South African Legislative Sector
Strategic Framework for Communications

LEGISLATIVE SECTOR
SOUTH AFRICA

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Speakers' Forum, through the Secretaries Association of the Legislatures of South Africa, commissioned the development of the Strategic Framework for Communications as an integral part of efforts aimed at strengthening the Legislatures role in entrenching Constitutional and participatory democracy. This framework therefore represents a giant leap to enhance communications and affirm its strategic value within the Legislative Sector. This marks a new beginning of alignment and collaboration to raise the bar in the functioning of the sector.

This Strategic Framework for Communications is aimed at and applicable to the South African Parliament and Provincial Legislatures of South Africa. It provides minimum norms and standards that Legislatures may aspire to and exceed, as it strives for excellence in serving the people of South Africa. It is in this context of a broader mandate of the SALS that this strategic framework for communications is a critical enabler and the requisite support to the Legislatures in fulfilling their constitutional mandate of law-making, oversight and public participation.

This framework is one of the instruments, at the disposal of the Legislatures, for use to help realise the ideals of the constitution such as ensuring inclusivity, cohesion, accountability, as well as effective and coordinated governance. Individual Legislatures are encouraged to use this framework as a guide in the development of customised and aligned communication policies, strategies, programmes of action, as well as roles and activities, which together would improve sector wide communication outcomes.

This Strategic Framework for Communications in the Legislative Sector, is adopted as a working document to be reviewed from time to time to incorporate the latest developments in the communications industry in particular and the Legislative Sector in general, in order to set increasingly higher standards.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The delivery of the South African Legislative Sector Strategic Framework for Communications came about as a result of the concerted efforts and contributions of a range of sector structures and individuals. It is a product of the collaboration of South African Legislatures aimed at strengthening the Legislative Sector.

The framework is published by the South African Legislative Sector under the auspices of the Speakers' Forum of South Africa which is acknowledged for its strategic leadership contribution to the development of the sector and its programmes. Sincere appreciation is extended to the Secretaries' Association of the Legislatures of South Africa (SALSA) for their commitment and guidance towards realising this framework.

The project team, guided by the project champion and supported by the project management and coordination of the Legislative Sector Support, played a central role in the research and development of the SA Legislative Sector Strategic Framework for Communication. The project team worked very closely with communicators in all Legislatures to produce this framework.

Dr G A Lawrence	Project champion and Convenor of the SALSA Cluster 3 Communication Focal Area
Mr J Ndakana	Project Content Manager, Free State Provincial Legislature
Ms N Luhabe	North West Provincial Legislature
Ms N Mosana	Eastern Cape Provincial Legislature
Mr F Nondonga	Gauteng Provincial Legislature
Mr W Nxumalo	KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature
Mr J Retief	Western Cape Provincial Parliament
Ms R Scott	Project Manager, Legislative Sector Support, Parliament of the RSA
Mr M Wolela	Parliament of the Republic of South Africa

KEY TERMS

Constitution   Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

Executive   The Executive Arm of State of South Africa

Legislative Sector   Parliament, nine Provincial Legislatures of South Africa and the Local Government sphere

Legislatures   Parliament and the nine Provincial Legislatures of South Africa

Parliament   National Parliament of the Republic of South Africa which is constituted by two houses, the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces.

Provincial Legislatures Provincial Legislatures of the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Northern Cape, North West and Western Cape

Speakers' Forum   Consists of the Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the National Assembly, the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the National Council Of Provinces, as well as nine provincial Speakers and Deputy Speakers.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

GCIS: Government Communication and Information Services

GOPAC: Global Organisation of Parliamentarians Against Corruption

EU: European Union

HR: Human Resources

ICT: Information Communication Technology

IPU: Inter Parliamentary Union

LSS: Legislative Sector Support

MEC: Member of Executive Council

MP: Member of Parliament

MPL: Member of Provincial Legislature

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

NA: National Assembly

NCOP: National Council of Provinces

PAIA: Promotion of Access to Information Act

SALS: South African Legislative Sector

SALSA: Secretaries' Association of the Legislatures of South Africa

SFSA: Speakers' Forum of South Africa

SMS: Short Message System

SOM: Sector Oversight Model

UNCP: United Nations Development Programme

WTO: World Trade Organisation

SECTION A
Introduction and Background

1. Introduction

The Republic of South Africa is a constitutional democracy with three arms of the state that provide checks and balances to advance good governance and the rule of law. These are the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Authorities. The national, provincial and local levels of government all have Legislative and executive authority in their own spheres, and are defined in the South African Constitution as "distinctive, interdependent and interrelated". The Legislative authority is vested in Parliament which is composed of the National Assembly (NA) and the National Council of Provinces (NCOP), as well as nine autonomous Provincial Legislatures as established in terms of the RSA Constitution, Act No 108 of 1996.

The National Parliament and Provincial Legislatures have a shared constitutional mandate set out in Chapters 4 and 6 of the Constitution, respectively. The Legislative Sector has a three legged mandate of **lawmaking**, **oversight** of the Executive and ensuring **public participation** in Legislative processes.

