APPENDIX 34

STELLENBOSCH MUNICIPALITY

MFMA Circular No.122

MUNICIPAL BUDGET CIRCULAR FOR THE 2023/2024 MTREF – 12 DECEMBER 2022

NATIONAL TREASURY

MFMA Circular No. 122

Municipal Finance Management Act No. 56 of 2003

Municipal Budget Circular for the 2023/24 MTREF

CONTENTS

1. THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY AND INFLATION TARGETS 2

2. KEY FOCUS AREAS FOR THE 2023/24 BUDGET PROCESS 3

2.1 Local government conditional grants allocations 3

2.2 Re-enforcing the 2023 Division of Revenue Bill, (DoRB) to facilitate improved intergovernmental relations 3

3. PENSION FUND DEFAULTS 5

4. MUNICIPAL STANDARD CHART OF ACCOUNTS (*m*SCOA) 5

4.1 Release of Version 6.7 of the Chart 5

4.2 Amendments to the regulated A1 schedules 6

4.3 Credibility of *m*SCOA data strings 7

4.4 Regulation of Minimum Business Processes and System Specifications 10

4.5 *m*SCOA Training Initiatives 10

5. THE REVENUE BUDGET 11

5.1 Maximising the revenue generation of the municipal revenue base 11

5.2 Setting cost-reflective tariffs 13

5.3 Tariffs – achieving a balance between cost-reflectiveness and affordability 14

5.4 Bulk Account Payments and Concessions 15

5.5 Critical Notice Affecting STS Meters 15

5.6 Completeness and credibility of revenue related information in the Budget 16

5.7 Eskom Bulk Tariff increases 16

5.8 Updated Municipal Borrowing Policy Framework 17

5.9 Tariff Policies 17

5.10 Non-Revenue Electricity and Non-Revenue Water/ Revenue Losses: 18

6. BURIAL OF COUNCILLORS 18

7. FUNDING CHOICES AND MANAGEMENT ISSUES 18

7.1 Employee related costs 19

7.2 Remuneration of Councillors 19

8. TRANSFERS TO MUNICIPALITIES 19

8.1 Criteria for the release of the Equitable Share 19

9. THE MUNICIPAL BUDGET AND REPORTING REGULATIONS 21

9.1 Schedule A – version to be used for the 2023/24 MTREF 21

9.2 Assistance with the compilation of budgets 21

9.3 Assessing the 2023/24 MTREF budget 22

10. SUBMITTING BUDGET DOCUMENTATION AND A1 SCHEDULES FOR 2023/24 MTREF 23

10.1 Expected submissions for 2023/24 MTREF 24

10.2 Portals for the submission of information 24

10.3 Publication of budgets on municipal websites 25

10.4 Communication by municipal entities to National Treasury 25

Introduction

This budget circular provides guidance to municipalities with their compilation of the 2023/24 Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework (MTREF). It is linked to the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (MBRR) and the Municipal Standard Chart of Accounts *(m*SCOA), and strives to support municipalities' budget preparation processes so that the minimum requirements are achieved.

Among the objectives of this budget circular is to demonstrate how municipalities should undertake annual budget preparation in accordance with the budget and financial management reform agenda by focussing on key "game changers". These game-changers include ensuring that municipal budgets are funded, revenue management is optimised, assets are managed efficiently, supply chain management processes are adhered to, *m*SCOA is implemented correctly and that audit findings are addressed.

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

The National Treasury forecasts real economic growth of 1.9 per cent in 2022, compared with 2.1 per cent projected in the 2022 Budget Review, in response to global and domestic shocks. Growth is projected to average 1.6 per cent from 2023 to 2025. Implementing structural reforms, especially in the energy sector, remains crucial to improve the economy's productive capacity and competitiveness.

The recovery in economic activity that began in 2021 was driven by a strong rebound in global economic activity, high commodity prices and easing COVID-19 restrictions. The scarring impact of the pandemic on employment and investment decisions will likely weigh on the recovery over the medium term. Investment remains well below pre-pandemic levels.

The economy grew by 1.4 per cent in the first half of 2022 compared with the first half of 2021. Real GDP grew more than expected in the first quarter of 2022, with output returning to pre-pandemic levels. However, a deteriorating global environment, flooding in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, industrial action in the electricity and mining sectors, and prolonged and intense power cuts resulted in a broad-based contraction across most sectors during the second quarter. The third quarter was marked by frequent and prolonged power cuts, which significantly disrupted economic activity.

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	5.2%	6.8%	4.7%	4.6%	4.6%

Source: Medium Term Budget Policy Statement 2022.

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.

It is noted that variations in regional specifics are possible, however, any variation of assumptions must be explicitly set out and well explained in the budget narratives, in the absence of which the Treasuries will refer the budget back to council for alignment to the macroeconomic performance projections.

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

2.1 Local government conditional grants allocations

Over the 2023 MTEF period, conditional grant allocations to municipalities will grow below inflation. This is due to a higher 2022/23 baseline (R3.8 billion) added to local government conditional grants in the 2022 Division of Revenue Amendment Act. Over the next three years, total local government resources, including the equitable share and indirect conditional grants increase at an annual average rate of 6 per cent.

The local government equitable share increases at an annual average rate of 7.8 per cent and municipal conditional grants increase by 3.6 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.

The annual Division of Revenue Bill will be published in February 2023 after the Minister of Finance's budget speech. The Bill will specify grant allocations and municipalities must reconcile their budgets to the numbers published herein.

