GUIDE ON DEVELOPING SERVICE STANDARDS
Contents

1. Background ................................................................. 3
2. Why the Guide/ Toolkit? .................................................... 4
3. Service Delivery Planning Value Chain Components ...................... 4
4. Definition and types of Service Standards .................................... 5
5. Guidelines for setting Standards ............................................. 6
6. Step-by step guide to setting Service standards ................................ 7
   6.1 Preparation .................................................................. 7
   6.2 Set standards .............................................................. 7
   6.3 Empower staff ............................................................. 10
   6.4 Manage standards ........................................................ 10
   6.5 Communicate and Reward .............................................. 10
Conclusion ........................................................................... 10
Templates ........................................................................... 11
References ........................................................................... 12
1. **Background**

Government Departments, as service providers, have both a legal and moral responsibility to deliver the best possible services to the public. The legal responsibility emanates from a Regulatory Framework. The moral aspect is underpinned, amongst others, by the eight principles of Batho Pele. Within the context of Batho Pele, providing quality services means putting in place a service delivery system that meets the needs of the people it serves.

The Delivery Agreement for **Outcome 12** stipulates a number of Outputs and Sub-outputs. In Output 3, Sub-output 8: Business Processes, it is stated that:

- ...it was realized during the roll out of Service Delivery Improvement Plans by the DPSA that departments do not understand the value chain regarding the setting and improvement of service standards.
- Undocumented processes means that staff turnover can compromise service delivery, and that consistent quality standards are difficult to maintain.
- A further complicating factor is that where mapping of processes is being conducted, it does not take place within a nationally set norm and standard and also outside of any set framework regarding the value chain dealing with service delivery improvement.

One of the Key activities outlined to address the above is:

- Development of a framework and toolkit for:
  i. Business Process Mapping, review and management
  ii. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
  iii. Setting of Service Standards; and
  iv. Service Delivery Improvement Plans (SDIPs)

This link between Business process mapping, SOPs, Setting of service standards and SDIPs is furthermore stressed within the Outcome 12 Delivery Agreement which states (p65) that:

- The MPSA thus has limited powers directly over the efficient and effective running of a department except his own, but he can set norms and standards within which parameters other executing authorities must operate. These norms and standards then set minimum requirements to which a department must adhere...the MPSA can monitor compliance and share best practice amongst departments.

There is a need for DPSA to initiate and lead a coordinated approach in the setting of service norms and standards. This guide is to serve as a generic and practical toolkit to the consultation, design and documentation of service norms and standards. Sector/- line Departments have unique challenges (eg. Large geographic service areas, inequalities in terms of income, access to transport/ infrastructure, etc. departments also have varying capabilities in dealing with these challenges and in managing service standards.

The bottom line is that all Departments have a responsibility to review, improve and report on service standards.
2. Why the Guide/ Toolkit?

The White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery (Batho Pele White Paper, 1997) provides a clear mandate to departments on the setting of service standards:

2.1 National and provincial departments must publish standards for the level and quality of services they will provide, including the introduction of new services to those who have previously been denied access to them. In the case of certain services, such as health, or education, national departments, in consultation with provincial departments, may set standards which will serve as national baseline standards. Individual provinces may then set their own standards, provided these meet or exceed the national baseline. Provincial departments may also set additional standards for aspects of service not covered by national norms. Similarly, departments may set intra-departmental service standards which will serve as minimum norms for their institutions and components. These internal institutions and components may also set additional service standards for aspects not covered by intra-departmental norms. Standards must also be precise and measurable, so, that users can judge for themselves whether or not they are receiving what was promised.

2.2 Service Standards must be set at a level which is demanding but realistic.

2.3 Service Standards must have the approval of the relevant Minister/MEC/ executing authority before they are adopted.

2.4 Once approved, Service Standards must be published and displayed at the point of delivery and communicated as widely as possible to all potential users so that they know what level of service they are entitled to expect, and can complain if they do not receive it. Performance against standards must be regularly measured and the results published at least once a year, and more frequently where appropriate.

