

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Management Information Series

## **ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE**

"If you wish to understand the relationship between the employee and some aspect of his environment try to change one and see what happens to the other." (Bronfenbrenner, *The Experimental Ecology of Education*, 1976 pp. 164-165)

One of a five-part Management Information Series

Priorities and Planning Secretariat  
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## PREFACE

This booklet was prepared to assist senior managers who are experiencing problems that can be attributed to the basic structure of their organization, to identify the source of the problem and to seek alternative solutions.

This booklet also identifies the authorities required prior to making a major structural change.

Other booklets in this series include:

- Priorities and Planning Committee —** provides an explanation of the structures and decision making processes of the government.
- Policy Writing —** outlines the role and processes involved in policy development.
- 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.

More detail on processes and procedures for resolving human resource management issues arising from a proposed reorganization can be found in the document entitled "Organizational Analysis and Design" published by the Department of Personnel.

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*"Very few organizations are going to survive longer than a few years in forms similar to their current ones and statistics on large number of randomly chosen organizations are dominated by organizations that are progressing towards disappearance."*  
(Starbuck and Nystrom, Handbook of Organizational Design 1982 p. XIV)

## **I INTRODUCTION**

Public organizations exist because society has demanded through a democratic process that certain collective needs, be satisfied for the good of society as a whole. Therefore, as public needs change over time as a result of changing societal values and public perceptions of needs, new technology, etc., organizations satisfying these needs must also change.

Recognizing the link between the achievement of governmental goals and the manner in which the government is organized to achieve those goals, Executive Council approved a policy in August 1983 entitled Government Organization to formalize procedures for securing Executive approval for proposed major organizational changes.

While the policy establishes the Executive Council as the authority for decisions on organizational changes affecting the government as a whole, it does not limit the authority of individual managers to make changes to improve organizational efficiency and effectiveness.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE POLICY ON GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION**

The Government of the Northwest Territories has a mandate to carry out certain functions and provide services specified by the N.W.T. Act. Departments are created under the authority vested in the Commissioner by the Public Service Ordinance to carry out those functions. Departmental Establishment Policies in turn, act as formal statements of authority and function assigned by the Executive Council. The Departmental Establishment Policy is therefore one of the first points of reference for undertaking any major organization review.

It is important to note that the Executive Council reviews only those proposals which involve new organizations or major changes to existing organizations. Approval for minor changes below the divisional level in departments are within the authority of the executive member responsible. Major and minor changes are defined as follows:

### **Major Change**

- A change of the authority, responsibilities or functions of a department or agency as expressed in a Departmental Establishment Policy.
- A change that would result in the transfer of a government function from one community to another.

### **Minor Change**

- Means an organizational change to the internal structure of department or agency, below the level of a division or its equivalent to improve its effectiveness or efficiency.

The approval process is outlined in the section called Approval Process.

## **II PLANNING THE REORGANIZATION**

It is most important for senior managers to realize when contemplating a reorganization that a major organizational change should normally only be considered when the mission or mandate has changed as a result of an assignment of new functions, a change in priorities or when serious concerns have arisen concerning the effectiveness of the organization in meeting its objectives.

Prior to making major changes in an organization, the first step should be to develop a plan or a terms of reference guide to guide the reorganization. This plan must have ministerial approval. The plan should include three elements.

- Assessment of current organization.
- Design and development of new structure.
- Implementation.

### III CARRYING OUT THE PLAN

While there are no prescriptions for undertaking an organizational assessment, it is important that the assessment and final design be directed and managed from the top. In putting together an assessment team the Deputy Minister must make a trade-off between the need for objectivity and need for technical knowledge possessed by managers. As a general rule, objectivity is important when the problems within the organization and the specific objectives of the organizational change have not been clearly defined or when there are sensitive human resource issues involved, and less so, when the problem is known and accepted.

There are times when it may be useful to break the study into two phases: the assessment and design phase completed by one team and implementation by another.

The handbook has been written with this possibility in mind. Steps to be taken in the assessment and design phase include:

- (a) Defining the Mission
- (b) Structural Analysis
- (c) Analysis of Departmental Systems
- (d) Human Resource Analysis

#### A. DEFINING THE MISSION

*"The successful organization is the one where everyone is clear on what they are doing why and when."* (J. H. Harvey Jones, Chairman, Imperial Chemical Industry, Financial Post 1983).

