

# We all have a part to play to drive accountability in the public sector

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The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica) has received concerns from members and stakeholders to play a more active role in the public sector to assist the government in rebuilding the economy and improve service delivery as public trust in government continues to deteriorate. To achieve sustainable economic growth and development, all stakeholders, including citizens, government officials, civil society organisations, and the private sector, must come together and actively participate in driving an accountable public sector.



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Saica, through its constitution, has a role to play as one of its principal purposes is to 'contribute to economic and social development in South Africa'. Saica's Public Sector Summit scheduled for Tuesday, 15 August plans to ignite conversations amongst members and key stakeholders to support and improve accountability by the government.

The International Monetary Fund highlighted on 15 June that 'reforms are urgently needed to resolve the energy crisis and tackle structural unemployment' given that the economy is losing momentum amid record power cuts. Furthermore, the economy grew by 0.4% between January and March 2023 with a projection of real GDP growth to fall sharply from last year, reflecting a gloomy outlook.

South Africa faces numerous challenges with its public sector, which hinder its progress towards social and economic prosperity. Corruption has been a persistent issue, eroding public trust and diverting resources away from essential services and infrastructure development. This is further exacerbated by the lack of accountability and consequence management resulting in the government losing billions of rands each year through fruitless and wasteful expenditure. In addition, lack of skills also negatively impacts service delivery due to municipalities struggling to implement basic financial management disciplines and preventative controls and properly plan budgets for and monitor projects.

It is important that we act now to prevent further mismanagement of public funds as a continued deterioration of service delivery will have significant negative consequences for the people of South Africa which includes:

- Impact on quality of life: Citizens experiencing reduced access to basic necessities like healthcare, education, and clean water, affecting their overall well-being.
- Economic implications: Poor service delivery can hinder economic growth and development, making it difficult for businesses to operate efficiently and attract investments.
- Social unrest: Frustration with inadequate services can lead to protests and civil unrest, destabilising the country.

Saica believes that driving an accountable public sector in South Africa is a collective responsibility. Economic reforms initiated by the government are a positive step forward, but the active participation of citizens, civil society organisations, and the private sector is crucial to sustain and amplify these efforts. By demanding transparency and fostering a culture of integrity, South Africans can build a public sector that efficiently utilises resources, promotes social and economic development, and ensures a brighter future for all.

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