



THE COUNCILLOR

AS

OVERSEER



Handbook 9

Training for Elected Leadership
Istanbul, 1996 - "THE CITY SUMMIT"

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FOREWORD

As shown by results of training needs assessments conducted by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), training needs of local government elected officials (councillors), or of local politicians, appear among the most urgent world-wide and, at the same time, the least attended areas of capacity-building for local development and municipal management.

In the last few years, a number of countries as varied as Nepal and Poland or Uganda and Paraguay have embarked for the first time in several decades, and in some cases for the first time ever, on a process of electing their councillors and mayors. Training needs of local-government elected officials are also at the top of the agenda in established municipal democracies such as Ecuador, India, and the United States of America.

To respond to these needs, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has developed and tested a series of training handbooks to assist councillors to represent the citizens, provide civic leadership and effectively work with central government and with the management, technical, and professional staff in local authorities and other local institutions. The handbooks cover policy and decision-making, communication, negotiation and leadership, attending, managing and conducting meetings, councillors' enabling and facilitating activities, financial management and other related needs.

This handbook, *The Councillor as Overseer*, is one of the series of 12 and is intended for use primarily by trainers in national training institutions for local government or training units within local governments themselves. As an additional assistance for trainers using these handbooks, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has published a companion *Trainer's Guide for Training of Elected Officials* containing trainer's notes and information prepared exclusively for the benefit of these trainers in planning workshops for local elected officials based on the handbooks.

It's expected that this training handbook will contribute greatly to strengthening the capacity of local governments through the introduction of good leadership practices, one of the major objectives of the 1996 United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, Habitat II.

I wish to thank Dr. Fred Fisher and Mr. David W. Tees for preparing this and other handbooks in the series in collaboration with the staff of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Training Section within the Centre's training programmes supported by the Government of the Netherlands. I also wish to acknowledge the contribution of the trainers and local-government officials in Costa Rica, El Salvador, Kenya, Lithuania, Romania and Uganda who assisted in the field testing of these training materials.

Dr. Wally N'Dow
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United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)



Traditional Kafiya worn by Arab men

ABOUT THE HAT

The hat worn by the figure to the right and shown on the pages to come was selected to symbolize the councillor role featured in this handbook.

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HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK

This training handbook on THE COUNCILLORAS OVERSEER, like other handbooks in the series, can be used in several ways.

Self-study

The essay that opens this handbook is intended for self-instruction. All you need is a quiet place to think, some time, and something to write with. For best results, we encourage you to write down your answers to the questions raised from time to time in the essay. The learning value of the information is multiplied many times for the reader who takes the time to do this.

Work shop training

The trainer's notes and exercise materials in this handbook are intended for use by experienced trainers in a training workshop for councillors from different local governments. We have included various types of learning activities and formats to provide trainers with considerable flexibility in adapting a workshop to the specific needs of participating councillors. It has been our intention in developing this handbook to encourage you to incorporate your own experiences as a trainer to heighten the learning value of these training materials for participating councillors.

As a trainer, you may decide to use the materials in the handbook in the exact order and manner presented. If you prefer, however, you may rearrange or modify the materials as needed to meet the objectives of a particular training situation. You may choose to offer three hours of training by using key exercises and activities included in the handbook. Or you may take advantage of the many materials in the handbook supplemented by content of your own to extend the length of the programme to a full day.

This handbook is one of 12 in a series for training in elected leadership. You might decide or be requested to provide a workshop that requires you to use more than one or all of these handbooks over a longer period of time. While each handbook can be used independently of the others, their use in sequence can provide a powerful, unified learning experience for participating councillors.

Team training

These materials also can be used, preferably with the assistance of an experienced trainer/facilitator, to improve the performance of councillors who serve together on the same governing body. When training councillors who serve together, we believe the facilitator must be prepared to organize the training activities in this handbook in different ways. There may be occasions where you, as facilitator, will choose to add new activities depending on the situation and the characteristics of the group. We hope in situations like these you will view this handbook as a "tool kit" containing many optional training ideas to be mixed and matched, modified or abandoned, as suggested by the situation.

