
Companion Guide

**The Development of Results-based Management and
Accountability Frameworks for
Horizontal Initiatives**

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http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/eppi-ibdrp/coll_res/guide_e.asp

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The Development of Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks for Horizontal Initiatives

Introduction

Results for Canadians, the management framework for the federal government, clearly sets out the requirement for public service managers to manage for results. This involves developing and implementing plans, monitoring, measuring and evaluating progress made, reporting on results and making the necessary adjustments.

Many of the social and economic outcomes (results) the government of Canada aims to achieve require the contribution of two or more departments (including agencies and crown corporations), jurisdictions or non-governmental organisations. Indeed, the ability to build alliances, form partnerships and effectively manage *horizontal* initiatives is in many cases key to delivering high-quality, cost-effective services to Canadians. In light of these benefits, significant efforts have been undertaken to improve the management of *horizontal* initiatives.

Managing a horizontal initiative involves entering into an arrangement with partners where there is:

- shared authority and responsibility among partners;
- joint investment of resources (such as time, funding, expertise);
- shared risks among partners; and
- mutual benefits and common results.

In June 2000, the Treasury Board (TB) *Policy on Transfer Payments* formalised the Results-based Management and Accountability Framework (RMAF) as a component of TB submissions involving transfer payments. In April 2001, the TB *Evaluation Policy* identified RMAFs more generally as valuable management tools for major policies, programs and initiatives. A [guide](#) was produced to help departments and agencies develop these RMAFs.

Whether related to a policy, program or initiative, a Results-based Management and Accountability Framework is intended to help managers:

- describe clear roles and responsibilities for the main partners involved in delivering the policy, program or initiative - a **sound governance structure**;
- ensure clear and logical design that ties resources to expected outcomes - a **results-based logic model** that shows a logical sequence of activities, outputs and a chain of outcomes for the policy, program or initiative;

- determine appropriate performance measures and a **sound performance measurement strategy** that allows managers to track progress, measure outcomes, support subsequent evaluation work, learn and, make adjustments to improve on an ongoing basis;
- set out any **evaluation work** that is expected to be done over the lifecycle of a policy, program or initiative; and
- ensure **adequate reporting** on outcomes.

The development of RMAFs for policies, programs and initiatives is increasingly gaining acceptance as a sound and beneficial approach to results-based management. It is particularly useful for managing *Horizontal* initiatives, which are complex and where clarity of the respective roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of all partners is critical. The development of RMAFs for horizontal initiatives is proving to be very worthwhile and is strongly encouraged.

When successfully developed, an RMAF for a horizontal initiative provides:

- partners with a common understanding of what they aim to achieve, how they plan to work together to achieve it (including roles and responsibilities), and how they will measure and report on results;
- a tool for better management, learning and accountability throughout the lifecycle of the initiative; and
- an early indication that the initiative is set up logically – has strong commitments to results – and has a good chance to succeed.

This guide has been developed to provide federal managers with practical advice on how to develop effective RMAFs for *horizontal* initiatives. It is designed to complement the [Guide for the Development of Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks](#), by addressing the unique challenges encountered when diverse organizations work together to achieve common objectives. While it does not provide answers to every question, it does provide guidance based on the most important lessons learned to date.

The guide is divided into three sections:

- Section 1: “The RMAF Development Team”, deals primarily with the challenges of building an effective team which will draft the RMAF;
- Sections 2: “Developing an RMAF for a horizontal initiative”, walks through the five main components of an RMAF; and
- Section 3: “General Guidance”, provides a list of additional lessons learned and reference documents.

1. The RMAF Development Team

Developing an RMAF for a horizontal initiative often requires the commitment and leadership of a few key individuals. This is particularly true at the beginning of an initiative when:

- an RMAF development team is assembled; and
- the initiative itself is defined by the group.

During this early phase, effective leadership can make the difference between an initiative that struggles to get off the ground and one that simply takes off.

