

## Monitoring and Evaluation in Local Government for Improved Performance

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Monitoring and evaluation in local government are processes utilised as tools to assess a municipality's performance and municipal interventions' impact on communities' social needs and service delivery. These processes also serve as mechanisms through which the municipality can fulfill its constitutional mandate. Numerous authors reason that public funds allocated to local governments to meet social needs and provide essential services are not utilised for the intended purpose. As a result, the investments made do not lead to tangible benefits for the communities. In such instances, monitoring and evaluation can be used for evidence-based planning, promoting efficient and effective service delivery to communities. One of the challenges local municipalities experience is that most service delivery programmes and plans are implemented but not evaluated to determine their impact on community members' quality of life before a new or revised programme is initiated. The lack of evaluation is mostly attributed to the lack of leadership, ethics and oversight in local government. This is confirmed by the Auditor General (AG) every year upon completion of the annual audit, despite the local government being perceived to be the most important sphere of government because of its interaction with the public. Unfortunately, the political will required to address the systemic challenges appears to be lacking. The research upon which this paper is based was an explorative, outcome-based, empirical study that employed a mixed-method approach to assess the impact of monitoring and evaluation on service delivery to communities.

**Keywords:** Performance management, Monitoring and evaluation leadership, Ethics, Service delivery accountability, Good governance.

### Introduction

In South Africa, more than two-thirds of households' report that their municipalities do not meet their service delivery needs and that their access to basic services has declined. The service delivery infrastructure in numerous areas has reached the end of its useful life, with some no longer fit for purpose. The Auditor General (2021) painted a bleak picture of South African municipalities not fulfilling their constitutional mandate regarding service delivery. Municipalities, therefore, need to align operations and policies with the national and provincial government spheres to ensure synergy when addressing citizens' needs.

Ensuring performance, control and accountability in the public sector is essential for all governments to effectively deliver services and respond to citizens' demands. It is customary for strategic objectives and organisational structures and processes to be accompanied by a performance management and measurement system. To address the issue of silo planning within the government and improve collaborative planning and budgeting among local municipalities, the government introduced the district development model (DDM). However, the implementation thereof remains challenging, as this initiative is regarded as an overly authoritative approach.

Despite the existence of a favourable legislative framework in local government created to enhance municipal performance, the effective implementation of performance management systems remains a challenge in numerous municipalities. These challenges primarily stem from a shortage of skilled personnel and councils' lack of oversight interventions (State of Local Government in South Africa, 2009; Auditor General's Report, 2021).

## **The Constitution and Service Delivery**

Section 152 of the Constitution outlines local government goals, which include the imperative to provide and improve sustainable service delivery and promote accountable governance at the local level. Unfortunately, local government is often ineffective in fulfilling its commitments to the communities it serves. This issue typically arises during the pre-election period when promises are made to communities but remain unfulfilled by the government. Beyers (2016:175) posits that as a result, communities feel excluded and alienated from decision-making processes, leading to a sense of disempowerment in influencing decisions or policies.

The Batho Pele Principles serve as the fundamental guidelines for improving service delivery in South Africa's public sector, but in practice, these principles often remain limited to office banners, and not all officials in the sector are trained or attend workshops on these principles. Consequently, there is a lack of awareness and implementation of service standards among municipal staff.

The municipality has experienced constant community protests about poor service delivery outcomes in recent years. Beyers (2016), Ismail and Yunan (2016), assert that communities feel that they are excluded and alienated from decision-making processes, and are, therefore, disempowered. This is the main reason why communities fail to acknowledge the efforts municipalities make to address their needs. Without involvement in the decision-making process, community members feel disconnected, resulting in dissatisfaction with service delivery initiatives and standards.

According to Ismail and Yunan (2016), service quality is determined by citizens' comparison of their expectations with the services provided. If the community is not involved in defining the service standards, they distance themselves from the project. The rise