

# **A results-based monitoring and evaluation system to support good public management**

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**Abstract:** Many countries from around the world are implementing E-government in an attempt to improve service delivery and all governments are under increasing pressure to produce, and to demonstrate, results. But the question needs to be asked “how will government measure and communicate progress. How will they know if they are failing?” The objectives of this paper are to highlight to policy makers of E-government strategies some of the lessons learned from other countries in moving to an outcomes approach for effective and responsive public management and to suggest a tool for establishing a monitoring and evaluation system for good public management.

## **1. Introduction**

Many countries from around the world are implementing E-government in an attempt to improve service delivery, general back office efficiencies, and effectiveness through citizen centred strategies. All governments are under increasing pressure to produce, and to demonstrate, results. But the question needs to be asked “how will government measure and communicate progress. How will they know if they are failing?”

In South Africa the role and contribution of ICT in development is not clearly defined, documented or captured in monitoring and evaluation systems. Assessing the performance of these initiatives and learning from them require more deliberate actions with regard to measuring the increasing reach of the Information Society [1].

The objectives of this paper are to highlight to policy makers of E-government strategies some of the lessons learned from other countries in moving to an outcomes approach for effective and responsive public management and to suggest a tool for establishing a results-based monitoring and evaluation system for good public management.

## **2. The Need to Measure Performance**

Addressing the development challenges in South Africa, requires of government to constantly seek better and improved development solutions. Government is committed to using Information Communication Technologies, ICTs, to take the country into a higher growth and development trajectory. One of the key pillars of this strategy is E-government.

Unfortunately, the role and contribution of ICT in development is often not clearly defined, documented or captured in monitoring and evaluation systems. Assessing the

performance of these initiatives and learning from them require more deliberate actions with regard to measuring the increasing reach of the Information Society in South Africa.

Potential benefits of ICT applications may be lost or unfold unnoticed unless its impacts are measured. Furthermore, decision-makers and policy developers globally require information and intelligence about the performance and results of ICT interventions for evidence-based policy making.

The assessment of the contribution of ICTs to the development of the Information Society requires detailed analysis which is based on statistical and qualitative data about purpose, intensity and value of ICT use and application. Official statistics relating to the connectivity of SMMEs, health institutions, public funded institutions are not widely available and thus need to be developed and collection strengthened.

South Africa lacks a comprehensive and easily accessible evidence base to support strategic policy decision making and programme design to leverage ICTs for South Africa's Information Society development. This makes the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery and the implementation of corrective action difficult.

Lack of an accessible evidence base further complicates the reporting requirements on the Millennium Development Goals and progress made towards the implementation of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Plan of Action. The WSIS Plan calls on all countries and regions to develop and set up coherent and internationally comparable indicator systems and tools to provide statistical information on the Information Society, with basic indicators and analysis of its key dimensions.

The design, development and implementation of a nation-wide indicator and measurement system will require agreement on a core set of indicators and measures needed to generate the necessary data, among all stakeholders. Stakeholders have divergent views on what constitutes the Information Society and have different indicators and measures to represent their methodological approaches [1].

In developing such a methodological approach for South Africa, policy makers can gain from the experience and lessons learned from other countries in the developing and developed world in the implementation of E-government.

### **3. Lessons Learned from Developing Countries**

At a World Bank Roundtable discussion, involving twelve developed and developing countries (two from Africa), a number of experiences and important lessons learned were shared in the implementation of an outcome approach to public sector management [2].

Firstly, the importance of linking outcomes to strategy was highlighted. It was generally agreed that moving towards an outcome approach is important and worth doing. Substantial evidence from the experiences of the countries involved suggests that it is possible to move towards a results-oriented approach.

It was recommended that an outcome approach requires a strategic focus that impacts directly on the countries citizens. For example, Uganda has drafted the Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) as the national planning framework for refocusing policy and prioritizing public strategies. Tanzania has a national development agenda with poverty reduction strategies that aim to focus on outcomes.

An outcome focus can provide a framework for an integrated “whole of government” approach involving the co-ordination of different policy and program areas all contributing to the same outcome such as employment creation. For example the Ugandan Sector Wide Approach was adopted to cater for interrelationships and synergies within sectors for efficient utilisation of resources in support of the PEAP.

Different countries have adopted differing ways of implementing performance management in government. Strategies include “whole of government” approaches, sector specific or customer focused.

The “whole of government” approach introduced government wide strategic plans, performance indicators and annual performance plans and integrated them into annual budget documents. Sector specific approaches for example would be piloting performance monitoring and evaluation as part of a rural development sector performance information and management system.

Customer focused approaches include targeting users or beneficiaries such as women or children. Such strategies develop key performance indicators that cut across lines of ministries with a specific focus on improving programs targeting those beneficiaries.

Some countries have adopted whole of government approaches to introducing performance management others began with pilot initiatives. The pilot strategy can help move forward a national agenda in a program area without waiting for the entire government to embrace performance management.

Facilitating the implementation of an outcome focus was considered important. This requires a fundamental shift away from a focus on process to a focus on benefits and impacts on existing accountability and reward mechanisms as well as the manner in which government relates to its citizens. Countries that have done this have found that is difficult to bring about and that it needs to be looked upon as a long-term process.

