Community Engagement Programme

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The *White Paper on Higher Education* (1997)[1] sets out the agenda for the transformation of Higher Education from the segregated, inequitable and highly inefficient apartheid institutions towards a single national system that serves both individual and collective needs. In line with international practice, The White Paper casts community engagement as one of the pillars of the higher education system, along with teaching and learning, and research.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) recognises that the generation of knowledge and advancement of science[2], as well as the development of human capacity, are central activities in the pursuit of its mandate to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all people in South Africa. Historically the NRF has provided limited support to researchers in order to facilitate the dissemination and transfer of knowledge. Some instruments are generic, however the Community Engagement Programme constitutes an important input into the modern knowledge-based economy. The NRF has not however, supported a programme or dedicated an instrument of funding for community engagement which would specifically address the need for a deeper understanding of the interplay of processes and relationships involved in the transfers of knowledge and innovations; or the ways in which new knowledge is generated through interaction with communities.

The Community Engagement programme has thus been established to support research and activities aimed at improving our understanding of the full spectrum of community engagement and the suite of activities that this implies. This may for the purposes of this call, include *inter alia*: negotiating the terrain of knowledge production as a site of multiple processes and relations, interrogating the ways in which tacit knowledge is surfaced in the complex process of community engagement; and assessing the impact for, and changes in communities as a result of newly coded knowledge.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Along with teaching and learning, and research, community engagement is cast as one of the pillars of the South African Higher Education system. The transformative *White Paper on Higher Education* has called upon universities to "demonstrate social responsibility … and their commitment to the common good by making available expertise and infrastructure for community service programmes". A key objective is to "promote and develop social responsibility and awareness amongst students of the role of higher education in social and economic development through community engagement".

Concomitantly, the Higher Education Act (1997) gave rise to the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) of the Council on Higher Education (CHE) whose responsibilities include quality promotion, institutional audits and programme accreditation. The HEQC has identified "knowledge based community service" as a basis for programme accreditation and quality assurance. This aspect of the HEQC policy has been operationalized by requiring that as part of the first round of institutional audits, institutions must report against the specific criteria for community engagement.

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[1] South Africa. 1997. White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education. Notice 1196 of 1997. *Government Gazette*, 386(18207)1:55, August 15.

[2] This framework adopts an inclusive definition of science and scholarly endeavour, encompassing the humanities, social sciences and the natural sciences

Other key initiatives aimed at articulating the role of community engagement in knowledge production, utilization and human capacity development have included the University of Fort Hare conference, *Community Engagement: The Changing Role of South African Universities in Development*, in November 2011[3]; the CHE *Symposium on Community Engagement* in March 2009[4]; the NRF and CHE co-hosted workshop, namely, *Research on Community Engagement*, in August 2008[5], and the CHE-HEQC, JET Education and Community-Higher Education Service Partnerships (CHESP) conference *Community Engagement in Higher Education*, in September 2006[6].

The NRF released its *NRF Vision 2015*[7] strategic plan in 2008. The plan has been expected to guide the organisation over the seven years. A marked feature of this redefined strategy is the shift from a *demand-driven* to balanced *strategy–push* and *demand-driven agency.* The Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) business division of the NRF has thus identified a number of strategic investment areas. One of these areas is community engagement. The decision to initiate investment in this area signals the commitment of the NRF to align more closely with the higher education mandate of research, teaching and community service/engagement; and also to contribute towards the Human and Social Dynamics Grand challenge. As one of the grand challenges identified by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) in its *Ten Year Innovation Plan[8], the Human and Social Dynamics Grand Challenge* is intended to address an array of social, economic, political, scientific and technological benefits.

Under the rubric of the Human and Social Dynamics Grand Challenge; and as a corollary to the Community Engagement Programme, the DST initiated the Community University Partnerships Programme in 2010. It is a three year pilot programme involving 4 rural-based institutions and it is designed to facilitate community-based assessments that will promote partnerships between Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) and communities, as an effective vehicle for solving problems and facilitating development.

As a complementary path of enquiry, the NRF also entered into a Memorandum of Agreement with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) in 2009, to undertake a study on "***Investigating the Contribution of University-Community-Based Interaction to Building a National System of Innovation***". This study focused on the nature of university responsiveness to communities in the new global context and interrogated how a sample of universities and disciplinary fields conceptualise social responsiveness in practice. The study also investigated the diverse forms of community interaction, in terms of their knowledge intensity, outcomes and beneficiaries. The findings of this study have strengthened, nuanced and refined the community engagement programme as it continues to evolve as an instrument of funding.

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[3] University of Fort Hare Conference on Community Engagement: The Changing Role of South African Universities in Development, 8 – 10 November 2011, East London

[4] Council for Higher Education. 2009. CHE Symposium on Community Engagement. 19 March 2009, Pretoria

[5] Council for Higher Education & National Research Foundation. 2008. CHE/NRF Workshop in Community Engagement. 22 August 2008, Pretoria

[6] CHE-HEQC/JET-CHESP Conference on Community Engagement in Higher Education. 3 – 5 September 2006. Cape Town

[7] National Research Foundation.2008. *NRF Vision 2015.* Pretoria. NRF.