Assembling a Team to Develop the RMAF:

Involving the right people early, not only helps to move an initiative forward, but also establishes a base upon which a network of support is built. Key factors to consider in assembling a team include:

- 1.1 Skills and Experience:** An RMAF development team should include a relevant mix of managers, delivery partners and evaluation specialists. This balanced team would also bring together individuals with experience in program development and horizontal management.
- 1.2 Size:** Generally speaking, an RMAF development team should be assembled that is small enough to allow all members to fully express their views, while at the same time large enough to capture the contributions of all major stakeholders. While experience has shown that a group of 6 – 10 individuals is often ideal, the size may be influenced by both the number of partners involved in the initiative and the relative contribution of each partnering organization. In cases where there are, for instance, 15 or more partners involved in an initiative, it may be unrealistic to expect their full participation on the development team. Similarly, as the development of the RMAF for a horizontal initiative progresses, the full development team does not need to meet as often as at the start. Under these circumstances, a sub-group of individuals from each partnering organization can provide input on specific components of the document before it is circulated among the full development team for comments.
- 1.3 Negotiation:** Horizontal initiatives naturally transcend organizational boundaries. In mobilising an RMAF development team, it is therefore important to include individuals that will be able to align or link the overall objectives of the initiative to the priorities of partnering organizations. Members should also have the ability to make decisions and commit their organization.

Defining the Initiative:

Leading an RMAF development team through a first meeting can be challenging at best. The diversity of interests and professional specializations means that team members often enter into discussions under very different sets of assumptions. It is therefore critical that someone assumes the responsibility of leading the team towards a shared understanding of both the initiative and the role of the development team.

The following considerations should be taken into account when planning the first meeting of the RMAF development team:

- 1.4 *Purpose of an RMAF for a Horizontal Initiative:*** The role of the RMAF as a planning tool, integrating/leveraging mechanism, and source of information for the initiative's manager as well as for policy-makers should be underlined for all team members.
- 1.5 *Establish a Lead Organization:*** Defining who will take the lead on an initiative and what that entails, often helps to clarify the team's understanding of the initiative. In many cases the lead role is conferred in a Memorandum to Cabinet, a Treasury Board Submission or other senior level directive or decision.
- 1.6 *Presentation:*** A brief presentation outlining the history of the initiative is often a good way to initiate a discussion. The presentation should outline pre-established parameters (e.g., defined in a Memorandum to Cabinet) in addition to areas for discussion.
- 1.7 *Buy In:*** It is important that the commitment of each partnering organization be articulated by those at a high enough level to ensure that competing priorities do not impede this important activity.
- 1.8 *Common Terminology:*** Members of new RMAF development teams often do not communicate at the same level. Agreeing on the use of technical terms and program criteria may therefore serve to improve communication among members and help avoid future misunderstandings. Pre-circulating copies of the RMAF Guide and the Results-based Management and Accountability Lexicon may also give team members a greater understanding of the process they are planning to undertake.
- 1.9 *Create Value for Team Members:*** Working on a horizontal initiative demands time, energy and resources. Given these demands, one of the first questions members of a new RMAF development team will ask, or think, is: "what's in it for me and my department." The development team will therefore need to define the initiative in a way that allows each member to identify the value of her/his horizontal involvement.

This may include the added value of sharing best practices and lessons learned. The lead organization may also create value for partnering organizations by reducing administrative burdens associated with coordination, reporting and evaluation functions.

1.10 *Development Team Structure:* It is important to discuss the ways in which members will communicate and participate in the development of an RMAF for a horizontal initiative. Consideration should be given to what mechanisms will best support the process in terms of inclusiveness, efficiency and effectiveness. In particular, the development team should consider how often it will meet (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, etc...). Likewise the development team will need to determine what types of expectations, in terms of roles and responsibilities, it will place on each member.

1.11 *Decision-making Process:* The development team must agree on how it will best serve as a decision-making body. Consideration should be given to such matters as: the sign-off process for all stakeholders (e.g., who will serve as the sign-off authority for each partner?); and possible dispute resolution mechanisms.

