



Protocol on Announced and Unannounced Inspections

Public Service Commission

August 2007

Vision

The Public Service Commission is an independent and impartial body created by the Constitution, 1996, to enhance excellence in governance within the Public Service by promoting a professional and ethical environment and adding value to a public administration that is accountable, equitable, efficient, effective, corruption-free and responsive to the needs of the people of South Africa.

Mission

The Public Service Commission aims to promote the constitutionally enshrined democratic principles and values of the Public Service by investigating, monitoring, evaluating, communicating and reporting on public administration. Through research processes, it will ensure the promotion of excellence in governance and the delivery of affordable and sustainable quality services.

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August 2007



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Foreword

In terms of the Public Service Commission Act, 1997, "the Commission may inspect departments and other organisational components in the public service, and has access to such official documents or may obtain information from heads of the departments organisational components as may be necessary for the performance of the functions of the Commission under the Constitution or the Public Service Act". In line with this provision, during 2005/2006 the Commission decided to develop a Protocol on Inspections to guide its inspection process. Inspections are used to monitor policy compliance and to ensure that service delivery continues to meet the standards and the needs of people using the services.

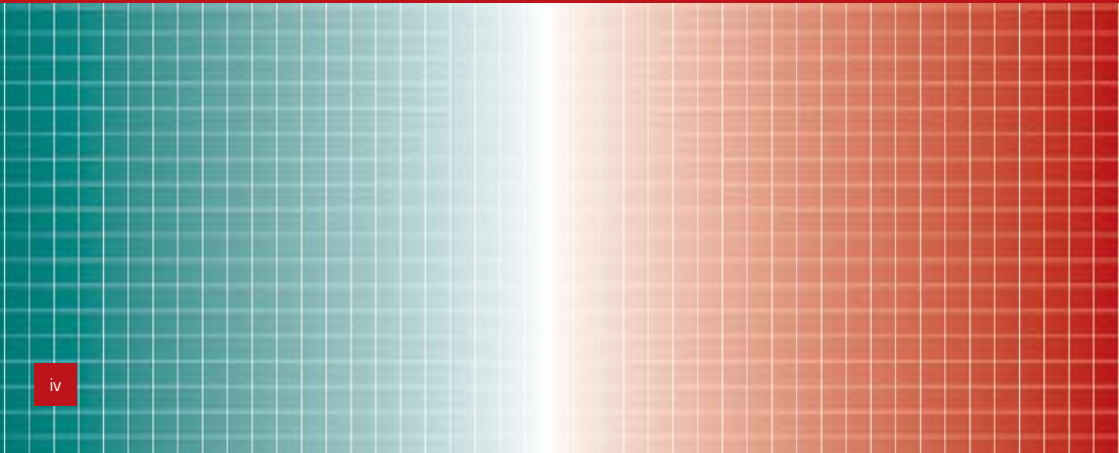


It gives me great pleasure to present the "Protocol on Announced and Unannounced Inspections", which I believe will assist the Commission in conducting inspections in a meaningful and objective manner. The Commission piloted the protocol during 2005/2006 in service delivery sites of the national departments of Home Affairs and Labour; and the provincial departments of Housing (Gauteng) and Social Development (Free State). The lessons learnt during the pilot phase were used to refine the protocol. In its revised form the Protocol, amongst other things, provides information about the guiding principles of conducting inspections, objectives of inspections, different approaches to inspections, possible risks in conducting inspections, site inspection checklist, and a site inspection report template. By having a Protocol that everyone can follow, it is hoped that the Commission and other oversight bodies will have a consistent approach to conducting inspections.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Sangweni".

