



ACT
Government

Strategic Service Planning: ACT Government Directorate Guidelines

June 2012

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Introduction

Strategic service planning is an internal process to guide and inform decision-making, priority setting and resource allocation. This process aims to embed transparent planning processes across ACT Government Directorates. The output of this more robust planning process will be Transformational Service Advice that informs decisions about which services to provide, at which standard, to which group and by whom.

These guidelines complement *Achieving Results for the Community: Strategic Service Planning in the ACT Government* (the Framework). The Framework outlines the long-term goals of strategic service planning, while these guidelines more explicitly detail the process for Directorates, including:

- roles and responsibilities;
- timing;
- requirements for Directorates;
- opportunities to build capability; and
- a multi-year phased implementation approach.

Objectives

Strategic service planning supports planning for future service requirements. It aims to provide:

- an accurate description of where we are now;
- where we want to be and, importantly, how we will get there; and
- how we will know when we are there.

Strategic service planning also supports a clearer line of sight between the Government's long term vision and Directorate service delivery.

Strengths of the current service planning approaches

CMCD has engaged extensively with ACT Government Directorates in the development of the Framework and guidelines. All Directorates engage in service planning and concurrently engage in high level strategic planning for the future.

In their planning across both of these levels, Directorates:

- develop operational service plans; and
- consult extensively with all relevant stakeholders, including:
 - Ministers;
 - the community;
 - peak bodies; and
 - other Directorates (where relevant).

