

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

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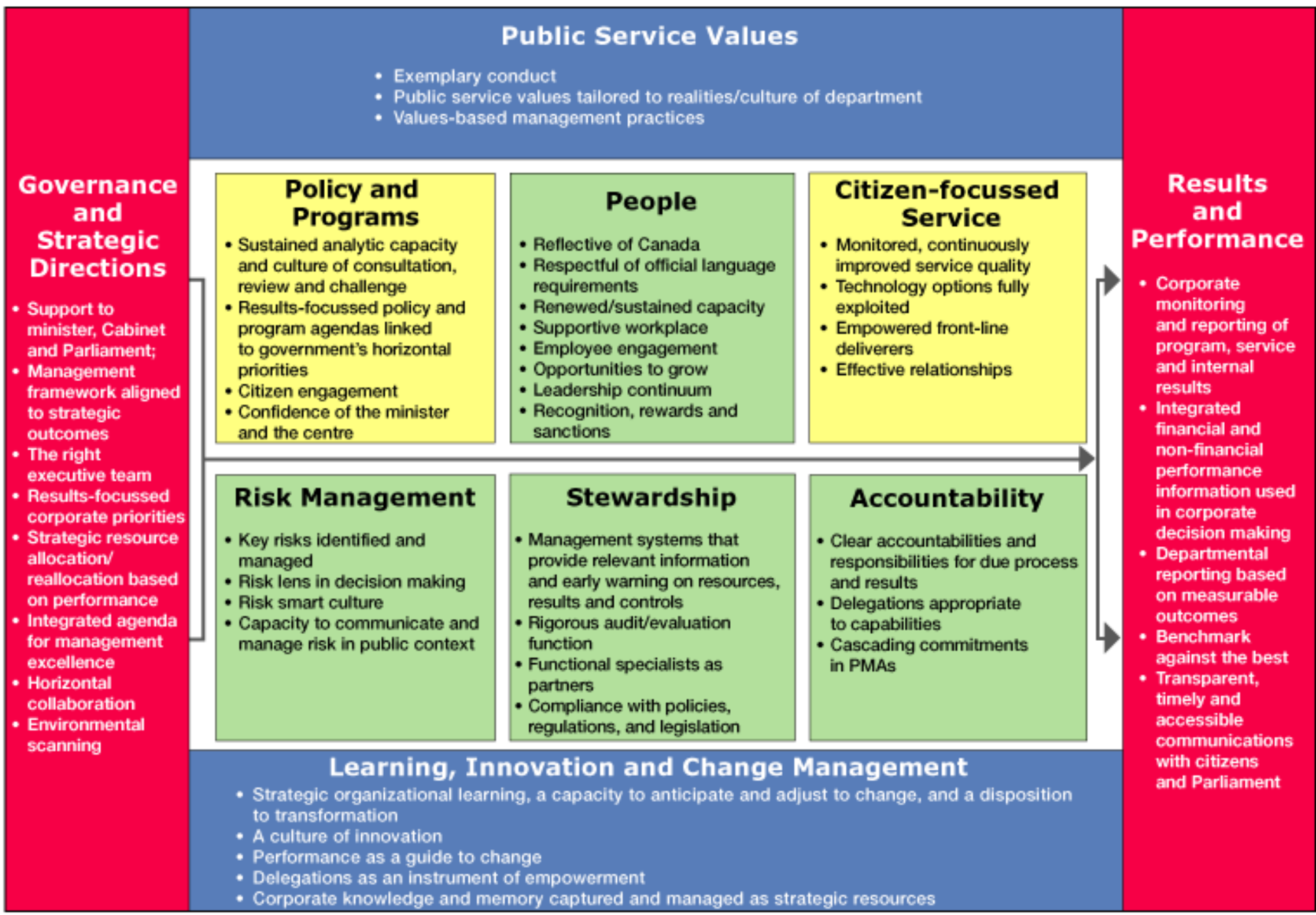
# The Challenge and Argument

- Initiated in 2003, the Management Accountability Framework has served as 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



# 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](mailto:evert@uvic.ca)