

NATIONAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FORUM (NSTF)
MINUTES OF THE 2025 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

Date: 7 November 2025

Time: 10:00-12:00

Venue: Zoom meeting

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The NSTF Chairperson, Prof Jeffrey Mphahlele, opened the meeting and welcomed everyone present.

A moment of silence was observed for Mr Dawie Botha, who passed away on 1 September 2025. Mr Botha was the first and immediate past chairperson of the NSTF proSET (Professionals in science, engineering and technology) sector and a longstanding NSTF Executive Committee (Exco) member. At the NSTF-South32 Awards gala dinner on 31 July 2025, Mr Botha received the NSTF Ukhozi Award for his exceptional contribution to the NSTF and for championing civil engineering in South Africa (SA).

The Chairperson reflected that there had been several changes in Exco membership over the previous year. Mr Denis Hunt, who had been the Chairperson of the NSTF Adjudication Panel and a Director of the NSTF NPC (non-profit company), resigned from Exco and received a special tribute at a previous NSTF-South32 Awards event. Prof Gillian Drennan was now chairing the Adjudication Panel.

Ms Jansie Niehaus (NSTF Executive Director) reached retirement age and her contract was renewed for a year. In due course, Exco would make an announcement on succession arrangements.

1.1 Apologies: Thirty-two individuals from 24 member organisations sent apologies for the AGM (see Appendix B).

1.2 Quorum: Ms Mankwe Mojapelo (NSTF Events and Committees Officer) reported that 92 of the 149 member organisations accepted the invitation to attend the AGM, a response rate of 62.16%; 103 individual representatives of member organisations registered to attend.

The Chairperson explained that it would only be possible to confirm at the end of the meeting whether the AGM was quorate as this depended on the proportion of the total membership that was present. Ms Mojapelo reported that there were 74 participants logged in at the start of the meeting, and the Chairperson confirmed that it was in order for the meeting to proceed.

1.3 Adoption of the agenda: The agenda was adopted without alterations.

Proposed: Mr Tony Parry

Seconded: Mr Johan Maartens

2. CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS AGM AND MATTERS ARISING

2.1 Confirmation of the minutes of the AGM of 8 November 2024: The minutes of the previous AGM on 8 November 2024 were taken as read. The minutes had been distributed a month before the meeting, as required by law, and were reviewed at an Exco meeting. The minutes were adopted with the following correction:

- Item 3.1 (Audit for financial year 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024): the fifth bullet must be corrected to read "Revenue declined from R6,132,875 in 2023 to R5,701,415 in 2024".

Proposed: Prof Ali Dhansay

Seconded: Mr Johan Maartens

2.2 Matters arising: There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. POSITION OF CHAIRPERSON

The Chairperson had announced earlier in the year that he would not be available to stand for a second term. This would thus be the last AGM that he would be chairing.

Ms Niehaus presented the procedure for the selection of the next NSTF Chairperson. In accordance with the NSTF's Memorandum of Incorporation (MOI), nominations were invited from NSTF member organisations; any individual within a member organisation could submit a nomination.

Six nominations were received. Exco reviewed all nominations and conducted a vote. Exco resolved to recommend a candidate for appointment as Chairperson; the candidate receiving the most Exco votes was Prof Nnenesi Kgabi, and the second-highest number of votes were for Prof Stephanie Burton.

The Exco recommendation to appoint Prof Nnenesi Kgabi as Chairperson was presented to the AGM for ratification. AGM members were invited to submit questions or comments; in the absence of objections, concurrence with the Exco recommendation would be assumed and the appointment would proceed.

Prof Thanyani Pandelani (University of South Africa – UNISA) asked for clarification of the voting process within Exco. Ms Niehaus explained that voting took place by email.

Resolution: The appointment of Prof Nnenesi Kgabi as NSTF Chairperson was ratified.

The outgoing Chairperson reflected on the past three years, noting that the NSTF remains on the right path. Membership has continued to grow, increasing from 140 members last year to nearly 150, and the award categories have expanded over the same period.

The period also saw the participation of new organisations, including the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), and the introduction of the first Clinician-Scientist Award. The National Intellectual Property Management Office (NIPMO) expanded the categories of its awards, and this year the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) also presented an award. These developments were highlighted as clear signals of confidence in the NSTF.

The Chairperson further noted the significance of the address by the Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation at the NSTF-South32 Awards event, marking a new chapter for the organisation. The NSTF has the opportunity to rethink and reimagine its mandate, scope and role, not only within the provinces and the broader science community, but also within the wider communities of South Africa. The NSTF is expected to continue growing and to be recognised by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) and other key public and private stakeholders as a force to be reckoned with. The Chairperson extended his best wishes to Prof Kgabi for her term of office, together with an assurance of continued support.

In accepting the appointment as incoming NSTF Chairperson, Prof Nnenesi Kgabi thanked NSTF members for the confidence shown in her.

Ms Wilna Eksteen (NSTF Chief Operations Officer) placed the announcement of the new Chairperson in the chat function, and a formal statement would be published after the AGM.

