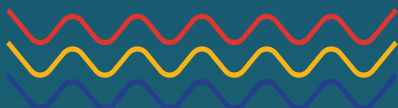




YOUth Choose Your Leaders

*A Civic Education Toolkit for
First-Time and Young Voters*



Facilitator's Handbook



About This Handbook



This handbook was developed for facilitating a civic education workshop with young people aged 18–25, in urban or rural settings in the Free State, in the run-up to the 4 November 2026 Local Government Elections. The civic education toolkit is a key output from SAIIA's *YOUth Choose Your Leaders* project, supported by the Social Justice Initiative (SJI). Under the project, SAIIA aims to engage young people – especially first-time voters – in the Free State province for a civic education drive aiming to make new voters aware of their democratic rights, civic responsibility, and process of voting in this election. The Free State province was selected for this activity since the quality of local government in the province has deteriorated and because outreach activities of this nature do not often take place there.

The toolkit is built on the central idea that civic education only really lasts when it starts with people's real lives, not with theory. Most civic education materials are structured the way a textbook is structured, starting with the Constitution, then rights, government, and finally, elections. That order makes sense for reference material. It is less effective as a one-day workshop for young people who may feel disconnected from politics because it asks them to care about abstract institutions before showing them why those institutions matter to their own lives.

This toolkit flips that order. It opens with a structured town hall in which participants describe, in their own words, what is and isn't working in their community. Lived experience is vital for converting political knowledge to political action. Everything that follows (the short presentation on how government is organised, the hands-on simulations, the voting-station walkthrough, the closing action plans) is deliberately built to answer the concerns participants themselves raised. Facilitators can pick and sequence activities based on what actually comes up in the room.

This toolkit is written in English, Afrikaans, Sesotho and isiZulu aimed at a reading level accessible to someone who left school after Grade 9, and it defines technical or legal terms the first time they appear (a full glossary is in Appendix B).

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Cover design and artwork: FAD Communications

How to Use This Toolkit

Roles you will need

- Lead facilitator to hold the agenda, lead the Town Hall and Bridge, give instructions for each activity.
- Co-facilitator / scribe to capture issues on the Community Issue Map during the Town Hall, help run small-group activities, and keep time. For groups larger than about 25 participants there should ideally be a second co-facilitator.
- Timekeeper to be the co-facilitator or a volunteer participant; gives 5-minute and 1-minute warnings during small-group work so the workshop stays on schedule.

Structure

The toolkit is modular. After the Town Hall and the short “Bridge” segment that follows it, the facilitator can choose from a menu of six hands-on activities based on the time available and the issues that came up in their specific group. Three ready-made agendas are provided i.e. full-day and half-day. But each facilitator can build their own combination based on their audience and the time available.

Group size

Designed for 15–40 participants. If there are fewer than 15 participants, the Town Hall and budget-simulation activities work better as a single group rather than small groups. If there are more than 40 participants, the group should be split into two parallel workshops. The Town Hall format loses quality with more than 40 people because not everyone gets heard.

Urban and rural adaptation

- **Rural settings:**
 - Allow extra travel-time buffer at the start; confirm whether the venue has reliable connectivity if you plan to demonstrate the IEC’s online registration portal or WhatsApp chatbot live. If not, describe the tools and provide the printed Handout D9 reference card instead. Municipal service issues raised may lean toward water infrastructure, roads, and distance to services (per Appendix Ca, access to tap water has declined across the Free State over the past two decades).
- **Urban/township settings:**
 - Issues raised may lean toward electricity reliability, refuse removal, safety, and youth unemployment. The Ward Council Budget Simulation (Activity 3) tends to generate especially lively debate in denser settings where competing service demands are visible side by side.

- **In both settings:**

- Before the workshop, find out the actual name and contact details of the local ward councillor and the municipality's official service-complaint channel (these vary by municipality and do not rely on a generic national number). Insert this into Handout D9 so participants leave with something they can actually use.

Staying non-partisan

This is a civic education workshop, not a campaign event.

Facilitators should not express a preference for any political party or candidate and should redirect any attempt by a participant to campaign for a party during the session ("Thank you — let's park that and come back to why participation itself matters"). The workshop's job is to build the skills and confidence to participate; who a person votes for is theirs alone to decide, and no one is entitled to know how a participant voted or intends to vote.



Materials checklist

See Appendix E for the full facilitator logistics checklist, including a print quantity guide for all handouts.

Learning Objectives

By the end of the workshop, participants should be able to:

1. Explain, in their own words, why their vote and their voice matter beyond Election Day.
2. Identify which sphere of government (national, provincial, or local) and which arm of government (legislature, executive, or judiciary) is mainly responsible for a given issue in their community.
3. Describe, accurately, how to check their voter registration status and what happens, step by step, at a voting station on Election Day.
4. Name at least two ways to participate in local democracy other than voting.
5. Connect at least one issue raised in the Town Hall to a specific, concrete civic action they intend to take.

Suggested Agendas

Choose the format that fits your logistics or adapt. In every format, run the Town Hall and Bridge first — the activities that follow are only as good as the issues the participants respond to.

Option A — Full day (approx. 6.5 hours)

Time	Segment	Duration
09:00–09:20	Welcome, ground rules, icebreaker	20 min
09:20–10:30	Town Hall: Our Free State, Our Future	70 min
10:30–10:45	Tea break	15 min
10:45–11:15	Bridge: From Issues to Institutions	30 min
11:15–12:00	Activity 1 — Whose Job Is It?	45 min
12:00–12:45	Activity 2 — Constitution FC	45 min
12:45–13:30	Lunch	45 min
13:30–14:15	Activity 3 — Ward Council Budget Simulation	45 min
14:15–14:50	Activity 4 — Voting Station Walkthrough	35 min
14:50–15:15	Activity 6 — Beyond the Ballot: My Action Plan	25 min
15:15–15:30	Closing circle and pledge	15 min

Option B — Half day (3.5 hours)

Drop three of the six hands-on activities and condense the Town Hall. Choose whichever single deep activity (3 or 4) best matches the issues you expect: service-delivery groups usually benefit most from Activity 3 while first-time-voter anxiety is better served by Activity 4.

