CIGFARO

ANNUAL CONFERENCE SUMMARY PACK

2026

REIMAGINING PUBLIC FINANCE LEADERSHIP FOR A CHANGING SOUTH AFRICA

05–08 OCTOBER 2026 • DURBAN ICC • KWAZULU-NATAL

CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank



MASTERCLASSES



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

MASTERCLASS 01

Building Financial Resilience in a Time of Fiscal Uncertainty



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Building Financial Resilience in a Time of Fiscal Uncertainty



> ***EVERY RAND SHOULD HAVE A CLEAR ANSWER TO: WHAT OUTCOME DOES THIS EXPENDITURE BUY?***

Khomotso Letsatsi

Commissioner | Financial and Fiscal Commission

FACILITATOR Mirriam Sunda | CIGFARO

PANEL MEMBERS

Yvonne Malesa | JB Marks Municipality
Sarah Dunmun | uMlalazi Municipality

CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

MASTERCLASS SUMMARY

Building Financial Resilience in a Time of Fiscal Uncertainty

Khomotso Letsatsi
Commissioner | Financial and Fiscal Commission

KEY NOTES

- **Prioritise for delivery:** Protect statutory obligations, essential services and vulnerable communities, replace blanket cuts with explicit expenditure choices; redesign inefficient processes; phase non-critical expansion, stop or defer low-value activity or unaffordable future liabilities.
- **Manage financial risk:** Track revenue, expenditure, liquidity, debt and contingent-liability risks. Assign owners, define escalation thresholds and use early-warning indicators to trigger action before pressure becomes a crisis. Implement executable contingency plans with immediate action priorities.
- **Build institutional resilience:** Strengthen decision rights, critical skills, reliable data, integrated finance and planning, business continuity and governance. Develop agile, cross-functional teams that can navigate challenges while maintaining robust controls.
- **Sustain public finances:** Anticipate, absorb, respond and recover from financial shocks by building credible, affordable budgets, forecast cash and commitments, assess capital projects over their full lifecycle and prevent the accumulation of arrears. Reinforce transparent reporting, audit follow-through, performance evaluation, accountability and value for money.

Key takeaway: Resilient institutions do not wait for financial pressure to become a crisis. They make deliberate trade-offs, respond to early-warning signals and protect public value through credible planning, decision-making, strong controls and accountable leadership.

MASTERCLASS 02

Digital Innovation and Data-Driven Decision-Making in Public Finance



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Digital Innovation and Data-Driven Decision-Making in Public Finance



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***REIMAGINING PUBLIC FINANCE LEADERSHIP MEANS TURNING DATA INTO DECISIONS, DECISIONS INTO SERVICES, AND SERVICES INTO MEANINGFUL PUBLIC IMPACT.***

Thenzie Stewart

Senior Manager: Financial Systems | CSIR

FACILITATOR Katlego Masemola| Orion Cyber

PANEL MEMBERS

Xolile Mdluli | National Treasury
Yamkela Mehlomakulu | Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury
Koketso Moeng | Ntiyiso Consulting

MASTERCLASS SUMMARY

Digital Innovation and Data-Driven Decision-Making in Public Finance

KEY NOTES

Thenzie Stewart
Senior Manager: Financial Systems | CSIR

- **Put public value at the centre:** Digital transformation should connect budgets, financial processes and verified delivery outcomes, ensuring that public money ultimately enables dependable services for communities.
- **Turn data into decisions:** Finance teams should begin with a specific decision, combine budgets, actuals, commitments, cash and verified progress, and use scenario analysis to identify risks, accountable owners and time-bound actions.
- **Connect finance with service delivery:** Expenditure alone does not demonstrate progress. Financial information must be supported by contract data, physical verification, project milestones and evidence that the intended service is functioning.
- **Build on existing digital foundations:** Platforms and systems such as BAS, PERSAL, LOGIS, the Central Supplier Database, Vulekamali and Municipal Money provide a foundation for stronger analytics, digital workflows and public scrutiny. However, institutional readiness, data quality and system connectivity remain uneven.
- **Modernise without disrupting essential services:** Institutions should stabilise critical systems, connect information through controlled interfaces and introduce changes in manageable phases, with testing, reconciliation, recovery arrangements and clear approval gates.
- **Apply AI within clear boundaries:** Rules automation, predictive models, generative AI and AI agents serve different purposes and carry different levels of risk. As a system's ability to act increases, stronger permissions, testing, oversight and independent approvals are required.
- **Keep human accountability in place:** AI may retrieve information, perform tested calculations and draft explanations, but authorised officials must verify evidence, approve decisions and remain accountable under the PFMA and MFMA.
- **Embed governance and assurance:** AI risks, including inaccurate explanations, biased or outdated data, information leakage and excessive system authority, should be managed through source verification, access controls, human review, audit trails and continuous monitoring.
- **Strengthen transparency from budget to service:** Public reporting should allow stakeholders to trace expenditure from its approved purpose through contracting, payment and verified delivery to the service experienced by residents.
- **Start small and scale with evidence:** Start with one important decision, establish reliable source data and ownership, run a controlled pilot, and scale only after evaluating accuracy, cost, workload, risk and public benefit.

Key takeaway: *"Digital public finance creates value when trusted data, responsible technology and accountable leadership turn financial decisions into services that people can experience."*

MASTERCLASS 03

The Power of Public Speaking in Leadership



SESSION SPOTLIGHT

The Power of Public Speaking in Leadership



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SPEAKING TRANSFORMS TECHNICAL EXPERTISE INTO PUBLIC UNDERSTANDING, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRUST.***

Dr Lakela Kaunda

DDG | National School of Government in South Africa

FACILITATOR Lucas Raphela | Natonal School of Government

PANEL MEMBERS

Phumla Williams | National School of Government
Maria Makhongela | CIGFARO

MASTERCLASS SUMMARY

The Power of Public Speaking in Leadership

Dr Lakela Kaunda
DDG | National School of Government in South Africa

KEY NOTES

- **Translate complex information**: Public finance leaders must simplify complex financial, audit and governance information for diverse audiences.
- **Strengthen accountability and trust:** Transparent communication helps stakeholders understand organisational performance, service-delivery decisions and the responsible use of public funds.
- **Prepare for the audience and environment:** Effective communication starts with thorough research of the subject, the audience's information needs and the broader context in which the engagement will take place.
- **Communicate with clarity and authority:** Leaders should avoid technical jargon, ambiguity and hesitant language, using direct messages, relatable examples and clearly defined commitments.
- **Lead with empathy and active listening:** During community and stakeholder engagements, leaders should demonstrate an understanding of people's circumstances, listen attentively and provide follow-up where immediate answers are unavailable.
- **Focus on solutions and hope:** Particularly during crises, communication should acknowledge the issue, present practical actions and avoid blame-shifting, leaving stakeholders informed, heard and confident in the way forward.
- **Prepare for media engagement:** Media briefings and interviews require concise take-home messages, professional delivery and readiness for difficult or unexpected questions without losing focus.
- **Build lasting stakeholder relationships:** Every communication opportunity should reinforce accountability, strengthen relationships and position public finance leaders as credible and trusted representatives of their institutions.

Key takeaway: Effective public speaking is a critical leadership skill that enables public sector professionals to build trust, promote accountability and communicate complex issues in a meaningful and accessible way.

DAY ONE



SESSION 01

Conference Introduction

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Conference Introduction



> ***BEHIND EVERY BUDGET ALLOCATION IS A DECISION: WHAT GETS BUILT, WHAT GETS FUNDED, WHAT COMMUNITY RECEIVES A SERVICE, AND THE INSTITUTIONS THAT WE DECIDE TO CONTINUE TO BUILD.***

Enkromelle Andrew

Programme Director

SESSION SUMMARY

Conference Introduction

Enkromelle Andrew
Programme Director

KEY NOTES

A 97-Year Institutional Legacy

- Delegates were welcomed to Durban for the 97th CIGFARO Annual Conference, reflecting the organisation's longstanding role in advancing public finance.
- While recognising this institutional history, the conference was positioned as a forward-looking platform focused on the future of public finance leadership.

Reimagining Public Finance Leadership

- The conference theme calls on delegates to reimagine public finance leadership for a changing South Africa.
- Leadership was identified as the central theme, requiring public finance professionals not merely to respond to change, but to help shape what comes next.

Public Finance Beyond the Numbers

- Public finance extends beyond spreadsheets and technical administration. Every budget allocation influences what is built, funded and delivered.
- Financial decisions ultimately determine which communities receive services and which public institutions are strengthened.

