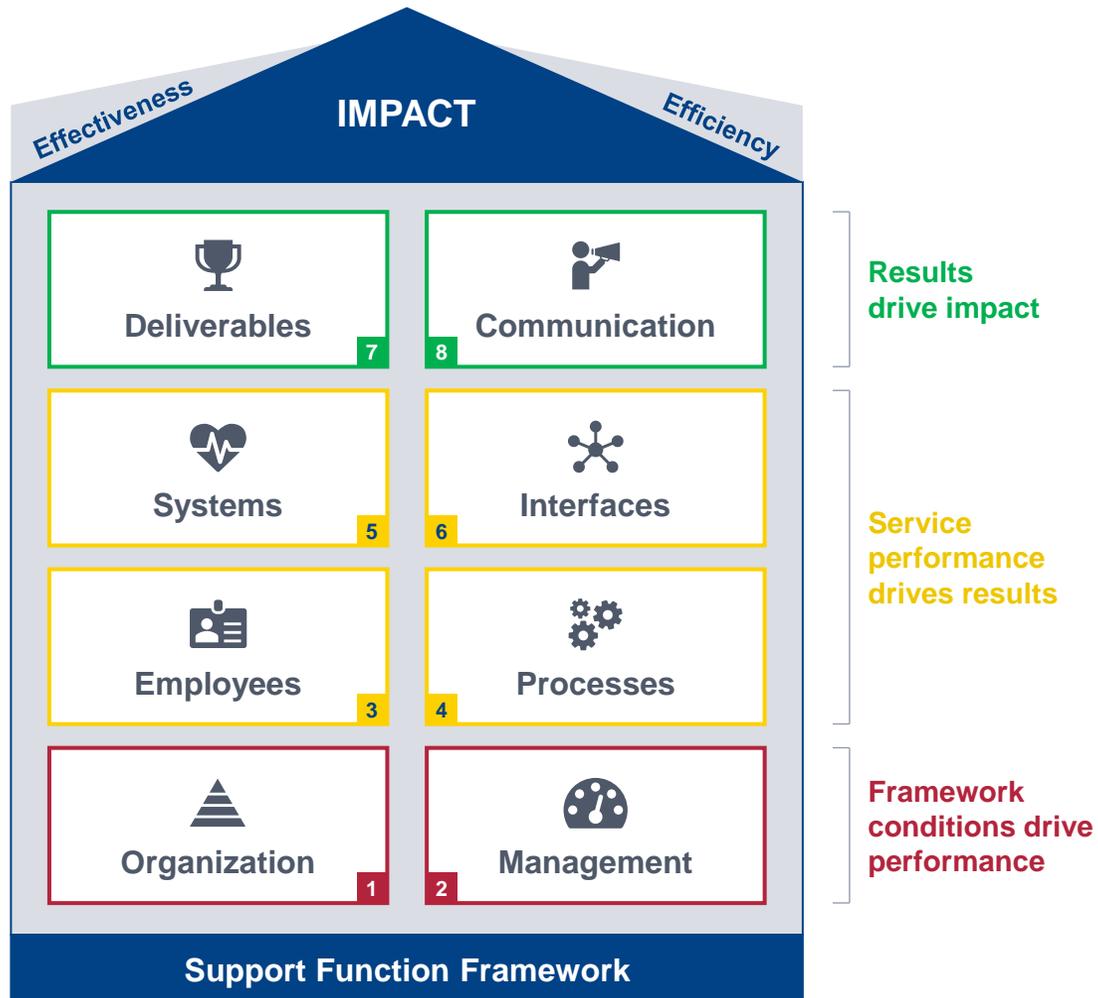**SIVENTUS**

Self-assessing the status quo – visualize, structure and discuss support functions applying the Support Function Canvas (SFC)