You have many options to choose from with these training handbooks. We hope you take full advantage of them.

PART I

ESSAY

The Councillor as Financier

Definition

The councillor, in the role of OVERSEER, ensures that the council and staff are doing the right things and doing things right through such activities as monitoring and evaluating policies, programmes, and services. ⁽¹⁾

Summary

We'll look at the role of the councillor as overseer of policy making and implementation from the perspectives of efficiency and effectiveness. We will also explore why this role is so difficult to fulfill.

Reflection

When I think of myself as an overseer of council and local government decisions and activities, the following things come to mind:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Concepts and ideas

Being an overseer of one's own behaviour as a councillor and assessing the staff 's efforts to implement council's directives is probably not your favorite responsibility as an elected official. It is much more interesting to make policy and to initiate programmes and services than tracking them to see if they are being implemented as planned and adopted. In addition to being a less attractive part of your job as councillor, the overseer role is fraught with some problems. These need to be examined in an effort to help you perform this responsibility with efficiency and effectiveness.

First, the overseer role often falls to one or two councillors who either have a background that gives them some expertise (such as an accountant or personnel officer) or someone who wants to get involved in the day-to-day operations of the local government. This responsibility is too important to be left either to a small group of "experts" or to those who want to supervise street level activities. It needs to be embraced by all councillors.

Secondly, there is a tendency on the part of many councillors to view the overseer duty as an opportunity to get involved in the day-to-day operations of the local government staff. Unless your city is so small that it cannot afford competent managers and elected officials are expected to supervise day to day operations, it is better not to get too deeply involved in administration. It can undermine the authority of your management team and de-motivate, if not demoralize, those responsible for implementation.

Thirdly, being an objective "overseer" is difficult, if not impossible, if you don't have benchmarks against which to judge performance. Objectivity also diminishes whenever council members get involved in the implementation process.

Lastly, council must make a commitment to this overseer role and be prepared to spend the time and energy it will take if it is to have any meaning or impact on council's performance or the performance of the organization.

General bench marks and targets

The overseer role can be summarized as assessing whether or not the local government is operating effectively and efficiently. This definition is both simple and complex. Simple because these are terms we have heard ever since we have had any role or experience in organized settings. Complex because they cut across everything the council and local government does. The terms "efficiency" and "effectiveness" are most often associated with private-sector organizations, but they have equal significance as ways to look at public institutions.

Peter Drucker, that venerable world resource on the practice of management, defines "effectiveness" as doing the right things and "efficiency" as doing things right. ⁽²⁾ In simplistic terms we could say that effectiveness is the elected leader's primary responsibility whereas efficiency is primarily the role of the local-government officers and employees. The problem with this easy dichotomy is the fact that a council also needs to look at how it does "the right things," and the management team must also be concerned with whether it is doing what it should be doing as well as whether it is doing these things right.

Councillors, in determining whether they are doing the right things, might want to review all the city's programmes and services from two perspectives: (a) Is this particular service or programme still needed by the community? and (b) If it is still needed, should the city be the producer or should someone else be producing it? One could say, we suppose, that this latter question really gets into the realm of "doing things right." But, the council also must decide whether it is right to be doing it at all. On the other hand, if the council decides that it should not be performing the service directly (for example, solid-waste collection) but rather contracting it out to the private sector, the council still has a vital role to play in service implementation according to community standards. Rather confusing, isn't it?

Just to confuse the discussion a bit more, let's look at what Osborne and Gaebler, the authors of *Reinventing Government*, have to say about these terms. They say " efficiency is a measure of how much each unit of output costs; whereas,

effectiveness is a measure of the quality of that output (how well it achieved the desired outcome)." ⁽³⁾ These authors seem to beg the question of "doing the right things" that Drucker says is the essence of effectiveness. But the authors who are proposing ways to re-invent government cover this by use of the terms "outputs" and outcomes".

