



KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCE

TREASURY
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



HON. NELISWA PEGGY NKONYENI

MEC: FINANCE

E-DIALOGUE

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SEPTEMBER 2023

FOCUS: DIVERSITY & INCLUSION FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE



*Provincial Treasury Employees In Their Colourful Outfits Celebrating Casual Day
In Support of Persons with Disabilities*



**GROWING
KWAZULU-NATAL
TOGETHER**

KZN PROVINCIAL TREASURY CONTINUES TO PLAY A STRATEGIC FISCAL ROLE



HOD Carol Coetzee



Mr. Santhanu Moodley



Mrs. Idah Zwane-Dhlomo



Mrs. Rejoice Gwala

KZN Treasury, an institution that is legally tasked with being the warden of the public purse, remains committed to playing a strategic fiscal role in a bid to create an environment that is conducive to growth, investments, job creation and uncompromised service delivery in KwaZulu-Natal.

Buoyed by our legislative mandate which includes effective management of the provincial and municipal fiscal resources, effective management of assets and financial systems, promotion of accountability and ensuring prudent financial governance, we are determined to ensure that our focus is not only of embedding good fiscal management in our administration, but also to be a catalyst in the improvement of the lives of communities that we serve.

Our efforts as a management collective saw our Provincial Administration improving on its audit outcomes compared to previous years.

KZN Treasury continued to play a significant role in the audit readiness support project to enhance financial management of Departments and Public Entities. The continued implementation of the Province-wide Operation Clean Audit Plan resulted in an overall improvement in the provincial PFMA audit outcomes with an increase in the number of Departments achieving clean audits and a reduction in the number of qualified audit opinions.

Eight Departments received clean audits, compared to 5 clean audits in the previous year. Five Departments received unqualified audit opinions and 2 Departments received qualified audit opinions compared to 3 qualified in the previous year. Twelve Public Entities achieved clean audits while 5 achieved unqualified audit opinions. Eleven Public Entities sustained their clean audit, while one entity regressed from a clean audit to an unqualified audit and the audit outcome of one entity improved from an unqualified audit to a clean audit with the overall result remaining the same for Public Entities.

KZN PROVINCIAL TREASURY CONTINUES TO PLAY A STRATEGIC FISCAL ROLE



Mr. Jacob Twala



Mrs. Tanya Stielau



Ms. Thembi Mgujulwa, Mr. Thokozani Madlala and Mrs. Kudzai Musasiwa



Mr. Musa Cebisa and Mr. Thabani Nalovu

Also worth-mentioning is that KZN Treasury continues to lead by example and our receipt of 15 clean audit outcomes consecutively bears testimony to our unparalleled appetite for sustained excellence in financial governance.

Our challenge does not only lie in ensuring improvement in our financial and fiscal performance as government and as individual government departments, but it also lies in translating our efforts into improved standards of living for our communities. It is for this reason that, as KZN Treasury, we say we want to make the rand go an extra mile.

With the growing concern of financial governance at a local government level, KZN Treasury empowered by Municipal Finance Management Act, continues to intensify its technical support to municipalities with a view to drastically nipping the identified inefficiencies in the bud. This is a very important task in order to ensure that municipalities continue to provide decent and uninterrupted services to communities while also ensuring strict compliance with all financial protocols regulating the use of public finances in local government.

Despite the turbulent economy that threatens our ability to stabilise the fiscal "ship", working with the KwaZulu-Natal Members of the Executive Council, Accounting Officers and public servants across departments, public entities and municipalities, we will continue to dig deep and align our commitments with key priorities of our government in order to benefit the communities that we serve and ensure that essential services are delivered uninterrupted.

As KZN Treasury, we are intensifying our efforts to provide support and monitoring to all departments, public entities and municipalities in order to inculcate a culture of continuously striving for good and improved financial governance where every cent is spent wisely and accountability is sacrosanct.

KZN TREASURY AND COGTA LAY BOLD GROUND RULES FOR THE DYSFUNCTIONAL UTHUKELA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY



MEC Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni, and HOD Carol Coetsee in Ladysmith, Uthukela District Municipality.



LADYSMITH: UTHUKELA DISTRICT: MEC for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi, MEC for Finance Ms Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni.



As a proactive and decisive step to provide redress for the dysfunctional UThukela District Municipality, both MEC for Finance, Ms Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni, and MEC for the Department of Co-operative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Ms Bongiwe Sithole-Moloi, accompanied by their senior officials, called for a full council meeting with the Audit Committee, in order to present their detailed analysis of the current financial and governance challenges and proposed recommendations aimed at turning around the current deplorable state of governance.

The reports presented by both departments highlight an abysmal operational culture characterized by glaring weaknesses in financial management and governance which has resulted in the UThukela District Municipality receiving qualified audit reports for the past 5 years.

