



COMPACT CASE STUDY

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Community Participation Index

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Community participation is an important component of municipal planning, budgeting, and oversight in local government in South Africa. Legislation, regulation and policy all emphasise the need for municipalities to involve residents and communities in the affairs of local government. Unfortunately, community participation is often just a compliance or ‘tick box’ exercise done for the sake of it, not for real developmental impact. Research has shown that despite this, communities in South Africa still strongly support public participation at the local level.

The COMPACT Community Participation Index has been developed in an iterative process as one tool amongst several tools and resources forming part of the COMPACT Toolbox.¹ The purpose of the index is to improve community participation in planning and oversight and to deepen participatory democracy in local municipalities in South Africa. The index is meant as a complementary monitoring and evaluation tool to help municipalities better undertake and monitor community participation on an annual basis.

The findings and recommendations from Phase 1 and Phase 2 of action research with the 12 partner municipalities were incorporated in individual municipal reports, as well the COMPACT Consolidated Technical Findings Report.² These findings and recommendations informed the development of the index, together with learnings from the development and piloting of other tools. Pilot workshops were held with Witzenberg Local Municipality and Sol Plaatje Local Municipality in June and July 2025, and this feedback led to the index being further refined.

The index measures and monitors the performance of municipalities in terms of community participation across six broad dimensions: shared vision for community participation; budgeting and resourcing for participation; community participation in performance management; participation in the IDP process; ward committee functionality; and public participation, transparency and accountability. There are 50 indicators in total, and a simple measurement system is used to develop a percentage score which reflects the performance of the municipality. The process of completing and reviewing the index annually should be a collective exercise of self-assessment and solution-finding within a municipality. The idea is for municipalities to be supported to move beyond mere legislative compliance around community participation to a focus on innovative, developmental local government that puts people first.

A document with the 50 indicators, descriptions and municipal custodians - as well as footnotes to all legislation, regulations, policies and guidelines referenced - is [annexed](#) to this document. The COMPACT Community Participation Index template in Microsoft Excel format is [available](#) as an annexure to this document.

1 COMPACT is a partnership between the Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI), the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and Integrity Action, together with 12 partner local municipalities in South Africa. The overall goal of the COMPACT programme is enhanced local government service delivery and accountability. The specific objective of the project is that public participation in municipal integrated development planning (IDP) processes is meaningful and contributes to service delivery which better meets low-income residents’ socio-economic needs. See <https://pari.org.za/compact/>

2 COMPACT (2024) *Public Participation and Municipal Planning in South Africa: A Consolidated Technical Findings Report on Action Research at 12 Local Municipalities*: <https://pari.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/COMPACT-Consolidated-Technical-Findings-Report-FINAL-November-2024.pdf>

1.1. STRUCTURE

This case study provides some context and information on the development and piloting of the COMPACT Community Participation Index.

- [Section 2](#) explains the **purpose of the index**.
- [Section 3](#) provides **definitions of community participation**, explores the idea of **meaningful participation**, as well as sets out a **public participation spectrum** and **participation principles**.
- [Section 4](#) outlines the **process of developing and piloting** the index.
- [Section 5](#) introduces the **six broad dimensions and 50 indicators** that comprise the index and explains the **measurement system** used in the index, including the three possible rankings for each indicator and the percentage score bands.
- [Section 6](#) suggests **how to operationalise the index** within a municipality.
- [Section 7](#) provides a short **conclusion** to the case study.

2. PURPOSE OF THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INDEX

The overall purpose of the COMPACT Community Participation Index is to **support meaningful community participation** and to **deepen participatory democracy in local municipalities in South Africa**. It is a **developmental, capacity-building and support tool** to help councillors and officials in municipalities, ward committees, CSOs/CBOs and communities better measure and monitor community participation across its various dimensions. The index can also be viewed as a **reference document or checklist** for local government stakeholders.

Importantly, the index is not meant to be a burdensome and technocratic compliance exercise. The population of the index is not an end in and of itself. Rather, the process of completing and reviewing the index annually should be a **collective exercise of self-assessment and solution-finding within a municipality**. The idea is for municipalities to be capacitated and supported to move beyond mere legislative compliance around community participation to a focus on innovative, developmental local government that puts people first. The index provides the space and mechanism for a municipality to track progress across several key dimensions and indicators over an annual cycle.



3. WHAT IS COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION?

Engagements with municipalities have shown that there is a desire for more guidance on the definition of community participation, as well as information on the participation spectrum and principles of community participation.

