

1

Develop a Foundation for Delivery

Components of Deliverology

1 Develop a Foundation for Delivery

- A. Define your aspiration
- B. Review the current state of delivery
- C. Build the Delivery Unit
- D. Establish a guiding coalition

2 Understand the Delivery Challenge

- A. Evaluate past and present performance
- B. Understand drivers of performance and relevant system activities

3 Plan for Delivery

- A. Determine your reform strategy
- B. Set targets and trajectories
- C. Produce delivery plans

4 Drive Delivery

- A. Establish routines to drive and monitor performance
- B. Solve problems early and rigorously
- C. Sustain and continually build momentum

5 Create an Irreversible Delivery Culture

- A. Build system capacity all the time
- B. Communicate the delivery message
- C. Unleash the “alchemy of relationships”

Every strong delivery effort has a few prerequisites that must be put in place before you begin: a clear idea of what the system should deliver, an understanding of where and how delivery must improve, a talented team that will run the delivery effort on your behalf, and sufficient alignment at the top to get things done.

Not all delivery efforts are created equal. The efficacy of your effort will depend on what has already been done, your system's specific strengths and weaknesses, and the resources that are available to you. In order to launch your delivery effort, you must build an accurate understanding of the system you will be working with. You must understand the context of your system's history, mission, and ambition. You must understand the nuances of the challenge at hand. And you must build the necessary support system to help you confront this challenge.

This chapter will help you develop the foundation for your delivery effort. It consists of four modules:

- A. Define your aspiration
- B. Review the current state of delivery
- C. Build the Delivery Unit
- D. Establish a guiding coalition

With this foundation in place, your delivery effort will be well positioned to achieve real results for your system.

■ 1A. DEFINE YOUR ASPIRATION

"Only those who dare to fail greatly can ever achieve greatly."

—Robert F. Kennedy

Note to delivery leaders: *Aspiration-setting is primarily the responsibility of the system leader. This module is a guide for how a system leader should set the system's aspirations. Your role as delivery leader is highlighted where appropriate.*

"What do you want?" is a basic but often unasked question. System leaders must understand what their system wants, or what kind of change it needs. Many attempts at delivery have been derailed because those in charge assumed that a system's leaders all shared the same aspirations, when in fact they did not. Other efforts have failed because leaders agreed

on the wrong things, were insufficiently ambitious, or simply had ill-defined goals. Aspirations set the direction of a system's change and motivate people toward that direction.

This module will explore what an aspiration is and define some criteria and approaches for clarifying and/or setting a system's aspirations. An aspiration is your system's answer to three questions:

DIRECTION AND MOTIVATION

"Where direction was clarified—as in Education under Blunkett or the Treasury under Gordon Brown—the civil servants were highly motivated. Where [it] was lacking—as in Social Security—motivation was, of course, less evident." (*Instruction to Deliver*, 45)

- What do we care about?
- What are we going to do about it?
- How will we measure success?

To have an impact, a system's aspirations must be clear, sharp, and understandable to everyone. Common aspirations form the basis for all efforts at delivery because they signify a shared understanding of what success would look like. Shared aspirations become a powerful tool that your Delivery Unit can invoke during its work with the front line. How much more difficult would it have been for NASA leaders to motivate their agency to put a man on the moon if they were without President Kennedy's famously expressed aspiration to back them up? An aspiration acts as a system's backbone, the goal to be insisted upon when others are thinking of giving up, or giving in to the mistaken belief that outcomes are not in our power to control or influence.

As defined here, an aspiration is not necessarily a specific and time-bound target (for more on target setting, see Chapter 3, Plan for Delivery). However, as the three defining questions above suggest, an aspiration should lend itself to measurement by one or more target metrics: metrics that the system uses to represent the actual outcomes desired by a system.

An aspiration is, at a minimum, a verbal expression of the specific outcome (or outcomes) that a system strives to influence or attain, and the direction of that desired influence or attainment. It is often derived from a system's overall mission but is more specific. The American Cancer Society's mission, for example, is to "eliminate cancer as a major health problem" (ACS, n.d.). That mission may embrace many aspirations: providing universal access to cancer screening, increasing awareness about cancer risk factors, ensuring the provision of life-saving treatment, and so on. Likewise, in his first speech to Congress in 2009, President Barack Obama set an aspiration that the United States would have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world by the year 2020. Though this was a measurable aspiration, much remained to be done to clarify exactly what measures to use. Exhibit 1A.1 indicates examples of aspiration setting in public policy, education, and the nonprofit sector.

Aspirations set the foundation for delivery because they set the bar for what the system will be asked to achieve. The relationship between aspiration and delivery can be summarized in Exhibit 1A.2. The nature of your aspiration determines how bold the reform will be, while the quality of your delivery effort determines how well executed the reform will be.

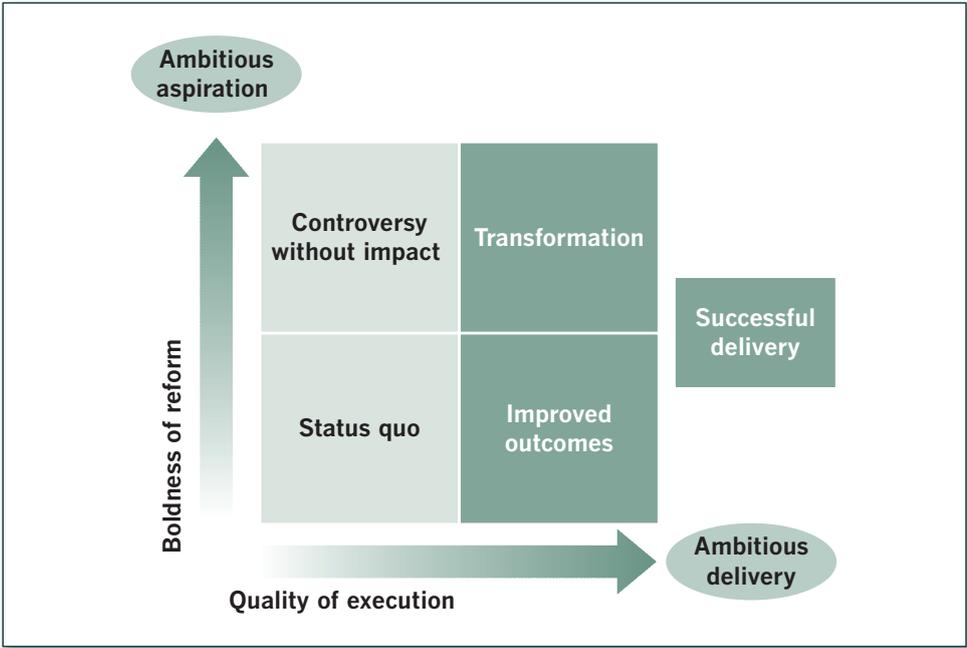
The ideal is to have both a bold aspiration and excellent execution, but this will be challenging for obvious reasons. However, watering down the aspiration too much results in a defense of the status quo, which, in an era of rising public expectations, is a recipe for managed decline. The equation changes when the horizontal axis becomes the focus. A not very radical but plausible idea, implemented well, will make a difference and deliver improved outcomes. This can buy you the right to increase the boldness of your aspirations and deliver transformation.

This map will be a useful guide as you identify, evaluate, and help create your system's aspirations. By plotting your aspirations onto this map, you will have an idea of the balance of your ambitions, with clear implications for you. If most of your current aspirations are on the left-hand side, you will need to shift them to the right. Incidentally, a controversy without

Exhibit 1A.1 Aspirations in education, public policy, and the nonprofit sector—examples

	Aspiration	Target metric
San Jose Unified School District	We seek to prepare every high school student to be ready for college upon graduation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduation success rates against rigorous requirements aligned with the A-G requirements of the University of California system
City of Los Angeles	We want to improve public services in six key areas: education, economic development, transportation, energy and environment, public safety and security, and fiscal responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education—graduation and drop-out rates • Economic—residential and commercial construction • Transportation—synchronization of traffic signals • Energy and environment—percent of city trucks meeting diesel emissions standards • Safety/security—gang-related murders per capita per time period • Fiscal—level of deficit (holding taxes constant)
One Campaign	We want the commitment of world leaders to fight extreme poverty and preventable disease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Track progress on specific initiatives of Global Call to Action Against Poverty (GCAP) for each country • Analyze and track each country's budget for GCAP campaigns • Track countries that do and do not honor their commitments • Track countries that do not participate in any initiatives related to fighting poverty

Exhibit 1A.2 A map of delivery: Aspirations push the boldness of reform while delivery pushes the quality of execution



impact might be worthwhile as a step on the way to transformation, but it should be avoided as an end state. If the whole portfolio is destined to end up in the “Transformation” box, then the program is probably too risky. If it is all headed for the “Improved outcomes” box, then it probably lacks ambition. The more ambitious your aspiration is, the more rigorous you must be with delivery to ensure that it can lead to transformation.

ROLES OF SYSTEM LEADER AND DELIVERY LEADER

Setting a system’s aspirations is primarily the responsibility of the system leader. If it already exists, your Delivery Unit (the person or group responsible for driving the achievement of system aspirations—see Module 1C for more information) may be called upon to assist the system leader in doing this. Over time, your role as delivery leader will be to ensure that this aspiration remains sufficiently focused, clear, and shared by system leaders—and to push for clarification or redefinition where necessary. Systems lacking ambitious aspirations are sometimes set right by their Delivery Units, which can point out this need and bring the right people together to meet it.

PROCESS STEPS

- Step 1: Identify existing aspirations
- Step 2: Clarify existing aspirations
- Step 3: Refine or define new aspirations if necessary

Step 1: Identify existing aspirations

The aspirations for most systems will not be set from a blank slate. For many, aspirations usually exist in some form, and usually systems are not completely free to define their own aspirations: mission statements, laws and regulations governing the system, and existing commitments made by other leaders all have an influence.

As a first step, system leaders must identify their system’s existing aspirations and any external influences on those aspirations. Some examples of external influences are included in Exhibit 1A.3, and key questions for doing this are given in Exhibit 1A.4.

As prime minister, Tony Blair wanted to target several areas of concern for which well-defined aspirations were lacking. The Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) leader worked with the prime minister, ministers, and half a dozen members of Blair’s policy team to establish priority areas for which aspirations were set. The key was to focus aspirations on a narrow set of themes in order to have a clear message of delivery and increase chances of success.

Step 2: Clarify existing aspirations

Once existing aspirations have been identified by the system leader, she must examine them to determine whether they are fit for anchoring delivery

Exhibit 1A.3 External influence on system aspirations—examples

No Child Left Behind Act	Requires that all students in the United States perform at grade level according to state standards by 2014. This effectively means that no state K–12 system can avoid including performance on state assessments as part of its aspiration.
Presidential goal for college attainment	In his first speech to a joint session of Congress, President Barack Obama made the pledge that “by 2020, America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.” Though not backed up by legislation, this pledge will influence the aspirations of state university systems throughout the United States.

Exhibit 1A.4 Identifying a system’s existing aspirations—questions for consideration

Alignment on aspirations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the system leader’s aspirations? Are they well known? • What are the views of the top 7–10 people in the system’s leadership on the system leader’s aspirations? Are they aligned? • What are the views of the middle managers and the front line about these aspirations? Are they aware of them? • Does the system itself have aspirations, articulated either publicly or internally? What are the strategy documents (strategic plans, goals, etc.) that set out the system aspirations?
External influences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the system have a mission statement? How does it affect aspirations? • Does the system define its aspirations with governing laws and regulations? Do those laws and regulations set out specific measures to which the system is held accountable? • Have previous system leaders or leaders with some kind of oversight responsibility, effectively set aspirations? • If the system leader is an elected official or an appointee of an elected official, is she accountable to an electoral mandate that must be considered when setting aspirations? • What do the users of the system’s services want? What do other stakeholders who are affected by the system’s work want?

efforts. Questions to consider when shaping existing aspirations are presented in the following paragraphs:

- **What moral purpose do the aspirations serve? Should they be achieved, why will that matter?** Without an aspiration connected to the college- and career-readiness agenda, a K–12 state education agency (SEA) may be neglecting one of the most important elements of its organizational mission. Likewise with a hospital and the reduction of mortality rates.
- **Are the aspirations sufficiently ambitious? If achieved, will they make a substantial impact on the things the system cares about?**

Is the conception of “ambitious” embodied in the aspirations truly supported by the data? (For more on this, see Module 3B, Set targets and trajectories.) Aspirations should guard against complacency and take account of how the world is changing; for example, it would do no good for an antipoverty campaign to set an aspiration to ensure that all incomes are at least \$1 per day if trends show that this income will be insufficient to pull a household out of poverty five years from now.

- **Can the aspirations be summarized in one or more metrics that can be calculated using data that are readily available? If not, what would be required to collect the necessary data?** Is there an alternative metric or metrics that can be calculated using available data? While there should theoretically be few limitations on aspirations based on availability of data, some criteria may be difficult to measure.
- **Are the aspirations sufficiently focused?** Are there two or three big aspirations, or dozens of small ones? Are the aspirations so large, or so numerous, as to be incoherent?
- **Are the aspirations shared?** That is, is the leadership team aligned on these aspirations? Are there exceptions to this alignment? How serious are they? How well do people throughout the system, from middle managers, such as principals, to front line actors, such as teachers, understand these aspirations? How well do users and the public understand them? Could they name them if asked?

Depending on how these clarifying questions are answered, the appropriateness of endorsing, altering, or redefining a system’s aspirations can be decided.

FOCUSED ASPIRATION

“We were already agreed that the departments to focus on were Health, Education, Transport and the Home Office, and no others. What [Tony] Blair made clear in this meeting, however, was that he also wanted to narrow the focus within each departmental area. ‘I want the Delivery Unit focused on issues of real salience . . . for example, in transport, I only want [the PMDU] to sort out the railways.’ In fact, at that stage the Prime Minister’s determination to narrow the focus . . . was such that I was worried our scope would be too limited, but over time this rigorous prioritization was completely vindicated.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 49)

Step 3: Refine or define new aspirations if necessary

If existing aspirations are insufficiently clear, insufficiently focused, or insufficiently shared, then their redefinition, narrowing, and/or dissemination will be necessary.

