

Government as a service provider

A system analysis of municipal service providers in a democracy, based on the Unified Service Management Method (USM)

A paper of the SURVUZ Foundation

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

This paper describes the standardized management system of a government organization as a service provider. The analysis is limited to *democratic* governments, steered by a systematic representation of the people.

Government is a service provider and thus acts as the provider of government services. The customers of this provider are the citizens, companies and other organizations, in short, the **residents** of the country or the region. To manage that service in an effective and efficient, but above all sustainable way, the service provider can take a systematic approach.

The analysis is based on Systems Thinking: a scientific, holistic approach that considers the role and cooperation of essential parts in the context of the whole. It shows how the *enterprise service management architecture* of the Unified Service Management Method (USM) specifies a standardized *enterprise service management system* according to the views of Systems Thinking, in the form of a **link** for the endless chains and networks in the ecosystem of government services. This concept of the link can provide the required **interoperability** of complex service ecosystems.

The Netherlands was chosen as one of the *examples* of a democratic system, but the conclusions apply by analogy to any other democratically organized country.

Part 1 describes in general terms the nature and structure of a management system, in the context of government. The playing field is determined by the customer, the demands, the provider, and the service, which are decomposed into their essential components. The value creating service delivery system is then defined in terms of the *cooperation* between the essential components. This demonstrates that any service provider can manage all its service management activities with a simple, integrated management system of no more than 5 processes and 8 workflows.

Part 2 discusses the example of a municipality as a government organization. It shows that municipalities are often fed with practice-based guidance that does not support the *cooperation* between the essential components of the municipal management system. Instead, this practice-based guidance often comes down to *polishing the outside*, a strategy that doesn't deliver sustainable improvements.

Part 3 describes how a municipality can take the first steps on the road to a systematic approach. This can be done with a simple half-day exercise that demonstrates the universal applicability of the USM management system for government organizations. All tools described are made available free of charge by the SURVUZ Foundation.

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1 GOVERNMENT AS A SERVICE SYSTEM

Part 1 of this paper considers the government organization as a service provider. In other words: it considers government as a service delivery *system*, and shows how a Systems Thinking approach provides a grip on that system and its components, for the purpose of a sustainable delivery of government services.

System: A coherent set of components that interact and form an integrated whole.

To understand the operation of a system and thus be able to influence and control it, it is not only important to understand the *components* of the system, but especially to understand the *cooperation* between those components. After all, Systems Thinking demonstrates that none of the components can do what the system does, and the system requires all of the essential components to contribute to the system's performance.

As a service provider, the government is responsible for *managing* service delivery.

Managing: Organizing and coordinating resources, to achieve goals effectively and efficiently.

The government needs to systematically deploy service *management* to ensure the continuity of that service. To this end, the government uses a *management system*.

Management system: The coherent set of resources ("*system*") that you organize and coordinate ("*manage*") to achieve intended goals.

The essential components of any organization consist of the *people*, the activities they perform (*processes*), and the tools (*technology*) they use, to produce their *services*. Since government is a service provider just like any other service provider, the universal definition of "service" also applies here.

Service: A supported facility.

A *facility* is composed of goods and actions. The core mission of government is to deliver *value* in terms of services (supported facilities) to its customers: the citizens, businesses and other organizations that make up "the residents" of the country.

Service delivery: Making a facility available to another party for a period of time, and supporting that other party in using the facility.

1.1 Context

"The central government makes policy, enacts laws and enforces compliance. In addition, the central government prepares plans of the government and parliament, and implements these plans."
 [Source: Rijksoverheid, NL]

The government can be thought of as a *service system*, or a network of such systems (Figure 1.1). A service system is characterized by the **service provider**, the **customer**, the **demands**, and the **service** with which the provider fulfills the customer's demand, creating *value* for that customer. The customer allows the service to be used by its users, in the performance of daily operations.

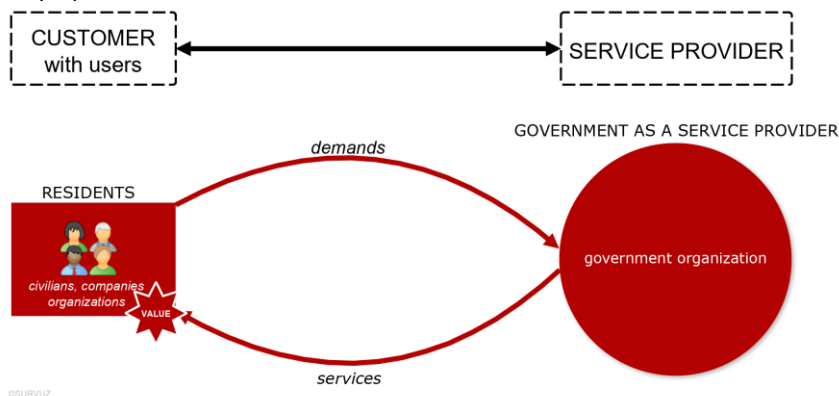


Figure 1.1. A service provider creates value for its customers and users

The purpose of any government organization is **to provide services**. The government is therefore a **service provider**: the government provides **government services** (supported government facilities) to its customers, the **residents** of the country. Supervision and enforcement are an inseparable part of that service. This mission can be translated into services at the national, provincial/state and municipal levels (Figure 1.2).

Residents include citizens and organizations (businesses and non-commercial institutions). Residents are thus the **users** in the customer domain of government (Figure 1.1). The party that plays the role of **customer** in this, and that makes *agreements* with the government about those services on behalf of and in the interest of those residents, is the collective democratic *board of representatives* of the country's residents: in a dual system based on Separation of Duties, that is the representation of the residents as the customer of the government (Figure 1.2).

Examples

The **Netherlands** have a system of *municipalities, provinces*, the First and Second *Chamber*, plus some national structures like Water Authorities composing the side of the customer, and executive departments composing the side of the government for each of these representation layers. Representation in the customer domain is mainly based on political parties.

The **USA** have a hierarchical customer domain that is based on *local counties* (municipalities, cities, townships, villages, boroughs) with a system of geographical representation through City Councils, a *State* above that, and the *Senate and House of Representatives* at the top level, based on three distinctive powers: legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Each level has its own executive organization.

India also has a federal structure, like the USA. The lower level is composed of towns and municipalities with Town Boards, City Councils, or City Corporations, above that is a State level, and on top of that is the central government with the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the People (Lok Sabha). Each level has its executive organization.

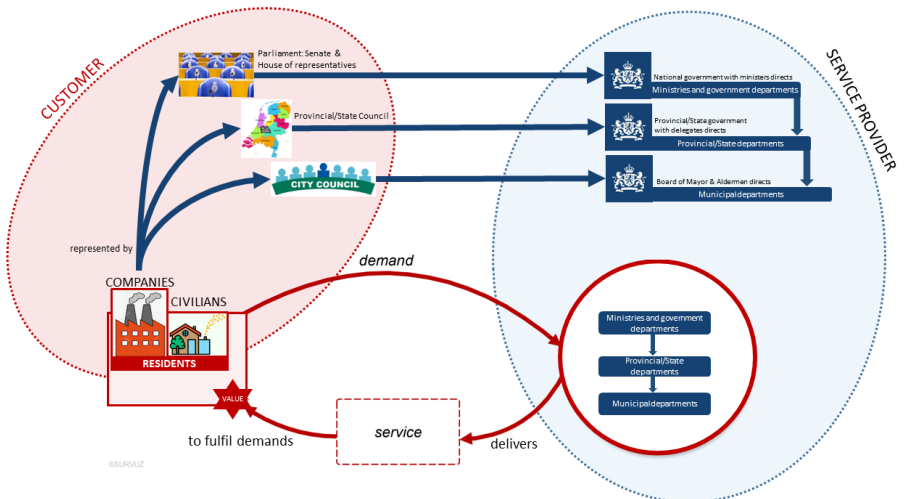


Figure 1.2. Government as service provider, residents (citizens, businesses and other organizations) as customer (example: the Netherlands)

This collective democratic board oversees the execution of services by executive government organizations. Those executors are the municipalities, towns, cities, townships, etc., (led by structures like the Board of Mayor and Aldermen/Councilors), the provinces or states (led by a Provincial Executive like a Governor), and the national government with ministries and other

government institutions (led by central government structures like the Prime Minister or the President, and the Cabinet).

1.2 Cooperation in the system

A systems-based approach (Systems Thinking) is a scientific approach that considers the *whole*, and then considers the role of essential components in the context of that whole. It is mainly based on two rules:

- **Rule 1 of Systems Thinking** is that a system consists of essential components and none of those components *alone* is capable of doing what the system does.
- **Rule 2 of Systems Thinking** is that the performance of the whole is determined by the *combination* of those essential components.

A major implication of these two rules is that a system can only be improved by steering for cooperation *among* its components and not by steering for the improvement of a single component.

Government is a complex system, with an aim to act as *one* government to the resident. Within government, numerous institutions work together to meet the needs of residents. Because none of these institutions is able to meet the resident's needs on its own, these collaborating institutions then act as **supply chains** or **networks** (ecosystems).

This means that each government organization acts as a **link** in supply chains and networks. Clearly, cooperation between these links is not promoted if each link chooses its own form and operation (Figure 1.3).



Figure 1.3. A chain of independently operating links, each performing its task in its own way

A network of such links would lead to an undeniably dramatic result as shown in Figure 1.4, where the collaboration between all those different components becomes a headache and detracts from joint performance.



Figure 1.4. A network of independently operating links has a dramatic effect on cooperation and joint performance of the whole

A supply chain of *similarly shaped* links (Figure 1.5) undeniably functions better, in the perspective of the *purpose* of that supply chain (or network, ecosystem): an integrated service that is delivered effectively and efficiently.



Figure 1.5. A supply chain of uniform links provides powerful cooperation

So there is a lot to be said for making agreements about the “linkability” of the actors in those networks. This linkability is called **interoperability**¹.

To establish such an efficient and effective cooperation between all these government organizations - based on the concept of a uniform *link* - that link must meet three important conditions:

1. The link must be **strong**. This requires a well-thought-out design of the concept “link”: an architecture based on clear principles and using unambiguous building blocks.
2. The concept of the link must be **acceptable** to all actors in the supply chains (networks, ecosystems). This requires that this link must not only be easily learnable and applicable, but also that all actors must have the freedom to realize their own *local* interpretation of issues *within* their link (think of local organizational structure and local tooling).
3. The link must answer the question of how the integral service is *managed* with that link, enterprise-wide. So the concept of the link refers to the *management system* of service delivery: the **service management system** of each link.

Because linkability (interoperability) refers to the cooperation *between* the links in the network, it is crucial to define the **interfaces** between the links. By definition, that interface consists of the residents' expressed **demands** and the subsequent exchange of **government services**: the **facilities** and the **support** requested with those demands. Therefore, if we want to control the cooperation between the links in government services, we need to find out what that interface looks like in the form of the *essential components* of the system (the management system resources), in order to manage it in an integral, integrated, and sustainable way.

1.3 Services

The services a government organization provides are defined in the governance model of the country. This often includes three levels:

- The **central government** makes policies, enacts laws and regulations, and enforces compliance. The central government prepares and executes

¹ Interoperability is the ability of different autonomous, heterogeneous units, systems, parties, organizations or individuals to cooperate, communicate and exchange information with each other (definition by [Nictiz](#)).

government and parliamentary plans. The central government provides a wide range of *supported facilities* for its residents.

- At the intermediate level, **provinces** or **states** may decide independently on many regional matters. For example, where they build roads. The provinces/states also implement national laws. For example, each province/state is responsible for the construction of new nature.
- At the lower level, **municipalities** (cities, towns, boroughs, etc.) only perform tasks that are of direct interest to their residents. For example, collecting garbage and making zoning plans.

Thus, each government level provides different services to residents. In all cases, the respective government organization thereby provides **facilities** to its residents and **supports** these residents in using those facilities. Each government service is a **supported facility** (Figure 1.6).

