

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS OF GCIS (2012-2017)

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the GCIS strategic planning process of 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan that failed the requirements of the National Treasury Frameworks (NTF). This is in accordance with the 2012/13 AGSA report (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2013). Although the strategic plan covers the period of five years, the financial years discussed are from 2012/13-2015/16 because the 2016/17 has not been implemented.

A qualitative research approach was followed in identifying challenges in the GCIS strategic planning process; the purpose of the study is to offer recommendations to the GCIS management on improvement of the planning process.

The South African public sector introduced an outcome-based planning approach in 2009, and developed the long-term plan which is the *National Development Plan: Vision 2030* (NDP). In addition, NTF were drawn up and implemented to support the outcome-based approach. This approach to planning shifted the focus of government from outputs to outcomes and to the impact of service delivery on the lives of South Africans. The GCIS was mandated to ensure that there was a constant flow of information between the government and its citizens.

The GCIS is responsible for providing strategic leadership in government communications within national, provincial and local government. In order to do this, it embarks on two planning processes, one to develop the National Communication Strategy and the other to develop the strategic plans of the GCIS. The NCS, in particular, guides communication within the government-wide communication system (GWCS).

This study was conducted to answer the primary research question:

(1) To what extent does the GCIS meet its strategic planning process?

The literature review focuses on strategic planning processes in general and within the public sector in particular. The strategic planning process of the South African public sector gives context to the GCIS strategic planning process.

A qualitative research design is followed, with in-depth interviews with the GCIS management, government communicators, members of the oversight bodies and a journalist. The findings from the research illustrate that the GCIS strategic planning process is not effective and does not meet the requirements of the NTF. It is not institutionalised as a management tool to improve the performance of the organisation.

The challenges with the GCIS strategic planning process were identified as follows:

- (1) inadequate application of research to inform the strategic planning process, leading to poor formulation of strategies;
- (2) failure to set appropriate performance indicators and targets for the organisation as well as within the GWCS;
- (3) misalignment between the strategic plan and the National Communication Strategy (NCS), causing poor implementation of both documents;
- (4) prolonged acting leadership within the GCIS, which has caused instability in the organisation and unclear strategic direction; and
- (5) the need to identify planning approaches that are suited to addressing the dynamic and fluid communications environment.

The study concludes with recommendations for the improvement of the GCIS strategic planning process to produce a credible strategic plan to meet the NTF requirements. The implementation of such a plan could enhance the efficient functioning of a GWCS.

DECLARATION

I declare that this report is my own except where authors have been acknowledged. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Public and Development Management to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management of the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.

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ACRONYMS

ADG	Acting Director General
AGSA	Auditor General South Africa
APP	Annual Performance Plan
CP&D	Content Processing and Dissemination
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSA	Communications Service Agency
DDG	Deputy Director General
DG	Director General
DGCF	District Government Communicator's Forum
DM	Deputy Minister
DPME	Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
DPSA	Department of Public Service and Administration
DoC	Department of Communications
EA	Executive Authority
Exco	Executive Committee
GCF	Government Communicators' Forum
GCIS	Government Communication and Information System
GWCS	Government-Wide Communication System
FOSAD	Forum of South African Director Generals
HoC	Heads of Communications
HR	Human Resource
ICSM	Intergovernmental Coordination and Stakeholder Management
IMC	Inter-Ministerial Committee
Manco	Management Committee
MDDA	Media Diversity Development Agency
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
MTSF	Medium-Term Strategic Framework
NCS	National Communication Strategy
NDP	National Development Plan
NPC	National Planning Commission
NT	National Treasury
NTF	National Treasury Framework
PGCF	Provincial Government Communicator's Forum
PLL	Provincial and Local Liaison
PFMA	Public Finance Management Act
PoA	Programme of Action
SoNA	State of the Nation Address
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic and Time-bound
SP	Strategic Planning
SPPM	Strategic Planning and Programme Management
SPPMRF	Strategic Planning, Performance Monitoring and Reporting Framework
TSC	Thusong Service Centres

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Communication cluster: is defined by the Department of Government Communication and Information Systems, (2014) “as a collection of departments whose work is complementary and thus need to work and plan together. Although not exactly the same, these clusters mirror the Forum of South African Director (FOSAD) clusters and Cabinet committees. Each cluster has a chairperson from the department whose Director General is the chairperson of the FOSAD cluster, for ease of coordination and information flow”

Executive authority: is the political principals of a national department (minister and deputy minister) (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014)

Government communications: “the term embraces both media handling and direct communication with the public, hence the role and scope of government communications is defined to mean a citizen–focused continuous dialogue” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014)

Government communicators: “are public servants, whose operational code includes impartiality and professionalism. Section 36(c) of the Public Service Act of 1994 states that public servants are prohibited from acting in a manner that is intended to promote or prejudice any political party” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014)

National Treasury Frameworks (NTF): These are legislative frameworks developed by the National Treasury to set the requirements for public sector strategic planning in South Africa. They itemise the contents of the strategic plan and the period to be covered by the strategic plans

Political principal: is defined as “an individual who holds a position of political oversight or leadership” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014)

Scenario planning: According to Schoemaker, (1995). “It is a disciplined method for imagining possible future that companies have applied to great range of issues. It attempts to capture the richness and range of possibilities and stimulating decision-makers to consider changes they would otherwise ignore”

Strategy: “It is the direction and scope of an organisation over the long term, which achieves advantage for the organisation through its configuration of resources, within a changing environment, to meet the needs of markets and to fulfil stakeholder expectations” (Johnson & Scholes, 1999)

Strategic plan: It is described by Grensing-Pophal (2011) as the formal documentation of a set of related actions taken by a business, a department or even an individual, to achieve specific goals

Strategic planning: defined by Bryson (2011) as a deliberative, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organization (or other entity) is, what it does, and why it does it

Strategic thinking: defined as thinking in an innovative, creative and right-brained process that encourages an open exchange of ideas and solutions to meet the dynamic, often unpredictable challenges faced in today’s economy (Haycock, Cheadle, & Bluestone, 2012).

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

A democratic government enters into a social contract with its citizens through its electoral mandate. At the beginning of an electoral term, the party that is voted into power wins the elections based on their election manifesto. According to Young (2007), “In a representative democracy, where people do not rule directly, but through elected members of parliament, communication is particularly important as representatives need to know their citizen’s needs and preferences to represent their interests.”

To manage the social contract effectively, a government needs to communicate with its citizens, keeping them informed about the policies, programmes and activities that are implemented. In turn, informed citizens are empowered to hold the government accountable, especially when it fails to deliver on its mandate.

The GCIS is a government department mandated by the Constitution to co-ordinate effective communication between the South African government and the citizens of the country. “Government communications should provide citizens with information about how they can take part in local, provincial and national discourse so that they influence the direction in which the country is going” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). There are three spheres of government in South Africa: national, provincial and local; and all of them must communicate with the citizens within their respective sphere. They form part of Government-Wide Communication System (GWCS). The process of providing information to citizens must be well planned, co-ordinated and funded. To achieve this, there are planning processes followed by the GCIS to ensure effective ways of providing citizens with timely, accurate and reliable information.

There are two distinct planning processes within the GCIS. One is followed to develop the strategic plan, while the other develops the National Communication Strategy (NCS). The NCS guides communication activities across the three spheres of government. The planning process involves a consultation with government communicators to ensure the coherence of government messages. The strategic plan is the corporate strategy of the GCIS, and is aimed at operationalising the NCS. It also includes other interventions, identified by the department to implement its mandate. The strategic plan is submitted to the National Treasury and its budget is allocated through the Medium-term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) process. It is important for the two processes to be integrated, for better co-ordination of government communications.

This study focused on the strategic planning process that was followed to develop the 2012/13 to 2016/17 Strategic Plan. The strategic planning process that was examined covered the 2012/13 to 2015/16 financial years: this was because the plan for the 2016/17 financial year was not implemented. The findings of the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) for 2012/2013 stated that the approved 2012/13 to 2016/17 Strategic Plan failed to meet the requirements of the National Treasury Frameworks (NTF). The report asserted that important targets regarding Programme 2 and Programme 3 had been misstated to a significant degree. This was due to a lack of standard operating procedures for accurate recording of actual achievements, as well the lack of an adequate performance management system to record and monitor the completeness of source documentation in support of actual achievements. The accuracy and completeness of the targets for key performance indicators could therefore not be confirmed (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2013). When the GCIS strategic plan is not credible and fails to meet the NTF requirements, it has a negative impact on the Government-Wide Communication System (GWCS).

In 2009, the public administration of South Africa introduced the outcomes approach to improve government performance towards service delivery. Two ministries were established, namely, the Ministry of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation, currently known as the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) and the National Planning Commission (NPC). The NPC was mandated to develop a long-term plan for the country, which is the *National Development Plan (NDP): Vision 2030*. The main purpose of the NDP is to address the challenges of inequality, unemployment and poverty.

The planning approach adopted by government shifted from outputs to outcomes, and focused on the impact of service delivery, which was intended to eventually improve the lives of the service beneficiaries – that is, the public in general. It involved an agreement regarding the specific service delivery outcomes that would have an impact. To support this new approach, the government released a number of NTFs to set out the requirements for public sector strategic planning. These legislative frameworks delineated on the government's strategic planning cycle, and included the contents of the strategic plan and the period to be covered by the departmental strategic plans. The purpose was to standardise strategic plans within the public sector. The need to do this was expressed as follows:

If we are to succeed, we need to plan and do things differently. We need to understand the needs of the people we serve and what the current situations is with which they are faced with. We need to learn from our past experiences, asking what we have been doing that has not delivered the desired outcomes (The Presidency, 2010).

The DPME co-ordinates the outcomes approach; its function is to ensure that government departments support the targets set in the NDP and the Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), and that government institutions provide services that have a positive impact on the lives of

citizens. The National Treasury, *Framework for Strategic Plans (SP) and Annual Performance Plans (APP)* required the departments to develop five-year strategic plans that detailed how they would support the government outcomes by developing targets and indicators for service delivery. The GCIS as a government department adopted the government outcomes approach and developed the five-year strategic plan based on the NTF requirements. The GCIS planning activities assisted in formulating strategies to provide citizens with access to information in the cost-effective manner.

South African citizens require information about how to access government services. Access to this kind of information can change and improve the livelihoods of citizens for the better. There has to be constant and targeted communication about government programmes, the opportunities available to citizens, and how they can access them. Young (2007) stresses the importance of effective communication between a government and its electorate, arguing that:

... (C)ommunication is inseparable from how governments operate. It is a dimension of every action or decision a government takes, from the way in which policies are made, prompted and enacted, to how government is organised and the relationship it builds with the citizens, the media and other groups such as business and community organisations Young (2007)

An effective strategic planning process for the GCIS as intended to ensure that continuous communication programmes delivered by means of GWCS, kept the public informed. The aim was to maintain alignment between the strategic plan and the NCS, the NCS was allocated the budget.

1.1 BACKGROUND

The GCIS was established in 1998 on the recommendation of the Task Group on Government Communication. It was formally established in terms of Section 239 of the Constitution, and as a strategic unit in the Presidency in terms of the Public Services Act, 1994 (Act 103 of 1994). The co-ordination of government communications activities is therefore central to the work of the GCIS, which is responsible to maintain open channels of communication between the government and the public:

The purpose of the task group was to investigate the functioning of the then government communications system at all spheres of government as well as internationally and propose structures for the effective government communication system better aligned with the principles of a healthy democracy. (Task Group on Government Communications, 1996).

The task group on communications was appointed to review the old system of government communications and to make recommendations on the new government communications system. The GCIS plays a pivotal role in co-ordinating the GWCS and ensuring that there is active communication between the government and its citizens.

To meet the objectives of the government communication system, structures and processes have been created to achieve co-ordination of activity and coherence of content within an overarching strategic framework. Furthermore, all these structures receive communication guidance from the GCIS, informed by the NCS approved by Cabinet and further informed by the government Programme of Action (PoA) and fed into subsidiary communication strategies of clusters, departments, provinces and local government (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014).

The GCIS provides strategic leadership for all the spheres of government to ensure that there is coherence in the delivery of government messages. The strategic plan of the GCIS must operationalise the NCS by providing the necessary resources to ensure effective implementation of communication programmes. There has to be an alignment between the Strategic Plan and the NCS, to achieve better co-ordination of the GWCS. A strategic plan that is unclear is likely to create complications in the co-ordination of the GWCS and fail to meet the information needs of the public.

The five-year strategic plan developed for the financial years 2012/13 to 2016/17 was tabled in Parliament on 12 March 2012. The time period for the implementation of the strategic plan was based on the government planning cycle, which was aligned to the five-year electoral cycle. However, the strategic planning process that was examined for the purposes of this research study covered the financial years 2012/13 to 2015/16, because the final year has not been implemented.

According to McBain and Smith (2010) "Strategic planning takes a big picture approach that blends futuristic thinking, objective analysis, and subjective evaluation of values, goals, and priorities to chart a future direction and courses of action to ensure an organisation's vitality, effectiveness and ability to add public value". The strategic planning process allows the organisation to assess how it is doing, so that it can plan for the future.

The strategic plan is a guiding document that indicates what needs to be achieved within a specific time period. It details the strategic goals, objectives and performance indicators, which must be specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound. The strategic plan is the end-product of the strategic planning processes undertaken within the organisation. These processes involve a series of activities to produce the plan that will be implemented within a specified period. Therefore, processes undertaken in

producing the strategic plan determine the quality of the plan itself. The GCIS has two planning processes: one is to develop the strategic plan of the department; this is regulated by the DPME and the National Treasury. The other is to develop the NCS, which guides the communication activities within the GWCS.

1.1.1 History of GCIS

The mandate of the GCIS is to ensure the democratic strength, success and security of the country through rapid, responsive and continuous communication of government's achievements in meeting the mandate to rule given by the citizens of South Africa. The strategic intent speaks of necessity and therefore of the broad agenda of the manifesto of the ruling party. Therefore, the GCIS is responsible for providing strategic leadership and coordinating a government communications that ensures that the public is informed, and have access to government programmes and policies that benefit them (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

According to the Department of Government Communication and Information System (2014), some of the GCIS functions are as follows:

- Developing and monitoring of communication strategies and plans;
- Providing communication services to client departments;
- Developing and implementing the NCS based on the government's Programme of Action (PoA) and the State of the Nation Address (SoNA);
- Ensuring coherence of content by providing communication products for all government transversal campaigns, working with the relevant departments or clusters; and
- Advising Cabinet and other government institutions on communication matters and taking issues up with departments, clusters and communicators.

The Task Group on Government Communications (1996), also known as the Comtask 2000 Report, identified some of the challenges relating to government communications:

- **The first constraint was the difference in culture between the old administration and the new one.** ministers had little direct involvement in the broad communication (beyond media liaison) of their departments, yet their political role required them to take responsibility for explaining, motivating and defending government policy;
- **Lack of communication and information policy:** there was no clear policy in relation to government communications and information in South Africa;
- **Communications and the role of government in relation to budget and resources:** the public budget was under severe pressure, with many demands placed upon it. The development of a more effective GWCS needed to be financed, at least in part, from savings and reduction of waste and duplication;
- **Co-ordination within government,** which lacks centralised co-ordination in messaging and adequate planning of information campaigns. Communication has been regarded as a low priority, as reflected in its budgets and the status of communications.

In 2008, ten years after the establishment of the GCIS, the department commissioned research to review the GWCS and assess, in particular, the degree to which the recommendations of the Comtask 2000 had been implemented. The research report highlighted a number of successes, some of which were as follows:

- The GCIS had established a range of co-ordinating structures and forums, such as the Government Communicators' Forum (GCF), communications clusters, the Provincial Government Communicators'

Forum (PGCF), the District Government Communicators' Forum (DGCF), and the Forum for Ministerial Liaison Officers;

- The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the GCIS was the spokesperson for Cabinet and government, and this had resulted in cohesive and coherent communication from Cabinet;
- Ongoing research into the effectiveness and reach of government communications had been conducted, and programmes and projects were developed in response to the gaps that were identified;
- The Media Development and Diversity Agency (MDDA) and the International Marketing Council (IMC), currently known as BrandSA under the authority of the GCIS, had been established; and

The government launched the Imbizo campaign in which members of the Executive (political principals) met with communities to assess their needs and provide feedback on government policies and programmes. The campaigns aimed at ensuring direct and unmediated communications between the political principals and the communities.

However, the following challenges persisted within the GWCS:

- While there is the National Communication Strategy (NCS) was developed each year, GCIS had no systematic evidence of how all the fora had implemented their communication plans and evaluated the impact;
- There was evidence of poor conceptualisation of the policies and programmes of departments by some of the officials responsible for communication. This was more pronounced among those excluded from accessing relevant information from their DGs and removed from decision-making processes within their departments;
- The GCIS continued to struggle in balancing its role as a passive co-ordinator of communication and as a provider of strategic guidance; it

was often undermined by departmental activities that took place without its input or guidance; and

- The communication co-ordinating forums were seen by most government communicators as the GCIS structures and not necessarily as forums to strengthen the government-wide communication system (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2009).

The 2012/13-2016/17 strategic plan was supposed to provide interventions in addressing the challenges identified in the review report. However, the planning processes followed by the GCIS were not effective in producing a 2012/13-2016/17 strategic plan that met the NTF requirements. A less credible strategic plan for the GCIS affected the implementation of the organisational mandate. It has also had a negative impact on the co-ordination of GWCS, which, in turn, affected the effectiveness of communication between government and the public.

1.1.2 GCIS structure

The alignment between the structure of an organisation and the strategy it employs is critical, since it ensures that there is the capacity to implement its strategic imperatives. According to Kavale (2012), once strategy has been directed by the environmental forces, strategists identify a structure to match the strategy. This is referred to as the strategic alignment - aligning of the strategy and the structure to the environment.

Changes in the strategy of the organisation might require that the structure of the organisation be amended to suit the requirements for the new strategy. According to Kavale (2012), structure is the design of the organisation, through which strategy is administered. The same author adds that structural design describes the roles, responsibilities and lines of reporting in the organisation. The GCIS underwent a restructuring process

to align the structure to the 2012/13 to 2016/17 Strategic Plan. It introduced a new branch of the Communication Service Agency. Unfortunately, the National Treasury did not fund the new structure (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

The GCIS has the staff complement of 483 employees out of the total establishment of 500. The budget allocation of the GCIS was 429 million for the 2012/13 financial year, which was also set to decrease by 3% over the medium-term expenditure period due to government budget cuts. (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

The GCIS has three branches, two business units and an administrative unit, with particular functions:

“The Content Processing and Dissemination (CP&D) branch is responsible for providing strategic leadership in government communication to ensure coherence, coordination, consistency, quality, impact and responsiveness of government communications. Its key activities involve conducting various researches, surveys, and analysis on public perceptions of government and its performance to understand the communication environment. It also develops the overarching NSC and creates access to information through various communication products and platforms” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

Currently, the Intergovernmental Co-ordination and Stakeholder Management (ICSM) unit is responsible for the implementation of development communication, through mediated and unmediated communication and sound relations and partnerships. It ensures interdepartmental co-ordination and planning across the three spheres of government through the co-ordination of national, provincial and district

communication forums. The co-ordination process entails the cascading of the NCS to all the forums within the GWCS. At national level, the chief directorates of clusters are responsible for the cascading of the NCS, while at local and provincial level it is the Chief Directorate of Provincial and Local Liaison (PLL).

PLL also co-ordinates a proactive imbizo (public participation programme) of political principals, including the president and deputy president, throughout the year and during imbizo focus weeks (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

The two core branches are critical in delivering on the mandate of the organisation. They relate to different service delivery areas. During the strategic planning process, the branch heads, who are Deputy Director-Generals (DDGs), are required to cascade the strategic direction of the organisation to line managers, who then convey it within their respective branches. They should also ensure that there are adequate resources for implementation of the strategic plan.

