Leading in a multidisciplinary environment:

What senior leaders need to know

To provide confident and powerful leadership in a multidisciplinary environment, leaders need a depth of knowledge and understanding of the core disciplines that underpin the work of the Civil Service. This guide sets out the knowledge, skills and behaviours that all senior leaders should seek to acquire in the following areas, in order to lead in the unique context of government:

1. **Finance**
2. **Project Delivery**
3. **Commercial**
4. **Digital Data and Technology**
5. **Operational Delivery**
6. **Legal**
7. **Parliament**
8. **Analysis**
9. **Human Resources**

Guides for Policy and Communications will be available from spring 2018

Finance: what do senior leaders need to know?

The role of the Finance Business Partner…

- The importance of having a good working relationship with their Finance Business Partner.
- The role of their Finance Business Partner in providing independent advice, support and challenge.
- Know when, and on what issues, to draw in their Finance Business Partner for support.

How money moves around government…

- The journey from taxation to supporting public spending, through the fiscal framework.
- The mechanisms and processes within Departments to acquire and allocate funds.
- How to recognise and take into account the wider fiscal position.

How to use finance to support and enable effective decision making…

- How to translate a policy idea into costed and practical value for money solutions, ensuring documentation contains relevant financial information to allow decision makers to commit funding.
- How to evidence and evaluate decisions using the HMT Green Book principles and rules.
- How to manage risks identified in business cases and challenge assumptions being made.
- Internal and external business planning process.

Key government financial principles, as well as the various roles and accountabilities of those involved in managing finance…

- Governance, risks, controls, fraud prevention and detection, and how they are maintained.
- The four Accounting Officer tests (regularity, propriety, value for money, feasibility).
- The key roles and responsibilities of a Budget Holder, Finance Director, Treasury, Cabinet Office and National Audit Office (NAO).
- The overall approach to delegations, and what it means when you sign a delegation letter issued to you.
- The specific approvals required for particular categories of spend.

What is involved when implementing policy decisions…

- The control framework, and how their decisions affect their budget and forecast.
- The risks and volatility associated with forecasts.
- How to understand the drivers and assumptions that underpin the policy and the business case supporting it.
- How to ensure submissions and other policy documentation contain the information Ministers need to make decisions about committing funds.
- The corporate behaviours that you need to display to support effective financial management in your organisation.

Project Delivery: what do senior leaders need to know?

The fundamentals of project delivery…
- What projects, programmes and portfolios are.
- The four main types of government projects, and the differences between them.
- The two main delivery methodologies, and the difference between them.
- The accountabilities of key project delivery leadership roles.
- Have an appreciation of the project lifecycle.
- Have an appreciation of benefits realisation.

The importance of major projects in the delivery of government policy…
- An appreciation of the 'Government Major Projects Portfolio' (GMPP) and 'Early Development Pool' (EDP).
- The role of the Infrastructure and Projects Authority (IPA).

Why some government projects fail…
- The eight common causes of failure.

How to setup projects for success…
- Implementation – getting it right from the start.
- Ensuring alignment to the organisations strategic priorities.
- The importance of having the right project leadership and team.
- Programme sponsorship – establishing the right buy-in and support.
- Why risk management is key and what good looks like.
- Why stakeholder management is key to successful delivery.

An appreciation of what good Governance & Assurance looks like…
- How to set up the systems needed to manage and monitor progress.
- How to set the right environment for success.
- The key questions for senior managers to ask.

An appreciation of the importance of senior leader behaviours…
- The effects of senior leaders' behaviours, actions and their influence on the success or failure of government projects.

Commercial: what do senior leaders need to   know?

The fundamentals of commercial...

- What 'commercial' is, and how it impacts procurement, policy and operations.
- What the commercial cycle is, and how other professions link into each stage.
- How the use of business acumen and commercial analysis can improve Value for Money.
- What good contract management looks like and what the pitfalls are.
- How an understanding of markets and suppliers leads to better services.
- What relationships should be maintained with suppliers and bidders.
- What the key commercial processes are, and where expert support is found.

The importance of commercial in the delivery of government policy and public services...

- An appreciation of the 'Operating Standards' and commercial strategy; Commercial Blueprints, pipelines and planning.
- The role of the Commercial Function / Teams.
- A survey of markets and competition: early engagement and the bigger picture.
- Understand the need to take a cross-functional approach to sourcing, and the timeframe required to consider options.
- How to prepare for and oversee the procurement process.
- An overview of contract management: planning and delivery, promote continuous improvement and innovation, reduce risk and maintaining / enhancing Value for Money

An appreciation of commercial failures and success...

- Key commercial case studies that have made the news for the wrong reasons, and understand what went wrong.
- Commercial case studies and money saved when it's done right.
- Implementation – the importance of getting it right from the start.
- The importance of having the right commercial leadership and involvement.

An appreciation of what good commercial governance and assurance looks like...

