

# Alignment between the strategic performance plans of selected Eastern Cape Provincial Government Departments and the Provincial Growth and Development Plan 2004–2014, South Africa

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## ABSTRACT

*Within a system of intergovernmental relations, integrated planning across all spheres it is important for South African public institutions to ensure effective policy implementation. This article provides results of a study that was aimed at evaluating the nature and extent of alignment between the Strategic Performance Plans of selected Eastern Cape provincial government departments and the Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP): 2004–2014. The intention of the study was to critically assess how to enhance the effectiveness of the policy implementation process to ensure meticulous deployment of public funds and other resources. A qualitative research approach was followed. This approach combined a literature review, collection of data in ten provincial government departments and one public entity, and a desktop analysis of planning documents, reports, policy and budget speeches of selected provincial government departments. The findings of this study revealed that while the PGDP priorities are well articulated in departmental plans, they are accorded a status that is secondary to priorities of national government departments. Of course, weaknesses in*

*the design of the PGDP were revealed, in particular those that relate to PGDP strategies that were formulated without active participation of sectors that would facilitate their implementation, including some PGDP targets that were unrealistically set. The weak intergovernmental relations system and absence of technical alignment mechanisms across sectors and spheres were noted. The study concludes by suggesting a Strategic Planning Alignment Model for Public Service organisations to provide a conceptual framework within which governmental institutions should assess alignment in planning and implementation of public policies.*

## INTRODUCTION

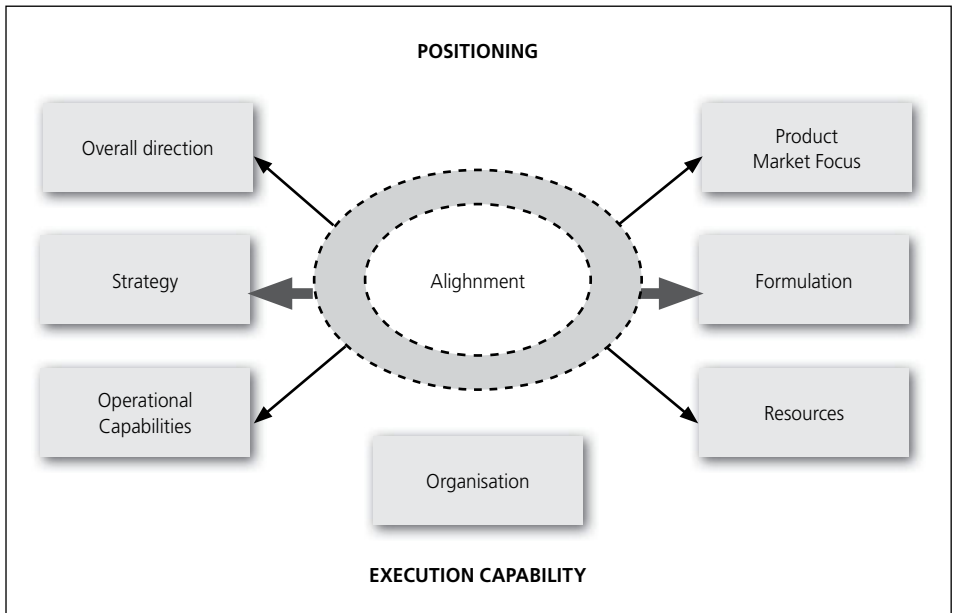
Governments continue to cite a challenge of poor alignment among policies, plans and programmes within and across all spheres of government. This challenge manifests itself in fragmented public service provision, duplication in the deployment of resources in the local government sphere, unsustainability of development programmes and projects, and slow service delivery to the citizens (Mbanga 2011:157). This article discusses the concept of alignment within the context of strategic planning in the public service, with particular reference to selected provincial government departments in the Eastern Cape. In doing so, it is first necessary to conceptualise strategic alignment especially as it applies to the context of the public service. A comprehensive literature study was conducted, central to which was defining the alignment concept in a context of public sector strategic planning as it has evolved globally and in South Africa. This will provide a theoretical basis for determining how local development plans should be synchronised with sub-national planning frameworks.

