

**Handbook  
for  
Councillors  
of  
Municipalities  
and Neighbourhood Democratic Councils**

**Volume 2**



**Ministry of Communities  
Building Cohesive, Empowered and Sustainable Communities  
2017**



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# Acronyms

- AREO -- Assistant Regional Executive Officer
- By-Law -- A regulation made by a local democratic organ
- CDC -- Community Development Council
- CED -- Community Economic Development
- CH&PA -- Central Housing & Planning Authority
- Community asset – Facilities, equipment, and material owned by the people and controlled or administered by the local democratic organ
- DDO -- District Development Officer
- EHO -- Environmental Health Officer
- LDO -- Local Democratic Organ
- LDO -- Local Government Organ
- LUP -- Land Utility Plan
- MC -- Municipal Council
- MoC -- Ministry of Communities
- MSME -- Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise
- NDC -- Neighbourhood Democratic Council
- NGO -- Non-Governmental Organisation
- RDC -- Regional Democratic Council
- REO -- Regional Executive Officer
- RHO -- Regional Health Officer
- Sovereignty – Supreme power or authority
- SWM -- Solid Waste Management
- TC -- Town Clerk

## Local government organs must be representative, inclusive and effective



Local government organs of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana should embody three principal political characteristics. They should be representative, inclusive and effective.

(Local) councils are part of the tripartite system of government – national, regional and municipal / neighbourhood. All three levels must collaborate in order to ensure that citizens, wherever they are, enjoy a high quality of life.

(Municipalities and neighbourhood democratic councils) are an integral part of Guyana's system of local government. They are local government organs.

Councils, therefore, are expected to manifest the virtues and values of representativeness, inclusiveness and effectiveness.

**Representativeness** is the basis of elections. Elected councillors are reminded that their authority is derived directly from the people. Authority within councils should be exercised, therefore, in a democratic manner. The views of all councillors should be considered when making a decision. Internal democracy should be a guiding principle within councils.

**Inclusiveness** is a key concept in local governance. The Constitution of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana mandates that local authorities become inclusive in the management of their communities.

**Effectiveness** is the yardstick by which performance will be measured. (Elected leaders) who have taken their oaths of office must perform. They must produce. They must heed the needs of their constituents and the dictates of the Constitution.

I urge them to ensure that citizens have an input into decisions which are likely to affect their well-being.

I also urge the leaders of Guyana's local democratic organs to emphasise the principles of representativeness, internal democracy and inclusiveness in the administration of their areas.

Adapted from Address of H.E Brigadier David Granger

President of the Co-operative Republic of Guyana

At the Swearing –in Ceremony of

Mayors and Deputy Mayors

2017.03.30

## Message from the Minister

This handbook is a resource guide primarily for you, the some 1170 councillors and administrative staff of municipalities and neighbourhood democratic councils. It is a tool that explains local government laws, particularly in relation to the role, scope and authority of councillors and councils, to assist you to perform your jobs effectively and responsibly. Though every effort has been made to ensure accuracy of the information presented, this guide is not set in stone.

Despite the progressive provisions in the Constitution and subsidiary laws relating to the system of local government, the system in the recent past was considered to have little, if any, relevance. This was as a consequence of central government's attitude over an extended period of time which suffocated local government organs and denied them their constitutional authority.

The ultimate insult was the refusal for over two decades to hold local government elections which are required by law to be held every three years. This contributed to a severe deficit in people's understanding of the role of local government and more significantly to improper management of communities. The result was a severe degradation of the quality of local administration, and poor delivery of services to residents.

This all changed following the November 2011 general and regional elections which saw the advent of Brig. David Granger as Leader of the Majority Opposition and who placed the issue of the necessity of local democracy, front and centre of A Partnership for National Unity's agenda in the 10<sup>th</sup> Parliament.

The new momentum of reform and relevance of local democracy continued with the accession to office in 2015 of the APNU + AFC Coalition administration. The swiftly-held long-overdue local government elections were described by President Granger as 'historic', more out of recognition that the newly-elected councils were coming into being into an environment of empowerment and not merely a reference to renewal of their democratic credentials.

It was a manifestation of the sincerity and stated intent of the government and as articulated by President Granger in his inaugural address on 10 June, 2015 at the opening of the 11<sup>th</sup> Parliament where he said: *'Your Government will adhere to an empowerment policy that regularly renews local democracy by ensuring that local government elections are held as is stipulated in our Constitution. We shall fortify grassroots democracy by ensuring that local residents are allowed to play a greater role in managing their own towns and villages.'*

Now, therefore, is an exciting time to be a part of the local government system as the administration is committed to empowering local democratic organs to discharge their constitutional responsibility to manage and develop their areas. The government holds the firm view that that a functional local government system is essential for the efficient

delivery of public services to residents. The administration sees local government as the gateway to a Good Life.

The philosophy of the government is clear: it is that local government organs are not cosmetic or ornamental bodies, nor are they appendages of the central government but rather, that they represent a vital level of public administration and are partners in national development.

This handbook contains critical information and you (councillors and administrative staff) are urged to read it and make use of it; it will assist you in making your work more effective. **Whether you are a constituency councillor or a PR councillor, I urge you to take ownership of your area, which is the role the Constitution provides for you.** In this quest you will find an ally in me, the Ministry of Communities and the Government of Guyana.

As you go about your vital work, I urge you as individual councillors and collectively, as councils, to challenge conventions. I encourage you to question the status quo. The laws governing your role and authority gives you the power and opportunity to make a positive difference. I encourage you to make use of them, instead of waiting on any other officer-holder to initiate change in your community.

As councillors, you are the bedrock of the system and you are expected to discharge your responsibilities with dedication and integrity. It is acknowledged that you serve out of a sense of commitment. I commend you for your spirit of volunteerism.

I respect the sacrifice that you continue to make to improve living conditions in your communities.

While the credit for the compilation of this handbook belongs to many persons, any errors and omissions are entirely mine.

Yes to peoples' empowerment and to local democracy.