Time	Segment	Duration
09:00–09:15	Welcome and icebreaker	15 min
09:15–10:00	Town Hall (condensed)	45 min
10:00–10:20	Bridge: From Issues to Institutions	20 min
10:20–10:35	Break	15 min
10:35–11:05	Activity 1 — Whose Job Is It? (quick version)	30 min
11:05–11:50	ONE of Activity 3 or Activity 4	45 min
11:50–12:15	Activity 6 — Beyond the Ballot: My Action Plan	25 min
12:15–12:30	Closing circle and pledge	15 min

Opening and Ground Rules (15–20 minutes)



Time:
15–20 min

Materials: Flipchart, markers, name tags/tape (optional)



Icebreaker: “Where I’m From”

Pair participants who don’t already know each other well. Give each pair 3 minutes each way to answer these questions:

- Their name
- The area they live in (be specific, e.g. township, town, farming area, village)
- One thing they are proud of about where they are from

Each person then introduces their partner to the whole group in one sentence.

Setting ground rules

Co-create 5–6 ground rules with the group rather than presenting a fixed list. This is a small, first exercise in participatory decision-making.

Suggest these as starting points if the group needs prompting:

- Everyone gets a turn; no one dominates the floor.
- During the Town Hall specifically: listen to understand, not to respond. Debate happens later in the day, not during the Town Hall itself.
- It’s OK to disagree but do it respectfully, and focus on ideas, not people.
- There are no “wrong” concerns. If it affects your daily life, it belongs on the wall.
- What’s shared in the room stays in the room, unless the person sharing says otherwise.
- This is a space to learn how to participate in democratic processes. It’s not a space to campaign for any party or candidate.

Part A — The Town Hall: “Our Free State, Our Future”



Time:
60–90 min
(45 min condensed)

Materials: Flipchart paper, sticky notes (2 colours if possible), markers, tape, pre-labelled category headers, camera/phone to photograph the finished map



Objective

To surface participants’ real, current concerns and sources of pride about their community, in a structured and non-partisan way, producing a “Community Issue Map” that the rest of the day will respond to directly.

Facilitator framing (say this, in your own words)

"This isn't a complaint session and it isn't a debate. Think of yourselves as private investigators describing your community as accurately as you can. Tell us what's working, and what isn't. We'll come back to these exact issues all day, so what you say here matters."



Method

Step 1 — Individual reflection (5 minutes)

In silence, each participant writes on sticky notes:

1. One thing in their daily life or community they wish worked better, and
2. One thing they're proud of about their community.

One issue per note.

Step 2 — Small groups (15 minutes)

In groups of 4–5, participants read out their notes, cluster similar ones together, and agree on their group's top 3 concerns to bring to the whole room.

Step 3 — Report back and mapping (20–30 minutes)

Pre-label wall/board space with category headers: Water & Sanitation, Electricity, Roads & Transport, Safety & Policing, Jobs & Economy, Education, Housing, Corruption & Accountability, Health, Environment, Other. Each small group posts its top 3 issues under the right heading. The co-facilitator reads each one back aloud before it goes up, to confirm it has been captured accurately and without commentary or editing.

Step 4 — Naming the themes (10 minutes)

As a whole group, step back and look at the wall. Ask: "What do you notice? What keeps coming up?" If time allows, give each participant 3 sticky dots to vote for the issues that matter most to them personally. Agree on 3–5 dominant themes and write these on a separate flipchart headed "Today's Big Issues" and keep this visible for the rest of the day.

Ground rule reminder

No rebuttal, no "well actually," no minimising during this part. Simply listening and capturing. Reasoned disagreement and problem-solving happen later, in the activities.

Output

A physical Community Issue Map and a short list of dominant themes, both kept visible for the remainder of the session. Photograph the map before it is taken down. You will use it to prepare Activity 1's issue cards during the break, and it is genuinely useful evidence of what young people in your area actually care about.

Bridge — From Issues to Institutions (20–30 minutes)



Time:
20–30 min

Materials: The Community Issue Map from the Town Hall, 5–6 issue cards pulled from it, 3 labelled zones/corners of the room (National / Provincial / Local)



Objective

To connect the issues just raised to the structure of South African government, so the rest of the day's content feels relevant rather than abstract.

Talking points

South Africa's government operates in three spheres (i.e. national, provincial and local) which are meant to work together ("co-operative government," Constitution Chapter 3) rather than in a strict hierarchy. Each sphere also has three arms:

1. The Legislature, which makes laws (Parliament nationally, the provincial legislature, the municipal council locally)
2. The Executive, which carries out laws and runs day-to-day business (the President and Cabinet nationally, the Premier and MECs provincially, the Mayor and officials locally)
3. The Judiciary, the courts, which settle disputes and apply the Constitution.

Think of it like a football team on match day.

- The coach sets the game plan and calls the tactics. That's what the Legislature does; it decides the rules the team will play by.
- The players on the pitch carry that plan out in real time. That's the Executive and they run the day-to-day game.
- The referee doesn't set tactics and doesn't play the ball. Their job is to apply the Laws of the Game impartially and settle disputes when there is a disagreement about whether a rule was followed. That's the Judiciary.
- And just as VAR allows a decision to be reviewed after the fact against the Laws of the Game, courts can revisit a law or an executive action after it's been passed or taken. They can strike it down if it doesn't hold up against the Constitution.

A team works when everyone sticks to their role. A coach who runs onto the pitch and starts playing is overstepping. A referee who starts calling tactics is overstepping. And just as a red card applies to the star striker as much as to any other player, no official, President, Premier, or Mayor, is too senior to be pulled up for breaking the rules.

