

Presidential Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring

FSD Mini-Case Study¹

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Case Study Title: Improvisation and proactive insights in the quest for excellence in service delivery: The case of Ladybrand Magistrate Court

Purpose: To share the good practice with the public and other service facilities, so as to suggest ways of improving service delivery.

Target Audience: DPME, OoPs, government departments, citizens, service providers.

Acronyms:

FSDM	Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring
NPA	National Prosecuting Authority
SAPS	South African Police Service

1 Basic Information

Fill all relevant fields:

Service Point Name	Ladybrand Magistrate Court
Town	Ladybrand
Municipality	
Province	Free State
Service Point Manager / Contact	Name: Marie-Louise Lourens Designation: Acting Court Manager Dept/Org: Justice and Constitutional Development Tel. 051 924 3210 Email: MarLourens@justice.gov.za
Key words	Improvisation; innovation; commitment; passion; open communication; proactive procurement.
Executive Summary	With minimal resources and procurement red tape, the Ladybrand Magistrate Court has always rose above the rest by utilising the little that they have to ensure that service delivery is not adversely affected. Where the court management realised that the maintenance section deals with cash on a daily basis, they came up with daily cash check systems, which ensures that challenges are quickly identified and addressed. The court management has

¹ This template has been prepared to serve as a guide for the development of thumbnail case studies or story sketches from projects of the FSDM Programme. The purpose of these “mini-case studies” is to document, in a standardized and accessible format, cases that highlight key innovations and practices in development programmes/ projects which offer relevant lessons for FSDM practice. These mini-case studies are meant to provide readers with an easy-to-grasp-and-understand snapshot of a project, or components of a project, focusing on key learning points that contribute to future practice. Where possible, the mini-case studies should provide references to more detailed reports on the projects covered and to relevant resources for interested readers.

	<p>also ensured that citizens who come for service do not come back several times for the same kind of service before their individual issues are finalised. In this regard, there are application procedures in the maintenance section, which puts 30 minutes as standard time for all applications processed within the Ladybrand Magistrate Court. Citizens who are on the list to appear in court are informed of the postponement of the cases in advance, which saves costs for both citizens and the court. The prosecutions section has been receiving awards for service excellence since 2008.</p> <p>While the magistrate court has been striving for excellence in service delivery, some of the key stakeholders have not always come to the party. For example, the municipality issues too many traffic fines for the magistrate court to handle. In this regard, the court management has held meetings with these stakeholders and addressed the concerns.</p>
Key Themes	<p>Operational Systems / Policy Impact</p> <p>The operations of this magistrate court are inculcated in every official so as to ensure that citizens are helped in such a way that they do not come back for the same service again. In this instance, the management has developed a check list for every action that should be taken on a daily basis. This check list enables management to track outstanding actions and address them as fast as possible. In addition, especially in the maintenance claims section, the court management has put the application procedures in public spaces so that citizens are aware of what their applications would go through. In this regard, the court has put 30 minutes as standard maximum time it should take for a new maintenance applicant to complete their applications. This is evaluated by using the register put at the maintenance counter. In order to fast track decision making, the court manager has delegated two officials to act on senior positions, even without any form of compensation.</p> <p>While most of the improvements observed were those identified in the action plan during the 2012 monitoring visit, the court management has been proactive to include some of the items that were not identified as needing improvements. For example, while at the time of the first monitoring visit, the court was found to be clean, cleanliness within the whole court premises improved substantially. Signage, both external and internal, also improved. Improvements in internal signage can be attributed to the improvisation which the court management has come up with, which includes using cost effective methods of procuring signage. While office space has always been a challenge, the court management has also improvised by procuring vertical steel cabinets, which eases up filing within the office. To ensure transparency within the court, every office has a photograph of officials using that office in display at the office entrance. This enables the public to know who their service officials are. In addition, all officials wear name tags for easy identification.</p> <p>Some of the operational excellence observed in Ladybrand Magistrate Court include the awards some sections of the court has been receiving throughout the years, such as the awards it won as the NPA's best run office for 3 years running.</p>

