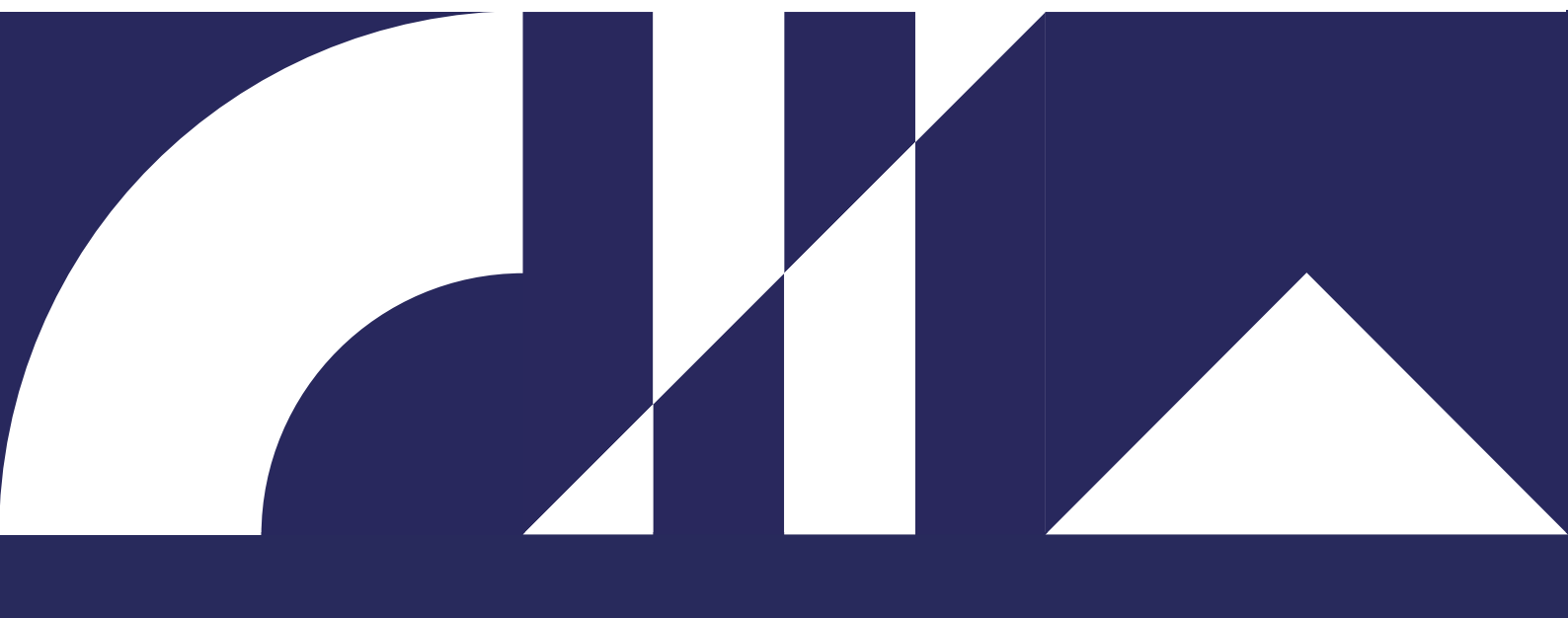




HM Government

# Government Functional Standard



## GovS 001: Government functions

Version: 2.0  
Date issued: 15 June 2022

**Approved**



This functional standard is part of a suite of management standards that promotes consistent and coherent ways of working across government, and provides a stable basis for assurance, risk management and capability improvement.

The suite of standards, and associated guidance, can be found at **Functional Standards - GOV.UK**.

Functional standards cross-refer to each other where needed, so can be confidently used together.

They contain both mandatory and advisory elements, described in consistent language (see the table below).

Term	Intention
shall	denotes a requirement: a mandatory element.
should	denotes a recommendation: an advisory element.
may	denotes approval.
might	denotes a possibility.
can	denotes both capability and possibility.
is/are	denotes a description.

The meaning of words is as defined in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, except where defined in the Glossary in **Annex B**.

It is assumed that legal and regulatory requirements are always met.

Version 2 of GovS 001 replaces version 1 and has the same purpose, scope and intent. Changes relate to general enhancements derived from feedback from use, lessons learned, and alignment with other functional standards. Version 2: reflects the mandate from Managing Public Money; clarifies governance and assurance arrangements; updates some roles and accountabilities; adds new requirements about functional leadership; adds additional advice, for example about re-charging for functional advice and services; and emphasises that functional standards should be met proportionately and appropriately in organisations, to suit the scale and complexity of the functional work being done.

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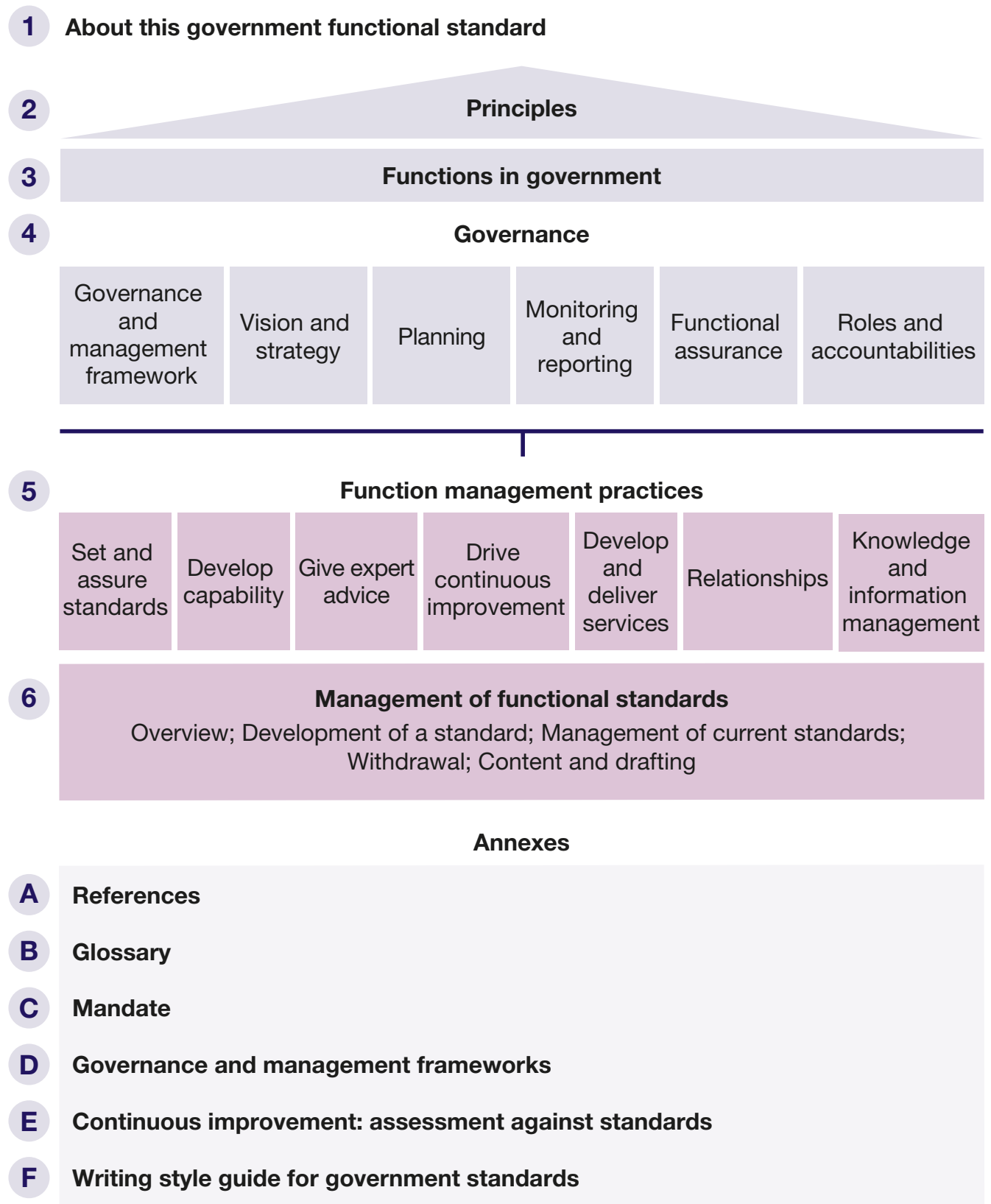
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**Figure 1** Structure and scope of this standard



# 1. About this government functional standard

## 1.1 Purpose of this standard

This standard sets expectations for the direction and management of functions across government, including management of functional standards, in order to:

- drive high performance and achieve excellent outcomes for the citizen
- ensure consistent and improving collaborative practices and culture across government organisations

This standard provides direction and guidance for:

- permanent secretaries, directors general and chief executive officers of arm's length bodies, to ensure an environment exists within their organisations which promotes effective partnership working with functions
- senior leaders and board members within organisations and across government
- senior leaders accountable for managing a function across government
- functional leaders within organisations
- the functional standards design authority, and owners and managers of individual functional standards
- those involved in developing, managing, delivering and promoting aspects of a function's work

## 1.2 Scope of this standard

This standard applies to:

- government functions recognised by the Civil Service Board, in government departments and their arm's length bodies
- government functional standards, encompassing their development, publication, communication, maintenance and application

Other public sector organisations, devolved or local, might find this standard useful.

The structure of this standard is shown in Figure 1.

Note: this standard does not apply to the legal advice and services provided by the Government Legal Department and by other legal professionals in government.

## 1.3 Government standards references

The following standards are directly necessary for the use of this standard:

- GovS 002, Project delivery
- GovS 003, Human resources
- GovS 004, Property
- GovS 006, Finance
- GovS 007, Security
- GovS 008, Commercial
- GovS 009, Internal audit
- GovS 011, Communication

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## 2. Principles

Those engaged with functional work shall:

1. promote a shared vision across government, working collaboratively to ensure the work of the functions is aligned to government-wide policy and priorities, to achieve effective results for the government as a whole, and better outcomes for the citizen
2. ensure that it is clear who makes decisions, and who owns outcomes and processes
3. ensure that accountabilities and responsibilities are clearly defined, mutually consistent and traceable across all levels of management
4. ensure that governance and management frameworks are proportionate and appropriate to the work, and the level of prevailing risk
5. promote opportunities to avoid duplication and minimise complexity through the use of consistent, simple and user-focused processes, methods and tools
6. promote opportunities for efficiency, innovation and transformation, and early user engagement, where this represents value for money
7. create a culture of continuous improvement, setting stretching quality and performance targets and helping people to meet them
8. ensure that public service codes of conduct and ethics and those of associated professions are upheld.