Osborne and Gaebler say "there is a vast difference between measuring process and measuring results." But what does this have to do with outputs and outcomes? Well, according to them, everything! Outputs, they say, don't produce outcomes. If, for example, your community's vocational school is graduating 50 students a year in irrigation-pump maintenance, but there are no jobs available as irrigation pump mechanics, how good is the programme? Or, in Drucker's terms, is the school doing the right thing? The school's output is impressive but the outcomes are nil since these new graduates are unable to get jobs in the trade for which they were trained. It's a case of doing something well that doesn't need to be done at all.

We find ourselves somewhat at odds with the definitions of Osborne and Gaebler. For example, in the situation just noted, the school superintendent could argue that he was successful in meeting both criteria. That is, (a) he came under the projected costs of producing an irrigation pump maintenance graduate and (b) the quality of the graduates meet industry standards (they can perform all the tasks expected as a result of this type of educational programme). The authors would, no doubt, counter-argue that the superintendent was not successful in terms of effectiveness because his graduates are not working in positions that use their skills.

You can begin to see the dilemma in attempts to be too precise about the particulars of the overseer's responsibilities. To return to the school superintendent for a moment, how can he be held accountable for the job environment? Isn't that someone else's job? And yet, if he and his staff were carrying out a strategic planning process efficiently (doing planning and forecasting right) which is also effective (because planning and forecasting are the right things to do as managers), they should. have known there was no demand for their product. In this case, they could have retooled their operations to train other kinds of technicians (e.g., sewer plant operators) based on a demonstrated need.

Overseeing policy development

The closer you get to the performance of specific tasks, the easier the overseer role becomes. Unfortunately, your councillor role as overseer is not to scrutinize specific tasks, although the temptation is always great to tell the street crew it doesn't know how to fix a pothole, particularly the one at the end of your driveway. As a member of the elected leadership body of the community, you need to resist these kinds of temptations and focus your overseer attention at higher levels of community concern.

The highest level of scrutiny you need to exercise will not be defined in any legal document outlining the legislative boundaries of your role as councillor. Rather, it has more to do with your ability to do the right things beyond the legal dictates of the job. When Drucker was referring to effectiveness, we are confident that he was not confining his remarks to the legal parameters of the council's role. He says "effectiveness is the foundation of success - efficiency is a minimum condition for survival after success has been achieved."

In most situations you will be faced with overseeing the effectiveness of both policies and programmes. Policy effectiveness is much more difficult to assess because it is concerned, in part, with whether you have made the right choices between competing demands for scarce resources. For example, would it have been more effective to have allocated funds for a new elementary school, to repave five streets, or to initiate a new pre-natal training programme? Obviously, the effectiveness of these kinds of decisions is highly subjective. Nevertheless, you and your colleagues must go beyond subjectivity to make these kinds of decisions.

Several factors enter into the picture at this point:

- Is there a demonstrated need for the programme and service you are considering?
- Is it feasible to do anything that will make a difference?
- Who else could do it as well or better?

After you have satisfied these kinds of inquiries and the policy is enacted, the overseer role becomes one of monitoring and evaluating efforts to implement it:

- Is the programme or service meeting the need you thought it would when you initiated it?
- How well is the need being met?
- Did you misjudge the magnitude of the task and your ability to make a difference (the feasibility trap)?
- Can and should the programme or service be produced by someone else, subject to your continued overseeing?

The ideal time to undertake these kinds of policy assessments is during budget deliberations. While we have not advocated zero-based budgeting (ZBB) as an approach to financial management, the underlying philosophy and strategy makes a lot of sense as a way to evaluate policy performance. ZBB essentially says that every programme and service should be reappraised at the beginning of each budget cycle. At the beginning of each budget cycle, you could ask your chief administrator or finance officer to prepare a list of all current programmes and services. Each programme or service would then be assessed, using the questions listed above and any other the council might believe important to determine future direction.