Municipalities are advised to use the indicative numbers presented in the 2022 Division of Revenue Act to compile their 2023/24 MTREF. In terms of the outer year allocations (2025/26 financial year), it is proposed that municipalities conservatively limit funding allocations to the indicative numbers as presented in the 2022 Division of Revenue Act for 2022/23. The DoRA is available at:
http://www.treasury.gov.za/documents/national%20budget/2022/default.aspx

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

Towards enforcing a system of good intergovernmental relations as envisaged in the Chapter 3 of the Constitution and subsequent related legislation, the National Treasury would like to remind municipalities of Section 31 of DoRA that articulates the facilitation of personal liability for unnecessary litigation. Going forward, a municipality may therefore 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 NERSA).

The 2023 DoRB will facilitate the personal liability of and refund of any expenditure related to such litigation to the national revenue fund (NRF) by any person responsible for the institution of litigation by a municipality without having exhausted all the available dispute resolution mechanisms. This will be done through the equitable share off-setting processes. Municipalities, parallel to instituting any litigation against any organ of state, must report such litigation to the Auditor-General, the National Treasury and to the relevant provincial treasury. The report must provide the details of all the dispute resolution processes that were attempted, supported by information explaining the failure of these attempts.

Division of Revenue Amendment Bill, 2022 (DoRAB)

Disaster response funding

Conversion of disaster response grants – To allow for adequate response to the April 2022 floods, funding was shifted between the disaster relief grants in August 2022. R145 million

was shifted from the Provincial Disaster Response Grant to the Municipal Disaster Response Grant and R120 million was shifted from the Municipal Emergency Housing Grant to the Provincial Emergency Housing Grant.

Additional funding for disaster response grants – In response to disasters that have occurred, most of the disaster funding for 2022/23 had been depleted by the time of the tabling of the DoRAB. To enable for response should a disaster(s) occur in the remaining months of the current financial year, R248 million is added to the Municipal Disaster Response Grant to enable immediate response by municipalities.

Additional funding for disaster reconstruction and rehabilitation[1] – For the reconstruction and rehabilitation of municipal infrastructure damaged by flash floods in the Western Cape (Overberg District Municipality, Cape Winelands District Municipality and Garden Route District Municipality) in December 2021 and the April 2022 floods in the Eastern Cape (Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality) and KwaZulu-Natal (eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality, uMhlathuze Local Municipality, uThukela District Municipality, uMgungundlovu District Municipality and iLembe District Municipality), R3.3 billion is added to the Municipal Disaster Recovery Grant.

Purchasing of land for relocation of flood victims – R92 million is added to the Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant: Municipalities for eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality for the purchase of land identified for the relocation of displaced flood victims.

Changes to local government allocations

Roll-over of funds in the Integrated National Electrification Programme (municipal) Grant – R1 million is rolled over in the Integrated National Electrification Programme (municipal) Grant to fund 50 electrification connections in Swellendam in Dikgatlong Local Municipality.

Roll-over of funds in the indirect Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant – R15 million is rolled over in the indirect Regional Bulk Infrastructure Grant to fund operational payments for the Vaal River pollution remediation project in Emfuleni Local Municipality.

Reprioritisation in the Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant – R100 million of the Neighbourhood Development Partnership Grant is shifted from Schedule 5, Part B (direct) to Schedule 6, Part B (indirect) to fund project preparation, planning and implementation for municipalities that are having administrative and financial challenges that are affecting project implementation. These funds will be used for projects they were allocated for in the direct component. Affected municipalities are Mogale City Local Municipality, KwaDukuza Local Municipality and Emfuleni Local Municipality.

Changes to gazetted frameworks and allocations

Municipal Disaster Response Grant – The grant framework for the Municipal Disaster Response Grant is amended to allow for spending to respond to the disasters that occurred in December 2021 and April 2022.

Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant: Municipalities – The grant framework for the Informal Settlements Upgrading Partnership Grant is amended to ring-fence funds for

[1] There was an oversight in the allocations to Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, wherein the allocations or parts thereof allocated to the district municipalities in the DoRAB ought to have been allocated to the respective local municipalities in these districts. This is explained in detail in the section "*Correction of errors in the Municipal Disaster Recovery Grant framework and allocations to municipalities*" below.

the purchase of identified land for the relocation of flood victims who were previously residing in informal settlements that were washed away by April 2022 floods in eThekwini Metropolitan Municipality.

Municipal annexures – Changes to previously gazetted municipal allocations include a change of the name of a municipality. The name of Engcobo Local Municipality in the Eastern Cape is updated to Dr A.B. Xuma Local Municipality as per the Gazette published in terms of section 12 of the Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, on 30 May 2022.

Correction of errors in the Municipal Disaster Recovery Grant framework and allocations to municipalities

The National Disaster Management Centre (NDMC) has requested changes to the in-year allocations for the Municipal Disaster Recovery Grant in the DoRAB tabled in Parliament. Part of the funding allocated to uThukela and iLembe district municipalities in KwaZulu Natal (page 36 of the DoRAB), should have been allocated to Alfred Duma and KwaDukuza local municipalities, respectively. The allocations made to the Cape Winelands, Overberg, and Garden Route district municipalities in the Western Cape (page 39 of the DoRAB), should have been made to Breede Valley; Theewaterskloof and Swellendam; and Oudtshoorn and George local municipalities, respectively. These corrections also affect the ring-fencing in the grant framework (page 28 of the DoRAB).

Parliament has approved that the National Treasury correct the allocations and effect the required changes to the MDRG framework, as part of section 15(1) of the 2022 DoRA to ensure that MDRG allocations are correctly allocated to the municipalities assigned for the functions.

