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## **CALL FOR PROPOSALS:**

### **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH GRANTS -NRF001/2026**

#### **1. Background and Rationale**

The National Research Fund (NRF), established under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013, is mandated to mobilize resources for research and innovation to strengthen Kenya's national research ecosystem. In line with this mandate, NRF recognizes postgraduate research as a critical pillar for developing sustainable research capacity, advancing knowledge, and nurturing future researchers, innovators, and policy leaders. Despite their central role in generating original knowledge, postgraduate researchers continue to face limited access to competitive research funding, which constrains the quality, scope, and timely completion of research, particularly in areas vital to national development.

Research is the backbone of national transformation, driving innovation, informing evidence-based policies, and providing solutions to pressing societal challenges across all sectors. To achieve this, NRF strengthens research capacity and skilled human capital by supporting the development of human resources through grants to persons, research institutions or universities pursuing postgraduate programs in prioritized areas of science, technology and innovation.

Therefore, NRF announces the Competitive Grants for Postgraduate Researchers. The grant intends to support high-quality, innovative, and methodologically sound research by Master's and PhD students, delivering focused, time-bound studies with clear scholarly and policy-relevant outputs that contribute to the Government's Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA) and inclusive national development.

This call invites applications from postgraduate researchers whose work addresses critical knowledge gaps in Kenya's development landscape, with emphasis on research that translates into actionable solutions for communities, industries, and government. Successful applicants will demonstrate rigorous research design, adherence to ethical standards, and potential for meaningful impact within their respective fields while contributing to the national innovation ecosystem and regional competitiveness.

#### **2. Objectives of the Call**

This Grant seeks to:

- a) Support postgraduate researchers to undertake innovative and original research.
- b) Enhance research skills, mentorship, and timely completion of postgraduate studies in scientific areas that lack sufficient human capacity.

- c) Generate knowledge with academic, policy, and/or societal impact in national priority areas.
- d) Promote interdisciplinary and inclusive research approaches.

### **3. Scope of the Grant**

#### **3.1 Thematic Areas**

The Grant will support only the research component for masters or doctoral degree training programmes on projects addressing the national development agenda, within, but not limited to, the following thematic areas:

- a) Agricultural and Natural Resource Sciences
- b) Physical, Industrial and Energy Sciences
- c) Biological and Health Sciences;
- d) Infrastructure, Information and Communication Sciences
- e) Humanities and Social Sciences
- f) Earth and Space Sciences
- g) Emerging technologies

#### **3.2 Eligibility Criteria**

Applicants must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- a) Be a Kenyan citizen;
- b) Be below thirty-five (35) years for Masters and forty-five (45) years for PhD research, respectively, at the time of application;
- c) Be a full-time postgraduate researcher (Master's or PhD) duly registered at a recognized Kenyan institution;
- d) Have an approved research proposal duly endorsed by the applicant's supervisor and/or the relevant postgraduate board;
- e) Demonstrate the feasibility of completing the proposed research within the grant period; and,
- f) Not be a beneficiary of another grant covering the same research costs.

### **4. Budget and Grant duration**

A successful doctoral proposal will be funded up to a maximum of Kenya Shillings Two million **(Ksh 2,000,000/=)** for a period not exceeding **three (3) years**, while a Masters proposal will be funded up to a maximum of five hundred thousand **(Ksh 500,000/=)** for a period of **one (1) year**.

The following are the allowable expenses in the proposed budget:

- a) Direct cost for undertaking research which shall include but not be limited to research equipment, consumables, essential infrastructure and upgrading systems development;
- b) Research output trials;
- c) Mobility costs (travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses) for project activities for professional and non-professional personnel not exceeding 20% of the total grant;
- d) Capacity building, knowledge sharing and research uptake and dissemination.

## **5. Application and Review Process**

### **5.1 Application process:**

The research proposals for this call must be submitted by 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 23:59hrs. Only successful applicants will be contacted.

Applications should be submitted in electronic format through the Online Grants Management System: [grantsportal.nrf.go.ke](https://grantsportal.nrf.go.ke).

### **5.2 Review process/ Evaluation Criteria:**

In the review of the research proposals, the following evaluation criteria will be used:

- i. Quality and originality of the proposed research (20%)
- ii. Relevance of the proposed research to the call objectives (20%)
- iii. Feasibility of the proposed research (10%)
- iv. Budget justification and value for money (15%)
- v. Potential impact of the proposed research; (10%)
- vi. Suitability of the proposed research design and methodology; 15%
- vii. Technical capacity of the researcher and supervision support; (10%)

## **6. Reporting and Publication**

- a) Every funded researcher will report implementation progress at semiannually upon commencement of the project using the prescribed reporting template shared during the post award phase.
- b) At the completion of the project, a final report using the template provided by NRF shall be submitted. The report must be endorsed by the Head of Institution before submission by the researcher to NRF.
- c) The researchers are expected to publish their results in peer-reviewed journals of international repute and to submit to NRF proof of abstract submitted to journals or conferences of international repute.
- d) NRF shall be acknowledged in all the publications arising from funded projects.

- e) A full account of all expenses made for a research project shall be due within 30 days of completion.
- f) Unexpended funds remaining at the end of the grant cycle shall be returned to NRF.

## **7. Ethics and Regulatory Compliance**

All applicants must obtain and maintain the necessary ethical approvals and regulatory licenses prior to commencing research activities and throughout the project duration. Depending on the nature of the research, this includes but is not limited to: Institutional Review Board (IRB) or Ethics Review Committee approval for human subject research; animal ethics committee approval; biosafety clearance; data protection compliance; and any other sector-specific regulatory authorizations.

All applications must be accompanied by a valid research license issued by the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). In addition, applicants must submit proof of all required approvals and ensure all approvals remain valid throughout the project period and immediately notify NRF of any modifications to ethical approvals or regulatory status.

Researchers shall also ensure that no payment, consideration or benefit of any kind, which could be regarded as an illegal or corrupt practice, is made, promised or accepted directly or indirectly, as an inducement or reward in relation to activities funded under this call. Any such practice will be grounds for the immediate cancellation of the grant and for such additional action, civil and/or criminal as may be appropriate.

## **8. Contact details**

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### **DISCLAIMER**

This document is prepared by the National Research Fund to provide guidance to applicants for this Call. NRF shall not be responsible for any use that may be made of the information it contains outside the purview of this call.