Good Practices in Social Security

Good practice in operation since: 2017

Establishing a national quality management unit (Unidad de Gestión de la Calidad Nacional)

A case of the Social Security Institute of Guatemala

Social Security Institute of Guatemala
Guatemala
Summary

Changes were made based on quality standards to protect insured persons against ill health and ensure that their financial benefits are paid. This required the proper and transparent administration of resources, avoiding duplication of work, to ensure that the institution’s limited resources were used wisely. The aim was to offer a more people-focused service, increase staff involvement and leadership, develop a process-based approach, achieve continuous improvement of medical and financial service provision through quality assurance, and define and standardize management indicators with which to measure productivity across all the institution’s processes. This required teamwork and the exchanging of experiences and knowledge monitored by monthly quality circles. The changes led to better organized, more orderly and cleaner work places, allowing better productivity and a more pleasant working environment. Executive commitment to the project was pivotal.

The issue or challenge

What was the issue or challenge addressed by your good practice? Please provide a short description.

The introduction of quality management systems is a global trend, so the challenge addressed by the Social Security Institute of Guatemala (Instituto Guatemalteco de Seguridad Social – IGSS) in this good practice is to generate a positive impact in the country through the proper planning and execution of comprehensive programmes. The changes to be made were based on quality standards to protect insured persons against ill health and ensure that their financial benefits are paid. This required the proper and transparent administration of resources, avoiding duplication of work, to ensure that the institution’s limited resources were used wisely. This would produce the modern social security institution needed by all: one characterized by continual growth and development providing coverage to the population in line with its mandate under article 100 of the political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala. It would also ensure that the institution’s long-term financial projections are healthy and the quality of medical and financial services high. To achieve this, teamwork must go beyond group work and synergies must be created between sub-departments. All the key contributors to the Institute’s programmes must be included: everyone from the security guard who welcomes people into the building to the board of directors.

The challenge being faced was significant, but not impossible to overcome. Hurdles such as the resistance to change which characterizes human beings must be cleared, but with the support of the management board, the executive board and the people who sit on them, teamwork will become part of the institutional culture and environment rather than being unthinkingly imposed by regulatory decisions.

Addressing the challenge

What were the main objectives of the plan or strategy to resolve the issue or challenge? List and briefly describe the main elements of the plan or strategy, focusing especially on their innovative feature(s) and expected or intended effects.

The introduction and implementation of the national quality management unit involved several challenges, including the ongoing development of a culture of professionalism and excellence...
in customer service provision through continual training and assessment. These ensure that metrics are available for the institution’s staff and beneficiaries to evaluate customer satisfaction with the service, with quality assessments taking place on at least a quarterly basis.

The main objective was to deal satisfactorily with the complaints and claims lodged by the institution’s staff and beneficiaries within the time frame stipulated in the standards, not exceeding this by more than two per cent. This room for manoeuvre takes into account that some complaints are more difficult to resolve than others due to the specific circumstances involved. However, they can be sorted into groups and resolved in this way, which can assist with and improve the work of the institution’s staff and generate trust when complaints are impartially resolved.

**Targets to be achieved**

**What were the quantitative and/or qualitative targets or key performance indicators that were set for the plan or strategy? Please describe briefly.**

- Making the service more people-focused: concentrating on beneficiaries and understanding that behind every medical or financial case file is a person who needs healthcare or a pension or benefit that will assure their quality of life.
- Staff involvement and leadership.
- A process-based approach: standardizing the institution’s processes, creating guidelines and standards for the coordinated execution of activities, giving staff legal and administrative certainty.
- Continuous improvement to medical services by means of quality assurance: the different stages of continuous improvement should include planning, executing, monitoring and taking steps to ensure daily progress, thus generating trust and consistency.
- Defining and standardizing management indicators ("what cannot be measured cannot be monitored").
- A change of institutional culture and environment, rooted in quality with a specific focus on the healthcare and financial services sectors, with constant use of examples and awareness raising.
- A decision-making approach based on facts and existing standards.
- Mutually beneficial supplier relationships conducted transparently, effectively and efficiently: even when they are not bound in a hierarchical relationship with the Institute, they still help it to achieve its aims.

**Evaluating the results**

**Has there been an evaluation of the good practice? Please provide data on the impact and outcomes of the good practice by comparing targets vs actual performance, before-and-after indicators, and/or other types of statistics or measurements.**

- Delivery of the project to create the quality management unit to the management and board of directors for approval prior to implementation, meaning that it enjoyed executive support prior to development.
- Effectively resolving complaints from beneficiaries by taking the necessary action, adding value in the following areas:
Leadership skills.
- Human resource management skills.
- Skills relating to the formation of medical and financial teams.
- Conflict resolution skills.
- Decision-making skills.
- Skills relating to the administration of medical and financial projects.
- Skills relating to competition in the medical and financial fields.
- Skills relating to services to beneficiaries, retired people and pensioners.

- Raising awareness of quality and productivity among all the institution’s members through teamwork and exchanging experiences and knowledge, as well as mutual support, monitored by quality circles that report to the National Quality Management Unit (Unidad de Gestión de Calidad Nacional) on a monthly basis.
- Permanently achieving better organized, more orderly and cleaner workplaces as a means of bolstering productivity and offering a better working environment, using the Kaizen philosophy implemented at the Centre for Comprehensive Medical Care for Retirees (Centro de Atención Médica Integral para Pensionados).
- Improving conditions for staff in the main building in terms of ergonomics, lighting, ventilation and colour scheme, a responsibility of the Department for Safety, Hygiene and Accident Prevention.

Lessons learned

*Based on the organization’s experience, name up to three factors which you consider as indispensable to replicate this good practice. Name up to three risks that arose/could arise in implementing this good practice. Please explain these factors and/or risks briefly.*

**Indispensable factors:**

- Executive commitment: for projects of this magnitude, the involvement of the management board and executive board, including those who sit on them, is the foundation on which implementation is carried out and sustained.
- Development of a strategic plan, in accordance with the institution’s mission and vision to develop short-, medium- and long-term strategic, tactical and operational plans.
- Documentation and records to ensure traceability.

**Risks:**

- Lack of ongoing training, supervision and monitoring: if timely follow-up is not in place, the information required to create opportunities for improvement will not be available, which may determine whether the project succeeds or fails.
- Failure to follow the plan due to a lack of room for manoeuvre with both time and money, which may prevent the project from being carried out and undermine strategy and operations.
- Failure to implement the tools due to not having developed them sufficiently or satisfactorily: given their new and innovative nature, such shortcomings multiply the negative effect and resistance to change, undermining the project as a whole.