## 3. Context: functions in government

### 3.1 Introduction

This section provides essential background information for the use of this functional standard. It introduces the elements of the government's functional operating model, explains how the model works, and outlines the approach taken to setting functional standards.

For a list of government functions and their functional standards, see the functional standards pages on GOV.UK [1].

### 3.2 Elements of the functional model

#### 3.2.1 Organisation

An organisation, in the context of government functional standards, is the generic term used to describe a government department, arm's length body, or any other entity that is identified as being within scope of a functional standard.

A **government department** sets priorities and objectives for the implementation of government policy, enabled by government functions and professions. Departments are supported where needed by **arm's length bodies** and **third parties**.

Government departments are accountable, through their accounting officer and their secretaries of state and ministers, directly to Parliament.

#### 3.2.2 Government functions

A **government function** is a grouping aligned across government, embedded into departments and arm's length bodies to support achievement of the outcomes sought by the organisation. A function harnesses the skills of people from any relevant government profession.

For activities within its scope, a function: sets cross-government strategies; sets and assures standards; develops capability; gives expert advice; drives continuous improvement; develops and delivers commonly required services.

This is shown in Figure 2.

#### 3.2.3 Government professions

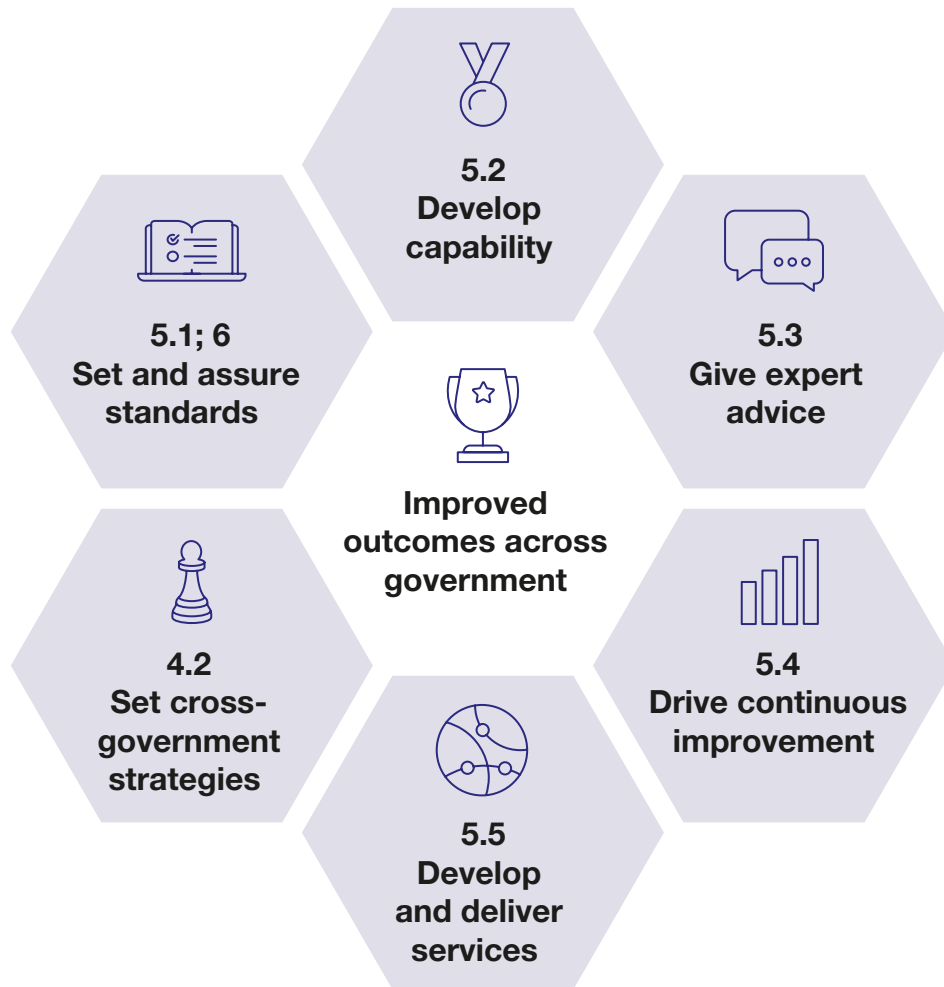
A government profession develops the capability of a group of people with particular skills, knowledge or expertise, and works across government on behalf of organisations and functions.

The relationship between professions and functions varies. For example:

- sometimes a single profession aligns closely to a single function (such as communication)
- in other cases, several professions naturally group with one function (such as analysis)
- sometimes a profession is not aligned to a function (for example, policy and operational delivery)

A member of any profession can support any type of functional work (for example to provide professional legal or commercial advice about aspects of work managed by the Project Delivery or HR functions).





**Figure 2:** What government functions do

Note: the numbers in Figure 2 refer to the relevant clauses in this standard.



### 3.3 How the functional model works

#### 3.3.1 Overview

Functions form a framework for collaboration across organisational boundaries, and each function supports excellence and consistency in delivery of outcomes and services by:

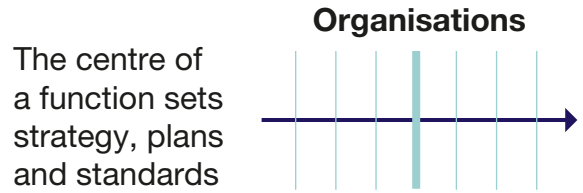
- defining what needs to be done, and why, for the effective undertaking of work within its scope
- bringing together people, systems, processes, and specialist expertise to support delivery
- enabling people to collaborate
- enabling the right functional capability, in the right place, at the right time
- supporting better decision-making, effective risk management, and continuous improvement

#### 3.3.2 Cross-government (horizontal) management

Some functions are managed as a single entity, while others combine a functional centre and functional teams managed by and within individual organisations.

Each function has a senior officer accountable for managing a function across government, supported by functional leaders in departments and arm’s length bodies.

The centre of the function sets direction for functional work across government through its strategy, standards and plans. Each accounting officer or equivalent directs the work of their respective organisation. See Figure 3.

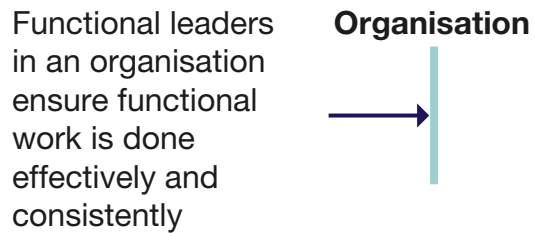


**Figure 3:** The centre of a function sets direction for functional work across government

The functions and organisations come together through the Civil Service Board and designated sub-boards, to make sure that the operational needs of organisations are met, whilst securing the benefits of the functional model. Efficiencies and synergies can be harnessed and common issues resolved consistently.

#### 3.3.3 Organisation (vertical) management

The senior officers accountable for managing a function in an organisation make sure that the function’s work is conducted effectively and consistently in their organisation, see Figure 4. They report directly or indirectly (through a board or chief operating officer) to the organisation’s accounting officer.



**Figure 4:** Leaders in an organisation align ways of working to each function’s strategy, plans and standards

Functional leaders in departments make sure that functional leaders in arm’s length bodies have the right information to manage their functions appropriately.

Note: for more on roles and accountabilities, see clause 4.6.

### 3.4 Functional standards

#### 3.4.1 Overview

Functional standards are set by each function to provide direction and advice for people working in and with the UK government. They are mandated for use across central government (departments and their arm’s length bodies) through Managing Public Money [2] (see Annex C).

These management standards are designed as a coherent suite, cross-referenced where needed, to support integrated government.

Each standard includes a glossary of terms, which collectively form a system-wide dictionary of important government terminology [1].

#### 3.4.2 Setting expectations

A functional standard supports achievement of the outcomes sought by an organisation. It sets expectations for **what** needs to be

done, and **why**, relating to the functional work within its scope, in order to achieve those organisational outcomes.

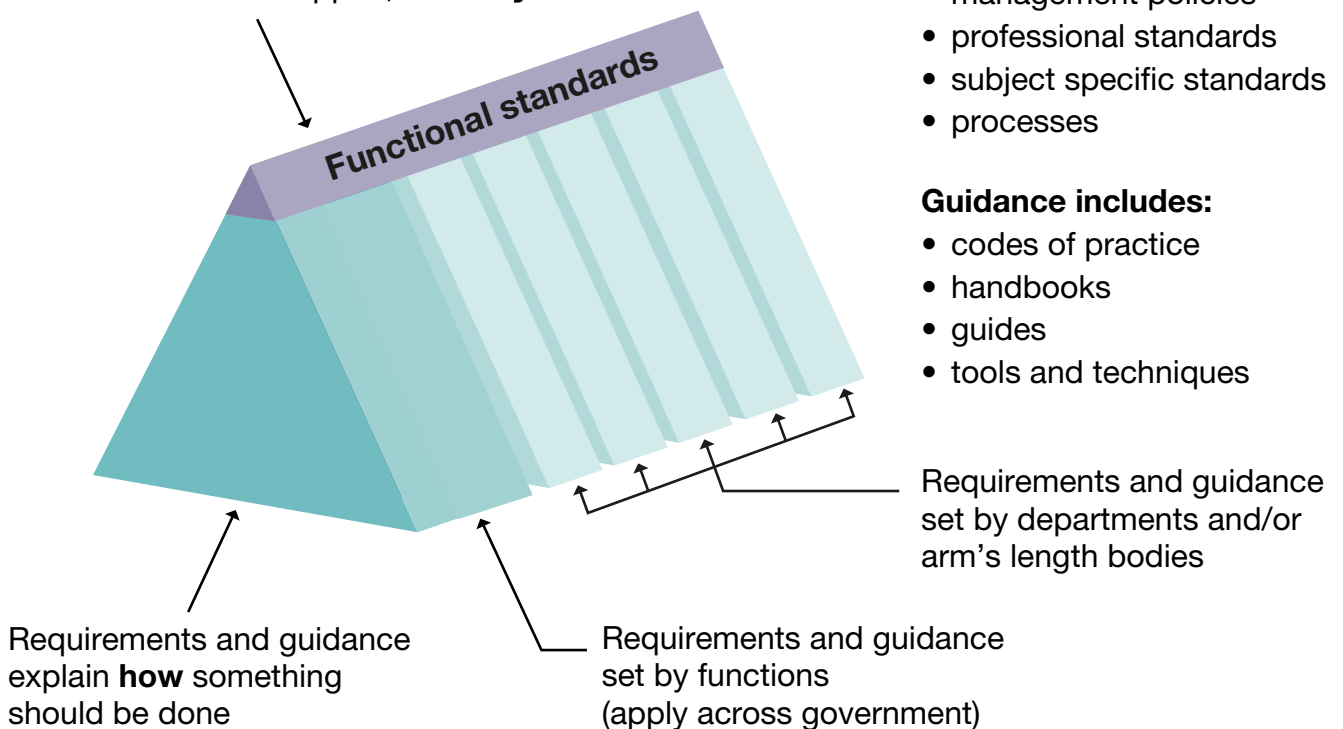
The standards contain mandatory and advisory elements, described in consistent language, that provide a stable basis for assurance, risk management and continuous improvement.