Purpose and Social Responsibility

- Delegates were encouraged to exchange ideas, share successful practices and challenge established thinking in preparation for the work ahead.
- The opening also acknowledged the continuing crisis of gender-based violence in South Africa, with a moment of silence held for those who have lost their lives and in solidarity with survivors.

SESSION 02

Host City Welcoming Address

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Host City Welcoming Address



> ***INFRASTRUCTURE IS BOTH BALANCE SHEET AND STREET. WHEN MUNICIPAL ASSETS DETERIORATE, THE IMPACT APPEARS IN OUR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND IN RESIDENTS' LIVES.***

Cllr Cyril Xaba

Executive Mayor | eThekwini Municipality

SESSION SUMMARY

Host City Welcoming Address

Cllr Cyril Xaba
Executive Mayor | eThekwini Municipality

KEY NOTES

Public Finance Leadership Under Pressure

- Municipalities must deliver more despite constrained resources, ageing infrastructure, rising community expectations and growing financial pressure.
- Audit outcomes should prompt reflection on the leadership required to strengthen municipal performance over the next decade.
- An unqualified audit is not the final destination, but a stepping stone towards stronger performance, better compliance and a clean audit.

Revenue, Infrastructure and Sustainability

- Financial sustainability is inseparable from service delivery. Weak revenue collection and losses in water and electricity directly undermine municipal capacity.
- Infrastructure is both a balance-sheet asset and a service-delivery asset; deterioration ultimately affects financial results and residents' daily lives.
- Municipal strategies must prioritise maintenance, renewal and lifecycle asset management: "We cannot build sustainably if we do not maintain what we have."

Accountability and Consequence Management

- The address highlighted persistent material compliance findings, particularly in procurement and contract management, requiring stronger institutional discipline.
- Procurement must be fair, transparent, competitive, cost-effective and defensible, with deviations treated as exceptions.
- Prevention requires effective internal controls, accurate information, management accountability, active oversight and ethical administrative leadership.

From Audit Outcomes to Public Value

- Modern finance leadership must connect finance, infrastructure, technology, revenue management and municipal operations.
- Finance professionals should use data and artificial intelligence responsibly, challenge poor decisions and translate financial information into practical action.
- Municipal success should ultimately be measured by improved services, protected public resources, maintained infrastructure and lasting change in people's lives.

SESSION 03

CIGFARO Presidential Address & Opening of the Conference

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

CIGFARO Presidential Address & Opening of the Conference



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***PUBLIC FINANCE LEADERSHIP CAN NO LONGER BE UNDERSTOOD ONLY AS THE ACCURATE RECORDING OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED. IT HAS TO SHAPE WHAT HAPPENS NEXT.***

Louise Muller

President | CIGFARO

SESSION SUMMARY

CIGFARO Presidential Address & Opening of the Conference

KEY NOTES

Louise Muller
President | CIGFARO

Leadership Grounded in Ethics and Accountability

- The conference theme, **“Reimagining Public Finance Leadership for a Changing South Africa,”** is a call to action, not simply a slogan.
- Accountability, stewardship, ethics, evidence and respect for the law remain non-negotiable, but must be applied with greater courage and purpose.
- The **Code for Ethical Leadership in Local Government** has been formally adopted by **103 municipalities**, although its true value depends on implementation.

Public Finance as an Enabler of Service Delivery

- Public finance extends beyond budgets and financial statements. It enables water, sanitation, electricity, roads, clinics, waste management and public safety.
- Finance professionals must connect numbers to decisions, risks and the lived experiences of communities.
- Their work protects public resources, supports sustainable service delivery and strengthens institutional confidence.

Professional Leadership Amid Change

- During political transition, lawful administration, sound financial management, ethical conduct and continuity of services must remain constant.
- Leadership is not dependent on title. It is demonstrated through objective advice, proper records, consistent application of the law and resistance to inappropriate pressure.
- Public finance professionals provide continuity, stability and institutional memory when organisational environments become uncertain.

Building Capability, Trust and Public Value

- Leaders must balance transformation with compliance, service delivery with financial sustainability, and innovation with responsible stewardship.
- Technology and data should improve decision-making without replacing professional judgement or compromising privacy, security, fairness and accountability.
- Delegates were challenged to convert conference learning into action through improved controls, earlier risk identification, simpler processes and stronger ethical decisions.

SESSION 04

Words of Support: Office of the KZN Premier

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Words of Support: Office of the KZN Premier



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***LET PROPRIETY BE A CHOICE RATHER THAN A MATTER OF COMPLIANCE.***

Rev Thulasizwe Buthelezi

MEC | KZN COGTA

SESSION SUMMARY

Words of Support: Office of the KZN Premier

Rev Thulasizwe Buthelezi
MEC | KZN COGTA

KEY NOTES

Public Finance as a Democratic Responsibility

- Public finance is the lifeline of democracy, translating approved budgets into services, infrastructure, economic growth and support for vulnerable communities.
- Political office-bearers and public servants are entrusted with public funds and must demonstrate integrity, transparency and accountability.
- Corruption, maladministration and mismanagement betray this responsibility and erode public trust.

Modernising Financial Leadership

- Rapid technological change, shifting global economic conditions and persistent structural inequalities require a new approach to public finance.
- Government must move beyond traditional fiscal-management models towards leadership that is agile, inclusive, data-driven and sustainable.
- Long-term public value and transparency must take precedence over short-term gains.

Ethics as a Personal Choice

- Stronger institutional frameworks and oversight mechanisms are required, supported by comprehensive skills development for finance and non-finance officials.
- Those responsible for oversight must possess the ethical awareness and moral courage to safeguard public resources.
- Ethical conduct should be internalised as a personal responsibility, rather than treated merely as a compliance obligation.

Turning Dialogue into Institutional Reform

- Conference deliberations should produce practical strategies that make transparency, accountability and responsible stewardship central to public service.
- The work of CFOs and finance professionals is critical to protecting the public purse and preventing further corruption and mismanagement.
- Resolutions should contribute to a stronger and more effective architecture for public financial management.

SESSION 05

Words of Support: Global Federation of Public Finance Associations

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Words of Support: Global Federation of Public Finance Associations



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***WE CAN THINK OF PUBLIC FINANCE PROFESSIONALS AS ARCHITECTS OF PUBLIC TRUST.***

Grace Martinez

President | GFPFA

SESSION SUMMARY

Words of Support: Global Federation of Public Finance Associations

KEY NOTES

Grace Martinez
President | GFPFA

A Shared Global Public Finance Agenda

- Public finance professionals worldwide face similar pressures: growing service expectations, constrained resources, economic uncertainty, technological transformation and emerging risks.
- While solutions must be locally implemented, international collaboration enables institutions to share knowledge, innovations and practical lessons.
- The central responsibility remains the ethical, transparent and sustainable management of public resources.

Formalising International Collaboration

- Following more than two decades of collaboration between CIGFARO and GFOA, the Global Federation of Public Finance Associations was formally established in June 2026.
- The Federation provides a platform for professional associations to share leading practices, support professional development and strengthen public finance standards globally.
- Eight organisations and countries are now represented, with South Korea's Local Finance Association joining in August 2026.

Building Public Trust Through Finance

- Public finance professionals were described as "architects of public trust" whose work enables reliable infrastructure, effective services and resilient communities.
- Sound financial management builds confidence that public resources are used ethically, effectively and in communities' best interests.
- Although much of this work happens behind the scenes, it remains essential to strong, trusted government.

Learning Across Borders

- No country or organisation has all the answers or a monopoly on innovation; progress depends on professionals learning across jurisdictions.
- The Federation's first international knowledge-sharing event will be a free webinar on 28 October 2026, hosted by the Swedish Association of Local Government Finance Officers and focused on financial resilience in local government.
- CIGFARO will continue playing a central role, with Louise Muller serving as President of the newly established Federation.

SESSION 06

Words of Support by Platinum Sponsor

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Words of Support by Platinum Sponsor



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***ELECTIONS WILL BE WON AND ELECTIONS WILL BE LOST, BUT OUR INSTITUTIONS MUST ENDURE.***

Nicholas Maweni

CEO | Munsoft

SESSION SUMMARY

Words of Support by Platinum Sponsor

Nicholas Maweni
CEO | Munsoft

KEY NOTES

Institutions Must Outlast Political Change

- With local government elections approaching, municipalities must remain operational regardless of changes in councils, mayors or coalitions.
- Water, electricity, refuse collection, payroll and the proper accounting of public funds must continue without disruption.
- Political uncertainty must not weaken institutional continuity or the delivery of essential services.

