AFRICAN COELACANTH ECOSYSTEM PROGRAMME (ACEP)
INFRASTRUCTURE LINKED FUNDING INSTRUMENT

KNOWLEDGE FIELDS DEVELOPMENT

Framework Document and Funding Guide

MARCH 2023

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1. FUNDING INSTRUMENT TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

1.1 FUNDING INSTRUMENT TITLE

The African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP) Marine Infrastructure-Linked Funding Instrument (2024-2026).

1.2 FUNDING INSTRUMENT DESCRIPTION

The African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP) consists of four major driving forces:
1. ACEP Open Research Call (this call)
2. ACEP Marine Platform Provision
3. ACEP Phuhlisa Transformation Programme
4. ACEP Joint Marine Laboratories

The ACEP Marine Infrastructure-Linked Funding Instrument promotes marine research along the east and southern coast of South Africa by providing competitive access to:

- ACEP and SMCRI funded SAIAB and SAEON platforms:
  - Coastal Craft fleet and associated equipment,
  - Marine-Remote Imagery Platform (MAR-RIP),
  - Acoustic Tracking Array Platform (ATAP), and
  - Geophysics Mapping Platform (GeMap)
  - Algoa Bay and KZN Sentinel Site
  - Airborne Remote Sensing

in conjunction with providing research funding.

The ACEP Open Research Call for 2024-2026 seeks to attract marine research applications that fall within the research framework of ACEP and the Marine and Antarctic Research Strategy (MARS) and in particular the National Marine Research Plan for South Africa 2014+ of the Department of Science and Innovation and the Science Technology and Innovation Decadal Plan 2022; and that will maximise the use of available equipment not normally available at HEIs, or NRF-recognised research institutions. The ACEP Funding Instrument is specifically designed around infrastructure access. As such, research applications that do not require infrastructure support are advised to apply to other NRF funding instruments.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

ACEP is a flagship programme of the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) Key partners in terms of platform provision include South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB) and South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON) in their capacity at National Facilities of the NRF. ACEP is managed by the South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB).

The African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP) was initiated after the discovery of coelacanths off Sodwana Bay, South Africa, in 2000, and was one of the first multidisciplinary, multi-national research programmes to facilitate extensive ecosystem-based research in the Southwest Indian Ocean (SWIO). ACEP forms a key instrument in the implementation of the DSI-led National Marine and Antarctic Research Strategy plan (MARS). In particular, ACEP aims to address some of the key research

objectives outlined in the National Marine Research Plan for South Africa 2014+ and Science Technology and Innovation Decadal Plan 2022, with a focus on the east and southern coast of South Africa and to fill gaps identified by the National Biodiversity Assessment 2018. By doing so ACEP will be aligned with and be well positioned to facilitate a meaningful contribution to the United Nations Decade of the Ocean 2021 – 2030.

The National Marine Research Plan for South Africa 2014+ serves to link South Africa's comparative geographic and research advantage, regional stewardship, and national interest considerations to research themes to stimulate systems-scale integration of knowledge and understanding. The importance of South Africa's east and southern coast in terms of the economic wellbeing of the country as well as understanding regional and global environmental and climate systems cannot be stressed enough.

The mandate of the National Research Foundation (NRF) is to support and promote research through funding, human resource development and the provision of the necessary research facilities 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, 2018). In support of its purpose, the *NRF Strategy 2025* 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) Supporting, promoting and advancing research and human capacity development, through funding and the provision of the necessary research infrastructure, in order to facilitate the creation of knowledge, innovation and the development of all fields in science and technology, including humanities, social sciences and indigenous knowledge;
b) Developing, supporting and maintaining national research facilities;
c) Supporting and promoting public awareness of, and engagement with, science; and
d) Promoting the development and maintenance of the national science system and support of Government priorities.

3. OBJECTIVES

3.1 ACEP INFRASTRUCTURE STRUCTURE

ACEP aims to ensure that key marine research infrastructure is made available to research scientists throughout the National System of Innovation (NSI). The DSI and other ACEP partners have invested heavily in marine equipment and systems (e.g., coastal craft, marine remote imagery equipment, sentinel sites, coastal arrays etc.) that are not readily available at universities, NGOs, and other research entities. ACEP is a specific intervention that ensures that this equipment is optimally used and that researchers throughout the NSI have access. Successful research teams are provided with research platform access and running expenses. By design ACEP does not support research proposals that do not intrinsically require research platform access. Research proposals that do not require any of the ACEP research platforms are catered for in other NRF research calls and instruments (e.g., Unrated/Rated Research Call, Thuthuka, SARChI, Marine and Coastal Research Call) as well as research resources within line departments such as the Department of Forestry Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE).

3.2 PLATFORM RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Applications for platforms must address objectives outlined in the overall DST Marine and Antarctic Research Strategy (MARS) and in particular the research priorities outlined in the National Marine Research Plan for South Africa 2014+, the Science Technology and Innovation Decadal Plan 2022 as well as the priority research areas identified by the National Biodiversity Assessment 2018. Applications that address multidisciplinary questions in the following themes are requested.

Key research areas include:

Innovation

- Development of capacity of marine bio-discovery and biotechnology.
- Development of capacity and application of machine learning in marine sciences.
- Development of, and application of low-cost research equipment to address other key research areas highlighted in this list.
- Development of capacity in underwater soundscape ecology and underwater acoustics research.

Biodiversity and Ecology and Oceanography

- Foundational species information for priority taxonomic groups – highly utilised species, endemic marine invertebrates.
- Research to elucidate the key drivers of offshore biodiversity patterns.
- Mapping & assessment of ecological infrastructure and benefits of biodiversity to people.
- Research to support understanding of canyon ecology.
- Research including foundational ecosystem research to test, validate and improve the marine ecosystem classifications of the National Biodiversity Assessment.
- Research to support finer-scale habitat mapping of fluvial inputs, muds, hard grounds (including cold water corals, deep reefs, submarine canyons and other sensitive habitat types).
- Research to support understanding of paleo-ecosystems.
- Research to support the understanding of resources species' value to the ecosystem and the impacts of harvesting.
- Foundational knowledge of ocean soundscape ecology.
- Research to provide a better understanding of the Agulhas Current and inshore coastal interactions which may impact the local ecosystems.

Marine Spatial Planning, MPA Research and Resource Management

- Research to support MPA design including connectivity, transport pathways, dispersal distances and migration pathways and links to estuaries.
- Foundational species assessments in MPAs.
- Identify areas critical to life phases not currently protected by MPAs.
- Research to support the refinement of biodiversity targets within MPAs including habitat and species representation and persistence targets.
- Research to refine methods and indicator species and effectively support the monitoring and effectiveness of management interventions, including measuring and monitoring spill-over effects.
- Research to support line-fish stock assessment and recovery, including the value of MPAs in this process.

- Identify future refugia that may need protection due to movement of species.

Global and Climate Change

- Ecological water requirement studies and the impacts of freshwater flow reduction into Marine environment – fluvial dependent coastal ecosystems.
- Research to support the understanding of industry and other emerging pressure's impacts (e.g. aquaculture, mining, oil spills, marine noise) on habitats and species e.g., condition assessments, habitat recovery and resilience.
- Impact of plastic and micro-plastic on ecosystems and species.
- Invasive species research.
- Research/capacity development to support restoration of coastal habitats/species.

Priority areas were identified in the National Biodiversity Assessment 2018 based on historic sampling effort per ecosystem type.

As indicated the applications must have the following components:

- They must intrinsically require the use of the ACEP coastal research platforms to be successful.
- They must be multidisciplinary, inter-, or transdisciplinary.
- They must be on the east or southern coast of South Africa. Proposals that include research outside of these areas will not be considered.
- Proposed research budgets for 2024-2026 should not exceed R 1 750 000 (excluding student bursaries, which are applied for separately via the NRF Online Submission System at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/ .
- As a key driver in the generation of marine spatial data and multidisciplinary data, proposals must cover as many of the following data layers as possible: oceanography, pelagic biodiversity, and benthic environment. Single-discipline research cruises will not be supported.

4. RESEARCH PLATFORM DESCRIPTION AND LOGISTICS

4.1 GENERAL

The ACEP call is for multidisciplinary, infrastructure-linked projects and as such only projects that are not possible without platform support will be considered.

