Funding Instrument: Thuthuka

Functional Domain: Grants Management & Systems Administration

Document: Application and Funding Guide 2019

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List of Acronyms

PR	Progress Report
DA	Designated Authority
CF	Carry forwards
CoG	Conditions of Grant
DST	Department of Science and Technology
GMSA	Grants Management and Systems Administration
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HICD	Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development
NRF	National Research Foundation
RE	Reviews and Evaluation
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement
RISP	Research Infrastructure Support Programme
SARChI	South African Research Chairs Initiative

Introduction

This Application and Funding Guide is intended to inform potential and existing Thuthuka grantholders of the operational procedures for participation in this Funding Instrument. It should be read in conjunction with the Thuthuka Framework document, which can be accessed at http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding_overview.php.

The Application and Funding Guide provides a brief overview of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument, including issues of eligibility, funding tracks, the application process, funding guidelines and review procedures. It does not, however, constitute a complete set of the policies, procedures or systems used by the NRF.

1 Thuthuka Funding Instrument

1.1 Overview

The Thuthuka Funding Instrument, initiated in 2001, is central to the NRF's human capital development strategy in so far as it relates to advancing the equity and redress agenda within the research sphere. It is located within the Human and Infrastructure Capacity Development directorate at the NRF (http://hicd.nrf.ac.za/). Operating within the ever-evolving higher education landscape, this Funding Instrument aims to develop human capital and to improve the research capacities of designated researchers (black [African, Indian and Coloured], female or disabled) with the ultimate aim of redressing historical imbalances. This is done in partnership with public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF.

1.2 Objectives

The strategic objectives of the Thuthuka are to -

- promote the attainment of a Doctoral qualification by early-career academics employed at South African universities, Science Councils and other research institutions recognised by the NRF;
- promote the research development of early-career academics employed at South African universities, Science Councils and other research institutions recognised by the NRF;
- promote the attainment of an NRF rating by early-career academics, in particular black and female researchers and persons with disabilities;
- promote the attainment of an NRF rating by academics that have not been able to realise their potential or sustain their research ability by virtue of the lack of an enabling research environment;
- promote the attainment of an NRF rating by academics that have not been able to realise their potential or sustain their research outputs due to family responsibilities;

- foster a culture of research excellence and aid in the development and expansion of the national knowledge-based economy by boosting research outputs and human capital development; and
- effect a transformation in the demographic composition of the established researcher community at publicly funded HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions recognised by the NRF, with respect to gender, race and persons with disabilities.

2 Eligibility

The Thuthuka grants are limited to **academics and researchers**, with academic and/or joint academic and administrative professional appointments, at NRF recognised public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions. Where applicable, applicants must provide proof that the institution, at which the individual is employed, recognises such a joint appointment. Applicants must be employed in these institutions on a full-time permanent or full-time contractual basis. In the case of a contract, the appointment must extent for the duration of the approved three-year funding cycle. Applications from Doctoral students appointed by institutions for the duration of the project will not be accepted.

Applicants that are generally under the age of 45 years at the time of first application may apply. Applicants in the PhD and Post PhD Tracks over the age of 45 **should** submit a motivation as to why they were not able to achieve their doctoral qualification or research capabilities by the stipulated age.

First-time applicants to Thuthuka should NOT be rated scientists, but may become rated during the tenure of the Thuthuka grant. Once rated, a grantholder must complete the current cycle and exit the Funding Instrument. However, should an NRF Evaluation and Rating application and a Thuthuka application be submitted simultaneously and, both are successful, then the Thuthuka grant will not be awarded.

Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities can apply. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID document should be included in the online application.

The **Institutional Support Form**, which is attached to the Call documents, must be downloaded by the applicant for the Dean of the Employing/Affiliated Faculty and Research Office/DA signatures and then **uploaded in the attachment** section. This document is submitted to confirm and verify the Institution's support to the applicant for the proposed research. **The Funding Track has to be completed by the applicant on the Institutional Support Form.**

Failure to submit a fully signed and completed **Institutional Support Form** will render the application ineligible for Review and will be rejected. **Failure to include the funding track on the Institutional Support Form will result in an automatic rejection of the application.**

Applicants are required to upload a copy of their South African Identity Document online for audit purposes. This should be done under Registration Details on the application. Applications that are submitted without this document will be automatically rejected.

In addition to the above criteria the following also applies. The Thuthuka Funding Instrument consists of three distinct tracks. Applicants may apply for funding in one of the following three tracks:

2.1 PhD Track

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the PhD Track:

- Only South African citizens.
- Should have obtained a minimum of a Master's degree.
- Registered for a Doctoral degree.
- Electronic endorsement by a nominated supervisor supporting the proposed Doctoral work to be undertaken (supervisor's report to be submitted via the electronic application process).

Note:

- The applicant has to complete the supervisor's details in the **Reference** section of the application. An e-mail will be generated requesting the supervisor to complete the form electronically. The supervisor's report is an integral part of the application and without this the application will not be considered for funding.
- Successful applicants must provide renewed proof of registration annually for the consecutive years of NRF funding. Failure to comply will lead to the cancellation of the grant.
- Should a grantholder not have obtained his/her Doctorate within six years of funding in this Funding Instrument, no further funding will be considered beyond the sixth year.
- If applying in Thuthuka for the first time and the project was previously funded by the NRF as a grantholder-linked bursary or funding from the Emerging Researchers section of the NRF, progress to date needs to be provided in the proposal. The years of previous funding for the Doctoral degree from any other NRF Funded Programme will be taken into consideration when funding is awarded.

2.2 Post·PhD Track

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the Post-PhD Track:

- Only South African citizens may apply.
- Applicants should have obtained a Doctoral degree no more than five years prior to the date of first application.
- Institutional commitment from the employing institution, pledging to allow the applicant time off for research and relief of teaching duties to conduct fieldwork/research, must be submitted with the application (institutional support form to be submitted with the application).

