National Research Foundation | Research, Innovation and Impact Support and Advancement

Research Grants:

Thuthuka PhD Track;
Thuthuka Post PhD Track; and
Thuthuka Rating Track

Application Guide

Directorate: Grants Management and Systems Administration (GMSA)
Date: March 2024

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Contact Details

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For technical online enquiries, please contact the NRF Support Desk during office hours (08:00-16:30) Monday to Friday on:

E--mail address: Supportdesk@nrf.ac.za

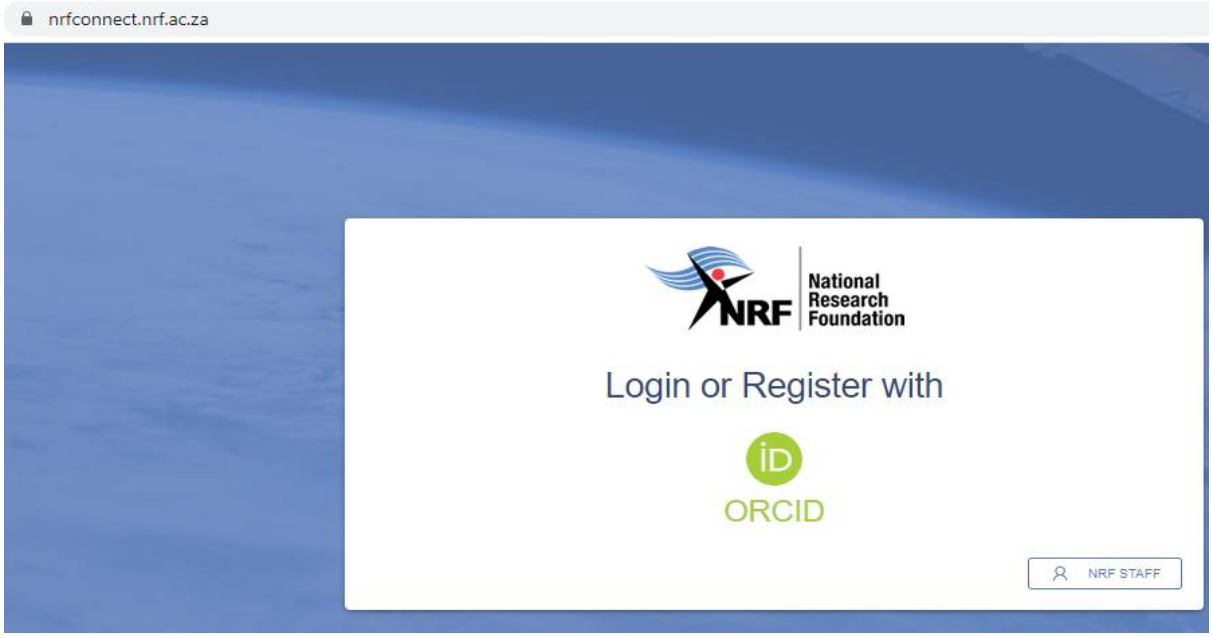
1. Introduction

This document serves as a guideline on how to complete the online application for the Thuthuka Funding Instrument. An understanding of the application process is critical in successfully submitting your application. This guide provides an overview of the application process and funding guidelines.

This document should be read together with the accompanying Thuthuka Framework to the current call. The Framework will provide the detailed information about Thuthuka Funding Instrument including eligibility criteria, funding principles as well as the review scorecard.

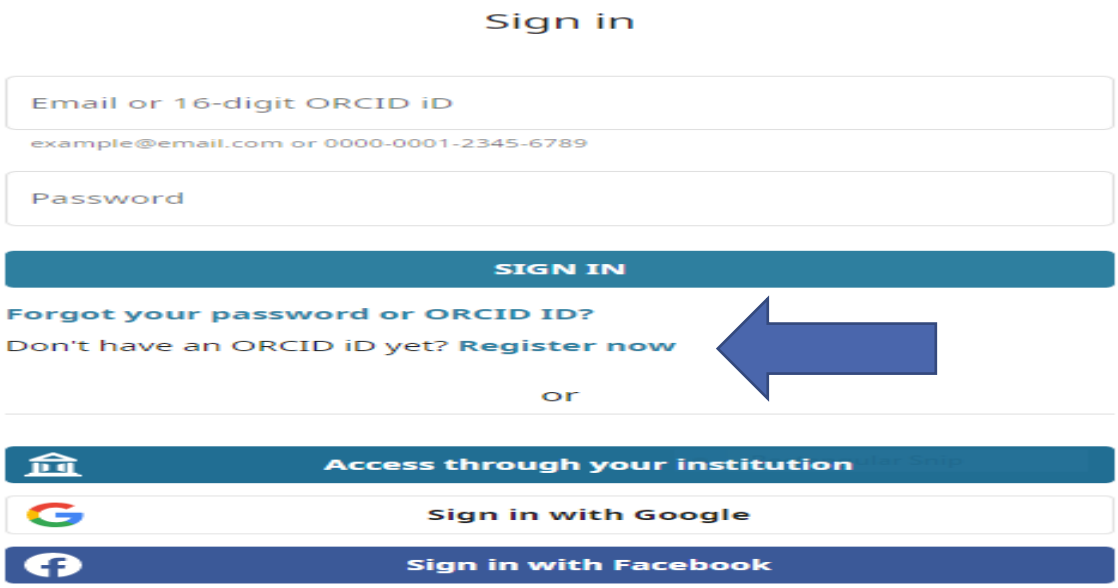
2. Registering and accessing the system

The application must be completed on the NRF online system: https://nrfconnect.nrf.ac.za, using the ORCID (Open Researcher and Contributor ID) credentials.



