



# Overview of the: Human Capital Development Strategy for the Biodiversity Sector

Post 2020 Update



forestry, fisheries  
& the environment

Department:  
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**SANBI**

Biodiversity for Life



South African National Biodiversity Institute

# Acknowledgements

The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) has had a long-standing partnership with The Lewis Foundation which has supported many aspects of the development and implementation of the strategy since 2010.

Key partners in the post-2020 update include the Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, the Department of Science and Innovation, GreenMatter, Rhodes University, the University of the Witwatersrand, the Water Research Commission and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF-SA), South African National Parks (SANParks), the Southern African Wildlife College, Nature Connect, the South African Education Project, the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA), the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency, Birdlife South Africa and The Guild Combination are among the many organisations that contributed to the mid-term review, stakeholder engagements and working groups.

This document was written and compiled by Eureka Rosenberg and Karen Kotschy from the Environmental Learning Research Centre at Rhodes University.



# Vision

The vision pursued by the strategy is to ensure a socially equitable<sup>1</sup> and suitably skilled workforce of biodiversity leaders, professionals and technicians to optimally implement the sector's expanding and increasingly complex mandate.



# Strategic Goals

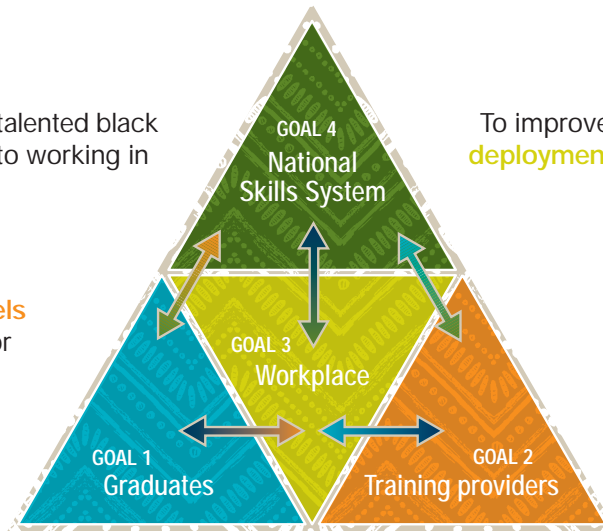
The vision is pursued through **four connected strategic goals**:

**ONE:**

To increase the number of talented black South Africans **attracted** to working in the biodiversity sector.

**TWO:**

To improve the **quality, levels and relevance of skills** for the sector.



**THREE:**

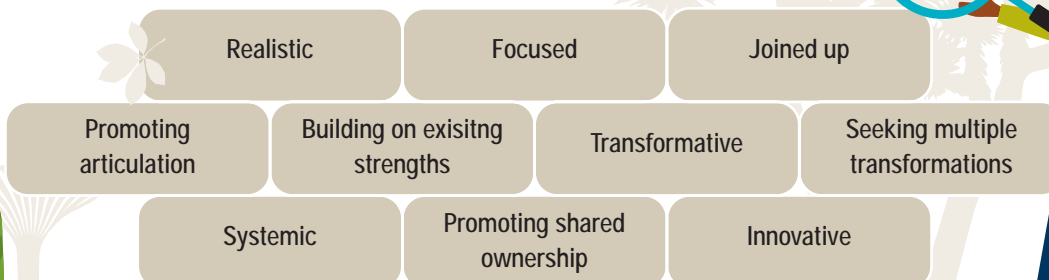
To improve the retention and **effective deployment** of suitable individuals in the sector.

**FOUR:**

To create **enabling macro-conditions** for skills planning, development and evaluation.

The strategic goals reflect a systemic approach to capacity development. This is contrasted with a linear perspective, often associated with the terms 'human capital' and 'skills pipeline'. Instead of just focusing on individuals' qualification levels, its perspective is also on the system as a whole and the quality of skills.

# Principles on which the strategy is based



# Target Audience

## Who is it for?

The strategy was developed by the sector, for the sector. It is intended to guide government, civil society, private sector, academic and research institutions and professional bodies concerned with developing, employing, coordinating, planning, monitoring and evaluating skills for biodiversity, in a broad sense.

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan and the National Biodiversity Framework provide the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) with the legislative mandate to play a leading role in the development and implementation of the strategy.

## History

The Human Capital Development Strategy for the Biodiversity Sector was developed in 2010 through a broad consultative process. Several initiatives and activities have been carried out under the strategy since then.

A mid-term review was conducted in 2020/21 with broad input from the sector. The review found that although the strategy remains highly relevant and although much has been achieved in the last 10 years, there are some key gaps and shortcomings, particularly around coordination, advocacy, political support, and monitoring and evaluation.

