Major criteria of credible integrated development planning in local government: city of Mbombela, Ehlanzeni District, South Africa

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of the study was to determine the major criteria for a credible integrated development planning (IDP) process in Mbombela municipality, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.

Design/methodology/approach – The study utilizes a combination of sequential exploratory and explanatory mixed methods. About 120 key informants participated in the structured questionnaire, and a further seven interviews were conducted as elite interviews. Four multistakeholder workshop sessions with up to sixty-six participants each were conducted.

Findings – To strengthen the integrated planning in local government, the study recommended "stakeholder participation and ownership," "leadership and accountability," "impact and outcome-based focus," "a compact value chain" and "monitoring and evaluation."

Originality/value – The IDP process is a tactical planning gadget designed to achieve transformation and introduce new systems of governance. IDPs currently tend to lack standard criteria to measure their performance in promoting public leadership and responding to community needs, which is a major challenge in

many municipalities across South Africa. Since its introduction in 2000 to fast-track service delivery, concerns have been raised about why there are still constant protests alleged to be caused by poor service delivery.

1. Introduction

There has been a gradual shift toward the simultaneous rather than sequential pursuit of development tools and public leadership. In a connected and linked world, public leadership must encompass more than just managing public institutions and be accordant to the rationales of designing and yielding impactful leadership training agendas for the parties, the served communities and the organizations they oversee (Broussine and Callahan, 2015). To this end, integrated development planning (IDP) can provide comprehensive training on public leadership and effective service delivery to grassroots communities when optimally and rationally implemented. Studies on leadership in the public sector present a broad spectrum of theories and norms of leadership (Callahan, 2017). With these in mind, substantive planning theories have taken the lead in informing poverty eradication, providing quality daily essential services, gender empowerment, public leadership, environmental sustainability and governmental transparency and accountability (Ramaano, 2023a, b).

The concept of IDP was identified as one of the perfect tools of planning to give effect to the shift from ad-hoc project-based approaches to a more strategic and integrated form, particularly in developing countries (Sibanda, 2018; Ramaano, 2022a; Mamokhere and Meyer, 2022a). IDP is a mechanism to drive a needs-based practice in which equity, institutional transformation and participatory management are stressed and has had a prolonged incubation involving the recycling and recombination of old and political contexts (Sibanda and Lues, 2019). In some instances, IDP was used to assist the government in shifting its emphasis from a progressive, state-driven development path to the economic orthodoxies of sustainable livelihood. Mamokhere and Meyer (2022b) argue that the IDP, by its nature, strengthens democracy and promotes coordination between different actors to achieve the desired outcome. This explains why, throughout the world, researchers and policymakers have given special attention to the various models of development decision-making tools such as the IDP (Madzivhandila and Asha, 2012; Ramaano, 2023c, d).

In South Africa, the IDP was introduced in 2000 to enhance the transformation of municipal development planning processes (Coetzee, 2010; Sibanda and Lues, 2021). This came after the African National Congress (ANC)-led government in 1994, through the Reconstruction and Development Program (RDP), identified the need for participatory and inclusive planning (ANC, 1994). On one hand, it transformed the typical modernist planning system, which was rigid, into a more post-modern, democratic, strategic and developmental type of planning system (Biljohn and Lues, 2020; Ramaano, 2022c, d, e). On the other hand, it replaced the top-down segregation planning of the apartheid regime with bottom-up planning comprising the joint engagement of the public, private and voluntary sectors in local planning (RSA, 2000; Mamokhere, 2022; Mamokhere and Meyer, 2022c). To achieve this, municipalities were compelled, in terms of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (2000), to adopt IDPs to guide the planning and development across the entire municipal area (RSA, 1996, 2000).

The IDP is expected to fast-track service delivery, ensure equal distribution of state resources, promote the participation of communities in the development processes of municipalities and coordinate the work of the three spheres of government to ensure sustainable democracy (Coetzee, 2005; Lues, 2014). It is also meant to introduce a demand-driven approach to service delivery where the government and the communities identify and prioritize needs that must be considered in the planning and budgeting processes (Coetzee

and Oranje, 2006). In addition, it is the creation of a process that integrates procedural and substantive aspects of planning and comprises dependent and interlocked phases such as analyses, strategy, project, integration and approval that operate as a value chain.

Since the introduction of the IDP in 2000, no criteria have been set to assess its performance against its mandate. This has created a vacuum in terms of determining whether the process is reliable in terms of service delivery. The South African Government, through the "Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs," once introduced the IDP assessment templates, which were later suspended due to disputes by many municipalities based on their relevance to the IDP process. To others, the template was viewed as a checklist for compliance, which did not add any value to the process. The challenge was exacerbated by the fact that the IDP Guidelines, which were introduced to guide the development of the IDP, did not include the norms and standards to determine credibility and genuine public leadership. The community's protests in 2018 and 2019 have been triggered by the ineffectiveness of the IDP process to bring about the desired change (Mbombela Municipality IDP, 2018–2019).

There are indications that the communities are not satisfied with the municipality-approved IDP, which they believe does not respond to their service delivery needs. Hence, it is crucial to involve Madzivhandila and Asha's (2012) vision of equipping and involving the grassroots communities in all phases of the IDP processes. This is despite the theory of change guiding the IDP, which is to be the product of a consultative process made up of dependent and interconnected phases that are participatory and in which all the communities make inputs before approval. The lack of criteria to assess the quality of the IDP makes it difficult for the municipality to determine whether the existing IDP is credible in responding to the needs of the communities. This study sought to determine the major criteria for a credible IDP process and improving public leadership and service delivery in Mbombela Municipality, Mpumalanga Province, South Africa.