Ronald Bulkan, MP  
Minister of Communities

May 2017



# 8. Governance and Community Engagement

## 8.1 Governance and Democracy

The principles of democracy and good governance are enshrined within Guyana's Constitution. Article 9 states, *'Sovereignty belongs to the people who exercise it through their representatives and the democratic organs established by or under this Constitution.'* Article 13 states that, *'The principal objective of the political system of the State is to establish an inclusionary democracy by providing increasing opportunities for the participation of citizens and their organisations in the management and decision-making processes of the State, with particular emphasis on those areas of decision-making that directly affect their well-being.'*

The Constitution, therefore, makes crystal clear that: supreme power or authority (sovereignty) to make decisions which affect their lives, belongs to the people. It is clear too, that elected representatives exist to give effect to the will of the people and include the maximum number of citizens in this democratic process.

### **Democracy Defined**

Democracy is government by the people. It includes the principles of protection of individual rights; citizen participation in government affairs; political tolerance and respect for the rights and interests of minorities; transparency in government decision making; equality of opportunity and access to government services. (NDI)

### **Local Governance Defined**

Local Governance is the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a community's affairs. It comprises the mechanisms, processes and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests, exercise their legal rights, meet their obligations and mediate their differences. (UNDP)

### **Good Governance Defined**

Good Governance is governance that is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive, and which follows the rule of law. (UNDP)

The Caribbean Forum of Local Government Ministers, in the *Regional Policy and Co-operation Framework on Local Governance and Local Democracy in the Caribbean*, has listed some key principles of local democracy and good local governance consistent with international best practices. Those include:

***Accountability*** – ensuring that persons and organisations entrusted with public resources and/or authority give full account of how they used the resources and exercised the authority. This means that councillors must submit to public scrutiny and be answerable to the electorate and the wider community on the decisions made and funds expended by council.

***Transparency*** – making certain that the information about how decisions are made and carried out by council can hold up to public scrutiny. This means making the decision-making process clear, making information readily available to the public (unless it is not in the public interest to do so) and being prepared to give reasons for the decisions council takes.

***Inclusiveness*** – including all persons in the decision making processes and delivery of services with special provision for minorities and disadvantaged groups whose exclusion may result in their issues not being adequately addressed. This means reaching out to include those who might otherwise not participate and not discriminating against anyone based on sex, age, ethnicity, religion, economic status or any other characteristic.

***Participation and Empowerment*** – providing the means and opportunities for people’s participation in the decision-making process. This means providing sufficient information and opportunity for citizens to take part in governance and ensuring the meaningful involvement of both women and men, youth and the diverse groups within the community.

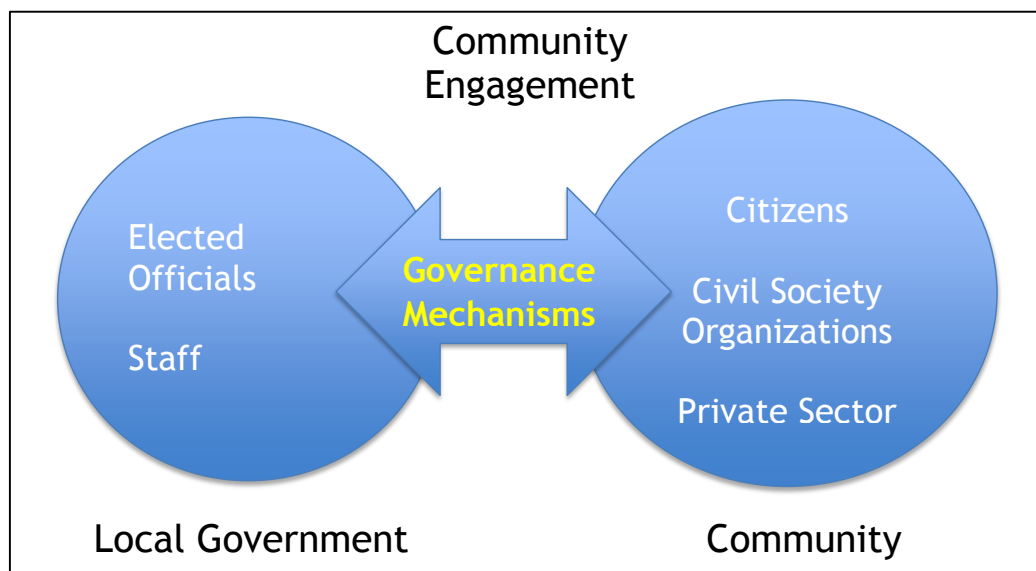
***Integrity and Ethical Standards*** – carrying out council duties in the public interest guided by high values and moral standards which are accepted by the society as a whole. This means upholding the law, not taking personal gifts or showing favouritism, declaring conflict of interest and being responsible for the LDO’s assets.

***Efficiency and Effectiveness*** – providing services to all residents at the highest possible standard and quality in the most cost-effective manner. This means careful planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation.

## 8.2 Introduction to Community Engagement

Chapter VII, Article 71(1) of the Constitution states that local government shall be organised so as to involve as many people as possible in the task of managing and developing the communities in which they live. Thus local democratic organs have an obligation to encourage civic participation in decision-making and service delivery.

Community engagement is central to democracy, and effective local governance. Community engagement depends on councillors and staff having good communication skills and putting in place mechanisms, systems, procedures etc. that encourage interaction between the local government and the various stakeholders.



There are many strategies to enhance community engagement, from improving public communication to entering into formal partnerships with community groups or local businesses. Different strategies will be needed for different “stakeholders” within the various areas. Councillors and staff will need to identify and interact with the key stakeholders in the community to know how they want to participate in managing their own affairs and what strategy will work best to engage them.