Furthermore, the Legislatures are granted powers to determine and control their arrangements, proceedings and procedures in terms of Sections 57, 70 and 116. This includes making rules and order with due regard to representative and participatory democracy, accountability, transparency and public involvement.

Section 40 makes provision for cooperation by stipulating that whilst spheres of government are distinctive, they are interdependent and interrelated. All government institutions, irrespective of their sphere of government, should observe and adhere to the principles of cooperative governance as set out in Chapter 3 of the Constitution. These institutions are expected to cooperate with one another in mutual trust and good faith by:
- Fostering friendly relations;
- Assisting and supporting one another;
- Informing one another of, and consulting one another on, matters of common interest;
- Coordinating their actions and legislation with one another

- Adhering to agreed procedures; and
- Avoiding legal proceedings against one another.

2. Background and Context of the SA Legislative Sector

While section 43 of the Constitution notes the autonomy of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures, these institutions are also obliged to adhere to the notion of cooperative governance as per Chapter 3 of the Constitution. This, therefore, provides a basis for Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures to collaborate and organise as a sector and coordinate their efforts.

Through the Speakers' Forum of South Africa (SFSA), Parliament and the Provincial Legislatures resolved to organise themselves as a sector and engage in efforts aimed at asserting the sector against potential threats to its role and independence. At present, the South African Legislative Sector includes the national Parliament of the Republic of South Africa and Provincial Legislatures of the Eastern Cape, Free State, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West, Northern Cape and the Western Cape Provincial Parliament and was formed through the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding* in March 2010. The purpose thereof was to establish the Legislative Sector, work towards minimum sector norms and standards on common matters and provide for sector or joint structures of coordination.

Most recently, the Legislative Sector has embarked on a process of further formalising its collaboration through legislation. This signifies the strengthened cooperation and collaboration on joint matters by Parliament and Provincial Legislatures, not only to improve efficiencies in the context of limited resources, but to enhance the outcomes of a qualitatively better life for all people in South Africa.

The strategic focus of the sector during the 5th term includes:
- Enhancing public involvement to deepen and entrench people-centered democracy;
- Enhancing (anticipated) impact of laws passed to improve the achievement of State policy outcomes;
- Strengthening oversight over the Executive to ensure implementation of the National Development Plan, radical economic transformation and improved service delivery;
- Enhancing effectiveness, efficiency and capacity, through improving governance and administration for optimal functioning of the South African Legislative Sector; and
- Strengthening capacity for sector participation to contribute to a better and safer Africa in a better world.

It is in this context of the broader mandate of the SALS that the communications strategic framework is a critical enabler that would ultimately support the sector in fulfilling its mandate of law-making, oversight and public participation. The need to communicate is clearly essential in meeting the goals of the SALS. Meaningful communication is about getting information out to the relevant actors in the sector, as well as to the appropriate partners, stakeholders and the public.

This strategic framework for sector communications is meant to be one of the instruments, at the disposal of the Legislatures and Legislative Sector for use to help realize the ideals of the constitution including ensuring inclusivity, cohesion, accountability, effective and coordinated governance.

3. Environmental Analysis

The leadership of the Legislative Sector affirmed communication as a political and management function that they need to be effectively responsive and proactive in a dynamic political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal context of the South African society. These dynamic factors are motive forces behind what the Legislatures do or not do operationally, as well as behind the reputation of the Legislative Sector in citizen's eyes.

a. Political

The Legislative Sector represents the highest form and platform for participation of diverse communities of South Africa, who are represented in the national dialogue on development. The eleven Legislatures are key in ensuring greater political stability, commitment in fighting corruption, holding the executive and other organs of society accountable and in better management of even global influencers of national development. The multiparty constitutional democracy in South Africa, continues to provide vibrant national dialogue, and continues to mature and reassure citizens of the enduring democratic dispensation, which must anchor various communication efforts.

b. Economic

South Africa continues to face challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty, which despite numerous interventions remain among the highest in the world. They are compounded by the global economic crises that have limited South Africa's rate of success. These remain threats to ideals enunciated in the Constitution and in the National Development Plan, a South Africa of people's dreams. The centrality of the Legislative Sector in addressing these multiple challenges is critical in any communication efforts of building the image and the reputation of the Legislative Sector.

c. Social

There are strong ideals and overwhelming majority of South Africans inspire for, which include, a democratic, prosperous, non-racial and non-sexist South Africa where all people enjoy a great quality of life. As outlined in the National Development Plan, the South Africa people want, their dream society is where social cohesion is progressively stronger than historical divisions, lifestyles improve, a carrying society is entrenched and cultural diversity is celebrated as strength instead of being barriers.

