

**Section 6.5**

**Benchmarking**

**INTRODUCTION**

In the past decade the terms “Benchmarking” and “Best Practices” have been used almost synonymously as they have become part of the language and culture for both private and public organizations. For many organizations, benchmarking and best practices have become a cornerstone of their success, which in turn has created even greater interest in these processes.

The simple definition of the term benchmarking is a standard of performance. That standard may be one established by the municipality as a goal to aspire to, or the standard may be one established by looking at other municipalities to see how they are performing in a specific area.

There is no great mystery to benchmarking or best practices. It is a simple concept that has been used since the beginning of time for those individuals who strive to improve and become the best in their field.

Picture if you will a caveman crouched at the riverside scooping up handfuls of water to drink because he has a long day of hunting ahead of him and he knows he will get thirsty. Our caveman looks up and notices that one of his companions has made a cup out of an animal’s horn to carry water for the hunting trip. He’s found a way to bring the river water with him to use later in the day. Our caveman considers the benefits of such a handy device when he notices that another one of his companions has fashioned a pouch of animal skins and he’s filling it with water and tying it to his waist. This is benchmarking in it’s simplest terms, looking at how others are doing the same task. When our caveman considers the alternatives and decides that the skin pouch is the better of the two options because the water is less apt to spill, and it’s easier to carry, then he is deciding which of the two methods for carrying water is the “best practice”.

This combination of benchmarking and best practices is a process we can use to our advantage in just about every aspect of our daily lives. It is a process that we use all the time, but we have probably never considered what it was called before.

**Demystifying the concept**

Benchmarking for municipalities is the same basic idea. It is the continuous process of identifying, adapting and implementing the practices and processes that can result in improved performance. It is a learning process primarily, that involves measuring the gaps, first between your municipality and the best performing municipality, and second, between current performance and previous performance.

Quite simply, benchmarking involves the process of:

- examining how we do certain things,
- examining how other people do those things;
- review each process,
- take mental notes on how they do it,
- compare it to the way we do it or others do it,
- determine which way we think would be the best way (best practice) of doing it for ourselves,
- implementing the best practice for ourselves, and
- once implemented, begin the whole review process again.

## WHAT DOES BENCHMARKING DO?

What can a municipality hope to accomplish by establishing a benchmarking process? Benchmarking enables a municipality to define what it could accomplish, set goals, and develop a realistic plan for achieving those goals.

### What can Benchmarking do for you?

- **Connect goals to results:** Benchmarking can enable a community to develop measurable outcome indicators relating to each specific municipal department or function, and identify the section responsible for each goal. The process helps develop clearly defined long term goals for each section, and provides a mechanism for attaining those goals.
- **Build an inventory of Municipal Data:** Information is key to improving performance. Benchmarking enables an organization to gather relevant data, identify areas where data is currently unavailable or incomplete, and develop procedures for acquiring the desired data
- **Use the data to achieve goals:** Making use of the data collected in the process of benchmarking enables municipal governments to assess the progress they are making towards

accomplishing tasks, and achieving their goals.

For private and public sector organizations benchmarking focuses on how to improve any given business process by exploiting a “best practice” rather than merely measuring the best performance. It is this exploitation of best practices that result in the best performance. Studying best practices provides the greatest opportunity for gaining a strategic, operational and financial advantage.

It is an example of a continuous improvement tool that can:

- Provide meaningful performance information;
- Improve strategic planning and provide an assessment of the organization’s strengths and weaknesses;
- Establish challenging performance goals and stimulate better financial management;
- Foster implementation of best practices and lead to increased efficiency in the use of resources; and
- It promotes the emergence and evolution of a “learning culture” throughout the organization, a key to continuous improvement, total quality and competitiveness over the long term

As noted, benchmarking is linked very closely to strategic planning, as it provides the long-term focus of the organization to become the best in their class. It also provides the action plans for implementing the results of the study to achieve the strategic goals.

*For further information on Strategic Planning and its value to your organization, please refer to Section 6.1 of this document.*

There is an extensive body of research and literature on benchmarking, while the literature is varied, and at times specific to a particular situation, there are elements that are applicable to most situations. Rather than recreating an extensive review on benchmarking, the purpose of this guide is to present an overview on benchmarking, its benefits, procedures, methodologies and direction for further study.

**WHY SHOULD MUNICIPALITIES BE CONCERNED?**

In the private sector, the bottom line of profits and losses, market share, growth potential etc. are the driving forces for the private sector to incorporate the benchmarking process as part of their ongoing

business culture. The rationale for the private sector, is therefore quite straight forward, it is a matter of survival.

