



OVERVIEW OF A FEASIBILITY STUDY ON A NETWORK OF ARTS AND SCIENCE CENTRES

The South African Department of Science and Technology (DST) has appointed Ulwazi to conduct a feasibility study on the establishment of a national network of Arts and Science Centres that can provide unique interactive experiences in science and technology.

The feasibility study, to be completed by 31 August 2004, is in four phases that will provide:

- an audit of existing interactive science centres and mobile resources
- the development of alternative models for a network of arts and science centres
- an analysis of these models, and
- recommendations for the ideal model.

Phase 1, the audit of existing, interactive science centres and mobile resources, commenced in February 2004. Interactive science centres/mobile resources are defined as permanently established educational facilities, providing interactive exhibits and displays as well as interactive teaching and learning in science, engineering, technology, mathematics and related fields. Each centre/resource will be asked to complete a questionnaire. Each centre/resource will be visited by a member of the Ulwazi team to assist with this process and to gather supplementary information, such as contacts for other stakeholders. Site visits will be completed by the end of March, a preliminary analysis by April and a report to DST by mid-May 2004.

Phase 2, the development of alternative models of the network of arts and science centres, started at the beginning of March 2004. Phase 1 will provide information on South African models of operating science centres. Information on community arts centres (CACs) will be derived from a 2002 audit completed by the Human Sciences Research Council. In addition, the Government Communication and Information System is rolling out a network of Multi-purpose Community Centres (MPCCs) that may provide a base for expanding the network of arts and science centres. South African information will, in turn, will be complemented by visits to North and South America, Europe and Asia to investigate other models of operating science and/or arts centres. Phase 2, which will also begin to identify potential sources of funding, will be completed by mid June 2004.

Phase 3, the analysis of alternative models, will start in May and conclude in July 2004. During this period, members of the Ulwazi team will be facilitating one or more workshops in each province, which will bring together stakeholders from the science/technology and arts/culture communities interested in the proposed network. Such stakeholders may include provincial and local government, private sector, education sector, museums, CACs and MPCCs. Provincial workshops will be followed by a national consultative workshop in Pretoria, which will draw on the provincial experiences to begin to develop a national picture of the network.

Phase 4, the recommendations on an ideal model, will be undertaken during August 2004, with draft and final reports to DST due by mid-month and end-of-month, respectively. DST has indicated that it expects to be able to make a submission to the National Treasury aimed at securing resources to begin to assist with the development of the network in 2005-2006.

We hope that the strong interest in the development of arts and science centres will encourage all stakeholders to support and participate in the study. We appreciate that involvement takes valuable time and we would like to thank you in anticipation of your cooperation. Should you have any ideas and/or wish to be included in a consultative session please be contact with either of the following:

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