

# PRUB-Validate UK Public Services

*PRUB-Validate can explicitly determine:*

- *which public services are 'validated' and should be retained*
- *which public services cannot be 'validated' and should be modified or terminated*

*PRUB-Validate can then enable validated services to be joined up across multiple organisations and topics to maximise effectiveness and efficiency*

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UK:  
Munira Thobani  
OPM Ltd  
MThobani@opm.co.uk

NZ:  
Dr Phil Driver, CEO  
OpenStrategies Ltd  
[phil@openstrategies.com](mailto:phil@openstrategies.com)

# PRUB-Validate UK Public Services

## Why?

The UK government requires public servants to:

- develop, validate and undertake strategic actions which have worthwhile impacts
- join up their actions to optimise effectiveness and efficiency
- develop convincing business cases to justify funding

The ‘validation of strategies’ and the ‘joining up of strategies’ are challenging, yet both are crucial for underpinning effective business cases for funding.

PRUB-Validate can:

- objectively and simply guide the validation of public service strategies at all organisational levels
- guide and enable the joining-up of the all strategic actions across multiple agencies, organisations and topics
- guide the development of ‘SubStrategies’ which are excellent tools for underpinning business cases for funding

**This paper describes the validation of public services.** To validate their strategic actions, public servants must distinguish between:

1. ‘Validated’, impact-generating strategic actions which must be maintained and possibly expanded
2. ‘Non-validated’ actions which must be improved or stopped and savings made

Four questions must be answered for each public service:

1. What desired outcomes should each public service lead to?
  - *Action: clarify the **High Level SubStrategy***
2. What needs to be done to make each public service successful?
  - *Action: define the **Guidance Level SubStrategy***
3. What evidence do we have that each public service will genuinely lead to the desired outcomes?
  - *Action: justify the SubStrategy with cause-and-effect **Evidence***
4. Is it worth it?
  - *Action: assess the SubStrategy’s net **Value***

This 4 step process is “PRUB-Validate”.

Each of the above questions must be answered convincingly before it is possible to take the subsequent step. For example it is not possible to determine the value of the impact of a strategic action until there is compelling evidence that the Results of the action are in fact being Used to generate that impact (Benefit).

Each of the above steps is easier than the subsequent steps. It is easier to write a high-level SubStrategy than a detailed one, which is easier than Evidencing a SubStrategy, which in turn is easier than determining a SubStrategy's net value.

This means that the easiest PRUB-Validate steps can quickly guide the improvement or elimination of those public services which fail each step.

Actions eliminated in each step do not need to be processed through the subsequent, more challenging Validation steps.

This paper describes how to do this effectively and efficiently.

## How?

### 1. Clarify the High Level SubStrategy

The first step in PRUB-Validating each strategic action is to define it rigorously using the following general sequence:

*Public servants run **P**rojects to produce **R**esults  
which communities/citizens/others **U**se to create **B**enefits*

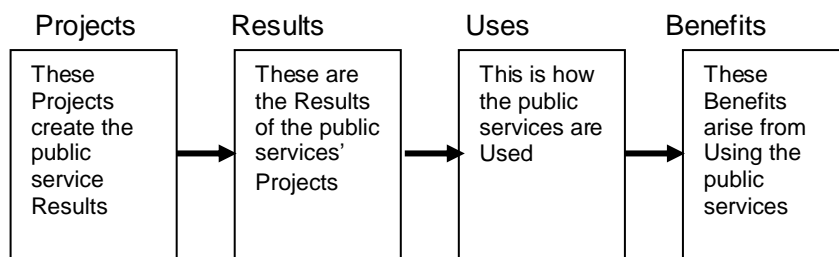
This logical sequence is PRUB. PRUB simply and precisely describes the real world.

There are no short cuts. **Successful** Projects *must* produce Results (products, services and infrastructure) which *must* be Used in ways which *must* produce worthwhile Benefits.

Any break in this sequence immediately invalidates a public service strategy.

Step one in Validating a strategic action is to define it as a general PRUB sequence:

1. What general Project(s) are required to generate the desired Results?
2. What are the outputs (Results)?
3. How are the Results being Used?
4. What Benefit(s) are arising?



