NATIONAL TREASURY

MFMA Circular No. 123

Municipal Finance Management Act No. 56 of 2003

Municipal Budget Circular for the 2023/24 MTREF

CONTENTS

Introduction

This budget circular is a follow-up to MFMA Circular No. 122 that was issued on 09 December 2022. It aims to provide further guidance to municipalities with the preparation of their 2023/24 Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework (MTREF) budgets and should be read together with the budget circulars that have been issued previously.

The grant allocations as per the 2023 Budget Review and the 2023 Division of Revenue Bill are also key focus areas in this circular. Municipalities are reminded to refer to the annual budget circulars of the previous years for guidance in areas of the budget preparation that is not covered in this circular.

1. The South African economy and inflation targets

GDP is expected to grow by 0.9 per cent in real terms in 2023, compared with an estimate of 1.4 per cent at the time of the medium-term budget policy statement (MTBPS), recovering slowly to 1.8 per cent in 2025.

The economic outlook faces a range of risks, including weaker-than-expected global growth, further disruptions to global supply chains and renewed inflationary pressures from the war in Ukraine, continued power cuts and a deterioration in port and rail infrastructure, widespread criminal activity, and any deterioration of the fiscal outlook.

Government is taking urgent measures to reduce load-shedding in the short term and transform the sector through market reforms to achieve long-term energy security. Several reforms are under way to improve the performance of the transport sector, specifically freight rail and to improve the capability of the state.

The following macro-economic forecasts must be considered when preparing the 2023/24 MTREF municipal budgets.

Table 1: Macroeconomic performance and projections, 2021 - 2026

Fiscal year	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26
	Actual	Estimate		Forecast	
CPI Inflation	4.9%	6.9%	5.3%	4.9%	4.7%

Source: Budget Review 2023.

Note: the fiscal year referred to is the national fiscal year (April to March) which is more closely aligned to the municipal fiscal year (July to June) than the calendar year inflation.

2. Key focus areas for the 2023/24 budget process

2.1 Local government conditional and unconditional grants allocations

Over the 2023 MTEF period, local government allocations will increase by a total of R14.3 billion, made up of R8.1 billion in the local government equitable share and R6.2 billion in direct conditional grants. This takes the total direct allocation to R521.7 billion over the same period. These allocations alleviate some of the financial pressures, particularly in basic services, where the costs of providing services are rising.

The *local government equitable share* and related allocations increases at an annual average rate of 7.8 per cent and municipal conditional grants increase by 3.5 per cent over the 2023 MTEF period.

The *local government equitable share* formula has been updated to account for projected household growth, inflation and estimated increases in bulk water and electricity costs over the 2023 MTEF period. It also includes allocations for the operational and maintenance costs associated with the provision of free basic services.

The 2023 Budget has ensured that sufficient provision has been made to ensure that all municipalities are fully subsidised to support indigent households. Following this, R1.35 billion has been left unallocated in the LGES formula for 2023/24 to serve as a precautionary measure should municipal electricity tariffs exceed the 20.7 per cent provided for in the formula (see section 5.7 on why this is above the 18.7 per cent approved by the Energy Regulator). If the actual increase in municipal bulk tariffs exceeds the provision made in the formula, it will be the first call on those unallocated funds. We will consider funding broader cost relief measures for municipalities if funds remain available after that.

The R6.2 billion in direct conditional grants is funded from the Budget Facility for Infrastructure (BFI) and is broken down as follows:

- **R2.2 billion** added to the Urban Settlements Development Grant to fund the implementation of projects in the eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality and the City of Johannesburg;
- **R461 million** added to the Public Transport Network Grant to align funding with the revised implementation plan and cash flow projections for the City of Cape Town's MyCiTi public transport network project; and
- **R3.4 billion** added to the Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant to fund 3 water projects in Sol Plaatje Local Municipality, Drakenstein Local Municipality and Nelson Mandela Bay Metropolitan Municipality.

Notable changes to the conditional grants system

Housing emergency grants
Changes to conditional grants in the 2023 Budget include the discontinuation of the conditional emergency housing grants for provinces and municipalities. The baselines of these two grants are shifted to the Department of Human Settlements. This will allow the department to respond quickly in the event of an emergency housing need.

Changes to the INEP conditional grant frameworks
As part of government's efforts to accelerate access to electricity thereby addressing the energy crisis, Eskom and municipal INEP grants will begin funding alternative energy technologies such as rooftop solar and energy-saving devices. Due process must be followed to access funding for these new technologies. As a result, both Eskom and municipalities will need to conform to the set requirements by submitting business plans by 31 October 2023. These business plans, will need to be approved by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) before they can be implemented. Priority should be given to new connections, i.e., non-grid technology should be targeted at households that do not have access to electricity.

The annual Division of Revenue Bill was published on 22 February 2023. The Bill specifies the grant allocations and municipalities must reconcile their budgets to the numbers published therein in compiling their 2023/24 MTREF.

> The Division of Revenue Bill, 2023, which includes the annexures outlining allocations to each municipality is available at:
> http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2023/default.aspx

2.2 Re-enforcing improved intergovernmental relations in the 2023 Division of Revenue Bill, (DoRB)

In order to strengthen the system of good intergovernmental relations as envisaged in the Chapter 3 of the Constitution and subsequent related legislation, municipalities are reminded of Section 31(3) of DoRA that provides for the facilitation of personal liability for unnecessary litigation. As required by subsection (1)(a) of this clause, read together with section 41(3) of the Constitution, a municipality may only institute litigation against any organ of state, state-owned enterprise, public- and/ or municipal entity after exhausting all dispute resolution mechanisms required and/ or available to the municipality in terms of existing intergovernmental relations processes, policy and/ or any related contract with the municipality, including in terms of the Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003, the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, 2005, and/ or the Electricity Regulation Act, 2006 (dispute processes administered by National Energy Regular of South Africa (NERSA)).

Section 31 is amended to include a clause that requires that where an organ of state decides to institute judicial proceedings against another organ of state, it must, within 10 working days of its decision, notify the National Treasury, the relevant provincial treasury, the Department of Cooperative Governance and the Auditor-General, of the details of compliance with Chapter 4 of the Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, 2005, including an explanation of the failure to resolve the dispute.

2.3 Conditional grants usage

Conditional grant funds may only be used for the purposes, and subject to the conditions specified in the framework for each conditional grant. These conditions are binding in terms of sections 11 and 12 of the annual Division of Revenue Act. Any instruction by a municipal, provincial, or national official or politician that is inconsistent with the framework of a conditional grant is invalid. Municipalities are reminded that in terms of section 32 of DoRA, spending of a grant that is inconsistent with DoRA is considered irregular or unauthorised expenditure.

3. Pension and medical aid fund defaults

There has been a growing trend where municipalities are deducting pension and/ or medical aid contributions from officials but are not paying it over to their pension- and/ or medical aid fund. This is inconsistent with the intent and spirit of the MFMA and constitutes an act of financial misconduct in terms of section 171 of the MFMA read with the Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings, 2014 and also a financial offence in terms of section 173 of the MFMA read together with the Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings. Municipal Councils should refer these actions to the Disciplinary Boards for further investigation and should also lay criminal charges against the accounting officer or any other responsible or delegated official who has failed to perform the responsibility outlined in terms of section 65(2)(f) of the MFMA which states that “the accounting officer of a municipality must take all reasonable steps to ensure that the municipality complies with its tax, levy, duty, pension, medical aid, audit fees and other statutory commitments”. Municipal Councils should also consider further measures and actions in terms of the Pension Funds Act, as may be applicable.

4. Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (*m*SCOA)

4.1 Version 6.7 of the *m*SCOA Chart Go Live

Version 6.7 of the *m*SCOA chart will go live on 13 March 2023, whereafter tabled budget data strings can be uploaded on the GoMuni portal.

For new *m*SCOA chart changes to be considered for version 6.8 of the chart, a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) must be logged by 31 August 2023 on the *m*SCOA FAQ database on GoMuni. FAQ queries can be logged at:

https://lg.treasury.gov.za/ibi_apps/portal/mSCOA_FAQ

It is important that the issue logged is described clearly and that sufficient supporting evidence is provided to ensure that all aspects of the issue are considered. After investigating the query logged, the following actions will be taken:

- If the query does not require a chart change, the FAQ will be closed, and feedback will be provided to the logger.
- If the query warrants a chart change, it will be submitted for consideration and approval by the relevant committees within the National Treasury.

Chart changes are communicated in October of each year to allow sufficient time for municipalities and vendors to effect such changes. Chart changes are officially published in the MFMA Budget Circular in December of each year.

4.2 Additional requirements to change municipal financial systems

The cost and risk associated with procuring and implementing a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) financial system necessitate careful consideration and extensive planning to ensure a smooth operational transition. Such a transition takes at least 18 months to conclude and does not come without challenges and disruptions in operations.

The National Treasury will regulate the minimum business processes and system specifications for *m*SCOA by the end of 2024/25. A new transversal tender for the provision of ERP financial systems that complies with these regulations will be put in place once the regulations have been issued. Municipalities should therefore exercise extreme caution when changing their financial systems at this stage to eliminate fruitless and wasteful expenditure by procuring financial systems that might not comply with the said regulations.

Municipalities are reminded to follow the due diligence processes set out in MFMA Budget Circulars No. 93, 98 and *m*SCOA Circulars No 5 and 6 prior to procuring new financial systems to protect them from making incorrect decisions in this regard.

In addition, and **with immediate effect**, municipalities must inform the National and relevant Provincial Treasury of any intention to replace the financial system currently operating at the municipality prior to inviting proposals from system providers. This is a requirement in terms of section 74 of the MFMA. The submission should include:

- A comprehensive motivation with specific reasons for why it is deemed necessary to replace the existing financial system;
- A copy of the service level agreement with minutes of the meetings between the municipality and the current service provider (financial system vendor) during the previous twelve months;
- An assessment to determine which modules of the existing financial system are being utilised by the municipality. Reasons must be provided for modules not in operation. Details and reasons must be provided on the use of third-party systems to provide functionality required in terms of MFMA Circular No. 80;

- An assessment to detail the proficiency of municipal users to utilise the current financial system properly. Reasons must be provided if users are not proficient in the use of the system and the details must be provided on how the system is being operated and transactions are being captured on the system in such cases;
- The date on which the existing financial system was implemented, the procurement and implementation costs and the current operational costs thereof must be disclosed;
- The organisational structure, specifically for the IT department/ function, clearly indicating management capacity and responsibility for operating the financial system;
- A technical assessment should be submitted indicating how the existing ICT infrastructure, server and network comply with the requirements of the current financial system; and
- Copies of all IT strategies, policies and procedural documents including the IT disaster recovery plan must be made available.

The above submissions and all enquiries must be forwarded to lgdocuments@treasury.gov.za. A working committee comprising representatives from the National and Provincial Treasuries, the Office of the Auditor-General and other relevant stakeholders will assess the submissions and respond with its findings. These findings must be tabled in Council and a council resolution must be submitted to lgdocuments@treasury.gov.za within 14 working days after the Council meeting has taken place.

It must be emphasized that the combination of both credible data inputs and an effective financial system is fundamental to ensure the quality and timeliness of financial reporting. If the data input into the financial system is incorrect then any management information generated by the system will lack credibility and reliability for decision making. Furthermore, a municipality with poorly designed business processes will not resolve the problem by implementing a new financial system. Processes must firstly be redesigned with the necessary data validation rules if the municipality is to improve its data integrity. This foundation is integral to ensuring that software applications generate credible information and can be used effectively by municipalities.

5. The revenue budget

Similar to the rest of government, municipalities face a difficult fiscal environment. The weak economic growth has put pressure on consumers' ability to pay for services, while transfers from national government are growing more slowly than in the past. Some municipalities have managed these challenges well, but others have fallen into financial distress and face liquidity problems. These include municipalities that are unable to meet their payment obligations to Eskom, Water Boards and other creditors. There is a need for municipalities to focus on collecting revenues owed to them and eliminate wasteful and non-core spending. It is important to note that the municipal equitable share as a policy instrument is meant to subsidies services to the poorest of the poor and not to pay municipal creditors. This bad practice by municipalities will have to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Municipal creditors should be advised that municipalities cannot use funds allocated for basic service provision to pay creditors.

Municipalities must ensure that they render basic services, maintain their assets and a clean environment. Furthermore, there must be continuous communication with the community and other stakeholders to strengthen awareness and participation and to improve the municipality's reputation. This will assist in attracting investment in the local economy which may result in increased employment.

Some municipalities are experiencing serious liquidity challenges. Therefore, the new leadership is advised to:

- Decisively address unfunded budgets by reducing non-priority spending and improving revenue management processes to enable collection; and
- Address service delivery failures by ensuring adequate maintenance, upgrading and renewal of existing assets to enable reliable service delivery.

5.1 Maximising the revenue generation of the municipal revenue base

Reference is made to MFMA Circulars No. 93, paragraph 3.1 and No. 98, paragraph 4.1. The emphasis is on municipalities to comply with Section 18 of the MFMA and ensure that they fund their MTREF budgets from realistically anticipated revenues to be collected. Municipalities are cautioned against assuming collection rates that are unrealistic and unattainable as this is a fundamental reason for municipalities not attaining their desired collection rates.

The purpose of the above mentioned MFMA Circulars is to ensure that the municipalities are using their entire revenue base as the basis for the revenue budget. It is essential that municipalities reconcile their most recent consolidated valuation roll data to that of the current billing system data to ensure that revenue anticipated from property rates is realistic. The municipalities should implement a data management strategy and develop internal capacity to perform these reconciliations and investigations to improve completeness of billing.

One of the aims of the reconciliation process is to identify exceptions, i.e. records on the general valuation roll that are not on the billing system and records on the billing system and vice versa. In addition, the reconciliation must identify duplicated records, missing data, and data errors. These exceptions should then be investigated, and remedial action strategies developed for data cleansing and other corrective actions. The Debtors Ageing data should also form part of the reconciliation process so that "debtors" can be tracked and assessed at a property record level and prioritised for verification of rates liability measured against a MPRA property and owner.

To facilitate reconciliation of the separate databases (General Valuation Roll and Billing), a unique property identifier (common primary unique link code) must be created and populated for each rateable property on the general valuation roll system and on the rates billing system. This property identifier must be unique, without duplicates, and must remain constant for the life of the property. The standards adopted by the South African Council for the Property Valuers Profession (SACPVP), namely South African Standard: Municipal Valuations for Property Rating, specifies that the Surveyor General Code SG 21-digit Code, derived, and created from the property description, be applied for all registered full title properties defined in terms of part (a) of the definition of property.

