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Government Finance, Audit & Risk Officers

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PUBLIC SECTOR CASE STUDIES AND BEST PRACTICE SHOWCASES

Learning from Practice to Improve Public Governance and Service Delivery

- Governance
- Leadership
- Innovation
- Service delivery
- Institutional performance
- Public value

Presenter: Prof. Zamokuhle Mbandlwa
Institution: Durban University of Technology

Presentation Objectives or benefits

By the end of the presentation, participants should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of case studies in public-sector learning.
2. Identify characteristics of effective public-sector practices.
3. Analyse successful and unsuccessful public-sector interventions.
4. Compare public-sector practices across different countries and contexts.
5. Identify lessons that can be adapted to local government and public institutions.
6. Develop practical recommendations for improving public-sector performance.

What Is a Public-Sector Case Study?

A public-sector case study is an **in-depth examination of a real government programme, institution, policy, reform or service-delivery intervention**.

It enables us to examine:

- What problem existed?
- What intervention was introduced?
- Who implemented it?
- What resources were available?
- What challenges emerged?
- What outcomes were achieved?
- What lessons can be transferred elsewhere?

Key principle:

"Case studies transform abstract governance concepts into practical lessons."

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Why Case Studies Matter

Case studies allow public managers to:

- Learn from real-world experiences.
- Understand complex governance problems.
- Identify successful interventions.
- Avoid repeating institutional failures.
- Understand contextual differences.
- Encourage evidence-based decision-making.
- Develop innovative solutions.
- Strengthen organisational learning.

From theory to practice

Policy → Implementation → Experience → Evidence → Learning → Improvement

What Is Best Practice?

Best practice refers to an approach, process or intervention that has demonstrated strong results and provides useful lessons that can potentially be adapted elsewhere.

However:

Best practice ≠ Copy and Paste

A successful intervention in one municipality or country may fail elsewhere because of differences in:

- Political environment
- Institutional capacity
- Resources
- Culture
- Legislation
- Technology
- Population
- Leadership
- Economic conditions

Therefore:

Best practice should be **adapted, not simply replicated**.

SOUTH AFRICAN CASE STUDIES

Case Study 1 – Batho Pele

"People First"

The Batho Pele principles provide a framework for improving public-service delivery and placing citizens at the centre of government services.

Key principles include:

- Consultation
- Service standards
- Access
- Information
- Openness and transparency
- Redress
- Value for money

Key lesson

Public administration should be evaluated not only by internal processes but by **the experience and outcomes of citizens**.

Batho Pele – Best Practice Lessons

What can public institutions learn?

1. Citizen-centred administration

Citizens are users and beneficiaries of public services.

2. Accountability

Government officials must account for service standards.

3. Transparency

Citizens should understand what services they are entitled to receive.

4. Redress

Complaints should result in corrective action.

Challenge

The existence of a policy does not automatically guarantee effective implementation.

Case Study 2 – eThekwini Water Management

The challenge

Large metropolitan municipalities face:

- Population growth
- Urbanisation
- Aging infrastructure
- Water losses
- Climate-related risks
- Informal settlements
- Increasing demand for water

Governance question

How can municipalities provide reliable water services while maintaining financially and environmentally sustainable systems?

Lessons from Water-Service Challenges

Effective water governance requires:

Infrastructure

Investment in maintenance and upgrading.

Management

Efficient planning and monitoring.

Finance

Sustainable revenue and expenditure management.

Technology

Smart monitoring and early detection of leaks.

Community participation

Citizens should participate in identifying and addressing service-delivery problems.

Resilience

Infrastructure must anticipate climate and disaster risks.

Case Study 3 – Digital Government in South Africa

South Africa has increasingly adopted digital platforms to improve interaction between government and citizens.

Examples include:

- Online applications
- Digital identity systems
- Electronic payment systems
- Online tax administration
- Digital licensing services
- Government information portals

Expected benefits

- Faster service delivery
- Reduced administrative costs
- Greater accessibility
- Improved record management
- Reduced queues
- Increased transparency

Digital Government – Risks and Challenges

Digitalisation does not automatically produce better government.

