



IPPF Business Plan

Learning Review

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Background

The IPPF Business Plan was initially developed to address identified gaps in operations that were risking the ability of the Federation to deliver the outcomes and outputs of the Strategic Framework. Designated funds were agreed by GC to fund a series of identified ‘Solutions’, which had been identified through ‘Solutions Teams’ comprising staff and volunteers from all parts of the Federation. However, the intention of the plan swiftly moved beyond this basic intent and took the opportunity to see the BP initiatives could also serve as ‘learning laboratories’ on how IPPF could work differently. Rather than the current model of CO – RO – MA, the BP would take the approach of tendering out different streams of work to different actors within IPPF, primarily MAs, but also Regional Offices. A clear set of principles were drawn up which would inform how the Business Plan Centres would be operationalised, as well as various processes and accountability charts.

MA Centricity	Adaptability and Pace	Mutual Accountability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more effective federation that draws on its assets and unleashes potential • Bring the global closer to the MAs and vice versa • Share leadership and engender a new culture of collaboration • Recognise and grow leadership everywhere 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit process to improve pace • But, allow to move at different paces • Safeguard flexibility • And, use restricted funding strategically • Risk appetite to try new things (that help accelerate towards results) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have value for federation • Work towards global relevance; • Be fully transparent • Ensure robust governance • Collaboration and accountability at all levels; • Discourse and openness

Purpose of the Learning Review

The Learning Review aims to evaluate the development and early operationalisation of the new centres against the principles contained in the chart above.

It is very early in the process, some centres have been operational for nine months, but many for less. Thus the review is not an evaluation of performance and will not cover whether planned activities have taken place or outputs delivered, beyond where the review finds that the application, or lack of, the principles above have either enabled, or thrown up barriers to performance in the eyes of the stakeholders. The findings of the review will inform any potential adaptations to the structures and processes of the BP itself, and will comprise a learning to inform ways of working more widely as we move to one IPPF Unified Secretariat.

Methodology

A quantitative and qualitative survey was developed and received 19 responses, 10 from Centres and 9 from Secretariat staff involved in supporting the Centres. In addition to the survey, and using the information provide, a series of questions were developed to conduct key informant interviews to garner more in-depth information. A total of 16 interviews were conducted with staff from each Centre, the three Chairs and the consultant who oversaw the development and launch of the Business Plan.

It should be noted that this learning review has been conducted internally by three members of the DLT, with the assistance of OLE staff members. The review was intended as a quick and basic scan of the current state of play and does not pretend to be a comprehensive evaluative process, but to give broad indications of where improvements could and should be envisaged. As an internally conducted process, inevitably there is some degree of subjectivity. Thus, we want this not to be an end point, but a starting point of an inclusive dialogue, to refine the analysis and the recommendations and progressively agree on concrete steps to be taken.

Conclusions

1. Everyone interviewed finds that the Business Plan is an exciting and relevant initiative. The political will exists to make the Centres initiative work, both in the Secretariat and in the MAs, although there is great need to come to a collective understanding of mutual expectations.
2. In the survey, three key themes emerged from responses on what people believed to be the transformational elements of the BP. (a) Working as one eco-system, across regional boundaries, breaking the traditional CO/RO/MA linear approach. (b) Unleashing MA capabilities and enabling them to support one another and (c) an explicit emphasis on learning.
3. A mix of views on the essential nature of Centres reflects both the actual heterogeneous nature of the Centres as well as perceptions of respondents. When asked to choose which description they most identified their/the Centres with, 47% of respondents identified “start-up”, 21% “project” and 16% “programme”. Some Centres are in fact delivering restricted projects because there is a back-donor. Of those who have IPPF funding some feel relatively free to experiment, while others are more focused on fixed deliverables in the initial tenders/proposals, often related to enabling them to expand a specific approach – proven in their context - to a pre-agreed number of MAs.
4. The principle of MA Centricity is welcomed and accepted by all interviewees, but there is a lack of clarity on what is meant by ‘leadership’ and accordingly unaligned expectations, leading to frustrations expressed by both Centre and Secretariat staff. This probably links to a certain extent with the differing viewpoints of the role of Centres and risks hampering the Centres becoming leaders.
5. There is an exploration that needs to be done in the Secretariat on how to manage the tension that can arise between supporting start-up initiatives which may be accompanied by lack of clarity, a certain degree of ‘messiness’ and even failure, versus the potentially conflicting expectation that Secretariat staff should enable a more aligned, efficient and effective Federation.
6. Tenders were awarded rapidly, but some contracts took six months or more to sign, and some were not yet signed at the time of interview. Progress has been hampered by differing visions and understandings between Centres, between Centres and

Chairs, and between DLT and middle management in the Secretariat. To avoid delay, these could/ should have been worked through, at least to an extent, before tenders were awarded and/or more time spent interrogating the change upon which we were embarking, and what it would imply for the different stakeholder groups.

