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INTRODUCTION TO HOW CONDUCT SELF-ASSESSMENT

Service delivery must be monitored constantly to make sure it is on track

The only and essential way of ensuring that service delivery is on track and meeting the agreed standards is to monitor it constantly. There are many ways of monitoring service delivery and all of them or most of them have a role to play in ensuring optimum service delivery. Some of these means of monitoring service delivery focus on the performance of individuals while others focus on the performance of teams, units or projects.

Self-assessments are a means to monitor the efficacy of teams, units or projects in meeting their service delivery commitments. It will be mentioned several times throughout this guide that services cannot be monitored unless there are clear standards against which to measure performance. These standards must be set and agreed in consultation with the customers.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

The aim of this guide is to introduce you to the concept of self-assessment and to provide you with a frame of reference for conducting a self-assessment

This guide will give you:

- ❑ A definition of self-assessment
- ❑ Explains how self-assessment can be used as a learning opportunity;
- ❑ Provides you with guidelines and best practices on self-assessment;
- ❑ Outlines the objectives, outcomes and key performance indicators of self-assessment;
- ❑ Illustrates the links to legislation and the *Batho Pele* White Paper;
- ❑ Suggests possible challenges and responses to these;
- ❑ Takes you through a step-by-step guide on how to conduct self-assessment;
- ❑ Offers some key considerations to think about during the process;
- ❑ Refers you to additional resources and training opportunities that are available in this field.

WHAT IS SELF-ASSESSMENT?

Self-assessments are a means to monitor the efficacy of teams, units or projects in meeting their service delivery commitments.

SELF-ASSESSMENT AS A LEARNING OPPORTUNITY

The self-assessment process lends itself to the following learning opportunities:

- ❑ An understanding of the Regulatory Framework and their importance of achieving against organisational mandates.
- ❑ Allows new ideas and suggestions to emerge as a means of improving service delivery.
- ❑ It draws managers attention on day-to-day matters and allows them to learn more about the organisation and improve service delivery

GUIDELINES FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

The following guidelines need to be borne in mind during self-assessment:

- ❑ get buy-in and commitment;
- ❑ communicate the instrument widely;
- ❑ appoint people with competencies;
- ❑ provide training and development; and
- ❑ select components who are ready.

Each of these will be dealt with in detail.

Get buy-in and commitment

Get buy-in and commitment from all stakeholders so that the assessment process receives everyone's full support.

Communicate instrument widely

Communicate the assessment instrument widely –show benefits of measurement, explain the main objective as one of improving service delivery - not to be punitive or judgmental.

Appoint people with competencies

Appoint people who demonstrate the required competencies to manage the self-assessment process

Training and development

Identify and provide appropriate training and development for the task team so that the assessment yields accurate and valid results.

Select components who are ready

Select components who are ready and willing to participate in the process. Those who have translated their strategic objectives into action plans with standards and performance indicators.

THE OBJECTIVE OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

The objective of self-assessment is to measure the performance of a team or project by means of an internal assessment. This will:

- ❑ assist components to establish a baseline of where they are in terms of performance so that they are able to ascertain the gap that exists between the current state and the service standards they have set in line with customer expectations;
- ❑ afford components an opportunity of assessing their contribution towards the overall achievement of their department's strategic objectives and organisational effectiveness;
- ❑ ensure the implementation of developmental and service delivery plans; and
- ❑ enable them to track the achievements of the component.

LINKS TO *BATHO PELE*

Measuring performance against agreed standards is an essential tool to track service delivery against the strategic objectives of the department and/or the component. It is impossible to measure anything unless there are clear standards against which to measure it. For example, if someone should ask how long it will take to process an application for a new ID document, they need to be told that it will take 10 days, two weeks or three months, whatever the case may be. The time given in the answer, namely, ten days, two weeks and three months are standards of service delivery.

The most important link that self-assessments have with *Batho Pele* are the need to set and publish clear standards in consultation with the customers in order to ensure efficient and effective service delivery that represents value for money.

