

# Summary of the report on the survey on the level of knowledge of and interest in the CAF in Polish public administration<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION- information about the survey and its objectives

A survey on the application of CAF<sup>2</sup> in the Polish administration was conducted by the Head of the Civil Service and the National Institute of Local Self-Government (NIST) between May and June 2021. The invitation to participate in the survey was addressed to all entities (public offices, institutions) of public administration. The survey was completed by respondents electronically. The survey was intended to obtain information regarding:

- of interest in the CAF model,
- its knowledge and level of application,
- scope and forms of support for public sector institutions in the implementation of the CAF self-assessment.

The purpose of the survey was primarily to collect quantitative data and thus the results did not always provide sufficient information about the usefulness and effectiveness of the tool itself. In view of this, the report also incorporates information derived from the authors' knowledge.

1,081 public administration offices responded to the survey. The respondents self-identified one of three possible categories of public offices (government administration office, local government office, another type of office) to which they belong. Participants in the survey included:

- 629 local government offices (58.19% of total respondents),
- 399 government administration offices (36.91%)
- and 53 public offices (4.9%) that constituted another type of office<sup>3</sup>.

The authors of the report analyzed the answers given from the point of view of the declared type of office and the indicated number of employees<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The report, commissioned by the Chancellery of the Prime Minister, was prepared by TZ-Consultants Tadeusz Zawistowski in November 2021. Report authors: Marek Jefremienko, Jacek Radwan, Sławomir Wysocki, Tadeusz Zawistowski.

<sup>2</sup> The Common Assessment Framework (CAF) - it is a model for total quality management (TQM), developed by the public sector for the public sector. To support public sector organizations in improving performance, CAF is available in the public domain - no charge. It is designed to be used in all areas of the public sector and at its different levels: national, regional or local. CAF can be used in any public organization around the world, even though it was developed in a European context

<sup>3</sup> These included, among others: Province and County Sanitary and Epidemiological Stations; County Employment Office, Social Insurance Institution.

<sup>4</sup> The survey indicated the following categories (to be reported as of 31 March 2021): not more than 25 persons; more than 25 but not more than 50 persons; more than 50 but not more than 100 persons; more than 100 but not more than 250 persons; more than 250 but not more than 500 persons; more than 500 but not more than 1000 persons; more than 1000 persons.

In both major types of offices (local government and government), responses were analyzed by grouping respondents into two categories: offices with up to 100 employees and those with more than 100 employees. The analyses were also carried out in search of possible correlations, comparing the answers of offices declaring their knowledge of the CAF model as well as lack of such knowledge.

## MAIN SURVEY RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Six major conclusions emerge from the analysis. They address the main questions formulated in the assumptions of the survey (about knowledge of the CAF model, the extent of its use, its perceived usefulness, the interest in using it and the expected forms of assistance in applying the model).

### *KNOWLEDGE OF THE CAF MODEL AND THE EXTENT TO WHICH IT IS USED*

357 entities (33.02% of those surveyed) confirmed knowledge of the CAF model. In this group, 161 entities (45.10%) confirmed that they were using the CAF model for self-evaluation of organizational performance. The results also indicated that the CAF model is not - and has not been - widely known and used.

### *REPORTED PROBLEMS IN APPLYING THE CAF MODEL*

The problems in conducting self-evaluation using the CAF model, as indicated by offices that use or used the CAF (in the order of those considered the greatest) are:

- time consumption,
- labor intensity,
- lack of resources to make improvements,
- level of complexity of the model,
- too little employee involvement,
- little knowledge of CAF,
- too little management involvement.

According to the authors of the report<sup>5</sup>, this result could have been influenced by the process of dissemination of the CAF model so far (2006-2016)<sup>6</sup> and the way it was used (in the opinion of the authors of the report, application of CAF involved excessive bureaucracy and formalities in many projects, while the advisory support was not always professional), which discouraged many entities from continuing to use it.

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<sup>5</sup> All of the report authors participated, to varying degrees, in the projects discussed below. They have extensive experience from participation in and observation of projects applying the CAF model.

