

2015/16-2017/18 Application Guide for Research and Technology Fund



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1. Background

1.1 Strategic context

The Department of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) has established the Research and Technology Fund (RTF) as a vehicle to optimise DAFF's investment in research and improve coordination of efforts within the research system. Some of the challenges to be addressed by RTF, which require science-based solutions, include:

- Maintaining the competitiveness of the sector for commercialization and foreign markets;
- Degradation of natural resources associated with climate change;
- Low productivity by the small holder farmers;
- Policy and institutional arrangements which inhibit growth and development of the sector; and
- Develop/sustaining a pool of skilled professionals involved in R&D.

The National Agricultural Research and Development Strategy was a key guiding document for the establishment of the RTF. The RTF will initially be investing through the following two funding models which are detailed in section 2 below:

- i) Co-funding model (CoFM); and
- ii) Competitive funding model (CompFM).

1.2 Goals

The RTF aims to contribute to the following strategic goals:

- Improve the funding mechanism for research and innovation;
- Develop capacity building research partnerships;
- Develop new technologies to support small-holder cooperatives in agriculture, forestry and fisheries technically and in terms of market requirements; and
- Conduct commodity-specific research to support improved products in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries sectors.

2. Funding modalities

The two types of funding models to be availed through RTF are the CoFM and CompFM. In broad strokes, the difference between the two is that the CoFM-supported projects' research topic and area will primarily be directed by the industrial partners who will also be co-funding these, while the CompFM projects will be funded from RTF fund without necessarily receiving co-funding from any industrial partners. In the latter case (CompFM), the selected projects' research topic and area will be informed by the DAFF priorities. It is anticipated that there will be linkages between the two RTF funding models, where projects from the CompFM will move to the CoFM or to other technology funding instruments such as the Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme (THRIP), after completion of the first cycle of funding.

2.1. Co-funding model

The core purpose of CoFM is to promote public-private partnerships in research and development. It will provide a collaborative platform for government to address

challenges faced by the industry in the sectors and to improve the funding mechanism for research and innovation. Under this mechanism mandatory funding commitment from the industry will be required as a condition for funding of projects by RTF. This cost sharing mechanism with industry will be on a non-standardized formula, i.e. with no requirement for a particular modality of cost-sharing in terms of matching, forward-sliding or backward-sliding (i.e. where government specifically concedes greater funding responsibility than the industry). RTF will at its own discretion consider meeting the need for additional funding for the project.

2.2. Competitive funding model

CompFM will consider supporting projects that will be carried out by eligible agencies, or institutions/universities based on, among others, a judgement on their ability to undertake the research project. Extensive collaboration is important for projects funded under this model. At least one historically disadvantaged HEI (see list in **Annexure 1**) and at least one small-holder cooperative (refer to DAFF website for more detail) should be involved for any project to be supported.

3. Funding criteria and rules

Table 1 – A listing of the minimum criteria for funding of projects and their respective applicability for the two funding models. The “X” indicates that the specific applies.

NB: The review panel will determine the extent of importance of the areas below in each funding model.

Specific	CoFM	CompFM
3.1. Nature of project:		
The project must be in agriculture, forestry and fisheries whose outputs must make a significant contribution towards improving the industrial partner’s competitive edge/agricultural entity’s social stability.	X	X
The project must have clearly defined scientific, or technology, or appropriate systems outputs. Furthermore, the project must lead to development of a prototype (product, process, technique, methodology) to benefit the industry partners/small-holder cooperatives /targeted communities. This could include new seed varieties, the development of new cultivars, genotypes, animal feed rations, production and marketing strategies, etc.	X	X
The project should lead to the transfer of outputs to small-holder cooperatives /targeted communities. Support for professional development and small-holder technology needs will also be the basis for funding.	X	X
The project should be led by a researcher employed by a University/ Science Council. In the case of researchers at DAFF research centres, they must collaborate with researchers at University/Science	X	X

