

SUMMARY NOTES:

SESSION 6: BREAKAWAY SESSION ON 'MUNICIPAL IDP CHALLENGES'

Note: These notes are in response to the undertaking given at the closure of the Conference that "the result of this breakaway session must be analysed and circulated to attendees for reference and application" and "The Department of Local Government will do the editing in ensuring that the major issues are captured and ultimately fed into a targeted IDP Support Strategy"

The **purpose** of the Breakaway Session was to allow Conference attendees to discuss 3 main challenges:

1. Participation/Stakeholder engagement /inter-governmental co-operation
(Group Facilitator: Ismail Davids)
2. Main IDP Management challenges hampering implementation
(Group Facilitator: Leon Fourie)
3. 'IDP' related skills needs
(Group Facilitator: Claude Schroeder)

Task: Each of the 3 groups was to identify the 5 to 7 main or critical aspects on each theme and to present solutions to these issues to the plenary.

THE RESULTS:

Group 1: Participation; Stakeholder engagement and inter-governmental co-operation

1. Regarding **public participation**:

It is clear that the understanding and knowledge of IDP has not reached all stakeholders. This includes business, consultants in the field, women and farm workers.

Suggested solution:

- Planning processes in each municipality must target the involvement of these groups. The annual IDP review process must specifically provide for times and places to ensure that this occurs – either through bilaterals, special council events, targeted training and IDP process events.
- The establishment of a municipal wide advisory forum with representivity from ward committees was a workable vehicle for public participation (as proven in two municipalities). Such a forum is not limited to IDP issues but also discusses budget and service strategies within the municipality.

2. Regarding **intergovernmental co-operation**:

The development of a clear **mechanism(s)** to strengthen strategic relations and planning between the spheres is critical. It should allow National, Provincial and Municipal government to openly discuss and align their programmes, projects and budgets.

Suggested solution:

- Establish formal engagement forums with senior representivity which are able to take binding decision or agreements on delivery
- The province should take the lead in this process
- The budget cycles of the different spheres should be streamlined to either work to the same budget cycle or allow very clear inputs directly into each other budget processes each year.
- One should be creative in implementing the mandates of sector departments to target common outcomes for the IDP of your area.

3. Regarding **stakeholder engagement**:

The most pressing issue is limited resources. Special efforts should thus be made to harness external resources.

Suggested solution:

- Establish special forums – be it “donor” forums – to engage external holders of resources.
- Target partnerships with local business and the private sector as part and parcel of the IDP process
- Use ward committees to assist if necessary
- Establish special district level “sectoral forums” to target the critical or priority economic or social sectors in your area. Use these forums to mobilise and combine the resources of the municipality and sectoral roleplayers through mutually agreed to projects.

Group 2: Main IDP Management challenges hampering implementation

The group identified various aspects of IDP management that are hampering implementation to a varying degree in each municipality. A shortened list of key issues were presented that focused on internal management issues. It was suggested that these issues needed to be dealt with in a specific way in the presentation to the Conference Plenary:

1. **High level buy-in to IDP:** as reflected in involvement of municipal councillors in IDP processes. The operation of the council must enable speedy decision-making as it directly impacts on the implementation management of the IDP (i.e. a clear understanding of the appropriate strategic decisions that must be taken by the council and a clear set of delegations to officials and project managers to allow speedy delivery to citizens).
2. **Dedicated IDP personnel at the right level:** The importance of locating the IDP function (or manager) at a high strategic level within the organisation was emphasised - i.e. able to work directly to the municipal manager and reporting to council. The IDP requires specific skills which directly impacts on the ability to manage the drafting, review and monitoring the implementation of the IDP.

3. **Integrated Management Systems:** The management of IDP deals with the strategic priorities, programmes, project information, key service roll out and regular performance reporting. These issues must be reflected in an integrated management system and consistently dealt with at a high level within the organisation. The IT support and software within the organisation must be integrated to allow key management information to be easily accessible to all senior staff members responsible for service delivery. The key information and management activities around priority-setting and targeting, project management, budget allocation and cash flow and performance reporting must not be allowed to run separately, but be accessed on one system.
4. **Re-engineering internal processes and work flow:** This issue relates to how the way the municipality is run internally. Line departments should not be allowed to operate in isolation without being clearly targeting IDP priorities through each service and programme. The allocation of resources is directly motivated by its contribution to the IDP. Regular reporting on implementation is possible to management and council to enable shifting of resources within short timeframes (improving performance management). Using smaller teams, clear delegation of execution authority and easily accessible information flow (without multiple meetings) significantly improved IDP implementation. In some municipalities, the business processes were revisited to identify and reduce those activities not making a contribution to the key IDP deliverables and to think of new ways to do the job quicker and less costly.
5. **Having a shared vision within organisation:** A key realisation was that the ease of managing IDP implementation was directly related to how it is communicated, and committed to, within the organisation. The paradigm shift to IDP requires the shared vision (or developmental approach) to be shared by each staff member (i.e. to understand the bigger picture, his/her contribution and ownership of the IDP). It became clear that existing performance management systems did not respect this aspect and was thus seen as a penalising instrument instead of “a tool to ensure effective use of resources to deliver on our shared vision”.
6. **Financial constraints:** It became clear that the management and implementation of the IDP could be related to financial constraints. This is related to having the finances to enable **dedicated personnel** to manage the drafting and review process, to ensure that projects and services are resourced and the performance on the IDP is regularly monitored.

Group 3: ‘IDP’ related skills needs

The following core IDP related skills were identified:

1. Leadership / people skills / communication
2. Strategic planning
3. Project Management
4. Financial Management
5. Resource mobilisation and management
6. Analytical ability (e.g. research and understanding of local poverty, socio-economic analysis of needs)
7. Facilitation/negotiation/listening skills
8. Presentation skills

9. Change or Diversity management
10. Strategic management of integrated processes and programmes

Suggested solutions:

A variety of tools were identified which can be used in the most appropriate way to each skills required. These range from:

- Formal training sessions to target groups
- Mentoring and visits between municipalities (including study tours)
- Peer learning between people in similar positions
- Establishing a learning network on IDP
- Self development (reading, learning opportunities)

Special mention was made to:

- (a) set up an IDP learning network which enables municipalities in the province to 'benchmark' themselves against performance in IDP,
- (b) enable the development of a variety of IDP tools and to share them (be it IT tools to capture strategic information on projects and their performance or the exchange of specific methodologies)