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The Stellenbosch Safety Initiative:
A case study in partnering solutions

The Western Cape Economic Development Partnership (EDP) provides tailored partnering solution initiatives to support the implementation of public sector development objectives within the local and regional economic development system. Part of its work is to identify best practice in partnering in the Western Cape, and facilitate the translation of this practice to other areas or issues.

The Stellenbosch Safety Initiative (SSI) is one such example of best practice in partnering. In an environment where safety and security issues are of increasing concern, this initiative, which includes all the key security stakeholders in a municipal area, provides valuable insights into how to build and maintain a focused partnering solution.

In essence, the Stellenbosch Municipality employed partnering solution tools to establish a neutral security entity composed of both private and public security bodies. This entity has adopted the responsibility for establishing and sustaining a safe community characterised by multi-stakeholder security measures, pre-emptive strategic preparation for crime prevention, effective empowerment of security personnel, and proactive leadership.

The process involved in establishing and developing this security entity represents a unique opportunity for knowledge-sharing. To assist with this analysis, a framework developed by the EDP which details seven key partnering principles or attributes (as below), has been used.

Partnering Attributes

1.	Shared goals and objectives
2.	Joint activities
3.	Shared resources
4.	Effective Communications
5.	Strong governance
6.	Efficient use of process, technologies and systems
7.	Collaborative leadership

1. Shared goals and objectives

In successful partnering solutions, issues that are being addressed are understood, and goals and objectives are shared and articulated in a common language. In practice, this also means that there is agreement on priorities, that there is clarity on who needs to work together to reach shared objectives, and that there is an awareness of the way in which different mandates can be combined.

The goals of the SSI were based on the immediate reality of the Stellenbosch community, i.e. that petty crime had evolved into more serious crime, owing, to a large degree, to the entry of crime syndicates into the town. This led to an increase in ATM thefts, kidnapping, and other crime, and a realisation that local safety programmes had to be rethought. The establishment of the SSI in 2014 followed, with the explicit purpose of reducing crime and establishing a safe environment in Stellenbosch.

The objectives of the SSI were based on this specific goal, and were influenced by the immediate safety challenges in the municipal area. The limited resources of the local South African Police Services (SAPS), for example, were identified early in the process as a primary challenge. It was therefore imperative to create a cooperative platform from which SAPS and private security companies in Stellenbosch could work in partnership in order to reduce crime. It was also, however, critical that this process observed the individual mandates of each entity involved, and that the these mandates

were not placed in conflict with each other.

The detailed objectives of the SSI were therefore co-designed with this sensitivity in mind, and were geared to maximise individual members' skills and experience while leaving their mandates intact.

2.   Joint activities

The activities that underpin the successes of the SSI are notable for being both grounded in practical solutions, and for being jointly planned and implemented. In general, this characterises effective partnering, and the benefits of this approach are clear.

- A shared memorandum of cooperation was jointly produced which aligned partners' aims and deliverables clearly.
- A joint operational task team was established – and maintained – to manage activities and to report on successes and learnings.
- The range of activities proposed and implemented was broad, and utilised the skills and experience of all the partners. These activities included road blocks, car searches, and drive-by initiatives, for example.
- The task team also developed an ongoing action plan which was specifically structured to match partners' security skills and experience with the activities being planned.

3.   Shared resources

Maximising resources in partnering solutions is critical. To do this, the potential contributions of all partners need to be identified, and – where possible – budgets, personnel, knowledge and ideas should be combined for collective impact.

Within the SSI, as mentioned, the resource capacity of SAPS was insufficient to allocate adequate resources to address the growing security concerns in Stellenbosch. The SSI provided a solution to this dilemma by introducing the concept of resource pooling. This included making it possible for SSI members to utilise vehicles from other partners when operationally practical, as well as the sharing of previously-embargoed information between partners.

These measures are notable for being previously unprecedented in security operations, which traditionally operate in very tight organisational silos.

4.   Effective communications

Communications in partnering solutions can be complex, with partners having differing communications approaches and timelines. For partnering solutions to be most effective, it is important that communications are jointly developed, that partners promote each other's activities and successes, and that both formal and informal communications networks are utilised.

In the process of establishing and maintaining the SSI, a number of levels and types of communication were employed. It is worth noting that the importance of maintaining clear and transparent communications with the various audiences in question was understood, and stressed, at every stage of the evolution of the SSI.

The first level of communication was that between the members of the SSI, with a particular focus on the engagements between SAPS and the private sector security companies. These communications were deemed important enough to be governed by the terms of the memorandum of co-operation signed by each member, and formed part of the core of communications for this initiative.