7. There was no consideration given to the support that MAs require to move from working at the national level to leading across their peers and working cross-federation in partnership with other MAs. Technical knowledge and expertise do not automatically come with the expertise in capacity sharing and co-ordination that is required for the Centres to deliver and the Secretariat has done little work to support this prior to the BP.
8. Since the initiative was not situated within the regular work stream, there wasn't one overall lead from within leadership or management. To compound this, the May 2019 governance crisis and diversion of human resource away from the BP left a gap in overall co-ordination and Centres and Chairs appear to have been left to fend for themselves. While similar issues are being faced in all Centres, there has been no 'anchorage' in the Secretariat where questions can be asked and issues can be shared, discussed and addressed.
9. This underestimation of the coordination needed, diversion of human resource from BP to reform, and insufficient alignment in the inception has put a large burden on the Chairs who are working at an operational level that was not envisaged and not desired by them. This has not always been appreciated by some Centres, while others have relied significantly on the practical support of the Chairs.
10. The lack of clarity on accountability mechanisms and decision-making has caused unnecessary delay and sometimes friction, with decisions in essence reverting to Central Office staff (as all Chairs are CO staff) or DLT for lack of alternative, and thereby leading to a questioning of the real change potential of the model both by MAs and the Secretariat.
11. The learning roles of the Centres is clearly seen and desired by respondents. While within Centres and solutions the focus is on how learning will be captured and disseminated, there is a lack of collective learning mechanism. The Centres decision-making would value a mechanism that would allow them to come together and share experiences and learning of being a Centre.
12. There is a strong, shared expectation of the Secretariat is to enable communication, exchange and information sharing – within Solutions, between Solutions and beyond. This level of overarching communication was cited as key to the successful initiation of the BP but fell off once the focus shifted to the governance reform.
13. In general, there is an understanding expressed at theoretical level by MAs and Centre Leads, as well as to involved Secretariat staff, that the Business Plan initiatives are neither restricted projects nor business as usual. Some Centres expressed dissatisfaction with Secretariat systems of tendering, planning and support processes, feeling they are not well aligned with a new way of working. Others were happy with the processes, more aligned to a restricted project with delivery supported by the Secretariat
14. There is much hope and expectation from survey and interview respondents, but without enough support and more clarity there is a danger of losing momentum. Action needs urgently to be taken to clarify roles, iron out bureaucratic processes, support Centres to develop into their new role of leadership, clarify what is meant by mutual accountability and enable same.

Findings

Leadership – Principle welcomed and accepted by all but lack of clarity on what is meant by leadership, and unaligned expectations of same.

At the heart of the Business Plan lies the idea that MAs, as expert practitioners, are best placed to provide leadership within their specialist sphere - to their peers on key areas of work, to the wider Federation, and externally on behalf of the Federation. Both the survey and interviews did reflect this shift in approach and is received positively across all respondents. However, the interpretation of leadership then varied. *“It was clear the initiatives will be led by MAs, but no-one articulated what does it mean?”*

In the main, all – MAs and Secretariat- concurred on the shift to a peer to peer, horizontal approach of supporting other MAs with knowledge. *‘Mapping needs, sharing experiences’; ‘create networks of MAs from all regions’; “moving forward if we successfully implement this project, this should position us to learn how to work amongst ourselves as MAs”*. However, there was less clarity around leadership expectations beyond the peer to peer leadership within MAs, at least in the short term. Respondents were not clear whether the BP meant that a Centre would/should take on leadership or representation in the wider external world. This is evidenced by confusions which have arisen around specific issues referenced, eg an international conference that the Secretariat technical lead would typically have attended and it was unclear whether that would now be the role of a Centre and unclarity around roles in decision-making on an IPPF partnership with a global movement, and. The MAs who have a stronger vision of leadership at Federation level, see its development over time *‘We are kickstarting a process’; ‘In five years we want to be a Centre of Excellence’; ‘a long-term ambition over multiple years where new opportunities and new donor relations can be created’*. All interviewees see the importance of dialogue to develop alignment and shared understanding. *“Centres are not pushing the edges yet, but part of the reason is that there is need for more conversations”*

