

The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA)



The South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA) is an agency of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture which is tasked with an overall legislative mandate to identify, assess, manage, protect and promote heritage resources in South Africa, and to protect them for future generations.

National heritage sites need to be protected and safeguarded from damage or alteration, and it's important to prevent development that could endanger their existence.

"SAHRA works to identify and protect heritage resources in South Africa"

SAHRA works with local communities to identify heritage resources and record their oral and living histories, as well as increase public involvement in the preservation of heritage resources.

"South Africa has a very rich heritage," says Stephen Muller,

SAHRA ICT Manager, "and SAHRA works across a number of business units – including Heritage Properties, Burial Grounds and Graves, the Built Environment and Heritage Protection – to identify and protect heritage resources in South Africa.

"We have a very valuable registry in the form of our internal archives, encompassing a vast amount of heritage documents including old papers, plans, maps, information about graves.... information from the past that it's important

to protect and preserve. Overall, our outlook for the future is to become significantly more digitalised, including with our registry and archives, and also as an organisation overall. The work done by SAHRA is valuable and it's important that it's assisted in the digital realm, to protect South Africa's Heritage Sites in the physical realm."

THE BUSINESS CHALLENGE

"It's our intention to have a proper electronic document records management system in place so that we can get all our information, including our records and administrative systems, more digital," explains Muller.

In the quest to keep SAHRA's digital processes and communications systems modern and not 'vintage', the organisation has carried out a significant number of implementations or upgrades in the past 10 years or so. These include such important technology elements as:

- Business Fibre connectivity;
- Voice and Telephony solutions;
- Backup of data;

- Foundational network security; and
- The implementation of an SD-WAN solution.

Some of these implementations have been carried out at SAHRA's head office in the Western Cape, and others have been at regional offices. SAHRA operates across four sites around the country. Muller clarifies that there have been some challenges previously with getting all the sites connected with fast connectivity, including the replacement of a slow ADSL line at one of the regional offices.

"Our concerns were around data security and service continuity, as well as site integrations that were required to interlink all our colleagues and allow them to interact and integrate with our existing systems and offices. Vox was able to address these requirements through well detailed bids," he explains.

VOX CASE STUDY

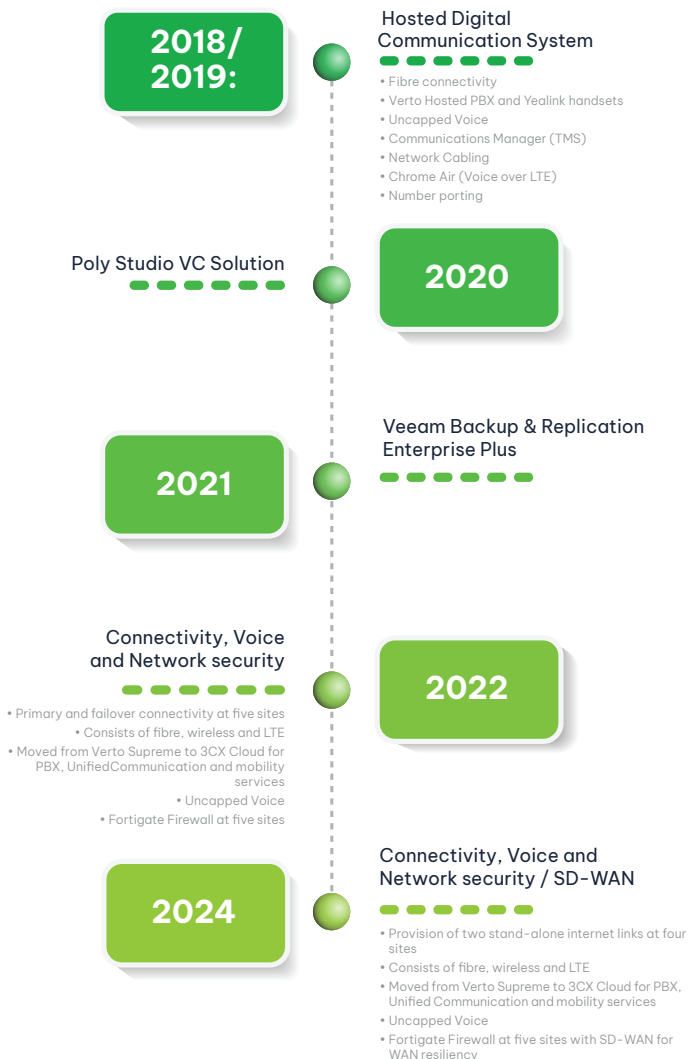
As a government entity, SAHRA is required to follow strict bidding / tender procedures each time a new project or upgrade over a particular Rand value is required. Muller explains: “Being a government entity, we have to follow a formal public procurement process and that’s always

THE BUSINESS SOLUTION

done by a means of competitive bidding. SAHRA’s relationship with Vox began when we had to shift our existing voice solution, and then we also added in the Internet connectivity as well. Later on, we found the need to include managed firewall services and most recently we have had a requirement for an SD-WAN solution.

