

NSCF Emerging Leaders Workshop: iron sharpens iron

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The Natural Science Collections Facility (NSCF) is a South African Research Infrastructure Roadmap (SARIR) facility with a network of 18 partner institutions in South Africa, holding scientifically significant natural science collections. The NSCF is funded by the Department of Science, Technology and Innovation (DSTI) and hosted by SANBI.

The NSCF hosted its third Emerging Leaders Workshop. The first workshop was held in April 2023 at Somerset West, Western Cape. The second workshop was in May 2025 at Skukuza in the Kruger National Park, Mpumalanga. The third workshop took place in November 2025 at the Bertha Retreat, Boschendal Wine Estate, Western Cape. The institutions present included the Agricultural Research Council (ARC), Albany Museum, Bayworld, Durban Natural Science Museum (DNSM), H.G.W.J. Schweickerdt Herbarium (PRU), KwaZulu-Natal Museum, South African Institute for Aquatic Biodiversity (SAIAB), NSCF Hub, the South African National Parks’ (SANParks) Skukuza Museum and SANBI.

We have all heard the phrase ‘leaders are born’. However, in a workplace that treats leadership as a teachable skill, one that requires no title or corner office, leadership is truly born from a common goal to preserve, support and grow. The NSCF Emerging Leaders Programme is a multi-module learning journey designed to discover, nurture and strengthen leadership capacity in the natural science collections community of South Africa. The programme is facilitated by the highly experienced organisational development facilitators, Desiree Paulsen and Ilze Olckers of Tamarind Tree Associates, and coordinated by Fulufhelo Tambani of the NSCF Hub. This immersive training experience builds on the Collections Management and Curation Course, supports the implementation of work related to the NSCF Collections Management and Curation Manual (<https://nscf.org.za/collection-management-and-conservation-manual>) within each institution, and fosters the growth of communities of practice across institutions.

To officially open the workshop, participants were asked to introduce themselves by highlighting their home province. The cultural diversity that shapes each leadership style was expressed through music, dance and the vibrant Rainbow Nation energy that we all know and love. While the emerging leaders community represent every form of collections, from water to land animals, whales to termites, baobabs to ferns, rare, protected, invasive and introduced species alike, the collective group face similar challenges and coming together in the NSCF Emerging Leaders Workshop has allowed participants a space to collaborate, develop and tackle challenges effectively. Leaders have committed to Inner Development Goals (IDGs) to represent themselves, their institutions and the NSCF well in all the spheres where they may find themselves in. The IDGs are five main categories that leaders use to strengthen their inner capacities to drive meaningful systemic change, and integrate inner development into their organisations. These were developed to support the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which asserts that inner growth must precede outer, greater change to



Emerging leaders in courageous conversations.

close the gap between human inner development and the action needed for a sustainable future.

The SANBI team that attended the workshop included Nonkululeko Ntshangase, Sedzani Simali, Sithembile Ndlovu and Siyabonga Tibini from the National Herbarium (PRE) in Pretoria; Ieslaah Isaacs representing Compton Herbarium (NBG); and Mpumelele Gumede, Rangani Nemando and Sanelisiwe Miya representing KwaZulu-Natal Herbarium (NH). The contributions of these leaders involve working within the SANBI community to realise and ensure SANBI’s UGREAT values. The Plant Identification Community of Practice, born at the second workshop as a brainchild of Sedzani Manamela, is now up and running. The outcomes of the NSCF Emerging Leaders Workshop are not loud, but this group is committed to serving and serving well. And with time, the outcomes will be obvious and irrefutable.

Leaders shared their portfolios to kick-start the workshop. Each participant showcased areas of work that they were committed to pursuing for their inner development, team or institutional development and community or network-wide development. Each presentation demonstrated growth and their intentions to put in the necessary work. Activities throughout the workshop were educational and informative. The final night of the workshop allowed participants to wind down with a formal dining experience where certificates of attendance were awarded. The gala dinner was graced by the presence of Dr Anthony Magee, NSCF Lead, along with other members of the NSCF Hub. The theme ‘Rise and Shine’ was honoured, and there were no lab coats in sight. Leaders present shared notes of appreciation from the organising team and facilitators, to the most interacting leader and the one with the most welcoming smile.

Ending the productive week in style, the emerging leaders howled in unison like a pack, a symbol of unity from a game called Werewolf that was featured on game night. We invite you to answer the next call to join the NSCF Emerging Leaders Workshop and become part of a community where iron sharpens iron. *Uyinkosi uzazi* (you are a king, know yourself)!

Being	Thinking	Relating	Collaborating	Acting
Cultivating Our Inner Life	Understanding Our Complex World	Caring for Others and the World	Building Trust and Working Together	Leading and Enabling Change
Inner Compass	Critical Thinking	Appreciation	Relationship-Building Skills	Courage
Integrity & Authenticity	Perspective Skills	Connectedness	Inclusive Mindset & Intercultural Competence	Hope & Optimism
Openness & Learning Mindset	Systems Thinking	Humility	Co-creation Skills	Conscious Use of Resources
Self-Awareness	Long-term Orientation & Visioning	Empathy & Compassion	Communication Skills	Proactivity
Presence	Creativity	Forgiveness	Mobilization Skills	Resilience

Inner Development Goals leadership skills.



Portfolio presentation by Sedzani Manamela.



Group photo of participants attending the gala dinner.

