



Government Offices for the Regions

Standard Note: SN/EP/2126

Last updated: 9 November 2010

Author: Adam Mellows-Facer

Section Economic Policy and Statistics

Government Offices (GOs) for the English regions are to be abolished.

Contents

1	Closure of GOs	2
2	Role of GOs	2
3	Funding streams	3

This information is provided to Members of Parliament in support of their parliamentary duties and is not intended to address the specific circumstances of any particular individual. It should not be relied upon as being up to date; the law or policies may have changed since it was last updated; and it should not be relied upon as legal or professional advice or as a substitute for it. A suitably qualified professional should be consulted if specific advice or information is required.

This information is provided subject to [our general terms and conditions](#) which are available online or may be provided on request in hard copy. Authors are available to discuss the content of this briefing with Members and their staff, but not with the general public.

1 Closure of GOs

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Eric Pickles, announced the Government's intention to abolish the Government Offices (GOs) for the English regions outside London in a written ministerial statement on 22 July 2010. This announcement followed the commitment to abolishing the Government Office for London in its *Programme for Government*.¹

The closure of the GOs was confirmed in the 2010 *Spending Review*.² The Government has stated that existing regional government arrangements "lacked democratic accountability, created burdens and bureaucracy for local councils and imposed arbitrary administrative boundaries over real communities".³

The closure of the GOs will take place no later than the end of March 2011. The GO Network website notes:⁴

Functions undertaken by the GO Network are now in the process of being wound down, with the exception of a small number which may transfer elsewhere. Until future arrangements have been agreed a range of National Transport Casework and Rights of Way work will continue to be carried out by the GO Network. Responsibility for the National Rentcharge unit has moved across to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Further decisions on the continuation of GO functions are still to be made.⁵

The Government has not put a firm figure on the expected savings from closing GOs.⁶

2 Role of GOs

The Government Offices (GOs) for the English Regions were formally created in April 1994, bringing together the regional offices of the then Department of Trade & Industry, the then Department for the Environment, the Department of Transport and the Training, Education & Enterprise Directorate of the Department for Education.

GOs act as 'Whitehall for the English regions', implementing policy at local level and manage the spending programmes of the sponsoring government departments. In addition, they oversee budgets and contracts delegated to regional organisations, as well as carrying out regulatory functions and sponsoring Regional Development Agencies. The rationale is that delegating to local expertise and understanding results in more effective government. Through representing the interests of a wide range of departments GOs are also intended to result in more 'joined up' delivery of cross-cutting agendas.

GOs represent thirteen Whitehall departments:⁷

- Cabinet Office
- Communities and Local Government

¹ HM Government, *The Coalition: our programme for government*, May 2010

² HM Treasury, *Spending Review 2010*, Cm 7942, October 2010, para 2.35

³ [HL Deb 8 Nov 2010 c24WA](#)

⁴ www.gos.gov.uk/

⁵ [HL Deb 2 Nov 2010 c386WA](#)

⁶ [HC Deb 3 Nov 2010 c814w](#)

⁷ [Government Offices website](#)

- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- Department for Children, Schools and Families
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- Department of Energy and Climate Change
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department for Transport
- Department of Health
- HM Treasury
- Home Office
- Ministry of Justice

3 Funding streams

A recent PQ addressed the question of funding streams:⁸

The Government Offices for the Regions have specific responsibility for an administration running cost budget and a capital budget. Programme budgets administered by the Government Offices are the responsibility of the Secretaries of State for the relevant sponsor Departments. The Departments delegate authority to the regional directors to spend against their programmes, though all expenditure incurred is recorded in the accounts of the Department concerned. [...]

The administration budget is not insubstantial, but is dwarfed by the central budgets administered through the GOs. Administration funding was £128 million in the 2009/10 financial year, the majority of which was pay. It was expected to fall to £124 million in 2010/11.⁹ The funding is provided by the sponsor departments, with the DCLG (41% in 2010/11) the largest contributor.

The GOs “managed/influenced” £7.7 billion of programme expenditure in 2006/07, money which remains on the accounts of the central departments. The DfT accounted for 31% of that expenditure, followed by the DCLG (28%) and the DWP.¹⁰

⁸ HC Deb 10 Feb 2010 c1029w

⁹ Government Offices for English Regions, *Network Corporate Plan 2008-11*, p18-19

¹⁰ Ibid