1.12 *Open and Honest Participation:* From the outset it is advisable that the development team leader encourage all members to participate in an open, honest and forthright manner. This will help to establish a policy of full participation and avoid future misunderstandings.

Prior to all meetings the development team leader may find it useful to determine possible points of contention. Successful meetings will results if an inventory of such issues is maintained, indicating that they have either been resolved, or that there are agreements to essentially disagree.

2. Developing an RMAF for a Horizontal Initiative

Unlike departmental initiatives, horizontal initiatives often need to integrate vertical and horizontal accountabilities, various resource pools, as well as a variety of departmental mandates, performance measurement strategies and reporting structures. This added level of complexity has two implications:

- Before members of the RMAF development team start drafting an RMAF they may need to invest additional time exploring issues and working as a team towards a common understanding of the challenges they face; and

- The final product of this process, an RMAF for a horizontal initiative, will need to explain how the profile and logic model as well as the performance measurement, evaluation and reporting strategies will address these horizontal challenges.

This section is not intended to replicate the contents of the *Guide for the Development of Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks*. Rather, it is intended to complement “Section 3: Steps in the Process of Developing an RMAF” by outlining some of the key elements and considerations related to RMAFs for horizontal initiatives.

Profile:

The first section of an RMAF for a horizontal initiative should provide a clear understanding of what the policy, program or initiative is intended to achieve as well as an appreciation for how it intends to do so. In the context of horizontal management, specific attention should be paid to describing the:

- 2.1 Purpose of the Initiative:** An RMAF for a horizontal initiative should include a clear description of the initiative and the identified needs to which it responds. Equally, the origin of the initiative and the rationale for the collaboration should be fully explained. In many cases this information is articulated in a Memorandum to Cabinet or a Treasury Board Submission.
- 2.2 Common Goals:** Clearly a horizontal initiative will need to be built upon a foundation of common values and goals. These goals and values should be stated explicitly in the RMAF. Moreover, in developing a shared set of goals, the development team should also spend some time identifying how the partners will contribute both financial and non-financial resources, to the initiative.
- 2.3 Roles and Responsibilities of Each Partner:** As the CCMD found in its *Roundtable on the Management of Horizontal Initiatives*, “the need to reconcile individual accountability with a collective sense of purpose and responsibility is one of the most significant tensions [...] in the management of horizontal initiatives.” An RMAF for a horizontal initiative can help to mitigate this tension by defining not only the broad contributions of each partner, but also the roles and responsibilities assumed by each partner.

Past experience has shown that it is useful to outline in what way partners are accountable: to each other; to governing bodies (e.g., Parliament); and to the affected community. This list of roles and responsibilities should also take into account each member’s responsibility to negotiate with colleagues, retrieve information and form a consensus within his or her organization.

- 2.4 **Governance Structure:** The management of a horizontal initiative, which by definition cuts across organizational boundaries, would be impossible without an effective governance structure. For the purposes of an RMAF for a horizontal initiative, this structure should be formalised. It should describe the co-ordination mechanisms, decision-making process, and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Similarly, the governance structure should outline what resources will be allocated to the initiative over the funding period and how those resources will be distributed amongst, and used by, the various partners.

Logic Model:

The second part of an RMAF for a horizontal initiative, the logic model, describes how an initiative, in theory, is expected to lead to a set of intended outcomes. It identifies the specific linkages between the activities of an initiative and the achievement of particular outcomes.

When designing a logic model for a horizontal initiative the following points should be taken into account:

- 2.5 **Involve all Partners:** The logic model represents the most fundamental expression of an initiative's rationale; activities and expected results. As such, the development of a logic model must involve each of the partnering organizations and include evaluation specialists, initiative personnel and subject area specialists.
- 2.6 **The Logic Model Should be Results-Focussed:** Horizontal initiatives are by their very nature complex. They are designed to harness the collective efforts of multiple organizations and produce synergistic results. A logic model should direct the focus of each department towards the achievement of the initiative's planned results.

