



***AFRICAN ORIGINS PLATFORM (AOP)***

***FUNDING INSTRUMENT***

**KNOWLEDGE ADVANCEMENT AND SUPPORT**

**Framework Document and Funding Guide**

**May 2018**

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

<b>CV</b>	<b>Curriculum Vitae</b>
<b>DST</b>	<b>Department of Science and Technology</b>
<b>GMSA</b>	<b>Grant Management and Systems Administration</b>
<b>KAS</b>	<b>Knowledge Advancement and Support</b>
<b>NRF</b>	<b>National Research Foundation</b>
<b>PI</b>	<b>Principal Investigator</b>
<b>RE</b>	<b>Reviews and Evaluation</b>
<b>RISA</b>	<b>Research and Innovation Support and Advancement</b>
<b>SADA</b>	<b>South African Data Archive</b>
<b>SADC</b>	<b>Southern African Development Community</b>

# **1 FUNDING INSTRUMENT TITLE AND DESCRIPTION**

## **1.1 Funding instrument title**

The African Origins Platform Funding Instrument

## **1.2 Description of Funding Instrument**

The African Origins Platform (AOP) is a discipline-specific funding instrument which supports research and associated human capacity development in the palaeosciences<sup>1</sup>. South Africa's obvious geographic advantage in palaeontological, palaeoanthropological and archaeological research necessitates that the country emerges as a globally leading center for research excellence in these fields of study.

As a competitive funding instrument, the chief eligibility criteria are:

- **Research in the palaeosciences, widely defined;**
- **Alignment with the research and public engagement goals as detailed in the 2012 South African Strategy for the Palaeosciences (The Palaeo Strategy);**
- **Scientific merit and quality of the research proposal;**
- **Scientific, societal and/or environmental impact of the proposed research**
- **Evidence of and or clear plans for associated human capacity development**

The Palaeo Strategy highlights 5 goals, and outlines implementation plans for each. The implementation plans represent the Department of Science and Technology's (DST) aims to widen the reach of the field of palaeosciences to ensure a better understanding of the story of life on Earth. This includes the story of humankind, which is an important endeavour for nation-building. The African Origins Platform represents a grouping of interventions that support some of these strategic goals, thus facilitating palaeosciences advancement in South Africa. The strategic goals of the Palaeo Strategy are as follows:

- **To transform the minds of south Africans;**
- **To support the country's universities;**

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<sup>1</sup> Within this framework document the term palaeosciences includes palaeontology, palaeoanthropology, archaeology and related disciplines, unless stated otherwise.

- **To empower museums to increase research;**
- **To resource South Africa's heritage agencies; and**
- **To make SA the destination of choice for palaeo-tourism**

Social Sciences, Law and Humanities applications are especially encouraged, as are applications addressing innovation, defined in the broadest sense. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consider the goals of the Palaeo Strategy and to integrate these innovatively into their research proposals. Proposals that do not integrate one or more of the goals of the Palaeo Strategy will not be prioritized for funding.

### **1.3 African Engagements**

Within the context of the above, the African Origins Platform funding instrument will ring-fence **a total of R 1 000 000 per year (R 3 000 000 for the funding period)** for research or research-based activities and the associated human capacity development in collaboration with African counterparts. Applications will comply with all the eligibility criteria and rules of participation detailed for the African Origins Platform funding instrument, with the exceptions noted below. This allocation has been set aside by the Department of Science and Technology to contribute towards the support of African palaeosciences research and to create an enabling environment for South African researchers to engage with their African counterparts in the field. Successful applications will show evidence of a coordinated and proactive engagement with counterparts on the African continent (outside of South Africa). Applications conducting research in SADC countries will be prioritized.

**Applicants wanting to access this ring-fenced funding should note the following:**

- As with the African Origins Platform funding instrument, the main tenet of the programme is on research and training;
- The allocation includes student bursaries. As such, the total application cannot exceed R 1 000 000 per year;
- The allocation is **only** for the financial support for researchers based in or associated with South African institutions (and as per conditions of eligibility) and students based at public research institutions that are recognised by directive of

the Minister of Science and Technology. These include mainly, Public Universities, Museums and Science Councils.

