Restructuring and Organizational Development

Published edition control record

Edition reference

UHRDA-EN-G02-20261031-02

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/organization-design/

Comments and update requests: info@uhrda.net

Arab Union for Human Resources Development

Restructuring and Organizational Development

Practical guide | October 2026

1. Starting point and outputs

Restructuring is a decision about how work, authority, and accountability are distributed to serve an organization's objectives. This guide starts with the services and capabilities required, then moves to units, roles, delegations of authority, and coordination mechanisms. The Arab Union for Human Resources Development proposes a practical approach to building an organizational design that can operate in practice. It must be reviewed against local mandates and regulations, and does not assume that changing titles or reducing management layers alone improves performance.

Who benefits

- Executive leaders and organization and development committees.
- Human resources, planning, and quality directors.
- Teams designing operating models and shared services.

What you will produce

- Approved design principles linked to organizational objectives.
- Organizational options compared using clear reasoning and workload data.
- Consistent unit mandates, job descriptions, and a decision matrix.
- A transition plan that protects service continuity and monitors the results of the design.

Inputs to prepare

- Statutory mandates, strategy, services, and the groups served.
- The formal structure, the actual operating map, and delegations of authority.
- Demand volume, working time, and available capabilities and skills.
- Records of conflicting responsibilities, escalations, and complaints.
- Budget, recruitment, location, and technology constraints.

2. Working methodology

Start with the work, then define the structure

Identify what the organization must achieve and whom it serves, then derive the capabilities needed: policy development, service delivery, oversight, or support. Separate the description of a capability from its current incumbent so the design does not become a way to accommodate individuals. Map how value flows between capabilities, and test where the organization needs deep specialization and where it needs direct coordination. Only then propose units and reporting lines.

Make decisions using explicit trade-offs

No single structure suits every organization. Centralization may improve service consistency while slowing local response; decentralization may offer speed while requiring stronger quality control. Compare options by their ability to deliver the strategy, clarity of accountability, service continuity, total cost, and ease of transition. Set the weights for these criteria in advance and document the reason for any exception, rather than selecting the simplest-looking chart.

Organizational development includes behavior and operations

Structure is completed by delegations of authority, data, skills, meetings, and a dispute-resolution mechanism. Communicate why the change is needed, its effects on employees, and where to direct questions, and involve experienced staff in testing the design. Review mandates, rights, and staff placement with specialists under the local framework. These principles are a design tool rather than detailed legal advice, and international comparisons do not create obligations for the organization.

> 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 Define the case for change and its principles

Describe the organizational problem in terms of its effects, such as duplicate reviews, multiple decision authorities, or weak regional service. Link it to operational evidence, and identify what cannot change because of a mandate or approved constraint. Develop five to seven understandable design principles, such as a clear owner for every service and separation of delivery from oversight where needed. Approve these principles before presenting an alternative structure.

Suggested owner
Leadership and the development committee.

Required output
A case-for-change document and design principles.

Progression check
Each principle is linked to a problem or objective that can be explained.

2 Document the current distribution of work

Collect unit mandates and actual job duties, then compare them with a sample of transactions and decisions. For each activity, record who performs it, who approves its outcome, and who supplies its data. Identify work with no owner and work duplicated by two units. Review meetings, committees, and escalation routes: a bottleneck may arise from a decision that has not been delegated even when the formal structure is clear.

Suggested owner
Organization design team and process owners.

Required output
A work map and a matrix of overlaps and gaps.

Progression check
The map shows actual practice and exceptions as well as the documents.

3 Estimate demand and capacity

Group services by comparable complexity and estimate the volume and actual working time required for each group. Calculate the hours of work demanded and compare them with available productive hours after allowing for other duties, training, and leave. Present normal and peak scenarios, and distinguish a headcount shortage from a lack of skills or decision-making authority. Do not derive staffing needs from transaction counts alone.

Suggested owner
Planning, human resources, and operations.

Required output
A workload and capacity gap analysis with its assumptions.

Progression check
Each estimate is linked to a source, date, and scope, with uncertainty stated.

4 Develop operating model options

Design two or three options, such as an improved functional structure, service-based teams, or shared services for recurring activities. For each option, specify where work is done, what remains local, how data flows, and who owns the final outcome. Explain technology and skills dependencies and transition costs. Use the design principles to reject options that recreate the problem under new names.

Suggested owner
Design team with internal service-user participation.

Required output
Option briefs and a comparison against multiple criteria.

Progression check
The comparison includes service continuity and transition difficulty, as well as payroll costs.

5 Define units, decisions, and roles

Translate the selected option into unit mandates and clear boundaries between them. For each role, state its purpose, outputs, decisions, authorities, interactions, and required skills. Create a decision matrix distinguishing the person doing the work, the final approver, those consulted, and those informed. Assign one final approver to each decision unless regulations require otherwise, and document any exception. Do not use a fixed span of control for every job; consider complexity and geographical dispersion.

Suggested owner
Organization design, human resources, and the relevant specialist functions.

Required output
An organizational structure, mandates, job descriptions, and delegation matrix.

Progression check
No service lacks an owner, and no authority lacks an accountable person.

6 Test the design before final approval

Simulate routine and exceptional cases: an urgent request, an absent manager, a complaint involving two departments, or a system outage. Ask participants to explain who decides, where information comes from, and how escalation works in each case. Check the segregation of conflicting duties and staff ability to perform their roles. Adjust the design if ordinary cases require constant escalation or additional meetings to resolve a simple responsibility question.

