

Getting Results
in Government
*A checklist for
effective policies
& programs*



Why a Checklist?

It's a question many have asked: Can a simple tool be created to increase the effectiveness of large government programs?



It's a question many have asked: Is there a simple tool to increase the effectiveness of large government programs?

Governments have achieved extraordinary outcomes in complex environments—no more apparent than in NASA's Apollo program. But why do so many government programs fail? William D. Eggers and John O'Leary's *If We Can Put a Man on the Moon...* investigates why some government programs fail to deliver on their intended goals while others are very effective. The book profiles 78 large-scale government programs between 1941 and 2009 and includes survey data from the US Senior Executive Service and National Academy of Public Administration..

Similarly, Michael Barber's *Instruction to Deliver* sets forth a methodology and series of guidelines that the author developed from his work as the head of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit under Tony Blair. Barber's approach centers on posing challenging questions to leaders of major initiatives to help their programs stay on target to achieve their intended goals.

Complementing these two guides to effective government programs, Atul Gawande's *Checklist Manifesto* illustrates how simple, well designed checklists improve effectiveness in complex undertakings—from building sky scrapers to code to decreasing the chances of infections following surgery. Gawande's book demonstrates how checklists bring structure to difficult tasks, leading to a "higher standard of baseline performance," and preventing common yet avoidable errors.

The result

This Checklist for Getting Results in Government brings together some of the specific lessons in these books and combines it with the experience of Deloitte professionals who have advised Government clients on some of their most challenging goals.

Like the case studies in these books, this checklist can be applied to many types of initiatives at any level of government—federal, state, and local.

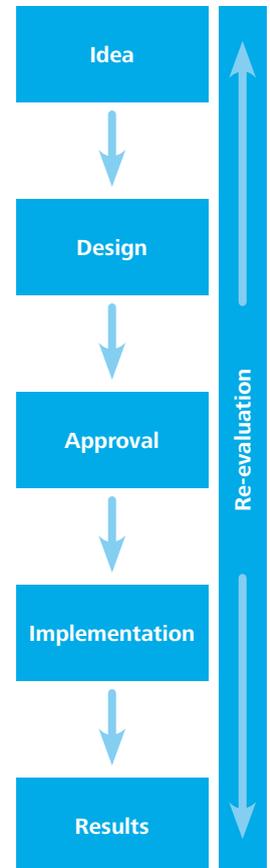
How it works

This checklist is broken into six sections, each representing a specific stage in a government program's journey from idea to successful completion:

- 1. Idea:** Developing the idea for a program that will be effective and implementable
- 2. Design:** Articulating the specifics that will lead to an implementable program
- 3. Approval:** Securing the agreement of the stakeholders who will decide whether the program is implemented
- 4. Implementation:** Setting the architecture for delivering the program so that it will meet its intended goals
- 5. Results:** Managing the program deliver the intended outcomes
- 6. Re-evaluation:** Continuously assessing the program to be sure that it delivers results

Based on the specific success factors at each stage, the checklist poses a series of questions, which program managers can ask themselves in order to increase the chances of meeting program objectives.

This checklist can be used to plan within a project team, strategize with clients at each stage of a major initiative, demonstrate the project team's intimate understanding of project management principles, chart the path for a new initiative, identify how to get a failing program back on track, or retrospectively diagnose why a program was effective or not. If applied *early and often*, this checklist can be a powerful addition to your program management toolkit and a valuable resource for keeping programs on track.



A Solid Foundation



Effective programs are built on good ideas. Arriving at the right idea on which to base the design of a program requires:

- Clarity on what you are trying to achieve
- Understanding the different ways you can meet your objectives
- Selecting the best idea to meet your goal

Once you are clear on what you are really trying to achieve, it is important to draw on the diverse experiences of others who have tried to achieve similar objectives or overcome similar challenges. Engaging a wide group of stakeholders can also bring valuable perspectives and views to the generation and evolution of possible ideas. Finally, it is important to consider the available evidence on the likely impacts of the most promising ideas before selecting the idea you wish to progress.

This part of the checklist targets those who are responsible for generating ideas for government programs as they aim to arrive at the best idea to achieve their goals.

Getting clarity on the goal

Do you really understand the end goal?

Can you articulate:

- What are the specific goals that your idea seeks to achieve (i.e., how will the world look different because of your idea)?
- Where are you now in achieving your goal?
- Why is a new program needed to achieve these goals?
- How will you know when you have reached the intended outcome?
- How does your goal align or conflict with the government's other priorities?