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- ❑ the publication of service standards; and
- ❑ a report on the findings of the assessment, with a focus on measurement of performance in terms of the set standards.

OUTCOMES OF SELF-ASSESSMENT

The outcomes of effective self-assessment are:

- ❑ Improved service delivery – substantial improvements to both the quality and quantity of public services.
- ❑ Service standards will improve progressively with each assessment – continuous improvement. Measurement of performance points the way ahead and the ability to deliver is pushed from the hub to the spokes of the service delivery wheel so that better services are delivered on the ground.
- ❑ A healthy team spirit is fostered and individuals emerge as teams, committed to attaining a common goal.
- ❑ The component's commitment to service delivery is reinforced and the component stays on the "cutting edge".

CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

Challenge

Getting buy-in and commitment from senior management.

Response

Involve senior management in the process from the outset. Consult, explore possibilities, conduct feasibility studies, including cost effectiveness against budgets, etc, especially the cost of developing the assessment instrument.

Challenge

Getting buy-in and commitment from staff.

Response

- ❑ Appoint a competent task team – with appropriate skills to manage the process.
- ❑ Provide relevant training and development for the task team
- ❑ Communicate assessment instrument widely –show benefits of

measurement, explain the objective – one of improving service delivery not to be punitive or judgmental.

Challenge

A survey that discloses a low baseline of service delivery could demotivate staff.

Response

Make people aware of changes, motivate them and gain commitment to improved service delivery by reassuring them that a low baseline survey indicates where the component is at present and that the only way forward is up. Emphasise that they need to keep focus on where the component wants to go as defined in the strategic objectives.

STEP – BY – STEP GUIDE TO SELF – ASSESSMENT (PHASES)

THE PHASES OF SELF – ASSESSMENT PROCESS

PHASE ONE

DIAGRAM

PHASE 1 COMPULSORY ORIENTATION PHASE

STEP 1

Get buy-in and commitment.

- ❑ Get buy-in from all team members to the self-assessment process and decide on an appropriate assessment instrument.
- ❑ Present the concept of self-assessment, with a relevant assessment instrument, to top management – obtain authority and endorsement from management to conduct the assessment and to use the instrument.
- ❑ Get buy-in from unions and other relevant stakeholders so that the assessment process receives everyone's full support.

STEP 2

Identify and appoint a Change Manager

- ❑ Each department should appoint a Change Manager who is willing to project manage the assessment process. It is advisable for the manager to be two levels below the top level of the organisational/departmental structure (middle management). The appointed manager must be given the necessary training and development to ensure that the process yields accurate and valid results and the desired outcome of improved service delivery.

Responsibilities of the Change Manager

- ❑ To consult with senior management and select/develop an appropriate assessment instrument that measures the performance of components against agreed objectives and standards.
- ❑ To manage the assessment process by:
 - Developing a plan for the self-assessment and to ensure that there are structures, systems and procedures in place to support the implementation of the process.
 - Co-ordinating the assessment in line with the agreed plan.
 - Monitoring the process to ensure that it measures performance against the standards set in the Service Delivery Charter.
- ❑ To select and appoint 10-12 members to serve on a task team to conduct the assessment.

- ❑ To provide appropriate training and development for the task team so that the assessment yields accurate and valid results.

The effort and enthusiasm contributed by the Change Manager are an important factor in the success of the project.

Competencies required to manage the process

In addition to generic managerial competencies for the Public Service, the following are considered as critical competencies to manage self-assessments:

❑ Leadership

- Leads and directs the department's and components' involvement in the process.
- Gets buy-in and support from management, task team and staff to the process; as a driver for continuous improvement in service delivery.
- Ensures that the assessment is conducted in a non-threatening manner.
- Provides expert advice and guidance to members of the task team and to management.
- Monitors and evaluates the progress and impact of the self-assessment process.