If you feel your department, division, etc. is lacking a sense of purpose and direction, to test this it may be useful to independently visit each of your managers and ask them to state departmental missions, its priorities and strategies.

Responses that may indicate a problem include:

- Differing views on the goals of the department and its priorities.
- Lack of understanding in how activities assigned relate to departmental goals.
- Perceptions that job description or performance targets are too vague.

If the department's mission is not understood prior to taking any action on reorganizing, it will be necessary to firmly establish and communicate the department's mission and priorities.

Neither should one restrict the assessment to inside the organization. It may be just as important to test the views of program clientele.

Once assurance is gained that the organizational mission is understood and accepted by those within the organization and those served by it and a problem persists, it may be useful to conduct an analysis of the organization's structural elements. A guide to problem analysis is found in appendix C.

#### B. STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

In the context of this handbook, the organizational structure of a department is defined as in incorporation of separate organizational units within the department to carry out functions required for the achievement of departmental objectives. As a general rule, the organization's structure should mirror the organization's objectives.

*Symptoms of structural problems may include:*

- Organizations within the department working at cross purposes;
- Tasks assigned on a temporary basis which have never been incorporated within the organization's design.
- Inter-departmental/inter-divisional conflicts over mandate;
- Inadequate authority delegated to carry out responsibilities assigned;
- Non-performance arising out of uncertainty over who is responsible for what.

#### Selecting an Organizational Structure

While there have been many books and journal articles written on how to organize, set up or change an existing organization, probably the best sources of advice are found within the GNWT from senior managers who have had previous experience in establishing or evaluating organizations in a northern context. However, within the Government of the N.W.T. as in many other governments, convention dictates that staff functions such as strategic planning, policy coordination, program evaluation including service functions such as financial, and to a lesser degree personal administration, should be

kept separate from the line functions. For more detail on the composition of these functions refer to Appendix B.

In establishing a structure, there are generally two approaches.

1. To select a single organization structure (i.e. by function, by client group or by program) which meets the most important needs of the department.

This may be accomplished by ranking the department's problems, opportunities and needs and selecting a traditional structure which meets those of the highest priority. While not all of the needs may be addressed in terms of organizational structure, many may be dealt with through other integrating devices. This approach generally creates an easily understood, economical, and consistent structure.

2. To combine a number of organizational types into a "composite" structure.

For example, a department may organize at the most senior level by function (Operations, Administration, Policy and Planning, etc.), but below that level might organize by client group, program, or geography. Depending on the needs to be addressed, the Operations group might be organized into programs (based on "product"), by client group, or directly into a regionalized structure.

Choices about organizational structure are crucial, in that they help to clarify roles and responsibilities. But organizational structures only begin to describe relationships. Defining distinct roles by drawing boxes in an organizational chart inherently creates isolation, not integration. Formal, deliberate attention, therefore, needs to be paid to how individuals will interact within the structure.

Once a final structure of the organization has been decided, it should be tested prior to seeking approval. Suggested criteria for the pre-implementation assessment are given below:

- Does the organizational structure meet the original specifications/objectives?
- Are the organizational objectives consistent with the departmental mission?
- Do the responsibilities assigned conflict with responsibilities assigned elsewhere in the government?
- Have responsibilities been established to ensure accountability?

### C. ANALYSIS OF DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

While the structural assignments provide the context for decisions, consistent and informed decisions are dependent on the decision maker having in place properly designed management systems to provide the right information at the right time.

In assessing a department's decision-making capability and capacity, it is important to look at present corporate planning systems, committee's structure, and management information systems.

In assessing the effectiveness of existing systems, questions that may be useful to ask include:

- What types of decisions (are you required to make) and at what frequency? If you are a Deputy Minister and most of your time is devoted to making operational decisions, perhaps increased delegation of authority is required.
- Do you have time to think and plan for the longer term?
- Does your management committee deal with strategic issues or does it serve primarily as a form for information exchange?
- Are your management reports useful?
- In assessing performance of subordinates, do you have sufficient performance criteria to make a fair judgment?