The department underwent a restructuring process subsequent to the 2014 national election:

Following the General Elections in May 2014, the President of the Republic of South Africa, announced the establishment of a new Ministry of Communications. He stated that the Ministry would be responsible for an overarching communications policy and strategy, information dissemination and publicity as well as the branding of the country abroad. The Proclamation 43 of 2014 was issued giving effect to the establishment of the new department (Department of Government Communication and Information System 2015).

The GCIS changed the reporting lines from the minister in the Presidency to the minister of department of communications.

Since the establishment of the new Ministry of Communications in 2014, the GCIS has changed the acting Director-General. The DDG for corporate services was appointed as a cabinet spokesperson, removing that function from the acting DG. However, the service delivery branches remained the same and are currently still headed by a DDG. The lines of accountability within the GCIS are shown in the organogram in Figure 1

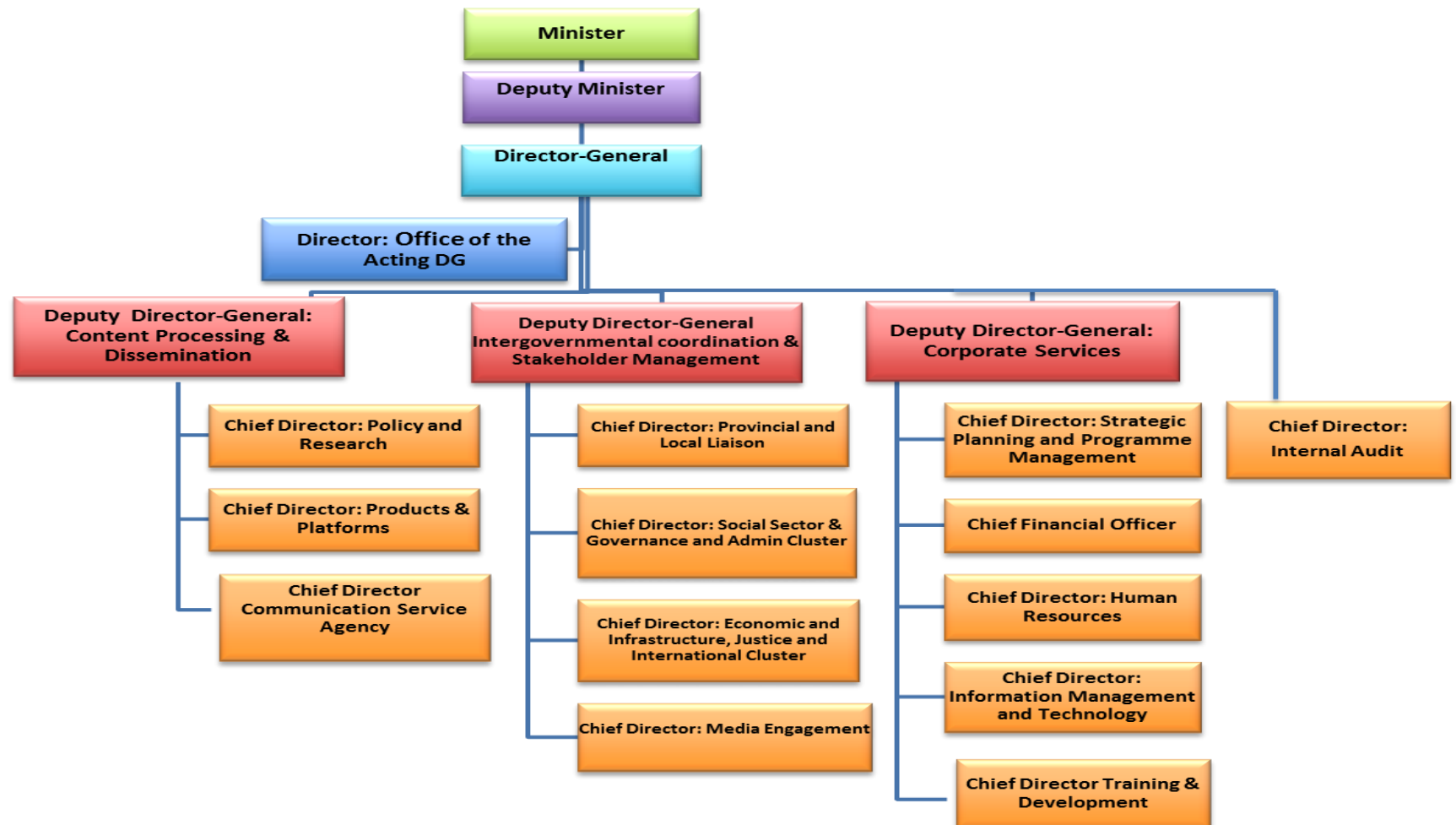


Figure 1: The GCIS organogram. (GCIS, 2014)

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The National Treasury Framework prescribes that the five-year strategic plan of departments reflect the organisational long-term goals, measurable objectives, strategies and resources needed for implementation over the period it covers. The development of a strategic plan, with clear goals, measurable objectives, targets and resources, provides a guide for the organisation to focus on services offered to the public in an efficient and cost-effective manner. It should also ensure that the services provided have a positive impact on the lives South African citizens.

A well-developed strategic plan is a roadmap that details the status of the organisation and its desired future achievements, in accordance with public needs, as well as the goals, strategic objectives and indicators for the planned targets. It is the final product of the strategic planning process. The 2012/13 to 2016/17 Strategic Plan of the GCIS did not meet the requirements of the NTF, as was revealed in the findings of the 2012/13 AGSA report, and the goals and the strategic objectives did not necessarily meet the SMART principles. It is essential to consider the strategic planning process of the organisation when developing the strategic plan, and a strategic plan that is unclear creates a challenge in measuring the performance of the organisation.

This research examined the effectiveness of the strategic planning process of the GCIS, for 2012/13 to 2015/16 financial years. This is because the plan for the 2016/17 financial year has not been implemented. Effective planning by the GCIS can result in efficient dissemination of government information within the GWCS.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is as follows:

- (1) to assess the strategic planning process of the GCIS and to examine the challenges that led to the development of the 2012/13 to 2016 /17 Strategic Plan and resulted in the unmet requirements of the National Treasury;
- (2) to identify the challenges of the GCIS strategic planning process; and
- (3) to provide recommendations to the GCIS management to improve the planning process.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary question:

- To what extent does the GCIS meet its strategic planning process?

Secondary questions:

- What are the challenges towards the development of the quality strategic plan by the GCIS?
- What are the elements of government communications planning?
- What is the role of the GCIS management in the strategic planning process?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This research will benefit the GCIS management, the political principals, the heads of communications (HoCs), the government communicators, the research community and the public, as it will enable these individuals and groups to understand the challenges involved in the strategic planning process of the GCIS. Most importantly, the GCIS management will be able to consider adopting the recommendations to improve the planning and co-ordination of government communications. The study will add to the body of knowledge on the strategic planning process in the public sector in South Africa.

1.6 LIMITATIONS

The followings are the limitations that the researcher encountered:

- Access to the literature on the strategic planning process in the South African public sector, and specifically about the GCIS, was inadequate.
- The key interviewees were not easily accessible. The postponement and cancelling of interviews affected the original timelines planned for the research process.
- The lack of financial resources to fund the study limited the scope in sampling communicators at national level and within the GCIS senior management.
- The researcher is a GCIS employee and this may have led to unconscious biases.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

With regard to the ethics of research projects like this one, Bless and Higson-Smith (1995) comment as follows:

An interviewer may want the information that is private in nature or scientist might need to observe people in situations that are harmful, or at least uncomfortable, to participants. People should not be subjected to research unless they agree to it (Bless and Higson-Smith, 1995).

1.7.1 Confidentiality and privacy

Participants agreed to disclose information for research purposes. They gave the researcher permission to record their interviews.

CHAPTER TWO:

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will focus on the different elements of the strategic planning process and its benefits for the success of an organisation. The existing literature points out the evolution of strategic planning as practised in the private sector. According to (David, 2003) strategic planning originated in the 1950s and become popular between the mid-1960s to mid-1970s amongst corporate America. In addition, the literature review will provide information on the roles of leaders and of stakeholders in the strategic planning process. Moreover, it examines strategic planning in the South African public sector by discussing the legislative frameworks on which the government's strategic planning process is based, and how they are implemented within the GCIS.

2.1 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

There are many definitions of the strategic planning process. However, Bryson (2011), defines strategic planning as “a deliberative, disciplined approach to producing fundamental decisions and actions that shape and guide what an organisation (or other entity) is, what it does and why.” Similarly, Andersen (2000) defines strategic planning as a decision-making process with logically sequenced activities that allow management to analytically determine an appropriate strategic path for the organisation. “It involves a sequence of analytical and evaluative procedures to formulate an intended strategy and means of implementing it” (Johnson & Scholes, 1999).

The strategic planning process involves a series of activities undertaken to plan for the direction the organisation needs to take. These, according to Johnson and Scholes (1999), include “the setting of objectives or goals, as well as the analysis of the environment and the resources of the organisation, so as to match environmental opportunities and threats with the resource-based strengths and weaknesses; the generation of strategic options and their evaluation; and the planning of implementation through resource allocation processes, the structuring of the organisation and the design control – all to be done in a prescribed way”.

Bryson (2011) indicates that deliberate strategic planning can be beneficial for the following purposes:

- Gathering, analysing and synthesising information to consider its strategic significance and frame possible choices;
- Producing considered judgements among key decision-makers about desirable, feasible, defensible and acceptable missions, goals, strategies and actions, along with complementary initiatives such as new, changed or terminated policies, programmes or projects, or even overall organisational designs;
- Addressing, in effective ways, key organisational issues or challenges, both now and in the foreseeable future; and
- Enhancing continuous organisational learning.

These activities indicate a deliberate process on the part of the organisation. An organisation is required to assess how it is performing and what it aspires to achieve in the future. The benefits of the strategic planning process for the GCIS are to ensure that the strategic communication programmes in the NCS are well resourced, to provide interventions to deal with challenges that persist within the GWCS, and to address the change brought about by reporting to the new Ministry of Communications.

Mann (2012) distinguishes between strategy and business or strategic planning. “Strategy is not planning. It is not business planning. It is very different from that. In fact, business planning is actually the second-order activity; it is what you do once your strategy has been formulated.” In clarifying this distinction, Mann (2012), goes on to define strategy as a big, complicated decision with many consequences that cannot be taken lightly. Secondly, he emphasises that it is long-term, with changes taking time to yield perceptible results. Thirdly, the strategy depends on the actions or reactions of others. The successful implementation of a strategy depends on how the clients and the internal and external stakeholders respond to it. This distinction is important because it assists an organisation in distinguishing activities that are strategic from those that are operational. It also assists managers in prioritising their activities.

2.2 BRIEF HISTORY OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Mintzberg (1994) indicates that when strategic planning arrived on the scene in the mid-1960s, corporate leaders embraced it as the one best way to devise and implement strategies that would enhance the competitiveness of each business unit. However, the strategic planning process has evolved over the years incorporating other aspects to the process. These aspects are discussed in the section below.

2.2.1 Formalised strategic planning process

Verma (2011) describes the strategic planning process as a '*traditional perspective*' which consists of analysing the internal and external environment of the company to arrive at organisational strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT). This also indicates that the situational analysis will result in the basis for developing the mission, goals and strategies for the organisation.

Heracleous (2003) refers to the traditional planning approach, based on the "planning view" of strategy developed by Harvard in the 1960s. It describes the strategic planning process as "rational, top-down, structured process that involves clear steps of establishing missions, goals, conducting internal and external analysis, choosing strategies for implementation. Although David (2003) refers to it as strategic formulation, there is a consensus that the process entails developing a vision and mission, identifying an organisation's external opportunities and threats, determining internal strengths and weakness, establishing long-term objectives, generating strategies and choosing particular strategies to suit a purpose. This is also supported by Glaister and Flashaw (1999), who indicate that an effective strategic planning system will link long-range strategic goals with both mid-range and operational plans. Organisations embarks on these planning processes by analysing their environments using tools such as SWOT. They further develop missions, visions and strategies for implementation.

The formalised strategic planning process followed by an organisation more often results in a plan or document, which will be implemented by the organisation over a period of time. Grensin-Pophal (2011) describes the strategic plan as a formal

documentation of a set of related actions that a business, a department or even an individual take to achieve specific goals. According to the Department of Government Communication and Information System (2014), the GCIS follows a formalised strategic planning process, with senior managers within the organisation meeting over period of days to discuss the strategic direction of the organisation. To also, review how the department has progressed in achieving the strategic objectives and decide on the future interventions.

Subsequently, the branches provide targets for within their service delivery areas to consolidate the departmental strategic plan for particular a financial years. The strategic plan details strategies that are intended and planned, but might not be implemented or realised. The reason being the environment might dictate to the department to take a different direction or course.

Johnson and Scholes (1999) distinguish between an intended strategy and a realised strategy, explaining why managers set out to provide a clear vision for the future and strategies to achieve the desired goals, but there can be a disparity between what actually happens during implementation; this might eventually lead to a different strategy being realised. This can happen when the assumptions made by the organisation prove to be wrong, mainly because the events in environment did not unfold as expected, therefore the planned strategies could not be implemented. Verma (2011) concurs by defining a deliberate strategy in which managers plan to pursue an intended strategic course.

“An emergent strategy is one that was not planned or intended, it comes from a number of decisions taken by managers” (Verma, 2011). Mintzberg provides a broader definition of strategy; it can be a plan, ploy, pattern, position or perspective. For purposes of this research, the focus will be on definitions of strategy as a plan and pattern. According to Mintzberg (1987) strategy can be seen as a plan, an intended course of action, and a guideline to deal with a situation. Further to that, the plan comprises deliberate strategies that might be realised. However, strategy as a pattern is based on consistency in behaviour, whether or not intended. The strategies are unplanned and are informed by patterns from the past and actions taken by

management. This allows management to deviate from the strategies laid down in the strategic plan and to respond to strategies emerging from the environment.

The GCIS strategic planning process is described as formalised and traditional. This is in accordance with the departmental strategic planning framework: the strategic planning process is aligned to the government's planning cycle, mainly to ensure timeous submission of the strategic plan to the National Treasury. The GCIS framework does not mention how strategic thinking and scenario planning will be incorporated into the strategic planning process. (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014) The strategic thinking and scenario planning approaches can assist the GCIS when planning for the GWCS, which is dynamic in its nature.

2.2.2 Strategic thinking

In discussing strategic thinking, Heracleous (1998) refers to a criticism of the strategic planning process, which is that planning cannot produce strategies because it is a programmatic, formalised and analytical process; what is more significant is what happens after strategies are decided, discovered or simply emerge. Mintzberg (1994), concurs that strategic planning is not strategic thinking, and that strategic planning often spoils strategic thinking, causing managers to confuse real vision with the manipulation of numbers. Thus strategic thinking aim to address the gaps identified in the formal planning process. "Strategic planning is often used to refer to a programmatic, analytical thought process and strategic thinking to refer to a creative divergent thought process" (Heracleous, 1998). Strategic planning involves following a linear approach to the planning process, with a sequence to be followed in producing a strategic plan. Once the plan is developed, it is assumed that the environment will remain static to allow for implementation as predicted.

"Strategic thinking is defined as a synthesising process, utilising intuition and creativity, whose outcomes is an integrated perspective of the enterprise" (Liedtka, 1998). This process complements the strategic planning process by allowing managers to use their intuition and creativity in the decision-making process. Once the analysed data is presented to management, they have to use both facts and intuition to arrive at a

particular decision. According to Heracleous (2003), the purpose of strategic thinking is to discover novel, imaginative strategies, which can re-write the rules of the competitive game, and to visualise potential futures significantly different from the present. In addition, strategic planning is differentiated from strategic thinking in that “it is an activity carried out within the parameters of what is to be achieved, but does not explicitly question those parameters, while strategic thinking questions the strategic parameters themselves” Heracleous (2003). Strategic planning uses analytical tools to examine the past and present situation of the organisation. Based on the findings, there is an attempt to predict the future outcomes,

Strategic choices are made amid a variety of alternatives, to select the one that will achieve the vision. But the systematic and analytical planning process is limited because the environment is unpredictable and it is impossible to plan with certainty. Strategic thinking requires managers to think creatively during the planning process and begin to think about future outcomes that might emerge, as opposed to thinking about a single definitive future outcome.

2.2.3 Scenario planning

The formalised strategic planning process has been criticised over the years. Mintzberg (1994) pointed out three fallacies with this approach. Firstly, the fallacy of prediction, which involves planning with certainty that the future will unfold as planned; secondly, the fallacy of detachment, where the planning process is carried out by strategic thinkers who are removed from the operations. This happens when there is no flow of information from operations to top management. Lastly, the fallacy of formalisation, pointing out the limitations that result when intuitive thinking and the facts that are produced by formal system are not integrated. This can lead to poor decision-making in the planning process. Scenario planning provides the tools to combine strategic planning and strategic into the planning process. “Scenarios are descriptions of plausible future contexts in which we might find ourselves. They are typically presented as a small set of stories about how our surrounding environment might have evolved into the future.” (Ramírez, Selsky and van der Heijden, 2010). Scenario planning requires an approach to planning that encourages the organisation to consider different, plausible future states for the organisation. This is because in the

external environment there are too many driving forces which are beyond the control of the organisation. According to Shoemaker (1995), “scenario planning is a disciplined method for imagining possible futures that companies have applied to great range of issues. It attempts to capture the richness and range of possibilities, stimulating decision makers to consider changes they would otherwise ignore.” Ramírez, Selsky *et al.* (2010) and Shoemaker (1995) comment that scenario planning differs from strategic planning in that it explores the impact of various uncertainties, which are equally important. It takes into consideration that there are too many forces facing an organisation that might lead to a number of scenarios unfolding in the future.

However, the scenario planning approach is complementary to the formalised planning process, requiring managers to be engaged in the process and consider alternative scenarios for the future. Van der Heijden (1996) adds that scenario planning does not attempt to predict what is unpredictable and therefore considers multiple, equally plausible futures. It is detrimental for an organisation to try to predict the future because the external environment comprises so many diverse factors: political, global, social, legal and economic and each might have a dire impact.

Schoemaker (1995) asserts that organisations that are faced with some of the following conditions can benefit from the scenario planning approach:

- The company does not perceive or generate new opportunities;
- The quality of strategic thinking is low;
- The industry has experienced significant changes, or is about to; and
- The company wants a common language and framework, without stifling the creativity of staff members.

The GCIS can benefit from the three approaches, but scenario planning in particular, as it can explore driving forces within the communication environment, emerging trends in communication mediums and advances in information technology. It does not have strategic thinking mechanism within the strategic planning processes. (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014)

The scenario planning approach combines the elements of strategic planning with those of strategic thinking. It assists the organisation in considering futures that might

plausibly emerge. Scenario planning helps organisations become attuned to changes in their environments and to detect which scenarios are unfolding and which strategies to implement.

The first step in scenario planning involves the identification of the problem area, and this is done by assessing the current environment. In the second step managers are encouraged to use their intuition and creativity during the planning process, and not rely only on facts when making decisions. The third step is an analysis of the environment by looking at trends in the industry. Tools from formal planning can also be applied, for example, the SWOT analysis. The fourth step requires creativity in building scenarios to imagine plausible futures. The last two steps are about selecting for implementation strategies that provide a strategic direction for the organisation. Scenario planning requires the combination of the formal strategic planning process and the strategic thinking, pointing out their dependencies to enrich the process.

Although organisations can benefit from the strategic planning process, there are differences between the public sector and private sector environment. Therefore, the application of the strategic planning process will differ greatly between the private and the public sector.