The following platforms are available, and the applicants must ensure they **specifically indicate** which platforms they wish to apply for in their application. The costs associated with these platforms are borne by the ACEP Management Team and **DO NOT** form part of the PI's grant award.

It is essential that applicants discuss their projects with the relevant platform technicians or instrument scientists in terms of feasibility. Below are the contacts who should be engaged with during the proposal phase to ensure that platform planning within the project is feasible.

Platform	Platform manager	Contact
Coastal Craft	Ryan Palmer Thor Eriksen	rm.palmer@saiab.nrf.ac.za ts.eriksen@saiab.nrf.ac.za
Acoustic Tracking Array Platform	Taryn Murray	ts.murray@saiab.nrf.ac
Marine Imagery Platform - ROV	Ryan Palmer	rm.palmer@saiab.nrf.ac.za
Marine Imagery Platform - BRUV	Anthony Bernard	atf.bernard@saiab.nrf.ac.za
Geophysics Mapping Platform	Thor Eriksen	ts.eriksen@saiab.nrf.ac.za
SAEON Sentinel Site	Tommy Bornman Shaun Deyzel	tg.bornman@saeon.nrf.ac.za hp.deyzel@saeon.nrf.ac.za
Airborne Remote Sensing	Tommy Bornman Sean Bailey	tg.bornman@saeon.nrf.ac.za se.bailey@saeon.nrf.ac.za
Equipment use on 3rd party vessel	Ryan Palmer	rm.palmer@saiab.nrf.ac.za

4.2 Infrastructure and Platforms

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS

Coastal Craft - *RV Observer* (15 m coastal craft) – SAIAB / ACEP / SMCRI	**Home Port:** Port Elizabeth
	
	Area of operation – East London, Port Elizabeth, Mossel Bay
	
	Available 2024-2026:
	• One 21-day period per year (max 2 trips per project) operating from East London, Port Elizabeth or Mossel Bay
	
	 
	
		• R/V Observer is a 15 m catamaran vessel, ideal for work up to 2-day trips (48 hours) in duration. She is suitable for bay-scale projects. Please note that RV Observer is NOT a ship; she has coastal craft capabilities.
		• *RV Observer* will be based in Port Elizabeth but will be available to be stationed in East London or Mossel Bay for one 3-week periods per year per project (max 2 trips per project).
		• Capabilities as follows:
		  ○ Can operate up to 40nm offshore and within 40nm of port of operation.
		  ○ A-frame and winch for lifting a maximum of 500 kg over the stern.
		  ○ Can carry up to 10 researchers/students.
		  ○ Can overnight with up to 4 researchers/students on board (plus 2 crew).
		  ○ Suitable for multi-beam operations.
		  ○ Suitable for ROV operations to 250m.
		  ○ Includes skipper and one crew but students and researchers are required to undertake research operations.
		• The following equipment is available: Benthic grab, Conductivity, Temperature, Depth meters (CTD); ROV, bongo nets, plankton pump, vertical ring nets, SBRUV. ACEP can assist in trying to source other specialised equipment providing sufficient lead time is given.

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS

Coastal Craft - *RV Phakisa* (15 m ski-boat) - SAIAB / ACEP / SMCRI	**Home Port:** Durban
	
	Area of Operation: Richards Bay, Durban
	
	Available 2024–2026:
	• One 21-day period per year (max two trips per project) operating from Durban or Richards Bay
	
	 
		• *RV Phakisa* (15 m Legacy cat) is ideal for up to 2-day trips (48 hours). She is suitable for bay-scale projects. Please note that *RV Phakisa* is NOT a ship; she has coastal craft capabilities.
		• *RV Phakisa* will be based in Durban but will be available to be stationed in Richards Bay for one 3-week period per year per project (maximum of two trips per project).
		• Capabilities as follows:
		  ○ A-frame and winch for lifting up to 500 kg over the stern.
		  ○ Can carry up to 10 researchers/students.
		  ○ Range of operation: within 40nm of port of operation.
		  ○ Can overnight with up to 4 researchers/students on board.
		  ○ Suitable for multi-beam operations.
		  ○ Suitable for ROV operations (live-boating).
		  ○ Includes skipper and one crew but students and researchers are required to assist with operations.
		  ○ The following equipment is available: Benthic grab, Conductivity, Temperature, Depth meters (CTD); ROV, bongo nets, plankton pump, vertical ring nets, SBRUV. ACEP can assist in trying to source other specialised equipment providing sufficient lead time is given.

Marine Remote Imagery Platform (Mar-RIP) – Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV)	**Available 2024-2026:** For use off *RV Phakisa*, *RV Observer* or 3rd Party vessel - Operator provided. • One 14-day trip per year (2024 - 2026) on *RV Phakisa*, RV Observer operating from Richards Bay, Durban, East London, Port Elizabeth or Mossel Bay or operating from a third-party vessel. A maximum of two of these trips may	The SAAB Seaeye Falcon (rated to 300 m) is available for use with a pilot/technician from both ACEP vessels (*RV Phakisa* and *RV Observer*) and suitable third-party vessels. • Includes pilot/technician. Applicants are not permitted to fly unless certified and competent. • Operated off *RV Phakisa and RV Observer* (live-boat to 250 m). • If ACEP vessels are required, these must be specified and fit into the call conditions, area of operation and time allocation of the

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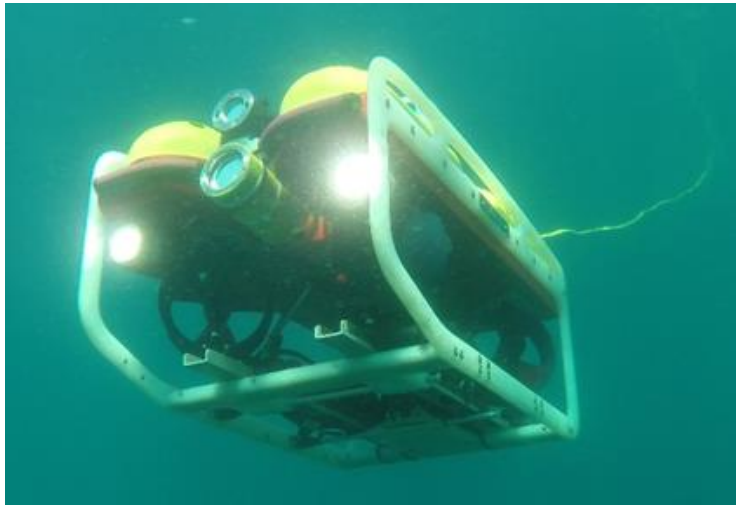
(Seaeye Falcon) SAIAB / ACEP	be applied for per project. Level of support: • Mobilisation • Footage/sample collection • Footage dissemination Please also apply for vessel time accordingly. 	vessels. • Can be operated off third-party vessels (minimum 9 m with closed cabin and suitable generator and winch/davit) on anchor. (Please contact Ryan Palmer to discuss technical requirements). • Suitable for video (HD) surveys and still (12MP) photographs. • Limited collections can be conducted. • The applicant must provide at least one deckhand for operations and a team member to assist with photographs and data logging. • A copy of all footage collected will be lodged at SAIAB and will become publically available in 2029. Any team is **required** to discuss their proposed operations with Ryan Palmer (SAIAB Marine Platform Manager) rm.palmer@saiab.nrf.ac.za prior to submitting their application.
Acoustic Tracking Array Platform (ATAP) SAIAB / ACEP	**Available 2024 – 2026:** Access to SAIAB's Acoustic Tracking Array Platform (ATAP). Additional VR2W or VR2AR receivers for placement at strategic locations specific to the project (number subject to feasibility and availability). http://saiab.co.za/atap.htm	ACEP supports the SAIAB Acoustic Tracking Array Platform (ATAP). This research platform gathers acoustic tag detection data on acoustic receivers owned by the Canadian-based Ocean Tracking Network (OTN) project, SAIAB and other platform partners. The nationwide array, spanning more than2 000 km of coastline, has monitoring sites in False Bay, Walker Bay, Gansbaai, Struisbaai, St Sebastian Bay, Mossel Bay, Plettenberg Bay, St Francis Bay, Algoa Bay, Port Alfred, Kei Mouth, Port St Johns, GweGwe, Durban, Umdloti, Sodwana Bay and Ponta do Ouro. Each monitoring site is equipped with several

