

MERAFONG CITY COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Provide Quality Services to All

1.) INTRODUCTION

This Merafong City Communication Strategy will be a guiding tool and a framework for the articulation of the Municipality's Vision, Mission, priorities and challenges in line with the National and Provincial and District Communication Strategies.

The strategy is informed by the Gauteng ie Years Programme of Action, the District Programme of Action and the Merafong City Five Year IDP Plan.

It identifies communication challenges and strategic emphasis, core messages, themes and it incorporates a fully-fledged communication cycle in line with IDP and Budgetary Cycles. Promotion of National Pride, Heroes day, Human Rights Day, Freedom Day, Workers Day, Youth Day, Women's Day, Heritage Day, Arbor Day, Reconciliation Day, Mayor's programs etc. and must transmit information to large heterogeneous and widely dispersed audience.

This strategy is further intended to link the Municipal Communication Calendar to the Regional and Provincial Intergovernmental Communication Calendar, in order to create a cohesive communication approach for local government and to enable hands-on support by the Province and District to the Municipality on communication issues.

This strategy, therefore, gives an aligned and practical context to the Vision and Mission of the Municipality and aims to adhere to the principles of intergovernmental communication. It incorporates local communication priorities and forms part of the Municipal communication policy framework.

It will be reviewed accordingly on an annual basis to ensure alignment with the medium term expenditure framework of the municipality as well as changes in the government communication environment.

2.) Context

- To ensure that the government agenda is communicated in an effective, integrated and co-ordinated manner.
- To enhance the communication capacity of the municipality to convey messages and themes, with the aim of facilitating development and good governance.
- To provide a framework for communicating and popularising the municipality's strategic plan, projects and programmes, with the aim of enhancing community participation, ownership of their lives, and the improvement of their livelihood.
- To come up with programmes aimed at restoring the people confidence in the local government system and build trust between municipalities and their communities.
- To encourage local initiative aimed at building long term relationships between the municipality and the local community.
- Building local confidence in the programmes and delivery of all spheres of government, being local, provincial and national government.
- Empowering youth, women, disabled, business through the dissemination of relevant information, to enable them to manipulate their natural environment and progress.
- To ensure that the technocratic nature of government communication is simplified and presented to communities in their own language.
- To ensure that the necessary budgetary provision is made to enable the communication actions expected from municipalities.

3.) LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Communication in a Local Government Environment is legislated through the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996), the Local Government Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000) and the Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000).

3.1 The Constitution includes the following guidelines with regard to Local Government Communication:

Section 32 (1) (a) "everyone has the right to any information held by the State"

Section 152(1)(e) "in setting out the objects of Local Government, municipalities must encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in matters of developmental local government.

Section 160(7) "a municipal council must conduct its business in an open manner, and may close its sittings, or those of its committees only when it is reasonable to do so."

Section 162(3)" municipal by-laws must be accessible to the public."

Section 6(3)(b)"municipalities must take into account language usage and preferences of their residents when communicating with them."

3.2 The Municipal Systems Act, includes the following guidelines:

Communication of information concerning community participation

In terms of the Municipal Systems Act The local community consist of that body of persons comprising –

- the residents of the municipality
- the ratepayers of the municipality
- any civic organisations and non-governmental, private sector or labour
- organizations or bodies which are involved in the local affairs within the municipality, and

- visitors and other people residing outside the municipality who, because of their presence in the municipality, make use of services of facilities provided by the municipality, and includes, more specifically, the poor and other disadvantaged sections of such body of persons.

3.3 Local Government: Municipal Structures Act, 1998 (Act 117 of 1998)

Section 19 Municipal Objectives:

Subsection 2(c)

A municipal council must annually review –

(c) its processes for involving the community;

Subsection (3)

A municipal council must develop mechanisms to consult the community and community organizations in performing its functions and exercising its powers.

Subsections 56(3)(g) and (h)

(3) The executive mayor in performing the duties of office, must –

(g) annually report on the involvement of communities and community organizations in the affairs of the municipality, and

(h) ensure that regard is given to public views and report on the effect of consultation on the decisions of the council.