Protecting Politics–Administration Boundaries

- Elected representatives should determine policy and remain accountable to voters, while administrations must operate professionally.
- Appointments should not become political currency, procurement should not become a reward system, and officials should not have to choose between professional duty and political survival.
- Councillors must be allowed to govern, administrators to administer, and both must be held accountable.

Technology Must Improve Government

- Marking 25 years in 2026, Munsoft reaffirmed its commitment to municipal technology that enables stronger governance and better decisions.
- Digitalisation has value only when it produces timely information, supports action and improves outcomes for citizens.
- Technology can strengthen accountability, but it cannot manufacture ethical leadership, institutional courage or professional judgement.

Competence, Conscience and Collaboration

- South Africa must move beyond repeatedly diagnosing municipal failures and focus on what will be done differently.
- Stronger local government requires collaboration between government and business, politics and administration, and technology and governance.
- Public finance demands both competence and conscience, supported by professionals who protect institutions, uphold integrity and act when governance boundaries are crossed.

SESSION 07

Keynote Address: Reimagining Public Finance Leadership for a Changing South Africa

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Keynote Address: Reimagining Public Finance Leadership for a Changing South Africa



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***THE DIGNITY OF PUBLIC MONEY IS NOT A TECHNICAL ISSUE; IT IS A MORAL ISSUE.***

Hon Mzamo Buthelezi

Minister of Public Service and Administration

SESSION SUMMARY

Keynote Address: Reimagining Public Finance Leadership for a Changing South Africa

Hon Mzamo Buthelezi
Minister of Public Service and Administration

KEY NOTES

Economic Constraints Demand a Capable State

- Gross government debt is projected to stabilise at 78.9% of GDP in 2025/26 before declining to 76.5% by 2028/29.
- However, economic growth remains weak and unemployment reached 33.6% in Q2, intensifying pressure on public services and social expenditure.
- The public service cannot simply be large; every rand spent on compensation must translate into measurable value for citizens.

Professionalising and Transforming Public Service

- Public-sector transformation must shift the focus from compliance for its own sake towards performance, impact and tangible service-delivery outcomes.
- Legislative reforms have clarified the distinction between political and administrative authority, placing greater responsibility and accountability on accounting officers.
- Merit-based recruitment, competency, ethics, continuous development and the appointment of the right person to the right role are central to professionalisation.

Ethical Courage and Accountable Leadership

- Finance professionals will face pressure to overlook irregularities, approve deviations or adjust specifications; technical competence must therefore be matched by ethical courage.
- Accounting officers must exercise their authority, document objections, refuse unlawful expenditure and protect the integrity of public resources.
- Political leaders must respect administrative authority and give professionals the space, protection and support required to fulfil their responsibilities.

Future-Focused Public Finance Leadership

- Finance leaders must connect budgets to service outcomes, explain public finances in language citizens understand and invest in institutional capability beyond individual office-holders.
- Data analytics, automation and artificial intelligence can detect anomalies and improve efficiency, but require governance, testing and human oversight.
- Future priorities include climate adaptation, infrastructure resilience, the just transition and innovative financing through credible public-private partnerships and underutilised funding instruments.

SESSION 08

How are Public Finance Leaders navigating digital transformation for the future of public finance?

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

How are Public Finance Leaders navigating digital transformation for the future of public finance?



“

THE FUTURE IS NOT MORE SOFTWARE… IT IS BASICALLY A DIFFERENT OPERATING MODEL FOR FINANCE.

”

Prof Tankiso Moloi

Professor of Accounting | University of Johannesburg

CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

SESSION SUMMARY

How are Public Finance Leaders navigating digital transformation for the future of public finance?

Prof Tankiso Moloi
Professor of Accounting | University of Johannesburg

KEY NOTES

From digitisation to transformation

- Digital transformation is not simply about adopting new technology; it requires redesigning processes, controls, governance and accountability.
- Public finance must progress from recording past expenditure to understanding current performance and anticipating future outcomes.

Connected, data-driven financial management

- Modern finance requires integrated systems, common data standards and trusted information across budgeting, procurement, payroll, revenue and reporting.
- Automation and analytics can strengthen reconciliations, anomaly detection, forecasting and continuous assurance.

Technology cannot replace sound governance

- Poor data, weak controls and fragmented processes cannot be corrected by technology alone.
- Cybersecurity, interoperability, data governance and clearly defined human accountability must be embedded from the outset.

A new role for finance leaders

- Finance leaders require broader capability in data architecture, technology risk, AI governance and organisational change.
- The priority is to build finance functions that are faster, cleaner, more integrated and trustworthy while retaining professional judgement.

SESSION 09

Building Inclusive and Resilient Public Finance Leadership



SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Building Inclusive and Resilient Public Finance Leadership



> ***"PUBLIC FINANCE LEADERSHIP SHOULD BE JUDGED NOT ONLY BY COMPLIANCE & AUDIT OUTCOMES, BUT BY WHETHER PUBLIC RESOURCES DELIVER SAFE COMMUNITIES, DIGNIFIED EMPLOYMENT, RESILIENT INFRASTRUCTURE & MEASURABLE IMPROVEMENTS IN PEOPLE'S LIVES."***

Hon Nkululeko Dunga

Gauteng MEC of Finance

CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

SESSION SUMMARY

Building Inclusive and Resilient Public Finance Leadership

Hon Nkululeko Dunga
Gauteng MEC of Finance

KEY NOTES

Public finance must respond to social realities

- Fiscal leadership must address unemployment, failing infrastructure and the national crisis of gender-based violence and femicide.
- Allocations for shelters, victim support, public lighting and safe transport must reach intended beneficiaries promptly and in full.

Protect integrity and strengthen public capability

- Finance officials must be protected when resisting corruption, irregular expenditure and unlawful instructions.
- Recurring services should be considered for insourcing where this improves value, worker security and institutional control.

Mobilise capital while protecting the public interest

- Responsible public-private partnerships can help address infrastructure backlogs in water, energy, roads, health and education.
- The state must retain appropriate ownership, negotiate effectively and avoid structures that transfer disproportionate risk to the public sector.

Use public finance to drive inclusive development

- Government procurement should support local manufacturing, industrial employment and productive capacity in townships, rural areas and secondary cities.
- Clean audits must translate into functioning services, while officials maintain fiscal discipline and resist election-driven spending pressures.

SESSION 10

Panel Discussion: Women in Public Finance Leadership: Influencing Change and Driving Impact

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Women in Public Finance Leadership: Influencing Change and Driving Impact



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***"COMPLIANCE AND INNOVATION ARE COMPLEMENTARY: TECHNOLOGY IS THE ENABLER, BUT ETHICAL, INCLUSIVE AND ACCOUNTABLE LEADERSHIP IS THE FOUNDATION OF SUSTAINABLE PUBLIC FINANCE."***

Louise Muller

President | CIGFARO

PANEL MEMBERS

Nosipho Nkomo | CCG Systems
Thenzie Stewart | CSIR
Yvonne Malesa | JB Marks Municipality

SESSION SUMMARY

Women in Public Finance Leadership: Influencing Change and Driving Impact

Louise Muller
President | CIGFARO

KEY NOTES

Inclusive leadership and career progression

- Representation strengthens decision-making by bringing broader perspectives to public policy and financial leadership.
- Institutions should address systemic barriers and establish diverse mentorship networks to develop future leaders.

Fiscal discipline and public accountability

- Municipal financial sustainability requires rigorous revenue management, timely creditor payments and a clear focus on financial sustainability and going-concern status.
- The panel referred to a 95% revenue-collection benchmark and discussed the revenue-management responsibilities set out in sections 64 and 65 of the MFMA.

Responsible digital transformation

- AI and financial analytics can support anomaly detection, identify duplicate invoices and strengthen procurement oversight.
- ERP and AI implementation must align people, processes and technology, supported by clear requirements, phased execution and effective change management.

Leadership grounded in public value

- Technology enables better decision-making, but cannot replace integrity, professional judgement and accountable leadership.
- Financial and digital reforms should ultimately improve municipal resilience, equitable economic participation and service delivery.

SESSION 11

Reimagining Public Finance Leadership: mSCOA as the Foundation for Transparency and Accountability

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Reimagining Public Finance Leadership: mSCOA as the Foundation for Transparency and Accountability



> ***"MSCOA GIVES US A COMMON LANGUAGE; THE REPORTING SYSTEM TURNS THIS LANGUAGE INTO NATIONAL INFORMATION; LEADERSHIP TURNS THIS INFORMATION INTO ACTION; AND ACCOUNTABILITY MAKES THIS ACTION VISIBLE."***

Una Rautenbach

Director: Local Government Budget Analysis | National Treasury

CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

SESSION SUMMARY

Reimagining Public Finance Leadership: mSCOA as the Foundation for Transparency and Accountability

Una Rautenbach
Director: Local Government Budget Analysis | National Treasury

KEY NOTES

A common language for municipal finance

- mSCOA standardises municipal financial information through seven classification segments, improving comparability and transparency.
- Its value extends beyond reporting to budgeting, costing, project tracking and linking expenditure to service-delivery locations.