d. Technological

The Information and communication technology innovations (ICT) have gained great traction, empowered citizen with unprecedented access to and use of among others, smart phones, and has given a voice to millions. Along side these developments, has been exponential growth of all forms of digital and / or online communications, including social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp and more. Although traditional forms of communication remain key, there is phenomenal growth of reliance on digital communication, which continues to account for the largest segment of the broader multi-media landscape. The sector has to gear itself for the onset of the fourth industrial revolution (4thIR), expected to usher in lower communication, data and transport costs that will give more power to the citizens. There are also anticipated major negative outcomes of the 4thIR such as automation of production and replacement of labour, growth in unemployment and possible resulted civil strife or conflict. The Legislative Sector is expected to anticipate these developments, invoke its activist stance to development and mitigate to enhance positive outcomes of the 4thIR. With proper scenario mapping, planning and execution the sector could enhance its delivery on all its mandates especially the citizen involvement and participation.

e. Environmental

The natural environment continues to take a centre stage in major development efforts, as industrial the centre of major development projects, with citizens mobilized to either support or reject such initiatives. Environmental impact assessments are done, and the Parliament is called upon to pass legislation that tightens these processes and gives citizen a stronger voice on these matters.

f. Legal

The Speakers Forum commissioned the High Level Panel (HLP) to evaluate the impact of thousands of pieces of legislation passed since the advent of freedom and democracy. This assessment is meant to reflect on successes and gaps, particularly in respect of land hunger, poverty, inequality, unemployment and a need for social cohesion. The intervention of the fifth term of the Legislative

comes in the context of South Africa's adoption of the National Development Plan (NDP) which should find expression in the Legislative landscape, in the execution of the oversight mandate and in optimizing citizen participation in governance.

The robust democratic engagements and legal challenges by political parties and non-state actors, has placed on the national dialogue questions of judicial overreach and the vibrancy of the South African constitutional democracy.

4. Objectives, Scope and Application of the Framework

4.1 Objectives

- To support the SALS in fulfilling its mandate of law-making, oversight and public participation through improved communication of its business to diverse publics.
- To clearly define strategic communications within the context of the SALS and to highlight the principles and benefits of strategic communications within the context of the Legislative Sector.
- To provide a framework for effective coordination and alignment of all internal and external communication efforts to increase the scope, reach and impact of communication efforts;
- To affirm the strategic value of communication within the Legislative Sector and enable the mainstreaming of the function and streamlining of business processes as well as monitoring, evaluation and reporting; and
- To develop a "best fit' model for strategic communications for the SALS and to detail good practice in respect of strategy, structures, resourcing and systemic arrangements to derive optimal value from any investment in communication.
- To determine minimum norms and standards that Legislative institutions may aspire to and exceed.

4.2 Scope and Application

This Strategic Communications Framework is aimed at and applicable to the South African Parliament (Both the National Assembly and the National Council of Provinces) and Provincial Legislatures of South Africa.

While this framework makes reference to guidelines for communication and minimum standards for implementation, it is advisable that each Legislative institution undertake a comparison of current communication processes, practices and resources, and then develop or customise institutional communication strategies for alignment purposes.

This Strategic Communications Framework is not applicable to any government department or stakeholder group. Any alignment of their programmes and resources to this framework would be of their own volition where and when deemed necessary to achieve a shared goal.

5. Legal and Policy Framework

5.1 Applicable Legislation

The importance of strategic communications on the part of Legislative institutions is legally mandated in the RSA Constitution and numerous pieces of legislation and policy aimed at ensuring progressive realization of constitutionally guaranteed rights as per below:

The **Bill of Rights and the Constitution of South Africa, 1996** –
Chapter 2 of the Constitution of South Africa contains the Bill of Rights, a human rights chapter that protects the civil, political and socio-economic rights of all people in South Africa. The rights in the Bill apply to all law, including the common law, and bind all branches of the government, including the national executive, Legislative institutions and the judiciary.

The Bill of Rights guarantees all citizens the right to information about decisions that affect their rights. Section 32 provides for the right to access to information and covers the freedom of expressions and all related rights including media freedom, the right to know, right of access to 'any information held by the state' and 'any information held by another person and that is required for the exercise or protection of any rights'. This means that Legislative institutions are required to facilitate public involvement in the Legislative and other processes.

The **Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000** –
PAIA was enacted to give effect to the rights enshrined in the Constitution. The two main objectives of PAIA are: (1) To give South Africans and non-South Africans a legal right to access information held by public and private bodies, enabling them to more fully exercise and protect their rights, and (2) To foster a culture of openness and accountability in South Africa. Procedures for access to information under Section 32 of the Constitution, and the limitations on the release of information, are regulated by the PAIA.

A range of other pieces of legislation find application and relevance in the communications space and Legislative Sector. These are a few of the key pieces though not an exhaustive list:
• Powers, Privileges and Immunities of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act
• Financial Management of Parliament and Provincial Legislatures Act

- Broadcasting Act
- Electronic Media, Records Management and Archives Act
- Protection of Personal Information Act

5.2 Relevant Policies

Communication responsibilities are entrenched in the Constitution as a critical service in the governance of South Africa with numerous clauses prescribing standards to be met as part of basic human rights, including the: freedom of speech, optimizing citizen participation in the Legislatures' exercise of their mandate.

