

BOARD REFORM INITIATIVE

General Questions and Responses

Proposed Model

1. Why create Regional Services Boards over other approaches to board reform?

- Based on analysis of a variety of options, it appears that the Regional Services Board model best achieves the objectives of improving integration and cooperation in service delivery, maintaining a strong regional role in managing service delivery, simplifying governance structures and reducing duplication in administration.

This is also a model with some proven success in the NWT, e.g. the Tlicho Community Services Agency.

2. Why not look at other approaches like territorial boards or not making any changes?

Other options have been examined in previous studies on approaches to service delivery. In developing the approach to Regional Services Boards, comparisons were made with moving towards creating territorial boards or leaving things as they are.

Territorial Boards Only

- Reduces potential for local or regional input into programs or ability to pursue regional priorities
- Takes staff administering programs further way from communities where services are delivered
- More difficult to implement any improvements in cooperation or integration in service delivery on a territorial basis from headquarters offices
- Doesn't establish a structure that supports implementation of self-government

Status Quo

- 70 boards involved in governance are too many. Duplication in administration takes resources away from programs
- Inconsistencies in service delivery approach by region and community, and between program areas
- In the current situation it is difficult to hold boards and agencies accountable when they have different leadership, different financial systems, different policies – makes it difficult for GNWT to ensure consistency of approach, monitor and evaluate
- Barriers exist to working together, service integration and improved case management

3. What is the problem that you are trying to fix with this board reform initiative?

- 70 boards involved in governance creates unclear accountability and responsibility, creates challenges in monitoring results and identifying and implementing change.

- 70 boards involved in governance means significant resources are dedicated to duplicated administration that takes resources away from programs
- 70 boards involved in governance means that residents face on-going challenges in dealing with multiple agencies to obtain services
 - A family with a special needs child works with a pediatrician, social workers, day cares, rehab professionals, teachers and special needs assistants with no one having overall case management authority and often facing barriers to working together.
 - A youth in crisis may deal with social workers, schools counselors, teachers and addictions counsellors that face barriers to dealing with the individual in a coordinated manner.
 - A family in public housing needs to deal with multiple organizations to get public housing support, income security programs and career development programs.
 - Seniors need to work with different agencies to access home ownership or public housing programs, home care, the Seniors heating subsidy program with potential impacts to support when working with youth on language or other cultural programs.
 - Different agencies run programs that provide support for family planning and support such as financial planning, parenting, pre-natal courses, early childhood development, social workers without any integration or linkage such as day care services within schools or Elders supporting Aboriginal language or cultural programs for children or youth.
 - Stovepipes limit a case management approach to child protection for simple matters such as contacts between the schools and guardians and ensuring appropriate supports.

4. The subject matter and issues covered by the proposed boards is too large.

- The boards will focus on setting strategic direction through developing strategic plans and annual business plans, working with Ministers on strategic initiatives to address on-going issues, managing the Chief Executive Officer, setting annual budgets and ensuring objectives and reporting requirements are met.
- Boards will not be involved in day to day operational issues faced by the staff of the authorities.
- Board members do not need to be subject matter specialists to set strategic direction for regional services that reflect priorities of community residents, to monitor performance against agreed upon goals and objectives, and to work with Ministers on overall strategic direction.
- While the subject matter will be broad for a regional services board, this board will be able to set strategic direction that address service delivery challenges that are extremely inter-connected.

5. How does this improve service delivery?

- Creating Regional Service Boards will help to remove the stovepipes created by the current structure, which will improve integration and effectiveness of service delivery. Reducing administration will free up resources to invest further into programs.
- Services for children, youth and elders will benefit as barriers are removed and better integration of service delivery is achieved. This could include service delivery related to special needs children, youth in crisis, housing and income security, early childhood development and schools, elders and housing and supported living, housing and career development, and family supports across sectors.

Accountability

6. Isn't the accountability of Ministers for program delivery diminished?

- No – in fact, the intent is to strengthen accountability. There will be little change in proportion of GNWT funding that is flowed to third party boards to support program delivery, but the new structure will provide an opportunity to streamline and improve accountability requirements.
- The Regional Service Boards are being established to manage service delivery at a regional level to reflect regional priorities and advance overall strategic direction.

Service agreements with standards and reporting requirements will ensure the Minister, the Assembly, and the public have clear expectations and information on results. The proposed annual letters of expectation, business plans by the Regional Service Boards and the contribution agreements will all contribute to accountability.

7. These boards will have control of about 60% of the GNWT budget. Creating these boards reduces the authority of the Legislative Assembly.

- The overall percentage of the budget that will relate to services delivered through boards and agencies will not increase dramatically.
- The Legislative Assembly will continue to approve annual budgets, approve Legislation and review policy and program changes.

8. Who are these boards accountable to?

- The Regional Services Boards are accountable to the Minister and the residents of the region they serve.

- The nature of the accountability to the Minister will be primarily related to financial and service standard responsibilities, effective board operations, monitoring and reporting, and meeting overall strategic and performance objectives.
- For the residents, the Regional Services Boards are accountable for ensuring service delivery reflects regional and community priorities, that concerns are being listened to, and that residents are aware of and knowledgeable about the services being delivered.

