



Federal Ministry
of Research, Technology
and Space



National
Research
Foundation

2025 South African - German Collaborative Research Programme on Artificial Intelligence for Societal Transformation (ZADE-AI)

Call for proposals

For German applicants: the legally binding announcement is published in the German Federal Gazette ([Bundesanzeiger](#)).

South African applicants should consult their institutions for internal DA closing dates.

July 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background

There is a long history of scientific collaboration between South Africa and Germany in the field of research and innovation. The South African Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) in partnership with the German Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) have conceptualised a new South African - German Collaborative Research Programme to further stimulate long-term research collaboration between the two countries. By funding joint research, we aim to strengthen the international position and global impact of our research ecosystems. Funding is provided for consortia of South African and German research groups to conduct high-quality interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research that has the potential for meaningful scientific as well as societal impact.

The NRF and BMFTR have jointly agreed on strategic knowledge and innovation agendas. Funded research should be in alignment with national research agendas and priorities, as well as international initiatives such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and build bridges between different actors in the knowledge chain, fundamental and applied research, and scientific disciplines.

1.2 Available budget

Total budget for this call amounts to:

approx. €1.8 mil (R37.3 mil) (South Africa and Germany combined).

With the available total budget, the NRF and BMFTR aim to fund up to five joint projects for the maximum period of up to 48 months (four years). Researchers can apply for projects of:

- Up to R2 mil per project from NRF. Only R1.4 mil will be released for research and mobility-grants. More information on the doctoral students' support is outlined in the *NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy* and section 3.2.1 of this call guideline.
- Up to €220,000 per project from BMFTR for the four-year period of the project (plus a 20% lumpsum awarded to German higher education institutions).

NRF supports researchers from South Africa and BMFTR – through its funding agency DLR-Projektträger – supports researchers from Germany. Please refer to section 3 for the application details.

Researchers should ensure that their budgets are aligned to eligible research costs as outlined by each funding agency (see section 3.2 for guidelines on budget allocation against eligible research activities per funding agency).

1.3 Application Deadline for proposals

The deadline for submitting applications in electronic form is Tuesday, 10 October 2025, 16:00 SAST. The deadline for submission is not a cut-off date, but it will not be possible to consider project proposals received after the above date. Please refer to section 3 for details on the application process.

The call process is highly competitive. Therefore, submission of an application will not guarantee funding. The evaluation of applications will be conducted by an impartial, international review panel.

2. Aim and expected outcomes

Through this bilateral call, South Africa and Germany aim to bring together partners to co-develop user-centred solutions for pressing ecologic, economic and social challenges using AI-related technology and methodology. The research funded under this call addresses global, regional and national challenges that cannot be solved by one country alone. It requires multi-country partnerships as well as trans-, multi- and interdisciplinary approaches.

The ZADE-AI call therefore serves as a national and regional research platform designed to provide the knowledge needed to support transformations towards sustainability and equity. The call seeks

- to build and connect knowledge to increase sustainable use of AI tools including blockchain, machine learning and quantum technologies,
- to explore new development pathways for AI tools in the focus areas (see below), and
- to find new ways to accelerate transitions towards their sustainable and equitable application.

2.1 Thematic focus

The increasing spread of artificial intelligence (AI) in various areas of life offers enormous potential for addressing challenges faced by population groups or even society as a whole. Despite their different economic, social and political contexts, South Africa and Germany share vast opportunities for the use of AI to improve quality of life, increase economic efficiency and solve pressing environmental problems.

This call for proposals is intended to fund joint research projects between South African and German higher education and/or research institutions that deal with the development and application of AI technologies that can be translated into applications for a wide range of user groups.

These research projects should develop and test innovative solutions for specific problems in the areas of **health, climate change, agriculture, energy, finance/blockchain, quantum technologies and machine learning**. The collaboration between South African and German researchers is intended to facilitate an exchange of knowledge, experience and methods in order to increase the quality and effectiveness of the research results. Specifically, the proposals are encouraged to address one of the following sub-themes:

- **Health:** precision medicine; One Health; health services for remote areas (e.g. telemedicine); pandemic preparedness
- **Climate Change:** climate resilience in rural communities (community/citizen science)
- **Agriculture:** adaptation to climate change; robotics
- **Energy:** efficient ownership of energy models; sustainable (energy efficient) AI
- **Finance:** in the area of blockchain
- **Quantum Technologies**
- **Machine Learning**

Additionally, **cross-cutting aspects** such as education, ethics of AI, and AI governance (what is hindering AI and how can AI contribute to the betterment of communities?) should be taken into consideration and demonstrated in the proposal submission.

