Promoting the science of today, for the world of tomorrow

We are currently preparing students for jobs and technologies that don’t yet exist... in order to solve problems we don’t even know are problems yet.

We live in exponential times... SAASTA is integrally involved in promoting science at school level, in public forums and in the general media. These efforts aim to grow the pool of quality science postgraduates who can benefit from R&D funding and support, while also helping to create a more informed population that is better able to debate and decide on issues such as global warming, genetically modified foods, biofuels, and more.

SAASTA supports all science advancement interventions across the NRF, working closely with the seven National Research Facilities. These focus on the fields of astro/space/geosciences, biodiversity and conservation, and nuclear sciences. SAASTA also works closely with other NRF business units, science facilities, science centres, higher education institutions, science councils and government departments.

All SAASTA initiatives – from its travelling exhibits, science centres and media campaigns, through to educator and learner programmes – fall under three key strategic areas:

1. Education (through which we build up the supply of tomorrow’s scientists and innovators);
2. Awareness (through which we engage the public with the phenomena of science, engineering and technology);
3. Communication (through which we share science and technology achievements with the public, building public appreciation of the benefits of science).

These three areas are interdependent, each enhancing the effectiveness of the other, while accommodating different audiences and creating opportunities for joint initiatives across government departments and science agencies.

This multi-layered, integrated approach remains the bedrock of SAASTA’s success.

Why?

Science, through research, has a significant role to play in the growth of South Africa’s economy. When scientific research findings are made more accessible to the general public, it is possible for industrial and entrepreneurial opportunities to arise.

Research findings can also have an impact on policy and social conditions in the country but only if the value and potential of science’s role in society is effectively communicated to the broader public. This can only be achieved when science becomes part of our daily dialogue and discourse.

Special projects

Stakeholder programmes

Science communications, research initiatives, publications and the media are all key partners in SAASTA’s efforts. These stakeholders remain involved through consultative such as the National Science Communication Conference, the Southern African Science Communication Network, and a central network for science communication, and media reports include a series of brochures produced by SAASTA specialists.

Educator programmes

SAASTA’s mandate includes supporting educators so that they are able to deliver quality teaching in science, mathematics and technology. This includes resource materials such as printed manuals, Science Teachers’ Focus – an open forum through which teachers meet to share ideas and discuss issues encountered in the classroom.

Youth programmes

SAASTA supports a number of initiatives targeted at the youth to engage them with science and create platforms for school subjects such as science, life orientation and mathematics. This includes the South African National Science Olympiad, a competition that has been running for more than 45 years, aimed at Grades 10 to 12 learners in physical sciences and through initiatives also in Primary Science Day, national debate and school debating.

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Promoting the science of today, for the world of tomorrow
South Africa is rapidly reaching the forefront of science and technology advancement and has the potential to become a rich source of scientific expertise.

The need to make scientific disciplines more accessible and attractive to younger generations has never been greater.

And this is exactly what the South Africa Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) intends to achieve.

As a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF), our mandate is to:

- steer young minds towards careers in science, and to instil in people an enthusiasm and deeper understanding of the material, role modelling campaigns, job shadowing, and otherwise engaging the public in a way that interests and engages them.
- share the advances of science and technology and supports the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Department of Education (DoE).
- develop and manage projects that promote science, engineering and technology to learners and educators.
- steer young minds towards careers in science, engineering and technology (SET); and
- apply science in our every day lives.

The wonder of science often only reveals itself when it is presented in a format that everyone can see, touch, feel and experience. To this end, SAASTA’s awareness unit manages an impressive array of science centres around the country in the form of Science Week and Sasol Techno-X, go a long way towards demystifying science for the public in a way that makes it tangible, that makes it accessible and that makes it fun.

Science communication and capacity building:

The essence of good science communication lies in providing credible and accurate information that is accessible to all South African communities.

To achieve this, SAASTA’s communication unit utilises a number of communication tools and resources that are used to promote science to the general public, one of which being SA Science Lens – Africa’s only scientific photographic competition.

The Public Engagement programme (PUB) also offers learning facilities such as an infinity room, optics, astronomy, astrophysics and space science. It also offers learning facilities such as an infinity room, optics, astronomy, astrophysics and space science.

The Public Engagement (PEN) programme (PEN) is managed by this unit:

- Three DST-funded programmes are managed by this unit:
  - The Public Understanding of Biotechnology programme (PUB)
  - The Public Engagement with nanotechnology programme (PEN)
  - Hydrogen South Africa Public Awareness (PWA)

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**Why?**

Science, through research, has a significant role to play in the growth of South Africa’s economy. While scientific research findings are made more accessible to the general public, it is possible for the individual and entrepreneurial opportunities to arise.

Research findings can also have an impact on policy and social conditions in the country but only when the value and potential of science’s role in society is broadly understood by the broader public. This can only be achieved when science becomes part of our daily dialogue and discussion.

