

Case Study



FCM ICMD



Community Clean-Up in New Amsterdam: Building a Framework for Public-Private Partnerships in Municipalities in Guyana

Summary

Public private partnerships, though not a new phenomenon in Guyana, represent an untapped funding source in the municipal sector. The Small Projects Fund of the Municipal Governance and Management Program (MGMP) has helped facilitate corporate and citizen involvement in municipal affairs, with demonstrated benefits to everyone involved. This case study examines a community clean up project in New Amsterdam, the first of the small projects implemented through the MGMP. The project resulted in \$1.5 million GD (approximately \$7,000 CAD) of corporate sponsorship and donations, and garnered an overwhelming level of support from the business community as well as the community-at-large. The case study documents the experiences of the municipalities in relation to corporate involvement in the Small Projects Fund of the MGMP. The lessons learned from the small projects implemented to date can contribute to the development of more formalized public/private partnerships in municipalities in Guyana in the future.

Introduction

MGMP is a bilateral initiative between FCM and the Government of Guyana, with financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). FCM is an association of more than 1,300 Canadian municipal governments (including Canada's largest cities and rural communities), as well as provincial and territorial municipal associations. Since 1987, FCM has supported various overseas municipalities in capacity building, knowledge sharing and implementation of practical solutions to municipal issues. MGMP is designed to help strengthen local governance and management in six municipalities in Guyana and help foster an enabling environment for municipal governance and development. MGMP enjoys strong support in all of the municipalities, and is making inroads in many of the neighbourhoods surrounding the participating municipalities.



Clean-up on Main Street, New Amsterdam.

Local Context

The Government and people of Guyana face serious challenges for development at the political, economic and social levels. The political divide in Guyana is manifested in partisan politics and racial divisions, which dominate and often hinder decision making at the municipal level. Economic uncertainties are exacerbated by the emigration of professionals and skilled people; poverty remains a serious issue. The six municipalities involved in MGMP are Georgetown, New Amsterdam, Anna Regina, Linden, Rose Hall and Corriverton. Guyanese municipal governments are mandated to deliver a range of essential services, but struggle to meet their mandate because of vulnerable and small economies, high levels of poverty and the poor quality of services. Municipal governments have problems attracting skilled human resources and raising financial support for their programs. Poor infrastructure, weak governance and management capacity, and mistrust among citizens are challenges common to the six municipalities.

MGMP Small Projects Fund

The MGMP Small Projects Fund is one component of the MGMP that aims to support local capacity over the long-term. Its primary purpose is to encourage project management in the municipalities and more active and productive collaboration between the municipalities and communities in the planning and implementation of local development initiatives. The elements of capacity building and self help are built into the design of projects. Citizens are required to identify and select projects, and participate in the entire implementation process, providing both the municipality and its residents with increased management capacity.

Box 1

MGMP Small Projects Completed or Underway

- Georgetown emergency post flood construction and rehabilitation culverts project
- Princetown racehorse bridge project
- Rose Hall drainage project
- Anna Regina Community Centre ground phase 1 project
- Rose Hall municipal sanitary block
- Rehabilitation of New Amsterdam chapel
- New Amsterdam Esplanade Park sanitary block and benches
- Wismar Hill waster water project
- Rehabilitation of Anna Regina High Bridge and establishment of a citizen's park
- New Amsterdam community clean up

Projects generally focus on some aspect of environmental management or community infrastructure. Once a project is selected, MGMP contributes a maximum of \$1.5 million Guyana dollars (approximately \$7,000 CAD). In exchange, the municipality is expected to contribute in kind to the project. This contribution may take the form of labour, machinery, and/or supplies, among others. Given the limited financial resources available to Guyanese municipalities, private sector involvement has been integral to the success of many of the small projects undertaken in 2005, reducing the overall cost of the projects, and facilitating their execution.

As of May 2006,, MGMP has provided \$79,161 dollars (CAD) to support 10 projects in the six municipalities (Box 1). The municipalities themselves have made contributions totalling \$26,462 dollars (CAD).