Do you fully understand the factors that influence the achievement of your goal?

Can you articulate:

- What does the data tell you about how similar outcomes have been achieved in other settings?
- How have other municipalities, states, or countries tried to achieve the same goals?
- What factors have helped or hindered their ability to achieve those goals?

Opening up to alternative ideas

Have you looked at your idea from different perspectives?

Can you articulate:

- How do people with different ideologies think you should achieve your goal?
- What ideas do external specialists have about how you should achieve your goal?
- How did your idea evolve as you examined different ways to achieve your goal?

Has your idea benefited from the experience of others?

Can you articulate:

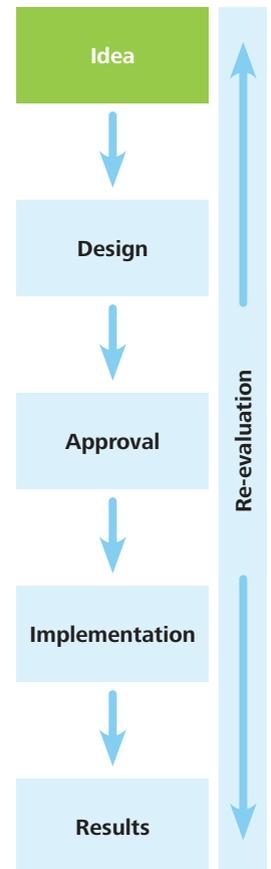
- What ideas do stakeholders in the delivery chain (i.e., those who will steward your idea from design through to final delivery) have about how you should achieve your goal?
- What ideas do those who will be impacted by your idea have about how you should achieve your goal?
- How did your idea evolve in light of feedback from specialists, the delivery chain, and those who would be impacted by your idea?

Selecting and improving the idea

Do the evidence and analysis support the selection of your final idea?

Can you articulate:

- How have you determined that the evidence and analysis you had gave you a complete picture of the issue?
- What does the data suggest about the likely effectiveness of different ideas?
- Does the evidence suggest that your idea will deliver the goal alone, or will it need to be combined with other measures?
- To what extent is meeting your objectives contingent on variable factors (e.g., economy, technology, demographical trends, global or geopolitical considerations)?
- Why is your idea a more worthwhile investment than other options?
- What does independent verification say about your cost/benefit estimates?
- What data have you seen that might suggest that your approach may not be the best way of achieving your goal?



Designing Programs that Work

When public programs fail to meet their objectives, that failure is often rooted in poor program design. Too often, legislators focus on what is necessary to secure an idea's passage through the legislature, and program designers develop programs that work more easily in concept than in practice. This is not enough. They also need to view drafting legislation or designing programs as creating the blueprint for an effective, workable program that will deliver its goals. Keys to effective program design are:

- Clearly articulating program objectives and how they will be measured
- Considering the system within which the program will need to deliver
- Understanding the role that stakeholders will play
- Anticipating the different ways in which the program might fail to meet the defined objectives
- Getting right the core building blocks of how the program will operate

Once there is clarity on the program objectives to be achieved, a detailed program design needs to be developed. This design needs to be informed by an understanding of the system within which it operates and the different ways in which the program might fall short of such objectives. Design also needs to take into account the role that stakeholders will play in its approval, delivery, and evaluation

This part of the checklist has been designed to target those tasked with turning an idea into draft legislation or a blueprint for a government program.

Defining the goal

□ *Are you clear about what your goals look like?*

Can you articulate:

- How does your view of the program's goals coincide with or deviate from the view of those who formulated the original idea on which your program is based?
- What metrics will you use to measure progress and achievement of such goals?
- Is the supporting data for those metrics available, reliable, and sufficiently frequent?

Aligning the program with the system

□ *Do you have a full picture of what else is going on in the same policy 'space'?*

Can you articulate:

- What are the major programs that currently operate in this policy 'space'?
- What are the existing programs that seek to achieve similar goals?
- What are the major planned initiatives that will operate in this policy space in the future?
- What programs/initiatives are already in place that impact the same set of end recipients (e.g., the individuals, communities, businesses, organizations targeted by your program)?

□ *Do you understand how your program will work with other programs?*

Can you articulate:

- What are the potential synergies with other programs?
- How may other programs support or hinder the achievement of your goals?
- What existing programs could be directly or indirectly impacted by your proposed program?

