

# FRAMING THE ISSUE OF SERVICE STANDARDS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONTEXT

## Background

**In many developed and developing countries, local governments have gained an increasing role in providing public services to their constituencies. Albania is part of the same trend with** Local Government that increasingly is entrusted with more responsibilities in providing an array of public services to local citizens (The 2015 Law on Local Self-Government). New Functions and responsibilities were transferred to local government<sup>1</sup>. While, this increasing role is already a fact, a natural question to decision makers at any level, and practitioners of good governance is: how well local government in Albania is doing, and whether its performance may be improved? A survey conducted by Association for the Autonomy of Local Government in Albania (2020) found that on average the number of citizens assessing positively the performance of service delivery across various programs and functions of local government was not more than 50%. If this level of approval shows that there are bottlenecks, the question arises whether those bottlenecks are intrinsically linked to Local government, or to factors that as such are beyond the discretion of local government? The following short document tries to provide in a concise way some practical steps to elucidate various elements for answering these questions.

**Quite often, the assessment of how good the local government is performing its role will pivot generally around the assessment of its activity in compliance with legal framework.** National/Subnational legal framework defines the powers/discretion, functions, and responsibilities of local governments, therefore local government are as good as this legal framework allows for (in terms of conformity with legal provisions for instance on the generation and collection of revenues, resource disbursement, and service delivery etc) . The fact that the compliance with such legal criteria established in the legal framework are quoted as main arguments for providing a foundation for how good local governments means:

- first and foremost, that all the rationale for increasing the role of local government in the service provision are captured in the legal framework<sup>2</sup>.
- and then that local government have the Fiscal Capacity for ensuring that they attend to fiscal compliance, that is, they do not overspend, and that their public expenditures are in line with their mandate (as it is generally represented in the local budgets or as it is stipulated in national and subnational legal frameworks).

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<sup>1</sup> Such as responsibilities for financing and managing preschools, fire protection, irrigation and drainage, providing counselling services to farmers, and managing and maintaining forests, pastures, and rural roads.

<sup>2</sup> One argument behind this rationale is the one known as Responsiveness to Constituents Demands: It consists on the claim that local governments, which are closer to citizens, are more likely to provide the right services than are higher-levels of general governments, hence the claim that they are more responsive. Another argument is the efficiency argument, which runs more or less like this: local governments not only are more likely than higher-level governments to provide the right services, but also are more likely to provide these services in the right way, that is with cost efficiency and competitiveness in local settings. Both arguments go hand in hand with the positive view that local government are held accountable by local constituents, and there is sufficient participation in political process to hold them accountable.

Clarifying the question of legal foundations is important; yet it's the first step in the analysis of how local government perform in their role. A further analysis on what performance consists of, how it's measured, reported and can be improved has the potential to elucidate temporal limitations, complexities and even inconsistencies within the institutional settings in which local government find themselves.

## Performance of Local Government and Principal/Agent model of analysis of Decision-Making In-Service Delivery

**Analyzing performance of local governance is intrinsically linked to services because public services are the very reason of existence of government (functions and responsibilities)** as such. In this sense public services are those for which there is a broad consensus that some type of government action is necessary, desirable, and/or inevitable—this includes absolutely essential functions such as ensuring law, order and maintaining a means of payment, through to development programs that have a strong “rationale for public sector involvement”, like irrigation, sanitation, improved water supply, and components of education and health. Even if these services could, in principle, be supplied by the private sector, it is highly unlikely the government could escape assuming major responsibility for them if/when they failed<sup>3</sup>.

**Performance of any government level or official then can be understood, accounted for and analyzed as service delivery related results of decision making instances, modelled according to principal vs agent approach.** Principal/agent model of analysis of decision-making during service delivery choices (**what** and **how**) in the public sector organizations is analogous to the same approach being applied to decision making in the private sector. In the private sector the principals are the shareholders; corporate boards of directors are their agents, whereas senior managers are the agents of the board. In the public sector the principals are the public at large. In a democracy, the first-level agents are publically elected representatives of citizens; in turn, the legislators act as principals with regard to the executive branch agents that are delegated the responsibility to implement the policies elected representative have legislated, and so on. There is however a small difference between private and public sector in Albania: while the focus of principal/agent model of decision making in private sector is product/service supply/delivery, in the public sector the focus of analysis is mainly decision making about the **what** and **how** of public services delivery. This because the role of public sector in production of products (goods) is very limited in Albania.<sup>4</sup>

