

# **A Monitoring and Evaluation System Utilisation Model for support to South African Municipalities**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Section 154), stipulates that national and provincial government must support and strengthen the capacity of municipalities to operationalise their constitutional mandate. The primary mandate of the provincial Departments of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the national Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) is to promote sustainable development by providing support to local government. Such support should strengthen the financial, human, technical and administrative capacity of municipalities and enable them to achieve their developmental objectives. To facilitate such support, a Government-wide Monitoring & Evaluation System (GWM&ES) was established.*

*This article reports the results of empirical research conducted in a sample of 36 local municipalities to determine the extent to which COGTA and DCoG utilise the Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system in support of municipalities. Based on these results, a model is proposed for the improvement of M&E system utilisation by COGTA and DCoG, helping them to fulfil their support mandate more efficiently.*

**Key words:** monitoring and evaluation, Monitoring & Evaluation System, cooperative governance, intergovernmental relations, municipalities, Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

## **INTRODUCTION**

Within South Africa's system of cooperative governance and intergovernmental relations (IGR), Section 154 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 mandates national and provincial government to support the local sphere of government. For this and other purposes, a Government-wide Monitoring & Evaluation System (GWM&ES) was established to foster an integrated framework for monitoring and evaluation of policy programme implementation endeavours in all spheres of government. In addition, according to the Annual Report (COGTA, 2010:10), the primary mandate of the national Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG)

is to promote sustainable development by providing support to local government initiatives. The support should strengthen the financial, human, technical and administrative capacity of municipalities, enabling them to achieve their developmental objectives. However, the State of Local Government Assessment Report (COGTA 2009,5) points to the fact that despite significant gains, many municipalities are in deep distress. They continue to falter in delivering basic municipal services which include clean water, electricity and sanitation. The Consolidated General Report: Local Government Audit Outcomes (2010,96) also indicates that the weak monitoring and oversight processes of systems within the national DCoG and provincial Departments of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) lead to decline of audit opinion within the municipalities. The State of Local Government Assessments Report (2009,22) also reveals that the causal reasons for the distress in municipalities mainly relate to the following:

- inadequate accountability measures and support systems;
- weak intergovernmental monitoring and support; and
- weak application of intergovernmental checks and balances, that is, the oversight and review process administered by DCoG.

Considering the above state of affairs, the ineffective monitoring and inadequate intergovernmental support to municipalities make it problematic to achieve key developmental goals such as poverty alleviation, food security, job creation and infrastructure delivery.

The purpose of this article is to report on findings based on empirical research conducted in 36 sampled municipalities in South Africa to determine the extent of M&E system support to municipalities. Based on the data analyses a model is proposed for M&E system utilisation in support of municipalities by COGTA and DCoG. The M&E system utilisation model provides solutions on how to eradicate current support weaknesses and how to achieve maximum support to municipalities.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION: CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION**

Minnaar (2010,157) defines monitoring simply as “a continuous control process”, whilst Van der Waldt (2004,67) also notes that monitoring involves the constant tracking of performance to determine whether or not objectives are likely to be achieved. Nel (2005, 2:4.28, 5) confirms this view and adds that monitoring is also about the routine checking of information on progress so as to confirm that progress occurs against the defined direction. Prinsloo and Roos (2005,95) remark in a similar vein that monitoring is the process of ensuring that actual activities correspond to planned activities. Valadez and Bamberger (2000,12) offer a broader perspective of the term when arguing that monitoring entails a continuous internal management activity whose purpose is to ensure that government programmes achieve their defined objectives within a prescribed time-frame and budget.

As far as evaluation is concerned, Shafrits (1998,818) postulates that it determines the “value or effectiveness” of an activity for the purpose of decision-making. Van der Waldt (2004,67) elaborates on this by indicating that evaluation can be regarded as an in-depth process of investigation to determine whether stated objectives have been reached, as well as determining

the nature of the processes that were undertaken. Minnaar (2010,156) confirms this view by stating that evaluation implies the comparison of the actual impact of a project against agreed strategic plans. Fox, Schwella and Wissink (2004,126) add a further dimension when they explain evaluation as the systematic assessment of a government programme aimed at improving policy and bettering programme decisions. With reference to this, Valadez and Bamberger (2000,12) postulate that evaluation should be seen as an internal or external management activity meant to assess the –

- appropriateness of a programme’s design and implementation methods in achieving both specified objectives and more general development objectives;
- programme’s results, both intended and unintended; and
- factors affecting the level and distribution of the benefits produced.

