

THE UFS INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT FUND

Background

We wish to improve on the scale and scope of engagement between UFS staff and industry partners primarily:

- 1) To ensure that the research and academic outputs of the university are relevant and visible to industry and;
- 2) To increase the utilization of the excellent research facilities, and technical expertise that reside within the UFS by industrial clients through research contracts.

Development of university-industry collaboration needs to take a structured approach. As an academic institution we need to be clear about what are our strengths and our specific offerings. In short, we should have a value proposition for industry. However, a value proposition is not developed only based on our inherent capabilities, it is also based on whether those offerings resonate with the needs of industry. How we position our offerings in relation to the “pains” that industry is experiencing, is a key factor when a partner decides whether or not to work with us. A value proposition therefore takes time to develop and refine. It is built around intensive discussion and working together with those who require a product or service. At the start, a value proposition needs to have some flexibility without trying to be everything to everyone. When the value proposition is tested with key stakeholders, honest and critical feedback allows for the core elements to be refined. Having a clear value proposition is vital to ensuring the long-term sustainability of product and service offerings.

In order to enable deep and robust conversations with industrial role players on the value propositions that UFS can offer, the Directorate Research Development (DRD) has established a fund to support industry engagement.

Purpose of the Industry Engagement Fund

This fund is managed through the Office of the Vice Rector: Research and Internationalisation, Prof. Corli Witthuhn. This fund will help with the initial work of planning research collaborations between UFS and industry partners. It will allow for visits between UFS staff and industry partners to each other’s facilities. It may be used to organize workshops or site visits during which opportunities for collaborative research and further contract research could be discussed. The funds could also be used to showcase UFS infrastructure and services that industry partners may wish to access through research contracts. **This fund will not provide resources to conduct specific research in your field, it will however fund your engagement with stakeholders to take your research forward in the future.** We would expect an increase in research contracts from that particular industrial sector once your Industry Engagement Fund project is completed.

A value chain refers to the stages of production of a good, for example: raw material > refined material > intermediate goods > final products > distribution > wholesale/retail > end user/consumer.

In some cases, the fund may be used to develop pre-competitive research proposals for a particular industry value chain where a new technology/solution/industry standard may need to be implemented, but there is a need for collaboration and co-ordination in the value chain before difficult decisions can

be made. The role of facilitator or coordinator may best be played by objective academics and researchers in such circumstances. Pre-competitive research is difficult co-ordinate because the benefits would be felt differently throughout the value chain. However, it is vital that such work gets done to ensure upgrading of South African value chains. It is only experts in the field that would be able to influence competitors to become collaborators and invest in technology or other upgrades that could have long term benefits to all stakeholders. It is hoped that this fund will enable UFS staff to engage multiple industry partners across the target value chain and develop strategies to improve technological competitiveness in South Africa.

This is not an exhaustive list of activities, and UFS researchers may have specific interventions which they could propose and would be considered by the funding committee. Applications should include a note of support/interest from relevant industry partners if possible. The project can only last one year. These funds are not intended to execute complex projects, but rather to enable, gathering of information, planning and collaboration to initiate long term collaborative projects between UFS and industrial partners.

Who can apply?

Permanent and contract UFS academic and research staff, UFS post graduate students and UFS post-doctoral research fellows may apply for this fund. If this is a collaborative project the partners and their affiliations should be stated.

Budget

There is no maximum or minimum budget that is prescribed. The research team needs to develop an accurate budget for only one year with clear activities, deliverables/outputs and costs. Funds will be awarded on merit and availability. The budget should be realistic and take into account availability of key members of the team and the activities to be achieved. Funds will be transferred in two tranches. An upfront payment of 50% will be done. A mid-term review of the project will be conducted, and the remainder of the funds will only be transferred if significant progress has been achieved. The project may be terminated at the mid-point if adequate progress is not achieved.

This one-year project should be seen as part of a larger project. Whilst it is not necessary to present all the follow up activities, the application should give the reviewers some insight to the future work and potential impact.

Application Process and Timeframes

Please complete the Application Form for the Industry Engagement Fund on RIMS
<https://rims.ufs.ac.za/Proposal/PD/ProposalCustomCreate.asp?System=PD>

Applications must be submitted by 1 August 2022.

- Projects will be screened and follow up questions may be sent to applicants during August 2022.
- The evaluation panel will make a decision by the end of September 2022.
- Project plans will be finalised by October 2022.
- Projects will be implemented from 1 November 2022 – 31 October 2023.
- Quarterly meetings will be held to discuss project progress.

- A mid-term review will take place in April 2023.
- A final report will be due in November 2023.

Eligible Activities and Support

- Funds should be used in South Africa or Southern Africa.
- Costs associated with organising workshops including appointment of a facilitator and report development.
- Costs associated with travel and accommodation for meeting with industry partners.
- Purchasing of market research reports or other materials that may not be available through current library resources.
- Contracting a consultant to conduct specialized assessments.
- Development of marketing plans or marketing material.
- Opportunities that ultimately involve technology development, customization, localization, enhancement and upgrading of industrial value chains will be prioritized.
- The DRD will also provide non-financial support to participants in this programme. It may include mentorship, training, or other assistance to enable successful completion of the project.

Activities that will not be funded

- Early-stage research activities
- Equipment
- Attendance of academic conferences

Evaluation Criteria

Applications will be evaluated on:

- Overall quality of the content and presentation of the submission
- Skills available within the proposed team to implement the proposed activities
- Feasibility of the proposed activities within the available timeframes
- The long-term vision and potential impact of the project
- Clarity and alignment of the budget to the objectives of the project
- Value for money

All inquiries are welcomed and should be addressed to Ravini Moodley (Moodleyr5@ufs.ac.za).

A briefing session will be held on 19 July 12:00-13:00 on MS Teams

https://teams.microsoft.com/l/meetup-join/19%3ameeting_Nzg0NjUxZDctZGYyMS00YTg5LWJjMDItOWVlYzQ1MmExZThi%40thread.v2/0?content=%7b%22id%22%3a%228efc1bb9-b90f-4a48-bf6c-ba0686193b80%22%2c%22oid%22%3a%221c2ece07-4be1-4196-b5af-09f0af906626%22%7d

RSVP to Thabi Mosoetsa - MosoetsaT@ufs.ac.za by 15 July 2022.