

# Sansa establishes SA space programme foundations

According to Engineering News, although the South African National Space Agency (Sansa) was formally launched on December 2010, it began operations only on April 2011.

Sansa absorbed the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research's (CSIR's) Satellite Applications Centre at Hartebeeshoek, west of Pretoria, and the Hermanus Magnetic Observatory, which fell directly under the National Research Foundation. Currently, the agency has four divisions - Earth Observation, Space Operations, Space Engineering and Space Science.

As Sansa approaches the end of its first financial year (March 31), CEO Dr Sandile Malinga is satisfied: "Things have gone well," he says, "notwithstanding the challenges of setting up a new entity and incorporating entities with their own ways of operating and their own ethos, It has been a great success. Integration hasn't hampered what we do." Sansa has a total staff complement of around 140. In addition to the four divisions, Sansa designates human capital development, science advancement and public engagement as additional focus areas. Space Science MD Dr Lee-Anne McKinnell says that the creation of the agency has opened the door to international cooperation in space.

In the ten or so months Sansa has been functioning, it has already hosted two international space conferences - "great for our scientists, great for our morale," McKinnell says. Sansa is now looking more and more to the future. "By the start of the next financial year, we think we'll have smoothed out challenges and will be able to focus on our core functions," CEO Malinga tells Engineering News. "Space - you can't do it alone," he points out. "One has to partner with other nations and focus on niche areas of expertise. Everyone works together in space, at different levels and in different ways. But there are open partnerships all around. We partner with just about everyone. But, obviously, some partners are more important, more strategic."

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