



# SASUF-NRF Seed Grants

## SASUF-NRF Seed Grants for Collaborative Research

**Call for joint proposals: 2023 – 2024**

South African applicants should consult the General Application Guide 2024 for opening and closing dates

A maximum of 30 projects will be funded for this call

## Contents

1. Preamble .....	2
2. Aim and objectives of the SASUF-NRF Seed Grants .....	2
3. Description of the supported areas of cooperation .....	3
4. Duration of the projects .....	4
5. Eligibility criteria .....	4
6. Eligible research activities .....	5
7. Funding regulations .....	5
8. Application procedure .....	6
9. Review process .....	6
10. Projects follow-up and reporting .....	7
11. Science engagement .....	7
12. Intellectual property .....	8
13. Ethical considerations .....	8
14. Protection of personal information .....	8
15. Submission deadline .....	8
16. Contact details .....	9

## 1. Preamble

The South Africa-Sweden Universities' Forum (SASUF) 2030 is a transformative project uniting 38 universities from across Sweden and South Africa, bringing together leading researchers, teachers, students, university leaders and other stakeholders. The project aims to develop joint solutions to the challenges posed by the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2030. SASUF, which was launched in October 2017, is now in Phase II of implementation which will continue until the end of 2024.

Collaboration between South Africa and Sweden has grown significantly in recent years. Since its inception, SASUF has connected more than 3000 South African and Swedish researchers, teachers, students and university leaders in workshops and seminars. Activities in SASUF have led to the initiation of more than 70 collaborative projects with researchers from both countries addressing challenges linked to the SDGs. The initial funding from the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT), the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa, the South African Departments of Science and Innovation (DSI) and Higher Education and Training (DHET) was crucial for the success of the project. With this initial funding, SASUF has made a substantial impact in advancing science between the two countries. The methodology and approaches in SASUF have been internationally recognised as a highly successful model for building an equitable platform for international collaboration.

## 2. Aim and objectives of the SASUF-NRF Seed Grants

With the momentum built in Phase I, the Second Phase of SASUF, now known as SASUF 2030, presents new and innovative ways of working with strategic internationalisation. In addition to the broad spectrum of activities already successfully proven in the initial Phase, SASUF 2030 introduces a range of renewed partnership mechanisms and tools including the [Seed Grants for Collaborative Research](#). This programme is implemented in partnership with the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa.

These seed grants aim at building and supporting new teams which might not have any prior collaborative track record to develop creative research and technical approaches addressing critical, and even untested, novel ideas contributing to the SDGs. This Programme therefore, provides a basis for initiating, developing and expanding collaborative research projects.

The objectives of the SASUF-NRF Seed Grants are 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 next generation and emerging researchers to cooperate in an international setting and to develop their scientific careers
- support the advancement of basic and applied research; and
- contribute meaningfully to research capacity development.

### 3. Description of the supported areas of cooperation

The UN has issued a global call for a “Decade of Action” to deliver the SDGs by 2030 and emphasised the need to be innovative in thinking of new ways to accelerate the Agenda 2030. The name SASUF 2030 refers to the UN Agenda 2030 and is meant to symbolise the importance that this bilateral cooperation places on working with the SDGs (see Figure 1 below for a list of the SDGs 2030 Agenda). Discussions about SASUF 2030 were initiated in February 2020 with the formation of the SASUF 2030 Action Plan. This was distributed to, and discussed between, all partners involved in the current initiative. In November 2020, during the final event of SASUF: SASUF Goes Digital, Vice-Chancellors from all partner universities met virtually in a leadership summit to discuss, finalise and adopt the SASUF 2030 Action Plan. Student leaders from different SASUF universities were also included in the process and were invited to present their recommendations at the leadership summit.

The expectation for this bilateral cooperation is to generate innovative approaches, solutions and society-wide results that would otherwise not have been possible. As a result, the cooperation is viewed as a local and global model for addressing the SDGs.



