

Call for proposals

CSIR Photonics Centre's Rental Pool Programme 2026/27

The CSIR Photonics Centre's Rental Pool Programme (RPP) is funded through a grant received by the CSIR from the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation. The purpose of the fund is to stimulate and grow laser- and laser-based applications research and development programmes within the South African research environment, with the objective of increasing capacity in the National System of Innovation and supporting the next generation of researchers in photonics-based technologies. The programme is focused on supporting laser-related research in all research fields in the natural sciences, engineering and health sciences fields. The fund allows access to equipment for use at the host institution of the applicant or for access to equipment housed at the CSIR Photonics Centre facilities.

The CSIR would like to take this opportunity to invite researchers employed at public universities and universities of technology in South Africa to participate and apply for funding to support their laser-related research programmes in the 2026/2027 financial and academic years. This call allows researchers the opportunity to submit a multi-year project proposal, with a maximum duration of three years. Contracting with successful proposers will be done on an annual basis, with continued funding after year one of the project subject to the submission and approval of an annual progress report. For grant holders with an approved multi-year project, there is no requirement to re-apply. A detailed progress report, however, is required to ensure continuation of the project.

The fund makes provision for research-related costs, including:

- Upgrading of existing laser equipment to ensure suitability for the proposed project;
- Delivery and set-up charges of equipment received on loan from the CSIR at the university's facilities;
- New equipment (including smaller diagnostic equipment) and laser-related consumables to support the proposed research project;
- Maintenance costs for CSIR-owned equipment placed at the university's facilities; and
- Research and technical support provided by the CSIR in support of an approved application.

Consumables will remain the property of the grant holder's institution and will assist in establishing in-house laser infrastructure. The CSIR RPP grant scheme also makes provision for the replacement of older equipment.

The CSIR RPP grant scheme is only available to researchers employed at South African universities. The CSIR Rental Pool Programme application manual outlines the focus of the programme, eligibility criteria and review processes. Applications will be evaluated in line with CSIR policies on equity and redress.

Researchers in all scientific and engineering disciplines using laser technology in their research programmes are encouraged to apply. In the laser-based manufacturing field, applications aligned with the CSIR's own research programmes in additive manufacturing and laser surface engineering will receive preference.

CALL OPENS: Tuesday, 16 September 2025

CALL CLOSES: Tuesday, 21 October 2025

Applications must be submitted electronically to the CSIR Photonics Centre by email: nlcrentalpool@csir.co.za or tiduplooy@csir.co.za.

Applicants must ensure that all additional documents as identified in the proposal template be submitted with their application to the CSIR Photonics Centre by email: nlcrentalpool@csir.co.za or tiduplooy@csir.co.za.

Please direct all queries to:

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CSIR Photonics Centre

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