

## Invitation: Expressions of Interest

### **South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI) South African Environmental Observation Network National Infrastructure Platform Chair hosted by the Afromontane Research Unit, University of the Free State**

#### ***‘The Maloti-Drakensberg as a Social-Ecological System under Global Change’***

The South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON; National Research Foundation), in collaboration with the Afromontane Research Unit (ARU; University of the Free State – UFS) is calling for Expressions of Interest towards the submission of a Department of Science and Innovation-National Research Foundation (DSI-NRF) South African Research Chair Initiatives (SARChI) research proposal for the theme ***The Maloti-Drakensberg as a Social-Ecological System under Global Change***.

The Chair will be shared between SAEON and the ARU. While the Chair will be able to access and contribute from and to the broader SAEON and UFS platforms, the primary relationship will be between the SAEON Grasslands-Forests-Wetlands Node, the Expanded Freshwater and Terrestrial Environmental Observation Network (EFTEON) Northern Drakensberg Landscape, and the ARU – including partners across the Maloti-Drakensberg. The position is intended to create added value to / optimise benefits of the established SAEON, EFTEON, and ARU platforms within the Maloti-Drakensberg Transfrontier Programme (MDTP).

Short-listed candidates will be invited to submit a full proposal under the SARChI programme.

#### **Minimum Criteria**

- Tier 1 SARChI requirements:
  - A, B or P-rated, or equivalent (for international candidates), recognised internationally as a leader in their field.
  - Should be appointable at the level of a full Professor, benchmarked nationally.
  - Should be an outstanding and innovative researcher whose accomplishments have and are making a major impact in their field.
- Research interest is one or a combination of the following: systems thinking, natural resource / ecological economics / natural capital accounting, social-ecological systems, or similar such fields.
- Demonstrated inter- / multi- / trans-disciplinary activities in natural resource management under Global Change.
- Demonstrated supervision of postgraduate students and mentoring of emerging and young researchers.
- Proven ability to raise international research funds and drive / participate in international research consortia.
- Should reside full time in South Africa at the site of operation of the ARU or SAEON for the duration of the Research Chair award.

#### **Duties and Responsibilities**

- Lead collaborative syntheses across existing SAEON, EFTEON Northern Drakensberg, and ARU research and activities, and translate these into trans-disciplinary and systems-thinking outputs with high policy and practice relevance.
- Support and strengthen the SAEON-ARU relationship.

- Supervise / co-supervise postgraduate students within SAEON and the UFS, and potentially from a variety of South African and international institutions.
- Contribute to SAEON quarterly reporting, ARU annual reporting, and NRF annual reporting.
- Mentor postdoctoral research fellows and young researchers.
- Raise additional financial support through collaborative grants.
- Contribute to the life and vibrancy of the SAEON Grasslands-Forests-Wetlands Node, EFTEON Northern Drakensberg, and the ARU.
- Ensure policy coherence in the design of the research agenda in line with the NRF frameworks, including the Framework to Advance the Societal and Knowledge Impact of Research, with methodologies for capturing and reporting on impact pathways.

**Reporting Lines:**

- The Chair will be hosted in the ARU, reporting jointly to the Vice-Rector: Research (UFS) and the SAEON Managing Director.
- The ARU Director and Manager: Grasslands-Forests-Wetlands Node will provide day-to-day operational support.
- The 50/50 SAEON-UFS Advisory Committee will review progress on an annual basis.

**Application Process:**

Expression of interest should comprise a letter of motivation (one page), comprehensive academic résumé, and details of five referees, and should be submitted simultaneously to:

The Managing Director, SAEON, for attention Dr Mary-Jane Bopape, [mm.bopape@saeon.nrf.ac.za](mailto:mm.bopape@saeon.nrf.ac.za) and the Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation, University of the Free State, for attention Prof Corli Witthuhn, [viljoene@ufs.ac.za](mailto:viljoene@ufs.ac.za) by 31 March 2023.

For further information, please consult the document *Framework and Funding Guide for SARChI Chair for the South African Environmental Observation Network (SAEON)* (May 2018).

*Both SAEON and the UFS reserve the right not to proceed with invitations for full proposals.*