It is for this reason that a development or transition period is recommended. Rather than attempt a “whole of government” approach, it is recommended to rather establish a pilot in selective areas first.

Both a top-down as well as a bottom-up approach are considered essential. Strong leadership and political will is essential as is support and buy-in from middle-management. Having sufficient capacity and expertise in results-oriented thinking and managing, as well as expertise in more specialised tasks such as monitoring and evaluation, is crucial. The reform effort itself should be subject to regular evaluation.

Strong support was given to monitoring and evaluation and reporting on outcomes. Countries have found that being able to document what actually happens is absolutely critical to an outcome orientation. Without good information on what has happened, a focus on results is impossible. And for good information, all countries recognize that one requires monitoring or tracking of progress in accordance with objectives and indicators, along with evaluation that can look at broader considerations.

For example, the Ugandan government established an integrated National Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism for the PEAP with a specific focus on outcome indicators.

Tanzania has introduced a poverty monitoring and evaluation system to track progress using a core set of indicators.

It was noted that much of the current activity is at the monitoring level, and the need for more attention to evaluation was identified. Evaluation is required to assess the continuing relevance and appropriateness of strategies and programs, and to provide information about all types of impacts, including unintended or unexpected consequences. Evaluation, it was suggested, can identify the continued appropriateness of objectives and of indicators used for monitoring. Evaluation is needed to demonstrate causality or attribution, to determine if the program intervention was indeed responsible for any documented results.

Perhaps most importantly, evaluation can provide “why” and “how” information that is needed for an understanding of how and in what circumstances a program approach “works” or does not, and what would be needed to be able to learn from what has happened and to make informed decisions on future actions

According to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), “the budget is the single most important policy document of governments, where policy objectives are reconciled and implemented in concrete terms. Budget transparency is defined as the full disclosure of all relevant fiscal information in a timely and systematic manner”. Some governments that are moving towards a results-based focus are implementing a strategy that aims to tie the annual budgets to outcomes [3].

According to the OECD, performance management is a key aspect of public sector reforms in many OECD member countries. In developing countries, performance management is also a key aspect of poverty reduction strategies and social reforms.

International lessons learned indicate that there is no best way to implement performance management strategies whether they be “whole of government” approaches, sector specific or customer focused Other lessons learned include creating an environment that expects and values high performance, designing and executing a well defined system for monitoring and evaluation, and aligning budgets with programs and goals..

#### **4. Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation**

Because E-government usually involves significant money, human resources, information and political commitment, accountability is critical. In developing and industrialized countries alike, whether democratic or not, the policymakers and agencies responsible for E-government are answerable for money spent, policies set and public services delivered, or not, once the rollout of E-government begins [4].

The test of an e-government project’s success is how well the project meets its goals, for example, how well it delivers services, makes information accessible, or increases access to government. Judging both progress and performance means establishing metrics. Accountability requires measurable performance standards.

As the World Bank roundtable discussions concluded, it is desirable to move toward an outcome focus that places emphasis on results, monitoring and evaluation and reporting on outcomes. Countries have found that being able to document what actually happens is absolutely critical to an outcome orientation. Without good information on what has happened, a focus on results is impossible. And for good information, all countries

recognize that one requires monitoring or tracking of progress in accordance with objectives and indicators, along with evaluation that can look at broader considerations. A results-based monitoring and evaluation system is such a tool that will support the above objectives of good public management. The World Bank has developed a methodology for Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation [3].

There are a number of reasons for implementing Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation (R-BM&E). It provides crucial information about public sector performance, a view over time on the status of a programme, promotes credibility and public confidence, helps formulate and justify budgets and identifies promising practices.

R-BM&E focuses attention on achieving outcomes, establishing goals and objectives, permits managers to identify and take action to correct weaknesses and supports development agenda that is shifting towards greater accountability for aid lending. Implementing R-BM&E requires a combination of institutional capacity and political will.

Traditional monitoring focuses on implementation monitoring that tracks inputs, activities and outputs (the products or services produced) often done to assess compliance with workplans and budget. There is now a new emphasis on both implementation and results-based monitoring. Results-Based Monitoring demonstrates how effectively government is performing and whether a policy/programme is achieving its stated goals.

Results-Based Evaluation is an assessment of a planned, ongoing, or completed intervention to determine its relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. The intent is to incorporate lessons learned into the decision-making process, a key finding of the World Bank roundtable discussions.

#### **4. Developing a Performance Matrix for E-government**

The South African government has identified the need to manage information, internal functions as well as serving business and citizens as core to its strategy. Key outcomes of this strategy are greater access to government services, improved service delivery, a focus on citizen centred approaches and encouraging a participatory process.

From a review of governments E-government strategy documents [5,6,7]] the following outcomes are suggested by the author:

Focus on citizen centred and participatory process of E-government  
Improve delivery of government services to citizens living in rural areas  
Citizens experience improved customer service

Outcomes make explicit the intended objectives of government action, they are what produce benefits and tell you when you have been successful or not. Outcomes must be translated to a clear set of key indicators. An outcome indicator identifies a specific numerical measurement that tracks progress toward achieving an outcome

Outcome indicators are not the same as outcomes. Outcome indicators identify a specific numerical measurement that tracks progress (or not) toward achieving an outcome. Each outcome needs to be translated into one or more indicators.