## Analytical tool for public service delivery analysis

**Having explained the general conceptual approach for understanding and analyzing public services for local government, also in Albania, we may proceed one step further: we can specify further the framework of public service analysis (or variables as economists use to say) by adding dimensions**

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<sup>3</sup> The last earthquake is a striking example for showing the importance of this remark. Although in principle all new houses, or reparatory works could in principle have been provided entirely by private sector, the sheer need for financing, optimization of various costs, and the right for access to housing for all those in need had a role in government of Albania being involved in public programs of reconstruction works (mainly during the stages of tendering, procurement, and implementation).

<sup>4</sup> Albanian Government and some of local government still have some economic interests (Share of capital) in production facilities (for instance in mining industries, or power production), yet the value of these shares is low compared to the services component down the supply chain of these products (e.g. instance the value of power production compared to the cost of transmission and distribution)

**according to which such analysis can be made.** The dimensions mentioned here are two, namely *discretion on the side of decision maker* and *Intensity of transaction* implied in the process of service delivery.

- Services are discretionary to the extent that their delivery requires decisions by providers to be made on the basis of information that although important is yet inherently imperfectly specified and incomplete, thereby rendering them unable to be fully standardized, mechanized, or automatized in advance. As such, these decisions usually entail extensive professional (gained via training and/or experience) or informal context-specific knowledge. In the process of service delivery, discretionary decisions are taken which are crucial to a successful outcome; the right decision depends on conditions (“states of the world”) that are difficult to assess (ex ante or ex post), and hence it is very difficult to monitor whether or not the right decision was taken.
- Transaction intensity refers simply to the extent to which the delivery of a public service (or an element of a service) requires a large number of transactions, nearly always involving some face-to-face contact. School lunch programs, for example, require numerous cooks and cleaners to show up every day to individually prepare and distribute hundreds of meals in a hygienic environment; a small committee at a single meeting, on the other hand, can draw up the monthly menu.

**The models of decision making corresponding to various types of public services being delivered so explained can be presented in the below matrix:**

	<b>Discretionary</b>	<b>Non-Discretionary</b>
<b>Transaction Intensive</b>	Practices	Programs
<b>Non-Transaction Intensive</b>	Policies	(Procedures, Rules)

In a more detailed way:

- **Policies** are all actions of various level of governments (including local government) that intrinsically involve assessing a lot of information and taking an appropriate action, but implementation capacity is not the key issue as the implementation itself is not transaction intensive. The politics of policy reform may (or may not) require mass support, but a group of experts can handle the actual mechanics of policy reform quite well. Yet, their decisions require considerable professional training and judgment, and thus cannot be foreseen in advance before such information has been processed by these experts. Examples of such policies may vary from policy initiatives on education, health, social affairs or else.
- **Programs (of activities)** of national or local governments<sup>5</sup> require thousands or millions of individual transactions and hence thousands or tens of thousands of “providers”, but each transaction can be (reasonably) carried out with relatively little discretion on the part of the agent responsible for implementation. To implement a “program” the agents of the organization (being that private or public) need only to stick to a relatively fixed “script”<sup>6</sup>, in which the choices

<sup>5</sup> Similar to expenditure programmes, whose performance has been assessed in the study of Association for Local Autonomy

<sup>6</sup> There are rules and procedures how an expenditure program in general is conceived, managed, funded and reimbursed for instance. The same may go for a programme of public work

are few and judging the choice appropriate to the situation relatively easy. The main concerns of public official in the programs are technical (finding an effective and least cost solution) and logistical (carrying out the mandated actions reliably in different contexts).

- **The provision of those elements of services which are (more or less) discretionary and transaction intensive—“Practices”**—are of the most difficult for public decision makers because they are intrinsically incompatible with the logic and imperatives of large-scale, routinized, administrative control and accountability that the logic of principal/agent is trying to achieve . This is the case of teaching a class of pupils, or providing a diagnosis for a patient, or providing counseling therapy by social workers being them in North, Central or South of Albania- the differences are none. As an analogy from private sector production, we may say that whereas activities that can be either carried out in a large bureaucratic setting or via a franchise ( similar to programs )—fast food restaurants— the practices are rather done in lower scale for instance law firms, physician practices, universities, household contractors, counselors, and coaches.
- **Rules and Procedures** are neither discretionary, nor transaction intensive in the sense that they are to be considered *as a given* in any setting of public service delivery. As such there are tautological with regard to ex ante and ex post claim (part of the same) for accountability from principals towards their agents, provided that a transparent communication has already taken place<sup>7</sup>.

