

Public Service (citizen/stakeholder) Accountability and the Sevottam Model

Introduction:

1. The institutional structures of top down management and isolated managerial efforts have proved inadequate for satisfying performance i.e. delivery of results and outcomes. There is over-reliance on 'command' models of administrative effort for service delivery. Citizens and service users are stakeholders and participants not just 'customers'. This role needs to be institutionalized in the administrative structures linked to the specific organizational service delivery. This participation of stakeholders in the process design and their institutional integration into the decision and delivery framework can be based on a 'cooperative model' of consultation and co-production. Institutional norms and practices become habits and routines and have to be consciously analyzed, confronted and substituted with alternate institutionalized practices. This perspective of purpose is important also for determining the type of Performance Related Incentive Scheme (PRIS) developed and adopted. The importance of a systems shift from top down monitoring to stakeholder-citizen participation and co-production with transparency and checks is critical for better public service delivery.

A. Recommendations of the IIM Ahmedabad: Public Service Accountability as a Performance Criterion and the Sevottam Model

2. The Synthesis Report of studies on Formulating the Concept, Principles, and Parameters for Performance-Related Incentives (PRI) in Government states that "in a democratic society, citizens are considered the owners of the state and the government is ultimately accountable to them i.e. citizens' expectations regarding government services have to be fulfilled. This approach does not however imply taking a short term approach, where larger public interests are sacrificed for short term gains or only loud voices of powerful are heard. Apart from citizens, for government there will be other stakeholders also in the form of politicians (elected representatives), different government departments (output of some parts of government will be consumed by government itself) and suppliers of services to government. All the above groups fall within the accountability map of government. To be responsive to the stakeholders, employees have to be responsible to requirements of public and other stakeholders and hence they need to be flexible, sensitive and dynamic. Since the environment is changing and heterogeneous, it is necessary that suitable systems are developed to

understand the environment and capture the stakeholder expectations and perceptions. Hence performance indicators based on public/stakeholder opinion becomes a necessity tool. The three criteria for measuring responsiveness are speed (including waiting time), accuracy with which the service provider responds to a request for action or information and service quality. In addition there are public service values expected of a government and internal organizational factors (like efficiency and effectiveness) to be fulfilled. Measuring responsiveness is difficult, but multi-dimensional approaches have been developed. By including public service accountability as a performance criterion it is expected that the attitudes and behavior of government employees to public will change.

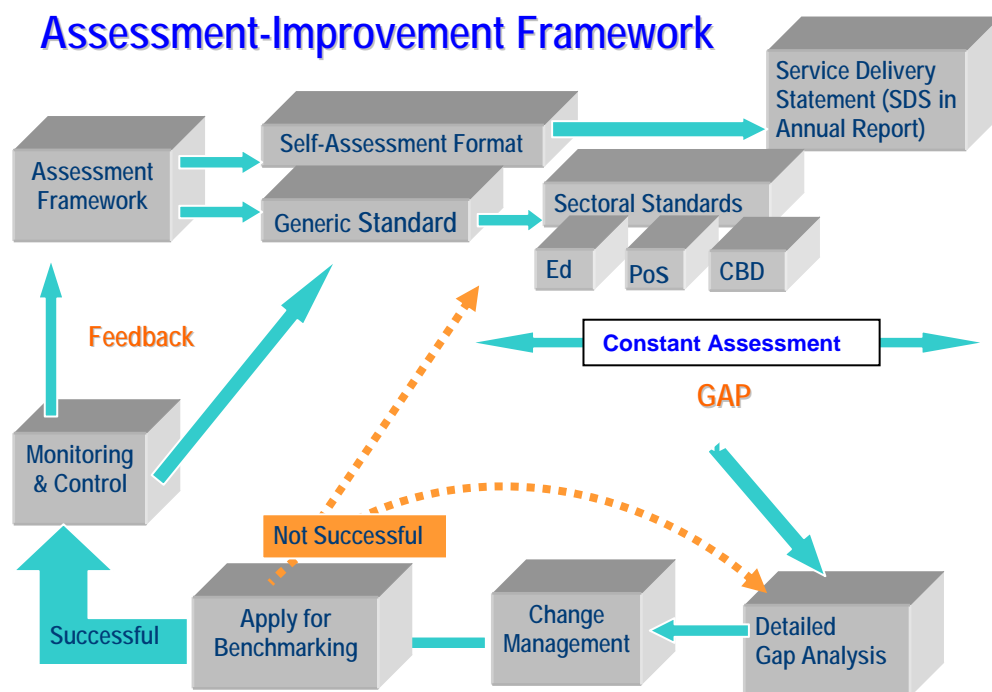
3. The citizen centric governance commitment of Government of India has led to development of a model for public service delivery (Sevottam). The model has been developed through extensive consultations with multiple stake holders and it has led to development of Indian Standard IS: 15700: 2005. By doing that, India has become the first country to have a published standard for Public Service Delivery. We are of the view that, for PRI purpose, the Sevottam model can be integrated into the model and thus employees of ministries/departments fulfilling certain level of public accountability be rewarded through PRI. Since collective effort of all employees is required for high quality service delivery, Sevottam score should be a group measure. The unit of analysis can be the larger organization and/or basic performance units determined by service delivery requirements. As PRI system progresses in maturity, minimum performance under Sevottam may be kept as a qualifier for PRI. Here employees of entire organization (or part) achieving other results, but failing in Sevottam may not receive PRI. We would like to emphasize that by no means we imply non-achievement of other performance goals, while achieving Sevottam. In our opinion, by measuring and rewarding high quality public service delivery, it can be made a natural priority for teams.”