## ALIGNMENT DEFINED AND CONTEXTUALISED

According to Fuchs, Young and Zweidler-McKay (2000:12), the emerging view of strategy is that success depends on developing and aligning a unique combination of strategy positioning and execution capabilities. The biggest impediment to the success of organisations is not that they lack well-defined strategies or focused execution but that the execution and strategies are usually not in *sync*. Many organisations fail to achieve strategic objectives because they do not successfully connect operations with goals (Becker 2005:7). Strategic misalignment does not only affect public organisations. According to Fuchs, Young and Zweidler-McKay (2000:13), organisations are learning that the key to success lies in the alignment between the strategies that have been developed and their implementation. Strategy formulation processes are changing to enable companies to create and sustain alignment in their organisations. Organisations are experimenting more with the details of strategy, rather than merely implementing formal long-range plans. However, companies need the internal capacity (structure, culture and systems) to follow this path. Organisations across a broad range of industries are facing rapid change and uncertainty. Under these conditions, they find it increasingly difficult to establish a competitive advantage. Figure 1



**Figure 1: The emerging view of strategy**



Source: Adapted from Fuchs, Young & Zweidler-Mckay 2000.

below depicts the relationship between strategies developed and capabilities that support these within an organisation.

According to Boar (1994:2), alignment occurs when all parts of the institution naturally and harmoniously work together to accomplish a common objective. Alignment occurs when all share a sense of purpose and where processes, systems and structures are compatible in supporting a common vision and goals. In defining alignment as a process, the *Webster's English Dictionary* states that alignment is the act of adjusting the parts of a device in relation to each other. Generally, alignment is quite often defined in an indefinite and vague way, if defined at all. Many publications tend to avoid being explicit in defining the concept, but revert into tautological definitions. According to Maes, Rijsenbry, Truijens and Goedvold (2000:36), any further attempt to enhance alignment as a practical tool should:

- start from an unequivocal definition of alignment;
- consider alignment as a dynamic process;
- consider alignment at different levels, ranging from strategy formulation to implementation;
- strive to achieve measurability;
- take the relevant business or organisation and its contexts into account;
- pay attention to the human factors; and
- be well-balanced, taking the practical managerial limitations into account.

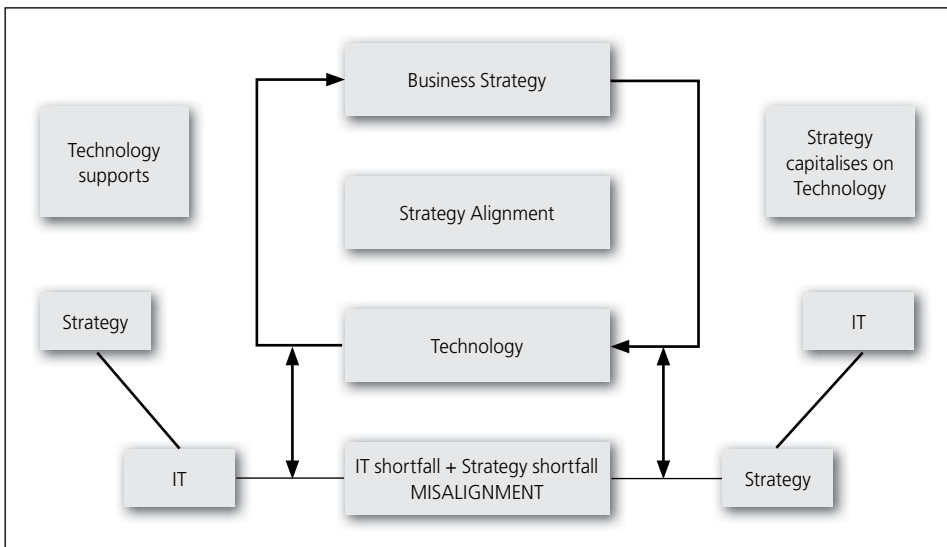
However, as organisations show renewed interest in strategic planning, they endeavour to establish *stretch* goals. Gunn (1997:3) contends that a strategy does not exist by itself, but always shares resources with other strategies, combined in harmony with the balance of an (*overarching*) organisational strategy. Alignment, in planning thus constitutes strategic and operational alignment.

## DIMENSIONS OF STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Strategic alignment is one of the most important issues facing organisations. However, limited research has been conducted that examines how alignment unfolds over time, why alignment problems emerge, and what managers do to solve these problems. As a result, the understanding of the managerial actions that influence the alignment process remains limited (Fiegener & Coakely 2002:16). Furthermore, no precise definition of strategic alignment has gained acceptance in research literature. Many authors provide a general impression of the term. The common thread in descriptions of the term is that current and future strategic decisions in the lower organisational domain take into account those made in the higher business domain and *vice versa*. Empirical studies of the administrative mechanisms believed to facilitate strategic alignment have, collectively, examined a few mechanisms, and have overlooked the possible interacting effects of multiple alignment mechanisms. Little is known about the managerial cognitions and behaviours that influence and are influenced by alignment, and the comprehensive set of mechanisms through which executive managers attempt to manage the alignment process over time (Fiegener *et al.* 2002:26).