3.1. DEFINITIONS

Community participation or public participation can be defined differently depending on the different context, purpose or audience. There are a number of useful South African definitions of public participation in the context of local government. Taken together these definitions build a picture of what community participation should look like in the country. Section 152(1)(e) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) states that the **objective of local government** is to “encourage the involvement of communities and community organisations in the matters of local government.” The National Development Plan (2030) emphasises the **importance of citizen participation in bringing about transformation**, stating that:

“South Africans need to use the avenues provided for in the legislation and others to help shape the development process and hold the government to account for the quality of services it delivers. Active citizenship requires inspirational leadership at all levels of society.”³

The National Policy Framework for Public Participation (DPLG, 2007) provides a comprehensive definition of public participation:

“An open, accountable process through which individuals and groups within selected communities can exchange views and influence decision-making. It is a democratic process of engaging people, deciding, planning, and playing an active part in the development and operation of services that affect their lives.”⁴

The Public Participation Framework for the South African Legislative Sector (2013) defines public participation as:

“A two-way communication and collaborative problem-solving mechanism with the goal of achieving representative and more acceptable decisions.”⁵

It is important to remember that public participation can be between more than two different groups of stakeholders, particularly when a collaborative approach is being taken. Other key components of the definitions include that participation is a **democratic process** (i.e. bottom-up not top-down) and that **people have influence over decision-making** (i.e. certain decisions require the input of communities and other stakeholders to be successful and sustainable).

³ National Planning Commission (2013) Your Guide to the National Development Plan 2030, p. 138.

⁴ Section 2.1 of the National Policy Framework for Public Participation (DPLG, 2007)

⁵ Public Participation Framework for the South African Legislative Sector (2013) p. 7.

Meaningful participation is simply participation that genuinely meets the above requirements. The Constitutional Court has ruled in several cases that to be valid, participation processes must be meaningful. Meaningful participation takes information-sharing and consultation as the starting point, and entails genuine collaboration and empowerment, where community input is valued, respected, and incorporated into planning, decision-making and oversight. Some criteria for testing how meaningful a participation process is include:

- whether the process was **timely and accessible**;
- whether it enabled **informed participation by those most affected**; and
- whether it was **fair and transparent**.⁶

A commitment to meaningful participation ensures that the diverse voices, needs and perspectives of the community are considered and reflected in the development and implementation of municipal plans, policies and projects. This ultimately leads to more inclusive, responsive and sustainable outcomes for communities and the municipality as a whole.

3.2. INVITED AND INVENTED SPACES OF PARTICIPATION

Community participation in municipalities is often understood in terms of participation in the integrated development planning (IDP) process and through ward committees, however it is broader than this. It is important to recognise the existence and importance of both **“invited” and “invented” spaces of participation** at the local level. This was emphasised in the pilot workshop with Witzenberg Local Municipality.

Invited spaces are formal, structured platforms and processes created by municipalities or other institutions to facilitate community participation in governance e.g. ward committees, imbizos or IDP engagements. Invented spaces are informal, citizen-led initiatives and spaces, such as community protests or civics organisations, where citizens and communities independently organise and voice concerns outside official channels.

These spaces complement each other, with **invited spaces ensuring structured engagement around formal legislated processes, and invented spaces empowering communities to address key issues and pressing concerns**.⁷ Municipalities must ensure that they engage the “invented” spaces of communities and organisations with respect and afford them the same type of engagement as the formal participatory processes they convene.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ MirafTAB, F (2004) “Invited and Invented Spaces of Participation: Neoliberal Citizenship and Feminists’ Expanded Notion of Politics” *Wagadu* 1(Spring 2004).

3.3. SPECTRUM OF PARTICIPATION

The International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) *Spectrum of Public Participation* is widely used internationally and in South Africa,⁸ and helps to define the public's role in any public engagement process. The spectrum of participation is a scale that shows how much real power citizens have in decision-making, ranging from zero involvement (being ignored) to full empowerment (citizens themselves make the final decisions). The **spectrum of participation** is explained in the following diagram:⁹



Different kinds of issues, processes or decisions require different levels of participation. However, in South African municipalities there is often not even information-sharing or consultation occurring when these are mandated by the law. And when these are practiced, there are challenges with "the how", with communities not actually being informed, consulted or involved adequately.

COMPACT has developed another tool called the Local Government Collaboration Model which promotes **collaboration between municipal officials, councillors and the local community** around key issues facing a municipality.¹⁰ The model focuses on the "how" of collaboration in municipalities, and a facilitator's guide is available for anyone who would like to facilitate a collaborative process in a municipality.

