



social development

Department:
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL WELFARE
SERVICES (V4)**

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1. BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In line with the Constitution, the national government has the responsibility for the management of the country's affairs and shares responsibility with provinces for the provision of basic social welfare services. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), states that Government has a responsibility to determine and regularly review guidelines for the promotion and management of quality social welfare services.

The development and implementation of service standards is a critical requirement for the transformation and improvement of service delivery by public institutions. This is provided for in the White Paper on the Transformation of Public Service (1995), which outlines service standards as one of the eight principles underpinning the transformation process.

From 2009 until 2012, the Department of Social Development developed a quality assurance framework (QAF) for social welfare services in line with the implementation of the Integrated Social Delivery Model (ISDM). The DSD has since reviewed the manner in which social welfare services are delivered, which resulted in the reviewed framework for social welfare services (FSWS).

The FSWS seeks to facilitate and/or guide the implementation of a comprehensive, integrated, rights-based, well-resourced, and quality social welfare service delivery system. The FSWS highlights the definition of quality assurance as a set of activities that are carried out to set standards and involves a process of verifying or determining whether products or services meet or exceed customer expectations. This is done through continuous monitoring and improving including taking mitigating actions so that the services provided are effective and as safe as possible.

The Department of Social Development has made significant strides in empowering beneficiaries by developing the QAF, based on the developmental approach and geared towards customer satisfaction. The FSWS necessitated the development of clearly defined norms and standards to deliver social welfare services, associated with measurable indicators for the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery and therefore also the review of the QAF.

The purpose of the QAF is to:

- Provide a consistent system and clear standards for evaluating effectiveness;
- Prioritise and facilitate continuous improvements within social welfare services; and
- Support organisational learning.

The scope of the QAF includes:

- The approach to quality assurance by providing an overview on quality assurance; the approach of government and the DSD to quality assurance and the social welfare context in which the QAF will be implemented.
- The SWS quality assurance strategy with emphasis on the quality assurance statement. It identifies a quality assurance model for implementation of the QAF within a quality assurance culture.
- The implementation of the quality assurance process in a cycle highlighting the important elements of service quality requirements; relevant data collection; and effective analysis that will ensure maintenance and improvement of service quality.
- Finally, the document focuses on the implementation of the QAF.

The QAF is applicable to:

- Internal stakeholders including:
 - Department of Social Development officials at the national offices.
 - Department of Social Development officials at provincial offices.
 - Department of Social Development officials at district and local offices; as well as residential facilities.
- External stakeholders:
 - Social welfare services managers and practitioners at government departments and non-governmental organizations as partners in social welfare service delivery.
 - Beneficiaries of social welfare services.
 - Public representatives.
 - Oversight and monitoring structures.
 - Researchers.
 - Aid and other development agencies.

1.2 OVERVIEW ON QUALITY ASSURANCE

Quality is the degree of excellence provided, or the degree of worth derived from a service. Quality is also the level of perceived value reported by a stakeholder who benefits from a

process or its outcome. From the point of view of users different aspects of services may impact on overall quality, e.g. accessibility, consistency, staff competence and timeliness.

Every organization needs to have a quality management system (or equivalent) in place to ensure quality in processes and outputs as well as in institutional aspects. Various types of general and internationally developed quality management approaches, systems, models and frameworks exist and organisations may apply one or several of these approaches, in full or in part, for different purposes, or base their own systems on elements from them while making further adaptations according to their specific national circumstances. Others may be involved in a comprehensive range of quality initiatives and activities, but lack an overarching framework to organize, give them context and show how they relate to the various quality tools.

Total quality management (TQM) is both a philosophy and a set of guiding principles. It is also a strategic, integrated management system and forms the foundation of a learning organisation. All members in such an organisation are involved in an effort aimed at continual as well as innovative improvement in performance at every level. The ultimate focus is to increase the degree to which the expectations of customers and other stakeholders are met.

Within the TQM philosophy, all work is viewed as a process, while the organisation is viewed as a system with the purpose of executing the process. Processes transform inputs into the required outputs through the application of human resources, equipment, facilities and documentation.

TQM places great emphasis on a customer-first orientation, in very much the same manner as is emphasised through the Batho Pele principles. (a Sotho translation for 'people first', an initiative to get public servants to be service orientated, to strive for excellence in service delivery and to commit to continuous service delivery improvement. It is a simple and transparent mechanism, which allows citizens to hold public servants accountable for the level of services they deliver.)

Top management lead and champion the TQM cause through commitment and example. Achieving quality results is however not their responsibility alone, but that of every member within the organisation. The member responsible for the execution of a process knows best how to improve the process. This knowledge should be respected and utilised. A participative management style with an integrated process team organisation is advocated.

The theoretical foundations and methods of total quality management (TQM) support its use for both manufacturing and services. Although the framework, vision and techniques of total quality management have been embraced by both types of organisations, most literature addresses its application in manufacturing.

The unique nature of service organisations has however given rise to the concept of total quality service (TQS). Service organisations are compelled to examine their service delivery processes critically. The focus of such internal analysis is ultimately about customer/beneficiary satisfaction, whether in the private sector, or public sector.

TQS is described as TQM applied in service organizations. However, it is also much more than that, because of the complex implementation issues surrounding service delivery, as well as the increased number of variables involved in such delivery. TQM concepts do not measure customer satisfaction directly, but they are relevant in developing a visionary leadership structure and organizational culture, which are very important for quality service.

TQS is a comprehensive methodology, which engages crucial elements of the organisation toward a vision of delivering increasingly high quality services to consumers. It proposes that a quality focused organizational culture, a strategically inclined leadership team, and a fully committed employee population, support the achievement and preservation of a TQS environment.

The contemporary literature suggests that the human issues involved with service delivery appear to be the best predictors of whether a TQS environment will flourish within a given organization. Within the literature, there appears to be an underlying theme that professional camaraderie, trust, and interdependence among employees set the stage for superior service delivery. The TQS model is based on three constructs, namely: leadership involvement, organizational culture, and committed employees.

Service excellence has two dimensions: the objective dimension which is about compliance with all applicable regulations, as defined by all regulatory documents (i.e. legislation, policies, as well as norms and standards); and the subjective dimension which is about the perceived value of services (and these services are again defined and guided by the regulatory documents).

Measuring the quality of service outputs is often more difficult than measuring the quality of a product, because services are abstract rather than concrete, transient rather than

permanent, and psychological rather than physical. Services differ from manufacturing goods on a number of dimensions: service intangibility, simultaneity of production, delivery and consumption, perishability, variability of expectations of customers, and the participatory role of the customers in the service delivery.

Systematic quality management typically takes the form of a quality assurance framework. Several issues underscores the need to systematically adopt quality management measures sooner rather than later and translates them into a formalized quality assurance framework. Although quality assurance (QA) systems traditionally focused on monitoring compliance with an objective set of standards, it was soon realised that for measurement of quality to be meaningful, users of the services also need to be involved. Quality assurance systems need to attempt to gather and assess a range of information on quality, engaging a broad range of internal and external partners in the quality improvement process.

