

IMPLEMENTING THE PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SYSTEM

PILOTING THE SYSTEM

A new performance management system should be pilot-tested at a number of sites before full implementation.

The following issues will need to be considered in undertaking the pilot:

- suitability of the sites in terms of providing a range of occupations and sufficient numbers of employees to test the processes and materials;
- senior management sponsorship at the pilot locations;
- preparedness of the sites in relation to:
 - availability of realistic reporting structures;
 - availability of organisational objectives and job descriptions to form the basis of individual's work plans;
- communication to participants of the benefits of the new approach and of participating in the pilot;
- training of participants;
- provision of performance management project team and local human resource personnel support at the pilot sites;
- provision for a pilot timeframe that encompasses at least work plan development, one progress review and an annual appraisal (six months minimum);
- evaluation of the pilot.

TRAINING

Implementation training is a vital part of introducing a performance management system, particularly where the public service organisation has not previously had a performance management system in place.

Consideration should be given to the need for comprehensive training so that, as well as covering systems procedures, there is guidance on the acquisition of the people management and communication skills and practices which underpin successful implementation.

There are a variety of options for length and content of training programmes. A longer programme is useful for participants who are managers as considerable improvement is usually needed in management, communication and work planning to support effective performance management. Some initial training is therefore recommended to ensure some initial success. Performance management training can be incorporated at a later stage into mainstream training programmes, such as induction programmes for new starters and management training for supervisors. The length of the initial training programmes will have an impact on when implementation can occur.

The style of the initial performance management training programmes will depend to some extent on the amount and type of resources available for delivery. A system with access to very experienced workshop convenors may tend towards training which seeks to modify substantially the behaviour of participants during the workshop.

An implementation training strategy for an entire public service will probably need to depend on initial training of facilitators who can then carry out the training in each ministry.

The style of the Zambian training package is to provide comprehensive guidance to the programme convenor so that the package can be delivered by well-educated, articulate and experienced public servants who have had very little experience as convenors. This is an alternative to a "train the trainer" approach. This approach works well where there is considerable focus on conveying systems knowledge rather than on skills training.

An outline of the Zambian Training Package is given in Appendix D.

In developing its performance management approach, the Government of Zimbabwe plans to prepare a team of 70 trainers to conduct a cascade training programme covering 170,000 employees. Training in the new performance management system concepts will be provided for existing trainers, while those inexperienced in training will also be trained in training methods.

Proposed outlines for the Zimbabwe courses for supervisors and employees are given in Appendix E.

COMMUNICATION

To help alleviate fears and misconceptions and ensure that the implementation plans and benefits of the performance management approach are well understood, an on-

To help to support implementation of its new objective-based appraisal system across a large number of employees, the Zimbabwe Government has developed a question-and-answer brochure to circulate to all employees. A video is also planned for managers to show to employees in the workplace. Examples of the questions and answers from the brochure are shown below.

How many objectives should I set myself?

All objectives should be agreed with one's supervisor. Most officers/employees will have between five and ten objectives.

If I am unhappy with my supervisor's rating what should I do?

The subordinate should take the matter up through his/her supervisor to the latter's superior. If still unhappy after this meeting, he/she can go to the head of the ministry or his/her designate (where the matter should be finally resolved).

Is it not risky to have one person deciding whether someone deserves a 1 or a 5 rating, when the implications are so important to the rated person's career?

It is strongly recommended to all ministries that all ratings of 1 to 5 should be corroborated by the supervisor's superior. Supervisors who abuse their authority will find their own ratings negatively affected.

going communication strategy encompassing all employees and employees' organisations should be part of the implementation process. The communication strategy can be part of a one-page implementation plan which defines accountabilities, how reporting and recording will occur, and what training and information will be provided.

The Provincial of Gauteng in South Africa decided to overcome a short implementation lead time by providing performance management concept training to a team of 30 trainers and 75 human resource practitioners to allow them to assist supervisors and employees in carrying out the new objective development and review processes.

Due to the timeframes, they decided to provide an initial half-day seminar to all of the 17,000 employees prior to the commencement of the system, followed by training courses of one day for employees and two days for supervisors during the first two years of system implementation.

EVALUATING THE PILOT

The initial evaluation of a pilot scheme should be simple and direct – *are forms completed satisfactorily and are system-users satisfied?* A further evaluation after a year of operation will allow the system to be assessed over an annual cycle and

The Government of Lesotho task team developed the following desired outcomes and performance indicators and targets to assess its pilot programme.

Desired Outcome

Acceptance of an understanding of the training programme by the employees and supervisor

Indicators

Evaluation of the training at the end of training before the pilot

Target 60% participants satisfied with course

Evaluation of the initial training programme at the end of the pilot

Target 75% of participants found the training relevant

Desired Outcome

Understanding of the instructions in the guidelines by employees and supervisors

Indicators

Percentage of forms completed adequately in desk check of a random group of forms

Target 90% of forms are completed adequately

Users' views in focus groups on ease or difficulty in completing the form

Target 90% found forms reasonably easy to understand

Desired Outcome

A satisfactory grievance mechanism

Indicators

Number of grievances satisfactorily resolved

Target 80% grievances satisfactorily resolved

Views of the grievance panel

Target panel members to provide constructive advice

Desired Outcome

Effectiveness of the personnel advice system

Indicators

Client/User satisfaction gauged in focus groups

Target 95% of users satisfied

Desired Outcome

Identification of areas for change and user recommendations for change

Indicators

Recommendations for improvement obtained in focus groups

Target recommendations available

can introduce the longer-term topics for evaluation. It is also an appropriate point to ask ministries or other units for feedback on implementation and systems issues and problems, as well as assessing human resource data on key issues such as absenteeism, disciplinary cases, and training provision for improvements.

Methods of evaluation include the use of questionnaires, interviews or focus groups. Suggested topics are given below. It is recommended that initial evaluations go no further than halfway down this list.

Topics for evaluation questionnaires and interviews will be selected from:

- clarity and usefulness of the appraisal documents;
- comprehensiveness of performance appraisal training/instruction;
- increased knowledge of overall objectives and specific performance expectations;
- improved quality of work allocation process;
- identification of development needs;
- suggestions for system improvement;
- motivation to work better;
- improvement in working relationships and communication;
- constructiveness of feedback from manager;
- increase in responsibility and autonomy;
- existence of on-going feedback;
- opportunity to input to the assessment;
- agreement with the assessment;
- actual provision of useful training and development;
- proper handling of information;
- fairness of appraisal.

Longer-term evaluations can explore whether there has been improvement in planning, performance, staff development, communication, understanding, and management.

Performance appraisal systems should be kept under regular review. Experience in various Commonwealth countries has shown that they may require major updating after five years.

The Government of New South Wales, Australia, has included audit of performance management systems as a compulsory item in the annual audit of agencies conducted by the Auditor General. The audit looks at, for each agency, whether there is a system in place in the agency, how many appraisals were completed and the number of ratings given in each performance category.

In addition to system evaluation, monitoring of outcomes should be undertaken by using a basic set of statistics focusing on appraisal outcomes and comparing them across job levels, ministries, and by factors such as gender and age, to ensure equitable use of the system.