

**ROLE and FUNCTION
of the
PRIORITIES
and
PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Management Information Series

**ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE
PRIORITIES AND PLANNING COMMITTEE**

One of a five-part Management Information Series

Priorities and Planning Secretariat
May 1984

PREFACE

This booklet describes the Priorities and Planning Committee's mandate, its relationship within the Executive system and its operating procedures. For additional detail on the Executive Committee System the reader is referred to the *Ministers' Handbook*.

This is the fifth booklet in a series designed to increase management's understanding of the structures and decision-making processes of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

The other four booklets within the "Management Information Series" are:

Policy Writing — outlines the role and processes involved in policy development.

Organization — serves as a guide for rational and consistent organizational design.

Priorities — outlines the processes and timing important to the development of government priorities.

Strategic Reviews — defines the processes and structures required for conducting an independent review of programs.

The Management Information Series was developed by the Priorities and Planning Secretariat in consultation with a wide variety of government staff including those of other jurisdictions. The Priorities and Planning Secretariat gratefully acknowledge the commitment and contribution of all those involved.

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Prior to the 1979 election, the new Commissioner John H. Parker appointed a task force to enquire into the adequacy of existing structures and processes to meet the needs of a larger, and for the first time, mainly elected Executive Council. The Task Force on Administration concluded that support to the Executive Council was weak in the areas of policy advice, broad government planning and program coordination. As a consequence, the Executive Council approved the creation of an Executive Council Secretariat and an Executive sub-committee on Priorities and Planning. By 1981 the Executive Sub-Committee on Priorities and Planning had evolved into the Standing Committee on Priorities and Planning and the policy group within the Executive Council Secretariat was formally recognized as the new committee's staff support, becoming the Priorities and Planning Secretariat.

Since its inception, the Priorities and Planning Committee has acted as a forum for Executive Members to *collectively develop their priorities and long-term government plans*. It enables Executive Members to set the agenda of government for the long term, by establishing planning frameworks, such as the priorities and policies to guide future decisions. The committee's primary responsibilities are to recommend to the Executive Council regarding:

- GNWT policies and plans.
- Policy and program proposals brought forward by individual Ministers.
- Broad priorities for allocating government resources.
- Major organizational proposals.
- Strategic reviews.

THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

The decisions of any Executive Committee except for the Financial Management Board must be referred to the Executive Council for final consideration. The Executive Council has authority to accept, reject or modify the recommendation of any other committee.

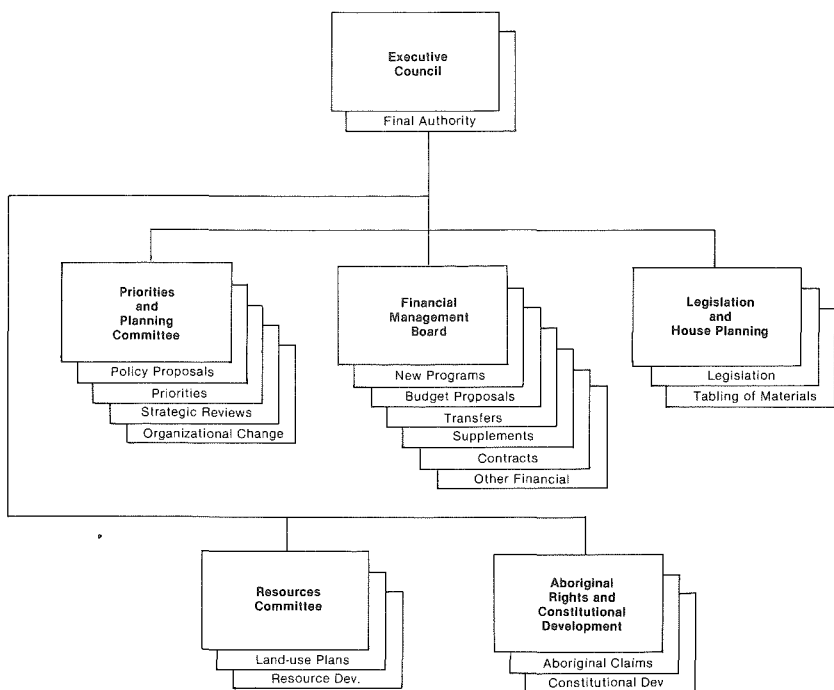
The three standing committees of the Executive Council – the Priorities and Planning Committee, the Financial Management Board and the Legislation and House Planning Committee establish the broad frameworks for most decisions within government including:

- Priorities
- Budgets
- Fiscal plans
- Policies and directives
- Legislation
- Government organization

The two special committees of the Executive – the Resources Committee and the Aboriginal Rights and Constitutional Development Committee – are responsible for making recommendations within established policies such as the Resource Development Policy.

Figure 1 illustrates the reporting relationships and responsibilities of the six Executive Committees.

