

## **7 reasons why municipalities need to digitally collect and analyse data**

Many municipalities still collect field information on paper before transcribing the information into a spreadsheet or report, which is then often saved on a PC. A month later an updated report is required by the Department Head only to find that the staff member has left the municipality and the hard drive of the PC is not accessible or cannot be found.

This is a common occurrence which could be resolved simply by mobile phone applications developed using open-source software and the setup of an aggregate server for hosting the apps and the centralised database. Automated reports and dashboards can be generated to ensure that the captured data is in a form that is useful to managers.

The benefits of this digital platform approach to data management include:

1. Fieldworkers have an easy-to-use mobile data collection method (on their mobile phone)
2. The system provides a structured data collection format that validates inputs, provides prompts based on information already provided and provides options for photographic or video evidence as well as GPS locations
3. It allows for seamless integration of the collected data with existing municipal systems
4. All data can be presented on a simple web-based interface
5. Dashboards can provide management with business insights into issues such as urgent maintenance and long-term asset management
6. All data sources can be traced
7. All data is stored in one place in a data repository which is safe and can easily be accessed by officials

Using digital solutions such as mobile applications and a centralised data repository is a no brainer for municipalities and for that matter any organisation.