Potential challenges include:

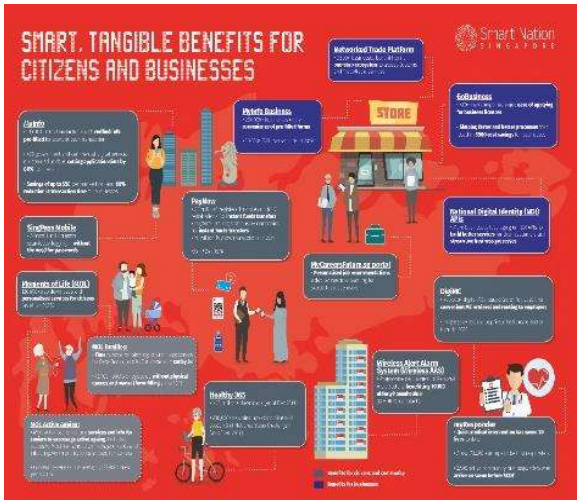
- Digital exclusion
- Cybersecurity risks
- Privacy concerns
- Poor connectivity
- Low digital literacy
- System failures
- Fragmented databases
- Resistance to organisational change

Key lesson

Digital transformation must be accompanied by institutional transformation.

- **SECTION B: INTERNATIONAL CASE STUDIES**

Case Study 4 – Singapore

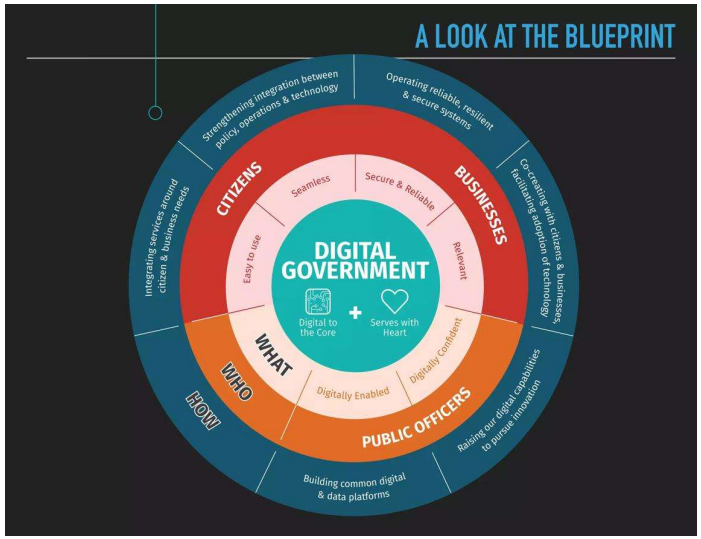




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Key features of Singapore's public administration

- Long-term planning
- Strong institutional capacity
- Professional public service
- Digital government
- Performance management
- Strategic infrastructure investment
- Integrated government planning



Lesson

Strong institutions and long-term strategic planning can significantly improve state capacity.

Singapore – Public Housing

Singapore's public housing system provides an important example of integrated public policy.

Key components

- Government planning
- Land management
- Infrastructure development
- Housing finance
- Transport planning
- Community facilities

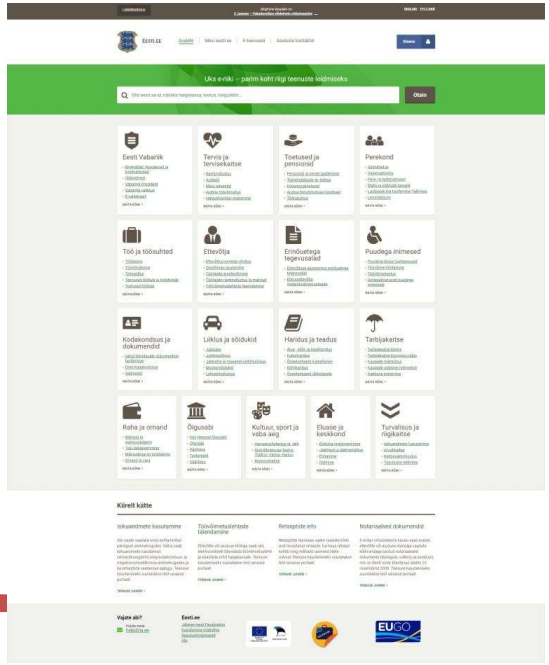
Lesson for developing countries

Public housing should not be treated simply as **building houses**.