2.3 NRF Rating Track (Unrated Researchers)

The following eligibility criteria apply in respect of the NRF Rating Track:

- Only South African citizens and South African permanent residents with a valid South African Identity Number may apply. Applicants applying for permanent residence will not be considered.
- Should have obtained a Doctoral degree. The Doctoral degree should have been obtained no more than 8 years prior to the date of first application.
- Institutional commitment from the employing institution pledging to allow the applicant time off for research and relief of teaching duties to conduct fieldwork/research, must be submitted with the application (institutional support form to be submitted with the application).
- A research focus has been identified in an area in which the applicant plans to establish a research track record.

Applicants must demonstrate that they have been unable to establish themselves as researchers due to limited research opportunities (e.g. working at an institution with limited research infrastructure and research activity, or due to family responsibilities). If such limitations are not clear from the proposal and confirmed in the applicant's career profile, the application will not be considered.

3 Granting Rules

3.1 Funding Duration

Funding is available for a maximum period of six years (in two three-year cycles) within all Tracks. Budgets are approved annually, based on outputs and progress reported in a Budget Motivation submitted to the NRF by grantholders. Budget Motivations must be approved by the grantholder's Head of Department. Approved grants for continuing grantholders are released upon submission of a Progress Report (PR) by 15 February.

A new application should be submitted for **each** three year funding cycle in the same Track except for the PhD Track.

The following apply if a grantholder in the PhD Track completes his/her Doctoral degree within a three-year cycle:

- If the Doctoral qualification is completed within the first three year cycle, the grantholder may apply for funds for a new project in the Post-PhD Track for a second cycle, after which he/she will be eligible for a third three-year cycle in the same Track.
- If the qualification is completed in the second, three year cycle, the grantholder may apply for funds for **a new** project in the Post-PhD Track for one additional funding cycle.
- Grantholders commencing their Thuthuka grant in the PhD Track, are therefore eligible for up to three, three-year cycles (9 years) in total within the Funding

Instrument, provided they complete their Doctoral degree within the first two funding cycles.

- Grantholders in the PhD Track that have received 6 years of funding but have not completed their Doctoral Degree, are not eligible for a third three-year cycle of funding.

Grantholders that currently receive Thuthuka funding must use this document as the updated Application and Funding Guide. This document must also be used when submitting a Budget Motivation or Progress Report.

3.2 Participation across Funding Tracks

Applicants **may not** hold two Thuthuka grants simultaneously. For participation in other NRF funding instruments, the *Overview of Funding Opportunities* document of GMSA (available on the NRF Website), should be consulted.

3.3 Exclusions

Applications that do not meet the requirements for the Thuthuka Funding Instrument will be rejected without review.

The Thuthuka Funding Instrument does not consider applications for:

- research infrastructure for which the Infrastructure Funding Instruments make provision;
- budgets requesting funding only for student support, equipment and/or conference attendance;
- single‑year grant applications or grant applications for less than three years, unless the applicant is in the process of completing a doctoral study (applying in the PhD Track);
- lecturer replacement, external supervisory support, study/training visit local/abroad and sabbatical support;
- researchers that have received 6 years of funding in the Post PhD or NRF Rating Track do not qualify for further Thuthuka funding as this is the maximum number of years a researcher may be funded by the Thuthuka Funding Instrument; and
- researchers that have received three (3) years full-time Doctoral funding from any NRF Freestanding Scholarship Programmes, Grantholder-linked bursaries or 5 years part-time Doctoral Funding, do not qualify for further funding on the same level.

3.4 Co‑funding

The NRF policy on co‑funding in this Funding Instrument is a 1:1 funding ratio commitment by the NRF and the applicant's employing institution. By validating the application, the applicant's institution declares its funding commitment for operating costs at the ratio of 1:1. The onus is on the institution to ascertain that all budget rules have been adhered to.

The **Institutional Support Form**, which is attached to the Call documents, must be downloaded by the applicant for the Dean of Employing/Affiliated Faculty and Research Office/DA signatures and then **uploaded in the attachment** section. This document is submitted to confirm and verify the Institution's support to the applicant for the proposed research. **Important: Indicate funding track on the form.**

Failure to submit an Institutional Support Form and/or uploading an incomplete form that is not supported by the Dean of the Employing/Affiliated Faculty and Research Office/DA, will result in the application being rejected.

3.5 Carry Forward of Grant Funding

The Carry Forward (CF) of unspent/unclaimed funds to the next grant year is not automatic and will only be considered according to the regulations provided in the '*Guidelines for the Carry Forward of Unspent/claimed Grant Allocations'.* All Thuthuka grantholders must submit strong motivations for a CF.

3.6 Multiple Grants

A grantholder may not hold a Thuthuka grant concurrently with -

- a grant as a Director of an NRF Centre of Excellence or Industrial Centre of Excellence, or as a participant in the South African Research Chairs Initiative (unless he/she is a Chairholder of a Tier 2 Research Chair);
- any NRF Knowledge Fields Development grants;
- NRF Freestanding or grantholder-linked student support.
- NRF – FRF Sabbatical Grant

For further details refer to the *Overview of Funding Opportunities* document of GMSA or the *Multiple Grant Eligibility* rubric (available on the NRF Website).

4 Budget Breakdown and Funding Model

Thuthuka supports the advancement of individuals from Masters' to Doctoral level in all scientific fields. Grants are awarded for well-structured research projects that demonstrate the prudent use of funds. Projects should have clear aims and sound methodologies that support the study objectives. The NRF does not fund any clinical trials projects.

The budgeting model for Thuthuka takes into account two dimensions, namely the human-capital dimension (in terms of race, gender and disability) and the funding Track. Funds are allocated in terms of a horizontal budget split across the three funding Tracks (namely, PhD, Post-PhD and NRF Rating) with weights assigned to each Track on the basis of its relative importance. For example, the PhD Track is allocated 40% of the overall budget in line with the NRF's initiative of the 'PhD as a Driver' for the knowledge-based economy strategy.

