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How can we co-create opportunities through strategic public and private sector collaboration?

Answering this question was the intention behind our inaugural NBI C-Suite Dialogue, held in February 2022 together with our member company, Sanlam. The C-Suite Dialogues are a series of high-level conversations where executives can offer advice and gain key insights on a range of important topics, through sharing best practice with their peers.

This specific dialogue focused on:

- Unpacking the concept of servant leadership;
- Defining a democratic and functional society and the impact on our economy of achieving these outcomes;
- The interplay between social cohesion (including service delivery) and business; and
- Highlighting opportunities for collaboration and co-creation between the public and private sectors – “How do we get our hands dirty”.

Ruth Troskie, Head of the NBI’s Technical Assistance, Mentorship and Development (TAMDEV) Programme, facilitated the discussion with:

- Avril Williamson (Director General, Department of Cooperative Governance);
- Dorah Marema (Portfolio Head for Municipal Sustainability, SALGA);
- Joanne Yawitch (Chief Executive Officer, NBI);
- Mzila Mthenjane (Executive Head: Stakeholder Affairs, Exxaro), and
- Mkuseli Mbomvu (Executive Head: Corporate Affairs and External relations, Sanlam).

The focus of the conversation was highlighted in the welcome by Karl Socikwa (Group Executive: Market Development & Sustainability at Sanlam): "At the core of service delivery is the proximity of Local Government to the people. Coupled with this proximity is the reality that the heart of proper functionality at local government level is good governance."

The discussion highlighted a pleasing commitment from both business and government to work together in solving some of South Africa's most pressing problems. The Director General (DG) of the Department of Co-operative Governance, Avril Williamson, spoke on the formal relationship established between her Department and the NBI, through NBI's TAMDEV programme. "This relationship is premised on a shared common commitment to the promotion and building of municipal capacity, in identified municipalities across South Africa," explained NBI CEO, Joanne Yawitch. Ruth Troskie and DG Williamson both emphasised how the objective of this partnership is the provision of support to strengthen the Municipal Financial, Infrastructure and Human Resource Development systems and the overall capacity of municipalities, including technical, leadership, professional development and the transfer of key skills.

The importance of an action orientated approach to collaborative initiatives was highlighted by Exxaro's Mzila Mthenjane, stating: "Understanding how Business and Government can work together to serve is important, as service is a key means to progress. Talking is important but action following these conversations is vital." Sanlam's Mkuseli Mbomvu agreed with Mzila, emphasising that with regards to business involvement in municipal planning: "Sanlam is often involved in planning and support processes (such as via the 'P4RR') when it comes to local disaster management."

A key outcome of this dynamic discussion was not only the importance of collaboration and co-creation, but the need for more companies to join hands with public institutions such as COGTA and SALGA (South African Local Government Association). This point was emphasised by Dorah Marema (SALGA) who said we need more companies to come onboard when it comes to things like Disaster Management Planning and highlighted this as a key mechanism to ensure the needs of vulnerable communities are met by their municipalities, working together with local businesses, in an effective and efficient manner.

If you would like more information on our TAMDEV work, the C-Suite Dialogues, or if you would like to co-host a future dialogue, please contact: Ruth Troskie (Head: TAMDEV): RuthT@nbi.org.za or Gillian Hutchings (Head: Membership & Communications): GillianH@nbi.org.za

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NBI Website: www.nbi.org.za

Email: info@nbi.org.za

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