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**TO HEADS OF ALL NATIONAL DEPARTMENTS, PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATIONS,
PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENTS AND GOVERNMENT COMPONENTS**

**STRATEGY TO REDUCE THE RECRUITMENT PERIOD AND THE VACANCY RATE IN
THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of this circular is to-
 - 1.1 inform all departments of the above-mentioned Strategy;
 - 1.2 obtain inputs from national departments and Offices of Premiers on the Strategy; and
 - 1.3 establish a protocol whereby national departments and Offices of Premiers will, by 31 July 2011 and in future, provide information to the DPSA to monitor the implementation of the above-mentioned Strategy.

INFORMATION ON THE STRATEGY

2. As you are aware, Government adopted 12 outcomes as a key focus of work between 2010 and 2014. Each outcome has specific measurable outputs with targets. The outputs are linked to a set of activities that will assist to achieve the targets and the realisation of the outcome. Each of the 12 outcomes has a Delivery Agreement which, in most cases, involves all three spheres of government and a range of partners outside government. Combined, these agreements reflect government's delivery and implementation plans for its foremost priorities.
3. The Minister for Public Service and Administration is the custodian for the Delivery Agreement for outcome 12 (An efficient, effective and development oriented public service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship) that focuses on the entire Public Service across the spheres of government.

Staatsdiens en Administrasie . Ditirelo tsa Puso le Tsamaiso . Ditshebeliso tsa Mmuso le Tsamaiso . uMnyango wemiSebenzi kaHulumeni nokuPhata

Muhasho wa Tshumelo ya Muvuso na Vhulanguli . Kgoro ya Ditirelo tša Mmušo . Ndzawulo ya Vutirela-Mfumo na Valawuri

LiTiko le Tebasebenti baHulumende nekuPhatsa . ISebe leNkonzo kaRhulumente noLawulo . UmiNyango wemiSebenzi kaRhumende nokuPhata

Outcome 12 consists of four outputs and of these, Output 2 (Human resource management and development) deals with matters related to human resource management and development; in particular with the aim to improve areas that currently contributes to inadequate service delivery. Output 2 comprises the following sub-outputs:

- 3.1 Performance development, performance agreements and assessment
 - 3.2 Recruitment, retention and career pathing
 - 3.3 Discipline
 - 3.4 Human resource planning, skills development and cadre development
4. In respect of the sub-output referred to in paragraph 3.2 above (Recruitment, retention and career pathing) the DPSA has, given its responsibilities with regard to human resource management in the Public Service, established a project to develop a strategy to improve staffing levels in the Public Service by -
- 4.1 reducing the period it takes to fill a vacant post in the Public Service to 4 months after being advertised; and
 - 4.2 reducing the average vacancy rate in the Public Service to 10%.
5. The work done so far culminated in the attached draft Strategy that will assist and guide departments to improve their staffing levels in the areas referred to in paragraph 4 above. The Strategy will in essence serve as a key driver to set the required processes in motion to achieve the targets within the timeframes set in the relevant Delivery Agreement.
6. Given its purpose, the Strategy needs to be finalized as soon as possible and to this end, national departments and Offices of Premiers are requested to provide inputs on the Strategy to Mr Pelsers whose contact details appear above, by not later than 15 July 2011. The Offices of Premiers are urged to consult the Strategy within their constituencies so that the input process does not exclude provincial departments. If necessary, national departments and Offices of Premiers are welcome to provide their inputs to the DPSA directly by means of consultation sessions.
7. Inputs in especially the following areas will be appreciated:
- 7.1 The practicality and feasibility of the interventions envisaged in paragraph 5 of the draft Strategy.
 - 7.2 The roles and responsibilities of sector departments, Offices of Premiers, etc as set out in paragraph 7 of the draft Strategy.