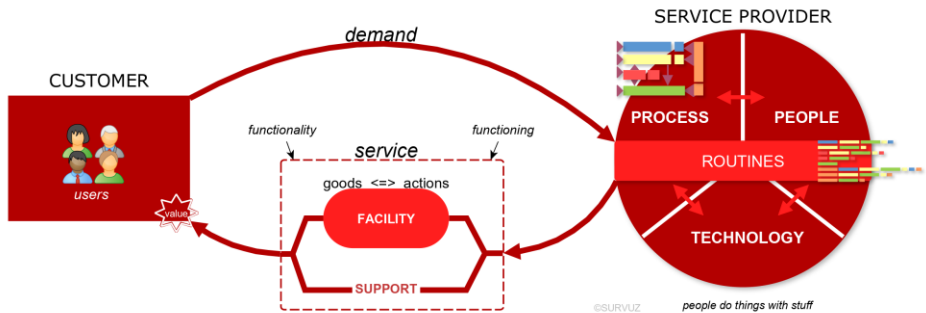


Figure 1.6. The USM customer-provider interaction model: every service is a supported facility that is composed of goods and actions, and that is evaluated in terms of functionality and functioning

This defined in the USM method: Unified Service Management. USM is an open method that is governed by the [SURVUZ Foundation](#).

A common model for government architecture is the four-layered BDAT model: business – data - application – technology, as specified by Spewak (1992) and others. The [Dutch Government Reference Architecture](#) (the NORA) goes a bit further by specifying a five-layer model (Figure 1.7) that includes the goals and constraints of the system:

- **Regulatory layer** - The upper layer specifies the laws and regulations (L&R): from national laws to the ordinances, exemptions, local policies, etc.
- **Organizational layer** (“Business”) - The second layer specifies the government service organization as the *provider* of the services at issue in this context, including the domains, practices and tools involved.
- The **information, application, and network layers** specify the *information* aspects of the services involved in government service

delivery. These layers cover the traditional data-application-technology layers of the BDAT model.

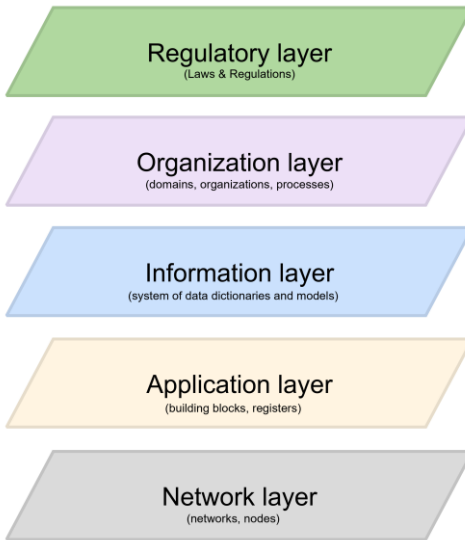


Figure 1.7 The NORA five-layer model, used by government in the Netherlands

The USM customer-provider interaction model (Figure 1.6) can easily be mapped onto the BDAT model and to the NORA's five-layer model (Figure 1.8):

- The **regulatory** layer is the context for *all* services.
- The **organizational** layer corresponds to the *service provider's* system.
- The **information, application, and network layers** specify the information aspects of the *services*.

In this way, USM is easily positioned as the standardized management system of any government organization, or as the standardized management system of any team *within* a government organization, respectively.

Note: the five-layer model focuses on the information aspects of government service delivery, while USM covers *all* aspects and forms of managing services and service delivery. USM thus complements the five-layer model into a holistic approach to integrated government service delivery.

With this, we find **the concept of the link**, which allows us to capture cooperation *between* and *within* all government organizations, for all government services, in a universal way, without limiting the degrees of freedom for the organization of local responsibilities.

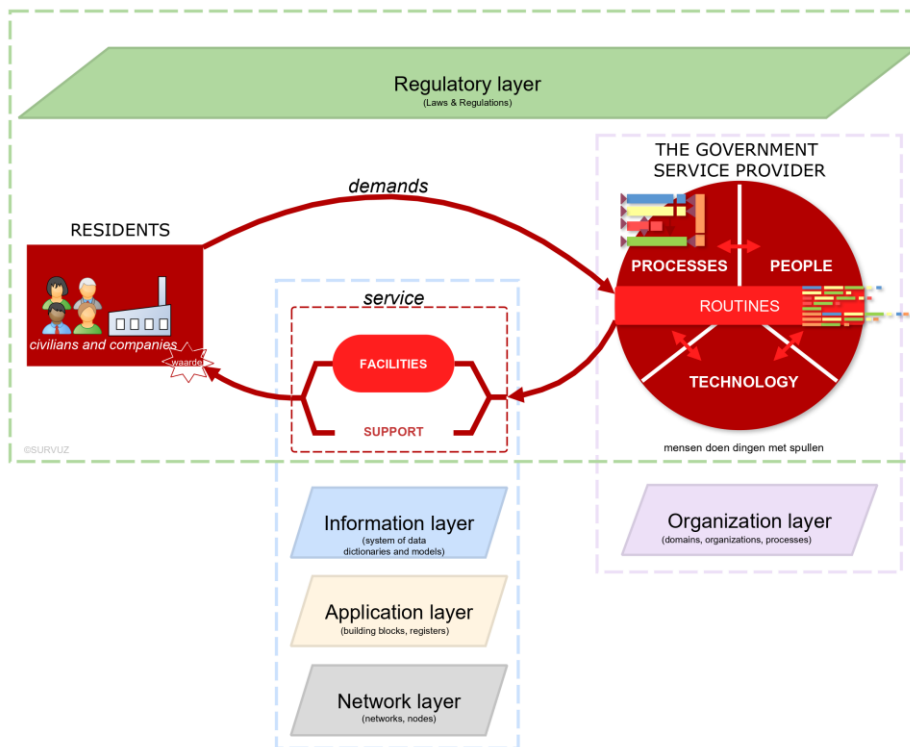


Figure 1.8 Mapping the BDAT model and the NORA five-layer model onto the USM customer-provider interaction model

1.3.1 Facilities

The services of government organizations are determined by the L&R of the Regulatory Layer, and performed in accordance with that L&R by the government organizations concerned. The facilities that a government organization thereby makes available to residents are always composed of goods and actions (Figure 1.6):

- **goods** – e.g., based on the Passports Act, municipalities issue passports that allow residents to identify themselves; based on general local by-laws, municipalities issue permits for the installation of charging stations on municipal properties; based on the Tax Act, the Ministry of Finance makes facilities available for paying taxes.
- **actions** – e.g., based on a municipal act, municipalities provide advice on debt relief and support the application for debt restructuring; based on a road traffic act, the Department of Public Works combats slipperiness on national roads during winter conditions, and provinces/states and municipalities do so on provincial/state and

municipal roads; based on an anti-doping act, a Doping Authority conducts tests to keep sports doping-free; based on a privacy act (e.g. GDPR – the General Data Protection Regulation of the European Union), a Privacy Data Authority assesses the careful use of privacy rules.

The resident assesses both the goods and actions from those facilities in terms of "what can I do with it" (*functionality*) and "how well does it work" (*functioning*) (Figure 1.6). So, those characteristics must also be included in government *service agreements*, as well as in *reporting* to the people's parliament.

1.3.2 Support

The government also provides support to residents when these residents *use* the facilities. That support always comes down to the same thing: it always involves handling an interaction with a resident. This is the *reactive* part of service delivery.

1.3.2.1 Reactive support activities

The resident can trigger four types of support with a request (aka "call"):

- With a **wish**, the resident asks for an adjustment of the service arrangements (L&R). Those wishes usually go through the elected *representatives* of the people - City Council, Provincial Council, Senate and House of Representatives, respectively - who make the agreements with the executive government organizations. In some cases, there is a route through other channels, such as through a referendum, or even an option *for individual residents* to make an agreement with the government. A *complaint* about a service that was not carried out according to agreement or expectation *in the past* is also a wish. The resident files such a complaint with the government individually, or through a representation channel such as the ombudsman (Commissioner) or an advisory board.
- By reporting a **failure**, the resident requests that a deficiency in the agreed service (L&R) be rectified, that is, if the government does not perform the service in the resident's experience as that resident expects. This can be a very simple and small-scale failure such as a loose paving stone, but also cases with major national impact such as an abuse at the Tax Office. The latter often requires the resident to give the reported failure extra weight, for example by using a large-scale petition to draw attention to an incorrect execution of services, or by involving an authoritative representative.

Note that for something to qualify as a failure, it must relate to a preferably *explicitly agreed feature* of service delivery (the L&R) that fails *at the moment* it is reported. If a resident reports that he/she does not agree with the *agreed service*, it is not a *malfunction* but a *wish* (possibly formulated as a complaint, relating to a past situation). Only after the L&R has been adjusted can such a report be considered a failure.

- A request to perform a service *within* the agreements made (L&R) either results in a change to the **managed infrastructure**² of the government organization or the request concerns the execution of a service *without* changing the managed infrastructure. This distinction is of no importance to the resident, but all the more so to the government organization providing the service.
 - If the request requires a permanent modification of the managed infrastructure, the governmental organization interprets the request as a **request for a change**.
 - If the request doesn't require any modification of the deployed *managed* infrastructure, the governmental organization interprets the request as a **service request**. In this case, the organization simply executes the request in accordance with the agreement.

It is of great importance *to the government organization* whether the request results in such a change in the managed infrastructure: after all, such a change may have an impact on all other users of that *same* infrastructure and must therefore be carried out carefully and planned. Each government organization must therefore have defined for itself exactly *what* it understands by its managed infrastructure.

The resident can make such a request for support on an individual basis to the government (through their own request or through public participation), but also through an advocate (e.g., ombudsman, commissioner) or through a representation such as the City Council. The lower in the governing hierarchy, the more freedom there is to adapt regulations to a resident's individual wishes: at the level of a municipality, the resident can request more variation in fulfillment than at the level of the central government. For example, a resident is more likely to influence the detailing of his own residential neighborhood than the detailing of a large national project such as the design of new highway or the revision of the student loan system.

1.3.2.2 Proactive support activities

Based on its own findings, user data, or external information resources, a government organization itself may decide *proactively* to define a **risk** for the way it has designed and delivered its services. A risk is an initiative to make

² The **managed infrastructure** is the specification of all infrastructure (including "assets") that the government deploys for the purpose of the agreed service (within L&R), and that is worth specifying and **recording** - so that the government knows how and with what resources it provides the service. This concerns not only the infrastructure components but also the characteristics of that infrastructure. Any modification of a component from that register is a *change*. Thus, a change to unimportant (low-cost) infrastructure or features thereof, which are not worth registering (commodities), and therefore not monitored by the government, is not a change but something that is requested with a *service request* - which must be performed with equal care. The government registers all components of the managed infrastructure with their characteristics in a register: the **managed infrastructure register (MIR)**, in IT also called configuration management database (CMDB) or asset register.

an **improvement** by either removing a threat or applying an innovation. Both initiatives lead to a structural improvement in service delivery.

The resident is only *indirectly* involved in this³. It is the servicing government organization itself that *directly* benefits from the measures resulting from risk handling: these measures improve the execution of *agreed* services. From the resident perspective, all resident requests to improve services are requests to adjust the *agreements* on the delivery of services or to improve the *execution* of already agreed services. If, based on such a request, new L&R is established, the government organization will then provide its services according to that new (better) L&R.

The government thus has its own *internal* responsibility regarding the continuous improvement of its services.

1.4 The components of the system

The government service organization functions as a **system**. Each system, by definition, consists of its **essential components**, which provide a coherent and sustainable contribution to the collective performance: in this case, the delivery of services to residents. The essential components of a service provider are - as in any other organization - the **People** in the organization, the **Processes** (the logically ordered activities these people perform), and the **Technology** (the tools these people use in performing those activities) (Figure 1.9). These essential components constitute the **business resources** of the government service organization.

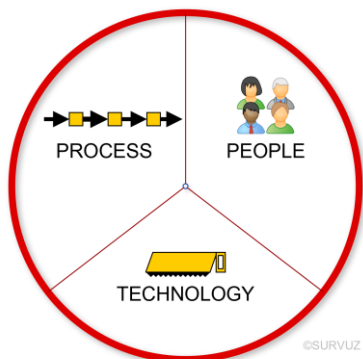


Figure 1.9. Every organization has three types of resources: People, Processes and Technology

³ By comparison, a visitor to a restaurant may ask the restaurant owner to offer a different dish on the menu from now on ("Can you include a vegan dish on the menu list?"), but that visitor does not interfere with whether the cook can use better pans to prepare the meal, or develop a better recipe.

"An organization is a bunch of people doing things with stuff."

