

IMPROVING OPERATIONS

Improving Operations is the ability and motivation to apply one's knowledge and past experience for improving upon current modes of operation within the Ministry. This behaviour ranges from adapting widely used approaches to developing entirely new value-added solutions.

<i>This Means...</i>	<i>This Doesn't Mean...</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • being aware of different technical and business methods, and integrating and applying different ideas and approaches to accomplish a goal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • performing the same processes year after year, in the same situations or trying to force-fit a previously applied approach without considering alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proactively sharing what you know in your area of expertise with others to help them achieve their business plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • only sharing what you know when asked
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • constructively challenging existing processes and procedures on the job and developing original approaches to improve or replace them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • criticizing existing processes or procedures without offering alternative solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • looking at what other organizations or organizations are doing successfully and determining what you could transfer to your ministry or to the government sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assuming that if there is not a problem, there is no need for improvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • taking a calculated risk to improve performance by introducing something new and unique to the public sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introducing something new and unique without thinking through the implications and assessing the risk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • showing foresight, encouraging new ideas and helping others to see new possibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leaving the job of fostering a creative working environment to chance or to someone else
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using your expertise to identify tools, methods and concepts that will impact the way the organization does business over the next few years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assuming that others will tell you about a new approach when you need to know

**Developmental
Activities**

Level 1 Activities

Purposely seek out opportunities to strengthen your own abilities and update your job knowledge and skills.

- Read the latest pertinent journals, books and articles which will strengthen or extend your knowledge.
- Attend pertinent seminars, workshops, information meetings and/or courses regularly.

Reflection Tip:

- * Use the Internet as a source of information. Ask your peers about the sources they use to stay up-to-date in their field.

Join a Professional Association.

- Join an association outside the government that consists of participants from all areas in your field of expertise, or service sector.
- Try to “learn” one new approach or idea from each session that you attend.
- Consider how that new approach or idea could impact the work that you already do.

Reflection Tip:

- * What challenges are other individuals facing, and could those issues become relevant to your role?

Find effective ways of building your development needs into the work that you do.

- Think of an area that you consider to be “leading edge” in your sector.
- Identify a project in that area in which you should increase your knowledge.
- Assess whether you could be assigned to work in that area.
- List current qualifications and learning opportunities.
- Apply to work on this project. This may be a temporary assignment or an addition to regular duties.
- Maintain log of personal progress in growth areas.

Reflection Tip:

- * Look for leading-edge opportunities.

Level 2-3 Activities

Do something dramatically different to improve your ability to generate new and creative ideas.

- Three or four times a year read something that is dramatically different from the material you normally read, or participate in an activity that you normally don't do.
- Make a conscious effort to broaden your perspective or thinking.
- Think of ideas, approaches or contacts that might be useful to you or your organization, to help develop business opportunities.

Reflection Tip:

- * Make an effort to incorporate something new into your own approach.

Examine your basic mode of operating.

- Routinely check your assumptions. Work with others in your function or related areas of responsibility to identify the main paradigms and assumptions that are guiding your operations, and to determine if those assumptions are still appropriate and relevant.
- If not, determine a more appropriate set of guiding principles and adjust your strategies and plans as necessary to be consistent with your new assumptions.

Reflection Tip:

- * Ask yourself how long you have been following a particular way of doing things. Is this still the most efficient way? How can you use your expertise or technology to improve your effectiveness?

Flow chart a process in the organization.

- Draw a flow chart or diagram of all the steps involved in a business process.
- Identify the individuals or groups involved in each step of the process and make an effort to learn more about all of the individuals or groups involved in the process.
- Examine the process to see if it has been impacted by change recently, and if it can be changed or streamlined to be more efficient.
- Present your recommendations to the key stakeholders for feedback and support.
- Develop an action plan for any decisions based on your recommendations.

Reflection Tip:

- * What objections do you anticipate from existing process owners?

Look for an opportunity to improve upon a procedure or process in your Ministry.

- Identify any areas where problems or issues reoccur in your work unit.
- Generate a set of options to address the problem and improve the procedure or process. You may need to involve others in this analysis.
- Balance the attention you give to integrating the big picture and analyzing the detail.
- Consider the cost/benefit, select the best option and develop a plan to pilot the option.

Reflection Tip:

- * Think about how your manager, your direct reports, your customers/clients and other internal individuals or groups would view the issue or problem.

Develop an exchange forum of experts.

- Invite a number of experts and interested parties to participate in an ongoing exchange forum of ideas and learning.
- Include people from different areas of the government or even from outside of the government.

Identify a new or emerging trend that will have a future impact on the organization's/government's mandate.

- Continually scan the popular media for interesting or unusual trends in technology, demographics, innovative business education, politics, lifestyles.
- Read books written by futurists (e.g. Faith Popcorn, David Foote, etc.).
- Identify one or two trends that could enhance or potentially threaten current services the government or your Ministry offers.
- Share your findings with your colleagues. Identify one or two actions that could be taken immediately to act on your research.

Volunteer for projects and new initiatives that involve topics that are new and different from your normal mandate, or represent "ground-breaking" areas for your area of responsibility, where existing policies and practices do not apply.

- Take advantage of this opportunity to experiment with doing things in a new way and exploring opportunities from a broad perspective.
- Integrate new trends to first time business issues. Make a conscious effort not to impose the old, comfortable way of doing things on this new initiative.

Reflection Tip:

- * What is the impact or outcome of this new way of thinking?

Level 4 Activities

Test a new idea or concept with others that would be unique or different in your area.

- Determine its application within the industry overall by following the steps below:
 - ⇒ Develop a plan for its implementation, even if you believe the idea may not be supported.
 - ⇒ Test the plan with people you trust and get their feedback.
 - ⇒ Identify key learnings from the exercise.
 - ⇒ What changes are necessary to your plan to make it viable?
 - ⇒ Assess the feasibility of the plan and determine if there is merit to proceeding further.

Reflection Tip:

- * Get feedback from creative thinkers and individuals with expertise in the relevant area.

Develop a new concept or transform an idea that would significantly impact the industry.

- Investigate and develop different approaches for developing the concept or idea.
- Develop a business case that supports the change including such things as strategic repositioning and leverage, resource utilization, cost/benefit impact, and so on.
- Examine the pros and cons from the perspective of each stakeholder group (e.g., sales, marketing, senior management, etc.).
- Create a draft implementation plan. Include a transition plan for migration or conversion to the new approach, a communication plan for positioning the project and updates to stakeholder groups.
- Present your ideas and case to the appropriate groups.

Reflection Tip:

- * Think about how you can present your business case and implementation plan in a creative way.

Look at your ministry from the perspective of the people it serves.

- Get a sense of how others (peers, stakeholders--internal or external-- and competitors in the private sector, if applicable) see your ministry, by asking how they view your operations and deliverables.
- Examine your business objectives, processes, people capabilities and technology in light of the information you gather.

- Use your expertise, the information you've gathered and the analyses you've completed to formulate some recommendations.
- Share this information and any recommendations you have for changes based upon this information with the appropriate group(s).
- Incorporate any feedback and develop an action plan based on decisions made.

Reflection Tip:

* What perceptions were you surprised by?