

**MANUAL FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL PLANNING
AND BUDGETING PROCESSES**

**(A PRATICAL AND SIMPLIFIED) MANUAL FOR
CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL PLANNING
AND BUDGETING PROCESSES**

Planact

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MANUAL FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND BUDGETING PROCESSES

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF THIS MANUAL

As so eloquently put by Wangari Maathai, “The little grassroots people can change this world”. Put differently, “be the change you wish to see in the world” (Mahatma Gandhi).

To do so, grassroots people and organisations need to be equipped with ‘how’ to change and influence their world around them. Many individuals and civil society organisations have a burning desire to participate, challenge and influence governance decisions within their localities, but wouldn’t know where to begin, where the opportunities for engagement are, who to engage with and how to achieve their ultimate objectives.

That is, in essence, the purpose this manual.

At the heart of development is people, the human connection, and so it is vital to understand the importance of building relationships, establishing the right contacts, managing them effectively, regular engagement and feedback etc. Many communities or individuals get their way or get things done swiftly because they know who to talk to, how and for what, which channels to use (whether formal or informal), make the right connections with the key officials and so on.

That is the reality of how things work in any place in the world – people are at the heart of any system, structure, methodology and it is people who can move or frustrate progress on any issue. Understanding this is empowerment in itself and can equip citizens and community groups with the ammunition they need to engage the institutions that govern, and the key processes they wish to influence (in this case planning and budgeting decisions).

OBJECTIVES OF THE MANUAL

To ensure that citizens understand the policy imperatives and legal avenues for participation in the key Integrated Development Planning (IDP) and Budgeting processes

Their rights to access information, the different structures and roles of each of those that may provide opportunities for participation or engagement;

To help citizens and civic organisations understand the municipal planning and budgeting cycle, phases and processes of their municipality;

To ensure targeted, well timed (in terms of stages in the cycle) and appropriate (content wise) citizen initiative in the planning and budgeting processes, and to equip CSOs with different strategies to pursue their interests within their municipal processes; and

To enable co-production and collective local ownership of priority setting and budgeting, including through the formation and use of existing local structures and technology.

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2. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENS

In a developmental and decentralised system like ours in which local government (which includes by definition its communities) has the right to govern on its own initiative, citizens have a lot more responsibilities than rights. Civic education must start with that fundamental realisation.

Too often, citizens expect government to ‘fix’ all of the socio-economic and other problems and challenges which confront society, and take a back seat once they have voted. But the reality is that government has a limited (albeit important) role to play in framing and guiding the development path that our localities take.

Far greater onus rests on the individual, social clusters and economic sectors to contribute to the functioning, efficiency, improvement and overall attractiveness of the village, town or city. Ownership of that village, town or city must start with the individual taking pride in their locality and acting accordingly, for eg. paying their rates and taxes, utility charges (to enable Council to finance the plans for maintaining and improving operations); obeying by-laws; not littering; responsible and considerate use of public facilities and services; and so on. Individual practices, tolerances and influence have a significant bearing on the successful governance, economic prospects or otherwise of any place.

The responsibilities start with participating in municipal elections, deciding which party and councillor you wish to govern and represent your constituency > to participating in planning and budgeting processes of the municipality > to supporting implementation during the year (reporting problems, feedback etc) > to holding those you elected accountable for their performance and the state of your locality, to name but a few.

Right / Responsibility	Legislative Provision	Brief Description
To vote for my municipal leaders	Section 19 of the Constitution	Responsibility to participate in deciding who (which party) should run my municipal council and the councillor I wish to represent my ward
To participate in municipal affairs	Constitution section 152 (1)(e)	Municipality obliged to work with communities and community organisations in municipal affairs