It should be integrated with:

Housing + Transport + Employment + Education + Health + Community Development

- **Case Study 5 – Estonia**





Estonia is widely recognised for its digital-government ecosystem.

Key features

- Digital public services
- Digital identity
- Interoperable government systems
- Online government transactions
- Data sharing between institutions
- Digital signatures

Key lesson

Government departments should not operate as isolated information silos.

Estonia – The Digital Government Lesson

Traditional model

Department A → Citizen → Department B → Citizen → Department C

Integrated model

Government data and systems communicate securely

Citizen

↓

Digital platform

↓

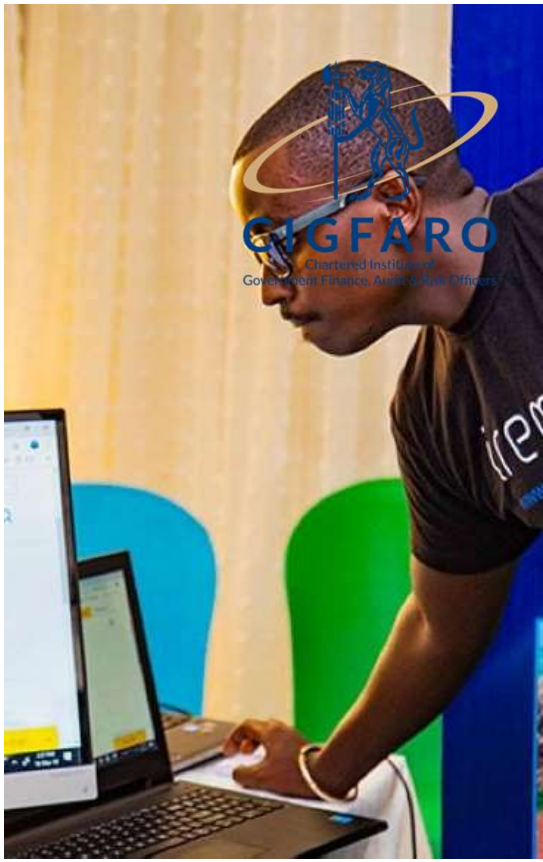
Multiple government services

Result

- Reduced duplication
- Faster transactions
- Better information management
- Greater convenience
- Lower administrative burden

- **Case Study 6 – Rwanda**





Rwanda provides an interesting African case of:

- State capacity building
- Performance management
- Digitalisation
- Public-sector reform
- Infrastructure development
- Local government performance systems

Key lesson

African governments can develop innovative governance systems by adapting approaches to their own institutional and socioeconomic circumstances.



Rwanda – Performance Management

A major emphasis has been placed on:

Planning → Targets → Implementation → Monitoring → Evaluation

Public institutions can ask:

- What are we trying to achieve?
- What indicators will measure success?
- Who is responsible?
- What resources are required?
- When should results be achieved?
- How will performance be evaluated?

SECTION C: PUBLIC-SECTOR INNOVATION

Case Study 7 – Participatory Budgeting

Participatory budgeting allows citizens to influence decisions regarding public expenditure.

Basic process

Government identifies available resources

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Citizens identify priorities

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Projects are discussed

↓

Projects are prioritised

↓

Government allocates resources

↓

Citizens monitor implementation

Benefit

It can strengthen:

- Democratic participation
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Community ownership

Case Study 8 – Community Participation

Effective public participation should move beyond:

- ❌ Information sharing only
- ❌ Public meetings without feedback
- ❌ Token consultation

towards:

- ✅ Dialogue
- ✅ Joint problem-solving
- ✅ Co-production
- ✅ Community monitoring
- ✅ Shared decision-making

Key question

Are citizens genuinely participating, or are they merely being informed?