❑ Communication

- Must be able to exchange information and ideas in a clear and concise manner to explain the process and influence others to achieve the desired outcomes of the assessment.
- Ensures that there is a communication plan in place that provides for the sharing of information on organisational performance throughout the process.
- Ensures that accurate information is generated and passes on to management, so that meaningful efforts can be made to improve service delivery in line with the strategic objectives.

❑ People skills and management

- Encourages staff to maximise their outputs to achieve accurate results from the assessment process.
- Creates an environment in which staff feel free to come forward with new ideas and suggestions on the assessment process and ways of improving service delivery.

- Gets staff to view the results of the assessment as an opportunity for development and to work towards improving service delivery.
- ❑ **Project management**
 - Draws up a project plan for the assessment process.
 - Obtains all the resources required for the assessment
 - Monitors and keeps the assessment on track.
 - Ensures that the results from the assessment are translated into an action plan that will lead to improved service delivery.
- ❑ **Organisational awareness**
 - Understands the department's strategic direction, strategic objectives and the standards that are being measured.
 - The ability to adopt a holistic view of the organisation and see the “bigger picture” of the transformation process.
 - An understanding of the Regulatory Framework and their importance of achieving against organisational mandates.

STEP 3

SELECT AND TRAIN A TASK TEAM

Appointing the task team

The task team should consist of a maximum of ten members. It is important to identify employees who are willing to participate and who demonstrate the required competencies. It is advisable for the team to be represented by the following members of the component being assessed:

- ❑ the head of the component;
- ❑ 2 to 3 members of the management team; and
- ❑ 4 to 6 members, representative of the job categories and levels.

Responsibilities of the task team

- ❑ To provide support to the Change Manager in charge of the process so that the desired outcome of the assessment is achieved.
- ❑ To provide input and suggestions on measurement instruments.
- ❑ To keep the channels of communication open so that the manager is aware of day-to-day issues.
- ❑ To conduct the self-assessment, using the agreed assessment instrument.

Competencies of the task team

In addition to their respective job competencies the members of the task team should demonstrate the following competencies:

❑ Leadership potential

- The ability to communicate the need for self-assessments to relevant stakeholders.
- The ability to motivate staff to see self-assessment as a means of improving service delivery.

❑ Organisational awareness

- The ability to adopt a holistic view of the organisation and see the “bigger picture” of the transformation process.
- An understanding of the Regulatory Framework and their importance of achieving against organisational mandates.
- An understanding of the department’s strategic direction and the standards that are being measured to enable them to identify and implement an appropriate assessment instrument.

STEP 4

PLAN THE SELF-ASSESSMENT

- ❑ Develop a work plan for the assessment process. Involve the task team so that they have a firm understanding of the process. Define the roles and responsibilities of each team member. Define outcomes, communication plan, reporting and feedback mechanisms, etc.
- ❑ Select components who are ready and willing to participate in the process and who have translated their strategic objectives into action plans with standards and performance indicators.

STEP 5

CHANGE MANAGER GATHERS DATA ON RESULTS TO DATE

- ❑ The Change Manager analyses the component’s performance to date against the standards and strategic objectives. Evidence can be obtained from the following sources:
 - results of surveys;
 - annual reports;
 - files;
 - budgets; etc.

STEP 6

AWARENESS AND RESULTS SESSION

The Change Manager facilitates a one-day Awareness and Results workshop to introduce the assessment team to the instrument and the self-assessment process, and to present to them the findings from the assessment of the results/data that have been collected in Step 5 above.

OPTION A PHASE 2

SIMPLE SELF -ASSESSMENT

Option A can be used as a Simple self-assessment. It is advised that this option be used:

- ☐ to introduce departments who have little or no experience of self-assessment and the application of self-assessment instruments; and
- ☐ when departments are not certain whether the assessment instrument is appropriate to measure the department's performance.

Although very limited time is devoted to the assessment process, it is possible to generate a fairly accurate assessment of the component's performance and to identify the areas for improvement.