For all other MPRA defined property, Part (a) Sectional Title, Part (b) Registered Rights, Part (c) Land Tenure Rights and Part (d) PSI and, apportioned multiple use property in terms of sections 8(2)(i) and 9(2), an added suffixed 5 digits to the SG 21-digit code must be assigned by the designated municipal valuer, thereby creating a unique 26-digit code. The municipality must ensure that the SG21 digit code and 26-digit coding system is applied in their valuation roll management system and billing system and engage with their designated municipal valuer and systems service providers to implement the unique property identifier.

Further it is important that municipalities who are performing a general valuation (GV) to implement a new valuation roll on 1 July 2023, must also as best practice compare the current consolidated roll to the new valuation roll. This will identify any anomalies and errors of category of property and market values for review and investigation and the option of lodging an objection by the municipality, where applicable. This process should also identify outliers and shifts in market values by category and area so that tariffs on the new roll can be modelled and determined in an equitable manner to avoid rates shocks.

Municipalities should undertake this exercise as a routine practice during the budget process so that supplementary adjustments to the valuation roll are kept up to date. In order to ensure that the most updated information is used for the reconciliations, municipalities are reminded to adhere and comply with Section 23(1)(2) of the MPRA and therefore use the Part A register as the basis for performing the reconciliations going forward.

Furthermore, municipalities are also advised and expected to comply with Section 8(1) of the MPRA in terms of the billing methodology that should to be specified within their policies to ensure that the correct categories (based on the selection made by the municipality) are used in the reconciliation process.

The list of exceptions derived from this reconciliation will indicate where the municipality may be compromising its revenue generation in respect of property rates or whether the municipality is overstating its revenue budget.

A further test would be to reconcile this information with the Deeds Office registry. In accordance with the MFMA Circular No. 93, municipalities are once more requested to submit their reconciliation of the Valuation roll/ Part A register to the billing system to the National Treasury on a quarterly basis by no later than the 10th working day after the end of the quarter. A detailed action plan must accompany the reconciliation where variances are noted.

The above information must be uploaded by the municipality's approved registered user(s) using the GoMuni Upload Portal at: https://lg.treasury.gov.za/ibi_apps/signin. If the municipality experience any challenge uploading the information, a request for an alternative arrangement may be emailed to linda.kruger@treasury.gov.za.

Municipalities are reminded of the need to clearly communicate the GV appeals and objection process to residents to ensure that any disputes are timeously resolved.

Revenue Collection – No operation can be sustainable if it does not collect its revenue. A municipality is no different. There is a misconception that a municipality may not interrupt or restrict the supply of water services of a defaulting consumer. The National Treasury confirms that neither the Water Services Act, 1997 (Act No. 108 of 1997) or any other legislation prevents a municipality from cutting the supply of water to a defaulting consumer unless the consumer is an indigent in which case the water services to that household must be restricted to the national free basic water limit of 6 kilolitre water monthly (or 50 kilowatt hours in the case of free basic electricity monthly). This was confirmed by the Constitutional Court in the matter of Mazibuko and Others v City of Johannesburg and Others (CCT 39/09) [2009] ZACC 28; 2010 (3) BCLR 239 (CC); 2010 (4) SA 1 (CC) (8 October 2009).

Municipalities are urged to use the restriction/ interruption of supply of both water and electricity services as a collection tool. Effective from the tabling and adoption of the 2023/24 MTREF, municipalities' By-laws and policies must facilitate this and clearly stipulate the order in which any partial payment of the consolidated municipal bill (including property rates) will be applied as well as the process before the supply of water and electricity services will be cut. The National Treasury recommended that any partial payment firstly be applied to property rates, wastewater, waste management, water and lastly to electricity. When interrupting or restricting the supply of water it is important that such is undertaken together with the municipal engineer(s) to ensure a continued minimum supply of waste-water.

Municipalities should develop a Wheeling Framework to allow for the transmission of energy across their networks. These wheeling frameworks provide an opportunity for municipalities to generate revenue from their distribution networks. Provincial Treasuries or National Treasury can be approached for support to develop these frameworks.

5.2 Funding Depreciation

The information shared in Circular 115 regarding the funding of the depreciation refers. It is important to note that depreciation represents the cost of using assets in service delivery and forms part of the total cost of providing the municipal service. Accordingly, it should be included in the setting of cost reflective tariffs to recover the full cost of rendering the service, failing which the depreciation will not be cash backed on Table A7 and will remain a journal entry with no value as mentioned in MFMA Circular No. 115.

5.3 Tariff-setting – the impact of loadshedding

Loadshedding not only affects the electricity service but also some municipalities' ability to pump water, thereby negatively impacting the stability of water supplies and the related functioning of the wastewater reticulation network. The loadshedding crisis has been declared a state of disaster and will require tough budgeting choices for municipalities to make sure that basic municipal services are sustained. The regulations published in the Government Gazette No. 48152 on 27 February 2023 in terms of the Disaster Management Act, 2002 (Act 57 of 2002) require municipalities to "ensure continuous operation of water infrastructure and other specified essential infrastructure, including by installing alternative energy sources or other measures to provide an uninterrupted power supply." Municipalities are also required to "mobilise available resources" and "provide funds for this purpose, subject to affordability." As an immediate interim solution back-up electricity to pump water should be prioritised while being mindful of its affordability within the municipality's available funding sources and other critical priorities. The municipality need to adequately plan and prioritise funding in its 2023/24 MTREF for this purpose, including:

- When planning to pump water/ maintain the wastewater service by way of any alternative solution(s), it is important that the municipality properly plan and budget for the associated capital and operational costs to operate and maintain the solution(s) over the 2023/24 MTREF and longer-term;
- Any additional cost the municipality already incurred in this regard during the period of elevated loadshedding since December 2022 should be projected to continue in 2023/24 i.e. diesel to operate a generator;
- Although a state of emergency has been declared to deal with the continual loadshedding challenges in the country, it is likely that loadshedding will continue during the 2023/24 municipal financial year. It is proposed that municipalities factor in the impact of loadshedding on their electricity revenue projections, taking into account current experience in terms of loadshedding practices by Eskom;
- The additional costs of prolonged loadshedding should be considered;
- Municipalities are always asked to try to balance full cost recovery on services with affordability for their residents. In practice, this means that where the full increase in the cost of a service is not passed on to consumers, municipalities must offset the increased costs through savings identified elsewhere in their operations. Therefore, **reducing/ limiting overall expenditure** is a key part of budgeting for the response to loadshedding. The municipality should stick to its core mandate and functions and carefully review overall expenditure to manage the net effect. Measures should include aggressively cutting costs, frills, and vanity projects, dealing with bloated administrations and structures possibly duplicated across Municipal Manager and Mayoral offices, and applying for exemptions from the annual salary increases if these are not affordable;
- While municipalities are urged to maximise efficiency in their operations, tariff setting efforts should consider the need to make additional provision for repairs and maintenance associated with infrastructure breakdowns during loadshedding;
- **Reducing/ limiting overall expenditure –** the municipality should stick to its core mandate and functions – it is necessary to carefully look at the overall expenditure side to manage the net effect, including aggressively cutting costs, fancy, frills, vanity

projects, deal with bloated admin- and structures possibly duplicated across Municipal Manager and Mayoral offices, and apply for exemptions from the annual salary increases; and

- The cost should be considered and included when setting the tariffs of the service(s) to which it relates.

Municipalities should also budget for reduced bulk purchases and sales to municipal customers based on the same loadshedding assumptions cited above.

