



Economics and Health Policy in South Africa: Time for Alignment

Request for Proposals

South Africa confronts a unique and urgent set of health system challenges, compounded by deep socio-economic inequalities. In response, Economic Research Southern Africa (ERSA) is launching a research initiative that focuses on the economics of health and health care in South Africa.

Authors of accepted proposals will be given the opportunity to present their preliminary findings at a Researcher's Workshop in July 2026; their near-final findings at an ERSA Conference in December 2026, and the opportunity to publish their work in our Working Paper Series.

Research Themes

The project's goal is to produce robust, evidence-based research that can guide South African policymakers in developing a health system capable of supporting the country's broader development. Researchers are encouraged to propose work that focuses on (i) Health System Performance and Financing, (ii) Health Service Design, Costing and Implementation, (iii) Health Technology Assessment, (iv) Equity, Access, and Social Determinants, (v) Behavioural and Informational Economics in Health and (vi) Global and Context-Specific Comparative Health Economics.

For more detailed guidance on research questions under each of these themes along with important guidance on data sources can be found [here](#).

Submission Guidelines

ERSA invites proposals for working papers that provide in-depth analysis of topics that broadly fit within the six thematic areas. We encourage interdisciplinary approaches combining household, facility, and administrative data. When using such approaches, researchers should be mindful of policy timelines, fiscal cycles, and sectoral silos.

While no restrictions are imposed on data and empirical methods used, studies that use novel data, including survey data, will be prioritised. Still, descriptive and qualitative research remain highly valued.

Compelling proposals that require primary data collection will also be considered, although the budget for this type of research is limited, and such projects also need to be completed within 12 months.

To summarise, proposals should demonstrate:

- Clear policy relevance
- Academic novelty
- Feasible use of available data sources
- Alignment with one or more of the priority themes

Submission deadline: 2 February 2026
Notification of acceptance: 23 February 2026
Proposal template and guidelines: [download here](#)
Submission link: [visit website](#)

Proposals will be reviewed by ERSA's Research Committee, with external feedback as needed. To reduce the risk of impartiality, committee members will be prevented from commenting on proposals from their colleagues.

Expectations, Ownership and Dissemination Details

In addition to presenting the preliminary findings at a Researcher's Workshop in July 2026, and presenting near-final findings at the Conference in December, authors are expected to submit final papers to the ERSA Working Paper Series by January 2027, and submit a Policy Brief or Executive Summary by April 2027.

Researchers will retain ownership of their work. ERSA reserves the right to promote and disseminate the research findings to the broader academic and policy community. The Research Committee may request periodic progress reports.

Funding

Final papers will be published in the ERSA Working Paper Series, subject to the formal review process. Papers accepted for publication will receive R50,000. Researchers must also provide a policy brief, executive summary, or economic note summarising their findings. Additional funding of up to R100 000 is available for primary data collection, subject to an assessment of value for money.

Contact Information

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