For municipalities, the rationale for including the benchmarking process are a little different, but never the less, just as important. Although municipalities do not have the concern of competition, there is an electorate and politicians who have an expectation of quality service while maintaining a reasonable tax rate. Therefore, benchmarking becomes an invaluable tool for municipalities to enable them to do more with less when they incorporate the best practice throughout their municipality. There is a growing realization that increasing taxes is not a viable option. Increased grants from upper levels of government to municipalities is not a likely event in the foreseeable future. The argument that one does not have the time or resources to deal with benchmarking is akin to a lumberjack facing a large stack of wood to cut saying that he has too much wood to cut to take the time to sharpen his dull saw blade.

## **TYPES OF BENCHMARKING FOR MUNICIPALITIES**

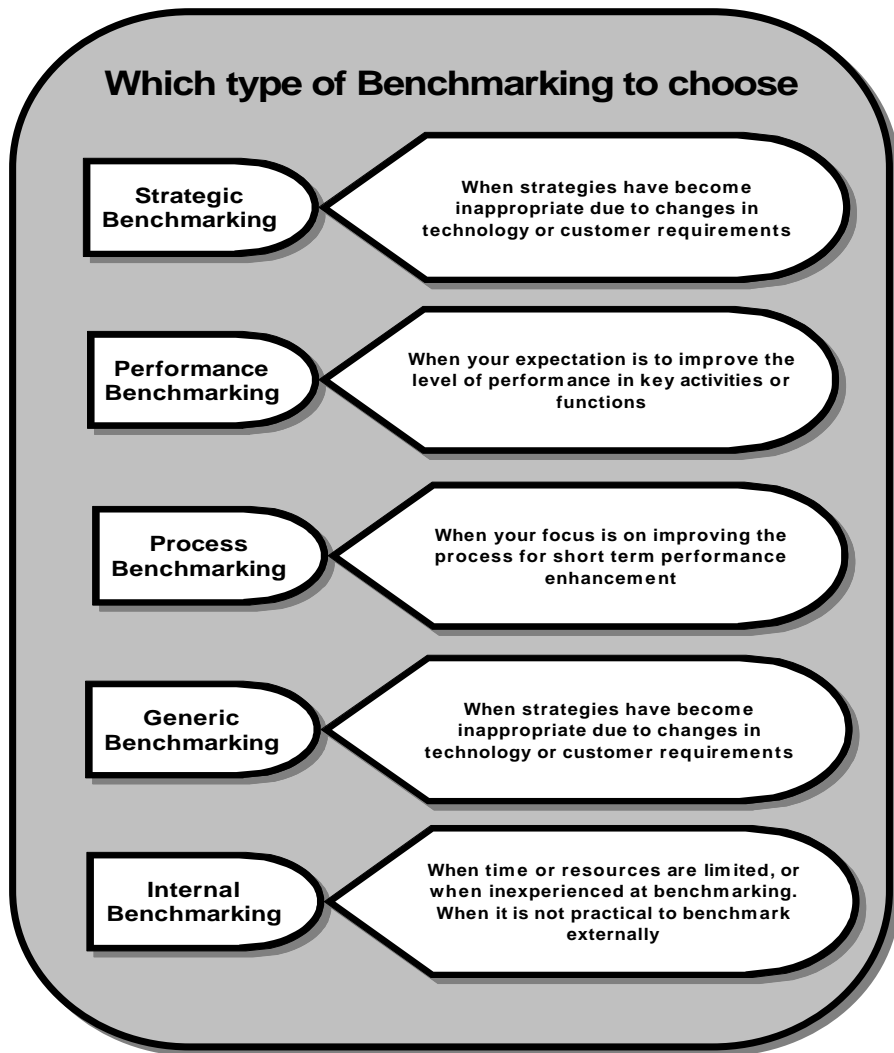
There are a wide variety of types of Benchmarking identified in the literature, however, for the purposes of this discussion the following types are suggested:

- **Internal Benchmarking** compares performance and practices within your organization between different departments. This is the least expensive and time consuming for a municipality as it involves data and information available within the municipal organization. One advantage of this type of benchmarking is the ease with which you can access the data therefore requiring fewer resources. The disadvantage of this type of benchmarking is that the possibility of learning new methods is limited. Viewing how customer service is provided in the various functional areas of the municipality, including over the counter service, telephone service, electronic service to the public, private industry, other government agencies and the other departments of the municipality is an example of Internal Benchmarking.
- **Process Benchmarking** compares the process or how things are done to achieve an end product. It seeks the best practice for conducting a particular business process, which is

**What does it all mean?**

considered to be the best in the field. Once the best practice is identified and understood it may then be adapted and improved for application in another organization.

