



“Growing South Africa together for a capable and ethical Public Service”



COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE OF SOUTH AFRICA

“Together beating the drum for service delivery.”

MARCH 2026

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	INTRODUCTION	2
2.	PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES	2
3.	SCOPE.....	3
4.	DEFINITIONS.....	3
5.	LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK.....	3
6.	LINKS TO BATHO PELE PRINCIPLES	4
7.	UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES.....	5
8.	THEORY OF CHANGE FOR INSTITUTIONALISATION	7
9.	INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER ROLES.....	9
10.	IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING.....	10
11.	CATEGORIES FOR COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS.....	11
12.	CONCLUSION	12
	REFERENCES	13

1. INTRODUCTION

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996, under Chapter 10 (Public Administration), mandates that public administration be governed by democratic values and principles, requiring a public service that is accountable, development-oriented, responsive to citizens' needs, and committed to the efficient, economic, and effective use of resources. Complementing this, the Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended), and the Batho Pele White Paper, 1997, establish the legal and policy framework for promoting citizen-centred service delivery and operational excellence across the public service.

In this context, the Minister for the Public Service and Administration (MPSA), supported by the Deputy Minister, is entrusted with ensuring the development of policies, norms and standards that strengthen service delivery and uphold Batho Pele principles.

Public service complaint mechanisms are crucial for maintaining transparency, accountability, and efficiency. The Office of the Public Service Commission (PSC) and other oversight institutions, including the Presidential Hotline, the Public Protector, and the Human Rights Commission of South Africa (SAHRC), have identified gaps in complaints handling. Common concerns include:

- a) Delays in resolving complaints.
- b) Inconsistent implementation across departments.
- c) Lack of public awareness of complaint channels.

2. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The objectives are to:

- a) Provide a structured, transparent, and citizen-friendly mechanism for lodging and resolving complaints and compliments.
- b) Strengthen accountability, responsiveness, and continuous improvement in public service delivery.
- c) Align with Batho Pele principles (Consultation, Service Standards, Access, Courtesy, Information, Openness and Transparency, Redress, and Value for Money).
- d) Foster a culture of learning from compliments to replicate excellence and from complaints to remedy shortcomings.

3. SCOPE

The framework applies to:

- a) **All national and provincial departments**, constitutional institutions, and public administration entities covered under PSA and PAMA.
- b) **Municipal institutions**, insofar as they are bound by PAMA and the Municipal Systems Act (2000) for service delivery standards and redress.

4. DEFINITIONS

- i. Complaint – An expression of dissatisfaction or discontent, however made, about the service, actions, or lack of action about the services rendered by a government institution to an individual or a group of clients.
- ii. Compliment - a statement of praise, commendation, or admiration directed towards the services offered or the care provided within a government institution.
- iii. Suggestion - a proposal or idea presented by an individual to enhance the services or treatment delivered within the government institution.

5. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA) provide a Complaints and Compliments Management Framework to guide government departments in handling service delivery feedback from citizens. This framework is supported by several legislative instruments that establish the legal foundation for managing complaints and compliments within the public service.

- a) The Constitution of South Africa, 1996 Section 195(1)(e) & (g): Mandates public administration to be responsive to citizens' needs and to foster public participation. The constitutional principles governing the Public Service state that:
 - services must be provided impartially, fairly, equitably and without bias;
 - people's needs must be responded to, and the public must be encouraged to participate in policy-making;
 - public administration must be accountable; and
 - transparency must be fostered by providing the public with timely, accessible and accurate information.
- b) White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery attempts to introduce a fresh approach to service delivery. It puts pressure on systems, procedures, attitudes and behaviour within the Public Service and re-orientates them in the customer's favour. It involves creating a framework for the delivery of public services which treats the customer as "king" and enables customers to hold public servants

accountable for the service they receive. Setting up a complaints system is a means of listening to customers and, if one is prepared to learn from them, to improve services.

