1. **BACKGROUND**

In line with its constitutional mandate as the custodian of innovation, the Department of Science and Technology (DST), seeks to ensure that South African researchers have access to modern and relevant research infrastructure that ensures their competitiveness in the global arena; and, maximizes return on investments in research and innovation, such as the development of new products, technologies and services.

It is for this reason that the DST has, through the National Research Foundation’s (NRF) Research and Technology Infrastructure Strategy, established the National Palaeosciences Equipment Programme (NPEP) to support research equipment and infrastructure by allocation of funds in its annual budget vote. The DST is investing in this programme under the auspices of the African Origins Platform (AOP).

2. **DEFINITION**

The National Palaeosciences Equipment Programme (NPEP) is an initiative designed to ensure the establishment of world-class research infrastructure in the National System of Innovation (NSI). It enables researchers to perform cutting edge research, through the development of much needed advanced technology infrastructure. This programme also contributes to the advancement of human capital development and the promotion of national and international research collaboration in the palaeosciences.

3. **OBJECTIVES**

The key objectives of this initiative are to:

- Support the acquisition or upgrade of state-of-the-art research equipment to enable national research institutions to undertake world class research,
- Provide infrastructure for human capital and skills development, mainly post-graduate student training and technical staff development,
- To build human resource capacity and infrastructure capacity in the areas of palaeontology, palaeoanthropology, archaeology, genomics and related disciplines
- Make provision for the development of technologically advanced research with far-reaching scientific effects
• Assist in creating a long-term planning culture around research equipment,
• Promote the development of research collaboration through the placement of research equipment,
• Support and promote institutional, national and regional research priorities in the palaeosciences
• To promote regional, national and international research collaborations in palaeosciences and
• To support the creation of new and novel devices for the application of palaeoscience research

In addition to ensuring the realization of the aforementioned strategic objectives, this initiative will also be used to address historical imbalances of research equipment acquisition and placement, in terms of race, historical background and geographic distribution. It is in light of this that the following criteria have been developed, against which the proposed projects will be assessed.

4. **ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

4.1. **Criteria for applicants**

You are eligible to apply to the NPEP if you are currently employed at a:
- South African Higher Education Institution
- National Research Laboratory, such as Science Councils, Government-funded research laboratories and National Facilities
- Museum and
- Other national research institutes

4.2. **Criteria for application**

The project proposal should demonstrate ALL of the following:

- **Human capital development**. As human capital development is one of the key drivers of the acquisition of research equipment, the application should demonstrate how the project/programme will drive human capital development, skills training, equity and transformation.

- **Multi-disciplinary palaeosciences research**. The applicant/s must demonstrate how the project will straddle various research disciplines

- **Research consortia**. Research should be conducted by a consortium of Higher Education Institutions, Research Institutes and international collaboration

- **Project plan and budget**. Applications should provide details of the project plan including the duration of the project and a detailed budget for 2010.

- **Applicants are eligible for 1 year of funding in 2010**
5. **APPLICATION FORMAT**

There is **no** prescribed application template for this call, but applications must be submitted in PDF format.

Applicants are advised to refer to the **panel assessment scorecard in section 6 below**, for guidance on the criteria that will be used to adjudicate and score each proposal. **Applicants must ensure that all this information is clearly articulated in the proposal submission.**

6. **PANEL ASSESSMENT SCORECARD**

A constituted review panel will be tasked to assess all the proposal submissions using the criteria and scoring system below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Criterion</strong></th>
<th><strong>Detail</strong></th>
<th><strong>Score</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Track record of applicant</td>
<td>Reflect on the past research and student training record</td>
<td>/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity and redress</td>
<td>Of applicant, and geographical location, institutional location, and equity of students/staff supervised</td>
<td>/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation for new equipment and infrastructure</td>
<td>Is the argument convincing with adequate justification?</td>
<td>/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human capital development</td>
<td>How well has the applicant demonstrated what the effect of the equipment/infrastructure acquisition will be on human capacity development in terms of: skills transfer, equity considerations, student training and transformation of the knowledge field(s) in general?</td>
<td>/20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientific merit</td>
<td>Does the proposal demonstrate evidence of multi-disciplinary scientific endeavour in the palaeosciences?</td>
<td>/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td>Has the applicant articulated the appropriateness and</td>
<td>/10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relevance of collaboration in the proposal? Has the applicant previously engaged in research collaborations which involve other research areas?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Project Plan and budget</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Comment on and assess the proposed project plan and the associated budget? Is the budget commensurate with the project plan?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Impacts</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on and evaluate the expected outputs as expressed in the proposal in terms of: - the research outputs - capacity development - impact on the field and broader society.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTAL SCORE:  /100

7. FORMAT OF THE CALL

Mandatory steps for applicants:

- All applicants are required to enter or update their CV's on the NRFonline system at http://nrfonline.nrf.ac.za. You can access the CV under Edit Detailed CV on the main menu. Please ensure that all sections under the Research Profile and Research Outputs are completed. This is a compulsory step and failure to do so will result in disqualification of the application.

- Applications must be converted to PDF format before submission to the institutional designated authority and finally the NRF. The NRF will ONLY consider applications that are in PDF format.

- Applicants will need to submit their application form to the recognized NRF Designated Authority at their institution before the internal closing date, as set by the institution; and in order to meet the NRF closing deadline.

- APPLICANTS ARE ADVISED THAT THESE GRANT AWARDS WILL BE MADE IN THE 2010/11 FINANCIAL YEAR

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8. ROLE OF THE DESIGNATED AUTHORITY

The Institutional Designated Authority will:

- Screen and approve the applications
- Generate a PDF of each application
- E-mail the application to:

  Ndileka Qamba at the NRF
  ndileka@nrf.ac.za
  Tel: (012) 481-4161

9. TIMEFRAMES

CALL OPENS: 24 February 2010
CALL CLOSES: 24 March 2010

EXPECTED OUTCOME AND GRANT AWARD NOTIFICATION: By 23 April 2010

10. ENQUIRIES

Any enquiries on the call may be directed to:

Candice Steele (candice@nrf.ac.za)
Lebusa Monyooe (Lebusa@nrf.ac.za)