A regular calendar of engagements of all SSI members was also maintained, in order to ensure that there was consistent communication both about SSI activities, as well as about local and regional security issues. In addition, opportunities for all members of the SSI to meet less formally, in a social setting, were also arranged. These social interactions yielded disproportionately significant gains in relationship- and trust-building, and played a demonstrable role in enabling faster subsequent co-operation and communication between SSI members.

There was also particular attention paid to the specific messaging between the Stellenbosch Municipality and other members of the SSI. This channel allowed for confidential information to be shared between SSI members and the municipality when necessary, in the instances where this information could not be shared more widely within the partnership.

The next level of communication was between the SSI and the public, whether directly from the Stellenbosch Municipality, or from the SSI itself.
- The key focus of the municipal communications with the public centred on clarifying that

the municipality was not usurping the SAPS authority to deal with security issues, but was rather facilitating a partnering approach to addressing systemic challenges.

- Communications from the SSI were governed by the key principle that all SSI initiatives should be conveyed as coming from all the participants; as specified in the memorandum of cooperation for the SSI, no single member could assume responsibility or take the credit for any of the SSI initiatives. In this case, the assistance of the media was actively utilised in creating a unified image for the SSI and in clarifying the role of the organisation within the Stellenbosch community.

5.   Strong governance

Good governance within a partnering solution includes clarity on the convening role, agreed divisions of labour, broad-based representation of partners, and accountability to the group for delivery of activities.

In the case of the SSI, the governance role is currently held by the Stellenbosch Municipality. The extent of these governance activities, however, while robust and addressing the requirements listed above, has purposely been limited operationally. This has been done in order to foster as much neutrality as possible in the management of the partnership, and has led to an increased climate of co-operation and shared accountability.

6.   Efficient use of process, technology and systems

Successful partnering generally entails the shared use of processes, technology and systems. Shared online tracking tools, for example, can be particularly useful, as are agreements to co-produce data or evaluation methods. If partners agree to share information and knowledge, using shared processes and systems, partnering behaviour is significantly bolstered.

The first step taken by the Stellenbosch Municipality was to approach the approximately fourteen private security companies within Stellenbosch with a partnering solution proposal, which was subsequently also presented to SAPS. A key element of this proposal was the retention of complete transparency between partnering entities with respect to both the goals of the solution, as well as

the processes and systems that were being proposed to support the concept. This ensured that the mandates of each partnering organisation were observed and respected, and that no single organisation would be seen to be usurping the mandate of any other.

Another key characteristic of the processes underlying the SSI was their adaptability. The partners in the SSI agreed on an approach that favoured 'practice before paper-work'. This meant that, while the programme was certainly clearly planned and all relevant documentation put in place, as little time as possible was spent at the outset of the SSI on setting up lengthy terms of reference or memoranda of understanding. Instead, the partners focused on finding common ground and sharing solutions such as a detailed security map, depicting each organisation's area of operation. This map was later expanded and became a key tool for the partners, depicting the positions of all security vehicles.

A further key system that played a large role in cementing the relationships within the SSI was the deployment of an SSI radio within each security vehicle. In addition, these radios were supported by a network specifically set up to address the needs of a multi-partner security initiative. Without this core systemic support, it is doubtful whether the SSI would have been able to achieve the gains it has made.

7.   Collaborative leadership

Of all the elements of partnering, culture, attitudes and leadership are often the most overlooked – and fostering a culture of collaboration can prove to be the most difficult part of any partnering activity. In the case of the SSI, this issue was potentially complicated by the fact that the security industry in general is not characterised by partnering behaviour; there can be fierce competition for business and/or territories, and this often mitigates against security companies working together.

Building a culture of collaborative leadership among the members of the SSI was achieved in a number of ways.

- The memorandum of cooperation, at the outset of the initiative, specifically focused on rewarding collaboration and a culture of shared responsibilities. It also helped formalise a shared understanding of the aims and action plans of the SSI, and allowed for the easier inclusion, subsequently, of additional members of the

Stellenbosch security environment.

- Encouraging networking outside the professional environment for SSI members was also instrumental in building trust between them, and led to increased informal collaboration, over and above the levels of co-operation specifically called for in the memorandum of co-operation.
- The culture of collaboration was most vividly demonstrated in practice in the planning of joint operations. In each instance, not only were tactical activities planned by all members of the SSI, but the leadership of individual activities was rotated among members, based on individual members' or organisations' skill sets and experience. For example, the SAPS led any roadblock activity, while other activities were led by ADT or other appropriate SSI members.
- Overall, the collaborative leadership demonstrated by the two main partners, i.e. the Stellenbosch Municipality and SAPS, was undoubtedly one of the strongest factors in the success of the SSI.

Conclusion

The Stellenbosch Safety Initiative has been uniquely successful in addressing pressing security issues in a defined municipal area. There is undoubtedly the potential to translate the learnings from this process to other municipalities, and to use them to facilitate public sector initiatives in community safety more broadly.