

Leading by example

The public-private partnership (PPP) that fulfilled the medical devices requirement at the Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital serves as an industry benchmark for how PPPs can work effectively

The Inkosi Albert Luthuli Central Hospital (IALCH) is a 846-bed tertiary referral hospital PPP project that includes 46 burn unit beds, 75 intensive-care beds and 96 high-care beds. The hospital has 16 operating theatres, two trauma operating theatres and a burns operating theatre with complete laboratory services on site. The IALCH is the central referral hospital in the region with leading-edge technology as well as unique services available exclusively at the facility.

The IALCH Healthcare PPP kicked off with implementation and commissioning that started in February of 2002, with financial close earlier in that month. The tender processes had started earlier in 2000 and, throughout 2001, negotiations and contract finalisation took place between the preferred bidder consortium and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Health.

Consulens, a specialist in medical equipment management, and able to deliver on all related aspects of the project, was selected as principal subcontractor for the implementation and commissioning

for medical devices. It involved areas of project management in order to plan, order, receive, install and commission all required medical equipment and devices.

A key process included the management of training for medical staff on the devices in order to ensure safe and successful equipment operations for patient care.

The commissioning and implementation of the complete facility medical devices (over 18 000) was completed in under two years, with the first patient (paediatric) being admitted during phase one after six months. The remainder of the phases for implementation after the first patient was completed in a patient-live hospital environment.

During, and after the phased process of implementation, the comprehensive project operations took place simultaneously.

Consulens continues to be responsible for the maintenance of all medical devices, refreshing or replacing them at strategic phases throughout the 15-year period in order to ensure the facility remains at a high technological service level. The refreshment/replacement programme for the project requires complete co-operation of all parties involved (clinical, medical, technical and all support services). Careful planning and implementation is required to ensure minimum interruption to

Five PM tips toward successful PPPs

1. Have regular internal company meetings in the form of open forums to allow all members to contribute to the regular identified project challenges, risk identification and action plans.
2. Maintain regular contact with all levels of the client team in the form of meetings on the relevant PPP aspects.
3. Have an ongoing training programme to ensure current understanding on the project agreement, policies and procedures, workflows and, where possible, equipment operations (internal, your staff and external client staff).
4. Manage all activities, no matter how insignificant they may seem, with sound project principles and a focus on excellent communication.
5. Most importantly, document EVERYTHING through a process that provides easy reference and access to all parties requiring the documentation. This includes emails and notes, comments regarding informal discussions, among others.

patient services and zero compromise on their safety.

The IALCH project has been a model in terms of the efficient and successful process required to manage a PPP effectively in the field of medical devices and associated services. Several local and international delegations regularly visit the facility to reference and model its success and take away valuable information.

Consulens general manager Stuart Grey reflects on some of the challenges typically associated with PPPs of this nature and offers advice to those in a similar situation: "The PPP is a partnership where the private party provides services (and equipment) that is not the core competency of the public partner. In so doing, there should be performance levels to maintain and it is important, through a regular process of reporting, to demonstrate value for money and high performance standards within the PPP.

"The private party, if selected wisely, may well perform better than expected. This improved performance and value is what the private party should drive home as often as possible, otherwise there will always be a comparison to other similar non-PPP ventures or projects that do not have the performance levels and standards of the PPP. This all amounts to an 'apples vs pears' approach and will inevitably result in the perception that the PPP is expensive and without benefit. The private party needs to clearly articulate and communicate its services and value effectively."

He continues, "In the long-term PPPs that include equipment refreshment and operational maintenance, ensure you are up to speed' with regard to the technological advances that will be experienced during the project. In today's project environment, these technological changes are occurring quicker and quicker, especially in IT [information technology] and computers, and the cycles are becoming increasingly shorter.

"It is important not to fall into the trap of replacing items or devices every time there is a new product on the market. The

current products have value and will continue to perform as designed for the life of the product.

"It is advised to have detailed specific levels of service and product refreshment to protect both parties in the PPP. By planning these requirements correctly and ensuring realistic maintenance costs and replacement periods (without cutting corners and under-quoting), a win/win situation will result. The public partner will get product and service, and the private partner will be able to ensure the delivery of the product and service. Appropriate planning and agreement will ensure value for money," Grey notes.

He summarises the major lessons learnt as a result of this implementation:

- Detail all additional requests correctly through the change process documents as part of the policy and procedures. No matter how small, ensure all additional requests (variations) are documented and recorded accordingly.
- Ensure client user requests are documented prior to and during the project and that client users are aware of the project agreement as documented. If the client makes decisions on certain project aspects that could impact users, these should be made known to the client users through appropriate channels in the form of feedback, to prevent disagreement at operational levels.
- Ensure the contract has inclusions and exclusions detailed
- Ensure it is clearly stated what is included in a service and what is included in a product. When a service includes a product, make sure it is accompanied by a finite output projection. It would be appropriate to detail a definitive course of action should there be variation under or over the specification, and action from either parties. It is very difficult without an accurate method of determining or converting this to a common denominator. But if this is left unchecked, there may be a perception that one party is being disadvantaged, which



*Stuart Grey, general manager:
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will break down co-operation and working relationships.

- Have a detailed communication path from the client to the service provider and do not allow the client users to bypass the client communication paths and address the private partner without going through appropriate channels.
- Train, train and train again (private and public staff users and employees).

The overall IALCH turnkey project success (medical devices, IT, facilities and clinical services) is a testimony and proof that PPPs of this magnitude and length in duration are successful when the private and public sectors pool their expertise and resources to provide a solution mutually beneficial to all. ☑