

MUNICIPAL SERVICE DELIVERY

New water tech forum to boost municipal service delivery

The South African Local Government Association (SALGA) together with the Water Research Commission (WRC) have launched a Water Technology and Innovation Forum aimed as a sharing platform for how technological innovation can solve today's and future challenges of clean water and improves sanitation services delivery.



The forum is set to provide a collaborative platform for municipal partners to share their innovation needs, mobilise partnerships to jointly conceptualise programmes, projects and funding towards matters related to safe water and sanitation.

"Through these platforms we are re-imagining the delivery of water and sanitation to our communities. We are creating a different paradigm shift in our approach to water management. We acknowledge that the world is moving into a fourth industrial revolution and such requires all of us to adapt or become irrelevant hence these platforms anchored by Science, Research, Technology and People together under one roof." So

said SALGA President, Councillor Thembi Nkadimeng at a two-day forum on 28 and 29 September to launch the initiative.

The event brought together technology and water thought leaders from the three spheres of government, research institutions and state entities, who shared their insights on the management of water and sanitation services through technology.

Nkadimeng made reference to a WRC study, *Drivers for wastewater technology selection – Assessment of the selection of wastewater treatment technology by municipalities in relations*



To watch a recording of the launch go to, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gFN6pcoZIFA>

to the management capability and legislative requirements (WRC Report no. TT 543/12), which painted a worrying picture on the role of local authorities in the wastewater treatment sector.

“Research undertaken by the WRC in collaboration with SALGA paints a worrying picture in relation to application of appropriate technology at municipal level. The findings of the report indicate that there is no shortage of technological solutions. However, there are major challenges in the application of such in municipalities. To this end, relevance and cost effectiveness of our technology choices are a key feature and integral part of this initiative we are launching today,” she noted.

However, Nkadameng expressed confidence in the newly established forum and its ability to find water-tight solutions to these challenges “Further, it seeks to safeguard the interests of the water sector and municipalities through creating an enabling environment for municipalities to seek technical guidance before employing technological solutions, secondly to select proven and vetted technology by water sector experts.”

Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, said that the forum would do well in paving the way towards the roll-out of the new District Development Model (DDM), an operational model for improving cooperative governance aimed at building a capable, ethical developmental state.

“We believe that the establishment of this forum will contribute to the implementation of the district development model, which seeks to strengthen local government by utilising the districts as a landing strip for all the spheres of government,” said Dr Dlamini-Zuma.

“Through the DDM, we’ll also see the acceleration of technology and innovation initiatives.”

Chief Executive of the WRC, Dhesigen Naidoo said of the ambitious forum: “The local government water and technology innovation forum...is a critical intervention. This partnership-led forum seeks to set up and expand a network of test beds for ground breaking water and sanitation technologies emanating

from South African laboratories.”

Naidoo added that the endpoint of the forum would ensure that South African citizens receive improved water supply and sanitation. “We want South African districts, villages and towns to be among the leaders in sustainable water and sanitation solutions in the world. We want our citizens to be the beneficiaries of the best water supply, the best water treatment and state of the art sanitation,” he said.

Department of Water and Sanitation ministerial advisory committee chairperson Jurgen Kogl, who addressed the virtual launch on behalf of Human Settlements, Water and Sanitation Minister Lindiwe Sisulu, proposed that the forum should provide regular feedback on progress review reports. “We propose that the forum provide quarterly or twice-yearly presentations to all stakeholders on what work has been done and what projects can be implemented in a financially sustainable manner,” he said.

Further, the Department of Water and Sanitation proposed, in partnership with the departments of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and Human Settlements, as well as the National Treasury and Salga, that a water sector leadership group be established under Salga. “Our view is that the Blue Drop, Green Drop and No Drop programmes be reactivated with vigour. We need all the water works in every municipality on the system, regardless of the level of vandalism or malfeasance, to improve the management of water.”

In addition, given the expected impact of climate change, the country needs to prepare and plan for the future and ensure that it uses what it has appropriately and in a financially responsible way to ensure that the country can ensure that water security and living standards can be met over the next 50 years, said Kogl.

There is significant academic and technical capacity in South Africa in the water and sanitation sectors and it has the support of international partner countries.

