



transformation
WORKING TOGETHER FOR EXCELLENCE



SAMRC **TRANSFORMATION PLAN** 2025 – 2028



Preamble

The SAMRC Transformation Plan 2022 – 2025 was based on two overarching goals:

- 1) promoting diversity and equity with regard to the demographic profile of employees, and recipients of scholarships, grants and extramural units (EMUs); and
- 2) promoting inclusion, self-awareness and flourishing in all employees, and the institution overall.

The SAMRC Transformation Plan 2025 – 2028 seeks to sustain the interventions that yielded positive outcomes in regard to these goals during the 2022 – 2025 period, as well as introduce new initiatives that strengthen existing programmes, and respond to emerging concerns, priorities and opportunities.

Summary of key Transformation achievements during 2022 – 2025

In 2024, a decadal (2014 – 2024) analysis was undertaken to assess progress with regard to diversity in the demographic profile of SAMRC employees, and the recipients of SAMRC scholarships, grants and extramural units (EMUs). While the results of the decadal analysis were pleasing in most respects, they also underscored the unfinished transformation agenda, particularly at senior management and professional levels, as well as, for example, the leadership of EMUs. Alongside interventions to promote employment equity and resource distribution, and in line with evidence of strong associations with workplace success, harmony and other desirable outcomes, we promoted self-awareness and emotional intelligence. For example, opportunities were provided for personality identification, learning to receive and give constructive feedback, life and leadership coaching, leadership development (the STAR Programme), Lunch-and-Learn webinars on various dimensions of self-awareness, and the establishment of an ecosystem for self-directed learning. We also implemented measures to enhance SAMRC campuses, and improve access for people with disabilities. The majority of these interventions were

very well received, and we believe, contributed to the considerably lowered ranking of Transformation from No. 1 to No. 8 on the SAMRC Risk Register. The most highly regarded interventions during the 2022 – 2025 period will be sustained in the SAMRC Transformation Plan 2025 -2028, and complemented with a range of new initiatives to respond to ever emerging concerns.

The international and national context

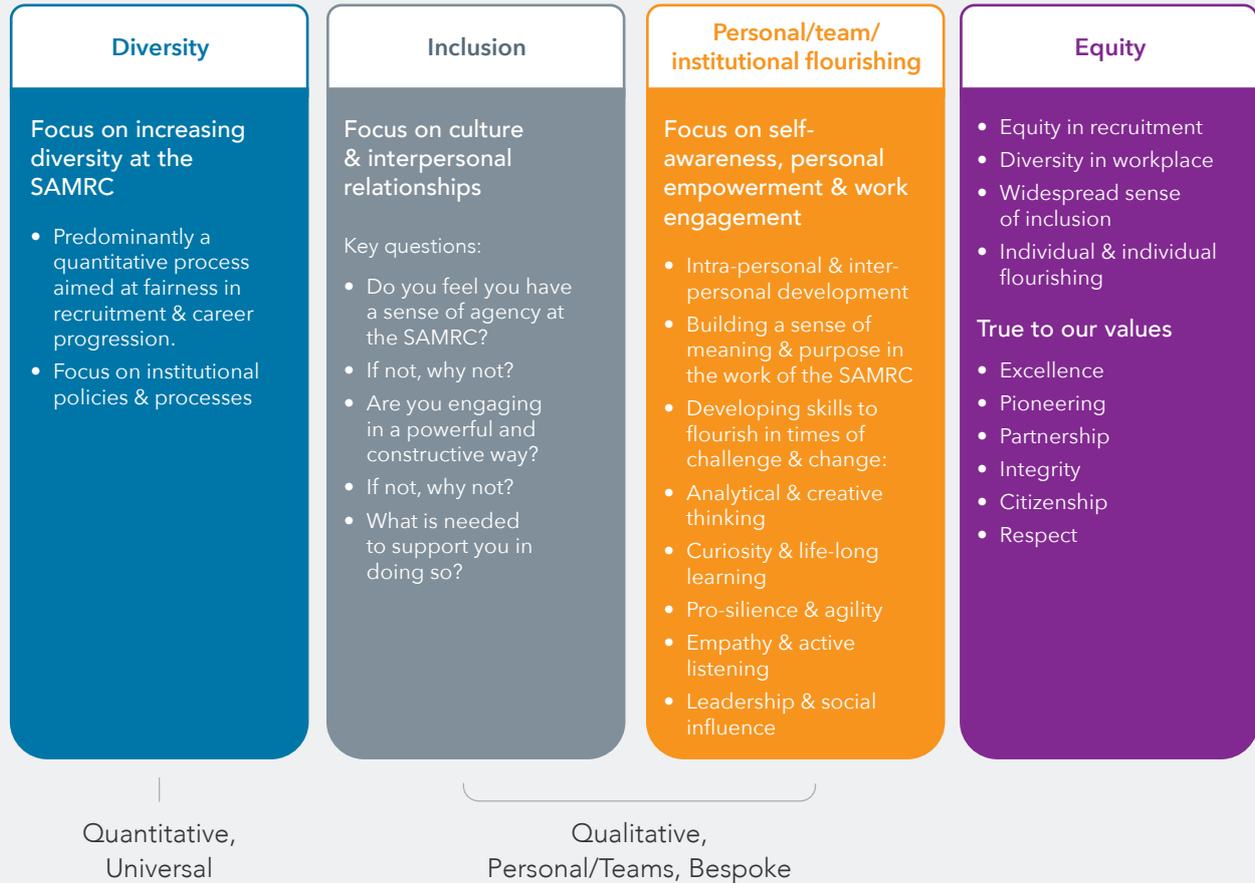
Over the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, organisations were required to be flexible and agile in response to unprecedented, rapid change. Albeit now for different reasons, such as unprecedented shifts in geopolitical power, technological acceleration, climate and demographic variation for example, organisations continue to be challenged to react or respond to rapid change; this requirement is likely to endure for the foreseeable future. At national level institutions need to engage with the realities of high levels of poverty and inequality, political uncertainty, infrastructure failures, a poorly performing public health system and corruption and mismanagement, amongst other challenges. These and other realities also require organisations to build new capacities and skills if they are to flourish in the coming decade.



