

Saica hosts a successful Inaugural Public Sector Summit to drive transformation and collaboration

By [Msizi Gwala](#), issued by [SAICA](#)

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The South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (Saica) successfully concluded its highly anticipated Inaugural Public Sector Summit that was held on 15 August 2023. The summit brought together a broad array of industry leaders, stakeholders, Saica members, the broader accountancy profession, and society from across the public sector landscape. The summit marked a significant step forward in Saica's commitment to making a positive difference in the public sector. Following the summit, Saica has been reflecting and debriefing, a process being undertaken to ensure that actionable strategies are adequately derived from the proceedings.

Some key takeaways

The summit, themed 'Nurturing Change for a Better Society', served as a dynamic platform for impassioned discussions, knowledge sharing, and strategic collaborations aimed at fostering transformation within the public sector. Members of the panel and attendees alike engaged in thought-provoking and at times challenging conversations that explored the state of affairs in South Africa's public sector. Through these discussions, various challenges, innovative approaches, best practices, and actionable insights, all geared toward building a better public sector, were shared.

"We are thrilled to have witnessed the overwhelming success of our inaugural Public Sector Summit," said Milton Segal (Saica's executive director: Standards). "Some of the key messages the profession will be taking forward include increasing focus on implementation, not only legislation and policy, more support for the sector and less reflection on the negative." Segal went on to mention the importance of a collaborative response amongst the broad stakeholders in the ecosystem, and the need for the profession to also be held accountable, as key themes coming through strongly during the deliberations.



Msizi Gwala: Saica project director for Enabling Competencies

Panellists and attendees shared insights on improving governance, accountability, financial management, fiscal responsibility, service delivery and professionalisation.

The need for directional clarity for the country, reforms in the system of public procurement that has eroded state capacity, better hiring and expertise management or sharing practices and working towards better service delivery also featured prominently in the discussions during the summit.

Esteemed panel members and discussions

Panel members deliberated on the improvement of governance, accountability and transparency and the role of the profession in the professionalisation of the public sector. Moderated by Khaya Sithole, the insights from both panels resonated deeply with attendees and underscored the urgency of collaboration in effecting lasting change, and the need for fewer 'talk shops' and more work to follow such initiatives. Freeman Nomvalo, Saica CEO, highlighted whistleblowing as an area needing urgent attention by all stakeholders. "Those who stand up for good and draw our attention to problems we face as a country, tend to be victimised," says Freeman.

Adding to this, Wayne Duvenage, OUTA CEO, notes that the lack of consequences and accountability in the sector remains a key challenge. Wayne cited the unfortunate incidents that result in victimisation and unfortunate deaths. As an example, he noted that two years after reports on the alleged Thembisa Hospital corruption, there have been no real

consequences for wrongdoing.

According to Jan van Schalkwyk (from the AGSA, which is considered to be a professionalised public institution and counts amongst the country's top employers), a lot can be done despite resistance, a misty tone at the top or even a lack of political will.

Hon. Mkhuleko Hlengwa also challenged professionals to commit to their work despite all the challenges they face, and not be part of the problem. Hlengwa added: "Don't put the entire salvation of this country in the hands of politicians, it requires a collective effort. Every right, such as to vote, comes with a responsibility, which is missing in certain parts. There is a need to mobilise and raise the voice of civil society, which makes such conversations an important contributor to the democratic discourse."

Prof. Somadoda Fikeni, Natasha Soopal and Dr Emmanuel Ngcobo all emphasised the need for competence beyond technical expertise, in order for professionals to make a difference. Stakeholders present were urged by the moderator to work on a cure for what he termed 'South Africa's implementation paralysis'. As Saica plans a way forward, the institute commits to being a key partner in making a positive difference in the public sector, and nurturing change for a better South Africa.



FINANCE

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Saica extends its heartfelt gratitude to all attendees, speakers, partners, and stakeholders who contributed to the resounding success of the Inaugural Public Sector Summit. The momentum generated during this event will undoubtedly continue to shape the discourse and drive change in the public sector for years to come.

Panel discussions on public finance, governance, accountability, and transparency can be accessed [here](#), while deliberations on professionalisation can be accessed [here](#).

Saica thanks the following panel members and stakeholders for taking part in the discussions:

- Freeman Nomvalo (chief executive officer of Saica),
- Alice Muller (head of portfolio AGSA),
- Shabeer Hamid Khan (accountant general of South Africa),
- Wayne Duvenage (chief executive officer of OUTA),
- Hon. Mkhuleko Hlengwa (chairperson of SCOPA),
- Dr Emmanuel Ngcobo (president elect of CIGFARO),
- Prof. Somadoda Fikeni (chairperson of the Public Service Commission),
- Jan van Schalkwyk (executive in the office of the auditor-general (AGSA)),
- Natasha Soopal (Saica executive: Ethics Standards and Public Sector), and
- Darren Issacs (founder and chief executive officer at Makosi).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Msizi Gwala is project director for Enabling Competencies at Saica.

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