

INSIGHT FROM A DBM JUNIOR LEADER

The Difficult Task of Transforming Institutions

From 2004 to 2013, I was part of the implementation of a vital reform initiative, the Government Rationalization Program, which was mandated under Executive Order (E.O.) No. 366, s. 2004 to transform the bureaucracy into an effective and efficient institution.

I was a Budget and Management Analyst back then and had been only in the DBM for more than a year when I was assigned to handle the drafting of the said E.O., as well as its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

I was a bit concerned in undertaking the task since said documents would be presented and approved by the key officials of the government, such as the late DBM Secretary Emilia Boncodin and former Civil Service Commission (CSC) Chairperson Karina David, and eventually by the President. But with the guidance and effective supervision of my Division Chief and my Bureau Director at that time, I was able to draft these issuances.

Part of my task was to evaluate the rationalization plans submitted by seven agencies: Department of Agrarian Reform, CSC, Bureau of Corrections, Career Executive Service Board, National Defense College of the Philippines, Philippine Army, and the Philippine Military Academy. Consequently, when I became a Division Chief in 2012, I reviewed the draft action documents as regard the evaluation of the plans of about 15 agencies.

As these plans were approved by the DBM, we then came up with a rationalized organizational structure and staffing pattern for said agencies, which were vital in improving the quality of their service delivery and enhancing their institutional capacity.

It took us a while before we completed the evaluation of the plans since there were instances that the proposed functional, organizational, and staffing shifts of the agencies were not consistent with E.O. 366 and its IRR, as well as DBM rules and regulations.

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In addition, in the numerous meetings and dialogues between the DBM and the agencies concerned that were conducted prior to the approval of the plans, the agencies would express their opposition about our findings and evaluation. During these instances, I would remain calm, sensitive, and tactful.

While I encountered some difficulties in dealing with a number of the agencies, I felt fulfilled whenever the rationalized organizational structure and manpower complement we recommended for them were approved by the DBM Secretary. I likewise considered our recommendations an opportunity for the agencies to become more effective and efficient in performing their core functions, and responsive to the needs of their clients.

I felt the gratitude of those who gained from this program. I particularly remember some employees, who were affected by the program and opted to retire from the service, approaching me and extending their gratitude to the DBM for this effort.

I am equally grateful for the deeper knowledge that I gained about the DBM's organization as well as the operations of the agencies that I worked with on this reform, and for the exposure I had to the many people in the government that I met in the course of this program.

I feel fortunate also that I became proficient not only in evaluating and reviewing organizational proposals, but also on staffing modification-related concerns. My presentation, facilitation, and negotiation skills were also honed through the many consultation meetings, dialogues, and briefings in the course of implementing the program.

I would be willing to be part again of a similar initiative that the DBM may take in the future. Our experience and lessons learned in the conceptualization and implementation of this program would be helpful in making a similar reform effort successful.

¹ As of this publication, Janda is a Chief Budget and Management Specialist of the Systems and Productivity Improvement Bureau.