Specific		CoFM	CompFM
Council (Referrals to appropriate researchers could be obtained from RTF secretariat at the NRF.)			
Each project must have at least one student at postgraduate level participating.		X	X
3.2. Research Themes and Priority areas to be addressed			
Research Theme	Priority research area		
Efficiencies and improved or enhanced productive system	Grains (Maize, Wheat, Sorghum, Millet)	X	X
	Fruits and Vegetables (Potatoes, Beans)	X	X
	Livestock (Cattle, Goats, Sheep)	X	X
	Food safety management systems	X	X
	Poultry –/feeds and energy efficiency	X	X
	Fisheries	X	X
	Aquaculture- /feed and disease management	X	X
Mechanization, post-harvest and value-addition	Industrial Crops (Natural fibres, biocomposite materials)	X	X
	Soya beans value chain	X	X
	Bio-economy: Bio-energy and biofuels feed stock	X	X
Sustainable natural resources use and management	Biodiversity and resilient ecosystem services	X	X
	Land and land use management	X	X
	Irrigation and water management	X	X
	Containment and management of degraded areas	X	X
	Conservation practices	X	X
Climate Change	Adaptation options	X	X
	Mitigation options	X	X
3.3. Outcomes to be achieved:			
Food security within South Africa		X	X

Specific	CoFM	CompFM
Market access and profitability	X	X
Improve global competitiveness, commercialization, value addition and agro-processing for specific commodities	X	X
Empowerment programmes and technology transfer to address the needs of smallholder farmers	X	X
Protection and enhancement of natural resources.	X	X
Contribute to an increase in the number and quality of people with appropriate skills in the development and management of technology for the industry	X	X
Improve collaboration networks among research institutions	X	X
3.4. Funding contribution and levels from RTF:		
Compulsory co-funding with industry partner's contribution being at least 20% of the project budget	X	
Will be funded to a maximum total of R650,000.00 per grant holder for the duration of a funding cycle (i.e. a period of up to 3 years).		X
Will be funded to a maximum total of R900,000.00 per grant holder for the duration of a funding cycle (i.e. a period of up to 3 years)	X	
3.5. Qualifying costs		
The following items are funded within the programme on condition that they are legitimate research costs and support the proposal presented for funding:		
<p><u>Personnel</u></p> <p>The costs towards personnel should exclude the salary of staff employed on a full-time basis by the institution where the project is implemented. Personnel costs that can be covered by RTF include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research assistant remuneration. Remuneration and allowances for support personnel are determined by the institution concerned, according to its own policies; and • Technical, scientific, consulting or contracting personnel (these people must not be employees of the HEI/SETI where the project is based or of the contributing industrial partner in the case of CompFM). The motivation for these costs must clearly be presented in the application for funding. 	X	X
<p><u>Travel</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local travel to present a paper at a conference or visiting experts and/or centres of specialization which are essential for the project 	X	X

Specific	CoFM	CompFM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International events, including workshops, conferences and visiting experts and/or centres of specialization which are essential for the project. A detailed motivation should be presented in the application. 		
<p><u>Research Consumables</u> Consumables must be for use by the research group of the funded RTF project. The purchased consumables must become the property and responsibility of the Research Institution which administers the grant.</p>	X	X
<p>Bursaries Bursary funding may be paid from the grant of the project solely for post graduate studies (See Annexure 3)</p>	X	X
<p>3.6. Qualifying Matching Funds (Applies to CoFM only)</p>		
<p>The following will qualify as industry partner contributions for matching by the DAFF RTF 2015/16 allocation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds provided for the specific project which is seeking funding from RTF. Funding provided by industry partners who are involved in the project and are looking to apply the research outputs in improving their products/process. Funding provided by South African companies and/or by foreign companies operating in South Africa. The cost to company for in-kind contributions to the project (see examples of in-kind in the attachment). It is the responsibility of the institution to verify, quantify and report the value of the in-kind contribution from the industry partner. 	X	
<p>3.7. Participating Institutions/industry partners</p>		
<p>Participating industry partners Every project in the CoFM modality must have at least one industry partner.</p> <p>Industries Partners (Note: Priority will be given to South African Industries)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Private companies Parastatals approved by DAFF Associations Cooperatives 	X	X
<p>Criteria defining eligibility of industry partners: Use registered enterprise as standard</p>	X	

