Welcome to the finance family

"I am delighted to welcome the Government Technical Advisory Centre into the "finance family". You have a challenging and exciting mandate. Building capacity in public finance management is essential if we are to accelerate development and improve service delivery. I expect big things of GTAC — a portfolio of technical support and advisory projects that has real impact, sound advice on major capital projects, innovative contributions to job creation, and support for private investment in public services and infrastructure. The challenges are huge, but the opportunities to make a difference are immense."

Introducing GTAC

Building capacity efficiency and effectiveness

GTAC is bringing together people with energy, experience and expertise in different areas to consolidate and give impetus to our implementation of the National Development Plan.

We support the National Treasury in bringing expert advice and technical capacity to critical initiatives such as the Jobs Fund, the Cities Support Programme and the Independent Power Producers Programme. GTAC also supports other departments and municipalities in financing and managing their development priorities.

Improving health services, encouraging investment in further education, establishing effective border management and supporting efficient special economic zones requires multi-disciplinary teams with complementary skills and styles of work. We provide transaction advisory support, project management or organisational support, and specialised expertise. But the real challenge is combining these elements to address complex development challenges.

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Partnering for excellence in public finance management

GTAC aims to be recognized as a centre of excellence in public finance management and development. The National Treasury’s commitment to integrity, transparency and accountability is central to our identity. We work to build capacity — this isn’t just about training or good technical advice; it is also about working with client departments as partners, learning by doing, continuously looking for ways to do things better and participating in important debates on difficult policy options.

Over time we will expand our capacity to contribute to good public finance management practice and evidence-based policy.

Many of our projects and activities are about how government can work better with the private sector. Improving the operating rules of engagement with business is an important part of improving public service delivery, getting value for money in procurement, and promoting competition and growth.

GTAC brings together parts of the National Treasury that have an externally oriented advisory role, often involving specific client departments or agencies. There are also programmes or activities we manage on behalf of the National Treasury. We support collaboration between different divisions and with other departments, but we report to the National Treasury.

GTAC has been designed using lessons we have learnt about in-house government consulting and advisory services from the Technical Assistance Unit’s collaboration with Canadian partners over many years, and the Public-Private Partnership Unit’s observations of best practice in the United Kingdom and other countries. But we have ensured that our activities and services make sense for South African circumstances and for the particular challenges of public service delivery in our context.

From here to a fully functional GTAC

Our approach to GTAC’s development is phased and evolutionary — the centre is already a substantial functional organization, with about 120 advisory projects under way in addition to the Jobs Fund portfolio, several expenditure reviews and support for major infrastructure investments.

We held a series of strategic conversations with the GTAC team in June this year. During the second half of the year we will develop an organizational structure, comprising several business units, for consideration by the Minister of Finance and the Department of Public Service and Administration. We are also investing in a project management and information system to help build an effective advisory and technical support organization.

Publications

GTAC generates a substantial and diverse body of knowledge. The dissemination of this information presents an opportunity to position GTAC as an agency that shares high-quality, validated, evidence-based knowledge, packaged as a user-friendly, easily accessible product. Decision-makers within government are the target audience, but GTAC aims to broaden and deepen its reach using electronic and social media. The centre’s new publication capacity will ensure that the knowledge it generates is shared, becoming a vehicle to communicate with stakeholders and partners.

GTAC’s publications and website will feature the following:

- A quarterly e-book focused on key policy issues
- A working papers series
- A case study series
- A weekly WhatsApp news alert
- Links to the websites and products of GTAC’s partners
- Notification of events and conferences.

Our work in 2014

Our work in 2014 includes the former Technical Assistance Unit, Public-Private Partnership Unit, National Capital Projects Unit, Expenditure Performance Review Programme and Jobs Fund, and has been operating as an agency of the National Treasury since 1 April 2014.

Following a series of strategic consultation sessions with the new GTAC team, the centre is in the process of developing a strategic plan and an organizational structure which will be finalised and submitted to the Minister of Public Service and Administration in November 2014.

