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**WD —
Service Canada
Model**

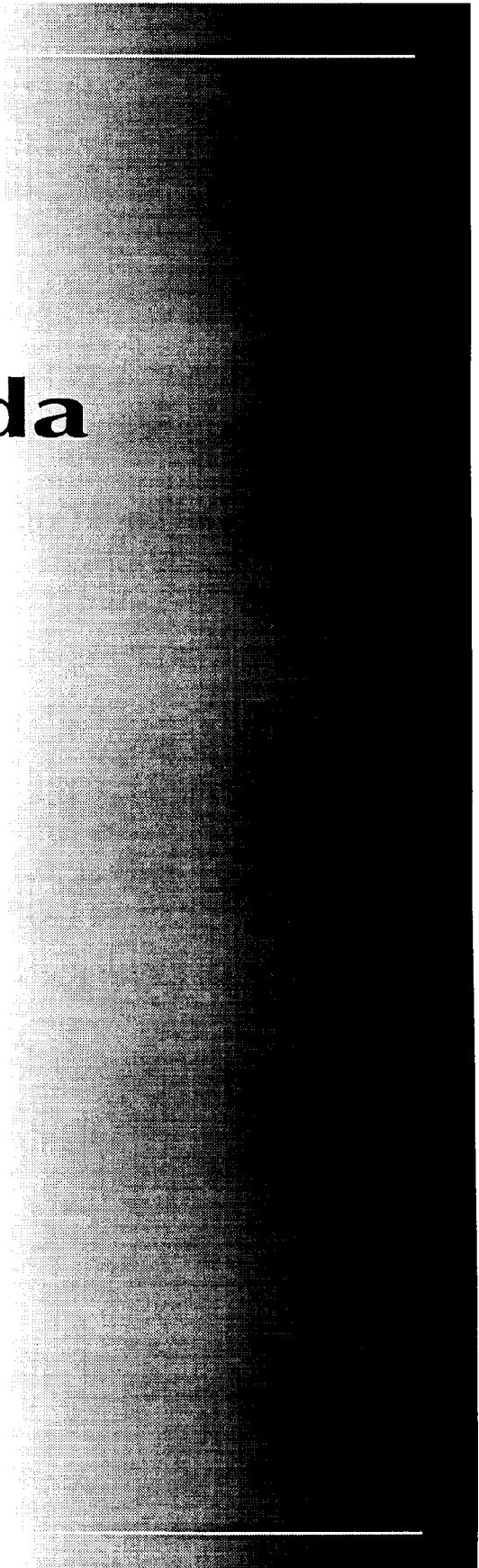


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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

In recent years, governments throughout Canada, and indeed in other countries, have begun to waken to the nature of their relationships with citizens. In part, this awakening has been driven by the demands of citizens themselves as service, and more particularly, service quality, has become a critical dimension of economic relationships in the private sector.

Perhaps more fundamentally, governments have perceived a widening gap between themselves and their electorate. This perception has made them increasingly aware of the need to find ways to “re-connect” with citizens. It has been argued that government does not pay sufficient attention to the quality of service provided and that by and large, public sector institutions are not oriented towards the needs of citizens, service in general, efficiency and effectiveness, economy and productivity. In short, the perception is that few steps have been taken to demonstrate that government is adept at anticipating or responding to client needs.

This report examines models for refocusing the federal government-citizen service relationship around the citizen/client.

First, the paper sets out the current state of the relationship. It is important to layout this relationship before moving onto solutions as the nature of the relationship is broad and multifaceted. It is also important to understand the different types of interactions citizens have with the federal government and to differentiate between transactional/information interactions (the focus of this paper) versus policy/advice interactions.

It then explores Canada-wide service delivery options aimed at enhancing the federal government-citizen service relationship. And it examines the critical success factors and lessons learned from existing innovative service delivery models.

Finally, the paper examines some of the key implementation issues that will arise in setting up a new service delivery model.

1.2 Nature of the Relationship

To understand the nature of the relationship, one must first recognize that the federal government/client service interface is multifaceted. The relationship with citizens is built on a number of interfaces and through the delivery of a vast array of services and programs.

Citizens interact with governments over the delivery of services or products in the form of *transactional/informational* requests. The reasons for these interactions – or the needs of individuals – can be specific and well defined, or more general, broad in scope and far reaching; they may occur at many times during the year, or sporadically over the lifetime of the individual depending on needs and circumstances.

Citizens may also interface with governments in the *policy/advice* forum. This interface could include expert advice on particular issues; interface with boards, commissions, tribunals; and lobbying of politicians or senior bureaucrats directly on issues of importance to a particular individual or group. This interface is often focused on issue specific concerns from an individual point of view, or from the collective perspective of a larger group (e.g., seniors, an industry sector, special interest group such as environmentalists or consumer affairs advocates).