Quality assurance (QA) is defined as a formal set of activities that reviews and affects the quality of service provided. These activities provide both internal and external parties the confidence that the organization will consistently meet the requirements for quality. QA provides activities that permit the organization to determine if service is being delivered to the specifications of the customer by identifying gaps and providing a means for improvement and maintaining excellence.

The objective would be to have in place an overarching framework that would provide context for quality concerns, activities and initiatives, and explain the relationships between the various quality procedures and tools. Such an organizing framework has proved to be very useful in providing a single place to record and reference the full range of current quality concepts, policies and practices, and is forward looking because it takes into account future actions and activities.

The main benefits of having a quality assurance framework in place are:

- It provides a systematic mechanism for facilitating the on-going identification of quality problems and possible actions for their resolution. At the same time, it serves to stimulate and maximize the interaction among staff throughout the organization;
- It gives greater transparency to the processes by which quality is assured and reinforces the image of the organisation;
- It provides a basis for creating and maintaining a quality culture within the organization and contains reference material that can be helpful for training;
- It supports quality improvements and their maintenance over time;

- It is a mechanism for the exchange of ideas on quality management with other national and international organizations.

The QAF is underpinned by a series of major principles, including, but not limited to the following:

- Service users are best placed to determine what constitutes a quality outcome;
- Quality can always be improved;
- Everyone has a role to play in improving quality;
- All staff must be flexible in meeting service user's changing needs and choices;
- Quality outcomes and improvements are most likely when there are skilled, enthusiastic and resourceful staff;
- QA should be planned into all new services to ensure it is right first time;
- Comprehensive policies and procedures should be in place so staff can see what they have to do in order to meet standards; and
- QA will draw together messages from a wide-evidence base to provide an overview of quality making it easier to take away messages and act on them

Perhaps the most important benefit of a QAF is promoting service effectiveness by the provision of tools that describe, develop and maintain quality service through:

- Organizational motivation;
- Performance measurement;
- Programme evaluation;
- Solicitation of stakeholder feedback; and
- On-going development and implementation of the organization vision/mission.

During the process of establishing a QA environment, accountability is increased, which normally drives individuals to render quality service. Organizations tend to become more efficient in service delivery and service providers are exposed to reduced risk.

With improved information about how service is being provided, in other words what works, whether standards are met, where the gaps are, the organization is able to carefully tailor service delivery to meet its goals for excellence.

1.3 THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT AND DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT QUALITY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

The South African welfare system aims at raising the quality of life of all people especially the disadvantaged, those who are vulnerable and those who have special needs, through the equitable distribution of resources and services. The White Paper for Social Welfare Services mandates quality strategies for excellence and for the provision of quality services, to promote sustainable improvements in the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The Department is seeking to align its planning with the new planning framework led by The Presidency by moving away from an output-based approach to outcomes relevant to social development. This approach will allow the assessment of qualitative differences resulting from social development policies, legislation and programmes. The real impact of government service delivery will also promote an integrated and closer working relationship between the Department, its social sector partners, other government departments, civil society, and business

South Africa's Batho Pele initiative aims are to enhance the quality and accessibility of government services by improving efficiency and accountability. Batho Pele principles are aligned to quality management principles. In summary regularly consulting with customers prove the shift towards customer focus. The principle of setting service standards, confirms a process approach and management by facts. The strife for increased access to services will demand dedicated systems and processes. The need for provisioning of more and better information about services and maintaining higher levels of courtesy is in alignment with customer focus systems and process approaches, involvement and empowerment. The principle to increase openness and transparency about services reflects that quality should be leadership driven. Remedy failures and mistakes and to give the best possible value for money confirm the quality principle to continuous improvement, systems and process approaches.

The role of the Office of the President is to oversee and coordinate the work of government and the state as the leading institution on interstate relations. It has a responsibility to ensure that government achieves all its objectives, meets its targets within an electoral term. The Presidency proposes a comprehensive and systematic new approach to outcomes monitoring and evaluation. In order to enhance the monitoring, all Ministers and Departments are assessed in terms of their contribution towards the twelve Presidential outcomes:

- Improved quality of basic education.
- A long and healthy life for all South Africans.
- All people in South Africa are and feel safe.
- Decent employment through inclusive growth.

- A skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path.
- An efficient, competitive and responsive economic infrastructure network.
- Vibrant, equitable, sustainable rural communities with food security for all.
- Sustainable human settlements and an improved quality of household life.
- A responsive, accountable, effective and efficient local government system.
- Environmental assets and natural resources that are well protected and continually enhanced.
- A better Africa and a better world as a result of our contributions to global relations.
- An efficient and development oriented public service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship.

This new and challenging approach has major implications for how the Department does its business and how monitoring and evaluation should be undertaken. The Minister of Social Development signs a performance contract with the president in which she commits herself to the delivery of certain results, contributing to specific outcomes, even though she does not lead their delivery. The Director General's performance agreement and those of members of the senior management service link directly with the minister's performance contract. This means that the department must prioritise programmes that will lead to the delivery of the results listed on the minister's performance contract. Therefore, the M&E Chief Directorate will prioritise those programmes, in addition to the sustained agenda (additional priorities), from a monitoring and evaluation perspective.

The Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) remains the overarching conceptual framework, developed by the centre of government that seeks to identify the development challenges that the public sector has to confront in future. It serves to guide planning and budgeting across all three spheres of government and informs the core elements of the budgetary submissions that the Department of Social Development should make. The Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) depicts the rolling cycle of planning and performance measurement to inform delivery targets. The MTSF and MTEF form the underlying foundation of the DSD's strategic and financial planning as well as its monitoring and evaluation.

The two frameworks used by the DSD to guide its approach to monitoring and evaluation are:

- the Policy Framework for the Government Wide Monitoring and Evaluation system (GWM & E); and

- the National Treasury's Framework for Managing Programme Performance Information (NTFMPPI);

The GWM & E provides general guidance, describing how all public entities, including the Department of Social Development, should approach monitoring and evaluation.

The NTFMPPI is more specific on what should be reported and how, in terms of the main criteria, used by the Auditor General. These would include:

- Assessing compliance with reporting requirements (Existence(accessibility),timeliness, consistency);
- Usefulness (measurable/interpretability, relevance, methodological soundness, consistency); and
- Reliability (validity, evidence/integrity, accuracy, completeness).

The DSD M&E framework policy document aims to clarify stakeholders' roles and to prevent duplication and fragmentation and calls on all service providers to ensure that services are integrated, coordinated and managed to maximise their benefits for society. The model emphasises monitoring and evaluation and mentions three M&E products that should be produced by any agency or organisation providing services on behalf of the DSD:

- Reports to the Department;
- Client satisfaction surveys; and
- Quality assurance reports.

Monitoring is described in the M&E framework as a continuing managerial function that aims to provide managers, decision makers and main stakeholders with regular feedback and early indications of progress or lack thereof in the achievement of intended results and the attainment of goals and objectives. Monitoring involves collecting and analysing data on implementation processes, strategies and results, and recommending corrective measures.

