How to document levels of service

LEVELS OF SERVICE PROCESS:

1 Clarify strategic objectives, and confirm stakeholder needs

Identify services and assets

2 Identify services

3 Identify assets

Describe current levels of service and identify performance measures

4 Describe current levels of service

5 Identify performance measures

6 Identify performance gaps and develop strategies to address them

Reviewing LOS

Prepare an action plan

7 Develop strategies to address gaps

8 Prepare a service delivery plan

Measurement and reporting

9 Track performance

10 Report on performance

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES:

Climate change

Reconciliation & AREI

Public consultation

APPROACH:

The general approach for documenting levels of service (LOS) is captured in 4 phases: clarifying services and assets; describing and evaluating LOS; preparing an action plan; and, measurement and reporting. This process is preceded by clearly identifying relevant strategic objectives as well as a solid understanding of stakeholder needs. Key overarching themes that should be embedded throughout the process include climate change, equity and public consultation. In addition, although risk is a very distinct topic, it is important to recognize the association between your LOS and risk processes and how failing to achieve your LOS can lead to increased risk.

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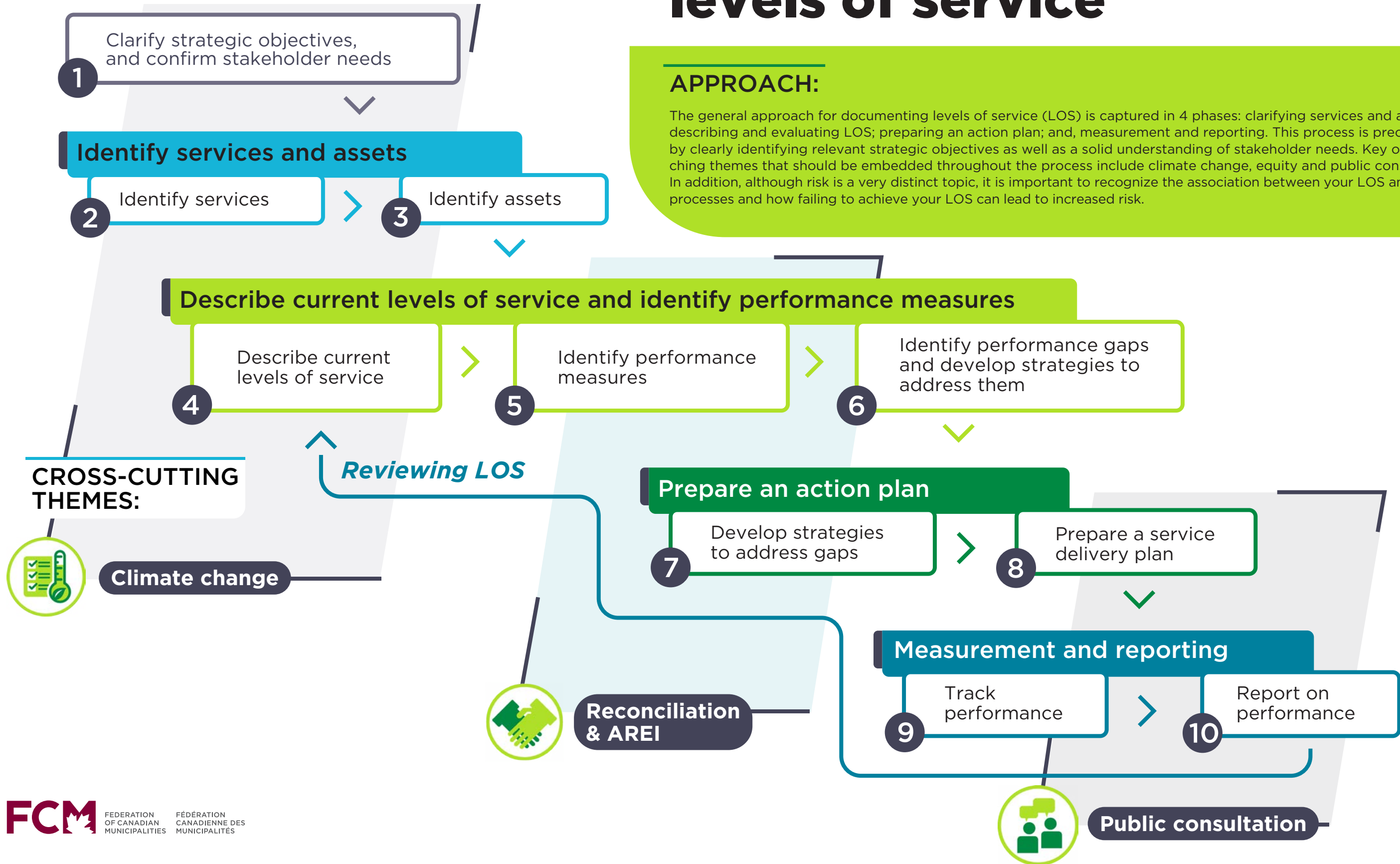
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES:

Climate change:

How could your ability to provide services be compromised as a result of climate change? Where are your services and systems the most vulnerable to adverse climate impacts?