Ms Niehaus welcomed Prof Kgabi, noting that she was already serving the NSTF and had been a valuable asset on Exco for the past two years. The NSTF was now 30 years old, and looked forward to working with Prof Kgabi in leading the organisation into the new decade.

4. FINANCIAL MATTERS

4.1 Audited financial statements for 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025: Ms Niehaus presented the audited annual financial statements for the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. The financial statements are on the NSTF website under the AGM tab and are required to be presented at the AGM. The presentation highlighted:

- The NSTF had received a clean unqualified audit.
- The value of the non-current assets stood at R148,996, having increased slightly since the previous year.

- The current assets totalled R12,947,808. proSET financial assets had decreased from R3.03 million to R2.73 million due to justifiable expenditure. The DSTI financial assets had decreased from R7.73 million to R5.61 million. Ms Niehaus commented that the decline was not especially meaningful, representing the dynamic flow of funds depending on the projects that the NSTF was managing on behalf of the DSTI. Because of the declines in some of the current asset categories, the overall current assets were lower than in the previous financial year, dropping from R14,578,318 to R12,947,808.
- Equity totalled R3,132,130, which was slightly higher than in 2024. The opening equity for the NSTF was R65,418. The Bursary Reserve Fund was separately accounted for and stood at R319,598.
- Liabilities decreased to R9,964,674, from R11,756,168 in 2024. This included R2.9 million of ringfenced proSET funding, as well as funds held on behalf of the DSTI worth R5.9 million.
- Between 2024 and 2025, revenue increased from R5.3 million to R6.0 million, while other income almost doubled from R550,000 to R1.7 million. Operating expenses increased to R8.0 million, from R6.7 million in 2024, resulting in an operating deficit of R259,142 for 2025, compared with a deficit of R801,753 for 2024.
- Investment revenue was very similar for the current and previous financial years at R305,867 in 2025, compared with R315,013 in 2024.
- The NSTF had a small overall surplus of R46,725 in 2025, compared to a deficit of R486,740 in the 2024 financial year.
- With respect to the statement of changes in equity, total equity decreased from R3,529,382 at the end of the 2023 financial year, to R3,063,849 in 2024, and then increased slightly to R3,132,130 in 2025.

Ms Niehaus invited comments and questions on the audited financial statements.

Mr Richard Gundersen (proSET Committee and STEMulator.org) asked what the DSTI reserve, worth R5.9 million in 2025, was used for. Ms Niehaus responded that this was contractual funding for administrative tasks conducted for the DSTI, mostly related to the science, technology and innovation Decadal Plan, especially for DSTI communication and for their branding strategy. The NSTF spends several million rand per year on behalf of the DSTI.

Ms Niehaus noted that the DSTI's use of the NSTF as an implementing partner reflects confidence in the NSTF's processes and its independence. She explained that the NSTF undertakes projects within the science and technology domain that align with the NSTF's mandate. All such activities are reported in detail to Exco, ensuring oversight. The NSTF receives a small administrative fee for managing these projects, which supports the organisation's non-profit activities.

The Chairperson clarified that DSTI-funded projects are often multi-year, which complicates annual expenditure figures because projects may span several financial years. Expenditure in any given year depends on the DSTI's requests to execute specific project phases. Funds cannot be spent without the DSTI's direction or instruction. Ms Niehaus further stated that all these activities are governed by formal contracts that specify the purpose of the funding, the budget and how it will be spent, and the NSTF assists the DSTI in managing these projects.

Resolution: The annual audited financial statements for the financial year 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025 were approved.

4.2 **Appointment of auditors for the financial year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026:** Ms Niehaus presented a proposal to appoint Middel and Partners as auditors for the financial year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. She pointed out that Middel and Partners are the incumbent auditors and have provided consistently good service.

Ms Niehaus noted that while best practice encourages periodic auditor rotation, there is no legal requirement to do so. Middel and Partners were considered well suited to the role as they understand the complexities of working with the NSTF, which is neither a business nor a government institution. It was further noted that the audit work is undertaken by a team within the firm rather than a single individual. A link to the firm's website was provided for reference.

Ms Niehaus invited comments and questions.

Prof Thanyani Pandelani (UNISA) asked how long the NSTF had been using Middel and Partners. Ms Niehaus responded that the NSTF had been using them for about ten years.

Resolution: The appointment of Middel and Partners as the auditors for the financial year 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 was approved.

5. LAUNCH OF THE 2024/2025 NSTF ANNUAL REPORT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT ON ACTIVITIES

Ms Niehaus presented the NSTF's Annual Report for 2024/2025.

The 30th anniversary of the NSTF was marked with a bumper issue of the annual report. The front cover highlights the International Year of Quantum Science and Technology; a discussion forum on this theme is planned, and it was celebrated at the NSTF-South32 Awards.

The report opens with an overview of the NSTF as a stakeholder forum with representation from both the public and private sectors. It is registered as a non-profit company and a non-profit organisation, with oversight from both the CIPC and the Department of Social Development (DSD). Transformation remains a priority for the NSTF. The NSTF positions itself as a unique, independent platform in a complex and often divided political environment, in which it maintains a position of neutrality. Activities are inclusive and collaborative, reflecting openness, independence and a collaborative energy, and are regarded as an investment in democracy.

