

Water service delivery

The Establishment and Piloting of the Technical Assistance Centre for Small Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants

A new WRC publication provides an overview of the establishment and piloting of the Technical Assistance Centre (TAC) to improve water and sanitation services delivery in municipalities.

Need for assistance centre

This centre for small water and wastewater treatment plants was established to test a model to provide technical (but also non-technical) support to water services providers (WSPs) experiencing challenges with their water and wastewater treatment plants.

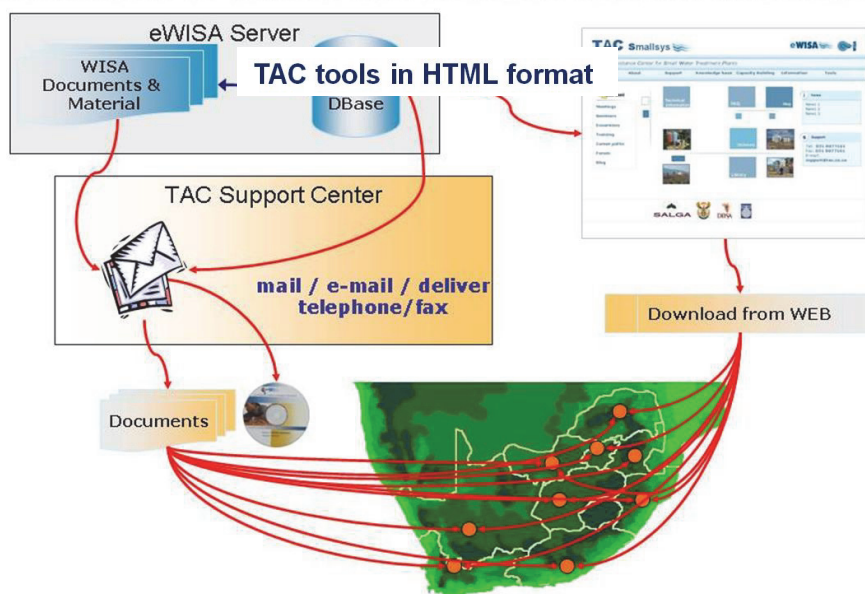
This report provides an overview of the establishment and piloting of the TAC, consisting of a description of the structure, mission, aims and activities of the TAC. It also provides feedback on piloting of the TAC that was performed in the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces. Included is an

overview of generic challenges common to many of the treatment plants in the provinces. Conclusions are presented on the establishment and piloting of the centre, and recommendations for future structuring and support activities by the TAC.

The main functions of the centre are:

- To provide a **technical assistance to water and wastewater treatment plants**: to provide pro-active and reactive hands-on support and assistance to small water and wastewater treatment systems experiencing challenges with compliance. This includes needs analysis, plant optimisation and monitoring, evaluation and certification.

■ Mechanisms to transfer and distribute data and information



Overview of the
TAC model

- To provide **knowledge and information management and transfer**: to coordinate and share information with the relevant sector stakeholders. This includes the operation and maintenance of a website and the development and management of databases of small systems and relevant service providers and suppliers. In addition, the TAC will play both an advisory and active role in the exchange of information and communication of new information on a range of topics such as management of facilities, funding mechanisms, and regulatory and legislative updates.
- **Develop competence and standards**: to assist in the development of professional competence and the best practical performance standards for small water systems at both national and regional level.
- **Research**: to initiate and formulate the undertaking of research and any other activities required to further the interests of the poor and small communities receiving water from small water systems.

Pilot phase results

It was decided that the establishment, piloting and roll-out of the centre be phased over two years to ensure progress against milestones and the planning budget. The initial decision by the WRC to pilot the TAC in two provinces proved correct as the rollout of the TAC proved difficult.

The pilot exercise provided the following key lessons:

- One of the main challenges of the TAC to date has been the lack of leadership support by key sector players (DWA, DBSA) and their initiatives for the Centre. It was especially difficult for the TAC to establish where it fits in with the overall support strategies in the water sector, and consequently how to coordinate its activities to achieve most value for the municipalities. This lack of coordination has made planning of the TAC support activities and funding for the activities and interventions challenging.
- The poor promotion by sector leaders of the role of the TAC in assisting with addressing problems at municipal water and wastewater treatment plants has led to poor integration of the Centre with other support initiatives in the water sector. The support of SALGA could also not be solicited. As such, widespread buy-in by the municipalities and appropriate role players in the municipalities could not be accomplished.

As a result of lack of demonstrated acceptance by DWA and DBSA, the TAC did not have the perceived 'legitimacy' that it needed to ensure buy-in from the municipalities.

Recommendations

Legitimacy

The legitimacy of a TAC should be clear to all stakeholders; there must be buy-in from all stakeholders from all levels of government. There must be a budget for priority interventions and accountability from stakeholders in following through with the strategic and planning direction provided by the TAC in the longer term.

Efficient project management

The aims, objectives, deliverables, products, time schedules and priorities of such a centre should be drawn up by the main funding organisation/s (DWA, DBSA, SALGA or other), who should also perform the project management to ensure that the TAC is managed according to the required aims and time schedules of the project. Attention should be given to efficient budgeting, communication and shaping it to provide unique services in the water sector. The TAC should operate on a different paradigm than any of the other existing support initiatives.

Strategic plan needed

The strategic plan should contain intervention plans on a regional basis in the prioritised regions. These intervention projects should then be set out on tender for companies or consulting engineers/institutions to tender within the scope of the work/terms of reference. All funding should be from a central ring-fenced fund managed by a suitably appointed institution.

Further reading

To obtain the report *The Establishment and Piloting of the Technical Assistance Centre for Small Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants* (Report No. TT 510/11) contact Publications at Tel: (012) 330-0340; Fax: (012) 331-2565; Email: orders@wrc.org.za or Visit: www.wrc.org.za to download a free copy.