



National Science and
Technology Forum

National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF)

STRATEGY DOCUMENT

2022-2027

National Science and Technology Forum

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2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 DESCRIPTION OF STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The process to revise and renew the NSTF Strategy This document is a revision of the NSTF's 2015/2020 Strategic Plan. The Strategy has included, since 2007, wording similar to the current Mission and Vision. The current strategic planning process was started in 2020, and in 2021 the NSTF Executive Committee (Exco) and proSET committee held a Strategic Planning Session online with a facilitator. The outcomes were discussed by the Exco. The Strategy Statement was thoroughly discussed by Exco and proSET at an in-person meeting on 8 June 2022 .

About this document: This Strategy Document replaces the 'NSTF Strategic Plan' of 2015 to 2020. as a revision rather than an entirely new strategy, and is a public document. This is NSTF's guiding document for five years, from 2022 to 2027.

2.2 ABOUT THE NSTF

The NSTF is the largest, oldest and most representative stakeholder body of its kind, with a proud history of stakeholder engagement with government and continued support from stakeholders on all levels. It represents more than 100 organisations, councils and institutions in South Africa and spans both the private and public sectors. The NSTF is registered as a non-profit company (NPC) and as a non-profit organisation (NPO). NSTF is guided by its Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI) which is available on the website.

The NSTF has 6 membership sectors and these are all represented on the NSTF Executive Committee (Exco):

- Business (small, medium and large businesses, and business associations)
- Civil society and labour
- Higher education
- Professional bodies and learned societies – which is known as proSET (Professionals in Science, Engineering and Technology) and governed by a sub-committee
- Science councils and statutory bodies – governed by a sub-committee
- State-owned enterprises

The NSTF as the most representative body of the National System of Innovation (NSI)

- **The NSTF is a valuable asset in the NSI.** It can ensure robust debate and encourage collaboration across silos. The NSTF is an instrument of democracy, encouraging free speech and critical voices.
- **The NSTF can play a coordinating and unifying role due to its independent and non-partisan nature.** This includes bridging some of the persistent gaps that exist within the SET landscape. The 'National System of Innovation' is difficult to quantify. This SET landscape is very complex and its diverse aspects cannot be contained within the mandate of a single government department. While statutory bodies have established channels, it is equally important that a broader stakeholder forum that includes civil society is formally heard and acknowledged by government. Research and consultation are essential for informed government decision making.
- **The NSTF represents most of the disparate research and information structures and creates a collaborative space.** Other organisations and structures do not play the same role as the NSTF which is more representative of the NSI, and strives to include all stakeholders.
- **The difference between the NSTF and government agencies.** The NSTF is not established in terms of an Act of Parliament, does not receive government grant funding, and is not compelled by law to

report to government, except where there are contractual obligations to do so. The role of the NSTF and its activities need to be understood against this background.

- **The NSTF occupies a niche in the SET landscape and can play a coordinating and unifying role**

The SET landscape is a complex one, with many role players for its size. South Africa has a strong science and engineering community, but it is small compared to the country's population. The NSTF occupies an important niche within this complex 'system'. It can play a coordinating and unifying role, making it easier to get an overview of and navigate the SET landscape.

2.3 THE GOVERNMENT SECTOR IS AN IMPORTANT STAKEHOLDER

The government sector is represented on the Exco by the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI), with additional Exco members from the National Advisory Council for Innovation (NACI) and the Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD). The NSTF brings together stakeholders in a 'quadruple helix' model, involving the government, industry, research and civil society sectors. It is important to have a channel for communication with the DSI, **which has always been the Director-General**, as well as to have channels to other government departments. The NSTF is non-partisan, and able to liaise with departments besides the DSI. **About 12 departments have mandates that involve research and innovation.** NSTF engages officials wherever possible in discussion events and provides feedback and recommendations.

3 STRATEGY STATEMENT

The NSTF Vision, Mandate, Mission, Values and Strategic Objectives

Vision

A transformed country where SET and innovation contribute to an optimal quality of life for all, where STEM and innovation education and training are effective, and SET professionals are representative of the population.

(SET = science, engineering and technology)

(STEM = science, technology, engineering and mathematics)

The NSTF Mandate

To represent a wide range of stakeholders in SET

The NSTF Mission

- Promoting SET and innovation
- Representing as close to 100% as possible of the National System of Innovation (NSI) stakeholders
- Networking stakeholders around SET-related issues
- Encouraging collaboration among stakeholders

NSTF's strategic objectives

1. **To promote dialogue among SET and innovation stakeholders.** across the public and private sectors, including engagement around SET-related policies, and providing an information hub for SET and innovation.
2. **To promote and celebrate excellence in SET and innovation,** SET capacity building and STEM education, and SET and innovation activities that can have a positive impact on society and contribute to sustainable development.
3. **To implement and support SET-related projects** that are multi-disciplinary and cross-cutting, where appropriate, especially outreach to the youth.