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- share the advances of science and technology with the public in a way that interests and engages them.
- steers young minds towards careers in science, engineering and technology;
- and supports the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Department of Education (DoE).

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**Education**

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**SET careers**

- This comprises career promotional materials, role-modelling campaigns, school inducements, SET internships, and entrepreneurship initiatives.

**Science resources**

- This includes curricula-based support resources, enrichment materials, web-based courses and virtual laboratories.

**SET innovations**

- This promotes science, engineering and technology to learners and educators.

**School science support**

- This includes science enrichment programmes and educator and learner programmes.

**Awareness**

- The number of scientists and engineers remains low when compared to countries that are similar in terms of population and resources.

- The unit is funded by the DST through the NRF and supports the Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Department of Education (DoE).

**Background**

- SAASTA’s education unit therefore implements development and management projects that promote science, engineering and technology to learners and educators based on the following three focus areas:

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**School science support**

- This includes science enrichment programmes and educator and learner programmes.

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**Science communication and capacity building**

- The unit has the following focus areas:

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**Science and the media**

- This includes media-related communications and the facilitation of workshops to assist media practitioners and researchers, enabling them to more effectively share their achievements with nanotechnology researchers, enabling them to more effectively share their achievements in priority research areas.

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**Three DST-funded programmes**

- These are managed by this unit:

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**The Public Engagement in Basic Science (PUB)**

- This is a programme that provides support to science in the general public, one of the key elements being SA Science Lens – South Africa’s online science and technology advancement programme (PUB).

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**The Public Engagement in Advanced Science (PEN)**

- This programme is managed by this unit:

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**The Public Engagement in Forensic Science (PES)**

- This programme is managed by this unit:

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**Harmattan South Africa Public Awareness (PNS)**

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**SAASTA has a number of initiatives**

- This programme is managed by this unit:

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**INSITE, SciFest Africa, National Science Week and Sasol Techno-X, go a long way towards demystifying science for the public in a way that makes it tangible, accessible and fun.**

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The essence of good science communication lies in providing credible and accurate information that is accessible to all South African communities.

In achieving this, SAASTA’s communication unit utilizes three critical processes:

**The Scientific Editorial Process**

- This ensures that messages are clearly communicated and understood; and

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**Scientific editing**

- This is a process that considers ethnicity and ethnology of target audiences, ensuring that messages are clearly communicated and understood; and

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**Audience analysis**

- The unit utilises audience analysis, with the intention to better understand South Africa’s diverse audience categories by measuring information needs and information seeking behaviour.

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The unit has the following focus areas:

**Science communication tools and resources**

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The unit has the following focus areas:
South Africa is rapidly reaching the forefront of science and technology advancement and has the potential to become a rich source of scientific expertise.

**Education**

The number of scientists after only remains itself when its primary goal is to provide a platform for scientists to share the advances of science and technology; steer young minds towards careers in science, technology and innovation; and supports the Department's Youth into Science and Technology (DoE).

South Africa is rapidly reaching the forefront of science and technology advancement and has the potential to become a centre of excellence in the sciences, engineering and technology to learners and educators. The unit runs a Science and Technology Centre Network programme, which provides support to science centres around the country in the form of science and technology capacity building, and has the potential to become a centre of excellence in the sciences, engineering and technology to learners and educators.

**Awareness**

The awareness unit occupies the Johannesburg Observatory, which hosts exhibitions on engineering, optics, astrophysics and space science. It also offers learning facilities such as an infinity room, a forensics crime laboratory, and a TRAC network programme, which provides support to science centres around the country in the form of science and technology capacity building, and has the potential to become a centre of excellence in the sciences, engineering and technology to learners and educators.

Through its many outreach and awareness programmes, SAASTA educates and engages students to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and supports the Department’s Youth into Science and Technology (DoE).

**Communication**

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The unit runs a Sciences and Technology Centre Network programme which provides support to science centres around the country in the form of science and technology capacity building, and has the potential to become a centre of excellence in the sciences, engineering and technology to learners and educators.

**SAASTA has a number of initiatives:**

- **targeted at the youth to engage them with science and create enthusiasm for school subjects such as science, life orientation and mathematics.**

The need to make scientific disciplines more accessible and attractive to younger generations has never been greater.

And this is exactly what the South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) intends to achieve.

As a business unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF), SAASTA is committed to increasing participation by all South African communities in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and supports the Department’s Youth into Science and Technology (DoE).

The unit runs a Science and Technology Centre Network programme, which provides support to science centres around the country in the form of science and technology capacity building, and has the potential to become a centre of excellence in the sciences, engineering and technology to learners and educators.

School science support: This includes educational outreach with learners and educators. The education unit therefore implements science enrichment programmes and competitions.