Valadez and Bamberger (2000,14) continuous to observe that monitoring and evaluation should be considered complementary parts of an integrated system. Consequently, evaluation should take place either continuously or periodically, from the time the project is formulated through implementation and the operational phase. Also, information that has been monitored should be fed constantly into the national data bank. This information can be used to improve the selection and design of future projects. In the above context, reference in this article will be made to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) together as the “system”.

## **M&E SYSTEM UTILISATION: CURRENT STATUS IN SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES**

The Presidential Review Commission of the Reform and Transformation of the Public Service in South Africa (1998) revealed that the Public Service faces serious challenges in the area of monitoring and evaluation. Until 2005, policy programme monitoring and evaluation were not undertaken, managed and coordinated systematically in the South African Public Service (Cloete 2009, 2:293.311, 298). The following aspects are some of the considerations that motivated a Cabinet decision in 2005 to develop a comprehensive Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System (GWM&ES):

- a need for regular national government report-backs to the International UN Millennium Goals Initiative on the progress made;
- the undertaking by the Presidency to inform citizens regularly about progress being made with the Government’s National Programme of Action;
- donors that are increasingly requiring systematic monitoring and evaluation of projects and programmes that they fund, in order to protect their investments; and
- the institutionalising of national M&E systems which have proved to be international good governance practice (Cloete 2009, 2:293.311, 298).

The Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation System Policy Framework published by the Policy, Coordination and Advisory Services in the Presidency in 2007, stipulates that monitoring and evaluation processes can assist the public sector in evaluating its performance. Thereby such processes can help identify the factors which contribute to service delivery outcomes in this sector. The Framework further states that monitoring and evaluation help provide an evidence

base for decisions on the allocation of public resources and help identify how challenges should be addressed and successes replicated.

In support of the GWM&E system an extensive statutory and regulatory framework was established. This framework includes the following:

- The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996;
- Local Government: Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000;
- Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003;
- Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information, 2007;
- The Role of Premiers' Offices in Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation: A Good Practice Guide, 2008;
- The Green Paper: National Strategic Planning, 2009;
- Policy on Improving Government Performance: Our Approach, 2010; and
- South African Statistical Quality Assessment Framework (SASQAF), 2010.

In spite of this elaborate framework, Ijeoma (2010, 2:344.360, 351) contends that the GWM&ES in its current form displays clear deficiencies. This instrument is nothing more than an emerging monitoring and evaluation framework based on the collection of disparate documents published by different departments, each from the perspective of its own line function. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in Support of Cooperative Governance (COGTA 2010,5) indicates that it is all-important to understand the logic-model approach, which will assist in the achievement of the desired outcomes. The logic model or results-chain illustrates the logical sequence of specific inputs and activities that are needed to produce outputs, which eventually will contribute to the achievement of outcomes and a positive impact.

The performance data generated from the M&E system is used to coordinate support to municipalities, which enables them to perform their functions (COGTA 2010,13). This means that the performance information flowing from the M&E system should guide the provision of technical support to municipalities. The performance information indicates, for example, whether a particular municipality needs either skills or financial support. In this way, the potential challenges in the main function areas such as finance, human resource, infrastructure, local economic development and governance in municipalities, are detected and corrected timeously. The aim is enabling Government to pre-empt the collapse in service delivery within municipalities while ensuring the achievement of wider developmental objectives. A further aim is to provide national and provincial governments with accurate and timely information about the progress that municipalities have made in achieving Government's key performance targets.

As a result of the negative findings of the State of Local Government Report (2008-2009), Government approved a comprehensive Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS) on 2 December 2009. Poor service delivery in most municipalities over the period of five years preceding 2009, lead to the key interventions of the LGTAS. These interventions include effective national and provincial support for municipalities. The LGTAS emphasises tailor-made municipality support. In this sense, the LGTAS implies a shift away from the one-size-fits-all approach to local government support, towards a differentiated approach in supporting municipalities. The implementation of the LGTAS is premised upon the methodology which

underscores a differentiated and targeted support for municipalities. The purpose is to build the capacity of municipalities in the key focus areas, such as human resources, finance, infrastructure, local economic development and governance, and thus turn them into development hubs. The complicated social, economic and environmental issues are identified, analysed and addressed at the municipal government level. Gqogana (2010,2) indicates in this respect, however, that the multiple support programmes that are implemented to build the capacity of local government have not brought about the desired changes in municipalities.

The Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (2007,19), issued by National Treasury, indicates that COGTA is responsible for developing and implementing an integrated M&E system to support municipalities. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in Support of Cooperative Governance (2010:11) further outlines a process which the national and provincial Departments of Cooperative Governance should embark upon by employing an M&E system to support municipalities. For this purpose COGTA has developed a set of general key performance indicators (KPIs) that address the reporting requirements for the municipalities at national level. Performance indicators provide the basis for assessing the progress towards the achievement of stated goals and objectives (Seasons 2003, 4:430.440, 430). COGTA also has developed an integrated reporting template against which reporting on indicators by municipalities is done.

The Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) has furthermore embarked on numerous initiatives to support municipalities. The initiatives include the introduction of the Monitoring, Support and Intervention Bill, 2012 in the National Assembly by the Minister of COGTA and the project by DCoG entitled “Development of a barometer and proposals for institutional arrangements to support the implementation of a differentiated approach to municipal support”. Chapter 3 of the Bill deals with national and provincial monitoring and support. The purpose of the Bill is to make provision for the supervision of provinces and municipalities.

Notwithstanding the above initiatives, the Draft Refined Delivery Agreement (2011,16), issued by DCoG, identifies performance information that is dispersed across different entities as one of the reasons for the lack of coordination and ineffective support to municipalities.. There is no mechanism that brings together various pieces of key information to form an integrated and holistic picture of municipalities with a view to facilitating coordinated responses in terms of either support or other interventions. Moreover, political oversight structures such as the Ministerial Implementation Forum and the President’s Coordinating Council do not have at their disposal critical municipal information which could be used for strategic leadership over the local government sphere. The performance information of municipalities will be known to DCoG and provincial departments of COGTA and may be disseminated to other national and provincial sector departments. This will enable them to support municipalities in the identified areas of underperformance. In this way, critical coordination and alignment of interventions to strengthen the support to municipalities may be achieved.

The Role of the Premiers’ Office in Government-wide Monitoring and Evaluation: A Good Practice Guide (2008,22) shows that the current implementation of the monitoring and reporting framework for municipalities has been influenced heavily by the Municipal Finance

Management Act 56 of 2003 (MFMA). The Act stipulates that municipalities must fulfil comprehensive reporting requirements such as:

- monthly financial reports;
- mayor's quarterly reports;
- mid-year performance assessment reports; and
- annual reports.

The Institutionalising Performance Management: A Toolkit for Municipalities (COGTA 2007,17) indicates that institutional arrangements refer to the structural mechanisms that have been established to assist with management of processes, such as performance management, within the institution. The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in Support of Cooperative Governance (2010,15) indicates that, in addition to the existing intergovernmental structures provided for in legislation, other existing structures such as M&E Forums will be used to support monitoring and evaluation.

**Figure 1** below shows M&E forums across the three spheres of government, including civil society.

<insert Fig 1>

### **Figure 1: Monitoring and evaluation structures**

*Source:* Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in Support of Cooperative Governance (2010,16)

As can be seen from **Figure 1** above, the institutional arrangement for monitoring and evaluation provide evidence of community participation. This is done by cascading down monitoring and evaluation to lower levels through the Ward Committee M&E Forum. The functions of each Forum are explained below briefly:

- *National Local Government M&E Forum* – The Forum allows the following role-player to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Local Government Turnaround Strategy (LGTAS): national sector departments, provinces (Offices of the Premiers, provincial Departments, COGTA), state-owned entities and other key stakeholders, for example the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).
- *Provincial M&E Forums* – The Forum supports the coordination of the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the Municipal Turnaround Strategy (MTAS). It also facilitates the participation of sector departments in the sharing of information on their plans.
- *District M&E Forums* – The Forum at this level supports implementation through the sharing of experiences, knowledge and information for continuous improvement.
- *Local M&E Forums* – The local M&E forums are vehicles through which civil society's voice is heard clearly, which improves the participation of civil society. Additional pressure is put on Government to achieve higher levels of performance.