According to Puth (2002:81), the term *strategic alignment* presupposes that there is a strategic line, a clear overall strategic direction, intent and a set of desired outcomes, that organisational units, divisions and eventually every individual can align their actions to. A second implicit assumption of strategic alignment is that everyone is aware of this strategic line and that it is sufficiently *visible* for alignment to take place. Tallon and Kraemer (1999:12) define strategic alignment as the extent to which the information systems strategy supports and is supported by the organisational strategy. This definition serves to focus research efforts on activities central to the implementation of strategies. This perspective facilitates a more dynamic assessment of strategic alignment than if the focus was limited to strategic

**Figure 2: Exploring the dimensions of strategic alignment**



Source: Adapted from Tallon and Kraemer 1999.

objectives, as has been the case with much of the existing literature in this area. Figure 2 illustrates the various dimensions of strategic alignment.

## **DIMENSIONS OF OPERATIONAL ALIGNMENT**

It appears that even in instances where an organisation has a well-defined strategy, success is not guaranteed. While many organisations fail in the execution of strategy, some of them fail because the day-to-day operations do not give effect to the predetermined outcomes of an organisation. In an attempt to bridge the gap between strategy and execution, organisations employ financial measures of performance tracking. However, because of their backward-looking nature (lag strategy), financial measures lack sufficient predictive power to provide early warning of areas at risk and therefore, do not enable more proactive decision-making. According to Pilot Software Inc (2004:3), organisations should maintain operational agility that facilitates ongoing understanding of how well tactics are contributing to objectives, along with the ability to respond quickly to performance issues and environmental changes. Alignment studies have arrived at the following key *foci* of operational alignment that are crucial in understanding the extent to which public policies are implemented at operational level. These focus areas are outlined below.

### **Fiscal alignment**

Budgetary alignment studies investigate trends in public funding especially as this pertains to the allocation and utilisation of funding to address the various service delivery priorities that have been identified. These studies seek to answer questions of whether goals and targets that have been set are realistic in the context of resource availability and timelines (Pilot Software Inc 2004:5). In the context of government planning, fiscal alignment studies would primarily be concerned with what priorities in the Medium Term Strategic Framework have been allocated funds within the Medium Term Expenditure Framework cycle and annual budgets.

### **Institutional alignment**

Alignment is not an event, but an ongoing change management effort. Operational strategies, policies and processes within organisations require periodic adjustment to achieve specific policy outcomes. The time lag between strategy formulation and implementation could have resulted in new environmental constraints, limitations and opportunities that require consideration. According to the American Career Resource Network (2005:14), key questions that institutional alignment studies attempt to respond to include institutional goals and targets that give effect to predetermined priorities.

### **Capability alignment**

Quite often, one of the reasons advanced with regard to the inability of organisations to achieve set goals and targets is understaffing or unavailability of requisite skills to

carry out the tasks. Availability of funds alone is not a sufficient indicator for success of development programmes and projects. Over and above financial resources, there should be adequate human resources and not in numbers alone but also in terms of the right skills, found at the right place, at the right time, and with the right attitude (Pilot Software Inc 2004:7).

## Spatial alignment

To facilitate rational and consistent decision-making in relation to government development and infrastructure investment spending, national spatial guidelines are increasingly being recognised as a critical tool for bringing about co-ordinated government action and alignment. Globally, alignment is increasingly pursued and achieved by making use of spatial planning instruments such as spatial development perspectives, spatial development frameworks, and spatial guidelines for infrastructure investment and social spending. Unlike the simplistic master and blueprint spatial plans of the 1960s and 1970s, these instruments do not predetermine from the centre what should happen where, when and how, as the earlier examples tended to do, but utilise space as a common backdrop against which investment and spending decisions can be considered and made. The purpose of such perspectives is to bring about synergy and complementarities in terms of the spatial effects of government action with a view to maximise the overall social and economic returns on government development spending. These instruments provide for intergovernmental negotiation, deliberation and agreement (The Presidency 2004:5).