2. Methodology
The study was conducted in the Mbombela Municipality of Ehlanzeni District in Mpumalanga province (Figure 1). Figure 1 shows the location of Mbombela Municipality.
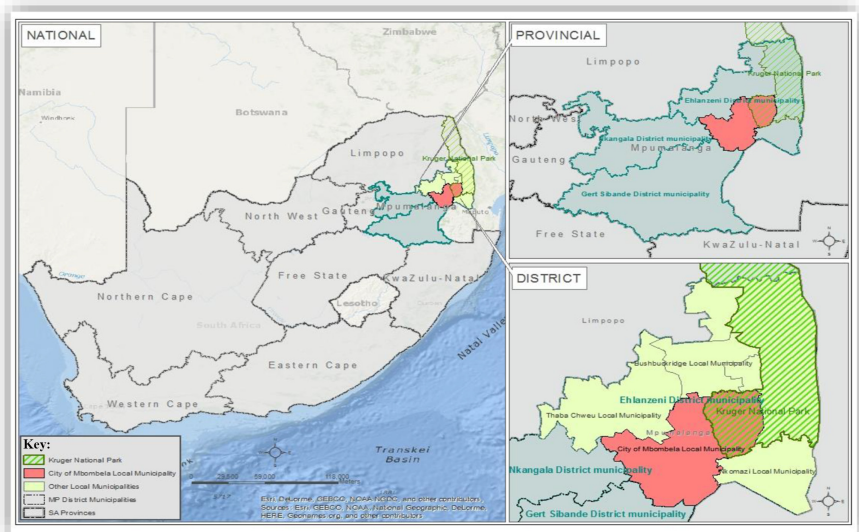

Figure 1.
Map of South Africa showing the location of Mbombela municipality

Mbombela Municipality is one of the four local municipalities that form the Ehlanzeni District Municipality. It was established in terms of Section 12 of the Municipal System Act (2000) by the Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs in Mpumalanga after the disestablishment of former Mbombela (MP322) and uMjindi (MP323) local municipalities. Its strategic location and status as a capital city provide the municipality with a competitive advantage as a corridor for growth and development, which, on the negative side, exacerbates the problem of urbanization in the municipal area. This study adopted a combination of sequential exploratory and explanatory mixed-methods design. This is because the data were collected and analyzed in phases. The first phase constituted qualitative data collection and analysis, and the results thereafter informed the second phase, which in this case was quantitative data collection and analysis. During the first phase of the study, respondents were purposively sampled, and the data were collected using multistakeholder workshop sessions and elite interviews.

The respondents to the study were the municipality's general manager, members of the mayoral committee, IDP practitioners within the Ehlanzeni District Municipality, the Mpumalanga Provincial Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs and registered stakeholders who were on the municipality's stakeholders list, such as ward councilors, ward committees, community development workers (CWDs), organized business, community leaders, traditional leaders and the war room. The respondents were engaged to explore their perspectives on the overall observations and thoughts on the IDP process and its influence on service delivery. Special attention was given to the respondents' perceptions of the major criteria for credible IDP in local government. The results of the first phase were summarized and organized into subthemes. The consolidated information was then used to construct a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions that was administered to the respondents as part of phase two of the study. The quantitative data were collected using a structured questionnaire that was administered to the same respondents who participated in the first phase of the study to authenticate the qualitative results. Appendix 1 shows the questionnaire administered, Appendix 2 is the key informant interview guide and Figure A1 presents the multistakeholder workshop guide.

To uphold research ethics and secure informed consent, approval to undertake the study was sought from the University of Venda's Research Ethics Committee. Permission and approval for conducting the study was sought from the accounting officer of the Mbombela Municipality. The aim and purpose of the study, its implications and possible risks of involvement in the study were communicated to the respondents. Written consent from the respondents was sought, and they were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time and doing so will not expose them to any form of prejudice or criticism. Those who volunteered to participate were asked to sign an informed consent form before participating, and attendance registers were stored separately from all the other research materials. Permission to capture photographs and tape records of the deliberations of the multistakeholder workshop sessions and interviews was sought and granted. Two enumerators were appointed as research assistants to assist the principal researcher during the multistakeholder workshop sessions.

The enumerator's role was to take minutes and pictures and ensure that the attendance register was signed during the multistakeholder focus group sessions, which were led by the principal researcher. Before embarking on data collection, an hour-long training session was arranged with the research assistants on how to administer the tools designed for the purpose, specifically, minutes taking, recording, pictures and the research assistants' conduct or behavior during the multistakeholder workshop sessions. A schedule was developed to guide the process concerning the dates, times and venues of the four multistakeholder workshop sessions. Each multistakeholder workshop was requested to write their perceptions or views

on the flipcharts using markers after consensus was reached on issues relating to the allocated topics. The flipcharts were labeled correctly, showing the respective focused workshop's identification, composition and region it belongs to. Participants were also given notebooks to record their perceptions regarding the given topics. The data collected through the multistakeholder workshop sessions were used to construct a structured questionnaire with closed-ended questions. The purpose was to confirm the results from the focused multistakeholder workshop sessions as part of phase two of the study. The questionnaire expected the participants to give responses on a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree). About 120 structured questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents, which included the councilors, ward committee secretaries, CDWs, organized business, community leaders, traditional leaders and war room representatives. Thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data.

The data were logically packaged, transcribed into reflective statements and analyzed per the specific objectives; they focus on the need for a credible IDP process and the influence of stakeholders on hoisted public leadership and service delivery in Mbombela Municipality. This was achieved through coding the text and developing descriptive themes to establish whether there were common themes among the responses given by stakeholders. The three stages of the process were followed, namely data reduction, data display and data drawing. The data were sorted and organized (data reduction) and then arranged in concepts and thoughts to make it easier to establish some meaning (data display). The data were then categorized based on similar patterns, themes and interrelationships (data drawing) to build conceptual coherence and consistency of the data. The data were stored in the Microsoft Office Word Processor before being exported to ATLAS, version 8.4, which is a qualitative data analysis software package.

Code groups were created to cluster related subthemes, which were adopted as the broad themes. Three types of outputs were generated: code-document tables, network diagrams and textual reports. Code-document tables were used to show the sources of the data, broad themes, subthemes and number of associated quotations. Network diagrams presented an overview of themes and subthemes as well as relevant quotations. This assisted in showing the relationships existing among themes. Lastly, textual output was used to retrieve relevant verbatim quotations. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 26.0 was used to analyze the quantitative data from the structured questionnaire. The data collected from the respondents were cleaned before being coded, captured and stored on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. All the data were nonparametric. Thereafter, the data were imported into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 23.0 for analysis, and the mean scores and standard deviations of the imported data were calculated and used for ranking purposes.

3. Results

3.1 Demographic information
Consistent with the essence of descriptive data, demography is a significant aspect of the population. With 33% male and about 79% adult, Table 1 spells out the cumulative age group and gender for the study's participants from all phases, showing the dominance of females and older age groups over men and youths.

