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## Support Services

As presently constituted, Support Services comprises nine directorates, overseen by the Chief Operations Officer/Chief Financial Officer (COO/CFO), comprising Finance; Supply Chain Management; Legal Services; Risk and Compliance; Human Resources; Information Services; Information Technology; Operations and the HSRC Press.

Together with staff in the Office of the CEO and administrative staff in the research units, support staff makes up a little less than 40% of total staffing – in line with best practice in comparable research institutions internationally. Spending on Support Services amounts to a little more than 25% of the HSRC's operational budget. This is in line with the past three years and with the organisation's commitment to effective and cost-efficient service provision.

Highlights of the activities of the respective Support Services units in 2006/07 are as follows.

### Finance

Finance played a key role in planning and executing changes in the HSRC's financial and business strategy over the past year, helping to ensure financial stability and continued organisational growth.

These developments assisted in guiding the HSRC to record earnings from external sources and the achievement of a significant surplus. They also helped relieve earnings-related stress on research staff and contributed towards the high level of delivery against the HSRC's commitments in terms of its Shareholder's Compact.

### Supply Chain Management

The programme to implement supply chain management (SCM) in compliance with the Public Finance Management

Act (PFMA) had reached an advanced stage by the end of 2006/07. Managers for acquisitions and logistics were appointed, along with a number of more junior appointments, some filled by temporary staff. Full compliance has been achieved in respect of the processing of tenders. An increasing percentage of lower value acquisitions is passing through the unit, taking advantage of its database of suppliers who have been rated, *inter alia*, in terms of black economic empowerment (BEE) criteria.

A full complement of SCM policies has been approved, many accompanied by relevant procedures. A comprehensive procedures manual, including that applying specifically to research procurement, is to be compiled during 2007/08. Centralised online travel booking facilities are now saving the HSRC and its clients hundreds of thousands of rands annually.

### Legal Services

The demand for the services of this unit has increased to the extent that it has been necessary to appoint a second practitioner.

The unit has evolved from being a contracts support office into a fully-fledged provider of legal services in partnership with specialist external service providers, identified through an open tender process, for which Legal Services acts as conduit and internal expert counterpart.

### Risk and Compliance

Following the resignation of the incumbent Risk and Compliance Officer in June 2006, the activities of the directorate were pursued by the COO/CFO. In addition to ensuring that all of the key risks identified for 2006/07 – IT, cash flow, corporate image, staff retention, supply chain management and fraud/theft – were addressed and

managed, a Fraud Prevention Policy and strategy were developed, incorporating a 'hotline' – which will become operational in 2007/08 – for reporting suspected malpractices. A further innovation was the drawing up of a risk register by a team of experienced staff. This will be updated regularly and will generate an ongoing agenda for risk management.

A new director, Ms Simi Gugwini, has been appointed and is expected to assume office on 1 September 2007.

#### Human Resources (HR)

Human Resources (HR) saw the replacement of its former director, Ms Vicky Tlhabanelo, by Mr Josias Chabani on 1 September 2006. HR identified staff retention as one of the key risks for the HSRC in 2006/07 and benchmarked HSRC salaries for all staff against its major competitor groups. This formed the basis for substantial salary increases for most staff from April 2007.

To incorporate the HSRC's commitments in terms of its Shareholder's Compact into annual performance appraisals and goal-setting for staff, a number of adaptations were made to the appraisal process and a complete overhaul of approach to goal-setting was undertaken in consultation with members of staff and the PSA.

#### Information Services (IS)

Formerly closed to outside users, the library is now being progressively opened and new relationships are being built to give access, in the first instance, to users in Parliament and government departments. With the purchase and application of e-library software, electronic access to a range of more than 45 000 journals and other publications is now available to all staff and to the increasing numbers of external users. A third information consultant has been employed to help cope with the growing demand.

In a further initiative to realise the vision of a knowledge hub, IS has begun to lay the foundations for data curation.

Upgrading of the 9th Floor, Pretoria



## Facts 'n Figures

**Spending on Support Services amounts to a little more than 25% of the HSRC's operational budget**

Relationships have been developed with offshore research institutions and communities where data curation is already well established, and with South African counterparts, and the physical capacity is to be installed during 2007/08 as part of IT's remediation programme.

#### Information Technology (IT)

The level of service delivery by the external service provider, Choice Technologies, improved steadily and the service level agreement was revised to respond to additional requests from staff. Problems with e-mail and spam were progressively dealt with, a programme to introduce best governance practices was commenced and an IT policy framework was formulated and is now

Finance played a **key role** in planning and executing changes in the HSRC's financial and business strategy ... helping to ensure financial **stability** by improving a steady cash flow and continued organisational **growth**

awaiting approval. Efforts to secure finance for far-reaching infrastructure remediation finally bore fruit, with the allocation of ring-fenced portions of the Parliamentary grants for 2007/08 and 2008/09 for buildings and IT infrastructure. Approximately R6 million of the grant for 2007/08 has been set aside for IT. In addition, permission to enter into financial leases was obtained from National Treasury. Together these will result in the acquisition in 2007/08 of much-needed IT backbone and desktop equipment.

### Operations

The main thrust of the activities of Operations has been to secure, maintain and upgrade space for the steadily expanding number of staff – as many as 700 at any one time. This included conducting a thorough audit of the HSRC building in Pretoria to assess its needs for maintenance and upgrade and the preparation of an application to National Treasury for the funds required.

HR Director, Josias Chabani and Mr Gerhard van der Merwe, PSA, shake hands on the signing of the annual salary negotiations agreement with the negotiations team at the back

Of the R15 million awarded for 2007/08, roughly R8 million was allocated by the Council for expenditure on buildings and facilities, including the upgrade of electrical and security systems, videoconference equipment improvements and compliance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act. Provision was also made for the construction of a Council chamber and for renovations to the CEO's suite in the Cape Town office.

### HSRC Press

HSRC Press continues to be the leading open access publisher in South Africa, ensuring free access to all of its outputs. An increasing number of university courses benefited from this policy. The press has further improved its impact by contributing to resource-sharing initiatives of international institutions, such as the United Nations and World Health Organisation.

One of the key indicators of the high regard enjoyed by the Press in the academic community is the number of external submissions received, which doubled for the year under review. As with internal books, all were subjected to stringent peer review under the guidance of an independent editorial board. Sales improved by more than 20%, while free downloads increased by over 50% for the year.

The Press won a prestigious publishing award from the International Political Science Association and was nominated for three other awards during the year.

