

# Report on the Assessment of Recruitment and Selection Practices in respect of Section 57 Managers and Municipal Managers



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THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
Commission House  
Cnr. Hamilton & Ziervogel Streets  
Arcadia, 0083

Private Bag x121  
Pretoria, 0001

Tel: (012) 352-1000  
Fax: (012) 325-8382  
Website: [www.psc.gov.za](http://www.psc.gov.za)

National Anti-Corruption Hotline Number for the Public Service:  
0800 701 701 (Toll-Free)

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Custodian of Good Governance

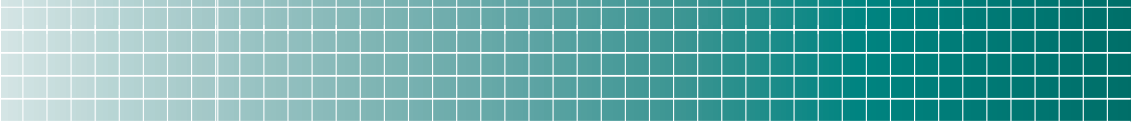
# Foreword

Human capital plays a crucial role in ensuring that any public or private organisation has the capacity to provide quality services required by society or its clients. The role of human capital becomes even more important to the local sphere of government given that it interfaces the most with citizens. To ensure the success of local government, it is critical that rigorous recruitment and selection tools are implemented as part of endeavours to employ the right people with the necessary competencies and attributes timeously into vacancies in order to accelerate service delivery. This places the human resources management function in a strategic position to assist municipalities to effectively attract, select and retain quality managers and professionals, charged with the responsibility to implement the service delivery agenda of this sector.

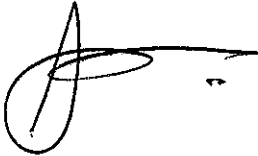


The manner in which these recruitment and selection processes are developed and implemented ultimately determines whether a given municipality will have the ability to achieve its set strategic goals and objectives. The PSC, therefore, decided to assess the extent to which municipalities apply recruitment and selection tools in respect of section 57 managers and municipal managers as the upper most administrative echelon. The study has found that whilst almost all the municipalities selected to participate in the study have the necessary systems in place, a number of concerns emerged in relation to whether correct processes are being followed at all times.

For example, the study has found that in most instances municipalities do not conduct competency assessments, security vetting, credit checks (to assess adverse credit listing), reference checking and criminal record checks. Failure to do these critical checks may result in the appointment of unsuitable persons, and may consequently compromise service delivery. However, the study has also found that a number of municipalities have taken initiatives to ensure that recruitment and selection practices are improved. For example, some municipalities have gone to the extent of sourcing the assistance of external recruitment agencies to ensure that capacity in selecting prospective employees is built and strengthened for future recruitment processes.



I trust that you will find the findings and recommendations contained in this report useful for the purpose of improving recruitment and selection practices in local government. Finally, I would like to thank all the municipalities which participated in the study for their cooperation.



**MS PMTENGENI**

**DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON: PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

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# List of Acronyms

CFO	Chief Financial Officer
DCOG	Department of Cooperative Governance
DBSA	Development Bank of Southern Africa
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
EE	Employment Equity
EM	Executive Mayor
HR	Human Resources
HRPs	Human Resource Plans
JE	Job Evaluation
LLF	Local Labour Forum
MM	Municipal Manager
MSA	Municipal Systems Act
OPSC	Office of the Public Service Commission
POA	Program of Action
PSC	Public Service Commission
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SALGBC	South African Local Government Bargaining Council
TMM	eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality



# Executive Summary

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The sourcing of human capital requires the utilisation of effective recruitment and selection tools which need to be applied strategically and systematically. The effective utilisation of recruitment and selection tools would ultimately determine the extent to which the local sphere of government is able to attain its strategic objectives and goals. Effective implementation of recruitment and selection practices is of extreme importance considering the fact that local government occupies centre stage in the provision of basic services such as water, electricity, housing and sanitation. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure the appointment of suitable candidates. The Public Service Commission (PSC) thus decided to undertake a study to assess the implementation of recruitment and selection practices in municipalities.

## 2. OBJECTIVES

The overall objectives of the report are to:

- assess the recruitment and selection practices implemented at local government level;
- assess how recruitment and selection of section 57 managers and municipal managers is undertaken; and
- assess whether recruitment and selection practices are supported by credible processes such as policy frameworks.

## 3. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The assessment focused on 3 municipalities in each province. These municipalities were chosen on the basis of seven (7) legal categorisations as defined in the overview report on the state of local government in South Africa<sup>1</sup>.

## 4. METHODOLOGY

The following methodology was applied during the study:

- A desk-top study was conducted focusing on the relevant legislation which provides for the recruitment and selection of section 57 managers and municipal managers;
- A questionnaire was developed and distributed among participating municipalities for completion;
- The recruitment and selection toolkit for the Public Service deemed a best practice model on recruitment and selection was used as a guide;
- Follow-up interviews were conducted with the selected municipalities;

<sup>1</sup> Republic of South Africa, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Overview Report on the State of Local Government in South Africa. November 2009.

- A meeting was held with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) with the purpose of understanding their role and involvement in providing the necessary support to municipalities; and
- Data obtained through the questionnaires, source documents and interviews was analysed and utilised in developing the findings and recommendations of the report.

## 5. MAIN FINDINGS

### 5.1 The Existence of Policies, Procedures and Strategies

Only 18% of participating municipalities had developed and implemented their Human Resource Plans (HRPs). This figure means that the majority of the municipalities did not have HRPs, which are critical for the identification of both current and future human resource needs.

The study also found that 89% of the sampled municipalities had EE plans in place. However, this high percentage of compliance has not translated into a high number of women and persons with disabilities being represented in the senior management echelons of municipalities as required by the Employment Equity Act.

In addition, it was found that 96% of the sampled municipalities had developed and implemented recruitment and selection policies. An analysis of the recruitment and selection policies of municipalities against the recruitment and selection toolkit for the Public Service has shown that contents of these documents ranged from basic to comprehensive. The absence of such policies or guidelines may imply that recruitment and selection processes are followed in an *ad hoc* manner.

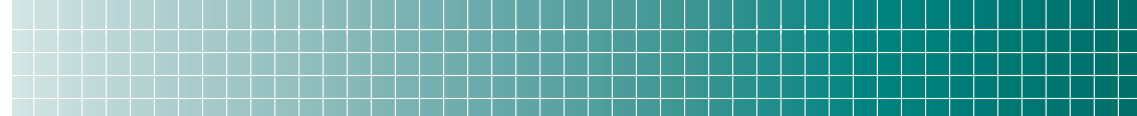
The absence of overarching national norms and standards on human resource management may have led to some municipalities being unable to develop comprehensive recruitment and selection policies, procedures and strategies.

### 5.2 Creation of Awareness of Policies among Staff

Overall, the responses received from all participating municipalities with the exception of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality (TMM) indicated that Local Labour Forums (LLFs) were used as structures through which communication and the creation of awareness of policies among staff was handled. In this regard, the TMM stated that the awareness of policies was created through induction programmes and workshops where necessary.

### 5.3 The Review of Policies and Procedures

On average 78% of the sampled municipalities indicated that they reviewed their policies and procedures to ensure that they meet their needs in a changing internal and external environment. It should, however, be mentioned that there was no substantial evidence in the form of minutes or documents of the top management meetings, council meetings, bargaining council meetings or any other appropriate forum to show that the process of review was



undertaken by these municipalities. In addition, these municipalities could not provide the PSC with copies of revised policies or minutes of LLF meetings where such reviews were approved. The remaining 22% of municipalities stated that recruitment and selection processes are not reviewed at all as part of self assessment.

