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RESPONSIVE  
LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT  
TOOLKIT

# RESPONSIVE LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## **Service Improvement Guide**

A Service Improvement Guide  
for South Africa, Namibia  
and Botswana

# RESPONSIVE

**The Service Improvement intervention outlined in the current guide is the result of a three year piloting cooperation programme between the local government associations of South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.**

The collaboration project, P3, set out to engage with service improvement in 25 partner municipalities that focuses on existing resources, where management and staff are capacitated to take charge of their own service improvement agenda to meet expectations of its citizens.

The service improvement guide provides some insight into the components of service improvement and why it is needed from a customer and local development perspective. The guide also outlines the steps to be taken in a service improvement intervention guided by a service improvement champion in that local government.

The Service improvement guide is further supported by a Facilitator's guide for Service Improvement trainers and champions and a Training participant workbook with exercises to be used in a targeted service improvement intervention that capacitates both management and staff to embark on service improvement processes.

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# 1

## Before getting started...

### Why focus on service improvement in local government?

Local government is responsible for providing essential services to citizens using public funds such as water, sanitation, refuse removal, roads & transport, electricity, recreation, safety & security, health and many other of the most basic public services.

For this reason local government is often judged by one criterion: their effectiveness in delivering services which meet the basic needs of citizens and business alike. Local governments are facing challenges with growing demand and higher expectations from citizens for information and accountability in the provision of services. Citizens that receive poor services become unsatisfied, and are becoming more vocal in expressing their discontent. Such challenges demand local authorities to address issues of service delivery and to communicate initiatives to come to terms with flaws in service provision and planned improvements.

Essentially, service improvement is about:

- Equity
- Transparency
- Responsiveness
- Accountability
- Predictability



#### Equity...

Citizens are entitled to the same treatment in dealing with local government and have access to services and service information in their official language.



#### Transparency...

Citizens have the right to have insight into decision-making and communication around processes associated with service delivery. Openness will enable citizens to influence decisions that impact on the well-being of the local community.



#### Responsiveness...

Citizens need to be consulted around their expectations on service delivery so that service improvement initiatives address real needs. Citizens' feedback and complaints are invaluable in managing expectations.



### Accountability...

Local governments are answerable to the citizens on the service commitments they make.



### Value for Money...

Citizens have the right to access local government services that are of good quality and delivered in a timely manner at affordable cost.

A deliberate approach that rethinks service delivery is needed. This does not mean introducing more rules and centralised processes or micro-managing service delivery activities. Rather, it involves creating a framework for the delivery of public services, which puts citizens first and enables them to hold public servants accountable for the service they receive.

### Consequences of poor service delivery

Failures in service delivery are a reason for people remaining in poverty, for example through ill health, no access to electricity and limited access to water. In contrast, good service provision helps people to transition out of poverty, for example through education or provision of housing. There is a clear need to strengthen service delivery systems in local governments to improve the quality of life and secure equal access to services.

**Service improvement is about developing a mind-set of continuous change in local government.**



## INTRODUCING MYMUNI LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Mymuni is a small, unspoilt town with a population of 61 000 and a wide natural appeal, situated in a delightful part of Mylandia – an imaginary country in Southern Africa created for the purposes of this Service Improvement Guide. The Mymuni Local Government serves a number of small towns, the largest of which, Urbanville, has an informal settlement on its outskirts.

The citizens of Mymuni consist of three main language groups; mylanga, mylingo and myabla of which the mylanga speaking group is the biggest with 65% of the population.

The town has a rich history and earns its living from nearby mining and commercial agricultural farming activities. For many years this historic town, with its beautiful gardens, golden sands and stunning mountains with superb views which are second to none has attracted many visitors who return again and again.

Mymuni provides its citizens with services such as water, sanitation, refuse collection, roads and transport, electricity, recreation, town planning, safety and security and stray cattle handling. These services are currently provided in the urban Urbanville as well as in the informal settlements.

Mymuni always had a good track record but over the past few years, service delivery had become costly due to skills shortage, ailing bulk infrastructure and equipment - putting enormous strain on Mymuni's abilities to deliver services effectively and efficiently. This is happening at a time when the citizens of Mylandia (particularly in Urbanville) are becoming more vocal in their demands.

Mymuni has therefore embarked on a number of service improvement initiatives, which we share in this Guide.

The currency in Mylandia is the Afri (Af).

## What do we mean by service improvement?

In the private sector, companies are primarily motivated by profit because dissatisfied customers will spend their money elsewhere. The slogan ‘the customer comes first’ is therefore a fundamental business principle. Public sector ‘customers’, i.e. citizens, cannot easily take their business elsewhere. This lack of competition can sometimes lead to bureaucratic, rule-bound institutions and leaving frustrated clients, discontented citizens and disruptive communities. This can result in a negative effect on payment for services and the social and economic development of a country. Improved service delivery is critically important for sustaining democratic societies.

Clearly, professional local government officials, who deliver quality services, can have a positive effect on citizens’ attitudes to government and democracy in general. An accessible, helpful and trustworthy local government that cares about the well-being of citizens and delivers efficient services will result in a higher level of confidence.

A citizen-focused local government strives to provide the best possible services, including relevant information on service delivery, adequate housing, an agreeable environment and creating opportunities for economic growth. An approach which focuses on the citizen will ensure that service delivery exceeds peoples’ expectations. The degree, to which the citizens and public think this is achieved, is the measure of success.

Central to any service improvement strategy is the setting of rigorous service standards that are communicated to the public and against which service performance is measured.

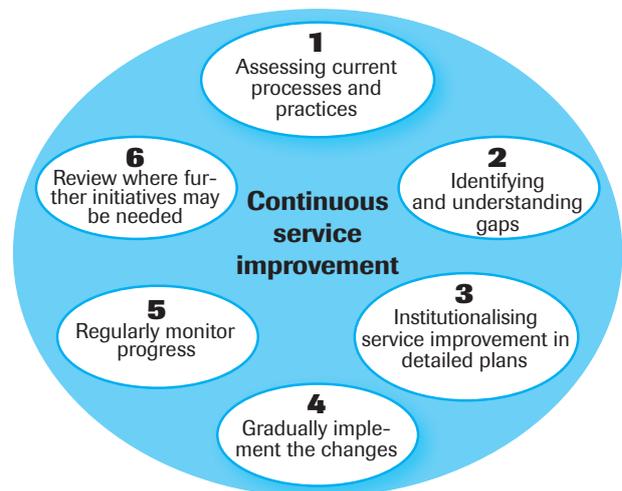
### Continuous service improvement commonly involves

1. map how things are done currently (‘AS IS’)
2. identify gaps, delays and unnecessary detours between the way things are done now (‘AS IS’) and the ideal situation (‘TO BE’)
3. make a plan for how to make change happen
4. gradually implement the changes
5. regularly monitor progress
6. review where further improvements can be done.



## Working with continuous improvement

The inspection, evaluation and approval of building plans is a core service for Mymuni, which has a flourishing local economy with citizens as well as business renovating and building new properties. Having launched a programme of service improvement (including citizen orientation, capacity building for staff and management, streamlining of work processes around building plan approval – and more), Mymuni has reduced the cost and inconvenience to the citizen for approval of building plans through the provision of a one-stop service point. Here, citizens and business alike can submit applications, discuss with an officer, go through previous applications, pay fees and study building plans. In the spirit of continuous service improvement, Mymuni is now considering the integration of other services using the same service point.



## What can you expect to achieve?

Process improvement is not an end in itself. It is a means to increase the effectiveness and efficiency in the provision of services. The benefits of service improvement for local government are:

- A citizen focused approach that will provide for higher quality services that are based on existing needs and expectations.
- Restructured and streamlined service processes that will increase the speed of service provision.
- Streamlining of service processes that will reduce cost in the provision of these services, making existing funds last longer – for both the local government and the citizen.
- A more cohesive local government organisation where management and staff respectively work towards common standards. Staff will have a greater sense of responsibility when processes are highlighted and clarified and with management closely monitoring processes.

Taken together, the achievements of service process improvement will increase citizen satisfaction for local government and to manage that one criterion that is often used to judge the performance of local government: how effectively it renders services to its citizens.

## Challenges to prepare for

Resistance to change does not come about only when attempting to 'fix' a specific issue. Some people might not see the benefit to participate or to be honest about symptoms or effects of issues related to their own processes. Sometimes inefficiencies or administrative processes allow some people to gain bargaining power.

In some instances this bargaining power might lead to corruption, but in most cases people use this power to further their own ambitions or to remain relevant. In other cases, people might resist addressing an issue because the clumsy design of the system hides their own insecurities, incompetencies or performance levels. It might even be the case that people resist process improvement because they do not like the thought of change in itself, or because they are afraid that they might become obsolete if the efficiency of the system is improved.

In most cases, reluctance to change is related to the unknown. Change in itself can be threatening and should therefore be treated with respect. The thought of losing my position, my status or even my job can be unbearable. And what about our team? We have worked together like this forever and no-one has ever complained, so what's the problem now?

Process improvement cannot simply be introduced and implemented through one-dimensional hierarchical planning and management. A service improvement related issue may lead to several symptoms that are created or reinforced by many different causes. Bringing staff and management on board to work together and complement each other is therefore crucial for success.



### Preparing for challenges

When first introduced to the concept of Process Improvement, Mrs Muni Karen, Deputy Head of Department for Water & Sanitation reaction was:



In this municipality we cannot cut corners like they can in the private sector, we have to comply with national directives which sets the scene for everything we do. There's just very little that we can do to change things around here. I'm sorry to say but our hands are kind of tied."

Her reaction was not unexpected to the other participants, and they all recognised her comment. In this case, the Mymuni Service Improvement Team decided to appoint Mrs Karen the prime agent for change in the review process at her own department, which turned out to be the best way to go as 1) she got to lead the way in terms of selection of services for review which secured her buy-in and 2) the review was made with careful consideration for national government legislation.



### 30 days...

Mr Muni Robert is working at the Department for Social Services. At the introductory meeting he becomes quite agitated, saying

“We are already on top of this and are delivering within 30 days, as recommended by the Department. We have worked hard for this and besides, even if we weren't on top of it, I can't see how you can make any significant change by only working with mapping what we do and 'tweek' things a bit. What we need is a coordinated IT system that optimises our performance to reduce costs.”