3. Pension fund defaults

There has been a growing trend where municipalities are deducting pension from the employees but are not paying it over to their pension fund. This in our view is inconsistent with the intent and spirit of the MFMA and constitute 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 and potentially also a criminal offence in terms of section 173 of the MFMA read with other applicable legislation. Municipal Councils should refer these actions to the Disciplinary Boards for further investigation and should also consider laying criminal charges against the accounting officer and other responsible officials that 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 Administration Act, as may be applicable.

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

4.1 Release of Version 6.7 of the Chart

On an annual basis, the *m*SCOA chart is reviewed to address implementation challenges and correct chart related errors. Towards this end, Version 6.7 is released with this circular.

Version 6.7 of the chart will be effective from 2023/24 and must be used to compile the 2023/24 MTREF and will be available from 20 December on the link below:

http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/MunicipalRegulationsOnAStandardChartOfAccountsFinal/Pages/default.aspx

Kindly note that, in accordance with section 8(2)(j) of the Municipal Property Rates Act (MPRA) as amended in 2014, municipalities may apply for categories other than the categories in 8(2)(a) to (i). Towards this end the Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs approved the following categories:

- Sports Clubs and Fields for Bitou Municipality and
- Residential sectional title garages for Drakenstein Municipality.

These categories were only approved for use by municipalities indicated above. System vendors must therefore block the use of these categories for all other municipalities. The Project Summary Document (PSD) on the National Treasury webpage will be aligned to the chart changes in version 6.7 where applicable. The PSD is also available on the above link.

For the National Treasury to consider a new chart change in version 6.8 of the chart, the issue must be logged with all relevant background and details on the *m*SCOA FAQ portal by 31 August 2023. The *m*SCOA FAQ portal can be accessed by all registered GoMuni users on the following link. https://lg.treasury.gov.za/ibi_apps/signin

4.2 Amendments to the regulated A1 schedules

The following tables of the A1 Schedule that was regulated in terms of the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations (MBRR), have been aligned to the *m*SCOA and Generally Recognised Accounting Standards (GRAP):

- A4: Statement of Financial Performance; and
- A6: Statement of Financial Position

In addition, tables A8 and A10 have been linked to the *m*SCOA data strings and will be included in the 2023/24 budget reports available on the GoMuni portal from 01 July 2023.

The amended and protected version of the A1 schedule will be available from 20 December on the link below:
http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/MunicipalRegulationsOnAStandardChartOfAccountsFinal/Pages/default.aspx

System vendors and municipalities that are managing their own in-house systems must programme the amended schedules on their financial systems. Input fields for supporting tables that are not part of the non-financial data string must be created to ensure that a complete A schedule is generated from the core municipal financial system.

The *m*SCOA Regulations require that municipalities budget, transact and report on legislated *m*SCOA segments and directly on the core financial system and submit the required data strings directly from this system to the GoMuni Upload portal. To ensure that the data strings submitted are credible, municipalities must:

- Lock the budget adopted by Council on the core municipal financial system before submitting the budget (ORGB) data string to the GoMuni Upload portal;
- Close the core financial system at month-end as required in terms of the MFMA before submitting the monthly data string to the GoMuni Upload portal; and
- Generate the regulated MBRR Schedules (A, B and C) directly from the core municipal financial system.

The preparation of budgets on excel spreadsheets that is captured in the system at a later stage and manual correction of data strings by municipal officials or system providers are not allowed in terms of the *m*SCOA Regulations. Where a municipality makes use of a stand-alone 3rd party sub-system or a system provider has entered into an agreement or consortium for the provision of certain functionality with a 3rd party sub-system provider, such a 3rd party sub-system should host the relevant part of the *m*SCOA chart to seamlessly integrate with the core financial system without manual intervention.

4.3 Credibility of *m*SCOA data strings

The credibility and accuracy of the data strings must be verified by municipalities before submission as the data strings submitted will be used as the single source for all analysis and publications in the 2023/24 municipal financial year.

Municipalities have been given access to the GoMuni portal in April 2022 and should use the reports on GoMuni to verify the credibility of their submissions. It should be emphasized that errors in the data can only be corrected in the next open period. e.g., errors in the tabled budget (TABB) data string can only be corrected in the adopted budget data string (ORGB). Municipalities are not allowed to open closed periods to make corrections.

Municipalities are reminded that incorrect or incomplete data string submissions is considered as non-submission.

The credibility of the *m*SCOA data strings remains a concern in the following areas:

The inclusion of opening balances in data strings

Municipalities and system vendors must ensure that opening balances are included in the budget and in-year data strings. The opening balances at year end (month 12 – M12) of the previous financial year must be rolled over to the first month (M01) and updated with pre-audited (PAUD) and audit (AUDA) adjustments in the current financial year in the *applicable open period*. In other words, if the audit is completed on 31 October, then the changes in the opening balances must be reflected in the in-year submission for November 2022 (M05 submission). If opening balances and changes thereto are not included in the budget and in-year data strings, the C schedules will not populate correctly. This means that the movement of the balance sheet items will not have a starting point and the Statement of Financial Position (balance sheet) will be incorrect.

Accounting for Water Inventory

As per the guidance in MFMA Budget Circular No.115 (dated 04 March 2022), municipalities must budget and account for bulk water purchases as **inventory** under current assets in the Statement of Financial Position as per GRAP 12 (paragraph. 07).

In terms of GRAP 12:

Inventories are assets:

a. In the form of materials or supplies to be consumed in the production process;
b. In the form of materials or supplies to be consumed or distributed in the rendering of services; and
c. Held for sale or distribution in the ordinary course of operations, or
d. In the process of production for sale or distribution.

Inventory acquired through non-exchange transactions should be recorded at its fair value as at the date it is acquired. The cost of inventory, except for non-purified water, will be determined or recognised in accordance with paragraph 25 and 26, which is the primary and secondary costs in getting the water either to the treatment works or to the users of the water.