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	Section 16(1) of the Municipal Systems Act	<i>A municipality must develop a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance</i>
Right to participate in planning, budgeting, performance management systems and service delivery	Systems Act section 16(1)(a)	<i>The municipality must encourage, and create conditions for, the local community to participate in the affairs of the municipality, including in formulation, review and implementation of its IDP, Budget, performance management systems and the provision of services.</i>
Municipal obligation to build capacity of communities to participate	Systems Act section 16(1)(b)	<i>Municipality must contribute to building the capacity of the local community to enable it to participate in the affairs of the municipality; and councillors and staff to foster community participation; and use its resources, and annually allocate funds in its budget, as may be appropriate for the purpose of implementing this.</i>
Responsibility to pay my municipal bills (rates, levies, user charges)	Section 229 of the Constitution and Section 75 and 96 of the Municipal Systems Act	<i>Municipality can impose rates on property and surcharges; to levy and recover fees (including interest on outstanding amounts), charges or tariffs for any service provided; and to collect all money due and payable to the municipality.</i>
Right to municipal information in alternate languages	Section 18 of the Municipal Systems Act	<i>When communicating information as set out, a municipality must take into account language preferences and usage in the municipality; and the special needs of people who cannot read or write.</i>

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How to participate / mechanisms to participate	Section 17 of the Municipal Systems Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>political structures for participation, including committees and ward committees</i> - <i>councillors, in particular ward councillors</i> - <i>other appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures established by the municipality</i>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>The receipt, processing and consideration of petitions and complaints lodged by members of the local community</i> - <i>Public meetings and hearings by the municipal council and other political structures and political office bearers of the municipality, when appropriate;</i> - <i>Consultative sessions with locally recognised community organisations and, where appropriate, traditional authorities; and</i> - <i>Report-back to the local community</i>
To participate in Council and committee meetings	Section 20 of the Municipal Systems Act	<i>Meetings of a municipal council and those of its committees are open to the public, including the media (only in exceptional circumstances are meetings closed to the public, must be justified)</i>
Right to participate in Budgeting	Section 23 of the Municipal Finance Management Act	<i>After tabling the Budget, it must be open to the public for consultation</i>
Right to access municipal documents and information	Section 32 of the Constitution and Promotion of Access to Information Act	<i>PAIA gives effect to the Constitution in providing for the right of access to any information held by the state (including municipalities) or any information that is held by another person / institution that is required for the exercise or protection of any right.</i>
Responsibility to respect and implement the by-laws and		<i>Responsibility to participate in elections, participate in planning and budgeting to influence decision making and pay rates and taxes (if you are not indigent). If you do not vote, participate in planning and budgeting</i>

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policies of Council		<i>processes, then you have no right to complain, even as an inhabitant of the municipality.</i>
Responsibility / civic duty to understand my municipality and state		Duty to educate myself or learn what to expect from my municipality, who my ward councillor is, how I can participate and what others (govt agencies or spheres) are responsible for.
Civic duty to responsibly use services and protect public infrastructure		For eg, use water responsibly; report service delivery challenges (water leaks, burst pipes etc), systems abuse or vandalism of public infrastructure; influence other citizens and condemn bad behaviour (water waste, littering etc). It all starts with me!

3. PARTICIPATION IN MUNICIPAL IDP AND BUDGET PROCESSES

What is a municipal IDP?

An Integrated Development Plan is the grand or master plan for the entire jurisdiction of a municipal area and sets out the desired outcomes and key priorities of that municipal government. It gives an overall framework for the development of that municipality. It pulls together and attempts to present a holistic, aligned picture of the various and multiple sector plans and strategies, including ward based plans.

In essence, the chapters or components of an IDP often break it down into various segments such as:

- Contextual overview of the municipality, its demographics, key information and statistics, key trends, projected scenarios etc.
- Spatial planning and transformation (highlighting and attempting to integrate sector plans into a clear development picture)
- Infrastructure services (such as housing, electricity, water, sanitation, waste management)

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- Safety, security and environmental and disaster risk management
- Good governance, transparency and accountability
- Macro-economic and fiscal context and outlook (funding strategy, revenue and expenditure projections and expectations and so on)
- It often includes outcome indicators aimed at tracking performance against a desired benchmark and would end with a future outlook of the City or municipal space

The IDP is thus the grand plan which (ought to) guide all of the municipality's work, including its organisational plans, strategies and structures, as well as its budgeting and performance management systems.

Since the IDP is the focal point of all municipal plans, projects and budgets, it is the central focus of citizen participation. Any development desired must be reflected in the IDP, which will then see it budgeted for etc.

Thus, studying and understanding your municipality's IDP is a vital entry point for citizen engagement and participation. It is also the entry point for accountability and oversight in that budgeting and implementation must match commitments made in the IDP. It is thus an instrument for communities to hold the municipality to account for its commitments and stated development outcomes.

What is a Municipal Budget?