The SAMRC Transformation Plan 2025 – 2028

This Transformation Plan outlines the strategies, goals and initiatives the SAMRC will undertake between 2025 and 2028 to advance diversity, inclusion, flourishing and equity. The plan is aligned with national transformation goals, the SAMRC's vision of improving the nation's health through research and innovation, and emerging literature on organisational transformation, such as the Future of Jobs Report 2025 of the World Economic Forum.

SAMRC approach to Transformation



Multiple streams of information have guided the development of this Plan, including reflections on the lessons learned through implementation of the SAMRC Transformation Plan 2022 – 2025, the perspectives of the SAMRC Executive Management Committee (EMC) and members of the Board, consultation with key stakeholders within the organisation, the views of the Transformation Forum and viewpoints shared during a series of Transformation Conversations held with various groups on all our campuses. Similar Listening Tours have been held by our HR Department, and the insights gleaned from these consultation processes



were harmonised with emerging thinking in the literature on organisational transformation, as well as with thought leaders in this field. For example, as we embark on the SAMRC Transformation Plan 2025 – 2028, we are mindful of the key findings of the World Economic Forum's 2025 Report on the Future of Jobs, emphasising

that the core skills needed for organisations to flourish over the coming decade include analytical, systems and creative thinking, resilience, flexibility and agility, leadership, social influence, technological literacy, artificial intelligence, big data and cybersecurity, curiosity and a commitment to lifelong learning.

Our Values



Vision for Transformation

The SAMRC vision is "building a healthy nation through research, innovation and transformation". Rooted in the latter, our vision is to be a transformed, inclusive organisation where individuals, teams and the organisation can flourish in their pursuit of the SAMRC's vision, mission and strategic objectives.