This kind of systematic inquiry will help your council keep a better focus on those policies that lend themselves to monitoring and evaluation. Overseeing policy implementation is an attempt to provide long-range navigation for your community. It's as though you are on a long space journey and need to make mid-course corrections. It is also a time when you take stock of what you have on board that can be jettisoned to help you conserve your resources for the long haul.

Overseeing implementation

The council's role in overseeing the performance of those programmes and services that you have enacted is a more rigorous process. As elected leaders the world over have learned, there can often be a sobering gap between what a council legislates and what its staff implements. The implementation gap, as it is often characterized, is nothing more than the disparity between what the council wants in terms of performance, and sets forth in policies and financial plans, and what actually happens once the policy and budget are carried out. Let's look at some of the reasons why the implementation gap develops and plagues a council's best intentions.

A small hole can sink a big ship

- Russian proverb

Plugging the gap before it develops

1. **Policy-making is relatively easy; implementation is not.** This may be the biggest reason why the gap develops and persists. Policy discussions that do not consider the cold realities of what it will take to carry out programmes and services are bound to lead to follow-through problems.
2. **Before any policy or programme can be implemented successfully, there needs to be a strategy for implementation.** A strategy might be defined as a set of actions devised to achieve a policy goal. If it is a simple initiative, the strategy may evolve out of a few meetings with the local government's chief executive and department heads. At other times it may require a lengthy set of discussions and negotiations to prepare the organization to take on new responsibilities.
3. **Policies are often under-resourced.** The lack of adequate resources may be the biggest reason why policies become "underachievers" when they reach the implementation stage of development. Often, it is the lack of funds that create the performance discrepancy between policy and implementation. But, more money is not the only answer. The need for additional staff and staff development is also a major performance barrier. Many local governments believe they can expand their programmes without expanding their staffs ability to deliver. Often new policies require new employee knowledge, skills, and attitudes if they are to be implemented successfully.
4. **Operating and maintenance costs are often under funded.** The long-term costs of operating and maintaining new capital programmes and services are so often overlooked by local governments that they have become a major embarrassment, not only to these local governments, but to funding institutions such as the World Bank. Developing countries have some of the world's most exotic junk yards. We have seen scores of motor pools where expensive equipment sits idle. Vehicles were wrecked because employees were not trained to operate them. Others were "cannibalized" to obtain spare parts that weren't available at the time. Local governments aren't always to blame for these difficulties. Donors often make equipment available but ignore the need for training in its operation and maintenance.
5. **When those responsible for implementing new programmes and services are not sufficiently involved in the planning process, they can become a part of the implementation gap problem.** Developing staff understanding about new ventures and commitment to them must come at the beginning of the planning/policy-making process. It is never too early to involve those who will be responsible for implementation.

6. ***The same is true of programme or service recipients.*** As you and the local government organization plan and implement new initiatives, don't ignore the recipients of your efforts, the customers. It has become conventional wisdom that community participation can enhance the planning and development of new initiatives. What is less well known is the role community members can perform in monitoring and evaluating local-government programmes and services if they are properly trained and organized.
7. ***Don't ignore the need for staff and organization development.*** Even though new skills or knowledge may not be essential to undertake new council initiatives, there may be attitudes within the staff that could slow or block implementation. Many local governments have used team building as a means to overcome these kinds of barriers to performance. This is a facilitator-led effort to assist a team to look at the way its members work together, engage in some action planning, and consider organization-type barriers to better performance. These barriers include such things as unnecessary procedures, organizational units that are misplaced or not congruent with task needs, and the lack of incentive systems to motivate better performance. Individual and organization development interventions can be critical to successful implementation. Investments in human resource development can pay big dividends and should not be seen as frivolous expenditures or unnecessary rewards to employees.
8. ***The-effective overseer needs a monitoring system to track performance.*** The overseer responsibility of council can be greatly aided by a good monitoring strategy. The strategy should include both quantitative and qualitative measures. However, be cautious of those who are eager to promote the collection of quantitative data. Sometimes lending agencies and agency staff members get over-enthusiastic about the kinds of indicators they want monitored. Collect only the data and information you need to track the progress of policies or programmes being implemented. Involve those who will be responsible for implementation in the monitoring discussions and decision process.