In simple terms, a municipal budget (often called a Medium Term Revenue and Expenditure Framework, MTREF) is the projected financial plan of the municipality, reflecting its anticipated revenue and the different sources thereof (rates, taxes, utility charges etc), expenditure, including separating its capital and operational revenue and expenditure. It is often a complex set of documents outlining how resources of the municipality is allocated to the different political offices, departments and entities.

Importantly, a municipal budget is projected over a three-year period, for the current year plus two additional 'outer' years, hence the title MTREF. This is particularly so because of the large infrastructure projects that form the backbone of a municipality's planning, which includes conditional and fixed capital expenditure that is not subject to much change or negotiation and is committed funding over a longer period of time.

In most metros and cities, the budget will be broken down into various components (including, but not limited to):

- Operating budget framework

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- Capital expenditure
- Annual budget tables
- **Tariff setting**
- Council resolutions
- Supporting documentation would often include –
 - Overview of annual budget process
 - **Overview of alignment of annual budget with IDP**
 - **Measurable performance objectives and indicators**
 - Budget related policies
 - **Overview of budget assumptions**
 - overview of budget funding
 - expenditure on grants
 - monthly targets for revenue, expenditure and cash flow
 - **legislation compliance status**
 - break down of medium term budget per cluster, department and municipal entity

Highlighted in bold can be considered the key areas that would or should be of most interest to communities and community organisations, as it gives a good indication of the governance and financial state of the municipality, its funding sources (rates and tariffs over the medium term) and its priorities (where it really puts its money).

The budget assumptions are crucial as the entire budgeting process is based on those assumptions, and this would also be an important focus point for communities engaging the budget process.

Why participate in municipal planning and budgeting?

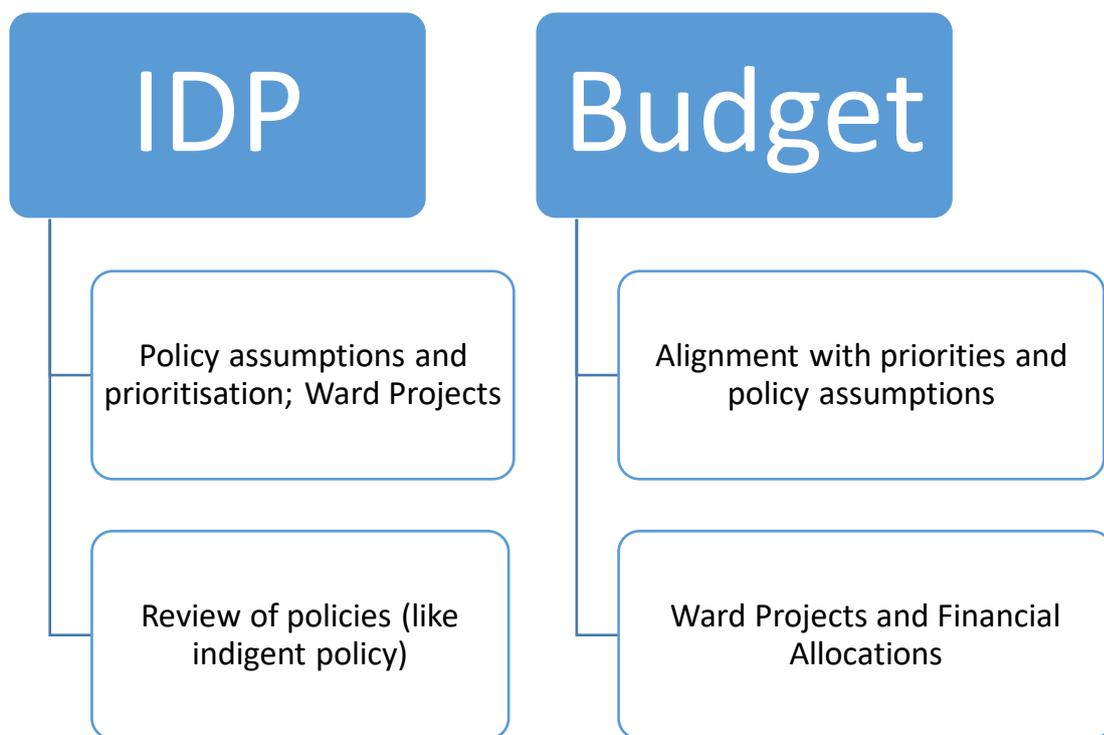
- It allows me to make my voice, and our collective voices, heard by policy makers and ensure that our views influence decision making and resource allocation to our localities.
- So that I can exercise my civic duty to improve our own lives and ensure that the municipality is working for the people and doing what it is supposed to be doing,

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in planning, budgeting but also assessing performance of our councillors and municipal institution.

