

Questions and answers for the Public Entities quarterly reporting system

Data input process

Q: Does this report replace the executive authority report?

A: No, the level of detail required by the executive authority cannot be fully accommodated in the system and thus entities are required to provide both the executive authority and National Treasury with the information required on the different tools.

Q: Can we work towards this template reducing the reporting burden for consolidating all reporting requirements?

A: As far as it is possible, we are considering all reporting requirements that can be consolidated into this process. The National Treasury recognises the importance and efficiencies that can be gained by ridding of unnecessary duplication of processes. Discussions are being held with both the internal and external stakeholders to address concerns raised by entities of still having to report to various stakeholders after inputting information on the QR tool.

Q: Can the cost containment report and quarterly procurement plan be incorporated into the QR tool?

A: This will be considered in future after discussing the possibility with the users of the information.

Q: We hope that this process together with the DPME processes in the budget mean that the planning will now drive the budget not the other way round.

A: Yes, this should be the case in view of the focus on the medium term strategic framework (MTSF) and service level agreements. However this does not take away the facts of budget constraints and allocative efficiency.

Q: Is there a separate narrative required to be submitted with this template?

A: There is a narrative required for governance information included in the guidelines but this is applicable to schedule 2 entities.

Q: What value does this process add?

A: The fiscal indicators include entities' numbers in the consolidation at an annual level, but because of lack of information, the in-year assessment at a consolidated level has not been possible. This process adds value to the regular management of the public sector financial and non-financial performance from a central point.

Q: What is the relevance of including annual reporting information that is already in the budget template?

A: The reporting information only contains information for the past financial year, not all three financial years as in the budget template. This allows us to compare the current and the previous year in the in-year- analysis.

Q: Are you going to prepopulate information already submitted through the budget process?

A: No, this will not be possible because the two collection tool structures are not the same. The Quarterly reporting system accommodates requirements of other external stakeholders while the budget process collection tool does not.

Q: Do we need to complete the two cash flows?

A: Only entities that are required to submit information used by the Reserve Bank are required to complete both cash flows. Other entities should only complete the direct method of cash flow as done in the budget template.

Q: Is it possible to consider the long list of items to forecast on the tool?

A: Stakeholders will be engaged to reconsider the forecasting list.

Q: What type of risk is to be populated in the Risk sheet?

A: This should be strategic risk with serious financial implications. The type of risk that can have serious impact on the continuity of business of the entity if it goes undetected.

Q: How do we do the forecasts where some spending is seasonal?

A: Please make sure that your projections are based on your historical seasonal spending patterns.

Q: Do we have thresholds for the deviations to be explained?

A: Please explain deviations above the 15% threshold.

Q: What is the difference between restatements and adjustments?

A: A restatement is when the entity wants to change data that was submitted in previous quarters. Adjustment is when the budget has changed midway due to policy mandates.

Q: Can we restate information already submitted?

A: Generally, the template restricts this action. Entities have to consult with the Nation Treasury before they can be allowed to restate.

Q: In this template are we allowed to show a surplus/deficit?

A: This is a reporting tool for outcomes and therefore the actual deficits and surpluses should be reported.

Q: In our system Admin is not programme 1. Can we change the numbering of programmes to align to ours?

A: No, entities are required to capture administration programme as programme 1. Please note that our numbering of programmes in this template is in no way a ranking system.

Template functionality

Q: What do I do if I need any technical assistance or training on the template?

A: Call the technical assistant listed on your information page. They will assist you with any matter relating to the functionality of the template.

Q: Can the speed at which the numbers are being updated be improved?

A: We have tried to update the code to speed up this process but the different versions of excel used by different users determines the speed it takes to update the numbers. We are unable to control this.

Q: Can the Trial Balance mapping list be shortened to list and report only on the major spending items?

A: We try not to have an item “other” in the template because history has shown that “other” gets used to dump major spending items. A shortened list will not be able to accommodate all spending items because of the nature of businesses entities are involved in.

Q: Will you please consider switching the Objectives capturing to allow entities to map expenditure items against the Objectives at once instead of having it the other way around?

A: This is doable and will be implemented it in the next cycle.

Q: Why do you not have one template that serves as a quarterly reporting tool as well as a budgeting tool? (Merge the two)

A: Currently that will be very difficult to do, because the two serve different purposes. However, we will keep the suggestion in mind for future developments.

Q: Are the checks conditioned to allow a small deviation from zero, if so what deviation is permitted?

A: General rounding off deviations of .5 will be permitted on the financial data checks.

Q: Can we get a customised reporting to executive authorities?

A: This is a discussion for a wider group. Customisation will mean that the oversight units across departments should agree on a standard. Customisation can also only happen for data available from this template. Additional information outside the scope of this template cannot be customised.

Performance Indicators

Q: How do we report on the annual indicators?

A: If the indicator cannot be measured on a quarterly or biannual basis, the actual achievement must be reported in the applicable quarter. This will be measured non-cumulatively.

Q: Do we also need to report on the admin indicators?