**While given sectors of public services across various levels of government have relatively more or less of the three types of activity, it is not the case that “education” is discretionary and “health” is not; rather, within every sector there are examples of each in different stages of the service provision process.** For example, in health, providing some individualized services, such as immunization, in which the appropriate action is nearly the same for each individual of a given age (which is easily observed), can be carried out as a program. In contrast, the provision of curative medical or psychological services, in which the provider is available for and responds to the complaints presented by individuals, requires a practice.

Sector	Discretionary, not Transaction Intensive Policies	Discretionary and Transaction Intensive Practices	Transaction Intensive, not Discretionary Programms
Social Protection	Setting eligibility criteria	Determining eligibility of marginal/special cases	Issuing checks to the eligible
Law Enforcement	Law making defining criminal behavior	Handling individual conflict situations	Directing traffic
Education	Curriculum design	Classroom teaching	Providing school lunches
Health	Public information campaigns	Curative care	Vaccinations
Irrigation	Location of main canals	Allocation of water flows	Providing standpipes “in every village”

<sup>7</sup> The burden of proof for not implementing a given procedure or law is not on the principal if the procedure/law has been fully and transparently communicated. This is the reason why rules and procedures are not part of the table shown above

Lightening Roads	Choice of energy mix power generation	Deciding on schedules of maintenance and upgrading	Switching on and off the grid the lightening
Meals Provision in Primary Schools	Decision on extension of service and financing mode (user charge vs subvention by Public Authorities)	Setting the menus and calories Defining criteria for eligibility of those that benefit from price subvention Defining the timing of services, and condition of delivery of public service	Providing meal every day according to the time and schedule proposed Billing and payment collection of user charges

With all the approaches and tools stated so far, the framework for analyzing and improving public service delivery becomes much clearer. The diagnostic for each public service may be carried out in the spirit of principal/agent model in order to specify the following elements

- Resources.** Where does the budget of the service providers come from?—revenue from clients, budgetary allocations, or some mix? Who retains control of the budget flows at what level?—centrally allocation to functions, discretion at the “point of service”?
- Information.** Does information flow to and/or from the top? To whom (if anyone) is information disseminated?
- Decision-making.** What is the scope of decision-making? Over what items do providers have de jure and/or de facto control?
- Delivery Mechanisms.** To whom is the service actually provided? —individuals, groups? By whom? —providers in large bureaucratic organizations? Are any third-party intermediaries involved? —small groups, staff of non-government organizations?
- Accountability.** To whom are service providers accountable? What power do they have? —hire and fire, reassignment, compensation?

Providing clear answer to all above mentioned elements is important in order to engage in a credible way for performance of public service delivery also at local level. Communicating these answers to constituents (in this context principals) is equally important because it feeds certain expectations related to public service delivery, and consequently the ability of constituents to effectively control the performance of public service delivery by public officials (agents) in line with these expectations. As we’ll see in the next section these efforts amount to what we call setting standards on service delivery. The ideal situation will be if every policy, program, and practice could be standardized, which clearly is not the case for policies. On the opposite side we have Rules and Procedures that in themselves are nothing more than... standards; hence the focus of attention in the next section is rather on standardization of Practices and Programs of Service Delivery.

As we already mentioned the types of public services, captured under the heading of “practices” are by definition not able to be standardized, and therefore not easy to be mapped in business

**process mapping of value chain analysis for being delivered through automatization and digitalization.** Diligent teachers might share tips about what seems to work in the classroom, and the wider dissemination of those tips may have a small positive impact, but the everyday act of teaching entails making innumerable discretionary and transaction-intensive decisions, the effective execution of which are deeply embedded in the teacher's (idiosyncratic) personality and professionalism, and the nature of the particular institutional context. The same goes also for providing a diagnosis to a patient by a doctor. In spite of making certain information standart (check up analysis for instance) the amount of judgement needed by doctor in order to deliberate is intrinsically linked to the case and patient unique situation, hence cannot be predicted in advance. It's for the same reasons that "best practices" or "good practices of service delivery" cannot be standardized in handbooks of service delivery to be replicated in various contexts as ready-made solutions. The successful implementation of what works, and what's not in various contexts is a function of idiosyncratic elements being considered along five elements (**a** to **e**) of services delivery within the perspective of agent/principal as underlined above. Taking away discretion, through standardization, for increasing internal control and avoiding abuse may be detrimental to **performance**.

