DR. PIXLEY KA ISAKA SEME LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



REVENUE ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

2025-2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

A municipality is defined as structures, political office bearers and the administration of the municipality; a geographic area; and the community of the municipality. It is a key level of government and is often used as a barometer to measure the success or failure of any government given its close proximity and interaction with the people. The municipality must have structured mechanisms to ensure accountability to local communities, and must meet the priority needs of communities by providing services equitably, effectively and sustainably within the means of the Municipality.

Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality is located in the Gert Sibande District of Mpumalanga province, South Africa. Its mandate is to provide all matters from service delivery, Local economic development to financial sustainability.

Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality has been diagnosed to have significant challenges in revenue collection with significant amounts of money owed to the municipality by its clients. The debt balance has accumulated over a period of time due to lack of effective controls in revenue management and credit control processes.

The objective of this document is to undertake to address financial and institutional challenges faced by the municipality. The document focuses in the formulation and implementation of strategies to improve financial management and controls within the municipality. The objective of any successful revenue enhancement strategy is to build and improve on current payment levels and then to recover arrear debt.

As indicated, this document seeks to identify causes for non-payment and to develop a strategy to address those challenges. In order to develop an effective system of revenue collection, it is important to understand the reasons and dynamics behind the current situation. Revenue collection problem does not only start when the client has defaulted but early in the revenue and receivables cycle when the consumers applies for services, when there are no proper controls in the processing of bills and many other reasons within the revenue management process.

2. DELIVERABLES

Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality is at the forefront in the improvement of service delivery and must be able to deliver services in a sustainable way and therefore must be financially viable. Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality is currently experiencing difficulty in collecting amounts owed to the municipality from its debtors which comprises of households, businesses and government departments amongst others.

3. REVENUE MANAGEMENT

Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality is a medium capacity municipality with a population of more than 85 395 people and generates revenue from providing basic services i.e. water, refuse removal and from property rates amongst other sources.

Municipal revenue is under pressure due to high and unacceptable levels of distribution losses and none collectability of customer debtors.

4. CHALLANGES FACED BY THE MUNICIPALITY

Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality, amongst others, has and still experience significant difficulty in collecting revenue from its debtors, which negatively impacts on its financial sustainability and ability to delivery basic services. This Revenue Enhancement Strategy has been prepared in line with Section 142 of MFMA, after reviewing past and current information, intensive engagement with municipal and provincial officials, and is aimed at securing the Municipality's ability to meet its obligations, to provide basic services in a sustainable manner and to strengthen its financial situation.

There are other contributing factors impacting on the municipality. These include the institutional capacity, organisational structure and assignment of powers and functions.

4.1 Financial Challenges

The following are evident from the review of financial status for the period 2023-2024:

- Revenue collection for services rendered and property rates levied are extremely low;
- Inaccurate billing information;
- · Need to address the significant amount of outstanding consumer debtors;
- Replacement of faulty and stuck meters

There is an immediate need to address:-

- The high portion of outstanding debtors relating to government and business accounts;
- Financial administration of the Municipality due to inadequate internal controls; and

The continuous repetitive findings issued by the Office of the Auditor-General.

5. PROPOSED STRATEGIES

Due to the current low collection rate, it has become critical to introduce a Revenue Enhancement Strategy. The challenges faced by the municipality will be addressed through the implementation of the following revenue enhancement strategy

Financial management in a municipality falls within the control and under the ambit of the Chief Financial Officer. To ensure proper financial management one needs to identify the critical areas within which the municipality's finances must perform. The Municipal Finance Management Act (MFMA) identifies some of these major competencies and from the functions mentioned in the Act a Clear role definition can be established.

The revenue enhancement process needs to be divided into short, medium and long-term activities as set out in this Revenue Enhancement Strategy.

Short-Term activities (to be completed within three to six months) will include focus on the following:

- Confirm the completeness of revenue Improved billing processes;
- Implement a targeted approach on debt collection of Organs of State;
- Implement a targeted approach on debt collection of businesses;
- Update the indigent register to reduce debt on indigent households;
- Review credit policy;
- High level data cleansing;
- Resolve issues relating to current valuation roll and property ownership.
- Proceed to identify the debtors in order to encourage them to pay.
- Continue to collect monies owed from the Government Departments as well as businesses.