**In addition to the funding categories outlined in Section 5.2, successful applicants accessing this ring-fenced funding will be eligible to apply for:**

- Controlled access to fossil sites, collections and data within South Africa or in the rest of Africa;
- Conferences, seminars and/or workshops within the African continent; and
- Per diem costs for African collaborators and students, when these are in South Africa

**Applicants wanting to access this ring-fenced funding will NOT be eligible to apply for the following:**

- Research-related costs for African collaborators;
- Salaries or stipend costs for African collaborators
- Bursaries or stipend costs for students not registered at a recognized South African institution as detailed above.

**Applicants wanting to access this ring-fenced funding MUST indicate this on the online application form as part of the application title**

## **2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The National Research Foundation (NRF) recognises that in order for South Africa to be internationally competitive and to meaningfully contribute to the global economy, the country must have the capability to understand the knowledge produced by others. This understanding can best be developed through performing research. Publicly funded basic and applied research is viewed as a source of new ideas, opportunities, methods, and most importantly, the means through which problem solvers can be trained.

The AOP Funding Instrument supports the objectives of the Palaeo Strategy, the core of which lies in the development of human capital, skills and infrastructure to provide a

comprehensive approach to the advancement of the field of the palaeosciences. The AOP has the potential to bring unparalleled opportunities for cutting edge research, African and other international collaboration, innovative teaching and training programmes, and the development of early career researchers. The AOP is also uniquely placed to facilitate the public understanding of the story of life on Earth, and to contribute to nation-building by detailing the story of humankind in a way that appeals to all sectors of society. This, in turn, will stimulate an interest in palaeosciences, which will stimulate *inter alia* palaeo-tourism, thus contributing directly to poverty alleviation through job creation.

### **3 STRATEGIC CONTEXT**

The mandate of the NRF is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and development in all fields of science and technology, including indigenous knowledge and thereby to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people of the Republic (NRF Act, 1998). In support of its purpose, the *NRF Strategy 2020* aims at two strategic outcomes, namely, *a vibrant and globally connected national system of innovation, and a representative research and technical workforce* targeting the following four strategic goals:

- A scientifically literate and engaged society;
- World-class benchmarking and grant making systems;
- An internationally competitive and transformed research system; and
- Leading edge research and infrastructure platform.

#### **3.1 Environmental scan**

The AOP funding instrument resonates with the NRF mandate by promoting and supporting research through funding and the associated human capital development, in so doing being cognisant of the role that research plays in the innovation and the commercialisation value chain, and hence the socio-economic development of the country and the improved quality of life of all the people of the Republic.

### **3.2 Objectives**

The objectives of the funding instrument are:

- To contribute to knowledge production about South Africa's palaeosciences in the Natural Sciences, Social Sciences and the Humanities;
- To achieve world-class research in the palaeosciences, including a renewed prioritization of previously identified vulnerable or critical skill areas (as per the 2012 Palaeosciences Strategy);
- To advance or develop paradigms, theories and methodological innovation relating to the palaeosciences;
- To develop a comprehensive pipeline of human capacity in the palaeosciences, from past graduate training to emerging researchers, to established researchers;
- To ensure meaningful public awareness activities so as to raise the national and international visibility of South African palaeosciences research; and
- To develop sustainable and inclusive community engagement activities.

### **3.3 NRF Perspective**

The AOP Funding Instrument is a demand-driven funding instrument; will serve to develop and expand palaeosciences research excellence. This is in line with the NRF's view that support for research is an investment in South Africa's learning capabilities. The funding instrument directly, and in part, addresses the following strategic objectives of the *NRF Strategy 2020*:

- To promote globally competitive research and innovation;
- Provide best practice systems in support of grant making, reviews and evaluations;
- Enhance strategic international engagement;
- Entrench science engagement; and
- Improve talent management



### **3.4 Institutional structure**

The strategic direction of the funding instrument and the finalization of the review panel outcomes are managed by the Knowledge Advancement and Support (KAS) Directorate within the Research and Innovations Support and Advancement (RISA) business unit of the NRF on behalf of the DST. The KAS Directorate is also responsible for the ongoing grant management process once the award process has been completed.

The review process and grant award recommendations are managed by the Reviews and Evaluation (RE) Directorate within RISA. RE is responsible for sourcing postal review reports, selecting panel members, and writing feedback to unsuccessful applicants upon completion of the awards cycle.

The Grant Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) Directorate within RISA is responsible for posting of the research call, managing applications technical queries, the disbursement of grant funds, and ensuring adherence to the conditions of the grant.