- The effects of senior leader's behaviours, actions and their influence on commercial outcomes for government.
- How to set the right environment for success.
- The key questions for senior managers to ask.
- Be aware of the HMT Green Book – better business cases.
- The benefits of Open Book Contract Management.

Digital, Data and Technology: what do senior leaders need to know?

Champion the importance of cross government design principles and service standards…

- What it means to place the user at the centre of designing a service.
- The detail and purpose of the Design Principles and the Digital Service Standards.
- An awareness of the Service Manual and how it can help digital, data and technology teams.

An appreciation of discovering, developing and owning a digital service…

- The principles of discovery, alpha, beta and live phases and retiring a service.
- The role of the delivery manager and the product manager and how they differ.
- The responsibilities of the service manager or service owner.
- Be aware of user needs and user stories.
- Be aware of the approvals and governance of digital services including assessments.

An understanding of agile ways of working in government…

- The principles, approach and behaviours of delivering projects using agile methods.
- The difference between agile and waterfall methods and when to apply each.
- How to explain and participate in sprint planning, retrospectives, scrums, and other activities.
- Advocate for the value of cross-functional and multi-disciplinary teams that occasionally defy conventional hierarchies.

The application of data in decision-making…

- The ways in which government uses digital and non-digital data to improve services and content, and champion this approach.
- An expert awareness of creating performance frameworks, setting metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs).
- Be comfortable with analytics technology and tools.
- Encourage teams to explore new analytical techniques.

Understand the digital, data and technology profession…

- The role of the Government Digital Service and government as a platform.
- The digital, data and technology roles across government.
- The relationships and interdependencies between roles in the profession.
- The role of cross-government communities of practice, and encourage participation.

The importance of infrastructure and technology across government…

- The technical infrastructure and architecture underpinning critical systems in government.
- The difference between backend and frontend development, technical architecture, and web operations.
- An appreciation of legacy systems and the interdependencies between IT infrastructure.
- Understand the risks and costs associated with maintaining existing infrastructure and managing future development.

Operational Delivery: what do senior leaders need to know?

The significance of Operational Delivery to the Civil Service…

- Recognise that UK Citizens and customers experience the business of government through Operational Delivery professionals.
- Recognise that delivering to the public is a core function of the Civil Service, and those working in Operational Delivery will always want to consider the customer service impact.
- Be aware of the size and scale of the delivery arm of the Civil Service, often delivering large scale multi-faceted transformation programmes as well as the 'business as usual'.
- Understand that delivery functions operate within significant public and political scrutiny.

The distinct structure and culture of the Operational Delivery environment…

- Recognise that the workforce is often geographically dispersed. Operations happens throughout the UK.
- Be aware that operational leaders (and their teams) are often responding to the here and now issues brought about by delivery to customers.
- Understand that leading in an operational environment often requires different leadership behaviours and capabilities.
- Appreciate the necessity of supporting and driving forward the operational narrative to 1000's of people, through consistent and effective communication.
- Recognise that often quite junior staff in front line roles will be asked to make challenging and potentially difficult decisions – clear policy with limited ambiguity is helpful in this situation.
- Understand that operational delivery is a very fast paced environment, with work often delivered within defined and challenging timescales.

The interface between Operational Delivery, policy, and other functions of the Civil Service…

- Be aware that operational engagement at the outset of policy making makes for more deliverable policy.
- Recognise the dependency on teams like Employee Relationships, Human Resources, Finance and Policy to support delivery of frontline services.
- Understand the value of working collaboratively to form high performing relationships with other parts of the business.

How to most effectively work with the Operational Delivery functions…

- Understand the need to engage with Operational Delivery officials at an early stage of the policy development process.
- Understand how, what and when to engage with delivery functions, and what works.
- Recognise the need to keep any communications and learning, short, sharp and focused with accessible channels and alternatives to travel where possible.
- Have at least a basic awareness of the range and breadth of operational roles.
- Understand the core skills required to lead in an operational role.

Legal: what do senior leaders need to know?

How legal services in government are provided…

- How the Government Legal Department (GLD) is structured and the expertise it provides.
- The role of a Government lawyer.
- How to work most effectively with lawyers from GLD.

How to use the law to support and enable effective decision making…

- An awareness of key public law obligations.
- Understand where Ministers get their powers from.
- Know what devolution means in practice for your area.

When (and when not) to legislate...

- An outline of the process from policy idea to implementation.
- The different types of legislation, how each works and who is responsible for the drafting of each type.
- Timescales and what your lawyers will need to know to support the delivery of the project.
- Impact of the current Parliamentary arithmetic.

Assessing the risk of challenge/success/impact...

- The GLD risk guidance – why and how it was devised; how it works.
- Evaluating legal risks as part of the overall risk profile.
- Understand whose responsibility it is.

Dealing with legal challenges...

- The most common forms of public law challenge.
- How to make your decision making as legally robust as possible.
- The duty of candour: disclosure of internal documents.
- What the impact could be.

