



cooperative governance
& traditional affairs

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SALGA
South African Local Government Association



Learning Framework for Local Government

Local Government should aspire to building learning municipalities in which employees acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes from their daily experience, educational influences and resources in their environment

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1. Purpose of the Learning Framework for Local Government

The framework aims to **support managers and employees in municipalities** to address learning in the workplace. The Learning Framework is a model that attempts to frame Personal Development Planning (PDP) in relation to effective learning.

2. Why should the learning needs of the employees be addressed?

2.1 A municipality (through the facilitation by its management) should be committed to –

- (a) the continuous training and development of its employees to achieve its vision, mission and strategic objectives and empower its employees to implement its Integrated Development Plan;
- (b) manage training and development within the ambit of relevant national policies and legislation; and
- (c) build a pool of suitably qualified candidates for higher positions at all levels, with particular reference to groups whose promotion will promote employment equity and address scarce and critical skill shortages.

2.2 A municipality should follow an integrated approach to Human Resource Management, that is:

- (a) Human Resource Development or building individual capacity forms an integral part of Human Resource Planning and Management.
- (b) For Human Resource Development / Individual Capacity Building Strategies and Plans to be successful it should be based on sound Human Resource (HR) practices, such as the (strategic) HR Plan, job descriptions, competence profiles, the result of regular performance appraisals and career pathing / talent management / succession planning.
- (c) To ensure the necessary linkage with performance management, the Performance Management and Development System should provide for redress through the Personal Development Plans of employees. Such approach will ensure alignment of individual performance objectives to the municipality's strategic objectives and that further learning needs are identified through performance management and appraisal.

- (d) Career-pathing ensures that employees are placed and developed in jobs according to aptitude and identified potential. Through training and development they should acquire the necessary capacity to prepare them for future positions.

3. Determining an Employee's Learning Needs

Learning needs can be determined through conducting a skills audit of which the information should be kept recent or deductions made during performance management and development cycles (usually quarterly by reviewing Personal Development Plans).

This framework, however, is a product that emerged from a national skills audit process and this document will thus focus on the skills audit process only. Mention must be made that the performance management and development process is also a source for learning need information.

A **skills audit** aims to establish the status of an individual's capacity / development needs of employees. This is done by:

- (a) Ascertaining the combination of an employee's qualification(s), experience and competence at a set time frame in a specific post and occupational grouping and functional unit.
- (b) Comparing the individual's capacity to the combination of qualification(s), experience and competence required for the specific post and occupational grouping and functional unit.
- (c) The **difference** between (a) and (b) above **represents the learning needs** in terms of qualifications, experience and / or competence (*Competence* is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills and attributes required for the specific post and occupational grouping and functional unit).

To assist managers and employees to conduct a skills audit to establish baseline information, a questionnaire was developed during the national skills audit conducted from 2007 to 2010. This questionnaire is available through the internet on the GAPSKILL (the internet-based web tool for municipalities at <http://gapskill.cogta.gov.za>). Attached at Annexure 1 is a copy of the questionnaire.

The product of the skills audit at an individual level is referred to as a **Personal Development Plan** (PDP); an example of such is at Annexure 2. PDPs are a tool that managers can use to develop and motivate employees and assists in budgeting for annual training. By encouraging a focused approach to each employee's learning needs, managers can help their employees enhance their capacity and become more effective and productive. Managers who promote the use of PDPs also send a clear message to their employees, i.e. that they view each employee's development as a priority. Employees should be encouraged to take responsibility for addressing their learning needs. The following areas are covered in the PDP that can be extracted from the GAPSKILL:

- (a) Personal Details, including post and division
- (b) Qualifications
- (c) Experience
- (d) Summary of Competences
- (e) Implementation of the PDP, i.e. Identified Learning Requirements and decisions on how to address them

For **Section 54A and 56 Managers a comprehensive competence assessment**, in line with the Competence Framework developed for them, was conducted and the individual assessment reports were shared with the Municipal Manager and / or the individual Section 54A and 56 Managers who requested a copy. These assessment reports could further assist in identifying learning needs.

