



**science
& technology**
Department:
Science and Technology
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Hosting of Media Round Tables (MRTs) by Science Centres in South Africa

INVITATION TO A MEDIA ROUND TABLE WORKING GROUP SESSION COMBINED WITH A CALL FOR PROPOSALS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. INTRODUCTION

The South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA) is a business unit of the National Research Foundation. SAASTA's mission is to promote broad public awareness, appreciation and understanding of science, engineering and technology in South Africa.

The Public Understanding of Biotechnology (PUB) programme, an initiative of the Department of Science and Technology (DST), is implemented by SAASTA's Science Communication Unit across all sectors of society. The PUB programme was launched in 2003 and the aim is to promote credible, fact based understanding of biotechnology through awareness, dialogue and education to enable informed decision making on biotechnology innovations to improve the quality of life.

Stimulating message providers on scientific issues, in this case, biotechnology, whether it is the scientists themselves who are generating the information, or the journalists that carry the messages to the public, are a specific goal of the PUB strategy. By improving both the quality of the information that is being communicated and the frequency and accuracy with which it is reported, is essential to ensure clarity on these complex issues to ensure the different sectors of the South African public have access to accurate and appropriately pitched, information.

PUB has been hosting a series of media round tables (MRTs) around South Africa. The MRTs are interactive media briefings where the media are the target audience, involving a cross section of relevant stakeholders to enable all perspectives/viewpoints to be expressed and discussed in equal standing. MRTs also help to bridge the communication divide between researchers/scientists and the media which is often responsible for the poor quality and quantity of accurate media reporting. Ultimately, MRTs will lead to improved understanding by the South African lay person of biotechnology issues.

To date, the PUB Programme has undertaken five MRT events focusing on:

- 1) Human cloning and related issues (November 2005);
- 2) Biofuels (March 2008);
- 3) Use of GMOs in the Wine Industry (June 2008);
- 4) Biotechnology and Medical research (October 2008); and
- 5) Nanotechnology (November 2008)
- 6) Bioprospecting (February 2009)

Full high quality video coverage has been obtained of the four MRTs that were held in 2008.

The PUB programme at SAASTA has ear-marked a certain amount of funds to support projects and activities to be implemented through various SET stakeholders around South Africa.

2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of this project are to:

- Duplicate the MRT models of SAASTA and PUB by Science Centres across the country to role out to localized and community media through information sessions in each of the area.
- Provide community media (radio and print) and key media partners with access to information.
- By introducing media to content specialists and information on the scientific topic, encourage accurate reporting that would stimulate community participation and dialogue.

3. MEDIA ROUND TABLE ON BIOPROSPECTING AND WORKING GROUP SESSION

The PUB programme will be hosting an MRT on Bioprospecting on the 25th of February at the MonteCasino in Fourways, Johannesburg.

PUB and SAASTA are inviting Science Centres throughout the country to participate in the MRT. More details on the MRT will be available on the SAASTA and PUB websites closer to the time of the event.

A comprehensive working group session will be conducted the following day (26th of February) on the Media Round Table models tested by SAASTA that would assist in using valuable resources to introduce local and community media to the scientific content in a way that would encourage accurate reporting that would stimulate community dialogue.

4. BRIEFING/WORKING GROUP SESSION

All applicants are invited to a working group session where guidelines around the standardization and duplication of the MRTs locally using Science Centres will be discussed in detail. It is intended that this session will assist Science Centres in the development of their proposals.

Date: **26th February 2009**
Venue: **Observatory, 18A Gill Street, Johannesburg**
Time: **10h30**

5. CALL FOR PARTICIPATION

Following the working group session, Science Centres are requested to submit innovative and creative proposals for duplicating the MRTs hosted by PUB which will contribute to raising public awareness of biotech related matters and specifically on research done in these areas.

Only one proposal per applicant should be submitted. Only proposals submitted with a clear outline of the proposed deliverables and budget breakdown will be considered.

For more details on requirements visit the SAASTA or PUB websites: www.saasta.ac.za or www.pub.ac.za

6. SELECTION CRITERIA

- Adherence and contribution to achieving the objectives of the proposed call
- Quality and relevance of the proposal for the content of the proposed call
- Relevance and inclusion of targeted audience
- A strong focus on interactive training
- Creativity and innovativeness of approach
- Cost effectiveness of the proposal
- Budget

7. CLOSING DATE

The following closing dates are applicable;

- RSVP to attend MRT and working group session – 13 February 2009 (all travel and accommodation arrangements for **1 person per Science Centre** will be made by SAASTA).
- All proposals must be submitted to SAASTA electronically/ by fax or hand delivered. An application form is available from the SAASTA website at <http://www.saasta.ac.za/>. The deadline for submitting proposals is at the close of business on **27 March 2009**. Submissions received after this date will not be considered.

8. ENQUIRIES

Enquiries should be directed to

Manjusha Joseph
Biotechnology Science Communicator (PUB)
SAASTA
Tel: 012 392 9314
Fax: 012 320 7803
Email: manjusha@saasta.ac.za

Physical Address:

Didacta Building
211 Skinner Street
Pretoria Central
0001

Postal Address:

P.O Box 1758
Pretoria 0002