Communication for the Legislative Sector thus takes its cue from the constitutional imperative of freedom of information and the objectives of building a truly democratic state. The function of communication by Legislative institutions represent a vital public service involving both providing information and listening to the public. This means that strategic communication is a function of open, transparent and proactive good governance to ensure the public receives information, and that the views and concerns of the public are taken into account in the planning, management and evaluation of policies, programmes, services and initiatives.

The applicable policies in this respect are the SA Legislative Sector Policy, Strategy and relevant adopted sector Frameworks whilst at institutional level the local policies would apply.

SECTION B
Legislative Sector Communication Model

6. Definition

Communication is defined as a two-way process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share *meaning*. In general, *communication* is a means of connecting people or places.

Corporate communications denotes the inherently multi-disciplinary (e.g. media liaison, marketing, advertising, management, etc.) and integrated (print, speech, electronic, etc.) communication efforts made by a Legislature to advance its mission and can be aimed at either an internal or external audience.

7. Objectives of Communications

- To ensure that Legislative institutions are visible, accessible and accountable to the public.
- To raise awareness of the institution and its role and functions.
- To provide information on the institution's activities to the general public.
- To promote the role and facilitate participation of the public in the Legislative process
- To communicate in a manner that is clear, concise, timely, relevant and accessible to all stakeholders, including a diverse populace and accommodates the needs of all citizens.
- To build and promote active citizenship and stakeholder engagement.

8. Guiding Principles for Strategic Communications

The strategic communications function in all Legislative institutions should be guided by the following principles:

a) **Pursuit of constitutional mandate** – sector communications should be underpinned by the

constitutional mandate of law-making, oversight and public participation of Legislative institutions. Legislative Sector policy principles are to guide sector communications.

b) **Strategic communication** – Affirmation of the strategic nature and positioning of communications and provision of strategic communications advisory support. This should find expression in representation, participation and involvement in mainstream processes and systems.

c) **Integrated communication approach** – Accepting that all communication should be based on an integrated communication strategy and programme, from conception to impact evaluation.

d) **Outcomes focused communication** – Ensuring effective and accountable management of communications through programme planning, development, implementation and management which includes effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting, knowledge management and resource allocation.

Hierarchy of Communication Outcomes
Note: Various audiences and stakeholders may be at various levels of the continuum

Progressive towards image reputation (wd b)

