

Bilateral Scientific Research Cooperation Projects Between the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO) and the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF)

Guidelines call 2019

Summary:

The National Research Foundation of South Africa (**NRF**) and the Research Foundation – Flanders (**FWO**) announce an initiative to fund joint collaborative proposals in basic research in all fields of knowledge.

Closing date for submission of proposals:	FWO: May 31st 2019 (5pm local time) NRF: July 31st 2019 (midnight local time)
Maximum duration of the project:	Up to 36 months
Submission of proposals:	Through NRF for South African investigators and through FWO E-loket for Flemish investigators

Contact NRF: Teuns Phahlamohlaka, e-mail: Teuns.phahlam@nrf.ac.za.

Contact FWO: Isabelle Verbaeys, e-mail: Isabelle.Verbaeys@fwo.be and Gregory Absillis, e-mail: Gregory.Absillis@fwo.be.

NRF Announcement of Opportunity: <https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/framework-documents/funding-framework-documents>

FWO Announcement of Opportunity: <https://www.fwo.be/en/fellowships-funding/international-collaboration/bilateral-research-cooperations/bilateral-research-cooperation-south-africa/>

1. Introduction

Science is increasingly global. Many research questions and “grand challenges” cannot be resolved without cross-border collaboration between scientists. Flanders and South Africa wish to invest in joint research projects, creating a leverage for scientific excellence.

This intention will be realized through the implementation of a call for proposals, to be launched jointly in Flanders and South-Africa.

Each proposal should be an integrated Flemish-South African research project with both partners from Flanders and South Africa who join their strengths to execute a joint research project. Applicants are expected to propose a **coherent research project, in which the added value of both the Flemish and South African partner, and the complementariness of both teams, is clearly shown**. The research should be carried out both in South Africa and Flanders. The partnership should be balanced, not specifically in monetary terms, but with equivalent research commitment and efforts from both sides.

2. Scope of funding and duration

Proposals for bilateral research projects between researchers from Flanders and South Africa can be submitted in **any scientific domain, as long as it covers basic scientific research**. The projects, all starting on January 1st 2020, have a **duration of three years**. Please note that the project duration must be the same on both sides.

3. Eligible Researchers

In order to be eligible, a proposal must involve both a Flemish principal investigator (PI) and a South African PI. If needed co-investigators can be included both in Flanders and South Africa.

3.1 Eligible researchers for NRF:

This call is open to working researchers residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology or science council. The private higher education institutions are not eligible to apply under this programme. The South African PI must be in possession of a PhD. South African applications from previously disadvantaged individuals and the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education and research institutions will be prioritised in case of equal scoring.

In the framework of this call with NRF, each researcher can only **act once** as a principle investigator (supervisor) or co-investigator (co-supervisor).

3.2 Eligible researchers for FWO:

- Your research will be carried out at an eligible Flemish main host institution, possibly in collaboration with other Flemish and/or federal research institutions ([Article 7](#)).
- Your research will be carried out under the supervision of a supervisor-spokesperson, possible in collaboration with other (co-)supervisors ([Article 11 and 12](#)).
- **In the framework of this call with NRF, you can only act once as a principle investigator (supervisor) or co-investigator (co-supervisor).**

Projects in the frame of this bilateral call with South Africa are not taken into account in the quota of maximum two running or submitted projects one researcher may have within FWO from 2019 onwards, nor are they included in the maximum of two projects for which you can act as a (co-)supervisor per application round.