### D. ANALYSIS OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Although the organizational structure, management planning and control systems are important, organizational performance ultimately is dependent upon having the right people in the right jobs. The criteria for selecting the management team are often based on a number of intangible factors such as the management style and not the technical factors. Responding to Financial Post survey on the factors contributing to success, one Chief Executive Officer stated that,

*"In choosing your top management team, attitude and commitment are more essential than technical criteria."*

Since it is beyond the scope of this handbook to give guidance in assessing the performance of individual employees, no attempt will be made to do so.

## IV IMPLEMENTING REORGANIZATION

The approval process for reorganization outlines changes required to the various Executive documents affected by the reorganization. Implementing these changes will involve some instability and confusion. Various integrating mechanisms are available to alleviate these problems:

### **Integrating Mechanisms**

As mentioned earlier, the decisions on organization structure are only the beginning of a reorganization. Equally important will be the establishment of complementary co-ordination, integration, and communications mechanisms.

The types of integration needs that may arise can be illustrated by the following examples:

- One area in the department may require information collected and/or stored by another.
- Signals indicating a problem in one area may be generated in another area.
- Appropriate policy recommendations may require the collective efforts of more than one area.
- Corporate planning may require the participation of all divisions.

There are a number of considerations which should be addressed to enhance integration. The following are some examples:

### **Committees**

The department's committee structure may include senior and divisional management committees, resource management committees, program planning committees, etc. Committees are usually appropriate where frequently recurring or ongoing issues require collaboration. It is important to establish clear purposes, terms of reference, meeting schedules, etc.

### **Task Forces**

These time-limited groups normally tackle a specific problem or issue, and usually include representatives of all the relevant divisions or branches. Again, clear mandates, terms of reference, completion dates, and resource limits are important.

### **Staff Agencies**

Units are sometimes assigned responsibility for ensuring co-ordination (e.g. policy and planning, administration, etc.)

### **Management Processes**

Planning, reporting and human resources management are essential to ensure the appropriate interaction of staff in carrying out all management functions.

### **Technology**

The hardware and software requirements for information processing and communications (e.g. data networks, tele-communications equipment, etc.) should be explored and defined.

The advantages and disadvantages of each type of integrating mechanism should be weighed in terms of cost, time investment, motivation of staff, and likely impact on decision-making.

### **Implementation Manager**

Because of the importance of the reorganization, implementation should be made the responsibility of an Implementation Manager who has sufficient time and authority to achieve the desired results. The Implementation Manager should be responsible for:

- Preparing an implementation plan in consultation with senior managers.
- Staging and effecting a smooth transition to the new or modified organization structure.
- Ensuring that the implementation plan is adhered to, including co-ordinating the physical, personnel and financial changes necessary.
- Identifying for resolution by senior managers any inconsistencies or conflicts with the original intent of the reorganization decisions.

In terms of timing, the Implementation Manager should be designated as early as possible in the reorganization process so as to benefit from first-hand knowledge of the senior managers' deliberations.



### **Communications Strategy**

One of the first issues to be addressed in implementing a reorganization is how and to whom changes are to be communicated. A reorganization creates instability during the period of transition. To counteract this effect, a communications strategy should be worked out to explain the changes to staff and affected external bodies and clients. It may be appropriate to hold a number of communications sessions with various groups concerned, for the purposes of reporting on the progress being made and gathering feedback on problems and issues.

### **Administrative Details**

There are many issues to be dealt with in implementing a reorganization:

- Obtaining advice for the reorganization from central agencies.
- Redrafting job descriptions and assessing classification levels.
- Reallocating budgets and adjusting financial reporting systems and estimates.
- Relocating groups, renovating offices, transferring telephone numbers, acquiring supplies, and furniture.
- Altering administrative approvals and authorities.

