

## Training Needs Assessment for Surat Municipal Corporation

### Executive Summary

The Surat Municipal Corporation (SMC) has been regarded as one of the models of excellence in urban management after it transformed the image of the city from being one of the filthiest cities with the outbreak of plague in 1994 to one of the cleanest now. The SMC prepared a vision to project Surat as a "Global City with Global Standards and Values". With this vision in mind, the corporation has given a high priority to implementing managerial and administrative reforms and hence had taken the initiative to undertake a training needs assessment exercise for its elected members and its officials. The overall objective of the Training Needs Assessment exercise was to identify training needs of existing manpower of the SMC and to identify specific training modules.



The National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in association with the Urban Management Centre (UMC) conducted the study. In order to capture both- the qualitative discussions and the individual capacity of the SMC, the study team used the SWOT tool and conducted comprehensive individual questionnaire. Detailed discussions with several department officials were conducted. Mr. D.M. Sukthankar, IAS (retd.) was the chief resource person for conducting the department specific SWOT discussion. The departments consulted were planning &

engineering; social infrastructure; finance and administration. The elected members were also consulted separately, to get their specific inputs on the study. Individual meetings were conducted with key decision makers' viz.-Mayor, Municipal Commissioner and divisional heads. Additionally more than 50 officials and 45 elected members filled up a self-administered structured questionnaire. Respondents were selected by SMC, by position and their responsibility and also by ensuring appropriate women representation.

### Analysis



A detailed analysis into the trainings provisions reveal that although it is commendable that the SMC has separate training budget provisions for each department, the overall training budget is only 0.01% of the total revenue expenditure. Maximum trainings have been provided in the area of legal understanding (mostly RTI related) followed by computer trainings and disaster management. It is commendable that sixteen officials were provided training in the area of

efficient functioning and management of the organization, which seldom receives importance and priority among other technical sectors.

The figures of number of people trained also highlight the fact that class I officials have received the least training. Across departments, the engineering department has received the maximum opportunities to attend any training programs. With SMC's JnNURM projects focusing primarily on improving basic amenities like water supply, drainage, transportation, only two Class II officials received training in water supply management. It was also seen that no cross-sectoral training for efficient coordination and project management was provided.

E.g., the importance of providing training to contracts department for public-private partnerships training.

It was also seen that over the years, the ratio of staff per sq. km has gone down considerably from 154 in the year 1998-99 to merely 59 in 2007-08.

While conducting the study, though not part of the study scope, the team realized many posts which have become obsolete. The TNA report also recommends that the SMC undertake a rationalisation of overall organisation structure and reorganisation of departments to become an efficient and effective service oriented institution.

**The main training provision recommendations based on the qualitative discussions and analysis of the individual questionnaires are:**

- *Formation of a dedicated training department* – the training department should be created within the Personnel and Establishment Department and a full time training manager can be recruited who would be responsible for a holistic capacity development of SMC.
- *Mandatory induction training* – the induction training should be made mandatory for all the staff in the first year itself.
- *Pre-retirement training* - there should be tailor made training programs for officials more than 55 years of age to prepare them for post-retirement options and to assist them find a new vocation. They could receive a phasing out schedule whereby they can reduce their working hours for the SMC and on the other hand increase the time devoted to the new vocation, over a period of last three years of their service.
- *Yearly calendar for training* - It is recommended that
  - for Groups I and II, 15 and 12 person days respectively must be invested for their training per annum (for the initial years which could be reviewed).
  - 10 person days of training should be invested for Group III officials.Class I officials have received insignificant amount of training due to pressures of work within the organization as staying away from the office for training delays work cycles. Hence it is recommended, that class I employees receive more training.
- It is also recommended to make a policy to allocate a percentage of revenue earned in a year for training and capacity building. Our suggestion is of 2%, as a guiding principle. The same could be reviewed periodically.
- *Prioritized Sectors for training*- maximum respondents mentioned that they would like to receive training in areas of urban planning, roads and bridges, financial management, contracts management and slum upgradation. Almost all these priority sectors are important for successful implementation of JNNURM projects and to ensure sustainability of initiatives and hence should be given priority in the short term (0-1 year). Similarly, other training sectors have been categorised in medium (2-3 years) and long term (4-5 years).
- *Training to be a pre-requisite to promotion* - SMC may initiate a process of accreditation whereby employees who have undergone training get some points. Minimum person days of annual training and or points collected could be made mandatory for employees for promotions or salary upgrades.
- *Internal staff newsletters* – internal newsletter should be prepared in Gujarati and disseminated across departments and across classes. These fortnightly newsletters are also a tool for imparting information on upcoming trainings, best practices from other municipal corporations, articles on self help, personal development etc.



- *Merit based competitive open selection for long-term professional development programmes-* professional development programmes are large investments for an organisation. Therefore, it is recommended that SMC develop a simple and universal criterion for merit-based selection to nominate staff for long-term training programs. The staff trained should become assets to the organisations, and hence there could be a bond signed to serve the organisation for a certain period, in exchange of the investments made.
- *Announcement for courses/training programs.* Announcements for training/capacity building programs seldom reach the aspiring participant. And hence a training department inventory of participants would assist the information flow.
- *Feedback to parent department-* SMC's training department (when constituted) should keep parent departments informed of participant's progress, based on the performance evaluation



- *SMC to enter into partnership* with training organizations to ensure that training is demand driven and specific. This will include strategic collaborations with state, Indian and foreign. SMC could work out the schedule with these institutions to receive special rates and customized programs for its staff.
- The methodologies for provision of training must have a balance of these tools

along with standard methodologies like class room trainings, Group work and exercises, Case studies, Films and audio visual aids and oration and presentation

The TNA report further details out specific training modules for specific class officials of key departments. It also provides a comprehensive list of training providers, their contact details, and areas of expertise as well as training modules for few key areas.