[8] South Africa. Department of Science and Technology. 2007. *Innovation towards a knowledge-based economy: Ten-Year Innovation Plan for South Africa, 2008-2018.* Pretoria: Department of Science and Technology

3. PROGRAMME TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

The Community Engagement Programme is a competitive programme, which provides the space for research that contributes both to knowledge production within the ambit of community engagement (here community is defined in its broadest sense); as well as research on the processes and dynamics of engagement from the perspective of the higher education sector. To further elaborate, the programme is aimed at supporting and providing the enabling conditions for higher education institutions to come to grips with some of the philosophical and conceptual challenges associated with the dynamics of community engagement and social responsiveness, as a field of research enquiry.

Key features of the programme:

- Research which contributes to deeper theoretical, philosophical and conceptual orientations of community engagement from a higher education perspective;

- Research which interrogates the complex interplay and processes of engagement; that is, the various ways in which knowledge is produced, assimilated and utilized through interactions and relationships with communities;

- Case studies, typologies, appreciative inquiry about community engagement and community assessments.

Key assumptions underpinning the programme:

- The conception, definition or meaning ascribed to the notion of "community" is not universal or pre-determined in the programme; it may be the focus of the project; and will depend on how each project defines it.

- An exploration of community engagement implies that communities (however defined) have roles and agency in a reciprocal set of relations.

4. OBJECTIVES

- To sharpen and mainstream the higher education sector's response to community engagement as a third pillar of academic activity (Hall: 2009).[9]

- To facilitate the development of robust theoretical and conceptual positions on community engagement in the South African context; and thereby stimulate and contribute to contemporary debates on the issue.

- To create new forms of knowledge in this area.

- To develop human capacity in "field" of community engagement.

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[9] Hall, M (2009) Community Engagement in South African Higher Education. Paper presented at the CHE Symposium on Community Engagement, 19 March 2009, Pretoria.

5. MODUS OPERANDI

5.1. WHO MAY APPLY FOR FUNDING?

■ Full time employees at a publicly funded academic and or research institution in South Africa.

■ Part-time employees on contract at a publicly funded academic or 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 or stipends 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.

■ Rated and unrated researchers are eligible to submit applications. **Successful applicants will be eligible for initial funding for up to three years.** Any extension beyond the three years will be dependent on the outputs in research and research capacity development such as graduated students, published papers, other recognized outputs and available budget. Candidates, who wish to apply for any new project funding, will have to submit a new proposal.

■ 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.

5.2. RULES OF PARTICIPATION

■ The principal investigator (i.e. the applicant) must be an active researcher or community engagement practitioner 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.

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

The research team may also include:

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 but meaningful contribution to the research endeavours outlined in the proposal, but who have not actively participated in the design. **Depending on their contribution, they may or may not 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 technical advice/input.

5.3. WHAT CAN BE FUNDED?

5.3.1. GRANT HOLDER-LINKED STUDENT SUPPORT

The distribution for these bursaries is targeted at the ratio:
- Final year Undergraduate and Honours/BTech student assistantships:100% SA citizens with a minimum ratio[10] of 1:1 for Black[11] and White participants
- Masters bursaries: 90% to South Africans and 10% to candidates from other African countries
- Doctoral bursaries: 80:15:5, SA: Other African: Rest of the World
- Postdoctoral bursaries: Open to all who undertake research in South Africa.

Values of Student Assistantships
- Final year undergraduate (Full-time) **R8 000 pa**
- Honours / BTech (Full-time) **R20 000 pa**

Values of Bursaries & Fellowships
- Masters degree (Full-time) **R40 000 pa**
- Masters degree (Part-time) **R10 000 pa**
- Doctoral degree (Full-time) **R60 000 pa**
- Doctoral degree (Part-time) **R12 000 pa**
- Postdoctoral (*pro rata* per month) **R80 000 pa**

5.3.2. RESEARCH-RELATED OPERATING COSTS

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[10] With the emphasis on Black students

[11] The classification "Black" is a generic term which refers to all individuals previously disadvantaged by the pre-1994 dispensation

These costs include materials and supplies, travel (including conferences) and subsistence, equipment and research/technical/*ad hoc* assistance and sabbaticals to other research organizations and institutions of higher learning may be included within the context of the project proposals, student top-ups. These costs should be justified and commensurate with the planned outputs, as they will be assessed on the criteria provided in the framework/guide. The amount awarded within this framework **can be used at the discretion of the applicant**.

General guidelines

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.

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 R4000 per person (all costs). Support for local conference attendance could be requested for all listed co-investigators and post-graduate students. The applicant should motivate for:
  - the benefits to attend more than one local conference per annum if so requested
  - the number of people that should be funded to attend local conferences.

- **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 equivalent.

Research / Technical / *Ad hoc* Assistants
- The NRF **does not pay for any salaries** or buy-out time for lecturing staff
- Requests for research/technical/*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 consultants. 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.