Membership sectors include business and state-owned enterprises, civil society, NGOs and labour; higher education; science councils and statutory bodies, and professional societies.

The vision (which was slightly amended during the revision of the NSTF's strategy the previous year) reaffirms a transformed country where STEM and innovation education and training are effective; where science, engineering and technology (SET) professionals are representative of the population; and where SET and innovation contribute to an optimal quality of life for all. (STEM = science, technology, engineering and mathematics.)

eNews: Ms Niehaus reported that the NSTF eNews function was brought in-house last year and is now produced by the communications team led by Mr Barnard Manne (Communications and Media Liaison Manager), supported by a team of interns. The eNews serves a dual purpose: informing members about NSTF activities and providing a comprehensive source of South African science and technology news. Content includes policy updates, opinion pieces, news from proSET member organisations, science councils, statutory bodies and universities, as well as SET events and NSTF-specific updates.

The eNews was distributed to a database averaging 15,306 contacts, with a peak of 21,000 subscribers during the period, a 14% increase year on year. A total of 115 electronic communications were issued (a 140% increase), comprising 11 e-newsletters, three notifications of radio and TV interviews, 83 announcements related to the NSTF-South32 Awards and discussion forums, and 19 media releases profiling award winners aligned to relevant commemorative days. The communications team prepares and edits these releases.

Engagement grew strongly. Average monthly clicks rose to 4,888, up 146% from the previous year. More than 2,000 relevant news items were shared, a 38% increase, and regional engagement improved, evidenced by a 135% rise in click-through rate. The unique read rate was approximately 52% (up 2%), while the unique click rate improved to 34% (up 61%), exceeding the NGO sector benchmark of 29%. Opinion pieces appeared roughly every second month, including contributions from Ms Fhumulani Ratshitanga (CEO of FruitSA and NSTF Exco member) and Prof Irvy (Igle) Gledhill (Visiting Adjunct Professor at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and 2023 Science Diplomacy for Africa award recipient), with additional pieces authored by Ms Niehaus.

Discussion forums: Five discussion forum events were held during the financial year. Topics covered included the Energy Crisis; Current Challenges in South Africa's Research, Development and

Innovation (RDI) systems; STEM education (academic and vocational); Modernising Agriculture (with successes and lessons from the Agricultural Bio-economy Innovation Partnership Programme – ABIPP); and the Public Relationship with Science (SAPRS) Conference. Continuing professional development (CPD) points continued to be awarded for SACNASP-registered professionals and are now also granted to professionals registered with the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA), and accreditation to issue CPD points for the Institute of IT Professionals South Africa (IITPSA) was expected soon. Details of programmes, speakers, summaries and key statistics are available in the annual report and on the website.

Participation totalled 939 individuals across the five events, with attendees from all nine provinces and occasional international logins. Gauteng accounted for roughly half of participants, the Western Cape 12%, KwaZulu-Natal slightly less, and the remainder distributed across the other provinces. The sectors were fairly evenly represented overall: higher education comprised about 25%, with strong participation from science councils / statutory bodies, business, and government – accounting for 15-17% each; and civil society (NGOs and labour) at 9%. There were also 4% participants from state-owned enterprises. Most forums were held online, with one in-person event.

Demographic data indicated that approximately 61% of attendees were black. Gender representation was broadly balanced at around 48% female and 44% male, with the remainder unspecified.

The Public Relationship with Science (SAPRS) conference, organised for the DSTI in March 2025, included facilitated breakaway groups and generated extensive outcome reports. A follow-up panel discussion is planned as part of Science Forum South Africa (SFSA).

NSTF-South32 Awards: The Awards were reported under the strategic objective to recognise, reward and promote excellence in SET and innovation, with the slogan, “Today’s research... tomorrow’s innovation”. Established in 1998, this year marked the 27th anniversary of the Awards and the 10th year of partnership with South32, formed following BHP Billiton’s divestment. The unique trophy, 3D-printed in titanium, remains a distinctive feature of the programme.

The 2024/2025 Awards were broadcast live on 31 July 2025 from simultaneous gala dinners at the Cape Town International Convention Centre and the Sandton Convention Centre, with an accompanying YouTube stream. In-person attendance reached a record 792 guests (529 in Johannesburg and 263 in Cape Town), representing a 9% increase year on year. The event was attended by the Minister of STI, the Deputy Minister and the newly appointed Director-General. The Minister’s speech emphasised a new policy focus to place STI at the centre of government, education, industry and society, and called on key role players in the public science system, including the NSTF, to help ensure high-impact scientific work is known and appreciated at grassroots level. The Minister affirmed his confidence that South Africa’s scientific talent can deliver sustainable solutions and contribute to a better country through STI.

A new award category sponsored by the ARC was introduced, with the first winner announced. Engagement indicators were strong: the online recording of the awards gala dinners attracted almost 4,000 views (predominantly post-event) and nearly 200 organisations were represented among the attendees. NSTF surveys reflected very positive feedback on the event and broadcast. The *Mail & Guardian* produced a 16-page supplement titled “*SET for a quantum leap – Celebrating 30 years of excellence*”, supported by advertising. Ms Niehaus thanked the NSTF member organisations that had advertised in the *Mail & Guardian* and *Business Report*.

