

In 1999 a contract post was created in the GCIS to facilitate the establishment of national training infrastructure for government communicators, in line with the Comtask recommendations.

Five objectives were set:

- Development of a curriculum for government communicators
- Development of a database of training service providers
- Establishment of the necessary infrastructure in terms of training legislation
- Developing long-term capacity to manage government communication training
- Fund-raising for communication training

1. Development of a curriculum for government communicators

A series of new courses has been piloted by the GCIS during the contract period and are now in place. These include:

- communication strategy skills
- understanding the new communication paradigm
- new media skills for government communicators
- community liaison and PR for government communicators.

All the abovementioned courses are pending certification by the Interim Government Communication Training Council, which should take place during 2000.

2. Development of a list of training service providers

The first phase of this project was completed in May 1999, and an updated database was produced in September 1999. The database is available, with a searchable facility, on the GCIS web site. Government communicators around the country can now access and search for training service providers to suit their needs, and access the course outlines of the new courses listed above.

3. Establishment of a Government Communicators' Training Board

Two structures have been established, in line with the new legislative framework for training and development:

- A standards-generating body for government communication, which has been approved by the South African Qualifications Authority's National Standards Body for Communications and Language Studies. The composition of the body is due to be gazetted before the end of the year.
- A quality-assurance body for government communication, called the Interim Government Communications Training Council. The Council has met several times since its formation and is playing a crucial role in determining and assessing the content of the courses outlined above.

4. Development of capacity to manage the training infrastructure

Three new posts have been created in the new GCIS structure to ensure continuity:

- A head (director level) of training services, to provide overall management of training provision for government departments.
- A coordinator (deputy director level) for training programmes, who will develop training strategies and programmes for clients, liaise with service providers, maintain the database of service providers and coordinate practical arrangements for training programmes.
- A coordinator (deputy director level) for training infrastructure, who will develop strategic plans for existing and prospective training infrastructure, coordinate the standard-setting and quality-assurance processes, and participate in the Public Service SETA.

5. Fund-raising

A favourable response has been received from several funders, and the Commonwealth Secretariat and the UN Development Programme allocated R250 000 to a series

of pilot training programmes which was run in four provinces. There is a possibility of funding from these and other donors, which are being explored. The Department of Finance and the SA Management Development Institute (SAMDI) are seen as partners in future fund-raising efforts.

Other activities

Several other objectives outside the initial brief of the National Training Board project were identified during the course of the initiative, and were achieved. Some of these are:

- A national skills audit was conducted in all three spheres of government, providing the first comprehensive assessment of short and medium-term training needs across government.
- Input was made into the internal training processes at the GCIS, for example through the Competencies Subcommittee of the GCIS Transformation Council.
- Discussion has begun around the formation of a professional association for government communicators.
- Contact has been made with government communication training initiatives around the globe.
- Preparatory work has been done on the development of a training plan for GCIS Multi-purpose Community Centres (MPCCs), covering the training needs of their 'governing bodies', community stakeholder committees and staff.
- Meaningful contact has been made with SAMDI in the Department of Public Service around:
 - a) the possible incorporation of some of the GCIS initiatives (for example some of its new training courses) into the activities of SAMDI,
 - b) sharing information and experiences with SAMDI (for example GCIS experience in establishing its database and establishing its quality-assurance bodies),
 - c) assisting with the development of communication management modules for inclusion in SAMDI's management training courses.