



# INSTITUTIONALISING CITIZEN-BASED MONITORING (CBM) IN SOUTH AFRICAN LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES

A Guide



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Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM) is a proven social accountability approach implemented in over 20 countries to date. It involves citizens monitoring local government projects and services and collaboratively working with local government to find solutions on identified areas of concern.

As part of the COMPACT programme, Integrity Action, Public Affairs Research Institute (PARI) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA) developed an approach to CBM for South African municipalities, which was piloted in Kouga and Oudtshoorn Local Municipalities. For more details on COMPACT and the CBM pilot, please visit the [COMPACT website](#) and the CBM case study.

This document provides steps on how to take up and implement CBM in your municipality, along with guidance for how to institutionalise the approach within the municipality for long-term sustainability.



## A. OVERVIEW OF THE CITIZEN-BASED MONITORING (CBM) APPROACH

In the CBM approach, selected ward committee members and/or interested community members are nominated through a process to track the performance of government-funded projects and services. This can include gathering feedback on the projects from the wider community. Monitoring data is shared with the municipal officials responsible and accountable for these projects, and is also shared with the wider community.

If problems are found on the projects, the monitors raise them with the relevant municipal stakeholders through an agreed reporting protocol. They then discuss the issues with the responsible authorities in collaborative fora, to agree on possible solutions. Solutions are implemented by the responsible authorities and recorded through the ongoing ward committee monitoring process.

## B. BENEFITS OF IMPLEMENTING CBM

Citizens have a constitutional right to ensure that government projects are delivered on time and to budget, and that government provides the services promised (1996 Constitution, 1998 White Paper on Local Government, 2000 Municipal Systems Act).

Citizen-based monitoring (CBM) offers a new way for communities to engage with local government in its planning and service delivery at the local level, thereby enhancing public participation and local government accountability.

CBM brings **benefits to communities** – strengthening their voice in local government delivery and their understanding of local projects.

It also brings **benefits to municipalities** – monitoring provides local government with data and feedback from the perspective of local communities, which can be used to strengthen project and service delivery. Citizen monitoring can identify issues before they escalate, allowing for timely interventions and more resilient project delivery. CBM also helps government to enhance public participation in their processes.

By bringing awareness and information to citizens on the progress of projects, CBM can potentially reduce the opportunities for disruptions or protests of infrastructure projects.

Overall, CBM can lead to the delivery of better projects and **strengthened trust between communities and local governments, benefitting all.**

## C. LIST OF REQUIREMENTS

CBM is designed to be an accessible, low-cost approach that makes use of existing roles, meetings and processes rather than introducing new ones. This means that very few additional resources are required for municipalities to take up the approach.

Here are the resources required to implement CBM (more information found in the steps in the next section):