### **3.5 Financing support**

Funding for the AOP Funding Instrument is made possible through contract funding from the DST. The DST will fund a three year cycle of research funding from 2019-2021. As a demand driven funding instrument, there is no limit to the amount an applicant can request. Having said this, the financial requests need to be in line with requirements and accurately reflect the financial needs of the proposed work. Excessive budget requests are not well received by the review panels. Applications will be scored according to a scorecard (see **Annexure 1**), and the top scoring applications will be supported until the available resources are exhausted. The financial requirements of the top scoring applications will determine the final number of applications supported. The research budget for the AOP Funding Instrument is approximately R 10 million per annum. This amount includes research related costs **and** student bursaries.

### **3.6 Key stakeholders**

The key stakeholders in this funding instrument are persons doing research in the fields of palaeosciences, based at public research institutions that are recognised by directive of the Minister of Science and Technology. These include mainly, Public Universities, Museums and Science Councils.

### 3.7 Information sources

2002 *South Africa's Research and Development Strategy*

2012 South African Strategy for the Palaeosciences

2013 The Department of Science and Technology. *The ministerial guidelines for improving equity in the distribution of DST/NRF bursaries and fellowships.*

2015 The National Research Foundation. *The National Research Foundation Strategy 2020.*

2015 The National Research Foundation Open Access Statement

2015 The Department of Science and Technology. *Science Engagement Strategy.*

## 4 MODUS OPERANDI

### 4.1 Call for proposals

The AOP Funding Instrument invites applicants to apply to an **OPEN CALL** for a three year funding cycle (2019-2021). Successful applicants will be eligible for funding **for three years (2019-2021)**.

**All application materials must be submitted electronically**

**via the NRF Online Submission System at**

**<https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>**

All applications **must** be endorsed by the research office of the principal investigator before submission to the NRF. It is the responsibility of each applicant to familiarise himself / herself with the **internal closing dates** set by their institution in order to meet the NRF closing date. **Incomplete or late submissions will not be accepted, and without exception will be rejected without review.**

Call opens: 22 May 2018

Call closes: 2 July 2018

## 4.2 Contact details

REFER ALL <u>TECHNICAL</u> QUERIES TO:	REFER ALL <u>OTHER</u> QUERIES TO:
<b>SUPPORT DESK</b>  012 481 4202  <a href="mailto:Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za">Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za</a>	<b>TRACY KLARENBECK</b>  012 481 4177  <a href="mailto:tracy@nrf.ac.za">tracy@nrf.ac.za</a>

## 4.3 Eligibility

- A PhD is not an applicant prerequisite;
- Rated and unrated researchers can apply for three years funding (2019-2021) in this call, note of course the competition principle and criteria of the instrument;
- Applicants must be doing paleontological research and must be employed by public research institutions as recognised by directive of the Minister of Science and Technology;
- Full-time **employees** at recognised research institutions in South Africa are invited to apply;
- Part-time **employees** on contract at recognized research institutions in South Africa may apply, on condition that their appointment is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for in the submission. The length of the contract should be stated in the application form;

Salaries must be paid by the research institution and the primary employment of the individual concerned must be at that institution. A contract researcher appointed at a research institution on behalf of a third party to fulfill a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support.

- Retired academics/researchers, provided that they meet all set criteria as stipulated below:
  - are resident in SA;

- are formally affiliated to a recognised institution e.g., appointed as an emeritus professor, honorary research associate/professor, supernumerary/contract employee;
  - are active researchers with a distinguished track record in research and postgraduate student supervision;
  - are actively mentoring/training postgraduate students/young research staff and
  - the institution ensures that a minimum of 6 months a year is spent at the facility for the purpose of research and research capacity development.
- **Students, including PhD Candidates and Post-doctoral Fellows are NOT eligible to apply** as principal investigators in this call. They may, however, find support for their proposed research by embedding this into applications submitted by eligible principal investigators as detailed above. ***Applications for own degree purposes will not be considered.***

#### 4.4 Application screening

All applications validated by the appropriate designated authority of the institution and submitted before deadline to the NRF via the NRF's Submission system at <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>, are screened by the NRF for compliance with the eligibility criteria and online application requirements. All eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to assessment as detailed in section 4.5 below.