- To build my understanding of governance challenges and opportunities for change, as well as the resources available for decision making

What to influence



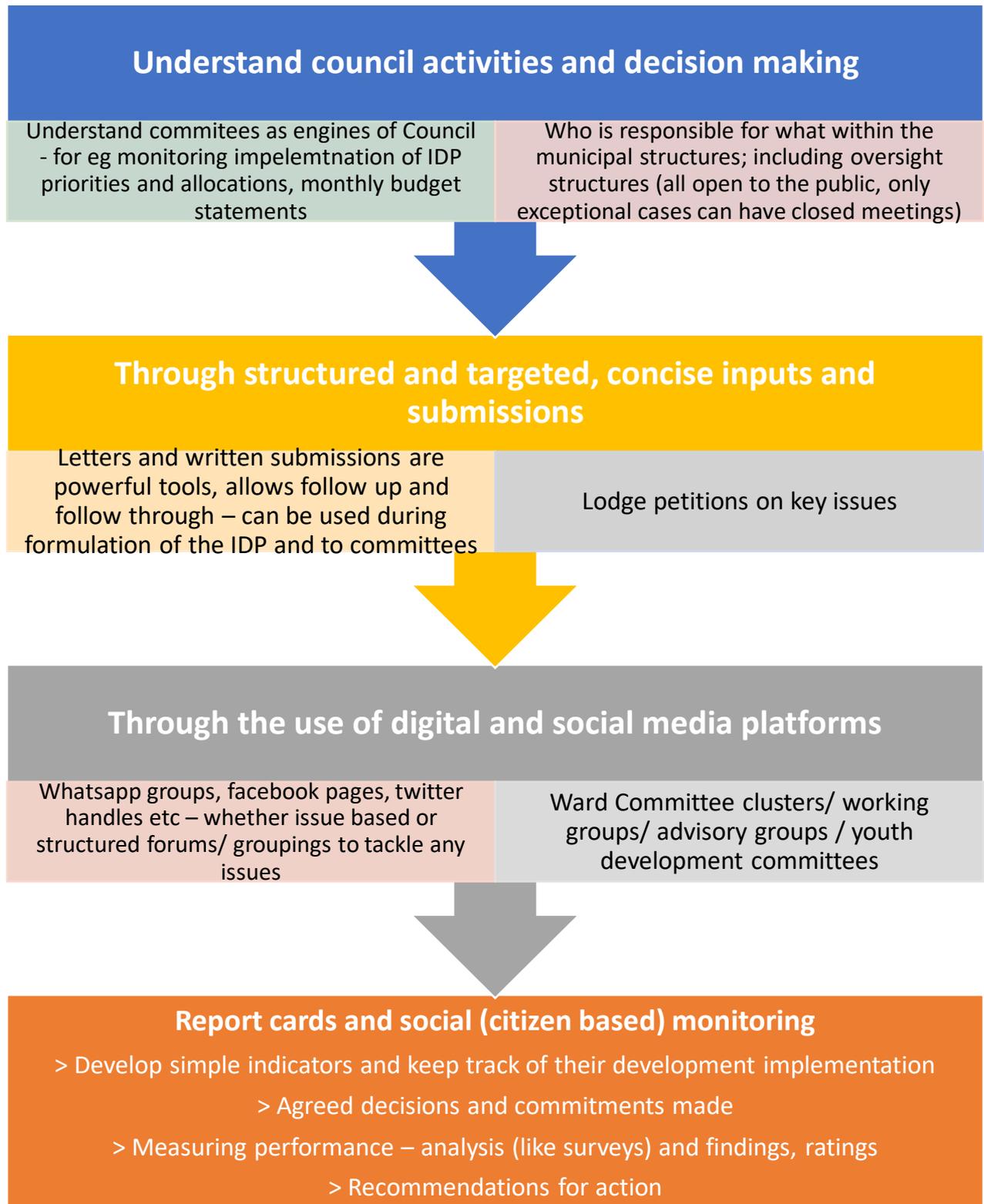
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Understanding the Obstacles and Risks to effective Citizen Participation