8 SALGA (2020) Stakeholder Engagement Tool: [https://www.salga.org.za/Documents/Knowledge-products-per-theme Governance%20n%20Intergovernmental%20Relations/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Tool%20-%20EU%20Funded.pdf](https://www.salga.org.za/Documents/Knowledge-products-per-theme-Governance%20n%20Intergovernmental%20Relations/Stakeholder%20Engagement%20Tool%20-%20EU%20Funded.pdf)

9 International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) *Public Participation Pillars*: https://cdn.ymaws.com/sites/iap2.site-ym.com/resource/resmgr/files/IAP2_Federation_-_P2_Pillars.pdf

10 See <https://pari.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/COMPACT-Factsheet-6-v2.pdf>

3.4. KEY PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATION

The National Policy Framework for Public Participation sets out **nine key principles (core values) of community participation**, which should guide municipalities when undertaking public participation:¹¹

Principle	Examples of applying these principles
Inclusivity	Identifying and recognising existing social networks, structures, organisations, social clubs and institutions and use them as a vehicle for communication.
Diversity	Ensure that different interest groups including women, the disabled and youth groups are part of governance structures.
Building Community Capacity	Solicit funding from external sources to train ward committees and IDP forums on their role in development and service delivery. Embarking on citizen education on all aspects of local governance.
Transparency	Engendering trust in the community by opening council meetings and processes to the public and encouraging attendance.
Flexibility	Being flexible in terms of time, language and approaches to public meetings and processes.
Accessibility	Conducting public meetings and processes in the local languages.
Accountability	Ensuring report backs to the community forums or ward committees at least on a quarterly basis.
Trust, Commitment, and Respect	Ensuring that the purpose of the process is explained adequately, as well as how it will develop.
Integration	Integrating ward planning with the IDP, budget and performance management processes. Including user committees into mainstream services.

Municipalities can move from a compliance or ‘tick box’ approach to public participation by working with the spirit of these principles in mind and prioritising ways to operationalise them when engaging with communities and stakeholders. The COMPACT Community Participation Index has incorporated these principles into its indicators and descriptions.

11 Section 2.3 of the National Policy Framework for Public Participation

4. DEVELOPMENT AND PILOTING OF THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INDEX

4.1. DEVELOPMENT OF THE INDEX

The development of the COMPACT Community Participation Index occurred as part of an iterative process between 2022 and 2025. The index was initially supposed to be developed as a monitoring and evaluation tool for the COMPACT programme over the project period, focused on participation in the IDP process. However, after feedback from stakeholders the index was revised and the scope broadened to be used as a tool by municipalities.

The process started in 2022 with action research conducted across the 12 partner municipalities. Key themes and questions to be asked in interviews and focus groups conducted with ward councillors, officials and ward committee members.¹² Five broad themes were developed: meaningful public participation; functional, representative and responsive institutions; transparent and accessible processes and timelines; extensive participation in meetings; power in decision-making around planning and performance management; and accountability and monitoring around water and sanitation. The index dimensions and indicators were further developed taking into consideration the findings and recommendations from the action research, which were structured across six themes: IDP public participation process; ward committees; communication; operational planning; performance management; and political-administrative interface.

There are several tools that have been developed to measure governance and service delivery in municipalities in South Africa. The Governance Performance Index (GPI) is a local governance assessment tool launched in 2016 by Good Governance Africa (GGA). The index ranks municipalities in terms of five categories: administration and governance; economic development; leadership and management; planning, monitoring and evaluation; and service delivery. The aim of the index is to assess the state of local governance performance and citizen sentiment across the country. Each municipality is given a score for each category, as well as an overall score (scores given are between 1 and 5, with 5 being the best). The GPI is used to rank municipalities in terms of type of municipality, by province, and nationally.¹³ In 2020 SALGA developed the comprehensive Municipal Accountability Assessment Tool to assist councils and other key municipal accountability role players to perform their oversight and related responsibilities.¹⁴ The tool contains statutory duties/activities that have clear linkages to specific accountability measures, and the carrying out of these duties/activities are allocated to various political office bearers, officials and institutions. There is a self-evaluation key with the following options: Y = Complied with; IP = In process of ensuring compliance; P = Partially complied with; and N = Not complied with. SALGA also developed the Municipal Accountability and Consequence Framework, which identifies the duty/activity described in legislation with a specifically defined consequence for non-compliance and what the next step is if the accountability action is not implemented.¹⁵

¹² In terms of the action research, in 2022 interviews and focus groups with 373 councillors, municipal officials and ward committee members were undertaken across the 12 partner municipalities. In 2023 and 2024 citizen engagement workshops with over 200 community leaders, ward committee members and representatives from community-based organisations (CBOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) were held.