Period

Reputation

Image

Advocacy

Participation

Appreciation

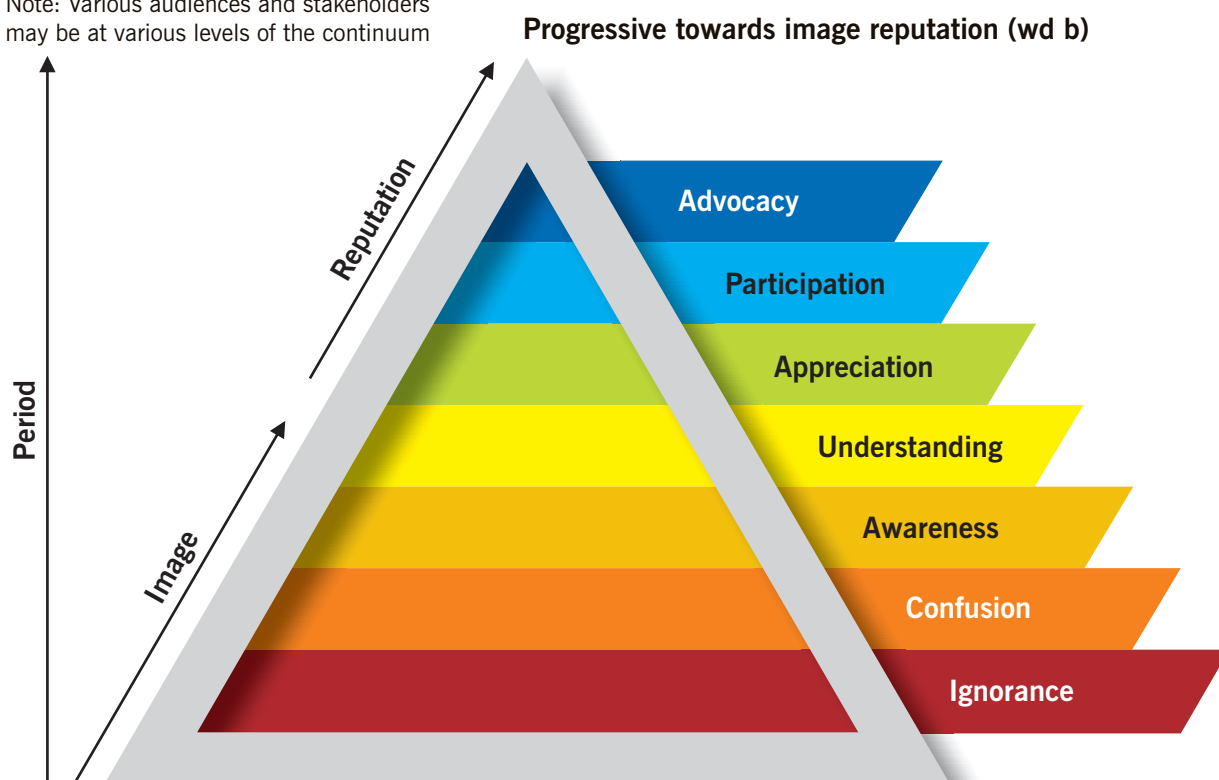Understanding

Awareness

Confusion

Ignorance

Diagram 1: This diagram represents progressive outcomes of communication efforts. In essence communication efforts seek to shift as many members of the public and stakeholders as possible, from ignorance to advocacy levels. Various segments of the target audiences may be at difference levels

from the outset, hence the significance of measuring baselines, setting of targets and tracking of changes in audience awareness, understanding, appreciation (image), participation and advocacy which better demonstrate the reputation of, in this instance, the Legislative Sector.

e) **Commitment to constitutional values** – Guided by a set of values and ethics affirming the constitutional values of freedom, openness, accessibility, security, accountability, citizen empowerment and development, while also honouring the value and reputation of the Legislatures in all communications activities.

f) **Needs based communications** - Accepting that communication should be context specific and able to meet the diverse needs of the populace.

g) **Collaboration** – Every effort should be made to enhance a collaborative approach to communication across the Legislatures, in a manner that adds value to their work.

h) **Developmental communication** – Acknowledging that communication should be undertaken to optimally promote a direct, unmediated and developmental model to communication with stakeholders and the citizens, while providing effective feedback loops that including outcome based research, and assessment of the impact of communication efforts.

i) **Optimising technology** – Embracing technology and digital platforms to support communications and expand the reach of Legislatures, while investing in human capital development to help the sector ride the wave of the technology revolution.

j) **Impartial and balanced communication** – Pursuing a communications approach that serves the Legislatures in a balanced and non-partisan manner.

9. Stakeholder Relations and Engagement

In the context of strategic communications, stakeholder management is a critical component ensuring the fulfilment of the constitutional mandate of Legislative institutions. From the constitution to policies and strategic plans, stakeholders are seen as strategic partners who can augment the capacity of legislators to serve the primary beneficiaries, the citizens, much better. There are numerous internal and external stakeholders who should be engaged effectively to enhance a multi-stage communication effort of the sector, who have specific needs, expectations and perceptions about each one of the Legislative institutions. The communication strategies of institutions should take note of the activities of its peers in the sector and internationally. The institution with the support of the strategic communications function should foster close working relationships with the following key internal and external stakeholders (not exhaustive).

Internal Stakeholders
- The Speaker and Deputy Speaker as the Presiding Officers of the Legislature
- Chief Whip and Whips
- The House Chairpersons / Chair of Chairs of the institution
- Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of all Committees
- The Secretary and Deputy Secretary to the Legislature
- Members and Officials of the institution

External Stakeholders
- Other Legislative institutions and organisations within SA, the continent and globally
- The Leader of Government Business
- Government / Executive and Judiciary
- Media
- Constituencies
- Citizens

It is important to note that communication straddles the relationship of political and administrative operations and harmonises the varying emphases of these two fraternities to emerge with messages reflecting their unity of purpose. It is thus critical that stakeholder management includes packaging of messages in a manner that harmonises the administrative and political arms of government. Communications within Legislative institutions is a shared responsibility involving office bearers, public representatives, and officials at all levels. Of vital importance however, is the need to make a clear distinction between communication messages for the purposes of addressing institutional versus party political requirements.

The strategic communications function has to work very closely with:
- The Secretary of the Legislative Institution
- The Media Liaison in the Presiding Offices
- House Chairpersons / Chair of Chairs
- Committee Chairpersons
- Programming Committee
- Spokespersons of the relevant Portfolio Committees
- Spokespersons from political parties
- Media organisations
- Officials of the institution

10. Categories of Communication

Below is a short description of the main categories of communication that are generally distinguished in the Legislative Sector, i.e. internal, external, development and crisis communication.

a.   External Communication

External communication devices promote the Legislature and creates publicity, generate interest, announce events, products or services and support branding. The element of external communications or public relations focuses on the relations and communications with external stakeholders in which media relations is a key aspect. Other external stakeholders of the Legislative institutions include the public, groupings, partners, other parliaments / parliamentary organisations, government, etc.

External communication typically includes email, brochures, newsletters, posters, advertisements and other forms of multimedia marketing designed to inform the external audience of a Legislature.

b.   Internal Communication

In many instances the internal communications function is taken for granted and under resourced, yet it holds the key to effective staff ownership of the vision, mission, values and programmes of the institution. Rather than operating from a dominant paradigm of external stimuli, it should be integral to high level decision making, where decisions of what, when, how and through who should the decisions be communicated to all staff. Options being used should be broadened to cover basic and new media platforms including: a working intranet, email system, TV screens in strategic points that carry traditional notices, scheduled meeting from the leadership.

