

Government Gazette
Staatskoerant

REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
REPUBLIEK VAN SUID AFRIKA

Vol. 715 27 January Januarie 2025 No. 52004

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ISSN 1682-5845



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GOVERNMENT NOTICES • GOEWERMENTSKENNISGEWINGS

DEPARTMENT OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

NO. 5787 **27 January 2025**

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT: BIODIVERSITY ACT, 2004 (ACT NO. 10 OF 2004)

CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT NATIONAL ELEPHANT HERITAGE STRATEGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

I, Dion Travers George, Minister of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, hereby publish the draft National Elephant Heritage Strategy in South Africa (the draft Strategy) for public comment as set out in the Schedule hereto.

The draft Strategy provides a high-level vision and strategic objectives at national level for the management and long-term conservation of elephants as a meta-population in South Africa, while contributing to the well-being of people. The draft Strategy provides a strategic framework for planning and decision-making around living landscapes with elephants. As such, this draft Strategy should guide development, revision and implementation of mechanisms and tools, such as the Elephant Norms and Standards, the National Elephant Research Strategy, the Non-Detrimental Finding for Elephants, the Elephant Red-list Assessment, reserve-level Elephant Management Plans, National Elephant Meta-Population Plan, and engagements regarding elephants in relevant consultative fora.

Members of the public are invited to submit written comments on the draft Strategy, within 30 (thirty) days from the date of publication of this notice in the Government *Gazette* or in the newspaper, whichever date is the last date, to any of the following addresses:

By post to: The Director-General: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
Attention: Ms Humbulani Mafumo
Private Bag X447
PRETORIA
0001

By hand at: Environment House, 473 Steve Biko Road, Arcadia, Pretoria, 0083
By email: ConservationManagement@dffe.gov.za

Any enquiries in connection with this Notice can be directed to Ms. Amanda Magubane on 012 399 8809, or via email: AMagubane@dffe.gov.za.

Electronic copies of the draft Strategy can be downloaded from the following link:
https://www.dffe.gov.za/legislation/gazetted_notices

Comments received after the closing date may be disregarded.

DR D T GEORGE
MINISTER OF FORESTRY, FISHERIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

forestry, fisheries & the environment
Department:
Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

SANBI
Biodiversity for Life
South African National Biodiversity Institute

SCHEDULE

NATIONAL ELEPHANT HERITAGE STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA

2024 - 2034

April 2024



This document links to an extensive background document that provides details of the status of South Africa's elephants as well as the co-development process with National and provincial governments, community organisations, academic institutions, non-government organisations, wildlife industry, research and wildlife sector.

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1. Executive summary

African elephants (*Loxodonta africana* and *L. cyclotis*) are important species in human history, religion, culture, consciousness, and economy. They provide multiple overlapping socio-economic, cultural, spiritual, and ecological benefits, and have intrinsic value. However, elephants can also impose on the livelihoods of people and even threaten a person's life.

Because of the different ways that elephants are important to, have meaning for, and impact on people, and the long mutual association of elephants and people, there is a need to consider more than simply the conservation status of elephants. Status is here interpreted as the biological aspects of elephant persistence and factors that threaten that. Because elephants are part of South Africa's history, traditions and culture, heritage better encapsulates elephants' contribution to how South Africans perceive themselves, their history, and traditions, and elephants' importance. Such heritage, with its associated culture and spirituality, are important as to how the citizenry see themselves as South African, diverse as the citizenry is. Elephant heritage is, thus, a key element of the South African culture and spirituality, and human livelihoods and well-being, and plays important roles in South Africa's politics, society, business, and world view. South Africa, thus, should strive to enhance this elephant heritage, i.e., the close connection between elephants and people, and not focus solely, in isolation, on the conservation of elephants as a species.

The primary threats to the conservation of the species remain habitat destruction and illegal killing of individuals for their ivory. However, in South Africa, elephant poaching is minimal, affecting less than 0.01% of the national population annually. In contrast, fragmentation, the small size of many populations and habitat loss are increasingly important considerations. South Africa has 89 relatively small areas containing elephants, largely isolated from each other. In addition, at the end of 2022, 19% of elephants in South Africa were privately and communal owned with an increasing trend in community ownership of elephants over the last decade.

Currently, the management of individual elephant populations in South Africa is informed by the National Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants in South Africa , which

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were published for implementation in the Gazette in 2008 (Government Gazette No. No. 30833). However, these norms and standards do not address broader strategic policy aspects, such as the management of elephants in South Africa as a meta-population, ensuring that all South Africans benefit from all the values of elephants, and that there is equitable and inclusive access and benefit sharing.

The African savanna elephant (*L. africana*), which is the species that occurs in South Africa, is nationally listed as Least Concern and globally as Endangered . *L. africana* is also currently listed as a Protected species in terms of section 56(1) of the National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004) (NEM: BA). In addition, South Africa's African elephant population is included in the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) Appendix II; however, ivory is deemed to be included in Appendix I, for which international commercial trade is currently prohibited. Because of its value and importance for people and the environment, and its dependence on conservation management, including protection against poaching, to survive, the African elephant warrants special attention as a species. Hence, the development of this National Elephant Heritage Strategy.

Several processes highlighted an urgent need to develop a national approach to and goals for elephant conservation and sustainable use. This will have a different purpose to the existing Norms and Standards, and the 2014 Elephant Research Strategy, both of which may require review to align better with the Heritage Strategy. A national conservation and sustainable use approach should be focused on the conservation of the national elephant herd, and the various benefits, services and values which should flow from this. Our newly developed National Elephant Heritage Strategy serves this purpose.

