

## INSIGHT FROM A DBM JUNIOR LEADER

### How We Improved Accountability Reporting and Collaboration with COA

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Imagine that you work with two bosses who required you to accomplish a report with similar contents but in different formats: the first boss wanted it printed in portrait, and the other wanted the data presented in landscape – wouldn't that be frustrating? For several years the various implementing agencies suffered the same thing. They were required to submit the same reports to the oversight agencies in varying formats.

In 2013, the COA and the DBM took efforts to harmonize these reports. However, when the Unified Accounts Code Structure (UACS), the GAA-as-Release Document (GAARD) and the Performance Informed Budget (PIB) were implemented, the need to revisit the harmonized circulars turned up again.

I didn't know that this initiative would have a major significance to me. Since these reports are done at the agency level, and as a Budget Analyst, as long as I receive the reports on time and have the data that I need, I thought I would not have any problem. However, these situations have given me a valuable lesson I would never forget.

I was tasked to become the cluster secretariat of the team responsible for revisiting, for the second time, the Budget Execution Documents (BEDs) and the Budget Financial Accountability Reports (BFARs), which was headed by a Cluster Head, our Director. The cluster was composed of the Directors and Assistant Directors or their representatives from the DBM Operations Bureaus, Fiscal Planning Bureau, Financial Management Service, Regional Office NCR, IV-A and IV-B.

I was then relatively new, with only a few years in the DBM and with no experience in writing a circular. I took the challenge nevertheless. A first time for me to decide to become more involved in the reform initiatives in the government, I learned to be more empathetic to others in the process.

Besides taking down minutes of the various meetings, I also had to initially draft the circulars as well the new report forms, based on the preliminary instructions of my Cluster Head.

It was also my job to incorporate the recommendations made during the series of cluster meetings into the draft circulars and forms. I was really amazed at how intellectual and dedicated the cluster members were. In every meeting, I was always in awe on how they thought about ideas and noticed even the smallest details that have potential impact, for example, the difference between a “budget year” and “fiscal year.”

Collaborating with the COA is a bit more challenging—since they are located outside of the DBM and reaching them and making sure they would come during cluster meetings, which were always held in DBM, required a bit more effort. But overall, their representatives were very responsive and they really made sure to attend the scheduled meetings. Seeing each circular signed and implemented gave me feelings of fulfillment and pride, that all our efforts, patience, and perseverance finally paid off. It was a different experience for me knowing that for the first time, and hopefully not the last, I had been a direct part of such a great change in the whole of government.

I couldn't be more thankful for the opportunity to become a catalyst of change in my own little way. The dedication and hard work of the people in the cluster inspired and revived my hope in a better Philippine government. Within the cluster, I saw examples of great leaders whom I would emulate and hopefully become a similar kind in the future – a leader who has great passion and care for the country and for others.

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