INFORMATION TO BE PROVIDED TO THE DPSA WITH EFFECT FROM 1 JULY 2011

8. Given the scope of the strategy, it will be necessary that national departments and Offices of Premiers report regularly to the DPSA on the implementation of the strategy and its impact in their respective departments and provincial administrations.
9. The information so obtained will be used for reporting to higher levels of Government. It will also be used to inform the interventions envisaged in paragraph 5 of the draft Strategy. The format and detail in which the information is to be provided are outlined in the attachment.

10. Kindly note that the information required must be captured directly on an Excel spreadsheet designed for these purposes. The spreadsheet can be obtained from the DPSA website at www.dpsa.gov.za or from Ms Ontlametse Makutu at Ontlametsem@dpsa.gov.za (The attached Excel sheet has been populated to assist departments with interpretation. The relevant departmental/provincial administration information must be added to the electronic version). The information required is for the period up to 30 June 2011 and the Excel spreadsheet must be submitted no later than 31 July 2011.
11. Your co-operation in providing inputs to the draft Strategy and capturing the required information will be highly appreciated.



DIRECTOR-GENERAL

DATE: 27/6/2011

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**A STRATEGY TO REDUCE THE RECRUITMENT PERIOD AND THE
VACANCY RATE IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

Date issued:

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1. Introduction

Recruitment can be described as the process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications, and encouraging them to apply for jobs in an organisation. Deciding which source to recruit from requires careful planning and strategising. Some organisations simply ignore the multitude of options and resort to using the same sources (and methodologies) each time, which contradicts any form of strategic recruitment.

To attract qualified staff, organisations are adopting more proactive, creative recruitment techniques such as cyberspace, job banks and mobile recruiting vans. The focus is also not only on hiring but it has also extended to creating a retention environment that will keep newly recruited employees satisfied and less inclined to leave the organisation in a short period. This, however, creates a major challenge as it requires employers to understand the motivating and discouraging forces that workers look for and then to be able to lever it into concrete benefits.

Similarly alternatives to current staffing practices are also being pursued before permanent employment is considered. Alternatives to recruitment commonly include outsourcing, use of temporary workers and overtime.

Recruitment in the Public Service is decentralized to individual departments and is governed by sector-specific legislation, collective agreements (transverse and sector-specific) and national employment legislation.

2. Background

Government has agreed on 12 outcomes as a key focus of work between 2010 and 2014. Each outcome has specific measurable outputs with targets. Each output is linked to a set of activities aimed at achieving the targets set for that outcome. Each of the 12 outcomes has a Delivery Agreement which, in most cases, involves all spheres of government and a range of partners outside government. Combined, these delivery agreements reflect Government's delivery priorities and implementation plans.

Among other factors, poor human resource management in the Public Service is contributing to inadequate service delivery quality and access. Human capital of the desired quality and standard is critical in order to ensure the achievement of the required service delivery standard. Some of the challenges being experienced with regard to human resource management in the Public Service include high vacancy rates, poor management of performance and discipline, the inability to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of skilled people in key occupations, insufficient human resource planning and inadequate training and development of employees.

In some cases previous attempts to address these challenges have had limited success. One of the reasons for this may be that the root causes of the challenges were not properly identified and understood. For example, the Public Service has been grappling for some time with the high vacancy rate in some departments as well as the extended periods required to fill vacancies. It is becoming increasingly clear that some of the vacancies that have been identified are not "real" vacancies. Many are not funded and will probably not be funded in the foreseeable future. This may also explain why it often takes so long to fill vacancies. This

means that the recruitment processes aimed at filling vacancies may not be the problem but rather the ability to identify real, funded vacancies.

The Minister for the Public Service and Administration is the custodian for the Delivery Agreement for outcome 12 (An efficient, effective and development oriented public service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship) that focuses on the entire Public Service across the three spheres of government. Output 2 (Human resource management and development) of this outcome deals with matters related to human resource management and development; in particular with the aim to improve areas that currently contributes to inadequate service delivery. Output 2 comprises the following sub-outputs:

- (a) Performance development, performance agreements and assessment
- (b) Recruitment, retention and career pathing
- (c) Discipline
- (d) Human resource planning, skills development and cadre development

The aforementioned sub-outputs are to be achieved by 2014, which require that concerted and continuous efforts be made by all departments throughout the Public Service.