Evaluation, according to the M&E framework, is defined as a time-bound and periodic exercise that systematically and objectively assesses the relevance, performance, challenges and successes of programmes and projects. It is a vehicle for extracting cross-cutting lessons from operating unit experiences and/or determining the need for modifications to strategic results frameworks.

In summary, no pertinent quality management system has been adopted within the SA government to manage the quality of statistical products and processes. However, eight

dimensions of data quality have been adopted by Statistics South Africa, as general best practice. They would include:

- Relevance (the degree to which statistics meet current and potential users' needs);
- Accuracy (the extent to which the performance information provided is sufficiently accurate to allow it to be considered reliable);
- Timeliness (whether the key time frames prescribed for the release of performance Information are met);
- Accessibility (provision of performance information which is readily available);
- Interpretability (the validity of the performance information, specifically the quality of the evidence provided to substantiate the performance reported);
- Comparability and coherence (the quality of the performance measures contained in strategic and performance plans and reflecting on their ability to provide a meaningful measure of the intended result to be achieved through the activities undertaken);
- Methodological soundness (the extent to which the performance information has been consistently measured in the same way and using the same standards in each instance); and
- Integrity (the extent to which required information is provided, without gaps or incomplete elements).

1.4 THE SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIAL WELFARE CONTEXT

The social welfare sector, based on the difficulties and constraints inherent of the limitations imposed by the past and focus on social security, found it difficult to establish itself and evolve to the extent required to deliver the quality and quantity of service it is capable of.

The mission of the national developmental social welfare strategy as described in the White Paper for Social Welfare 1997, is *“To serve and build a self-reliant nation in partnership with all stakeholders through an integrated social welfare system which maximizes its existing potential, and which is equitable sustainable, accessible, people-centred and developmental.”*

A decade later the ISDM aimed to provide “clarity on the nature, scope and level of services in the developmental services sector” amidst debates to clarify the concept of developmental social welfare services. Five years after the establishment of the independent agency for Social Security, the social welfare sector had the opportunity through the norms and standards project of the Department of Social Development to reflect on its services,

processes, enablers, and key performance areas in an attempt to improve social welfare service delivery.

Baseline studies on the policy and legislative framework have been developed to serve as the foundation for the review of the FSWS and the development of generic norms and standards for social welfare service delivery and the subsequent monitoring and evaluation of service quality. These studies focus on governing documentation pertaining to the agreed target groups and service areas and should be an on-going activity for the purpose of increased quality. This would require the periodic revision of legislation and policies that direct social welfare service delivery.

The contexts within which social welfare services are rendered have changed during the last fifteen years. This has been largely influenced by changes in the socio-economic and political situation of the country, which necessitated legislative and policy reviews to make social welfare programmes and services responsive and equitable to the needs of the poorest of the poor, marginalised and vulnerable groups of our society. The White Paper for Social Welfare (here after referred to as White Paper) guided this transformation process.

The review of the FSWS addressed the nature, scope, extent and level of integrated social welfare services that social service practitioners should be delivering. The framework seeks to facilitate/guide the implementation of a comprehensive, integrated, rights-based, well-resourced, and quality developmental social welfare services.

The figure below demonstrates the interconnectedness of the Policy and Legislative Framework; the Framework for Social Welfare Services; the Norms and Standards and the Quality Assurance Framework. The Framework for Social Welfare Services is informed by the policy and legislative framework which guides developmental, holistic and integrated services. Both these frameworks inform the norms and standards for efficient and effective social welfare services. The Quality Assurance Framework guides the monitoring of these norms and standards in terms of compliance with the policy and legislative framework and in terms of the perceived value for beneficiaries and stakeholders.

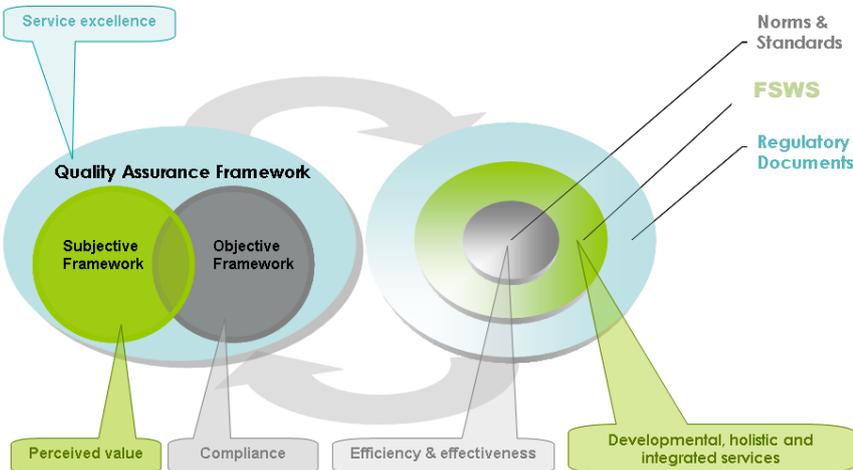


Figure 1: Quality Assurance in the Social Welfare Services Context: the FSWS, QAF and Norms & Standards

2. A QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES

2.1 SWS QUALITY ASSURANCE STRATEGY

The constitutional mandate of the Department of Social Development is to provide sector-wide national leadership in social development. Based on its mandate, the Department of Social Development develops and implements programmes for the eradication of poverty and for social protection and social development amongst the poorest of the poor and the most vulnerable and marginalised. The department effectively implements this through its partnerships with its primary service users and all those sharing its vision.

Social welfare services increasingly experience external and internal pressures to improve effectiveness and efficiency. The worldwide trend toward service quality started in the 1880s with the recognition that service quality rather than a quality product ensures a competitive advantage. Literature suggests that total quality philosophy can be usefully deployed in the service sector too.

A developmental social welfare service in South Africa aims to build a self-reliant nation and maximizes the existing potential in partnership with all stakeholders, and to provide a service that is equitable, sustainable, accessible, people-centred and developmental. This aim is expressed in the vision of the Department of Social Development (DSD) of “A caring and integrated system of social development services that facilitates human development and improves the quality of life.” The mission of the DSD illustrates the developmental focus of the department, namely “to enable the poor, the vulnerable and the excluded within South African society to secure a better life for themselves, in partnership with them and with all those who are committed to building a caring society”.

This total quality philosophy is further expressed through the values of the department as:

- “The people we serve come first in performing our duties.
- We will ensure equity and freedom from discrimination and harassment in the workplace and in the services provided by our department.
- We will work in partnership with the people we serve and with other stakeholders.

- We will use the resources entrusted to us, to deliver on the Government's priorities in the most efficient, effective and innovative ways.
- We will be transparent and accountable for our decisions, actions and performance.
- We will share our knowledge and expertise with other departments and broader welfare sector and learn from them.
- In performing our duties, we will uphold the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the laws governing the public service and the Code of Conduct for the Public Service“

The QA strategy requires the organisation to routinely collect information about performance and to use it to improve services. One simple way of viewing it is to think of the answer to the following questions:

- What do we know about the quality of people's lives? (Collecting information)
- What does this tell us about services? (Interpreting the information)
- What do we need to do to improve quality? (Action planning)
- Are we doing it and learning from it? (Review)

The action plan for QA is developed through a QA statement. The QA statement clearly articulates the organization's intentions regarding quality by answering the following questions:

- Where does the organization want to go in terms of QA?
- What needs to change in order to move toward the mission?
- How does the organization wish to provide services and at what levels?
- Who should benefit?
- What will those benefits be?