There is a need for internal and external communication of each institution to be aligned. In assessing how to align individual internal communication systems, institutions should review structural issues and assess what is the most effective enabling environment to facilitate efficient communication internally and externally. In terms of internal communication systems, the following guidelines can assist institutions:

- Communication among managers and employees should be open and collaborative to achieve goals and institutional missions, and to ensure the flow of information within the institutions.
- Internal communication should be a two-way dialogue. Listening to employee ideas, concerns and suggestions for achieving results and improving service, and acting upon them, is just as important as keeping employees informed about the goals and priorities of an institution, or about developments, changes or new initiatives affecting their work. Taking account of the views and concerns of employees will lead to more effective institutional management.

- Engaging employees in a conversation for action allows institutions to tap into a vast pool of intelligence and expertise. Properly engaged in the life of an institution, employees can be valuable allies in external communication – helping to inform the public, professional colleagues and prospective employees about their institution.
- Internal communication is an integral part of an institution's brand strategy and should play a role in awareness creation and understanding of the brand among employees. All employees should be encouraged to be brand ambassadors.
- Effective internal communication is a shared management responsibility. Collaboration, particularly between human resources management and the communication function, is essential to ensure internal communication requirements are met.
- Managers and supervisors should communicate with employees openly, frequently and before or at the same time as information is communicated to the public. Training in communication should be available to managers and supervisors to help ensure they are effective communicators.
- To foster employee knowledge, awareness and understanding, internal communication includes a mix of published materials (in multiple formats), oral presentations, staff meetings and learning events. Representation on newsletter editorial boards, internal communication advisory committees and evaluation task forces provide additional avenues to engage managers and employees in a conversation for action.
- Internal communication activities and processes should be reviewed from time to time, to evaluate results, identify areas for improvement and make adjustments as needed.

c. Development Communication

In addition to marketing, which is the sharing and dissemination of the Legislative institutions with the public as well as the media, a key activity for institutions is to ensure the public is able to effectively and meaningfully engage with its activities, programmes and processes.

Development communication is key, as it takes into account the diversity of culture, language and literacy levels to support institutions to achieve outcomes. Development communication is responsive to the needs of the community, relies on feedback (consultation) and allows room for creativity. A key goal of development communication is the slow changing of beliefs, norms and standards within a group or community. For example, using a variety of communication channels to increase understanding of the Legislative Sector and how it supports the public, and decrease the belief that government acts on its own without input from the public.

d. Crisis Communication

Clearly, no emergency response plan can be applied to every potential crisis situation. However, a

comprehensive plan that takes into account potential natural, technological and human-made threats, and involves key personnel in the planning process, can help the institutions to systematically manage emergencies in an effective and efficient manner.

Typically, this involves analysing capabilities and hazards, outlining specific roles and responsibilities, and identifying critical programmes and individuals at stake. These activities help to ensure a coordinated and effective response when a critical incident does occur. In addition, this particular area of strategic communication is activated to mitigate against negative publicity, scandals and any other events that impact on the image and profile of the Legislative institution.

11. Key Communication Services

The key elements or functions of corporate communications generally include public and media relations, internal communications, new and multimedia, content and publications, corporate image and brand management as well as marketing and promotions. Below is a short outline on each of these functions of organisational communication.

a.   Media Relations Management

Media is acknowledged as the most used communication platform by the overwhelming majority of the people of South Africa, and currently is at the centre of the "push approach" to the Legislature's communication programme. Media can generally be categorized into commercial and community media. A balanced approach should be taken in advancing the Legislative mandate through both media streams.

Media representatives play an important role in the democratic process, providing the public with news and information about the Legislative institution and reporting on the public's views and opinions of the institution. It is important for institutions to cultivate proactive relations with the media to promote public awareness and understanding of policies, programmes, services and initiatives. Some of the key deliverables for media relations management should include the following and find expression in strategy:

- Institutions should operate and respond effectively in a 24-hour media environment. They should be able, on short notice, to reach and inform the media on issues of importance to decision-makers and the public. Institutions should strive to engage the media using a variety of communication tools, including news conferences, background or technical briefings, news releases and audio-video presentations.

- In addition, it is critical for institutions to facilitate information or interview requests from the media, and manage plans and strategies for communicating with the media. Communication Units should review the communication's architecture when planning media campaigns or strategies that could involve participation of political office bearers.
- In terms of media engagement, communicators should be informed and knowledgeable of the authority and responsibility of Parliament and Legislatures, whose members are entitled to learn about planned Legislative initiatives before information about them is released to the media.
- Furthermore, it is important that quality and consistency of information services is provided to the media in official languages. Media enquiries, whether by phone, email, letter or in person, should be addressed promptly to accommodate publication deadlines. Institutions should ensure processes and procedures are in place to assist staff in responding to media calls.
- Communication specialists responsible for media relations should ensure that media requests, particularly for interviews and technical information on specialised subjects, are directed to knowledgeable managers or staff who are designated to speak as official representatives of their institution.

