

The Local Economic Development Series

Promoting Local Economic Development through Strategic Planning



Volume 1: Quick Guide



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Foreword

All around the world, local governments, the private sector and civil society are demanding better ways to achieve local economic development, a cornerstone of sustainable development. This is due to the fact that local governments face increased democratic reforms and greater decentralization at the same time as massive transformations are taking place in the global economy resulting from trade liberalization, privatization, and enhanced telecommunications. The significance of these changes is that citizens and local governments now face formidable challenges, greater opportunity, and growing responsibility to work together to address the economic health of municipalities and the livelihood of their local citizens, many of whom may be under- or unemployed and living in poverty.



The purpose of the training series on Local Economic Development (LED) is to respond to this demand and help local authorities and their partners in the private, public and community sectors address these issues. Achieving economic growth and staying competitive is a serious challenge in itself. Ensuring the benefits of growth spread widely such that development becomes inclusive and impacting on the quality of life of all citizens is even more challenging. The question therefore is not only how we can make economic growth a reality in our communities, but how we can make sure that the growth benefits the marginalized and the poor. This requires firmly placing LED within the broader framework of local sustainable development. This in turn demands a strategic approach to LED that implies careful consideration of the various trade-offs, and making difficult choices. It also demands harnessing and mobilizing the local human, social, financial and natural capital towards the common vision, goals and objectives that the community aspires to achieve. This is possible only when the various stakeholders and actors join forces to make a difference in quality of life in their cities, towns and settlements.

This series on Local Economic Development, developed by UN-HABITAT, in partnership with EcoPlan International, is built around these principles. Whilst there are many tools and best practices in the field of local economic development, mainstreaming these into the local government institutional structure and development agenda remains a key challenge. This series will go a long way in bridging this gap, and enhancing the role of local authorities, elected officials and their officers, in guiding and stimulating local economic development to the benefit of their citizens.

The process of developing the LED Training Series relied on the above-mentioned basic philosophy of knowledge sharing. As is evident in the Acknowledgements, a wide range of local economic development professionals offered their ideas and experience to make this final document rich in content, robust in methods and widely applicable. There are many to

thank in the achievement of this training series: from the funding agencies – the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Dutch Partnership Programme, to the contributing members of the “virtual round table”, to the dozens of trainers and members of local government, private sector and civil society. Their wisdom and pragmatism permeate the documents in this series. Due acknowledgement must also go to Gulelat Kebede and the Training and Capacity Building Branch (TCBB) team of UN-HABITAT who guided and contributed to the project while bringing it to fruition. Final gratitude is reserved for principal author William Trousdale of EcoPlan International, Inc. (EPI), as well as to the many co-authors who undertook the challenge of articulating this innovative training series.



Anna Kajumulo Tibajuka
Executive Director, UN-HABITAT

Preface

Strategic planning for local economic development is important. It is a cornerstone of sustainable development. It involves wise resource use, integrating values and thinking ahead. These are demanding tasks that can be intimidating, and at times, overwhelming. They need not be.

In our work around the world, we have seen local economic development (LED) planning processes unnecessarily get stuck, lose momentum or, worse yet, not get started in the first place. In other cases, we have seen LED processes craving fresh insight, innovative ideas or a new sense of direction. We believe that confronting these basic challenges and taking advantage of these opportunities are well within our reach. It is this belief that inspired the development of this training series on LED.

As part of the development of this LED training series, we convened a Global Round Table of LED professionals. From Africa to Asia, Slovakia to Canada, Washington, DC to Quito, we received a myriad of perspectives on the core issues of LED. What we found was encouraging — the opportunities are great, the success stories extensive and the lessons learned helpful. Our Round Table participants pinpointed key issues in LED, such as leadership; enabling environments; children, youth and gender; job quality; society and environment; governance and democracy; culture; capacity; poverty reduction and globalization — to name but a few. Our Round Table participants agreed that for LED to succeed, local leaders and economic development practitioners need to have access to a range of tools, ideas and experiences to help them strategically address their own complex issues at the local level. Local challenges require local solutions.

We believe that strategic planning for LED is a pragmatic and powerful tool that can help significantly address local issues. By engaging in a strategic planning process for LED, at a minimum, this offers a way to improve the necessary interaction among business, government, labor and the poor. If done well, it provides a way to clarify competitive advantages, identify cooperative opportunities, craft innovative options and generate strategies that better achieve local priorities.

The commonality at the heart of all the comments from our Round Table is the belief that LED, broadly defined, can help communities to realize vibrant, resilient and sustainable local economies capable of improving the quality of life for all.

The LED series will yield a number of key measurable outcomes. It would respond to the existing demand and culminate in production of a tangible output that begins with local adaptations of these manuals, and ends with durable, long-term training and capacity building initiatives which are ultimately captured in the application of what has been learned. The LED Training Series targets the development of concrete action plans as a clear output of the training process. Partnerships and cooperation between public, private and civil society sectors underpin these action plans. The series is important in its contribution to promoting knowledge sharing. The LED

Training Series uses case studies and real world examples to encourage the evolution of learning-by-doing. The ultimate success and realization of these outcomes however lies on the creativity of local establishments and actors - local authorities, training institutions, informal sector operators, businesses, and civil society organizations-in adapting the tools to the realities on the ground and using this series as a living document, keeping it enriched through new insights, knowledge and experience.

So, if you have found yourself asking:

- How do we get started in LED?*
- What are the steps and tools needed to develop a LED strategy?*
- What are alternative LED programs and projects?*
- What are other communities doing?*

.....then this LED Manual Series was designed to help you.

Similar to the other UN-HABITAT training manuals, the LED training manual and companion documents will be accessible to the public in print and electronic formats. It is our vision to have this manual become a “living document” that will continue to be improved over time and we encourage adaptation to local, regional and national contexts. As you use, change and adapt the documents in this training series, we request due acknowledgement and credit.

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