3.4 Local Government: Municipal Systems Act, 2000 (Act 32 of 2000)

Subsections 2 (b) and (c)

2. Legal Nature

A municipality –

(b) consist of –

(i) the political structures and administration of the municipality;

and

(ii) the community of the municipality;

(c) functions in its area in accordance with the political, statutory and other relationships between its political structures, political office bearers and administration and its community;

Subsection 4 (2)(c) and (e)

4. Rights and duties of municipal councils –

(2) The council of a municipality, within the municipality's financial and administrative capacity and having regard to practical consideration, has the duty to

(c) encourage the involvement of the local community;

(e) consult the local community about –

(i) the level, quality, range and impact of municipal services

provided by the municipality, either directly or through another service provider; and

(ii) the available options for service delivery;

Subsection 5 (1)(a), (b) and (c)

3.5. Rights and duties of members of local community.

5(1) Members of the local community have the right –

(a) through mechanisms and in accordance with processes and procedures provided for in terms of this Act or other applicable legislation to –

(i) contribute to the decision-making processes of the municipality;

and

(ii) submit written or oral recommendations, representations and complaints to the municipal council or to another political structure or a political office bearer or the administration of the municipality;

(b) to prompt responses to their written or oral communications, including complaints, to the municipal council or to another political structure or a political office bearer or the administration of the municipality.

(c) to be informed of decisions of the municipal council, or another political structure or any political office bearer of the municipality, affecting their rights, property and reasonable expectations.

Subsection 5 (2)(a)

(2) Members of the local community have a duty –

(a) when exercising their rights, to observe the mechanisms, processes and procedures of the municipality;

Subsection 6 (2)(d), (e) and (f)

(2) The administration of a municipality must –

(d) establish clear relationships, and facilitate co-operation and communications, between it and the local community;

(e) give members of the local community full and accurate information about the level and standard of municipal services they are entitled to receive, and

(f) inform the local community how the municipality is managed, of the costs involved and the persons in charge.

Section 7. Exercise of rights and performance of duties.

The rights and duties of municipal councils and of the members of the local community, and the duties of the administrations of municipalities as set out in sections 4, 5 and 6, are subject to the Constitution, the other provisions of this Act and other applicable legislation.

Section 16. Development of Culture of Community Participation

(1) A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that compliments formal representative government with a system of participatory governance, and must for this purpose –

(a) encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to

participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in –

- (i) the preparation, implementation and review of its integrated development plan in terms of Chapter 5;
- (ii) the establishment, implementation and review of its performance management system in terms of Chapter 6;
- (iii) the monitoring and review of its performance, including the outcomes and impact of such performance;
- (iv) the preparation of its budget, and
- (v) strategic decisions relating to the provision of municipal services in terms of Chapter 8;

(b) contribute to building the capacity of –

- (i) the local community to enable it to participate in the affairs of the municipality; and
 - (ii) councillors and staff to foster community participation; and
- Use its resources, and annually allocate funds in its budget, as may be appropriate for the purposes of implementing paragraphs (a) and (b)

(2) Subsection (1) must not be interpreted as permitting interference with a municipal council's right to govern and to exercise the executive and legislative authority of the municipality.

Section 17. Mechanisms, Processes and Procedures for Community Participation

(1) Participation by the local community in the affairs of the municipality must take place through –

- (a) political structures for participation in terms of the Municipal Structures Act;

- (b) the mechanisms, processes and procedures for participation in municipal governance established in terms of this Act;
- (c) other appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established by the municipality;
- (d) councillors; and
- (e) generally applying the provisions for participation as provided for in this Act.

(2) A municipality must establish appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures to enable the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, and must for this purpose provide for –

- (a) the receipt, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints lodged by members of the local community;
- (b) notification and public comment procedures, when appropriate;
- (c) public meetings and hearings by the municipal council and other political structures and political office bearers of the municipality, when appropriate;
- (d) consultative sessions with locally recognized community organizations and, where appropriate, traditional authorities; and
- (e) report back to the local community.

