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Setting Up National Contact Point Network: South African Experience

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Presentation Overview

- Structure of the SA NCP network
- SA NCP Network responsibilities
- Benefits of an effective NCP network
- Recommendations and lessons learnt

STRUCTURE OF THE SA NCP NETWORK

- SA NCPs are appointed by the Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology (DST) on a three year term basis subject to renewal of contract (option to have assistant NCPs)
- Managed and coordinated by the Strategic Partnerships Directorate, (guides the development of the annual business plans, and biannual reviews, and monitoring and evaluation)
- Experts in their respective research fields and are familiar with the European STI systems
- Based at the DST, Universities, and Science Councils
- NCPs responsibilities are additional to their normal day-to-day work
- No remuneration for their time spend on implementing NCP activities, but DST covers costs incurred in implementing the (local and international)

SA NCP NETWORK RESPONSIBILITIES

Objective: to assist the DST with promoting SA participation in the H2020

- **Analysis of H2020 calls**, mapping against SA priorities, and identifying potential SA researchers to respond to the calls (with the DST)
- **Information and awareness raising** of the opportunities amongst targeted SA research communities (dedicated sessions, alongside or during the international events hosted by SA, or specific national platforms targeted at researchers in a specific field)
- **Provide technical advise** to the SA research communities preparing to participate in H2020 (general information sessions are done by the DST)
- **Signposting** for the Department of Science and Technology
- **Participate in the NCP activities** organised by the NCP networking projects or the EC NCP call info sessions
- **Assist with identification of SA researchers to participate in the brokerage activities** (supported financially by the Ministry of Science and Technology)
- **Provide up to date information** to be published on the ESASTAP website
- **Provide content for marketing material** produced by the DST
- **Assist other African NCPs with their national information sessions** (establishment of the NCP network by the DST liaising with the bilateral counterpart)

BENEFITS OF AN EFFECTIVE NCP

Increased awareness and technical understanding of the calls amongst the broader research community

- Have technical expertise required to analyse and promote H2020
- Reach the broader SA research communities
- Exposure and participation in the NCP network projects and activities
 - first hand information about the calls
 - facilitate partner matching
 - support and training from experience EU NCPs (co-organise some of the call analysis workshops to exchange best practice and learn from each other)

Visibility of SA expertise and excellence in Europe

- Extended marketing of SA expertise during NCP project meetings and brokerage events in Europe
- Increased networking and opportunities (institutional or national) identified with counterparts

BENEFITS OF AN EFFECTIVE NCP

Signposting for the Ministry

- Liaise with SA researchers on behalf of DST to establish their needs and support required to participate in the FP
- Note and inform DST of the challenges experienced by SA participants in the FP (S&T policy dialogue)

DST aware of the EC forward planning and priorities

- SA NCP network representation in NCP activities organised by the EC and NCP projects
- Participation in international conferences relevant to their thematic area to familiarise themselves with the broader EU priorities and plans
- Better alignment and synergy between SA and the EU priorities and policies and increased chances of collaboration success

It's a team effort, together we can achieve more!!

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LESSONS

- **Select the right candidates** to play the NCP role (such as understand the FP, familiar with the national pockets of excellence and capabilities, professional maturity)
- **Provide necessary support** for the NCPs to be effective and efficient (proper briefing on national expectations, admin, training, financial, time management with host institutions etc.)
- **Monitor and evaluate NCP performance regularly**
- **Time is of crucial importance, plan ahead (get draft WP)** it is normally late to start mobilising researchers when the WPs are officially published
- **Facilitate national networking meetings** (to share best practice and lessons learnt between NCPs, and to facilitate cross thematic planning)
- **Use locally understood language (H2020 terminologies are different to other countries terminologies) during information sessions.** Design specific marketing materials directed to your audience, presentation etc.)

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LESSONS

- **Ensure political/national support for the network's sustainability** (face-to-face NCP networking meetings and activities, EC organised NCP meetings and brokerage events, national information sessions, etc)
- **Clear national guidelines** to ensure alignment, synergy, and support of NCP activities with national priorities
- **Targeted efforts and strategic selection of opportunities to ensure success** rather than promoting all H2020 opportunities even when there is no national expertise (H2020 is a highly competitive programme, only the best will win!)
- **Be actively involved in the NCP networking projects and activities** (be a full partner where possible, use the networks, they are useful)

Thank you!!

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