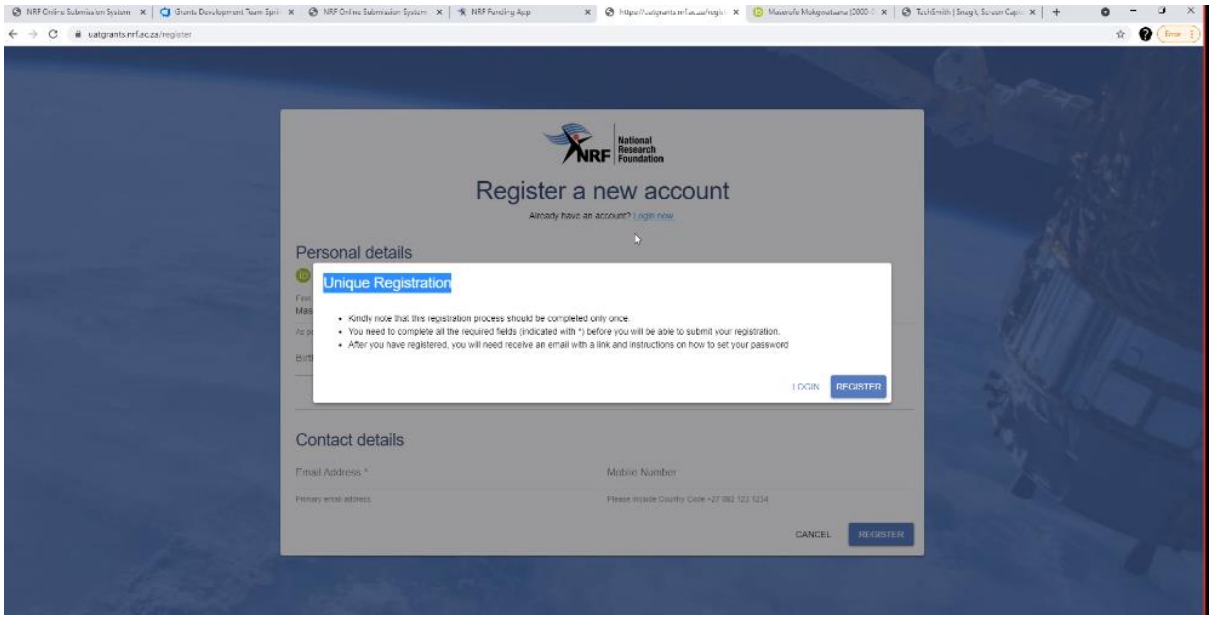
If not registered on ORCID, click Register now and follow the steps. Continue with the ORCID registration as prompted. If users are already registered on ORCID, they must sign in using one of the following options:

1. ORCID iD
2. Email address linked with your ORCID profile
3. GMAIL account linked with your ORCID
4. Facebook account linked with ORCID