A National Elephant Heritage Strategy includes key elements that would be considered in a conservation strategy such as a National Elephant Action Plan as guided by the African Elephant Action Plan. A National Heritage Strategy, however, focuses on South African societal aspirations, including promoting a sustainable intergenerational legacy for all South Africans. In addition, the strategy is structured to give effect to the White Paper on

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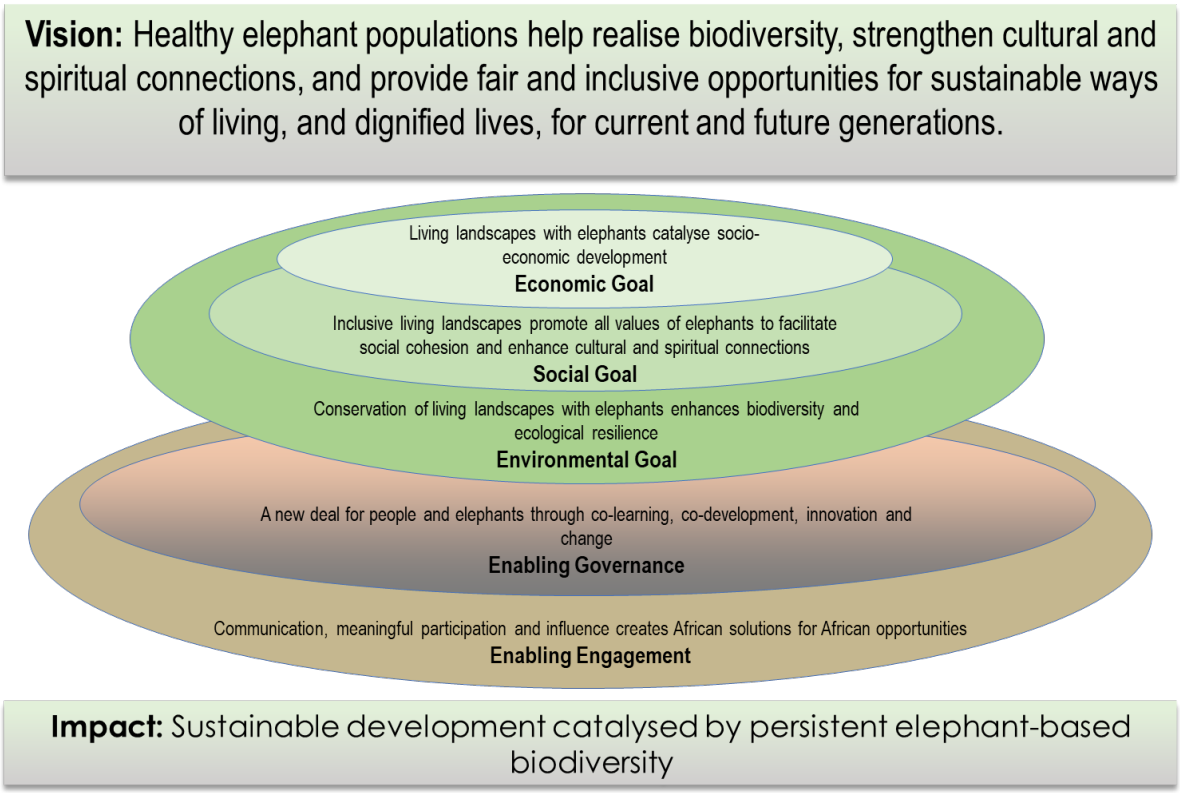
Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity, the Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard and Rhinoceros and the draft National Biodiversity Economy Strategy, with specific reference to the African savanna elephant.

Consistent with the Global Biodiversity Framework, the strategy took a whole of society approach in its development, engaging over 700 representatives and members of key stakeholder groups including Communities (National People and Parks (as well as site-based visits), Traditional Health Practitioners, Traditional Leaders, elephant owners and managers, NGOs, elephant specialists and academics, Wildlife industry and members of national and provincial government concerned with elephants. Stakeholders provided input on values and aspirations they associate with South Africa's elephants. Weighing the values most frequently expressed by stakeholders and considering the interests and potential impacts elephants may have on these groups, resulted in a collective South African aspiration as captured in the vision.

The **Vision** of the National Elephant Heritage Strategy of South Africa is:

Healthy elephant populations help realise biodiversity, strengthen cultural and spiritual connections, and provide fair and inclusive opportunities for sustainable ways of living, and dignified lives, for current and future generations.

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Diagrammatic summary of South Africa's National Elephant Heritage Strategy and achieving sustainable development catalysed by persistent elephant-based biodiversity.

The emergent vision has three core elements: environmental outcomes and the influence that elephants can have on these; economic outcomes and how elephants can contribute to these; and social outcomes that embrace all the values of elephants, including their cultural and spiritual importance. The vision is aspirational, aiming to do better than just achieving sustainability (*i.e.*, the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level, or avoiding depletion), or only resilience (*i.e.*, the ability to recover quickly after a disturbance), rather encompassing restorative and regenerative practices that enhance and build up the world's natural and social capital.

The aspiration seeks to ensure that elephants contribute to improving the well-being of people and ecosystems simultaneously. Using whole systems approaches, it is imperative

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for South Africa to harness collaboration, co-learning and co-working, so that our collective wisdom, capacity and actions bring forth a flourishing world and thriving life. Elephants play a significant role in maintaining a balance where the creation of value exceeds consumption, crucial for sustaining and increasing South Africa's social and natural capital which are fundamental for inclusive socio-economic development. Hereby, elephants serve as a flagship for transformative change toward "Thriving People and Nature".

The three key goals of the National Elephant Heritage Strategy are:

Goal 1: Conservation of living landscapes with elephants that enhances biodiversity and ecological resilience.

Goal 2: Inclusive living landscapes promote all values of elephants to facilitate social cohesion and enhance cultural and spiritual connections.

Goal 3: Living landscapes with elephants catalyse transformative socio-economic development.

However, achieving these goals requires the establishment of good governance and meaningful stakeholder engagement that recognises key trade-offs particular to elephants. Navigating such trade-offs among the diverse aspirations of South Africans will substantially benefit from inclusive, equitable and transparent engagement, ensuring the acknowledgement and inclusion of the values, needs, and aspirations of all stakeholders. Enablers within the strategy provide for these aspects. The two enablers are:

Enabler 1: Enabling governance - A new deal for people and elephants through co-learning, co-development, innovation, and change.

Enabler 2: Enabling engagement - Communication, meaningful participation and influence creates African solutions for African opportunities.

Stakeholders provided further input through a second round of consultation that helped identify key activities to achieve the goals and enablers that capture specific values

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expressed by stakeholders, and outcomes which contribute to achieving the Goals of the White Paper: (1) Enhanced Biodiversity Conservation, 2) Sustainable Use, 3) Equitable Access and Benefit Sharing, and 4) Transformation. These strategic activities are captured under each Goal and Enabler.

This strategy intends to achieve, amongst others, the outcomes of:

1. The thriving people, nature and elephants are considered and realised.
2. Expanded, connected, thriving, conservation areas conserve viable populations of elephants in living landscapes.
3. Financial support and incentives are harnessed and leveraged from all sources to ensure the biodiversity sector is adequately resourced and transformed.
4. Improved livelihoods and well-being of local communities, through meaningful participation and increased and more inclusive access and fair benefit sharing.
5. The value and integrity of elephants as a key component of African traditional culture and spirituality is restituted and restored.
6. Improved governance, co-management and partnerships, and contribution to the biodiversity economy, with meaningful community participation, influence and benefit, and empowerment as equal and influential participants, leading transformation of the biodiversity sector.
7. Clear understanding of the intent and aspirations of South Africa, in promoting the conservation and management of elephants and their landscapes for the well-being of people and nature.