**Various approaches have been proposed to improve service delivery implying intensive transaction and high level of discretion that particular to practices.** They have been developed in the literature as (1) Supplier autonomy (public sector reform II), (2) Single sector participatory, (3) Contracting out, (4) Decentralization to states/provinces, (5) Decentralization to localities/municipalities, (6) Demand side financing, (7) Social Funds, and (8) Community driven development (CDD). Whether they are successful in some context and deemed to fail in other context depends as it was underlined in idiosyncratic elements (local context, culture, language, religion etc) that are hard to be rationalized in the form needs/solution/instruments, therefore hard to be replicated through **multiplication** of effort (intensification), **market solutions** (getting government out of it because there are public services that simply cannot be ), or **policy reform** (getting the clever people at central level to design and effectively implement service delivery improvements at local level). Yet, it's precisely for these type of service deliveries that the role of local context, including the local government is the most needed and can be beneficial to any potential improvement of service delivery objective. The standartization processes being that done at regional, or national level should always refer to the practice at local level.

## NON-DISCRETIONARY, INTENSIVE TRANSACTION PROGRAMS OF SERVICE DELIVERY AND SERVICE STANDARDS

**Public programs of service delivery are the perfect candidate for standardization for the sake of improvement of outcome performance, and increased cost efficiencies through automatization or digitalization. Various variants and typologies of standardization of programs have received attention in last decade especially in the aftermath of financial crisis of late 2008 that was associated with hard constraints on public funds.** The process of standardization has been developed in various country context under different headings: new public administration ( New Zeland), Citizen Centric and Service Delivery (UK) South Africa (Transformation of Public Service Delivery), EU Service Directive and Digitalization agenda etc.

**What is particular in all these approaches is the fact that the analysis of programs of service delivery (that is a group of activities decided by public officials) is done in such a way as to instantiate them as flow/chain of processes, tasks or work flow, in order to identify the most efficient way of linking various tasks/processes for service delivery.** Codifying these links in the form of standard operating procedures, and associating them with related costs (financial and human resources) allows no more room for discretion by any agent (public official) and therefore the final performance of service delivery can equally be standardized in various forms (format or specimen of service, unit of service delivered per time interval, timeline of provision of public service etc). These forms, which are labelled as standards, are published, and endorsed by public organizations as part of internal control rules and procedures (internal standards of control) on which public officials are held internally accountable by higher level management, or externally by public. The entire approach is captured what is known as “service value chain model” and in a simplified way it’s presented below:

**(a) Strategic Planning**

(b) Develop Service Delivery

(c) Business Process Management

(d) Standard operating procedures

(e) Unit Costing

**(f) Service Standards**

**(g) Service charters**

(h) Service delivery improvement plans

**We have emphasized Strategic Planning, Service Standards and Service Charters in order to give an idea where is the entry point for each public government organization engaging in service delivery standards setting and main emphasis in the flow of efforts.** A given meaning in relation to other concepts and terms defining the activity and purpose of public government is associated to Service Standards as per ANNEX 1 of this document.

## **Local versus central Standards of Public Services**

**The above-mentioned value chain depicts where the responsibility and authority for developing standards of service is located. The process by which the authority is delegated matches also the responsibilities attached (namely the people responsible for strategic planning of local government units in our case). Yet according to principle of subsidiarity, the scope of service standards cannot pass the boundaries of authority bestowed to the corresponding hierarchical level public government organization.** This is to say that local government units can develop standards of performance in line with their authority bestowed by national legal framework (laws and bylaws). They have the option however either to adopt standards set at national level (by national government) or set higher standards. **The decision depends off course on the cost associated to delivering on the standards in line with the reality of fiscal capacity of local government. In the case of Albania, therefore the setting of standards of public service at local level cannot be divided by the discussion of fiscal capacity of Local Government Units to finance, maintain, and deliver on such standards. Any attempt to set standards of public services that could not be covered by potential local resources, as recognized by the Law of Local Government and Local Finances, either would lead to non-feasible standards or conflictual situation that will need to be mitigated through further**

amendments of the law<sup>8</sup>. In line with such factors the guide line to develop service standards, communicate and improve them is provided in the ANNEX 2 of this document.

