

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) Executive Management Team (EMT) Lekgotla.



The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) considers strategic planning to be a continuous process, and its Executive Management Team (EMT) Lekgotla, held from January 24-26, 2024 at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) Convention Centre in Pretoria, was a chance for the executive and management teams of SALGA to review and update the organisation's 2022-2027 strategic plan.



SALGA President Cllr Bheke Stofile delivers the keynote address at the SALGA EMT.

Key role-players in the country's local government ecosystem system were present at the meeting, including, among others, Parliament, the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB), Trade Unions, the National Treasury, the Department of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation (DPME), Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Statistics South Africa (Stats SA), and the South African Cities Network (SACN).

SALGA Acting Chief Executive Officer Mthobeli Kolisa opened the EMT by setting the scene for the 3-day gathering.

In his contextualized assessment of the state of local government, Mr. Kolisa addressed the challenges municipalities faced in raising revenue from shrinking tax bases while also addressing the ability of ratepayers to pay for municipal services like water, power, and sanitation. He also talked about the need for data analytics and how it could enhance operational effectiveness and decision-making in local government.

“We need to step up and have insight intelligence that tells us what could happen. SALGA must be able to say with what we know;

this is what is likely to happen so that we can act on it. But that is not enough, we must have foresight intelligence that informs us what could happen in the future

“That is the challenge that we have as an organisation. Our task then becomes clear that we need to answer the question, how do we turnaround local government. That is the sum-total of everything that we will be talking about,” said Mr. Mthobeli.

The purpose of the EMT Lekgotla, is to framework the priority areas for SALGA for the remainder of the period towards the implementation of the SALGA Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027 and agree on immediate priority areas for the 2024 – 2025 Annual Performance Plan.

The objectives of the Extended EMT Lekgotla therefore is to:

- Reflect on the past year and half and progress made towards implementation of the current 2022 – 2027 SALGA Strategic Plan.
- Reflect on the outcomes of the Governance Structures held in 2023 (PMAs, National Members Assembly, Council of Speakers, National Executive Committee Rotational Engagements with Municipalities, Working Groups, etc.).
- Reflect on key emerging issues that affect local government and how stakeholders view SALGA’s role in responding to such issues.
- Frame the mid-term priority areas for the remainder of the term and the 2022 – 2027 Strategy.



A participant at the SALGA EMT



Participants at the SALGA EMT

- Agree on the deliverables for the Annual Performance Plan 2024 – 2025.

In light of the organisation’s financial management successes—as demonstrated by an 11th consecutive clean audit from the Auditor-General of South Africa’s (AGSA—SALGA President Cllr. Bheke Stofile discussed the organisation’s challenge in pushing its member municipalities to emulate these achievements.

“We want to see an effective local government system and I was saying in my interaction with the auditor general, that yes I accept that SALGA has achieved numerous clean audits but I am not happy that municipalities are not seeing any significant improvement,” said Cllr. Stofile

“I hope that your engagement with us in the national executive committee, you will highlight what what can be our contribution in making sure that the municipal system in south Africa changes audit outcomes from what it is today to a better outcome.”

Census data related to the population, economy, and society can help municipalities plan, track policy evaluations, and make better decisions overall.

Mr. Faizel Mohammed from Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) delivered a presentation containing key highlights, including, among others that the South African population grew to 62 million in 2022, translating to 17,8 million households (an increase of 7,2 million over the last 20 years).

Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal continue to be the provinces with the largest population, at 15,1 million and 12,4 million, respectively. In addition, 50% of the South African population live in the largest 17 metros and municipalities resulting in cities facing growing environmental, societal, and economic

On service delivery:

- Access to electricity for lighting went from 58,1% in 1996 to 94,7% in 2022;
- Over four out of five (82,4%) of households in the country has access to piped water either inside their dwelling or inside their yard;
- 98.4% households have sanitation, with 70.8% having access to flush toilets; and
- Two-thirds (66,3%) of households in the country had their refuse removed by a local authority once a week.

Dr. Robert Nkuna, Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) Director-General offered a few insights into actions that could be taken to improve local governance in South Africa.

- Review the local government fiscal framework. A differentiated approach is needed to ensure the policy is well-tailored to overcome unique issues individual municipalities face.
- Ensure professionalization and capacitation of local government, including critical technical skills such as qualified engineers
- Strengthen regulatory framework on the formation and management of coalition councils
- Rethink governance of municipalities as developmental enterprises – innovation to expand revenue base and incentives to attract investment, and



SALGA COO Lance Joel

- Take steps to stop political violence, crime and corruption in local government

The Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)'s Mr.Mbulelo Tshangana gave an overview of some of the department's major interventions to address issues facing local government:

- The 2021 review of the Municipal Structures Act, 117 of 1998 – The review laid the foundation for the separation of powers between the executive and legislative arms of the municipal council. The reinforcement of the Code of Conduct for Councillors. The recognition of the Municipal Public Accounts Committees (MPAC) and the introduction of the whip of Council for all municipalities.
- The 2022 review of the Municipal Systems Act, 32 of 2000 – The review was a reintroduction of the 2011 amendment of the Municipal Systems Amendment Act, 07 of 2011 which was struck down by the Constitutional Court in 2019.
- The introduction of the Municipal Systems Act: Municipal Staff Regulations of 2021, laid a solid foundation for the achievement of the objective to professionalise local government. Revised competency assessment batteries are also being finalised to further strengthen professionalisation interventions.

Improving the performance of Parliament and the government go hand in hand, and for this the Secretary to Parliament, Mr. Xolile George, presented "A Transformative Parliament" as a topic of discussion

- A Parliament that acts in putting the needs and well-being of people first and protecting their vulnerabilities.
- A Parliament that shows its responsiveness, care, and intervenes, to protect, promote, and reaffirm everyone's inherent right to dignity.
- A Parliament that listens, promptly responds to concerns raised by society and reinforces its status as the trustee of the aspirations of the people
- Parliament will actively promote collaboration and cooperation with various stakeholders and partners to enhance effectiveness in delivering on its mandate
- A Parliament that commits to always put stakeholders at the centre to fulfil its mandate

To achieve this, the following actions were recommended.

- Shift to data-driven insights to inform a focused, structured oversight programme for the legislative sector
- Include systematic assessment of impact of laws passed
- Focus on Parliament's role in effecting meaningful change in the lived realities of South Africans
- Leveraging the potential of constituency periods – more direct engagement between Members of Parliament and communities
- Greater strategic collaborations and partnerships with private and public sectors and civil society

A Just Transition presents and extraordinary opportunity for South Africa is the message

SALGA NaExecutive Management Team (EMT) Lekgotla



Delegates to the SALGA EMT

Mr. Steve Nicholls, Head of Mitigation at the Presidential Climate Change Commission, delivered.

He explained that as South Africa looked to a low-carbon, prosperous future, it was vital this transition is well-managed, just, and equitable, and for this the Presidential Climate Commission developed a just transition framework to act as a practical guide.

The framework sets out the actions that the government and its social partners will take to achieve a just transition, and the outcomes to be realised in the short, medium, and long term.

Prof Theo Veldsman, one of the top Work Psychologists and thought leaders in South Africa, reviewed SALGA's operating model.

The expected outcome of the exercise is a proposed high-level, fit-for-purpose Operating Model for SALGA, that will enable the organisation to deliver excellently on its legislative mandate: An association that leads innovation through cutting edge quality and sustainable service delivery to its member municipalities for better services to their communities.

Mr. Kolisa closed the EMT saying he was confident that the insights and lessons learned from the gathering would be translated into actionable solutions that will improve SALGA's operational performance.