

Intergovernmental relations in the North West

The North West Provincial Intergovernmental Forum (NWIGF) was officially launched in July 1997. Its mission statement reads that it:

...exists to co-ordinate, through political interaction, the actions of all local government and provincial bodies, provincial departments and other role players, thereby promoting interdepartmental co-operation and intergovernmental relations in order to ensure and facilitate efficient, cost-effective service delivery within an integrated development planning framework.

Subsequently the North West Provincial Government and South African Local Government Association (SALGA) North West entered into an agreement in April 2000 in which they committed themselves to the objectives of local government as set out in the Constitution.

Objectives of the NWIGF

The stated objectives of the forum are to:

- enhance and promote co-operative governance;
- ensure policy synergy between the two spheres of government on the horizontal and vertical levels;
- create a platform for the co-ordination of legislation and actions of provincial and local governments;
- create a channel of communication between the province and local governments;
- encourage an integrated approach to service delivery;

- promote the principle of integrated development in the province and, in particular, consolidate the thrust towards a provincial Growth Strategy and Development Plan (GSDP); and
- monitor the implementation of national programmes and policies by providing a supportive role in respect thereof.

Structure and role players of the NWIGF

The general thrust of the NWIGF is that it is inclusive of other stakeholders such as the legislature, the House of Traditional Leaders and service providers (parastatals).

The forum has two components, namely the political component and the technical component. Both collectively allow the participation of politicians from provincial and local spheres, organised local government in the province, representatives from the provincial House of Traditional Leaders, major service providers in the province and provincial government officials.

Political forum

This component meets six times a year and comprises:

- the Premier, who is also the Chairperson;
- the Speaker and Deputy Speaker;
- the Chairperson of the provincial House of Traditional Leaders;
- the Chairperson of the Chairperson's Forum in the North West legislature;
- the Head of the Office on the Status of Women;
- the Chairperson of the Youth Commission;
- the members of the SALGA North West Management Working Committee (councillors); and

- all members of the provincial Executive Committee.

The political forum is the decision-making body. It is led and driven by politicians and receives technical and administrative assistance from the technical forum.

Technical forum

This component meets monthly and comprises:

- the Director-General (also the Chairperson);
- members of the provincial Management Committee;
- representatives of service providers such as the water boards, Housing Corporation, Telkom and Eskom;
- representatives of the National Planning Commission; and
- the SALGA North West technical team.

The functions of the technical forum are to:

- act as the management of the NWIGF;
- design integrated programmes on policy implementation with clear time frames and directives to the sectoral forums;
- monitor progress on the implementation of national programmes;
- provide technical support and advice to the political forum;
- ensure the implementation of national policy;
- act as a forum to give continuous support to the quest for integrated development within the province; and
- perform such other duties as may be delegated by the political forum.

In order to manage its operation effectively and efficiently, the technical forum established an intersectoral forum with four components, namely the Institutional Development Forum, the Infrastructural Development Forum, the Social Welfare Development Forum, and the Safety and Security Development Forum. They discuss matters such as:

- public servants holding local political office;
- integrated sustainable rural development strategies;
- integrated development planning for municipalities;

- provision of basic water services;
- cross-boundary municipality management;
- municipal cost recovery;
- municipal policing;
- financial assistance to provincial organised local government; and
- restructuring and re-alignment of the technical forum structure with the provincial government cluster committees.

Assessment

The biggest stumbling block for these forums is the non-availability of the different role players. This can be a result of either a lack of commitment on the part of role players or the fact that there is no statutory obligation on them to attend these meetings. Their non-availability makes it very difficult to get meetings off the ground and to get decisions in which everyone made an input.

It has been suggested the secretariat of these meetings look at a predetermined roster for meetings which can be distributed to members at the beginning of each year.

Furthermore, fewer meetings, perhaps quarterly, will also help alleviate the problem.

What is lacking from the Intergovernmental Relations Forum is a formal dispute resolution mechanism between the different spheres.

Examples of new approaches are the joint initiatives between NWIGF and the Office on Status of Women in terms of arranging workshops on poverty alleviation.

This province is one of the few where traditional leaders play an active part in intergovernmental relations and decision making.

At a meeting in July 2002 it was decided and accepted by all role players that municipalities and provincial departments should consult traditional leaders on matters that affect rural communities.

An intergovernmental relations conference was held in February 2002 between all role-players to re-affirm their commitment to the objectives of the intergovernmental forum.

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