

PUBLIC SECTOR ECONOMIST FORUM

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Accounting officers

- National Treasury
- National Department of Economic Development;
- National Department of Trade Industry and Competition;
- Provincial Treasury;
- Provincial Departments of Economic Development;
- Provincial Departments of Agriculture; and
- Municipal Metros

Introduction

The purpose of the letter is to introduce the Public Sector Economist Forum (PSEF) to relevant stakeholders.

Background

The PSEF was founded in 2009 and was born out of a realization that there were severe limitations on the organisation, functioning, effectiveness and overall contribution of public sector economist employed at sub-national level, further compounded by what often appears to be lack the understanding of the unique dynamics at sub-national government levels by policymakers. The PSEF therefore exists to enhance the role of public sector economists at provincial economic level and metropolitan municipalities in policy development, analysis and implementation through:

- Creating a platform for economic discussions;
- Sharing of information and best practices;
- Collaborative research;
- Expanding and enhancing access to training opportunities;
- Relevant and province-specific research; and
- Creating linkages between the different spheres of government.

Membership

Membership of the PSEF was estimated at just 100 in December 2012. Membership of the forum will be free and is valid for 3 consecutive years.

In line with its vision and mission, the primary membership of the PSEF is economists and economic practitioners in Provincial Treasuries, Provincial Departments of Economic Development and Agriculture as well as Economic Development Departments in metros. The day-to-day management of the PSEF is carried out by the Steering Committee, which is made

up of three representatives per province, one from Provincial Treasury, one from the Department of Economic Development and the last one from the Department of Agriculture. The Steering Committee meets quarterly and its meetings rotate between all the nine provinces. The Chairperson of the PSEF is nominated at each annual general meeting and appointed to this position is valid for 12 months.

Stakeholders

With the development of economic policies being a national mandate, it has become crucial also to use the PSEF as a platform for meaningful engagement between economists at National Treasury, National Department of Economic Development and the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition. Since 2009, these relationships expanded so much and together with commitment of economists in these national departments. With metropolitan municipalities key in driving local economic development, provision has been made to extend membership of the Steering Committee to one representative of each of the metropolitan municipalities.

The PSEF has established relations with similar organizations, namely the Economic Society of Southern Africa (ESSA) as well as the Economic Research South Africa (ERSA), with the primary purpose being to streamline province-specific applied research agenda. As such, meaningful relationships have been initiated with amongst others the following external stakeholders, some of whom have already participated during Steering Committee meetings and/or at previous Annual Congresses:

- South African Institute of Race Relations;
- IHS Markit;
- University of Pretoria;
- Quantec Research;
- Palama;
- TIPS;
- Conningarth Economist;
- Statssa;
- National Treasury;
- Department of Trade Industry and Competition
- South African Reserve Bank;
- Financial & Fiscal Commission;
- National Planning Commission;
- REDI/Econ 3x3; and
- Government Technical Advisory Centre (GTAC).

Annual Congress

Since 2009, the PSEF has had Annual Congresses in all of the nine provinces. These congresses are in the main a platform for members to share their research work prior to presenting them at ERSA or the biennial ESSA conference. These annual congresses have been addressed by the MECs for Finance in the respective provinces where they were held.

Most recently, the congresses have been used to professionalise the PSEF and elevate the aspect of research by its members.

Formal interface

In the past, the PSEF through its Steering Committee was mainly used by National Treasury in the development of a position paper on the role of provinces in economic development. This work had been commissioned by the Technical Committee of Finance (TCF). The PSEF recognises the need to foster such interface with relevant governance and policy structures (e.g. technical MINMECs) and will be pursuing this aspect, going forward.

Benefits from the PSEF

By being members of the PSEF, economists and economics practitioners in your department and/or metro will:

- Benefit from various platforms created for discussions on economic policy issues, which are part of their day-to-day tasks;
- Benefit from best practices shared on research methodologies and other information;
- Benefit from the research being undertaken in other provinces or municipalities on similar issues that are of relevance to your department and/or province or municipality;
- Benefit from the immense networking opportunities for collaborative research; and
- Benefit from structured interactions between key role players in economic policy in different spheres of government.

Commitments towards the PSEF

Departments are requested to commit to the PSEF by:

- Enabling members to participate in all events of the Forum;
- Given that membership to the Forum is free, the departments are requested to assist the Forum with the following:
 - Carry the travelling and subsistence costs of members when they attend PSEF events;
 - Provide catering for Steering Committee meeting (Only applicable to host departments); and
 - Provide venue for Annual Congress (Only applicable to hosting department and/or province).

We trust that this correspondence shows the importance of the Public Sector Economist Forum. Attached, please find the inaugural Terms of Reference. More information on the PSEF can be viewed on the website, www.psef.org.za

I trust you will find in order,

Sincerely

Gershon Oliver

Chairperson

Public Sector Economist Forum

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