Prof Stan S Sangweni

Chairperson: Public Service Commission



Protocol on Announced and Unannounced Inspections

In Terms of the PSC Act
(1997) Section 9

1. Introduction

Service Delivery Improvement needs to be understood against the backdrop of the historic mission of the democratic, non-racial people-centred Government and the developmental state that seeks to transform South African society by ensuring improvement and quality of service delivery. Transforming service delivery is in line with the White Paper on Transforming Service Delivery (Batho Pele), 1997. The White Paper focuses on improving service delivery, which calls for a shift away from inward-looking, bureaucratic systems, processes and attitudes, towards a search for new ways of working which put the needs of the public first. This means a complete change in the way public services are delivered.

In the 2004 State of the Nation Address (SONA) President Thabo Mbeki said “We must be impatient with those in the public service who see themselves as pen-pushers and guardians of rubber stamps, thieves intent on self-enrichment, bureaucrats who think they have the right to ignore the vision of Batho Pele, who come to work as late as possible, work as little as possible and knock off as early as possible” (SONA: 2004: 2). This statement emphasises the people-oriented culture of the public service, which is informed by Batho Pele Principles.


2. Background

In terms of Section 196 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, (1996), the Public Service Commission (PSC) has the mandate to promote the Constitutional values and principles set out in section 195, and to propose measures to ensure effective and efficient performance within the public service.

In line with this mandate, during 1999/2000, the PSC undertook a review of the implementation of government's Batho Pele principles. Based on the eight principles of Batho Pele, this survey focused on departments and their efforts to promote people-centred development and public service delivery. The survey yielded some positive results but indicated that there is still much work to be done.

Above and beyond the Batho Pele review, the Commission decided to develop tools and methodologies to incorporate the views and perceptions of citizens in its analysis of Batho Pele implementation. During the 2001/02 financial year, the Commission conducted a citizen satisfaction survey in the departments of Education, Health, Housing, and Social Development. The study highlighted a number of specific aspects of service delivery, which each department scored well on, while at the same time pointing to areas where challenges remain.

Furthermore, the Commission, working in co-operation with the National Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration, developed an approach called Citizens' Forums, which allow for significant participation by representatives of citizens' groups and individuals in the improvement of service delivery. A great deal of information was gathered through high-level discussions, which suggested how the involved departments could improve service delivery by taking into consideration the needs of communities.



It should be noted that in its work, the Commission is engaged in oversight activities that involve inspection processes as a matter of course, for example monitoring and evaluation, investigations, and management and service delivery improvement. The inspection of service delivery sites is not meant to duplicate the efforts of these programmes but to specifically strengthen and complement the Batho Pele campaign.

In addition to the above initiatives, a need has been identified to conduct “Unannounced and/or Announced Visits/Inspections” to further entrench a citizen and service-centric culture and accountability across the public service. This is in line with the Public Service Commission Act, 1997, Section 9, which states that “The Commission may inspect departments and other organisational components in the public service, and has access to such official documents or may obtain such information from heads of those departments or organisational components or from other officers in the service of those departments or organisational components as may be necessary for the performance of the functions of the Commission under the Constitution or the Public Service Act”

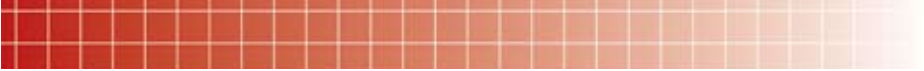
3. Announced and Unannounced Inspections

An inspection is a process of closely looking at any documentation and/or officially examining facilities and production in order to ensure adherence to stipulated regulations and other government frameworks. Inspections can be both announced and unannounced. The determining factor of whether to embark on announced or unannounced visits will be the purpose of the visit.

The processes of both announced and unannounced inspections are a form of monitoring and evaluation, although studies have shown that the procedures for announced inspections are closer to monitoring and evaluation than those of unannounced inspections. This is due to the fact that announced inspections involve advance scheduling of time with people to be interviewed, using questionnaires for gathering the necessary information and arranging for necessary access to documents, equipment or locations in preparation for report writing.