Applicants should pay due regard to the focus of research commissioned. Proposals should consider the achievements of other European, African and (inter)national initiatives recently completed, underway, or at an advanced stage of planning where possible.

2.2 Specific project requirements

2.2.1 Integrated research approach and Co-creation

The challenges to be addressed through this bilateral Call are interrelated, complex, and multi-scalar, therefore, addressing them will require a holistic approach or collaborative efforts in the form of consortia that span the entire research and innovation chain. Eligible consortia should be composed of researchers based in South Africa and Germany, with active involvement in the project of a senior Principal Investigator (PI) on both the South African and German side.

The call for proposals is directed at research institutions and universities working in the fields of AI, computer science, engineering, social sciences and related fields. The funded projects should contribute to strengthening bilateral relations between South Africa and Germany and lay the foundation for long-term cooperation in the research and development of AI technologies. Besides the advancement of scientific knowledge, the funded projects must demonstrate innovative solutions for high scientific and societal (stakeholder/user) impact and applicability.

The funded consortia should be knowledge-chain wide, meaning they should cross-cut scientific disciplinary boundaries (interdisciplinarity) and integrate scientific and practitioners' knowledge in joint research (transdisciplinarity). The proposed research itself should be characterised by integrated perspectives and should evolve in a process of co-design and co-creation with different partners from both countries (South Africa and Germany).

Proposals should furthermore be characterised by equal partnership and sustainable collaboration between the South African and German partners. This includes inter-institutional cooperation, a balanced contribution to the proposed research, and frequent exchange between the partners, including a focus on capacity building. Added value may be achieved by integrating and synthesising various sources of knowledge to create new knowledge and by creating sustainability through the development of long-term knowledge relations.

Therefore, a Consortium Agreement (CA) is obligatory and should be signed by the two PIs and their designated authorities within two months of the start of the project. The German PI should provide to the South African PI for the proposal application a copy of a Letter of Intent (LoI). The aim of this CA is to confirm that all parties understand their roles and responsibilities in the consortium. The CA should also clearly indicate the contributions of all other consortium partners whether in monetary value or in-kind. Please note that a signed CA by all consortium partners is obligate for funding. There is no desired standard template for this. PIs are free to design this CA whichever way they deem fit.

2.2.2 Impact Pathway

The research conducted in this call for proposals should have relevance and potential for impact beyond the academic world, such as in societal, technical, economical or cultural realms. This is why, in addition to collaborating with societal or industry partners, consortia should consider how relevant stakeholders can be involved in, or benefit from, the design and realisation of the proposed research project. Consortia are also advised to present a strategy which reflects the timeframe (short-, medium- and long-term) within which the proposed benefits are intended to be reached.

To further enhance the potential for impact of the proposed research, the application should state how approaches for achieving impact are integrated in the research design and conducted by the consortium in engagement with end-users, such as practitioners, policymakers, and industry.

Researchers should describe how the research process can contribute to impact, considering the context, actors involved and describing the sequence of logically-linked cause-effect relations. Developing an impact pathway in a joint effort with research partners as well as stakeholders allows for making explicit which (and whose) problem is being tackled, and how the desired change is perceived to happen through research efforts. Projections on expected change will be based on a myriad of assumptions; documenting these assumptions allows for reflection on whether and how expected pathways to impact remain adequate or need adjustment.

In dealing with potential impact, researchers are expected to explain the expected change process that the proposed project contributes to through the realisation of output and outcomes, and the desired contribution to impact (see Box 1 below).

*See **Annexure I** for the format/template to be used when completing the Impact Pathway with indicators at output and outcome level. A completed template should be attached as an Annexure to the joint proposal.*

Box 1: Output, outcome and impact

Research outputs relate to the direct and immediate results obtained by a research project or programme.