2.3 STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

According to Bryson and Roering (1988), the changes brought about by oil crises, demographic shifts, changing values, tax levy limits, reductions in federal grants and a volatile economy have resulted in government re-orienting the direction of policy. This led to the realisation that a strategic planning process could be beneficial for the public sector. However, Bunning (1992) points out that most public agencies undertake strategic planning processes only because it is required by their central government. The public sector began to practice strategic planning processes to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery to citizens.

Mulgan (2009) indicates that the ultimate purpose of strategy in a democracy is to meet public wants and needs, refracted through politicians' more immediate need to win elections. As a result, most governments devise strategies to distribute the public

resources equitably. Plant (2009) adds that public strategy involves positioning the organisation to provide a unique and customized service driven by the needs of its citizens and businesses.

The Department of Government Communication and Information System (2012) indicates that the GCIS undertook the planning process in 2011 to develop the 2012/13 to 2016/17 Strategic Plan. This was because of pressure from the central government. The National Treasury and the DPME required departments to adopt a planning process that would support the NDP and the MTSF, and released the NTF as a guideline. The planning process was intended to develop the strategic plan and comply with the requirements. However, the GCIS strategic plan failed to meet the requirements of the NTF. According to the AGSA report, there were challenges with the strategic objectives, indicators and targets.

The strategic planning process can be useful to public sector managers who need to measure results and become more accountable to the citizens about government performances. There are differences between the private and public sector environments which might cause public sector managers to see little value in undertaking the planning process. Fard, Moshabbaki, Abbasi and Akbar Strat (2011) indicate the following differences between the public and the private sector:

- The primary financial driver of the public sector is the maximization of outputs within a given budget;
- Strategy, which is typically a long-term concept, is cut short in a relatively short time compared to private managers;
- Public sector managers suffer more from red tape than private sector managers, caution, and rigidity; and
- The successful implementation of strategic management in the public organisations depends upon the presence of a strong leadership.

The GCIS faced certain conditions within the 2012-2016 strategic planning, they experienced budget cuts due to austerity measures from the NT. There were also required to change reporting lines from the presidency to the department of

communications. (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2015)

2.3.1 Public sector strategic planning challenges

The public sector managers might find it more difficult to commit to the strategic planning processes. To really do so, they need to accept the challenges within the public sector environment and to devise strategies to overcome them. Some will be easy to resolve; others might be more difficult. Bunning, (1992) suggests the following four challenges that public sector managers encounter in committing to the planning processes:

- **Stakeholder involvement:** Involving outside groups in the planning process could give them more influence and raise their expectations;
- **Continuity:** Governments could change before the completion of the five-year planning horizon and the budget is only provided on a one-year basis, so there might be no point in planning;
- **Transparency:** If government make known what it plans to do, it could leak out and attract criticism from adversely affected pressure groups and clients; and
- **Compliance:** The planning process might be performed to meet the expectations and demands of others. The focus is not so much on what is ultimately achieved as on the production of a plan on paper.

Mulgan (2009) adds the following, to support Bunning's points:

- Airing future possibilities creates present headaches. It might highlight the flaws and deficiencies of current policies, and, as a result, remind voters that they are bored with their rules;
- Strategic planning in the name of the future can endanger the present. This is because there is no good reason to spend scarce resources on actions that will benefit your successors, who might be from a different political party.
- Many strategists assume that their operating environment will remain constant or that the existing trends will continue in a straight line. Scenario planning will therefore be useful to test strategies against different scenarios, good or bad.

- Governments find it harder to end policies and programmes that have had significant amounts of investment; even though there is strong evidence, there will be minimal return on investment.

Strategic planning is regarded as a management tool to assist an organisation to function effectively. It requires managers within the organisation to own the process and show commitment. In addition, the leadership of the organisation needs to cultivate an environment that encourages creative thinking and innovation. Sound leadership is therefore critical in the strategic planning process, from strategy formulation to implementation, but is not always available in the public sector.

2.4 ROLE OF LEADERSHIP IN STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

There are many definitions of leadership. Azhar, Sumera, Sajjad, & Shannawaz (n.d), define strategic leadership as a process that makes organisations successful by implementing appropriate strategies. These authors also maintain that it is the responsibility of the leadership to motivate and inspire the people in the organisation to work together so that an organisation's vision can be translated into reality.

Paul (2004) adds that strategic leaders focus their organisation on a particular direction, create an agenda for strategic change, and also believe in delegating power and authority to employees to make decisions. It is therefore important for management to share the vision of the organisation with the staff members. In the public sector, management is critical in articulating the policy direction that needs to inform the strategic planning process and to identify the priorities of the organisation.

According to Jooste and Fourie (2009), strategic leadership requires the ability to accommodate and integrate the internal and external business environments of the organisation, and to manage and engage in complex information processing. This also emphasises the involvement in and commitment to the strategic planning process on the part of the leadership. Management must know the contents of the strategic plan and require regular progress reports on its implementation. They must be abreast about the targets that are being unmet and the challenges thereof.

During the situational analysis, it is necessary for the leadership to accept the facts on how the organisation is performing within its internal and external environment. It must also be instrumental in articulating the vision, mission, goals and strategic objectives of the organisation to staff members and stakeholders. “During the strategizing process, top leadership strives to fit its strategies into an accurately described environment” (Mosia and Veldsman, 2004). Management must be able to prioritise and identify the best possible strategies and see that they are implemented to achieve the goals and objectives set out in the strategic plan. Lastly, it must provide mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the process of strategy implementation. For reasons mentioned the role of management is critical as Jooste and Fourie (2009) indicate that a lack of strategic leadership has been identified as one of the major barriers to effective strategy implementation.

However, leadership applies to managers at different levels within the organisation, not only top management. At all levels, it is important for articulating the business strategy and leading teams towards implementation. “Leaders provides the vision and set goals for long term and short term. Then they shift towards developing strategies to achieve the vision and leading the teams towards implementation of the strategy.” Azhar *et al.* (n.d) and Mosia and Veldsman (2004) concur that the effectiveness of leadership in directing and influencing others is seen in improved outputs.

The responsibility of leaders in the organisation is to lead teams towards implementation of the strategy of the organisation. The strategic planning process requires leaders to manage a process of change within an organisation, implement strategies to address current challenges and motivate the organisation to realise the vision of the organisation. Heifetz and Laurie (1997) describe the process of organisational change as “adaptive change”. They add that this is particularly important when an organisation’s deeply held beliefs are challenged, when values that made the organisation successful become less relevant, and when legitimate yet competing perspectives emerge. Azhar *et al.* (n.d) supports this view, stating that leaders develop the environment for change. “Firstly it unfreezes the organisation and then demonstrates the need for change or improvement. Secondly, leaders try to build a team that helps mobilize change within the whole organisation, both vertically and horizontally” (Azhar *et al.* (n.d). The strategic planning process delivers a change

agenda for the organisation, to stop certain projects, adopt new ones and continue with those that are still relevant. This also requires employees to change their behaviours and adapt to the requirements of implementing the new interventions.

The GCIS has outlined the roles and responsibilities of management in the strategic planning process, and this includes all the other role-players that are critical to the process: in the case of the GCIS strategic planning process, this includes the roles of the Director General (DG), Executive Committee (Exco), Management Committee (Manco) and senior management. However, there is more emphasis on the role of the DG and Exco in providing a strategic direction for the organisation. The process of agreeing on the strategic direction of the organisation, must be participatory, involving Manco and stakeholders.

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1994) hold a different view of the role of leadership, instead of delegating responsibility solely to the leaders, employees are also empowered to find their own solutions to challenges facing the organisation. These authors maintain that strategy formulation should not be a top-down approach: contributions from the line managers should also inform the strategy. They explain that, because strategic information used to make decisions usually resides with line managers, and even if the information is relayed to top managers, it may be diluted, distorted or delayed. They assert that one of the solutions is not to focus so much on setting up the business strategy, but to define the purpose of the organisation in terms with which people can identify. Cascading the strategic plan to all staff members is important to ensure they understand the direction of organisation.

The role of management is to ensure that all staff members understand their responsibilities in implementing the organisational strategy, since identifying with emerging strategies and to taking advantage of the opportunities they present are empowering for those concerned.

2.5 PUBLIC SECTOR STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS MODEL

Differences between the public and private sector mean that most of the strategic planning models that have been applied in the private sector will prove to be somewhat

limited when applied in the public sector. The Strategy Change Cycle of Bryson (2011) outlines ten steps in initiating the strategic planning process for public and non-profit organisations. This model might help to address the challenges to public sector organisations that were indicated in the earlier sections.

Bryson's (2011) ten steps in the strategic planning process for public sector are briefly described below:

- **Step 1: Initiation and agreeing on a strategic planning process:** There should be an agreement on the strategic planning process, the focus areas and how the process is going to unfold. This agreement is made by key decision-makers and concerns the purpose of the strategic planning process, the roles and responsibilities of those involved and, most importantly, how the stakeholders will be consulted and their inputs incorporated into the planning process.
- **Step 2: Identifying the organisational mandate:** The mandate might be written into the organisational policy document, and it might lead to different interpretations by managers and stakeholders. The mandate must be clearly articulated to employees and to external stakeholders.
- **Step 3: Clarifying the organisational mission and values:** This provides a sense of purpose and justifies the existence of an organisation. The mission indicates what the organisation seeks to achieve, and the values guide the behaviours that are acceptable. They form the basis for strategic focus in the organisation and will guide employees as they carry out their functions.
- **Step 4: Assessing the organisation's external and internal environments:** An assessment of both the internal and external environments allows the planning team to become aware of internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as external strengths and opportunities. This assessment assists in determining the gap between the current situation and the desired future state of the organisation. It further suggests that scenarios of plausible futures can be constructed to assist management in deciding on the strategic choices that will inform the organisational strategy.
- **Step 5: Identifying strategic issues facing the organisation:** Strategic issues are defined as fundamental policy questions or critical challenges affecting the organisation's mandates, mission and values, products or services. The strategic

choices needs to best fit the prevailing the environment and is referred to as strategic fit. This can be very challenging for government, because of the varying needs of the stakeholders they serve.

- **Step 6: Formulating strategies and plans to manage the issues:** A strategy is defined as a pattern of purpose, policies, programs, projects, actions, decisions or resource allocation that defines what an organisation is, what it does and why it does so. Strategies can vary according to level, function and timeframe. Different strategies might be applied to address the range of issues identified by the organisation. Government develops policies to manage the distribution of goods and services to the public, they have to devise strategies to distribute the resources.
- **Step 7: Reviewing and adopting strategies and plan:** Once strategies have been formulated, the planning team might need to obtain an official decision to adopt them and proceed with their implementation. The official adoption strategic plan will ensure that the necessary resources are allocated for implementation.
- **Step 8: Establishing and effective organisational vision:** Some planning processes begin the visionary process earlier in the planning process, while others only consider it much later, when they have a clearer concept of the environment. However, a vision of the future assists the organisation in working towards a goal, and keeps employees motivated.
- **Step 9: Developing and effective implementation process:** Thinking strategically about implementation and developing an effective implementation plan are important in realising the strategies identified. The implementation plan must indicate explicitly what the responsibilities are, and what the funding is for the strategies. The organisation needs to have internal controls and policies to manage the implementation process.
- **Step 10: Reassessing strategies and the strategic planning process:** During the process of implementation, attention should be paid to testing the assumptions made about the strategies, ascertaining whether they are successful and should be maintained or whether they should be replaced with other strategies.

The Strategy Change Cycle model provides insight into a strategic planning process to be adopted by government. It offers suggestions on addressing some of the

challenges unique to public sector managers. It incorporates elements like the strategic thinking, scenario planning, stakeholder consultation and situational analysis. However the limitations of the model are stakeholder involvement and consultation in government can prolong the planning process and lead management to overlook it. The public sector serves many stakeholders with differing interests, making it difficult to consult all of them. Although scanning of the internal and environment is also part of the model, there should be a clear emphasise on research in the planning process, and the model should guide the organisation on how to incorporate the top-down and bottom-up approaches in their strategic planning process.

Step ten of the Strategy Change Cycle indicates a good practise in assessing the strategies in the strategic plans, to test whether or not the basic assumptions that were made were correct. However, in the South African public sector that can only happen after implementation of year one of the strategic plan. The NT framework has prohibited any in-year changes to a strategic plan already tabled in Parliament. "To simplify performance tracking, in-year changes to the plan should not be made" (National Treasury 2010). This step cannot be implemented with ease for public sector managers. If public sector managers are still faced with the challenge of separating strategic issues from operational issues, step five of the Strategy Change Cycle will be difficult to implement. The outcomes approach of government in South Africa must assist managers to identify strategic issues but it is still a fairly new approach.

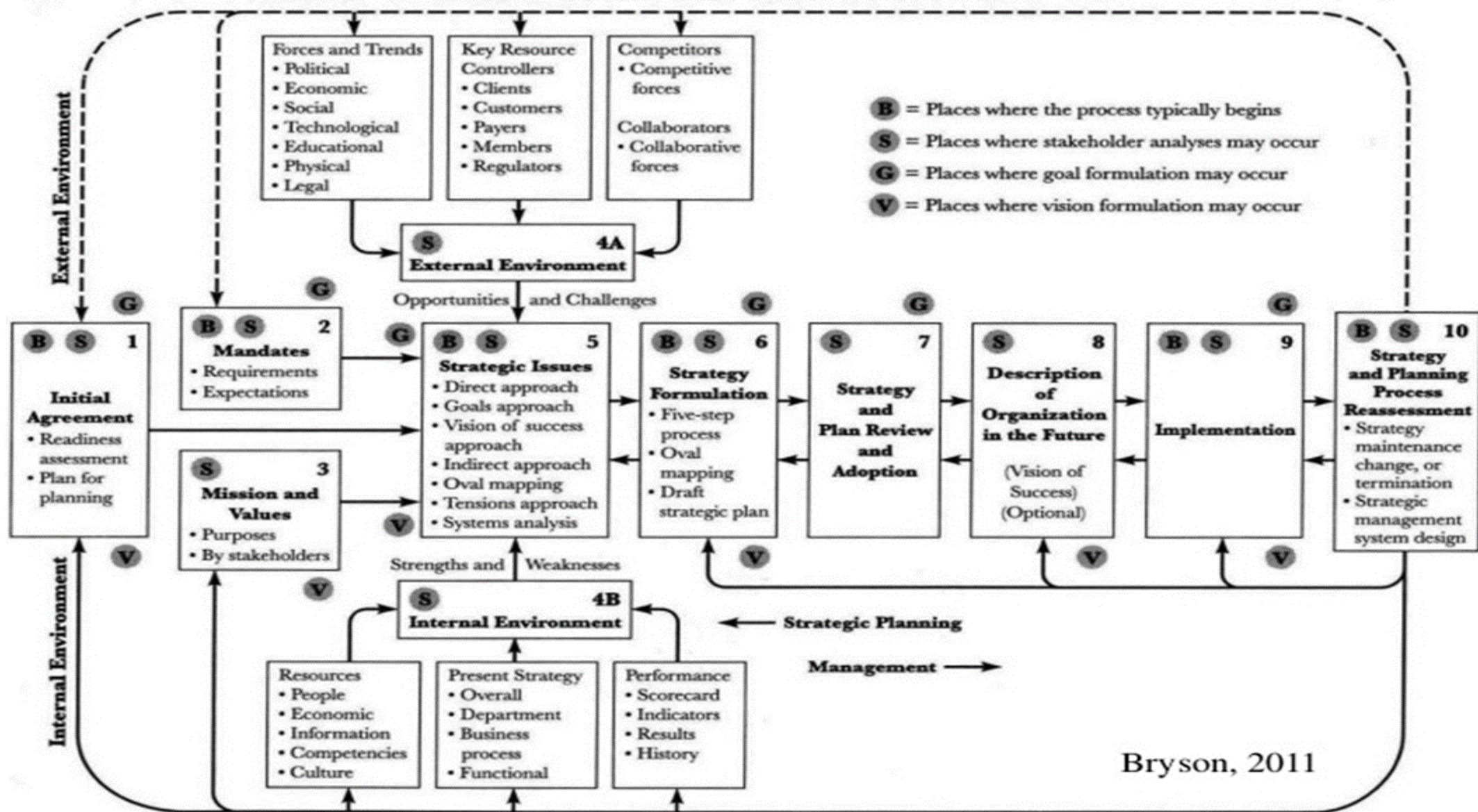


Figure 2. Strategy Change Cycle (John M. Bryson, 2011)

2.6 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT IN STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Johnson and Scholes (1999) define stakeholders as individuals or groups who depend on the organisation to fulfil their own goals, and on whom, in turn, the organisation depends. Bryson (1988) describes stakeholders as any person, groups or organisation that can place a claim on an organisation's attention, resources or output, or is affected by that output. All organisations have stakeholders with expectations that must be considered and that, when ignored, might impact on the operations of the organisation.

The lack of stakeholder involvement in the planning problems has been earmarked as a challenge that affects public sector managers. According to Bunning (1992), strategic planning requires the involvement of outside groups such as customers, at least in the environmental scanning stage, and this could stir them up, give them increased influence and raise their expectation. The risk with not involving the stakeholders is that it is possible to develop a strategic plan that is internally focused and consequently fails to address the needs of the stakeholders, which are external. The public sector managers need to find ways of consulting with stakeholders to ensure that they participate in the direction an institution is taking.

According to Plant (2009), if senior managers develop a plan in isolation, without the involvement of stakeholders, the risk is higher that the plan will be poorly implemented. Freeman and McVae (2001), support the traditional view that strategic planning has often ignored some stakeholders, marginalised others and consistently traded off the interest of others against favoured stakeholder groups. This has proved to be consistently detrimental to the organisation in achieving its objectives. They propose a stakeholder approach which encourages management to develop strategies by looking outward, identifying and investing in all the relationships that will ensure long-term success. The same researchers also maintain that diverse groups of stakeholders can only cooperate over the long run if, despite their differences, they share a set of core values.

Paul (2004) supports the view that one way in which public service organisations can improve service delivery is to bring community organisations into the strategic planning process, ensuring that strategic analyses focus on the problems of the public and the

strategies formulated to address those problems. The GCIS has a number of stakeholders with differing expectations. The framework of the organisation does not indicate how those stakeholders will be consulted during the strategic planning process (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). The process involves senior managers, with little consultation done with staff members. This points to the notion that public sectors managers have a challenge in consulting with their various stakeholders during the strategic planning process. However, according to Denhardt (1985), a strategic planning process in the public sector should be a highly participatory process, as the participation opens up the possibility of building new understanding among various groups about the work of the organisation. It further suggests that citizens' surveys and public forums maybe used to generate input from community groups about the directions the community or the organisation should take (Denhardt, 1985).

The stakeholders must buy in to the business strategy of the organisation. Internal stakeholders, that is, employees, must be able to understand the strategy so that it informs daily actions within their operations. The vision of the company must be able to motivate them to achieve the company's broader strategic direction. Not involving them might lead to the intended strategies remaining unrealised because the employees have not bought into it. Similarly, the organisation might be oblivious to the changing needs of the external stakeholders, so that they continue to implement a strategy that has been successful in the past, only to realise later that it is no longer responding to the current needs to the stakeholders.

There are benefits for public sector to adopt the strategic planning process. However, the planning process also has limitations. There are times where carefully planned strategies do not yield the envisaged results. According, to Buehler, Griffin, & Peetz (2010), "The planning fallacy refers to the readily observable phenomenon, the conviction that the current project will go as well as planned even though most projects from a relevant comparison set have failed to fulfil their planned outcomes." This indicates that predicting the future outcomes of a planning process with certainty has limitations as it is based on the premise that the future will unfold as envisaged.

2.7 STRATEGIC PLANNING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN SOUTH AFRICA

“The post-1994 government embarked on a sustained programme of public sector reform, including reforms to the civil service performance management system as well as to budget reforms” (Cloete, Rabie, & De Coning, 2014). The transformation process placed too much expectation on the ability of government to right the wrongs of the apartheid system. For a long time, the focus was on financial planning and less on the strategic planning process within the public sector. Managers were encouraged to plan according to a three-year planning cycle, and to link plans to the budget. The emphasis was on delivering public services by producing outputs; as a result, there was no long-term planning.