SECTION D: LEADERSHIP AND INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE

Case Study 9 – Public-Sector Leadership

Effective public-sector leadership requires:

- Ethical leadership
- Strategic thinking
- Accountability
- Communication
- Change management
- Evidence-based decision-making
- Stakeholder management
- Crisis leadership

The leadership challenge

Public-sector leaders must balance:

Political expectations + Legal requirements + Public needs + Institutional capacity + Limited resources

Case Study 10 – Crisis and Disaster Governance

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the importance of:

- Preparedness
- Intergovernmental coordination
- Risk communication
- Data-driven decision-making
- Emergency procurement
- Health-system capacity
- Community participation

Key lesson

Crisis management begins before the crisis occurs.

Effective governments invest in:

Prevention → Preparedness → Response → Recovery → Adaptation

What Makes a Public-Sector Practice Successful?

Successful practices generally demonstrate:

1. Strong leadership

Clear direction and commitment.

2. Institutional capacity

Competent people and effective systems.

3. Adequate resources

Financial, human and technological resources.

4. Citizen orientation

Focus on public needs.

5. Accountability

Clear responsibilities and consequences.

6. Evidence

Decisions informed by reliable information.

7. Innovation

Willingness to improve existing approaches.

SECTION E: FAILURE AS A SOURCE OF LEARNING

Learning from Public-Sector Failure

Not every case study represents success.

Failures can reveal:

- Weak planning
- Poor implementation
- Corruption
- Lack of accountability
- Political interference
- Inadequate capacity
- Poor procurement
- Weak monitoring
- Infrastructure neglect

Important principle

Failure should become institutional learning rather than institutional denial.

Common Causes of Public-Sector Failure

Problem	Consequence
Poor planning	Unrealistic programmes
Weak leadership	Lack of direction
Corruption	Loss of public resources
Political interference	Poor decisions
Skills shortages	Weak implementation
Poor monitoring	Problems remain unidentified
Weak accountability	Poor performance
Fragmentation	Duplication and inefficiency

SECTION F: COMPARATIVE BEST PRACTICES
Comparative Case-Study Matrix

Important
Comparisons must consider **context**.

Area	South Africa	Singapore	Estonia	Rwanda
Digital government	Developing	Advanced	Highly integrated	Rapidly expanding
Citizen services	Mixed performance	Strong	Highly digital	Increasingly digital
Long-term planning	Variable	Strong	Strong	Strong
Institutional capacity	Uneven	High	High	Improving
Innovation	Significant potential	High	High	High
Key lesson	Institutional reform	Strategic state capacity	Digital integration	Performance orientation

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Best-Practice Transfer Model

Before transferring a practice, ask:

STEP 1

What problem does the practice solve?

STEP 2

Why did it work in the original context?

STEP 3

What institutional conditions supported success?

STEP 4

Can those conditions be reproduced?

STEP 5

What must be adapted?

STEP 6

How will success be measured?

From Best Practice to Best Fit

A better approach is:

BEST PRACTICE

↓

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

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LOCAL ADAPTATION

↓

PILOT IMPLEMENTATION

↓

MONITORING

↓

EVALUATION

↓

SCALING UP

Best practice becomes valuable when it becomes best fit.

SECTION G: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND THE FUTURE

AI in the Public Sector

Artificial intelligence creates opportunities for:

- Predictive analytics
- Fraud detection
- Service personalisation
- Disaster-risk prediction
- Automated administration
- Chatbots
- Resource allocation
- Policy analysis
- Early-warning systems

But government must address:

- Bias
- Privacy
- Transparency
- Accountability
- Cybersecurity
- Digital exclusion
- Human oversight

AI Best-Practice Principles

Public institutions should adopt:

Human-centred AI

Ethical governance

Transparency

Accountability

Data protection

Human oversight

Inclusivity

Explainability

Key principle

AI should strengthen public value—not simply automate existing bureaucracy.

