New Integrated approach
New Partnerships
New ways of working
Meeting our new needs
Changing for a prosperous future
Brief Introduction of the PSA

The PSA
• **Vision & Mission**

With a proud history of more than 97 years of service to public servants, the PSA represents more than 230,000 public sector employees guided by the following commitment:

“As a leading trade union, we the PSA, will protect the rights and promote the interests of our members, through professional, dedicated and competent staff and member structures in an assertive, innovative, ethical and financially sound manner - at all times striving to exceed members’ needs and remain the union of choice.”
Brief History of the PSA

- Registered trade union at forefront of labour developments.
- Largest, politically non-affiliated, fully representative Union in the Public Service.
- Successfully transformed into a union that represents the full spectrum of the South African population.
- Over years played major role in transformation and improvement of Public Service and service conditions of State employees.
- Survived major changes in labour field and steadily moved forward to enter new millennium as second-largest union in the Public Service and the third largest in South Africa.
The PSA values:

- honesty
- transparency
- respect
- integrity
- consistency
- service excellence
- non-racialism
"Public sector policy implementation of talent and career management systems to achieve Vision 2030."

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Overview

✓ The public service is the bedrock on which an efficient government is built. Developing policies and tools that are empowering for civil servants, including improving the environment they work in and bolstering their capabilities should be at the heart of the kind of a state that we seek to build. That is the only way we can truly achieve a developmental state.

✓ Of critical importance is the need to pay a great deal of attention to attracting and developing the public servants of the future. Incentive structures such as competitive wages and benefits are important in this respect. When government has become the employer of choice, it is then that we will know we are making progress in creating a conducive environment in which civil servants flourish. It should thus be our objective to ensure that public sector employees are nurtured professionally and have a space to express their potentialities.
Overview cont…

There is therefore a need for a more holistic approach to human resource development. There are three core issues that need to be prioritised in this regard:

✓ Recruitment
✓ Training
✓ Retention
Training

What should be taught?

While there is general agreement on the need to have constant skills upgrading for public servants, implementing this could be complex. Questions remain on what should be taught, how that teaching can be integrated into the workplace, and whether current methods and institutional structures are adequate for skills promotion. Three issues are particularly important: improving induction and reference systems; providing more focus in ongoing skills development; and reassessing teaching methods.
Induction and reference systems

Although all public servants must go through the National School of Government’s Compulsory Induction Programme, care needs to be taken in assuring that induction processes are linked to ongoing support systems.

In particular, greater knowledge needs to be engendered on the overarching regulatory framework in which government operates, with a special emphasis on the PFMA and MFMA.

These documents are obviously very complex, and exist in a sprawling regulatory ecosystem that is often difficult for civil servants to fully engage with. While training on core legislation is of course essential, training may have a bigger impact if it focuses on equipping civil servants to understand where to find information they need as they navigate their work. This is where on-the-job real time training, including through short workshops, peer-to-peer learning, mentorship, and coaching, is necessary.

Induction training that equips new hires on how to navigate problems and knowledge gaps needs to be supported by the creation of ongoing support tools. While some exist, serious gaps remain. Rules around the PFMA, for example, tend to exist only in a sprawling collection of regulations and instruction notes that are difficult for inexperienced civil servants to navigate. Creating user-friendly guide books and online systems would help make legislation a lot more approachable, and encourage its use among those who might otherwise ignore something they struggle to understand.
Ongoing skills development

Once an established base of training is accomplished that allows civil servants to navigate the government space, deeper training is likely needed that accomplishes two outcomes: building greater capacity in the specific functions in which that person works, and building the capacity of the person in order to provide some sense of career advancement.

While the current structure of training is very diverse, there are two broad types of training that are available.

The first is through the National School of Government’s offering which, as you all know, focuses on induction, leadership, management and administration training. While the NSG’s offering is already impressive, there is a need for ongoing engagement to assure that the courses offered are relevant to the situation on the ground, and provide practical support to complement more theoretical approaches to complex challenges like management. Developing the NSG’s public profile could also assist in promoting the marketability of courses taken, and encourage more civil servants to actively seek out NSG courses.
Reassessing teaching methods

✓ Finally, the structure of training needs to be considered. Many public servants struggle to make time for training, or find they are in an environment where it isn’t prioritised. This often leads to singular focus on a couple of core functions, which can stifle innovative thinking and lead to unhappiness among more ambitious civil servants.

✓ New methods to get around this problem - notably e-learning - are interesting, but controversial. The literature on the effectiveness of online courses is mixed, and can at times encourage the assignment of training without the requisite provision of support or time for online courses. The NSG’s efforts to rollout an e-learning programme are encouraging, but must be accompanied by additional support at the office-level, and must be supported by the middle-managers that must assure time is set aside for training.

✓ Given the immense knowledge contained in the public service, training needs to be incorporate a system of give-and-take. Answers to many of the most pressing questions facing the public servants can be found within the public service, but often aren’t identified because civil servants feel their voices won’t be heard, or because poor communication prevents good ideas from reaching the right people. Utilising training as a dual system, whereby feedback is captured and incorporated into future training, would be a useful addition.
Retention

While recruiting and developing civil servants is essential, retaining talent is equally as important, and perhaps a more difficult challenge. Talented public servants often have the opportunity to work in the private sector, where pay and workplace environments are more attractive. Retaining all these civil servants will always be unrealistic, but it should be possible to convince a significant segment to stay on with the public service. Doing so will require a number of interventions.

Work needs to be done on the basics. That includes assuring clear progression paths, and providing adequate feedback in order to empower employees to reach the next stage in a fair amount of time.

Bottlenecks in promotion, where there is little route forward for a given civil servant, need to be acknowledged and actively managed. Training for new functions should be offered where appropriate and desired, while in other cases the opportunity for salary progression or performance bonus may be needed.
Retention cont....

Stability at middle-management level may create a supporting environment for developing relationships and creating a management level that feels empowered to intervene on behalf of their staff.

Finally, and a more complex proposition, is combating politicisation of the civil service. While having political leadership of government departments is inevitable, there is a creeping politicisation of senior civil service positions, as more and more senior jobs require political connections. This has serious implications for the stability and quality of government, but also undermines efforts to retain top talent. Ambitious civil servants are less likely to invest long periods of time in the public sector if there is a limit to the level of seniority that can be achieved, after which political connections are needed.
Conclusion

I would like to conclude by making two further points:

• The first point is the need to formalise the secondment systems.

• The second point is the need to deepen career tracks outside narrowly defined and regimented managerial ranks.
Thank You