



GUIDE
South African Research Chairs Initiative
Round 2

Version 1.3
August 2008

ROUND 2

Of the

**South African Research Chairs
Initiative**

**Will add at least 15
Research Chairs**

In focused research fields

Towards the ultimate goal of

210 Chairs by 2010

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Round 2 of SARChI is sponsored by the
Department of Science and Technology
and the FirstRand Foundation.

The NRF wishes to thank these sponsors for their wise investments.

It is also important to understand that different sponsors have different strategic needs and therefore there may be slight modifications to the rules that govern specific groups of Chairs. These modifications will be listed elsewhere and will supersede the information provided within this document.

PART A: Strategic Background

Part A of this Guide sketches the strategic intentions of the South African Research Chairs Initiative. It focuses on the What, Why, How, Where and Who? It is extracted from the Initiative's strategic framework that was prepared by Dr Tessa Marcus, in consultation with the NRF and the sponsor: the Department of Science and Technology (DST).

If, at this stage, you are only interested in the mechanics of submitting a proposal then skip this part and move directly to Part B.

A1. What?

The South African Research Chairs Initiative is a strategically focused knowledge and human resource intervention that has five interrelated objectives:

1. To increase the number of world class researchers in South Africa,
2. To retain and/or attract back qualified research scientists to the Higher Education sector and thereby:
 - a. To help reverse the systemic decline in research outputs, focus and capacity at publicly funded higher education institutions (HEI s), Science Councils and other research institutions,
 - b. To strengthen and improve the capacity of HEIs, Science Councils, Musea and other research institutions (e.g., University linked Teaching Hospitals) to generate and apply new knowledge,
3. To stimulate strategic research¹ across the knowledge spectrum and thereby increase the level of excellence in research areas of national and international importance,

¹ Strategic Research is defined as research that is directed in a very general way by broad national or economic objectives to which research can contribute. It can be applied or basic research, and is carried out with the expectation that it will produce a broad

4. To create research career pathways for highly skilled, high quality young and mid-career researchers that effectively addresses historical racial, gender and age imbalances,
5. To improve and accelerate the training of highly qualified personnel through research.

A2. Why?

In order to make South Africa competitive in the international knowledge economy based on its existing and potential strengths.

A3. How?

The purposes of South African Research Chairs are to:

1. Advance the frontiers of knowledge through focused research in identified fields or problem areas;
2. Stimulate and coordinate the work of other researchers active in identified fields or problem areas;
3. Teach/supervise postgraduate level students and postdoctoral researchers whose learning should be embedded in the field of the research focus;
4. Provide a critical locus for the development of excellence in ideas and capacity;
5. Promote gender and racial equity in the scientific community.

base of knowledge likely to form the background to the solution of recognised current or future practical problems. (after Irvine and Martin, 1984 and Johnston 1990)

A4. Where?

The Research Chairs will be awarded to publicly funded HEIs who can hold such chairs in their own right or jointly in collaboration with Science Councils, Musea or other institutions that conduct research and develop research capacity as part of their usual functioning.

A5. Who?

Research Chairs will be awarded in any discipline of scientific research, including social science, humanities, the Law, natural science, engineering and technology. The Chairs will fit into the normal management structures of their host institutions.

There will be no restriction on the number of Research Chairs that may be awarded to a single Institution.

The NRF will fund a candidate in a Research Chair and not merely a chair. So the candidate's credentials are very important to the selection process. The successful Institutes will be responsible for nominating and recruiting the Research Chair candidates.

The candidates must:

- Have a doctoral degree;
- Have a four or more year track record of research that is excellent and sustained and/or clearly on an upward trajectory. Ideally such candidates should be NRF rated (or equivalent); and if they are not NRF rated on appointment they would have to become a rated researcher to be eligible for renewal of the chair;
- Have a track record in supervising postgraduate students that is clearly on an upward trajectory;
- Have a record of being able to obtain external funding;

- Be appointed at the Associate Professor or Professor Level - benchmarked nationally;
- Reside full time in South Africa for the duration of the Research Chair award;
- Be awarded to suitably qualified candidates irrespective of their nationality, race or gender. Where such candidates are not young higher education institutions must develop a succession plan with incumbents to ensure that a range of possible candidates with competitive capacity exists within two cycles of a South African Research Chair award.

