

Italy's Justice Bureaus

Sharing best practices to improve service delivery



What is a Justice Bureau?

In Italy, a Justice Bureau refers to an entity which, according to the constitution, is responsible for the administration of the law. Justice Bureaus include: Courts, Courts of Appeal, Juvenile Courts, Mediators, General Prosecutors and Prosecutors.

The Challenge

For the Italian Ministry of Justice, the combination of increased demand for services and the impact of ongoing cost reductions was starting to affect the quality of the justice system.

With civil cases taking up to a decade to go through the legal system and many penal cases in front of the courts for up to three years, the Ministry recognized a clear need for change. Moreover, service levels were inconsistent across the various Justice Bureaus, with pockets of excellence – and deficiencies – in almost every region of the country.

For their part, the Justice Bureaus themselves were also facing a number of challenges. For one, budget cuts had largely resulted in widespread hiring freezes that quickly reduced the number of resources available. Slow implementation of IT systems and ineffective employee computer training were also resulting in subpar performance being observed by the Bureaus.

“The BPR program has helped us realize that there was an opportunity to reinvent our organization to pay more attention to the needs of our clients. It’s been a thrilling experience that we hope can be used by other Justice Bureaus to advance the sharing of best practices.”

Dott.ssa Rosalba Cipparano,
Bari Court of Appeal

The Approach

Leveraging financing from the European Social Fund, the Ministry (working through the regional governments) developed a project to provide Business Process Reengineering (BPR) services to the regional Justice Bureaus. The program would be voluntary, meaning that individual Bureaus would need to ‘opt in’ in order to participate.

The individual projects were commissioned by their respective regional governments who were at liberty to adapt the project to meet the needs expressed by the Bureaus. However, all projects were to include a number of core activities such as organizational assessments and BPR activities, IT system and competency assessments, stakeholder communications and the definition of a ‘code of service’ to formalize service level targets across the country.

A large focus of the program was to identify and share best practices and process excellence across each of the participating Bureaus to help the individual offices make the most of their existing processes and IT systems. Change management support would also play a role in ensuring that changes were not only effective, but also sustainable in the long-term.

Ultimately, the Ministry and the Justice Bureaus expected that the project would improve service delivery and reduce long-term costs, thereby simplifying access to justice for citizens.

The Results

For those Bureaus that participated, the project was widely seen as a significant success. Rigorous benchmarking exercises successfully identified a number of best practices that were quickly rolled-out across the participating Bureaus.

The project team – staffed by BPR professionals from KPMG in Italy – worked closely with employees from every level of the organization to develop tools and approaches that would help them become more efficient and effective in their day-to-day tasks. The project team also analyzed the broader organizational structure of the Bureaus to identify redundant processes and controls, highlight opportunities for greater efficiency and expose gaps in critical work-streams.

Participating Bureaus now report making better use of their existing processes and IT resources and – as a result – are now able to meet their increasing workload more efficiently without compromising citizens’ access to the justice system. Anecdotal evidence also shows that these Bureaus have reduced their ‘cost-to-serve’ while simultaneously increasing efficiency.

For example, the redesign of the Sentences Office at the Bari Court of Appeal is estimated to have resulted in a 40 percent savings in time; similar work within the Justice Expenses group at the Court of Appeal in Lecce is estimated to have cut the time in half for a single operation.

Citizen satisfaction has also greatly increased. Results from customer satisfaction surveys from the Bari Court of Appeal show that 75 percent of respondents are now fully satisfied with their experience with the Sentencing Office, with the remainder claiming to be ‘very satisfied’. What’s more, 83 percent of respondents rated the new system as excellent.

“The project had a very positive impact, particularly in the field of social accountability. What’s more, we were able to unlock real change within the offices and even the most resistant employees started to understand the importance of proper analysis and improvement.”

Dott.ssa Alessandra Scimitore,
Lecce Court of Appeal

Lessons Learned

The Ministry of Justice's project provides a number of valuable lessons for any government department seeking to become more effective and efficient in an era of austerity and budget reductions.

- **Leverage best practices:** The ability to break down organizational silos in order to share experiences and best practices is often seen as a significant challenge for governments. But by encouraging cooperation between the various departments, governments can foster a culture of continuous improvement and drive sustainable change across the organization.
- **Build momentum:** While uptake from the individual Bureaus was initially slow, this started to change as results of the project's success became evident. In fact, as the first Bureaus started to show results, the program enjoyed a noticeable uptake in the interest and enrollment from other parts of the country. This was also true within individual Bureaus where successes within one office often catalyzed engagement from other offices.
- **Maximize IT investment:** Rather than installing a new organization-wide IT system, the project aimed to enable employees to make better use of the resources already available such as self-generating standardized forms that allow both clerks and judges to avoid duplication and reduce redundant data entry activities. This not only meant that the Ministry was able to maximize their IT investments, but also allowed Bureaus to achieve significant improvements without disrupting operations and service delivery.

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