Government works the same way. Problems occur when:

- An institution tries to do a job that isn't its to do
- An institution fails to do the job that is its own to do

The three spheres work a bit like a local club, a provincial association, and the national federation. Each has its own turf and its own responsibilities, and none simply outranks the other. But they're expected to coordinate rather than compete.

- Local government, your municipality, is the sphere closest to daily life, and is constitutionally responsible for services such as water, electricity (in some cases Eskom supplies electricity directly to paying customers), refuse removal, local roads, and community facilities (Constitution s156 read with Schedules 4B and 5B; s152 sets the objects of local government).
- Provincial government carries most responsibility for health and education service delivery.
- National government carries responsibility for policy areas like policing strategy, social grants, and national economic and job-creation policy.

Unemployment and corruption are the clearest examples of issues that cut across all three and are everyone's job at once, no single sphere can substitute for the other two.

Interactive component

Pull 5–6 actual issue cards from today's Community Issue Map. For each one, ask participants to physically move to a labelled corner of the room (i.e. National, Provincial, or Local) showing where they think responsibility mainly sits. Then discuss and clarify the answer together using Appendix A's quick-reference table.

This doubles as the warm-up for Activity 1.



Facilitator note: where an issue is genuinely shared across spheres, then explain to the group why. This is a teaching moment about co-operative government, not a trivia question with one right answer.

Part B — Menu of Hands-On Activities

Choose activities based on the themes that emerged in your Town Hall and the time you have (see Suggested Agendas). Each activity description below notes which kinds of issues it works best with. Note that Activity 5 does not appear in any of the three agendas above: treat it as a reserve to swap in where apathy or distrust dominated the Town Hall.

	Activity	Best suited to	Time
1	Whose Job Is It? (sorting game)	Any group; good general reinforcement of the Bridge	30–45 min
2	Constitution FC: Playing by the Rules	Groups wanting a deeper rights/values grounding	30–45 min
3	Ward Council Budget Simulation	Groups where service delivery (water, roads, electricity, housing) dominated the Town Hall	45–60 min
4	Voting Station Walkthrough	Groups with many first-time voters, or where registration/voting-process questions came up	30–40 min
5	Your Voice, Their Promises (persuasion role-play)	Groups where apathy, distrust, or “my vote won’t change anything” came up strongly	25–35 min
6	Beyond the Ballot: My Action Plan	Recommended for every format as the day’s closing activity	20–30 min

Activity 1 — Whose Job Is It?

	Time: 30–45 min	Materials: Handout D2a (blank issue cards, prepared during the break from the Issue Map), Handout D2b (institution header cards), 4 table stations or floor zones, Appendix A answer-key table	
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Objective:

To reinforce the sphere/institution mapping from the Bridge, using the group’s own real issues rather than generic examples.

Steps:

1. During the break after the Town Hall, transfer the 10–15 most-mentioned issues from the Community Issue Map onto blank cards (Handout D2a).
2. Split into small groups of 4–5. Give each group a shuffled stack of issue cards and the four institution header cards: National / Provincial / Local / Shared Responsibility.
3. Groups sort the cards within 10 minutes, then each group defends its placement of one tricky card to the whole room.
4. Facilitator confirms or discusses each placement using the reference table in Appendix A.
5. If time allows, sort a second time by arm of government i.e. who makes the rule, who carries it out, and who settles disputes about it.

Debrief prompts:

- Which issue was hardest to place, and why?
- Does knowing whose job it is change what you would do about it?

Activity 2 – Constitution FC: Playing by the Rules



Time:
30–45 min

Materials: Handout D3 (Constitution FC, one per small group), markers, Bill of Rights category reference card, sticky notes

**Objective:**

To make the Bill of Rights tangible by physically connecting rights categories to the group's own concerns.

Steps:

1. Briefly recap the “Constitution FC” idea from the Bridge, if not already covered.
2. Each small group draws a football pitch (or team sheet/formation diagram) and labels zones for the different rights categories (Basic, Civil, Political, Socio-economic, see the reference card in Appendix D):
 - a. Defence = Basic Rights (the last line, non-negotiable, protecting life, dignity, equality)
 - b. Midfield = Civil Rights (the connective tissue, freedom of expression, movement, association)
 - c. Attack = Political Rights (driving change, the right to vote, form a party, stand for office)
 - d. Squad Depth = Socio-economic Rights (housing, water, health, education)
3. Groups return to the Community Issue Map, choose their top issues, write each on a sticky note, and place it on whichever zone or position of the pitch it most relates to.
4. Discuss as a whole group:
 - a. The state has a duty to respect, protect, promote and fulfil every right, but the manual is honest that socio-economic rights are subject to available resources and progressive realisation.
 - b. This maps onto squad depth: a club builds up its bench and reserves over successive transfer windows as budget allows, it doesn't field a full second team on day one, but that doesn't mean squad depth is optional or can be ignored indefinitely.
 - c. It's worth stating plainly to the group that rights are not a blank cheque, but neither are they optional extras the state can ignore.

Debrief prompts:

- Which position or zone on your pitch is the most crowded with community concerns?
- What does that tell you?

Activity 3 – Ward Council Budget Simulation

	Time: 45–60 min	Materials: Handout D4a (councillor/community role cards), Handout D4b (fictional R10 million municipal capital budget sheet with costed project menu), counters or a whiteboard tally, today's Community Issue Map	
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Objective:

To give participants a real sense of the trade-offs of municipal budgeting and public participation (the Integrated Development Plan, or IDP, process), using their own Town Hall issues as the input.