2.2 SWS QUALITY ASSURANCE STATEMENT

The Department of Social Development remains firm on its primary objective of improving the quality of life for all our people and is on course in the realisation of its vision which is to build a caring society together. In pursuit of this vision, the Department will continue to provide comprehensive, integrated, sustainable and quality social development services to fight vulnerability and poverty.

The Minister of Social Development has identified priorities in the strategic plan for five years, reaffirming the Department's continuous strive towards improved life quality. These would include:

- Welfare services improvements;
- Reduction of substance abuse;
- Reduction of social crime and the impact thereof;
- Promotion and establishment of Early Childhood Development;
- Community development through mobilization, advocacy and social facilitation;
- Provision of comprehensive social security;
- Strengthening of the capacity of non-governmental organizations;
- Social policy;
- Promotion of population and development agenda; and
- Zero hunger.

The proposed QA Statement for the SWS is:

The DSD was established to improve the quality of life of South Africans by providing social development services. Social welfare services are delivered by the national and provincial departments of social development; non-governmental organisations as well as other government departments. Services are rendered by a spectrum of social welfare practitioners and support staff.

Service quality is important because we value our beneficiaries and stakeholders. We strive to provide services which meet and even exceed expectations and in a manner which demonstrate a developmental approach and respect for human rights.

We are committed to continuous improvement and have established a Quality Assurance Framework which provides a guide for monitoring, measuring and improving service delivery.

We have the following systems and procedures in place to support us in our aim of total stakeholder satisfaction and continuous improvement:

- *regular collecting and monitoring of customer feedback;*
- *a stakeholder complaints procedure;*
- *selection and performance monitoring of suppliers against set criteria;*
- *training and development for our employees;*
- *regular audit of our internal processes;*

- measurable quality objectives which reflect our business aims; and
- management reviews of audit results, customer feedback and complaints.

Our processes are reviewed regularly and are captured in a framework for service delivery, which is made available to the sector. This policy is posted on the Department's website.

Though the Minister has ultimate responsibility for quality, all employees have a responsibility within their own areas of work to ensure that quality is embedded within the entire organization.

2.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE MODEL FOR SWS

The proposed quality assurance model for social welfare services is illustrated in the figure below:

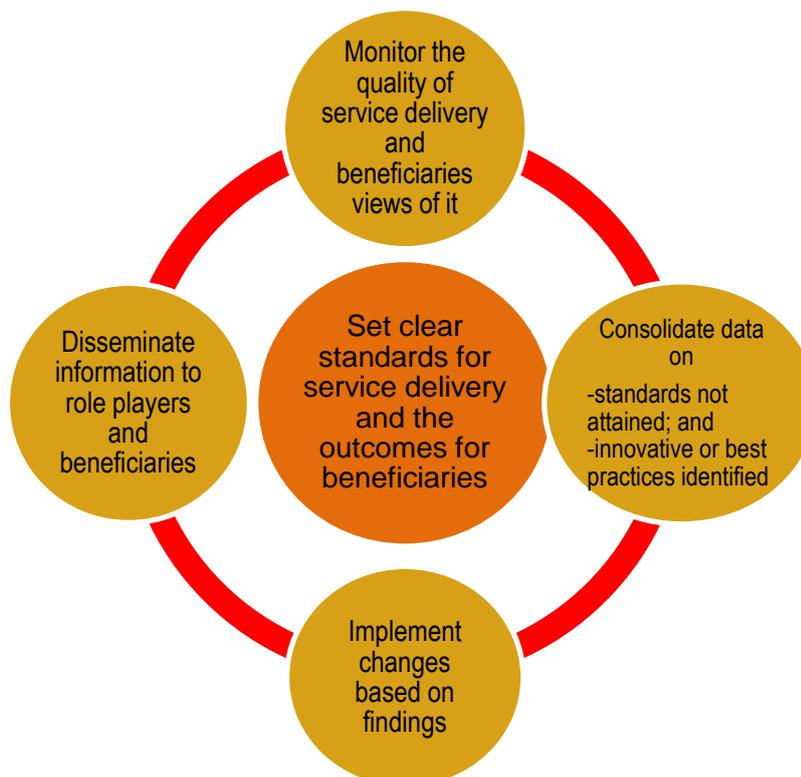


Figure 2: Quality Assurance Model for SWS

In the figure above it is clear that QA revolves around a clear set of standards for service delivery and the outcomes for beneficiaries surrounded by the four interactive building blocks through continuous concurrent processes. These would include the following:

- Monitoring the quality of service delivery and beneficiaries' view of it;
- Consolidate data on standards not attained and innovative or best practices identified;
- Implement changes based on findings; and

- Disseminate information to role players and beneficiaries.

The point of departure for quality assurance for social welfare services is a clear set of standards. The standards will be related to the following elements of service delivery:

- Inputs refer to those aspects of quality that form the foundation of service delivery, e.g. policies and procedures, well-trained staff with the proper credentials and appropriate facilities; and resources.
- Access refers to whether or not those eligible for service are actually receiving the service, and whether the right people are receiving the service.
- Process relates to the way that service is provided and whether the provider carries out the proper actions in the appropriate way.
- Output, which has to do with the volume of service provided and whether or not service is being delivered in sufficient quantity.
- Outcomes describe the results of the service and whether the service had the desired effect.

However the key judgment on service quality should be in terms of outcomes for the people who use it. Quality is assessed through a variety of means including questionnaires, focus groups, reviews, observations and audits. This is backed up by clear messages obtained through external inspection and review.

Monitoring of the quality of service delivery and the views of beneficiaries on the service delivery will be done through the collection of data from various sources and using different methods.

The Department's M&E approach and therefore the quality assurance approach for social welfare services involve both the monitoring of processes and outputs and the evaluating of outcomes and impacts, with some evaluation of processes as well. The table below summarises what gets monitored and what gets evaluated:

Table 1: Monitoring or Evaluation

RESULTS	MONITOR		EVALUATE	
Impact	N	Impacts are not monitored	Y	Based on a broader plan, a decision is made for each programme as to whether an impact evaluation will be undertaken and if so, when.
Outcome	N	Outcomes are not monitored	Y	Outcomes are evaluated according to a determination of the evaluation questions to be addressed.

Output	Y	Key strategic indicators are monitored as determined through the monitoring strategy	N	Outputs are not usually evaluated but in special circumstances, diagnostic evaluations may be undertaken at this level.
Inputs and processes	Y	Determined through the monitoring strategy	Y	In some cases processes are evaluated.