GTAC is building its skills base and capacity for greater engagement in public-sector capacity building. Its services include diagnostics, programme and project implementation support, organisational development, and with plans to extend its advisory services to all public-private partnerships and large capital projects. As the projects discussed below illustrate, GTAC maintains a strong commitment to accountability and transparency, with an inclusive and broad-based approach to economic development. The centre will continue to learn and share findings, build partnerships and encourage innovation.

Projects

Energy related projects dominated the work of the National Capital Projects team in the first quarter of 2014. The unit provided support to address Eskom’s funding challenge, which involved modelling the existing situation and scenarios to address the issue. It also researched and modelled electricity generation options for South Africa to understand their economic and financial implications.

Supply chain management

GTAC provides assistance to the Eastern Cape’s provident education department to improve its supply chain management. It helped the department decentralize its process for ordering office supplies and improve the National School Nutrition Programme’s supply chain management in eight schools in the district.

Border management agency

GTAC is helping the Department of Home Affairs establish a border management agency. The centre has designed an institutional options assessment and a business case for the preferred option. So far the project has been a success, with positive feedback from stakeholders.

Special economic zones

GTAC participated in a special economic zones event in East London in June 2014 to enhance delegates’ understanding of the opportunities and challenges associated with these zones, and to develop mechanisms and approaches to regional economic development through expert advice and input.

Ocean strategy

GTAC took part in an ocean strategy project, assisting the Department of Environmental Affairs with a review of the economy and governance of the sea.

Cities Support Programme

The Cities Support Programme, coordinated by the National Treasury’s Intergovernmental Relations Division, focuses on sustainable growth and good governance in major urban environments. GTAC provides the programme with technical support in four areas: strategic planning, leadership development, monitoring and evaluation, and organisational development. The programme piloted various approaches to support, including scenario planning, and aimed to develop an understanding of the broader historical, economic, political and social factors that have contributed to current urban dynamics.

Jobs Fund

The Jobs Fund is tasked with identifying innovative and often experimental models for job creation. It piloted innovative approaches to employment creation, with the successful, can be used at scale to create jobs. The fund, worth R161 billion, has been disbursed with an additional R100 billion leveraged. This has resulted in the creation of 17 375 new permanent jobs by the 57 projects. These projects have also created 8 738 short-term jobs and 31 870 individuals have received work-readiness training.

Public-private partnerships

The Public-Private Partnership Unit provides specialisation support for infrastructure procurement through public-private partnerships and conventional procurement mechanisms, often extending beyond the conclusion of procurement processes into project implementation. The unit also provides training and monitors the performance of such partnerships at the request of the sponsoring institution.
How has South Africa changed for the better?

Lebogang Nkadimeng

What is your role at GTAC?
I provide project advice and support to municipalities and provincial departments on infrastructure projects, specifically from inception to the procurement phase.

How are things different today for women?
South Africa has evolved in a positive way for women. We can now participate in a wide range of economic activities. Things have changed; although there are still cultural stereotypes about women, we now have equal access to education and economic opportunities, and we can make decisions about what we want in life, rather than following societal and cultural norms.

Do you think women have equal rights today?
I believe women have equal rights as stipulated in the Constitution. South Africa has made progress in putting women in positions of authority and leadership. But stereotypes about femininity still exist in society, so the struggle for gender equality and women empowerment is not yet over; we still have a long way to go.

What is your favourite part of your job?
Projects go through defined phases and every phase has its challenges and achievements. I enjoy the procurement phase, especially the negotiations with the preferred service provider.

Shirley Skenjana

What is your role at GTAC?
I manage the office of the acting head of GTAC.

How are things different today for women?
When I was a little girl, 90 percent of women were housewives taking care of homes and children. Today, women are career women who occupy leading roles at work and in society. They contribute to policy-making and they represent our country in many forums. Women have access to a lot of opportunities — they are decision-makers who are involved in the planning of their households and the future of their families.

Do you think women have equal rights today?
There are still areas where women do not have equal rights. Maya Angelou once said that “each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it, she stands up for all women.” Let’s stand up and make a difference.