SECTION H: PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Case-Study Analysis Framework

When analysing any public-sector case, ask:

Problem

What problem was being addressed?

Context

Where and under what circumstances?

Actors

Who was involved?

Intervention

What was done?

Resources

What resources were required?

Implementation

How was the intervention implemented?

Outcomes

What changed?

Challenges

What went wrong?

Lessons

What can others learn?

Transferability

Can it work elsewhere?

Slide 31: Group Activity

Case Study Challenge

Divide participants into groups.

Each group selects a public-sector problem:

- Water scarcity
- Waste management
- Housing
- Unemployment
- Healthcare
- Disaster management
- Corruption
- Digital government
- Public transport

Task

Develop a **best-practice intervention**.

Participants must identify:

1. Problem
2. Root causes
3. Stakeholders
4. Proposed intervention
5. Resources
6. Implementation strategy
7. Performance indicators
8. Risks
9. Expected outcomes

Slide 32: Case Study Presentation Template

Each group presents for **5–10 minutes**:

1. Problem

What is the problem?

2. Evidence

What evidence demonstrates the problem?

3. Best practice

What existing practice provides a useful lesson?

4. Adaptation

How should it be adapted to the local context?

5. Implementation

How will it be implemented?

6. Impact

What results are expected?

Slide 33: Measuring Public-Sector Success

Public-sector success should not only be measured by:

❌ Money spent
❌ Number of meetings
❌ Number of reports
❌ Number of officials employed

Instead, focus on:

INPUTS

Resources

↓

ACTIVITIES

What government does

↓

OUTPUTS

Services delivered

↓

OUTCOMES

Changes produced

↓

IMPACT

Long-term public value

Slide 34: Public Value as the Ultimate Measure

Public institutions should ask:

"What value does government create for society?"

Public value includes:

- Improved quality of life
- Effective services
- Social justice
- Safety
- Economic opportunities
- Environmental sustainability
- Trust in government
- Democratic participation

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Slide 35: Ten Best Practices for Public Institutions

1. Put citizens first
2. Strengthen ethical leadership
3. Invest in institutional capacity
4. Use evidence to make decisions
5. Embrace responsible innovation
6. Strengthen accountability
7. Improve intergovernmental coordination
8. Engage communities meaningfully
9. Use technology strategically
10. Continuously learn and adapt

Slide 36: Key Lessons

Lesson 1

Good policies require effective implementation.

Lesson 2

Technology cannot compensate for weak institutions.

Lesson 3

Citizen participation must be meaningful.

Lesson 4

Leadership is central to institutional performance.

Lesson 5

Successful practices must be adapted to context.

Lesson 6

Public-sector failures provide valuable learning opportunities.

Lesson 7

Performance must focus on outcomes and public value.

Slide 37: Reflection Questions

1. Which public-sector case study is most relevant to South Africa?
2. Which international practice could realistically be adapted?
3. What prevents public institutions from implementing best practices?
4. How can citizens contribute to improved service delivery?
5. What role should technology play?
6. How can public-sector leaders promote innovation?
7. How should public institutions measure success?

Slide 38: Conclusion

Public-sector transformation requires more than new policies.

It requires:

Effective leadership

Strong institutions

Capable public servants

Citizen participation

Innovation

Evidence-based decision-making

Accountability

=

Better Public Governance and Public Value

Slide 39: Final Message

"The purpose of studying best practices is not to reproduce what others have done, but to understand why it worked, adapt the lessons to our own context, and create better solutions for our citizens."

From Case Studies to Action

LEARN → ANALYSE → ADAPT → IMPLEMENT → MEASURE → IMPROVE

Slide 40: Thank You

Thank You

Questions, Comments and Discussion

Public Sector Case Studies and Best Practice Showcases

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Thank You!

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