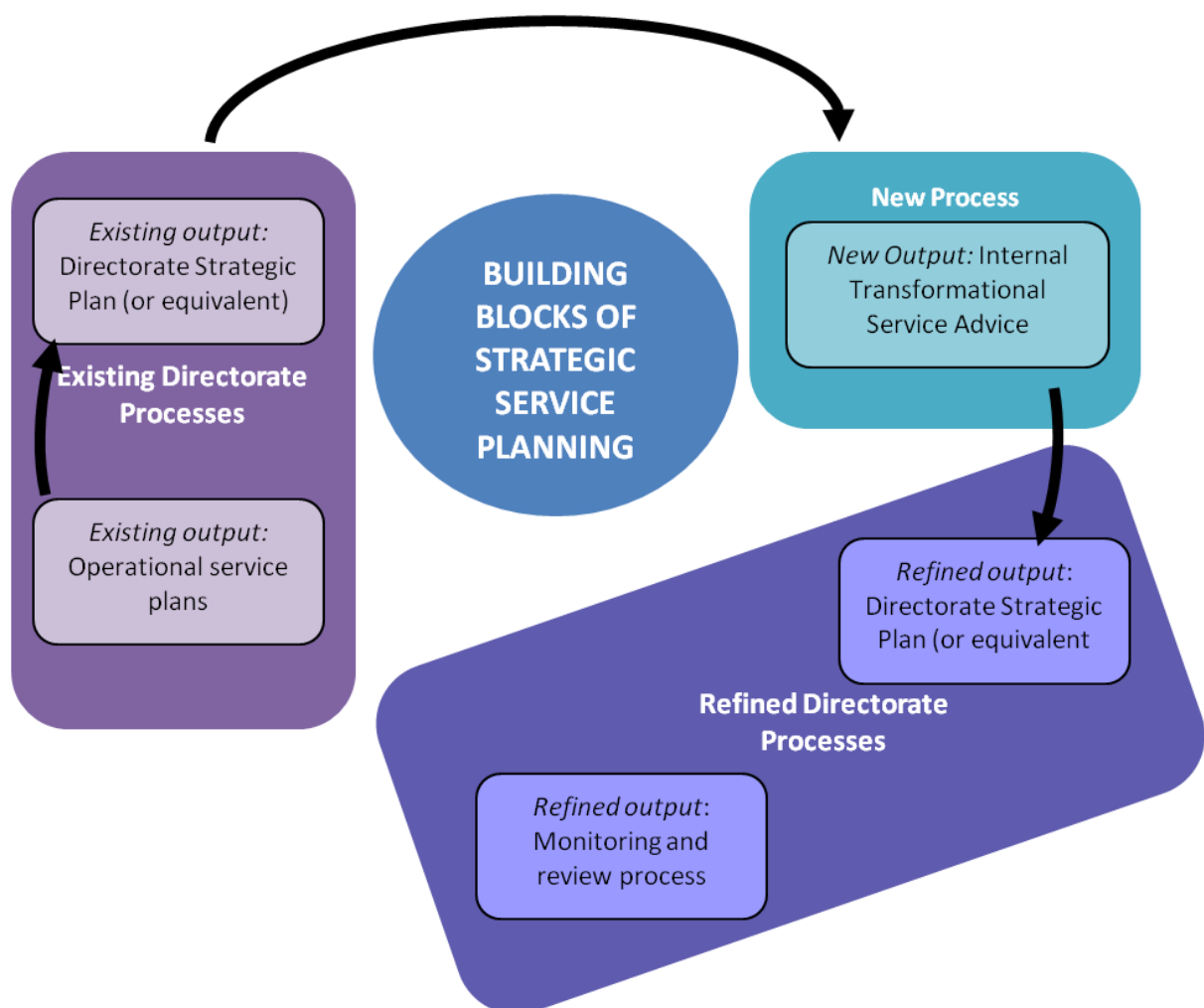
Opportunities for improvement

The new service planning approach will not replace existing processes. Rather, strategic service planning will strengthen these existing processes. Specifically, this process will better integrate Directorate-level operational planning with Directorate strategic planning and introduce a consistent process across Government. For example, timing, governance and outputs will be (to the extent relevant and beneficial) standardised.

Building blocks of service planning

ACT Government Directorates already have the building blocks of service planning. The new Framework introduces one new element, which in turn will refine Directorate strategic planning processes. This is depicted in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Building blocks of service planning



Source: Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate (2012).

Transformational Service Advice

These guidelines do not prescribe the process for all components of the strategic service planning process. Based on Directorate feedback, it assumes that a Directorate Strategic Plan (or equivalent) and operational service plans are already in place and, therefore, focuses on the preparation of a Transformational Service Advice as the key document to guide decision-making.

The Transformational Service Advice is the key output of the strategic service planning process. It should:

- identify strategic service options, relating to:
 - opportunities;
 - challenges; and
 - changing operating environment;
- be informed by:
 - Government priorities;
 - evaluations;
 - corporate planning;
 - performance information;
 - environmental scan; and
 - Ministerial, Cabinet and Strategic Board direction; and
- inform:
 - Government priority setting;
 - Strategic Board and Cabinet decision-making;
 - Budget Strategy; and
 - initiative development.

The process

The process outlined below will guide the development of Transformational Service Advice and is based on *Achieving Results for the Community: A Strategic Service Planning Framework*. Each stage of this process should be conducted according to the principles outlined in Appendix I of the Framework. This cyclical process is outlined in figure 2.

Figure 2: Process for developing Transformational Service Advice



Source: Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate (2012).

1. Where we want to be — information and decision component

What

To improve we need to have a clear direction of where we want to be. To determine where we want to be, Directorates should identify:

- objectives (aligned with Government priorities);
- priority areas for action under these goals; and
- appropriate performance indicators for these objectives.

How — direction statement

Develop a direction statement that is a Directorate's expression of their contribution to the overarching priorities of Government. This statement should be:

- dynamic, reform-oriented — forward looking; and
- a goal-oriented statement of a Directorate's role.

This vision should represent formalised, comprehensive and agreed goals or targets — with specific goals or targets to be quantified and objective.

2. Where we are now — information component

What

To identify 'where we are going', we need to know 'where we are now'. This will require a situation analysis and an environmental scan.¹ A situation analysis will:

- review Directorate history and achievements to understand relevant change that the Directorate has already undergone;
- assess current performance to identify areas where the Directorate is achieving real results, as well as areas for improvement; and
- identify the current influences on Directorate performance, as well as other environmental factors, to identify changes that may affect performance into the future.

This step will inform decisions about the potential need to change, cease or continue service delivery to achieve results for the community.

How — situation analysis and environmental scan

This analysis and scan will involve objective, specific, evidence-based and data-rich identification of key contextual issues and environmental drivers that influence attainment of the Directorates' vision or provide opportunities to change Directorate services. This may include:

- an outline of the Directorates contextual environment now and looking forward (for example, over the next two to three years), including:
 - results of evaluation activity;

¹ CIE (2011).

- corporate planning;
- performance information; and
- Ministerial, Cabinet and Strategic Board direction; and
- key drivers of change — examples may include:
 - technological changes;
 - theory;
 - delivery models;
 - demographics; and
 - national agreements.

This should not be ‘problem’ based, but provide a real assessment of the context for service delivery now and into the future.

3. How we can get there — options component

What

To get ‘where we want to be’ from ‘where we are now’ we need to know what the difference between these states is and how to address this difference. This is best achieved through:

- a gap analysis;
- identifying options for improvement or change (and where relevant, consulting on these options), including:
 - status quo;
 - business as usual — provision of existing services;
 - doing more;
 - doing less; and
 - doing things differently; and
- identifying and considering the risks that could impact on achieving Directorate or Government objectives.

This step will see the preparation of options for achieving results. These options will be consulted on and presented to appropriate decision makers for consideration.