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	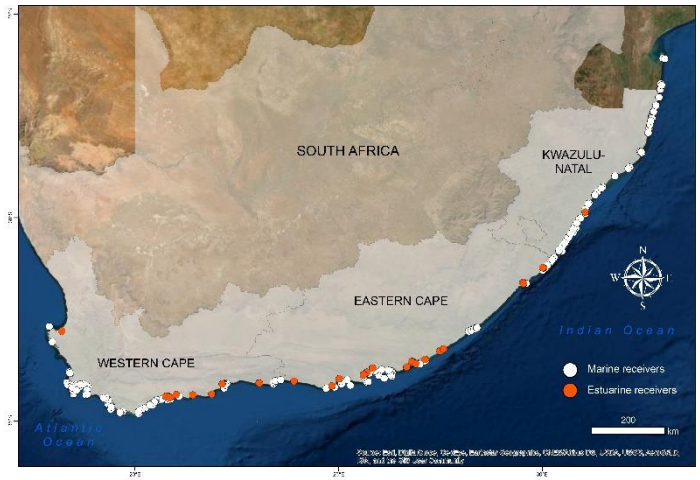	Innovasea VR2W and VR2AR acoustic receivers and HOBO temperature loggers, making the array ideal for longshore migration monitoring and localised studies at the core monitoring sites. In addition, approximately 20 estuaries and ports are monitored by single receiver deployments. The receiver network will be in place until March 2027 (i.e., current ACEP funding cycle) but the platform is planned to continue indefinitely. Projects that wish to link into this network are encouraged to apply. If required, ATAP can also supply additional receivers to assist with additional coverage at strategic locations specific to proposed projects. The number of receivers supplied will be submit to both feasibility and availability, and an ATAP receiver loan application will need to be submitted. Transmitters should be budgeted for in the project proposal. The following should be noted: • To minimise the risk of equipment loss, ATAP Standard Operating Procedures for the deployment of receivers must be adhered to. • ACEP will not be responsible for the logistics associated with additional receiver deployment. The applicant's own vessel must be used, or the application must be linked to the use of and availability (and associated conditions) of the ACEP vessels on offer namely: *RV Phakisa* or *RV Observer.* • ACEP and ATAP can provide technical advice, expertise, and training, if required. • All downloaded data will be stored and managed centrally by ATAP. All participants will be required to register their projects with ATAP and abide by the ATAP collaboration agreement and data management policy. • All metadata associated with the project (deployment, retrieval, download and tagging) must be submitted to the ATAP. Standardised data sheets can be provided at the onset of the

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS
		project. • Detection data collected on the ATAP array (including the project-linked receivers) belong to the tag owner. Applicants are required to contact Dr Taryn Murray (ATAP Manager) to ensure all project plans conform to the objectives of the ATAP and OTN, and to avoid potential site-specific acoustic overloading. TS.Murray@saiab.nrf.ac.za
Marine Remote Imagery Platform – Stereo BRUVs – SAIAB / ACEP	**Available 2024– 2026:** Platform includes: ○ 8.5m rigid inflatable boat with trailer – for MARIP use only – skipper not provided. ○ 5 Heavy duty SBRUV systems ○ 3 Deepwater lander SBRUV systems ○ 5 Light duty SBRUV systems ○ 2 Drop camera system ○ 1 Diver Operated Stereo Video system • Software licenses: ○ 3 x EventMeasure ○ 1 x TransectMeasure • Network Attached Storage System and Specify7 database. • Technician provided for all projects using landers and 8.5m RIB. • Technician provided for projects where research team has no experience using stereo-BRUVs.	Baited remote underwater stereo-video systems are used in benthic and fish monitoring and research. Four heavy duty (150 m) and 4 light duty (60 m) SBRUV systems as well as a drop camera system (150 m) and a diver operated stereo video system are available for one 3-week slot per annum during two of the funded years. Timing will need to be negotiated with existing programmes. Software licences for video analysis are available for up to 4 months per year. These include 3 EventMeasure and 1 TransectMeasure licences. Furthermore an 8.5 m rigid inflatable boat with a trailer will be available for use with this platform. The following should be noted: • To minimise the risk of equipment loss, standard operating procedures for the deployment must be adhered to. • To ensure standardisation of data collected with the platform, the Standard Operating Procedures for data collection and management must be adhered to. • For use off the applicants own vessel ACEP will not be responsible for the logistics associated with deployment. A vessel of at least 6 m is required, fitted with a capstan winch and davit arm.

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS
	• Research teams with stereo-BRUVs experience will be required to conduct surveys independently. PERIOD OF SUPPORT • With technical support: One 21-day trip per year during 2 of the funded years • Without technical support: as needed depending on availability. 	• Details of the proposed vessel must be provided. • To use this platform off an ACEP vessel (*uKwabelana, Phakisa, Observer or Hispidus*), the applicant must apply for time on the relevant vessel, meeting the conditions, area of operation and time availability of that vessel. • Recommended deployment depth max 50 m for discipline entrants and max 150 m for experienced operators. • Each project will be assessed according to the risk of equipment loss, taking into consideration researchers' experience, operating depth, sampling location, time of year and vessel specifications. • All footage and metadata collected with MARIP platform to be lodged with SAIAB immediately after fieldtrip. To be stored on MARIP Network Attached Storage (NAS) system. • Biodiversity data to be lodged with SAIAB once available. Stored on a Specify7 database. • Following completion of the project and embargo period, data will be published in 2029 to GBIF and OBIS.

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS
SAEON Sentinel Sites for LTER	**Access to SAEON Elwandle Node Sentinel Sites.** Access to the platform includes: Access to in situ sensor data from SAEON Sentinel Sites Access to monthly CTD data from eight stations since 2010 in Algoa Bay One moored ADCP for strategic placement specific to the project in Algoa Bay or KZN-Bight in 20-30m depth and within 30nm of the harbour.	**Algoa Bay and KZN-Bight Sentinel Sites for LTER** ACEP supports applications to undertake research in the Algoa Bay and KZN-Bight Sentinel Sites. The Algoa Bay Sentinel Site includes over 100 in situ instruments between Port Alfred and Oyster Bay, measuring temperature, swell and currents as well as salinity (in the following estuaries: Kromme, Gamtoos, Swartkops, Sundays and Kariega). The KZN-Bight Sentinel Site includes 6 thermistor strings (3 off the Bluff and 3 off the mouth of the uThukela in 30, 60 and 80 m depth), 3 Gully UTRs and an ADCP off the Bluff. Proposals must demonstrate the need to utilize data from the existing in-situ equipment array (ADCP's, Gully UTRs and Thermistor strings). Applicants are advised to contact Dr Tommy Bornman and Dr Shaun Deyzel to discuss the available data prior to submission of the application. tg.bornman@saeon.nrf.ac.za and hp.deyzel@saeon.nrf.ac.za

