Support

services

The department's branches are supported in achieving their objectives related to the constitutional mandate through the activities of the Corporate Affairs Branch.

This branch provides the strategic support that is needed to interpret and implement legislation and regulations, formulate policies and render operational and procedural support. The branch also supports the department to position itself as an employer of choice, enhance service delivery and systems improvement, and to promote equitable and sound corporate governance. Its functions are concentrated on human resources management and development, security and auxiliary services, legal services, information technology and communication.

Human resources

The department has for the most part been characterised by stability in top management throughout the current and previous political terms, which has contributed greatly to continuity in the sector. The retention of competent staff has contributed to the continued maintenance of excellent levels of performance. This was achieved, among other things, through the amendment of the contracts of the department's senior management service, with directors being appointed on a permanent basis, and chief directors and deputy directors-general on five-year contracts. Over the period, the department has developed its staff and introduced several innovations in relation to recruitment and retention, labour relations, learning and development, sector skills and employee wellness.

Administrative transformation

Over the past 15 years, good progress has been made in meeting the transformation targets as set out in the White Paper on the Transformation of the Public Service (1995). Since 1994, the implementation of the human development strategy has accelerated change in the recruitment, retention, reward, development and promotion of staff in the department. In the process, posts are advertised more regularly, new graduates are recruited to gain experiential training in the department, internal staff members are given fair opportunities for advancement, and the

department adheres to the Employment Equity (EE) Plan and its implementation. Transformation targets include employment representivity levels, the democratisation of the workplace, the transformation of the organisational culture, and restructuring to improve service delivery, training and development.

The department's EE targets for 2010 are as follows:

Designated group and salary level	Target
Black employees: salary level 13–16	82%
Black employees: salary level 11–12	80%
Black employees: salary level 9–10	80%
Black employees: salary level 4–8	80%
Women on senior management service levels	50%
Women on middle management service levels (deputy director and assistant director)	48%
People with disabilities	2%

Since 2003, female representivity in the department has increased from 41% to 47%. On the level of the senior management service, women representation has increased from 32% to 46%. On the level of the middle management service, women representation has increased from 37% to 44%. The representation of black employees (African, coloured and Indian workers) has increased from 66% to 82%. On the level of the senior management service, the representation of black employees has increased from 68% to 74%. On the level of the middle management service, the representation of black employees has increased from 51% to 77%. The representation of employees with disabilities has increased from 1.2% to 1.4%.

These statistics show that female representation in the department has increased overall, as well as on the senior and middle management levels over the past six years. The target has not been met with regard to the employment of people

with disabilities due to various factors, but the department has put in place measures to address this area such as earmarking posts, partnering with specialist employee bodies and the like.

In 2005, an institutional review was undertaken. Based on the results of the review, the key value chains of the branches were redesigned, and an overall organisational design of the support and cross-cutting functions and major components took place. As a result, most of the positions affected by the review were redesigned. The occupational classes of marine scientists, oceanographic technicians, auxiliary services officers and marine conservation inspectors were regraded and proper remuneration levels were determined for these positions. The occupational-specific dispensations (OSD) for environmental officers and legal professionals were implemented in the department, and incumbents of these occupational classes were correctly aligned in terms of remuneration structures across government.

Human resource development

As part of a strategy to combat the rising level of youth unemployment, the department implemented environmental management internships and environmental education learnerships. The first environmental management internship programme was piloted in 2005 in partnership with the City of Cape Town and the University of Cape Town. Fourteen interns were appointed and exposed to practical workplace experience on environmental management issues, risks and challenges. The programme was extended in 2006 with an intake of 24 interns who were recruited nationally and placed at the Department of Environmental Affairs in Cape Town. The department committed R1 million of funds received from the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) towards the internship programme for 2006/07.

In 2007/08, the department enrolled 58 unemployed people in learnerships at Environmental Education Training and

Development Practice (EETDP) NQF Level 5. The purpose of this qualification was to develop the capacity of environmental education and training practitioners to identify and develop their understanding of environmental and sustainability issues in their work context and to conduct education and training interventions that respond to these issues.

The department has submitted its Workplace Skills Plan to the relevant SETA, and has established the DEAT Learning Network, an interactive learning method to enhance the performance of managerial staff in the department.

Performance management

The department's operations in terms of service delivery have improved markedly with the introduction of the Performance Management System. The signing of performance contracts by management, submission of quarterly performance reports and undergoing of quarterly evaluations have contributed to improved performance. These processes have, in turn, enabled the department to improve public access to information, examine appropriate ways of giving feedback on client service standards through its various programmes, more clearly reflect the elements of *Batho Pele* in its business plans, incorporate ways of measuring and improving public service standards, and give clear recognition to high achievers and reward good performance. In an audit conducted by the Public Service Commission, DEAT was rated as being one of the best performing departments in government for 2008.

Democratisation of the workplace

The department has made notable changes in the workplace. The platform for negotiations and discussions with top management has been improved through the creation of structures such as the Departmental Bargaining Council, which serves as a forum for the employer and

employee representative unions to discuss issues of mutual interest. The unions enjoy co-governance with the department and participate in all departmental strategic meetings. This refers to the involvement of unions in the administrative running of the department and is exercised through their participation in certain decision-making processes, where management consults unions before the finalisation of decisions.

The department has ensured that the process of developing policy and legislation has included a vast array of stakeholders and citizens and that the objects of the National Environmental Management Act have been adhered to as far as was possible.

Staff health

The introduction of a Wellness Programme has reconfirmed management's commitment to supporting staff members with various personal problems as and when they occur. The culture of caring goes beyond the HIV/Aids support strategy for DEAT employees and their immediate families. Employees in the department have been trained to handle HIV/Aids-related issues, including lay counselling. These employees conduct workshops to educate co-workers on various HIV/Aids-related topics, such as prevention and care, and sexually transmitted diseases. In addition, the department has developed a variety of employee support programmes that deal with debt counselling, sport and community involvement.