<sup>6</sup> In the period indicated, several large projects for local and governmental administrations were carried out to promote the use of the CAF model. These projects are identified in the report.

## *USEFULNESS OF THE MODEL IN MANAGEMENT CHANGE PROCESSES*

The survey showed that, according to the respondents, the improvement in the performance of the offices as a result of the CAF self-assessment took place mainly in two areas (criteria of the CAF model):

- “people”
- and “processes”.

The experience of the report's authors indicates that these areas were regularly presented in the self-assessment of many offices as major areas for improvement. It seems fair to conclude that in these areas the CAF proved to be an effective tool: after the self-assessment process, it was in the areas of “people” and “processes” that most improvement projects were implemented.

What is notable about the survey results, however, is the lack of indications of visible qualitative improvement in the model's criteria for organizational performance. This is invariably one of the biggest areas for improvement regularly identified in the CAF self-assessment.

## *WHAT CAN HELP PUBLIC OFFICES APPLY THE CAF MODEL?*

The survey confirmed that the self-assessment process requires external support. The respondents almost equally (58-63% of total responses) indicated most of the given sample forms of self-assessment assistance. From employee training, to assistance by external experts, to the use of an IT application in self-assessment. The most preferred assistance is training of the organization's management. This is in line with the recommended approach in the CAF self-assessment methodology to start the self-assessment by building management commitment to the process. Responses to the question about the preferred form of knowledge acquisition to be used by those interested in the model to learn about it, yield very similar results for both major types of administration. Similarly to the question about the forms of support for the process of self-evaluation, the respondents mention almost equally often: trainings for employees, help of external experts, use of applications. Again, the most anticipated training is for the management of the organization.

## *ONE ADMINISTRATION - A COMMON APPROACH TO APPLYING THE CAF MODEL*

The results of the survey in both major types of administration do not warrant the conclusion of significant differences in terms of the forms of delivery of knowledge about the CAF and the support expected in its application. The emerging differences are a consequence of the number of administrative units in both types of administration and the scale of impact of the projects implemented

in previous years. The greater interest in the CAF model in local government offices is also strengthened by something that is very widespread in this environment: exchange of good practices and autonomous approach to finding tools for organizational development (in government administration, this is generally developed top-down).

Interestingly, in the group of local government units that declared having knowledge of the model, the most numerous is the group of rural (41%) and mixed urban-rural municipalities (22%).

The government administration and in the group of public offices that called themselves as “other” users of the CAF model, overwhelmingly (51 out of 168 total) constituted tax administration offices.

### *THE PRESENT STATE - A CONSEQUENCE OF THE PAST*

Based solely on the results of the survey, it is difficult to draw clear and indisputable conclusions about the effectiveness of promotional activities to date. The respondents show relatively high interest in learning more about how to conduct a self-assessment using the model (nearly 59% of all respondents). Therefore, it is reasonable to undertake intensive training and counseling activities.

What is of note in the survey is the low<sup>7</sup> willingness to both reapply the CAF and to apply it for the first time. It seems necessary to increase promotional activity also by sending direct and dedicated information about the model. The efforts should also include such new media as social media or podcasts. Websites are now only a supporting solution, not the primary channel of effective communication.

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The authors of the report point to two general issues that determine the effectiveness of appropriate activities for dissemination of the CAF model:

- I. A key issue in deciding the future fate of the CAF is formulation of a long-term, clear strategy at the political level. This should define the vision of public administration and the plan of its execution (the authors of the report assume that this vision will be in line with the concept and assumptions resulting from the CAF model).
- II. With regard to local government units, it is necessary to intensively promote the model there, while naturally allowing autonomy of the decision to use the model. As for government administration, the application of the CAF model should follow directly from the strategy developed by the relevant authorities.

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<sup>7</sup> The first self-assessment is planned by 6% of the respondents, and a subsequent self-assessment - by 2.6%.