Evidence collected from all the sources must be consolidated to inform an opinion or assessment on whether standards were attained. This can be reflected through a basic dashboard involving a colour coding system. (Green means that all standards are being met, amber means that further examination is required and red that standards are being missed by some margin.) The consolidation will also provide the opportunity to identify innovate and good practices.

This must culminate in a change plan, addressing corrective actions or improvement. Finding, as well as change plans must be disseminated to all role players, including beneficiaries through appropriate communication methods.

2.4 A QUALITY ASSURANCE CULTURE IN THE SWS SECTOR

Having established the vision, mission, and strategy for achieving quality, QA must become a part of the culture of the organization in order to move the organization from compliance monitoring to continuous quality improvement. This culture requires not only a clear and consistent direction but also a set of expectations regarding quality. In addition to the beliefs that need to be embraced by the organization, there are other conditions that need to exist including practical steps that can be taken in order to instil a quality mission within the organization. The incorporation of QA throughout the organization is a continuous process that is addressed at key points during the life of the organization.

One of the central premises related to QA is the belief that problems in quality come from systems, not individuals. Since management is responsible for systems, their involvement is key to the promotion and advancement of a QAF. Without the commitment of the organization's top executive, all quality initiatives are doomed.

Top and middle management must provide leadership to the organization through:

- Demonstration of activities and behaviours that indicate quality as a top priority;
- Support of an environment where opportunities for continuous learning is encouraged.

In order to operationalize the organization's commitment to QA, a structure designed to integrate QA into the way of doing things is necessary. Decisions made regarding the way that the QA programme is carried out will, again, signal the organization's intentions regarding QA.

Another opportunity for visible leadership occurs if management establishes a committee with responsibility for quality. QA committees may vary widely in composition; broader representation will send a stronger message regarding the importance of quality to the organization. A broad-based committee provides opportunity for input from all stakeholders.

Management can also show a commitment to QA by ensuring that adequate resources (adequate staffing, appropriate information systems, training) are available. In addition to resources dedicated to the implementation and oversight of QA processes, the organization can express quality expectations through:

- Communication to staff about standards and desired outcomes beginning with new staff during orientation.
- Evaluation of staff performance on goals connected to quality (and related directly to the mission of the organization).
- Regular monitoring of quality indicators is a further indication of management responsibility.

3. THE QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS (also known as QA CYCLE)

The QA cycle is a set of concurrent processes which include quality control and quality improvement. The quality assurance will not be complete or add value to service delivery without these two processes. Quality assurance provides for the systems or procedures to proactively ensure that quality requirements are met. In order to determine if the requirements are indeed met or to identify deviations against the standards, quality control, which measure against the standards, is critical. In order to minimise deviations and ensure greater adherence to the standards or to improve on the standard quality improvement mechanisms is required.

The total cycle is portrayed in the figure below:

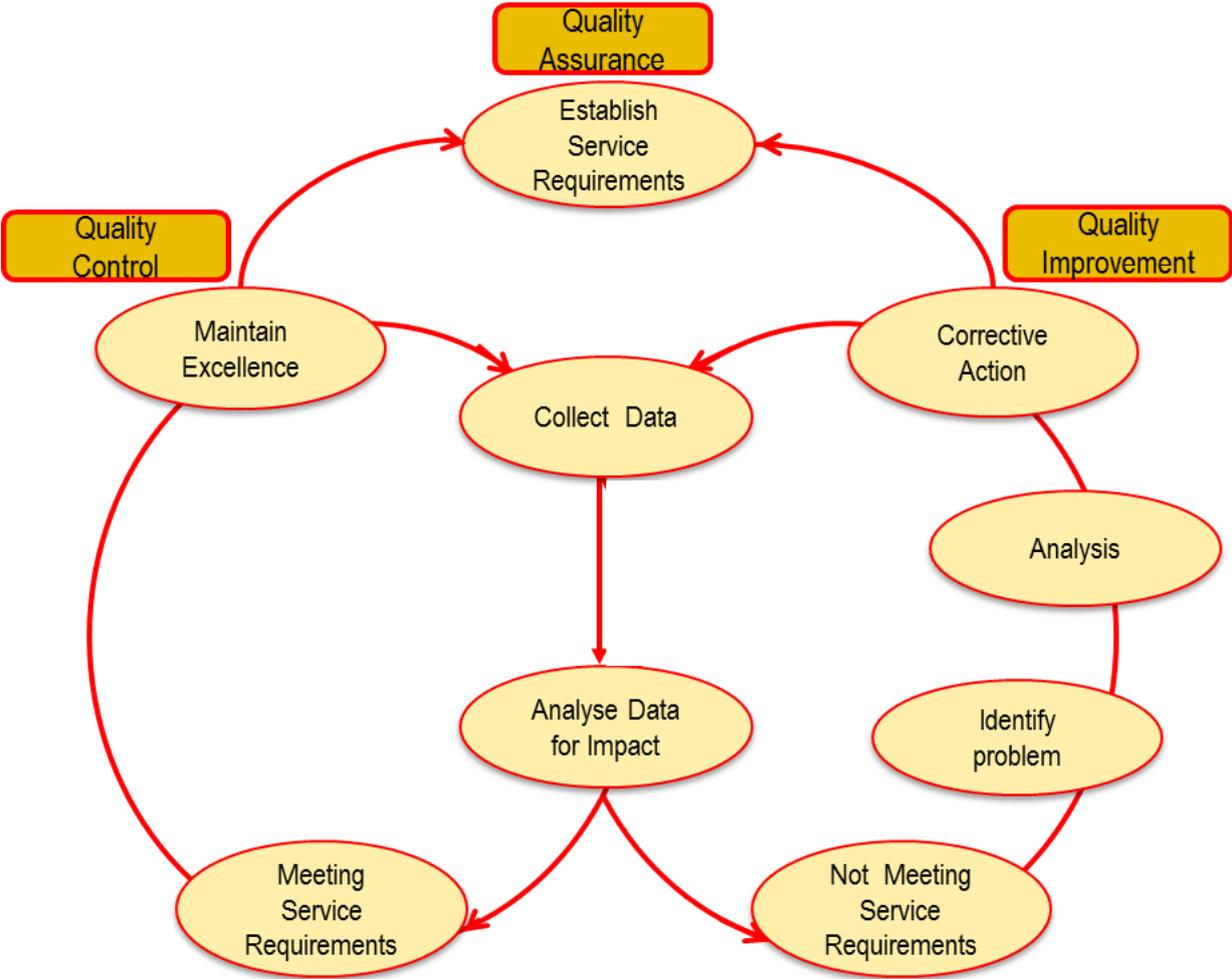


Figure 3: Quality Assurance Cycle

The QA process comprises of the following major steps:

- Establish service quality requirements;
- Collect data; and
- Analyse data for impact.

Depending upon the satisfactory evaluation of the latter, it will either imply continuous maintaining excellence or quality improvement, entailing problem interrogation, and mitigating actions.

3.1 SERVICE QUALITY REQUIREMENTS

Service quality for Social Welfare Services indicates the degree of excellence of services delivered, and has two dimensions, as is clearly indicated in Figure 1:

- The objective dimension where quality is the measurable degree of compliance of activities and processes or its outcomes with the accepted Legislation, Policies and Norms and Standards for Social Welfare Services.
- The subjective dimension where quality is the level of perceived value reported by a stakeholder who benefits from a process or its outcome.