Research outcomes relate to the changes in behaviour, relationships, actions, or activities of stakeholders as a result of sharing and uptake of research.

Research impact is defined as changes in economic, environmental and social conditions a project or programme is aiming at. Change is a complex process that depends on a variety of actors and factors of which research is only one. Where research outputs fall under the direct sphere of control of a research project or programme, outcomes belong to their sphere of influence, and impact to their sphere of interest.

Additionally, all scholarly publications/communication must be accompanied by a popular media publication aimed at the societal partner/user/stakeholder in a local language other English where applicable.

3. Guidelines for applicants

3.1 Who can apply

Eligible consortia should be composed of researchers based in South Africa and in Germany, with active involvement in the project of Principal Investigator (PI) on both the South African and the German side. Therefore, a proposal should have two PIs: one based in South Africa, and one based in Germany. The two PIs will serve as the main contact points for NRF and DLR-Projektträger respectively. The South African PI will be required to submit the proposal on behalf of their consortium. Upon being selected for funding, the German PIs will need to submit full applications to DLR-Projektträger (for details on the submission process for German PIs, see Chapter 7.2.1 in the German Call published via Bundesanzeiger).

Together, the consortium members must: 1) formulate relevant research questions and approaches; 2) formulate and submit the joint proposal through one PI; 3) conduct the project activities; 4) coordinate knowledge sharing and support the application, disseminate and communicate project results to a broader group of possible knowledge users that are not a member of the consortium; and 5) take responsibility for the adequate and timely reporting conditions. Each consortium can only submit one proposal.

A “**Letter of Intent**” (LoI) which states that, should an application become successful, a consortium agreement will be signed within two months of the start of the project, is obligatory and should be submitted with the proposal. A signed Consortium Agreement articulating consortium governance, task division, resource management and ownership of results between the collaborating consortium organisations/individuals is obligatory if the project outline is selected for funding (see section 2.2.1 for details or refer to national rules). A completed Impact Pathway template must be attached as an Annexure to the joint proposal. Further additional national eligibility criteria might apply. See Chapters 3.1.-3.4 below.

3.1.1 South African national regulations

For South African-based PIs, the NRF eligibility criteria are as follows:

- Only working researchers/scientists residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised South African public higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology or science council are eligible to apply.
- Private higher education institutions are not eligible to apply under this programme.
- The SMEs, private companies/industries, and NGOs cannot serve as a PI but can be involved in the project at their own expense.
- It is “**obligatory**” for South African PIs based at historically advantaged institutions to include, as part of the consortium, a research partner from any of the historically disadvantaged institutions and/or one of South Africa’s two new universities. Proposals submitted by an applicant based at a historically advantaged institution without a research partner from a historically disadvantaged institution will be ineligible (and will not be submitted for review). The research partner from the historically disadvantaged institution in this case, can serve as a co-applicant in the proposal.
- Applicants based at historically disadvantaged institutions including those based at the two new universities, i.e. the Sol Plaatje University (SPU) and the University of Mpumalanga (UMP), can act as PIs and submit proposals without the involvement of and/or partnering with researchers based at historically advantaged institutions if they so wish.

Please note that only the following universities will be recognized as historically disadvantaged institutions (HDIs) in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training Ministerial Statement on university funding and New Universities:

- University of Limpopo (UL)
- University of Fort Hare (UFH)
- University of Venda (Univen)
- Walter Sisulu University (WSU)
- University of the Western Cape (UWC)
- University of Zululand (UniZulu)
- Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT)
- Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)
- Sol Plaatje University (SPU)
- University of Mpumalanga (UMP)

3.1.2 German national regulations¹

- Applications may be submitted by universities and non-university research institutions based in Germany.
- Research institutions which receive basic funding from the Federal Government and/or the *Länder* can only be granted project funding supplementary to their institutional funding to cover additional project-related expenditure or costs under certain preconditions.