- c) Promotion of Administrative Justice Act (PAJA), 2000: Expands on Section 33 by providing mechanisms for citizens to challenge unfair administrative actions. This act confirms the customer's right to consultation and redress if his or her rights are adversely affected by an administrative action. The Act upholds a citizen's right to express his or her dissatisfaction with public services. A complaints facility is an important element in the process of providing redress.
- d) Public Service Act, 1994 (as amended) Section 3(1)(i): Assigns the DPSA responsibility to set norms and standards for public administration, including handling complaints and compliments.
- e) The Public Service Regulations of 2001 Part C of the Regulations states that an executing authority shall establish and sustain a service delivery improvement programme for his/her department that must include, among other things: the current and future complaints system or mechanisms.
- f) Batho Pele Principles (White Paper on Transforming Public Service Delivery, 1997) provides a citizen-centred approach to service delivery, emphasising courtesy, openness, redress, and consultation. Requires departments to establish complaint mechanisms and ensure citizens have ways to provide feedback.
- g) Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA), 2000 Enables citizens to request information about decisions affecting them, including complaints lodged against government departments.
- h) Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), 2013 Ensures confidentiality and privacy of individuals when managing complaints and compliments.
- i) Public Administration Management Act (PAMA), 2014 Promotes ethical public service delivery and prevention of maladministration related to complaints handling.
- j) National Development Plan (NDP) - Vision 2030 Calls for professionalising the public service and improving responsiveness to citizens' complaints.
- k) DPSA Guidelines on Complaints and Compliments Management (2021/22) provides operational standards for government institutions to process complaints and compliments.

6. LINKS TO BATHO PELE PRINCIPLES

The ultimate aim of public service transformation is to improve service delivery. The Batho Pele White Paper provides a framework and a practical implementation strategy

for the 197 transformation of service delivery. Its focus is on “how” services are provided. Allowing customers to complain is a strategy to promote continuous improvement in the quantity and quality of services and to be more responsive to customer needs.

The Batho Pele principles are listed in Chapter One of the Batho Pele Handbook. Several of them reinforce a customer’s right to complain, for example, a customer’s right to courteous behaviour, transparency and openness at all times, and especially redress when he or she is not satisfied with the service provided. The second Batho Pele “service standards” states that citizens should be made aware of the level and quality of services they should expect. This sets a baseline for customers to complain when service standards are not met. The seventh principle is very specific about the nature of redress customers are entitled to. It states: “If the promised standard of service is not delivered, citizens should be offered an apology, a full explanation, and a speedy and effective remedy; and when complaints are made, citizens should receive a sympathetic, positive response”. This principle demands a new approach to handling complaints.

Complaints are seen by many public servants as an irritation and intrusion in their working lives. Where complaints procedures do exist, they are generally ineffective and bureaucratic and they often tend to defend or justify a department’s actions, rather than solving the customer’s problems. By offering redress we do not only appease irate or unhappy customers, we change the mindset of service providers from a preoccupation with the processes of service delivery to focus on deliverables and thus put in motion a process of improving service delivery.

7. UNDERPINNING PRINCIPLES

All national and provincial departments should establish complaints handling systems and, in terms of the Batho Pele White Paper, they are required to review them in line with the following guidelines:

- a) accessible;
- b) speed;
- c) fairness;
- d) Complaints
- e) confidentiality;
- f) responsiveness;
- g) informative;
- h) reviewed;
- i) training.

Each of these will be discussed in detail.

a) Accessible

Complaints systems should be:

- Well-publicised and easy to use.
- Free of jargon and excessive formality.
- User-friendly and convenient to the customer, with options such as face-to-face, telephonic or written communications.
- Located in venues that can be reached easily by all and sundry, including people who are physically challenged, for example, blind people or people in wheelchairs, etc.

b) Speed

The longer it takes to respond to a complaint, the more dissatisfied customers are likely to become. Hence:

- Time limits for responding to complaints should be set to ensure that they are dealt with promptly.
- All complaints should be acknowledged immediately and courteously and where delays are unavoidable, customers must be kept informed of progress.
- Once the complaint has been verified, a sincere apology together with a full explanation must be given to the customer.

