

UNIT EVIDENCE AND RESEARCH STRATEGY

2007-08

THE GOVERNMENT CAR & DESPATCH AGENCY

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1. Introduction

1.1. The intention of this document is to set out the evidence and research strategy for the Government Car & Despatch Agency (GCDA) within the framework of the DfT Evidence and Research Strategy. The focus of this document is a programme of work for 2007/08.

1.2. GCDA is an Executive Agency of DfT, delivering outcomes in support of the Department's strategic aims and contributing whenever possible to the Department's aims in respect of road transport. Whilst GCDA is not formally part of the DfT Driver, Vehicle & Operator Group, the Director General of DVO Group has AAO responsibilities for the agency.

1.3. There are two branches to the GCDA that provide services to other government departments - Government Cars and Government Mail. These are the government's own services for moving people and documents safely and reliably throughout the UK. The agency exists to help government departments and the wider public sector achieve efficiency and savings by providing these services directly. Government Cars is the larger part of the agency's work, giving a turnover of around £12m (out of the total turnover of around £18m). Government Mail transports internal mail between government departments, covering all major government departments and some agencies and NDPBs. Government Mail also operates a next day courier service, run in partnership with Amtrak Express Parcels. In addition, there are two branches of GCDA responsible for providing internal services - People & Organisational Development (POD) and Finance, IT and Corporate Governance.

2. Objectives

2.1. The aims at the heart of GCDA's strategy are:

- effective service provision;
- organisational development;
- realising staff potential;
- efficiency and corporate assurance;
- making best use of information technology.

2.2. These translate into key tasks and performance indicators which represent the GCDA's critical success factors. The agency's functional objectives are:

- to meet government requirements and customers' needs for the provision of secure cars, drivers, and mail services;
- to provide a value for money service and recover its costs
- to promote best practice in driving standards and road safety, security and in the environmental performance of its operations;
- to promote a culture of quality and performance, based on clear organisational values, an inclusive culture and good employee relations;

2.3. DfT has set GCDA the following targets for 2007-08:

- **Financial:**
 - To break even on an accruals basis;
- **Quality of Service:**
 - To maintain a Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) score at least at 2005-06 levels of 86.7;
 - To maintain accreditation for ISO 9001;
- **Environmental:**
 - To reduce the environmental impact of the Agency;
 - By March 2008 to reduce the average tailpipe emissions of the Government fleet by 5% compared with March 2007 levels;
 - To increase the use of alternative engine and fuel technology in GCDA vehicles by 5% by March 2008 against 2006-07 levels;
- **Efficiency:**
 - To reduce the administration charges to customers by 2% against 2006-07.

3. Evidence Needs

3.1. Unlike most other government agencies, GCDA is an inward-facing agency, providing services to government departments rather than the public. The majority of the agency's evidence needs relate to its aims of providing a reliable, efficient and environmentally friendly service.

3.2. To monitor performance against our targets, we collect evidence on the following

areas:

- Vehicles - GCDA's vehicle management system is used to collect information on cars and vans such as tachograph readings, fuel usage and CO₂ emissions. This information is used for fleet management (including identifying maintenance needs) and measuring performance against targets. Data on accidents and infringements are also collected.
- Drivers - daily paper logs are kept, recording drivers' movements. This is used for recharging departments for services, and is also needed to calculate drivers' pay (which depends on the hours worked). It is envisaged that a telematics system will be introduced into the fleet soon which will collect this information via a satellite link and will automate the process of collecting data.
- Mail deliveries - all mail coming in and going out of vans is tracked.
- Customer satisfaction - an annual survey is carried out to measure customers' satisfaction with both the Government Cars and Government Mail services. This takes the form of telephone interviews with a range of customers from Ministers or Permanent Secretaries to diary secretaries. In practice it is often the Assistant Private Secretary that answers the questions.

3.3. Customer satisfaction is currently measured as an index, but it is recognised that this is as not as meaningful as measuring the percentage of customers who are satisfied or dissatisfied with the service. GCDA aims to develop a new model for measuring customer satisfaction during 2007.

3.4. Information from the customer satisfaction survey is used to measure performance against the target, and by each part of the business to develop an action plan based on comments received to address perceived deficiencies in the system. These action plans are then monitored by the Senior Executive Team. Face-to-face customer meetings have also been introduced on a twice yearly basis, to gather information on the service required.

4. Communication

4.1. Most of the information and evidence gathered by GCDA is used internally for performance management. Performance against high-level targets and the latest financial position are reported quarterly to DVO Group by the GCDA Chief Executive.