With those three types of resources, the public service provider strives to optimally convert the **demands** of its residents into the agreed **services** in order to create the intended **value** in society.

The *people* working at a government organization vary from one government organization to another and are actually constantly changing, as is the *technology* (tooling) deployed. So, the design of a *sustainable* management system of the government organization should be based on a *sustainable* process design: the activities that make up the processes are the only stable factor in the management system.

But what are the processes of a government organization?

1.4.1 Processes

Worldwide, a **process** is defined as a series of activities performed in a certain order to achieve a predetermined goal. Thus, by definition, a process consists *only* of activities (Figure 1.10).

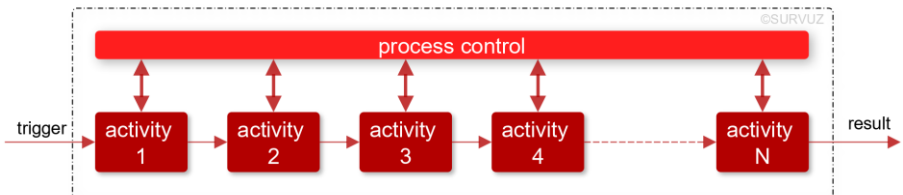


Figure 1.10. Definition of process: a series of activities, just the **what**, no **who**, no **how**

1.4.1.1 Three types of routines

For practical purposes, of course, what matters most is how those activities in those processes are *practically* carried out by the people involved, with the help of the technology deployed. After all, these practical activities are the most important components of the organization, in the sense that they determine the practical nature and identity of the organization. A municipality does different things from a dairy, and it does different things from a law firm. However, that essence only comes into play *in that practical application*, influenced by the selected tools, the knowledge of the people involved, and the supported facilities (services) created with them. *Without* that practical application, the processes can be **universally** defined for all service providers. After all, it is only in the combination of the processes with the people and technology that the differences within an organization arise.

In this way, **three types of routines** can be distinguished (Figure 1.11):

1. The **process**, specifying only the *what* (the activities).
2. By adding to the activities of the process *who* performs these activities, a **procedure** emerges.
3. If we then also describe *how* that person should perform those activities, a **work instruction** is created.

To develop an efficient set of routines in practice, the organization must be well aware of that distinction: there is a Babylonian confusion⁴ worldwide in which the term "process" is incorrectly applied to anything and everything - *but not to processes*. So we must learn to distinguish between things that are called "process" *but are not*, and things that *do* meet the definition of "process" (Figure 1.11): the latter we will call here '**pure processes**'.

1.4.1.2 Practical examples from others

The design of practical *routines* in government - as in business - has been dominated for decades by thinking from the *practical examples of others*, the so-called **best practice** approach. This approach is described in many *frameworks*, and documented in the many *reference models* made available by and for central government. Education and handbooks are also based on that best practice approach.

Many vastly different versions of each of these frameworks have been released. Because applying best practices always leads to an alignment with *local* people and *local* resources and thus to *local* interpretation, that approach causes a huge fragmentation of routines, making practical collaboration between teams and organizations a major challenge. And all of these frameworks and reference models abuse the term "process" in the same way: they are *not* limited to the *what*.

Examples from IT departments

In the IT departments of government organizations, practical routines have also been set up for decades based on common *frameworks* with similar *best practices*, including ITIL and COBIT. All of these frameworks apply the term "process" to things that are *not* limited to just the what, but also include the who and the how – and therefore these so-called "processes" are all to be found at the bottom level of Figure 1.11: the practical routines of the "work instruction" type. Together, ITIL and COBIT alone already cover **more than 70 "processes"**.

⁴ Read the SURVUZ Foundation e-book "[Demystifying the term PROCESS](#)"

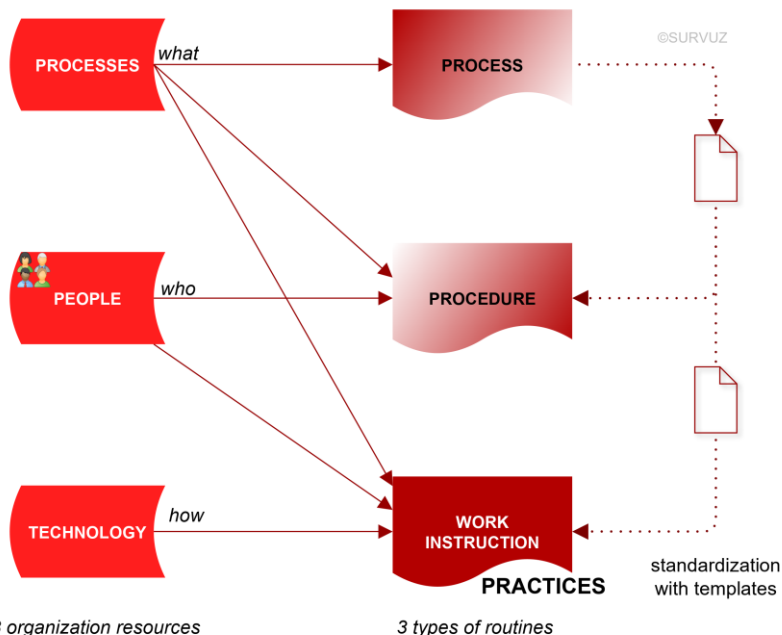


Figure 1.11. Every organization has three types of routines, based on combinations of the resources involved

Example from the Netherlands

Municipalities frequently use *case-based working*, an approach based on the description of *practices* (or functions) that a municipality can adopt. The GEMMA – the Dutch Municipal Model Architecture - speaks of **156 municipal business processes** and hundreds of different *case types*, of which 43 reference case types have been developed. All of these “processes” and case types refer to things that a municipality performs *in practice*, and are therefore at the bottom level of Figure 1.11: the *practical* routines of the “work instruction” type.

Example from the USA

The same applies to *reference models*. E.g., in the APQC resource database, we can find the *process reference model* for city government: the [APQC Process Classification Framework \(PCF\) - City Government](#). This reference model includes **some 1500 so-called “processes”** that refer to things that a municipality performs *in practice*, and all of the “processes” cover the who and the how – and therefore these are practical routines of the type of procedures or work instructions (Figure 1.11).

All of these examples demonstrate that the things that are so often called “processes” violate rule number 1 of the process definition: a process is only composed of activities (the *what*) and not the *who* and the *how*.

The things people tend to call “processes” are almost always practices of the work instruction type.

1.4.1.3 Sustainable routines

Sustainable routines are not based on rapidly changing *best practices* but on **principles** (Figure 1.12) that have a long period of validity. The practical routines of others (*practices*) cannot simply be translated to one's own organization, especially if it is not clear on the basis of which (sustainable) *principles* these routines were created.

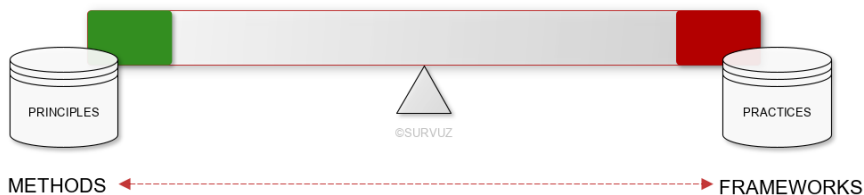


Figure 1.12. Principles versus practices of others

Government often aims to use a single national set of principles, with which sustainable routines for a nationwide uniform service provision (“one government”) can be realized. This starting point is of great strategic importance because it provides the basis for a sustainable solution for integrated and efficient government services.

Example from the Netherlands

The aspiration of “one government” is expressed, among other things, in the NORA and in numerous policy documents. As of January 1, 2023, the NORA has established a set of Binding Architecture Agreements, which should enable a good connection between services, and further improve the quality of services and service delivery. Those agreements were drafted within the community of government architects and adopted by the NORA User Council. In April 2021, the NORA User Council adopted a [Service Delivery Concept](#) for this purpose, which is based on the USM method.

The (*best*) practices describe how an organization can set up certain tasks *in practice*, and thus are actually *generalized work instructions* shown on the bottom layer of Figure 1.11. Thus, *best practices* are in no way equivalent to the pure *processes* from which a service provider's optimal routines should be derived. Similarly, *reference models* cannot be equated with processes:

they describe the tasks and functions (aka *capabilities*) that an organization should be able to perform in its daily practice.

To gain insight into the **pure processes** of a government organization, we will therefore have to resort to sources other than *practice*-based frameworks and reference models. Mindful of the adage "think first – act later" it is useful to formulate the requirements for the term "process" first, before we start *calling* something a process.

1.4.1.4 Four requirements for pure processes

An *integral* and *pure process model*, which is also *integrated* for maximum efficiency, should meet at least the following four requirements:

1. Each process describes **only what** is to be done sequentially, not the *who* or the *how* (otherwise it would be a *procedure* or *work instruction*, see Figure 1.11).
2. Each process has a **relevant and unique goal to the customer** (otherwise it is a sub-process with an intermediate product that has no meaning to the customer: only the end result affects the customer).
3. An *integral process model* organizes the processes and **includes all activities** for managing services (otherwise we have multiple process models next to each other, i.e. [multiple steering wheels on the car](#), multiple captains on the ship).
4. In an *integrated* process model, **each activity occurs only once** (otherwise processes are redundant, and redundancy is the worst enemy of efficiency).

1.4.1.5 A pure process model

The search for a process model that consistently meets these four requirements began in the Netherlands as early as the late 1980s⁵. Figure 1.13 shows the final result of this search as it was published in 2016: a *universal* process model for managing service activities. This is the process model of the Unified Service Management (USM) Method, a model that consists of only **five pure processes** for managing all service activities. The model is applicable to *any* service organization, regardless of its size and mission domain, providing the universal concept of the **link** for the interoperability of service teams and organizations in service ecosystems.

⁵ With Dutch national Post and subsequently in the early nineties with Dutch national Telecom, in a search after an approach to get *in control* of the ever growing complexity in technology.

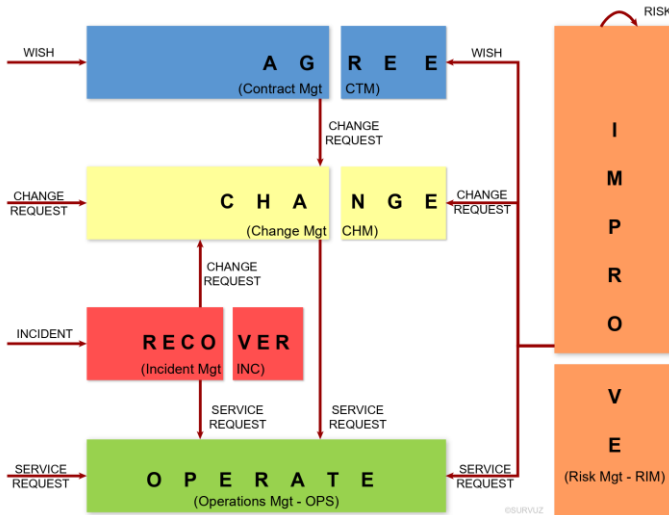


Figure 1.13. The USM process model: clean, integral, integrated, with customer-relevant output per process.

The USM process model specifies the five pure service provider processes by which that service provider manages *all* service management activities:

- Agree:** establishing and maintaining service delivery **agreements**. In government, those agreements consist of the L&R that applies at the national, provincial and municipal levels. This process involves both the agreements with customers (residents and their representatives) and the agreements with the external suppliers and the internal solution teams of the service provider that contribute to that service. The corresponding trigger is called **wish**.
- Recover:** recovering the service from any failure, in accordance with the agreements (L&R) made with the customer (resident). This process relates to both failures and *imminent* failures. The corresponding trigger is called **failure** (or *incident*).
- Change:** the controlled deployment of modifications to the assets and agreed services (facilities *and* support). The service provider uses this process only if the component to be modified is part of the *managed infrastructure*. The corresponding trigger is called **change request** (or also *request for change* (RFC)).
- Operate:** the planned execution of all operations in the production environment of the agreed service, including monitoring the performance of the deployed infrastructure. This process relates to all deployed infrastructure: all facilities and all assets required for it. The corresponding trigger is called **service request**.

- **Improve:** *preventing* effects that impair the agreed service (threats), as well as *promoting* structural improvements in the agreed service (innovations). The corresponding trigger is called **risk**.