At the lunch break during the workshop, Mr Robert's colleague whispers to the colleague from Tourism Services; “I know Robert is onto this, but seriously, we all know that the waiting time is more than 60 days and that their budget is always under scrutiny.”

Internal review, like Process Improvement, provides an opportunity to look at the production process from a perspective where individuals are excluded. We look exclusively at the processes involved in producing a service. In this case, it might very well be that 30 days is the norm, but when the office is ill, the handling time increases to 60 days or even more. Service delivery processes cannot be dependent on individuals and they cannot be designed to accommodate personal capacity.

Mr Robert also expresses a common belief in 'The Green Button' – the solution that will solve every challenge ever identified. It is not unusual that this is connected to some kind of ICT solution; 'The System'. While it can sometimes be said to be true that new IT-based systems can uniform or harmonise processes, they usually come at a high cost. And yes, reducing costs in the long term may be sensible, but the immediate costs of redesigning a system or upgrading to a better technology may require short-term investments that may exceed the financial resources of a local government.

In conclusion, as much as the benefits of service delivery outweigh many of the challenges, some of the most obvious should be mentioned here:

- **Adequate capacity:** Embarking on a process improvement programme requires a team based approach where affected management and staff are involved from the word 'Go'.
- **Adequate know-how:** Process improvement needs to be guided by a structured methodology with a well thought out plan, with clear and agreed objectives, and measurable outcomes.
- **Fear of change:** The potential restructuring of services and streamlining of processes may make some staff and management feel uneasy about their positions. This is why it is critical to involve those affected by the service improvement work from the very outset. Improving local government effectiveness in service delivery does not necessarily mean cutting costs in terms of staff numbers, but the reorganisation of staff, alterations of job descriptions, multi-skilling of staff, recruitment of new competencies, and so on.
- **Making process improvement a management approach:** the philosophy is that service improvement rests on the assumption of continuous change. The conditions on which local government provides its services is changing all the time as expectations of citizens change. This requires local government to change its management practices so that it responds to such changes, making continuous service improvement its management practice and culture.

The current guide tries to come to terms with the above challenges by providing a guide that is applicable to councillors, management and as well as staff, and a methodology that is based on capacity building and an action learning approach, which allows for conscious learning and sharing of lessons to continuously improve the service improvement agenda.

# 2

## How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this publication is to guide the establishment of basic service standards and developing service improvement strategies to foster a culture of continuous learning and change amongst management and staff in local government.

Some local authorities may start service improvement initiatives by using a pilot project to attain an understanding of their service provision and how service improvement works in practice. Others may have already established service standards, which need to be communicated better and monitored more systematically and improved over time.

### Who can use the guide?

The target audience for this publication can be divided in three categories:

1. **For elected representatives**, who are committed to service improvement in local government and efficient service delivery to the electorate.
2. **Managers in local government**, to gain knowledge and practical ideas for implementing service improvement.
3. **Officials** who can gain practical guidelines for service improvement in the work they are doing.

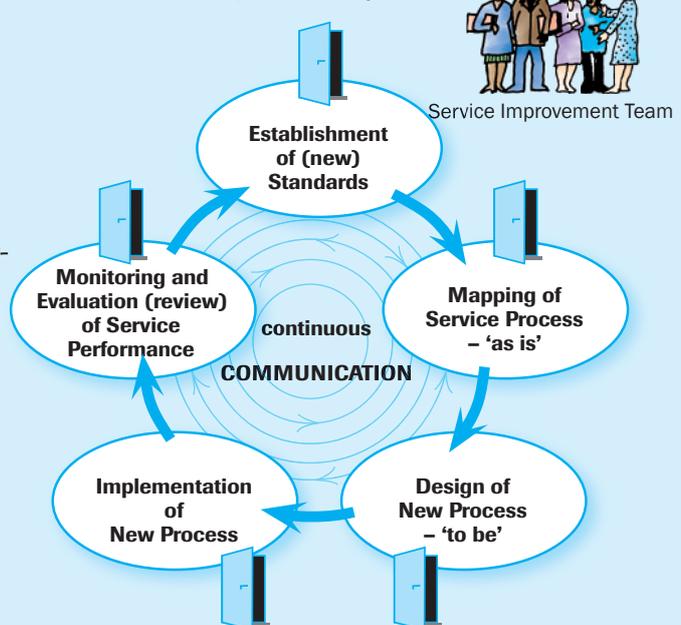
### Where are we now and where do we start?

Local governments are at different stages in their thinking around service delivery, how far they have come in service improvement, and the resources available to them.

Since service improvement is a cyclical process of continuous learning, this manual/guide can be used irrespective of where your local government is in your service delivery process.

Where do WE enter first?

The Service Improvement Cycle



The starting point of any local government using this manual is to analyse its current situation ('AS IS') in service provision. The ensuing chapters will clarify each of the steps making it easier for a local government to find their way around the service improvement cycle.

The following checklist can be used to identify the starting point on the service improvement cycle.

Ranking alternatives in the table

4 points = agree

3 points = agree to some extent

2 points = partly disagree

1 point = disagree

In OUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT	4	3	2	1
There are national government directives and/or national development plans affecting service delivery				
There is political will to focus on service improvement				
Service improvement is part of a strategic plan				
There is a service improvement policy in place				
There are service standards in place				
Management supports improved service delivery				
There are resources to work on service improvement				
Service improvement is part of management performance review				
Service standards have not been reviewed lately				
Service standards are not monitored regularly				
Service delivery performance is not reported to the public				
Services are not cost effective				
Citizens demand information on service standards				
Citizens demand service improvement				
Citizens complain about some services				
Citizens increasingly demand a particular service				

**The checklist also facilitates the identification of problem areas – for example, inadequate communication, lack of monitoring etc. that the local government needs to emphasise in its service delivery improvement agenda.**



Where are the problem areas?

# 3

## Basics of Service Improvement

**The purpose of this chapter is to explain the fundamentals of service improvement as a change management intervention, and how rethinking service delivery will benefit local government and its citizens.**

The essence of any service improvement initiative in a local government setting is that citizen satisfaction is the most reliable indicator of improvement in service performance. This chapter unpacks some basic concepts before embarking on a service improvement process.

Improving service delivery has become the focus of organisational development over the past few decades. In the highly competitive business environment the motivation for this is obvious – the survival and success of companies depends on their ability to attract and keep customers. Local governments are also challenged to improve their services as their citizens expect better products and services.

Efficient and effective service processes are critical for organisations to deliver good products and services.

The way the organisation structures and manages its service processes has a great impact on achieving this. There are different theories on how organisations can improve their service processes. One of the popular approaches is Business Process Improvement, also known as Business Process Reengineering (BPR).

This is fundamental, because it explores ‘why

do we do this?’ and ‘why do we do it this way?’ To improve, people must question their existing and assumptions. It is radical because it can implement drastic changes to existing structures and procedures. It is dramatic because it seeks to make substantial improvements, not just fine-tuning or amending parts of the process.

### The output oriented local government

A service process is a series of logically related activities that take one or more kinds of inputs and creates an output. The process is set in motion through the input of information, applications, and requests for service. It is composed of tasks that require the input of people in different functions, as well as other resources.



The output is the delivery of the expected result. In a request to upgrade a sewerage system, the request is the input and the output is the upgraded sewerage system. Service Improvement is ultimately concerned about the output achieved through the business processes.

A distinction is made between three processes that must be in place:

1. Operational processes delivers products and services to the citizens
2. Managerial processes control and coordinate the organisation's activities
3. Support processes provide infrastructure and other assistance to service processes.

Local governments need to move from being input to becoming output-oriented.



Service Improvement rethinks and redesigns these processes to ensure:

Ask	to ensure
Is there value for money?	←→ COST
Is the service at an acceptable standard?	←→ QUALITY
Is it delivered within reasonable time?	←→ SPEED
Are the services delivered in sufficient volume?	←→ QUANTITY
Are services delivered at a convenient place?	←→ ACCESS
Are services provided without discrimination?	←→ EQUITY
Is the citizen offered alternatives?	←→ FLEXIBILITY

Services can be improved through:

- Ensuring that service standards are set
- Streamlining and improving the service delivery process

tive customer experience. The culture of the organisation and the attitude of the employees determine if the organisation is input based or output based.

This results in more efficient service, better quality service, cost effectiveness, improved job satisfaction and customer satisfaction.

An input oriented organisation focuses on the internal needs of the organisation such as adhering to the policies, procedures, and regulations. The focus is on what suits the organisation rather than on what suits the customer. It is internal needs e.g. its regulations that are more important than its outputs to customers.

On the other hand, an output oriented organisation focuses on what it delivers to customers. It focuses on what adds value for customers and changes, discards those things which form a nega-

### Definitions

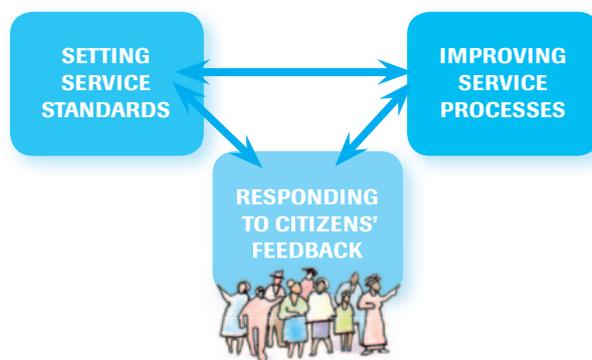
**INPUTS** are all the resources that contribute to the production and delivery of outputs. Inputs are what we use to get our work done. This includes finances, personnel, equipment and buildings.

**OUTPUTS** are the final products, or goods and services produced for delivery. Outputs may be defined as 'what we produce or deliver'.

## Service improvement in local government

The aim of service improvement in Local Government is not necessarily to reduce costs but to improve efficiency and provide a better customer service. In some instances it may cost more rather than less to provide a better service. If it benefits citizens in terms of better service it could justify the increased cost. Employing a new customer service officer is an example of this. However, more efficient processes might also be more cost effective and prevent wastage of time and resources.

Service improvement at local government level should include three interrelated processes:



### How can the change be made?

The achievement of a more professional, focused organisation which views customers and visitors as customers requires certain essential components.