Medium to Long Term (to be completed within seven to twelve months) will focus on:

- Improve data integrity in the transaction processing environment;
- Metering previously unmetered areas;
- Implementing bulk meters for big users;
- Improve customer service Improve communication with consumers;
- Establish internal controls and proper costing of services.

The purpose of this document is to create a conducive environment for consumers to pay services by developing strategies to mitigate the challenges as identified above.

5.1 Debtors Collection

Monies owed by debtors emanates from a variety of charges and levies charged by the municipality for services rendered. It can be noted that that the municipality is struggling to collect from its customer debtors as 95% of its total debts is due for more than 120 days from when they become due, while on the other hand it has to pay all expenses within 30 days as required by the MFMA.

The municipality debtor's balance is currently sitting at R1.2 billion as at 30 June 2024. The municipality is collecting an average of 42% annually from on its total billing which mean that it is effectively and involuntarily funding its customers by a 42%.

Before the implementation of stringent debt collection, the municipality's revenue collection rate is currently at 42%. This is unsustainable and a prime condition for distress. If the strategy is implemented, the revenue collection rate should increase by 10% per year to reach an acceptable level within five years.

Amounts owed by the customer debtors must be classified per type of services which are owed and also the type/class of consumers who owes this will enable the municipality to devise an appropriate strategy according the debt type or classification; Taking into account the application of sound indigent policies that the municipality will adopt, the revenue collection rate should be stretched to a target of 90% within the next three years.

A high-level assessment of the municipal collecting activities has revealed the following areas of concern:

- (i) The restriction of water services is not effectively applied as a collection tool due to lack of appropriate meters;
- (ii) The approved credit policy is inadequate and it was not fully implemented and followed:
- (iii) Not all customers who are in arrears are converted into pre-paid meters;
- (iv) The debtor's book is being not adequately analysed and sanitised for errors to enable effective monthly credit control;
- (v) The customer debtors are not followed up monthly to allow for tailored collection strategy to be followed;
- (vi) Lack of adequate performance management for the Revenue Management and Credit Control Department;
- (vii) Information relating to debtors and their particulars is incomplete and inaccurate;
- (viii)Some debtors are disputing the total amount outstanding or the bills provided by the municipality;
- (vi) Targeted and stringent debt collection is not followed consistently;

To achieve this, target rigorous and creative solutions focused on the entire revenue collection value chain will be required. The following actions are recommended for the different aspects of the value chain to address the above mentioned challenges;

- 1. Review the credit control and debt collection policy;
- 2. Develop a procedure manual or business rules for collections and credit control from the credit control and debt collection policy;
- 3. Strengthen credit control process;
- 4. Targeted collection Organ of state;
- 5. Targeted collection Municipal Councillors and Ward Committee Members;
- 6. Targeted collection Municipal Officials;
- 7. Targeted collection Businesses;
- 8. Targeted collection All residential debtors at the end of the 1st quarter of the financial year;
- 9. Law Enforcement
- 10. Advertising boards
- 11. Premises with tuck-shops

5.1.1 Review of credit control policy

The credit control policy must provide a framework, within which the municipal council can exercise its executive and legislative authority with regard to credit control and debt collection, use innovative, cost effective, efficient and appropriate methods to collect all debt in the shortest possible time without any interference in the process: and effectively and efficiently deal with defaulters in accordance with the terms and conditions of this policy. Ensure that all monies due and payable to the municipality are collected and used to deliver municipal services in the best interests of the community, residents and ratepayers and in a financially sustainable manner.

Outline the procedures that will ensure that the members of the local community is afforded the opportunity to contribute in the decision-making processes of the municipality and that they are informed of the decisions and affairs of the municipality, Set realistic targets for debt collection, Outline credit control and debt collection policy procedures and mechanisms.

Promote a culture of good payment habits amongst Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality debtors and instil a sense of responsibility towards the payment of municipal accounts and reduction of municipal debt.