¹³ Good Governance Africa (2024) *Governance Performance Index - South Africa 2024*, p. 4.

¹⁴ SALGA (2020) *Municipal Accountability Assessment Tool*: <https://www.salga.org.za/Documents/Knowledge-products-per-theme/Governance%20n%20Intergovernmental%20Relations/SALGA%20Municipal%20Accountability%20Assessment%20Tool.pdf>

¹⁵ SALGA (2020) *Municipal Accountability and Consequence Framework*: <https://www.salga.org.za/Documents/Knowledge-products-per-theme/Governance n Intergovernmental Relations/SALGA Municipal Accountability and Consequence Framework.pdf>

The COMPACT team learned from these tools when developing the Community Participation Index. The index focuses on a specific aspect of governance and takes a holistic, multidimensional view of community participation in municipalities.

Several key questions were asked when designing the index, including:

- How detailed should the index be in terms of indicators?
- How are measurement, weighting and ranking going to take place?
- How can the index be simple to use but also account for nuance?
- What is a useful way to represent a measurement of community participation?

The index is quite comprehensive in terms of the indicators included, as well as the descriptions provided for each indicator. This was in response to the call for more guidance to be provided and to broaden the scope of the index. The indicators and descriptions are grounded in legislation and supplemented by relevant policy and guidelines. The indicators are however not exhaustive.

In contrast, a very simple measurement system was developed. The decision was made not to use different weighting for indicators but to rather assign each indicator (whether a high level or process indicator) the same weight. The aim was to keep the index simple to use but also ensure that the important issues related to community participation in municipalities were reflected and addressed. The final score is reflected out of 100 or as a percentage score, with a description of performance provided for percentage score bands. The first design of the index was workshopped internally within COMPACT and SALGA and revised following feedback.

4.2. PILOTING THE INDEX

The second version of the index was piloted with two partner municipalities: Sol Plaatje Local Municipality and Witzenberg Local Municipality. Participants in the two pilot workshops included municipal speakers, MMCs, councillors, municipal managers, directors, ward committee coordinator, and officials. COMPACT made a presentation on the index and then a discussion followed, based on hard copies of the index that were circulated. Some guiding questions included the following:

- Are the indicators relevant to the dimension they fall under?
- To what extent is the indicator clear and easy to understand?
- Does the description of the indicator accurately capture what is being measured?
- Is the identified custodian the relevant person to champion the indicator?
- Which word would you use to describe the overall tone of the index (aspirational, developmental, punitive, idealistic etc)?
- Do you think that this tool can assist municipalities beyond the COMPACT project?

WITZENBERG LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



At the Witzenberg Local Municipality pilot workshop, held in Ceres on 30 June 2025, there was a clear request for the index to **define public participation** and to **reference “invited” and “invented” spaces of participation**. The municipality also advised that the index reflect the various types of **day-to-day participation** that take place in a municipality, over and above ward committees and the IDP process. Municipal officials suggested that

the structure of the index be changed, and this led to the Public Participation, Transparency and Accountability dimension being reframed and moved to the end. The municipality also motivated for **indicators on petitions, protests, and complaints management** to be included. The importance of civic education was emphasised. Overall, the municipality stated that the index was a “great tool to monitor ourselves” and was viewed as a living document which they would share with councillors and ward committees. The municipality expressed the desire to receive the revised index and have it adopted by council so that it could be taken forward.

SOL PLAATJE LOCAL MUNICIPALITY



During the pilot workshop with Sol Plaatje Local Municipality, held on 29 July 2025 in Kimberley, participants described the index as “developmental and idealistic” but stated that it was a “good instrument to prepare for the next cohort of councillors” and as a tool to help officials. Serious **challenges with the relationship between the political and administrative arms of the municipality** were highlighted by participants, with one councillor

stating that “the administration is far from us”. In turn, officials expressed frustrations with councillors. Participants emphasised the need to include in the index **effective internal communication, coordination and collaboration around participation within the municipality**, as well as external communication. The **lack of staff capacity to simplify information and communicate with communities** was highlighted, as was the issue of transparency of information. Challenges with resources for IDP participation were mentioned by participants, as well as the dysfunctionality of ward committees. **The municipality emphasised the importance of ward committees as a component of service delivery, but explained that challenges with elections, capacity, and performance were being experienced**. One participant stated that ward committees were “apolitical but political”, with politics affecting performance and service delivery in the municipality. The need to keep up the momentum of councillors and ward committees across their five-year term of office was stated, as well as the **importance of the role of the speaker** in overseeing this.



