



Municipal Budget Circular for the 2016/17 MTREF

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Introduction

The budget circular is compiled annually to guide municipalities on how to prepare their budget inputs. This circular focuses on the preparation of the 2016/17 Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework (MTREF), reference should also be made to the previous circulars. This guidance includes national policy imperatives that should be accommodated and other relevant information. The circular provides a summary of South Africa's economic outlook, inflationary targets, financial management issues and specific reference on how to give effect to National Treasury's Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (MBRR). The key focus of this circular is the 2016 Local Government Elections, the demarcation process and the changes to the local government grant allocations.

1. 2016 Local Government Elections and the budget process

Local government elections are likely to be scheduled between May and August 2016; the proposed date is yet to be determined. Elections are important events – when we reaffirm our commitment to democratic and accountable government by choosing representatives of the people who will guide the work of local government for the next five years.

The following four risks need to be explicitly managed:

1. In terms of section 13 of the Municipal Property Rates Act, 2004 (Act No 6 of 2004)(MPRA) and sections 24 and 42 of the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act No 56 of 2003)(MFMA), new tariffs for property rates, electricity, water and any other taxes and similar tariffs may only be implemented from the start of the municipal financial year (1 July). This means that the municipal council must approve the relevant tariffs before the commencement of 1 July; and, should this not happen, the municipality will not be able to increase its taxes and tariffs. Failure to obtain Council approval for the annual tariff increases would most likely cause an immediate financial crisis that may lead to the provincial executive intervening in the municipality in terms of section 139 of the Constitution;
2. In terms of section 16 of the MFMA, a municipal council must approve the annual budget for the municipality before the start of the financial year, and should a municipal council fail to do so, section 26 of the MFMA prescribes that the provincial executive **must** intervene. This provincial intervention may include dissolving the municipal council and appointing an administrator to run the municipality;
3. The outgoing council may be tempted to prepare an 'election friendly budget' – with unrealistically low tariff increases and an over-ambitious capital expenditure programme. The outcome of this approach will undoubtedly be unfunded municipal budgets that threaten their respective municipalities' financial sustainability and service delivery; and
4. Given that the timing of election campaigning coincides with the municipal public budget consultations; and there is a risk that these consultations may be neglected or used to serve the narrow interests of political parties.

In the build-up to the 2016 local government elections, municipalities are encouraged to act towards ensuring financial sustainability. Now, more than ever before, it is paramount for sound municipal decision-making so that long-term sustainability of municipal finances and service delivery is achieved beyond the election period.

Municipal finances are presently volatile and there is severe pressure to maintain healthy cash flows and maintain effective cost containment measures. It is therefore imperative that municipalities refrain from suspending credit control and debt collection efforts in a bid to win votes.

Furthermore, as the current composition and leadership of municipal councils will, for the most part, be responsible for the compilation of the 2016/17 medium-term revenue and expenditure (MTREF) budgets, councils are advised to prioritise expenditure appropriations aligned to the policy intent as described in the integrated development plans (IDPs). Infrastructure provisioning for water, sanitation, roads and electricity remain key priorities.

In addition the outgoing council is advised to critically consider the financial implications before entering into new long-term contracts that are not of priority to the municipality and avoid if possible, committing the incoming council. In addition, refrain from purchasing cars and from incurring expenditure at this stage that will financially burden the incoming council.

During this time of transition, all stakeholders should work together to ensure that municipalities continue to perform their functions efficiently and effectively. The Mayor and municipal manager should now be engaging in the process of the annual review of the fifth and last year of the IDP in terms of section 34 of the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) and the 2016/17 budget preparation process in terms of section 21 of the MFMA. It is particularly important to ensure that arrangements for the review of IDPs and preparation of budgets continue seamlessly as these processes cannot be delayed in anticipation of the announcement of an election date.

The uncertainty of the date of Election Day means that the newly elected councils may not be duly constituted by 31 May 2016 and therefore they will be unable to consider the annual budget before the start of the new municipal financial year. If the election date falls within the latter part of May 2016 and if there is any delay in declaring the election results or if the results are legally contested then it is unlikely that the new councils will be able to consider and pass the annual budget before the start of the new municipal financial year. In fact, in the case of district municipalities, there is a high probability that they will not be constituted in time to consider the annual budgets since they depend on the finalisation of the local municipality election results relevant to their respective districts. The same will apply if the election is held in June, July or August. It is for this reason that it is recommended that the outgoing council should adopt the 2016/17 MTREF budget before the start of the new financial year.

In deciding on the schedule for the 2016/17 budget process, the Mayor and municipal manager must also note that the MFMA read together with the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations only allows for a 'main adjustments budget' to be tabled after the mid-year budget and performance assessment has been tabled in council, i.e. after 1 January 2017. In addition, the permitted scope of an adjustments budget is quite limited in that taxes and tariffs may not be increased or decreased (refer to section 28(6) of the MFMA), and any additional revenues may only be appropriated to programmes and projects already budgeted for (refer to section 28 of the MFMA). Therefore the idea of the current council passing a 'holding budget' which the new council will change substantially through an adjustments budget soon after the start of the municipal financial year is not legally permitted.

Though an IDP is a five year strategic document of council, municipalities should note that when a new council takes office after each local government election, the norm has been that the first year of such a new council is primarily confined to implementing the last adopted IDP. Subsequent to this, it is normally in the second year of the new council where the newly

elected council will adopt its new and thoroughly interrogated and consulted IDP. This process mostly leads to an overlap of the last year of outgoing council into the new council.