Who are the Local Authority Stakeholders?			
Citizens	Civil Society Organisations	Private Sector	Supporting Institutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All residents of the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Community groups and committees</li> <li>▪ Non-governmental organisations (NGOs)</li> <li>▪ Religious organisations</li> <li>▪ Farmers’ associations</li> <li>▪ Women’s groups</li> <li>▪ Youth clubs</li> <li>▪ Residents associations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Micro, small, medium and large scale businesses and industries</li> <li>▪ Business associations</li> <li>▪ Professional groups</li> <li>▪ Self-employed within the informal sector</li> <li>▪ Cooperatives</li> <li>▪ Social enterprises</li> <li>▪ Emerging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Schools and colleges</li> <li>▪ Technical &amp; vocational training centres</li> <li>▪ Business support organisations</li> <li>▪ Financial institutions</li> <li>▪ Libraries and other resource centres</li> <li>▪ Hospitals and health centres</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cultural groups</li> <li>▪ Sports clubs</li> </ul>	entrepreneurs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Child care centres</li> </ul>
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### 8.3 Strategies to improve Information Sharing with your community:

- Develop or enhance your **website** or Facebook page. Post information that will be helpful and of interest to your stakeholders such as information about how to pay taxes and fees; information about how to apply for building permits and business licences etc.; the budget; report on activities; minutes of meetings; notice of upcoming council meetings, public hearings; newsletters.
- Put up a **notice board** at the office and in other prominent locations around the local area. Post bulletins, flyers, newsletters and notices.
- Establish a **“help desk”**, “front desk” or “information desk” near the entrance to the municipality or NDC office. Have a trained member of staff available to greet visitors, provide them with information about the council, local services and businesses or direct them to whom they need to see.
- Hold an **“open house”** at the LDO building (City Hall, Town Hall or, NDC office) where residents and business persons are invited to come and meet councillors and staff and learn about local services and programmes.
- Use **social media** to provide updates to citizens on council activities, to notify them in cases of emergency and to solicit input on special topics.
- Have a short intensive information and **education campaign** if there is the need to educate and get public support for a new project or by-law enforcement. Use mass media including newspapers and television.
- Work with your community **radio** or other radio station to provide messages to the public about council activities and to have the Mayor or Chairperson and council members speak with listeners.

### 8.4 Strategies to improve Community Consultation

- Hold **public meetings or forums** to allow citizens an open opportunity to raise their concerns. A public meeting or forum may be held prior to, or after a regular council meeting or at any other time that would be convenient to the public and the council members. A public forum allows citizens to identify issues that they believe deserve council action and those issues should be recorded. When the same issues are raised by a number of different participants indicates that council should discuss the issue at one of its regular meetings.
- Hold a **public hearing** when there is an important issue or controversial project about which you want to know the public’s opinion. A public hearing is open to anyone and council specifically invites those stakeholders who they think may have an interest in the issue. A public hearing examines only one issue at a time, such as building a community centre, and allows citizens an opportunity to

address council about that issue. It is an opportunity for you to learn about citizens opinions, but no decision is taken at a public hearing.

- Conduct **focus group discussions** when you would like to delve deeply into a complex issue and want to hear stakeholders' ideas on the issue and the possible solutions. A focus group discussion is usually conducted by a skilled facilitator for a small group of invited participants who represent a larger population of stakeholders. For example you may ask a youth leader to bring together 8 to 12 youth to discuss issues and solutions to youth unemployment in your area.
- Consult with representatives from a specific **target group in their own location** when their opinion is important but hard to ascertain. This could be required when it is difficult to get the target group to attend meetings. For example, women from an underprivileged part of the community who sell produce at the side of the road will be impacted by a proposed road improvement project, but have not attended a public hearing on the project. Councillors may need to visit the women at their stalls to discuss how the project will impact them and hear their suggestions about how their livelihood can be sustained.
- Undertake a **survey** of citizens, or of a specific stakeholder group, to find out what they think. Public opinion surveys are questionnaires that can be conducted through a written or verbal method. Written surveys can be conducted on-line, through the mail, or during a focus group discussion. Verbal surveys can be conducted by interviewers in a public venue, over the telephone or by door-to-door visits. Surveys are made up of simple, objective questions that elicit citizens' feedback about the quality of services they are receiving from the municipality or NDC, the issues they are facing that are within the LDO's purview to address and their priorities for action. The information you gather will guide council in setting community priorities and making budgetary allocations.
- **Invite citizens** to attend council meetings as they are entitled to through legislation. By posting the date, time and agenda of council meetings, as well as the minutes of the previous meeting, on various media and by welcoming citizens when they arrive in the council chamber, you will invite their input into consultation on matters of importance.
- Attend **social, cultural and community events** when you are invited or when they are open to the public. During informal discussions with citizens you will learn about their issues and ideas which will help you to identify those concerns that should be brought to council's attention and followed up with more formal consultation.

## 8.5 Strategies to strengthen Formal Mechanisms for Community Involvement

- Ensure **Standing Committees** consult with citizens as necessary. Standing committees have the authority to hold public meetings, hearings and focus group

discussions and to form sub-committees with citizens as members to investigate issues as necessary. Standing Committees should maximize community involvement by identifying knowledgeable citizens who can contribute to their deliberations through approved sub-committee and consultation mechanisms.

- Establish **Select Committees** as necessary to investigate and make recommendations on specific issues. A select committee is a limited-term special or ad-hoc committee chaired by a councillor and established by council to act as a task group to research an issue, identify options and make recommendations to council to address the issue. For example, a Select Committee may be established to review and update the community's development plan. The Select Committee has the authority to hold public hearings and other forms of consultation to inform and gather input from the public and concerned stakeholders.
- Establish **Advisory Committees** as necessary to provide guidance to council about ongoing issues that require multi-stakeholder input. Council and staff are usually represented on an Advisory Committee along with subject experts, relevant community groups and other stakeholders.
- Conduct **participatory planning workshops** as part of the LDO's development planning process. Whether updating the LDO's Community Development Plan, formulating a Community Disaster Management Plan, formulating a tourism development strategy or undertaking any other planning process, the involvement of citizens is a must. Councillors should identify members from amongst themselves or members of staff with good group facilitation skills to organise events that solicit input from concerned stakeholders. Such events will not only help ensure the plan is responsive to citizens' needs but will garner support from the stakeholders for plan implementation.
- Establish a **complaint mechanism and process** so that citizens have a formal and transparent way to lodge a complaint against the LDO. The public should be made aware of the process through information sharing techniques and should include timelines for responding to the complainant and working to address the concern.

## 8.6 Strategies to establish more Strategic Partnerships

- Collaborate with a community group or community-based organisation to deliver a service or carry out a development project.
- Enter into a public-private partnership with a local business to deliver a service or carry out a development project.

- Support an initiative of a local NGO or educational institution that is in line with the LDO's development plan and priorities.
- Undertake a joint project with a nearby MC, the RDC or neighbouring NDC.
- Co-operate with a national government ministry or agency to deliver a service or carry out a development project.