Inspections vary in nature according to their objective. Firstly, the Commission may conduct **routine inspections** to ensure that services rendered continue to meet the required service standards and the needs of people using the service. Routine inspections are conducted to establish the extent to which the sampled institutions comply with government prescripts and frameworks. In principle, the inspection process would, besides encouraging compliance, look at actual service provision in action to match the expectations of the service users with the actual performance of the service delivery site. Inspections are not intended to be a punitive measure but rather a continuous improvement activity in respect of public service delivery. Inspections should help identify weaknesses and strengths, and advise on corrective measures where necessary.

Secondly, the Commission may conduct **special inspections** which are site visits following complaints. Special inspections may also be conducted to gather specific information on specific operations. To this end



Commissioners, conducting special inspections may not want to review all Batho Pele principles or the overall performance of the service delivery site since they may wish to focus on specific issues.

Lastly, the Commission may also conduct **follow-up inspections**, which are used to assess whether identified improvements have taken place. Follow-up inspections can be used to determine whether recommendations made to departments in specific Reports of the Commission are implemented or not.

It should be emphasised that any type of inspection begins when an inspector initiates the inspection task and ends when the inspector completes the inspection report. The inspection report is important as it identifies areas of improvement and areas of excellence. Without the inspection report inspections become meaningless.

3.1 Announced Inspections

An announced inspection is an onsite visit where a site to be visited and/or inspected is given a notification in advance prior to the actual inspection by the Commission. This means that a specific date of visit or inspection is given to the site to be inspected. There could be a negotiated arrangement on the suitability of the date of visit. An announced inspection offers service sites and Head Offices the opportunity to set out their day-to-day practice and where appropriate to invite their relevant staff for the inspection exercise. The service site should be given a minimum of five working days or at most, four weeks before the announced inspection takes place. In most cases, the service site will receive a pre-inspection questionnaire¹. Ideally, it should take one day to complete an onsite inspection, but depending on the nature and size of the service on the site under inspection, more time may be needed. However, it should not take more than five working days.

The service site is allowed to request the Commission to re-schedule the date for an inspection and request for a date on which key personnel would be available. The service site key personnel will also be able to make proper arrangements for opening access to areas that are normally locked or require security clearance. As an announced inspection offers service sites and/or Head Offices the opportunity to prepare themselves in advance, it may not always give a true reflection of the activities of the site that is being inspected.

Announced inspections would be appropriate in Systems Inspections (SI) and Documentary Inspections (DI). Such inspections can be conducted when:

- inspecting government facilities such as the functionality of an IT system; and/or
- specific information is being sought which must be prepared and provided by the service point.

To ensure quality results, announced inspections should be 'issue specific'. This means that the visit should focus on a specific aspect of public service, such as effective teaching, treatment of patients or clients at the service points.

¹See Commission for Social Care Inspection (2004) regarding inspection of Regulated Services, London

3.2 Unannounced Inspections

An unannounced inspection is an onsite visit to a service delivery site where the Commission provides no prior notification of the actual date of the inspection to the service delivery sites, or notice is given shortly before the scheduled time of the inspection (i.e. on the same day of the inspection). The Commission may, as a courtesy, inform the concerned department about the intended unannounced inspection without divulging the exact date and sites to be visited. During the unannounced visit, the service delivery operations and facilities of the service delivery site are officially examined and observations are recorded. This kind of inspection will provide the most representative picture of the daily operations and practices of a service delivery site. Inspectors arrive and find the service as it would be for anyone else visiting the service delivery site on that day.