What is your favourite part of your job?
Managing managers, even though it is a challenge sometimes, also enjoy mentoring administrative staff. Knowing and understanding that my role is key to the success of the organisation is very gratifying.

Thembela Skenjana

What is your role at GTAC?
I work as a project administrator in the Governance and Administration portfolio.

How are things different today for women?
For me, growing up in a home and an advantage — women had the same opportunities as men to develop themselves academically. I grew up seeing a lot of independent women striving to succeed. But it was rare to find people in the engineering field then, for example, which is something that is emerging now. Today we can pursue any career without any prejudice, be it gender or racial. I can freely be anything my heart desires.

Do you think women have equal rights today?
Yes, I think we have equal rights and opportunities; all we need to do is reach for them. We cannot sit back and think opportunities will present themselves to us — we need to work hard. There are challenges and there is still limited representation of women in executive positions in this country. Government needs to work with the private sector to address this issue.

What is your favourite part of your job?
I enjoy the interaction with the clients and working on the technical/contractual aspects of projects.

Amanda Smit

What is your role at GTAC?
I am responsible for, among others, managing the Knowledge and Information Unit; building human resources capacity; overseeing internal communications; developing monitoring, reporting and evaluation; branding and corporate identity; and developing the organisational structure.

What are the remaining hurdles for GTAC?
We need a transitional plan to accommodate the culture change of the organisation and build a common set of behavioural values.

In setting up GTAC, tough decisions need to be made, following an organic, evolutionary approach. But this increases risk and leads to uncertainty, which affects performance. Strategy, functions and services are the critical determinants for any organisation — these are change enablers for GTAC. A communication plan is crucial. We need to communicate one message, with consistent corporate communications and branding.

How are things different today for women?
Women are increasingly becoming the bread winners in their households. We are now in a fortunate position where we can choose to have a career, or a family, or both. The voice of women also carries power and authority, which was not the case when I was a little girl.

Do you think women have equal rights today?
Equal rights mean different things to different people. Being a soldier in the military taught me what equal rights mean. First priority is being a soldier; but never lose your womanhood in the process. Women have the same privileges and rights as men; it’s about not abusing that right, and it’s about honouring the right that is given to you.

What is your favourite part of your job?
Making a difference and having hope for GTAC. Serving my team members and being able to be a part of, and influence, the organisation’s change.

Elsa Strydom

What is your role at GTAC?
I am a senior project advisor in the PPP Unit dealing with infrastructure procurement.

How are things different today for women?
Today women have a lot more opportunities, and this all depends on the way you look at things. Some women prefer to stay at home; some women want to have a career. You have a choice; it is important to know yourself and what you want out of life to be happy. This is one of the major lessons I hope my gifts will learn, to be their own woman.

Do you think women have equal rights today?
I think women have equal rights on paper. There is no legal discrimination between a man and a woman, but discrimination, abuse and intimidation are still prevalent in our society.

What is your favourite part of your job?
My favourite part of my job is to work to make something happen, to deliver on infrastructure and to close a deal. All the work involved to solve a problem. The ability to bring parties together and keep the project on track when it threatens to derail. The actual hands-on project work of a transaction excites me.

“I’ve never regarded women as in any way less competent than men.”

Nelson Mandela

What is your role at GTAC?
I provide project advice and support to municipalities and provincial departments on infrastructure projects, specifically from inception to the procurement phase.
The main emphasis of this logo is on the ‘ASSISTANCE’ part of what GTAC aims to achieve and is symbolised by the highly stylised ‘A’.

The A also serves as an upward pointing arrow signifying:
- Improvement in decision-making and governance
- Improvement of efficiency and effectiveness of public sector infrastructure delivery

The A or arrow also signifies:
- Development
- Change
- Moving up
- Forward
- Creativity
- Enhancement
- Knowledge dissemination

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National Treasury
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

240 Madiba Street, Pretoria, 0002 | T 012 395 6761 | F 012 315 5786
info@gtac.gov.za

Editorial Team:
Amanda Smit
Anita Rwelesihana
Marië Kirsten
Greg Rosenberg (Language editor)

Designed and printed by David-A (studio-cx.co.za)