

Developing an Accountability Framework Reference Guide

2019

Policy connects the dots

Public Engagement and Planning Division



Newfoundland
Labrador

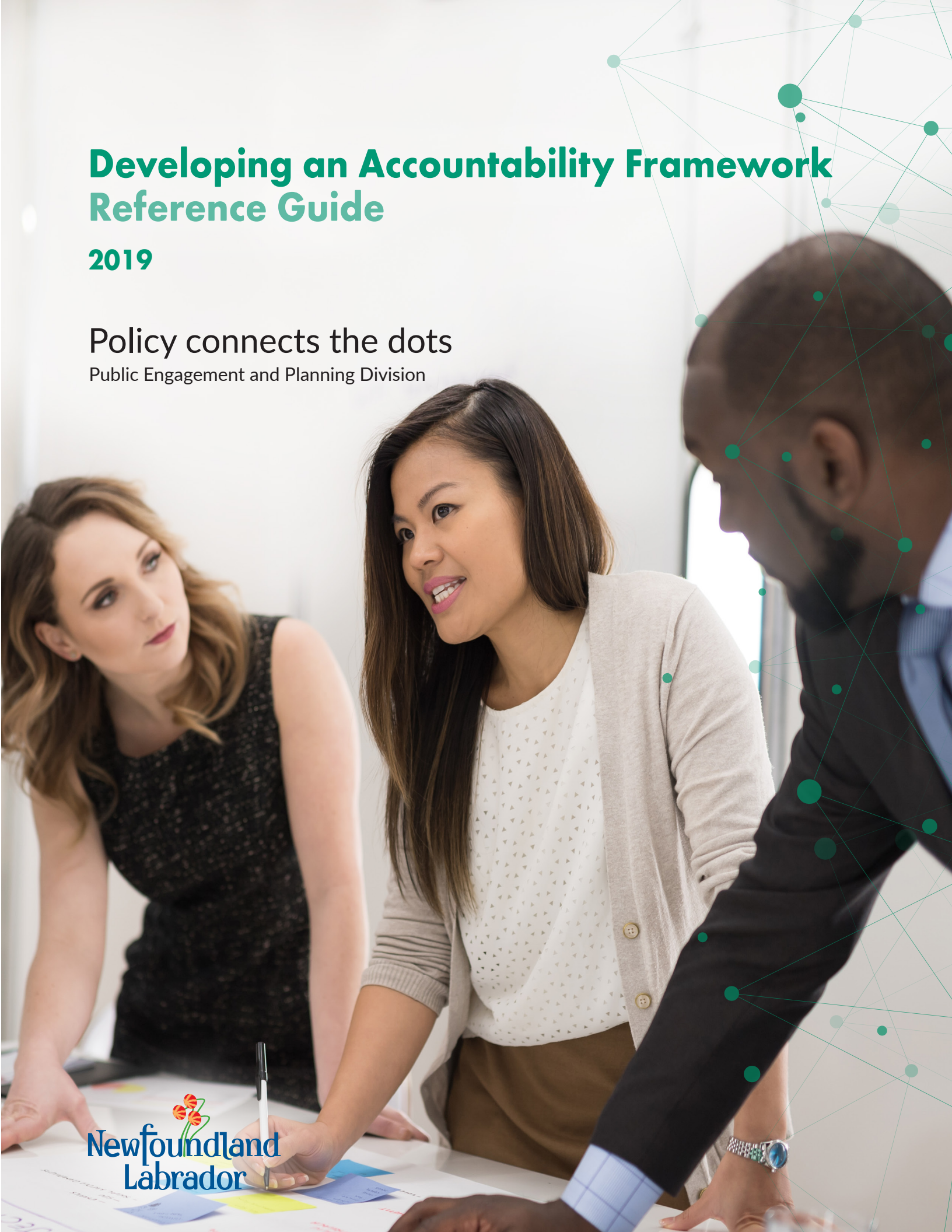




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When are you required to develop an Accountability Framework?