NSTF Values

- The democratic principles as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa
- Responsible and ethical behaviour
- Discussion, debate and diplomacy
- Collaborative and inclusive action

4 BACKGROUND OF THE NSTF

4.1 ABOUT THE NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FORUM (NSTF)

The NSTF is a broadly representative umbrella stakeholder body for SET

The NSTF is an umbrella stakeholder body that is broadly representative. It is for all organisations in South Africa with an interest in science, engineering, technology (SET) and innovation.

The NSTF is the largest and most representative stakeholder body of its kind, spanning both private and public sectors

The NSTF is the largest, oldest and most representative stakeholder body of its kind. It represents more than 100 organisations, councils and institutions. It spans both the private and public sectors. The NSTF consists of a formidable gathering of expertise and experience. The individual representatives of member organisations include:

- Researchers and scientists (in various disciplines)
- Engineers (in all branches of engineering)
- Entrepreneurs and businesspeople
- Technologists and technicians
- Administrators
- Academics and teachers

4.2 LEGAL STATUS

The NSTF is a non-profit company and non-profit organisation

The NSTF is a registered non-profit company (registration number 2007/029165/08). It is also registered as a non-profit organisation (registration number 92042) with the Department of Social Development, in compliance with the *Non-Profit Organisation Act, No. 71 of 1997*.

5 NSTF ACTIVITIES

5.1 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

To promote dialogue among SET and innovation stakeholders. across the public and private sectors, including engagement around SET-related policies, and providing an information hub for SET and innovation. The NSTF promotes debate and discussion among the various stakeholders in a number of ways:

- Discussion forums and events that address issues of cross-cutting interest to the SET community, including public SET-related policies
- Distributing SET news through the monthly newsletter (NSTF eNews)
- Through the NSTF website: www.nstf.org.za
- Through the NSTF social media platforms

DISCUSSION FORUMS/EVENTS

Addressing issues of cross-cutting interest including public SET-related policies: Five to six gatherings are held per year. The topics are of cross-cutting relevance to the public and the SET community. All presentations, videos, as well as reports of the discussions and recommendations, are published on the NSTF website. For every discussion event, a media release summarising the issues and themes that were discussed is produced and distributed, and available on the website. All of these actions contribute to fulfilling the NSTF's Vision and

Mission, namely to work towards a transformed country, promote SET and innovation, and network a wide variety of SET stakeholders.

DISTRIBUTING SET NEWS THROUGH THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER AND SOCIAL MEDIA

SET-related public policies, events and other South African SET news: The NSTF eNews focuses on SET-related public policies, SET events and a wide variety of SET news in South Africa, in addition to the NSTF and proSET news. The information is taken from various sources to give readers a monthly overview of news and activity in the SET landscape. The NSTF eNews is sent to more than 13 000 subscribers. NSTF and proSET news items are also distributed to various social media platforms.

5.2 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

To promote and celebrate excellence in SET and innovation, SET capacity building and STEM education, and SET and innovation activities that can have a positive impact on society and contribute to sustainable development. Through the prestigious annual NSTF Awards (currently called the NSTF-South32 Awards), the NSTF promotes and celebrates outstanding SET and innovation contributions. The awards encourage the involvement and participation of a wide range of SET organisations while raising awareness among the general public about local research and SET-related initiatives. They address government R&D targets by involving business, drawing attention to scarce skills and profiling role models. The awards also showcase role models for learners and students, inspiring them to pursue careers in SET.

Running the NSTF Awards process and gala dinner/s

Annual SET awards to encourage and reward excellence: The NSTF has been running the NSTF Awards annually since 1998. This includes all the arrangements, publicity and fundraising, as well as the adjudication process and associated youth outreach projects. The NSTF-South32 Awards honour and celebrate outstanding contributions to SET and innovation. The awards encourage and reward excellence in:

- Scientific research
- Technological innovation
- Environmental sustainability/Green economy
- Technology transfer
- Education and training
- Capacity building
- Management
- Communication and outreach

5.3 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

Implement and support SET-related projects that are multi-disciplinary and cross-cutting, where appropriate, especially outreach to the youth.