Municipalities should carefully monitor their Eskom accounts for any penalties that result from increased demand immediately after a period of loadshedding is ended. Eskom has indicated that they will reverse any penalties for exceeding notified maximum demand that results from the implementation of loadshedding. This should be factored into the tariff calculation to ensure that consumers are not overcharged.

Lastly, it is important to note that a municipality may only introduce a load-shedding levy or surcharge with the approval of the Minister of Finance and in terms of the legislated processes set-out in the MFMA and Municipal Fiscal Powers and Functions Act, 2007.

5.4 Setting cost-reflective tariffs

Reference is made to MFMA Circular No. 98, paragraph 4.2. The setting of cost-reflective tariffs is a requirement of Section 74(2) of the Municipal Systems Act which is meant to ensure that municipalities set tariffs that enable them to recover the full cost of rendering the service. This forms the basis of compiling a credible budget. A credible budget is one that ensures the funding of all approved items and is anchored in sound, timely and reliable information on expenditure and service delivery (Financial and Fiscal Commission (FFC), 2011). Credible budgets are critical for local government to fulfil its mandate and ensure financial sustainability.

A credible expenditure budget reflects the costs necessary to provide a service efficiently and effectively, namely:

- A budget adequate to deliver a service of the necessary quality on a sustainable basis; and
- A budget that delivers services at the lowest possible cost.

The National Treasury issued a tariff setting tool and guide as part of MFMA Budget Circular No. 98 (refer item 4.2) on 6 December 2019 and since 2019, has encouraged municipalities to utilise the tool. **With effect, from the 2023/24 MTREF, all municipalities** (**<u>except</u>** *metropolitan cities and district municipalities that do not provide any services*) **as part of both the tabled and adopted MTREF submissions must submit the completed National Treasury tariff tool (in excel format)** illustrating that the revenue component of the budget is credible and funded and that the municipality's tariffs are cost reflective. If the municipality's initial calculation results in high increases to facilitate cost-reflectiveness, it is recommended that such are phased in over 3 to 5 years. The municipality's strategy in this regard should be included as part of the budget narratives.

This tool will assist in setting tariffs that are cost-reflective and enable a municipality to recover costs to fulfil its mandate. Going forward it is also imperative that every municipality fully embrace the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts (*m*SCOA): costing component. Considering, *m*SCOA implementation is entering its sixth year of implementation, all municipalities must fully embrace and report also utilising the costing segment correctly. The National Treasury Municipal Costing Guide is available on the link below on the National Treasury website.

http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Guidelines/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fGuidelines%2fDocuments%2fMunicipal%20Costing%20Guide&FolderCTID=0x0120004720FD2D0551AE409361D6CB3E122A08.

5.5 Tariffs – achieving a balance between cost-reflectiveness and affordability

National Treasury encourages municipalities to maintain tariff increases at levels that reflect an appropriate balance between the affordability to poorer households and other consumers while ensuring the financial sustainability of the municipality.

When setting tariffs, it is therefore critical to understand the economic environment specific to the municipality and consideration should include at least –

- *The socio-economic profile undertaken for the municipality* available on the National Treasury GoMuni portal – municipalities are encouraged to annually update their own socio-economic profile using the template model available on GoMuni;
- *The most recent average monthly household income in the municipality* as per Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) available on Statistics South Africa | Improving Lives Through Data Ecosystems (statssa.gov.za);
- *The average property value in the municipality* per its most recent approved general valuation roll and/ or supplementary general valuation roll;
- *The number of indigent households in the municipality,* including any variation in the number of indigent households included in the Equitable Share: free basic services component for the municipality vs the municipality's own indigency level discretion; and
- *The economic drivers and activities specific to the municipal area*[1]*; etc*.

The municipality's tariff-setting or other committee tasked with this role must understand and deliberately reflect on this context during the tariff-setting process. Considering the average monthly household income, the median affordable municipal bill would ideally not exceed proportionally approximately 10 to 15 per cent the average monthly household income. This median affordable bill, in combination with the median average property value should inform the basis to determine any rebates to households with income below the median. Furthermore, municipalities contemplating to increase free basic electricity allocations as an indigent relief measure, should do so only after careful consideration of the long-term financial impact that such a decision might have.

It is also important when setting particularly water and electricity tariffs that municipalities are encouraged to set two-tier tariffs, that include a basic availability charge to recover the fixed (direct and indirect) cost associated with the service in conjunction with consumption-based tariff bands. For example, in a drought, such tariffs will facilitate the ability to pay for infrastructure and maintenance, treating chemicals and salaries, etc. while parallel facilitating water restriction based on inclining tariffs as consumption increase. Furthermore, it is important to link the municipality's water tariffs to dam levels, also approved as part of the budget process. For example, if the dam levels drop to 60 per cent the first tier of restriction tariffs should become applicable in terms of the municipality's approved tariff policy.

It is also noted that NERSA approves seasonal tariffs for Eskom but not necessarily for the municipality. It is important that the municipality clearly factors this in its tariff application to NERSA, illustrating the cash flow crunch if the municipality is not similarly allowed a seasonal tariff to recover the higher Eskom bulk cost during winter months.

Lastly, municipalities are cautioned against setting tariffs that include operating inefficiencies. This could lead to tariffs falling into the unaffordable range.

[1] The spatialised tax data is now available through National Treasury for all municipalities that provides an up to date information on economic activity within a municipal boundary.

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation is forecasted to be within the 3 to 6 per cent target band; therefore, municipalities are required to ***justify all increases in excess of the*** **projected inflation target for 2023/24** in their budget narratives and pay careful attention to tariff increases across all consumer groups. In addition, municipalities should include a detailed account of their revenue growth assumptions for the different service charges in the budget narrative.

Additional loadshedding considerations when calculating anticipated revenue collection rates include:

- Consumption patterns amongst pre-paid users who work more sparingly with electricity units. This can have a lagging effect on revenue estimations i.e. although units are paid for up front, it is not necessarily used in high-demand periods; and
- A decline in average consumption patterns for post-paid customers.

As part of its debtor management strategy municipalities should clearly communicate the impact of loadshedding on municipal tariff setting, including through education campaigns. Consumers will expect a decrease in their electricity bills as consumption drops due to loadshedding. Not understanding the impact of tariff structures (fixed and demand-driven components) can create distrust and reduce willingness to pay municipal accounts.

5.6 Municipal Debt Relief

An optimally designed debt solution for Eskom can leverage the structural reform of the electricity sector that is needed both on the Eskom side and the municipal side, however, the municipal debt owed to Eskom pose a material risk to any Eskom debt relief package. In parallel the challenge of defaulting municipalities cannot be separated from a consumer culture to not pay for services.

Municipal Debt Relief that is **conditional and application based**, has therefore been sanctioned. The relief is aimed to correct the underlying behaviour and operational practices in defaulting municipalities and Eskom while in parallel, progressively introducing a smart metering solution to change consumer behaviour by instilling a culture of payment for services consumed. The proposal consists of 4 elements:

i. **Eskom will write-off all debt municipalities owe** as on 31 March 2023 (excluding the March 2023 current account). This will be done over three national financial years and require as a critical qualification that municipalities monthly honour their current (monthly consumption) Eskom and water accounts going forward and maintain a minimum average quarterly collection, etc;

ii. Secondly, **new mechanisms are explored to resolve non-payment –** this to include a dispute ombud mechanism and re-assigning the license of persistent defaulters;

iii. Thirdly, Eskom will continue to **implement a regime of installation of pre-paid meters** in Eskom supplied areas to improve Eskom collection. Municipalities are additionally encouraged to adopt a similar operating regime; and

iv. Lastly, the National Treasury will continue to implement municipal revenue enhancement initiatives, including a transversal tender for a smart pre-paid meter solution to change to a forward looking culture of payment of the consolidated municipal bill.