4. Application procedure

- 4.1 Proposals must be **submitted by the Flemish PI at FWO and by the South African PI at NRF**. In Flanders it can only be submitted according to the regulations of FWO; in South Africa it can only be submitted according to the regulations of NRF;
- 4.2 The **closing date** for the submission of proposals is the **31st of May 2019** (5pm local time) **for FWO** and **31st of July 2019** (midnight local time) **for NRF**. No proposals will be accepted after the closing date for submission, nor will any addendum or explanation be accepted, unless those explicitly and formally requested by NRF or FWO.
- 4.3 Proposals must be submitted in English to both agencies through their online systems:
- NRF: The proposal submitted by the South African PI to NRF (including the documents of his/her FWO collaborator) shall be sent to NRF via the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>.
- FWO: The proposal must be submitted by the Flemish PI using the appropriate application form through the [FWO E-portal](#).
- 4.4 All PIs and co-investigators of **both the Flemish and South African research team** must have an **online profile including an updated list of publications** on the [FWO E-portal](#) before the submission deadline. **Please note that the registration of your login/password takes 24 hours**. It is therefore strongly advised to start well in advance;
- 4.5 The proposal should be clearly integrated and contain one central issue to be investigated, as well as a methodology and an implementation plan. The project description in the proposal submitted by the Flemish and the South African research team should be identical. The work packages and budget should be specified clearly and separately for respectively the Flemish and South African part of the project. At FWO the South African budget (in ZAR) must be added in the online application tool by adding the foreign host institution and subsequently allocating budget to it. At NRF it is necessary to add the CV of the Flemish (co-)supervisor(s) and the Flemish budget in a separate spreadsheet as a mandatory document;
- 4.6 After the deadline, FWO and NRF will check whether the proposals have been submitted in Flanders and South Africa, on the respective deadlines (**please be aware of the different deadlines!**). They will inform each other of the results. If a proposal is submitted only in one country/region and/or received after the deadline in one country/region, it will be declared ineligible;
- 4.7 Applicants must note that the funding agencies retain the right to reject applications where they fail to comply with FWO or NRF regulations and/or the procedures set out in these guidelines.

5. Funding modalities and eligible costs

5.1 FWO

The Flemish part of the project budget can only be used for one or more of the following cost categories:

- Scientific staff;
- Consumables;
- Equipment;
- Travel and accommodation costs of Flemish researchers going to South Africa;
- To cover production costs of joint publications.

In the frame of this bilateral collaboration with South Africa the budget for **staff and consumables** on the Flemish side is minimally 45,000 EUR and **maximally 75,000 EUR annually per project**. In case one of the project partners requests only funding for consumables, the lower limit for this partner is set at 20,000 EUR. Per project a maximum amount of €150,000 for equipment can be applied for. Applying for matching funding up to €150,000 is possible. Overhead costs are directly paid to the host institution and should not be included in the FWO budget calculations.

During their stay abroad and travel from and to Belgium/South Africa, taking place in the frame of an approved joint FWO-NRF project, all researchers involved on an allocated FWO-NRF project and independent of nationality, can rely on a travel and assistance insurance and repatriation covered by FWO. This insurance is NOT a health insurance. Social security remains a responsibility of the home country.

5.2 NRF

For more info on the NRF budget regulation see the NRF guidelines that can be consulted [here](#).

6. Application timeline

The call for 2019 will be published in March 2019. The timeline is as follows:

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| • March 2019 | Opening of the call |
| • 31 May 2019 (5 pm local time) | FWO deadline for proposals |
| • 31 July 2019 (midnight local time) | NRF deadline for proposals |
| • May-October 2019 | Eligibility check and peer review |
| • Beginning November 2019 | Joint evaluation panel |
| • November/December 2019 | Ratification by FWO Board |
| • December 2019 | Communication of results |
| • January 2020 | Start of the projects |

7. Assessment and Selection

7.1 Evaluation Procedure

The applicants shall respect the evaluation procedure outlined by FWO and NRF. The projects will be evaluated using a two-step procedure.

1. In a first step the proposals submitted at NRF will be subjected to the peer-review procedure of NRF. Concomitantly, the proposals submitted at FWO will be peer-reviewed according to the following procedure: The Flemish applicant is requested to provide a list of 10 eligible referees that meet the following conflict of interest regulations. **Please note that there cannot be a conflict of interest between the external referees and both the Flemish and South African partner(s).** Reviewers must be affiliated to a university, research institute or research department of another organizational type and must be active at least at a postdoctoral level. They must have expertise that matches as much as possible the content of the application.