For Employees below Section 56 Managers the part of the skills audit dealing with competences is still subjective and to ensure that actual needs are addressed through relevant capacity building initiatives, a training needs analysis to further interrogate the skills audit findings may be needed. More objective competence assessment instruments were developed at a national level for staff below S56 Managers and a link to such can be found on www.cogta.gov.za under documents under the Category: Local Government Support and Capacity Building.

Although **professionalisation** is not listed in the PDP all employees should be encouraged to belong to a professional body relevant to their occupational grouping. This allows them opportunities to share ideas with employees who may be experiencing similar challenges and so build their capacity (and indirectly that of the municipality). However, the most important in terms of

professionalisation is that it should be **institutionalised**. The words of Minister Richard Baloyi refer

“Instill in those men and women a work ethic that will make them realise that what they are doing is not just a job, but responsible nationhood.”

Relevant **national programmes and municipal requirements** should be included in an individual’s PDP where relevant.

In the case where a manager has more than one individual’s capacity that should be developed, the manager could use a table similar to the one below to plan for and ease the management of the process: E.g. **Managing the Functional Unit’s Learning Needs**: E.G. January 2010

Management of Functional / Business Unit's Capacity Building

Name, post and grade of employee	Learning Need identified and agreed to with the employee	Initiative identified and agreed to with the employee	Available budget	A monthly calendar could be used to indicate time frames per employee by using a different colour pen for different employees
<p>E.g.</p> <p>Kay Ndwa, Admin Officer, Grade 10</p>	<p>Note:</p> <p>This should form part of the qualifications, experience and competence requirements for the post, occupational grouping and functional unit that the individual still needs to acquire</p>	<p>Note:</p> <p>This aspect will be elaborated on further in the framework. Prioritisation of training needs will be necessary since it will not be possible to address all identified training needs in a specific financial year. It is of critical importance that training needs are addressed on a phased and priority basis. This implies that all these needs should be prioritized for purposes of accommodating critical / strategic training and development needs in the HR Plan, Personal Development Plans and the Workplace Skills Plan.</p> <p>Guidelines regarding the number of training days per employee and the nominations of employees:</p>	<p>Note:</p> <p>The aim is to ensure that the available budget is fairly distributed and in line with municipal policy</p>	<p>Note:</p> <p>The aim is to ensure that not all employees in the functional unit will be attending training at the same time thus hampering service delivery</p>

Name, post and grade of employee	Learning Need identified and agreed to with the employee	Initiative identified and agreed to with the employee	Available budget	A monthly calendar could be used to indicate time frames per employee by using a different colour pen for different employees
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right employee should be nominated and attend. • On average each should receive at least three days of training per financial year. • The prioritization per employee in terms of municipal objectives remains relevant. • Employees should not unnecessarily be withdrawn from training initiatives. • Should an employee be undergoing studies for a qualification they should first complete that before being nominated for training. 		

At the institutional level the Skills Development Facilitator (SDF) should, amongst other, use the GAPSKILL and PDPs to complete the **Workplace Skills Plan (WSP)**. The WSP should be agreed to by the municipality, representatives within the functional Training Committee, to ensure transparency and buy-in at all levels and be submitted to the Local Government Sector Education and Training Authority (LGSETA) by the end of June annually.

4. What forms the basis of Learning?

4.1 Learning principles:

- (a) Managers should inspire employees to learn and create an environment that encourages life-long learning to take place, be shared and implemented. Learning is more likely to be effective if there is synergy between the factors and forces that contribute to the learning (i.e. regular discussion, supportive management, willingness to collaborate and learn).
- (b) Learning should address the requirements of the country (communities), government, municipality and individual by addressing the employee's needs in relation to the post (thus occupational grouping and within the functional unit) occupied ensuring that the employee optimally performs.
- (b) A manager should agree on a strategy for successful learning with the employee him- / herself, e.g. Identifying the employee's preferred learning styles (Visual, Auditory, Verbal, Kinaesthetic, Logical or Social) and proposing relevant initiatives.
- (c) The initiative should be suited to address the learning need, e.g. if one is addressing the category 'qualification', send an employee to acquire a qualification. However, if one is addressing a 'competence' or 'experience' gap, a qualification would not suffice as it addresses mainly theoretical knowledge.
- (d) Use LGSETA (or other SETA) accredited service providers in addressing a learning need other than a qualification.
- (e) Use workplace learning where appropriate, e.g. learning through demonstration, eLearning, reading, attending a meeting with a colleague, doing research, etc.
- (f) Persons in leadership / managerial positions may have time constraints and find coaching and mentoring programmes more appropriate.