Since Thuthuka is aimed at the development and advancement of designated groups per race and/or gender, the Funding Instrument has set the following targets for allocation of grants to designated groups, to bring about this transformation:

- **PhD Track:** 80% of all funded applicants to be Black; and up to 60% to be female.
- **Post-PhD Track:** 80% of all funded applicants to be Black; and 50% to be female.
- **NRF Rating Track**: 80% of all funded applicants to be Black; and 50% to be female.

The grant covers Running Expenses and Student Support and it excludes costs incurred by the researcher or institution for research prior to the approval of the Thuthuka award.

5   Categories of Support

When completing the project budget, applicants need to consider all costs that could impact on undertaking the research, such as the direct, indirect and human capacity development costs. **Budget approvals by the NRF are subject to the availability of funds in any given financial year.**

The amounts allowed per item, by the NRF, need to be considered as indicated below.

5.1 Human Capacity Development (Grantholder - linked Student Support)

Grantholder-linked student support is available only to the applicant's human resources (students) directly involved **in the grantholder's project**. The grantholder must be a supervisor or co-supervisor. Greater participation of women, black and disabled students are specifically encouraged.

The grantholder is expected to provide mentoring and supervision to all NRF-funded students supported within his/her grant. The number of students per grantholder is therefore carefully monitored in accordance with the experience of the grantholder.

In compliance with the Ministerial Guidelines for equity targets, 80% of all students nominated by each grantholder should be Black (African, Indian or Coloured).

Student support is available in the following categories:

- **Honours/4th year BTech**: Honours/4th year BTech students for South African citizens only.
- **Postgraduate Bursaries**: Masters and Doctoral full-time students with a research component of more than 50%.

Postgraduate Bursaries and **Honours/4th year B/Tech** are awarded for either a full calendar year or for a semester, depending on the date of registration of the student; the date of submission of the nomination; and the period for which the award is requested, as indicated in table 1 below.

Postgraduate students, including Internships, may hold only one Scholarship or Bursary from the NRF or another state-funded organisation at any one time. This includes NRF/DST and other Government Internships.

Staff members are not eligible for full-time Masters and Doctoral grantholder-linked bursaries and should not be nominated.

The award of bursaries in each Track is restricted to the total in Table 1 below. The approved number and level of grantholder-linked postgraduate student bursaries will be subject to the budget availability.

Table 1: Awards and maximum period of support

Funding Track	Level
PhD Track	1 Honours/4th year BTech 1 Masters
Post-PhD Track	1 Honours/4th year BTech 1 Doctoral student and 1 Masters OR 2 Masters students
NRF Rating Track	1 Honours/4th year BTech 1 Doctoral student and 1 Masters OR 2 Masters students

Exclusions:

- Postdoctoral Fellowships are not supported by this Funding Instrument.
- Part-time bursaries are not supported by this Funding Instrument
- No bursaries for new Doctoral students will be awarded to grantholders in the last year of the first or second cycle of a project (3rd or 6th year of funding).
- Grantholders in the PhD Track may not request Doctoral grantholder-linked bursaries.

5.1.1 Student Assistantships

Student Assistantships are available to full-time Honours/4th year BTech students. Nominees should show potential for postgraduate study and research, participate in the grantholder's research project in addition to their normal studies and have maintained acceptable grades. The grantholder is responsible for supervising and mentoring these students. The purpose of these assistantships is both to provide assistance to the grantholder and to attract promising students into postgraduate studies.

5.1.2 Postgraduate Bursaries

Grantholder-linked postgraduate bursaries are available to students who are supervised or co-supervised by the grantholder and who work on his/her Thuthuka funded project.

Bursaries for degrees by coursework are supported, provided the research component of the degree comprises more than 50% of the degree and is externally evaluated.

Table 2: Awards and Maximum Period of Support

Level	Value of support (per annum)*	Maximum period of support
BTech/4th year Honours	R30 000	1 year
Postgraduate Bursaries		
Masters full-time	R50 000	2 years
Doctoral full-time	R70 000	3 years

* 50% of the amount indicated is allocated for semester grants.

Student intake into this Funding Instrument is according to the *Ministerial Guidelines for Improving Equity in the Distribution of the DST/NRF Bursaries and Fellowships* (January 2013). The demographic and citizenship breakdown for such student intake is as follows:

- 87% South African (including permanent residents);
- 5% SADC;
- 4% Rest of the African continent; and
- 4% from non-African countries.

5.2 Running Expenses

Budget requests must be well motivated according to the requirements of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument. Budget requests that are not well motivated according to the requirements of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument will not be approved for funding.

5.2.1 Materials and Supplies

Goal

Materials and Supplies refer to the daily running expenses/costs of the research project. These items must be directly related to the project.

Materials and Supplies is a compulsory category of funding. However, should your research not require this, please substantiate in the application.

Materials and Supplies are any items with a life expectancy of generally less than a year, and which are consumed in the normal course of operation in all field of research.

Laboratory Materials and supplies such as equipment with a value of less than R3 000 should be captured under Materials and Supplies even if not consumed in the normal course of operations e.g. pipettes.

Eligibility

- Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.
- Only project-related direct costs are covered.
- Every type of purchase must be clearly identified individually and be well-motivated in the budget submission.

- Funding may be considered for applicants/team members with disabilities and other special needs as specified in the *Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities*, as stated in the *Employment Equity Act* (No. 55 of 1998). **A clear motivation should be provided.**

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- A detailed description of items, e.g. description of the material, quantity, reagent grade and cost per unit;
- Survey related costs, e.g. number of questionnaires, stationary, photocopies, etc.; and
- Details of singular items less than R3 000.

Exclusions

- Indirect costs (overheads);
- Registration fees for enrolment;
- Basic office equipment;
- General stationary, photocopying and printing costs;
- Journal publications, journal subscription costs and textbooks;
- Telephone, fax and internet costs;
- Personal laptops, computer hardware, and purchase or renewal of software licenses unless for specialised equipment and software licences.
- Any funding line that is listed as: "miscellaneous", "other" or"etc."