Understanding stakeholder impact

□ *Do you have a full picture of how external stakeholders will influence achievement of your program goals?*

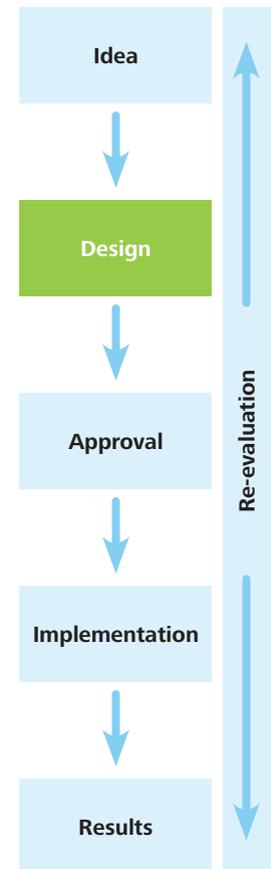
Can you articulate:

- Who is responsible for leading the program from beginning to end?
- What are the different segments of stakeholders and customers that will be affected by your program, and what are the specific needs and preferences of each?
- Who are your champions in the specific parties (e.g., Congress, agencies) involved in the project?
- Why will people critical to program success respond positively to this approach?
- What potentially negative effects to stakeholders can be expected, and how will they be addressed?
- How are stakeholders measured for performance, and how will their involvement in your program enable them to be effective in their jobs?
- Who are your program's chief critics?
- What are your critics' main concerns about your program?

□ *Do you have a clear understanding of the role of stakeholders in delivering your program?*

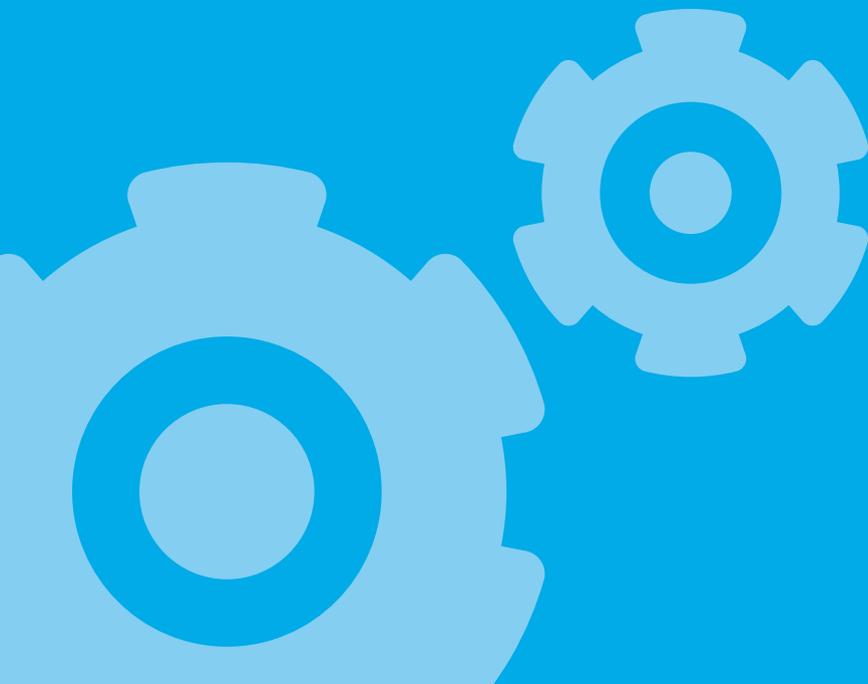
Can you articulate:

- Who are the stakeholders in your delivery chain (e.g., government agencies, state and local governments, industries, businesses, NGOs or individuals that will be part of program implementation)?
- What are the competing priorities of the stakeholders who will deliver your program?
- What do stakeholders in your delivery chain have to say about your draft program design?
- How will the different stakeholders be incentivized to cooperate in program delivery?
- How might stakeholders try to 'game' the system?



(continued)

Designing Programs that Work (cont.)



Pressure testing

- **Do you understand the ways in which your program could fail to meet its objectives?**

Can you articulate:

- What were the results of scenario planning used to identify the various ways in which the program could unfold?
- If any aspects of your design have been tried before, what was the outcome, good or bad?