(3) When establishing mechanisms, processes and procedures in terms of subsection (2) the municipality must take into account the special needs of –

- (a) people who cannot read or write;
- (b) people with disabilities;
- (c) women; and
- (d) other disadvantaged groups

(4) A municipal council may establish on one or more advisory committees

consisting of persons who are not councilors to advise the council on any matter within the council's competence. When appointing the members of such a committee, gender representivity must be taken into account.

Section 18. Communication of information concerning community participation.

(1) A municipality must communicate to its community information concerning –

- (a) the available mechanisms, processes and procedures to encourage and facilitate community participation;
- (b) the matters with regard to which community participation is encouraged;
- (c) the rights and duties of members of the local community; and
- (d) municipal governance, management and development.

When communicating the information in sub-section (1), a municipality must take into account –

- (a) language preferences and usage in the municipality;
- (b) the special needs of people who cannot read or write.

Section 29 deals with the process to be followed in respect of integrated development planning (IDP) and subsection 29 (1)(b) inter alia provide as follows:

(1) The process followed by a municipality to draft its integrated development plan, including its consideration and adoption of the draft plan, must –

- (b) through appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established in terms of chapter 4, allow for –

- (i) the local community to be consulted on its development needs and priorities;
- (ii) the local community to participate in the drafting of the integrated development plan;

Section 42 deals with community involvement in the performance management system of the municipality and reads as follows:

42. A municipality, through appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established in terms of Chapter 4, must involve the local community in the development, implementation and review of the municipality's performance management system, and, in particular, allow the community to participate in the setting of appropriate key performance indicators and performance targets of the municipality.

Section 51 of the Act deals with the organization of the administration of a municipality and inter alia provides as follows:

51. A municipality must within its administrative and financial capacity establish and organize its administration in a manner that would enable the municipality to –

- (a) be responsive to the needs of the community;
- (e) establish clear relationships, and facilitate co-operation, co-ordination and communication, between –

(ii) its political structures, political office bearers and administration and the local community;

3.6. Local Government: Municipal Finance Management Act, 2003 (Act 56 of 2003)

Section 21 of the Act deals with the budget preparation process and inter alia provides as follows:

21 (1)(b) at least 10 months before the start of the budget year, table in the municipal council a time schedule outlining the key deadlines for –

(iv) any consultative processes forming part of the processes referred to in subparagraphs (i), (ii) and (iii)

Section 22 of the Act deals with the publication of annual budgets and inter alia provides as follows:

22. Immediately after an annual budget is tabled in a municipal council, the accounting officer of the municipality must –

(a) in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Municipal Systems Act –

(i) make public the annual budget and documents referred to in section 17(3);
and

(ii) invite the local community to submit representations in connection with the budget.

Section 23 deals with consultation on tabled budgets and inter alia provides as follows:

23 (1) When the annual budget has been tabled, the municipal council must consider any views of –

(a) the local community;

(b)

Section 75 of the Act prescribes the information to be placed on the website of the municipality and provides as follows:

75 (1) The accounting officer of a municipality must place on the website referred to in section 21A of the Municipal Systems Act the following documents of the municipality:

- (a) The annual and adjustments budgets and all budget-related documents;
- (b) all budget-related policies;
- (c) the annual report;
- (d) all performance agreements required in terms of section 57 (1)(b) of the Municipal Systems Act;
- (e) all service delivery agreements;
- (f) all long-term borrowing contracts;
- (g) all supply chain management contracts above a prescribed value;
- (h) an information statement containing a list of assets over a prescribed value that have been disposed of in terms of section 14(2) or (4) during the previous quarter;
- (i) contracts to which subsection (1) of section 33 apply, subject to subsection (3) of that section;
- (j) public-private partnership agreements referred to in section 120;
- (k) all quarterly reports tabled in the council in terms of section 52(d); and
- (l) any other documents that must be placed on the website in terms of this Act or any other applicable legislation, or as may be prescribed.

(2) A document referred to in subsection (1) must be placed on the website not

later than five days after its tabling in the council or on the date on which it must be made public whichever occurs first.

