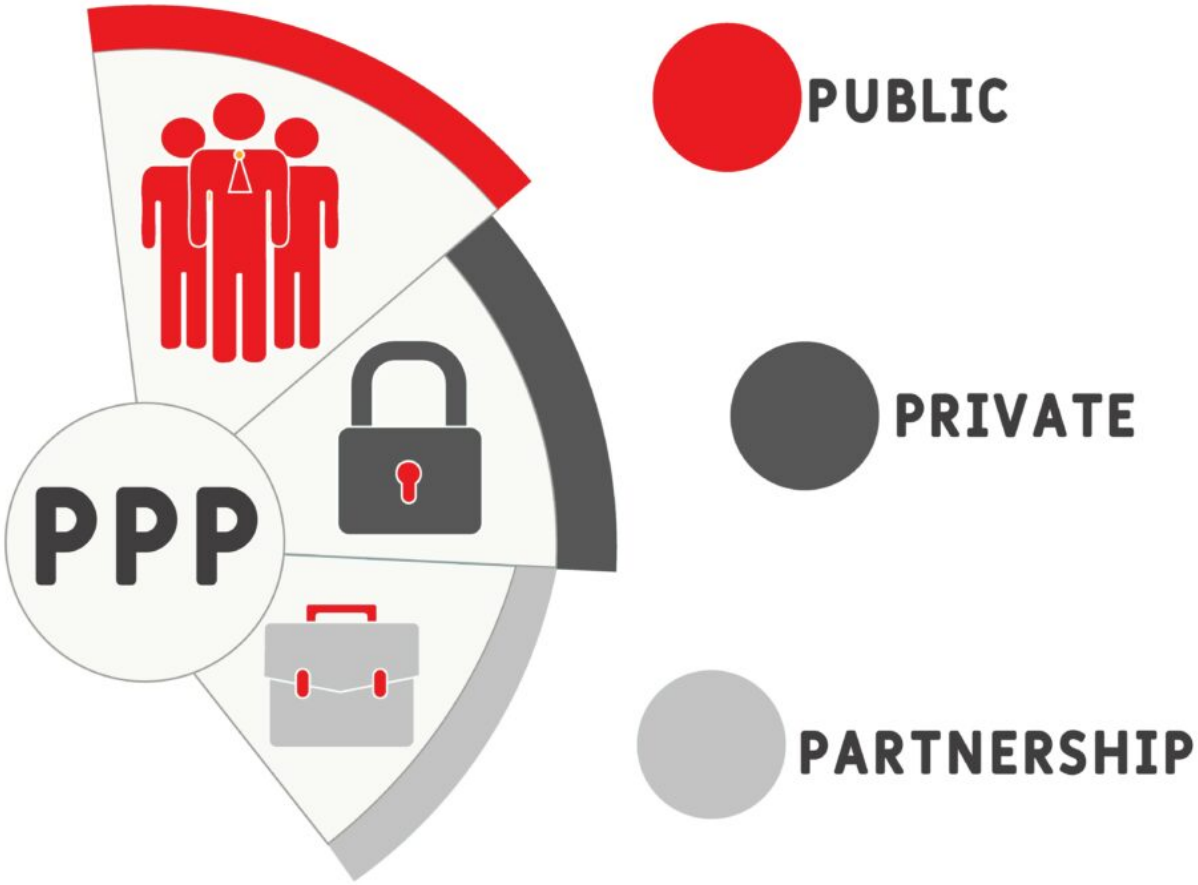
PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO ADDRESS ICT INFRASTRUCTURE CHALLENGES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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written by Sadia Rizvi | May 16, 2023



South Africa experiences significant challenges in the ICT infrastructure sector. There is a scarcity of funding in the public sector for telecommunications-related and ICT infrastructure. In the past year alone, broadcasters and mobile operators have battled for additional broadband spectrum. Spectrum is considered to be a valuable and scarce resource in the telecommunications sector. As the demand for wireless services rapidly increases, the supply of available spectrum is running short. This necessitates the need to consider alternative solutions to meet the demands for spectrum and generally, ICT infrastructure. Public-private partnerships for ICT infrastructure is a solution to ensure that the population can access information and communications technologies. In this article, we outline some factors to consider when developing successful public-private partnerships, specifically in relation to the ICT sector.

Best Practice for Successful Public-Private Partnerships

Incorporate a testing phase in the project. By screening the public-private partnership for potential, government can avoid wasting money on a project that is not suitable to become a public-private partnership. It will also help government to determine whether a public-private partnership is the most appropriate method of carrying out the project.

Conduct stakeholder consultations. This includes the telecommunications operators, the end-users, affected communities and other government agencies. Consultation sessions with the important role players will assist with identifying the types of services required, the level of demand, and challenges that might be faced when deploying infrastructure.

Consider the existing telecommunications infrastructure systems. The existing systems should be taken into account when considering the type of infrastructure to deploy. Existing access may be impeded when new infrastructure systems are deployed. This will also impact on the required funding for the project, as the ability to reuse existing infrastructure may affect the costs involved.

Agree on milestones, targets and technical specifications. The scope of the project must be defined early on to avoid wasteful expenditure. However, project planning processes can become expensive and lengthy, therefore stakeholders must ensure that effective conversations are held over the costs and changes to the scope.

Focus on training as a key part of an ICT PPP project. The long-term sustainability of the project is dependent on ensuring that adequate capacity is built once the project is completed.

ICT infrastructure is difficult for developing countries to get right, the World Bank notes. Public-private partnerships offer a solution that brings in the competencies of the private sector and improves public service delivery when government lacks funding.

Contact us for more good, clear, precise advice.

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