

## Scarce Skills Development Fund Postdoctoral Fellowships Call for 2016

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) commits grant funds from the National Skills Fund (NSF) towards the Scarce Skills Development Fund Programme (SSDF). The management of the SSDF programme is performed in accordance with the memorandum of agreement (MoA) between the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the DHET. The South African government passed the Skills Development Act (Act no. 97 of 1998), which provides a framework for addressing the severe shortage of skills. The legislation provides guidelines on how to increase the overall level of skills in the country and to improve access to quality learning, especially for the previously disadvantaged sectors of the population. The NRF was tasked with management of a postgraduate student funding, the Scarce Skills Development Fund (SSDF). The SSDF supports students at the Honours, Masters and Doctoral levels and, Postdoctoral Research Fellows.

The Scarce Skills Development Fund Postdoctoral Fellowships supports fellows at South African higher education institutions (HEI's) and science councils. The objectives of the Funding Instrument are:

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

### 1. Areas of Support

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

- **Management:**  
Financial Management

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

## 2. Eligibility

The following eligibility criteria will apply:

- Fellowships are open to *bonafide* **South African citizens and permanent residents only**;
- Applicants must have obtained their PhD within 5 (five) years of submitting an application to the NRF;
- Applicants who are currently completing their Doctoral dissertation for submission may apply however, **awards that are not taken up by 30 September 2016 will be automatically cancelled by the NRF**;
- Applicants who are applying for a third postdoctoral research placement are not eligible;
- Full- time employees of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) are not eligible to apply;
- Fellowships will preferably be awarded to individuals that intend to expand their research experience by undertaking research on a new research project; in a different department; or at a different institution to that where the previous study was undertaken; and
- Special consideration will be given to applicants where the individual's research training and outputs may be enhanced by continuing with postdoctoral research at the same institution; department; or under the same mentor. In such instances the

applicant must provide a **strong motivation** describing the benefits to the applicant and for advancing research and innovation.

### 3. Value of the Fellowships

Successful applicants will receive funding for a maximum period of three (3) years. The Fellowship package for 2016 is broken down as follows:

R220 000 per annum	non-taxable stipend
R45 000 per annum	contribution towards research costs
R15 000 per annum	compulsory institutional contribution

Host institutions will be expected to supplement the fellowship with a minimum of R15 000.00 per annum as part of the institutional commitment. In addition, the host institutions will ensure the provision of an enabling environment for fellows' research training and skills development.

Successful candidates are also eligible for a travel grant of up to R25 000, for local travel, and up to R50 000, for international travel. The travel grants may be used to contribute towards the costs of attending local or international conferences; workshops; visiting a laboratory or; any other activity that supports the beneficiaries' research training. This is the maximum amount permitted over the tenure of the fellowships. Postdoctoral fellows who wish to access the travel grant must complete a travel grant application form provided by their university postgraduate office/research office for submission and approval by the NRF.

### 4. Conditions of the Fellowship

- The fellowship shall be held as the primary funding for the postdoctoral research training.
- Fellowships may not be held simultaneously with a fellowship from any other government or NRF source or NRF administered source.
- Postdoctoral fellows are permitted to spend a maximum of 20% of their time undertaking lecturing and student supervision.

- Postdoctoral fellows may not concurrently hold the fellowship with any other full-time employment position.
- Postdoctoral fellows may hold non-binding supplementary grants or emoluments to the institutional capped value.

## 5. Equity and redress

In line with the national imperative of equity and redress, the bursary scheme prioritises support for appropriately qualified applicants from designated groups *viz.* black, female and persons with disabilities, while ensuring that only applications that meet the NRF merit review and selection criteria are supported. The set equity targets are 85% blacks, 54% women and 4% students with disabilities.

## 6. Application process

Applicants may apply by following the steps below:

- Applications must be submitted through an online application process to the NRF.
- Applicants must apply for the NRF Free-standing-Scarce Skills-Innovation Postdoctoral Fellowship Call for 2016 by accessing the link: <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>.

**On accessing the link, please follow the instructions as follows:**

- Register/Login using your Identity (ID) or passport number and password.
- Select “My Applications”.
- Select “Create Application”.
- Select the call for which you are applying: **NRF Free-standing-Scarce Skills-Innovation Postdoctoral Fellowship Call for 2016.**
- Select “Apply now”.
- Complete all compulsory and non-compulsory (CV) sections of the application form. Please attach the necessary documents in **one PDF file in the following order: ID document, proof of permanent residence (if applicable) and certified copies of Masters or Doctoral certificates (if available).** Should you not follow the guidelines for attaching the necessary documents, your application will not be considered.

- Remember to submit your application on completion.

**Please note the following:**

- Complete applications will automatically be forwarded to the host Institution for verification before being submitted to the NRF for further processing.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered.
- Contact the university postgraduate or research office for queries related to institutional processes and deadlines.
- NRF contact persons are listed below for NRF related enquiries.

The closing date for submitting applications is **01 September 2015**.

## **7. Review process**

After the closing date for the submission of applications, all eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to a competitive merit review process. Any information submitted as attachments that should have been completed as part of the application renders the application incomplete resulting in a rejection. All applications considered will be evaluated in a competitive merit review process. The reviewers are selected by the NRF staff from database existing databases and other sources and may include the reviewers suggested by the applicant's. The applications are sent to reviewers before the panel. In assessing the proposals, the reviewers' reports are referred to, and agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard during the panel.

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications in order to determine applicants that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding are evaluated according to the predetermined criteria.

Each area is given a weight to indicate its relative importance. Kindly consult the table below for details on the criteria used as well as their relative weighting.

## Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Postdoctoral fellowships

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Weight (Total = 100%)
<b>Track Record of Applicant</b>	Applicant expertise/training that will enable the applicant to successfully undertake the proposed research.	10%
	The applicant's research track record which could include peer reviewed publications, conference proceedings, research prizes and awards.	10%
<b>Scientific and Technical quality of proposed research</b>	Literature review with citations, significance of the research in terms of the problem statement, aims and objectives. Scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge to be generated.	20%
	Research design, methodology developed to address aims of the research. Provision of workplan and feasible timelines and milestones for the research.	20%
	Alignment with national and institutional research priorities.	5%
<b>Institutional Support</b>	Institutional support for the postdoctoral fellowship through infrastructure and facilities for an enabling environment.	10%
<b>Potential Research Outputs and Impact of the research</b>	Details of envisaged realistic outputs of the research such as publications, conference proceedings, toolkits, policy documents.	5%
	Contribution to postdoctoral research skills development in a priority research area (human capacity development of the applicant)	10%
	Potential for socio-economic impact of the research in South Africa	10%
		100%

## 8. Reporting

For continuous monitoring of progress, the awardees will be required to submit an Annual Progress Report (APR), in a format provided by the NRF, against deliverables as outlined in the application form and the signed Conditions of Grant.

## 9. NRF contact persons

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

Ms Zikhona Lose

Professional Officer: Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA)

Telephone: 012 481 4365. E-mail: [zikhona.lose@nrf.ac.za](mailto:zikhona.lose@nrf.ac.za)

**For funding instrument related enquiries, please contact:**

Ms Nompumelelo Thwala

Professional Officer: Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development (HICD)

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