

Case Study On Water Use Licensing Applications (WULA) Performance Improvement

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water & sanitation

Department:
Water and Sanitation
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



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Background

- National Water Act: all water users require water use authorization from DWS – to ensure that water resources are protected and used sustainably
- Assessment of WULA can require sophisticated scientific, engineering, hydrology, and geo-hydrology analysis
- By late 2020:
 - Many license applications took longer 300 days to process, and some took years
 - Huge backlog of unprocessed water use licenses
- This had become an impediment to economic growth and development
- Need for improvement identified in President’s 2020 State of the Nation Address: set target of processing all applications within 90 days
- Identified as a priority reform by OV in late 2020



Key elements of the reform

1. **Business process reengineering** to identify and implement smarter, quicker business processes

- Streamlining of WULA information requirements and simplification of application process
- Removal of licensing conditions that are not implementable or unnecessarily onerous
- Development of improved standard operating processes (SOPs) for assessing applications
- Development and implementation of performance monitoring and escalation system in E-WULAAS: used to monitor adherence of DWS officials to set minimum timeframes for process steps



2. **Organisational redesign:** more appropriate organizational structure, including creating additional technical positions

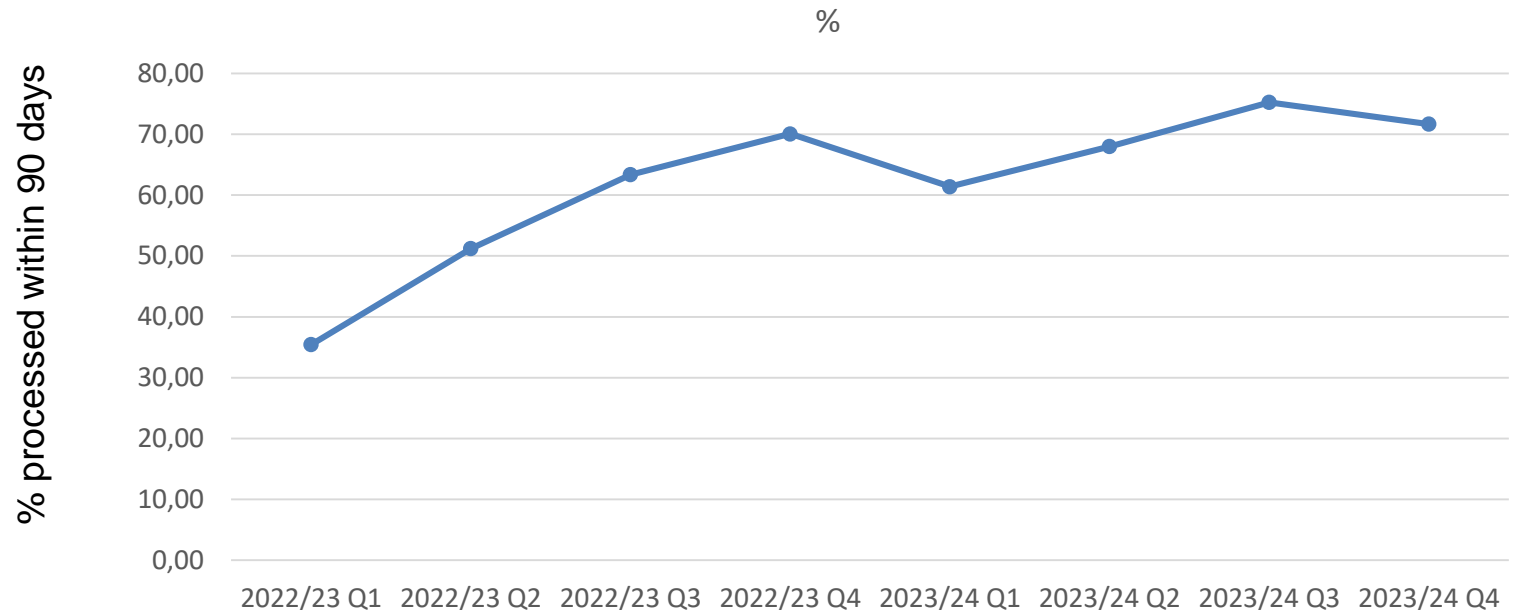
3. **IT improvements:** improvements to e-WULAAS digital application management system

4. **Training** (identification of training needs, development of training manual, classroom and on-the-job training) of staff and applicants on improved SOPs and use of e-WULAAS system

OV engaged with DWS to agree on causes of the problem and what needs to be done to address the problem, facilitated donor-funded external business process re-engineering expertise to assist DWS to:

- Develop improvement plan with actions and timeframes (by mid-2021)
- Implement (between mid-2021 and mid-2022)

Results



- Started to see results from mid-2022 onwards
- Performance improved from 35% processed within 90 days in 2022/23 to 70% currently
- Recent recruitment of 120 additional technical staff should result in further improvement
- Backlog of more than a thousand WULAs virtually eradicated, now no more than 100 longer than 90 days

Lessons from the case study: reasons for success

It's not impossible to make government more business-like!

- Willingness of government to pay attention to fixing the basics
- Minister and top management in DWS paid attention to detail, regularly monitored progress, resolved blockages
- Strong political support (President, Minister and DMs in DWS)
- Focus by Presidency and OV, regular monitoring by OV
- Funded external support (business process engineering) facilitated by OV
- Application of private sector management methodologies not commonly used in the public service, including evidence-based analysis, measuring inputs and outputs, business process reengineering and continuous improvement

Ongoing improvement:

- DWS is striving to achieve as close to 100% as possible of WULAs processed within 90 days – will require ongoing training, monitoring, focus on worst-performing regions, further standardization and BPR and IT improvements

THANK YOU