GOVERNMENT
COMMUNICATORS'
AWARDS (GCA)

Rewarding excellence in government communication

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The approach to government communication takes its cue from the constitutional imperative of freedom of information and the objectives of building a truly democratic state. This requires government to maintain continued interaction with the people to be able to understand their needs. This type of communication will enhance an informed and appropriate response to the people's needs to enable all South Africans to become active and conscious participants in social transformation.

The GCA provides an opportunity for government communicators and departments to be recognised for creativity and innovation in communication. Furthermore, the GCA sets quality standards that communicators should strive to attain.

There are, however, challenges in the government communication system, which are reflected in the non-submission of aligned communication strategies and regular implementation reports; the inconsistencies of communication structures; and the non-attendance of the various forums that aim to assist departments to have integrated planning and coherence of messages. All these challenges have an effect on the entries received for the GCA.

The understanding of the overall system of government communication, which encompasses continuous processes that work towards supporting service-delivery implementation within government, is key in achieving excellence in the profession.

Annually, the government communication system is set in motion by the State of the Nation Address when the President outlines the Government's Programme of Action. Government communicators use this programme to strategise for communication in the areas that affect their departments in order to keep the public informed of the programmes of government and progress in implementing them.

In ensuring that all elements of government speak in one voice, government communicators need to understand that creating plans and strategies to communicate their programmes does not mean the end of the journey, but in actual sense, the beginning of all communication efforts that lie ahead, involving all those responsible in the implementation process.

Having an effective government communication system that enhances and supports service delivery is a journey, not a destination. This means that the journey towards excellent communication involves an entire process of active participation in government communication forums, attendance of cluster meetings, submitting content and inputs, working together and most importantly, handing in effective departmental communication strategies and implementation reports to GCIS. Strategising and planning remain key elements for effective, integrated and coordinated government communication.

For communicators to claim success towards excellence in communication and service delivery, they need to know and understand the journey that leads to being recognised as an excellent communicator. It is crucial for government communicators to know and understand the cycle of government communication to better plan for their campaigns and programmes and implement them.

It is vital that every strategy is accompanied by an implementation plan with clear monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Government communicators must ensure that they understand the various emerging and established intergovernmental structures and how they play a role in fostering greater integration and coordination in government systems.

Within the context of government's broader objectives of ensuring that communication is a strategic element in service delivery, the GCA seeks to promote and encourage excellence in government communication by rewarding and motivating the best communicators who understand the importance of participating in the government communication system, and who have shown consistency in communicating government messages and programmes through proper planning and implementation.