c) Fairness

Complaints should be fully and impartially investigated. Public servants should guard against becoming defensive and trying to justify their actions, when a complaint is received. It should be borne in mind that many people might be nervous and hesitant to complain, thus the process should not be daunting or place them at a disadvantage. Wherever possible, the customer who is complaining should be offered alternative avenues to take his or her complaint forward, if the matter cannot be resolved satisfactorily the first time round.

d) Complaints

Systems should be:

- Well-publicised and easy to use.
- Free of jargon and excessive formality.
- User-friendly and convenient to the customer, with options such as face-to-face, telephonic or written communications.
- Located in venues that can be reached easily by all and sundry, including people who are physically challenged, for example, blind people or people in wheelchairs, etc.

e) Confidentiality

In line with the constitutional principles, the confidentiality of complainants should be respected and protected at all times to prevent possible intimidation and victimisation. Confidentiality must also be maintained so that staff who are being complained about are managed in line with the Code of Good Practice as detailed in the Labour Relations Act.

f) Responsive

No matter how trivial a complaint may seem, for the customer it is a real concern and he or she must be taken seriously. Full account should be taken of the complainant's concerns, perceptions and feelings. When a mistake is made or the service falls below the set standards, the department:

- must respond promptly;
- give an assurance that the occurrence will not be repeated and that remedial action will be taken; and
- take remedial action.

g) Informative

The system must provide good and useful information to management so that service delivery can be improved.

h) Reviewed

A good complaints system should incorporate mechanisms for review and evaluation. Furthermore, it should allow for feedback so that mistakes and failures do not recur.

i) Training

Complaints handling procedures should be publicised throughout the organisation and training given to all staff so that they know what action to take when a complaint is received.

8. THEORY OF CHANGE FOR INSTITUTIONALISATION

If government institutionalises a standardised, well-governed, and technology-enabled Complaints and Compliments Management Framework, supported by clear roles and responsibilities, capacity building, and effective oversight, then complaints and compliments will be managed consistently and efficiently across all spheres of government. This will result in improved responsiveness, enhanced accountability, better service delivery outcomes, and increased citizen satisfaction and trust in government.

Dimensions	Logic
Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approved Complaints and Compliments Management Framework • Legislative and policy alignment (Batho Pele principles, Public Service Regulations) • Functional ICT systems (e.g. SITA ITMS, Presidential Hotline) • Skilled and trained personnel (PLOs and frontline staff) • Financial and institutional resources • Communication and awareness programmes led by GCIS
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll-out and implementation of the Framework across national, provincial, and local government • Capacity building and training of officials responsible for complaints and compliments management • Standardisation of processes, tools, and reporting templates • Strengthening coordination through the Presidential Hotline and oversight structures • Public awareness campaigns to encourage citizen participation • Monitoring, evaluation, and reporting on complaints and compliments trends
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional and standardised complaints and compliments management systems across government • Improved recording, tracking, and resolution of complaints • Regular and reliable reports on complaints and compliments • Increased awareness and utilisation of complaints mechanisms by citizens • Improved compliance with prescribed norms and standards
Outcomes	<p>Short to Medium Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved turnaround times for complaint resolution • Increased responsiveness and quality of feedback to citizens • Strengthened accountability of departments and entities • Enhanced coordination across spheres of government <p>Long Term:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematic use of complaints data to inform service delivery improvements • Reduction in recurring service delivery failures • Improved citizen experience and satisfaction with government services

Table 1: Theory of Change for Institutionalisation

8.1 Impact

- a) A responsive, accountable, and citizen-centred public service that upholds Batho Pele principles
- b) Increased public trust and confidence in government
- c) Continuous improvement in service delivery across all spheres of government

8.2 Key Assumptions

- a) Political and administrative leadership will support implementation and enforcement
- b) Departments will allocate adequate resources
- c) ICT systems will be reliable, integrated, and accessible
- d) Citizens will actively utilise complaints and compliments platforms
- e) Effective intergovernmental coordination will be sustained

8.3 Risk and Mitigation

Risk	Mitigation
Resistance to change and weak adoption	Strong leadership, change management, and training
Inadequate ICT integration	Strengthen collaboration with SITA and invest in system upgrades
Capacity constraints	Continuous skills development and support
Poor compliance and accountability	Strengthen monitoring, reporting, and consequence management
Low public awareness	Targeted communication campaigns through GCIS

Table 2: Risk and Mitigation

9. INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDER ROLES

The implementation of the Complaints and Compliments Management Framework is supported by clearly defined institutional arrangements and stakeholder roles across national, provincial, and local spheres of government. These arrangements are intended to promote coordination, accountability, and effective management of complaints and compliments in line with Batho Pele principles.

