



## District technical support teams

Yesterday some 81 engineers and town planners pledged to make a difference in the 55 municipalities to which they are being deployed. Through the Municipal Infrastructure Support Agent (MISA), these professionals will try and attend to the service delivery crisis of money being returned due to a lack of capacity to expend grants (amounting to an estimated R3.4bn over the past five years). This takes place as the most far-reaching Section 154 intervention to support local government since democracy.

### Engineers to the rescue

With only 21% of municipal technical divisions led by engineers, the gap in technical capacity is a clear deficiency in local government to which district technical support teams are intended to respond. The teams are comprised of:

- 36 civil engineers,
- 14 electrical engineers,
- 16 town and regional planners, and
- 7 candidate civil engineers (experienced engineers in the process of registration)

They will provide support until April 2021 ([twitter.com](https://twitter.com)) and work by these professionals is already underway.

The intervention takes place in the wake of Cooperative Governance Minister, Zweli Mkhize's visits to a number of provinces (the Eastern Cape, North West, Limpopo, Free State and later this month, Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga), and in consultation with National Treasury, to address the complex interplay of service delivery, governance, and financial challenges afflicting local government ([www.facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com), [www.businesslive.co.za](https://www.businesslive.co.za), [municipaliq.co.za](https://municipaliq.co.za)).

The plan is to build capacity, rather than just implementing - perhaps a shortcoming of previous interventions that were of a more *ad hoc* nature, and speaks to Mkhize's systematic plan for addressing local dysfunction. MISA has also appointed 62 young graduates in civil engineering, electrical engineering, town and regional planning, project and construction management as well as solid waste management fields, with an

ongoing recruitment drive - an important measure to entrench capacity further in targeted municipalities ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com)).

Taking the Cogta Thuma Mina Pledge, it can only be hoped that these professionals, with political support and multi-disciplinary engagement, will be able to attend to the ever worsening malaises of sewerage overflows and crumbling roads with which local government is increasingly associated.

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