It is evident from the preceding exposition that operational alignment is more concerned with the detail of how the goals that have been set are implemented. It is apparent that alignment studies should be concerned with matters of resource allocation, availability of management and technical skills, industry capacity, organisational culture, institutional arrangements for implementation, strategic partnerships, joint selection of intervention sites, and a review of existing policies and practices. A failure to appreciate these variables at a planning stage will render development policies ineffective.

## MECHANISMS TO PROMOTE ALIGNMENT IN PLANNING

Process studies have portrayed the *content* of alignment as a series of intersecting and mutually consistent choices across four domains: organisational strategy, information systems strategy, organisational infrastructure and processes. While this answers the *what is alignment* question, it does not allow consideration of strategic alignment as a continuous process nor does it consider the management practices used in changing an organisation towards alignment (Tallon & Kraemer 1999:4). Venkatraman, Henderson and Oldach (1993:144) state that management practices act as alignment mechanisms that deal with the “management challenge of translating the strategic choices made into administrative practices and operational decision-making.” Essentially, these alignment mechanisms are tools that enable executive managers to oversee and manage the content and process of alignment. The alignment mechanisms are evident in three main channels: context, content and process, which are outlined below (Fiegener & Coakley 2002:18).



## Context linkage

A context is the *given* for an organisation. For alignment purposes, this channel relates to the management systems, programmes and activities that help create a shared understanding of the external environmental factors and how these influence and are influenced by the activities of the organisation. This could include the economic conditions, the industry norms, and how these are likely to change, research products and what is being projected in terms of future demands, international conventions that the country is a signatory to, sector policies, legislation and political change.

## Content linkage

Content linkages are documented statements of intent within an organisation. These may include the long-term development vision of the country, the medium-term sector strategies, strategic plans, annual performance plans, operational plans, budget or financial plans, and so forth. These documents should be cross-referenced to track the *golden thread* from higher- to lower-level plans and *vice versa*. This also includes assessing how the performance targets of components are realised with the support of other components, horizontally. Daily decisions and management choices are also subject to scrutiny in this dimension.

## Process linkage

Process linkages relate to strategies employed to promote a discourse on potential misalignment. This would include participating in existing structures and, in certain instances, the creation of new structures that provide a platform for discussion of priorities, strategies, funding streams, implementation and monitoring mechanisms. The latter includes the need to foster strategic partnerships with other organisations that can contribute to the organisational mandate. Alignment is not directly achieved through these arrangements. However, the organisation is exposed to the norms, standards, strategies, priorities and constraints of the other organisations, which forms a basis from which it will proceed in making realistic assumptions during its planning processes. Some trade-offs can be made through these engagements.

Proceeding from this understanding, the next section briefly outlines the Provincial Growth and Development 2004-2014 that provincial government departments were expected to align their strategic and annual performance plans with.

## **PROVINCIAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2004–2014**

The Provincial Government of the Eastern Cape and its social partners, during 2003, formulated a Provincial Growth and Development Plan (PGDP) in line with the national policy framework for socio-economic planning at the provincial sphere of government. The PGDP sets out a provincial vision, targets and programmes aimed at economic growth, employment creation, poverty eradication and income redistribution for the ten year period

2004-2014. This plan seeks to achieve rapid improvement in the quality of life of the poorest people of the Province.

In order to meet the set targets, the *Framework for Growth and Development: 2004-2014* outlines objectives and key outcomes that should be achieved over the ten year period, in six identified strategic focus areas, namely: poverty eradication; agrarian transformation; diversification of manufacturing and tourism; infrastructure development; human resource development; and public sector transformation. Key to the realisation of agreed-upon objectives and outcomes in each of these strategic focus areas is the design of programmes that contain clear and sequenced targets and indicators, timeframes, budgets, institutional mechanisms and linkages for delivery and monitoring. These programmes will become the basis for re-orienting and aligning the plans and budgets of municipalities, provincial and national departments, and state-owned enterprises operating in the Province to the strategic thrusts of the PGDP. In addition, these programmes will become the point of alignment with the municipal Integrated Development Plans (Mbanga 2011:1).