The intention of this strategy is that it provides a strategic framework for planning and decision-making around living landscapes with elephants. As such, this strategy should guide the development, revision and implementation of strategies, frameworks, mechanisms and tools, such as the Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants in South Africa, the National Elephant Research Strategy, the Non-Detrimental Finding for Elephants, the Elephant Red-list Assessment, reserve-level Elephant Management Plans, National Elephant Meta-Population Framework, and engagements regarding elephants in

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relevant consultative fora, *etc.* Even so, the National Elephant Heritage Strategy embraces evidence-based elephant management and seeks to adapt approaches upon reflection and identifying new lessons learned.

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8. Acronyms

CITES: Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

DFFE: Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment, Government of South Africa

Elephant N&SNEM: BA: National Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants in South Africa

GEF: The Global Environment Facility

HLP: High-Level Panel

NBES: National Biodiversity Economy Strategy

NDP: National Development Plan

NEMA: National Environmental Management Act, 107 of 1998, as amended

NEM: BA: National Environmental Management Biodiversity Act, 10 of 2004, as amended

NEM: BA-TOPS: Threatened or Protected Species Regulations

NEM: PAA: National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 57 of 2003, as amended

NGOs: Non-Governmental Organisations

PDIs: Previously Disadvantaged Individuals

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SMMEs: The Small, Medium and Micro enterprises

WP: The White Paper on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity

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9. Definitions

Use of terms in this strategy should be understood in terms of the definitions contained within the White Paper, relevant legislation, or the general understanding of such terms. Definitions are not repeated here for sake of brevity.

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10. Introduction

African savanna elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) play key roles in African ecosystems and provide global intergenerational benefits. Within South Africa, they live in large populations shared with Botswana, Namibia, Mozambique, and Zimbabwe, as well as in many small, protected areas. Elephant numbers in South Africa are increasing. The context in which elephants live in South Africa also differs substantially within different areas in South Africa and from other African countries. Many protected areas with elephants are surrounded by land uses that are incompatible with elephants, leading to the installation of fences to restrict elephant movements. However, some areas in Limpopo allow elephants to roam freely.

African elephants shape their ecosystems and influence the physical environment, benefiting other species. People value elephants for many reasons including the benefits provided to tourists, rural communities, and society at large. Elephants, however, can also pose risks to biodiversity, cause damage to property, and come into conflict with people. Balancing the various benefits of elephants and costs of living with them is a complex trade-off challenge to South Africa.

South Africa regulates the management of elephants through enabling legislation and national norms and standards for elephant management, but a shared vision for elephant conservation and sustainable use amongst its citizens is lacking. The African Elephant Action Plan has a continental focus and a traditional conservation approach, that guides the aspirations of African elephant range States. South Africa, however, is a nation of diverse cultures, with a historical and ongoing legacy of social injustices. Many of its citizens have no access to cultural, spiritual and other values of elephants, and have been excluded from decision-making processes concerning elephants.

This strategy aims to guide the integration of the aspirations of all South Africans concerning elephants and their role in enhancing the f of people and nature alike. It recognises elephants as an integral part of South Africa's natural heritage, valued for many reasons by diverse cultures. Moreover, living landscapes with elephants that enhances biodiversity and

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ecological resilience. could catalyse contributions to sustainable development and transformation throughout the country.

11. Brief description of the policy and legislative context of the Strategy

South Africa's environmental management is underpinned by the environmental right in Section 24 of the Constitution, which is given effect in law through the National Environmental Management Act, 1998 (Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA) and its subsidiary legislation (including The National Environmental Management: Biodiversity Act, 2004 (Act No. 10 of 2004) (NEM: BA) and the National Environmental Management: Protected Areas Act, 2003 (Act No. 57 of 2003) (NEM: PAA) and their regulations). Provinces, have a concurrent competence, and have their own specific legislation applicable to that province. Legislation from other spheres of Government also plays a role in governing elephant conservation and sustainable use.

The White Paper on the Conservation of the Sustainable Use of South Africa's Biodiversity (Government Gazette, No. 48785, and No. 3537 for implementation on 14 June 2023) provides a foundation for conservation and sustainable use in terms of its four goals, namely:

1) Enhanced Biodiversity Conservation (All biological diversity and its components conserved);

2) Sustainable Use (The sustainable use of biodiversity contributes to the thriving of both terrestrial and marine landscapes and ecosystems, local livelihoods, and human well-being, while a duty of care avoids, minimises, or remedies adverse impacts on biodiversity);

3) Equitable Access and Benefit Sharing (Benefits derived and shared from the use and development of South Africa's genetic and biological resources should not compromise the national interests); and

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4) Transformed Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use (Effect is given to the environmental right as contained in Section 24 of the Constitution which facilitates redress and promotes transformation).

As well as two cross-cutting Enablers:

1) Enabler 1: Integrated, Mainstreamed and Effective Biodiversity Conservation and Sustainable Use: Integrated policy and practice across government and the effective implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements; and

2) Enabler 2: Enhanced Means of Implementation: Expanded and developed ability to effectively conserve biodiversity, to manage its use and benefit sharing, whilst addressing factors threatening biodiversity.

The White Paper sets out the vision: "*An inclusive, transformed society living in harmony with nature, where biodiversity conservation and sustainable use ensure healthy ecosystems, with improved benefits that are fairly and equitably shared for present and future generations*", with the Mission: "*To conserve and manage South Africa's biodiversity, and ensure healthy ecosystems, ecological integrity and connectivity, with transformative socio-economic benefits to society for current and future generations through ecologically sustainable, and socially equitable use of what people values from nature*". The White Paper impact statement is "*Thriving People and Nature*".

The White Paper explicitly recognises that responsibility rests with a range of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, the state, traditional leaders, traditional health practitioners, communities, private landowners, industry, academia, non-government organisations and civil society. Building partnerships, particularly community – private partnerships, between these constituencies will be important, and this National Elephant Heritage Strategy takes this approach.