When the final logic model is created, members of each participating organization will not necessarily see their discrete activities, outputs and outcomes in the model. They should, however, understand how their own contributions link to the logic underlying the initiative as a whole.

Performance Measurement Strategy:

The third key phase in designing an RMAF for a horizontal initiative is the development of an ongoing performance measurement strategy. This strategy should outline how the various partners will, over time, collect information and collectively measure progress against planned results. The main purpose of this performance information is to improve the management of the initiative.

In developing a sound performance measurement strategy the RMAF development team will need to reach a consensus on each of the following components:

2.7 *Agree on an Overall Performance Measurement Strategy:* Normally, performance measurement plans can be refined on an ongoing basis to continuously improve the process. While continuous improvement is also encouraged for horizontal results arrangements, it must be recognized that this is much more difficult to do when multiple parties are involved.

To ensure an effective co-ordinated approach to measuring performance, it is important that, at a minimum, clear expectations and ground rules are established. These basic expectations and ground rules can be presented in a simple table that identifies which parties will collect and analyse data throughout the initiative's lifecycle.

2.8 *Performance Indicators:* In terms of process, the group will need to identify indicators for each of the outputs and outcomes specified in the logic model. Efforts should be directed towards developing a small, concise set of comparable indicators that measure performance at the program-level and when appropriate at the societal-level.

2.9 *Coordinating the Performance Measurement Process:* Generally, a coordinating body, such as a Secretariat or lead organization, will coordinate the performance measurement process amongst the various partners. In some cases it may be advisable that one of the other partnering organizations assume this role.

2.10 *Data Collection:* Data collection systems are not always compatible. Before considering new infrastructure that fully integrates databases and data input standards, the development team should look at keeping the process simple. Experience has shown that costly approaches do not guarantee success. Indeed, clear, simple, manageable methods are often the best choice.

2.11 *Sharing Performance Information:* There are a number of ways performance information can be shared among partners. For instance, information can be distributed by the lead organization in monthly reports (e.g., via email). Alternatively, a system may be established that allows partners to directly access a common performance results database. Whatever system is utilized, it is important that all performance information that can be shared (given privacy considerations) is shared amongst the partners.

- 2.12 Costs:** The costs of performance measurement should be identified and connected to financial resources. Without an understanding of the financial commitment the strategy will likely flounder.

Evaluation Strategy:

The lead organization's evaluation group should be engaged to support the development of the evaluation strategy. In developing the strategy for an RMAF for a horizontal initiative, the development team will need to pay particular attention to:

- 2.13 Identification of the Evaluation Issues:** Before the development team can reasonably assess the costs of the planned evaluations it will need to identify the main evaluation issues to be addressed. As such, the group should outline the issues and types of questions it plans to answer during both formative (mid-term) and summative evaluations.
- 2.14 Integration of the Data Collection Needs:** Like the performance measurement strategy, efforts should be made to identify the data collection methods that will be utilized throughout the process. To the extent possible, this data collection should be integrated with the performance measurement process.
- 2.15 Costs:** The evaluation strategy should identify specific sources of funds that will be used for each phase of the evaluations.

Reporting Strategy:

The final step in developing an RMAF for a horizontal initiative is the specification of a reporting strategy. The strategy ensures that plans are in place to systematically report on the results of ongoing performance measurement and evaluation, and that reporting commitments are met. The following key considerations should be incorporated into the reporting strategy for all horizontal initiatives:

- 2.16 Timelines:** The reporting strategy should establish, for all partners, clear timelines that take into account government reporting cycles. Overall, the reporting obligations should be reasonable given the resources and objectives.
- 2.17 Reporting Formats:** There is often a tendency in horizontal arrangements to create a new performance report. This may lead to unnecessary duplication of effort and confusion for citizens. For a high profile initiative with considerable public interest, it may make sense to create a separate performance report in addition to including the information in *Departmental Performance Reports*. For a less visible or more straight forward initiative, existing performance reports should be sufficient for reporting performance information.