The candidates may be an incumbent or a new recruit to the successful HEI. Where Research Chairs are taken up by existing faculty, the HEI must replace them with suitably qualified candidates in the faculty². Where such replacements are not young, black or female, the HEI must develop a succession plan designed to develop a range of possible candidates with competitive capacity within two cycles of a South African Research Chair award.

A6. Specific Targets

This round of SARChI will not exclusively target external candidates; however all others factors being equal preference will be given to external candidates, candidates from designated groups and candidates from the African Diaspora.

² In short this Initiative must **add** to the number of faculty

PART B: Submission and Assessment Process

This part of the Guide describes the process of submitting a proposal to the South African Research Chairs Initiative. It also focuses on the assessment mechanics and their timing.

B1. Round 1

The process of selecting 210 Research Chairs is divided into a number of rounds. The exact number of rounds will be determined by the rate of release of funds. The NRF will inform the research community about this number when it is known.

In the mean time, this Guide focuses on **Round 2**. Future Guides will be published for each subsequent round.

B2. Number of Calls in Round 2

Round 2 of the South African Research Chairs Initiative will have one call for pre-proposals. Subsequent call may be initiated depending on the release of funds. The duration of the call is shown in **Table 1**. Also listed in this table are the expected dates for the decision and public announcement of the chairs and the number of Research Chairs that will be awarded during each call of Round 2.

Call	Nomination Deadline	Decision Date	Public Announcement	Awarded Chairs
1	1 Sept 08	31 Oct 08	April/May 09	About 15
			Total	15

Table 1: Call dates & expected number of awards in Round 2

B3. Submission & Assessment Process

The submission and assessment process, as illustrated in **Figure 1**, consists of two sub-processes:

- **The Preliminary Phase**; which begins with the submission of a short (maximum 10 pages) pre-proposal during the call period (see **Table 1**). The purpose of this phase is to select institutions that are best positioned to host and support the Chairs.

Assessment of the pre-proposals will be undertaken by a panel of senior NRF and staff members representing the sponsors. This assessment will not focus on scientific merit, but rather on the alignment of the proposed Chair with the strengths, capabilities and competencies of the host institution. The match between proposed Chair and Institution will be assessed within the contexts of the institution's strategic environment and the provincial and national environments. Further selection criteria are listed in the following section (**Section B4**).

The pre-proposal is best authored by a member of the Research Directorate of the host Institution.



Change

NB! It is not necessary to have a candidate for the Chair in mind during this stage of the selection process.

Followed by the ...

- **Recruitment Phase**; which begins with an invitation from the NRF to submit a full-proposal (of no more than 50 pages). This full proposal will be written by the nominated candidate³. It will give details of how he/she will use the Chair to further his/her career and fulfill the SARChI objectives. It should include information on the strategic considerations mentioned in the pre-proposal, the research focus of