Roadmap to setting integrated service standards at local level need to be tailored accordingly with above considerations. Some of suggested recommendations for national/regional/local levels:

- National and local government department unit could set and must publish standards for the level and quality of services they are responsible for.
- In the case of certain services, such as health, or education, central government organization departments, in consultation with local government units may set standards which will serve as national baseline standards.
- Individual provinces may then set their own standards, provided these meet or exceed the national baseline.
- Local government organizations may also set additional standards for aspects of service not covered by national norms.
- Similarly, public government departments (national, regional or local) may set intra-departmental service standards which will serve as minimum norms for their institutions and components. These internal institutions and components may also set additional service standards for aspects not covered by intra-departmental norms.
- Standards must also be precise and measurable, so, that users can judge for themselves whether or not they are receiving what was promised.
- Service Standards must be set at a level which is demanding but realistic
- Service Standards must have the approval of the relevant first authorizing official before they are adopted.
- Once approved, Service Standards must be published and displayed at the point of delivery and communicated as widely as possible to all potential users so that they know what level of service they are entitled to expect, and can complain if they do not receive it.
- Performance against standards must be regularly measured and the results published timely in accordance with time schedule agreed by national/regional/local services standard agreed for.
- Performance against standards must be reviewed annually and, as standards are met, so they should be progressively raised, year on year. Once set and published, standards may not be reduced. If a standard is not met, the reasons must be explained publicly and a new target date set for when it will be achieved.

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<sup>8</sup> This paragraph considers that all cost efficiency improvement at local level have been factored in during the service value chain analysis. In the context of Albania these const efficiency considerations are mainly related especially to programs at national scale like the digitalization agenda, operating under the schema of “one single window of public services.



## ANNEX 1

### Function:

- The intended purpose of a person or thing in a specific role. **Purpose, responsibility, concern, undertaking, commission, obligation, duty, etc.**
- A system supplying a public need such as transport or water, etc, run by the state
- For example, the function of the Department of Education is to provide educational services; and the function of an army is to provide protection and security for the country.
- A function often comprises several services and each service is made up of one or more tasks.

### Service:

- Action/process of serving. **Actions that fulfil a function.** To supply the needs of the public by **performing specific tasks; performance of work for another.**
- For example, the function of a Department of Transport is to provide transport services in the form of trains, buses, etc, and the function of a Department of Health is to provide healthcare services through its components such as the HIV and AIDS Unit, Nutrition, Legal Services, Human Resource Development, Institutions, etc.

### Standard of service

- Standards of service” - is typically to answer questions such as:
  - “How often will the service be provided?”
  - “How long should it take to receive the service?”
  - and “What does one do if one is not satisfied with the service?”
- A simple and effective way of setting standards is to use **Quantity, Quality, Time and Cost** as a guideline. This will ensure that your standards are SMART
- Level, grade, calibre, merit, yardstick, benchmark, measurement, criterion, touchstone, such as a code of behaviour, code of honour, principle, ideal, ethics, seniority levels at work, etc.
- For our purposes, a standard is something **specific, measurable and realistic** that can be **achieved within a given time-frame.**
- For example, the matric pass rate must reach 80% for the whole country within the next five years..
- In essence, a service standard is a **criterion adopted by a department** in order to define how it should behave with respect to its client base (the client base may be internal or external).

### Target:

- A **person, object or place** selected as an aim of an attack (marksman). An **objective or result** towards which efforts are directed.  
For the purposes of Service Delivery Improvement Standards and Targets may be differentiated as follows:

· Standards set **measurable levels of Service Performance;**

And

· **Targets** set measurable levels of Citizen Satisfaction.

