Improving Procedures and Services

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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/service-improvement/

Comments and update requests: info@uhrda.net

Arab Union for Human Resources Development

Improving Procedures and Services

Practical guide | October 2026

1. Starting point and outputs

A practical approach to improving the service user's journey and the procedure supporting it, from defining the problem and measuring the current situation to simplifying work, piloting a solution, and monitoring it. It serves ministries, authorities, and organizations facing delayed transactions, repeat requests, or numerous follow-up visits. It focuses on the outcome the user needs while preserving necessary controls, and turns improvement ideas into decisions with clear responsibility whose impact can be tested before scaling up.

Who benefits

- Service owners, operations directors, and service-user centers
- Organizational development, quality, and digital transformation teams
- Procedure, data, and interdepartmental coordination specialists

What you will produce

- A documented map of the current journey, delays, and rework
- An improved procedure design with responsibilities, controls, and exceptions
- A limited pilot comparing performance before and after the change
- An operations manual, monitoring dashboard, and continuous improvement plan

Inputs to prepare

- The service definition, its start and end points, user groups, and access channels
- Dated transaction samples covering completed, pending, and withdrawn cases
- Approved procedures and the reasons for document and approval requirements
- Complaints, interviews, and observations from frontline and back-office staff
- A service owner and a team including operations, technology, and legal affairs where needed

2. Working methodology

See the whole journey

The journey starts when a user tries to achieve their purpose; it may begin before submitting a request and continue after receiving the output. Examine what they do beyond the organization's screen: obtaining a document, visiting another organization, or contacting the service again. The UK government service manual emphasizes understanding the problem and its context and testing assumptions. It is used here as a general principle; the implementation procedures and templates below are an approach proposed by the Union.

Value, control, and accessibility

Classify each step: it serves a user purpose, provides a necessary control, or has no apparent justified purpose. Do not automatically remove controls to reduce time; examine whether they can be combined, performed once, or targeted at cases requiring them, within authorized limits. Compare solutions across channels, because improving the digital channel may shift the burden to the telephone, an employee, or a user who needs assistance.

Verifiable improvement

Every change needs a testable hypothesis, an improvement indicator, and a safeguard indicator. For example, clarifying the document checklist may reduce requests for missing information, while the incorrect rejection rate is monitored so speed is not presented as success at the expense of fairness. Durations and volumes below are planning examples, rather than binding service limits or guaranteed results.

> 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 Choose a service and define success

Start with a service that has a clear problem, a tangible impact, and an owner able to make decisions. State whom it serves, its final outcome, where it starts and ends, and which channels and exceptions are in scope. Define success through a combination of time, quality, effort, and fairness. Record project exclusions and constraints requiring another authority's approval so the initiative does not expand beyond delivery capacity.

Suggested owner
Development sponsor and service owner

Required output
A short improvement charter

Progression check
The team agrees on one definition of a complete request and its outcome

2 Build a reliable baseline

Extract transactions from a period representing normal demand, then review timestamp completeness and transaction status definitions. Separate simple from complex cases, and do not automatically exclude overdue cases. Measure time from the agreed start point to the outcome, stating whether calendar or working days are used. Record demand volume, resources, and concurrent changes, and show missing and pending cases to avoid a misleading view of performance.

Suggested owner
Performance analyst and operations manager

Required output
A baseline and data quality statement

Progression check
Figures can be recalculated from the sample records

3 Document the journey and actual procedure

Follow a number of transactions from the user's perspective and observe actual work with employees. For every step, map the input, output, person performing it, system, waiting time, and handoff to the next party. Record unclear messages, data re-entry, and points where people with different needs get stuck. Compare practice with the written manual; the gap between them may explain the problem better than the form's design itself.

Suggested owner
Procedure analyst and service-user representative

Required output
A journey map and current procedure map

Progression check
Those responsible for the steps reviewed the map and confirmed that it reflects actual practice

4 Analyze causes and prioritize improvement opportunities

Classify causes of delay and rework by frequency and impact, then test likely causes against records and observations. If a transaction is waiting for approval, ask why approval is required, when it is requested, and what delegation limits apply. Assess opportunities by user benefit, implementation effort, risk, and dependencies on other parties. Separate facts from assumptions and identify the data needed to resolve each material assumption before adopting a solution.

Suggested owner
Improvement team and process owner

Required output
A list of documented causes and prioritized opportunities

Progression check
Each opportunity targets a cause and has supporting evidence, rather than an impression alone

5 Design the improved procedure

Start with the simplest change that addresses the cause: standardized instructions, removing duplication, early verification, or moving a decision to the authorized level. Write the normal path, exceptions, authority limits, and escalation route. For each required document, record its purpose and the authority permitted to change the requirement. Then identify what can be automated after simplification. Review the design's effects on records, privacy, service accessibility, and operational continuity.

Suggested owner
Service owner, operations, and specialists

Required output
An improved procedure, forms, and defined authorities

Progression check
No necessary control disappears without an approved alternative

6 Test the solution with users and employees

Test the form or instructions with people representing target groups, asking them to perform a realistically worded task without explanations that lead them to the answer. Record difficulties, questions, and time. Run a limited operational pilot with a defined scope and a rollback route if a material problem emerges. Compare similar cases and monitor quality and backlogs in downstream departments so the bottleneck does not move beyond the part being measured.