- (g) The cost of the learning initiative should be appropriate to the impact that will be achieved.
- (h) The impact of the learning should be assessed and redressed if unsuccessful.

4.2 Who in the municipality has a role to play in learning?

- (a) **Smart leaders (Section 56 managers and other managers accountable to them)** make sure that they:
 - i. Develop the right types of knowledge, skills and attributes in each team member.
 - ii. Consider work assignments for employees that broaden skill sets, partnering developing employees with experts on projects.
 - iii. Recommend or approve appropriate education or training activities focused on municipal and professional development that will achieve results.
 - iv. Develop team members in ways that are connected with and integrated into the way work gets done naturally.
 - v. Use work-related discussions about operations, project reviews, as a way to naturally coach and accelerate development. At the same time, they are focused on delivering business results.
 - vi. Use open two-way dialogue to understand and assess operating challenges and to get ideas and innovations on the table that can lead to improved performance.
- (b) **Smart employees** know they should own and take the initiative to implement their development plans.
- (c) **Skills Development Facilitators** support managers with the development of employees.
- (d) A **municipal Training Committee** ensures that there is transparency and buy-in by all stakeholders in the learning processes.
- (e) The **Municipal Manager** must ensure that learning is addressed in his / her municipality in line with the Municipal Systems Amendment Act.

- (f) The **Chief Financial Officer** should ensure that funding is made available for learning and managed in line with relevant legislation.

5. Addressing the Learning Needs Identified

Capacity is a multi-dimensional concept with **three inter-related core elements**, i.e. individual capacity, institutional capacity and environmental capacity (National Capacity Building Framework for Local Government: 2012 to 2016).

Learning can be addressed in a variety of ways. **An appropriate initiative** should be identified to address the learning gap. The outcome to be achieved with the initiative should be determined prior to the initiative so that the assessment of the initiative's success is measurable. The 3 areas of individual capacity are:

5.1 Qualifications

The qualification will be relevant to the post that an employee occupies.

Addressing a Qualifications Gap:

- (a) A qualification is a hierarchically structured, chronologically graded education system running from primary school through to university. It is a traditional type of learning and is appropriate in addressing lack of theory / knowledge. The National Qualifications Framework Act was compiled to provide for the responsibilities of the Ministers of Labour and Education and related structures.

During the skills audit some **competence profiles developed were linked to a qualification profile**, Annexure 3 provides an example of such. A qualifications database, developed as baseline during the skills audit project, can be accessed from the LGSETA or DCoG within the Ministry of CoGTA through the municipality's SDF.

The LGSETA is best suited to provide advice on appropriate qualifications-based learning for a post and per level of employee

through the municipal SDF. The following are qualifications-based learning, a / an:

- i. Qualifications obtained through a Further and / or Higher Education and Training Institution. Information on these can also be obtained from relevant institutions' web addresses.
 - ii. Occupational qualification is a qualification associated with a trade, occupation or profession resulting from work-based learning and consisting of knowledge unit standards¹, practical unit standards and work experience unit standards.
 - iii. Apprenticeships, i.e. a learnership in respect of a listed trade and includes a trade test in respect of that trade.
 - iv. Learnerships consist of a structured learning component; the learnership includes practical work experience of a specified nature and duration. The learnership would lead to a qualification registered by the South African Qualifications Authority and is related to an occupation.
 - v. A Skills Programme is occupationally-based, when completed constitute a credit² towards a qualification registered in terms of the National Qualifications Framework and uses accredited training providers.
 - vi. Adult Education and Training is based on a set of Regulatory-defined requirements in terms of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 1 to 4 that are required should an employee want to obtain NQF level 5 and higher qualifications.
- (b) Recognition of Prior-Learning (RPL) is a process that recognises what learners already know and can do regardless of whether this learning was achieved formally, informally or non-formally. An employee can apply to be taken through the process. Once again, the LGSETA is best situated to provide advice in this regard through the municipal SDF.