- 2.18 *Use all forms of Evidence:*** The performance measurement and evaluation strategies devised by participants will likely produce more evidence than can realistically be used in either performance or evaluation reports. Participants should resist the temptation however, to simply pick the evidence that “tells the best story.” To enhance credibility and value, multiple lines of evidence should be used to support balanced public reporting.
- 2.19 *Link Resources to Results:*** This is the long-term goal for all government results information, as it greatly enhances the internal value of results information for the purposes of strategic management. It also enhances both the transparency and the credibility of results information.
- It is evident that linking resources to results can be difficult, particularly when there are several distinct parties involved. As a suggested starting point departments should identify which resources are being directed towards which outputs and outcomes. From there, participants can approximate the level of effort being expended.
- 2.20 *Provide Easy Access to Information:*** A key component of transparency is access. It is not sufficient to simply report on progress through internal documents. All results information should be readily available to the public with minimal effort. Further, partners should be aware of, and have timely access to the relevant performance information of their partners.
- 2.21 *Use Independent Assessments:*** Governments sometimes lack public credibility when they assess their own progress. Moreover, individual partners in a particular horizontal initiative might not consider one another’s results to be credible when progress is self-assessed. One way to overcome such concerns and to contribute to continuous learning is to make better and more frequent use of independent assessments of progress. Consultants, academics, auditors and independent think tanks may all be used to assess and evaluate horizontal initiatives.
- 2.22 *Costs:*** A realistic reporting strategy requires adequate funding. The RMAF should summarize all relevant funding allocations.

3. General Guidance

The following are some final tips that have proved useful when developing an RMAF for a horizontal initiative:

- 3.1 **Get Senior Support:** The support of a senior level champion for the development of an RMAF can raise the profile of an initiative and motivate the team.
- 3.2 **Assess the Relative Value of the Initiative:** The development team should match the efforts made in the RMAF to the relative size and budget of the overall initiative.
- 3.3 **Remain Flexible:** It is important to realize that the RMAF is not a static document. To the contrary, it may need to be adapted to meet changing circumstances.
- 3.4 **Set Realistic Timelines:** An RMAF for a horizontal initiative should represent an enabling framework. It should create conditions under which key milestones will, in all probability, be achieved. Unrealistic timelines can create a situation where partners disengage from the initiative. Also, clear target dates are useful to create a sense of urgency and achievement.
- 3.5 **Communication is the Key to Building Consensus:** Clear communication and regular contact by e-mail/telephone will help keep team members “plugged into” the RMAF development process. Communication is also the best way to move development team members beyond negotiations to a point where they can work on consensus building.
- 3.6 **Involve Stakeholders:** Developing an effective and relevant RMAF requires the direct input of all key stakeholders.
- 3.7 **Engage in Continuous Learning:** Continuous learning should become an operating principle for the RMAF development team. Members should consider how they will share, learn from and capture information throughout the process. Members should consider how they will learn from both mistakes and failures as they occur.
- 3.8 **Access Other Sources of Information:** Development teams may find it useful to contact other practitioners or TBS analysts involved in *horizontal* initiatives. Similarly, it may be advantageous to visit the following web sites for additional information on horizontal initiatives or RMAFs:
 - Guide for the Development of Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/RMAF-CGRR/rmafcgrr_e.asp
 - Guide for the Strategic Use of Results-based Management and Accountability Frameworks
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/tools_outils/guidance-conseils/guid-cons_e.asp
 - Horizontal Results Database
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/eppi-ibdrp/hrdb-rhbd/profil_e.asp

- Horizontal Results Seminar Series
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/eppi-ibdrp/hrs-ceh/hrs-ceh_e.asp
- Lexicon – Results-based Management and Accountability
http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/eval/pubs/RMAF-CGRR/rmafcgrr06_e.asp