

RCD's Strategic Engagements: Optimising Funding Processes to Strengthen Research Equity and Expand Impact Across South African Universities

As part of its ongoing efforts to support and strengthen South Africa's health research pipeline, the SAMRC's Division of Research Capacity Development (RCD) conducted strategic visits to the University of Cape Town (UCT) on 7 April 2025 and Stellenbosch University (SUN) on 9 April 2025. These visits aimed to enhance collaboration, streamline post-award scholarship processes, and directly engage with university stakeholders and SAMRC-funded students.

At both institutions, the SAMRC engaged with representatives from the legal, finance, research management, and postgraduate funding offices to address key administrative and operational challenges. Discussions focused on improving grant disbursement efficiency, aligning institutional processes with SAMRC timelines, and reducing bottlenecks in contract finalisation and financial reporting. Institutions welcomed efforts to clarify post-award procedures and expressed appreciation for greater transparency in scholarship administration.

SAMRC visits the Western Cape Province



07 April 2025, the SAMRC Research Capacity Development team and the University of Cape Town beneficiaries



09 April 2025, the SAMRC Research Capacity Development team and the University of Stellenbosch Beneficiaries

The visits to the Western Cape Province universities follow prior engagements with the Limpopo Province Universities, where RCD, together with GIPD and the Office the Vice President, visited the University of Limpopo and the University of Venda. These interactions form part of SAMRC's broader vision to support inclusive research ecosystems by investing in capacity-building, infrastructure, and equitable funding opportunities.

SAMRC Visits the Limpopo Province



The SAMRC Research Capacity Development team and the University of Limpopo staff, 07 October 2024,



The SAMRC Research Capacity Development team and the University of Venda staff and beneficiaries, 08 October 2024,

To further amplify its outreach and engagement, RCD participated in research festivals hosted by various universities, including the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT); the University of Pretoria (UP), where RCD collaborated with SAMRC's Corporate & Marketing Communications and the Office of the Vice President; the Tshwane University of Technology (TUT); and the Eastern Cape Postgraduate Funding Fair — a joint initiative by Nelson Mandela University (NMU), Rhodes University (RU), Walter Sisulu University (WSU), and the University of Fort Hare (UFH).

The research festivals showcased a vibrant mix of early-career researchers, community health innovators, and multidisciplinary collaborations—a testament to the growing momentum in South Africa's research landscape. They served as valuable platforms to raise awareness about SAMRC funding programmes among postgraduate students and researchers.

The RCD team provided detailed information on available funding streams (scholarships and grants), eligibility criteria, application process and post-award support services. The engagements were informal yet impactful and provided an opportunity for the research community across South African universities to engage with SAMRC staff.



The SAMRC Research Capacity Development team at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology Research Festival (from left to right: Ms Deney Christians, Ms Asemahle Zide, Ms Fallon Heinrich, Dr Frederic Nduhirabandi, Ms Asanele Ngcauzele and Mrs Jo-Anne Engelbrecht), 29 October 2024.



RCD Project Coordinator Mr Vincent Fipaza engaging with the scholars at the TUT Research Festival, 14 October 2024.



RCD staff at the Eastern Cape Postgraduate Funding Fair SAMRC stand (read from left to right): Mr. Vincent Fipaza (Project coordinator: Scholarship Programmes), Dr Lindokuhle Ndlandla (Programme Manager: Postgraduate Programmes) and Dr Abeda Dawood (Division Manager), 16 May 2025.

During these engagements, RCD also held funded beneficiary sessions at each university, providing an opportunity for scholars and supervisors as well as grantees to share experiences, raise questions, and offer feedback. Researchers expressed enthusiasm for the flexibility and structure of SAMRC programmes such as the [Early Investigators Programme](#) (EIP) and [Clinician Researcher Development Programme](#) (CRP). Discussions also covered administrative support, funding timelines, and potential involvement in upcoming research conferences.

These engagements reaffirm SAMRC's commitment to fostering meaningful partnerships with academic institutions and ensuring effective support for its scholarship recipients. The visits laid a foundation for improved collaboration and responsiveness, contributing to the broader goal of building a sustainable and inclusive national research capacity.