The Policy Position on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Elephant, Lion, Leopard, and Rhinoceros (Government Gazette, No. 50541, for implementation on 24 April 2024), focuses primarily on correcting unsustainable practices, promoting conservation, sustainable use,

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and the well-being of the five species, including elephants, and providing policy direction for international commercial trade in the five species. In terms of elephants, the Policy Position, provides two relevant commercial trade-related policy objectives:

1. To promote live export of the five species only to range states or any other appropriate and acceptable destinations with suitable habitats on the African continent; and
2. Consider international commercial elephant ivory trade only when conditions become favourable.

The revised National Biodiversity Economy Strategy (NBES) (Government Gazette, No. 50279, published for public comment on 8 March 2024) was developed to optimise biodiversity-based business potentials across the terrestrial, fresh water, estuarine, and marine and coastal realms, and to contribute to economic growth with local beneficiation, job creation, poverty alleviation, and food security, whilst maintaining the ecological integrity of the biodiversity resource base, for thriving people and nature.

The NBES is underpinned by two cross-cutting imperatives:

- Cross-cutting Imperative 1: Leverage the Biodiversity Economy to promote conservation and species and ecosystem management, thereby ensuring positive feedback loop.
- Cross-cutting Imperative 2: Promote growth and transformation of the Biodiversity Economy.

The NBES sets out to achieve four Strategic Goals:

- Goal 1: Leveraging biodiversity-based features to scale inclusive ecotourism industry growth in seascapes and in sustainable conservation land-use.
- Goal 2: Consumptive use of Game from extensive wildlife systems at scale that drive transformation and expanded sustainable conservation compatible land-use.
- Goal 3: Consumptive use of wild and produced marine and freshwater resources that drives inclusive coastal socio-economic development.

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- Goal 4: Well structured, inclusive, integrated and formalised Bioprospecting, Bio-trade, and Biodiversity-based Harvesting and Production Sector that beneficiates communities.

In order to achieve these goals, the NBES requires implementation of four key enablers:

- Enabler 1: Effective and Efficient regulation and policy implementation
- Enabler 2: Increased capacity, innovation and technological support
- Enabler 3: Financial support sustains conservation and grows the Biodiversity Economy
- Enabler 4: Market access for communities and Previously Disadvantaged Individuals

Consistent with the policy context of the White Paper, the NBES is founded on the key pillars of conservation, sustainable use and beneficiation of biodiversity business value chains, and transformation, which will promote sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development. This requires growing and sustaining conservation land and seascapes while promoting and facilitating inclusive biodiversity-based businesses that drive transformation of the biodiversity sector. Importantly, broadening the NBES in revision provides increased opportunity to contribute to achieving more elements of the National Development Plan and the Sustainable Development Goals. This emphasises the importance of sustainable use of biodiversity as key to inclusive socio-economic development, especially when effectively mainstreamed into cross sectoral planning.

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1. Consultation process

A societal consultation process was followed and focused on several stakeholder engagements to ensure that all relevant stakeholders were included in the process. In order to co-develop the strategy with relevant stakeholders a total of 12 workshops inclusive of local communities, landowners/managers, scientists/industry/NGOs, and government departments were conducted between 2019 and 2022 to provide information on values that South Africans have for elephants. Workshops focus in regions where elephants live (Fig. 1).

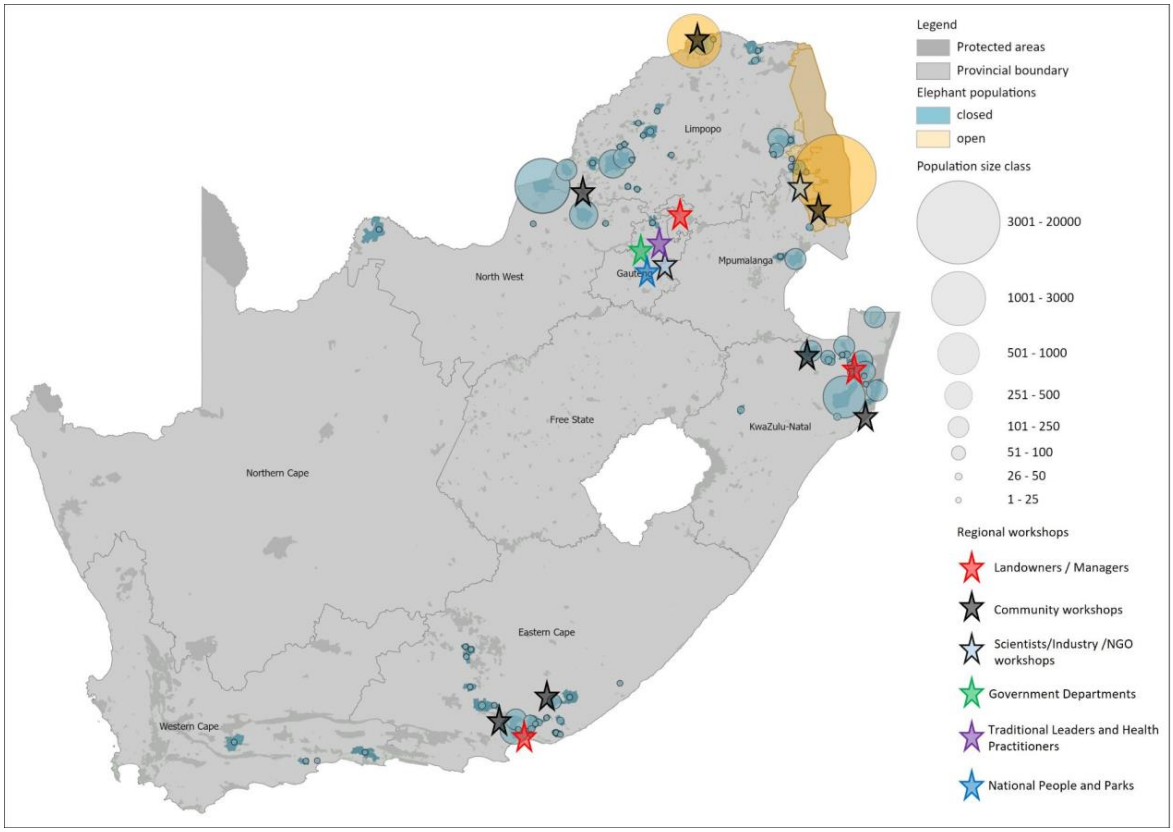


Figure 1: The distribution of stakeholder engagements in relation to the key elephant populations within

South Africa, highlighting that stakeholder engagements were conducted in the same areas of the key elephant populations. There were initial consultations to inform the development of the vision and framework of the strategy, with follow-up meetings (virtual for managers,

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owners, scientists/industry/NGOs) to provide feedback on the visions and goals and gather inputs on potential activities.