What are the major obstacles?	How can they be overcome?
Little knowledge about rights and responsibilities and unrealistic levels of expectation	Through informative and effective civic education and training
Limited access to information and lack of media attention to local issues	Public awareness campaigns (often using social media) and communication strategies
Lack of trust and confidence in 'the system'	Networking and building bridges
Focus is on minute issues rather than broader impactful issues	Guided and structured dialogues and conversations (use professional facilitators)
Lack of resources and resource knowledge	Fundraising and local partnerships
Intimidation due to lack of education or understanding	CSOs to prepare simplified versions of the IDP and Budget (only relevant to those communities)

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How to Participate and Influence

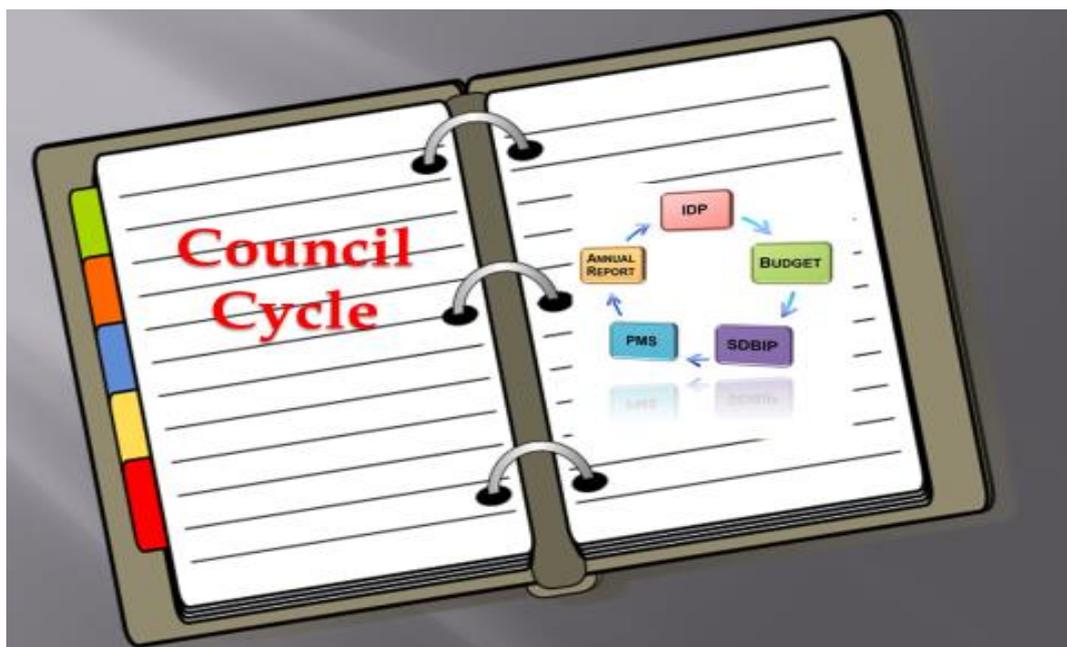


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Understanding the Municipal Planning and Budgeting Cycle



The cycle effectively starts with the new financial year and implementation of the approved IDP and Budget, managed through the Service Delivery and Budget Implementation Plan and Performance Management Systems, and culminating in an Annual Report reflecting on the plans, activities, financial statements etc of the municipality for that financial year.



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Soon after the financial year starts, from August to November, IDP feedback engagements are held with communities to report on progress against the previous commitments made and actual work done, as well as to plan ahead for the next cycle.

From January to March, the municipality will be finalising the draft IDP and Budget (using various Makgotla for Council consideration and deliberation) for tabling in Council at the end of March, and planning for community engagements (in some municipality's this could be called regional summits or IDP roadshows) to get input into the IDP and Budgeting Process.

At the end of March, the draft IDP and Budget are tabled in Council and then made available for public comment (March – June can be considered the consultation and approval phase for the next financial year). Various committees (mayoral or council) will also be engaging with the public on the draft IDP and Budget. By the end of May, the Budget for the next year must be approved by Council (usually the IDP and Budget go together and are approved in the same Council meeting).