Current youth outreach projects are:

- The **Brilliants Programme** which celebrates the top performers in matric maths and science, and aims to motivate them to continue with studies for SET-related careers. The Brilliants programme includes sponsored bursaries to selected students. More information:

- The **Share 'n Dare programme** creates platforms for top researchers and other SET professionals to inform and inspire high school learners and university students. More information on: [The NSTF Share 'n Dare programme – NSTF](#) and [National Science and Technology Forum \(NSTF\) - YouTube](#)
- **Bursary directory and information for SET-related studies.** NSTF collects bursary information so that SET-related study funding can be found in one place for easy access. NSTF also provides information for learners and students on some of the many exciting careers that can be pursued. See: [Available Bursaries – NSTF](#) and [SET-Career-booklet.pdf \(nstf.org.za\)](#)
- **proSET (professional associations) sector of the NSTF** runs the following projects: the online learning tool [STEMulator](#); the proSET members booklet [Professional Bodies \(proSET\) – NSTF](#); and financial contributions towards proSET members' projects.

6 THE NSTF'S CORPORATE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

6.1 THE NSTF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD

There are representatives for the six sectors and government

Each member organisation is represented at the NSTF Annual General Meeting (AGM) by official representatives appointed by each organisation. Six of the sectors of membership each elect representatives to the Executive Committee (Exco), which meets about 5 times a year. Government representatives for DSI, NACI and DALRRD on the Exco are appointed by these government departments and agency. Members of the Exco are not paid for their services. The NSTF Board of Directors is a subset of the NSTF Executive Committee, i.e. some of the Exco members are appointed as Directors taking legal responsibility for NSTF as a registered non-profit company. There are currently (as of April 2022) 4 directors of the NSTF. The board meetings coincide with Exco meetings. For the list of current Exco members and directors, see [Structure – NSTF](#).

7 NSTF STAKEHOLDER BODIES IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING, TECHNOLOGY (SET) AND INNOVATION

7.1 STRUCTURE OF THE NSTF MEMBERSHIP AND APPROXIMATE MEMBER PROPORTION PER SECTOR

The diagram below shows the NSTF's membership sectors and approximate member proportion per sector as in 2022. Here the Business and State-Owned Enterprises (SOE) sectors have been combined.

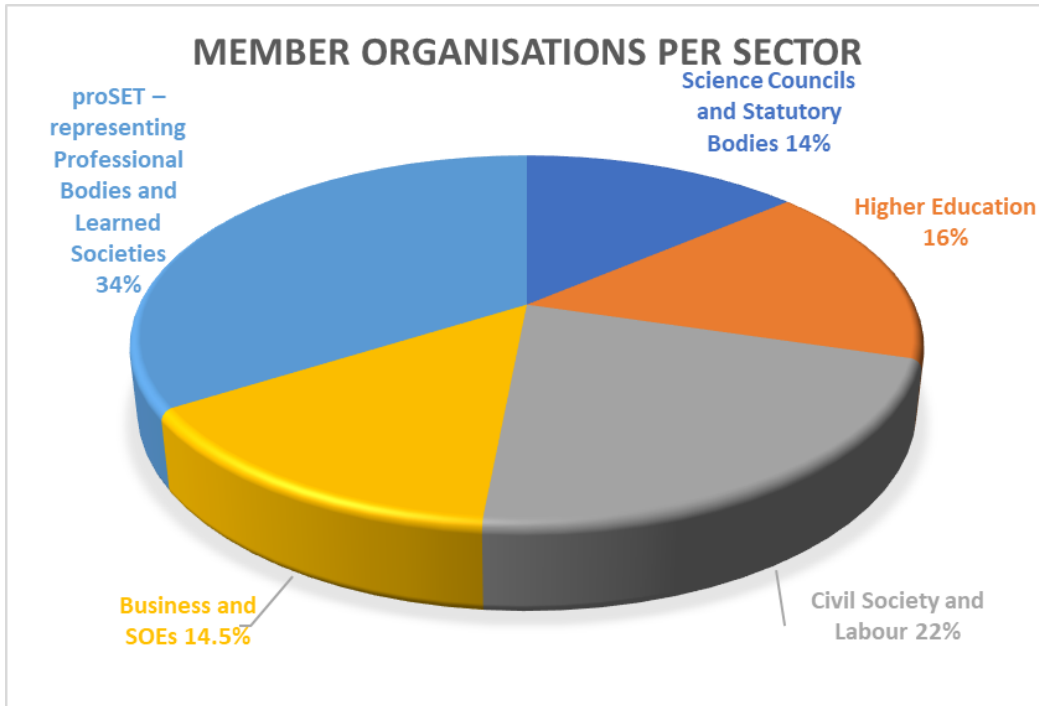


FIGURE 3. Membership sectors of the NSTF in 2022

NSTF represents substantial number of NSI stakeholders. The NSTF represents a substantial number of stakeholders of the 'NSI'. These include:

- Wherever scientific research is undertaken
- Wherever new technologies are being applied and developed
- Wherever science teaching is taking place
- Wherever science awareness is raised
- Wherever young people are being trained in new technologies

The NSTF strives to represent as close to 100% as possible of the NSI stakeholders.