4. The Objectives of an Inspection

The broad objectives of an inspection are to assess the quality of services rendered, the state of the facilities and the conditions at the service site. It is also the objective of an inspection to determine if government departments, both at national and provincial levels, are achieving the required service standards, intended to meet the needs of the people of South Africa. Furthermore, inspections are an opportunity for the Commission to encourage government officials to comply with regulations and policies. The following are the specific objectives of an inspection:

- To afford a personal opportunity to experience the level of service delivery first-hand and to see what kind of service delivery challenges are facing staff – particularly at service delivery points such as clinics, Home Affairs offices, Labour offices, and Social Development grant registration and pay points;
- To engender a sense of urgency (metaphorically – to beat the drum for service delivery as a clarion call) and seriousness among officials regarding service delivery. Such visits will also serve as an inspiration and motivation to officials;
- To introduce objective mechanisms to identify both weaknesses and strengths towards improving service delivery;
- To report serious concerns about the quality of service delivery and compliance with the Batho Pele requirements;
- To carry out investigations of serious failures as pointed out by inspections; and
- To improve service user care relations in order to promote a user-oriented public service.

5. Inspection Implementation Plan

5.1. Who Should Perform Inspections?

In terms of a Parliamentary media briefing by the Minister for Public Service and Administration, held on



24 August 2004, Ministers and Public Service Commissioners are encouraged to pay unannounced visits to service delivery centres. Such service delivery visits would be distinct from the current *Izimbizo* as the focus of the latter is more on public consultation. The Ministerial/Commissioner service delivery visits focus mostly on institutions, officials serving the public, compliance with service standards/quality levels as well as feedback from the public. The respective Minister/Commissioner would also interact with members of the public at the service delivery points to solicit feedback on their experiences when interfacing with the respective institution and its officials.

The Office will render administrative support to Commissioners conducting inspections. The Directorate: Citizen Engagement at the Head Office in Pretoria will co-ordinate all the processes involved in this project. Communication with the involved Executive Authorities and Heads of Department, prior to and after the inspection, is recommended to ensure co-operation.

It is important that individuals who have a high degree of professional expertise, and extensive experience in those aspects of the public services to be inspected, form part of the inspection team. In addition, an inspection team is expected, for example, to offer advice on how to improve service delivery in the Public Service. An inspection should be regarded as an opportunity to assist and motivate public servants working at service delivery points.


5.2. Pre-inspection Phase

Commissioners will identify the service delivery priorities of those areas that need to be inspected during each financial year and will be actively involved in the inspection. Facilitation of the management, logistics and communication with departments is the responsibility of the Office of Public Service Commission. The Chairperson of the Commission will issue a notification to all involved Executing Authorities and Heads of Department indicating the Commission's intention to conduct a particular inspection.

The Director: Citizen Engagement (CE), together with a regional officer assigned to the project, will be responsible for co-ordination of all pre-inspection activities, such as time schedules for the visits and service delivery sites to be visited. Time schedules for *Izimbizo* must be taken into consideration in order to minimise the chance that inspections coincide with *Izimbizo*. Specific criterion should be used to determine the sites to be visited e.g. high priority points, rural areas, urban areas, and best performers.

5.3. The Inspection Process

The inspection team members, led by a Commissioner will introduce themselves to the key personnel at the centre and explain the tasks to be completed. The inspection team should carry identification cards or wear nametags to identify themselves.



For routine inspections to be objective and valid, it is recommended that a standard instrument be used for collecting information. This instrument will guide inspectors when analysing collected data and writing the inspection report. **Annexure A** (Site Inspection Checklist) should be used to guide the process of inspections. The checklist covers a number of generic aspects relating to service delivery but can be adapted to accommodate certain inspection specifics as the need arises. **Annexure B** (Service Delivery Site Inspection Report Template) should be used to compile an inspection report. It should, however, be noted that Commissioners conducting special or follow-up inspections may decide not to use the attached checklist and report template.

In instances where it is applied, the attached checklist should be completed onsite by the inspectors. Where necessary or possible, inspectors should always ask for accompanying documentation to substantiate information gathered. The inspection team will then tour the centre with the personnel concerned.

5.4. Post-inspection Phase

The lasting success of inspections depends on how and when the outcomes of the process are communicated to the line departments and other implementing agencies. Timely reporting of the outcomes of the inspections assists those departments that have been inspected to build on their strengths, and address and negate the weaknesses in their service delivery processes. Without this feedback, inspections are meaningless.

