



Call for proposals (CFP)

REGIONAL INNOVATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME (RISP)

Ref No. RISP/RIS10/2026

Date of Issue	Monday, 16 March 2026	
Closing Date	Thursday 30 April 2026	
Place	To: GMANDLA@CSIR.CO.ZA cc: NMASHAMAITE@CSIR.CO.ZA	
Enquiries	Nare Mashamaite	E-mail: NMASHAMAITE@CSIR.CO.ZA
Briefing session (Compulsory)	1 April 2026	
	Venue: Virtually on Microsoft Team	Time: 10:H00 am
	Please contact GMANDLA@CSIR.CO.ZA for the meeting link.	



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) aims to strengthen and advance South Africa's national innovation system through a range of initiatives. These initiatives are designed to equip citizens with the skills and knowledge necessary to engage meaningfully in the knowledge economy. These efforts support government's broader objective of transforming the economy into an inclusive, globally competitive and industrialised nation.

The National Development Plan (NDP) outlines a long-term development trajectory towards a prosperous and inclusive economy, characterised by high levels of innovation-driven growth, employment creation, and social equity. Aligned with the NDP, the White Paper on Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) sets out the national STI agenda, which has been translated into a concrete implementation plan through the STI Decadal Plan.

Concerted efforts are ongoing to strengthen collaboration among multi-helix partners, with the aim of building a resilient and dynamic National System of Innovation (NSI). These efforts have played a key role in shaping regional innovation systems. The Regional Innovation Support Programme (RISP) was established by the DSTI as a strategic policy intervention to facilitate regional innovation support, with a particular focus on strengthening these subnational innovation systems.

Over the past eight years, the RISP, implemented through a Programme Management Unit (PMU) hosted by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has partnered with regional stakeholders to actively support the implementation of initiatives that enable innovation at the subnational level.

1.2 RISP Programme Management Unit

The RISP PMU provides the following interventions (elements of support) to strengthen and support subnational innovation systems:

1. Regional Innovation Networking Platform

Aimed at establishing Platforms to **bring together** research & development, innovation communities, technology SMMEs, industry and government **to establish an innovation enabling ecosystem** that could also support socio-economic development through innovation.

2. Feasibility study and/or business plan support

Aimed at facilitating planning and establishment of **innovation enabling mechanisms** such as Science and Technology Parks, Techno Parks, Innovation Hubs and other similar concepts in the regions, with the aim of strengthening/expanding RISs.

Each of these elements of support is primarily aimed at expanding South Africa's spatial innovation footprint, fostering multi-helix partnerships at the subnational level to enable systematic innovation,

and enhancing inclusivity within the National System of Innovation (NSI), as outlined in the White Paper on STI and the STI Decadal Plan. RISP initiatives also contribute to the implementation of government policies and strategies, including the NDP and relevant regional development plans.

2 CALL FOR PROPOSALS

Proposals for grant funding are invited for the following two distinct and independent elements within the RISP:

- A. **Regional Innovation Networking Platforms (RINPs)** Regional Innovation Networking Platforms (RINPs) are aimed at establishing networking platforms that bring together research, development, and innovation communities, technology SMMEs, industry, and government to foster innovation at regional (subnational) level.
- B. **Feasibility studies and/or business plans** support for innovation enabling mechanisms such as:
 - a. Science and Technology Parks, Techno Parks, Innovation Hubs, Tech Hubs or other similar concepts.
 - b. Other innovation enabling mechanisms and initiatives.

Applications from, or in concrete partnership with, provincial and local government entities and or Higher education institutions are strongly encouraged. The successful consortia will work closely with the **RISP PMU** as the implementing agency for the RISP on behalf of DSTI.

It must be noted that the RISP is NOT a business incubation programme, and will therefore not support business incubation or acceleration programmes and activities, especially if these proposals are exclusively aimed at general business incubation services.

3 PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND TIMELINES

All proposals must be submitted to the following email address: GMANDLA@CSIR.CO.ZA cc: NMASHAMAITE@CSIR.CO.ZA.

The Call for Proposal timelines, as currently envisaged, incorporates the following key dates:

- Call for Proposal (publication): 16 March 2026
- Closing / submission Date: 30 April 2026
- Compulsory Briefing Session: 1 April 2026

4 PROPOSAL SPECIFICATION

All proposals must be submitted according to the format specified (**see the PROPOSAL TEMPLATE/01**) in the CFP. However, applicants are welcome to submit additional documents to support their project proposal.