The service quality requirements for Social Welfare Services are influenced by the following:

3.1.1 The legislative and policy mandate

The constitutional mandate of the Department of Social Development is to provide sector-wide national leadership in social development. The department effectively implements this through its partnerships with its primary service users and all those sharing its vision. The Social Welfare Sector derives its mandate from key pieces of legislation and policy documents captured in the FSWS.

Requirements for Quality Assurance on the Legislative and Policy Mandate

- Each piece of legislation in the database should be allocated to an owner.
- All new legislation and policy documents published, with the information of the owner, must be registered on the Compliance Database of the QAF Sub-Directorate.

- The owner of the Legislation, Policy should compile a Compliance Audit Checklist that reflects the expectations of the drafters. This Audit Checklist will be used to objectively determine whether an organisation or practitioner complies.

3.1.2 Policy and planning frameworks guiding social welfare service delivery

The Medium Term Strategic Framework which is a conceptual Framework developed by the centre of government that serves to guide planning and resource allocation. The Medium Term Expenditure Framework seeks to align the planning and expenditure planning cycles of government as a whole. It introduces a rolling cycle of planning and performance measurement so government is able to pay close attention to delivery targets, identify problems, incorporate unforeseen events or concerns, and manage itself.

Requirements for Quality Assurance on Policy and Planning Frameworks

The MTSF and MTEF therefore form the underlying foundation of the DSD's strategic and financial planning and performance reporting. The DSD is required to submit its annual performance information documents for audit purposes with its annual financial statements by 31 May each year in order to allow the auditors to perform the necessary final audit procedures.

3.1.3 Presidency Outcomes

The Minister of Social Development signs a Performance Contract with the President in as the commitment to the delivery of certain results. The outcomes that are reflected in the performance agreement are outcomes 2, 4 and 7.

- A long and healthy life for all South Africans.
- Decent employment through inclusive growth.
- Vibrant, equitable, sustainable rural communities with food security for all.

Additional outcomes to which the department is contributing to are outcomes 1, 3 and 12.

- Improved quality of basic education.
- Vibrant, equitable, sustainable rural communities with food security for all.
- An efficient and development oriented public service and an empowered, fair and inclusive citizenship.

Requirements for Quality Assurance of Presidential Outcomes

The indicators for reporting on these priorities are described as the sector priority indicators. The data elements as developed by the DSD M & E Directorate are attached

as Appendix A-1, with the indicator definitions attached as Appendix A-2.

3.1.4 Sector Priorities in the sustained agenda (Non-financial data)

The Department of Social Development has identified a number of priorities that it seeks to achieve. Those priorities that do not contribute directly to the achievement of the Presidency's Outcomes are referred to as the sector's "sustained agenda". The National department has ensured synergy between the identified outcomes, the sector priorities and the strategic plans of the department. The priorities referred to are as follows:

- Reduction in the abuse of substances
- Promotion and establishment of Early Childhood Development
- Strengthening of communities through community mobilization and development
- Providing comprehensive social security, including income support, and a safety net for the destitute
- Strengthening of the capacity of non-governmental organizations to deliver quality services
- Escalation of social policy as a centre for social development research
- Promotion of population and development
- Welfare services
- Zero hunger

Requirements for Quality Assurance of Social Service Priorities

The data elements for reporting on these outcomes are part of the non-financial data reporting as developed by the DSD M & E Directorate are attached as Appendix B-1, with the indicator definitions attached as Appendix B-2.

3.1.5 Norms and Standards for Social Welfare Services

Monitoring and evaluation of the quality of services requires that norms and standards should be established and maintained to form the basis for on-going quality assessment activities, to evaluate and monitor progress of a particular service. The norms and standards framework describes the fundamental aspects of quality in social welfare services and therefore includes the responsibilities of the various role players on national, provincial and local level.

Norms and standards should ensure that service delivery is:

- Consistent with the Constitution, 1996; especially Section 27 and 33 with regard to the right to accessibility, administrative justice, efficiency and cost effective use of public resources;
- Consistent with the broad vision and policies of the government of the day;
- Provided within the framework of current legislation and policies;
- Delivered according to sound governance and management principles;
- Provided by well capacitated service providers;
- Consistently, timeously and reliably delivered;
- Affordable and cost effective;
- Managed in terms of realistic measurable performance standards; and
- Managed through provision of adequate control measures.

The implementation of the developed norms and standards aim at enabling the following quality features, in particular for the National Department of Social Development:

- Create focus on the Government's social priorities by all service providers;
- Clarify roles and responsibilities of the government and other role players in the social welfare sector including all collaborative partners;
- Standardise services and streamline processes for rendering social welfare services across the country, which will enable quality and performance management; and
- Provide a framework for the planning of financial and human resource requirements, as well as the planning for infrastructure and information management requirements to deliver the required services;

For service providers and other collaborative partners it implies:

- Promotion and maintenance of a high standard of professional ethics within the whole sector;
- Clear strategic direction in terms of priorities and needs to be addressed;
- Clarified roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders in the process of delivering social welfare services;
- Reduction in duplication of services; and
- A platform for planning and funding services based on the needs of the communities and most vulnerable individuals and communities.

For the beneficiaries, the implementation of the norms and standards should result in fair, equitable and impartial provision of services, efficient and effective utilisation of public resources, encouragement of public participation in policy-making, a culture of

transparency, accountability and development and a clear understanding of what minimum services to expect and from where to receive these services.

The norms and standards for social welfare services include contextual; organisational; process and outcomes norms and standards. The structuring of the norms and standards aligns and integrates of all the elements of the framework for social welfare services, namely the life stages, focus areas, services, levels of service delivery and support services to provide norms and standards that addresses the preconditions for service delivery, the service providers, the service delivery and the end results of service delivery.

Requirements for Quality Assurance on Norms and Standards

The norms and standards for social welfare services provide a clear indication of the quality requirements. However, in order to monitor adherence to the norms and standards, indicators were developed. The index of the norms and standards with indicator titles related to specific norms is attached as Appendix C-1. The index of indicator definitions is attached as Appendix C-2. The indicator protocol sheet for each indicator is attached as Appendix C-3.

The quality requirements for social welfare services are described in the different documents referred to above as outcomes and objectives. In order to determine the service quality it requires the collection of data to assess the existing services and service delivery against the set requirements.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION

The methodology and tools for data collection will be determined by the purpose of the data collection. In quality management the two main purposes are monitoring or evaluation to determine the current status in order to determine the gaps which will inform maintenance or improvement plans.

Monitoring aims to provide managers, decision makers and main stakeholders with regular feedback and early indications of progress or lack thereof in the achievement of intended results and the attainment of goals and objectives. Monitoring involves reporting on actual performance against what was planned or expected according to pre-determined standards. It generally involves collecting and analysing data on implementation processes, strategies and results, and recommending corrective measures.

