



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

EQUIPMENT RELATED MOBILITY AND TRAINING GRANTS

May 2011

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1. Strategic Context

Research infrastructure is a key enabler for advancing research and postgraduate training. In this regard, the Department of Science and Technology (DST) has identified five categories for research infrastructure investment in South Africa. These are research equipment, cyber infrastructure, specialised laboratories, large high-end infrastructure and global infrastructure.

The National Research Foundation (NRF) through the funding instruments, the National Equipment Programme (NEP), National Nanotechnology Equipment Programme (NNEP) and the Strategic Research Infrastructure Programme (SRIP) supports the acquisition, upgrade and development of state-of-the-art research equipment at universities, science councils (SCs), National Research Facilities (NFs), museums, and other publicly funded research institutes, such as the South African Nuclear Energy Corporation (NECSA).

While the NEP, NNEP and SRIP have, over the past five years, made inroads in addressing the research infrastructure needs of the country the following challenges have been encountered by the NRF:

- Specialised multi-user research equipment, is not equitably distributed across the various research institutions in South Africa;
- Researchers in South Africa continue to require access to specialised equipment located at institutions abroad. Such equipment are not currently available in South Africa;
- Researchers from South Africa will in the short to medium-term continue to require access to global research infrastructure such as synchrotron radiation facilities; and
- Optimal access and utilisation of the available research infrastructure is dependent on the availability of funding support for:
 - Hosting of workshops that focus on training of technicians, operators and other users;
 - On site training of researchers and postgraduate students by instrumentation specialists; and
 - Access to specialised equipment and global research infrastructure located at other institutions in South Africa and abroad.

In light of the aforementioned challenges the NRF has, over the past several years, funded both national and international travel costs in order to support researchers who require access to equipment that is not available either regionally or nationally. This document provides a framework for the implementation of mobility grants geared towards addressing the aforementioned challenges.

2. Scope

The rationale for the mobility grants is to make available funds to support the larger science community to access state-of-the-art equipment that is not available at the home research institution or region including access to synchrotron facilities and other global research infrastructure. The mobility grants are divided into two portfolios of opportunities, namely:

- Equipment related **Travel Grants**; and
- Equipment related **Training Grants**.

2.1 *Equipment Related Travel Grants*

The objective is to provide financial support for researchers to access state-of-the-art equipment, within South Africa and abroad, that is not available at their own research institution, region or nationally. This funding instrument is subdivided into two categories, namely:

2.1.1 General Equipment Travel Grants, which makes funds available to researchers requiring access to specialised equipment that is not available regionally or nationally. The grant will cover national or international travel and subsistence as required.

2.1.2 Synchrotron Travel Grants, which makes funds available to researchers requiring access to a synchrotron radiation facility. The applicant must provide evidence that he/she was successful in his/her application to utilise a beam line(s) at a synchrotron radiation facility.

2.2 *Equipment Related Training Grants*

This intervention makes funds available to support workshops focussed on training technical staff, postgraduate students and other users of specialised and state-of-the-art equipment that were acquired either through NEP, NNEP and/or SRIP grant awards. This will include practical training and short courses on the use of specialised research equipment.

The initial training that forms part of the commissioning of new equipment will not be

covered by this training grant as this may be factored into the purchase price of the equipment.

3. Objectives

The Mobility Grants aim to support world-class research, enhance research collaborations nationally and internationally and, support the development of specialised skills required to sustainably manage and operate state-of-the-art research equipment.

The objectives of this programme are to make funds available to support:

- The larger research community to access state-of-the-art equipment (not necessarily NRF supported) that is not available regionally and/or nationally;
- Researchers and postgraduate students in South Africa to access global research infrastructure such as synchrotron radiation facilities; and
- Grantholder institutions hosting training workshops on the use of specialised equipment that is acquired through NRF equipment grants.

4. Application Process

4.1 *Eligibility criteria*

All applicants must be a full-time staff member at a publicly funded research institution, including Universities, Science Councils, National Research Facilities, museums and co-operations such as Necsa. In addition, the following programme-specific criteria apply:

Travel Grants: Full-time masters and doctoral students, registered at South African universities, and postdoctoral fellows are also eligible for support, on condition that the supervisor is the applicant and will be accountable for the conditions of the grant award.

