How to improve your chances of policy implementation success

(A brief synopsis to introduce the tagged version of the Shergold Review report)

I am pleased to have been a contributor to the report "Learning from Failure"[1] by Professor Peter Shergold AC, which was published in early February 2016. On page one of the report he says:

> *"Leadership begins with finding the courage to say, 'I accept personal responsibility for contributing to the failure to which I was a party'. That recognition can steer the resolve to make changes, try again, and do better. Acknowledging errors publically is a form of self-improvement, not self-abnegation. Failure, and how we respond to it, is where leadership is born."*

This synopsis is for SES officers who wish to make changes, try again, and do better with programmes[2] and projects.

Note 1: Content in italics has been sourced directly from this ASPC publication. This material is licenced for reuse under a Creative Commons BY Attribution 3.0 Australia licence. The Tanner James version of the report is identical to the original, we have simply bookmarked it and highlighted elements of the text to enable you to quickly assimilate the key points.

Note 2: The report uses the spelling "program". As an AXELOS provider Tanner James uses the spelling "programme". We hope you share our opinion that how the word is spelled is unimportant.

Where to begin?

You may have read the review, but how closely did you look at the front cover? Apart from the title "Learning from Failure" it contains two descriptors of what lies within:

> *"Why large government policy initiatives have gone so badly wrong in the past and how the chances of success in the future can be improved"* and

> *"An independent review of government processes for implementing large programs and projects"*

There is a strong implication here: large government policy initiatives should be implemented as programmes and projects.

Given this implication I recommend that you begin by contemplating what departmental policy initiatives should be managed using programme and project management disciplines, taking a much broader view than you might previously have done.

What are the key points for you?

In his review Professor Shergold identifies 10 key lessons to be learned:

1. *Policy is only as good as the manner in which it is implemented.*
2. *Policy advice can only be frank and fearless if it is supported by written argument.*
3. *Deliberations, oral and in writing, need to be protected.*
4. *Deliberative documents need to be preserved, whether written on paper or delivered by digital means.*
5. *It is up to ministers, not officials, to make policy decisions.*
6. *The effective management of risk is just as important in the public sector as in the private—perhaps more so.*
7. *As the public service fully commits itself to measuring results by outcomes, program management needs to be accorded far greater professional status.*

8. *Good governance increasingly depends on collaboration across sectors.*
9. *The APS needs to be further opened up.*
10. *An adaptive government can respond rapidly to changing circumstances without taking unnecessary (and unforeseen) risks.*

He made 28 proposals for improvement, in the form of conclusions, grouped under 7 main headings:

A. *Providing Robust Advice.*
B. *Supporting Decision Making.*
C. *Creating a Positive Risk Culture.*
D. *Enhancing Program Management.*
E. *Opening Up the APS*
F. *Embracing Adaptive Government.*

What do I need to do next?

If you are an SES officer involved in policy implementation I recommend ensuring that you and your SES colleagues read the pdf version of the Shergold Review Report that Tanner James has created.

The pdf version is identical in content to the original, we have simply added bookmarks and highlighted text to enable you to quickly assimilate the key points.

Want to know more?

If a you would like to know more about, please call me personally on **0407 404 688** or email me at john.howarth@tannerjames.com.au . I would be very happy to come to meet you, answer questions and provide further information on topics such as:

*   The difference between programme management and project management, and what considerations apply when determining what departmental policy initiatives should be managed using these disciplines;
*   The programme management and project management methods available to you, and how they need to be tailored for the APS context and nature of initiatives with which you are involved.