GENUS

DSI-NRF CoE Palaeo

Tips for Creating a Winning Grant Application

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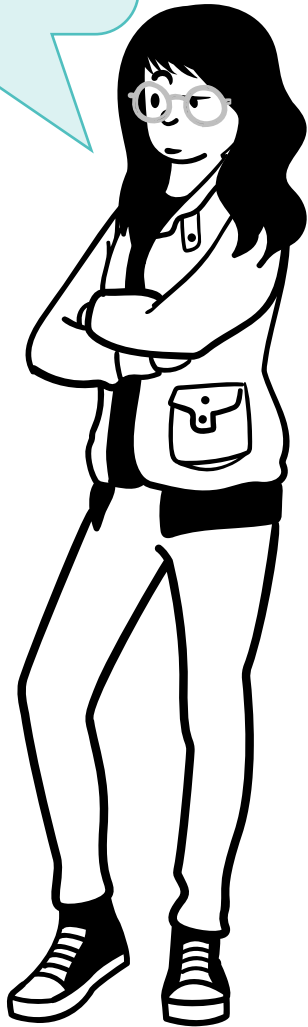
Genus's Manifesto Video

Important questions to ask before you start -

1. **WHO** and **WHERE** to ask (don't just *wish*...)

2. **WHEN** to apply

3. **WHAT** to apply for and **WHY**

4. **HOW** to apply

WHO to ask for funding

1. Supervisor
2. Postgraduate Coordinator/university representative
3. Head of Department
4. Universities (financial aid, scholarship administration, research office)
5. Friends and colleagues
6. The internet!
   - Government agencies (i.e., Dept of Science and Innovation, Dept of Sports, Arts, & Culture)
   - Non-profits (NGO, PBO)
   - Organisations, companies, and embassies that supply funding for specific groups
   - Social Media (particularly Twitter and LinkedIn)

To: Prof T. Rex

Good day,

I want funding, please help me.

Thank you,

A good student

Avoid writing vague emails like these!
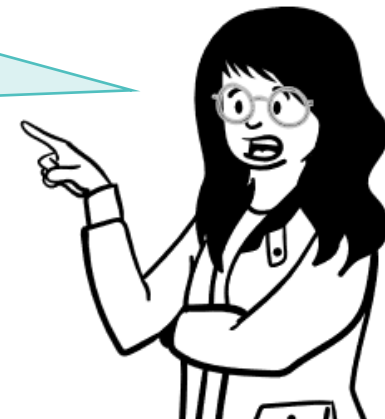
WHO to ask for funding

Composing an email to a funder:

1. Give details!
   - Name
   - The university that you are attending or would like to attend
   - Why are you applying for this grant? Funders are looking to see if you have done homework on their organisation
   - What is your interested in a particular field or research question
   - How to contact you (e.g., email or cell number)
   - Be polite!

Good communication is key!

Good day, Prof Rex,

My name is Agnes Nkosi, and I am an honours student in palaeontology attending the University of the Witwatersrand. My study looks at brain size in ancient rodents, to understand decision-making in modern rodents. I think my study aligns closely with your Institute's research on the basic skull morphology of tetrapods. I was hoping you could point me to any relevant funding I could apply for.

Please let me know at agnes@wits.students.com if you are aware of any such opportunities.

I appreciate your assistance,

Agnes

This is a good email!
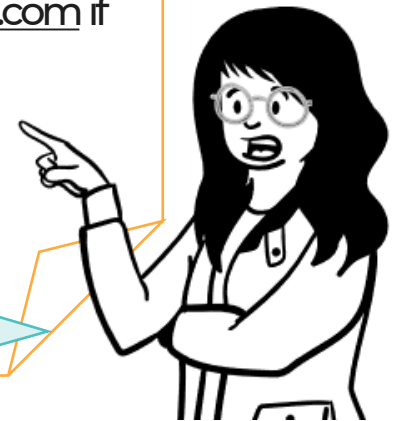
- Know your research topic and see how it can fit into other related topics. Don't think laterally, think more broadly for connections