More details on the application process and related conditions for municipalities will soon be outlined and published through a separate MFMA Circular.

5.7 Bulk Account Payments and Concessions

Since 2018/19, intense work was undertaken to resolve systemic and structural issues pertaining to the electricity function in municipalities. Core to this work was addressing the escalating Eskom debt that threatened the sustainability of Eskom as well as that of municipalities.

During the process, Eskom agreed to provide relieve in certain areas. Municipalities are reminded of the following concessions that remain in place:

- The interest rate charged on overdue municipal bulk accounts were reduced from prime plus 5 per cent to prime plus 2.5 per cent;
- Payment terms were extended from 15 days to 30 days for municipal bulk accounts; and
- Eskom allocation of municipality payments to capital first and then to interest.

These concessions align to the MFMA and are meant to curb municipal growing debt levels by allowing a more conducive payment regime than what was previously employed. In addition, municipalities are urged to budget for and ring-fence their payment of bulk services. Bulk current account payments must be honoured religiously to avoid stringent application of the bulk suppliers' credit control policy.

Municipalities are also urged to enforce a culture of payment for services through their normal credit control processes. In this regard it should be noted that municipalities are only compensated for free basic services based on an indigent user component calculation through the equitable share. As such, a municipality's allocation of free basic services to all of the municipality's consumers is not funded in the equitable share. Every municipality, during the budget process, must consider the affordability to the municipality when allocating free basic services above the national norm and to consumers other than indigent consumers. **If a municipality has any arrears on any of its bulk supplier's accounts, it must limit its provision of free basic services to registered indigent consumers only**.

5.8 Critical Notice Affecting STS Meters

As highlighted in previous MFMA Circular No. 115 (dated 04 March 2022) municipalities are once again alerted that there is still a pending business risk to the prepayment metering industry that requires urgency of action. The token identifiers (TID) used to identify each credit token will run out of available numbers in November 2024, at which point all STS meters will stop accepting credit tokens.

The remedy is to visit each meter and enter a special set of key change tokens in order to reset the meter memory. Municipalities are advised that the National Treasury, through the Office of the Chief Procurement Officer (OCPO), will soon facilitate a transversal contract for the provision of auditing, re-calibration and re-configuration services for standard transfer specification compliant prepayment meters that align to minimum and critical technical specifications for local government. In this respect the development of the transversal contract for smart prepaid meters as per NRS 049 (per latest approved version) is at an advanced stage and should be issued shortly by National Treasury.

If your municipality or municipality entity is currently in the process of procuring for a solution or is planning to, you are cautioned:

- Against proceeding prior to the OCPO having issued and awarded the transversal contract for the provision of inter alia auditing, re-calibration and re-configuration services for standard transfer specification compliant prepayment meters Terms of Reference (ToR); and
- That, with immediate effect, you must inform and obtain the National Treasury's input prior to proceeding with any current procurement or proposed procurement for this purpose or any related solution or similar. This is to prevent unnecessary and wasteful expenditure on such solutions. Any request for National Treasury's input on the current or planned procurement of any related solution or similar or component thereof, must be

directed to the National Treasury for the attention of the Local Government Budget Analysis Unit (Mr. Sadesh Ramjathan) at Sadesh.Ramjathan@treasury.gov.za.

In this regard, municipalities will have two options to choose from:

- Firstly, to pursue the route of auditing, re-calibrating and re-configuring services for standard transfer specification compliant prepayment meters; and/ or
- Secondly, to replace the old meter with a new smart prepaid meter.

For both options, the municipality will have to budget accordingly as no additional funding will be available through the national fiscus.

Your assistance in proactively ensuring that the municipality and/ or its entities are not adversely affected by these processes will be appreciated.

5.9 Completeness and credibility of revenue related information in the Budget

The MBRR regulates the minimum level of information required from municipalities when compiling, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the municipality's financial management situation. Failure to include the minimum required information hampers the municipal council, the public and stakeholders' ability to make informed decisions and engage on the matter. It also limits research, studies, and benchmarking undertaken for local, provincial, and national purposes.

The National Treasury would like to take this opportunity to caution municipalities that the MBRR prescribe the minimum level of information municipalities must include as part of their legal reporting obligations.

Going forward the Treasuries will place increased attention and focus on the adequacy of municipalities' submissions. The National Treasury regards this non-compliance to include the minimum level of information as serious and if persistent will consider applying the available legal sanctions, including recourse in terms of section 216(2) of the Constitution. In this context, National Treasury will particularly focus on the completeness of asset management related information as well as the statistical information required in the A, B and C schedules during the 2023/24 MTREF.

5.10 Eskom Bulk Tariff increases

The National Energy Regulator of South Africa (NERSA) is responsible for the price determination of the bulk costs of electricity. In January 2023, NERSA approved tariff increases of 18.7 per cent in 2023/24 and 12.7 per cent increase in 2024/25. For purposes of calculating the free basic energy subsidy in the local government equitable share formula, the National Treasury has added 2 per cent to these increases. This is in anticipation of higher increases than those published in January, for municipalities, due to the difference in the financial years of Eskom customers and municipalities meaning that Eskom only has nine months to collect the allowable revenue from municipalities. R1.1 billion is added to the free basic energy subcomponent of the free basic services component of the local government equitable share formula to fund these higher tariff increases. To this end, the free basic electricity subsidy in the local government equitable share is calculated based on a 20.7 per cent tariff increase in 2023/24 and a 14.7 per cent increase in 2024/25. In the absence of an approved tariff increase in the outer year of the MTEF period, the formula assumes an increase of 17.7 per cent in 2025/26. This is the average of the estimated increases for the first two years of the MTEF period.

5.11 Updated Municipal Borrowing Policy Framework

Cabinet approved the Update to the Policy Framework for Municipal Borrowing and Financial Emergencies on the 17th of August, 2022. The purpose of the update was to re-examine the original Policy Framework, along with the legislation (i.e. Municipal Finance Management Act – MFMA) that was adopted to implement it, considering the experience with municipal borrowing that has accumulated since 2000.

The following key reforms have been introduced through the Update to the Policy Framework for Municipal Borrowing:

- The Policy Framework for Municipal Borrowing has been updated to introduce the necessary reforms that will expand the scope of responsible municipal borrowing and create an environment that attracts more players (e.g. insurers, pension funds, institutional investors and fund managers, and international Development Finance Institutions) in the municipal debt market space. The original core principles underlying municipal borrowing are maintained (i.e. creditworthy municipalities should borrow prudently to finance capital investment, and that there will be no bail-outs by the provincial or national government);

- The updated policy framework clarifies the role of Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), as it was not clearly articulated in the original policy. DFIs are required to pursue clear and agreed developmental goals, as outlined in the policy. The objective of this approach is to ensure that a DFI lending does not crowd out the private sector. Public-sector lenders, both domestic and foreign, should be guided by a social and developmental investment approach in which demonstrable social outcomes are considered alongside potential financial returns;

- The updated policy framework permits and clarifies innovative infrastructure financing mechanisms (such as pooled financing mechanisms, project finance, tax increment financing, revenue bonds, and pledging of conditional grants) that municipalities can use to leverage municipal borrowing. Municipalities are encouraged to explore these alternatives, and innovative infrastructure financing mechanisms permitted subject to the requirements contained in the Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA); and

- The participation of both private and public sector market participants in the development of a liquid secondary market for municipal debt securities is also encouraged. The policy proposes options that can be explored to support the development and growth of an efficient and liquid market for municipal debt obligations.