Compliance does not guarantee credible data

- Technical compliance cannot compensate for weak business processes, manual workarounds or fragmented systems.
- Leaders must interrogate whether submitted data is credible, complete and useful for decision-making.

From reporting to strategic leadership

- Municipalities should move beyond producing compliant reports to using financial information to identify risks, guide action and strengthen sustainability.
- Core functions and external service providers should operate within an integrated data environment rather than disconnected spreadsheets.

Leadership must drive implementation

- Updated processes, system specifications, standard procedures and assessment tools can support implementation, but internal change management remains essential.
- Municipal leadership must align departments, strengthen data ownership and convert system information into accountable management action.

DAY TWO



SESSION 12

Public Sector Case Studies and Best Practice Showcase: An Academic Perspective

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Public Sector Case Studies and Best Practice Showcase: An Academic Perspective



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***LEARNING FROM PRACTICE MUST TRANSLATE INTO LOCALLY ADAPTED IMPLEMENTATION, STRONGER LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE OUTCOMES THAT CREATE PUBLIC VALUE.***

Prof Zamokuhle Mbandlwa

Associate Professor in Public Management and Economics
Durban University of Technology

SESSION SUMMARY

Public Sector Case Studies and Best Practice Showcase: An Academic Perspective

Prof Zamokuhle Mbandlwa

Associate Professor in Public Management and Economics
Durban University of Technology

KEY NOTES

Service delivery and public value

- Data collected from finance officers in four South African municipalities in 2021 indicated a disconnect between clean audits and effective service delivery.
- Public-sector success should be assessed through services delivered, changes produced and long-term public value, rather than budget expenditure, the number of meetings held or staff headcounts.
- Community engagement should move beyond token consultation and “tick-box” exercises towards joint problem-solving, feedback loops and continuous monitoring of commitments.

Context-led learning and implementation

- Case studies should examine successful and unsuccessful government programmes or reforms, identify the problem addressed and test whether enabling conditions can be reproduced locally.
- International practices should not be copied and pasted; differences in fiscal, cultural, legislative, connectivity and literacy conditions require local adaptation, pilots and scaling.
- Implementation of recommendations frequently fails because of weak planning, limited follow-through, poor accountability, corruption, political interference, skills shortages and resistance to performance management.

Strategic leadership and digital governance

- Strategic leadership requires intentional change, ethical conduct, accountability, communication and evidence-based decisions, rather than merely maintaining existing systems.
- Singapore, Estonia and Rwanda illustrate lessons in professionalism, digitalisation and performance management, but each model must be assessed against South Africa’s operating context.
- Artificial intelligence should complement human intelligence, supported by ethical governance, transparency, data protection and human oversight.

SESSION 13

Panel Discussion: Professionalisation: Building a Competent, Ethical and Future-Ready Public Finance Profession

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Professionalisation: Building a Competent, Ethical and Future-Ready Public Finance Profession



> ***"PROFESSIONALISATION REQUIRES CREDIBLE APPOINTMENTS, PRACTICAL INDUCTION, FAIR PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT, CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT AND CONSISTENT ENFORCEMENT OF EXISTING REQUIREMENTS."***

Dr Andrew Siddle

Public Governance and Policy Consultant

FACILITATOR Andile Makhanda | Munsoft

PANEL MEMBERS

Annalene Marais | CIGFARO
Phillip Rakgwale | SAIGA
Lesego Komane | National School of Government

CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

SESSION SUMMARY

Professionalisation: Building a Competent, Ethical and Future-Ready Public Finance Profession

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

Dr Andrew Siddle
Public Governance and Policy Consultant

Purpose and reform context

- Professionalisation was presented as essential to the capacity, credibility and ethical performance of public institutions, particularly in municipal financial management.
- The speaker linked a capable state to skilled public servants, public-service commitment, consistent delivery and merit-based recruitment and promotion.

Recruitment, selection and onboarding

- Existing requirements cover qualifications, work experience, competencies and unit standards, but compliance does not necessarily demonstrate practical capability.
- Interview evidence raised concerns about weak technical expertise on selection panels, political interference in some municipalities and generic induction programmes.
- Proposals included stronger technical assessment, credible oversight, role-specific induction and mentoring for newly appointed officials.

An ethical culture that supports speaking up

- The discussion emphasised creating a culture in which people feel safe to raise concerns and discuss problematic conduct.
- Ethical behaviour, professional judgement and personal drive were presented as important alongside technical competence.
- Normalising constructive challenge was proposed as a practical way to strengthen accountability.

Compliance and implementation

- Only 136 of 257 municipalities reportedly responded to the annual legal reporting requirement.
- Reported compliance included 85% in one requirement area and 45% for unit standards.
- The central call was to implement and enforce existing requirements effectively, update delayed unit standards and give professionalisation greater urgency.

SESSION SUMMARY

Professionalisation: Building a Competent, Ethical and Future-Ready Public Finance Profession

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

From qualifications to applied competence

- The discussion identified a gap between holding qualifications and applying knowledge effectively within a finance function.
- “Stable knowledge on its own is not enough.” Officials also need judgement, confidence and an understanding of the institution’s specific context.
- Senior managers should ensure that available skills and competencies are aligned with institutional needs.

Controls, judgement and escalation

- Participants questioned why control weaknesses persist even where policies and procedures exist.
- Officials should be able to challenge or escalate instructions, including requests to process payments that have not followed the required process.
- Institutions need clear policies, procedures and supervisory alignment to guide decisions when individuals face pressure or uncertainty.

Performance and continuing development

- Performance management was described as highly compliance-focused and, in some cases, potentially used to punish rather than support development.
- Most respondents supported continuing professional development and professional-body membership, while showing less support for compulsory licensing by another authority.
- Training should be relevant to the official’s discipline and institutional responsibilities.

Implementation and accountability

- The closing discussion called for greater objectivity in recruitment and selection panels, beginning at the appointment stage.
- Professional registration and development matter, but credible recruitment is the foundation for placing suitably skilled people in roles.

SESSION 14

Strengthening Governance, Accountability and Public Trust

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Strengthening Governance, Accountability and Public Trust



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***EFFECTIVE LOCAL GOVERNANCE REQUIRES A COLLECTIVE SHIFT TOWARDS ACTIVE, INFORMED AND CITIZEN-CENTRED OVERSIGHT TO IMPROVE SERVICE DELIVERY AND REBUILD PUBLIC TRUST.***

Adv Dinkie Portia Dube

Deputy Public Protector | Public Protector

FACILITATOR Maphefo Mgadi | SALGA

PANEL MEMBERS

Patrick Mcklein | Siyancuma Local Municipality
Cllr Muzi Mtshali | King Cetshwayo District Municipality
Bongani Mdletshe | National Treasury
Cllr Bheki Stofile | SALGA

SESSION SUMMARY

Strengthening Governance, Accountability and Public Trust

Adv Dinkie Portia Dube
Deputy Public Protector | Public Protector

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

An integrated governance ecosystem

- Sustainable and resilient public institutions depend on seven interdependent pillars working together.
- The pillars are ethical leadership; accountability and consequence management; capable institutions; anti-corruption; whistle-blower protection; citizen-centred governance; and collective oversight.

Ethical leadership and meaningful accountability

- Accountability must extend beyond identifying wrongdoing to implementing remedial action and tangible consequences.
- Technology can strengthen consequence management by tracking misconduct and preventing unethical officials from moving between institutions without accountability.

Capable institutions and proactive anti-corruption

- Professionalisation reforms are essential to building a capable, ethical and developmental public service.
- Institutions should identify systemic weaknesses before corruption occurs, rather than relying mainly on investigations after the fact.
- Digital systems and reliable audit trails can strengthen controls, preserve records and reduce vulnerabilities associated with manual processes.

Citizen-centred governance and collective oversight

- Governance success should be measured by citizens' lived experiences and access to reliable services, not compliance outcomes alone.
- Whistle-blowers require stronger protection from physical, professional and financial harm.
- Collaboration among oversight bodies, government institutions and communities is vital to improve governance and advance shared development goals.

