

# Professional administration

CRUCIAL FOR  
SERVICE  
DELIVERY

Municipalities cannot deliver on their developmental mandate without suitably qualified and professional staff. However, evidence shows that the lack of good governance of staff matters in many municipalities results in service delivery failures. Local government needs to professionalise and be professionalised – and there are three aspects to this.

Firstly, national government needs to prescribe a single, coherent competency framework for key municipal staff categories. In addition, there should be a coherent system of enforcement of this competency framework (see below). Currently, the Municipal Systems Act and the Municipal Finance Management Act each prescribe their own detailed competency frameworks. It is not always clear who supervises and enforces which framework. More rules are in the offing, once Parliament adopts the Systems Amendment Bill, which could further complicate the situation. Different departments should not prescribe requirements that contradict, overlap or create parallel support and enforcement structures.

Secondly, the law must make professional associations responsible for protecting the ethics and quality of their sectors. It should not be permissible for someone to be appointed as a municipal manager, chief financial officer, chief town planner or municipal engineer without being a member of the relevant association. The associations must be charged with enforcing quality and ethical standards and facilitating continuous education, all relevant to the sector. Most associations are not yet up to this, so national and provincial governments must support them as they take up their obligations.

In addition, a national accord must be struck between government, professional associations and tertiary education institutions to ensure that the supply meets the demand

everywhere (and not just in Johannesburg, Cape Town and Durban).

Thirdly, the roles of the municipal council, municipal executive and municipal manager (as head of the administration) with regard to staff appointments should be clarified. Municipal councils should do this by clearly defining those responsibilities when their term of office starts. The council is responsible for setting recruitment and appointment policies and for overseeing their implementation by the municipal manager. In addition, councils should appoint municipal managers. Other than that, councils or councillors should not deal with individual appointments. Councils may investigate appointments made if they suspect irregularities, but they should not, in any way, seek involvement in the making of individual appointments.

Municipal managers should have the task of appointing, dismissing and disciplining all staff. National law should be changed to make municipal managers (and not the council) responsible for the appointment, dismissal and disciplining of managers accountable to the municipal manager.

Without professionalism in the municipal administration, the newly elected councillors will fight an uphill battle to deliver to their constituencies. Important initiatives are already under way, but there is no doubt that more needs to be done.



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