Steps:

1. Explain briefly that municipalities are legally required to consult the public on their IDP and annual budget (Constitution s152(1)(e); the operative duties are in the Municipal Systems Act 32 of 2000 — Chapter 4 read with ss 28–29 — and the Municipal Finance Management Act 56 of 2003, ss 21–23). This activity simulates that process with a fictional but realistic small capital budget.
2. Split into 4–6 “ward councillor” groups. Give each group 2–3 real issues from today's Issue Map as their ward's mandate i.e. what their community has asked them to address.
3. Hand out the Municipal Budget Sheet (Handout D4b): R10 million (fictional) in discretionary capital funding and a costed menu of projects (e.g., water infrastructure repair, road resurfacing, streetlights, a refuse truck, a community hall upgrade, a youth skills centre). The costs are set so that no group can fund everything.
4. Each group first reaches internal consensus on their top priority, then pitches it to the “full council” (the whole room).
5. Run a live negotiation/vote (10–15 minutes). Allocate the shared R10 million across competing pitches using counters or a running whiteboard tally, until the budget is fully committed.

Debrief prompts:

- What did your ward have to give up? How did that feel?
- What does this exercise tell you about why showing up to a real budget hearing matters even though it's slower and less satisfying than simply voting once every five years?

Activity 4 – Voting Station Walkthrough

	Time: 30–40 min	Materials: Handout D5a (sample ballots, clearly marked SAMPLE — NOT A REAL BALLOT, using fictional party labels), a table + improvised privacy screen, a box to act as the ballot box, Handout D5b (8-step process quick card)	
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Objective:

To build practical confidence and reduce first-time-voter anxiety by physically simulating Election Day, using the accurate process the IEC follows at every voting station.

Steps:

1. Set up a mock voting station recreating the real flow: queue → ID check and voters' roll check → ballot stamped and issued and thumb marked with indelible ink → private voting booth → ballot box → exit.
2. Walk the whole group through the real 9-step process once (see the quick card in Handout D5b):
 - Arrive at the voting station where you are registered. In a local government election you may only vote at that station
 - A voting officer checks your ID, finds your name on the voters' roll and marks it off
 - Your left thumb and thumbnail are marked with indelible ink.
 - Your ballot paper(s) are stamped
 - You receive your ballot(s)
 - You go behind the private voting screen
 - You mark your choice with a clear X
 - You fold your ballot and place it in the sealed ballot box
 - You exit — you've voted!
3. Rotate small groups through a hands-on run-through using the sample ballots. Practise marking a clear X (not a tick or initials; an unclear mark risks the ballot being spoiled), folding it, and posting it.
4. Cover what happens if a ballot is spoiled by mistake. Tell a voting officer before placing it in the box so they can issue a replacement.
5. Explain how many ballots participants will receive, which depends on where they are registered. In Mangaung (a metropolitan municipality) voters receive two ballots: a ward ballot (you vote for a person, who may be an independent candidate or a party's ward candidate) and a PR ballot (you vote for a party). Everywhere else in the Free State — including Dihlabeng (Bethlehem), Maluti-a-Phofung (Phuthaditjhaba) and Matjhabeng (Welkom) — voters are in a local municipality inside a district and receive three ballots: a ward ballot, a local council PR ballot, and a district council PR ballot. Worth noting that the district ballot fills only 40% of the district council seats; the other 60% are appointed by the local councils — see Appendix A for how these combine.

Debrief prompts:

- What part of this process did you not know before today?
- What would you tell a nervous first-time voter?

Remind Participants: voting is private. No one — not an employer, a family member, a community leader, or a political party agent — is allowed to watch you mark your ballot or to find out afterwards who you voted for.

Activity 5 — Your Voice, Their Promises (Persuasion role-play)

	Time: 25–35 min	Materials: Handout D6 (4 scenario cards, plus 2 blank cards for local customisation)	
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Objective:

To practise reasoned, respectful civic argument in response to common reasons young people give for not voting.

Steps:

1. Before the session, add 1–2 new scenario cards using the actual dominant themes from today's Issue Map, alongside the four standard cards.
2. Cut out the scenario cards and hand one to each small group of 2–4.
3. Groups prepare a short (max 1 minute) role-play: one person voices the objection on the card, the others respond with genuine, non-partisan reasons to participate — no forced positivity; it's fine to acknowledge the objection has real substance.
4. Groups perform for the room if time allows; otherwise, a few groups present and the rest discuss briefly.

Debrief prompts:

- Which of today's real issues did you use in your argument?
- Was there a version of the objection you couldn't fully answer? What would you say to that honestly?

Activity 6 — Beyond the Ballot: My Action Plan

	Time: 20–30 min	Materials: Handout D7 (action plan worksheet), reference card of non-voting participation tools, pens	
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Objective:

To ensure the day ends with concrete tools, not only a reminder to vote. Voting happens once every five years; the tools in this activity can be used the following week.

Steps:

1. Revisit the Community Issue Map one final time.
2. Individually or in pairs, each participant chooses one issue they personally care about (either their own, or one from the wall) and completes Handout D7:
 - What is the issue?
 - Which sphere/institution is responsible?
 - Which one non-voting tool will I try, and by when?
 - Am I on the voters' roll for 4 November, and do I know which voting station I must go to? If I am not registered, when will I register for the next election before the next election in 2029?

3. Non-voting tools to reference:

- attending a ward committee meeting; commenting on a draft municipal by-law during its public comment period
- participating in your municipality's IDP public meetings
- contacting your ward councillor directly
- using your municipality's official service complaint channel (facilitator: confirm and insert the correct local channel — these vary by municipality)
- a petition
- the media
- a peaceful demonstration
- joining a community-based organisation

4. Optional: 2–3 volunteers share their action plan aloud.

Debrief prompt:

"A vote every five years is one form of power. What is a form of power you can use this month?"

Closing Circle and Pledge (15–20 minutes)



Time: 15–20 min

Materials: Handout D8 (pledge cards), pens



One-word/one-sentence go-around

Each participant shares, in a sentence or less, one thing they're taking away from the day.

The pledge card

Distribute Handout D8. Participants tick any that apply to them:

- I will check my voter registration status
- I will register as soon as the voters' roll reopens after 4 November, so that I can vote in the next by-election and in 2029
- I will attend one ward or IDP meeting before the election
- I will talk to two friends about registering
- I will vote on 4 November 2026.