Suggested owner
Design team and operations and oversight representatives.

Required output
A test and adjustment log, and conditional approval.

Progression check
Realistic scenarios can be resolved without gaps or conflicts in decision-making.

7 Manage transition and staff placement

Divide the transition into waves, specifying the services, people, data, and authorities to be transferred in each. Set readiness conditions covering approved responsibilities, trained staff, updated systems, and operational support. Coordinate staff placement and individual personnel actions with the competent authorities, and provide an opportunity for questions and grievances under the applicable rules. Keep a formal handover register for open files, and set a rollback point if service delivery falters.

Suggested owner
Transition manager, human resources, and information technology.

Required output
A transition plan and handover and readiness register.

Progression check
An existing responsibility is not withdrawn before the new owner is ready.

8 Review performance after implementation

Monitor decision time, repeat referrals, service quality, and units' ability to perform their duties. Discuss findings with employees and service users, and distinguish the effect of the structure from changes in demand or systems. Correct delegation or coordination arrangements before proposing another restructuring. Update documents when changes are approved, and close temporary transition arrangements by a clear deadline so they do not become a permanent parallel structure.

Suggested owner
Development committee and service owners.

Required output
A post-implementation review and approved corrective actions.

Progression check
The design is judged by what it achieves in operations, rather than the date the decision was issued.

Guide and editable templates: https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/organization-design/

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.

Decision and responsibility matrix

Complete this for critical and recurring decisions. The example is illustrative and must be checked against approved delegations of authority.

Decision	Responsible for execution	Final approver	Consulted	Informed
Change an internal service workflow	Process owner	Operations director	Oversight and information technology	Service teams

Download CSV template

Organizational options comparison

Define scores and weights before use; the example presents a hypothetical assessment and does not express a general preference.

Option	Expected benefit	Transition risks	Dependency	Evidence supporting selection
Shared services center	Standardize recurring procedures	Request backlog at launch	Standardized data and a service agreement	Demand and capacity simulation, and response-time measurement

Download CSV template

5. Hypothetical example: standardizing an internal service in a multi-branch authority

A hypothetical authority with five branches receives administrative support requests. Requests passed between three units without a final owner, and 36 of 120 cases required referral again because responsibility was unclear.

- The service was mapped and its decisions defined before changing employees' reporting lines.
- A standardized request intake model was selected, while specialist delivery remained in the branches.
- A service owner was appointed, escalation rules were set, and staff absence and urgent request scenarios were tested.

Interpreting the result

In a later comparable hypothetical test cycle, 12 of 120 cases required referral again: 10% compared with 30%. Closure quality and branch workloads are reviewed before rollout; the figures are educational, not a promise of results.

Learning from the case

Improvement may come from clear ownership and handover arrangements without merging units comprehensively or assuming employees will be made redundant.

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
Process ownership coverage	Number of critical processes with an approved owner and documented authority ÷ total identified critical processes × 100.	Process and delegation registers.	During design, then every three months.
Organizational re-referral rate	Unique requests redirected because responsibility was unclear ÷ all requests in the measured batch × 100.	Request register with referral reason codes.	Monthly.
Decision-making time	Median duration between completion of a decision file and documented approval; report the duration from first submission separately to reveal incomplete files.	Approval register, including decision type.	Monthly for each decision category.
Transition wave readiness	Readiness requirements accepted with evidence ÷ all approved requirements for the wave × 100; critical requirements remain mandatory gates even if the overall percentage is high.	Readiness checklist and acceptance records from the new owner.	Weekly during transition.

7. Indicative implementation plan

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

Period	Action	Deliverable
Diagnosis phase: a suggested three to four weeks	Analyze work and capacity and confirm design principles.	A case for change and a capability and gap map.
Design phase: a suggested four to six weeks	Compare options, define mandates, and test decisions.	A design package ready for approval.
Transition phase: a suggested eight to twelve weeks	Implement waves and review performance; durations vary with scale and required approvals.	Stable operations, responsibilities in force, and an impact review.

8. Common pitfalls

Designing the structure around current individuals.

Define work and capabilities first, then address staff placement using published criteria.

Assuming that reducing management layers is an end in itself.

Test its effects on supervision quality, decision speed, and risk.

Transferring duties without resources or authority.

Require a complete capability and delegation package before handover.

Ignoring employee concerns and the spread of rumors.

Establish regular communication that clarifies confirmed decisions and matters still under consideration.

Measuring restructuring success by the number of units abolished.

Link success to clear responsibilities, better service, and sustainable operations.

9. Review checklist

- ☐ Design principles were approved before selecting an option.
- ☐ Workload and capacity are documented with clear assumptions.
- ☐ Options were compared using published criteria.
- ☐ Authorities and mandates are consistent.
- ☐ The design has passed realistic operating scenarios.
- ☐ The transition plan protects open files and ongoing services.

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. GOV.UK — Design Principles: Summary

   A reference for the role of design principles, accountability, and employee involvement in organizing shared services. The approach and templates in this guide are practical proposals rather than a transfer of UK government requirements.

2. OPM — Planning a Strategic Approach

   A reference for linking workforce planning to mission, skills gaps, and organizational structure assessment, while allowing for differences in the local organizational context.