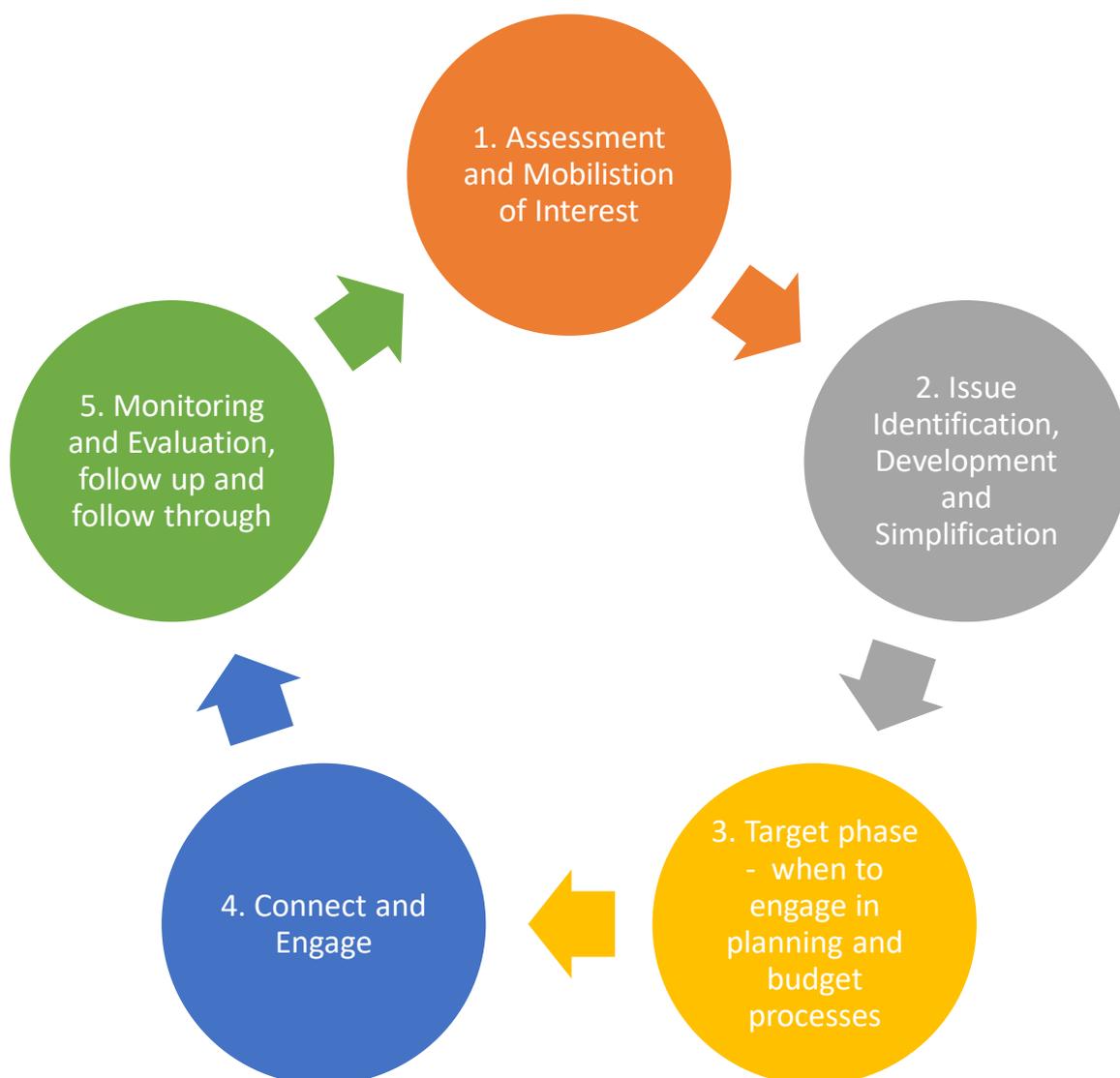
Below is a snapshot of the key activities and opportunities for engagement (see 4.3):