#### Changing the thinking patterns of staff

The thinking patterns and behaviour of staff within an organisation will inevitably reflect the culture of that organisation: staff within a bureaucracy will be focused on the internal needs and procedures of the organisation, and away from the needs of the client.

However, a change in the mind-set of the staff will in fact be counterproductive if the underlying culture of the organisation does not change.

A common mistake made by organisations is to pour resources into programmes which address the thinking patterns of staff but do not address the systems and processes which, in fact, support the negative organisational culture.

This can only result in frustration, disillusion-

ment, low morale and a quick return to bureaucratic thought patterns.

#### Re-designing the business processes of the organisation

The organisational culture is given expression through the systems and processes which the organisation devises.

Ultimately, staff who have positive thinking patterns are actively prevented from improving service delivery by the sheer weight and power of the organisational culture.

It is therefore essential that the hard process issues associated with the delivery of outputs are attacked at the same time as the mind-set change of staff is accomplished, thus encompassing an holistic approach to organisational change.

The re-design of business processes is based on the following principles:

- Re-focus on core activities and the needs of the customer.
- Elimination of all processes that do not add value to the customer.
- Elimination of all wastage and unnecessary steps.
- Levelling of hierarchies and multiple authority levels
- Focus upon team-work and the multi-skilling of staff.

#### Staff involvement and empowerment

Staff must be not only consulted throughout every step of the change process, but actually empowered to redesign their work processes themselves. Changes imposed from the top (or by consultants!) do not generate the energy and buy-in necessary for sustainability.

#### Utilization of current resources

Another principle to be observed is that changes in work processes should be made using only current resources.

All too often organisations throw more staff and equipment at inefficient processes, a solution which only serves to exacerbate the problem.

Improvements in technological support, for instance, can only be made once the underlying business processes have been cleaned out; if not, they will only serve to entrench wasteful and inefficient practices. Outputs must be improved before requests for more staff, money, equipment or technologies are considered.

### **Developing measurable performance standards for outputs**

It is essential that outputs be concrete and measurable: we must be able to test whether and to what extent customers are receiving the services that they need.

A re-designed business process must therefore include multidimensional standards to judge the success of each step in the process.

Once these are set and agreed upon, they will form the basis of a realistic and objective performance management system for the staff working within the process.

### **Identifying skill requirements, and developing staff**

It is essential that staff be held accountable for outputs: no customer should ever hear the words: “I can’t help you – it’s not my job”!

However one cannot expect people to perform competently without first capacitating them to do so. It is often the case that once a process has been re-designed, the staff members working within that process need new skills and abilities to achieve the required level of service delivery.

A worker who has spent years performing the same task may now need to be multi-skilled to become part of a team working together to deliver an output. Alternatively, the skills required to perform an individual job may change dramatically: the skills required by a process manager are very different from those needed by a conventional line manager.

### **Holding staff accountable for outputs**

Once staff have been retrained and judged competent to perform within a re-designed process, an objective performance management system can be put into place whereby they are held accountable for delivering the particular service.

The following principles for change therefore apply:

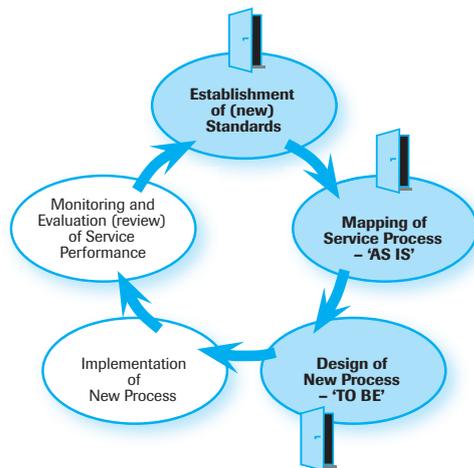
- Better utilization of current resources through improved process management.
- Unnecessary bureaucratic procedures eliminated.
- Re-focus on core activities and customer needs.
- Consultative and transparent: changes come from those actually doing the work.
- Process guided and managed by internal staff.
- Technology based on sound processes backed by staff who have bought in.
- Identification of skill requirements, and retraining of staff.
- Consequences for non-performance.

**Setting service standards is a means to generate citizen satisfaction and not an end in itself.**

# 4

## Establishment of Service Standards

The purpose of this chapter is to explain service standards, identify the various aspects of a standard and how to make standards measurable for performance monitoring and evaluation.



### What are service standards?

In plain terms service standards refers to a basic commitment made by the local government on the level of service delivery the citizens can expect.

Citizens deserve effective, efficient and quality services from their local governments. Where service quality is poor, it is often the case that standards have not been set. This means that there is little or no expected or planned level of performance and nothing for staff to aim for, or be assessed against. Citizens also do not know what quality of service to expect.

On the other hand, excellent service is usually

the result of consciously setting and striving to meet high service standards that are also communicated to citizens.



### Setting service standards

Mymuni commitment to citizen-focused service delivery:

- Develop and implement service standards
- Monitor performance against these standards
- Communicate the standards to citizens
- Evaluate performance against set standards.

Service standards are criteria that define a local government's commitment to their citizens. Service standards are usually written in the form of a statement that describes what level of service will be provided to citizens. It answers questions such as:

- ? How often will the service be provided?
- ? How long should it take to receive the service?
- ? What service can be expected?
- ? How much will the service cost?
- ? What can people do if they are not satisfied with the service?

Service standards minimise uncertainty and ensure that citizens have realistic expectations about the

nature of the services being delivered.

Service standards also promote a culture of effectiveness and efficiency and are used to measure performance.

Improving service delivery is a continuous process and not a once-off task. It calls for a shift from inward-looking bureaucratic systems, processes and attitudes to searching for new ways of working that will give priority to the needs of citizens. To verify whether delivery has met a standard, service standards need to be measurable, but is more than just delivery targets such as reducing waiting times or speeding up response times.

Rigorous service standards can incorporate five aspects:

### 1. Description

This provides the details of the service that the local government intends to provide. Where applicable, the benefits citizens can expect to receive are also included. Usually, the service standard includes a statement that describes exactly what services are provided at a particular delivery site.

**Example from MYMUNI:** Issuing of license for selling of alcohol within Urbanville.

### 2. Service Commitment

The commitment refers to how citizens will be treated and describes the **quality** of service delivery that the department promises to meet. The commitment should emphasise delivery principles such as transparency, accountability, fairness and courtesy.

**Example from MYMUNI:** All information necessary to obtain the licence should be available in all official languages.

### 3. Target

Delivery targets refer to the key aspects of the specific service that is referred to in the service standards. Generally, targets would deal with issues such as **access** and **timeliness**. Targets establish realistic expectations among citizens, based on what the department can actually deliver and establish the performance expectations for the department.

**Example from MYMUNI:** First response to all applications within 10 working days. Provided complete information and paid application fee, decision should be received within 20 days after application.

These standards are also important for staff, but there are often also internal standards and targets that are not visible to citizens, but are as important for efficient and quality service provision, e.g. 'Number of applications processed by each official per day', 'Response times for internal process steps'.

### 4. Cost

It is important that citizens know about the cost of a service, especially services that are free or requires only a low fee. This encourages people to make use of the service, have realistic expectations about the services offered and attaches a value to local government service delivery. Many over-the-counter services involve a fee, which, if not reasonable or flexible, can be a burden for, or discriminate against poorer citizens.

**Example from MYMUNI:** Cost of the license is Af 10, payable at time of application.

### 5. Feedback and complaints mechanisms

Mechanisms should be in place to deal with the concerns of citizens when they feel that a local government has not met the service standards it has promised to meet. Feedback and complaints mechanisms add value to any service when citizens are not satisfied, as these provide a means of obtaining greater satisfaction. In addition, such mechanisms provide a means by which a department can assess the quality of its delivery. Feedback and complaints mechanisms are an additional service, and also require high standards in terms of response times and satisfactory outcomes.

**Example from MYMUNI:** We will respond to your complaint within 10 working days of receipt. However, if your complaint requires extensive follow-up, we will contact you within the 10-day period to explain why and when you may expect a full response.

## How to measure service standards

Service standards indicate to what standard a particular service will be delivered. Thus service standards can measure or evaluate the performance of local governments in terms of service delivery. Service standards are developed and measured against:

- **Quantity:** Are the services and products supplied in sufficient volume?
- **Quality:** Are the services and products of acceptable standard?

- **Time/Timeliness:** Are the services and products delivered on time and within reasonable time?
- **Value for money:** Is the cost of the product or service balanced against the value for the citizen? (This irrespective of whether or not customers pay directly for products and services, it is important that the cost of the product or service is balanced against the perceived by the recipient).
- **Access:** Are the services and products being delivered at a locality that enable citizens to make best use of services, without having to spend unnecessary funds to get to the place of delivery?
- **Equity:** Are the services and products provided without discrimination?
- **Flexibility:** Is the client offered any alternatives as to time, cost, place of delivery etc?



**Using service standards, which are agreed upon and made public ensure that:**

- Customer needs are met
- The public know what to expect
- Staff know what the public expects
- Staff know what and how to deliver
- Performance can be measured and managed
- Performance can be compared or benchmarked
- Performance improvement can be monitored and managed.



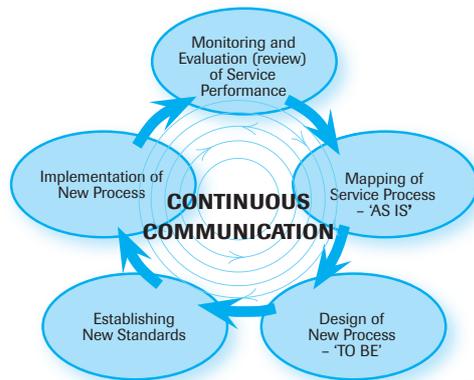
Municipalities need to inform and engage with citizens on their service standards.

# 5

## Communicating about Services and Service Standards

This chapter covers external communication with citizens regarding services and service standards, and internal communication as a key aspect of service improvement.

It gives also an overview of the communication tools and methods that can be used to respond to these citizens' questions regarding services.



See page 31 with details how to communicate at different stages.