The reports further reveal poor financial management practices, lack of co-operation with the District Audit Committee, KZN Treasury and Cogta units responsible for support to municipalities, provision of poor and unreliable financial reports, Administrator is not submitting nor providing the Financial Recovery Plan to the Audit Committee, lack of implementation of the Audit Committee recommendations, poor organizational capacity and governance, weak internal controls, 40 percent average collection rate, among many anomalies, which are indicative of a municipality in serious financial distress.

Also highlighted during the engagement was the rift and breakdown of working relations that the council has with the Administrator appointed by the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs which was also sanctioned by KwaZulu-Natal Executive Council.

KZN TREASURY AND COGTA LAY BOLD GROUND RULES FOR THE DYSFUNCTIONAL UTHUKELA DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY



The MECs were ably supported by senior officials from Provincial Treasury and COGTA

The Mayor of UThukela District Municipality, Inkosi Ntandoyenkosi Shabalala said "as a municipality, we are going to revise the organogram and address staff shortage and staff performance. We want to do this in order to restore operational culture of the municipality. We appreciate this intervention and we hope to get our house in order to ensure that we improve service delivery". MEC Sithole-Moloi said their mandate is to ensure that all municipalities are functioning optimally in line with their legislated mandate in order to ensure effective service delivery to the communities they serve.

"It is in our interest to assist UThukela District Municipality and ensure that service delivery is not affected. We will continue to provide support to this municipality until it comes out of administration. Communities of UThukela District are entitled to uninterrupted service delivery and it is our resolve to make this happen," said MEC Sithole-Moloi.

Presiding over the engagement, MEC Nkonyeni said that KZN Treasury and the Department of Co-operative Government and Traditional Affairs have a task to oversee the functioning of all municipalities and there is a need to ensure that these two departments are able to work cooperatively with all municipalities in order to ensure improvement of service delivery at local levels.

"We want to see a drastic improvement in the functioning of this municipality, but UThukela District Municipality, from leadership down to staff, have to co-operate with structures that are meant to provide support to it. We want to fully support UThukela District Municipality until it is not listed among municipalities that are dysfunctional," said MEC Nkonyeni.

MEC Nkonyeni said the engagement with UThukela District Municipality will continue until all the operational and financial governance hindrances are resolved.

***"It is in our interest to assist UThukela District Municipality and ensure that service delivery is not affected."
- MEC Sithole-Moloi***

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Source – images online, article published by - <https://www.betterup.com/blog/disability-inclusion>, Allaya Cooks-Campbell

This article gives an in-depth insight on the importance of inclusion and diversity in the workplace for persons with disabilities. Provincial Treasury is taking extra measures to ensure a healthy, safe and enabling environment for all employees in the department.

The article is shared with Treasury employees as it gives an important perspective on disability inclusion, the importance of having good disability policies and initiatives that could be incorporated to the workplace for an inclusive environment.



Image: Getty Images

What is disability inclusion?

Many definitions of "disability inclusion" are some variation of "including those with disabilities in every aspect of daily life." This definition is woefully short-sighted. People with disabilities aren't lacking in engagement or vitality, and they're certainly not sitting on the sidelines waiting to be asked to dance. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 25% of adults — that's one in four — live with a cognitive, physical, or emotional disability. And many of them are among the most talented contributors across every industry.

Stephen Hawking had a motor neuron disorder. Robin Williams had Parkinson's and major depression. Helen Keller lost her sight and hearing as a child. Toni Braxton has lupus. The work of inclusion, then, isn't inviting disabled people to do more. They're living full lives, blazing paths in their careers. The work is making a difference in the environments that we invite them into. We can design our physical environments, events, websites, and even our language in ways that make it easier for people with disabilities to live their lives and reach their potential. The challenge doesn't lie with them. It lies with systems that aren't built with inclusivity and access in mind.

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

Source – images online, article published by - <https://www.betterup.com/blog/disability-inclusion>, Allaya Cooks-Campbell

What does disability inclusion in the workplace really mean?

As with other forms of diversity, disability inclusion goes much further than just making sure you're meeting the quota. Disability inclusion is about creating an inclusive workplace where people feel welcome and comfortable and where they are seen, valued, and appreciated for what they bring to the table. Not in spite of their differences, but including their differences. No one wants to be tolerated or pitied at work. People with disabilities, just like those without disabilities, want to be recognized for their talents and accomplishments.

Most organizations would never intentionally ostracize someone. But not meaning to hurt someone doesn't make the omission any less harmful. That's because, as Sandra Robinson and Kira Schabram explain in Harvard Business Review, even being left out unintentionally "signals that we are socially worthless and a bad fit for that very community that we depend on."