## 5.4 The Utilisation of Recruitment Methods/Techniques

### 5.4.1 Job evaluation

Job evaluation is a process of determining relative value and weights between jobs and informing the design of grade and salary structures of an organisation. In the context of Public Sector organisations, job evaluation is about the job content, value, size and weight, and the determination of an equitable salary grading for the job<sup>2</sup>. Job evaluation is currently not undertaken as municipalities are still awaiting finalisation of TASK, a job evaluation system developed by SALGA in conjunction with the South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC).

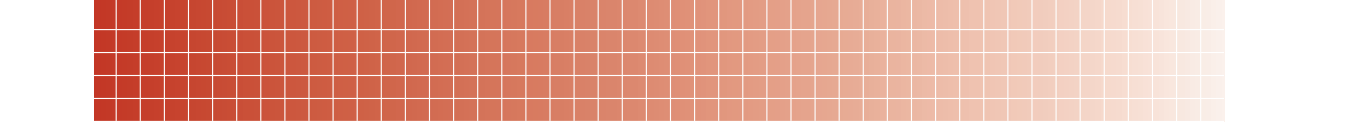
### 5.4.2 Advertising

The findings showed inconsistencies in all the municipalities with regard to advertising. Some municipalities indicated that they first advertise internally to create opportunities for the existing staff as a means to retaining institutional memory and expertise. Other municipalities indicated that the two processes of advertising internally and externally run concurrently and all qualifying candidates are considered. In analysing recruitment and selection policies it was found that all municipalities are required to advertise their vacant senior management posts in local, provincial and national newspapers. In terms of whether the posts are advertised according to the approved establishment, the study found that there were inconsistencies across municipalities. Some indicated that they advertise according to the approved establishment whilst indications from others were that posts that were not on the approved establishment were also advertised. Further probing established that these positions were often filled at a level lower or higher than those that appeared on the approved establishment, depending on the needs of a given municipality at any given time. This finding could be attributed to failure by municipalities to conduct job evaluation.

### 5.4.3 Skills search/head hunting

Skills searching can be used to seek and identify suitable candidates for positions where extreme difficulties are envisaged or experienced in finding suitably qualified candidates. In practice this method can be used in conjunction with the normal process of advertising of the vacant position. The findings of the study showed that 20 out of the 27 sampled municipalities had strategies in place to attract or retain scarce skills. For example, retention strategies have been developed and where appropriate, scarce skills allowances have been introduced. In addition, some municipalities have entered into partnerships with institutions such as the

<sup>2</sup> Republic of South Africa. Department of Public Service and Administration. Public Service Regulations, 2001, as amended.



Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to provide specialised professionals for key positions with the aim of addressing critical skills gaps.

#### 5.4.4 The use of external recruitment agencies

The study has found that five (5) of the municipalities use recruitment agencies only in instances where employees are required on a contractual basis and for filling certain critical posts. However, the use of recruitment agencies for filling of positions has had major financial implications. For example, the City of Cape Town has indicated that in one instance the services of an external recruitment agency was about R200 000 for the filling of a post of Director. It was found that the reason for utilising recruitment agencies could be attributed to the fact that selection panel members in some municipalities do not have the required depth and knowledge of the post (s) to be filled, and as a result, these agencies are then expected to fill such gaps.

### 5.5 The Selection Processes

#### 5.5.1 Composition of selection panels

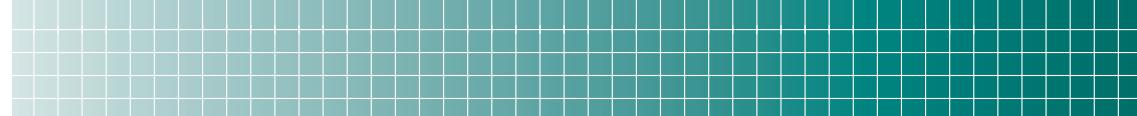
The study found that the composition of selection committees was generally approved by designated officials prior to interviews being conducted in municipalities. In addition, it was established that the chairpersons of the selection committees were always one level higher than the post in question. In terms of gender representation, the PSC found that in 13 municipalities the selection committees tended to be male dominated with little or no representation of women. This could be attributed to the gender imbalances found at senior management levels across municipalities. Furthermore, it was found that Councillors who often do not have in-depth knowledge of and insight into the job content form part of selection committees to evaluate candidates' suitability for the position in question.

#### 5.5.2 Disclosure of conflicts of interest

The study found that in 7 municipalities selection committees are not required to declare potential conflicts of interest. The recruitment and selection policies of these municipalities are also silent on this important key area of integrity. Whilst the declaration of potential conflicts of interest is not a legal requirement, it would be ethical for selection committee members to adopt this practice so that any recommendation made on the suitability of candidates would be based on the fact that such persons met the requirements of the posts. Failure to declare any potential conflicts of interest may not only tarnish the image of the selection committee members but also bring into disrepute the entire selection process. Therefore, it is crucial for the selection committee members to comply by declaring their interests at all times to counter the possibility of any allegation of nepotism being leveled against them.

#### 5.5.3 Short-listing

A total of 24 of the sampled municipalities indicated that they compile a list that contains relevant information for each shortlisted applicant which includes, among others, work



experience and qualifications. The municipalities which did not compile a list that contains relevant information for each applicant include the Buffalo City, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan and West Rand District municipalities. They indicated that compiling such a list was superfluous because the interview packs contained this information and it was always made available during the interviews.

#### 5.5.4 Security vetting process (including criminal and credit records checks, verification of qualifications and reference checking)

With the rising unemployment figures, some applicants may not resist the temptation to cheat their way into a job. Therefore it is incumbent upon all organisations to be cautious by vetting their candidates to reduce the chance of criminals infiltrating their organisations. Twelve of the sampled municipalities indicated that the vetting process was only used in selected positions, for example, Traffic Officers, whilst the rest of the positions including critical occupations such as Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) and Supply Chain Managers were neglected. It is incumbent upon all municipalities to ensure that provision is made in their recruitment and selection policies to ensure that uniform rules dealing with job applicants with criminal records apply to all their current and prospective employees. Furthermore, provision should also be made on how credit checks, verification of qualifications and reference checking would be conducted. If necessary, these requirements should be stipulated in advertisements so that prospective employees are informed in advance with regard to the expectations of municipalities. Failure to make provision for the security vetting process could be time consuming and costly for any organisation in the event that any appointment had to be reversed.

#### 5.5.5 Record keeping

Record keeping of interview discussions was found to be poor in 7 out of the 27 sampled municipalities. Failure to conduct proper record keeping may result in municipalities being unable to provide a comprehensive recording of the recruitment and selection process. Therefore, in the event that a candidate challenges the outcome of the process, municipalities would not be in a position to provide reasonable proof as to why certain applications were eliminated during the selection process. This further raises questions of the capacity of the HR practitioners to manage and control sensitive information in a systematic and orderly manner.

### 5.6 The Interview Process

The study has found that all municipalities utilise interview questions as a method of selection. In addition to the interview process, it was also established that 56% of the sampled municipalities utilise skills testing, 52% conduct reference checking and 33% subject candidates to competency tests. However, it should be noted that this 56% skills testing has been confined to secretarial positions only. Of particular concern is the low level of utilisation of competency tests (33%) for senior managers as a method to gauge their ability to function effectively at a higher echelon. The low level of utilisation of this method particularly for section 57 managers and municipal managers may compromise the ability of municipalities to appoint persons who have been subjected to a rigorous selection process.

