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Stakeholders: the key to success in measuring the productivity of
government

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Abstract

Stakeholders: the key to success in measuring the productivity of government

- Measurement of government output and productivity is a very recent development
- Measuring public service performance is more sensitive than measuring other parts of the economy and society
- Need to successfully manage relationships with many stakeholders, including service providers, suppliers of activity data, suppliers of financial data, customers for results, the political level
- To meet these challenges, UKCeMGA developed a communications strategy to:
 - Stress the impartiality and independence of the process and analysis
 - Build partnerships with stakeholders
 - Communicate progress and developments on measuring government output and productivity
 - Plan and manage public consultation on proposed output measures
- Identifying stakeholders and engaging with them
- Development of communications tools
- Communicating with external and internal stakeholders
- Role played by Advisory Board in ensuring independence, its terms of reference
- Issues that we faced and resolutions
- What's next? Maintaining and building on what we have done to date

Key Stakeholders

We categorise stakeholders as "key" and "non-key". Key stakeholders are those whose interests **must** be recognised if the project is to be successful (a successful project is one which achieves its outcomes within agreed constraints of time, cost and output quality). The interests of non-key stakeholders should also be identified and addressed provided the project plan allows time for this.

Stakeholders: the key to success in measuring the productivity of government

1. Introduction

1.1 Measuring government output and productivity is a very recent development. It is a more politically sensitive area of work than say, measuring the economy and society, as it is measuring the performance of public service and the services it provides. As a result it was recognised early on in setting up the UK Centre for the Measurement of Government Activity (UKCeMGA) that there was a requirement, which would inevitably lead to a significant benefit, for the Centre to proactively manage its stakeholders. As a result, a team was set up - the Strategic Development and Communications Team - with the remit to take forward this role and to further develop the vision and profile of UKCeMGA.

1.2 This paper sets out how UKCeMGA has identified its stakeholders and, developed and implemented a communications strategy to successfully engage with them. It also sets out the key challenges and successes since the launch of UKCeMGA in July 2005, and the next steps which look to maintain and build on progress to date.

1.3 Successful stakeholder management through a sound communication strategy would enable UKCeMGA to achieve success across the three main aspects of its work:

1. The Development Programme;
2. Publishing the Public Service Productivity series of articles and other ad hoc publications;
3. The Consultation Programme.

2 Developing and implementing the communication strategy

2.1 The key aims of the UKCeMGA Communication Strategy is to:

- build relationships and partnerships within the resource limits available.
- communicate progress and developments in UKCeMGA as widely as possible, to reach as many stakeholders as possible, on a regular basis.
- to set out plans for consulting with the public on the proposals for further developing the way UKCeMGA measures the performance of the key public services as drawn together in the series of Productivity articles.

2.2 The Strategic Development and Communications Team have a key role in coordinating communication across UKCeMGA. In particular to:

- ensure that communication is effectively delivered to key stakeholders (both internal and external) in a coordinated and cost efficient manner
- developing 'relationship leads'; to concentrate resources and ensure a co-ordinated approach
- to ensure that our key stakeholders value and respect the work of UKCeMGA and buy into our work programme

2.3 Identifying our stakeholders and engaging with them

2.3.1 A stakeholder is a person, group or organisation who either provides or receives services, information, deliverables and support to or from UKCeMGA, in short, can have some influence on the Centre's work.

2.3.2 It was obvious that when conducting the initial Stakeholder Analysis, that due to the nature of the work, UKCeMGA could potentially have an extremely large and wide ranging number of stakeholders. Given that building relationships with these stakeholders is a resource intensive process, it was important to focus on those 'key stakeholders' that would have the most influence on the Centre's work and the Centre would therefore, benefit from building partnerships with. The key stakeholders identified as priority were those where shared working would be necessary to progress UKCeMGA's agenda. It was also felt that trying to build too many relationships early on in UKCeMGA's existence would be counter productive in terms of 'promising all' to a vast stakeholder community and then being able to deliver considerably less.

2.4 Sharing responsibility for building relationships with our stakeholders

2.4.1 To enable relationships to be built with these key stakeholders, 'relationship leads' were identified to take responsibility for each stakeholder. For example, the Head of the Education Team would lead on building relations with our colleagues in the Department for Education and Skills. Leads were also identified for those areas internal to ONS that UKCeMGA would be working with e.g. National Accounts Group, and also, international organisations, such as Eurostat and OECD, to advance the comparability of statistics between countries.