It is important to note that water cannot be issued if it was not purchased or brought into the inventory through system input transactions. Therefore, the total input volume of water related to water purified and water from natural sources should include both primary and secondary cost components. The allocation of secondary cost to the input volume of water will necessitate the utilisation of the Costing Segment in the *m*SCOA. This is crucial in determining cost reflective tariffs for water.

The fair value of water from natural resources such as boreholes, springs and fountains may be determined by the primary and secondary cost components. Secondary costs include:

- Labour
- Extraction cost
- Distribution cost
- Chemicals/ Treatment
- Maintenance
- Infrastructure
- Depreciation charges

The municipality must account for water from natural resources as follows:

Debit: System Input Volume: Natural Resources
Credit: Gains and Losses: Water at fair value

Water inventory must be budgeted to be acquired and recorded in the Current Assets: Inventory: Water as indicated below. The movement accounts in the *m*SCOA structure makes provision for the different methods of acquiring and the consumption/ issuing of Water inventory.

Current assets:
- Inventory: Water Opening balance: Non-Funding Transactions
- Inventory: Water: System Input volume: Bulk Purchases: Water Treatment/Natural Resources
- Water Authorised Consumption:
  a) Billed Unmetered Consumption
  b) Un-Billed Authorised Consumption
  c) Billed Metered Consumption
- Inventory: Water Losses (Apparent and Real Losses)

Water that is issued to Consumers must be issued from the inventory and expensed in the **Expenditure:** Inventory: Consumed -Water.

Water losses will reduce the Water inventory in current assets and the corresponding amounts should be captured in **Gains and Losses:** Inventory: Water: Fair value

It is important to note that the change in accounting for water through the inventory purchased process and the change of using a methodology to report the balance of water as at year-end may impact on the Annual Financial Statements (AFS). Municipalities must ensure that they update their accounting policy, document this process, and provide comparative figures when assessing and reporting their water balance to ensure that the GRAP guidelines of changes in reporting and materiality is applied correctly.

The Local Government Municipal Property Rates (MPRA) Amendment Act, 2014

Municipalities are reminded that section 8 of the MPRA on the determination of categories of rateable properties has been revised through the Local Government Municipal Property Rates Amendment Act, 2014 ("the Amendment Act").

Municipalities were required to implement the new property categorisation framework by not later than 01 July 2021. The *m*SCOA chart Version 6.7 will only make provision for the new framework. The old framework has been retired and municipalities must prepare their 2023/24 MTREF Budgets accordingly.

Fixed Asset Register

Municipal financials systems must comply with the minimum business processes and system requirements on fixed asset registers as articulated for the asset management module in MFMA Circular No 80. The asset management module should be embedded in the core financial system or seamlessly integrate from a third-party sub-system to the core financial system. This will enable the regular and seamless updating of the fixed asset register. The register must contain the following information as a minimum requirement:

- Description of the asset
- Date of acquisition or brought into use
- Purchase cost
- Location of the asset
- Function responsible for the asset
- Current value
- Depreciation and method utilised
- Remaining life of the asset
- Maintenance information
- Insurance Coverage

Municipalities will be required to upload their updated fixed asset register in a PDF format on the GoMuni Upload portal as part of their 2023/24 MTREF tabled and adopted budget submission and thereafter on a quarterly basis as part of their in-year reporting.

Recording of Schedule 6B Grants in *m*SCOA

Grants allocated in terms of Schedule 6B of DoRA should be recorded in terms of *m*SCOA as an allocation-in-kind. This means that the municipality will only record the transaction once they received a completed asset.

Importantly, a Schedule 6B grant may not be transferred to the end-user of the asset to construct the asset as this is in contravention with the conditional grant framework. If a transferring officer of a Schedule 6B grant consider the municipality capable of constructing its own asset, the grant should be re-gazetted and reclassified as a Schedule 5B grant. The grant will then be transferred directly to the municipality to construct the asset and the receipt and expenditure of the grant must be in accordance with GRAP 17. An adjustments budget in terms of Section 28(2)(b) of the MFMA and Regulation 23(3) of the MBRR must be adopted to include the grant funding and project in the MTREF budget.

In the case where a municipality is constructing an asset for a national department but will not be the end-user of the asset being constructed, the accounting must be done in terms of GRAP 11. There will be VAT implications as the municipality will be a contractor and act as an agent. It is important to ensure that the contract between the municipality and the department outlines the responsibilities of all parties.

Municipalities must ensure that they are making provision for VAT in accordance with the VAT Act, 1991 (Act No. 89 of 1991) and the VAT 419 guide issued by SARS. The National Treasury issued *m*SCOA Circular No.12 (dated 01 October 2021) that provides guidance on the recording of VAT in the *m*SCOA.

Impact of Balance Sheet Budgeting and Movement Accounting on Cash Flow Tables

From the analysis of the *m*SCOA data strings it is evident that the cash flow tables (A7, B7 and C7) are still not populating correctly or completely. This can be contributed to the fact that a number of municipalities still do not use balance sheet budgeting and movement accounting. Guidance on the use of balance sheet budgeting and movement accounting to populate tables A7, B7 and C7 correctly was provided in MFMA Budget Circular No. 107 (dated 04 December 2020) and *m*SCOA Circular No. 11 (dated 04 December 2020).

4.4 Regulation of Minimum Business Processes and System Specifications

National Treasury will review and regulate minimum business processes and system specifications for *m*SCOA by the end of 2024/25. In preparation for the regulation of the minimum requirements, municipalities should ensure that they comply fully with the current minimum business processes and system specifications articulated in MFMA Circular No. 80 (dated 08 March 2016).