## 5.7 Turnaround Time for the Filling of Vacant Posts

Sixty seven percent (67%) of the sampled municipalities indicated that their turnaround time to fill a vacant post is 3 months, 26% of them indicated that they took 4 months, and the remaining 7% said they took more than 4 months. A sample of submissions requesting approval for the filling of advertised posts was analysed. It was found that most municipalities have managed to fill vacancies within a reasonable period of three months. Any period more than 4 months for filling a vacant post could have a devastating effect on the effective functioning of municipalities and consequently on service delivery. This is even more worrying considering the fact that municipalities are a critical link between communities and the entire government system as part of the value chain designed to meet the aspirations of society.

## 6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below must be implemented with immediate effect in the 2011/2012 financial year:

- 6.1 The Department of Cooperative Governance (DCOG) must develop regulations on recruitment and selection procedures which would be applicable to all municipalities. These regulations, once developed, would ensure that there is uniformity across all municipalities with regard to the manner in which senior managers in particular are recruited.
- 6.2 All municipalities must ensure that, as part of recruitment and selection processes all candidates recommended for appointment to senior management positions are subjected to competency assessment tests to assess whether they have the required competencies to occupy such positions. These competency assessments would also assist municipalities in identifying and developing capacity needs of its cadre of senior leadership.
- 6.3 All municipalities must ensure that all recommended candidates are subjected to security vetting prior to making any decisions on appointments. Such a step would ensure that employees with acceptable behaviour and character are appointed.
- 6.4 Municipalities must ensure that verification of qualifications, reference checking and credit record checks are conducted prior to making any decisions on appointments.
- 6.5 Human resource components in municipalities must be capacitated to ensure that record keeping is strengthened in line with the provisions of the National Archives Act.
- 6.6 All municipalities must ensure that only funded vacant posts which are on the organisational establishments are advertised.
- 6.7 All municipalities must develop guidelines on the declaration of conflicts of interest which should be followed by all selection panel members.
- 6.8 SALGA must develop a toolkit on the implementation of human resource plans which would assist municipalities to conduct forecasting of their current and future human capital needs.

# Chapter One

## Introduction

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The acquisition of appropriate human capital at local government level requires the utilisation of effective recruitment and selection tools. The effective implementation of recruitment and selection practices is crucial considering that local government occupies centre stage in the provision of basic services such as water, electricity, housing and sanitation. This consideration applies even more to the filling of posts of municipal managers as this is a cadre of leadership who is expected to translate broad government mandates into tangible programmes, and ensure that momentum is given to the implementation of programmes.

Considering the foregoing, it became critical for the Public Service Commission (PSC) to assess how municipalities conduct recruitment and selection practices of their upper most administrative echelon as represented by section 57 managers<sup>3</sup> and municipal managers.

## 1.2 MANDATE OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

In terms of section 196 (4) (b) of the Constitution, read in conjunction with section 9 and 10 of the Public Service Commission Act, 1997, the PSC is mandated to investigate, monitor and evaluate the organization of administration and personnel practices in the Public Service. In addition, the powers and functions of the PSC include giving directions aimed at ensuring that personnel procedures relating to recruitment, transfers, promotions and dismissals comply with the values and principles set out in section 195. The provisions of section 195 are also applicable to the local sphere of government.

## 1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The overall objectives of the study were to:

- assess the recruitment and selection practices implemented at local government level;
- assess how the recruitment and selection of section 57 managers and municipal managers is undertaken; and
- assess whether recruitment and selection practices are supported by credible processes such as policy frameworks.

## 1.4 METHODOLOGY

The study adopted the following methodology:

- A desk-top study was conducted focusing on the relevant legislation which provides for the recruitment and selection of section 57 managers and municipal managers;
- The recruitment and selection toolkit for the Public Service was also used as a guide to provide for a model of best practices;

3 Republic of South Africa. Department of Cooperative Governance. *Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000*. 20 November 2000. In terms of the *Municipal System Act*, section 57 managers are those persons appointed as managers directly accountable to the municipal manager.

- Using the information obtained from the desk-top study of legislation and all the other relevant literature as indicators, a questionnaire was developed. The questionnaire sought to solicit information on the mechanisms adopted by the different municipalities in recruiting section 57 managers and municipal managers;
- Follow-up interviews with the selected municipalities were conducted with a view to further clarify certain responses provided on the questionnaire and to collect supporting documents;
- A meeting was held with the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) with the purpose of understanding their role and involvement in providing the necessary support to municipalities; and
- Data obtained through the questionnaires, source documents and interviews was analysed and a report with findings and recommendations was developed.

## 1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

**Table I** below represents municipalities which were selected to participate in the study across all 9 provinces.

**Table I: Municipalities selected per provincial government**

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT	MUNICIPALITY	CATEGORY
Eastern Cape	Chris Hani District	C2
	Buffalo City	B1
	Nelson Mandela Bay	A
Free State	Mangaung	B1
	Thabo Mofutsanyane District	C1
	Fezile Dabi District	C1
Gauteng	West Rand District	C1
	Tshwane Metropolitan	A
	Sedibeng District	C1
KwaZulu-Natal	eThekwin Metropolitan	A
	Mtubatuba	B3
	Umgungundlovu District	C2
Limpopo	Vhembe District	C2
	Ephraim Mogale	B4
	Polokwane	B1

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT	MUNICIPALITY	CATEGORY
Mpumalanga	Emalahleni	B1
	Victor Khanye	B3
	Nkangala District	C1
North West	Rustenburg	B1
	Mafikeng	B2
	Bojanala Platinum District	C1
Northern Cape	Sol Plaatjie	B1
	Umsobomvu	B3
	Moshaweng	B4
Western Cape	City of Cape Town Metropolitan	A
	Swellendam	B3
	West Coast District	C1

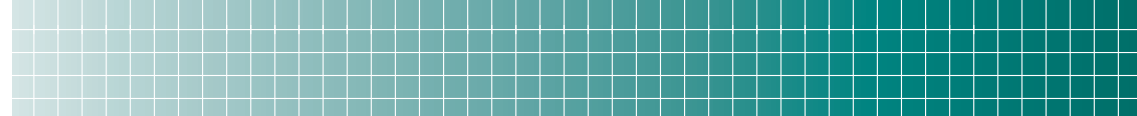
The PSC would like to commend all the selected municipalities for responding promptly to its request for information, which resulted in a 100% response rate. As reflected in **Table I** above, three (3) municipalities per province were selected to participate in the study. This constituted a selection of twenty seven (27) municipalities across all provinces. The basis for the selection took cognisance of the seven (7) legal categories of the different municipalities as defined in the overview report on the state of local government in South Africa<sup>4</sup>. According to the report the categorisation of these municipalities is as follows:

- A: Metropolitan municipalities;
- B1: Local municipalities with largest budgets (also referred to as the secondary cities);
- B2: Local municipalities with large towns at their core;
- B3: Local municipalities with small towns and relatively small populations;
- B4: Local municipalities which are mainly rural with communal tenure;
- C1: District municipalities which are not water service authorities; and
- C2: District municipalities which are water service authorities.

## 1.6 LEGISLATION AND REGULATORY REQUIREMENTS

Section 57 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act of 2000 provides for the conditions under which a municipal manager and a manager who is accountable to the municipal manager may be appointed. According to the Act, a manager accountable to a municipal manager may be appointed in terms of a written contract, subject to the signing of a

<sup>4</sup> Republic of South Africa, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs. Overview Report on the State of Local Government in South Africa. November 2009.



performance agreement which should be renewed annually. In the case of a municipal manager, the contract should be entered into with the Municipality as represented by the Mayor or Executive Mayor. However, in case of a manager directly accountable to the municipal manager, this should be entered into with the Municipal Managers themselves.

