



LEARNING NOTES

MASTER CLASS: THE ART OF FACILITATING URBAN STRATEGIC PLANNING WORKSHOPS

**MOSES MABHIDA STADIUM GBC 10
DURBAN, SOUTH AFRICA**

02 – 03 MARCH 2017

Hosted by eThekweni Municipality Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE)

1. Introduction and Background

As custodians of service delivery, municipalities also bear the responsibility of developing and adopting a clear long term strategy. In doing so, it is crucial for planners and other key stakeholders to have a sound understanding of the key components of City Development Strategies (CDS), while taking into account the key development challenges they may be faced with. Furthermore, the formulation of visions, purpose statements, and detailed road maps fall within the ambit of strategic town planning. The process of developing strategies includes hosting urban strategic workshops, whereby practitioners facilitating them must practically implement concepts and methodologies to yield positive outcomes. The Municipal Institute of Learning (MILE) hosted and facilitated a Mini-Master Class on the Art of Facilitating Urban Strategic Workshops. It was a sequel to the Urban Strategic Planning Master Class, where approximately 40 urban planners, IDP and key practitioners influencing planning for municipalities were empowered with various concepts, methodologies and content. The Master Class was undertaken over a two day period from 02-03 March 2017 at Moses Mabhida Stadium.

2. Aims and Objectives

On completion of the workshop, it was aimed that participants would:

- Have a sound understanding of key components of city/town development strategies - including unpacking their city/town's key development challenges, visions and purpose statements; and formulating detailed road maps i.e. goals, timeframes, budgets, responsibilities, etc.;
- Be capacitated with an understanding of, and equipped with a set of tools that can be employed to improve the stakeholder engagement process; and
- Be empowered to conduct their own facilitation in their respective municipalities.

3. PROGRAMME

Day One: Thursday 2 March 2017	
08:00 – 08:30	Registration and Tea
08:30 – 10: 30	MODULE 0: GETTING STARTED (Ms Genevieve Hartley) Module 0A: Welcome Address Module 0B: Introduction of participants and facilitators Module 0C: Purpose of the workshop Module 0D: Ground Rules Module 0E: Determining Expectations Module 0F: MILE's Entry Point Module 0G: The EThekwini Story – setting the scene
10:30 – 11:00	Tea
11:00 – 12:30	MODULE 1: COMPONENTS OF A GOOD CITY/TOWN DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (Ms Genevieve Hartley)
12:30 – 13:30	Lunch
13:30 – 16:00	MODULE 2: DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK Module 2A: Defining Municipal Challenges Module 2B: Crafting Effective Visions and Purpose Statements Module 2C: Developing a Strategic Roadmap / Action Plan
16:00	Wrap Up
Day Two: Friday 3 March 2017	
08:30 – 08:40	Check in (Ms Genevieve Hartley) Learning Circle: Reflections from Day One (Ms Genevieve Hartley)
08:40 – 10:30	MODULE 3: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT (Mr Sogen Moodley) Module 3A: Sharing Participatory Processes to Date Module 3B: Unpacking Participation Module 3C: Making Stakeholder Participation Happen
10:30 – 11:00	Tea
11:00 – 13:30	MODULE 4: IMPROVING MUNICIPAL FACILITATION SKILLS (Mr Sogen Moodley & Ms Genevieve Hartley) Module 4A: Unpacking Facilitation Module 4B: Facilitation Role Play
13:30 – 13:45	Municipal Technical Support (Ms Genevieve Hartley)
13:45 – 13:55	Evaluation of the Two Day Mini Master Class (Ms Genevieve Hartley)
13:55 – 14:00	Closure (Mr Sogen Moodley)
14:00 – 14:45	Lunch
14:45	Departure

4. Components of a Good City/Town Development Strategy

Urban Strategic Planning is an on-going process whereby consultation and engagements are an integral part of it. In the proceedings, planners were empowered with information and techniques to apply when conducting their own facilitation in their respective municipalities. To ensure successful facilitation, planners should first be knowledgeable of the content in order to meaningfully steer engagements towards desirable outcomes. In this light, a refresher of essential elements that form part of a good city or town development strategy was provided, through the constant encouragement of participants to develop the same. In its entirety, the session was structured to be informative, dynamic and interactive. Hence, activities such as group work and case studies were constantly utilised to maximize participation. In practically applying the techniques provided, real key challenges of the various represented municipalities were raised through group tasks. Taking into consideration the various challenges, the development of effective visions and purpose statements form a basis of addressing them. It was emphasised that in order to identify and develop good visions, planners should have a clear insight of whom they are serving.

5. Developing a Strategic Framework

In developing an effective strategic roadmap, the ability to distinguish internal and external challenges, and steps the Municipalities can take in addressing them is crucial. Categorizing all challenges with urgency status was deemed an impossible task; therefore they should be prioritized in order of strategic importance. At this stage, planners would have developed a clear set of strategic municipal goals and would be in a position to elaborate by crafting detailed strategies, timeframes, budgets and responsibilities.