This Linked PRUB sequence defines a high level SubStrategy for a public service.

Results are often known as “outputs”. Benefits are often known as “outcomes”.

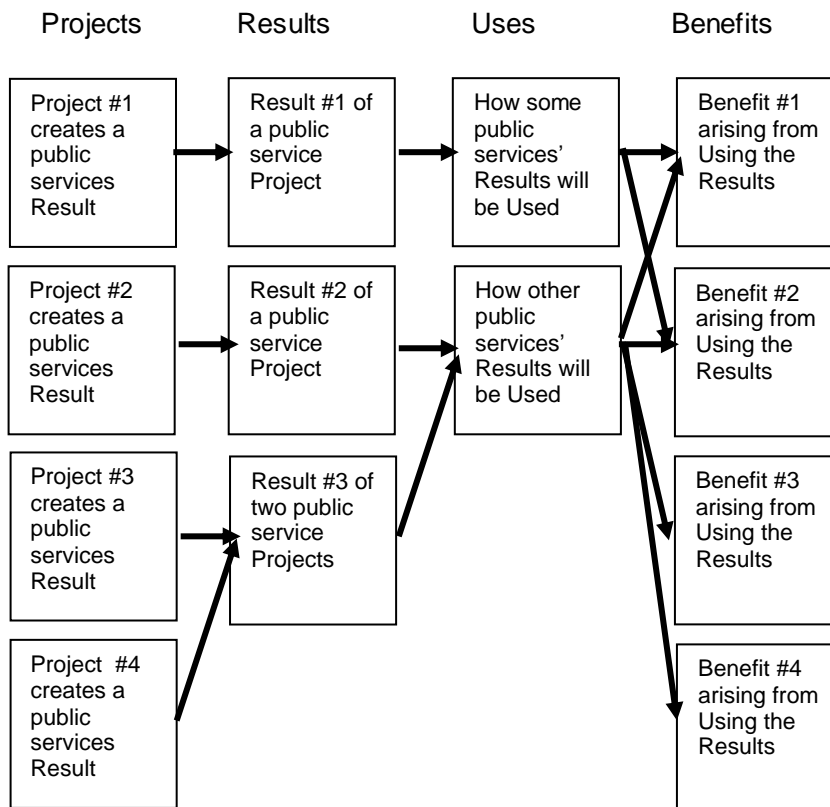
If it is not possible to define a public service as a high level SubStrategy like this, then *do not continue with the service*. Improve or eliminate them.

This PRUB-sequence is not yet enough to Validate the service.

We still need to know details of what other actions are required to support the public service actions, whether the Results are actually being Used by communities and citizens and whether they lead to sufficiently valuable Benefits. This leads to step 2 in the PRUB-Validate process.

## 2. Define the guidance-level public services’ SubStrategy

To Validate each public service it must be expanded into an operational-level SubStrategy which contains all the Linked Projects, Results and Uses which are both *necessary and sufficient to generate the desired Benefits*.



This SubStrategy now defines and Links all the *necessary and sufficient* things that need to happen if a public service action is to effectively and efficiently have an impact.

There are no short-cuts from Projects to Benefits. To be validated, a Project *must* lead to Results which *must* lead to Uses which *must* lead to Benefits.

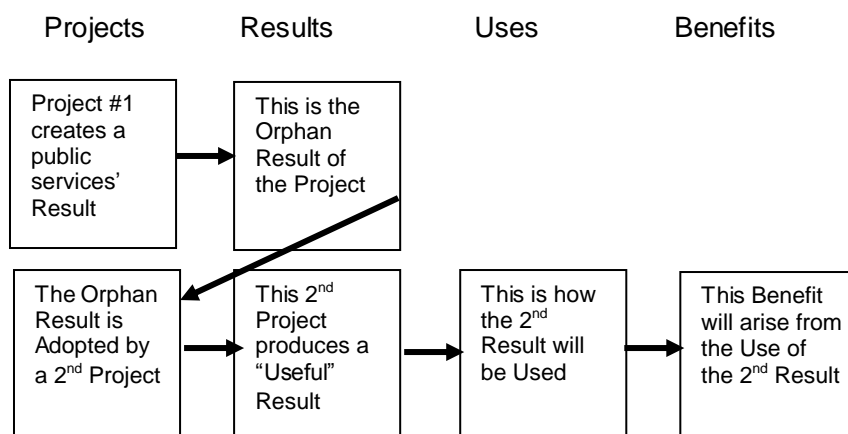
If it is impossible to convert the high level SubStrategy into a necessary and sufficient guidance level SubStrategy like this, then *do not continue with the service*. Improve it or eliminate it

Note, however, that Projects often produce Results *which cannot be directly Used by communities*. Such Results are known as ‘Orphan Results’.

