

SACN-SALGA Knowledge Management Reference Group meeting Buffalo City Municipality, 7 and 8 February 2008

The SACN Knowledge Management Reference Group (KMRG) was established in 2004 to promote a shared-learning partnership between different spheres of government in support of good governance of South African cities. In October this year this group was given new strategic direction and reinforced by a strategic partnership between the South African Cities Network and the South African Local Government Association.

The second meeting of the SACN-SALGA KMRG was hosted by Buffalo City Municipality with the aim of:

- ⌘ Introducing new municipalities to the SACN Knowledge Management Reference Group
- ⌘ Establishing the support needs of Knowledge Management practitioners in SA Cities
- ⌘ Consolidating the outcomes of the October meeting
- ⌘ Proposing a plan of action for Municipalities, the SACN and SALGA in forwarding the aims of learning and sharing between Cities.

Session 1: Reflection and forming new partnerships



Councillor Zintle Peter, Executive Mayor of Buffalo City Municipality and Chairperson of the SACN, welcomed everybody and emphasized the scope and importance of knowledge management. She cited the example of economic growth through tourism as an indirect knowledge management output. Managing, sharing and using knowledge must improve service delivery outputs. Knowledge management must provide the framework for a strategic and critically informed understanding of developmental challenges. There is a need to keep pace with innovations and leading practice and this session provides participants with an opportunity to learn. She invited delegates to celebrate the partnership between SACN and SALGA, by working constructively in this workshop.

Kubeshni Govender-Jones facilitated a story-telling exercise that demonstrated the difficulties of collaborative operations. She emphasized that it is important to link creativity to logic in solving problems. We live in a more complex world with more complex problems, so we need different and more complex tools and skills with which to solve these problems. Creativity and collaboration are important.

In 2006 the SACN commissioned research on knowledge management capacity and operations in the municipalities. [Report attached as annexure A]. There conclusions in this report include:

1. Institutional arrangements associated with the location of the municipal knowledge management units are varied and these units have had a range of experiences. The location within a strategic office such as that of the municipal manager or mayor makes it easier to achieve a wider acceptance of knowledge management projects.

2. It is important for KM strategies to enjoy the support and buy in of senior managers in the municipality to successfully achieve cross-cutting objectives and integration. Knowledge management tools and resources are useful only when relevant, and when users buy into the technology or system. For example, it is important for knowledge management to make the link between research resources and practitioners. Research priorities identified for tertiary institutions, and the relationships between tertiary institutions and municipalities must be managed.
3. Where knowledge management units have not been integrated into the core business of the municipality the value of the unit remains marginal. An exclusively programme or project-linked focus also runs the risk of being obsolete. There is a need to find a balance between these two extremes.
4. KM units within the different municipalities tend to use the same service providers to solve similar problems. If these units share experiences they could be more efficient.
5. There is an over-reliance on web-based tools. ICT should be seen as an enabler to avoid spending on 'white elephant' systems. Knowledge management must build the bridge between technology and person.
6. The KMRG should allow the KM units in the municipalities to move to a new level of operation. For example, KM strategies can be refined in consultation with peers in the KMRG.

Kubeshni Govender-Jones spoke about the unwritten rules of the knowledge economy. There has been a shift in the workplace from a psychological contract between employer and employees, to transactions on the basis of skills. New workers must be able to learn and adapt much faster.



Sithole Mbanga, CEO of the SACN, emphasized that knowledge management is a approach to behaviour. All institutions should be learning. SACN must provide tangible assistance on actual implementation projects to allow KM units to a higher level of operation.

Bongani Matomela, Director: Research, learning and knowledge management at the Department of Public Service and Administration, described the government wide knowledge management system. [Presentation attached at annexure B.] He highlighted good practice in National Departments such as National Treasury, the SA Revenue Services and DBSA. The strategy is implemented through the following initiatives:

- Learning Networks and Communities of Practice
- Guides and manuals



- Service Delivery Review journal and an annual Service Delivery learning academy targeting operational managers at the front-line of service delivery
- Knowledge management champions in provinces and departments
- Learning excursions and site visits:
- Multi-media records of best practices
- Data-base of experts in the fields who can make themselves available and provide advise and support to other colleagues:
- Comprehensive analysis and write-up of Integrated Provincial Support Programme – documenting and disseminating the story and the legacy
- Framework guide on learning and knowledge management in the public service
- KM capacity-building and incorporating KM into SMS competency framework - SAMDI
- Road shows targeting senior managers and ICT practitioners
- Technical support to provinces that are developing their KM and innovation strategies

The DPISA's strategy and approach is anchored on knowledge products, platforms and conversations, case studies, and electronic material.

Mr Francois Menguele and Ms Leah Poto, from DPLG, presented the Urban Renewal Programme, a multi-sector intersphere development programme without any dedicated funding. [Presentation attached at Annexure C]. The mandate for the programme was to (a) explore innovative solutions to the urbanization of poverty and sticky exclusion; (b) define new responses and (c) pilot these solutions.

There is a growing demand for lessons and experience from the URP. There is steady demand for node-to-node learning and mutual support. The implementation cycle (exploration, testing and piloting) has matured, so it is possible to define implementation models and recipes as leading practices.

There is a need to be clear about what knowledge to generate and what form to share it through. The DPLG would like to create a 'voice' for urban renewal in policy debates. The response is to develop a knowledge management framework for the URP.

Key outputs for a two-year URP knowledge management programme of action are under discussion. They include:

- Nodal twinning and provincial peer learning
- Story writing
- Moving from a website to urban renewal portal
- Documenting lessons and smart practices
- Nodal fact sheets
- Celebration of excellence (achievers)
- Conference 2009 (area based management)





Buffalo City Municipality hosted a cocktail party for all delegates

Session 2: Planning for 2008

The knowledge management strategy for Buffalo City Municipality was presented by Sandra Jones, a KM specialist from New Zealand who is working with BCM for the next two years. [Presentation attached as Annex D]. She emphasized that the KM strategy has the overarching objective of supporting the BCM vision, mission, values and outcomes and it aims to promote a learning and knowledge sharing culture in the municipality. The BCM knowledge management strategy includes projects such as training of councilors and staff, knowledge championship, documentation of case studies, an expert locator system, capturing of institutional memory and establishment of a KM portal. Three specific projects can be prioritised as national projects: documentation of case studies on BCM revenue collection, 2010 Soccer World Cup, and fast tracking of urban renewal.

Sheena Louw and Jean-Jacques Mbayo from the City of Joburg's Innovation and Knowledge Exchange unit (JIKE) pointed out that the knowledge management strategy is aligned with the GDS and IDP of the municipality. [Presentation attached as Annexure E]. JIKE reports to the Chief Information Officer within the office of the City Manager. The unit's vision is to provide knowledge intensive services, and their mandate is driven by a human perspective rather than services and technologies. Knowledge exchange, innovation and knowledge products make up the three activity groups for the unit's business plan. The overall goal is increased evidence of a stronger culture and practice of innovation and KM in the city. Priority business activities are a knowledge portal, Ideation, Case study documentation, leadership development, innovation management, micro-conferencing, mayoral legacy projects, knowledge tourism, debriefs in DVD format and exit interviews.

Projects that can be escalated to national level include: (a) bench-marking audit of KM initiatives across the cities; and (b) a best practices collection on addressing the silo mentality.

Madeleine Jackson Plaatjies from Msunduzi Municipality explained that their knowledge management approach is informal and does not have a structure with dedicated resources. [Presentation attached as Annexure F]. A workplan was approved and will be implemented through verbal add-ons to normal responsibilities and through knowledge management champions. The workplan aims to create internal KM capability through 3 focus areas: developing knowledge focused leadership, KM strategies within each business unit; and building an internal KM team and infrastructure. There has been a disappointing level of buy-in and support. Implemented through leadership workshops, appointing a KM co-ordinator and training KM champions from the business units and developing KM service level agreements with the business units and associated roadmaps to achieve KM outputs.

Expert locator, communities of practice and interest, expect each project to start with learning (eg peer assist and best practices), database of case studies and innovations and an annual publication linked to the brand, debriefings for all projects and retrospectives, knowledge portal, km in performance management system of muni, escalate learning as an IDP goal, skills transfer and mentoring as part of all consultancies, exit interviews, quality management and links with tertiary institutions. Escalated projects: (a) directory of expertise across country; (b) database to facilitate peer assist and shared learning between member cities. (Case studies attached to info about project owners).

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Municipality launched KM in 2005 with executive approval. The new mayor and city manager deprioritised the strategy, and little implementation has take place.

In concluding the discussions, Sithole Mbanga emphasized that KM does not necessarily require resources. Municipalities should use existing energy from for example, consultants, academics and students and the media or other watch-dog organizations can write up case studies and document good practice.

Kubeshni Govender-Jones wrapped up the session by showing how the SACN-SALGA KMRG business plan will be composed of three elements: (1) priority projects with time frames and resources; (2) a risk management matrix; and (3) KMRG programme of work for knowledge sharing and learning. She will prepare a first draft of this business plan and circulate it for comment.

Cape Town will be invited to host the next meeting of the KMRG in May, NMB offered to host the August meeting and Joburg will host the November meeting.

Gaster Sharpley, the city manager from BCM, thanked the organizers, the facilitator and the participants, and he gave each participant a certificate of attendance.