3.2 What can be applied for

The R&D projects should not exceed a period of four years (48 months). Funding to a maximum of R1.4 mil can be requested from the NRF and will be awarded as non-repayable project grants, and a maximum of €220 000 can be requested from BMFTR (plus 20% lumpsum for universities). All consortium members have to be involved in the formulation of the research questions, in the development of the proposal and in the execution of the research project. Each partner of a consortium can apply for one project or participate in one consortium only.

¹ For German applicants: the legally binding announcement is published in the German Federal Gazette (Bundesanzeiger).

The funders will also organise joint kick-off and closing workshops (maximum of two-days per workshop) for the ZADE-AI call and researchers should include costs of attending these workshops (i.e. travel and accommodation), in their budget plans. The kick-off workshop will be held in Pretoria (South Africa) in September 2026 and the closing workshop in Bonn (Germany) in September 2030.

3.2.1 NRF funding regulations

From the NRF side, funding will be made available for the following joint research activities undertaken as part of the joint research project:

- **Research-related costs**
Activities to be supported may include expenses relating to field work such as conducting interviews / surveys / laboratory experiments, research-related trips, etc. Airfare, accommodation, ground transport and subsistence should be calculated using rates as stipulated in institutional travel policies.
- **Staff exchange programmes**
Short term mobility or travel expenses (i.e. transport, accommodation, subsistence, visa and health insurance costs) of the research teams between the partnering countries. Please note that the costs for travelling incl. visa will be covered by the sending institution and the costs of accommodation, subsistence and health insurance will be covered by the host.
- **One (3-year) doctoral position per project**
The doctoral student will be supported in accordance with the *NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy* and the value of the scholarship will be the same as that of the NRF free standing scholarship. PIs are expected to encourage their identified PhD students to apply for scholarship when the NRF call for Postgraduate Student Support opens in April. The PIs should provide the students with their ZADE-AI application reference number to include in their applications.
- **Masters, Doctoral, and Postdoctoral Research Placements**
The placements should enable the postgraduate students within the project to (1) learn valuable new skills or techniques; (2) access facilities or resources not readily available at home; (3) build relationships with potential new collaborators; and (4) advance complementary collaborative research. The duration of each placement is expected to be 3-6 months, with the flexibility to split the placement into several shorter visits. Longer placements may be undertaken where this would add value, and these should be justified within the application. Placements must enhance, not replace, the standard training and study support that the postgraduate students receive. These placements must be managed to fit within the original funded period of the studentship. Additional funding will not be made available through this call to support studentship extensions for those undertaking international placements. Applicants should include information about how these exchanges will be managed within their proposal.
- **Knowledge sharing costs (research uptake and science communication)**
In support of activities organised by the partners, such as joint workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia, lecture presentations, capacity building sessions, meetings, local/regional dissemination of results aimed at involving stakeholders, and/or end-users from outside the consortium with a minimum of 10% of the grant budget.
- **Programme kick-off and closing workshops**
It's mandatory for researchers to make budgetary provisions (travel and accommodation) to participate at these workshops as they serve as part of the reporting requirements under this Programme (see section 3.3).
- **Small equipment, consumables and accessories**
Up to a maximum of 10% of the budget may be budgeted for this item.

The following **will not** be funded from the South African side:

- consultant's fees
- salaries
- temporary staff fees
- large equipment
- Project management fees

The total amount requested from the NRF should not exceed R2 mil per project. Funding will be made available for a maximum of four years, to be paid in annual instalments and exclusively for research activities commencing in 2026. The funds per project have to be utilised as follows:

- R1.4 mil per project for research activities, mobility costs of the research team, small equipment and knowledge sharing costs per project.
- Support for identified doctoral students will only be released provided they meet the eligibility criteria as outlined in the *NRF Postgraduate Funding Policy*.

3.2.2 BMFTR Funding Regulations²

Grants for projects of research institutions which fall into the category of economic activities [for the definition of economic activity, see no. 17 of the R&D&I state aid Framework], will be calculated on the basis of the eligible project-related costs.

The basis for calculating the grants for higher education institutions, research and science institutions and similar establishments which do not fall into the category of economic activities is the eligible project-related expenditure (in the case of the Helmholtz centres and Fraunhofer, eligible project-related costs), which can receive up to 100% coverage in individual cases, considering state aid legislation.