There are two types of Orphan Results:

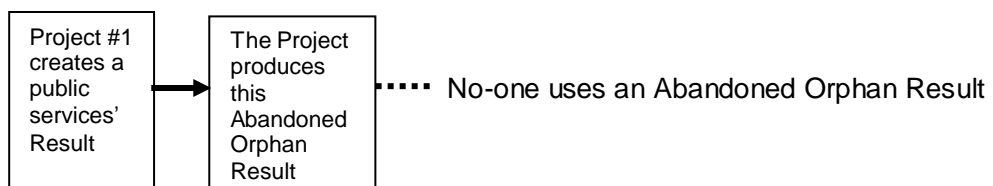
1. Adopted Orphan Results
2. Abandoned Orphan Results

**Adopted Orphan Results:** If an Orphan Result is Adopted by another Project run by another organisation or elsewhere in the same organisation, we say that the Orphan Result has been ‘Adopted’ – it is an ‘Adopted Orphan Result’.



Both Projects above have been successfully PRUB-Linked so they can proceed to the next step in the Validation process.

**Abandoned Orphan Results:** If an Orphan Result is not ‘Adopted’ by another organisation, then we define it as an ‘Abandoned Orphan Result’.



This Result has been neither Used nor Adopted – it is an Abandoned Orphan Result.

It is estimated that 10-40% of public sector Projects produce Abandoned Orphan Results.

If a Project produces an Abandoned Orphan Result, *do not continue with the Project*. Improve it or eliminate it.

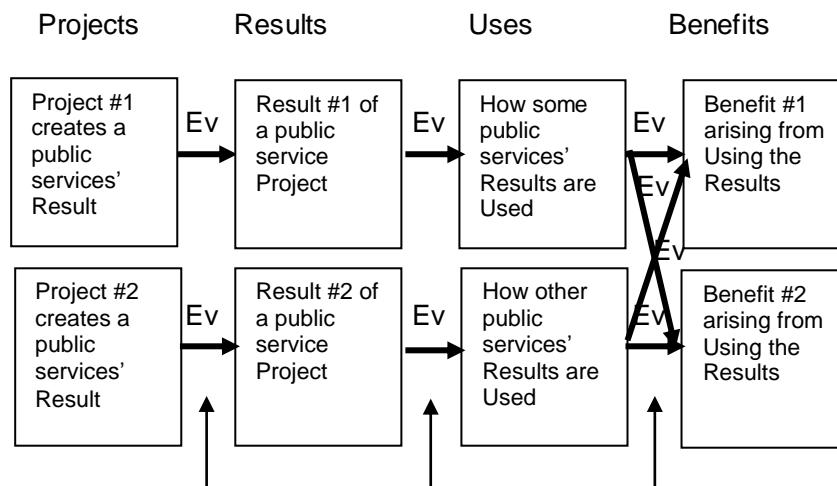
A SubStrategy in which all the Results are either Used or Adopted is still not enough to Validate a public service because at this stage it is merely a theoretical map of possibilities.

We still need to know if it is actually happening at a level which is worthwhile. This leads us to steps 3 and 4 of PRUB-Validate.

### 3. Justify the SubStrategy with cause-and-effect Evidence

Every Link in a public services' SubStrategy must be Evidence-based to demonstrate that the Results are actually being used by communities/citizens and are leading to desired Benefits.

This Evidence is precisely located in the Links (arrows) in the SubStrategy diagram of each piece of UK Public Services.



Convincing Evidence *must* be found for each of these Links to provide confidence that:

- each public service Project is definitely producing the desired Result
- the public service Result is definitely being Used
- the Use of each public service Result is definitely leading to the desired Benefit

Some Evidence is easier to find than other Evidence. For example, it is usually straightforward to find Evidence that a Project is leading to a Result.