#### 4.5 Application assessment

All eligible and appropriately completed applications are subjected to a competitive review process. The assessment of applications will be the quality of the proposal, as well as by the financial and environmental feasibility. The assessment of applications will be guided by a Panel Assessment Scorecard (**see Annexure 1**), and scored according to the Proposal Grading (**see Annexure 2**). Application assessment will begin by way of a two-tiered process:

- **Postal-peer review**

The remote peer reviewers will be specialists in the ambit of the respective proposals. Requests for written reviews will be solicited electronically from peers located at remote locations from the NRF. Applicants will be required to provide the contact details of between 6 and 10 possible reviewers. It is in the applicant's best interest to ensure that the selected reviewers are aware of the submission, and are thus likely to respond to a request to review. **It is also in the applicant's best interests to ensure that selected reviewers have no possible conflict of interest as such reviews are dismissed without consideration. Such conflicts may be personal or professional.** In addition, the NRF will select appropriate reviewers from the NRF database and other sources, which are updated on a continuous basis. On average, a 30% response rate is achieved by the NRF in the request for self-appointed or NRF-appointed postal peer reviews.

- **Panel-peer review**

Panels will broadly include specialists, selected based both on their respective knowledge in the field, and for their research standing. The NRF has invited international panel members in the past, and may do so pending appropriateness and availability of such participants. The panel meetings will be held in Pretoria. Panel members will deliberate on submitted written reviews and will be expected to offer their own expert opinions.

#### **4.6 Application ranking**

The purpose of the scoring system is to evaluate applications, based on the strategic objectives of the funding instrument. Funding decisions for the AOP Funding Instrument are informed primarily by the accumulative grading the review panel in respect of each assessed application, as per the assessment criteria outlined in **Annexure 1**. Each criterion is weighted, giving an indication of the strategic importance of the criteria. Applications are then ranked in accordance with their overall scores. Applicants are **strongly** advised to consider the assessment criteria and their relative weightings **carefully** when writing their proposals. These are the criteria that will be used to assess

each proposal. The final funding decisions are subject to budget availability. Financial feasibility will form **an essential part** of the assessment process.

#### **4.7 Rules of participation**

##### **a) Principal Investigator**

Only researchers based at NRF recognized research institutions in South Africa (as defined above) are eligible to apply as principal investigators in this funding instrument.

The principal investigator (i.e., the applicant/PI) must be an active researcher who takes intellectual responsibility for the project, its conception, any strategic decisions required in its pursuit, and the communication of results. **An applicant cannot submit an application to this funding instrument for their own degree purposes. The applicant may not submit an application on behalf of a student where the student in the main will be carrying out all the research. Students should be appropriately embedded into the application and are only eligible for support as part of the larger research endeavour.** The PI must have the capacity to make a serious commitment to the project and cannot assume the role of a supplier of resources for work that will largely be placed in the hands of others. S/he will take responsibility for the management and administration of resources allocated to the grant award. S/he will also take responsibility for meeting reporting requirements.

**The research team may also include:**

##### **b) Co-investigators**

A co-investigator (CI) is an **active** researcher who provides **significant** commitment, intellectual input and relevant expertise into the **design and implementation** of the research application. S/he will be involved in all or at least some well-defined research activities within the scope of the application. Only South African-based co-investigators will be eligible for funding in successful grant applications.

**Please note that post-doctoral fellows, students, technical & support staff  
DO NOT  
qualify as co-investigators or collaborators, and should not be listed as such**

**The project may also include:**

**c) Collaborators**

These are individuals or groups who are anticipated to make a relatively small, but meaningful contribution to the research endeavours outlined in the application, but who have not actively participated in the research design. They are not considered a part of the **core** research team, and **are not eligible** for funding in successful grant applications.

**4.8 Data Management**

A formal data management plan is required if and where this is appropriate. This describes the anticipated acquisition or generation of data, as well as how such data will be managed, described, analysed and stored. Importantly, this plan will also describe the mechanisms (including digital data storage) that will be used at the end of the project to share and preserve such data. All data management must be in accordance with the NRF Open Access Statement (2015), available at <http://ir.nrf.ac.za/page/policies>.

