



# The Emerging Researcher Acceleration Programme Doctoral Support Call

Highly skilled individuals are key to enabling faster and more effective development and deployment of context-appropriate solutions to water sector challenges. Given this need, the Water Research Commission (WRC) Strategic Plan (2023/24 -2027/28) has, amongst others, an explicit focus on capacity development for the water sector (Outcome 4). Given the WRC organisational mandate to work within the water system of innovation, one of the main capacity development priorities is to nurture the emerging research and innovation pipeline that supports long term water security.

Similarly, the Department of Science and Innovation, through its Decadal Plan priorities and strategic investment into the National Water RDI Roadmap, has a priority around investing into emerging researchers in the water sector.

This strategic synergy has resulted in a partnership emerging between DSI and WRC to support the emerging researcher pipeline in the water sector. In 2024/25 DSI and WRC have made funding available to support doctoral students in topics that are aligned the WRC strategic plan, and also the themes of the National Water RDI Roadmap.

The WRC thematic focal areas **are**:

1. Water availability
2. Water use
3. Water quality and health

In the 2024/25 emerging researchers call we will particularly be on the look-out for exciting topics that speak to subthemes related to groundwater management, data and analytics, governance and policy, sanitation and water quality. We will also be prioritizing strong applications from hydrology, data science, and engineering disciplines.

The Water RDI **Roadmap** focuses on:

1. Unlocking alternative sources of water
2. Governance, planning and management of supply
3. Improving adequacy and performance of infrastructure (built and ecological)
4. Financially sustainable “business” approaches for improving operational performance
5. Governance, planning and management of demand
6. Reducing losses and increasing efficiency of productive use
7. Improving monitoring and metering

***For those interesting in applying for funding to support doctoral students, the following should be noted:***

- Applications need to be completed by the supervisor, working in conjunction with the student they wish to appoint. Any university or science council employed supervisors may apply.
- Funding will be for candidates starting their studies in January 2025.
- This call is open to support emerging researchers, defined as “someone who wishes to pursue a career in research and innovation and has not yet established themselves as a full academic. These candidates should also be under 40 years old, undertaking or within 5 years of completing a masters or Ph.D.”
- Funding levels and duration: PhD Students will be supported for a maximum of 3 years, R 120 000 per year
- In this call we welcome applications that are aligned to the WRC thematic priorities and Water RDI Roadmap clusters (summarised above). Note the areas that we are particularly interested in, described above.
- South African candidates from previously disadvantaged race, gender groups and institutions will be given priority in this call.
- Application details and contacts:
  - To apply, use this **link**: [Doctoral Student Support](#)
  - Closing date for applications: 11 December 2024

For enquiries, please contact: Sarah Ravhudzulo, Water RDI Roadmap Coordinator: [Sarahr@wrc.org.za](mailto:Sarahr@wrc.org.za) or Shanna Nienaber, RDI Programme Manager [Shannan@wrc.org.za](mailto:Shannan@wrc.org.za)

***We look forward to receiving your applications!***