5 September 2025

**RESEARCH DIVISION COMMUNIQUÉ**

CALL FOR PROPOSAL: **SOUTH AFRICAN - GERMAN COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE FOR SOCIETAL TRANSFORMATION (ZADE-AI)**

Dear Staff

**PLEASE NOTE: BOTH NRF AND INTERNAL CLOSING DATE – 10 OCTOBER 2025**

**NB**: ALL applications **MUST** be completed online on the NRF Connect website: [***https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za***](https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za)

**WHO CAN APPLY**

1. 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
2. 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.
3. 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

**ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

**South African**:

* 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:
1. University of Limpopo (UL)
2. University of Fort Hare (UFH)
3. University of Venda (Univen)
4. Walter Sisulu University (WSU)
5. ▪ University of the Western Cape (UWC)
6. ▪ University of Zululand (UniZulu)
7. ▪ Mangosuthu University of Technology (MUT)
8. ▪ Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University (SMU)
9. ▪ Sol Plaatje University (SPU)
10. ▪ University of Mpumalanga (UMP)

**PLEASE NOTE: 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.**

For further queries kindly contact: **Ms Nondumiso Radebe** at radeben4@ukzn.ac.za or call Ext 8431 **COPYING** **Mrs Patricia Ngwenya** at ngwenyap@ukzn.ac.za or call Ext 3273.

**Issued by the University Research Division**