- Look widely for grants, not just in your specific field

- Take opportunities when they present themselves and build your connections

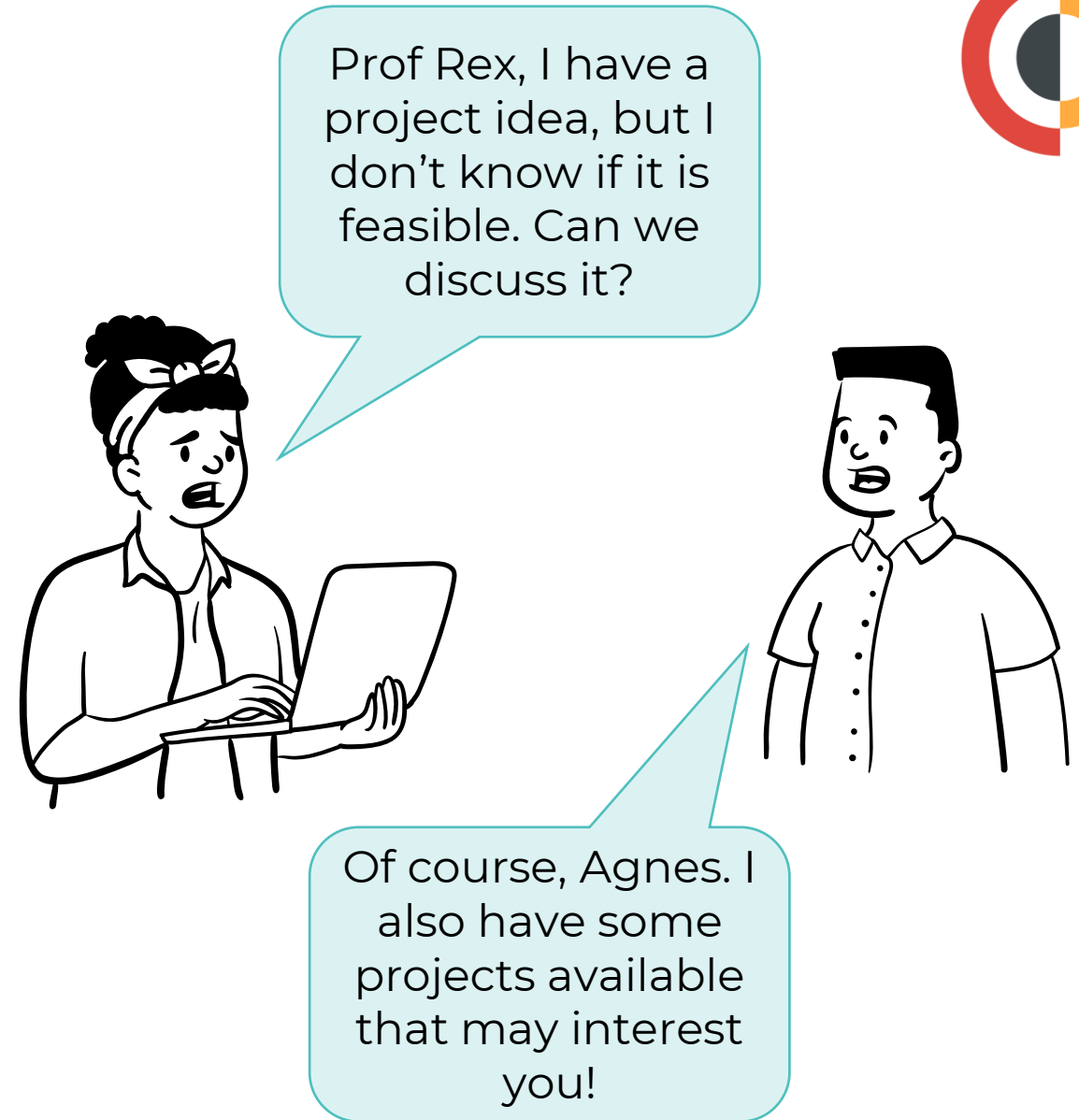You never know when a conversation will turn into an opportunity!