The Updated Municipal Borrowing Policy Framework can be accessed at the MFMA website at the following link http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Guidelines/Pages/default.aspx.

5.12 Tariff Policies

Municipalities must comply with the provisions of Section 74 of the Municipal Systems Act (MSA) which requires that a municipal council must adopt and implement a tariff policy on the levying of fees for municipal services provided by the municipality itself or by way of service delivery agreements, and which complies with the provisions of this Act and with any other applicable legislation. Municipalities should also ensure that the tariff policies adhere to all the principles outlined in section 74(2) of the MSA. A municipality's tariff policies must also take into consideration variable factors such as water shortages and electricity feedback excess into the municipal system from new generation capacity. Municipalities are urged to develop wheeling and Small-Scale Embedded Generation (SSEG) frameworks to guide the development of associated tariffs. Municipalities must adopt by-laws to give effect to the implementation and enforcement of their tariff policies.

5.13 Non-Revenue Electricity and Non-Revenue Water/ Revenue Losses

Water Service Authority municipalities and electricity licensed municipalities are urged to align both their non-revenue water and non-revenue electricity indicators and their set targets in the 2023/24 SDBIPs with identifiable infrastructure or operational projects and/ or programmes. Municipalities should track improvements on the baseline information included in the SDBIPs by indicating the volume of water losses (i.e., kilolitres/ mega-litres) and the amount of electricity losses (KwH or MWs) for the previous year. This approach will help to determine the progress of municipalities in curbing losses, which impact on municipal revenues, in both non-revenue water and non-revenue electricity.

6. Burial of Councillors

Salaries, allowances and benefits for political office-bearers and members is managed through Determination of Upper Limits of Salaries, Allowances and Benefits of Different Members of Municipal Councils notice issued by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs.

Section 167 of the MFMA provides that a municipality may remunerate its Councillors within the framework of the Public Office-Bearers Act, 1998 (Act No. 20 of 1998), setting the upper limits of the salaries, allowances and benefits for those political office-bearers and members. Any benefit which is not included in the above-mentioned notice constitutes irregular expenditure and recovery thereof from the Councillor concerned is mandatory.

Municipalities may also refer to relevant Councillor Pension Scheme or personal funeral policies in existence for any funeral benefits relating to such Councillor.

7. Funding choices and management issues

Municipalities are under pressure to generate and collect revenue for service delivered. The ability of customers to pay for services is declining and this means that less revenue will be collected. Therefore, municipalities must consider the following when compiling their 2023/24 MTREF budgets:

- Improving the effectiveness of revenue management processes and procedures;
- Cost containment measures to, amongst other things, control unnecessary spending on nice-to-have items and non-essential activities as highlighted in the Municipal Cost Containment Regulations read with MFMA Circular No. 82;
- Ensuring value for money through the procurement process;
- The affordability of providing free basic services to all households;
- Not taking on unfunded mandates;
- Strictly control the use of costly water tankers and fix the water infrastructure to enable the sustainable provision of water;
- Automate business services where possible to increase efficiencies and lower customer costs;
- Prioritise the filling of critical vacant posts, especially linked to the delivery of basic services; and
- Curbing the consumption of water and electricity by the indigents to ensure that they do not exceed their allocation.

Accounting officers are reminded of their responsibility in terms of section 62(1)(a) of the MFMA to use the resources of the municipality effectively, efficiently and economically. Failure to do this will result in the accounting officer committing an act of financial misconduct which will trigger the application of chapter 15 of the MFMA, read with the Municipal Regulations on Financial Misconduct Procedures and Criminal Proceedings, 2014.

7.1 Employee related costs

The Salary and Wage Collective Agreement for the period 01 July 2021 to 30 June 2024 dated 15 September 2021 through the agreement that was approved by the Bargaining Committee of the Central Council in terms of Clause 17.3 of the Constitution should be used when budgeting for employee related costs for the 2023/24 MTREF. In terms of the agreement, all employees covered by this agreement shall receive with effect from 01 July 2023 and 01 July 2024 an increase based on the projected average CPI percentages for 2023 (5.4 per cent according to the Reserve Bank's Monetary Committee Statement for January 2023) and 2024 (4.8 per cent according to the Reserve Bank's Monetary Committee Statement for January 2023). The forecasts of the Reserve Bank, in terms of the January 2023 and January 2024, shall be used to determine the projected average CPI. Municipalities are encouraged to perform an annual head count and payroll verification process by undertaking a once-a-year manual salary disbursement, to root out ghost employees.

According to the 2021 State of Local Government Finance Report, there are about 165 municipalities that are in financial distress. These municipalities need to ensure that they seek an early exemption from this dispensation of this salary agreement. Municipalities should also avoid paying out leave in cash while having major financial challenges.

7.2 Remuneration of Councillors

Municipalities are advised to budget for the actual costs approved in accordance with the Government Gazette on the Remuneration of Public Office Bearers Act: Determination of Upper Limits of Salaries, Allowances and Benefits of different members of municipal councils published annually between December and January by the Department of Cooperative Governance. It is anticipated that this salary determination will also take into account the fiscal constraints. Municipalities should also consider guidance provided above on salary increases for municipal officials during this process. Any overpayment to councilors contrary to the upper limits as published by the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs will be irregular expenditure in terms of Section 167 of the MFMA and must be recovered from councilor(s) concerned.

8. Conditional Grant Transfers to Municipalities

8.1 Criteria for the release of the Equitable Share

The equitable share release criteria for 2023/24 were set out in MFMA Circular No. 122. To assist with managing this process, a guiding checklist has been developed (attached hereto as Annexure A) which municipalities can follow throughout the course of the year to ensure that the required documents are timeously uploaded to the GoMuni platform in line with the prescribed deadlines.

Going forward, municipalities will be required to submit the completed checklist as part of the quarterly performance reporting process for quarter 1 of the municipal financial year. According to section 52(d) of the MFMA, the mayor of a municipality must within 30 days of the end of each quarter, submit a report to council on the implementation of the budget and the financial state of affairs of the municipality. The report must then be submitted to National and Provincial Treasury within 5 days of being tabled in council as per section 32 of the MBRR. The report for quarter 1 of 2023/24 must therefore be submitted to council by the end of October 2023 and submitted to National and Provincial Treasury by no later than 5 November 2023. By including the completed checklist in this report, municipalities confirm their adherence to the equitable share release criteria, including that all supplementary information (as defined in the checklist) was successfully uploaded to the GoMuni platform.

Please note that most of the information required for the release of the equitable share, is already uploaded/ submitted by municipalities as part of existing reporting requirements throughout the year. There are however a few items (clearly marked in the checklist) that does not have a dedicated storage location (for example, payments of employee benefits) on GoMuni. A dedicated Equitable Share Verification Folder will be created on GoMuni for this purpose.

8.2 Criteria for the rollover of conditional grant funds

In terms of Section 21 of the Division of Revenue Act, 2022 (Act No.5 of 2022) (DoRA) in conjunction with the Division of Revenue Amendment Act, 2022 (Act No. 15 of 2022) (DoRAA), the Act requires that any conditional allocation or a portion thereof that is not spent at the end of the 2022/23 financial year reverts to the National Revenue Fund (NRF), unless the rollover of the allocation is approved in terms of subsection (2). Furthermore, the receiving officer, provincial treasury and national transferring officer is required to prove to National Treasury that the unspent allocation is committed to identifiable projects, in which case the funds may be rolled over.