Be clear that choosing not to vote is also a legal right. The goal of this workshop is to help the participant make an informed decision, not a guilt-driven one. What matters is that participants leave knowing their options.

Practical close

Remind participants how to check their registration details and, in particular, which voting station they are allocated to. Be straightforward that the voters' roll for this election closed on 7 August 2026: anyone not registered by then cannot vote on 4 November, and the honest message for them is to register as soon as the roll reopens after the election:

- SMS your 13-digit ID number to 32810 (costs R1.00) to check your registration status, registered voting station, and details
- Online at registertovote.elections.org.za or elections.org.za
- WhatsApp the IEC chatbot on 060 088 0000
- Toll-free call centre 0800 11 8000 (available Monday – Friday 08:00-17:00)
- In person at your local IEC office, or at any IEC outreach/registration event

Reaffirm neutrality

"This workshop hasn't told you who to vote for. It's given you tools to decide for yourself, and to stay involved after Election Day too."

Optional follow-through

With participants' consent, consider sharing a photo of the Community Issue Map with the local ward councillor's office as a genuine feedback loop. This models the "beyond the ballot" behaviour the workshop teaches and gives participants tangible evidence that today's discussion went somewhere.



Appendix A — Facilitator Background Reader

A1. Why civic education matters

Democracies work best when citizens are informed and active. Civic education gives people the knowledge to claim their rights and the tools to hold elected leaders accountable. It is about more than knowing your rights. It is equally about living up to your responsibilities: monitoring government performance, participating between elections, and not violating the rights of others. Choosing not to vote is a legal right in South Africa but a low turnout reduces the incentive for leaders to be responsive to ordinary people.

A2. What is democracy?

“Democracy” comes from the Greek “demos” (the people) and “kratos” (rule) i.e. rule by the people. South Africa is a representative democracy which means that citizens elect people to make decisions on their behalf. It is also a participatory democracy: the Constitution requires ongoing public involvement between elections, not only a vote every five years. South Africa became a full democracy only in 1994.

A3. The Constitution, in plain language

A constitution works like the Laws of the Game. It protects players from foul play and unfair treatment, guards against any one side abusing its power over the match, and gives everyone room to play freely within a shared set of rules. Just as a match has different roles for different purposes, a constitution has different sections for different functions, rights, the legislature, the executive, the courts, public finances, and it works when each part does its own job and respects the others' boundaries (this is called the separation of powers). Rights are the space every player is entitled to play in; the legislature sets the game plan; the executive carries it out on the pitch; the courts referee disputes about whether the rules were followed; and public finances are the budget that keeps the pitch maintained and the competition running. A good constitution serves every player, not only the star striker or the club with the biggest budget, and is deliberately difficult to change, just as amending the Laws of the Game requires broad agreement through the game's governing body, not a call made unilaterally by whoever happens to be in charge on a given match day.

A4. The Bill of Rights, in plain language

Rights are entitlements people hold simply because they are human. The Constitution recognises them but it does not create or grant them. Rights are universal (they apply to everyone), indivisible (you can't pick and choose which to respect), and interdependent (upholding one often depends on upholding others). South Africa's Bill of Rights groups rights into four broad categories:

- Basic rights — e.g., equality, life, dignity.
- Civil rights — e.g., freedom of religion, belief, opinion, and expression.
- Political rights — e.g., the right to vote, to assemble and protest, to form or join a political party.
- Socio-economic rights — e.g., access to housing, education, and health care.

The state has four levels of duty toward every right: to respect it (not interfere), protect it (enforce laws against violations), promote it (raise awareness), and fulfil it (put resources and institutions in place). Socio-economic rights are qualified by "available resources" and progressive realisation: the state cannot instantly deliver everything, but it is also not permitted to simply ignore these rights.

A5. How South African government is organised

Government has three spheres (i.e. national, provincial, and local) which the Constitution requires to co-operate rather than compete (Chapter 3, "co-operative government"). Each sphere has three arms: the legislature (makes laws), the executive (implements laws and runs daily administration), and the judiciary (interprets the law and settles disputes). No single arm or sphere holds all the power. This system of checks and balances exists specifically to prevent abuse of power.

A6. Local government and your municipality

Local government is the sphere closest to daily life. The Free State has one metropolitan municipality (Mangaung, seated in Bloemfontein) and four district municipalities i.e. Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa, Thabo Mofutsanyana, and Xhariep, which are together subdivided into 18 local municipalities.

Section 152 of the Constitution requires every municipality to: provide democratic and accountable local government; deliver services sustainably; promote social and economic development; promote a safe and healthy environment; and encourage community involvement in local government matters. Municipalities are legally required to consult the public on their Integrated Development Plan (also known as the IDP which is the municipality's core strategic and budget plan) and on draft by-laws, through ward committees, public meetings, and published documents.

Municipal councils are elected every five years and are made up of ward councillors (directly accountable to a specific area) and PR councillors (allocated by party vote share). The council adopts by-laws, sets budgets, and takes decisions; day-to-day work is carried out by the municipal administration, headed by a municipal manager.

A7. Elections: how South Africa votes

South Africa uses proportional representation (PR) for national and provincial elections (i.e. parties win seats roughly in proportion to their vote share) and a mixed system for local elections, combining PR with directly elected ward councillors. Every South African citizen who is on the voters' roll and who turns 18 on or before election day may vote, and only at the voting station in the ward where they are registered. The next Local Government Elections are scheduled for Wednesday, 4 November 2026. The election was formally proclaimed on 7 August 2026, which closed the voters' roll: no new registrations or changes of registration details can be processed for this election. Anyone not already on the roll on that date cannot vote on 4 November, but can register again once the roll reopens after the election, in time for by-elections and the 2029 national and provincial elections.

Independent candidates (people standing without belonging to a political party) have long been allowed to contest ward councillor seats. Following a 2020 Constitutional Court ruling and the Electoral Amendment Act 1 of 2023 (signed into law 17 April 2023), independent candidates are now also permitted to contest National Assembly and provincial legislature seats. This is a significant change from the position described in older civic education materials, which stated that only parties could contest at that level.