The Support Function Canvas

To achieve excellence in support functions requires highest levels of both **effectiveness and efficiency** throughout the organization. An important step along that road to excellence and vital when setting the direction, is to have a clear picture and a common understanding of where the journey starts, i.e., how the organization looks like today.
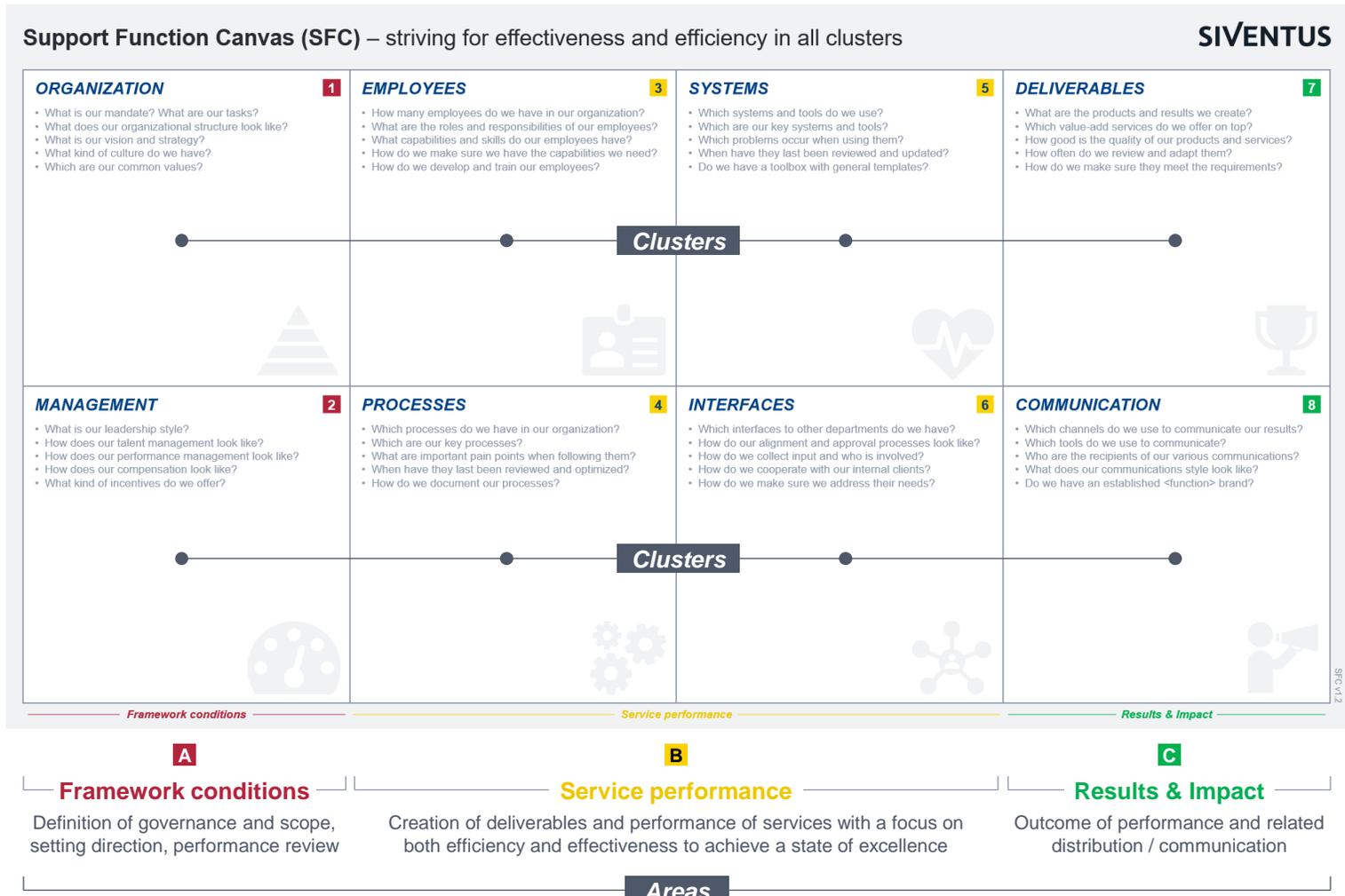
The SFC is a **framework for self-assessment** which helps to depict the current state of an organization in a holistic and clearly structured way. Our **free-to-use working template** helps to develop an overview of the status quo of complex environments, facilitates a common understanding among the team, and provides a qualitative baseline for intended changes.

As a canvas the SFC is supposed to offer a template which can be filled with life by its users. Additionally, it provides a clear structure and consists of **eight building blocks** which generally form an organization plus **eight sets of questions** which guide users through the process. The questions are not exhaustive so users can add more to make the SFC even more suitable to the needs of their organization.

Answering the questions and collecting the required information correctly and exhaustively will provide the user with a **transparent overview of the status quo**. At the same time this will already offer initial insights regarding potential deficiencies without having to conduct a deeper analysis at that stage.

It is recommended to develop an individual SFC as part of a **team workshop**. Besides obvious advantages like being able to split the workload and a faster data collection, this approach facilitates a faster and seamless start of important subsequent steps like the identification of deficiencies and the development of adequate counter-measures.

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SIVENTUS

Support Function Canvas (SFC) – striving for effectiveness and efficiency in all clusters

SIVENTUS

ORGANIZATION [1]
- What is our mandate? What are our tasks?
- What does our organizational structure look like?
- What is our vision and strategy?
- What kind of culture do we have?
- Which are our common values?

EMPLOYEES [3]
- How many employees do we have in our organization?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of our employees?
- What capabilities and skills do our employees have?
- How do we make sure we have the capabilities we need?
- How do we develop and train our employees?

