

Astronomy Community Task Team

Terms of Reference

v2.0

8 November 2022

1. Introduction

At the Astronomy Town Meeting, held in hybrid format on 8 - 9 September 2022, it became clear that there was an appetite for an annual astronomy town meeting in conjunction with an astronomy science meeting for the South African community. This was among several key outcomes which can be found at <https://www.sao.ac.za/townmeeting2022/>.

Furthermore, it was made clear that Astronomy Advisory Council (AAC), initially set up by the NRF's astronomy desk, has been discontinued, and that a community-led team was required to respond to the operational needs of the research, teaching (undergraduate and postgraduate), and infrastructure community, as well as to coordinate the community on longer term strategic matters.

Thus, one of the key outcomes of the 2022 Astronomy Town meeting was a decision to establish the Astronomy Community Task Team (ACTT).

2. Mandate

The Astronomy Community Task Team is established to

- 2.1. coordinate the renewal of the [Multiwavelength Strategy](#) for the 2025 -- 2035 period
- 2.2. provide advice and input on policies affecting astronomy in South Africa
- 2.3. establish committees or teams that can propose approaches to address strategic issues in astronomy in South Africa, organize town and science meetings for the professional astronomy community in South Africa, and
- 2.4. liaise with other astronomy stakeholders outside of the direct astronomy research community within South Africa (e.g. amateur community, astrotourism, etc)

The task team should be seen as representative of the South African professional astronomy community, and should form a bridge between government structures and the community.

The annual astronomy town meeting is the primary platform where the community holds the ACTT accountable for this mandate.

3. Membership

- 3.1. There will be at least five (5) and no more than seven (7) members of the ACTT. All members should have affiliations with South African research institutes, national facilities and/or universities and should be based in South Africa for at least 50% of the year.
- 3.2. Members will be appointed by an open election process involving the South African astronomy community.
- 3.3. The ACTT will elect their own chair once the members are established.
- 3.4. Members should be from diverse scientific backgrounds, seniority levels, regions, genders, and race representation. However, members are appointed in their personal capacity and do not represent specific institutions or regions.
- 3.5. The task team should have at least one student and one early career representative.
- 3.6. Each member will serve for a three-year term, and members may be re-elected to subsequent terms.
- 3.7. Previous members can serve as ex-officio members in an advisory capacity, if required.
- 3.8. Members of the task team serve without remuneration.
- 3.9. The ACTT can formalise sub-committees with co-opted members as the need arises.

4. Governance and Operations

- 4.1. The ACTT will meet at least twice annually.
- 4.2. The ACTT will establish its internal procedures (e.g. deciding on what constitutes a quorum and when members should recuse themselves for particular discussions).
- 4.3. ACTT members will canvas the community prior to meetings to determine items of interest and/or challenges for the South African astronomy community.

- 4.4. The ACTT will feed back to the astronomy community through the SA astronomers mailing list at least twice annually, through a web presence, and at each astronomy town meeting.
- 4.5. The Chair will be responsible for organizing and conducting the meetings of the ACTT, and for preparing its reports and recommendations.
- 4.6. The ACTT will maintain written minutes of its meetings, and clear documentation of its decision-making process, whether in meetings or through email.
- 4.7. The ACTT will consult with and inform DSI and NRF as required and will provide them with Annual Reports (in addition to point 4.4 above).
- 4.8. The ACTT will be responsible for sourcing the necessary operational support or funding required to carry out their mandate.