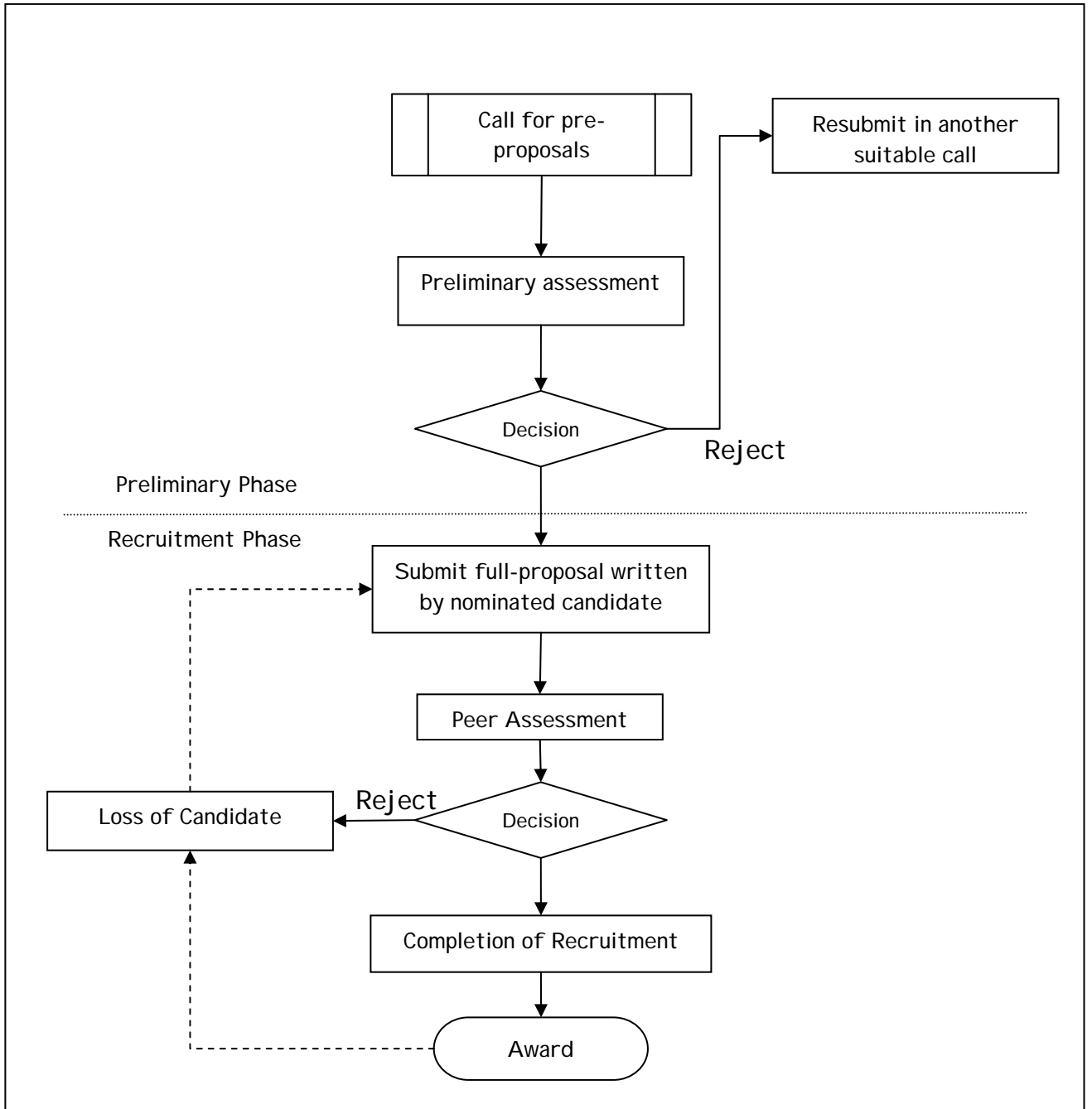
³ No commitment should be given to the candidate before the NRF has officially informed the HEI of the award by means of an award letter.

the Chair and how this is expected to deliver on the Institutional research strategy. The full-proposal should contain a proposal for a five year programme including budget requirements. The full-proposal must also contain a detailed CV of the candidate. More information on selection criteria is given in *Section B5*.

Assessment of the full-proposals will be undertaken by independent peers who will make recommendations for approval by senior executives of sponsors and the NRF.

Figure 1: Submission & Assessment Processes

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B4. Selection Criteria: Preliminary Phase

As awards are to be made to Institutions; Research Chairs must be applied for by the HEI (not the candidate for the Chair).

The selection of successful pre-proposals during the preliminary phase will be based on the competence of the host institution to support the proposed Chair. The pre-proposal therefore must consider the following matters:

- The Institution's research objectives,
- The Institution's research strengths,
- The relevance of the research areas which they wish to target for growth and development through Research Chairs,
- The support the host institution can give to the Chair in terms of:
 - Academic support (related research groups, facilities, information, etc.),
 - Financial support (direct and indirect),
- The management of the Chair, including who, how and when.

All Research Chair applications will also be considered against National research priorities as articulated in general and specific governmental or agency policy documents including the National R&D Strategy.