There are two ways of setting aspirations. The first is consultative, and the second is to lead from the front. In a consultative method, the leader brings together a group of key stakeholders and holds an open discussion. Depending on what was discovered in Step 1, the makeup of this group will vary. If the system’s internal control over its aspirations is substantial, the group may simply be the system’s leadership team. If, on the other hand, the

desired change requires a change in an external constraint such as a law or regulation, the group may combine lawmakers, internal leadership, and even interested third parties who have influence.

Agreement among stakeholders can be achieved in a number of ways. For small changes, a series of individual consultations might be all that is needed, followed by broad communication of the new aspirations. For larger changes, it might be advisable to convene a workshop—a meeting of all stakeholders to discuss and agree collectively on a new aspiration—or to conduct a wider consultative exercise that involves substantial public input from a variety of sources.

The consultative model is not always appropriate; sometimes, to aspire means to lead from the front. Leaders often mistakenly believe that they must trade off ambition for efficacy in government, while the reverse is sometimes true. We have already referred to President Kennedy’s aspiration to land a man on the moon. It is generally agreed that his expressed goal of achieving this by 1970 spurred the NASA engineers toward success. Would Kennedy’s goal have had the same effect if it had not been so ambitious—if, say, the deadline had been 2020 instead of 1970? If he had consulted widely, would it have been set at all? Expressed ambition creates urgency that can be a real asset in getting things done. It can be crucial in generating the early wins that a system needs in order to have the right to continue its work. System leaders should therefore develop reasonable, ambitious, and non-negotiable aspirations and demonstrate to stakeholders their willingness to “go it alone” if that is what success demands.

Exhibit 1A.5 summarizes these two models of aspiration setting and some guidelines for when each is appropriate.

Exhibit 1A.5 Models of aspiration setting

	←	→
Model	“Lead from the front”	Consultative
Description	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader asserts an aspiration and invests his or her own political capital to support the aspiration. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader convenes a series of workshops or meetings to develop new aspirations collaboratively. • Stakeholders may include system leaders, local leaders, frontline staff, and/or community groups.
When to use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader needs to create a sense of urgency in the organization. • Leader wants to communicate that certain aspirations are important enough to be non-negotiable. • Leader fears that consultative method would produce watered-down aspirations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader needs to secure buy-in from key stakeholders by involving them early. • System needs to demonstrate that it listens and responds to stakeholders (e.g., teachers feel they have no voice in reform decisions).
Tips from delivery practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving system actors in the process of creating aspirations increases the likelihood they will embrace and support them. However, a consultative approach can make it more challenging to set highly ambitious aspirations. 	

Conclusion

In this module, you have learned the following aspiration-setting processes:

- How to identify a system’s existing aspirations and the context surrounding them.
- How to clarify these aspirations to see if they are fit to anchor delivery efforts.
- How to identify and bring stakeholders together to refine, redefine, and/or narrow system aspirations.

When aspiration setting is complete, the system will have an agreed-upon, well-articulated set of aspirations along with one or more metrics to measure progress according to available or collectable data. This data will become the basis for understanding current performance and for setting system goals.

1B. REVIEW THE CURRENT STATE OF DELIVERY ■

“You try getting change in the public sector and the public services. I bear the scars on my back after two years in government and heaven knows what it will be like after a bit longer.”

—Former U.K. Prime Minister Tony Blair

In his 1999 “scars on my back” speech, Tony Blair underscored a real challenge that he faced. Blair’s Labour Party had won a resounding victory in elections just two years earlier, and Blair himself had near complete mastery of the political scene. In trying to effect change, however, the prime minister discovered nonetheless that the levers he controlled were weak, the leaders of the public service workforce were prepared to defend a manifestly inadequate status quo, and there were no systems in place to drive and monitor delivery.

Tony Blair learned a hard lesson in his first term: Those who seek to make change ignore the inner workings of the bureaucracy—and the use of delivery tools to make change happen—at their peril. Leaders must always work through those that they lead. Making change happen requires a clear understanding of an entire ecosystem of people and organizations that will play a part in implementing your reforms as well as a set of defined activities that will push delivery forward.

In this module, you will learn to examine your system’s capacity to deliver your aspiration. A system’s capacity to deliver, or *delivery capacity*, can be measured according to the kinds of *delivery activities* a system is undertaking and how effective they are in improving the impact of the *system’s activities*. In order to fully understand these activities, you must first also get a general sense of the landscape of the *system actors*, the people or organizations that drive the *system’s activities*.

Here, a distinction is being made between delivery activities and system activities.

- **Delivery activities** are the specific activities described in this field guide, usually undertaken by your Delivery Unit and system leadership team, that help make delivery happen. Examples include analyzing

system performance against the aspiration or running routines to monitor progress.

- **System activities** are those undertaken by system actors to achieve the system's aspiration. This is the “real work” of any system. It can consist of day-to-day work, such as classroom teaching, or specific programs, such as outreach for low-income students to help improve freshman year retention rates in college.

As indicated above, the capacity to deliver is a strict measurement of the presence and quality of your system's delivery activities but not its system activities. You will gain a better understanding of system activities in Module 2B when you develop delivery chains to assess the types of changes you want to make in your reform strategy. Then in Module 5A, you will learn the tools to help build both delivery capacity and system capacity based on the gaps you have identified in this module and Module 2B. This module focuses on simply understanding the current state of delivery in the system, which is important at this early stage in the delivery process because it can inform the way that your delivery effort is organized.

ROLES OF SYSTEM LEADER AND DELIVERY LEADER

Delivery capacity will often be reviewed before the Delivery Unit is completely set up; in some cases, you may find yourself alone as delivery leader when the review occurs. Your role is to work with the system leader to conduct the review, and use its results to inform the way you design and set up your Delivery Unit (see Module 1C). Sometimes, the system leader may conduct the review prior to your arrival as delivery leader, in which case your role will be to use the results of the review to inform your management of the Delivery Unit.

PROCESS STEPS

- Step 1: Understand the landscape of your system
- Step 2: Conduct a delivery capacity review
- Step 3: Organize your delivery effort to improve capacity

Step 1: Understand the landscape of your system

In order to better understand your delivery capacity, you need to develop a general understanding of your system: Who are the main players, and what are their roles and relative influence in the system? To do this, it is helpful to make a list of the major system actors, their roles, and their relationships with one another. This is similar to creating an organization chart for your system. Later, you will learn in Module 2B about creating delivery chains—the set of system actors that contribute to a specific system activity. The system map is a broader overview that provides you with baseline knowledge about your system.

Most system leaders and their teams should be able to draw such a map easily, but it may take a few interviews to develop an understanding of influences and relationships. Exhibits 1B.1 and 1B.2 are examples of system maps for both a higher education system and a K–12 SEA.

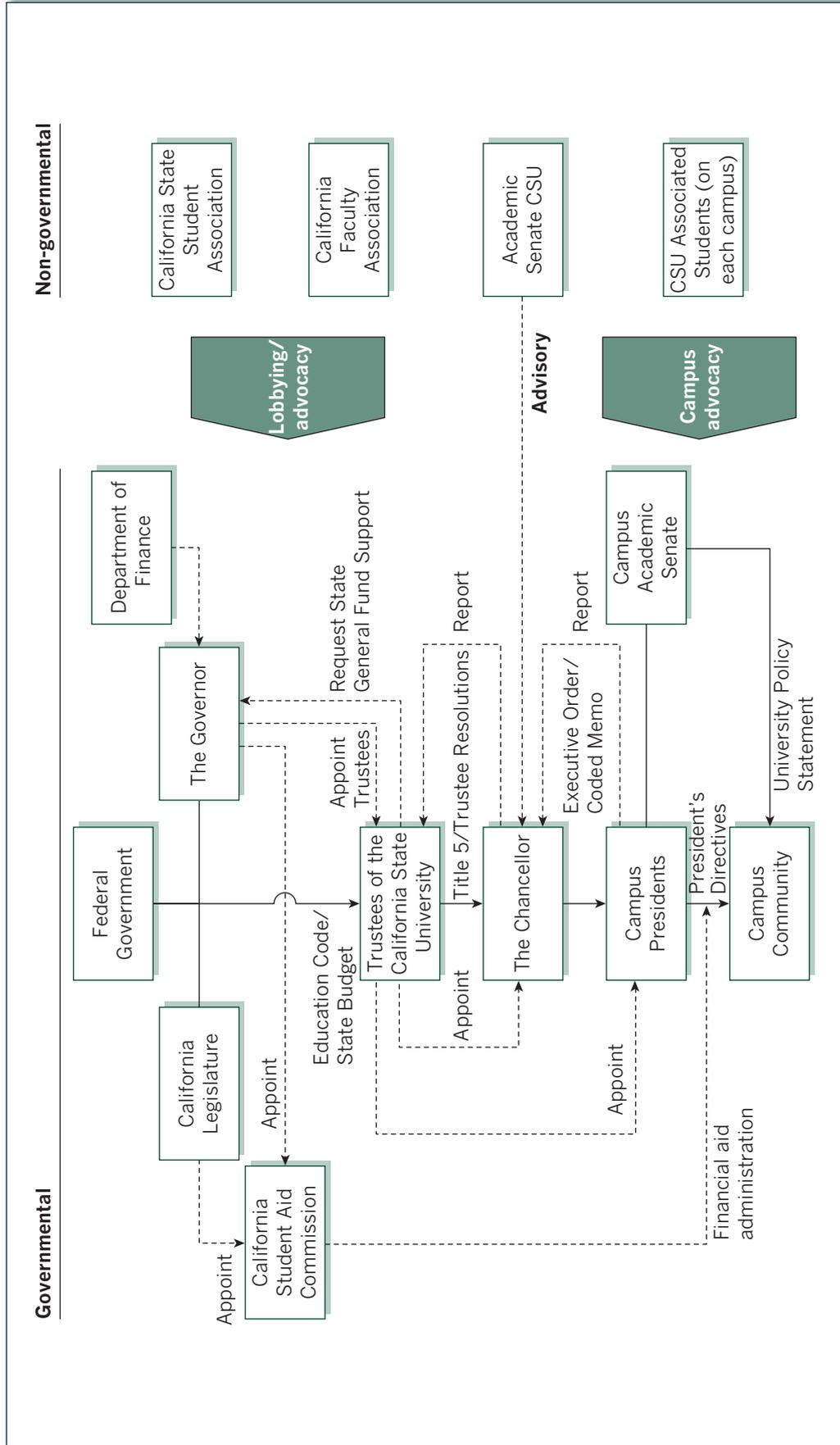
Once you understand the landscape of your system, you can better understand the state of delivery of this system through a proper delivery capacity review.

Step 2: Conduct a baseline delivery capacity review

A *delivery capacity review* is a tool that you can use to assess the ability of your system to perform the delivery activities associated with each of five stages of delivery. These stages are embodied in five sets of questions.

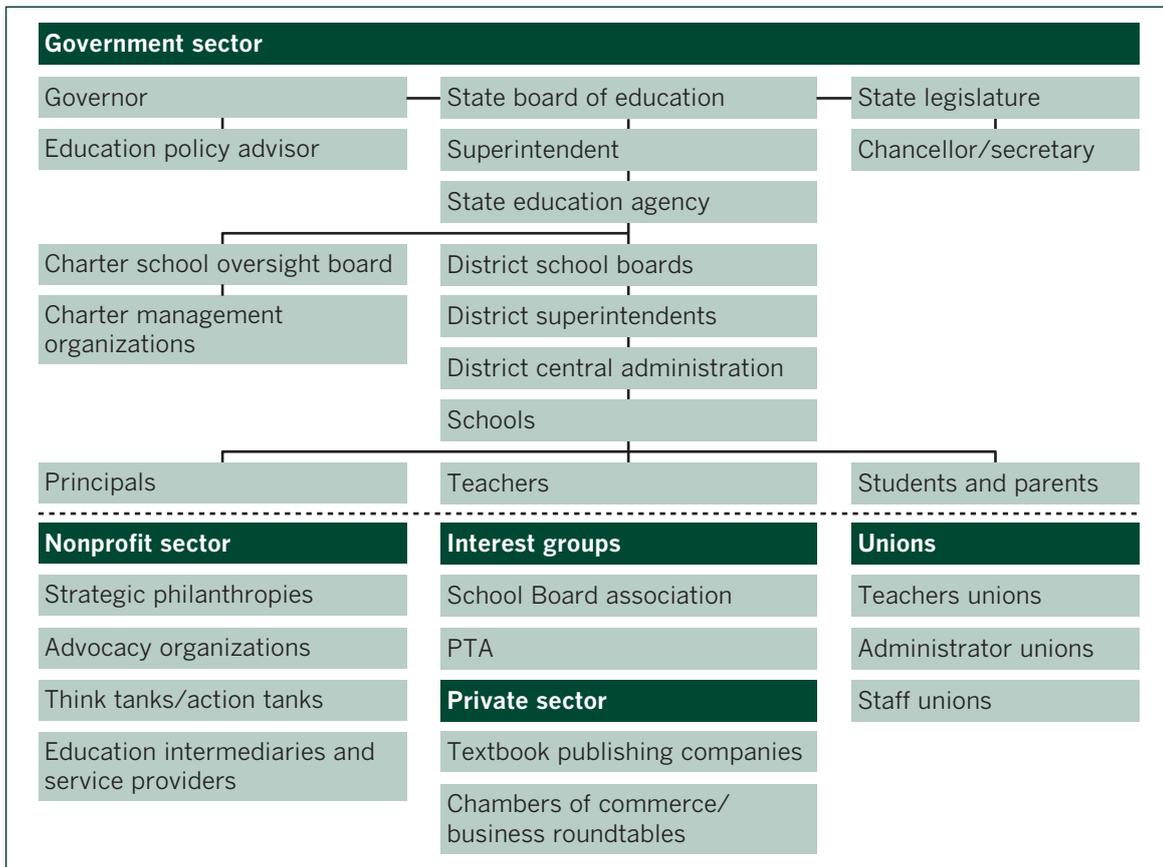
1. Has your system *developed a foundation for delivery*? Do system leaders and their top teams share an ambitious aspiration? Do they understand the current state of delivery? Have they set up a Delivery Unit and assembled a guiding coalition to drive and lead the achievement of that aspiration?
2. Does your system *understand the delivery challenge*? Does your system understand the opportunity to improve performance and the barriers to exploiting that opportunity? Does your system have the ability to collect and analyze performance data related to your aspiration, including leading indicators? Do system leaders use this data to understand the most important patterns of performance? Do they understand, and regularly assess, the drivers of their biggest performance challenges and the efficacy of current system activities in addressing those challenges? Do they constantly search for ideas and lessons from analogous situations, states, and systems that have overcome these challenges?
3. Does your system *plan for delivery*? Do system leaders have an integrated reform strategy grounded in a theory of change? Have they done a rigorous and evidence-based analysis of that strategy to set an ambitious but realistic target and trajectory for delivery of the aspiration? Have they broken this strategy down into delivery plans that establish the tangible **action steps** that will make it happen?
4. Does your system *drive delivery*? What regular routines have system leaders established to ensure that they are getting the information they need, on a regular enough basis, to know whether the delivery effort is on track? When problems arise, do they have an approach for solving them quickly, systematically, and rigorously? Beyond monitoring, what mechanisms have they put in place to push those who are successful to the next level?
5. Does your system *create a culture of delivery*? What measures do system leaders and their top teams undertake to ensure that people and organizations throughout the system are able to execute on their delivery plans? What is the story that they tell stakeholders about the delivery effort? Is the quality of relationships throughout the delivery system—and, particularly, the delivery chains—sufficient to enable successful delivery?