Section 120 deals with conditions and processes for public-private partnerships and inter alia provide as follows:

120 (b) When a feasibility study has been completed the accounting officer of the municipality must –

(b) at least 60 days prior to the meeting of the council at which the matter is to be considered in accordance with section 21A of the Municipal Systems Act –

(i) make public particulars of the proposed public-private partnership, including the report on the feasibility study; and

(ii) invite the local community and other interested persons to submit to the municipality comments or representations in respect of the proposed public-private partnership;

Section 127 deals with the submission and tabling of annual reports and inter alia provides as follows:

127 (5) Immediately after an annual report is tabled in the council in terms of subsection (2), the accounting officer must –

(a) in accordance with section 21A of the Municipal Systems Act –

(i) make public the annual report; and

(ii) invite the local community to submit representations in connection with the annual report;

Section 129 deals with oversight reports on annual reports and inter alia provides

as follows:

129 (3) The accounting officer must in accordance with section 21A of the Municipal Systems Act make public an oversight report referred to in subsection (1) within seven days of its adoption.

Section 130 deals with council meetings which are open to the public and certain public officials and provides as follows:

130 (1) The meetings of a municipal council at which an annual report is to be discussed or at which decisions concerning an annual report are to be taken, must be open to the public and any organs of state, and reasonable time must be allowed –

(a) for the discussion of any written submissions received from the local community or organs of state on the annual report; and

(b) for members of the local community or any organs of state to address the council.

4.) Communication Environment

4.1 Strategy:

Depending on specific situations and contexts, the meaning created and understood may vary. Therefore, we should target specific groups and analyze their own cultures, concepts, episodes and relationships that they have with government. This would include youth in all its categories, the adult population and its categories. The purpose is to send a message that will appeal to a specific age group and monitor possible responses. The message should be target specific.

4.2 Current Scenario

As it has been made clear in this strategy, the call to action is for all South Africans to join the national effort to build partnerships which will expand access to a better life for all. The critical challenge facing the country, the province and the public sector, and each individual is to lift economic growth to higher trajectory, in a way that overcomes the dynamics of exclusion of a large part of society.

The underlying popular sentiment in the current period is one of hope. Over the past years Government on all spheres were actively delivering on its promises. The one area in which Government failed was to communicate its successes to the broader public. In Municipalities communication of successes must be made an integral part of the Municipal Performance Management System.

The perception of a government committed to implementing its programmes and popular sentiment to work together are reinforcing one another – creating a sense that the nation is geared for qualitative movement forward. This must however be effectively communicated to the public.

4.3 Political Environment

The success of the election and the State of the Province Address by the Premier has created a positive sentiment which needs to be sustained in the medium to long term. The perception of the Premier as action-oriented, especially her resolve to do things differently to deliver improved and better services to the people of Gauteng, has won her and the government the confidence and plaudits of both the people and the media.

4.4 Economic Outlook

NOTE CLOSURE OF BLYVOOR ETC.

Despite the recent global economic meltdown, Gauteng continues to be a dominant player in the economic development sphere with various surveys showing areas of resilience.

The recession has, however, reversed some of the gains made in the fight against joblessness since 1994. For example, the recent statistics by Stats SA show that the unemployment rate in Gauteng increased from 20.7% in 2008 to 21.7% in the first quarter of 2009.

4.5 Service delivery issues

The second half of 2009 saw a high number of service delivery-related protests, particularly after the elections. Both domestic and foreign media, in their bid for front news stories, reported extensively on the protests and highlighted the concerns and frustrations of the protesters. The reports gave an impression of a government under siege and the communities losing patience.

Whilst studies still have to reveal the main reasons behind the protests; it does appear as though poor communication between government and the people could be a factor in some of the affected communities.

Poor service delivery at health care institutions, especially hospitals, also continued to attract negative media coverage. Consistent reports on challenges experienced within the public health care sector were projected as a reflection of a sector in 'crisis' - despite assurances that there are plans being implemented to remedy the situation.

The success of the FIFA Confederations Cup, which was largely hosted in Gauteng, has created a positive mood which must be sustained to 2010 World Cup and, possibly, beyond.