Maximum Funding

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R100 000 per year.

5.2.2 Research Equipment

Goal

To provide support to applicants for the **purchase** of equipment, contributing to the purchase of large equipment, or covering the **maintenance**, **service** or **upgrade** costs for equipment or hiring of equipment.

Eligibility

Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- Details of laboratory equipment to be purchased, e.g., water bath, autoclave, water purification system, gel dryer;
- Details of the contributing to the purchase of large equipment, e.g. shipping and customs.
- A motivation for specialised hardware, e.g. audio-visual equipment, and specialised software;
- If more than one item of a particular piece of equipment is purchased, a motivation per application should be provided;

- Maintenance costs, for new equipment that is purchased with NRF funding, must be budgeted for (if not requested in this application);
- Equipment should be purchased following the institutional procurement policies; and If the funds are not used to purchase equipment, but to cover equipment maintenance/service/upgrade costs, to enable research to be carried out on the Thuthuka project, provide at the minimum the following:
    o Detailed description of the equipment, e.g. (camera or tape recorder for data capturing purposes)
    o Description of how the equipment will be used in the Thuthuka project
    o Details of the specific maintenance or service or upgrade.

Exclusions

- Personal laptops, net books, hand-held notebooks, and personal digital assistant (PDA) devices.

Licence fees or renewals of licences of non-specialised software (e.g. Ms Office).

Maximum Funding

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R50 000 per year per applicant.

Requests for funding for equipment valued between R1 000 000 and R10 000 000 should be directed to the Infrastructure Funding Instruments for support. Information is available at http://www.nrf.ac.za/funding_overview.php.

5.2.3   Research, *ad hoc* and Technical Assistance

Goal

To provide support for **specialised technical skills** essential to the completion of the project; if a skills gap exists in the research team.

Eligibility

Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.

Appointees as Temporary Support Staff must have a minimum qualification of a BTech or Honours. Technical Assistance Support (e.g. services of a statistician) includes using statistical software packages (e.g. Statistical Package for the Social Science-SPSS, Statistical Analysis System-SAS, etc.) to analyse data.

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- Details on research assistance required, e.g. consulting and legal services, editing and proofreading, data capturing, survey fees, forums facilitator fees or assistant, e.g. Statistician, Technician, Transcriber, Translator, Field worker.
- Identified skills gap in the research team;
- Expected skills transfer, if applicable; and

- Detailed cost breakdown, e.g. technical assistant work for three hours per day for a total period of three months, at a rate of R80 rand per hour.

Exclusion

Administrative and/or secretarial support.

Maximum Funding

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R40 000 per year.

5.2.4 Local Travel

Goal

To provide support to applicants, or students of the applicant (only those funded by the NRF within this project), to cover travel for **research** and **fieldwork** that is related to the research project.

When determining the cost pertaining to local travel, researchers must ensure that the most economical and safe transport is utilized.

Eligibility

Applies to applicants and their students for application in all the funding Tracks.

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- A motivation and purpose (why) and place (where to) of the travel that is related to the project objectives and methodology.
- Detailed budget breakdown including:
  - Cost for economic air travel.
  - For travel by road, the number of kilometres to be travelled and costs based on the applicant's institutional rates.
  - Type and cost of accommodation and duration of stay.
  - Subsistence allowance based on the applicant's institutional rates.

Exclusions

Meetings, workshops, networking and collaboration event.

Maximum Funding

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R10 000 per year per applicant.

5.2.5 Local Conferences

Goal

To provide support to an applicant and/or nominated grantholder-linked postgraduate student/s who intends to participate (**not** for attendance) at locally-held conferences, as a

mechanism to further the goals of their projects. This includes national and/or international conferences held **in** South Africa.

NB: Workshop attendance will only qualify for support if this is attached to the local conference.

Eligibility

- Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks who are <u>presenting a paper or poster</u> at a conference in the field of the research project funded by the NRF.
  o Applies only where a conference has been identified; and
- In addition, preference will be for conferences where applicants can demonstrate:
    o networking opportunities;
    o launch of collaboration; and/or
    o Professional society/association meetings.
- Grantholders should motivate how the presenting of a paper or poster by their nominated postgraduate students at **reputable local events** (conferences, seminars and workshops) will benefit the research project.

<u>Applicants are required to submit the following:</u>

- The **name** and **place** of the conference.
- Indicate that a paper or poster will be **presented**.

Exclusions:
- Visa and permit fees;
- Events not attached to the conference;
- Presentation of the same work at multiple conferences; or

Maximum Funding:

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of:

- R4 000 per year for local conferences held in South Africa.

5.2.6 International Conferences

Goal

To provide support to an applicant who intends to participate (**not** for attendance) at internationally-held conferences, as a mechanism to further the goals of their projects

NB: Workshop attendance will only qualify for support if this is attached to the conference.

Eligibility

- Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks who are <u>presenting a paper or poster</u> at a conference in the field of the research project funded by the NRF.
- Applies only if a conference has been identified; and

- In addition, preference will be for conferences where applicants can demonstrate:
  - networking opportunities;
  - launch of collaboration; and/or
  - Professional society/association meetings.
- Attendance of international conferences in subsequent years will be considered only if the grantholder's paper at the previous international conference, for which funding was awarded, has been published in a peer-reviewed journal or proceedings, or if evidence of acceptance for publication is supplied.

Applicants are required to submit the following:

- The **name** and **place** of the conference.
- Indicate that a paper or poster will be **presented**.

Exclusions:

- Visa and permit fees;
- Events not attached to the conference;
- Presentation of the same work at multiple conferences; or
- Attendance of more than one conference abroad per year.

Maximum Funding:

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of:

- R17 000 per year for conferences held abroad.

