

South Africa / France Science and Technology Research Collaboration

PROTEA Call for Joint Research Proposals

Closing Date: Consult the General Application Guide 2026

(on the NRF website at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>)

***Note:** the NRF Online Submission System will only open on **May 2026** for submission of applications. South African applicants **must** consult their institutions for internal closing date.*

A maximum of 8 joint projects will be funded for this call

The South Africa–France PROTEA Programme is a joint initiative between the two countries to support collaborative research and innovation. It is funded by the French government (through its foreign affairs and higher education ministries) and South Africa’s Department of Science and Innovation and National Research Foundation.

The programme promotes researcher mobility, training, and partnerships between institutions in both countries, helping to grow scientific collaboration and knowledge exchange. Since its launch in 1997, it has served as a platform for developing and expanding joint research projects, and its success led to a renewed commitment in 2017 to continue supporting it annually.

AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

This Programme aims to:

- contribute to scientific advancement in both countries by funding researchers’ mobility in the frame of joint research projects in specified research fields;
- provide an opportunity for **young and emerging researchers** to cooperate in an international setting and to develop their scientific careers, especially for early-stage, mid-career as well as female researchers;
- support the advancement of basic and applied research; and
- contribute meaningfully to research capacity development.

AREAS OF COOPERATION

The call is open to all scientific disciplines and thematic areas, including social sciences and the humanities as well as Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Please Note:

Joint projects with the potential to lead to future bilateral and multilateral co-operations within the French, South African and European research programmes will be favourably considered. Also, the joint projects by **young scientists** incorporating PhD students, and those that pay particular attention to a balanced involvement of female and male researchers (gender equality) will be positively considered and will receive a higher rating.

DURATION OF PROJECTS

The projects will be supported for a period of two years (projects starting in 2027 and ending in December 2028).

WHO MAY APPLY?

- An application must designate two Principal Investigators (PIs), one in South Africa and one in France, who will bear the main responsibility for the project, including its technical and administrative coordination as well as scientific and financial reporting.
- Project proposals submitted by early-to-mid career researchers as well as project proposals with involvement of PhD (doctoral) students and/or female researchers, will be prioritised for funding by both sides.
- The focus of the Programme lies in new international partnerships. Therefore, follow-up proposals with the same research partners will not be prioritised for funding (if they have already been funded under this Programme).

South Africa:

This call is open to working researchers residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology, science council or any other research institution as declared by the Department of Science Technology and Innovation (DSTI). Commercial institutions and private education institutions are not eligible to apply under this programme. The South African applicant must be in possession of a PhD. In terms of human capital development, South African applications from historically disadvantaged individuals and the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education institutions will be prioritised.

France:

This call is open to working researchers residing in France with a recognised French higher education university/college, research institution, or enterprise.

HOW DO I APPLY?

The onus is on the applicants to find their own research partners. Proposals must be received in both South Africa and France. Proposals which have only been received in either South Africa or France, but not both, will not be considered for funding. The call process is highly competitive; therefore, submission of an application does not guarantee funding. The availability of funds and the evaluation of applications from both countries should be positive for projects to be considered for funding. The NRF will not be held responsible for non-submission, administration, or evaluation of the application in the partner country.

South Africa:

Applications must be submitted through an online application process on the NRF Connect link: <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>

France:

The French team's project proposals, in French, must be submitted online at: [protea on line submission of the French proposals](http://www.campusfrance.org/fr/protea): <http://www.campusfrance.org/fr/protea>.

WHICH ACTIVITIES MAY I APPLY FOR?

The purpose of this call is to support the mobility of researchers between the two countries to carry out joint research projects. In this regard, funding will be made available for visits and exchanges of scientists conducting joint research in their area of specialisation.

In the case of meetings, research visits and exchanges of scientists, personnel and experts, as well as reciprocal visits undertaken as part of joint research projects and the attendance of workshops, seminars, symposia and other meetings funded under this partnership, the sending side will be responsible for expenses associated with international travel (flights), visas, medical insurance and subsistence while the receiving party covers accommodation costs, local/ground transport and all expenses associated with hosting of events, e.g. venue for workshops, etc.

The following will **NOT** be funded from the funds allocation:

- Consultant's fees
- Project management fees
- Educational expenses (scholarships and/or bursaries, etc.)
- Large equipment
- Salaries and temporary staff fees

FUNDING MODALITIES

Funding will be available for a maximum of two years for collaborative research projects jointly developed and completed by researchers on both sides. In both countries, all the approved projects will get funding support from the two parties in terms of the cost of activities mentioned above. Apart from the financial support from the two parties, institutions and universities in both countries are encouraged to solicit other funding resources.

FUNDING LIMITS

- Should you be successful you will be funded only for the activities within the scope of this guideline.
- Scientific and financial reporting on the project is **obligatory**.
- Research stays in both countries are **obligatory**.

South Africa:

The total amount requested from the NRF should not exceed **R300 000** per project. Funding will be made available for a maximum of two years, to be paid in annual instalments and exclusively for research activities commencing in 2027.