5.1.2 Develop procedure manual for credit control

The procedure manuals are beneficial to any organisation regardless of industry sectors and size. They help document what needs to be done and by who and when, it can be used to improve understanding and accountability for business activities, which in turn are critical for the achievement of the organisations strategic goals. They clearly defined and documents the processes followed when carrying out specified business activities during the normal course of operations;

Procedure manuals provided the following benefits to an organisation:

- Provide consistency and common understanding in carrying out business activities;
- Identifies and allocate responsibility and accountability;
- Safeguards organisational memory;
- Improves business continuity;
- Assist in the continuous identification of risks on key business processes

As part of its constitutional obligation to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, the Municipality will develop a procedure manual for Credit control and Debt collection. The objective of the manual is to equip staff and managers with the correct procedures when dealing with issues of credit control and debt collection.

The processes and activities to be documented in this manual are for those involved in the Credit Control and Debt Collection sub-processes.

5.1.3 Implement credit control processes

Amounts owed by the customer debtors will be classified per type of services which are owed and also the type of consumers owing and devise an appropriate strategy according to the debt type or classification; Taking into account the application of sound indigent policies that the municipality will adopt, the revenue collection rate should be stretched to a target of 90% within the next five years.

The debt book will be extracted from the financial systems and analysed per type of debtors, location, amount due and background, inconsistencies in the debtor's information is followed up and corrected, debtors owing beyond 60 days will be contacted for arrangements; Implementation of the cut-off procedure as a debt

collection measure and Follow Up on debtors who have not paid since cut-off for further action. The top 100 debtors will be targeted for intensified debtor's collection.

5.1.4 Collect From Organ of State

A significant portion of customer debtors is made up of organs of state i.e. National and provincial departments. Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality is local Municipality which is a part of the three spheres of government and to this end a varied approach must be adopted. The municipality will leverage its close relationship with national and provincial departments through COGTA in the province and COGTA national and also Provincial and National Treasury to collect monies owed by the organs of state.

The municipality will do its bit to assist the departments and present the required information to the government clients in a required format so as to speed up the process and eliminate any opportunities for a delay. Those organs of state which fails to cooperate will be escalated to the appropriate level for further intervention.

The following processes will be followed collect monies due from Organs of State;

- 1. A list will be prepared listing all organs of state which owes properties within the boundaries of the municipality and the amounts due;
- 2. Preparation of debtors reconciliation per account with all the relevant supporting documents;
- 3. Verify the municipal records relating to amounts owed by the Organs of State;
- 4. Submit the debtors reconciliations together with all the attachments i.e. invoices and records of payments already made;
- 5. Follow up with the organs of state for payments;
- 6. Report Defaulting Department at PCF Meeting.

5.1.5 Collect from Municipal Councillors and ward committees members

Councillors and ward committee members are the elected leaders of the municipality and they a leadership role in the communities that elected them, this leadership role requires them to set the tone for all the residence and business they represent. There is a deep culture of non-payment for services in Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality and therefore councillors are to be part of the solution and contribute towards changing that culture by paying for their services which they receive from the municipality, this sets a good example as agents of change for the community to follow and give them the confidence to also lobby the residents and businesses in their wards to follow suit.

All councillors who are in arrears with their accounts are to make arrangements for a reasonable and acceptable amount to be deducted from their monthly salary to go

towards settling their debts. The progress in this regards must be monitored monthly by the revenue management function of the municipality.

5.1.6 Collect From Municipal Employees

There is a culture of non-payments for services within Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality. The employees of the municipality must be part of the solution towards changing that culture. It is not possible to convince the residents and business to pay for services if the employees of the municipality which provides those services do not pay for services. According to the Municipal Systems Act that no municipal official should be in arrears on their municipal accounts for a period longer than three months therefore it is not desirable for municipal officials to have accounts which are long overdue as this gives the wrong impression to the community at large and contributes to the culture of non-payment.

5.1.7 Collect From Businesses

Third from residents and organs of state business are the biggest users of municipal services, however not all of them are paying for services provided for by the municipality. Though the credit control policy makes no distinguishing in the treatment of various debtors, a specific approach must be employed when collecting from businesses as they cannot be treated the same as residents and organs of state. The debtor's book must be stratified to identify properties which are used for commercial purposes business uses the environment i.e. municipal infrastructure and services provided by the municipality to benefit financially and therefore must contribute towards the cost of sustaining that infrastructure and services.