The issues raised by the participants in the two pilot workshops were incorporated into the index as far as possible, and the dimensions and indicators revised.

Learnings from the workshops also assisted in the development of other tools in the COMPACT Toolbox, including a local government guide and pamphlet series as part of COMPACT's civic education materials.

5. INDEX DIMENSIONS, INDICATORS AND MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

This section sets out the dimensions and indicators of the COMPACT Community Participation Index and explains the measurement system that is used. It also explains the other components of the index included in the [Microsoft Excel template](#).

5.1. DIMENSIONS AND INDICATORS

The index is categorised into **six broad dimensions**. There are **50 indicators in total**, framed as legislative and normative statements.¹⁶ These indicators can be categorised as high-level indicators, process indicators and resource indicators. The description of the six dimensions and the related indicators are set out in more detail in the table below:

Dimension and Description	Indicators
<p>1. Shared Vision for Community Participation</p> <p>This dimension speaks to a municipality fostering a culture of community participation and developing a shared vision for how to include citizens in decision-making. The high-level indicators for this dimension show that the relationships between the municipality and community are strong and planning is aligned to community needs.</p>	<p>1) Culture of participation; 2) Community participation in decision-making</p>
<p>2. Budgeting and Resourcing for Participation</p> <p>This dimension refers to a municipality ensuring that sufficient resources (both financial and non-financial) are reserved to facilitate community participation in a given financial year.</p>	<p>3) Budget for participation; 4) Office of the Speaker; 5) IDP Unit; 6) Civic education; 7) Staff training on participation; 8) Ward committee stipend; 9) Ward committee resourcing; 10) Training and capacity-building for ward committees; 11) Basic services</p>
<p>3. Community Participation in Performance Management</p> <p>This dimension speaks to a municipality involving communities in the development of its performance management system and in the monitoring and review of performance and projects.</p>	<p>12) Performance management system; 13) KPIs and targets; 14) Performance monitoring; 15) Communication of performance management information</p>

¹⁶ The index is informed by several laws, regulations, policies and guidelines, including the: Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Act 108 of 1996), White Paper on Local Government (1998) Local Government: Municipal Systems Act (Act 32 of 2000), Local Government: Municipal Structures Act (Act 117 of 1998), Local Government: Municipal Services Act (Act 32 of 2000), Local Government: Municipal Planning and Performance Management Regulations (2001); National Policy Framework for Public Participation (DPLG, 2007); and Regulation of Gatherings Act (Act 205 of 1993). References for each of the indicators are provided at the end of this document.

Dimension and Description	Indicators
<p>4. Participation in the IDP Process</p> <p>This dimension speaks to participation in the IDP process and encourages a municipality to establish appropriate mechanisms, processes and procedures to facilitate meaningful participation of citizens and other stakeholders.</p>	<p>16) Process plan; 17) IDP Representative Forum; 18) Community-based planning; 19) Public meetings; 20) Advertising of IDP meetings/engagement opportunities; 21) Organisation and accessibility of meetings; 22) Purpose of meetings; 23) Attendance of community; 24) Stakeholder engagement; 25) Language; 26) Attendance of officials at meetings; 27) Quality of participation in meetings; 28) Minutes of meetings</p>
<p>5. Ward Committee Functionality</p> <p>This dimension refers to the functionality of ward committee structures and encourages municipalities to ensure ward committees are functioning well and are enhancing participatory democracy.</p>	<p>29) Establishment and functionality; 30) Representation; 31) Induction training; 32) Roles and responsibilities; 33) Identification; 34) Ward meetings; 35) Public ward meetings; 36) Role of chairperson; 37) Reporting; 38) Training and capacity-building</p>
<p>6. Public Participation, Transparency and Accountability</p> <p>This dimension refers to the various other ways in which a municipality should be undertaking public participation and fostering transparency and accountability, as a start by providing citizens and communities with timely, accessible and accurate information.</p>	<p>39) Culture of public service; 40) Political-administrative relationship; 41) Everyday participation of residents; 42) Public access to council meetings; 43) Communication of council decisions; 44) Consultation period for IDP and budget; 45) Public meetings; 46) Communication of municipal information; 47) Transparency of information; 48) Petitions; 49) Complaints management; 50) Marches and protests</p>