Month	Activity
1. July	1. New financial year starts
2. August	2. IDP feedback (for previous yr)
3. September	3. New IDP (for next financial yr)
4. October	4. Community Dialogues
5. November	5. Various Makgotla to consider draft IDP and Budget
6. December	6. Preparations for Community Engagements
7. January	7. Oversight report on Annual Report (MPAC - Council)
8. February	8. Approval of Draft IDP and Budget for public consultation
9. March	9. Departments/ Section 79 Draft IDP/ Public consultation and Comments
10. April	
11. May	11. Budget Speech
12. June	

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4. KEY PHASES AND STEPS TO SUCCESSFUL PARTICIPATION AND OUTCOMES

Below are the key phases and steps for mobilising successful participation and achieving development outcomes, whether administered by ward committees, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Community Based Organisations (CBOs) or any other civil actors, which are unpacked further hereafter:



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1. Assessment and mobilisation of Interest

✚ Do an **assessment of community priority needs and levels of interest in the key issue identified** – determine if it is indeed a major priority to be targeted for IDP and Budget attention

✚ **Establish a Community of Purpose (COP):**

- Identification and notification of interested and affected parties and other stakeholders (to be part of the initiative)
- Set up specific purpose (for that issue) social media groups, pages etc (to update and keep track of progress, meetings etc)
- Start-up meetings outlining and defining the purpose, objectives and desired outcomes of the group and how it will feed into the formal structures
 - It is important to have an independent and skilled facilitator who can ensure that the objectives and purpose are achieved, as well as some neutrality / objective reflection in participation.
 - The day programme should be deliberative, consensus seeking and solution orientated.

✚ **Agree on participation strategy:**

- Ground rules for participation, participation rights and limits, roles and responsibilities of individuals, consultation process
 - Could introduce visualisation tools, digital planning and social media tools that will be used in the participation strategy
 - Agree on working groups / focus groupings, electronic or social media discussion groups that will engage in structured brainstorming, creative problem solving and scenario planning (my future space)

✚ **Capacity building of the community during the initial stages:**

- Priority setting and trade-offs, technical considerations and options available
- Reality check – place context, decision making processes and where to feed in, understanding planning and budgeting phases of the municipality

2. Issue Identification and Development

✚ **Key issue(s)** – development priorities for that precinct, neighbourhood, ward etc

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- For example, key policy change desired: The municipal policy should at least stipulate a small percentage of the municipal budgets that will be allocated to communities to cover their developmental needs. This would make it easier for communities to participate if they are given real figures to work with.
 - Specifically, **five percent (5%) of the municipal unconditional grant should be allocated to ward communities** for them to prioritise according to their needs during the initial planning.
 - Expected outcome: This will enable communities to effectively influence their budgets and encourage genuine participation.
- Another key issue: section 42 of the Systems Act allows communities to participate in the performance management system.
 - Citizen based monitoring of municipal performance must become a greater reality, public scorecards developed for key functionaries and officials.
- Issue: Civic education and adequate publicity for engagement and participation (as required by the Municipal Systems Act) – the municipality must invest resources in notifying the public and popularising IDP and budget consultation (some communities only received the notification on municipal budget submission one week before closing date)
 - So make an issue and submission to Council (including further strategies for elevating the issue such as protest march if necessary) to address this gap, and invest adequate resources on public participation processes (ring-fencing the money if necessary).
 - Some examples of suggestions including:
 - Much greater and more effective use of community radio and social media
 - Distribute notifications to other strategic community points such as hospitals, community halls libraries etc.
 - Simplify the call for budget submissions to ensure that community residents with basic levels of education understand it.

Set realistic goals and objectives

- Consider financial and time constraints

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- Use participants time effectively, structured and outcomes based conversations and action plans – it takes time for citizens to understand certain issues and be able to engage effectively with it.
 - Therefore, carefully structuring any engagements and setting aside enough time to discuss issues is critical to getting the necessary buy-in and consensus. Not everyone will agree, but if the process is right and the objectives clearly defined and pursued, a clear majority view will emerge.

Develop a framework plan with key targets, assumptions and budgetary parameters

- Using previous IDP, Project Plans and Budgets as general guidelines for what is likely in the current and future years
- Use the framework plan to engage with the ward councillor / ward committee and other stakeholders (not as gate keepers, but to ensure synergy in ward strategies)
- Be sure to group special/ vulnerable groups (women, disabled, youth) into working groups affording them platforms to participate in the planning and budgetary process.
 - The balance of power is important in improving community participation – as much as possible facilitate the participation of all the communities and groups and ensure representation of diversity of the respective communities.