Each workshop targeted specific types of stakeholders (*e.g.*, reserve managers, elephant owners, scientists and NGOs, policy developers, local people, environmental management agencies, other government bodies and several stakeholder engagements focused on local communities adjacent or near areas with elephants) (Table 1). At each workshop, stakeholders were asked to list the services, benefits and values associated with elephants, as well as the risks and costs of elephants, and key approaches to ensure elephants' contribution to socio-ecological sustainability. This provided insight into the various perspectives and aspirations of stakeholders in varied settings, encompassing state, private, or communal ownership, reserves of diverse sizes, reserves that traverse cadastral borders, or with multiple owners and management structures, that included people that don't own elephants. The consultation process also included feedback received from relevant stakeholders after the meetings. In line with the White Paper's emphasis on the need for transformation and incorporating the voice of communities living with wildlife, the process also considered the High-Level Panel (HLP) Report's community engagements (p553 – 571 of that report).

In total, 430 people were engaged in the first workshop process, which consisted of a representative sample of each of the stakeholder groups. The process collated all values expressed by stakeholders during these engagements, as well as those documented in the HLP report, resulting in a list of 45 elements of values. These values were then listed per engagement and aggregated to indicate which were most frequently expressed across stakeholder groups. Values were weighted by the interest that stakeholders have in elephants as well as the impact that elephants have on a stakeholder and/or its livelihood.

Based on the inputs received from the above stakeholder engagements, the vision, impact statement and key goals were developed. The second phase of consultation took place during 2023. During this phase of the consultation the draft vision, impact statement and goals were presented to the same stakeholders as in phase 1 to obtain buy-in and support

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for what had been developed. The process then focused on obtaining additional information on key actions to be implemented in order to achieve the specific goals. In total 335 people were engaged in the second round of stakeholder engagements.

Overall the majority of stakeholders were in support of the vision and impact statement with minor changes suggested. Based on the inputs received, changes were made to some of the goals and key actions were added to each of the goals.

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Table 1: Organisations that are involved in developing and implementing various aspects of the National Elephant Heritage Strategy.

National Governments and their Entities	1. Department of Forestry, Fisheries and the Environment (Biodiversity and Conservation; Regulatory Compliance and Enforcement) 2. Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development (DALRRD) 3. Department of International Relations and Cooperation 4. Department of Tourism 5. South African National Biodiversity Institute 6. South African National Parks 7. iSimangaliso Wetland Park
Provincial Government and their Entities	1. Eastern Cape Province: Department of Economic Development, Environmental Affairs and Tourism 2. Gauteng Province: Department of Agriculture and Rural Development 3. Limpopo Province: Department of Economic Development, Environment and Tourism 4. North West: Department of Economic Development, Environment, Conservation and Tourism 5. CapeNature 6. Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency 7. Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife 8. Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency 9. North West Parks and Tourism Board

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Community Organisations and Programmes	1. People and Parks Forum 2. Traditional Health Practitioners and Healers Organisations 3. Traditional Leaders
Academic Institutions	1. University of Pretoria 2. University of Oxford 3. University of the Witwatersrand 4. University of Cape Town
Non-Government Organisations; Industry; Research & Wildlife Sector	1. African Parks 2. CHASA 3. CPHC 4. Elephants Alive 5. ESAG 6. HSI 7. NSPCA 8. PHASA 9. Elephant Owners and Reserve Managers 10. SAHGCA 11. SAVA 12. Wildlife ACT 13. Wildlife Forum 14. WRSA

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15. National vision and impact statement

Vision

Healthy elephant populations help realise biodiversity, strengthen cultural and spiritual connections, and provide fair and inclusive opportunities for sustainable ways of living, and dignified lives, for current and future generations.

Impact Statement: Sustainable development catalysed by persistent elephant-based biodiversity.

The emergent vision, based on the values most frequently expressed by the stakeholders, has three core elements: the environmental impact of elephants, their economic contributions, and the social benefits they bring, including cultural and spiritual importance. The vision is aspirational, aiming beyond just achieving sustainability (i.e., the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level, or avoiding depletion), or only resilience (i.e., the ability to recover quickly after a disturbance), encompassing restorative and regenerative practices that enhance the world's natural and social capital. This reflects a concept of "Thriving People and Nature," which positions thrivability as South Africa's transformation from unsustainable practices to a future where all people prosper, and the environment is nurtured to support them, significantly aided by elephants and their habitats.

The aspiration seeks to ensure that elephants contribute to improving the well-being of people and ecosystems simultaneously. Using whole systems approaches, it is imperative for South Africa to evolve its communal relations through collaboration, co-learning and co-working, so that our collective wisdom and actions bring forth a flourishing world and thriving life. Elephants play a significant role in maintaining a balance where the creation of value exceeds consumption; crucial for sustaining and increasing South Africa's social and natural capital which are fundamental for inclusive socio-economic development. Hereby, elephants serve as a flagship for transformative change toward "Thriving People and Nature".

16. Goals and Strategic Activities

The aspirations expressed by the stakeholders span three key dimensions – (a) environmental, (b) social and (c) economic (Refer to Figure in Executive Summary). However,

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achieving these goals requires the establishment of (d) good governance and (e) stakeholder engagement that recognises key trade-offs particular to elephants. Navigating such trade-offs among the diverse aspirations of South Africans will substantially benefit from equitable and transparent engagement, ensuring the acknowledgement and inclusion of the values, needs, and aspirations of all stakeholders.

8.1. Environmental Goal

GOAL 1: *Conservation of living landscapes with elephants that enhances biodiversity and ecological resilience.*

Elephants have evolved various traits that play a vital role in ecosystems, serving as key drivers and maintaining ecological, cultural, and spiritual resilience in their habitats. In addition, elephants also have an existence value on their own. However, their ecological influence depends on how intensely they use localities.

Small areas available to elephants require more management. Elephants require large spaces to thrive, and in fragmented landscapes, they require connectivity to move between suitable habitats. When connections are constrained, interventions such as responsible translocations mimic elephant movement and dispersal dynamics. Interventions focus on reducing habitat fragmentation and increasing linkages and/or corridors between conservation areas both within and between countries (transboundary conservation areas).

In addition, a metapopulation approach to the management of elephants could be adopted more broadly. South Africa could act as a reservoir for the rest of the continent and contribute elephants to range states within the continent where elephant populations have been extirpated or have decreased over time. Approaches thus focus on ensuring the persistence of elephants, even within a diverse landscape with multiple land uses. However, this will come with challenges as people have little exposure to free-roaming wildlife and there is potential for conflict and risks and challenges associated with this. Legal uncertainties, such as issues of ownership and user rights, are also likely to emerge.