- **Performance Benchmarking** compares the performance or how well the process is done. Generally, performance benchmarking compares a number of indicators. These could measure the performance of just one process, but usually this type of benchmarking covers a wider range of the organization's processes.
- **Sector Benchmarking** involves making comparisons with organizations in the same industry. This form of benchmarking is particularly relevant for municipalities as it allows local governments to network to determine what is working well in other localities and adopt best practices for their own units. For the municipal sector, Australia and England lead the way for municipal benchmarking information.
- **Generic Benchmarking**, or "best in class" benchmarking compares practices that are independent of the industry. This type of benchmarking has been identified as the one which can result in a paradigm shift leading to innovation and creativity in the function or process. A good example of this would be the application of bar-coding, which use ranges from product identification to tracking shipments of material or billing.
- **Strategic Benchmarking**, which looks at the organization, identifies the long term strategies, and the needs served. Finally, strategic benchmarking identifies the resources and the skills required to fulfill those needs. This may involve consideration of core competencies, and skills development. This type of benchmarking can be most relevant combined with a review of the mission and mandate of an organization.
- **Informal Benchmarking** is the practice of comparing our performance with the performance of other organizations similar to our own. This type of benchmarking has been carried on through attending workshops, conferences and other activities where there is an opportunity to compare one organization with others of a similar nature. This can be useful but will not be effective for developing strategies for improvement.



**WHICH TYPE SHOULD YOU USE?**

**Deciding which type is right for your municipality**

Before you can decide which type of benchmarking is most appropriate for your situation, it is important to be very clear about what you expect to achieve by the process. Consideration should be given to the time available, the resources required, the level of experience as well as the benchmarking partner you have selected.

Circumstances will dictate which type of benchmarking is most appropriate for a particular situation.

*The PSBS (Public Sector Benchmarking Service) in London England provides valuable information on benchmarking for the public sector on their website [www.benchmarking.gov.uk](http://www.benchmarking.gov.uk).*

**KEY FACTORS TO BENCHMARKING SUCCESS**

Drawing from the experiences of others who have gone through the benchmarking process, there are a number of factors which can contribute to a successful benchmarking experience for your municipality. These key factors include:

- Careful planning and resourcing from the beginning,
- Committed support from management and cooperation from staff at all levels,
- Setting clearly defined objectives,
- Focusing on the issues that are important to your organization,
- Identifying appropriate partners,
- Thorough understanding of the processes under review and of the process of benchmarking as well,
- Clearly defined measures for comparison,
- Understanding the reasons why performance varies,
- A willingness and commitment to change,
- Strong lines of communication throughout the organization.

Once a benchmarking project gets underway, it may take several months before actual improvements may be achieved. For this reason, a strong commitment to the process is vital to a successful endeavour. The process itself can be demanding on staff and require a good deal of energy, time and commitment. It is crucial for the benchmarking team to have sufficient time to devote to the work in order to gain a complete understanding of how and why performance differs, and further, it is important for the organization to permit staff sufficient time for learning new ways of doing things.

**THE BENCHMARKING TEAM**

The team that will be undertaking the benchmarking project should be formed as early in the process as possible in order to be actively involved in the planning stages. Normally the benchmarking team would be comprised of municipal staff however, there may be times when it may be more beneficial to bring in an outside consultant. When should you bring in an external consultant?

**Building a team**

When -

- you need a fresh perspective,
- you lack experience or expertise in-house,
- time restraints prevent in-house personnel from completing a project before a deadline.

Process analysis skills are probably the most important skill required of the benchmarking team. Understanding each process is critical to a successful endeavour. In addition, team members should be skilled communicators and team builders.

### **WHAT SHOULD BE BENCHMARKED?**

**Where do you begin?**

The rationale for doing a benchmarking process is that the municipality may have identified a problem area or there is a strategic change in initiatives. The municipality may have become aware that another organization has been able to do a particular activity better or more efficiently, or perhaps the municipality has made a commitment to continuous improvement. There are no rules as to what is the best thing to benchmark, rather there are a number of factors to consider, for example, what are your resources for doing the study, what is the time line, and what would other organizations be willing to reveal.