It is usually more difficult (yet crucial) to determine objectively and quantitatively if Results are actually being Used, to what extent, and whether these Uses are genuinely leading to the desired Benefits.

Validating or justifying strategic actions requires convincing Evidence that the Results are actually being Used in the manner that is anticipated.

Experience shows that *the most useful Validation Evidence is the Evidence which confirms that Results are actually being Used.*

If such Evidence is lacking, *do not continue with the public service Projects.* Improve or eliminate them.

Even when a public service action has been successfully defined, mapped into a SubStrategy and fully Evidenced (steps 1-3), this is still not enough to Validate the science.

We still need to know “is it worth it?” This is determined in step 4 of PRUB-Validate.

#### 4. Assess the Value of each UK Public Services SubStrategy

We now need to know if the net value of the Benefits exceeds the net costs of creating those values. Specifically:

*“does the value of the Benefits exceed the sum of the costs of the Projects plus the costs of the Uses?”*

Determining the value of Benefits is often very challenging. This fact alone is a powerful reason why, *before attempting to determine the net value of a public service, it is easier and better to first conduct steps 1-3 above to eliminate:*

1. *all those public services which cannot be defined as a high level SubStrategy*
2. *all those public services which cannot be succinctly described in a guidance level SubStrategy*
3. *all SubStrategies which cannot be effectively Evidenced*

It is precisely because economic valuations are so challenging that steps 1-3 above are so powerful for rapidly assessing public services. However, end-users generally have a pretty clear idea of the Value of their Uses of Results, so intimate engagement with end-Users is crucial for designing and Validating public services.

Having eliminated public services which fail the first 3 steps, we now have a smaller set of strategic options to ‘Value’ and hence to completely Validate. Non-validated public services can also be refined so that they can be validated and the PRUB-Validate process identifies exactly where such services need to be refined by identifying gaps in the SubStrategy/Evidence.

Importantly, the second step (defining the public services as a guidance level SubStrategy) identifies exactly *which costs* will be incurred to achieve *which Benefits*.

Frequently the Users’ costs exceed the Project’s costs so they *must* be included in the value calculations.

There are hundreds if not thousands of articles, papers and books on determining the value of outcomes/Benefits and this current paper will not attempt to describe them. A keen reader is invited to start here:

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predicted\\_outcome\\_value\\_theory](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Predicted_outcome_value_theory)

Crucially, the net value of a public service SubStrategy must take into account all 3 factors:

1. the value of the Benefits
2. the cost of the Projects
3. the cost to Users of using the Results to achieve the Benefits

and then determine whether the value of the Benefits outweighs the *sum* of the Project costs and the Use costs.

Mathematically, is  $\Sigma V_B > \Sigma C_P + \Sigma C_U$  ?

where  $\Sigma V_B$  = Sum of the Values of the Benefits  
 $\Sigma C_P$  = Sum of the Costs of the Projects  
 $\Sigma C_U$  = Sum of the Costs of the Uses

## Summary: **PRUB-Validate UK Public Services**

PRUB-Validate asks four questions and recommends four actions to Validate each UK public service:

1. What desired outcomes should each public service lead to?
  - *Action: clarify the **High Level SubStrategy***
2. What needs to be done to make each public service successful?
  - *Action: define the **Guidance Level SubStrategy***
3. What evidence do we have that each public service will genuinely lead to the desired outcomes?
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The first three steps simply and succinctly describe, and where appropriate, retain or eliminate public services *without having to speculate on the actual Values of the Benefits to arise from each SubStrategy*.

The fourth step uses the SubStrategy from step 2 to *precisely identify those costs and values which must feed into the value assessment* to complete the service validation process.

All 4 PRUB-Validate steps are essential to justify continuing a service.

There are no short-cuts.

You can proceed with confidence when a public service has been PRUB-Validated

Once each public service has been PRUB-Validated it becomes much easier to interlink it across agencies and topics using the OpenStrategies' system.

Contact Dr Phil Driver on [phil@openstrategies.com](mailto:phil@openstrategies.com) for further information.