Brilliants Programme: The Brilliants Programme identifies and celebrates future leadership in STEM. It recognises first-year university students who achieved outstanding results in physical science and mathematics during the matric examinations and are enrolled in STEM-related courses. The programme typically acknowledges at least 18 students annually (two per province, a boy and a girl); this year 19 were selected. While the programme does not select on the basis of race, the proportion of black students in the cohort has increased over the years. The programme was sponsored by the DSTI, South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions (SACNASP) and South32.

The selected cohort achieved an average of 97% in mathematics and physical sciences in the previous year’s matric examinations. Of the 19 students, 10 are studying medicine, four engineering and five other science-related qualifications. Their university distribution is: eight at the University of Cape Town

(UCT); three at Stellenbosch University (SU); two at Wits; two at the University of Johannesburg (UJ); two at the University of the Free State (UFS); and one each at the University of Pretoria (UP) and North-West University (NWU).

Students' public school origins are spread across all five school quintiles, as defined by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to indicate levels of school resourcing. Learners from the lower-resourced quintiles 1–3 comprise the majority (63%) of the group, while those from quintile 5 represent about a quarter. All but three students also took life sciences in grade 12, with an average mark of 94%.

In parallel, the Brilliants Programme includes a bursary component. The DSTI provides annual funding support to selected students, as well as to designated students of the Minister's choice. These are once-off, partial bursaries with no repayment obligation, intended to help students navigate the challenges of their first year of higher-education studies. Despite some students holding full bursaries, administrative delays and funding glitches can cause hardship, and the NSTF provides limited supplementary assistance where needed.

The NSTF continued its partnership with the London International Youth Science Forum (LIYSF) for the third year, sending six students to participate in the two-week programme in London, United Kingdom (UK). The students represented South Africa with distinction, participated fully in lectures and activities, carried the national flag at the opening ceremony, and undertook science tours to world-class laboratories, including engagements with Nobel Prize Laureates.

Youth outreach: Youth outreach activities were conducted in conjunction with award winners where feasible. The scope of these activities remained limited due to the lack of dedicated funding. Despite these constraints, outreach was carried out at three events, with four award winners participating. A total of 13 schools were reached, engaging 601 learners and 16 educators.

Bursary and STEM Careers Directory: Bursary and career information is maintained on the NSTF website under the Bursaries and Youth tabs. The bursary pages list both undergraduate and postgraduate opportunities from a variety of providers, many of whom are not formal partners, and are kept updated as a service to learners. A separate list of companies that regularly offer STEM bursaries is provided to help learners and students identify opportunities and potential employers.

Career resources include monthly online profiles of award winners as role models, which are kept permanently on the website, and video career talks published on the website and YouTube for learners, students and the public. The *Science-Based Career Fields* booklet describes about 130 STEM-related careers, presented with an accessible categorisation. It incorporates correlated careers from the STEMulator.org platform and is used in collaboration with the STEMulator.org. Recent video talks have covered careers such as radio astronomy and clinician-scientist pathways in obstetrics and gynaecology, highlighting associated research roles.

Ms Niehaus invited comments and questions:

Prof Thanyani Pandelani (UNISA) commended the exciting work being done by the NSTF to expand the perspectives of school learners.

Mr Tauqeer Ahmed (South African Institution of Civil Engineering – SAICE) enquired if the NSTF was leveraging the Eskom Expo for Young Scientists, which he considered an excellent platform that needs more exposure. He observed the high calibre of the submissions to the expo, including projects on smart technologies and AI.

Ms Niehaus responded that the Expo for Young Scientists was an NSTF member and had twice won an NSTF award. The STEMulator.org was exploring opportunities for collaboration with the Expo.

Dr Priscilla Mensah (Nelson Mandela University – NMU) noted that NMU, together with Rhodes University (RU), launched the Eastern Cape Postgraduate Funding Fair two years ago, aimed at connecting students with various funding opportunities for postgraduate studies. In the current year, over 20 funders participated in the funding fair, and the next event was scheduled for 15 May 2026. Dr Mensah suggested this as a possible platform in the Eastern Cape for the NSTF to showcase its initiatives.

6. MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The NSTF currently has 149 members, which was an increase of nine members since the last AGM. There were 63 invitations were issued for membership, and six organisations were recruited by the NSTF. Ms Niehaus welcomed the 12 new member organisations, as follows, and encouraged them to become actively involved in the activities of the NSTF and to use the opportunities to grow professionally and to make their organisations visible:

1. Vuligqondo Innovation Networking Platform – under Civil Society/NPOs (applied for membership and approved by Exco)
2. Mthethwamatics – under Civil Society/NPOs (applied for membership pending approval from Exco)
3. Green Shoots – under Business, SMMEs (applied for membership)
4. Alpvest Institute for FutureTech (Pty) Ltd (AIFT) – under Higher Education (applied for membership and approved by Exco)
5. South African National Institute of Rock Engineering (SANIRE) – under proSET (recruited)
6. International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE SA) – under proSET (recruited)
7. Afrigen Biologics (Pty) Ltd – under Business, SMMEs (recruited)
8. Aggregate and Sand Producers Association of Southern Africa (ASPASA) – under Business Associations (recruited)
9. Goldfields TVET College – under Higher Education (applied for membership and approved by Exco)
10. National Research Foundation (NRF) – under Science Councils (recruited)
11. Society for Asphalt Technology (SAT) – under proSET (recruited)
12. Sibayeni Metrofarming – under Business, SMMEs (applied for membership and approved by Exco)