5.2.7 Visiting Scientist

Goal

To provide support to applicants to invite a visitor/s to the applicant's employing institution, whose specialised skills add value to the project on a technical, scientific, strategic and/or human capacity building level/s. Visiting scientists must be individuals of good standing in their research fields and may be drawn from institutions in South Africa or abroad. Capacity development activities associated with such visits are a requirement for funding under this funding category.

Eligibility

Applies to applicants in all funding Tracks.

The visiting scientist should make a contribution to the research project in the following categories:

- Technical skills or knowledge transfer.
- Human capacity building: Student interaction (faculty interaction, seminars and lectures).

Applicants are required to submit:

- The **name** of the person visiting;
- The **purpose** of the visit (At the minimum a preliminary plan that must have been discussed with the visiting scientist);
- The **period** of the visit
- A detailed cost breakdown with regards to:
    - Accommodation,
    - Airfare,
    - Ground travel,
    - Incidentals, e.g. Toll gate, parking costs & Subsistence.
- Information on other sources of funding available; and
- An outline of the outcomes that will be achieved including -
    - Skills or knowledge transfer; and
    - Contribution to the research at a strategic level.

There are no limits on the number of visitors, e.g. the visiting scientist. Repeat visits by the same scientists will only be considered if active research collaboration exists.

Maximum Funding

The NRF contribution will be limited to a maximum of R60 000 per year per applicant, awarded on a *pro rata* basis.

Table 3: Financial Categories Supported and Maximum Amounts Funded

Category of Support	Maximum Amounts (NRF contribution)
Materials and Supplies	**R100 000 maximum per annum**
Research Equipment	**R50 000 maximum per annum**
Research/ Technical/ Ad Hoc Assistants	**R40 000 per annum awarded on a *pro rata* basis**
Local Travel	**R10 000 maximum per annum**
Local Conference	**R4 000 per annum**
International Conference	**R17 000 per annum**
Visiting Scientists	**R60 000 pro rata for a maximum of 12 months**

Table 4: Financial Categories NOT Supported under the Thuthuka Grant

Online Application Categories	Thuthuka Grant
International Visits	Not Funded
Costs for Joint Conferences and Workshops	Not Funded
Airfare	Not Funded (please include airfare costs where applicable under International conference, Local conference or Local travel)
Subsistence	Not Funded
Accommodation	Not Funded (please include accommodation costs where applicable under International conference, Local conference or Local travel)
Lecturer Replacement	Not Funded

Please note: Budget requests and motivations that are not consistent with the permissible funding categories in the Application and Funding Guide will not be considered in the Funding Decision process. In order to realistically gauge the full extent of the proposed research, details of other sources of financial support for the research must be submitted in the application budget. This in no way compromises or disadvantages the proposal; instead, knowledge of the commitment and contribution of other contributors (where applicable) serves to better understand the feasibility of the proposed research project.

All grants allocated are subject to compliance with the NRF Conditions of Grant (CoG) as specified in attachments to the Award Letter to successful applicants.

6 Quick Overview of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument

	PhD TRACK	POST-PhD TRACK	NRF RATING TRACK
Eligibility Criteria	Applicant must be a South African citizen.	Applicant must be a South African citizen.	Applicant must be a South African citizen or have a Permanent South African Resident status with a valid South African Permanent Resident Identity Number.
	Applicant should be generally under the age of 45 years at the time of first application.	Applicant should be generally under the age of 45 years at the time of first application.	No age restriction applies.
	Applicant must be employed at public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF on a full-time permanent or full-time contract basis. The contract appointment must extend for the duration of the approved three year grant.	Applicant must be employed at public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF on a full-time permanent or full-time contract basis. The contract appointment must extend for the duration of the approved three year grant.	Applicant must be employed at public HEIs, Science Councils and other research institutions, as recognized by the NRF on a full-time permanent or full-time contract basis. The contract appointment must extend for the duration of the approved three year grant.
	Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID should be included in the online application.	Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID should be included in the online application.	Female applicants that are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment in order to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible. This is limited to women raising children of four years of age and below. A copy of the child's ID should be included in the online application.
	Applicant must hold a Master's degree.	Applicant must hold a Doctoral degree awarded no more than five years prior to the date of first application.	Applicant must hold a Doctoral degree awarded no more than eight years prior to the date of first application.
	The institution at which the applicant is employed must be committed to a 1:1 funding partnership with the NRF, based on the total research operating costs awarded.	The institution at which the applicant is employed must be committed to a 1:1 funding partnership with the NRF, based on the total research operating costs awarded.	The institution at which the applicant is employed must be committed to a 1:1 funding partnership with the NRF, based on the total research operating costs awarded.
	The proposal must be endorsed by the DA of the institution at which the applicant is employed.	The proposal must be endorsed by the DA of the institution at which the applicant is employed.	The proposal must be endorsed by the DA of the institution at which the applicant is employed.

	PhD TRACK	POST-PhD TRACK	NRF RATING TRACK
	Proof of Registration for Doctoral studies must be attached to the application or submitted with the signed Conditions of Grant.	Applicants may not be an NRF-rated researcher at the time of the Thuthuka application. Should an NRF Evaluation and Rating application and a Thuthuka application be submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then the Thuthuka grant will not be awarded.	Applicants may not be an NRF-rated researcher at the time of the Thuthuka application. Should an NRF Evaluation and Rating application and a Thuthuka application be submitted simultaneously and both are successful, then the Thuthuka grant will not be awarded.
	Recommendation by the supervisor/project leader in support of the Thuthuka award/application is required.	N/A	N/A
	N/A	N/A	Applicants must have identified a research focus in an area in which they plan to establish a research track record. Applicants must demonstrate that they have been unable to establish themselves as researchers due to limited research opportunities (e.g. working in an institution with limited research infrastructure and research activity).
Types of support	Consumables.	Consumables.	Consumables.
	Grantholder-linked Student Support (up to Masters level) (limited to a maximum of one Masters and two final-year/Honours bursaries per grantholder).	Grantholder-linked Student Support.	Grantholder-linked Student Support.
	Provision for the establishment of a mentoring relationship.	Provision for the establishment of a mentoring relationship.	N/A
		Research/technical assistance.	Research/technical assistance.
	Research equipment. The maximum contribution by the NRF is R50 000.	Research equipment. The maximum contribution by the NRF is R50 000.	Research equipment. The maximum contribution by the NRF is R50 000.
	A well-motivated budget for domestic/local travel for research purposes.	A well-motivated budget for domestic/local travel for research purposes.	A well-motivated budget for domestic/local travel for research purposes.
	One local conference per year for the applicant, to present a paper or poster.	One local conference per year for the applicant, to present a paper or poster.	One local conference per year for the applicant, to present a paper or poster.