It is necessary to establish baseline data on indicators. A performance baseline is information that provides data at the beginning of the monitoring period. The baseline is

used to learn about recent levels and patterns of performance on the indicator and to gauge subsequent policy performance. Sources of data need to be identified for the indicators.

When planning for improvement it is necessary to select results targets. Targets are the quantifiable levels of the indicators that a country wants to achieve at a given point in time. Baseline Indicator level plus the desired level improvement equals the Target Performance. Only one target is desirable for each indicator. Targets challenge low expectations and give the public a clear benchmark against which they can measure progress.

An example of a results-based monitoring and evaluation matrix, known as a performance matrix, is given below. The linkages between clearly defined outcomes, outcome indicators, baselines and targets are illustrated in the table below.

Outcomes	Indicators	Baselines	Targets
Focus on citizen centred and participatory process of eGov	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. number and/or percentage of public services provided electronically;</li> <li>2. volume of transactions handled electronically</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. current number of services</li> <li>2. Score 3.6 (World Bank)</li> <li>3. current volume of transactions</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. X % government services online by ddmmyy</li> <li>2. Score X by 2007</li> <li>3. X number by ddmmyy</li> </ol>
improve delivery of government services to citizens living in rural areas	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. number and/or percentage of rural customers accessing information or services electronically</li> <li>% increase in MPCCs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. X % accessing services</li> <li>2. current number of MPCCs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. X % accessing government services online by ddmmyy</li> <li>2. Number to be delivered by ddmmyy</li> </ol>
Citizens experience improved customer service	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. response time to inquiries;</li> <li>2. length of trouble-free operation of an e-government service starting from its launch</li> <li>3. increased convenience or efficiency in delivering information or services (e.g., reduction in number of days</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. current response times</li> <li>2. current trouble free time</li> <li>3. average number of days</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.improve response time by X% by ddmmyy</li> <li>2.X % hours trouble free time by ddmmyy</li> <li>3.target number of trouble free days by ddmmyy</li> </ol>

	to deliver services) resulting from 24/7 availability; 4. length of time for procuring goods, service, info (from the government, business or citizen perspective);	4. current number of days	4.target number of days by ddmmyy
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Developing a Performance Matrix

Other quantifiable indicators may be developed. For example, an e-procurement project might be assessed based on the volume of transactions processed, reduction in the time for the procurement process or reduction in the government’s administrative costs of procurement.

### 5. Challenges and Next Steps

South Africa is at the formative stage [8] in terms of implementing E-government and has identified the need for developing a monitoring and evaluation system and indicators.

Experience from other countries and current literature, recommends that an outcome approach to public sector management (and E-government), be adopted. As the World Bank roundtable discussions concluded, it is desirable to move toward an outcome focus that places emphasis on results, monitoring and evaluation and reporting on outcomes.

South African E-government planners need to agree on outcomes. This needs to be done in a participative process with all key stakeholders involved. The agreed outcomes make explicit the intended objectives of government and impact can be measured using the performance matrix as shown in the example given. This matrix demonstrates the linkages between outcomes and indicators. Outcome indicators identify a specific numerical measurement that tracks progress toward achieving an outcome.

In terms of developing a Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation system for South Africa, it is also recommended that a readiness assessment be conducted first. This will help understand the demand, clarify roles and responsibilities, identify ways to generate trustworthy and credible information, assign accountability, audit technical and managerial capacity and create incentives for the use of the information.

From the experience of other developing countries, it is recommended that results-based monitoring and evaluation implementation begins with an enclave strategy (e.g. an island of innovation) as opposed to a whole government approach. It is advisable to begin with a pilot in order to learn the lessons for building and sustaining monitoring and evaluation within government. This could be sector specific or customer focused, targeting women or children, cutting across lines of ministries.

## 5. Conclusion

South Africa can benefit from the experiences and lessons learned provided by other developing countries around the world that are moving towards a results-driven approach that promotes government accountability and improved government effectiveness and efficiency. It is recognised that in developing countries performance management is a key aspect of public sector reform and poverty reduction strategies.

The World Bank roundtable has recommended that developing countries take an outcome approach and implement results-based monitoring and evaluation of their E-government programmes. This will ensure that scarce resources are targeted at meeting the needs of citizens and that government delivers on agreed outcomes.

The South African government has expressed the need to establish performance indicators but indicators are only one key component of a performance management system. Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation for E-government provides crucial information about public sector performance and details a methodology for capturing best practices and lessons learned. This will also support reporting requirements for the Millennium Development Goals and implementation of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) Plan of Action and a development agenda that is shifting towards greater accountability for aid lending.

By implementing Results-Based Monitoring and Evaluation, South Africa can develop a comprehensive and easily accessible evidence base to support strategic policy decision making and programme design in order to leverage E-government for enhanced public sector performance.

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