B5. Selection Criteria: Recruitment Phase

The full-proposal should flesh out the pre-proposal by indicating, in greater detail, exactly what the Chair will do and how this will dovetail with the strategic framework presented in the pre-proposal. How the Chair's work will synergize with the competencies of the host Institution. It is also important to emphasize how the candidate's qualifications and experience will help deliver on the strategic promise. (See [A5. Who?](#) for more details on the selection criteria for the candidate.)

The full-proposal will also need to give specific details of:

- The proposed teaching⁴ to research time ratio,
- Expected knowledge⁵ outputs in the first five year period,

⁴ Teaching of post-graduate students only

- Expected human capacity⁶ outputs in the first five year period,
- Expected development trajectory of the candidate him/herself⁷.

The full-proposal will also contain a five year research (activity) plan. This plan should indicate significant milestones and expected outputs (papers, graduates, etc.) and should include detailed and reasonable budget (see section *C3. Funding Levels*).

B6. Submission of Proposals

Both proposals will be submitted in electronic format (preferably PDF) using the templates provided as a guideline.

NB! The nominated Chair candidates must use the NRF Online system to register their current CVs.

⁵ Peer reviewed journal articles, conference organised and presentations, book and chapters, (patents), etc.

⁶ Numbers of Masters & Doctoral graduates and completed post-doc fellowships

⁷ Progress in impact on local and international research community indicated by NRF Rating and other appropriate means

PART C: Management of the Research Chairs

This part of the Guide describes what happens after the award is made and the candidate takes up the Chair.

C1. Duration of the Research Chair Grant

Research Chairs will be tenable for five years, renewable for two further five year periods giving a total life span of 15 years.

Eligibility for renewal will be entirely performance linked.

C2. Management of the Research Chair Grant

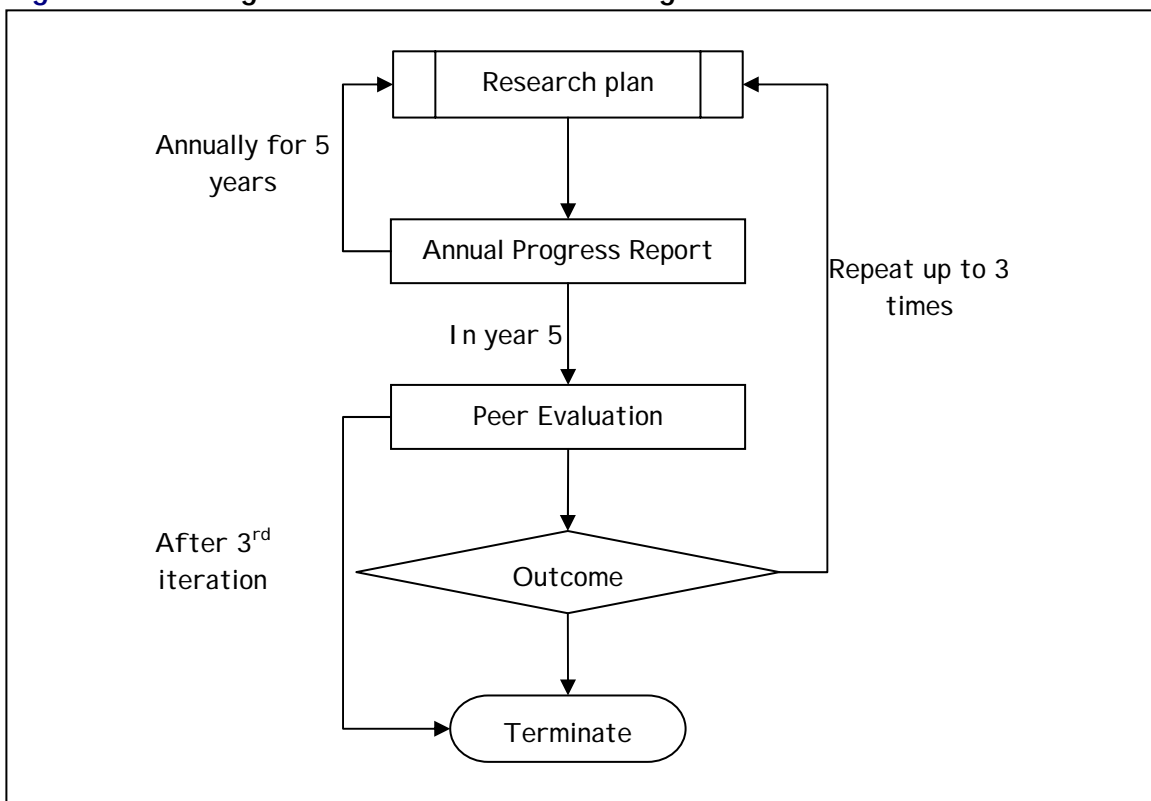
The management of Research Chair grants is illustrated in [Figure 2](#) and described below.