3.2 Preferred criteria for assessing the quality of IDP process
In Phase 1 of the study, 107 quotations relating to preferred criteria for assessing the quality of phases of IDP were drawn. They were categorized into 14 sub-themes. When further processed, 6 themes were identified. The six themes were: (1) "Stakeholder participation and

ownership," (2) "Leadership and accountability," (3) "Impact and outcome-based focus," (4) "Compact value chain," (5) "Monitoring and evaluation" and (6) "Others or general" (Table 2). "Stakeholder participation and ownership" and "Leadership and accountability" were the most popular themes, whereas "Impact and outcome-based" and "Others" yielded the least quotations. The various interest groups expressed views that were related to the extent to which the grassroots community, other stakeholders and the Municipal Council considered and adopted reports of each phase of IDP. The distribution of quotations also varied among interest groups regarding the need for transparency in the process and the involvement of the mayor(s) and municipal manager(s). Below are some verbatim quotes that confirmed that "stakeholder participation and leadership" were of major concern to the respondents:

Communities know what they need; no development will succeed without their buy-in. It is important to understand the role that communities play in development. (Councilor).

I feel like the IDP process lacks leadership; it has been relegated to junior officials who do not take decisions. So, for the process to be credible, the center must have an IDP practitioner.

Across the six themes, "the extent to which the grassroots community, other stakeholders and Municipal Council consider and adopt reports of each phase of the IDP," "transparency of process in terms of prioritization of projects and allocation of budget" and "the quality of the respective leadership and management provided by the mayor (s) and municipal manager (s) in each phase of the IDP" were most common. Regarding the "regularity of progress monitoring and reporting on all phases of the IDP," the interest groups suggested that monthly community meetings be used to provide feedback to the communities on the progress of each phase of the IDP process. The following excerpt from one ward committee member sheds some light on the need for regular feedback at each phase of the IDP process:

Having a regular progress report on each phase of the IDP process will add value to the process since the quality of each phase will be monitored and improved before the next phase rather than proceeding to the last phase without having any report.

In Phase 2 of the study, 13 criteria were identified as the most preferred ones for assessing the quality of phases of IDP (Table 3). The criteria were categorized into six themes, which were subsequently ranked according to the mean scores. According to the rankings, most of the respondents reported that "the grassroots community, other stakeholders and municipal council must consider and adopt reports of each phase of the IDP." This was followed by the need for "transparency of process in terms of prioritization of projects and allocation of budget" and the "involvement of councilors and ward committees in the phases of the IDP," respectively. Across the 13 criteria, "involvement of a multi-stakeholder team" and "progress monitoring and reporting on all phases of the IDP" were ranked at the center between the most and least common criteria. On the other hand, the views expressed about Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) and the district municipalities

| Age group | % of gender type | | |
	Male %	Female %	Total %
11–18	0%	2%	2%
19–35	3%	16%	19%
36–40	8%	30%	38%
41–50	20%	18%	38%
51+	2%	1%	3%
Total	33%	67%	100%

Table 1.
Age group and gender
of the respondents

Perception or view	IDP practitioners	Councilors	Ward committees	Community development workers	Organized business	Traditional representatives or Induma	War room	Totals
Stakeholder participation and ownership								
(i) Extent to which grassroots community, other stakeholders and municipal council consider and adopt reports of each phase of IDP	1	5	4	3	2	3	5	23
(ii) Transparency of process in terms of prioritization of projects and allocation of budget	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	13
(iii) Involvement of multistakeholder team in assessment of IDP phases	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	6
(iv) Involvement of councilors and ward committees in assessing quality of the IDP	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	3
Leadership and accountability								
(i) Quality of respective leadership and management provided by mayor (s) and municipal manager (s) in each phase of the IDP	4	2	1	1	2	1	2	13
(ii) Local stakeholders to assess the IDP not COGTA assessors	0	3	2	1	1	1	2	10
(iii) COGTA and the district municipalities assessment of every phase	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	4
(iv) Evidence of power and influence of war rooms in determining the quality of each IDP phase	0	1	0	0	0	1	2	4
(v) Level of confidence of organized business that its inputs are used to influence decisions in integrated development planning and budgeting	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	3

(*continued*)

Table 2.
Preferred criteria for assessing the quality of integrated development planning

Perception or view	IDP practitioners	Councilors	Ward committees	Community development workers	Organized business	Traditional representatives or Induna	War room	Totals
Impact and outcome-based								
(i) Responsiveness of IDP to citizen and stakeholder aspirations and expectations	0	1	0	1	1	2	0	5
Compact value chain								
(i) Comprehensiveness of checklist or scorecard of deliverables of each phase	2	2	1	1	0	1	2	9
Monitoring and evaluation								
(i) Regularity of progress monitoring and reporting on all phases of the IDP	2	2	2	1	1	1	2	11
Others								
(i) No need to have formal criteria of the IDP phases	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3

Table 2.

Themes of preferred criteria	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Stakeholder participation and ownership			
(a) Extent to which grassroots community, other stakeholders and municipal council consider and adopt reports of each phase of IDP	8.16	1.979	1
(b) Transparency of process in terms of prioritization of projects and allocation of budget	7.93	2.244	2
(c) Involvement of councilors and ward committees in assessing quality of the IDP	7.82	2.219	3
(d) Involvement of multistakeholder team in assessment of IDP phases	7.49	2.279	6
Leadership and accountability			
(a) Local stakeholders to assess the IDP not COGTA assessors	7.68	2.139	4
(b) Quality of respective leadership and management provided by mayor (s) and municipal manager (s) in each phase of the IDP	7.58	2.462	5
(c) Evidence of power and influence of war rooms in determining the quality of each IDP phase	6.83	2.629	11
(d) Level of confidence of organized business that its inputs are used to influence decisions in integrated development planning and budgeting	6.74	2.495	12
(e) COGTA and the district municipalities assessment of every phase	6.67	2.623	10
Impact and outcome-based			
(a) Responsiveness of IDP to citizen and stakeholder aspirations	6.93	2.193	8
Compact value chain			
(a) Comprehensiveness of checklist or scorecard of deliverables of each phase	6.88	2.457	9
Monitoring and evaluation			
(a) Regularity of progress monitoring and reporting on all phases of the IDP	7.01	2.812	7
Others			
(a) No need to have formal criteria of the IDP phases	6.01	2.818	13

Table 3.
Ranked scores of preferred criteria for assessing the quality of integrated development planning

assessing phases of the IDP and the "non-necessity to have formal criteria for the IDP phases" received the least support from the respondents.