Take a look at your monitoring and evaluation system from time to time to see if it is providing the information and insights you need to operate the programme. Try to isolate the monitoring and evaluation process from both political and managerial interference. Maximize the amount of attention given to performance data. While looking at the internal processes of implementation is important, it is critical that you know whether you are achieving the outcomes anticipated of implementation.

9. ***Everyone with a significant role in implementation needs to understand the goals and strategies of the new initiative, including their own roles and responsibilities for the new initiative, and they must be committed to carrying them out.*** If understanding and commitment are not in place before you start implementation, take whatever time is needed to reach this state before moving on.

You may be saying that many of these issues have nothing to do with the overseer role and responsibility of councils and everything to do with policy-making. Yes and no. Yes, because they should be considered very early in any policy discussion on new venture development. No, because they will come to haunt you in your overseer role if they aren't addressed before implementation begins. So, we risk redundancy by emphasizing again the groundwork that is required during the policy and programme development phases if you want to ease the burden of overseeing implementation.

Once implementation is underway

If you have followed many of the suggestions outlined above, you should be in an excellent position to conduct routine monitoring and evaluation efforts. Here are some thoughts on how to be more effective in your overseer role once implementation is underway.

1. ***Don't get too involved, but get involved enough.*** The two greatest problems with councillors in carrying out their overseer role are over-involvement and under-involvement. Those of you who tend to get over-involved begin to undermine the staff's authority and responsibilities for implementation. Under involvement is often seen by staff as either disinterest, non-support, or a license to stray from the mandates of the council initiative. Both extremes of overseer behaviour can impede the implementation process.
2. ***Recognize the need for flexibility and inevitable adjustments in that which is being implemented.*** It is virtually impossible to envision every contingency that will visit the implementation of new policies and programmes. Be prepared to help the implementing staff or organization adjust to the emerging realities of operation.

3. **Make room for the ambiguity that resides in the grey zones between policy and administration.** There is more interdependence between the elected leadership and the administrative staff than either side likes to admit. Try to be comfortable with the zone of ambiguous feelings, messages, and actions that separate your respective territories. Negotiate the uncertainties that threaten to slow or sidetrack your efforts to move projects and programmes forward.
4. **Decide how you're going to resolve differences between clashing factions before they begin to clash.** Conflict is inevitable with new ventures and, as we said in the handbook on The Councillor as Facilitator, a healthy sign that progress is being made and people are thinking in alternative ways. Given its inevitability, plan on how you will manage the conflict in your overseer role and help others manage it in your absence.
5. **Don't be afraid to say: "Enough is enough"!** One of the great failings of elected bodies is to do a lot of high-decibel moaning and groaning when things go wrong, but then fail to take meaningful and decisive action to fix it.

The overseer role can give the council leverage to ensure that it gets what it thought it intended to get when it enacted policies and approved the budget. Your efforts in this arena of engagement with the local-government operations staff should provide assurance that your direction is being carried out and that the implementation gap between your intentions and expectations never grows beyond that which is reasonable and acceptable.

Key points

- Most councillors are more interested in making policies and initiating new programmes than they are in overseeing them once they are in place.
- Efficiency and effectiveness are important benchmarks for determining performance.
- If you have to sacrifice one of them for the other, make sure its efficiency. Usually there is more than one way to be efficient. Being effective is more difficult.
- Policy outcomes are more important than programme outputs.
- Three factors should dominate your efforts to oversee your own policy making and programme planning activities:
 - Does it meet a demonstrated need?
 - Is it feasible to implement within our community's means?
 - Who else could do it as well or better than we can?
- Overseeing implementation involves closing the implementation gap before it has a chance to gape.
- When you under-resource any programme or policy activity, you are unfair to everyone involved, including yourself.
- It's usually a safe bet to wager money on a council's unwillingness to fund maintenance.
- It is wise to involve all those who will be significant in the implementation of any council initiative in the planning and development of that initiative.
- Staff and institutional development should be treated as a cost of doing business in local governments and factored into every new policy and programme initiative undertaken by a council.
- Develop a monitoring and evaluation system that meets your needs and no more.
- Get consensus on all of the key issues of your policy and programme on initiatives before your staff or contractors begin to implement them.
- Don't be an over-zealous overseer. You could lose your effectiveness just when you need it most.