The Policy on Evaluation requires Deputy Ministers and Equivalents to ensure that all policy submissions to approve new policies or programs outline specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound (SMART) targets, where feasible, before a decision is taken by Cabinet on implementing this new program or policy. The Policy also requires Deputy Ministers and Equivalents to “ensure submissions include an Accountability Framework documenting how performance will be monitored and determining if and when a more comprehensive evaluation of the program/ policy will occur”.

This Guide will help you develop an Accountability Framework for any new policy, program or initiative that you may be advancing. The Accountability Framework should be developed **prior to writing your Cabinet Submission** and must be appended as an annex to the final submission. If you are wondering whether an Accountability Framework is required, please engage the Public Engagement and Planning Division who can provide you advice and assistance. Further detail on when an Accountability Framework is required is presented in Appendix A.

Accountability Frameworks can also be developed for ongoing initiatives. An Accountability Framework can help you evaluate what you are doing, why you are doing it and how well it is being done. Accountability Frameworks also ensure good performance measurement and monitoring practices are in place and help determine whether an evaluation should be undertaken.

What is an Accountability Framework?

Accountability refers to the ownership of responsibilities and the obligation to report on the discharge of those responsibilities. An Accountability Framework for a new initiative helps to outline both the ownership of responsibilities relating to that initiative, as well as plans for information gathering, monitoring and reporting. An Accountability Framework describes the initiative, its purpose and intended results, how the initiative’s performance will be monitored, and whether or not an evaluation is planned.

Accountability Frameworks help:

- Encourage outcomes and evidence-based management and decision-making;
- Clarify the data collection methodology and timelines to support implementation, management, oversight and review of the initiative;
- Establish a basis for objective assessment of the progress of an initiative; and
- Help public sector employees assess whether an initiative is achieving its intended results and outcomes.

Who should develop an Accountability Framework?

Accountability Frameworks should be collaboratively developed by individuals working in policy, program design and service delivery. Program design and front-line delivery officials have the operational knowledge needed to identify critical performance indicators and to collect program data. Policy officials can support developing the logic models and performance monitoring and evaluation planning. Consideration should be given to including key stakeholders in the design of the Accountability Framework, particularly if they will be involved with program delivery, data collection and reporting. Engagement of officials working in a variety of roles will help ensure that the Accountability Framework supports principles of continuous improvement.

Public Engagement and Planning Division also encourages departments to engage the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency when developing data collection methodology and determining what baseline data may be available.

How do you develop an Accountability Framework?

The table below outlines the standard template for an Accountability Framework. Remember that frameworks developed to attach to submissions will inform the content of that document. Summary information on the targets for key performance indicators and your plans to monitor and/or evaluate and to report on program performance as outlined in your Accountability Framework should be referenced in the body of the submission.

This document can be downloaded as a Word file from the Public Engagement and Planning Division website. The text within each section offers considerations on how to complete this template.

Section	Information to Include
Purpose of the Initiative	<p>This section should provide a description of and rational for the policy or program. Who are the program's clients? What services will the program deliver? Why has the program been established?</p>
Clients and Primary Stakeholders	<p>Clients: This section builds on the Purpose above by describing demographic, socio-economic and other characteristics of the clients, such as geographic location.</p>
	<p>Primary Stakeholders: This section lists key departments or external organizations that have an interest in the client group and/or proposed initiative, as well as the nature of their interest.</p> <p>If an external organization is already providing similar or complementary services, the framework should explain why government should undertake this initiative.</p>
Accountabilities	<p>This section outlines the roles and responsibilities of the lead department and other partners in implementing the initiative.</p> <p>For collaborative arrangements, this section should outline how the relationship will be managed, how decisions will be made and who has final decision-making authority, and what processes will be used to ensure performance of other departments or external partners/ organizations.</p>
Logic Model	<p>The Accountability Framework should append a logic model for the initiative.</p> <p>A logic model depicts what a program or policy will do and what it is intended to accomplish. A logic model is a systematic and visual way to present the relationships among the resources you have to operate the program, the activities you plan, and the changes or results you hope to achieve. The following diagram shows a logic model in its simplest form. However, there are various approaches that can be taken to develop a logic model and departments may want to modify their approach based on the simplicity or complexity of an initiative. A sample logic model template is also available online on the Public Engagement and Planning Division website.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px 0;"> <pre> graph LR A[Activities - what is done with the resources?] --> B[Outputs - the direct products of the activities] B --> C[Outcomes - these can be immediate, intermediate and ultimate - they are changes in behavior, knowledge, skills, status, level of functioning, etc.] </pre> </div>

