



The EDP story – building partnerships to boost the regional economy

Prepared by the Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP).

Introduction

The Economic Development Partnership (EDP) was launched on 26 April 2012 as a collaborative intermediary organisation. Its mandate is to build, monitor, teach and support partnerships in order to improve the performance of the Western Cape's economic development system and to foster a more competitive, inclusive and resilient regional economy.

History

In October 2010, the Cape Town Partnership, under the leadership of Andrew Boraine, was celebrating the city's successful participation in the 2010 World Cup when new economic development MEC Alan Winde called to discuss the performance of the economic agencies in the Western Cape. Winde thought that these agencies were underperforming, and asked Boraine to explore a model for the restructuring of the various agencies into a single economic development agency. Boraine and his team looked at the possibility of amalgamating all the government-funded agencies but eventually went back to Winde to suggest that while culling overheads was important, the biggest problem was that government was not engaging properly with

business and civil society, and what was actually needed were structured partnerships. The concept of an Economic Development Partnership (EDP) was taken to the Western Cape Government Cabinet, which accepted the proposal in August 2011.

Alan Winde gave Boraine a year to get the EDP up and running, and he, together with Yumnaa Firfirey, quickly got to work with a series of road shows, first talking to all the government bodies from DEDAT to Wesgro and the sector development agencies. The discussion was broadened and potential partners included all levels of government (national, provincial and local), municipal managers and mayors, the main business associations, the region's four universities, social movements and organised labour. Organisations were asked to indicate

whether they would be interested in becoming a member if a partnership body was formed. All except Cosatu signed a declaration of interest in membership.

National Treasury's Technical Assistance Unit, as well as the Western Cape Government, provided funding for the design of the partnership. While this was under way, the fledgling EDP launched an Economic CEO's Forum, which provided some insights into the partnership process. Boraine realised that bringing everyone together in a generalist way doesn't work, as it doesn't necessarily translate into action and stakeholders quickly become fatigued with 'talkshops'. Most institutions and organisations have specific interests and a more effective approach was to refine the process into bilateral engagements based on sector, thematic or geographic interests.

At the same time, (and before the EDP was officially launched in April 2012) the Economies of Regions Learning Network (ERLN) was launched, demonstrating the EDP's commitment to networking nationally. The Western Cape Government also approached the EDP to run the Future Cape process, and a Contextual Report was published in February 2012. When the City of Cape Town became a partner, Future Cape was renamed One Cape 2040 and the EDP had an busy time developing the One Cape 2040 vision while at the same time selecting the EDP's new board and putting a new institutional structure in place. The first EDP Board meeting was held on 28 August 2012, and a shared services agreement between the EDP and the Cape Town Partnership was cemented. By now, the EDP's first staff appointments had been made, and the Western Cape Government Cabinet adopted the One Cape 2040 vision and framework in November 2012.

At the end of 2012 the Western Cape farm crisis broke out, and the EDP stepped in

to demonstrate the power of partnerships with the Future of Agriculture and the Rural Economy (FARE) process. For the first time the EDP was acting rather than talking, and the establishment of the FARE process took up huge resources as it involved getting adversaries involved in the process, raising funds, running the process and delivering a report. FARE was launched exactly a year after the launch of the EDP.

Other projects were initiated, including work on skills development and paths to employment and 2013 was used as a time to show the value added through delivery, which meant that the establishment of the institution itself was neglected. This changed after a move to the EDP's current offices at the end of 2013, whereupon there was an emphasis on building a strong professional staff.

Focus

The EDP's work is categorised into four focus areas: Building Partnerships; Monitoring, Evaluating and Designing Partnerships; Teaching Partnership Techniques and Practices; and Supporting and Facilitating Partnerships.

Fifty percent of the EDP's work is in building partnerships, and this is what drives the EDP's engagement strategy. Categories of partnership include sector-, theme- and spatially based partnerships. The FARE process, for example, was about building the agricultural sector. Everyone working at the EDP has to show evidence of partnership formation, and one of the internal systems involves developing an understanding of the stages of partnership, which is useful when it comes to teaching partnership techniques and practices.

The second pillar of the EDP’s work is the Monitoring, Evaluation and Design of Partnerships, and this involves the monitoring of the performance of the regional economic development ecosystem in order to make recommendations for improvement and support. The EDP team also coordinates economic data and business intelligence for evidence-based planning; undertakes research and project development; and works on partnership design.

The third pillar is the Teaching of Partnership

Techniques and Practices, and this involves the development of partnering models, methodologies and practices; leadership development services; partnering case studies; and networking and knowledge sharing through the EDP’s Partnership Exchange.

The fourth pillar is the Supporting and Facilitation of Partnerships, which involves dialogue and partnership facilitation services; the support of partnership building activities of the EDP members and stakeholders; and the generation of new leads and ideas.

CLASSIFICATION OF EDP ACTIVITIES AND SERVICES				
Focus areas	Building Partnerships	Monitoring, Evaluating and Designing Partnerships	Teaching Partnership Techniques and Practices	Supporting and Facilitating Partnerships
Activities and Services	Categories of partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector based • Theme based • Spatial based Types of partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transversal • Inter-governmental • Cross-boundary • Cross-sector 	Monitor performance of the regional economic development ecosystem and make recommendations for improvement and support Coordinate economic data and business intelligence for evidence-based planning Research and project development Partnership design	Develop partnering models, methodologies and practices Collaborative leadership development services Partnering case studies Networking and knowledge sharing	Dialogue and partnership facilitation services Support partnership building activities of our members, partners and stakeholders Generate new leads and ideas



Challenges

The EDP grapples with a variety of challenges, including:

- Historically adversarial relationships among government, the private sector and labour.
- A politically-charged environment, with a limited history of bi-partisan approaches to problem-solving
- Dominant corporate sector interests and a fairly fragmented civil society.
- Mandate confusion, which means that some of the EDP's public sector partners treat the EDP as a 'service provider' rather than working with the EDP to improve the regional economic delivery system.
- The need to demonstrate short-term 'return on investment' of stakeholder time, energy and funds, when in practice, partnership building needs longer-term participation.
- Sourcing of funding beyond the current one set of funders (the public sector). It is challenging to secure funding for processes as opposed to projects with seemingly more concrete deliverables.

Conclusion

The EDP's work is a combination of action, teaching and partnership design with a focus on data and intelligence. While the EDP is a non-profit organisation, it is focused on the needs of enterprises and firms, which differentiates it from government departments and agencies, which tend to be supply side driven. As a non-profit, collaborative intermediary organisation, the EDP is able to provide an objective, neutral platform and facilitate cross-sector dialogue and partnerships between government, business and civil society for the development of the Western Cape's regional economic development system.

References

Cloete, E, *The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership as a collaborative intermediary organisation: lessons for partnership practitioners*, Annual Review of Social Partnerships.

Acknowledgements

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