In terms of section 66 of the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, “a municipality, in accordance with the Employment Equity Act, 1998, must develop and adopt appropriate systems and procedures to ensure fair, efficient, effective and transparent personnel administration, including-

- (a) the recruitment, selection and appointment of persons as staff members;
- (b) service conditions of staff;
- (c) the supervision and management of staff;
- (d) the monitoring, measuring and evaluating of performance of staff;
- (e) the promotion and demotion of staff;
- (f) the transfer of staff;
- (g) grievance procedures;
- (h) disciplinary procedures;
- (i) the investigation of allegations of misconduct and complaints against staff;
- (j) the dismissal and retrenchment of staff; and
- (k) any other matter prescribed by regulation in terms of section 72.”

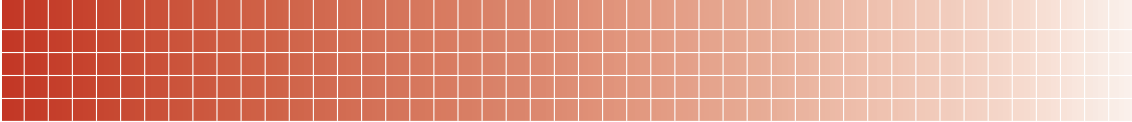
Furthermore, in terms of section 72, “the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs may subject to applicable labour legislation and after consultation with the bargaining council established for municipalities for the purpose of this chapter-

- (a) make regulations to regulate the following matters:
  - (iii) the setting of uniform standards for-
    - (aa) municipal staff establishments;
    - (bb) municipal staff systems and procedures and the matters that must be dealt with in such systems and procedures; and
    - (cc) any other matter concerning municipal personnel administration;
- (b) issue guidelines to provide for the following matters:
  - (i) the establishment of job evaluation systems;”<sup>15</sup>

In addition, Section 151 of Chapter 7 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996<sup>6</sup> states that the executive and legislative authority of a municipality is vested in its Municipal Council. The section also stipulates that a municipality has the right to govern, on its own initiative, the local government affairs of its community, subject to national and provincial legislation, as provided for in the Constitution. In addition, section 153(a) mentions that a municipality must structure and manage its administration and budgeting and planning processes to give priority

5 Republic of South Africa. Department of Cooperative Governance. Local Government: Municipal Systems Act. 2000. 20 November 2000.

6 Republic of South Africa. Department of Justice and Constitutional Development. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996.



to the basic needs of the community, and to promote the social and economic development of the community, and participate in national and provincial development programmes.

An analysis of the above provisions of the Municipal Systems Act and the Constitution clearly shows that the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs is empowered to develop national norms and standards which should, among others, standardise public administration at the local government level, including issues of human resource management. The research by the PSC has established that the Department of Cooperative Governance developed and published the Local Government: Municipal Systems Amendment Bill on 14 May 2010 as part of standardising public administration practices at the municipal level across the country. Once the Bill has been approved and promulgated into law, a process of developing regulations would commence. These developments are noted, however, the PSC is concerned at the fact that it took more than ten years for the Department of Cooperative Governance to introduce amendments aimed at standardising norms and standards for public administration at local government level.

Failure to effectively deal with these gaps in the legislation has meant that municipalities were obliged to develop their own systems and procedures to deal with matters such as recruitment and selection, advertisement of vacant posts, job evaluation, appointment of selection committees, shortlisting and interviewing of candidates. Given capacity constraints in some municipalities, the obligation to develop such policies became a serious challenge resulting in delays which affected their smooth functioning and consequently impacted negatively on service delivery.

## 1.7 LIMITATIONS

Not all the municipalities were able to provide supporting documents to substantiate some of the responses in the questionnaires. Furthermore, in instances where supporting documents were provided, the information was sometimes found to be insufficient. However, during the interviews, further probing was done which provided more information and detailed clarity to ensure that the quality of the findings of the report was not compromised.

## 1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

The rest of the report is structured as follows:

**Chapter 2:** presents the analysis of findings of the study;

**Chapter 3:** provides recommendations and a conclusion.

# Chapter Two

## Analysis of Findings

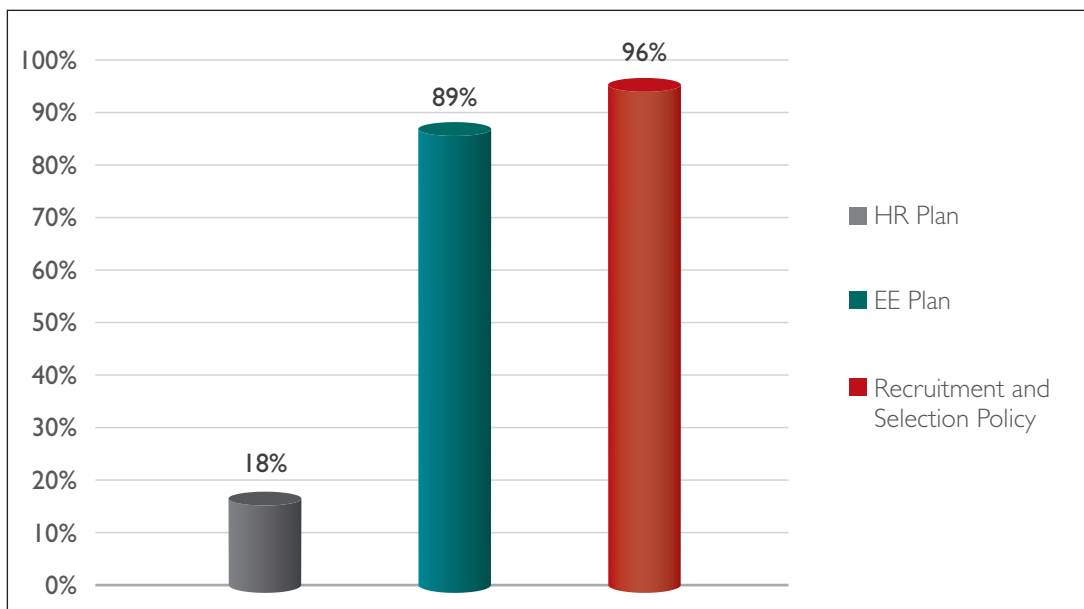
## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

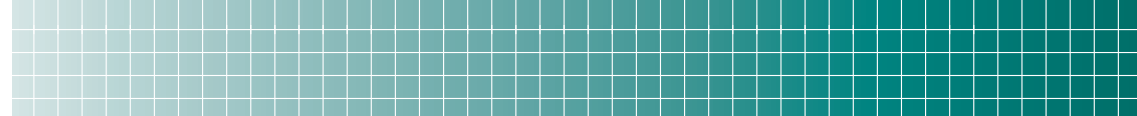
This chapter provides a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the responses received from all the participating municipalities. The municipalities were responding to the questionnaire which was distributed for completion by the human resource representatives. The chapter also deals with the findings in relation to the policies, procedures and strategies supporting effective recruitment and selection practices. In addition, the analysis of the findings would include information obtained through supporting documentation provided by municipalities to substantiate their responses to questions that were posed.

## 2.2 THE EXISTENCE OF POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND STRATEGIES

In order for municipalities to have sound recruitment and selection practices, they need to have in place strategic and policy documents which include human resource (HR) and employment equity (EE) plans to address their unique labour demand. It should be noted that in terms of the Municipal Systems Act, municipalities are not required to develop Human Resource Plan (HRPs), however, experience has shown that organisations which have such plans in place are more successful as they tend to forecast current and future human resource needs. A well developed HRP should address key areas of recruitment, reward, redeployment, remuneration and retraining/reskilling. Such HRP should be a policy document which would dictate the different key areas of recruitment processes and procedures necessary for the filling of vacant posts to ensure that the right person is appointed in the right position. **Figure 1** below provides information on the extent to which municipalities have policies, procedures and strategies in place.

**Figure 1: Availability of policies, procedures, strategies across municipalities**





According to **Figure I**, only 18% of participating municipalities had developed and implemented their HRPs. This figure means that 72% of the municipalities do not have HRPs, which are critical for the identification of both current and future human resource needs as well as potential challenges which may impact negatively on the ability of organisations to consistently achieve set strategic objectives.

