research Consortia.**

Research should be conducted by a consortium of Higher Education Institutions, Research Institutes and international collaboration

**8.3 Eligibility criteria**

**You are eligible to apply to the NPEP if you are currently employed at a:**

* South African Higher Education Institution
* National Research Laboratory, such as Science Councils, Government-funded research laboratories and National Facilities
* Museum and
* Other national research institutes

***Panel Assessment Scorecard***

A constituted review panel will be tasked to assess all the NPEP proposal submissions using the criteria and scoring system below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Detail** | **Score** |
| Track record of applicant | Reflect on the past research and student training record | **/10** |
| Equity and redress | Of applicant, and geographical location, institutional location, and equity of students/staff supervised | **/10** |
| Motivation for new equipment and infrastructure | Is the argument convincing with adequate justification? | **/20** |
| Human capital development | How well has the applicant demonstrated what the effect of the equipment/infrastructure acquisition will be on human capacity development in terms of: skills transfer, equity considerations, student training and transformation of the knowledge field(s) in general? | **/20** |
| Scientific merit | Does the proposal demonstrate evidence of multi-disciplinary scientific endeavour in the Palaeosciences? | **/10** |
| Collaboration | Has the applicant articulated the appropriateness and relevance of collaboration in the proposal?  Has the applicant previously engaged in research collaborations which involve other research areas? | **/10** |
| Project Plan and budget | Comment on and assess the proposed project plan and the associated budget?  Is the budget commensurate with the project plan? | **/10** |
| Impacts | Comment on and evaluate the expected outputs as expressed in the proposal in terms of:  - the research outputs  - capacity development  - impact on the field and broader society. | **/10** |
|  |  | **TOTAL SCORE: /100** |

**HOW TO APPLY?**

All applications must be submitted via the NRF’s Submission System <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. The application system for research project submissions will open on **11 June 2012.**

Please select the **AOP Call** under **Create New Application.** Choose the template for **NPEP.** Applicants must also submit three quotations if possible for the equipment items.

The NRF closing date for validated applications is **31 July 2012**. All applications must be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant. Incomplete and/or late submissions will not be accepted by the NRF. It is anticipated that the process will be finalised by **October 2012.**

**The NRF closing date for validated applications is 31 July 2012. Institutions must set their own internal closing date for DAs to validate applications before the closing date.**

**9. TECHNICAL SKILLS FUNDING**

**Background**

In line with its constitutional mandate as custodian of innovation, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) seeks to ensure that South African researchers have access to the required technical skills and support in the Palaeosciences that ensures their competitiveness in the global arena; and maximizes return on investments in research and innovation, such as the development of new products, technologies and services. It is in support of this that the **Technical Skills** funding opportunity of the African Origins Platform Open Call for Funding for 2013offers funding that is expressly aimed at supporting technical personnel (excavators and casting technicians) at South African research institutions.

**9.1. Definition**

In recognition of the need for funding technical skills and support in the Palaeosciences, the DST has made additional funding available. This is a competitive call in response to the human capacity constraints highlighted by the Archaeology and Paleontology research community. The call is expressly aimed at supporting technical personnel (excavators and casting technicians) at South African research institutions.

**9.2. Objectives**

The available funds will be ring-fenced, and may be used expressly and solely for the purpose of supporting excavators and casting technicians. The funds are not transferable to other activities. These funds are strictly for newly supported technical staff, and may not be used as top-ups for technical staff supported by way of previous funding vehicles in the AOP programme.

**9.3. Criteria**

**Timeframe - 2013-2015**

Applicants will quantify their technical skill requirements in terms of the numbers of excavators, preparators and casting technicians required by their institutions.

Applicants will prepare a commensurate budget according to the following values set per technical position:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **POSITION** | **VALUE OF SUPPORT**  **(per annum)** | **MAXIMUM PERIOD OF SUPPORT** |
| Excavators | R 80 000 | 12 months |
| Preparators | R 80 000 | 12 months |
| Casting Technicians | R 60 000 | 12 months |

Applicants will provide a **detailed justification** for each excavator and/or casting technician and how they are embedded in existing research or proposed research. The justification must detail what impact their contribution has on research and human capacity within the research project.

**9.4. Panel Assessment Scorecard**

A constituted review panel will be tasked to assess all the Technical Skills proposal submissions using the criteria and scoring system below:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Criterion** | **Detail** | **Score** |
| Track record of applicant | Reflect on the past research and student training record, as well as the supervision of technical personnel | **/10** |
| Equity and redress | Of applicant, and geographical location, institutional location, and equity of students/staff supervised | **/10** |
| Motivation and justification for the excavator/casting technician | Is the argument for technical personnel convincing with adequate justification? | **/40** |
| Evidence that the excavator/preparator is embedded within an existing research project or will be embedded within a new research project | How well has the applicant articulated and demonstrated that the technical personnel will be integral to the research and a necessary component in ongoing activities? | **/20** |
| Impacts | Comment on and evaluate the expected contribution the technical personnel will have on research and human capacity within the research project, as expressed in the application. | **/20** |
|  |  | **TOTAL SCORE: /100** |

**9.5. HOW TO APPLY?**

All applications must be submitted via the NRF’s Submission System<https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za>. The application system for research project submissions will open on **11 June 2012.**

Please select the **AOP Call** under **Create New Application.** Choose the template for NPEP. Applicants must also submit three quotations if possible for the equipment items.

The NRF closing date for validated applications is **31 July 2012.** All applications must be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant. Incomplete and/or late submissions will not be accepted by the NRF. It is anticipated that the process will be finalized by **October 2012.**

**The NRF closing date for validated applications is 31 July 2012. Institutions must set their own internal closing date for DAs to validate applications before the closing date.**

**10. FINANCIAL CONTROL & REPORTING**

These grants are to be used for research purposes under the auspices of the NRF standard grant and finance policies. The money is released on acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her employing institution. The funds will be awarded against a number of items such as equipment, running costs, travel costs, student bursaries, etc. Bursaries are awarded as per the NRF rules. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

Annual Progress Reports are to be submitted before the end of March of the following year, as a prerequisite for the release of the subsequent year’s funding. Failure to submit the Annual Progress Reports will result in the cancellation of the project.

1. Source: Technical Skills Call Guide 2010 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Recognized research institution, if not a publicly funded institution of higher learning or science council will normally have gone through the NRF process for recognition and is one that meets all the following minimum requirements:

   o any institution that conducts basic or applied research,

   o of a pre-competitive nature,

   o for the benefit of the long-term knowledge base,

   o whilst being committed to human resource capacity development, including a commitment to equity and redress [↑](#footnote-ref-2)