The New Amsterdam Community Clean-up is a special case in the Small Projects Fund, since New Amsterdam did not request matching funds from MGMP for its implementation. Although it was considered to be a "no cost project" for MGMP, it still followed the same approach, guidelines and reporting as any other small project funded through the program, and is very much considered to be a part of the program.

The Approach:

Businesses Help Meet the Challenge

Management and Administration of the Small Projects

Each municipality involved in the MGMP has a Municipal Implementation Team (MIT), which is responsible for selecting and prioritizing the projects that will be supported by the Small Projects Fund. The MIT is comprised of 8 – 15 municipal stakeholders, including municipal staff, councillors, and a diverse cross-section of community members. Approximately equal numbers of men and women sit on each MIT. The MIT in each municipality selects small projects that are identified in its Municipal Agenda, which is a planning document that sets out priorities and projects for a municipality to pursue over a given time-frame. The MAs are developed in a collaborative and highly participatory process, in which municipal councillors, personnel and community stakeholders are fully engaged.

Municipal Development Officers (MDOs) help coordinate MGMP activities, and are located in each town hall in which MGMP works. MDOs are responsible for approaching, facilitating and coordinating both corporate and municipal involvement in the MGMP small projects. Based on their experiences with corporate participation, there are a number of overarching themes that have emerged. These themes deal specifically with the challenges and benefits of working with corporate sponsors and the resulting impact on the projects.

Focus on New Amsterdam:

The Community Clean Up Project

The idea for a community clean-up in New Amsterdam emerged following a series of 16 environmental community consultations held in September 2005. New Amsterdam's Waste Implementation Team (WIT) hosted the consultations, which helped identify the most pressing environmental issues affecting the municipality. The WIT takes a leadership role in environmental issues in the community and has nine members, including representatives from the religious and business communities, as well local government officials.



Members of New Amsterdam's Waste Implementation Team (WIT).

The purpose of this project was to clean-up of all the wards in the municipality through self help activities. The major project objectives included:

1. to clean up the waste along the main roadways and streets;
2. to reduce the risk of health hazards by preventing indiscriminate dumping and burning;
3. to educate citizens to store their solid waste in a more organized manner for collection;
4. to have residents of the various wards take ownership of their respective environments.

Based on participant input provided through the consultation process, the WIT developed a process to undertake the community clean-up. Because the municipality could not provide the funds needed to purchase the tools necessary for the clean-up, the WIT decided to seek donations from local businesses. A list of tools was developed based on the type of cleaning that would be undertaken, including the cleaning of drains, and the removal of litter and excess vegetation from road corners and private yards. Businesses were targeted with specific items in mind, and each business was asked to donate two items based on their area of specialty. Some businesses donated what was asked and others contributed more than what was requested. Others provided funds for additional supplies and snacks for volunteers involved in the clean-up.

New Amserdam's MDO made initial contact with businesses through a combination of personal calls, formal letters of request and informal networks. She suggests that 85% of all businesses approached responded positively, resulting in more than one million Guyana dollars worth of supplies for the community clean-up (approximately \$5,000 CAD). Contributions from participating businesses included donations, in-kind products and/or services.

Results: Sharing the Responsibility Goes a Long Way

Overall, sixteen neighbourhoods in the municipality of New Amsterdam have participated in a community clean-up. A total of 47,254 feet of drains, parapets, and road shoulders have been cleaned, and the entire main road running through New Amsterdam has been revitalized. Clean-ups have occurred mainly on weekends, and on average, each neighbourhood has involved twelve volunteers working at a given time. Each neighbourhood chose a number of projects, which generally included the cleaning of drains, parapets, and private yards.

A number of results have been felt already, improving the overall quality of life for residents of New Amsterdam. First and most obvious is the reduced flooding due to unclogged drains. Second, the overall appearance of the neighbourhoods has improved, as the bushes have been trimmed and debris removed. Residents, business owners and the municipal council have all taken note of these improvements, which has created a ripple effect by fostering increased community participation. A number of residents have offered their services to prepare free meals for the volunteers. Further, littering has become more socially unacceptable, and since the clean-ups began, the municipal environmental inspector has fined two people for littering.

Through this process, both citizens and business owners have come to realize that when they do their share they also benefit in return. In addition to the environmental improvements, both the municipality and the local residents have gained experience in the area of small project design, implementation and evaluation. These skills will remain within the municipality long after the project is completed.

The local media has also begun to cover the community clean-ups, noting the progress regularly in the local print and television media. It is hoped that the success of this project will inspire local businesses to continue to support municipal endeavours.

Finally, as a direct result of the corporate sponsors, the overall cost of the project was reduced and funds could be allocated elsewhere. The remaining funds will be used to extend the scope of the original project or start other projects.

Analysis

The outcome of the clean-ups and feedback from those involved has led to the conclusion that corporate sponsorship has been essential to their success. Local businesses recognize that since they depend on the support of residents, they have a natural role to play in contributing to the well being of their municipality. The small projects provide a relatively straightforward mechanism for businesses to contribute, enabling them to choose which projects they will support, and the type of contribution they will make. Further, they gain recognition for their generosity and corporate citizenship. It is assumed that residents will support businesses that contribute to the well-being of their community.



Clean-up on Pitt Street, New Amsterdam.

The businesses of New Amsterdam were willing to participate in this endeavour for a number of reasons. First, the project was clearly outlined and would significantly impact the entire community. Second, the project was well planned. Businesses were approached professionally, in an organized and timely fashion, and the process was straightforward, transparent and citizen-initiated. Further, the project garnered the full support of the municipality. Based on the success of this endeavour, local businesses will be more likely to support such endeavours in the future.

Lessons Learned

Time and Preparedness

A significant amount of time was required for outreach with local businesses in order to gain their involvement in the project. The MDO was required to write letters, make follow-up phone calls and personal visits, and provide project data as requested. This element of the project added an extra level of accountability that was repeatedly noted as essential to the process.

Time Lines

The municipality must take into consideration that corporations, while willing to make a contribution to a project, may have internal processes and timelines that do not match the timelines of the municipality's project. This may cause delays in the project's implementation. Conversely, if the municipality is slow to respond to offers of a corporate contribution, this can frustrate both the municipality and the business sector. It has been suggested that if the municipality were to increase its response time, corporate citizenship would increase. A better understanding of both the municipal and corporate processes may help to alleviate this problem.

Developing Relations with Businesses and the Community

Open, two-way communication between the municipality and local businesses is key in developing successful corporate-municipal partnerships. Corporate sponsors are willing to participate in municipal endeavours when the process is straightforward and transparent, and when they are approached and informed about a project. Businesses do not generally offer their products and/or services if they are not directly approached. Further, businesses will not make donations unless they are certain they will be used solely for the intended purpose. However, once they are approached and informed, and some level of accountability is built into the process, corporate involvement can be overwhelming. This was demonstrated during the



BELOW AND ABOVE: Clean-up of drains on Pitt Street.

undertaking of the New Amsterdam Community Clean-Up, as well as in other small projects in the MGMP.

Enhanced Citizen and Corporate Involvement

The New Amsterdam project and others in the MGMP yielded unexpected benefits, mainly in terms of increasing both citizen and corporate involvement in community activities. Community members become more willing to participate in development projects when they see their neighbours participating, and when they observe noticeable changes. Similarly, as local businesses notice the changes happening within their community, they become more willing to support other endeavours. In New Amsterdam, residents were impressed with the project to the extent that they volunteered to provide meals to the volunteers free of cost.

Replicability and Prospects for Future Partnerships

This case study clearly demonstrates that while public-private partnerships are relatively new in the municipal sector in Guyana, both municipalities and businesses are willing to venture into this new realm. To date, over 10 MGMP small projects have been implemented using a common approach, all of which have involved partnerships between the municipality, the private sector and community members. The projects provide a basis for the development of more formalized public-private partnerships in the future.



For more information on MGMP or to contact program staff in Guyana:



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