It is each municipal council's prerogative to decide when to approve its annual budget. However, to assist municipalities, National Treasury proposes that councils consider adopting the following approach for their 2016/17 budget process:

Outgoing council approves 2016/17 budget	
1.	Current Mayor prepares a budget schedule that brings the review of the IDP and the tabling of the budget forward to late February or the beginning of March 2016;
2.	Community consultations on the annual budget conducted in the remainder of March and early April 2016;
3.	Officials complete technical work on annual budget by mid-April 2016;
4.	Current council approves annual budget and reviewed IDP before the end of April 2016; and
5.	Council implements annual budget from 1 July 2016.
Benefits	
- Minimises the risk of being without an approved budget at the start of the financial year; - Ensures continuity of operations; and - Safeguards the financial sustainability of the municipality by ensuring tariff increases are locked in before the start of the financial year.	
Risks	
New council may not concur with the priorities set out in the annual budget approved by the outgoing council, and therefore they may be reluctant to be held accountable for the implementation thereof.	
Mitigating factors	
- New council should note the overlapping year of the last year of the IDP into the first year of new council; and - Note that MFMA section 28(6) does not allow for tariff increases during the financial year of implementation of the adopted budget.	

2. Financial Implications of the demarcation process

According to section 21 of the Municipal Demarcation Act, 1998 (Act No 27 of 1998), the Municipal Demarcation Board (MDB) must determine municipal boundaries and may re-determine any municipal boundaries. In June 2011, the MDB began an intensive three year consultative process of reviewing municipal boundaries. This process was concluded in 2013, and resulted in 17 local municipalities being affected by major boundary redeterminations. As a result of these changes the total number of municipalities is reduced by 8 municipalities.

Following the 2013 cycle of municipal boundary redeterminations, the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (CoGTA) submitted additional proposals requesting the MDB to consider the re-configuration of boundaries of certain municipalities. These proposals were submitted to the MBD in January, February and April 2015 in terms of section 22(2) of the Act, which gives the Minister of CoGTA the right to request the MDB to consider specific boundary changes. The process of considering these applications was finalised in 2015, resulting in 32 local municipalities being affected. As a result of these changes the total number of municipalities is reduced by a further 13 municipalities.

In total there will be a net reduction of 21 municipalities resulting in a total number of 257 municipalities in the country. A list of affected municipalities is attached as Annexure B.

Implications for municipalities that are merging (if the election is held before 1 July 2015):

- The demarcation changes are only effective from the date of the local government elections, therefore each existing municipality must compile an individual budget for the 2016/17 MTREF;
- The individual budgets will be consolidated for the newly demarcated municipality after the local government elections, regardless of the new allocations that will be published in the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill;
- In order to ensure seamless consolidation of budgets after the elections, the merging municipalities are urged to start working as a team on the planning and technical processes; and
- During the period between the date of the election and the start of the new municipal financial year on 1 July 2016 the current arrangements for the payment of staff and creditors are required to be maintained.

In addition, municipalities should be aware of the role of the Change Management Committee (CMC) of overseeing joint planning between the municipalities in preparation for the consolidated budget after the local government elections.

National Treasury will provide further information on the implications of the mergers if the elections are after the start of the 2016/17 municipal financial year. This will be done in the second budget circular to be issued in March 2016. In this scenario the currently existing municipalities would continue to exist for the beginning of the 2016/17 financial year before the mergers come into effect on the date of the election. Existing councils will have to adopt budgets and municipalities will be eligible to receive a pro-rata portion of their equitable share and some grant allocations for the period prior to the new municipal boundaries coming into effect.

2.1 Support provided to municipalities

To support the newly amalgamated municipalities to undertake a smooth transition, the Municipal Demarcation Transition Grant (MDTG) was established with a time span of three years (2015/16 to 2017/18). The purpose of the grant is to subsidise the additional institutional and administrative costs arising from major boundary changes due to come into effect after the 2016 local government elections. The grant only subsidises additional administrative costs related to the mergers (such as merging and changing administrative systems and costs related to transferring staff). It does not provide for any infrastructure funding.

All affected municipalities are also being supported by provincial departments of cooperative governance. A Change Management Committee has been established for each re-demarcation, with representation from all of the affected municipalities and their respective district municipalities and the provinces. The Department of Cooperative Governance has also established a national Municipal Demarcation Transitional Committee with the aim of coordinating the various transitional measures that need to be put in place for the affected municipalities.

The 2016 DORA will set out the funding that will be provided to the affected municipalities, and these municipalities, CMCs and affected provinces must ensure that they adhere to the conditions attached to the MDTG. In particular, business plans must be timeously submitted to the Department of Cooperative Governance so as to ensure that transfers are done in accordance with the payment schedules.

2.2 Impact of demarcation changes on financial transfers to municipalities

Implications for Local Government Equitable Share (LGES) allocations

The LGES is allocated through a formula that takes account of several factors including the number of poor households and households in a municipality, their incomes and the ability of the municipality to raise its own revenue. In calculating municipalities' equitable share allocations for 2016/17 all of these indicators will be updated in line with the new municipal boundaries. The resultant changes in the affected municipalities' equitable share allocations will be implemented by National Treasury and details of the new allocations will be published in the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill.

Implications for Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) allocations

The MIG is allocated through a formula in a similar manner to the LGES (the MIG formula is based on infrastructure backlogs). The MIG formula will also be updated with data reflecting the changed municipal boundaries. The resultant changes in the affected municipalities' MIG allocations will be implemented by National Treasury and details of the new allocations will be published in the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill.

Implications for other conditional grant allocations

Allocations of other conditional grants are made to municipalities by the responsible national departments, often on a project basis. Allocations for conditional grants are only made for one year and the amounts published for the outer years in the schedules of the Division of Revenue Act are published for indicative purposes only and are not guaranteed. Departments will make their allocations for the 2016/17 financial year based on the new boundaries of municipalities. For municipalities that have been merged this means that previous indicative allocations are likely to be made to the new municipality that incorporates the municipal area where a project was planned and indicative amounts were published, however there is no guarantee of this.