8.1 Stakeholder Overview

The following key stakeholders play a critical role in the implementation of the Framework:

Stakeholder	Responsibility
Department of Public Service and Administration	Provides oversight of the Framework, ensures policy alignment, and supports monitoring and reporting on complaints management performance across government.
Department of Planning Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME)	Provides oversight of the Presidential Hotline Strategy and supports monitoring and reporting on complaints management performance across government.
State Information Technology Agency (SITA)	Manages and maintains the IT systems that support the logging, tracking, and reporting of complaints and compliments.
Provincial Governments (Offices of the Premier)	Ensure coordination, oversight, and effective handling of complaints at the provincial level. Municipalities: Manage service delivery complaints at the local level and escalate unresolved cases through appropriate channels.
State-Owned Entities (SOEs)	Address complaints within their respective mandates and escalate unresolved or systemic issues where necessary
Government Communication and Information System (GCIS)	Leads communication and awareness initiatives to promote the use of complaints and compliments mechanisms and strengthen citizen engagement

Table 3: Stakeholder Overview

10. IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

1. Develop guidelines in a consultative manner and in line with service standards
2. Formulate a committee/formal appointment letter from the HoD and Terms of Reference – Reporting Head of Quality Assurance, Labour, Specialists
3. Data analysis and reporting
4. Use of ICT (AI, IoT) ref no
5. Advocacy/Create awareness for citizens
6. Manner in which complaint was lodged: Written, Verbal, Physical visit

11. CATEGORIES FOR COMPLAINTS, COMPLIMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS

Category Type	Category	Description / Examples	Responsible Unit	Typical Resolution Action
Complaint	Access and Availability of Services	Long queues, limited service points, inaccessible facilities, or limited operating hours.	Operations / Service Delivery	Review staffing levels, extend operating hours, or improve facility accessibility.
Complaint	Staff Conduct and Attitude	Rude, unhelpful, or discriminatory behaviour; lack of empathy.	Human Resources / Ethics	Conduct customer care refresher training or disciplinary action if necessary.
Complaint	Service Efficiency and Responsiveness	Delays in processing applications or responding to citizens; missed service targets.	Line Function Unit / Operations	Review workflow, track turnaround times, and implement performance improvements.
Complaint	Information and Communication	Inaccurate, unclear, or inconsistent information provided to citizens.	Communications / Frontline Services	Standardise communication materials; train staff on information protocols.
Complaint	Corruption and Unethical Practices	Bribery, favouritism, misuse of resources, or conflict of interest.	Anti-Corruption / Ethics / Internal Audit	Refer to Ethics Unit or Internal Audit for investigation; enforce disciplinary measures.
Complaint	Infrastructure and System Failures	System downtime, poor facility conditions, lack of resources or equipment.	ICT / Facilities Management	Escalate technical issues; prioritise maintenance or system upgrades.
Complaint	Policy or Procedural Dissatisfaction	Citizen disagrees with policy or finds procedures unfair or unclear.	Policy and Planning	Review and simplify processes; communicate

Category Type	Category	Description / Examples	Responsible Unit	Typical Resolution Action
				rationale and appeal options.
Compliment	Exemplary Staff Conduct	Staff member displayed exceptional professionalism, empathy, or courtesy.	Human Resources / Communications	Acknowledge through internal recognition or commendation.
Compliment	Efficiency and Responsiveness	Quick, effective, and solution-oriented service delivery.	Line Function Unit / Operations	Share as a best-practice example; replicate in other service points.
Compliment	Communication and Information Sharing	Clear, proactive, and helpful communication that improved citizen understanding.	Communications / Frontline Services	Highlight in newsletters or recognition programmes.
Compliment	Innovation and Problem Solving	Creative or technology-driven solution that improved citizen experience.	Innovation / Service Delivery Improvement	Nominate for innovation awards; document and scale the initiative.
Compliment	Positive Service Environment	Clean, well-organised, and welcoming service point; professional teamwork.	Facilities / Operations	Recognise the team; maintain service standards and cleanliness.

