McKinnon INSTITUTE

GETTING STARTED AS A MINISTER
A REFERENCE FRAMEWORK

What to consider, and when

Establishment

The initial period following your swearing in – and presuming you understand constitutional, legal and administrative context.

Departmental engagement	• Receive the initial approach from the Department. • Undertake the initial engagement with Department and agencies (incl variables).
The core guidance	• Keep returning to your Incoming Government Brief (or equivalent). • Consider the Charter Letter and discuss it with the centre. • Be across all of the other requests, requirements and rules being set for Ministers.
Office establishment	• Bump in / do the physical move. • Interim office arrangements – but establish fundamentals in setting up the office. • Take steps with staffing - choose a CoS and key senior staff; resolve status of current staff.
Find your tempo	• Undertake initial meetings with key internal and external stakeholders. • Commence routines and arrangements – The Department – like for like engagement – The Centre - First Minister's Office, Treasurer's Office (plus Finance Minister) – The Neighbours – other Minsters/Parl Secs in the same Department(s) – The Colleagues – the Parliamentary Party arrangements
Attempt the triage	• Urgent business; key issues; critical dates; and some sense of longer term priorities.

Norming and then performing

At 100 days you are settled and understand the scale and consequences of the role. You are on an even keel with the Department and have spent some time on getting the systems, process and approach right.

Critical basics	• Alignment of effort between MO and Department staff. • Commence the task of engaging, informing and educating the public.
Operational Effectiveness	• Have a sense of your own strengths and weaknesses; ensure your operation reflects them. • Build out the internal dashboard – effective reporting – co-ordination and oversight mechanisms – formal mandate; and – intervention mechanisms.
Your agenda	• Fundamentally revisit the priorities and the ministerial method. – Horses for courses approach but structured and deliberate **(See DIPR framework).** – Base your thinking on Mark Moore's Strategic Triangle of Public Value: ○ Public Value - Does it align with our agenda? What's the benefit? Where's the public at? How do I navigate the cost/benefit? ○ Legitimacy - Do I have cover? have I tested it? Do I have a head of power or budget? ○ Organisational capacity - Do we have resources, capability and co-ordination? What are the implementation risks?

Keeping out of trouble

The routine activities to minimise mistakes and risks.

Don't repeat the mistakes of others	• Leverage the knowledge and insight available: – Formal and informal guidance and advice – including Mentorship – Observation – Corporate memory – mix of old and new
Continue your conversations	• Shared knowledge is a critical foundation for action. • Get cover; or get formal permission.
Worst critic's perspective	• Step back and consider it by the perspective of your worse critic - Is it legal; is it moral; is it appropriate? - Does it undermine other directions and commitments? - Does it make you look stupid, unwise, frivolous or reckless?