Stable standards make it easier for a function to provide and maintain succinct, aligned and targeted requirements and guidance explaining **how** activities should be done (and, where possible, who should do them), as illustrated in Figure 5. Alignment aids collaboration and supports consistent ways of working.

Functional standards use the term ‘governance and management framework’ to describe the collection of materials needed to meet the standard (for more, see Annex D).

**Figure 5:** Functional standards support provision of mutually consistent functional requirements and guidance

Functional standards set expectations for **what** needs to happen, and **why**



**Requirements include:**

- management policies
- professional standards
- subject specific standards
- processes

**Guidance includes:**

- codes of practice
- handbooks
- guides
- tools and techniques



### 3.4.3 Clarifying roles and accountabilities

Roles such as principal accounting officer, accounting officer, finance director and senior responsible owner are well established in government. Functional standards build on this to define the most important roles and accountabilities for functional work, at the centre of a function and in organisations. This avoids confusion about who does what, and mitigates any tendency for people to operate only within their organisation.

Note that the standards define roles, not jobs. This gives flexibility for organisations to decide how to structure their operations to suit the scale and complexity of the work being done.

Functional accountability does not just follow organisation structure. It flows where needed, in a similar way to other non-vertical structures such as portfolios and programmes and cross-government operations (see GovS 002, Project delivery).

This is advantageous because it:

- helps flatten reporting lines without the need for reorganisation
- supports appropriate and proportionate management for each activity
- gives clarity to accounting officers on what they can expect from the functions, in their organisation and for government as a whole
- supports accounting officers to draw upon functional experience and knowledge from other organisations across government

Note: for more on roles and accountabilities, see clause 4.6.

### 3.4.4 Culture

Each functional standard includes a number of principles (section 2 of each standard). These reflect the behaviours and mindset needed when following the standard, and can be used to help encourage and embed cultural norms.

The effectiveness of a function is not just about what should be done (practices), but relies on behaviours and building relationships. Because they work across government organisations, the functions are an important vehicle for:

- enabling people to collaborate and to share learning and experience within and across organisations, and to start working as soon as practicable when they move between organisations
- building capability within and across organisations
- making the vision of shared delivery platforms across government a reality

### 3.4.5 Using this standard

This standard (GovS 001) sets expectations, and defines roles and accountabilities, for consistent management of the activities that are common to all functions, including the management of functional standards. It provides a stable and coherent basis for continuous improvement of these practices, with flexibility for each function on how the standard is met.

For expectations about specific types of functional work (such as project delivery, finance or commercial), please refer to the relevant functional standard [1].

## 4. Governance

### 4.1 Governance and management framework

#### 4.1.1 Overview

Governance comprises prioritising, authorising, directing, empowering and overseeing management, and assuring and reviewing performance, and should be undertaken:

- across government for all functions collectively
- across government for each function
- within each organisation

A governance and management framework shall be defined and established for each of the three levels above, by those leading functional work.

Governance and management frameworks should include:

- delegated authority limits, decision making roles and rules, degrees of autonomy, assurance needs, reporting structure, accountabilities, roles and escalation routes
- the appropriate management practices and associated documentation needed to meet this standard

Relevant heads of profession (see 4.6.5) should be consulted about how the work of the profession should align to, and be reflected in, the governance and management framework.

Note: see Annex D for more information about governance and management frameworks.

#### 4.1.2 Governance across government for all functions collectively

Governance for all functions collectively shall be defined, and shall include:

- setting the vision and strategy for government functions as a whole (see 4.2.2)
- setting expectations for the direction and management of functions across government (the purpose of this standard, GovS 001)
- oversight and assurance of functional standards (see 5.1.1 and 6)

The need for shared norms of behaviour and aligned ways of working across more than one function should be defined and established, to promote collaborative ways of working and interoperability.

Monitoring and reporting should enable comparison of the impact of different functions on the effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of government outcomes (see 4.4).

#### 4.1.3 Governance across government for each function

A senior officer accountable for managing each function across government shall be assigned (see 4.6.4).

The senior stakeholders for each function should be defined, and should use their organisation's experience to contribute to governance of the function across government.

Governance for each function should be established to enable the senior stakeholders to hold the senior officer accountable for managing the function to account, and to:

- inform the development of functional strategies (see 4.2)
- endorse function plans (see 4.3) and standards (see 5.1)



- resolve problems
- escalate issues to Civil Service Board where necessary

Note: a senior stakeholder could be a senior leader overseeing policy, delivery or operations, such as a permanent secretary, chief operating officer, or senior responsible owner. Stakeholders can be constituted into function boards which would normally be led by a permanent secretary.

The governance and management framework for each function across government should define and establish how the function's vision, strategy, and plans are to be implemented, monitored and managed, in consultation with the function's primary stakeholders in government organisations, and should:

- establish and promote desired norms of behaviour and consistent ways of working, to meet the relevant functional standard
- set expectations for the governance and management of related subject specific standards, systems and processes to enable collaboration and interoperability where needed (see also 5.1.2 and 5.5).

Alignment with other functions' governance and management frameworks should be considered, to promote and simplify collaborative working between functions and across organisational boundaries.

Requirements and guidance associated with each functional standard should be aligned to the relevant standard, and managed in accordance with the Guide to governance and management frameworks [1] (see also 5.5 and Annex D).

#### 4.1.4 Governance within an organisation

A senior officer accountable for managing each relevant function in an organisation shall be assigned (see 4.6.6 and 4.6.7). accounting officers in departments (see 4.6.3) should confirm these appointments with the relevant senior officer accountable for managing each function across government (see 4.6.4)

The governance of each function within an organisation should be an integrated part of that organisation's overall governance, and should include:

- development, communication, monitoring and assurance of the vision, strategy and plans for the function within the organisation (see 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5)
- oversight of compliance with functional standards (see 5.1)
- provision of practices relating to the function (see 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7)

Governance and management frameworks for different functions within the organisation should be mutually consistent.

## 4.2 Vision and strategy

### 4.2.1 Overview

Vision statements and strategy set aspirations, direction, and desired delivery outputs and outcomes. Vision and strategy should be developed together, and be mutually compatible.

A strategy should set objectives, and provide principles to inform the future decisions and choices needed to achieve the objectives. A strategy should be used as a basis for developing plans (see 4.3).



### 4.2.2 Functional vision and strategy

A vision and strategy for government functions as a whole, and for each function, shall be developed and maintained reaching at least three to five years into the future, showing the aspirations for effective and efficient delivery of functional work in government. This vision and strategy should meet the needs of organisations.

Each organisation's strategy should include how each function's vision and strategy is to be implemented within the organisation, taking into account the organisation's priorities and constraints.

### 4.2.3 Cross-government strategies

Functions should, where required by ministers, develop and implement cross-government strategies relating to work within the function's scope, drawing on cross-cutting knowledge and ensuring that work supports the needs of organisations and government as a whole. This might include support for policy and operational decisions across government, and input to plans where needed.

Functions should work across organisational boundaries to facilitate delivery of a cross-government agenda.

Note: the Government Estate Strategy is an example of a cross-government strategy.

## 4.3 Planning

### 4.3.1 Overview

Planning ensures that desired outputs and outcomes are likely to be delivered within defined constraints, to meet an agreed strategy.

Functional aspects of an organisation's business planning should meet relevant functional standards, for example: financial planning should meet GovS 006, Finance; workforce planning should meet GovS 003, Human Resources; and estates planning should meet GovS 004, Property.

### 4.3.2 Function plans

A plan for each function shall be developed and maintained to ensure working methods are up to date and appropriate and that there are sufficient people with the requisite skills, across government, to carry out the work required.

The plan for each function should be integrated with each organisation's business plan.

Note: departmental business plans are currently referred to as outcome delivery plans.

Function plans should be updated at least annually showing how each function intends to achieve its vision and strategy, covering:

- prioritised initiatives required for the on-going development of the function
- prioritised improvement initiatives, aimed at rectifying or preventing shortfalls in the function's performance or use of the function's standard (see 5.1 and 5.4), and how capability gaps can be filled or improvements implemented (see 5.2)
- significant specialist advice, services and accommodation to be provided (see 5.3 and 5.5)
- the funding required to implement the plan and where such funding is sourced

Objectives and deliverables in function plans should have clear owners, target dates for delivery (milestones), and appropriate performance criteria.

Lessons learned, for example through crisis management, should be incorporated into plans.

Note: performance gaps can include shortfalls in capabilities, capacity, quality, communications, user focus, operational experience or any other aspect of a function's management.



### 4.3.3 Cross-government planning

Where plans require an organisation to work across a number of functions and organisations, portfolio management and planning practices defined in GovS 002, Project Delivery, should be followed.

### 4.3.4 Integrating function plans with an organisation's plans

Functional activity within organisations should be integrated into the respective organisation's business plan, and reflected consistently in the plan for each function.