How — identification of strategic options

Central to the Transformational Service Advice will be the identification of two to three options for each element of the ‘direction statement’. Options will also be presented on challenges and opportunities for change.

Table 1: Examples of strategic options

Issue	Strategic option
Develop and effectively utilise key skills within and across Directorates	• Implement new Directorate capability strategy
	• Develop whole-of-government training strategy
	• Tender for the provision of services that require certain skills
	• Integrate key skills into job descriptions
	• Centralise key skills for use across Government
Ongoing budget pressure	• Full expenditure review
	• Request performance audit to evaluate effectiveness
	• Status quo
	• Cease certain services
Service not achieving performance measures	• Investigation of service delivery model with options provided to Cabinet, including assessment of need for ongoing service provision
	• Assessment of performance measures (do they appropriately reflect the objectives of the service?)
	• Reallocate funding into a program that has proven to be effective in meeting these objectives
Conflicting Directorate goals	• Develop Memorandum of Understanding for Cabinet approval
	• Develop a different way of meeting demand that is more in line with Government priorities
	• Compare the outcomes of evaluation activity to determine if both goals are still appropriate

These options should identify whether they propose:

- reallocating resources;
- cessation — stopping service provision;
- additional services; or
- status quo — maintaining services within existing resources.

4. Who is going to do what and when — assessment and decision component

What

Once a suite of options has been prepared to achieve Directorate objectives, it will be necessary to make decisions about which services should be provided, where and to whom.

The results of the ‘how we can get there’ step should be communicated to a decision-making body by presenting:

- options for services, improvements and innovations;
- the evidence for the service need and demand; and
- the rationale and evidence supporting each option.

Presentation of this information will allow decision makers to:

- identify potential conflicts and tradeoffs;
- identify overlaps in key result areas;
- determine which Directorates should deliver which services or portions of services; and
- decide an appropriate mix of services that:
 - contribute to Directorate strategic objectives and, through them, the overarching direction of Government;
 - most effectively achieve desired results; and
 - reflect the best investment.

The strategic service planning decision-making process will need to be integrated with other key decision-making processes in the ACT, including the annual Government priority setting process and the Budget process. Strategic service planning should be involved in a 'top down/bottom up' relationship with all Government strategic planning processes.

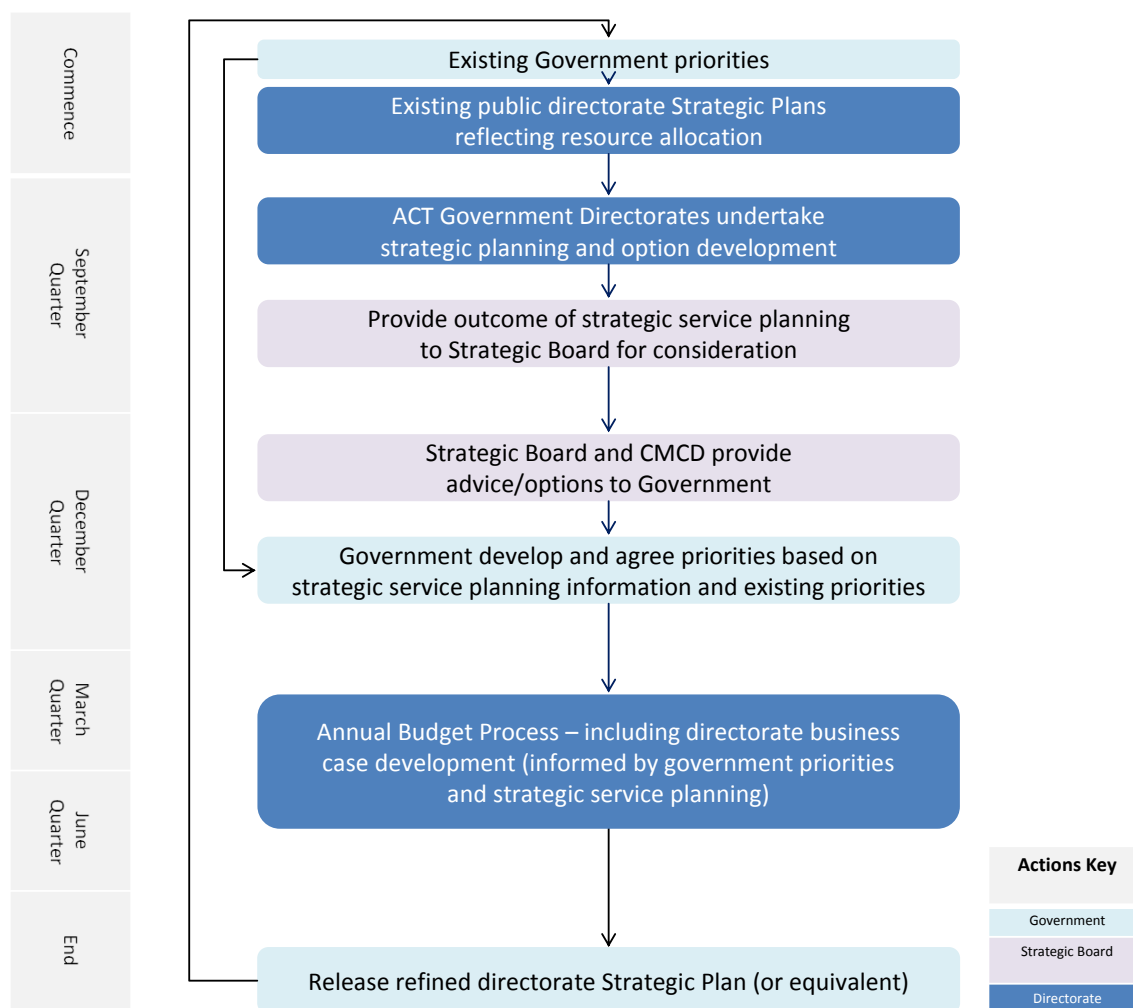
The timing of strategic service planning should reflect this relationship, with Directorates preparing their Transformational Service Advice early in the financial year so that decisions about service type, quality and mix can inform business case development and, through this, the Budget papers. This integration is represented in figure 3.