9. Will the Minister Responsible for the Regional Services Boards or the Minister of Education be accountable for issues associated with the delivery of school programs?

- The Minister of Education, Culture and Employment will continue to be responsible for the delivery of programs and services related to education programs. This will also be true for the respective programs for the Minister of the Health and Social Services and the Minister Responsible for the NWT Housing Corporation.
- The proposed Minister Responsible for the Regional Services Boards will be primarily responsible for overall coordination of the Regional Services Boards, chairing joint management meetings, managing board appointments, and coordinating contribution agreements with the boards.

10. Why do we need 19 MLAs and 7 Cabinet Ministers if these Regional Services Boards are making the decisions about service delivery in our communities?

- The role of MLAs and Cabinet Ministers in relation to service delivery boards will not change.
- The Regional Services Boards are managing service delivery at a regional level.
- The suite of programs and services, resources available for service delivery and standards related to service delivery will continue to be the responsibility of Ministers and the Legislative Assembly.

Community Input

11. Community control is diminished by this approach.

- Regional input is being sought on composition of the Regional Service Boards. It is somewhat likely that board membership would be allocated on a community basis.
- A key responsibility for board members of a Regional Services Boards would be to obtain community input to ensure service delivery reflects regional priorities. Members of the Legislative Assembly would continue their role to ensure legislation, programs and policies, and resourcing impacting services delivered by the Regional Services Boards reflect community aspirations.

- A more integrated approach to service delivery at a community level may also help ensure that services reflect community priorities.

12. Loss of democratic rights if appointed.

- Regional service boards currently in place have appointed members. In the case of health boards and local housing organizations the Ministers make appointments in consultation with stakeholders. In the case of District Education Councils, District Education Authorities appoint a member to the regional board.
- No decision has been made around elected versus appointed for the proposed community structures for getting input into service delivery.
- Appointments to the proposed Regional Services Boards would include broad consultation and nominations from community and regional stakeholders.

Potential Impacts of Board Reform

13. You are forcing areas to compete for resources as part of a single board. How can the residents be assured that, for example, education programs will not be reduced in order to pay for health services?

- Service standards that will be identified as part of the contribution agreements with the Regional Services Boards will define expectations around the delivery of services that residents can expect.
- More work is required to determine the degree to which any resources could be moved between the main business lines. Increasing this ability will add flexibility for the Regional Services Boards to address priorities, while the service standards and associated resourcing will help protect overall territorial interests.

14. Won't this amalgamation of boards simply result in community residents losing their jobs?

- No changes in program staff at a community level are expected at a community level. There may be changes in the nature of some jobs.
- Residents shouldn't see a significant change in programs as a result of board reform. There will be better integration in program delivery which should benefit residents.
- This is not a reduction exercise, but removing duplication in administration may result in some job loss. Any savings from reducing duplication in administration will be reinvested into programs.

Other General Questions

15. How much is this going to increase overall costs?

- The overall savings or cost of the proposed approach will be determined as more detailed implementation planning takes place. Currently research is taking place on the potential savings as duplication in administration is removed and on the costs of bringing additional staff into the public service.
- The more detailed costing will need to be part of the overall decision about the approach to the board reform initiative.

16. If the authority is led by someone from a different business line, staff from other areas will not stay. Don't regions have enough difficulty recruiting and retaining employees?

- Day to day operations and supervision of staff in most cases will not change with the creation of Regional Services Boards.
- The broader management of an authority related to the Regional Services Board will not require detailed subject matter expertise as this will continue to be in place within each business line.
- One lesson learned from the Tli Cho experience is that a multi-purpose board and authority can work.

17. Isn't this a disguised effort to re-centralize or pull authority back to headquarters?

- No. Rather the creation of Regional Services Boards provides the opportunity to strengthen regional influence over service delivery and by clarifying roles and responsibilities, regional boards will be allowed greater certainty over their role in meeting regional priorities.
- The creation of the Regional Services Boards does also provide the opportunity to address a number of inefficiencies in administration like unclear accountabilities, duplication in administration, and inefficiencies caused by multiple financial and other information systems.

Process and Next Steps

18. If this approach has already been decided, why bother consulting?

- The GNWT is committed to taking action on Board Reform, to streamline accountability and improve effectiveness and efficiency. This is an issue that has been talked about for years and it is time to move forward. But there has been no decision about the final structure or approach.

- There are a number of specific issues and variations in approach by region that may need to be reflected in developing detailed implementation plans including: board composition, regional boundaries, responsibilities for Regional Services Boards, and approaches to community input.
- No final decisions have been made. Current planning indicates that by about April, 2009 decisions will need to be taken on the proposed approach.

19. What will happen on April 1? Will the new structure be implemented?

- There will be no implementation in April 2009.
- From now until April, GNWT Ministers and officials will talk to stakeholders, and work will continue on analyzing the financial, human resource and program delivery implications of various options.
- In April we will bring together the results of consultation and analysis, take stock of what it tells us and make decisions on how to move forward.

20. Will this be the only opportunity for stakeholders to comment?

- This is only the first round of consultation. Once a decision has been made on how to proceed, we will continue to consult with stakeholders on implementation.