



Case Study

URUGUAY VUCE – Performance Measurement

Background

The Single Window Implementation Project was set up in Uruguay as a part of the national Customs modernization process, initiated in 2007 with funding from the Inter-American Development Bank. Under this project, a strategic planning process was launched in 2010 that made it possible, *inter alia*, to identify the key initiatives to be implemented by the National Customs Authority in order to position itself as a facilitating entity in the development of the country's competitiveness.

Against this background, the Single Window Project was established by the National Customs Authority in conjunction with the Interministerial Commission for Foreign Trade Affairs (CIACEX). In 2013, the VUCE (Single Window for Foreign Trade, known by its Spanish acronym) was integrated into the Uruguay XXI Investment, Export and Country Brand Promotion Agency.

By 2017, the VUCE was fully operational in Uruguay, having seen the integration of more than 70% of procedures and a huge increase in the number of its users. Although much still remains to be done, this tool has had a major impact, making processes more efficient and reducing the time and costs involved in operations.

Performance measurement framework

One of the key elements in achieving the desired outcomes was to identify, from the outset, the objectives that would guide the development of this platform. Once the purpose and function of the VUCE had been decided, the focus was oriented towards the definition of the principal long-term objectives based on five key perspectives for the development of this facilitation environment: Facilitation, Control, Coordination, Electronic Processing and Internal Management.

These objectives were carefully defined to ensure a clear understanding of the expectations of all stakeholders involved and the role that they would play in fulfilling them. Once an objective had been agreed and guidance on its implementation provided, key performance indicators were established so that the level of progress made towards achieving that objective could be measured. It was then possible to identify and plan the actions or initiatives required to achieve the objective.

The Balanced Scorecard is a performance management tool that is used continuously to monitor key performance indicators, while the system incorporates quarterly planning which

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allows for the integration of any necessary adjustments. The methodological logic used involves the development of a Balanced Scorecard that converts broad objectives into specific projects and actions, providing a precise definition of the indicators that make it possible to measure the progress made towards each of the proposed objectives. This is identical to the methodological framework proposed by R. Kaplan and D. Norton for management control.

Key performance indicators

The definition of objectives in connection with the purpose and vision of the VUCE remained a major challenge. A number of important characteristics had to be taken into account in defining key performance indicators:

- **Relevant.** Indicators are closely linked to the objectives to be reached and show clearly how each goal is being achieved.
- **Objective.** Indicators are unambiguous and produce the same result from reliable input data, no matter who performs the measurement.
- **Efficient.** Indicators that are difficult or too expensive to monitor should be avoided where possible.
- **Robust.** Indicators are affected by the underlying processes to be measured, but not by other processes. They also should not produce any unintended effects.

The following Balanced Scorecard, which draws on these characteristics and proposes a dynamic model that is reviewed in the light of any changes made to the objectives, was developed for the VUCE:

Objective	Indicators	BL	2017	2020
The approval of the documents will not be a bottleneck for the operations because operators will be able to issue all documents electronically, with short and predictable time and low costs.	Approval time for document	34	22,5	18
	Cost per document	26	24	12
	% of Operations using documents on SW	21%	43%	80%
	% of LPCO with SLA	0%	0%	50%
Control of operations will be efficient (by reducing resources affected to the task) and effective (by focusing on high-level controls)	Hours dedicated per document	12	11	8
	% Fields Controlled Automatically	10%	12%	15%
	% Documents Using Risk Analysis	0%	0%	5%
	% Trained Officers	22%	45%	50%
SW will be recognized as an articulator for the community, integrating and offering solutions for all the actors, and leading the region in terms of interoperability, new projects and technologies	% Stakeholder recognizing SW in survey	37%	47%	50%
	Customer Satisfaction in survey	3,7	3,9	3,9
	Number of projects led by SW	0	1	2
	Number of projects led in the region	0	1	2
SW is an e-government Project, so it has to be aligned with national e-gov strategy, offering high-availability, accesibility, high-usability	% Standards Accomplished	0%	58%	100%
	Availability	-	99,7%	99,9%
	Customer Satisfaction (usability) in Survey	3,2	3,4	3,8
SW has a strong structure with a team committed with organizational values, self-sustainable and legally enabled to ensure its permanence beyond political will.	% Team Building Plan Accomplished	0%	75%	100%
	Hours Training for Team	30	120	150
	% Legal Plan Accomplished	20%	60%	100%
	% of Budget Covered by Incomes	0%	43%	80%

Achievements and future challenges

Although a tremendous amount of progress has been made, continuous efforts are required to ensure that the objectives are achieved. Moreover, given that the implementation of a Single Window is a dynamic process, the objectives (and, therefore, the way in which they are measured) must be reviewed on a regular basis. In particular, plans are currently being made for the integration of new services and processes, which will involve setting more aggressive and challenging objectives. As part of the strategic planning process, the objectives are reviewed on an annual basis in order to assess their relevance and take into account new environmental and internal factors. Therefore, the measurement mechanisms allow for adequate control of performance management, provided that the objectives are defined in line with policy and strategic guidelines, as well as any foreign trade needs that may arise.