This strategy deals only with the sub-output: Recruitment, retention and career pathing.

3. Problem statement

A number of departmental organisational structures on PERSAL reflect a high vacancy rate. However, due to inaccuracies in the information available, it is not possible to accurately determine the real vacancy rate in terms of vacant posts that can be funded within departmental budgets. This situation hampers the Public Service's ability to-

- (a) measure its ability to attract scarce and critical skills, set targets in this regard for various professional categories, and report on progress against them;
- (b) measure the duration of employment in scarce occupations, set a target to increase the duration and to evaluate the effectiveness of targeted interventions in this regard; and
- (c) improve the period it takes to fill a vacancy.

4. Objective of the strategy

The objective of this strategy is to provide high level interventions that will enable departments (irrespective of sector) to improve staffing levels in the Public Service by-

- (a) reducing the period it takes to fill a vacant post in the Public Service to 6 months (4 months after being advertised) through-
 - identifying improvements in processes and timelines for recruitment, selection and appointment; and
 - developing special recruitment measures for identified categories that will enable a deviation from the open competition principle to reduce the vacancy rate in targeted groups;
- (b) reducing the average vacancy rate in the Public Service to 10% through-
 - establishing a baseline on the real vacancy rate in the Public Service;
 - identifying categories where special recruitment measures must be introduced;

- developing guidelines on improving the practice of career management to assist HR practitioners and line managers to integrate various human resource management practices to enhance staff development and retention;
 - amending the Public Service Regulations, 2001 and/or issuing Ministerial directives; and
- (c) Rendering of implementation support to departments, including advocacy workshops.

Given the aforementioned statements, the objective is thus not to provide an operationally focussed departmental recruitment strategy, but an overarching enabling strategic framework.

5. Focus of the strategy

The strategy comprises the following seven interventions within available departmental budgets:

5.1 Intervention 1: Promulgate regulatory changes recommended in the 2010 Report on Recruitment

The above-mentioned Report was developed by the Department of Public Service and Administration in response to a need identified during 2009 to investigate ways to enhance the quality of the recruitment process. The 2010 Report on Recruitment therefore identified a number of challenges relating to recruitment practices and the following regulatory changes will be pursued:

- (a) Chapter 1, Part VIII, C.2.2 of the PSR requires that an advertisement for a post shall specify the inherent requirements of the job, the job title and core functions. In this regard provision must be made that advertisements must as part of the inherent requirements of the post also cover competency requirements instead of narrowly focusing on qualifications and experience only.
- (b) Chapter 1, Part VIII, C.2.4 of the PSR requires that an Executive Authority must advertise any vacant post other than a Senior Management Service-post within the department as a minimum, but may also advertise such posts elsewhere in the Public Service or outside the Public Service either nationwide or locally. The PSR C.2.5 provides for limited deviation in this regard. This Regulation should be amended to provide for the following additional circumstances:
- Prescribe the occupational categories and scarce skills where a deviation from the normal open competition process is permitted and the conditions that must be adhered to.
 - Regulate the practice of headhunting and deviation from the open competition principle under prescribed circumstances as follows:
 - Amend the PSR to enable the MPSA to prescribe categories of scarce skills occupations where a deviation from the open competition principle can be allowed where difficulty in recruiting suitable candidates in terms of the normal procedure is not successful and hampers service delivery
 - Amend the PSR to prescribe that in other cases than those mentioned above suitably qualified candidates can be targeted or head-hunted in

conjunction with the normal advertising of vacancies, i.e. a potential candidate should be requested to apply for the vacancy, where after the normal process will apply. Only after the normal recruitment process has been exhausted “individualized” head-hunting can be undertaken provided that such candidate must be assessed by the same interview committee, against the same criteria used for the other candidates. The salary offered to such a head-hunted candidate must also not be substantially different from that advertised.

