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**Summary and Analysis of the Government Communications Information Systems (GCIS)**

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**VISION**

The vision of the Department is to help meet the communication and information needs of government and the public to ensure a better life for all.

**MISSION**

It is to provide leadership in government communication and to ensure that the public is informed of government's implementation of its mandate.

**STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

The overarching strategic objective of the GCIS is to enhance the government communication system and operations in ways that contribute to the process of further consolidating the country's democracy and taking the country onto a higher growth and development path.

**PROGRAMME PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS**

There are seven programmes in the GCIS namely:

- Administration;
- Policy and Research;
- Government and Media Liaison;
- Provincial and Local Liaison;
- Communication Service Agency;
- Public Entities; and
- Government Magazine.

This document analyses the performance of each programme as indicated in the 2006/07 Annual Report against the objective outputs that have been laid out in the 2006-2009 Strategic Plan of the GCIS.

**Administration**

This programme is responsible for overall management and provides support services to the whole department. According to the Estimates of National Expenditure (ENE), this programme was allocated, R68 596 the second largest stake of all the GCIS programmes. It is divided into five sub-programmes, namely, Project Desk, Human Resources, Training Services, Finance Supply Chain Management and Auxiliary Services, Information Technology and Management and Internal Audit.

**Policy and Research**

The aim of this programme is to conduct communication research, provide communication advice and monitor development and implementation of government communication programmes, policies and products. Policy and Research was allocated the least amount of R11 697. This programme consists of only two sub programmes, namely, Policy and Research. The department reports on various achievements including working on 21 different



research projects that supported the enhancement of effective government communication. Regarding the Research sub-programme, targets set in the GCIS' 2006-2009 Strategic Plan<sup>1</sup> are qualitative whereas the achievements are reported quantitatively. There is a need to compare like with like in order to help the department identify whether it is performing optimally or there is room for improvement.

- Is there a follow up programme to indicate the success and the impact of these research projects?

#### **Government and Media Liaison**

The purpose of this programme is to co-ordinate effective, integrated and comprehensive communication and media liaison services across government. There are four sub-programmes under this programme, i.e. National Liaison, International and Media Liaison, News Services and Parliamentary Liaison. This programme was allocated R17 975 000. Most the objectives set out for this programme were achieved. However, there were targets that were unmet, such as the plan to publish six issues of the *Bua* Magazine, which was unsuccessful due to problems, which arose as a result of migrating to online production. The department is transparent in its report but to a limited extent. For example, in his report the Auditor-General observed that the department reported on only eight of the twelve outputs that were spelt out in the Strategic Plan<sup>2</sup>.

- Can the department give an account of what happened to the four output objectives that it neglected to report on?
- The department says there were delays in the distribution of the annual handbook to communicators, by how long was distribution delayed?
- Are there plans in place to help the department improve on this performance in this regard and in other areas where targets were not met?

#### **Provincial and Local Liaison**

This programme supports development communication and extends government's information infrastructure through provincial and local government. It facilitates the establishment of *Thusong* Service Centres to make services and information more accessible to the public particularly the disadvantaged. Provincial and Local Liaison programme is divided into four sub-programmes namely, Institutional Development, Local Liaison and Information Management, Provincial and Local Liaison Administration and Regional Office Liaison. It was allocated R39 483 according to the Estimates of National Expenditure of 2007.

- The Annual Report states that the department had planned to establish twenty-seven (27) *Thusong* Centres but only managed seventeen (17).
- Can the department explain why it did not reach its target?
- Again the department had a target output of forty (40) focus groups<sup>3</sup> but does not it report its achievements in this regard.

<sup>1</sup> See page 11 of the Strategic Plan with page 29 of the Annual Report 2006/07

<sup>2</sup> see pg 12 of the 2006-2009 Strategic Plan and compare with pg 35 of Annual Report

<sup>3</sup> See pg 39 of the 2006/07 Annual Report



- How many focus groups did the department organise successfully?
- To try and balance quality with quantity, how did the GCIS measure the effectiveness of these focus groups?
- The Auditor General has noted that there is a discrepancy in the number of outputs per objectives and the targets that have been reported on in the Annual Report under this programme. On its Strategic Plan the GCIS has indicated that it wanted to engage in ten (10) development communication partnerships per year and offer support to communication structures at local government level. What were the outcomes of these objectives if they were indeed carried out and why were they not reported on?

#### **Communication Service Agency**

The objective of this programme is to provide core communication service to the government and its departments, both in-house and through outsourcing. Its functions have been divided into three sub-programmes namely, Marketing, Product Development and Content Development.