Misfortunes always come in by a door that has been left open

- Chez proverb

References

⁽¹⁾ "Overseer" is another role label that has created some concerns so let's talk about it before we proceed any further. In some parts of the world, an overseer is someone who looks after the roads. Obviously, that's not what we have in mind. We, along with others, considered the following alternatives: "policy and programme supervisor," but this didn't sound right; "quality controller," but images of factory engineers came to mind; and finally, "monitor" and "evaluator," but each sounded too limiting. The role we envision includes some of all these descriptions, and more. Essentially, we believe councillors should be concerned that they are doing the right things (exhibiting effectiveness, policy-oriented behaviour) and doing those things right (which involves efficiency, implementation-kinds of behaviour on the part of the organization and its employees). We decided to stay with "overseer."

⁽²⁾ Drucker, Peter, *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* (New York, Harper and Row, 1974), p. 45.

⁽³⁾ For one definition of the terms "efficiency" and "effectiveness", see "The art of performance measurement", appendix B, Osborne, David, and Gaebler, Ted, *Reinventing Government.. How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector* (Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley, 1992), pp. 351-2.

PART II

WORKSHOP

The Councillor as Overseer

OVERVIEW

Purpose

Assessing the impact of government policies and programmes requires systematic evaluation. This is an important council responsibility. This responsibility extends further to encouraging and monitoring the organization's performance and appraising the performance of key management staff.

This workshop is designed to inform participants about the various ways the councillor can and should serve as overseer and where to draw the line between council and staff responsibility. Emphasized will be the council's role in overseeing policy and programme implementation. The role of the council in monitoring staff performance is covered in another handbook in this series, *The Councillor as Institution-builder*.

Contents

A brief description of each learning activity is shown below with an approximation of the amount of time required. If you wish to change the order, to omit something, or to add training material of your own, feel free to do so.

9.1 Warm-up exercise: the overseer role

Participants discuss what it means to "oversee" from the councillor's perspective and to share their ideas with one another. (30 minutes)

9.2 Trainer presentation

Brief presentation picking up ideas from the warm-up exercise, the essay on the overseer, and the trainer's own experiences with overseeing. Highlighted in the presentation are how to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of governmental programmes, why implementation gaps occur, and how to be more effective as an overseer. (30 minutes)

9.3 Exercise: the council overseer's checklist

Participants complete a checklist that shows how much council overseeing is being done by local authorities represented at the workshop. Comparison of results and discussion. (45 minutes)

9.4 Case study: the market that never was

Participants read a case involving the neglect of a council to review the performance of an important public facility and discuss what should have been and might now be done about the situation. (45 - 60 minutes)

9.5 Exercise: programme evaluation

Using ideas from the presentation and a set of guidelines, participants working in small groups design a procedure for evaluating several common service programmes. Results are compared and discussed. (90 minutes)

9.6 Skill transfer exercise

Participants reflect on what they have learned and make personal commitments to put it to use after the workshop. (30 - 45 minutes)

9.1 Warm- up Exercise: THE OVERSEER ROLE

Time required: 30 minutes

Objective

This exercise is for participants to explore their own councillor experiences as overseers and to compare their ideas and viewpoints with one another systematically.

Process

Write the following question on a sheet of newsprint:

When we say, "The councillor is an overseer," what does that mean to you?

Ask participants to pair up and discuss their thoughts on how this question applies to them in their councillor roles. Give them about 30 minutes to answer the question.