There are differences in the nature of the Centres which inevitably impact on the differing approaches to leadership. It should be noted the initial documentation¹ clarifies that Centres can have different roles, from a more ‘start-up’ function, to a programme or even a project. Thus the survey asked respondents to choose from a selection of statements whether the Centres most closely aligned to the idea of a ‘start-up’, a ‘programme’ or ‘a project’ most respondents (47%) chose the **‘start-up’** option. *“It’s more of an innovation lab which is not business as usual. There certainly may be failures but the point is to learn from them, do the course correction and generate evidence” “I see it as a start-up that can develop into a programme – but it must at least initially work as a start-up to be able to innovate and take chances”*. An example of how those (16%) who selected ‘programme’ saw it *“The Centre is a strengthening platform for already existing structures, expanding their effects and improving delivery, it promotes learning and encourages a field of encountering new challenges and bringing different MAs to come up with different solid solutions workable in their respective areas to mitigate anticipated issues that may occur in the current situations or in the near future.”*

21% identified more with a project set-up. “When I initially read the Business Plan, I assumed this work would be programmatic and that the MAs who were awarded would provide Federation-wide leadership but I now see first-hand that this was set-up and is being implemented as a one-off project.” However, a number of responses indicate that even a project structure is not completely antithetical to some aspects of a start-up approach. *“Even*

¹ IPPF Business Plan Design Report April 2019

though there are clear deliverables in a set time frame, there is also a certain element of finding our way, trial and error and hopefully a lot of learning.” “Since the funding around our work on the solution centre is project based with clear objectives, targets, reporting structures and a back donor, it still feels from day to day as a project that we need to deliver... [However] it is inspiring to read the description of 'start-up' in this survey, since I think we could embrace that approach maybe a bit more” And in one case where the outputs of the Solution Centre are very specific deliverables and it sounds very much a project -- the respondent identified the deliverables themselves as innovations. Thus *“The process of nurturing these innovations would essentially resemble a start-up.”*

Decentralisation – It is a start but there is much work to be done

There is a sense in both the survey and the interviews that the BP is will lead to a change in how IPPF does things and that some movement has already happened in places. *“There is a certain shift in the way the initiative is being implemented. Right from the start [our MA Centre] has had complete flexibility to plan and implement the activities appropriate for the requirements of the Solution initiative.”* However, respondents felt the Secretariat is still in ultimate control. *‘Although the content of the work is more decided by MAs, actual decision making in the project (sic) is highly hierarchical and goes through different layers in IPPF with the Secretariat having the final say.’*

A concern expressed by both Secretariat and MAs is that experience and expertise in one country/technical area/or even regional context *“does not inherently translate to provide technical assistance to other types of contexts/languages.”* *“We [MA] understands our expertise, strengths and weaknesses best, but we don’t have it all. We also look for learning, we want the Secretariat to bring all the other experiences.”* On the one hand, some interviews reflect the responsibility that Secretariat staff feel to keep closely connected with the Centres. One concern expressed was that more in-depth analysis was not carried out at tender stage to determine the existing gaps and potential risks of decentralising global work to organisations whose implementation experience is limited to one, or a few similar contexts. These might not simply be non-transferable to another, or more seriously, the same approach might pose risks in another context. In a number of cases this analysis appears to have been (informally) done as part of contracting, leading to changes being demanded vis a vis the original tender by the Chairs. This has contributed to the sense of the Secretariat retaining control and raised frustration levels. On the other hand, Secretariat staff is actively holding back and/or frustrated by the significant expectations being placed upon them by the Centres. *“I am confused as to whether I should help if the MAs ask.”* *“Some centres expect detailed co-ordination”*

Change Management. The support required to achieve the desired transformation has been radically unplanned