Successful grant applications are subject to the NRF Conditions of Grant, which clearly outline data storage, usage and dissemination requirements (Section 9):

*“Where the Lead Institution decides that the NRF funded research outputs should not be protected under Intellectual Property Rights, the Institution shall be obliged to make the necessary arrangements within its powers to ensure the availability of the research output data to the larger research community through existing specific research fields or other generic databases and has complied with national legislation in this regard.*

*All papers that were published in an Open Access journal or other publisher prior to the release of the NRF statement on Open Access to Research Publications may deposit the published version in PDF format, should this be allowed by the publisher, such versions should be deposited into the administering Institutional Repository and Open Access should be provided as soon as possible. In addition, the data supporting the publication should be deposited in an accredited Open Access repository, with the provision of a Digital Object Identifier for future citation and referencing”*

Should the host institution not have a repository, a dataset can be deposited in the NRF's SADA database "as a last resort" or in other international repositories registered at DataCite"

#### **4.9 Science Engagement**

(See [bit.ly/2zHvHsL](https://bit.ly/2zHvHsL) for the DST's Science Engagement Strategy)

The NRF supports science engagement through its coordination and implementation of the DST's Science Engagement Strategy. The strategy embraces a broad understanding of science, encompassing systematic knowledge spanning natural and physical sciences, engineering sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities, technology, all aspects of the innovation chain and indigenous knowledge. Within this context, science engagement refers to activities, events, or interactions characterised by mutual learning and dialogue among people of varied backgrounds, scientific expertise and life experiences, who articulate and discuss their perspectives, ideas, knowledge and values. Science engagement is an overarching term for all aspects of public engagement with science, science awareness, science education, science communication and science outreach, which aim to develop and benefit individuals and society. Researchers funded through the NRF programmes are required to contribute to science engagement and report the related outputs in their project's Annual Performance Report".

#### **4.10 Timelines**

Successful AOP grants will be awarded for a period of no more than three years (2019-2021) on condition that all NRF grant conditions are met

#### **4.11 Management of funding instrument**

The Knowledge Advancement and Support Directorate of the NRF – Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) manages the AOP funding instrument, and is responsible for:

- Strategic oversight and management of the funding instrument;
- Conceptualizing and developing the funding instrument;
- Coordinating and facilitating activities of the funding instrument;



- Compiling funding instrument research and evaluation reports;
- Stakeholder engagement; and
- Ensuring that the funding instruments delivers on its intended goal(s).

The RE Directorate is responsible for managing the adjudication process including:

- sourcing of reviewers both for remote reviews and panels;
- managing the peer review process;
- organizing and managing the review panels; and
- providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants

The GMSA Directorate is responsible for

- Managing the call process, that is,
  - Posting the call;
  - Receiving the applications;
- Coordinating and facilitating the granting processes
- Managing the granting including the administration of awards;
- Administering grant payments; and
- Ensuring adherence to conditions of grants

#### **4.7 Lines of authority**

The funding instrument Director in the KAS Directorate generally manages the AOP funding instrument with the assistance of a Professional Officer. Where and when appropriate, a call may be managed by a specially appointed Project Leader supported by Project team of staff drawn from RE, GMSA; Science Engagement; Knowledge Management and others. The Director responsible for this instrument reports to the Executive Director of the KAS Directorate. Directors from GMSA and RE will normally manage the granting and review processes, respectively with the assistance of Professional and Liaison Officers. The Directors in both the GMSA and the RE report to their respective Executive Directors

## 5 FINANCIALS

### 5.1 Funding model

The grants of this funding instrument are primarily for **research purposes** and development of associated human resources under the auspices of the NRF standard grant and finance policies. The money is released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her employing institution. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions. Additional funding to support people with disabilities as per the Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities as in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998 may be requested under the AOP funding instrument.

### 5.2 Funding categories

The application assessment process will consider proposed budget items in terms of cost, risk and reward ratios. The NRF online submissions system uses a single template for all research grants. Please note that the definitions in this document will be strictly adhered to in the adjudication and award process. All awards will be made in line with the detailed AOP funding rules and guidelines as outlined below. Although specific funding categories are outlines in the application form, awards will be collapsed into 5 categories: running, research equipment, support personnel (non-students) and student bursaries on the award letters. The detailed budget is required during the assessment process Successful applications will receive funding that accommodates the following broad financial categories:

- Research-related operating costs;
- Equipment;
- Technical skills personnel;
- Grant holder-linked student support; and
- Early career advancement.

#### **Research-related operating costs**

- **Materials and Supplies**

Support for the running expenses of the proposed application. These items would be used in the normal course of operations in all fields of palaeo-related research.