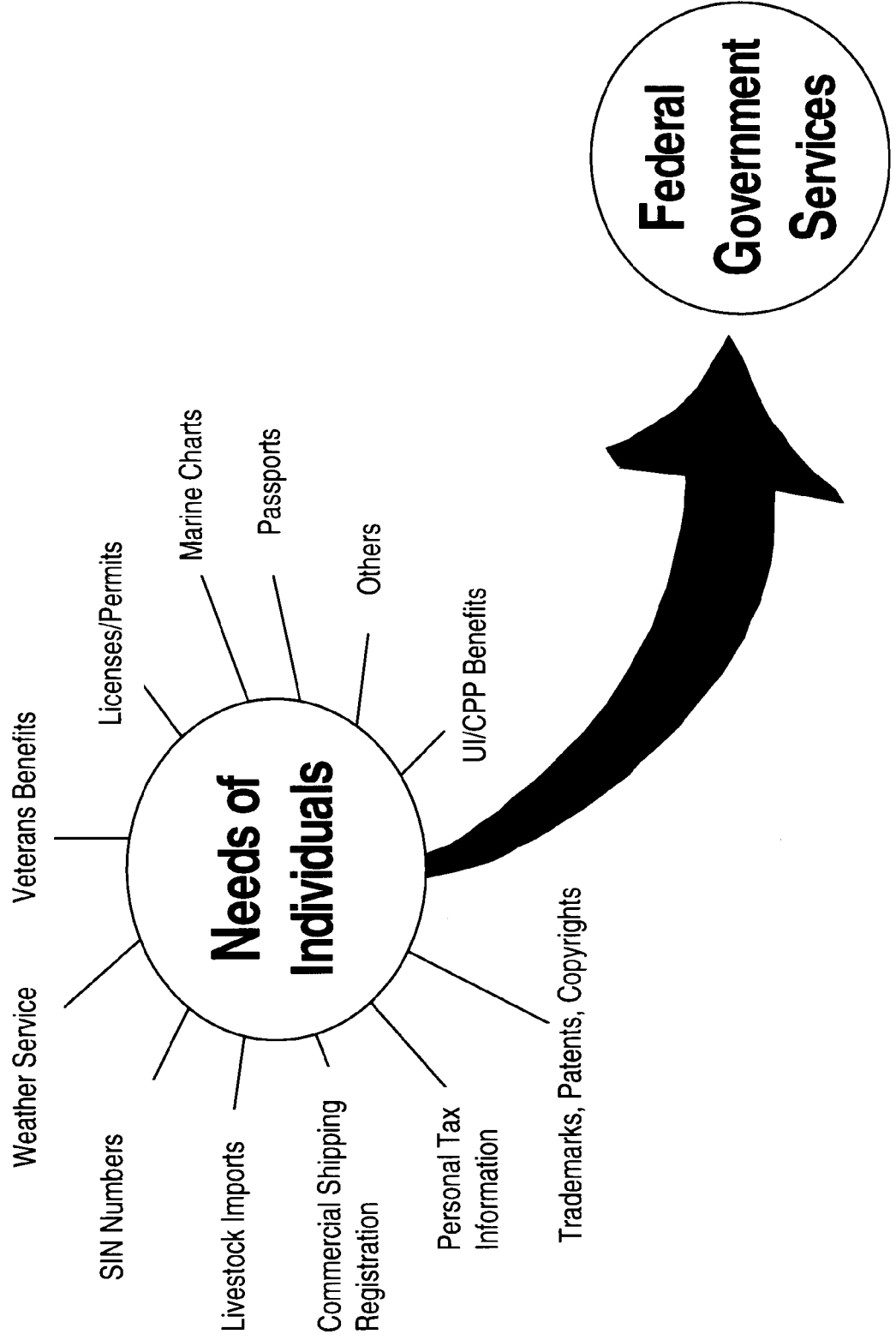
This paper, focuses on the transactional/informational service relationship. Chart 1 illustrates the general nature of this relationship.

The transactional interface is here defined as one based primarily on the processing of information. There is limited discretion involved in the relationship. The interface flows from a statutory or regulatory requirement.

As such, these interfaces are generally marked by face-to-face or telephone contact with public servants or written responses to applications, questions or complaints that often require processing of information, payment of money and collection of data; transactional services may also have a compliance nature about them. Information requests can run the gamut of government activity and typically result in the furnishing or provision of information on a broad range of issues, government programs, departmental information, statistics, and so on.

The nature of these interactions varies with circumstances: an individual deciding to start-up a small business may need information on what is required (e.g., licenses/permits, GST registration, start-up funding, employee benefits, CPP/UI, and so on); the granting of passports and visas for travelers; loans to farmers; export credit for Canadian businesses; the granting of Old Age Security benefits; the provision of GST registration numbers; and the granting of Social Insurance Numbers.

