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Strengthening Performance Management in the Public Service for Better Delivery to Citizens

Introduction

Zimbabwe's public service is shifting from routine administration to a results-driven culture that places the citizen at the centre. The Second Republic has advanced performance contracting, Integrated Results Based Management (IRBM) and monitoring to entrench accountability for tangible outcomes. These reforms operationalise the national policy frameworks that carry the country towards **Vision 2030**: a prosperous and empowered upper-middle-income society with a target Gross National Income (GNI) per capita of USD 4,516–14,005.

Performance management is the bridge between high-level national strategy and everyday service delivery. It converts broad policy ambitions into specific, measurable commitments for which named institutions and their leaders can be held to account.

Historical and Global Context

Performance contracting emerged in France in the late 1960s and was later adopted in Korea, Pakistan and India. By the 1990s it was a widely embraced reform tool, propelled by New Public Management (NPM) principles that stress efficiency, accountability and citizen-centric service delivery. In Zimbabwe, reform has evolved through distinct phases:

- **Early reform commissions:** the Kavran Public Service Review Commission (1987) first exposed widespread inefficiency, waste and poor service delivery.
- **Macroeconomic programmes:** ESAP (1990–1995), ZIMPREST, MERP (2000), NERP (2003) and ZIMASSET (2014–2018).
- **Results-based governance:** Results-Based Management (RBM) was adopted in 2005, but appraisal largely targeted middle and lower-level officials, leaving top executives such as Permanent Secretaries effectively unappraised. Performance contracting closed this gap by enforcing top-down executive accountability across

Permanent Secretaries, heads of public entities, local authority CEOs and Cabinet Ministers.

Policy Alignment and Strategic Architecture

Performance management operates within a phased national development sequence: the Transitional Stabilisation Programme (TSP, October 2018 – December 2020), which restored macroeconomic stability; National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1, 2021–2025), which targeted average growth of 5% per annum under the mantra "leaving no one and no place behind"; and National Development Strategy 2 (NDS2, 2026–2030), which consolidates these gains by moving up the value chain and strengthening manufacturing. Four mechanisms institutionalise this vision across Government:

- **Government Functions Handbook:** delineates the mandates of all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), preventing overlap and duplication.
- **Five-Year MDA Strategic Plans:** Cabinet-approved plans that define long-term deliverables.
- **Programme Based Budgeting (PBB):** allocates public funds to programmes and their intended outputs and outcomes rather than to line items, linking every performance target to a funded budget line through the National Compendium of Programmes and Projects.
- **Managing for Development Results (MfDR):** a management strategy that uses performance information at every stage of the results chain, supported by continuous capacity building led by the Public Service Academy.

Legal and Institutional Framework

Section 202 of the Constitution establishes the Public Service Commission (PSC) to oversee human capital, appointments, conditions of service, discipline and performance management. Under the Public Service Regulations (Statutory Instrument 1 of 2000), Regulation 8 provides the framework for periodic, objective performance appraisal, while Regulation 29 links performance outcomes to rewards by authorising performance-based incentives. Together they form the evaluative and motivational pillars of performance contracting.

To move performance contracting from administrative principle to statutory obligation, Government is enacting the **Government Performance and Results Act**. As indicated by the Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet at the 2026 validation workshop, mature IRBM implementation makes it prudent to codify the system in law, anchoring enforcement, rewarding over-performance and sanctioning under-performance.

A performance contract is an explicit agreement, over a fiscal year (January to December), between Government as owner and executive agency heads. Government commits to clear mandates, institutional capacity and financial resources; the executive commits to adequate, satisfactory and measurable performance against agreed targets.

Objectives of Performance Contracting

Introduced in 2021, performance contracting has become one of the Second Republic's most significant public sector reforms. Its objectives are to:

- align individual and institutional effort with national priorities and Vision 2030;
- enhance accountability by attaching named responsibility and a public record to measurable targets;
- improve efficiency and effectiveness in public service delivery;
- institutionalise a results culture that values outputs, outcomes and impact over routine process;
- provide an objective basis for reward, recognition and corrective action; and
- strengthen transparency and citizen-centricity by integrating public feedback into assessment.

Validation, undertaken before signing, confirms that every target is realistic, adequately resourced and traceable to an approved strategic plan, so that contracts are credible rather than symbolic. It is a constructive governance tool, not a fault-finding exercise.

