

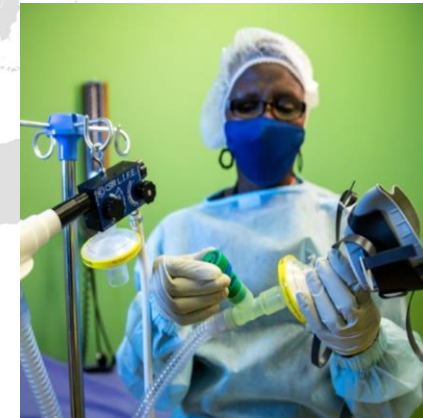


Embedding Engagement in a Research Framework



Date: 6 October 2022

'Science Communication for Societal Impact'
Online, 4-7 October 2022.



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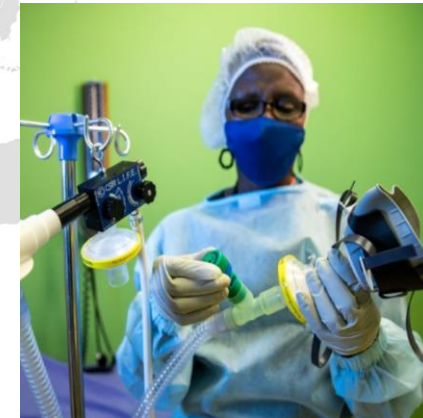


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The Open University defines engaged research as the following:

*Engaged research encompasses the **different ways that researchers meaningfully interact with various stakeholders over any or all stages of a research process, from issue formulation, the production or co-creation of new knowledge, to knowledge evaluation and dissemination.***

Irish Research Council uses the following definition for engaged research:

*Engaged research describes a wide range of **rigorous research approaches and methodologies** that share a common interest in **collaborative engagement** with the community and aim to **improve, understand or investigate** an issue of public interest or concern, including societal challenges. Engaged research is advanced **with** community partners rather than **for** them.*

The lexicon of engagement...

Open Science – efforts by researchers, governments, research funding agencies or the scientific community itself to make the primary outputs of publicly funded research results publicly accessible.

Science Engagement – includes all aspects of public engagement with science, science communication, science literacy and science outreach and awareness (DST, 2015). Public engagement describes the myriad of ways in which the activity and benefits of research can be shared with the public.

Community Engagement – the initiatives and processes through which the expertise of universities in the areas of teaching and research are applied to address issues relevant to one or more communities (adapted from CHE, 2010).

Engaged Scholarship – the application of academic scholarly work and professional expertise with an intended public purpose and mutual benefit.

The lexicon of engagement...

COMMUNITY –

Community refers to group of people with diverse characteristics who are **linked by social ties, share common perspectives** (MacQueen et al. 2001).

Community can include groups of people who range from a university's own staff and students to **communities of practice, civic organisations, industries, businesses, governments, schools, townships, and citizens at large** (CHE, 2010).

Journey towards an Engaged Research Framework

The legislative mandate of the NRF provides the broad national intent for **research that benefits society**, which this is supported by the articulation in a **more detailed and strategic framework to support the implementation and adoption** of Engaged Research.

The purpose of the NRF Engaged Research Framework:

- Outline NRF's strategic position on Engaged Research.
- Shape and position the implementation of NRF Engaged Research approaches within the context of the knowledge enterprise and in line with NRF Vision 2030, NRF Strategy 2025 and the NRF Impact Framework.
- Catalyse the development and promotion of growth of localised Engaged Research networks and capacity across the research ecosystem.

Development of an Engaged Research Narrative

- NRF 's support for embedding a more engaged research approach is in line with significant shifts over time, both **nationally and internationally**, in with regards to:
 - knowledge production,
 - the role(s) of the university as a public institution,
 - the nature of the relationship between science and society,
 - social responsiveness
 - and societal impact (among others).

South African Policy relating to Engaged Research

1997 Programme for the Transformation on Higher Education

Identified community engagement as one of the three key responsibilities of higher education

Towards becoming more “democratic, more responsive to community challenges, and conducive to partnership-building with a wide variety of stakeholders”

2002 Research and Development Strategy (DST) National Development Plan 2012

Focusing on scientific literacy for capacity development

Science need to be made “attractive, accessible and relevant through media, public engagement and promotional programmes” in order to transform the scientific workforce.

2015 Science Engagement Strategy (DST)

Focusing on scientific literacy and public understanding of science

To popularise SETI as **attractive, relevant and accessible** in order to enhance scientific literacy and awaken interest in relevant careers.
To develop a **critical public** that actively engages in the national discourse of S&T
To **promote science communication** to enhance science engagement
To **profile** South African science domestically and internationally

2018 NRF Amendment Act

2019 White Paper on STI (DSI)

Focusing on scientific literacy and introducing ‘science in society’

Scientific literacy - emphasis on science awareness and promoting critical thinking and debate
Science in society – Responsible Research and Innovation, ensuring “engagement of all societal actors throughout the process of framing societal challenges and developing joint solutions.”