According to Cloete *et al*:

“The National Treasury, through the Public Finance Management Act of 1999, was the big driver of change, regulating financial management in across the three spheres of government. Secondly, another important driver of performance was the emergence of the strong Auditor-General of South Africa, with the focus on financial audits but later adding the audit of predetermined objectives” (Cloete *et al.* 2014).

The limitation inherent in both approaches was the emphasis on outputs as an end to service delivery rather than on the impact of public services in improving the lives of citizens. The government realised that there was a need to plan for the outcomes and the impact of service delivery: It released a number of legislative frameworks to support the planning approach. These are discussed in the next section.

2.7.1 Legislative frameworks for strategic planning

Legislation was put in place to regulate the strategic planning processes within government. The frameworks also provided guidelines on the contents of government’s strategic plans. This was to ensure that the strategic plan were developed and tabled in Parliament.

The South African public sector released a number of legislative frameworks focusing on the development of strategic plans and annual performance plans in particular. This led to the standardisation of strategic plans within the public sector. However, the framework does not provide guidance on the planning process of departments: it is left to managers to develop the planning process best suited to their organisations. The following frameworks provide legislative requirements for the development of strategic plans documents within national and provincial governments.

Outcomes approach

According to the Presidency (2010), the outcomes approach is designed to ensure that government is focused on achieving real improvements in the lives of all South Africans. This approach clarifies what government expects to achieve, how it will achieve it and how to measure whether or not it has achieved it. It is intended to help all spheres of government in ensuring that service delivery impacts on the lives of citizens. Furthermore, this approach emphasises planning with the end in mind. It starts with identifying outcomes to improve the lives of South Africans. In addition, it is necessary to work out the outputs required to achieve those outcomes, as well as determining the activities that must be implemented to achieve the outputs and the resources needed to perform those activities.

All government departments, from all spheres of government, were required to plan for long-term and medium-term outcomes. The planning process was conducted in consultation with the service beneficiaries to ensure that the outputs produced would result in the expected outcomes. The GCIS, as a government department, was also required to ensure that there was continuous communication with the public. It had to plan long-term communication campaigns that would have a positive impact on the lives of citizens. The programmes had to ensure that the public was always informed about government information services and how to access them.

Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF)

The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) is government's strategic plan for the 2014-2019 electoral term. It reflects the commitments made in the election manifesto

of the governing party, including the commitment to implement the NDP. The MTSF sets out the actions government will take and the targets to be achieved. It also provides a framework for the other plans of national, provincial, and local government (The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, 2014).

It indicates the priorities of government and the outcomes it aims to attain over the five-year period. It is based on implementing the targets of *the National Development Plan Vision 2030*. The first cycle was scheduled to commence in 2015-2020, the second in 2021-2025 and the last from 2026-2030. The GCIS was required to align their strategic plan to the MTSF by developing communication programmes in support of outcome 14, which deals with nation building and social cohesion.

National Treasury Frameworks (NTF)

There are frameworks are issued by the National Treasury in terms of the mandates set out in sections 215 and 216 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, to guide the strategic planning process. *These are namely: the Framework for Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans, Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information, The Guidelines for Budget Programmes, and the Performance Information Management Handbook* (National Treasury, 2010).

The GCIS complied with the timeframes for the above-mentioned frameworks, submitting the first and second drafts of the 2012/13 to 2016/17 Strategic Plan to the National Treasury and the DPME. Although the department complied with the requirements for submission of the strategic plans, findings from the 2012/13 AGSA report indicated that the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan did not meet the requirements of the NTF. This is in terms of the content of the document, with strategic objectives, target and indicators that were not specific, measurable and realistic.

Public Audit Act, 2004 (Act No. 1 of 1999)

According to the Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors (2015), "in terms of the Public Audit Act, 2004 (Act No. 25 of 2004) (PAA), the Auditor-General of South Africa (AGSA) and private sector auditors in public practice must provide an audit opinion or

conclusion on the reported information relating to the performance of the auditee against predetermined objectives.” More importantly, the audit of performance information is based on the NT regulations and frameworks guiding the development of the strategic plans and annual performance plans. The aim is to ensure that the departments comply in full with the regulations set by government.

2.8 STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS OF GCIS

The five-year Strategic Plan developed for the period 2012/13-2016/17 was tabled in Parliament on 12 March 2012. However, the strategic planning process to be assessed for purposes of this research covers the four financial years, 2012/13 to 2015/16. The 2016/17 financial year has not yet been implemented. Although there are two planning processes within the GCIS, the focus will be on the planning process followed to develop the 2012/13 to 2016/17 Strategic Plan. This is because the AGSA 2012/13 report indicated that the strategic plan was not credible. The report also pointed out the ineffectiveness of the strategic planning process followed by the GCIS towards the development of the strategic plan.

The GCIS strategic planning processes were indicated in the *GCIS Strategic Planning, Performance Monitoring, and Reporting Framework* as follows:

- The GCIS will use both the top-down and bottom-up approach during the strategic planning process. The top-down approach will commence with a Senior Managers’ (director upwards) strategic planning workshop, which will conduct an environmental scan and develop strategic objectives of the organisation that are aligned to the vision, mission and goals of the organisation. The session will take place at the end of July, as per directive of the GCIS Management Committee (MANCO).
- Chief directorates will commence with the cascading process during mid-July by developing the five-year strategic plan and three Annual Performance Plan (APP) targets against the strategic objectives.
- The target-setting phase should be finalised by the end of July and the first draft of the consolidated strategic plan and APP presented to Management Committee during the first week of August.

- The revised drafts of both the strategic plan and APPs will be submitted to the Management Committee (MANCO) for final approval in mid-August of the year prior to submission of the SP and APP to National Treasury and the DPME.
- The final drafts will be signed off by the Executive Committee (Exco) and then submitted to National Treasury and the DPME for inputs by the end of August in the year prior to the tabling year. It is expected that inputs will be sent back to the department by early October.
- During October, branches and chief directorates will revise the SP and APPs based on National Treasury inputs and submit to Manco for approval.
- Once the second draft of the strategic plan and APPs are approved, they will be re-submitted to National Treasury and the DPME by the end of November of the year prior to tabling.
- The strategic plan and APPs will be finalised during January to ensure alignment with the budget. Subsequently, the strategic plan and APPs will be tabled in Parliament by February.” Department of Government Communication and Information System (2014).

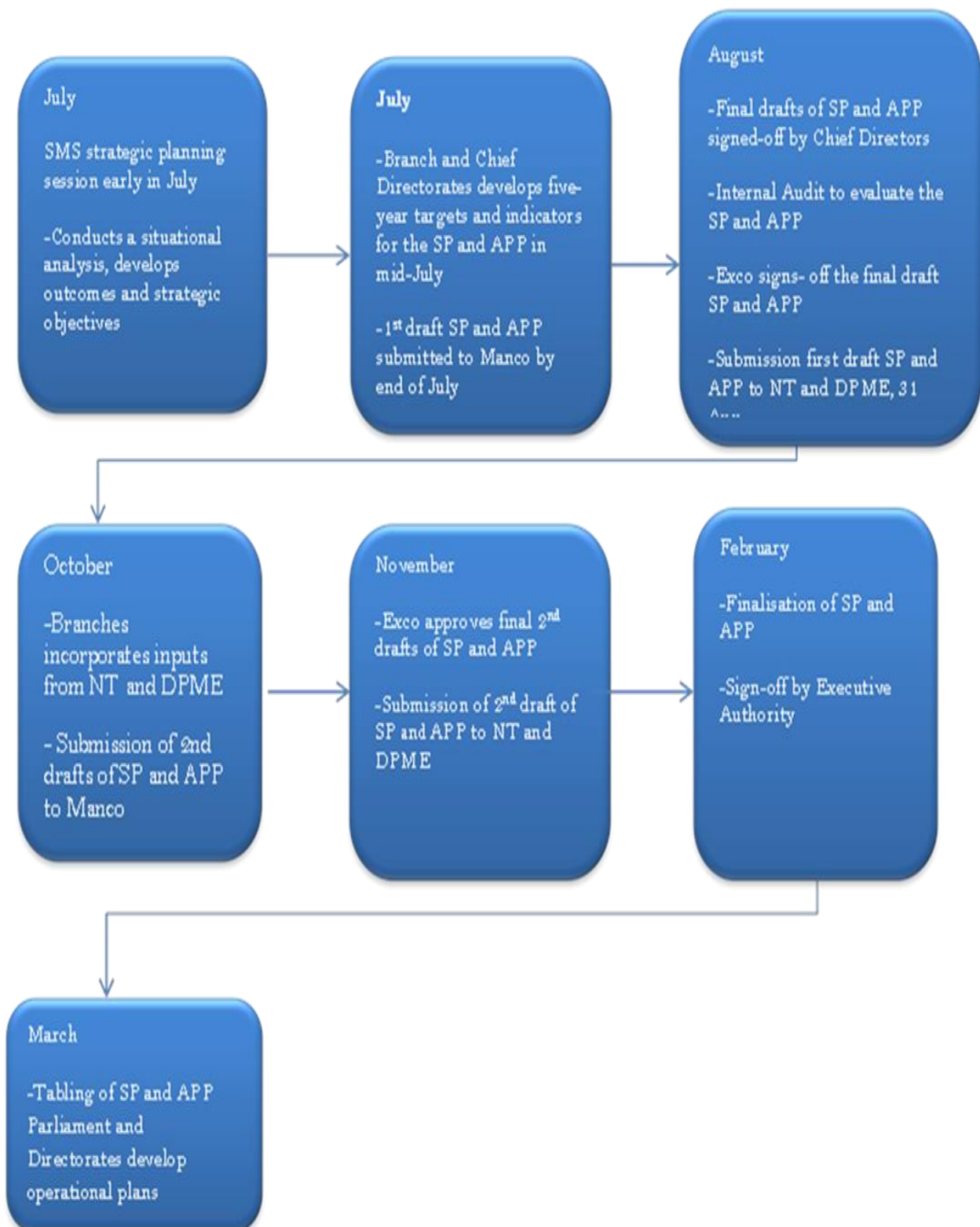


Figure 3. GCIS Strategic Planning Process. GCIS (2014)

The Strategy Change Cycle outlines the ten steps towards initiating strategic planning for non-profit and public sector organisations. The GCIS process is temporal: it follows the timelines of the NTF to ensure compliance (Department of Government

Communication and Information System, 2014). The steps in the planning process successfully led to the development of the GCIS strategic plan. The department held annual strategic planning session with the senior managers to develop the strategic plan. The inputs were consolidated to produce the strategic plan that was submitted to oversight bodies for assessment. The political principals formed part of the session to provide a political and policy direction for the department. However, the following gaps were identified in the strategic planning process of the department:

- **Research:** The GCIS framework did not mention how research would be conducted, in particular, to identify the opportunities and challenges within the internal and external environment (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). According to the feedback from the DPME, the department did not provide a situational analysis in the draft strategic plan. “The department has indicated that information relating to the situational analysis will be provided upon submission of the second draft plans by end of November 2014” (T. Matona, personal communication, 05 October 2015). Research is critical in the strategic planning process; it identifies the opportunities and challenges that might be facing the department. It forms the basis for strategic interventions by the organisation to maximise opportunities or address the prevailing challenges.
- **Stakeholder participation:** The earlier sections indicated the importance of the public sector consulting with the stakeholders in their strategic planning processes. This was to develop an understanding of the stakeholders’ expectations and to make sure that they were met. The GCIS framework on strategic planning and reporting indicates a general description of the importance of stakeholder involvement in the strategic planning process (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). However, the framework does not indicate how or when the stakeholder consultation will take place within the GCIS.
- **Alignment to the government priorities:** The department did not align its strategic plan to the outcomes, as reported in the feedback from the DPME. In addition, the strategic plan of the department indicates outputs to be achieved and did not have any strategic programmes to support outcomes of government. “The

department is not aligned to Outcome 14 of the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019.” (T. Matona, personal communication, 05 October 2015).

- **Bottom-up approach:** “The bottom-up approach is important when directorates develop targets that will inform the strategic plan and APP. The chief directorate should involve directors in the process of setting targets because they oversee the implementation process” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). The bottom-up approach was defined up until directorate level, and the framework did not indicate how it would filter down to operational level.

2.9 2012/13 -2016/17 GCIS STRATEGIC PLAN

A strategic plan indicates what the organisation aims to do and how it plans to use its resources to achieve the set objectives over a specific period. The GCIS was required to follow a strategic planning process and develop a five-year strategic plan document, which was to be tabled in Parliament. A formal strategic planning process was adopted in 2011, after the NT published the *Framework on Strategic Plans and Annual Plans* in August 2010. The 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan details the description of the planning process undertaken to produce the plan. In July 2011, the department held a three-day session, attended by all senior managers. “The session reflected on the current vision, mission, strategic objectives and subsequently reviewed them” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

According to the Department of Government Communication and Information System (2012), the vision of the department is “the pulse of communication excellence in government” while the mission is to “provide professional services, set and influence adherence to standards for effective government communication system, drive coherent government messaging and proactively communicate with the public about government policies, plans, programmes, and achievements.” The vision and mission indicate the department’s role in ensuring that government provide information to the citizens. Information is important because it means that the public has access government programmes and policies that can improve their lives.

The department provides communication support for the outcomes of the MTSF and government. However, through its mandate, it is aligned to outcome 14. According to the Department of Government Communication and Information System (2012), the department will contribute to the outcome by ensuring that the GWCS disseminates information on programmes and services of government.

The GCIS is required to support the NDP in two ways: firstly, by contributing to the targets that government has set out in the plan, and secondly through a communication campaign to popularise the plan and communicate on progress. “The GCIS contributes to Outcome 14, Sub-Outcome 4: Active citizenry and leadership. When citizens are informed about government plans, activities and programmes, they will be empowered regarding their responsibilities and rights, and will hold government accountable for service delivery. This improves responsiveness and the quality of government services” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2015).

The GCIS must provide strategic leadership for GWCS. They must be able to plan for government communications and offer strategic direction across the three spheres of government. This kind of strategic leadership entails ensuring that there is the capacity, and enough skills within a system to deliver cost-effective and efficient government communication programmes. As a central co-ordinating agency of government communications, The GCIS must be able to guarantee that there is access to government information at national, provincial and local government. It must also ensure that the communication forums are active at all levels of government and prudent in co-ordinating government communications activities for their respective communities.

2.9.1 Strategic plan assessment and feedback

It is a legislative requirement that departments submit strategic plans and annual performance plans to oversight bodies (AGSA, DPME and the National Treasury) and to the executive authority (EA) for an assessment prior to the tabling of the documents in Parliament. The strategic plans are assessed, firstly to ensure adherence to the NTF, secondly for alignment to the MTSF targets, thirdly to check that the strategic

intention of the department is clear, and lastly, to see that there are appropriate targets and indicators against the strategic objectives of an organisation.

Executive authority

The role of the executive authority in the strategic planning process is to pronounce the political and policy imperatives for the organisation. It receives a mandate from the political party it represents and ensures that it is interpreted in the strategic direction of the organisation. According to Manning (2006), politicians are challenged because they are voted into power but in fact have limited power: they are in the hands of the bureaucracy. They give orders, but it is the executives they appoint who produce results. Moreover, when the mandate is reflected in the strategic plan of the organisation, it is seen as a commitment to the electorate that the promises that were made will be achieved.

The executive authority of the GCIS is the minister of Communications, Ms Faith Muthambi and the deputy minister of Communications, Ms Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams. The Director-General (DG) of the GCIS submits the strategic plan and annual performance plan to the executive authority to indicate how the political mandate has been articulated. In addition, the DG manages how the organisation aims to achieve its strategic intent and how the priorities are resourced.

F. Muthambi (personal communication, 18 February 2015) provided feedback on the strategic plan of the GCIS as follows:

- The document lacks the high-level nature that is required by a strategic document of a national department;
- It does not demonstrate how it will improve capacity and align efforts with provinces and state-owned enterprises (SOEs);
- It does not assist to modernise communication-making use of technologies as the mission and vision suggests;
- Development communication is an integral part of government communications; this document is silent on that and does not provide any direction in that regard and;

- A review of the structure to probe the effectiveness and responsiveness to the government-wide communication is needed. The structure must be informed by the priorities of government in the five years and must assist in ensuring the operations of the GWCS. There must be a deliberate effort to ensure that municipal communications work. In addition, the current structure does not emphasise this.

The management of the GCIS was then requested to review the strategic document in the light of the comments from the minister. However, the above feedback indicates the challenges with the quality of the strategic plan submitted to the minister, and points out that the GCIS strategic planning processes did not lead to the development of a credible Strategic Plan. There was no feedback from the deputy minister on the strategic plan submitted.

Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)

The DPME provides oversight support to departments to ensure alignment of the departmental strategic plans to the MTSF and the NDP. They assess the five-year plans and provide feedback to departments on the draft strategic plans before they are tabled in Parliament. “The role of the DPME is to facilitate the production of government five-year plans for priorities. Monitor and evaluate plans for government priorities as well as for performance of individual departments and municipalities” (Goldman, *et al.* 2015).

The DG of the DPME provided the following feedback to the DG of the GCIS on the first draft of the strategic plan (T. Matona, personal communication, 05 October 2015):

- The department must provide strategies to address any contingencies that might emanate from the situational analysis. There should be evidence of use of various data sources such as demographic data, statistical data, evaluation reports, trends analysis from annual reports in providing contextual background of the environment within which the department operates;
- The department is not aligned to Outcome 14 of the Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019. Therefore, the department must ensure that the

impact indicators reflected in Outcome 14 find expression in the department's strategic plan and APP;

- The planning process of the department has provided the strategic objectives for all the programmes. However, the strategic objectives have activity-driven performance indicators that measure programme performance. No five-year targets have been provided; and
- The department must revise the strategic plan and APP to reflect high level outputs that would be measured to assess progress towards achievement of outcomes. The department must develop strategic objectives that are SMART and ensure that there are credible data collection systems in place for all the strategic objectives.

Office of the Auditor-General of South Africa

“The audit of predetermined objectives of public institutions is an annual engagement to provide assurance to Parliament, legislators, members of the public and other relevant parties that the actual performance reported is useful and reliable” (Independent Regulatory Board for Auditors, 2015). AGSA audits the performance information of the public institutions to give an assurance that predetermined objectives were achieved as planned. The GCIS received a qualified audit opinion on the predetermined objectives during the 2012/13 financial year. The 2012/13 AGSA report points out that the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan did not meet the NTF requirements.

National Treasury

According to Goldman, *et al.* (2015), “the NT regulates the departmental five-year plans, annual performance plans and reporting. It receives quarterly performance information and conducts expenditure reviews.” This function requires the NT to ensure that the strategic plans of the departments are well resourced, that there are financial and human resources to achieve the targets that the departments have set in the plans. However, there was no feedback on the GCIS 2012/13-2016/17 strategic plans submitted to the NT.

2.10 GCIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS (2012-2016)

The four financial years of the GCIS strategic planning process are briefly discussed here, describing how the department has progressed in their planning process since the development of the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan document. They cover the four financial years 2012/13, 2013/14, 2014/15 and 2015/16. The 2016/17 financial year will not be discussed in this research because it has not been implemented. Table 2.10 depicts how the GCIS strategic planning process unfolded, considering the role of the top leadership (executive authority and DG), the budget allocation, and the audit outcomes on performance.