Table 4: Categories for Complaints, Compliment or Suggestions

12. CONCLUSION

This framework provides the foundation for building a world-class feedback management system. Its successful implementation will require strong political will, dedicated resources, and a fundamental shift in culture towards true citizen-centricity, ultimately rebuilding trust and ensuring the South African Public Service delivers on its promise to the people.



We Belong



We Care



We Serve

REFERENCES

Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA). 2003. *Batho Pele Handbook: A Service Delivery Improvement Guide*. Pretoria: Government Printers.

Department of Health (2022). *National Guideline to Manage Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions in the Health Sector of South Africa*: Government Printers

Annexure A: **Form to lodge a complaint or record a compliment or suggestion**

Form to lodge a complaint or record a compliment or suggestion

Public Service Complaints, Compliments and Suggestions Form

Department/Institution: Date Received: ___ / ___ / 20___ Reference Number:

Section A: Your Details (Optional)

(You may remain anonymous, but providing details will help us respond to you)

Full Name: _____

ID/Passport No.: _____

Contact Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Physical/Postal Address: _____

Section B: Type of Submission

Complaint

Compliment

Suggestion

Section C: Details of Your Complaint / Compliment / Suggestion

1. Service / Department / Office concerned:

2. Date and Place of Service Experience: ___ / ___ / 20___ at

3. Description of Complaint, Compliment or Suggestion:

(Please give full details. If it is a complaint, state what went wrong. If it is a compliment, state what was done well. If it is a suggestion, explain your idea for improvement.)