How

Each option should also provide information on:

- options for varying levels of services;
- options for collaboration;
- options for changing the services (including innovations);
- benefits of the options — and how they will achieve the direction statement or contribute to the direction statement;
- who is going to do what;
- who is already doing what (including other ACT Government Directorates and non-Government organisations);
- timing;
- financial implications — including any efficiencies associated with the options; and
- next steps — including a brief outline of implementation plans for each option.

Figure 3: Integration of strategic service planning and other key decision-making processes



Source: Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate (2012)

5. How will we know if we are there — information component

What

It is important to measure the impact of government services to know if we achieved what we set out to do. Reviewing performance through well planned evaluation activity and measuring our progress against appropriate indicators will provide this information.

How — performance measurement and evaluation

To know if the Transformational Service Advice has been effective it must consider reporting and reviewing components. Therefore, it should include:

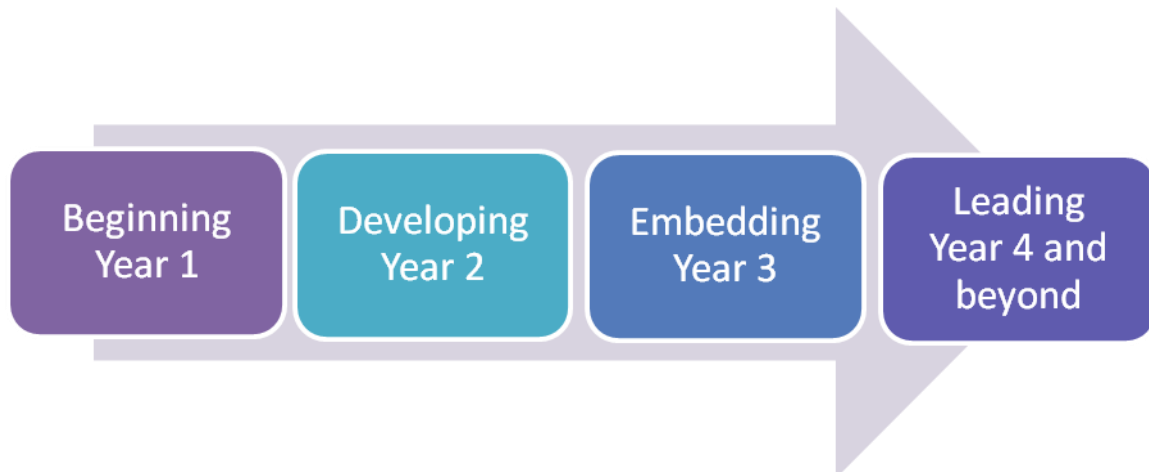
- an evaluation plan — a plan to measure the effectiveness of the services in achieving our objectives;
- meaningful measures and indicators for the direction statement;
- methods for collecting and collating performance monitoring information to report on relevant indicators; and
- corresponding governance arrangements.

Implementation

Implementation of the strategic service planning framework will be iterative and will leverage existing processes. It will be phased over a number of years to build capacity and capability across government and ensure integration with other strategic planning reform initiatives. The aim of this implementation approach is to build strategic service planning maturity and embed this framework into broader government performance and accountability systems.

The maturity model for strategic service planning is outlined in figure 4.

Figure 4: Maturity model for strategic service planning



Source: Chief Minister and Cabinet Directorate (2012)