Planning, Governance, and Excellence

Published edition control record

Edition reference
UHRDA-EN-G07-20261031-02

Edition review
2026-10-31

Responsible for updates and edition review
Training Department

Scope of use
Indicative guidance and working templates to adapt to the organization's context.

Verification scope

Consistency of the published material, its links, edition information and limits of use. Consult the relevant specialist within the organization before adopting a procedure or professional decision.

The following pages retain the original English guide material and formatting. Review dates within that material refer to its original edition. Current edition controls appear here and on the guide webpage.

Current edition and contact

https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/governance/

Comments and update requests: info@uhrda.net

Arab Union for Human Resources Development

Planning, Governance, and Excellence

Practical guide | October 2026

1. Starting point and outputs

A guide connecting an organization's direction to its day-to-day decisions: what it wants to achieve, which initiatives it will implement, who holds decision authority, and how it reviews results and risks and learns from them. It helps build an actionable plan and governance proportionate to organizational size, treating excellence as sustained quality in performance and results. The guide offers a working package adaptable to each organization's mandate and approved framework, rather than a compliance certificate or mandatory model.

Who benefits

- Executive leaders and planning and organizational development directors
- Committee secretaries and initiative and performance management teams
- Risk, quality, and internal control officers

What you will produce

- A focused set of strategic priorities supported by an organizational diagnosis
- An initiative portfolio linked to outcomes, owners, and resources
- An authority matrix, committee charters, and an escalation route
- Indicator profiles, a risk register, and regular implementation reviews
- An improvement program based on evidence and identified weaknesses

Inputs to prepare

- The organization's mandates, governing decisions, and approved authorities
- Service results, resources, costs, and stakeholder feedback
- The current plan, budget, initiatives, and commitments of subordinate entities
- Oversight findings, service-user complaints, and the risk register, if available
- A plan sponsor, outcome owners, and a monitoring secretariat with clear authority

2. Working methodology

One chain from objective to accountability

The Union's proposed approach links each priority to an outcome, each outcome to an indicator and an initiative, and each initiative to an owner, resources, and decision limits. More initiatives do not necessarily make a stronger plan. Quality begins when an organization can explain why it selected a project, how it will change the outcome, and when it will stop or adjust the project if its underlying assumption does not hold.

Governance proportionate to the decision

Design governance around actual decisions: approving a priority, allocating a resource, resolving a conflict, or accepting or escalating a risk. Each decision needs an authorized owner, a consultation route, and a record. This approach draws on OECD principles of public governance and integrity, without transferring one country's model to another or claiming conformity. The organization applies its own current rules and authorities when converting the proposal into a procedure.

Excellence results from organizational learning

Use self-assessment to identify a specific gap, address it, and verify the result. A document alone demonstrates that a procedure exists, rather than that it is effective. A judgment also requires an implementation sample, a result, and a review. Do not use maturity scores or comparative rankings without defining measurement levels and ensuring organizations are comparable, and do not let winning an award take priority over improving service.

> This is an adaptable practical approach developed by the Union with reference to the sources below. Adjust steps, timeframes and measures to the organization and its data. It is not a certificate of compliance or accreditation by the referenced organizations.

3. Implementation steps

1 Confirm the mandate and identify stakeholders

Review what the organization is required to achieve and what falls outside its mandate. Identify users, oversight bodies, partners, and delivery units, and gather their expectations through interviews, service data, and complaints. Distinguish binding requirements from preferences and optional improvements, and record conflicts requiring leadership resolution. Restate the organizational purpose in language that explains the value required for people or entities that depend on its work.

Suggested owner
Leadership and planning department

Required output
A map of mandates, stakeholders, and requirements

Progression check
Every major obligation has a source and a follow-up owner

2 Conduct an evidence-based diagnosis

Examine results, processes, capabilities, resources, data, and governance, then gather evidence of strengths and shortcomings. Compare branches or periods when their circumstances are similar, and test explanations with those doing the work. Do not turn every observation into a project; look for common factors such as unclear responsibility, missing data, or duplicate decision-making. Record confidence levels and evidence still needed so assumptions do not appear to be settled facts.

