



Thusong Service Centres • One-stop centres for government services and information

Ten years in a partnership for quality service delivery

Thusong Service Centres (formerly Multi-Purpose Community Centres (MPCCs)) are at the coalface of government efforts to bring services and information about opportunities closer to communities in an integrated, efficient and professional way. These centres are one-stop points where government departments from across the three spheres work together to ensure that communities are serviced in a way that better their lives. The centres, resting as they do on partnerships and co-operation, embody government's vision that by 'working together we can do more'. While the primary focus of the programme is on rural and under-served communities, urban and peri-urban areas similarly benefit, as poor communities in these areas also suffered deprivations in service delivery and access to information and opportunities made possible by government.

What is a Thusong Service Centre?

A Thusong Service Centre is a one-stop centre, providing government information and services in an integrated manner. Thusong Centres bring government closer to the people to promote access to opportunities to better the lives of communities and speed up service delivery.

Useful facts:

- By March 2009 there were 137 centres.
- Almost 4 000 services have been brought to communities through these centres.
- Over 3 million South Africans received services at Thusong Service Centres between October 2008 and March 2009.
- The centres ensure that people are not referred from pillar to post to access services and information. At the Inhlazuka Thusong Service Centre in KwaZulu-Natal, for example, communities had to travel 45km to Richmond to access such services at a cost of R54 per round trip. This in a community where the per capita monthly income is around R1 000 which is mainly based on social grants.

Who is responsible for Thusong Service Centres?

Municipalities

Municipalities are responsible for:

- establishing Thusong Centres;
- including centres as development priorities in its integrated development plans (IDPs);
- monitoring the quality of service delivery by all spheres of government;
- source funding for the establishment and sustainability of centres, especially the appointment of centre managers and staff to run the centres.

Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs

The department is responsible for:

- providing leadership in developing policies to guide and sustain the programme;
- playing a key role in advising on the funding model for these centres, especially the use of the Municipal Infrastructure Grant.

Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA)

The DPSA establishes and implements proper information and communications technology services in the centres.

South African Local Government Association (Salga)

Salga's role is to:

- advise government on how best to set up the Thusong Centres,
- promote the centres among organised local government.

Government Communications (GCIS)

Nationally, government had assigned GCIS the role of co-ordinating the Thusong Service Centre Programme.

Service Providers at the centres

Government, Parastatals, Business and NGOs render a basket of services at Thusong Service Centres. Government services include those from departments of Home Affairs, Labour, Social Development and Health; the GCIS; the South African Social Security Agency; telecentres; the South African Post Office; libraries; agricultural extension offices; provincial government, municipalities; and community development workers (CDWs).

Although not every centre has all services, centres start operating with primary services identified by the communities surrounding the centre during the research phase. New services are introduced as the centres function and develop.

Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Significant progress has been made in providing online service delivery to communities using these centres. The introduction of an ICT Blueprint at Thusong Centres is aimed at addressing the historical challenge of providing appropriate, fully functional, affordable and sustainable ICTs to enable service providers to offer services directly in even the remotest centre. This will enhance government access and speed up service delivery as citizens, are serviced directly at the centre.

General Service Counters

Other initiatives aimed at improving service delivery include the proposed roll-out of the prototype General Service Counters to guarantee that each centre has a frontline service and referral point, ensuring that citizens do not stand in long queues simply for information or to collect an application form. The National Youth Development Agency (NYDA), formerly known as Umsobomvu Youth Fund (UYF), with the help of municipalities has in the last financial year implemented an internship programme, whereby municipalities recruited unemployed local youth while NYDA trained and compensated these learners.

Funding for the programme

Whilst government is responsible for funding this programme, some parastatals and business have sponsored the programme by providing support and contributing in the construction of these centres. Private Public Partnerships are encouraged and supported, as they are an embodiment of the government vision that by 'working together we can do more'.

How will the Thusong Service Centres fight poverty and promote employment?

- The centres enable people to access government services such as IDs and social grants.
- They provide information material on youth development, entrepreneurship and women empowerment projects for sustainable livelihoods.
- They give information on how to start small businesses.
- Thusong Service Centres offer training venues for public education on Local Economic Development initiatives.
- Public participation events are held at centres e.g. IDP hearings, ward committee meetings and izimbizo to hear what communities are saying about local service delivery.
- Centres provide information on government's programmes and projects and distribute useful material such as government gazettes, circulars, brochures, forms, municipal reports, etc.

- Thusong Centres can be used as mobile alignment points and centres for events and programmes of government (e.g. service delivery drives, door-to-door campaigns, outreach events, workshops, councillor feedback meetings, etc.)

Ten years on! The Thusong Service Centre programme has demonstrated some best practices in providing integrated services to enhance government access and effective service delivery. Moreover, challenges as they have been identified through monitoring, evaluation and continuous review and assessment of the programme, have been addressed with innovations such as the ICT Blueprint and the General Service Counters, but also through solid cooperation between the three spheres of government and with partners from community organisations, civil society and business.

By October 2009, the review of the programme will be completed hopefully ushering in a new chapter in the life of this key initiative and ensuring that through quality service delivery and heightened access, the quality of life of communities serviced by the Thusong Centres will be better.

Who do I contact for more information?

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For more information, visit the Thusong Service Centre website on: www.thusong.gov.za

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Mobile vehicles regularly service communities during Thusong launch events or on service days. Here communities at the Zava Thusong Service Centre in the Limpopo province are serviced by the mobile vehicle of the Department of Home Affairs on the occasion of a service delivery jamboree held recently.



An outreach event took place at the launch of the Mafatsane Thusong Service Centre in October 2008.



At the Mpuluzi Thusong Centre in Mpumalanga officials of the South African Social Security Agency (SASSA) conduct a service drive at the centre's Open Day in 2008.



Document certification is a crucial service offered to rural communities enabling them to apply for services. A community member at the Zava Thusong Service Centre in the Limpopo province has her documents certified.



Then Deputy President and now President of the Republic of South Africa Mr Jacob Zuma launches the Leretlhabetse Thusong Service Centre (formerly MPCC) at the Lebotlwane village in the North West in June 2001