# 9. Local Planning

## 9.1 The Importance of Planning

The Constitution gives municipalities and NDCs responsibility for the management and development of their local area. This requires careful planning to ensure that infrastructure, building construction, businesses and industrial activities are not undertaken to the detriment of the community but rather for the benefit of all. A good neighbourhood development plan will set out the residents' aspirations for the future of their community, target potential sectors and areas for growth and identify heritage and environmental sites needing protection. One of the councillor's key roles as community leader is to help develop a shared vision and set priorities for the future of the community. Councillors should bear in mind the adage (frequently attributed to Benjamin Franklin) that;

***“failing to plan is planning to fail.”***

LDOs do not plan in isolation. The development of the community is influenced by, and contributes to, the development of the region and the nation. Therefore the LDOs development plans should be synchronised with the national and regional development plans and priorities. The Constitution also requires that local democratic organs “involve as many people as possible in the task of managing and developing the communities in which they live.” This means that LDOs need to involve their citizens and other “stakeholders” in the planning process.

Key Stakeholders in LDO Planning	
<b>Local Government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mayor, Chairperson and Councillors</li><li>▪ Town Clerk, Overseer, Assistant Overseer and other staff</li><li>▪ RDC, eg. AREO, DDO, Community Economic Development Officer</li></ul>	<b>National Government</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ministry of Communities</li><li>▪ Other Ministries</li><li>▪ Government Agencies</li></ul>
<b>Private Sector</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Businesses and Industries</li><li>▪ Business Associations</li><li>▪ Farmer/Fisher Associations, Cooperatives, Informal sector</li></ul>	<b>Civil Society</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Citizens</li><li>▪ Community groups, religious groups, NGOs</li><li>▪ Educational and Health Institutions</li></ul>



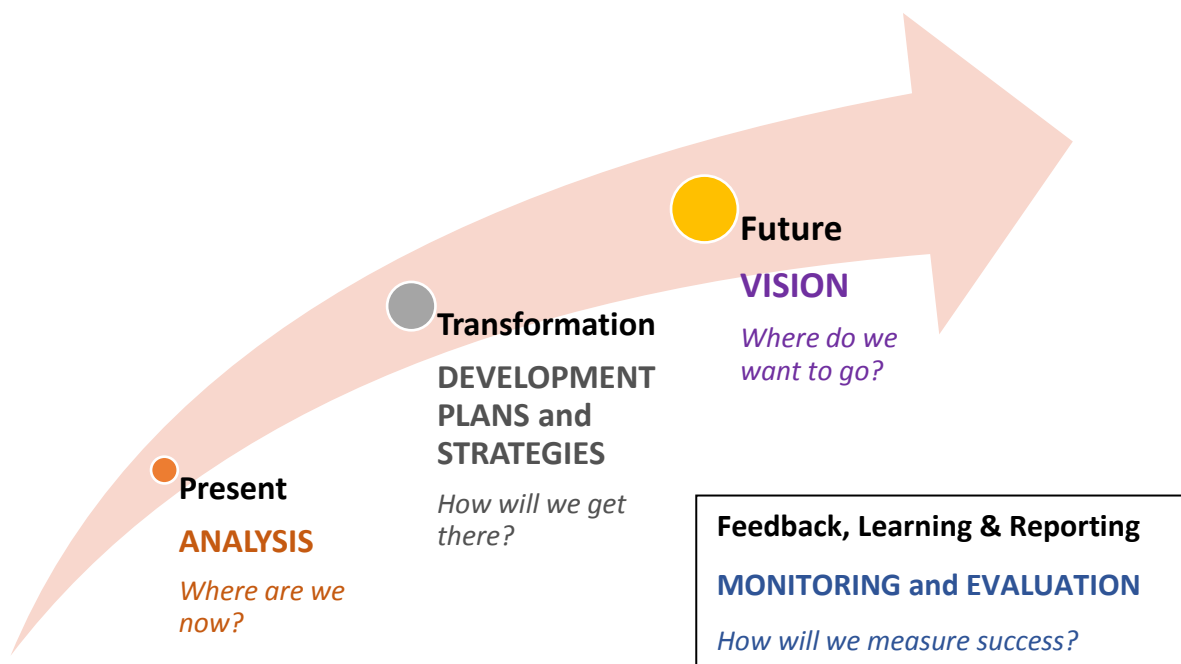
## 9.2 Community Development Plan

A local development plan is a tool prepared by a local government organ to guide the physical, social and economic development of the geographic area governed by the LDO. It identifies important issues facing the community and how to resolve them. The plan forms the basis for Council's decision-making about the allocation of local authority resources as well providing a tool for mobilising resources from external sources that share similar development goals.

Similar to a Plan of Action for Regional Development (PARD) prepared by a RDC or a Plan of Action for Municipal Development prepared by a Municipal Council, a NDC Development Plan will set out a realistic comprehensive plan of action for the integrated and sustainable development of the NDC area over a period of approximately five years.

Local development planning is a forward-thinking, dynamic and systematic process that follows a standard participatory strategic planning process. This process, led by a team of councillors, staff and technical experts, will start by examining the present situation within the community, proceed to determining the desired future and goals for the community and culminate in formulating an action plan to achieve those goals.

### *Strategic Thinking about Local Development*



A Development Plan, formulated after considerable consultation with stakeholders, will include a summary of the current conditions within the community, the common direction or “vision” of what the LDO hopes to be like in the future, a set of goals for priority changes the people want to make, a description of the actions that the LDO plans to take to achieve those goals, an indication of the resources required to

implement the plan, and an outline of the how the implementation of the plan will be monitored and reported to the public.

Integrated with the overarching local Development Plan, the Council may have a number of sector specific strategies, plans and programmes that expand the LDOs planned efforts in that sector.

***Relationship among sample LDO plans and strategies***



Informed by the LDO’s development plan, strategies, programmes and priority projects, the LDO will be able to develop its annual work programme, budget or “estimate” that outlines how the LDO will spend its subvention and local revenues in the coming year. Without development plans in place, there is a risk that the allocation of financial and other resources may be haphazard and not aligned to the critical social and economic development needs of the community.

There are generally five stages in the strategic planning process for local development, whether formulating a comprehensive integrated municipal development plan or preparing a sector specific plan such as one for development of the local economy or improving solid waste management. These five stages are shown in the figure below.