It should be evident that the effective implementation of monitoring and evaluation relies on appropriate internal institutional arrangements. However, the Monitoring and Evaluation Systems Approaches and Success Factors (available at [www.preval.org](http://www.preval.org)) indicate a challenge in this regard. It is found that the lack of understanding of M&E systems' development and application as an administrative or compulsory function currently hampers its implementation. Ijeoma (2010, 2:344.360, 351) points to the fact that even though the GWM&ES was launched in 2007, currently there are still government departments that are operating without an M&E system, thus making it difficult to determine whether they indeed are able to perform.

The Presidency (2008,2) explains that when the GWM&ES was officially launched in 2007, it was envisaged that the successful implementation of the system would have a huge potential for improvement of the public policy outcomes and impacts on the country. However, Cloete (2009 2:293.311, 299) and Engela and Ajam (2010,20) observe that the updated GWM&ES implementation plan still contains no detailed implementation strategy, and no time frames has yet been determined to establish the system in South Africa to its full capacity. It can thus be argued that the utilisation of the M&E system, as far as support for municipalities are concerned, is still very limited and yet overdue. A model for municipal support is thus required.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN**

Based on a qualitative research design, semi-structured interviews and questionnaires were utilised as data collection methods to obtain data that are relevant to the research objectives. The reasons for employing these instruments for data collection were twofold. Firstly, to obtain the opinions and perceptions of the relevant officials in DCoG and COGTA respectively on the utilisation of the M&E system for the effective intergovernmental support to municipalities, and secondly, to ascertain the opinions and perceptions of officials from the local municipalities on the level of support they receive from the national and provincial government.

Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents from the national government, consisting of the Directors in the Provincial and Municipal Government Support branch of the DCoG. The selected members of the population from the provincial government were Directors within the COGTA Departments who are responsible for municipal performance management. A sample of 36 local municipalities was selected from a total of 230 local municipalities. This meant that four local municipalities comprising Class 1, Class 2, Class 3 and Class 4 were selected from each of the nine provinces. Out of 36 questionnaires distributed, 27 were completed and returned: 11% from Class 1, 31% from Class 2, 29% from Class 3 and 29% from Class 4. Data were then obtained from managers responsible for Performance Management Systems but not present in a specific municipality, or from managers responsible for Integrated Development Plans (IDPs).

The questionnaire was divided under the following main headings: Biographical information, Municipal information, Municipal support and Utilisation of M&E systems.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with relevant officials of DCoG and provincial COGTA departments in order to generate qualitative data on the extent to which DCoG utilises the M&E system for the effective intergovernmental support to municipalities. Semi-structured interviews were conducted further with officials from the local municipalities. The objective was to determine whether the level of support they receive from the provincial and national government is adequate, enabling the respective local municipalities to fulfil their statutory obligations. The totality of responses provided a balanced perspective of the respondents' views and opinions regarding utilisation of the M&E system and municipal support.

### **Research findings**

The data obtained from the respondents, as well as an analysis of the findings, are presented below.

#### ***Municipal support***

Only 10% of the participants (Figure 2 below) in municipalities indicated that the DCoG and COGTA constantly monitor and review the progress made by municipalities in achieving their developmental objectives. Thirteen percent were of the opinion that this is done in less than 50% of the cases. Thirty eight percent expressed the view that the monitoring and review are seldom

done. Thirty eight percent also represented the respondents who were of the opinion that monitoring and review is done in between 50% and 75% of the cases.

The respondents in the provinces also had different views. Ten percent were of the opinion that the monitoring and review of progress in municipalities happen in less than 50% of the cases. Ninety percent stated that these are done in between 50% and 75% as well as in more than 75% of the cases. That is, 45% for each category of respondents.

In the national Government, 20% believe the monitoring and review of the progress being made in municipalities on the achievement of developmental goals are being done in more than 75% of the cases. Thirty percent of respondents disagreed with the observation that the occurrence is in less than 50% of the cases. However, 50% perceived the occurrence as existing in between 50% and 75% of the cases.