Not eligible as referee are:

- members of the FWO Board of Trustees;
- [members of an FWO expert panel](#);
- persons appointed to a Belgian university, research institute or any other organization; or, in the case of calls for proposals in the framework of bilateral or lead agency agreements, **persons appointed to similar institutions or organizations in the country (or as specified in the call documents) where the foreign project partner is professionally active**;
- co-authors with the applicant(s) and/or their (co-)supervisor(s) of a publication that was submitted or published after January 1st of the year n-3 (n=year of application) unless the total number of authors exceeds 10. 'Co-authorship' is to be understood as follows:
 - co-authorship of a monography of which the applicant is also the co-author;
 - co-authorship of an article or another type of contribution to a collection (book, journal issue, report, congress proceedings, abstract,...) of which the applicant is also the co-author.
- Editors are not regarded as co-authors insofar as they have not also acted as 'co-author' as described above. Co-editors of the applicant are not accepted as external reviewers.
- partners of the applicant(s) in a research cooperation, whether formalised in a research project or not, that has been applied for or has been running after January 1st of the year n-3 (n=year of application). In this context, the following shall in any case qualify as research cooperation (non-exhaustive list):
 - Cooperation under a research fellowship, granted by the FWO;
 - Cooperation under a research project, whether relating to a specific subject or not or under an international cooperation project, granted by the FWO;
 - Cooperation under the Odysseus programme, granted by the FWO;
 - Cooperation under a Scientific Research Network, granted by the FWO;
 - Cooperation under programmes similar to those mentioned above, granted by organisations other than the FWO;

- Joint research work not formalised in a cooperation structure as defined above;
- Research carried out in the research domain and/or with research facilities provided by the applicant to the reviewer or vice versa;

In case the applicant(s) doubts the eligibility of the proposed referee, he or she can contact the FWO before submitting the application.

The FWO administration will select the reviewers who will be invited to submit an evaluation in writing of the research proposal and the candidate concerned. The aim is to collect at least two evaluations per application.

2. A Joint Evaluation Panel comprising of Flemish and South African experts designated by FWO and NRF will evaluate all eligible proposals and make a funding recommendation which will be ratified by the FWO board of trustees and the NRF administration. The South African part will be funded by NRF according to its own rules and procedures; the Flemish part by FWO according to its rules and procedures.

7.2 Evaluation criteria

- International scientific level of the research groups including the composition of the research team
- Complementarity of the included research teams and their expertise
- Methodology
- Originality and innovative nature of the project
- Importance of the project
- Purposefulness of the project
- Feasibility/focus of the project
- Collaboration and coordination between research departments
- Scientific context (appropriateness, expertise, and infrastructure) of the research departments
- Necessity for the budgeted resources

In addition, great importance is attached to the added value of the international collaboration, the complementarity/synergy between the partners, the contribution/coordination of research tasks, and the exchange of researchers.

Please note that new international collaborations (not yet funded under this programme), projects involving young and emerging researchers, projects paying attention to balanced involvement of female and male researchers, and/or projects from previously disadvantaged individuals or historically disadvantaged higher education/research institutions will be prioritized in case of ex aequo. In addition, in case of ex aequo a balance in projects over different domains will be strived for. For more info see [NRF guidelines](#).

8. Intellectual Properties Rights

Upon final approval of the project proposal, a **partnership agreement** between the research institutions is recommended, laying out topics such as Intellectual Property Rights. (Please note that no specific format for this agreement will be provided by FWO or NRF). The involved host institutions are free to elaborate such a document as long as it contains the necessary basic information.

9. Contact information

For the National Research Foundation (NRF)

Teuns Phahlamohlaka

Knowledge Advancement and Support

E-mail: Teuns.phahlam@nrf.ac.za

Stephen Dlamini

Grants Management and Systems Administration

Tel: +27 12 481 4037

Email: stephen.dlamini@nrf.ac.za

For the Research Foundation – Flanders (FWO)

Isabelle Verbaeys

Head of International Affairs

T +32 2 550 15 31

Isabelle.Verbaeys@fwo.be

Gregory Absillis

Science Policy Advisor International Affairs

T +32 2 550 15 29

Gregory.Absillis@fwo.be