Section	Information to Include		
Indicators and Targets	Output Indicators: Outline the quantitative or qualitative measures for the indicators and establish targets for all outputs identified in the logic model.	Baseline:	Target for Each Indicator:
	Outcome Indicators: Outline the quantitative or qualitative measure for the indicators and establish targets for all outcomes identified in the logic model.	Baseline:	Target for Each Indicator:
Performance Monitoring Plan	This section should identify how often performance monitoring reports will be developed, by whom, who will receive these reports and how the reports will be used. Departments may find it useful to complete the performance measurement template available on the Public Engagement and Planning website, to assist in identifying what performance data will be collected, who will be responsible for collecting the data and the frequency of collection. The Performance Measurement Plan is a working document and does not have to be attached to a submission, but should be prepared as part of the development of a new policy or program.		
Evaluation Plan	This section could discuss how the policy or program is planned to be evaluated. If an evaluation is not planned, this section should discuss why not or what might trigger a decision to evaluate. If evaluations are planned, this section should provide a summary of the type, by whom it would be done (e.g., internal, external consultant, combination of the two) and the timeframe, such as presented in the sample below:		
	Type of Evaluation	Why Would Conduct?	Date/Timeframe
	Formative Evaluation	Internal	End of Year 1
	Summative Evaluation	Internal plus external consultant for pieces	End of Year 4

How to Use the Completed Accountability Framework

The completed Accountability Framework template should be appended to your submission, when seeking direction to implement. If you are approved to proceed, the actions outlined in the Accountability Framework must be implemented. Officials involved in implementing the policy or program should be informed of the actions required in the Accountability Framework. The Accountability Framework should be viewed as a living document and as such should be updated during the course of implementation of the initiative.

Appendix A: When Accountability Frameworks are Required

Accountability Frameworks are Mandatory for:

1. Requests for approval of New Programs
2. Requests for approval of New Policies, except as noted below

Accountability Frameworks are not Required for:

1. Board appointments
2. Renewals of Cost-shared agreements
3. Requests for Proposals (approval to issue or award)
4. Infrastructure projects
5. Approval of Grants to specific recipients under a granting program
6. Legislative Amendments
7. Operational issues (e.g., organizational changes, IT systems, human resource policies, etc.)
8. Financial issues (e.g., lines of credit, loan guarantees, pre-commitments, financial policies, accounting circulars, etc.)

'Grey' Areas:

1. New legislation
 - Accountability Frameworks are not required as the required Regulatory Impact Analysts should suffice. However any programs required to be set up to meet the legislative requirements would require an Accountability Framework.
2. New cost-shared agreements
 - If the accountability arrangements are addressed by an FPT Agreement and are adequate, then an Accountability Framework may not be required. You should consult with your Cabinet Officer in such instances.
3. The Department of Finance is to advise if funding was approved for new programs but a follow up Cabinet Submission, including an Accountability Framework is required for program design approval.
4. Changes or expansions to existing programs
 - An Accountability Framework may not be required if changes are not substantive (i.e., not a new program - no new activities leading to different outputs or outcomes). Consult with your Cabinet Officer to determine if an Accountability Framework is required or considered to be beneficial for purposes of Cabinet's consideration of the proposal.

Accountability Frameworks are required for most new programs and policies, as outlined above. If you are unsure whether or not your program/policy requires an Accountability Framework; or if you would like further guidance on completing your Accountability Framework, please contact the Public Engagement and Planning Division.



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