2 The Case Study Story

Background / Context:	<p>Ladybrand Magistrate Court was unveiled to the public on 30 May 1951, mainly to serve the farming community of Ladybrand. The magistrate court was visited by DPME and OTP Free State officials in 2012 as part of monitoring visits, which the DPME conducts to selected facilities. In 2013, regional management reported to the Office of the Premier that both Ladybrand and Bloemfontein Magistrate Courts have shown outstanding improvements in their operations since the monitoring visits were made. It is with this background that Ladybrand Magistrate Court was chosen as a case</p>
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	<p>study for good practice.</p> <p>The prosecutions section of the court was voted Best NPA Office in 2008, 2009 and 2011. In order to ensure that prosecutions are conducted to the best, this section has displayed service charter for the citizens to know what standards are used in the provision of service. Staff rotation has motivated subordinates in ensuring that service delivery is always provided, as they get knowledgeable.</p>
Problem/gap identification	<p>The court realised that it was experiencing an influx of maintenance claim applicants. There was also overcrowding on certain days, when there would be court appearances. Challenges with cash balances were also not identified soon enough to address them. There was a challenge with both the South African Police Service and the municipality regarding the issuing of too many fines that would need the involvement of the court, which were issued without the consultation of the court. The court faces a huge office space shortage, especially as it has to accommodate the regional court regularly when the regional court has hearings in the area. The centralised procurement system has also made things difficult for the court operations, especially when there are regional court sittings.</p>
Steps taken to achieve the improvement	<p>In order to address the influx of applicants in the court, besides the standard electronic payment transfer which the national department of justice has initiated, Ladybrand Magistrate Court has introduced a 30-minute maximum application period, which helped in the reduction of queues in the court. The introduction of step-by-step application procedures, which is made known to the citizens, has also addressed the long queues. In order to address the cash balance challenges in the maintenance section, the court management introduced a daily cash check, which is aimed at identifying cash balance challenges as soon as they arise. The court is also proactive by checking its court case roll a day in advance and informing stakeholders of any changes to their court dates. This proactive approach has already resulted in passion, commitment and innovation among staff members, who feel that the court management involves them in every action taken within the court. The influx of fines that were issued by both the SAPS and municipality was addressed when the court management met on a quarterly basis with the SAPS and the municipality. The quarterly awareness campaigns also helped with stakeholders knowing their role within the justice system in general and in the court management in particular.</p>
Results	<p>Communication openly with subordinates and treating them as equals always yield positive results. Good planning and being practical always results in a positive spinoff. Transparency and courtesy towards citizens earns a facility trust from the public. Set service standards and strive towards achieving them, irrespective of how high they are. Early warning system should be used to address bottlenecks where they exist.</p>
Challenges and requirements to replicate	<p>The court was getting more traffic fines than it could handle in a day. This would result in its staff being overworked or the fines not processed.</p> <p>In order to address the problem, the court management met with the municipality and an agreement was reached that the traffic officers would not issue too many fines that will need the attention of the court. The issuing of too many traffic fines and not forwarding control documents to the court led to the court sometimes taking money from citizens without processing the transaction, which is risky for both the citizen and the court. The court management arranged a meeting with the municipality to address the problem.</p>
Lesson Learned	<p>Be passionate about your work</p> <p>Show commitment in service excellence</p> <p>Be innovative and see the future in every situation</p> <p>Improvise when things are difficult for the sake of service delivery</p>
Conclusions and	<p>While most of the standards are set by the National Department of Justice,</p>

Limitations	there is evidence of improvisation within Ladybrand Magistrate Court, especially regarding internal signage. The procurement of a few external signage, amidst procurement red tape, also signals that the court management is serious about transforming service delivery within Ladybrand Magistrate Court. The proactive approach in addressing issues has led to some of the challenges getting resolved without the involvement of external stakeholders. By ensuring that cash is checked and balanced daily, the maintenance section has ensured that it operates optimally. Calls that are made to the public a day in advance (to inform them when their cases are postponed, so they do not incur transport costs unnecessarily) has helped build trust between the community and the court.
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3 References

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Further Reading:	

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