



DEPARTMENT OF WATER AFFAIRS AND FORESTRY
CHIEF DIRECTORATE: SCIENTIFIC SERVICES

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COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

**MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT INFORMATION
SYSTEMS**

MAIS Phase 3

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MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (MAIS)

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

1 Introduction

The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry has initiated a project to establish a Monitoring and Assessment Information System (MAIS) to fulfil the requirements of the National Water Act. A communication strategy is required in order to increase awareness of, participation in, and acceptance of the MAIS project. The intention of the strategy is to facilitate information flow about the project, to ensure that MAIS satisfies stakeholders' needs, creates the opportunity for stakeholder involvement and assists with attracting potential funding for project implementation. Effective stakeholder involvement is critical to the success of the MAIS project.

Furthermore, the communication strategy must assist in:

- Creating stakeholder ownership within the department
- Addressing the requirements of affected and interested parties
- Building partnerships between the Department and external stakeholders

2 Background

The National Water Act (Act 36 of 1998) specifies that the government, as a public trustee of the nation's water resources, must act in the public interest to ensure that water is protected, used, developed, conserved, managed, and controlled in a sustainable and equitable manner, for the benefit of all.

Chapter 14 of the Act specifies the requirement for monitoring, recording, assessing and disseminating of information on water resources. To fulfill this requirement, it is necessary to establish national monitoring systems, collect appropriate data, and provide information to assess and manage all aspects of water resources. These aspects include, but are not limited to quantity, quality, use, rehabilitation, and compliance with resource quality objectives, health of aquatic ecosystems, atmospheric conditions that may influence water resources, floods and drought.

The above requires a national information system and infrastructure to be established to store and provide the necessary data and information. There are a number of activities, structures and systems that can currently provide aspects of the information required for

water resources management and water services information, however it is disparate and uncoordinated. Thus a need for a Monitoring and Assessment Information System (MAIS) that will provide comprehensive, efficient and effective collection, storage and dissemination of data and reporting of information.

3 Development of a strategy framework and communication approach

The MAIS project will involve a major technology management conversion, including changes with respect to corporate versus line function information management and governance. The afore-mentioned change will require the development and implementation of a change management process (related to MAIS) that will help the affected individuals to be able to embrace the change in the way water related information is being managed. MAIS by its integrated nature attracts not only a broad range of stakeholders but issues as well. The MAIS development approach will therefore consider a pilot design for one or more integrated monitoring programmes (IMPs) to produce the information required. The purpose of the pilot is to focus the design on one issue at a time and develop a generic design guide for broader implementation. The communication strategy should in turn consider a process of careful stakeholder selection, so as to contain the process and restrict it to only those stakeholders who are directly involved in the design of pilot studies.

Stakeholders are the individuals, groups, or institutions that have an interest or stake in the outcome of the project, mainly because they will be affected by or will have an influence on the project. Different stakeholder groups require different forms of communication with a specific content that addresses their interests. Developing strategies for incorporating stakeholder participation throughout the project cycle is particularly necessary in projects that impact on people. Stakeholder participation in MAIS will involve a process where stakeholders collaboratively engage, as appropriate, in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of activities.

Finally the strategy will also have a public relations component that will deal with the upkeep of the project's image.

4 Strategic objectives

The communication strategy seeks to achieve the following:

- increase the level of understanding of the project and processes of implementation within DWAF
- facilitate a process of consultation with both internal and external stakeholders within the confines of the selected pilot studies

- facilitate a process of effective stakeholder participation in the design and implementation of relevant integrated monitoring programmes
- facilitate a change management process related to MAIS
- enhance ownership of, and accountability for, project outcomes
- create a positive image of the project

5 Tasks to achieve objectives

Objective 1. Increase the level of understanding of the project and processes of implementation

Develop effective communication mechanisms and information dissemination products to facilitate the effective as well as accurate transfer of relevant information to specific target audiences

- prepare an inception report, describing MAIS objectives, functions and structure
- prepare presentations for orientation sessions
- disseminate information through letters, meetings, workshops and hands-on participation in the project, orientation sessions, conference papers, progress reports and DWAF News Letters
- identify symposia and conferences of relevance to MAIS
- establish a Web site for MAIS.
- establish a project Task Team to facilitate the participation of staff, and the flow of information between the project team and the line functions.