The membership spanned six sectors, mostly from the private sector, but with a good balance from the public sector to make the NSTF a broadly representative forum. The biggest growth had been in proSET membership, which accounted for 35% of members, representing professional bodies and learned societies; higher education 18%; civil society and labour 16%; science councils and statutory bodies 13%; business 13%; and state-owned enterprises 5%.

The following members resigned since the last AGM:

1. Sibayeni Metrofarming – under Business, SMMEs
2. AfricaBio – under Civil Society/NPOs
3. Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) – under Statutory Bodies

7. NSTF-SOUTH32 AWARDS 2025/2026

Ms Niehaus reported that the call for nominations for the next Awards was at an advanced stage of preparation and would be released the following week. This would be the 28th round of the awards.

7.1 2025/2026 Awards Adjudication Panel members: Ms Niehaus reported that nominations are being sought for the 2026 NSTF Awards Adjudication Panel. The call for nominations was circulated with the AGM notice, and eligibility criteria are available on the NSTF website. The panel will comprise representatives from all the NSTF sectors, with each sector asked to nominate both a main and an alternate representative. Exco would make the final selections. Members who have not yet submitted electronic nominations were urged to do so as soon as possible.

Volunteers are also invited to serve on the Awards Committee, which is responsible for planning the Awards event, including decisions on decor and publicity. Individuals with relevant skills or related responsibilities in their organisations who wish to contribute to this NSTF initiative are encouraged to make contact.

7.2 New awards: The annual theme for 2026 is Healthy Ageing, with a special theme award for outstanding contributions in this field.

A new Research Software category is being introduced, comprising two awards: one for research software in any field of science (including the social sciences and humanities) and another specifically for human language technologies (HLT). The category is sponsored by the South African Centre for Digital Language Resources (SADiLaR), which has long championed recognition for research software in its area of speciality and is also supporting the broader, cross-disciplinary award.

The new category aims to highlight and recognise the often “invisible” contributions of research software, much of which is developed locally to enable cutting-edge research. This focus complements existing awards that recognise behind-the-scenes enablers of research, such as the Data for Research Award and the longstanding Management Award.

8. TOPICS AND THEMES

- 8.1 Theme for 2026:** As announced under item 7, the annual theme for 2026 is Healthy Ageing. The theme has broad scope, and a discussion forum on Healthy Ageing is planned.
- 8.2 Call for suggestions of topics and speakers for discussion forums:** A discussion forum would be held on the 2026 annual theme of Healthy Ageing. Members were invited to suggest topics and speakers for discussion forums.

9. proSET (PROFESSIONALS IN SCIENCE, ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY)

Mr Johan Maartens presented the proSET report.

- 9.1 Finances:** Half of the proSET fund was previously moved from the shares’ portfolio to a fixed deposit account, and this year it was decided by the proSET Committee to move the remaining half of the fund to a fixed deposit account as well. This is in light of the poor performance of the shares’ portfolio. The proSET fund, inherited from the former AS&TS Fund¹, declined by approximately R300,000 in 2024/25, to R2.7million, and was being used mainly for administration, and for support and development of the STEMulator.

Additional sources of funds would have to be identified to cover the cost of work allocated to proSET. A business plan was drafted for that purpose and circulated for comment by proSET members. Based on the plan, a draft marketing and fundraising Plan had been developed and still had to be discussed among members. A meeting of proSET members was being scheduled to consider ways of raising additional funds.

- 9.2 New members:** The following new members had joined proSET since the previous AGM:

1. Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa (EAPASA)
2. International Council on Systems Engineering (INCOSE SA)
3. South African National Institute of Rock Engineering (SANIRE)
4. South African Statistical Association (SASA)
5. Society for Asphalt Technology (SAT)

- 9.3 proSET discussion forum:** proSET convened a discussion forum on the topic of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) on 27–28 August 2025, and the presentations could be viewed on the NSTF website.

- 9.4 STEMulator.org:** Mr Gundersen reported that the STEMulator.org had been in existence for five years and aims to become a household name among South African high school learners considering their future careers. Developed as a proSET initiative and partly funded from historical reserves, the platform has now been placed in the public domain and is freely

¹ AS&TS stands for Associated Scientific and Technical Societies of South Africa, a former organisation that was instrumental in advancing science and technology in South Africa. After being disbanded, its funds were transferred to the NSTF, specifically to the proSET sub-committee, which now uses the funds for projects consistent with the original mission of the AS&TS.

available, which is a significant milestone. The tagline is “Explore, discover, learn – The hidden world revealed.”