5.1. The eThekweni Story

The participants were presented with the steps eThekweni Municipality took in developing its own strategic plan in an effort to radically transform Durban. Approaches to City Strategy that were adopted were done through developing a Strategic Framework, Long Term Planning and Medium Term Planning (IDP). Following the presentation, the participants expressed sentiments of how the approaches taken were exemplary and of a high standard. The importance of needs assessment was one of the fundamental lessons learned. Furthermore, eThekweni Municipality made a lasting impression by displaying transparency in the process of public participation, even when it had to courageously acknowledge errors and correct them by embracing the “SOAR” (Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations and Reality) paradigm. It was emphasized that, self-introspection is a big motivator in moving forward. It must be remembered that “Municipal Transformation” offices no longer exist in most municipalities and that planners have been activists in this regard.

Despite eThekweni Municipality being highly praised as a “trailblazer in service delivery”, there were gaps identified. A critique of how the Long Term Plan shifted from 2020 to 2030 is an indication of such. Moreover, there is a need for the advocacy of the Imagine Durban (i.e. Long Term Development Plan) document, as it is barely known by the people.

6. Stakeholder Engagements

Without stakeholder engagement, all the intricate processes that inform the development of successful urban strategic plans would be highly flawed and invalid. Citizen participation is crucial to effective service delivery, as it is intended to satisfy the needs of communities. An interactive discussion on the different participatory methodologies used by the various municipalities ensued, while identifying best practices and new opportunities for further participation. As the session was a safe space for open debate, the participants also shared their participatory processes incorporating their challenges, success and failures.

6. The Municipal Systems Act No. 32 of 2000

In sharing and unpacking the various municipal participation processes, the Municipal Systems Act was identified by the participants as guiding legislation for citizen participation. It prescribes that consultation is mandatory and that the decision-making process would be incomplete without it. Thus, the IDP was identified as a vital document supporting the Act as it provides guidelines of how public participation processes should be undertaken. In complying with the Act and ensuring that activities promoting participation are undertaken, the provision of a budget makes it a possibility, as all activities require resources to execute. In this regard, the term “discretionary budget” was raised as one of the methods for funding public participation. It was identified as a process whereby citizens of a particular community are given funding by their respective municipality to utilize in any community upliftment activity or project they deem necessary.

6.1. Full Citizen Power VS. Delegated Power – Is It Feasible?

Moving forward, a distinction was made between full citizen power and delegated power, and its merits and demerits were explored. The participants were asked to ponder on the reason behind why South African municipalities do not exercise the allocation of full citizen power when it comes to budgets. Robust engagements ensued whereby a range of responses were provided. Some individuals were of the view that the Municipal Finance Management (MFMA) does not prescribe to full citizen power; therefore there would be a legislation breach. Another view was that having no control measures would result to chaos and no level of accountability as the budget is aligned with the IDP and must be spent accordingly. While some participants felt that the funds would be mismanaged, others were of the opinion that it could be to a certain degree a motivator for participation. However, this method would marginalise political principals as they would be hindered in making meaningful contributions to communities. Zimbabwean Experience of Citizen Participation and Engagement During the proceedings, an informative presentation on the Zimbabwean experience of citizen participation and engagement was delivered by seasoned academic from Midlands State University Zimbabwe, Ms. Virginia Makanza. She gave insight into various frameworks that support participatory processes and unpacked the evolution of citizen engagement in the context of Zimbabwe.

6.2. The Key Lessons drawn from Zimbabwe:

- Practical responses sustain citizen interest in Citizen Engagement (which is a political process);
- On-going mutual learning & conscious capacity development are key;
- Senior Council management & political leaders' attitudes & actions define Citizen Engagement;
- Executive stability & succession aid Citizen Engagement institutionalization;
- Process flexibility without skirting MONEY issues sustain good Citizen Engagement;
- Balance needed between devolved ownership & Council-wide visioning;
- Unstructured 'open door policy' is unhelpful;
- The whole national governance system has to show practical interest in Citizen Engagement;
- A central inter-Council platform for Citizen Engagement learning, action and reflection would advance practice and policy

