

ENGAGED RESEARCH AS A PATHWAY TO BRIDGING KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIETY

The HSRC First Announcement for Engaged Research Conference



Conference Theme:

Engaged Research as a Pathway to Bridging Knowledge and Society

Date: 22–24 October 2025

Time: 09:00–16:00

Venue: Birchwood Hotel & OR Tambo Conference Centre, Gauteng

INTRODUCTION

Engaged Research is increasingly acknowledged as a pillar in fostering multi-sectoral collaboration to generate and disseminate knowledge for impact. Engaged Research provides a helpful set of principles and frameworks through which researchers can meaningfully interact with other research producers, research users, and beneficiaries. It addresses complex societal challenges by fostering inclusivity, mutual respect, and the co-creation of knowledge and engagement. In the context of an evolving South African economy, Engaged Research enables the fusion of academic capabilities and knowledge that exist among diverse stakeholder groups and organisations to gain a deeper understanding of societal challenges and create just and sustainable outcomes. A key tenet of Engaged Research is that it fosters epistemic justice and emphasizes the fair recognition and inclusion of diverse ways of knowing. It thus challenges power imbalances, enhances research relevance, and promotes justice in knowledge creation and application. Engaged Research methods such as Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) foster equitable partnerships between researchers and communities, valuing lived experiences and co-producing knowledge to drive meaningful social change.



ENGAGED
RESEARCH

NRF ENGAGED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

The NRF defines Engaged Research as :

Integrates considered approaches to engage communities and society in, and with, the research across its full cycle, to ensure communities are primary stakeholders, active contributors, as well as beneficiaries of research.

Given its perceived value in transforming lives, research funders worldwide are working to deepen engaged research by investing in innovative ways to strengthen this emerging framework. A key impetus in this movement towards engaged research has been the question of impact and the extent to which investments in research knowledge contribute to benefit and influence society.

It is widely held in the field of Engaged Research internationally that it is hinged on establishing and sustaining partnerships between researchers and research stakeholders. It is also fundamental to build and sustain multi-sectoral communities of practice to share knowledge, advance practices and transform lives. It is crucial therefore to create platforms of engagement between these stakeholders in order to enhance knowledge and practice sharing.



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In cognisance of the potential of Engaged Research to catalyse research impact and bridge the gap between academia and society; and the value of creating platforms of rigorous engagement for its success, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), in collaboration with the National Research Foundation (NRF), will host its first multidisciplinary Engaged Research conference in October 2025.

THE CONFERENCE PURPOSE

This conference aims to bring together researchers, practitioners, community members, and policymakers to explore innovative approaches to Engaged Research that addresses societal challenges. The conference, with a theme of Engaged Research as a Pathway to Bridging Knowledge and Society, will serve as a platform for discussing established and novel methodologies, practices, challenges, and opportunities in engaged research. Through this the event aims to foster meaningful partnerships, enhance the co-creation of knowledge, and promote the integration of academic inquiry with society-driven priorities. Participants will showcase successful projects, share best practices, and reflect on barriers in Engaged Research to inspire actionable strategies that advance inclusive, impactful, and transformative research efforts for the betterment of society. It seeks to inspire participants to further their commitment to collaborative and impactful research.

THE CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the conference are to:

- Identify barriers to Engaged Research and how to overcome these barriers.
- Promote knowledge exchange on engaged research methodologies, approaches, and best practices.
- Facilitate networking between academia, community organisations, industry, government, and build partnerships for future engaged research projects.
- Showcase impactful case studies that illustrate engaged research’s real-world benefits and value.
- Consolidate learnings on how engaged research can be operationalised in different contexts.

THE KEY THEMES

To facilitate in-depth discussions, the conference will explore themes related to engaged research as summarised in the table below.

Theme	Description
<i>Co-Creation and Participatory Research Approaches</i>	This theme will explore a range of methods, practices, and tools for involving stakeholders in all stages of the research and dissemination processes.
<i>Impactful Community Partnerships</i>	This theme will delve into case studies and best practices on building long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships with communities.
<i>Policy and Engaged Research</i>	This theme will explore how engaged research influences policy and contributes to societal change.
<i>Engaged Research in the Digital Age</i>	This theme will examine the role of technology in enhancing the reach and accessibility of engaged research.
<i>Engaged Research for Epistemic Justice, Social Justice and Equity</i>	This theme will focus on research that addresses systemic inequalities and promote social justice.
<i>Ethical and Inclusive Research</i>	This theme will address power dynamics in engaged research, ethical considerations and inclusivity challenges.
<i>Research Translation and Knowledge Brokering</i>	This theme will explore approaches and strategies for ensuring research findings are accessible and useful for relevant audiences.
<i>Impact Measurement and Evaluation</i>	This theme will discuss frameworks and tools for assessing the impact measurement and evaluation of engaged research.

THE CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

The conference will include keynote presentations, panel discussions, interactive workshops, case study showcases and networking sessions:

- **Keynote Speakers:** Renowned experts in engaged research.
- **Panel Discussions:** The panel discussions will feature diverse voices from academia, government, and community organisations to discuss specific challenges and opportunities in engaged research.
- **Interactive Workshops:** The interactive workshops will provide the participants with the opportunity to learn practical skills, tools, and methodologies for engaged research.
- **Case Study Showcases:** Selected projects demonstrating significant impact through engaged research will be presented.
- **Networking Sessions:** Facilitated networking sessions will allow participants to connect and explore potential collaborations.

IMPORTANT DATES

First announcement and save the date:	31 March 2025
Call for Abstracts:	07 April 2025
Abstract Deadline:	30 May 2025
Abstract Decision	30 June 2025