National Research Foundation Vision 2030

Focusing on ‘science in society’, incorporating scientific literacy

‘Science in society’ - NRF is committed to engaged research for mutual benefit, where society participates in knowledge production.
Scientific literacy – acknowledging the role of critical discourse and a critically engaged public in the transformation of society

NRF Engaged Research Framework



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NRF Engaged Research: Principles

1



PRINCIPLE 1:

ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

Engaged Research is driven by the **active citizenship** of researchers and research institutions for the **common good** of humanity, through producing socially inclusive and robust knowledge that is **anticipatory, inclusive, responsive and reflexive** to the needs, challenges and aspirations of society. Unlocking this active citizenship of researchers and research institutions requires **integrated resourcing** and **capacity development** approaches.



NRF Engaged Research: Principles



PRINCIPLE 2

RECIPROCITY

Engaged Research approaches that are guided by principles of **reciprocity for mutual benefit**, genuine and **equal standing** amongst all actors, and pursuing a **knowledge co-production** approach that builds capacity and capability in communities along the research value chain, towards strengthening a knowledge democracy.

These principles are informed by a shared **philosophy of Ubuntu**, which incorporates the values of **trust, honesty, empathy and accountability**.



NRF Engaged Research: Principles



PRINCIPLE 3

TRANS- AND INTER-DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Engaged Research **encourages trans- and inter-disciplinary** knowledge production driven by researchers from diverse academic disciplines while also being cognisant of the need for **active transformation** towards inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development.

This will foster a **systematic, multi-perspective approach** that will enhance Engaged Research towards more impactful deliberations between researchers and communities.