4. Discussions

The majority of stakeholders who participated in the study were adults and predominantly female, with 21% being youth and 67% being women (Table 1). Studies carried out by various scholars (Gueli *et al.*, 2007; Ramaano, 2021d, 2022g) revealed that most service delivery-related programs such as IDP are dominated by women compared to their male counterparts. The nonavailability of essential services such as potable clean water, electricity and sewer directly affects women because they get frustrated when there is no water to bathe, clean or wash and no electricity to cook (Katsande, 2012). This, in turn, encourages women to participate in processes like IDP that are aimed at discussing service delivery matters. The fact that youth constitute only 21% of the total respondents is a major concern for the credibility of the IDP considering that they form the majority of the municipality and South African population (Stats SA, 2016). Logically, it means that youth should be involved in the development planning processes, in particular the IDP, to make sure that their interests are covered. Thus, the question is whether the low number of youth in the IDP process is associated with their being sidelined or unwilling to participate in the process. In this regard, youth might be too engaged with other activities, such as still progressing in their tertiary studies or different sporting activities, which could limit their meaningful dedication and

participation, among other possibilities. This observation was echoed by Gebre-Mariam and Fruijtier (2018), who asserted that IDP activities are time-demanding and require full-time people to achieve credibility. Henceforth, from the youth aspect, overall, the majority of respondents were women compared to their male counterparts.

Most stakeholders had attained secondary and tertiary education. This might imply that the stakeholders have acquired sufficient knowledge to understand the municipal processes, such as the IDP process. This observation is in agreement with the findings of Chambers's (2009) study, which revealed that education is one of the indicators that depicts the level of development and the potential for one to have better chances of participating in and contributing positively to the IDP process. Therefore, the failure or challenge with the IDP process in Mbombela Municipality cannot be linked with the education status of the stakeholders. Most stakeholders who participated in the study are not full-time employed; those who are full-time employed are councilors and ward committees. This raises a major concern about the stakeholders' commitment, particularly their availability to actively participate in IDP activities. Some might not be able to afford to attend IDP meetings, while others might prioritize other activities to earn money for living, which might affect their participation in the process (Gebre-Mariam and Fruijtier, 2018).

The results from phases one and two of the study revealed that "stakeholders' participation and ownership" and "leadership and accountability" were perceived to be the most important norms for assessing the quality of phases of the IDP in the quest for an improved or credible planning process. On one hand, this observation might imply that grassroots communities and key stakeholders are not satisfied with the IDP process or how the process (IDP) is conducted; they feel sidelined during the IDP process in the municipality. For this reason, transparency and the involvement of stakeholders, including communities, to solicit their buy-in are required. Various scholars (Harmse, 2010; Marambana, 2018) highlight the importance of stakeholders' involvement as an enabler of success in any development planning tool and, in particular, the IDP process. Presumably, this might also work in African countries such as South Africa, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Zambia that have adopted the concept of IDP to deepen democracy and also serve as an enabler for sustainable service delivery.

In support of the preceding argument, Marambana (2018) advances the view that there should be transparency in the prioritization of projects and budget allocation. To this end, Marambana focused on stakeholder concentration in IDP processes in the Blue Crane Route Local Municipality, South Africa. This, in turn, will build confidence and solicit buy-in from the stakeholders in the IDP process. In this regard, Mashiteng (2017) recommends that stakeholders be actively involved in all phases of the IDP process and not only during the analysis phase and approval phase, as is currently happening at the moment in most municipalities in the country, including the Mbombela local municipality. With that, Sibanda and Lues (2021) focused on shared participation and power dynamics in strategic growth planning in an urban municipality in the Eastern Cape Province, South Africa. Ramaano (2022a, 2023e), with a case study of Musina Municipality, South Africa, assessed the tourism-oriented IDP, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) and local economic development (LED) for enhanced community-based organizations (CBOs), community participation, service delivery and livelihoods. His study revealed minimal adherence to IDP and LED processes in the study area, resulting in poor tourism-based public leadership and meager livelihoods.

In the Zambia case study, Banda et al. (2022) used legal and policy frameworks to coordinate and mainstream climate and disaster stability alternatives into municipality-integrated development plans. Likewise, Dlamini and Reddy (2018) critiqued the approach and technique of IDP with a case study of the Umtshezi Local Municipality in the KwaZulu-Natal Province of South Africa. On the other hand, the observation implies that stakeholders feel that there is a lack of decision-making in the IDP process due to the nonparticipation of municipal managers and senior managers. This view was echoed by some of the respondents

during the interviews, who indicated that the IDP process lacks leadership because the municipal managers and senior managers have relegated the process (IDP) to the junior officials, who cannot take decisions during the municipal engagements with the stakeholders, including communities.

In a similar study to the aforesaid, Dlulisa (2013) found that the Randfontein local municipality's IDP is not credible because of a lack of proper leadership in the municipality, specifically by the municipal manager and the executive mayor. For this reason, "leadership and accountability" in the IDP process are required from the municipal manager and the entire management. This finding was alluded to by various scholars (Madzivhandila and Asha, 2012; Dlamini and Reddy, 2018; Sebake and Mukonza, 2020) who asserted that the IDP process is the responsibility of the municipal manager, who is the sole accounting officer in the municipality and, therefore, cannot be relegated to the junior officials.

The study also revealed that "impact and outcome-based" and "others" were perceived to be the least norms for assessing the quality of the phases of the IDP. Initially, the findings might imply that IDPs in general are not responding to the actual challenges facing communities on the ground. For this reason, alignment of IDP and community priorities is required. These sentiments were supported by various scholars (StepSA, 2010; Dlulisa, 2013; Wesolowska et al., 2021) who highlighted the importance of alignment using the implementation of sequential and identification models of the development planning process. Central to the models is the linkage between problem identification and intervention thereto. In this regard, Irvin and Stansbury (2004) recommend that there should be synergy between the phases of the IDP and the communities' aspirations to strengthen the quality of the IDP process in general. On the other hand, the findings imply that the notion that there is no need to have formal criteria for the IDP process is not justified. This was proven by the fact that the latter notion received the least support from respondents in both phases one and two of the study. It is consonant with Binns and Nel (2002), who found that development planning tools such as IDP require a criterion to measure their success in fulfilling their purpose.

