

COMMISSIONER FOR PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT

# GUIDELINE

*for the South Australian Public Service*

## Continuous Improvement

MARCH 2001



Government  
of South Australia

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

The concept of Continuous Improvement is integral to the goal of best practice in human resource management. This Guideline provides principles for public sector agencies to use in reviewing and enhancing current human resource management structures, systems and processes.

Continuous Improvement is both a mind-set and a range of techniques to review and evaluate work processes. As a mind-set, it is a way of approaching work so that a culture of innovation and creativity is encouraged. As a range of techniques, Continuous Improvement includes approaches such as Benchmarking, Re-engineering, Quality Management, Organisational Reviews, Performance Management etc.

Continuous Improvement can be applied at a whole of government, agency or functional level and to a range of structures, systems and processes.

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## ***KEY RESULT AREA***

This guideline is linked to the Continuous Improvement key result area of the Strategic Human Resource Management Framework for the South Australian Public Sector.

### ***Continuous Improvement***

Continuously review and improve human resource management structures, systems and processes so that they facilitate government directions, draw on best practice, work flexibly, and adapt quickly to changing needs.

(eg Best Practice, benchmarking studies, business process re-engineering, organisational structure reviews, agency human resource function)

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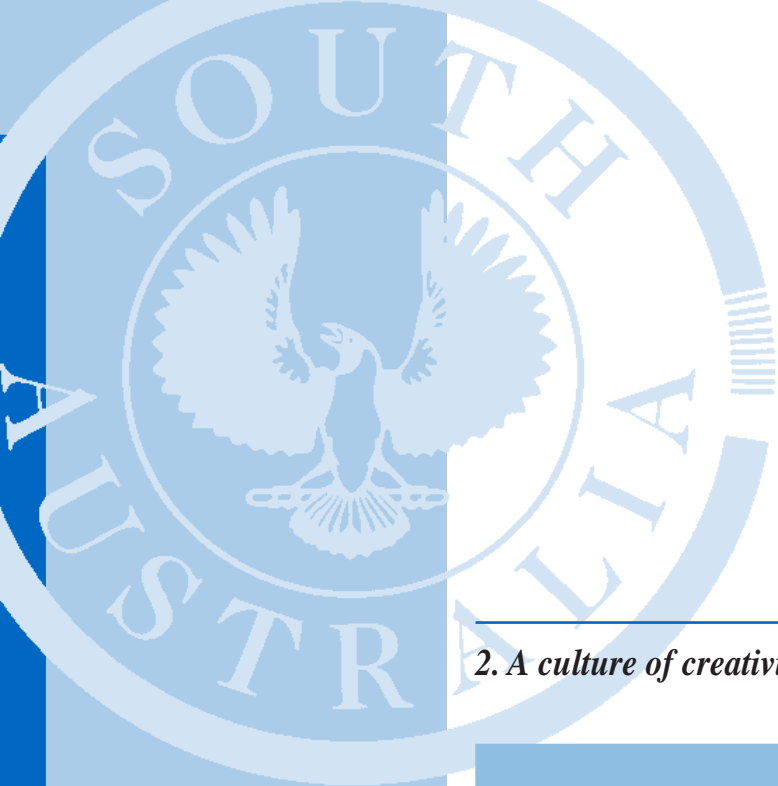
## ***PRINCIPLES***

### ***1. Continuous improvement of human resource management is approached strategically***

Continuous improvement should be strategically integrated with the agency's corporate objectives to ensure that human resource management continues to evolve towards best practice.

Agencies should:

- (a) have a clear organisational understanding as to what continuous improvement applied to human resource management means to them
  - (b) have a framework in place to apply continuous improvement of human resource management in a planned and structured way
  - (c) recognise that continuous improvement of human resource management should not be adopted in isolation but integrated with an agency's strategic planning processes
  - (d) be clear about the improvement objective (ie performance gap) being sought prior to implementing any improvement process
  - (e) regularly review human resource management so that it remains aligned with corporate directions.
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## *2. A culture of creativity and innovation is encouraged*

To foster the generation of ideas, and to maximise the commitment of employees to improving human resource management structures, systems and processes, agencies should encourage a culture of creativity and innovation.

In particular, senior management should:

- (a) encourage employees to participate and contribute to continuous improvement of human resource management
  - (b) encourage creativity through risk-taking and being tolerant of mistakes
  - (c) create an organisational culture that learns from mistakes
  - (d) adopt and encourage mechanisms to facilitate the generation of ideas, such as suggestion boxes, brainstorming sessions, and the use of lateral thinking approaches
  - (e) acknowledge employees' contributions to continuous improvement of human resource management.
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### ***3. A range of continuous improvement approaches and techniques are used***

To ensure human resource management structures, systems and processes are flexible and responsive, a range of continuous improvement approaches and techniques are used.

Agencies should:

- (a) tailor continuous improvement processes in relation to human resource management to suit their own context and people
  - (b) recognise that continuous improvement can range in scale from small initiatives, such as designing of an internal form, to large initiatives such as performance development, benchmarking or re-engineering
  - (c) recognise that continuous improvement efforts are multifaceted and should be resourced according to the size and complexity of the process being implemented.
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#### ***4. Key stakeholders are involved***

To ensure the success of continuous improvement of human resource management, key stakeholders should be involved.

Agencies should:

- (a) provide support mechanisms such as information and training to employees to ensure that they can actively participate in the continuous improvement of human resource management
- (b) actively encourage systematic consultation with key stakeholders to participate in an agency's continuous improvement of human resource management
- (c) put in place mechanisms for receiving and acting on feedback received from key stakeholders
- (d) feed back the outcomes of the consultation process to those involved.

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#### ***5. Continuous improvement processes are evaluated***

Improvement processes are evaluated to ensure that continuous improvement of human resource management approaches remain effective, appropriate and the most efficient way of producing desired outcomes.

Agencies should:

- (a) implement a regular review cycle
  - (b) evaluate the contribution of continuous improvement of human resource management against identified agency performance outcomes
  - (c) use recognised evaluation techniques
  - (d) recognise that these approaches form the basis for the next generation of improvements.
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## ***OTHER INFORMATION***

### ***Legislation***

Public Sector Management Act 1995

- Part 2 General Public Sector Aims and Standards
- Part 4 Chief Executives, Section 14, Chief Executive's general responsibilities
- Part 7 Public Service Appointments (Apart from Chief Executives), Division 1 – Executive Positions, Section 37 Executive's general responsibilities

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### ***Publications issued by the Commissioner for Public Employment***

Guideline for Individual Performance Development

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### ***Other publications***

Government Management Framework (Department of the Premier and Cabinet)

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### *About Guidelines*

The Commissioner for Public Employment issues guidelines in accordance with Section 22 of the Public Sector Management Act 1995.

The guidelines detail the principles underpinning the eight key result areas of the Strategic Human Resource Management Framework for the South Australian Public Sector.

This guideline has been prepared in consultation with agencies with a view to facilitating agency level decision making. Where a requirement exists under legislation, or in government policy, the guideline indicates this.

Where necessary, the Commissioner issues PSM Act Determinations and supporting material. The determinations are binding, so as to ensure the effective implementation of Government public sector workforce policies and the personnel management standards of the Act, and the protection of key employment conditions. The supporting materials explain best practice in human resource management and provide additional information to agencies.