### Communicating with citizens about services

The main concern of citizens is that municipalities deliver good quality services to meet their needs. Public communication is thus essential to enable citizens to know

- how to access services
- what service standards to expect
- how to give feedback or complain about services
- what is being done to improve services.

Transparency regarding service delivery, service standards and service improvement efforts will result in realistic expectations on the part of citizens, and encourage striving by municipal councils and staff to meet public commitments.

A good starting point for communicating with citizens is to identify what they want and need to know, and then decide how to respond. The most common questions that citizens ask about municipal services are:

#### CITIZENS' QUESTIONS ABOUT SERVICES

- What services does the municipality offer?
- How and where do I access a particular service, and what is required?
- What standard of service can I expect? How long will it take, the cost, level, quality, etc.?
- What can I do if I am not satisfied with a service, or want to give positive feedback, or make a proposal or enquiry?
- What is the municipality doing to improve service delivery?



**What services does the municipality offer?  
 How, where and when can I access a particular service, and what is required?  
 What standard of service can I expect? How long it takes, the cost, level and quality?**

### A Catalogue of Services

A Catalogue of Services (CoS) answers the above questions by listing all the services that a municipality provides and giving the most important information that citizens need on each service. It is the most basic and essential public communication document on services that informs citizens what services are available, how to access them and what to expect.

At the same time, a publicly communicated CoS is a commitment by the municipality to deliver services and meet standards stated in the CoS.

The CoS only gives the basic service standards of interest to citizens, or it becomes too long and complicated. Departments can have more detailed standards for each service that guide staff regarding quality and quantity, cost-effectiveness and time for internal processes, etc.



### The Mymuni Catalogue of Services

The Mymuni Service Improvement Team (SIT) designed their CoS so that it included essential information that citizens needed to access services, and the basic service standards. Here is a sample page from the Mymuni CoS.

**WATER SERVICES**  
**TIMES:** All services are available Monday to Friday between 8.30 and 4.00

Service	Department & location	Contact/ phone number	Service standards (response time, service level, cost)	Requirements / conditions to access the service
Account payments and billing queries	Finance payments counter	029-12345	Max. wait 1 hour. Bill correction - 5 days	Last account
Connections and meter installation	Technical - Room 46	029-23456	5 days Meter on pavement, connection at site boundary Af500	Title deed, erf number, ID
Technical problems - faulty meter, burst pipes, leaks, blocked sewers, etc.	Technical - Room 46	029-34567	Emergency 2 hrs., other 48 hrs. No on-site repairs No cost	None
Indigent application - for households that cannot afford to pay their service accounts	Finance - Room 23	029-45678	Investigate and agree in 14 days Individual agreement, depending on your circumstances No cost	Household income less than Af2500 household members list and IDs, municipal bill, unemployment registration (if applicable)

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES:** at the Info desk, or tel. 029-987654

NOTE: Municipalities can customise their own CoS, e.g. some prefer all calls to a central enquiries number, and will thus not give departmental contact

details. They can also decide which service standards are most important for citizens to know for different services.



## How Mymuni communicated their CoS

The Mymuni Service Improvement Team (SIT) decided that the CoS should be widely communicated so that citizens were aware it and able to access it. They realised that the provision of good municipal information was a service in its own right.

They used the following communication methods to inform citizens about the Catalogue of Services

- the Mymuni website
- a CoS booklet
- a poster on the CoS, showing key services
- public notice board in the foyer.

The CoS booklet was produced as a print-on-demand booklet to minimise costs and enable easy updating. It was available at all service desks, and was given or posted to any citizen on request. The availability of the CoS was communicated in the municipal newsletter, in the local newspaper and in all public communication regarding services. Posters were put up in all municipal facilities and areas accessed by the public, including libraries.

An excerpt from the Mayor's annual budget speech was put on the back of the CoS booklet and on the website, and a shorter quote was put on the poster.



Excerpt from  
the Mymuni  
Mayor's speech



Citizens have elected this council to improve service delivery, and we are committed to doing so. We have initiated a service improvement process that will assess all services, identify and solve problems, and set new service standards.

For example, last week Mrs Ntuli got her water connection within five days of her application,

whereas last year people waited for up to two months. The service team also repaired the damage to her sidewalk immediately, as part of the job. Previously it would have taken months for the roads department to do this. Other services have seen similar improvements, which are shared in our latest Mymuni newsletter, and on the website.

We have also produced a Catalogue of Services with key service standards, so citizens know what to expect, and can hold us accountable. We intend to perform according to these standards, and we welcome your feedback and complaints when we don't, as this will help us to improve our services to meet your needs."



### Service standards poster

Service standards define the the level of service, the response time, the cost and how to access a service. They tell citizens what they can expect and set standards for staff performance. *For more on service standards, see chapter 4 on page 20.*



## MYMUNI MUNICIPALITY'S SERVICES TO THE CITIZENS



### PROPERTY SERVICES

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



### ELECTRICITY SERVICES

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



### WATER SERVICES

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



### SANITATION/SEWERAGE SERVICES

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



### SOLID WASTE/REFUSE REMOVAL SERVICES

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_



### TRAFFIC, FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**MUNICIPAL EMERGENCY SERVICE**  
tel. 029-985600

**POLICE**  
tel. 029-987654

**HOSPITAL**  
tel. 029-876543

**AMBULANCE** tel. 2244

**WEBPAGE**  
[www.mymuni.mm](http://www.mymuni.mm)



### WATER SERVICES

- Tap water will be safe for drinking and comply with SANS 241 quality standards
- No household will be without a water supply for more than 1 day, or a total of 7 days per annum
- Account payments and billing queries
- Connections and meter installation
- Technical problems – faulty meter, burst pipes, leaks, blocked sewers, etc.
- Indigent application

### OPENING HOURS

All services are available Monday to Friday 8.30 – 4.00

**GENERAL ENQUIRIES:** at the Info desk, or tel.029-987654

**WEBPAGE** [www.mymuni.mm/waterservices](http://www.mymuni.mm/waterservices)

Catalogue  
of Services  
booklet





**What can I do if I am not satisfied with a service, or want to give feedback, make a proposal or enquiry?**

**Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms**

Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms (FCMs) are an essential means for citizens to communicate their complaints, compliments, suggestions and questions regarding services. FCMs invite two-way communication, but must include effective response mechanisms, so that citizens complaints are heard, acknowledged and acted upon.

Effective FCMs ensure that citizens are not frustrated that they cannot communicate with their municipality, that they are not heard, or that complaints do not lead to action. It is essential that municipalities communicate the availability of FCMs to citizens, and that feedback is welcome, so that they are known and used.

FCMs also provide valuable feedback on service improvement from the customers' perspective, which supports service improvement efforts. As such, FCMs are an essential component of any services monitoring and evaluation system, and all feedback needs to be recorded and analysed, and responded to and acted upon when appropriate.



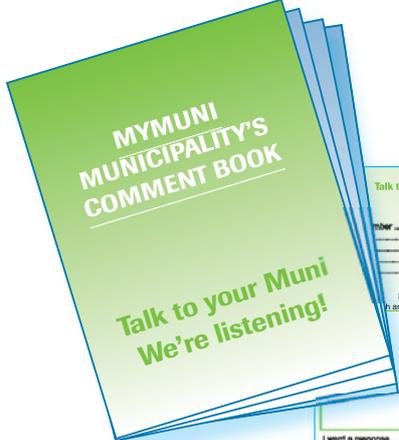
Communicating to the public on the performance against set standards is vital to ensure the credibility of service standards. This requires that service standards are clearly communicated to citizens and that municipalities listen to citizens' feedback.



**Emphasize positive feedback!**

When the Mymuni SIT saw the positive feedback citizens were giving on improved services, they decided to put a selection of comments up on a notice board in the service area, with photos of the citizens who made them, where this was possible, and acceptable to the person concerned.

This acknowledgement of citizen's input encouraged citizens to use the FCMs, and motivated staff to keep striving to give excellent customer service.



Talk to your Muni – we're listening!  
MYMUNI COMMENT SLIP  
Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Contract number \_\_\_\_\_  
Suggestion 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Complaint 2 \_\_\_\_\_ Question 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please write it below)  
I want a response  
I do not need a response  
Thank you for your feedback! We're listening!  
If you require a response, we will get back to you within 24 hours.  
MYMUNI COMMENT CONFIRMATION SLIP  
Reference number \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Contract number \_\_\_\_\_



## Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms at Mymuni

The Mymuni Service Improvement Team (SIT) decided that it was essential to provide effective feedback and complaints mechanisms (FCMs). The FCM system included acknowledging feedback and complaints and standards for appropriate and timely responses and action. Analysis of FCM input indicated where and how services needed to be improved, while positive feedback acknowledged achievements and encouraged staff to do even better.

The Mymuni SIT realized that FCMs would only be used to the extent that citizens knew about and could access them, so they thus decided to

- put up a notice in public areas listing all FCMs, with contact numbers, web address, etc.
- put the FCM notice on the website and in Mymuni News
- put up visible signs with orange lettering and graphic icons indicating the comment box and book, that comments and complaints were welcome at the info desk (where they were recorded in the comment book by the info officer), the hot-line and SMS numbers and web address
- councillors shared the FCM list in local meetings and forums and encouraged people to use them.

Speeches and public statements also referred to the importance of feedback and complaints for Mymuni service improvement, and the availability of FCMs.

They also came up with a slogan to encourage citizens' feedback and complaints: **Talk to your Muni – We're listening** which was used wherever FCMs were communicated. The comment box and book are checked daily, and the response time is within 48 hours. Comment slips and books are available in all three main local languages, as are signs indicating these and other FCMs.

**Talk to your Muni – We are listening!**

**MYMUNI COMMENT SLIP**

Reference number ..... Date .....

Name ..... Contact number .....

Email .....

Address .....

.....

Compliment ☺  Suggestion !  Complaint ☹  Question ?

(Please tick which and write it below)

.....

I want a response

I do not need a response

**Thank you for your feedback ! We're listening!**

If you request a response, we will get back to you within 24 hours.

**MYMUNI COMMENT RECEIPT SLIP**

Reference number ..... Date .....

Contact number .....