2.5 Performance against standards must be reviewed annually and, as standards are met, so they should be progressively raised, year on year. Once set and published, standards may not be reduced. If a standard is not met, the reasons must be explained publicly and a new target date set for when it will be achieved.

Departments have succeeded in varying measures in delivering on the above mandate. Unfortunately, due to the lack of a systemic approach, departments have often done their own thing, sharing with other departments did not take place and duplication of efforts occurred. This guide is only one link in a set of guidelines on SOPs, Business process management and SDIPs, all aimed at harnessing the collective knowledge of the Public Service in achieving more efficiency and effectiveness when it comes to service delivery.

3. Service Delivery Planning Value Chain Components

The concept of Value Chain was first described and popularized by Michael Porter in the 1980’s. By definition, a value chain categorizes the value-adding activities of an organization. The chain of activities gives the services more added value than the sum of the independent activity’s value. Below is a schematic representation of the Service delivery planning value chain. The setting of service standards is a key deliverable for the drafting of quality service charters and service delivery improvement plans.
The concept of Service standards is fundamental to the first pillar of the DPSA Service Delivery and Organisational Development (SDOT) framework. A framework and methodology for the development of service standards was developed and approved during the first half of 2011. The approach outlined in this document is intended to be a toolkit aimed at assisting Departments to follow a systematic and standardized approach in Standards setting.

### 4. Definition and types of Service Standards

A standard is a “basis of measurement” and “a definite level of excellence”. A Departmental service standard is something desired (by the Department and citizens) and achievable.

A ‘Norm’, on the other hand, is defined as a “usual or average level of performance”.

A Service standard is a reasonable and measurable expectation from the side of the recipient, and an honest commitment by the service provider, to meet or exceed that expectation.

A service standard has **qualitative** aspects, such as:

- **Appropriateness** – refers to the service the individual/ community needs and expects; and
• **Acceptability** – when services are provided to satisfy the reasonable expectations of the client, community or taxpayer; as well as the eight Batho Pele principles, i.e:

1. **Consultation**: Citizens should be consulted on the level and quality of public services they receive and, wherever possible, should be given a choice on the services that are offered.
2. **Service standards**: Citizens should be told what level and quality of public service they will receive.
3. **Access**: All citizens should have equal access to services.
4. **Courtesy**: Citizens should be treated with courtesy and consideration.
5. **Information**: Citizens should be given full, accurate information about services.
6. **Openness and transparency**: Citizens should be told how Departments are run, how much they cost and who is in charge.
7. **Redress**: If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology and a speedy and effective remedy.
8. **Value for money**: Public services should be provided economically and efficiently.

A service standard is not a service standard if it does not meet S.M.A.R.T.E.R. criteria, i.e:

- **Specific** – e.g. FET colleges through put rate to be increased by 1% per annum, to reach 67% by 2011/12
- **Measurable** – e.g. Diesel vehicles testing for air quality: a minimum of 50 vehicles per month (from log sheet reports);
- **Achievable** – e.g. the Department of Health cannot set a standard that all critical cardiac arrest patients are to be 100% better within 24 hours
- **Realistic** – e.g. Throughput rate in Grade R to 12 increased by 2% per annum to achieve 87% by 2011/12
- **Time-bound** – delivery cannot be measured if not linked to a time period;
- **Empowering** – service standards should not be set by an external consultant who disappears without empowering the end users
- **Revisable** – standards should be formatted in such a way that indicators can be easily reviewed and adjusted annually

There are three broad categories of Standards, namely:

- Structure standards (eg. with regard to personnel, supplies, systems, finance)
- Process standards (**how** to achieve minimum service levels)
- Outcome standards (what the public receives; front office services)

Standards can be generic (eg. Process standards), or standards can be specific (eg. Outcome standards).

Besides the **qualitative**, service standards should also be expressed in terms of **Quantity, Time and Cost**.