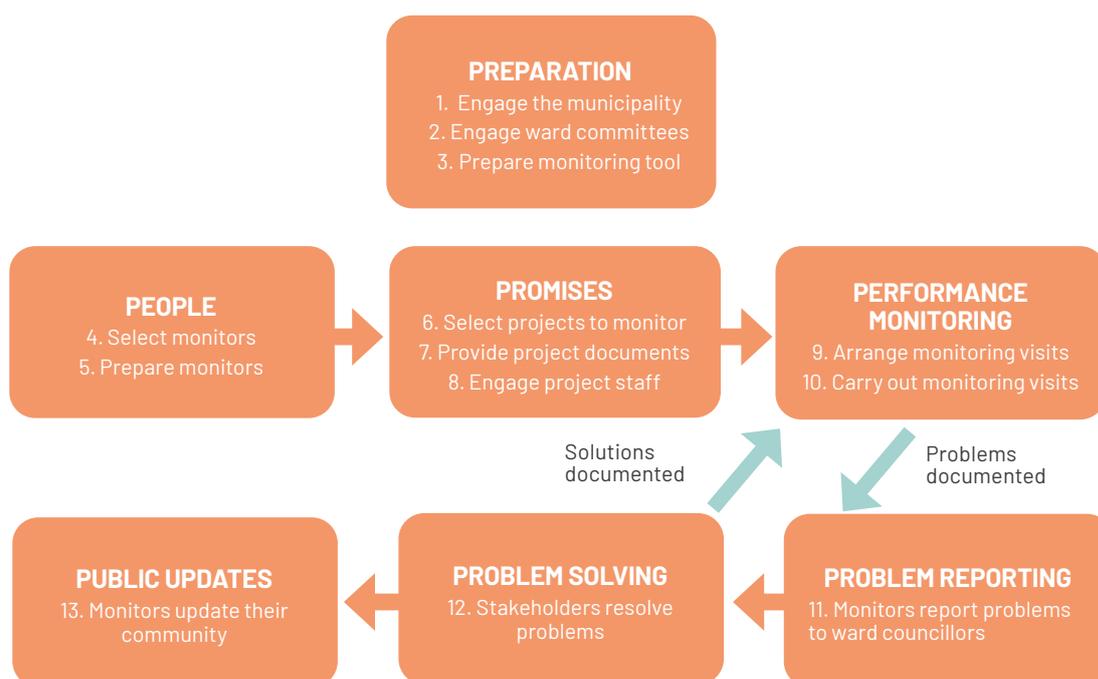
**Staff members to champion approach** – at least one staff member from the Public Participation Unit (PPU) and also one staff member from the Project Management Unit (PMU) to lead and champion the approach. We recommend that this is made a part of this staff member’s role and handed over to another when they leave their position.

**Ward committee members to carry out monitoring role** – see Step 4 below. Committed ward committee members will be needed to carry out the role of monitor. We highly recommend that ward committee stipends are increased for those who take on the monitoring role, to incentivise and reward them for taking on this extra responsibility and time commitment.

**Tool to record problems** – Municipalities will have to establish some kind of monitoring tool for monitors to collect and document the monitoring data, and in particular document problems found on projects. This could either be the online tool Kobo, or an offline form or spreadsheet. See Step 3 below for a guide to this. Municipalities should consider what record-keeping works for them. These are both free tools and so there is no additional cost to the municipalities.

**Regular meetings to discuss project progress** – When monitors identify issues and areas for improvement on projects, they will need a forum to discuss these with project stakeholders. We recommend using existing meetings, such as ward committee meetings (with ward councillors), Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings, councillor meetings and municipal management meetings.

## D. STEPS TO SETTING UP AND IMPLEMENTING CBM IN YOUR MUNICIPALITY



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## 1. ENGAGE THE MUNICIPALITY

When establishing CBM, it is important that the Public Participation Unit (PPU), the Project Management Unit (PMU) and the Speaker of the Council are all engaged and supportive of the approach. We recommend embedding CBM within the PPU, with collaboration with the PMU. A proposal may need to be prepared for Council consideration.

It is important to ensure that there are municipal staff members who will champion the approach and be responsible for overseeing it. There should be at least one champion from the PPU and one staff member from the PMU. Champions can be selected through a process of self-nomination and approval by peers. The municipal champions should familiarise themselves with this guide document and the [Monitor's Handbook](#).

We recommend adding the role of championing CBM into the staff members' job descriptions and including a handover of the role if those staff members leave.

Ward councillors should also be informed about the CBM process and the role that they can play to support it. The PPU and PMU champion can work closely with the ward councillors when establishing the CBM process in each ward.

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## 2. ENGAGE WARD COMMITTEES

CBM fits well within the role of ward committee members, as they are representative of their communities and have an existing role communicating with ward councillors.

The second step of establishing the CBM is for municipal champions to engage the ward committees and gather their interest in participating. This includes giving an overview of the benefits and process of CBM as explained in this guide. Ward committees should be engaged to own and lead the approach, with support from the municipality.