A8. What political parties do

Political parties organise people around shared ideas of how the country should be governed. They help shape and represent public opinion, link government and citizens, formulate public policy, communicate and educate voters, and provide the mechanism through which government is held accountable — a government needs at least one party in opposition to function as a democracy. Where no party wins an outright majority, parties may form a coalition to govern together; in South Africa these have mostly formed at local level and have often been unstable, which is itself a useful discussion point about the difference between winning power and using it well.

A9. Quick-reference table: “Whose job is it?” (answer key for Activity 1)

Issue type	Sphere mainly responsible	Notes
Water supply, sanitation, refuse removal, local roads, streetlights, electricity reticulation	Local (municipality)	Constitution Schedule 4B / 5B; day-to-day delivery, though bulk water/ electricity infrastructure may involve provincial or national entities (e.g., Eskom, water boards)
Housing (implementation)	Local, as implementing agent	Housing policy itself is not a municipal function, but municipalities plan and implement on behalf of national/provincial government
School education, public health/ clinics and hospitals	Provincial	Provincial departments of education and health administer these; national government sets overarching policy
Policing policy, social grants, macroeconomic and job-creation policy, national ID/civic documents	National	Set and largely funded nationally, though implemented locally (e.g., SAPS stations)
Unemployment, corruption, public safety perceptions	Shared / all spheres	A good moment to discuss co-operative government rather than force one answer



Appendix B — Glossary

Term	Meaning
Bill of Rights	Chapter 2 of the Constitution, listing the rights that the state must respect, protect, promote and fulfil for everyone in South Africa.
By-law	A local law made by a municipal council, applying within that municipality's area.
Cabinet	The President, Deputy President, and Ministers, who together form the national executive.
Civic education	Education aimed at informing and empowering people to understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens.
Coalition government	A government formed when two or more parties (and/or independent candidates) agree to govern together, usually because no single party won a majority.
Constitution	The supreme law of South Africa; all other laws and government action must be consistent with it.
Councillor	An elected member of a municipal council — either a ward councillor (elected by a specific area) or a PR councillor (allocated by party vote share).
Democracy	A system of government based on rule by the people, usually exercised through elected representatives.
District municipality	A municipality (Category C) that shares authority with several local municipalities in its area, typically covering wider bulk services and coordination.
Electoral Commission (IEC)	The Electoral Commission of South Africa, the independent body responsible for managing elections and the voters' roll.
Executive	The arm of government that implements laws and runs day-to-day administration — Cabinet nationally, the Premier and MECs provincially, the Mayor and officials locally.
Governance	The system of laws and institutions through which a state is organised and run.
Independent candidate	A person who contests an election without belonging to a political party.
Integrated Development Plan (IDP)	A municipality's core multi-year strategic plan covering infrastructure, budgets, and development priorities, which the public must be consulted on.
Judiciary	The courts, which interpret the law, apply the Constitution, and settle disputes.
Legislature	The law-making arm of government — Parliament nationally, the provincial legislature, the municipal council locally.
Local municipality	A municipality (Category B) sharing authority with a district municipality in its area.
Mandate	The authority citizens give to elected representatives through their vote, to make decisions on their behalf.
MEC	Member of the Executive Council — a provincial minister, part of the provincial executive under the Premier.

Term	Meaning
Metropolitan municipality	A single-tier (Category A) municipality with sole authority over a major urban area (e.g., Mangaung).
Municipal manager	The senior official heading a municipality's administration, responsible for implementing council decisions.
National Council of Provinces (NCOP)	The house of Parliament representing the nine provinces in national law-making.
Preamble	The introductory statement of a constitution, setting out the values and aims behind it.
Proportional representation (PR)	An electoral system in which parties win seats roughly in proportion to the share of votes they receive.
Rule of law	The principle that everyone, including government, is bound equally by the law, which must be applied consistently and fairly.
Separation of powers	The division of government into legislature, executive and judiciary, each checking and balancing the others to prevent abuse of power.
Voters' roll	The official register of everyone eligible and confirmed to vote, organised by voting district.
Ward	A geographic area within a municipality represented by one directly elected ward councillor.
Ward committee	A body of elected community representatives that advises the ward councillor and channels community input into council decisions.



Appendix C – Glossary

Confirm any time-sensitive figures (contact numbers, statistics, operating dates) closer to your workshop date, as these can change.

Fact	Detail	Source
Election date	Local Government Elections are scheduled for Wednesday, 4 November 2026.	Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, proclamation gazetted 7 August 2026; IEC election timetable
Registration age	Citizens may register from age 16, but may only vote if they turn 18 on or before election day, 4 November 2026. Registration for this election closed with the proclamation on 7 August 2026.	Electoral Commission of South Africa, voter registration FAQ (2026)
ID required to register/vote	A green barcoded ID book, smart ID card, or valid Temporary Identity Certificate.	IEC (2026)
Check registration status	SMS your ID number to 32810 (R1.00); or elections.org.za; or registertovote.elections.org.za; or WhatsApp 060 088 0000; or toll-free 0800 11 8000 (limited operating periods).	Electoral Commission of South Africa, elections.org.za (2026)
Free State municipal structure	1 metropolitan municipality (Mangaung) + 4 district municipalities (Fezile Dabi, Lejweleputswa, Thabo Mofutsanyana, Xhariep) + 18 local municipalities.	Municipal Demarcation Board; Statistics South Africa municipal profiles (do not use the Free State provincial website, which is out of date and still lists 19 local municipalities)
Free State home language (2022 Census)	Sesotho 72.2% (only province where Sesotho speakers are a majority); Afrikaans 10.3%; isiXhosa 5.6%; Setswana 5.3%; English 1.6%; isiZulu 3.8%.	Statistics South Africa, Census 2022, Report 03-01-84, Table 2.1
National youth unemployment (ages 15–24)	60.9% in Q1 2026, the highest of any age group. The Q2 2026 survey has since been released and puts national unemployment at 33.6% and the 15–34 youth rate at 47.4%;	Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1 2026
Youth not in employment, education or training (NEET), ages 15–24	Approximately 37.6% (about 3.9 million of 10.3 million young people).	Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey Q1 2026
Free State unemployment (general population, most recent figure available)	36.2%.	Statistics South Africa, Quarterly Labour Force Survey — specify the quarter