Suggested owner
Pilot lead and quality officer

Required output
A pilot report and a decision to adjust or scale up

Progression check
Continuation and stopping criteria are agreed before the pilot

7 Approve the procedure and prepare operations

Update the service manual, staff instructions, forms, messages, and published timeframe if its revision is approved. Specify the version's effective date and how transactions started earlier will be handled. Train staff on routine and exceptional cases, and check every channel for consistent information. Archive the previous version for authorized reference and stop using its operational copies so teams do not work under different rules.

Suggested owner
Procedure owner and operations management

Required output
An approved operational version and transition plan

Progression check
Website, front-desk, telephone, and manual instructions are consistent

8 Monitor performance and close the improvement cycle

Review indicators alongside user complaints and samples of decision quality. If the average improves while one group remains delayed, analyze the distribution before declaring success. Link every deviation to an owner, action, and deadline, then verify the action's effect at the next review. Reassess the design when legislation, demand volume, or the system changes. Keep a decision log so the organization knows why a step was added or removed.

Suggested owner
Service owner and performance analyst

Required output
A monitoring dashboard and improvement decision log

Progression check
Review decisions are based on data and user feedback

Guide and editable templates: https://uhrda.net/en/organizations/guides/service-improvement/

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.

Procedure step review register

One hypothetical worked row and one blank row. The team requires evidence of a step's purpose before proposing its removal and assigns the decision to the person with the relevant authority.

Step	Problem and evidence	Purpose of the step	Proposed change	Approval condition
Check document completeness	Repeated requests for missing information in the request sample	Prevent missing essential data	A clear checklist before submission	Service owner review and user testing

Download CSV template

Improvement pilot brief

Use before the pilot begins so success criteria are not selected after results appear. The team separates the improvement sought from an indicator that protects decision quality.

Hypothesis	Scope	Improvement indicator	Safeguard indicator	Scaling decision
A clear checklist reduces repeated requests for missing information	One service and a specified branch	Rate of requests for missing information	Incorrect rejections in a review sample	Review improvement, quality, and workload before approval

Download CSV template

5. Hypothetical example: simplifying a municipal service request

A hypothetical team found that 80 of 200 requests required missing information during the baseline period. Sample review showed that instructions did not explain the alternative document for a common situation and that staff across channels gave different answers.

- The team standardized the instructions, wrote an example of the exceptional case, and reviewed it with specialists.
- It tested users' understanding, then implemented the instructions in one branch while monitoring rejections and complaints.
- It compared a subsequent batch of similar size and composition and recorded changes in staffing and demand volume.

Interpreting the result

In the hypothetical figures, 40 of the next 200 requests required missing information; the rate fell from 40% to 20%, a decrease of 20 percentage points and a relative reduction of 50%. This describes the observed change in the example and does not, by itself, prove that the instructions caused the entire difference.

Learning from the case

Explaining improvement requires comparing similar cases and monitoring decision quality and concurrent changes.

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
Median service completion time	The middle value of completed transaction durations after sorting; time runs from a defined start point to delivery of the outcome, with pending cases shown separately	Transaction register and timestamps	Weekly or monthly, depending on volume
Rate of requests for missing information	Number of requests for which missing information was requested at least once ÷ total requests received in the specified batch × 100	Transaction statuses and missing-information request register	For each consistently defined follow-up batch
Completion within the published timeframe	Number of transactions completed within the approved timeframe ÷ total transactions completed during the period × 100; show the ages of pending cases alongside it	Service register and approved deadline definition	Monthly
Decision soundness in the sample	Number of decisions passing quality review ÷ number of decisions reviewed × 100; document the sampling method	Independent review of a completed-case sample	With each pilot, then periodically

7. Indicative implementation plan

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

Period	Action	Deliverable
Phase one: a suggested two weeks	Define the scope, collect the baseline, and document the journey	A current-state map, causes, and improvement opportunities
Phase two: a suggested two to four weeks	Design and pilot the solution and review its effect	A comparison report and a decision to approve or adjust
Phase three: an appropriate operating cycle	Update the procedure, train, and monitor according to transaction volume	A current version and monitoring dashboard; durations are estimates

8. Common pitfalls

Digitizing a complex procedure unchanged

Address duplication and unclear decisions before building automation.

Measuring the easy part of the journey

Define start and end points that reflect what the user needs.

Improving speed at the expense of quality

Pair time measures with a sample of decision soundness and complaints.

Removing a control step without authority

Identify the control's purpose and obtain approval for a suitable alternative.

Leaving pending transactions out of the picture

Show their number, ages, and causes alongside completion indicators.

9. Review checklist

- ☐ The service is defined from the user's perspective.
- ☐ Baseline data quality has been checked.
- ☐ The map includes waiting and exceptions.
- ☐ The competent functions have reviewed the changes.
- ☐ The solution has been tested with appropriate groups and channels.
- ☐ The version owner, follow-up plan, and rollback plan are defined.

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 — Understand users and their needs

   A general reference for understanding users' context, researching their needs, and testing assumptions.

2. GOV.UK — Measuring the success of your service

   A reference for distinguishing transaction measurement from the whole journey and combining data with user research.

3. GOV.UK — Define what success looks like and publish performance data

   A reference for defining success and using performance indicators to improve services; it is not a local legal requirement.