Specific	CoFM	CompFM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must be committing to or making a financial contribution to the project. • Typically is a firm/company but may also be an association/cooperative. • Must be South African or at least having a legal presence in South Africa. • In the case of the South African firms these may be from the private sector or they may be parastatals. Approval by the DAFF for participation by some parastatals must be sought before RTF matching funds are provided. This is generally in the interest of optimising inter-departmental cooperation and synergies. • There must be a clear indication that the project will directly benefit the Agriculture OR Forestry OR Fisheries sectors. <p>The following are key roles, responsibilities and/or expectations of the industrial partner in the context of the projects to be or being co-funded:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They will confirm or reject applications (online) that have them listed as industrial partners. • They will confirm that the technology and/or human resources outputs of the project will directly benefit them. • They will communicate their financial commitment to the project through the online application submission process. • They will submit an online evaluation of the reported progress as stated in the annual progress report submitted by the grant holder. 		
<p><u>Research Institutions (see Annexure 1)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science councils, • Agriculture research centres/stations • Universities 	X	X
<p>At least one HEI and one industrial partner contributing financially, must be involved in the funded projects. The industrial partner must give a clear indication of how it expects to benefit from the project.</p>	X	
<p>At least one historically disadvantaged HEI (see list in Annexure 1) AND one small-holder cooperative should be involved.</p>		X
<p>3.8. Participants / role-players / beneficiaries</p>		
<p><u>Project Leader:</u> The grant holder should be the leader of the project (unless approval for alternative arrangements is granted by the RTF), and should have:</p>	X	X

Specific	CoFM	CompFM
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full time employment in a research institution or an employment contract whose duration is at least that of the number of years for which the RTF funding is approved. • Experience and qualification in Agriculture, Forestry or Fisheries research. • Capacity to supervise students at postgraduate level • Cannot be a student in their own projects 		
3.9. Intellectual property		
Intellectual Property generated by RTF funded research must be appropriately protected and exploited, in a manner that is compliant to the Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act, (Act No. 51 of 2008)(“the IPR Act”).	X	X

3.10. Call for proposals

Submission of proposals

- The grant holder at a University/Science Council is responsible for completing the application forms and has to “present” this to the institution’s assigned authority in their research administration, for submission to the NRF.
- All applications must be submitted via the NRF’s Submission System <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za>.
- The Designated Authority in the research administration of the institution validates the application before submission to the NRF. In the case of CoFM, the validation should be done only after the industry partners have accepted and approved the application. The application is only acceptable to the NRF after the Designated Authority at the institution has signed-off on it. This is intended as an indication that the institution is aware of the application and assures the quality of the application.

Unique to CoFM

- In the case of CoFM, the industrial partner(s) has to also complete and submit a form in which they approve the application, commit to co-funding it and indicate their anticipated benefit from the proposed project.

Screening of proposals

This will be an iterative process between the NRF and eligible institutions.

- NRF screens the submitted and validated applications primarily for completeness, correctness and/or whether submission has been made to the appropriate programme.
- Where necessary and appropriate, the NRF will enable and invite applicants to attend to the application deficiencies that need attention. The applicant will attend to the deficiencies and re-submit.

