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GSP II Reflection Learning Sharing

Digitalisation of Service Delivery and Citizen Engagement

Improving Customer Care Services with Digital Solutions

Over the last decade, citizen's expectations about their relationship with the local authority or municipality servicing their community have changed dramatically. Citizens have become far more demanding, more vocal, and more likely to demonstrate dissatisfaction. These stakeholders demand not only basic services, but also more efficient and effective citizen engagement services and enhanced customer experience, across all touchpoints.

In some areas, the high penetration of smartphone technology and the rapidly growing and 'tech savvy' youth segment is adding additional pressure on municipalities to adapt quickly to digital demands.

Overview

To meet the need of technology enabled service delivery, the GSP II provided partner municipalities with a digital mechanism to register, monitor, track and respond to their complaints and queries on a real-time basis. This tool can be used to provide management with credible data that they can use for planning purposes. This intervention was aimed at supporting the following strategic objectives:

1. To identify service delivery gaps through customer feedback.

2. To enhance management decision-making and planning through intelligent reports and by making critical statistical information readily available.
3. To reduce customer contact effort – make it easy for citizens to access services using digital tool.
4. To gradually eliminate paper-based processes so as to reduce turnaround times.
5. To offer self-service options for citizens through mobile apps, 24/7 real-time updates on queries and complaints.
6. To monitor and measure service level agreements - this helps supervisors to hold their staff accountable.

What was done

The following digital tools were developed and provided to partner municipalities:

- An Incident Management Tool to register complaints and provide intelligent reports that highlight trends and areas of concern with a need for management interventions.
- A Citizen Engagement Platform to enable and facilitate constant communication between members of the community and municipal leadership. The platform enables citizens to raise issues or suggest solutions to ward councillors so that





their concerns should be attended as soon as possible.

- An Indigent Application to shorten the time taken by households to apply for free basic services and for municipalities to process these applications.

What was achieved

- The tools resulted in automated incident reporting, made management data easily accessible, identified bottlenecks and constraints within the customer care operations, identified service failures, encouraged a culture of accountability through automated escalation processes and proper SLA management.
- The Citizen's engagement improved continuous communication between ward councillors and community members. This intervention resulted in councillors responding timeously to citizen's concerns.
- The Indigent application enabled the participant municipality to verify applicant's information, confirm if each application meets the set criteria so as to make informed decisions regarding the indigent status.

Reflection and Learning

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It is critically important to try to understand the operations of the municipality before we provide solutions.
(GSP Technical Advisor)

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Three success factors have been identified:

- Understanding of the municipality's operations
- Identification and availability of key stakeholders
- focus on citizens' needs

It was also noted that time taken to implement the project might have been shorter if key stakeholders were identified in the initial stages of the project. This would have allowed for the solution to be aligned to their business's needs from the start.

The importance of considering the citizens' needs when looking for possible solutions emerged as a key lever for impact.

The Governance Support Programme (GSP II) is a Technical Cooperation programme co-steered at national level in a partnership between the Department of Cooperative Governance (DCoG), the National Treasury (NT), the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), the Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME), and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), the latter responsible for the implementation of the German development contributions on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The programme was co-financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department for International Development of the United Kingdom (DFID).

The GSP II provided technical, policy and process advice to support the South African public sector. The programme strengthened capacity for local government planning, financial management and oversight and was executed in the Provinces of Mpumalanga and Eastern Cape.

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