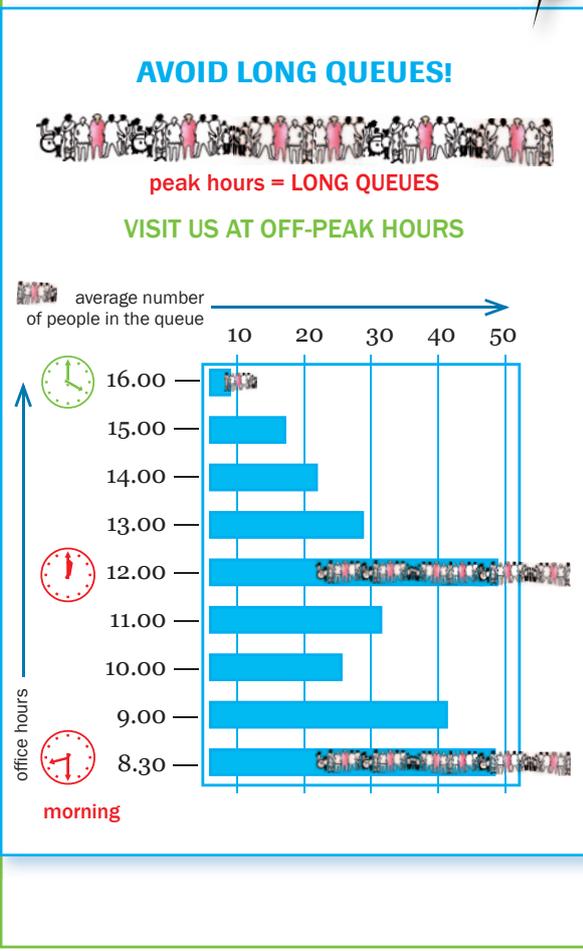


## Communicating peak and off-peak queuing times

The Mymuni Service Improvement Team found that a common citizens' complaint was the time spent in long queues. So they put up notices at service counters informing citizens of peak and off-peak times, so they could come at less busy times.

This also helped to spread the load for officials, and avoid having too few staff at peak times and too many at off-peak times.

Peak time chart



## Soliciting feedback

Municipalities don't need to wait for citizens to give feedback, and not all will do so, even when dissatisfied. So why not ask for feedback as an aspect of your service improvement effort? This can be done by

- asking citizens waiting in municipal queues
- asking local/ward committees and forums
- a survey in the community
- a questionnaire on the website and in the municipal newsletter.

Such proactive surveys can concern all services or particular services. However, a survey is only worthwhile if the data it yields is analysed and used, which requires proper planning, implementation and data processing, according to accepted survey methods.

## FEEDBACK AND COMPLAINTS MECHANISMS CHECKLIST

Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms		✓
1	Comment book	
2	Feedback and Complaints Hot-line	
3	Phone call to a department	
4	Sms to the Hot-line	
5	Website comment box for feedback on services	
6	Face-to-face complaint to an official, their manager or customer service officer	
7	Ward/local councillor or committee meeting	
8	Community forums or Imbizos	
9	Customer service survey (interviews/questionnaires)	
10	Road shows that elicit feedback	
11	Comment box (for complaints, comments, compliments and suggestions) with forms/slips and pens provided	



## What is the municipality doing to improve service delivery?

### Informing citizens about service improvement initiatives

Many citizens are not satisfied with service delivery and are asking what municipalities are doing to improve services. Municipalities thus need to communicate their commitment to, and efforts at service improvement to citizens. Useful tools are

- a service charter or statement of values and commitment, which could also be from a speech or public document such as the annual plan or report. A service charter is similar to a vision and mission statement, but focuses on customer service and service standards.

- a overview of service improvement efforts and measures
- a diagram of the service improvement process.

Effective ways to communicate the above

- the website and municipal newsletter
- the local newspaper and community radio
- at ward/local committee meetings and public forums
- speeches and public documents.



### Mymuni public statement of commitment to service improvement

#### OUR COMMITMENT TO IMPROVING SERVICES TO CITIZENS of MYMUNI MUNICIPALITY

Mymuni strives to provide the best quality services possible to all its citizens, given available resource. We will treat all citizens with courtesy and respect, as our valued customers.

Our aim is to meet your needs to the best of our abilities, and to continuously improve our services in term of

- delivery time
- quality
- cost-effectiveness
- accessibility
- public information and communication.

Our service improvement process has started with water, sanitation and electricity services, and will focus on these services in the second half of 2011.

We welcome citizens' feedback and complaints as an important source for learning to do better. We are committed to transparency and effectively communicating public information about services, service standards and service improvement to all citizens.





## COMMON STAFF QUESTIONS ABOUT SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

- What is service improvement about?
- Why is it necessary
- How will it affect me?

### Internal communication for service improvement

Good internal communication and consultation are critical for successful service improvement (SI), as a change management process. Councillors and managers need to lead improvement processes by informing and involving staff regarding

- why improvement is needed
- the vision, values and objectives
- the improvement process
- the implications for and involvement of staff
- the intended benefits for customers and staff.

If the leaders communicate their commitment and enthusiasm, staff will be motivated to actively participate in improving services.

### Leadership commitment and communication – key to service improvement

**Real commitment and active communication by Council and senior managers is essential to improving services. They are responsible for ensuring that service provision is effective, and need to:**

- 1 Care about community needs
- 2 Publicly commit to improving services
- 3 Assess service performance and standards
- 4 Identify and solve problems
- 5 Plan and implement service improvement processes
- 6 Communicate with and motivate staff to improve services
- 7 Manage service improvement by planning, organising, monitoring, evaluating and reporting on improved performance
- 8 Communicate with citizens regarding services, service standards and service improvement

### Internal service improvement communication at Mymuni

The Mymuni Service Improvement Team (SIT) understood the importance of good internal communication in the service improvement process. They also knew that leadership was critical, and that good leaders influence and motivate others by communicating effectively. If council and management were not actively and visibly committed to service improvement, no-one else would be.

They started with a presentation and discussion session for council and all managers. This wasn't difficult to arrange, as the Municipal Manager had decided to lead the SIT himself, and it consisted of all department managers, the HR Manager and three committed councillors.

In planning the service improvement process, they paid special attention to communication, and decided on what needed to be communicated and how. They decided that important things that everyone needed to know were

- the overall service improvement plan, goals and values
- service improvement methods
- progress in improving services
- success stories and good practice examples
- difficulties, challenges and lessons.

The methods they used are given in the checklist on next page.

The Mymuni SIT found that face-to-face, two-way communication was most effective in engaging and motivating staff, as it enabled participation, cooperation and learning. Staff at different levels and in different departments got to know each other, and they enjoyed the new responsibility of improving services and working and learning together in teams.

Good internal communication addressed staff concerns regarding service improvement in terms of changes in current practices and how they might be affected. Their fears were allayed when they realised that change would not be imposed on them and that they were participants in and drivers of their own service improvement processes.



They soon found that the challenge of continuous improvement made their jobs more interesting and interaction and communication with colleagues and customers more frequent and meaningful. They were proud to be partners in the Mymuni success story, and they knew that if Mymuni service delivery was ever in the news, it would be for the right, rather than the wrong reasons.

### INTERNAL SERVICE IMPROVEMENT COMMUNICATION CHECKLIST

Internal service improvement communication processes		Mymuni ✓
1	Regular briefings on SI plans and progress by the MM at monthly staff and council meetings	✓
2	Service improvement training	✓
3	Monthly departmental reports to the SIT on progress, also posted on the municipal intranet	✓
4	SIT discussion of challenges and lessons in implementing SI	✓
5	Portfolio councillors participating in departmental SI meetings	✓
6	A service improvement section with a monthly news and lessons input by the SIT, plus a discussion forum on the intranet	✓
7	SCTs are presented and explained to local/ward committees	✓
8	A Service Improvement page in the municipal newsletter, showcasing successful service improvement initiatives and those responsible	✓

### Internal service policies for water service staff

Water services staff decided on the following internal policies as part of their service improvement process

- Slips in the F&C box and comments book to be analysed daily and reported on to the water department manager on a weekly basis
- Any serious complaint or issue is to be reported to the water services department manager and followed up immediately
- A weekly F&C report will be shared with and discussed by all staff at the weekly team meeting
- All public notices will be checked weekly, updated if necessary and removed if outdated.
- The customer service staff team will meet weekly to review the week and
  - consider key items in the feedback and complaints report
  - plan follow-up on specific complaints
  - identify and address problems
  - suggest and plan improvements.