### Indicator:

- *Guide, mark*; a thing that indicates a **state or level**; a **meter** or gauge to reflect or indicate specific outcomes or outputs, such as a speedometer in a car or a thermometer.
- *A device to attract attention*; a **measuring instrument**. For example, economic indicators that reflect or gauge our inflation rate, or how well or poorly we are doing economically as a country
- Indicators show whether the **desired goal is being achieved or not**. An outcome can have more than one indicator, as indicators should address different stakeholders. Each indicator must have a **service standard or a target**. In essence, a **service standard is a criterion** adopted by a department, defining how it should behave towards its citizens.
- Indicators are used for specifying outcomes and outputs in measurable numeric or Qualitative terms under the following headings:
- **Quantity indicators**: Magnitude (numbers or dimensions)
- **Quality**: To which standard?
- **Target Group**: Who?
- **Target Area**: Where?
- **Time**
- **Outcome indicators** specify the achievements of a programme.
- **Output indicators** specify what the programme delivers.
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### The difference between an indicator and a service standard?"

- The short answer to this is that they are the **same thing**, the longer answer is that a **service standard is a type of indicator**. National Treasury (2004) defines an indicator as a measure of *"how well an expenditure programme (or main division of a vote) is delivering its output and contributing towards meeting the outcomes that government wants to achieve."*
- In other words, an *indicator is a measure or signal or benchmark* that indicates the *level of achievement or the current state of something*.
- Indicators are what *we observe or measure* in order to verify whether, or to what extent, progress is being made (United Nations Development Programme, 1999).
- Thus service standards are effectively service delivery indicators, which are used to measure or evaluate the performance of departments in terms of service delivery. In order to verify whether delivery has met a standard, service standards need to be measurable. Thus we suggest using the same approach to construct a service standard as we would for constructing an indicator, for example:
- **Define the quality** - Issue accurate and correct passports
- **Set the target group** - Issue accurate and correct new passports
- **Define the target area or place** - Issue accurate and correct new passports at all Home Affairs Offices
- **Set the quantity/time period** - Issue accurate and correct new passports at all Home Affairs Offices within 6 weeks of receiving an application

### Benchmarking:

- The continuous, systematic process of measuring and assessing products, services, and practices of recognised leaders in the field to determine the extent to which they might be adapted to achieve superior performance.
- Typically, a department will make one of four types of comparisons when establishing its benchmarks.
  - It might make an **internal comparison within the Public Service**,
  - **a comparison with a competitor** (e.g. Telkom vs. Vodacom or MNet),
  - **A functional comparison** (e.g. between departments offering similar functions),

- or a **generic benchmark** (a comparison against a company known for innovation but unrelated to the services delivered by the Public Service, e.g. BMW or Woolworths).
- Benchmarking, can, for example, be done at the input phase and/or the implementation phase and/or the output phase
  - input and implementation phase might be **more process-focused**, and therefore a department might want to **consider benchmarks from similar organizations**
  - output benchmarks could be influenced by a **wider range of organizations, not necessarily operating in the same sector**
- **Best Practice Sharing:** The capture, dissemination and sharing of a work method, process or initiative to improve organizational effectiveness, service delivery, and employee satisfaction

<b>Fact sheet of standards</b>
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- Whilst not every service standard need cover all five aspects, one would expect to find all these. These aspects are:
- (a) **A description of the service:** *issue a passport*
- provides the details of the service that the department intends to provide and, where applicable, the nature of the benefits citizens can expect to receive. Usually, the service standard includes a short, easy-to-understand statement that describes exactly what services are provided at a particular delivery site.
- (b) **A service pledge or commitment:** *We will strive to make information available in all official languages*
- how citizens will be treated and describes the quality of service delivery that the department promises to meet. This commitment would typically emphasise delivery principles such as transparency, accountability, fairness and courtesy.
- (c) **A delivery target:** *To process your application within 30 days*
- Generally, delivery targets would deal with issues such as access and timeliness. Targets have a two-fold purpose: they help to establish realistic expectations among citizens, based on what the department can actually deliver, and establish the performance expectations for the department.
- (d) **The cost of the service** *No user fee will be charged for this service<sup>9</sup>*
- Knowing the cost of a service, in particular when it is either free or requires only a low fee, encourages citizens to make use of the service, forms realistic expectations about the services being offered, and allows them to participate knowledgeably in debates about the value of government service delivery.
- (e) **Reference to the relevant complaint and redress mechanisms** *We will respond to your complaint within 10 working days of receipt*
- A public service “that is responsive and citizen-focused must provide an easy, clear and effective way for citizens to complain and seek redress

## ANNEX 2

### Step-by step guide to setting Service standards

#### 6.1 Preparation

- Develop a Service standards policy and get sign off by the Executing Authority.
- The department must get **buy-in** from stakeholders, including senior management, before embarking on a service standards process.
- Buy-in is usually best achieved within the development of a **Change management programme**.