Helpful Hints

WHEN to apply

When should you apply for funding?

1. First, talk to your supervisor or potential supervisor!

Now that you have done your homework on the various funding options available:

1. Make a list of possible funding options you can apply for
2. List the opening and closing dates for each
3. Make sure that you are eligible to apply
4. Do you know what type of research the grant supports?

Prof Rex, I have a project idea, but I don't know if it is feasible. Can we discuss it?

Of course, Agnes. I also have some projects available that may interest you!

WHAT to apply for

All funders have funding guides, which provide:

1. **What you can apply for.** Depending on the type of grant, you can apply for:
   - Scholarship/bursary (usually covers University fees and living costs)
   - Computer/laptops
   - Lab & field costs
   - Conferences
   - Equipment
2. Who is eligible
3. Helpful tips for completing your application
4. What is the focus or theme of the funding body
5. What is required from the funder if you receive a grant
6. How your application will be assessed
7. Application deadline
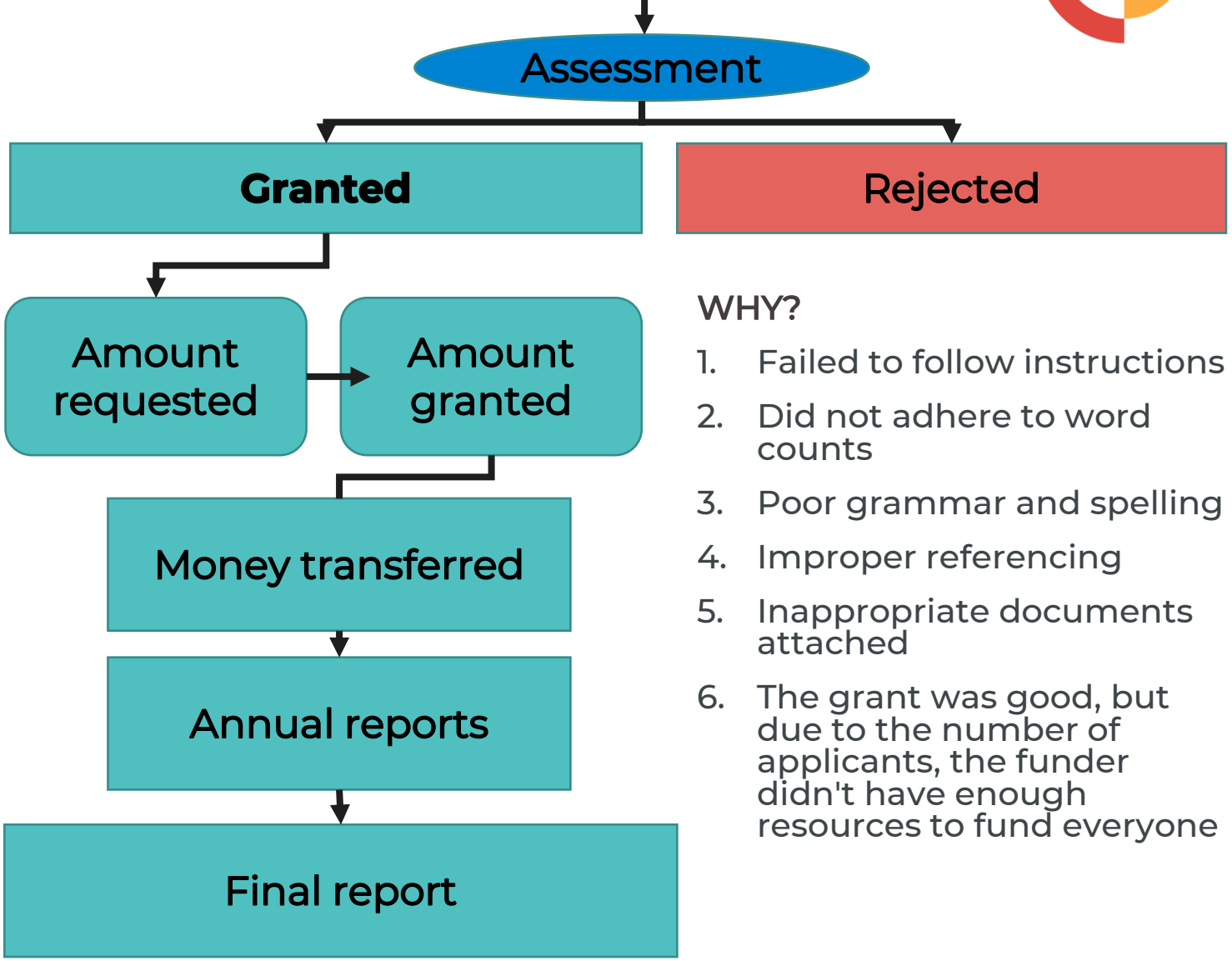8. Details for a contact person if you have questions