**Citizens expectations need to be reviewed periodically, as they change over time.**



## SERVICE COMMUNICATION CHECKLISTS

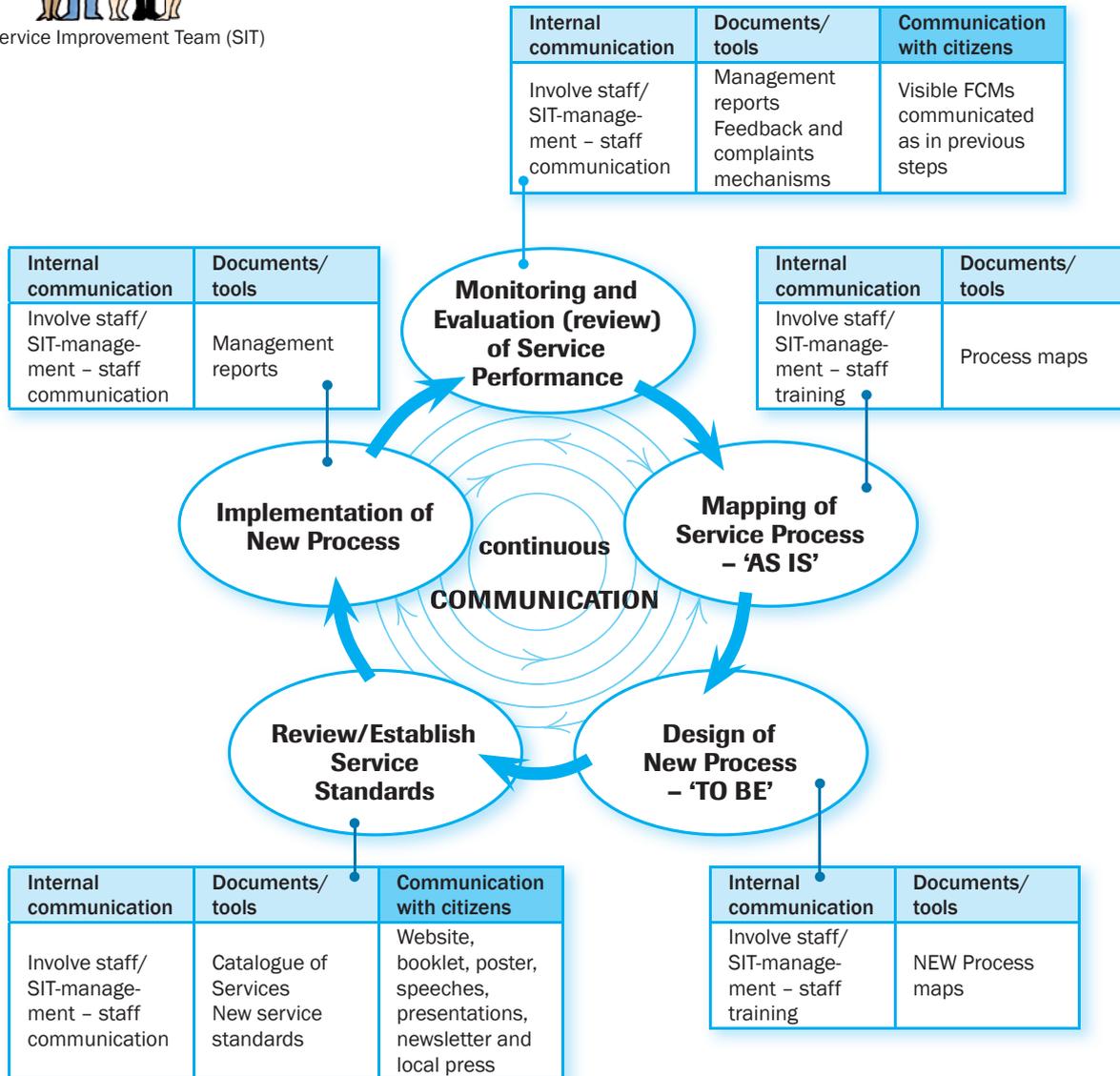
Service communication tools (SCTs)		✓	Service communication methods		✓
1	Catalogue of Services (CoS)		1	Speeches and presentations by municipal leaders focus on service improvement and refer to SCTs	
2	Service Standards included in the CoS		2	Include sections on service improvement in key public documents such as annual plans and reports, (and in the summary versions)	
3	Summary of service improvement policies and values/Service Charter/Public statement of commitment to service improvement		3	All service communication tools (SCTs) on the municipal website	
4	A poster giving an overview of services		4	SCTs are shared in the municipal newsletter	
5	Feedback and Complaints Mechanisms list		5	SCTs are posted on municipal notice boards	
6	Service improvement process diagram		6	Good signs and notices on walls in service areas	
			7	Copies of SCTs are available to citizens on request	
			8	SCTs are shared in local newspaper/s	
			9	All councillors and service staff have, understand and can use hard copies of the SCTs to explain services and service standards to citizens	
			10	SCTs are presented and explained to local/ward committees	
			11	Service improvement commitment and initiatives are presented and explained on local/community radio programmes	

# COMMUNICATION IN THE SERVICE IMPROVEMENT CYCLE

Apply internal communication tools and communication with citizens at each stage in the Service Improvement Cycle



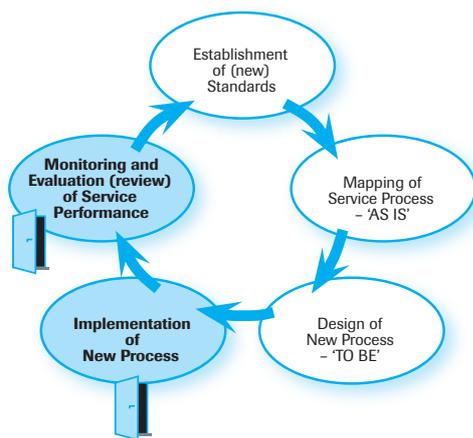
Service Improvement Team (SIT)



# 6

## Embarking on a Service Improvement Process

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief outline of the service improvement process steps, including how to map service processes 'AS IS' and how to design new streamlined service processes 'TO BE'.



### Process improvement in your own environment

Before embarking on a service improvement process, it is important to agree on a set of principles to govern the work onwards.

#### Process Improvement Principles

- ✓ Focus on customer needs
- ✓ Externally, give members of the public a single and accessible point of contact
- ✓ Internally, focus on activities which deliver value to customers
- ✓ Concentrate on flows and processes through the organisation
- ✓ Remove non-value added activities
- ✓ Undertake parallel activities
- ✓ Speed up response and development times
- ✓ Concentrate on outputs rather than inputs
- ✓ Prioritise service delivery rather than the maintenance of control
- ✓ Keep the number of core processes to a minimum
- ✓ Ensure that continuous improvement is built into implemented solutions.

Process improvement identifies, analyses and re-designs processes within an organisation to improve efficiency. It aims to achieve the same or even better results using fewer resources. Cost-cutting and waste reduction are major objectives. Waste reduction is applied to all resources, including money, materials, time and even the number of staff

involved, in order to do more with less, which is a basic definition of efficiency.

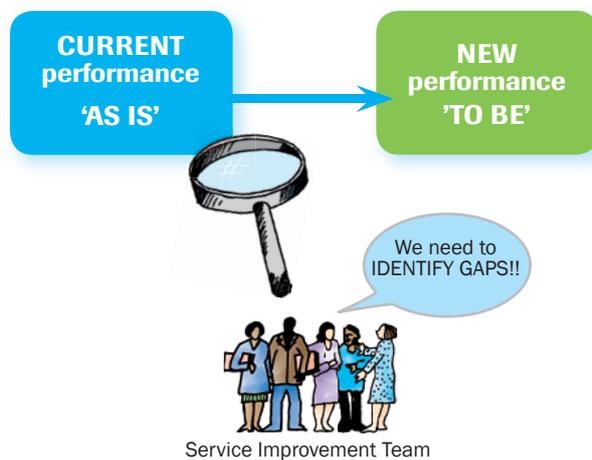
Where this is done **to** staff rather than **by** them, the result can be stressed and de-motivated staff and a loss of trust and cooperation between management and staff. It is thus important that staff is involved in improving their own service delivery processes. This can be a motivating, learning and empowering approach. It is useful to involve stakeholders such as local politicians and unions from the beginning.

### Mapping the service process – describing the ‘AS IS’

Before launching a service improvement process it is important to take stock of the current performance and to identify gaps in service provision. Analysis existing service gaps will identify waste in service processes and unnecessary detours that effect negatively on service performance.

In order to improve the process, the managers and staff who will be involved in service improvement can examine the process and look at ways of redesigning it to make it more effective and enhance the citizen’s experience.

Below is a process laid out on how to initiate service process mapping:



Staff involved in the selected service process up for review map the ‘As Is’.



The ‘To Be’ process comes with a set of recommendations, both quick fixes that can be made immediately and those changes that need financial resources to implement.



### 1. Develop a catalogue of services

A Catalogue of Services (CoS) is an inventory of all services offered by a municipality, grouped by type/department, and given a reference number. A CoS is required to identify, define and manage the services offered by a municipality.

### 2. Select services for improvement

It is not wise to try to improve all services at once. Rather select an initial number of services to begin with, as pilot improvement processes or projects.

#### Selection Criteria could be:

- Poor current standard/citizens complaints
- Priority service for citizens (the importance of a service for citizens)
- Meeting of basic needs
- Ease of improving the service
- Significant costs and/or income to the municipality
- Willingness of managers and staff concerned
- Select a process with a customer at the receiving end. Remember, citizens are not interested in your internal processes.

The assessment of the criteria above could include elements identified in the second chapter How to Use this Guide and assessment tools described in the chapter on Monitoring and Evaluation of service standards.

### 3. Map the service delivery process: the 'AS IS'

The 'AS IS' process is laid out using a detailed flowchart of the process or processes involved in delivering the service that shows all the steps required and the decision points between the initial request/contact and the service result and variations on the process, if relevant.

In a flowchart, decisions are usually followed by a **Yes** or **No**, which lead to alternative process routes. If a flow chart goes over one page, circles with corresponding number are used at the bottom of the page and the top of the following page to indicate how the process lines connect/continue. Flow direction is indicated by an arrow.

A flowchart can also show the average time taken for the process in a column down the side, or the times taken for each stage can be listed in a separate table.

Creation of a flowchart requires observation and measuring of the process or reconstruction of the process through interviews with key actors. The flowchart could be broken down into more detailed process steps or consolidated, depending on its purpose.

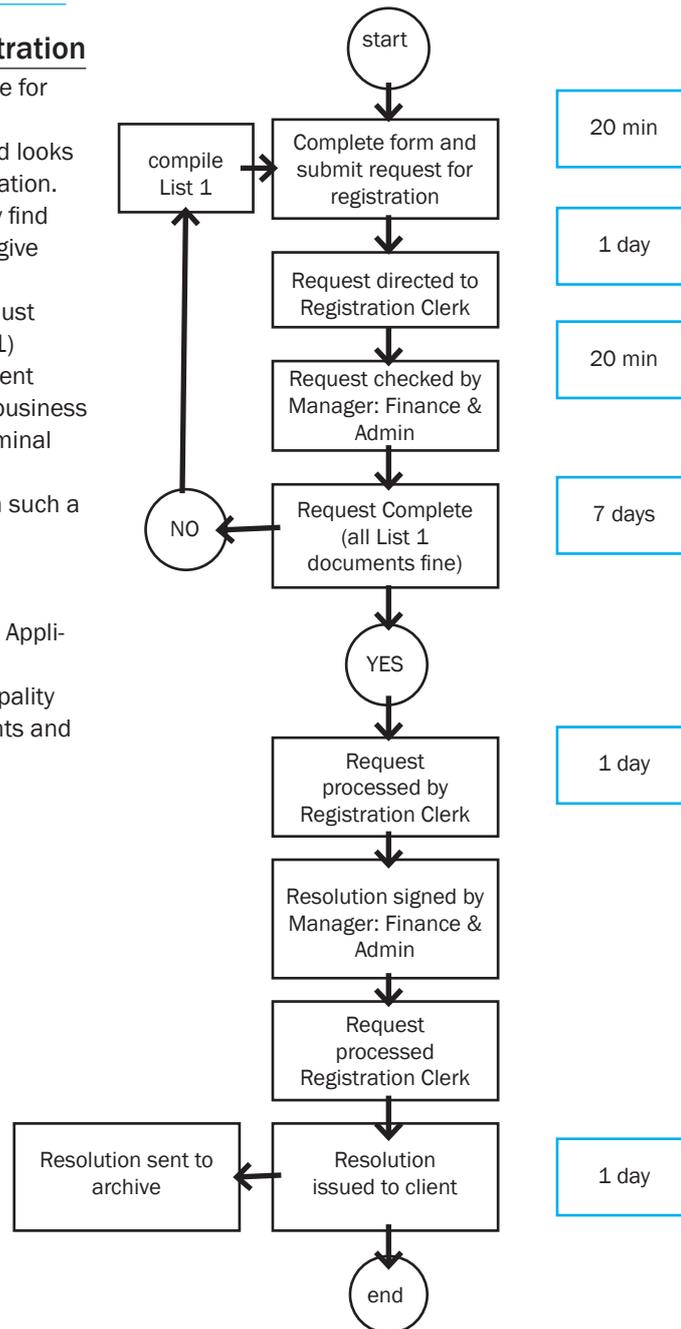
The flowchart used in the example given, identifies the main steps, who is responsible, how long do they take and where delays are. Having identified the 'bottlenecks' a detailed analysis is done of those problematic phases to identify the cause of the delay. After the problems and their causes are identified, solutions can be considered and discussed.