Preparations for each major boundary re-determination are being overseen by a Change Management Committee (CMC). These CMCs are expected to play a coordinating role and exercise oversight over the preparation of a joint budget as well as any business plans required for conditional grants. The business plans can then be approved by the new council as soon as it has been constituted.

Transfers to municipalities will be gazetted in terms of the new municipal boundaries for the 2016/17 financial year.

2.3 Implications for assets and liabilities of municipalities

The changes to municipal boundaries are published by the MECs for local government in provincial gazettes in terms of section 12 of the Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act No 117 of 1998)(LGMSA). Section 14 of this Act regulates the effects that changes to municipal boundaries will have on existing municipalities. It also stipulates that the section 12 notice issued by the MEC for local government must provide for:

- The disestablishment of a municipality (or part of a municipality);
- The vacation of office by councilors of the existing municipality;
- The transfer of staff from the existing municipality to the superseding municipality (this must be done in accordance with labour legislation);
- The transfer of assets, liabilities and administrative and other records from the existing municipality to the superseding municipality (creditors of the existing municipality must be paid by the new municipality); and
- The extent to which existing by-laws will still apply.

The 2016/17 municipal budget preparation must make provision for any changes contained in these section 12 notices. The outgoing Council will as a result still be responsible for the preparation and conclusion of the Annual Financial Statements and the audit process.

3. The South African economy and inflation targets

The 2015 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement notes that the global economic outlook has been weaker than anticipated. Growth in developing economies has moderated in response to lower commodity prices, subdued domestic demand and reduced capital inflows. Growth in some developed economies has offset this slowdown. The South African economy is expected to grow by 1.5 per cent in 2015, 1.7 per cent in 2016 and 2.6 per cent in 2017. Domestic inflation is lower, largely as a result of declining oil prices. However, the depreciation of the Rand and the current drought gripping many parts of the country, however, pose some risk to the inflation outlook. Furthermore the electricity supply shortages pose the largest domestic risk to growth.

Persistent high unemployment remains one of South Africa's most pressing challenges. Difficult trading conditions and low business confidence levels have limited hiring during 2015. The formal sector lost 76 000 jobs, with sharp declines in manufacturing and construction, as well as community, social and personal services.

These economic challenges will continue to pressurise municipal revenue generation and collection hence a conservative approach is advised for projecting revenue. These circumstances make it essential for municipalities to reprioritise expenditure and implement stringent cost-containment measures.

Municipalities must take the following macro-economic forecasts into consideration when preparing their 2016/17 budgets and MTREF.

Table 1: Macroeconomic performance and projections, 2014 - 2018

Fiscal year	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	Actual	Estimate	Forecast		
CPI Inflation	5.6%	5.5%	6.0%	5.8%	5.8%

Source: Medium Term Budget Policy Statement 2015

Note: the fiscal year referred to is the national fiscal year (April to March) which is more closely aligned to the municipal fiscal year (July to June) than the calendar year inflation.

4. Key focus areas for the 2016/17 budget process

4.1 Local government conditional grants and additional allocations

The purpose of the conditional grants is to deliver on national government priorities relating to service delivery. Additional funding is allocated in the form of unconditional allocations such as the equitable share and the sharing of the general fuel levy. The main purpose of the equitable share is to fund the provision of free basic services to the poor.

The 2015 Medium Term Budget Policy Statement indicates that over the 2016 MTEF period, transfers to local government total R350.6 billion, with 59.5 per cent transferred as unconditional allocations and the rest as conditional grants. The division of available funds to local government have increased to R106.9 billion or 9.2 per cent of the national revenue for 2016/17. These funds are expected to increase to R128.4 billion by 2018/19.

Municipalities are advised to use the indicative numbers as set out in the 2015 Division of Revenue Act to compile their 2016/17 MTREF. In terms of the outer year (2018/19 financial year), it is proposed that municipalities conservatively limit funding allocations to the indicative numbers as proposed in the 2015 Division of Revenue Act for 2017/18. The DoRA is available at <http://www.treasury.gov.za/legislation/acts/2015/Default.aspx>

It is imperative that municipalities reflect the conditional grant allocations as per the 2016 Division of Revenue Bill once available, and plan effectively to utilise these allocations appropriately so as to avoid requesting roll-overs.

Changes to local government allocations

- The *local government equitable share* is being increased by R6 billion over the MTEF to provide some relief for the impact of increasing costs of bulk water and electricity and rapid growth in households.
- The *municipal demarcation transition grant* allocation is being increased to subsidise the additional administrative costs in respect of the re-demarcations. This includes increased allocations for demarcations approved in 2013 and allocations for demarcations approved in 2015.
- The *municipal systems improvement grant* will become an indirect grant so that it can support more strategic capacity building interventions at municipalities. The initiatives funded from this grant will be aligned to the Back-to-Basics strategy and the Department of Cooperative Governance and the National Treasury will jointly decide on the details of how this programme will work.
- The *municipal human settlements capacity grant* was introduced in 2014/15 to facilitate the development of capacity to manage human settlements programmes in anticipation of the assignment of the housing function to cities. However, there is no longer a need for this standalone grant as the assignment process was subsequently suspended indefinitely. The grant will be terminated in 2016/17. Cities will be allowed to use 3 per cent of the *urban settlements development grant* to improve their capacity with regard to the built-environment functions.
- The indirect *bucket eradication programme grant* was due to end in 2015/16 but will be extended to 2016/17 to complete the eradication of bucket sanitation systems in formal residential areas. Sanitation upgrading and bucket system eradication in informal areas will continue to be funded through the *urban settlements development grant*, *human settlements development grant* and *municipal infrastructure grant*.