### 5. Criteria for setting Standards

As will be outlined later in this guide, a Champion should facilitate the consultations on specific service standards. Draft standards should be reviewed and enhanced by a Standards Team. Standards must be clearly identifiable within Departmental Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The following criteria are to be considered by the facilitator and the Standards Team **before and during** Standards setting:
• Are the standards meaningful to customers?
• Do standards comply with national standards and legislation?
• Are standards based on consultation?
• Are standards attainable? (S.M.A.R.T.E.R.)
• Are standards affordable?
• Are standards owned by managers?
• How are standards to be communicated?
• Are performance measures in place and are achievements reported?
• Are standards reviewed and updated?

6. **Step-by step guide to setting Service standards**

6.1 **Preparation**
- Develop a Service standards policy and get sign off by the Executing Authority.
- The department must get **buy-in** from stakeholders, including senior management, before embarking on a service standards process.
- Buy-in is usually best achieved within the development of a **Change management programme**.
- One of the best ways to drive change management and buy-in is to appoint a **Service standards Champion**.
- The champion may choose to appoint a Service standards Committee/ Team within the department to advise on and to promote the process.
- The champion should be a skilled facilitator and take responsibility to get stakeholders and experts together for the writing up of draft service standards.
- The champion should have a budget and authority to appoint an external specialist, if deemed necessary.
- The champion may have to set up more than one writing team where service standards are too diverse for one team to focus on.
- The champion should introduce facilitation platforms, eg **Moodle**, whereby team members can collaborate and share standards on an e-learning platform.

6.2 **Set standards**
Effective service standards should be set taking into account the results of two key processes within the service delivery value chain, i.e.:

i) Business process management/ -mapping (BPM)

ii) Service costing

The Service standards champion may be the same champion for BPM and costing, or the Department may want to appoint a different champion for the two processes. The following steps are put forward as a guideline for the setting of Service standards:

**Step 1: Identify Service Beneficiaries**

This step goes hand in hand with Step 2. Some beneficiaries may be in the Department, for example Human Resources or Corporate services. However, the primary beneficiaries of a service standards process should always be the Public.
The key process in this step is **consultation**. Service beneficiaries are not the only, but are the most important stakeholders. Other stakeholders to consult are staff, partners and Labour. Business Process Mapping is a powerful tool that can be used for identifying service beneficiaries. As seen in Figure 1, Business process management is a much earlier process (Step 3) and the results of that process should be directly applicable to this step.

**Step 2: Document all services**

In government context, service standards are the rules of engagement between government and citizens. Service standards include targets such as waiting times and hours of operation. Service beneficiaries are entitled to know what level of service they should expect, how services will be delivered and what they cost.

A service is provided every time a customer deals with a public service department or component. For example the issueing of social grants, birth/ death certificates, ID documents, passports or housing subsidies. A service is rendered at every level at a public school or hospital as well as every situation where a public servant responds to customer queries, albeit, face-to-face, by telephone or in writing.

The key to identifying services is to identify every interaction with the public. However, as outlined in Step 1, services are not only external. Some services are internal and some services are with other Departments.

**Step 3: Identify Partnerships**

Some services are delivered in partnership with Agencies and the private sector, for example the National Traffic Information System (NATIS). The National Qualifications Framework is also a complex partnership between Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETSAs), SAQA, the Department of Higher Education and public/ private providers of education and training.

All partnerships, possible and existing, need to be reviewed at a strategic and operational level (refer steps 1 and 2; figure 1).

**Step 4: Assess current service delivery standards**

This step can obviously only be done effectively if the Department have existing documented service standards. If such are in place, this step constitutes a critical review phase which is best done in small, focused workshops with the relevant staff members.