Lack of monitoring and evaluation was also perceived to be one of the crucial criteria in the quest for a quality IDP process. This finding might imply that the performance of the phases of the IDP process is not monitored, which affects its outcome. For this reason, regular progress monitoring and reporting of each phase of the IDP is required. This proposal is in line with Banda et al.'s (2020) sentiments, which highlighted the importance of monitoring in every development planning tool, including the IDP process, to increase the chances of achieving its desired goal. They juxtaposed the two IDP models of South Africa and Zambia and posited that overall, the Zambian model can still benefit from adapting some of the harmonizations of other legal and functional frameworks relating to the IDP process and synergizing among parties. Piotrowicz (2018), with the case of Polish humanitarian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and Ukrainian IDPs, also advances the view that each phase of the IDP should be assessed and adopted before the next phase to strengthen the quality of the entire IDP process value chain. Similarly, again using Poland as an example and the development of planning strategies, Wesolowska et al. (2021) critiqued the transition from short-term planning, subordinated to the necessities of the country's financial development, to a long-term planning system incorporating diverse facets of development.

5. Conclusions, limitations and further study implications

5.1 Conclusions

This study identified stakeholder participation and ownership, public leadership and accountability, an impact and outcome-based focus, a compact value chain, monitoring and evaluation as the preferred criteria for assessing the quality of the IDP. The grassroots communities and key stakeholders are not satisfied with the IDP process or how the process is conducted; they feel sidelined during the IDP process in the municipality. For this reason,

transparency and the involvement of stakeholders, including communities, to solicit their buy-in are required.

The stakeholders feel that there is a lack of decision-making in the IDP process due to the nonparticipation of municipal managers and senior managers. This view was echoed by some of the respondents during the interviews, who indicated that the IDP process lacks leadership because the municipal managers and senior managers have relegated the process (IDP) to the junior officials, who cannot take decisions during the municipal engagements with the stakeholders, including communities. Impact and outcome-based were perceived to be the least normative criteria for assessing the quality of the phases of the IDP.

Initially, the findings might imply that IDPs in general are not responding to the actual challenges facing communities on the ground. For this reason, alignment of IDP and community priorities is required to improve the post-apartheid management history and their challenges and foster effective governance and practice for enhanced service delivery (Binns and Nel, 2002; Gunter, 2005; Holtzhausen and Naidoo, 2011). This study thus adheres to the cited authors in theoretically contributing to the body of academic knowledge. Lack of monitoring and evaluation was also perceived as one of the crucial criteria in the quest for a quality IDP process. This finding might infer that the performance of the phases of the IDP process is not monitored, which affects its outcome. Due to this, regular progress monitoring and reporting of each phase of the IDP is required.

5.2 Limitations and further study directions

There are limitations to the study; while 265 questionnaires were distributed, only 120 were accounted for and processed. Additionally, only seven elite interviews were conducted to inform the study's current results. Perhaps more such interviews would have enriched the study even further. Instead of traditional and all-inclusive focus group discussions, this study selected four multistakeholder workshop sessions, sourced data and recorded minutes, in which up to 66 participants each attended. However, all the cited limitations did not compromise the credibility and reliability of the study.

As for the future direction of this study, Rogerson (2010) asserts that the processes of IDP and LED are complementary. Hence, they can be vital aspects of rural development processes, public leadership, inclusion and communities' livelihoods (Gunter, 2005; Ramaano, 2008, 2021c; Rogerson and Rogerson, 2019). Therefore, Rogerson (2014) further reminds us of the essence of place-branding efforts and LED values. The cited are significant aspects of IDP and can function well with pro-poor tourism in the promotion of livelihoods in the municipalities. It is consistent with Ramaano's findings in tourism literature and LED and IDP values, with specific references to Musina municipality (Ramaano, 2021a, b, 2022a, b, f). Therefore, further research can take the diverse route of IDP and LED processes in conjunction with rural developments, tourism value and livelihoods.

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Appendix 1

Questionnaire Administered to the Respondents

Refined Integrated Development Planning Process For Mbombela Local Municipality

<u>PART 1</u>

1. Region in Mbombela Local Municipality: _____

2. Stakeholder representing: _____

3. Gender: _____

4. Age Brackets (Place X in box that represents your group):

11 - 18		19 - 35		36 - 40		41 - 50		51+

5. Educational level (Place X in box that represents your group):

No formal		Primary		Secondary		Tertiary

6. Employment status (Place X in box that represents your group):

Full-time employed		Casual employed		Part-time employed		Not employed

7. Stakeholder representing or interest group (Place X in box that represents your group):

Councilor		Ward Committee		CDW		Organized Business		Community leaders		Traditional Rep/Induna		War Room

<u>PART 2</u>

Instructions

Towards the end of last year, we facilitated several engagements throughout Mbombela Local Municipality. Various stakeholders were engaged. Our aim was to obtain their views or perceptions regarding how to refine integrated development planning and bring better results than is possible at present. The perceptions or views we obtained are shown below. Today, we are here to find out the extent to which you agree with these views. In order to do this, we kindly request you to use a sliding scale of 1 (Completely disagree) to 10 (Completely agree). This means that for each statement in each table below, you are expected to award a score ranging from 1 to 10. Note that the higher the score the more you agree with the view. Make sure that the answer you place in the box corresponding to every statement is what most members in your group agree with. Please encourage those who might not say anything to talk and share their views.