Reforms to local government fiscal framework

The second phase of the collaborative review of the local government infrastructure grant system led by the National Treasury has been concluded. Several changes will be introduced over the 2016 MTEF period to streamline these grants and improve the value and sustainability of associated investments. Proposed reforms to be introduced from 2016 include:

- Enabling the use of funds for the renewal, refurbishment and rehabilitation of existing infrastructure, alongside asset management systems to plan and prioritise maintenance;

- Reforming the public transport network grant to support financially sustainable transit networks in large cities by using a formula to allocate the grant, thereby giving cities a clear financial envelope within which to plan;
- Consolidating urban grants over the MTEF to tackle challenges in the built environment;
- Rationalising grants to reduce complexity and administrative burdens. Several water and sanitation grants are being merged;
 - o The *municipal water infrastructure grant*, the *water services operating subsidy grant* and the *rural households infrastructure grant* will be merged into a single grant that will be targeted at reticulation and on-site-solutions in low capacity municipalities.
- Introducing greater differentiation between urban and rural areas. Secondary cities in particular will see changes to their planning requirements.

National Treasury has initiated a process of reviewing development charges. A national draft policy framework on development charges has been developed and processes are underway to consult on the policy. The consultations will convene early next year. More detailed information on these consultation processes will be provided in due course. For more information in this regard, you can contact Ms Judy Mboweni at Judy.Mboweni@treasury.gov.za or Ms Mmachuene Mpyana at Mmachuene.Mpyana@treasury.gov.za.

4.2 Reporting indicators

The National Treasury has engaged in a process of rationalising the reporting regime for the eight metropolitan municipalities with an aim to reduce the reporting burden whilst also creating a pool of indicators that will enable government to monitor progress on the outcomes and impact of municipal spending. This process has progressed significantly with regards to the outcomes and impact indicators whilst the rationalisation of the inputs, activities and output indicators is still undergoing rigorous consultations. The metropolitan outcomes and impact indicators are linked to the Built Environment Performance Plans (BEPPs) and therefore the Integrated City Development Grant (ICDG); whereas the inputs, outputs and activities indicators are linked directly to the Service Delivery Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) only as it relates to the built environment. When finalised, these indicators will assist the process of standardising the SDBIP.

The functional outcomes indicators are due to be finalised for the next budget cycle whilst the work on the input and output indicators is ongoing. Over time these reforms will also be extended to non-metropolitan municipalities.

4.3 Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (mSCOA)¹

The mSCOA Regulations apply to all municipalities and municipal entities with effect from 1 July 2017 and only eleven months remain for preparation and implementation readiness as the 2017/18 MTREF budgets will all have to be aligned to mSCOA.

The implementation of mSCOA must be considered a business reform and it requires a significant change in municipal business processes; and it involves systems conversion and/

¹ The Minister of Finance promulgated the Municipal Regulations on a Standard Chart of Accounts in government gazette Notice No. 37577 on 22 April 2014.

or re-implementation. Further, *mSCOA* requires organisational change as it is not only a financial reform that is being introduced.

The 2016/17 tabled budget or consolidated budget must include an annexure containing the municipality's *mSCOA* project plan and progress to date.

National Treasury has a dedicated website to support municipalities with their *mSCOA* readiness efforts. The following information is available:

- The current *mSCOA* classification framework;
- The *mSCOA* Project Summary Document;
- All Municipal *SCOA* Circulars, providing hands-on support on how to undertake preparation and implementation;
- Integrated Consultative Forum (ICF) – documentation and presentations of the *mSCOA* piloting process; and
- The Frequently Asked Questions Database (FAQ Database) – where previously asked questions and responses can be accessed and new questions may be logged.

For more information on *mSCOA* and other benefits of the reform, visit: <http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/MunicipalRegulationsOnAStandardChartOfAccountsFinal/Pages/default.aspx>

5. The revenue budget

National Treasury continues to encourage municipalities to keep increases in rates, tariffs and other charges at levels that reflect an appropriate balance between the interests of poor households, other customers and ensuring the financial sustainability of the municipality. For this reason municipalities ***must justify in their budget documentation all increases in excess of the 6.0 per cent*** projected inflation target in the budget narratives.

Municipalities are not maximising the revenue generation potential of their revenue base and this, together with the increasing unemployment and the decline in economic growth means that there is just not sufficient municipal own revenue to supplement the national funding sources to local government.

It is therefore necessary for municipalities to ensure that their tariffs are adequate to, at the minimum, cover the costs of bulk services and also to ensure that all properties are correctly billed for property rates and all services rendered.

5.1 Eskom bulk tariff increases

In terms of the Multi Year Price Determination (MYPD) for Eskom's tariffs approved by the National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA), a tariff increase of 8 per cent has been approved for the 2016/17 financial year. However, Eskom has applied to NERSA to use tariff increases in 2016/17 to compensate for an under-recovery of R22.8 billion in 2013/14. Such an application is allowed in terms of the NERSA's methodology for calculating the MYPD. A similar Eskom application was approved by NERSA for 2015/16.

NERSA is now in the process of reviewing this application. Until a decision on Eskom's application is announced by NERSA, municipalities are advised to base their planning on the 8 per cent increase already approved by NERSA. However, municipalities should be aware that it is possible that a higher tariff increase could be approved and take this possibility into account in their planning for the 2016/17 MTREF. NERSA expects to make a decision on Eskom's application by February 2016.

Municipalities are urged to examine the cost structure of providing electricity services and to apply to NERSA for electricity tariff increases that reflect the total cost of providing the service so that they work towards achieving financial sustainability.

5.2 Water and sanitation tariff increases

Municipalities should consider the full cost of rendering the water and sanitation services when determining tariffs related to these two services. If the tariffs are low and result in the municipality not recovering their full costs, the municipality should develop a pricing strategy to phase-in the necessary tariff increases in a manner that spreads the impact on consumers over a period of time. Should this not be the case, municipalities will be required to clearly articulate the reasons and remedial actions to rectify this position in their budget document. It is expected that the tariffs will differ per municipality depending on the bulk water tariff increases charged by their respective water boards.