4. If this is a Complaint, what outcome or remedy do you seek?

Section D: Supporting Information

Documents attached (please specify): _____

Photos/Other evidence attached

Section E: For Official Use Only

Reference Number: _____

Officer Receiving: _____

Unit/Division Responsible: _____

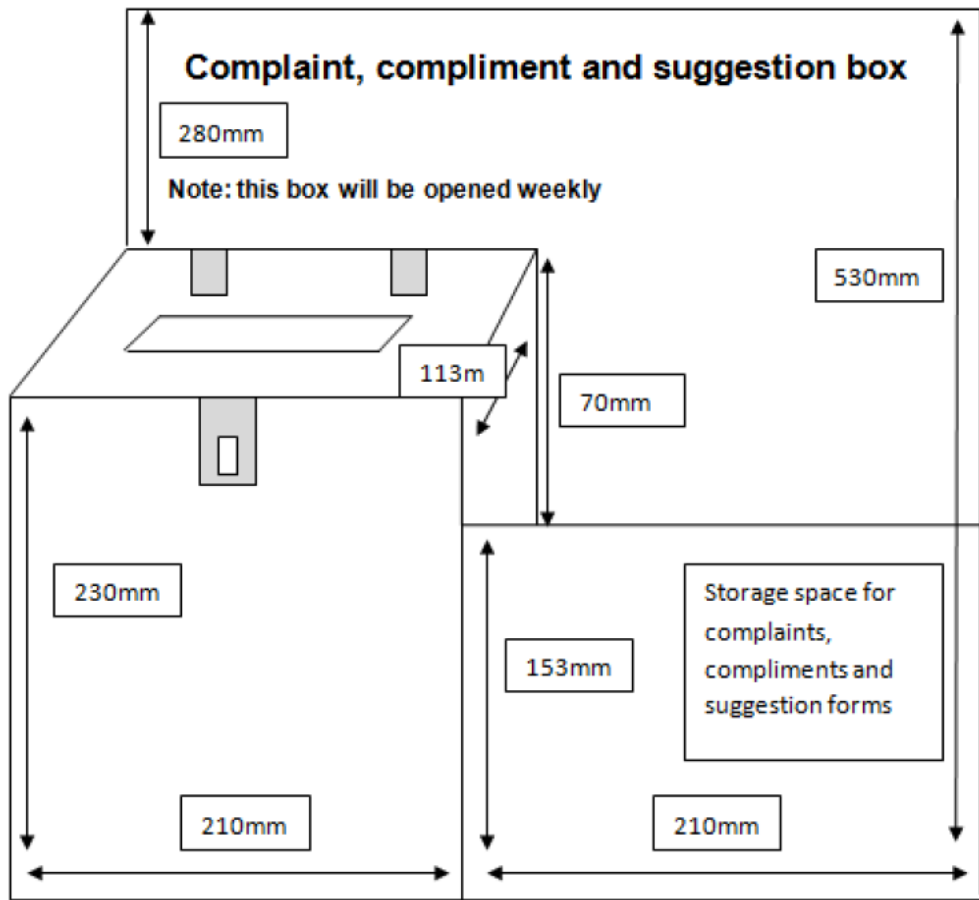
Action Taken: _____

Feedback Provided on: ___ / ___ / 20___

Note:

- All complaints will be acknowledged within 7 working days.
- Compliments and suggestions will be shared with the relevant unit for recognition or consideration.
- Your personal information will be protected in line with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA).

Annexure B: Specification for complaint, compliment and suggestion boxes



Specifications

Material	Perspex, 5mm thick
Colour	White, frosted (can be any colour according to province's decision)
Hinges and hook and eye	Stainless steel
Label	Perspex print on box itself (no labels) in colour as determined by the province (Colour model CMYK: specify colours) Text and font size: "Complaint, compliment and suggestion box" – Arial 72 Repeat text translated into two other languages according to most prevalent language in the province "Note: this box will be opened weekly (change according to facility's schedule) – Arial 32
Lock	Lock with number sequence to lock
Mounted	Mounted onto the wall, 1.2m above the ground

Annexure C: Poster to inform customers on the process to follow to lodge a complaint or record a compliment or make a suggestion

HOW TO LODGE A COMPLAINT OR RECORD A COMPLIMENT OR SUGGESTION

FIND A FORM



1



COMPLET THE FORM

Fill in the details on the form

2



SUBMIT THE FORM

Hand in the form to a staff member or submit it to the relevant office

3



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

You will receive a written acknowledgment

4



RECEIVE A RESPONSE

A response will be provided in the manner indicated

Annexure D: Register for complaints

Department: _____

Ref No	Date received	Name of complainant	Service area where the complaint is lodged	Summary of the complaint	Category of complaint	Severity of the complaint

- Column name (e.g. A, B and D) in the heading of the complaints register refer to the columns to be completed in Annexure G:
- To obtain column A of Annexure G count the number of reference numbers for the month have been entered). Very important: also check previous month' s registers for complaints that have been resolved for the current month and add all the complaints that have been resolved for the current month. In some instances you can have more complaints resolved than received for a specific month because complaints of previous months were resolved in that specific month.
 - To obtain column D of Annexure G count the number of complaints resolved within 25 days only. Same principle applies as previous bullet; therefore check previous month' s registers

Month/Year: _____

Type of resolution	Date resolved	Number of working days to resolve the complaint

Implementation phase and activities

Phase	Phase Description	Key Activities	Deliverables	Timeframes	Responsible Unit/Department
Phase 1	Consolidation of Consultation Inputs	Collect and analyse consultation inputs; Categorise themes; Identify gaps, Citizen Engagement	Consolidated Consultation Inputs Report/Reviewed framework	March 2025	DPSA
Phase 2	Revision of Draft CCMF	Integrate inputs; Strengthen redress, escalation and accountability; Align with key policies	Revised Draft CCMF	February 2026	DPSA
Phase 3	Validation and Quality Assurance	Internal validation; Legal and policy compliance checks; Refinement	Validated Draft CCMF	February 2026	DPSA: Policy, Legal & QA Units
Phase 4	Governance Approval	Submit to governance structures; Incorporate recommendations; Finalise framework, Call for pilot sites	Approved CCMF	February – March 2026	DPSA Management
Phase 5	Implementation Readiness and Communication	Develop implementation guidance; Issue	Implementation Readiness Brief	March 2026	DPSA

		communication; Stakeholder briefings			
--	--	---	--	--	--