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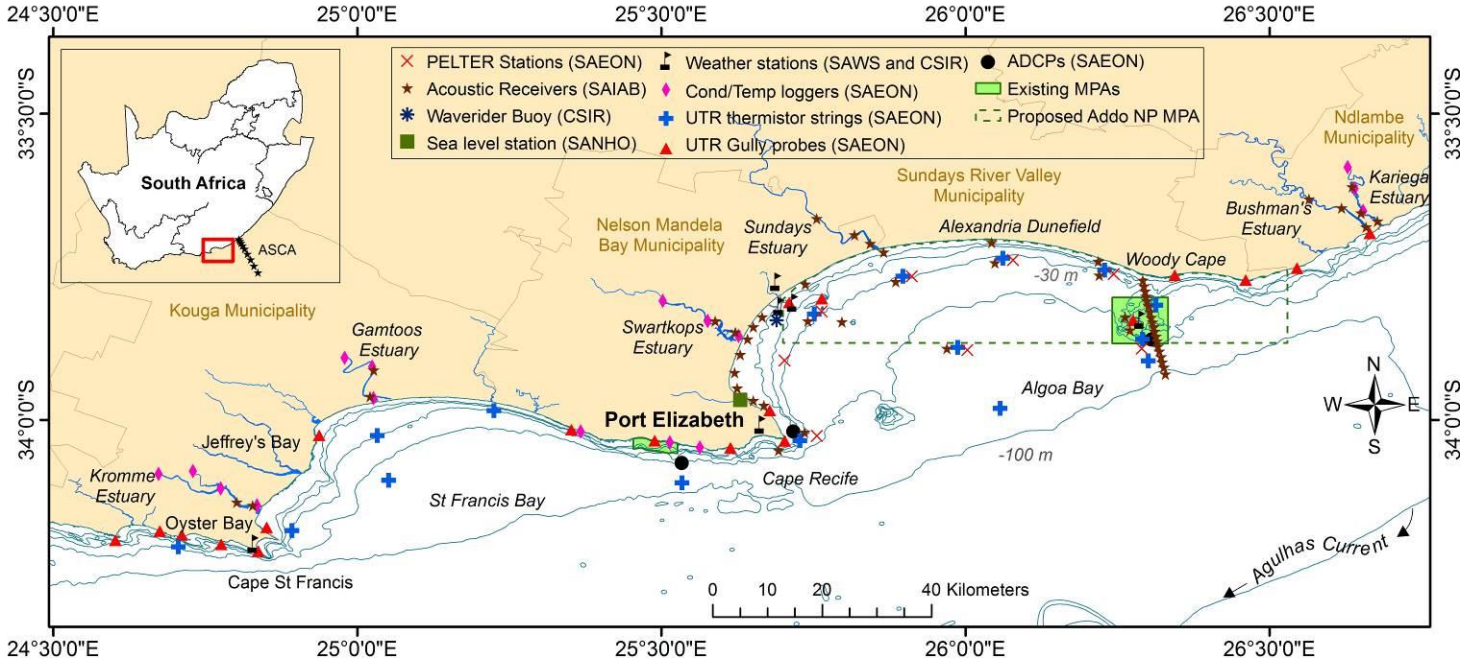

Algoa Bay Sentinel Site

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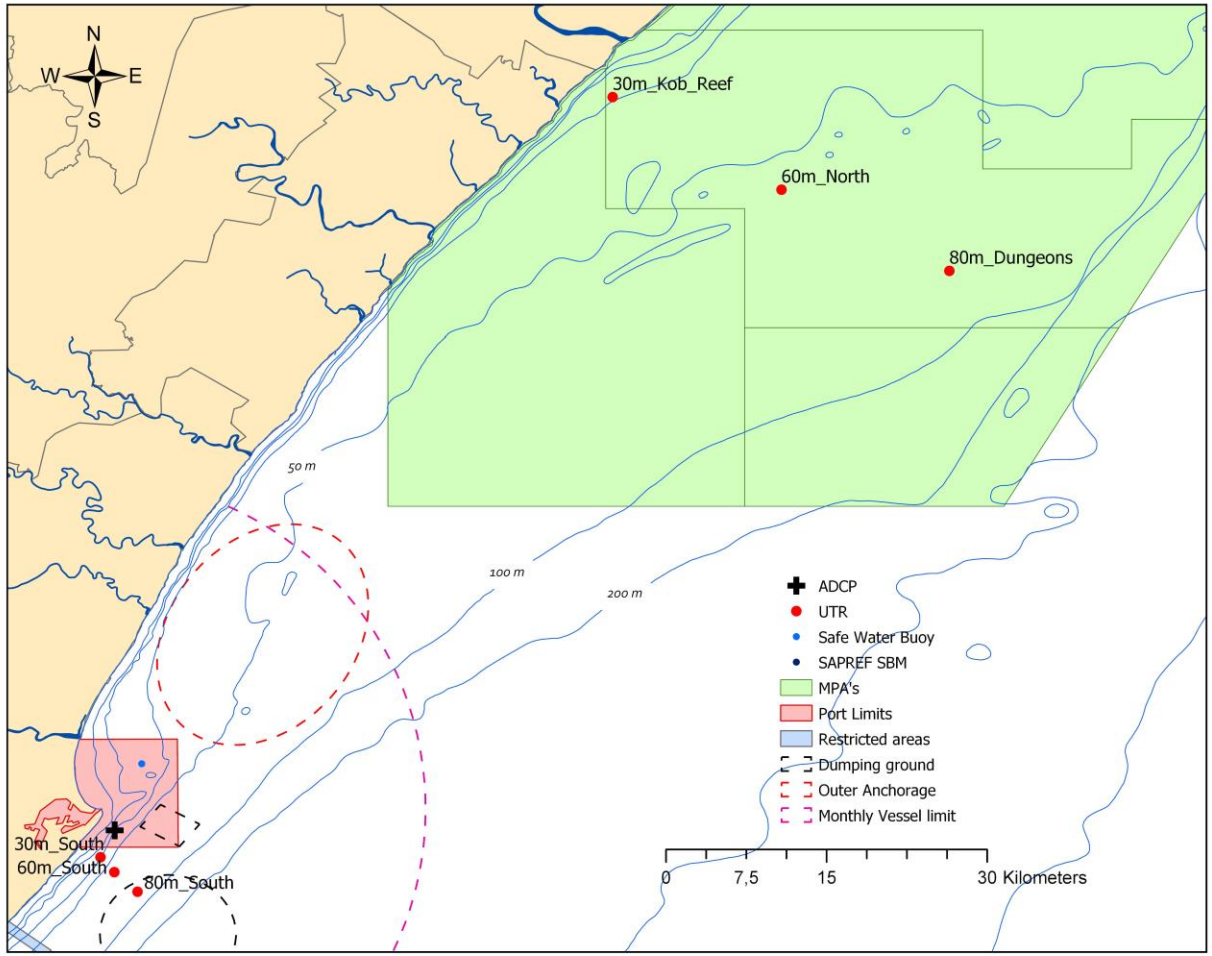
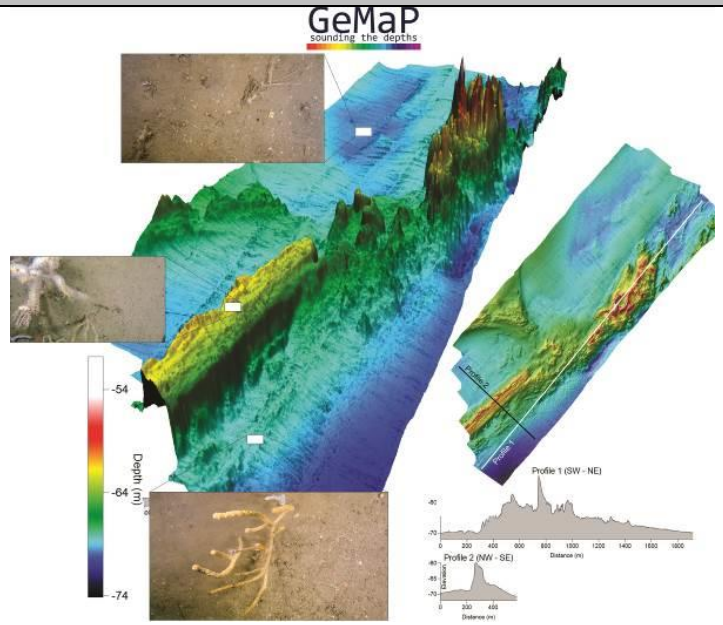


KZN Sentinel Site

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS
Geophysics and Mapping Platform (GeMAP) - Multi-beam sonar – SAIAB / ACEP	**Available 2024-2026.** For use on *RV Phakisa,*– operator provided • One 21-day survey period per year in Durban or Richards Bay (apply for time on *RV Phakisa*) • Actual number of sea days is dependent on weather • Based on a 12-hour operational day • Operational limit of 30 nautical miles from port (may be discussed on a case-by-case basis) For use on *RV Observer* – operator provided • One 21-day survey period per year in the East London, Mossel Bay, or Algoa Bay area. • Actual number of sea days is dependent on weather. • Based on a 12-hour operational day • Operational limit of 30 nautical miles from port (may be discussed on a case-by-case basis) Boat time on *RV Phakisa* or *RV Observer* should be included on the application. Level of support available: Geoscience projects: • Survey design • Data Collection (survey time up to 8hrs/day) The research team is expected to include a geoscientist to process data and produce final products. Biological/ecological projects requiring a map: • Survey design • Data Collection (survey time up to 8hrs/day)	ACEP offers a multibeam echosounder (Teledyne SeaBat 7101) system for hydrographic surveys. The system can collect bathymetric data from 15 to 250 m water depth for the generation of digital terrain models. It is the ideal tool to survey areas of interest to provide geospatial context ahead of target selection and sampling. Using the high-resolution 3D seafloor model informed sampling strategies can be developed resulting in efficient and meaningful use of time and equipment. System specifications as follows: ○ Teledyne Seabat 7101 system including acquisition PC. ○ SBG Apogee Navsight Inertial Navigation system ○ Valeport Sound Velocity Profiler ○ QPS acquisition and processing software ○ Survey to a depth from 15 - 250 m

