

News Release

For immediate release

26 September 2018

Buffalo City Executive Mayor calls for local government communicators to be pro-active in telling “good stories” about government

EAST LONDON Thursday, 26 September 2018: The Buffalo City Executive Mayor Xola Pakati says government communicators should adopt a proactive approach to tell “good stories” about what municipalities are doing to better the lives of citizens.

Pakati was giving a keynote address at the two-day 3rd National Communicators Forum (NCF) which is convened by the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) in East London.

“There are a number of good stories about local developments and lives being changed through the provision of municipal services. It cannot be correct that often the media sets the agenda and our work involves responding to what is being queried,” Pakati said, and urged communicators to move away from being reactive.

“The NCF is a very important event as it helps to facilitate peer learning between officials responsible for communication across the country’s municipalities. We are confident that this event will also go a long way in creating the necessary interface between SALGA and government communicators, more particularly regarding the communication of critical decisions by the sector,” Pakati said.

Referring to the theme of the gathering, which is "Bringing Local Government closer to the People", Pakati said: “critical for local government officials and public representatives is the task of ensuring that there is a fusion between the thinking of the municipality and that of the people”. Pakati urged the participators to use the forum to assist them in crafting positions that will realize bring local government to the people.

SALGA Executive Manager Lance Joel made an analogy of a hen after laying an egg. "The hen crows as a sign of triumph", Joel said, urging the delegates to do the same. “I challenge you to make a deliberate commitment, responsibility and function to go and dig good stories about local government and upon finding them, make the necessary noise,” Joel said.

Since the 2nd NCF held in July 2017 held eThekweni municipality, the NCF made certain undertakings and as a result, the district forums and provincial forums had been revived. The national forum is now a culmination of a bottom-up process.

A Communication Policy developed with the objective of guiding municipalities into developing their own communication policies and strategies has been approved by Cabinet. It emphasises the need for communicators to operate from a developmental communication paradigm where communities are given information they can use in bettering their lives. Municipalities have been urged to develop communication policies and strategies.

Having realised that communication was also insufficiently funded or not prioritized in certain municipalities, the forum has agreed to lobby and advocate for a Communication Grant to fund communication in various municipalities.

The NCF will continue till Friday and some of the key topics in the forum table include political killings, how to use communication to strengthen democracy, dealing with communication crisis to help equip communicators in order to plan better.

END

Issued By: South African Local Government Association

For further media enquiries, please contact:

For further media enquiries, please contact:

Sivuyile Mbambato

Email: smbambato@salga.org.za

Mobile: 073 897 8519

Tebogo Mosala

Email: tmosala@salga.org.za

Mobile: 084 666 7699