

Business must band together to support infrastructure development and better service delivery

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Municipalities are the most basic units of government. Tasked with providing basic services and fostering development in the regions they control, they have the challenging role of mobilising their economic resources and using them to improve the lives of all citizens by providing basic services necessary for good health, well-being and human dignity. Their role is so vital, in fact, that South Africa municipalities are constitutionally tasked with providing sustainable and effective services to the public. But you only need to look at the myriad of basic service delivery protests that plague our country year in and year out to see that they're failing dismally to meet this mandate.

Why is this the reality? The reason is multi-faceted.

Skill shortages are among the biggest stopping block standing in government's way of delivering quality services to our nation

One thing that comes up time and time again is that the lack of finances (whether due to poor tax revenue, corruption, misappropriation or other) and the lack of capacity to utilise those finances correctly. Another problem that regularly comes to the surface is the fact that the public sector is not seen as an attractive sector to work in. To be effective and efficient, municipalities require a skilled workforce, but they compete with other spheres of government and the private sector to attract and retain skilled personnel. Skilled human resources contribute to effective service delivery.

Take the financial offices of a municipality for example and you'll quickly see how detrimental these two issues are. As is made evident by the annual Municipal Audit Outcomes published by the Auditor-General of South Africa, the lack of adequately skilled financial officers who hold positions in municipalities has created a stark difference between approved and implemented budget spend. This shortage of skills directly reflects on government's ability to achieve development objectives, including delivering services to the public.

Yet here is the good news: It *is* possible for a municipality to improve and expand the delivery of services! By improving a number of skills (such as improved financial planning so as to best use available funds) municipalities can dramatically improving in their ability to deliver services effectively and efficiently from the inside.

But how does one do this?

TAMDEV (Technical Assistance, Mentorship and Development) is a Jobs Summit Business intervention whereby experienced retired and/or semi-retired individuals from the private sector come together to support Government in the improvement of service delivery through the offering of technical assistance and mentorship. Working collaboratively with:

- Association Savings and Investment South Africa (ASISA),
- Business Unity South Africa (BUSA),
- Business Leadership South Africa (BLSA),
- the South African Institute of Chartered Accountants (SAICA),
- Business Unity South Africa (BUSA),
- The National Business Initiative (NBI)
- TAMDEV brings together government and business to identify and implement priority infrastructure projects within local municipalities by training highly skilled retirees to support and mentor permanently employed civil servants, through a focused skills transfer process.

So how does this work in practice?

Proving the concept of skills partnership during the Covid-19 pandemic

As an initiative, TAMDEV partners with municipalities to support water, energy, revenue management and local economic development projects and Covid-19, gave TAMDEV a chance to really prove that partnerships and skills transfer can make a significant difference to the lives of SA citizens.

At the onset of the pandemic, the Department of Water and Sanitation identified 2000 communities in the Ekurhuleni Municipality without water services to facilitate hand-washing to reduce their risk of infection. Aligning with Department and partnering closely with local municipalities and communities, TAMDEV set about designing, manufacturing and installing foot-operated public hand washing facilities in prioritised informal settlements, hostels and social housing. Thanks to the joint efforts of municipal officials, engineers, scientists, water experts, project managers and the private sector, this programme was able to deliver an innovative solution that fast-tracked infrastructure development and potentially saved many of the lives of the people living in these communities.

Says Ruth Troskie, TAMDEV Unit Head about the project: “This project has demonstrated the value of public and private sector collaborating in finding solutions. We have been hard hit by Covid-19, but I firmly believe that, through TAMDEV, we have an opportunity to collectively restore trust, address our challenges, and rebuild our communities and our economy.”

Adds Chantyl Mulder, SAICA Executive Director: Nation Building who sits on the TAMDEV steering committee: “Enhanced cooperation is needed to ensure that sufficient means of implementation exist to provide countries the opportunity to achieve United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goal’s 2030 Agenda. As SDG17 outlines, it is only through a partnerships-based approach underpinned by collective actions, collaborative efforts and the effective mobilisation and use of domestic resources that we will truly be able to find practical solutions to the sustainability challenges stopping both our country and the world from moving forward. As SAICA, we are proud to be a part of the solutions the TAMDEV initiative is working towards.”

We all have a role to play

The TAMDEV model offers corporates and individual the opportunity to collectively address the skills deficit in municipalities by:

- Sharing resources
- Benefitting from collective partnership
- Providing technical retirees as resources for Technical Assistance and Mentorship

If you or your company would like to engage with TAMDEV on how you can be a part of the service delivery solution, contact TAMDEV at RuthT@nbi.org.za

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