Political office bearers are the principal spokespersons of Legislative institutions. They are supported in this role by the Secretary, appointed communication specialists and other officials designated to speak on the institution's behalf, including technical or subject-matter experts.

Spokespersons, particularly senior managers, are often called upon to represent institutions before parliamentary committees and boards of inquiry. To ensure effective communication, which respects official protocol, spokespersons should be familiar with relevant guidelines.

b. Multimedia

Institutions should maintain a capacity for innovation and stay current with developments in communication practice and technology. As they adopt new means of communication, institutions should strive to reach, in a timely manner, citizens whose access to technology may be limited or who prefer to receive government information through more traditional means such as print or interpersonal communication.

To ensure new technology advances an institution's ability to connect with a diverse range of citizens in efficient and practical ways, all plans should be developed collaboratively by managers in information technology, communication and other key functions, such as programme and service delivery, and human resources.

Investments in new communication technology should serve to:

- Enhance public access to information, programmes and services;
- Achieve efficiencies in the preparation, accessibility and dissemination of information, while preserving its availability to current and future generations;
- Foster interactive communication with citizens and facilitate public consultation in the development and delivery of policies, programmes, services and initiatives; and
- Improve service performance and integrate service delivery.

Institutions should advance digital and online initiatives aimed at expanding the reach and quality of internal and external, improving service delivery, connecting and interacting with citizens, enhancing public access and fostering public dialogue.

An important tool for providing information and services to the public, the Internet facilitates interactive, two-way communication and feedback. It provides opportunities to reach and connect with citizens wherever they reside, and to deliver personalised services. Institutions should maintain an active presence on the Internet to enable 24-hour electronic access to public programmes, services and information.

Institutions should ensure that Internet communication conforms to parliamentary policies and standards. Institutional branding, themes and messages should be accurately reflected in electronic communication with the public and among employees.

With technological developments such as smart phones and the growing capacity for ordinary citizens to generate, capture and distribute messages, the social media sector has grown exponentially in South Africa, in the continent and across the globe. Online communication and social media have grown to be the leading platforms for accessing information. Each Legislature should embrace the use of social media and other digital platforms. Institutions should also develop social media policies to help manage the platform.

The production and distribution of audio-visual and multimedia products such as films, videos, television programmes, etc. form part of the multimedia environment. Systems should be put in place to facilitate archiving of institutional materials.

c.   Public Relations and Events Management

Public Relations is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. This helps to bring together organizations and individuals with their key stakeholders. For the Legislative Sector public relations would be mainly related to events management, publicity and branding.

d. Information and Content Development

Information and content for communications purposes should be developed with an aim to profile the business of the Legislative institution and be packaged for relevant audiences. Information may be shared in different forms via a range of platforms and channels which serves the purpose of the activity.

Although the world is fast moving towards a situation where more and more publications are only available in electronic format, the printed word still has value to an institution. It is important that institutions should have a strong quality control of all publication's content and its look and feel (corporate identity). Publication formats should also be aimed at specific target audiences, taking into account aspects like literacy rates, age and purpose.

The production and packaging of information should facilitate access by citizens or target audiences through relevant languages as per policy.

e. Branding and Marketing

Marketing and brand promotion is progressively being mainstreamed in the delivery of communication services. Marketing assists in promoting an institution's policies, programmes, services and initiatives to the public in line with the institutional brand and should be integrated within the communication function. This ensures that promotional activities, whether in support of specific market needs or broader policy objectives, advance the communication goals of the government and the institution. Institutions are encouraged to develop a branding strategy in this respect. Clear and consistent brand identity should be applied to assist the public in recognizing and accessing programmes and services of the Legislative institutions.

Central to any successful marketing strategy is an understanding of target audiences (internal and external) and their needs. A thorough understanding of segments is required which should be determined through research. The strategy will help identify a marketing mix that specifically addresses the target market's specific needs.

SECTION C
An Enabling Environment for Communication

12. Policy, Planning and Management

Policy and Regulatory Framework

Legislative institutions should use the SALS Communications framework to develop their respective communication policies to help manage their particular environments, in a manner that advances the goals, principles and standards enunciated in this framework for Legislative Sector communications. This should be developed taking cognizance of relevant sector and institutional policies.

Strategy Development and Planning

Institutional communication strategies should be developed in alignment with the policy orientation and strategy of the Legislative Sector and institution. Generally, the communication strategy should cover:

- The institutional background and context also integrating institutional priorities linked to country and sector priorities,
- Environmental analysis including challenges and opportunities,
- Institutional communication objectives, target audience and segmentation, messengers, core messages and relate the communications programme linked to the institutional programme.
- Strategies, tools, mechanisms and responsibilities for communicating with target audiences; and
- Set out operational needs, processes and resource allocations.