The eight Batho Pele principles are the overarching measure when reviewing service standards. The following checklist may be useful in guiding a workshop during such review:

- Staff courtesy, appearance and communication skills
- Appearance of staff
- Public security
- Response times
- Ease of access
- Information sharing with beneficiaries; e.g. brochures, signage, website, contact centre
- Complaints management system
- Services delivery accountability in terms of cost effectiveness (value for money)
- Documentation of measurable service standards
Step 5: Consult stakeholders
- Eg. by means of suggestion boxes, complaints analyses, surveys, focus groups, client panels and site visits.
- Consultation must include the consideration of parallel processes, for example Queue management systems and Access to services.

Step 6: Set standards

If the champion has enough information from consultation, he/ she may go ahead and draft service standards which should be tabled to the Service standards Team for review and ratification.

The champion may opt to write standards directly during a consultative workshop (or multiple workshops if needed) during which stakeholders and experts may freely debate and agree on the output.

At the end of this Guide are two templates for the purpose of documenting service standards. Template A provides for the basic capturing of Service, standard and measures. Template B is more comprehensive and provides for Quality and target group specific details as well.

Whichever template is used during the consultative workshop, the standards document must be drafted in simple, clear language understandable by any service beneficiary and end user.

Service standards must be drafted in the S.M.A.R.T.E.R. way.

Figure 2, below, provides a schematic view of the 6 steps.

![Figure 2 Diagram](image-url)
6.3 **Empower staff**
- Inform and train relevant staff on service standards, especially front-line staff.
- Ensure that staff have access to the resources (equipment, information), as outlined in the service standards, to deliver the quality service expected
- Ensure that relevant staff have aligned their performance agreements to revised service standards

6.4 **Manage standards**
- Publish and implement service standards
- Monitor the implementation by means of audits/ surveys
- Identify gaps between set standards and actual delivery
- Review and, as the need arise, set new standards

6.5 **Communicate and Reward**
- Assess the success and value of the process by engaging service beneficiaries by means of focus groups, surveys, etc.
- Publish results in Annual report and booklets
- Develop a *Service Charter* for sign off by the relevant Minister/ MEC/ Executing Authority.
- Identify and reward service standard achievers

---

**Conclusion**

Service Standards must be relevant and meaningful to the individual user. This means that they must, cover the aspects of services which matter most to users, as, revealed by the consultation process, and they must be expressed in terms which are relevant and easily understood.

Some standards will cover process, such as the length of time taken to authorize a housing claim, to issue a passport or identity document, or to answer letters. Other standards will be about outcomes. In the health area, for example, standards might be set for the maximum time a patient should have to wait at a primary health care clinic, or for a non-urgent operation; or for the information they are entitled to receive about their treatment, and about who is responsible for their case. This means that they should reflect a level of service which is higher than that currently offered; but which can be achieved with dedicated effort, and by adopting more efficient and customer-focused working practices.

To achieve the goal of making South Africa globally competitive, standards should be benchmarked against international standards, taking into account South Africa’s current level of development.

Service standards, as well as the results of performance against standards, should be published. This will be an essential mechanism to enable the public to hold national and provincial departments to account for their performance. This will also be essential to track improvements in services from year to year, and to inform subsequent decisions about the levels to which standards should be raised in future.
### Templates

**A. A standard template for the setting of service standards will be as follows:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action/ Service</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Measurement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>eg. Facilities management query response</td>
<td>Response within 24 hours and weekly updates until resolution of issue</td>
<td>Query log sheets</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**B. Recommended Transversal Template:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key services</th>
<th>Department of Town planning services</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quantity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate township establishment applications</td>
<td>All applications</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References
Public Service Regulations, 2001
Batho Pele Handbook
White Paper on transforming Public Service delivery (Batho Pele White paper), 1997
Towards Standards for waiting and turn around times in Government service delivery offices, DPSA 2011
Eastern Cape DoE: Service Standards, 2009
Delivery Agreement for Outcome 12, 2010
Framework and methodology for the development of service standards, DPSA, 2011
A Framework and methodology for Service delivery Value chain components, DPSA, 2011
Draft Service norms and standards for City of Tshwane, 2011