The municipality must therefore prioritise businesses and implement targeted debt collection measures for those businesses within the borders of the municipality. Those businesses owing big amounts must be targeted first for intensive debt collection which may include sight visits and inspections, while notices and telephone calls could be made for the rest. Furthermore, the municipality must use the processes for the renewal of business licenses as a credit control measures to collect monies owed by business such that no business licence should be renewed where a municipal account is not up to date.

Tough credit control measure must be complemented by a cordial relationship between the municipality and local businesses, the municipality must be accessible to the businesses to respond to their queries and ensure consistent service delivery, and this will in turn give it the confidence to bill and follow up on collections. Credit control officials should visit the businesses at least one every three months confirm if the clients are satisfied with the statements and bills they are receiving and clarify any misunderstandings;

5.1.8 Collect From ALL HOUSEHOLD DEBTORS

Analysis of the top 100 Residential Debtors: A list of all the residential debtors of the municipality is to be generated on a monthly basis by the Revenue Department. An analysis of the debtors that are eligible for water restrictions is performed then a list will be generated and signed-off by the Manager – Revenue confirming that the debtors on the list are indeed eligible for water restrictions.

Implementation: The signed water restrictions list is then taken to Technical Services before for execution. The list will then be handed over to the Technical Services to implement with a turnaround time of 30 days for implementation. The Technical Services will then execute the water restriction on the properties of the debtors on the list. Clients with disputes as well as queries are to raise those disputes and queries with Revenue Management and not Technical Services.

Review: Once water restrictions is implemented revenue management is to monitor the accounts of the debtors for any changes (if outstanding balance has been paid or not). Debtors can arrange payments with the collection clerks - Revenue and no other official. All arrangements and upliftment of water restrictions are to be signed off by the Manager - Revenue. From month to month there must be an analysis and review of the debt book to monitor the financial impact of the water restrictions as to. The preferred outcome is that payments are to be made in order to reduce the debt book as well as distribution losses incurred by the municipality.

Follow up procedure: Follow-ups on debtors' accounts are essential in order to detect and monitor the success of the intensified collection mechanism. If during the follow-up process there are incidents of payments not being made and no arrangements are being made, however there is still consumption, technical can go investigate for possible tempers. A top 100 debtors list will continue to be circulated, bringing in more and more debtors to provide for debtors that have paid.

5.2 Revenue Management

The revenue streams are divided into two being exchange transactions and non-exchange transactions, revenue generated for exchange transaction must be done in a viable manner which means that the municipality cannot spend more than it can recover from the users of those services, and the municipality must meet all conditions and requirements in order to be able to claim the revenue from non-exchange transactions.

The total amount generated from trading services which is made up of service charges for water and electricity which is the amount municipality billed its customers during the period against the direct cost of providing these services, which is accounted for in bulk purchases.

The profit margins for providing basic services is very tight and is usually around 10%, a proper analysis of distribution loses is needed to determine exactly how much money is the municipality loosing for distribution of services i.e. water. Further detailed assessment of broken or damaged pre-paid water meters should be conducted, these broken meters when fixed could reduce revenue losses currently experienced by the municipality.

Assessment of processes and controls over revenue and accounts receivable we noted the following:

- (i) The municipality customer and billing data needs to be continuously cleansed;
- (ii) Inadequate business processes The municipality does not have a process to identify and follow up all unmetered usage of water which could result in loss of revenue;
- (iii) Inadequate business processes to curb distribution losses which are increasing unabated resulting in material loss of revenue;
- (iv) The municipality does not adequately calculate the cost actual services delivery;
- (v) Lack of coordination between interdependent dependant i.e. Town Planning, BTO and Infrastructure & Engineering Departments;
- (vi) Indigent register is not adequately updated;
- (vii) Lack of delivery of service which are actually billed by the municipality;

The following actions are recommended for the different aspects of the value chain to address the above mentioned challenges;