It is furthermore important that institutions integrate communication planning into their annual planning process and evaluate communication work as an integral part of operations. Annual operational and activity-based action plans should incorporate milestones, activities, responsibilities, inter-dependencies and budget allocations.

Resourcing Requirements

It is critical that communication is integrated into strategic management processes and procedures. Clear working links should be maintained at all times between communication and other institutional functions. Communications should be managed at a central point and synergy between all communications and liaison personnel should be prioritised to ensure that the institution speaks with one voice and is uniformly profiled.

Provision should be made for the following functions as the most basic communication functions needed in each institution: Multimedia, Media Relations, Public Relations and Events management, Information and Content Development, Stakeholder Management, Development Communication, Marketing and Branding, as well as Internal Communication. There are also a number of enabling yet critical communication functions which include: strategy development and execution; research / analysis and advisory services; coordinating; crisis communication; training and empowerment; resource mobilization/fund raising and bulk-buying. These are important enablers for integration, effectiveness, efficiency and progressive movement to achieve excellence.

For effective management and coordination of the communication functions, institutions may be guided by the following to establish an enabling environment:
- Adequate staff capacity with the relevant skills and competencies should be in place for effective communication.
- Institutions should develop, implement and manage policies, programmes and initiatives with the involvement of communication specialists.
- Institutions should ensure the communication function has the appropriate budget needed to fulfil the requirements of this framework and institutional strategy.
- Institutions should ensure the coherence and consistency of information and messages across all channels of communication.

13. Platforms, Tools and Mechanisms for Communication

A comprehensive range of communication channels, tools and mechanisms are available for use in different types of communications. Legislative institutions are encouraged to utilize the tools that are appropriate for the specific audience and message and which will optimize the reach for the institution. The optimization of resources and use of communications tools and platforms that are efficient and effective for purpose should form a key principle in communications planning.

14. Legislative Sector Collaboration

Parliament and Provincial Legislatures of South Africa should pursue stronger collaboration and cooperation on communications aimed at expanding the reach and publisizing of parliamentary work, maximising available resources, and leveraging on economies of scale. This should be done within the parameters of the legal framework of the Legislative Sector. Collaboration on communications matters in respect of joint sector activities or programmes is furthermore an important development in the cooperative approach of the sector.

15. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Legislative Sector has adopted an outcomes based approach to programme planning, execution and evaluation. Central to this approach is evidence based reporting and decision making where the analysis of the context and the challenges is done objectively, and effective monitoring, evaluation and reporting on programme execution. At institutional level, Legislature monitoring and evaluation systems are applicable to track performance in respect of the communications function.

As part of the system, the communication plan should be periodically reviewed, evaluated and updated in conjunction with the annual planning and budgeting cycle. Institutions should ensure that review and assessment takes place at intervals and as required during initiatives. The views and needs of citizens in particular should be assessed periodically to inform strategy review and alignment. The performance of communication products and measure results achieved against objectives set in communication and business plans should also be tracked.

Evaluating of effectiveness, including cost-effectiveness, of communication programmes and campaigns developed in support of policy or programme initiatives is important in order to make necessary improvements or adjustments to ensure the efficacy of plans, strategies and activities.

16. Norms and Standards for Communication in the Legislative Sector

This section provides a list of recommended minimum norms and standards for Parliament and Provincial Legislature to aspire to, improve uniformity and provide guidance to the various Legislative institutions:

a) Each institution should have a communications policy(s) governing institutional communications as well as a communications strategy, plans and standard operating procedures.
b) The communications strategy of the institution should take cognisance of the official languages of South Africa and/or the specific Province in facilitating access to information and parliamentary proceedings, including Sign Language and Braille.

c) Institutions are expected to employ a system of monitoring of implementation of communications as well as a system of evaluation at regular intervals, covering outputs as well as outcomes.

d) The review of the institutional communication strategy and plans should take place to better understand business processes and accordingly adjust communication.

e) All institutions should implement a system of internal communication.

f) Each institution is encouraged to establish and maintain a corporate identity, have a corporate identity manual and brand value proposition.

g) Communications should be mainstreamed in all institutional systems, processes and programmes.

h) Each institution should have designated media spokesperson(s).

i) Media exposure should be facilitated for relevant institutional activities.

j) Legislatures are encouraged to build and maintain relations with media stakeholders.

k) Institutions should have a communications plan in place for disaster / crisis situations.

l) Institutions are encouraged to optimise the use of new media platforms.

m) Institutions are encouraged to make optimal use of community media.

n) Each Legislature should develop and maintain an institutional website.

o) Legislatures are encouraged to develop a communications content management system.

p) Institutions are encouraged to produce relevant information material on Legislative matters.

q) Capacity building on Communication should be pursued.

17. Conclusion

This Strategic Framework for Communications serves as a guideline for enhancing communications as a strategic function in the Legislative Sector. It fulfils the purpose of assisting Legislative institutions to set the bar in the communications space and raise it continuously.

It should be regarded as a working document which is to be reviewed on regular basis to incorporate the latest developments in communications and the sector in order to set increasingly higher standards.

NOTES

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