Accordingly, the proposal must include either one of the elements of support outlined below. ***(if you are planning to submit a proposal for more than one intervention, please submit separate proposals for each proposed intervention)***:

4.1 Regional Innovation Networking Platforms (RINPs)

Regional Innovation Networking Platforms (RINPs) are aimed at enabling innovation at subnational (regional) levels and to strengthen regional/rural innovation systems. They function as well-structured and organised **networking and collaboration physical platforms** that bring together research, development, innovation communities/civil society, technology SMMEs, industry and government, to implement effective capacity-building programmes, and facilitate access to innovation support services, information, and knowledge for tech SMMEs and innovators. The impact of these platforms includes the development of technological capabilities and innovation pipelines in the regions, with tech SMMEs and innovators as the primary beneficiaries. Focusing on designated geographical areas (i.e. subnational level), these platforms take advantage of their spatial closeness of different innovation actors (with complementary knowledge and resources) and create a favourable environment for:

- Harnessing Science, Technology & Innovation (STI) for socio-economic development.
- Promoting, supporting and mentoring technology-based technology SMMEs through implementation of innovation-driven activities.
- Initiating and implementing prospective innovation driven projects, programmes and initiatives directed at spurring their regional economies, industrialisation, regional capacity development and creation of job opportunities.
- Enabling innovation, including capacitating stakeholders with respect to innovation.
- Promoting inclusive economic growth.

The Proposal must clearly articulate how the following **RISP Minimum Requirements** for Regional Innovation Networking Platforms will be met:

1. **Mechanisms for meaningful participation of previously disadvantaged individuals (i.e. black owned technology SMMEs, small businesses owned by females and people living with disabilities) as well as young people.**
2. **Co-funding contribution (in cash) from local or regional partner(s) to support the operations and activities of the Platform. There must already be a written firm confirmation of this contribution.**
3. **Structured and relevant Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) capacity buildings programmes (e.g. technical training, innovation related interventions, networking events/forums, mentorship programmes, workshops etc.) aimed at enabling improved innovation driven industrial competitiveness. Financial support will not cover the cost**

of international conferences and traveling, as well as business incubation activities or general SMME development services (such as financial management, accounting, human resources, customer care, report writing, business writing skills etc.)

- 4. Support mechanisms for improved innovation partnership deals (e.g. access to information, business strategy, legal/IP templates, funding proposals etc.).**

The proposal must comprehensively explain how the innovation networking platform will implement activities in alignment with each of the minimum requirements outlined above. In addition, the proposal must also articulate the following:

5. Situational Assessment (relevant to innovation).
6. The platform's location and operational boundaries (please note the RINP support will be directed at a specific subnational location(s) (region(s)) within South Africa.
7. Mechanisms for meaningful participation of knowledge partners (innovators, universities, science councils, STI institutions etc.), government (provincial/local), innovation communities (civil society) and industry.
8. Demonstrate support towards, and development of, the key economic sectors of the location, taking into account social impact and new areas of growth.
9. Demonstrate alignment, linkages and awareness to Provincial and Local development plans and strategies.
10. Promote partnerships and collaborations, including securing co-funding.
11. The proposal must map out the various regional stakeholders to constitute the Platform Steering Committee and the Lead Institution (applicant and the Platform host). This must include contributions and responsibilities (financial or/and non-financial) of each stakeholder, accompanied by a signed letter of support and commitment. **Please note that the DSTI and RISP PMU will participate in the Platform Steering Committees.**
12. The proposal must outline how the applicant's initiative would leverage the relevant innovation mechanisms and instruments.
13. A detailed budget breakdown must be submitted by the applicant, including sources and nature of co-funding contributions and its related expenses.

It is essential that the proposals specify how the platforms will address the highlighted minimum requirements. Please note that this will be a two-year contract. The proposal must clearly outline the planned activities and interventions, as well as the associated financial requirements for both Year 1 and Year 2. Funding for the second year will be dependent on availability of funds, satisfactory overall progress and approval of progress reports and a business plan, culminating in concrete collaborative projects between relevant stakeholders.