Organisations should set out functional activity in support of delivering organisational objectives. The organisation's business plan should define the approach to aligning an organisation's activities, processes and systems to meet each relevant functional standard, in a way that meets its business needs and priorities.

Statements about use of functional standards should be included in annual reports and, where relevant, accounting officer system statements.

An organisation's completed self-assessments against functional standards, where available, should be used as an input to the organisation's business planning (see 5.4).

## 4.4 Monitoring and reporting

Function plans should be monitored and reported against, using appropriate milestones and performance criteria, with respect to:

- outcomes, benefits realisation and delivery of primary outputs
- how well functional standards are being met (see 5.1 and 5.4)
- availability of finance, and the capacity and capability constraints in government and the supply chain
- current levels of risk
- feedback from users (see 5.6.2)

New risks and issues should be identified and existing ones managed. Mitigating action should be taken to keep on plan and reflect any constraints.

The senior officer accountable for managing a function across government (see 4.6.4) should define appropriate metrics and benchmarks to allow scrutiny of the efficiency and effectiveness of their function's ongoing operations and services. Use of these routine metrics should be established to support planning and decision making, and to drive continuous improvement (see 5.4).

## 4.5 Functional assurance

### 4.5.1 Overview

The purpose of assurance is to provide confidence to senior leaders and stakeholders, through a systematic set of actions, that work is controlled and supports safe and successful delivery of policy, strategy and objectives.

Assurance should be undertaken:

- across government for all functions collectively (see 4.5.2)
- across government for each function (see 4.5.3)
- within each organisation (see 4.5.4)

Arrangements for assurance should be defined and established in relevant governance and management frameworks (see 4.1), and should typically be on three separate and defined levels:

- by, or on behalf of, operational management within organisations, who apply their judgement to support successful delivery and compliance with this standard
- by, or on behalf of, senior or specialist management, independent of operational management (such as a senior functional leader)



- by independent bodies (within or external to government organisations, such as internal audit and the National Audit Office), who provide objective evaluation of the adequacy and effectiveness of a function's work

Each function's approach to meeting this functional standard should be continually reviewed through a combination of proportionate and co-ordinated activity.

The requirements of The Orange Book (management of risk – principles and concepts) shall be met [3].

The work of internal and external assurance providers should be planned to minimise disruption to other work, avoiding overlaps with other assurance activities and duplication of effort, whilst remaining rigorous and meeting the needs of stakeholders.

Where assurance includes formal review activity, the customer for the review should be clearly identified. See GovS 009, Internal Audit.

Functional risks to delivery should inform cross-government internal audit planning. Senior officers accountable for functional work within and across organisations may propose and support delivery of cross-government internal audits, see GovS 009, Internal Audit.

Relevant lessons learned from audit engagements should be incorporated into functions' management frameworks and plans, to mitigate the risks to delivery of functional work.

Note: Internal audit assesses the adequacy and effectiveness of a function's governance, risk management and controls. The National Audit Office undertakes targeted value for money studies on areas of significant expenditure, which sometimes include direct assessment of a function's work.

#### **4.5.2 Assurance across government for all functions collectively**

Assurance across government for all functions collectively provides confidence to senior leaders and decision-makers on the reliability of the cross-government management information they depend on.

Assurance should focus on:

- the effectiveness and consistency of cross-government governance and management frameworks (see 4.1)
- the mutual coherence of functional strategies and plans (see 4.2.2 and 4.3.2) and the robustness of associated management information
- the extent of integration of functional strategies and plans into each organisation's strategies and plans

#### **4.5.3 Assurance across government for each function**

Assurance across government for each function provides confidence about coherent delivery and early warning about emerging issues and risks, and helps to spread good practice across organisations.

Assurance should focus on:

- how well the function is being managed across government, against this standard (GovS 001)
- how well leaders understand the extent of compliance with the function's own functional standard, and the effectiveness of continuous improvement activities undertaken to improve efficiency and performance in organisations (see 5.4)
- the effectiveness and consistency of the cross-function governance and management framework (see 4.1.3)
- whether the function's strategy and plans support effective and efficient



delivery of functional work (see 4.2 and 4.3), including the reliability and robustness of associated management information (see 4.4)

Note: activities within the scope of a function are assured against the relevant functional standard (for example, commercial work is assured against GovS 008, Commercial).

#### **4.5.4 Assurance within each organisation**

Assurance within organisations provides confidence to the accounting officer that management of functional work (whether done directly by the organisation or through third parties) is controlled and supports delivery of the organisation's policy, strategy and objectives.

Assurance should focus on:

- how well each function is being managed in the organisation, against this standard (GovS 001), including the reliability and robustness of associated management information
- understanding by the organisation's leaders of the organisation's ambition for meeting relevant functional standards, and its progress in achieving plans for continuous improvement
- the effectiveness and consistency of the organisation's functional governance and management frameworks, and how well they promote seamless working across functional boundaries (see 4.1)

Assurance should be tailored to the size and complexity of the functional work done by the organisation, and should be proportionate and appropriate to the level of prevailing risk. Whilst the whole of a standard needs to be complied with, those recommendations or advisory elements which are not applicable may be discounted, where appropriate and justified.

#### **4.5.5 Cabinet Office spending controls**

Cabinet Office spending controls require central government bodies to obtain expenditure approval from Cabinet Office ministers, based on professional advice from relevant functions, before certain expenditure is made or committed.

Organisations should comply with controls policy and guidance, and take advice from relevant functions well in advance of planned expenditure (see 5.3) [4].

Assurance of a functional standard shall include adherence to relevant centrally mandated Cabinet Office spending controls (see 5.1) [4].

### **4.6 Roles and accountabilities**

#### **4.6.1 Introduction**

Roles and accountabilities for those doing functional work shall be defined in relevant governance and management frameworks (see 4.1), and assigned to people with appropriate seniority, skills and experience. This includes, but is not limited to, the outputs or outcomes they are responsible for, and the person they are accountable to.

The following roles are essential. A team may support each role, on a part or full-time basis.

#### **4.6.2 Civil Service Board**

The Civil Service Board is chaired by the chief operating officer for the Civil Service on behalf of the cabinet secretary and head of the Civil Service. It comprises a quorum of permanent secretaries, and is responsible for the strategic leadership of the Civil Service.

The Civil Service Board is accountable for the direction and oversight of all government functions. It should approve the creation of any new government function, and should approve all functional strategies (see 4.2).

The Civil Service Board may delegate, to another suitable board or role, responsibility for direction and oversight of the:

- development and implementation of the cross-government function vision and strategy (see 4.2.2)
- effectiveness and integrity of all government functions
- management of all government functional standards (see 6)

The above should be carried out in consultation with the senior officers accountable for managing each function across government (see 4.6.4).

#### **4.6.3 Accounting officer**

The permanent head of a government department is usually its principal accounting officer.

The principal accounting officer generally appoints the most senior executive in the arm's length bodies within the department's ambit as an accounting officer.

An organisation's accounting officer is accountable (via a principal accounting officer where appropriate) to Parliament and the public for the stewardship of public resources, ensuring they are used effectively and to high standards of probity.

The accounting officer should ensure that the governance and management frameworks of all functions operating within their organisation are integrated with the overall governance and management framework for the organisation (see 4.1.4).

Accounting officers should take account of advice from the senior officer accountable for managing a function across government as part of the assessment of individuals leading functional work in their organisation (see 5.2.1)

Where it has been mutually agreed that there is a significant business requirement for a function's work (see 5.2.1) the accounting officer (or a person delegated by them) shall consult the respective senior officer accountable for managing the function across government as part of performance management of the relevant functional leader (see 4.6.6 and 4.6.7).

More detail on the role of the accounting officer can be found in Managing Public Money [2].

#### **4.6.4 Senior officer accountable for managing a function across government**

The senior officer accountable for managing a function across government is accountable to the chief operating officer for the Civil Service or to the permanent secretary of HM Treasury for:

- developing and implementing the function's vision, strategy and plans (see 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4), including standards, capability, expert advice and specialist services, in consultation with the senior officers accountable for managing the function in organisations (see 4.6.6 and 4.6.7)
- establishing appropriate functional governance (see 4.1)
- supporting accounting officers to make better decisions, have the right capability to achieve their priorities, and enable efficiencies
- developing cross-government strategies in pursuit of specific ministerial objectives that are reliant on the work of the function (see 4.2.3)
- providing advice to accounting officers on appointments related to the function, and approving the most senior appointments where required (see 4.1.4)



- setting and maintaining expectations for the capability and performance of functional leaders, and advising on the performance of individuals where appropriate (see 5.2.1)
- ensuring lessons from assurance activity are built into functional strategies, plans and ways of working (see 4.5).

Note: the role of senior officer accountable for managing a function across government is often known as the ‘head of function’, and is usually done by the same person who owns the function’s standard, see 4.6.9.

Note: accountability to the permanent secretary of HM Treasury relates to the finance function.

See Figure 6.

#### 4.6.5 Head of profession

The head of profession is accountable for building the capability and professional competence of members of the relevant government profession, who contribute to the work of a function, or functions (see 5.2.2)

A head of profession is accountable to the respective senior officer accountable for managing a function across government (see 4.6.4) for ensuring the members of their profession are skilled and competent to undertake the functional work assigned to them.

Note: professional standards are owned by the relevant head of profession.

Note: the role of head of profession can be done by the same person who leads a function (see 4.6.4).

Note: a head of profession can be supported by profession leads in each organisation.

#### 4.6.6 Senior officer accountable for managing a function in a government department

The senior officer accountable for managing a function in a government department is accountable to the:

- department’s principal accounting officer for ensuring the department and its arm’s length bodies adopt the relevant function’s standard, and that its strategy and plans take account of cross-government functional strategies and plans
- senior officer accountable for managing a function across government, for implementing the function’s vision, strategy and plans within the department and its arm’s length bodies, and providing support for the on-going development of the function (see also 5.2.1)

A department may appoint one individual to take responsibility for more than one function.

Note: the role of senior officer accountable for managing a function in a department is not needed if the department, or any of its arm’s length bodies, are not involved in work within scope of that function.

The senior officer accountable for managing a function in a government department should engage with the department’s sponsorship lead for each arm’s length body, and work with them to ensure that the department’s arm’s length bodies have the right information, tools and capacity to adopt relevant functional standards.