The STEMulator.org is a unique digital landscape enabling exploration of the built environment, living organisms and complex systems through interactive, animated content. It uses a language-free visual navigation system to support learners who are not fully literate in English, allowing intuitive “click-and-reveal” discovery. Approximately 65% of South African learners have internet connectivity, presenting a substantial opportunity to engage them via the STEMulator.org and encourage them to continue their studies in mathematics and science. Recent donations have supported the addition of a dedicated “school” tile and broader content expansion.

To improve the reach and insight into the target audience, users are encouraged to complete the pop-up visitors’ form indicating how they heard about the platform. Most visitors currently arrive by typing the URL directly, making referral sources difficult to track, though some traffic is now coming via ChatGPT, which is promising for global visibility. Mr Gundersen personally responds to each person that registers on the site.

The platform is fully established and continues to invite professions and organisations to be featured. Collaborations included: the Southern African Institute for Industrial Engineering (SAIIE), the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI); the National Scientific Collections Facility (NSCF); the Geological Society of South Africa (GSSA); the ARC; and the Corrosion Institute of Southern Africa (CorrISA) (to be featured in the water pipeline journey, illustrating corrosion issues). Logos from supporting organisations are placed on relevant content pages with hyperlinks to their websites. Universities are also profiled on career guidance pages, and can guide learners on where to study for particular professions.

To improve usability and access, mobile apps are available on Android and Apple, with a Huawei version under development and expected before the end of the year. A gamified approach is also being developed to introduce scoring based on time spent on the site, enabling learners to challenge one another in school settings and encouraging exploration across the platform.

Science centres in Cape Town (Cape Town Science Centre) and Johannesburg (Sci-Bono Discovery Centre) are establishing permanent displays featuring a looping video that becomes fully interactive when users engage with the mouse, reverting to the loop when inactive. This is expected to expand exposure across schools. Mr Gundersen appealed to NSTF members to help promote the STEMulator.org platform, noting the shared objective of attracting more young people into STEM disciplines.

10. SCIENCE COUNCILS AND STATUTORY BODIES SECTOR

Prof Norman Maiwashe presented the progress report from the Science Councils and Statutory Bodies Sector Committee.

- **Membership:** Membership remains stable at 18 members. Two organisations resigned during 2024, namely the ETDP SETA and the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO). Long-standing NSTF member, the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) became the newest member in 2025, having previously resorted under proSET.

10.1 Committee meetings: There were two scheduled meetings during the year, and a third meeting was scheduled for 11 November 2025. There was active participation in the meetings, and members were encouraged to attend.

10.2 Science Councils discussion forum: A discussion forum on the topic of “Climate, environment, water and food” was held as a virtual event on 1–2 October 2025, with 12 speakers from 11 organisations, among whom were several recipients of NSTF-South32 Awards. Video recordings and slides of the presentations are available on the NSTF website. The Committee expresses its appreciation to NSTF Management and staff who ensured that

the discussion was a success. The generosity of member organisations in availing its experts is appreciated.

11. GENERAL AND CLOSURE OF AGM

12.1 Science Forum SA (SFSA) 2025: The NSTF would be participating in the SFSA on 25–28 November 2025.

12.2 Planned events: An Indigenous Knowledge (IK) Summit is planned for March 2026 together with the DSTI.

12.3 Closure of the AGM

Ms Mojapelo (NSTF Secretariat) confirmed that the meeting had been quorate throughout, with attendance peaking at over 80; 50.68% of member organisations had been represented at the AGM.

The Chairperson thanked the NSTF Management and Secretariat for their support during his term of office. Ms Niehaus thanked Prof Mphahlele as outgoing Chairperson for his leadership over the past three years.

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and closed the meeting at 12:00.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS IN ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**Member organisations**

Organisation	Name	Sector
Agricultural Research Council – ARC	Prof Norman Maiwashe	Science Councils
Association of Municipal Electricity Utilities – AMEU	Mr Veer Ramnarain	Business
Black Women in Science – BWIS	Ms Cassandra Moodley	proSET
Cape Bio Pharms	Miss Tamlyn Shaw	Business
CapeBio SA	Mr Daniel Ndima	Business
Cengen (Pty) Ltd	Mr Francois Smit	Business
Centre for the Advancement of Science & Mathematics Education – CASME	Mr Mbongiseni Gumede	Civil Societies
Chamber of Engineering Technology – COET	Mr PS Moncur	proSET
Consulting Engineers South Africa – CESA	Mr Chris Campbell	proSET
Council for Mineral Technology – MINTEK	Mr Tumi Ngqondo	Science Councils
Council for Mineral Technology – MINTEK	Miss Siphelele Mafuleka	Science Councils
Council for Scientific Industrial Research – CSIR	Ms Hunadi Mokgalaka	Science Councils
Council for Scientific Industrial Research – CSIR	Dr Ndumiso Cingo	Science Councils
Central University of Technology – CUT	Prof Samson Mashele	Higher Education
Durban University of Technology – DUT	Ms Nomnikelo Patience Lundall	Higher Education
Engineering Council of South Africa – ECSA	Ms Basetsana Khoza	proSET
Entomological Society of South Africa – ESSA	Dr Charlene Janion-Scheepers	proSET
Environmental Assessment Practitioners Association of South Africa – EAPASA	Dr Patrick Sithole	proSET
Fertilizer Association of Southern Africa – Fertasa	Dr Pieter Haumann	Business
Forestry South Africa – FSA	Mr Stefan Links	Business
GreenMatter	Mrs Neo Ntshobane	Civil Society
Green Shoots	Mr Mark Swartz	Business
HORTGRO (Pty) Ltd	Mr Marno van der Westhuizen	Business
Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers South Africa – IEEE SA	Dr Udochukwu Bola Akuru	proSET
International Council on Systems Engineering – INCOSE SA	Dr Basie Jansen	proSET
Mineral Councils South Africa	Mr Christian Teffo	Business
Mthethwamatics	Dr Siyabonga Dubazana	Civil Society
National Health Laboratory Service – NHLS	Mr Khuliso Ravhuhali	State-owned Enterprises
National Metrology Institute of South Africa – NMISA	Dr Jayne de Vos	State-owned Enterprises
National Research Foundation – NRF	Dr Mamoeletsi Mosia	Science Councils
Nelson Mandela University – NMU	Dr Priscilla Mensah	Higher Education
North-West University – NWU	Prof Nnenesi Kgabi	Higher Education
Sci-Bono Discovery Centre	Mr Akash Dusrath	Civil Society
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University – SMU	Prof Mapaseka Seheri	Higher Education