Disability exclusion comes from mundane, even well-meaning, sources. Many oversights, like holding a team event in an inaccessible restaurant or relying on people in a meeting to quickly read tiny text off a slide presentation, stem from both a lack of thought or lack of understanding of other people's potential challenges. Other disability exclusion, like avoiding candidates who need accommodation or choosing team members who fit a certain mold, may stem from bias but also from discomfort and even fear. Managers may actually feel uncertain and unprepared to work with someone with a disability and might avoid the situation altogether for fear of doing it wrong.

Disability inclusion in the workplace means understanding and addressing the causes of all these types of exclusion. Having effective and courageous conversations about disability inclusion may be uncomfortable and new. It requires sensitivity and care — plus a healthy dose of transparency — to unlearn implicit bias and become more aware. It requires support for managers to be more confident and empathetic as they create environments inclusive of disability. It requires support for those with disability so that they don't have to be the sole advocates and standard bearers to fight for inclusion.



Image: Getty Images



“Disability inclusion in the workplace means understanding and addressing the causes of all these types of exclusion.”

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Why is disability inclusion a crucial part of today's businesses?

In the workplace, this means taking special care not to set certain individuals at a disadvantage. Workplace environments can be intrinsically skewed towards those without disabilities. This means that, considering one in four people live with a disability (visible or invisible) a significant portion of your workforce benefits from inclusion strategies. The ripple effects go well beyond the people who may be living with visible disabilities. Because 96% of severe disabilities aren't readily apparent, it takes compassion and foresight to plan for accessibility. Showing a commitment to accessibility, especially in multiple ways, shows people that their differences are accepted, welcome, and valued. Disabilities may include developmental disabilities, physical disabilities, or mental health conditions. Taking a broad view of disability as something that may not be visible is important in boosting efforts towards inclusion in the workplace.

What are the benefits of having good disability inclusion policies?

The benefits of good disability inclusion policies can be felt throughout the workplace. Many disabilities aren't visible, and employees are under no obligation to disclose them to their employer. That creates an unfortunate paradox — those with hidden disabilities have more control over whether or not to divulge them, but are unable to advocate for accommodations unless they do. While employers don't have to provide accommodations unless requested, it's prudent to use statistics to assume that good policies make a difference for a significant portion of your workforce. Even if you're unsure which changes to make, creating an environment that is open and supportive to all people has the following benefits:



Image: Getty Images

INCLUSION AND DIVERSITY FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH DISABILITIES IN THE WORKPLACE

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6 initiatives to be more inclusive

1. Create safe spaces

Employee resource groups, or ERGs, are employee-led groups that support and empower people from underrepresented backgrounds. Having these groups at work fosters a sense of belonging and inclusion. They help build community and provide safe spaces for people to share and get to know other community members. ERGs help boost mental health and improve employee experience.

2. Review your materials

Take the time to look over your copy, website, and marketing materials with a fresh eye. Be on the lookout for language that may exclude people, even if you think the meaning is clear. Avoid referring to people with disabilities as “physically challenged,” “differently abled,” or “special needs.” Never use the word “normal” to describe people without disabilities.

3. Hire an expert

When it comes to disability and inclusion, you don't have to know everything. You just have to be willing to learn. Don't hesitate to hire a professional who is familiar with the laws and accommodations you may not be aware of.

They can help you start an ERG, plan conversations with leadership, and prioritize changes to the workplace. They can help you identify other opportunities you might not be aware of, such as using people-first language in your materials. They can also provide resources for practical, disability-inclusive solutions, such as captioning, braille, or sign language interpretation.

4. Talk to your people

At some point, you'll need to actually reach out to your team and find out what they need. While people will appreciate you making accommodations on their behalf, leaving them out of the decision-making process is insulting. It may also result in frustration as you make well-intentioned changes that no one actually needed. Including people with disabilities in your decision making is necessary.

While it can seem nerve-wracking to open up a conversation about accommodations (especially as we're socialized to pretend impairments don't exist), it's worth talking about. Many people are afraid to speak up for themselves and may be extremely grateful for the opening.

5. Promote diversity on all levels

Diversity isn't just about hiring people that look the part. In order to have a truly diverse environment, companies need to go beyond the surface. There are many different kinds of diversity. Physical and cognitive ability, educational and economic background, neurodiversity, and immigration status are just a few that come to mind. Recognize that these individuals do more than just “check a box.” They each bring unique experiences, depth, and nuance to their roles — and to the company as a whole.

6. Be transparent

It can't be said enough — disability inclusion isn't a conversation where one person supplies all the answers. It's a journey. Companies — and leaders — need to show that their efforts to create a more inclusive environment are an ongoing priority, not a project. Allow your leaders and employees to be transparent about their struggles, their mistakes, their wins, and even their own disabilities. The goal is a welcoming community, not a place that says and does everything perfectly all the time.