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Elephants are sentient, have cognition and consciousness and are highly social, attributes that make them important for, amongst others, traditional, cultural and spiritual values. They evolved coping strategies to deal with various stresses. Elephant management interventions, thus, embed within a principle of a duty of care, with case-by-case decisions guided by natural processes. This approach includes ensuring the maintenance of viable populations with natural family units and social dependencies, managed according to social structure and natural ways to cope with social disruption.

GOAL 1: Conservation of living landscapes with elephants that enhances biodiversity and ecological resilience.		
Environmental Values	**Strategic Activity**	**Outcomes**
Existence Value: Elephants have intrinsic and existence value as they evolved within their landscapes.	Activity 1.1: Provide a natural environment for elephants that allows them to thrive and cope with stressors.	Thriving people, nature and elephants is considered and realised. Expanded, connected, thriving, conservation areas conserve viable populations of elephants in living landscapes, including through co-ordinated partnerships. Resilience and adaptive potential of elephants, including their response to human disturbance and climate change, is
Ecological Role: Elephants influence ecological resilience in how they use landscapes, which intensifies when habitats are fragmented or confined.	Activity 1.2: Maintain, restore or mimic the ecological role of elephants across landscapes. Activity 1.3: Evaluate areas where there is ecological risk from elephants and prevent or mitigate such risks.	

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Species persistence: Viable, healthy and resilient populations that improve the persistence of elephants while connecting expanded ranges.	Activity 1.4: Expand connected space for elephants and reduce human influences (including illegal harvesting, trafficking, habitat fragmentation and human-wildlife conflict), for thriving living landscapes with elephants . Activity 1.5: Management of elephants is evidence-based and follows a National Elephant Metapopulation Framework.	maintained and elephant populations are protected. Improved management of fragmented sub-populations ensures a viable national elephant population.
Integrated land-use within living landscapes: Opportunities for expansion options, management models and approaches including integration with a range of land uses.	Activity 1.6: Coordinate inclusive community-private-state partnerships to facilitate a dynamic viable elephant metapopulation that expands and connects populations across conserved living landscapes. Activity 1.7: Strengthen Transboundary population governance, and	

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	elephant protection, conservation, and adaptive management.	

8.2. Social Goal

GOAL 2: *Inclusive living landscapes promote all values of elephants to facilitate social cohesion, and strengthen cultural and spiritual connections.*

South Africans have many non-monetary social values linked to elephants. These link to respect for elephants based on moral obligations, ethical considerations and environments that enhance elephant well-being. This imposes a duty of care by South Africans to elephants. South Africans should recognise the importance of considering the diversity of relevant stakeholders, especially their needs and social values, to ensure the upholding of people's dignity. Such respect for people and views is part of creating a social cohesion of citizenry and highlights a value linked to the importance of a unifying approach. A key element of social cohesion, and a unifying approach to conservation and benefits linked to elephants, is opportunities for equitable livelihoods, particularly to improve access to elephants and their environments. This can ensure the well-being of current and future generations of South Africans.

Broadscale consensus highlights that the broader value of elephants and their environments needs to be optimised to benefit all people, including obtaining support from global citizens. Benefits derived from elephants and their environments should be shared beyond the fenced boundaries of protected areas. Many local people have limited access to protected areas, which reduces the value of these areas and species within them (such as elephants). This is especially concerning where local people have lost access to land for conservation or where they are co-owners/managers without deriving benefits. Adjacent communities require

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access to conservation areas for education both to understand how the park works and for their children to see wildlife, learn to value conservation and learn about their local history.

Adjacent communities should enjoy, and have access to, numerous traditional benefits provided by elephants and their environment. These include, for example, elephant dung, which has a multitude of medicinal uses varying between different communities, elephant maggots that also have medicinal value and certain plant species which elephants eat that assist in human milk production. In some communities, elephant by-products are used as traditional attire.

GOAL 2: Inclusive living landscapes promote all values of elephants to facilitate social cohesion and strengthen cultural and spiritual connections.		
Social Values	**Strategic Activity**	**Outcomes**
Global benefits: Healthy elephant populations incur costs for South Africa and its people, while providing local and global intergenerational benefits.	Activity 2.1: Use South Africa's national elephant conservation success to enhance its reputation and increase local beneficiation. Activity 2.2: Develop and implement mechanisms and tools for global stakeholders to enhance elephant conservation and its benefits locally.	1. Financial support and incentives are harnessed and leveraged from all sources to ensure the biodiversity sector is adequately resourced and transformed. 2. A prosperous and equitable society living in harmony with nature. 3. Improved livelihoods and well-being of local communities, through meaningful

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Proudly South African: Pride and honour of diverse people in the elephant heritage of South Africa.	Activity 2.3: Understand and share the diversity of cultural values of elephants and their importance and communicate this proud South African heritage.	participation and increased more inclusive access and fair benefit sharing. 4. The broad values of ecosystem services are realised and enhanced for designated groups 5. The value and integrity of elephants as a key component of African traditional culture and spirituality is restituted and restored.
Human well-being and social cohesion Elephants contribute meaningfully to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals	Activity 2.4: Develop mechanisms and opportunities promoting elephants as flagships in key areas of sustainable and equitable socio-economic development, thereby increasing human well-being and social cohesion.	
Diverse values People have a range of values associated with elephants.	Activity 2.5: Create mechanisms to respect and include diverse stakeholder values from elephants, and ensure all can express and enjoy these. Activity 2.6: Harness the diversity of values of elephants to promote a common purpose	

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	to sustain, conserve and use elephants in living landscapes for the well-being of people and elephants.	

8.3. Economic Goal

GOAL 3: *Living landscapes with elephants catalyse transformative socio-economic development*.

Stakeholders with a high interest in elephant-related issues often influence how people can benefit from elephants, yet they are unaffected in terms of how elephants directly influence their livelihoods and safety. Contrary to this, stakeholders living close to or amongst elephants often face negative consequences from elephants, carrying the burden of elephant management responsibilities. More equitable socio-economic benefits should go to stakeholders who are directly affected by elephants, and loss of access to natural resources due to power issues and the creation of fenced reserves. Benefits should also be aligned with responsibilities, vulnerability and needs to ensure equitability. Recognising and using fair socio-economic values derived from the national elephant population have the potential to contribute to the reduction of poverty (SDG 1), the reduction of hunger (SDG 2), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), reduced inequalities (SDG 10), protection of biodiversity on land (SDG 15) *etc.* as part of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) (https://sdgs.un.org/goals).