- (c) Chapter 1, Part VIII, C.2.4 of the PSR determines that the selection committee shall make a recommendation on the suitability of a candidate after considering only-
- Information based on valid methods, criteria or instruments for selection that are free from bias or discrimination
 - The training, skills, competence and knowledge necessary to meet the inherent requirements of the post
 - The needs of the department for developing human resources
 - The representativeness of the component where the post is located
 - The department’s affirmative action programme

This Regulation should be amended to prescribe compulsory elements to be included in the assessment of candidates for employment. In addition to job specific requirements; all candidates must as a minimum be evaluated against the following criteria during the selection process:

- Understanding of national/provincial priorities and the departmental specific mandates in relation to the requirements of the relevant post level where the post is on salary level 9 or higher
- Ability to solve problems/seek solutions and provide innovative solutions in relation to the requirements of the relevant post
- Ability to motivate self and others where applicable
- Drive for continuous improvement
- Ability to work in a team
- Potential of candidates to acquire the relevant competencies to perform the job within a given time (with relevant development programmes). This will assist in advancing previously disadvantaged individuals

- (d) The current system and quality of probation management need to be enhanced so that it provides for the tenets of “fit and proper” as prescribed in section 10 of the Public Service Act, 1994. Chapter 1, Part VII, E2 of the PSR regulates probation management and in this regard it is required that the assessment of probationers be augmented by adding a requirement that all probationers must be assessed in terms of their suitability in relation to appropriate behaviour, competence and socialization with the work environment as part of their performance reviews.

- (e) Chapter 1, Part VIII, C.1 of the PSR provides that an Executive Authority may establish separate performance instruments for different occupational categories or levels of work. This Regulation should be augmented by prescribing that the performance agreements of employees with disabilities must address the

requirements of the employee in respect of her/his work place and the necessary assistive devices that may be required.

5.2 Intervention 2: Reduce the vacancy rate by establishing a credible baseline on the vacancy rate in the Public Service

This intervention relates to another DPSA project to validate and ensure the reliability of data on PERSAL. This project intends to improve the accuracy and credibility of information relating to funded organisational structures and information on real vacancies and the time that they have been vacant before filling.

The main elements of this intervention are an advocacy campaign, technical focus, capacity development, accountability and support to departments. The implementation will be managed as a separate project.

Information on vacancies and the time to fill vacancies will be obtained from PERSAL. The first report in this regard will be compiled during the first quarter of the 2011/2012 financial year and it will provide a baseline on the vacancy rate in the Public Service and the duration for the filling of posts. This report will also be closely linked to the managerial reports that DPSA will provide to HoDs. HoDs will, amongst others, be provided with information on vacancy rates and the time that it takes to fill vacancies. This information will also provide insight on potential challenges experienced with recruitment that may need further analysis. Departments that have high vacancy rates and or take excessively long to fill vacancies will be required to investigate the causes and report back to the DPSA on interventions to be implemented to rectify the situation. The information so gathered will furthermore be used to shape the strategy regarding the needs in terms of introducing specific measures related to targeted recruitment for identified occupations. In addition to these managerial reports departments will be requested on a six monthly basis to provide specific information pertaining to recruitment trends and vacancy rates which will be monitored.

The reporting to be made by departments will focus on the following:

- (a) High vacancy rates (exceeding 15% both funded and unfunded)
- (b) Vacancy rates according to predetermined criteria
- (c) A comparative figure iro the previous reporting cycle
- (d) The reasons for the vacancies
- (e) Detail of interventions planned to fill the vacancies in terms of recruitment methods, targets and timelines
- (f) Detail on turnaround times to fill vacancies according to predetermined criteria