Under this programme, the Radio Unit received forty-one (41) requests to facilitate live links, thirty-five (35) requests to produce radio advertisements and eight requests for editing and production of video programmes and advertisements etc.

- Does the GCIS have adequate capacity to process all these requests?
- How many of these were executed successfully? If not all of them what caused the lag?
- Did the department encounter any obstacles in executing the requests and how did it solve them?
- Again the Auditor General reports that there are inconsistencies in the number of outputs per objectives and the targets that have been reported on in the Annual Report under this programme.
- The Auditor General's report has again pointed out that there were eight objective outputs spelt out in Strategic plan and only 6 were reported on in the 2006/07 Annual Report.
- Has the GCIS taken cognisance of these inconsistencies and how will it ensure that they are not repeated in the future?

#### **Public Entities**

There are two public entities under this programme namely the International Marketing Council and the Media Development and Diversity Agency. This programme is allocated the largest portion of the budget. For the 2006/07 financial year, the public entities received 32% of total appropriation.

#### **Government Magazine**

The aim of the Government Magazine is to create a communication vehicle that provides information on economic and other opportunities and how these can be accessed.

#### **Audit Report**

The GCIS received an unqualified report from the Auditor General. A flow up audit, which was conducted in May 2007, showed a significant improvement in internal controls. However the Auditor General raised concerns over several matters that had not been rectified. These include:





- Weaknesses had been identified in the user account management procedures for the Personal and Salary Systems, Basic Accounting System, Local Area Network and Logical Information System.
- Unmonitored activities of the system controllers and network administrators
- Access violations and logon violations of users were not reviewed and monitored.
- Unformalised service level and business agreements between the GCIS and State Information Technology Agency (SITA)
- Management said it had taken corrective measures to resolve these matters. Can the GCIS furnish the committee with the details of these corrective measures?

The Auditor General also found some discrepancies in the reported objectives. For example, there was little or no correlation between the objectives stated in the Annual Report and those in the Strategic Plan for the Communication Service Agency programme and the Public Entities programme<sup>4</sup>. The Auditor General also reported that there are discrepancies between targets in the Annual Report and Strategic Plan for the Government and Liaison, Provincial and Local Liaison and Communication Service Agency programmes.

- What caused the inconsistencies between the objectives in the Annual Report and the Strategic Plan?
- How is the department going to ensure that these discrepancies are not repeated?

#### **Under spending**

Although it calls it savings the department has reported an under spending of over R900 000 in three of its programmes. These include programmes such as the Provincial and Local Liaison and the Communication Service Agency that have not met their targets as singled out by the Auditor General. As also indicated in this analysis, one of the department's goals was to establish twenty-seven (27) *Thusong* Centres but only seventeen (17) were reported on.

- Could the under spent funds not have been utilised to more efficiently to build more *Thusong* Centres to help provide a better life for under resourced communities?
- Does the department have internal controls to ensure that money allocated to it is spent accordingly in order to fulfil the Strategic Objective of "taking the country onto a higher growth and development path"? If not, why not?
- If yes, then why was money committed to projects not processed accordingly?

#### **Points to consider**

- What has the department accomplished currently in preparation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup?
- The last State of the Nation Address to appear on the GCIS website is dates 14 February WHICH YEAR? address by the president<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> See page 19 of Strategic Plan (2006-2009) and page 45 of the 2006/07 Annual Report.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.gcis.gov.za/docs/govcomm/index.html>



- How come has the Government Communication Framework website not been updated?
- And how come is the Strategic Plan of the GCIS not posted on its website?
- The Information Centre under the first programme, Administration, has the highest vacancy rate of 23,1% under employment by programme<sup>6</sup> what has the department done so far to correct improve the situation?

### **Conclusion**

The department tends to report mainly on its successes but many a time fails to indicate challenges that it encountered during the year under review. For the purposes of openness and transparency the department should also communicate its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and remedial measures. This could also empower the committee to assist the department to improve on its performance.

As the information hub of the government departments and the country, the GCIS has made significant strides in disseminating information and in attempting to accomplish its vision of "helping to meet the communication and information needs of government, and the public to ensure a better life for all." However it needs to be vigilant about a number of things such as, updating its website as source of information and a tool of communicating with the nation.

### **References**

The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) 2006/07 Annual Report  
The Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) 2006-2009 Strategic Plan  
<http://www.gcis.gov.za/about/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> See pg 59 of the 2006/07 Annual Report