Where a municipality is not fully compliant with the *m*SCOA requirements, a *m*SCOA Road Map must be in place to drive and fast track the *m*SCOA implementation in the municipality. The *m*SCOA Steering Committee, chaired by the Accounting Officer or his/ her delegate, must use the *m*SCOA Road Map to track progress and take correction actions where required.

Road Maps must be reviewed and updated annually as part of the budget process is updated and submitted to Council for approval together with their 2023/24 MTREF budget. Municipalities will be required to upload their updated *m*SCOA Road Maps in a PDF format on the GoMuni Upload portal as part of their 2023/24 MTREF tabled and adopted budget submission and thereafter on a quarterly basis as part of their in-year reporting.

Municipalities should ensure that they budget sufficiently to become and remain mSCOA compliant.

Guidance on the content of the *m*SCOA Road Map was provided in MFMA Budget Circular No. 115 (dated 04 March 2022).

4.5 *m*SCOA Training Initiatives

Training to municipalities and municipal system vendors

The National Treasury, in conjunction with CIGFARO, will conduct monthly training sessions aimed at municipalities, municipal system vendors and other relevant role-players. The training will focus on technical aspects of budgeting, transacting and reporting in the *m*SCOA and is aimed at improving the quality of *m*SCOA data strings. The draft programme is attached as **Annexure A.**

***m*SCOA eLearning Course**

The National School of Government is hosting the *m*SCOA eLearning Course that was developed by the National Treasury. The *m*SCOA eLearning Course provides government officials with the basic knowledge on the reform and how to record transactions using the *m*SCOA.

Government institutions can enrol their employees for this course by sending a request for training to the NSG at contactcentre@thensg.gov.za. If your institution has not attended any training with the NSG previously, then you will also be required to register on the NSG database. The *m*SCOA eLearning Course will be offered as no cost until 31 March 2023. Thereafter, delegates will have to pay to attend the course.

Any queries in this regard must be directed to the NSG at contactcentre@thensg.gov.za or tel number: 086 100 8326.

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.

Municipalities must ensure that they render basic services, maintain their assets and clean environment. Furthermore, there must be continuous communication with the community and other stakeholders to improve the municipality's reputation. This will assist in attracting investment in the local economy which may result in reduced unemployment. 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 roll and not on the billing system and records on the billing system and not on the roll. 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 (Roll and Billing), a unique property identifier (common primary unique link code) must be created and populated for each rateable property on the roll system and on the rates billing system. This property identifier must be unique, without duplicates, and 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 property 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 can 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 s23(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 s8(1) of the MPRA in terms of the billing methodology that needs 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. 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.

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.

5.2 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, encouraged municipalities to utilise the tool. **With effect, the 2023/24 MTREF, all municipalities** (**except** *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.

5.3 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*[2]*; 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 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.

It is also important when setting particularly water and electricity tariffs that municipalities consider setting 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 factor this in its tariff application to NERSA, illustrating the cashflow 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.

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

[2] 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.

tariff increases across all consumer groups. In addition, municipalities should include a detail of their revenue growth assumptions for the different service charges in the budget narrative.

5.4 Bulk Account Payments and Concessions

During 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**.

5.5 Critical Notice Affecting STS Meters

As highlighted in previous MFMA Circular No. 115 (dated 06 December 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 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) 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.

5.6 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.

5.7 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 the municipal financial year 2022/23, bulk electricity costs increased moderately at 9.61 per cent, compared to 17.8 per cent in the 2021/22 municipal financial year. Due to Eskom's funding needs, they are seeking higher tariff increases and have applied to NERSA for a 32 per cent hike from 1 April 2023/24. NERSA will make a final decision on the tariff application by 24 December.

In addition, a High Court hearing is still pending on the Multi-Year Price Determination (MYPD 5) application. The urgent High Court review requires NERSA to urgently process the Eskom revenue application for at least one year, as required by law. The timeframes for the review allow for a decision to be made in time for implementation by 1 April 2023.

5.8 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 is 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.

5.9 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 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 must adopt by-laws to give effect to the implementation and enforcement of their tariff policies.

5.10 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 improve 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 will be deemed 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 revenue. 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;
- 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.

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 and 2024. 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, in order 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 the councilor(s) concerned.

8. Transfers to municipalities

8.1 Criteria for the release of the Equitable Share

Section 216(2) of the Constitution of South Africa requires that the National Treasury must enforce compliance with the measures established to ensure both transparency and expenditure control in each sphere of government and may stop the transfer of funds to an organ of state if that organ of state commits a serious or persistent material breach of those measures.

The criteria for the release of the Equitable Share Instalments for the 2023/24 municipal financial year are as follows:

- The 2023/24 adopted budget must be funded and adopted by Council as per the legal framework, as required in terms of section 18 of the MFMA and consistent with the Budget Council and Budget Forum resolutions;
  a. The adopted budget must include budget allocations for bulk suppliers current account payments;
  b. Should the adopted budget still be unfunded, then a credible funding plan will be required to show how the municipality intends moving progressively out of this position into a funded state, if this plan has been adopted in the past, then a progress report must be submitted on the framework previously shared to guide municipalities which is aligned to the rescue phase of the new approach to Municipal Financial Recovery Service (MFRS);

c. Those municipalities that adopted an unfunded budget must work with their respective Provincial Treasuries to rectify this position in the lead up to the main adjustments budget process in February 2023; and
d. A council resolution showing commitment to address the unfunded position must be submitted by these municipalities to the National Treasury by 01 July 2023.