- **Can your program still meet its objectives if circumstances change?**

Can you articulate:

- To what extent is achieving your program's objectives contingent on unpredictable factors (e.g., economy, technology, societal trends, political environment)?
- How might technological changes or advancements impact your program?
- How will you adapt if your leadership team or program champions change?

Working out the details

- **Do you have a detailed understanding of how your program will work?**

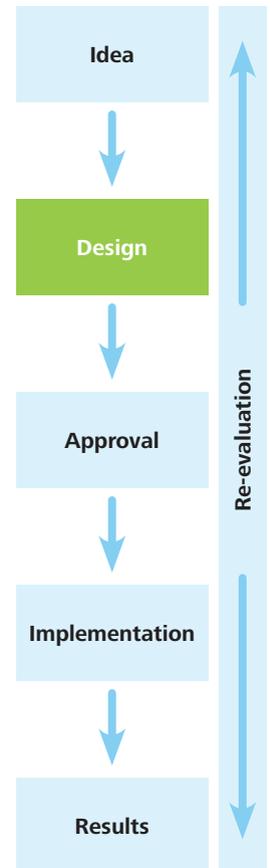
Can you articulate:

- What is the view of your program's delivery model top-down and bottom-up?
- Who is accountable for the program as a whole?
- Who is accountable for the role played by each element of the delivery chain?
- What new processes, rules, capabilities, and infrastructure will need to be developed in order to deliver your program?
- How might your program affect related pieces of legislation or government policy?
- How did you arrive at your list of requirements for program design?
- What creative ideas could enable the achievement of your goal even if they are not stated requirements?
- What does your anticipated trajectory for progress and achievement of your goals look like?
- What evidence do you have that your anticipated trajectory is realistic?
- What are your processes to manage change?
- How long will this program last?

- **Do you have a detailed understanding of program costs?**

Can you articulate:

- What does your anticipated spend look like over the course of the program? What is the breakdown of startup and recurring costs?
- How will you determine that government funds are used efficiently?
- What issues and concerns were raised during the independent cost analysis of this program?



Getting Approval



Effective navigation of the approval process is integral to eventual achievement of the program goals. Stakeholders in the approval process may try to redirect the program toward alternate goals or seek changes that compromise the likelihood of the idea achieving its goals. Getting a draft program through the approval process with its original goals and its integrity intact requires:

- Arriving at good-faith compromise on details without compromising program goals or effectiveness
- Preparing the program for transition to those who will be executing it

This phase covers the democratic commitment point that separates the 'political' universe of policy selection and funding decisions from the 'bureaucratic' universe of implementation.

This part of the checklist has been designed to target those charged with taking a draft program through the approval process to arrive at a sound mandate for delivery. At a national or state level it could apply to the legislative process. Within a Government agency, it could also represent the stage when political appointees consider policy options and decide on their strategies to deliver their mission.

Arriving at smart compromise

- **Are you prepared for any negotiation that may be necessary before you can obtain approval for your program to proceed?**

Can you articulate:

- What are the 'nice-to-have' program features that can be cut to increase the likelihood of approval?
- Of the different components of your program design, which can stand alone and which can be combined in order to deliver your anticipated impacts?
- What aspects of the program are considered 'deal breakers,' and can you articulate them to opponents of the program?
- Of the potential components that may be added to your program, what are their individual and collective impacts on your goal, costs, and timescales?
- Can you walk away from your program if agreement cannot be obtained during negotiations?

Preparing for transition

- **Are those affected able to articulate the intended goals or outcomes of the program?**

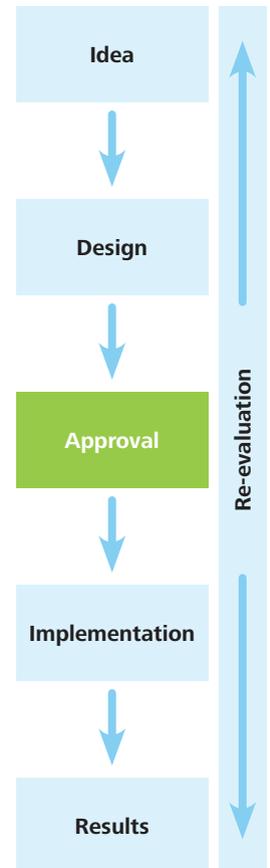
Can you articulate:

- What messaging have you put together to communicate the program's goals to those who would be affected?
- What communications channels have you leveraged to get your message across?
- Can those affected by the program understand what operational and day-to-day changes are going to take place as a result of the implementation?

