The SKA Observatory’s communications strategy

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Communications and strategy

- Since 2013...
- Setting up structures, tools, & resources to facilitate collaboration
  - Across the SKA partnership - SKA Comms & Outreach Network (SKACON) currently 35 members from 15 countries with regular interactions
  - At SKAO - 10-year funding & recruitment plan, now 13 FTEs across 3 countries
- Comms strategy co-developed with SKACON and approved by Council
  - Focus on high-impact opportunities to secure support & international visibility
  - High-level international events, stakeholders: SKAO
- National-level comms & outreach: local partners
The SKAO’s overall communications objectives 2022-2029

1. Position the SKAO as a sustainable, responsible and impactful global Research Infrastructure that delivers transformational science and contributes to addressing societal challenges

2. Maximise communications opportunities stemming from the construction of the SKA telescopes and prepare for Early and Full Science by identifying, leveraging and promoting relevant developments and milestones across science, computing, engineering and procurement.

3. Continue to raise the international profile of the SKAO and grow a community of supporters and future users by sustaining interest, excitement and buy-in into the SKAO and its vision, mission and values
Communications deliverables

Objective 1 - impact
- Develop case studies of successful industrial involvement & innovation
- Maintain Member countries’ confidence, engagement by highlighting how Member countries benefit from SKAO membership
- Promote impact and benefits at local (jobs, tourism, etc.) and international level (IP, spin-offs, science diplomacy, etc.)
- Team up with local partners to develop initiatives in the realms of outreach, education, astro-tourism, etc.
- Work with local communities on the development and promotion of Indigenous cultural heritage
- Support engagement with new Members and develop a ‘Benefits package’
- Support and promote in-house and partner institutions’ SKA activities towards sustainability
- Support and promote the SKAO as a highly desirable place to work
- Support the creation and promotion of an ethical, safe, equal, diverse and inclusive SKA Observatory, in line with the Observatory’s values
- Support the identification of new funding streams to deliver SKAO programmes and activities

Objective 2 – construction & science
- Capture various stages and contributions of construction audio-visually to build an archive
- Sustain momentum and cooperation with the engineering community within SKAO and at partner institutions
- Collaborate with procurement teams and industry partners to promote their successful involvement in the SKA project
- Sustain momentum with the scientific community and SRC network through the promotion of pathfinder, SRC developments, Science Data Challenges, etc
- Develop protocols to produce public-friendly appealing astronomical images and explore the possibility of public participation in SKAO science (e.g. citizen science)

Objective 3 - visibility
- Identify and facilitate opportunities for communicating with member and prospective member countries
- Support partner countries with their international efforts to promote the SKAO and the SKA Project
- Support and encourage the participation of SKAO representatives at relevant events
- Partner with selected groups such as industrial partners, science communicators, education experts and others to leverage communications in terms of both reach and spend
- Nurture current and built relationships with key multipliers and influencers such as media to cover the SKAO and the SKA project
- Continue to build the SKAO brand and support its broad use and visibility
- Develop and conduct innovative STEM outreach activities, in partnership with key stakeholders
Comms Implementation Plan

- Developed with SKACON
- 3 objectives
- 20+ deliverables
- 100+ actions
- KPI tracking
Communications and SDGs

• Increasingly, RIs & projects are asked to justify RoI and benefits

• Contribution to UN SDGs key in highlighting broader impact of astronomy in society

• How? Show qualitative and quantitative data through story-telling e.g. impact case studies

• Participation in high-level events (e.g. UNESCO, UNGA, WSF, ESOF)

• Contract communications
Communications and EDI

- Communications plays a key role in increasing visibility, creating awareness, showing support & facilitating access

- Representation & visibility: Look at who we are featuring in quotes, interviews, outreach events, etc.

- Showing support: participation in specific initiatives eg international days

- Staff awareness-raising via internal comms (seminars, articles, workshops, etc.)

- Accessibility of content & events
SKAO comms activities

**General audiences**
- General public,
- voters,
- school kids, etc.

**Key influencers**
- Senior officials,
- Ambassadors,
- key industrial sectors,
- Chief Scientists, etc.

**Decision makers**
- Government minister,
- Senators,
- Prime Ministers, etc.

**Interest groups**
- Scientists,
- industry groups,
- lobbyists,
- peak bodies,
- local communities, etc.

**Multipliers**
- Journalists (TV, press, radio),
- social media leaders,
- celebrities,
- science communicators, etc.

**High-level visits**

**Online (website)**

**Multimedia production**

**Promotional material**

**Publications**

**Social media**

**Local events**

**Conferences**

**Special events**

**Special projects**

**Promotional material**

**Reports**
Some thoughts on SKA comms & outreach

- Role & support of member states & institutions crucial – Council approval, national comms strategy, resources, etc.

- Comms plays a key role in showing RoI (e.g. contracts, innovation, etc.); outreach in inspiring the public, etc.

- Different priorities in different countries – students, media, HCD, outreach, education, astro-tourism, etc.

- Key innovative projects & ideas needed – VR, AR, arts, etc. – and open-source material to share with partners & maximise use

- SKA project is global & multilingual - more content is needed in different languages

- Tracking essential to understand national & global impact of SKA comms
What success looks like - a recent example from Switzerland

- Swiss-developed virtual experience and gamification of SKA-Mid

- Developed using EPFL resources & expertise

- Made available to SKAO for semi-permanent exhibit & events + international partners expressed interest

- Discussions to develop an SKA-Low version
We recognise and acknowledge the Indigenous peoples and cultures that have traditionally lived on the lands on which our facilities are located.