When requesting a rollover in terms of section 21(2) of the 2022 DoRA, municipalities must include the following information with their submission to National Treasury:

1. A formal letter, signed by the accounting officer addressed to the National Treasury requesting the rollover of unspent conditional grants in terms of section 21(2) of the 2022 DoRA;
2. A list of all the projects that are linked to the unspent conditional grants and a breakdown of how much was allocated, spent and the balance per project;
3. The following evidence indicating that work on each of the projects has commenced, as applicable to the specific rollover(s):

    a) Proof that a contractor or service provider was appointed for delivery of the project before 31 March; or
    b) Proof of project tender and tender submissions published and closed before 31 March or with the appointment of contractor or service provider for delivery of service before 30 June in cases where additional funding was allocated during the course of the financial year of the project;
    c) Incorporation of the Appropriation Statement;
    d) Evidence that all projects linked to an allocation will be fully utilised by 30 June 2024 (attach cash flow projection for the applicable grant).

4. A progress report (also in percentages) on the status of each project's implementation that includes an attached **legible implementation plan**);
5. The value of the committed project funding and the conditional allocation from the funding source;
6. Reasons why the grants were not fully spent during the year on the original allocation per the DoRA;
7. Rollover of rollovers will not be considered. Municipalities must therefore not include previous year's unspent conditional grants as rollover request;
8. An indication of the time period within which the funds are to be spent if the rollover is approved; and

9. Proof that the Municipal Manager and Chief Financial Officer are permanently appointed.

No rollover requests will be considered for municipalities with vacant or acting Chief Financial Officers and Municipal Managers for a period exceeding 6 months from the date of vacancy; this also includes acting appointments because of suspensions of either MM or CFO that are more than 12 months.

If any of the above information is not provided or the application is received by National Treasury (Intergovernmental Relations Division) after 31 August 2023, the application will be declined.

In addition, National Treasury will also consider the following information when assessing rollover applications; and reserves the right to decline an application should there be non-performance by the municipality in any of these areas:

1. Compliance with the in-year reporting requirements in terms of sections 71 and 72 of the MFMA and section 12 of the 2022 DoRA, **including the Municipal Manager and Chief Financial Officer signing-off on the information** sent to National Treasury;
2. Submission of the pre-audited Annual Financial Statements to National Treasury by 31 August 2023;
3. Accurate disclosure of grant performance in the 2022/23 pre-audited Annual Financial Statements, (i.e. correct disclosure of grant receipts and spending in the notes to the AFS);
4. Despite the fact that local government is required to comply with to different norms and standards prescribed by different legislations, municipalities are expected to fully comply with the provisions of DoRA that relate to rollover processes and disclose conditional grant performance in the 2022/23 pre-audited Annual Financial Statements (i.e Cash coverage and unspent conditional grants in the Statement of Financial Position) in order to verify grant expenditure; and
5. Cash available reflected in the Statement of Financial Position and Cash Flow Statements and the bank (net position including short term investments) as at 30 June 2023 is equivalent to the unspent amount at the end of the financial year. If the amount that is requested for rollover **is not entirely cash-backed**, such a rollover will not be approved. National Treasury will also not approve portions of rollover requests.

It should be noted that under no circumstances will the National Treasury consider requests to rollover:

1. The entire 2022/23 allocation to the municipality, in cases whereby the rollover request is more than 50 per cent of the total allocation, National Treasury will approve the rollover amount up to 50 per cent of the 2022/23 allocation;
2. Rollover request of the same grant for the third consecutive time. In a case where a municipality is applying for rollover as a result of additional funding, the application will be given a careful consideration;
3. Funding for projects procured through Regulation 32 of the Municipal Supply Chain Management Regulations (Gazette No.27636) – Projects linked to additional funding and disasters are exempted; and
4. A portion of an allocation where the proof of commitment for the rollover application is linked to invoices that were issued before or on 31 May 2023.

8.3 Unspent conditional grant funds for 2022/23

The process to ensure the return of unspent conditional grants for the 2022/23 financial year will be managed in accordance with section 22 of the DoRA. In addition to the previous MFMA Circulars, the following practical arrangements will apply:

Step 1: Municipalities must submit their June 2023 conditional grant expenditure reports according to section 71 of the MFMA reflecting all accrued expenditure on conditional grants and further ensure that expenditure reported to both National Treasury and national transferring officers reconciles;

Step 2: When preparing the Annual Financial Statements, a municipality must determine the portion of each national conditional grant allocation that remained unspent as at 30 June 2023. The unspent grant values must be determined based on the guidance that was provided in *m*SCOA Circular No. 13 in as far as VAT, retention and interest is concerned; and

Step 3: If the receiving officer wants to motivate in terms of section 22(2) of the 2020 DoRA that the unspent funds are committed to identifiable projects, the rollover application pack must be submitted to National Treasury by no later than 31 August 2023.

National Treasury will not consider any rollover requests that are incomplete or received after this deadline.

Step 4: National Treasury will confirm in writing whether or not the municipality may retain any of the unspent funds as a rollover based on criteria outlined above by 20 October 2023;

Step 5: National Treasury will communicate the unspent conditional grants amount by 08 November 2023. A municipality must return the remaining unspent conditional grant funds that are not subject to a specific repayment arrangement to the National Revenue Fund by 17 November 2023; and

Step 6: Any unspent conditional grant funds that should have but has not been repaid to the National Revenue Fund by 17 November 2023, and for which a municipality has not requested a repayment arrangement, will be offset against the municipality's 06 December 2023 equitable share allocation.

All other issues pertaining to Appropriation Statement and reporting on approved rollovers are addressed in the Annexure to MFMA Circular No. 86.

9. The Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations

9.1 Alignment of Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (MBRR) Schedules

The revised Regulated MBRR Schedules (A1, B, C, D, E and F), as aligned to the *m*SCOA chart and GRAP are published on the National Treasury web page and can be accessed using the following link.

http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/Municipal%20Budget%20and%20Reporting%20Regulations/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fRegulationsandGazettes%2fMunicipal%20Budget%20and%20Reporting%20Regulations%2fDocuments%2f2023%2d24&FolderCTID=0x0120001860D4A2BD7AD042BF8427FC3BB59F67

The alignment of the A1 Schedules required substantial changes to the reporting formats used for budgeting and reporting purposes which required the creation of new A1 Schedule codes to ensure that the data strings populate the new reporting formats. The relevant changes were also made in the reporting formats relating to versions 6.1 to 6.7 of the *m*SCOA chart to ensure that the historical data are populating when reports are drawn from GoMuni.

To ensure that ERP systems generate the A1 Schedule aligned to version 6.7 of the *m*SCOA chart, municipalities and system vendors should refer to the linkages provided on GoMuni. The following reports on GoMuni should be used for this purpose:

- List *m*SCOA account linkages to A1 Schedule based on 6.7 under menu option *m*SCOA Reporting; and
- List *m*SCOA A1 schedule codes WIP (i.e. new A1 Schedule codes) under menu option *m*SCOA Administration.