- 1. Develop a procedure manual or business rules for revenue management;
- 2. Systematic Cleansing of Billing Information;
- 3. Bill for Previously Unbilled Services;
- 4. Update the Indigent Register;
- 5. Install Water Meters;

5.1.9 Procedure Manual for Revenue Management

The procedure manuals are beneficial to any organisation regardless of industry sectors and size. They help document what needs to be done and by who and when, it can be used to improve understanding and accountability for business activities, which in turn are critical for the achievement of the organisation's strategic goals. They clearly define and document the processes followed when carrying out specified business activities during the normal course operations. Procedure manuals provided the following benefits to an organisation;

 Provide consistency and common understanding in carrying out business activities;

- Identifies and allocate responsibility and accountability;
- Safeguards organisational memory;
- · Improves business continuity;
- Assist in the continuous identification of risks on key business processes;
- Reduction in the risk of loss of institutional memory;
- Enable Risk officers to better understand and analyse business processes;
- Allow managers to identify and eliminate bottlenecks while improving processes;
- Continuous knowledge transfer;
- Ensure consistency in performance of functions;
- Link organisational strategy to well defined business processes;
- Improve process communication
- Improve operational efficiencies

As part of its constitutional obligation to ensure the provision of services to communities in a sustainable manner, Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality has to develop a procedure manual for the opening and closing of accounts. The objective of the manual is to equip staff and managers with the correct procedures when dealing with issues of opening and closing of municipal accounts.

5.1.10 Systematic Cleansing of Billing Information

Critical to any revenue management function is the credibility of its billing information, it is very difficult to get customers to pay for services received if there is any doubt that the amount, they have to pay may be incorrect. The ability to accurately bill for services delivered gives the municipality the confidence to implement strict credit control measurers knowing that the amounts being collected are unimpeachable.

It is critical to address the issue of outdated consumer information as many statements are returned unposted to the municipality due to postal address no longer registered in the account holders' name. The email addresses on the system are also not correctly captured which results in the statements emailed not reaching the end user.

5.1.11 Bill for previously unbilled Services

The municipality has not billed for certain services in certain areas where services are currently being provided. The municipality must bill all residents and businesses who are currently enjoying its services, services delivery comes at a cost and those costs must be recouped from somewhere to enable the municipality to provide services in a financially sustainable manner.

Property which was previously not billed for services must be identified and appropriate tariff codes must be allocated to them to enable the municipality to start billing for them. It should be noted however that it may be difficult to start billing for historically unbilled services as that may result in disputes which may prolong the payments for services.

5.1.12 Update the Indigent Register

To review and improve the indigent management policy and processes to ensure that they are adequately and effectively applied to improve with the aim of improving access to basic services to all household within the borders of the municipality and that free basic services are provided to those who are poor and vulnerable.

Due to the level of unemployment and poverty within municipal areas, there are those households and citizens who are unable to access or pay for basic services; this grouping is referred to as the indigent. An indigent policy should therefore allow municipalities to target the delivery of essential services to citizens who experience a lower quality of life.

TARGETING THE POOR

It is the ultimate objective of the FBS programme that the indigents in the country will all have access to basic services. The national indigent framework states, "An indigent policy will only be fully functional once subsidies are targeted in such a way that the indigent benefit and those who are not indigent pay. Municipalities need to have the capacity and resources to align its financial planning so that ultimately, all the indigents will be provided with Free Basic Services, and the municipality will remain sustainable. Municipalities can leverage the following subsidy sources to develop a subsidy framework for FBS that will benefit the indigent:

- Cross subsidies from non-residential and high-income consumers using the particular service (they are charged more than what the service costs to generate a surplus to be used to cover the cost of services to the indigent).
- The core administration revenue of the municipality which includes property rates, RSC levies and water suppliers.
- The national fiscus, through the equitable share

THE CRITERIA FOR QUALIFYING AS INDIGENT

Every municipality is expected to develop an indigent policy in relation to the specific need and financial standing of the municipality. The policy should also outline the approach it will use for cross subsidization and pricing of services. The policy needs to be developed in compliance with nationally set norms and standards and be enforceable by the municipality. Below are the 5 minimum criteria and conditions identified by the Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality to qualify an individual as an indigent:

- The applicant must be a natural adult person.
- The council has determined that the gross total monthly household income of all persons ordinarily residing at the premises concerned from all sources may not exceed an amount of twice the old age pension grant as from time to time.
- Either the applicant may not own, on her/his own or together with other persons, more than one fixed property.
- The applicant must ordinarily reside at the premises concerned.
- The amount written off will be re-instated should the owner sell the property.