4.6 Media

With a few exceptions, media coverage does reflect a trend of positive mood and economic buoyancy. The positive economic outlook and general confidence in our institutions of governance have been, to a varying degree, positively reflected in the media. We heavily rely on the mercy of gatekeepers (media executives, news editors and prominent reporters) and they are SELECTIVE of what goes through the gate.

It is impossible for the media to communicate *everything* about public affairs, however 'news worthy' articles/events do get primetime coverage.

In the national perspective, the impact of government efforts to eradicate poverty is shifting from “no change” to “widening inequality” and no proper ‘consultation and communication with constituencies’, giving rise to arguments that “the government is imposing itself and thus becoming more autocratic’, ‘poor are getting poorer, and the rich are getting richer”. This show exactly how strongly can the media influence public opinion.

Furthermore, despite the media’s potential for influencing public opinion, its greatest impact on politics is found on its power to set the agenda. An *Agenda* is the list of things to do or consider; a political agenda is a list of issues that need government attention for example, violent crime in South Africa, service delivery, corruption and the inadequate performance of local government remain principal areas of media’s attention.

A point to acknowledge is that public perceptions and mood are brittle phenomena, sometimes removed from the reality of fundamentals. The challenge is to manage these negative developments and to ensure that the focus is on essentials and the steadily inclining graph of positive public opinion is not lost.

A relationship should be fostered that positive local developments and initiatives are communicated through media. This will help in the political socialization of the citizen. We must bear in mind that newspapers, magazines, etc are also socializing agents; therefore government should insist that a balanced view should be reported and that government be measured on merit so that people can gain a perspective in/or about their own government (esp. locally and provincially)

There are other issues that are likely to threaten the image of the municipality, in the coming year and this strategy should assist in preventing that. Some members of the community are cooperating with government while there are

those who are applying some resistance and threatening legal action, with the support of some independent researchers and mainstream media.

The municipality should in its policies provide specific strategies to build media relations on a continuous basis. This will enable access to the media on a more regular and continuous basis.

Freedom of the press is a noble value and that has been important to our democratic government. But we should not ignore the fact that we sometimes pay a price for pursuing it without qualification. The value of press is often abused by communities who copycat popular unrest for no other reason than the potential press coverage that they can derive from such actions. In this regard continued media relations strategies are of utmost importance for the municipality to ensure that it's side of the story is also reflected in press coverage.

4.7 Public Perception Survey

Although functioning in a political environment, local government has to embrace all the tools of modern marketing and have to use these marketing communication tools in order to ensure that the core messages get through to the local community.

5. Government Strategic Communication Priorities

The communication in the three period will be driven by the need to communicate the following seven strategic priorities of government:

- Creating decent work and building a growing, inclusive economy;
- Promoting quality education and skills development;
- Providing better health care for all;
- Stimulating rural development and food security;
- Intensifying the fight against crime and corruption;

- Building cohesive and sustainable communities; and
- Strengthening the developmental state and good governance.

5.2 Government Communication Objectives and Positioning

The objectives of government communication are to:

- Effectively position the government as getting down to work to implement the people’s mandate;
- Strengthen local government communication through joint planning and implementation (and the provision of communication support in areas deemed necessary);
- Popularise and deepen people’s understanding of the Five Year Programme of Action and how it aims to address the key challenges facing the province;
- Demonstrate qualitative improvements in the government’s pace of delivery and decisive action to address key concerns of the people;
- Give concrete expression to the idea that the government is ensuring both continuity and change as well as “breaking new ground” in addressing the challenges and priorities facing the province;
- Challenge individuals, organised formations and sectors to explore their own role in addressing the key challenges of the province and to develop partnerships with government to achieve common objectives;
- Demonstrate that government is capable of meeting the deadlines and effectively implementing its the programmes;
- Ensure that the people of Gauteng have easy access to information about government and are empowered to exercise their constitutional rights as well as their rights to certain service standards and redress mechanisms;

The government should be seen as:

- ready to deliver on its electoral pledge with a workable plan to effectively tackle key challenges such as unemployment and poverty;
- having a longer-term vision with a five-year plan to reach that vision;
- concerned about ordinary people, especially the poor and the vulnerable;
- working with communities to address their challenges;
- different spheres working together to improve the lives of the people of Gauteng;
- intolerant of crime and corruption;
- committed to clean, ethical governance;
- providing leadership to the province as a whole and key sectors of civil society in the achievement of the vision of an integrated Gauteng; and being
- responsive to the needs of communities.