For non-economic research projects at universities and university hospitals, a flat-rate project allowance of 20% is granted in addition to the eligible expenditure.

The following expenditures/costs will be eligible for funding:

- a) Funds for project-related personnel required in Germany. The projects require a high degree of coordination and, in order to implement the project successfully, up to one full-time equivalent who can demonstrate appropriate experience, and knowledge, can be funded (usually up to TVöD 13).
- b) Project-related non-cash resources and equipment. Funding for project-related resources (such as consumables, office supplies, appliances, award of contracts) can be provided to a limited extent.
- c) In justified cases, appropriations may also be requested for contracts with third parties.
- d) Travel and stays by German and South African researchers and experts. The following applies to the funding of travel and stays by German project researchers and experts:
 - The costs/expenditure for travel to and from the project partner's location in South Africa will be covered including the necessary visas (if by air: economy class) and the expenditure/costs for the stays as well as travel within Germany in accordance with the applicable rules of the institution or company.

The following applies to the funding of stays by South African project researchers and experts:

- The costs/expenditure for travel to and from the project partner's location in Germany (if by air: economy class) will be covered by the sending country. Stays in Germany will be funded at a fixed rate of €104 per day or €2,300 per month and a subsidy of €77 for individual days of the following month. The day of arrival and day of departure are counted as one day. Contributions to health insurance and, if applicable, other types of insurance are included in this allowance and must be paid

² For German applicants: the legally binding announcement is published in the German Federal Gazette (Bundesanzeiger).

by the South African partner.

- e) Means of transport for international events: Travel expenses for the participation of staff financed by the project in international conferences at home and abroad with a technical project relevance can be subsidised in justified cases.
- f) Workshops in Germany and in the partner country can be funded as follows: Funding will be provided to cover various expenditure and/or costs related to the organization of workshops. For example, grants can be provided towards expenses such as accommodation of guests, transfers, provision of workshop documents, adequate hospitality and rental of premises. The exact amount of the grant depends on the size of the event and the number of foreign guests. In such cases, no per diem allowances (see d. above) will be provided.

The usual basic equipment of the participating institutions is generally not taken over or subsidised.

Other terms and conditions

The *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Kostenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung an gewerbliche Unternehmen für Forschungs- und Entwicklungsvorhaben* (NKBF 2017) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research to Commercial Companies for Research and Development Projects on a Cost Basis) will be part of the notification of award for grants on a cost basis. Notification of award for grants on an expenditure basis will include the *Nebenbestimmungen für Zuwendungen auf Ausgabenbasis des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung* (NABF) (Auxiliary Terms and Conditions for Funds Provided by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research for the Promotion of Projects on an Expenditure Basis).

Further auxiliary terms and conditions and information of the BMFTR regarding this funding measure may also form part of the notification of award of funds. For the purpose of conducting progress reviews within the meaning of administrative regulation (VV) 11a pertaining to section 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO), funding recipients are required to provide the data necessary for the progress review to the BMFTR or the institutions charged with such tasks without delay. The information will be used exclusively for the purposes of supporting research and any subsequent evaluation; it will be treated confidentially and published in anonymized form, making it impossible to trace it back to individual persons or organizations. Funding recipients commit themselves to participate in central monitoring activities of the funding provider (e.g. the kick-off and concluding workshops in Germany and South Africa).

Funding recipients are required to plan and present suitable measures for science communication in connection with their research process and research results.

In collaborative projects, the partners should develop a joint strategy for science communication.

3.3 Application Process

The South African PIs should submit the full proposal on behalf of the entire consortium through the official joint application system, i.e. NRF-Connect, available at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. The DA submission deadline is: **17 October 2025, 16:00 SAST**.

The South African PIs should consult their institutions for internal DA closing dates.

Upon being selected for funding, the German PIs will need to submit full applications to DLR-Projekträger (for details on the submission process for German PIs, see Chapter 7.2.1 in the German Call published via Bundesanzeiger).

Applicants are advised to consult the NRF General Application Guide 2025 available at <https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/nrf-call-for-proposals-for-funding-in-2025-and-2026/> for further details on how to apply for this opportunity (and for making use of the NRF-Connect).