Training Grants: The applicant must be a grantholder to a SRIP, NEP and/or NNEP grant award.

4.2 *Exclusion criteria*

Undergraduate and honours students are not eligible to apply for equipment related travel and training grants. In addition, the following programme-specific exclusions

are applicable.

- Travel Grants: Requests for funding to support:
- Research that advances private enterprise;
 - Visiting scientists;
 - Attend conferences and/or non-equipment training workshops; and
 - Test the functional capability of equipment that an applicant may procure through SRIP, NEP and/or NNEP grants. This must be achieved by the applicant in partnership with the supplier.

- Training Grants: Requests for funding to support:
- Training that addresses the applicant's institutional needs only;
 - Basic training of operators and technicians, provided by the supplier as part of equipment acquisition; and
 - Training on equipment that is not supported through an NRF grant.

4.3 **Application requirements**

The submitted proposal must address the following:

General Equipment Travel Grants:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There must be a clear indication that the equipment the applicant proposes to access is not available in the applicant's own institution, region or nationally. This may include letters from other institutions explaining that similar equipment will not be able to support the research activities of the applicant;• Applications must be supported by the designated authority at the research institution; and• Where the cost of the trip exceeds R45 000 (forty five thousand rand), the applicant must clearly demonstrate that additional funding has been secured to cover the full cost of travel.
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Synchrotron Travel Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A strongly motivated proposal that includes supporting documentation such as invitations, training and an access schedule from the synchrotron radiation facility that the applicant proposes to visit; • Applications for students must be submitted by the supervisor who will be accountable for the conditions of the grant award; and • Costs associated with a typical international synchrotron radiation facility visit of two weeks that exceed R45 000 (forty five thousand rand), must be strongly motivated.
Training Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate motivation must be provided for the need for the training, which must have either regional and/or national impact; • The proposed programme must include the training of researchers based at historically disadvantaged institutions, black and female researchers as well as postgraduate students; • Where the cost of the workshop exceeds R20 000 (twenty thousand rand), the applicant must clearly demonstrate that additional funding has been secured to cover the full cost; and • It is encouraged that applicants engage with suppliers for such training workshops.

4.4 Application documentation

If the applicant is not registered on the NRF Online System (<http://nrfonline.nrf.ac.za>), he/she needs to do so, completing especially the CV section as it will be part of the application. This is necessary for the SPP-Grants unit to process the application.

Applications, where applicants fail to complete NRF Online Registration and CV sections, will not be considered for funding.

All applicants must submit the following documentation:

- Completed NRF application form, through the Research Office of their institution;
- Confirmation from the institution to be visited of allocated time on the equipment; and
- A detailed budget indicating funds secured and requested from the NRF.

The following additional information is required for Synchrotron Travel grants and Training Grants:

Synchrotron Travel: A letter indicating the outcome of the peer review process; and confirmation of allocated beam time from the host synchrotron facility.

Training: A letter of confirmation indicating that a trainer has been appointed by the supplier/manufacturer for a specific date, time and venue as well as a *Curriculum Vitae* of the trainer.

5. General

5.1 Financial control

The grant awarded must be taken up within the financial year (1 April to 31 March) in which the grant is awarded and may not be carried over to the next financial year.

The maximum value of the Mobility Grants will be reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted for inflation linked increases as required.

These grants are to be used for research purposes only, under the auspices of the NRF standard grant management and systems administration as well as and finance policies. The money is released on acceptance of the conditions of grant, both by the applicant and his/her employing institution. The funds will be awarded against a number of items as outlined in the grant letter.

5.2 Reporting

All grantholders are required to submit a report to the NRF no later than 60 (sixty) days after a trip has been completed. The following types of outputs are expected to emanate from the visit:

- Scarce skills development on the use of specialised equipment and analytical systems;
- Training of students – particularly black and female students;
- Training of black and female researchers, as well as researchers from historically disadvantaged institutions; and
- Research outputs:
 - Publications,
 - Conference Proceedings,

- Collaborations,
- Improved laboratory processes, and
- Other (explain).

