UNIVERSITY OF THE **FREE STATE**
UNIVERSITEIT VAN DIE **VRYSTAAT**
YUNIVESITHI YA **FREISTATA**

Call for proposals: Italy/South Africa Joint Research Programme (ISARP) – Joint Collaborative Research Grants 2026

The Italy/South Africa Joint Research Programme (ISARP) Call for Proposals is now open on NRF Connect under the Research Grants category.

UFS internal closing date: 3 December 2026

Background:
The Italy-South Africa Joint Research Programme (ISARP**)** is a new call for proposals launched under the Scientific and Technological Cooperation Agreement between Italy and South Africa. The programme is jointly managed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI), the South African Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI), and the National Research Foundation (NRF).

The call invites researchers from both countries to submit proposals for **Joint Research Projects**, the available funding mechanism for this programme. The scheme is designed to support **bilateral collaborative research activities** involving Italian and South African research teams, with funding provided by both participating countries.

Priority research areas:

- **Frontier Digital Technologies and Data-Intensive Sciences**
  - Artificial intelligence (AI)
  - High-performance computing (HPC)
  - Quantum technologies
  - Astrophysics and radio astronomy
  - Emphasis is placed on AI applications that deliver societal benefits, including social development, community upliftment, and rural development solutions
- **Health, Biotechnologies, and One Health**
  - Medical, agricultural, industrial, environmental, and marine biotechnologies
  - Infectious diseases research
  - Pandemic prevention and preparedness
  - Vaccine development
  - Enabling and supporting technologies
  - A One Health approach, recognising the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health
- **Sustainability, Biodiversity, and Community Resilience**
  - Renewable energy technologies
  - Community-based energy solutions
  - Ecosystem protection and restoration
  - Sustainable wildlife management
  - Biodiversity monitoring and conservation
  - Climate resilience and adaptation
  - Circular economy approaches that promote sustainable resource use

Financial support:

The maximum budget for a project is R1,5 million (R500 000/year), including co-funding by the applying South African institution.

Duration of the projects:

Eligible proposals are collaborative Italy-South Africa research projects submitted jointly by partners from both countries, prepared in English, and designed to run for the entire three-year programme period from 2027 to 2029.

Research activities to be supported:

***South African Party**

The actual costs of travel – including airfares, accommodation, ground transport, subsistence and medical insurance – should be determined and calculated based on individual institutional travel policies and must be in line with the regulations in force in each country. No additional funding will be provided by the NRF under this programme, therefore South African researchers are expected to top up these funds should there be a need.

NRF-fundable items can include the following costs:

- Research-related costs (interviews, surveys, laboratory experiments, research-related trips)
- Small equipment
- Consumables
- Postdoctoral research support
- Mini research sabbaticals by young researchers
- Science engagement

****Please consult the attached framework for further information on eligibility criteria, exclusions, and the evaluation process.***

***For more information and assistance with proposal writing, please contact**:*

Thabi Mosoetsa (Mosoetsat@ufs.ac.za / +27 51 401 7708) – NRF Grants Coordinator
Sibusiso Lukhele (Lukheles1@ufs.ac.za) – Grant writing specialist
Mark Naidoo (Naidoom4@ufs.ac.za) – Manager: International Grants and Partnerships

Assistance with the budget:

Thato Molefi (MolefiTI@ufs.ac.za)
Sugandren Moodley (MoodleyS4@ufs.ac.za)