- Credible *m*SCOA data strings and source documents for the 2023/24 MTREF and 2022/23 audits must be generated directly from the core municipal financial system and successfully uploaded to the Local Government GoMuni Portal. Source documents must be submitted in PDF and no excel based spreadsheet/ templates will be accepted;
- The report submitted by bulk suppliers in terms of section 41 of the MFMA must indicate that the current account has been paid timeously in terms of section 65(2)(e) of the MFMA. In addition, where the municipality has a repayment plan with Eskom and/ or the water boards, proof that the current accounts have been paid and a copy of the agreed upon payment plan (or evidence of negotiations underway with creditors) must be submitted to the National and provincial treasuries;
- Municipalities must provide evidence that SARS, pension and other staff benefits deducted from municipal officials have been paid over the appropriate Funds and/ or institutions;
- The information requested in MFMA Circulars No. 93, 98 and 107 on the reconciliation of the valuation roll have been submitted to the National Treasury as per the required timeframes;
- The Competency Regulations reporting requirements have been complied with;
- Provide a copy of the Unauthorised, Irregular, Fruitless and Wasteful (UIF&W) expenditure register, the latest copy of the Municipal Public Accounts Committee (MPAC) recommendations, Council Resolution on UIFW as well as a copy of the council approved UIFW Reduction Strategy/ Plan, proof of establishment of the Disciplinary Board (or evidence of progress towards their establishment) including evidentiary evidence demonstrating functionality of the Disciplinary Board and updated audit action plan (where the audit has been completed);
- Those municipalities that received an adverse or disclaimed opinions for the 2020/21 financial year will not receive their funding allocation unless there is a council resolution committing to address these opinions with an implementable plan. The resolution must be signed by each member of the Council and submitted to National Treasury by 1 October 2023;
- The Municipal Financial Recovery Service progress reporting framework for financial recovery plans must be complied with by municipalities under intervention in terms of S139 of the Constitution;
- Additionally, those municipalities that have outstanding audits for both the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years as well as municipalities with outstanding 2021/22 audit opinions that also received an adverse or disclaimer opinion in 2020/21, will also not receive their allocation; and
- Any other outstanding documents as per the legal framework have been submitted including the AFS submission (municipality only and consolidated AFS).

Failure to comply with the above criteria will result in National Treasury invoking section 38 of the MFMA which empowers National Treasury to withhold a municipality's equitable share if the municipality commits a serious or persistent breach of the measures established in terms of Section 216(2) of the Constitution which includes reporting obligations set out in the MFMA and National Treasury requests for information in terms of Section 74 of the MFMA.

9. The Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations

9.1 Schedule A – version to be used for the 2023/24 MTREF

National Treasury has released Version 6.7 of the Schedule A1 (the Excel Formats) which is aligned to Version 6.7 of the *m*SCOA classification framework and must be used when compiling the 2023/24 MTREF budget.

All municipalities must prepare their 2023/24 MTREF budgets in their financial systems and produce the Schedule A1 directly from their financial system.

Municipalities must start early enough to capture their tabled budget (and later the adopted budget) in the budget module in the financial system and must ensure that they produce their Schedule A1 directly out of the budget module. **Manual capturing on the A1 schedule version 6.7 is not allowed** in terms of the *m*SCOA Regulations.

National Treasury has protected the A1 schedule version 6.7 in order to ensure that the Schedule A1 generated directly from the financial system and not populated manually.

The budget, adjustments budget and Section 71 monthly reporting Schedules that have been regulated in terms of the MBRR have also been aligned to the *m*SCOA chart version 6.7. The revised MBRR Schedules for the 2023/24 MTREF and its linkages to the financial and non-financial data string are available on the link below:

http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/RegulationsandGazettes/Municipal%20Budget%20and%20Reporting%20Regulations/Pages/default.aspx

9.2 Assistance with the compilation of budgets

If municipalities require advice with the compilation of their respective budgets, specifically the budget documents or Schedule A1, they should direct their enquiries to their respective provincial treasuries or to the following National Treasury officials:

Province	Responsible NT officials	Tel. No.	Email
Eastern Cape	Matjatji Mashoeshoe	012-315 5553	Matjatji.Mashoeshoe@treasury.gov.za
	Pitso Zwane	012-315 5171	Pitso.Zwane@Treasury.gov.za
	Oreal Tshidino		Ophulusa.Tshidino@Treasury.gov.za
Buffalo City	Mandla Gilimani	012-315 5807	Mandla.Gilimani@treasury.gov.za
Free State	Sifiso Mabaso	012-315 5952	Sifiso.mabaso@treasury.gov.za
	Cethekile Moshane	012-315 5079	Cethekile.moshane@treasury.gov.za
Gauteng	Matjatji Mashoeshoe	012-315 5553	Matjatji.Mashoeshoe@treasury.gov.za
	Abigail Maila	012-395 6737	Abigail.Maila@Treasury.gov.za
City of Tshwane and City of Johannesburg Ekurhuleni	Willem Voigt	012-315 5830	WillemCordes.Voigt@treasury.gov.za
	Makgabo Mabotja	012-315 5156	Makgabo.Mabotja@treasury.gov.za
	Kgomotso Baloyi	012-315 5866	Kgomotso.Baloyi@treasury.gov.za
KwaZulu-Natal	Kgomotso Baloyi	012-315 5866	Kgomotso.Baloyi@treasury.gov.za
	Kevin Bell	012-315 5725	Kevin.Bell@treasury.gov.za
eThekwini	Sifiso Mabaso	012-315 5952	Sifiso.mabaso@treasury.gov.za
Limpopo	Sifiso Mabaso	012-315 5952	Sifiso.Mabaso@treasury.gov.za
Mpumalanga	Mandla Gilimani	012-315 5807	Mandla.Gilimani@treasury.gov.za
	Lesego Leqasa		Lesego.Leqasa@treasury.gov.za

