AfricaArray was launched in 2005, with support from academic and government institutions in Africa, the U.S., and Europe, and from mineral and energy companies. AfricaArray promotes a range of educational and research activities in addressing shrinking training and human capacity in the mineral, petroleum, groundwater and environmental sectors in Africa. The main focus is on establishing effective Africa-based education programmes.

Geophysics, in particular seismology, was the vehicle selected to establish AfricaArray; a training programme in which M.Sc. and Ph.D. students are attached to the University of the Witwatersrand and co-supervised at U.S. and European institutions, an observatory network that provides data for research, and a diversity programme and international field school for students from historically disadvantaged communities.

During the 2nd phase, the network of observatories was extended into Africa, also to build geophysics programmes at other African universities, and the diversification of AfricaArray initiatives into other areas was initiated.

The current phase will consolidate and expand this diversification process to include atmospheric and climate science, geodesy, human dimensions of global change, hydrology and space weather. GPS receivers and automated weather stations have been added to many existing observatories. Academic and government groups are interested in real-time data transmission for weather forecasting and disaster risk reduction.

Data can be downloaded manually; seismic and GPS/meteorological data is made available through IRIS and UNAVCO, respectively. Near real-time data transmission is available for a few of the observatories, mainly in southern Africa.