- 4.2. GCDA's main stakeholders include all government departments as the agency drives all Ministers other than the Prime Minister (for security reasons). There is regular and ongoing communication with all government departments on operational issues, as well as regular communications relating to invoicing.
- 4.3. GCDA has a seat on the DVO Group Vehicle Technology Forum, however this is more as an area of interest than one that is directly relevant to the agency's work. The forum tends to consider policy issues whereas GCDA is interested in current operational activities. The agency contributes by offering the perspective of a fleet user.
- 4.4. GCDA has also worked with DfT's Cleaner Fuels and Vehicles division to share information and data relating to efficient driving, and was involved with Defra's work to set targets for CO₂ emissions by the government fleet. GCDA collects fleet management data, including on fuel utilisation, which was able to feed into this work. GCDA is also working with Defra on carbon offsetting. Although GCDA has already met Defra's emerging targets for CO₂ emissions it is acknowledged that there will continue to be some emissions, and the agency is keen to explore how these can be offset.
- 4.5. GCDA has recently developed a new marketing strategy. Work has been carried out to change the agency's visual identity, including changing the name of the agency and services. In addition to visual marketing aides that are already available, the Green Cars service is being re-launched in January 2007.

5. Collaboration

- 5.1. GCDA collaborates with a number of other government departments. For example, the agency works with Transport for London on congestion charging issues. As the agency has a fleet of vehicles operating across London we are able to pilot initiatives on behalf of TfL. A recent example includes a potential new initiative to charge motorists according to the amount of time spent in the charging zone, rather than just for passing a boundary. GCDA has also discussed with the Highways Agency the possibility of piloting initiatives on the

national road network.

5.2. The GCDA Chief Executive chairs the Home Office's UK Vehicle Security Advisory Group. This is a cross-government group that advises on security issues relating to armoured cars. The police, security services, the MOD and any others that have the need for protected vehicles have seats on this group. There is a unit in the police that deals with research, and the group will commission research from this unit when necessary. For example, the unit is currently looking at the next generation of armoured vehicles. The Group meets quarterly, as does its technical sub-group. Through these groups, GCDA has close links with the Home Office, security services, MOD and others.

5.3. GCDA runs the Government Mail service in collaboration with Amtrak Express Parcels, enabling a nationwide, next day delivery service to be provided to government departments and the wider public sector. Government Mail gives Government and the wider public sector an opportunity to cut their administration and reduce costs through an innovative Government-backed partnership. In addition, GCDA is beginning the process of tendering for a national network of local courier services.

6. Skills

6.1. As the majority of GCDA's data are drawn from internal information management systems, the key skill required to extract the relevant information is the ability to use the operating system (i.e. IT skills), and analytical skills to analyse the data. There is a significant resource need in terms of the number of people needed to collect and analyse this information as many systems are still paper-based.

6.2. GCDA is hoping to introduce a new IT system that will automate the process of monitoring performance. However, most of the information needed will come from drivers, who in general are not as IT literate as office-based staff. Therefore there is likely to be a significant training need. There are issues to be resolved relating to the new shared services centre before it can be decided whether it will be possible to introduce the new IT system.

7. Research Management

7.1. An established contract is in place with a consultancy company to carry out the annual customer satisfaction survey, and the same team within the company carries out the survey each year. The same process is used annually, although this is currently under review.

7.2. An initiation document is put together after Christmas each year for the project to investigate customer satisfaction with the service provided by the agency in the previous year. There are regular meetings with the consultancy company throughout the project, and the end results are presented to GCDA in June.

8. Technology & Innovation

8.1. The most relevant new technology that GCDA is hoping to soon make use of is telematics in the vehicle fleet, and the agency has been working with DfT's Transport Technology and Standards division on this. Although this will be beneficial in providing information relating to route choice and car to car communication systems, the main benefits of telematics in the fleet will be to gather information on the car - such as start and finish times, fuel consumption, braking systems, and all other electrical systems in the car, in real time. There are also health and safety benefits as each car will have a panic button, which if pressed will enable GCDA to send emergency services to the vehicle's location.

8.2. GCDA is also looking to make use of other new and existing technologies, for example new initiatives include developing the ability for customers to book cars online, and the ability for GCDA to take payment using the government procurement card.

8.3. The key initiative in which the agency has strived to be innovative is the new IT strategy which will change the way that information is gathered and processed. A road map has been developed that shows the strategy and timeline for moving to a new IT system.