Suggested owner
Planning, quality, and process owners

Required output
A diagnostic report and priority gaps

Progression check
Conclusions can be traced to specific evidence

3 Select priorities and formulate outcomes

Translate major issues into observable outcomes over an appropriate horizon, and specify what the organization will defer. Assess priorities by user value, obligations, feasibility, resources, and risks, explaining the weighting method. For each outcome, choose a baseline, an indicator, a justified target, and an owner. If there is no baseline, make establishing it the first task; do not choose a cosmetic numerical target simply to complete the table.

Suggested owner
Leadership and outcome owners

Required output
An objectives map and outcome profiles

Progression check
The relationship between the priority and a documented organizational need can be explained

4 Build the initiative portfolio and resource plan

For each initiative, define the problem, output, expected contribution to the outcome, boundaries, resources, and dependencies. Test the availability of people, budget, and data before approving its schedule, and look for duplicate or conflicting projects. Set stage decision points to check that continued implementation remains worthwhile. Distinguish delivering an output, such as launching a system, from realizing a benefit, such as reducing service errors after it is actually used.

Suggested owner
Portfolio management, planning, and finance

Required output
A funded portfolio and a dependency and benefits plan

Progression check
No approved initiative lacks an owner, resources, or an expected benefit

5 Define authorities, committees, and escalation

List recurring decisions and identify who proposes, reviews, approves, implements, and is informed. Test the list against practical cases to reveal overlapping authority and gaps. Establish a committee only where a decision or coordination need warrants it, and define its purpose, membership, quorum, frequency, and decision register under internal rules. Set a route for handling conflicts of interest and escalation when limits are exceeded or decisions stall.

Suggested owner
Leadership, governance secretariat, and specialists

Required output
An authority matrix and committee charters

Progression check
The final approver for each major decision is clear

6 Integrate risks and controls into implementation

For each objective, ask what could prevent its achievement or harm users, then identify the cause, event, and impact. Assess risks using a published, consistent scale, and record existing controls, their operating effectiveness, and the treatment plan and owner. Distinguish management responsibility from independent review. Do not treat a policy's existence as sufficient evidence that a control works; request a verification sample and refer acceptance of residual risks to the authorized decision-maker.

Suggested owner
Risk owners and risk officer

Required output
A risk and control register and treatment plans

Progression check
Every significant risk has an action, an owner, and a review date

7 Run performance reviews that lead to decisions

Build a concise dashboard combining outcomes, initiatives, risks, and data quality. Before the meeting, each owner explains deviations, causes, options, and the decision required so the meeting is not consumed by reading figures. Record each decision, its owner, deadline, and closure criterion. Check indicator consistency and ensure definitions are not changed to conceal deterioration. Show missing data explicitly rather than replacing them with a reassuring green status.

Suggested owner
Leadership and performance secretariat

Required output
A decision record and reliable dashboard

Progression check
Every material deviation has a corresponding decision or documented explanation

8 Evaluate effectiveness and update the plan

Periodically review whether initiatives have actually improved outcomes and whether governance has made decisions faster and better controlled. Gather implementation evidence and user and employee views, and identify a small number of achievable improvements. Stop initiatives that are no longer worthwhile through a documented decision, and reallocate resources when needed. Retain reasons for changes to targets, definitions, and versions so comparisons remain understandable, and draw a lesson usable in the next cycle.

Suggested owner
Leadership, planning, and quality

Required output
A strategic review and updated improvement plan

Progression check
The review includes decisions about learning and resource allocation, rather than a presentation alone

Guide and editable templates: https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/governance/

4. Working templates

Review the illustrative row, then complete a copy of the blank row using your organization's information. Download each template as CSV or print it within the guide.

Objective and initiative brief

Start with the outcome, then the initiative. The example is hypothetical; figures and targets are approved after reviewing the baseline and available capacity.

Outcome	Indicator and baseline	Initiative	Outcome owner	Review decision
Improve service clarity	Requests for missing information; baseline being verified	Standardize the requirements guide	Services director	Approve a target after reviewing a representative baseline month

Download CSV template

Decision and risk register

Use to show who decides and what evidence is required for closure. Risk assessment remains linked to the organization's scale and is not imported as an absolute number.

