



RISA

Research and Innovation
Support and Advancement

Funding Instrument: Infrastructure Bridging Funding

Functional Domain: Human and Infrastructure Capacity
Development
Grants Management and Systems
Administration

Document: Strategic Framework & Funding Guide

Date: February 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Strategic Context and Background.....	3
2. Objectives	4
3. Scope.....	4
4. Proposal Requirements	5
5. Funding	6
6. Financial Control	6
7. Application Process	6

1. Strategic Context and Background

The National Research Foundation (NRF), through a range of funding instruments, supports the acquisition, upgrade and development of research infrastructure at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Science Councils (SCs), museums, and other NRF recognised research institutions such as Necsa. However, several challenges have been encountered during the implementation phase of each of these programmes. Major challenges include:

- The lack of financial resources available to the research institution to support the infrastructural requirements to house the newly procured research equipment;
- The acquisition of additional research equipment to support the current research infrastructure;
- Unscheduled power outages, access by multi-users and unforeseen / unplanned events that may arise during installation or usage of equipment undoubtedly results in the malfunctioning and breakage of some of the components of the equipment, which is both costly and deprives the research community of access time;
- The equipment is custom made to the grantholder's research requirements and hence has a long lead-time before equipment is fully installed and commissioned; and
- The financial burden placed on the research institute to contribute to a third of the funding requirements towards the purchase of state-of-the-art research equipment.

In light of the aforementioned challenges, the NRF has implemented a Bridging Funding Initiative in the form of the Infrastructure Bridging Funding. The Infrastructure Bridging Funding makes available, non-interest bearing bridging funding to a maximum value of **R5 million and depending on the size of the NRF grants per institution**, to support the physical infrastructural requirements needed to support either the acquisition or upgrade to state-of-the art research equipment or platform research projects in strategic areas.

The rationale behind the Infrastructure Bridging Funding Initiative is to make advance NRF funds to support the university community in terms of infrastructure required to extend the boundaries of science, engineering and technology in South Africa. This financial risk must therefore be guaranteed by the institution in terms of the full repayment of the bridging funding within the stipulated 12-month time frame.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Infrastructure Bridging Funding Initiative are to:

- Support the South African public universities and all public research institutions that are listed as NRF approved beneficiaries including science councils, national facilities, public laboratories as well as corporations such as Necsa, with the establishment of suitable infrastructure needed for large pieces of research equipment funded through other NRF mechanisms;
- Prevent the delay in the deployment of research equipment due to infrastructural constraints that arise from a shortage of cash or inadequate cash flow; and
- Support the acquisition of research equipment to enhance the research infrastructure capacity at the universities.

3. Scope

Proposals for the Infrastructure Bridging Funding shall be submitted to the NRF by the Research Office of the South African public research institution. As these awards effectively place a financial risk on the institution, the conditions of funding will need to be completed and approved by the following parties representing the institution:

- **Research Management:** Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (or equivalent); and
- **Research Institution:** Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent).

The proposals for funding may include requests in support of:

- The upgrade and refurbishments of existing research facilities and/or laboratories to support the housing of equipment in line with the proposed institutional research development infrastructure (RDI);
- The acquisition of additional research equipment to support the current research infrastructure; and
- The acquisition of advanced computer workstations necessary for the promotion of world-class research.

Laptops for routine office work, travel grants for user-training workshops and other human capacity related initiatives **may not** be included.

The funds made available through this non-interest bearing bridging funding **must be expensed**, according to the institution's proposed plan, within the year that the funds are awarded. The non-interest bearing bridging funding, however, is repayable, in full, to the NRF

by 25 March of the year immediately after bridging funding was made available to the public research institution.

If the institution is unable to pay back the full value of the bridging funding awarded, within the stipulated timeframe, then

- The institution will be disqualified from further participation in this Funding Instrument; and
- The total outstanding amount will be recovered either from future grants awarded to the institution or the grant deposit made to the institution.

4. Proposal Requirements

For the proposal to be considered, it must contain the following information:

- Willingness to participate in a full NRF audit;
- Description and justification for the proposed research infrastructure;
- Impact of the research infrastructure on the following:
 - Research infrastructure that supports the acquisition and/or upgrade to state-of-the-art research equipment procured from the NRF suite of infrastructure grants;
 - Research infrastructure for other equipment, placed at different departments at the research institute;
 - Research initiatives across research fields at the research institute;
 - Research infrastructure that will assist the institution in building research capacity; and
 - Research infrastructure that will be utilised to train students at postgraduate level and in particular disabled, black and female students.
- A work plan that describes:
 - Details of the project leader;
 - A description of the proposed work (deliverables);
 - Time frames for the completion of work;
 - Detailed budget;
 - Maintenance and operation of the research infrastructure; and
 - Identified and committed sources for loan repayment.

All proposals must be submitted by the specified date and will be evaluated by an NRF convened panel, prior to decisions for bridging funding being communicated to the successful institutions. Late applications will not be considered unless otherwise decided by the NRF.

5. Funding

A total budget of approximately R50 million will be made available to support the development of infrastructure associated with the purchase and installation of equipment through this funding instrument. A maximum of one application per institution is applicable. Repayment of the non-interest bearing bridging funding is due no later than **25 March** of the following calendar year to the NRF.

6. Financial Control

The Infrastructure Bridging Funding will only be made available to South African public research institutions. The Conditions of Funding (CoF) will apply strictly, including the stipulated date of the full payment of the funds back to the NRF. Failure to adhere to the CoF will disqualify the institution from participating in the funding initiative and the total outstanding amount will be recovered either from future grants awarded to the institution or the grant deposit made to the institution. The NRF reserves the right to make at least one site visit to inspect progress of the work in relation to the approved proposal.

7. Application Process

The Call for Infrastructure Bridging Funding Initiative applications will be open from **21 February 2017 to 14 March 2017**.

The application process will be accessible online at <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za> from **Tuesday, 21 February 2017**. Applicants are advised to complete their proposals as soon as possible to prevent an IT system overload nearer the closing date.

The application will need the endorsement of the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) or Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (or equivalent) for internal institutional authorisation and approval. ***Late applications will not be considered without NRF prior approval.***

The NRF will not process applications that are incomplete, contain insufficient or incorrect detail, or fail to follow instructions; therefore such applications will be rejected. 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.***

The NRF assumes that the Deputy Vice Chancellor Research (or equivalent) or the Chief Financial Officer (or equivalent) through the respective DAs are satisfied with the contents of all proposals validated and submitted, and that the institution approves and supports the application for Bridging Funding.

NRF Contacts for Enquiries:

Ms Mpai Motsei	Ms Rebecca Sibiya
Telephone: (012) 481-4078 PO: GMSA e-mail: mpai.motsei@nrf.ac.za	Telephone: (012) 481-4333 PO: HICD e-mail: mmatshepo.molubi@nrf.ac.za
Mr Raven Jimmy	
Telephone: (012) 481-4069 Director: GMSA e-mail: raven@nrf.ac.za	
National Research Foundation (NRF) P O Box 2600 PRETORIA 0001	