Embrace diversity — don't just tolerate it

As we mentioned, people want to be welcomed, not just tolerated. Your environment should reflect sensitivity, inclusivity, and celebrate each other's differences — both visible and invisible. After all, invisible illness is all around us. No matter what, stay transparent, humble, and keep trying to get better. The goal is not to be beyond reproach. It's to develop an environment where everyone is treated the way they want to be.



What is cultural diversity?

Culture is what shapes us, it is the reason we have certain beliefs, influences how we behave and is what gives us our identity. Cultural diversity is the representation of different cultural and ethnic groups in society. When talking about cultural diversity in the workplace, it is the inclusion of employees from different backgrounds, different races, different sexual orientations and different political views [3]. The term cultural diversity encourages an environment of inclusion, with representatives from a range of various backgrounds that come together to work as a team. It's easy to talk about the theory and definitions of cultural diversity, but when it comes to creating that within an organisation, it very much depends on the practices used during the hiring process.

Why is cultural diversity important?

We've touched on the idea of the benefits cultural diversity offers, but equality and diversity are something that hasn't just received lip service within the media. There's been extensive research into its positive effects and the importance of business inclusivity.

Studies looking at why cultural diversity is important give us solid stats to work from when thinking about its benefits. For instance, economically, research shows that the 43 most diverse public corporations were 24% more profitable than the S&P 500. Other studies show that almost 95% of directors agree that diversity brings unique perspectives.

Ultimately, workplace diversity and inclusion allow businesses to build teams that bring different viewpoints and talents to the mix, increasing innovation and driving higher revenues.

Types of workplace diversity

To get a deeper understanding of what cultural diversity looks like, you need to start with a rundown of different types of recognised workplace diversity. We are all defined by characteristics that go beyond the basic HR capture forms. We could write an everlasting list with all the types of cultural diversity with this theory in mind.

In HR terms, there are a few primary types of diversity characteristics to bear in mind :

- Gender – women make up a bigger percentage of the workforce than ever before. But there is still a gap in terms of fair pay and the percentage of women in leadership roles.
- Race and ethnicity – as ethnic and racial identities evolve, standardised forms with ethnic groups fail to hit the mark. By opening the conversation with employees and candidates on race and ethnicity, this goes a step towards improving cultural diversity.
- LGBT – the LGBT community includes a complex range of people in terms of backgrounds, experiences and challenges. To work towards eliminating discrimination, careful attention needs to be paid towards a strategy as an LGBT employer.
- Age – both younger and older workers can be discriminated against in terms of preconceptions. Through steps like opening apprenticeships to all ages and providing cross-generation mentoring programmes, these prejudices can be addressed.
- Workers with disabilities – disabilities can cover many differences, from the ability to form social relationships to physical disabilities. Part of this can be helped with a neurodiversity programme, as well as fighting against negative perceptions.
- Mental health – focusing on mental health along with workplace wellness support can combat a variety of issues, from absenteeism to behavioural problems.
- Neurodiversity – recognising and providing a supportive environment for those with neurological differences that include dyslexia, autism and Tourette's helps organisations to celebrate differences and the benefits they can offer in well-matched job types.
- Thought style – different personalities and thought styles can enhance creativity if the individual and the role are well matched. In contrast, it can cause stress if ill-matched.



HIGHLIGHTS: MEC PEGGY NKONYENI STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT



KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Finance, Ms. Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni, at the BIO Africa Convention held recently at the Durban International Convention Centre. This is an annual event that facilitates an enriching and collaborative platform for the exchange of groundbreaking ideas and opportunities in the biotechnology industry. All biotechnology innovations pertaining to the health, energy, agriculture and entrepreneurial sectors get discussed and debated on these platforms. AfricaBio has conceptualized and executed five successful BIO Africa Conventions since 2018.



HLUHLUWE, KZN: KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Finance, Ms. Neliswa Peggy Nkonyeni, has put together a team of experts in technology, private sector partners, and government officials to assist a young woman, Thando Gumede, aged 29, to start a Science and Technology Academy in uMkhanyakude District, north of KwaZulu-Natal with a long-held view of bringing strategic centres of learning closer to rural children so that, when they are empowered with the valuable IT-based skills and knowledge, they can fly high and improve themselves, their families as well as become Ambassadors of KwaZulu-Natal on Information Technology-based development. Ms. Gumede is the founder of a Science and Technology Center at EMakhosini, KwaMqobokazi area in Hluhluwe (Mkhanyakude District). The Academy is a first of its kind, specializing in science, engineering, technology, coding and robotics.

HIGHLIGHTS: PROVINCIAL TREASURY CELEBRATES SPRING DAY ON 1ST SEPTEMBER

Photos by: Sboniso Khumalo, Communications Intern



Spring Day 2023 was celebrated in support of persons with disabilities themed Share A Smile .