Carrying on from Phase 1 above, the steps in a Simple self-assessment are as follows:

STEP 7(a)

ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING SESSION

The Change Manager (using the services of an appropriately experienced and qualified consultant, if deemed necessary) facilitates a one-day Assessment and Improvement Planning Session for all the employees in the unit/component/project, which is to be assessed. The first part of the day is devoted to introducing the assessment instrument and explaining the assessment process. The major part of the day is spent on a rapid, perception-based assessment of the department. This assessment is informed by the data on results gathered earlier by the Change Manager in Step 5 above.

The last section of the day is devoted to a rapid review of the key strengths and areas for improvement, identified during the day. An action plan is formulated and individuals are assigned to work on the areas for improvement.

STEP 8 (a)

REPORT ON FINDINGS

It is important that notes are taken of the main issues raised during the workshop in order to report to management and to support the improvement plan.

STEP 9 (a)

IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN

- ☐ Communicate action plan and strategic direction.
- ☐ If necessary, consolidate inputs.
- ☐ Assign priorities.
- ☐ Agree responsibilities and milestones.
- ☐ Set up improvement teams.
- ☐ Provide appropriate resources.

OPTION B PHASE 3

BASIC SELF- ASSESSMENT

This is a perception-based assessment (i.e. evidence is not gathered to verify the team's conclusions) based on the criteria of the assessment instrument, in the form of a workshop.

STEP 7 (b)

PREPARATION

The assessment team members need to structure their thoughts around the functions of the department, using the organisational structure as a basis for considering the criteria and the types of issues that they will be debating at the Assessment Session. This will give them the opportunity to familiarise themselves with any specific aspect of the unit's operations. The assessment team members may also canvas the views of a cross-section of employees within their unit to provide a more informed view.

STEP 8 (b)

ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLANNING SESSION

The Change Manager (assisted by a consultant, if deemed necessary) facilitates a two-day workshop. The objective of this workshop is to consolidate the inputs gathered in step 8(a) and for the assessment team to reach consensus on the performance of their component, based on the assessment instrument. The assessment team then agrees on the assessment scores and develops a profile of the component's strengths and areas for improvement.

The team then goes on to review the output from the assessment and to agree an action plan to address the vital issues, which will drive service improvement in their department.

The minimal time required to conduct a Basic Self- Assessment means that a department's senior management team can readily be involved in the process. However, if it is not possible for senior management to be involved for the full two days, it is important that, as decision-makers, they are involved in the action planning session. This may mean that the session has to be split into two single days. This will have the advantage of providing time for collecting any final data required for the workshop.

STEP 9 (b)

FINAL REPORT

A feedback report must be generated on the key points emerging from the workshop, including overall performance, strengths and areas for improvement, as well as suggestions as to how improvements may be achieved.

STEP 10 (b)

ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN

- ☐ If necessary consolidate inputs from operational units.
- ☐ Review areas to be addressed.
- ☐ Assign priorities.
- ☐ Agree responsibilities and milestones.

- ❑ Communicate action plan and strategic direction.
- ❑ Set up improvement teams.
- ❑ Provide appropriate resources.

OPTION C PHASE 4

INTERMEDIATE SELF -ASSESSMENT

This is a rigorous, in-depth form of self-assessment where each member of the assessment team collects evidence to support his or her suggested scores, before the scores are discussed in the assessment session.

STEP 7(c)

TEAM GATHERS EVIDENCE

The assessment team must agree on the method to be used to collect data. They could collect the data in groups or as individuals. The Change Manager collates the data and information obtained from the task team to plan the structure of the assessment session.

In preparing for the assessment session, the assessment team will be able to structure their data gathering so as to arrive at more robust scores against each of the assessment instrument's criteria.

