CALL FOR JOINT PROJECT PROPOSALS

CLOSING DATE: 20 April 2017

ONLY A MAXIMUM OF TEN (10) JOINT PROJECTS WILL BE FUNDED FOR THIS CALL

On 30 September 2010, the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National Research Foundation (NRF) of South Africa. Following the successful Geoscience workshop held in November 2016 in Beijing China, the NSFC and the NRF are pleased to announce the second joint call for research proposals, and herewith invite all interested parties to submit their applications, by a date no later than the indicated closing date.

Aims of the programme

- To contribute to scientific advancement in both countries through the funding of joint research activities in specified research fields;
- To provide an opportunity for young researchers in the two countries to engage;
- To support the advancement of basic research; and
- To contribute meaningfully to research capacity development.

Areas of cooperation

Joint research proposals may be submitted within the broad thematic area of Geoscience. Sub-topics within this broad thematic area may include (but are not limited to): Landscape Evolution (development and change) and Critical Zone Studies.

Applications should pursue a holistic (systems) approach to find integrated solutions that can be implemented in the relevant context and should address the following aspects:

- Multi-inter-trans-disciplinary studies
- Holistic Earth system science approach
- Comparative studies
- Capacity development (skills transfer and knowledge development and exchange).

In terms of human capital development, South African applications from historically disadvantaged individuals are encouraged, as is the involvement of historically disadvantaged higher education and research institutions.

Duration of projects

The projects will be supported for three years from January 2018 to December 2020.
Who may apply?

**South Africa:** This call is open to employed researchers residing in South Africa and affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution such as a university, university of technology or science council. The South African PI must be in possession of a PhD.

**China:** Permanently employed researchers residing in China and affiliated with a recognised higher education or research institution registered with NSFC. The Chinese applicant must possess an academic title of professor or associate professor and must be the PI of an on-going or completed NSFC research grant which duration is more than 3 years. *Please read the Chinese version of the guidelines for details on the eligibility of Chinese applicants.*

An application must designate two Principal Investigators (PIs), one in South Africa and one in China, who will bear the main responsibility for the project including its technical and administrative coordination as well as scientific and financial reporting.

How do I apply?

Chinese and South African applicants shall write a joint application to be submitted to both NSFC and the NRF. The joint application must be written in English. In addition, Chinese applicants should write and submit an identical Chinese-language proposal to NSFC as required by its regulation. *Please read the Chinese version of the guidelines for details.*

**South Africa:** Applicants can apply by following the steps below:
- Applications must be submitted electronically to the NRF on the NRF Online Submission System at [https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/](https://nrfsubmission.nrf.ac.za/).
- Register/Login using your ID number and password.
- Go to “My Applications” and select “Create Application”.
- Select the call for which you are applying for: National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC)/NRF Cooperation 2018.
- Complete all compulsory sections and the applicable CV sections in full.
- Please attach the required documents in PDF format in the following order: CV of partner, budget of partner, a signed letter from the Partner Principal Investigator, work plan and a student exchange programme plan.
- Remember to submit your application on completion.
- Complete applications will go to the host institutions for verification before being forwarded to the NRF for further processing.
- Incomplete applications will not be considered.
- Applications that do not meet the eligibility criteria will not be considered (please refer to call document for details on eligibility).
- Applications submitted outside the NRF Online Submission System will not be accepted.
- 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 or research institutions will be accepted.
- Please contact your research office or Designated Authority if you have any queries.

**China:** Application for Chinese applicants may be completed by following the steps in the Chinese version of the guidelines, to be released on NSFC’s website: [http://www.nsfc.gov.cn/](http://www.nsfc.gov.cn/).
The onus is on the applicant to find their own research partner. **Proposals must be received in both China and South Africa.** Proposals which have only been received in either South Africa or China, but not both countries, will not be considered for funding. The call process is highly competitive therefore application does not guarantee funding. The evaluation of applications from both countries should have positive ratings before consideration for funding. Neither the NRF nor NSFC will be held responsible for non-submission of the application in the partner country.