The AOP funding instrument **does not** provide financial support for the following:

- basic office equipment including computers;
- photocopying or printing costs;
- Journal publication costs, subscription costs, books;
- Telephone, airtime, fax and internet costs.

**These restrictions do not apply to a PI and/or CI's based at a museum.**

- **Research equipment**

**Small** equipment requests of no more than R 200 000 per proposal will be considered. Larger equipment requirements should be submitted through the NRF's National Equipment Programme.

- **Research/ Technical/ *ad hoc* Assistants**

Requests for technical/*ad hoc* assistance under research-related operating costs should be **treated with caution**. Generally the AOP funding instrument strongly encourages applicants to engage senior students to undertake the research. The commissioning of research consultants is strongly discouraged within this funding instrument, and will only be considered when **highly specialized research/technical expertise** is required to fill an essential skills gap. Successful technical assistance requests will be **CLEARLY** motivated for in the proposal.

**Please note: Administrative assistance does not qualify as technical assistance.**

- **Local travel**

Support for **research-** and **fieldwork-related** travel as directly related to the proposed application for the PI, the CI's and the students directly supported by way of the current application. The mileage rate of the PI's institution will apply. Applicants should provide details of this rate, the estimated distance to be travelled, and how this travel links to the aims and objectives of the proposed research.

- **Local conferences**

This category relates to any conferences held in South Africa that will further the goals of the current application. Participants are required to present a paper or a poster. The

AOP funding instrument generally restricts expenditure against this item to **R5 000 per person** (all costs). The PI, the CI's and postgraduate students directly supported by way of the current application qualify for support. Postgraduate participation is strongly encouraged.

- **International conferences**

This category relates to any conferences held outside of South Africa that will further the goals of the current application. Participants are required to present a paper or a poster. The AOP funding instrument generally restricts international conference support to two conferences per year. The PI, the CI's and postgraduate students directly supported by way of the current application qualify for support. Postgraduate participation is strongly encouraged.

- **International visits**

This category relates to support for a research-related visit to an international institution that will further the goals of the current application. Formal invitations will be required, and applications will be considered on a **case by case** basis. Such visits must be integral to the research plan and strong motivations should accompany these requests. Realistic funding allocations will be based on the requested activities. Only outgoing visits will be considered depending on the availability of funding. The PI, the CI's and postgraduate students directly supported by way of the current application qualify for support. Postgraduate participation is strongly encouraged

- **Visiting scientists**

Visiting scientists may be from South African institutions, or from international institutions. They will be individuals of good standing in their research fields, and must possess specialized skills that contribute to the goals of the current application. Capacity development activities associated with such visits are a requirement for funding under this category.

- **Joint conferences / workshops**

Support for joint conferences or workshops that contribute to the specific goals of the current application will apply for support here. Should there be participants from outside

South Africa, their costs not categorized elsewhere may be accommodated here. A clear motivation including the possible names and roles of participants will be required. This support will be extended to select postgraduate students from outside South Africa if appropriate.

- **Airfare**

Support for national and international economy class air travel for the purposes of furthering the goals of the current application. The PI, the CI's and postgraduate students directly supported by way of the current application qualify for support.

- **Subsistence**

Support for national and international subsistence. The PI, the CI's and postgraduate students directly supported by way of the current application qualify for support.

- **Accommodation**

Support for national and international accommodation. The PI, the CI's and postgraduate students directly supported by way of the current application qualify for support. Accommodation is limited to the cost-equivalent of three-star graded establishments.

- **Lecture replacement**

The AOP funding instrument **does not** provide support for lecture replacement

- **Sabbatical**

The AOP funding instrument **does not** provide support for sabbaticals

### **Technical skills personnel**

Support for full-time technical skills personnel will continue into 2019-2021 so as to enable South African researchers have access to the required technical skills and support personnel in the palaeosciences, thus ensuring their competitiveness in the global arena. Free-standing technical skills personnel **will not** be awarded under the

AOP funding instrument. Consultants **do not** qualify as technical skills personnel under this funding instrument and such requests will not be considered.