SESSION SUMMARY

Strengthening Governance, Accountability and Public Trust

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Clarifying political and administrative roles

- Councillors must distinguish party responsibilities from municipal duties and remain accountable to the communities they represent.
- Effective oversight requires a strong working relationship with officials while respecting the administrative chain of command and avoiding interference.
- Political and administrative leaders must move beyond blame and accept their distinct, complementary responsibilities for municipal performance.

Information, capability and functional oversight

- Councillors and oversight committees need complete, accurate and timely documents to scrutinise decisions and make informed recommendations.
- Section 79 committees, Section 80 committees and MPAC require clear mandates, administrative support and continuous follow-through on findings.
- Induction and ongoing practical training should equip councillors to interpret budgets, audit reports, IDPs, legislation and municipal systems.

Prevention, systems and consequence management

- National Treasury emphasised business processes, digital systems and compliance dashboards that identify failures before funds are withheld.
- When non-compliance occurs, accountability processes should identify responsible individuals and weaknesses in processes rather than penalising communities collectively.
- Internal audit, councils and oversight bodies should raise risks early, monitor corrective action and use consequence management consistently.

Political leadership and citizen-centred governance

- Sustainable reform requires political parties to improve how councillors are selected, prepared and supported for public office.
- Local government funding, regulation and capacity interventions should recognise the different economic realities and capabilities of municipalities.
- Communities must be treated as active participants and shareholders in local development, with collaboration centred on service delivery and public trust.

SESSION 15

Reimagining MFMA Implementation for Improved Municipal Performance

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Reimagining MFMA Implementation for Improved Municipal Performance



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

> ***NOT COMPLIANCE AS A DESTINATION BUT COMPLIANCE AS A FOUNDATION.***

Kulani Mkhonto

Business Systems Analyst | Munsoft

FACILITATOR Morakane Mototo | CIGFARO Board Member

PANEL MEMBERS

Justice Maceke | Munsoft
Mamikie Bogatsu | Frances Baard District Municipality
Dr Amos Zungu | DUT

SESSION SUMMARY

Reimagining MFMA Implementation for Improved Municipal Performance

Kulani Mkhonto
Business Systems Analyst | Munsoft

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

From compliance to municipal performance

- The MFMA, introduced in 2003 and effective from July 2004, established frameworks for financial management, accountability, transparency and fiscal discipline across municipalities.
- Despite improved compliance, reporting, audit processes and capacity-building, municipalities continue to experience service delivery challenges and uneven performance outcomes.
- The presenter argued that compliance alone does not automatically create a high-performing municipality.

Understanding the compliance-performance gap

- Municipalities may submit budgets, financial statements, audit action plans and policies, yet still experience weak revenue collection, control weaknesses and financial sustainability challenges.
- The key question is not whether municipalities comply, but whether compliance contributes to meaningful service delivery and organisational improvement.
- Fragmented management approaches can prevent financial decisions from translating into operational and community outcomes.

Reimagining MFMA implementation

- The presenter proposed shifting from compliance to outcomes, from transaction processing to strategic management, and from annual reporting to continuous financial intelligence.
- Financial information should help management understand risks, performance trends and emerging challenges before they become audit findings.
- Municipal financial systems should support decision-making, identify trends and provide actionable insight rather than merely record transactions.

Revenue, accountability and continuous improvement

- Revenue management should focus on collection performance, billing accuracy, debt management and data-driven interventions.
- Accountability requires moving beyond noting findings to implementing corrective actions, monitoring progress and addressing root causes.
- Compliance should be viewed as a continuous operating cycle that supports capability, integration, intelligence, performance and improved municipal outcomes.

SESSION SUMMARY

Reimagining MFMA Implementation for Improved Municipal Performance

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Professionalisation and organisational culture

- Dr Zungu argued that municipalities generally have qualified and skilled officials, but professionalisation must extend beyond officials to include service providers and contractors who influence service delivery outcomes.
- Panellists emphasised the need to protect professional standards through stronger organisational culture, ethical conduct and accountability.
- Concern was raised that instability in key municipal positions undermines continuity and long-term implementation of reforms.

Consequence management and accountability

- Dr Zungu identified weak consequence management as a major obstacle to improved municipal performance, arguing that accountability mechanisms are often not effectively enforced.
- The panel noted that successful consequence management requires leadership support, protection for officials and clear ownership of responsibilities.
- Participants highlighted the importance of shifting from identifying problems to implementing corrective actions and monitoring results.

Planning, performance and financial sustainability

- Mamikie Bogatsu stressed that planning should drive budgeting, not the reverse, with budgets responding to developmental priorities and service delivery needs.
- Oversight should focus on analysing performance outcomes and using data for decision-making rather than merely confirming regulatory compliance.
- Revenue collection, financial sustainability and long-term planning were presented as essential foundations for municipal performance.

Using the MFMA as an enabler

- Panellists agreed that MFMA compliance remains important but should serve as a foundation for improved performance rather than an end goal.
- Municipal financial systems and data should be used proactively to identify risks, guide interventions and improve community outcomes.
- The discussion encouraged municipalities to use MFMA implementation to strengthen integration, service delivery and institutional resilience.

SESSION 16

Modernising Financial Management for Greater Public Value

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Modernising Financial Management for Greater Public Value



CIGFARO Chartered Institute of Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers | Standard Bank

“EVERY RAND, EVERY DECISION, GREATER IMPACT”

Tholakele Ndlazulwana

Business Unit Leader (Executive): Investigations | AGSA

FACILITATOR Semanga Ruiters | CIGFARO Board Member

PANEL MEMBERS

Nonhlanhla Thanjekwayo | KZN Tourism and Film Authority
Phando Legoale | North West COGTA
Matsobane Aphane | Department of Traditional Affairs

SESSION SUMMARY

Modernising Financial Management for Greater Public Value

Tholakele Ndlazulwana
Business Unit Leader (Executive): Investigations | AGSA

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

From compliance to public impact

- The presenter argued that modern financial management should move beyond budget spending, reporting and clean audits to focus on whether public expenditure improves citizens' lives.
- Citizens are primarily concerned with tangible outcomes such as better roads, reliable healthcare, functional schools and timely government services.
- Financial management should be assessed on service delivery outcomes and public value created, rather than compliance metrics alone.

Accountability, governance and implementation

- Public money is held in trust, and Accounting Officers remain accountable for financial management even when responsibilities are delegated.
- The presenter argued that the Constitution and PFMA provide an adequate legislative framework, with consistent implementation remaining the key challenge.
- Transparency, accountability and effective governance remain critical amid growing fiscal pressure and public scrutiny.

Internal audit and audit outcomes

- Internal audit should operate as an early warning system and "smoke detector" that identifies risks before problems escalate.
- Strong internal audit functions are associated with improved financial statements, stronger controls and better audit outcomes.
- AGSA highlighted ongoing concerns, including low numbers of clean audits, many institutions remaining "unqualified with findings", irregular spending, late supplier payments and delayed infrastructure projects.

Modernising financial management

- Financial management should shift from compliance-focused reporting to impact-focused, strategic decision support using predictive analytics and digital systems.
- Technology should improve data quality, real-time monitoring, decision-making, controls and fraud prevention, but should not automate ineffective processes.
- Key enablers identified were digitalisation, data-driven decision-making, skilled people, strong governance and a focus on public value creation.

SESSION SUMMARY

Modernising Financial Management for Greater Public Value

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Modernisation beyond compliance

- The discussion emphasised that modernisation is not simply about introducing new systems, but about changing how government creates value for communities.
- Financial management should contribute to tangible improvements in citizens' lives rather than focusing solely on compliance and audit outcomes.
- The North West Department of Cooperative Governance attributed its clean audit outcomes to strong executive leadership, continuous monitoring and placing audit findings on standing agendas.

Expanding the role of finance professionals

- The discussion highlighted the need for finance professionals to move beyond being "number crunchers" to providing strategic advice, analysis and decision-making support.
- Financial managers should influence organisational culture, integrity and performance, not just financial reporting.
- Clean audits should be the outcome of sound management practices rather than the primary objective.

Leadership, accountability and operational discipline

- The discussion stressed that technology alone does not drive transformation; leadership, planning and adherence to existing processes are fundamental.
- Effective accountability ecosystems require participation from officials, management, audit committees and oversight structures.
- Streamlined processes, consistent controls and faster supplier payments, moving from 30 days closer to 7 days where possible, were highlighted as practical improvement areas.

Audience insights and future priorities

- Participants noted that financial pressures may stem from spending choices and priorities as much as resource constraints.
- Behaviour change, policy evolution, integrated government information systems and stronger impact measurement were identified as critical enablers of modernisation.
- Concerns were raised about government debt owed to municipalities, rural implementation challenges and resistance to automation where manual processes create opportunities for manipulation.