5.1.13 Install water meters for all water users

The municipality can raise additional revenue from water services by installing meters in all areas which it currently servicing. If the Municipality is to continue to provide services in a financially sustainable manner it must acquire the ability to measure the consumption for water distributed and accurately bill for it. South Africa is water scarce country and changes in weather patterns have brought severer drought which affects many areas in the country. The ability to meter the consumption by its residents is an important tool which can be used to control water distribution, manage demand and reduce water waste by its residents and the community at large.

The repair and installation of water meters will allow the municipality to do the following:

- Reduce water losses by residents as residents will know that they pay for every kilo litre they get;
- Allow the municipality to reduce costs of its bulk purchases by buying less water.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REVENUE ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

This Plan places significant implementation responsibility on the Municipal Manager and Chief Financial Officer. The implementation responsibility should be operationalized

whereby the key focus areas and activities outlined in the Revenue Enhancement Strategy should be cascaded to all relevant municipal officials.

Finally, it must be emphasised that the strategies set out in this Plan relate to activities that must be institutionalised and performed by municipal officials as their regular tasks and who are appointed to such positions. Council must take overall responsibility for the plan and be party to its design implementation and monitoring and take fully ownership of the plan. Without political leadership the recovery plan is destined to fail.

6.1 Risks associated with the Plan

This Plan has identified certain risks that must be mitigated for successful implementation. These are summarised below: -

- Non-implementation of previous plans There are numerous plans and strategies developed over the years which have not been implemented. A key risk is that implementation of strategies may not take place. In order to mitigate this risk, specific timeframes and responsibilities have been defined for each of the strategies developed in the Revenue Enhancement Strategy.
- Change management From a change management perspective, urgent action is required to address some of the bad practices that may have occurred for many years. There is a need to strictly enforce new procedures without exception. The enforcement of staff discipline will be extremely important, and this should drive the change management process within the Municipality. The Municipal Manager and Chief Financial Officer with the assistance of Human Resources division must communicate the content of this plan to all employees to ensure full understanding for effective implementation.
- Labour relations This Plan has an impact on labour and therefore discussions
 will need to be held with organised labour and the Bargaining Council to
 address any labour relations matters arising from the implementation of this
 plan.
- **Community and Stakeholders** There is a risk that there may be further community and stakeholder challenges to aspects of the Plan, such as budget cuts and the need to increase tariffs. This risk can be managed by effective, improved communication by councillors, officials of the municipality and the community. The municipality must communicate effectively with the community on all aspects of the plan.

There should be a regular review of the risks to ensure timely mitigation strategies are instituted by the Political leadership, Municipal Manager.

6.2 Monitoring and Evaluation

As a result of the nature of the intervention, all decisions regarding implementation of the Revenue Enhancement Strategy will be undertaken by the Municipal Manager until such time as the intervention ceases. It should be noted that the Revenue Enhancement Strategy also includes medium to long-term activities that may go beyond the term of the Municipal Manager. The Municipal Manager must therefore also accept responsibility from the outset to ensure continuity and sustainability when the intervention ends. Once the intervention is terminated, the Municipal Manager will continue with the implementation of this plan, until such time as all aspects of the plan have been fully implemented.

The monitoring and reporting on progress in implementing the Revenue Enhancement Strategy will be undertaken by the Office of the Municipal Manager. Reports on the implementation of the Plan must be submitted to the Municipal Manager on a monthly basis. The Municipal Manager must take corrective action when activities in the Revenue Enhancement Strategy are not achieved.

7. APPROVAL OF POLICY AND DATE OF EFFECT

The Revenue Enhancement Strategy of Dr Pixley Ka Isaka Seme Local Municipality shall come into effect on 1 July 2025.

M A NGCOBO MUNICIPAL MANAGER

DATE