Technical skills support in this context will be exclusively for:

- Casting technicians @ R 100 000 pa cost to company (*pro rata* per month);
- Excavators @ R 120 000 pa cost to company (*pro rata* per month);
- Preparators @ R120 000 pa cost to company (*pro rata* per month);
- Rock art tracing/digitization @ R120 000 pa cost to company (*pro rata* per month)

Applicants will quantify their technical skill personnel requirements under the research/tech skills/ad hoc assistants funding category on the NRF online system's application template, but must clearly state that these are technicians in this specific context. The Curriculum Vitae (CV) of each person must accompany the application. **No technical skills personnel funding will be released without the accompanying CV.** The applicant must submit a detailed justification for each position, including how each will be embedded into the current research proposal. The justification must include the impact each individual will make on both research and human capacity development within the proposed research proposal. Applicants may request new or recurring technical skills awards for the award period.

#### **Grant holder-linked student support**

Grant holder-linked student support will be awarded in accordance with eligibility criteria as detailed in the **Ministerial Guidelines for Improving Equity in the Distribution of DST/NRF Bursaries and Fellowships** (January 2013). Distributions as detailed below will be measured across all successful applications, and will not be assessed within individual applications. A severely skewed distribution in an individual application may, however, disqualify a successful application for support. Applicants that do not include student participation will not be prioritized in this funding instrument. Student participation via other funding streams must be detailed if grant holder-linked bursaries are not requested. Overall the expectation is that 30% of the allocation be made to grant holder linked bursaries in the AOP funding instrument.

**The equity distribution for grant holder-linked bursaries is targeted at:**

- 80% Black
- 55% Female
- 4% Disabled

**The citizenship distribution for grant holder-linked bursaries is targeted at:**

- 87% South African (including permanent residents)
- 5% SADC
- 4% Rest of the African continent
- 4% Non-African

The awarding of postdoctoral fellowships will be **guided by**, but **not governed by**, these equity and citizenship targets.

**Support values are as follows:**

- **Student Assistantships (South African citizens only)**

Honours / BTech (Full-time)                      R 60 000 pa    Max 1 year

- **Bursaries & Fellowships**

Masters degree (Full-time)                      R 90 000 pa    Max 2 years

Doctoral degree (Full-time)                      R 120 000 pa    Max 3 years

Postdoctoral (*pro rata* per month)              R 220 000 pa    Max 2 years

The appointment of new Doctoral students and Postdoctoral Fellows in the final year of award (i.e.2021) will not be allowed.

**Early career advancement:**

The DST has acknowledged an urgent need to radically increase the number of women and people from previously disadvantaged groups entering the South African science system. In addition, a significant increase in the number of research active

palaeoscientists employed in the public and private sectors is required to sustainably develop this research field. In an attempt to create enabling conditions which allow the field to make a significant contribution to the knowledge economy, the DST has made provision for a palaeosciences transformation instrument to address some of the abovementioned issues, and to meaningfully support early career advancement of women generally, and specifically individuals from designated groups. These fellowships will only be awarded to individuals in possession of a PhD. This allocation is designed to create employment for individuals who wish to pursue a research career path in the palaeosciences under the guidance of the PI and his/her academic department. Successful candidates will be placed in a position to develop their research and teaching experience, and to improve their chances of employment in the science and technology system.

Such grants will be managed via the principal investigator who will take responsibility for mentoring such candidates, and will report annually on their progress. Such candidates will be expected to conduct research, teach where appropriate, and publish in recognized peer-reviewed journals.

Early career transformation candidate	R350 000 stipend + R 100 000 research costs
	Max 3 years

The appointment of **new** early career transformation candidates will not be allowed in year 2 and 3 of the award (ie. 2020 and 2021 respectively).

Successful AOP applicants who request early career transformation candidates will be required to submit a motivation to the NRF once a suitable candidate has been identified. The NRF will award such allocations on the basis of the strategic objectives of the initiative. It is anticipated that between 5 and 9 positions can be created. Once approved, the institution will need to furnish proof of employment.

### **5.3 Funding instrument budget**

The AOP is made possible through contract funding from the DST. Approximately R 10 million per annum will be available for all new applications in this call. The allocation of



funds to the AOP funding instrument is **demand-driven**, and as such, **maximum or minimum financial limits do not apply**. Some research is expensive, whilst other research may be less so. The number of applications that will be supported overall will depend on the financial requirements of successful applications and the availability of financial. If successful applications have high financial requirements, fewer applications will be supported. This may result in fundable applications not receiving support (“fundable but not funded”).