The first four processes are **reactive** and are triggered by the customer/user (resident), the fifth process (*improve*) is **proactive** and is triggered by the service provider itself (the government organization).

Each pure process in this integrated process model consists of steps, which in turn can be detailed in activities (Figure 1.14). The specifications of those steps and activities (shown here with numbers) are detailed in the textbook "[The USM Method](#)".

Because the process model described is **integral and non-redundant**, the service provider can only deliver a performance with logical combinations of those non-redundant process blocks. The combination of the **triggers** and the **logic** of the process model limits the number of possible combinations to only eight: the eight standard **workflows** of each service provider (Figure 1.15).

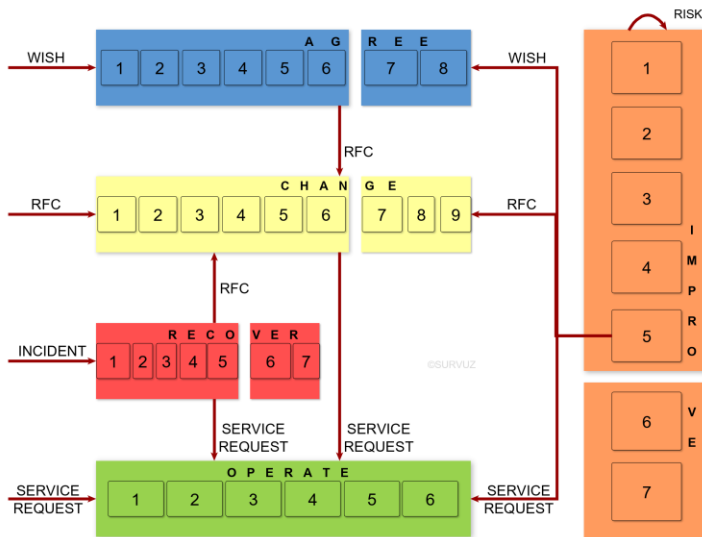


Figure 1.14. The process model can be detailed in steps and activities

Thus, all of the service provider's management tasks fall within eight workflows: that is all that the process model offers.



Figure 1.15. An integral, integrated, and non-redundant process model provides only eight different workflows for performing all of a service provider's management tasks

The five reactive workflows, triggered by or on behalf of residents, are easily recognizable in practice:

- **Workflow type 1:** Residents submit (through the representation channels of Figure 1.2) a wish to modify the existing service agreement (L&R) or create a new version of that service agreement. That request is tuned and established (new L&R), after which the government deploys the new (adjusted) service via a change and then realizes it on a daily basis.
- **Workflow type 2:** A service agreement (L&R) has been agreed and residents now wish to change something *within* the options defined therein. This results in an adjustment of the agreed facilities, after which the government realizes the adjusted service on a daily basis.
- **Workflow types 3 and 4:** Residents report a failure (incident) of an agreed service. Its handling depends on whether there is a modification to the *managed infrastructure*.
 - If the recovery requires a significant modification to the facilities (for example, replacement of an important or costly component of the managed infrastructure), then **workflow type 3** applies: recovery *via a change* to the managed infrastructure, which is then brought into production.
 - If the government can recover the failure without modifying the managed infrastructure (for example, by rearranging the furniture in a waiting room), then **workflow type 4** applies: *recovery via a direct action* in the production environment.

After the situation is adjusted and recovered, the government delivers the service again as agreed on a daily basis.

- **Workflow type 5:** residents request the government to provide an agreed service, without a change in the managed infrastructure. The government handles this as agreed, within the agreed time and quality. Examples include answering an informative question, providing an overview of data, or a request for access to government resources. In this case, nothing changes in the managed infrastructure of the government organization.

The three proactive workflow types 6, 7 and 8 do not start from the residents. These are the workflows that start from the process *Improve*, *initiated* by the government organization itself and under the *responsibility* of that government organization. Here the internal manager of the government organization acts as the principal. Residents can participate in the *handling* of these improvements if requested.

Such a *proactive* improvement initiative can lead to three different handling processes in the form of workflows:

- **Workflow type 6:** For a threat or innovation, the government triggers the negotiation of existing service agreements (L&R), with the goal of adjusting those agreements. This can happen if the government is no longer able to realize the agreements made, or if the government thinks it is able to provide *better* services and wants to adjust the agreements (L&R) accordingly.
- **Workflow type 7:** The government handles an improvement by changing the managed infrastructure *within* existing service agreements (L&R) - i.e. without having to change the service agreements.
- **Workflow type 8:** The government processes an improvement by modifying the routines or the deployed infrastructure *within* existing service agreements (L&R) - but without changing the *managed infrastructure*.

Each government organization can thus handle all its service management activities with no more than **eight standard workflows**. This provides the basis for a uniform connectivity concept *between* all government organizations, as well as for all teams *within* a government organization.

This *pure* process architecture provides the generic middle layer from the universal three-layer service provider architecture model (Figure 1.16).

The universal three-layer architecture can be explained in simple terms:

- The pure processes make up only eight pure workflows, which can be pictured as **trains**, made up of **wagons** that specify the steps of the individual processes in the logical order.
- The service provider decides which **conductors** are assigned to clip the tickets in those wagons. This provides the service provider's organizational structure.
- The service provider determines which **pliers** each conductor uses to clip the tickets in his wagon. This provides the technology, the tools of the service provider.

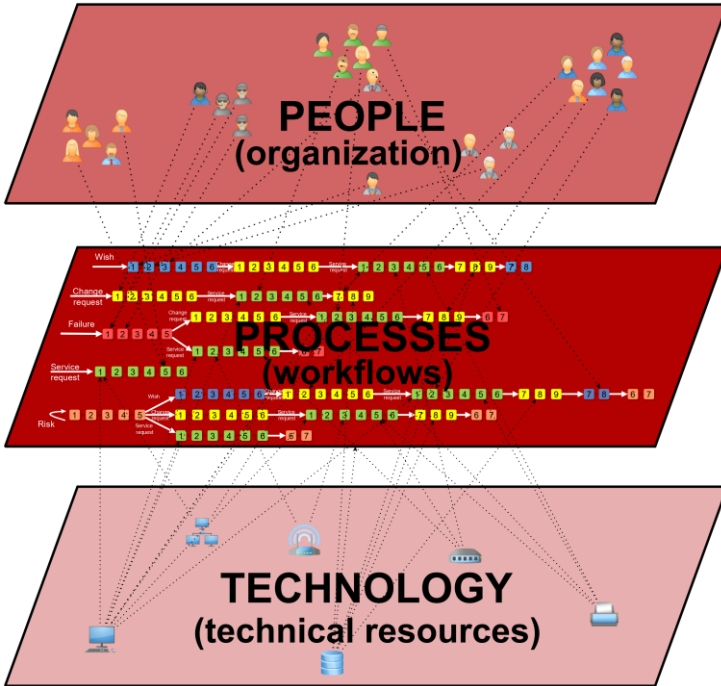


Figure 1.16. The universal three-layer service provider architecture model (layer 2 from the NORA five-layer model)

The routines from Figure 1.11 can now be easily depicted on these three layers (Figure 1.17).

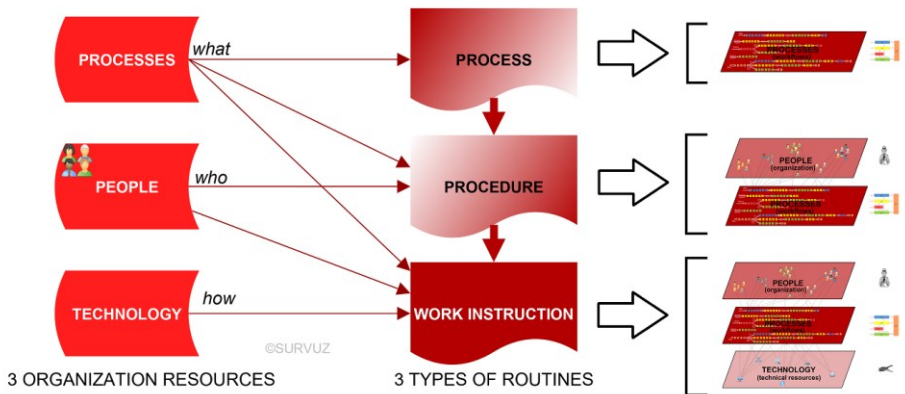


Figure 1.17. The relationship between the three types of routines and the three architecture layers

1.4.2 People

The organizational arrangement of the government organization ("the conductors who clips the tickets") is a local matter: each institution provides for that itself. There are no requirements for this organizational structure other than that it should be set up in such a way that it contributes optimally to the desired **control** over the agreed quality of service. Exactly *what* this optimal organization is, is often a matter of history, culture, personal conviction of the management, or other local conditions.

Only if there are umbrella agreements within the government sector concerned for this organizational structure, or if W&R applies to organization structure, can there be restrictive regulations. E.g., restrictions may apply in terms of forced compliance with ISO standards, specifying the distribution of responsibilities. Most of these restrictions would automatically be covered by the organizational guidance included in USM. This USM guidance is mainly based on the principle of Separation of Duties, the most powerful organizational intervention technique that contributes to *control*.

1.4.3 Technology

Numerous tools are used in *managing* service delivery. In modern society, these are increasingly *automated* tools. Common tools are:

- **service delivery coordination tools** (SDC tools) with two core functions:
 - *workflow tools* with templates, for the coordination of calls, with templates and call registers
 - a *database* for the registration of managed infrastructure (the MIR)
- tools for **automating the execution** of activities (mechanization), including:
 - knowledge management tools
 - project portfolio management tools (PPM tools)
 - reporting tools
 - communication tools
- non-automated tools, including:
 - templates
 - documents, forms, diagrams

For example, a municipality uses a help desk package, as well as a case system, a financial package, and a variety of Office systems.

Schematically, such tools can be arranged according to the diagram in Figure 1.18. A combination of functions is often supported by products that have come to be known as *facility management information systems* (FMISs) or *enterprise resource planning* (ERP) software.

The technology resources used by a government organization to manage its services are no different from those used in the business world. And just like

in business, there are countless *different* tools from different providers being used across government organizations. This does not make acting as a link in a chain or network (Figure 1.5) any easier.

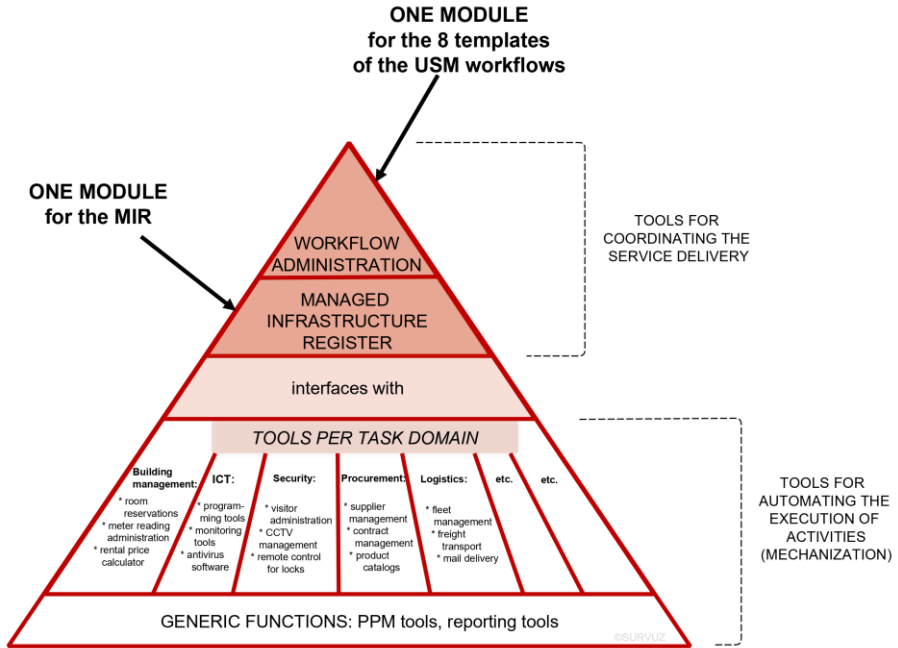


Figure 1.18 A schematic layout of automated resources of a service organization

The tooling relevant to the *management system* is at the tip of the pyramid in Figure 1.18. That tooling actually supports only two functions or modules: the **workflow coordination** of the 8 USM workflows, and the **resource registration** in the managed infrastructure register (the MIR). So, for its *management system*, a government organization needs only *one* tool that supports these two functions - but in a comprehensive and integrated way. Unfortunately, only very few tools offer this in a simple and structured way. Most tool vendors prefer to focus on a wide range of functions that are mainly found in the lower reaches of the pyramid: there is considerably more money to be made there, especially if the provider uses the usual revenue model based on complexity, and if the provider has a module-based pricing model instead of the preferred *seat*-based pricing model.

