

Delivering value for money in human and social services

The Government of Alberta undertakes a results-based budgeting review



Governments want to know that they are achieving the best possible results from the programs and services they deliver, particularly in the human and social services sectors. For many, the answer may be a move to a results-based budgeting (RBB) review.

Taking a results-based approach to review spending allows governments to directly correlate resource allocation to specific and measurable results. As the Government of Alberta has found, RBB reviews can help ensure that citizens are getting the services they need while maximizing value for money, both now and in the future.

Accountability tops the agenda

For the Government of Alberta, the need for greater public accountability and value for money was becoming increasingly clear. Not only was the budget front and center in the province's 2012 election, public finances were also becoming tight as revenues from natural resources – one of the biggest contributors in the province – started

to fall on the back of tumbling energy prices in North America.

Facing mounting public and budgetary pressure, the Government of Alberta knew that they needed to introduce a results-based budgeting (RBB) review process to deliver on their commitment to ensuring that government investments were efficiently and effectively delivering the outcomes that Albertans expected. With a clear vision of what they wanted to achieve, the big

question was how to develop, roll out and manage the process.

Creating a practical framework

Based on KPMG in Canada's long history of partnering with the Ministry of Human Services and KPMG's extensive experience in designing, executing and monitoring RBB review programs around the world, the Ministry selected KPMG in Canada to tailor an approach

to the RBB review that incorporated best practices from other jurisdictions. In particular, the ministry was looking to KPMG to create a framework that would provide the data and insights needed to deliver visible and sustainable change.

Following a thorough review of existing documentation on similar RBB programs and a series of in-depth discussions with the Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs) and executive officers of the Ministry, the KPMG in Canada team delivered a framework for conducting the RBB reviews which was ultimately accepted and incorporated as the guiding process.

Central to the approach were clearly defined and evidence-based methodologies for quantifying the impacts and benefits of the various review areas and determining areas for change which, in turn, enabled KPMG in Canada to develop other key elements that would support future reviews such as performance frameworks, data management tools, and system-level performance measures.

Putting the approach into action

With the framework now defined, the Alberta Ministry of Human Services subsequently engaged KPMG in Canada to execute one of the first cycles of the review, specifically covering the

'Supports for Disabilities' bundle, a group that included 12 different programs and supported 25,000 Albertans.

Focused around a theme of relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, the reviews aimed to not only assess the current state of program delivery, but also to create a future state vision that would effectively meet the needs of the program's multiple stakeholders including people with disabilities, their carers and their service providers.

In conducting its review, KPMG in Canada brought together a range of integrated approaches that included consultation services, the creation of appropriate metrics, the identification and collection of data, the review and analysis of results and the development of the reports which ultimately identified opportunities for transformative change.

KPMG in Canada's report on the 'Supports for Disabilities' bundle included a number of practical and actionable opportunities while also articulating a vision for a single disability program regardless of disability or age – a vision that Cabinet and Treasury Board subsequently endorsed.

Following this work, KPMG in Canada was engaged to execute a review of the much larger 'Support to Albertans in Need' bundle, which included more than 40 different programs providing income,

housing, employment and community-based supports across five different Ministries. This review also presented recommendations for reform to improve access to income, housing and employment support and address some of the root causes of poverty in Alberta.

Creating a better service funding model

The RBB process has been widely hailed as a success and has already achieved considerable results. For example, the RBB review found that efficiencies and service improvements could be delivered by merging the province's disability programs for children with those targeted to adults to create one single service window that could better serve citizens regardless of their age.

Key to the team's success has been KPMG's ability to build consensus between various departments, stakeholders and participants involved in the reviews. Ultimately, KPMG in Canada helped the ministry make recommendations towards an environment that is better aligned to the changing needs of their clients, and better prepared to respond to future budget pressures without impacting service levels.

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