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# ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

Fisheries and Oceans

January 18, 1999

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This document outlines the general framework within which alternative approaches to the delivery of services are to be reviewed within the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO). The framework includes the need to address departmental priorities and vision, to involve staff and unions, be sensitive to regional needs, and provide clear, consistent direction in dealing with organizational and regulatory requirements and barriers.

The department views Alternative Service Delivery as a potentially useful approach for the delivery of services in an efficient, effective, flexible, responsive, and economical manner. A review of proposed and existing services will encourage a shift in thinking from the department as a deliverer of service, to that of manager of the delivery of service.

As guiding principles, the department supports the use of ASD where it provides quality service in cost effective, responsive ways, and deals fairly and responsively with employee concerns, while maintaining appropriate departmental control and accountability. The department is committed to an ASD process that is open and transparent, consistently applied, and meaningfully involves all stakeholders.

ASD thinking within the department will be encouraged through three strategic directions:

1. Development of a departmental ASD process that outlines the review, analysis, approval, delivery, and assessment phases;
2. Creation of a Centre of Expertise to monitor all ASD activity and provide advice, guidance, challenge, and encouragement towards the review, approval, delivery, and assessment of ASD initiatives; and
3. Development of a Communication Plan to keep all stakeholders up-to-date on ASD activities and developments within the department.

Steps in the approval process would normally include initial project screening, preliminary feasibility analysis, approval to study in depth, choice of ASD approach, business plan development, final approval, implementation, and on-going assessment. Deputy Ministerial approval would be required for any ASD initiatives that impact DFO staff.

## **1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

Over the years, rising costs of departmental service delivery and reduced budgets, along with an increased demand for technical and specialized skills have served to highlight a real need for the department to adopt innovative methods for the provision of quality services at affordable costs.

The delivery of services through alternative means is one such method. Each potential alternative service delivery (ASD) initiative will be unique and its advantages and disadvantages must be weighed and balanced on a case by case basis.

The purpose of the alternative service delivery framework is twofold. Firstly, it is to provide criteria and principles on which to conduct a constructive review of departmental service delivery methods to determine if alternative options should be considered. Secondly, it offers the department an opportunity to address the issues arising when quality services must be delivered while the ability to do so is reduced.

There is no simple answer as to when or how to deliver services through alternative means. However, in all cases, the initiative must fulfill a public policy mandate and the requirements for delivery capacity, quality, cost and service to the client and stakeholders must be foremost in any consideration. Those considerations can be more specifically addressed in the following terms:

- a strategic plan to address overall priorities
- in light of DFO's vision statement, a review of departmental activities against which an alternative service delivery framework can be applied
- a determination of the points at which the input and involvement of the unions would be most constructive
- a framework design that is flexible and that accounts for differing regional and sector needs
- a horizontal rather than vertical organization
- a capacity and authority to confront and resolve issues as they arise including:
  - a) requirements for additional or specific expertise
  - b) factors contributing to increased
  - c) concerns by management/employees/the public which may lead to potential resistance to change
  - d) ensuring strong, consistent leadership
  - e) management of changing political priorities
  - f) information security issues and implications of the Privacy Act and other legislation
  - g) legislative/regulatory barriers

A framework that addresses each of the above considerations should go a long way to ensure that "we know what we are doing and what we want before we do it". That, in turn, should instill a sense of cooperation and confidence in the process.

The following guidelines and principles set out in this document are intended as an overview of how we may achieve the objectives associated with alternative service delivery initiatives.

## **2. DEFINITION OF ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY**

Alternative service delivery is a process and philosophical framework for reviewing existing service delivery approaches to determine if there are better delivery options. Treasury Board currently defines alternative service delivery as “the most appropriate means of providing programs, activities, services and functions to achieve government objectives, consistent with the needs and values of Canadians as citizens, clients and taxpayers.”

At times confusion has arisen as to the relationship or difference between Alternative Service Delivery and Partnering Arrangements. A Partnering Arrangement is only one form of alternative service delivery. Other potential forms of alternative service delivery include special operating agencies; new forms of cooperative relationships among departments; devolution, employee take-overs, commercializing and privatizing of government programs.