5.3 Government Communication Challenges

Government communication must help sustain the positive sentiment towards government and profile the implementation of the programme of action and how it impacts the people's lives.

Tighter co-ordination of the government programme of public communication and discipline will help avoid competing activities and conflicting messages.

The decline in government revenue is likely to impact negatively on the ability of government departments to communicate effectively with their target audience, in particular, as media production and buying power dwindles. This requires more creative use of the mass media to gain free publicity. This may involve pushing the boundaries of what is defined as news, impacting in programming areas which go beyond the news such as talk shows, edutainment and the like, and exploring partnerships with the media in areas of social responsibility and generally promoting the public good.

The change of administration brings with it new communicators and political principals; some of whom are without much experience in handling the media. This, therefore, calls for an investment in media training for communicators and political principals.

5.1 Local Government Communication Tools

- Weekly/monthly news magazine (local) and or provincial
- Community Meetings and Edutainment
- Ward Committees
- Community Development Workers (CDW's)
- Local radio station covering both local and provincial.
- Flyers, Posters and Information Brochures
- A consideration for Provincial T.V station (remember the effects of Bop T.V and mass marketing)
- Commemorative Days as contained in the events calender
- National projects, Presidential projects and Mayoral projects.
- Influential individuals can influence public opinion- they are attentive policy elites and thus influence mass opinion indirectly through two step flow of communication. It is important therefore to have an elite circulation of news.
- Trade Fairs

- Golf Days (Sporting Events)
- Media (Print and Electronic)
- Websites and Intranet
- Outdoor Media
- Communication Tools for people with disabilities
- Meetings of Traditional Leadership where applicable
- NGO's and other civil organisations or forums

4.5 Specific Target Groups

4.5.1 Youth

The receptiveness of the Youth for communication messages and marketing messaging has long been established by business. Youth should be given special attention through schools news flashes and gadgetry edutainment and SMS's (tele- marketing). A special focus should be given to vulnerable youth and communicate their course, in the language and syntax that they will understand.

4.5.2 Women

A coalition with women organizations and other groups working for sexual equality should be fostered in order that a communiqué can be developed for this group. Special focus should be given to women rights, education, skills and what government can or has done in development of women educationally, economically and politically in their locality. We must celebrate women by communicating their achievements.

This strategy seek to achieve coherence by communicating social realities that which the government seek to construct by changing people's livelihood

through the theme Renewing our pledge – a Partnership to build a better life for all.

4.5.3 People with disabilities

The special needs of People with disabilities, should be kept in mind in constructing communication messages and choosing communication tools. Such as audio messaging and Braille and choosing venues which is accessible and conducive for the physically disabled.

5.) NATION BUILDING A COMMUNICATORS PERSPECTIVE

The changing social dynamics in all local municipalities and provinces are driven by larger societal trends that are affecting us all. The dramatic increase of information, the mobility of the work force, the ease of communication, the globalization of markets are all influencing the way we work and live.

These and other trends have altered the way we live. Similarly, they have altered the way we work. And as we can now see with clarity, they have altered the ways that world class sales forces set themselves apart in the eyes of their customers. This will be important when we focus on communicating at how the government responded to these challenges (globalization and its local impact).

Therefore, at local level be continuous communication of information on Government projects/ programmes such as:

- indigent policies and its implementation,
- social grants,
- Extended Public Works Programs (EPWP's)
- Multi Purpose Community Centres

- IDP's
- Budget
- MIG Grants
- Neighbourhood Development Fund
- Presidential Izimbizo, Imbizo Focus Week (April and October),
Mayoral Imbizo's
- ASGI-SA and its subsidiary programmes JIPSA (Joint Integrated
Programme of Skills Acquisition)
- Ward Committee Meetings
- Civil Society and Sectoral Meetings
- and such programs should be daily communicated and how that has
impacted on the lives of the ordinary citizens. Communication flow in
a democracy must move in two directions: from government to
citizens and from citizens to government.
- Inter Governmental Forums

Communicators at local provincial or national level should know all government programs in all sectors to convey an informed position and to be better able to synergize information for this purpose. Developmental issues must be communicated to the citizens of this country in all localities.