1. **Understanding the criteria for assessing the quality of each phase of the IDP**

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
1. There are no criteria, hence there are challenges in the IDP process. COGTA to set a criterion for each phase to assist Municipalities in implementing phases of the IDP	
2. There should be a community and Council resolution taken per each phase of the IDP. The community resolution must be signed off by the Ward Councilor. Attendance registers of the community meetings where the resolution was taken must be available for records purposes	

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
3. COGTA and the District Municipalities must assess every phase of the IDP prior to the next phase. This implies that before the Municipality proceed to next phase it has to be approved by COGTA and the District Municipalities	
4. A checklist must be developed to outline key deliverables and scorecard per each phase of the IDP. This will assist Municipalities to evaluate the performance of each phase against the activities outlined in the IDP guide packs	
5. Each stage must be measured against the most common criteria such as relevance, meaningfulness or applicability, health importance or improvement, evidence-based, reliability or reproducibility, validity, and feasibility	
6. The Municipality must appoint a team comprising of Municipal officials, Councilors, ward committees, community development workers and organized business to manage the implementation of the IDP process. The team must be given mandate to decide whether the phase of the IDP has met the required outcomes or not. If not, the team insist that the phase must be re-done until the concerns are raised. This will ensure completed involvement of key stakeholders in the implementation of the IDP process	
7. COGTA IDP assessment criteria are not assisting because the assessors do not know the area and challenges, use local stakeholders to assess the IDP	
8. COGTA IDP assessment criteria is too much technical and doesn't not recognize Councilors as key stakeholders in the IDP process	
9. The IDP process as applied by the Municipal officials is not transparent in terms of project allocation	
10. Councilors and Ward Committees must be used to assess the credibility of the IDP	
11. Ward Committees are not aware of any existing IDP assessment criteria	
12. Ward Committees are only requested to submit community priorities and only invited to attend consultative meetings on the Draft IDP	
13. Ward Committee must be adopted as a Committee responsible for assessing the quality of the phases of the IDP process. If they don't approve, the Municipality must not proceed to the next phase.	
14. An IDP which respond to the needs of the people is the one to be considered as credible. Therefore, IDP must be assessed on the basis of its response to the needs of the people	
15. COGTA IDP assessment criteria must be improved to assess the impact instead of only checking compliance matters	
16. War rooms must be used to assess the quality of the IDP phases as they are an inclusive structure constituted by all the existing stakeholders in the ward. This is due to the fact that they know the area and are able to tell if the process will contribute to service delivery in the Municipal area.	
17. Traditional leaders are not aware of the IDP assessment criteria	
18. Traditional Leaders are not recognized in the IDP process. As a result, most of the projects are delayed	
19. Traditional Leaders must be consulted from the beginning to the end of the IDP process	
20. Traditional Leaders must be afforded an opportunity to assess the quality of the IDP	
21. Most of the areas falls within the Traditional Areas, therefore, it is important that their views get considered in the IDP process. This will add value to the process, considering the fact that large portion of land falls within their jurisdiction	
22. As rates payers, the only IDP assessment criteria to assess a Municipality, is the quality-of-service delivery rendered. If the performance is poor, the IDP can't been viewed as credible	
23. The Municipality must a prepare report of each phase of the IDP process. That report must be subjected to the community and stakeholders inputs prior to the next phase.	
24. Organized business must be part of the IDP and Budget Steering committee which is chaired by the Executive Mayor and is assigned to determine budget allocation. This will assist in terms of ensuring that business is also catered in the budget. In most instances, the IDP projects are only focusing providing infrastructure in rural areas and nothing is said about business areas.	
25. War Rooms don't know about any existing IDP Assessment	
26. War Rooms are only invited to attend IDP meetings in October and April every year, but	

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
their inputs are not considered	
27. An assessment must be designed to check if the phases of the IDP are credible or not. This will address the current challenges of approved IDPs not responding to the needs of people.	
28. War rooms must be used to assess the quality of each phase prior to the finalization of the IDP process. This is due to the fact that war room is made up of all the existing community structure in the ward, therefore, war room are at the better position to guide whether the IDP is responding to the needs of the people	

2. The extent to which key stakeholders play designated roles in formulating the IDP

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
1. The key stakeholders in the IDP value chain are municipal officials (Municipal Manager, Head of Departments, General Managers, Chief Financial Officer, IDP Manager, Budget Manager, Performance Manager, Risk Manager & Public Participation Manager), Councilors, Ward Committees, Traditional Leaders, War Rooms, Sector departments, Ehlanzeni District Municipality, Organized Business and National Treasury	
2. The municipal officials deal with all the administration and logistical arrangement in the entire IDP process. The problem is that decisions are taken by TROIKA with regard to the prioritization of projects and budget	
3. Some officials within the Municipality, particularly the CFO and Budget Manager, do not consider the proposals from the IDP Manager and Heads of Department. This makes the process to be invalid because it doesn't have any support from the Accounting Officer	
4. Although the Municipal Manager is required to manage the IDP process, the perception is that the IDP process has been relegated to junior officials	
5. Councilors are not given sufficient opportunity to contribute in the phases of the IDP process	
6. Councilors approve the IDP process plan, but are not involved in the phases of the IDP. They are only required to submit community priorities (during the analysis phase) and also when there is a draft IDP (during the approval phase).	
7. Councilors as community leaders must be involved in all the phases of the IDP process, including the prioritization of projects and allocation of budget, which is done by TROIKA. This will enable Councilors to buy-in into the process and also communicate the decisions accordingly.	
8. The report of each phase must be tabled before Council for approval. This will enable Councilors to intervene at the appropriate phase level when necessary.	
9. Ward committees are only called to develop ward plans; they identify community priorities, however, are not consulted when finalizing the projects	
10. Ward committees are excluded from some of the IDP meetings, and only Councilors are invited.	
11. The relationship between ward committees and Councilors who are the chairpersons (of ward committees) is not good which makes the participation in the IDP process to be difficult.	
12. CDW are excluded from the entire IDP process. They are accused of colluding with sector departments due to their location to COGTA.	
13. CDW must be consulted in all the phases of the IDP process. CDW are locally based and understand the challenges on the ground; therefore, are at the strategic position to advise the Municipality in terms of community priorities	
14. Traditional leaders are not part of the IDP process. Council always say they are part of the Municipality. However, in real terms they are not.	
15. The strategies and projects are not addressing the Traditional Area's needs.	
16. Organized business is not involved in the entire IDP process. The Municipality's public participation approach is merely for malicious compliant purposes. The organized business is required to submit inputs as part of the Draft IDP, however, their issues are never addressed during the finalization of the IDP process	
17. War rooms have been established to champion service delivery at ward level, however, they are sidelined during the IDP process	