Note: A ‘sponsorship lead’ is the person managing a government department’s relationship with its arm’s length bodies. For more information, see the Sponsorship Code of Good Practice [5].

See Figure 6.

#### 4.6.7 Senior officer accountable for managing a function in an arm's length body

The senior officer accountable for managing a function in an arm's length body is accountable to the:

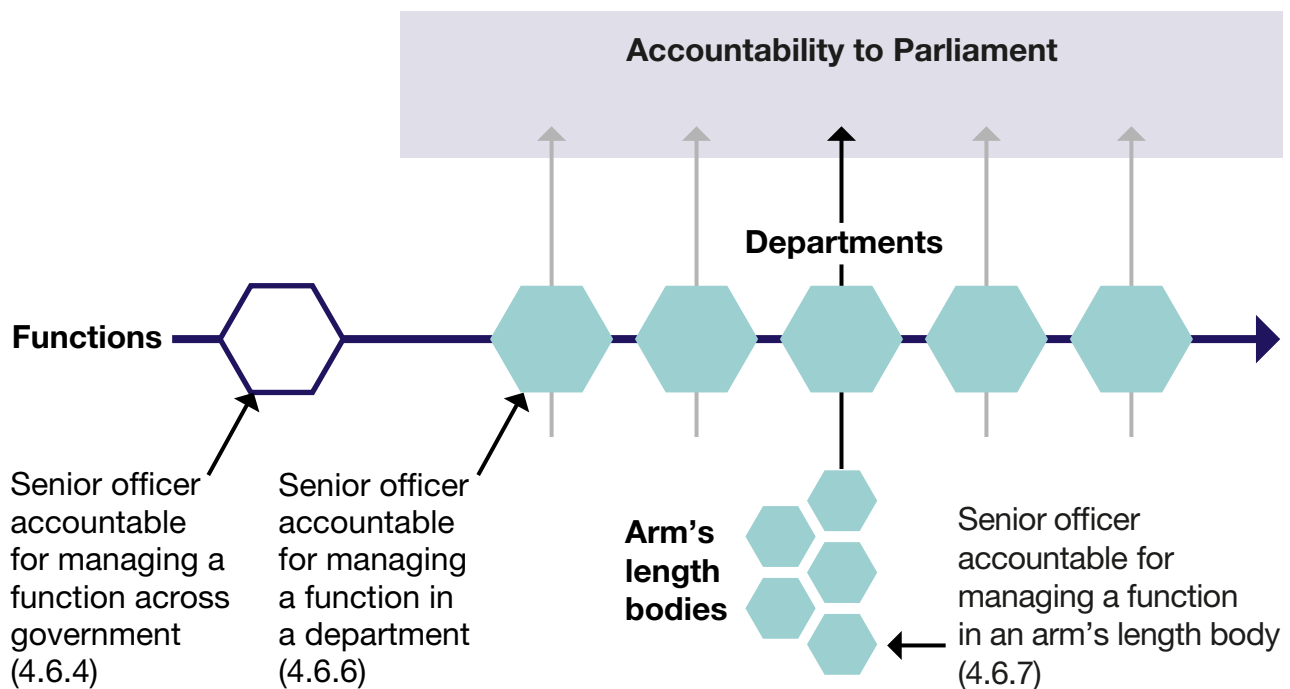
- accounting officer (or equivalent) for ensuring the arm's length body adopts the relevant function's standard, and that its strategy and plans take account of cross-government functional strategies and plans

- senior officer accountable for managing a function in the arm's length body's parent department, for implementing the function's vision, strategy and plans within the organisation, and providing support for the on-going development of the function (see also 5.2.1)

An arm's length body may appoint one individual to take responsibility for more than one function.

Note: the role of senior officer accountable for managing a function in an arm's length body is not needed if the organisation is not involved in work within the scope of that function.

See Figure 6.



**Figure 6:** roles are defined for the management of each function across government, in a department, and in an arm's length body





#### 4.6.8 Functional standards design authority

The functional standards design authority is accountable to the Civil Service Board for maintaining the alignment, completeness and integrity of the suite of government functional standards, in particular to:

- meet the functional standard aspects of this standard (see 4.1, 5.1 and 6)
- ensure owners and managers assigned to each standard have the information necessary to undertake their roles
- maintain change control over the suite of standards and each discrete standard to ensure consistency
- give prior approval to draft standards to ensure consistency in approach and terminology across the suite of standards
- champion the development and establishment of the standards and their use across government
- establish and maintain appropriate communications channels to and from users to encourage use and to share experience and learning
- promote initiatives to improve the effectiveness and usefulness of government standards
- produce handbooks and guidance for standard managers to follow (see 4.6.10)

The standards design authority may set up a steering group or groups to support them in their role, which may include, but not be limited to, representation from departments.

Note: the functional standards peer group currently fulfils the role of design authority.

#### 4.6.9 Government functional standard owner

A standard owner is accountable to the chief operating officer of the Civil

Service for establishing, controlling and championing the functional standard within their area of responsibility, and for establishing a governance and management framework that is appropriate for users and mutually consistent with the standard (see 4.1).

Specific accountabilities include:

- appointing a suitably qualified and empowered standard manager (see 4.6.10)
- requesting periodic reviews to determine how effectively the standard is used in practice
- setting improvement targets and approving changes to the standard
- approving the performance indicators to measure how well the standard is performing in meeting its purpose
- responding to audits
- highlighting significant issues regarding use of and compliance with the standard to the relevant authority
- developing and agreeing standards in consultation with a representative sample of colleagues in organisations (who are subject to the functional standard in question)

Standard owners should use functional standards to set requirements and make recommendations, and provide signposts for helpful guidance, see Figure 7.

Management of the governance and management framework associated with a standard may be delegated to a suitably qualified person or team, who should follow the Guide to governance and management frameworks [1].

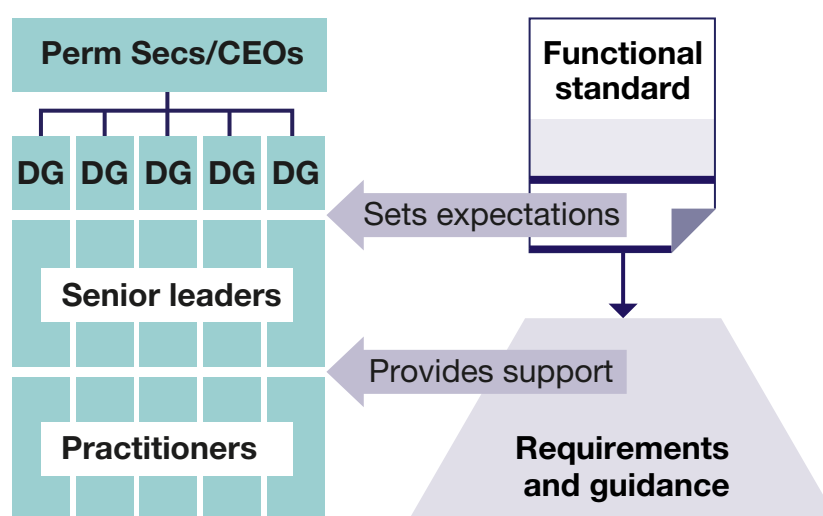
Note: a standard owner is likely to be the senior officer accountable for managing a function across government (see 4.6.4).

#### 4.6.10 Government functional standard manager

A standard manager is accountable to the standard owner for the day-to-day management of the assigned standard(s). The specific accountabilities include:

- develop the standard in accordance with this document, GovS 001 and the Handbook for standard managers [1]
- undertake reviews of the standard and how effectively it is used in practice
- trigger, prioritise and undertake necessary improvements or changes including responding to any errors or issues
- maintain a control sheet noting changes, reviewers and approver and dates
- work with the standards design authority and other standards managers to develop and agree any interfaces
- gather and manage feedback and improvement requests
- propose the performance indicators to measure how well an organisation is undertaking the practices defined in the standards
- report performance on a regular basis
- advise users of the standard on how to implement it, and put in place appropriate communications (see 5.6.4 and 6.2.5)
- ensure the standard and any supporting guides, manuals, training, and coaching are up to date and mutually consistent

Note: a standard manager is likely to work closely with those managing the function in organisations (see 4.6.6 and 4.6.7).



**Figure 7:** Functional standards should be used to set requirements, make recommendations, and provide signposts for helpful guidance



## 5. Function management practices

### 5.1 Set and assure standards

#### 5.1.1 Functional standards

The Functional standards set expectations for what needs to be done, and why, for the functional work undertaken in government, to achieve outcomes set by organisations.

They are management standards that exist to:

- create a coherent, effective and mutually understood way of doing business within government organisations and across organisational boundaries
- provide a stable basis for assurance, risk management, and capability improvement

Each function shall develop and maintain a government functional standard covering the full scope of the activities undertaken by the function, which shall be managed in accordance with this standard.

Each function should have a defined and established approach to providing appropriate assurance that its functional standard is being deployed effectively, and the extent to which an organisation is operating within the function's standard (see also 4.5)

Organisations should assess their compliance and maturity of performance against relevant functional standards, to manage risk and drive continuous improvement (see also 5.4 and Annex D). Such assessments should be an integral part of an organisation's assurance arrangements (see 4.5.4).

Assurance of a functional standard shall include adherence to relevant centrally mandated expenditure controls [4].

See section 6 for more detail on the management of functional standards

Note: for general guidance see the Guide to functional standards [1].

Note: functions are developing a shared, consistent approach to assessing how well organisations are meeting functional standards (on a 'developing/good/better/best' maturity scale), see the Guide to continuous improvement against functional standards [1].

#### 5.1.2 Subject specific standards

Subject specific standards can cover any subject. They complement functional standards by setting out how a relevant functional activity should be done. This establishes norms of behaviour within and across organisations and/or functions, and supports a 'whole system' approach to government. They are usually aimed at practitioners.

Subject specific standards should set particular procedures to be followed, language to be used, and/or performance criteria to be met in a particular field, and can apply to a product, delivery of a policy or service, or supply of materials.

Performance criteria can relate to an output, or an activity (manual or automated).

Subject specific standards should be owned by a senior subject matter expert, and be developed and maintained by an appropriately qualified group of experts, including representation from relevant functions and professions.