On accepting the award (signing the conditions of grant), the newly appointed incumbent of the Research Chair will be required to deliver on the annual research plan that formed part of the accepted full-proposal. At the end of each calendar year the incumbent will be required to prepare and submit to the NRF an annual progress report addressing the milestones and expected outcomes presented in the research plan.

During the fifth year of existence, the Research Chair will be subjected to an in depth evaluation undertaken by peers within a framework set by the NRF's Evaluation Centre. This evaluation will critically review progress against the:

- Strategic framework provided in the full proposal,
- Progress made against the two research plans presented by the incumbent,
- Impact of the Research Chair on the host HEI, graduated students and the relevant knowledge base.

Figure 2: Management of Research Chair grants



C3. Funding Levels

The South African Research Chairs Initiative proposes to make an award of up to R2.5 million per annum per Research Chair. This award will need to cover salaries⁸, postdoctoral fellowships and postgraduate student bursaries, research operating costs and equipment for the well founded laboratory relevant to the Chair. The guidelines for the split between various categories and the sizes of fellowships and scholarships are shown in [Table 2](#). It is emphasized that this budget template is a guide to applicants and deviations are allowed. On the other hand, the assessment process will consider the proposed budget and will consider the ratios of cost, risk and reward.

⁸ Salaries of the incumbent of the Chair and limited administrative/research support

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			Guidelines					
Item	Sub-item	Estimate	Min ⁹	Max ¹⁰	Cost	Actual % of budget		
Salaries	Chair	580,000	1	1	580,000	23.2%	25.6%	43.1%
	Admin support	30,000		1.2%	30,000	1.2%		
	Research assistants	30,000		1.2%	30,000	1.2%		
Fellowships	Pos-docs	120,000	1		120,000	4.8%	4.8%	
Bursaries	Doctoral (full time)	55,000	2		110,000	4.4%	12.7%	
	Masters (full time)	33,000	6		132,000	5.3%		
	Honours	15,000	8		75,000	3.0%		
Equipment	Items < R500 k	500,000		20%	400,000	16.0%	46.9%	56.9%
Running	All other	773,000		33%	773,000	30.9%		
Overhead	To Institution	250,000		10%	250,000	10.0%		
Total					2,500,000	100.00%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 2: Annual budget guidelines

A Research Chair would not be eligible for additional NRF parliamentary vote core grant funding, except in respect of large equipment. Large equipment is expected to be addressed through the National Research Equipment and Infrastructure strategy.

Research Chairs are also encouraged to extend their funding through innovation, government, industrial, business, donor and community funding.

C3. Payment of Grants

Recruitment of the candidate can be finalized after the award letter has been presented to the successful HEIs. The candidate and the host Institution will jointly sign the conditions of grant (CoG) that are based on the intentions of the South African Research Chairs Initiative.

Upon receipt of the duly signed CoG, the NRF will start its standard method of grant payment.

⁹ Suggested minimum number of people

¹⁰ Suggested maximum % of budget to be spent on this item

C4. Monitoring

A baseline study of chairs and their institutional and intellectual environments will be conducted with each round of new awards. These studies, together with HEI Strategic Research Plans and the Research Chair's Business Plan, will serve as the benchmark to assess performance.

Assistance

Should you require clarification on any of the process, criteria or plans presented in this Guide please do not hesitate to contact Mr. Sibongile Sowazi (sibongile@nrf.ac.za).

A briefing meeting is planned for beginning September 2008.