It can be seen that the majority of respondents across all spheres of Government viewed monitoring and the review of municipal progress as taking place between 50% to 75% of the cases. However, during the semi-structured interviews with the researchers, the respondents added that whereas monitoring is done and gaps are being identified, the corresponding support is seldom provided by COGTA and DCoG.

<insert Fig. 2>

The respondents were asked the following question: “How effective do you regard the current system of co-operative government and intergovernmental relations in South Africa in terms of strengthening the intergovernmental support to municipalities?” The responses were as follows (Figure 3).

<insert Fig3.>

### **Figure 3: Cooperative government and intergovernmental relations**

The above figure illustrates that 5% of the respondents in municipalities felt that the system is not effective at all. In contrast 20% was of the opinion that the system is greatly effective. Seventy five per cent responded that it is moderately effective.

Concerning the responses from the provincial government, 40% of the participants indicated that the system is greatly and fully effective. Furthermore, 60% responded that the system is moderately effective. The figures from the national Government reveal that 20% perceived the system as greatly effective, 30% as moderately effective and 50% as fully effective.

### ***Utilisation of M&E system by DCoG***

From **Figure 4** below, it could be seen that, in municipalities, 13% strongly disagreed that the M&E system is utilised effectively, 30% agreed and 57% strongly agreed. In the provinces, none of the participants disagreed because 25% agreed and 75% strongly agreed. In the national

Government 50% agreed and another 50% strongly agreed. The study found that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the utilisation of M&E system by DCoG.

<insert Fig. 4>

**Figure 4: Utilisation of M&E system by DCoG**

During the empirical survey, the respondents in the three spheres of government also identified the following causal conditions for the ineffective utilisation of M&E system to support municipalities.

- Monitoring and evaluation is poorly institutionalised and, as a result, the M&E system is not utilised adequately at all levels of government.
- Municipalities do not have the capacity to understand and employ M&E systems, and only the national and provincial government officials do have a fair understanding of the concept.
- It is not clear whether performance information reports are analysed, as feedback is not provided to municipalities.
- The provincial and national departments of COGTA and DCoG respectively are currently unable to detect timeously areas of underperformance in municipalities.
- There is inadequate political oversight in municipalities on the achievement of the developmental objectives.

When asked: “Do you think that the provincial and national departments of COGTA and DCoG respectively constantly monitor and review the progress made by municipalities in achieving their developmental objectives?” the results were as follows (Figure 5).

<insert Fig. 5>

**Figure 5: Monitoring and review of municipal progress**

According to the above graphical data, 10% of the participants in municipalities indicated that the DCoG and COGTA constantly monitor and review the progress made by municipalities in achieving their developmental objectives. However, 13% felt that this is done in less than 50% of the cases and 38,5% expressed the view that the monitoring and review are seldom done. Nevertheless, 38,5% of the respondents were of the opinion that monitoring and review is done in 50% to 75% of the cases.

The respondents in the provinces also had different views on the matter. From these 10% represented the view that the monitoring and review of progress in municipalities happen in less than 50% of the cases. In contrast, 90% stated that monitoring and review are done in more than 50% of the cases. That is, 45% for each category of respondents.

In the national Government, 20% believe the monitoring and review of the progress being made in municipalities on the achievement of developmental goals are being done in more than 75% of the cases. From these 30% disagreed as they stated that monitoring and review happened in less

than 50% of the cases. However, 50% perceived it happening between 50% and 75% of the cases.

It can be seen that the majority of respondents across all levels of government viewed monitoring and review of municipal progress as taking place between 50% and 75% of the cases. This is related to the fact that the respondents complained that, whereas monitoring is done and gaps being identified, the corresponding support is not provided by DCoG and COGTA.

The research participants were also requested to rate the overall effectiveness of DCoG and its provincial departments in supporting the municipalities. The responses in the municipalities were that the support is completely ineffective (5%), ineffective (8%), effective (40%) and extremely effective (47%).

The responses in the provincial departments were that 25% viewed the support as being ineffective and 75% viewed it as effective. In the national Government 50% of the participants stated that the support is ineffective while 50% indicated that it is effective.