To begin the benchmarking process for any organization, select an item or process which is easily definable, measurable, evaluated and can result in achievable results, then build on your successes. As people see the value of this work, they will be more willing to become involved and the organization can move to more complex processes.

Benchmarking can be a time consuming and expensive process and therefore clear objectives should be set out in advance. Some areas to focus on include:

**What to benchmark**

- **Product delivery:** Are there ways of providing the goods and services that will be more cost effective or less labour intensive.
- **Work processes:** A work process can be defined as a function that enables a municipality to successfully deliver its services to the community.
- **Support functions:** Work processes not associated directly with providing municipal services. (Such as financial services or human resources).
- **Performance indicators:** How satisfied are the residents of your community in the operation of your organization? Are there ways of improving quality of services, reducing response times, or making the community a better place to live.
- **Strategic Planning:** Does your municipality have a business plan? Does your Council plan for the immediate, mid and long term, or

react to situations as they arise?

Because of the cost and commitment involved in benchmarking, it is essential that the areas chosen to be benchmarked should be carefully selected. Activities to be benchmarked must be clearly defined in order to maintain focus. Areas selected to be benchmarked should be important not only to those who will ultimately be using the service, but should also fit in with the goals and business plan of the municipal organization.

The Audit Commission in the UK offers some helpful advice on carrying out a successful benchmarking project in the management paper *“Getting Better all the Time: Making Benchmarking Work”*. This paper is available online and the web address is included in the bibliographic section at the end of this paper.

### **WHO IS TO BE BENCHMARKED?**

Identifying the appropriate target as a benchmarking partner, can be the most difficult aspect of the benchmarking process. The key depends on what type of benchmarking is to occur: internal, process, performance, strategic, generic or sector benchmarking. The answer to this, will to a large degree determine which organization will be surveyed. It also has to be recognized that some of the best organizations have been inundated with requests for benchmarking studies and are therefore less likely to want to participate.

An other thing to keep in mind is to not limit your view of potential organizations to study. For example, if your goal is to improve your over the counter and telephone customer service you may wish to look beyond the public sector and look at what banks or fast food services are doing.

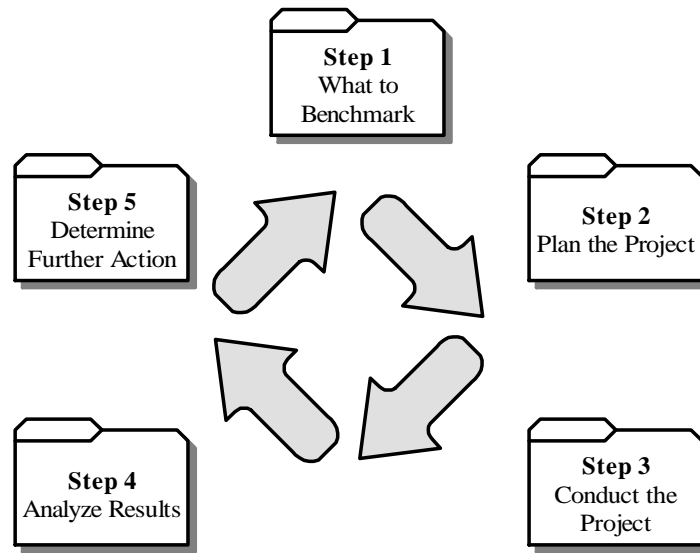
### **THE FIVE STEPS OF BENCHMARKING**

In the literature there are a variety of steps to benchmarking, however, they follow a similar pattern, some are just a little more detailed than others. The common point in all the models is that benchmarking is a continuous learning process, and a process which is never ending, if continuous improvement is the desired result.

The Strategis Canada website offers a wealth of information on benchmarking and benchmarking tools including a ten step process.

For the purposes of this review, the simple version will suffice and it is illustrated in the following chart.

**The steps in the process**

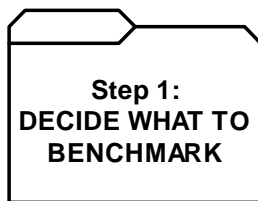


*Chart 1:*

*Benchmarking Process*

**STEP 1: DECIDE WHAT TO BENCHMARK**

- **Select benchmarking team**  
Involve staff who are involved in delivering the service you are benchmarking. The team ideally would also include a staff member from support services / finance to help in estimating costs, and someone with training in research who has knowledge of conducting surveys and analyzing processes.
- **Make the initial Choice**  
It is important to spend time deciding which process or performance you wish to benchmark. For the first time out, keep it simple, measurable and achievable.
- **Refine Choice**  
Focus and refine your initial choice to identify aspects of the practice you want to benchmark. How does it relate to the final goal you may wish to achieve and is it something that is measurable or identifiable in other organizations?
- **Define objectives**  
Have a clear idea of what it is you want to accomplish, which processes you want to improve, and what goals you want to achieve.