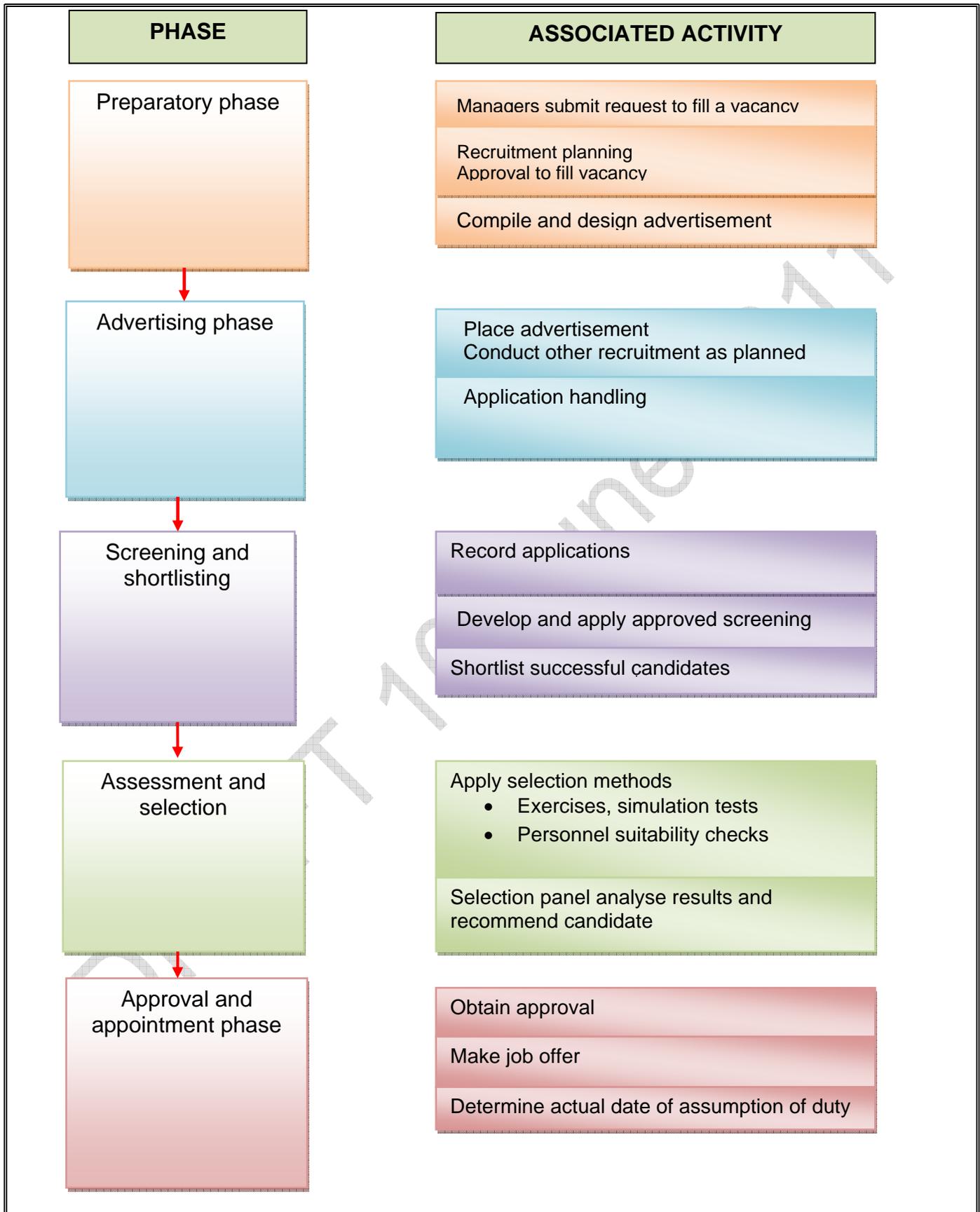
5.3 Intervention 3: Assessment of the current recruitment process

Information on the recruitment process varies according to methodology and sources utilized. However, research and surveys undertaken by the DPSA and the Public service Commission revealed the following in regard to the recruitment process:

- (a) The average time to fill vacancies is 274 days (about 9 months). Broken down according to major occupations, the position is as follows:

- 437 days: Administrative office workers
 - 393 days: Craft related workers
 - 368 days: Professionals and managers
 - 307 days: Social, natural sciences and medical staff
 - 302 days: Drivers, operating and ship personnel
 - 293 days: IT personnel
 - 274 days: Technical and associated professionals
 - 266 days: Elementary occupations
 - 152 days: College and school educators
- (b) 62% of all SMS posts advertised are filled. The figure for non – SMS advertisements is 78%.

As the recruitment process consists of clearly identifiable phases, departments that take excessively long to fill vacant posts will be required to report on the average duration for the different phases in the recruitment process to determine where challenges are experienced and what the reasons are against the phases illustrated below:



In order to shift from a predominantly reactive method of recruiting towards a more proactive recruiting, the following will also be taken into consideration:

- (a) The prescribed verification (personnel suitability checks) must be conducted in respect of all appointments or the filling of posts made in terms of the Public Service Act, 1994. In this regard departments have reported challenges in respect of the time taken to finalise these suitability checks. Specific improvements to the current system can reduce unnecessary duplications and reduce turnaround times. The State Security Agency (SSA) will be requested to establish a database that can be accessed by all departments to obtain information on shortlisted candidates that have been screened during the preceding year. Candidates are often shortlisted for various posts in different departments. Having access to the screening result of another department on the same person can assist departments in reducing the time to fill vacancies. Agreement must be reached with SSA on the establishment of such a database and the protocols to be applied in utilizing the information.
- (b) The Public Service Regulations require that all vacant posts must, except for a few exceptions, be advertised before filling. However, this requirement can be approached more resourceful to reduce both the cost of advertisements and the time it takes to fill vacancies. More guidance must be provided to departments on how to advertise a “pool” of similar posts that can be used for the filling of vacant posts for a predetermined period without advertising similar vacancies as and when they arise.

5.4 Intervention 4: Establish targeted recruitment for identified categories

- (a) Information gathered as described in paragraph 5.2 will form the basis for identifying sectors and occupations where severe challenges are experienced in filling of vacancies. This information will be used to identify categories that may justify deviation from the open recruitment principle taking into consideration:
 - Staffing levels
 - Reasons for high vacancy and turnover rates
 - Scarcities and critical skills as well as the spread of skill in the Public Service
 - Demand and supply.
- (b) Developing a methodology for targeted recruitment for identified categories
From the information mentioned above specific categories will be identified during 2011/2012 where it is evident that the current principle of open competition in recruitment is not adequate for recruiting and where a prescribed targeted recruitment process allowing deviation from the open competition principle will assist departments with the filling of identified vacancies.

This will further be informed by evidence regarding occupations where vacancy rates are high, linked to scarcities or critical skills. The following will be considered in this regard:

- Skills requirements listed in departmental HR plans
- Vacancies as reported through PERSAL
- Establishing of a pool of candidates through a central provincial panel to assist with meeting prescribed targets related to employment of people with disabilities
- Service delivery and or Legislative requirements
- Improving the branding of the employer

5.5 Intervention 5: Develop Guidelines on improving the practice of career management

A guide on the practice of career management in the Public Service will be developed to provide departments with practical guidance on the implementation of career management and also sensitize employees, supervisors and managers on their roles and responsibilities pertaining to career management. This will assist departments to plan better around skills needs and to also have a better understanding of what skills are available and how it could be utilized better. This will also assist in improving the quality of internal appointments to higher posts and reducing the time to fill vacancies

Successful career management requires-

- (a) a partnership between employees and managers within the context of the organization; and
- (b) that career management programmes should be supported by other HR practices, e.g, recruitment planning, training and development, performance management,

5.6 Intervention 6: Partnering with PALAMA to provide training on recruitment

A need for training on a number of HRM policy areas has been identified. PALAMA will develop training material and introduce training courses in to improve the capacity of both HR practitioners and line managers with regard to the human resource management function. The following focus areas will be prioritised:

- (a) Orientation on HRM strategic frameworks
- (b) Recruitment and selection
- (c) Vetting of staff before appointment
- (d) HR Planning

5.7 Intervention 7: Effecting additional regulatory amendments

In addition to the regulatory changes discussed in paragraph 5.1 above, additional amendments to the Public Service Regulations, 2001 may be required to support the implementation of this strategy. Regulatory changes will be introduced as may be necessary.