Many of the MAs are also very aware of the jump that they are being expected to make from delivering in their national context to leading across other MAs, and feel they are not getting enough support from the Secretariat to make this transition. It is clear that a huge part of the evolution of the Centres is not about technical expertise but learning the ‘**how**’ of working across the Federation with their peer MAs. MAs reference previous culture, the ‘supervisory’ role of the RO, and believe that the Secretariat is needed to convince other MAs to engage. *“How will they perceive an email coming from another MA”? “Difficult time getting in touch with MAs’.* All interviewees agreed that the Secretariat has a larger role at the beginning in order to support MAs into their changed role and to make other MAs aware of the change in approach. *“The Secretariat should have... a greater role in helping the centre at the initial stage, setting them up with communication with the MAs’ ;“There is a need for IPPF to weave*

us together – secretariat, lead MAs and supporting MAs’ ‘Completely new experience for MAs – they don’t know where to go when they aren’t getting replies from MAs’ But it is agreed this should be time limited. ‘Important at the beginning but diminishing importance as it continues.’

Management / Coordination Model. The model as envisaged works to an extent, but is hampered by lack of alignment prior to implementation, lack of role clarity and the lack of co-ordination and change management capacity

Despite the good intentions and enthusiasm - there is a lot of unclarity about the model. Many respondents said they have little understanding to ‘no clue’ about the roles of Chair and Sponsor. In fact, several MAs expressed their satisfaction with the model and said they would not change it. In contrast Secretariat respondents felt that the model was not working as designed and this very much linked to change management required to support MAs work with each other and across the Federation in a new way. *‘There have been high expectations of the MAs... and almost complete reliance on the Secretariat to progress co-ordination, planning etc’ ‘Instead of Solutions Chairs playing a role of bringing together the different Centres within a solution to share experiences and identify solutions to common challenges, they ended up playing the role of vertical “project managers”, something they did not sign up for”.*

However, it also comes through that is not only the expectation of certain MAs that leads to this, but also expectations from different stakeholders in the Secretariat itself. *“The expectation from finance [was] that funds would be treated as designated funds requiring approval from DLT and subsequent oversight from a “project” lead.” “In middle management there was a dread and fear that the BP would not be accountable, and people would spend the money however with no results – what was needed was strong oversight.”* It was also not clear that MAs do not always had the level of technical capacity that had been anticipated and that the Secretariat, in the form of the Chairs, was still providing a heavy level of technical support, reviewing documentation and providing advice requested by the MAs.

Accountability – There is no shared understanding of the level of accountability that is desired, and no clear accountability chain or mechanism.

A significant variety of answers to this question, in the survey and in the interviews, illustrates that there is no overall understanding of the accountability chain. A number of the MAs felt the accountability was to the Secretariat, some felt it was to the Chair, and the Chairs felt they were providing reporting to IPPF that should be handled by the Centres. In some co-lead cases, there was no knowledge of where the sub-grants were coming from and to whom they were responsible. In some cases, there is an external donor, to whom the Centre feels accountable. During the interviews, most respondents – though not all - did start to consider the accountability to the Federation as a whole rather than to the Secretariat or to a back donor, but respondents were unsure what this would look like in practice.

Some suggested that there should be a single point of oversight for all Solutions Centres, others felt the technical areas were so different this would not be practicable and felt accountability per Solution would be preferable. A proposed way forward in one Solution was posited as a Technical Advisory Committee ‘a mix of external and internal stakeholders, including representation from the Secretariat to provide impartial advice on how the Centre is moving’, this could also be considered as an accountability mechanism. It is clear that we need to consider two elements within accountability – one is technical, are the Centres delivering the technical excellence that was foreseen? And the second is more around enabling learning – are the Centres playing their role in learning and in upping the game of the Federation over all? This could possibly be done across all the Centres, with shared

indicators, but there needs to be some sort of accountability on technical areas/subject matter. Both of these need to go beyond the Secretariat and the current in practice accountability to the 'Chair' and beyond that to the DLT needs to shift.

Collaboration- The most positive finding is the increase in collaboration that the Centres are bringing about, but co-ordination support is needed to enable it.

