

2026 SARIMA Conference | WORKSHOP:



— Future-Focused Research Costing: Where Strategy, Governance, and Sustainability Meet

- Tuesday, 8 September 2026
- 08:15 – 12:15
- NH Hotel Johannesburg Sandton, South Africa

— **TARGET AUDIENCE:** Research Development Officers, Research Finance Practitioners, Post-Award Administrators, Grants Managers, Institutional Leaders responsible for research governance, Emerging Research Management Professionals, Researchers and PI

Proposed Facilitators:

Carin Niemand (UNISA), Prof SJ Johnston (UNISA), Audrey Erasmus (Stellenbosch University), Chantal Hugo (Stellenbosch University), Eleni Flack-Davison (Wits University), Beverley Manus (Wits University), Tebogo Machethe (Wits University)

Rationale and Background:

- Research costing is a foundational yet frequently fragmented component of Research Management and Administration (RMA). Accurate, transparent and strategically aligned costing practices influence proposal competitiveness, project sustainability, institutional compliance, and overall financial governance within the research enterprise. In many institutions across the Southern African research landscape, research offices and finance divisions operate within parallel structures that do not always fully integrate during the proposal development and post-award phases.

This fragmentation can result in several challenges, including under-recovery of indirect costs, misalignment between funder requirements and institutional policies, compliance risks during project implementation, and limited institutional learning from completed projects. As research funding environments become increasingly competitive and funders place stronger emphasis on financial accountability, institutions must strengthen their internal costing frameworks to ensure both sustainability and transparency.

This workshop seeks to provide a structured, practice-oriented platform for dialogue between research management practitioners and research finance professionals. By bringing these communities together, the session will explore practical strategies for improving costing accuracy, strengthening governance alignment, and enhancing institutional sustainability.

Although the Financial Research Administration and Management Community of Practice (FRAM-COP) is still in its developmental phase, this workshop will act as an important catalyst to surface shared challenges, exchange institutional practices, and contribute to the professionalisation of Financial Research Administration within the SARIMA community.

Workshop Objectives:

1. Differentiate clearly between direct costs, indirect costs, and full cost recovery models and understand how these principles influence institutional sustainability.
2. Identify common financial and governance risks associated with research costing during proposal development and project implementation.
3. Apply practical tools and frameworks to strengthen budget justification, cost defensibility, and compliance with funder and institutional policies.
4. Strengthen collaboration mechanisms between research offices and finance divisions to support integrated research funding management.
5. Reflect on institutional governance maturity and identify opportunities to improve costing practices within their own organisations.

DRAFT Programme Layout:

Session 1: Understanding the True Cost of Research

- Direct vs Indirect vs Full Cost of Research (FCR)
- Institutional overheads and sustainability
- Cost drivers in research projects
- Hidden costs often overlooked
- Alignment with institutional financial governance frameworks

Session 2: Costing in Proposal Development – From Idea to Submission

- Translating research design into defensible budgets
- Aligning funder rules with institutional policy
- Cost justification narratives
- Risk mitigation during proposal stage
- Balancing competitiveness versus sustainability

Session 3: Governance, IP and NIPMO – Regulatory and Financial Implications

- Overview of the NIPMO framework
- Intellectual Property Rights from Publicly Financed Research and Development Act
- Costing implications of IP ownership
- Commercialisation and benefit-sharing considerations
- Budgeting for IP protection and technology transfer

Session 4: Post-Award Financial Management – Managing for Impact

- Budget monitoring
- Virements and funder approvals
- Financial reporting alignment
- Audit readiness
- Managing under- and overspending
- Indirect cost recovery tracking

Session 5: Close-Out, Sustainability and Institutional Learning

- Financial reconciliation
- Asset management
- IP reporting
- Final funder reporting
- Lessons learned into institutional costing frameworks

Participant Outputs

- Research Costing Checklist for proposal development
- Budget Risk Identification Matrix
- IP-Costing Impact Framework
- Post-Award Financial Governance Checklist
- Research Funding Life Cycle Costing Map

Methodology

The workshop will adopt a highly interactive and practice-oriented learning approach designed to facilitate peer exchange and applied problem-solving. Rather than relying solely on lecture-style presentations, the session will incorporate short expert inputs followed by scenario-based exercises that allow participants to apply concepts in realistic research administration contexts.

Participants will engage in small-group discussions, analyse practical case studies, and collaboratively develop solutions to common costing and governance challenges faced within their institutions. Each session will include structured reflection points to encourage participants to compare institutional practices and share experiences across the SARIMA network.

Practical tools, templates and frameworks will be introduced throughout the workshop to support immediate implementation within participants' institutions. The emphasis will be on translating theory into actionable practices that strengthen financial governance and sustainability in research funding management.

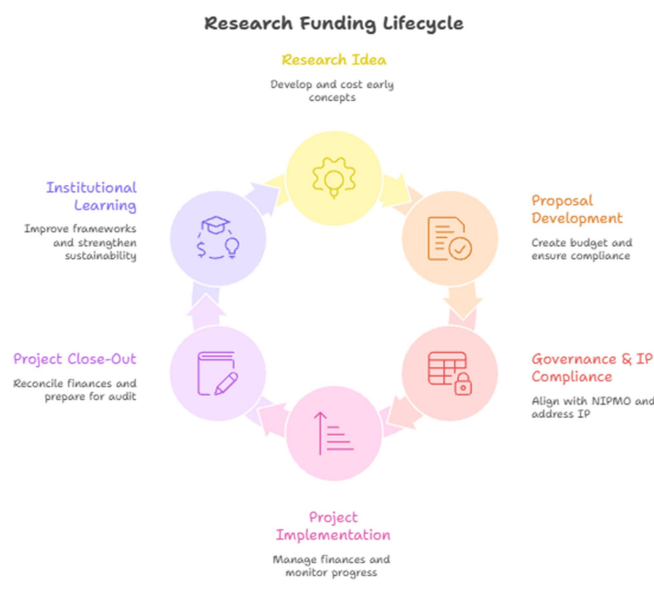
Expected Outcomes and Value to SARIMA

- Strengthened understanding of sustainable research costing models and full cost recovery principles.
- Improved institutional practices in budget development, compliance, and financial risk management.
- Greater alignment between research offices and finance teams, promoting integrated research administration processes.
- Enhanced awareness of the financial implications of intellectual property and NIPMO regulatory requirements.
- Practical tools and frameworks that participants can immediately apply within their institutions.
- Contribution to the ongoing development of Financial Research Administration as a specialised competency area within the SARIMA professional community.

The workshop will also help build momentum for the emerging Financial Research Administration and Management Community of Practice (FRAM-COP) by identifying common sector challenges and opportunities for collaborative learning across institutions.

Research Funding Lifecycle & Costing Integration Framework

- Research Idea – Concept development and early costing considerations.
- Proposal Development – Budget construction, compliance checks and justification.
- Governance & IP Compliance – NIPMO alignment and intellectual property considerations.
- Project Implementation – Post-award financial management and monitoring.
- Project Close-Out – Financial reconciliation, reporting and audit readiness.
- Institutional Learning – Improving costing frameworks and strengthening sustainability across the research system.



This diagram illustrates how research costing interacts with governance, compliance, and financial sustainability across the full research funding lifecycle, from research idea development to project close-out and institutional learning.