We recommend that CBM is officially made a part of the ward committee's roles and responsibilities, institutionalising the role of monitor within the role of the ward committee. Monitoring responsibilities should be added to the manual and guidance provided to ward committees. Feedback from the COMPACT CBM pilot indicates that increasing the stipend for ward committee members who act as CBM monitors would greatly help to incentivise and support monitors in their role.

The role of monitoring can also be carried out by community members who are not part of the ward committee. They would need to receive stipends and would need additional support from the municipality to access meetings. There would also need to be a process in place for ensuring that the role is handed over, to embed the role within the community.

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## 3. PREPARE MONITORING TOOL

To prepare for the monitoring process, the municipal champions will need to prepare the monitoring tool that monitors will use to assess the projects and record monitoring data. This is a form, which can be filled out either online, offline or on paper, which presents a series of questions about the projects that will be monitored.

An example list of monitoring questions is available [here](#), which municipal champions can use or adapt to the projects in their municipality. We recommend keeping the questions the same for each project, for consistency and simplicity, and so that data can be compiled and compared more easily.

The intention of the monitoring questions is to provide a community perspective to the delivery of projects, complementing existing monitoring and evaluation processes.

Which tool the monitors use to fill out the form can be tailored to context – each municipality can select the option that would work best for them.

### **Option 1 – offline paper form**

Monitors can fill out a paper version of the form and take these records along to meetings to inform stakeholders of monitoring progress and any issues identified. This is the simplest and most accessible option.

We recommend also compiling the data on a platform that can easily be shared or viewed by others. For example, tracking the projects on an Excel spreadsheet or community noticeboard.

### **Option 2 – online form**

If your municipality is interested in exploring the use of an app, a good option is Kobo Toolbox, which is free to use. Collecting the data through an app can help to aggregate and review the data more easily, and can also make it easier to share the data with stakeholders.

Municipal champions can create a monitoring form (made up of the questions shared above) on the [Kobo website](#) and monitors can use the Kobo Collect app to record their responses (the app can be downloaded from the Google Store on Android smartphones, or monitors can fill out the form on their browser). [This video](#) can be viewed to learn about how to set up a monitoring form on Kobo.

If the data is collected through an app, then there needs to be someone responsible for managing and reviewing the data, and ensuring that it is shared with monitors. The PPU champion could play this role.

As well as using the monitoring questions, monitors in the CBM pilot found it useful to keep a general project report document to share with the councillor. You can find this document [here](#).

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## **4. SELECT MONITORS**

A selection of ward committee members can then be selected as monitors. Your municipality could work towards having 2 monitors per ward. If the municipality has future projects in mind that could be monitored (see Step 6), then the project locations could guide the decision on which wards to start with. We recommend having 2 monitors per project.

Monitor selection can be done through a combined process of self-nomination and election. Interested ward committee members can nominate themselves and an election held at either a ward committee or community meeting, to select the monitors.

For selecting monitors, we recommend that:

- The selection rules, process and criteria are credible, transparent and fair
- Monitors are representative of different sections of the community, representing diversity of gender, age, race and background
- A complaints mechanism is devised so that people can feedback on the selection process if they are not satisfied with it
- The community is aware of what is happening and supports the efforts.

If a monitor drops out or the number of monitored projects increases, the ward committees should select a new monitor using the monitor selection guidance above.

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## 5. PREPARE MONITORS

Once selected, monitors will need to be equipped with the tools and knowledge for monitoring. Municipalities can provide monitors with this guide and the [Monitor's Handbook](#) (also available in [Afrikaans](#) and [isiXhosa](#)), which provides monitors with information about how to carry out CBM.

### *Training*

Municipalities should use the Monitor's Handbook to train and prepare monitors. If there are no resources for a separate training session, existing ward committee meetings can be used for this purpose.