The SURVUZ Foundation has an audit for providers of SDC tools that wish to comply with this simple and efficient functionality. They can have their product tested against a set of requirements. After a successful audit, such a product is then [registered](#) at the USM portal, allowing USM users to choose their tooling from a list of trusted products.

1.5 Continuous improvement

The government has a duty to meet the agreed services, the L&R. This makes it clear to the government what requirements it must meet. Of course, this does not always go well, and there is often room for improvement. Meeting the expectations of the customer (the resident) in the best way with the least effort is therefore a constant concern for the government. This is the area of continuous **improvement** - not at the explicit *request* of the resident, but in the resident's *interest*.

Improvement initiatives can have numerous causes, but they always have one of two goals: they either (partially) eliminate a **threat**, or they enable an **innovation**. In either case, the intended result is "improved" service delivery by handling a *negative* risk (a threat) or a *positive* risk (an innovation).

In USM, improvement initiatives are managed in the Improve process, also known as **Risk Management**. Because all risks (both positive and negative) ultimately have only one goal - to improve resident services - *all* risks must be weighed against that resident interest. For each risk (each improvement initiative), the benefits must outweigh the costs, otherwise a measure makes no sense. The net benefit of a measure must then be expressed in added value, using the USM definition.

Value creation is the increase in the vitality of the receiving system, in this case the customer (resident).

So the government itself is responsible for recording and handling risks, and also for determining the *business case* for the **measure** for dealing with the risk. It is in the Improve process that the government has the most to gain: every measure for handling a risk by definition delivers more than the measure costs. The challenge lies primarily in freeing up the time needed for proactive tasks.

Unfortunately, a government organization that is not *in control* of its services is still reactive and therefore spends most effort on fire fighting. This government organization will hardly achieve the potential benefits of the Improve process. For that government organization, an improvement plan based on methodical and systematic service delivery is a matter of vital importance. Those who are not *in control* of service delivery - the only task of government - pay the price for that every day.

1.6 The government ecosystem

Based on this concept of the link, we can now picture any government ecosystem as an ecosystem of *similar* entities that have a standardized interface, but that can still determine their local formats in their own way without interfering with the ecosystem’s **interoperability** (Figure 1.19).

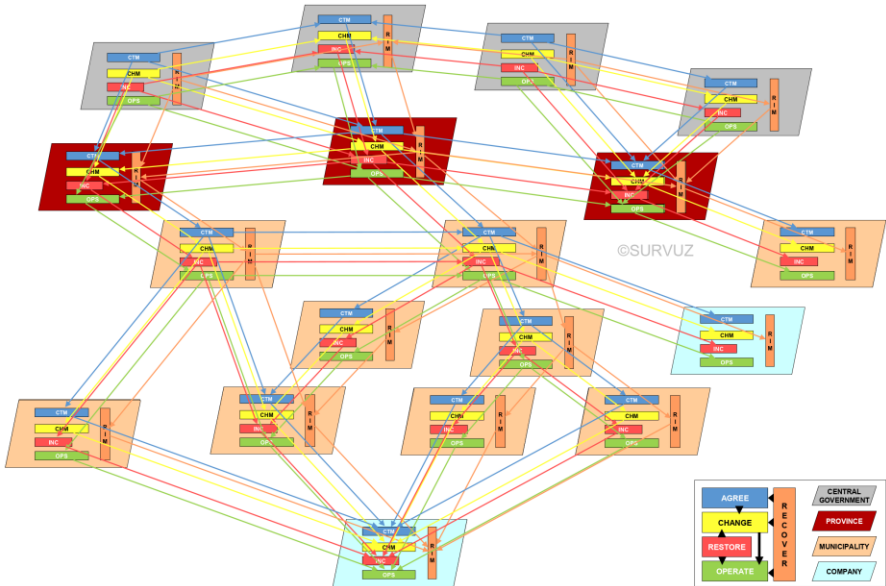


Figure 1.19 A government ecosystem based on the USM concept of the link

This solution is completely in line with the original requirements of Section 1.2, saying:

- The link must be **strong**.
- The concept of the link must be **acceptable** to all actors in the supply chains (networks, ecosystems).
- The concept of the link must refer to the **management system** of service delivery.

The universal character of the USM Method enables the application of this concept for *any* government service, for *any* government organization of *any* size, as long as it is based on the principle of democracy, representing a customer-provider relationship between executive government organizations and the residents of the country or the region.

2 THE MUNICIPALITY AS AN EXAMPLE

Municipalities have autonomous powers to decide on many issues, like building theatres, creating cycle paths or building houses. Making these decisions is the municipal authorities' most important task. Municipalities also implement many national laws, like the ones requiring them to issue passports and identity cards to their residents. [Source: [Municipality's tasks, NL](#); alternative source: [Australia](#)]

In Part 2 of this paper, we elaborate the description of the management system of Part 1 for the situation of a municipality (or other local structures like towns, cities, townships, etc.). Thus, the layout of Part 2 is completely analogous to the layout of Part 1.

In Part 2, we apply the concept of government service based on the **link** concept to the bottom layer of Figure 1.2: the municipality as a service system. Each municipality is a link in the ecosystem of government services. The translation to the other layers can be done completely analogously.

2.1 Context

The municipality is a government service organization (Figure 2.1), as are the provincial/state and central government departments.

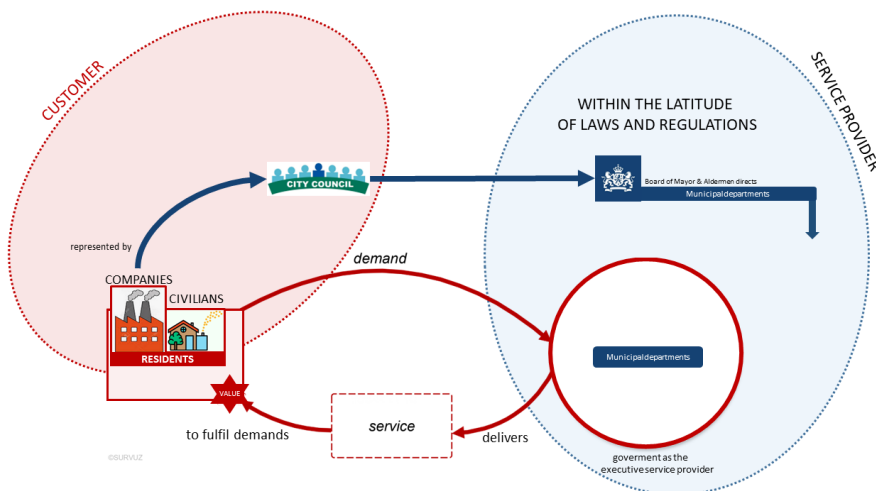


Figure 2.1. The municipality as a service provider, within the latitude of L&R

Residents are the *users* of municipal services. Those residents are not limited to the residents of only the respective municipality; residents of other municipalities can also act as users. However, the municipality makes its *local* agreements with only the residents' *local* representatives. Those *local* representatives make up the municipal council (City Council), which has the role of customer here, on behalf of those *local* residents. The mayor and the aldermen direct the implementation by the municipal organization, within the leeway of the L&R at the national and provincial/state levels.

Municipalities tend to follow a service delivery strategy based on **case-based working**, a strategy that is supported by the before-mentioned APQC reference models and the Dutch GEMMA. The responsible parties provide guidance which is reflected in the technical automation tools with which municipalities support the daily handling of their work. That approach can unmistakably be positioned as a *practice*-based approach on the right side of the principle-practice axis (see Figure 1.12, Section 1.4.1.3), which for that reason can only have a sustainable result if it is combined with a *principle*-based approach, on the left side of that axis. Unfortunately, for decades now, this guidance has only fulfilled the right-hand side of the axis, leaving the essential left-hand side as a blind eye. Consequently, this balance has been missing from the tools provided to municipalities, with the effect that these municipalities have often ended up with redundant and inefficient tooling.

In recent years, more and more municipalities are finding their way to a **task-based** strategy. That strategy emphasizes the customer- and result-oriented nature of municipal service delivery, which in itself is an excellent principle, but also does not provide a fulfillment of the required principle-based *foundation* for managing municipal service delivery.

Other support for municipalities also emphasizes this one-sided, *practice*-based approach. This is reflected, for example, in the **Service Blueprinting** technique used by municipalities with the intention of capturing and improving the "*customer journey*" of residents.

All initiatives that *start* with a focus on current *practices* by definition miss the beat to the complementary *principle*-based municipal management system, and actually amount to "polishing on the outside" - an approach that seemingly does lead to some improvement, but does not involve the *heart* of the system and therefore never yields a sustainable solution.

2.2 Cooperation in the system

The supply chains of Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.5 are as applicable to municipalities as to any other organization inside or outside government. These supply chains and networks occur both *between* municipalities and *within* municipalities:

- All **municipalities** must cooperate with each other and with other government organizations for effective and efficient service delivery. This is due in part to the fragmentation of tasks across numerous actors, and is visible e.g. in the strong growth of APIs for data management.
- All **teams within the municipality** must work together to provide effective and efficient services for residents. This also involves numerous external teams (suppliers), as many municipal tasks are outsourced.

Thus, for municipalities and for teams *within* municipalities, their patterns of collaboration among themselves are of paramount importance to the net result of service delivery - their sole reason for existence.

2.3 Services

Municipal services are based on the tasks imposed on municipalities by higher government. E.g., the municipality:

- is responsible for L&R like a Social Support Act, a Participation Act and youth aid
- deploys an Environmental Management Act and regulates, among other things, the separate collection of household waste
- keeps track in a Residents Register of who lives in the municipality and issues official documents, such as a passport or identity card and a driver's license
- grants benefits to those who cannot support themselves
- is responsible for school housing and spends money on pupils who need extra assistance
- makes zoning plans indicating which area is designated for housing, which part for nature, and which part for businesses
- supervises housing construction, and makes agreements on this with housing corporations
- maintains streets, roads, sidewalks, and bicycle routes
- grants subsidies, for example to a swimming pool or library
- ensures that business parks are easily accessible

All of these activities boil down to the same thing: the municipality makes **facilities** available to residents, and **supports** those residents in using these facilities (Figure 1.6). The facilities always consist of a combination of goods and actions.

As with a "normal" organization, this is largely a case of forced shopping for users: in this case, for residents. Thus, the resident of a municipality is

condemned to purchase municipal services *in the municipality* where that resident is registered as a resident.

However, not everything is forced shopping. For example, a resident of a municipality may choose to be buried in another municipality, apply for a permit for an activity in another municipality, or develop a licensed business activity in another municipality. This again makes it clear that a common ground under municipal services is paramount if a resident is not to get lost in a constantly changing forest of local rules.

Until now, efforts for such a common foundation have been mainly limited to the specifications of the services and associated technology, and interfacing between the *management systems* has remained out of the picture.

2.3.1 Facilities

The municipality provides numerous facilities to its residents. These facilities always consist of a combination of **goods** and **actions**. The resident evaluates both the goods and actions from those facilities in terms of "what can I do with it" (*functionality*) and "how well does it work" (*functioning*).

- In youth care, for example, the municipality provides a *youth shelter* for loitering youth, but also provides *help at home* for family problems and psychological and behavioral problems of children and adolescents. In doing so, the municipality can commission third parties to carry out the deployment, but the municipality remains accountable.
- In education, the municipality has a task in the *housing* of schools, but also *assists* families with students who need extra guidance. Again, the municipality can delegate tasks to third parties, but the municipality remains accountable.
- In environmental management, the municipality provides a *landfill site for waste*, but employees also *help* dispose of that waste.

To the extent that the municipality considers the facilities to be important to fulfill its mission by doing so, the municipality registers those facilities in a register (in USM: the managed infrastructure register - the MIR). In practice, there are often a large number of sub-registers that make up the MIR. The more these registers are integrated, the less redundancy, and the more efficient the registration is.