Table 2.10
GCIS strategic planning process (Financial years 2012- 2016)

Financial Year	Executive Authority	Director-General (DG)	Budget	Audit Outcomes
2012/13	Late minister in the Presidency Mr. Collins Chabane	DG: Mr. Jimmy Manyi (a.k.a. Mzwanele Manyi)	R 323 635.00	Qualified audit opinion on performance information.
	Deputy minister Ms Dina Pule			
2013/14	Late minister in the Presidency Mr. Collins Chabane	Acting DG: Ms Phumla Williams	R30 000.00	Unqualified audit opinion on performance information.
	Deputy minister: Mr. Obed Bapela			
2014/15	Minister of Communications Ms Faith Muthambi	Acting DG: Mr Donald Liphoko	R 10 000.00	Clean audit on performance information.
	Deputy minister Ms Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams			
2015/16	Minister of Communications Ms Faith Muthambi	Acting DG: Mr Donald Liphoko	R 5000.00	The audit outcome on performance information has not been concluded.
	Deputy minister Ms Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams			

Source: GCIS (2016)

2.10.1 Financial year 2012/13

The executive authority of the GCIS was the late minister in the Presidency Mr Collins Chabane and the deputy minister (DM) was Ms Dina Pule. The DM was delegated the responsibility of overseeing the work of the GCIS, and therefore addressed the GCIS management during the strategic planning processes. Mr Mzwanele Manyi was the Director-General of the GCIS.

During the 2012/13 financial year, government had only just released the planning guidelines and the formal strategic planning process was new to government departments, including the GCIS. However, the then DG, Mr Mzwanele Manyi championed the planning process, especially the process of cascading the strategic plan to ensure that the all staff members were involved in formulating it.

After the strategic planning session, the DDGs were instructed to ensure that the strategic objectives were cascaded within their chief directorates. As a result, chief directorates held their respective strategic planning sessions to develop targets against the new strategic objectives. Middle-level managers participated in these sessions the technical assistance unit (TAU) of the National Treasury facilitated the branch sessions to help them interpret the framework. Branches presented their inputs to the Manco for approval, then they were incorporated into the departmental Strategic Plan. (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

There were changes in the structure to support the new strategy. “The delivery imperatives of the GCIS have resulted in the review of the structure from the old branches into four programmes, each headed by a DDG, reporting to the DG” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012). The Communication Service Agency, which was a Chief Directorate, was elevated to a branch. Chief directorates for Clusters, Training and Development were established. The new structure was approved by the National Treasury, but was not funded.

During 2012/13 financial year, the GCIS strategic planning process was rigorous. The process entailed implementing the recommendations of the report on *Review of the Government-Wide Communication System*. The department appointed a consultant

to facilitate the planning session over a three-day period. All the senior managers attended the session, and the purpose was to review the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the organisation. In addition, the department booked an outside venue for three days in Bela-Bela, in North West Province, far from the office, to allow managers to plan. The cost estimates for the session were R 323 635.00, including the venue and consultant (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2012).

The bottom-up and top-down approaches were implemented in the department. However, there were still areas that were inadequately dealt with in the planning process: the research process, stakeholder consultations and the identification of strategic issues. During the 2012/13 financial year, the department received a qualified audit opinion of performance information from the AGSA. The report of the AGSA indicated that the indicators on the predetermined objectives of the department were not measurable and realistic.

2.10.2 Financial year 2013/14

The late minister in the Presidency, Mr Collins Chabane, and the deputy minister, Mr Obed Bapela, were the EA of the organisation during the 2013/14 financial year. “The contract of the GCIS DG Mr Mzwanele Manyi on 25 August 2012 and the appointment of Ms Phumla Williams as the acting DG from 26 August 2012. Chief director: human resource Management was subsequently appointed as acting DDG: Corporate Services” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2013).

The department held a one-day strategic review session the political leadership were not invited to attend. The purpose of the session was to assess progress made in the achievements of the targets and to set new targets for the upcoming financial year. The estimated cost was R30 000.00, which was for hiring of an outside venue for the management committee. The session was attended by the management committee, comprising chief directors but excluding directors. The process of cascading the plan to chief directorates and branches, which was initiated by the former DG, Mr Jimmy

Mzwanele Manyi, was not approved. Subsequently, the bottom-up approach was discontinued.

There were slight changes to the structure of the Chief Directorate: Training and Development was transferred from Programme 2 to Programme 1. Subsequently, the Directorate: Human Resource Development reported to the Chief Directorate: Training and Development. There were no changes to the strategy and, as result, no major changes to the structure of the organisation. The department received an unqualified audit from the AGSA (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2013). Although the department received an unqualified audit, there was a regression in the planning process of the GCIS. The bottom-down approach was discontinued, which meant that the only participants in the process were senior managers. Lower-ranking staff members were left out of the planning process. Very little investment was made in the strategic planning, because there was no budget allocated to conduct research process and stakeholder consultation required.

2.10.3 Financial year 2014/15

The 2014/15 financial year was the national election year the EA was the late minister in the Presidency, Mr Collins Chabane and the deputy minister was Mr Obed Bapela for the first six months of the financial year. Ms Phumla Williams was still the acting DG of the GCIS. However, after the elections of May 2014, the president announced the establishment of a new ministry of communications. The GCIS was to report to the new department of communications (DoC) and ceased to report to the minister in the Presidency. The GCIS received the new EA, minister Faith Muthambi, the deputy minister, Ms Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, and Mr Donald Liphoko was appointed as the acting DG.

The president established a number of Inter-ministerial Committees (IMC) to service specific purposes that is deemed to require the dedicated attention of a certain team of ministers. The IMC on Communication and Publicity was established to ensure coordination in the government communication programme. The minister of planning, monitoring and evaluation, Mr Jeff Radebe was appointed as the chair of the IMC (The Presidency, 2016).

Ms Phumla Williams continued, as the acting Cabinet spokesperson, to provide support to the IMC. The post of the Director General (DG) and Cabinet Spokesperson were spilt. This meant that the DG of the GCIS was not the Cabinet Spokesperson, reversing one of the recommendations of the Comtask Report.

A two-day strategic planning session was held with the senior managers, attended by the new EA of the department. During the session, the minister announced her expectations to the management of the GCIS, so that they were incorporated into the strategic plan of the department. The session was held in-house and the only cost incurred was for catering; the amount expended was around R 5000.00 for the two days. There were no changes to the structure of the organisation. The GCIS received a clean audit during the 2014/15 financial year. This was due to its compliance with the audit process (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2015). Some of the challenges raised by the oversight bodies persisted, for example, inadequate provision made for research in the planning process, weak stakeholder consultation and poor involvement of lower-ranking staff members in the planning process. In addition, the financial investment made in the planning process was reduced.

2.10.4 Financial year 2015/16

The EA was the minister, Ms Faith Muthambi and the deputy minister was Ms Stella Ndabeni-Abrahams, with Mr Donald Liphoko as the acting DG. The organisation faced the challenge of relinquishing some of its vacant posts and part of its budget to establish the new DoC. There were austerity measures introduced by the NT, and as a result, there were no funds for office space for the DoC: the GCIS and the Doc shared the same office space. The targets in the strategic plan were reduced to align to the budget cuts from the NT and the structures were adjusted by reducing the branches to three. The CSA branch reverted to a Chief Directorate and formed part of Branch Two. This was because the branch was never funded by the NT.

The strategic planning process had regressed over the years and was affected by the leadership of the organisation. Under the leadership of Mr Mzwanele Manyi a budget

was allocated to the planning process and there was participation by all staff members. The time for the planning process was about six months, incorporating the bottom-up approach. However, with subsequent acting DGs, the process regressed, the bottom-up approach fell out of use completely. Only senior management participated in setting the targets. The planning period was reduced to week to make sure the plans were developed and submitted to oversight bodies. There was not enough budget allocated to the process to incorporate the research and stakeholder consultation.

2.11 GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION PLANNING

In a democratic society where officials are voted into power to govern, communication between government and the citizens becomes vital. Thus, there should be communication channels that allow a citizen to become actively involved in any policy-making processes or decisions taken by government. Young (2007) indicates that communication is a dimension of every action or decision government takes, from the way in which policies are made, promoted and enacted, to how government is organised and the relationships it builds with citizens, the media and other groups such as business and community organisations.

A true account on how government is performing will legitimise it to its people and increase its public value, which is necessary for a good and healthy democracy. Failure to do so often leads to disruption within a country, which might lead to unnecessary instability. According to the Communication for Governance and Accountability Programme (2015), when a government faces a crisis of legitimacy, it is vulnerable to disruptive forces and may not be able to carry out its mandate effectively.

Government must take up responsibility to create communication channels and mediums to meet the information needs of all citizens. In reality, communicating within a heterogeneous society is always a challenge because of diverse information needs and unequal access to resources. Different channels and communication mediums are therefore used for communicating with the public. The GCIS is responsible for central planning and the co-ordination of government communication programmes. The NCS guides the work of the communication structures it developed by the GCIS

it is cascaded down to all spheres of government. The government institutions align their departmental communication strategies to the NCS.

The Task Group on Government Communication (1996) indicated the following responsibilities of the GCIS within a government-wide communication system:

- Facilitate effective communication but not centralise the information flow;
- Ensure that communications/information is delivered by the level of government closest to the consumer of that information; and
- Develop an infrastructure to ensure co-ordination between the national departments (horizontally), between the three tiers of government (vertically) and between other government bodies and parastatals (laterally).

An efficient co-ordination of government communications ensures that many types of communication are maintained between the government and the public at all times. This means that the public has access to information about all government activities, plans and programmes. Government communication planning refers to the ways in which each level of government provides mechanisms to ensure that the public is informed about and participates in all the plans and programmes undertaken by government.

The government communication planning is co-ordinated through the various structures and forums within the GWCS.

“The communication planning meeting is a strategic platform for government communications. The meetings are recognition that it is much easier for communicators to meet and plan together in an effort to attain coherence of message within the communication system. Through this meeting, communicators are fully apprised of the issues within the communications environment, issues their principals are taking to Cabinet and the Cabinet decisions as they are announced through the Cabinet statement” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014).

The communication planning structures need to develop communication campaigns in support of the government policy frameworks, for example, the MTSF. The process entails working with communicators to develop cluster communication strategies and departmental communication strategies to reflect the overall theme and programme of government. The cluster communication strategies are presented at the DG cluster forums, while departmental strategies must be submitted to the GCIS and include implementation/action plans and budget allocations to enable effective evaluation of implementation and alignment with the overall NCS (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2009). Communication is necessary to ensure that the citizens are informed at all times. However, communication also plays a support role within a department. If the department fails to deliver on its mandate, there is nothing much that communication can do. Therefore alignment of the NCS and the strategic plan becomes important. The government communication campaigns must report on progress made to implement the strategic plans. Similarly, departments must follow the same process to ensure that communication strategies support the implementation of the strategic plans within their respective departments.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research methodology used in this study was best suited to answering the research questions. The study examined the GCIS strategic planning process for 2012/13-2016/17, but the strategic planning process that was investigated was for only four financial years, because the 2016/17 financial has not been implemented. The purpose was to identify the challenges that caused the GCIS to develop the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan failed to meet the requirements of the NTF.

3.1 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

According to Saunders, Philip, and Thornhill (2012), qualitative research is interpretive because researchers need to make sense of the subjective and of the socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied. A qualitative research design was used in this study to gain insights about the effectiveness of the GCIS strategic planning process. The following research questions were explored:

- To what extent does the GCIS meet its strategic planning process?
- What are the challenges towards the development of the quality strategic plan by the GCIS?

What are the elements of government communication planning?

- What is the role of the GCIS management in the strategic planning process?

Brynard and Hanekom (1997) indicate that a qualitative research approach entails discovering novel or unanticipated findings and presents the possibility of altering research plans in response to accidental discoveries. A qualitative research design is used in this study to assess the strategic planning process of the GCIS and to examine the challenges that led to the development of a 2012/13- 2016 /17 Strategic Plan that did not meet the requirements of the National Treasury.

Quantitative research is limiting to this research because, according to Terre Blanche, Kevin & Painter (2006), a quantitative study makes sense of a situation in which we know in advance what the important variables are, and are able to devise reasonable ways of controlling or measuring them. However, the qualitative design allowed the researcher to explore how the GCIS conducts their strategic planning process to develop the strategic plan document.

3.1.1 Sampling

According to Laher and Anja (2012), “prior to sampling, a sample frame is required. This is a list of all individuals in a population. Once sampling frame is obtained, one needs to decide on the sample size required for the study as well as the method of sampling; that is probability or non-probability sampling.” A small sample was identified which included individuals familiar with the GCIS strategic planning process. However, Laher & Anja (2012) indicate that there are no rules concerning the most appropriate sample size in qualitative research, but owing to the intense, in-depth nature of such studies, sample size tends to be small. The sample size for this study was twenty participants. They included seven the GCIS senior managers, the Minister of Communications, four members of oversight bodies, six government communicators and two journalists. The participants were relevant to the study to offer their insight pertaining to the GCIS strategic planning process.

According to Saunders, et al. (2012), with purposive sampling you need to use your judgement to select the cases that will best enable you to answer the research question(s) and to meet your objectives. Furthermore, your sample cannot be considered statistically representative to the total population. Purposive sampling was used to select eight of the GCIS management, including the Minister of Communications and four members of the oversight bodies, to be interviewed. They were chosen because of their relevance in answering the research questions. However, officials from oversight bodies who interact specifically with the GCIS were selected automatically.

3.1.2 Data collection methods

The choice of research design dictates the data collection methods used. According to Babbie and Johann (2015), the individual interview is one of the most frequently used methods of data gathering within the qualitative approach. It allows the participants to speak for themselves, rather than providing respondents with a battery of predetermined, hypothesis-based questions. The study was qualitative in nature, therefore the in-depth interviews were conducted with sixteen participants.

Semi- structured interviews

According to Welman, Kruger and Mitchell (2005), “in semi-structured interviews, the researcher has a list of themes and questions to be covered, although these may vary from one interview to the next. This means that some questions may be used in particular interviews, given the specific organisational context that is encountered in relation to the research topic.” Purposive sampling allowed the researcher to adjust the interview according to the group of participants, since some of the questions relevant to one group were irrelevant to another. The schedule consisted of twenty interviews: six with government communicators, two with journalists, four with officials from the oversight bodies and eight with GCIS managers, including the Minister of Communications. Of the twenty interviews, sixteen were conducted successfully and four were cancelled.

The questionnaire was adjusted according to the group that was interviewed; this was because of their different roles in the strategic planning process of the GCIS. However, each interview was unique and revealed different viewpoints, even within the same group, for example, the GCIS management. This is acceptable because Welman *et al.* (2005) indicate that respondents may be asked the same questions, but the interviewer may adapt the formulation, including the terminology, to fit the background and educational level of the respondent.

The questionnaire consisted of a number of probing questions which allowed the interviewer to get more clarity with regard to the main topic of the study. Saunders *et al.* (2012) indicate that probing questions can be used to explore responses that are significant to the research topic. They may be worded like open questions but require

a particular focus or direction. Different questionnaires were sent to participants and followed up with telephonic discussions to provide background about the study and its objectives.

The interviews with officials from the oversight bodies took place as scheduled. Four government communicators were interviewed successfully, two cancelled. Only one journalist was interviewed and seven the GCIS management were interviewed. The Minister's interview was cancelled due to pressing work commitments.

Secondary data

According to Bless and Higson-Smith (1995), "researchers have to use data collected by other investigators in connection with other research problems (or as part of the usual gathering of social data, as in case of population census)." The following documents provided information relevant to the research questions and objectives:

- The 2012/13 management report issued by the Auditor General of South Africa (AGSA), indicating the findings from the AGSA on the quality of the strategic planning process; and
- Correspondence from oversight bodies to the GCIS, which detailed the feedback on the quality of the strategic plan document submitted by the GCIS.

Desktop research

According to Hox and Boeije (2005), "the internet holds several interesting web sites where individuals or research units offer access to their data sets." They further indicate that universities, research institutes and individual researchers may decide to make their data available. The internet became a powerful means for this researcher to access information. Desktop research was used to acquire some of the research material. It assisted the researcher, when there were time constraints, to have easy access to material relevant to the study.

3.1.3 Data analysis

Qualitative data can be analysed using different approaches. However, this study followed an inductive approach. Several researchers agree that “to analyse data, you can take the inductive approach, which works well with single cases or when you want to describe or explore some phenomenon. Inductive analysis involves going from specific to general. In this approach, codes are typically identified from the data themselves, rather from preconceived codes from the existing literature or from the researcher’s beliefs or knowledge of the specific data” (Kawulich & Holland 2012; Holland 2012; Laurel & Holland 2012). This approach was followed, firstly, because the research process is qualitative, and secondly there were no predetermined theories, hypotheses or assumptions made or to be proven. It is also called grounded theory.

Thematic analysis

According to Kawulich and Holland (2012), Holland (2012), and Laurel and Holland (2012), “Thematic analysis is a general approach to analysing qualitative data that involves identifying themes or patterns in the data. In some qualitative studies, the purpose is to generate theory or models such as in grounded theory. The researcher wants to understand some phenomenon by looking at how various participants experience that phenomenon.” The thematic analysis was relevant to the study to analyse the qualitative data collected during the interviewing process. However, this study is not intended to develop any theories, but to uncover the challenges in the strategic planning processes of the GCIS that led to the development of the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan that did not meet the NTF requirements.

According to TerreBlanche *et al.* (2006): “coding means breaking up the data into analytically relevant ways. A code can be a phrase, a line, a sentence or a paragraph, identifying textual bits by virtue containing material that pertains to the themes under consideration.” In addition, Welman *et al.* (2005) indicate that the purpose of coding is to analyse and makes sense of data that have been collected.

The coding process involved themes guided by the research questions. These relate to the following questions:

- To what extent does the GCIS meet its strategic planning process?
- What are the challenges towards the development of the quality strategic plan by the GCIS?
- What are the elements of government communication planning?
- What is the role of the GCIS management in the strategic planning process?

A total of sixteen interviews were conducted, two of them telephonically, and the data were analysed as follows:

- All the interviews were recorded, except for one where the researcher simply took notes. Audio tapes were transcribed into document.
- Each interview transcript was analysed word-for-word to identify the themes emerging from data. Subsequently several themes emerged from the transcripts and are discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of Chapter 4 is to present the findings and to discuss the themes and patterns that emerged when the strategic planning process of the GCIS was assessed. The analysis was done to discover the challenges that led to the development of the GCIS 2012/13-2016 /17 Strategic Plan that did not meet the requirements of the National Treasury. There were seven major themes that provided answers the research questions.

4.1 GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The context for the government strategic planning process was set in the NTF, which guided the process for national and provincial departments. According to the National Treasury (2010), “The outcomes oriented approach is designed to ensure that government is focused on achieving expected real improvements in the lives of South Africans.” Additionally, it was a legislative requirement that institutions produce and table a strategic plan with a five-year planning horizon, outlining the planned projects and programme implementation and associated implications regarding resources and other prescribed information (National Treasury, 2010).

Managers in the public sector were required to have an understanding of the government strategic planning process, as they were responsible for the implementation of government policies and programmes and for allocating the necessary resources. Moreover, they had to ensure that their departmental programmes and projects were aligned to the targets outlined in the NDP and MTSF. Officials from oversight bodies were required an in-depth understanding of the government strategic planning process so they could give guidance to departments on how to align their respective strategic plans to the NDP and the MTSF. This would, in turn, ensure that government monitored the implementation of the developmental targets stated in the NDP and MTSF. Government communicators also played a pivotal role in communicating government progress in implementation of policies and programmes. To perform this role, they also needed to understand the government’s

strategic planning cycle, so that they could provide the necessary communication support. Table 4.2 lists a number of participants who were aware government strategic planning process and understood how departments were required to align their respective strategic plans to NDP and MTSF.

Table 4.2
Government strategic planning process

Participants' profile	Total number of participants	Number of interviewees who were able to define the process
GCIS Management	7	6
Communicators	4	2
Oversight bodies	4	3
Total	15	11

Source: Researcher's own, (2016)

There was a general understanding of the government strategic planning process by the participants, as well as of how departments were supposed to be aligned to the NDP and the MTSF. The findings indicate that eleven out of fifteen participants were able to define the government strategic planning process. However, the journalist was not asked the same questions because they operated outside government. The managers and communicators supported government's outcomes approach and recognised the importance of providing services that improved the lives of ordinary citizens.

