

Presidential Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring

FSD Case Study¹

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Case Study Title: An analysis of the Sector Meeting Approach as employed by the Office of the Premier: Free State Province as part of the Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring Programme

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to share with other FSDM stakeholders the goals, processes, challenges, lessons learned and recommendations stemming from the OTP: FS Sector Approach in conducting improvement and feedback meetings. It also covers the intended, and unintended, consequences of this approach as it impacts on Sector Departments and the FSDM programme as a whole.

Target Audience: Department of the Premier, National Sector Departments, Provincial Sector Departments, Agencies and Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

Glossary:

FSDM	Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring
DPME	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation
FS	Free State
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MPAT	Management Performance Assessment Tool
OBP	Outcomes-based Priorities
OoP: FS	Office of the Premier: Free State
SASSA	South African Social Security Agency

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Office of the Premier: Free State has adopted a unique strategy in the management of Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring. Born out of several considerations, this approach utilizes meetings with sector department stakeholders to both solicit and provide information to facilities and sector departments on the outcome of frontline service delivery. Through careful, this approach enables strategic management of sector departments in the Free State to attend to, and take ownership of, Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring, and thereby influence improvements in service delivery. Enabling bidirectional communication, promoting cooperation across management levels. This approach has highlighted the need for training in Monitoring and Evaluation at frontline offices, as well as suggesting the inclusion of frontline service delivery monitoring as part of the performance contracts of line executives of sector departments.

1. Basic Information

Institution Name	Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency Department of the Premier: Free State
Town	Pretoria / Bloemfontein
Municipality	City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality
Province	Gauteng / Free State
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Key Themes	Strategic Management, Accountability, Strategic Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, Service Delivery Improvement

2. The Free State Sector Approach

Background / Context:	The Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring unit in the Office of the Premier: Free State uses a combined sector approach in the provision of feedback and the sourcing of improvements feedback from Sector Departments in the course of its service delivery improvement initiatives.
Problem statement	A fundamental part of the FSDM programme is the provision of feedback (whether from Baseline or Improvements Monitoring) to participating facilities and Sector Departments. DPME is aware that the different Provinces utilize different approaches in achieving this, and it has come to the attention that the OoP: FS is utilizing a Sector

	<p>based approach to provide feedback in combined sessions. This case study seeks to trace the development of this approach, as well as the impact this approach has had on the programme in the Free State.</p>
Approach to the Case Study	<p>The Sector Approach utilized in the Free State was assessed via the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observations conducted during four (4) Sector meetings with the Department of Home Affairs, The Department of Police, Roads and Transport, the South African Police Service and the South African Social Security Agency • Semi Structured group interview with the Frontline Service Delivery Unit in the Office of the Premier: Free State;
The Sector Approach in the Free State	<p>The Sector Meeting Approach as implemented by the OoP: FS is seen as a practical management tool that facilitates the implementation of intervention plans developed by frontline offices. It consists of facilitating improvement and feedback meetings with Sector Departments at provincial level</p> <p>Sector meetings are held at least twice a year in order to keep FSDM on the forefront of the strategic decision makers. These meetings are hosted by the applicable sector department, and are chaired by an official representing the Executive of the said department. The meetings are attended by officials from the OoP: FS, DPME, Facility Managers, District Managers / Regional Managers, as well as various representatives of the Sector Department in question (this includes officials from Procurement, Strategic Management, Human Resources, Infrastructure Management, IT, M&E, as well as those responsible for frontline service delivery monitoring)</p> <p>During these meetings the facilities included for improvements monitoring present the progress made in terms of their improvement plans with photographs as evidence. The OoP: FS as well as the provincial coordinator from DPME update the progress in the improvement plans, and also obtain feedback on any items not implemented or reported on. The House then discusses any items going forward, and new timelines are agreed upon in the meeting.</p> <p>During these meetings the OoP: FS also presents findings on any facilities visited from baseline assessments prior to the Sector Meeting of that particular financial year. These are discussed, and any feedback on changes that might have already occurred is provided.</p>
What led to the OTP: FS utilizing this approach	<p>The Sector-based approach has been adopted in the Free State for several reasons and considerations, but mainly due to the lack of ownership for improvements plans taken at facility level management in the absence of strategic management as represented by the Sector Department.</p> <p>A contributory factor that has enabled the OoP: FS to utilize this strategy is their management of baseline monitoring. Baseline monitoring is scheduled to take place a few days before the sector meeting. Also, the OoP: FS provided preliminary feedback on the very same day as the baseline monitoring. Doing so empowers the facility to complete their own improvement plans, which are presented during the Sector Meetings.</p> <p>Other factors that contributed to the adoption of the Sector-based approach in the Free State are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The distances involved in the Free State, given the limitation on transportation for OoP officials (the FSDM team are limited to one vehicle, and capped at 2000 km per month on subsidized vehicles). This curtails the mobility of the team, and hampers their ability to visit far-flung facilities; • Facilitating proper decision making at higher-levels of the departments;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that line managers are accountable for their actions; • Ensuring that proper consultation with all relevant stakeholders (from facility management to the Executive) has taken place;
Aims of this approach	The main aim of this approach is to facilitate the implementation of improvement recommendations by instilling a culture where M&E is valued as an essential management tool and not merely a compliance exercise for strategic decision makers. This done by bringing together all relevant stakeholders (from facility level management to strategic decision makers at Sector Department level) to share information, take decisive action and agreed upon commitments and creating a sense of responsibility amongst the various stakeholders involved.
The advantages of this approach	<p>The main advantage of the Sector Meeting Approach is that it creates an enabling environment wherein practical and technical issues are discussed and addressed amongst all relevant stakeholders. Accountability and Transparency are enhanced as delegation and assumption of responsibilities are done in an open, supportive manner.</p> <p>Some additional benefits to this approach include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saving of time and money as all stakeholders converge at one venue on one day, thereby eliminating the need for various trips; • Senior Managers are present, allowing them to provide direction and spell out responsibilities to the relevant units within their Departments; • Improved coordination and cooperation between facilities and the line Departments; • It cultivates ownership within the departments to take full responsibility for the implementation of recommendations as indicated in the improvement plans; • These meetings also create an opportunity for the OoP: FS to assist facilities in the correct completion of summary reports and improvement plans – it serves as a capacity building session as well; • Executives are able to make immediate decisions as well as issue directives based on the findings as reported on; • Frontline Facilities that have not yet been visited by OoP: FS / DPME are able to share results; • Due to the various levels of officials and structures involved, the approach also informs the strategic planning processes of the department; • The sector approach also ensures that the Executive of the department meet with frontline staff at least twice a year to ensure that policies and directives are implemented in the applicable offices;
The disadvantages of this approach	<p>This approach has a few inherent disadvantages:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some executives do not participate in this approach as the FSDM programme is not part of their performance contracts. Thus, they see no need to support this approach; • This approach requires careful management of logistics and timeframes on the part of the Sector Departments, sometimes resulting in insufficient attendance and communication amongst role players; • Sign-off of the action plans by executives does delay finalization of reporting
The successes of this approach	The most significant success of this approach has been in instilling a culture where FSDM is seen as a crucial, integral part of the sector departments' core business. As Mr Bandile Maqetuka, Regional Executive of SASSA FS, said: "The goal of our work is to ensure that the environment in which we operate is conducive to our clients". He