- Identify the participants**  
 Every process involves particular staff members. Identify all those involved in the process you have chosen to benchmark. Bring your staff onside by communicating clearly what it is you are doing and how you plan to accomplish your goals. Having your work reviewed in such detail can seem threatening to some people so keep relevant staff informed about the project. By keeping clear and open lines of communication you will encourage cooperation and participation. Allow feedback from the staff members involved because they may have valuable suggestions for improving the process.

**Output of Step 1:**

- Project plan,
- Communications plan,
- Presentation to management and senior staff.

**STEP 2: PLAN PROJECT**

- Analyze current procedures**  
 Take a careful look at your organization to determine which aspects are in most need of improvement. Focus your attentions on one area at a time. Select processes where you can achieve some initial successes to build confidence and a sense of teamwork. These early successes will provide valuable experience for when you need to tackle the more complicated processes later on. Such detailed analysis may reveal areas where improvements can be made before looking to outside organizations for comparison. In order for the benchmarking process to have an optimum effect on an organization, staff at all levels should be involved in the process. Allowing staff to have a sense of ownership over their individual responsibilities enables them to understand how their role impacts the overall performance of the organization as a whole. At the same time, management needs to be sensitive to the risk of demoralizing staff when comparing their performance with similar services in another community. Exercise caution to avoid a tendency to place blame and cause a defensive response instead of a learning comparison.



- Choose Partners**  
 If you are doing internal or process benchmarking, the

partners you choose will be the people involved in the particular process under review. If you select external benchmarking, decide who to benchmark with and why. While it may be beneficial to benchmark with a similar municipal government, it is advisable to not limit your focus to a narrow view of the types of organizations or businesses to survey. Perhaps you are already aware of another municipal organization that is doing an exceptional job of some aspect of municipal government, then that municipality would be the ideal choice for a benchmarking project.

- **Plan Comparisons**  
Select the most effective way of comparing your performance or process with that of your benchmarking partners. It is important not to “jump the gun” and go off to visit your benchmarking partner before you have done a thorough job of studying the processes under review and have a clear understanding of how your organization carries out those processes. You will need to have your process mapping completed prior to visiting with your benchmarking partner so that you can effectively compare the way your organizations carry out the same processes.
- **Manage the Project**  
Manage the project so that it is completed on time and within budget. This type of project can grow to the point where it becomes completely unmanageable so it is vital to keep focused on the particular processes that you have identified in step one.

**Output of Step 2:**

- Identification of processes and functions to be benchmarked,
- Schedule of visits with benchmarking partner,
- List of questions and topics to discuss with benchmarking partner,
- Presentation to management and senior staff.

**STEP 3: CONDUCT PROJECT**

- **Gather Data**  
The approach to data analysis should be consistent across all participating organizations. Gathering data involves careful analysis of each process and all the steps involved in each process. Take it one at a time and construct a detailed process map for each process being benchmarked. Use

**Step 3:  
CONDUCT  
PROJECT**

business tools such as process mapping and flow charts in order to examine each practice to analyze and identify each individual phase of the process. *Appendix A1 provides details on how to construct a flow chart and process map.*

- **Review the Data**  
Do a walk through of the flowchart and process map. It is a common pitfall when process mapping to show the process as it should be done rather than how it actually is done. Doing a walk through examination involves watching the process as it is carried out. This requires sensitivity and patience as people being observed tend to be apprehensive about being watched. Reassure them that you are not finding fault with the way they are doing things, rather you are studying the process itself.
- **Analyze Data**  
Ensure that the quality and quantity of information being gathered meets the requirements to allow for a successful outcome.
- **Produce Report**  
The report must provide clear comparisons, easily understood by people from each partner organization.

**Output of step 3**

- Process maps,
- Flowcharts,
- Database of findings,
- Written report,
- Presentation to management and senior staff.