Our particular government has chosen the macro planning cycles. We have chosen long-term plans, so we had vision 2030, which takes us to 16, 18, 20 year's cycles. We have macro plans and within that, we have micro plans, medium-term cycles and annual cycles. So for me that planning process must set the long-term vision for the society in terms of achieving those programmes, policies ,laws and things to run the society. Secondly, it must achieve in a long term of 30 years some of those goals of a developmental state. To get to the

2030, we have five years cycles that is the MTSF with targets to be achieved by government (GCIS Manager).

Six managers, were able to define the government strategic planning process; one manager defined the government communication cycle. The same six managers defined the NDP as a long-term developmental plan of the country, with a five-years cycle aligned to the electoral cycle of government. Furthermore, they indicated that the MTSF focused on the fourteen outcomes of government, with targets and indicators, and departments had to align their strategic plans to these outcomes. Two communicators also indicated that the NDP was the long-term plan, to be implemented over five years, and identified in the MTSF; three of the officials from the oversight bodies expressed the same views.

Two communicators defined the process, while one focused on the challenges with the government strategic planning process. Three officials from the oversight bodies were able to describe the government strategic planning process but one from the AGSA could not describe it. This could be because the AGSA was not necessarily part of government and operated independently.

4.1.1 Standardisation of strategic plans for departments

According to the National Treasury (2010), the NTF itself, including the generic formats for the Strategic Plans and Annual Performance Plans, fell within the ambit of uniform treasury norms and standards, and compliance with them was therefore critical. As a result, departments were required to align their respective strategic plans and annual performance plans with the guidelines. The first inclination of the department in the strategic planning process was to comply with the legislative requirements of the NTF. This involved tabling of the strategic plans in Parliament within the legislated time-frames. Although compliance was the first order for public sector managers, it should not have been the main driver to embark on the planning process. Managers should have appreciated the benefits of the strategic planning process and commit to it fully.

Five out of seven managers indicated that government developed frameworks to guide the planning process and to ensure that there was standardisation within government. The NTF guided departments on how to develop their strategic plans and align to the MTSF. However, these managers indicated that standardised frameworks were a challenge for government departments. This was because government departments had to conform with the industry trends which applied to their discipline. As a result, NTF requirement tended to be limiting.

The department of communication has to responds to the policy environment and particularly to the international trend in terms of program, broadband and data collection. So government in a sense has to come up with rules that can be able to apply to every environment throughout and that is where the challenge comes in (GCIS Manager).

There was a further indication that this standardisation led to malicious compliance, and that planning was not regarded as a management tool to improve performance within the GCIS. Bunning (1992) states that government institutions undertake the strategic planning processes mainly to comply with the requirements of the central government. The GCIS had to plan for eventualities that went beyond mere compliance it had to plan for the impact of the communication programmes within society. Oversight bodies were there to ensure that departments improve their planning process. For the same reasons, the DPME required departments to also institutionalise monitoring and evaluation systems for departmental programmes and projects.

4.2 GCIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The GCIS framework served as a policy guideline for planning, performance monitoring, monthly, quarterly and annual reporting, and was applicable to the entire department, including provincial offices (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). The framework outlined the time-based planning process for the organisation, but not the specific steps in the planning process, or clear deliverables that would result.

All seven managers defined the GCIS strategic planning process differently. There was no unified understanding of the strategic planning process within the department. Moreover, only one out of seven managers described the government communication cycle. However, each referred to the timelines for the government strategic planning process, and was aware of the legislative deadlines of government. Therefore, the strategic planning process within the GCIS can be described as haphazard, without a clear outline of how the process will unfold, and what the intended outcomes of the process were. A manager described the ideal planning process for the department, indicating the limitations of the current practices for strategic planning. These limitations might be attributed the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan that did not meet the NTF requirements.

The GCIS the strategic planning process is supposed to start with the review of the previous strategy and that must include all managers and middle managers. Firstly, to reflect on what we have set ourselves to achieve this year and the things that we have managed to achieve. Secondly, look at the things we did not manage to achieve and identify the circumstances that led to not achieving. Thirdly focus on the new environment that has dictated any new approach. Then plan is based on the strategies to continue to provide government messages to the public. Management must take the plan through until Manco has approved it and taken it to the minister (GCIS Manager).

4.2.1 Strategic direction of the organisation

The strategic direction of the organisation is important because it explains what the organisation will focus on to achieve its vision, mission, and the strategic objectives. “It indicates the broad priorities and direction adopted by the organisation” (Myers, 1998). It assists staff members in differentiating strategic issues from operational issues and guides decision-making within the organisation. All seven managers defined the strategic direction of the GCIS differently; there was no uniformity in their definitions. However, three believed that it was clear to every staff member in the organisation. In contrast, three stated that it was not clear, and one did not express any judgment.

Managers are responsible for sharing the strategic direction of the organisation. However, when the leadership has a different understanding of the strategic direction, it means that even the general staff members are likely have different understandings as well. This points to a lack of coherence in the planning process, and as a result, the end product, which is the strategic plan document, might be of poor quality.

The strategic direction is the main thrust of the strategic plan, delineating the challenges of the organisation and what it aims to achieve in the future. Lack of clarity in the strategic direction also indicates confusion regarding the priorities of the organisation, and this is likely to affect the morale of the staff.

4.2.2 Strategic planning approaches

There are many strategic planning process approaches organisations can adopt. However, according to the GCIS framework, the GCIS used both the top-down and bottom-up approach during the strategic planning process: “The top-down approach will commence with a senior managers’ (directors upwards) strategic planning workshop, which will conduct an environmental scan and develop strategic objectives of the organisation that are aligned to the vision, mission, and goals of the organisation. The bottom-up approach is important when directorates develop targets that will inform the strategic plan. The chief directorate should involve directors in the process of setting targets because they oversee the implementation process” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). Implementing both approaches ensures that all staff members participate in the planning process. It assists them in understanding their roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the strategic plan document.

Six of the seven managers emphasised that the top-down approach was practised within the organisation, with only one indicating that the planning process cascaded down to the operational level. They further indicated the limitations with this approach, because the lower staff members did not buy in into the strategy of the organisation. This invariably led to poor implementation of the strategic plan. Managers held a strong view that all staff members should have been involved in the strategic planning process. However, they failed to indicate why they were not involved in the first place.

You know, the thing that would make our planning clear to people at lower levels is if our process of planning begins with the Directorates. Inputs into the plan should begin at Directorate level and builds up to Chief Directorate and Branch level. So it should start like the bottom-up, top-down, not top-down. Then these two meet half way (GCIS Manager).

I don't believe in the planning process that it only speaks to the management it has to be a collective thing. I believe that you can achieve more by involving your below structures than just the leadership (GCIS Manager).

4.2.3 Planning schedule in the GCIS

The planning schedules ensure that there is a sequence in how the planning process is going to unfold. The details of the phases, timelines, roles and responsibilities in the planning are outlined in the schedule. It compels all the participants to be informed about the process, the timelines, and their responsibilities. Moreover, it ensures that the entire process is well co-ordinated and yields the required outcomes.

“Time is probably the most important element to consider in designing the planning process. It should take between three and nine months to complete all the tasks related to the process and additional time for review and approval by the full leadership” (The Enterprise Foundation, 1999). There was no planning schedule in the GCIS to guide the strategic planning process; hence, there was no sequence or defined phases for the strategic planning process itself. Six of seven managers responded to the question about the existence of the planning schedule within the organisation. Four indicated that the planning schedule did not exist within the organisation and that it was guided by the NTF legislated timelines. One alluded to having the planning schedule within the department. This showed that the planning process was compliance-driven, but not institutionalised as a management tool within the organisation.

I think that the planning schedule is determined by government deadlines. The GCIS one has not been institutionalised. It depends on strategic planning unit indicating the deadline for submission of the strategic plan to DPME and National

Treasury. So I think it is the responsibility of the strategic planning unit to bring some kind of a planning schedule to guide the planning process within the organisation (GCIS Manager).

4.3 GCIS STRATEGIC PLANNING CHALLENGES

There were many challenges in the strategic planning process, which might involve a lack of commitment from top management, and a lack of staff involvement. Also, the organisation might not have had the culture of planning. The findings of the study revealed five challenges in the GCIS strategic planning process that led to the development of the 2013/12-2016/17 Strategic Plan that did not meet the requirements of the NTF.

4.3.1 Research in strategic planning process

Research precedes the planning process, so as to have a deeper understanding of the prevailing challenges in the internal and external environment of the organisation. It provides information that management needs. According to the National Treasury (2010), research should be able to present a range of indicators that reflect the demand for services and the nature of challenges to be addressed.

The research can involve a survey study conducted by the organisation on stakeholder, competition, and internal staff satisfaction. The research results will be used for the SWOT analysis later in the planning stages of the organisation. Research in the GCIS will bring the realities of how stakeholders within the GWCS view the organisation, the emerging trends in communication and the changing communication needs of the public. Four of seven managers indicated that there was no research conducted to inform the planning setting of performance targets and indicators. Furthermore, they indicated that strategic issues were not identified and the strategic plan becomes operational.

4.3.2. Performance indicators and targets

Performance indicators and targets are important to measure progress towards achieving the strategic objectives of the organisation. The NTF provided the following requirements for the performance indicators and targets for government departments:

- The key performance indicators should be aligned to the NDP that will be monitored and this may involve negotiations with the line department and the Presidency.
- Programme performance indicators that are reliable, well defined, verifiable, cost effective, appropriate and relevant should be sought, with baseline information and targets expressed in terms of actual numbers. (National Treasury, 2010).

The GCIS management and the officials from the oversight bodies were asked to express their opinions about the GCIS performance indicators and targets. These two groups were relevant because they were familiar with the contents of the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan document. Government Communicators and journalists as stakeholders were not consulted during the GCIS strategic planning process.

Table 4.2.2
Setting performance indicators and targets

Participants' profile	Total number of interviewees	Number of interviewees indicating challenges with performance indicators and targets
GCIS Management	7	5
Oversight bodies	4	3
Total	11	8

Source: Researcher's own, (2016).

Five of seven managers and three of four oversight officials indicated that the GCIS has challenges with setting the right performance indicators and targets in the strategic plan. Eight of eleven participants stressed the challenge with the performance

indicators and targets in the strategic plan document. The managers maintained that the greatest challenge remained the fact that the communication environment was fluid and has no tangible outputs and outcomes. However, the oversight bodies indicated that the department has the capacity to set the correct targets and indicators.

4.3.3 Acting leadership

Leadership is important in the strategic planning process. For the purposes of this study, the leadership comprised the EA and the EXCO of the organisation. Each has a specific role to play in the planning process.

Five of the seven managers pointed out the instability of having acting leadership and were of the opinion that the restructuring process had had a negative impact on the organisation, while two did not raise any concerns. They pointed out that it led to unclear strategic direction, affected the morale of the staff, and brought many uncertainties within the organisation. The acting leadership also affected continuity in the strategy of the department. The GCIS had three DGs, with two acting within the four financial years from 2012/13-2015/16. They all differed in their strategic focus for the organisation.

4.3.4 NCS and GCIS strategic plan

The GCIS developed the NCS to guide the government communications within the three spheres. It cascaded the communication strategy through co-ordinating forums. The process of developing the NCS and the strategic plan were completely different and were not complementary. While the strategic plan had been allocated the budget, the NCS was partially funded by the NT. The NCS and the strategic plan were separate documents but were both aimed at ensuring that there was coherence within the GWCS, and that government constantly communicated with the citizens. The strategic plan was a corporate plan of the department, and was intended to operationalise the NCS. The department needed to provide resources for implementation of the NCS, by aligning it to the strategic plan.

Five of seven managers indicated the challenges with the main document that drives the work of the department. They indicated the contention between the NCS and the strategic plan of the department. Three of them believed they were separate documents, because they are developed and approved separately. One manager indicated that the NCS is the main content driver of the strategic framework of the GCIS.

4.3.5 Communication environment

According to the Department of Government Communication and Information System (2014), the communication environment is the terrain in which the communicator chooses to communicate. It should deal with issues such as the public mood, the media agendas and concerns, attitudes of varying sectors and forces and potential for improving the environment.

Mulgan (2009) indicates that most of the time the public sector experiences a crisis in their operational environment that requires immediate attention. This often tends to shift the focus from strategic issues in dealing with the crisis. Six of seven managers and one of four communicators indicated that the communication environment was dynamic and traditional methods of planning process might not have applied. This directly affected government communications, because there had to be communication around any crisis that affected the country. As a result, the plan that had been developed might have been affected by crises that emerged from the communication environment.

4.4 ELEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION PLANNING

The respondents described the four elements that are critical in government communications planning, namely: the government communication cycle, strategic communication, the role of political principals and co-ordination of communication structure. The research findings indicated that the GCIS management should pay attention to these elements to improve the functioning of the GWCS

4.4.1 Government communication cycle

The government communication cycle outlines the phases and timelines in the planning process within the GWCS. It guides the development and implementation of the NCS, the subsidiary cluster communication strategies and departmental communication strategies.

All four government communicators were aware of the government communication cycle and indicated that they participated in it. The communication cycle was important in ensuring that there is continuous communication flow within the GWCS. The GCIS had to inform the public about programmes, plans, challenges and achievements of government.

The departmental communication strategies had to resonate with the strategic plans of the departments because the key programmes of the department were reflected in the strategic plans. Communication units could provide communication support for departmental programmes, as they were implemented. Four communicators pointed out the challenge of the budget allocated to the communications unit, and also stated that, for implementation of communication campaigns, they relied on the budget from the core functions.

4.4.2 Strategic communication

“Strategic communication is more than just getting the right message to the right people. This approach seeks to ensure that communication programmes meet the objectives of both the public and government. Strategic communication is typically supported by a detailed plan to meet government’s objectives” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). Although all four communicators defined strategic communication differently, they all agreed that it was not events management. However, Cornish, Julian and Claire (2011) indicate that the search for a common definition has often hindered rather than helped strategic communications. Indeed, the ideally flexible and adaptive nature of strategic communications means no single definition will suffice.

Communicators indicated that the government communications programme was largely consumed by events, especially the ministerial *imbizo*'s, which had little impact in communicating government messages. They all agreed that more public education and outreach programmes should have been conducted to influence the public. "Effective strategic communications must be established upon a strong understanding of any given information environment. Communicating has traditionally been understood to be a two-way process, and effective strategic communications, if properly configured (and not merely as a euphemism for 'megaphone diplomacy'), should inform the periodic adaptation and adjustment of policy and strategy" (Cornish, et al., 2011).

Strategic communication requires government communicators to focus on heightening communication campaigns that drive the message across; this will require a multifaceted communication campaign with many communication activities. However, this requires that the budget is enough to ensure that the communication runs over a period of time, so as to make the right impact. The communicators indicated that once-off Imbizo's and events were not have sufficient impact and did not yield the required outcomes.

I remember in the early days of our democratic government we went out for Imbizos and some other department they still do Imbizos Now these Imbizos for me they become, venting sessions for communities and most of the time we do not document the discussion during these sessions. If we do document them, we do not go back to communities, and report on progress made since the last session (Communicator).

4.4.3 Role of political principals in government communication

According to the Department of Government Communication and Information System (2014) the political principals are defined as:

- The president and deputy president
- The minister and deputy minister

- Directors-General and senior members of the department.

Political principals are the main communicators and the chief spokespersons of government (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2014). Five out of seven managers and all four communicators indicated that the political principals showed a lack of appreciation and understanding for the communications function. Communicators further pointed out that cabinet ministers have expressed a lack of trust in the GCIS, and sometimes prefer to use consultants for communication functions that the GCIS could do. “Firstly, it is necessary to ensure that all political principals and heads of departments have a common understanding of government’s approach to communication and of the critical role communication plays in policy implementation” (Department of Government Communication and Information System, 2009).

4.4.4 Co-ordination of communication structures

The co-ordination function was mainly conducted through the communication forums and structures. The GCIS co-ordinators co-ordinated these structures across the three spheres of government. The forums were used for joint planning, to cascade NCS, and to report progress on the implementation of communication campaigns. The findings point out challenges relating to the co-ordination communication structures, such as poor attendance, lack of understanding of the GCIS co-ordinators on how clients departments work, and the inadequacies of the reporting process.

Three of four communicators indicated that the co-ordination function varied among the cluster co-ordination within the GCIS. There were those who were proactive and more involved in the support they offer to the client departments, while others were not. Three communicators also pointed out that the co-ordinators do not understand how the client departments within their respective clusters are structured. Two even suggested that the co-ordinators should be inducted into how the other government departments are structured and how they function. Four communicators pointed to the poor attendance at the co-ordinating forums, with one saying that there was just no respect for the structures by the executive management, and another one commenting

that there was no value in attending the sessions. One GCIS manager agreed that the some of the structures had lost direction and purpose.

4.5 ROLE OF GCIS MANAGEMENT IN STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Management consists of different levels within the organisation. However, respondents alluded to the role of executive management (DG and the DDGs) in the GCIS strategic planning process. Most respondents alluded to three roles of management in the strategic planning process. Firstly, five of seven managers asserted that the role of the management was to provide strategic direction during in the planning process. Secondly, it is necessary to harness the culture of innovative and creative thinking within the organisation. This would assist the team in identifying strategic intervention in the planning process. Lastly, five out of seven managers indicated that the role of management was to ensure staff members buys-in to the strategic planning process.

Strategic thinking involves the ability by staff members to identify emerging opportunities, and being able to act on them. However, doing so needs to be part of the culture harnessed within the organisation. Four of seven managers emphasised that the GCIS had no culture of harnessing innovative and creative thinking. However, the role of leadership is described, indicating what is expected from the GCIS leadership.

The role of the leadership it is to indicate the strategic direction, to lead and guide the organisation on a mandate, and achieving the strategic plan. To liaise with the political principals and get support to unlock resources. It is also to create the stability within the organisation and to show that we are consistent in what we do. To ensure that all the sections work together in an integrated and aligned way to achieve the strategic goals and objectives of the organisation” (GCIS Manager).

4.6 FEEDBACK FROM OVERSIGHT BODIES

“Institutions in the executive that have broad oversight responsibilities within government have a general duty to assist Parliament, legislatures and municipal councils to exercise better oversight themselves by publishing appropriate summary information” (The National Treasury, 2007). The oversight bodies are there to ensure that government institutions adhere to the legislative requirements. The oversight bodies have different responsibilities which are contradictory at times.

4.6.1 Oversight bodies

The findings showed that oversight bodies got involved in the assessment of the strategic plan document, but did not do so during the strategic planning process. All seven managers and oversight bodies agreed that there was little assistance during the strategy formulation process, and that there was no technical advice on the formulation of indicators, especially those that supported the NDP and MTSF.

Five of seven managers indicated that the DPME could have become more involved in the planning process itself. In contrast, two of seven managers thought that the assistance was sufficient. The management of the GCIS required the DPME to assist the department in aligning to the MTSF targets and indicators, and not only to assess the departmental strategic plans and provide feedback. They required more engagement in translating the MTSF and NDP targets into the strategic plan of the department.

The three officials from the oversight bodies indicated that they had not offered support in the strategic planning processes of the GCIS. They did not assist the GCIS with the development of performance indicators and strategic objectives that were aligned to the NDP and MTSF.

4.6.2 Feedback assessments of strategic plan

Three officials from oversight bodies expressed the view that the GCIS was generally compliant with the framework, while one indicated that they never assessed the plans

because of lack of capacity. They also indicated that the GCIS had the capacity to correct the performance indicators and targets, and complied with the legislative framework in terms of deadlines of submission of plan. However, the 2012/13-2016/17 strategic plan was not credible because it failed to meet the NTF requirements. There was agreement, based on feedback from the assessments by the EA, the DPME and AGSA that the quality of the strategic plan produced was operational and did not have impact indicators to align to the NDP and MTSF.