“On each of these occasions, Vox has submitted separate tender documentation in response to the advertised tenders. In summary, Vox has helped SAHRA to improve on our operational efficiency, including the enhancement of our remote working capabilities. Additionally, Vox has helped us to strengthen our cybersecurity posture, while also reducing infrastructure costs over time.”

Vox was the successful winner of a number of tender processes for SAHRA in recent years, as follows:



René Minnie, Key Account Manager at Vox, clarifies that the most recent 2024 upgrades are of particular interest and significance for SAHRA, involving upgrades to the entity’s connectivity, voice and network security. She says: “When we look at the migration from Verto Supreme to 3CX Cloud, we see that Vox is providing SAHRA with a solution that is future-proof and rich in functionality, and which allows more control. With regards to the implementation of an SD-WAN solution, it is important to note that Vox has provisioned for the ability to use both links at each site.

“As for the benefits of SD-WAN, it’s a modern networking solution that simplifies the management and operation of a wide area network (WAN) by decoupling the network hardware from its control mechanism, with key benefits including improved network performance, cost efficiency, enhanced security, simplified management, and scalability and flexibility.”

More details on the benefits of SD-WAN are as follows:

- **Improved Performance:** SD-WAN intelligently routes traffic across the most efficient paths, reducing latency and improving application performance, especially for cloud-based services.
- **Cost Efficiency:** SD-WAN allows businesses to use lower-cost internet connections (like broadband) alongside or instead of expensive MPLS links, significantly reducing WAN costs.
- **Enhanced Security:** Built-in encryption, firewall capabilities and centralised security policies help protect data across all network endpoints.
- **Simplified Management:** Centralised control makes it easier to configure, monitor and manage the network, reducing the need for manual intervention and on-site IT support.
- **Scalability and Flexibility:** SD-WAN supports rapid deployment across multiple locations and adapts easily to changing business needs, making it ideal for growing organisations.



VOX CASE STUDY

OVERALL EXPERIENCE WITH VOX

Muller says he has been very happy with both the service and the products received from Vox overall, and enjoys an extremely positive relationship with Vox. He clarifies: "The service levels have always been consistently high, and in fact have always exceeded what we at SAHRA have requested. We also very much appreciate the scalability of the available offerings. You could say that Vox has essentially become a strategic partner towards the SAHRA IT unit, and as a company, its employees and divisions are very good at communicating the available offerings, both for a present requirement as well as for future possibilities and planning – I find Vox to be well-structured and transparent."

Muller also praises the quality of Vox's tender documents, which, he says, are unfailingly of a high quality and provide all the information – and sometimes more – than actually required.

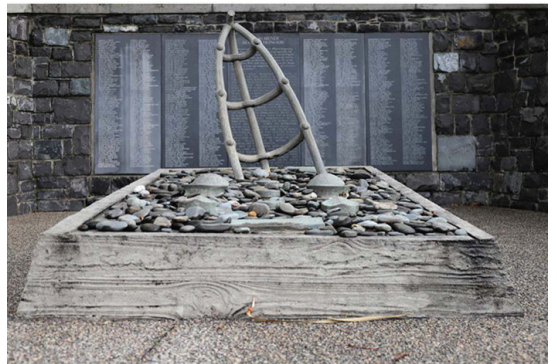
"Usually, we look to see that the potential service providers are able to meet or even exceed our minimum requirements," he explains. "Then we look at proven reliability and uptime, scalability, security and compliance. Cost-effectiveness plays a vital role as well, and we also look at strong support and after-sales service.

"Vox scores consistently highly across all these categories, including with excellent service and competitive pricing across all its products. The type of bid received from Vox overall is always excellent. No matter big or small, there's always enough information. If it's a specific brand or model mentioned, there will be a specification sheet that paints a clear picture."

Minnie adds that the interactions with Muller and the rest of his team at SAHRA have always been most pleasant: "As a company, people across a number of divisions at Vox appreciate SAHRA's business relationship, which is based on mutual politeness and respect. Our two companies work extremely well together, and we look forward to continuing to be of assistance to SAHRA for many years into the future," she says.

"I believe that in Vox, SAHRA has found an excellent partner and over the years, we have met regularly and enjoyed smooth operations overall. And so if I could sum it up, Vox's offerings are a clear commitment to a partnership with long-term value overall, because of the scalability and expansions that are offered by Vox," concludes Muller.

"Vox has essentially become a strategic partner towards the SAHRA IT unit"



About Vox

Innovation and insight combine in Vox, a market leading end-to-end integrated ICT and telecommunications company. We have an enviable track record of meeting the needs of thousands of consumers, SMEs, large corporates, and public sector organisations. Thanks to our dedicated staff of more than 1 500 people – and our several hundred business partners countrywide – we set the benchmark for service delivery by connecting people through best-of-breed technology.

From data to voice, as well as cloud, business collaboration and conferencing tools, Vox offers intelligent solutions that connect South Africans to the world, supporting entrepreneurs, customers and commerce, while practicing values of integrity, choice and service excellence in all of its dealings.

Visit us at www.vox.co.za