Organisation	Name	Sector
Society for Automation, Instrumentation, Mechatronics and Computer Engineering – SAIMC NPC	Mr Johan Maartens	proSET
South African Academy of Science and Arts – SAASA	Prof Hannes Rautenbach	proSET
South African Institute of Agricultural Engineers – SAIAE	Mr Senzo Masikane	proSET
South African Academy of Engineering – SAAE	Dr Christine Render	proSET
South African Association for Food Science and Technology – SAAFoST	Ms Ingrid Woodrow	proSET
South African Association for Theoretical and Applied Mechanics – SAAM	Prof Thanyani Pandelani	proSET
South African Chemical Institute – SACI	Dr Xolani Nocanda	proSET
South African Council for Natural Scientific Professions – SACNASP	Mrs Sarah van Aardt	proSET
South African Environmental Observation Network – SAEON	Prof Thomas Bornman	Statutory Bodies
South African Genetics Society – SAGS	Dr Lerato Diseko	proSET
South African Institute of Electrical Engineers – SAIEE	Ms Tshego Cornelius	proSET
South African Institute of Physics – SAIP	Dr Brian Masara	proSET
South African Institution of Chemical Engineers – SAIChE	Prof David Lokhat	proSET
South African Institution of Civil Engineering – SAICE	Mr Tauqeer Ahmed	proSET
South African Mathematics Foundation – SAMF	Mr Patrick Rasehwete	proSET
South African Medical Research Council – SAMRC	Dr Kwazikwakhe Gabuza	Science Councils
South African National Biodiversity Institute – SANBI	Dr Mamadi Theresa Sethusa	Science Councils
South African National Institute of Rock Engineering – SANIRE	Mr Obakeng Rakumakoe	proSET
South African Nuclear Energy Corporation SOC Limited – Necsa	Dr Mpho Lekgoathi	State-owned Enterprises
South African Society for Agricultural Extension – SASAE	Mr Mzomninzi Witness Mdladlamba	proSET
South African Society for Animal Science – SASAS	Prof Carina Visser	proSET
South African Society of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology – SASBMB	Prof Jo-Anne de la Mare	proSET
South African Space Agency – SANSA	Dr Naledzani Mudau	Statutory Bodies
South African Statistical Association – SASA	Prof Michael von Maltitz	proSET
South African Young Academy of Science – SAYAS	Dr Avela Majavu	proSET
South African National Energy Development Institute – SANEDI	Mr Funanani Netshitomboni	State-owned Enterprises
South32 SA (Pty) Ltd	Mr Kabelo Mphake	Business
Southern African Association for Research of Maths, Science and Technology & Education – SAARMSTE	Prof Marissa Rollnick	proSET
Southern African Institute for Industrial Engineering – SAIEE	Mrs Chantelle du Plessis	proSET
Southern African Society for Plant Pathology –SASPP	Dr Cheryl Lennox	proSET

Organisation	Name	Sector
Southern African Institute of Mining and Metallurgy – SAIMM	Mr Kondwani Banda	proSET
Sol Plaatje University – SPU	Mrs Anthea Poss	Higher Education
University of South Africa – UNISA	Prof Azwihangwisi Mavhandu-Mudzusi	Higher Education
Universities South Africa – USAf	Prof Stephanie Burton	Statutory Bodies
University of Johannesburg	Prof Victoria Graham	Higher Education
University of Limpopo Science Centre	Mr Sandikle Rikhotso	Civil Societies
University of Pretoria	Adv Lawrence Baloyi	Higher Education
University of Stellenbosch	Ms Maryke Hunter-Husselmann	Higher Education
University of the Witwatersrand	Prof Brett Bowman	Higher Education
University of the Western Cape – UWC	Prof Mosa Selepe	Higher Education
Vaal University of Technology – VUT	Mr David Mauchline	Higher Education