SAMRC Strategic Goals

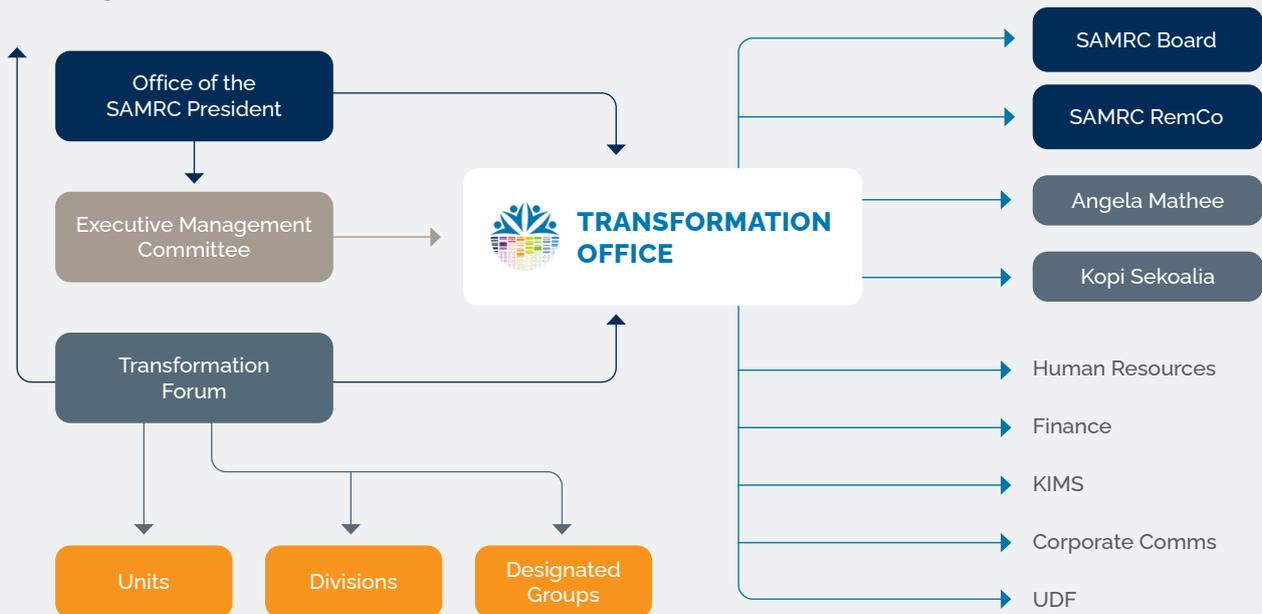
- 1 Administer health research effectively and efficiently
- 2 Lead the generation of new knowledge
- 3 Support, through funding and other mechanisms, technology development and implementation, translation of research into policy and practice, and innovations in health and technology delivery to improve health
- 4 Build human capacity for the long-term sustainability of South African health research
- 5 Translate new knowledge into policies and practices to improve health



Transformation at the SAMRC: institutional arrangements

Transformation Forum:

Active agents for Transformation Vehicle for Communication



Mode of work

A wide range of domains participate in the SAMRC Transformation agenda, including the Executive Management Committee (EMC), the offices of the President/CEO and Vice-President, Human Resources, Corporate Communications, Knowledge and Information Management Systems (KIMS), Finance and Facilities Management, and Research Capacity Development. Triennial Transformation Plans, approved by the EMC

and the SAMRC Board, provide an overall framework for rolling out Transformation plans and projects. An ongoing process of in-depth employee consultations yields rich discussions and insights, which are threaded through the fabric of our interventions. All interventions are evaluated, and the SAMRC EMC and Board are regularly appraised of progress and challenges. Various internal structures, especially our Transformation Forum, are updated on emerging Transformation ideas and projects, on both formal and informal bases.

Key objectives of the SAMRC Transformation Plan 2025 – 2028

In this section we set out the Transformation objectives and projects for the next three years, and beyond. They include interventions that worked well in 2022 – 2025, or are incomplete, as well as new initiatives that we believe are important to roll out in the coming years.

Diversity, equity, justice

- Strive for employment equity targets through sustained implementation of the processes and measures that have driven diversity over the past decade.
- Particular emphasis needs to be placed on recruitment or development of Black African scientists at senior management and professional levels.
- Monitor and regularly report on Employment Equity (EE) targets in relation to the SAMRC Employment Equity Plan.
- Respond to the issues highlighted in the SAMRC Culture Survey, barrier analysis and other sources of information.
- Build a focus on the recruitment and accommodation of people with disabilities.