Exhibit 1B.1 System map for the California State University System



SOURCE: "University Governance and Administration," California State University, Cal-State Chico (http://www.csuchico.edu/catalog/cat09/01Front/05CSU_UnivAdministration.pdf); interviews.

Exhibit 1B.2 System map for California’s K–12 system



STARTING FROM SCRATCH

The PMDU had to start from the ground up, as the British government at that time had not established a systematic approach to delivery:

“At the most basic level, there was no Delivery Unit to inherit, so the people would have to be found, the methodologies invented, the processes designed and the relationships established. We had to develop techniques or methods that would result in convincing, reliable, evidence-based answers to our five questions.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 48)

In order to ensure that the results are both objective and grounded in a thorough understanding of your system, your delivery capacity review is best conducted by a joint team consisting of

- You and/or Delivery Unit staff (if there are any);
- A handful of crucial people on your system leadership team; and
- Staff from an independent entity, which has delivery expertise.

This combination of participants ensures both insider and outsider perspectives, which are necessary to ensure productive dialogue about the state of delivery in your system and lay the foundations for progress.

A delivery capacity review should not take a long time to conduct—maybe a week at the most, depending on available time, organizational complexity, and the condition of the organization’s capacity. Sometimes, you will only have time to ask a few leaders and stakeholders some key questions that will allow you to make quick judgments about delivery capacity. Other times, you may have more time in which to conduct a thorough review and reach a deeper understanding.

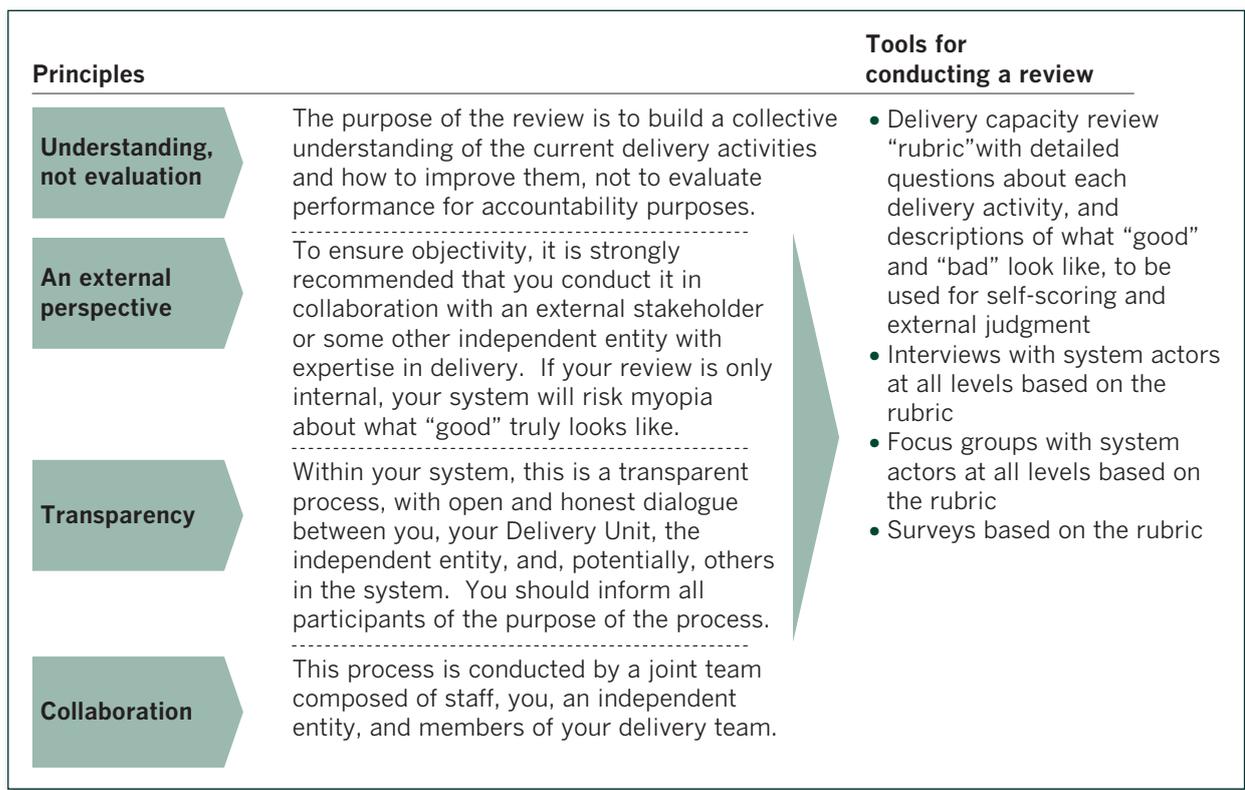
A delivery capacity review will help you in several ways:

- It will establish a baseline against which you can measure your progress in building your capacity to deliver;
- It will provide you with the context and insight necessary to be effective in coaching and advising others in your Unit or delivery organization;
- It will facilitate the engagement of a wide group of stakeholders involved in the delivery effort; and
- It will deepen your own understanding of excellent delivery.

While the nature and form of the delivery capacity review process will vary depending on system context, all delivery capacity reviews should be conducted according to a certain set of principles. These principles, and the tools that can help you to put them into action, are summarized in Exhibit 1B.3.

The most important of these tools is the delivery *capacity review rubric*, a detailed questionnaire that explores multiple dimensions of each aspect of the

Exhibit 1B.3 Principles and tools for conducting a delivery capacity review



delivery framework (see Exhibit 1B.4). For each of the components in this field guide, the rubric describes model “good” and “bad” states of delivery, and potential sources for evidence to support the reviewer’s judgment. The rubric uses a four-point scale, which helps prevent a convergence to the middle and forces a real judgment about how good or bad delivery is. The rubric is a tool for scoring the system’s delivery approach on all of these dimensions, but it is also the basis of all other questioning and probing tools that the team will use in the delivery capacity review process (interview protocols, focus group plans, surveys, etc.).

Exhibit 1B.4 The delivery capacity review rubric

This tool defines characteristics of strong delivery and asks critical questions for each part of the delivery framework

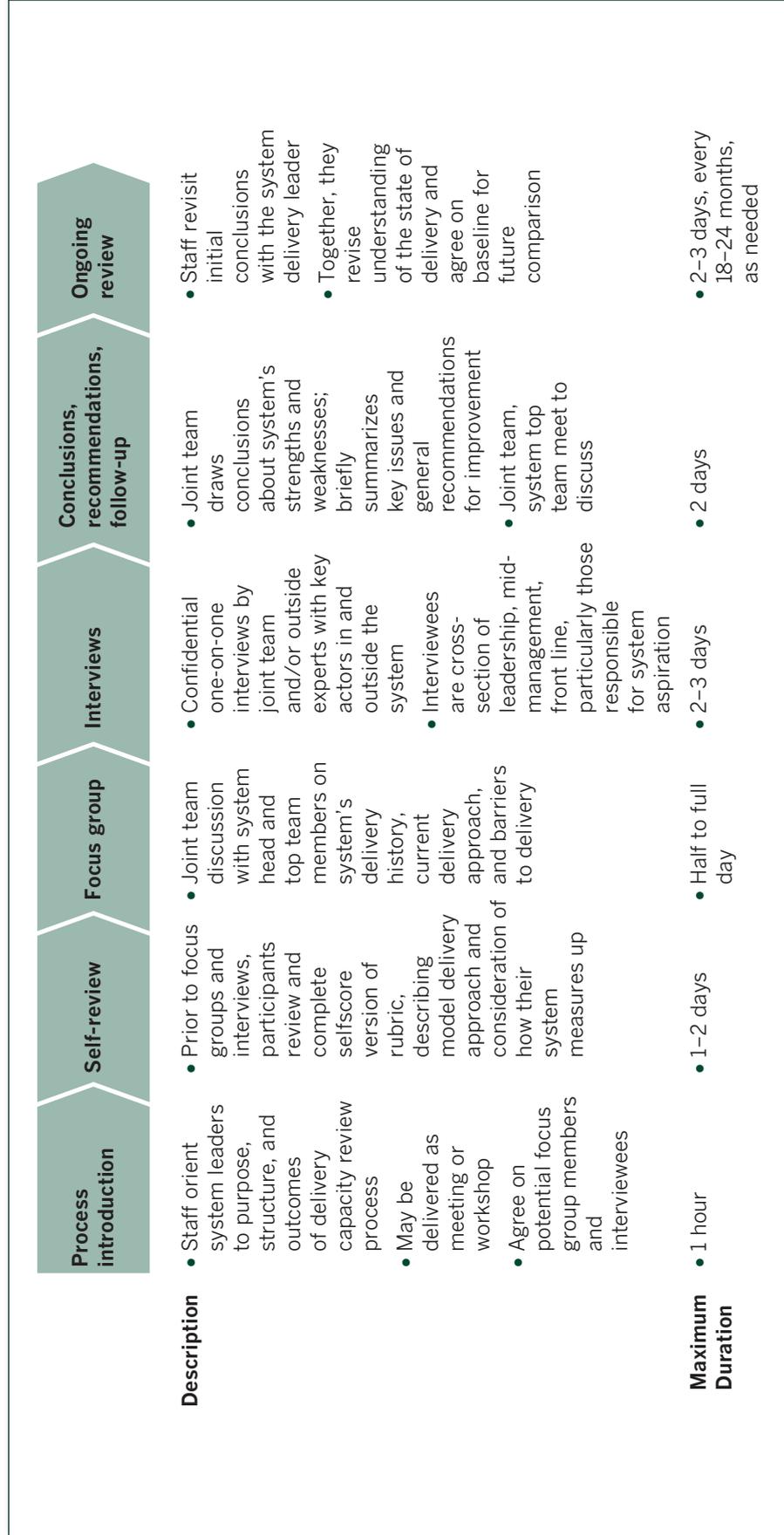
Example questions	Best case (Green) ←	→ Worst case (Red)	Rating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your system have a theory of change that articulates how it believes it will achieve its aspiration? • Does your system have a reform strategy with a coherent set of interventions that are consistent with the theory of change? • Are the interventions powerful on their own, with proven or promising efficacy to improve performance against the aspiration? • Are the interventions integrated, having a combined effect that is more powerful than their individual effects would otherwise have been? • Are the interventions sequenced to balance resources required, impact, and interdependencies over time? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System has a well-defined theory of change that tells a coherent and compelling story about how the system achieve its aspiration. • Different possible interventions are analyzed in terms of expected impact, cost, feasibility, scale, rigor, and requirements for skill and participation along the delivery chain; this analysis informs the choice and sequencing of interventions. • Chosen combination of interventions represents a coherent strategy, is aligned with the theory of change, and is complementary and mutually reinforcing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System lacks a well-defined theory of change. • Combination of interventions lacks coherence. Little or no benefit arises from implementing all the interventions as part of a single strategy. • Little analysis of different combinations of interventions or interdependencies between them. • Interventions themselves have little evidence that they have large impact on performance against the aspiration. 	

For the complete delivery capacity review rubric, please see the Appendix A1.

Depending on whether your system has begun to act on the aspiration defined in Module 1A, you may need to anchor your delivery capacity review questions on some other, prior aspiration of the system leader in order to understand current delivery activities.

What process should you use to get the information that will allow you to make these judgments? Depending on your situation, your delivery capacity review process may be more or less involved. Some systems simply conduct a focused interview (based on the rubric) with a few members of the system leadership team then convene these leaders in a single meeting to compare results. For others with more time, the process may look something more like what is shown in Exhibit 1B.5.

Exhibit 1B.5 Delivery capacity review process—example



The process begins with an introductory session, during which joint team members are oriented to the delivery capacity review process. Reviews then begin with a period of self-review, during which you, your delivery team, and all identified focus group and interview participants use the delivery capacity review rubric to consider your system's current delivery approach.

Once reflections are complete, the joint team convenes a focus group and conducts a series of interviews, both with a cross section of participants from system leadership, middle management, and the front line, as well as stakeholders external to the system. From these activities, the joint team develops conclusions and recommendations about the system's strengths and weaknesses with respect to delivery.

A delivery capacity review will establish a baseline that must be updated periodically. As your system's delivery approach grows and matures, and as a stronger and more collaborative relationship develops between you and joint team members, you will want to form a new joint team every 18 to 24 months to revisit and improve your understanding of your system's delivery capacity.