Exco and committee members

Organisation	Name	Position	Sector
Society for Automation, Instrumentation, Mechatronics and Computer Engineering – SAIMC NPC	Mr Johan Maartens	proSET Committee	proSET
Fruit Mzanzi Africa t/a Fruit South Africa	Mrs Fhumulani Ratshitanga	Exco	Business
University of the Witwatersrand	Prof Marissa Rollnick	Exco	Higher Education
South African Medical Research Council – AMRC	Prof Ali Dhansay	Exco	Science Councils
South African Nuclear Energy Corporation SOC Limited – Necsa	Dr Mpho Lekgoathi	Deputy Chairperson	State-owned Enterprises
South African Chemical Institute – SACI	Prof Helen Drummond	proSET main Representative	proSET
Institute of Information Technology Professionals South Africa – IITPSA	Mr Tony Parry	proSET Committee	proSET
STEMulator NPC	Dr Gerda Botha	STEMulator	proSET
Nelson Mandela University – NMU	Dr Priscilla Mensah	Exco	Higher Education
Agricultural Research Council – ARC	Prof Norman Maiwashe	Exco	Science Councils
STEMulator NPC	Mr Richard Gundersen	proSET Committee	proSET
North-West University – NWU	Prof Jeffrey Mphahlele	Chairperson	Higher Education

Staff and service providers

Organisation	Name
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Ms Jansie Niehaus
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Ms Mankwe Mojapelo
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Mr Matome Mphela
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Ms Wilna Eksteen
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Ms Zimkhitha Trom
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Ms Itumeleng Ndlovu

Organisation	Name
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Ms Seipati Moleleki
National Science and Technology Forum – NSTF	Ms Mahlodi Rasebotswa
Write Connection CC	Ms Robyn Arnold (Scribe)

APPENDIX B: APOLOGIES

Member organisations

Organisation	Name
South African Sugarcane Research Institute – SASRI	Dr Riekert van Heerden
Physiology Society of Southern Africa – PSSA	Prof Peace Mabeta
Afrigen Biologics and Vaccines	Prof Petro Terblanche
Afrigen Biologics and Vaccines	Dr Caryn Fenner
University of the Western Cape – UWC	Prof Rachael Jesika Singh
South African Geophysical Association – SAGA	Dr Stephanie Enslin
South African Geophysical Association – SAGA	Dr Wesley Harrison
Durban University of Technology – DUT	Dr Pienkie Ntola
Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University – SMU	Prof Maggie Aphone
Africa Health Research Institute – AHRI	Ms Munyadziwa (Munya) Rabambi
University of Pretoria – UP	Prof Christian Chimimba
Cape Peninsula University of Technology – CPUT	Prof Marshall Sheldon
Society for Asphalt Technology NPC – SAT	Mr Nik Berning
Coaltech Research Association NPC – Coaltech	Ms Carmen Bergman-Ally
Coaltech Research Association NPC – Coaltech	Mr Avhurengwi Nengovhela
HORTGRO (Pty) Ltd	Prof Wiehann Steyn
South African Statistical Association – SASA	Prof Daniel Maposa
Vaal University of Technology	Mr Maome Kobe
Zoological Society of Southern Africa – ZSSA	Dr Seth Eiseb
Zoological Society of Southern Africa – ZSSA	Prof Aliza le Roux
Design Biologix	Ms Karen Nel
Africa Health Research Institute – AHRI	Ms Munyadziwa Rabambi
Maths Centre Incorporating Sciences – MCIS	Ms Sharanjeet Shan
Maths Centre Incorporating Sciences – MCIS	Ms Melanie Anderson
Red Meat Industry Services NPC – RMIS NPC	Mr Dewald Olivier
Red Meat Industry Services NPC – RMIS NPC	Ms Lizanda Vioen
South African Association for Marine Biological Research (RF) NPC – SAAMBR	Prof Sean Fennessy
Agricultural Research Council – ARC	Dr Petronella Chaminuka
Agricultural Research Council – ARC	Dr Andrew Magadela
Grassland Society of Southern Africa – GSSA	Dr Michelle Tedder
South African Association for Theoretical and Applied Mechanics – SAAM	Prof Wei Hua Ho

ExCo member

Organisation	Name	Position
University of the Witwatersrand	Prof Gillian Drennan	Adjudication Panel

APPENDIX C: ACRONYMS

4IR	Fourth Industrial Revolution
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AS&TS	Associated Scientific and Technical Societies of South Africa
CEO	Chief executive officer
CIPC	Companies and Intellectual Property Commission
CPD	Continuing professional development
DSTI	Department of Science, Technology and Innovation
Exco	Executive Committee
NGO	Non-government organisation
NMU	Nelson Mandela University
NPO	Non-profit organisation
NSTF	National Science and Technology Forum
proSET	Professionals in science, engineering and technology, a NSTF membership sector for professional bodies and learned societies
SACNASP	South African Council for Natural Science Professions
SET	Science, engineering and technology
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SFSA	Science Forum South Africa
SMME	Small, medium or micro organisation
STEM	Science, technology, engineering and mathematics
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation