

FEZILE DABI DISTRICT MUNICIPALITY CASE STUDY REPORT

PUBLIC OFFICIALS' SKILLS AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

Submitted by

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1. Introduction

The Public Official's Skills and Capacity Assessment Study conducted by the Development, Capable and Ethical State (DCES) has three key objectives as outlined in the previous reports:

- To conduct a skills and capacity assessment to understand the capacity realities and support requirements of entry-level, mid-level and senior-level municipal officials in South Africa to inform training and capacity-building interventions.
- To assess whether existing or envisaged/planned training and capacity-building strategies and interventions are appropriately aligned with expressed and actual priority needs as identified in the LGSETA Work Place Skills Plans (WPSPs and National Development Plan (NDP)
- To produce a final report on the findings of the assessment, including recommendations for policy and practice.

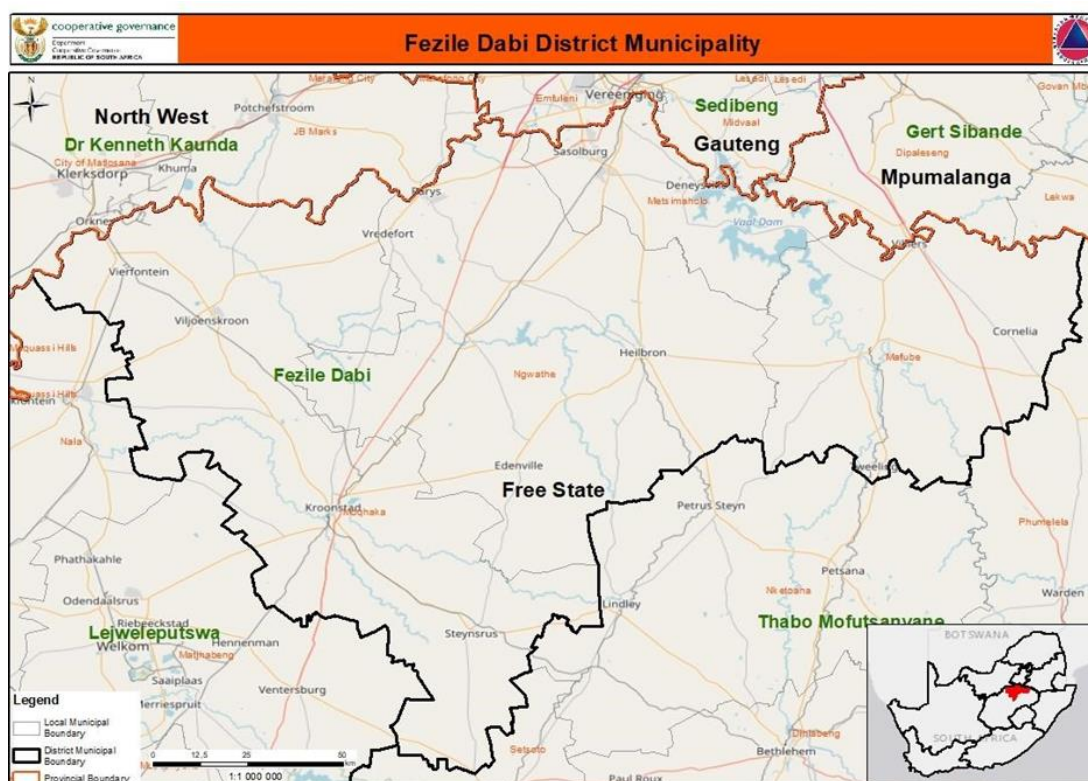
As it has been noted in other outputs of this study, municipalities, specifically the smaller ones, lack the technical knowledge, skill and expertise necessary to perform core operational and financial functions (Municipal Demarcation Board, 2012). Municipalities are also often unable to fill vacant posts which affects municipal governance and administration (Sheoraj, 2015). Service delivery is particularly hampered by capacity constraints in critical areas of municipal governance and administration (De Visser 2009: 24). Capacity constraints can be defined as the lack of adequate and suitable human, scientific, technological, organisational, institutional and resource capabilities to deliver on the constitutional mandate of government (Soko, 2006; Development Network Africa, 2006). Generally, this shortfall includes skills in planning, engineering and project management. These constraints exist at the system, institutional and individual levels. They are notable mainly in the absence of qualified people, the quality of certifications, deficiencies in attributes like experience and shortages or absence of skills less likely to be certified, like leadership capabilities (Development Network Africa, 2006).

The National Development Plan (NDP) identified capacity issues as a leading challenge that undermines the creation of a capable, democratic developmental state able to respond to the social and economic challenges presented to the country. Chapter 13 on building a capable and developmental state identifies several training and capacity building initiatives for public officials to enhance their skills and capacitate them to meet their responsibilities (National Planning Commission, 2012). The varying degrees of success of some of these initiatives and programmes to address skills and capacity issues up until 2015 (Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, 2015), illustrate the importance to keep reflecting on the matter and do further research to better understand capacity constraints within Local Government. As the literature notes, there are major disparities across municipalities (economically, politically, in terms of location) which affects differently their capacity and performance (see Monkam, 2014) making comparisons difficult. In an effort to provide a deeper understanding of some of the nuances at play, this report offers some valuable insights from the experiences and ideas of municipal officials in Fezile Dabi District Municipality. The insights are useful from municipal officials to understand some of the capacity realities and support requirements at municipal level at large, and to inform training and capacity-building interventions.

This report is structured around the background of this municipality and the key themes that emerged from the data collected throughout the field work exercises in terms of overall governance challenges, but most specifically around skills and capacity constraints.

2. Background: Fezile Dabi District Municipality

Fezile Dabi District Municipality is located in the northern part of the Free State province and is 20 829.1 km² in size. It is situated in Sasolburg. It is the smallest district in the Free State province, making up 16% of its geographical area. This area's population represents approximately 17% of the total population of the Free State. The main tourist attraction site is the Vredefort Dome, the third-largest meteorite site in the world. The municipality shares a boundary with the North West province, Gauteng provinces to its north and Mpumalanga to its north east. To the south, Fezile Dabi shares a boundary with Thabo Mofutsanyana District and Lejweleputswa District to the west (Fezile Dabi District Municipality Annual Report, 2019).



Source: <https://municipalities.co.za/map/107/fezile-dabi-district-municipality>

The municipality was established following the local government elections in December 2000. It is named after a well-known political activist known as Fezile Abraham Dabi, born in the Free State Tumahole (Parys) in 1956. This District municipality is formally known as the Northern Free State District Municipality. It is one of 5 districts of Free State. Fezile Dabi District Municipality is a Category C municipality established in terms of the Free State Provincial Notice 113 of 28 September 2000. As a category C Municipality it includes four (4) local municipalities known as: - Mafube, Moqhaka, Matshimaholo, and Nqwathe (Fezile Dabi District Municipality Annual Report, 2019).

Map: Fezile Dabi's four Local Municipalities (<https://municipalities.co.za/overview/107/fezile-dabi-district-municipality>)



Organisationally, the municipality consist of an Executive Mayor, Municipal Manager, Speaker of the Municipality and is structured politically into six portfolio committees, and administratively into six departments (Corporate Services, Environmental Health, LED and Tourism, Municipal Manager, Finance, Project Management and Public Works) to ensure that the vision and strategy objectives of the municipality are achieved (Annual Report, 2019).

The administrative structure of the municipality is headed by the Municipal Manager. As the Accounting Officer, the Municipal Manager accounts to the council for all the administrative issues of the municipality, including implementation of council resolutions. In execution of the municipal manager's (MM) duties, the MM is assisted by senior managers, who serve as departmental heads and all together, constitutes the senior management team of the municipality (Annual Report, 2019).

The vision of the municipality is to be a leading Municipality in delivering effective, affordable and sustainable quality services to its communities. To give effect to the vision the mission of the municipality is to develop and implement projects and programmes that must 1) meet standards, 2) be accountable, 3) be well communicated, 4) capacitate staff and communities, 5) have proper systems and processes, and 6) ensure sustainable, affordable and effective service delivery.

The Municipality's strategic objectives for the year 2019 were i) Municipal Transformation and Organisational Development; ii) Basic Service Delivery and Infrastructure Investment, iii) Local Economic Development; iv) Financial Management and Viability, and v) Good Governance and Public Participation. The specific objectives below from three of these performance areas serve to illustrate some of the municipality's responsibilities and specific activities.

2.1 Basic Service Delivery and Infrastructure Investment.

- To assist rural areas in the district in setting up their road asset management system.
- To provide for and support integrated, efficient and sustainable settlements in the district.

- To provide Municipal Health and Environmental Services effectively and equitably in the District.
- To contribute towards the reduction in the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in the district.
- to ensure effective and efficient disaster management services in the district.

2.2 Local Economic Development.

- To support development of emerging farmers in the district into mainstream farming.
- To promote and enhance the SMME sector in the district.
- To nurture the development of people's potential in the district through arts and culture.
- To promote and develop the tourism sector in the District.
- To promote and support the development of vulnerable groups in the district.
- To promote and enhance the SMME sector in the district.

2.3 Good Governance and Public Participation.

- To ensure development of legally compliant and credible Integrated Development Plans (IDPs) in the district and local municipalities within the district.
- To ensure Good Governance practices to ensure an effective, functioning municipality.
- To provide information through the available ICT platforms of the municipality and to improve the corporate image of the municipality.
- To promote effective communication and coordination of communication structures and systems.
- To support and capacitate Councillors, Ward committees and Community Development workers in an effort to enhance good governance in the district.
- To promote ethical behaviour and social values and principles enshrined in the country's constitution among the communities within the district.
- To promote and facilitate Intergovernmental Relations amongst stakeholders in the district.
- To ensure oversight over the affairs of the municipality.
- To build a risk conscious culture within the organisation.
- To strengthen a meaningful community participation and interaction program.
- To plan, coordinate and support sports amongst the youth.

The municipality reports to have a functional Performance Management System in place. In terms of skills and the workforce, training is provided to staff in line with the Workplace Skills Development Plan (WSP) that was drafted and co-signed by labour representatives as required by legislation. It is interesting to note that no skills audit was conducted during the 2018-19 period (Fezile Dabi, Annual Report 2019). It is important to note that the position of Chief Financial Officer has been vacant since 14 June 2018. The lack of this critical skill and expertise leaves the municipality extremely vulnerable.

This report is therefore also prepared against a background of a qualified audit for the year 2017/2018 in which the Auditor-General indicated that all statements submitted for auditing were not in all respects to the requirements of section 122 of the MFMA. This material misstatements of non-current assets, liabilities and disclosure items identified by the auditors in the submitted financial statements were subsequently corrected, but the uncorrected material misstatements resulted in the financial statements receiving a qualified audit opinion (Fezile Dabi District Municipality Annual Report, 2019). The capacity and skills data gathered from this study will therefore assist the municipality to plan well and assist management to better review and monitor compliance with laws and regulations as well as policies and procedures. The position of the Chief Financial Officer is therefore crucial in this regard and must be filled by a candidate with the required skills and experience as a matter of urgency.

Fezile Dabi municipality acknowledged the importance of education and therefore over the last annual reporting period supported more than 70 students to access their tertiary education. The municipality anticipates that through investment in education they will eventually have the required skills to service its communities better. This is in line with the broader vision of the Municipality that through education and skilling of their youth they will be able to defeat the high levels of unemployment amongst our youth. It for this reason that the municipality sent four students to study maritime studies at the Vietnam Maritime University for four years. These students were drawn from the poorest communities of the district and will come back with honours degrees in maritime studies (Fezile Dabi, Annual Report 2019). We find it odd that this non-coastal and landlocked municipality are targeting maritime skills but it seems that the purpose with the training of these students is to address unemployment and not necessarily to deal with any lack of skills experienced by the municipality. Nevertheless, if training is provided in this area of interest, it is important that the placement opportunities or internships are provided to students to prevent or exacerbate unemployment.

Table 1: Workforce profile of the municipality

Employment category	Race										
	African		Coloured		Indian		White		Total		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Senior Management	1	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	4
Mid- Management/Prof	9	13	0	0	0	0	3	1	12	14	26
Supervisors and Junior Management / Professional	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	6	11
Clerical / administrative	47	32	0	0	0	0	1	4	48	36	84
Elementary	23	10	0	0	0	0	0	0	23	10	33
Total Permanent	85	64	0	0	0	0	4	5	89	69	158
Temporary Employee	10	8	0	0	0	0	10	8	10	8	18
Grand Total	95	72	0	0	0	0	14	13	99	78	176

Source: Fezile Dabi, Annual Report 2019

Table 2: Vacant Senior Management Positions

Job Title	Employment Category	Provided for on the Org. Structure	Position Budgeted for in 2018/19	Date since vacant
PM&PW Director	Senior Management	Yes	No	2012
Chief Financial Officer	Senior Management	Yes	Yes	14 June 2018

Source: Fezile Dabi, Annual Report 2019

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Ethics

The DCES secured research ethics clearance from the HSRC Research Ethics Committee before commencing the study. The ethics approval is an important requirement because the research detailed in this report involves human subjects, meaning that ethical protocols must be strictly adhered to in order to ensure participants in the study do not experience undue harm. The ethics clearance received for the research project denotes that the study complies with the South African National Research Ethics Guidelines (2004), South African National Good Clinical Practice Guidelines (2006), and with the HSRC REC ethics requirements as contained in the HSRC REC Terms of Reference and Standard Operating Procedures.¹

Additionally, in line with ethical guidelines, informed consent was requested from all participating individuals. In the present study, all online survey participants familiarised themselves with the Consent Section page of the survey instrument and selected the “I agree to participate” option. Those who refused to participate selected the “I don’t agree to participate” option” and any responses were separated from the final dataset.

All key informant participants as well as the focus group participants also signed the consent forms before they proceeded respectively with the interviews and focus group discussions. The consent forms make provision for participants who have any complaints or ethical concerns to exercise their rights by contacting the HSRC REC Administrator or call the HSRC’s toll-free ethics hotline (0800 212 123 or email research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za). In addition, participants were informed about the aim of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as their ability to withdraw from the study at any time.

3.2 Research Methods

The study employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The qualitative methods consisted of focus group discussions as well as key informant interviews. These focus groups as well as key interviews were conducted between December 2019 and December 2020. In addition to the qualitative methods a quantitative online survey with public officials was executed. We discuss these methods in more detail below. This mix method approach was important to better understand the

¹ Available at: <http://www.hsrc.ac.za/index.php?module=pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=132&>

support requirements of municipalities, gathering insights on the nuances and the possibilities for improving skills and overcoming capacity constraints.

However, despite this mix method approach we want to emphasize that the findings from the Fezile Dabi District Municipality must be triangulated with the other project outputs to offer a more comprehensive picture of municipalities' skills and capacity constraints. For example, we found that there is a very positive mood in Fezile Dabi despite challenges such as lack of money, gossiping, lack of more staff in Human Resources, some political interference, frustrations with local municipalities. In this overall positive working environment, the officials appear not to face a great deal of skills and capacity issues and the managers interviewed were very professional and hands-on. It may be that the views of the officials working at a district municipality is very different from those working at a local or metropolitan municipality. One Director even indicated that the "District Development Planning approach will be useful to further improve the local-district municipality". The final integrated project report of this study must therefore include a comparative analysis of all eight municipalities that were included in this study.²

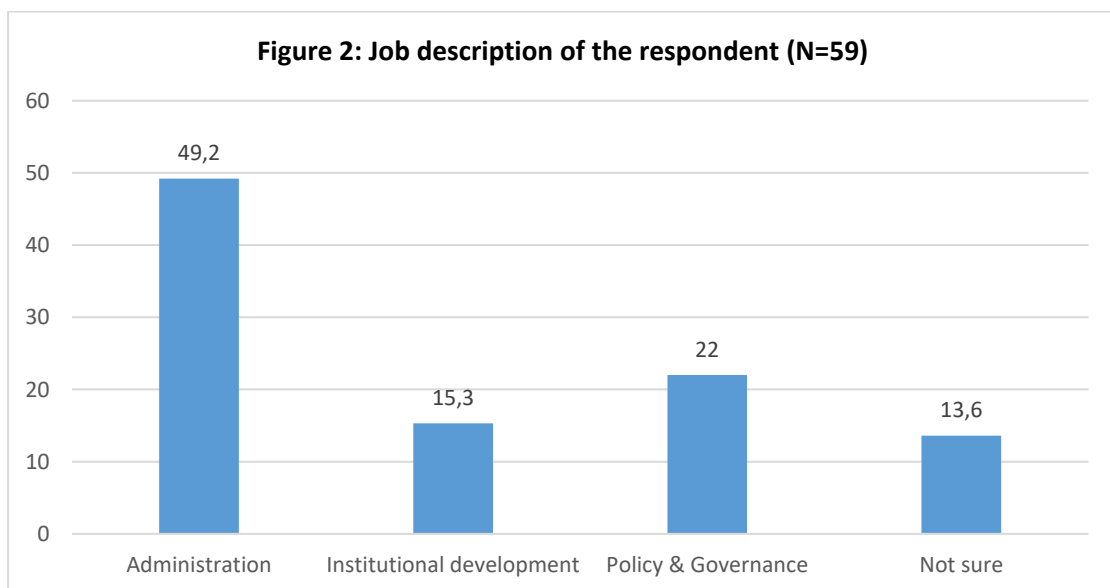
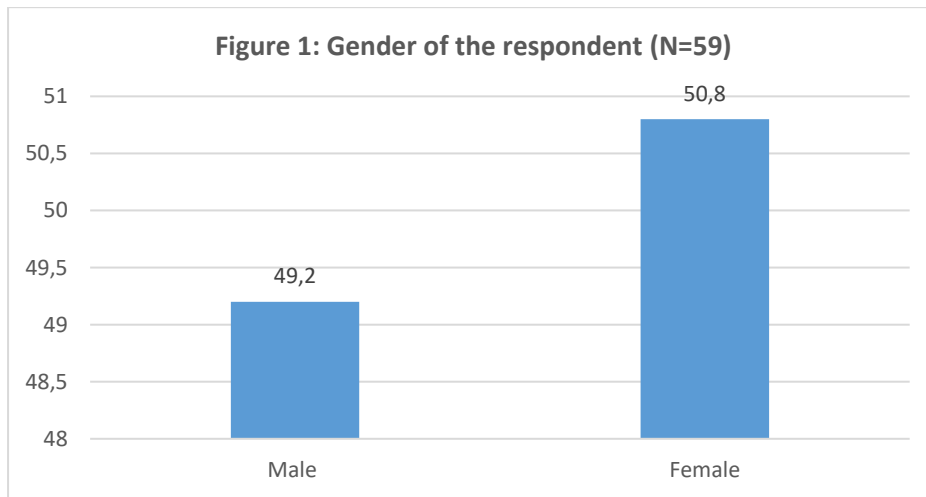
The HSRC conducted focus groups and key informant interviews between the 2nd and 4th of December 2019. The fieldwork started with a meeting with Head of Departments (HoDs) upon arrival at Fezile Dabi District Municipality. This welcoming meeting provided an entry into the municipality as well as a broad perspective of the institution. As indicated the fieldwork comprised of three main components:

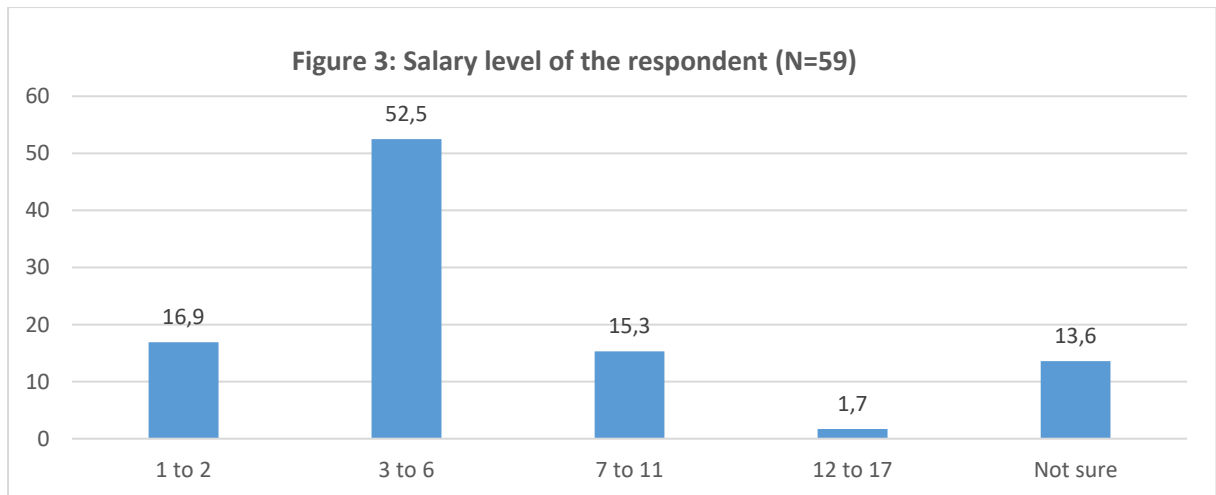
1. **Focus Group Discussions (FGD):** Two FGDs with a total of 18 participants; one with entry-level staff and one with mid-level and senior-level staff. These served to gain a deeper understanding of the thought processes and experiences of Fezile Dabi municipal officials.
2. **One-on-one key informant interviews:** We conducted four key informant interviews with senior officials from the municipality. This included officials from the office of the Municipal Manager, the Environmental Health and Emergency Services, Corporate Services and from the Chief Financial Office. Unfortunately, we were unable to secure an interview with an official from the Skills Development and Training office.
3. **Public skills and capacity survey:** this is the quantitative part of the study and consisted of an online survey administered to 1) entry-level municipal officials, 2) mid-level municipal officials and 3) senior-level municipal officials. The research team in conjunction with the Fezile Dabi District Municipality and its delegated authority worked together to ensure the completion of the survey. Given constraints such as limited access to internet, apathy, time constraints and the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown, only 59 officials out of 176 responded to the survey. This represents a response rate of 33.5%, which acceptable for organisational surveys. There is no international comparative data on this kind of survey but available industry standard response rate for an internet/email-based survey of this nature normally ranged between 10% and 15% (Fryrear, 2015). Despite this it should be emphasised that a sample of 59 officials is relatively small and that the survey findings in this report must therefore be interpreted in conjunction with the findings of the focus groups and key informant interviews. It is envisaged that the sample in the final

² In the Free State we visited Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality and Felize Dabi District. We also included Nelson Mandela Bay Metro and Makana District Municipality in the Eastern Cape; Elias Motsoaledi Local Municipality and Ba-Phalaborwa Local Municipality in Limpopo; and Bojanala Platinum District Municipality and Ngaka Modiri Molema in the North West.

project report will be much larger because it will include officials from the eight target municipalities.

The online survey results show that 49.2% of the sample were male, while 50.8% were female (Figure 1). In terms of job description, we found that respondents indicated that 49.2% are working in administration, while 15.3% are responsible for institutional development and 22% for policy and governance (Figure 2). About 13.6% said that they are not sure. In terms of salary the survey showed that 52.5% are at the salary level 3 to 6, while 16.9% are at the level 1 to 2. Very few of the survey respondents are at the rank 12 to 17 (1,7%) (Figure 3).



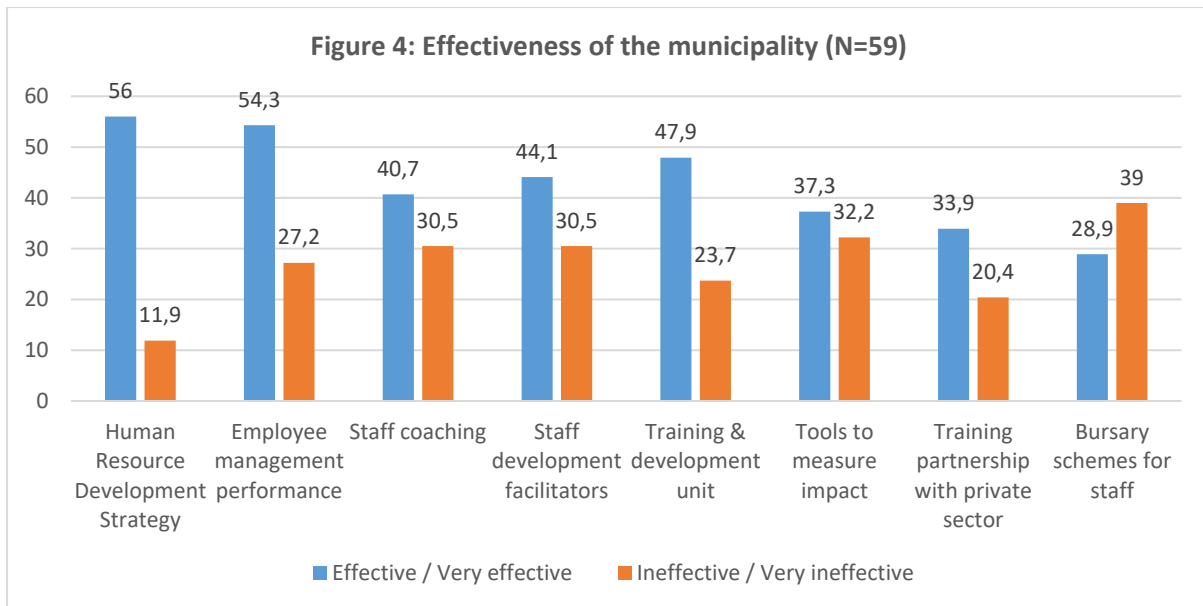


4. Findings

The field work conducted in the municipality show a variety of issues affecting the overall performance, capacity and skills of the municipality. These include contextual and systemic issues related to environmental constraints, socio-political challenges such as citizens' lack of knowledge and trust in government, inter-governmental disconnections and issues around municipal planning and coordination. Similarly, as the study participants shared, institutional aspects around the organisational culture, availability of resources and competing demands also play a role.

Overall, the capacity and skills landscape of the institution is marked by constraints in their human resources and skills development strategies, but also supported by what seems to be a general positive management and leadership set-up. Lastly, given the significance of community engagement approaches, officials highlighted some of the limitations that provided insights into specific skills needed to enhance community participation and engagement.

Before we unpack some of the findings and contextual issues, it is important to note that overall, as the survey results illustrate, most officials have a positive perception of the effectiveness of the municipality across a range of issues. Figure 4 indicate that a large proportion of the respondents believe that the municipality is effective or very effective in dealing with the human resource development strategy (56%). Similarly, a large proportion also believe that the municipality is very effective or effective in terms of employee management performance (54,3%). In contrast, the survey respondents felt that the municipality is ineffective or very ineffective in dealing with bursary schemes for staff (39%). Some of the survey respondents also indicated that the municipality is ineffective or very ineffective in dealing with staff coaching (30,5%) as well as using staff development facilitators (30,5%).



4.1 Contextual and Systemic Issues

4.1.1 Environmental and Contextual Aspects

There are major environmental and contextual issues that affect the functioning of a municipality. These include issues such as infrastructure weaknesses, unemployment rates (specially youth unemployment), rapid urbanization, environmental factors such as climate change and migration from rural areas and other countries. More recently, the challenges also relate to the COVID-19 pandemic. The following quotes from our focus group discussions and interviews with senior municipal officials are reflective of this:

'In our country in the past people used to stay in rural areas. But through urbanisation people have moved from those areas to come to the cities. And then when they come to the cities, that has put pressure on the existing infrastructure; On your dam capacity, on your integrated risk management capacity, your power station's capacity and that in itself has led to the performance of municipalities deteriorating' (Junior level official, Focus Group).

'Our country now is receiving a lot of our own brothers from Africa and all over the world and that has put tremendous pressure on demand for services you know by these municipalities' (Junior level official, Focus Group).

'The issue of global warming has put pressure in terms of our water demand. Our dam levels are very low and then if you check in terms of performance, we are no longer giving water to our communities as required as mandated in terms of Section 152 and the National Water Act' (Junior level official, Focus Group).

'With the effects of COVID you are seeing most of our municipalities closing down (...) the economy is suffering and at the same time people are suffering because they cannot get services from the municipality. So it's a catch 22 situation, we should be closing down because we have a case of COVID, and at the same time, the community is expecting us to be functional and they're expecting us to provide them with services that are supposed to be (...) Intergovernmental relations, played a very important role here because in cases we could not provide a certain performance, or a certain function

to our community we had to engage our provincial department to assist' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

4.1.2 Lack of Knowledge and Trust in Government

Public officials spoke of the challenges experienced when communities do not understand clearly the different spheres and responsibilities of government. The inability to distinguish between national, provincial, and district and local levels creates frustrations both for public officials and for communities.

'This is a big challenge. We are experiencing directly the frustrations of communities. If a project from national did not get completed communities cannot distinguish between national and province, they just say government, and to them, government is municipality because it's the closest to them, and they can lash out at the municipality' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

As two middle level officials shared:

'During IDP engagements, the public can't tell between an IDP meeting that has been called by the district and the one called by the local municipality' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'I just received a call saying there is sewerage running in front of their house (...) now we have to explain that we do not deliver services, the local does, we support the local' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

This situation is further affected by a general and growing perception of municipal officials as not professionals, which in the experience of a middle level official is widely spread.

'People say, if you want to see people who does not have skills and capacity, go to local government (...) they even think we never even went to school because that's the perception' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

These negative perceptions seemed to come partly from the Apartheid legacy.

'In the past in our country due to the apartheid perceptions, blacks or Africans will only be appointed in municipalities as general workers. So, people have not actually moved away from that. They still see a black person in local government as an unskilled entity which cannot add any value. But that has changed' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

In Fezile Dabi a Senior Municipal Official has noted the situation and tried to take action.

'Municipal workers are perceived to be people who are not professional, people who do not know what they are doing, and most of all, people who cannot conduct themselves in a manner in which a public office bearer should be. So, I said let's change the mindsets (...) the perception of public sector is negative so rather let's change our perception and say, we are working for a private company, and behave in such a way or conduct ourselves in such a way (...) and we are winning in that, you know'. (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

4.1.3 Inter-governmental Disconnections

Intergovernmental relations within the District are mainly driven through the three interrelated structures—. The District Coordinating Forum, The Speakers Forum and the Technical Intergovernmental Relations Forum.

Public officials attending the focus group discussions were aware of the existence of Inter-governmental relations mechanisms. As a Senior Municipal Official explained, the municipality

depended on intergovernmental relations to be functional particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic hit the country. While some officials mentioned the well-functioning of some of these mechanisms, for other officials the challenge was the fact that various government agencies including national, provincial and municipalities develop their own systems which are not linked or coordinated between them. The perceptions of middle and senior officials illustrate the absence of generic systems, a silos approach and often results in projects that are not properly consulted, planned and budgeted. This reinforces issues of trust in government and dissatisfaction of communities as mentioned in the previous section.

'We don't have as local government well-coordinated and generic systems governing local government in the entire country. Municipalities in our country, they operate on a silo approach. Municipality A will have their own system although the government's framework is the same you know? We are all operating in terms of the Municipal Structures Act of 1998. We all operate in terms of your Municipal Systems Act of 2000. We're all expected to make use of the Municipal Finance Management Act of 2003 and other related regulations and so on. But however, in terms of application, we all develop our own generic systems. I mean our own individual systems. That's the other challenge which I think as local government practitioners we get confronted with. But however, when you get audited, the auditors are auditing us from a generic point of view' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'I talked about the silo approach. We as municipalities are expected to develop an Integrated Environmental Programme (IEP) and then province and national develop their own performance plans. National or Provincial departments developing their own projects without proper local consultation with communities or with district and local municipalities. Maybe they want to build an athletic track. They develop it. They dump it and then they go. You know what does that create? It creates problems. We'll have to look up that asset without available funding. And another end in terms of accountability, we are challenged. And then eventually you know what does that lead to? That leads to civil unrest. People, members of the public start you know coming and picket against the municipality, arguing they wanted houses, but government built an athletic track' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

In the experiences of officials, Inter-governmental Relations (IGR) mechanisms are mainly used to unblock bottlenecks and create synergies between different departments and projects. Departments have various intergovernmental mechanisms which are diverse and operate in various service delivery areas through regular meetings at different intervals, some sit quarterly, other bi-annually depending on the setup of the mechanism itself.

'I will answer on the IGR, because I co-ordinate IGR activities in the office of the Municipal Manager (...) We have a very functional IGR structure there are about 7 IGR structures, 5 of those are feeder to the main IGR structures. The main IGR structures are the Technical IGR and the Political IGR. Technical is where you get all MMs with all sector partners present. (...) so, all departments have their own IGR structures, now all the structures they all prepare reports for the main IGR (...) they dissect the items brought forward to them and then if they need to be escalated to political IGR where the political principals sit, then they could be escalated to the political IGR. So, the main objective of the IGR structure, the technical and the political IGR is to unblock bottlenecks, to come forward with different plans (...) I know we are best in Free State Province followed by I think Gariep. Our IGR structure is very functional' (Senior level official, Focus Group).

However, it is worth noting that for some officials at the middle level, the lack of coordination and support at the broader level is challenging.

'The Intergovernmental Relations Framework Act, when it was developed, it was developed to facilitate working relations, working together between all spheres of government, be it local, provincial and national. But at the end of the day all these spheres of government in the current set up, they are all having their own developmental agendas in their own offices and approach.' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Similarly, when it comes to municipal planning and coordination there are various challenges. These are related to the configuration of government, conflicting rationalities between the district and the municipal planning approach and confusion amongst officials around responsibilities, as well as competition for resources.

'Relationships with local municipalities is very challenging. Councillors in some committees are very uninformed and don't even understand the division of roles and responsibilities' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'I think if we're to measure the district municipality in terms of the role that it needs to play with regards to providing support to local municipalities, we're doing very bad. If you check the level of service delivery at local municipalities, there's very, very poor. If you check the level of unemployment in our municipalities, it's very poor' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'Local municipalities feel we have a big brother approach and are not often open to support. The problematic ones will not show up or take the District seriously. Instead of sending managers to meetings, they send an intern' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

The challenges result in disconnections between IDPs and also in the consultation process. As the critical voice of a middle level official highlights, these results in competencies and issues on planning, consultation and impact:

'We are planning alone. So, if we're supposed to play a role that will support local municipalities, then we're not doing the work. Are our integrated development plans actually strategy documents that speaks to real issues of service delivery within our local municipalities? Even when you do your consultation processes, we do our own consultation processes. They do their own consultation processes. Then how do you measure the two?' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

The officials go further to explain that there are issues of territoriality and competition which are also linked to the distribution of financial responsibilities and resources between the district and the local levels. The District Development approach³ advocated by the Presidency and driven by COGTA is seen as a light at the end of the tunnel, but these are early days to arrive to this inference.

'The issue with the local municipalities, we always compete for a territory. But because we don't have certain resources and they have, instead of assisting they come in to occupy the space because they have the financial resource to do something. So, we are more competitive than actually being of assistance to each other' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

³ In the 2019 SONA, President Cyril Ramaphosa identified the ***"pattern of operating in silos"*** as a challenge which led to ***"to lack of coherence in planning and implementation and has made monitoring and oversight of government programmes difficult"***. The proposed DDM launched by the President Cyril Ramaphosa is a practical IGR mechanism that aims to ensure an integrated and a single strategically focussed ***'One Plan'*** for each of the **44 districts** and **8 metropolitan** geographic areas in response to service delivery challenges (**52 Spaces**).

'The configuration of government may be a problem. District and local municipalities are fighting for the same 'turf'. One can generally say that the district may not be a necessary layer when compared to local' (Senior official, Interview).

'The District Development Planning (DDP) approach will make things better with local municipalities. Driven by National and it will help us to perform and relate better' (Senior official, Interview).

Overall, issues around context, environmental factors, social dynamics such as lack of trust and knowledge on public systems as well as the disconnections between municipalities and other spheres of government, affect the performance of the municipality. These factors are also intertwined with dynamics and challenges at the institutional level.

4.2 Institutional Challenges

4.2.1 Organisational Culture

In relation to the organizational culture of the municipality most officials, specifically middle and senior level, as well as the municipal manager agreed that while there is room for improvement and COVID-19 has affected the operations, it is an overall positive and encouraging culture which translates in good performance. Areas for improvement include developing a shared and clear vision.

'We are overall performing well. However, I cannot say we don't have challenges, like any other institutions. We do have challenges. I think our challenge is around motivation (...) for some reason we lost momentum in the municipality. And I think at the moment, with the challenge of COVID-19 we are losing even more momentum' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

There is also an understanding that since they are not really a service delivery institution, there is not so much pressure in terms of front-line delivery and performance. But one official shared how small steps go a long way to create a healthy organisational culture. These include respectful labour relations, a code of conduct and guidelines for time management and dress-codes. The following quotes illustrate some of the dominant perceptions:

'When you arrive at the reception of Dabi you feel you would like to work in this environment. The atmosphere itself encourages you' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'I can proudly and confidently say in our municipality, we are conducting everything professionally. (...) We have labour relations Act. we have the code of conduct (...) It's small things that somebody might think they are small but when you put them together and throw them in a basket, they become the things that give that perception. So, we are trying to deal with all those small things, like late coming is not allowed in our municipality. We are one municipality that even has biometrics where you must register your time' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

'Organizational culture is performance orientated. The municipality can be considered a high-performance municipality. People keep themselves in their 'lanes' – political and administrative. Structures and procedures are in place and the culture and environment is right, it is one of performance. The municipality has 154 employees which is a very controllable number' (Senior official, Interview).

While there are administrative and political divides and challenges a very senior official in one of the interviews, spoke positively of the interface with the politicians in relation to organizational matters:

'I think we are fortunate, even with our political leadership. It's a team of understanding and professional politicians, and our executive mayor (...). We have our weekly meetings. He does a lot of things, but he makes time to listen to our story in terms of administration, and if there are bottlenecks that he needs to unblock for us. We do have those interactions. The Speaker of the municipality of the council, we have professional meetings in Fezile Dabi before every council (...) So it makes it easy for us in our sessions of your portfolio committees, (...) but in our case, there's leadership. So, there's that professional spirit within the municipality and it makes it easy for us to be functional as a municipality' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

However, officials shared the challenges and frustrations about the working environment marked by the division between administrative and political functions, as well as responsibilities and staff.

'The biggest struggle of working in a municipality environment is the reality of the effect of politics in our work. That's number one that's the biggest challenge for us' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

'The problem is politicians are not taken through what we normally do as administrators where we look into what we want to achieve, how long it will take us, what it needs to take us. With them it's more about themselves' (Junior level official, Focus Group).

'What we identified in our department was the misunderstanding of our politicians on what your role is. There's a confusion with them when it comes to roles and responsibilities between district and local. We get enquiries and complaints and you now must convince the politician that it's not our role' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Although the organizational culture is overall perceived by officials as one of performance and professionalism, there are major weaknesses when it comes to strategic planning and internal communications. These were acknowledged by some of the middle and senior level officials.

'We have not been able to convene a strategic planning meeting for a long time so that all managers can be on the same page. We are weak on internal communication. This implies leaving behind lower-level employees when only executive management talks to each other' (Senior official, Interview).

More specifically, some middle managers highlighted the importance for having the strategic session as soon as possible to discuss reassigning some key activities, like for example the IT function which is currently under the CFO. They mentioned a qualified OD (organisational development) person should assist to develop the organisational structure further and more adequately.

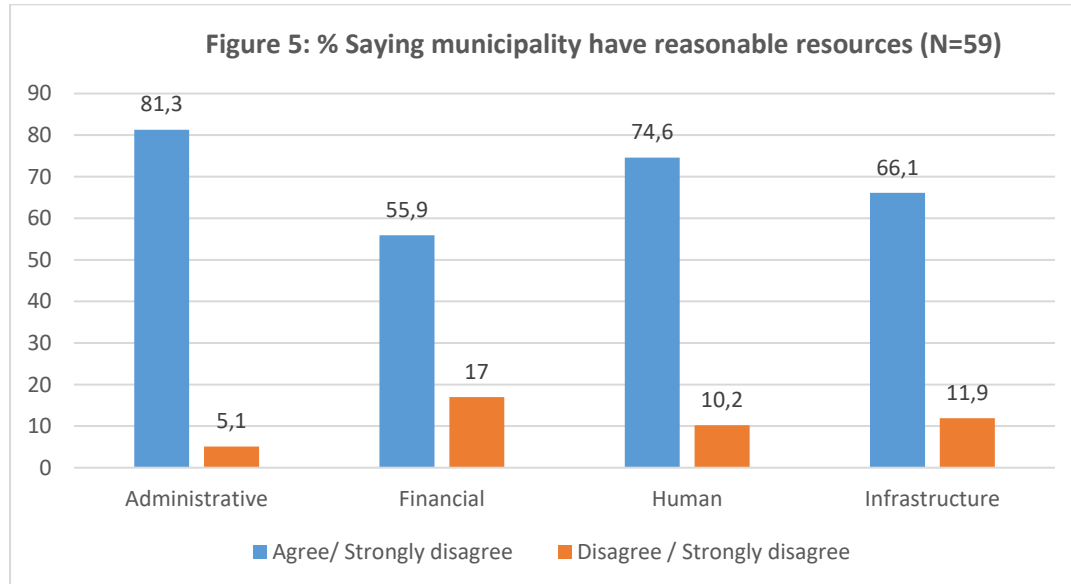
For some officials, the organisational culture is not properly communicated and therefore not internalised by lower-level employees. This creates a tension between just doing work for the sake of it and being a public servant that serves a developmental purpose. As another middle level official explains, this will at the end affect the capacity to perform well.

'You find out when you work, you just work to finish the job, not for the intended purpose' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'I come from a local municipality. I came here, people tend to think that I know what is happening and my first comment was; you have a different organisational culture. You have to introduce me to your vision, your mission and your culture. Once I understand that, I will actually operate optimally' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

4.2.2 Availability of Resources and Competing Demands

Figure 5 indicate that the largest proportion of the survey respondents agree or strongly agree (81.3%) that the municipality have reasonable administrative resources. About 74,6% agree or strongly agree that the municipality have reasonable human resources. However, a smaller proportion agree or strongly agree that the municipality have reasonable financial resources (55,9%).



In the focus group discussions officials considered the mandate of local government as developmental. However, it is difficult to fulfil this mandate if there are funding challenges. The funding model unviability is further affected by a smaller municipal budget allocation for district municipalities:

'I always think to myself we are expected to support locals, but we don't have any support through proper resources: Be it funds, finances. Be it skills. Be it with projects. They've taken away the regional service council levies, so we rely strictly on the grant. It's not enough for the entire municipality. We are no longer receiving rates as we used to receive. That was stopped and now national government is giving a certain allocation to us. And I'm worried that every year the allocation we get is smaller. The locals can still make money. They're selling electricity. They're selling water. Rates and taxes and all. So, they're actually richer than the district' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'But we try to support. It's more from knowledge of management than with finance. We just do not have financial capacity to assist our local municipalities' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Other concerns were the lack of support from other spheres of government and inadequate funding for some of their mandates.

'When municipal health services, environmental health was moved from local municipalities and brought to districts, that mandate was not funded properly. Now recently we have Air Quality Act where certain responsibilities were removed from national department and were given to district municipalities. No funding followed that mandate' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'Provincial role is to support the District municipality – but we don't get that supportive role, they are constrained. If we have enough resources, then we can be in a position to support local municipality' (Department Director, Interview).

Officials spoke also of specific resources such as cars to move around the district, travel allowances for field workers and for employees located in local municipalities. Similarly, there are concerns about ICT capacity. Various officials highlighted the need to invest both in hardware and software to make the most of technological advances, doing it in a way that benefits all relevant employees and not only senior officials.

'Its a resource constrain, and I don't think everyone [is] treated equally. It's a frustration and I'm talking on behalf of the staff who needs to do the job (...) they can't email. They can't scan' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'As you switch on your laptop, the first thing you want to check is the internet icon, is the email working? It's very stressful. We are not ready for the 4IR' (Junior level official, Focus Group).

The lack of resources has become particularly evident and challenging during the difficult times of COVID -19 as most of public officials were required to work from home during the hard lock down restrictions.

'The reality of COVID is that everybody should be having at least a smartphone or so to make it possible for them to have meetings. And now with the new norm of people having to work from home, we are going to have to spend more on data' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

According to some officials, staff stationed in some local municipalities have less access to resources and therefore encounter difficulties to perform optimally. All these factors, as a senior director acknowledges, affects both staff's capacity and morale, making it necessary for directors like herself to identify alternative resources from the private sector in order to support their own line of work.

'The staff becomes demoralized with no money. We are trying to identify private companies to present them our business plan for my department and look for support' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

Lastly, several officials mentioned how the lack of adequate resources also affects the capacity of the municipality to hire and keep the right people, which affects performance through a pervasive combination of being underfunded and understaffed in some areas.

'Understaffing is a problem because national changed the law to say districts and metros must render environmental health services, but it didn't [come] with enough money' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'The resources that are available to us as an institution makes it a bit difficult for us to fill the posts. Remuneration of CFO is for example not very attractive, so it is a battle to fill such a position' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'One of the reasons for low performance is not acquiring or attracting the right skilled people in salary levels. What municipalities can pay is not attractive' (Senior level official, Focus Group).

Lastly, when it come to the issue of competing demands, the experiences of officials also illustrated the tension between financial compliance having clean audits and service delivery that occurs in all municipalities. This affects the functioning of the district municipality.

'We all work towards attainment of clean audits and then we compromise service delivery. (...) if you go and check all those municipalities that are receiving clean audits, they are municipalities that are afraid to render their powers and functions and they are afraid to spend. Because if they spend more, chances are they'll make mistakes, but then eventually service delivery gets affected' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

4.3 Community Engagement

Public participation is recognised to be of pivotal importance in decision-making processes of the municipal council. As a district municipality, engagement with communities is done around specific areas such as awareness of laws and budgets or campaigns in specific themes such as environmental health. According to the municipality's annual report 2018/19, the municipality relied on public inputs through consultation processes such as meetings to inform the Integrated Development Plans, Budgets, Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan (SDBIP) and Performance Plans.

4.3.1 Understandings and Approaches

Officials see and experience engaging with communities and public participation in different ways, depending on their department and responsibilities they speak of being a legal requirement or a service provided by the municipality.

'This [public participation] gets done primarily by the political offices through campaigns. But from the perspective of the office of the Speaker, it will be more awareness on legislation. Whatever changes in law, communities must be made aware (...) [Also] in instances of budgets, we have to talk new budgets. We have to go back to the communities and involve them. We call this public participation (...) We are required to publish by-laws, municipal health by-laws, air quality by-laws. I think it's a legal requirement that we publish those' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'Mostly our engagement with communities is on public participation (...) it's in a form of service delivery. We're rendering a service to them' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'We have got our own budget brochure that we take our budgets to the community and they also put inputs on there so what we are going to spend on, where they will tell us reduce there and there and so forth, but our budget doesn't speak to the basic needs on the ground you know. Our budget speaks to a higher level' (Senior level official, Focus Group).

A senior official speaking about the environmental health department (Environmental Health and Community Services) explained that since it comprises of Environmental Health Services, Environmental Management, Disaster Management and Fire Services, they do what they call educational awareness.

'Our directorate has got a lot to do with the communities. We've got a community development approach rather than a law enforcement approach because we're not successful with law enforcement. To get the message over we've experienced that numbers doesn't do it for us. To give me a thousand people is chaos to talk to a whole school. We will rather target the grade seven B class and make sure we leave them with a message and something (...) When it is the time of fire hazards, we do have awareness to tell them the procedures that they can do (...) also we do make sure that the community know that we are under drought, we have having drought everywhere so disaster will take over that (...) in environmental health talks it is all about cleanliness at hospitals, shops, schools, etc.' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'We deal with the community (environmental health, fire, disaster management). Our mandate requires this. We involve them through different structures and fora to come and learn and take ownership. Have bilateral and open discussions. Capacitate them to operate in the community through

these fora – like disaster management. My managers are encouraged to be on site, to be visible in the communities’ (Senior level official, Focus Group).

Similarly, beyond awareness campaigns, other officials spoke of various developmental activities and projects around economic development as part of what they perceive as community engagement.

‘Regarding the LED department, they engage a lot of the public because there is arts and culture development where they assist young artist. There is social development where they assist crèches with equipment and old age homes and there is local economic development where they assist small business in order to grow their business to alleviate poverty, and employment physically’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

4.3.2 Limitations

For all officials, while engaging communities is an essential element of governance, it is experienced as a challenging space given issues such as the disjuncture between communities’ and government interests and priorities.

‘(...) our communities have other priorities. Our communities are not interested in air quality issues. They have other priorities. Our communities are concerned about a plate of food tonight. They’re not worried about air pollution’ (Junior level official, Focus Group).

Similarly, several officials spoke about the need to improve processes in order to involve other stakeholders, ensuring diverse communities and people are engaged through more relevant mechanisms.

‘We preach to the same, (...) you know more especially if you check our young people, they don’t prefer eye to eye contact for consultation. They prefer to use you know cell phone devices and so on (...) Ensure that through your Facebook and so on, social media, we become strong enough so that we also get these people that we cannot get through outreach programs’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

‘Well, I’m part of every community engagement whether it’s outreach program, whether it’s consultation with regard to budget and to the IDP. We’re doing very good. But maybe what we need to improve is on variety. Whether it’s the budget, it’s the same audience. So, we need to develop ways to reach other people that we are not able to reach in terms of your public consultation’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Some officials believed the municipality needs to try to reach out and include the perspectives of diverse stakeholders such as businesses, academics and retired citizens who hold valuable experiences.

‘There’s one last thing that I’ve realised also is we are talking very less to the business community which is a very important component when it comes to local community development. We don’t. We seldom talk to them. Maybe in a year we go once to talk to business community. And sometimes when you meet them in other meetings, they will tell you that we also want to invest in our community but there is no-one approaching us. So, we need to improve here’ (Senior level official, Focus Group).

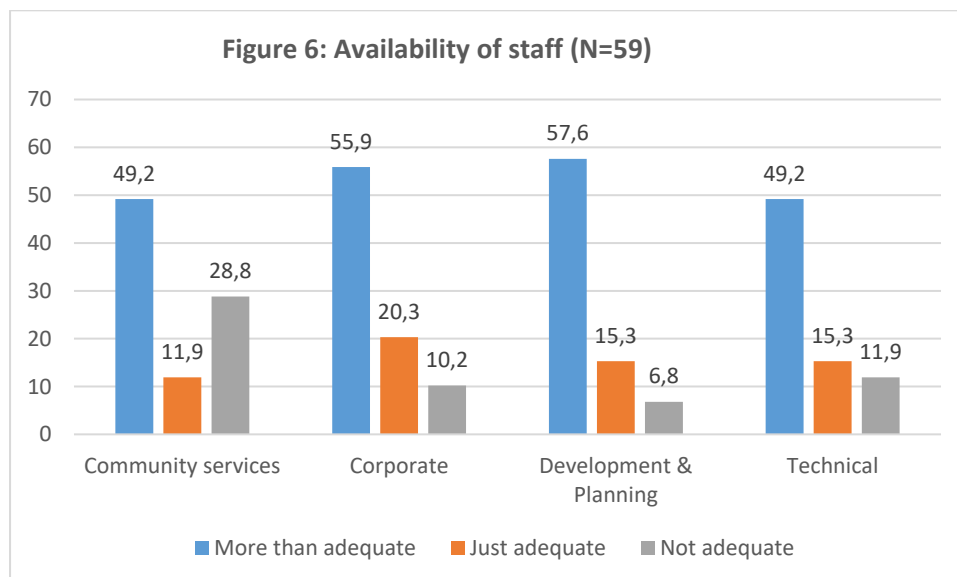
‘So, the proposal is that to improve public participation, we not only target those people that you will find at home, we also want the inputs of business, we even need the inputs of academic scholars, the pensioners everyone, every stakeholder in the community’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Overall, the discussions on the limitations of current approaches and practices, highlighted that specific and adequate skills around public participation and community engagement are an important gap. Some of their ideas for improvement are discussed in the next section.

4.4 Capacity and Skills

4.4.1 Human Resources

Looking at the availability of staff, the survey showed that a larger proportion of respondents felt the municipality have “more than adequate” staff for development and planning (57,6%) as well as for corporate services (55,9%) (Figure 6). However, a smaller proportion of respondents felt that they have more than adequate staff for community services (49,2%) and technical services (49,2%). It is interesting to note that the largest proportion of respondents felt that they do not have enough staff for community services (28,8% indicating that it is “not adequate”) followed by technical services (11,9% indicating that it is “not adequate”).



Officials that participated in the focus groups and key informant interviews pointed to an imbalance between administrative staff and technical officials which, as the quotes below illustrate, affects performance as technically qualified people are needed for some tasks, and could create an imbalance with some employees working more than others.

‘So basically, what we have, we have a lot of your general administrative people, but we don’t have adequate specialized areas, like I mentioned, your environmental management practitioners and disaster management. Emergency services and disaster management are our core functions, and at the moment, we only have, like I said, very few people. We are very strict with the qualifications and the skills that we want, we don’t just take somebody to do disaster management. So those are the skills that we are lacking’ (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

‘I have observed a situation whereby we are handling a lot of ‘warm bodies’ we are paying here every month, but they’re doing nothing. You know it’s a reality whether we like it or not. And then that’s

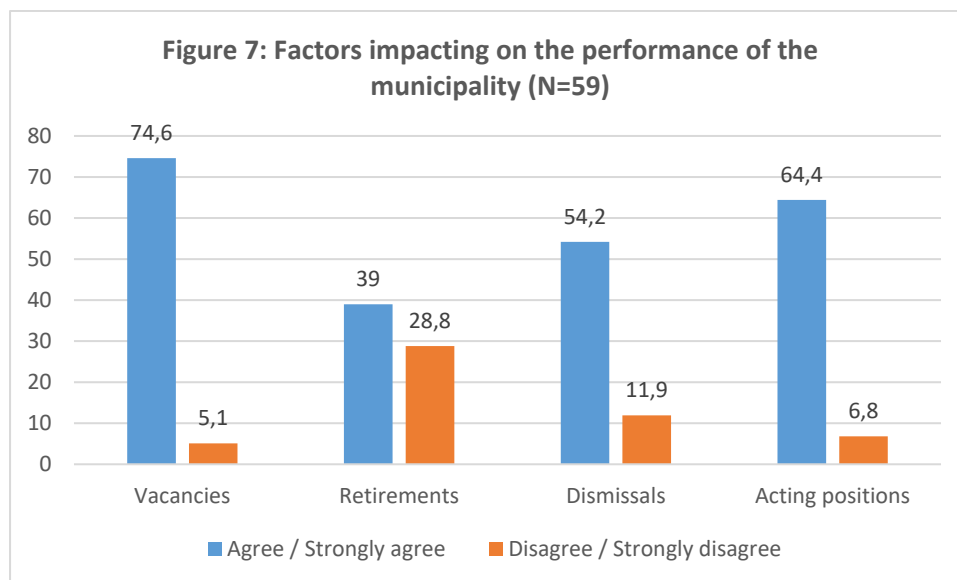
one point that we must go and look into. We must look at the root cause of that' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Specific areas lacking more resources are for instance legal and human resources.

'I feel that in our municipality we lack a legal team, we only have one legal adviser. And that person must juggle between all legal matters as well as labour related matters and that becomes too much.' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

'Human resources is not only management of leave. You know for me that remains our biggest challenge [at Human Resources Department]. We're only three full time practitioners and then we are an organisation that has? Hundred and fifty-four? And you can imagine having hundred and fifty-four employees with a full time Human Resources, functional of only three people and two colleagues are interns. For me, it's scary and it tells you that some of the things from a human resource point of view will not be done properly. It's the biggest challenge' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

The aforesaid is further exacerbated by the fact that several staff in key managerial and leadership positions are in acting positions, often only on short-term contracts. As the survey shows a larger proportion of respondents felt that vacancies impact the most (74,6%) on the performance of the municipality. This is followed by the impact of acting positions (64,4%), dismissals (54,2%) and lastly retirement (39%) (Figure 7).



This situation is not ideal for the municipality's performance and shows a high level of unmitigated risks.

'There is a challenge with acting positions and replacing leadership positions (...) Currently in our municipality these positions are vacant and we the people who are working here, we don't want to apply for that. Because one, we talked about the issue of them being on contract. It's very risky getting appointed in that position (...) chances are if you get appointed now, you'll serve for a period of three years [linked to the political term of office]and then after that, you are not sure whether you are coming or going' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'A challenge is failure to fill critical positions that requires leadership (...). To date, our institution is still in a vacuum in terms of two critical senior managers. The one for local economic development which is where you want to start development from, and secondly, your Chief Financial Officer. You cannot

operate without the CFO. For me a CFO is a very critical position that must be filled for the purpose of making decisions and for purposes of leadership’ (Senior level official, Focus Group).

Related to the aforementioned concerns, a major challenge identified by one middle-level official and acknowledged by other colleagues was an individualistic culture and the absence of functional succession plans and systems to retain institutional knowledge beyond individuals who for one reason or another leave the institution.

‘The challenges that we are faced with are lack of basic human resources. I’m responsible for monitoring and evaluation. The challenge that I have is that I’m the only custodian in that office’. I work alone and there is no succession and there is no review mechanisms in place. When I do my work, I do my work alone and complete and done and dusted. And majority of my work, because it is strategic in nature, happens to be externally and internally audited. But there is no opportunity for my work to be reviewed by another person’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

‘The issue of being loners in our own work is an issue (...) and like I said there’s no proper succession planning. (...) If I were to leave the institution tomorrow, it means things will die. I’m responsible for monitoring and evaluation which is the anchor of the institution because all your reports flow into monitoring and evaluation. All your plans flow into monitoring and evaluation and if you leave, there’s nobody to take over.’ (...) Because people don’t just leave because of greener pastures. People die. People get disabled. You know there are a number of factors’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Other two issues mentioned by officials referred to the need to strengthen the induction and orientation processes so that officials are better aware of strategic documents, and also have better understanding of the boundaries of their roles. Both of these tasks are expected to be performed by the Human Resources Department, which as discussed earlier, has limited resources.

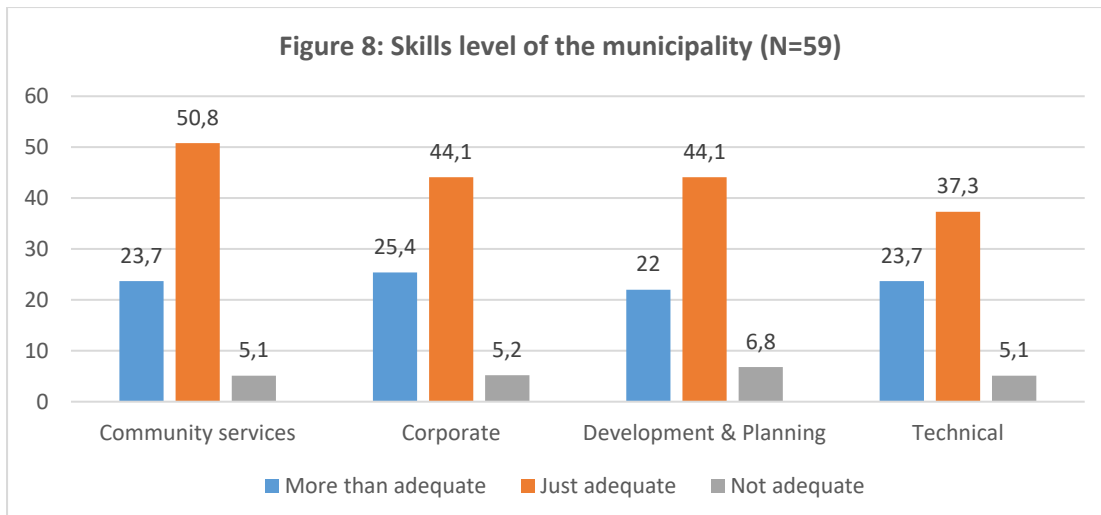
‘Our orientation mechanisms towards the understanding of the vision and the culture of the institution upon being appointed is not strong. That’s one area that we need to strengthen. But the assumption is everybody knows what they have to do and I’m saying no, that’s not true, because you have a number of strategic documents that you have to understand’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

‘We will need assistance from Human Resources because most of the people in this institution, they don’t have boundaries. They can’t know roles and responsibilities. Some of them are beyond their roles and responsibilities (...) So if maybe our Human Resources can assist a lot on that one to give people a detailed job description and to emphasise on that, that you don’t go beyond your job description provided’ (Junior level official, Focus Group).

4.4.2 Qualifications, Skills and Capacity

The Municipal Regulation on Minimum Competency Levels (2007) set out the minimum competency levels that must be met by the Accounting Officer; Chief Financial Officer; Senior Managers of the Municipality, Supply Chain Management Officials and other related Financial Officials.

When examining the skills level of the municipality, the survey found that for most respondents the municipality has ‘just adequate’ skills to perform its functions, but with still room for improvement. Only 25.4% of the survey respondents indicated that the municipality have “more than adequate skills” for corporate services, 23,7% was recorded for community services, 23.7% for technical services and 22% for development and planning (Figure 8).



As it was discussed in the previous section, and as the quote below highlights, Fezile Dabi seems to have an adequate number of skilled people, therefore, lack of skills and capacity is not naturally identified as a major constrain by its top leadership or senior and middle managers.

'I think generally, our municipality is one of the lucky municipalities, and if I can put it that way. Like, in essence, that is a reality that in many municipalities you find people occupying positions, and yet they are not skilled for those positions. And fortunately, in this municipality. Almost 80% of our officials are highly skilled people, and they are occupied in the correct positions. And then, as a result, this is making it a bit easy for us as a municipality in terms of performance and the expectation of what is expected of our officials' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

This perception filters down with officials placed in technical functions, as in their experience they have adequate skills to perform their tasks and there are high levels of compliance in this regard:

'In my unit yes. To be an environmental health practitioner you must have a minimum qualification of a diploma or a degree. You must be registered with the Health Professions Council as an independent practitioner and we all comply' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

As one official explained, there is a direct correlation between adequate skills especially from managers and levels of achievement, pointing also that while not his experience, other units and colleagues have been challenged when not having directors with the adequate skills.

'The reason why I think we are successful in our directorate, our director is a qualified environmental health practitioner. So, managing the environmental management unit is an environmental health practitioner. So, I'm not sitting with the problem that other colleagues are sitting with' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

But a different perspective is shared in relation to the skills available in political appointments, with officials highlighting the importance for good practitioners to be deployed and retained in political offices.

'I will always have a concern with political offices. Political offices most of the time do not compliment the other offices which are specialised offices simply because if somewhere a politician comes in, the politician comes in with his or her people irrespective of qualifications that they have. If he feels I want to take this one, my cousin, they will be employed in that office because it is based more on trust than delivery. (...) But they must be able to understand all different forms of legislations across the

departments. So, if you could have even in political offices what departments would do in terms of skills, then we would have a complete institution’ (Junior level official, Focus Group).

‘You have good people employed in those offices. But every five years they leave. When is the end of the term, comes a new practitioner that does not understand organisational culture. You have to start from scratch to make this person to understand’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Importantly, some officials also spoke of the need to adequately place skills and resources to make the most of what is available.

‘You often have the skills and capacities, but they are misplaced (...) in some instances you may find that we have personnel. We have skills but they are misplaced. Just by relocating one person, you might solve some of the problems that we have’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Following this same line of thinking, another official explained the need to have more flexibility around requirements such as specific requisite skills to fill positions – that rather focus on the experiences and value that a person could bring. This is specifically applicable for existing staff to allow existing capacities to be better deployed and grow people into a more structured career path of public service.

‘We would always want people’s CVs. But these are wanted for purposes of files. But we can look at what I have done before in terms of what I can contribute in an institution like this by virtue of skills, experience and competencies. Specially for people already employed in the municipality. For instance, if he has outgrown himself in terms of what he’s achieving there. And by virtue of his skills and competencies, he can actually assist in that office. Let’s have him and put him there and then we can get somebody that we have groomed in the process and put him in his place’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Overall, it was clear throughout the conversations that all officials understand the efficiency challenges when local government lacks the right skill set and the importance of skills development plans.

4.4.3 Skills Development Strategies

Plans and systems to develop skills are in place since it is a legal compliance, but also something that the municipal leadership as well as other senior officials takes seriously. The municipal leadership acknowledged that in their experience this is not a major priority in all spheres of government, but they believe there is value and need for skills development strategies.

‘The Fezile Dabi senior officials emphasised that we are giving skills development a serious take in our municipality, but generally in our sphere of government, in municipalities, you find that skills development is not taken seriously. And that is why you will find a wrong placement; you will find the people who do not possess right skills to be in a specific office. But generally, I think the policies that we have at the moment are working very well, I feel that we must just make sure that when we enforce them in our area of work, we do that correctly, and we do it in a manner that will capacitate other officials’ (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

‘We have a work skills plan that is circulated amongst employees to check what skills they need. In my team is a choice, but usually I assist them in writing something that is within their career. Make sure it is aligned with their career path and our needs in the department. The municipality also has Continual Development Points (CDP) to refresh knowledge and trainings are regular for employees such as firefighters and environmental health practitioners (...) There is a form that you fill annually where you

determine the skills gaps, capacity needs and training requests so that a budget will be structured accordingly' (Another Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

Skills development takes place in terms of the Work Place Skills Development Plan (WSP). The WSP are submitted to the LGSETA, and the municipality receives benefits from the skills levy. There are also discretionary funds to up-skill youth in the district. According to some officials several employees have advanced their education with the support of the municipality. As indicated previously the municipality provided bursaries to over 70 youth community members to further their tertiary education (Fezile Dabi, Annual Report 2019).

A focus group participant indicated that another municipal official obtained a Master's degree. And if you ask him who assisted him towards that, the Masters degree that he has, it is the institution. The institution offered everything for him to be able to attend that. Not only him. There's other lot of colleagues including myself. I benefited from the support of the municipality to push my post graduate qualifications to a level of Masters' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Some officials also noted that aside from skills offered by the municipality, other government institutions offer and request specific qualifications from public officials.

'With us in finance for example, you have to be qualified to work in finance, with a Commerce Degree or whatsoever but what treasury does is that we all must have a minimum competency level certificate that we get (...) which is a Municipal Finance Management Programme that we all get regardless if you are CA or a whatever you must go and get that certificate, it just top up' (Senior level official, Focus Group).

Several officials also pointed out to their concerns about the readiness of the municipality to embrace the IT revolution and have the skills needed to embrace and make the most of developments in this field.

'Right now, we're talking Fourth Industrial Revolution. How is it going to impact in terms of the skills needed towards the organisation? What kind of strategies and policies we can put in place to develop people so that we are ready when we reach that point where everything is digital' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Similarly, one of the senior officials explained the importance for senior managers to be trained in specific and strategic areas such as politics, communication and soft skills that will allow for better leadership and management.

'For management we need training, in-house, the same as municipal finance but also political studies as a certificate to understand the political environment. Also, communications and Executive Leadership training where we learn about emotional intelligence and important soft skills.' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

Interestingly, officials also mentioned the importance of supporting junior colleagues and those employees at the lowest levels.

'You must also have skills development initiatives that are at their level [lower-level employees]. Like those who do not have matric because I am a firm believer that we cannot appoint as a cleaner and that person will die a cleaner. So, our skills development initiatives should try to focus on such interventions that a person cannot stay in the same level for the rest of their lives' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Although the system is in place, officials with a more critical view highlighted some of the problems with the implementation of the strategy such as lack of funds, lack of deep understanding of skills needs and lack of human resources to support officials when they go for training.

'I don't think our skills strategy it's done in a right way. I'm saying this because for me, if I am a training person, I have to know your skill set for me to know where are your lacks. This needs to be done by you and your manager (...). Then somebody has been here for five or ten years and has not been trained' (Junior level official, Focus Group).

'The Skills Department always complains about lack of budget (...) It is a struggle and you cannot take people to training' (Senior level official, Focus Group).

'In our case, if I go for a conference for a week, when I come back my work is still waiting for me' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

But beyond the shortcomings of the strategy, some of the senior officials proposed ideas for improvement. This included to complement existing efforts, taking stock of what has happened to move forward and strengthening the Human Resources department for it to drive a better strategy forward.

'If we can give that department a bigger budget for training staff that will be good. Encourage people to also do it for themselves, even if the municipality helps halfway. We could also explore partnerships with universities or education institutions to help us train people cheaper. (...) Look at specific areas of work, for instance, environmental law short courses' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

'I think it's necessary to take stock. You can't just correct it overnight. I think the municipality must take stock and really see what we have. Is this what we need or what must we do to adjust? And that links to our strategic planning which is long overdue' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

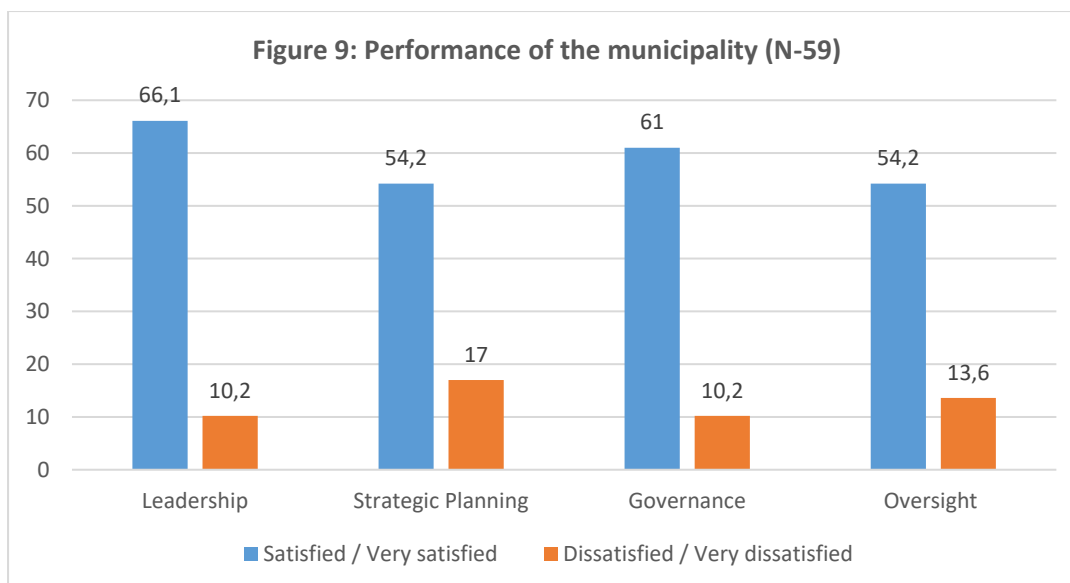
'Our Human Resources is so incapacitated to the extent that it's not fulfilling all the responsibilities. The Department - must go and do a thorough study in terms of what skills are needed. And have the ability to say how to take this municipality to further heights in ten years. What are the gaps that we need to close' (Middle level official, Focus Group)?

4.4.4 Management and Leadership

Good leadership is acknowledged by officials from various levels who recognize the support from their senior officials and interestingly, the significance of female leadership in the organization.

'I always say I think I've got one of the best directors in the country. If she tells you, she supports you, she supports you. She's putting her head on the block. So, I'm privileged to have this in the municipality. She's also very hands-on. She can make necessary decisions where necessary. So, and these are women. And I'm saying at least as an institution from a woman empowerment point of view, we were so fortunate and lucky to have within our midst a woman in this senior position who are capable in terms of providing leadership' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

The high levels of satisfaction with management and leadership is also visible in the 66.1% of officials who mentioned they were satisfied or very satisfied with the performance of the leadership, (Figure 9).



Beyond support, as officials kept explaining, good leadership involves traits such as decision making, having a clear vision and getting people behind the attainment of such a vision.

‘We are very fortunate in our case to have had in our midst a very good leader. A visionary. And for me I always say a good leader is not someone who is supposed to know how to patch the computer. It is a person who is supposed to be able to lead a team towards the attainment of the vision. In our case we are fortunate we are having such a person who’s also able to make decisions. One thing I like about our leader is her decision making. A good leader is a leader who makes decisions whether good or bad. But as long as such decisions are taken’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Another positive perception from middle and senior level officials is that leaders treat staff as humanly as possible and not just as ‘workers’. As one of the senior municipal officials explained this comes from a professional but also from a caring approach:

‘In Fezile Dabi we believe in encouraging employees and looking after their well-being for them to be productive. Balancing their needs. This perspective comes from the top leadership in the municipality, as females we somehow feel like mothering our employees, understanding they are important. (...) I am goal orientated and I believe in encouraging to support together and shine as a team. I see weaknesses as an opportunity to provide support. My role is not to distract but to build, have a constructive approach’ (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

Similarly, other officials spoke how good leadership in their experience involves a capacity to delegate, develop trust in working relationships and most importantly capacitate middle managers and those working under you. In the perception of officials this is primarily based on personal and behavioural traits.

‘Your leadership is always as good as your middle management. That kind of a leader is a very good leader who doesn’t have to be there to see things happening. Because she doesn’t have to be there to see things happening (...) when there is a crisis, that’s when perhaps you could see her. But most of the time she will be busy with other things because she has a good layer which she had developed by virtue of her character and personality’ (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'I think there's mutual trust. I always tell my unit that listen man, we've got all the support we want so don't disappoint our director. And I think this is what we also do with the Municipal Manager and with the Directors. We don't give them a reason to have sleepless nights over operations. So, I think we are proud to say that on a middle management level we are very strong and committed and reliable' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Reflecting on the relationships with leadership upwards, one of the directors explained how the good performance of senior management is encouraged by the support and availability of top management.

'It is nice to work with the accounting officer who is always available, she is always available around the clock. Whether it is at night, in the early hours of the morning, she is always busy you send her something you want an answer, you are sure to get it (...) it pushes me to do my job' (Department Director, Interview).

Lastly, it is worth noting the perception that satellite offices are overall in a weaker position when it comes to availability of strong management.

'Satellite offices do not have similar levels of supervisions comparable with head office. A challenge is that people are not always in positions that commensurate with their skills and experience' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

4.4.5 Skills for Engagement

Various officials spoke of the need to strengthen public participation and community engagement skills. According to a senior municipal official any approach to improve skills and engagement with communities needs to be grounded on the developmental nature of local government and the challenges of working with communities.

'You cannot go and interact with your communities, if your mindset is not on a developmental mode (...) Let me say during our IDP engagements, you find that communities want a road, for example, and they mentioned it as a priority, but when you look into the infrastructure, you find that you cannot have a tarred road when you don't have water. So, you must be in a position to enlighten our people and make them aware that for four pipes of water to run, obviously, we need the roads in this state, let us put the pipes and then after work then we can put to the road rather than starting with the road and then into the various multiple pipes' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

The top senior municipal official therefore highlighted the importance of capacitating those officials in charge of community engagement with requisite skills.

'So, you should be able to articulate and have good communication skills for you to be able to put the message across to draw the people. But most importantly, I think, as a community or a public participation person you must be somebody who is compassionate, who is passionate about people, and seeing people. So, I think basically, those are the skills. And then you must have good writing skills, because you must be able to communicate the needs that you collected from the community into a report that can be processed by our politicians and by managers (...) be in a position to write a proper report, state all the effects and, and give a clear picture of what is needed in our communities.' (Senior Municipal Official, Interview).

The importance of building capacity in this area was also acknowledged by other officials:

'This thing of public participation start way earlier than when you address the people: when you invite the person, it's the first thing. When you arrive and your presence and attitude. (...) And I think we need the training. Proper training to do that because there are really people who mustn't talk to the public. There are a few admin officers who mustn't face the public. They must sit in the back office, not the front office and we need the training on that customer care. (...) We made it a priority. You'll see in the management lately it's one of our successes. We've made a point that we implement the proper customer care at our satellite offices. So that when someone knock at the door, then the right person opens it. Be equipped to address the public. So, I think we need that' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

This initial comment shared by an official was echoed by others in the group discussion who mentioned elements such as ethics, gaining communication skills and being exposed to relevant processes and mechanisms. This does not require accredited training.

'So, I think there's a need for proper training. There's a component of ethics. How you treat the public' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'We need proper communication skills to deal with variations in terms of people and how to understand people's emotions at a given instance. And somebody would explode and talk about something that is not even part of the agenda. You don't have to get angry with communities you know? You need to know how to bring them to where we are. You need to have such skills. It's not something that comes automatically. One needs to be trained into it.' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

'We don't need something that is accredited. We can have a day or two away where we get somebody who tells us how to go about it. It doesn't have to be an accredited course all the time. But we really need those' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

Lastly, as one official explained, exposure to professionals or other institutions who could help officials reflect on their experiences, will be useful in terms of building that internal capacity, and also avoid further exhaustion in communities.

'It comes with experience (...) But still if you don't get professional training on it, you might be thinking what you're doing is right only to find out for ten years you've been doing something wrong. That is why the community is exhausted because you are not hitting the right notes' (Middle level official, Focus Group).

5. Concluding Remarks

As discussed throughout the findings section, there is a variety of issues affecting the overall performance, capacity and skills of the municipality. These include contextual and systemic issues related to environmental constraints, socio-political challenges, inter-governmental disconnections and issues around municipal planning and coordination. The experiences of entry-level, mid-level and senior-level municipal officials in relation capacity and skills, as well as inter-related factors are our entry point to suggests some ideas on where to improve skills and capacity-building interventions in the municipality. These suggestions and insights speak to the importance of management and leadership in skills development, of institutional systems and culture, of the need to create capacity to facilitate internal and external collaborations, and lastly developing skills for community engagement and nurturing relationships with external stakeholders.

Indeed, as discussed in section two, being a District Municipality, Fezile Dabi has developed its strategic objectives primarily around performance areas which require a diverse set of skills and adequate capacity. The three core areas, namely i) Basic Service Delivery and Infrastructure Investment, ii) Local Economic Development and iii) Good Governance and Public Participation require both specialised technical expertise, but also skills such as communication, coordination, planning, supporting and facilitation. The significance of the latter is particularly salient. Fezile Dabi's governance and participation performance area requires, according to their own planning, promoting effective communication and coordination of structures and systems; supporting and capacitating councillors, ward committees and community development workers, promoting and facilitating intergovernmental relations amongst stakeholders in the district and strengthening a meaningful community participation and interaction program.

Considering that in general, lack of skills and capacity is not naturally identified as a major constrain by officials who overall feel there is an adequate number of skilled people and adequate staff for their key functions (development and planning, corporate services, community services and technical services) any strategy to improve skills and capacity further needs to be nuanced, adapted to particular needs and ideally co-developed with officials.

In light of the aforesaid, the following three entry points, which are based on the perspectives of officials, propose to develop skills strategies focusing in these broad areas. First, on building upon the existing positive factors (such as good leadership and management practices), second, on addressing organisational factors, and lastly, identifying and developing targeted skills to better perform on key areas (such as interactions with stakeholders and political training).

Build upon the positive factors

The overall positive management and leadership set-up presents an entry point to overcome some of the constraints around skills and capacity. Middle and senior level officials perceived that leaders treat staff as humanly as possible and not just as 'workers'. Therefore, leaders could become more pro-active in driving a new agenda for skills developments that could be built into their strategic discussions and plans as mentioned by some middle-level officials. The fact that good leadership is acknowledged by officials from various levels who recognize the support from their senior officials and interestingly, the significance of female leadership in the organization, opens a door for starting an inclusive and reflective process to co-develop a relevant strategy with various employees and stakeholders.

In the perceptions of officials, good leadership involves traits such as decision making, having a clear vision and being aligned to the idea that *'Your leadership is always as good as your middle management'*. This vision is encouraging as it suggests an understanding of the strategic importance of developing skills plans that grow officials into stronger management positions, as this is key for good performance.

Organisational culture

The second entry point to develop pathways for further skills and capacity improvement relates to organisational culture. Although it is a positive starting point that the organizational culture is overall perceived by officials as one of performance and professionalism, there are major weaknesses when it comes to strategic planning and internal communications that need to be addressed.

An important issue here is the challenges and frustrations that come with a working environment marked by the division between administrative and political functions, responsibilities and staff. Addressing this matter, requires identifying and developing skills and capacity to overcome this issue which permeates many other areas.

Similarly, officials highlighted the need to strengthen the team- work ethos, tackling an individualistic culture and developing functional succession plans for when officials leave the organisation. These three organisational factors require developing systems and practices based on relevant skills and with adequate capacity. Here, it is important to highlight that notwithstanding the need to strategically support middle level officials as a priority, building capacity from below needs to be seriously considered.

Importantly, several officials mentioned how the lack of resources affects the capacity of the municipality to hire and keep the right skills, which affects performance through a perverse combination of being underfunded and understaffed in some areas. Also, the challenge of having key managerial and leadership posts in acting positions creates an environment of uncertainty which is made more pervasive by the constraints in key areas lacking more resources, like the finance, legal and human resources departments. In contrary, a municipality can have requisite skills in these areas, but if the organisational culture is not conducive enough, it obviously could trigger turnovers which over a long run, would deplete the very available skills capacity in the same municipality.

Overall, the organisation's culture and systems need to allow the complementarity of existing efforts around skills development, taking stock of what has happened in order to move forward. Very urgent and important seems to be the strengthening of the Human Resources department for it to have more capacity and be able to drive a better a renewed strategy forward through the support of leadership as explained earlier.

Specific and strategic skills

The voices of officials and their experiences point to the importance of identifying and prioritising specific sets of skills, especially for the mid-term. These specific skills include amongst others; i) political training so that the interface between the political and administrative could be more beneficial and harness efficiencies, ii) Well thought and tailored skills development interventions to build interaction capacity with external stakeholders and, iii) ICT training (accompanied with resources) for the municipality to make the most of technological opportunities.

As one of the directors explained the importance for senior managers to be trained in specific and strategic areas such as politics, communication and soft skills will allow for better leadership and management, and therefore performance.

Similarly, a very significant suggestion by various officials was to provide capacity and skills to improve interactions with stakeholders (public institutions, communities and civil society). While for all officials, engaging communities is an essential element of governance, it is experienced as a challenging space given issues such as the disjuncture between communities' and government interests and priorities. Therefore, there is an urgency and importance to provide key skills to those officials in charge of community engagement and those wanting to develop collaborative relationships. This does not imply long accredited courses, but instead focused interventions. The specific set of skills needed, should be identified with those officials most exposed to engagement

work. As such, one official said that exposure to professionals or other institutions who could help officials reflect on their experiences, will also be useful in terms of building that internal capacity. It is therefore surprising that not one of the officials that participated in the study mention the National School of Government (NSG) as a partner nor the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) as well as Local Government Sector Education Training Authorities (LGSETA).

Any capacity efforts in this performance area should also develop skills for officials to know how to reach out and include the perspectives of diverse stakeholders such as businesses, academics, the future generations of citizens and retired citizens who hold valuable experiences. In this regard it is interesting to observe and acknowledge the fundraising efforts of directors, keen to identify private sector resources to support their specific lines on work. Efforts as such will require amongst other skills such as fundraising, communication and networking, but importantly, also ethics and accountability.

Hitherto, beyond communities and civil society interactions, this study highlighted the need to look into skills useful to improve the coordination and working relationships with other government spheres. Since departments have various intergovernmental mechanisms and protocols which are diverse and operate in various service delivery areas, there is room to identify requisite skills that need to be boosted here, to create synergies between different departments, projects and organisations.

Overall, better municipal planning and coordination will only be possible through the development and deployment of relevant skills. Any skills and capacity efforts need to be aligned to the context and particularities as described by officials: infrastructure weaknesses, unemployment rates (specially youth unemployment), rapid urbanization, environmental factors such as climate change, migration and more recently, the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lastly, an important development that has created positive expectations amongst directors in the municipality is the district development model (DDM) launched by the President Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019. This is expected to provide a better planning framework for all municipalities and better support district municipalities. Further reflections on how skills and capacity plans are located into this new district development approach will be therefore very important. It leaves room for further research to link skills development with the DDM to enable municipalities to thrive in their differential capacities.

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Appendix 1: Focus Groups Discussion Guide

PUBLIC OFFICIALS' SKILLS AND CAPACITY AUDIT

Open Society Foundation South Africa (OSF-SA) and HSRC Study

Focus Group Interview Guide

Public Officials

Questions

Question	Follow up / probes
Capacity and skills of public officials	
1. Please share the story of your experience and position(s) in this municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you live in this municipality? • How long have you been working with this municipality? • Why did you apply for the position and what were your expectations? • Have your expectations been met?
2. What do you think of the general functioning and performance of this municipality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the municipality is performing well? Please give examples to explain your views. • How do you think most of your colleagues (other officials) perceive the performance of the municipality? • Do you think the municipality has adequate resources (human, financial and technical) to perform well? Please explain and give ideas for improvement. • Do you think municipal officials have adequate and appropriate skills to undertake their duties? Please explain and suggest areas where more or different skills are needed.
3. Do you think staff receive enough clarity on their role and responsibilities before commencing with their duties; and appropriate support to perform them?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think staff know their job description and where they fit into the organogram? • How and who provides guidance in relation to your specific roles and responsibilities? How often are these discussed? • Do staff understand how their tasks affect / contribute to the overall performance of the municipality?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do staff get information on the roles of staff in other departments and on ways of collaborating to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness?
<p>4. Do you think that most staff are qualified to do their job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the level of education and training of most officials in your department is adequate for the job they are doing? • What are the most common education background and skills amongst your colleagues? • What are the skills most commonly lacking amongst your colleagues?
<p>5. What are your perceptions of skills development strategies in your municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please explain how training and development of employees happens in your department / the municipality. • Please explain the ways in which managers are involved in skills development processes. • How is the skills plan for your department developed? • Are you aware of the existence of consultative committees? Please share your experiences. • How do you interact with other public officials to improve the skills and capacity of this municipality to engage with the community at large?
<p>6. Understandings and role of good leadership.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think managers are adequately and appropriately skilled to perform leadership duties? Please explain any strengths and weaknesses. • How important is good leadership for skills and capacity development in the municipality? • What could be done to encourage good leadership? • Please share your experiences with the delegation of decision-making and authority. Have they been positive or negative? • Is management open to suggestions for improvement?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does management treat people with respect? • Does management provide feedback on performance and support to achieve improvements?
<p>7. What do you think about the availability of the necessary resources to perform your job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please list the key resources you need to perform your duties well (financial, human and technical) • Is there adequate supply of up-to-date materials and equipment to do your job? Please explain with day-to-day examples. • Is equipment (i.e. phone lines, computers, internet, etc.) usually operational? • Is technical support usually available? Please explain the main technical needs and challenges. • Is your work place comfortable? Please describe what makes a working-place comfortable in your experience and how it makes a difference. • Are the overall facilities clean and welcoming?
<p>8. Why are policies and procedures important for the optimal performance of your job? Name the main procedures and policies in your experience.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What procedures are in place to prevent and correct poor performance? • What should be the main roles and characteristics of an effective human resources department? • How are standard operating procedures of your department communicated to you and your colleagues? • What policies or mechanisms are in place to encourage transparency and openness? • What policies or mechanisms are in place to ensure accountability? Are they used effectively? • Are any vital policies or procedures missing, outdated or ignored in practice?
<p>9. How important are your personal needs and values in terms of performing your job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think that your work contributes to your personal well-being? Please elaborate. • Do you feel that having job security has an influence on your performance?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that the municipality cares about your well-being as a person and worker? Is this important to you and your work? • Do you feel staff are acknowledged for their contribution to reaching their departments' targets? • Are staff encouraged to take the initiative to improve performance?
<p>10. What can you tell us about the organizational culture of the municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe your municipality; what are its organizational values? • Are staff clearly encouraged to be courteous and friendly towards citizens? • Is the organization open to employees' views and ideas? • Are you aware of the ethical standards of the organization? Please identify the most important standards. • Does the organization have conflict resolution mechanisms in place? Are they used effectively?
<p>11. What is your responsibility towards improving community engagement within this municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you define community engagement in relation to your specific job? • How do you interact with other public officials to improve the skills and capacity of the municipality and specifically your department to engage with the community? • What are the main challenges you encounter in this municipality when interacting with the community? Any ideas on how to overcome these? • Can you share with us any success stories of working together with local organisations to improve service delivery in this municipality?
<p>12. What contextual factors impact on the performance of this municipality?</p>	<p>What are the external technological, social, economic, geographic, cultural and natural factors that affect the performance of the municipality?</p>

<p>13. How do other government departments or external organizations affect the performance of the municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you experienced or heard of interference from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Political leaders? ○ Other government departments?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes, there can be tensions between political representatives and administrative officials within a municipality. Is this a problem in this municipality, and how do you think this tension can be effectively managed?
<p>14. Is there anything else you want to mention or suggest to improve capacity and skills in this municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different types of training? Supporting different skills? Creating incentives? Partnerships?
<p>IF YOU HAVE ANY RELEVANT DOCUMENTS PLEASE SHARE WITH US</p>	

Appendix 2: Individual Interview Guide

PUBLIC OFFICIALS' SKILLS AND CAPACITY STUDY

Open Society Foundation South Africa (OSF-SA) and HSRC Study

KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Senior Public Officials

Questions

Question	Follow up / probes
Capacity and skills of public officials	
15. What are, in your view and experience, the major challenges facing public officials working at your municipality?	Can you also share your view on the influence of poverty, unemployment, corruption, and the continuing effects of racism on the capacity constraints of municipalities?
16. What do you think of the general functioning and performance of your municipality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you think most of municipal officials perceive the performance of your municipality? • Do you think your municipality has enough resources (human, financial and technical) to perform well? • Do you think municipal officials have adequate skills to deal with their duties?
17. What contextual factors impact on the performance of your municipality?	What are the external technological, social, economic, geographic, cultural and natural factors that affect the performance of your municipality?
18. How are other government departments or external organizations affecting the performance of your municipality?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you experienced or heard of interference from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Political leaders? ○ Other government departments
19. What can you tell us the importance of organizational culture on the performance of municipal officials?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the main organizational values found in your municipality? • What are the ethical standards of the organization?
20. How important are personal needs and values of employees in terms of performing their job?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think employees believe that their work contributes to their personal well-being? • Do you feel that having job security has an influence on performance of employees?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that the municipality cares about employee’s well-being as a person and worker? • Do you feel staff gets acknowledge for their contribution to reach the departments’ targets?
<p>21. What do you think about the availability of the necessary resources for municipal employees to perform their job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please list the key resources needed by employees to perform their duties well (financial, human and technical) • Is there adequate supply of up-to-date materials and equipment? • Is equipment (i.e. phone lines, computers, internet, etc.) usually operational? • Is technical support usually available? • Is the work place comfortable? Describe what makes a working-place comfortable in your experience and how does it makes a difference? • Taking all things into consideration, do you think that public officials have the necessary resources, equipment and technical support to work from home?
<p>22. How will you describe current leadership practices and challenges in your municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think managers are skilled to perform leadership duties? Explain strengths and weaknesses • What do you think needs to change for better leadership practices? • What could be done to encourage good leadership?
<p>23. Do you think staff receive enough clarity on their role and responsibilities before commencing with their duties? And support to perform them?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think staff know their job description and where they fit into the organogram? • How and who provides guidance in relation to specific roles and responsibilities? • Do staff understand their tasks in relation to the overall performance of the municipality? • Do staff get information on the roles of other departments and ways of collaborating?

<p>24. Do you think that most staff are qualified to do their job?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you think the level of education and training of most officials is adequate for the job they are doing? • What skills are lacking the most in your municipality?
<p>25. What are your perceptions of skills development strategies in your municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Please explain how training and development of employees happens in municipalities? • How is the skills plan developed? • How are interactions between public officials to improve the skills and capacity of municipalities to engage with the community at large?
<p>26. What do you think about the alignment of policies and procedures to the strategic planning processes of your municipality?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you think about the strategic planning processes of your municipality? • What policies or mechanisms are in place to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to control corruption? - encourage transparency and openness?
<p>27. How qualified in terms of adequate skills are municipal officials for performing community engagement processes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In your experience, how is your municipality engaging with communities (mechanisms, tools) and how effective are these? • Can you highlight the main challenges that your municipality encounters when interacting with communities? • Can you identify the main opportunities to improve engagement in communities? • How is your municipality performing community engagement and participation processes under COVID-19 constraints?
<p>28. Is there anything else you want to mention or suggest to improve capacity and skills in your municipality and municipalities in South Africa?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different types of training? Supporting different skills? Creating incentives? Partnerships?
<p>IF YOU HAVE ANY RELEVANT DOCUMENTS PLEASE SHARE WITH US</p>	

Appendix 3: On-line Survey



PUBLIC OFFICIALS' SKILLS AND CAPACITY AUDIT

Municipal Skills and Capacity Study: Public Official Survey

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). The HSRC is undertaking a Municipal Skills and Capacity Study in four provinces that include eight municipalities. The HSRC regularly carries out research on a wide range of social issues. This particular study aims to unpack the capacity constraints and support requirements of entry-level, mid-level and senior-level municipal officials to inform training and capacity-building interventions. As a public official working at this municipality, we will greatly value your opinions.

To obtain reliable, scientific information we request that you answer the questions that follow as honestly as possible. Your opinion is important in this research. There are no right or wrong answers. It is your opinion that counts. The information you give to us will be kept confidential at all times. You will not be identified by name/email/address in any of the reports or outputs we plan to develop. This is an independent research study and it is not linked to the government in any way. Before you continue we kindly request that you read the disclaimer below and indicate your consent to participate in the study.

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and agree that I have in no way been forced to participate herein. I also understand that I am able to terminate my participation in this study at any time, without consequences/without having this decision affect me negatively. I understand that my participation and the information I provide will remain confidential. I understand that the information that I provide for this survey/questionnaire will be safely stored by the HSRC and may only be used for research purposes. If you have any concerns regarding this study please contact the HSRC tollfree ethics hotline 0800 212 123 (tollfree when phoned from a landline from within South Africa) or email research.ethics@hsrc.ac.za.

If you have any queries regarding the content of the questions, please contact Derek Davids(HSRC) for assistance on the following number: 021 466 7838/083 448 4383 or via email on nydavids@hsrc.ac.za

* Required

Email Address

Consent

<input type="checkbox"/>	I agree to participate
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not agree to participate

Type of Interview

<input type="checkbox"/>	Face to face
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-administered: online
<input type="checkbox"/>	Self-administered: paper based
<input type="checkbox"/>	Telephonic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other

SECTION 1: GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE MUNICIPALITY

1.1. What is the name of the Municipality?	
1.2 Who is the Municipal Manager?	

1.3 What type of municipality is it?

Metropolitan	1
District	2
Local	3
(Do not know)	8

1.4 Indicate the province in which the municipality is located?

Eastern Cape	1
Free State	2
Gauteng	3
Kwazulu-Natal	4
Limpopo	5
Mpumalanga	6
Northern Cape	7
North West	8
Western Cape	9
(Do not know)	10

1.5 What is the geographic location of municipality?

Urban formal	1
Urban informal	2
Rural formal	3
Traditional	4
(Do not know)	8

SECTION 2: INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY OF THE MUNICIPALITY

2.1 Do you agree or disagree that your municipality has reasonable resources in the following areas to perform the constitutional functions assigned to them?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(Do not know)
Administrative resources	1	2	3	4	5	8
Financial resources	1	2	3	4	5	8
Human resources	1	2	3	4	5	8
Infrastructure resources	1	2	3	4	5	8

2.2 Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the performance of the municipality in terms of the following areas?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Strongly dissatisfied	(Do not know)
Leadership of the municipality	1	2	3	4	5	8
Strategic planning of the municipality						
Governance of the municipality	1	2	3	4	5	8
Oversight capacity of councillors and senior management of all municipal staff	1	2	3	4	5	8

2.3 How well do you think the municipality is handling the following performance areas?

	Very well	Quite well	Not very well	Not at all well	(Do not know)
Community services	1	2	3	4	8
Corporate services	1	2	3	4	8
Development and Planning services	1	2	3	4	8
Technical services	1	2	3	4	8

2.4 Are the number of municipal staff inadequate, just adequate or more than adequate for the following performance areas?

	It is not adequate	It is just adequate	It is more than adequate	(Do not know)	(Not applicable)
Community services	1	2	3	8	9
Corporate services	1	2	3	8	9
Development and Planning services	1	2	3	8	9
Technical services	1	2	3	8	9

2.5 How well do you think the municipality is handling the following?

	Very well	Quite well	Not very well	Not at all well	(Do not know)	Not applicable
Poverty level of the municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9
Unemployment rate of the municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9
Creating work opportunities within the municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9
Addressing corruption within the municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9
Fighting crime within the municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9
Provision of water	1	2	3	4	8	9
Provision of sanitation	1	2	3	4	8	9
Refuse removal	1	2	3	4	8	9
Educational needs of the municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9
Educational needs of the municipality	1	2	3	4	8	9
Informal housing to formal housing	1	2	3	4	8	9
Health facilities	1	2	3	4	8	9
Police coverage	1	2	3	4	8	9

SECTION 3: INDIVIDUAL (STAFF) CAPACITY OF THE MUNICIPALITY

3.1 Please indicate your level of employment within the municipality?

Senior level	1
Mid-level	2
Junior level	3
(Do not know)	8

3.2 Did you get full clarity on your current role and responsibilities before commencing with your duties?

Yes	1
No	2
Unsure	3
(Do not know)	8

3.3 Taking into account all the things expected from you, would you say your job description is clear or unclear?

Very clear job description	1
Clear job description	2
Neither clear nor unclear job description	3
Unclear job description	4
Very unclear job description	5
(Do not know)	8

3.4 Please tell us whether your level of education and training is inadequate, just adequate or more than adequate for your current job description?

Inadequate	1
Just adequate	2
More than adequate	3
Not sure	4
(Do not know)	8

3.5 Tell us whether your level of experience is inadequate, just adequate or more than adequate for your current job description?

Inadequate	1
Just adequate	2
More than adequate	3
Not sure	4
(Do not know)	8

3.6 Looking at the entire municipality is the skills of municipal staff inadequate, just adequate or more than adequate for the following performance areas?

	It is not adequate	It is just adequate	It is more than adequate	(Do not know)	(Not applicable)
Community services	1	2	3	8	9
Corporate services	1	2	3	8	9
Development and Planning services	1	2	3	8	9
Technical services	1	2	3	8	9

3.7 Do you agree or disagree that the following has an impact on the performance of the municipality?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(Do not know)
Job vacancies over the past year	1	2	3	4	5	8
Number of retirements in the past year	1	2	3	4	5	8
Number of dismissals in the past year	1	2	3	4	5	8
Number of acting positions in the past year	1	2	3	4	5	8

3.8 How effective or ineffective is the following within the municipality?

	Very effective	Effective	Neither nor	Ineffective	Very ineffective	(Do not know)
Human Resource Development Strategy	1	2	3	4	5	8
Employee performance management system	1	2	3	4	5	8
Staff coaching	1	2	3	4	5	8
Staff development facilitators	1	2	3	4	5	8
Training and development unit	1	2	3	4	5	8
Tools to measure the impact of training	1	2	3	4	5	8

Training partnerships with the private sector	1	2	3	4	5	8
Bursary schemes for staff	1	2	3	4	5	8

3.9 Which skills do you think your department is lacking? How can you address this as a department? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

3.10 Are your personal aspirations and interest considered in the skills and training plans of your department? Explain

3.11 What motivates you in your job? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

3.12 What frustrates you in your job? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

SECTION 4: CITIZEN INTERACTION WITHIN THE MUNICIPALITY

4.1 BATHO PELE: And now I would like to ask you a few statements about the performance of your municipality. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither nor	Dis-agree	Strongly disagree	(Do not know)
Municipalities do not consult communities enough on basic services	1	2	3	4	5	8
Government is delivering on its promises in terms of providing basic services that are of good quality	1	2	3	4	5	8
Government is making progress in giving all South Africans equal access to services	1	2	3	4	5	8
My municipality treats people with respect	1	2	3	4	5	8
My municipality provides people with good information about basic services	1	2	3	4	5	8
My municipality provides regular information on its performance in delivering services	1	2	3	4	5	8
My municipality responds quickly to complaints about problems with services	1	2	3	4	5	8
My municipality does a good job of following through and fixing problems	1	2	3	4	5	8
People are getting good value for the money they are charged for basic services	1	2	3	4	5	8

4.2 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(Do not know)
There are some things about this municipality that make me feel ashamed	1	2	3	4	5	8
Generally speaking, my municipality is better than most other municipalities	1	2	3	4	5	8

4.3 How much is this municipality doing to ensure that people of all races have equal opportunities for jobs, housing, and education?

Nothing	1
A little	2
Quite a bit	3
A lot	4
(Do not know)	8

4.4 How much is this municipality doing to ensure that vulnerable groups such as women and people with disabilities have equal opportunities for jobs, housing, and education?

Nothing	1
A little	2
Quite a bit	3
A lot	4
(Do not know)	8

4.5 And how much should this municipality be doing to ensure that people of all races have equal opportunities for jobs, housing, and education?

Nothing	1
A little	2
Quite a bit	3
A lot	4
(Do not know)	8

4.6 What is your responsibility towards improving community engagement within this municipality? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

4.7 How do you interact with other public officials to improve the skills and capacity of this municipality to engage with the community? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

4.8 What are the main challenges you encounter in this municipality when interacting with the community? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

4.9 Can you share with us any success stories of working together with other public officials and community organisations to improve service delivery in this municipality? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

Now some questions about people from other countries coming to live in this municipality.

4.10 Please indicate which of the following statements applies to you? I generally welcome to our municipality ...

All immigrants	1
Some immigrants	2
No immigrants	3

(Do not know)	8
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4.11 How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither nor	Disagree	Strongly disagree	(Do not know)
Immigrants are generally good for the economy of this municipality	1	2	3	4	5	8
Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in this municipality	1	2	3	4	5	8
Immigrants make this municipality more open to new ideas and cultures	1	2	3	4	5	8
Immigrants bring skills that are needed in this municipality	1	2	3	4	5	8
Immigrants use up this municipality's resources	1	2	3	4	5	8

SECTION 5: ENVIRONMENTAL / RESOURCE CAPACITY

Environmental capacity refers to the environment and conditions necessary for establishing capacity at individual and institutional level. These factors often influence the performance of municipalities.

5.1 What are the technological factors that influence the performance of this municipality? Please explain with examples. (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

5.2 What are the social factors that influence the performance of this municipality? Please explain with examples. (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

5.3 What are the economic factors that influence the performance of this municipality? . (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

5.4 What are the geographic factors that influence the performance of this municipality? (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

5.5 What are the cultural factors that influence the performance of this municipality? . (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

5.6 What are the natural resources that influence the performance of this municipality? . (Please indicate if you do not wish to answer or "do not know" in order to move to the next question)

SECTION 6: FACTORS THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO PERFORM YOUR JOB OR ROLE EFFECTIVELY

There are different factors that are important for you to perform your job / role effectively **WITHIN YOUR DEPARTMENT**. On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is 'not at all important' and 5 is 'very important', how important is it:

		Scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important,					(Do not know)
6.1 External environment							
	Public image of the Department	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Your Department's image as an "Employer of choice"	1	2	3	4	5	8
	No interference from other government departments	1	2	3	4	5	8
	No interference from political leaders	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Stable and prosperous economic environment	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.2 Vision, mission and strategy							
	Communication of the Department's mandate and objectives	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Trustworthiness of employees	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Standards of ethical behaviour	1	2	3	4	5	8
	There are clear strategies in place to achieve our department's objectives	1	2	3	4	5	8
	That your department's mandate is clear	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.3 Leadership							
	Skills of people in your team / work group	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Effective delegation of decision-making and authority	1	2	3	4	5	8
	That management staff are skilled to perform leadership duties	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Management is open to suggestions for improvement	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Management must be able to follow and lead by example	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.4 Organisational culture							
	Friendliness and Courtesy of employees	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Employees' views being heard and acknowledged	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Upholding ethical standards	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Conflict resolution mechanisms must be in place	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.5 Individual and organisational performance							
	Recognition and appreciation	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Salary and benefits	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Career advancement opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Department meets its goals in a timely manner	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Organisational performance has a positive impact on public	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.6 Structure							
	Fair distribution of work amongst employees	1	2	3	4	5	8
	There is sufficient staff employed in the various sections of the department	1	2	3	4	5	8
	That proper decision-making structures are in place	1	2	3	4	5	8
	That there is an effective communication strategy within the department	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.7 Management practices							
	Management's skills and effectiveness in guiding staff	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Provision of challenging (difficult) work by your manager / supervisor	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Job related feedback and support from managers / supervisors	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Management treats staff in a respectable manner	1	2	3	4	5	8

		Scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all important and 5 is very important,					(Do not know)
	Management understands policies of the department	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Management communicates policies of the department						
6.8 Systems (policies and procedures)							
	Communication of job related information	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Control of Corruption	1	2	3	4	5	8
	There is an effective human resources department	1	2	3	4	5	8
	That employee knows the standard operating procedures of the department	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.9 Departmental / work unit climate							
	Retention of skilled employees	1	2	3	4	5	8
	a conducive work environment	1	2	3	4	5	8
	A culture of mutual learning	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Transparency and openness is encouraged	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.10 Task requirements and individual skills / abilities							
	The quality of your department's service delivery	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Performance agreements in defining the expected performance outputs of your job is well designed	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Performance bonuses / incentives	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Support staff to achieve their performance targets	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.11 Individual needs and values							
	Job security	1	2	3	4	5	8
	My work increases my sense of self-worth	1	2	3	4	5	8
	There is concern about my well-being as a person and worker	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.12 Motivation							
	Training and development of employees	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Teamwork	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Staff are acknowledged for their contribution to reach the departments' targets	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Staff are complimented for taking initiative	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.13 Equipment							
	Supply of up-to-date materials and equipment to do your job	1	2	3	4	5	8
	That equipment are in working order	1	2	3	4	5	8
	The availability of technical support	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Equipment needs analysis be conducted regularly	1	2	3	4	5	8
6.14 Working environment							
	Working environment (building, offices and facilities)	1	2	3	4	5	8
	Whether your work place or office is comfortable	1	2	3	4	5	8
	There is an area for relaxation during breaks	1	2	3	4	5	8
	That bathroom facilities are clean and presentable	1	2	3	4	5	8

SECTION 7: RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

7.1 Gender of the respondent

Male	1
Female	2

7.2 Please indicate the how you would describe your work?

Administration	1
Institutional Development	2
Policy and Governance	3
(Not Sure)	8

7.3 How long have you worked at your Department?

0 – 1 years	1
2 - 3 years	2
4 - 5 years	3
6 - 9 years	4
10 years or more	5
(Not sure)	8

7.4 Please indicate your racial group:

Asian	1
African	2
Coloured	3
White	4
Other	8

7.5 Please indicate your Salary Classification:

Salary level 12 – 17	1
Salary level 7 - 11	2
Salary level 3 - 6	3
Salary level 1 - 2	4
(Not sure)	8

7.6 Please indicate which age group you fall into:

Less than 25 years	1
25 to 35 years	2
36 to 45 years	3
46 to 55 years	4
56 to 65 years	5
Above 65 years	6
(Not sure)	8

7.7 What is your current marital status?

Married	1
Separated from spouse / partner	2
Divorced	3
Widowed	4
Never married but engaged	5
Never married and not engaged	6

(Refused to answer)	7
(Do not know)	8

7.8 What is the highest level of education that you have ever completed?

Some primary schooling	00
Primary schooling completed	01
Some secondary schooling	02
Secondary Schooling completed (Grade 12/Standard 10/Form 5/Matric)	03
NTC 1/ N1/NC (V) Level 2	04
NTC 2/ N2/ NC (V) Level 3	05
NTC 3/ N3/NC (V) Level 4	06
N4/NTC 4	07
N5/NTC 5	08
N6/NTC 6	09
Diploma	10
Advanced diploma (AD)	11
Bachelor degree	12
Post graduate diploma (PGD)	13
Honours degree	14
Master degree	15
Doctorate degree, Laureatus in Technology	16
Other (specify)	17
(Do not know)	88

7.9 What language do you speak mostly at home?

Sesotho	01
Setswana	02
Sepedi	03
Siswati	04
IsiNdebele	05
IsiXhosa	06
IsiZulu	07
Xitsonga	08
Tshivenda/Lemba	09
Afrikaans	10
English	11
Other African language	12
European language	13
Indian language	14
Other (specify)	15

7.10 Are you a citizen of South Africa?

Yes	1
No	2
(Do not know)	8

Thank you