***“Stages in the Planning Cycle.”***

The development planning process is cyclical and iterative. This means that planning is not a one-time activity but an ongoing process. Once plans are approved and are being implemented, the progress and outcomes should be routinely monitored and evaluated to see if the results of the activities are actually achieving the desired goals and objectives. If they are not, the activities and the plan need to be revised appropriately. As objectives are achieved and if the context within the area changes the plans must be updated in response to the new reality. Local plans should be reviewed every year to identify the priorities where financial resources need to be allocated during the Council’s annual budgeting process. Development plans should also be reviewed and confirmed

by new councils following local elections and updated through a participatory planning process involving stakeholders approximately every five years or when there is a need to revise the plan in response to significant shifts in the local social, economic or environmental situation.

### *Stages in the Planning Cycle*



✚ *Guides and tools to assist with local development planning can be obtained from the MoC*

The steps to prepare the actual plan, whether for a Community Development Plan or a sector specific plan, are basically the same and entail:

- **Step 1.** Create a vision
- **Step 2.** Develop goals and objectives
- **Step 3.** Identify programmes and projects to achieve the goals and objectives
- **Step 4.** Prioritize the actions and identify the resources required
- **Step 5.** Document the strategy and communicate it to stakeholders

### ***Example of a Successful Planning Process: Mocha-Arcadia NDC***

The Mocha-Arcadia NDC undertook a strategic planning process in 2015-2016. The process was championed by the NDC Chairperson, coordinated by the Overseer, facilitated by a local resource person and involved significant participation from community groups and the Mocha-Arcadia business community.

<b>Excerpts from the Mocha-Arcadia Strategic Plan</b>
<b><i>Vision:</i></b> To develop Mocha-Arcadia into a vibrant, self-sufficient agricultural community with committed leadership and cooperation among residents.
<b><i>Goal 1:</i></b> To improve business development in the community
<b><i>Objectives for Goal 1:</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><b><i>A.</i></b> To improve operations of the Mocha-Arcadia NDC to support the start-up, training and expansion of local micro, small and medium- sized enterprises</li><li><b><i>B.</i></b> To ensure that 70% of small/emerging businesses have access to financing and support</li></ul>
<b><i>Sample Projects/ Activities for Objective A:</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Establish a business directory of all businesses in the community</li><li>➤ Establish a business “Help Desk” and support program meme</li></ul>
<b><i>Sample Projects/ Activities for Objective B:</i></b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>➤ Organise capacity building programmes for farmers in land preparation, agronomic practices and farm and project management</li><li>➤ Organise and manage a farmers’ market</li></ul>

The Mocha-Arcadia NDC has been successful in implementing their strategic plan and has begun to see results. The Business Directory was completed which has allowed residents and local businesses to purchase more of their goods and services from within the community, providing increased revenue for the local shop owners, tradespeople and other suppliers. Through providing training and support to local farmers the NDC facilitated all farmers in the area to obtain legal title to their land. To establish the farmers’ market the NDC prepared proposals for grants from donor and government agencies and was successful in securing funding to construct stalls for the vendors that are both sanitary and attractive. The market provides a venue for local farmers to sell their produce close to home and for local residents to have a convenient place to shop. The NDC is in the process of establishing its Help Desk and initiating a project for the restoration of heritage buildings. The NDC Chairperson and councillors have identified some of the keys to their success as good teamwork among the councillors and extensive outreach to the community to solicit both their ideas and their support.

## Tips for Effective Local Planning

### ***i. Keep the plan realistic and achievable***

Avoid being overly ambitious. Many plans are never implemented because they are beyond the ability and budget of the LDO. Some plans are so ambitious and complex that they overwhelm the people who are supposed to implement them. Keep the plan simple, understandable and “doable.” Remember the human and financial resources that are available and formulate the plan so that it can realistically be implemented in a reasonable timeframe.

### ***ii. Use a planning process that is participatory, inclusive and transparent***

Follow the planning cycle set out above as well as planning guides that are available from the MoC, NGOs and other sources. This will help ensure that a good planning team is established and uses an effective process to put together a truly “community” plan. A good plan will have “buy-in” from stakeholders and “ownership” by the local council and community groups. Strive for equity and inclusiveness in the consultative planning process by involving both women and men and representatives from the various ethnic, religious and social groups that make up the local authority area. Solicit the views of groups that are often marginalised, such as vulnerable populations and the groups that represent them, and youth.

### ***iii. Integrate the plan***

Ideally plans should be integrated both “horizontally” and “vertically.” Horizontal integration means that all of the plans are working towards the same community vision and that the projects and activities within each plan complement rather than hinder each other. For example, a Local Community Tourism Development Plan and a Local Agricultural Development Plan may complement each other by including initiatives to pilot Eco and Farm tourism. On the other hand, the two plans may hinder each other by proposing to develop an industrial agro-processing facility next to a proposed conservation area and eco-tourism lodge. Vertical integration means that the plans should be integrated with regional and national plans. Both the national and regional governments will have development priorities that affect the LDO area. By including projects within the LDO plan that contribute to regional and/or national development initiatives, the LDO is much more likely to get co-operation as well political and financial support for its initiatives from the other spheres of government.

### ***iv. Consider sustainability***

Some plans will include infrastructure or industrial projects that have the potential to negatively affect the environment by impacting water quality, drainage patterns, traffic patterns, air quality, waste production or use of natural resources. The planning process should include environmental impact

assessments where necessary and efforts to mitigate harm to the environment. Proactively, consideration should be given to projects that contribute to the green economy, preserving natural resources and cultural heritage and that increase the area's resilience to the effects of climate change. The financial sustainability of projects must also be considered. Will the owner of any new infrastructure, business or other development be able to maintain it into the future?

**v. Partner with other organisations**

Completing a plan is often the easy part. Implementation is much more difficult and LDOs can only implement a few initiatives relying solely on their own staff and financial resources. Many projects can only be implemented with the co-operation and support of others. Depending on the type of initiative within the plan, partners may include community groups, NGOs, businesses, educational institutions, religious organisations, national government agencies, financial institutions, and donors. Partnerships may be simple agreements to co-operate on a task such as cleaning a drain or improving signage or a more complex agreement to jointly undertake the construction of a new market or establishment of a small business incubator.