## Example of a 'AS IS' Service Flowchart

### Process for Small Business Registration

1. Citizen seeks out the authority in charge for small business registration.
2. Citizen approaches the municipality and looks around for the relevant point for registration.
3. If they are instructed correctly they may find the appropriate staff member who will give them information.
4. Based on the information, the citizen must prepare the following documents (List 1)
  - a. Certified copy of an Identity Document
  - b. Certificate of fitness to run such a business
  - c. Police Clearance Certificate (no criminal record)
  - d. Qualifications showing ability to run such a business
  - e. Ownership or rental contract
  - f. Taxation Number
  - g. A Completed Business Registration Application Form
5. Citizen approaches the Mymuni Municipality Reception Counter with these documents and the process starts:



### Designing the new process: the 'TO BE'

After having analysed the current service process 'AS IS', it is time to identify ways to make it more efficient.

This usually involves reducing or combining steps, speeding up processes and improving communication and cooperation between staff or departments.

Then draw up a new flowchart that illustrates how the process can be shortened, speeded up or improved. The new process should simplify and make

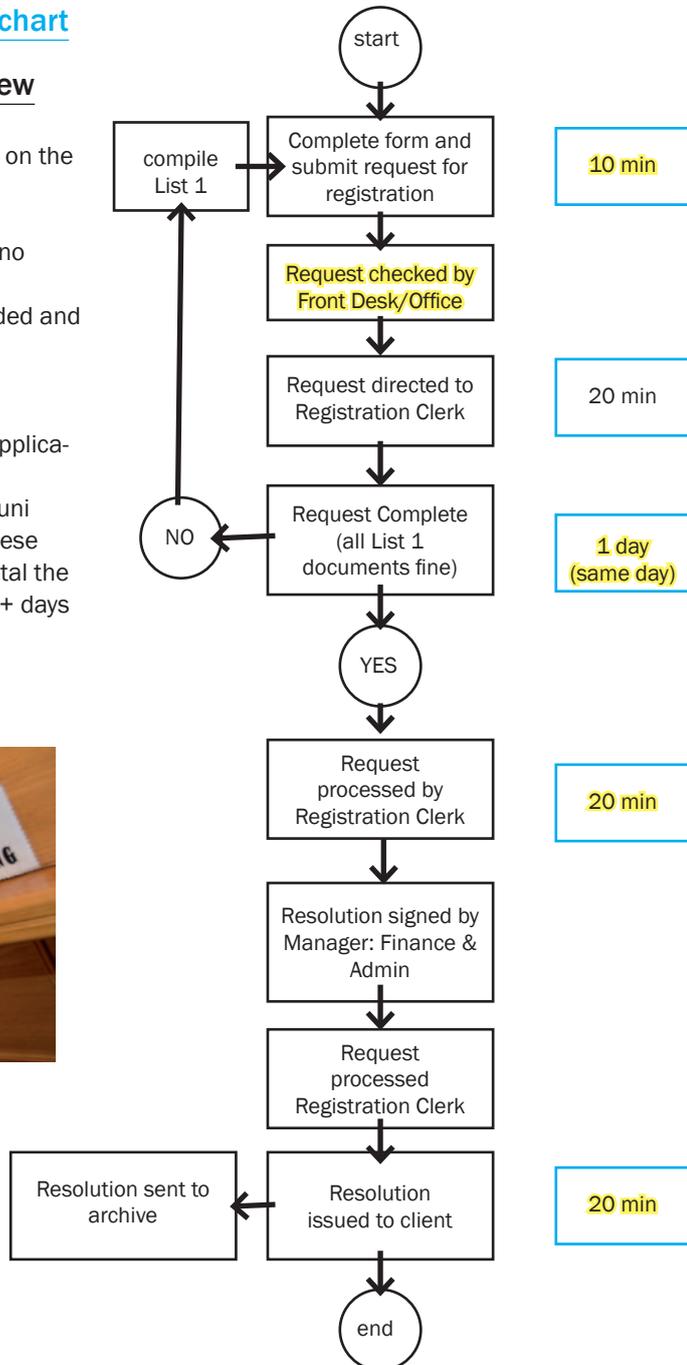
the process more efficient – without reducing but improving quality as experienced by citizen-customers.



### Example of a 'TO BE' Service Flowchart

#### After Process Improvement, the new procedure is:

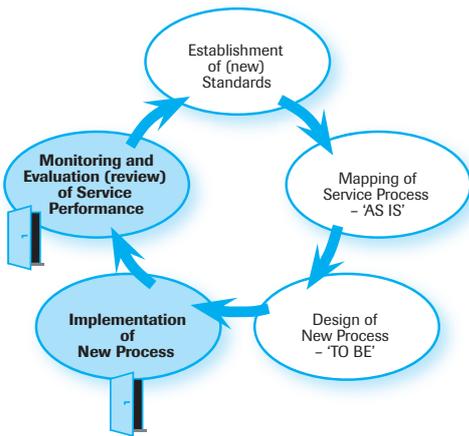
1. Front desk helps citizens with basic info on the procedure and all required documents
2. List is reduced to (List 1)
  - a. Identity Document (for presentation, no need for certified copy)
  - b. Police Clearance Certificate (not needed and replaced by a statement)
  - c. Ownership or Rental Contract
  - d. Taxation number
  - e. A Completed Business Registration Application Form
3. The citizen may now approach the Mymuni Municipality Front Desk/Counter with these documents and the process starts. In total the process has now been reduced from 11+ days to (up to) 1 day.



# 7

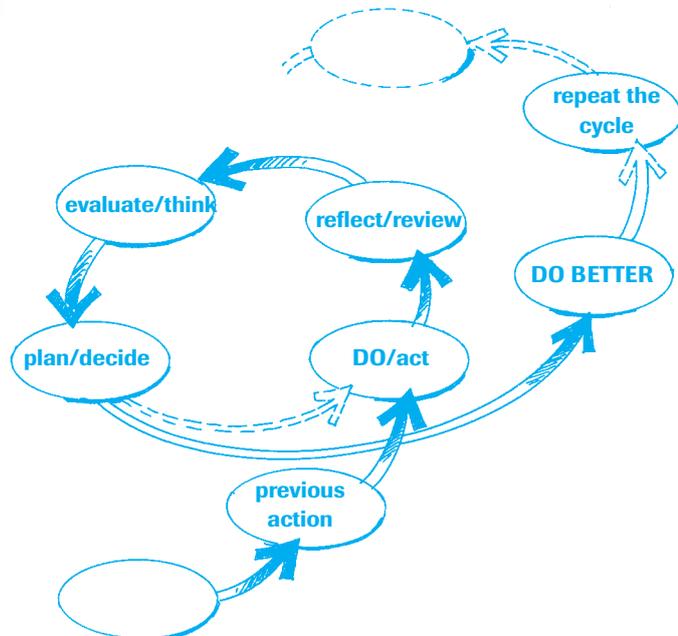
## Implementation of New Service Standards

The purpose of this chapter is to guide the implementation of new service standards and the drafting of an implementation plan.



The implementation of new service processes and standards follow any other path of implementing change. And, as in any other action learning process, implementation needs to be carefully monitored and evaluated and reflected upon. Lessons learnt need to be converted into action for yet another cycle of activities to ensure the fostering of the continuous improvement mentality to break through.

Action Learning Cycle



## A word on preparation and capacity building

The setting up of a Service Improvement team is critical to ensure commitment of those affected and have experience from service processes and standards. The responsibility of the SI team is to drive the service improvement process. The SI team (4–5 staff) need to be capacitated enough to lead the change process and thereafter to facilitate service improvement in the local government. The SI team should report to a management committee to validate process steps and get buy in from the start.



Service Improvement Team

### Get management and council support

Support from management and council are essential for the success of any service improvement programme. Their commitment should be evident and institutionalised preferably in the formation of a Steering Committee (SC).

The SC should include senior managers and councillors with sufficient authority to guide the programme. It could also include citizen representatives, or establish and interact with a reference group of citizen-customers, ward or other local committees. If a SC does not include sufficient senior councillors and managers to achieve the requirements, its first task will be to engage them in this regard.

If an existing group has or takes on this responsibility, service improvement must be clearly established as one of their key performance indicators (KPI).

Establishment of a PSC is a clear commitment to service improvement, which should be clearly stated in the SC mandate or terms of reference and objectives

A transparent local government communicates how it's progressing in improving their services.

### Commitment Requires

1. A conscious decision to support a service improvement programme
2. A policy statement, and/or inclusion of quality service as a key element of the municipal vision and mission
3. Service improvement as a KPI for managers, with clear objectives that must be reported on.