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS
	• Data processing • Development of a bathymetry map. For use of third-party vessel: Up to 30 days per year - Operator not provided. • Subject to system availability around use on ACEP vessels. • The vessel to be approved for use of the equipment by the ACEP Instrument Technician. • Technical support only includes assistance with setup of instrument on vessel (excluding dimension control survey). Third party vessel expected to have in-house technical support. • The PI is responsible for hiring or appointing a suitably qualified operator. • ACEP will not cover the costs of any modifications or fittings required to accommodate the instrument on the vessel – mounting pole is not included.	
SAEON Airborne Remote Sensing SAEON	**Access to the SAEON Airborne Remote Sensing Platform** Access to the platform includes: • Access to historical remotely sensed data products • Repeat surveys (not less than annual) of one or more estuaries (not more than 3) or a stretch of coastline not exceeding 30 nm • Observational counts from the aircraft along the coastline (not exceeding a half-day of flying) Operations to take place in uncontrolled airspace only (i.e., not near airports, military zones, etc). Please discuss with Sean Bailey se.bailey@saeon.nrf.ac.za	**Remotely sensed data products** The SAEON aircraft can collect high resolution RGB, infrared, thermal and LiDAR data. Flight planning, ground truthing and post-processing are very time consuming, and proposals must clearly demonstrate the need for the data, the spatial and temporal extents required, and allow for sufficient time to conduct the surveys and produce the data products. Data collected through the ACEP programme will be embargoed for the duration of the project, whereafter it will be made freely available. Applicants are advised to contact Dr Tommy Bornman and Mr Sean Bailey to discuss requirements prior to submission of the application. tg.bornman@saeon.nrf.ac.za and se.bailey@saeon.nrf.ac.za

PLATFORM	AREA OF OPERATION & DESCRIPTION	SPECIFIC DETAILS
		

5. TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Advanced platforms and instrumentation require skilled technical support. Technical support is provided for the following platforms:

- Coastal craft (*RV Phakisa* and *RV Observer*) – ACEP skipper and deckhand for all trips (mandatory).
- Acoustic Telemetry Array Platform (ATAP) – Deployment training only.
- Stereo Baited Remote Underwater Video (SBRUV) – Deployment training only.
- Remote Operated Vehicle (ROV) – ACEP operator (mandatory).
- Multi-beam sonar – ACEP Operator when used on ACEP vessels. Setup only on 3rd party vessel.
- SAEON Sentinel Site ADCP placement – ADCP setup and deployment training only.

The following technical support is included:

- Training
- Explanation of standard operating protocols
- Deployment training
- Operating (ROV & Multi-beam only) – data collection
- Data retrieval and dissemination
- Calibration

The above support requires no formal acknowledgment of the technical specialist other than recognising ACEP and platform partner in the acknowledgment section of papers. However, should the principal investigator (PI) require the technical specialist to be involved in scientific decision-making rather than solely the deployment of the instrument, then the technical specialist should be regarded as a scientific team member and be recognised appropriately e.g., paper authorship, co-supervision etc. Tasks that are outside technical support and which technical specialists are not obliged to perform without due recognition are:

- Experimental design
- Experimental design modification during cruise
- Statistical design
- Data processing or analysis
- Student supervision
- Paper writing

The inclusion of the technical specialist in the science team is entirely at the **discretion of the PI.** The relationship must be clarified prior to any cruises or equipment deployment.

6. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

ACEP is made possible through contract funding from the DSI. The DSI will fund a three-year cycle of research funding from 2024–2026.

ACEP will fund four to five projects up to a value of approximately R 1.75 million per application (excl. student bursaries). Financial requests need to be in line with the requirements of the proposal and should accurately reflect the anticipated financial requirements of the research work. Excessive budget requests are not well received by the review panel. Applications will be scored according to a scorecard (see **Appendix 1**), and the top-scoring applications will be supported until the available resources (funding and platform availability) are exhausted. ACEP reserves the right to optimise the programme

with regards to platform provision and thus successful programmes will require some flexibility. The financial and infrastructure requirements of the top-scoring applications will determine the final number of applications supported.

7. STUDENT SUPPORT

ACEP places a strong emphasis on student training and as such, student projects should be embedded in the work plan. Student bursaries will not be budgeted for in this proposal, however, the proposal should clearly indicate what student projects will be supported. Students will be required to apply for a bursary through the NRF Connect system at https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za to be considered for postgraduate funding. Only top-scoring students who meet the eligibility criteria will be considered for funding. Please encourage your students to use your application reference number, or if successful your grant unique identifier number to enable us to link them to your research team.

8. TRANSFORMATION

The need for greater participation of women and black scientists in marine science is of paramount importance. Applicants are required to carefully consider how their proposed programme will contribute to transformation of marine science. Possible contributions include, but are not limited to:

- Special support offered to disadvantaged students.
- Significant involvement of women, black students, and researchers.
- Collaboration with Historically Disadvantaged Universities.
- Specialist training offered to postgraduate students.

Applicants should take note of the specific section in the online admission form on transformation as well as the scoring in **Appendix 1**.

9. SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT

In January 2015, the Minister of Science and Innovation approved the department's 'Science Engagement Strategy' that seeks to create a society that is knowledgeable about science, critically engaged and scientifically literate. The strategy will achieve this intention by pursuing the following four strategic goals:

Goal 1: To popularise science, engineering, technology, and innovation as attractive, relevant and accessible in order to enhance scientific literacy and awaken interest in relevant careers.

Goal 2: To develop a critical public that actively engages and participates in the national discourse of science and technology to the benefit of society.

Goal 3: To promote science communication that will enhance science engagement in South Africa.

Goal 4: To profile South African science and technology achievements domestically and internationally, demonstrating their contribution to national development and global science, thereby enhancing its public standing.

ACEP, as a flagship programme of the DSI, supports the strategy. Open Call applicants are therefore required to include in their research project planning a carefully considered science engagement component that addresses one or more of the strategic goals itemised above and is integral to the project's outcomes.

Preference will be given to projects whose proposed science engagement activities are integrated into the project planning from its inception and spread throughout the duration of the project. Planned outputs and their potential impact within one or more of the stated goals should be clearly articulated in the proposal.

10. INFORMATION SOURCES

2002 *National Research and Development Strategy*, accessed on 26 March 2013, from http://www.dst.gov.za/index.php/resource-center/strategies-and-reports/174-national-research-a-development-strategy-2002

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

2014 The Department of Science and Technology. *South African Antarctic and Southern Ocean Research Plan (2014-2024)*

2015 The Department of Science and Technology. *The South African Marine and Antarctic Research Strategy*

2015 The National Research Foundation. *The National Research Foundation Strategy 2020* accessed at http://www.nrf.ac.za/sites/default/files/documents/NRF%20Strategy%20Implementation.pdf, ISBN: 978-1-86868-088-7

2019 Sink KJ, van der Bank MG, Majiedt PA, Harris LR, Atkinson LJ, Kirkman SP, Karenyi N (eds). 2019. *South African National Biodiversity Assessment 2018 Technical Report Volume 4: Marine Realm*. South African National Biodiversity Institute, Pretoria. South Africa. http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12143/6372

2022 Science, Technology and Innovation Decadal Plan, May 2022. *Science, Technology, and Innovation, enabling inclusive, sustainable, South African development in a changing world.*

11 *MODUS OPERANDI*

11.1 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

The African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme invites applications to an

OPEN CALL

for a three-year funding cycle (2024-2026)

All application materials ***must*** be submitted electronically via the NRF Connect system at https://nrfconnect.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 to meet the NRF closing date.