Fact	Detail	Source
Youth share of registered voters	The majority of eligible 18–19-year-olds remained unregistered as reported by the IEC in mid-2026.	Electoral Commission of South Africa — but this figure predates the June and August 2026 registration weekends and must be re-checked or dropped
Independent candidates	Permitted for ward councillor elections; extended to National Assembly and provincial legislature elections by the Electoral Amendment Act 1 of 2023 (signed 17 April 2023), following a 2020 Constitutional Court ruling.	gov.za; Parliament of South Africa; Constitutional Court (New Nation Movement NPC case)
Water access trend	Access to piped water has declined across the Free State over the period 2002–2025; 56.8% of South African households nationally reported water-supply interruptions in 2025.	Statistics South Africa, General Household Survey (2025)
Municipal debt to service providers	Municipalities owed more than R161 billion by December 2025 (R110.5 billion to Eskom, R30.7 billion to regional water boards).	National Treasury, local government revenue and expenditure data (Eskom and water board arrears, December 2025)



Appendix D — Glossary

*Printable materials, one handout per heading below. Print quantities depend on group size — see Appendix E. Handouts marked * need facilitator customisation with real local information before printing.*

D1 — Community Issue Map: category headers

Print or write large on separate sheets of A4/flipchart paper, one per heading, to post on the wall before the Town Hall begins:

- Water & Sanitation
- Electricity
- Roads & Transport
- Safety & Policing
- Jobs & Economy
- Education
- Housing
- Corruption & Accountability
- Health
- Environment
- Other

D2a — Blank issue card template

For the co-facilitator to complete during the break, transferring the top 10–15 issues from the Community Issue Map. Suggested card layout (one issue per card, print 15–20 per workshop):

Issue:	Category:

D2b — Institution header cards

Print large, one per card/sign, for Activity 1 table stations:

- NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
- PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
- LOCAL MUNICIPALITY
- SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Extension set (arm of government):

- LEGISLATURE — makes the law
- EXECUTIVE — carries out the law
- JUDICIARY — settles disputes about the law

D3 – Constitution FC

Provide each small group with a large sheet of paper. Instruct them to draw a simple football pitch outline with at least 4 zones (Defence, Midfield, Attack, and Squad Depth/Bench), and label each zone with one Bill of Rights category, using this reference card:

Category	Examples
Basic rights (Defence)	Equality · Life · Dignity
Civil rights (Midfield)	Religion · Belief & opinion · Freedom of expression
Political rights (Attack)	Right to assembly & protest · Right to vote · Right to form/join a political party
Socio-economic rights (Squad Depth/Bench)	Access to housing · Right to education · Access to health care

D4a – Ward Council Budget Simulation: role cards *

Print one role card per small group (adapt ward names to reflect your actual area if you wish):

Role	Card text
Ward 1 Councillor	Your community's top concerns: [insert 2–3 real issues from today's Issue Map]. Your job is to win as much of the shared R10 million budget as possible for these priorities, while staying credible with the other councillors.
Ward 2 Councillor	Your community's top concerns: [insert 2–3 real issues from today's Issue Map].
Ward 3 Councillor	Your community's top concerns: [insert 2–3 real issues from today's Issue Map].
Ward 4 Councillor	Your community's top concerns: [insert 2–3 real issues from today's Issue Map].
Municipal Manager (non-voting)	Your job is to remind councillors of legal/technical constraints (e.g., some projects need provincial sign-off; emergency repairs can't wait) and keep time.
Community Observer	You may not vote in the budget allocation, but you may ask any councillor to justify their position at any point.

D4b – Municipal Budget Sheet (fictional, for simulation only)

Total discretionary capital budget: R10,000,000. Costed project menu (facilitator: these figures are illustrative and simplified for the exercise, not real municipal costings):

Project	Cost
Repair and upgrade of ageing water pipeline (one area)	R3,500,000
Resurface 5 km of tarred road	R2,800,000
Install streetlights along a 2 km stretch	R900,000
Purchase one new refuse collection truck	R1,600,000
Upgrade a community hall	R1,200,000
Build a youth skills/training centre	R2,400,000
Extend the storm-water drainage system	R1,800,000
Electrify an informal settlement section	R2,200,000
Staff salaries	?
Creditors	?

Note the total cost of all projects (~R16.4m) exceeds the available R10m — this is deliberate, to force real prioritisation. Two budget line items, “staff salaries” and “creditors” are also included with no exact costs attached (it will vary), but to illustrate that even before projects can be started, staff salaries need to be considered as well as payment to creditors.

D5a – Sample ballots (sample only – not a real ballot)

This is a practice ballot for a training exercise. It uses invented, fictional names. It is not connected to any real political party or candidate.