In addition, according to the authors of the report, it should also be assumed that with regard to the CAF model, the success of its application should not be seen in terms of quantity, but in the quality of its use. This can be expressed figuratively: it is better that 20% of the institutions apply the CAF model correctly and achieve measurable results than that 80% apply the model unproductively.

## SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

The following summary includes recommendations that are based on the survey and on the knowledge of the report authors. They are provided with a short justification. They are described in more detail in the report.

- 1. It is necessary to develop a multi-year dissemination strategy, including a promotion plan, for the CAF model.** The plan should include targeted communications to specific recipients in future years. It is important that it is based on measuring results and the results obtained in the subsequent phases of its implementation. It is necessary to increase the information and promotion activity of the CAF model, among others in the social media.
- 2. The model dissemination and promotion activities should be addressed in the first place at larger public offices employing more than 100 people.** Public offices with more than 100 employees predominate among those declaring knowledge of the CAF. Smaller units, on the other hand, indicate more difficulty in applying the model.
- 3. Seminars, trainings, workshops, online expert consultations should be the most common forms of dissemination of the model.**
4. The survey results show a dramatic reduction in the use of the CAF beginning in 2017. **This issue requires in-depth analysis and additional research necessary for proper construction of the recommended strategy of dissemination of the model.** These analyses are necessary for empirical verification of the reasons for such phenomena as claiming that the CAF self-assessment is significantly laborious and time-consuming.
5. One solution to the problems in the application of the CAF model indicated by the respondents - the “time consumption” and “labor intensity” of the self-assessment process - could be **development of a simplified method for conducting the CAF self-assessment.**
6. The analysis of the research results as well as the knowledge of the authors of the report indicate that, in a sense, the CAF model competes with the self-assessment conducted as part of the management control system. This state of affairs is certainly not conducive to encouraging the use of the CAF model. **Accordingly, the report's authors recommend that:**

- **The Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance undertook activities reminding and promoting the CAF model as a tool for self-assessment as part of the management control (MC) system.**
- **Both of these entities have developed guidelines indicating how the application of the CAF model can ensure the achievement of a self-assessment that meets the requirements of the Public Finance Act and the guidelines contained in the Finance Minister's communication on the KZ.**

7. When analyzing the responses to the question about the possibility of gaining or expanding their knowledge of the CAF, nearly 59% of all respondents expressed such an interest. **In view of**

**the above and taking into account the knowledge of the authors of the report, we recommend intensification of building awareness about the CAF and competences in its application among the managers of public administration units.** It is this group that actually influences the model application process.

**8. The authors of the report recommend an evaluation of the activities taken so far to promote the CAF model.** Conclusions from the diagnosis should be valuable information for shaping strategies and implementing activities promoting the model.

9. Both the survey results and the experience of the report authors indicate that the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and the National Institute for Local Government should provide administration with access to support from professional consultants. **The authors propose to develop and implement procedures on the basis of which there would be a reliable assessment and verification process for consultants and trainers who are involved in supporting CAF users.**

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON HOW TO ORGANIZE THE PROCESS OF DISSEMINATION OF THE MODEL

**It would not be reasonable or effective for promotion, awareness-building and competence-building activities to be carried out in the local government and government areas independently of each other.** Currently, there are two CAF model centers in Poland - Department of Civil Service of the Chancellery of the Prime Minister and National Institute for Local Government. A common strategy is needed, in which:

- the objectives of the application of the CAF model in public administration will be defined,
- approach to promoting the model will be determined, using specific recommendations from the report on the research discussed above and findings from other sources,

- tasks will be identified, some of which will be performed jointly by the both entities, while others - separately (so far as reasonable).

In the opinion of the authors of the report, the obtained results, along with the recommended activities, are the right basis for shaping the process of promoting the CAF model as a practical tool for diagnosing the state of management of public sector organizations. We know what potential we have, we know - and we want to know even more - what limits us and where the opportunities are. All this can foster a qualitative change in the way the Polish administration works. For that, you need a strategy and a plan on how to execute it effectively.