



Public Sector Reform Column



MAKING BARBADOS WORK BETTER

“Public Sector Reform” has become a catch-phrase as popular as e-commerce and globalisation, but there is a need to put this phrase into context and clarify how Public Sector Reform (PSR) is implemented within Government. Welcome to the first “Public Sector Reform Column” presented by the Office of Public Sector Reform (OPSR).

The draft White Paper on PSR was produced along with the establishment of OPSR, within the Ministry of the Civil Service in 1997. The role of the Office is primarily to facilitate the implementation of PSR programmes and activities following some basic guidelines:

- Initiate and implement public sector reform projects;
- Provide advisory, facilitatory and counselling services in the achievement of reform objectives, strategies and programmes;
- Monitor and evaluate public sector activities;
- Educate both the internal and external public on the reform programme;
- Develop guidelines to guide the implementation of reform projects and ensure consistency in their implementation;
- Undertake research and analysis of the issues which impact the efficiency, effectiveness and quality of service delivery; and
- Be a clearing house for information on public sector reform.

OPSR provides several services to Ministries, Departments and Agencies, all focused at improving service standards for public benefit. The following is a

brief account of the various types of services OPSR provides to assist Government in the action plan for PSR.

Strategic Planning

Strategic planning is a critical area for the development of PSR. This management tool is specifically used to help Ministries and Departments plan for the future, enabling them to better meet the challenges they may face and make the required changes in their organisations. This is a results-oriented planning process designed to assist with the clarification of goals and future direction; policy and budget decisions; enhance client and external relations; improve internal management and service delivery

Organisational Reviews

OPSR has conducted several reviews that seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of service through the restructuring of organisational systems, processes and procedures. Since the inception of the public sector reform programme a number of implementation measures have already been completed in some of the ministries and departments while such action is still in progress in other organizations.

Customer Charter Programmes

The aim of this programme is to develop and publish social contracts, which set out and define the quality of service to be delivered to the public. Specifically, the programme seeks to establish standards of service delivery and continuously strive to improve the quality of service for internal and external customers; promote the efficient and effective delivery of public services; and implement physical upgrading to points of service delivery in order to create a more customer friendly environment.

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP)

The Employee Assistance Programme provides professional counselling services to assist employees who are experiencing difficult personal or work related problems be they stress-induced, domestic issues, alcoholism, drug dependency and financial or legal difficulties. Network Service Centre has been contracted to provide the services to public employees. The organisation has a wide range of professionals who are trained to deal with employees' problems in a confidential manner.

Internal Reform Committees (IRC's)

The functions of the IRC Committee within a Department are to review the operations of the work environment; identify and analyse problems; recommend and implement improvement strategies; monitor and evaluate reforms implemented; be reservoir for the generation of new ideas; and to document all improvements programmes. A number of ministries and departments have instituted IRCs since they provide a structural mechanism that accentuates the process of Public Sector Reform.

Re-Engineering Organisational Operations

There is growing concern within government and the private sector that the burden of regulations, bureaucracy and red tape has been increasing over the years with an unacceptable effect on the services offered. This in turn is having a negative impact on the county's economic and business competitiveness. OPSR, being the secretariat for the reform process, has to find ways and means to eliminate this unnecessary burden. Any failure to remove this impediment could jeopardize job creation and investment and diminish the competitive direction that the country is moving towards.

Review and Upgrade of Systems

The Office has embarked on a majority of projects based on requests, primarily for the upgrade of registry systems and procedures. Assistance in this area was provided to the Ministry of Health and the Prime Minister's Office and various departments including the Barbados Drug Service, Queen Elizabeth Hospital and Electoral Department.

Over the coming months, OPSR will be enlightening the public about many PSR initiatives to public services at several Ministries and Departments. OPSR welcomes and encourages comment, feedback and suggestions from the public who may write to Email: feedback@opsr.gov.bb or call on telephone: 426 4605.