



SOUTH AFRICAN
RESEARCH CHAIR: T
Creation of Decent Work &
Sustainable Livelihood



National
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SALDRU
Southern Africa Labour and
Development Research Unit



PRESIDENTIAL
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Postdoctoral Fellowship Opportunity

Public employment and the social value of work

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| Title | Postdoctoral Research Fellow |
| Research department | Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit, School of Economics / SARChI Chair in Creation of Decent Work & Sustainable Livelihood |
| Fellowship stipend | R320,000 - R370,000 per annum, tax free |
| | Fixed-term, with possibility to extend annually for a maximum of 3 years depending on performance and availability of funding |
| Reporting to | Prof Ines Meyer and Prof Murray Leibbrandt |
| Application deadline | 31 October 2025 |
| Starting date | Latest start 1 February 2026 |

The University of Cape Town invites applications for a postdoctoral fellowship position funded through the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and National Research Foundation's (NRF) South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI) Chair in Creation of Decent Work and Sustainable Livelihoods. The position is based at the Southern Africa Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU).

This fellowship sits within a research initiative examining how publicly funded employment programmes create value beyond income security, with a particular focus on the Presidential Employment Stimulus which has created over 2 million jobs and livelihood opportunities since 2020. The successful candidate will undertake research on "The added value of work for communities and society," investigating how participation in work creates social value, builds community cohesion, and produces public goods that support South Africa's development priorities.

The candidate will work at the intersection of academic research and policy implementation, contributing to evidence to reimagine the role and relevance of public employment in South African society. This research agenda will be co-created together with both government and non-governmental stakeholders to ensure that the research remains grounded in practical realities. The candidate must, therefore, expect close collaboration with government and implementing partners, in addition to a core focus to research, publish, and convene.



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This is a unique opportunity to help shape a national research agenda to assist redefining how South Africa values the work that people do for the common good.

Scope of the work

In addition to his/her own research and publishing (as agreed to by his/her/their supervisors), the postdoctoral fellow will:

- Co-create a conceptual and empirical approach to understand the social value created by labour in public employment programmes,
- Design and deliver studies (mixed-methods welcome) on the social value of work that will result in high-quality academic outputs
- Work at the research - policy interface: translate findings into policy briefs, opinion pieces, and presenting at forums or conferences
- Participate in knowledge exchange activities with government partners and civil society

Requirements

Essential:

- PhD in development studies, development/labour economics, sociology, public policy, human geography, work psychology or a related social science field (awarded or near completion within the last 5 years), multi- or interdisciplinary experience is a plus.
- Excellent written and communication skills
- Collaborative mindset and appetite for co-creation with policy and practitioner partners.
- Dedicated to facilitating take-up of research findings by policymakers and programme implementers
- The prospective Postdoctoral Fellow has not previously held comprehensive professional or permanent academic positions.

Desirable:

- Evidence of strong scholarly performance (publications, participation in research projects, research networks and/or conference presentations)
- Knowledge of social protection, public employment, and South Africa's development challenges
- Experience working with government and/or civil society

The successful candidate will be expected to:

- Register as a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Cape Town



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- Comply with the University of Cape Town's approved policies, procedures and practices applicable to postdoctoral fellows

To apply for this fellowship, please submit the following:

1. **Curriculum Vitae (CV):** including details of academic qualifications, research experience, and publications.
2. **Short prompt response:** a maximum 500-word response to the following question: *"What does the term 'social value of labour' mean to you?"*

A maximum of 3 writing samples (including one academic piece): these may include a mix of academic work (e.g. journal articles, thesis chapters, working papers) and public-facing work (e.g. blogs, op-eds, policy briefs).

Applications should be submitted by email to [Haajirah Esau](#) with the subject line *"PEP Postdoctoral Fellowship Application – [Your Name]"*.

Selection process

Eligible and complete applications will be considered by the research team. If you have not heard within two months of the deadline, please assume your application has been unsuccessful

The University of Cape Town reserves the right to:

- *Disqualify ineligible, incomplete and/or inappropriate applications;*
- *Change the conditions of the award or to make no awards at all*