- **Are the people implementing the program ready to take on the task?**

Can you articulate:

- Do the people implementing the program have the necessary resources in order to achieve their task?
- Do the people responsible for implementing the program have the necessary powers and levers to achieve their task?
- Do the people responsible for program implementation have the necessary experience to achieve their task?
- What evidence do you have that this program will work as designed?



Implementing the Program

Programs that make it to the Implementation phase have gained momentum and political support, but achievement of the program goals is still not guaranteed. From this point forward, achievement of the defined objectives is dependent on how well the program is implemented.

A significant amount of planning and coordination is necessary to implement a large-scale program on time, within budget, and in a way that lays the foundation for achieving its goals. Effective program implementation requires:

- Developing a well-defined project management approach to track program implementation
- Testing the critical components and structures of the program
- Simulating the go-live conditions and being flexible to make changes

This part of the checklist is intended to be used by those responsible for launching and implementing government programs so that unknown but foreseeable risks to delivery can be addressed before go-live.

Establishing a comprehensive implementation plan

- ***Do you have a well-defined project plan and the management capabilities to oversee the implementation of your program?***

Can you articulate:

- What are the critical activities, who are their owners, and what are their dependencies and timelines?
- How will you sense, mitigate, and manage risks?
- What are the parameters for permissible change in scope?
- How will changes in scope be managed?

Testing before implementation

- ***Do you understand the different ways in which your program may fail to achieve its objectives?***

Can you articulate:

- What are your anticipated failure points?
- Have the necessary concepts or technologies supporting the program been prototyped or tested on a small scale?
- What are the constraints (e.g., reduced budget, technological changes, human, timescales) that could impact the implementation?
- What stress tests have you employed to test the program resources?

Planning for go-live

- ***Do you have a complete launch plan for go-live?***

Can you articulate:

- What is the rationale for how you will time the launch of your program (e.g., in phases, through multiple launch days, or as a 'big bang')?
- What were the results of simulations for the launch, and what previously unidentified risks did they uncover that could negatively impact your launch day?
- Are you able to delay launch if the proper processes or resources are not in place?
- What capabilities, processes, and resources must (or need not) be in place for launch?
- Are the people responsible for implementing this program equipped with the necessary tools and training to perform in their new roles?

- ***Is the Day One messaging powerful and clear?***

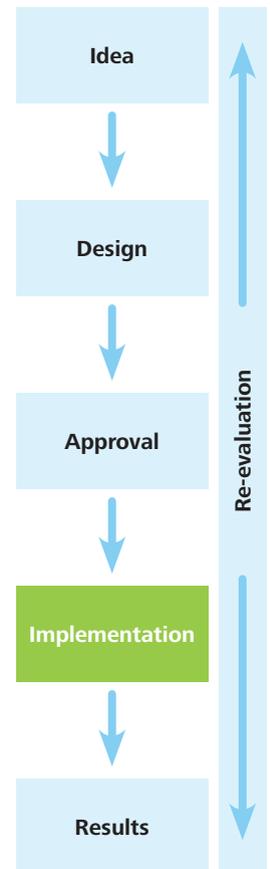
Can you articulate:

- What are the internal and external communications that inform the right people about the changes?
- How will you determine that stakeholders and those impacted by the launch and delivery of your program understand the change and how they need to react?

- ***Do you have a sound method to rapidly analyze the effectiveness of the program's launch and communicate wins or changes?***

Can you articulate:

- How you will account for and communicate quick wins?
- How will you communicate any issues that arise during the launch?
- How you will communicate any program changes developed based on the launch?



Achieving Results

Even with a great program design and the best laid plans, achieving results in reality is by no means guaranteed. Barriers to achieving the intended outcomes can include conflicting priorities among those who deliver the program, inadequate incentive structures, or poor program management. Meeting program objectives can also be limited by unforeseen changes to the context within which the program will be delivered. Managing programs so that they deliver the intended outcomes requires:

- Well-designed performance management systems focused on results
- Committed stakeholders who can and will play their part
- The ability to take fast, corrective action if strategies are failing to meet objectives

This part of the checklist seeks to target those tasked with overseeing the delivery of a program to increase the chances that it will deliver its intended outcomes.

Managing performance

Have you established the right metrics to track the impact of the program?

