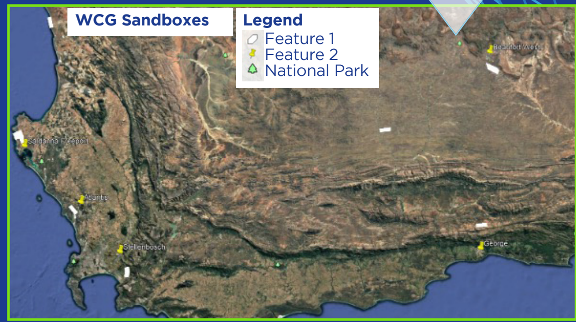
CREATION OF A REGULATORY SANDBOX TO POSITION THE WESTERN CAPE AS A GLOBAL HUB FOR DRONE INNOVATION

MAP OF THE PROJECT



PROJECT SUMMARY

The Western Cape Government is developing a Regulatory Sandbox for Drones and UAVs to position the province as a global hub for drone innovation. The Sandbox provides a controlled, real-world environment to test emerging technologies, support adaptive regulation, and catalyse commercial applications. Aligned with the Western Cape Infrastructure Framework 2050 and the Growth for Jobs Strategy, the project supports the growth of inclusive value chains across logistics, agriculture, inspection and public services. Viable test sites have been identified, with a phased approach enabling scalable operations from VLOS to BVLOS and UTM integration. The Sandbox also supports STEM education, job creation and investment attraction.

PROJECT STATUS

The project is currently in Phases 4 and 5 of a six-phased implementation plan (2024–2025). Stakeholder engagements, regulatory alignment, technical planning and site selection have been completed. Saldanha, Atlantis and George have been shortlisted as preferred locations based on environmental, infrastructure and community-readiness criteria. Operational, governance and financial models are now being finalised. Live engagements and business planning are in progress, setting the stage for procurement readiness and private sector participation by late 2025.

FINANCIAL NEEDS

Approximate value: R2,1 million (phase 1).

The project's financial model is structured around the development of a minimum viable sandbox (MVS) with clear pathways for expansion. Funding is currently provided by the Western Cape Government for initial infrastructure and regulatory development. Private investment is sought to scale operations, integrate advanced technologies and transition into a public-private sector partnership model. Cost categories include site infrastructure, staffing, digital platforms and airspace integration tools, with a revenue model based on user fees, tiered access and service partnerships.

PRIVATE SECTOR OPPORTUNITIES

Private sector investors can engage through:

- Co-investing in sandbox infrastructure and scaling BVLOS and UTM capabilities.
- Providing operational services, including data analytics, compliance tech and airspace management tools.
- Participating in trials and demonstration projects to test commercial drone applications.
- Supporting STEM and SMME development linked to regional aerospace and drone value chains.

TIMELINE

1. **2024 Q1-Q3** Stakeholder engagement, technical planning, regulatory alignment
2. **2024 Q4** Site selection completed
3. **2025 Q1-Q2** Finalise operational and governance models
4. **2025 Q3-Q4** Initiate procurement and Sandbox rollout begins
5. **2026 onward** Transition to private sector partnership and move to BVLOS/UTM operations

Western Cape Government

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