## **NATIONAL TREASURY GUIDELINES**

In November 2001, the National Treasury released a discussion document entitled *Proposed Generic Framework and Format for Strategic Plans for provincial Departments*. Since then the document has been revised with a view to streamlining the format and content of the strategic and performance plans, and ensuring that such plans are indeed strategic in nature. The most significant innovations in the strategic planning framework and template of 2001 have been:-

- the linking of the strategic planning process to the electoral cycle, which has a number of implications for the structure and content of strategic and annual performance plans;
- to split the strategic plan that was submitted by departments to Treasuries into two documents, the strategic plan and annual performance plan;
- the encouragement by National Treasury to sectors, that they co-operate with provinces and develop a minimum set of measurable objectives and performance measures (for programmes and sub-programmes) that all provincial departments will use;
- the encouragement of provincial departments to maintain a top down and bottom-up process of strategic planning, where the top-down approach relates to the national (MTSF and NSDP), provincial (PGDS and PSDP) and sectoral priorities consideration in the determination of departmental strategic goals and strategic objectives and bottom-up approach considers links with municipality Integrated Development Plans that must be maintained at all times;
- releasing a planning guideline that integrates planning, budgeting, reporting and performance management; and
- introduction of a reporting requirement for the end-term of government, which would coincide with the end of the electoral cycle, and ensure some greater measure of continuity and public accountability on government work and resources (National Treasury 2004:18).





However, since the National Treasury Guidelines were released there has been a new development in the policy and planning environment in South Africa. At the time of concluding the study two Green Papers had been compiled to guide the new strategic planning thinking in South Africa. These policy guidelines are briefly discussed in the next section.

## **GREEN PAPER ON NATIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING, 2009**

In 2009, a *Green Paper on National Strategic Planning* was released by The Presidency which outlined the position of national government on strategic planning to ensure effective coordination at the centre of government. This has arisen out of a realisation that a single term of government is too short a time to complete the project of building a prosperous, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society, with clear programmes that reduce poverty and roll-back the inequalities of the *apartheid* era. In this respect, it is noted that the lack of a coherent long-term plan has:

- weakened the ability of government to provide clear and consistent policies;
- limited the capacity of government to mobilise key actors in the society in pursuit of the country's development objectives;
- hampered efforts to prioritise resource allocation and to drive the implementation of government's objectives and priorities; and
- led to coordination weaknesses culminating in policy inconsistencies and poor service delivery outcomes (The Presidency 2009:2).

In response to this, the Green Paper on National Strategic Planning aims to:

- set out the rationale for planning, drawing on international experience and country history;
- describe the institutions required in the planning processes and define their respective roles. In particular, it establishes a National Planning Commission, composed of external experts, intellectual and leaders, which will develop a National Strategic Plan for South Africa (Vision 2025) in consultation with government and in partnership with the broader society;
- define the outputs of the planning process; and
- give an indication of what content issues the national strategic plan is likely to deal with (The Presidency 2009:7).

## **GREEN PAPER ON MANAGING GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE, 2009**

The *Green Paper on Managing Government Performance*, 2009 is a discussion document describing government's new approach to performance management, monitoring and evaluation, in support of outcomes and outputs emanating from the National Strategic Planning process. Essential to the new approach is focusing on the set of priorities that have

been agreed upon and consolidated into the *Medium Term Strategic Framework*, which in turn was derived from the manifesto of the ruling party.

The Green Paper advocates an outcomes-based approach in managing government performance and notes that

*managing for outcomes requires attention to the full delivery chain. The chain starts with the **outcome** to be achieved, then defines the **output** measures that must be used to check if delivery is on track. The chain then describes the key **activities** that need to be successfully carried out to achieve the outputs, and concluded by listing the crucial **inputs**.*

As an enhancement of the existing Government-Wide Monitoring and Evaluation System, the defined sector outcomes and outputs will be:

- concluded and detailed in *Individual Performance Agreements* for both political heads and administrative staff in sector departments, in consultation with their respective supervisors;
- considered and debated in *Sector Delivery Forums* constituted by institutions and agencies that have an impact on implementation and delivery; and
- informing the content of *Sector Delivery Agreements* that will be negotiated with various institutions and agencies, describing roles and responsibilities against timelines and budgets.

An interventionist and innovation-oriented *Delivery Unit* will be established within the Office of the Presidency, and will support sectors in unblocking issues on selected priority or high-impact programmes (The Presidency 2009:6).

The need for alignment in intergovernmental planning in order to realise the defined national and provincial outcomes warrants that detailed attention be devoted to the concept of alignment. The recognition of the need to achieve strategic alignment is insufficient to ensure that this is actually realised. For alignment to be realised there should be a deeper appreciation of what actions governmental institutions should undertake and what mechanisms should be in place for this purpose. The next section outlines a methodological approach that was followed to evaluate the nature and extent of alignment between the PGDP and the strategic and performance plans of selected Eastern Cape provincial government departments.

## RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The nature of the data to be collected and the problem studied determines the research methodology to be followed (Mouton 2001:161).

### Research design and approach

This study followed a methodological approach that comprises, *firstly*, a content analysis of departmental plans and documents, and, *secondly*, the collection of primary data through focus group discussions. Content analysis studies focus on analysing the content of texts or



documents such as letters, speeches, organisational plans, and annual reports. Content refers to words, meanings, pictures, symbols, themes or any message that can be communicated (Mouton 2001:165).

## Sampling and data collection methods

In this study, non-probability purposive sampling was utilised. According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005:204), in utilising purposive samples, qualitative researchers usually select individuals with whom to conduct unstructured interviews and focus group discussions. Ten out of twelve provincial government departments in the Eastern Cape were selected to participate in this study. The selection of provincial government departments was done in a manner that ensured a representative sample from each of the following Provincial Government Administrative Clusters, namely:

- **Economic Growth and Infrastructure Cluster:** Department of Public Works, Department of Agriculture and Rural Development, and Department of Economic Development and Environmental Affairs.
- **Social Needs Cluster:** Department of Human Settlements, Department of Social Development, and Department of Education.
- **Justice Crime Prevention and Security Cluster:** Department of Safety and Liaison.
- **Governance and Administration Cluster:** Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs, Office of the Premier, and Provincial Treasury.

In view of the fact that a non-probability purposive sampling technique was used in this study, it was necessary to predict the key components or business units that would hold institutional memory regarding the problem that was being investigated by the study. In this regard, key informants were drawn from the following components within the provincial government departments: Strategic Planning, Economic Planning, Spatial Planning, Infrastructure Planning, Integrated Development Planning, Budget Planning and Control, Policy Research, Fiscal Policy, Research and Demography, Monitoring and Evaluation, Municipal Support, Municipal Finance, Land Administration, Expanded Public Works Programmes, Special Programmes, Premier's Priority Programme, PGDP Flagship Programme Unit, and regional and district offices. One focus group was organised for each selected provincial government department. Each focus group comprised between ten and twenty participants. The Eastern Cape Socio Economic and Consultative Council (ECSECC) also formed part of the study sample due to the role it played in the formulation and ongoing assessment of the PGDP.

## Data analysis methods

Wessels (1999:406) contends that the application of the various methods and techniques of data collection leads to different types of data-sets with different techniques of interpretation. This viewpoint is supported by Bradley (1997:31) when he cautions that attempts to reduce into numbers data on phenomena that have been collected through qualitative techniques is disastrous to the selected study approach. It is against this background that data collected through focus group discussions was organised under specific themes that

mirror the suggested Strategic Planning Alignment Model (SPAM) that emerged from the study. Qualitative data was transcribed into relevant thematic areas. Each thematic area had a set of guiding questions for the focus groups. Data collected during the desktop review of departmental strategic and performance plans and policy speeches was analysed qualitatively. For each selected provincial government department, data was captured and presented in a pre-designed Planning Alignment Evaluation Matrix, following identified themes of content, context and process linkages. Under each Planning Alignment Evaluation Matrix, data collected through focus group discussions was presented and analysed in accordance with the themes used to guide the discussions including institutional, fiscal, capability and spatial alignment dimensions. The next section outlines the key findings across all selected provincial government departments.

## **DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS**

While there are positive findings in respect of how the selected provincial government departments have creatively moved towards incorporating the PGDP targets in their planning and implementation processes, the following section highlights issues that were common across departments, with the emphasis on areas for improvement. These study findings are discussed below in terms of recurring themes that emerged.

### **Theme 1 – Design of the PGDP**

One of the findings of the study was that provincial government departments had, during their planning processes, struggled with translating the PGDP priorities and targets into operational plans. The PGDP was *firstly* designed as a provincial plan, which, while not mandatory in terms of the law, was regarded as a strategic framework that guides socio-economic planning in the Province. Therefore, the PGDP was found to be straddling between being a strategic framework and an implementation plan. *Secondly*, the PGDP covered almost everything that provincial government departments were doing at the time of its inception. As such, the PGDP did not provide adequate strategic direction because it failed to select the critical few priorities that the Province would channel resources to in its ten-year horizon to guide economic growth and social development. *Thirdly*, the targets set in the PGDP were unrealistic in the context of capability and resources at the disposal of the Province. Targets that were set in the PGDP did not consider the capacity of and funding available within provincial government departments that were expected to develop and implement programmes aimed at achieving these targets.

