

■ CHANGE

Slow built environment transformation

Only 26 percent of all the organisation's registered professionals were from previously disadvantaged groups

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TRANSFORMATION in the built environment has been slow, compared to sectors such as financial, according to the Council for the Built Environment (CBE).

Priscilla Mdlalose, the chief executive of the CBE, said on Wednesday that only 26 percent of all registered built environment professionals were from previously disadvantaged groups.

However, she said candidacy registrations were used as an early predictor of transformation and about 71 percent of all registered built environment professional candidates were from the previously disadvantaged groups.

Mdlalose said whites represented 74 percent of all registered professionals, Africans 17 percent and women

0.3 percent.

Addressing the CBE Transformation Indaba in Pretoria last week, she said that this translated into one in 5 000 Africans being a registered professional in the built environment, one in 3 300 coloureds, one in 526 Indians and one in 150 whites.

Mdlalose said whites represented about 29 percent of all candidates registered persons, with African candidates alone accounting for 58 percent of all registered persons and woman candidates about 25 percent.

She said transformation efforts in the built environment were hampered by poor skills development programmes, inadequate funding, market factors, capacity constraints, fraud and corruption and data inconsistency, and inaccuracy.

Mdlalose added that the built envi-

ronment had been one of the slowest sectors to adopt new technologies, resulting in a poor project delivery performance.

She said this was characterised by cost overruns, schedule overruns, unacceptable quality levels and a poor health and safety performance.

Mdlalose said the CBE envisioned a three-pronged strategy to address transformation, which was focused on addressing historical imbalances, which was a national imperative; preparing the built environment for the uncertain future created by the fourth industrial revolution; and making the built environment count again by addressing the failure to live up to people's expectations on delivery.

She said the built environment professions and skills were the key in realising the planned infrastructure

drive, adding that the economic and social benefits of a transformed built environment included an improvement in the quantity and quality of built environment professionals, safeguarding previously disadvantaged individuals and meeting future industry challenges.

But Mdlalose said this was dependent on several critical success factors.

These included buy-in from public and private sector stakeholders, the establishment of an oversight entity, the establishment and maintenance of a fund to sustain transformation initiatives, the positive participation of stakeholders in the education and training value chain, and the willingness of the private sector to fund key programmes and its commitment to quality workplace training.

With regard to the creation of a

fund to sustain and maintain transformation initiatives, Mdlalose said the CBE had already requested and been granted permission by the National Treasury to establish such a fund.

She said the CBE had opened a separate account for this purpose but would be working with the Feenix Trust, because it had an established infrastructure and was working together with Standard Bank.

Mdlalose said the CBE was looking to all stakeholders to contribute to this fund, including their own employees, from amounts "from R10 up to millions".

Mdlalose stressed that the CBE was not only focusing on money, but was also looking at human resource contributions to ensure that the skills pipeline was well supported and that support was sustainable.