- One of the best ways to drive change management and buy-in is to **appoint a Service standards Champion**.
- The champion may choose to appoint a Service standards Committee/ Team within the department to
- advise on and to promote the process.
- The champion should be a skilled facilitator and take responsibility to get stakeholders and experts together
- for the writing up of draft service standards.
- The champion should have a budget and authority to appoint an external specialist, if deemed necessary.
- The champion may have to set up more than one writing team where service standards are too diverse for
- one team to focus on.
- The champion should introduce facilitation platforms, , whereby team members can collaborate
- and share standards on an e-learning platform.

## 6.2 Set standards

Effective service standards should be set taking into account the results of two key processes within the service delivery value chain, i.e.:

- i) Business process management/ -mapping (BPM)
- ii) Service costing

The Service standards champion may be the same champion for BPM and costing, or the Department may want to appoint a different champion for the two processes. The following steps are put forward as a guideline for the setting of Service standards:

### Step 1: Identify Service Beneficiaries

This step goes hand in hand with Step 2. Some beneficiaries may be in the Department, for example Human Resources or Corporate services. However, the primary beneficiaries of a service standards process should always be the Public.

The key process in this step is **consultation**. Service beneficiaries are not the only, but are the most important stakeholders. Other stakeholders to consult are staff, partners and Labour. Business Process

Mapping is a powerful tool that can be used for identifying service beneficiaries.

### Step 2: Document all services

In government context, service standards are the rules of engagement between government and citizens.

Service standards include targets such as waiting times and hours of operation. Service beneficiaries are entitled to know what level of service they should expect, how services will be delivered and what they cost.

A service is provided every time a customer deals with a public service department or component. For example the issuing of social grants, birth/ death certificates, ID documents, passports or housing subsidies. A service is rendered at every level at a public school or hospital as well as every situation where a public servant responds to customer queries, albeit, face-to-face, by telephone or in writing. The key to identifying services is to identify every interaction with the public. However, as outlined in Step 1, services are not only external. Some services are internal and some services are with other Departments.

### Step 3: Identify Partnerships

Some services could be delivered in partnership with Agencies and the private sector, All partnerships, possible and existing, need to be reviewed at a strategic and operational level

#### **Step 4: Assess current service delivery standards**

This step can obviously only be done effectively if the Department have existing **documented** service standards. If such are in place, this step constitutes a critical review phase which is best done in small, focused workshops with the **relevant** staff members.

The following checklist may be useful in guiding a workshop during such review:

- Staff courtesy, appearance and communication skills
- Appearance of staff
- Public security
- Response times
- Ease of access
- Information sharing with beneficiaries; e.g. brochures, signage, website, contact centre
- Complaints management system
- Services delivery accountability in terms of cost effectiveness (value for money)
- Documentation of measurable service standards

#### **Step 5: Consult stakeholders**

- Eg. by means of suggestion boxes, complaints analyses, surveys, focus groups, client panels and site visits.
- Consultation must include the consideration of parallel processes, for example Queue management systems and Access to services.
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#### **Step 6: Set standards**

If the champion has enough information from consultation, he/ she may go ahead and draft service standards which should be tabled to the Service standards Team for review and ratification.

The champion may opt to write standards directly during a consultative workshop (or multiple workshops if needed) during which stakeholders and experts may freely debate and agree on the output.

#### **Step 7: Empower staff**

- Inform and train relevant staff on service standards, especially front-line staff.
- Ensure that staff have access to the resources (equipment, information), as outlined in the service standards, to deliver the quality service expected
- Ensure that relevant staff have aligned their performance agreements to revised service standards

#### **Step 8: Manage standards**

- Publish and implement service standards
- Monitor the implementation by means of audits/ surveys
- Identify gaps between set standards and actual delivery
- Review and, as the need arise, set new standards
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#### **Step 9: Communicate and Reward**

- Assess the success and value of the process by engaging service beneficiaries by means of focus groups, surveys, etc.
- Publish results in Annual report and booklets
- Develop a **Service Charter** for sign off by the relevant first authorising Official .
- Identify and reward service standard achievers