7. The Role of the Facilitator

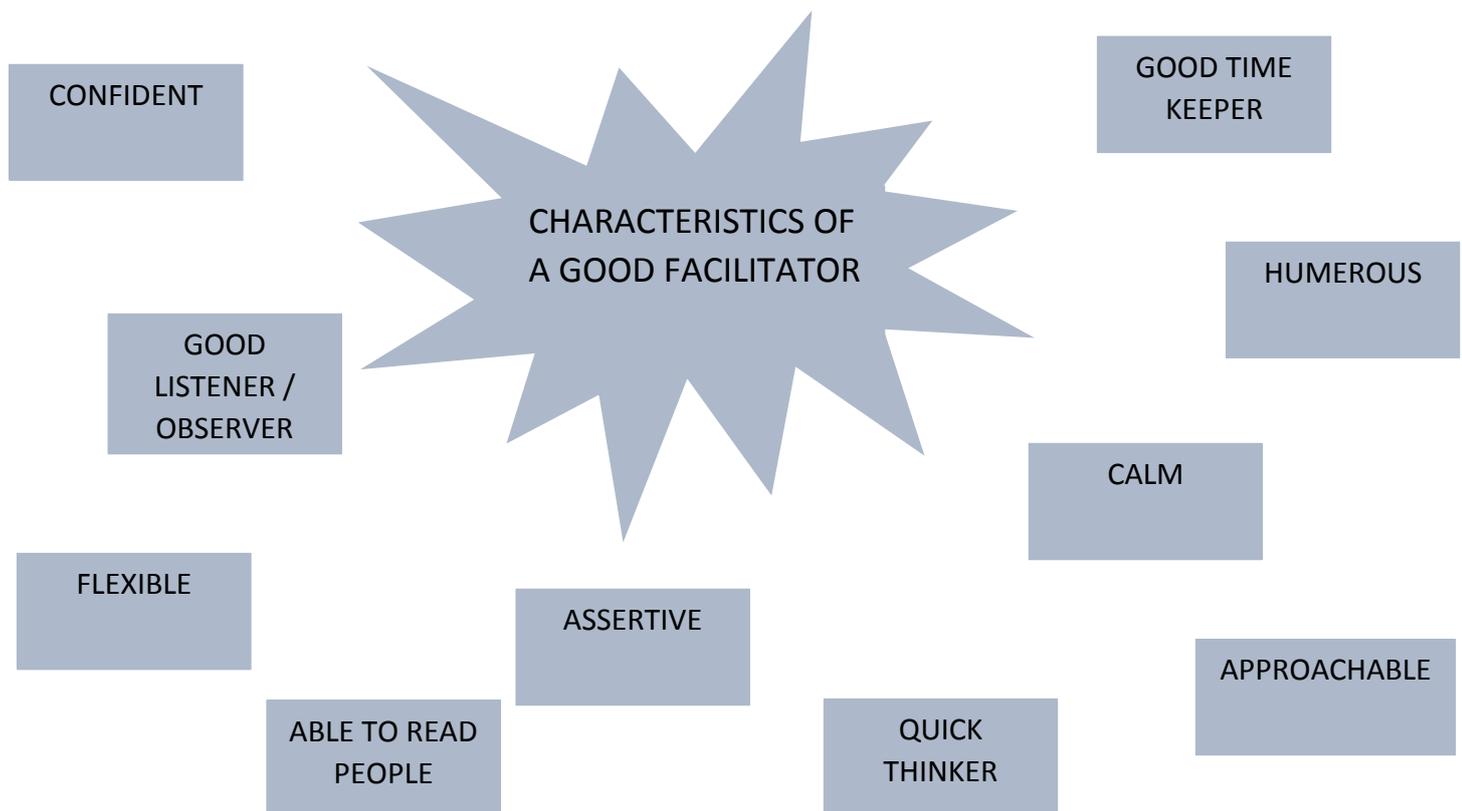
"Each of us guards at a gate of change that can only be unlocked from the inside. We cannot open the gate of another either by argument or by emotional appeal." -Marilyn Ferguson, Educator and Writer

In the deliberations, it was unanimously agreed that the role of the Facilitator is of the utmost importance. A Facilitator plays the role of an architect, pilot and guide interchangeably in order to assist groups work through a process by focussing on the strategic outcome. It was discussed that good Facilitators as architects plan and design the learning session. In doing so they are ensuring that the purpose is well understood while defining a set of clearly outlined outcomes. As a pilot, they assume the role of safely navigating throughout the learning journey by providing leadership towards where the session is destined. In order to achieve this, logistical details must be properly attended to. Assuming the role of the guide would require maintaining trust of the group and leading until end of learning adventure.

In improving facilitation skills, participants were encouraged to first build a rapport with the audience. Special emphasis was placed on Facilitators removing themselves away from the content as they cannot take a position while aspiring to achieve an outcome. The participants shared facilitation methods they apply during their citizen participation processes. They shared their success stories as well as the undesirable ones in an effort to draw key lessons and execute an effective facilitation plan in the future. It was raised that whilst engaging with the audience, it is crucial for Facilitators to be fluent in the language of the community as some individuals might be withdrawn from making any kind of contributions. It is not advisable to source Facilitators from the private sector as they might not be sensitised to the dynamics of Local Government. Dress code was also identified as a crucial determining factor in the process. The onus is on the Facilitator to ensure that s/he is adaptable to the target crowd to earn their trust.

7.1.Role-Play

Participants were presented with the opportunity to simulate a workshop scenario whereby all the key stakeholders were actively participating in the proceedings. The simulation enabled them to practically apply the techniques they were equipped with and provide feedback on what worked well and what didn't work well.



8. Key Lessons Learnt and Conclusion

- The participants appreciated the need to be flexible, as there might be anomalies that present themselves.
- In this regard, facilitators should make an allowance for venting.
- The sessions must follow a structure, if not the opportunity for frustration might set in.
- In preparing for facilitation, planners should “expect the best and prepare for the worst”.
- The role played by co-facilitators is just as significant as they are there to support and is a safety net especially when there is pressure

In conclusion, throughout the two days of extensive learning and knowledge-sharing sessions, participants were equipped with the necessary methodologies and techniques to improve their facilitation skills in the stakeholder engagement process.