Do the participatory budgeting and costing of priorities and issues identified

- Participatory budgeting is classically where citizens engage in multiple rounds of debates and deliberations on any particular issue, engage in costing exercises and ultimately vote on how a certain percentage of the municipal budget gets spent.
- For example, earlier we made reference to key policy change that may be desired to really effect participatory budgeting: As a starting point, the municipal policy should at least stipulate a small percentage of the municipal budgets that will be allocated to communities to cover their developmental needs. This would make it easier for communities to participate if they are given real figures to work with.
 - In that case, the recommendation that specifically five percent (5%) of the municipal unconditional grant should be allocated to ward

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communities for them to prioritise according to their needs during the initial planning.

- Expected outcome: This will enable communities to effectively influence their budgets and encourage genuine participation.
- However, notwithstanding that required change, it is still possible for communities to cost their needs and priorities and make a case for why their development needs should be prioritised, which funding should be moved around to accommodate it, or the location of some priorities shifted around to save costs etc.
 - The possibilities are endless here, but the key point is that any submission to Council on the IDP and Budget should be accompanied by some costing exercise that gives accurate figures about the financial implications of those desired outcomes and policy or priority changes.

3. Target Phase / When to engage in Planning and Budget Processes

- ✚ Understanding the phase in the planning cycle and **identify the appropriate phase to target**

Time Period of the Process	Key Issue to focus on	How to pursue it
August	Planning and budget assumptions, priorities and alignment	Initiate engagement with ward and MayCO councillors and municipal structures (could be in form of letters drawing attention to the issue)
September – October	Planning assumptions, priorities and budgetary alignment	Make formal written submission on the key issue(s) to relevant portfolio committees
October – November	Mid-term Adjustment Budget	Participation in finance MayCO and written submissions for desired change / amendment to the Budget

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March – June	IDP and Budget Review	Post tabling - study versions to see if any changes and earlier inputs incorporated. If not, continue engagement and consider alternative strategies to heighten attention to the issue, protest march, petition etc.
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4. Connect and Engage

- ✚ Make **submissions to relevant municipal structures** (August – September)
- ✚ **Attend key structures (committees for example) and meetings**, request to follow through on written submissions by addressing the committee and emphasising the key issues and the weight of community behind it (and that citizens expect responsive governance to their needs and reasonable demands)
- ✚ **Develop and utilise a media strategy, including social media**, to apply pressure and raise awareness of the key issues highlighted, and mobilise action (could be protest action etc)

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

- ✚ **Assess if priorities are included or not in the draft IDP and Budget** published for public comment (April)
- ✚ Make further **written submissions and enquiries** if need be (prior to June) to the appropriate committees, councillors and officials
- ✚ Conduct **social audits (commonly known as the People’s Audit or Public Audit)**
 - Assessing the financial and physical gaps between needs and resources committed for local development
 - Create awareness among beneficiaries and providers of local social and productive services
 - Scrutiny and evaluation of various policy decisions committed in the IDP, keeping in view community interests and priorities, particularly the poor

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- Monitor project implementation according to project timeframes and specifications – once the financial year begins in July and commitments have been made, monitor their implementation
- Estimation of the opportunity cost for communities of not getting timely access to public services ie. social impact

5. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES THAT CAN ENHANCE COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE AND PARTICIPATION

- ✚ Municipal Money – How well is your municipality managing its money? (www.municipalmoney.gov.za)
- ✚ Vulekamali – South Africa’s Online Budget Data (www.vulekamali.gov.za)
- ✚ Vuk’uzenzele (Government Communications and Information Systems) – Know your Ward Councillor (www.vukuzenzele.gov.za)
- ✚ Municipal Barometer (local government data) – South African Local Government Association (www.municipalbarometer.net)
- ✚ Municipalities of South Africa – (www.municipalities.co.za)

CONCLUSION: An informed and educated citizenry participating meaningfully in its municipal affairs is vital to accountable, responsive and people centered local democracy and governance. This MANUAL seeks to empower communities with the knowledge and tools to participate meaningfully in the affairs that govern them.

It is our hope that it will be used powerfully and be improved over time to be a valuable resource to individuals, community organisations and other institutions in understanding and engaging your Municipality.