### **People**

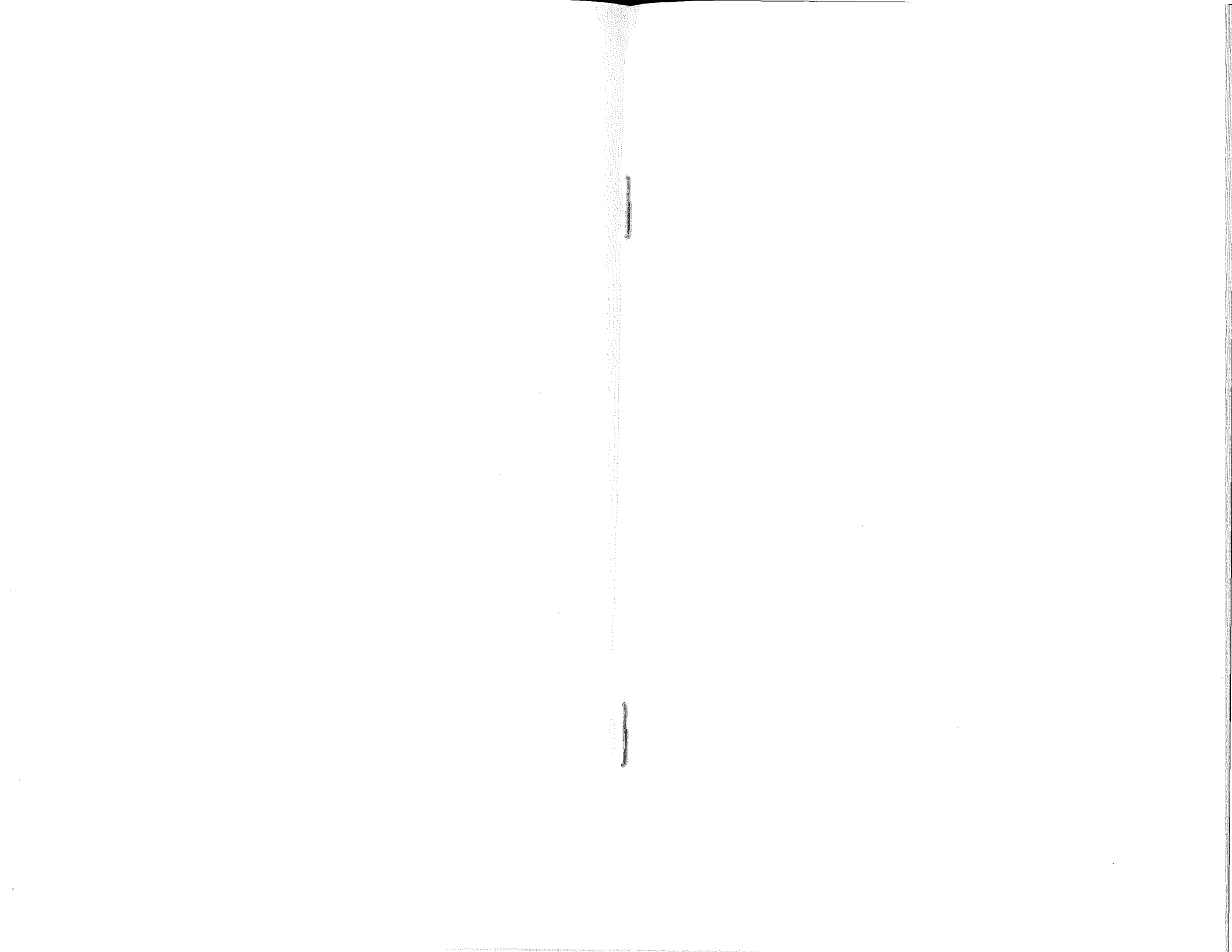
As well as making certain technical adjustments, an implementation strategy should attend to the needs and attitudes of individuals in the ministry. For example:

- Motivational factors and other components of personnel management may have to be reconsidered in the context of the new or modified structure. Continuing staff commitment will be crucial to the effectiveness of the reorganization.
- Staff may no longer have the requisite knowledge or skills. Training or orientation programs may be necessary. Whenever surplus employees are identified, efforts should be made to retrain them or place them in other suitable positions, in keeping with the appropriate personnel policies.
- Remuneration and appraisal systems may need to be reviewed. Adjustments may have to be made to accommodate new positions or to maintain equity throughout the ministry.

### **Commitment to Reassessment and Periodic Evaluation**

Senior managers should make a commitment to reassess, periodically, the new organization structure. Reviews should identify those recommendations that have not yet been implemented, assess the effectiveness of the organization structure and make recommendations for improvements as appropriate. Such reviews may eventually lead to a re-examination of the conditions for reorganizing and reapplication of the design criteria – in effect, a renewal of the reorganization cycle.