	PhD TRACK	**POST-PhD TRACK**	**NRF RATING TRACK**
	One international conference for the applicant biennially to present a paper or poster from which a peer-reviewed published article should be produced. An application for any subsequent international conferences will be considered only if the requirements for the previous one have been fulfilled.	One international conference annually to present a paper or poster from which a peer-reviewed published article should be produced. An application for any subsequent international conference will be considered only if the requirements for the previous one have been fulfilled.	One international conference annually to present a paper or poster from which a peer-reviewed a published article should be produced. An application for any subsequent international conference will be considered only if the requirements for the previous one have been fulfilled.
Outputs per three year cycle	A minimum of one publication biennially on the Thuthuka-funded research project in a peer-reviewed journal, or a recognised equivalent research output.	A minimum of two publications per cycle on the Thuthuka funded research project in peer-reviewed journals, or recognised equivalent research outputs.	A minimum of three publications on the Thuthuka funded research project in peer-reviewed journals, or recognised equivalent research outputs.
Outputs at end of full support period	N/A	At least two postgraduate students at Masters and/or Doctoral level supervised or co-supervised and completing their studies.	At least two postgraduate students at Masters and/or Doctoral level supervised or co-supervised and completing their studies.
	Completion of a Doctoral degree.	N/A	NRF rating or application for NRF rating by the end of the funding period.
	At least three papers presented at local and/or international conferences.	At least four papers presented at local and international conferences.	At least six papers presented at local and international conferences.
	A minimum of three publications in peer-reviewed journals or recognised equivalent research outputs.	A minimum of four publications in peer-reviewed journals or recognised equivalent research outputs.	A minimum of six publications in peer-reviewed journals or recognised equivalent research outputs.

7 Application Process

The NRF issues a Call for proposals to the Thuthuka Funding Instrument annually, which is placed on the NRF website and is accessible online at https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za. The Thuthuka Funding Instrument does not accept more than one application per applicant within a three year funding cycle; although a project proposal that has been rejected by the NRF may be revised and resubmitted in this period. In such cases, any revision or reworking of the proposal to accommodate the reviewers' feedback on the initial application should be explained and pointed out in the revision. Applications must be duly approved by the Designated Authority (DA) in the Research Office at the institution that submits the application electronically, by the DA closing date.

The processing of a grant application takes approximately six months from the time of submission to the announcement of the outcome of the review of the application.

7.1 How to Submit Applications

Applications are available for completion on the NRF Online Submission System, and applications for funding in 2019 will close on 10 May 2018 for applicants. Applicants in the PhD Track must ensure that their supervisors submit their recommendation by 24 May 2018. DA's have until 24 May 2018 to validate applications. Applicants are advised to complete their proposals as soon as possible to prevent IT system overload near the closing date.

This is an electronic submission system and applicants need to be registered on the NRF Online Submission System (https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za) in order to create and complete an application. Applicants that experience problems accessing the system with their password should use the Reset Password button to reset their password.

Applicants are urged to complete or update ALL screens of the CV, including the Research Profile and Research Outputs, before creating applications as this information is referred to in the review process.

When the applicant submits an application, it will be routed to the Designated Authority (DA) in the Research Office of his/her institution for internal review and validation. Late applications, additional supporting documentation or information received after the closing date will not be accepted or considered. Applications or budgets uploaded in the attachment section of the application will not be considered for funding by the NRF.

Applicants must ensure that they adhere to their institution's internal closing date for submission of their application to allow for internal institutional screening and review. The internal closing date will be determined by the respective research offices and is usually at least two weeks prior to the NRF's closing date.

The NRF cannot process Applications, Budget Motivations or Progress Reports (PRs) that are incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect detail, or fail to follow instructions. Such Applications, Budget Motivations or PRs will be rejected. The Applications, Budget Motivations or PRs must be completed in sufficient detail to allow comprehensive review

and evaluation by internal and external reviewers. In addition to the electronic application and required attachments, the NRF may request additional information or documentation to support an application.

Failure to supply such information or documentation upon request may result in the rejection of the application.

It is important that all proposals are screened and approved by internal institutional processes **before** submission to the NRF. Institutional authorities should take particular care regarding the budget information included in applications. It should be taken into consideration that the amounts requested from the NRF constitute 50% of the total project budget, up to the maximum amounts indicated in the Application and Funding Guide, as the employing institution will be committed to funding the balance in terms of operating costs. Applicants should provide a **detailed motivation** for each item for which funds are requested. The NRF assumes that the respective DAs are satisfied with the standard of all proposals validated and submitted, and that the institution approves and supports the proposed research.

7.2 Screening and Review Processes

7.2.1 Overview of the Screening Process

All applications validated by institutions and submitted to the NRF are screened by the NRF for compliance with the requirements of the Call for Proposals, the stipulations set out in this Application and Funding Guide, and the content requirements indicated in the online application screens. Applications that fail to meet the requirements and stipulations are rejected.

7.2.2 Overview of the Review Process

The NRF's peer review policy requires that all applications be subjected to a two-tiered review process, firstly for remote review and secondly for panel review.