Evaluation is a time-bound and periodic exercise that systematically and objectively assesses the relevance, performance, challenges and successes of programmes and projects. Evaluation can also address outcomes or other development issues. Evaluation usually seeks to answer specific questions to guide decision-makers or programme managers and should advise whether underlying theories and assumptions were valid, what worked, what did not and why. Evaluation commonly aims to determine relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.

There are two primary types of data that can be collected - data that allows for quantitative assessment and that which allows for qualitative assessment. Quantitative data refers to numbers and objective hard data. Qualitative data refers to more subjective data derived from open-ended and exploratory research. Data can be collected from existing social welfare information system or through other established reporting mechanisms. As the information collected will be used for decision-making, statistical methods of measurement need to be used to ensure that the information is valid and reliable.

Once outcomes and indicators have been defined by the organization and a QA culture has been created, data measurements must be collected. Data measurements allow management to “manage by fact” rather than judgment or intuition. The purpose of collecting data is to monitor and provide feedback regarding outcomes and compliance with standards. Prior to the collection of data, measurements, indicators and benchmarks need to be established. These measurements will help to quantify the achievement of an outcome as well as target the desired level of achievement.

Four common methods used to assess quality collect data are audits, programme evaluation, research and stakeholder feedback. They would include:

- Audits. Case files and organizational files can be audited for compliance to standards and for the quality of services provided. Internal case reviews would include those conducted by the social welfare practitioners and focus on compliance to standards. External reviews should regularly be conducted and could also focus on the measurement of compliance with standards. Stakeholders from external groups (e.g. community partners) along with organization staff can be used for external reviews.
- Programme evaluation. There are many benefits to the evaluation of programme and policy related outcomes. The measurements and information obtained can assist with the establishment of intervention and prevention priorities. The data can also be used

to improve organizational processes, assess the quality of services and assist in determining cost effectiveness.

- Research. Research can provide an evidence base for programme services, clinical interventions and best practices. Data acquired through research can be used to discover and interpret new knowledge or to provide information about a particular subject. Partnerships can be formed with academic institutions to perform both internal and external evaluations of organization programs.
- Stakeholder feedback. Stakeholder feedback is commonly used to collect data regarding perceptions, opinions and feelings. Some common methods of obtaining stakeholder feedback are:
 - Beneficiary, community, and stakeholder measurements using surveys, focus groups, complaint processes, interviews and discharge interviews
 - Employee measurements using tools such as employee attitudinal surveys, training surveys, exit interviews, through the grievance and complaint process and other organization feedback mechanisms

Prior to the collection of data, consideration should be given to ethical standards, practical matters, client consultation, and information systems. The ethical aspects of QA activities require examination, especially when they are related to the collection of data that is not otherwise seen as the 'direct case' responsibility of the organization. The collection of this data requires the consideration of its risk and benefits and the consent of the individuals involved. Safeguards around data collection need to be in place to ensure anonymity and confidentiality of information, and safeguarding the well-being of participants by identifying any possible risks and precautions to minimize or remove them.

In addition to the need to review ethical matters when the measurement method is selected, it is also important to give thought to practical considerations e.g. whether the information system has been designed to produce the required data, or if the staff can reasonably be expected to fill out one more survey. The ideal methodology does not create extraordinary pressures for the organization.

Often organizations are reluctant to survey welfare client populations because of the involuntary nature of the client/organization relationship and the decreased possibility of honest feedback. It is necessary, therefore, to be creative and develop methods for data collection that are sensitive to the needs of the population. Protection clients, for example,

have been successfully contacted through telephone surveys conducted by retired social workers.

The data collection described in this section will focus on monitoring of indicators. It is critical that programme evaluation and research be used effectively to address quality assurance. This is however addressed in the evaluation strategy of the DSD's Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. The sub-directorate must annually submit the specific needs for evaluation and research in terms of quality assurance issues to the M & E and Research Directorates of the DSD. This should include at least one study measuring the outcomes of social welfare services.

3.2.1 Data collection on the requirements for the legislative and policy mandate

Data Collection Method

Data on compliance with the requirement for the legislative and policy mandate will be collected by means of a compliance audit. A compliance audit can be defined as the independent, third-party assessment of the conformity of any activity, process, service or outcome with the criteria laid down by a specific legislation and policy.

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool will be the compliance audit checklist compile by the owner of each piece of legislation or policy document. This audit checklist will be used to objectively determine whether an organisation complies with the specific piece of legislation and/or policy. Each check point on the checklist must be formulated in such a way that an objective auditor can check "yes, comply" or "no, do not comply" against it. Each check point must represent only one concept, and must be measurable, either quantitatively or via visual inspection.

Data Collection Process

The compliance audits should be conducted in three phases

- Pre-Audit: This phase comprises the following steps:
 - Plan and organise the audit
 - Clarify the audit objectives, scope and protocol
 - Appoint and train the audit teams

Select (through a random selection methodology) the organisations to be audited. Select the regulations applicable to each organisation, and determine which (or all) of these will be audited.

- On-site Audits: This phase comprise visits by the audit teams to the selected organisations, to conduct personal interviews, review records, and make physical observations to assess compliance with regulations, using the audit checklists
- Post-Audit: During this phase the audit teams will process their findings and report back according to the predetermined format.

Sampling of participants

To ensure the objectivity and fairness of the process, each directorate in the national and provincial offices of the DSD, other government departments rendering social welfare services and all registered non-governmental organisations down to the level of service points must have an equal chance of being selected for an audit. The following sampling procedure should be followed:

- A comprehensive audit database must be compiled of
 - Names and contact details of each directorate in the national office of DSD.
 - Names and contact details of each directorate in the provincial offices of DSD.
 - Names and contact details of social welfare departments/directorates in other government departments.
 - Names and contact details of all the registered NGO's.
 - Names and contact details for all service delivery points for DSD; other government departments and registered NGO's.
- A software tool must be used to do the random selection as follows:
 - Randomly select 40% of the national and provincial DSD directorates countrywide, with least three directorates from each province included.
 - Randomly select 20% of all the DSD service points in each province.
 - Randomly select 5% of the registered NGO's.

Sampling of legislation and policy

Due to cost and time limitations it will be impossible to audit each organisation for all applicable legislation and policies during each audit cycle. The legislation and policies should be selected based on strategic priorities and changes in legislation and policies. The directorate service standards should every second year identify which legislation and policies should be included in the compliance audit.

Frequency of data collection

The compliance audit should be conducted annually at least every second year.

3.2.2 Data collection on the requirements for policy and planning frameworks

The DSD is required to submit its annual performance information documents for audit purposes with its annual financial statements by 31 May each year in order to allow the auditors to perform the necessary final audit procedures.

An audit report will be provided containing an audit opinion on the Department's financial statements, other matters and a separate audit opinion will be provided on performance information. The audit opinion on performance information will be reported in the audit report in a section entitled "other legal and regulatory responsibilities".

3.2.3 Data collection on the requirements for Presidency Outcomes

Data Collection Method

Data collection on the indicators for the Presidency outcomes will be done through self-reporting by practitioners/service offices.