SESSION 17

Moving from Assurance to Organisational Value

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Moving from Assurance to Organisational Value



> *"ASSURANCE SHOULD MOVE BEYOND COMPLIANCE TO BECOME A STRATEGIC ENABLER OF ORGANISATIONAL VALUE, RESILIENCE AND INFORMED DECISION-MAKING."*

Ntombizamatolo Lugongolo

Risk Manager | uMngeni uThukela Water

FACILITATOR Sanele Ngema | CIGFARO Board Member

PANEL MEMBERS

Prof Cameron Modisane | UNISA
Jay Ramharak | Risk Management South Africa (IRMSA)
Alistair Chibi | SALGA

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SESSION SUMMARY

Moving from Assurance to Organisational Value

Ntombizamatolo Lugongolo
Risk Manager | uMngeni uThukela Water

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

Assurance focused on outcomes

- Assurance should demonstrate that strategic objectives are achieved through appropriately managed risks, effective controls, functioning governance structures, compliant decisions and reliable management information.
- Organisational value is reflected in quality services, protected infrastructure and public resources, operational efficiency, stakeholder confidence, resilience and sustainable outcomes.

From control function to strategic partner

- Assurance providers should move beyond compliance reports, siloed reviews and counts of findings towards continuous assessment, root-cause analysis and practical strategic insight.
- Risk reporting should provide intelligence on what could happen, why it could happen, its potential impact, which indicators to monitor, what decisions are needed and which opportunities are available.

Combined assurance

- Combined assurance aligns management, risk, compliance, internal audit, external assurance providers and oversight committees around the organisation’s objectives and risk appetite.
- It supports informed decisions, accountability, closure of assurance gaps, stronger committee reporting and potential reductions in duplicated work and assurance costs.

Value-driven reporting

- Board conversations should focus on significant risks to strategic objectives, intended outcomes, organisational improvements and root causes, rather than only completed audits or outstanding findings.
- Success is seen through fewer surprises, stronger controls, lower risk exposure, improved service delivery, better decisions and greater organisational resilience.

SESSION SUMMARY

Moving from Assurance to Organisational Value

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Assurance and organisational value

- Panellists described assurance as providing confidence that risks are managed, resources are used effectively and organisations are progressing towards their strategic objectives.
- Assurance should focus on whether value is being delivered to citizens, clients and stakeholders rather than only on compliance and audit findings.

Barriers to value-driven assurance

- The main barrier identified was a compliance-driven mindset that measures success through audit outcomes, numbers of findings and implementation statistics rather than organisational outcomes.
- Risk, audit and assurance reports are often not fully used to assess service-delivery impact, progress towards strategic objectives or reductions in risk.

Link to service delivery

- Risk management, internal audit, performance management and compliance should support uninterrupted and efficient service delivery by identifying risks early and strengthening controls.
- Delays in supply-chain processes, weak revenue collection and ineffective project oversight were cited as examples of assurance failures that can directly affect communities.

Outcome-focused assurance

- Assurance functions should continuously assess risks, provide proactive intelligence and evaluate whether projects and controls achieve intended outcomes.
- Performance should be judged by results experienced by communities, not only by compliance reports, completed audits or closed findings.

SESSION 18

Leading the Digital Future of Public Financial Management

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Leading the Digital Future of Public Financial Management



> ***DIGITAL PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SHOULD BE GOVERNED AS AN INSTITUTIONAL REFORM, NOT AS AN IT PROJECT.***

Jonathan Kleinhans

ICT Manager | Hessequa Municipality

FACILITATOR Asma Sheik | CIGFARO Board Member

PANEL MEMBERS

Robinson Shai | Mantkitsolution
Samuel Zwane | SITA
Katlego Masamola | Orion Cyber

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SESSION SUMMARY

Leading the Digital Future of Public Financial Management

Jonathan Kleinhans
ICT Manager | Hessequa Municipality

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

Transformation beyond technology

- Digital transformation should be governed as an institutional reform, not merely an IT project or the acquisition of new systems.
- Digital initiatives should improve accountability, decision-making, service delivery and public trust, with success measured through tangible public-service outcomes.

Integrated leadership and governance

- Effective transformation requires collaboration across finance, ICT, operations, risk and audit, supported by clear leadership and institutional ownership.
- Accountability, controls, data governance and cybersecurity must be embedded from the onset rather than introduced after implementation.

Trusted data and simplified processes

- Reliable digital public financial management depends on strong data integrity, ownership, security and evidence-based decision-making.
- Technology should simplify and redesign inefficient processes, rather than automate or perpetuate existing weaknesses.

Measurable public value

- Shared services can centralise scarce skills and capabilities while maintaining accountability within individual institutions.
- Progress should be measured through stronger controls, better decisions, user adoption and improved service outcomes. Technology enables value, while leadership and governance deliver it.

SESSION SUMMARY

Leading the Digital Future of Public Financial Management

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Strengthen before investing

- Digital transformation should begin by understanding and simplifying existing processes, rather than immediately procuring new technology.
- Institutions should improve current systems, address process weaknesses and maximise available technologies before investing in additional solutions.

Treat data as a strategic asset

- Reliable transformation depends on accurate, governed and trusted data that supports informed financial and operational decisions.
- Clear data ownership, accountability, cybersecurity and appropriate controls are essential to protecting public information and strengthening public trust.

Augment, rather than replace, human judgement

- AI and automation can support forecasting, efficiency and improved service delivery, but cannot correct poor data, weak controls or inefficient processes.
- Human judgement and accountability must remain central, particularly where decisions carry ethical, financial or legal consequences.

Collaborate for greater public value

- Stronger intergovernmental collaboration, shared infrastructure and interoperable systems can improve coordination and create economies of scale.
- Success should be measured not by the technology acquired, but by greater efficiency, stronger public trust and tangible benefits for citizens.

SESSION 19

Financial Resilience in Local Government: Navigating Today's Challenges

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Financial Resilience in Local Government: Navigating Today's Challenges



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> ***FINANCIAL RESILIENCE IS NOT A DESTINATION. IT IS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS.***

Dr Nomonde Lindela Khiva

SALGA

FACILITATOR Claire van der Poll | CIGFARO Board Member

PANEL MEMBERS

Musa Mbhele | eThekwini Municipality
Ms Tumisang Moeketsane | GTAC
Prof Nirmala Dorosamy | DUT

SESSION SUMMARY

Financial Resilience in Local Government: Navigating Today's Challenges

Dr Nomonde Lindela Khiva
SALGA

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

Understanding municipal financial resilience

- Financial resilience was defined as the ability of municipalities to absorb shocks, adapt and continue improving despite financial pressures.
- Key challenges include weak cash conversion, ageing infrastructure, weakening controls, fragmented accountability and growing creditor obligations.
- Municipalities were reported to be owed approximately **R484 billion**, while owing creditors approximately **R185 billion**, placing significant strain on service delivery and operations.

Revenue reliability and financial sustainability

- Revenue collection remains a critical challenge, with a collection rate of approximately 63.9% in 2025.
- Budgeted revenue often fails to convert into cash at the required rate, contributing to amounts owed to creditors, infrastructure deterioration and operational constraints.
- Financial resilience requires revenue reliability, asset performance, governance, execution capacity and accountability to function as an integrated system.

From isolated projects to portfolio-based investment

- Municipalities should shift from isolated, budget-driven projects to portfolio approaches aligned with strategic priorities and long-term outcomes.
- Investment decisions should be linked to city priorities, infrastructure sustainability, stakeholder alignment and measurable public value.
- The presenter highlighted key maturity practices, including project alignment, self-assessment, performance monitoring and strengthened stakeholder coordination.

Governance, controls and operational recovery

- Municipalities should focus on funded budgets, creditor management, UIFW reduction, consequence management and continuous audit readiness.
- Quick operational gains can be achieved through stronger controls, accountability, transparency and disciplined implementation of action plans.
- Sustainable resilience requires disciplined revenue and expenditure management, credible planning, accountable delivery and continuous improvement.

SESSION SUMMARY

Financial Resilience in Local Government: Navigating Today's Challenges

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Revenue collection and financial sustainability

- Panellists and participants agreed that municipal financial resilience is fundamentally dependent on converting billed revenue into cash collections.
- Household debt, persistent non-payment and weak collection rates were identified as major contributors to declining municipal financial positions.
- Participants noted that infrastructure, service delivery and resilience cannot be sustained when municipalities are unable to collect sufficient revenue.