**vi. Focus on Results**

Keep the community's vision and goals in mind when making decisions and allocating resources. Select some indicators or milestones that will help you measure progress towards goals. Monitor and measure the progress of implementing the plan to see if the activities and projects are achieving the desired objectives and outcomes. If not, analyse what is happening and adjust the efforts. Sometimes the activities or strategy will need to be changed in order to achieve the results that will lead to the longer term goal. Report progress on implementing the plan to the community and inform them of the results of the projects and programmes, highlighting how the investments have brought benefits to the community.

### **9.3 Community Economic Development Plan or Strategy**

The development and implementation of a local or community economic development strategy or plan will feature in most LDO development plans as improving livelihoods, creating more employment opportunities and encouraging the growth of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs). The role that local governments play in economic development is increasingly being recognised and promoted by central government, and LDOs are expected to do their part in facilitating local or community economic development.

Community Economic Development (CED) can be defined as *“the process by which local government, the business community and the non- governmental sector work collectively to create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation in the local area.”* The goal of community economic development is to build

a healthy local economy that contributes to sustainable community prosperity and ultimately improves the quality of life for all.

A prosperous community with a healthy local economy is one where:

- ❖ Community members working as primary producers such as farmers and fishers are able to earn a livelihood that is adequate to support their family's wellbeing.
- ❖ Community members who want to be employed are able to find decent jobs characterised by safe working conditions and fair, livable wages.
- ❖ Community members who want to be self-employed are able to start, operate and expand their businesses.
- ❖ There is economic equity among community members regardless of gender, ethnicity, religion, age, or any other factor, and no community members are living in poverty.
- ❖ The assets and resources of the community are developed sustainably so that they will be available to contribute to the prosperity of future generations.

Community economic development (CED) is a participatory process. The LDO can take the lead in bringing together residents, business owners, community organisations and national government agencies to discuss the economic issues and challenges facing the area, identify the area's strengths, assets and opportunities for growth and formulate a strategy or plan to stimulate economic development by leveraging the resources.














The CED or strategy will identify the sectors where the area has a “competitive advantage” over other geographic regions. For example, does the area have unique features that could be developed into tourist attractions? Does the area have farmland that is well suited to producing a high value crop? Does the area have skilled artisans or technicians required by certain industries? The CED strategy will set out the actions that the partners from local government, the business community, community organisations and central government agencies need to take to turn these advantages into profitable economic activities. The strategy will concentrate on what needs to be done to support the existing businesses within the local community, to help local entrepreneurs start up new businesses and to attract investors and businesses from outside to come and do business within the area.

Although central government is responsible for economic policy and the regulatory framework for business operations and investment, there are many things that LDOs can do to facilitate economic development and expansion of the business sector within the community. LDOs can increase the “ease of doing business” for local entrepreneurs by simplifying and co-ordinating the regulatory processes of different spheres of government and providing businesses with easy access to information and support.

#### Sample Actions for Community Economic Development

##### Governance



Sample Actions for Community Economic Development	
	Establish a Community Economic Development “Stakeholder Mechanism” such as a working group or committee composed of local government, national agencies, private institutions, and representatives of business and civil society to discuss and agree on how they can work together to formulate and implement a local economic development strategy to make the community more prosperous
	Review the LDO’s policies and regulations that affect local business activity through taxes and regulation of land, building permits, utilities and other activities. Simplify and clarify processes and establish a Help Desk to assist businesses to get the information they need about the area and about starting and operating a business.
	Increase the ease with which businesses get the permits they need to operate by providing them with “one stop” service – one office that assists and advises them with regard to such things as licenses to operate, land title, building permits, fire inspection, health inspection etc. even when these are offered by different government entities. This initiative requires inter-governmental collaboration.
	Undertake a marketing campaign to brand, advertise and promote the area and its products to investors, business, industry, tourists, developers and potential residents.
<b>Entrepreneur and Small Business Support</b>	
	Establish a Business Incubator where space is rented out to fledgling businesses at below-market rents and mentoring is provided to help the new businesses start-up successfully.
	Establish a Skills Training Centre in partnership with businesses, artisans and education providers to provide training and apprenticeships to local youth and unemployed persons in fields where there are employment opportunities and make a job bank available for local employers.
	Establish a Small Business Development Centre that provides a range of services to local entrepreneurs to help them run their enterprise more effectively and profitably. Provide support and training to MSMEs to improve products, productivity, packaging, marketing, access to financing and business management practices.
	Establish a programme to increase loans and micro-credit available to MSMEs by partnering with financial institutions, micro-credit cooperatives and NGOs offering micro-financing.
	Encourage and support the establishment and strengthening of business networks and associations such as chambers of commerce, small business associations, farmer associations, cooperatives etc. and develop relationships with them.
<b>Physical Works, Infrastructure and Services</b>	
	Invest in the ‘hard’ infrastructure projects that business and industry need to operate efficiently such as roads and other transportation networks, water supply, sewers and drains, and electricity. Provide businesses with efficient services such as waste collection and disposal.
	Demarcate and set aside a zone for an Industrial or Business Park where similar businesses or “clusters” can locate and co-operate to share resources and reduce costs.
	Partner with businesses in the town centre or central business district to upgrade and enhance the area and make it more attractive to customers, clients and tourists. This may include building renovation, banners, greenery and flowers, signage, street cleaning, better sidewalks, improved parking, special events and marketing.
<b>Programmes for Disadvantaged Communities</b>	
	Initiate programmes to support workers in the informal economy as many low income families



### Sample Actions for Community Economic Development

derive their livelihood in this unregulated sector of the economy.

- ✚ Work with expanding industries, employers and training centres to reach out and extend training and employment opportunities to unemployed workers and disadvantaged populations in the community.

## 9.4 Land Use Plan and Zoning By-laws

A Land Use Plan (LUP) is a tool to help the LDOs to manage and control physical development (construction, housing, industry, infrastructure, etc.) in order to achieve the vision, goals and priorities set out in the community/municipal development plan and community economic development strategy. The Land Use Plan demarcates how the land within the LDO area can be developed, used or protected, such as:

- Where housing and residential areas may be located
- Where offices, business, industry and retail outlets may be located
- What environmental features such as forests, wetlands or mangroves should be protected
- What agricultural areas should be protected or further developed
- Where infrastructure such as roads, canals and bridges exist and need to be developed
- Where facilities such as parks, playgrounds, markets, schools and hospitals exist and need to be developed
- What areas are priorities for new development/growth
- What areas should not be developed to mitigate risk of natural disasters and impact of climate change
- What areas are priorities for refurbishing/improvement

Preparing a Land Use Plan requires accurate maps of the LDO area, a review of developmental priorities and a review of national planning documents that set out planning conditions and priorities for the area.