STEP 8 (c)

ASSESSMENT SESSION

The Change Manager (assisted by the consultant) facilitates a two-day workshop, which assesses the department in detail against the assessment instrument. This workshop brings together the inputs gathered in step 8(b) and achieves a consensus within the assessment team of the performance of their component against the criteria of the assessment instrument. The assessment team develops a profile of the component's strengths and areas for improvement and agrees a set of consensus scores.

It is advisable that the scope of the Improvement Planning session be agreed at this stage.

STEP 9 (c)

EXTERNAL VALIDATION (optional)

Support from the consultant will entail elements of validation and calibration as a natural part of the process. The facilitation provided by the consultant will ensure that assessment teams do not give themselves inappropriate scores. If departments wish to add an extra element of external validation, including a feedback report and the chance to be rewarded for excellent performance, it can be introduced here.

STEP 10 (c)

IMPROVEMENT PLANNING SESSION

The consultant works with the Change Manager to align the action planning activity with existing business planning processes. The jointly facilitate a one-day workshop.

The output from this event is an outlined action plan, which is aligned to the component's organisational goals and can be used to drive and monitor progress towards improvement objectives.

STEP 11 (c)

FINAL REPORT

The consultant produces a short written feedback report on any key points emerging from the process, including overall performance, strengths and areas for improvement as well as recommendations as to how improvements may be achieved.

STEP 12 (c)

ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT ACTION PLAN

- ☐ If necessary consolidate inputs from operational units.
- ☐ Review areas to be addressed.
- ☐ Assign priorities.
- ☐ Agree responsibilities and milestones.
- ☐ Communicate action plan and strategic direction.
- ☐ Set up improvement teams.
- ☐ Provide appropriate resources.

Co-ordinate action planning and delivery with a definite indication of visible and specific accountability.

PHASE 5

COMPULSORY REVIEW

As is the case with all good interventions, a review of the self-assessment must be conducted. This is not a separate activity and must form part of the normal business review process of the department. As with other approaches, the process should be repeated at appropriate intervals to:

- ❑ check whether the milestones set were achieved;
- ❑ examine any key business measures;
- ❑ assess the overall process control; and
- ❑ review any plans the department may have for “breakthrough” activities.

This ensures that there is continuous improvement in the department.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Some key lessons learned by departments/components who have already implemented a self-assessment method for performance measurement, are listed below.

- ❑ The process will be much more successful if the objective from the start is performance improvement rather than simply to attain a high score.
- ❑ The purpose is to help a department/component to improve more quickly and address the challenges facing it. Honest self-criticism is vital.
- ❑ The assessment will lead to genuine improvement action only if senior managers are committed to the approach and take real ownership of the output.
- ❑ It is important to communicate with the whole department/component throughout the assessment process. This is vital for the credibility of the improvements the department/component plans as a result.
- ❑ The Change Manager, who facilitates the assessment, must have good facilitation skills, credibility within the organisation and must

develop a reasonable level of knowledge about the assessment instrument.

- ❑ The assessment against the assessment instrument is a diagnostic, not an improvement initiative of itself. The assessment instrument helps to ask questions, it cannot provide the answers itself. Use of the assessment instrument or any other tool is part of good management, not a substitute for good management.
- ❑ Get expert help and train those taking part in the assessment.
- ❑ Do not worry unduly about low scores, these reflect where the department/component is at present and not where it is going. Everybody has to start somewhere.
- ❑ Act on improvement opportunities, failure to do so undermines the credibility of the department/component.
- ❑ Do not expect quick fixes. Although there may be some things that can be put in place quickly to achieve immediate benefit, the process is about continuous improvement.

Size of departmental entity to be assessed

Self -assessment can be initiated in:

- ❑ the department as a whole; or
- ❑ individual operational units within a department.

The culture and structure of the department and the benefits expected, will influence the particular approach adopted. Experience, however, has shown that when departments undertake self- assessment for the first time, they usually start at operational level as a pilot exercise, before implementing it across all components of the department.

After completion of a self-assessment, departments can decide whether they wish to submit to an external validation in order to be considered for an award or not.