

SAICE–PDP continues to support municipalities

After five successful years of supporting Gauteng municipalities, SAICE's outreach arm, SAICE Professional Development and Projects (SAICE–PDP), will move towards supporting government in the professionalising of municipalities

“LOCAL GOVERNMENT will never be the same again,” said Acting Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Nathi Mthethwa, at the passing of the Municipal Systems Amendment Act. “The law,” said Mthethwa, “sends a clear signal that our municipalities must and will be more professional in the manner in which they do their business.”

He said that this “will open a new chapter in local government and help turn it around into a responsive, ac-

countable, efficient and effective local government system that will help accelerate service delivery and the building of a better life for all.”

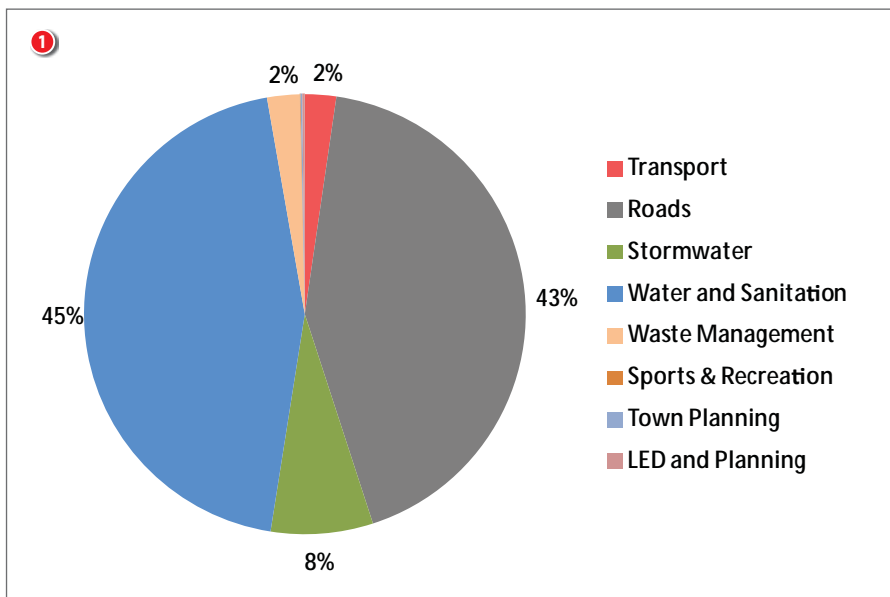
Since 2006, the SAICE–PDP (also known as Civils Masakheni) has worked with the Gauteng provincial government to facilitate service delivery in many municipalities.

“Now we are entering a new era of support,” said SAICE–PDP managing director Allyson Lawless. “It is time to establish the necessary technical capacity at these municipalities by building the skills and systems to meet the requirements and levels of service that our infrastructure demands and that our communities expect.”

PUSHING PROJECTS

Having begun in a small number of Gauteng municipalities, the SAICE–PDP has rolled out its support to the majority of municipalities in the province, with funding from partners who include the Development Bank of Southern Africa, and provincial and national government.

The strategic placement of senior, mostly retired, engineers with engineering students and graduates as part of municipal teams, was a critical intervention aimed at relieving bottlenecks.



It allowed projects to be released for development, and resulted in over R9 billion being spent in thousands of municipal projects between 2006 and 2011 (see Figure 1 for 2010/2011 analysis as an example).

The key projects included:

- Large-scale housing initiatives on the West Rand – where work included the updating and integration of comprehensive master plans, and assisting local municipalities with acquiring funds for various water and sewerage projects – and in Sedibeng, where the transfer of six housing projects (almost 10 000 units) to local municipalities was required. Private funding of more than R400 m was raised for some of the Mogale housing projects.
- Raising of Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grants in Mogale and Sedibeng for the enhancement of townships.
- Transport planning to develop Metsweding – including plans for the regional road network, management of new development applications, hands-on participation in the planning activities of the provincial roads authority, and provincial road network re-evaluation.
- Input into the World Cup traffic logistics.
- Development of stormwater management plans in Johannesburg to address the risks of flooding.
- Dolomite risk management in Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality – where dolomite areas were mapped out and all available dolomite-related information was captured, making EMM the only Metro with all this type of information available in one database.
- A biogas-from-waste treatment-to-electricity project at five Johannesburg water sewage works to save energy – initiated by a SAICE-PDP engineer which will save Johannesburg Water an estimated R1 billion over the next ten years in electricity costs. Many more installations will follow at other wastewater treatment works in other parts of the country.
- Quality management in the City of Tshwane – deployment allowed SAICE-PDP engineers to help improve the quality of effluent from treatment works, as well as the



- quality of work delivered by contractors on numerous roads projects.
 - Boosting of municipal revenue through the calibration of electricity meters.
 - The development of a master planning guideline, to ensure that municipalities make adequate provision for long-term growth.
 - The redevelopment of standard operating procedures, most notably in Johannesburg Water.
- The team is particularly proud of helping address service backlogs, getting improved sewage treatment services to over 110 000 households in the past year, and better water supplies to at least

- ① Percentage expenditure per discipline in Gauteng in the 2010/2011 financial year
- ② Attendees at one of the many courses presented by the Candidate Academy
- ③ Candidate exercise during the 'Road to Registration' course

40 000 homes. They were congratulated by MEC Humphrey Mmezi, the MEC for Gauteng Department of Local Government and Housing, at a ceremony earlier this year.

SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

There is increasing awareness of the dire lack of expertise at local government,



and how this is undermining service delivery. On-the-job training and mentoring of students, graduates and municipal staff has thus become an important element of municipal support.

This work has enabled about 300 students to complete the experiential training needed to graduate with national diplomas, and about 180 graduates have started getting workplace experience – without which many of them would remain unemployed. SAICE–PDP is particularly proud of having supported several in-house staff towards professional registration with ECSA. The plan is to step up this type of intervention in the coming year.

Among its range of resources, SAICE–PDP offers training and support to graduate engineers who need workplace exposure and learning to develop the competence for professional registration with the Engineering Council of South Africa (ECSA). Through its Candidate Academy, it is boosting the skills of the civil engineering sector by working with learners, students, graduates and professionals to share skills and experience in structured ways.

In the past year, some 600 engineering graduates (candidates), supervisors, mentors and human resources specialists have been trained by the Candidate Academy through the 'Road to Registration' courses. These courses offer guidance on workplace training, coaching, mentoring and support essential to building a new cadre of engineering professionals. In addition, technical courses in fields ranging from



transport management and pavement maintenance to sewer design and contract administration have been offered to young graduates to allow them to understand the processes which need to be adopted in the workplace.

REGULATING COMPETENCE

Government's regulations on minimum competency levels, promulgated in terms of the Municipal Finance Management Act, are also an important spur to ensuring the right level of technical ability at municipal management level. SAICE-PDP is now focusing on services that help municipalities to entrench their skills and systems to become more sustainable service providers. It is this professionalising of local municipalities that is key to their future success.

The support interventions being rolled out include the development of organograms to clarify and structure lines of reporting, the establishment of competence profiles for various positions and setting of formal job descriptions.

"Among the demands of the MFMA regulations on competency levels is the need to set standards for technical ability and performance, and registration with a professional body is an important way of doing this," said Allyson.

"This is one of the reasons why – through our Candidate Academy – we are investing so much time and energy in engineering graduates. We can take them through a fully supervised and monitored process as candidates,

so they can gain their registration from the Engineering Council of South Africa as professionals. This level of recognition and skill is what makes our modern economy work, and that upholds the complex infrastructure on which we all rely."

CAPACITY FOR THE FUTURE

According to Allyson there are still serious challenges to be overcome at local government. The more experienced technical staff are continuing to leave municipalities, and their posts often remain vacant. While officials are realising the need to address this challenge, the applicants for these vacancies are usually not skilled enough.

"We need to develop internal training programmes, so that junior staff can be employed and trained to eventually fill middle-management and senior positions," Allyson said.

The SAICE-PDP seniors working in local government are adamant that skills development should become the major priority in supporting municipalities. They believe that a three to five year dedicated skills development programme in all Gauteng municipalities should be mounted, and they should be harnessed to focus on skills transfer, rather than fill line function roles in the absence of staff being appointed to key vacant posts. It is their belief that they would have succeeded when their support to local government is no longer required.

Allyson summed up their views by saying that a municipality's right to

exist is its ability to provide the appropriate infrastructure to the communities it serves. "The key to municipal recovery is to develop an environment where there is sufficient understanding of the need to deliver, operate and maintain all facets of infrastructure, including basic, economic and bulk services," she said.

"Until all departments are service orientated, i.e. budgeting and allocating funds accordingly, and employ the appropriate technical staff, a sustainable environment will not be achieved."

► INFO

Allyson Lawless
Managing Director: SAICE-PDP
allyson@ally.co.za

- 4 University students provided solar heating to a crèche in Protea, in Soweto, that did not have any power
- 5 Luvuyo Kuselo and Sivatho Nzimma – bursary holders who graduated in September 2010
- 6 SAICE-PDP seniors assisting at a wastewater treatment works
- 7 Councillors on a field trip to a wastewater treatment works
- 8 An example of a badly-run landfill site in Johannesburg
- 9 An example of a well-run landfill site in Durban
- 10 SAICE-PDP seniors at the award ceremony that was held in June 2011 in recognition of exemplifying the highest standard of professionalism in transferring skills and supporting service delivery in local government in Gauteng