Municipalities are urged to design an Inclining Block Tariff (IBT) structure that is appropriate to its specific circumstances, and ensures an appropriate balance between 'low income customers' and other domestic, commercial and business customers, and the financial interests of the municipality. While considering this structure, municipalities are advised to evaluate if the IBT system will be beneficial to them depending on consumption patterns in their areas.

In light of the current drought being experienced across large parts of the country, and to mitigate the need for water tariff increases, municipalities must put in place appropriate strategies to limit water losses to acceptable levels. In this regard municipalities must ensure that water used by its own operations is charged to the relevant service, and not simply attributed to water losses.

6. Funding choices and management issues

Municipalities should carefully consider the costs associated with service delivery while keeping in mind affordability and inflation when setting revenue raising measures. Once again, approving tariffs that are far below levels representing cost of providing the services would negatively impact on the financial sustainability of municipalities.

Furthermore municipalities must consider the following when compiling their 2016/17 MTREF budgets:

- improving the effectiveness of revenue management processes and procedures; and
- pay special attention to cost containment measures by, amongst other things, controlling unnecessary spending on nice-to-have items and non-essential activities.

6.1 Employee related costs

The South African Local Government Bargaining Council recently entered into a three-year *Salary and Wage Collective Agreement* for the period 01 July 2015 to 30 June 2018. The agreement reached is as follows:

- 2015/16 Financial Year – 7 per cent
- 2016/17 Financial Year – average CPI (Feb 2015 – Jan 2016) + 1 per cent
- 2017/18 Financial Year – average CPI (Feb 2016 – Jan 2017) + 1 per cent

Municipalities are advised to use this Salary and Wage Agreement preparing their 2016/17 MTREF budgets.

6.2 Remuneration of councilors

Municipalities are advised to budget for the actual costs approved in accordance with the gazette on the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act: Determination of Upper Limits of Salaries, Allowances and Benefits of different members of municipal councils published annually by the Department of Cooperative Governance.

6.3 Service level standards

In spite of a broad guideline on the minimum service standards having been issued with MFMA Circular No. 75, many municipalities did not incorporate the service level standards in their respective budget documentation nor submit these to National Treasury. All municipalities are again advised to formulate service level standards which must form part of their 2016/17 MTREF tabled budget documentation. The said service level standards must, together with the budgets, tabled before their respective municipal councils by no later than 31 March 2016.

It is noted that the same service level standards do not apply across all municipalities. Therefore, the hereon provided outline is intended to guide municipalities with the development of their respective service level standards. The outline can be amended to suit the requirements of individual municipalities. Municipalities are advised to also consider other guideline documents issued by other institutions available on the link indicated below.

A framework was developed as an outline to assist municipalities in finalising their service level standards. The outline can be accessed on the link below:

<http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Circulars/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=/Circulars/Documents/Circular 75 - 2015 MTREF&FolderCTID=&View={06AB24E7-1C64-4A80-A0FA-273E6A829094}>

6.4 Outcomes of the Financial Management Capability Maturity Model (FMCMM)

In prioritising the upcoming MTREF decisions, municipalities should review the detailed analysis of the results of the FMCMM assessments with the results of the 32 financial ratios that provide a holistic picture of the financial capability and sustainability of the municipality. These reports have been communicated to all municipalities and should be read in conjunction with the most recent budget reviews and feedback provided by National Treasury and Provincial Treasuries. Key aspects requiring attention should be discussed with the municipal council and management so that they can be prioritised for resource allocation and implementation.

Comments on these assessments and any other related legislative advice on the MFMA can be submitted to the MFMA helpdesk facility at: MFMA@treasury.gov.za

6.5 Hand-over reports for the newly elected council

Each municipal manager, working together with the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and senior managers, is encouraged to prepare a hand-over report that can be tabled at the first meeting of the newly elected council. The aim of this hand-over report is to provide the new councils important orientation information regarding the municipality, the state of its finances, service delivery and capital programme, as well as key issues that need to be addressed.

It is proposed that the hand-over report should include:

- An overview of the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of the municipality;

- An overview of the organisational structure of the municipality, with the names and numbers of senior managers;
- An overview of key municipal policies that councillors need to be aware of, and where they can obtain the full text of such policies;
- An overview of issues that still need to be addressed in relation to the municipality's turnaround strategy;
- An overview of the municipality's financial health, with specific reference to:
 - o Its cash and investments, and its funding of commitments (Table A8);
 - o Cash coverage of normal operations (see Supporting Table SA10);
 - o Creditors outstanding for more than 30 days, along with reasons for delayed settlement;
 - o Current collection levels and debtors outstanding for more than 30 days; and
 - o Extent of existing loans, and associated finance and redemption payments.
- The municipality's 2014/15 audit outcome, and its strategy to address audit issues;
- An overview of the provision of basic services, including plans to address backlogs;
- An overview of the state of the municipality's assets, with particular reference to the asset management plan, and repairs and maintenance requirements;
- A list of the main infrastructure projects planned for the 2016/17 budget and MTREF;
- A list of key processes requiring council input over the next six months, e.g. revision of the IDP, approval of specific policies etc. and
- Any other information deemed to be important.

In addition to the hand-over report, each new councillor should be given the municipalities' revised IDP, the adopted 2016/17 budget (if already passed), the mid-year budget and performance assessment report for 2015/16, and the latest monthly financial statement, and the annual report for 2014/15.

Municipal managers should submit their municipality's hand-over report to the relevant provincial department responsible for local government, provincial treasuries, the Department of Co-operative Governance (DCoG) and to National Treasury.