¹ Unit Standards describe the **outcomes** of learning and the standard of performance, and describe what must be assessed, but not how to enable learning or how to assess. (Although indications of assessment requirements are described) Unit Standards describe the **result** of learning, not the process of learning.

² A credit value is allocated to every unit standard and qualification registered on the National Qualifications Framework. They indicate notional hours of learning. 1 credit = 10 notional hours. Notional hours do not only cover formal class sessions but time spent on pre-study, assignments and group work.

5.2 Experience

5 years of experience and above is a good benchmark, however, some employees build up experience quicker than others do, depending on how they are managed and what they are exposed to.

Building Experience:

- (a) Experiential or experience-based learning is based on a set of the following assumptions:
 - i. Experience is the foundation of and stimulus for learning.
 - ii. Learners actively construct their own experience.
 - iii. Learning is a holistic experience.
 - iv. Learning is socially and culturally constructed.
 - v. Learning is influenced by the socio and emotional context in which it occurs.

- (b) Experience is also strongly associated with time. Approaches that can be adopted are to:
 - i. Keep in mind that the biggest influence on learning at work is the work itself.
 - ii. Consider action learning: A process of mutual learning within small 'sets' of employees, generally through application and reflection on workplace issues and problems.
 - iii. Develop Procedure Manuals per position. These should be developed by an employee or group of employees who have the correct combination of qualifications, experience and competence in a specific post and level.
 - iv. Partner employees of different levels of experience.
 - v. A tool such as the Local Government Resource Centre (LGRC) of the Development Bank of Southern Africa could be of great assistance in this respect too.

5.3 Competence

The national Competence Profile for a specific position that is available on the GAPS KILL will assist with the post's competence requirements. This could be further supplemented by the national Competence Dictionary at www.cogta.gov.za under documents under category: Local Government Support and Capacity Building.

Building Competence:

- (a) Various approaches can be adopted to address competence gaps but in all cases it should be stressed that it should address a combination of Knowledge, Skills and Attributes not the one without the other.
- (b) Short courses have their place, e.g. Orientation or learning a specific skill set.
- (c) The services of accredited providers for classroom-based learning could be sourced but other than (a) above one should ensure that the learning needs identified will be met through the said initiative and that the costing is appropriate.
- (d) Informal learning can be developed within the context of new forms of work organisation (e.g. a project team approach).
- (e) Other approaches available: eLearning, one-on-one learning (demonstration, coaching or mentoring), rotation into a variety of related posts, partnering with / shadowing someone with the relevant competence, researching and presenting findings, etc.
- (f) The approach decided on should always be done in dialogue with the employee and the reason for the choice of initiative motivated and agreed on.

6. Risk Management, Monitoring and Evaluation of Learning

The risk for employers that employees who are developed may not be retained, especially those with critical and scarce skills, is a reality and should be catered for in the municipality's Human Resource Plan.

The Training Committee to be considered functional should meet at least quarterly, consist of representatives of each functional / business unit and unions and report to the Local Labour Forum and Council. They should report on at least the:

- (a) Compilation and implementation of the PDPs through the WSP and a strategy that addresses all the challenges identified.
- (b) Maintenance of the skills audit process, i.e. that all employees' latest information are updated on the GAPSKILL and newly appointed employees' details are captured on the GAPSKILL to enable the extraction of relevant reports.

7. Budgeting for learning

The Skills Development Levies Act, 1999 imposes a defined levy on municipalities, explains refunds, interest on late payment and penalties on default.

The SDF should communicate and implement the more specific details on the mandatory and discretionary grant that can be accessed from the LGSETA and report such to the Training Committee and the Council and ensure that such funding is made available by the CFO for training purposes.

The SDF should further enquire, communicate and where needed access additional funding from the National Skills Authority through the LGSETA, reporting such to the Training Committee and the Council.

We wish you success and fun in the achievement of individuals' and municipalities' learning objectives!