Both reports can be located under:

https://lg.treasury.gov.za/ibi_apps/portal/Local_Government_Database

The new format for the non-financial data strings A1D and A1F is available on the link below:

http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/Municipal%20Budget%20and%20Reporting%20Regulations/Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx?RootFolder=%2fRegulationsandGazettes%2fMunicipal%20Budget%20and%20Reporting%20Regulations%2fDocuments%2f2023%2d24&FolderCTID=0x0120001860D4A2BD7AD042BF8427FC3BB59F67

The A1D is the data string which populates information which we do not extract from the TABB while the A1F populates the budget information which we do not extract from the ORGB. Municipalities should ensure that they use the new format when submitting the non-financial data strings.

10. Submitting budget documentation and A1 schedules for 2023/24 MTREF

The MFMA and its Regulations require the submission of *m*SCOA data strings for budgets, in-year reporting, and annual financial statements in a specific format and by a required timeframe. The credibility and accuracy of the *m*SCOA data strings must be verified by municipalities prior to submission to the GoMuni Upload portal. Since the financial system must be locked at the end of the month in order to generate a *m*SCOA data string, municipalities may not open closed periods to correct errors. Errors must be corrected in the next open period. Providers of municipal financial systems must ensure that the necessary internal controls are built into the system to prevent the opening of closed periods on the financial system and the bypassing of such controls. This also applies to the correction of information in closed periods for 3rd party systems that should be integrating with the main financial system in terms of the requirements of the *m*SCOA Regulations.

From 1 July 2023, Municipal Managers and Chief Financial Officers will be required to sign off on the financial and non-financial data strings submitted to the GoMuni Upload portal when they submit their data strings. The schedules prescribed in terms of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (MBRR) populated from the *m*SCOA data strings on National Treasury's Local Government and Reporting System (LGDRS) must also be signed off monthly. These sign-offs are for audit purposes and serves as a confirmation by the municipality that the data strings submitted are accurate. Details on the submission of the signed-off figures will be communicated in due course.

In terms of Section 171 of the MFMA, financial misconduct by municipal officials includes the provision of incorrect or misleading information in any document which must be submitted to the National Treasury.

From 1 July 2023, the GoMuni Upload portal for the monthly in-year data strings will be closed at 16h00 on the 10th working day of each month. All publications by the National and Provincial Treasuries are now solely sourced from the *m*SCOA data strings submitted by municipalities and several stakeholders including Statistics South Africa (STATSSA), Auditor General South Africa (AGSA), the Reserve Bank, and NERSA are in the process of streamlining some of their reporting to the information contained on the National Treasury Local Government Database and Reporting System (LGDRS). The resubmission of data strings after the legislated timeframes is not only illegal but also causing challenges in data sets used by various stakeholders for analysis and reporting purposes. **No data string submissions will therefore be accepted by the National Treasury after the 10th working day of the respective month**.

Contact

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JH Hattingh
Chief Director: Local Government Budget Analysis
03 March 2023

ANNEXURE A: Equitable Share Verification Checklist:

General Requirements

Criteria	Verification Requirement	Yes/No
2023/24 Adopted Budget	Council resolution, adopted *m*SCOA budget data strings (ORGB), PDF version of adopted MTREF budget uploaded to GoMuni Upload portal immediately after approval.	
• Is the municipality's completed tariff tool (National Treasury format) included as part of its budget submission (MFMA Budget Circular No. 98 (refer item 4.2).	The completed National Treasury EXCEL tariff tool uploaded to GoMuni with the adopted budget by start of budget year i.e. **1 July 2023**.	
• Are allocations made for bulk suppliers current account payments?	Allocations reflected in *m*SCOA budget data strings (ORGB) and budget schedules/ document.	
If unfunded budget position–	-	
• Is a Budget Funding Plan (BFP) adopted with the budget?	Copy of the adopted Budget Funding Plan uploaded to GoMuni with the adopted budget by start of budget year i.e. **1 July 2023**.	
	PDF version of BFP/progress report uploaded to GoMuni Upload portal by start of budget year i.e. **1 July 2023**.	
	Is the BFP credible and show how the municipality intends moving progressively out of this position into a funded state?	
	In the case of the latest progress report being submitted, is it aligned to the rescue phase of the new approach to Municipal Financial Recovery Service (MFRS)?	
• Council resolution reflecting commitment to address unfunded position.	PDF copy of resolution uploaded to GoMuni Upload portal by start of budget year i.e. **1 July 2023**.	
***m*SCOA**		
• Submission of Data Strings	Successful submission of all financial and non-financial *m*SCOA data strings to the GoMuni Upload portal	
	Timeous submission of all financial and non-financial *m*SCOA data strings to the GoMuni Upload portal	
	Data strings submitted are credible as per the analysis done by NT/PTs	
	Data strings are generated directly from the main municipal financial system	
	The regulated MBRR Schedules are generated directly from the core municipal financial system	
	Successful submission of all financial and non-financial *m*SCOA data strings to the GoMuni Upload portal	
• Submisison of documents	Municipal documents required in terms of legislation and MFMA Circulars have been submitted timeously and in the required format to the GoMuni Upload portal.	
• Financial System Changes	Municipality has followed the processes in Circulars No. 93, 98, 123 and mSCOA Circulars No 5 and 6 to change their financial system.	
UIF & W		
• UIF&W Register	Documents need to be uploaded to NTs eMonitoring Webpage	
• MPAC recommendation on UIF&W		
• Council Resolution on UIF&W		
• UIF&W Reduction Strategy		
Disciplinary Board		
• Does the municipality have a functional disciplinary board?	Proof of establishment (or efforts to establish DC Board) uploaded to NTs eMonitoring Webpage NTs eMonitoring Website.	
Competency Regulations		
• Has the minimum municipal competency regulations reporting requirements been adhered to?	In line with the Competency Regulations, consolidated reporting information must be uploaded to GoMuni by **30 January 2023** and **30 July 2023**.	
Audit Process		
• Opinion Received	Did the municipality receive an adverse or disclaimed audit opinion or had outstanding audits for two consecutive financial years?	
• Adverse or disclaimed audit opinion	Council resolution signed by each member of the Council was was uploaded to NT's eMonitoring Webpage within 1 month after conclusion of the audit process reflecting council's commitment to address the opinion.	
• Is a council approved audit action plan in place?	Audit action plan, together with council resolution, to be uploaded to NT's eMonitoring Webpage within 60 days from audit report issuance.	
Interventions (where applicable)		
• In the event of a discretionary or mandatory intervention in terms of section 139 of the Constitution, is a Financial Recovery Plan (FRP) in place?	The FRP and monthly progress reports submitted in terms of sections 145 and 146 of the MFMA must be uploaded to GoMuni Upload portal for each month since the inception of the FRP.	

Quarterly Requirements

Criteria	Verification Requirement	Quarter 3 (Jan – March)	Quarter 4 (April – June)	Quarter 1 (July – Sept)	Quarter 2 (Oct – Dec)
Bulk Supplier Payments					
• Were current account payments to bulk suppliers (Eskom and Water Boards) timeously made?	PT/NT to verify status according to MFMA S41 Report. No action required from municipality if account in good standing.	-	-	-	-
• *If current account in arrears, are payment agreements in place?*	Copy of payment agreement or evidence of discussions are uploaded to on GoMuni Upload portal.				
Staff benefit Deductions					
• Were a) SARS, b) pension and c) other staff benefits timeously paid over to the relevant funds/institutions?	Proof of payment for each category, for each month of the quarter uploaded to on GoMuni Upload portal.				
Reconciliation of Valuation Roll					
• Has the valuation role been reconciled to the financial system?	In line with MFMA Circulars No. 93, 98 and 107, proof of the verification for each quarter should be uploaded on GoMuni Upload portal.				