

State owned entities pledge support for community and small commercial media

Issued by [Media Development and Diversity Agency](#)

25 Feb 2014

The State Owned Entities Communicators Association (SOECA) and the State Owned Enterprises Procurement Forum (SOEPF) have both pledged their support for community and small commercial media as defined by the MDDA Act, the two bodies agreed at a meeting held recently in Pretoria.

"Community media is a very strategic platform for state owned entities. Most of our SOEs and their programmes are fairly known by consumers of mainstream media but the same cannot be said about the consumers of community media. We have a responsibility as SOE communicators not to cut off community media audiences, wittingly or unwittingly, from the flow of information about SOEs," said SOECA President Congress Mahlangu.

The support SOECA is committing is at two levels: access to information on SOEs and an increased ad spend. "We would like to move to a situation where SOEs commit to spend 30 percent plus of their ad spend with community and small commercial media. This is also important if we are to see community and small commercial media surviving and thriving in our quest to promote media diversity," he said.

SOEPF's Chief Operating Officer Kamogelo Mampane concurred with Mahlangu particularly on the issue of increasing ad spend with community and small commercial media. "It is common knowledge that SOEs have tremendous clout in the procurement of services in South Africa and that would certainly include advertising. To the extent that a body like ours and our members can influence the direction of ad spend in order to support community and small commercial media, skills development and the growth of small, medium and micro enterprises in the media and communication space, we are fully behind this initiative."

Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Communications has called for a minimum of 30% government advertising to be allocated to community and small commercial media. In 2011 the Government Communication and Information System (GCIS) committed to work towards this goal. Both SOECA and SOEPF say their decision to support community and small commercial media is a response to the call made by Parliament and is in line with the commitment GCIS made.

Mampane said there needs to be alignment on this matter between what the legislators are calling for, what the executive arm through GCIS has committed to and what state owned entities are doing.

"SOECA has had preliminary engagements with the MDDA on this issue and we shall be reaching out to the sector and meeting organisations like the Association of Independent Publishers and the National Community Radio Forum to see how we can jointly advance the cause of this very important media sector," Mahlangu concluded.

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