- All compulsory sections and the CV sections on the NRF-Connect must be completed in full.
- Required compulsory documents should be attached in PDF format. Failure to submit compulsory documents will result in the disqualification of the application.
- Complete applications will go to the host institutions for verification before being forwarded to the NRF for further processing.
- Applications submitted outside the NRF-Connect will not be submitted for reviews.
- No hard copies will be accepted and will automatically be disqualified by the NRF.
- Only applications endorsed by the research office or its equivalent at higher education institutions will be accepted.
- Researchers are encouraged to contact their research office or Designated Authority if they have any queries.

The joint outline should include the following aspects of the project:

- I. Information on the project coordinator and all the project partners
- II. Summary of goals, research priorities, exploitation of results
- III. Scientific framework of the project:
 - a. Planned activities for implementing the goals of the funding measure
 - b. Description of the scientific objective of the project
 - c. Information on the state of development of the methods applied
 - d. possible participation of third parties
- IV. International cooperation in the framework of the project
 - a. Added value of international cooperation
 - b. Contributions of international partners, access to international resources
 - c. Experience of the partners involved in international cooperation, previous cooperation
- V. Sustainability of the measure/utilization plan
 - a. expected scientific results
 - b. Continuation of cooperation between the partners in South Africa and Germany
 - c. planned cooperation in follow-up projects
 - d. planned extension of cooperation to other institutions and networks
 - e. Strategy for the implementation of the research results (Impact Pathway (form, to be attached in the appendix)),
- VI. Description of the planned work steps of the project
- VII. Estimated expenditure/costs.

The outline must show clearly how all the partners will participate in the project's tasks and results. The protection of intellectual property should also be reflected an important role in this context. The final selection is made by a joint "Review Panel" (criteria see Annexure II). Applicants will be informed in writing of the result of the selection process. The project outlines and any other documents submitted in this phase of the procedure will not be returned.

Submission of applications by successful German PIs

Once projects have been selected for funding, the German PIs (of the successful projects) will be invited to submit formal proposals. In the case of collaborative projects, applications for funding must be submitted in agreement with the planned collaborative project coordinator.

Formal proposals must include:

- I. A detailed (partial) project description
- II. A detailed work plan and time schedule
 - Feasibility of the work plan
 - Plausibility of the time schedule
- III. Detailed information about the financing of the project
 - Appropriateness and necessity of the requested funding
 - Security of overall financing during the entire project period

Regulations to be observed: The approval and payment of and accounting for the funds as well as the proof and examination of the proper use and, if necessary, the revocation of the award and the reclaiming of the funds awarded are governed by sections 48 to 49a of the Administrative Procedure Act (VwVfG), sections 23 and 44 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO) and the related administrative regulations unless deviation is allowed from the administrative regulations under the present funding regulations. The *Bundesrechnungshof* is entitled to carry out audits in accordance with Section 91 of the Federal Budget Code (BHO).

3.4 Ethical clearance and Intellectual property

The researchers of each country, particularly the PIs, must take adequate steps to ensure that all research activities are carried out in compliance with the laws and regulations of the country in which the research activities are conducted.

3.4.1 NRF regulations

It is the responsibility of the South African PI, 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 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 at:

<https://www.nrf.ac.za/statement-on-ethical-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/>

3.5 Project Follow-up and Reporting

Funders will organise joint kick-off and closing workshops bringing together all relevant stakeholders (research consortia, funders, policy makers and other interested parties) as part of programme monitoring and reporting. During these workshops, researchers will be expected to report in accordance with the submitted Impact Pathway templates (see Annexure I). PIs are therefore, urged to continuously review and evaluate their Impact Pathway Templates throughout the lifespan of the funded project.

The joint publications by researchers must mention the support from the funders (i.e. the South African Department of Science, Technology and Innovation, the NRF and BMFTR).

The funders reserve the right to make the research outcomes available to policy makers including researchers within and outside this programme in similar disciplines.