7. Conditional Grant Transfers to Municipalities

7.1 Pledging of conditional grants

Read together with paragraph 4.5 of MFMA Circular No. 51, all conditions for the considerations of the conditional grant pledge should be aligned with the provisions of section 46 of the MFMA regarding long-term borrowing.

While pledging of conditional grants assists in accelerating capital projects, municipalities are cautioned that pledging will only be approved for projects that have gone through a proper planning process as well as meeting the criteria for pledging as per MFMA Circular No. 51.

8. The Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations

National Treasury has released Version 2.8 of Schedule A1 (the Excel Formats). This version incorporates minor changes (see Annexure A). Therefore **ALL** municipalities **MUST** use this version for the preparation of their 2016/17 Budget and MTREF.

Download Version 2.8 of Schedule A1 by clicking [HERE](http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/Pages/default.aspx)

The Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, formats and associated guides are available on National Treasury's website at:

<http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/Pages/default.aspx>

8.1 Assistance with the compilation of budgets

If municipalities require advice with the compilation of their respective budgets, specifically the budget documents or Schedule A1, they should direct their enquiries to their respective provincial treasuries or to the following National Treasury official as follows:

	Responsible NT officials	Tel. No.	Email
Eastern Cape	Templeton Phogole Matjatji Mashoeshoe	012-315 5044 012-315 6567	Templeton.Phogole@treasury.gov.za Matjatji.Mashoeshoe@treasury.gov.za
Free State	Vincent Malepa Cethekile Moshane Katlego Mabiletsa	012-315 5539 012-315 5079 012-395 6742	Vincent.Malepa@treasury.gov.za Cethekile.moshane@treasury.gov.za Katlego.Mabiletsa@treasury.gov.za
Gauteng	Kgomotso Baloyi Nomxolisi Mawulana	012-315 5866 012-315 5460	Kgomotso.Baloyi@treasury.gov.za Nomxolisi.Mawulana@treasury.gov.za
KwaZulu-Natal	Bernard Mokgabodi Johan Botha	012-315 5936 012-315 5171	Bernard.Mokgabodi@treasury.gov.za Johan.Botha@treasury.gov.za
Limpopo	Una Rautenbach Sifiso Mabaso	012-315 5700 012-315 5952	Una.Rautenbach@treasury.gov.za Sifiso.Mabaso@treasury.gov.za
Mpumalanga	Jordan Maja Anthony Moseki	012-315 5663 012-315 5174	Jordan.Maja@treasury.gov.za Anthony.Moseki@treasury.gov.za
Northern Cape	Willem Voigt Mandla Gilimani	012-315 5830 012-315 5807	Willem.Voigt@treasury.gov.za Mandla.Gilimani@treasury.gov.za
North West	Sadesh Ramjathan Makgabo Mabotja	012-315 5101 012-315 5156	Sadesh.Ramjathan@treasury.gov.za Makgabo.Mabotja@treasury.gov.za
Western Cape	Vuyo Mbunge Kevin Bell	012-315 5661 012-315 5725	Vuyo.Mbunge@treasury.gov.za Kevin.Bell@treasury.gov.za
Technical issues with Excel formats	Elsabe Rossouw	012-315 5534	lqdataqueries@treasury.gov.za

National Treasury, together with the provincial treasuries, will undertake a compliance check and, where municipalities have not provided complete budget information, the municipal budgets will be returned to the mayors and municipal managers of the affected municipalities for the necessary corrections. Municipal managers are reminded that the annual budget must be accompanied by a 'quality certificate' in accordance with the format as set out in item 31 of Schedule A in the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations.

The National Treasury would like to emphasise that where municipalities have not adhered to the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, ***those municipalities will be required to go back to the municipal council and table a complete budget document aligned to the requirement of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations.***

Municipalities with municipal entities are once again reminded to prepare consolidated budgets and in-year reports for both the parent municipality and its entity or entities in that they to produce:

- An annual budget, adjustments budget and monthly financial reports for the parent municipality in the relevant formats; and
- A consolidated annual budget, adjustments budget and monthly financial reports for the parent municipality and all its municipal entities in the relevant formats.

The A Schedule that the municipality submits to National Treasury must be a consolidated budget for the municipality (plus entities) and not the budget of the parent municipality only.

9. Budget process and submissions for the 2016/17 MTREF

9.1 Submitting budget documentation and schedules for 2016/17 MTREF

To facilitate oversight of compliance with the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, accounting officers are reminded that:

- Section 22(b)(i) of the MFMA requires that **immediately** after an annual budget is tabled in a municipal council, it must be submitted to the National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury in both printed and electronic formats. If the annual budget is tabled to council on 31 March 2016, the final date of submission of the electronic budget documents and corresponding electronic returns is **Friday, 01 April 2016**. The deadline for submission of hard copies including council resolution is **Friday, 8 April 2016**.
- Section 24(3) of the MFMA, read together with regulation 20(1), requires that the approved annual budget must be submitted to both National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury **within ten working days** after the council has approved the annual budget. If the council only approves the annual budget on 30 June 2016, the final date for such a submission is **Thursday, 14 July 2016**, otherwise an earlier date applies.

The municipal manager must submit:

- the budget documentation as set out in Schedule A (version 2.8) of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, including the main Tables (A1 - A10) and ALL the supporting tables (SA1 – SA37) in both printed and electronic formats;
- the draft service delivery and budget implementation plan in both printed and electronic format;
- the draft integrated development plan;
- the council resolution;
- signed Quality Certificate as prescribed in the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations; and
- schedules D, E and F specific for the entities.

Municipalities are required to send electronic versions of documents and the A1 schedule to lqdocuments@treasury.gov.za.