FIGURE 1



THE PRIORITIES AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

INTRODUCTION

During the term of the Executive Council of the Ninth Assembly, the processes and procedures were developed to enable the Priorities and Planning Committee to fulfill its primary functions. The committee's structure emphasizes participation by the elected members of the Executive Council and it is chaired by the Government Leader.

THE PRIORITIES AND PLANNING COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

Chairman	Hon. Richard Nerysoo, Government Leader
Quorum	Chairman and three elected members
Powers	To recommend to the Executive Council on matters related to the development of government policy or priorities.

As it is currently constituted the Priorities and Planning Committee is primarily responsible for making recommendations to the Executive Council in four distinct areas:

Priorities

- The establishment of broad governmental priorities.
- The formulation of strategies for implementing priorities, including the allocation of resources.

Organizational Change

- The establishment of long-term governmental organizational plans.
- Reviewing and recommending on all major organizational changes required to implement the plan.

Strategic Reviews

- To recommend independent enquiry (assessment) into existing programs to determine if needs are being met or objectives are valid or are consistent with priorities.

Policy

- To recommend on government policy to the Executive Council.

Each of these responsibilities is more fully explored in the following sections.

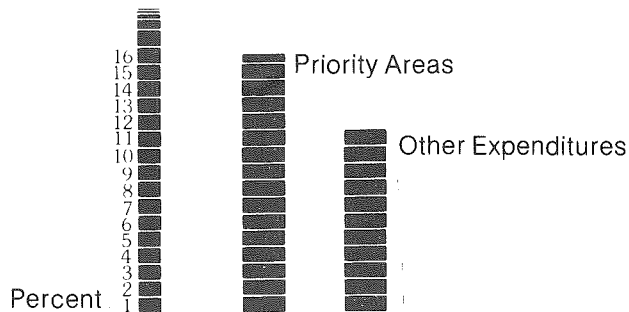
THE GOVERNMENT'S PRIORITY EXERCISE

(For more information refer to the Priorities Booklet)

Governments like all other organizations work in an environment where the demand for services exceeds available funding. In order to provide a basis for the allocation of financial and human resources, the Priorities and Planning Committee of the Ninth Assembly developed a priority process which resulted in the reallocation of resources into the following priorities.

- GNWT Priorities**
- (a) Revive Native Languages and Preserve Northern Culture
 - (b) Education
 - (c) Individual and Community Well Being
 - (d) Housing
 - (e) Cost of Living
 - (f) Resource Development
 - (g) Energy
 - (h) Constitutional and Political Development
 - (i) Improved Government Performance and Public Accountability

**Budget Growth
Fiscal Year 1983-84 compared to Fiscal Year 1982-83**



POLICY

(For additional information, please refer to the booklet Policy Writing)

Government policy may be described as a contract between the general public and members of Executive Council; it represents a commitment to follow a course of action in pursuit of approved objectives. Policy serves two primary purposes. First of all, it informs the general public about the government's commitment to provide specific goods or services. Secondly, it clearly establishes the specific responsibilities delegated from the Executive Council to government officials for which they will be held accountable.

The authority required to implement a new policy or to amend an existing one is summarized in the following table:

	Description	Authority Required
1. New Policy		Priorities and Planning Committee and the Executive Council
2. Policy Revisions		
	Major Change Change affecting the policy intent or scope	Priorities and Planning and the Executive Council
	Minor Change Change in the Policy direction but not in the scope or intent of the policy.	Minister
	As above, but with financial implications.	F.M.B.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

The organizational mandates of individual departments are established by government policy. Executive Council approval is required for any major change to the organizational mandate. A minor change may be approved by the appropriate Minister.

DEFINITION

A major change is defined as a change in the departmental mandate resulting from:

- The adding or deleting of functions.
- Transferring functions from another department.
- Reorganizing functions within a department.

While there are no prescriptions for undertaking an organizational review, it is important to realize that the need for organizational changes should primarily result from changes to the organization's mission or mandate. Other possible reasons for reviewing the organizational structure include:

- (a) Organizations within the department working at cross purposes.
- (b) Inter-departmental conflicts over mandate.
- (c) Inadequate authority or resources to fulfill the assigned mandate.
- (d) An unclear assignment of responsibilities within the department.
- (e) Inadequate policy or program support services.

The **organizational model** adopted by the Executive Council of the Ninth Assembly, used to evaluate organizational proposals submitted by departments, consists of three separate functions:

1. Strategic Planning/Policy

The strategic planning/policy category includes the Deputy Minister and departmental staff concerned with policy co-ordination, strategic planning, program evaluation, financial planning and personnel planning.

2. Program Planning Administration

The program planning/administration category includes the specialists responsible for the policy formulation, program planning, and administration. These are generally headquarters functions staffed by program specialists.

3. Program Delivery

Program delivery is generally accomplished through regional offices. In order to meet the needs of clients and ensure integration of services, superintendents report to the regional director on a day to day basis. To ensure program specialists in headquarters are aware of problems and program delivery issues, regional staff are also accountable on a periodic basis to their respective Deputy Ministers. This relationship is known as a matrix organization.