Can you articulate:

- What are your targets to measure the program's overall impact on its intended goals?
- What metrics will you use to measure the impact of specific components within your program?
- What other components of program health (e.g., leading indicators, costs, and capabilities) will be monitored in order to determine that the program continues to deliver?
- How reliable and frequent is the data that will measure the program impacts?
- What leading indicators or proxy measures could be used to gauge progress more regularly or in real time?
- How will you determine that performance data is being collected and interpreted objectively?

Do you have a well-defined performance management system to determine if your program delivers?

Can you articulate:

- Who will hold the program leaders and leaders from each partner organization accountable for delivering the program?
- Do they hold the necessary seniority/authority to determine that everyone feels accountable?
- How often will they hold you and stakeholders to account?
- What is your overall plan (including milestones and trajectory for anticipated results) for delivering the program?
- How will you know which elements of your program are contributing to outcomes and which are not?
- How and when will progress be reviewed by the management team?
- How and when will results be disclosed to external stakeholders?
- As you get closer to actual delivery on the ground, what are your incentives and mechanisms to determine each stakeholder plays his or her part as intended?
- How will you identify and mitigate any perverse incentives or unintended consequences that may arise as a result of your measurement system and incentives?

Maintaining a shared focus on results

Do you fully understand the priorities, capabilities, and cultures of your stakeholders and how they might impact delivery?

Can you articulate:

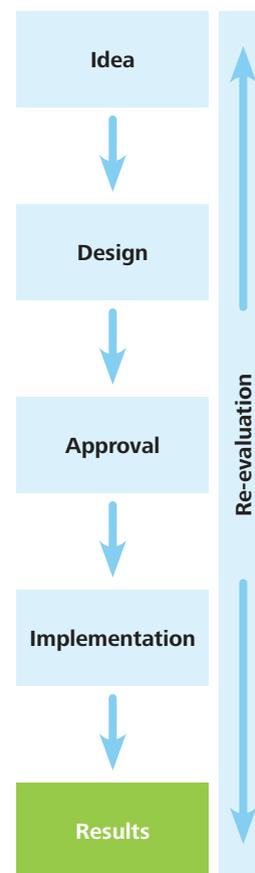
- How have you determined that everyone involved in implementing and delivering the program shares the same vision, strategy, and priorities for delivery?
- How have you determined that everyone involved in implementing and delivering the program is emotionally invested in its success?
- How have you determined that everyone involved in implementing and delivering the program understands their role and is capable of playing it?
- What are the competing/complementary priorities of the stakeholders involved in implementing and delivering the program?
- How will you address cultural differences that could hinder the positive outcome of this project?
- If multiple parties need to be involved, how will you establish a process that enables them to effectively communicate and share information in a timely and effective way?

Acting on results

Will the program change if performance measures are not met?

Can you articulate:

- How will you understand what is happening on the ground and the factors that are enabling/hindering the delivery of your program and its results?
- What will happen if performance indicators are not met?
- How much failure to meet program objectives will be tolerated?
- What is your process for identifying which elements of your program are working and which are not?
- What is your process to establish whether you need to improve or stop the elements of your program that are not working?
- How will you identify the reasons for poor performance?
- What is your process for identifying and implementing corrective measures?



Evaluating the Program and Planning for the Future

Conditions change fast, but government changes slowly. Programs that were once effective may no longer be delivering their goals or may no longer be the most effective way of achieving the outcomes sought. In order to keep programs relevant, program administrators need to:

- Confirm that evidence and analysis play a role in deciding the program's longer term relevance
- Clarify the conditions necessary for program extension, revision or closure

This part of the checklist assists those tasked with deciding on the long-term prospects for a program to determine its future.

Adapting to the current environment

Has your program adapted to meet the changing environment in which it operates?

Can you articulate:

- To what extent is the goal of the program still critical to the agency/department's mission?
- What new laws or other government programs can be leveraged to improve your program?
- How have program performance measures changed over time to reflect the current environment?
- If this program were initiated today, what would be done differently with regard to design and implementation?
- How are you connecting with any new stakeholders and involving them in this program?
- What changes in technology, organizational structure, or business processes might limit the effectiveness of this program as designed?

Understanding the evidence

Do you have a good understanding of how the program has performed?

Can you articulate:

- How has the performance of the program and its different components differed from their original planned trajectory?
- If applicable, what were the variations in performance by locality, agency office, nature of delivery, time of year, or stakeholder characteristics?