Holding managers accountable for implementing service improvement processes, i.e. monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of service improvement implementation

### Capacity building of Staff

Before any capacitation can take place, it is important that the critical people are identified. It is recommended that all staff members from affected departments are included at least in awareness raising. Strategic decision makers, managers and staff who will be involved in the service improvement need to be fully capacitated to ensure that they can implement the service improvement process.

Capacitation includes training in technical areas such as process mapping, process re-engineering, developing a communication plan, and implementation plan, monitoring and evaluation of performance against set standards.



Steps in implementation:

- **Setting of objectives:** what do we want to achieve with our service improvement?
- **Identify process owner:** assign responsibility and accountability for developing service improvement initiatives. The best people to improve a service are those who are closest to the customer in delivering the service. They know the current process best, will often have ideas for improvements, and will need to implement and 'live with' the improvements. They will only be committed if they are involved and responsible.
- **List activities to be piloted/implemented** to enable change needed including time frames and milestones for reporting.



From MYMUNI

**OBJECTIVE:**

“By 2012 Mymuni is able to provide high quality processing of building plans within 15 working days.”



Some additional pointers in implementation are:

- **Identify who the target citizens are** that are affected by intended service improvements; to involve in public consultation processes and learn what users regard as the most important aspects of the service.
- **Consult with front-office staff** who deal directly with citizens; to collect suggestions for service delivery improvements and to target for capacity building to develop a more citizen-oriented culture.
- **Ensure that proper costing methods** are used to support decisions and service standards, and that the costing methods themselves are cost effective.
- **Ensure that citizens are informed** of the service standards at the point of service.
- **Establish reporting mechanisms** (using existing structures) against the plan and how to communicate performance against the plan to citizens and other stakeholders.
- **Monitor and evaluate the implementation plan.** Analyse the new 'AS IS' and identify new service gaps to be addressed.
- **Plan the next change cycle** (another set of services, or in-depth change) or plan of implementation.

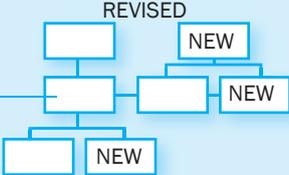
The development of standards is a learning process. Initial standards may be incomplete in some aspects, but as experience is gained, these standards can be improved and be extended to the range of services covered by the local authority.

Having service standards becoming an integral part with local government management may take some time.

Service improvement should not be implemented separate from other related developments, such as integrated development plans etc. Efforts should be made gradually to integrate service improvement and the setting of service standards with other initiatives on actual service delivery.

Activities may involve:

### What implementation can imply

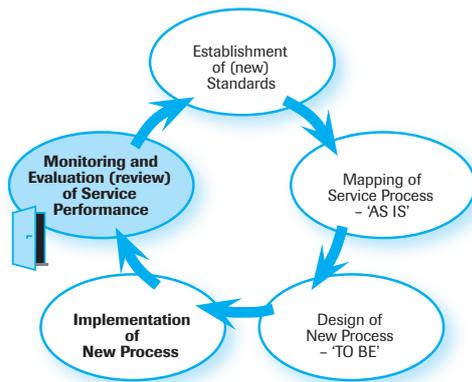
- A new policy on service improvement 
- Reorganisation 
- Streamlined work processes 
- Service improvement in performance agreements 
- New job descriptions 
- Multi-skilling of staff 
- Training of management and staff, technical and service quality 
- Setting up of new service desks 
- Changed ways of communicating 
- Adjustments in budgeting 

Service improvement initiatives and Service Standards should be implemented in a deliberate, planned manner, and should be based on action learning.

# 8

## Monitoring and Review of Service Standards

The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the use of monitoring and review to enable service improvement. It will further show how mechanisms of feedback and complaints can support the service improvement agenda.



Monitoring and review of service standards provide the fundamental tools that allow for continuous service process improvement. Monitoring and review of service standards is an important complement to process mapping (see chapter 6).

Whereas process mapping helps to identify waste and unnecessary detours in service processes, monitoring and review surfaces issues around effectiveness, relevance, citizen needs and expectations.

### Monitoring service performance

Monitoring service performance is about checking the progress on service provision on a regular basis. Monitoring will help to surface problems in the delivery of local government services. This will indicate to management when service provision needs evaluating or service standards may need reviewing to improve service delivery.

Monitoring service provision and performance against service standards is about checking progress.

The monitoring of service provision and performance against service standards requires information management systems that records these regularly and progress reporting to management.



Mymuni has a service standard indicating that the issuance of a business license should not take more than 4 weeks. To monitor the performance against this standard Mymuni has set up a system in the front-office that records the number of people applying for business licenses per day and a questionnaire for applicants to indicate how long they had to wait for the issuance of the licence. These records are reported on a monthly basis to management.

## Evaluating and reviewing service standards

Any local government who has adopted service standards must sustain such a policy with systems that assess performance against set standards.

Evaluation is about an in-depth scrutiny of service performance using various data collection tools, such as surveys to measure citizen satisfaction.

Reviews of service standards can be

- planned (as a regular feature supporting the local government's commitment to service improvement)
- ad hoc (e.g., due to new political agenda, etc.) or
- a response to increasing number of complaints recorded on a specific service.

The steps to review service standards are similar to those steps identified in chapter 7 on implementation around setting up of a SI team, leadership and staff involvement, etc. However, there are specific steps required for standards review, including:

### **1. Determining which standards or aspects of standards (target, cost, quality etc.) to be reviewed**

### **2. Analysis of current performance of standards**

Analysis can involve asking questions such as:

- How is the service functioning?
- Are citizens satisfied with the service?
- Are citizens getting value for money?
- Is the service provision cost effective?
- Is the service provided relevant? Does it meet citizens' needs and expectations?
- Is the service effective? Does it make the life of citizens easier?

Tools to collect information around the above questions include:

- provision of suggestion boxes in service areas,
- monitoring the volume and nature of complaints,
- conducting surveys, focus groups,
- citizens' client panels
- community meetings
- feedback forms in front office
- site visits, etc.
- public meetings
- opinion polls on the website.

### **3. Consult with citizens on new standards**

- find out what aspects of service delivery are most important to citizens
- find out what needs to be improved and what is working well
- find out both the costs of existing service levels and the major cost drivers.

### **4. Communicate new standards** (please see chapter 5 on service communication).

### **5. Draft an implementation plan to implement new standards** (please see chapter 7 on implementation).

## Feedback and complaints

Citizens' feedback and complaints is an aspect of setting service standards. Citizens' feedback and complaints constitute an invaluable feature and input in any local government service improvement agenda.

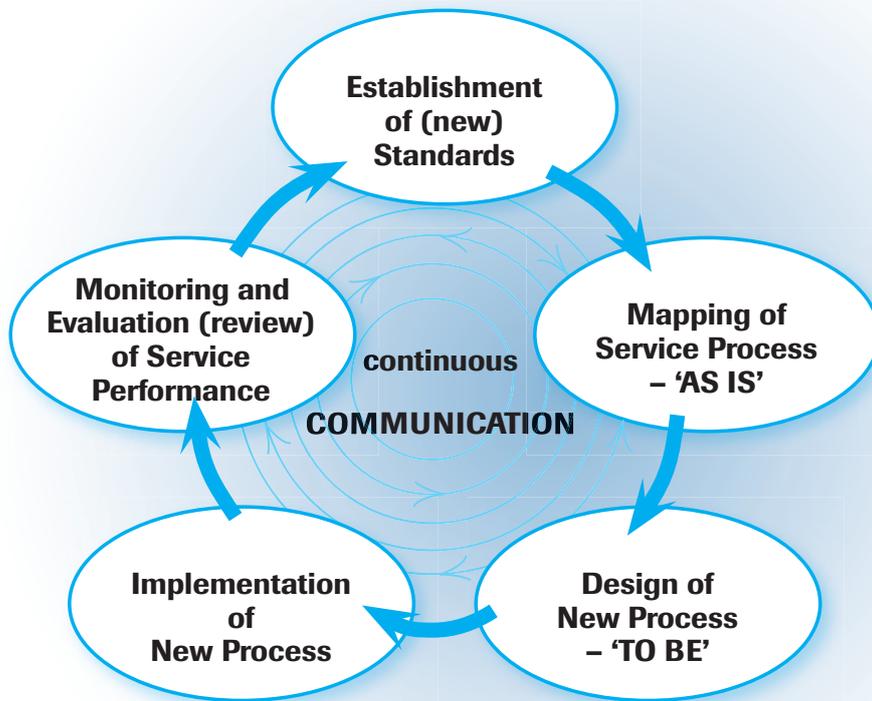
*Read more about feedback and complains in chapter 5.*





**Successful Service Improvement Team**

**Active and well established  
Service Improvement Cycle**



**Satisfied citizens – ratepayers**

# Acronyms

ALAN	Association for Local Authorities in Namibia
BALA	Botswana Association of Local Authorities
BPR	Business Process Reengineering
CoS	Catalogue of Services
EU	European Union
HOD	Heads of Departments
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
KSS	Key Service Standards
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
P <sup>3</sup>	Partnership   Participation   Progress
SALAR	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions
SALGA	South African Local Government Association
SC	Steering Committee
SI Team	Service Improvement Team
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency



# SERVICE IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

Part of the **Responsive Local Government** Toolkit: A Service Improvement Guide for South Africa, Namibia and Botswana.

This guide is intended for the municipal leadership, staff and other local government stakeholders to get a basic understanding of Service Improvement, the customer perspective on service delivery, the communication thereof, and an overview of an approach to service improvement involving them as key players.

## THE TOOLKIT CONSISTS OF FOUR ELEMENTS

### 1 A SERVICE IMPROVEMENT GUIDE

that sets out to explain the concept of Service Improvement, its benefits, and why it's necessary in local government, targeting both officials and politicians. It also provides an overview of the steps that can be taken in a Service Improvement initiative. The guide can be used independently as well as reference material in training.

facilitator's guide will be used in the training of trainers of facilitators and 'change agents' in municipalities to drive the Service Improvement process.

3 The Participant's **WORKBOOK** is an exercise book that is left with participants in Service Improvement training.

4 A **CD** with instruction videos, and other support material for facilitators.

### 2 FACILITATOR'S GUIDE

that outlines the Service Improvement process and steps taken, including some generic material around facilitation. This