4.7 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

According to the National Treasury (2010), institutions should consult with key stakeholders to identify and include indicators that they had a direct interest in tracking. Stakeholder consultation is critical in the public sector planning process; they have to understand their expectations so that they design programmes that will have an impact on their lives. Government communications have to offer information services by the methods preferred by the public.

4.7.1 Government communicators

The management of the GCIS had espoused the idea of consulting with key stakeholders during the planning process. However, they had different views on who the departmental key stakeholders were. Four of the seven managers did not regard government communicators as the key stakeholders to be consulted during the planning process.

Communicators are part of the communication system, they are key role players and they are part of the network. I do not think they are concerned stakeholders in my view to be consulted because they are part of the system. I think we should look at stakeholders more broadly. Stakeholders who are outside of government. (GCIS Manager).

All the managers agreed that the government communicators should be involved in the planning process for the NCS, as opposed to the strategic plan document of the department. They regarded the NCS as more relevant to communicators and the

strategic plan to be internally focused. All government communicators indicated that they were being consulted on the NCS at some point through the co-ordination of the Government Communicators Forum.

4.7.2 Media relations

The findings revealed that some of the managers within the GCIS actively d the relationship with the media, especially when co-ordinating events for national days. Three of four communicators indicated that they feel supported by the GCIS media liaison team, and one communicator said that the GCIS really prioritises the national days. One communicator commented that networking sessions with the media used to happen in the past, at which there were opportunities to reflect on how to work together and improve relationships. The journalist also expressed the same sentiments.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Seven significant themes were identified from the data described in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 interprets and analyses them to understand the implications of the challenges to the GCIS strategic planning process that led to the development of the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan that unmet the NTF requirements. The analysis is important in answering the following research questions:

- To what extent does the GCIS meet its strategic planning process?
- What are the challenges towards the development of the quality strategic plan by the GCIS?
- What are the elements of government communication planning?
- What is the role of the GCIS management in strategic planning process?

5.1 GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The South African government adopted a long-term and integrated planning system to help the country achieve its developmental goals. Government achieved its developmental goals through institutions capable of delivering quality services to the public. The majority of participants indicated that the NDP, as a developmental plan for the country, aimed to eradicate poverty, inequality and unemployment. Furthermore, they indicated that the MTSF was the five-year cycle of the NDP, which implemented the developmental agenda of the country. Although there was a general understanding of the requirements of the NDP and the MTSF by the GCIS management, the 2012/13-2016/17 strategic plan was not aligned to the MTSF targets. This was confirmed in the feedback from the DPME and the AGSA.

The formal strategic planning process was adopted by the fifth administration in 2009. Public sector managers were required to adopt this new approach to the planning process and in 2010 GCIS established a unit to drive the strategic planning process within the organisation. This was a new concept for the department, and the GCIS

managers might not have had the skills and capacity to perform this function. Manning (2006) discussed public sector managers' lack of skills and capabilities in the strategic planning process. The tools and processes they use are poorly selected and badly applied, so mixed results are inevitable. They produce "fat, turgid documents that confuse rather than enlighten". One manager response supported the view by Manning that the department had clear strategies but lacked the tactics to implement these strategies.

The GCIS adopted the strategic planning processes mainly to comply with legislative requirements, as pointed out by Bunning (1992). The GCIS managers agreed that the planning process had not been institutionalised to improve the performance of the organisation. When it has been undertaken, it will be aimed at complying with the deadlines of the NTF. Currently, there is little value to be derived from the strategic planning process within the GCIS.

5.1.1 Standardisation of strategic plans

Five out of seven managers indicated that government had developed frameworks to guide the planning process and ensure that there is standardisation within government departments. However, standardisation was aimed at bringing uniformity to the government strategic plans to plan better for service delivery. But, it was also limited because it left little room for dealing with unique situations or events.

The GCIS operated within a communication environment which was dynamic in nature. It required a certain level of flexibility to adapt the plan to the changing environment, and it became challenging for the department to plan with certainty when operating in such an environment. Nevertheless, the NTF prohibited in-year changes to a strategic plan that has been tabled in Parliament. Any deviation from the plan was considered to be non-compliance, which might lead to a qualified audit opinion by the AGSA. Mulgan (2009) pointed out the challenges public sector managers face because of the generalisations embodied in laws, prescripts, programmes and protocols. Strategic thinking requires managers to be innovative and capable of capitalising on opportunities as they arise from the emerging strategies. The GCIS might not have been able to benefit from the emerging strategies because this meant

deviating from the original plan. This might discourage the GCIS from incorporating strategic thinking into their planning process.

5.2 GCIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

A formal strategic planning process follows a linear approach to strategic planning, characterised by phases from strategy formulation to implementation. . Although it has limitations, it imparts a sequence to the process. The four broad phases include the research phase, which is aimed at understanding the internal and external environment of the organisation. The formulation phase involves agreeing on the vision, mission, strategic goals, and the strategic interventions, thus developing the plan. The last two phases include implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Each phase has its own detailed steps, which makes the planning process more comprehensive.

The GCIS had two strategic planning processes. The one was followed to develop the strategic plan of the department and it had to comply with the NTF requirements. The other was to develop the NCS and followed the government communication cycle approved by cabinet. However, the strategic planning process examined in the study apply for 2012/13-2015/16 financial years, and led to the development of the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan that was not credible and is the reason why the 2016/17 financial year has not been implemented, therefore it cannot be assessed.

The GCIS strategic planning framework implied that the department followed a formal strategic planning process. It did not incorporate other forms of planning, like strategic thinking or scenario planning. The strategic planning process of the GCIS did not lead to the desired outcomes. This was because there were challenges with the planning process that resulted in the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan not being credible and not meeting the requirements of the NTF.

There are benefits that result from institutionalising the strategic planning process, because it assists the department in providing services that will have a positive impact on the lives of citizens.

In this case, the planning process was temporal, to manage the legislative deadlines of the strategic plans. The managers disclosed that planning was driven mostly by the need to comply with the deadlines of the NTF, and there was not much value derived from the strategic planning process. The lack of a comprehensive planning process within the GCIS meant that critical steps were missed and the process did not yield the necessary results.

5.2.1 Strategic direction of the organisation

Strategic direction consists of the vision, mission, and strategic goals of the organisation. It also includes the strategies that the organisation will undertake to achieve the strategic goals and objectives of the department. It drives the employees towards what is of priority. The strategic direction must bridge the gap between the current situation and a desirable future state. The research findings indicated that all seven managers defined the strategic direction of the organisation differently. If managers are unclear about the strategic direction of the organisation, it might mean that the rest of the employees are also not clear about the strategic direction of the organisation. More importantly, the GCIS had a mandate to provide strategic leadership within the GWCS, so a different understanding of the vision and strategic direction might have pulled the focus of the system in different directions.

Employees, especially those that co-ordinate communication clusters, must be able to provide strategic guidance to departments. They therefore needed to be confident about the strategic focus of the GWCS. They co-ordinate the communication structures, and assist departments in developing communication strategies for campaigns, and arrange media briefings, among other functions. Therefore it is imperative that they steer government departments towards the strategic direction of the organisation.

5.2.2 Strategic planning approaches

The GCIS framework (2014) prescribed that the department would balance the top-down and bottom-up approaches to gain advantages from both. However, it became apparent that the department only applied the top-down approach in their strategic

planning process. Senior management, from the directors to the executives, were involved in the strategic planning process. Six of the seven managers emphasised that the top-down approach was practised within the organisation.

The GCIS did not cascade the plan to the operational level, leading to a lack of buy-in to the plan on the part of staff members at lower levels. The bottom-up approach did not receive much attention in the planning process of the GCIS. Therefore, no efforts were made to get input from staff members and to use that information to inform the strategic direction of the organisation. It is essential that implementation of the strategic plan of the department is done through lower staff members. If the GCIS management did not make efforts to ensure that staff members were informed of the strategy, it is highly likely that this led to poor implementation, since employees viewed it as an imposed strategy.

The GCIS missed opportunities to take advantage of the creative ideas arising from the staff members in the front line of service delivery. These were the people who worked closely with clients on the daily basis and were likely to know the strategies that would succeed and those that were likely to fail. However, there should have been a balance between the two approaches: top management should be able to interpret the strategic direction of the organisation to staff members and also create space for feedback from staff members on the best way to implement the strategic direction of the department.

The most critical element for the GCIS was the co-ordination; all levels of government were looking to the organisation for strategic direction within the GWCS. When the staff members were not involved in the strategic planning process of the organisation, they were challenged in providing leadership from within the GWCS. As a consequence, there was a lack of trust by other client departments in the GCIS's ability to provide that leadership. Some departments continued with communication efforts without consultation with the GCIS. Others appointed consultants to obtain the services that GCIS can offer for free.

In the 2012/13 financial year, the then-DG championed a rigorous planning process. During that time, all the staff members were involved in the planning process.

However, there was no follow-through when he left the department. Management agreed that it was vital to have a balance between the bottom-up and top-down approach in the planning processes, to incorporate a holistic approach.

Five out of seven managers thought that the department is doing well at corporate and branch level only. This supports the point that the top-down approach was given the most attention within the department. Management, especially of Exco, did not facilitate the process of ensuring that the functional level and operational levels in the strategic planning process were functional. . Top management developed the strategy, then agreed on the targets and indicators. This led to a lack of buy-in from staff, and generally poor implementation of the strategic plan of the department.

5.2.3 Planning schedule in GCIS

The GCIS did not have a planning schedule, mainly because there were no clear steps or phases in the planning process. Managers indicated that they were guided by the legislated timeframes, as outlined in the government's strategic planning frameworks. They also depended on the planning unit to indicate when the planning sessions would take place and to remind them of the deadlines set by the oversight bodies. Four of the seven managers indicated that the planning schedule did not exist within the organisation and that strategic planning was guided by the NTF legislated timeframes. The planning was informed only by compliance with the NTF, and not institutionalised to enhance organisation performance and effectiveness.

A planning schedule would have been very advantageous to the department. It would have outlined how the planning process would unfold, from strategy formulation to implementation, as well as delineating the roles and responsibilities of each level within the organisation. It would have indicated the start and finish for all the phases. As it is, the strategic planning process at the GCIS was described as haphazard and the management team waited for the planning unit to indicate when it would commence. When it was conducted, it was rushed so as to ensure that the department complied with the submission of the strategic plan to the oversight bodies. Organisations drew up a planning schedule to make sure that the strategic planning process was seamless from the point of strategy formulation to implementation, and

to assist them in organising the entire operation. The planning schedule consisted of a list of activities to be undertaken to develop the plan.

The planning process might have taken anything from three to six months. However, extending it over long periods sometimes leads to participants losing the momentum and discontinuing the process.

5.3 GCIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS CHALLENGES

The research findings identified five challenges in the GCIS strategic planning process. These challenges affected the quality of the GCIS 2012/13-2016/17 strategic plan and resulted in its failure to meet the requirements of the NTF.

5.3.1 Research in strategic planning process

The GCIS did not conduct any research for their strategic planning process. This was confirmed by four of the seven managers. The GCIS strategic planning process was not based on prior understanding of either the internal or the external environment. As a result, they did not know what the demand was for the services they offered. Furthermore, they were oblivious of how the clients and stakeholders felt about the services of the organisation. Lastly, they were not aware of emerging trends within the communication industry. Research would have assisted the GCIS in identifying the expectations of the stakeholders and the clients within the GWCS. Also, research would have informed them whether or not the methods of communication they used were still relevant to the audiences.

The strategic planning process signalled a changed agenda for the organisation; this changed agenda was absent from the GCIS strategic plan, mainly because there was no research involved in the planning process. Nevertheless, the GCIS had a research unit which focused on communication research to understand the communication environment when planning for communication campaigns. "Communication research is conducted to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of communication campaigns and allow for the needs of the target groups to be assessed; to also assists in the identification of appropriate messages and strategies to effectively communicate with

the target audience” (Department of Government Communication and Information System 2014).

The research unit did not conduct research towards the development of the strategic plan of the GCIS. Management saw the importance of research, but it was still not incorporated into the planning process. This was because, when the planning process was undertaken by the department, it was compliance-driven. The research process was generally time-consuming and required a budget and human resources. Although managers were aware of the importance of research in the planning processes, they cited the challenge of resource constraints.

5.3.2 Performance indicators and targets

Performance indicators are important in measuring progress towards achievements of targets set by an organisation. According to the feedback from the DPME, many of the performance indicators in the GCIS strategic plans were activity-based. This resulted in a disjuncture between the objectives of the strategic plan and its articulation in the Annual Performance Plan. (T. Matona, personal communication, 05 October 2015).

Eight of the eleven participants indicated challenges in setting performance indicators and targets for the GCIS. The strategic plan document entailed operational information because of the nature of the planning process of the department. Indicators were measured based on the interventions identified by the department.

Managers indicated the challenges of setting indicators for a communication discipline that was fluid and had no tangible outputs to measure. However, the department had to ensure that the GWCS was functioning optimally so that all the spheres of government communicated with the public. There should have been clear indicators regarding the functioning of the GWCS. These indicators should have been cascaded to all spheres of government to measure the effectiveness of government communications.

5.3.3 Acting leadership

Leadership is very critical in the strategic planning process; it sets the direction for everyone and is supposed to champion the entire process. The management of the GCIS indicated that the change in leadership affected the strategic direction and ways of doing things within the department.

Five of the seven managers pointed out to the instability of having acting leadership and restructuring process in the organisation. Bunning (1992) indicates that challenges to the continuity of a five-year strategic plan developed within the public sectors mainly because of the change of leadership. In the case of the GCIS, the EA changed twice within the period 2012/13-2015/16, while there had been three DGs (two in an acting capacity) within the same period. This affected the strategic focus of the organisation and led to the deployment of a management team that was not clear about the strategic direction of the organisation.

The restructuring process ended up with the GCIS reporting to the Minister of Communications and not to the Minister in the Presidency. The GCIS had become a public entity of the DoC and supported the IMC on Communication, chaired by the Minister in the Presidency. This created two reporting lines for managers within the organisation and caused instability, pulling the strategic focus of the organisation in different directions.

The GCIS has experienced change in leadership from 2012, with two acting DGs in the past three years and this might have influenced the strategic direction of the organisation. Each leader brings in a new style and philosophy to the business of the organisation. Moreover, the department is reporting to the Ministry of Communication and still not clear how they fit into that new department. Continuous change in leadership has been cited as a challenge in the public sector. It is one of the distinct differences of the public sector and private sector planning processes.

5.3.4 NCS and GCIS strategic plan

The research findings pointed to misalignments between the strategic plan document and the NCS. Five of the seven managers indicated that there were challenges with the main document that drives the work of the department. The NSC was developed to provide strategic leadership within the GWCS, while the strategic plan was developed to support the implementation of the NCS and achieve the mandate of the GCIS.

The NCS followed a more rigorous planning process, where communication research was conducted and government communicators were consulted for their inputs. However, the planning process for the development of the strategic plan did not benefit from the same process. The two documents were developed separately and approved by two different structures. The strategic plan followed the MTEF process and received the budget allocation from the NT, while the NCS was approved by cabinet and did not have the budget.

Unfortunately, the NCS had strategic communication programmes, while the operational campaigns were entailed in the strategic plan. The approved NSC did not have the required budget for implementation. Strategic programmes that were long-term, had to be implemented incrementally and should have formed part to the strategic plan failed to receive the necessary budget for implementation. As the long-term plan to streamline the communication within the GWCS, the NCS should have been implemented through the strategic plan of the department. This would ensure that the strategic plan reflected the strategic intent of the organisation not communication activities that are operational in nature.

5.3.5 Communication environment

The communication environment reflects the daily operational matters that arise from the media. It is also crucial because it relates to current matters the country is facing. In her feedback on the strategic plan submitted by the GCIS, the minister pointed out that crisis communication was one the weakest areas of government and that there seemed to be no structured approach or capacity to respond proactively to regular

crises that affected government. (F. Muthambi, personal communication, 18 February 2015).

The government communicator's handbook also provided guidelines on how to communicate during a crisis. Again, it pointed out on the roles and responsibilities, depending on the size and impact of the crisis. The majority of the GCIS managers (six of the seven) and one of four communicators mentioned the challenge of planning within the communication environment. It was because it was dynamic, and inundated with crises facing the country and the government.

However, Mulgan (2009) drew attention to the fact that government seemed to focus mainly on operational matters that required urgent attention. A strategic plan should reflect key strategic projects and programmes to spearhead change within the GWCS. A government communication programme should not be swayed by operational issues, but should make sure that strategic communication programmes are implemented, so that communication campaigns succeed in conveying the necessary messages to the public.

5.4 ELEMENTS OF GOVERNMENT COMMUNICATION PLANNING

The research findings pointed out four elements of government communication planning that required the attention of government communicators. Although they did not expand on their statements, most government communicators indicated that these elements were critical in planning for government communications.

5.4.1 Government communication cycle

The government communication cycle was followed to develop the NCS, the cluster communication strategies and the subsidiary departmental communication strategies. The NCS was then cascaded throughout all spheres of government. This was to ensure the effectiveness of the GWCS. All four government communicators were aware of the government communication cycle. However, they indicated that they developed the communication strategy of the department based on the PoA derived from the SoNA.

Furthermore, they developed their respective departmental strategies, which were aligned to the NCS. However, that planning process only involved the communications unit of the department. This created a challenge, because it indicated that core business units were not consulted on the programmes that would require communication support within a particular financial year. In addition, all four communicators were aware of the strategic plans of their departments, but not of their details, whereas departmental communication strategies should communicate the progress made by the department towards the implementation of the strategic plan.

Although the communicators agreed that the communication units supported the core unit, there was little indication that they engaged them when developing departmental communication strategies. However the core units provide the content for departmental programmes and the necessary budget, and communication units depend on them for implementation of departmental communication strategies. Lack of joint planning leads to poor communication of the service delivery achievements of departments, and therefore of the government.

5.4.2 Strategic communication

“To be effective, strategic communications require a common culture of strategy and communications. These include inter alia how to establish information superiority and information dominance, the relationship between information and education from the short to the longer term and an understanding of any opponents and their evolving strategic communications package – in terms both of message and use of media and of ways to counter opponents while still maintaining credibility” (Cornish, Julian, & Claire 2011).

Strategic communication separates daily issues emerging from the media from long-term, ongoing government communication programmes. Furthermore, it is distinct from events management or once-off campaigns linked to national days. Although all four communicators defined strategic communication differently, they agreed that it is not events management. Strategic communication must be about communicating departmental programmes that are reflected in the strategic plan of the department. The communication units need to work closely with core functions to identify

programmes that will be communicated to the public on a long-term basis. This will ensure that the public is aware of the departmental programmes and participate in them.

Collaboration between the core unit and the communication unit ensures that the budget can be made available for strategic communication campaigns. The emphasis from Cornish, *et al.* (2011) is that strategic communication should support the national strategy and its implementation. All the communicators indicated the limitations of events like Imbizos, commenting that they were less effective. This was because they were once-off events and did not include feedback mechanisms to measure their impact.

The GCIS needed to emphasise the importance of strategic communication. However, the GCIS also focused on short-term communication campaigns that had very little impact in a long run. The GCIS 2012/13 -2016/17 strategic plan reflected campaigns that were operational because of the lack of alignment to the NCS.

5.4.3 Role of political principals

Five of seven managers, and four communicators, indicated that the political principals showed a lack of appreciation and understanding of the communications function. This had a negative impact on government communications as a whole. Communicators listed challenges in obtaining the financial resources to implement strategic communication programmes in their respective departments. Communicators also mentioned that political principals show little faith in the GCIS as the central co-ordinating body: they would rather appoint consultants to assist with various communication functions.