3.11. Assessment and Decision Making Procedure

3.11.1. Assessment process

The NRF will coordinate and lead the peer review process. Reviewers will be nominated from HEIs, research institutions and industry. A score card suitable for the RTF programme will be used when reviewing applications. Successful applications will be subjected to the process of ranking in terms of criteria (and sub-criteria) that reflect the objectives, priorities and focus of RTF. In order for a project to be funded, the following hurdles must be satisfied:

HURDLES			
Criteria	Explanatory Notes	CoFM	CompFM
Contribute to the development of the industry partner	Project contribution towards improving the industrial partner's products/processes	Yes/No	
Collaborating with small holder cooperatives	Develop new technologies to support small-holder cooperatives in agriculture, forestry and fisheries		Yes/No
Partnerships with Research Institutions	Partnership with Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI) if the applicant is not from the HDI and partnership with other research institutions if applicant is from HDI		Yes/No
Technology transfer	Technology transfer includes that of new knowledge into a process or product (prototype), or the transfer of existing knowledge into a new process or product to benefit the needs of small-holder cooperatives in the case of CompFM, and to benefit the industry partner in the case of CoFM.	Yes/No	Yes/No
Skills and Human Resources development (Students and other personnel).	Professional development for the support of small-holder f cooperative s' and industry partners' technology needs	Yes/No	Yes/No

3.11.2 Deciding on funding

Funding decisions will be made guided by:

- Panel recommendations;
- Management Committee (ManCo) inputs
- Available budget
- Scores and ranking as per the scorecard
- Consequences of decisions to fund *vis a vis* policy, strategic objectives, priorities, focus and targets for RTF.

Re-allocating freed-up funds

- "RTF funds, the status of which changes from committed to non-committed may be used for re-allocation to further RTF activities within the same financial year, on approval by the Project Sponsor responsible for RTF" as determined by DAFF.

3.12. Accept conditions of grant & nominate students

Upon approval of the grant, RTF will send the award letter and the Conditions of Grant to the researcher. At the same time if this has not already been done, the researcher is required to capture the student details for students linked to the project (“nominate students”). This is critical as it is the only manner in which NRF captures students supported through its programmes to enable extraction of student data of acceptable integrity.

3.13. Release of grants

Awarded RTF funds will be released and paid under the following conditions:

- The completed and signed “Conditions of Grant” has been submitted to the NRF; and
- Where this applies - students have been nominated through the NRF online nomination process and proof of their registration has been provided

Unique to CoFM:

Appropriately authorised Proof of Payments (PoP) (e.g. institutional receipt issued to the firm or a bank transaction record) from industry partner should be submitted.

The PoP must be accompanied by a statement from the relevant financial authority of the HEI/SC certifying that the applicable industry contribution was (or is to be) used for the project concerned.

In-kind contribution (see Annexure 2)

Institutions are required to set their internal deadline for receiving PoPs from the Industry Partners. Releases will commence once the application has been approved, until 28 February 2016.

3.14. Payment of grants

3.14.1. Triggering and transacting payments

The triggering of this payment can only take place when the funds have been released by Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA) (see above) and are an enabler for the payment transaction. The payment noted above is batch with those prepared in the calendar month.

The funds will be awarded against a number of items such as equipment, running costs, travel costs, student bursaries, etc. Bursaries will be awarded as per the NRF rules. These grants will fall under the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

3.14.2 Secure PoEs

After funds have been released and paid, closure of the loop in terms of the financial management and accounting for the grant, is for the institution to “claim” (also referred to as providing “proof of expenditure” (PoE). Payment of grants will commence once the application has been approved, until 25 March 2016.

3.15. Carry-Forward

“Carry-forward” is the exercise of carrying forward a grant in a particular year, into the next year, because it is still not completely spent by year-end (i.e. to stage of 100% submission of PoE) and has acceptable reason for not being cancelled /withdrawn. Carry-forward must be motivated for, among others, a commitment to spend the funds early in the next year and a demonstration of ability to do this. Carry-forward will apply in the case of RTF, guided by the general principles of the NRF for carry forwards.

4. Processing appeals

4.1 Submission and processing of appeals

Unsuccessful applicants will be given a period of two weeks after they received communication on funding decisions, should they choose to appeal. The appeals will be processed following the NRF Appeal processes, and the feedback to the applicants will be given within a period of a month after receiving the appeal.