Accountability, governance and consequence management

- Concerns were raised about growing municipal debt, weak consequence management and whether key officials are being held accountable for deteriorating financial performance.
- Speakers questioned why escalating arrears persist despite existing legislation, professionalisation efforts and compliance frameworks.
- Effective monitoring, evaluation and application of accountability mechanisms were highlighted as essential to reversing negative trends.

Systems, data and revenue management

- Several contributors emphasised the need to integrate policies, systems, SOPs and risk management processes to strengthen revenue collection and improve controls.
- Credible indigent registers, accurate customer data and stronger technology-enabled monitoring were identified as critical interventions.
- Municipalities were encouraged to use data, GIS, valuation information and integrated systems to detect revenue leakage and improve decision-making.

Leadership, discipline and institutional reform

- Speakers argued that financial sustainability requires disciplined leadership, ethical conduct, professional responsibility and sustained implementation of controls.
- Concerns were raised about political-administrative interference, unfinished projects, weak oversight and inconsistent enforcement of regulations.
- Participants called for deeper collaboration among municipalities, stakeholders and professional bodies to address structural challenges and improve resilience.

SESSION 20

Financing Infrastructure for Long-Term Public Value

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Financing Infrastructure for Long-Term Public Value



“THE REAL QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER MONEY WAS SPENT, BUT WHETHER CITIZENS RECEIVED MEANINGFUL BENEFITS.”

Dr Joey Krishnan

Chief Director: Municipal Finance | KZN COGTA

FACILITATOR Sbu Zakwe | CIGFARO Board Member

PANEL MEMBERS

James Matsie | SALGA

Skhumbuzo Mgobhozi | KZN COGTA

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SESSION SUMMARY

Financing Infrastructure for Long-Term Public Value

Dr Joey Krishnan
Chief Director: Municipal Finance | KZN COGTA

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

Moving from compliance to public value

- Dr Krishnan argued that government has become overly focused on compliance, audit outcomes, expenditure levels and performance indicators.
- Municipal success should instead be measured by public value, including improved quality of life, reliable service delivery, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and public trust.
- The key question is whether citizens receive meaningful benefits from public spending, not simply whether budgets were spent.

Three dimensions of public value

- Service quality requires reliable water, sanitation, roads and electricity, delivered fairly and accessibly.
- Social outcomes should improve living conditions, strengthen community participation in planning and budgeting, and promote health, safety and inclusion.
- Trust and legitimacy depend on transparent governance, ethical leadership, accountability and public confidence in government.

Infrastructure delivery and service outcomes

- Auditor-General findings showed that R42.55 billion was allocated through infrastructure grants, yet approximately R4.2 billion remained unspent.
- Infrastructure projects were delayed by an average of **25 months**, despite funding being available.
- Poor planning, contractor issues, community unrest, scope changes and weak project management were identified as key contributors to project delays.

Governance, expenditure and planning

- Unauthorised expenditure reflects governance failures, irregular expenditure undermines public trust, and fruitless and wasteful expenditure represents lost service delivery opportunities.
- Municipalities should strengthen long-term infrastructure planning, develop realistic funded budgets and focus on outcomes rather than outputs.
- The presenter highlighted two critical requirements: engaging communities and ensuring that projects are fully functional before claiming success.

SESSION SUMMARY

Financing Infrastructure for Long-Term Public Value

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Governance, accountability and public value

- The discussion compared municipalities to private companies, describing residents as the true shareholders, councils as boards, and officials as accountable for delivery.
- The quality of infrastructure and public services was linked directly to governance effectiveness and council oversight.
- Panellists agreed that public value, rather than compliance or spending levels alone, should be the primary measure of municipal success.

Financial sustainability and infrastructure investment

- Municipalities face increasing competition from private providers in electricity, water and other utility services, creating pressure to improve service quality and retain revenue.
- Declining service quality risks shrinking municipal revenue bases as customers seek alternative providers.
- Municipalities were encouraged to improve creditworthiness, strengthen governance, build investor confidence and explore innovative financing mechanisms to support infrastructure delivery.

UIFWE and underlying institutional weaknesses

- The discussion highlighted UIFWE as a symptom of deeper challenges, including political interference, weak governance, poor planning, ineffective oversight and capacity constraints.
- Election cycles, procurement pressures and decisions that diverge from professional recommendations were identified as recurring risks.
- The focus should be on addressing root causes rather than treating UIFWE as an isolated compliance issue.

Oversight, accountability and service outcomes

- Concerns were raised that MPACs may lack sufficient technical expertise to evaluate complex financial matters.
- Political considerations can override technical findings, while investigations do not always result in meaningful consequences.
- The panel emphasised improved infrastructure planning, meaningful community participation, stronger maintenance practices and consequence management that addresses system failures.

SESSION 21

Strengthening Transparency Through Quality Financial Reporting

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Strengthening Transparency Through Quality Financial Reporting



> ***"QUALITY FINANCIAL REPORTING DRIVES TRANSPARENCY, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND RESPONSIBLE PUBLIC RESOURCE MANAGEMENT."***

Siyasanga Nondlazi

Standard Setter | Accounting Standards Board

FACILITATOR Maria Makhongela | CIGFARO Board Member

PANEL MEMBERS

Dr Mariska McKenzie | University of Johannesburg
Nelsiwe Ncama | KZN Provincial Treasury
Manenzhe Manenzhe | National Heritage Council

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SESSION SUMMARY

Strengthening Transparency Through Quality Financial Reporting

Siyasanga Nondlazi
Standard Setter | Accounting Standards Board

KEY NOTES: MAIN SPEAKER

Quality financial reporting

- Quality financial reporting is founded on relevance, faithful representation, understandability, timeliness, verifiability and comparability.
- Financial statements should support accountability and decision-making by providing users with a clear and reliable picture of how public resources are managed.

Why reporting quality matters

- Users, including boards, councils, audit committees, executives and treasuries, rely on financial statements for oversight, governance, resource allocation and sustainability assessments.
- The value of financial reporting lies not in producing a report but in enabling informed decisions and accountability.

Barriers to quality reporting

- Common challenges include weak records, capacity constraints, ineffective reviews, weak governance, system limitations and an approach that treats reporting as a year-end exercise.
- Quality reporting requires strong controls, reconciliations, reviews and oversight throughout the year.

Collective responsibility and standards

- Quality reporting depends on a connected ecosystem involving management, finance, governance structures, internal audit, external auditors and oversight bodies.
- GRAP standards support recognition, measurement, presentation and disclosure, while Directive 5 guides entities on applicable reporting requirements.

SESSION SUMMARY

Strengthening Transparency Through Quality Financial Reporting

KEY NOTES: PANEL DISCUSSION

Citizen-centred financial reporting

- Quality financial reporting requires collaboration across government and should not rest solely with the office of the CFO.
- Financial statements should move beyond an audit-centric approach and provide transparent, understandable information that supports accountability to citizens, councils and civil society.
- Technical financial information should be accompanied by plain-language explanations to strengthen oversight and informed decision-making.

GRAP standards and consistency

- Discussion focused on the role of GRAP standards in improving consistency and comparability in financial reporting.
- Financial statements should be prepared consistently from year to year, but the broader purpose remains communicating meaningful information rather than achieving audit outcomes alone.
- Reference was made to amendments affecting heritage assets and future reporting requirements.

Complexity of GRAP 104

- GRAP 104 was widely acknowledged as complex, particularly because it relies on professional judgement and expected credit-loss modelling.
- Municipalities reportedly experienced implementation challenges involving skills, systems, resources and preparation of financial statements.
- Participants noted that complexity is likely to increase, requiring additional training, stronger systems and enhanced disclosure practices.

Capacity building and future readiness

- Training, professional development and investment in financial systems were identified as critical enablers of successful implementation.
- Future reporting requirements may expand further through sustainability-related disclosures.
- Despite implementation challenges, alignment with broader accounting practice was presented as an opportunity for professional growth and mobility.

DAY THREE



SESSION 22

The Power of Collaboration: Building Networks that Drive Public Value

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

The Power of Collaboration: Building Networks that Drive Public Value



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> ***"COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL TO IMPROVING LOCAL GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE, STRENGTHENING MUNICIPAL CAPABILITY AND DELIVERING GREATER PUBLIC VALUE FOR COMMUNITIES."***

Sithole Mbanga

CEO | SALGA

SESSION SUMMARY

The Power of Collaboration: Building Networks that Drive Public Value

KEY NOTES

Sithole Mbanga
CEO | SALGA

SALGA's Strategic Transformation

- SALGA has repositioned itself around five strategic pillars: Leadership Development, Evidence-Based Decision Making, Differentiated Municipal Support, Member-Driven Services, and Strategic Partnerships.
- Leadership development covers both councillors and municipal management, with induction and capability-building programmes for newly elected representatives.
- Data-driven governance is being prioritised to improve decision-making, planning, policy development and resource allocation across municipalities.