Subject specific standards can include mandatory (shall) elements, as well as advisory (should) elements. Where it benefits efficiency and effectiveness, a minimum expected standard may be set, by writing minimum service levels or data requirements as 'shall'.



Note: examples of subject specific standards include technical standards, data, services, and security requirements.

Note: For more detail on managing subject specific standards and other requirements and guidance, see the Guide to governance and management frameworks [1].

## 5.2 Develop capability

### 5.2.1 Functional leadership

The senior officer accountable for managing a function across government (see 4.6.4) shall set and maintain expectations for the capability and performance required by those undertaking the role of senior officer accountable for managing the function in a department or arm's length body (see 4.6.6 and 4.6.7).

The expectations should be set in consultation with accounting officers, heads of profession and those affected, and should:

- be included in relevant governance and management frameworks (see 4.1) including professional standards and performance management guidance for the senior civil service
- be proportionate and appropriate to the scale, risk and complexity of the functional work being done
- be ambitious and stretching, tailored to identified priorities where necessary
- be accompanied by guidance about how any function-specific performance management arrangements for individuals are to be applied

The senior officer accountable for managing the function across government should support accounting officers to review the performance of individuals leading the function's work in organisations. This should include providing a cross-government perspective about development needs, opportunities and advancement.

Where there is a significant business requirement for the function's work identified in organisational plans (see 4.3), the senior officer accountable for managing the function across government should, in consultation with the respective accounting officer, determine the appropriate capability and level of performance expected from the individual leading the function's work in the organisation (see 4.6.6 and 4.6.7).

In such cases, the senior officer accountable for managing the function across government shall provide the respective accounting officer with tailored advice about the performance level attained by the individual functional leader, which should meet the function's standard and be appropriate for the needs of the organisation.

GovS 002, Human Resources shall be followed.

### 5.2.2 Developing skills

Induction, training and development ensure people are working effectively as soon as practicable.

Functions should promote and use the work of government professions to develop, maintain and improve the specialist skills, experience and behaviours needed by the function to improve outcomes in government organisations.

The skills, knowledge, and qualifications required for those engaged in functional work should be defined, so that a function's requirements can be identified and established in the training strategies, professional standards and plans of relevant government professions.

Function induction should include but not be limited to:

- a briefing on the work of the function and the functional role being undertaken
- necessary processes to be followed, and any training or security access required



- relevant communication messages to be followed to explain the function's activities to its users

Where appropriate, function induction and training should be integrated into organisational and professional induction and training. This can include provision of appropriate tools and guidance for cross-government use.

Note: see also GovS 003, Human Resources.

### 5.2.3 Resource and capacity

Resource, capacity and capability management balances the supply and demand for competent functional resources (such as people, equipment and facilities) to be deployed when needed.

Resources might be sourced from within government, by recruiting, or from the supply chain. GovS 003, Human Resources and GovS 008, Commercial should be followed.

Each government function should work with organisations to develop and maintain a view of future resources needed in departments and their arm's length bodies, with possible shortfalls identified and corrective actions proposed. Where relevant, information on professional capacity and skill levels should be used in assessing functional capability. GovS 003, Human Resources should be followed.

Advice should be provided to organisational leadership on how to balance the demand for resources required to undertake a function's activities with the resources available to the organisation. The advice might include assessing the need for third party suppliers, to minimise external labour expenditure.

Where consultants are employed, functions should harness opportunities for knowledge transfer, to improve in-house knowledge and build capability.

## 5.3 Give expert advice

Experts working in government functions should support organisations to:

- make decisions and assess deliverability
- manage risks and challenges
- ensure effective delivery of priorities

They should provide expert advice based on professional or experienced judgement, and the function's knowledge and information (see 5.7).

Expert advice may include advice on:

- business planning
- meeting functional or subject specific standards
- complying with expenditure controls (see 4.5.5)
- continuous improvement and good practice
- performance monitoring, efficiency and effectiveness

Expert advice contributes to assurance for organisations.

Whilst not a requirement, the centre of a function may recover the full or partial cost of expert advice from organisations. Before doing so, functions should:

- consult senior stakeholders to confirm that the cost recovery adds value for the government as a whole (see 4.1.3)
- define, agree and establish any cost recovery arrangement, so that organisations know what to expect and can plan accordingly

Expert advice may be delivered through any government organisation.

Note: expert advice might be delivered through groups such as 'centres of excellence,' or specialist teams such as the Complex Transactions Team in the Commercial function.

Note: expert advice can include expert witness input to inquiries and court actions.

## 5.4 Drive continuous improvement

A focus on continuous improvement benefits current and future functional work, the management of government as a whole, and delivery of government outcomes. It promotes innovation and the take up of improved practice, and enables functions to develop insight and provide thought leadership in government. It helps organisations to avoid repeating mistakes.

Innovation benefits government by introducing solutions that create a marked improvement in performance.

An understanding of how well organisations are meeting a functional standard supports continuous improvement across government through:

- assurance of functional work by each function (see 4.5)
- enabling peer review and peer support within and across organisations
- supporting consistent and effective ways of working within and across organisations
- aiding decisions about deployment of functional capability or capacity

Each function should develop and maintain a continuous improvement assessment framework to determine the extent to which its functional standard is being applied within and across organisations. Management information drawn from assessments may be used to support business planning (see 4.3) and independent scrutiny.

Note: for more on assessment against standards, see Annex E.

Those doing functional work should routinely capture and evaluate lessons, draw on relevant data and benchmarking, and analyse and act upon monitoring and reporting (see 4.4).

Action should be taken to facilitate continuous improvement of functional outputs and services, ensuring that the lessons and knowledge obtained are transferred across government. This should include incorporating lessons learned in a crisis into routine practice, where appropriate.

Owners of subject specific standards, processes, codes of practice, handbooks, guidance, tools and techniques, and training materials, should update their knowledge sources and communicate learning as appropriate. See also Annex D.

An understanding of current research and best practice that is likely to benefit functional performance should be obtained and developed with a view to being applied in future specialist services and products.

Models for operating in an integrated way across multiple functions should be based on the approach and practices set out in GovS 002, Project Delivery.

## 5.5 Develop and deliver services

Each government function should develop and provide specialist services and products, for use across government, where there is demand and when it adds value, either through consistency of service or efficiency. Such services and products can include, but are not limited to the provision of:

- services commonly required across government
- requirements, such as subject specific standards, professional standards and processes
- guidance, such as codes of practice, handbooks, guides, tools and techniques

A catalogue of services should be maintained and published so that potential users of the services are aware of what is available.



Functions should specify any charges that organisations are expected to pay for particular functional products or services, and how the re-charging model is to be managed.

Services and products offered should be monitored to ensure they meet customer needs, and add value. Where relevant, information on professional capacity and skill levels should be used when assessing functional capability. Corrective action should be taken, if necessary.

Specialist services may be provided internally using an organisation's staff, through 'shared services', or from third parties.

Specialist services and products should be supported by knowledge and information management systems that are accessible to the intended users.

Subject specific standards may be defined and established to support the management and assurance of common services and products (see 5.1.2). This can trigger the need for cross-government platforms, workflow tools and automation.

Programmes and projects to implement new or improved specialist services and products should meet GovS 002, Project Delivery.

## 5.6 Relationships

### 5.6.1 Government-wide relationships

Functions should develop relationships and partnerships across government so that each function's knowledge and perspective can be applied to work undertaken in any government organisation.

### 5.6.2 User engagement

Timely user engagement ensures the needs and concerns of users of expert advice and specialist services are understood and addressed.

Government functions should identify users and their interests, and understand their expectations. A user-engagement plan should be developed defining how

to engage users in a co-ordinated and appropriate way. The plan should be implemented, monitored and updated to reflect newly emerging users and stakeholders, and changes in the position of existing users and stakeholders. User attitudes should be assessed, updated and validated, for example through client surveys and relationship management.

Users of a function's expert advice and services should have a clear route to communicate ideas for improvement to the function.

### 5.6.3 Third party engagement

Each function should have channels open to academia, industry bodies, professional bodies, and other third parties as appropriate, to help them to:

- ensure services offered by the function represent current best practice
- understand relevant research and innovation work currently underway
- appreciate improvements that might result through innovation

### 5.6.4 Communication

Communication ensures interactions with users are effective, in pursuit of functional objectives.

Communication should be designed and coordinated to ensure the right messages are addressed to the right audience, at the right time, in a way that is suitable for the recipients.

Communication should be planned to match the stakeholders' needs (based on regular stakeholder management) and should include feedback mechanisms and effectiveness measures. The impact of communication should be assessed and, where appropriate, responded to. The communication plan should be adjusted if needed, to take account of feedback and to achieve continuous improvement. GovS 011, Communication shall be followed.

## 5.7 Knowledge and information management

### 5.7.1 Overview

Exchanging knowledge and information enables government to share experience, build corporate memory, and understand the influence of the past on current and future events.

Knowledge and information should be gathered to support policy development, to enable officials to exercise their accountabilities, and to enable comprehensive evidence to be presented to inquiries and court actions.

### 5.7.2 Information management

Information management ensures information (physical or electronic) is available and reliable for undertaking work and making decisions.

The information to be managed should be defined. It should be managed in accordance with the policies and practices of the host organisation, to ensure legal responsibilities are discharged properly. Where necessary, policies should be developed to ensure information is available and reliable for a function undertaking cross-cutting work and decision making.

Information should be retained to meet statutory, policy or contractual requirements. GovS 007, Security shall be met.

### 5.7.3 Knowledge asset management

Knowledge assets are intangible assets such as intellectual property and innovation, datasets, and new ideas, processes or methods. They are often the secondary product of a primary activity, such as research and development, project delivery, managing physical assets, or a contract.

Each function should identify knowledge assets relating to the function and define how they are to be managed. This should include identifying, categorising, storing, distributing, updating and transferring knowledge assets.

Each function should consider how the social, economic or financial value of knowledge assets generated from its activity might be used to generate added value for government.

Knowledge assets should be used to inform the expert advice given by the function, as appropriate (see 5.3).

For guidance on managing knowledge assets see [6].





