

Identifying and Applying Best Practices for Government

Dr Robin Mann, Ahmed Abbas, and Dr Zeyad Mohammad El Kahlout, COER News Article, 5 January, 2015.

The Dubai Government Excellence Programme (DGEP), part of the General Secretariat of the Executive Council of Dubai, launched the Dubai We Learn initiative in October 2015. This initiative is in cooperation with the Centre of Organisational Excellence Research (COER), New Zealand. The initiative aims to empower a culture of institutional learning and the transfer and exchange of knowledge within the government sector.

The initiative consists of the mentoring of 13 benchmarking projects, training in organisational learning and benchmarking, and the provision of a best practice resource, www.BPIR.com, for all 37 government entities, see Figure 1.



Figure 1 – The launch of Dubai We Learn by Dr Ahmad Al Nuseirat, Coordinator-General, DGEP and an illustration of Dubai We Learn services

The 13 government projects are shown below:

Government Entity	Project title
Dubai Corporation for Ambulance Services	Development of Emirati Paramedic's Leaders
Dubai Courts	Personal Status Smart Certifications Services
Dubai Culture	Developing National Human Resources for Museums
Dubai Electricity & Water Authority	Shams Dubai Initiative – Customer Awareness and Engagement
Dubai Land Department	Towards Happy Employees
Dubai Municipality	Improving Purchasing Channels
Dubai Police Head Quarter	Smart Police Officer
Dubai Statistics Center	Innovative Statistics
General Directorate of Residency & Foreigners Affairs Dubai	Developing a World-Class Customer Service Design Process
Knowledge & Human Development Authority	People Happiness
Mohamed Bin Rashid Enterprise for Housing	Improving Customer Experience
Public Prosecution	Judicial Knowledge Management
Road and Transport Authority	Ask Subject Matter Expert - Knowledge Management

Figure 2 – Dubai We Learn's benchmarking projects

For each project there is a team leader, benchmarking facilitator and other team members with technical knowledge of the process or system being investigated. Project teams are using the

TRADE Best Practice Benchmarking Methodology to identify and implement best practices. This methodology provides a step by step approach to ensure that the opportunities and challenges facing the government are clearly identified and relevant best practices are captured, adapted and implemented. At the conclusion of the initiative a publication will be written to share the best practices and results achieved. This publication will serve as a valuable record on how to do benchmarking within the government sector.



Figure 3 – TRADE stages and steps

Although all projects started at the same time the pace of progress through the TRADE stages varies dependent on the project’s size and complexity, level of understanding of how the process currently operates and performs, and how much time is being invested in the project. For instance, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority’s project is "to identify and implement best practices related to people happiness to increase their happiness, work-life balance and well-being". Already, the project team has progressed to the "Acquire best practices" stage and conducted benchmarking visits in the United States. The team were able to progress quickly as they have been measuring employee satisfaction and related measures for a number of years and knew precisely the challenges they faced to increase employee happiness. Figure 4 shows progress to-date across all project teams



Figure 4 – Progress of project teams through the TRADE stages

Another project team, Dubai Electricity and Water Authority (DEWA) are finalising the Terms of Reference for their project. DEWA has taken longer on the first stage of TRADE to make sure they selected the most beneficial project, had the right team members in place, and the project would fit within the one year time-frame of Dubai We Learn. Their project aims *"to increase customer awareness and engagement on Shams Dubai initiative and improve marketing efforts"*. Shams Dubai was launched in March 2015 and sets the technical and regulatory framework to enable households and building owners to install solar PV systems within their premises and have it connected to DEWA's network. The generated electricity is used on site and the surplus (difference between the generated electricity and the consumption at the premises) is exported to DEWA's network. DEWA will discount the surplus from the customers' future electricity bill. The project team intends to learn from successful solar panel initiatives in other countries, and learn from institutions that have introduced new technology and quickly achieved high market penetration rates.

The progress of the 13 projects are monitored by COER and DGEP. A project reporting system is supplemented by regular Progress Sharing Days at which teams share and learn from each other. The 1st Progress Sharing Day was held on 9th November 2015 with the next planned for 18th January 2016. At the 1st Progress Sharing Day, the Dubai Statistics Centre (DSC) were recognised for the progress they had made with their project *"to identify best practices in Innovation to enable DSC to develop and implement a strategy for innovation to improve its process and services"*. Within a month DSC had undertaken a number of innovation self-assessments to identify their areas for improvement, and designed a thorough plan on how their project would be conducted.



Figure 5 - Dubai Statistics recognised at the 1st Progress Sharing Day (left photo) and Dr Robin Mann and Ahmed Abbas receive mementos after visiting Dubai Municipality to check their project "to reduce purchasing cycle time" (right photo).

The ultimate aim of these projects is to produce substantial benefits for Dubai citizens through improving the operations and systems of the government entities. These benefits will be closely monitored. A secondary aim is to build the capability of government through the training and support provided. Already, as a result of the training over 70 staff have been trained in TRADE (Level 1) and with the completion of their projects most are expected to achieve benchmarking proficiency (Level 2). In the long-term it is expected that many of these will achieve the highest level of benchmarking certification – benchmarking mastery (Level 3). These highly trained individuals will be expected to lead the introduction of structures and approaches that foster a culture of best practice learning and deliver citizen-centric services.



Figure 6 - Dubai We Learn participants trained on 6-8 October 2015 achieved TRADE Certification – Level 1. At the end of their project most are expected to achieve Level 2 – Benchmarking Proficiency.

To recognise the hard work of government employees in the pursuit of excellence they are encouraged to participate in local and international awards. International awards not only provide due recognition but also help to promote Dubai around the world. Already, Dubai government entities are making their presence known on the international stage for their best practice culture. In 2013, the Knowledge and Human Development Authority won the GBN’s Global Benchmarking Award. This award recognises organisations for their overall organisational learning approach with criteria focussing on leadership commitment to benchmarking, pervasiveness of benchmarking, formality of benchmarking and results achieved. In 2015, the Dubai Corporation for Ambulance Services (DCAS) won the 4th International Best Practice Competition (IBPC) for its MAMA ambulance service. This is a service focused on the needs of pregnant women and staffed by entirely women from the ambulance drivers to paramedics to ensure cultural sensitivity. The service is achieving satisfaction levels of 98% and higher.



Figure 7 – Through the building of benchmarking capability more Dubai government entities are likely to achieve international recognition for their best practice culture. Dubai’s Knowledge and Human Development Authority won the GBN’s Global Benchmarking Award in 2013 (left photo) and the Dubai Corporation for Ambulance Services won the 4th International Best Practice Competition in 2015 (right photo).

The Dubai Government Excellence Programme with the launch of Dubai We Learn continues to be a driving force for change. DGEP’s initiatives in the last 19 years have resulted in dramatic improvements in areas such as customer satisfaction and employee well-being across the government sector. This has contributed to the UAE becoming one of the fastest improving countries in the world as shown by dramatic improvements in indicators such as Ease of Doing Business, Global Competitiveness, Innovation Linkages, Information Technology Readiness and Corruption Perception. Indeed, since 2013 the UAE has been ranked No.1 in the world for government efficiency by the IMD World Competitiveness Centre.

Authors

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