The statement in the survey regarding collaboration that received the most positive responses was the asking whether respondents felt they or their organisation was collaborating across the Federation more than previously. The only disagreement was from those who already worked significantly across the Federation, but overall 66% agreed or agreed strongly they were collaborating in a new way with other Member Associations. *"We were collaborating in our region. Now we are collaborating across the globe" "Participating [in the Solution] and hearing from MAs and partners around the world has been illuminating."*

However, the interviews brought out that though collaboration is positive and is happening, it is not always easy. In one Centre, there have been huge delays as the Lead and the Co-Lead who had not previous relationship (two separate applications had been submitted and IPPF asked to make it one) tried to develop the programme. While there were staff in the proposal, the needs to work out a modus operandi fell on staff before people could recruited, meant lack of time capacity of existing staff to manage what was in essence a needed inception phase but which had not been planned or budgeted for. In another Solution lack of needed coordinating capacity, disagreements as to where such capacity should sit, and very lengthy approval and recruitment process managed out of CO, meant that the original vision of three Centres working in an interconnected way, sharing key tools and overseeing one grant making mechanism has not yet been possible to implement optimally. Similarly, two Centres in the same Solution had proposed digital platforms. While there have been attempts to merge, this has not yet been successful. Awarding individual tenders and then trying to adapt the original concept of the different Centres in mid-stream in order to better align across Solutions, has proved difficult. Again, an inception process prior to allocation of the tenders might have helped alignment in advance that would have avoided unnecessary delay caused by different visions and understandings within partnerships.

Across Centres: In some cases, there is incipient working across Solutions, particularly Solutions One and Two, and this includes initial efforts to link the Solutions to the wider context of the Solution, e.g. linking to the Advocacy Advisory Group. There were several positive references to the development of the shared Movement Accelerator Platform 'brand' developed for Solutions One and Two, though some partners feel less clear than others of the interconnections and that it still a way from functioning optimally.

In other Solutions, respondents felt that the Centres are working completely independently of each other and are not connected. The Chair has not been able to pick up the role to connect across Solutions as there is so much support required for the set-up of each individual part of the Solution, that convening the three has not been considered priority, nor has any thinking been done on how to integrate them into wider global work.

Additionally, while the three Chairs have had some informal interaction to support each other, there has been no formal processes to link across the Solutions and so there is no opportunity to learn from the process of setting up the Centres, enable the Centres to share experiences and learn from successes, failures and ideas of others. This is something which many respondents felt is very needed.

Learning- All see learning as key role of the Centres but there is no agreed approach as to how to do it.

An explicit emphasis on learning came across as a key theme when survey respondents were asked which ingredients had the most potential to transform IPPF. Centres have varying approaches to how they think they can become the 'go-to' resource for MAs across the Federation and many feel the Secretariat has a key role to help them position themselves and amplify the learnings both within IPPF and externally. However, there is a lack of a collective learning mechanism and a clear desire that something should exist to capture not just the specific learning per technical area, but also on the lessons learned on how to capture, disseminate learning as well as how to measure the uptake and impact of the learning, including on the process of Centre implementation itself.

RO (Secretariat) Involvement

There are two elements to this, firstly the role of ROs who host or partner in Centres, and secondly ROs in their capacity as supporting the MAs in their region. Centres in general see a critical role for the Secretariat, including ROs (although it is clear from some responses that MAs see the 'Secretariat' as equaling CO only (not including ROs), and in one case being supported by CO directly was considered preferable to support from the relevant RO.). They realise that the Secretariat has the advantage of wide knowledge and linkages and these should be accessible and put to use for the advantage of the Centres and to expand their scope and reach. Centres which have an RO partner appear to have better communication and linkages. However, there is a view that ROs should be supporting the Centres anyway in this role, but not necessarily as lead or co-lead drawing resources. At the most extreme, one Centre partner felt that its role was only to provide the technical expertise and learning but it was the ROs role to do the work across the partners. Alternatively, some RO or Secretariat Solution partners won the tenders due to highly developed technical skills in the relevant area, which MA partners do not have to the same degree. Thus, the added value goes significantly beyond connection and amplification, and includes mitigating risk where MAs are on a learning curve. Some respondents pointed out a conflict of interest where ROs host centres, and are also on DLT, where DLT has final decision-making power. Where ROs are not formally part of Centres, as above, the Chairs are gap-filling and/or the MAs have expectations of their ROs that are not necessarily being fulfilled as RO staff are not clear what their input should be. It is often clear there is a Secretariat role and this role needs to be clarified, appropriately resourced and included in workplans of the most appropriate Secretariat entity.