The respondents were also asked to list any constraint(s) that, according to them, hamper the provincial and national Departments of DCoG and COGTA in giving effective support to municipalities. The respondents in the three spheres of government identified the following constraints:

- shortage of skilled personnel;
- ever-changing/different performance templates which are issued by DCoG and COGTA to municipalities;
- inadequate budgets at all levels of government;
- poor coordination of activities at all levels of government;
- political interference in the administration, particularly in municipalities;
- non-compliance with legislation at all levels of government;
- appointments of unsuitable personnel (deployments);
- no feedback to the affected municipalities after monitoring and diagnosis of the challenges;
- lack of integrated planning processes and strategies;
- lack of communication mechanisms and strategies; and
- top-down approach.

### *Utilisation of Monitoring and Evaluation System*

The respondents were requested to indicate the extent to which they agree/disagree with the statement that M&ES is adequately utilised by DCoG. They showed their choices as follows (Figure 6).

<insert Fig. 6>

**Figure 6: Utilisation of M&E system by DCoG**

From the above figure it can be deduced that, in municipalities, 13% strongly disagreed, 30% agreed and 57% strongly agreed with the fact that M&ES is adequately utilised. In the provinces, none of the participants disagreed: 25% agreed and 75% strongly agreed. In the national Government 50% agreed and another 50% strongly agreed.

The research found that the majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the utilisation of M&E system by DCoG. On average 66% of respondents furthermore strongly agreed that the utilisation of the M&E system should take into account the varying capacities and unique environments of municipalities, as this is critical for targeted support.

The level of intergovernmental support to municipalities was also gauged through the use of semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. The following key findings were made.

- Municipalities do not receive feedback on intergovernmental support, which is required in areas of underperformance.
- Intergovernmental support to municipalities is inadequate, not provided timeously and not addressing appropriate challenges.

As stated, the purpose of this article is to incorporate the above-mentioned empirical findings and take into consideration the causal conditions responsible for the ineffective utilisation of the M&E system to support municipalities through the development of a model. The model is highlighted in the following section.

## **MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEM UTILISATION MODEL TO SUPPORT SOUTH AFRICAN MUNICIPALITIES**

The model consists of the following three main elements: structures and their responsibilities in the national, provincial and local spheres, gathering and flow of performance information and providing of support to municipalities. In identifying the elements of the M&E system utilisation model for municipal support, it was crucial to take into consideration the statutory framework and theory of cooperative governance and monitoring and evaluation, as well as considering the data obtained from the empirical study. Recommendations by the respondents on the key challenges for DCoG to utilise the M&E system effectively to support municipalities were built into the model.

**Figure 7** below illustrates the model for M&E system utilisation to support municipalities, after which each element will be discussed in more detail.

<insert Fig. 7>

**Figure 7: A model for monitoring and evaluation system utilisation to support municipalities**

*Source:* Researchers' own construction

The M&E system utilisation model is divided into macro-, meso- and micro-levels. The macro-, meso- and micro-levels represent the national, provincial and local spheres of government

respectively. In the following subsections, each element of the model is briefly elaborated to clarify the context of the model.

## **1. The structures and their responsibilities in the national, provincial and local spheres**

### **(A) *Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG)***

The Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) is responsible for the following:

- **Develop national policies and legislation** – The Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG) has the responsibility to monitor performance and to support the provinces and local government. It should therefore embark on processes to develop new legislative solutions to the identified challenges which hamper provinces and municipalities in achieving their developmental objectives. The main objective is to strengthen the Department by monitoring and supporting the provinces and municipalities.
- **Assess the overall achievement of the national development objectives** – DCoG should take responsibility for the assessment of local government contributions towards achieving the identified national objectives.
- **Define and coordinate the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy** – DCoG should describe the approach the institution should follow to create and operate its M&E system that produces credible and accurate information on an ongoing basis. For example, its M&E strategy will outline how the M&E findings may inform strategic and operational planning, budget formulation and execution, as well as in-year and annual reporting. That is, M&E should be integrated with other management processes. It should further describe the purpose of the M&E system, the data the system will collect and how the system will operate. The strategy should also include the list of indicators to be measured.
- **Supervise the M&E system** – DCoG should therefore supervise the M&E system. This supervision should include developing a standard performance reporting template on the performance of municipalities and determining the timelines for submission of performance reports.
- **Ensure capacity and allocate resources** – The capacity and resources need to be strengthened by DCoG so as to enable it to fulfil its mandate effectively. For example, it was discovered from the empirical data of this study that shortage of skilled personnel is one of the constraints that hamper both COGTA and DCoG to utilise the M&E system effectively. DCoG should therefore ensure that there is adequate capacity and resources within its own organisation and COGTA for the effective utilisation of an M&E system.
- **Promote and foster interlinking role of the spheres of government** – The utilisation of an M&E system to support municipalities is dependent on effective intergovernmental relationships between the three spheres of government. It is therefore imperative that DCoG plays a role of ensuring that the spheres of government are able to interlink