7.2.2.1   Remote Peer Review

After the closing date for the submission of applications, all eligible applications are subjected to remote peer review. Any information submitted as email attachments that should have been completed in the Thuthuka online application form renders the application incomplete resulting in a rejection. The reviewers are selected from the list of suggested reviewers provided by the applicant, as well as additional reviewers selected by the Reviews & Evaluation (RE) staff of the NRF from existing databases and other sources. Applicants are encouraged to suggest reviewers from abroad. A minimum of six written reviews per application are solicited, with the ultimate aim of eliciting <u>at least</u> three well-substantiated remote review reports per application for submission to the panel review process.

Applications are sent for review to researchers with selected research knowledge and insight in relevant disciplines, after which written online review reports are submitted to the NRF. The remote review reports, together with the proposals and supporting documentation are then deliberated upon in the Panel Review Process.

7.2.2.2   Panel Peer Review

Following the remote review process, applications are subjected to panel peer review. The remote reviewers' reports serve as the basis for discussion and review by the panel members.

Panel members are selected from the NRF database, which is updated on a continuous basis, as well as other sources. In making the selection, the expertise and experience of individuals in funding proposal adjudication are taken into account. In assessing the proposals, the postal reviewers' reports are referred to, and agreed assessment criteria are applied in the form of a scorecard.

The panel provides recommendations to the NRF. The final funding decision is made by the NRF. In awarding grants in this Funding Instrument, the NRF takes into account the recommendations of the peer review panels, budget motivations by the applicant, the objectives and equity targets of the Instrument, as well as the availability of funds.

7.3   Ranking of Proposals

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate proposals, based on the Thuthuka Funding Instrument criteria, in order to determine applicants that are most deserving of the limited funds available. All research proposals submitted to the NRF for funding, irrespective of the Funding Track, are evaluated according to a number of predetermined criteria. Proposals are assessed and ranked on the basis of qualifiers as listed in the table below. Each area is given a weight to indicate its relative importance. Kindly consult the table below for details on the criteria used per funding Track as well as their relative weighting.

NRF Scorecard for the Assessment of Proposals for Thuthuka Funding

Criterion	Description	% Weightin		
		PhD Track	*Post-PhD Track*	*NRF-rating Track*
Track Record of Applicant	This refers to past research outputs recognised by the NRF. This refers to outputs such as the professional development of the applicant; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; books and book chapters; and patents. Reviewers will be required to comment on whether the standing and research record of the researcher suggest that the applicant has the appropriate research experience to undertake the proposed research.	**5**	**5**	**5**
Research Proposal	This refers to scientific contribution; originality and new knowledge; interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary aspects; match between the research question and the proposed research methodology and alignment with the applicant's institutional strategy and/or any national research strategy. Scientific and Technical Quality – Reviewers will evaluate whether the project will * make a contribution to new knowledge and new methodologies in the field; * apply existing knowledge and methodologies in the field; * involve unique application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field; * or utilise the application of existing knowledge and methodologies in the field. Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary aspects – Reviewers will assess whether Interdisciplinary or Multidisciplinary aspects have been fully- , partially or not explored in the research proposal	**35**	**25**	**25**

Criterion	Description	% Weighting		
		PhD Track	*Post-PhD Track*	*NRF-rating Track*
	Research objectives to match aims of study – Reviewers will assess whether the research objectives are clearly stated and on whether they are appropriate to meet the aims of the study; are sound but have inconsistencies and can be refined; are appropriate but only partially address the aims of the study; or are not appropriate to meet the aims of the study. Research methodology to match research objectives – Reviewers will comment on whether the research methodology is appropriate to meet objectives of study; is sound but has inconsistencies and can be refined; is appropriate but only partially addresses study objectives; or not appropriate to meet objectives of study.			
Human Capital Development □ **Student involvement** □ **Representation from designated / under-represented groups**	Greater emphasis is placed on the number of students trained and the participation of researchers and/or students from under-represented groups (i.e. black, female and disabled) in research projects.	**10**	**20**	**20**

Project Management				
☐ **Project organisation**	Project organisation refers to how project teams and human resources are composed; the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of team members; the proposed research activities; and the supervision.	**20**	**20**	**20**
☐ **Project scheduling**	Project scheduling refers to the work breakdown of the project to ensure that specific outcomes are achieved; as well as the objectives and associated timelines in place to divide the scope of work into manageable activities.			
☐ **Budget**	Project budgeting refers to effective planning and budgeting of resources.			

Criterion	Description	% Weighting		
		PhD Track	Post-PhD Track	NRF-rating Track
Collaboration on Research Project	In order to address historical imbalances, research collaboration between researchers at various institutions is encouraged, especially between institutions with limited research infrastructure and research activity, and research-intensive institutions with varied capabilities. Reviewers will be required to comment on whether research collaborations are required to meet the study objectives and have been considered, and to also comment on whether the research collaborations are appropriate to meet objectives of the study and have been fully addressed; are appropriate but only partially meet the study objectives; or are not appropriate to meet the study objectives.	5	10	10
Supervision/Mentorship	In the Post-PhD and NRF-Rating Tracks, the supervisory track record of their academic standing and past outputs.	10	5	5
Expected Outputs	This refers to NRF recognised research outputs such as the professional development of the applicant; journal articles; conference presentations and proceedings; books and book chapters; and patents. Successful applicants will be expected to deliver on all anticipated outputs or risk suspension of their funding. Reviewers will be required to assess whether the proposed outputs are fully-, partially- or not achievable within the given timeframe.	10	10	10
Potential Impact	Particular attention is paid to proposals with the potential to contribute to the strategic goals of the knowledge economy.	5	5	5

7.4 Application Feedback and Disputes

Once the review and assessment processes have been completed and the funding decision recommendations have been approved by the Executive Director: HICD, applicants are notified of the outcome whether positive or negative. The Reviews and Evaluation Department will notify unsuccessful applicants together with feedback from the peer review panel process. GMSA will notify successful applicants of the funding awarded towards the successful proposal.

