

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada's

Centre of Excellence on Performance Management and Accountability (CEPMA)

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada proposes to establish a Centre of Excellence on Performance Management and Accountability to promote and improve research and understanding of these issues and to provide this support to its members.

The CEPMA will commission and share research specific to the needs of its members, and provide a forum for the exchange of best practices, networking and the development of innovative approaches. The CEPMA will be a unique inter-disciplinary venue at the crossroad of public, private, BPS and non-profit sectors, to analyze trends and develop targeted approaches for performance management issues of common concern.

Introduction

Accountability in public administration and management are paramount for politicians and practitioners. Citizens want their public institutions to be effective and well-managed, and to have public services that work and are available to them. Media will continue to report on the flaws of accountability systems, failures and disappointments, and the juxtaposition of innovation and creativity within these transparent systems.

Recent events in government and in the broader public sector have highlighted the need for enhanced accountability. It is important to focus on the essential components of this challenge: what do we hope to achieve, for what purpose and for whom?

“Accountability for results and outcomes” is our shorthand for “the implementation of performance management systems to achieve the organization’s stated objectives”. Performance management systems include the systematic collection, reporting and use of information about programs and services to assess and improve the delivery of these programs and services. Organizations increasingly concentrate on measuring and reporting their actual performance, having moved away from just counting, monitoring and controlling the inputs. Good performance management systems also include risk management, facing the fact that risks (and strategies to deal with them) are key to an organization achieving its objectives, including innovation.

Accountability in the Canadian public sector

Most governments in Canada have new “accountability” rules for themselves and the organizations that they fund. The Provincial governments have “multi-year accountability agreements” between themselves and broader public sector institutions, such as school boards, colleges, universities and hospitals, and some agreements include performance expectations. However, accountability is a two-way street and all parties need each other to achieve good results. This implies a high degree of cooperation, a clear understanding of their agreements and how best to work together to achieve these objectives.

Some provincial governments also have “accountability” legislation for their own operations, as well as those of the broader public sector. Some provinces have enhanced the powers of their Auditors General.

Federal Accountability Act (FAA)

Government of Canada’s *Federal Accountability Act* (FAA) and Action Plan became law on December 12, 2006. The FAA will make government more effective and accountable, and the Action Plan will clarify roles, responsibilities, and the appropriate controls. The Action Plan includes measures such as new limits on donations to political parties, stricter rules for lobbying, more protection for whistleblowers, more power to the Auditor General to audit individuals and organizations that receive government funding, reforming the Access to Information Act and streamlining rules including procurement and financial management policies.

These are vast changes that will have deep repercussions on public sector administration. Some observers feel that these additional “rules” will paralyze an already cumbersome management process.

Many Canadian organizations operate in a very public environment, in which attention is focused on transparency and accountability. Companies and industry associations are obliged to reconsider the FAA's provisions, specifically their relationships with the Government of Canada and their work in public-policy advocacy.

A Positive Framework for Accountability

The fundamental question is: how can public organizations use accountability as a positive force and tool to achieve their goals? How can we reframe the discussion about accountability from “shame and blame” to improving and innovating organizations and their performance? How can individual accountability agreements become aligned throughout an organization to achieve the desired outcomes? How do we ensure accountability for results? How do we use accountability to link performance to organizational objectives? How do we talk openly about risks? How can accountability and performance management complement innovation? Or are they mutually exclusive concepts in public management?

Accountability and Third Parties

The Federal government provides significant transfers to provinces for many social programs. Provinces, in turn, “contract” with third parties in the broader public sector (municipalities, hospitals, colleges, universities, etc.) for the delivery of services to the public or for specific activities. What are the right accountability mechanisms for these areas of shared jurisdiction and responsibility? How does a performance management system reflect this inter-dependence, as well as organizations’ different cultures, mandates and missions?

Other Jurisdictions

Accountability is also about learning from others. What have other jurisdictions done to match their government’s objectives to their delivery mechanisms? How do they ensure accountability for their citizens? Have government services and programs improved? How do they report to the public on performance? What are their performance metrics and management systems? How do other jurisdictions deal with the tension between innovation and considered risk taking, and accountability?

CEPMA Objectives

The Centre of Excellence on Performance Management and Accountability (CEPMA) has four objectives:

- To increase understanding of performance management and accountability, and how to use accountability to improve organizational effectiveness and ensure that results are achieved.
- To provide forums for practical learning for managers in public sector organizations across Canada to discuss the concepts and applicability of performance management programs to enhance organizational effectiveness and efficiency.
- To provide forums for practical learning for public sector managers from across the country, focusing on the improvement of organizations’ efficiency and competitiveness, in an environment of transparency and accountability.
- To undertake and publish high quality research on key issues in performance management, accountability and risk management, including jurisdictional analysis and practical how-to guides.