The following are examples of how a K–12 SEA and higher education system conducted their delivery capacity reviews. The higher education example includes a sample of a completed delivery review rubric.

CASE EXAMPLE

Reviewing delivery capacity in K–12 and higher education systems

In one K–12 SEA, time was short, so the team assisting the staff in setting up the Delivery Unit conducted a quick series of interviews with key personnel in the SEA. Rather than score their system against the formal rubric, they instead collapsed their results into a series of key findings and implications for the delivery effort (see Exhibit 1B.6).

Exhibit 1B.6 Findings and implications for K–12 capacity review

Finding	Implication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-level personnel want more top-down engagement and feedback on plans and goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical direction provided through delivery may quickly build support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no single owner of any of the ambitious goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complexity will require SEA to find ways to foster collective responsibility for goals and collaboration.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountability is tied to running programs rather than achieving student outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shifting to outcomes-based accountability will require investment to change mind sets and to build problem solving capabilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Failure to meet targets results in change in target as opposed to change in plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> True trajectory construction will be an entirely new exercise for the SEA—relentless focus and urgency may meet resistance.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Finding	Implication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery is being executed reasonably well in isolated pockets of SEA.¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can we build on this as we develop SEA's capacity (e.g., what should be the role of the program leader X)?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many units' plans prioritize initiatives based on attached funding rather than proven efficacy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this a problem to solve or work around?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal setting, planning, and bimonthly reports required by CSSO's Office, but there is little feedback provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff may be skeptical about these aspects of delivery; countering this skepticism will require highlighting what differentiates delivery from past efforts and identifying quick wins.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of real-time data for specific metrics is limited (organization is rich in annual data only). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity will have to be built to problem solve methods of estimating progress via indicators.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People feel consumed with ad hoc requests that could be predicted (e.g., frequent requests during legislative session). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we begin building the mindset that developments should not take staff by surprise?

SOURCE: Interviews with SEA officials.

1. Program X is constructing strong delivery systems, independently overcoming barriers, and driving excellent progress against SMART targets.

By contrast, the new Delivery Unit for a higher education system undertook a more formal review process. Over the course of one week, they set up interviews (based on the rubric) with several key officials in the system office. They then collated those results and produced a formal traffic-light judgment for each component of the delivery framework. The Delivery Unit shared these results with the system CEO privately before debriefing with the senior staff as a whole. The debrief was designed to explore the findings and improve mutual understanding of the rationale behind each judgment. For each of the categories, the Delivery Unit provided some preliminary thoughts on what kinds of concrete actions the system could undertake to improve performance. The meeting concluded with an agreement that the system leadership would decide where it wanted to focus improvement efforts so that the Delivery Unit could develop a more robust work plan for these areas. Some partial results from this process are shown in the Exhibit 1B.7.

These results were illuminating for several staff members. In particular, the results brought on the realization that the system had taken on a fire-fighting culture, tending to the crises of the moment and therefore not focusing on a consistent set of priorities. Because delivery would require focus, they agreed that this would mean letting some fires burn out while others would require less leadership attention.

The team followed up with a list of short-term and long-term actions that the system should take to "move toward green." This list (Exhibit 1B.8) would ultimately shape and inform their entire delivery effort.

Aspect of delivery	Characteristics	Strength	Rationale	
3) Plan for Delivery	3A) Determine reform strategy: Does system take cohesive approach to initiatives, maximizing and understanding interdependencies?	R	Significant opportunity for greater holistic approach to activities and identification of interdependencies	R
	3B) Set goals and establish trajectories: Has aspiration been translated to concrete targets and cascaded down to relevant level? Have realistic trajectories been created for tracking performance?	R	Significant data tracking to monitor progress but great opportunity to increase use of targets and trajectories	YR
	3C) Produce delivery plans: Does system use meaningful plans against which to track performance?	R	Implementation plans not widely used for system's efforts. Request-for-proposal driven processes do require plans of bidders	YG
	4) Drive Delivery	4A) Ensure start of delivery and establish routines: Is there a regular, fact-based, results-driven cycle of routines to monitor progress and correct course where required?	R	Data available for fact-based decision making, but routines focus on fire fighting over ongoing performance assessment and reaction; open culture of discussion
4B) Solve problems early and rigorously: Are there mechanisms to ensure problems are identified and raised early and solved in order of priority?		YG	Problems addressed quickly when surfaced; learnings shared with other affected stakeholders but not always within system leadership	YR
4C) Build and sustain momentum: How does the system maintain dedication to the approach through adversity and celebrate success?		YR	Reliant on individual commitment and monthly board meetings	G

Exhibit 1B.8

Moving toward green—partial list of possible actions based on delivery capacity review results

	Near Term	Longer Term
<p>3. Plan for Delivery</p> <p>Characteristics</p> <p>3A) Determine reform strategy Does system take a cohesive approach to its initiatives and try and maximize synergies and understand inter-dependencies?</p> <p>3B) Set goals and establish trajectories Has the aspiration been translated to concrete targets and cascaded down to the relevant level? Have realistic trajectories been created against which to track performance?</p> <p>3C) Produce delivery plans Does the system use meaningful plans against which to track performance?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generate campus-level targets for overall system target • Build trajectories for each campus using historical data, projections, and peer benchmarks • Work with campuses to refine individual goals and trajectories. Provide support where needed to campuses in the development of their plans to achieve the goals. • Craft a system-wide delivery plan to support achievement of the aspiration (e.g., direct roles for system to play, policy, support to campuses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the system is not operating in silos by encouraging sharing of updates across programs. • Begin to apply the tenets of Delivery to all system programs, i.e., ensure that all programs have <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Clear targets based on benchmarking/other research – Trajectories toward the targets – An implementation plan • Create a high level system plan that consolidates all the programs run directly by the system.

SOURCE: Higher education system.

Step 3: Organize your delivery effort to improve capacity

Your delivery capacity review will yield insights for improving your capacity to deliver throughout the lifetime of your delivery effort. The review may have implications for the design choices that you make in setting up your Delivery Unit (for more, see Module 1C).

- **Staff selection.** You may choose to recruit Delivery Unit staff from the departments or local units where delivery activities are strongest. For example, if a strong system of performance routines is already in place, you may want to recruit some of the people responsible for these routines to work in your Delivery Unit.
- **Functional capability.** Your delivery capacity review will help you understand where you can take advantage of existing capabilities to support your Unit's work. It will also tell you which capabilities your Delivery Unit will need to develop on its own. The most obvious example of this is data: Some Delivery Units will need to build in-house data capability, while others with sufficient infrastructure will merely need to share resources from that infrastructure.

Second, your delivery capacity review will have implications for where your Delivery Unit should focus its energy. Depending on the existence and strength of your system's existing delivery activities, your Unit may be called upon to emphasize some activities in this field guide over others. For example, your Delivery Unit may discover that your system does a poor job of understanding its own performance and the underlying causes of performance, in which case it will need to focus on modules 2A and 2B in this field guide. On the other hand, your Unit may find that your system's reform strategy is coherent, balanced, and fit for purpose. In such cases, the delivery capacity review group may choose to work with your leadership team to ensure that your strategy is aligned with their analysis of performance and with the goals and trajectories that they help you set (Module 3B), but they will not focus heavily on the substance of the strategy itself (Module 3A). Because time is of the essence and resources are limited, the delivery activity triage that the delivery capacity review provides will help you deploy your Delivery Unit for maximum effectiveness.

Conclusion

By now, you have learned

- What delivery capacity is and why it is important;
- How to map the landscape of your system; and
- How to conduct a delivery capacity review, and how to use its results to strengthen your delivery effort.

With a thorough understanding of your system's delivery capacity, you and your Delivery Unit will have gained vital insight for the work to come. You will know which delivery activities are strong and should be built upon, and where the Delivery Unit will need to focus its energy to ensure that

progress is made. With this knowledge in hand, you are ready to build your Delivery Unit.

■ 1C. BUILD THE DELIVERY UNIT

“Who is the person . . . who spends most of his/her time on the priority and has sleepless nights, worrying about hitting the targets?”

—*Instruction to Deliver (106)*

Most systems espouse “accountability” or “performance management,” and create chief performance officers and other similarly titled positions for the purpose of getting things done. On a deeper level, however, the commitment to action can be wanting. This is often because delivery has not been understood in all its complexity. As defined in this field guide, delivery is an integrated set of tools and activities that work together to improve performance such that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Many systems have adopted the parts, but few have created the whole. Moreover, the parts are often implemented with poor fidelity to the guiding principles of delivery. The Delivery Unit is created to ensure that delivery is achieved in accordance to the guiding principles and is the driving force of delivery. Simply defined, a Delivery Unit is the person or group responsible for driving the achievement of system aspirations, no matter what.

During his tenure as U.K. prime minister, Tony Blair established the Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit (PMDU) on a simple theory of change: A small, flexible, highly capable team, with the system leader’s backing and the latitude to operate outside the line management chain, can exercise meaningful influence over the activities of that system, no matter how vast its bureaucracy. The PMDU demonstrated its adherence to this principle with the *leverage ratio*, which compared the money spent on the Delivery Unit with the money spent on the public services that the unit influenced. The ratio the PMDU achieved turned out to be about 1:50,000.

While there may be other effective paradigms for driving delivery, this field guide proceeds from the same theory of change that motivated the PMDU. The key to efficient delivery of aspirations lies in the design, organization, and development of a Delivery Unit whose influence and leverage is maximized. A Delivery Unit has an internal mandate for urgent and visible action. Delivery Unit staff monitor and challenge progress, attending both to information and people to make sure that results are on track.

A Delivery Unit should not be confused with *system actors*, the people and organizations in your system who hold direct responsibility for implementation of system activities. One of the most important principles of Delivery Unit design is that the unit should be outside the line management structure of the system and report directly to the system leader. Rather than exerting its own authority, the Delivery Unit acts as an amplifier of the system leader’s authority over the actors in the system, providing a careful balance of support and challenge to those who are responsible for implementation.

To do this credibly, a Delivery Unit must be a highly capable organization with a strong culture. The system leader must understand the benefits of investing small but significant resources to build a Delivery Unit that is up to this standard and be well aware of the risks of failing to do so.

This module contains instructions for setting up, organizing, and developing a Delivery Unit to the highest standards. In addition to outlining design principles and ways to organize a unit's activities, the module also introduces the equally important principles for developing the unit's *culture of delivery*. As we will see in Chapter 5, the presence of this culture in the Delivery Unit is the key to the leverage it exerts over the system and so ultimately to its success.

ROLES OF SYSTEM LEADER AND DELIVERY LEADER

The system leader's role is to recruit and hire the most talented delivery leader he can find and work with him or her to build the Delivery Unit. The system leader must also make crucial design choices about the Delivery Unit—in particular, its location in the system as a whole and the resources (both human and financial) that are devoted to it. As the delivery leader, your role will be to advise the system leader on some of these choices, to organize the Delivery Unit's work, and to build its culture.

PROCESS STEPS

- Step 1: Design the Delivery Unit
- Step 2: Organize the Delivery Unit
- Step 3: Build the Delivery Unit's capacity and culture

Step 1: Design the Delivery Unit

Delivery Units will take different forms in different system contexts. In small or resource-constrained systems, there may not even be an official "Delivery Unit," and only one full-time staff person might be designated. In some systems, the unit may have a different name. In Los Angeles, the Delivery Unit was called the Performance Management Unit. While the name and size of Delivery Units may vary, roles and functions need to be clear.

A few principles are always relevant to Delivery Unit design.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? WHY THE LOS ANGELES PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT UNIT IS NOT A DELIVERY UNIT

"The Mayor was so taken with the whole notion of performance management as a Tony Blair-tested tool and approach . . . the PMU [Performance Management Unit] grew out of this . . . I am not sure we discussed its naming thoroughly but . . . to an American ear, "delivery unit" sounds like an obstetrics ward!"

—Robin Kramer, Chief of Staff,
Office of Mayor Villaraigosa,
March 2005–September 2009

- **The unit should designate a full-time (or nearly full-time) delivery leader who reports directly to the system leader.** This person must have the trust of the system leader and the system leader's top team.
- **The unit should be small.** The PMDU worked with a bureaucracy that provided multiple services to over 60 million Britons, but it was never larger than around 40 people. Most systems will provide services to a smaller population and will have a much smaller Delivery Unit. Smallness has several advantages: flexibility; the ability to be selective; and, perhaps most importantly, the ability to build and maintain a cohesive culture.
- **The unit leader and staff should reside outside the system's line management hierarchy.** They should not be managed by any of the people or organizations they are trying to influence, nor should they directly manage any of these people or organizations. This will allow the unit to balance its mandate to support and to challenge, to be a "critical friend" delivering difficult messages, but to sustain trust and credibility with actors in the system.
- **The time of the delivery leader and Delivery Unit staff should be mainly—exclusively, if possible—dedicated to delivery.** This facilitates the development of a delivery culture and ensures that learning about delivery will occur at the maximum possible speed.
- **Delivery Unit staff should be drawn from among the most talented and qualified people that can be found—inside or outside the system.** There simply is no substitute for staffing a Delivery Unit with the right people: As the PMDU leader noted, "A small number of excellent people is infinitely better than a large number of ordinary people" (*Instruction to Deliver*, 64). Potential staff should be screened for five core competencies:
 - **Problem solving.** The ability to break down complex and ambiguous problems into manageable pieces and to constantly seek solutions.
 - **Relationship management.** Sensitivity, empathy, fairness, and humility.
 - **Data analysis.** Basic "numeracy," the ability to understand, interpret, and draw implications from large quantities of data. For some in the Delivery Unit, deeper proficiency may be required (e.g., use of data analysis software and tools), depending on whether this capacity exists elsewhere in the system.
 - **Feedback and coaching.** A mindset of continuous reflection on and learning from one's own experiences and those of others, and the ability to communicate these lessons in a thoughtful and specific way.
 - **A delivery mindset.** A key competency in adding value to a delivery effort. The individual must have a very strong, positive, can-do attitude to push through the many instances when delivery can be frustrating and challenging.

