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CASE STUDY

# United Arab Emirates (UAE)

**Forbes insights**

# Built For Speed: How Swift Strategy Execution is Improving the Lives of UAE Citizens

UAE Vision 2021 is an initiative that aims to make the United Arab Emirates (UAE) a world-leading country. So when a strategic review in 2016 revealed that the program wasn't on track to meet some of its key targets, the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and The Future knew it had to act fast. "There was an urgency—time was ticking," says Huda Al Hashimi, assistant to the director-general for Strategy and Innovation at the Prime Minister's Office in the Ministry.

In response, the UAE government launched the Government Accelerators initiative—a strategic initiative designed by the Prime Minister's Office to tackle the most pressing challenges, from reducing road traffic deaths to improving air quality, by empowering government employees and encouraging greater cross-entity collaboration. The catch: Each challenge must be completed in 100 days or less.

It's a lofty goal for even the nimblest Silicon Valley startup, never mind a large government entity. But the Government Accelerators initiative has seen impressive results that have already directly improved the lives of 46,000 citizens.

But mobilizing the entire government, and introducing a 100-day challenge methodology, requires more than prioritizing objectives and establishing key performance indicators (KPIs). "We realized that we couldn't take the conventional route to implementing strategy," says Al Hashimi.

Here are some of the principles that helped the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs and The Future successfully complete **40+ high-priority challenges under a 100-day deadline.**



## Promote team engagement and effective cross-entity collaboration

With any implementation, leadership must firmly establish a shared commitment to strategy-delivery priorities and regularly reinforce them. Because of this, the Government Accelerators initiative consists of a multi-experience and cross-functional governance model, including:

- » **Leadership Teams:** Owners of a challenge who oversee its overall success. They're responsible for selecting and nominating employees to be part of the Acceleration Team.
- » **Acceleration Teams:** Comprising 10 to 12 cross-entity frontline employees with various functions and skill sets. These passionate change agents are given autonomy and accountability to get the job done.
- » **Sponsors:** Nominated by Leadership Team members to act as the bridge between the Leadership Team and the Acceleration Team. Sponsors guide and support the teams.
- » **Coaches:** While sponsors provide the details of a challenge, coaches facilitate discussions and activities around it. They also encourage innovation, ongoing collaboration, engagement, coordination and partnership among multiple stakeholders.

الهدف واضح، والطريق ممهد، والساعة تدق  
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لا مجال للتردد

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وزارة الداخلية



تسلم كافة المستندات  
النيوية للمواليد المواطنين  
خلال زيارة واحدة من أصل 7 زيارات

This clear governance model empowers frontline employees to make swift and impactful decisions, while providing easy access to sponsors and coaches for feedback and support.

In addition to effective team engagement and cross-entity collaboration between federal and local government entities, the ministry rallied for cooperation with the private sector, academic institutions and community organizations. “We wanted to make a very strong point that the UAE vision belongs to the country,” says Al Hashimi. “The private sector has a key role in that as well.”

A perfect example is the Government Accelerators’ initiative to improve air quality. In this case, the Ministry of Climate Change and Environment worked with Emirates Global Aluminum (EGA), one of the world’s largest primary aluminum producers and the third-largest electricity generator in the UAE. To help the UAE government meet its goal of having clean air, EGA agreed to reduce its NOx emissions by 10% using technologies from General Electric that are designed to lower emissions at some of EGA’s power plants. This public-private collaboration helped the government **improve air quality at a rate equivalent to removing 449,960 cars from the streets in just 100 days.**

## Govern through transparency to engender trust

Enabling collaboration among such disparate entities, though, requires a high degree of transparency and trust.

From the start, leaders from various teams sit, discuss and decide on common challenges,



digging deep into the root causes. Once an initiative is underway, entities are encouraged to share information to improve internal processes, organizational structures and data—anything that might help move things toward a common goal.

For example, Al Hashimi points to the Ministry of Interior and its challenge to reduce death rates from road accidents. At first, she says, the ministry didn’t believe it was feasible to reduce the rate more than 10%. “It was a huge challenge to get them to think that it was possible because they hadn’t been able to achieve it in a conventional way,” says Al Hashimi.

However, she adds, “What they realized when they entered the Government Accelerators initiative was that they were not alone. It wasn’t just the Ministry of Interior at work—there were 15 other organizations working with them who were just as committed to achieving their goal.” By being transparent about its difficulties, and collaborating with entities including the Dubai Police, National Ambulance and Emirates Traffic Safety Society, the Ministry of Interior achieved a 63% reduction in road deaths on five of the country’s most dangerous roads.

## Check ongoing initiatives before committing to new ones

The effective governance model, clear plans at the start of each 100-day journey and specific KPIs all help keep the Government Accelerators initiative on track. To sustain transformational success, the portfolio of strategic initiatives is regularly evaluated so teams can actively course correct and reprioritize if needed.

For example, halfway through the 100 days of each challenge, Acceleration Teams meet for a Midpoint Review workshop, where they reflect on their progress to date and update their work plan to ensure they reach their goal by Day 100. Members also brainstorm ideas to overcome roadblocks and present them to their sponsors.

Take, for example, the 100-day challenge to fully document the newborn children of UAE nationals. A Midpoint Review workshop revealed that factors such as large teams, disparate systems, laws among stakeholders and poor communication were preventing the team from meeting its 100-day challenge. Upon careful review, the Acceleration Team came up with a solution: Waive fees for registering newborns, provide hospitals with the necessary equipment for supporting the new process and coordinate with each entity's Communication Office to better market the campaign.

By actively addressing issues with the right governance, leadership, rigor and reporting capabilities, **the team was able to quickly course correct and deliver documents for 200 newborns on schedule.**

*It wasn't just the Ministry of Interior at work—there were 15 other organizations working with them who were just as committed to achieving their goal.*

**Huda Al Hashimi**

## Accept that you're accountable for delivering the strategy you designed

Providing employees with the power to oversee the progress of implementation is one way to ensure the strategy delivers results and achieves its goals. "The people on the ground are the ones who are leading," says Al Hashimi. "They're the ones who need the freedom and authority to push boundaries and experiment."

For this reason, Acceleration Team members are given autonomy and accountability over setting their goals, course of action and results. An aggressive 100-day deadline further reinforces accountability and ownership while fostering laser-sharp focus for the teams.

By adhering to strategy execution principles such as team engagement, transparency and stakeholder accountability, the Government Accelerators initiative positively affected thousands of lives. But it also ushered in a new stage that will continue to strengthen the efforts of government entities to realize UAE Vision 2021. •



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