Parliament: what do senior leaders need to know?

The fundamentals of Parliament…

- Understand the constitutional context of Parliament, and how it holds Government to account.
- Take account of parliamentary handling when devising policies, taking decisions and advising Ministers.
- Be able to work with Ministers to achieve policy objectives through Parliament (eg considering Parliament in engagement or communications planning).

Parliament and politics…

- Understand the composition and political reality of each House of Parliament.
- Understand Ministers' responsibilities as parliamentarians and as constituency MPs.
- Understand how external organisations interact with Parliament.
- Understand the differences between MPs and Peers (constitutional differences, and differences in backgrounds, identities and expectations), and the work of backbenchers in each House.

The importance of Parliament in your work...

- Understand how primary and secondary legislation are made by Parliament, including processes for emergency legislation.
- Understand select committee process from inquiry announcement to government response and possible debate, including Osmotherly Rules.
- Understand parliamentary process for all kinds of Parliamentary Question, statements, Westminster Hall debates; backbench business and opposition days; Lords' Questions for Short Debate and General Debates.
- Understand the parliamentary calendar/day.
- Explain role of answers to PQ and ministerial correspondence, ministerial statements and responses to debates and urgent questions, in democratic accountability.
- Understand consequences of missing parliamentary deadlines for select committee responses, Parliamentary Questions etc.

Parliament and your department...

- Be up to date with current parliamentary issues for the Department.
- Understand role of the Parliamentary Team, the Whips Offices, Commons and Lords Departmental Whips and PPSs.
- Understand pressures on Ministers and how accurate, brief and clear communication is essential.
- Understand departmental and Parliamentary Business and Legislation (PBL) Committee processes for bills and secondary legislation.
- Quality assure documents from the Department to meet the needs of both Parliament and Ministers.
- Understand how to react in unexpected situations e.g. emergency legislation, emergency debates, lost votes, urgent questions.
- Be aware of the role of stakeholders connected to Parliament (eg All-Party Parliamentary Groups).
- Coach and share experiences to build parliamentary skills of others within their teams.

Analysis: what do senior leaders need to   know?

Why the Analysis Function is fundamental to your work…

- Understand how professional analysis helps Government make better decisions to improve outcomes at all stages of policy and operational delivery.
- Understand how rapid changes in society and technology mean data available for analysis are in richer and more complex forms than ever before.
- Know why it is essential to use analysts to help unlock the significant rewards and prevent risks from materialising, in the context of parliament's legislative requirements as well as public and media expectations.

Who the Analysis Function is, and what they can offer…

- Be aware of common quantitative skills of analysts and when it is important to use the specialist skills of actuaries, data scientists, economists, engineers, operational researchers, scientists, social researchers and statisticians.
- How the Analysis Professions strong networks and communities of interest across government departments help support you and your team's objectives.

How to work most effectively with Government Analysts...

- Understand how you can translate your policy or operational problem into a question to be analysed.
- Understand the certainty or limitations which exist when using digital technologies and quantitative techniques to answer operational and policy questions.

Government Analytical standards...

- Have an awareness of the Analysis Function professional standards which support the Civil Service Code values of integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality: The Green Book; The Aqua Book; The Magenta Book; Better Use of Data; Actuarial Profession, Science & Engineering Charterships and the Code of Practice for Official Statistics.

Human Resources: what do senior leaders need to know?

How to make your people strategy part of your business strategy...

- Know how your HRBPs and other organisational development practitioners can support you.
- Understand the business case for diversity, taking proactive steps and removing barriers to create an inclusive work environment.
- Know how to use strategic workforce planning, even when the future seems volatile and uncertain.
- Know how to identify and develop key capability requirements.
- Know how to identify and nurture diverse talent.

Know how to get the best out of your people and role model excellence...

- Know how to coach, nurture and develop people as managers and individuals.
- Know how to engage with your people.
- Be mindful of health and wellbeing.
- Adopt an inclusive mindset when approaching tasks and challenges - engaging teams in planning and decision making and being constructively receptive to challenge.
- Set targets/objectives and manage performance effectively.
- Manage organisational change with the impact on people at the centre of your planning.
- Champion the people principles that your organisation values, and familiarise yourself with the culture and the strategic people narrative in whatever form it takes.
- Use the data and analytics that are available (e.g. people survey; workforce planning numbers; diversity; turnover; HR casework data; absence) but always use/trust your instinct to identify/address where something is not right.

The Human Resources operating model; relevant law; and the people policies which underpin the employer/employee relationship …

- Know who provides shared and expert services, when and how you access them and how they can help you deliver.
- Understand how HR support is delivered in your organisation and how you and your team can access that.
- Know what your legal obligations are and how HR can support you in meeting them.
- Understand the extent of your autonomy - what decisions are centralised/devolved.
- Know how your senior HR representative can support your teams', and your own, career development.