Research and work with other government departments (intergovernmental relations) is important for this purpose. What needs to be communicated is information that will stimulate communities' latent talent to fully control the natural forces around them.

It should be remembered that communicators are selling government to the public and that in a democratic state the power always remains in the hands of the citizens. They are informed about issues consequently more demanding and sophisticated. Therefore communicators must be skilled, knowledgeable, and above all, add value to government business.

5.1 Batho Pele Principles

Inculcate the following in communications the spirit of the Batho Pele principles, nation building and the people's contract must always be bourn in mind:

- Putting in place a customer/public- driven culture;
- Recruiting and selecting the right communicators talent;
- Training and developing for the right set of skills;
- Segmenting markets in meaningful ways;
- Implementing formal and dynamic communication processes (local and provincial) ;
- Developing enabling information technology; and
- Integrating formally other government business functions with communication (Interdepartmental relations formalized for a new binding policy that will enable corporate communications to deal with and communicate information to the citizens thus enhancing public participation).

As a municipality advantage must be taken of developments in the communication field, before the real benefits of communication will be experienced.

5.2 Local Government

Local government is the sphere of government closest to the people. It follows that communities will turn to local government for many of their government information needs.

A perception of non-delivery and incompetence continue to dominate public and media discussion around local government.

This has brought the reality of the fact that the negative image of local government needs to be addressed by, inter alia, capacitating municipalities to communicate positive messages. These messages should centre around service delivery to counter strong negative perceptions.

In reality the public has little contact with its elected representatives. This can be improved by regular spot-checks and monitoring the public participation profiles through documentary evidence such as Ward Committee Minutes.

Communication as such, must be made a compulsory performance measure on the performance contracts of all Section 57 employees. No project or program may be viewed as successfully completed, unless it has been successfully communicated to the broader community.

5.2.1 Access to information

Government information, in general, does not adequately reach its intended audiences, especially in the rural areas where information is desperately needed. Poor access to information often features as a common problem in any communication environment.

Government agencies often use wrong communication tools to disseminate information.

Government documents are often produced in inaccessible language. This marginalizes the poor and the illiterate from participating in the mainstream of South Africa's political life.

The visually impaired section of our society then becomes the most disadvantaged as there is inadequate effort(s) from government and its parastatals to ensure that audio material and Braille is also used when producing government information material.

Of particular importance is that the information gap is the biggest in those areas critical for job creation and skills development therefore under the poorest of the poor.

All municipalities must have an Access to Information Manual in terms of the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000 (Act 2 of 2000).

5.2.2 Media

6.) INSTITUTIONAL CHALLENGES ON COMMUNICATION ESTABLISHMENT

Another threat is at an institutional level of the Municipality's communication system. Whilst the issue of human resource is currently being addressed, the fact is that the communication section is severely under-resourced to render support services to the department effectively.

At the moment, the Municipality Section directorate still does not have all the equipment needed although some needs have been addressed. If a municipality cannot afford to establish a fully fledged communication unit, it should however still ensure that the core strategic functions are implemented through other line function sections, or through political oversight, but this must still take place according to the local government communication system.

The core functions are:

- Research and Information Management
- Communication and Marketing
- Outreach and Community Liaison
- Media relations

8.) COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIC FOCUS AREAS

The primary challenge arising from the environment is the mobilization of society, building partnerships and ensuring involvement of all sectors in the national drive to accelerate efforts to fight poverty and create employment. Municipality is expected to play a pivotal role in this regard.

8.1 Building a common corporate identity for the municipality

- The inconsistent applications of the municipal corporate brand need to be addressed. The municipal corporate identity policy is aimed at addressing these issues. *This policy will have to be updated and amended once the provincial corporate brand has been developed.*
- It is out of these guidelines that the section will develop and enforce corporate identity, corporate branding and corporate image.