Objective 2. Facilitate a process of consultation with both internal and external stakeholders

- identify and categorise stakeholders
- prepare a MAIS stakeholder database (both internal and external stakeholders)
- define stakeholder roles and responsibilities in MAIS
- build partnerships between DWAF, Catchment Management Agencies (CMAs) and external stakeholders who are either providers or users of information
- conduct stakeholder workshops / working sessions

Objective 3. Facilitate a process of effective participation in the design and implementation of pilot studies

- convene Task Team meetings to facilitate the participation of staff

- make use of skills, experiences, and knowledge of various organisations and individuals in the design and implementation of pilot studies
- identify stakeholder comments and concerns throughout the project process

Objective 4. Facilitate a MAIS change management process

The implementation of MAIS is going to change the way water related information has been managed before. To help DWAF staff to embrace the new technology, its management and the resultant change in governance, the strategy should include:

- dissemination of technical information about MAIS.
- provision of generic integrated monitoring programme design guides
- development of a capacity building plan to help staff attain the skills required in order to use MAIS effectively.

Objective 5. Enhance ownership of, and accountability for, project outcomes

The integration of existing disparate operations into a single co-ordinated information system requires a balance of consistency and control with individual accountability for specific integrated monitoring programmes.

- disseminate information on the costs and benefits of establishing MAIS as a corporate information system
- share information on the desired outcomes of the project, agree on methods to monitor feedback as the process unfolds
- establish coordination and collaboration with DWAF projects that have a direct bearing on MAIS

Objective 6. Create a positive image of the project

- develop appropriate products for public relations
- share MAIS successes
- develop appropriate communication mechanisms such as media placements that would promote a good image for DWAF

6 Key assumptions

For the communication strategy to be effective, the following key assumptions are made:

- the management of MAIS places a high priority on communications to ensure effective understanding

- there is a firm commitment from the project team, management and Task Team to a transparent and effective relationship with all target audiences
- there is a clear commitment to providing timeous, relevant and accurate information
- that the required funding will be made available to execute the campaign over a sustained period of time
- a link person is available to interact with the communications project coordinator from the Directorate: Communication Services

7 Target audience

MAIS by its integrated nature attracts a broad range of stakeholders who require different methods and media of communication. A campaign such as this requires a segmentation of the target audiences according to the nature and type of information that is required. Much of the communications during this campaign will be stakeholders within the Department, although there is a need to communicate with information providers and users external to the Department. Thus specific emphasis will be placed on the following target audiences:

- DWAF data providers (directorates within Chief Directorate: Scientific Services and Regional Offices)
- DWAF Chief Directorate: Water Services
- DWAF Chief Directorate: Water Utilisation and Conservation
- DWAF Chief Directorate: Forestry
- DWAF Directorates of Strategic Planning, Project Planning, Disaster Management, International Liaison, Legal Services and Human Resources Development
- DWAF Regional Offices
- DWAF projects and other initiatives that have a bearing on MAIS
- External data providers and users identified in the selection of pilot Integrated Monitoring Programmes.

8 Communication content and style of presentation.

The project team will be responsible for communicating the project progress to stakeholders, using the appropriate mechanisms described in Table 1. The project team has expectations (communications feedback) from stakeholders. These are also described in Table 1.

Table 1. Communication content and style of presentation

Audience	Communication content	Communication mechanism	MAIS Project Team expectations
Water Resources Management Committee (WRMC)	Implementation plan, milestone reports, progress of project, clarification of roles and responsibilities	Reports, briefings workshops, Web site	Direction to the MAIS project team, review progress and when required approve interim deliverables. Clarify DWAF's vision on WRM
Chief Director: Scientific Services	Submissions, project presentations, implementation plan, milestone reports, progress of project	Reports, briefings, management meetings, Bi-laterals	Approvals on behalf of WRMC, provide direction and ensures that MAIS is aligned to Departmental policy
Director: IWQS	Implementation plan, progress reports, impact of project	Reports, briefings, management meetings Bi-laterals	Evaluation of progress, inputs and comments on implementation plan, project progress
All Directors within Scientific Services	Implementation plan, progress reports, impact of project	Reports, briefings, management meetings Bi-laterals	Express concerns about impact of MAIS, encourage ownership of project outcomes
TINWA	Presentations of project, Progress and impact of project	Reports, briefings, Web site	Advise on how MAIS fits into the broader implementation of the NWA.
Task Team	Presentations of project, submission of reports	Reports, briefings, management meetings, Web site.	Advise on project plan and implementation
Managers of Selected DWAF Projects	Presentations of project, Progress and impact of project	Briefings, information sharing sessions	Provide information that is of relevance to MAIS
External stakeholders	Explanation of project, information verification	Media briefs, Workshops, bi-laterals, Web-site, publications, print/ electronic interviews	Confirm information requirements Provide comments.
Water sector	Explanation of project, value of activities, implementation process	Media placement Publications Conferences Brochures, Interactive CD, Web-site	Comments and inputs to ensure that MAIS delivers on the national mandate

9 The project team

Table 2. Contact details of project team

Project resources	Name	Telephone	e-mail
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