Furthermore, the figure indicates that 89% of municipalities had EE plans in place. However, this high percentage of compliance has not translated into a high number of women and persons with disabilities being represented in the senior management echelons of municipalities as required by the Employment Equity Act. An analysis of EE plans and organisational establishments of municipalities shows that senior management structures are male dominated with Africans in the majority, followed by Whites. However, these municipalities have developed numerical targets to ensure that the appointment of females and persons with disabilities in senior management posts is fast tracked.

In addition, the figure shows that 96% of municipalities had developed and implemented recruitment and selection policies. An analysis of the recruitment and selection policies of municipalities has shown that contents of these documents ranged from basic to comprehensive. For example, the recruitment and selection policy for the City of Tshwane has been comprehensively prepared and shows that employee organisations have been consulted during its development. This process of consultation has resulted in the document being a collective agreement entered into between the City of Tshwane and employee organisations. However, in the case of Victor Khanye Local Municipality, Swellendam and Thabo Mofutsanyane Districts municipalities, their recruitment and selection policies are still in draft format. The absence of such policies or guidelines may imply that recruitment and selection processes are followed in an *ad hoc* manner.

The PSC has also analysed these policies to assess whether they comply with basic requirements of recruitment and selection processes and procedures. In conducting this assessment the PSC reviewed its Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection<sup>7</sup>. In terms of the Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection, any sound policy should contain the following elements as a basis:

- Avoiding discrimination as any HR practice is open to potential legal scrutiny by institutions such as the Labour Court, Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) and sectoral bargaining councils;
- Provision for relevant legislative requirements such as the Employment Equity Act, 1998 and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000;
- Job evaluation including job descriptions and application for the filling of posts and approval thereof;
- Advertisement processes such as obtaining approval for the filling of a post, drafting an advertisement, placing an advertisement and record-keeping;

<sup>7</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. Toolkit on Recruitment and Selection. Undated.

- Processing of applications including receipt, logging and filing of applications;
- Screening of applicants by formulating and applying the screening criteria, drawing up of screening lists, record-keeping and obtaining approval on the outcome of the screening process;
- Shortlisting of applicants by formulating and applying the shortlisting criteria, drawing up of the shortlists, record-keeping and obtaining approval of the shortlists;
- Selection committees and defining its role and responsibilities and the formulation of guidelines compelling members to declare any possible conflicts of interest;
- Interviewing, including the formulation of interviewing criteria that are linked to the advertised requirements, the development of an interview checklist and a scoring grid, documentation in support of the interview process with due regard to thorough discussion on the elimination of candidates and record-keeping of the interview process;
- The physical filling of posts including the absorption, transfers, promotions and seconding of staff into vacancies.

In the main, the PSC has found that the recruitment and selection policies of, among others, the City of Cape Town, Umgungundlovu District, Mafikeng and Sol Plaatje Local Municipalities comply with the basic requirements of developing a sound recruitment and selection policy. However, it was also established that recruitment and selection policies of some municipalities do not cover the necessary basic requirements. These municipalities, among others, include Emalahleni, Umsobomvu and Rustenburg Local Municipalities. Therefore, failure by the Department of Cooperative Governance to develop national norms and standards on human resource management may have led to some municipalities being unable to develop comprehensive recruitment and selection policies which meet the basic requirements.

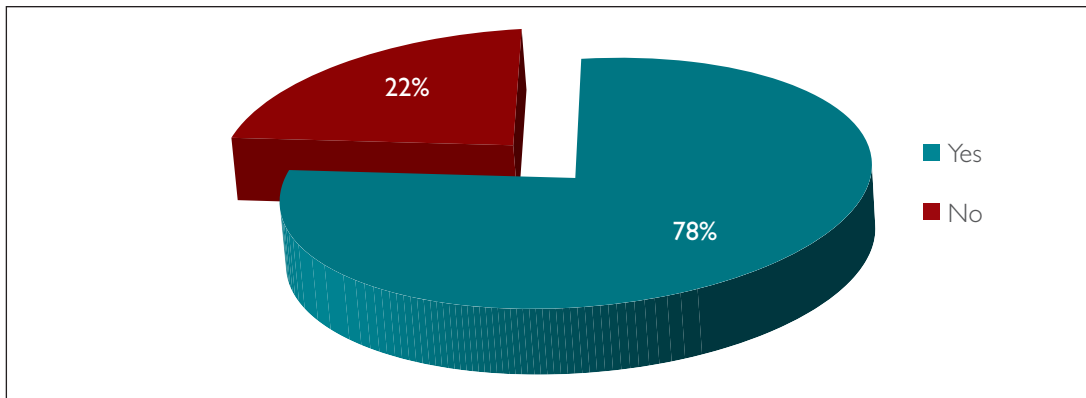
### 2.2.1 Creation of Awareness of Policies among Staff

Overall, the responses received from all participating municipalities with the exception of the eThekweni Metropolitan Municipality (TMM) indicated that Local Labour Forums (LLFs) are used as structures through which communication and the creation of awareness of policies to staff is handled. In this regard, the TMM stated that the awareness of policies is created through induction programmes and workshops where necessary.

### 2.2.2 The Review of Policies and Procedures

It is vital that the policies and procedures are reviewed as and when necessary to take into account new legislative requirements and to also meet the changing organisational needs. This review will provide for the staffing systems that are more flexible and responsive to support employee recruitment, promotion and professional developmental needs including processes that are outcome driven and supportive of innovation practices. If policies and procedures are not reviewed the future staffing needs in certain areas of specialised skills and even management positions can hamper organisations' ability to recruit, appoint and retain highly qualified employees and achieve its goals of becoming an employer of choice. The figure on the following page reflects the results of the findings on whether policies and procedures across municipalities are reviewed or not.

**Figure 2: The review of policies and procedures across municipalities**



On average 78% of the responses received from the municipalities indicated that policies and procedures are reviewed regularly to ensure that policies and procedures meet the needs of a given municipality in a changing internal and external environment. It should, however, be mentioned that there was no substantial evidence in the form of minutes or documents of the top management meetings, council meetings, bargaining council meetings or any other appropriate forum to show that the process of review was undertaken by these municipalities. The remaining 22% of municipalities stated that recruitment and selection processes are not reviewed at all as part of self assessment. Therefore, it is important that municipalities take these review processes seriously to ensure that recruitment and selection policies remain relevant and enables them to compete for human resources with the necessary skills and talent. In addition, such a review would assist municipalities in attracting, selecting and retaining quality candidates.

### 2.3 THE UTILISATION OF RECRUITMENT METHODS/ TECHNIQUES

There are certain methods or techniques that most organisations utilise to attract, screen and select qualified candidates to fill vacant positions. By using these methods/techniques, organisations are able to select from the pool of applicants the most suitable persons who match the criteria set for filling vacant positions. The methods/techniques employed may vary depending on the needs and requirements of a specific position. Sections below deal with the various methods/techniques used in filling vacant positions by municipalities.

#### 2.3.1 Job Evaluation

Job evaluation is a process of determining relative value and weights between jobs and informing the design of grade and salary structures of an organisation. In the context of Public Sector organisations, job evaluation is about the job content, value, size and weight, and the determination of an equitable salary grading for the job. Job evaluation is currently not undertaken as municipalities are still awaiting finalisation of TASK, a job evaluation system developed by SALGA in conjunction with the South African Local Government Bargaining Council (SALGBC).