Training should cover an overview of the CBM approach, what to look for on projects, how to document monitoring, and how to report project issues to the municipality. The content from the Handbook can be adapted to context – for example, the Handbook includes training on Kobo Toolbox, but this can be replaced with practicing to use an alternative data collection tool (see Step 3). A municipal engineer should attend the meeting to talk through what to look for on projects.

### *Establishing a process for problem resolution*

During the training sessions, we recommend carrying out the stakeholder mapping exercise that can be found in the Monitor's Handbook to map out the key stakeholders related to the type of municipal-funded projects that will be monitored. The municipal champions and monitors should discuss the best process within your municipality for reporting problems on projects, and who to engage to ensure that problems are resolved.

### *Support and handover*

We recommend setting up a WhatsApp group that includes the municipal champions and all monitors, to arrange monitoring visits and provide ongoing support to monitors. Frequent communication between the municipal champions and monitors is recommended to sustain momentum and interest in CBM.

If monitors choose to move on from their role as a monitor, they should pass on the training to the new monitor, with the support of the municipal champions. The training and handbook can also be included within any other capacity building sessions and/or materials provided to ward committee members.

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## 6. SELECT PROJECTS TO MONITOR

Government-funded projects should be selected to be monitored from the Integrated Development Plan (IDP). We recommend that monitoring is planned to begin as soon as possible after the selection and training of monitors in order to keep momentum and engagement, and so this step can happen alongside the earlier steps.

The COMPACT pilot focused on water projects, but projects of any sector can be selected.

We recommend that the following criteria is used for selecting projects:

- Projects that are at the **planning stage or at the beginning of implementation**. Ideally monitors are introduced at the beginning of projects, so that they can have more engagement and influence. If many projects are stalled, monitors can still monitor these projects by noting the delays and engaging with project stakeholders to resolve this.
- Projects that are **located close to monitors**, to make it easy and low cost for monitors to visit. This will also mean that the projects are more likely to affect the monitors and their community in their ward.
- Projects that will have an **impact on the local community** – monitors will be more incentivised to monitor projects that will affect the lives of them and their community.
- Projects that are **not too large in budget or size**, as very large projects are less practical for monitors to visit and to engage with. We recommend that you look for projects that have a budget between R100,000 – R5,000,000. Monitoring a project with a budget exceeding R5,000,000 is much more challenging, but the size of project you select will depend on what is available within your municipality.

We recommend that where possible, the terms of reference for these projects should indicate that there will be community monitors monitoring implementation. This helps to institutionalise the monitoring process, ensuring that project staff are prepared.

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## 7. PROVIDE PROJECT DOCUMENTS

Once projects have been selected, it is important that the PMU then shares the project documents for each project (e.g. contract, budget, Bill of Quantities) with the monitors, so that they know the project plans and can use this to engage with the project and monitor its implementation.

Under the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), the Information Officer (delegated by the Municipal Manager) is responsible for ensuring that project documents are available to the public. The PMU can liaise with the Information Officer to access the project documents and provide these to the monitors.

We recommend that monitors are included in the project inception meeting and all Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings, so that they understand project specifications.

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## 8. ENGAGE PROJECT STAFF

Once projects have been selected, all staff working on those projects need to be made aware of the monitoring process. This includes the contractors – the site manager should be engaged and communicate the process to all construction workers. The benefits of monitoring should be communicated to gain their buy-in and support.

This also includes the municipal team responsible for overseeing project implementation – the Consulting Engineer, Resident Engineer, the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and the Community Liaison Officer (CLO).

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## 9. ARRANGE MONITORING VISITS

Before starting monitoring, the municipal champions will need to review the questions of the monitoring form (see Step 3) to check that these questions are still suitable for the types of projects selected, and update any if necessary, following the same question format.

Once the monitors are prepared and the monitoring tool is ready, monitoring can begin. Before each visit, a date and time for the monitoring visit needs to be agreed with the contractors working on the site and communicated with the monitors. We recommend that monitoring visits are carried out at least once per month.