2.4.2 Key responsibilities of the relationship leaders were to:

- clarify and agree shared development work in joint Action Plans for the financial year period.
- clarify data delivery in Data Delivery Agreements
- as well as to maintain regular contact with the stakeholder and keep them up-to-date with developments.

2.4.3 A number of mechanisms and responsibilities were also identified across the UKCeMGA team to help manage relations with other important external stakeholders:

- Senior Management team to develop and manage strategic level contacts
- Strategic Development and Communications Team to manage and distribute regular information on the progress of the Centre in a consistent coordinated manner
- Head of function teams to take forward aspects relating to their specific areas of work.

2.5 The role of the UKCeMGA Advisory Board

2.5.1 To reflect the inherent political sensitivity of the area of work that UKCeMGA is engaged in, the National Statistician established an Advisory Board, so that politically sensitive judgements may be discussed with national experts alongside the professional judgement of ONS experts.

2.5.2 The Advisory Board is composed of people of high profile and calibre. Collectively, they have a mixture of skills and experience in public service delivery, analysis and in national accounting. It is coordinated by a non-executive Chairman, who has particular responsibility for ensuring two - way communication with the executive management of the Centre. The Advisory Board provides advice, as appropriate, to the executive management of UKCeMGA. More specifically, its role includes:

- advising UKCeMGA on priorities for development work and specific issues.
- promoting and participating in informed discussions of UKCeMGA methods, publications and plans as well as facilitating an outward looking learning culture
- and, perhaps most importantly in this context, the Board helps to facilitate links between UKCeMGA and external bodies.

2.6 Tools and methods for communicating with stakeholders - internal and external

2.6.1 To achieve this, a variety of tools and methods were then identified, some specific to internal and external stakeholders and some suitable for both groups. UKCeMGA has so far implemented a significant number of these tools but recognises that there is still further work to do.

2.6.2 Communicating with *internal* stakeholders:

- Presentations and discussion sessions, in particular on the work of UKCeMGA and its development agenda.
- Regular bilateral meetings between UKCeMGA leads and key leads for each area.
- Intranet - for releasing information to the whole of ONS.
- Monthly reporting tools - bulletin, highlight reports, forward look calendar of events.

2.6.3 Communicating with *external* stakeholders:

A number of communication channels were identified here which can be categorised as either participative or non-participative. These form part of our longer term strategy and we have concentrated on some of the key ways of reaching our stakeholders in the first twelve to eighteen months of UKCeMGA's existence. We will be looking to expand our communication tools range with time.

Participative:

- Seminars and Roadshows - a powerful medium to raise the profile of the Centre and understanding of its remit
- Annual Conference(s) - large forum for all stakeholders - to project consistent messages; themes, policies on most important issues
- Presentations - on particular topics. For example, productivity, quality adjustments
- Press briefings - for ensuring consistent and key messages are delivered to the media
- Consultation Seminars - to ensure stakeholders, particularly academics and practitioners in the field, can comment on the direction of UKCeMGA's work.
- Briefings - regular to keep stakeholders updated on progress/issues
- Bi-lateral meetings - UKCeMGA and departments, international organisations
- Stakeholder (interdepartmental) Group meetings
- Meetings - with those responsible for delivery of action plans
- Information sharing workshops - used for consultation exercises, to discuss ideas with those responsible at the technical level of the programme.

Non-participative

- Bulletins - update on progress and future work plans.
- Internet - for mass release of information.
- E-mail - to contact stakeholder groups on specific issues where appropriate
- Site exhibitions/distribution of handouts at conferences - setting out the work programme, vision, benefits and both the local and strategic level
- Briefings - regular to provide updates on progress
- Training seminars: Sharing of good practice
- Publication of UKCeMGA public Service Productivity series - setting out the latest development work in a specific function area.

2.7.4 UKCeMGA also recognises the importance of evaluating its communication strategy and regularly holds lessons learned sessions to improve and refine the methods and tools for future use. We will also be initiating questionnaire to gain the views of our stakeholders as to how successful we have been to date and to identify improvements for the future.

