

DO'S (AND A FEW DON'TS) OF INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION

Getting started

- * **Do** understand who within and beyond your institution will support you in pursuing transformation, as well as who within and beyond your institution is likely to try to spoil your efforts.
- * **Do** understand the legal framework within which your institution operates and that regulate actions on staffing, etc. to avoid delays, obstacles or legal challenges further down the road.
- * **Do** work within the resources that you have – while an ambitious plan may help in attracting resources, an overambitious plan may remain unfunded, and the results will fall short of raised expectations.

Building your reform team

- * **Don't** assume that you can push through transformation on your own – build a core management team with individuals who are innovative and reform minded that can support you in your mission.
- * **Do** empower your team/staff to come up with ideas/innovations and give them the leeway to find the best way to deliver them – and recognise staff for doing so to encourage others.
- * **Do** shield your team/staff from political/outside interference – they will only feel fully empowered if they know you are protecting them.
- * **Don't** punish your team/staff if they make honest mistakes in performing their tasks, instead use it as an opportunity for learning and improvement – knowing that they will not be punished for making honest mistakes will further increase their confidence to innovate and come up with new ideas.
- * **Do** stress that you expect your team/staff to model the same style of management with staff reporting to them and for it to be cascaded down through the institution.

Setting the institution up for transformation

- * **Do** review the organisational structure of your institution and ensure that it is set up to deliver efficiently and effectively on its mandate – based on your review, restructure as needed.
- * **Do** involve at the outset and lobby the necessary authorities to support and endorse your restructuring plan.

Staffing for transformation

- * **Do** put in place job descriptions and minimum requirements for all positions in your restructured institution.
- * **Do** set a timeline for any retrenchment/restaffing exercise and stick to it – this will demonstrate that there will be no more business-as-usual.
- * **Do** (to the extent that you have a mandate to do so) put the right people in the right positions and dismiss staff who are not performing or for whom there are concerns about their integrity – this again will demonstrate that there be no more business-as-usual.
- * **Do** promote from within when looking to refill positions – it is likely that there is hidden talent within your organisation waiting for the opportunity to blossom.
- * **Do** take care to manage relationships to avoid potential tension and suspicion between new staff and remaining staff – especially if your institution has gone through significant retrenchment and recruitment of ‘outsiders’.
- * **Do** anticipate legal action when staff lose their job as a result of retrenchment – make absolutely sure that all human resource related decisions follow the letter of the law.
- * **Don’t** forget that you are dealing with human beings – put in place measures to meet the psychosocial needs of the staff that are losing their jobs.

Planning for transformation

- * **Don’t** think transformation is complete once your institution has been restructured and restaffed – that is the easy part and your journey of transformation has only begun.
- * **Don’t** move ahead with further transformation initiatives/reforms unless you have a clear plan/strategy for going forward – a plan/strategy with clear timelines, deliverable and responsible persons.
- * **Do** put in place structures for managing/monitoring transformation initiatives/reforms – without such structures progress is likely to be uneven or stall altogether.
- * **Do** build on local knowledge/experience from other institutions that have successfully undergone transformation – benefit from their success and avoid making the same mistakes they may have made.
- * **Do**, to the extent possible, plan to make use of indigenously developed and context appropriate tools and approaches – you are more likely to be successful if making use of what is already tried and tested.

Continue to deliver on your core mandate

- * **Do** ensure that the institution is able to continue to deliver on its core mandate during the period of transformation – patience from the political leadership as well as citizens is likely to quickly wane if services are not being delivered.
- * **Do** put in place alternative measures to ensure delivery of core mandate if internal capacity is likely to suffer initially as result of the transformation, e.g. outsource services to other institutions who can deliver on your behalf as you (re)build the necessary internal capacity.

Making use of technology

- * **Do** prioritise automating systems and procedures – this will minimise the risk of fraud and corruption, make it easier to monitor institutional and staff performance, and allow for data-driven evidence-based decision making.
- * **Don't** assume that you need to procure off-the-shelf systems or hire outside firms as this may cause problems down the line when the systems cannot be customised/updated without significant further investment – developing systems in-house is likely to be more cost-effective and allows you greater control over the process.
- * **Don't** assume that once automated systems are in place your work is done – individuals will continuously seek to find weaknesses and exploit the system so systems and procedures will need to be continuously reviewed and strengthened.

Manage change

- * **Don't** underestimate the resistance to change from within and fear that it can instil in staff.
- * **Do** communicate clearly and often to staff on the content and purpose of the transformation – it is not about staff losing their jobs, it is about making the institution, and your staff, work more efficiently and effectively.

Changing norms and behaviours

- * **Do** engage with staff regularly on what it means to act with integrity and what their role is as public servants (to serve the public) – take a positive approach to changing norms and behaviours.
- * **Do** put in place a robust staff performance management system with clear indications of what is expected of your staff – reward staff when they perform well.

- * **Do**, also, put in place a credible deterrent – if staff are not performing or are engaging in unethical behaviour there should be certainty of sanctions.
- * **Don't** assume that sanctions are sufficient to change norms and behaviours – too much focus on sanctions may work against transformation if an atmosphere of fear, rather than integrity, is created.
- * **Don't** place responsibility for sanctioning and building integrity within the same department/unit – both the positive approach and sanctions will be seen as more credible if they are kept separate.

Build broader constituencies for change

- * **Don't** assume that you will continue to enjoy indefinitely the political support that you had at the outset of your transformation journey – the priorities and focus of the political leaders are likely to shift with time.
- * **Don't** allow the transformation process to make your institution overly inward focused – continue to engage with your service users and providers (civil society, private sector, etc.), as well as other government institutions, as they can contribute to making or breaking your transformation journey.
- * **Don't** shy away from communicating your accomplishments – your ability to demonstrated progress is a major factor in ensuring that you have continued support for your journey of transformation.

Prepare for the long-term

- * **Don't** assume that once progress has been made it cannot be rolled-back – sustaining progress will require constant vigilance and continuous effort.
- * **Do** recognise that the journey of transformation is a continuous one – there is no final destination as there always room for further improvements and new challenges will emerge along the way.
- * **Do** build in periods of review, reflection and consolidation of transformation/reforms – continuous transformation/reforms is otherwise likely to result in change fatigue and a slowing down of progress made.
- * **Do** plan ahead and build the necessary capacity to undertake future transformation/reforms – transformation/reforms at the outset of your journey are likely to be less complex. As you progress they are likely to become increasingly complex/difficult and will require continuously developing skillsets within your institution.