### 2.3.2 Advertising

The intention of advertising is to reach, as effectively and efficiently as possible, the entire pool of potential applicants in the labour market. This is particularly important if advertising is also aimed at reaching the historically disadvantaged. The findings showed inconsistencies in all the municipalities with regard to advertising. Some municipalities indicated that they first advertise internally to create opportunities for the existing staff as a means to retaining institutional memory and expertise. Whilst this might be found to be one of the best retention strategies, if not properly managed through policies which detail retention strategies and succession planning, such an exercise might limit the capacity of municipalities to recruit employees capable of executing effective delivery of mandates.

Other municipalities indicated that the two processes of advertising internally and externally run concurrently and all qualifying candidates are considered. In analysing recruitment and selection policies, it was found that all municipalities advertise their vacant senior management posts in local, provincial and national newspapers. In assessing whether the posts are advertised according to the approved establishment, the study found that there were inconsistencies across municipalities. Some indicated that they advertise according to the approved establishment whilst indications from others were that posts that were not on the approved establishment were also advertised. Further probing showed that these positions are often filled at a level lower or higher than those that appear on the approved establishment, depending on the needs of a given municipality at any given time. This state of affairs could also be attributed to failure by municipalities to conduct job evaluation.

### 2.3.3 Skills Search/Head Hunting

Skills searching can be used to seek and identify suitable candidates for positions where extreme difficulties are envisaged or experienced in appointing suitably qualified candidates. In practice this method can be used in conjunction with the normal process of advertisement. Simultaneously the HR component can identify and request a potential candidate to apply for the advertised position whereby the normal process of filling the vacancy will apply. Alternatively, if the search for suitably qualified candidates proves to be difficult, organisations can choose to utilise the recruitment agencies to assist in head hunting.

The skills search or headhunting plays a critical role as most municipalities require skills and expertise in scarce occupations or professions such as engineers, plant operators, environmental management, health professionals, electricians, town and regional planners and accountants which are relevant to the services rendered to local communities. In most cases these municipalities are expected to compete with the private sector for these skills or expertise. The findings of the study revealed that 20 out of 27 municipalities have incorporated skills search or headhunting strategies in their policies. In addition, some municipalities have entered into partnerships with institutions such as the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to provide specialised professionals for key positions with the aim of addressing critical skills gap.

### 2.3.4 The Use of External Recruitment Agencies

The study has found that five (5) of the municipalities use recruitment agencies only in instances where employees are required on a contractual basis and for filling certain critical posts. However, the use of recruitment agencies for filling of positions has had major financial implications. For example, the City of Cape Town has indicated that in one instance the services of an external recruitment agency was about R200 000 for the filling of a post of Director. It was found that the reason for utilising recruitment agencies could be attributed to the fact that selection panel members in some municipalities do not have the required depth and knowledge of the post (s) to be filled, and as a result, these agencies are then expected to fill such gaps.

Whilst this practice may be understandable in the case of municipalities in rural areas which could experience difficulties in attracting the required skills, the same costs cannot be justified in the case of the urban or metropolitan municipalities as such skills may be readily available in the labour market. In this regard, it is imperative for municipalities to ensure that their HR components conduct a proper cost benefit analysis prior to deciding on the best course of action when it comes to recruitment and selection approaches of this nature. For example, municipalities may consider requesting senior managers from other public sector institutions who possess the required depth and knowledge to form part of selection panels. External recruitment agencies should only be used when this approach fails to yield the desired results.

### 2.3.5 Composition of Selection Committees

The study has found that the composition of selection committees is approved at an appropriate level prior to interviews conducted in municipalities. For example, in the case of Sol Plaatje Local Municipality, the selection committee for the appointment of a municipal manager is approved by the full council. In addition, it was established that the chairpersons of the selection committees are always one level higher than the post in question. For other levels which reports to the municipal manager, he or she chairs the selection committee.

### 2.3.6 Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest

The study found that in 7 municipalities selection committees are not required to declare potential conflicts of interest. The recruitment and selection policies of these municipalities are also silent on this important key area of integrity. Whilst the declaration of potential conflicts of interest is not a legal requirement, it would be ethical for selection committee members to declare so that any recommendation made on the suitability of candidates would be based on the fact that such persons met the requirements of the posts. Failure to declare any potential conflicts of interest may not only tarnish the image of the selection committee members but also bring into disrepute the entire selection process. Therefore, it is crucial for the selection committee members to comply by declaring their interests at all times to counter the possibility of any allegation of nepotism being leveled against them.

### 2.3.7 Short-Listing

A total of 24 municipalities indicated that they compile a list that contains relevant information for each shortlisted applicant which include, among others, work experience and qualifications. The municipalities which did not compile a list that contains relevant information for each applicant include the Buffalo City, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan and West Rand District municipalities. They indicated that compiling such a list was superfluous because the interview packs contained this information and it was always made available during the interviews. This raises questions as to whether the HR practitioners from these municipalities understand the importance of the various steps of recruitment and the purposes they serve.

In terms of the short-listing, it was found that in 20 municipalities this process is done by selection committees without the involvement of HR components as custodians of the recruitment and selection committees. The HR components play a crucial role in providing advice and ensuring that the necessary steps are followed in conducting proper short-listing processes. Only 7 municipalities indicated that the short-listing is done by the relevant line-function manager where the vacancy exists in consultation with HR components.

### 2.3.8 Security Vetting Process (including Criminal and Credit Records Checks, Verification of Qualifications and Reference Checking)

With the rising unemployment figures, some applicants may not resist the temptation to cheat their way into a job. Therefore it is incumbent upon all organisations to be cautious by vetting their candidates to reduce the chance of criminals infiltrating their organisations. Only 12 municipalities indicated that the vetting process is only used in selected positions, for example, when appointing Traffic Officers, whilst the rest of the positions, including critical occupations such as Chief Financial Officers (CFOs) and Supply Chain Managers are neglected. According to a report by the PSC on the Management of Job Applicants with a Criminal Record in the Public Service, national and provincial departments which participated in the study indicated that in determining the suitability of a job applicant with criminal record, the following issues are considered<sup>8</sup>:

- Nature of transgressions/criminal acts committed;
- The risk posed by the transgression in relation to the requirements and nature of the job to be performed;
- Age of the person at the time of the transgression;
- Frequency of similar/correlating transgressions;
- Time that has lapsed since the job applicant was convicted;
- Educational qualifications of the job applicant;
- Employment history and previous performance assessments of the job applicant; and
- Misrepresentation of criminal status or withholding of information.

Emanating from the above, it is imperative for municipalities to ensure that provision is made in their recruitment and selection policies to ensure that uniform rules dealing with job applicants

<sup>8</sup> Republic of South Africa. Public Service Commission. Management of Job Applicants with a Criminal Record in the Public Service. December 2008.

with criminal records apply to all their current and prospective employees. Furthermore, provision should also be made on how credit checks, verification of qualifications and reference checking would be conducted. If necessary, these requirements should be stipulated in advertisements so that prospective employees are informed in advance with regard to the expectations of municipalities. Failure to make provision for the security vetting process could be time consuming and costly for any organisation in the event that any appointment had to be reversed.