Incomplete or late submissions *will not* be accepted.

Successful applicants will be eligible for funding **for three years (2024–2026)**.

Consult the General Application Guide on the NRF website for closing dates.

11.2 CONTACT DETAILS

REFER ALL ONLINE TECHNICAL QUERIES TO:	REFER RESEARCH PLATFORM QUERIES TO:
SUPPORT DESK **Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za**	**RYAN PALMER** **046 603 5872** **072 299 8232** **rm.palmer@saiab.nrf.ac.za**

11.3 ELIGIBILITY

Rated and unrated researchers can apply for three years funding and infrastructure support (2023–2026) in this call.

Applicants must be either:

- full-time employees at an NRF-recognised research institution[1] in South Africa;

OR

- part-time employees on contract at an NRF-recognised research institution in South Africa, on condition that the appointment is for (at least) the duration of the project applied for in the submission. The length of the contract should be stated on 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 university or university of technology on behalf of a third party to fulfil a very specific function for the latter does not qualify for support;

OR

- retired researchers affiliated to an NRF-recognised research institution provided that:
  - they are resident in South Africa;
  - institutional support is evident in the form of an employment contract, office space, administrative support, access to research equipment and space. The institution will have to ensure that a minimum of six months per year are spent at the facility for the purpose of research and research capacity development;
  - the researcher has a research publication track record and must be actively supervising postgraduate students at present.

Full time students, including PhD candidates and postdoctoral fellows *are NOT eligible to apply* as principal investigators in this call.

11.4 APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

The assessment of applications will be guided by a Panel Assessment Scorecard **(see Appendix 1)** and scored according to the Proposal Grading **(see Appendix 2)**. Final assessment will be guided by the following processes:

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[1] *An NRF-recognised research institution is one that meets **all** the following minimum requirements: An institution that –*

- *conducts basic or applied research;*
- *contributes to the research and development of the country (i.e., the results of this research should be freely available in the public domain);*
- *undertakes research that is for the public good, is of a pre-competitive nature and is for the benefit of the long-term knowledge base of the country;*
- *is involved in the training of postgraduate students;*
- *is committed to human resource capacity development; and*
- *is committed to equity and redress.*

1. Technical review and signoff of logistical feasibility.
2. Postal peer review[2] of research proposals.
3. Independent panel review of research proposals.
4. Funding and infrastructure allocation and optimisation.

Applications submitted to the programme will be assessed according to a range of criteria. These criteria include: the track record of the applicant; scientific merit of the application; issues of equity and redress; collaborative efforts; potential impact of the research; and importantly, maximising the use of the research platforms. Funding will be allocated competitively, based on the comments and scores derived from the review process and strategic prioritisation.

11.4.1Postal peer review

The NRF is aware that the selection of appropriate peer reviewers is the cornerstone of the success of the assessment procedure. For this purpose, applicants are requested to provide the names of between six and ten appropriate peers who would be able to provide an objective assessment of the application. Applicants must also indicate and motivate why specific reviewers should preferably not review their applications. Based on this information, as well as extensive consultations and the extraction of experts from the NRF's databases, the NRF will strive to obtain at least two to three quality review reports for each application.

Peer reviewers are requested to determine the scientific merit of the application, focusing on the following criteria:

Scientific novelty and relevance

- How well does the application address/engage novel concepts, approaches and methods that challenge existing paradigms and/or develop innovative methodologies and/or processes?
- How clear are the justifications for the choice of theoretical position(s) motivated for in the application?
- Does the application address the key research areas of the call?
- Does the research benefit society??

Approach and feasibility

- Is the project multidisciplinary in nature?
- Does the application clearly demonstrate a need for the research platforms on offer?
- Are the design, methods and analysis properly developed[3], well integrated and appropriate to the aims of the application?
- How achievable is the work plan within the time frame and available resources?
- How likely is it that the proposed work will be accomplished by the researcher(s) within the stipulated time frames as indicated by:
    - the documented experience and expertise of the participant(s);
    - past progress by the investigators regarding the work in the application; and
    - preliminary data collected that informed the application?

[2] While termed 'postal', the NRF peer review system is electronic.

[3] It is acknowledged that scientific novelty and properly developed methods can be mutually exclusive and this will be considered.

Student training and integration

- Have the activities of the student's projects been embedded in the work plan?
- Does the proposed research maximise student training?

11.4.2Panel peer review

A panel comprising independent academics and research managers of line departments in the marine sector with a broad knowledge of the fields of specialisation covered will assess and rank the applications and make recommendations to the NRF and ACEP Management Team using the multiple criteria-scorecard. The panel's grading of scientific feasibility and scientific novelty will be informed by the postal peer-review process.

11.4.3Allocation and optimisation

The final allocation process will be undertaken by the NRF and will be governed by the panel ranking and the availability and optimal use of research platforms.

11.5 RULES OF PARTICIPATION

11.5.1Principal investigator

Only researchers employed at NRF recognised 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. 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 timeously meeting all reporting requirements.

A PI ***MAY NOT*** submit a research proposal for their own degree purposes; or on behalf of a student where the student in the main will be carrying out the research. The expectation is that individual student projects will be embedded within a larger research programme or project.

11.5.2Co-investigators

A co-investigator 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. South African-based co-investigators are eligible to receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

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

11.5.3Collaborators

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 to receive NRF funds from the grant if the team's application is successful.

11.6 TIMELINES

ACEP support will be awarded for a period not exceeding three years **(2024–2026).** The last year to enrol students will be the beginning of 2026. Student commitments will be honoured beyond 2026 if all NRF grant conditions are fulfilled. Fieldwork should be planned for 2024 and 2025, leaving 2026 to finish any incomplete field components.

Academic year	Financial year	Nature	Research Platform support
2024	2024/25	Funded	Provided
2025	2025/26	Funded	Provided
2026	2026/27	Funded (last year to enrol	Limited – finish incomplete fieldwork
2027	*2027/28*	*Roll-over year*	*Not provided*
2028	*2028/29*	*Last roll-over year*	*Not provided*
2029	*2029/30*	*Programme ended – no funds*	*No support*

11.7 SPECIFIC ACEP FUNDING CONDITIONS

ACEP is funded through a rolling, three-year contract with the DSI. As ACEP is a research contract it has specific reporting and corporate governance requirements which must be adhered to by the ACEP management team and project PIs. PIs and their teams must take note that, in comparison to some NRF research funding streams, involvement in ACEP requires greater reporting and performance management by the PI.

1. **Platform accessibility**: ACEP enables research platform access however ACEP cannot guarantee platform access. Every effort will be made by the ACEP team to ensure access is provided but factors such as instrument loss, weather, major breakdowns, 3rd party platform provider withdrawal from ACEP may prevent ACEP from meeting all commitments.
2. **Cruise Chief Scientist:** Cruises are very expensive and are taxing on the scientist in charge. ACEP requires Chief Scientists to have had experience in managing cruises and ACEP management reserves the right to request alternatives if the individual indicated in the application does not have the required experience.
3. **Equipment insurance:** The ACEP project does not insure equipment other than that supplied by ACEP. PI's are to ensure that equipment brought into and used as part of the programme is adequately insured and the owner of the asset has given permission for its use. Nor is ACEP liable for any loss or damage to equipment used off its vessels.
4. **Personnel insurance:** ACEP does not cover any form of personnel insurance for participants. Participants will be required to sign indemnities and will need to cover their own death, disability, sickness, and search and rescue insurance.
5. **Data archiving:** It should be noted that the conditions of award will include a clause that indicates that all data collected by the project should be lodged with SAEON. All data collected with Mar-RIP, GeMap and ATAP equipment will be lodged with SAIAB. All data will be publically available 4 years

after the completion of the project (2030) with the data originator receiving acknowledgement (no automatic authorship on outputs).