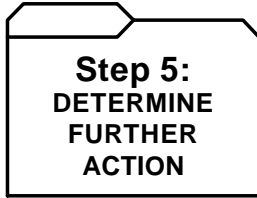
**Step 4:  
ANALYZE  
RESULTS**

**STEP 4: ANALYZE RESULTS**

- **Analyze the report**  
Participants in a performance benchmarking project need to conduct their own analysis of the results.
- **Examine Overview**  
Analyze in detail both individual performance indicators as well as overview. Internal information and criteria may assist.

**Output of step 4:**

- Summary of the findings
- Charts, graphs, tables and other appropriate diagrams



## STEP 5: RECOMMENDATIONS / IMPLEMENTATION

- **Primary Actions**  
Once the analysis is completed, there are usually some obvious actions which can be acted upon immediately.
- **Improve Process**  
Gaps may be identified in some areas where improvements to the process can be introduced . Improvements can often be implemented by consulting with the appropriate staff and considering their suggestions.
- **Follow-up Benchmarking**  
Performance benchmarking is best done on a multi-year basis. Appropriate process benchmarking projects can be identified more easily after performance benchmarking.

### Output of step 5:

- Final report on the benchmarking project, and recommendations,
- Presentation to management and senior staff,
- Implementation plan for applying the lessons learned.

## CONCLUSIONS:

Benchmarking is an effective business tool that municipal governments can use to achieve improvements in services, reduce costs, and improve efficiency. Certain factors will determine if your benchmarking efforts are successful. Management must of course be absolutely clear on what it is you want to achieve before you begin the process. Achieving improvements may involve changing the way you currently carry out service delivery, administration, management processes or even changing your fundamental organizational culture. Such changes are not always easy to accomplish and will require a concerted effort and cooperative attitude at all levels in the organization. Sufficient funding needs to be allocated in order to carry out the required studies and implementation of the resulting recommendations.

Everyone in the organization needs to be realistic about what can be accomplished by the benchmarking process. This is a powerful tool for improvement, but it is not a magic wand and there are a number of obstacles that can derail the process. Try to avoid concentrating so much on the collection of data that you lose sight of the overall objectives.

Perhaps one of the most important things to emphasize is maintaining clear and ongoing communications between management and staff throughout the benchmarking process. As reported in the National Partnership for Reinventing Government's *Balancing Measures: Best Practices in*

Performance Management (c1999),

*“Involving your employee in the planning process makes him or her a part of the team. Moreover, communication translates to respect for the individual employee—an especially important consideration to public sector employees. These people are dedicated to their jobs and believe very firmly in the service they offer...”.*

Do's and don'ts of benchmarking	
<p><b>DO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Ensure there is strong commitment and support from senior management.</b></li> <li>• <b>Communicate and encourage feedback.</b></li> <li>• <b>Select processes or services that are important to your customers.</b></li> <li>• <b>Be clear about the improvements you expect, whether cost /efficiency or quality/implementation of good practice.</b></li> <li>• <b>Use the data to identify where there is the best opportunity for improvement.</b></li> <li>• <b>Ensure your benchmarking team and your staff have the skills, training and attitude required.</b></li> <li>• <b>Be sure the process fits into the overall goals and business plans.</b></li> </ul>	<p><b>DON'T</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Waste time on unimportant processes.</b></li> <li>• <b>Undertake a project to just defend the status quo.</b></li> <li>• <b>Lose focus.</b></li> <li>• <b>Become overwhelmed in data and lose sight of the goals of the project.</b></li> <li>• <b>Allow the cost of the activity to outweigh the benefits in performance or possible savings.</b></li> <li>• <b>Underestimate the time and effort required to make real change possible.</b></li> </ul>
<p>Source: Audit Commission, Scotland</p>	

## **DEFINITIONS:**

**Activities:** The functions or tasks that are involved in a process.

**Benchmarking:** The continuous, systematic process of measuring and assessing products, services and practices of recognized leaders in the field to determine the extent to which they might be adapted to achieve superior performance.

**Benchmark:** The term has its origins from geographic surveying, where it means to take a measurement from a reference point. In the benchmarking process it is an external point of reference by which the performance of an activity, function, operation, process or service can be measured.

**Best Practices:** Management practices and work processes that serve as goals for organizations striving for excellence. The search for best practices is an intrinsic part of benchmarking.

**Controls:** Internal controls include agreed upon procedures, standing orders, budget limitations, legislative restrictions etc.

**Inputs:** The materials or resources required to produce an output. Inputs are typically transformed or consumed during the process. Inputs include, staff time involved, but not the staff. Budget expenditures required to carry out the process, and the materials consumed during the process such as paper, ink, etc.