Decision required	Risk	Authorized decision-maker	Action and owner	Closure evidence
Scale up a service pilot	Two branches are not ready	Authorized committee	Operations director tests readiness	A verification record and resolution of findings

Download CSV template

5. Hypothetical example: a development portfolio in a multi-branch organization

A hypothetical organization was monitoring 30 initiatives while shared decisions were delayed because three committees discussed the same issue without a clear final approver. Progress reports also counted activities without linking them to service outcomes.

- Leadership reviewed the initiatives, linked them to four outcomes, and identified overlapping projects.
- It consolidated follow-up on shared decisions while retaining approval with the specified authorized decision-maker.
- It required delivery evidence and a plan to verify benefits after operations began for each initiative.

Interpreting the result

In a hypothetical cycle with 20 management decisions due, 16 were closed on time with evidence, giving an on-time closure rate of 80%. The remaining four retained their overdue status and recorded reasons. These are illustrative figures, rather than an assessment of an actual organization or evidence of causal impact.

Learning from the case

Governance works when it links decisions to owners and evidence; excellence is measured by improved performance rather than numbers of committees and documents.

6. Measures and follow-up

Agree each definition, data source, baseline, target and accountable owner before measurement. Targets require organizational approval. A zero denominator makes a ratio not calculable rather than zero.

Measure	Calculation	Source	Review frequency
Completeness of initiative alignment	Number of approved initiatives with an outcome, owner, resources, and benefit indicator ÷ total approved initiatives × 100	Portfolio register and initiative briefs	At approval, then monthly
On-time decision closure	Decisions due and closed with evidence on or before their deadline ÷ all decisions due during the period × 100	Decision register and verification records	Monthly
Overdue risk treatment	Overdue, unclosed treatment actions ÷ all treatment actions due by the reporting date × 100; show critical risks separately	Risk register and treatment plans	At risk reviews
Reliability of performance indicator profiles	Profiles with a complete definition, source, owner, and verification date ÷ total indicator profiles presented × 100	Review of the data dictionary and performance dashboard	For each reporting cycle

7. Indicative implementation plan

The periods below are adaptable planning stages, not guaranteed delivery times.

Period	Action	Deliverable
Phase one: a suggested three weeks	Review the mandate, diagnose the organization, and prioritize outcomes	Priorities, objective profiles, and a stakeholder map
Phase two: a suggested four weeks	Connect initiatives, resources, authorities, and risks	A portfolio, authority matrix, and risk register
Phase three: two suggested review cycles	Run meetings and test data quality and closure	Documented decisions and improved governance; timing adapts to organizational size

8. Common pitfalls

A plan exceeding implementation capacity

Prioritize and stop or defer work without available resources.

Numerical targets without a baseline

Take an initial measurement before approving a justified target.

Numerous committees without clear decisions

Link each committee to an authority, purpose, and closure register.

Treating budget expenditure as success

Monitor outputs, benefits, and service quality alongside expenditure.

Impression-based self-assessment

Request a document, an implementation sample, and a result, then discuss the gap.

9. Review checklist

- ☐ Priorities and the reasons for selecting them are defined.
- ☐ Every outcome has an owner, indicator, and baseline or a plan to establish one.
- ☐ Initiative resources and dependencies are in place.
- ☐ Authorities and escalation routes are clear.
- ☐ Risks are linked to decision-makers and treatment actions.
- ☐ Decisions are closed with evidence, and plan effectiveness is reviewed.

Use this checklist at the final review. Record observations, the decision owner, approval date and document version.

10. Further reading

Original practical material prepared for the Arab Union for Human Resources Development. Sources support the concepts and further reading; the illustrative models and cases belong to this guide. Reviewed: 16 October 2026.

1. OECD — Policy Framework on Sound Public Governance

   A general reference for connecting governance values, management tools, policymaking, implementation, and evaluation.

2. OECD — Public Integrity Handbook

   A reference for principles of responsibility, integrity, integrity risk management, and the role of controls and review; it is not local legal advice.