3. **Weaknesses and strengths of each phase of the IDP value chain**

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
1. With regard to the weaknesses of each stage of the IDP process, it was indicated that communities are not involved in all the phases of the IDP process. There is no communication to the communities and stakeholders on the phases of the IDP process. The municipal officials compile the IDP alone and then present to the communities in the approval phase. It must be stated that the Municipality is consulting for compliant purpose.	
2. During the analysis phase, the Municipality convenes zonal stakeholder meetings where stakeholders are requested to raise issues to be prioritized in the IDP. After that no feedback sessions and prioritization sessions are arranged. The Municipality will convene another meeting where the stakeholders are informed of the projects that have been included in the IDP and Budget.	
3. During the meeting, stakeholders will raise points but those concerns are not addressed. The Municipality will approve the IDP and Budget without addressing the issues raised. To make the situation worse, the Municipality does not provide any feedback regarding the issues raised during the consultation process. No consultation on the project prioritization, no consultation on the preparatory phase, strategy phase and integration phase.	
4. The other challenge is that there is no monitoring tool to monitor the quality of each stage of the IDP process. The Municipality runs through all the processes, and as soon as the IDP is approved, the communities led by the stakeholders protest against the implementation of some of the projects that are in the approved IDP. A suggestion was made that COGTA must develop a monitoring tool for phases of the IDP process, and before the Municipality moves to the next phase, it requires approval from COGTA. This will improve the quality of the IDP process because each phase would have been assessed prior to the finalization of the process.	
5. The other challenge is that the municipal leadership does not use the same momentum or energy they use during the election campaigns. Service delivery is done only during the election period, after that no commitment towards the implementation of service delivery projects. The same energy of consulting the communities should be there in all the phases of the IDP processes.	
6. The other challenge affecting the IDP process is politics. In most instances, political leadership does not implement projects in certain areas due to the politics interference in those areas.	
7. It was also stated that communities do not understand the IDP process. This makes participation to be weak across the phases of the IDP process. When the Municipality presents its long-term plans and strategies during the analysis phase, the communities do not engage, they only raise service delivery demands without linking the issues with the municipal strategic plans. On the other hand, when the Municipality presents the draft IDP to the communities as part of the approval phase of the IDP process, the communities do not interrogate and make inputs. All they are interested in is to raise challenges instead of solutions	
8. The people who are attending IDP public participation meetings are only politicians, ordinary citizens do not attend due to being victimized. Some feel like it's a waste of time because those who are politically active use IDP meetings to fight political battles, leaving ordinary citizens confused and as a result some meetings are disrupted. Some communities feel that when you raise genuine service delivery problems, those in power feel threatened, and view that as a political attack.	
9. The IDP meetings are normal toxic in such a way that old people are not given an opportunity to raise the views. They are sometimes booed by young people claiming that their issues are not a priority. As a result, old people resort to stay at home.	
10. The other challenge is that IDP process does not cater for adjustment budget. The Municipality adjusts the budget, and does not communicate the adjustment to the communities and stakeholders. The community anticipates a project, which has been re-prioritized during the adjustment budget. This creates tension between the community and the Municipality.	
11. The integration phase must not be a stand-alone phase. Integration must be applicable in all the phases. It must not happen after the Municipality has finalized strategies and projects.	

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
12. Institutions of local government do not have capacity to champion planning. Practitioners are more focused on ensuring that the process is completed as required by the legislation. They don't care about the quality of each phase. In most instances, capacity of officials dealing with the IDP processes is a serious challenge in the Municipality. As a result, the Municipality cannot even produce reports of each phases. For example, the Municipalities cannot produce an analysis report which is the basis of the entire process.	
13. Roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the IDP process is not clarified. It is always municipal officials who is running everything while stakeholders no nothing about the processes. The roles and responsibilities must be presented to everyone and a service level agreement must be signed. It was suggested that stakeholders must be empowered to develop the guide the development of the analysis report, which is part of the analysis phase.	
14. The roles as discussed above must also be clarified with the municipal officials. In most instances, IDP process is relegated to be a function of the IDP officials. The municipal leadership including the Municipal Manager and General Managers do not get involved. Instances where IDP process is successful, the Municipal Manager drives the entire process, while the IDP officials are providing secretariat and advisory role.	
15. The stages are fine, the challenge is understanding what is expected to be done. The Municipality must use the approved sector plans which have been developed by experts in the respective fields. The sector plans must be communicated to all the stakeholders including the general public. This will assist the Municipality to advise the communities in terms of their service delivery needs. Instead of including all the wish lists in the IDP, needs must be analyzed and scrutinized against the sector plans. Civic education needs to be done on a regular basis for communities to understand how government operates, and the importance and content of the sector plans in terms of service delivery.	
16. Public participation must be done in all the phases in order to obtain buy-in from all the stakeholders. This will reduce the service delivery protests. In order to ensure active stakeholders participation, capacity building must be done of the key stakeholders such as ccouncilors, ward committees, community development workers, traditional leaders, organized business and war rooms.	
17. Poor implementation of projects is another challenge in the IDP process. After approving the IDP, the leadership does not put more effort towards realizing all the targets set in the IDP implementation plan, commonly known as service delivery and budget implementation plan (SDBIP). Once a process is included in the IDP and the budget, the expectation is that it should be implemented so that another project can be included. This will make IDP process to be more progressive towards addressing the needs of the people. Despite poor performance from the municipal officials and service providers, no penalty is taken against those affected. Hence, the situation is not improving.	
18. The other challenge is that the projects identified in the projects phase do not talk to the issues prioritized in the analysis phase. This results in a situation where the key stakeholders, including the communities, do not see a value in their participation in the IDP process.	
19. Time to implement the phases of the IDP process must be extended. For example, only thirty days is allocated to consult stakeholders and communities on the draft IDP and Budget. The Municipality approves the draft documents in 31th March, expected to consult in April and then approve the final documents in May. There is no sufficient time to engage and deliberate on the inputs raised from the public participation process.	
20. The Municipality must be flexible when implementing the phases of the IDP process. If it is discovered along the process that the strategy phase is not assisting the project phase, the Municipality must be flexible to go back to the strategy phase.	
21. The phases of the IDP process lack innovation. There is a need to apply fourth industrial revolution elements such as technology, social media and others to improve the phases of the IDP process. This must be applied to improve the communication and participation of stakeholders in all the phases. Instead of calling people in one room, meetings can be convened virtually, using social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp; information can be shared in public places such as malls, schools, libraries, municipal buildings for the public to make inputs in the IDP process.	