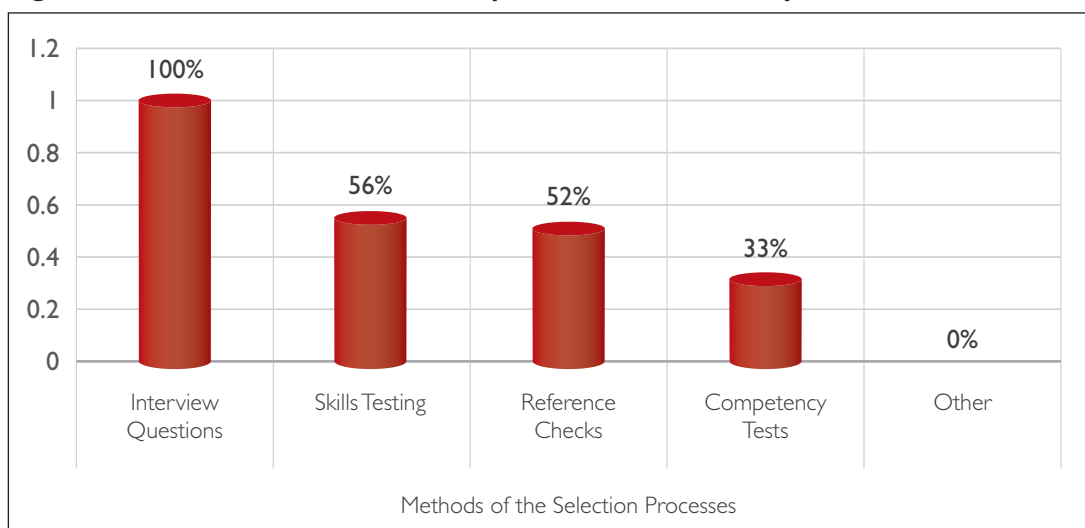
### 2.3.9 Record Keeping

Record keeping of interview discussions was found to be poor in 7 out of the 27 sampled municipalities. Failure to conduct proper record keeping may result in municipalities being unable to provide a comprehensive recording of the recruitment and selection process. Therefore, in the event that a candidate challenges the outcome of the process, municipalities would not be in a position to provide reasonable proof as to why certain applications were eliminated during the selection process. This further raises questions of the capacity of the HR practitioners to manage and control sensitive information in a systematic and orderly manner.

## 2.4 THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

As soon as all the above-mentioned steps have been complied with and completed, it becomes necessary for organisations to prepare for the assessment of the suitability of potential candidates to be considered for possible appointment. For this purpose, organisations undertake the interviewing processes which include methods such as interview questions, skills testing, reference checking, competence assessments and any other mechanism deemed appropriate. The utilisation of these methods would encourage workable, practical and fair processes and thus avoid bias and discriminatory practices in identifying and selecting the most suitable candidates for the position. **Figure 3** below is a representation of the different tools utilised in the selection processes at the municipal level.

**Figure 3: Tools utilised in the selection processes at the municipalities**

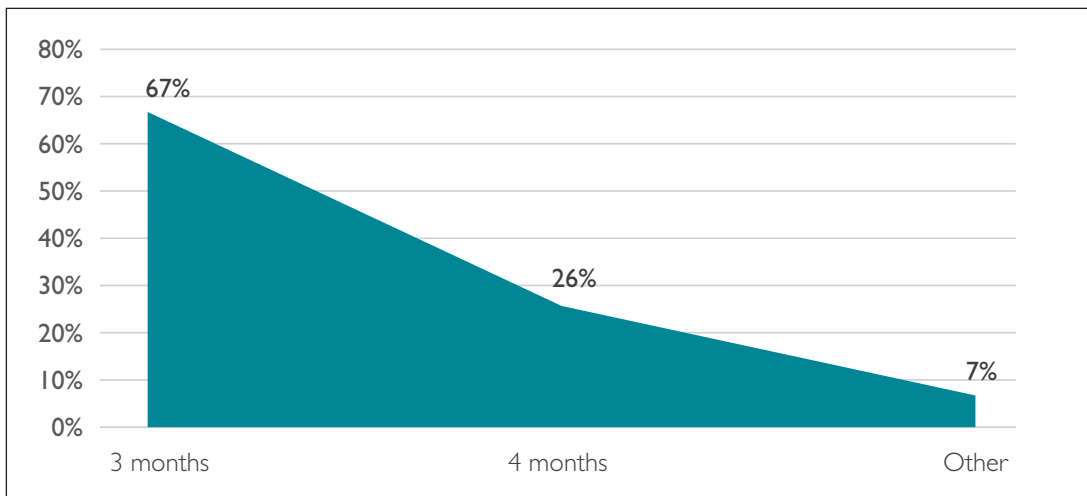


As reflected in **Figure 3**, it is clear that all municipalities utilise interview questions, with 56% also using skills testing, 52% reference checking and 33% competency tests. However, it should be noted that this 56% skills testing has been confined to secretarial positions only. Of particular concern is the low level of the utilisation of competency tests (33%) for senior managers as a method to gauge their ability to function effectively at a higher echelon. This method was introduced in the Public Service a couple of years ago as a tool to assess the competence of senior managers' eligibility for appointment. This low level of utilisation of this method particularly for section 57 managers and municipal managers may compromise the ability of municipalities to appoint persons who have been subjected to a rigorous selection process.

### 2.4.1 Turnaround Time for the Filling of Vacant Posts

Municipalities as labour intensive employers rely on human capital to deliver services to communities and, therefore, the speed with which vacant positions are filled may impact positively or negatively on its realisation of strategic goals. In this regard, procedures to recruit and appoint eligible candidates should at all times be driven by the requirements of policies, legislation and the need to fill vacancies as a matter of urgency. As a result, line management should make it their responsibility to ensure that posts are filled timeously to ensure improved and sustainable performance of municipalities. In this regard, line management should obtain assistance from their HR components in order to fulfill this critical role. **Figure 4** below provides information on the turnaround times taken by the municipalities in the filling of vacant positions.

**Figure 4: Turnaround time for the filling of vacant posts**

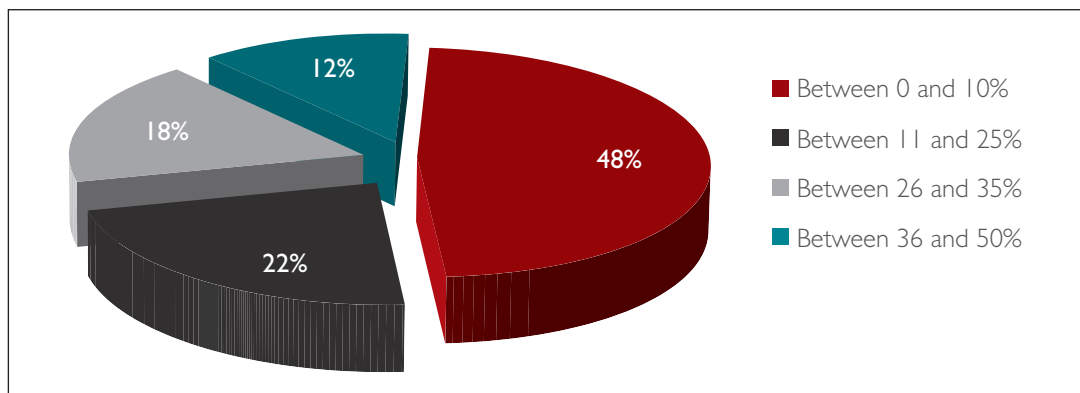


Overall, the findings revealed that in all the municipalities that participated in the study, 67% of them indicated that their turnaround time to fill a vacant post is 3 months whilst 26% of them indicated 4 months and the remaining 7% more than 4 months. Any period more than 4 months and beyond for filling a vacant post could have a devastating effect on the effective functioning of municipalities and consequently on service delivery.

## 2.4.2 The Vacancy Rate across Municipalities

The extended time periods it takes to fill vacant positions if left unattended may result in high vacancy rates. In this regard, the study assessed vacancy rates across all the participating municipalities. Therefore, **Figure 4** on the previous page should be read in conjunction with **Figure 5** below which reflects the vacancy rate found at all participating municipalities as at 31 October 2010.

