The SKA will have a uniquely distributed setup, with one observatory operating two telescopes on three continents for a global scientific community. The observatory’s operations will be guided by principles to maximise impact and availability while minimising radio frequency interference and ensure the data is accessible to the largest number.

### Operational Principles
- **24-hour operation** to maximise scientific impact and provide access to as much of the southern sky as possible
- **Service Observing** (no visiting observers at the telescope) to ensure efficient operations and minimise radio frequency interference
- **Flexible scheduling** to ensure dynamic response to observing conditions and to provide for Targets of Opportunity and triggered events

### Access Principles
- Common time allocation process based on **scientific merit** and **technical feasibility**
- Access proportional to national share in the project
- **Up to 5%** Open Time available
- **Key Science Projects** to take up 50-75% of observing time, with conventional PI-led projects taking up the remainder
- All data to be made **openly available** following a proprietary period

### Major dates
- **2017–2018** Prototypes deployed at the telescope sites
- **2020** Start of construction activities
- **2022** Start of Observatory & Science commissioning
- **2024–2027** Key Science Project (KSP) planning & proposals
- **late 2026** Commencement of PI-led programmes
- **late 2027** Commencement of KSPs
The data journey

Basic data products will be produced and stored in Cape Town for SKA1-mid and Perth for SKA1-low. From there, they will be delivered to a global alliance of SKA Regional Centres for further processing and archiving and access by the user community.

New data models will need to be developed as current software packages for radio astronomy data reduction don’t have the capabilities to handle the SKA’s large bandwidths and Field of View datasets.

The SKA will be:

- **Distributed**: One observatory operating two telescopes on three continents for a global scientific community.
- **Accessible**: Common software and user interface. Pre-programmed algorithms. Training at the SKA Regional Centres.
- **Open**: Open Access to non-proprietary data.
- **Citizen-ready**: Access to SKA public data for citizen science projects.