6. **Ethics:** All activities undertaken by the research team will need to meet the required ethics standards of the contracting institution. ACEP management reserves the right to request ethics clearance certification from the PI. ACEP also reserves the right to not support research activities that it deems unethical.
7. **Research permits:** Obtaining research permits is wholly the responsibility of the PI. ACEP management reserves the right to request copies of the permits from the PI. Copies of the research permit will be required for all work off ACEP platforms.
8. **Research outside SA:** In this phase, research is limited to South African waters.
9. **ACEP reporting:** ACEP is an integrated, actively managed flagship programme of the DSI. As such, ACEP has specific monthly, quarterly, and annual reporting requirements over and above the annual reports required by the NRF. In addition, certain research platforms, such as the ships and ROV, require detailed sailing orders to be developed to ensure maximum benefit is obtained from these expensive platforms. Where possible, the ACEP Management Team tries to streamline this process, but participation in reporting by PIs is obligatory. These reporting requirements include:
    - quarterly telephonic updates with the ACEP manager. The ACEP manager then puts together a quarterly progress report which is sent to DSI and NRF.
    - detailed input into sailing orders;
    - cruise reports by the Chief Scientist produced for all expedition type trips using any of the ACEP marine platforms;
    - standard annual reports to the NRF;
    - detailed input into ACEP Annual reports and promotional publications as required; and
    - one NRF Research Nugget submission during the project.
10. **DST key performance indicators (KPIs):** ACEP is contractually bound to the DSI to produce certain deliverables such as:
    - team member and student numbers according to demographic targets;
    - peer reviewed papers;
    - conference proceedings;
    - cruise numbers; and
11. **Acknowledgement:** All project outputs (publications, conference, student theses, etc.) must formally acknowledge DSI/NRF/SAIAB/ACEP support and the relevant platform funder or platform management institution (e.g., SAEON, SMCRI, ATAP, Mar-RIP, etc).

11.8 MANAGEMENT OF FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The Knowledge Advancement and Support Directorate of the NRF – Research and Innovation Support and Advancement (RISA) manages ACEP and is primarily responsible for:

- strategic oversight and management of the funding instrument;
- conceptualising 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 Reviews and Evaluation Directorate is responsible for managing the adjudication process including:

- sourcing of reviewers both for remote reviews and panels;

- managing the peer review process;
- organising and managing the review panels; and
- providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

The Grants Management and Systems Administration Directorate is responsible for:

- managing the call process, that is,
  - posting the call; and
  - 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.

SAIAB is responsible for:

- provision of the marine research infrastructure offered in the call; and
- provision of technical support

12. FINANCIALS

12.1 FUNDING MODEL

The grants of this funding instrument are primarily to support research, and the associated (and approved) logistics costs. Careful consideration should be given to the development of associated human resources under the auspices of the NRF standard grant and finance policies. Overall, the ACEP funding instrument is required to expense no less than 30% per annum on human capital development in the form of student bursaries, student activities, and the development of early career researchers. Successful applicants will be sent conditions of grant along with a successful award letter. The money is released upon acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her employing institution. These grants are subject to the NRF audit requirements of beneficiary institutions.

12.2 FUNDING CATEGORIES

The PI's research grant award is expected to pay for all running expenses associated with the programme (**Table 12 Part A**, below) excluding certain platform costs which are covered directly by the programme management team (**Table 12 Part B**, below). The PI's research should be justified and commensurate with the planned outputs and number of students trained.

TABLE 12 A – GRANT HOLDER-LINKED RESEARCH AWARD
Can be funded through grant holders award
All travel and accommodation (inclusive of travel associated with cruises)
All internal research and co-ordination meetings
All subsistence costs
All research consumables
All research equipment (<R100 000 per item)
All conferences (national or international)
All medical certificates

All additional certification required by students or researchers, e.g., Class IV diving certificates, safety-at-sea certificates.
All permits
All sample analysis
All publication page charges
Cannot be funded through grant holders award
ACEP does not provide funding for the salaries of team members or assistants.
Seagoing allowance
Equipment greater than R 100 000. Requisitions for large equipment items > R 100 000 should be submitted through the NRF's Equipment Programme.
Sabbaticals
Student bursary top-ups
TABLE 12 B – FUNDED DIRECTLY BY THE ACEP MANAGEMENT TEAM
Coastal craft costs (*uKwabelana*, *Phakisa* and *Observer* fuel, skipper, logistics)
ATAP array maintenance costs
Insurance of ACEP equipment
Calibration of ACEP equipment
Maintenance of ACEP equipment
Logistics associated with getting infrastructure to study site
Provision of multi-beam and ROV operators
Training in the use of equipment (BRUV, ATAP)

The application assessment process will consider proposed budget items in terms of cost, risk, and reward ratios. Decisions relating to budget items will also be governed by the overall funding instrument funds available for the period. Awards will be made in line with the NRF funding rules and guidelines as outlined in **Section 12.3**.

12.3 FUNDING SUPPORT

The NRF funds ACEP on an ongoing basis, and in line with contractual obligations. NRF-recognised institutions (as defined above) are the primary beneficiaries of this funding instrument.

12.3.1 Student Support

Postgraduate student support

The National Research Foundation (NRF) has developed a new Postgraduate Student Funding Policy that will use postgraduate student funding as a lever to address the challenges of inequity of access, success, and throughput. The policy is underpinned by the pursuit of research excellence in all its dimensions and has transformation of the postgraduate cohort as the core objective. Its purpose is to retain high academic achievers in the system to pursue postgraduate studies up to the doctoral level, as part of a national drive to grow the next generation of academics to sustain South Africa's knowledge enterprise. The NRF is prioritising postgraduate students with research inclination, with the aim to grow the pool of early career researchers. Another motivation for this policy is to fast-track the development of postgraduate students in high-impact, priority, and vulnerable disciplines critical for national socio-economic development.

All the postgraduate students will be expected to apply on the NRF Connect system by accessing the link: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za. This single-entry point will allow the NRF to co-ordinate the applications that have not yet had the financial means test conducted, this financial means test will be conducted by Ikusasa Students Financial Aid Programme (ISFAP). Postgraduate students will be funded either at Full Cost of Study (FCS) or Partial Cost of Study (PCS) under the new policy. To ensure equity of access to postgraduate studies, financially needy students (i.e., those whose combined household income is R350 000 per annum or less) and students with a disability will be funded at FCS. Academic highfliers achieving a distinction or first-class pass will also be eligible for funding at FCS. International students as well as any other South African student who is not eligible to be funded at FCS will be eligible for PCS funding.

The students are expected to meet the NRF minimum entry requirement to be eligible for FCS or PCS as illustrated in Table 12A below.

Table 12A: Eligibility criteria for NRF postgraduate funding for FCS and PCS.

Study Level	**Full Cost of Study** *(South African Citizens and Permanent Residents only)*		**Partial Cost of Study** (*South African Citizens; South African Permanent Residents and 5% Non-South African Citizens)*
	Exceptional Achievers	**Financially Needy & Students with Disability**	**Other**
Honours	• ≥ 75% Mark in Final Year of study	• ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study	• ≥ 65% Mark in Final Year of study
	Honours students must be **28** years of age or younger in the year of application. Non-South African Citizens are not eligible for Honours Scholarships.		
Masters	• ≥ 75% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year	• ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year	• ≥ 65% Mark for Honours • Completed Honours in one year
	Masters students must be **30** years of age or younger in the year of application.		
Doctoral	• ≥ 75% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years	• ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years	• ≥ 65% Mark for Masters • Completed Masters in two years
	Doctoral students must be **32** years of age or younger in the year of application.		

In cases where a grade is not indicated, the application will not be considered for funding by the NRF.

The NRF will allocate all postgraduate bursaries under its management control as follows:

- 95% South African citizens and permanent residents;
- 5% students from SADC countries and from the rest of the world; and
- 55% women.

The NRF disaggregates these targets for South African citizens and permanent residents as follows:

- 90% Black (African, Coloured, and Indian);
- 10% White; and
- 1% students living with a disability.

For further details on the NRF Postgraduate Funding policy, kindly refer to the framework document which is available on www.nrf.ac.za."

12.3.2Postdoctoral fellowships

Postdoctoral fellowships may be supported though an applicant's ACEP grant for a maximum of 2 years, and needs to be budgeted for in the project proposal as follows:

- Postdoctoral (*pro rata* per month) R 200 000 p.a Max 2 years

A postdoctoral fellowship may only be filled if there are at least one MSc or PhD student registered on the project.