Applicants from previously underserved regions in KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Free State are encouraged to submit proposals. Existing Science and Technology Parks, Techno Parks, Innovation Hubs, Tech Hubs, Innovation Centres etc., are particularly encouraged to apply for this element of support.

The proposal, covering a two-year implementation period, must not exceed 20 pages, excluding appendices.

4.2 Feasibility study or business plan support for science and technology parks, techno parks, innovation hubs or other innovation enabling mechanisms:

Innovation enabling mechanisms (such as technology incubators, science and technology parks, techno parks, innovation hubs etc.) are aimed at facilitating the flow of knowledge and technology amongst universities, R&D institutions, companies (including technology SMMEs) and markets, while also strengthening regional innovation ecosystems.

The following are **RISP Minimum Requirements** for feasibility study or business plan support for technology incubators, science parks or other innovation enabling mechanisms:

- 1. The proposal must demonstrate linkages and synergies to relevant development plans (3 spheres of Government) such as provincial plans and Municipal IDPs.**
- 2. Applicants must submit evidence of firm commitment from key regional institutions or stakeholders (e.g. Provincial/local government and institutions, private business etc.) to implement the business plan/outcome of the feasibility study if shown to be feasible.**
- 3. Applicants must also submit evidence of co-funding contribution(s) (in cash) from local or regional partner(s) to support the feasibility study or the development of a business plan. There must already be a written firm confirmation/letter of this contribution. In the event that the proposal is approved, evidence of the co-funding will be required prior to final signature of the contract with the RISP PMU**
- 4. A detailed budget breakdown must be submitted by the applicant, including sources of co-funding and its related expenses.**

The proposal must clearly and comprehensively demonstrate compliance with the minimum requirements outlined above. In addition, the proposal must articulate the following requirements of the relevant facility:

1. Meaningful participation of relevant provincial or local government authority (preference will be given to secured funding contributions).
2. Mechanisms required for supporting science, technology and innovation related entrepreneurship and incubation.
3. Mechanisms for meaningful participation of Black-owned technology SMMEs, including businesses owned by young people, females and people living with disabilities.
4. Inclusivity and relevance to South Africa's (and region's) developmental context.
5. Demonstrate strong linkages with local universities, science councils and/or other STI institutions.
6. Promote partnerships and collaborations, including securing co-funding.
7. International (and local) benchmarking and best practice with focus on (but not limited to):
 - Relevant Incentives, where they exist and are applicable.
 - Offerings, product and services.
 - The role of key actors.

- Lessons learnt and challenges.
- 8. Identification of potential sectors, products and services.
- 9. The proposal should outline how the applicant's initiative would leverage the relevant innovation mechanisms and instruments.
- 10. The proposal must map out stakeholders to constitute the Project Steering Committee (consisting of various regional stakeholders) and Lead Institution (applicant and the Project Lead). This must include contributions and responsibilities (financial or/and non-financial) of each stakeholder, accompanied by a signed letter of support and commitment. **Please note that the DSTI and RISP PMU will participate in the Project Steering Committees.**

The proposal must not exceed 20 pages (excluding appendices)

5 ELIMINATION CRITERIA

Proposals will be eliminated under the following conditions:

- Proposals that do not meet the **RISP Minimum Requirements** of the CFP will be eliminated. *Applicants are therefore strongly advised to familiarise themselves with the **RISP Minimum Requirements** and fully understand all the requirements before writing or submitting their proposals.*
 - With respect to the co-funding requirement, please note that co-funding must not be used to fund the same activities funded by other funders (double dipping). The co-funding must be for additional activities related to RISP (i.e., there must be additionality).
- Proposals that exceed R1 million (including VAT), **unless there is clear evidence of how the amount in excess of the upper limits will be covered by the applicant or through other sources of funding.**
- Submission after the deadline.
- Proposals submitted at incorrect address.
- Proposals that do not comply with the specified format (**PROPOSAL TEMPLATE/01**) in the CFP. Please note that this template comprises the layout for proposals for Regional Innovation Networking Platforms and Feasibility Study/Business Plan support.
- **Applicants who did not attend the compulsory briefing session will not be eligible to submit a proposal.**

6 EXCLUSIONS

- Funding received from DSTI or its agencies or any programme, initiative or project funded by the Department cannot be used to meet the co-funding requirements of the proposals.
- The cost of international travel (including accommodation, medical costs and S&T).
- Funding for general business activities and interventions (business support, marketing, accounting, financial management etc.)
- Funding for business **incubation activities/interventions.**
- Funding for any form of office infrastructure, furniture, equipment, software packages and machinery.