The Tripartite Governance Model

Performance contracting is anchored by the High-Level Forum on Public Sector Reforms (the Tripartite), which combines political authority, administrative oversight and financial management:

Institutional Body	Core Responsibility	Key Function
Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC)	Political leadership and policy guidance	Ensures alignment with national priorities and maintains executive accountability.
Public Service Commission (PSC)	Administrative stewardship and human capital management	Sets appraisal standards, trains managers, adjudicates disputes and manages performance reviews.
Ministry of Finance, Economic Development & Investment Promotion	Financial resourcing and budget alignment	Allocates funding through PBB, ensuring targets are backed by realistic budgets and timely transfers.

Acting in concert, the Tripartite standardises templates and appraisal rules across MDAs, builds capacity for target-setting and data use, ensures fairness through appeals and dispute resolution, coordinates secretariat functions, and embeds citizen feedback through satisfaction surveys. This Whole-of-Government Approach has been commended by the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) as a best practice in economic governance.

Monitoring, Evaluation and the Move to Automation

Zimbabwe's framework currently relies heavily on paper-based and manual reporting, which creates delays, reporting lag and a risk of inconsistent data across MDAs. Government is therefore prioritising the **Whole-of-Government Performance Management System (WoGPMS)**, an integrated platform to ingest, cross-link and monitor data from Strategic

Plans, Annual Plans and Individual Performance Contracts, complemented by the WoGMEL framework for programme-level monitoring and evaluation. An Executive Electronic Dashboard will give leaders real-time visibility of implementation, PBB budget utilisation and bottlenecks. Until then, the PSC maintains:

- **Quarterly triangulated evaluations** that test executive performance against ministry results and citizen satisfaction surveys rather than self-reported data alone;
- **Independent appraisals** by third-party consultants to guarantee objectivity;
- **The PSC Trainer Network**, which embeds IRBM principles and guides entities in producing strategic documents and performance contracts; and
- **Phased M&E modernisation** to shorten reporting timelines and increase transparency.

Consequence Management and Recognition

For officials at Director level and above, performance-related bonuses are tied to evaluated outcomes. Individual scores are rated, validated and triangulated with the annual Service-Wide Citizen Satisfaction Survey, which measures both Ministry performance and the overall performance of the Public Service. Under-performance triggers mandatory remedial capacity building or, where necessary, targeted administrative action. The forthcoming Government Performance and Results Act will give these measures full legal backing.

Success will be recognised when citizens feel the difference in daily life, with health, education, water, roads, licensing and social protection delivered reliably, promptly and with dignity. Progress is already visible in agriculture, mining, infrastructure, public health, social services and climate mitigation, reinforced by a comprehensive remuneration and retirement planning framework for civil servants and by e-Government backbone expansion.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge	Solution
Resistance to change	Structured change management and continuous capacity building through the PSC Trainer Network to build trust.
Lack of ownership and commitment	Participatory target-setting workshops that involve staff at all levels in co-creating indicators.
Misalignment of strategic documents	Pre-signing validation checks against Annual Plans, Strategic Plans and National Development Strategies.
Use of outdated templates	Mandatory administrative circulars and formal recall of hard-copy templates across public entities.
Unrealistic targets (under- or over-targeting)	PRAZ-compliant third-party consultants and independent assessors to audit baselines and validate feasibility.
Inadequate explanations in addendums	Formal narrative guidelines and multi-level approval workflows for contract adjustments.

Areas for Reform and Improvement

- Deploy the WoGPMS for objective, real-time tracking of achievement, with personal dashboards linking daily tasks to high-level goals
- Introduce policy locking so that targets not traceable to an approved, budgeted Strategic Plan line item are rejected automatically
- Push format and IRBM standard updates centrally so that non-compliant forms cannot be used
- Use predictive analytics on historical execution data to flag unfeasible targets during drafting
- Require justification logs and supporting documents so that no addendum is processed without a complete digital audit trail
- Enact the Government Performance and Results Act to codify performance contracting

Conclusion

Driven by the Tripartite collaboration of the Office of the President and Cabinet, the PSC and the Ministry of Finance, Economic Development and Investment Promotion, performance contracting has moved public administration from routine process adherence to accountable, results-oriented governance. By linking Vision 2030 targets to individual contracts, Programme Based Budgeting, digital monitoring and the impending Government Performance and Results Act, the public service is structured to deliver measurable improvements in citizens' livelihoods. As the national ethos puts it, *Nyika inovakwa nevene vayo*: brick by brick, leaving no one and no place behind.

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