Leadership development

- Driven by digital fluency and technological integration, the role of leaders is evolving to adapt to a rapidly changing world; leaders who can pivot quickly and guide teams through uncertainty are vital. Helping yourself and others flourish through change with a growth mindset, empathy, agility, creativity and forward thinking and other capacities, is critical. We are building a pipeline of emerging leaders through long-standing opportunities such as study support and leadership/management development, as well as emerging initiatives such as the STAR Programme, which emphasises self-awareness and coaching-based leadership, alongside leadership traditional training.
- Promote the importance of, and capacity for, visioning (providing a clear and compelling picture of a desired or possible future, and building consensus) and strategic planning (analysing the current situation, identifying opportunities and challenges, and developing a plan to move toward that vision while taking account of technological advancements) in leaders. Together these capacities enable leaders to ensure a sense of purpose and direction, navigate complex systems and drive creativity and innovation.

- Provide training in coaching-based leadership styles, which are more suited to success in complex and changing contexts (the Leader as Coach programme).
- Encourage the promotion of purpose-driven work by connecting individual contributions to the larger SAMRC mission, and tapping into intrinsic motivation and employee engagement.

Focus on flourishing teams

- Develop and implement interventions that build analytical thinking, creativity and innovation, agility, harmony and other key capacities in teams.
- Promote employee and team well-being through SAMRC Wellness programmes and other interventions.
- Create environments that actively support sharing ideas and engaging with colleagues in order to build more dynamic and cohesive teams.
- Creativity. Adopting a mindset of life-long, continuous learning promotes curiosity, flexibility and agility, and is critical in a rapidly and constantly changing workplace.
- Team coaching and mentorship towards the goal of harmonious and flourishing teams.
- Collaboration skills to work with hybrid and remote teams.

Institutional fitness for the future

A future-ready organisation is one prepared to adapt and flourish in an increasingly complex and uncertain world; one that is resilient to disruptions and proactive in anticipating and capitalizing on opportunities. To do so we need to ensure a combination of strategic foresight, organisational agility, technological innovation and strong, adaptable teams.

- Digital literacy. Build the skills to learn, work, communicate, collaborate and navigate everyday life in a digital world, including artificial intelligence.
- Promote digital tools for enhanced productivity and leveraging of emerging opportunities.
- Analytical thinking. In an era of fake news and information overload, it is increasingly important for everyone to be able to analyse issues and situations based on evidence rather than hearsay, personal opinions or biases.
- Create an ecosystem for self-directed and life-long learning, that is available to everyone at any time ("Once you stop learning, you start dying." — Albert Einstein).



Culture

- Conduct campaigns that promote positive cultural and environmental outcomes, such as kindness, active listening, empathy, a commitment to self-directed and life-long learning, and energy and water saving.
- Development and implement policies, campaigns and interventions to address all forms of prejudice and bias, for example harassment and bullying.
- Develop a Culture Memorandum for the SAMRC.
- Create safe spaces and opportunities for increased awareness on matters related to diversity, equity and inclusion.
- Use visual culture clues in the work environment to ensure that physical and digital spaces reflect the SAMRC's commitment to inclusion.

Campus environments

- Continue interventions to promote accessibility in SAMRC campuses for people with disabilities.
- Create diverse spaces, both indoors and outdoors, for meetings and discussion, including informal, opportunistic interactions.
- Construct memory walls at each campus to honour those lost during the COVID-19 pandemic, and since.
- Finalise the availability of lactation rooms at each campus.
- Greening of the SAMRC. Reduce water and energy use, shift toward a lower carbon footprint, motion sensors to reduce lighting use, incorporate sustainable materials into workspaces, retrofit buildings with modern, sustainable technologies and practices, install low water use devices in bathrooms.
- Adopt a case-by-case approach to accommodation of employees with special needs.

Monitoring & evaluation

- Develop a core set of SAMRC Transformation indicators.
- Develop a simple, pragmatic Transformation Barometer for the SAMRC.
- Regularly report on Transformation indicators to the EMC, Board and other stakeholders.

Indicators of success

The finalisation of an integrated set of Transformation indicators will be a priority in the 2025 – 2028 period. Indicators are needed for the following key areas:

- Equity
- Productivity
- Creativity and Innovation
- Self-directed and lifelong learning
- Intrapersonal development
- Employee engagement and satisfaction.

Conclusion

Transformation is not a peripheral activity but a central strategic imperative for the SAMRC, in respect of both historical and future dimensions. This 2025–2028 Transformation Plan lays the foundation for sustained, meaningful change that enhances employee and institutional flourishing and scientific excellence, while promoting diversity, inclusion, equity and justice.