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool for reporting is a template designed by the DSD M & E directorate attached as Appendix D.

Data Collection Process

A range of primary data will be collected from practitioners and local offices on paper data collection formats. The individual data collection sheets will be summarised and checked at local office level and submitted to DSD District Offices. District Offices will summarise the local data sheets and enter the data for the district onto the electronic monitoring system.

Sampling of participants

No sampling of participants will take place. The expectation is reporting by all registered non-governmental organisations and all DSD offices.

Frequency of data collection

Data is captured monthly and submitted to district offices. District and provincial offices submit the electronic data quarterly.

3.2.4 Data collection on the requirements for Sector Priorities (Non-financial data)

Data Collection Method

Data collection on the indicators for the Presidency outcomes will be done through self-reporting by practitioners/service offices.

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool for reporting is a template designed by the DSD M & E directorate attached as Appendix E.

Data Collection Process

A range of primary data will be collected from practitioners and local offices on paper data collection formats. The individual data collection sheets will be summarised and checked at local office level and submitted to DSD District Offices. District Offices will summarise the local data sheets and enter the data for the district onto the electronic monitoring system.

Sampling of participants

No sampling of participants will take place. The expectation is reporting by all registered non-governmental organisations and all DSD offices.

Frequency of data collection

Data is captured monthly and submitted to district offices. District and provincial office submit the electronic data quarterly.

3.2.5 Data collection on the requirements for Norms and Standards for Social Welfare Services

Data Collection Method

The main data collection method will be through self-reporting by using multiple sources of data, including the national and provincial offices of the DSD; the South African Council

for Social Service Professions; social welfare service managers; supervisors; practitioners; beneficiaries; and files.

Data Collection Tool/s

A number and variety of data collection tools can be used to collect the data. The data elements are identified in the Indicator Protocol Sheets and should inform any data collection tool.

For the baseline data, the data collection tools were a set of questionnaires addressing specific indicators for the various norms. These can be repeated or amended in order to compare results over time.

Data Collection Process

If the baseline data collection tools are used, the data collection process for each of the data collection tools is described in Appendix F which describes the methodology. Data could be collected through manual completion of questionnaires or online electronic completion. Any alternative data collection tool may require an alternative data collection process. Due to the amount of data elements and the variety of sources involved for the collection of data on the generic norms and standards for social welfare services, the data collection should be phased over a period of one – three years, focussing on managers and supervisors; practitioners and beneficiaries respectively in each year.

Sampling of participants

To ensure the objectivity and fairness of the process, each directorate in the national and provincial offices of the DSD, other government departments rendering social welfare services and all registered non-governmental organisations down to the level of service points must have an equal chance of being selected for an audit and therefore random sampling will be the most appropriate sampling technique. This will require detailed and updated databases of service offices; non-governmental organisations and finally of the different categories of practitioners.

Sampling of tools

Due to cost and time limitations it may be impossible to conduct each tool at each organisation during each audit cycle. The data collection tools could be selected based on previous reports in the different provinces and districts. The directorate service standards should identify which data collection tools should be used during each cycle.

Frequency of data collection

The norms and standards assessment should be conducted at least every second year.

3.3 ANALYZE DATA FOR IMPACT

Analysis and reporting of data is a critical element of QA as the finding should inform decision making and improvement of services. Data analysis can vary from a very simple assessment of the information to more complex methodologies. One straightforward way of looking at data is to:

- Graph the information in column, bar, line and/or pie charts;
- Compare the information to historical performance, trends and/or benchmarks; and
- Project future trends.

Other more complex methodologies more often involving evaluation and research studies could include statistical analysis such as correlations, linear regression, chi-square, moving from single variable to multi-variable comparisons.

Data results indicate examples of appropriate responses

- Equals benchmark criteria - supports status quo, reinforce, encourage, maintain;
- Higher than expected - re-assess benchmarks, assess related efficiency targets, assess quality indicators;
- Less than expected - develop supports, assess related efficiency targets, assess quality indicators and benchmarks, re-assess measures, change strategies; and
- Unsuspected trend - developing track related information to complete analysis.

A key aspect of this phase of the QA cycle is to develop and provide clear and timely communication about the results gathered. It is important to share the analyses in reports specifically tailored to the various key stakeholder audiences, providing a dynamic link between the staff who supplied the information, other stakeholders and the reviewers to demonstrate that QA is not just about monitoring. A well-developed message from a thorough analysis will reinforce the organization's quality objectives – acknowledging successes or providing the impetus for required adjustments.

3.3.1 Reporting on the requirements for the legislative and policy mandate

A compliance audit report disaggregated per province for the DSD; per government department; per NGO should be compiled by the audit team and submitted to the

Directorate Service Standards for dissemination and distribution to stakeholders.

3.3.2 Reporting on the requirements for policy and planning frameworks

The DSD is required to submit its annual performance information documents for audit purposes with its annual financial statements by 31 May each year in order to allow the auditors to perform the necessary final audit procedures.

An audit report will be provided containing an audit opinion on the Department's financial statements, other matters and a separate audit opinion will be provided on performance information. The audit opinion on performance information will be reported in the audit report in a section entitled "other legal and regulatory responsibilities".

3.3.3 Reporting on the requirements for Presidency Outcomes

The Department of Social Development will have to report on a quarterly basis on its contribution to the national outcomes as identified by the Presidency. Statistical and analytical information is required in terms of the DSD's progress with regard to the three outcomes identified in the Minister's performance agreement.

3.3.4 Reporting on the requirements for Sector Priorities (Non-financial data)

Reports on Non-Financial data must be submitted to National Treasury on a quarterly basis to allow it to monitor the expenditure of resources and compliance with budgets. This should be detailed and accurate and should support the kinds of analysis required for expenditure planning and budgetary allocation. DSD is also required to contribute to the End of Term Reports prepared by the Presidency and to respond to other ad hoc requests made by it.

3.3.5 Reporting on the requirements for Norms and Standards for Social Welfare Services

The report on the requirements for norms and standards for social welfare services will provide an assessment of the level of compliance with the norms and standards and identify gaps in compliance. Information could be disaggregated based on the data source; a category of norms; per district and province; as well as per government department and NGO.

3.4 IMPROVING QUALITY AND MAINTAINING EXCELLENCE

Depending upon the evaluation of the analysed data, it will either imply continuous maintaining excellence; also known as quality monitoring or quality improvement which involves problem interrogation, and mitigating actions.

The findings and recommendations in monitoring; evaluation and research reports should be translated to action plans in order to improve or maintain quality.

One of the by-products of the QA process can be the identification of best practices or innovation. When an organization has been able to demonstrate that certain practices lead to the achievement of desired outcomes, it enables the field to identify best practices.

4. CONCLUSION

The Quality Assurance Framework for Social Welfare Services is a tool to create a culture of quality in the social welfare sector. It is also a tool to instil confidence in the sector as stakeholders will have a common understanding and expectation of quality social welfare services. It clearly describes the benchmark for quality which will enable social welfare service practitioners to continuously improve on their own service delivery through reflective practice.