	<p>also underscored the collaborative nature of the FSDM programme, saying: “We work for different bodies, but we all have one goal: to serve our people.”</p> <p>During this meeting, it was also indicated that facilities require assistance in the completion of summary reports and improvement plans. The OoP: FS has developed a training package to assist departments and facilities in the completion of these documents, which will form part of the Sector Meetings going forward. This indicates another level in which ownership of the FSDM programme is being taken.</p> <p>Some of the other successes that stem from the sector approach include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of FSDM Reports amongst management teams of frontline offices within a department – this facilitates relationship building and sharing of experiences, knowledge, successes and challenges; • Leadership from the Executive to improve service delivery to their clients by allowing them to get involved with implementation of recommendations and improvement plans; • Line managers are held more accountable for the implementation of functions within their domain; • Budgeting at frontline sites has improved due to the correct prioritization of issues; • The sector approach has also enriched the development of departmental Service Delivery Improvement Plans as requested by the DPSA; • Proper decision making in allocation of responsibilities • Continuous monitoring and reporting has been implemented at several facilities; • Improved communication between departments, facilities and staff because responsible people are brought into one room to discuss challenges and requirements; • Some departments have included the FSDM Programme on the performance contracts of the executives, for example, Home Affairs.
<p>The challenges of this approach</p>	<p>This approach, in general, works well. It requires careful management of several aspects inherent in such an approach, the most impacting of which are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The management of attendees: due to this approach requiring the presence of strategic decision makers, it is heavily influenced by their diaries. Even though the meetings are scheduled well in advance, Executives might have last minute priorities which will take precedence over the FSDM Sector Meeting; • In some sectors, the Executives attending the meetings change with each meeting. This hinders a culture of ownership of M&E in general, and FSDM in particular, from being instilled at strategic levels within departments; • Some office managers delegate the reporting of their facilities to lower level staff. This results in the presenters not being able to answer questions from the Executive, nor are they able to make decisions and commitments during the meetings; • Some findings reports and implementation plans are incomplete and not completed correctly. This causes delays in the reporting on progress and implementation of appropriate recommendations. •

Lesson Learned	<p>Several lessons were learned during this case study.</p> <p>Firstly, the OoP: FS has managed, through strategic thinking and reorganization, to implement an impactful, effective approach in the provision and obtaining of FSDM information.</p> <p>Secondly, ownership of the FSDM programme is being taking by most Sector departments in the Free State. This is evidenced by the continuous support and commitment of Executives during the meetings.</p> <p>Thirdly, there is a need for M&E Training to be provided to facility management at frontline offices. This will not only facilitate the correct completion of reports, but also assist them in properly completing improvement plans with realistic and achievable outputs and timeframes.</p> <p>Fourthly, several facilities have indicated that they would appreciate training on complaints management, especially for the frontline staff. This will improve the quality of service they are able to provide to users.</p> <p>Fifthly, a strategic elevation of the importance of quality of frontline service delivery is noted. This is evidenced by the commitment from Sector Department Executives as well as the appreciation expressed by these sector departments for the collaborative nature of the FSDM programme as supported by both OoP: FS and DPME.</p>
Recommendations	<p>Several recommendations can be made based on the outcomes of this case study. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The inclusion of FSDM on the performance contracts of the executives of line departments. • The inclusion of FSDM reports and meetings in the annual budgeting processes of the line departments • Training to be provided to facility management as well as Executives on the completion of summary reports and improvement plans

3. References

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Further Reading:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. DPME Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring Guideline 4.2.8: Guidelines for selecting, collecting data and drafting case studies 2. Free State Provincial Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring Strategy. 3. Frontline Service Delivery Monitoring (FS): Defining Performance Areas. 4. FSDM Programme Framework Plan 2015

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