## How the strategy responds to the mid-term review and sector input

The policy context has been updated.

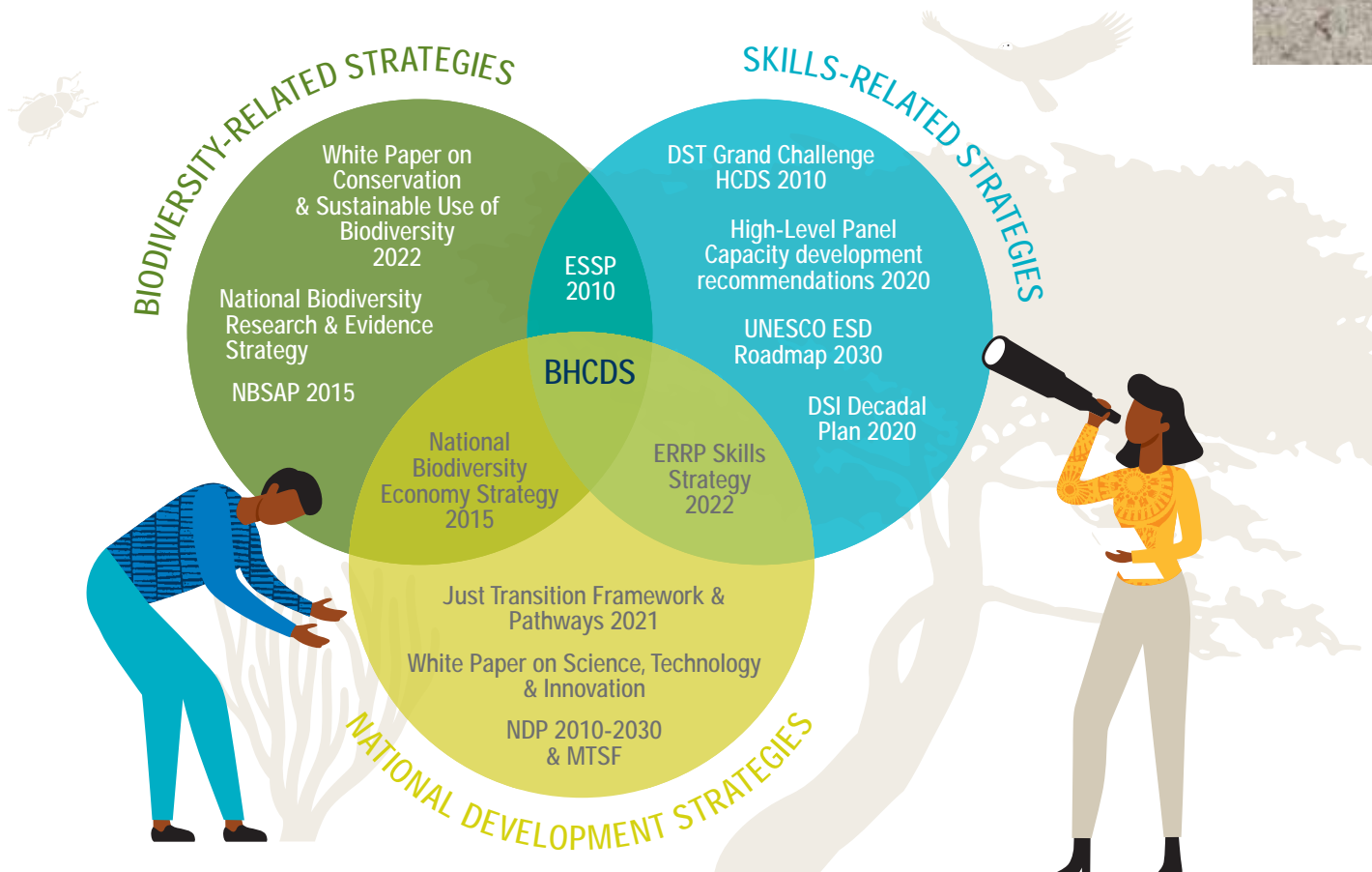
The Implementation Plan has been updated and strengthened to reflect the new needs and priorities of the sector, with a strong focus on activities related to coordination and advocacy.

The original vision and goals remain unchanged, but the original strategic objectives have been replaced with six outcome areas that reflect the new implementation plan.

## How the strategy responds to changes in the policy context and other national strategies and processes

The following were the main findings from the policy review:

- Biodiversity and ecosystem services continue to decline
- Biodiversity is increasingly being seen as foundational to economic and social wellbeing
- Bold, systemic transformation is urgently needed - particularly post-COVID
- Addressing green skills, institutional capacity and transformation is therefore more relevant than ever - not just jobs, but skills, values and leadership for systemic transformation



# Implementation Plan to 2030

The implementation plan was developed by combining the original implementation plan from the 2010 strategy, recommendations from the mid-term review, and inputs from six working groups or syndicates, other stakeholders, and high-level government officials.