Do you understand how internal and external factors have impacted program success?

Can you articulate:

- How have political, economic, sociological, technological, legal, or environmental factors influenced the ability to achieve program goals?
- What are the specific factors that have driven the variations in performance by locality, agency office, nature of delivery, time of year, or stakeholder characteristics?

Has the program evolved and been adapted based on changing circumstances?

Can you articulate:

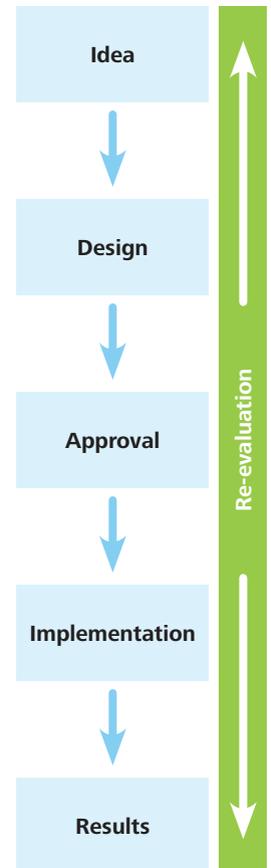
- How has the approach to implementing the program changed based on periodic program evaluations?
- How have resources changed as necessary improvements have been made?

Acting on the evidence

Does the evidence fully support your decision on the future of the program?

Can you articulate:

- What were your criteria at the start of the program for deciding the future of the program?
- Based on the trajectory of results, where is your program headed in the next 1, 3, 5 years?
- How might political, economic, sociological, technological, legal, or environmental factors influence your program's effectiveness going forward?
- What is your rationale for continuing, changing, or stopping the program?
- What changes do you need to make to the program design to make it more resilient?
- How are you enabling continued stakeholder input on the design and implementation of the program?
- If you plan to continue the program, what changes do you need to make to address variations in performance by locality, agency office, nature of delivery, time of year, or stakeholder characteristics?
- If you intend to continue the program, how often will you reexamine the rationale for continued investment?



After the Checklist: Additional Resources



A checklist is only as valuable as the impact of the discussion that it generates. To maximize that impact, you may need to take additional steps. The question of “now what?” may be lingering. There may be checklist questions that identified systemic problems in the program; perhaps you were not able to answer all the questions without further information. Such issues, once identified through use of the checklist must then be solved in order to increase the program’s likelihood of success.

Deloitte offers a variety of resources to address the different issues that might come to light through a review of the checklist. These include tools for brainstorming ideas, identifying program risks, and learning from the past outcomes of other initiatives. These resources include:

1. *If We Can Put a Man on the Moon...*

A guide to stewarding large government programs from the idea stage to completion by examining scores of government programs that have both achieved and failed to achieve their program goals over the past several decades.

2. *Using Social Media for Program Management*

An inventory of tactics for managing risk and improving program performance at each stage of the Journey to Success, based on real-life application of social media in government initiatives.

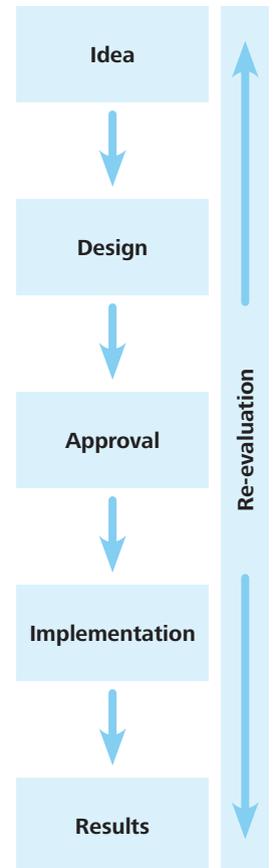
3. *The Value of Social Computing inside the Four-Walls*

A framework for calculating returns on investments in social media not solely on adoption rates, but instead on the business value gained by using social media. It also provides guidance on developing a set of metrics for social media, a topic that is often overlooked or misunderstood.

4. *Team Problem Solving Services*

Various collaboration, brainstorming and learning strategies that Deloitte has used with clients to achieve desired outcomes through creative means. When the checklist raises questions that no single individual can answer fully, project teams may consider opening these challenges up to new voices through team problem solving to leverage the wisdom of the crowds..

Please reach out to GovLab (govlab@deloitte.com) for more information on the resources mentioned above.



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