2.3.2 Support

The resident receives support in using the facilities. The resident requests that support through the request types (calls) described in section 1.3.2:

- With a **wish**, the resident requests a modification of the municipal service agreements: the L&R of the municipality that take the form of ordinances, decisions, and rules and regulations. This may take the form of a vending ban, a General Local Bye-Law, a subsidy regulation, a waiver, an exemption, or a zoning ordinance such as a zoning plan. In

doing so, the City Council represents the resident regarding municipal services. Residents can also use public participation to personally influence agreements. A complaint is also a wish.

- By reporting a **failure**, the resident requests that a failure in the agreed service be recovered. This can be a very simple and small-scale malfunction such as a loose paving stone or a broken lamppost, but also issues with greater impact such as a malpractice in youth care. The latter often requires the resident to give the report extra weight, for example, by moving a party from the City Council to voice the complaint, or to draw attention to a faulty execution of services with a petition.
- A request to perform an agreed service within municipal regulations either results in a change in the *managed infrastructure* that the municipality deploys for that service, or is merely an application of that service without such an effect. The difference between those two forms matters only to the municipal executive organization.
 - In the first case, the municipality interprets the request as a **change request** involving the modification of the municipal managed infrastructure.
 - In the second case, the municipality interprets the request as a **service request** and the municipality simply executes the request in accordance with the agreement: nothing changes in the deployed managed infrastructure.

A very large part of the interactions between residents and the municipality are of the *failure notification* or *service request* type:

- Every report of a loose paving stone or a broken street lamp is a **failure report**. The municipality is then apparently not doing what was established about the service ("safe roads"), or the municipality is not meeting a resident's expectation about that service.
- Any **informational question** (e.g., "How can I apply for a permit?") is a **service request**: the municipal regulations do not change, there is no failure, nor does anything change with the municipal managed infrastructure.

Providing a passport will not fall under that: the document is of high value and thus falls under the managed infrastructure. Thus, modifying a passport is then a *change*. Purchasing a gravesite will also be a change: gravesites are available in limited supply and the municipality will have to keep track of exactly which gravesite has been made available to which resident. In this way, each municipality has a comprehensive infrastructure whose characteristics are recorded in detail: the MIR. Any modification thereof requires a **change**.

Individual residents can also request changes, but this will be less the case with wishes: a resident cannot simply have a municipality's L&R changed.

In dealing with these requests, prioritization and scheduling are of paramount importance:

- some requests affect a resident's well-being more than others
- the municipality cannot do everything at once and will therefore often have to choose what to do first

Every request eventually results in an *operational activity* in the production environment of municipal services. Because today everything is interconnected, an activity in that production environment can have an undesirable impact on other activities, or on existing services. Integral and integrated **prioritization** and **scheduling** of those operational activities is therefore a crucial task of the municipality.

In planning and executing those operational activities, the municipality will have to take into account the agreements set forth in the L&R and in municipal regulations. Sometimes this involves details that are not *registered*, but about which there are **expectations**. Failure to meet expectations can also lead to resident dissatisfaction.

2.4 The components of the service delivery system

Municipalities also consist of "a group of people doing things with stuff" to provide services to residents. Thus, the assets of the municipality - as with all other service providers - consist successively of Processes, People and Technology (the tools).

2.4.1 Processes

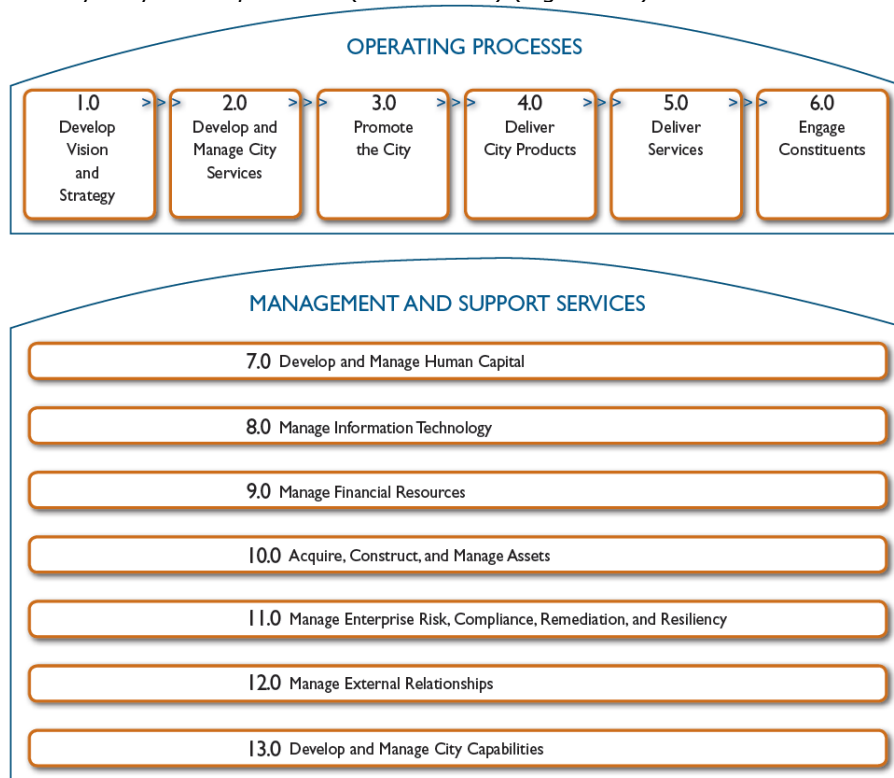
For municipalities, too, the **process** (the "what") is the core of the municipal apparatus: the things the municipality does define the character of the municipality. The *people* who perform these tasks are constantly changing (the 'who'), as are the *tools* deployed (the "how").

Mindful of Figure 1.11, municipalities could (and should) also derive their daily routines from the underlying **pure** process architecture (see Figure 1.13). In fact, by using the term "process" only for the "what", it becomes much easier to recognize the APQC or GEMMA manuals as *practical routines* at the level of the generically described *work instruction* of Figure 1.11. The municipality can thus perfectly use the APQC or GEMMA references as **inspiration** for the practical design of the municipal management system - a task with which many municipalities still have considerable problems - without being bothered by the complexity of the APQC or GEMMA references. However, if a municipality uses the APQC or GEMMA references as a guideline for the *design* and *configuration* of its management system, then that municipality is making a painful mistake.

2.4.1.1 APQC or GEMMA processes are not processes

Instead of working *from a process architecture*, it is often the *practices* that guide municipalities, especially if the municipality tries to follow sources like APQC or GEMMA. The “processes” these sources describe in their “process landscape” or “process model” are all about the *how* of a routine in a *specific function domain*, and are therefore a combination of *what*, *who* and *how*. As such, they are by definition *applied* practical routines of the “general work instruction” type (Figure 1.11), i.e. *practices* and not *processes*.

The APQC City Government Process Classification Framework® describes 13 containers that cover some 1500 practices for many of the regular municipality functions. Each of these practices is called “a process”, but actually they all are *practices* (or functions) (Figure 2.2).



Figur 2.2 The City Government Process Classification Framework (PCF®) of APQC

Similarly, the Dutch GEMMA does not provide information on the “process” component, but provides a reference model for the classification of a municipality’s *practical tasks* (Figure 2.3).

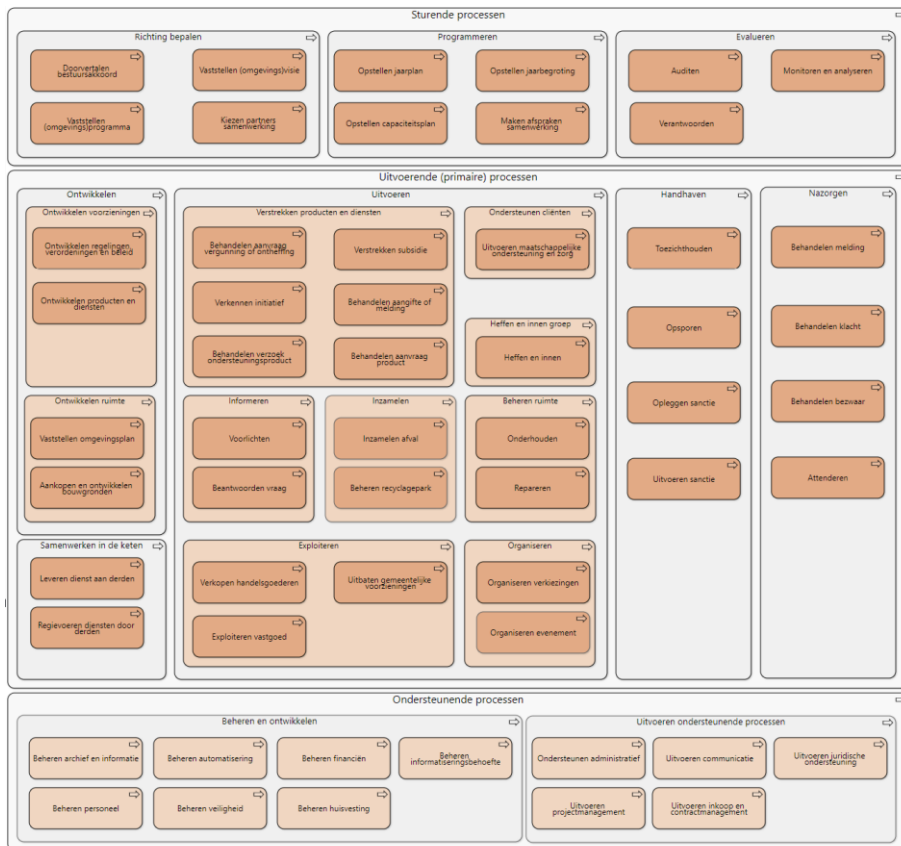


Figure 2.3. The process landscape of the Dutch GEMMA

Practical references are useful from the perspective of *inspiration*: good practical examples from others are valuable because then the municipality does not have to reinvent the wheel. However, a municipality that uses the APQC or the GEMMA references *to specify its own management system* soon gets bogged down in the complexity and redundancy of those practical examples. The result of that approach is, *by definition*, an inefficient municipal system. And it should be clear that the APQC or the administrator of the GEMMA (the Association of Dutch Municipalities), have the opposite intention. So, something is going very fundamentally wrong here, and that has *everything* to do with the misinterpretation of the term "process".

The classification of the GEMMA “process landscape” illustrates the misinterpretation of the term “process” right away with the division into *steering*, *executive* and *supporting* “processes”. In fact, according to the definition of “process” (Figure 1.10), there is no such thing as a *supporting* process, an *executive* process, or a *steering* process. *Each* process has supporting, executive, and steering *characteristics*, depending on who is the provider and who is the customer, who performs that process, how it is applied to practice, over what time period it is considered, etc.. Processes, however, say nothing about the *who* and the *what* and thus, by definition, cannot be *either* strategic, *or* tactical, *or* operational, *or* steering, *or* executive, *or* supportive. All these qualifications only apply to practical routines (*practices*).

Providing references for the practical execution of tasks can be very useful - *provided* it is embedded in an approach in which a **pure process architecture** is the basis for those practical references. This is unfortunately not the case in APQC’s PCFs or in the GEMMA, and that immediately makes these sources difficult to use in practice. After all, municipalities that do not develop and use their own service management architecture before they start working with the APQC or GEMMA *practices*, run the risk of basing their organization and their daily routines on the practices of others - without knowing what the principles *underpinning* those practices are and without knowing whether those principles fit their local resources. This is an extremely precarious business when pursuing sustainable service delivery.

Because APQC’s PCF and the GEMMA are not about *pure processes* but about *practices*, and moreover they are not based on a pure process *architecture*, they offer a fragmented and redundant system of *practical* routines for municipalities. Those practical routines are often referred to as “cases”. Software suppliers then base their supporting products on these cases. In this way, the *practices* of the PCF and the GEMMA are hard-coded into the software that suppliers build, based on the “business” case specifications that the municipality *must*, of necessity, use. And this then produces the *hard-coded* inefficiency that is so familiar in municipalities.

The APQC PCF and the GEMMA is not the only *practice*-based guidance offered to municipalities. For example, recommended techniques like **Service Blueprinting** to capture and improve *customer journeys* also reinforce the inefficiency. Service Blueprinting is characterized by reasoning from current practices, and through analysis of the routines found, making improvements. This, like other **Lean** and **BPM** techniques⁶, is a routine that begins by reasoning *from* actual practice: a *practice*-based approach.

