Rethinking the Management Accountability Framework and Performance Monitoring for the Digital Era

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The Challenge and Argument

- Initiated in 2003, the Management Accountability Framework
 has served has a one means for monitoring the performance of
 departments/agencies and deputy ministers.
- First seen as a way of engaging executive teams on strategic issues confronting departments, and unique by international standards, it has long been viewed as a 'tick-box' exercise.
- One of Ottawa's practices targeted by Clark & Swain (2005).
- MAF recently reviewed for a second time, in the context of the Trudeau government, which seeks to do things differently.
- The review proceeded in the context not only of Treasury Board's new Results Policy and the 'deliverology' push but also continuing constraint and demands for performance.
- This paper argues that MAF should also be viewed from 'open government', capability, and learning perspectives.

What Is the Management Accountability Framework?

- Arose out of the Modern Comptrollership and Results for Canadians initiatives, which sought integrated information & perspectives on management of departments and agencies.
- MAF provides an overall empirical picture and assessment of the quality of management and systems of departments and agencies – rooted in aspects of "well-performing" public sector organizations:
 - (1) governance and strategic direction; (2) values and ethics; (3) people;
 (4) policy and programs; (5) citizen-focused service; (6) risk management;
 (7) stewardship; (8) accountability; (9) results and performance; and (10) learning, innovation, and change management.
- MAF became legendary as reporting exercise because of numerous indicators (at one point 41) and even more measures (over 140); a contrast to the spirit of the Shared Management Agenda and Dept. Assessments initiated by TBC Secretary in early 1990s.
- MAF increasingly has the look and feel of a quality assurance and risk management assessment system.
- Feeds into the review of deputy ministers undertaken by COSO.

Management Accountability Framework

Public Service Values

- · Exemplary conduct
- · Public service values tailored to realities/culture of department
- · Values-based management practices

Governance and Strategic Directions

- Support to minister, Cabinet and Parliament;
- Management framework aligned to strategic outcomes
- The right executive team
- Results-focussed corporate priorities
- Strategic resource allocation/ reallocation based on performance
- Integrated agenda for management excellence
- Horizontal collaboration
- Environmental scanning

Policy and Programs

- Sustained analytic capacity and culture of consultation, review and challenge
- Results-focussed policy and program agendas linked to government's horizontal priorities
- · Citizen engagement
- Confidence of the minister and the centre

People

- Reflective of Canada
- Respectful of official language requirements
- · Renewed/sustained capacity
- Supportive workplace
- Employee engagement
 Opportunities to grow
- Leadership continuum

sanctions

Recognition, rewards and

Citizen-focussed Service

- Monitored, continuously improved service quality
- Technology options fully exploited
- Empowered front-line deliverers
- · Effective relationships

Risk Management

- Key risks identified and managed
- · Risk lens in decision making
- Risk smart culture
- Capacity to communicate and manage risk in public context

Stewardship

- Management systems that provide relevant information and early warning on resources, results and controls
- Rigorous audit/evaluation function
- Functional specialists as partners
- Compliance with policies, regulations, and legislation

Accountability

- Clear accountabilities and responsibilities for due process and results
- Delegations appropriate to capabilities
- Cascading commitments in PMAs

Results and Performance

- Corporate monitoring and reporting of program, service and internal results
- financial and non-financial performance information used in corporate decision making

Integrated

- Departmental reporting based on measurable outcomes
- Benchmark against the best

and Parliament

 Transparent, timely and accessible communications with citizens

Learning, Innovation and Change Management

- Strategic organizational learning, a capacity to anticipate and adjust to change, and a disposition to transformation
- A culture of innovation
- · Performance as a guide to change
- Delegations as an instrument of empowerment
- · Corporate knowledge and memory captured and managed as strategic resources

Some Criticisms of MAF...

- Another reporting requirements of central agencies which Clarke & Swan (2005) referred to as 'surreal'
- Non-trivial costs to reporting and coordinating
- Viewed as having become a 'tick-box' exercise
- Potential for improving scores by better reporting as opposed to actually improving performance
- Indicators and lines of evidence shift over time
- Do indicators measure performance under pressure?
- Not independently verified by reviews or audits
- Not considered strategic by DMs; too retrospective?

...But Has Latent Functions and is Unique...

- The MAF portal serves as a data-base for Treasury Board analysts on all facets of the management of departments.
- It assembles DPRs, evaluations, internal audits, as well as external audits and other reports on departments.
- Important resource for the usually high-turnover Treasury Board analysts, who must become 'instant-smart'.
- Leads various secretariats within TBS and across other central agencies to coordinate views on departments and agencies
- Risk profiles of departments emerge from MAF reporting
- Internationally considered an exemplary & unique practice
- Different from undertaking capability reviews (UK, Australia)

MAF: An Open Government Perspective

- GoC and Open Government Partnership → why not live it!
 Not just about open data; also about relevant information; key signal & symbol; some countries have MoG portals (Norway, Ireland, Germany).
- Why not build a parallel 'open' MAF portal for the public?
 Most of MAF information is public and accessible through FOI requests; most of the data collected anyhow; qualifies as 'low-hanging fruit'.
- Why not make MAF results more accessible, with a portal properly linking department/agency MAF and DAC reports?
 - For MPs, agents of Parliament, scholars, and observers; more outsiders should understand departments' capacity and health; user orientation!
- Why not have DMs & executive teams engage stakeholders?
 - Opportunity to assess the effects of multiple, successive, overlapping initiatives on departments and agencies; MAF could have more forward-looking elements re 'capabilities'; complement to top internal dialogue.

Not That Simple! Some Considerations

- The more 'open' any sort of internal reporting, the more potential for political use of the information
- Does anyone outside government really care about the internal challenges and capacity of departments and agencies?
- How are MAF results connected to results reporting which has long been a priority of governments?
- We already do this with mandated DACs?
- Will outside stakeholders e.g. MPs, staff, reporters, scholars, think tanks really use this information?

Thank You!

Comments and suggestions welcomed at evert@uvic.ca