Effective reorganization takes time, energy, sensitivity and know-how, but is an important means of enabling senior managers to adjust to changes in the government environment.



## APPENDICES

## GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION

### POLICY

The Government of the Northwest Territories will establish the authority, responsibilities, and functions of government departments and agencies in a manner that ensures accountability, through the Executive Council, to the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories and the public for the manner in which public business is conducted.

This policy is based on the following principles:

1. Executive Members are accountable for organizational decisions within assigned portfolios subject only to the collective authority of the Executive Council for structural change within departments.
2. The structure of government shall be established as to allow the Executive Council to account to the Legislative Assembly and the public for its actions.
3. The structure of government departments should be designed to allow programs and services to be delivered as close as practicable to the people being served.
4. The organizational design of government departments shall be standardized where practical.
5. The Executive Council is the authority for long term government organizational planning.

### SCOPE

This directive applies to all departments and agencies of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

### DEFINITIONS

The following terms used in this directive are hereby defined:

#### 1. **Departmental Establishment Policy**

Means the policy by which the Executive Council of the Government of the Northwest Territories establishes the authority, responsibilities, and functions of a department and/or agency of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

## 2. Department

Means a department of the Government of the Northwest Territories established by authority of the Executive Council.

## 3. Agency

Means a bureau, commission or crown corporation established by authority of the Executive Council or legislation, and as defined in the Financial Administration Ordinance of the Northwest Territories 2(32), (33), and (34).

## 4. Department Head

Means the non-elected head of a department or agency of the Government of the Northwest Territories, whether the title for the position is "deputy head", "deputy minister" director, or a similar description, and where the position is vacant or the department head absent or unable to act, includes the person designated by the Executive Member to act as department head.

## 5. Major Change

(a) Means a change of the authority, responsibilities, or functions of a department or agency as expressed in a Departmental Establishment Policy.

(b) Means a change that would result in the transfer of a government function from one community to another.

## 6. Minor Change

Means an organizational change to the internal structure of a department or agency, below the level of a division or its equivalent, to improve its effectiveness and efficiency.

### Note:

The submission of a position description for reclassification does not constitute organizational change for the purpose of this directive. Such requests may be referred directly to the Department of Personnel.

## PROVISIONS

### 1. Departmental Establishment Policy

The authority, responsibilities, and functions of departments and agencies of the Government of the Northwest Territories shall be established by Departmental Establishment Policies.

## 2. Authority and Accountability

### (a) Executive Council

- (i) Only the Executive Council has the authority to approve Departmental Establishment Policies.
- (ii) Only the Executive Council has the authority to approve a *major change* to a Departmental Establishment Policy.

### (b) Executive Council Members

- (i) Executive Council Members have the authority to approve *minor* organizational change within their assigned portfolios or responsibilities.

### (c) Priorities and Planning Committee

The Priorities and Planning Committee recommends to the Executive Committee on:

- (i) all proposals for major organizational change;
- (ii) all proposals for organizational change that will result in reassignment of functions between departments or between headquarters and regions.

### (d) Financial Management Board

The Financial Management Board may act on all matters where organizational change affects the financial management of the Government of the Northwest Territories.

### (e) Department of Personnel

The Department of Personnel is accountable through the responsible Executive Member for recommending on all organizational proposals in respect to:

- (i) organization design
- (ii) human relations effects of proposed changes
- (iii) conflicts over union agreements
- (iv) classification, staff training and development
- (v) employment of native northerners

### (f) Priorities and Planning Secretariat

- (i) independent review of functions within government priorities and the development of long-range organizational plans.
- (ii) identification of issues related to the assignment of functions and consistency with GNWT policies arising from major organizational change proposals.
- (iii) recommending the conduct of strategic reviews in functional areas affected by GNWT Priorities.

(g) **Financial Management Secretariat**

The Financial Management Secretariat is accountable to the Chairman, Financial Management Board for:

- (i) providing an independent assessment of the financial implications of organizational change.
- (ii) recommending operational audits or program evaluations on government organizations.

(h) **Department Heads**

Department Heads are accountable to their Executive Member for:

- (i) directing the preparation of proposals for major organizational change.
- (ii) consulting with Regional Directors on any organizational change proposals affecting regional administration or program delivery.
- (iii) implementing approved organizational changes.