- Implementation of business plans for science parks, techno parks, innovation hubs, or other innovation enabling mechanisms (e.g. operations, infrastructure funding, machinery and equipment, office equipment, salaries etc.). The *RISP grant will only cover the cost of conducting feasibility studies and business plans.*
- Support for feasibility studies and business plans for business incubators.
- Support for techno-economic feasibility studies for implementation of particular technologies, or technology solutions.
- Funding for motor vehicles.
- Funding for non-technological activities.
- Funding for construction work, purchase of building, office rental and related items.
- IP protection costs for individual businesses/innovators

7 SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

- 7.1 Proposals of **no more than 20 pages** (including appendices) must be electronically emailed to GMANDLA@CSIR.CO.ZA and cc NMASHAMAITE@CSIR.CO.ZA. Hard copies will not be accepted. The CPF Ref Number: RISP/RIS10/2026 must be quoted on the subject line.
- 7.2 Proposals submitted by companies must be signed by a person or persons duly authorised and by the lead consortium member where applicable.
- 7.3 The CSIR will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with applicants whose proposals are determined to be aligned with the programme's objectives, taking into consideration **RISP minimum requirements**.
- 6.4 An electronic copy (email) of each proposal (all pages/documents must be in one PDF and size must be less than 10MB) must be submitted to: GMANDLA@CSIR.CO.ZA and cc NMASHAMAITE@CSIR.CO.ZA.
- 7.4 It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the electronic pack is in **one printable and PDF version**. RISP PMU will not be responsible for consolidating any document. Exception will be on financial document in excel.
- 7.5 All applicants must be tax compliant (proof must be provided).
- 7.6 Applicants may not use the CSIR, DSTI, or RISP logos in their proposals.

8 DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION

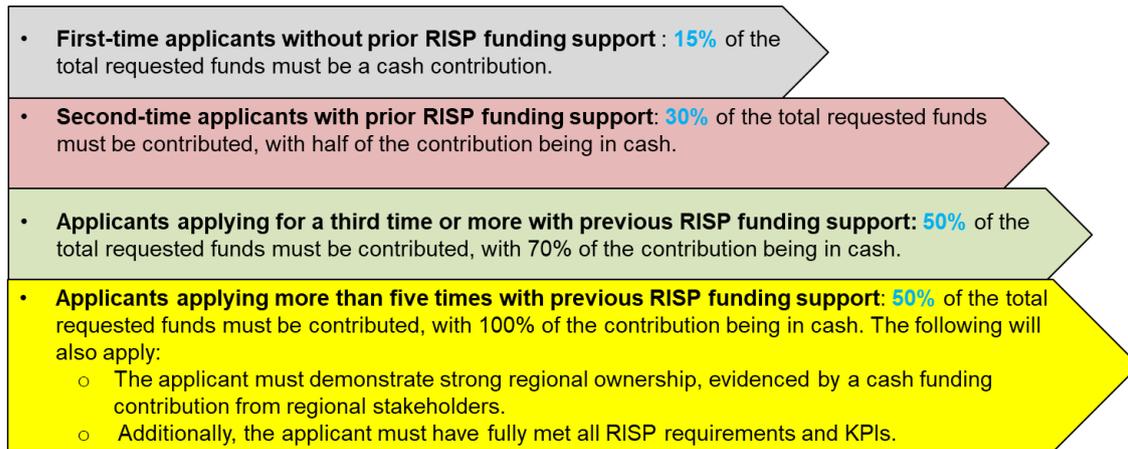
Proposals shall be submitted on the above-mentioned email address by no later than **30 April 2026**

Where a proposal is not received by the CSIR/RISP PMU by the due date and at the specified email address, it will be regarded as late and will therefore **not** be considered.

9 MAXIMUM GRANT SUPPORT

9.1 The RISP grant support

The RISP grant (i.e. the total amount requested from the RISP.) will not exceed R1 million (including VAT) per proposal for Feasibility Studies and Regional Innovation Networking Platforms. A detailed budget breakdown must be submitted by the applicant, including sources of co-funding and its related expenses. Please refer to the following RISP sliding scale to determine the minimum required co-funding contribution.



