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COGTA DEPLOYS EXPERTS TO AILING MUNICIPALITIES

June 15, 2012 | Filed under News | Posted by editor

Retired town clerks, accountants and corporate governance experts have been roped in by the provincial government to assist struggling municipalities fix their finances.

In an effort to improve financial management in the Free State municipalities, the provincial government has deployed financial and corporate governance experts in eleven vulnerable municipalities throughout the province.

The team of retired financial experts and senior finance government officials has been given six months contracts to sort out the financial management of cash strapped municipalities, assist with the auditing of their infrastructure needs and help them identify immediate service delivery needs.

The deployment of the experts by the department of corporate governance and traditional affairs department follows the commitment by Premier Ace Magashule in his State of the Province Address that the provincial government will support struggling municipalities.

The Head of Department at Corporate Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), Kopung Ralikontsane said this week that the deployment of the municipal support teams was part of the provincial government's efforts to ensure that all municipalities achieve clean audits by 2012 as expected by the national government.

"We are following section 154 of the Constitution which enjoins us to support our municipalities whenever they need help. We have identified the first part of people to assist on financial management and audit of infrastructure so that we can know what we are dealing with at the municipalities and this will also help us to decide on priority interventions," said Ralikontsane.

He said the team, which started its work on June 1, is expected to prepare and submit financial the financial statements of the municipalities they are deployed to between July 1 and August 31. The experts will assist municipal chief financial officers to draft proper financial statements.

"Some of our municipalities have battled with drafting proper financial records due to lack of supporting documents. We want these people to assess whether municipalities are failing to do so due to fraud or poor record management. We also want to ensure that supporting documentation is available for auditing when municipalities present their financial statements," said Ralikontsana.

Derrick Foster, a retired treasurer and town clerk, has been deployed to the Naledi Local Municipality; Danie Marais, retired director has been sent to Mohokare Local Municipality while provincial treasury chief director Daddy Phukuntsi has been sent to Masilonyana Local Municipality.

Former Free State auditor general, Ben van Niekerk, has been deployed to the Phumelela and Setsoto local municipalities and Jannie Lubbe, former director of KPMG, has been sent to Nala Local municipality.

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Ralikontsane said following the team's recommendations on the municipalities' infrastructure and service delivery needs, the provincial government will deploy a team of engineers to roll out infrastructure projects in the affected municipalities.

More experts will be deployed as of July 1 to Kopanong, Tokologo and Ngwathe local municipalities. The department is looking for retired or available black professional to assist these municipalities.

"We invite retired or available black professional to submit their CV's to us. It is not easy to get such people who are readily available. Most of them are already in jobs."

[source: www.theweekly.co.za]