



**National
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MEMORANDUM

To: Designated Authorities of Eligible Research Institutions

From: Singathwa Mbangeni

Date: 24 August 2026

Subject: Announcement of Publication of the 2027 African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP) Marine Infrastructure-Linked Funding Instrument Call

Dear Designated Authorities

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this memorandum is to inform Designated Authorities (DAs) of the upcoming publication of the **2027 African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP) Marine Infrastructure-Linked Funding Instrument Call**, which will officially open for applications on 18 August 2026.

2. BACKGROUND

The African Coelacanth Ecosystem Programme (ACEP) is a flagship programme of the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) and the National Research Foundation (NRF). The programme supports multidisciplinary marine research along the east and southern coast of South Africa through competitive research funding linked to strategic marine research infrastructure. The 2027-2029 funding cycle aims to support research projects that require access to ACEP-supported platforms and infrastructure, including:

- Coastal Craft Fleet (RV Observer and RV Phakisa)
- Marine Remote Imagery Platform (MaRIP)
- Acoustic Tracking Array Platform (ATAP)
- Geophysics Mapping Platform (GeMaP)
- SAEON Sentinel Sites
- Airborne Remote Sensing Platform

Applications that do not require the use of ACEP-supported infrastructure will not be considered for funding.

3. IMPORTANT DATES

Activity	Date
Call Opens	24 August 2026
Applicant Closing Date	21 September 2026: UFS Internal Closing date
Designated Authority Submission Closing Date	Internal

Applications must be submitted electronically through the NRF Connect system at <https://nrfconnect.ac.za>.

4. ACTION REQUIRED

Designated Authorities are requested to:

1. Circulate the ACEP Call documentation within their institutions to eligible researchers.
2. Inform prospective applicants of institutional internal closing dates to ensure sufficient time for institutional review and endorsement.
3. Ensure that all applications submitted to the NRF have undergone the necessary institutional quality assurance and endorsement processes.
4. Submit endorsed applications before the NRF Designated Authority closing date of 13 October 2026.

Please note that incomplete, non-compliant, or late applications will not be considered.

5. ELIGIBILITY HIGHLIGHTS

Researchers applying to the call must:

- Be full-time salaried employees of NRF-recognised South African public research institutions.
- Conduct research aligned with the African Coelacanth Ecosystem geographical focus area.
- Demonstrate a clear requirement for ACEP-supported marine research infrastructure.
- Align proposed research with the objectives of the STI Decadal Plan and marine research priorities.

6. ENQUIRIES

University of the Free State: Research Office

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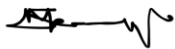
NRF Connect Technical Support

Support Desk
Tel: 012 481 4202
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7. CONCLUSION

Your support in disseminating this information and facilitating timely institutional endorsements is appreciated. The NRF looks forward to receiving high-quality applications that will advance marine science, human capacity development, and the strategic utilisation of South Africa's marine research infrastructure.

Kind regards



Singathwa Mbangeni
Professional Officer: Thematic Research Grants Unit