There are vast values, benefits, and services of elephants, however, diverse sectors and social groups within society value elephants differently. It is important that all sectors of society at least recognise all values ascribed to elephants even though some values may not necessarily be important or even acceptable to a particular segment of society. Economic benefits, services and values associated with elephants include eco-tourism, community development, hunting, tax beneficiation, conservation, carbon credits and accreditation amongst many others, including social values. Elephants create jobs within and outside

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protected areas through local businesses associated with such areas. These economic opportunities should be optimised to ensure equitable benefits for stakeholders mostly affected by elephants.

Elephants also carry costs for people, may cause damage to property, or place a person's life in danger. Roaming in living landscapes, interactions with people may increase. To mitigate damages and address conflicting expectations among stakeholders, it is essential to co-develop and uphold accountability in defining collective solutions with local communities primarily affected by or responsible for elephants.

Socio-economic opportunities from elephants, their derivatives and their environment can only be optimised if there is fair access to these. Access is often limited because of legislative restrictions, ownership of elephants and land tenure, preventing optimisation of socio-economic opportunities. Where possible, access to elephants, in general, needs to be improved whilst ensuring that there is sustainable use of the species and its derivatives. Once equitable access to elephants and their derivatives is established, there will be potential to develop small business opportunities created directly around elephants themselves. Derivatives from elephants such as elephant art, curios, hair, leather, ivory, and meat, and elephant-based educational programs, cultural activities, etc., have the potential to promote small business opportunities, skill development, and local value-adding.

GOAL 3: Living landscapes with elephants catalyse transformative socio-economic development		
Economic Values	**Strategic Activity**	**Outcomes**
Human-elephant co-existence: Humans and elephants use similar components of biodiversity and can co-exist in landscapes.	Activity 3.1: Unlock social and economic opportunities and solutions that address challenges of living with elephants, to	1. Practices and activities that promote sustainable use and human-elephant co-existence enhance living in harmony with

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	promote human-elephant coexistence. Activity 3.2: Develop tools and mechanisms, including Standard Operating Procedures, for protection of, and from, roaming elephants to reduce HEC.	nature, with effective mitigation of human-elephant conflict, 2. Reducing dis-services promotes support for conservation over alternative land uses. 3. Barriers to entry and participation in the biodiversity economy significantly reduced, and PDIs, youth, women, and people with disabilities become owners and operators of their own businesses within the biodiversity economy value chain.
Fair and inclusive benefits: **Living landscapes with e**lephants stimulate socio-economic benefits through meaningful partnerships.	Activity 3.3: Empower communities most affected by elephants by apportioning responsibility, accountability, and associated benefits and costs of landscapes with elephants. Activity 3.4. Facilitate effective and efficient conservation and management of elephants through innovative funding mechanisms, including biodiversity management agreements for tax incentives safeguarding elephants.	
Fair and inclusive access: Equitable opportunities for access to elephants	Activity 3.5: Provide opportunities for equitable and fair sharing of benefits, services, and values	

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and the environment they live in.	from elephants and their landscapes.	
Localised socio-economic development: Localised, community-based enterprise based on elephants and their landscapes unlocked.	Activity 3.6: Develop local value chains and markets while empowering local people as owners, partners and beneficiaries of elephants and their landscapes.	

8.4. Enabling Governance

ENABLER 1: *A new deal for people and elephants through co-learning, co-development, innovation and change*.

The strategic objectives of environment, economic and social contributions inadvertently will require trade-offs linked to viable environmental and economic relations, socially equitable economics and bearable social and environmental links. It is acknowledged that the issue of responsibilities of government and their mandates, together with the ownership of elephants, is complex. A key aspect is meaningful participation. To effectively conserve, manage and use elephants, all the key role players particularly principally affected stakeholders *i.e.*, communities, conservation managers, industries and state conservation bodies should meaningful participate in decision-making, albeit guided by different levels of participation. This promotes stakeholder buy-in and compliance in the implementation of this Strategy and other related tools. Considering the need to weigh values by level of effectiveness of stakeholders, reflecting thereby different relative importance of values, devolved decision-making may be most effective, respecting principles of good governance and benefiting from an enabling, responsive regulatory framework. This is particularly

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important given South Africa's history of past and present social injustices, and transformation requirements to address resultant inequalities, including those linked to elephants and benefits of all values of them.

In this context, evidence from various sources embraces South Africa's principles of evidence-based decision-making. This in particular requires integration of insights from various sources and cultures, and mutual respect in these. Even so, a key insight already is that elephants are integrated and part of ecosystems and do not act as a species in isolation. Governance of elephant management should thus incentivise a systemic approach rather than a symptomatic response.

ENABLER 1: A new deal for people and elephants through co-learning, co-development, innovation and change.		
Governance Values	Strategic Activity	**Outcomes**

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Adaptive co-learning Adopting evidence-based best practices, learning from approaches across socio-ecological systems promotes African solutions for African opportunities.	Activity E1.1: Based on the African Elephant Action Plan, use this strategy to initiate an inclusive and participatory community of practice with African range states and stakeholders, allowing for innovative and adaptive co-learning. Activity E1.2: Create an enabling and adaptive environment whereby the evidence-based decision-making and approaches to the conservation, management, and sustainable use of elephants integrates science, experience, indigenous and local knowledge systems and practices.	1. Strengthened multilateralism and advocacy in global biodiversity governance enhance thriving biodiversity in Africa, with a positive contribution to improve planetary health. 2. Inclusive and equitable biodiversity economy with redress, full access, and beneficiation of ecosystem services. 3. Improved governance, co-management, and partnerships, and contribution to the biodiversity economy, with meaningful community

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Constitutional justice: South Africa embraces transformation redressing historical injustices, with equitable and fair environmental approaches that address inequalities.	Activity E1.3: Develop appropriate mechanisms and processes which allow for inclusive and meaningful participation of all stakeholders in governance processes, which ensures environmental justice through co-developing, co-learning, co-management and shared decision-making processes, considering historical injustices. Activity E1.4: Develop an enabling regulatory framework which promotes living landscapes with elephants and people, and ensures and facilitates equitable access and benefits. Activity E1.5: Ensure reasonable decision-making processes that are inclusive, justifiable and accountable through	participation, influence and benefit. 4. Conservation areas provide access and benefit flows to communities, redressing past injustices. 5. Sustainable use ensures inclusive and meaningful participation in the biodiversity economy, and catalyses rural socio-economic development. 6. Designated groups are empowered as equal and influential participants, leading transformation of the biodiversity sector. 7. Enhanced and effective biodiversity reporting and trend analysis enhances biodiversity conservation and

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	transparent mechanisms and practices. Activity E1.6: Ensure state conservation bodies are sufficiently resourced and capacitated to effectively regulate, manage, and facilitate improved access and benefit from elephant conservation and sustainable use.	sustainable use and prevents or mitigates threats.
Systems focus: Elephants benefit socio-ecological systems and do not typically act as a species in isolation that creates problems	Activity E1.6: Develop integrated, systems-oriented mechanisms and tools to balance the environmental, social and economic benefits and costs of elephants, including under future scenarios.	