Any disputes resulting from the review process or contractual arrangements will be resolved according to the provisions in the contractual agreement. The level of resolution will depend on the nature and complexity of the dispute.

The following escalation process will be followed in resolving disputes:

- Review Officer: RE
- Executive Director: RE

7.5 Accountability within NRF

The NRF operates a matrix management system with a centralised GMSA Directorate responsible for administering and managing grants across a wide portfolio of funding instruments.

The Executive Director: HICD is accountable for the Thuthuka Funding Instrument, and the Director: HICD is responsible for the management of the objectives of the Funding Instrument.

Responsibility for the effective management and administration of the Thuthuka grants rests with the Director: GMSA, who is accountable to the Executive Director: GMSA.

8 Grantholder Responsibilities

8.1 Reporting

Continued funding beyond the first year is dependent on the submission of a Budget Motivation and a PR to the NRF each grant year. Continued funding will be considered based on satisfactory progress.

A Final Report must be submitted after the last year of a cycle. This includes grantholders that have missed the Budget Motivation deadline in any year, or after the completion of the project. Financial reporting on the project should be completed by the institution's Financial Officer at the end of the duration of the award.

NB: This should be read in conjunction with Section 4.1 of this document (Funding Duration) as well as the CoG that needs to be signed by the Grantholder and the Institution in order for the Grant to be valid.

8.2 Managing Changes during the Project Life Cycle

Changes may occur during the project life cycle due to unforeseen or extenuating circumstances. Please note the following on how to manage the award and subsequent changes (planned or unanticipated) should they arise during the project life cycle.

8.2.1 Change Requests

8.2.1.1 Prior Approval Requests

All change requests must be preceded by prior NRF approval submitted in writing to the GMSA at least three days before the proposed change. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office.

8.2.1.2 Grantholder change

The Thuthuka Funding Instrument does not allow a grantholder change. Should there be such a request the new nominated researcher should submit this project as a new application for assessment.

Exclusions:

Thuthuka grantholders in the PhD Track working on their doctoral dissertation may not transfer their grant to another grantholder.

8.2.1.3 Changes in project scope

Changes may occur where a project scope needs to be modified from the original research proposal/project design. The request must have institutional DA endorsement and be submitted to the NRF via the Research Office. Grantholders should notify the GMSA in writing of the proposed changes as soon as possible.

8.3 Scientific Compliance

8.3.1 Methodology

The grantholder takes scientific responsibility for the research to be undertaken, including its objectives and the methodology outlined in the project proposal. The grantholder is required to devote the necessary time to the research project in compliance with the work plan for the research proposal approved by the NRF so as to achieve the project's stated aims and objectives.

8.3.2 Intellectual Property Rights

The intellectual capital generated by NRF funded research must be appropriately protected and exploited for the benefit of South Africa. This condition should not interfere with the Intellectual Property Rights arrangements already made, on condition that the majority of the benefits arising

from the intellectual capital accrue to South Africa and its citizens. This condition is aligned with the *Intellectual Property Rights Act,*[1] which will override this Condition of Grant.

8.3.3 Ethics

A grantholder is required to maintain the highest ethical and safety standards in conducting the research, particularly when human and animal subjects are involved. It remains the responsibility of the project leader to comply with all relevant regulations in this regard, including those of the institution at which the research is carried out. An ethical clearance certificate (where applicable) must be submitted to the NRF in respect of successful applications before funding can be released.

8.3.4 Access to Data

The data generated from the proposed research must become available to other researchers working in the same field. Therefore, it is important that the data is provided to domain specific databases or, in the absence thereof, to the South African Data Archive (SADA).

8.4 Supervision

In the PhD Track, the grantholder AND the appointed supervisor have a commitment to the grantholder's nominated students working on the NRF-funded project. Grantholders must ensure that students receive adequate supervisory support to undertake project-related research that contributes towards the degree for which the students are registered. Grantholders are required to submit an APR on the NRF electronic submission system detailing both project and student related progress during the given funding year. Failure to comply with this requirement, or submission of a report that the NRF considers inadequate, may lead to the suspension or termination of the research grant.

8.5 Premature Termination

If a grantholder is unable to complete a research project for which the NRF has awarded a grant, it is the responsibility of the grantholder, through the institution's DA, to notify the Director: GMSA of the intention to prematurely terminate the project. Premature termination of a research project may occur for a number of reasons. Taking into account the circumstances and reasons for termination the grantholder, in consultation with the NRF, will decide on the best course of action and possible outcomes including, but not limited to, the final termination of the project and the recall of funds expensed. Irrespective of the decision taken, the grantholder is required to submit a Final Report to the NRF. The grantholder must ensure that each student involved in or directly linked to the project completes a progress report on their research project, which should be endorsed by the grantholder and the institution's DA. These progress reports will be used in considering any further applications for NRF funding to complete the work, according to the criteria applicable to the Funding Instrument to which any such application is submitted.

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[1] RSA (2008). Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act 51 of 2008. *Government Gazette,* 22 Dec 2008. Vol 522, no three1745.

9 Contact Details

Director: GMSA

Mrs Thashni Pillay: Emerging Researchers
Telephone: (012) 481 4142
E‑mail address: thashni.pillay@nrf.ac.za

Acting Professional Officer: GMSA

Miss Zodwa Mahlangu
Telephone: (012) 481 4114
E‑mail address: Zodwa.mahlangu@nrf.ac.za

Project Team Member: GMSA

Miss Malebo Mohlala
Telephone: (012) 481 4121
E‑mail address: Malebo.Mohlala@nrf.ac.za

The Professional Officer is responsible for the coordination of grant administration processes and management of Thuthuka grants.

The GMSA directorate processes all grant applications, and is responsible for the administration and management of grants. Full details of application procedures, eligibility and funding guidelines are explained in this document.

For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours (08:00-16:30), on:

Tel: (012) 481-4202
E‑mail address: Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za