B. Main Features of Sevottam

4. The Central Government’s *Sevottam* scheme was initiated as a mechanism to assess initiatives and best practices relating to service delivery. It is a model of service delivery standards based on experiments in e-governance. The model synthesizes ground realities in India with international best practices and has created an assessment system suitable for government organizations in India. The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) has developed generic standards for quality service delivery (**IS 15700:2005**) based on the assessment-improvement model developed by DARPG and TCS. The service provider will develop their own sectoral standards for improvement in service delivery. There are nine “QUALITY of compliance” criteria for which a requirement standard has been developed covering the three areas of (a) citizen charters, (b) grievance redressal and (c) service delivery capability. These criteria ascertain the extent to which the organization is applying service delivery improvement tools in a systematic manner and is able to learn from experience. The criteria are articulated in the form of questions that invite rating on a five-point scale

ranging from “ad hoc” to “systematic” action backed up by evidence attached with the application. An organization that scores well on these criteria deserves commendation for having understood the utility of service improvement tools and for putting this understanding to delivery excellence. Once the sectoral standards are achieved through a systemic process, the organizations can go in for certification. Periodic surveillance under the certification will ensure that the improvements made are institutionalized and a sustainable system for managing the quality of public service delivery is established.

5. Ten Ministries/Departments of Government of India, namely, Department of Post, Ministry of Communication; Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangthan (KVS), Ministry of Human Resource Development; Employees Provident Fund Organization, Ministry of Labour; Passport Division, Ministry of External Affairs; Ministry of Food Processing Industry; Income Tax, Customs and Excise, Department of Revenue; Ticketing and Freight Services, Ministry of Railways; Bureau of Indian Standards etc. have been identified for implementation of the Sevottam. The pilot schemes for streamlining delivery of these services with increased transparency of transactions, and increased citizen inputs into governance are at an advanced stage. The Sevottam Scheme is essentially based on the Service Gap Concept and can be effectively integrated with PRIS (see para 2.5.25).



Assessment Criteria in the Sevottam Model (Extracts from Service Delivery Excellence Model 'Sevottam' DARPG)

6. The criteria are set for the compliance requirements and for the improvement requirements for each of the assesseees. The assessment for compliance acts as screening mechanism to filter out organisations that do not meet the basic requirements for entry into the assessment process. The assessment criteria for improvement are divided into three modules with a total of nine criteria. The following table presents the structure of the assessment criteria. The elements for assessment are in the form of questions which enable the assessed to ascertain its status on each of the criteria. An assessee organization can opt to conduct only a self-assessment, or go in for an external assessment.

Critical Areas(3)	Criteria(9)	Elements for assessment(33)
Citizen Charter Excellence	Implementation	5
	Monitoring	3
	Review	3
Public Grievance Redress	Receipt	3
	Redress	3
	Prevention	5
Service Delivery Capability	Customers	5
	Employees	3
	Infrastructure	3

7. PRIS is envisaged as a tool to incentivise adoption of new service standards and best practices for effective and responsive service delivery – with constant self-assessment to bridge the service gaps.