Focus areas

Workshop feedback - summary

Most attendees of the Local Municipal Budget Workshop (on 12 April 2016) are interested in understanding municipal performance relating to "visible" services, such as housing, water and sanitation, local development projects (libraries, parks, etc.). This contrasts with financial performance indicators such as cash flow or debtor recovery which were rarely discussed.

There was generally a poor level of financial and budget literacy. The attendees didn't have a good idea of what the data means or how it fits into the larger picture of how a municipality is run. There is a poor understanding of how municipal financial planning takes place and the need and opportunities for the public to get involved.

Attendees focused on what they'd **ideally like** to be able to get from the datasets. When that turned out not to be possible, there was little exploration of what they **could in reality** get from the dataset.

Common interest areas include:

- Linking this data to other datasets would be very powerful and is necessary for truly holding municipalities to account for service deliver.
- Many groups are interested in exploring whether a particular expenditure amount is reasonable or wasteful. This is often difficult because the communities are not in a good position to understand all the costs of a project.
- Why are budget priorities set as they are? Who sets those? How can citizens understand and change those?
- Most groups understand that this is the starting point for helping citizens understand municipal budgeting and finances. This is not a silver bullet, but having expenditure information readily accessible is a powerful conversation starter.
- There is a lot of interest in transparency in the larger procurement process, from tenders through to execution.
- People care most about their local neighbourhood and would like to know expenditure at the ward or suburb level.

Regarding datasets, the following focus areas were evident:

- Housing (in particular grant spending)
- Water & sanitation
- Emergency medical services
- Police services
- Access to and supply of general infrastructure and services
- Municipal procurement processes
- Tendering processes and service level agreements