

NSCF NEWS

Communication from the Natural Science Collections Facility Hub Team

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NSCF Coordinating Committee Meeting and Organisational Development Session

The meeting took place on 13-15 August in Salt Rock, Durban with attendance by Directors and Managers of NSCF partner institutions.



The group enjoyed the presence of new faces in the form of Dr Molebogeng Mohapi who is the new director at Ditsong Natural Science Museum, Dr Ben Mans from the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Portia Nyakale and Grace Kwindu from the ARC; and Fulufhelo Gelebe who is the Science Communication Officer for the NSCF. The entire meeting was beautifully facilitated by Ilze Olckers and Desiree Paulsen of Africa Spirals of Change.

Important themes highlighted and issues discussed during the three days included:

- GRAP conversation
- What is the role/re-enrolling of the Scientists...
- Re-enrolling organisations/Who is the NSCF?
- Communication within the NSCF – start with Facebook likes
- Actual impact on work cultures and practices in organisations?
- Representivity and composition of Co-ordinating Committee
- Leadership in a time of pessimism and low morale
- Getting into the nitty-gritty of the NSCF work
- SCM/HR /Vacancy constraints
- Doing something NEW, BRAVE, and DIFFERENT
- Can we do something unachievable? Bigger than what we currently think possible?
- We need to BE vulnerable and courageous. Reflecting on own leadership orientation and what we need to DO
- Impact on nation-building? NDP/CLIMATE CRISIS
- Time for 'OUTWARD' focus
- Science needs to be free, will NSCF become the Science Police – stifling research & inquiry?
- What are we DOING in 'realising the Agenda of the NSCF'?
- Institutional alignment with NSCF deliverables: strategic plans and staff work plans



The first day involved going through the purpose of the meeting as well as the programme for the two and half days. Activities started with the reading of the Ben Okri poem titled 'Mental Fight' followed a check-in through reflections and journaling, from which each person picked a word or phrase that spoke to them or stood out.

Now, 'checking in' is a tradition that the NSCF has adopted from the Africa Spirals of Change family that involves each person in the room expressing themselves based on the prompts provided by the facilitators. This process gives each person the opportunity to speak and express themselves, and helps the group to get to know each other.

Reflections from the Forum

The group took time to reflect on the NSCF Forum that took place in May. Small groups sat together and photos from the Forum were projected on the screen to prompt reflections and the NSCF Collections and Data Coordinators reported on the outcomes of the cafés that took place at the Forum.

Access the summary of the forum feedback here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1wz-yQQ88vJzZuRz_HFd14DiAa1BaLVf?usp=sharing

Material

Readings: 'Leading from the future' by Otto Scharmer, 'Practising Ubuntu and leadership for good governance' by TI Nzimakwe and 'Complexity Leadership Theory' by Mary Uhl- Bien, Russ Marion and Bill McKelvey. **TED Talk:** 'The disarming case to act now on climate change' by Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old climate change activist. **Documentary:** 'Knock down the house', the story of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and three other women building a movement of "underdog" candidates to challenge powerful incumbents in Congress.

The second day started with an **active listening** activity done in pairs. This is



when one partner speaks for five minutes while the other one listens attentively without interrupting, and vice versa. After each listening session, the listener reflects back what they heard (considering the head message/content, the heart message/feelings and foot message/intent). Courageous conversations were tackled by using the fishbowl conversation constellation.

The third and final day involved two activities: the NSCF **deliverables** were divided and each person had to choose the one that they want to have a conversation about. Each person was tasked to draw a river of their life and journey into the NSCF, as a **river of life** activity. And finally, everyone 'checked out', reflecting on the entire meeting.



Thanks to everyone for their open participation and enthusiasm!

Did you know?

The notes from all NSCF meetings are available on the NSCF Google Drive for anyone in the network to access and read:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1GYt-P-qnpRakRAE8F-tpQkQrLgH0Bqf5?usp=sharing>

This includes notes of discussions held at the following committees and working groups:

- Coordinating Committee
- Advisory Committee
- Staffing & Capacity Development Working Group
- Collections Management & Curation Working Group
- Data Working Group

Feel free to access these anytime!

Monitoring and Evaluation – the learning journey

The Hub Team went through the Learning Journey Session with Rubert van Blerk on 7 August in Pretoria. As you might recall, Rubert has joined the African Spirals team to capture and evaluate the NSCF's organisational development journey. The team's job was to tell the NSCF story.

The outline of the session had three parts: Building a **starting point/base** for the evaluation process. This is not an evaluation in a traditional sense, but it is an accompanying and learning journey. **Producing a vivid account** of the journey that took place in phase 1 of the NSCF journey, not only details, but take the story deeper to draw lessons and key moments with great significance. And finally, **giving shape** to the process.

The team was tasked to share their experience of coming into the NSCF, the important moments they were part of, what led to these moments, what happened and what the results were.

**For your information,
Michelle's story was the longest
...but most interesting!**

Join us on Social Media

Like/follow, share/retweet and comment

"We don't have a choice on whether we do social media, the question is how well we do it."

– Erik Qualman



@NSCFSA—aimed at the public audience

'Natural Science Collections Facility' facebook group—aimed at communicating to institutions, and not the public.



@NSCF_SA—aimed at the public audience



@nscf_sa—aimed at the public audience

Let's connect!

Follow each link and **like/follow** the NSCF pages on social media, we will like/follow you back.

Send us your news, to feature in the NSCF newsletter!

What exciting activities took place at your institution?

- Did you discover a new species?
- Did you get a new staff member?
- Was your institution featured in the media?
- Did you attend a great event?

... Guess what? That needs to be on this newsletter!

Send your news to:

Fulufhelo Gelebe, f.gelebe@sanbi.org.za

... you can call her Fulu ☺

The NSCF is a virtual Facility, comprised of a network of institutions that hold natural science collections that are accessible to external researchers. The NSCF was established as part of the Department of Science and Technology's Research Infrastructure Roadmap and co-ordinated by the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI).

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