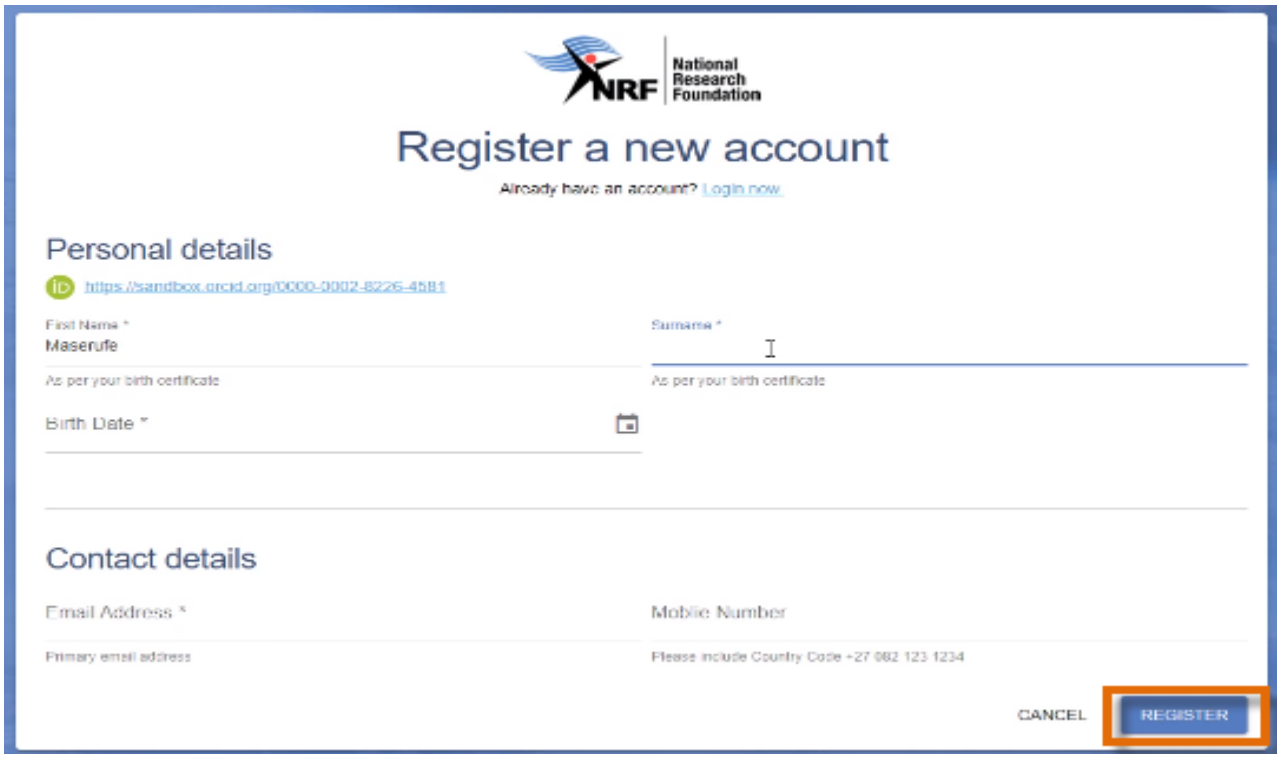


If you currently registered on the NRF Online Submission System, the system would automatically log in with the ORCID profile.

When the ORCID registration process is complete, new users will be redirected to NRF Connect login screen to register on the system.

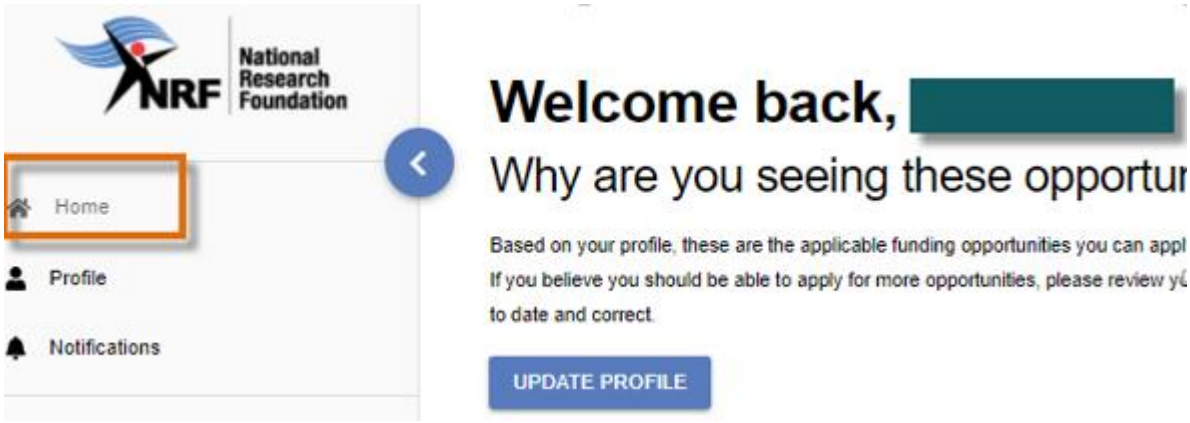


Complete the missing fields and click Register to complete the process and the system will automatically log the user in.



3. Personal Details

After logging in, please click on the Update Profile button to update or complete the profile details.

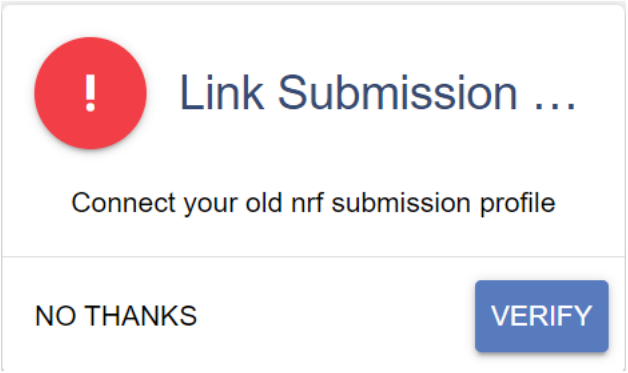


- South African citizens and permanent residents must attach a certified copy of their South African Identity Document. Other foreign nationals must attach a certified copy of their valid Passports. These documents must be attached under the Personal Details only, please do not attach this document under the attachment section. If these documents are not attached, the application will be rejected.
- Applicants in the **PhD** and **Post-PhD tracks** should be under the age of 45 years at the time of first application. Applicants over the age of 45 must submit a motivation as to why they were not able to achieve their doctoral qualification or research capabilities by the stipulated age.

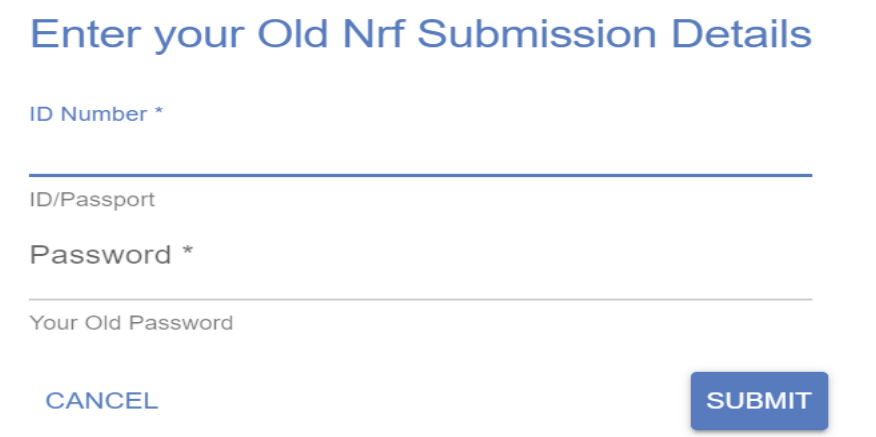
4. CV section

Migrating the CV from the NRF Online Submission System

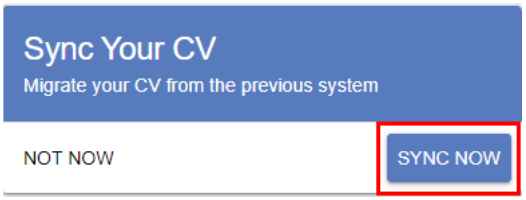
Should the user be an existing user on the NRF Online Submission System, there is functionality to migrate the CV from the previous system. Click **Verify** to link to the relevant account on the NRF Online Submission System.



Provide the ID/Passport number and password used on the NRF Online Submission System.

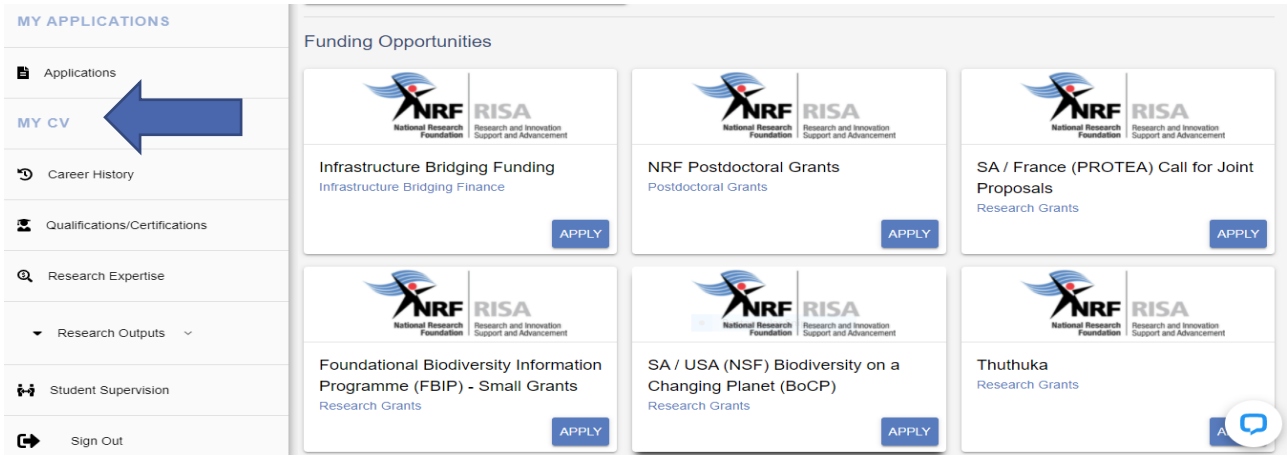


Once the verification of the two accounts has been completed, confirmation will show at the bottom of the screen.



For new users

The CV can be updated by clicking on the tabs under the CV banner on the left-hand side of the screen.



4.1. Sections of the CV

The CV includes the following sections:

4.1.1. Career History

- Thuthuka funding instrument awards are limited to **academics** and **researchers**, with academic and/or joint academic and administrative professional appointments, at **NRF recognised public universities, Science Councils and other public research institutions** as recognised by the NRF.
- The term "academic" relates to lecturing duties as part of their job. If any of the following "positions" (current career) are indicated under the Career Profile section of your CV, your application will be deemed ineligible:
    - Doctoral student
    - Postdoctoral fellow
    - Lab technician
    - Coordinator
    - Administrator
    - Research Fellow
    - Tutor
- Applicants must be employed at the institutions on a full-time permanent or full-time contractual basis. If the applicant is appointed on a full-time contractual basis, the appointment date must extend to cover the duration of the grant.

- Female applicants who are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible to apply. This is limited to women raising children of four (4) years of age and below. A copy of the child's birth certificate should be included in the online application. In the case of a contract, the appointment must extend for the duration of the approved three (3) year funding cycle.

4.1.2. Qualifications / Certifications

PhD track

- Master's degree should be the highest qualification.
- If the Master's degree is "in progress", then the date of completion should be before February 2025.
- Applicants who received previous freestanding and/or grantholder-linked doctoral scholarships are not eligible to apply for further funding under the same level.

Post-PhD track

- Applicants should have obtained a Doctoral degree no more than five (5) years prior to the date of first application.
- If the Doctoral degree is "in progress", then the date of completion should be before February 2025. *Please include the Doctoral degree under this section and indicate the anticipated date of completion.*

NRF Rating track

- Applicants should have obtained their Doctoral degree no more than eight (8) years prior to the date of first application.

4.1.3. Research Expertise

Select the relevant primary research field and secondary research field from the drop-down list. To search for a field of specialisation, please start typing any part of the word in the appropriate space.

4.1.4. **Research Outputs** - Primary and Secondary Outputs and Patents

Click on **Research Outputs Menu** to select the relevant output type.

Should the outputs have been synched with NRF Submission, a list of outputs will be available for editing or deletion.

4.1.5. **Student Supervision**

This section is for capturing the student supervision track record.

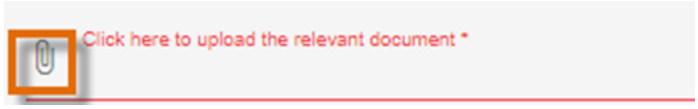
5. Navigation and Controls

5.1. Drop-down List Control

Click on the arrow on the drop-down to see a list of options. Then click on the relevant option(s) to select.

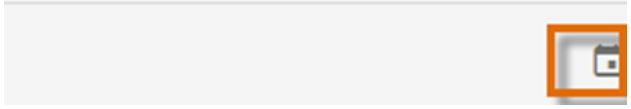
5.2 Upload Control

Click on the **Attachment** icon to upload required document(s).

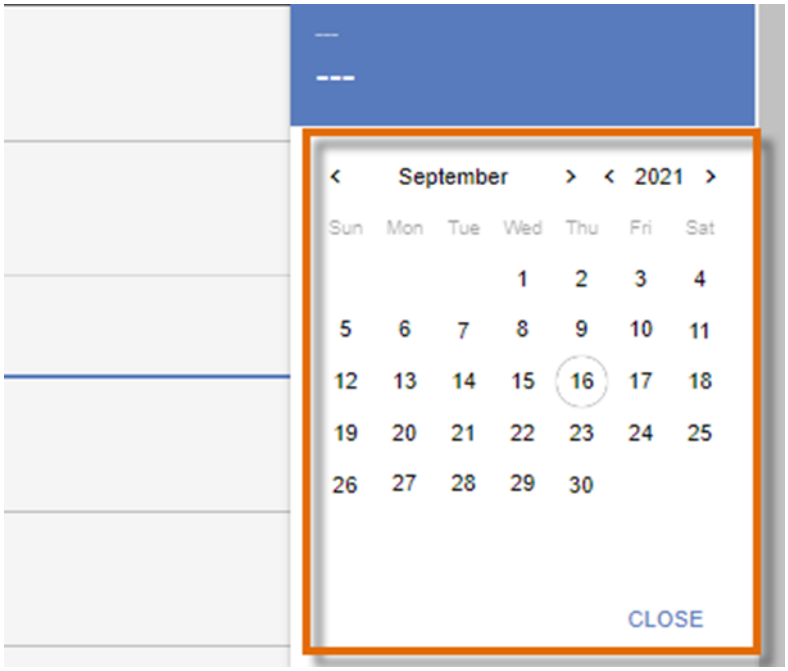


5.3 Calendar Control

Click on the **Calendar** icon to select the date, where a date is required.

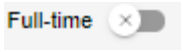


A full **Calendar** will be displayed to allow for selection of the relevant date (follow the sequence as follows: year, month, day).

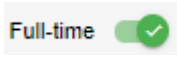


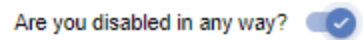
5.4 Toggle Control

Toggle to indicate **No**.



Toggle to indicate Yes.





Please make sure that the toggle has fully marked no or yes based on your selection. Toggle not fully selected will not allow the section to complete.

6. Creating the application

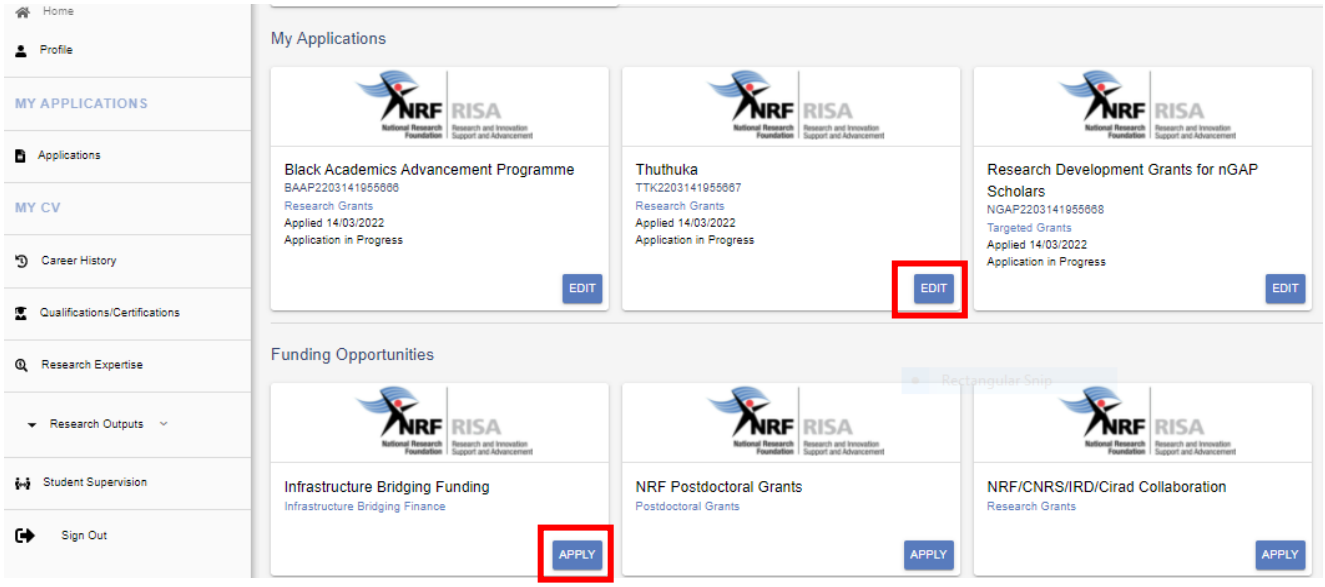
An application can be created from the **Home/Landing page** or from the **My Applications** menu.

Create Application from Home/Landing page

The Funding Opportunities listed under your profile will be those that the applicant might be potentially eligible to apply for based on the information captured under the CV section.

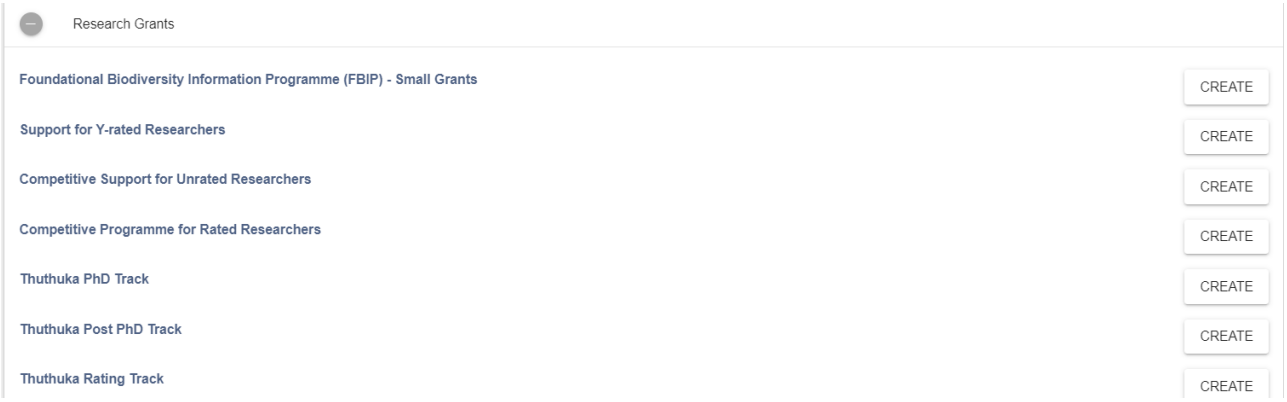
Click Apply on the funding call for which you are applying to create an application.

To continue working on an application, click **Edit** on the funding call you want to edit.



Create Application from My Applications Menu

Click the expand icon next to the relevant Category to see the Calls associated with the Category (*Thuthuka applications are under the Research Grants Category)*. Then Click **Create** next to the relevant Funding Opportunity to create a new application.



If the application is submitted under an incorrect funding track, it will be rejected without review.

Sections of the application

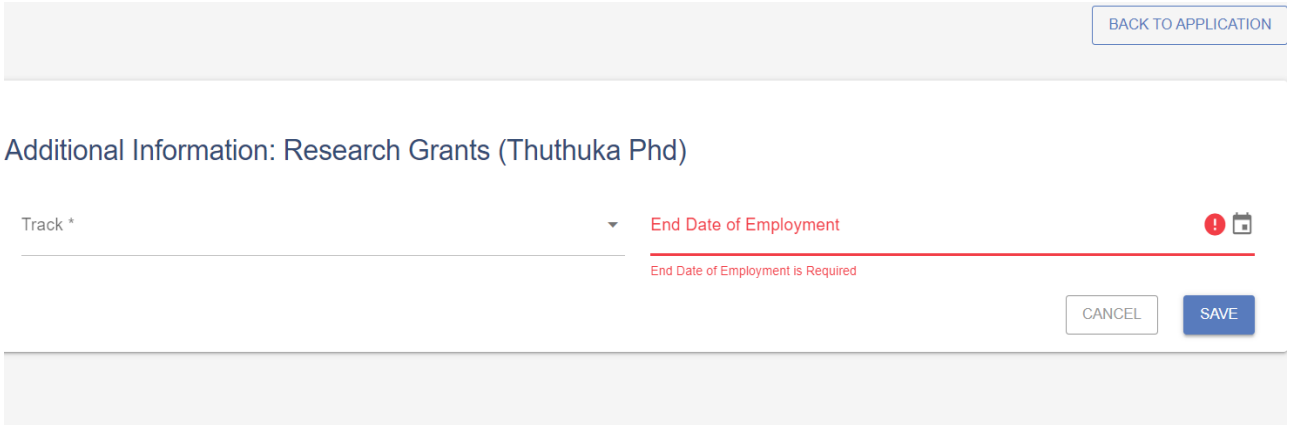
- Please note that some sections (e.g Personal Details, CV Details) will be pre-populated, if they were completed on Update Profile and MY CV sections.

- Most application screens have application specific instructions to help you work through the section. Please read the instruction carefully before completing the section.
- Completed sections will be indicated by a green tick on the main menu, while incomplete sections will have a red cross. Please ensure that you press the “save” button after completing information in a section, before returning to the application.
- All sections marked with a red asterisk (*) are compulsory sections in the application. These sections must be completed for the final submit button to be active.

Section	Complete	Updated
Personal Profile *	✓	16/02/2023
Qualifications/Certifications *	✓	29/02/2024
Research Expertise *	✓	29/02/2024
Student Supervision *	✓	29/02/2024
Career History *	✓	29/02/2024
Research Outputs	✓	29/02/2024
Patents	×	
Top Research Outputs	×	
Additional Information *	✓	29/02/2024
Student Support	×	
Basic Information *	✓	29/02/2024
Details of Research *	✓	29/02/2024
Attachments *	✓	29/02/2024
Ethical Clearance *	✓	29/02/2024
Reviewer *	✓	29/02/2024
Preferred Panel *	✓	29/02/2024
National Infrastructure Platforms *	✓	29/02/2024
Additional Information: Research Grant (Thuthuka PhD) *	✓	29/02/2024

6.1 Additional Information: Research Grants (Thuthuka)

If you are employed on a contractual basis, please indicate the end date of employment. If this information is not captured under the section, the application will be deemed incomplete and it will be rejected.



6.2 Details of Research

The details of research section is one of the most important parts of the application and is looked at during the review process (please refer to the detailed review scorecard in the Framework document). This section is made up of multiple sub-sections that must be completed with as much detail as possible. Character limitations are indicated in each sub-section.

Details of Research * ✓ 29/02/2024

Section	*Complete*	*Updated*
Potential Impact and Outputs *	✓	29/02/2024
Problem Statement *	✓	29/02/2024
Rationale and Literature Review *	✓	29/02/2024
Aims and Objectives *	✓	29/02/2024
Proposed Activities/Methodology/Work Plan *	✓	29/02/2024
Transformation *	✓	29/02/2024
Anticipated Outputs *	✓	29/02/2024
Alignment to National Imperatives *	✓	08/10/2022
Data Management and Utilisation *	✓	29/02/2024

6.3 Attachments

The following attachments are required for Thuthuka:

- The Institutional Support Form, which is attached to the Call documents, must be downloaded by the applicant for the Dean of the Employing/Affiliated Faculty and Research Office/DA signatures and then uploaded in the attachment section. This document is submitted to confirm and verify the Institution's support to the applicant for the proposed research. The Funding Track has to be completed by the applicant on the Institutional Support Form.

- Applicants with joint academic and administrative professional appointments **must** attach proof thereof. This can be in the form of a letter from the institution confirming the joint appointment.
- Female applicants who are appointed on a fixed-term half-day appointment to accommodate family responsibilities are eligible to apply. This is limited to women raising children of four (4) years of age and below. A copy of the child's birth certificate **must** be attached.
- Applicants in the PhD and Post-PhD tracks over the age of 45 **must** submit a motivation as to why they were not able to achieve their doctoral qualification or research capabilities by the stipulated age.

6.4 Ethical Clearance

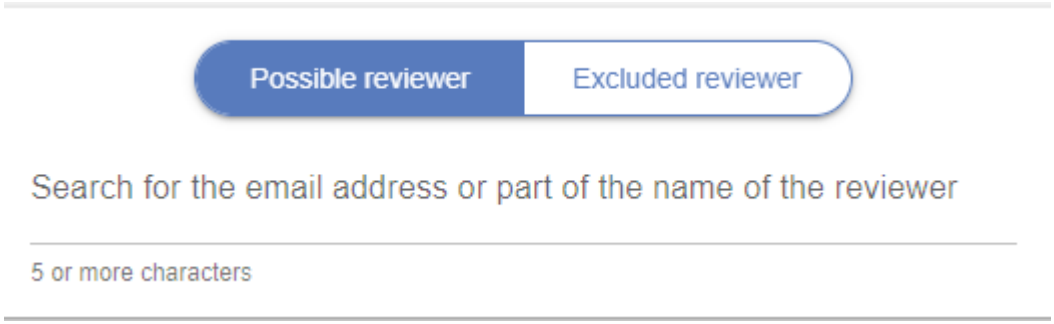
Indicate if ethical clearance is required for your research and if it has been obtained already.

*Note: If your application is successful and if ethical clearance is required for your research, then the ethical clearance certificate must be sent to the NRF together with the signed Conditions of Grant. Without this certificate, funds cannot be released.

6.5 Reviewers – Possible Reviewer and Excluded reviewer

Please indicate potential subject experts who would be suitable to review your application. A minimum of six (6) reviewers are required. Applicants are given the opportunity to identify reviewers (not exceeding three) who the NRF should not approach. Please use the appropriate 'tab' to enter relevant information.

You can search for the reviewer on the system by typing part of their email address.



Should a reviewer not be found, please select the not found tab to add the reviewer details.

6.6 Preferred Panel

Indicate the most suitable panel that your project should be evaluated under.

6.7 Requested Financials

Please refer to the Framework for more information about the Thuthuka granting rules, financial control and categories supported. Please note that some of the running expenses sub-categories listed under the template are **not supported under Thuthuka**.

**Please include all financial details (i.e., budget breakdown) in the space provided in the application. Do not add attachments with the required detail to the application. This will not be looked at during the funding decisions process.

****Only indicate the NRF contribution under this section.**

The eight (8) financial sub-categories supported by the NRF and the maximum amount that will be awarded per sub-category are indicated in Table 1. The NRF will award a maximum total amount of R100 000 (one hundred thousand rand) per annum for running expenses. The applicant's institution must match the NRF awarded amount in a 1:1.

Table 1: Financial Sub-categories supported and maximum amounts funded.

No.	Category of Support	Maximum amount (NRF contribution)
Equipment		

1.	Research equipment	R50 000 maximum per annum
Running Expenses		
2.	International conference	R20 000 per annum
3.	Local conference	R10 000 per annum
4.	Local Travel	R10 000 per annum
5.	Hardware and Supplies (Materials and Supplies)	R70 000 per annum
6.	Research / technical / ad hoc Assistants	R20 000 per annum
7.	Visiting Scientists	R50 000 per annum
8.	Science Engagement	R10 000 per annum

The Equipment sub-category supported under Thuthuka is the Research Equipment.

Note: Applicants must include a detailed and well-motivated budget for each of the three (3) years in the three (3) year grant application. The budget for each of the three (3) years will be approved at the time of the grant award. Applications with two (2) or one (1) year budget requests will not be considered.

Budget requests and motivations that are NOT consistent with the permissible funding categories will NOT be considered in the Funding Decision process. Budget requests must be well motivated according to the requirements of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument. Budget requests that are not well motivated according to the requirements of the Thuthuka Funding Instrument will not be approved for funding.

For more information on the **Financial Categories** supported under Thuthuka, please refer to the Thuthuka Framework document.

6.8 Other sources of funding

To realistically gauge the full extent of the proposed research, details of other sources of financial support for the research must be submitted in the application budget. This in no way compromises or disadvantages the proposal; instead, knowledge of the commitment and contribution of other

contributors (where applicable) serves to better understand the feasibility of the proposed research project.

If there are no other sources of funding, please select “add” under the section, then select “N/A” from the dropdown list under “source”. You can then enter 0 values for the different years.

6.9 National Infrastructure Platforms

Indicate the infrastructure platform (i.e., planned equipment or data) that will be accessed outside your own institution during the grant.

6.10 Science Engagement

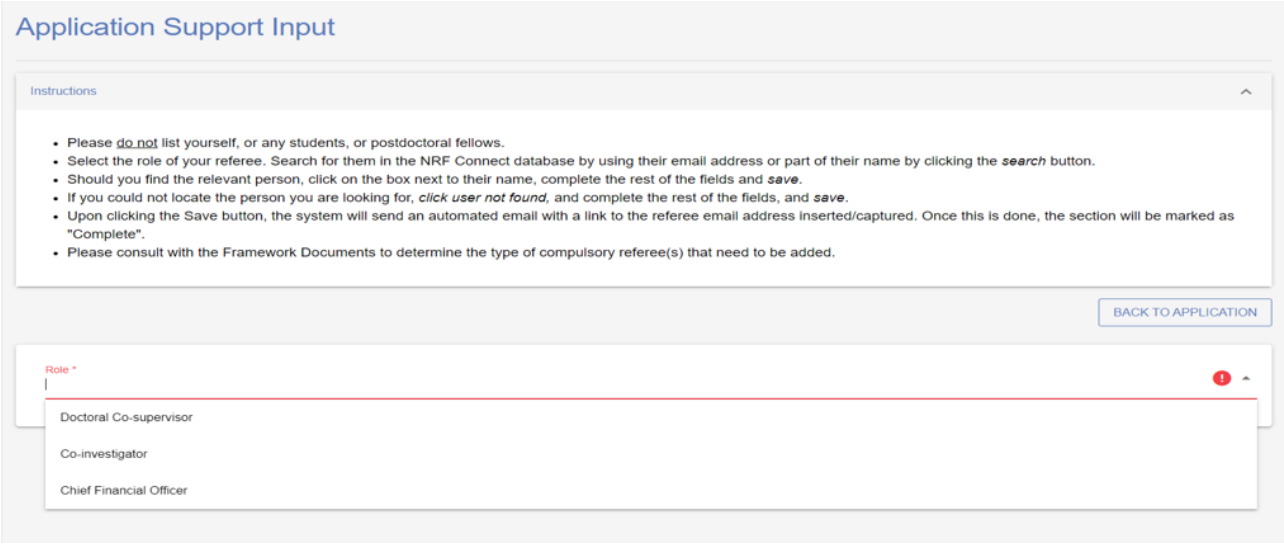
List any science communication or public engagement activities that will take place during the grant.

6.11 Application Support Input

6.11.1 Doctoral supervisor

Applicants under the PhD track must add their supervisor’s details in this section (please use the Doctoral Co-supervisor role under the application template). Once the application has been submitted, an e-mail will be generated requesting the supervisor to complete the reference report electronically. Please ensure that the contact details provided in the application are correct.

*The supervisor’s report is compulsory and without this the application will not be considered for funding.



6.12 Participating Members

Add the details of additional people e.g. collaborators, who will be involved in the research project.

Ends.