

PUBLIC SECTOR GROUP

Application for ACSR and Anticorruption Thematic Groups Funding

1. *Activity Title:*

Managed Depoliticization of the Civil Service

2. *Task Manager:*

Geoffrey Shepherd (LCSPS)

3. *Description of activity:*

- ?? A good civil service is characterized by middle- to higher-level cadres who are qualified, honest, and serve the public interest, but are also responsive to the government-of-the-day. In this spirit, the Bank's typical project approach to civil service reform has been to promote a model (with implicit antecedents in perceived OECD best practice) emphasizing meritocratic principles, ethical behavior, and rules that insulate civil servants from political influences. But the Bank has not met great success using this approach – problems of poor human resources, corruption, and political influence remain endemic – and the political (and social) constraints to this avenue of reform have become clearer.
- ?? One alternative avenue of reform, seeking “best fit” rather than “best practice”, has been to promote meritocratic/uncorrupt/professionalized “enclaves”, such as project implementation units or semi-autonomous agencies. This may be appropriate under certain national or sectoral conditions, but enclaving can balkanize the state and undermine broader attempts at reform.
- ?? An alternative, perhaps better, “best-fit” solution, where country conditions permit, might reside in trying to combine principles of meritocracy and integrity with political realities in administering the middle-to higher-level civil service – somewhat as the US, Canada, and Belgium do – rather than provide a greater degree of political isolation to the civil service, as the Westminster systems tend to do.
- ?? The proposed knowledge task would briefly review a handful of easily available national systems that combine meritocratic and political considerations in managing the higher civil service. The task would:
- ?? Describe these systems in terms of the institutions that: (i) promote merit, integrity, pursuit of the public interest, and political loyalty; and (ii) provide a framework for limiting the scope of political appointments.
- ?? Ascertain national conditions that facilitate or impede the combination of merit-based and political appointments, notably (i) the rules promoting merit and integrity; (ii) arrangements for transparency in political arrangements; and (iii) the effect of labor market institutions and human-resources capacities on the available pool of recruits.
- ?? Seek to draw lessons from the country cases about the prospects and conditions for applying a “managed depoliticization” model to civil service reform, as well as to identify issues for further work.
- ?? Four to six country cases would be chosen from the following tentative list: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, and the US among the advanced countries and Brazil, Jordan, and Mexico among the less advanced. (In addition, we would also briefly review the literature to see whether the historical evolution from patronage-based to meritocratic civil services in the UK and US throws up relevant lessons on managing the transition.)
- ?? A separate small piece of research is being carried out by Ranjana Mukherjee and Omer Gokcekus to use the results of civil service surveys that the Bank has carried out in a number of countries to measure the relationship between the degree of politicization of the civil service and its performance and to see to what extent good incentives systems have been able to offset politicization. We will work closely with this effort and decide later whether it makes sense to combine our findings in one report, etc.

4. *Breakdown of costs:*

Knowledge Management and Dissemination: Proposed Budget

Geoffrey Shepherd x 1.5 weeks	\$7,000
Suzanne Dove (consultant) x 3 weeks	\$4,000
Jose Garibaldi (consultant) x 2 weeks	\$4,000

TOTAL

\$10,000

5. *Timeline:*

Report	March 2001
Draft Website note	April 2001

6. *Description of expected contributions to current operations on the ground (with identification of specific operations):*

This proposed task has emerged from a recommendation of the Bank's Institutional & Governance Review for Bolivia that the Government consider some form of managed depoliticization through a transparent system of "hybrid" appointments mixing merit and politics. The proposed task will use foreign experience to put some flesh on the bones of the ideas in the IGR. The Institutional Reform Project, currently under supervision in Bolivia, will provide a vehicle for implementing civil service reform.

7. *Explanation of the public good aspect of this activity, i.e. the generalizable lessons and benefits that this activity is expected to provide:*

Given the poor record of Bank efforts to support civil service reform, the proposed task would provide the beginnings of a body of information relevant for almost any country where we are contemplating civil service reform. In particular, we hope the outcome would be to help move the Bank's approach beyond one dominated by a "best-practice" approach towards a debate on the appropriate elements of "best fit".

8. *Form(s) of knowledge output(s) that this activity will generate (e.g., PREM Note, paper, workshop, seminar):*

The output would consist in a short report consisting of case study write-ups and comparative conclusions, a PREM Note, and a contribution offered to the "personnel management" part of the Bank's civil service website. The results would also be presented in a Bank seminar. We also expect that the exercise will lead to the identification of a future program of work on professionalizing the civil service.