The decision to keep the PMDU staff small yielded a number of benefits, both in terms of internal interactions within the unit and its ability to be effective externally.

A SMALL, POTENT UNIT

“I was committed to a maximum of 49 [people], but in fact kept it at around 35 to 40. This was a happy number. We could all fit in one room so everyone could easily keep well-informed; I could personally involve myself in the appointment of every single member of staff so I could build a consistent, can-do culture and maintain quality; our budget was limited and flexibility relatively easy to achieve . . . The quality of our people became renowned across Whitehall. Once the reputation was established, good people wanted to work for us so we could constantly build and enhance the quality. This was, in turn, crucial to the relationship with Permanent Secretaries. They quickly realized that meetings with the Delivery Unit, while they might be challenging, were nearly always worthwhile.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 63)

Exhibit 1C.1 below shows the experience of some of the PMDU staff prior to their employment with the PMDU. The strength of the PMDU staff came from its mix of experiences and skills, as demonstrated by the variety of both public and private employers represented. The combination of expertise made the PMDU a powerful collection of highly capable and highly knowledgeable people. Your ambition in building your Delivery Unit should be correspondingly high. Following the principles above will help ensure that your Delivery Unit is created to the highest possible standard.

Exhibit 1C.1 Previous work locations of PMDU staff

Audit Commission	Cabinet Office	The Institute of Education, University of London
McKinsey & Company	Her Majesty’s Treasury	Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)
Accenture	Greenwich Council	Office for Standards in Education
Department of Health (DH)	Government Operational Research Service	Pricewaterhouse Coopers
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	Government Social Research	Home Office
Department for Education and Skills	Guy’s and St Thomas’ Hospital NHS Trust	National Statistics

CASE EXAMPLE**Delivery Units and finance functions: A critical relationship**

There is often confusion when it comes to the relationship between the Delivery Unit and the finance function (treasury, department of finance, or other such agency) in a system. Finance functions often play the role of demanding results for the money they allocate; if you are not careful, the finance function could see your Delivery Unit as an agency competing for turf, as an additional lobbying force for money for favored programs, or—worse—as irrelevant.

The PMDU solved this problem by building its system of targets on the Public Service Agreement (PSA) system that the U.K. Treasury Department had established. In essence, the Delivery Unit adopted a subset of the PSA targets, which represented agreements between the Treasury and relevant departments that they would reach a certain level of performance based on the money spent. This allowed the PMDU to focus on helping the departments to achieve these targets, knowing that they were already subject to this agreement and should (at least in theory) have sufficient funds to be successful. The Treasury came to see the PMDU as a helpful ally, even giving the PMDU much sought-after office space in its building in the later years of Tony Blair's second term.

Step 2: Organize the Delivery Unit

Once your Delivery Unit has been created with the right responsibilities and the right people, you can begin the task of organizing it. The key consideration in Delivery Unit organization is how will Delivery Unit staff interact with your system? In particular, how will your Delivery Unit staff organize themselves regularly to serve and oversee the various departments (or other similar organizations) responsible for implementing system activities? In general, Delivery Unit staff should organize to interact with these departments in a way that ensures the following:

- **Continuity in the relationship between the Delivery Unit and the departments being overseen.** This might take the form of a single point of contact or “account manager,” perhaps even to the point where a Delivery Unit staff member is embedded in, drawn from, or shared with the unit being overseen. Continuity is important both for the quality of the relationship and for the expertise of the Delivery Unit with respect to the departments it serves.
- **Objectivity of the Delivery Unit staff with respect to the departments they oversee.** This principle is in tension with the first, as discontinuity (e.g., rotation to different departments) helps to mitigate the risk that Delivery Unit staff “go native” with respect to the departments they oversee.

- **Sufficient skill and scope—both in data analytics and problem solving—to meet the needs of the departments being overseen.** If capacity needs change rapidly over time, this might imply a need for ongoing flexibility in the allocation of capacity.
- **Multiple perspectives in every decision.** Because so many of the Delivery Unit’s judgments are qualitative, they are of higher quality when pressure tested by multiple people from different backgrounds. This implies that the Delivery Unit should work in teams—or at least temporary groups—to solve any given problem.

Exhibits 1C.2 and 1C.3 illustrate two different types of Delivery Unit organization in the PMDU, one from the earlier years and one from the later years of Tony Blair’s second term as prime minister. The first is a flat, functional structure, in which a group of “account managers” are dedicated to the various departments while all other resources are essentially free floating, allocated according to need at a weekly staff meeting. This structure trades off some continuity, but delivers well on the other three principles (objectivity, skill scope, and multiple perspectives), and allows for maximum flexibility. It is particularly appropriate for the early years of a Delivery Unit, when so little is known about how capacity should ideally be arranged.

Exhibit 1C.2 Prime Minister’s Delivery Unit—functional organization

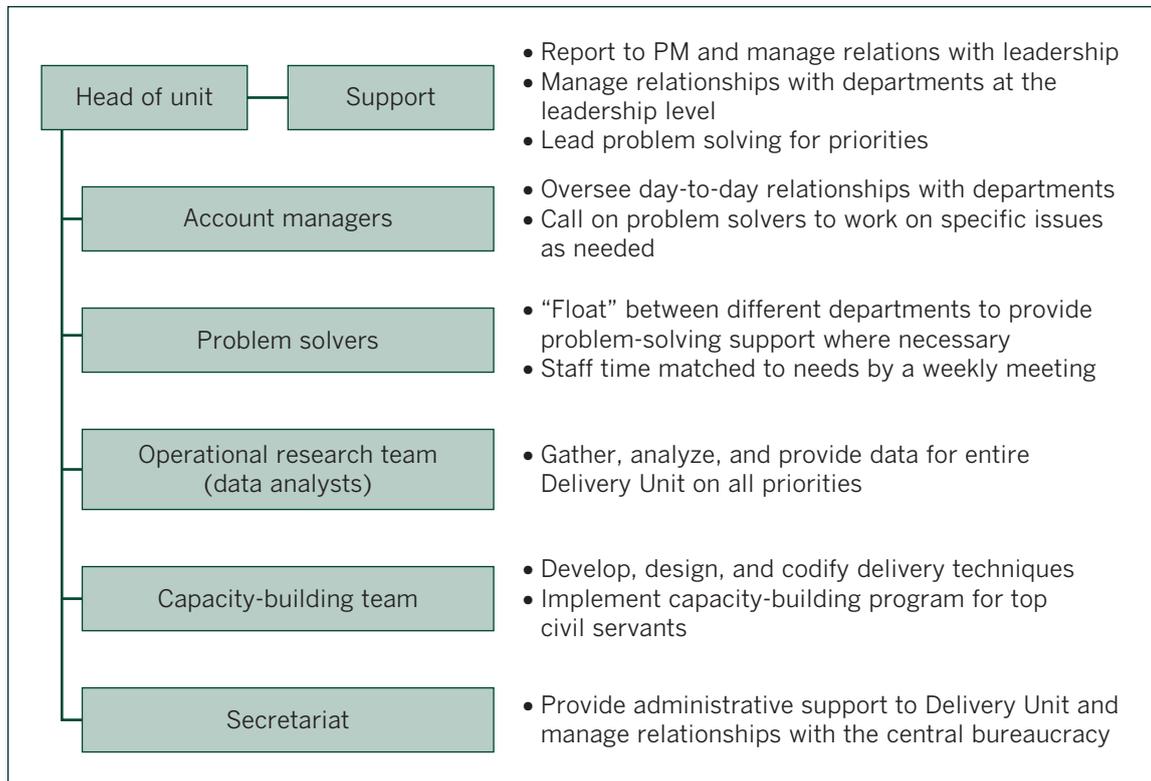
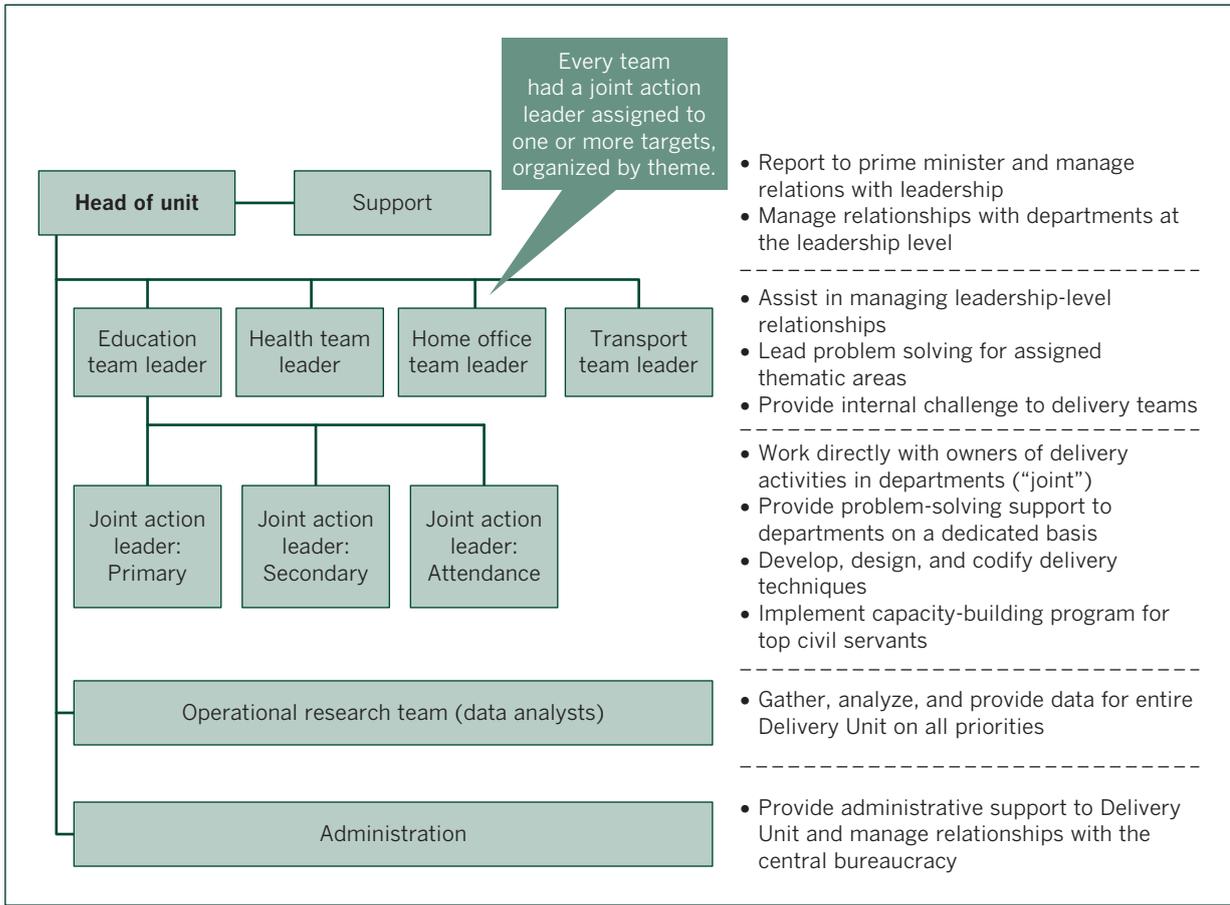


Exhibit 1C.3 Prime Minister's Delivery Unit—thematic organization

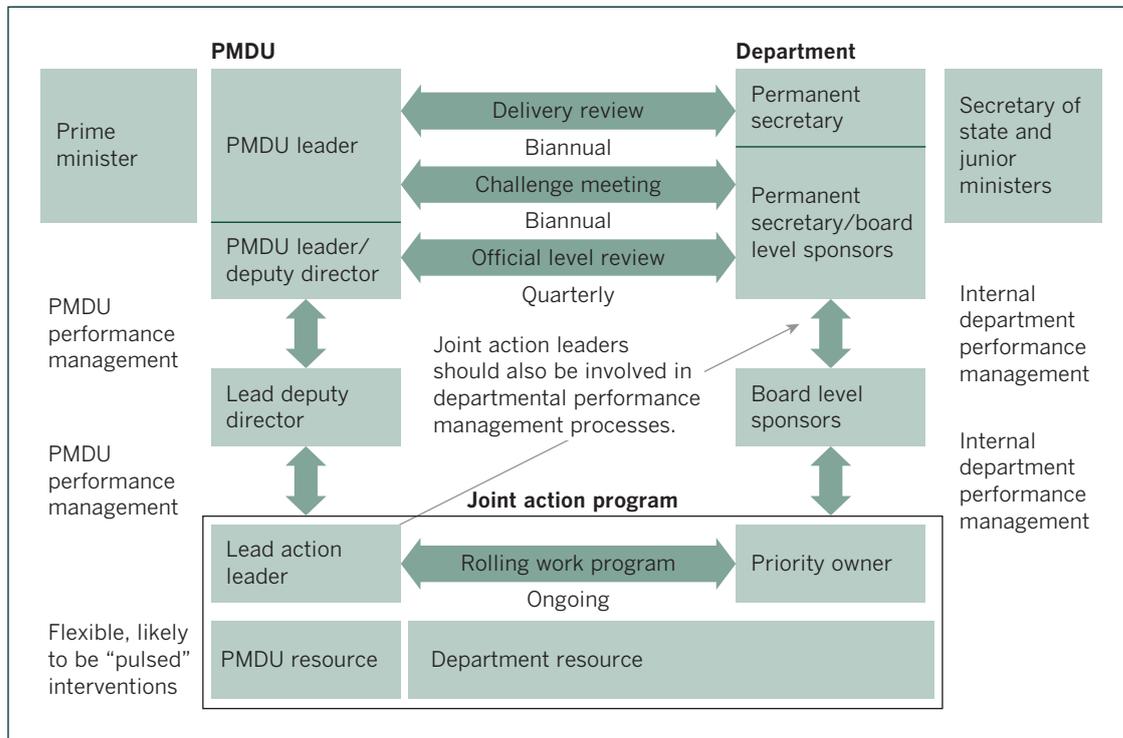


The second structure uses teams that are organized according to broad themes. The senior managers handle interactions and provide internal problem solving to the team as a whole. Each thematic team is then broken into subthemed teams, headed by a “joint action leader.” This person works with counterparts within the system—often the delivery plan owners (see Module 3C) whose targets are linked to the thematic area—to ensure progress. Crossteam units handle administration and data analysis. This arrangement prioritizes continuity and the development of expertise and may be appropriate if credibility with departments is an issue or when a unit has a mature staff with wide exposure and a good depth and breadth of skills.