## 6. Management of functional standards

### 6.1 Overview

Government functional standards shall be developed and managed so that they:

1. are easily understood, unambiguous and applicable to government
2. meet the needs of, and add value for, the primary users and other affected parties
3. are mutually consistent in terms of principles and terminology across the set of functional standards
4. have sufficient breadth of coverage to enable organisations to build their own compliant processes, methodologies and frameworks
5. are defined in order to enable users to develop or tailor methods and approaches to implement the functional standard, within defined constraints

Development, management and maintenance of government functional standards should meet the requirements of the Handbook for standard managers [1].

### 6.2 Development of a government functional standard

#### 6.2.1 New functional standards

A prospective functional standard owner (see 4.6.9) should demonstrate a business need for a functional standard and that:

- it is likely to have active support from interested parties across government
- there is likely to be the capacity and capability to complete and manage the standard within a reasonable timescale
- no conflict would exist with any other published government standard

As soon as there is agreement:

- the prospective standard owner shall appoint a standard manager (see 4.6.10) and provide a brief on what purpose the standard is to fulfil
- the functional standards design authority (see 4.6.8) shall register the title and number of the standard

#### 6.2.2 Drafting or updating a functional standard

The standard manager (see 4.6.10) should draft the standard taking into account policy and existing related documentation and practices, such as other standards, and relevant internal and external guidance, manuals, processes and methods.

During drafting, the standard manager should consult with the functional standards design authority (see 4.6.8), interested parties and experts to ensure proposed content is relevant, up to date and comprehensive. If consensus is not reached on content, the standard owner (see 4.6.9) should be consulted to give direction as they see fit.

#### 6.2.3 Reviewing a draft functional standard

The standard manager (see 4.6.10) should issue the standard as a draft, to be reviewed by:

- a review panel (membership of which should be agreed by and include the standard owner, see 4.6.9) which shall validate the content as necessary and complete
- the functional standards design authority (see 4.6.8) to confirm there is no conflict with other standards and that it complies with this document

Where a new requirement ('shall' statement) is proposed for inclusion in any functional standard, it shall be approved by HM Treasury.

Note: HM Treasury approval would normally be sought through the HM Treasury Officer of Accounts. See also Annex C.

The standard may be reviewed as many times as needed until the functional standards design authority and reviewers are satisfied the document is acceptable and should be submitted for approval.

#### 6.2.4 Approving a functional standard

The standard owner (see 4.6.9) shall either approve the standard, or ask the standard manager to modify and resubmit the standard.

The standard owner may also withdraw the standard from the proposal list or delay publication.

The standard owner should make decisions in the case of any conflict in content between the standard manager and the reviewers, drawing on the advice of the functional standards design authority (see 4.6.8).

#### 6.2.5 Publishing and communicating the functional standard

Once approved, the functional standards design authority shall confirm arrangements for publication of the standard.

The standard manager should:

- publish and promote the newly published standard
- raise and embed awareness of the standard as the primary reference for functional work
- ensure those needing to understand the standard are briefed and competent to use it
- ensure that use of the standard is explained in the context of the wider suite of functional standards

## 6.3 Management of current government functional standards

### 6.3.1 Lessons learned

Lessons learned on the use of the functional standard should be gathered and acted upon, including:

- capturing amendments for future versions of the standard
- sharing good practices with interested parties, resulting from use of the standard

### 6.3.2 Periodic review

A periodic review of the effectiveness of the standard should be carried out at least every two years or more frequently, if required by the standard owner (see 4.6.9). The aim of the review is to verify:

- there is still a business need for the standard
- the standard has support from interested parties across government
- there is likely to be the capacity and capability to manage and use the standard
- consistency with Managing Public Money [2], and that no conflict exists with any other published government standard or directive
- levels of compliance and performance against the standard are understood and acted upon

The review should incorporate lessons learned and user feedback, to improve and strengthen the content of the standard.

The standard manager should take action on any findings, as agreed with the standard owner.



## 6.4 Withdrawal of government functional standards

### 6.4.1 Update to a new version

If a standard is to be replaced by a newer version, the timing of the withdrawal of the old standard and publication of the new standard should be coincident, to meet the requirements of this standard (GovS 001) [1].

### 6.4.2 Complete withdrawal

When a standard no longer serves a purpose, the standard owner, in consultation with the functional standards design authority, shall instruct the standard manager to withdraw the standard.

The standard manager (see 4.6.10) shall communicate this to interested parties, informing them of the reason for withdrawal and what, if anything, is to be used in place of the standard.

## 6.5 Content and drafting

### 6.5.1 Typical content

Each functional standard should include:

- Purpose
- Scope
- Principles
- Context
- Governance
- Main text, containing the subject matter
- Annex A References
- Annex B Glossary
- Further annexes (C onward), as needed

### 6.5.2 Common standards glossary

The common standards glossary [1] includes a list of defined terms and phrases that should be used in the suite of government standards, to support consistent use of these terms, and facilitate understanding of each functional standard.

The glossary includes the term, definition, and which function owns the term and definition.

The common standards glossary should be maintained and separately published by the functional standards design authority.

### 6.5.3 Advice on drafting and version control

Annex E provides a writing style guide. For more detailed advice on drafting and version control, follow the Handbook for standard managers [1].



## A. References

All references are correct at the time of publication; users should check for updated versions.

I.D.	Description
1	HM Government, <i>Government functional standards and associated guidance</i> (note: This is the main functional standards page on GOV.UK. Follow links from each individual standard to find guidance specific to that standard - for example follow <i>GovS 001, Government functions</i> to find guidance directly related to this standard)
2	HM Treasury, <i>Managing Public Money</i> (2013)
3	HM Government, <i>The Orange Book: Management of Risk – Principles and Concepts</i> (2020)
4	Cabinet Office, <i>Spend Controls guidance</i> (2018)
5	Cabinet Office, <i>Arm’s Length Body Sponsorship Code of Good Practice</i> (2022)
6	Department for Business, energy and industrial strategy, HM Treasury, <i>The Rose Book: guidance on knowledge asset management in government</i> (2021)
7	HM Treasury, <i>Dear accounting officer letter mandating use of functional standards</i> (2021)
8	<i>Shorter Oxford English Dictionary</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
9	Government Digital Service, <i>Government Digital Service Style Guide</i> (2016)



## B. Glossary

See also the **common glossary of definitions** which includes a list of defined terms and phrases used across the suite of government standards. The glossary includes the term, definition, and which function owns the term and definition.

Term	Definition
assurance	A general term for the confidence that can be derived from objective information over the successful conduct of activities, the efficient and effective design and operation of internal control, compliance with internal and external requirements, and the production of insightful and credible information to support decision making. Confidence diminishes when there are uncertainties around the integrity of information or of underlying processes.
defined (way of working)	In the context of standards, 'defined' denotes a documented way of working which people are expected to use. This can apply to any aspect of a governance or management framework for example processes, codes of practice, methods, templates, tools and guides.
established (way of working)	In the context of standards, 'established' denotes a way of working that is implemented and used throughout the organisation. This can apply to any aspect of a governance or management framework for example processes, codes of practice, methods, templates, tools and guides.
governance	Governance defines relationships and the distribution of rights and responsibilities among those who work with and in the organisation. It determines the rules and procedures through which the organisational objectives are set, and provides the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance. Importantly, it defines where accountability lies throughout the organisation.
governance and management framework	A governance and management framework sets out the authority limits, decision making roles and rules, degrees of autonomy, assurance needs, reporting structure, accountabilities and roles and the appropriate management practices and associated documentation needed to meet this standard.
government function	A grouping aligned across government, embedded into departments and arm's length bodies. For activities within its scope, each function: sets cross-government strategies, sets and assures standards, develops capability, gives expert advice, drives continuous improvement, and develops and delivers commonly required services.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
government profession	A grouping aligned across government to increase the professionalism and engagement of people with particular skills, knowledge or expertise. A profession sets professional standards, supports professional development and career progress, and provides a consistent way to attract and retain people.
organisation	An organisation, in the context of government functional standards, is the generic term used to describe a government department, arm's length body, or any other entity that is identified as being within scope of a functional standard.
plan	A plan ensures that desired outputs and outcomes are likely to be delivered within defined constraints, to meet an agreed strategy.
strategy	A strategy sets objectives and desired delivery outputs and outcomes, to inform future decisions and choices about how objectives are delivered.

## C. Mandate

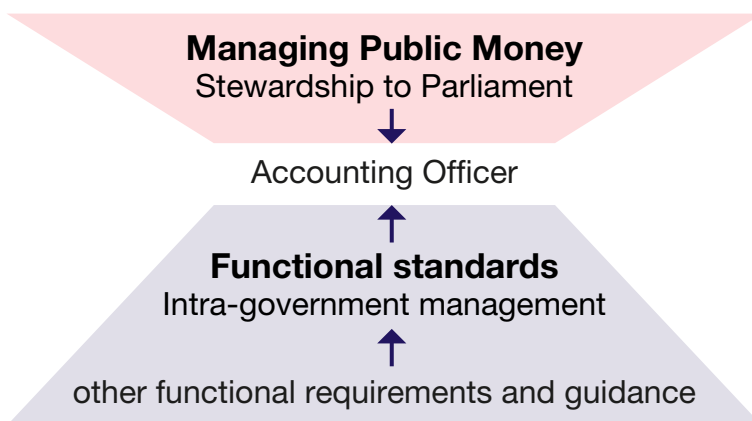
The mandate for the functions and functional standards flows from Parliament and ministers via the policy set out in *Managing Public Money* [2] and the Dear Accounting Officer letter (DAO 05/21) [7]

Note: See also the *Declaration on Government Reform* which included an action for 2021: “Implement clear standards for all functions and ensure they are used consistently across government to improve quality and efficiency”.

The default scope of functional standards mirrors that of *Managing Public Money* [2] (departments and their arm’s length bodies). The exact scope is set out at the beginning of each standard. The standards may apply to public corporations through mutual agreement with parent departments.

The standards help accounting officers to oversee and improve the quality of functional work, enabling them to demonstrate effective stewardship of public resources.

The relationship between the stewardship requirements in *Managing Public Money* [2] and the expectations set out in the functional standards is illustrated in Figure 8 below.