After 30 minutes, ask participants to volunteer some of the ideas discussed. If possible, group the responses (on a sheet of newsprint) into some general categories, such as:

- Assessing policy implementation
- Evaluating programme performance and results
- Measuring the efficiency of public services
- Reviewing budget execution
- Encouraging and evaluating staff performance

9.2 TRAINER PRESENTATION

Time required: 30 minutes

Objective

This presentation is to provide participants with ideas and perspectives on the overseer role and a conceptual foundation they can use for the individual and group exercises included in this workshop.

Process

Prepare the presentation based on information from the preceding essay on the overseer role. Highlight how to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of governmental programmes, why implementation gaps occur, and how to be more effective in reviewing and evaluating organizational performance.

Outlined information on note cards may help you cover the information systematically and stay on schedule. Ask questions from time to time during the presentation as a check on participant comprehension and to hold their attention. Augment the presentation with visual aids including pre-printed newsprint sheets and overhead transparencies as a further aid to comprehension.

9.3 Exercise: THE COUNCIL OVERSEER'S CHECKLIST

Time required: 45 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to identify and compare the extent to which 16 areas of overseer responsibility are or should be performed in the local governments represented by councillors at the workshop.

Process

Distribute copies of *The Council Overseer's Checklist*. Ask participants to read the instructions and complete the checklist individually. Give them about 10 minutes for this task.

When participants have completed the task, take another 15 minutes to develop a group profile from the individual participant checklists. This can be done by asking for a show of hands for each response to each of the 16 areas of overseer responsibility. Record the results on a version of the checklist drawn on newsprint.

Before discussing the results, divide the participants into four small groups of about the same size. Given the responses to the checklist shown on newsprint, ask each group to develop a strategy for improving the effectiveness of councils in their role as overseer.

Give the four (or three) groups about 30 minutes to complete this task. Then, ask them to reassemble. Ask for a report from each group and encourage a discussion of the results.

THE COUNCIL OVERSEER'S CHECKLIST

Instructions

To complete this checklist, read each of the following 16 statements about the role of councillors as overseers. Select the response to the right of each statement that corresponds with what you believe your council does or does not do and what your council should or should not do about that area of overseer responsibility. Continue until you have checked one response for each of the 16 areas of responsibility.

Area of overseer responsibility	My council:			
	Does it and should do it	Does it and should not do it	Does not do it and should do it	Does not do it and should not do it
1. Oversees and assesses the impact of policies and programmes.	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Monitors the efficiency (quality and quantity) of service delivery.	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Sets high standards for staff responsiveness to service needs and complaints.	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. Follows-up on staff handling of citizen complaints with the correct administrative officer.	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. Reviews complaints regularly to identify unacceptable patterns	☐	☐	☐	☐

of complaint handling.				
6. Asks for regular departmental reports that compare results with service objectives.	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. Encourages and monitors improvements in the organizations work performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. Follows-up and reviews progress on goal and policy implementation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. Questions the consistency of council goals, programmes, and budget allocations with policy.	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. Makes sure the organization is equipped and financed for operations and maintenance functions.	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. Sets priorities for policy and programme implementation.	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. Provides an opportunity for constituents and interest groups to provide comments.	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Identifies areas where evaluation studies should be undertaken.	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. Undertakes periodic appraisal of staff performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. Conducts random inquiries to stay informed on what is going on in the organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. Considers periodic policy, programme, and budget adjustments as justified.	☐	☐		

9.4 Case Study: THE MARKET THAT NEVER WAS

Time required: 45-60 minutes

Objective

This exercise is for participants to apply their knowledge of the overseer role to analyse and rectify a common community problem.

Process

Read the case situation in the following box out loud to participants:

In a major city in Eastern Africa, a market was built several years ago that has never operated as intended. Of over 200 stalls, only 20 have been occupied. The local authority has regularly diverted money from other revenue sources for security, maintenance and to pay off the indebtedness for constructing the facility.