It is sometimes useful to articulate the interaction model between your Delivery Unit and your system in more detail. Exhibits 1C.4 and 1C.5 were created by the PMDU to explain its interaction model with relevant departments as well as the role of joint action leaders. The interaction model not only details how interaction would occur (e.g., via challenge meetings or delivery reviews) but also the level at which each interaction would occur. This painted a clear picture of the relative importance of each type of interaction and also set expectations for interaction on both sides.

The Delivery Unit they built was organized in the following way:

Exhibit 1C.4 PMDU-Department interaction model for year three



CASE EXAMPLE

Setting up a Delivery Unit in a higher education system

The Louisiana Board of Regents (LBR) Commissioner formed a Delivery Unit as part of her system's participation in the Access to Success initiative of the Education Trust and the National Association of System Heads. She set a target with multiple dimensions: to produce 10,000 more graduates per year by 2015 and to do so while cutting in half the gaps in college access and graduation rates that separate under-represented minorities and low-income students from their peers.

The LBR's role—a coordinating board with oversight of four different state university systems—posed a unique challenge in the construction of a Delivery Unit. For a time, the team constructing the Delivery Unit deliberated over whether a system-level Delivery Unit was appropriate at all. However, in the end, they decided to construct a Delivery Unit at the LBR level. This decision was driven by an underlying and simple tenet of deliverology: *You should not set an ambitious target if you do not intend to build the capacity to deliver that target.*

Due to the LBR's small size, its Delivery Unit consists of two people, including a delivery leader who dedicates 50% of his time to the effort. Because of the importance of the four constituent systems as drivers of delivery, the LBR Delivery Unit is setting itself up to train each separate system office to implement delivery efforts of their own.

Exhibit 1C.5 How the Joint Action program fits in to the PMDU model

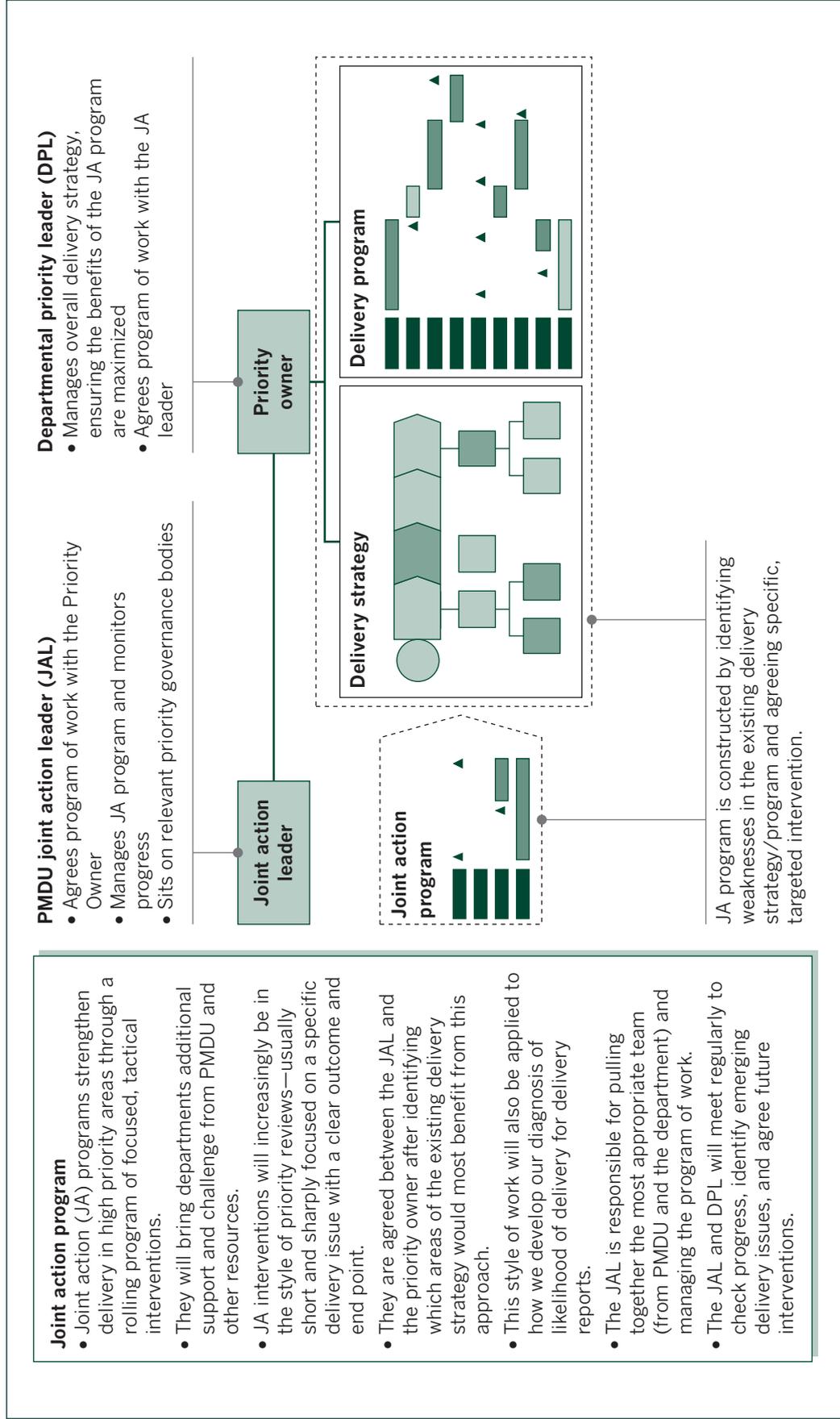
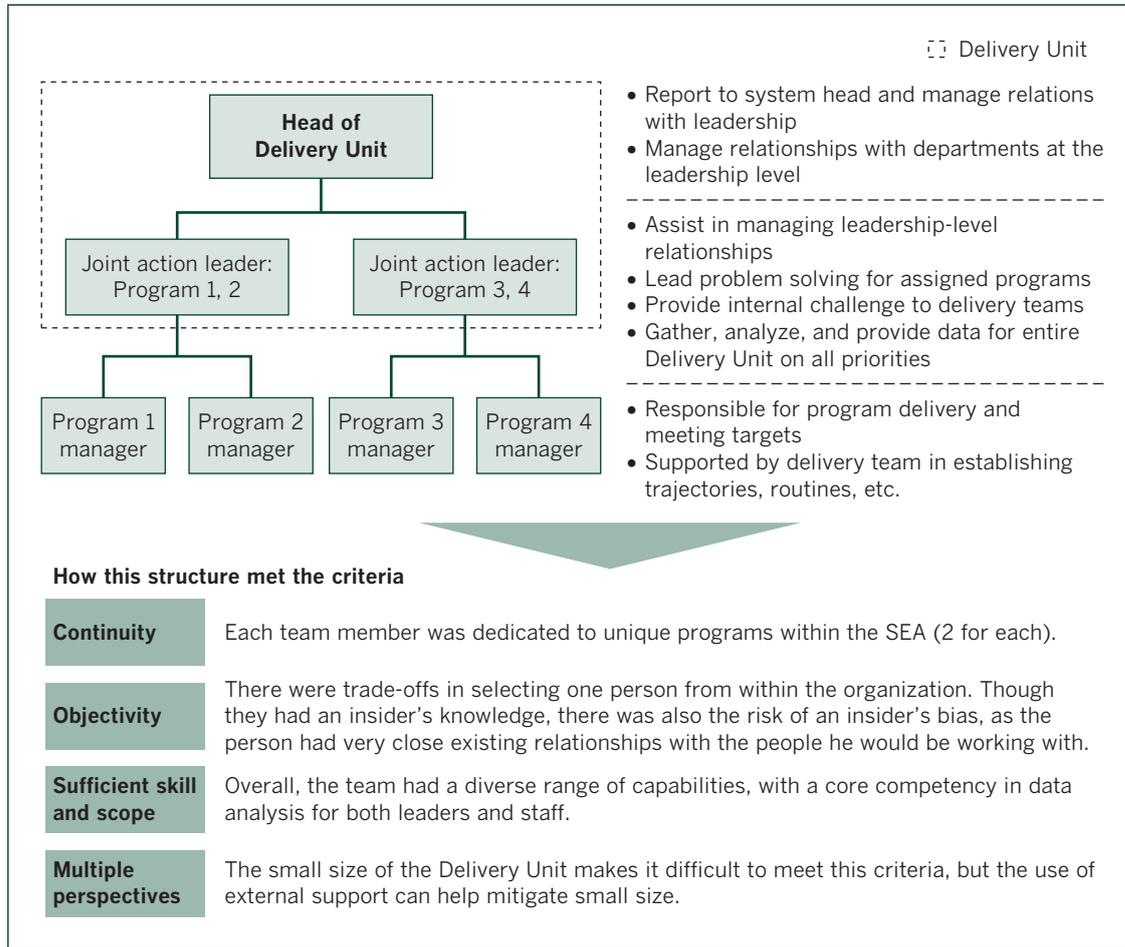


Exhibit 1C.6 K-12 Delivery Unit structure—single target, four programs overseen



Step 3: Build the Delivery Unit's capacity and culture

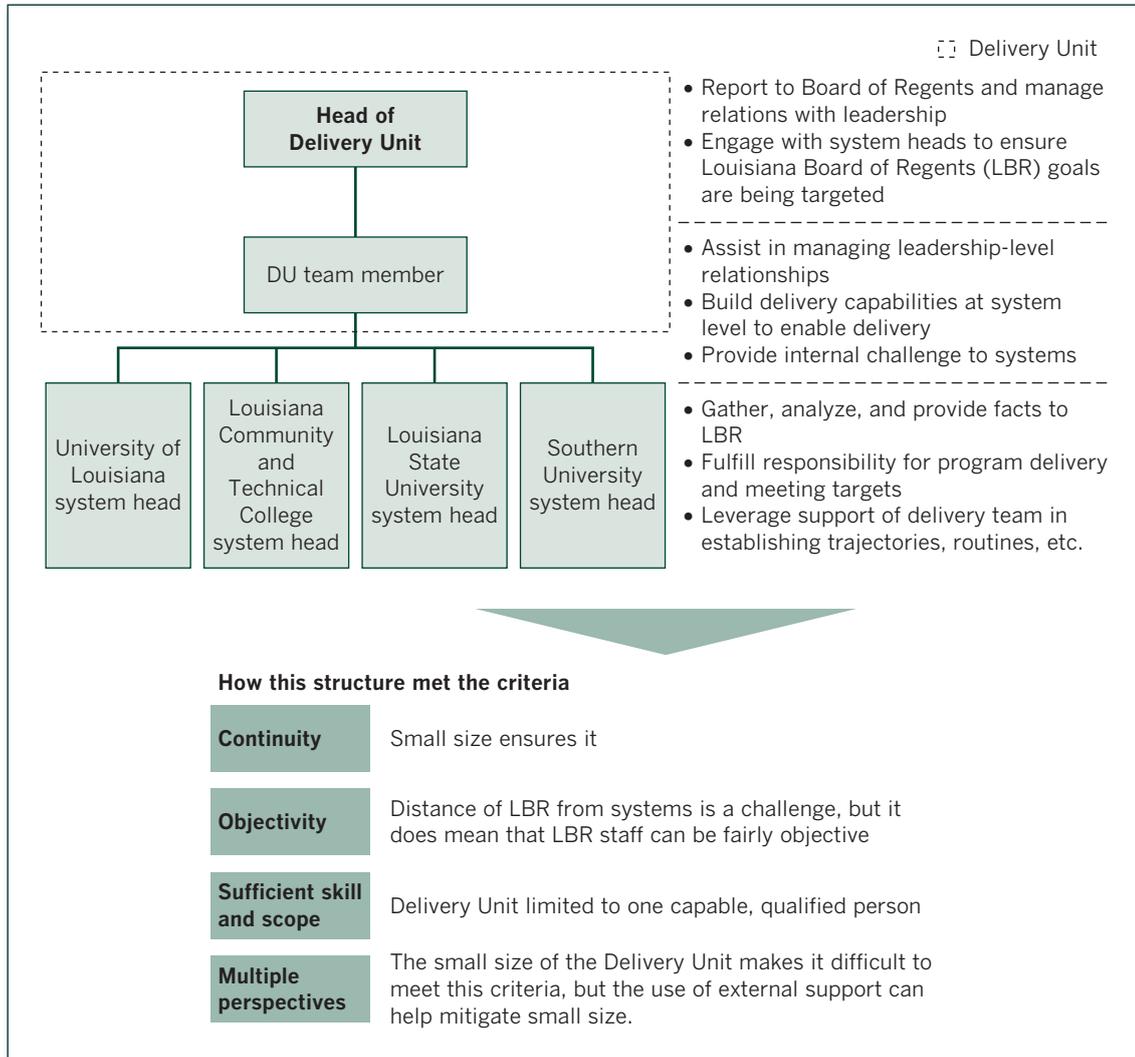
Delivery Unit staff will learn a great deal from their day-to-day work. However, a Delivery Unit will only be credible with others in the system if it is able to learn faster about delivery than anybody else, and a Delivery Unit will only be able to spread a delivery culture if it embodies that culture so thoroughly that it serves as the white-hot source for everyone else (for more on how your Unit will spread delivery culture, see Chapter 5).

What exactly is a culture of delivery? As explained in *Instruction to Deliver*, a culture of delivery can be summarized in five words: ambition, focus, clarity, urgency, and irreversibility.