- **From the NRF side:** a final project report has to be submitted in English no more than 3 months after the end of the project. Successful submission of the first annual report is an **obligatory** condition of funding in subsequent years. South African PIs should follow the reporting format/structure, rules and regulations of the NRF as outlined on the NRF-Connect. All reports by South African PIs must mention project outputs as compared to the objectives and aims of the proposal.
- **From the BMFTR side:** please refer to chapter 3.2.2 BMFTR funding regulations and please note in particular the section on “Other Terms and Conditions”.

3.6 When can applications be submitted

All applications must be submitted by the South African PI through the NRF-Connect by 10 **October 2025, 16:00 SAST**. The South African PIs **must** consult their institutions for DA internal submission deadline.

Once submitted, changes to the proposal will no longer be possible. The deadline for submission is not a cut-off deadline, but it may not be possible to consider project outlines which are received after the above date.

4. Review procedure

After submission, proposals will first be checked by NRF and DLR-Projektträger for the general eligibility criteria.

The review of applications should have positive ratings before consideration for funding.

Neither the NRF nor the DLR-Projektträger nor BMFTR will be held responsible for non-submission, administration or review of the application in the partner country.

The fundamental principles governing the evaluation of project proposals are:

- *Transparency.*
The process for reaching funding decisions will be clearly described and available to any interested party.
- *Equality of treatment.*
All proposals shall be treated alike, irrespective of where they originate or the identity of the proposers.
- *Ethical considerations.*
Any proposal that contravenes fundamental ethical principles of a funding organisation may be excluded from being evaluated and selected at any time.

4.1 Review process

A proposal that has been deemed eligible by both the NRF and DLR-Projektträger will be submitted for review. Eligible proposals will then be assessed remotely by expert reviewers.

These reviewed proposals and their accompanying reviewers' reports will be submitted to a Review Panel of the NRF and BMFTR/DLR-Projektträger for final recommendation.

4.2 Criteria for reviewing proposals

Please refer to Annexure II for details on the review criteria and scoring.

5. Contact details and other information

5.1 Contact

Prior to submission of an application, prospective applicants should contact the respective national agency for detailed information about respective national requirements pertaining to applications and funding.

5.1.1 Specific questions

For specific content-related questions about this call for proposals please contact:

Contact person NRF:

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T.Phahlamohlaka@risa.nrf.ac.za

Contact persons DLR-Projektträger:

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eva.binkert@dlr.de

5.1.2 Technical questions about the electronic application system

For technical questions on the NRF-Connect please contact the NRF Support Desk on email:
supportdesk@nrf.ac.za.

Call Annexures

Annexure I: Format for Impact Pathway with indicators at output and outcome level

Annexure II: Assessment Criteria

Annexure I: Format for Impact Pathway

with indicators at output and outcome level (max. 2 page)

[illegible]

Research outcomes	Indicators

Impact

Annexure II: Assessment Criteria and Scoring

Ranked between Excellent 5, Good 4, Satisfactory 3, Fair 2 and Poor 1

Assessment Criteria	Indicators to be assessed
1) Compliance with the object of the grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establishment of long-term and sustainable cooperation- Clear alignment with proposed research scope and the objectives of the call- Strong potential to support young researchers (e.g. in developing an international network)- Diversity: the consortia should include and support female researchers and historically disadvantaged groups, e.g. through targeted support and mentoring programmes
2) Scientific criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Scientific and methodological quality and coherence of the research project- Potential to generate new knowledge, insights and/or innovations- Expertise of the applicant and the partners involved- Disciplinary and/or interdisciplinary value add- Convincing strategy for the further development and utilisation of research results, translational potential
3) Plausibility and Feasibility (timeframe, milestones, financing)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Adequacy of the planned steps to fulfil the research objectives within the timeframe of the project- Realistically-stated goals and objectives of the research project, with visible feedback loops towards 1) output, and 2) proposed impact- Adequacy of the estimation of resources (comprehensible and appropriate)- Quality of the measures for involving stakeholders and practice partners
4) Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Clear rooting of the proposal in the demands of partners and stakeholders, including appropriate integration of gender and youth- Adequate potential for uptake/application of results including quality of the knowledge sharing approach with appropriate stakeholder engagement, capacity development and communication strategy- Quality and feasibility of the research impact pathway with indicators- Scientific benefits and prospects for the exploitation of the expected results