3 Challenges

3.1 This section sets out some of the challenges that UKCeMGA has faced, and is currently facing, across a range of internal and external stakeholders and what we have done to overcome them:

3.1.1 Getting the right messages across to the media:

- Due to the politically sensitive nature of UKCeMGA's outputs it has been proven vital that a significant amount of attention is paid to developing individual media handling strategies for our publications to try to ensure that the media fully understands the key messages that we want to get across, and as far as possible, accurately reports them.
- Through the media-handling strategies that we develop, we first aim to identify the key messages for each individual publication to get across in order to ensure that we deliver consistent messages, not only to the media, but in all the related publication material. We also hold press briefings for publications, an excellent tool for getting the key messages across to the media and also, for providing the opportunity to clarify their understanding and ask any wider UKCeMGA related questions.
- Its safe to say that we have not necessarily been successful in getting the key messages across right from the very start and we have learnt some valuable lessons on the way which we have aimed to implement when developing subsequent media handling strategies. But, we have also come to recognise that we are not always going to be able to influence all the stories that end up in the press, all of the time.

3.1.2 Developing in-house learning/knowledge sharing for UKCeMGA staff:

- As this is a new area of work and UKCeMGA staff come from varying backgrounds, it was recognised that there was a significant amount of knowledge in our possession that we could share with each other. We have therefore, developed an in-house learning programme at which UKCeMGA staff have the opportunity to present, comment on, discuss and ask questions about aspects of the Centre's work and the concepts involved in measuring the performance of government.
- This has proved to be highly successfully in not only improving the knowledge and expertise of UKCeMGA's own staff in a cost-effective way, but also has had the added bonus of being a team building exercise where everyone can join in and ask questions in an environment that they feel comfortable in.
- It has also further developed into a useful forum to hold exploratory discussions on work, such as, the development of the consultation papers and enables all staff to give their views.

3.1.3 Developing plans and associated material for UKCeMGA's Consultation Programme:

- The UKCeMGA consultation programme [began] in September 2006 with the publication of a consultation paper on establishing the principles behind measuring the performance of the public services. The consultation is aimed at our non-government stakeholders as the ultimate objective is to achieve a consensus of professional expert opinion on how the further development work of UKCeMGA should proceed.
- This is, and will continue to be over the coming six months, one of the biggest challenges that the Centre has faced since its launch in July 2005. There is a reputational risk to the ONS if the consultations are not successful i.e. the aims and objectives are not met.
- To minimise this risk UKCeMGA has sought advice from a range of experts on the consultation process e.g. Government Communications Network, Cabinet Office and Central Office for Information, to ensure that our plans and products are following the right path and that we are doing as much as we can, with the resources that we have,

to ensure that we are giving as many of our external non-government stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the proposals/issues set out in the consultation papers.

- We have identified two key steps to achieving our aims:
 1. To ensure that the consultations are widely advertised to the experts - analysts and practitioners - that we are targeting. This is being done through a variety of communication tools and regular communications e.g. using the web, e-mail, UKCeMGA Bulletins, handouts at related conferences etc.
 2. To ensure that those we are targeting have a variety of ways in which they can input/respond to the consultation paper e.g. through taking part in a consultation seminar, through responding in writing, via e-mail etc.

4 Next steps - maintaining and building on what we have done so far

4.1 The hardest challenge for UKCeMGA in the communications area now is to maintain the standards that it has reached since it was established in July 2005 and to build on this further by expanding on the stakeholders that it currently engages with and the tools and methods it uses to do so. Government communications, in terms of dedicated Stakeholder Management, is a fairly new concept and drawing in experience from colleagues in the Government Communications Network and the Cabinet Office is vital if we are to do this properly.

4.2 The main challenge for the Centre over the coming year is to successfully carry out its programme of consultations and to ensure that the outcome and way forward is communicated widely to all our stakeholders. Other challenges will come from new policy initiatives within Government, particularly the relocation of the whole of UKCeMGA to Newport as part of the wider relocation of government work. We cannot underestimate the need to continue raising our profile and ensuring that we invest in our stakeholders. In light of that it will also be important to revisit the communications strategy to consider further development that will be required to take the work programme to the next stages ensuring involvement from the right groups of people.