5 Reporting at project level

5.1 Annual progress report (Deadline: 31 March 2016)

The technical component should be relatively brief and focus on the progress and outputs vis-à-vis set milestones and projected outputs for the year concerned. A template developed by the NRF will be made available to grant-holders through the NRF submission system. The reporting templates will provide for submission of the information for purposes of reviewing the report, as well as for reporting, including meaningful statistics.

5.2 Annual financial report

Financial reporting of actual expenditure is communicated between the NRF and HEI/SETI finance sections. The final financial reports which present expenditure incurred up to 25 March 2016 of the financial year of support must be submitted by the appropriate authority of the institution on or before the 31 March 2016.

The total amounts claimed for RTF grants may not exceed the total amount awarded. The NRF will provide details on the format of financial reports to the organizations concerned, which should submit the report either on a document provided by the NRF or directly into the NRF grants administration system via its computer network in cases where such a facility exists.

External auditors' reports in the prescribed format verifying the figures contained in the financial reports must reach the NRF by 31 March 2016 and 30 June 2016 for Universities and Science Councils respectively. Should the organization fail to submit this audited report all payments will cease until it has been received.

6 Changes

The RTF management, through the NRF, reserve the right to change the terms of RTF support where and when necessary. If this were to happen however, due consideration must be given to possible implications of the actions and the change intention or decision

must be communicated to the grant-holder and relevant authority in the research institution. A need to change could typically be influenced by:

- Availability of funds;
- Failure by the other partner/s in the RTF project to honour agreements; and
- Changes in circumstances.

Grant-holders may also request changes to the project. These will be considered, decided and communicated to the grant-holder by the NRF. In deciding these changes the NRF must ensure that the relevant internal (to the NRF) affected parties and authorities are appropriately consulted and that decisions are taken per delegation of authority. The need to effect changes in the project plan could for example be influenced by changes in circumstances such as resources or participants.

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Annexure 1: Research institutions eligible for RTF funding.

Note that: (i) this list is as applies to the NRF; (ii) it is not necessarily a complete list; and (iii) all the NRF registered research institutions can apply.

1	University of Cape Town	12	Tshwane University of Technology
2	University of the Free State	13	Medical Research Council
3	University of KwaZulu-Natal	14	Council for Geoscience
4	North-West University	15	Agricultural Research Council
5	University of Pretoria	16	Council for Mineral Technology (MINTEK)
6	Rhodes University	17	Sol Plaatje University
7	University of Stellenbosch	18	University of Johannesburg
8	University of the Western Cape	19	Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
9	University of the Witwatersrand	20	University of South Africa
10	University of Mpumalanga		
11	Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University		
Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs)			
1	University of Limpopo	6	Central University of Technology
2	Cape Peninsula University of Technology	7	Vaal University of Technology
3	University of Zululand	8	Walter Sisulu University
4	University of Venda	9	University of Fort Hare
5	Mangosuthu University of Technology	10	Durban University of Technology

DAFF Provincial Research centres/stations that are not registered on the NRF-online application system are advised to apply in partnership with the closest Universities

Annexure 2: Items to be considered as In-Kind Contribution

i. Personnel

- Specialist technical, scientific, consulting or contracting personnel's remuneration for the time spent on the approved RTF project (these people must not be employees of the HEI/SETI where the project is based, but must be of the contributing industrial partner).

ii. Moveable Equipment/products Equipment and Materials

- The market value of an equipment/product donated to the Institution holding the RTF grant will be considered In-Kind.
- The equipment/product must become the property and responsibility of the HEI/SETI which receives the grant and be available to that institution in general, in consultation with the grant-holder.
- Rental/use of facilities of the Industrial partner or its associates.
- Where it is more practical for the equipment to be located at another HEI/SETI, the parties concerned should include with the proposal, a signed agreement stating that the equipment will be re-located to the institution within the project duration period as specified in the proposal.
- An equipment management plan must be submitted to RTF for all equipment valued at R250, 000.00 or more.