In the Microsoft Excel template there is a more detailed **description provided for each indicator**, which fleshes out each one and serves as a guideline. The drop-down column for scoring is complemented by a **space for narrative, qualitative information** to be provided for each indicator, where notes and comments on progress, opportunities and challenges can be recorded. There is also a column for the municipal **custodian for each indicator**, as well as a column where **support needs** to fully realise each indicator can be identified. SALGA provincial officials felt that the latter would be useful for municipalities as well as for SALGA and provincial departments to identify what support and training is required in terms of each indicator. The screenshot on the following page shows the first section of the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

COMPACT Community Participation Index

The purpose of the COMPACT Community Participation Index is to contribute to measuring and monitoring community participation in planning in municipalities. The index should be viewed as a developmental, capacity-building tool and a checklist or reference guide of what municipalities should be doing in terms of community participation.

There is a dropdown column for a score and space for more qualitative information (comments or notes) to be provided for each indicator, as well as columns for the custodian of each indicator and to highlight any support required.

The Community Participation Index is categorised into six dimensions:

- 1) **Shared Vision for Community Participation**
- 2) **Budgeting and Resourcing for Participation**
- 3) **Community Participation in Performance Management**
- 4) **Participation in the IDP Process**
- 5) **Ward Committee Functionality**
- 6) **Public Participation, Transparency and Accountability**

There are 50 indicators in total, framed as legislative and normative statements. A simple measurement system for each indicator is used. There are 3 possible rankings for each indicator (Low, Medium and High), each with a different score allocated (0 points, 1 point and 2 points respectively). These are in turn colour coded as red, yellow and green:

Low (0): The indicator has not been met at all, or has been met in very few respects, and considerable work is still required by the municipality to meet the indicator fully.

Medium (1): The indicator has been met in some respects, but more work is required by the municipality to meet the indicator fully.

High (2): The indicator has been fully met or is close to being met fully if the municipality stays on the correct path.

The scores for each indicator are then added up a final score out of 100 for the municipality is reached, which is also reflected as a percentage score.

Municipality:

Name:

Position:

Date:

Dimension	No.	Indicator	Description	Custodian	Value Dropdown	Support Required	Comments/Notes
1. Shared Vision for Community Participation	1.	Culture of participation: There is a culture of participation in the municipality , which is cultivated at all levels, including within council and the administration. Community participation is valued by the municipality and communities and organisations are encouraged and assisted to participate in the affairs of the municipality.	There is a culture of municipal governance that complements formal representative government with a system of participatory governance. The municipality engages with communities between elections. This includes regular public meetings as well as consultative sessions with community organisations, NGOs and, where appropriate, traditional authorities.	Mayor Speaker Municipal Manager	0		
	2.	Community participation in decision-making: Community participation is meaningful and contributes to decision-making processes in the municipality. Community inputs from IDP participation processes inform decision-making around planning, budgeting and performance management in the municipality.	Community participation is not done just for compliance purposes, but to have an impact on decision-making (in terms of planning, budgeting and monitoring) in the municipality. The municipality takes inputs by community members and organisations seriously and these inputs are synthesised and analysed to inform decision-making around planning and performance management in the municipality.	Municipal Manager IDP Office	0		
	3.	Budget: Adequate budget is allocated each year to encourage and facilitate public participation within the municipality.	The municipality allocates sufficient budget to ensure maximum participation of communities and CSOs in planning, budgeting, and performance management in all wards.	CFO	0		
	4.	Office of the Speaker: The Office of the Speaker is capacitated and resourced to be the custodian of public participation in the municipality, and the Public Participation Unit is established and functional.	The Office of the Speaker has adequate staff, capacity and resources to facilitate public participation and ensure functional ward committees. The Public Participation Unit within the Office of the Speaker is properly resourced with a manager and sufficient officers, and each year a Public Participation Plan is developed. The Office of the Speaker works well with the administration to undertake participation.	Office of the Speaker	0		



5.2. MEASUREMENT SYSTEM

The COMPACT Community Participation Index uses a simple measurement system for each indicator. There are **three possible rankings for each indicator (Low, Medium and High)**, each with a different score allocated (0 points, 1 point and 2 points). These are in turn colour coded as red, yellow and green:

Low (0)	The indicator has not been met at all , or has been met in very few respects , and considerable work is still required by the municipality to meet the indicator fully.
Medium (1)	The indicator has been met in some respects , but more work is required by the municipality to meet the indicator fully.
High (2)	The indicator has been fully met or is close to being met fully if the municipality stays on the correct path.