Northern Cape	Mandla Gilimani Sibusisiwe Mchani	012-315 5807 012-315 5539	Mandla.Gilimani@treasury.gov.za Sibusisiwe.Mchani@treasury.gov.za
North West	Willem Voigt Makgabo Mabotja	012-315 5830 012-315 5156	WillemCordes.Voigt@treasury.gov.za Makgabo.Mabotja@treasury.gov.za
Western Cape Cape Town George	Willem Voigt Enock Ndlovu Kgomotso Baloyi Mandla Gilimani	012-315 5830 012-315 5385 012-315 5866 012-315 5807	WillemCordes.Voigt@treasury.gov.za Enock.Ndlovu@treasury.gov.za Kgomotso.Baloyi@treasury.gov.za Mandla.Gilimani@treasury.gov.za
Technical issues with Excel formats	Sephiri Tlhomeli	012-406 9064	lgdataqueries@treasury.gov.za

National and provincial treasuries will analyse the credibility of the data string submissions.

9.3 Assessing the 2023/24 MTREF budget

National and provincial treasuries will assess the 2023/24 MTREF budgets to determine if it is complete, funded and complies with the *m*SCOA requirements. The *m*SCOA data strings for the tabled (TABB) and adopted (ORGB) budgets will be used for this assessment.

Municipalities should note that the MFMA legislated timeframes for submission of the tabled and adopted budgets are outer timeframes. In this context, different to previous MTREF's, going forward, if the municipality's budget is unfunded, council in terms of MFMA section 74 is requested to table and/ or adopt a budget funding plan together with the budget at the same time.

The Treasuries' **assessment period** of municipal budgets will be from **01 April to 30 June 2023 for both the tabled and adopted budgets**. **However,** (in a context of some municipalities persisting with unfunded budgeting practices)**, if the municipality tabled and/ or adopted an unfunded budget in the 2022/23 MTREF**, the municipality must adjust its schedule of key budget deadlines to facilitate an earlier Treasuries' assessment thereof between 1 April to 15 May 2023 for both tabled and adopted budgets. In this period the national and provincial treasuries will evaluate all municipal budgets for completeness and for being fully funded. Any adjustment that needs to be made must be done before the start of the municipal financial year on 30 June 2023.

Importantly, in order to generate an adopted budget (ORGB) data string, the budget must be locked immediately on the financial system at the start of the new municipal financial year on 1 July. Therefore, once the ORGB data string has been generated, errors in the ORGB can only be corrected via an adjustments budget in February of each year. In terms of the design principles of *m*SCOA, municipalities are not allowed to open the budget on the system for corrections after it has been locked. This means that the tabled budget data string (TABB) should in fact be verified and errors in the TABB should be corrected in the ORGB **before the adopted budget is locked on the financial system and the ORGB data string is generated**.

Amending an unfunded, incomplete and erroneous budget through an adjusted budget is also not encouraged as the National Treasury only considers an adjusted budget in the third and fourth quarter of the financial year for analysis and publication purposes. This will result in overspending and unauthorised expenditure not been monitored in the first six months of the financial year.

The National Treasury would like to emphasise that ***where municipalities have adopted an unfunded budget together with a funding plan that lacks credibility, they will be required to correct the funding plan and ensure that it is credible. The credible funding plan must be immediately adopted by the Municipal Council, and the changes to the***

budget must be effected in the mid-year adjustments budget to ensure compliance with Section 18 of the MFMA.

Municipalities with municipal entities are once again reminded to prepare consolidated budgets and in-year monitoring reports for both the parent municipality and its entity or entities. The following must be compiled:

- An annual budget, adjustments budget and monthly financial reports for the parent municipality in the relevant formats;
- An annual budget, adjustments budget and monthly financial reports for the entity in the relevant formats; and
- A consolidated annual budget, adjustments budget and monthly financial reports for the parent municipality and all its municipal entities in the relevant formats.

The budget and data strings that the municipality submits to National Treasury must be a consolidated budget for the municipality (including entities). The budget of each entity must be submitted on the D Schedule in pdf format.

In the past it was noted that municipalities have challenges to align the audited outcomes on the financial system to A1 Schedule. Municipalities must ensure that the audited figures and adjusted budget figures captured on the A1 Schedule aligns to the annual financial statements and Schedule B respectively.

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

To facilitate oversight of compliance with the Municipal Budget and Reporting Regulations, accounting officers are reminded that:

- Section 22(b)(i) of the MFMA requires that, ***immediately*** after an annual budget is tabled in a municipal council, it must be submitted to the National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury in electronic formats. If the annual budget is tabled to council on **31 March 2023**, the final date of submission of the electronic budget documents and corresponding *m*SCOA data strings is **Monday, 03 April 2023**; and
- Section 24(3) of the MFMA, read together with regulation 20(1) of the MBRR, requires that the approved annual budget must be submitted to both National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury within ten working days after the council has approved the annual budget. However, given that municipalities are generating the annual budgets directly from the financial system as required by the *m*SCOA Regulations and that the budgets must be verified before it is locked on the financial system and transacted against, municipalities must submit the approved budget to the National Treasury and the relevant provincial treasury in electronic formats ***immediately*** after approval by the municipal council. Therefore, if the annual budget is tabled to council **on 31 May 2023**, the final date of submission of the electronic budget documents and corresponding *m*SCOA data strings is **Thursday, 01 June 2023.**

Since the 2020/21 MTREF, municipalities are no longer required to submit hard copies of all required documents including budget related, Annual Financial Statements and Annual Reports to National Treasury via post or courier services. Electronic copies must be submitted in PDF format to the GoMuni Upload portal.