SAMPLE WARD BALLOT				SAMPLE DISTRICT COUNCIL PR BALLOT				SAMPLE LOCAL COUNCIL PR BALLOT			
Vote ☐ Choose one only				Vote ☐ Choose one only				Vote ☐ Choose one only			
NAME	PARTY 1			NAME	PARTY 1			NAME	PARTY 1		
NAME	PARTY 2			NAME	PARTY 2			NAME	PARTY 2		
NAME	PARTY 3			NAME	PARTY 3			NAME	PARTY 3		
NAME	PARTY 4			NAME	PARTY 4			NAME	PARTY 4		
NAME	INDEPENDENT			NAME	PARTY 5			NAME	PARTY 5		
NAME	PARTY 6			NAME	PARTY 6			NAME	PARTY 6		
NAME	PARTY 7			NAME	PARTY 7			NAME	PARTY 7		
NAME	PARTY 8			NAME	PARTY 8			NAME	PARTY 8		
NAME	INDEPENDENT			NAME	PARTY 9			NAME	PARTY 9		
NAME	PARTY 10			NAME	PARTY 10			NAME	PARTY 10		
NAME	PARTY 11			NAME	PARTY 11			NAME	PARTY 11		
NAME	PARTY 12			NAME	PARTY 12			NAME	PARTY 12		
NAME	PARTY 13			NAME	PARTY 13			NAME	PARTY 13		

D5b — The 9 steps of voting: quick reference card

1. Arrive at the voting station where you are registered — you may only vote there.
2. A voting officer checks your ID, finds your name on the voters' roll and marks it off.
3. Your left thumb and thumbnail are marked with indelible ink.
4. Your ballot paper(s) are stamped.
5. You receive your ballot(s).
6. You go behind the private voting screen.
7. You mark your choice with a clear X.
8. You fold your ballot and place it in the sealed ballot box.
9. You exit the station — you've taken part in the democratic process.

D6 — Persuasion role-play scenario cards

Card	Text
Scenario 1	Tuma says: "There's so much unemployment in this country. It won't help me get a job if I vote." Give Tuma good reasons to vote anyway.
Scenario 2	Kagiso says: "There's too much corruption. Politicians just enrich themselves. Why should I give them my power? Count me out." Respond to Kagiso.
Scenario 3	Babalwa says: "I'm tired of empty promises. Every election they promise us things and then nothing changes." Respond to Babalwa.
Scenario 4	Aluwani says: "I don't know who to vote for. No party speaks to my life. It's easier to just not vote." Respond to Aluwani.
Scenario 5 (blank — customise with today's issues)	_____
Scenario 6 (blank — customise with today's issues)	_____

D7 — Beyond the Ballot: My Action Plan

Prompt	Your answer
The issue I care about most:	
Which sphere/institution is responsible (national / provincial / local / shared)?	
One non-voting action I will take:	
By when?	
Am I registered to vote? If not, my plan to fix that:	

D8 – My Pledge card

Tick any that apply to you:

- ☐ I will check my voter registration status
- ☐ I will register as soon as the voters' roll reopens after 4 November, so that I can vote in the next by-election and in 2029 I will attend one ward or IDP meeting before the election
- ☐ I will talk to two friends about registering
- ☐ I will vote on 4 November 2026
- ☐ I choose not to vote, but I understand my other options for participating

D9 – Know Before You Go: takeaway card *

Local Government Elections: Wednesday, 4 November 2026

You must already have been on the voters' roll on 7 August 2026 to vote in this election, and you must turn 18 on or before 4 November 2026. Registration for future elections reopens after election day. Bring your green ID book, smart ID card, or valid Temporary Identity Certificate.

Check your registration: SMS your ID number to 32810 (R1.00) · elections.org.za · registertovote.elections.org.za · WhatsApp 060 088 0000 · 0800 11 8000 (toll-free, limited periods)

My ward councillor: [facilitator to insert name and contact details]

My municipality's service-complaint channel: [facilitator to insert local details]



Appendix E — Glossary

Two weeks before

- Confirm venue, date and time; check for clashes with local events, exams, or pay-day (affects transport money for participants).
- Confirm your chosen agenda option (A, B, or C) and print the corresponding timing table.
- Recruit a co-facilitator/scribe (and a second one if expecting more than 25 participants).
- Research and note your actual local ward councillor's name/contact details and your municipality's real service-complaint channel, for Handout D9.
- If planning to demonstrate the IEC's online portal or WhatsApp chatbot live, confirm the venue has reliable connectivity; otherwise plan to describe these tools and rely on the printed handout.

Materials list

- Flipchart paper / large wall space (at least 3 large sheets, plus space for 11 category headers)
- Sticky notes, two colours if possible (at least 3 pads)
- Markers (at least 1 per 3 participants) and masking tape
- Printed Handouts D1–D9 (see quantities below)
- A box or bin to act as a ballot box; improvised privacy screen (a large piece of card or a folded table works)
- Counters, poker chips, or similar for the budget simulation tally (or a whiteboard and marker)
- Camera or phone to photograph the Community Issue Map
- Name tags or tape and marker, if participants don't know each other

Print quantities (for a group of 25)

Handout	Quantity
D1 — category header sheets	11 (one set)
D2a — blank issue cards	15–20
D2b — institution header cards	1 set per small group (5–6 sets)
D3 — Constitution FC outline	1 per small group
D4a — role cards	1 set per small group
D4b — budget sheet	1 per small group
D5a — sample ballots	1 per participant
D5b — 8-step quick card	1 per participant
D6 — scenario cards	1 set, cut into cards, per small group
D7 — action plan worksheet	1 per participant
D8 — pledge card	1 per participant
D9 — takeaway card	1 per participant

Room setup

- Open, flexible space for the Town Hall — semicircle or floor seating works better than rows.
- Wall or board space for the Community Issue Map, visible from wherever activities happen.
- 4–6 small tables or floor stations for small-group activities.
- One corner set aside for the mock voting station (Activity 4).

Handling sensitivity

- Strong emotion during the Town Hall (frustration, anger) is a normal and valid response to real hardship. Acknowledge it rather than moving past it quickly, then redirect toward “what would help.”
- If a participant tries to campaign for a specific party, thank them, note that the workshop’s purpose is process rather than persuasion, and invite them to instead explain why participation itself matters to them.
- No participant is required to share personal ID numbers or private details during any activity. The sample-ballot and mock-ID materials exist precisely so no real personal data is needed for the simulations.

After the workshop

- With participants’ consent, consider sending the photographed Community Issue Map to the local ward councillor’s office as a feedback loop.
- Keep a simple attendance/feedback sheet if you plan to report on workshop reach and outcomes.



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