There is a drop-down column for scoring each indicator, and one of the three options can be elected. The wording of the description has been designed so that municipalities can make a realistic assessment of their performance across the indicators. The idea is for the scoring to be quite intuitive, although any disagreements or debates around the ranking would surface key issues/challenges, and be positive to collectively discuss in the municipality.

The scores for each indicator are then automatically added up and a **final score out of 100** for the municipality is reached, which can also be reflected as a **percentage score**. The following provides some indication of performance of a municipality in terms of **percentage score bands**:

0-25%	Very poor levels of community participation in municipal planning
25-50%	Poor to average levels of community participation in municipal planning
50-75%	Average to good levels of community participation in municipal planning
75-100%	Very good to excellent levels of community participation in municipal planning

The total score of each municipality can be tracked over each year, with an aim to improve the score for each indicator as well as the overall score.

The collective process of self-assessment and solution-finding across the municipality, together with stakeholders, is as important as the scores and the index should not be viewed as merely a compliance exercise.

6. OPERATIONALISING THE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INDEX

The usefulness of the Community Participation Index is dependent on how it is operationalised and embedded within municipalities. The first step to do this would be to present the index to the municipal council and get approval to implement. In terms of the institutional arrangements, it is suggested that the process be **facilitated and managed by the Public Participation Unit in the Office of the Speaker and/or the IDP Office**. The municipality would decide the most appropriate and effective champion based on the municipal context. Either way it is recommended that both offices work together closely to play a coordination role around the index within the municipality. The completion of the index is a process of **self-assessment by the municipality** which could happen **before the new financial year begins in July**.

The index has been designed to be **reviewed annually** and **improvements or challenges noted**. The **results would comprise a plan of action for the municipality** going forward. The aim is for the municipality to address systemic and operational issues over time and improve the indicators and overall score. One way to operationalise the index is for different dimensions and/or indicators of the index be allocated to and populated by different municipal stakeholders or delegated officials. The suggested **custodian for each indicator** is included in a column in the index. These include the following: Mayor, Speaker, Municipal Manager, CFO, Office of the Speaker, IDP Office, Directors/Senior Management, Performance Management Unit, and the Communications Unit.

After the first round of population by the custodians (which should be done based on honest reflection by the individual or team), the index would be consolidated by the Office of the Speaker and/or the IDP Office. A roundtable meeting between the Office of the Speaker, IDP Office and the other relevant units/departments would then be convened to discuss the results. The index would ideally be **shared with ward councillors and ward committees** when it is being populated or to provide feedback on the index. Municipalities could **engage key stakeholders, including community leaders and CBOs/CSOs**, in providing feedback and monitoring the index each year. The more inclusive the process the better.

