

CIGFARO — Free State Province

From Risk Trainee - Chief Risk Officer to Senior Manager: ERM

A Journey of Purpose

Esethu Nkosi | MComm (Leadership Studies) | ERM Practitioner

Finance • Risk • Audit • Performance Management



What We'll Cover Today



Where I Started

Butterworth to Bloemfontein — the beginning



The Journey

15+ years, 6 organisations, every challenge



Key Milestones

Qualifications, promotions & breakthrough moments



Lessons Learned

What I wish someone had told me



Your Turn

How to build your own path in governance

Meet Esethu Nkosi

Born

Butterworth, Eastern Cape

Current Role

Senior Manager ERM
eThekweni Municipality

Also serving as

Risk Management Chairperson
Nkandla Local Municipality

Highest Qualification

MComm — Leadership Studies (UKZN)

Professional Body

Associate Member — IRMSA

Years in ERM

15+ Years across local &
provincial government

The Journey: 15+ Years in Governance

2009–2010

Risk Management Officer

Xhariep District Municipality

2011–2014

Assistant Manager: Risk Management

Dept of Health – Free State

2014–2016

Chief Risk Officer

Gert Sibande District Municipality

2016–2021

Manager: Risk & Advisory Services (Senior ERM Advisor)

eThekwini Municipality

2021–2024

Senior Risk Officer: Risk Management & Compliance

Newcastle Local Municipality

2025–Now

Senior Manager ERM + CRO Chairperson

eThekwini Municipality + Nkandla LM

Education: Building the Foundation

NQF 4 → NQF 9 | Every step was intentional

2021 Master of Commerce — Leadership Studies (NQF 9) • University of KwaZulu-Natal

2018 Postgraduate Diploma: Business Management (NQF 8) • University of KwaZulu-Natal

2014 Certificate: Management Development Programme • University of Free State

2012 B-Tech: Internal Auditing (NQF 7) • Central University of Technology

2008 National Diploma: Internal Auditing (NQF 6) • Nelson Mandela University

2003 National Senior Certificate (NQF 4) • Msobomvu High School

The CRO Chapter: Leading at District Level & Progressing to a Metro



Gert Sibande DM

April 2014 – April 2016

Age: ~27 years old

To

eThekweni Municipality

January 2025 – Current

Age: ~39 years old

What shaped me as the ERM Practitioner

- *Built a strong academic foundation: Qualifications – continuous development.*
- *Gained exposure to strategic, operational, financial, compliance and governance risks across multiple spheres of government.*
- *Advising Executive Management, reporting & presenting at Audit Committees, Risk Committees and other Council governance structures on critical risk matters.*
- *Supporting and influencing organisational decision-making through risk-based insights and strategic advice.*
- *Ongoing embedding of risk management to instil positive risk culture, combined assurance and compliance monitoring.*

What Does a CRO Actually Do?

Beyond the job title — the real work of enterprise risk management



Identify & Assess

Strategic, operational, IT, finance, reputational, political, environmental & social risks



Govern & Advise

Report to Audit & Risk Committees, MANCO, Council — influence decisions at the highest level



Embed Culture

Drive risk awareness across all departments — every employee is a risk owner



Lead a Team

Supervise ERM practitioners, manage KPIs, mentor the next generation of risk professionals



Continuously Improve

Update frameworks, leverage tech (CURA), align to legislation, National Treasury guidelines & best practice



Protect the Public

In government, risk management ultimately protects service delivery to citizens

Real Talk: The Challenges

Nobody puts these in the job ad...

⚡ **Being young & female in a male-dominated governance space**

✓ *Let competence speak louder than perception. Earn the room.*

⚡ **Moving between provinces & municipalities**

✓ *Every context is different — adaptability became a superpower.*

⚡ **Political dynamics & resistance to risk culture**

✓ *Build relationships, translate risk into language leaders understand.*

⚡ **Studying part-time while working full-time**

✓ *Discipline, sacrifice, a supportive network — and believing the degree mattered.*

⚡ **Managing teams older than you**

✓ *Lead with empathy, clarity of purpose and technical credibility.*

Challenges Facing Youth

Collaborations required to change the status quo...