**Outputs:** The end result, either a product or service that is produced.

**Outcome:** An outcome is a higher level consequence of the activity, and reflect the intended results of actions. For example, improving the overall health status of the population is an outcome.

**Performance Measure:** A measure of how well a service is performing compared to it's objectives.

**Process:** A process is a set of activities that converts inputs (resources) to outputs (services). It is in essence the combination of people and equipment and the activities they go through to produce the service.

**Process Map:** A process map is a diagram that shows in some detail what an organization does, and how it delivers its services. A process map shows the key activities involved, the sequence of those activities, the inputs or resources required, and the outputs or services produced.

**Resources:** Resources are those things required to produce the outputs but are not consumed during the process. Resources can include people and equipment as well as the facilities. For example, a photocopier, a computer, a clerk and the municipal building are all resources

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**APPENDIX A1:**

**PROCESS MAPPING**

Process mapping is an essential part of the benchmarking procedure. In order to improve performance it is imperative that you understand the process in great detail. A process map is a diagram which shows in detail what an organization does and how it does it. Each key activity in the process is illustrated in the diagram in the sequence it is carried on.

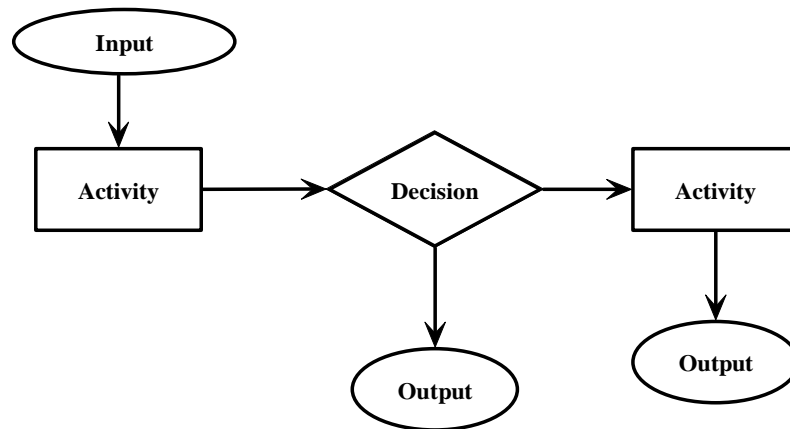
The two types of diagram that make up a process map are:

- **flow charts** - showing the sequence of activities in the process,
- **process map** which shows
  - the resources required,
  - the inputs,
  - the outputs,
  - the controls that regulate the activity, and,
  - the sequence of activities.

**FLOWCHART**

A flowchart is a simple tool that enables you to understand each step in a process or activity. It can show complexity and underline problem areas in a process, and can be used to illustrate any set of activities in an organization. It makes it possible to view a process as it actually is performed and compare it to the ideal, illustrating specifically where the process may be bogging down and may be improved.

*Flowchart:*



Source: *The Memory Jogger II: A Pocket Guide of Tools for Continuous Improvement and Effective Planning.* <http://goalqpc.com>

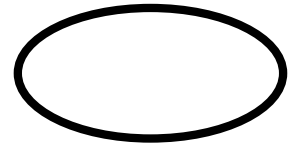
## Ten Easy Steps to Building a Flowchart

### **BUILDING A FLOWCHART:**

- 1.** Hold a brainstorming session to determine all the activities, the inputs, the outputs, the actions and decision points. Use flipcharts to list all the possible steps in the process and add or remove steps as required.
- 2.** Clearly define the process: Have a clear picture of the process you are studying. Decide where you are going to begin the flowchart (input) and where you are going to end the flowchart (output). Arrange the items in the list you developed in Step 1, in the order they would flow.
- 3.** Have the team come to a consensus on how detailed the flowchart is to be so that you may clearly understand the process and be able to identify areas of concern. Start with a fairly general view of the process and add complexity as it is required.
- 4.** Draw the flowchart using the proper symbols, shapes etc. so that the finished flowchart will be easily understood.
- 5.** Be consistent with each flowchart you create. Keep the level of detail consistent for each process.
- 6.** Use labels to identify each process so that the flowchart can be easily understood. Be sure to include the organization name, the date, the names of the team members who developed the flowchart, and any other identifying information that may be required.
- 7.** Check for completeness. Be sure that every path either takes you back or leads to the next step in the process. Don't leave any loops unclosed. Check also for continuity, use the correct symbols and shapes in every flowchart. (For example: Be sure there is only one output arrow coming from any activity box, if there is more than one, it should be a decision diamond.)
- 8.** Validate! Have the person who is actually doing the process verify that the flowchart accurately describes the process, that no steps are left out and that the process is being followed exactly as the chart indicates. If the process is not as charted, then change the chart to reflect what is actually happening.
- 9.** Examine the flowchart for obvious areas where improvements to the process can be made by either removing steps or changing the way the activity can be done.
- 10.** Draw an ideal flowchart and compare the two to identify areas for improvement to the current process.