Does my research align with the grant call? Should I apply? Ask yourself these questions first!

Have you researched your topic well?

- Is your literature review comprehensive?
- Why are you doing this research?
- Do you have a null hypothesis & alternative hypothesis?
- Are your aims and objectives clearly defined?
- Do you know what materials you are looking at & what methods you are using?
- Do you have a plan of action?

Yes!

Application submitted

Assessment

Granted

Rejected

Amount requested → Amount granted

Money transferred

Annual reports

Final report

WHY?

1. Failed to follow instructions
2. Did not adhere to word counts
3. Poor grammar and spelling
4. Improper referencing
5. Inappropriate documents attached
6. The grant was good, but due to the number of applicants, the funder didn't have enough resources to fund everyone

Remember...

HOW to apply

1. ALWAYS follow application guidelines

2. Prepare your application sections in advance on a Word document – remember, good applications take time to write!

3. The sections that may be required in an application:
   - Title
   - Abstract
   - Rationale
   - Problem statement
   - Aims & Objectives
   - Materials & Methods
   - Research Plan
   - References
   - Expected outputs
   - Science Engagement
   - Budget
   - Referees

Helpful Hints

Although this is usually how you structure your application, they are not always written in this order, as you will see in the next few slides!

Writing a grant proposal is like building a house

Remember: **It takes a least [two-months](#) to prepare your application, be meticulous and take your time!**

1.   Building permit = Rationale

- Why is this research needed (gaps in research)?
- What are the components that will make it successful (previous literature)?

2. Land Survey Report = Problem Statement

-   Identifies any challenges or issues that need to be addressed
-   It should address the gap in knowledge that was identified (*how* will your research fill the gap?)
-   It should be a significant contribution to the existing body of research
-   It should lead to further study, and
-   The problem should render itself to investigation through the collection of data

3. Building Materials = Materials and Methods

- All the components you will need to conduct your research
- It describes the specific procedures or techniques used to identify, collect, select, and analyse the information you collect
- Has a pilot study been conducted? If yes, provide a short statement outlining any preliminary or pilot research directly related to this project and a synopsis of the results

4. Groundwork = References
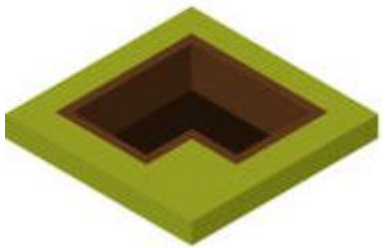
- What previous literature informs and supports your research
- Cite only the most significant (and most recent) references relevant to your research using author and date (i.e., Nkosi 2021; Ndlovu et al. 2021).
- Only provide the maximum number of requested references/citations.
- Use the specific references style (e.g., APA style citation) requested in the guidelines

