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Bilateral Research Cooperation South Africa (NRF) – Flanders (FWO)

Funding for joint research projects

1. Introduction

Science is increasingly global. Many research questions and “grand challenges” cannot be resolved without cross-border collaboration between scientists. In the framework of the joint MoU (2013) on bilateral scientific cooperation between the NRF and the FWO, South Africa and Flanders wish to invest in joint research projects, creating leverage for scientific excellence.

This intention will be realized through the implementation of a call for proposals, to be launched jointly in South Africa and Flanders. Applicants are expected to propose a coherent research project, in which the added value of both the South African and the Flemish partner, and the complementarity of both teams, is clearly shown. The research should be carried out both in South Africa and in Flanders. The idea is to create added value through collaboration, and not to have two research teams working completely separately.

The research proposal must be submitted both at FWO and NRF according to each agency’s own regulations and procedures. Please note that despite the fact that each agency has its own procedures, the content (title, Flemish and South African supervisor, abstract, work packages, ...) of both applications must be identical.

FWO contributes to this call a total budget of 1.200.000 EUR for a period of three years, while at the NRF the maximum amount of funding per project is limited to R2.800.000 per joint project for a period of three years (R930.000 per year). The NRF and the FWO will strive to fund 5-6 projects in this current call. The number of funded projects may vary depending on the requested individual project funding and on the quality of the received project proposals. The FWO will only fund the Flemish part of the project while the NRF will only fund the South African part of the project.

This document describes the procedures for the 2016 call of the bilateral research cooperation programme FWO-NRF.

2. Aim

The aim of the programme for Flemish-South African bilateral research cooperation is to strengthen international collaboration in **fundamental research in all scientific domains**.

The projects have a duration of three years.

3. Guidelines for Applicants

3.1. How to apply?

In order to be eligible, a proposal must meet the following criteria:

- Proposals should always involve a Flemish and a South African promoter/principal investigator eligible for project funding at the FWO and the NRF respectively;
- Proposals must be submitted simultaneously in English and before the deadline using the appropriate forms by the Flemish promoter/principal investigator at the FWO and a South African promoter at NRF according to the regulations of the FWO and the NRF respectively.

After the deadline, FWO and NRF will check whether the proposals have been submitted simultaneously in Flanders and South Africa. They will inform each other of the results. **If a proposal is submitted only in one country and/or received after the deadline, it will be declared ineligible.**

The proposal should be clearly integrated and contain one central issue to be investigated. The title, Flemish and South African participants, project description, methodology, work packages, ... in the research proposal submitted by the Flemish and South African promoter/principal investigator should be identical. The budget should be clearly and separately specified for the Flemish respectively the South African part of the project. This means that in the online FWO application tool the South African budget must be added as well in South African Rand ((ZA)R). This can be done in the section describing the 'funding per host institution' for each foreign host institution. At each side, besides a principal investigator, preferably at least one postdoctoral fellow or PhD fellow must be included in the execution of the project. On the Flemish side, the staff cost can be budgeted on the project.

Requested submission documents:

FWO:

- Online project application using the FWO E-portal (<http://www.fwo-eloket.be/FWO.ELoket.WebUI/Login.aspx>).
- Each promotor/principal investigator and co-promotor 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.

Incomplete project applications or applications submitted after the deadline will be declared ineligible.

NRF:

Applicants can apply by following the steps below:

- Applications must be submitted electronically to the NRF on the NRF Online Submission System at <https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/>.
- Register/Login using your ID number and password.
- Go to “My Applications” and select “Create Application”.
- Select the call for which you are applying for: NRF-FWO 2016 Joint Call for Proposals.
- Complete all compulsory sections applicable to you. Please attach the required documents in PDF format in the following order: CV of partner, budget of partner and the signed page of the partner.
- Remember to submit your application on completion.
- Complete applications will go to the host institutions for verification before being forwarded to the NRF for further processing.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered.
- Please contact your research office or Designated Authority if you have any queries.

Please note:

Applications submitted outside the NRF Online Submission System will not be accepted. No hard copies will be accepted and will automatically be disqualified by the NRF. Only applications endorsed by the research office or its equivalent at higher education or research institutions will be accepted.

3.2. What can be applied for?

The cost categories eligible for funding are regulated by each agency's respective rules.