NRF Engaged Research: Principles



PRINCIPLE 4

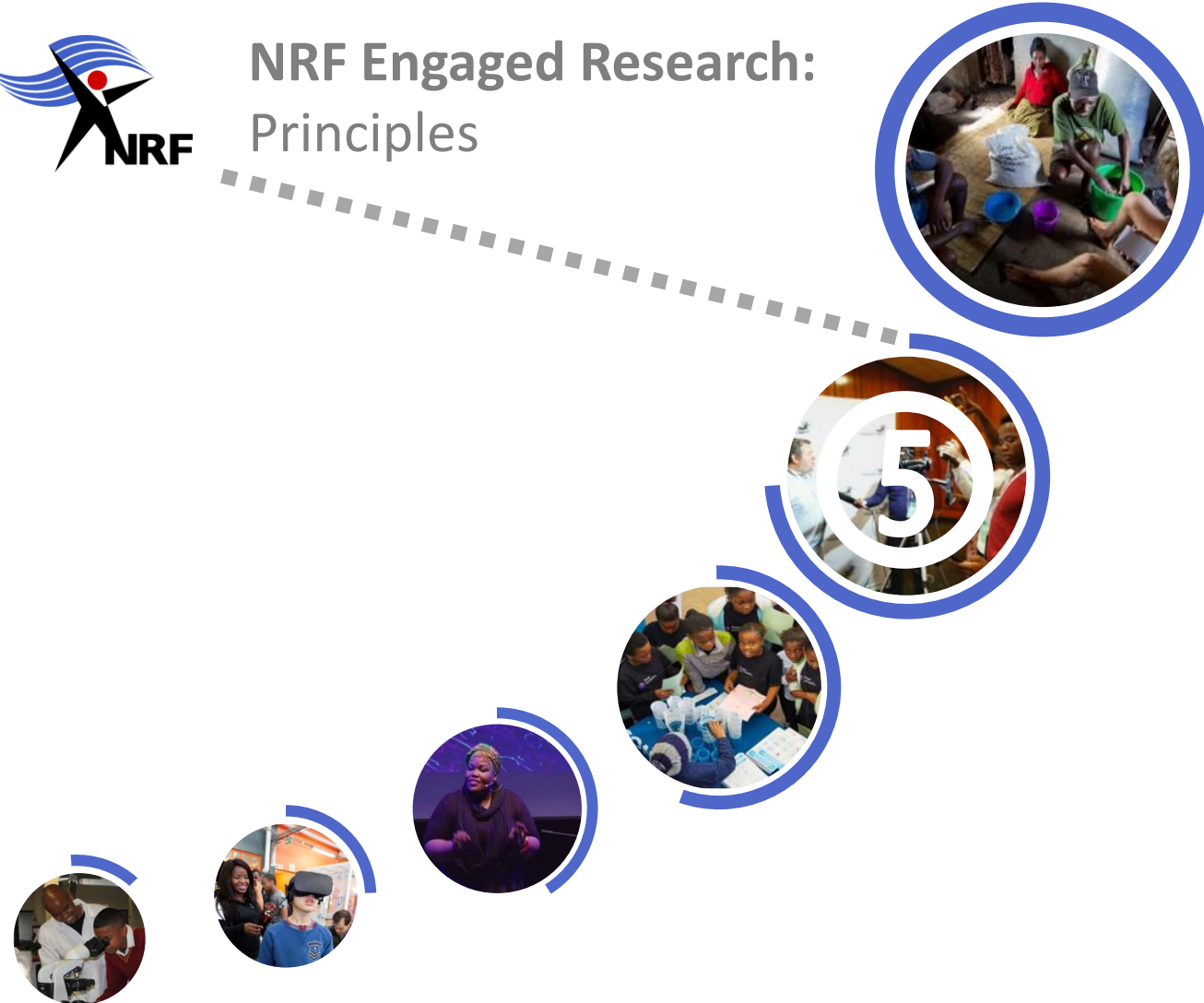
ETHICS AND SUSTAINABILITY

Engaged Research is governed by **ethical standards** that are applicable across academic disciplines, relevant to the social engagement processes throughout the research lifecycle, and act towards the intent of **beneficence (do good)** and **non-maleficence (do no harm)** within the interdependent dimensions of a triple bottom line, including **people, planet and profit**.

Engaged research seeks to ensure the sustained **longevity and transferability** across multiple contexts of the desired beneficial impact of research.



NRF Engaged Research: Principles



PRINCIPLE 5

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Engaged Research requires **relationship and partnership building** (initiated prior to research being conducted and is sustained downstream of knowledge production) over an **often-extended period** towards a long-term and **future oriented vision**.

Engaged Research requires capacity building throughout the **full research value chain**, which is retained as a basis of future engagement.

Implications of Engaged Research for the NRF

Ensuring policy and instrument coherence: Grant applications

- All research proposals include an explanation of the **degree to which** engaged research approaches will be adopted

Ensuring policy and instrument coherence: Funding instrument development

- Identify and **develop specific funding calls** with the explicit intent to support and embed engaged research.
- **Existing and future funding instruments** will be assessed to determine how engaged research approaches can be adopted and supported.
- Overall, **caution exercised** to prevent the development of grant frameworks that create inappropriate incentives for Engaged Research, which could potentially dilute or distort the processes of knowledge production and transfer.

Implications of Engaged Research for the NRF

Developing Engaged Research literacy: Knowledge sharing

- Co-create and **support a knowledge sharing network** for engaged research in South Africa
- The intention will be the **development of a common philosophical foundation and lexicon**, towards enhanced system-level literacy in and around Engaged Research

Implications of Engaged Research for the NRF

Introducing Engaged Research promoting rewards, incentives and recognition: Incentives and awards

- Consider the **modalities of incentives and awards** to acknowledge NRF funded researchers and community members who exhibit excellence and commitment to the principles and development of Engaged Research in South Africa.

Implications of Engaged Research for the NRF

Advancing research methodologies that promote Engaged Research: Skills development and training

- **Development of human capacity** to ensure that researchers, community members and other stakeholders are appropriately **motivated and skilled to contribute** willingly to the engagement process in an ethical and meaningful way.
- Support skills development and training of **NRF funded researchers and community/stakeholder**.

Implications of Engaged Research for the NRF

Introducing appropriate Engaged Research assessment: Reviews and evaluations

- Review process to include **specific assessment of engaged research** approaches to be adopted and the intended impact of such processes.
- **Adjustment of eligibility** for funding must be supported with changes to the research proposal review processes, including the reviewers being selected and briefed accordingly.
- **Societal representatives** who are able to contribute in a meaningful and relevant manner, and **researchers from across disciplines**, are to be involved in the assessment of research grant applications and in the design of the instruments for ex-post and ex-ante measurement of the societal impact of research being proposed.



In its Call to Action,
the **African Union's Agenda 2063** creates,
inter alia, a collective vision to:

- eradicate poverty;**
- to provide decent and **affordable housing;**
- to build **knowledge capabilities** and skills to drive innovations;
- to grow and **industrialise African** economies;
- to **modernise agriculture;**
- to **act on climate change;**
- and to establish **infrastructure to connect Africa.**

The NRF is responding to these aspirations through
harnessing **research capabilities** and adopting an **Engaged Research approach.**

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Any questions,
comments or thoughts?



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Group Discussion: Engaged Research Case Studies

- *Case Study 1: Regenerating Community Knowledge for Dispute Resolution in the South Africa Context*
- *Case Study 2: Community Oriented Substance Use Programme*
- *Case Study 3: A Child Centered Approach to Urban Resilience Research*
- *Case Study 4: Exploring educators' perceptions of their wellbeing in primary school contexts in a province in South Africa*

Group Discussion: Engaged Research Case Studies

- Discussion questions
 - How are (or aren't) the NRF Engaged Research principles evident in this research case study?
 - active citizenship, reciprocity, ethics, sustainability, relationship building and trans- and interdisciplinary knowledge production.
 - Are there additional, unforeseen or potentially more impactful engagement processes which could be used in similar research?
- Structure of the discussion
 - Select a rapporteur
 - Allow 5 minutes to individually read through the case study
 - Discuss the above two questions (for 10 minutes)
 - Provide feedback to the main group – starting with a brief case study overview



Thank you