Figure 1: United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda

Submitted proposals should therefore clearly indicate how they aim to address the 17 SDGs mentioned above. Successful proposals are those likely to empower the next generation and emerging researchers in both countries to become globally engaged citizens with knowledge, skills, and innovation potential to tackle major societal challenges in the SDGs.

Proposals that do not illustrate the link with one or more of the above-mentioned SDGs will not be considered for evaluation.

## 4. Duration of the projects

All projects will be supported for a maximum duration of 16 months starting from September 2023. The launching of this call is timed to align with the 2023 SASUF Research and Innovation Week, tentatively scheduled for 27 March – 2 April 2023. See Table 1 below for a full schedule of this call.

Table 1: Planned Call Schedule

Call Process	
Monday, 1 March 2023	Launch of the call
Friday, 28 April 2023	Call deadline
Mid-May to End-July 2023	Screening and reviews of eligible applications
August 2023	Decision making, awards and signing of contracts with successful candidates
1 September 2023	Start of funded projects/activities
End December 2024	End of funded projects/activities
End February 2024	Submission of final report by researchers

Although the funders endeavor to abide by the above-mentioned dates, it should be noted that the nature and complexity of the bilateral programme require synchronisation of all processes and alignment of different academic and financial years. Funders therefore, reserve the right to change and amend the above-mentioned dates without prior notification to applicants.

## 5. Eligibility criteria

All applicants must be based at one of the partner universities of SASUF. See the following link for a full list of SASUF members: <https://www.sasuf.org/partner-universities>.

A proposal must include participants from at least two (2) South African and two (2) Swedish universities to be eligible. Therefore, a proposal must be submitted by a minimum of four (4) consortia members. Each proposal must nominate one main applicant based in South Africa and one main applicant based in Sweden; they are the **Principal Investigators (PI)** on the South African and Swedish sides respectively. The PIs will bear the main responsibility for the project including its technical and administrative coordination as well as timely delivery of scientific and financial reports.

Additional research partners based in South Africa and/or Sweden can also participate in the joint projects and form part of the consortia provided there is a strong motivation for value add.

All PIs and their co-applicants must be in possession of a PhD to be eligible.

From the South African side, proposals submitted by a PI based at a Historically Advantaged Institution without a research partner from a Historically Disadvantaged Institution (HDI) will be ineligible and will not be submitted for review. The research partner from an HDI in this case can serve as a co-applicant in the proposal. Please note that co-applicants are also required to be in possession of a PhD.

Only the following eight universities will be recognised as HDIs in line with the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) November 2021 Ministerial Statement on university funding: 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), and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU).

Researchers from SMEs, private companies/industries, and NGOs cannot serve as PIs but can form part of the joint projects and will be expected to meet their own costs of participation in the joint projects. The NRF grants cannot be used to support these researchers.

Each consortium is allowed to submit only one proposal. Further to this, a researcher cannot serve as a PI on more than one proposal.

Former SASUF beneficiaries are welcome to participate in the call however, the project should not be a continuation of the past project.

## 6. Eligible research activities

Projects must demonstrate potential for promoting human capacity development, equity, and redress through the involvement of the next generation, mid-career researchers, historically disadvantaged individuals (including female and disabled), and the participation of HDIs. As indicated above, the aim of this programme is to foster new linkages and engagements with small cohorts of emerging researchers for new linkages. Therefore, the funding within this programme will support research capacity development activities such as:

- Postgraduate student exchange programmes
- General research-related mobility
- Joint workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia
- Lecture presentations
- Capacity building sessions such as participation in winter/summer schools, master classes, etc.
- Meetings, local/regional dissemination of research results aimed at involving stakeholders, and/or end-users from outside the consortium.

The following will **not** be funded from the fund allocation:

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

## 7. Funding regulations

Researchers should ensure that all expenses are calculated and covered in line with the rules and regulations in force in each country. Funds requested should not exceed **100 000 SEK (SASUF portion) plus 130 000 ZAR (NRF portion)** per consortium project.

Funding will be made available for a maximum of 16 months and exclusively for activities commencing in September 2023. A maximum of 30 consortia projects will be supported with this call.