Management and Operations: While in some places it has worked fine, overall our processes have not been adapted and are not fit-for-purpose for this changed way of working.

While some respondents were fairly satisfied, finding the processes easy and transparent, others were completely dissatisfied. Regardless, the evidence speaks for itself. In at least one case the contracts were still not signed at the time of interview- almost a year after the tenders were awarded. In others it took six months. More than one respondent referenced the complexity of working with the Secretariat, in this case CO, in terms of the layers of different people that approvals had to go through. "*The objections of various departments kept coming month after month as the file moved the tables from compliance to grants to finance and finally to programme departments. For every stage in the Secretariat, different departments looked at the proposal at different stages and gave their feedback, rather than a collective feedback process and this delayed the whole process.*" Additionally even for those Centres for whom the process happened more swiftly, the Secretariat had not thought through how to adapt its mechanisms to take account of the different nature of the BP Centres and the templates and formats used for classic restricted projects, even initially requiring weekly activity planning. Even in the large donor funded Centres, reporting deadlines and formats are not clear.

Recommendations

1. Establish /re-establish a **mechanism or clear point of oversight and co-ordination of the Business Plan** and ensure learnings feed improvements and enable needed adaptations quickly. There needs to be a coordinating function that maintains and an overview of progress, and a clear and quick decision-making forum when adjustments need to be made, including additional investment, recruitments, grant modalities etc. The focus of this work should not be the specific technical areas but on the model itself and how the Centres are working against the principles set in the BP. There should be constant feedback and learning loops between the Centres/Solutions and this 'mechanism' what is working, what is not, and how things need to be adapted in the model. These needs to not only be fed back into the current Centres but inform any new Centres or similar initiatives.
2. Reinvigorate/channel the positive energy around the Business Plan with a **targeted internal communications strategy** on the Centres, their role, their successes and their learnings, to MAs and Secretariat staff.
3. Establish channels of **internal communications with and between the Centres**, ensuring Centres are updated on overall developments within the BP, and enable to easily and informally communicate with and learn from each other.
4. Work with the Centres and relevant Secretariat/MA stakeholders to agree **appropriate accountability mechanism and framework for Centres and Solutions**. Break the current traditional, hierarchical accountability chain from Centre to Chair to DLT (Sponsor) to Board and take into account the start-up nature of many of the the initiatives. **This may have to have a dual layer.**
 - (A) One which has **sufficient specialist knowledge to hold the Centres to account on the technical element** of the work; this should probably be at Solution level. This will need technical experts beyond Secretariat staff, other MAs where relevant expertise exists, or possibly externals given that the Centres were chosen because they already had the leading expertise within MAs.
 - (B) A second that potentially could be done across all Centres- **which holds Centres and Secretariat accountable for how Centres are performing in driving learning, capacity and resources to the Federation, in essence are they achieving the leadership role envisaged and is the Secretariat doing a good job to support them.** This could be primarily MA led. Or potentially you have the first 'technical' level feed into the second.
5. **Set clear expectations and indicators for 'leadership' by Centres** (linked to the second level accountability framework mentioned above) and conduct with them an analysis of the challenges and gaps in knowledge and experience that they expect to face. In the future, this should be done at tender stage.
6. From this, **assess against objective criteria the level and type of support the Centres require / expect of the Secretariat.** Ensure MA expectations and Secretariat expectations on support are aligned, and that there is sufficient lead time and core resources to deliver the agreed support, as well as **a clear timeframe during which the support will be provided** – perhaps the first six months to a year.
7. The tender process should be examined in light of the review findings to see where adaptations could/should be made for future Centres. **More exploration should happen from the beginning as to the nature of a particular Centre, and therefore what the tendering process could/should entail.** For example, a real start-up might

expect a very light tendering process, but where a Centre is tied to deliverables because of a donor, or depends on partnerships within a Centre or has significant interdependencies with other Centres, more time might be needed to clarify roles and responsibilities across partners, or agree how decisions will be taken across entities.

8. The level of technical support required by some Centres might indicate that more work might need to be done **before** a decision is made to tender specific areas of work. There should be a **policy framework/mechanism that helps determine which areas of work are tendered** based on objective criteria.