Annexure 3: Research and technology fund grants conditions for the award of grant holder- linked student support categories

Post-graduate Bursaries

These bursaries are awarded only to South African citizens and permanent residence permit holders at post-graduate level who are supervised or co- supervised by the grant holder and registered at South African Universities. Grant holders may however, with the approval of the GMSA section of the NRF, allocate bursaries to particularly meritorious foreign students. A motivation for foreign students should simultaneously be submitted with the nomination indicating the academic standing of the student and his/her input to the grant holder's project. The NRF will limit support to foreign students to the following **quota** per level, on a first-come-first-served basis:

Masters: 10% of total Masters' bursaries for African students (other than South Africans)

Doctoral: 15% of total Doctoral bursaries for African students (other than South Africans)

Doctoral: 5% of total bursaries for non-African international students.

Grant holder-linked bursaries are intended for the support of the best (academically) postgraduate **students linked to the grant holder's research plan**. Grant holder-linked bursaries will be awarded for a full calendar year or for half a year (half value) depending on the date of registration of the student and the period for which the bursary is required.

Full time Values

Level	Maximum Period	Amount
Honours / B-Tech	1 year	R 40 000
Masters / M-Tech	2 years	R 70 000
Doctoral	3 years	R 100 000

Where registration for a full-time Master's degree is upgraded to Doctoral level, the maximum period of support for the upgraded Doctoral study will be 4 years in total.

Grant holder-linked bursary support for Masters and Doctoral students registered for **part-time study** can be considered (not for staff).

Part time Values:

Level	Maximum Period	Amount
Masters	3 years	R 10 000
Doctoral	5 years	R 12 000

Support for a second degree at the same level **will not** be considered even if the first degree was not supported by the NRF. The maximum period of funding per level applies throughout all Programmes within the NRF.

Grant holders who wish to apply for a grant holder-linked bursary for Master's degree studies without the student first obtaining a BTech/Honours degree, must apply for a bursary at Masters level. Should the student not complete the degree funded for, he/she has to refund the total amount received even if he/she obtained any other degree in the process.

Masters study by coursework will be supported provided that the **research component of the degree comprises at least 50%** (as declared by the institution on the applicable bursary nomination) and that the research component is externally evaluated. Only nominations for commitment students, Student Assistantships and/or new full-time Masters students will be considered in the final year of the grant.

Reporting on Progress

Progress of students supported under all of the four categories must be reported on in the grant holder's Annual Progress Reports and Final Report.

Supplementation

Bursaries and Fellowships:

Grant holder-linked bursaries may not be held simultaneously with another scholarship/bursary/grant from any other NRF source or with any other bursary/scholarship that is contractually binding.

Grant holder-linked student support may not be held concurrently with any NRF freestanding or block grant bursary, or grant for Research/Technical Assistance or Lecturer Replacement. Bursars are encouraged to undertake limited teaching, tutorials, assistance or demonstrating duties in line with the relevant policies of their respective institutions.

Procedure

Once the student has been identified, a nomination has to be completed online at <https://nrfs submission.nrf.ac.za> and submitted electronically to the institution's Designated Authority for validation and transmission to the NRF. A nomination has to be submitted annually per individual student for continued funding. The following documentation must be submitted with the nomination:

* Proof of Registration (also confirming full-time or part-time status)

* * Motivations (refer to foreign M&D nominations)

Supporting documentation for Masters by Coursework could be requested by the NRF. Funds reserved for grant holder-linked student support will only be considered on receipt of an online nomination and the required supporting documentation.

The Higher Education Institution concerned must report annually on the status of degrees obtained.

Recovery of Funds

All Students receiving NRF grant holder-linked support must sign the Student Agreement. Students must complete the qualification concerned within two years after expiry of the NRF funding. **If such students fail to complete the qualification for which the funding was awarded, the total amount received from the NRF towards the degree concerned must be refunded to the NRF by the student.**

Budget

We do not include an approved budget, feel free to re-prioritise your spending in line with the submitted budget. However, RTF approval must be sought where funds are to be spent on items NOT in your original budget. Further, Bursaries funds can NOT be moved around as it is solely for bursaries purposes.