The preparation of the inspection report is the final action that must be taken by the inspector to conclude an inspection exercise (see **Annexure B**). The inspection report should be based on the information recorded on the inspection checklist. The report should point out areas where service delivery is not being met, and provide recommended actions to address identified gaps. Most importantly, the inspection report should highlight areas where good practice is taking place, as it is important to acknowledge, reinforce and maintain good practice.

The final inspection report should reach the relevant department within thirty (30) working days after the inspection. The relevant department should be requested to develop an intervention plan, with specific timelines, to address the identified service delivery gaps.

The OPSC is responsible for compiling inspection reports to be presented to Parliament/Legislatures and/or relevant Standing Committees. Subsequently, an overview report reflecting all departments and provinces visited should be compiled for presentation to the Portfolio Committee on Public Service and Administration. The Director: Citizen Engagement (CE) is responsible for consolidating all provincial reports. A proper chain of communication should be maintained to ensure that visited departments are aware of intervention plans relating to their areas.

5.5. Frequency and Duration of Inspections

The South African government is committed to ensuring that citizens receive quality and competent public service. It is imperative that the welfare and rights of citizens are safeguarded at all times. A number of public institutions are involved in efforts that promote quality service delivery e.g. *Izimbizo*, EXCO Meets the People Campaigns, and the Premiers' State of Province Addresses. The Citizen Engagement Directorate should serve as a co-ordinating structure and should strive to ensure that the inspection visits do not clash with the scheduled *Izimbizo*.

5.6. Conduct of Inspectors

The success of inspections rests with the effectiveness of the inspectors and the swiftness of their feedback. The team should be conversant with international best practices for conducting inspections. Inspection team members should also be well informed on the Batho Pele principles and the Public Service belief set, namely "I belong, I care and I serve".

The actions and conduct of inspectors will always be subject to scrutiny by the personnel they encounter during their inspections. Inspectors are therefore required to behave professionally and courteously at all times and during all phases of an inspection. Each inspector should carry his/her identification card/name-tag. Research shows that inspectors should possess the following attributes or main elements of professionalism:

- Honesty and Integrity – conducting inspections and communicating with the public and public servants in such a manner as to bring confidence and respect to the position of public trust held by inspectors;
- Respect – treating people with respect by being courteous;
- Objectivity – performing all duties impartially and objectively;
- Punctuality – conducting and concluding activities within reasonable time periods; and
- Knowledge – good knowledge of the laws and regulations to be enforced in the public service.

6. Possible Risks in Conducting Inspections

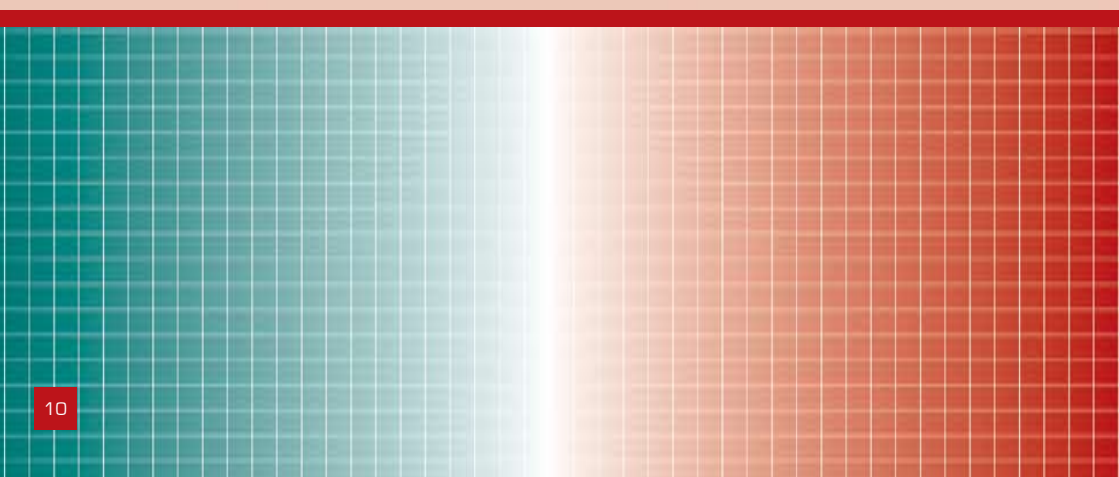
Inspections, whether announced or unannounced have the potential to make a positive impact on service delivery but also carry several risks, which need to be tightly managed. Research studies show that the following are some of the potential risks:

- Lack of proper training of inspectors and failure to use a standard instrument for evaluating the sites and behaviour of the employees;
- Possible gaps which allow some inspectors to be bribed in return for good site inspection reports;
- Inspections being used to promote other self interests e.g. political campaigns instead of service delivery;

- Failure to systematically analyse the results of the visits and report back to the principals of the visited sites; and
- Lack of commitment from the management of the visited sites to reinforce service standards by implementing recommendations made in the reports.

7. Conclusion

The importance of quality customer service in the public service cannot be overstated. Citizens are likely to develop perceptions about the public service based on their experiences when they interact with public service officials. It is important that public service officials treat citizens with dignity whenever they are to receive public services. Unannounced and/or announced visits/inspections are recommended as a valuable measurement tool for continuously evaluating employee-customer interactions. In the long run, this programme is expected to improve service delivery and relations between service providers and users.



Annexure A

Public Service Commission Site Inspection Checklist

(Adapted from the DPSA's Unannounced Visits Checklist)

Name of the assessor/inspector: _____

Designation: _____

Date of assessment: _____

Name of Department visited: _____

Name of Office Head: _____

Designation of Head: _____

Office/town: _____

Address and phone number: _____

Additional comments: _____

Recommendations: _____

N.B.

Rating is based on a 5-point scale where:

- 0 -3 means there is need for improvement;
- 4 means performance is satisfactory; and
- 5 means performance should be commendable for exceptionally good performance.

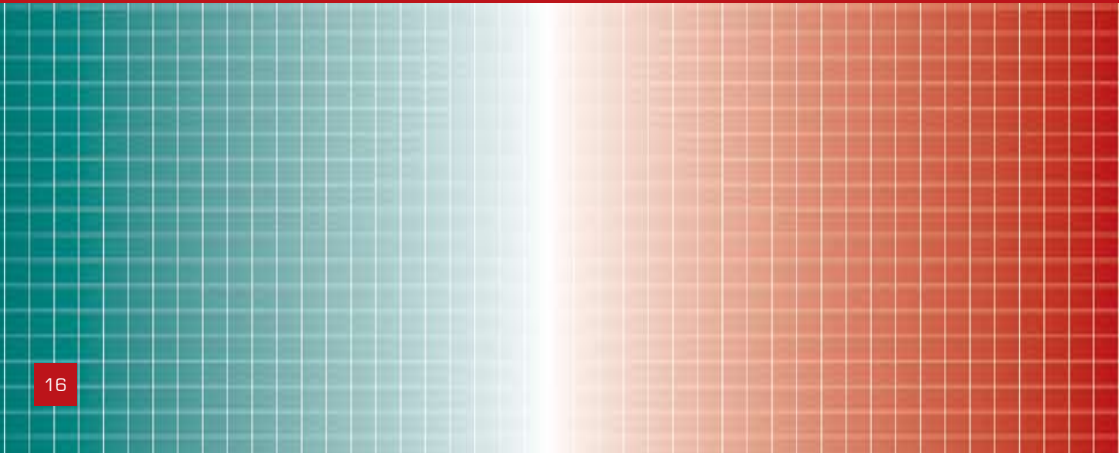


Initial observations:

Rating Facilities:	Score	Comments
1. Is the reception clearly identifiable?		
2. Outside signage?		
3. Inside signage gives proper information?		
4. Business hours reflected?		
5. Service rendered displayed?		
6. Prior requirements to accessing services displayed?		
7. Cost of services displayed?		
8. Condition of building?		
9. Ramps for people with disabilities?		
10. Cleanliness?		
Observing access:	Score	Comments
11. Is there a staff member who guides and directs people on arrival to the appropriate service points?		
12. Is there a service charter/standards displayed?		
13. If yes, does it reflect the dominant languages of the region?		
14. Is it appropriately placed (visible) to citizens?		
15. Is there an information or help desk?		
16. Is the desk stocked with appropriate forms and material?		
17. Is the desk staffed?		
18. Is there a complaints register or suggestion box?		
19. How are complaints from the box/ register addressed?		

Observing staff:	Score	Comments
20. Front staff wearing name badges?		
21. Back office staff wearing name badges?		
22. Staff appears friendly?		
23. Staff appears professional (efficient and knowledgeable)?		
Talking to citizens:	Score	Comments
24. Waiting time in the queue before someone assisted you?		
25. Waiting time for the service after application?		
26. Travel time to reach the service point?		
27. Have you lodged a complaint with the office?		
28. Are you aware of the office's complaints handling system and procedures?		
29. Did you feel that you were treated with courtesy?		
30. General perception of service, comments and complaints:		
Talking to staff:	Score	Comments
31. Counter area appropriate?		
32. Computers and equipment at counters?		
33. Does it appear that there is enough staff on duty to help citizens?		
34. Are lunch and other breaks taken without disrupting services?		
35. Which other approaches do you use to improve access to your services, especially to previously disadvantaged people?		

Talking to staff:	Score	Comments
36. Back office environment conducive to efficiency/support of front office?		
37. Are there any best practices regarding the implementation of Batho Pele principles?		
38. Are there any constraints that impede the implementation of Batho Pele principles?		
39. Staff comments and complaints:		
General Observations:	Score	Comments
40. Air conditioning/heating?		
41. Access to water for the public?		
42. Toilet facilities?		
43. Facilities for the disabled?		
44. Parking sufficient?		
45. Safety of service point location?		
46. Additional comments:		



Annexure B

Public Service Commission: Service Delivery Site Inspection Report Template

Report on the Inspection: Service Delivery Site and Department

Date of inspection:	The date and time of the inspection should be indicated.
Inspection team:	Names of all team members, giving an indication of the team leader; the contact person in the team and the contact number.
Interviewed personnel:	Name of the interviewed personnel giving the name and contact number of the first in charge.
Background and introduction:	<div>Give information on:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whether the visited site is a district or regional office;Whether the site is situated in an urban, rural or peri-urban area;Whether the site is accessible, especially to public transport users;Services provided at the site (in list form);The number of front line staff and back-office staff;The number of vacant posts if any; andThe estimated number of people served per day.</div> <div>The background information is not restricted to the above points.</div>

Based on the checklist:

	+	What positive practices or experiences were noted?	—	What negative practices or experiences were noted?
1. Rating the facilities				
2. Observing access to information				
3. Observing staff				
4. Talking to citizens				
5. Talking to staff				
6. General observations				

Service delivery improvement suggestions and proposals

The list of service delivery improvement suggestions must be preceded by the phrase: "*The Public Service Commission proposes that*:"

Areas of improvement must relate to findings.

Service delivery improvement suggestions must be:

- Written in simple language and easy to read;
- Written in point form addressing identified negative practices;
- Precise and easy to understand; and
- Reasonable, practical and achievable.

Report completed by: _____
(Name and position)

Signature and date: _____

Report approved by: _____
(Name and position)

Signature and date: _____

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