Security services

The department's security systems have been upgraded and improved on an ongoing basis. Measures are in place not just to ensure the physical security of staff members, but also the protection of the department's assets by means of access control and a biometric security system.

Document security is also a priority for the department, and for this purpose a classification system is in place that requires compliance with minimum information security standards (MISS). A policy directive is in place that regulates how security-related issues in government are managed, which is also applied in the case of security breaches. As the department functions in a very prescriptive environment, certain procedures need to be followed to avoid security breaches and, as such, the department has not encountered any serious security breaches over the past 15 years.

This excellent record is maintained by submitting staff members for security clearances, according to the prescripts set by the National Intelligence Agency.

Future developments include the upgrading of the current biometrics system to keep pace with the latest technological developments.

Departmental activities foster team spirit.

Legal services

The department's legal instruments are characterised by their robustness. They are aimed at the protection and sustainable utilisation of the environment. The department currently administers 17 acts. The department has made great strides in this regard and has developed policy and both primary and secondary legislation to implement its Constitutional mandate. The legal section has been expanded considerably and has played a crucial role in mitigating risks to the department.

Information technology

Since 1994, the department has been moving towards using predominantly electronic means of communication. This reinforces its commitment to conserving natural resources. The department's information technology (IT) systems have been characterised by several accomplishments in terms of systems development over the past five years.

It was the first government department to implement the Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) and it is still seen as a flagship in this regard. The Marine Administration System (MAST) is another unique innovation. This system was developed for the Marine and Coastal Management branch in Cape Town, to deal with the large amounts of electronic data it generates around permits, levies and catch totals. Where the department had previously had more than 20 different information databases and systems, these have now been consolidated onto a single integrated system. The first phase of the development comprised the administration module, while the second phase involved incorporating the catch system modules. The final phase involved linking MAST to back data and converting that to the new system.

Backup and recovery processes have been developed for the entire department, including the Marine and Coastal Management office in Cape Town, the Parliamentary office, and Antarctica and Islands. New IT policies and standards have been developed and implemented in order to keep abreast with the latest technology. Network-related services include the EDMS (with an average uptime of 100%), database applications and e-mail. A system of one e-mail domain for the entire department was implemented in 2005.

The local area network (LAN), the IT backbone of the department, has been upgraded to 1 GB per floor at the head office in Pretoria. An uninterrupted power supply has also been implemented at the Marine and Coastal Management office. A virtual private network has been implemented, so that DEAT is on its own network, and not part of GovNet. The security on this system has been upgraded to incorporate the implementation of a spam filtering tool on all incoming e-mail. An average of 350 000 spam-related e-mails are blocked each month.

An audit of the local area network at Marine and Coastal Management in the Foretrust Building was completed and the design enhanced to alleviate bottlenecks. International certification was obtained and performance on identified floors improved between 100 and 1 000 percent. Bandwidth optimisation devices were implemented to increase the performance of the Internet and access to applications. The Marine and Coastal Management storage area network solution was reconfigured into a central data store with enhanced security.

Mass storage equipment has also been implemented for the EDMS and GIS database in Pretoria, as well as for MAST data at Marine and Coastal Management. An IT Master Systems Plan (MSP) has been developed and will be implemented over the next five years.

An investigation was undertaken to integrate the three Environmental Quality and Protection applications on a portal platform. New applications that have been identified by the IT Department include the development of a tourism guide database, as well as a CITES database. The user requirement specifications for these applications have been completed. The department is also in the process of developing a new intranet.

Communications

DEAT's communication function does not merely provide administrative support to the department. It has been transformed into a key strategic area to guide the department in its interactions with stakeholders.

Public access to information is enhanced through the department's walk-in centre, where face-to-face interaction is established with the public, as well as its call centre. These centres handle any enquiries about the department and its work. They are the information resource hubs of the department that deal with the provision of information to internal staff and the public in accordance with the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA). They respond to public enquiries while implementing the principles of *Batho Pele*.

The department places significant emphasis on media liaison and, as such, DEAT keeps the media updated on pertinent issues and events through proactive media engagements.

Outreach, stakeholder liaison and community relations are established through the activities of this function. In 2001, the department launched the Cleanest Town Competition to create public awareness on good environmental practices.

In 2007, the department conducted a public perception survey to measure public perceptions pertaining to service delivery in order to provide baseline performance indicators of service delivery. Informed by the results of the survey, the department will implement measures in 2009 to address some of the issues that were raised.

Joint communications programmes with provincial authorities and government agencies are implemented to foster collaboration between different spheres of government.

Corporate Communications was established as a function within DEAT at the end of 2005 and commenced with the practice of staff interaction by moving towards face-to-face communication with staff by convening staff izimbizos in the Pretoria and Cape Town offices, where open communication and the exchange of ideas are encouraged.

In order to achieve a consolidated government brand, the department adopted the new government-wide corporate identity guidelines in 2005. In order to achieve consistent application of the government brand, the department developed corporate identity and branding guidelines with a corporate identity manual.

The departmental website has been redesigned to become more user-friendly, in line with the new corporate identity. The department is currently reviewing its websites and associated applications with the aim of consolidating and integrating its main website and associated websites in the design of a new portal by 2010 in line with its Master Systems Plan.

At the Marine and Coastal Management Office in Cape Town, effective public participatory processes are used to educate, inform and heighten awareness. These include fisheries' izimbizos, community meetings, information sessions, road shows, consultations with traditional leadership and influential voices of public opinion.