9.2 Project management and administration costs

- The management fee will be capped at 15% of the overall budget, calculated using the following formula:
 - Project Management Fee = Total Cost of all Innovation Support Activities (i.e. only the amount requested from the RISP.) × 15%.
 - Please note that if your proposal is eligible for funding and the project management fee exceeds 15% of the total requested funds from RISP, the project management fee will be adjusted down to the allowable maximum of 15%.
- Administrative and related costs (limited to stationery), for Regional Innovation Networking Platforms will be limited to a combined total of R5,000. (Such costs will not be covered for feasibility studies and business plan development).
- Logistics costs, including travel, accommodation, and related expenses for personnel involved in the initiative, will be capped at a combined total of R30,000 for Regional Innovation Networking Platforms and R20,000 for feasibility studies and business plan.

Project management and administration costs must be included in the total funds (i.e. Budget) requested from the RISP.

10 EVALUATION PROCESS

An evaluation panel will assess the proposals. Based on the results of the evaluation process, the CSIR / DSTI will approve the awarding of the contract to the successful applicant(s).

The **applicant** must prepare for a possible presentation should CSIR/RISP PMU/DSTI require such, in which case, the **applicant** shall be notified timeously.

Please Note: If you have not heard anything from us within 12 weeks of the closing date, please consider your application unsuccessful.

11 APPOINTMENT OF SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT

11.1 The contract will be awarded to the applicant(s) who is recommended and supported via the evaluation process.

11.2 Successful appointment as a lead institution shall be subject to the parties agreeing to mutually acceptable contractual terms and conditions. In the event of the parties failing to reach such agreement within a mutually agreed date after the provisional appointment date, the RISP PMU/DSTI reserves the right to appoint or not appoint an alternative entity, or consortium.

11.3 It must be clear at the proposal submission stage which entity will enter into the contractual agreement.

12 ENQUIRIES AND CONTACT WITH THE RISP PMU

Any enquiry regarding this CFP shall be submitted in writing to: NMASHAMAITE@CSIR.CO.ZA (cc: GMANDLA@CSIR.CO.ZA) with “CFP No RISP/RIS10/2026” Regional Innovation Support Programme (RISP)” as the subject.

Applicants are advised to peruse the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) (attached) for clarification on various aspects of the RISP.

13 MEDIUM OF COMMUNICATION

All documentation submitted in response to this CFP must be typewritten in English, unless otherwise indicated.

14 COST OF PROPOSAL

Applicants are expected to fully acquaint themselves with the conditions, requirements and specifications of this CFP before submitting proposals.

Each applicant assumes all risks for resource commitment and expenses, direct or indirect, of proposal preparation and participation throughout the CFP process. The CSIR and DSTI are not responsible for any costs, directly or indirectly, incurred by applicants.

15 CORRECTNESS OF RESPONSES

- 15.1** The applicant furthermore confirms their satisfaction regarding the correctness and validity of their proposal and that all prices and rates quoted cover all the work/items specified in the CFP, and that prices and rates quoted cover all obligations under any resulting contract.
- 15.2** The applicant accepts that any mistakes regarding prices and calculations will be at their own risk.

16 CSIR and DSTI RESERVE THE RIGHT TO

- 16.1** Extend the closing date,
- 16.2** Request additional documentary evidence regarding the proposal or any issue,
- 16.3** Appoint one or more entities, separately or jointly (whether or not they submitted a joint proposal),
- 16.4** Award this CFP as a whole or in part, or not at all, and
- 16.5** Cancel or withdraw this CFP as a whole or in part.

17 DISCLAIMER

This CFP is a request for proposals only and not an offer document; answers to it must not be construed as acceptance of an offer or imply the existence of a contract between the parties. By submission of its proposal, applicants shall be deemed to have satisfied themselves with and to have accepted all Terms & Conditions of this CFP. The CSIR/DSTI makes no representation, warranty, assurance, guarantee or endorsements to applicant concerning the CFP, whether with regard to its accuracy, completeness or otherwise and the CSIR/DSTI shall have no liability towards the applicant or any other party in connection therewith.