## **3. VISION STATEMENT FOR ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY**

The department views alternative service delivery as a potentially useful approach for the delivery of services in an efficient, effective, flexible, responsive and economical manner. Accordingly, the department intends to review its program objectives and service delivery strategies to determine if and when alternative methods of service delivery should be used. This review will encourage clients and stakeholders to reconsider how public services should be delivered; that is, from viewing the department as “delivering a service” to that of “managing the delivery of the service.”

**It is envisioned that such a shift in thinking will encourage the development of alternative service delivery initiatives in ways that support the department’s mandate and strategic direction; recognize and build upon the strengths of its own people; and serve as a model for government.**

## **4. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY**

### **4.1 The department supports the use of alternative service delivery where it:**

- is in line with the department's vision and mandate
- contributes towards attaining specific departmental goals and objectives
- provides quality services in a cost efficient, and responsive manner
- attains and maintains support from senior management and clients
- integrates and engages the service delivery (e.g. stakeholders may deliver part of the service)

- maintains appropriate departmental control and accountability
- minimizes any uncertainty that employees/union representatives may have in the process

**4.2 The department is committed to the use of an alternative service delivery process that:**

- demonstrates the department's commitment to continuity of employment and respect for employees
- includes full and comprehensive involvement and participation of departmental staff and union representatives
- provides open and timely communications
- includes full and comprehensive external stakeholder consultations (e.g. with users/recipients and other affected parties such as other government departments, provinces, NGO's, bands, industry etc.)
- is consistently applied across the department
- fairly and comprehensively assesses options
- is flexible in the implementation of any initiative
- encourages innovation and creativity
- is transparent and open

## **5. STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY**

The department will encourage the consideration and application of alternative service delivery through strategic directions that include:

- **development of a departmental review, assessment and delivery process**
- **creation of a Centre of Expertise, and**
- **development of an appropriate communication methodology.**

These are further described below:

**5.1. Develop and document an alternative service delivery process to be used by project managers to evaluate the applicability, feasibility and effectiveness of each alternative service delivery initiative. The process would outline each step, including the need to:**

- assess the scope, nature, purpose and magnitude of the service under consideration
- determine the preliminary impacts upon recipients of the service
- conduct an opportunity screening and feasibility analysis
- determine the level of expertise required to assess and implement the service
- develop a resource plan (human, financial etc.) for establishing and implementing the service delivery
- assess potential risks/hurdles affecting the assessment or implementation of the service delivery, including legislative requirements and authorities
- develop procedures for risk management
- determine the extent to which alternative service delivery applies, within the context of core and non-core business activities of the department
- identify the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of all participants including employees and union representatives
- describe the nature and degree of stakeholder involvement
- assess options and identify most appropriate approach
- obtain and develop accurate base line and option costs
- undertake cost-benefit analysis
- develop, and adhere to, a sound business case describing financial parameters, how the project falls within the department's mandate, the required level of service, the degree of continuing oversight required, a description of the scope/direction of the project, and any internal and external linkages, including those with other departments
- address any need to retain corporate memory and expertise
- develop a communication strategy. This would include the need to:
  - a) describe the nature, purpose and expectations of the project
  - b) identify all external and internal audiences and key communication messages
  - c) outline the roles and responsibility of all participants
  - d) provide clear channels and methods of communication
  - e) describe the means by which information will be disseminated amongst the parties, stakeholders, clients and other involved participants
  - f) ensure communication strategies are compatible with the department's overall strategic plan
  - g) define terms of the delivery model
  - h) describe the process to elicit and assess feedback from all involved participants at each stage of the process

- i) identify departmental timelines and milestones
- j) estimate the resources required for the project and determine the funding mechanism.

Such a process would guide and advise managers through the various steps involved in an ASD initiative. The application of the process would ensure that each review would:

- evaluate the performance capability of the proposed alternative service delivery and ensure the chosen option is an improvement to traditional service delivery
- assess and mitigate the impact upon employees
- maximize flexibility in service delivery and facilitate exploration of all viable options while enhancing the profile of government
- minimize and mitigate risk
- ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- acquire sufficient funds to carry out a feasibility study and options analysis
- organize a team, with required resources, for implementation of the ASD initiative at the transition stage
- provide for the necessary regulatory authority, monitoring, and oversight role
- define the service in terms of results/deliverables
- develop and apply assessment criteria to measure the appropriateness of the service delivery model.