The research findings also pointed out that political principals needed to understand that government communications was critical in providing information to the public. They needed to support the communication function by assisting communicators in articulating government policy. The GCIS played their role by training political principals at the beginning of each government term; the GCIS offered training to all political principals. "During the 2014/15 the GCIS conducted five training sessions for

newly appointed political principals” (Department of Government Communication and Information System 2015). The training dealt with the different elements of communication and prepared the political principals for their role in supporting government communications.

Political principals were important in articulating policy direction and working closely with communicators to disseminate the details of public policies: government communications is an important tool for communicating and defending government’s policy stance and ensuring that it is generally understood. This notion is supported by Cornish, et al. (2011) stating that political principals should always be ready to handle the media and be visible, especially during crisis communication.

What is also critical to the success of strategic communications is high-level political “ownership” of their role in government communication. They must ensure sufficient resources for the development and implementation of a credible communications strategies within their departments. This will, in turn, ensure that there is continuous communication support to inform the public about government plans, achievements and challenges on service delivery.

A communication strategy by the department needs to have the full support of the political principal. It is based on communicating the key programmes and policies of the department, which can only be well articulated by the political principals. Secondly, the communication strategy receives the necessary budget for implementation because of buy-in from the political principals. Lack of this buy-in will always affect the effectiveness of a GWCS. It means the HoCs are not empowered to participate actively in the planning structures or forums of the GCIS because they are not aware of the planned key programmes and policies of the department.

5.4.4 Co-ordination of communication structures

All communicators indicated a number of challenges with the co-ordination of the government communications. These were reported in the Comtask Report, as well as in the 2009 report on the Review of the Government-Wide Communication System. Co-ordinating forums are also key to the functioning of GWCS because they are used

for integrated planning between various departments across the three spheres of government.

Four communicators pointed out poor attendance at the co-ordinating forums. They indicated that, the planning forums failed to plan, and lacked direction from the GCIS. One of them indicated that there was just no respect for the structures by the political principals. Conversely, one pointed out that there was no value in attending the forums. One GCIS manager agreed that the some of the structures had lost direction and purpose.

The forums served as a platform to plan for government communications, as well as reporting progress on the implementation of planned communication activities highlighted in departmental strategies. When they were not functional, it meant planning for government communications was not well co-ordinated. The GCIS had little authority over government departments, and was challenged in providing strategic direction within the GWCS. This was indicated by poor attendance at the planning forums, as well as the outsourcing of communications services to consultants, and fewer departments submitting communication strategies to the GCIS for evaluation.

Three communicators indicated that the co-ordination function varied among the cluster co-ordinators within the GCIS. There were those who were proactive and more involved in the support they offered to the GCIS, while others were not. Three communicators also responded that the co-ordinators normally request reports from them at short notice, while they have their own work to do within their departments. They expressed the view that there had to be a better system for managing reporting.

5.5 ROLE OF GCIS MANAGEMENT IN STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

All the managers provided a number of definitions of a leader, who has to guide, lead and interpret the political mandate and direction of an organisation. Five managers asserted that the role of the leader in the strategic planning session is to provide strategic direction. The issue of appointing a permanent Director-General emerged as an urgent matter, essential for ensuring stability within the organisation. A permanent

Director-General for the GCIS would be able to lead, guide and create stability within the organisation. When someone is appointed in an acting capacity, it creates challenges with regard to authority and the ability to take decision within the organisation. The acting leader might be occupied with maintaining the status quo and not introduce any strategic changes. Because of the uncertainty associated with an acting post, the leader might not have the authority to introduce strategic changes within the organisation.

All seven managers were able to define their specific roles within the planning process of the organisation. Two of the officials from the oversight bodies indicated that they were not sure if the GCIS played a proactive role in the planning process. In contrast, one pointed that they did play an active role, and one indicated that they did not play a sufficient role in the planning process as they relied too much on the planning unit. All the managers knew their specific roles within the planning processes of the department.

However, because there were the GCIS management committee members and all of them participated in the planning process at corporate level, and it the most functional level. Middle and lower managers might not necessarily understand their roles and responsibilities, as the functional and operational levels in the planning processes were regarded as ineffective.

At one point, government introduced austerity measures and instigated cuts on government department's budgets. In his Medium Term Budget Policy Statement (MTBPS), delivered in the National Assembly on 21 October 2014, the then minister of Finance, Mr. Nhlanhla Nene, announced that the preliminary budget data showed that there would be further reductions in these categories of spending over the medium-term expenditure framework period, contributing to both value for money and improved public service delivery (Brand South Africa, 2016).

The budget cuts required government departments to find innovative ways to continue to provide much-needed government services to the public. The GCIS also had to follow suit and continue to provide government information services in a cost effective way. The GCIS management were required to incorporate creative thinking and

innovation into their strategic planning process. Four of seven managers emphasised the importance of incorporating creative thinking and innovation into the planning process of the organisation. However, to benefit from strategic thinking, there are other requirements that should be fulfilled: firstly, an understanding that this requires the involvement of employees in the strategic planning process, secondly, the strategic direction of the organisation must be clearly understood by all staff members. Thirdly, the internal and external environment must be assessed, able to implement the intended strategies while also maximising opportunities presented by the emerging strategies.

The GCIS is limited in a number of areas: firstly, the strategic direction is not clear to all members in the organisation; secondly, the organisation does not conduct research to identify, report on and assess the challenges that require strategic interventions. Lastly, the management's attitudes towards strategic planning are by their need to submit the required documents to oversight bodies.

5.6 FEEDBACK FROM OVERSIGHT BODIES

5.6.1 Role of oversight

All seven managers agreed that the DPME plays a supportive role in the development of the GCIS strategic plan documents. However, three indicated that they could probably have done more by being involved in the strategic planning process itself. While two thought involvement was sufficient.

The DPME indicated their involvement in the planning process was at the final stages where they evaluated the plans of the departments before they were tabled in Parliament. Management agreed that role is insufficient because of the feedback they received from DPME. However, they required the DPME to be involved during the planning sessions to assist the department in constructing better objectives and indicators.

Three of the four officials from the oversight bodies agreed that they have offered little support in the strategic planning processes of departments and do not assist

departments with the development of performance indicators and objectives. They usually come in during the assessment of the strategic plans. However, what became apparent was the issues of capacity within the oversight bodies, and how these compromised their ability to provide a service to all government departments, and the fact that they are not sufficiently expert to assist with content issues.

The NT frameworks did not offer guidelines on how to undertake the strategic planning process and how to identify the critical elements to be considered. There have to be guidance to government departments on their strategic planning process and that must be standardised; for example, the assessment of the external and internal environment and consultation with stakeholders to indicate the change agenda of the organisation. The GCIS cannot only look to oversight bodies for assistance in terms of indicators and targets suitable for their organisation. They need to consider benchmarks with other countries to determine suitable indicators within the GWCS.

5.6.2 Feedback assessments of strategic plan

Three officials from oversight bodies expressed the view that the department was generally compliant, while one said that they never managed to assess the plans because of a lack of capacity. The assessment of the GCIS strategic plan pointed out that the department complied with the framework, as management also pointed out that the planning process was mainly driven by compliance with the legislative frameworks and deadlines. There were a number of areas that the department did not focus on that are critical to the strategic plan, like assessment of the research. This was negative because it meant the department had no change agenda, and what ended up in the strategic plan were communication activities. As a result, the targets and indicators had no real impact to improve communications within the GWCS.

5.7 STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

5.7.1 Government communicators

Four of the seven managers did not regard government communicators as the key stakeholders to be consulted in the planning process to develop the strategic plan

document. The management of the GCIS had a different understanding of who the key stakeholders in the department were. Although four indicated that government communicators should not be consulted in developing the strategic plan, they had to be consulted in developing the NCS. Two managers considered the public and the one considered the media to be key stakeholders in the organisation, and necessary to be consulted in the planning process.

Denhardt, (1985) proposes that planning activities in the public sector provide an opportunity for a widespread, substantive involvement of leaders and citizens in defining the direction of the community or agency as it moves into the future, thus building trust and commitment. Stakeholder involvement is critical in the planning process to ensure that the strategies chosen address their specific needs. The government's outcomes approach was dependent on stakeholder involvement in the planning process, so that there could be agreement on the outcomes. Service beneficiaries, communities in particular, must be involved in assisting departments to determine how to provide services that can improve the quality of their lives.

All the managers agreed that the government communicators should have been involved in the planning process for the NCS. Communicators indicated that they were consulted about the NCS, but only once the plan has been developed and approved, and not in the earlier planning stages. They saw it more as the GCIS strategy and an imposition to on them. This indicates that the top-down approach adopted in the planning process for the NCS as well, did not yield positive results at all.

5.7.2 Media relations

The journalist expressed the importance of having a relationship with government that facilitates effective communication of official messages to the public. However, only one GCIS manager mentioned the media as an important stakeholder, to be considered especially in the strategic planning process. Six managers did not regard the media as key stakeholders, implying that little attention is given to fostering their relationship with the media.

However, one of the strategic objectives of the GCIS is to build and maintain co-operation with the media. It is important for the GCIS as well as other government communicators to do so. The media influences and shapes the public opinion. It is able to communicate government programmes and campaigns. There frequently appears to be a contentious relationship between government and the media, and there needs to be effort from both government parties to foster working relations.

One communicator indicated that the networking sessions that used to happen with the media created an opportunity to reflect on how to work together and improve relationships. The journalist echoed the same sentiments because the press assisted in maintaining good working relationships, although this practice seems to have fallen off. The GCIS should consider having the networking sessions for communicators and the media so they can maintain relationships and work better. The journalist and one communicator expressed the importance of having debriefing sessions and post-campaign analyses, so as to improve in the future. The journalist indicated that this is not standardised across government departments and even within the GCIS it is done by few managers. Debriefing sessions would have been beneficial to assess what went right and what did not work, so that lessons can be learnt and better campaigns can be planned for future campaigns.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 GCIS STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS CHALLENGES

The GCIS strategic planning process was not effective in producing the 2012/13-2016/17 strategic plan document which was required to meet the NTF requirements. The GCIS planning processes are currently driven largely by compliance with tabling of the strategic plans to Parliament. The challenges uncovered in the planning process have the potential to continue to impede the performance of the organisation and of the GWCS.

There are misalignments between the planning process for the NSC and the strategic plan, which lead to poor implementation of both documents. While the NCS provides strategic direction within the GWCS, the strategic plan provides resources for the implementation of the NCS. The two documents should be aligned to ensure that GCIS achieves its strategic objectives and that the GWCS functions effectively.

The GCIS management need to institutionalise the strategic planning process, so that is beneficial within the organisation. Currently, the planning process is undertaken to comply with the NTF requirements. The management need to agree on a number of important elements, namely; the strategic direction of the organisation, relations with key stakeholders, the planning approach to be followed and ways to harness innovation and creative thinking within the organisation.

The management of the GCIS defined the strategic direction of the organisation differently. The strategic direction was a pinnacle that informed what the organisation did and how it prioritised the services it offered to the public. The research findings revealed that, all seven managers interpreted the strategic direction differently. When top managers understand the strategic direction of the organisation differently, it has serious implications for the organisation, because it means that it pull in two directions and end up confusing the clients and the stakeholders they serve.

The planning process followed by the department was top-down. Staff members from middle management and below were not involved in the strategic planning process. It was a challenge for the department because lower-ranking staff members deal directly with the client departments. They provide communication support to them and co-ordinate the different communication forums, so they had to be more informed about the strategic direction of the organisation. The GCIS used to involve them in the planning process but somehow regressed and involved senior managers only. The GCIS had no planning schedule to guide the planning process, and when the planning process was conducted, it was mainly to comply with the deadlines of NTF. Most organisations develop the schedule to ensure that the strategic planning process is streamlined and yields good outcomes.

The findings indicate that the GCIS did not have capacity to plan correctly; this was because strategic planning was formalised by the South African public sector in 2009. Government released policies and legislative frameworks to guide the planning process, but oversight bodies (DPME and NT) did not provide technical support to departments on how to ensure that the strategic plans were credible. The implications are noticeable in the 2012/13-2016/17 Strategic Plan of the GCIS, which did not meet the NTF requirements. The contents of the strategic plan comprised operational issues like communication activities, especially national days. Although these are important, they are not strategic. They should form part of the operational plan - the strategic plan involves strategic communication programmes that will have an impact within the GWCS.

The GCIS did not conduct research to inform the strategic planning process. This is important to understand the external environment and how it impacts the organisation. Strategic planning process has always has a change agenda. Without research, the GCIS will have no concept of the external environment. The organisation needs information about the external environment, particularly of what stakeholders and the public expect. Stakeholder consultation is regarded as important in the strategic planning process of the public. The outcomes approach requires government departments to consult with stakeholders so that they agree on service delivery outcomes.

The results of this investigation made it clear that there are different interpretations of key stakeholders in the GCIS, further indicating that they are not consulted, so their expectations are not considered during the planning process.

It became apparent during the research process that there are were no performance indicators to measure the functioning of the GWCS, and the GCIS cannot hold departments accountable because they have no standards. This is a challenge to GCIS because it has to be able to monitor and evaluate how the government is communicating with the public across the three spheres. Operational indicators measure communication activities. There can be no real impact of the work of the department if the focus is on activities, and not on outcomes and impact of service delivery. The result is minimal improvements in the lives of ordinary South Africans.

Acting leadership has had serious implications for the GCIS as an organisation. This research has indicated that most managers feel that it has brought instability to the organisation. This was exacerbated by the restructuring process, in which the GCIS reported to the Minister of Communication. Most managers pointed out that the organisation was still trying to define its role within the new ministry, and this has affected its strategic direction.

The results of the study also revealed what the respondents deemed to be important elements of government communication planning namely; the government communication cycle; strategic communication; co-ordination of communication structures and the role of the political principals. The government communicators were aware of the government communication cycle and said they had participated in it. However, they developed a communication strategy based on the priorities outlined in the PoA. The findings indicated that communication units in other departments did not work with their respective core units to plan the communication support for departmental programmes. The line function must work with communication units to develop a departmental communication strategy, such collaboration will ensure that government departments keeps the public informed on how to access services.

Planning for strategic communication is still inadequate within the government communications: it is another aspect that requires much attention from the GCIS.

While events, campaigns, and imbizos were regarded as important, it became clear that they made little impact in getting the government messages across to the public. They were once-off and did not provide feedback mechanisms from communities. The communicators indicated that government should have more public education programmes aimed at empowering the public with information on how to access government services.

The co-ordination structures were seen as dysfunctional at best, especially at national level. Most communicators stated, that they added no real value because, as planning structures, they failed to plan. There was poor attendance at the planning structures by government communicators. The GCIS co-ordinators also seem not to understand how the client departments within their clusters operated. That compromised their relationship with client departments, they could provide a better service to them.

The political principals were important in government communication planning. They needed to be able to articulate and communicate the government policies to the public. Most respondents indicated that the political principals did not appreciate the government communications function. They further pointed out that the political principals expected government communications to be about profiling them as ministers, rather than communicating government policies.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

The GCIS has two planning processes: one deals with development of the strategic plan, while the other deals with the development of the NCS. This study reviewed the GCIS strategic planning process for the period of 2012/13 to 2015/16, focusing on this period because the 2016/17 financial year has not been implemented. The purpose of the research was to examine the challenges that led to the 2012/13- 2016/17 Strategic Plan of the GCIS that failed to meet the NTF requirements or offering recommendations to the GCIS management to improve the strategic planning process.

The findings of the study brought to light the following challenges in the GCIS strategic planning process:

- Misalignment between the NCS and the GCIS strategic plan;
- Weak integration of research in the strategic planning process;
- Setting ineffective performance indicators, targets and impact assessment for the organisation;
- The limitations of the top-down strategic planning approach followed by the organisation;
- Prolonged acting leadership within the organisation; and
- Inadequate co-ordination of communication structures.

Based on the findings and the analyses, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Align the NCS and Strategic Plan of the GCIS**

The alignment of the NCS and the strategic plan will ensure that the strategic communication programmes initiated in the NCS are resourced. Once included in the strategic plan of the department they will be subjected to the MTEF process of the NT. In the same way, the strategic plan of the department will involve strategic communication programmes that are allocated necessary resources. The implementation of both documents could have a positive impact within the GWCS and shift the focus away from once-off communication campaigns. The end result could be an informed society that fully participates in our democracy.

- **Conduct research prior to the planning process**

Research is important for informing the planning process and helping decision-makers in understanding the challenges in the environment in which the organisation operates. The management of the GCIS should conduct periodic surveys with different stakeholders, especially the public, to get feedback on how the organisation can improve the quality of the services it offers. The information assists the management to have a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities of the GWCS and identify strategic issues that will require intervention.

- **Adopt the Strategy Change Cycle of Bryson J. M.**

This model will be beneficial to GCIS, because it proposes solutions to some of the challenges in the strategic planning process of the organisation. Firstly, it outlines phases in the strategic planning process which complements the GCIS temporal phases. Secondly, it proposes ways to assess the external and internal environments. It also proposes ways stakeholders can be consulted and how their inputs can be incorporated into the planning process. It also give guidelines on how departments can identify strategic issues and devise strategies for interventions. These are some of the elements lacking in the GCIS planning process.

The scenario-planning process can also address the challenge of planning for government communications. The department can incorporate this process to deal with the uncertainties within the communication environment. The GCIS management could allocate time during the annual planning session to discuss issues facing the department and the GWCS. They could appoint an expert in scenario planning to facilitate a session at which possible scenarios are discussed and its implications for the organisation can be explored.

- **Incorporate the top-down and bottom-up approaches**

The management of the GCIS should consider incorporating the top-down and bottom-up approaches into their planning process. They should make sure that, all levels which involve the branches, chief directorates and directorates of the organisation, participate in the strategic planning process. This will harness innovation and creativity within the organisation by creating platforms where new ideas and improvements can be discussed. Furthermore, staff members should be encouraged to incorporate benchmarking and continuous assessment of the external environment to pick on trends within their specific fields. This will bring continuous improvements and innovation within their areas of work.

- **Appointment of the permanent DG for the organisation**

The appointment of a permanent DG is likely to bring stability into the organisation. The acting position has little authority to bring about strategic changes, especially when the acting period is uncertain. The acting DG might be more concerned with maintaining the status quo within the organisation and suspend change strategies because they are limited by the acting period. The permanent DG can identify the strategic direction of the organisation, as well as introduce new programmes that will improve on its performance.

- **Setting suitable performance indicators and targets and impact assessments**

Performance monitoring and evaluation is important for measuring progress within the department. The GCIS needs to identify suitable indicators for government programmes within the GWCS. The GCIS can work with government departments, the DPME and NT to identify suitable indicators within the GWCS. They can be used to monitor the effectiveness of government communications within the GWCS. These indicators will cascade down to all spheres of government, and help to ensure that communicators are measured against them. More importantly, they must measure the effectiveness of GWCS to ensure that the public is kept informed about the policies, programmes and plans of government. Access to government information about how to acquire government services would definitely improve the lives of ordinary South Africans.

- **Co-ordination of communication structures**

Review the purpose and mandate of co-ordinating structures of the GCIS. To check that they are structured in a way that improves planning for government communications and that there is attendance by government communicators. The GCIS should use these forums to hold departments accountable, and especially to report on feedback in the implementation of communication strategies. The cluster co-ordinators should also be well informed about how other government departments are

structured. They should take time to attend the communication sessions of other departments; they will be knowledgeable about the communication structures of other government departments, and understand the issues of the departments within their clusters. This would be time-consuming, but ultimately beneficial.

6.3 RECOMMENDATION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The study recommends the following:

- A quantitative study should be undertaken on the strategic planning process within the GWCS. The study must be broad enough to cover the communicators across the three spheres of government, the media, as well as communicators in the public entities in South Africa. The findings from such a study would enrich the GCIS management by providing enough information on how to enhance the performance of the organisation.

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