



What Gets Measured Gets Managed: Ministries' Performance Measurement, Program Evaluation and Annual Reporting

June 2023

Why we did this review

- Performance measurement can give government the evidence-based data it needs to improve its programs and assure the people of Ontario that they are getting value for their tax dollars.
- While performance measurement and reporting are key components of all value-for-money audits, we decided to examine this from a ministry-wide perspective.

Why it matters

- Timely measurement, program evaluation and internal and public reporting on performance should be just as important to inform provincial decision-makers as it is in the private sector for publicly traded corporations.
- Public reporting on ministry performance demonstrates transparency and provides information to both the Legislature and the public on whether tax dollars are being well spent.

What we found

Limited Oversight of and Requirements for Ministry Annual Reports

- Not all ministries are legislatively required to table an annual report, and unlike in most other provinces, the federal government and Ontario provincial agencies, the content requirements for Ontario ministry annual reports are not specified in either legislation or government directives.
- No annual reports were published for the 2017/18 fiscal year.
- Treasury Board Secretariat (Secretariat) is responsible for developing the instructions for annual reports, but does not review annual reports for quality or completeness.
- Annual report instructions were missing important elements of performance reporting such as the requirement to explain performance shortfalls, identify lessons learned, or compare to other jurisdictions or industry benchmarks.

RECOMMENDATIONS 1, 2, 16

Ministry Annual Reports Not Useful for Fulsome Assessment of Ministry Performance

- Ministries' 2021/22 published plans and annual reports lacked key details including quantifiable performance measures, and ministry key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Ministry annual reports were published as an appendix to their strategic plans for the next fiscal year, making comparing performance against past plans difficult for members of the public.

RECOMMENDATIONS 1, 2, 3, 4, 16, 17

Key Performance Indicators Not Complete or Consistent, and Not Always Focused on Improvements

- Critical components of ministry mandates, expenditures and risks were not reflected in KPIs.
- Based on KPIs reported internally for 2019/20 to 2022/23, between 20% and 31% of KPIs each year were missing critical information such as baselines and targets, with some of this information missing for years.
- KPIs changed often and were inconsistent year over year. In the last four years, the number of KPIs grew from 211 for 2019/20 to 469 for 2022/23.
- The Secretariat did not consistently evaluate the completeness of KPIs.

RECOMMENDATIONS 5, 6, 7, 8, 16, 17

Program Evaluations Not Always Used to Improve Programs and Not Always Consistent with Best Practices

- One third of program evaluation reports completed between 2019 and 2021 indicated internal changes were planned, but did not detail the changes or provide a timeline for implementation. A further one-third recommended either maintaining the status quo (often without explaining why) or conducting further analysis (often without explaining what type of analysis or providing a timeline of next steps), or they did not specify if any changes were planned as a result of the program evaluation.
- Program evaluations were not always conducted in an independent manner (i.e. by people who were not involved in the design or delivery of the program). They also often lacked clear and measurable objectives, did not include a mix of data types, sources or evidence, and did not identify potential limitations of the methodology or data used.
- The Secretariat provided limited guidance, oversight and assessment of program evaluation work completed.

RECOMMENDATIONS 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17

Program Evaluations Are Not Selected Systematically or Conducted on a Regular Basis

- Ministries did not systematically select program evaluations and, as such, risked missing important programs.
- The Secretariat's goal of 250 programs evaluated by March 31, 2024 also will likely not be met. To meet the target, ministries would need to complete 74 program evaluations per year, more than double the average number completed annually to date.

RECOMMENDATIONS 14, 15

Roles and Responsibilities in Performance Measurement, Program Evaluation Unclear

- It was not clear who was responsible for performance measurement and program evaluation in the Ontario Public Service. In contrast, the federal government's Policy on Results, managed by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, defines specific roles and responsibilities for designated evaluation positions within each ministry, agency or other unit of the federal public service, including performance measurement and evaluation monitoring and reporting requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 16

Conclusions

- Ministries were not consistently reporting to the public on the extent to which they achieved their planned program goals and objectives.
- Ministries did not consistently have performance measurement frameworks in place for the timely internal monitoring and reporting of performance against stated ministry goals and objectives.
- The Secretariat has not provided the necessary oversight and assessment of the quality of ministry KPIs, program evaluations and annual reports, and it needs to clarify the roles and responsibilities in performance measurement, program evaluation and performance reporting.

Read the report at www.auditor.on.ca