The Town and Country Planning Act, Cap 20:01 makes provision for “*the orderly and progressive development of Lands, Cities, Towns and other areas, whether urban or rural, to preserve and improve the amenities thereof, and other matters connected therewith.*” The Act makes the Central Housing and Planning Authority (CH&PA) the central authority for land use planning and development. The Act further requires the CH&PA to consult with the LDO whenever a proposed development scheme is wholly or in part within the area. LDOs also have the ability to propose development schemes for their own area. A Land Use Plan that gives due consideration to the vision and economic, social and environmental priorities of the community stakeholders will

provide the LDO and the CH&PA with an excellent tool to help assess the suitability of proposed schemes.

The Land Use Plan can also form the basis of LDO's Zoning By-laws that require anyone seeking a building permit or business license to comply with the land uses set out in the Land Use Plan.

### **9.5 Building Plans and Permits**

The Central Planning and Housing Act delegates the authority for approval of new construction and renovations of residential buildings to LDOs. The LDO has responsibility to review the building plans provided by owners/builders to make sure that they comply with the land use plan for the area and the building code including such things as set back from lot lines and height of building. The Environmental Health Officer generally undertakes the review of the plans on behalf of the LDO and recommends the issuing of a building permit to the LDO. Commercial building plans must be approved by the Central Planning and Housing Authority. The LDO also has authority to inspect the construction of residential properties to ensure that they adhere to the approved plan. The Government Electrical Inspection Office within the Ministry of Public Infrastructure is responsible for inspecting the electricity connection in new buildings and issue a certificate of compliance.

LDOs are empowered under the Public Health Ordinance to make and enforce by-laws to regulate aspects of the building permit process and building code. These by-laws must be consistent with the LDO's development plan and land use plan and enforced through the inspections undertaken by the EHO who makes recommendations to Council regarding action. If necessary the LDO, with the EHO, may initiate legal proceedings against defaulters for breaches or infringements against the Public Health Ordinance by prosecuting offenders in the Courts.

### **9.6 Disaster Management Plan and Climate Change Response**

LDOs have a responsibility for the safety and security of the community. This includes preparing for and responding to emergencies and disasters. Communities in Guyana, as elsewhere in the world, are experiencing more natural disasters as a result of climate change and extreme weather events, including strong winds, droughts, storm surges and flooding.

Section 126 A of The Local Government (Amendment) Act of 2015, outlines the responsibility of LDOs to respond to an emergency or disaster and stipulates:

*(1) Each local authority shall respond to emergencies or disasters in a manner as determined by the local authority whether it is a national or local emergency or disaster within their Neighbourhood Democratic Council or in another Neighbourhood Democratic Council.*

*(2) Each local authority may prescribe general procedures for the handling of emergencies or disasters including the deployment of personnel and equipment necessary.*

LDOs are encouraged to prepare a Disaster Management Plan that will set out the general procedures for handling emergencies and disasters and the strategies to prepare for and reduce the risks of disasters and impacts from climate change. Each LDO must assess its own specific risks that arise from its unique location, local conditions, physical features and climate. A comprehensive disaster management plan will include actions to address the following:

- a) Prevention:** This refers to decisions that the LDO takes to prevent an emergency such as not allowing building or development in high risk areas such as flood plains and steep slopes prone to landslides.
- b) Mitigation:** This refers to actions to reduce the effects of an emergency, extreme weather such as widening drains, maintaining irrigation channels and keeping drains clear.
- c) Preparedness:** This includes the measures taken in advance of an emergency to ensure an effective response framework is in place. It may include naming a councillor or staff member as Emergency Response Coordinator, establishing an emergency response team with members from the LDO, police, fire and emergency health services, identifying a disaster response operations headquarters, identifying emergency shelters and community coordinators, and establishing an emergency communication plan.
- d) Response:** This will set out the action plan in case of an emergency, including the role of the Coordinator, first responders and other members of the team and the ways to communicate with the public, secure citizens and public property and undertake rescue operations etc.
- e) Recovery:** This refers to the LDO's strategy for recovery following an emergency or disaster such as repairing or rebuilding damaged infrastructure and providing assistance to citizens. Ideally it entails setting aside an emergency reserve fund that can be used in urgent situations.

## **9.7 Solid Waste Management Plan**

LDOs are mandated to collect and dispose of garbage in their area. This public service has a significant impact on the community, affecting drainage, public health, business operations, community appearance and environmental preservation. The lack of efficient garbage collection and disposal can be a cause of citizen and business dissatisfaction with the performance of their local democratic organ. To improve the management of solid waste the LDO is advised to prepare a Solid Waste Management (SWM) Plan. It should be consistent with the Regional SWM Plan where one exists and the national Integrated SWM Strategy.

To formulate a plan for SWM, the standard planning steps should be followed:

- i. Get ready to plan: Establish a SWM planning team in collaboration with the Environmental Health Officer and Environmental Management Committee if there is one, and give it a mandate to formulate (or update) the LDO SWM plan; identify key stakeholders (eg. citizens, business, industry, the RDC, the MoC Sanitation Management Unit and the Environmental Protection Agency); consider forming a SWM advisory committee with community and expert members.
- ii. Understand the local situation: Gather and analyse data on littering, the types of waste being generated and collected from households, institutions and business, the challenges of collection and disposal and the opportunities for reducing waste and improving management; consult with stakeholders about issues, priorities and potential for collaboration.
- iii. Prepare the plan: Include measures to address the priorities identified in the local situation analysis; consider measures to reduce littering and illegal dumping, to increase waste reduction, recycling and recovery and to improve collection, transport and disposal efficiency.
- iv. Implement the plan: Communicate the plan to staff and the public; make budget allocation for each initiative within the plan; assign responsibility for implementation to appropriate committees and staff; work with partners to implement.
- v. Review the results: Monitor progress; adjust activities as necessary to achieve targets; report to the public on achievements and benefits; update the plan every 5 years or as needed.