**FLOWCHART SYMBOLS:**

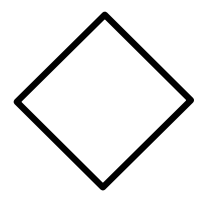
**Use the Proper Symbols so Everyone Will Understand**



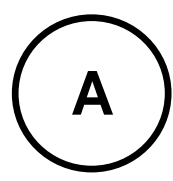
An **OVAL** is used to illustrate the inputs which start the process. The inputs could be information or actions. Oval is also used to show the results at the end of the process.



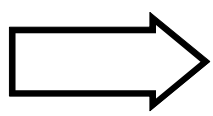
A **SQUARE** or **RECTANGLE** indicates a task or activity carried out during the process. Only one arrow should lead out of the square although there may be more than one arrow leading in. If there are more than one arrow leading out of the square, you should be using a diamond.



A **DIAMOND** indicates a point in the process where a decision needs to be made or a question is asked. It also indicates a change in direction.



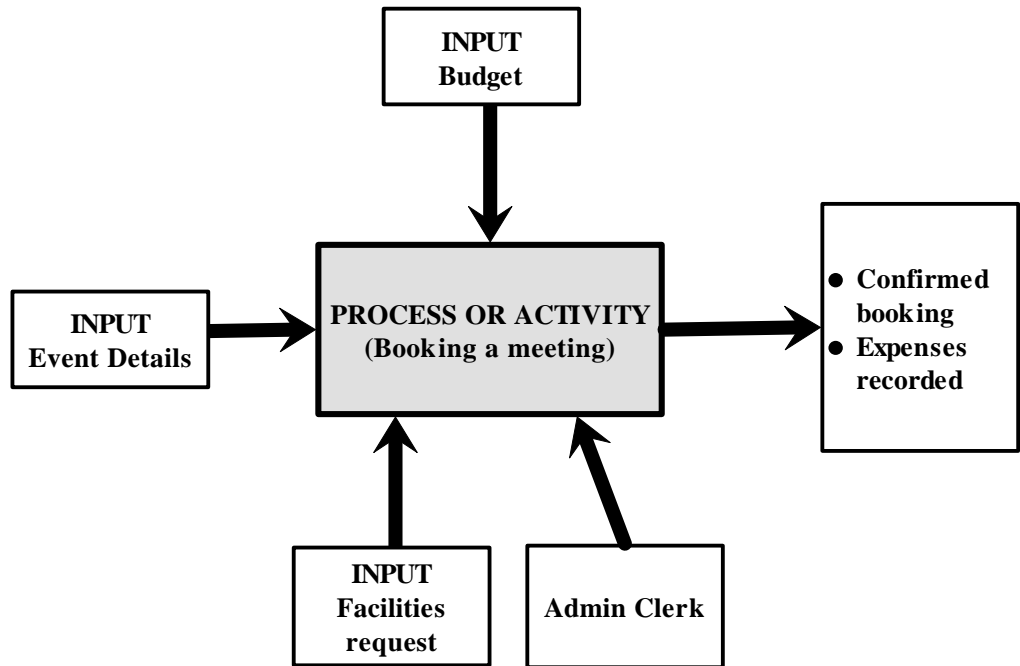
A **CIRCLE** containing a letter or a number indicates that there is a break in the flowchart that the process is continued elsewhere on the page or on another page.



An **ARROW** indicates movement or transportation. Smaller arrows indicate the sequence and direction towards the next step in the process.

*Source: The Memory Jogger: A pocket guide of tools for continuous improvement and effective planning. GOAL/QPC 1994. [Http://goalqpc.com](http://goalqpc.com)*

## PROCESS DEFINITION CHART



Source: *The Map to Success: Using Process Mapping to Improve Performance*, Published by Audit Scotland May 2000. <http://www.accounts-commission.gov.uk/search/ndx/01m01ac.htm>