The NRF portion of the grant shall be disbursed to the South African PI on signature of the Conditions of Grant (CoG) Contract and the SASUF portion shall be allocated to the Swedish PI. Apart from the SASUF-NRF financial support, universities in both countries are encouraged to solicit other funding resources. Leveraged funds should be clearly indicated in the application.

## 8. Application procedure

The South African PI must submit their consortia proposals through an online application process to the NRF on the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za>. Rejected applications during the screening phase will be given a maximum of 3 working days from date of email receipt to query the outcomes thereof. Please make use of the 'General Application Guide 2024' for assistance on the steps to follow when applying for international research grants. The link to the guide will be published on this web page: [https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/nrf\\_calls](https://www.nrf.ac.za/funding/nrf_calls).

Pls **must** attach the required **compulsory documents** in PDF format in the following order:

- CVs of all consortia partners.
- Budgets of the Swedish Principal Investigator.
- Budget division of the South African team, in particular budget sharing between the historically advantaged and historically disadvantaged institutions.

Failure to submit compulsory documents will result in the disqualification of the application and will make the entire project consortium ineligible.

The Swedish PI must submit their consortia proposal via mail to [sasuf@uu.se](mailto:sasuf@uu.se) using the template application form available on <https://www.sasuf.org/funding-opportunities>. Please make sure to follow the instructions in the call guidelines, also available on <https://www.sasuf.org/funding-opportunities>.

## 9. Review process

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: the potential of the project to initiate or further develop collaboration between Sweden and South Africa in research and/or education
- Human Capacity Development: the potential of the project to strengthen the international prospects of emerging researchers and students.

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 SASUF and NRF based on the results of the expert evaluations done in both countries.

The final decision on funding will be taken by a joint award committee with members of the SASUF Steering Committee and the NRF. The minutes of this meeting (indicating approved joint projects for funding) shall be signed by the Chairperson indicating a joint consensus on projects to fund. The results of this meeting will preferably be announced in August 2023.

Although all Parties undertake to execute the evaluation and selection process to notify applicants of the results as soon as possible, the nature of the bilateral process requires the alignment of the commencement of each phase of the process with the partnering countries, whose schedules may differ significantly.

## 10. Projects follow-up and reporting

- Principal Investigators are expected to submit progress reports to SASUF and the NRF. Scientific and financial reporting on the project is an **OBLIGATORY** condition of funding.
- A final scientific and financial report should be submitted by both the South African and the Swedish project Principal Investigators no more than 3-months after the end of the project.
- South African PIs should submit their reports through the NRF Connect system in line with the reporting schedule for all NRF grants. Swedish PIs should submit their reports, using the official template available on <https://www.sasuf.org/funding-opportunities>, to [sasuf@uu.se](mailto:sasuf@uu.se).
- The report should mention the outputs of the project compared with the objectives and aims of the proposal.
- The joint publications by the researchers should mention the support from all the funders (i.e. SASUF and the NRF).
- The funders reserve the right to make the final reports available to researchers within and outside this programme in similar disciplines.

## 11. 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. Science engagement is critical for all SASUF-related activities.



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.

## 12. Intellectual property

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

## 13. Ethical considerations

In conjunction with the institution, it is the responsibility of the grantholders 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 (CoG) Contract. 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-research-and-scholarly-publishing-practices/>.

## 14. 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>.

## 15. Submission deadline

The deadline for submission **28 April 2023**. South African applicants must consult their respective institutions for internal institutional deadlines.

Applications received after the closing date will not be considered for funding. Please note that neither SASUF nor the NRF will be held responsible for applications not received. Researchers are also advised to ensure that their research partners' applications are submitted and received in the partner country.

## 16. Contact details

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### NRF

Queries on the NRF online submission system (NRF-Connect) can be forwarded to the NRF Support Desk on email: [supportdesk@nrf.ac.za](mailto:supportdesk@nrf.ac.za). The following NRF officials can also be contacted for further details:

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