MINISTRY OF PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

NATIONAL SCHOOL OF GOVERNMENT
STRATEGIC PLANNING LEKGOTLA 2026

KEYNOTE ADDRESS
BY
MINISTER FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND ADMINISTRATION,
INKOSI MZAMO BUTHELEZI, MP

The Blades Pretoria: 22 September 2026

Programme Director

Acting Principal of the NSG

Members of the Executive

NSG Partners

Ladies and gentlemen

Good morning.

Thank you for the invitation to join this Lekgotla.
This is my second with the NSG, and I come with a clear view that the NSG is no longer being asked to prepare for the future but has been mandated to build it.

Colleagues
Much has changed. The legislation has changed, the expectations of government have changed, and so too have the demands on public servants and the challenges in those spaces where citizens experience the state most directly.

So this Lekgotla must answer one question - and that is what kind of institution must the NSG now become.

We are at the start of the third year of a five-year strategy, but with a fundamentally expanded mandate, and we must therefore ask ourselves whether - if we were establishing the NSG today with the powers Parliament has now given it, would we design it exactly as it exists.

If the honest answer is no, then this Lekgotla matters.

Over the next two days, I want us to think beyond programmes and targets, and to think about capability, professionalisation, partnerships, infrastructure and accreditation, and about whether the NSG can truly become the institution that connects policy ambition with the administrative capability to deliver it.

Our theme, "*Turning the Expanded Mandate into a Dynamic Public Sector Capability Ecosystem*," is a clear statement of intent, and how you interpret it will shape this institution to 2030.

That expanded mandate comes from two defining pieces of legislation I spoke to in Parliament.

The Public Service Amendment Act.
This act gives legal certainty to the separation between political and administrative authority - a separation this democracy has needed since 1994 so that accountability can finally follow responsibility.

And the Public Administration Management Amendment Act.

This one builds on the other previous one by advancing a seamless, ethical administration across all three spheres and by fundamentally repositioning the NSG.

Let me be precise here colleagues.
You are now empowered to train across all three spheres, to determine compulsory training, to award qualifications, and to partner formally with universities, professional bodies and private providers, which makes this a different institution from the one that existed three years ago.

It comes at a time when local government failures are the most visible expression of state capacity challenges. When communities protest for water, when audit outcomes regress, and when a municipality cannot spend its conditional grants, that is not only a local failure but a capability failure.

Parliament has judged that a more capable NSG is part of the response, and that is a considerable weight.

In my Budget Vote I called the NSG the bridge between policy ambition and administrative capability, and I chose that word deliberately because a bridge is not a destination but rather carries weight and connects what would otherwise remain apart, and if poorly built, everything that depends on it fails.

I therefore, want to acknowledge what you have already built. Over the past two financial years you trained more than 348,000 individuals and generated R242 million in revenue, which are unprecedented numbers and evidence that the cost-recovery model is moving in the right direction.

I also confirm the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Curriculum and Quality Assurance, chaired by Dr

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, with twelve local and international experts, which marks the shift from training provider to accredited professional institution.

This sits at the centre of our broader reforms: merit-based appointments, skills audits, and the Central Register for discipline. And if the NSG builds competence well - the rest of the reform programme has a foundation to stand on.

The question is therefore no longer how to deliver more training, because you have proven scale, but whether you can build a sustainable capability ecosystem that supports performance and growth to 2030.

That ecosystem will not be built by adding functions to the old model, because the PAMA Amendment did not

ask you to do more of the same, but asked you to become a different kind of institution.

For that, I ask you to give weight to three matters over these two days.

First, is the Recognition of Prior Learning, because an accredited NSG that cannot recognise the experience already sitting inside our public service will have built only half a system.

Second, the dedicated learning infrastructure, because an institution training at this scale, with accreditation requirements for examination integrity and security, cannot indefinitely rely on borrowed venues.

Third, is digital capability, because an accredited NSG that does not build digital, data and AI literacy into compulsory programmes will be preparing public servants for yesterday's state, not tomorrow's.

You must also confront organisational design honestly - namely whether the NSG as currently structured, resourced and staffed can deliver what the legislation now expects.

Colleagues

You must confront partnerships not as a checklist of MOUs, but as genuine extensions of reach into universities, local government and the private sector.

And you must confront financial sustainability, because a national ecosystem cannot be built on a funding model designed for a narrower mandate.

Program director

Let me be clear on what I expect this Lekgotla to produce.

First, a shared understanding, so that every one of you leaves able to explain this expanded mandate in the same terms - legislatively, strategically and operationally.

Second, a defined institutional response on partnerships and governance, focused not on how you will hold the mandate on paper, but on how you will build the capability and infrastructure it demands.

Third, agreed strategic priorities and performance outcomes for 2027/28 and the trajectory to 2030 - meaning a consolidated set of priorities that I, Parliament and public servants can hold you accountable to.

None of this can be built alone, because COGTA, SALGA, higher education, DPSA, PSC, CPSI, PSETA and other training institutions all have a stake in whether this succeeds.

In my Budget Vote I said legislation alone does not build a capable state, but institutions do, leadership does, and culture does, and that applies to this room.

Parliament and the Executive have entrusted you with one of the most significant mandate expansions in the public service training landscape.

That trust was not given lightly, and it will not be sustained on good intentions alone but will be sustained by what you build between now and 2030.

You are on the verge of doing what previous generations were not always able to do - to turn legislative ambition into administrative capability consistently and at scale.

I want to pause and thank the NSG team directly - trainers, assessors, administrators - whose work sits behind the 348,000 public servants reached, because numbers are recorded institutionally, but they are delivered by people.

Even Ubuntu teaches us that human dignity is realised through our responsibility to one another, and that applies to institutions as much as individuals.

This institution derives its legitimacy from how it serves the public servants who depend on it, and those public servants derive their confidence from the quality of what you build for them. And that chain of responsibility is the ecosystem I am asking you to design.

I wish you a productive and honest two days.

I remain committed to the vision I shared when I in June 2024 - to ensure the NSG becomes a world-class institution, an engine room that shapes top talent in our public service.

I thank you.