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The need for innovation in infrastructure projects

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While ageing infrastructure remains a significant challenge in rural areas, this is an opportunity for smaller municipalities and their supply-chain partners to find innovative ways of developing and maintaining the assets they need to provide services to the poor, according to CoreSlab. Shaun Hadkinson, CoreSlab's sales and marketing manager, says that the need to innovate to improve infrastructure delivery is also reiterated in an inclusion in the latest Municipal Infrastructure Grant (MIG) guidelines.

"I am encouraged by the ongoing focus on the roll out of infrastructure in poor areas, considering the important role that it plays in keeping youth motivated and productive members of communities.



Moreover, it is an important source of opportunity for emerging contractors and community members during the construction phases under the MIG-funded Expanded Public Works Programme," he says.

"However, I am concerned that most of the focus has been on attending to the demands of increasing urbanisation, considering that government spending on infrastructure has also not kept pace with the investment demands of population growth in the major cities. This has been to the detriment of rural areas, and severely weakened their

administrative structures and ability to attend to poverty, inequality and unemployment.”

Hadkinson points out that the Integrated Urban Development Framework notes the need to also fast-track the development of rural areas. They coexist with their urban counterparts, in terms of production, trade, information flow and governance, while sharing structural, social, economic and cultural linkages. These connections need to be significantly strengthened to enhance national growth, he says.

According to him, the MIG guidelines will help municipalities in the B and C categories accurately estimate unit costs when applying for funding for infrastructure from national government. Municipalities therefore need to consider innovation in the full spectrum of infrastructure technologies and associated operations and maintenance solutions. “These will greatly assist in bridging the growing infrastructure deficit in outlying areas and ease maintenance requirements of important service-delivery assets,” he says.

“CoreSlab has long been associated with high quality infrastructure projects in rural areas of the country, and we continue to work closely with various municipalities and their professional teams to pioneer new ways of accelerating the delivery of critical social development and economic service-delivery assets.” One of these is a 10 mega-litre (ML) reservoir that has been built with precast concrete elements to significantly fast-track a reliable supply of water to a rural area of Mpumalanga. This area has been grappling with water shortages for many years, and its municipality will be the first to use CoreSlab’s new precast concrete water-retaining wall system.

It is being used alongside the company’s precast-concrete roof structure system, which has shaved months off the construction time of reservoir projects to ensure timely completion of the structures. The project has served as an important testing ground ahead of the imminent commercial launch of the system to complement CoreSlab’s precast-concrete roof offering, says Hadkinson.

“While the technology will allow municipalities and water-service authorities to further accelerate storage capacity, the high durability of all of our precast-concrete elements has become an equally important selling point. All of the elements manufactured at our factory are at least 50 MPa, contributing towards a more robust final structure that requires minimal maintenance. Manufacturing them

in a controlled environment has also ensured a consistently high quality system that has a direct bearing on precision and productivity levels our installation teams maintain on site,” he conclude

Image credit.