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As a branch unit of the National Research Foundation (NRF), our mandate is to:

- create enthusiasm and deeper understanding of the science, engineering and technology (SET) programmes, we aim to entice students to pursue careers in SET;
- help to spread the word on science at schools and universities throughout this year;
- through our many outreach and awareness programmes, we intend to communicate the advances of science and technology with the public in a way that interests and engages people;
- share the advances of science and technology with the public in a way that interests and engages people;
- steer young minds towards careers in science, engineering and technology (SET); and
- develop and manage projects that promote science, engineering and technology to learners and educators.

SAASTA’s education unit therefore implements, develops and manages projects that promote science and technology advancement and has the potential to become a rich source of scientific expertise – but only if the system is fed with a healthy supply of learners whose interest in SET is fostered by our public education.

SAASTA’s education unit therefore implements, develops and manages projects that promote science, engineering and technology to learners and educators.

School science support: This includes curriculum-based science enrichment programmes and competitions.

SET careers: This comprises career promotional research, role modelling campaigns, informal education, SET innovation, and entrepreneurship initiatives.

Science resources: This includes curriculum-based support resources, enrichment materials, web-based materials and e-learning.

The number of scientists often only remains itself when it is positively engaged and that everyone can see, touch, feel and experience. To this end, SAASTA’s awareness unit aims to engage interested audiences in exciting activities and programmes that help to spread the word on science at schools and universities throughout this year.

The combination of in-school facilities and programmes, outreach and mobile awareness initiatives, new and existing events such as NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK and SA SCIENCE EXPO, are geared towards demystifying science for the public in a way that makes it tangible, accessible, fun.

The awareness unit occupies the Johannesburg Observatory, which hosts exhibitions on engineering, optics, astronomy, astrophysics and space science. It also offers learning facilities such as an infinity room, forensic laboratories, telescope domes and a TRAC laboratory.

The unit runs a Science and Technology Centre, networking programmes, which promote and support science outreach programmes by universities and science organisations around the country for the benefit of human capacity development and training in the fields, organisations and institutions of excellence of all these centres.

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**Strategic approach**

- **Youth programmes**
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Stakeholder programmes
Science councils, research institutes, professionals and the media are all key partners in SAASTA’s efforts. These stakeholders remain involved through consultative mechanisms such as the National Science Communication Conference, the Southern African Science Communication Network, a biannual network for science communication) and media events. These initiatives are interactive media briefings attended by national science specialists.

Educator programmes
SAASTA provides all science educators with practical teaching materials that are easy to use in secondary teaching in science, mathematics and technology. This includes audio-visual materials such as printed manuals. Science Teachers’ Forum – an open forum through which teachers meet to share ideas and discuss issues encountered in the classrooms.

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**Strategic approach**

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**Special projects**

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Science communicators, research institutes, professionals and the media are all key partners in SAASTA’s efforts. These stakeholders remain involved through events such as the International Science Communication Conference, the Southern African Science Communication Network, or a central network for science communication and media reports. Interaction is ongoing, facilitated by national science specialists.

**Educator programmes**
SAASTA’s mandate includes supporting educators so they are able to foster quality teaching in science, mathematics and technology. This includes resource materials such as printed manuals, Science Teachers’ Forums – an open forum through which teachers meet to share ideas and discuss issues encountered in the classrooms.

**Youth programmes**
SAASTA has a number of initiatives targeted at the youth to engage them with science and create awareness for school subjects such as science, life orientation and mathematics. One of the best-established of these is the National Science Olympiad, a competition that has been running for more than 45 years, aimed at Std 10 to Std 12 learners/high-school and college. Initiatives also include Primary Science Day, national school debates, the Alumni Day, the Young Science Communicators’ Competition and National Science Week, which SAASTA manages on behalf of the NSF.

**SASTA initiatives** – from travelling exhibits, science centres and media campaigns, through to educator and learner programmes – fall under three key strategic areas:

l **Education** (through which we build up the supply of tomorrow’s scientists and innovators);

l **Awareness** (through which we engage the public with the phenomena of science, engineering and technology);

l **Communication** (through which we share science and technology achievements with the public, building a higher appreciation of the benefits of science).

These three areas are interdependent, each enhancing the effectiveness of the other, while accommodating different audiences and creating opportunities for joint initiatives across government departments and science agencies.

This multi-layered, integrated approach remains the bedrock of SAASTA’s success.

**Why?**

Science, through research, has a significant role to play in the growth of South Africa’s economy. Effective and relevant scientific research findings are more accessible to the general public, it is possible to promote innovation and entrepreneurship opportunities to the public.

Research findings can also have an impact on policy and social conditions in the country but only when the value and potential of science is to society is fully understood by the broader public. This can only be achieved when science becomes part of our daily dialogue and discourse.

**Promoting the science of today, for the world of tomorrow**