

Students Should Be Able To Make Better Decisions

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Introduction

While some individuals feel that our government is doing a good job of providing services to the public, others contend that it can do an even better job at a lower cost.

This document introduces a new model of public accountability that would create a more open, informed, and better managed government operation that would help move Alberta government services from good to great.

In this new model of public accountability, government departments and those who provide services on their behalf will be listed in a comparative manner on each department's public website. This comparative list of information (Key Performance Indicators) will enable elected officials as well as the public to see how efficient and effective each provider of service is. This transparent information will enable elected officials, government personnel, and the public to make more objective and informed decisions regarding which service provider they wish to receive services from.

Service providers include such organizations as elementary and secondary schools, social service providers, health service providers, higher education and training providers, and government operated public providers. All public and private organizations receiving provincial government dollars to provide public service will be identified on each department's website.

Each website will consist of a set of qualitative measures and a set of quantitative measures.

Qualitative Measures

Comparative data listed on each department's public website will include a number of quality measures, for example,

- depth or degree of engagement
- breadth or range of services
- appropriateness or need of services
- speed or timeliness of service
- overall customer satisfaction

Within this new model of public accountability, a customer can be referred to as a client, patient, or student.

Quantitative Measures

Comparative data listed on department websites will also include a number of quantitative measures. Such measures could include:

- cost per unit of service
- cost per period of service (e.g., per hour, per quarter, per annum)
- the number of customers serviced per reporting period
- the number and percent of customers who withdrew or were terminated from service during the reporting period
- the number and percent of customers who successfully completed services
- the number and percent of customers who were able to utilize services in order to meet a personal need

Wherever possible, measures will focus more on outcomes, outputs, and desired goals, and will focus less on process (i.e., steps followed to achieve outcomes).

Benefits of Web-Based Accountability

- Each stakeholder will become more aware of the comparative costs of providing services by each service provider.
- Stakeholders will be able to compare the quality of services provided by each service provider.
- Stakeholders will be better informed and be able to make more objective decisions as to what service provider they wish to receive services from.
- Service providers will be more aware of and able to focus greater attention in areas requiring improvement in quality and costs.
- Service providers who provide more efficient and effective services should attract more customers (patients, clients, students), and in return receive more government support. Less efficient and effective providers should receive less government support.

Conclusion

Providing more transparent public accountability of government efficiency and effectiveness will improve the overall quality of services to the public, while at the same time, reduce inefficiencies (i.e., reduce the overall cost of government). This model of public accountability will increase public satisfaction with its government. It will also move government from being a good provider of service to becoming a great provider of service.