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 costs of Flemish researchers going to South Africa
- accommodation and local travel costs of South African researchers staying in Flanders

In the frame of this bilateral collaboration with NRF the average budget for staff and consumables on the Flemish side is around 75.000 EUR annually. However, funding for scientific staff and consumables up to 130.000 EUR (with a minimum of 45.000 EUR) per partner, per project and per year can be applied for at FWO. In case one of the project partners requests only funding for consumables, the lower limit for this partner is set at 20.000 EUR. The sum of staff + consumables that is applied for in the first year, has to be equal or higher compared with the funds asked for during the other years. For equipment a maximum of 150.000 EUR in the first year can be applied for with matching funding also up to 150.000 EUR.

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

- Research-related costs (including field work, publication costs, etc.).
- Consumables (30% of the budget is allowed for consumables and accessories).
- Exchange programmes (i.e. mobility of researchers, postdocs and doctoral students) between the two countries.
- Doctoral research placements (for visits not shorter than 2 weeks and not longer than 3 months per annum).
- Networking events (i.e. joint workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia and lecture presentations). Joint workshops must be aimed at intensification and long-term orientation of the FWO - NRF collaboration in the relevant subject area.

All PhD exchanges funded through this programme should ensure that the best possible development experience is provided for each student. International exchanges should add value through enabling students to:

- Learn valuable new skills or techniques
- Access facilities or resources not readily available in their home country.
- Build relationships with potential new collaborators.
- Advance complementary collaborative research.

It is expected that PhD placements will be managed so that they fit within the original funded period of the studentship. Additional funding will not be made available through this call or by the funders to support studentship extensions for those undertaking international placements. Applicants should include information about how these exchanges will be managed within their proposal.

In the case of meetings, research visits and exchanges of scientists, personnel, experts and students, as well as reciprocal visits undertaken as part of joint research projects and the attendance of seminars, symposia and other meetings funded under this agreement, the sending Investigator will be responsible for financing international travel, visas, and medical insurance. Fees relating to accommodation, ground transport, living expenses, and the organisation of events (venue, catering, audio-visual equipment etc.) will be the financial responsibility of the host investigator which is to be paid from his / her allocation of the joint funding.

The following may NOT be funded from this allocation: consultant's fees, educational expenses (scholarships and/or bursaries), large equipment, project management fees, salaries and temporary staff fees.

The total amount requested from the NRF should not exceed **R2.800.000** per joint project (**R930 000 per year to be paid in instalments**).

3.3. Application timeline

The call for 2016 will be published on the 18th of April. The timeline is as follows:

- Opening of the call: 18th of April:
- **Submission deadline at FWO: 30th of June 2016 (5 pm Belgian time). No pre-submission at research institution level in Flanders needed.**
- **Submission deadline at NRF: 30th of June 2016 for NRF applicants
7th of July 2016 for research offices to which the NRF applicant is affiliated**
- Evaluation period: July – December 2016
- Start of the projects: 1st of January 2017

4. Evaluation

4.1. 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. The proposals at FWO will be peer-reviewed according to the standard procedure at FWO.

The Flemish applicants need to list 10 possible external referees, the South African need to list up to 6 referees (see South African regulations). The Flemish applicants must make sure that the referees listed in the application submitted at FWO do not equal those listed by his/her South African partner and vice versa.

Each eligible application submitted at FWO will be peer-reviewed by international external referees. The Flemish applicant is requested to provide a list of 10 potential referees that are eligible according to the FWO regulations for external peer-review: <http://www.fwo.be/en/the-fwo/organisation/fwo-expertpanels/regulations-fwo-internal-and-external-peer-review/> Please carefully read and respect these regulations. E.g. **the proposed international referees cannot be appointed to a Belgian university, research institute or other organization. Moreover, the proposed international referees cannot be appointed to similar institutions and organizations in South Africa. Please note that there can also not be a conflict of interest between the external referees and both the Flemish and South African partner(s).**

2. A joint selection panel comprising of experts designated by the FWO and the NRF will evaluate all eligible proposals and allocate the funding.
3. Ratification of the joint decision by the FWO and NRF Board of Trustees.

4.2. Evaluation Criteria

The evaluation criteria are based on a holistic set of evaluation criteria such as for example:

- International scientific level of the research groups including the composition of the research team.
- Methodology, originality, innovative nature, importance, purposefulness, and feasibility 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, the added value of the international collaboration, the complementarity/synergy between the partners, the distribution/coordination of the project, the exchange of researchers, ... will be assessed.

5. Where can I obtain more information?

For FWO:

[Website](#)

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