PROGRAM EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

(For additional information refer to the booklet on Strategic Reviews)

Industrial development, technological change, urbanization and population growth are just some of the factors influencing the demand for public programs. As the public's need for programs change, old programs must be phased out or reduced or new revenues generated to provide the funds necessary for new initiatives. One mechanism for identifying programs or services for reallocation or cutback is program evaluation. The three major types of program assessment within the GNWT are:

	Initiation	Approval Required
1. Strategic Reviews	Executive Council	Priorities and Planning Committee
2. Program Evaluation	Minister	Financial Management Board
3. Performance Measurement	Program Manager	Department

Strategic reviews are a one time assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness with which government policies, programs or services contribute to the achievement of Executive objectives and priorities. They are conducted by a Strategic Review Team under a terms of reference approved by the Executive Council.

Strategic reviews may be initiated whenever the Executive directs although would normally result from:

MAJOR CRITERIA FOR INITIATING A STRATEGIC REVIEW

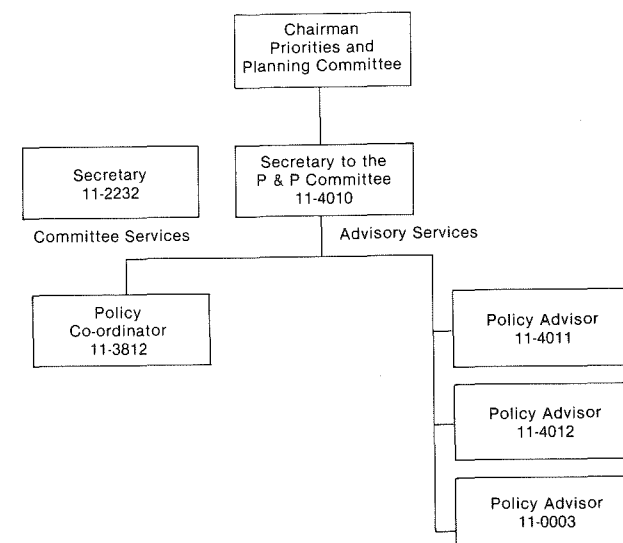
1. Major changes in public needs resulting from such factors as population growth, changes in the structure of the economy, technological change or changing world markets.
2. Problems in the administration of government programs where responsibility falls across more than one department.
3. Questions concerning the continued relevance of certain programs.
4. Changes in Executive priorities resulting in need for major reallocations in resources.

THE PRIORITIES AND PLANNING SECRETARIAT

The Priorities and Planning Secretariat reports through the Government Leader to the Priorities and Planning Committee. The Secretariat's primary purpose is to provide support services and advice to committee members. Specific services provided to members include:

- Review and advice on proposals coming before the Priorities and Planning Committee.
- Formulation of optional strategies for the achievement of Executive priorities.
- Development of systems, procedures and standards for promulgating government policy.
- Development of appropriate long term organizational models for committee consideration.

PRIORITIES AND PLANNING ORGANIZATION CHART



SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS

When a Minister decides to submit a proposal to the Priorities and Planning Committee, the first step is to notify both the Government Leader and the Secretariat's Policy Co-ordinator. Either the Minister or his senior departmental official should provide the Secretariat's Policy Co-ordinator with copies of the proposal, the original being signed by the submitting Minister.

In order to allow adequate time for the distribution of materials and consideration by individual ministers, materials should be submitted at least five days prior to the next scheduled committee meeting. Included within the package of materials submitted should be any special instructions regarding timing, identification of any related proposals under development, witnesses to be called and any other information or material deemed pertinent to the committee's review.

Once a proposal has been submitted to the Policy Co-ordinator, the Secretary, Priorities and Planning will assign the proposals for review by one of the advisors. The secretariat will normally review a proposal only to ensure consistency with previous Executive Council direction. An assessment report identifying any issues will be prepared and tabled with the proposal prior to the scheduled Priorities and Planning Committee meeting.

REVIEW CRITERIA

The following analyses are normally performed by the Secretariat when assessing a proposal submitted to the Priorities and Planning Committee.

Problem Analysis and Assessment

- Is the problem correctly identified (are there other causes)?
- What part of the population is experiencing this problem?
- What is currently being done to alleviate the problem?
- Is the problem temporary or permanent (regular/irregular)?
- What are the major factors contributing to the problem?

Option Analysis

- What is the proposed course of action to resolve the problem?
- Does the proposed course of action adequately address the problem?
- Are there other alternative ways of addressing the problem?

Decision Analysis

- Is an executive decision required or does the department have the authority to resolve the problem itself?
- What impediments exist to satisfactorily resolve the problem?
- Are there any legal restrictions e.g. Charter of Rights?
- Financial (Can the prescribed action be taken within current resources or is an FMB decision required?)
- Does the proposed course of action conflict with established governmental priorities/policies/positions?
- What other private interests will be affected if decision is approved? Who are the losers/winners?
- Have all the necessary authorities been sought to effectively implement the proposed course of action?

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