### **Theme 2 – Competing development priorities**

The study revealed that attempts by provincial departments to align their plans with the PGDP were met with a myriad of priorities that were competing for the limited resources at their disposal. While the PGDP was giving direction to provincial departments on key priorities for each of its six strategic objectives, sector priorities emerged in the national sphere, while municipalities also pointed to other priorities that required the attention of



provincial departments. Since there was no *clearing house* in the provincial sphere for all these priorities, it was left to the provincial government departments to determine for themselves, why certain programmes needed to be prioritised over others. Those priority programmes would be presented within the administrative clusters for inclusion in what is considered as the *Provincial Integrated Programme of Action*.

### **Theme 3 – Resourcing of PGDP programmes and priorities**

For each of the six strategic goals of the PGDP, flagship programmes with clear milestones and targets were endorsed by the Executive Council for the Medium Term Expenditure Framework Period 2004-2007. Lessons learnt from the implementation of these programmes would inform the comprehensive implementation of the PGDP. The study revealed that a lack of adequate funding and technical resources acted against the progress that could have been made on various PGDP targets. While the matter of competing priorities was cited as a hindrance for the realisation of PGDP targets, it must be emphasised that activities emanating from the PGDP did not match available resources within provincial government departments. Of note is that the resources included capacity to implement programmes. In this context, capacity relates to skills within provincial and local government spheres, including inadequate competent service providers within the provincial economy to absorb the various grants flowing from national government.

### **Theme 4 – Spatial targeting of development interventions**

The study pointed to an apparent challenge due to a lack of spatial decisions to drive economic growth and social development within the Province. While the PGDP noted, during its inception, the critical importance of geo-spatial referencing of development interventions by all actors in a geographic area, little progress had been made in this regard. In fact, the choice of spaces was entirely left to provincial government departments and municipalities in the absence of provincial and municipal Spatial Development Frameworks. This remained the case even after completion of a provincial study by the Department of Social Development, supported by the Human Sciences Research Council, which scientifically confirmed the eleven poorest municipalities in the Province that required urgent development interventions.

### **Theme 5 – Institutionalisation of planning for development management**

One positive development of note is that all the provincial government departments that participated in the study had managers appointed for the purposes of strategic planning facilitation. Organograms of departments provided for some planning units. However, the organisational structures indicated that these planning units varied in extent of establishment and levels at which they were pitched. It must be mentioned, though, that the strategic planning functions were not necessarily prioritised because the province had a PGDP that was in place. The study revealed that planning units were created because government departments were expected in the *Public Finance Management Act, 1999*, the *Public Service*

Act, 1994, and their concomitant regulations to maintain a set of mandatory plans that are used by Parliament and provincial legislatures to pass budgets for departments and serve as a basis for future parliamentary oversight over departmental work.

## Theme 6 – The role of the Coordinating Centre

The alignment evaluation findings across the selected ten provincial government departments lacked strategic leadership and poor co-ordination of the PGDP implementation in the Province. The study revealed that collaboration between the three coordinating departments, Office of the Premier, Provincial Treasury and Department of Local Government and Traditional Affairs (including ECSECC), was lacking. It transpired during engagements with these coordinating departments that there was no structured interaction between them.

The following section provides a summary of key recommendations aimed at addressing these gaps.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations that emanate from the study are outlined below.

### Recommendation 1 – Establishment of a Provincial Planning Commission

The existing gap with regard to macro-planning and strategy development in the Province warrants the establishment of an overarching entity, capacitated with adequate authority and skills to direct policy implementation across sectors and provincial government departments. This entity should serve as a *clearing house* of development priorities, including facilitating spatial choices on the basis of predetermined spatial development priorities.