⚡ High youth unemployment

- *Limited practical work exposure and career entry opportunities.*

⚡ Skills gap

- Gap between academic qualification & organisational competency requirements

⚡ Evolving technology and digital transformation

- The use of AI – its pros and cons.

⚡ Career progression moving slowly

- Limited positions and more competition.

⚡ Ethics and integrity always tested

- Ongoing fraud, theft and corruption adversely impacting service delivery.

“

*Risk management is not about being afraid of the future.
It is about being prepared for it —
and making sure others are too.*”

— Esethu Nkosi

This is what kept me going through every challenge



10 Lessons I Learned the Hard Way

1 Your qualification opens the door — your attitude keeps you in the room.

2 Understand the legislation: MFMA, PFMA, Treasury Regulations, etc., are not optional reading.

3 Find a mentor early. Ask boldly. Most senior professionals want to help.

4 Governance is about trust. Guard your integrity like your career depends on it — it does.

5 Master your ERM frameworks: ISO 31000, COSO — know them better than your job description.

6 Speak the language of leadership. Risk must connect to strategy and service delivery.

7 Never stop studying. The NQF ladder exists for a reason — climb it intentionally.

8 Build your network through IRMSA, CIGFARO, AGSA workshops — relationships are assets.

9 Be willing to move. Provincial government. Municipalities. Different contexts = rich experience.

10 Resilience is a skill. You will fail, be overlooked, feel stuck. Keep moving anyway.

Building YOUR Career in Governance

A practical path for Finance, Risk, Audit & Performance Management professionals







NOW	1–3 YRS	5–10 YRS	BEYOND
<p>Build the Base</p> <p>Complete your NQF 6/7 qualification</p> <p>Join IRMSA / SAICA / SAIGA as a student member</p> <p>Volunteer for risk & audit projects at your municipality</p> <p>Read: MFMA, National Treasury ERM Framework</p>	<p>Earn Your Stripes</p> <p>Aim for your first supervisory role</p> <p>Pursue NQF 8 (Postgrad Diploma / Honours)</p> <p>Attend CIGFARO & AGSA conferences</p> <p>Build your LinkedIn profile — your public CV</p>	<p>Lead with Authority</p> <p>Target a Manager / Senior Manager post</p> <p>Enrol in NQF 9 (Master's degree) — part-time is fine</p> <p>Serve on a committee, working group or task team</p> <p>Mentor someone junior to you</p>	<p>The C-Suite Awaits</p> <p>CRO / Director / HOD positions open up</p> <p>Contribute to thought leadership — write, speak, present</p> <p>Give back: teach, mentor, serve on professional bodies</p> <p>Your journey becomes someone else's roadmap</p>

Why Professional Bodies Matter

Professional Bodies & Communities

- ▶ CIGFARO — Governance, Finance, Audit & Risk
- ▶ IRMSA — Institute of Risk Management SA
- ▶ SAICA — SA Institute of Chartered Accountants
- ▶ SAIGA — SA Institute of Govt Auditors
- ▶ IIA SA — Institute of Internal Auditors
- ▶ National Treasury — MFMA Training Programmes

What Membership Gives You

-  A network of peers and senior professionals across government
-  CPD (Continuing Professional Development) accreditation
-  Access to latest research, frameworks and best practice
-  Credibility and recognition by employers and oversight bodies
-  Platforms to present your work and build a public profile
-  Awards & recognition programmes for young professionals



The Next CRO in This Room Is You.

*Your background, your province, your gender — none of it disqualifies you.
Your commitment to learning and serving the public does the rest.*

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Questions & Discussion

Build your own brand

Create networks for yourself, they are key.

Respect for others will open doors for you