**5.2 Create a Centre of Expertise within Corporate Services to assess and support the implementation of ASD within the department. This Centre will be a mandatory clearinghouse for all ASD activity within the department. It will provide an internal review and challenge function, and advise on approval requirements. It will encourage ASD initiatives and reviews. It will advise, assist, support and guide clients and stakeholders; will maintain an inventory of ASD models; will identify horizontal issues; will maintain the ASD framework and links to Treasury Board; and will provide a supporting role to the Departmental Management Committee through regular reports.**

The Centre of Expertise should:

- not be a bureaucratic process
- be set up as a brokerage function whether centralized or decentralized
- use a network approach to attain as much expertise as possible
- actively promote the use of ASD thinking within the department
- promote ASD training and conferences
- track and provide advice on best practices
- assess and advise on methods for handling management change

- assess need for expanded financial and contracting authorities, and provide support and advice in effecting necessary changes

- provide a challenge function to critically evaluate and test ASD initiatives (e.g. provide a 'reality check')
- determine and apply the general and specific knowledge base that will be needed to implement an alternative service delivery initiative by:
  - a) identifying activities, critical success factors, expected results, timetables and performance measures
  - b) establishing an inventory of current and proposed departmental initiatives and maximizing and building upon the knowledge of other internal sources
  - c) outlining a framework for a teamwork approach including multi-sectoral and a regional team/network to develop expertise and disseminate information
  - d) being an "honest broker" who will share his/her knowledge in an impartial, objective manner
  - e) conducting a training needs analysis and developing an appropriate ASD training package
  - f) identifying the level of service required and the appropriate leadership and approval authorities for each stage of the process (assessment, transition, implementation etc.)
  - g) organizing a team, with required resources, to perform continuing monitoring, evaluation and audit functions.

### **5.3 Develop a communication methodology that will:**

- keep staff, unions and stakeholders fully informed in a timely fashion about ASD activities within the department
- advertise the existence and services of the Centre of Expertise
- promote ASD thinking within the department
- publicize ASD conferences and training
- demonstrate openness and transparency over ASD activities
- encourage involvement of all stakeholders
- clarify the ASD process, departmental vision, guidelines, and policy framework.

## **6. APPROVAL PROCESS FOR ALTERNATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY**

The approval process is an integral part of any alternative service delivery review and its nature may depend upon the size, magnitude and purpose of the project. Accordingly, any approval process should be thoroughly analyzed to ensure sufficient involvement of authorities at all appropriate departmental and political levels. As well, thought should be



given as to how the Centre of Expertise can acquire the proper authority to fulfill its role of packaging projects/activities, when and if possible, into one service delivery initiative.

Alternative service delivery may be approved through the DFO Business Planning Process but a distinct process may be necessary for initiatives having significant scope or impact upon employees. For example, if employee job continuity with the Federal Government would be affected, approval would extend to the Deputy Minister. In addition, initiatives may impact existing legislative authorities, and thus require appropriate enabling legislation.

The following discusses the 4 overall phases typical of ASD project approvals in DFO:

**Phase 1, "Opportunity Screening"**, is happening all the time: any significant strategic, organizational, program or management change idea should be considered a potential ASD. DFO's strategic, business and performance planning processes are perfect opportunities to draw attention to areas that will be screened or where alternatives will be considered (Phase 2).

While line management can make the decision to consider a small scope ASD, large scope ASDs may require a distinct screening process developed in consultation with DFO's ASD Centre of Expertise (CoE).

**Phase 2, "Considering ASD"** concludes with a recommendation for a preferred alternative.

The ASD Centre of Expertise offers a Guide to help you through this phase, a project which requires working together with stakeholders to gather information, consider potential risks, and develop a well-considered recommendation for approval by appropriate levels of management or government.

Following the ASD Guide and working with the Center of Expertise will smooth the process of gaining approval and acceptance by stakeholders and management.

**Phase 3, "Implementation"** of an approved alternative will vary according to the scope and nature of the project.

Project management for implementation will require changing the way DFO has done business, and implementation may require eliminating a variety of potential barriers. People may resist change in the way things are (even if the project is clearly an improvement in service or workload), and Departmental or Federal policies, acts, decisions or assumptions may need to be overturned or modified. The ASD CoE can facilitate removal of many of these barriers.

**Phase 4, "Assessment"**, ensures that the performance of implemented alternative remains satisfactory. This phase is an opportunity for DFO to learn from our experiences.

For more information, refer to the [The DFO Guide for Considering Alternative Service Delivery](#).