The Implementation Plan details all the activities identified as important to take forward to 2030 and beyond. Effectively implementing these activities will have a significant impact on capacity and transformation in the sector. The plan should be seen as a “living plan” which is regularly revised and strengthened (e.g. annually) by partners and stakeholders. Efforts should be focused on refining and implementing the current proposals, rather than on generating new proposals. However, more projects can be proposed and developed as new opportunities and dimensions of issues come to light, provided they clearly address the strategic vision and at least one of the strategic goals.



## OUTCOME 1: COORDINATION

Effective institutional arrangements and coordination mechanisms are in place to support the strategy's implementation

**Activities include:** Formalising institutional arrangements, strengthening the role of the NESPF, convening an annual skills summit, institutionalising a shared M&E and reporting function, and encouraging the development of multiple coordination hubs.

## OUTCOME 2: ADVOCACY

The strategy has increased and sustained funding and political support, in line with its strategic importance for employment creation and sustainable development

**Activities include:** Communicating the achievements of the sector, expanding implementation partnerships, providing regular feedback on the strategy and its implementation, and ensuring ongoing alignment with policy.

## OUTCOME 3: ORGANISATIONAL STRENGTHENING

Organisations have increased capacity for attracting and retaining skilled staff

**Activities include:** Developing leadership for transformation, building mentorship capacity, career path development, developing practical resources for succession planning, competency profiling, skills audits and integration of racial, gender and language diversity, and strengthening organisational M&E.

## OUTCOME 4: SKILLS INTELLIGENCE

Enhanced understanding of skills supply and demand through a skills intelligence system aligned with existing and emerging national skills systems

**Activities include:** Mapping existing skills tracking systems, creating a national repository for tracking skills investments and demand, creating and maintaining an online networking platform, developing a sector research plan.

## OUTCOME 5: PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT AND LIVELIHOODS

Through investment in a range of strategic programmes and think tanks, viable pathways to employment have been unlocked which stimulate the economy and individual livelihoods

**Activities include:** Investing in expanded professional development systems as well as mentorship and internship programmes, growing business development capacity, reskilling and upskilling of existing employees.

## OUTCOME 6: EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The quality and relevance of skills produced for the sector is improved, and talented black South Africans are attracted to the sector

**Activities include:** Increasing the reach of teacher education interventions, supporting previously disadvantaged institutions, postgraduate bursaries, establishing a scarce skills academy, decentralised training programmes, and engaging with SETAs and TVET colleges.

# Institutional Arrangements

The Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (DFFE) will provide an institutional home for the strategy. This will allow the strategy to articulate with processes already underway to address the depletion of scientific capacity within the provinces, and to support capacity development within local government as well as capacity development for the oceans and wildlife economies. As the key policymaker in the biodiversity sphere, the DFFE is an appropriate home for a sector-wide biodiversity skills and transformation strategy.



The South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI) will play an important advocacy role, promoting the uptake and use of the strategy within government, including the Department of Science and Innovation (DSI) and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which are key players in the national skills planning system.



SANBI has been a lead implementer, with partners, of the strategy since 2010. In 2023 and 2024, SANBI's involvement will be channeled through the Groen Sebenza Phase II Programme initiated in 2022; this programme has already been aligned with the Human Capital Development Strategy. SANBI is also a leading implementation partner in other initiatives under the strategy, such as the Fundisa for Change Programme. SANBI also brings strengths in communications and synthesis of policy and evidence, as a key implementer of the DFFE's National Biodiversity Research and Evidence Strategy.

The DSI brings experience of integrating skills and transformation issues into the Decadal Plan and the Roadmaps for different sectors, and also of developing appropriate governance structures for implementation of these plans. The DSI has also worked more closely with the DHET, for example on the Economic Reconstruction and Recovery Plan Skills Strategy, which is linked to the DHET Master Skills Plan. The DSI is committed to engaging with the SETAs and the State-Owned Enterprises to build internal research and development skills in areas aligned to the priority areas in the Decadal Plan (which include climate change and environmental sustainability). The Department has oversight responsibility over a number of flagship human capital development initiatives implemented through the National Research Foundation (NRF). These include the South African Research Chairs Initiative (SARChI), the Centres of Excellence and the Internship Programme.

## National Systems of Innovation and National Skills System

### Human Capital Development Strategy for the Biodiversity Sector

Groen Sebenza Programme (and other implementation programmes)





For further information, please contact SANBI  
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