12.3.3Grantholder research-related operating costs

Research-related operating costs

Materials and supplies

The NRF **does not** provide financial support for:

- Basic office equipment including computers and consumables. Computer purchases will only be allowed in instances where these are specific requirements for the research itself (e.g., high performance computing). Computer purchases will be allowed if the principal investigator or co-investigator is based at a museum.
- Basic office stationery, photocopying costs, printing costs unless these items form part of the research tools, or the principal investigator or co-investigator is based at a museum.
- Journal publication costs, journal subscription costs, book costs unless the principal investigator or co-investigator is based at a museum.
- Telephone, fax, and internet costs unless the principal investigator or co-investigator is based at a museum.

Travel and subsistence

- International conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts this amount to R 50 000 per application per year for a team proposal, i.e. for principal investigators, co-investigators (local only) and local postgraduate students. This amount may be reduced proportionately if there is no team member and/or postgraduate student involvement.

- International visits: These 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. Both incoming and outgoing visits will be considered against the overall availability of funding.
- Local conference attendance: Generally, the NRF restricts expenditure against this item to R 5 000 per person (all costs). Support for local conference attendance could be requested for all listed co-investigators and postgraduate students. The applicant should detail the following in their motivations:
    - The value of attending more than one local conference per annum if so requested.
    - The number of people that should be funded to attend local conferences.
- Local travel: The NRF does not stipulate any rate for mileage as this will depend on the research institutions' rate, which varies per institution. Applicants are requested to provide details of this rate, as well as the estimated distance to be travelled within the given year.
- Local accommodation should not exceed a three-star rating establishment, per night per person.

Research / technical / ad hoc assistants

- This funding instrument does **not provide funding for salaries**.
- Requests for research / technical / ad hoc assistance should be treated with caution. The NRF strongly encourages applicants to engage students to undertake the research rather than employing research consultants. This guideline however does not apply when specific and / or highly specialised research / technical expertise is required (e.g., multi-beam operator for 3rd party vessel). **This should be CLEARLY motivated for in the proposal.**

Research equipment

Requisitions for large equipment items (> R 100 000) should be submitted through the NRF's Equipment Programme.

Funding to cater for disabilities.

Additional funding support to cater for disability may be allocated to people with disabilities as specified in the Code of Good Practice on Employment of People with Disabilities as in the Employment Equity Act No 55 of 1998.

12.4 FUNDING INSTRUMENT BUDGET

ACEP is made possible through contract funding from the DSI. The budget to be allocated to projects for running costs for the 3-year period will be approximately R7 000 000, while a minimum of R3 000 000 will be allocated for student support. Various institutions e.g., SAIAB, and SAEON provide equipment or platforms at a cost recovery or no costs basis.

12.5 FINANCIAL CONTROL AND REPORTING

Upon receipt of the signed Conditions of Grant letter, the NRF will release the awarded amount for the year. Grant holders will then be required to comply with the standard NRF financial management procedures, including the submission of an Annual Progress Report. These are to be submitted in February of each subsequent year and is 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 current grant award, and all other NRF grants under the Principal Investigator. Internal institutional closing dates for submissions will apply and no late reports will be considered.

13. MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE FUNDING INSTRUMENT

The NRF is responsible for monitoring and evaluating ACEP Open Call.

13.1 REPORTING

The funding instrument Director and SAIAB Managing Director are responsible for reporting quarterly on the contribution of ACEP to the Knowledge Advancement and Support Directorate's Key Performance Indicators. The Knowledge Advancement and Support Directorate is in turn responsible for reviewing and reporting to the DSI annually on the progress of the funding instrument.

13.2. TIME FRAMES FOR PROGRAMME REVIEW

The ACEP Open Call will be evaluated by an appropriate external reviewer as appointed by the Reviews and Evaluation Directorate. In consultation, the Knowledge Advancement and Support Directorate will agree to and set time frames for the review in line with existing NRF policies and guidelines.

13.3 BROAD TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE PROGRAMME REVIEW

The broad terms of reference for the programme review of the ACEP funding instrument will be determined by the Knowledge Advancement and Support Directorate and SAIAB Managing Director prior to the evaluation taking place, and in accordance with tenets set in the Reviews and Evaluation Directorate's Guidelines.

13.4 UTILISATION OF PROGRAMME REVIEW FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the evaluation will be used in line with the purposes set in the Terms of Reference for the evaluation, as well as for the improvement and development of the funding instrument.

13.5 ETHICAL CLEARANCE

It is the responsibility of the grantholder, in conjunction with the institution, to ensure that all research activities carried out in or outside South Africa comply with the laws and regulations of South Africa and/or the foreign country in which the research activities are conducted. These include all human and animal subjects, copyright and intellectual property protection, and other regulations or laws, as appropriate. A research ethics committee must review and approve the ethical and academic rigor of all research in accordance with institutional ethical policies and procedures. The ethical clearance approval should be held by the institution and the grantholder and should be accessible on request.

Please also refer to the "Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices" on the NRF website at https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/

ACRONYMS

ACEP	African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme
ATAP	Acoustic Tracking Array Platform
CTD	Conductivity, Temperature, Depth
DFFE	Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
DSI	Department of Science and Innovation
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MAR-RIP	Marine-Remote Imagery Platform
MARS	National Marine and Antarctic Research Strategy
MPA	Marine Protected Area
MSP	Marine Spatial Planning
NRF	National Research Foundation
NBA	National Biodiversity Assessment
NSI	National System of Innovation
PI	Principal Investigator
RIB	Rigid Inflatable Boat
RISA	Research and Innovation Support and Advancement
ROV	Remotely Operated Vehicle
SAEON	South African Environmental Observation Network
SAIAB	South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity
SBRUV	Stereo Baited Remote Underwater Video
SMCRI	Shallow Marine and Coastal Research Infrastructure
SWIO	Southwest Indian Ocean

ANNEXURE 1: ACEP PANEL ASSESSMENT SCORECARD

ANNEXURE 1: Panel Assessment Scorecard – ACEP					
Criteria	**Sub-Criteria**	**Details**	**Score / 4**	**Weight**	**Weighted score**
Proposals	Scientific merit and feasibility	• Reflect on the scientific, ethical, logistics and technical feasibility as proposed. • Reflect on past contributions of the applicant to appropriate knowledge production (e.g. journal articles, book chapters, designs, performances, etc.). • The proposed work significantly advance discovery and understanding in the field in terms of Impact on knowledge production.		45%	0.00
Equity	Of applicant	Race / Gender[4] .		15%	0.00
	Of students graduated	M and D graduates in the last 5yrs		10%	0.00
Collaboration	International, national, and institutional collaborations	• Are the appropriate collaborations proposed in the application? • Are historically disadvantaged institutions included? • Are the roles of the proposed collaborators clearly indicated?		10%	0.00
Impacts	Wider impact	• Has the potential contribution to economic, societal, or environmental impact been appropriately embedded in the proposal? • Is it clear how such impact will be measured?		10%	0.00
Data management and use	Data management plan	Has an appropriate, comprehensive data management plan been embedded within the proposal (as attachment or as free text)?		5%	0.00
	Open Access	Is the open access to all data generated by the proposed research been appropriately and comprehensively detailed?		5%	
Totals				**100%**	**0.00**

[4] This is a preset score inserted by the NRF. See Annexure 3

ANNEXURE 2: PROPOSAL GRADING

Score	Meaning of score	Notes
4	Exceptional	Application demonstrates evidence of ***exceptional*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration
3	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.
2	Above average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***above average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration.
1	Average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by the panel and relative to the knowledge field under consideration.
0	Below average	Application demonstrates evidence of ***below average*** performance across all the stated criteria, as determined by panel and relative to knowledge field under consideration

Context:

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.

ANNEXURE 3: PRE-SET EQUITY SCORES

ANNEXURE 3: Pre-set equity scores	
Equity Status	**Pre-set Equity Score**
Disabled	4
Black female; Black male, young[5]	4
Black male, not young	3
White female, young	3
White female, not young	2
White male, young	2
White male, not young	1

It should be noted that non-South African citizens will be scored as White females or males, as appropriate.

[5] "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.