8.5. Enabling Engagement

ENABLER 2: *Communication, meaningful participation and influence creates African solutions for African opportunities*.

Elephants are valued by people in many different ways, with ninety benefits, services, and values associated with elephants having been identified. Based on their culture, traditions, and how closely they are associated with, or work with elephants, people prioritise different

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benefits, services, and values over others. Importantly, in the South African context, the legacy of colonialism and Apartheid imposed a Western and discriminatory framing for elephant conservation and sustainable use, including restricting and limiting access to elephants, and the benefits that traditionally flowed from this.

Because of the importance of elephants to people and how their different world views influence their thinking and perspectives, decisions made around elephant conservation and sustainable use are contentious, especially when they involve trade-offs which are needed to achieve viable environmental and economic relations; social equitable economics; and bearable social and environmental risks.

Given the contention, the importance of meaningful engagement as a foundation to achieving the vision cannot be overemphasised. Such engagement has to be founded on effective communication with integrity, the ability for all stakeholders to participate in processes in an inclusive and equitable manner, which influences outcomes, and by building a shared, common purpose founded on co-learning with understanding. From this can emerge locally relevant solutions that respect both shared and unique values across stakeholders, and which can grow and sustain social cohesion.

Fundamental to this, is the creation of a safe engagement space where people can co-learn about elephants and what they mean to diverse people in very different contexts, and the essential role that they play in the environment and society.

Importantly and uniquely, owners and managers of elephants are their custodians on behalf of society, and it is essential that their intentions are well-founded, and voiced. Practical solutions, honed to local conditions and circumstances, should emerge from the people closest to the challenges and opportunities. Such solutions, while locally grounded, need to be forward-looking and well-considered, such that they collectively give effect to the aspirations and intent of this National Elephant Heritage Strategy. This can be achieved through harnessing the wisdom and knowledge of individuals, collective co-learning through sharing and referencing to the evidence base and building a cohesive voice that is effectively communicated. Empowering these custodians of elephants is critical for effective

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engagement with them by all interested and affected stakeholders on whose behalf they act, providing enabling engagement mechanisms to achieve the broader strategy.

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ENABLER 2: Communication, meaningful participation and influence creates African solutions for African opportunities		
Enabling values	**Strategic Activity**	**Outcomes (linked to WP)**
Let the locals lead: Ecological, social and economic benefits arise from elephants at local sites, where managers, owners, and people living with the costs of elephants, make daily decisions.	Activity E2.1: Empower local managers and owners, and people living with elephants through an effective Elephant Management Forum that shares and influences best practice conservation, management, and use. Activity E2.2: Advocate for, and establish, meaningful and equitable participation and influence across stakeholders, including people living with the costs and risks associated with elephants.	1. Integrated and strengthened awareness for people to value, appreciate, and care for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use. 2. Evidence-based best practice in conservation and sustainable use, with effective translation of knowledge, including traditional knowledge, into practice. 3. Clear understanding of the intent and aspirations of South Africa, in promoting the conservation and management of elephants and their landscapes for the
Co-learning: Education and learning about elephants span a range of sources of information shared across	Activity E2.3: Provide mechanisms for co-learning about elephants and their values, importance, and	

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diverse cultures that respect and enjoy the elephant heritage of South Africa.	use across cultures and different contexts.	well-being of people and nature.
Communication: Diverse stakeholders hold or share different perceptions, aspirations and values.	Activity E2.4: Consider peoples' behaviour, attitudes, awareness, needs, and aspirations related to elephants and the role that they play within the environment and society, for cohesive approaches. Activity E2.5. Ensure information is evidence-based, comprehensive, fair, transparent, shared, accessible, and meaningfully engaged with by stakeholders with different perspectives. Activity E2.6. Develop mechanisms to share South African conservation sustainable use successes, challenges and	

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	solutions with local and global audiences.	

4. Implementing the Strategy: Reflection and adaptation

South Africa embraces evidence-based elephant management and seeks to adapt approaches upon reflection and identifying new lessons learned. As part of the process of implementation SANBI will host a dynamic guiding document, which will capture the process as it unfolds. This is envisaged to include management options and responses as identified by stakeholders as part of a suite of innovations to help address various aspects of managing elephants.

The strategy emphasises the importance of engagement, participation, influence, co-developing and co-learning. As such, processes and opportunities for dynamic engagement will occur periodically, and systematically, either in terms of the implementation of the overall strategy, or for specific activities envisaged within the strategy.

This process will ensure that there is strong reflection on the process as it unfolds, which will enable adaptive learning, and refinement of the details necessary to successfully implement the process.

It is important that the implementation of the strategy is co-owned by all stakeholders, and initiatives by different stakeholders to lead processes will be supported and encouraged. A key element is establishing transparent reporting mechanisms with responsibility and accountability to all relevant stakeholders.

The intention of this strategy is that it provides a strategic framework for planning and decision-making around living landscapes with elephants. As such, this strategy should guide development, revision and implementation of mechanisms and tools, such as the

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Norms and Standards for the Management of Elephants in South Africa, the National Elephant Research Strategy, the Non-Detrimental Finding for Elephants, the Elephant Red-list Assessment, reserve-level Elephant Management Plans, National Elephant Meta-Population Plan, and engagements regarding elephants in relevant consultative fora, etc.

These approaches provide the basis of implementing the strategy within an adaptive management framework and having regular reflection to improve outcomes for South Africa linked to elephants and the contributions they make to environmental, social and economic benefits for its people.

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Printed by and obtainable from the Government Printer, Bosman Street, Private Bag X85, Pretoria, 0001
Contact Centre Tel: 012-748 6200. eMail: info.egazette@gpw.gov.za
Publications: Tel: (012) 748 6053, 748 6061, 748 6065

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