5. Foundation = Aims and Objectives

- Outline the specific goals and objectives of the project
- Everything else in your research depends on the aims and objectives, if they are unclear, your research will not be a success!
- The aim is the long-term outcome. Research objectives focus on how the aims will be achieved (short-term outcomes). Be realistic. Do you have the necessary resources to achieve the objective?
- You can also include a hypothesis - A statement about an expected relationship between variables or an explanation of a clear, specific, testable and falsifiable occurrence

6. Framework = Research Plan

- How are you going to carry out your research?
- Provide a detailed explanation of the information and work plan needed to answer the aims and objectives. It should also include how data is managed and stored
- Timelines and deadlines
- Contingencies and backup plans (plan for when things go wrong!)

7. Roof = Abstract

- Always done last!
- Gives an overview of your research, from rationale, introduction, aims and objectives to materials and methods and expected outcomes.
- Usually limited to 300-350 words
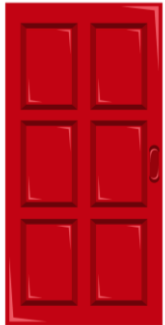
8. Front door = Title

- The first thing your reader/referees see and gives them an idea of what to expect
- Must be comprehensive, but a good rule of thumb is to limit your title to 15 words maximum

9. Finished product = Expected Outputs

- The outcomes of the research project (what will you produce?)
- Outputs may take the form of publications and presentations at conferences Provide a list of expected research outputs, including authors, title, potential journal and expected month of submission

10. Landscaping = Science Engagement

- How the research will be shared with the outside world
- It can include sharing digital information for education, public talks, information boards, creating exhibitions, participating in science competitions, making a video, etc. Provide a plan for your activities for the year. Indicate who your target audience is and when you expect to implement it

11. Quality control = Referees

- Inspection team that ensures that the research meets the standards
- Applications request at least three names of referees. Use anyone who knows you professionally, including
    - Supervisor
    - Co-Supervisor(s)
    - Researcher(s) you have worked with before (e.g., in the lab, fieldwork, mentor, etc.)
    - Head of Dept
- Remember to ask them to be a referee AHEAD of time to make sure they are available!

12. Budget

- Provide a detailed budget for the costs to conduct your research. Justify and provide clarity for your budget items. Be specific
- Do they provide university overhead costs? Sometimes universities take 10% of the grant. Most government and NGO funding bodies do not allow this.
- When should you put in contingency costs?
    - International travel
    - Field and lab costs
    - Equipment
- Make sure what exactly the grant will cover:
    - Honours, Masters, or Doctoral Bursary
    - Postdoctoral Fellowship Bursary
    - Support staff salary
    - Research costs
    - Field expenses (food and lodging, per diem)
    - Lab costs (Uranium-series, SEM, pollen analysis, etc.)
    - Travel (airfare, local or ground transportation)
   - Fees and other expenses (e.g., museum fees, journal costs)

IMPORTANT - Show your work before submitting your application!

Before submitting your application, discuss and show your application to your supervisors, committee members, friends, and colleagues for constructive comments and edits to improve your application.

Prof Rex, please will you go through my application with me?

Of course, Agnes. Two sets of eyes are always better than one!
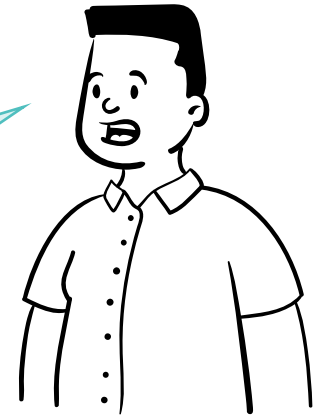
Then upload your application and the relevant documents, double-check *everything*, and hit

Submit

Outcome Letters

Congratulation Letters

When you get the 'Congratulations, you have received the … grant'

1. Send a personal email to the funding body to say thank you and what this grant means to you

How to make a lasting impression for a long-term relationship with your funder(s)

1. Send updates of milestones you have achieved (e.g., I like to thank you again for the conference grant I received. During the conference…)
2. Send any science communication that stems from your research
3. Send any publications or conference abstracts

Rejection Letter

Not all applications get funded. Do not be discouraged. Think of the rejections as a learning experience and how to improve your next application. Many funding bodies will provide feedback if you request it. Keep applying!