France:

Funding requests from France should not exceed €20 000 (10.000€ per year). The following indicative rates apply:

- The travel from France to South Africa will be reimbursed up to €1 600 per return ticket (subject to revision).
- For a stay in South Africa of researchers including PhD students, daily allowances of €125/day

HOW ARE APPLICATIONS EVALUATED?

Following the closing date, applications will be submitted to recognised national experts in the various fields of research represented by the proposals received. These experts will evaluate each proposal based on the following broad criteria:

- Scientific quality of the intended joint research project.
- Feasibility and/or plans for future cooperation.
- Human Capacity Development.

Please note that other national criteria may be applicable in line with the national policies and regulations of the partnering countries. Following national evaluation, a shortlist of projects to be funded will be constituted through consultations between the two Parties based on the results of the expert evaluations done in both countries. The project selection for funding will be carried out at the Joint Technical Committee (JTC) Meeting and the outcomes will be announced thereafter.

PROJECT FOLLOW-UP AND REPORTING

- A final scientific and financial report has to be submitted in English by both the South African and the French PIs no more than 3 months after the end of the project.
- From both the South African and French sides, successful submission of the first annual report is an **obligatory** condition of funding in subsequent years.
- The French PI should download and use the template for a report within the defined timeframe. The project report from the French side should be forwarded to the Attaché for Science and Technology at the French Embassy in South Africa.
- All project reports must mention project outputs as compared to the objectives and aims of the proposal.
- The funders reserve the right to make the final reports available to researchers within and outside this programme in similar disciplines.

The joint publications by researchers must mention the support from the funders (i.e. the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, the National Research Foundation, the French Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research, and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development).

IMPACT

Applicants are encouraged to ensure that their research have relevance and potential for impact beyond the academic world, such as in societal, technical, economical, or cultural realms. In line with this, applicants may include societal or industry partners within their projects or consider how relevant stakeholders can be involved in, or benefit from, the design and realisation of the proposed research project. These stakeholders, however, must cover their own costs of participation in the joint projects. In this regard, the NRF aims to facilitate sustainable institutional links between partnering countries by building on existing, outstanding and established research partnerships, and fostering new linkages and engagements with small cohorts of young and emerging researchers for new linkages.

SCIENCE ENGAGEMENT

Science engagement refers to scientific and initiative activities, events, interventions, or interactions characterised by mutual learning and dialogue among people of varied backgrounds, scientific expertise, and life experiences, who articulate and discuss their perspectives, ideas, knowledge, and values. It is an overarching term for all aspects of public engagement through suitable communication channels with science, science awareness, science education, science communication, and science outreach, aiming to develop and benefit individuals and society. The NRF supports science engagement by coordinating and implementing the Department of Science and Innovation's Engagement Strategy. The strategy embraces a broad understanding of science, encompassing systematic knowledge spanning (natural and physical sciences, engineering sciences, medical sciences, agricultural sciences, mathematics, social sciences and humanities, technology) all aspects of the innovation chain and indigenous knowledge. Therefore, researchers funded through the NRF programmes must contribute to science engagement and report the related outputs in their project's progress report.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Projects must demonstrate potential for promoting human capital development, equity and redress through the involvement of young, early-stage, and/or mid-career researchers, historically disadvantaged individuals (female and disabled), and the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education institutions.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The researchers of each country, particularly the Principal Investigators, must take adequate steps to ensure the protection and sharing of the intellectual property that could result from the joint projects.

ETHICAL CLEARANCE

In conjunction with the institution, it is the responsibility of the grant-holder 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 prior to the commencement of the research and acceptance of the grant. The awarded amount will not be released for payment if a copy of the required ethical clearance certificate, as indicated in the application, is not attached to the Conditions of Grant. Please also refer to the “Statement on Ethical Research and Scholarly Publishing Practices” on the NRF website <https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-researchand-scholarly-publishing-practices/>.

PROTECTION OF PERSONAL INFORMATION

The National Research Foundation ensures compliance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Act 4 of 2013, committing to ensure the privacy of those submitting applications and proposals to the NRF on the NRF Online Submission System (<https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za/>). The National Research Foundation will protect the personal information provided by applicants or the third party against misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure. The Privacy Policy of the NRF outlines the practices relating to the protection of personal information and can be accessed on the NRF website at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/privacy-policy>.

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS

All proposals by South African researchers must be submitted by the **30 July 2026**. Applicants are also encouraged to consult their institutions for internal closing dates. Applications submitted to the NRF after this cut-off date will not be submitted for review nor will it be considered for funding. Researchers must ensure that their partners submit their applications on time and that these are successfully received in the partner country. Both the French and South African funders will not accept responsibility for any applications that are missing, late, or not received on either side.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR QUERIES AND FURTHER INFORMATION

In South Africa	In France
National Research Foundation (NRF) For applications & programme queries: Teuns Phahlamohlaka RIISA: International Grants and Partnerships directorate Tel: +27 12 481 4385 Email: T.Phahlamohlaka@risa.nrf.ac.za For system or technical queries: Email: supportdesk@nrf.ac.za	French Embassy in South Africa Aurelien LEYNET Attaché for Science and Technology Ambassade de France en Afrique du Sud Tel: +27 12 425 1713 Email: aurelien.leynet@diplomatie.gouv.fr