

Komet information 2020:05E, published 2021-02-10

Government agency responsibility from a holistic approach

Komet presents a model for considering agency responsibility from a holistic approach consisting of three components: sustainability and ethics, collaboration and learning, and legal certainty and effectiveness. In a time of rapid transformation and changing technological conditions, the model can be used to facilitate development of governance and monitoring.

Komet considers it essential to develop a more dynamic public administration. In times of major challenges and extensive technological development, this is needed to ensure sustainable and stable societal development. The objectives of public administration policy are defined in the Instrument of Government, Government Agencies Ordinance and administrative policy. These objectives need to be incorporated into a common model that illustrates agency responsibility. This model can help balance governance and monitoring as a whole, based on the three components.

The first component of responsibility is aimed at creating legally certain and effective administration. The second component focuses on a collaborative and learning administration providing quality, service and accessibility. The third component involves the responsibility to contribute to sustainable and ethical development in Sweden and globally.

From the Government Agencies Ordinance

"The Agency should regularly strive to ensure all possible benefits for individuals and for the State as a whole through cooperation with government agencies and others."

Section 6 of the Government Agencies Ordinance (2007:515)

From the Swedish Constitution

"The public institutions are to promote sustainable development leading to a good environment for present and future generations."

Chapter 1, Article 2, third paragraph of the Instrument of Government.



Komet's model for agency responsibility from a holistic approach consisting of three components.

Clarifying the overall administrative objectives in this way makes it possible to transform objectives into concrete action and activities, and to find a balance between different priorities, initiatives and approaches.

The three components of responsibility

The model can be a good tool for the Government Offices and agencies. To achieve a balance between the three components, long-term and effective governance and monitoring must be applied. Each component requires different work approaches, incentives and leadership. All three components are equally important and must be managed individually and collectively.

- **Legal certainty and effectiveness.** Builds on an *inside-out* approach at the agency. The starting point is how the organisation and employees can ensure legal certainty and productivity.
- **Collaboration and learning.** Builds on an *outside-in* approach at the agency. The starting point is how the agency works in society. Through cooperation, the best organisation possible is created for citizens, businesses and civil society.
- **Sustainability and ethics.** Builds on a *long-term holistic approach*. The starting point is that the agency will contribute to a sustainable society and that every agency is part of the collective and long-term building of society.

The administrative policy objective

The Government's governance of agencies based on the administrative policy objective on which the Riksdag decided in 2010:

"An innovative and collaborative central government administration that is legally certain and efficient, has a high degree of quality, service and accessibility, and thereby contributes to Sweden's development and effective EU work."

Government Bill 2009/10:175, p. 27.

The table clarifies the three components of responsibility and gives examples based on a single agency.

Sustainability and ethics	Collaboration and learning	Legal certainty and effectiveness
<i>Holistic approach</i>	<i>Outside-in approach</i>	<i>inside-out approach</i>
Governance:		
Comprehensive, long-term and guiding objectives.	Objectives and tasks that stress collaboration and the individual's needs.	Objectives and tasks for productivity and continuous improvement efforts.
Examples of what an agency does:		
Ensures that all employees take an ethical approach to their daily work.	Collaborate with others to improve services for citizens and businesses.	Introduce modern IT systems and working methods that improve efficiency of the agency's administration in a secure way. The solutions are open, user-friendly and stable.
Take initiatives to enable sustainable holistic solutions.	Help to quickly clarify which agency is to deal with new issues.	
Examples of questions to consider when monitoring:		
What are the contributions to the whole?	What are the effects on individuals and businesses?	What is to be delivered – quantity and quality?
Will long-term benefit and confidence be created?	Are clarity and understanding increased?	How and with what resources?
Are development and innovation enabled?	How are changes in the external environment managed?	How are flexibility and robustness ensured?