6. NRF Granting Process

The grant management process for Mobility Grants is described in the flow diagram shown in Figure 1.

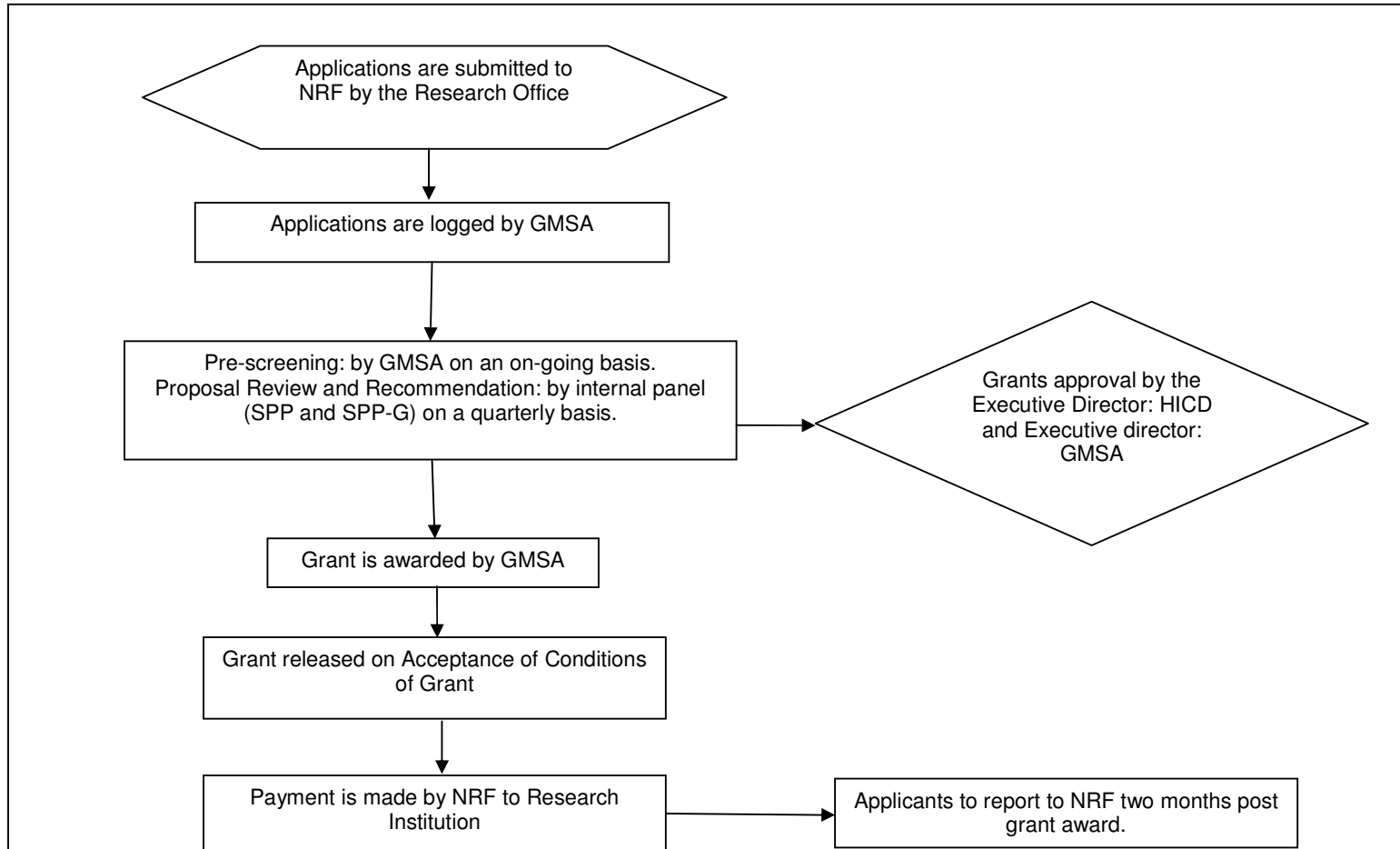


Figure 1: Application process flow diagram for Mobility Grants.