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
22. To improve the quality of phases of the IDP process, it is suggested that the District IDP Manager Forum be empowered to assess each phase and confirm validity and reliability across the entire IDP process	
23. All the phases lack inputs from the Councilors. It is recommended that Councilors must be consulted throughout the entire process, from the analysis phase until the approval phase.	
24. The IDP process does not accommodate Traditional Leaders. The Municipal Councillors and officials sit and decide on everything and then invite Traditional leaders to rubber stamp what has already been finalized.	
25. It is recommended that the Traditional Leaders respect the fact that the majority of land falls within their jurisdiction, and involve them in their entire process.	
26. A representative from the Traditional Leaders must sit in the IDP Steering Committee where decisions are taken on projects.	
27. The Traditional leader's structures of indunas must be incorporated into the Municipal structures to ensure synergy in terms powers and functions.	
28. War rooms must be given project feed backs so that they can keep the communities informed	
29. War rooms must be involved in the project identification and prioritization. This will enable the community to by-in on the IDP process.	
30. The needs of Traditional Leaders must be prioritized in the IDP budgeting process.	
31. A prioritization model must be developed as part of the project phase to guide the allocation of projects and the budget.	
32. Councilors must be afforded an opportunity to comment on the model and also be part of the prioritization process. This will ensure equal distribution of project and also ensure alignment of project and the community needs	
33. Projects in the IDP are not implemented, which nullifies the entire IDP process. It is recommended that a project implementation and monitoring be added as a new phase of the IDP process. Continuous feedback must be done to the Councilors so that they can inform the communities accordingly	
34. Regular workshops must be arranged on phases of the IDP process. Some Councilors do not understand the phases of the IDP process. This affects their participation in the IDP process.	
35. During the analysis, the information presented to the communities is not correct, which causes chaos in the IDP meetings. In some instances, it is reported that a project is completed, which it is not true.	
36. The community-based plans (CBP) must be used as a base for the analysis phase. The Municipality must identify projects according to the CBP since it has been developed together with the community.	
37. Integration is a continuous process. It needs to be adopted as cross-cutting in all the phases of the IDP, and not a stand-alone phase.	
38. The current process of having integration as a phase is not assisting the process because it consolidates all the projects from various departments internal and external. Hence, it is proposed that integration be applied across all the phases of the IDP process.	
39. Sector departments must be involved in the project phase, particularly during identification and prioritization of projects. This will ensure integration of project, unlike sector departments getting involved during the integration phase which comes after the projects have already been finalized	
40. The other challenge with regard to the project phase is that some projects disappear along the way. They get funded and then disappear without them being implemented. This therefore implies that there should be a system to ensure that all the projects that appear on the approved IDP be completed prior to the introduction of new projects	
41. Public participation must be factored into the entire process. Instead of consulting during the analysis phase and approval phase, it is proposed that consultation be done in all the phases to enable the stakeholders to make inputs in each phase. This will improve the quality of the IDP process.	
42. The phases of the IDP process are not interconnected. The chain within the phases is broken, hence, it is impossible to provide a quality IDP. The implementation of the phases	

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
of the IDP process is done purely for compliant purposes.	
43. The Municipality must prepare a report for each phase of the IDP process. Stakeholders must be empowered to assess the quality of each phase of the IDP process. In cases whether the stakeholders are not satisfied with the report, the phase must be re-done until all the parties are satisfied.	
44. The phases of the IDP process are fine. The only challenge is that the ward committees are sidelined in the finalization of projects. Ward committees are only told of the final product, their inputs are not considered at all.	
45. The public participation approach adopted by the Municipality to consult in a zonal/cluster is not assisting because the key stakeholders are left out of the process. This is one of the reasons why there are service protests immediately after the approval of the IDP.	
46. It is suggested that organized business be given an opportunity to participate in every phase of the IDP process.	
47. The Municipality approves the process plan and then invite organized business to submit projects to be implemented in the IDP. They will then be invited to comment on the draft IDP. The other phases such as strategy, project and integration do not exist in reality.	
48. The Municipality must be flexible when implementing the phases of the IDP process. If it is discovered along the process that the strategy phase is not assisting the project phase, the Municipality must be flexible to go back to the strategy phase	

4. Perceived process to facilitate integrated development planning

Perception or View	What score do you award from 1-10
1. Run sustainable community awareness campaigns	
2. Adopt a Ward Based Budgeting System (WBBS)	
3. Facilitate Participatory project identification and planning (PPIP)	
4. Integrated delivery of basic services (IDBS)	
5. Adopt a comprehensive communication strategy that takes into account how to share information with the following stakeholders:	
a) The church	
b) Traditional leaders	
c) Elected leaders e.g., Ward Committee and Civic Associations	
d) Schools	
e) Business	
f) NGOs	
g) All spheres of government	
h) Community Development Workers	
i) Youth	
j) Tertiary institutions e.g., universities and colleges	
6. Use a broad range of modern communication channels	
a) Radio stations	
b) Social media e.g., WhatsApp; Facebook; Instagram	
c) Emailing	
d) Sms messages	

Appendix 2
Key informant interview guide
Refined IDP process for Mbombela local municipality

(1) What criteria can be used to assess quality at each phase of the IDP?

- What are the major criteria at each phase?

(2) Who are the key role players in the IDP value chain?

- To what extent are the stakeholders satisfied with execution of roles by each role player?

- What are the reasons for the satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the extent of execution of designated roles by each stakeholder?

- Are you satisfied with the participation of the stakeholders in the IDP process?

(3) What are the major strengths and weaknesses identified at each phase of the IDP value chain?

- What are the origins or causes of the strengths and weaknesses?

- How can the weaknesses be addressed?

- How can the strengths be enhanced?

(4) What modifications or changes can be made at each phase of the IDP value chain in order to improve its quality?

- What are the risks likely to be faced when implementing proposed modifications?

- What action should be taken to mitigate the identified risks?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix 3
Multistakeholder workshops guide

Figure A1.
Refined Integrated development planning process in Mbombela local municipality

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