Strengthening Local Government Leadership

- SALGA reaffirmed its position as the legitimate voice of local government, representing municipalities in Parliament, national policy forums and labour negotiations.
- The CEO cautioned against fragmented representation, noting that a unified voice is critical for effective municipal advocacy and sector stability.
- Organisational re-engineering aims to reduce bureaucracy, use technology more effectively and bring support closer to municipalities through the District Development Model.

Reform Priorities for a Stronger Municipal Sector

- The speaker stated that municipalities receive approximately **9.5% of the national fiscus while delivering 44% of public services**, and outlined SALGA's proposal to increase the municipal share to **18%**.
- Municipalities should play a central role in economic development, with the **"Mayor's Economy"** positioning local leadership as a driver of growth and investment.
- Professionalisation of both municipal officials and councillors remains critical to improving governance, capability and service delivery outcomes.

Collaboration for Resilient and Sustainable Municipalities

- Climate change is placing increasing pressure on infrastructure, municipal finances and service delivery, requiring stronger resilience and risk management frameworks.
- Spatial transformation remains a priority, with a focus on integrated settlements, reduced inequalities and improved access to economic opportunities.
- Collaboration among professional bodies, government, business and civil society is essential to strengthening municipal capacity and supporting long-term reform.

SESSION 23

Ceremonial Signing of the CIGFARO–PSETA Memorandum of Understanding

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Ceremonial Signing of the CIGFARO–PSETA Memorandum of Understanding



CEREMONIAL SIGNING

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

CIGFARO & PSETA

SIGNATORIES

Bontle Lerumo
CEO | PSETA

Nakisani Mathobo
CEO | CIGFARO

SESSION SUMMARY

Ceremonial Signing of the CIGFARO–PSETA Memorandum of Understanding

Bontle Lerumo and Nakisani Mathobo

PSETA | CIGFARO

KEY NOTES

Partnership purpose

- CIGFARO and the Public Service Education and Training Authority (PSETA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the ceremony.
- The session notes describe a shared aim to strengthen public finance and governance capability across the public sector.

Wider discussion: skills and standards

- The discussion called for a capable, ethical and future-focused public service.
- Skills development, continuous learning and professional standards were presented as ways to support this goal.

Talent and career development

- Public service institutions were encouraged to attract graduates and professionals for long-term careers in government.
- Professional networks and mentorship were discussed as ways to develop future public-sector leaders.

Governance and accountability

- Strong governance depends on accountability, transparency, ethical conduct and a commitment to service excellence.
- CFOs, finance professionals and internal auditors play a critical role as custodians of sound governance and effective stewardship of public resources.

Collaboration for public value

- Research-driven solutions, knowledge sharing and institutional collaboration can help address challenges across all spheres of government.
- Investment in people can strengthen governance and service delivery, creating lasting value for citizens.

Key takeaway: Capable, ethical leadership is central to a stronger public service.

SESSION 24

Leading with Purpose: The Human Side of Public Finance Leadership

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

Leading with Purpose: The Human Side of Public Finance Leadership



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> ***LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT THE POSITION YOU OCCUPY; IT IS ABOUT THE IMPACT YOU CREATE THROUGH PEOPLE, ETHICAL DECISIONS AND YOUR WILLINGNESS TO LEAD CHANGE.***

Daluhlanga Majeke

HOD | Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury

SESSION SUMMARY

Leading with Purpose: The Human Side of Public Finance Leadership

Daluhlanga Majeke
HOD | Eastern Cape Provincial Treasury

KEY NOTES

Leadership beyond position

- Leadership is demonstrated through responsibility, integrity and a positive effect on others, rather than title or authority.
- Effective leaders demonstrate personal accountability, continually reflecting on their conduct, values and contribution to the organisation.

People-centred leadership

- People are at the heart of successful leadership. Leaders should value, empower and engage employees while creating an environment where individuals feel respected and supported.
- Employee experiences and perspectives should inform how organisations manage change, improve performance and strengthen culture.

Adaptability and purposeful change

- Leaders must recognise change early, adapt to evolving circumstances and lead organisational transformation with confidence.
- Change initiatives should improve organisational effectiveness, service delivery and public value rather than simply introducing new processes.

Ethical leadership and organisational culture

- Ethical leadership requires integrity, transparency and accountability, particularly when entrusted with public resources.
- Leaders should avoid self-centred conduct and remain accountable for decisions involving public resources.

Decisions that create public value

- Leaders should use reliable information to make timely, evidence-based decisions.
- Public-sector leaders carry a unique responsibility, as their decisions directly influence communities, service delivery outcomes and public trust.

SESSION 25

From Vision to Action: Shaping the Future of Public Finance Leadership in South Africa

SESSION SPOTLIGHT

From Vision to Action: Shaping the Future of Public Finance Leadership in South Africa



> ***"PUBLIC FINANCE IS NOT MERELY ABOUT BALANCING BOOKS AND ACHIEVING COMPLIANCE; IT IS ABOUT PROTECTING PUBLIC RESOURCES, ENABLING ACCOUNTABLE GOVERNANCE AND TRANSLATING EVERY RAND INTO MEANINGFUL DEVELOPMENT FOR COMMUNITIES."***

Dr Namane Dickson Masemola

Deputy Minister | COGTA

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SESSION SUMMARY

From Vision to Action: Shaping the Future of Public Finance Leadership in South Africa

KEY NOTES

Dr Namane Dickson Masemola
Deputy Minister | COGTA

Public finance as strategic leadership

- Public finance professionals play a strategic role in translating public resources into meaningful development and improved service delivery.
- Their responsibility extends beyond compliance and financial reporting to include governance, planning, accountability and the responsible stewardship of community resources.

From policy to implementation

- South Africa has an extensive legislative and policy framework, but the central challenge remains turning policies, plans and legislation into tangible outcomes.
- Successful implementation requires capable institutions, appropriate skills, ethical leadership and coordinated action across all spheres of government.

Professional and accountable institutions

- Local government reform is moving towards a professional, merit-based administration in which appointments and advancement reflect competence, qualifications and performance.
- Administrative stability and independence should be supported by clear performance expectations, effective oversight and meaningful consequences for misconduct or underperformance.

Stronger financial management and sustainability

- Reviews of municipal funding and the local-government policy framework should ensure that financial arrangements support municipalities' developmental responsibilities and long-term sustainability.
- Stronger financial controls, ethical conduct and accountable implementation of the MFMA are essential to protecting public resources and directing funding towards development and service delivery.

Communities, trust and public value

- Communities should have a stronger voice in municipal governance and greater visibility into how public resources are allocated and used.
- Ethical leadership, professional administration and visible improvements in service delivery can help rebuild public confidence.

CLOSING ADDRESS

Closing Remarks: Closing Address: Reimagining Public Finance Leadership for a Changing South Africa



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> ***SOUTH AFRICA IS ALIVE WITH POSSIBILITY WHEREVER ETHICAL, CAPABLE AND COMMITTED LEADERS CHOOSE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.***

Louise Muller

President | CIGFARO

CLOSING ADDRESS

Reimagining Public Finance Leadership for a Changing South Africa

KEY NOTES

Louise Muller
President | CIGFARO

CIGFARO as a community of purpose

- The conference reinforced CIGFARO's role as more than a professional forum, serving as a community that connects, supports and inspires public finance leaders across South Africa.
- Collaboration, shared learning and professional relationships remain critical to strengthening the public finance profession.

Leadership beyond compliance

- Modern public finance leaders are expected to provide strategic insight, ethical stewardship and innovation, not only financial oversight and regulatory compliance.
- Financial management achieves its greatest value when it translates into improved services and outcomes for citizens.

Turning possibility into impact

- The conference highlighted innovation, resilience, governance and accountability as essential enablers of a capable and responsive public sector.
- Meaningful change depends on leaders who are committed to converting resources, policies and plans into measurable public value.

Ethical leadership and social responsibility

- The GBVF candle tribute served as a powerful reminder that leadership must be grounded in dignity, compassion, accountability and human-centred service.
- Public sector leaders have a responsibility to foster safe, inclusive and ethical institutions.

The work begins after the conference

- The success of the conference will be measured by the actions delegates take in their organisations and communities after returning home.
- Reimagining public finance leadership requires continuous commitment to governance, service delivery and citizen-centred outcomes.

THANK YOU

Summaries prepared by Standard Bank