Good luck!
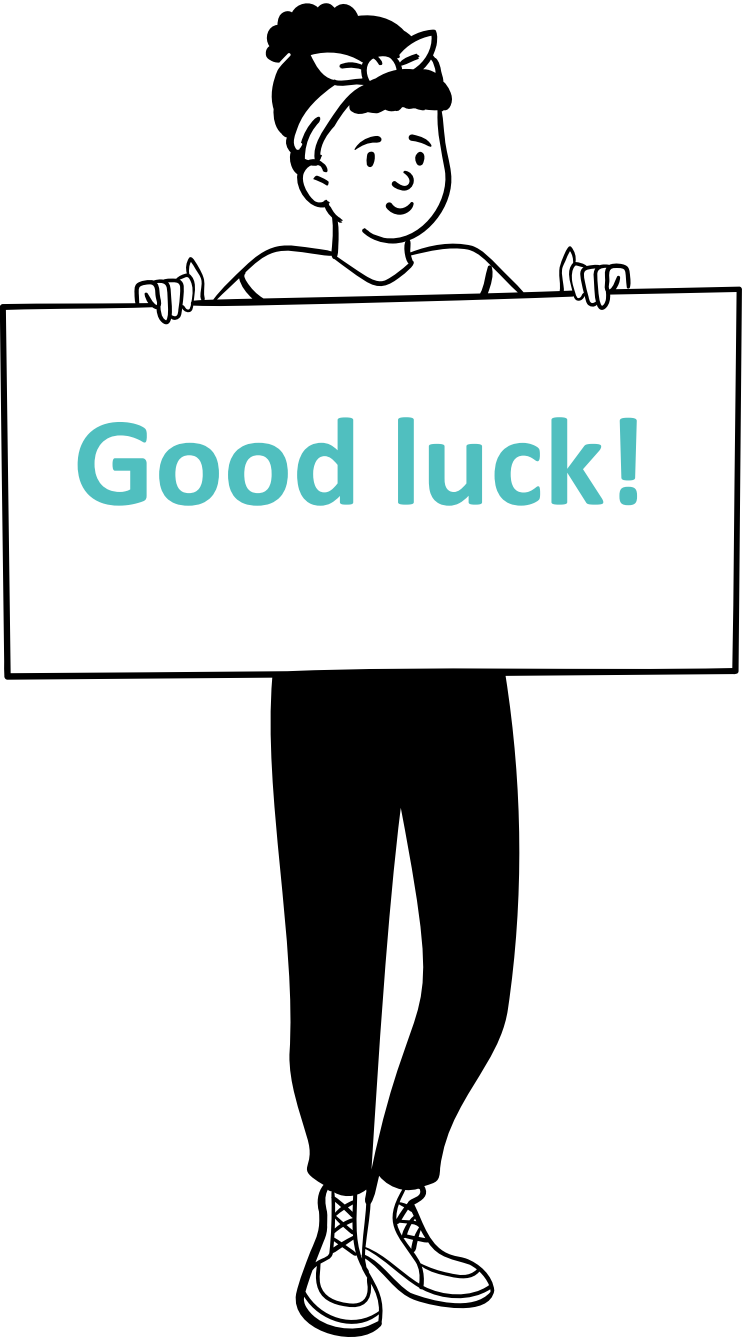
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science & innovation
Department:
Science and Innovation
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NRF National Research Foundation