**Figure 5: The percentage vacancy rate across all municipalities**



There is a clear indication that the municipalities are faced with serious structural capacity constraints given the high vacancy rates as reflected in **Figure 5** above. The municipalities whose vacancy rate fell in the range of between 36% and 50% included Ephraim Mogale, Polokwane and Swellendam Municipalities representing 12% of all the participating municipalities. Those that fell in the range of 26% to 35% vacancy rate include the Municipalities of Mangaung, Victor Khanye, Rustenburg, Mafikeng and eThekweni Metropolitan which represents 18%. These are followed by Thabo Mofutsanyane, Umgungundlovu, Bojanala Platinum District Municipalities, Emalahleni and Tshwane Metropolitan Municipalities who fell in the range of 11% to 25% vacancy rate which constituted 22% of all the municipalities. The rest of the municipalities fell in the range of 0% to 11% vacancy rate. Delays in filling vacant posts by municipalities may impact negatively on their capacity to deliver effectively on their mandates.

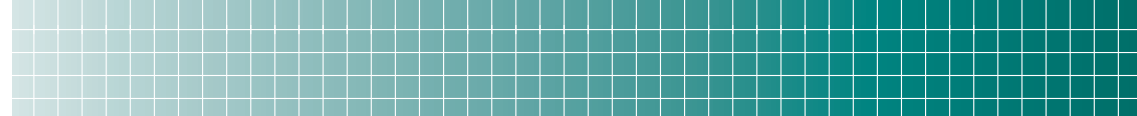
## 2.4.3 The Filling of Management Posts in Municipalities

For purposes of this study it was necessary to reflect the actual vacancies of section 57 managers and municipal managers at specific municipalities. In this regard, the abovementioned findings of the percentage vacancy rate across municipalities should be read with **Table 2** on the following page.

**Table 2: The filling of management posts in municipalities as at October 2010**

Municipalities according to Provinces	Total no. of Staff	Section 57 managers and municipal managers		
		Total no of posts	Total no of vacant posts	Percentage rate (%)
<b>EASTERN CAPE</b>				
Chris Hani District	443	7	1	14%
Buffalo City	4 682	9	3	33%
Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan	7 433	13	1	7%
<b>FREE STATE</b>				
Mangaung	3 757	11	2	22%
Thabo Mofutsanyana District	67	4	0	-
Fezile Dabi District	94	6	0	-
<b>GAUTENG</b>				
West Rand District	398	3	1	33%
Tshwane Metropolitan	19 863	17	2	11%
Sedibeng District	873	2	1	17%
<b>KWAZULU-NATAL</b>				
eThekweni Metropolitan	22 402	8	1	13%
Mtubatuba	152	5	1	20%
UMgungundlovu District	1 479	5	3	60%
<b>LIMPOPO</b>				
Vhembe District	1 063	6	0	-
Ephraim Mogale	226	5	2	40%
Polokwane	1 479	6	3	50%
<b>MPUMALANGA</b>				
Emalahleni	1 288	5	1	20%
Victor Khanye	320	5	1	20%
Nkangala District	94	5	1	20%
<b>NORTH WEST</b>				
Rustenburg	1 445	8	3	37%
Mafikeng	894	7	0	-
Bojanala Platinum District	200	8	3	37%
<b>NORTHERN CAPE</b>				
Sol Plaatjie	1 500	11	4	36%
Umsobomvu	190	4	1	25%
Moshaweng	100	6	0	-
<b>WESTERN CAPE</b>				
City of Cape Town Metropolitan	22 155	12	0	-
Swellendam	268	5	1	20%
West Coast District	480	5	0	-

According to **Table 2** above, the highest vacancy rate for senior managers was found at Umgungundlovu District Municipality where 3 out of the 5 posts were vacant, followed by Polokwane Municipality where 3 out of the 6 posts were vacant. From the examples above, it becomes clear that these vacancy rates are extremely high including those that fell between



the range of 32% and 10%. In this regard, some of the municipalities stated that the reason for the vacancies at this level was that Municipal Councils had placed a moratorium on the filling of vacant posts until the upcoming local government elections scheduled to take place in 2011. The reality is that delays in the filling of positions at this level of management creates a leadership vacuum which impacts negatively on effective and efficient management of municipalities, encourages a culture of customer dissatisfaction, results in poor morale and work ethic among employees and leads to a lack of commitment to service delivery.

# Chapter Three

## Recommendations and Conclusion

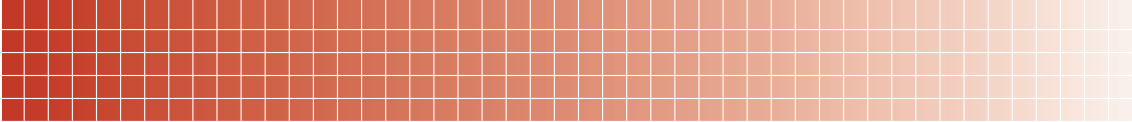
## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of the research study conducted in selected municipalities across the country have clearly shown that whilst there is an attempt to conduct recruitment and selection processes as effectively and efficiently as possible, a number of gaps were identified. For example, the study has found that there is no over-arching policy framework to guide municipalities in undertaking recruitment and selection procedures. The absence of an over-arching policy framework is worrying considering the important role played by human capital in the provision of services to communities. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to provide recommendations which would ensure that recruitment and selection processes for section 57 managers and municipal managers are conducted in line with established best practice models. In addition, the chapter will provide a conclusion.

## 3.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below must be implemented with immediate effect in the 2011/2012 financial year:

- 3.2.1 The Department of Cooperative Governance must develop regulations on recruitment and selection procedures which would be applicable to all municipalities. These regulations, once developed would ensure that there is uniformity across all municipalities with regard to the manner in which senior managers in particular, are recruited.
- 3.2.2 All municipalities must ensure that as part of recruitment and selection processes all candidates recommended for appointment to senior management positions are subjected to a competency assessment to assess whether they have the required competencies to occupy such positions. These competency assessments would also assist municipalities to identify and develop capacity needs of its cadre of senior leadership.
- 3.2.3 All municipalities must ensure that all recommended candidates are subjected to security vetting prior to making any decisions on appointments. This would assist to ensure that employees of acceptable character and moral fibre are appointed.
- 3.2.4 Municipalities must ensure that verification of qualifications, reference checking and credit record checks are conducted prior to making any decisions on appointments.
- 3.2.5 Human Resource components in municipalities must be capacitated to ensure that record keeping is strengthened in line with the provisions of the National Archives Act.
- 3.2.6 All municipalities must ensure that only funded vacant posts which are on the organisational establishments are advertised.

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- 3.2.7 All municipalities must develop guidelines on the declaration of conflicts of interest which should be followed by all selection panel members.
  - 3.2.8 SALGA must develop a toolkit on the implementation of human resource plans which would assist municipalities to conduct forecasting of their current and future human capital needs.

### 3.3 CONCLUSION

The study has shown the important role played by human capital in the provision of services by labour intensive employers such as public institutions. The effective management of human capital is imperative for these institutions considering the fact that they play an enormous role in the provision of basic services such as primary health care, housing, water, electricity and sanitation. In the case of South Africa with rising levels of unemployment and poverty, the majority of communities rely heavily on these services on a daily basis. Therefore, the manner in which these services are provided will determine to a large extent whether South Africa will be able to achieve its developmental goals as pronounced in a number of policy documents. In this regard, the study has sought to highlight the crucial role played by sound recruitment and selection processes in ensuring the realisation of such developmental goals.

Given the above, it is clear that sound recruitment and selection processes are particularly important in the appointment of the upper most administrative leadership of the local sphere of government as a primary vehicle for service delivery. This is particularly crucial given the central role occupied by the local sphere of government as a linkage between government and communities. However, it is clear from the findings of the study that recruitment and selection processes have not been undertaken at a level where it could be confidently shown that these processes are yielding the desired results. At the same time, the study has also highlighted areas where recruitment and selection processes are showing positive signs of improvement. Finally the study has provided recommendations which have been designed with the purpose of improving public administration at local government.