**Which activities may I apply for?**

The purpose of this call is to support the mobility of researchers, scientists, post-docs and short-term research placements of doctoral students between the two countries to carry out joint research projects. In this regard, funding will be made available for visits and exchanges of leading and young scientists, technical personnel or other experts conducting joint research within the above-mentioned thematic area of cooperation. Support will be provided for collaborative basic, applied and innovation research projects. Funds can be used to cover the following costs:

- **Research-related costs** - activities to be supported may include expenses relating to field work such as conducting interviews, research-related trips, and research equipment (small equipment) – 15% of the budget is allowed for consumables and accessories, publication related costs, etc.
- **Exchange programmes** - mobility of researchers, postdocs and doctoral students between the two countries.
- **Doctoral research placements** - for visits not shorter than 3 months and not longer than 6 months per annum; with flexibility to split the placements into several shorter visits.
- **Knowledge sharing costs** - in support of project-related activities, such as joint workshops, seminars, conferences, symposia, lecturer presentations, meetings, local and regional dissemination of results to relevant stakeholders.
- **Joint programme workshops** - travel costs for the kick-off and closing workshops for all granted projects.

The PhD placements must be managed to fit within the original funded period of the studentship. Additional funding will not be made available through this call or by the funders to support studentship extensions for those undertaking international placements. Applicants should include information about how these exchanges will be managed within their proposal.

In the case of meetings, research visits and exchanges of scientists, personnel, experts and students, as well as reciprocal visits undertaken as part of joint research projects and the attendance of seminars, symposia and other meetings funded under this agreement, the sending Investigator will be responsible for financing international travel, visas, and medical insurance.

Fees relating to accommodation, ground transport, living expenses, and the organisation of events (venue, catering, audio-visual equipment etc.) will be the financial responsibility of the host investigator which is to be paid from his / her allocation of the joint funding.

The NRF and the NSFC will also organise **launching and closing workshops** for the programme (maximum of 2-days per workshop) and Principal Investigators should include, in their budget plans, the costs of attending these two workshops (i.e. travel and accommodation costs). The launching workshop will be held in South Africa (in Feb/Mar 2018) and the closing workshop in China (in Mar/Apr 2020).

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

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

All other expenses, including operational running costs and research materials, may be financed from the NRF allocation accorded in terms of this call.

**How much may I apply for?**

**South Africa:** The total amount of funding requested from the NRF should not exceed R1.5mil. Funding will be made available for a maximum of three years, to be paid in annual instalments (R500 000 per year) and exclusively for research activities commencing in 2018. This amount excludes the Principal Investigator’s costs (travel and accommodation) of attending both the launching and closing workshop organized by the funders. The cost for the Principal Investigator’s participation in these two workshops will be a top-up of a maximum amount of R100 000 per project (and should be included in the project application). Principal Investigators may make use of this amount to also invite the emerging researchers (i.e. PhD students) who will be involved in the joint projects and undertaking short-term placements.

**China:** While NSFC funding levels are based on the actual amount of funding requested, it could be up to RMB2 000 000 (Two million Chinese RMB) per project for 3 years.

**Please do take note that:**
- Should you be successful you will only be funded for the activities within the scope of the guidelines;
- Not more than ten joint projects will be funded for this call; and
- Scientific and financial reporting on the project is an **OBLIGATORY** condition of funding in subsequent years.

**How are applications evaluated?**

Following the closing date indicated, applications will be subject to peer review by recognised experts, organized separately by each side. The experts will evaluate each proposal based on the following criteria:

- Scientific and technical merit
- Suitability and feasibility
- International significance
- Value addition by the collaboration / national priority
- Potential for promoting equity and redress / capacity building
- Student involvement/ doctoral research placements
- Holistic systems approach.

Particular emphasis is to be placed on the training of students to be achieved through research and the transfer of knowledge and know-how for capacity development of young researchers. Applicants are urged to ensure the involvement of young researchers from previously-disadvantaged communities.

Following local evaluation, a shortlist of projects to be funded will be constituted through consultations between the NRF and NSFC based on the results of the evaluations done in both countries. Please note that, although the two Parties undertake to execute the evaluation and selection process as quickly as possible so as 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 country, whose schedules may differ significantly.
Project follow-up and reporting

- A final scientific and financial report will be submitted in English by both the South African and the Chinese project leaders no more than 3 months after the end of the project.
- The report will mention the outputs of the projects compared with the objectives and aims of the proposal.
- The joint publications by the researchers will mention the support from the NRF and NSFC.

Intellectual property

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

When is the closing date for applications?

Applications for both South Africa and China must be submitted by 20 April 2017. Applications received after this date will not be considered for funding.

Please note that the NRF or NSFC will not be held responsible for applications that were not received. Researchers are also advised to ensure that their research partners’ applications are submitted and have also been received in the partner country.

Where can I obtain more information?

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