Ambition. Often, the best delivery comes about when people work back from a seemingly impossible outcome. A Delivery Unit's job is to amplify your aspiration as system leader, to make it something that is insisted on in every communication and every contact, and to stick to it no matter what the circumstances. Moreover, the Delivery Unit should constantly challenge performance and ask difficult questions, laboring to take excuses off the table when they are offered.

Exhibit 1C.7

Higher education Delivery Unit structure—coordinating board, multiple systems overseen



THE CONSTANT PERFORMANCE CHALLENGE

“In a change programme as dramatic as the one needed here, ‘Someone,’ as I put it to my staff in my farewell note, ‘has to be the unreasonable one.’ If you once start accepting the excuses, however plausible, it is a slippery slope. As I look back on four years in the Delivery Unit, I regret a number of cases of giving a department the benefit of the doubt; I can’t remember a single case of regretting being too tough.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 154).

“I spent hours trying to understand why health waiting times and the waiting list were not falling as fast as they should have been. I debated with the Home Office their complacency over the burglary figures—yes, they were falling, but they had not fallen far enough to make people feel that crime was low, as had happened in New York City. And with my team, we challenged the Department for Education to strengthen its plan for education in London.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 177)

Focus. Delivery requires sustained prioritization. It demands consistent focus on a narrow set of targets and the data that show what progress is being made. But the targets, however good, and the data, however clear, are only imperfect representations of something even more important—that is, the real-world outcomes that matter to citizens. The central focus should therefore be on the consistent application of solutions that work. “So much of human progress is based on the systematic application of simple truths.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 286).

Clarity. Above all, clarity about the diagnosis is needed. What is the problem? Why have attempts to solve it failed? What do we know about the causal relationships? How secure is our knowledge of the problem? The Delivery Unit must be supremely committed to acting based on facts and evidence, and communicating judgments objectively, transparently, and clearly. The Delivery Unit staff seeks out facts from every source—from the front line, performance data, or a global search for internal and external best practices around the country and the world.

Urgency. Delivery can be described as “gentle pressure, relentlessly applied” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 119). Though a Delivery Unit should wield its authority with humility and acknowledge competing priorities and unexpected situations (especially as relates to the time of the system leader and actors in the system), it should also consistently push for faster progress, knowing full well that the bias of any system is in the other direction. In addition, the Delivery Unit should be thoroughly grounded in the moral purpose of the delivery effort, acting, in a very real sense, as the conscience of the bureaucracy.

URGENCY WITH A MORAL PURPOSE

“When I told a senior official in the Department that I had been shocked to discover so many people died every year of infections caught in hospital, he shrugged and said, ‘hospitals are dangerous places; 5000 people have died in this way every year for many years.’ It was one of many examples I came across of passive (and immoral) acceptance of the unacceptable. How many lives might have been saved if top officials had demanded the problem be tackled without waiting to be asked? How much better might our public services have become if a restless search for improvement was a firmly established part of civil service culture?” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 231)

Irreversibility. This most challenging concept gets at the idea that success must be sustained and seen through. How can the changes be made to stick? Irreversibility means not being satisfied merely with an improvement in outcomes but asking whether the structures and culture are in place that will guarantee the right trajectory of results for the foreseeable future. Irreversibility means not yielding to the temptation of complacency or celebrating success too early. It is structure and incentives changed, leadership transformed, culture shifted, visible results achieved, and credibility established.

As these five words make clear, delivery is much more than a series of activities; it is fundamentally a state of mind, one that must be inculcated deeply in you and your Delivery Unit staff if the system is to succeed.

THE PMDU’S FIVE QUESTIONS

“There are thousands of people in government bureaucracies whose job it is to complicate matters . . . To get anything done, a countervailing force is required; people who will simplify, keep bringing people back to the fundamentals:

- What are you trying to do?
- How are you trying to do it?
- How do you know you are succeeding?
- If you’re not succeeding, how will you change things?
- How can we help you?

These five simple questions became the essence of the Delivery Unit. The secret lay in asking them calmly and persistently.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 73)

A concrete example of how this culture might play out is given in the sample “contract” in Exhibit 1C.8, which describes, to a department that will be working with the Delivery Unit, what they can expect the Delivery Unit to do, and what they can expect it not to do. Module 5C explains more about how the PMDU used this contract to build positive relationships within the system.

Exhibit 1C.8 The Delivery Unit “contract” with the actors in the system it serves

Ambition	Focus	Clarity	Urgency	Irreversibility
The unit will			The unit will not	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the system leader well informed • Consistently pursue key priorities • Use data and evidence • Be plain speaking • Identify problems early • Use imaginative problem solving • Learn from and spread best practices • Recognize differences and similarities between departments • Build capacity • Simplify things • Focus on action and urgency • Ask the important questions • Make heroes of people who deliver • Champion the belief that it can be done 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be just another committee or task force • Be burdensome and bureaucratic • Distract people from their key tasks • Take the credit for delivery that belongs to others • Get in the way of delivery • Micromanage • Offer opinion without evidence • Have a short-term outlook • Change the goalposts 	

How should you go about building this kind of culture in your Delivery Unit? Your Delivery Unit's culture, along with the structures, resources and competencies described above, are all components of your Delivery Unit's *capacity* (not to be confused with your system's delivery capacity, as defined in Module 1B, Review the current state of delivery). Throughout delivery efforts, your Unit should be concerned with building this kind of capacity and spreading it to the actors in the system. This topic is explored in more detail in Module 5A, Build capacity all the time.

Delivery culture will not come easily. Even with the best people organized in the most optimal way, you should still recognize the time, energy, and resources required to build this culture in your Unit. The quality of your system's culture will be largely determined by the quality of your Delivery Unit's culture.

Conclusion

By now, you have learned the following aspects of Delivery Unit construction:

- How to build and design a high-performing Delivery Unit;
- How to organize a Delivery Unit to suit a system's needs; and
- The five key words of delivery, and their centrality to delivery culture

With the right design, the right people, the right organization, and the right culture, a Delivery Unit can be a system's greatest asset. A high-quality Delivery Unit will manage the delivery effort both by managing the delivery activities (outlined in the next three chapters) and by disseminating the delivery culture that will ultimately make change irreversible. With your Delivery Unit in place, you can now turn to building the coalition for the delivery effort.

1D. ESTABLISH A GUIDING COALITION ■

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead

Your Delivery Unit can be a powerful catalyst for change. Its success in driving this change will depend in part on the quality of its work, the strength of its culture, and the quality of its relationships. However, success will also depend on leadership—specifically, the alignment of crucial leaders behind your delivery effort and the aspirations it supports.

One or two people, even in powerful positions, will always struggle to achieve dramatic change. But seven people in key positions who agree profoundly about what they want to do and how they want to do it can change the world. This is what John Kotter calls a *guiding coalition*.

A guiding coalition is not a steering committee or a formal decision-making body, nor is it a leadership team. Fundamentally, a guiding coalition is the group of people that enables the pursuit of your system's aspirations by (1) removing bureaucratic barriers to change, (2) using

their influence to support your Unit’s work at crucial moments, and (3) giving you counsel and guidance in your efforts. They are a subset of influential people in the system who are capable of making a big difference if they act in concert. They are a sounding board for your system leader and for you, and their opinions will likely guide and shape many of the decisions that you make.

The coalition itself may not be formal, and their structure depends on how you and the system leader would like to structure it, as well as the preferences of the guiding coalition members. Exhibit 1D.1 is an example of different levels of formality in guiding coalitions.

Lastly, as demonstrated in Exhibit 1D.2, guiding coalition members are the first core supporters in what will become a much larger effort to align people and organizations around the aspirations that your delivery effort supports, widening the “circles of leadership” of your delivery effort all the way to users and the public. For more on your Unit’s role in this broader effort, see Chapter 5.

Guiding coalitions are helpful in ensuring the success of any delivery effort. This module will describe the characteristics of an effective guiding coalition, as well as some simple tools and tactics for identifying and building one.

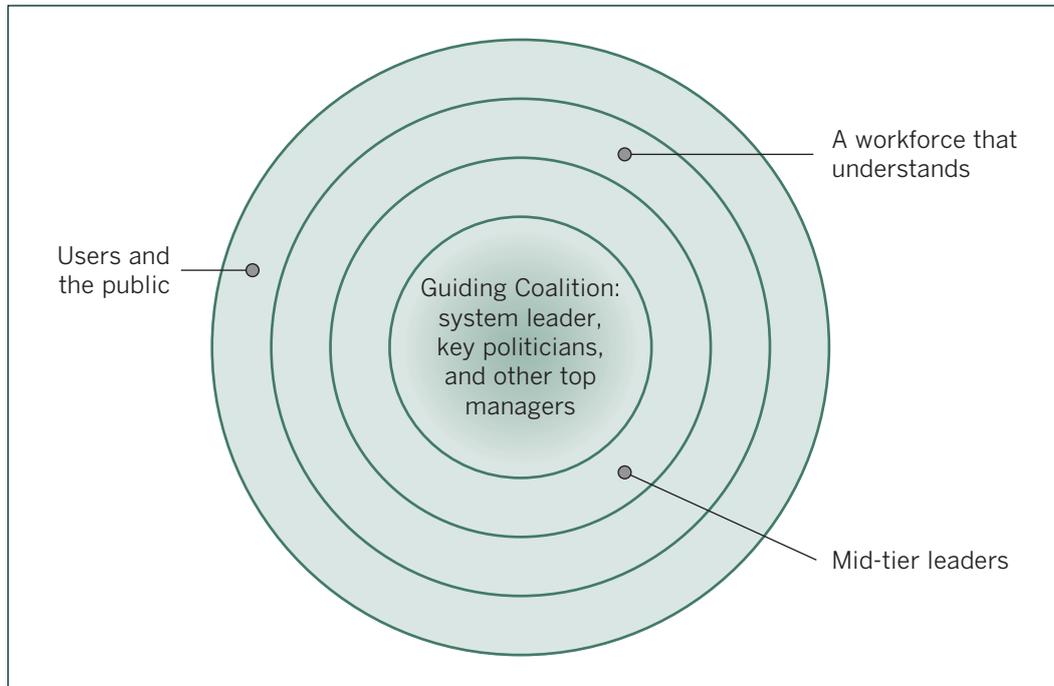
Exhibit 1D.1 Guiding coalitions can succeed either as informal networks or formally coordinated teams

Degree of formality			
Informal network	Coordinated team		
Case example	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> <p>San Jose Unified School District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System chief Linda Murray made special effort to bring leader of teachers’ union into guiding coalition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Weekly one-on-one meetings built a strong relationship and earned union head’s support for aspirations. • She made parallel investments with other stakeholders. </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <p>Ontario Ministry of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy planned a sustained series of formal and informal meetings with a range of stakeholders. • Guiding coalition members developed, assessed, and refined execution and communication plans and met regularly with Premier Dalton McGuinty. </td> </tr> </table>	<p>San Jose Unified School District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System chief Linda Murray made special effort to bring leader of teachers’ union into guiding coalition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Weekly one-on-one meetings built a strong relationship and earned union head’s support for aspirations. • She made parallel investments with other stakeholders. 	<p>Ontario Ministry of Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister of Education Gerard Kennedy planned a sustained series of formal and informal meetings with a range of stakeholders. • Guiding coalition members developed, assessed, and refined execution and communication plans and met regularly with Premier Dalton McGuinty.
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Benefits	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win critics’ support for aspirations by listening and responding to concerns </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a unified front • Use coordinated team to generate momentum </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Win critics’ support for aspirations by listening and responding to concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present a unified front • Use coordinated team to generate momentum
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Drawbacks	<table border="0" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; border-right: 1px dashed black; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that delivery effort does not become too fragmented or uncoordinated </td> <td style="width: 50%; padding: 5px;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that coalition does not create cumbersome new processes or slow down delivery </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that delivery effort does not become too fragmented or uncoordinated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that coalition does not create cumbersome new processes or slow down delivery
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SOURCE: Interviews.

Exhibit 1D.2

The guiding coalition: The center of a set of ever-widening concentric circles of leadership



ROLES OF SYSTEM LEADER AND DELIVERY LEADER

The system leader must play a very large role in building and aligning a guiding coalition around the aspirations that your Delivery Unit supports. As delivery leader, your role will be to identify the guiding coalition members that are needed and to support the system leader in building the necessary alignment among them. You will need to cultivate relationships with these members and help the system leader do the same.

PROCESS STEPS

- Step 1: Identify a potential guiding coalition for each aspiration
- Step 2: Build trust and alignment among guiding coalition members

Step 1: Identify a potential guiding coalition for each aspiration

While choosing a guiding coalition is not a formal (or even a publicly known) process, it still requires careful and deliberate thought on your part and on the part of the system leader. For each aspiration, start by identifying potential members: Who are the 20 people with the most power to affect your system's work with respect to that aspiration? This power can take any of the following forms:

- **Leadership.** Responsibility for strategy and/or policy relevant to the aspiration
- **Management.** Overseeing the planning and/or implementation of system activities relevant to the aspiration
- **Position power.** Other constitutional, statutory, or regulatory authority over affairs relevant to the aspiration
- **Expertise.** Deep knowledge of the major issues involved and/or your system’s existing work with respect to the aspiration
- **Credibility.** Respect from and/or authority over a critical mass of people in your system whose work is critical to the aspiration

In identifying these 20 individuals, look back at the list of system actors that you developed as part of Module 1B.

In the U.K., the PMDU leader thoughtfully made note of the leaders who were most influential and sought to build relationships with them.

GUIDING COALITIONS IN THE PMDU

“In government [building a guiding coalition] is not so much a question of management teams as of securing committed (and of course talented) people in the seven to ten key positions that influence policy and implementation—for example, the Secretary of State, the relevant Minister of State, the Permanent Secretary, key civil servants, the Political Adviser, the No. 10 Policy Directorate staff member, the head of the relevant inspectorate . . . or the equivalent.” (*Instruction to Deliver*, 237)

Some typical sources for guiding coalition members in K–12 and higher education are listed in Exhibit 1D.3.