For monitoring visits on construction sites, monitors need to be equipped with suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and briefed on safety procedures.

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## 10. CARRY OUT MONITORING VISITS

Monitors will then visit the sites and look at what has been implemented, comparing this to the plans on the project documents. Monitors should fill out the monitoring form (see Step 3) based on their observations. Whether this data is collected through an app or an offline form, the responses will be the same.

**Monitors will identify if there are problems with project implementation** through answering the questions. For example, the monitoring form asks whether there are any problems with the quality of resources being used, and monitors' responses will flag if there are any problems.

The problems should be documented so that they can be shared. The municipal champions and monitors should all review the responses and make note of the problems that have been identified.

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## 11. MONITORS REPORT PROBLEMS

**Monitors should then take problems identified to their ward councillors, and the appropriate members of staff from the municipality.**

This can be done through existing meetings between ward committees and ward councillors – CBM should be included as a regular agenda item for discussion of project progress and problems. The monitoring data/reports can also be shared with ward councillors.

In these meetings it should be decided who is responsible for resolving each problem. Monitors can carry out a stakeholder mapping exercise (see the Monitor's Handbook) to consider the different stakeholders and relationships. The person responsible for resolving the issue should be consulted through the appropriate protocol – this may be done by the ward councillor or through Project Steering Committee meetings. For each problem, it is important that the municipal champions and monitors develop a clear understanding of who the issue should be reported to and how they will be consulted.

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## 12. STAKEHOLDERS RESOLVE PROBLEMS

After a problem is reported, it is important to close the loop by ensuring that there is a resolution to the problem. There should be continuous discussion of the problem at relevant meetings, which should be identified through the stakeholder mapping exercise.

Through continuous monitoring of the project, monitors can check whether the problems have been resolved, and record this through the monitoring form. If problems remain unresolved, monitors should continue to follow up with the ward councillor and those responsible.

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### 13. MONITORS UPDATE THEIR COMMUNITY

Throughout the monitoring process, monitors should keep their community updated on project progress. Ward committees should already have in place regular meetings with ward residents, and if not are encouraged to arrange these meetings. Ward committees can use these meetings to engage and update the community.

Ward councillors should also update the ward residents on project progress. This ensures that citizens are kept informed and engaged on projects and services that affect them.

### E. CONCLUSION

Citizen-Based Monitoring (CBM) offers municipalities a practical, low-cost, and effective way to strengthen public participation and improve the quality of project delivery.

Through the CBM approach, municipalities can equip citizen monitors to monitor projects, identify issues, and collaborate with municipal staff to resolve them. CBM enables the systemic collection of community-based evidence that complements existing administrative monitoring data. This is a mutually beneficial process that helps to strengthen municipal project performance through identifying areas for improvement, supporting timely management responses and learning, while also ensuring that communities are informed and involved in the projects that affect them.

To sustain the CBM approach, municipalities should embed it within existing processes, roles and municipal documentation. We recommend that the CBM approach is championed by the Public Participation Unit (PPU) and Project Management Unit (PMU) and is owned and led by citizen monitors. Ward committee members and ward councillors are crucial parts of the process.

By following the steps outlined in this guide, municipalities can set up CBM in a way that works for them, supporting municipal government to be more accountable, effective and trusted.



• 2 permanent  
• 3 casuals  
• computer  
• generator  
• grinding

Plate computers, generators & cables for last  
Andre - Appoint 2 general workers with maintenance program  
Milo - Name 10 EMP workers' names  
Levie - Summary of whiteboard

System 1 - 2024

Task K1	Task K2	Task K3	Task K4
1x work	1x work	1x work	1x work
2x EMP	1x EMP	2x EMP	1x EMP
1x EMP	2x EMP	1x EMP	1x EMP

Stomwater team + structure list  
- Appoint 2 general workers (20)  
- EMP - 10



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