After participants have heard the situation, divide them into several small groups. Ask each group to answer the following questions about the situation:

1. What should past councils have done about this market with respect to the initial decision and continued policy for operating and maintaining the facility?
2. What should the present council do about the market in carrying out its role as overseer? After about 30 minutes, reconvene the participants and ask for reports from each small group. Discussion.

9.5 Exercise: PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Time required: 90 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to give participants guidance and experience in developing a plan for the evaluation of a local government service programme.

Process

Tell participants that they will be working for a few minutes on the elements of a plan for monitoring the efficiency of a local government service programme.

Divide the participants into three groups and assign to each group one of the following service programmes:

1. Street cleaning,
2. Solid-waste collection
3. Water supply

Note: If you have enough participants to justify it, divide them into more than three groups and add other services to the list so that each group is working on a different service programme.

Before sending the groups to separate work areas, distribute copies of a worksheet (see the next page) and tell them to use it as a guide in completing their plans. Give them about 45 minutes to develop their plans.

When the groups have completed their plans, have them reassemble and present their plans to members of other groups. Encourage discussion of the pros and cons of each plan.

WORK SHEET FOR MONITORING LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Service _____ Group _____

1. Identify who would be assigned to carry out the monitoring plan and why.

2. Identify the service objective (desired result of the service in the community) and associated set of performance measures (for example, how clean? how fast? how safe? how costly? how reliable?) you wish to establish.

Objective

Measures

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____

3. Specify the data collection procedure or procedures you would recommend (trained observers, community-wide surveys, on-site surveys of users, one-on-one interviews) to identify actual performance relative to each of your measures.

-
4. Indicate how the results of data collection would be analysed and reported to the council.
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-
-
5. Specify linkages to be established between the monitoring process and the local government's on-going decision-making processes such as budget allocation or reallocation, management work planning and control, and the review/encouragement of staff performance.
-
-
-

9.6 SKILL TRANSFER EXERCISE

Time required: 30-45 minutes

Objective

This exercise is to help participants transfer the learning experiences of the workshop into their real-world activities as elected officials. The focus of the exercise is on raising expectations, engaging in realistic planning, and making personal commitments. Most of the work is done on a personal basis with some interpersonal sharing.

Between knowing and doing there is a wide chasm

It is generally agreed that the purpose of training is to improve the way people do things by showing them a better way. In fact, the success of a training experience can be measured by the amount of personal growth and change that takes place both during training and after the training is over.

Training rarely has the impact on workshop participants that trainers hope it will have, particularly after an exposure of only a few hours. The exhilaration of the moment fades quickly when the trainee is confronted with old work habits and the resistance of work associates who have not shared the training experience.

On the other hand, commitments to learning and change made at the close of a workshop can help participants overcome learning resistance in themselves and in the work environment. A trainer can help learners make a successful transition from the world of learning to the world of doing through a few simple planning exercises. The time taken to encourage learning transfer could be the difference between a brief exposure to some interesting ideas and a life-changing experience.

Process

Spend at least half an hour at the end of the workshop to focus the attention of participants on important learnings and encourage them to continue experimenting with these learnings in their council activities. Begin by giving participants about 15 minutes to work independently on a simple learning transfer questionnaire.

When participants have completed the questionnaire, ask them to share quickly with the group two or three things they intend to do differently in their council roles as overseers to close the workshop.

A LEARNING TRANSFER QUESTIONNAIRE

Take a few minutes to reflect on the role of the overseer, the new ideas you encountered in this workshop, and how you feel about them. Then, in the space below, write a sentence or two to describe something interesting you have learned about yourself during this workshop.

Based on what you have learned about yourself and the many possibilities for change presented by this workshop, what two or three things do you intend to do differently in your council role as overseer?

1.

2.

3.

Finally, what obstacles in yourself or in your work environment do you expect to experience during your efforts to implement these changes? What will you do to remove or minimize these obstacles?

Obstacle	Action to remove the obstacle
1.	1.
2.	2.
3.	3.

If you can learn it, you can do it.