10.1 Expected submissions for 2023/24 MTREF

The following information should be submitted for the 2023/24 MTREF:

- The budget documentation as set out in the MBRR. The budget document must include the main A1 Schedule Tables (A1 - A10);
- The non-financial supporting tables (A10, SA9, SA11, SA12, SA13, SA22, SA23, SA24 etc. and any other information not contained in the financial data string) in the A1 schedule must be submitted in the prescribed *m*SCOA data string in the format published with Version 6.7 of the A1 schedule;
- The draft and final service delivery and budget implementation plan (SDBIP) in electronic PDF format;
- The draft and final IDP;
- The council resolution for the tabled and adopted budgets;
- Signed Quality Certificate as prescribed in the MBRR for the tabled and adopted budgets;
- D Schedules specific for the entities;
- A budget locking certificate immediately at the start of the new municipal financial year on 1 July;
- The National or Provincial treasury input to the tabled budget must be included as an Annexure to the adopted budget together with the municipality's explanation of how such was addressed in the adopted budget. If not, the explanation should provide reasons; and
- The bulk water-and electricity invoices for the 3 months immediately preceding respectively the tabled and adopted budgets, must be included as an annexure to the tabled and adopted budgets as part of supporting the municipalities provision for and calculations of payments to bulk suppliers over the 2023/24 MTREF.

10.2 Portals for the submission of information

Municipalities must ensure that the documents are submitted to the correct portals/ mailboxes. These portals/ mailboxes are:

https://lg.treasury.gov.za/ibi_apps/signin (GoMuni Upload Portal) – All documents required in terms of legislation, including:

- *m*SCOA Data Strings by approved registered users;
- Budget-related and in-year documents and schedules (A, B and C) by approved registered users; and
- Reconciliation of the valuation roll to the financial system (as per MFMA Circular No. 93).

Budget related documents and schedules must be uploaded by approved registered users using the GoMuni Upload Portal at: https://lg.treasury.gov.za/ibi_apps/signin. The GoMuni Upload Portal does not have the same size restrictions encountered with lgdocuments@treasury.gov.za, but requires all documents to:

- Be in PDF format only; and
- Each PDF file must NOT contain multiple document e.g. council resolution and quality certificate within the budget document. Each document type must be identified clearly and uploaded separately.

Municipalities may ***only*** send electronic versions of the above documents to lgdocuments@treasury.gov.za when experiencing problems with the GoMuni Upload Portal.

lgdataqueries@treasury.gov.za – Database related and submission queries and the grant rollover templates.

lgdocuments@treasury.gov.za – Any additional information required by National Treasury that is not listed under the GoMuni Upload portal such as the documents meeting the criteria to release Equitable Share and the contact list information.

FMCMM and Audit Action plans – using the web-enabled systems and as articulated in MFMA Circulars No. 113 and 114.

Please do not submit the same document to ALL the platforms listed above as it means that our Database Team must register the same documents three times which slows down the process. ***Any document/ queries that are submitted to the incorrect portal/ mailbox will be deleted and not processed***.

10.3 Publication of budgets on municipal websites

In terms of section 75 of the MFMA, all municipalities are required to publish their tabled budgets, adopted budgets, annual reports (containing audited annual financial statements) and other relevant information on the municipality's website. This will aid in promoting public accountability and good governance.

All relevant documents mentioned in this circular are available on the National Treasury website, http://mfma.treasury.gov.za/Pages/Default.aspx. Municipalities are encouraged to visit it regularly as documents are regularly added / updated on the website.

10.4 Communication by municipal entities to National Treasury

Municipal entities should not request meetings directly from National Treasury. National Treasury will only engage the entities through the parent municipalities. This includes all communications apart from the legislative reporting requirements.

Contact

national treasury
Department:
National Treasury
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Post	Private Bag X115, Pretoria 0001
Phone	012 315 5009
Fax	012 395 6553
Website	http://www.treasury.gov.za/default.aspx

JH Hattingh
Chief Director: Local Government Budget Analysis
09 December 2022

Annexure A

Virtual *m*SCOA Training Programme 2023

Month	TOPIC
Jan	**Getting a green submission** • Overview of *m*SCOA chart structure • Submission deadlines • Uploading to the GoMuni Upload portal • Correction of validation errors • Using GoMuni to verify receipt and credibility of submission

Feb	**Preparing the Budget in mSCOA (1)**
	• Preparing the project file (PROR)
	• Projects Typical Workstreams
	• Budgeting for disaster/special projects
	• Infrastructure Management and asset life cycle
	• The funding matrix
	  ○ Allocation of correct funding sources and alignment to the correct segments
	  ○ Funding capital expenditure

March	**Preparing the Budget in *m*SCOA (2)** • Opening balances & Balance sheet budgeting • Budgeting for cash flow • Budgeting for conditional grants
April	**Common Errors in 2023/24 Tabled Budget Data Strings** *(to be corrected in adopted budget (ORGB submission)* • Water Inventory
May	**Common Budgeting Errors** • Operating Expenditure – Deprecation • Bad debts written off • Impairment loss for consumer debtors • Travel and Subsistence
June	**Last change to get the ORGB right** • Functional allocation • Use of Regional segment • Alignment of A1 schedules
July	**Common Transacting and Reporting Errors** • Opening balances • Populating the cash flow • Reporting on conditional grants • Transacting without budget
Aug	**Preparing the pre-audit AFS Data Strings (PAUD)**
Sept	**Common Transacting and Reporting Errors**
Oct	**Preparing the AFS Data Strings (AUDA)**
Nov	**Chart changes for version 6.8**
Dec	**Preparing for the Adjustment Budget**