SYSTEMS [5]
- Which systems and tools do we use?
- Which are our key systems and tools?
- Which problems occur when using them?
- When have they last been reviewed and updated?
- Do we have a toolbox with general templates?

DELIVERABLES [7]
- What are the products and results we create?
- Which value-add services do we offer on top?
- How good is the quality of our products and services?
- How often do we review and adapt them?
- How do we make sure they meet the requirements?

Clusters

MANAGEMENT [2]
- What is our leadership style?
- How does our talent management look like?
- How does our performance management look like?
- How does our compensation look like?
- What kind of incentives do we offer?

PROCESSES [4]
- Which processes do we have in our organization?
- Which are our key processes?
- What are important pain points when following them?
- When have they last been reviewed and optimized?
- How do we document our processes?

INTERFACES [6]
- Which interfaces to other departments do we have?
- How do our alignment and approval processes look like?
- How do we collect input and who is involved?
- How do we cooperate with our internal clients?
- How do we make sure we address their needs?

COMMUNICATION [8]
- Which channels do we use to communicate our results?
- Which tools do we use to communicate?
- Who are the recipients of our various communications?
- What does our communications style look like?
- Do we have an established <function> brand?

Clusters

SFC v1.2

Framework conditions — *Service performance* — *Results & Impact*

A
Framework conditions
Definition of governance and scope, setting direction, performance review

B
Service performance
Creation of deliverables and performance of services with a focus on both efficiency and effectiveness to achieve a state of excellence

C
Results & Impact
Outcome of performance and related distribution / communication

Areas

What the SFC is for
- Template for self-assessments
- Provide a structured framework to depict an organization
- Determine the current state of a support function / dept.
- Collect and list all function-related topics (big picture)
- Discuss status quo and identify existing challenges

What the SFC is not for
- Display existing interdependencies between areas
- Provide a full picture of all existing challenges
- Provide methodologies for change and optimization
- Provide solutions to existing challenges

When to apply the SFC
- Create a fact-based foundation for a health check
- Create a qualitative baseline for intended changes
- Starting point for a full picture of complex environments
- Basis for team discussions and workshops

Advantages of the SFC
- It provides the structure, so users can focus on content
- It provides an overview of an entire department
- It provides an easy- and ready-to-use framework for productive workshops with small and large teams
- It facilitates a common understanding among the team, triggers the right questions, fosters healthy discussions
- It provides food for thought and without further analysis gives an idea on where potential challenges might exist

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SIVENTUS

A **Framework conditions**

The framework conditions define the governance structures, describe the scope of work and set the direction. This area consists of the **organization (1)**, i.e., the environment in which employees are working, and **management (2)** which describes how employees are being managed and paid.

B **Service performance**

This area consists of four clusters which can be described as the input factors of the production process, i.e., topics which are directly involved in creating deliverables and conducting services. The questions related to **employees (3)** mostly focus on qualitative information hinting towards the connection between mandate, tasks, organizational structure, roles, responsibilities, capabilities, and skills. The clusters of **processes (4)** and **systems (5)** additionally bring up the question of regular reviews and continuous improvement. **Interfaces (6)** are typically dominated by the interaction with (internal) customers. However, many processes require close cooperation with or approvals by partner departments in order to complete certain deliverables. The impact this kind of dependence can have on the own department's performance should not be underestimated.

C **Results & Impact**

The results area includes the **deliverables (7)** of the respective department as well as their **communication (8)**. Despite the widespread focus on results, the best work can have no impact at all and thus be completely ineffective – if not made available, explained and communicated adequately. This is particularly true in a world of ever-changing requirements and expectations which goes hand in hand with the increasing need for digitalization.

Working with the SFC

- Schedule an initial **meeting** of about four hours, invite the desired participants and book a **meeting room** which offers enough wall space and / or a large white board. We suggest you **distribute the SFC** via email to the participants in advance so they can prepare themselves.

- **Print the SFC** in large format (DIN A0, A1) to make sure you have enough white space to work with and hang it on a wall so everyone in the room can read the text. Alternatively, use **brown paper or large white boards** and draw the required boxes – in this case make sure to distribute the SFC to all participants in the meeting for them to have the guiding questions at hand.

- Distribute **markers** and use **sticky notes** for the answers to the questions which can then be pinned into the respective boxes. An advantage of sticky notes on top of their flexibility is that they force all participants to give **concise answers**. Be aware that some of the questions can require a decent amount of work to provide **correct and exhaustive answers** – depending on the level of complexity and the existing level of excellence in your organization.

- Work on answering the questions together or in case of a high number of participants divide them into teams – **group work** with dedicated areas per group in this case likely leads to faster progress. The **group work results** should afterwards be discussed together, possibly in a second meeting. In large groups you should also think about inviting a **facilitator**.