⁶ BPM: business process modeling. A technique that uses swimlanes to capture, analyze, and improve current routines. Swimlanes specify the what, the who, and the how, thus providing a description of routines at the work instruction level: *practices* and not *processes*.

While a *practice*-based approach may lead to *some* improvement, it is still **polishing the outside**. The real benefits of practices are never realized in a sustainable way, for the simple reason that they are not based on a sustainable principle-based foundation. This simple logic has been recognized in construction for centuries: any building that had to withstand the forces of nature has always been based on a foundation. Only when that foundation was in place were the floors of the building placed on top of that foundation. And even if organizations changed the activities in those floors every year, every month, every week or every day, the foundation would not change. In service management, this foundation is the management system of the service organization, based on the service management architecture, as specified in the USM Method.

2.4.1.2 A process architecture makes the PCF and GEMMA manageable

Municipalities can, of course, continue to follow the guidance provided by APQC's PCFs and the GEMMA. But it can also be done differently. In a Systems Thinking way. For simple and sustainable results.

Based on the pure process model (Figure 1.13) and the eight associated standard workflows (Figure 1.15) a municipality can specify *all* service activities using the eight *USM templates* for those workflows. If that municipality accommodates all of the municipality's "cases" and all of its other workflows in that way in the *same* eight templates, it creates an imposing uniformity of those routines, for *all* of the municipality's teams and for *all* of the municipality's operations. That uniformity is the basis for the **interoperability** *between* municipalities and other government organizations or suppliers, as well as for teams *within* a municipality.

2.4.2 People

For the design of the organizational structure, the APQC provides lots of individual *references*, but each of the containers in Figure 2.2 may also be interpreted as an organizational function and therefore as an organizational structure. The GEMMA does something similar, but it goes beyond that: it provides an explicit *reference model*. The GEMMA describes the **business functions** that a municipality should perform (Figure 2.4).

The GEMMA describes four *governing* functions for municipalities:
 - **Governing functions:** governance, strategy, accountability and collaboration formation

Next, the GEMMA describes 43 *primary* functions of a municipality, in six sectors:

- **Development:** service development, and economic, social, public order and safety, living environment and organizational development

- **Surveillance:** performance management, change management, framework monitoring, risk management, compliance management and collaboration monitoring
- **Direction:** organizational selection, assignment and monitoring and coordination
- **Customer and supply chain interaction:** information, signal processing, contact management, customer service, self-reliance promotion, collaboration and participation, reception and deliver
- **Operation,** divided into
 - **operation social domain:** products and services realization social domain, supervision and enforcement social domain, case management social domain, claim social domain
 - **operation spatial domain:** management and realization in the living environment, products and services realization spatial domain, supervision and enforcement spatial domain, management spatial projects, and exploitation
 - **operation of public services:** products and services realization public services, supervision and enforcement public services, valuation and levy, and collection public services
 - **operation of public order and safety:** case management of safety domain, products and services realization of safety domain, supervision and enforcement of safety domain, safety data analysis, and management of public order and safety
- **Data management**

And finally, the GEMMA describes another 12 *support* functions for a municipality (the bottom layer from Figure 2.4), under the heading:

- **Support:** procurement and contract management, legal support, financial management, information and records management, communication management, administrative support, computerization management, security management, automation management, project management, personnel management, housing

With that reference architecture of 59 (!) municipal functions, each municipality can specify its own local classification of support functions, provided that the municipal tasks are thereby realized: "*The model provides a list of functions that must all be invested in one or more departments*". Thus, in practice, these *functions* often correspond to one or more municipal organizational units (*teams*) with differentiated tasks, in small municipalities often bundled into larger units.

The USM management system learns that all those organizational units (the functions/teams/units that make up the top architecture layer of Figure 1.16) can use exactly the same set of 8 standard workflows for all the service management tasks addressed in such a function (the middle architecture layer from Figure 1.16). This is the basis for the concept of the **link** to create

the uniform linkability ("interoperability") of all municipal teams in an integrated service delivery system.

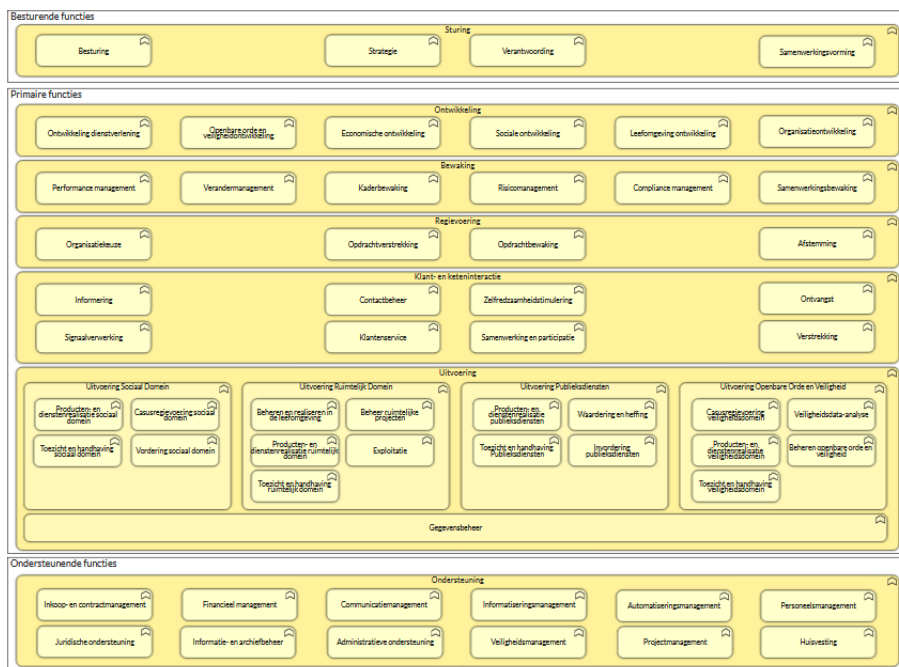


Figure 2.4. GEMMA's business function model (Dutch)

The GEMMA business function model and the APQC City Government PCF are very similar. They both specify *practices* and *functions* as references for the structure of cities/municipalities. And because both completely lack the specification of the heart of the system (which can be found at the left-hand side of Figure 1.12), both focus can be qualified as *polishing the outside* (focusing on the right-hand side of Figure 1.12).

2.4.3 Technology

The technological tools a municipality deploys in carrying out its routines are extremely varied and often not integrated. Consider:

- Call handling systems** - Each municipal service/function/team/section often has a separate registration system of the requests (calls) it receives - if those requests are registered *at all*. Such a reporting system can take the form of a helpdesk package, but Excel and Outlook can also (with some good will) fulfill that function. That reporting system fulfills

the "workflow management" function at the tip of the pyramid in Figure 1.18 and Figure 2.5.

- **Managed infrastructure registers** - Each municipal service/function/team/section often has its own register (MIR) of the facilities it deploys in service delivery, and of the internal tools it uses to achieve service delivery. This is the second part from the tip of the pyramid in Figure 2.5. Those records, as in business, are often fragmented across different teams and individuals who each keep their own records of what they consider important.
- **A facility management information system (FMIS)** - An FMIS combines the *coordination* of calls (the call handling system) with the technical support for the *operation* of tasks from those calls (the bottom part of that pyramid): this is pictured as the ERP strategy of Figure 2.5. FMISs, however, often have a relatively weak elaboration of that service *coordination* function and focus on the technical *automation* of operations.
- **A case system** - A software package that practically supports the administrative handling of numerous "cases". Those cases are all examples of the aforementioned "practical routines" of the "work instruction" type: the practical tasks of the municipality. A case system is in the lower part of the Figure 2.5 pyramid, but it can also contain limited coordination tasks from the tip of the pyramid and then has similar functionality to an FMIS - but focused on the primary tasks of the municipality. Cases deal with all kinds of general tasks of the municipality, from "Handle application for child addition to passport" and "Handle application for energy subsidy" to "Handle notification of illness" or "Handle notification of fireworks storage". Many *hundreds* of generic case types are included in the case type catalogs made available in the GEMMA.

If there is collaboration between multiple teams in the municipality, a common help desk system may be used or a widely applied FMIS, which then often goes by the name "Enterprise Service Management package" (ESM). However, such an ESM package is rarely based on an ESM strategy in which the *process architecture* forms the basis, resulting in yet another hard coding of *practices* in the tool instead of a sustainable support of services based on an architecture with *principles* and uniform building blocks.

A municipality's tools therefore often consist of a large number of separate sub-solutions (*point solutions*), which often also have considerable overlap in their functions, while the municipality needs *integrated* support for all its routines in order to provide a coherent service.

The patchwork of municipal tools should preferably be replaced by a single integrated product, or a set of well-integrated sub-products (see Figure 2.4). Both strategies have advantages and disadvantages. The rapid development of interfaces (think APIs) make the Best-of-Breed strategy (B-o-B) increasingly attractive. Especially if the municipality also sets requirements for the use of open source software.

Supporting *tools* are always intended to support the *chosen* routines, not the other way around. *Integrated* tools are therefore only possible when the municipality has a set of *integrated* routines. So the complexity in those support tools is also only solvable with an *integrated* approach to municipal service delivery. This then requires integration of the management layer at the tip of the pyramid in Figure 2.5: the tooling for service coordination and registration of the infrastructure deployed must be carefully integrated.

The other positions in the pyramid concern only the mechanization, the support for the *operation* of tasks. The latter can be filled in at will, but the tip of the pyramid is crucial for integration and cooperation within the municipality. The municipality can set up the tooling in that tip of the pyramid simply, cheaply and effectively with one integrated product that supports the eight USM workflows and provides a solid record of the managed infrastructure.

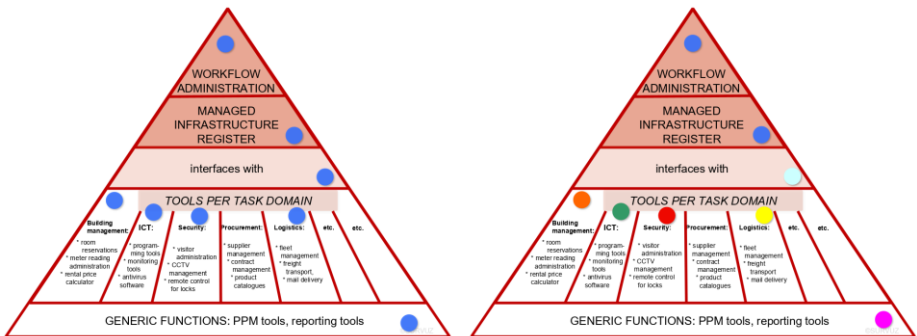


Figure 2.5. Setting up tools based on ERP strategy or a B-o-B strategy

To set up an integrated product to support the delivery of services, the municipality must first set up its routines in an integrated way. Tooling always follows the chosen routines. "A fool with a tool is still a fool."

2.5 Continuous improvement

A municipality has the task of complying with the agreed services and is accountable for them. In part this service is imposed "from above", in the form of the L&R, in part this agreed service is the interpretation of "the free space" in which the municipality itself may decide. But even for this free

space, the municipality makes agreements - generally between the Municipal Executive (mayor, aldermen) and the City Council as the resident's representative, sometimes directly influenced by the resident through participation. So, in principle, it is clear to the municipality what requirements it must meet. Of course, this does not always go well, and there is often room for improvement. Meeting the expectations of the customer (the resident) in the *best* way with the *least* effort is therefore a constant concern for the municipality. This is the area of continuous **improvement** - not at the express *request* of the resident, but in the resident's *interest*.

The municipality itself is responsible for recording and dealing with risks: both the negative risks (threats) and the positive risks (innovations). The municipality itself will also have to determine the business case for handling a risk. In the **Improve** process the municipality earns the most: every handling of a risk by definition delivers more than it costs. However, a municipality that is not *in control* of its service still has a *reactive* nature and is therefore mainly busy putting out fires. Such a municipality unfortunately hardly gets the benefits of the Improvement process. For that municipality, an improvement plan based on a methodical and systematic service vision is a matter of vital importance.

