



Center for Technology in Government

New Models of Collaboration ***A Guide for Managers***

Overview

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Overview

In the last decade, both industrialized and developing countries have been seeking new organizational models involving collaboration across-government or public-private partnerships.

The defining characteristic of these endeavors is the voluntary combination of separate organizations into a coherent service delivery system supported by advanced information technologies. The rapid evolution of these technologies has created important new opportunities for governments to redesign services through creative relationships with other organizations.

This guide is based on a multinational research project designed to understand how these collaborations work. It involved a network of field researchers in Canada, the US and Europe who studied more than a dozen collaborations and uncovered critical success factors and lessons learned about these new organizational forms are designed, managed, and perform.

Twelve of the case studies are presented in this guide, along with discussions of four key management issues, and summaries of conference presentations and other research results.

The case studies

Four American, six Canadian, and two European cases are presented as full case studies. In general, the cases can be viewed through several lenses:

- The political context in which the projects took place.
- The collaboration model used and levels of government involved.
- The type of government service implemented.

Political Environment as Context for New Models of Collaboration

The cases we studied fit into a overall national and regional efforts to streamline government and move toward innovative partnership models involving the use of technology deliver of public services. US, Canadian, and European policies share similar goals but differ somewhat in method and extent of implementation.

European Union (EU)

European policies and activities are the most advanced of the three. The European Council has made pan-European e-government initiatives a top priority for improving the delivery of public services to EU citizens and businesses. The stated goal of the “eEurope initiative,” approved at the June 2002 European Council meeting in Seville, is to provide interactive government services throughout the European Union. The European Commission is to issue an interoperability framework to support the initiate by the end of 2003. Interoperability is sought within and between public agencies at the European, national, regional, and local levels; as well as with the private sector. The European Commission defines interoperability as “not simply a

technical issue concerned with linking up computer networks. It goes beyond this to include the sharing of information between networks and the re-organization of administrative processes to support the seamless delivery of e-government services” (Commission Staff Working Document D2 414 DT: Linking Up Europe, 2003). Therefore, the eEurope initiative involves the development of new models of collaboration on a scale never seen before. eEurope aims at achieving “a modern European administration through electronic cooperation between different levels of government and across national borders” (Ministerial Declaration, Italian Presidency of the Council, 2003, p.1).

The eEurope 2005 Action Plan calls for the study of member states’ electronic government projects achieved through collaboration within and between levels of administration and with the public sector. The *Bremen Online Services* case study is an example of a member state initiative that involves collaboration between local governments to achieve an improved public service delivery. In addition, specific attention is devoted to EU-wide electronic services in the domain of job search and learning opportunities which are considered as “examples of pan-European services to be diffused and extended to other fields” (Ministerial Declaration, Italian Presidency of the Council, 2003, p.3). The *HotJob.be* Belgium case study is an example of such an initiative in the domain of job search. The portal has been enhanced by partnerships with several employment agencies in Europe to allow the citizen to expand its job search.

Canada

Canada has been recognized as a world leader in the field of e-government because of its focus on departmental and jurisdictional integration and commitment to respond to citizens and businesses needs. A 2003 survey of worldwide e-government initiatives led by Accenture rated Canada as number one for the third year in a row.

Canada’s Government On-Line (GOL) initiative, launched in 1999, aims to make Canada “the government most connected to its citizens with Canadians able to access all government information and services on-line at the time and place of their choosing.” The federal government committed to providing on-line access to *all* federal programs and services, through collaboration across agencies and with the private sector, by 2004. A Government On-Line Advisory Panel (GOLAP) was created in 2001 to advice the Treasury Board on ways to achieve this ambitious goal. The GOLAP is made of representatives from the public, private, nonprofit, and academic sectors, as well as citizens.

The GOL initiative is focused on three priorities: (1) organization of government information and services by user needs instead of government structures; (2) on-line availability of government information and forms; and (3) provision of transactional services through secure networks.