Centre's Components

The CEMPA will include learning and networking components:

1. *Learning from the Experts:* ***Applied research & Inter-jurisdictional studies***

IPAC will undertake research projects to acquire new knowledge about performance management and accountability, focusing on specific applications. IPAC will partner with experts and recognized thought leaders in the field to publish high quality research. Potential topics may include:

- Using accountability frameworks to drive organizational excellence;
- The link between performance management systems and accountability;
- Moving to an outcome focused performance management system;
- Bridging innovation and considered risk-taking with accountability and organizational performance;
- Accountability agreements;
- Accountability legislation;
- Improving accountability in a third party delivery system;
- Accountability for results – a Jurisdictional survey;
- The role of Auditors General in performance management;
- Relationship between the state, the market and civil society in improving accountability and governance;
- Developing performance management and accountability toolkits

2. *Learning from others:* ***Case studies***

Several countries, jurisdictions and organizations are successfully implementing performance management frameworks, systems or processes. What are some of the success stories? What has worked well in the change efforts and what has not? What are the critical factors for organizational success?

Case studies could deal with issues such as:

- External and internal drivers of change towards better performance through enhanced transparency and accountability
- Roles of management, the senior executive team and staff
- Roles of external agencies (NGOs, industry associations, civil society, the media....)
- Key factors of success identified by the case study participants
- Barriers to moving forward, and steps to making progress
- Positive and negative outcomes for the organization
- Unforeseen consequences

3. Learning from each other:

Knowledge Network on Performance Management and Accountability

The network will bring together public sector executives who have responsibility for performance management and accountability. They will have an opportunity to meet, network and learn with their peers privately. The network provides a closely-knit community of like-minded equals who are confronting similar challenges and seeking leading-edge solutions.

The group will be limited to a maximum of forty members to allow candid and informal discussions. The network will meet three times a year, but stays connected all year long, to learn and network with peers.

IPAC will organize a small Advisory Committee consisting of 4-6 people to ensure the Network addresses the questions and issues from the perspectives of key stakeholders. The Committee will advise the Network manager and help provide direction for the program. Committee members will also identify potential research and case study candidates.

About The Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC)

IPAC is the leading Canadian organization concerned with the theory and practice of public management. As a private, non-profit association, created in 1947, IPAC's scope includes public administration and governance at all levels, from local to global. It has 17 regional groups across Canada providing networks and forums at the regional, national and international levels. Public servants from every sphere of government, university and college teachers, staff, students, and others interested in public sector management use IPAC to exchange ideas on trends, practices and innovations in public administration and management.

Why IPAC?

Knowledge and Understanding of the Issues

IPAC has assisted organizations in the development of accountable and transparent processes for several years. The Centre has the demonstrated expertise, contacts and infrastructure to conceptualize and implement qualitative and quantitative research in the areas of governance, performance management, risk management, transparency and accountability.

Relationships and Infrastructure

The Institute of Public Administration of Canada has excellent relationships with thousands of public servants across the country. It has developed and maintains the infrastructure to carry out comprehensive research projects and to analyze the data and information collected. This information is translated into workable solutions for organizations. Research findings are disseminated using several media:

- Written briefings and reports;
- Public seminars, roundtables and conferences;
- On-site, specialized briefings.

Non-policy Prescriptive

IPAC is a non-policy prescriptive organization, with a long history of assisting organizations to improve through innovative management and effective leadership. IPAC works with a diverse group of stakeholders in communities to focus on common issues and seek workable “win-win” solutions.

IPAC’s comprehensive meetings and conference program delivers knowledge to public sector managers across the country through 17 regional groups. Our communications and production department assist in the translation, preparation, publication and dissemination of research reports, ensuring a consistently high standard of quality and a wide reach.

Membership Benefits

IPAC’s Centre of Excellence on Performance Management and Accountability will enhance the knowledge and capacity of its members in an important and complex field. Benefits will include:

- A regular meeting program designed to maximize sharing, learning, and exposure to leading-edge thinking in performance management and accountability
- Opportunities to network with peers from all orders of government and the broader public sector
- Opportunities to network with thought leaders from the public, private and not-for-profit sectors
- A full range of customized information services
- Confidential surveys of the membership
- In-house briefings in selected topic areas
- Complimentary copies of research reports published under the auspices of the Centre

For more information, please contact:

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