The Ministry of Communities has prepared a National Integrated Solid Waste Management Strategy that is expected to be finalised and circulated early in 2017. This strategy sets out the vision, goals and strategic directions for SWM in the country. It includes priority initiatives that LDOs, national government agencies and other stakeholders can take to meet the nation's SWM objectives. It will be an essential reference document for LDOs in preparing their SWM plan.

LDOs, depending on their local context, may consider the following when preparing their SWM Plan:

- **Reducing littering and illegal dumping** by conducting public education campaigns, enacting by-laws and strengthening enforcement.
- **Reducing the amount of waste generated and transferred to dumpsites** by introducing back yard or community composting programmes, implementing recycling projects for bottles, tyres, cardboard etc., and working with the private sector to reduce the use of single-use plastic bags and non-compostable food and beverage containers.

- **Increasing collection efficiency and cost-effectiveness** by assessing and improving collection equipment, routes, schedules and transfer systems, and partnering with other LDOS for economies of scale.

✚ *For more information contact the Sanitation Management Unit at the MoC*

# 10. Intergovernmental Relations

## 10.1 The Communication Imperative

Guyana's governance system has two spheres of government: national and local. Local democratic organs are of different types: regional, municipal, neighbourhood and community. Given this system, geographic areas fall within the jurisdiction of more than one government, which makes interaction between the spheres of governments compulsory.

Without good channels of communication, formal and informal, as well as good relationships between the officials within the various government organs and agencies, there is a significant risk of efforts working at cross-purposes, of gaps and overlaps in service, and of frustration among elected officials, government staff and citizens. Hence there is a great need for good "intergovernmental relations."

Intergovernmental relations are important not only between LDOs and other spheres or levels of government such as the RDCs and central government, but also with any municipal councils that are nearby and with other LDOs that are facing similar challenges or with whom an LDO shares an ecosystem, transportation network or local economy. Improving relationships, communication, co-operation and collaboration between the LDO and other government organs and agencies will lead to more coordinated public works and delivery of services to citizens, more integrated plans and programmes, and savings in implementing projects through joint funding and resource sharing.

## 10.2 Areas of Shared Jurisdiction

There are many service areas where LDOs are providing services in which other spheres of government are providing related services, such as public works (road maintenance, drainage construction and maintenance, solid waste management), facilitation of community economic development and disaster management, among others. When planning projects in these areas, the LDO should strive to develop relationships and work cooperatively with the other relevant authorities to ensure that planning, implementation and monitoring are coordinated, and where appropriate, are collaborative (joint or partnership projects).

### ***Examples of collaborative intergovernmental initiatives:***

***Infrastructure Development:*** The LDO, RDC and Ministry of Public Infrastructure and Public Works collaborate on the planning and construction of a new roadway and bridge near the LDO town centre, with the Ministry funding the bridge, the RDC improving the approach road and the LDO improving the feeder roads. A committee is

formed with engineering and public works staff from each partner. The construction plans, procurement and schedules are synchronized to ensure the most cost-effective purchase of goods and services, joint monitoring of the construction and the least amount of disruption for citizens.

***Solid Waste Management:*** Several LDOs, MCs, RDCs and the Ministry of Communities collaborate to develop and implement a SWM plan that includes efforts to reduce waste generation at source, introduce a composting programme within the participating LDOs and MCs, and improve the management of the dumpsite where all of the LDOs, MCs and RDCs dispose of collected waste.

***Community Economic Development:*** The LDO partners with the Ministry of Business to establish a Small Business Support Centre that will provide advice and support to entrepreneurs and MSMEs in the area and provide a “One-Stop-Shop” for businesses seeking licenses and permits to start-up or expand.

***Resource Mobilization:*** The LDO and its neighbouring MC, with assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture, prepare a proposal for a grant from an interested donor to build an agro-processing facility in the MC area that will purchase produce from the farmers in the LDO area.

### **10.3 Strategies and Mechanisms to Improve Intergovernmental Relations**

There are many ways to strengthen intergovernmental relations, all of which rely on good communications skills, good human relations and good will.

- **Develop Informal Linkages:** The primary way to improve intergovernmental relationships is through communication and networking. Elected officials of the LDO should strive to develop cordial, respectful and cooperative relationships with the elected officials of the nearby LDOs, MCs and the RDC as well as their representative to the national parliament. Similarly the LDO staff should strive to develop professional relationships and lines of communication between themselves and the officers within the neighbouring LDOs, RDC, MoC and the national agencies with whom they must interact to coordinate service delivery and developmental projects. Such informal linkages allow persons to “pick up the phone” and discuss items, seek cooperation or get answers to questions quickly, and avoid small items turning into issues or problems.
- **Clarify Roles and Responsibilities:** Poor intergovernmental relations frequently result when the different parties are not clear on who is supposed to do what and when they feel that another LDO or agency has transgressed into their area of authority. Such tension can be reduced when each party’s area of accountability and responsibility is clearly laid out – in legislation, executive orders, memoranda of agreement, development strategies or local plans, meeting minutes, or other types of

agreements. When there is lack of clarity, seek clarification from oversight agencies and organise a meeting with others involved to clarify roles.

- **Participate in Formal Mechanisms:** RDCs are tasked with convening monthly meetings of the Regional Communities Committee where LDO mayors or chairpersons and overseers have an opportunity to address issues of common concern. Use those opportunities to build relationships and to address challenges that require the co-operation of other LDOs.
- **Organise Ad Hoc Meetings:** The LDO can invite relevant parties to a meeting when it is necessary to resolve a particular issue that involves other spheres of government and/or other LDOs. These meetings can be held anytime but should be scheduled to be as convenient as possible for participants. Set an agenda and inform invitees of the purpose of the meeting.
- **Request Special Committees or Commissions:** When the LDO is facing a significant challenge that requires the combined efforts of several spheres of government, and which cannot be resolved through the normal channels or informal efforts, the LDO may request the MoC to setup a special committee or a commission with the explicit mandate to address the issue and recommend a policy change, by-law or programme in response.
- **Attend Conferences, Workshops and other events:** The MoC, national government agencies, NGOs, educational institutions, donors and others regularly organise a variety of educational opportunities and events designed for sharing experiences that focus on topics relevant to LDOs. Those events not only provide councillors and staff with an opportunity to become informed about various aspects of public service and governance but also provide a venue for intergovernmental liaison and networking.