The first priority requires government agencies to collaborate in order to provide integrated services that better respond to citizen and business needs: “working with provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to realize this vision will take time, but this ‘citizen first’ view of service delivery is at the heart of what we are trying to accomplish with GOL” (Government of Canada, Government On-Line and Canadians: Overview Report, Ottawa, 2002, p. 7). The

design and launch of *Service Canada*, the federal government information portal, illustrates the citizen-centered approach. The site abandoned the traditional agency-based organization of government services and information for a classification according to citizen, business, or international audience needs. The Canadian Government also strives to better serve the business community by providing one-stop access points where businesses can learn about government regulations and register with several agencies. *Ontario Business Connect* and *One-Stop Business Registration* are examples of such services designed to improve government-private sector relationships.

The Canadian government is also committed to providing access to e-government services to *all* citizens, even those who may not be computer literate. For this purpose, Human Resources Development Canada launched the *Ambassadeur* Project aimed at providing citizens with assistance in using the Internet at both the local and regional levels. Free public Internet terminals in Community Access Centers (CACs) are available to use for free in urban and rural communities throughout Canada.

United States (US)

Governments in the United States have been experimenting with different forms of collaboration for several decades. These range from quite traditional forms to more innovative types. The most common are characterized by formal purchase contracts for private sector goods and services, or long-term service arrangements which usually engage nonprofit organizations to offer publicly-funded social programs such as shelters or day care. In the 1990s additional forms of collaboration began to emerge that incorporated different philosophies about the arrangement of interests among the parties. These include outsourcing entire organizational functions, public-private partnerships, and full privatization of formerly public programs. These are less common, but growing in number. At the same time, interest and experimentation have grown significantly in cross-agency and intergovernmental collaborations entirely inside the public sector.

In 2001, the Bush Administration initiated a series of government reform efforts known as the President's Management Agenda (PMA) to improve government accountability, effectiveness, and responsiveness to citizens. One of the PMA initiatives is *Expanding Electronic Government*, which focuses on "modernizing IT investments within agencies using the principles of e-business (and) integrating IT investments across agencies centered around groups of citizens" (Office of Management and Budget, E-Government Strategy, April 2003, p. 2). An E-Government Task Force identified 24 critical cross-agency E-Government initiatives.

One of the main PMA goals for e-government is to develop cross-agency solutions to provide more one-stop access points of government information for citizens and businesses, similar to *FirstGov.gov*, the US government information portal. FirstGov was initiated as a public-private partnership and later evolved into an interagency public-public collaboration. Another public-private project is Free File, an extension of the pre-existing *IRS e-filing system* that will allow free online preparation and electronic tax filing provided by Industry Partners.

Cross-agency efforts to provide one-stop access points to government information have also been implemented at the state level. The *New York State (NYS) Geographic Information System (GIS)*

Coordination Program is a joint effort of state and local governments to provide statewide access to GIS data. State governments are leaders in the domain of public-private partnerships. State portals, such as *Access Indiana*, are based on a true partnership between the private and public sectors. Access Indiana is one of several state portals using a unique self-funding model where the private partner derives its income from fees imposed on premium services and online transactions.

European Case Studies	
Project	Government Sponsor
Bremen Online Services	City of Bremen, Germany
HotJob.be	Belgium
Canadian Case Studies	
Project	Government Sponsor
Quebec Cadastre	Province of Quebec
Ambassadeur	Province of Quebec
Partners in Change	Province of New Brunswick
One-Stop Business Registration	Province of British Columbia
Ontario Business Connect	Province of Ontario
Initiative Service Canada	Federal Government
United States Case Studies	
Project	Government Sponsor
GIS Coordination Program	State of New York
Access Indiana	State of Indiana
IRS E-file	Federal Government
First Gov	Federal Government

Types of Collaboration

All of the cases met our general definition of collaboration, although they represented three different types.

Definition of Collaboration in Our Research Study:

“A reciprocal and voluntary agreement between two or more distinct public sector agencies, or between public and private or non-profit entities, to deliver government services.”