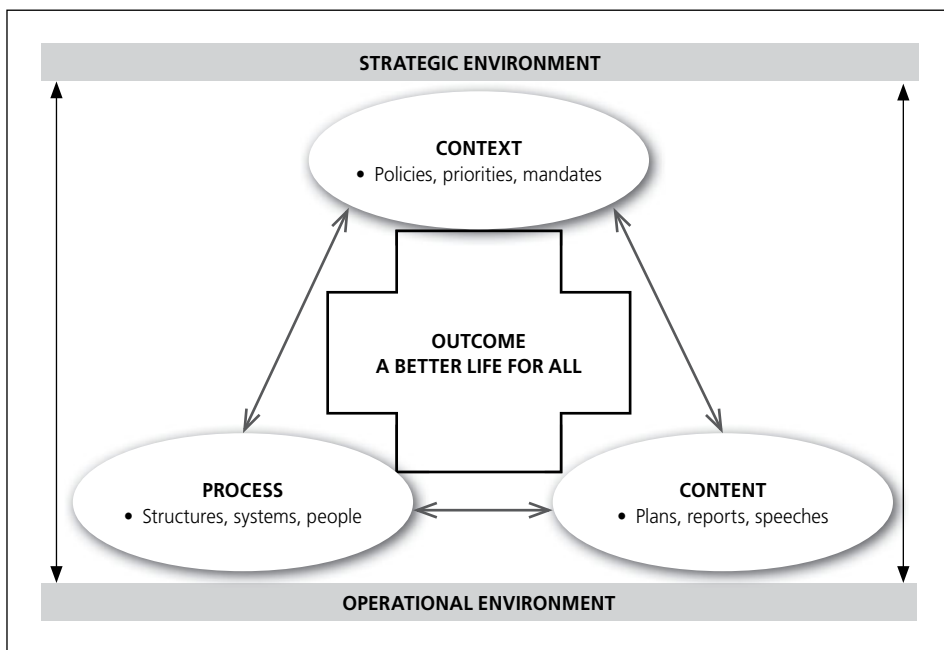
### Recommendation 2 – The Strategic Planning Alignment Model

For a Central Planning Unit to meaningfully fulfil its role, it would need a tool or a comprehensive conceptual framework to drive strategic alignment from both a horizontal and vertical perspective. This section unpacks the proposed tool to drive strategic planning alignment in the South African Public Service. The analysis of various strategic management and public policy theories in relation to the key findings of this study has yielded a conceptual model which practitioners and policy-makers should consider in the management of processes aimed at ensuring effective implementation of government policies. This model has been suggested as a Strategic Planning Alignment Model for the public sector, and is presented in Figure 3.

At the centre of the Model is a typical example of an outcome that governmental institutions would seek to achieve. At the top of the outcome' is an eclipse in which a set of external environmental factors that inform and influence plans and programmes of an organisation are located. On the bottom left is a circle that provides for the systems and processes that an organisation will create to realise the outcome, informed by policies



**Figure 3: Strategic Planning Alignment Model for the Public Sector**



Source: Mbangwa 2011.

and mandates that sit in the *context circle*. On the bottom right is a circle that provides for organisational plans and policies that are aimed at outlining that which an institution will do to realise the set outcome, at the centre. The three focus areas of context, content and process are located within a strategic and operational environments that influence each other. It is important to note that the context, content and process channels constantly influence each other. Public managers should always be kept abreast of developments in any of the channels to ensure the achievement of set outcomes. Equally important to note is that decisions taken in the content channel may require adjustments in the process channel, and *vice versa*.

### **Recommendation 3 – Creation of a Policy and Planning Development Institute**

A Policy and Development Planning Institute or Academy should be established by one of the higher education institutions located in the Province. This Institute would be a hub of relevant high-level policy analysis and development planning skills that can be channelled to various areas of the public sector in the Province.

### **Recommendation 4 – Rationalisation of planning functions within provincial departments**

The study revealed problems of intra-departmental misalignment arising from fragmented planning functions within departments. It was found that within certain departments, there

were different centres of planning which were expected to voluntarily collaborate with each other. Provincial government departments, supported by the Office of the Premier, should re-organise their functions, rationalise structures and abolish obsolete components.

## **Recommendation 5 – Updating the Provincial Growth and Development Plan**

There is a need to review the Provincial Growth and Development Plan. The process of review will seek to formulate a long-term provincial development vision and outcomes that are aligned with the national development vision that is being pioneered by the Office of the Presidency.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study enhanced the effectiveness of public policy implementation within the various spheres of government by providing mechanisms for guiding and assessing whether strategic priorities contained in government policies are translated into effective administrative actions. Planning processes within provincial government departments are expected to be synchronised with nationally determined outputs and outcomes. However, at the time of completing the study, it was unclear what mechanisms were in place to assist provincial government departments in aligning their plans and strategies with the national development vision. However, alignment in public sector strategic planning is not a problem that is peculiar to the Eastern Cape or South Africa since it is a challenge confronting many developing nations worldwide. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. In fact, alignment by its nature is a recurring issue that has to be addressed on a continuous basis to ensure that operations and strategies are harmonised.

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