



CITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME AND COACHING: EMERGING LESSONS FROM THE FIELD

BACKGROUND

The CSP has completed two coaching projects and is currently implementing a third. The projects have aimed to build city individual and team leadership in the context of supporting more effective administrations to implement their development plans.

The two projects that have been completed provide evidence of how useful coaching is. The current project is reinforcing this and providing further guidance as to how coaching can be effective in our different city contexts. This note provides an overview of experience to date and concludes with some pointers on how such support can be offered in future.

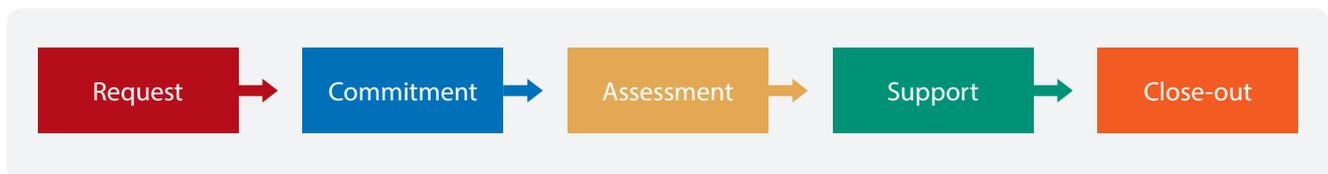
The request for coaching and leadership support arose from requests from the cities themselves through strategic development reviews that were undertaken in the cities. The requests came through the city managers offices where candidates and teams for support were confirmed following the offer of support. It is important to note that no coaching was imposed on candidates – it was an offer to individuals and their teams who were interested in improving their performance.

Commitment of the cities was reflected in inception reports which articulated how the support would be provided in each city in line with the four workstreams (individual coaching, team coaching, strategic support and a seminar series).

DESCRIPTION

These projects have had elements of four workstreams: (a) Individual coaching; (b) Team coaching; (c) strategic support; and (d) a seminar series. All of them follow a standard approach as articulated in the diagram below.

Two main methods were used to assess individuals: (a) emotional intelligence leadership assessments using the 360 degree feedback tool – Emotional Maturity Inventory (EMI) and (b) the Enneagram personality profiling tool. Two methods were also used to assess teams: Tuckman Model of “Stages of Team Development” and Roger Harrison and Herb Stokes’s “Diagnosing Organisational Culture”.



Feedback from these assessments then formed the basis of the coaching goals at the individual levels. Coaching goals at the team level were aligned more to the development plans of the municipalities (either the IDP or a long-term development strategy).

The support phase involved providing individual and team coaching support in line with the four packages of support identified.

- Individual coaching and team coaching is provided to senior administrative leaders that would like to benefit from such support – such candidates are identified together with the city manager. Team coaching is then provided to the departments that such leaders are responsible for.

- Strategic support is targeted specifically at city managers. Given the nature of their work, there is often a need for a space to be created for strategic reflection and support, particularly in the areas of the political-administrative interface, organisational structure, labour relations and performance management.
- Team building. Team building in this context refers to combined team of EXCOs and Mayoral Committees. In the context of city’s IDP and long-term development strategies (where these exist), the team at this level needs to cohere around the long-term goals of the city.
- Seminar series. This area of support has not yet been implemented, but it will be later in 2018 and will be in the form of mobilising inspiring leaders, particularly in the public



sector, who can speak to their leadership teams on various issues that they are grappling with.

Close-out is important as this is the space to reflect on what has worked and what has not worked. This step assists in fine-tuning the approaches and methods that are used in supporting city leadership teams.

CONCLUSION

Through coaching support leaders were assisted to understand what gets in the way of them achieving their individual and team goals and what they can do about it at the team and individual level.

The reflection facility offered by coaching should not be underestimated; it allows for different brain activity giving neural access to deeper memory and pattern recognition. In a demand driven, results-oriented work environment, 'narrowing' of neural activity can happen, with reliance on habitual functioning. In order to pioneer new ways of organising and managing cities, a structured space for reflection is critical. Coaching creates such a space. Coaching offers a professionally supported space for self-scrutiny and awareness-creation that supports clarity of intention and confident agency.

While there was initially much enthusiasm, in some cities this was not maintained resulting in a number of coaching sessions being

missed. In certain cities diaries were chaotic with last minute instructions for people to attend meetings and workshops that then took precedence over coaching sessions. This could be mitigated by ensuring that cities have "some skin in the game" through joint financial contributions and prioritising attendance of sessions in managers' performance agreements.

In going forward, it is important that there is consistent support of the city manager. Without this, the initial interest and excitement soon wanes and the process peters out. Team coaching is also not effective without support from the city manager – this is because the city manager needs to drive the strategic agenda for the administration and the team coaching needs rally around this.

It is also important that there is flexibility and sensitivity to the often turbulent contexts that our city administrations find themselves in. Certain instances require coaching to shift from being strategic and forward looking to being able to stabilize immediate crises and indeed attending to what can be referred to as "organizational accident scenes". This requires coaches who have range and sensitivity to what is required in the moment. This has required flexibility and consequently adjustments to the initial plans and approaches.

Lastly, it is important for cities to have "some skin in the game" through joint financial contributions and prioritising attendance of sessions in managers' performance agreements.

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