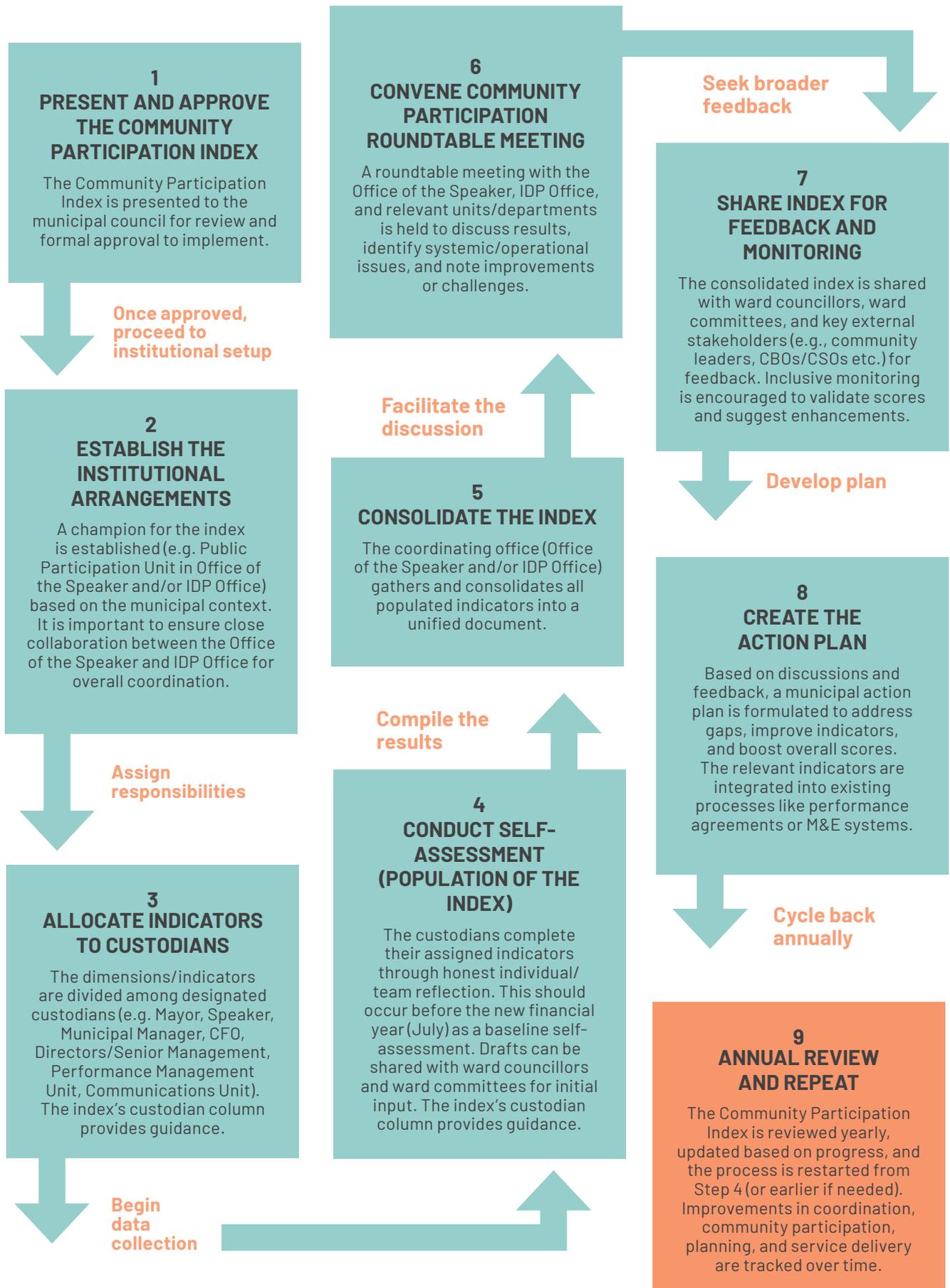
The aim is for the index to be used as a tool to **improve coordination and collaboration around community participation, planning and service delivery**. The index does not replace other structures or processes (e.g. the municipal performance management system, IDP participation process, Ward Committee Forums) rather is meant to enhance these. Where relevant, the indicators can also be drawn into other processes undertaken by the municipality e.g. performance agreements or monitoring and evaluation (M&E) processes.

6.1. COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION INDEX PROTOCOL

A protocol has been developed which outlines a suggested step-by-step process for operationalising the Community Participation Index in a municipality. It emphasises self-assessment, collaboration, and inclusivity to enhance community participation without replacing existing structures like IDP processes or ward committees. The process is designed to be annual, starting before the July financial year, and aims to build an action plan for ongoing improvements. The **key principles** underlying the process are:

- **Self-assessment:** Honest reflection by municipal stakeholders.
- **Coordination:** Led by the Office of the Speaker's Public Participation Unit and/or IDP Office.
- **Inclusivity:** Involving ward councillors, committees, and external stakeholders (e.g. community leaders, CBOs/CSOs) where possible.
- **Integration:** Linking indicators to performance agreements, M&E and other municipal processes.

The following **flowchart** can help to guide the implementation of the COMPACT Community Participation Index in a municipality:



7. CONCLUSION

Community participation is an important component of municipal planning, budgeting and oversight in local government in South Africa. This case study has provided information on the development and piloting of the COMPACT Community Participation Index. The overall purpose of the index is to improve community participation and to deepen democracy in local municipalities. The index gives a measure of the levels of community participation in planning and oversight in a municipality and has 50 indicators categorised across broad six dimensions: 1) shared vision for community participation; 2) budgeting and resourcing for participation; 3) community participation in performance management; 4) participation in the IDP process; 5) ward committee functionality; and 6) public participation, transparency and accountability. There is a simple measurement and scoring system that municipalities are encouraged to undertake collectively on an annual basis. A protocol has been developed to guide the implementation of the index in a municipality. The index has the potential to be an important monitoring and evaluation tool to help municipalities better undertake community participation over time. COMPACT is keen to learn from municipalities how they are using the index, and for good practice to be shared across municipalities in the country.



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