Those who are not *in control* of service delivery - the only task of the municipality - pay the price every day. Fortunately it is not at all difficult to be in control of service provision - as long as the municipality [1] develops an integral vision on systematic service provision, and [2] takes the initiative to work on this integrally. Part 3 of this paper describes how the municipality can make a start with a simple exercise to boost awareness.

A municipality that dares this awareness exercise need only spend a half-day in any team learning to "translate" that team's practices into those eight USM workflows, and the penny will drop. Then, in a step-by-step improvement approach, all practical routines (including those myriad "cases") can be brought into that same structure, based on one common municipal service architecture. This lays the ground for continuous improvement of the municipality's integrated service delivery.

3 A SIMPLE IMPROVEMENT APPROACH

The municipality's situation described is not unique. Many sectors are struggling with similar questions and are all looking for the same solution: a simple, systematic, and above all affordable way to bring the complexity under control and to achieve sustainable service provision. Preferably *demonstrable*, so that an auditor can determine that the organization is *in control* and, for example, complies with the government's Information Security Baseline.

3.1 The USM Method

That solution exists in the form of the USM method: Unified Service Management. USM is a universal method that helps the municipality set up its own service management system based on a simple architecture. This management system is *integral* (all-encompassing), so that *all of the municipality's activities* can be covered by it, both primary activities ("business") and secondary activities ("internal support"). Moreover, that management system is *integrated* so that it is an efficient system: it prevents activities from being performed multiple times in different places in different ways.

USM is an *open* knowledge system managed by a foundation whose goal is knowledge sharing: the [SURVUZ Foundation](#). The collaborating parties working on the further development of the USM method contribute to a growing knowledge database with practical tools. The resulting management system is easy to learn and apply step-by-step, so that it can be realized without much effort and cost.

3.2 All organizational change produces resistance

What USM *cannot* prevent is that it will require a change in existing routines. This is true for *any* structural improvement that requires people to adapt their routines to new insights. USM offers the great advantage that it is so simple that everyone can learn it quickly. In the Netherlands, and to some extent in Belgium and Germany, USM is increasingly being included in training programs for business schools, so that new employees will already be familiar with USM.

The standard USM deployment plan is based on an improvement approach with small steps, while "keeping the store open": an agile approach. Those small steps make it possible to steadily deploy the intended improvements with limited effort and with limited impact - as long as you know in which direction to walk; that is, as long as you know the dot on the horizon.

3.3 How do we teach municipalities to work with USM?

A municipality that makes the strategic choice to use a system approach to get its services under control should embed the knowledge of that system in the organization. In concrete terms, this means that some of the initiators of the improvement initiative must acquire the knowledge of that system approach. Those leaders can, if necessary, use [a short training](#) course for that purpose (USM is easy to understand) and then use their knowledge to guide the rest of the organization in applying the routines. That rest of the organization does not necessarily need to know all the details of the system to be able to *work* with it: they just need to be able to apply it to realize its benefits.

For the first step in learning the USM routines, a municipal team can suffice with **a half-day workshop**. That workshop can be led by internal leaders who already have knowledge of USM, or - if preferred - by external trainers or coaches with more USM experience.

The workshop consists of a brief one-hour introduction to the structure of the USM management system so that participants have a common understanding of the whole thing. Then participants learn to recognize USM routines by translating their own **practical situations** into the eight workflows of the USM management system (Figure 1.15).

By the end of that workshop, participants have:

1. learned that *all* municipality work fits into the integral USM management system
2. learned that a great deal of their work is of a routine nature that is essentially no different from work in other municipality teams
3. captured a large number of areas for improvement

The exercise can be done on-site with printed tools and flip charts, but can also be done online with a collaboration whiteboard from, for example, Teams, Zoom or MIRO (Figure 3.2).

If the exercise is done with several teams with different functions, it is recommended to have the participants always translate practical situations from *other* teams to USM: this makes the universal applicability of the USM management system even faster.

After a team has learned through this exercise to recognize its activities in the *same* unified management system, the team can start with the stepwise modification of the existing routines to the new routines. To do so, the existing routines are joined and re-committed in the corresponding templates and missing routines are added to that same system in the same way.

That capture can then use the familiar tools of Blueprinting, Lean, or BPM techniques, but *now* by using USM's underlying service management architecture. The result of this approach is an integrated set of routines, all built on the same foundation, for an *enterprise service management* strategy.

If the existing routines are normalized and integrated in this way step-by-step, the automated *support* for those routines can also be established step-by-step in the tooling. That tooling must then be prepared for the new support by incorporating eight USM workflow templates. Not all tools will be able to support that: integration of routines requires integration of the underlying database, preferably a *single* database to control the workflows. That tool requirement immediately separates the boys from the men. Modifications to the tooling are part of the step-by-step improvement approach.

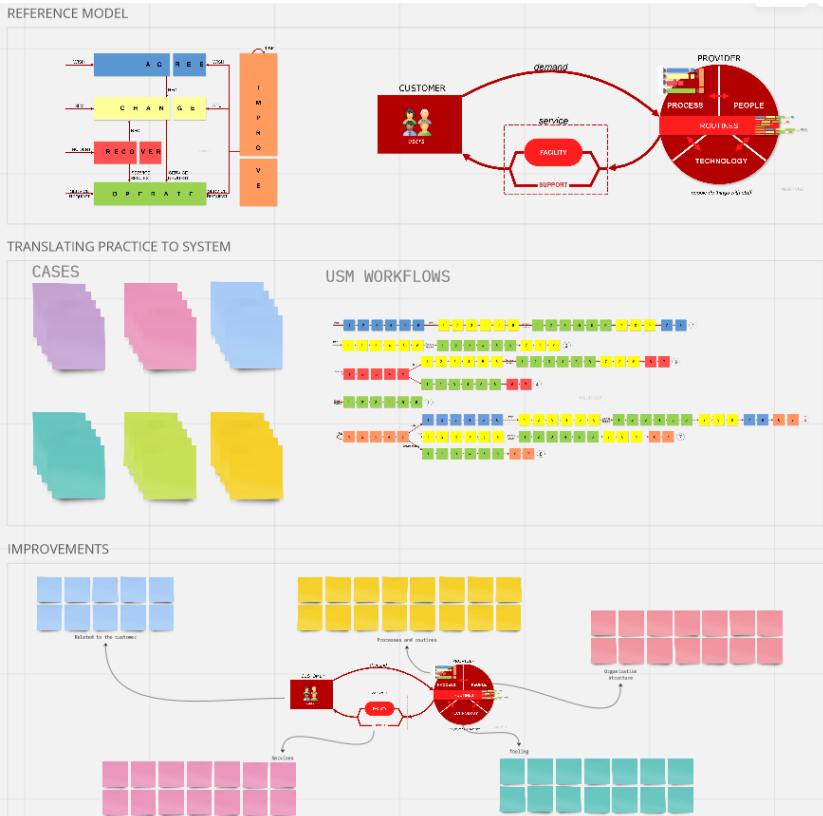


Figure 3.1. The online MIRO game board for USM exercises

If the organization wants to make modifications to the tasks, authorities, and responsibilities of employees, for better alignment with a *control* approach, those modifications are also part of the step-by-step improvement approach, so that they are secured in the management system.

In practice, many municipal teams will not have a clear picture of their *services*, let alone have an *agreement* with their (internal or external) customers or provide *reports* on them. The step-by-step standardization of services, the creation of a service catalog, better agreements, and the phased development of reports to get the management cycle going is therefore part of the improvement approach. That approach also leads to easier communication between the municipal service provider and the internal and external customer (resident) because in this way the *service* is materialized in terms that better reflect the perception of the customer.

3.4 The exercise: preparation and operation

The exercise for one or more municipal teams requires the following:

1. **GATHER** approximately 100 "raw" interactions with users or other stakeholders, from the daily service delivery of each team involved (the cases). These interactions can be collected from the registration system used. In their absence, a representative of the team can also provide a list of typical questions and interactions received by the team. This may include (preferably) problem situations.
2. **TRANSLATE** these raw interactions to some 20-30 *normalized* exercises per team: the raw cases are "cleaned" and reformulated so that each exercise has a unified character, and contains all the information for handling. Ensure good coverage of involved task areas of participants.
3. **PREPARE** the normalized exercises: for an online situation, record each case on a sticky note in the Teams, Zoom or MIRO game board; for an onsite situation, record the exercises in PowerPoint.
4. **PLAY**: the trainer assigns exercises (cases) to team members: this can be done on the spot by assigning an exercise one at a time, or it can be prepared if specific awareness goals apply. In a mixed team, it is extra instructive if the participants cover exercises from *each other's* fields. The team member translates the assigned exercise into the appropriate process or workflow. The trainer discusses each exercise with the participants and ensures that the final translation into USM processes or workflows is correct. To do this, the trainer needs an understanding of the municipal team's operations:
 - a. Who is the provider here?
 - b. Who is the customer?
 - c. What is the service, in terms of facility and support, functionality and functioning?
 - d. What agreements have been made about that service?
 - e. Who are the internal and external operators?

- f. By what supporting resources does the provider perform the service?
- g. What characteristics of the handling does the municipality record?
- h. How does the municipality report on the service, and to whom?

The trainer can name these help questions in each exercise to have participants think of areas for improvement for missing items.

5. **COLLECT IMPROVEMENTS:** At each exercise, participants identify current deficiencies in the organization. Each deficiency is converted into an improvement point and recorded. Each improvement point is linked to the part of the management system to which the improvement relates: the processes and routines, the organizational structure, the tools, the services, the relationship (agreements) with the customer (Figure 3.1). In practice - due to the absence of essential components of the management system or the absence of the common agreements or routines - there will be a lot of discussion about cross-border improvement points.

The recorded points of improvement provide the start of the *risk database* that will be the source for prioritizing new points of improvement in the follow-up steps (the USM deployment improvement sprints).

The interactions can be of many kinds, but in all cases they can be traced back to the interfaces between the resident and the municipal service provider. Each interaction triggers one of the four purely *reactive processes* (Figure 1.13) or is a communication *during* the handling of a previously triggered process. Which process is triggered depends on the agreed services (L&R) and on the managed infrastructure specified by the municipality. And of course, it is also possible that an interaction has nothing to do with municipal services.

3.5 Resources

In the online format of the exercise, the municipality should have a workspace for each participant, with a browser and access to the selected collaboration whiteboard from, for example, Teams, Zoom or MIRO.

The trainer should have the Teams, Zoom or MIRO game board ready. External trainers already have such a game board at their disposal as one of the default tools in their USM Professional toolkit. For internal trainers, the municipality can [contact the SURVUZ Foundation](#) to get a free online game board in MIRO.

For an onsite operation, it is useful to have a printout of the USM Customer-Provider Interaction Model and the pure USM process model available. Registered USM user organizations can download these images from the [USM portal](#).

After the exercise, it is recommended to have printed core USM management system slides widely available to participants: wall charts, laminated templates, some USM books for reference. Participants can thus make their own translation to the deployment of the USM management system for their own daily work, *within* and *between* teams.

3.6 More information

Municipalities that [register](#) as USM users at the USM portal (at no cost) and exchange their experiences with other municipalities/users receive a set of USM resources from the SURVUZ Foundation:

- the USM process model with the process specifications
- the USM workflow templates
- templates for calls
- several diagrams for management system components
- the USM figures
- the template for a RACI matrix
- additional guidance that is not part of the USM book

Access to these tools is free, provided the organization is willing to share its USM experiences with other USM users: knowledge exchange is central to the ongoing development of USM.

Learning and improving never ends.

MORE INFORMATION?

The SURVUZ Foundation develops and manages **methods and instruments** that can be used by **service providers** in improving their performance.

In doing so, SURVUZ applies the following principles:

- Organizational improvement is based on the promotion of **self-management**, with learning at its core.
- Organizational improvement is only **permanently effective** if it is driven and implemented by internal employees.
- External efforts should be limited to **coaching** internal employees.

The SURVUZ Foundation:

- manages the USM method and associated tools
- promotes the application of the USM method and the dissemination of USM knowledge
- certifies professionals who support the practical application of USM and provides them with free tools
- provides free tools to user organizations wishing to apply USM on their own
- provides free online learning environments to educational institutions that incorporate USM into their curricula

All standardized USM knowledge products act as service management *building blocks* in a unified architecture for managing services.

SURVUZ lists certified professionals and products at the USM portal so that USM users can always verify that they have qualified resources.

For all information about USM: go to <https://usm-portal.com>

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