Our preliminary research demonstrated that the arrangements among the parties in these collaborations often rest on a formal agreement which specifies the purpose of the collaboration, and the sharing or allocation of associated responsibilities, risks, benefits, and resources. Often, these formal agreements exist in the form of contracts for a specified period of time. In general, the following characteristics are present in each collaboration project we selected:

- A minimum of two distinct organizations

- A formal agreement about roles and responsibilities
- A common objective, activity, or project aimed at the delivery of a public service
- The sharing or allocation of risks, benefits, and resources - both tangible and intangible

Types of collaboration

Our case studies represent three different types of collaborations:

Public-Public Collaborations: This category includes both horizontal agreements between two agencies or departments at the same level of government, and vertical agreements or intergovernmental alliances between or among federal, state, and local levels. These collaborations go beyond the traditional legal frameworks that tie public agencies together through the operation of single programs. They represent voluntary relationships often driven by the need to solve mutual problems.

Public-Private Collaborations: Sub-contracting and outsourcing are the most common collaboration methods between the public and private sectors. In these cases, the government remains accountable for a service which is totally or partially operated by the private sector. Public-private partnership (PPP or P3) is currently the method of collaboration that generates the most debate. A PPP implies a sharing of resources, risks and benefits associated with project operations. In these cases, government hands over part of its management responsibilities while retaining enough control to ensure the protection of the public interest. Government control is ensured by contract or by laws and regulations governing the activities of the corporation.

Public-Non profit Collaborations: In certain service sectors, most notably health and human services, non profit service organizations are a major (sometimes sole) channel of service delivery at the community level. In the past, these relationships have been characterized by fee-for-service or annual contracts specifying the conditions under which a government agency will pay the non profit agency to deliver those services. Today, we are beginning to see joint development of service programs in which the public and non profit participants share responsibility for program design, performance, and evaluation.

Each of the twelve cases can be classified as primarily falling into one of these types.

Type of Collaboration	Case Studies	Government Levels
Public-private	IRS E-file	Federal, state
	First Gov	Federal, state
	Ontario Business Connect	Federal, state
	Cadastre Reengineering	State, local
	Access Indiana	State
	HotJob.be	State
	Partners in Change	State
	Bremen Online	Local
Public-public	GIS Coordination Program	State, local
	Service Canada	Federal, state
Public-nonprofit	One-Stop Business Registration	Federal, state, local
	Ambassadeur	State, local

Type of Services Offered

Most of the projects we studied involved the establishment of some kind of e-government initiative. The policy domains and customer or user groups varied widely, but three main service types were addressed:

Public access to a single service type

Most of the projects we studied were collaborations between the public and private sector to provide citizens and businesses easy access to a specific service. Several levels of government and agencies are usually involved but the service provided is one that is focused on a particular citizen or business need. These types of online services simplify government by providing a one-stop access point to complete a process that previously required visiting several government offices. Businesses can, for example, take advantage of services such as *One-Stop Business Registration* to register a new business through one single site visit. *Ontario Business Connect* is another example of a service provided to businesses who can complete electronic applications for several state and provincial programs in one location. Similarly, the *IRS e-file* provides citizens with the opportunity to download or fill out federal or state tax forms from the site. *Hotjob.be* is another example of a single access point for citizens. Job information from all regions of Belgium and countries of the EU are available through one portal.

Public access to multiple services and/or information sources

The second type of e-gov initiatives we studied are projects allowing public access to multiple services and information sources. These web sites are not focused on a single theme such as job search or new business registration but provide federal or statewide information on a variety of subjects. The portal that comprises the largest set of information is *FirstGov.gov*, which is

sometimes referred to as the US federal government megaportal. FirstGov classifies its information to address three types of audiences: citizens, businesses, and governments. It provides access to 186 million web pages from federal and state governments. Service Canada, the Canadian one-stop access to all government information organizes services is also designed for three categories of users: Canadians, Non Canadians, and Canadian Businesses. Similar approaches to multiple services and information portals are also found at the state level (e.g. AccessIndiana) or at the local level (e.g. Bremen Online).