■ **Administrative assistance / or research assistance DOES NOT qualify as technical assistance.**

Community Engagement Programme Specific Guidelines

It is acknowledged that community engagement research may require specific types of funding to support research in certain settings or projects. Applicants are advised to provide a clear rationale and justification for this type of expenditure in relation to the proposal and workplan activities. It is incumbent on the applicant to provide commensurate line items in the budget request. Examples include *inter alia*: payment for translators in the field, providing transport to fieldworkers etc. In each case, a clear motivation should be provided, which links to the objectives of the proposal.

5.3.3. STAFF DEVELOPMENT GRANTS

Grant-holders may apply for Staff Development grants for South African staff members at their own and other institutions, who are not grant-holders in their own right. These staff members must be registered for Masters or Doctoral degrees, supervised by the grant-holder or a team member and 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. Grants usually range between R15 000 and 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 Masters degree and five years for a Doctoral degree.

5.3.4. 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.

5.4. WHERE TO APPLY?

The application system for research proposal submissions will open on **24 August 2012.**

STEP 1:
■ All applicants are required to update their CV's on the **NRFsubmission system** at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za .
■ This will enable reviewers to assess track record as part of the criteria of scoring the application.

STEP 2:
■ All proposal applications must be submitted via the **NRF's Submission system** at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za .

- Please select the **Community Engagement Programme** under "My Applications" and to "Create New Application".

- The **NRF closing date** for endorsed applications is **28 September 2012.** All applications **must** be endorsed by the research office of the principal applicant before submission to the NRF. It is the responsibility of each applicant to familiarise themselves with the internal closing date set by their institution in order to meet the NRF closing date. Incomplete OR late submissions will not be accepted.

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6. 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.

Annual Progress Reports, submitted before the end of March of the following year, are 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. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

7. ASSESSMENT AND DECISION-MAKING PROCEDURES

7.1. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

As a standard operating procedure, proposals will be assessed in **a two–tiered process[12]:**

- A **postal peer-review process** where proposals will be sent to six reviewers with the intention to receive three review reports per proposal. The postal peer reviewers will be specialists within the ambit of the respective proposals and they will be requested to provide a narrative assessment of the application against the criteria stated in the details section of the scorecard.

- A **panel process** where the panel will consider the specialist reviewers' assessments and shall provide the score for each criterion. Each proposal will be scored against the scorecard as set out below. The panel will also be asked to make funding recommendations to the NRF.

The postal peer reviewers (narrative assessment) and panel members (score) will assess the proposals and make recommendations to the NRF using the following criteria:

NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals
Community Engagement Programme

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[12] Should a specific situation arise warranting a change in assessment procedure for the given call, all applicants will be informed through their institutions

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Details	Score / 4	Weight (Total = 100%)	Weighted score (Total = 4)
Track record of applicant	Past research (general)	Publications, designs, performances etc		10	0.00
	Prior experience in community engagement research	■ Scholarship that involves the applicant in a relationship with a community (*). ■ Extent of demonstrated experience in community-based research, or community-based learning, or community service.		5	0.00
Proposal	Quality of the proposal	■ How has the concept of community been articulated/defined/problematised in the proposal? ■ Does the proposal address the conditions for knowledge generation/ or research into the processes of engagement in communities? ■ Reflect on the proposed methodological avenues that the applicant wants to explore		25	0.00
	Feasibility of the proposal	■ Does the proposal meet the objectives of the programme and contribute to the field of community engagement? ■ Is the proposal feasible in terms of the stated work-plan, implementation strategies and methods?		25	
Collaboration (if relevant)	With other individuals/institutions/ organisations	■ Is the rationale for the collaboration clear, justified and appropriate? ■ Are the roles of the collaborators clearly indicated in the proposal? ■ Is there evidence to suggest that the community has been consulted, in terms of the content/preparation of the proposal?		8	0.00
	Within a team	Are the roles of these team members clearly indicated in the proposal **if this criterion is required?**		2	0.00
Impacts	Expected research outputs	■ Products e.g. publications, performances, programmes etc ■ How would the expected outputs contribute towards the advancement of Community Engagement research?		5	0.00
	Impact on field	New perspectives and/or understanding of field		15	0.00
Other	Ethical research	If relevant, have ethical considerations been addressed?[13]		5	0.00
			Totals	**100%**	**0.00**

(*) Community as defined by the proposal in each instance.

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[13] 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 expected to submit to the NRF signed statements and/or copies of clearance certificates **before** any grants funds are released. Proposals need to reflect the ethical considerations up front as this is a criterion of assessment.

7.2. PROPOSAL GRADING

Each criterion (where applicable) is graded on 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 contextualised 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 knowledge field
3	Above average	Above average performance across all criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to knowledge field
2	Average	Application demonstrates average performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to knowledge field
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

7.3. 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.

8. FEEDBACK AND APPEALS

In principle, feedback on the assessment of the proposal is regarded as a crucial value-adding function of the NRF. In a limited number of cases, feedback from either the reviewers and/or panel members who evaluated your proposal will be sent. These selected comments will be provided to give insight into some of the peer thinking that informed the grant decision-making process, and to give constructive support to applicants. In general, no feedback will be sent where the assessment was positive unless specific conditions are attached to the funding. All appeals must be processed via the relevant research office according to the NRF's requirements.