Exhibit 1D.3 Typical sources of guiding coalition members

K-12	Higher education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor’s office (particularly K–12 education advisers) • Legislature (particularly crucial committee chairs or their advisers) • Office of the Secretary of Education • State Board of Education • Department of Education (specific staff may depend on specific aspiration) • Unions, including teachers and administrators • School boards association • Superintendents of largest 10 districts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor’s office (particularly higher education advisers) • Legislature (particularly crucial committee chairs or their advisers) • Higher education governing board • System office (specific staff may depend on specific aspiration) • Unions and/or faculty senates • Campus presidents or chancellors

Once you have identified these potential members, you can whittle the list down by excluding those who would be unlikely ever to support the system aspiration. This is not to say that there should be no disagreement among the members of your guiding coalition; in fact, often guiding coalition

members will not start out in full agreement with you, and part of the purpose of the coalition is to build that agreement (see Step 2). However, nearly every system will feature powerful people who are so recalcitrant in their opposition to your aspiration that you will have no choice but to work around them. If you include them in your guiding coalition, you run the risk of poisoning your delivery effort.

In one K–12 SEA, for example, the appropriations committee chair in one house of the legislature was a strong proponent of a bill that would create a “career diploma” as an alternative to the college and career-ready diploma the state had in place—effectively lowering standards by offering students a way out of the tougher requirements. Though this person clearly had position power, he would have been an unsuitable member of a guiding coalition to improve college and career-ready graduation rates.

From those potential members who remain on your list, you can now select the group of roughly 7 to 10 people in whom you will invest. To do this, you will want to go beyond the individual characteristics of each person and ask about the characteristics of potential groups. Use the following criteria.

- **Diversity.** Is the group influential in relevant but varying circles? If your guiding coalition only has a limited influence sphere, you risk not reaching all parties you need in order to be successful.
- **Balance.** Does the group balance the different types of power? A combination of leadership, management, position power, expertise, and credibility is essential.
- **Potential to work together.** To the extent they are called upon to act in concert, is there a potential in this group to build collective agreement and commitment to the aspiration and (eventually) the strategy behind it? Are there any relationships between potential group members that could cause trouble?

Finally, once you have identified a potential guiding coalition for each aspiration, you will want to check for overlap. For multiple aspirations that are very similar (e.g., aspirations all within the field of education), you may find that the guiding coalition is more or less the same group.

Exhibit 1D.4 K–12 example: Potential guiding coalition members

Aspiration: Ensure that students graduate from the system college and career-ready						
		Criteria to maximize		Criteria to balance and diversify		Other considerations
Person	Alignment with aspiration	Potential for alignment with aspiration	Relative power	Type of power	Sphere of influence	Potential for difficulty with others
Governor’s education adviser	Low (lack of awareness)	High	High	Position	Governor’s office	None

(Continued)

Exhibit 1D.4 (Continued)

Person	Alignment with aspiration	Potential for alignment with aspiration	Relative power	Type of power	Sphere of influence	Potential for difficulty with others
Senate education committee chair	Very low (staunch opposition)	Very low	Very high	Position	Legislature	Bad relationship with Chief State School Officer
Teachers' union leader	Low	High	Very high	Credibility	Teacher workforce	Somewhat suspicious of governor
Deputy Superintendent	Low (lack of trust)	High	High	Leadership	Department of Education	None

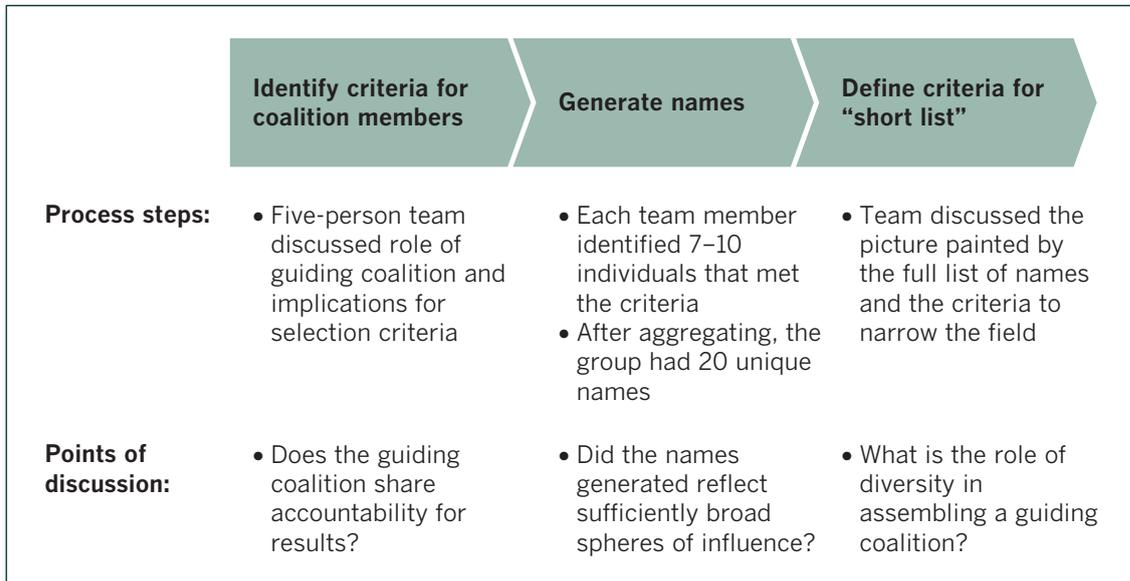
CASE EXAMPLE

A guiding coalition in higher education: Power, diversity, or both?

One higher education system identified potential members for its guiding coalition following the process laid out in Exhibit 1D.5.

Exhibit 1D.5

Process used by leadership team of a higher education system to develop a guiding coalition



This higher education system relied on a group of leaders to identify its guiding coalition rather than just the system leader. The points of discussion reflect some of the difficult issues that they discussed as they narrowed down their options.

Diversity was particular concern. After the group had agreed on about 20 unique names for potential members, someone remarked that the list consisted almost entirely of White men—and this in a system whose targets explicitly focused on the achievement of minority and

low-income students. This sparked a challenging discussion about when the power in a system lies with a group that is not diverse. Do you opt to increase diversity in your guiding coalition at the expense of influence? Some clearly thought that this was the right thing to do while others gravitated toward a focus on influential people—whoever they were. Still others thought that it was a false choice—that there was an influence associated with diversity that simply was not reflected in the group's exercise.

When you construct your guiding coalition, you may face similar issues. The right answer for you will depend on your objectives for the coalition as well as the extent to which its work is public.

While your responsibility as delivery leader is to ensure that these guiding coalitions exist, the coalition building must be led (even if under your heavy advisement) by the system leader even if he or she relies on a group of leaders to come to the final coalition.

Step 2: Build trust and alignment among guiding coalition members

Once you have identified the right group of people, the next step is to build this group into a true guiding coalition. This will rarely warrant a formal invitation or announcement; rather, you must develop a specific strategy for reaching out to and aligning people who may have disparate backgrounds and views (again, the template you filled out in Step 1 will be a helpful starting point as you build this strategy). You will be successful if the members of your guiding coalition:

- Share your system's aspirations;
- Share your values; and
- Share your strategy for achieving the aspiration (see Module 3A, Determine your reform strategy) and approach to delivery.

For the most part, this will require that guiding coalition members not only agree with you on each of these things but also that they play an active role in helping to shape them. To the extent that they can be involved in aspiration setting, they should be. As the time comes to craft a strategy, their input will be crucial.

The techniques for facilitating this alignment are fairly basic: interactions with guiding coalition members that include one-on-one conversations, meetings that include some or all of the members of the coalition, and one-way communications to coalition members. In some cases, a more formal gathering—such as a retreat to set aspirations or develop a strategy—may be appropriate.

As you establish meaningful connections with members of the guiding coalition, a few general relationship-building principles will be useful:

NEVER FORGETTING THE MORAL PURPOSE

"[I] made a mental note to keep asking myself the moral questions at the heart of the delivery agenda. To what extent was our work making Britain more prosperous, more equitable and more socially cohesive? I made a point of raising these issues all the time with staff, individually and collectively. I wanted to be sure we never lost sight of what our real mission was." (*Instruction to Deliver*, 146)

- **Find common ground.** Depending on the situation, you and your guiding coalition members may have a lot in common and just need to iron out the details, or you may encounter more disagreement than you expect. One thing that you may start with is the shared commitment to improve the organization and/or its core mission even if you do not yet agree on the best way to do this. As obvious as it may seem, verbalizing these commonalities will start to build relationships between people, especially if members of your coalition initially feel that their desires are in opposition to those of the majority. (For more on finding common ground, please see Module 5C.)
- **Confront opposing beliefs.** There will almost always be opposing viewpoints within your coalition, especially at first. Ignoring these issues will not resolve them. Remember that the people you have gathered have expertise in many areas and may offer perspectives that others have not considered. Be willing to name conflicts between these perspectives, walk toward them, and discuss them in the open (for more on conflict resolution, please see Module 5C). On the one hand, your system leader will play an important facilitative role here, legitimizing dissent and creating a safe space where, in internal discussions, people feel free to speak their minds. On the other hand, your system leader should also set the expectation that, once a decision is taken, members of a guiding coalition must support it publicly. Endless public debate will create problems that could potentially derail your delivery effort.
- **Build internal trust.** While alignment and commitment to the vision are important, internal trust is what will cement your coalition's success as a working team. Trust-building activities should revolve around people rather than topics. This is where creating opportunities for coalition members to get to know each other outside the work context (e.g., through a retreat) will be crucial. For more information on building trust and relationships, please see Module 5C, Unleash the "alchemy of relationships." The following examples show how different LEAs built trust amongst their key stakeholders, many of whom could be considered part of their guiding coalition.
- **Continuously return to the moral purpose.** Members will have competing priorities, differing opinions, and strong beliefs, but there will always be one common thread: their staunch belief in the moral purpose of your change. It is important to remind them of this at every opportunity, as it will continually inspire them and drive them to further help your efforts.

Building a solid relationship with members of the guiding coalition will be crucial in aiding the success of the effort. After all, the guiding coalition will only be as helpful as the strength of the relationships you have with its members. In addition, a strong guiding coalition increases the speed at which you can operate as well, because they will be able to remove barriers within the bureaucracy. Below are two case examples of successful relationships with members of the guiding coalition and the benefits that resulted.

CASE EXAMPLE

Building alignment in San Jose Unified School District

In the mid-1990s, San Jose Unified School District superintendent Linda Murray set a bold goal that every student would graduate from high school college ready. With these higher expectations came higher levels of support from the district for students and an increased emphasis on professional development for teachers.

Murray made a special effort to bring the leader of the teachers' union into her guiding coalition. Every Monday morning, Murray met with the union leader for three hours, building a close relationship that both secured her support and led to solutions benefiting teachers and students. An important outcome of this relationship was a union-created early retirement program giving some of the district's most resistant teachers an attractive way to exit. The program retired 300 teachers and created savings that were used to increase salaries for new hires, making it easier to bring reform-minded teachers into the district.

The result was higher standards, higher achievement, and higher graduation rates of college and career-ready students.

CASE EXAMPLE

In Chicago, the school system CEO worked to build a wide base of support for his controversial reforms

Arne Duncan, CEO of the Chicago Public School system from 2001 to 2008, led a controversial program to close failing schools and open new schools in their place. He faced strong opposition but managed to maintain sufficient support from the mayor and political community to legitimize his efforts.

Renaissance 2010	The opposition	Building a guiding coalition
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The plan, launched by Duncan in 2004 and signed into law by Mayor Daley, called for 100 new schools in Chicago by 2010. • As each school opened, a failing school would close. Schools were opened in a competitive process with charter, contract, and/or the public school system competing. • Schools would receive more freedom than traditional public schools in return for greater accountability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opposition was loud and fierce, led by the Chicago Teachers Union (new schools were not unionized), neighborhood groups (some of whom feared gentrification), and parents (some of whom were unhappy about their children being forced to attend a new school). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The most critical factor was the alliance between Duncan and Mayor Daley; without the other, neither could have had the legitimacy to close dozens of schools • Duncan had close ties to the Chicago Business Roundtable and cultivated the support of local leaders for political help, fundraising aid, and fostering links between education and jobs.

(Continued)

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While a June 2009 report indicates that there is not yet sufficient outcome data to fully understand how well Renaissance 2010 schools are serving students, they have managed to achieve higher attendance rates than most other Chicago Public Schools high schools and have put in place a number of promising practices that bode well for future student achievement outcomes.

SOURCE: Humphrey, et al. (2010). *High School Reform in Chicago Public Schools: Renaissance 2010*. SRI International and The Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Finally, another means to build a guiding coalition is to work in reverse, by influencing the selection of people for key positions within the system—the types of key positions that would qualify their holders to be a part of your guiding coalition. At times, you or the system leader may have influence over who is selected to fill key positions in the system. You may, for example, have the governor's ear as she selects her top education adviser. To the extent you can, it makes sense to use this influence to push for the selection of people who are likely to be aligned with your system aspiration and eager to do something about it.

Conclusion

In this module, you have learned

- What a guiding coalition is and why it is important;
- Criteria for selecting guiding coalition members; and
- Basic principles and techniques for building alignment and trust in your guiding coalition.

An up-front investment of the system leader's time in building a guiding coalition will pay dividends down the road as your Delivery Unit embarks on its work. Your guiding coalition members will act reflexively to make things easier for you, whether in small details, such as when something comes across their desk for them to sign, or in larger matters such as statements to the press. At other times, when you have specific things you need from them, their alignment will help you to ask for what you need and obtain it easily. However, once you establish a guiding coalition, you must continue to work at maintaining it. It is very easy for members to lose touch as people get caught up in their day-to-day responsibilities, and all evidence suggests that a coalition will be temporary unless worked at constantly.

With an aspiration set, an understanding of the current state of delivery, a Delivery Unit in place, and a guiding coalition to support your aspiration, you are ready to embark on the core activities of delivery—starting by getting a better understanding of the challenges your system faces.