effectively on the vertical and horizontal levels. Interlinking on a *vertical* level entails effective communication and cooperation between the provincial and local spheres of government. Interlinking on a *horizontal* level means effective communication between different national government departments, between provincial governments, as well as between local authorities.

**(B) *Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA)***

The responsibilities of the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) are as follows:

- **Consolidate and disseminate performance information of municipalities** – The various provincial Departments of COGTA will consolidate the quarterly reports received from municipalities in their respective provinces into a provincial report, and forward such a report to DCoG. Additionally, this Department will also align itself with the national DCoG’s approach and similarly undertake the applicable actions at a provincial sphere. As indicated above, these actions include:
  - Assessing the overall achievement of the National Development Objectives.
  - Defining and coordinating the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy.
  - Supervising the M&E system.
  - Ensuring capacity and allocating resources.

**(C) *Municipalities***

The key responsibilities of municipalities will be the following:

- **Capture performance information** – The data to be collected will be captured at the local municipal sphere. In other words, each local municipality will ensure that the performance information reporting template is populated with performance information. Municipalities will therefore serve as a point of data collection.
- **Consolidate and submit performance information** – A performance information report of the local municipalities in the district will be consolidated and submitted by the district municipality to the provincial COGTA.

**(D) *National, Provincial and District Monitoring and Evaluation Forums***

The responsibilities that the National Forum will fulfil at national level include the following:

- **Ensure participation of the national sector departments and other stakeholders** – The forum will ensure participation of the national sector departments, provinces (Offices of the Premiers, provincial Departments of COGTA), state owned entities and other key stakeholders such as the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). Participation at this level will mean that the sector departments and other stakeholders are able to share information and experiences.

- **Validate information** – A number of national departments have responsibilities over the functional areas for which municipalities provide performance information reports. The Forum, therefore, serves as a platform for such departments to validate the performance information provided by municipalities. The provincial and district forums will fulfil similar responsibilities at provincial and district levels.

**(E) *National and Provincial Intervention Units***

The main responsibilities of the national Intervention Unit are as follows:

- **Analyse performance reports of municipalities** – The Unit will analyse the performance reports so as to profile municipalities for differentiated remedial support. Based on the findings of performance reports on specific municipalities, the Unit will embark further on rapid responses and interventions in these municipalities.
- **Identify responsible sector departments and coordinate support to municipalities** – The line units in the national departments have responsibility for the functional areas in which municipalities could be underperforming. They are also ultimately accountable for monitoring and supporting municipalities in their respective areas. The Unit will be responsible to identify, based on the performance reports, the responsible department(s) and coordinate their support for the identified municipalities. The provincial Intervention Unit will fulfil similar activities at the provincial level.

**2. The gathering and flow of performance information**

This element of the model describes the collection of data and the path which data could follow within the M&E system. It is imperative that this element places strong emphasis on “process” as the collection, flow and analysis of data will be operated as a continuous process within the micro-, meso- and macro-levels of the model. This element should also entail the bulk of the resources, time and activity invested in the model, as it is critical that reliable performance information is collected.

DCoG will define and coordinate the monitoring and evaluation strategy. DCoG has developed a set of general key performance indicators (KPIs) that address the reporting requirements for municipalities at national level. The Department has further developed and integrated a reporting template against which reporting on indicators by municipalities is done.

In the above context, data will be collected at the level of the local municipalities. That is, the integrated reporting template will be populated by the local municipalities in each district municipal area. A consolidated performance report will then be submitted quarterly by each district municipality to the department of COGTA in the province, and other structures such as the M&E forum in the district. The various provincial departments of COGTA will also consolidate the performance reports received from the district municipalities into a provincial quarterly performance report and forward it to the DCoG, the M&E forum and the Intervention Unit in their respective provinces.

