

Expanded Public Works Programme

Role of municipalities

The Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) will spend R15 to R20 billion on labour-intensive projects by 2009. The short-term goal is to create a million temporary jobs to alleviate poverty, especially in rural areas. The EPWP promotes longer-term employment through learnerships and other programmes targeting unskilled labourers. Though it was officially launched in September 2004, many municipalities have yet to implement the EPWP.

Structure

The EPWP is divided into four sectors, each bringing unique responsibilities and opportunities for municipalities.

Infrastructure sector

The main focus of the EPWP is on labour-intensive construction and maintenance, such as low-volume roads, trenches, storm drains and sidewalks. The five year target is to create 750 000 jobs out of an investment of R15 billion. Successful projects will use labour-intensive methods to create jobs for local unemployed people and train them for skilled work. In addition, 1 500 emerging contractors and site supervisors will develop relevant skills from learnerships registered with the Construction Education and Training Authority (CETA). The constitutional power of municipalities means that they have a major role in implementing these infrastructure projects.

Environment and cultural sector

This sector aims to create 201 703 jobs out of a R4 billion investment by 2009, while benefiting the natural resources and cultural heritage of

South Africa. The core programmes focus on sustainable land-based livelihoods, coasts, parks, waste-removal and tourism. Unlike the infrastructure sector, these projects are funded by special poverty relief budget allocations to national and provincial departments. Municipalities thus have only a limited role as facilitators.

Social sector

Over R600 million is pledged to employ 150 000 people in health and social welfare over five years. The two programmes in the social sector are Home Community-Based Care and Early Childhood Development. Provinces are responsible for this sector and municipalities have only a supporting role, wherein municipal managers link existing community-based initiatives to the two new programmes.

Economic sector

This sector plans to create 3 000 venture learnerships to develop entrepreneurial skills and assumes each graduate will in turn employ three people. Municipalities have no role in this programme, yet Cabinet has discussed possible EPWP initiatives for the future. These include

community production centres, agricultural initiatives, co-operative income-generating projects and micro-enterprise development. Municipalities should follow future developments as these may provide them with opportunities for local economic development.

The conditional Municipal Infrastructure Grant

Most of the EPWP funding available to municipal projects is not new money: the municipal infrastructure grant (MIG) will supply nearly all the funds for infrastructure. Municipalities must use the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) process to prioritise projects for EPWP. However, they need not reprioritise existing IDP projects. Municipalities must register suitable projects in the MIG system with the MIG Unit of the Department of Provincial and Local Government (DPLG). If approved, the municipality can begin the project which will be managed by consultants and contractors certified in labour-intensive construction by CETA.

The MIG grants for EPWP projects are now conditional on adherence to the Guidelines for the Implementation of Labour-Intensive Infrastructure Projects under the EPWP (the Guidelines). These fall into four categories.

Types of projects appropriate for labour-intensive funding

Municipalities should target civil infrastructure projects where labour can feasibly substitute for machines, including excavation, short-distance hauling, loading/offloading, fencing and stone-pitching. Sufficient local labour, willing to work, must be available. Municipalities must pay labourers comparable wages for similar unskilled local labour and encourage work without recruiting away people from other work in the area. All labourers must receive equal pay for equal work regardless of sex, age or disability.

Municipalities may only award contracts to contractors with supervisory staff certified for labour-intensive projects.

key points

- The EPWP will invest at least R15 billion in the next five years to create a million jobs.
- Municipalities play a key role by using the IDP process to identify labour-intensive projects.
- Councillors and municipal managers must familiarise themselves with the EPWP Guidelines.
- The new District Intergovernmental Forums are the proposed hubs of EPWP monitoring and co-ordination.

Tender guidelines

Municipalities may only award contracts to contractors with supervisory staff certified for labour-intensive projects. Thus, tenders must include a specific eligibility criterion and must require proof that suitable staff will supervise the project during the contracted period.

Design guidelines

When creating the project, municipalities must consider a design checklist. For example, material for gravel roads should be sourced from suppliers close to the work site. The Guidelines provide a detailed list of technical sources for compliance with the checklist.

Contractual framework

Labour-intensive projects may use existing standard contracts. However, the Guidelines provide details on additional documentation required for these projects. The extra clauses outline obligations regarding work hours, sick/maternity leave, health and safety and more. EPWP contracts with consultants and contractors must include these provisions.