(i) **Regional Directors**

Regional Directors are accountable to their Executive Member for:

- (i) directing the preparation of proposals for major organizational change within the Regional Executive administrative organization.
- (ii) implementing approved organizational change.
- (iii) providing advice to Department Heads proposing organizational changes affecting regional administration or program delivery.

3. **Organizational Change**

Proposals to create a new organization or change an existing organization may be the result of a number of factors including:

- an Executive decision to realize a GNWT priority.
- a change in the government's objectives.
- addition of a new function(s) either as a result of a government priority or a transfer from the Federal Government.
- the requirement to improve effectiveness and efficiency.

The following shall apply in respect to proposals for organizational change within departments or agencies of the GNWT:

(a) **New Organization**

- (i) **Initiation**  
Proposals to establish a new organization will only be initiated through an Executive Member.

(ii) **Committee Submission**

Proposals to establish a new organization shall be submitted to the Priorities and Planning Committee.

(iii) **Committee Action**

The Priorities and Planning Committee shall:

- recommend to the Executive Council, with or without conditions, acceptance or rejection.
- refer the proposal to an Advisory Agency or an Advisory Committee for:
  - an opinion
  - a recommendation
  - further information
- return the proposal to the Executive Member with recommended changes.

(iv) **Financial Management Board**

The Financial Management Board may:

- recommend through the Priorities and Planning Committee, the proposal to the Executive Council, with or without conditions.
- return the proposal to the Priorities and Planning Committee with recommended changes.

(v) **Executive Council**

Executive Council recommendations concerning organizational change shall be expressed through a formal Executive Council Record of Recommendation.

The Executive Council may:

- approve a recommended organizational change.
- approve a recommended organizational change with conditions.

- disallow a recommended organizational change and terminate further work on it.
- refer the proposal back to an Executive Committee or Advisory Committee for:
  - more information
  - prescribed revisions
- direct the appropriate Executive Member to prepare/ amend a Departmental Establishment Policy.

(b) **Existing Organization**

(i) **Major Organizational Change**

When a major organizational change is proposed, the process as outlined in section 3 (a) shall apply.

(ii) **Minor Organizational Change**

When a minor organizational change is proposed, the Department Head except where (iii)(a) or (b) listed below apply, will:

- submit the proposed change along with a revised organization chart and any affected position descriptions to the Director of the Department of Personnel.
- the Director, Department of Personnel may:
  - provide advice regarding the consistency of proposed organizational design with accepted design.
  - reclassify affected positions.
  - make recommendations affecting staffing.
- proceed to implement required administrative changes that result from an approved change.

(iii) **Exceptions**

- Where there are financial or person year implications,
  - (a) the proposal shall be submitted to the Financial Management Board.
- When the proposed change affects a regional administration,
  - (b) the proposal shall be submitted to the Executive Council as an information item.

4. **Document Submission and Standards**

(a) Proposals will be submitted as prescribed in this directive.

(b) Documents will be prepared in accordance with standards prescribed in the handbook, the **Executive Committee System**.

5. **Organizational Change Approval**

When approval has been given to make an organizational change, Department heads shall:

(a) **New or Major Organizational Change**

(i) Amend the Departmental Establishment Policy and submit it to the Priorities and Planning Committee for examination and recommendation.

(ii) Prepare the necessary amendments to:

- affected GNWT policies
- the Programs and Services Manual
- departmental accountabilities
- departmental organization chart
- position description

(b) **Minor Organizational Change**

Where required, amend:

- departmental accountabilities
- departmental organization chart
- position description

(c) **Public Information**

The Deputy Minister, Department of Information, as instructed by the Executive, shall prepare a public information release to inform the public of the creation of or major change in the organization of the government.

6. **Prerogative of the Executive**

Nothing in this directive shall in any way be construed to limit the prerogative of the Executive Council to make decisions or take action respecting the organization of the GNWT, outside the provisions of this directive.

## TYPICAL ORGANIZATIONAL DOMAINS

To successfully carry out a complex task such as a departmental reorganization, it is necessary to understand the broad framework, direction, and principles that one is operating within. We have outlined the principles for reorganization from an overall government viewpoint. The next step is to deal with functions common in any department.