If the budget documents are too large to be sent via email (exceeds 4MB) please submit to lqbigfiles@gmail.com. Any problems experienced in this regard can be addressed with Elsabe Rossouw at Elsabe.Rossouw@treasury.gov.za.

Municipalities are required to send printed submissions of their budget documents and council resolution to:

For couriered documents

Ms Linda Kruger
National Treasury
40 Church Square
Pretoria, 0002

For posted documents

Ms Linda Kruger
National Treasury
Private Bag X115
Pretoria, 0001

In addition to the above mentioned budget documentation, metropolitan municipalities must submit the Built Environment Performance Plan (BEPP) tabled in council on 31 March 2016 to Yasmin.coovadia@treasury.gov.za. If the BEPP documents are too large to be sent via email (exceeds 4MB) please submit to yasmin.coovadia@gmail.com or send to Yasmin Coovadia via Dropbox; any problems experienced in this regard can be addressed with

Yasmin.Coovadia@treasury.gov.za. Hard copies of the BEPP may be sent to Yasmin Coovadia, National Treasury, 3rd floor 40 Church Square, Pretoria, 0002 or Private Bag X115, Pretoria, 0001.

9.2 Budget reform returns to the Local Government Database for publication

For publication purposes, municipalities are still required to use the Budget Reform Returns to upload budget and monthly expenditure to the National Treasury Local Government Database. All returns are to be sent to lgdatabase@treasury.gov.za. Municipalities are requested to submit returns for both the draft budget and the final adopted budget. This will assist the National and provincial treasuries with the annual benchmark process.

The aligned electronic returns may be downloaded from National Treasury's website at the following link: http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Return_Forms/Pages/default.aspx.

9.3 Publication of budgets on municipal websites

In terms of section 75 of the MFMA, all municipalities are required to publish their tabled budgets, adopted budgets, annual reports (containing audited annual financial statements) and other relevant information on the municipality's website. This will aid in promoting public accountability and good governance.

All relevant documents mentioned in this circular are available on the National Treasury website, <http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Pages/Default.aspx>. Municipalities are encouraged to visit it regularly as documents are regularly added / updated on the website.

Contact



national treasury

Department:
National Treasury
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Post Private Bag X115, Pretoria 0001
Phone 012 315 5009
Fax 012 395 6553
Website <http://www.treasury.gov.za/default.aspx>

JH Hattingh

Chief Director: Local Government Budget Analysis

07 December 2015

Annexure A – Changes to Schedule A1 – the ‘Excel formats’

As noted above, National Treasury has released Version 2.8 of Schedule A1 (the Excel Formats). It incorporates the following changes:

No.	Sheet	Amendment	Reason
1	A10	Cost of free basic services	Improve reporting of cost of free basic services provided including in informal settlements.
2	SA1	Revenue foregone	Improve reporting on revenue foregone and cost of free basic services.
3	SA9	Provision of free basic services	To provide detailed breakdown of free basic services which links to A10.

Annexure B – Municipalities affected by redeterminations

Redeterminations Finalised by the MDB in 2013 and 2015

Province	Affected Local Municipalities	Impact
Redeterminations finalised in 2013		
Gauteng	Randfontein and Westonaria	Reduction of 1 Municipality
KwaZulu - Natal	Vulamehlo and Umdoni	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Hlabisa and The Big 5 False Bay	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Umtshezi and Imbabazane	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Ezingoleni and Hibiscus Coast	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Emnambithi/Ladysmith and Indaka	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Kwa Sani and Ingwe	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Ntambanana, Mthonjaneni and uMhlathuze	Reduction of 1 Municipality . (Ntambanana disestablished with 8 wards. Ward s1-4 incorporated into Mthonjaneni; wards 5-8 incorporated into uMhlathuze)
Redeterminations finalised in 2015		
KwaZulu - Natal	Mooi Mpfana and Umvoti	No reduction in number of Municipalities. Portion of Mooi Mpfana (Cadham voting district) incorporated into Umvoti.
Mpumalanga	Mbombela and Umjindi	Reduction of 1 Municipality
Free State	Mangaung and Naledi	Reduction of 1 Municipality
North West	Ventersdorp and Tlokwe	Reduction of 1 Municipality
Northern Cape	Mier and //Khara Hais	Reduction of 1 Municipality
Limpopo	Mutale, Thulamela, Makhado and Musina	Reduction of 1 Municipality (Mutale disestablished. Parts of Mutale are incorporated into Thulamela and Musina. Parts of Makhado and Thulamela are incorporated to form a new municipality .)
	New Municipality	Parts of Makhado and Thulamela are incorporated to form a new municipality .
	Aganang, Blouberg, Molemole and Polokwane	Reduction of 1 Municipality . (Aganang disestablished; parts of Aganang incorporated into Blouberg, Molemole and Polokwane).
	Fetakgomo and Greater Tubatse	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Modimolle and Mookgopong	Reduction of 1 Municipality
Eastern Cape	Gariep and Maletswai	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Nxuba and Nonkobe	Reduction of 1 Municipality
	Inkwanca, Tsolwana and Lukanji	Reduction of 2 Municipalities (all 3 amalgamated into 1)
	Camdeboo, Baviaans and Ikwezi	Reduction of 2 Municipalities (all 3 amalgamated into 1)

Annexure C – Previous MFMA Circulars

Budget management issues dealt with in previous MFMA Circulars

Municipalities are reminded to refer to MFMA Circulars 48, 51, 54, 55, 66, 67 and 70 with regards to the following issues:

1. Mayor's discretionary funds and similar discretionary budget allocation – National Treasury regards allocations that are not designated for a specific purpose to be bad practice and discourage them (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
2. Unallocated ward allocations – National Treasury does not regard this to be a good practice, because it means that the tabled budget does not reflect which ward projects are planned for purposes of public consultation and council approval (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
3. New office buildings – Municipalities are required to send detailed information to National Treasury if they are contemplating building new main office buildings (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
4. Virement policies of municipalities – Municipalities are reminded of the principles that must be incorporated into municipal virements policies (refer to MFMA Circular 51).
5. Providing clean water and managing waste water – Municipalities were reminded to include a section on 'Drinking water quality and waste water management' in their budget document (refer to MFMA Circular 54).
6. Renewal and repairs and maintenance of existing assets – Allocations to repairs and maintenance, and the renewal of existing infrastructure must be prioritised. Municipalities must provide detailed motivations in their budget documentation if allocations do not meet the required benchmarks set out in MFMA Circular 55 and 66.
7. Credit cards and debit cards linked to municipal bank accounts are not permitted – On 02 August 2011 National Treasury issued a directive to all banks informing them that as from 01 September 2011 they are not allowed to issue credit cards or debit cards linked to municipal bank accounts (refer to MFMA Circular 55).
8. Water and sanitation tariffs must be cost reflective - refer to MFMA Circular 66.
9. Solid waste tariffs – refer to MFMA Circular 70.
10. Variances between 4th Quarter section 71 results and annual financial statements – refer to Circular 67.
11. Additional In-Year reporting requirements – refer to MFMA Circular 67.
12. Appropriation statement (reconciliation: budget and in-year performance)- reference is made to circular 67. It came to the attention of National Treasury that a number of municipalities did not include the appropriation statement as part of their 2012/13 or 2013/14 annual financial statement. In terms of the Standards of GRAP 24 on the Presentation of Budget Information in Financial Statements, municipalities are required to present their original and adjusted budgets against actual outcome in the annual financial statements. This is considered an appropriation statement and the comparison between the budget and actual performance should be a mirror image of each other as it relates to the classification and grouping of revenue and expenditure as has been the case in a national and provincial context. This statement is subject to auditing and accordingly supporting documentation would be required to substantiate the compilation of this statement.
13. Eliminating non-priority spending – The 2013 MTBPS emphasised the need for government to step-up its efforts to combat waste, inefficiency and corruption (refer to MFMA circular 70).
14. Council oversight over the budget process – refer to MFMA Circular 70.

Conditional grant issues dealt with in previous MFMA Circulars

Municipalities are reminded to refer to MFMA Circulars 48, 51, 54, 55 and 67 with regards to the following issues:

1. Accounting treatment of conditional grants: Municipalities are reminded that in accordance with accrual accounting principles, conditional grants should only be treated as 'transfers recognized' revenue when the grant revenue has been 'earned' by incurring expenditure in accordance with the conditions of the grant.
2. VAT on conditional grants: SARS has issued a specific guide to assist municipalities meeting their VAT obligations – **VAT 419 Guide for Municipalities**. To assist municipalities accessing this guide it has been placed on the National Treasury website at: <http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Guidelines/Pages/default.aspx>
3. Interest received and reclaimed VAT in respect of conditional grants: Municipalities are reminded that in MFMA Circular 48, National Treasury determined that:
 - Interest received on conditional grant funds must be treated as 'own revenue' and its use by the municipality is not subject to any special conditions; and
 - 'Reclaimed VAT' in respect of conditional grant expenditures must be treated as 'own revenue' and its use by the municipality is not subject to any special conditions.
4. Appropriation of conditional grants that are rolled over – As soon as a municipality receives written approval from National Treasury that its unspent conditional grants have been rolled-over it may proceed to spend such funds (refer to MFMA Circular 51 for other arrangements in this regard).
5. Pledging of conditional grant transfers – the 2015 Division of Revenue Bill contained a provision that allows municipalities to pledge their conditional grants. The end date for the pledges is extended to 2017/18. The process of application as set out in MFMA Circular 51 remains unchanged.
6. Separate reporting for conditional grant roll-overs – National Treasury has put in place a separate template for municipalities to report on the spending of conditional grant roll-overs. Municipalities are reminded that conditional grant funds can only be rolled-over once, so if they remain unspent in the year in which they were rolled-over they MUST revert to the National Revenue Fund.
7. Payment schedule – National Treasury has instituted an automated payment system of transfers to municipalities in order to ensure appropriate safety checks are put in place. Only the primary banking details verified by National Treasury will be used for effecting transfers.
8. Conditional grant transfers/payments, the responsibilities of transferring and receiving authorities and the criteria for the rollover of conditional grants – It is important that the transfers made to municipalities' are transparent, and properly captured in the municipalities' budgets. MFMA Circular no: 67 in this regard refers. The criterion for the rollover of conditional grants is stipulated in MFMA Circular no: 51.

MBRR issues dealt with in previous MFMA Circulars

Municipalities are reminded to refer to MFMA Circulars 48, 51, 54, 55 with regards to the following issues:

1. Budgeting for revenue and 'revenue foregone' – The 'realistically anticipated revenues to be collected' that must be reflected on the Budgeted Statement of Financial Performance (Tables A2, A3 and A4) must exclude 'revenue foregone'. The definition

of 'revenue foregone' and how it is distinguished from 'transfers and grants' is explained in MFMA Circular 51.

2. Preparing and amending budget related policies – Information on all budget related policies and any amendments to such policies must be included in the municipality's annual budget document (refer to MFMA Circular 54).
3. 2013/14 MTREF Funding Compliance Assessment – All municipalities were required to perform the funding compliance assessment outlined in *MFMA Funding Compliance Guideline* and to include the relevant information outlined in MFMA Circular 55 in their 2015/16 budgets (refer to MFMA Circular 55).
4. Tabling a funded budget - It is critical that municipalities adopt and implement funded budgets as per Section 18 of the MFMA. Tables A7 and A8 which if completed correctly by the municipality, it will provide most of the information required to evaluate whether a municipality's operating and capital budgets are **funded** or not.