#### **5.4 Financial control and reporting**

Upon receipt of the signed Conditions of Grant letter, the NRF will release the funds for research related operating costs (including technical skills allocations with accompanying CV’s) for the year. Funds which have been awarded within the student categories will be released upon receipt of the relevant nomination forms. Funds which have been awarded within the early career transformation initiative will be released once the motivation letters have been considered by the NRF. Grant holders are then required to comply with the standard NRF financial management procedures, including the submission of Annual Progress Reports. These are to be **submitted by the 15<sup>th</sup> February** of the following year, and are a prerequisite for the release of the subsequent year’s funding. Failure to submit the Annual Progress Report will result in the cancellation of the grant award.

### **6 MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT**

The Reviews and Evaluation Directorate of the NRF is responsible for facilitating the external monitoring and evaluating of the AOP funding instrument.

#### **6.1 Reporting**

The funding instrument Director is responsible for reporting quarterly on the contribution of the AOP funding instrument to the KFD Directorate’s Key Performance Indicators. In addition, the funding instrument Director is responsible for reviewing and reporting to the DST annually on the progress of the funding instrument.

## **6.2. Timeframes for programme review**

The AOP will be evaluated by an appropriate external reviewer as appointed by the RE Directorate. In consultation with the RE Directorate, RISA will determine and set timeframes for the review, when deemed appropriate, or in line with existing NRF policies and guidelines.

## **6.3 Broad terms of reference for the programme review**

The broad terms of reference for the programme review of the AOP will be determined by RISA with preliminary input by the KAS Directorate, and will be in accordance with tenets set in the RE Directorate's Guidelines.

## **6.4 Utilisation of programme review findings and recommendations**

The results of an evaluation will be used in line with the purposes set out in the Terms of Reference for that specific evaluation. Evaluation results will also be used for funding instrument improvement and development.

## ANNEXURE 1 AOP Panel Assessment Scorecard

Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Details	Score / 4	Weight
<b>Proposal</b>	Scientific merit and feasibility	Reflect on the proposed rationale, approach and methodology  Is the proposal feasible as proposed?  Has knowledge of relevant literature been adequately articulated?		30%
<b>Alignment</b>	Strategic alignment	Does the proposal align with the MARS strategy generally and with the Marine Research Plan specifically?		10%
<b>Equity</b>	Of applicant	Race / Gender / Years post PhD <sup>2</sup>		10%
<b>Transformation</b>	Early career researchers/ postgraduates	Reflect on the historical compliance with transformational objectives		10%
<b>Science Engagement</b>	Plans for science engagement	Is there evidence of a science engagement strategy?  Are the appropriate target groups adequately articulated?		10%
<b>Impact</b>	Impact on knowledge production	Will the proposed work <b>significantly</b> advance discovery in the field?		10%
	Wider Impact	Has economic/ societal/ environmental impact been embedded in the proposal?  Is it clear how such impact will be measured?		10%
<b>Data management and use</b>	Plans for digital data storage, usage and/or dissemination	Has appropriate consideration been given to digital data storage, usage and/or dissemination beyond the immediate project team?		10%
			<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

<sup>2</sup> This score is predetermined in accordance with an NRF-approved scale – see Annexure 3

## ANNEXURE 2: Proposal Grading

Proposal Grading: African Origins Platform		
Score	Meaning of score	Notes
4	Excellent	Application demonstrates evidence of outstanding performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
3	Above average	Above average performance across all criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
2	Average	Application demonstrates average performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
1	Below average	Below average performance across all the criteria, as determined by panel and relative to knowledge field
00	Poor	There are major shortcomings or flaws within and across the stated criteria, with <b>particular emphasis</b> on the scientific/scholarly merit
<p><b>Context:</b></p> <p>Proposal grading is done with sensitivity to the context within which each application is submitted. The score of each criterion for each application will be contextualised to accommodate variability in such things as knowledge fields, institutional capacity, etc. Should a criterion not be applicable to a specific application (e.g. plans for digital data storage; collaborations; etc.), the weighting of that specific criteria will be made to equal zero, and the overall score normalised.</p>		

### ANNEXURE 3      Preset equity scores

<b>Equity Status</b>	<b>Preset Equity Score</b>
Disabled	4
Black female; Black male, young <sup>3</sup>	4
Black male, not young	3
White female, young	3
White female, not young	2
White male, young	2
White male, not young	1

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<sup>3</sup> "Young" refers to 5 years post-PhD as per the applicant's CV. Applicants will be classified as "young" if their graduation date is less than 5 years prior to the date of assessment.