Bureaucracies and other large organizations normally perform functions which fall into three categories or "domains":

- strategic planning/policy
- program planning/administration
- service delivery

### STRATEGIC PLANNING/POLICY

The strategic planning/policy domain represents the Deputy Minister and support staff concerned with policy co-ordination, strategic planning, program evaluation, financial planning and personnel planning.

Because these functions normally referred to as staff functions provide the basis for overall management direction and control, they are best situated reporting directly to the Deputy or Assistant Deputy Minister. This enables staff to retain a departmental perspective essential for co-ordination and planning.

### PROGRAM PLANNING ADMINISTRATION

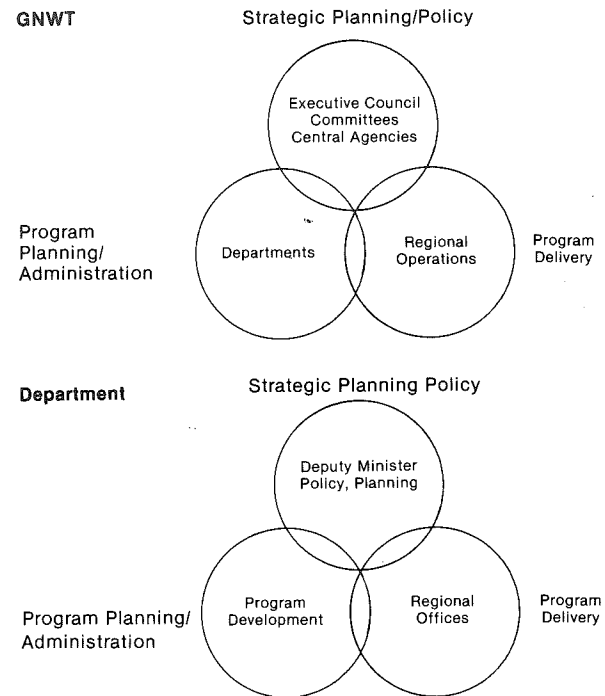
The program planning/administration domain consists of specialists responsible for the policy development, program planning and administration of departmental programs and are generally headquarters functions staffed by program specialists.

### 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. They also report to their respective deputy minister on program matters to provide feedback regarding program needs and effectiveness of existing problems and obtain direction on program-related matters. This is known as a matrix or dual-subordination situation.

The Manager should be cognizant of these organizational domains when drafting a reorganization proposal. Each of these domains performs a unique and necessary function within the organization and should be distinguishable within any departmental organization chart. Assigning responsibility for more than one domain or category to one person generally results in a bias towards one domain or category and a consequent reduction in effectiveness of the other. This does not mean that the three can operate independently. Ministerial direction through the establishment of the Executive Council priorities, regional perceptions of the effectiveness of programs and the input of departmental program experts must be provided with mechanisms within the organizational structure to facilitate co-ordination and communication.

Relationship of domains from a GNWT perspective and within a department.





## DEFINING THE PROBLEM

Problems of a structural nature:

- Overly centralized program delivery
- Indistinct or confusing chain of command (who reports to whom)
- Communications problems due to excessive layers of management
- General inefficiency or ineffectiveness in meeting objectives

In addition to these internal problems, external factors may arise which may call for reorganization:

- Changes in GNWT priorities
- Change in objectives
- Addition of new functions or functions transferred from another level of government
- Changes in client group size, needs or composition

Before considerable effort is put into drafting a reorganizational proposal, the manager should review the situation and address the following questions:

- Is the problem a long-term one or could it be dealt with in the short-term within the existing structure?
- Is it a personnel problem and can it be dealt with directly?
- Do the problems identified impede the achievement of the department's objectives?
- Will the benefits of the reorganization such as increased efficiency and ability to meet objectives outweigh the costs of change such as retraining or relocation of personnel and the instability that results?

Once the problem or problems have been identified and the manager is satisfied that they can best be dealt with through reorganization, the task of designing an appropriate organization begins. Many factors affect this design such as:

- Financial and person-year constraints.
- Abilities and skills of existing employees.
- Training available for employees in redefined positions.
- Distinction between "domains" outlined above.
- Existing GNWT structure and the need for similarity between departments to enhance communication and co-ordination.

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