6. Monitoring and evaluating

Monitoring of vacancies and assessment of progress in filling vacancies forms and integral part of process described in paragraph 5.2 above pertaining to establishing a baseline on vacancies. The managerial reports referred to will provide HoDs with the necessary information and also provide a common basis against which departments can report on challenges and actions to be taken to address it. DPSA will use the 6 monthly reports to determine progress made by departments and also to determine what additional actions are required. Provincial information will be shared with Offices of the Premiers who will be leading the implementation of this strategy at a provincial level.

The DPSA will in partnership with the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation monitor the changes in the vacancy rate and the average time to fill vacancies as per the 6 monthly reports referred to in paragraph 7 below. The impact of the strategy will be determined against the objectives in paragraph 4 above during 2014.

7. Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders in respect of the 7 interventions referred to above are as follows:

Institution	Activity	Target date	Comments
DPSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop first draft Strategy • Consult • Sector departments develop and obtain approval for own action plans to implement strategy • Refine strategy and submit to MPSA for approval 	<p>March 2011</p> <p>First and second quarters 2011</p> <p>Second and third quarters 2011</p> <p>Third quarter 2011</p>	
DPSA	<p>Issue departmental management reports to departments and to the relevant OTP on the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time taken to fill vacant posts • Vacancy rates <p>Consult with Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation on Monitoring of vacancy rate</p>	<p>First quarter of 2011 thereafter 6 monthly</p> <p>Second quarter</p>	
Departments	National departments report to DPSA on trends and interventions to address existing gaps	July 2011 and thereafter 6 monthly	

Institution	Activity	Target date	Comments
Offices of Premiers	Offices of Premiers report to DPSA on provincial trends pertaining to vacancies and interventions to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shorten the time taken to fill vacant posts; and • reduce vacancy rates 	July 2011 and thereafter 6 monthly	
Departments of Correctional Services, Basic Education, the South African Police Services and the South African National Defence Force	Report on trends pertaining vacancies and interventions to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • shorten the time taken to fill vacant posts; and • reduce vacancy rates 	July 2011 and thereafter 6 monthly	Employment in these sectors is mainly in accordance with sector specific legislation.
DPSA and Offices of Premiers	Monitor improvements in vacancy rates and timeframes to fill vacant posts.	Linked to 6 monthly reports	
PALAMA	Provide training in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation on HRM strategic frameworks • Recruitment and selection • HR Planning • Vetting of staff before appointment 	2011/2012 2011/2012 2011/2012 2013/2014	
DPSA	Identify possible occupations for targeted recruitment	Second quarter 2011	
DPSA	Develop targeted recruitment interventions for identified categories	Third quarter 2011	

Institution	Activity	Target date	Comments
DPSA	Circulate draft guide on career management to departments for comment	First quarter 2011	
	Revise and issue guide	Fourth quarter	
DPSA	Prescribe categories where targeted recruitment can be applied and effect other Regulatory changes that may be required	Fourth quarter 2011	

8. Managing the financial implications and resources needed by departments.

Departments will have to fund the costs associated with implementing this strategy from their own budgets. Funding for line departments will mostly relate to costs associated with the correction of information on PERSAL and to a lesser extend to the recruitment process. The DPSA will fund its own costs in relation to travelling and assistance costs incurred during visits to departments and provinces. However, departments may be requested to assist in this regard where specific support is requested by a department.