8.2 Contributing to building partnerships

- The national government will be paying attention to broadening the appeal of celebrations to mark important commemorative days as contained in the communications calendar, including the anniversaries falling this year, to achieve greater mobilization and inclusivity in participation. These events should be utilized to communicate a message of hope and to promote social cohesion.
- Regular submission of articles to publications should be a standing principle.

- Regular and consistent profiling of the municipality's work should be prioritized in both national and local print and electronic media.

8.3 Promoting participation and efficiency for development and service

- The primary challenge arising from the environment is the mobilization of civil society, building partnerships and ensuring involvement of communities, sectors and individuals in defining and implementing programmes aimed at improving people's socio-economic experience.
- Given local government's critical role in implementing the national Programme of Action (especially the five Key Performance Indicators), there is a need to extend public and community participation by consolidating integration of Izimbizo and other outreach programmes with municipal process and ward committees – this should include restoring the emphasis in Izimbizo on the community and door-to-door participation.
- The role of CDW's in gathering the socio economic profiles of our communities must be acknowledged. Further their role in dissemination of information and mobilization of our communities must be taken into consideration.
- A campaign of interactive communication around local programmes-of-action to promote effective and speedy service delivery.
- At the same time, there should be a focused and planned effort to understand the violent protests at the instance of specific grievances in some localities. This strategy focuses on actions to deal with this trend.

- Guidelines should be developed with special thrust on the time frame within which the municipality should respond to formal submission of grievances by organized grouping from within their respective constituencies.

8.4 Strengthening government communication on all platforms

- Ongoing efforts to extend the national government communication system to the local sphere will result in massive improvements in local government communication, through an approach that combines unmediated communication with effective use of local and regional media.
- Continued strengthening of integration and co-ordination in communication, around implementation of the Programme of Action and major transversal programmes is critical. Related to this is the need to improve integrated and co-ordinated government communication. This requires that government should continue to strive towards speaking in one voice. Accordingly, departments and institutions of government are expected to refrain from criticizing each other on public platforms.
- Further work to enhance platforms for unmediated communication, to promote both participatory democracy and the implementation of programmes that create opportunities and alleviate poverty needs to be done. This includes Izimbizo, government publications, the use of radio and other media platforms in all languages.
- The national and provincial governments' approach of research-based communication, which is based on the information needs of the people will be adopted by the department to enhance targeted communication at the local sphere of government.

- Strengthening the communication machinery, including an effective rapid response, customer care unit, and a strong community liaison unit will be one of the focal points. This also entails an effective media monitoring as well as timely response to media reports for both the department and municipalities and the establishment and strengthening of communication units at municipalities as well as production of communication policies and strategies.
- We must continue to build communication partnerships with other sectors outside of government so that they can lend a hand to government in communicating government messages.
- Optimum utilization of Thusong Service Centres (previously MPCC's) as a point of distribution information to the community.
- The relations between the communication section and CDW's must be strengthened since they are key informants of the community and the municipality.
- The role of officials in shaping public perceptions needs to be recognised. This demands improvements in our internal communication to empower staff with government information to enable them to become the true ambassadors of the government. Intimate knowledge of government's policies, programmes and implementation will further enhance communication.
- In the development of this strategy specific attention should be given to the need to find effective mechanisms to address grievances and concerns of communities. This would include strategies of direct solving of smaller problems to inclusion of larger problems such as the building of roads in the IDP review.

- The Chief Spokespersons of Municipalities will be the Mayor. It is expected of communication personnel to create the environment within which the Mayor can effectively execute this function.

12.) COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME AND MILESTONES

| Nr. | ACTIVITY | DESCRIPTION | START DATE |
|------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. | | | |
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| 10. | | | |
| 11. | | | |

13.) PROCESS

This communication strategy, once adopted by the Council will form the core strategy of the Communication Unit.

The Communication Unit will, on a regular basis, report on the progress being made on the implementation of this strategy.