This involves understanding what services and assets/systems are exposed and sensitive to climate change and assessing the impacts to your service performance. Then, identify vulnerabilities and develop strategies to address gaps and risks resulting from a changing climate. Finally, implement the preferred strategies to mitigate or adapt to a changing climate.

Your local government is likely already undertaking actions to mitigate and adapt, so ensure those are recognized and celebrated as you plan for next steps.

SUPPORTING RESOURCE: *Considering Climate Change in Levels of Service*

See *FCM's Learning Journey on Climate Resilience and Asset Management* to dive deeper into how your local government can integrate climate change with asset management in order to deliver services more sustainably.

Reconciliation & AREI:

Are there differences in service delivery performance across our neighbourhoods? Are these unnecessary or unfair differences? How is this affecting community wellbeing?

Applying a Reconciliation & Anti Racism, Equity and Inclusion (Reconciliation & AREI) when evaluating LOS will allow local governments to consider how they can meet needs across all groups in the community. There are three key aspects of the LOS process where we can most effectively apply this lens: 1) in undertaking an analysis of how the services being provided are distributed spatially across the local government; 2) in reconsidering how we approach improvements to service delivery into the future; and, 3) in how we understand and interact with stakeholders.

Equity is not equality. This is an important distinction when applying an Reconciliation & AREI lens to the LOS process. Different groups may require and use different services. Closing any equity gaps will take time; it's a continuous process of improvement.

EXAMPLE: *Ottawa's Neighbourhood Equity Index*

The City of Ottawa has developed a Neighbourhood Equity Index and is in the process of using this tool as part of the Asset Management Planning process. The city is exploring the possibility of using distributional analyses to understand the net effects of historic investment decisions for particular service areas, as well as how future investment could start to address any imbalance.

SUPPORTING RESOURCE:

FCM's anti racism equity inclusion and reconciliation resource hubs: *Reconciliation* and *Anti Racism, Equity and Inclusion*.

Public consultation:

Are the services you're providing aligned with the needs of your residents and business owners? What services are they willing to pay for?

We should be accountable to our customers (reporting performance trends over time) and checking in with them to ensure our services still meet their needs. There are many approaches to consultation, ranging from low to high cost, depending on the needs and resources of your local government.

Having sufficient knowledge of your data and services is crucial for engaging in meaningful conversations.

The level of detail and type of consultation will vary. A simple survey may be sufficient, with questions such as "How important is this survey to you?" and "How well are we performing at the moment?" Be aware of the limitations that your approach will have. For example, are there groups of people that are not represented in your responses? Are there groups of people that you don't hear from?

EXAMPLE: *Clarence-Rockland's Community Survey on Service Delivery*

A comprehensive community engagement process played a crucial role in developing the City of Clarence-Rockland's Strategic Planning Process for 2015–2021. The city asked stakeholders to provide insight into areas such as:

- What services are most important to the community?
- What is the satisfaction level in the provision of services?

In many instances, there was a strong alignment between the importance of a service and the level of satisfaction with that service. Conversely, the community viewed some services as very important but reported low satisfaction levels.

The Plan's Strategic Priorities were developed to reflect a stronger alignment of highly valued services.

SUPPORTING RESOURCE: *IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation*

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2)'s Spectrum of Public Participation is a useful framework for defining how best to engage stakeholders, and can help local governments to determine the right approach depending on the type of communication or input that is needed as part of the LOS process.

PATHWAYS FOR ACTION:

Levels of service is one of the most complex parts of asset management, but can be tackled by taking bite sized chunks over time in alignment with your local government's capacity and priorities. The entry points and related pathways below are intended to guide you on your journey.

A. Top-down exercise: Begin from Step 1 and work your way through. This is an opportunity to first develop a framework for your organization as a whole and then apply it broadly across all service areas. This will equip and empower departmental staff to take it further over time, and allow you to measure delivery.

B. Capitalize on existing data: Begin with one service area. It's ideal to use a service area where you already collect relevant information so there are closely aligned datasets to draw from. Focus on the first 4 steps in the LOS process. You can generalize what you have for this service area into a framework that can be gradually rolled out to other services.

C. Adapt/expand an existing framework: Build off an existing framework or process, which will mean diving in part way through the LOS process. It may be that you've already documented technical LOS, in which case you can start by aligning this with your strategic objectives and then document customer LOS. Or perhaps you already have some initial customer and technical LOS and the process starts with evaluating and addressing gaps.

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