**Figure 8:** functional standards support accounting officers to fulfil their stewardship role for the public resources associated with functional work

This standard (GovS 001) sets consistent expectations for direction and management of functions across government, including management of functional standards. The other standards in the suite set high-level (but comprehensive) expectations for what needs to be done and why for functional work, including roles and accountabilities, at the centre and in organisations. The rest of the governance and management framework (see Annex D) fills in the details (the ‘how’).

Mandatory elements in functional standards reflect consensus about what is essential, including existing requirements about spending or regularity. Failure to comply is an indicator of heightened risk about the underlying transactions, and of potential systemic failure. It would trigger additional scrutiny and likely corrective action through management lines, and might also lead to formal independent assurance reviews and adverse findings by internal and/or external auditors.

New mandatory elements proposed by functions for inclusion in a functional standard are subject to approval by HM Treasury, to ensure alignment with Managing Public Money [2] (see 6.2 and 6.3).

Functional standards may be adopted by other public sector organisations, devolved or local, in full or in part. Adoption over time is strongly recommended where relevant, to support best practice and consistent ways of working. Where used beyond central government for benchmarking purposes only, the mandatory elements in the standard may be taken as advisory.

## D. Governance and management frameworks

Functional standards are the primary reference documents for implementing consistent ways of functional working in government (**what** needs to be done, and **why**).

**How** the work is to be done is set out in associated practices and guidance, referred to throughout the suite of functional standards as ‘governance and management frameworks’. Taken together, the suite of standards and associated governance and management frameworks represent the management operating model for the functions.

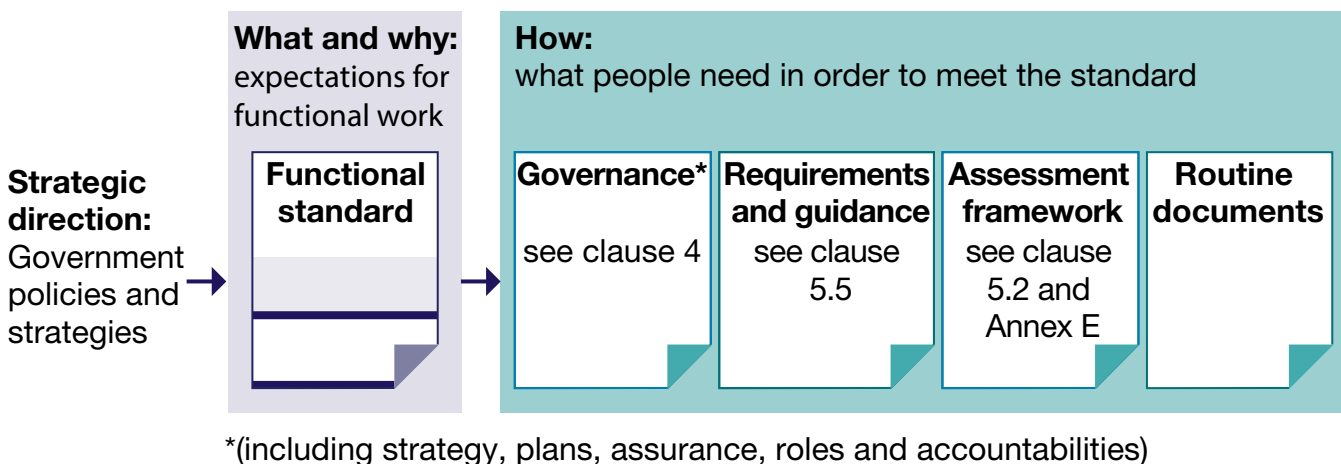
The exact content of a governance and management framework differs depending on the standard it relates to, the extent and complexity of the functional work being done, and who owns and operates it. It might apply across government, or within an organisation.

For more information, please see the **Guide to governance and management frameworks**.

Aligning governance and management frameworks to standards supports continuity of implementation and joined-up ways of working, and can be done over time as relevant material is created and/or updated. It supports interoperability across the systems and services of government, and helps ensure knowledge and information is shared across organisational and functional boundaries.

In an organisation, it is better to integrate governance and management frameworks for each function as part of the organisation’s own governance and management framework, rather than as separately managed documentation. The main point is to ensure that the function’s interests are reflected in, and aligned to, the organisation’s strategies, plans and documentation. This enables the organisation’s leadership to make explicit choices as to the relative priority of each function in delivering the organisation’s objectives.

An example of the content of a governance and management framework is shown in Figure 9 below.



**Figure 9:** Example of a governance and management framework

## E. Continuous improvement: assessment against standards

A complete and stable functional standard creates certainty about what is expected, and enables convergence over time towards an effective, coherent and integrated system.

### **Continuous improvement assessment framework**

A continuous improvement assessment framework is a management tool to help organisations consistently identify improvement needs and opportunities against the most important aspects of a standard, by defining what needs to be present or observable in an organisation for it to reach maturity levels of good, better and best.

Resulting management information is comparable across functions and organisations.

Assessment against the framework helps organisations and functions understand whether, and how well, a standard is being met.

The content of an assessment framework is not definitive, and does not dilute the need to meet the whole functional standard.

### **Raise the bar over time**

Criteria in an assessment framework can be recalibrated over time to reflect progress made. This keeps ambition high, and raises the bar for everyone.

Improved practices can be cemented into the functional standard, by turning an advisory 'should' into a mandatory 'shall' (see also 6.3.2).

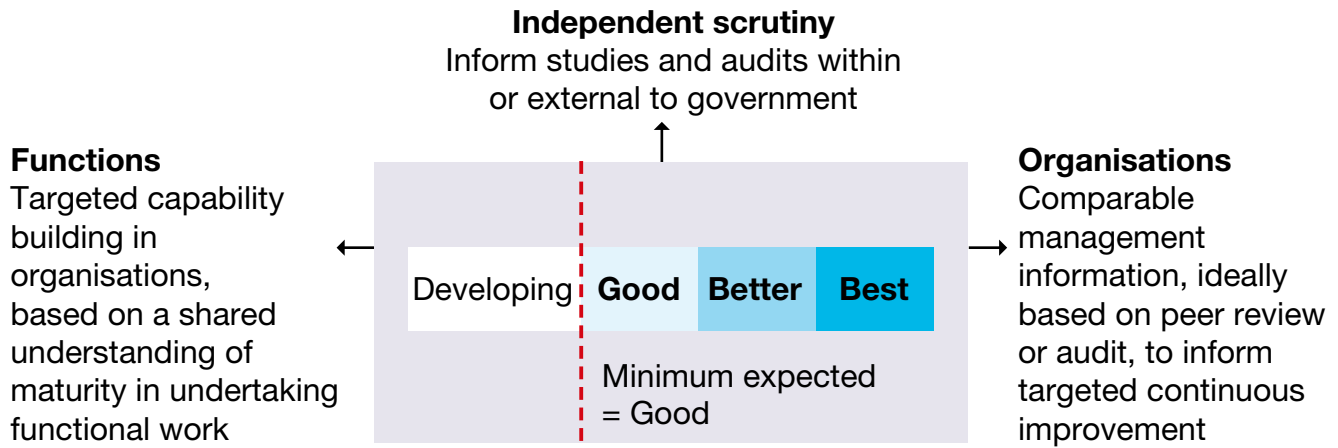
### **Benefits**

Consistent assessment provides comparable management information that supports system-wide continuous improvement (see Figure 8), providing the basis for:

- targeted continuous improvement activity within organisations, including through peer review and peer support
- targeted capability building by functions, based on a shared understanding of each organisation's maturity in meeting standards and undertaking functional work
- input to relevant independent scrutiny

A function is able to publish its continuous improvement assessment framework should it wish to do so, but completed self-assessments by organisations are for internal government management purposes, and not intended for publication.

Note: see also the Guide to continuous improvement against functional standards [1].



**Figure 10:** assessment against a functional standard supports system-wide improvement



## F. Writing style guide

### Use plain English

You should write your standard using plain English and with the reader in mind.

Plain English is easier to understand and does not mean oversimplifying your text nor changing its meaning.

Keep your sentences short, with one idea per sentence. Leave out words you don't need. Use lists when you can. Phrase your points positively where it makes sense.

Be careful with your punctuation; punctuation can completely change the meaning.

Reduce jargon where you can. Don't define words that have an evident, plain English, meaning. Avoid acronyms.

Use the present tense; standards are not able to predict the future!

Notes and examples may be used for giving additional information intended to assist the reader.

No requirements, recommendations or permissions should be included in a note.

Each clause needs to be numbered so it can be referred to accurately.

Each functional standard should be written:

- to contain mandatory (requirements) and/or advisory elements (recommendations)
- as outcome based, stating what is needed, rather than how activities are to be done.
- for long shelf life, and not contain elements which are likely to change, such as job titles
- to be agnostic to proprietary solutions and methods unless the government has adopted them

### Use the resources

Use the template to ensure consistent “look and feel”.

The following sources should be used:

- **The common glossary of definitions** used in functional standards [1].
- **Shorter Oxford English Dictionary [8]** for the meaning of words.
- **Government Digital Service Style Guide [9]**.

### Be clear on the accountabilities

All accountabilities in a standard should state who the role is accountable to and what they are accountable for. For example: “The project manager is accountable to the senior responsible owner for the day to day management of a project...”.

Some roles will be accountable to different people for different things – roles may not be shared.

**Be precise in your writing**

It should be clear, when reading a standard, which parts are mandatory (i.e. requirements), which are recommendations, which give 'permission' and which denote a 'possibility and/or capability'.

The context and preferred words to use are shown below.

Word	Implications	Notes
shall	<b>Requirements</b> – content from which no deviation is permitted if compliance with the document is to be claimed.	Do not use 'must' as an alternative for 'shall'.  Do not use 'may not' instead of 'shall not' to express a prohibition.
should	<b>Recommendations</b> – content denoting a suggested possible choice or course of action deemed to be particularly suitable without necessarily mentioning or excluding others.	'shoulds' are to be met on a comply or explain basis
may	<b>Permission</b> – expression denoting approval, consent or opportunity to do something.	Do not use 'possible' or 'impossible' in this context
might	<b>Possibility</b> – expression denoting expected or conceivable outcome.	Use in informative text only
can	<b>Possibility and capability</b> – expression conveying expected or conceivable outcome and the ability to do or achieve a specified something.	Use in informative text only
will		Ambiguous term, do not use
must		Do not use except in a legal context
is/are	A description	