Support for governmental operations

Finally, the third category of e-gov initiative involves the support of critical government operations. The projects undertaken are aimed at facilitating internal management and sharing of information to improve administration of service delivery. For example, the Partners in Change project involved the implementation of a case management system to help government employees deliver welfare benefits more efficiently. The Cadastral Reengineering project involved the use of data bases and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications to improve operations related to real property ownership and taxation. The New York State (NYS) GIS Coordination Program focuses on sharing of spatial data and analytical expertise throughout state and local government agencies.

Case	Service Type
Public access to a single service type	
Ambassadeur	Citizen Internet exposure & training program in rural areas
Hotjob	Job offers portal
IRS e-file	Filing of personal income tax returns
One-Stop Business Registration	Unique kiosk allowing electronic filling of all forms required to open a new business
Ontario Business Connect	Unique kiosk of government services to businesses
Public access to multiple services and/or information sources	
Access Indiana	Public access to state government information and transactions
Bremen on-line	Public access to city information and transactions
First gov	Public access to federal government information
Service Canada Initiative	Online government information to citizens
Support for governmental operations	
Cadastre Reengineering	Real property tax mapping
NYS Geographic Information System Coordination Program	Data sharing and development of data analysis expertise
Partners in Change	IT system to manage welfare benefits delivery

Key Management Issues

Our cross-country analysis of the dozen cases included in our research project led us to identify four critical success factors that transcend national boundaries: leadership, trust, risk management, and communication. These elements of project management were crucial in ensuring a smooth development and successful implementation of the collaboration projects. Comparative essays that draw on specific examples from the cases illustrate the importance of these key management issues.

Leadership

All of the innovative projects we studied were initiated by public sector leaders who shared a vision of better government. The leaders in each project were committed to developing working

relationships within government and between government and private and nonprofit organizations. Commitment of top political leaders at all levels of government proved critical to sustain the initial effort and achieve a successful partnership and service delivery. Leadership also emerged within project teams who believed in enabling a government that is available to everyone at anytime; a government that provides quality services and meets top standards of performance.

Trust

All of the cases in the New Models of Collaboration study involved the development and exercise of trust. Two kinds of trust relationships were critical to the successful implementation of these projects: (1) public trust or the degree to which citizens and other groups in society believe the project or service program can be trusted to treat them fairly; and (2) professional trust or the degree to which people and organizations charged with developing and delivering a service believe they can rely on the motives and predict the performance of other participants. In the cases studied, tools that trigger three types of trust (calculus-based trust, identity-based trust, and institution-based trust) were used to resolve problematic issues and move the partnerships forward.

Risk management

Collaboration within government or between the public and private sectors for the delivery of public services involves partners from different organizations pursuing different, sometimes conflicting, objectives. The participating organizations are usually engaged in large-scale projects that address very visible problems, making significant use of new processes and technologies. All these components are potential sources of risk. Fortunately, most risks can be managed if they are identified and understood early in the process. In this essay, we offer a typology of risks and risk management approaches associated with the delivery of public services by multiple partners. We distinguish external risks that come mainly from the socio-economic, political, and technological environments from internal risks that stem from the nature of the project, the participants, and their relationships.

Communication and Coordination

High levels of information sharing, good communication and well-orchestrated coordination help a collaboration project succeed. The likelihood of success depends on how well managers can leverage technology, organizational, and human resources in coordination with collaborating partners. These collaborations require that employees of all of the partners work in a highly coordinated fashion and require the partnering organizations to provide the motive, opportunity and structure for this to happen. Through our case studies, we found that public organizations are taking several approaches to ensure a high-level of communication and coordination among the employees of the collaborating partners in order to deal with critical challenges in meeting the project goals. These include clear governance, both formal and informal structures, and innovative problem solving mechanisms such as “war rooms.”