**3. Providing support to municipalities**

The focus of this element of the model is twofold. Firstly, the element seeks to ensure effective utilisation of performance information received from municipalities so as to support them in performing their core service delivery functions. Secondly, it further ensures that intergovernmental support to municipalities is channelled to prioritised needs and will best accomplish service delivery priorities in municipalities.

Taking into account the above considerations, the performance information gleaned from the performance reports of municipalities will determine the type and level of support for the underperforming municipalities. It is important to indicate that the kind of support municipalities may require from time to time, is determined by the performance reports. Thus the support may include the increase of the capacity of municipalities in the areas of finance, human resource, governance and infrastructure.

The performance information will further assist the Intervention units in identifying the national and provincial departments responsible for the functional areas in which municipalities require support. In this way, the Units will also help establish a single window and entry point for the coordination of intergovernmental support to municipalities.

From the above discussion of the three elements, it can be seen that they have interlinking relationships and each contributes to the final outcome of the model. Firstly, the structures that are set up across the spheres of government promote the use of performance information. Secondly, continuous gathering and flow of performance information takes place within the identified structures. Thirdly, the performance information that is received and analysed is utilised to design and implement targeted support and appropriate interventions in areas of underperformance within municipalities. Furthermore, it is of crucial importance that the identification of structures and their responsibilities occur in a continuous cycle to ensure the successful implementation of the model. These responsibilities relate to the three spheres of government, the gathering and flow of performance information, and providing support to municipalities.

#### **4. Critical success factors: Implementation of the comprehensive model**

Based on the literature and research findings of this study, the successful implementation of the M&E system utilisation model to support municipalities relies on the following factors:

- **Adequate human resource capacity** – This M&E system utilisation model may not be employed effectively without skilled personnel who effectively execute M&E tasks for which they are responsible. Therefore, understanding the skills needed and capacity of people involved in the M&E system (undertaking human capacity assessments) and addressing capacity gaps (through structured capacity development programmes) are critical for the M&E system utilisation model. During the study the issue of human capacity for M&E systems was noted. For example, it was emphasised that it is vital to ensure that there are adequately skilled monitoring and evaluation staff who can complete effectively and efficiently all activities that are defined in the monitoring and evaluation work plan.

- **Stakeholders** – An M&E system only serves its purpose adequately when the system is accepted by all those who bear certain responsibilities in it or require information from it. Therefore, it is vital to ensure participation of the stakeholders during the development of an M&E system. If the system is created on the basis of a participating approach, then those who made contributions in building the system are likely to take ownership and therefore support it. In the study it was highlighted that it is critical to establish and maintain partnerships with internal and external stakeholders, so as to strengthen the M&E system.
- **Organisational culture** – A negative organisational culture with respect to management of data and dissemination of information may make it difficult for the M&E system utilisation model to be effective. The culture of the organisation should therefore be taken into account in order to achieve effective implementation of the model. The study made it clear that databases which enable stakeholders to access relevant data need to be developed and maintained. In this way policy formulation and programme management are improved and organisational culture is enhanced.
- **Sufficient authority** – It is all-important for an institution to create a senior post at each sphere of government in order to lead the M&E unit. This gives the M&E unit sufficient authority and its findings may influence public decision-making, policy changes and allocation of resources. In this way, the model could be implemented effectively and efficiently.

## CONCLUSION

This article reported on the results of empirical research conducted in a sample of 36 local municipalities to determine the extent of Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E) system utilisation. Based on these results, the study proposed a model for the improvement of M&E system utilisation by COGTA and DCoG to facilitate their support mandate. The proposed M&E system utilisation model provides solutions on how to address and eradicate weaknesses, and how to provide effective support to municipalities. The support from the national and provincial governments to local government should be adequate so as to enable municipalities to fulfil their statutory obligations.

Even though the M&E system utilisation model to support municipalities was developed for DCoG and COGTA departments, any other department can utilise the model by adapting it to suit its requirements. The model provides a reference point against which any institution can consider its own practice and thereby identify areas for improvement in the processes and procedures followed.

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