A: Specific indicators which appropriately demonstrate the efficiency of an institution can be reported on the admin indicators.

Q: Will the admin indicators be standardised in the future?

A: This can be considered in future, which will be specific to sector or type of entity.

Q: Do we report on all the indicators in the Annual Performance Plans (APPs), Corporate Plans?

A: Only selected indicators should be measured. It would be best if they can be measured quarterly, however important indicators that have an annual target can be included and measured in the applicable quarter.

Q: Performance indicators get approved after the budget, so quarter 1 will have unapproved indicators. Will we be allowed to change the indicators in the subsequent quarters?

A: Performance indicators are based on Annual Performance Plans and Corporate Plans that should not change unless the change is required and approved by the executive authority and tabled in parliament. A formal request should then be made to DPME to allow the change on the template and DPME will advise as to the way forward.

Q: We do not cost our indicators. Are we expected to do so?

A: Costing of performance indicators should be part of the planning process for indicators that can be linked directly to a specific budget.

Q: Can we submit 60 days, instead of 30 days, after the end of the quarter?

A: All quarterly reports must be submitted within 30 days after the end of the quarter, in line with the requirements of the National Treasury Instruction 2 of 2014/15. Negotiations for possible change in submission dates including the quarter 4 submission date are being held and formal communication will be made once a decision is taken.

Q: Departments are required to submit indicators information 60 days after the close of each quarter. Why do you not use the same rule for entities?

A: Part of what makes statistics useful is timeliness. 60 days would be too late for most processes in which this information is required. We therefore encourage entities to adhere to the due dates in the instruction.

Personnel

Q: Personnel levels are not the same in entities; they are actually reverse of the ones on the template.

A: No levels have been provided for entities, but salary bands. The entities need to fit the salaries into the bands provided. They need to look at which band can they fit the salaries of their officials.

Q: Can the occupations types result in people at the same level to fall under two different types because of the salary levels?

A: The occupation type takes precedence over the salary band, meaning that the entities should first select the occupation type and then the salary band. It does not matter even if the salary is the same, the skill can be different.

Q: What happens if an employee changes occupation and salary level within the year of assessment? Will this result in double-counting the headcount?

A: The information captured is at a specific point in time. For example, as at 30 September 2017, included should be employees that fall under a particular occupation and/or salary band regardless of whether they were under a completely different category on the 30th of June 2017.

Q: Could the guidelines on the personnel also include definitions so we understand what the National Treasury requires rather than leaving it to our interpretation?

A: We have provided definitions in the database, "technical guidelines and economic definitions" sheet. If it is still unclear please contact us.

Q: Do we have to capture personnel data in any particular order?

A: No, the personnel sheet should be captured in any order that is convenient for the entity. We have internal processes that can arrange the data in the order we want to see.

Q: What happens when package + overtime + travel + other allowances are budgeted for but the spending happens in different quarters and thus this causes checks on compensation of employees' numbers on the affected quarters?

A: In this instance, we will accept the checks but these should be accompanied with explanations to explain the checks.

Process issues

Q: For some entities accounting authorities are the board, and the board does not sit all the time. So how will the boards sign off the template if they did not sit?

A: The board can delegate the signing powers to the CEO or any other functionary. The Treasury Instruction has made a provision for the delegation of signing powers of this information. Please refer to points 3.4 and 3.5 of the Instruction Note 2 of 2014/15.

Q: Should we send this template via the departments?

A: As stated in the Treasury Instruction, you are required to submit to both your executive authority and the National Treasury. If your executive authority requires that they validate the information before submission to the National Treasury, then make sure they receive the report before the due date so that it is submitted to the National Treasury on the due date.

Q: Should the department first validate the information before submission?

A: Validation is expected from the accounting authority/officer. Departments are however not barred from imposing such a requirement on their entities.

Q: Will the entities and departments be given regular feedback on the data provided for progress check and improvements?

A: Yes, a static report will be sent out to entities and departments on a quarterly basis for progress and improvements.

Compliance and materiality

Q: Will the Auditor General only audit on compliance or on quality and validity as well?

A: The Auditor General (AG) is likely to audit on the compliance, completeness and accuracy of the information submitted as required in the Treasury Instruction. The National Treasury will be in communication with the AG on the timing and scope of the audits. Entities will be advised when information become available.

Q: What are the scope and time frames for the audits?

A: The Auditor General will determine the scopes and time frames for audits. The National Treasury will be in communication with the Auditor General to that effect. Information will be communicated to the public entities in due course.

Q: What are the penalties for late submissions?

A: We have not put any punitive measures in place. Entities are however expected to comply with the Treasury Instruction.

Q: What are the consequences of non-compliance?

A: Compliance to the Treasury Instruction follows the rules of all other National Treasury's instructions and regulations. Furthermore, compliance is auditable.

Q: Does this replace TR 26.1.1 reporting requirement?

A: Not at this point. Entities are still expected to submit their financial information to their executive authorities.

Publication and confidentiality

Q: Will this information be published?

A: It is envisaged that the information will be published in future but publication will be aggregated in the form of a dashboard by sector and not by entity.