Service Canada - Nature of the Relationship



DEMAND

SUPPLY OF SERVICES

Information services/requests can include such things as weather information from Environment Canada; information about the night sky; economic statistics for general interest, research purposes, market or comparative analysis; sector specific market information; information on policy issues; or general information on the machinery/infrastructure of government. Chart 2 illustrates the breadth of requests.

While the government currently provides these services through various means. The problem is that they are delivered by a large number of departmental offices and there is little coordination among the deliverers. Even services which would seem to have natural affinities – export financing/insurance and small business loans – are not available from the same service delivery agent. In addition, in most instances, citizens do not discriminate effectively between levels of government when seeking information or services. More often than not, citizens see “government” as a single entity.

The issue explored in this paper is how to devise a system that focuses service delivery more effectively around the client.

Service Canada - Nature of the Relationship

1

Federal Government Transactional / Informational Services

ACCESS POINTS

- Reference Canada
 - path finding information and referral to federal programs and services
- Canada/Ontario Business Service Centre
- Publications:
 - Canadian Federal Government Handbook: A Guide to Dealing with the Federal Government
 - Canadian Government Programs and Services
- Government Departments Directly
 - Public Affairs Units
 - Communications Groups
- MPs
- Phone Books, Blue Pages

2

NATURE OF REQUESTS

- Jobs
- Starting a Business
- Income Security
- Tax
- Regulations
- General Services
- Statistical
- Others

3

SPECIAL CLIENT NEEDS

- Licensing
 - boat
 - pilots
 - radios
- Benefits
 - veterans
 - citizens
 - seniors
- Passports/visas
- Information Services
 - National Library
 - CISTI
 - Stats Canada
 - Info. Commissioner
- Permits
 - ship registry
 - exports, imports
- Maps
- Charts - marine
- Taxation
 - personal
 - corporate
 - GST
 - excise
 - customs
- Trademarks, patents, copyrights
- CPP, OAS, GIS, SA
- Museums, archives, gallery
- National Parks
- Standards (national)
- Insurance
 - deposit
 - Environment
 - Weather services
 - Atmospheric conditions
- Financial
 - Business loans
 - Taxation
 - Farm credits, loans
 - Industrial assistance programs
- Employment Deductions
 - UI
 - Taxes
- Regulatory
 - Environmental
 - Trade
 - Telecommunications
- Research
 - NRC
 - Others

2.0 A “SERVICE CANADA” FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

Traditionally, models of service delivery have required citizens (consumers of public services) to access services at different points of contact, at different times of the year, and at different places regardless of whether they require services for similar or related items. In most cases, there is little coordination between levels of government or within the same level of government, making accessibility a real issue for consumers of public services.

In moving to build a client-focused service delivery model, the first critical step is to first define what we mean by quality customer service in the context of transactional services provided by the federal government? The simplest way to do this is by establishing performance standards that, together, address the needs and concerns of citizens. Ultimately, for operational purposes, these standards need to be quantifiable and measurable, to the extent possible.

The key performance standards would include, among others, accessibility, reliability, effectiveness and efficiency. Together, these would define “quality customer service” in the context of a new federal service delivery model. While there have been many attempts to build these standards into the operations of individual programs or departments – Canada Business Service Centres, the Service Delivery Network of HRDC, Revenue Canada – it has not been done systematically across service delivery activities and with the client-focus as the key driver. We return to a brief discussion of performance standards in the final section of the paper.

In developing a service delivery model, it is important to recognize that Canadians’ expectations regarding service quality have risen sharply in recent years as a result of factors in the private sector. Private sector service and performance standards have become a critical competitiveness factor and Canadians are constantly the target of aggressive advertising campaigns that claim that service standards are reaching new limits.

These influences and constant reminders of the importance of service quality are all around us. They are evident in the advertising of retail giants like Wal Mart, Speedy

Muffler and Loblaws. They are also evident through the influences of technology like ATMs which have eliminated much of the need to queue in banks and provided instant access with 100 per cent reliability to basic banking functions.

In many cases, the perception has been that governments have not been keeping up to these rapid changes in service quality.

This is the environment within which a new approach to federal service delivery needs to be designed and operate. It is dynamic and the pace of change is rapid. The model will have to be flexible and holistic in nature to be able to address a wide range of client needs, requests and concerns. What follows is a brief description of the current “system” of federal service delivery, with a focus on its shortcomings.

2.2 The Current Framework

In order to begin designing a new approach to service delivery, one must understand how the current system operates and identify its shortcomings. The following discussion is intended to be a “macro” overview, from the citizen’s perspective, of the current system. Some specific departmental service innovations are noted below but these are spelled out in greater detail in the volume on *Case Studies* produced by the Task Force.

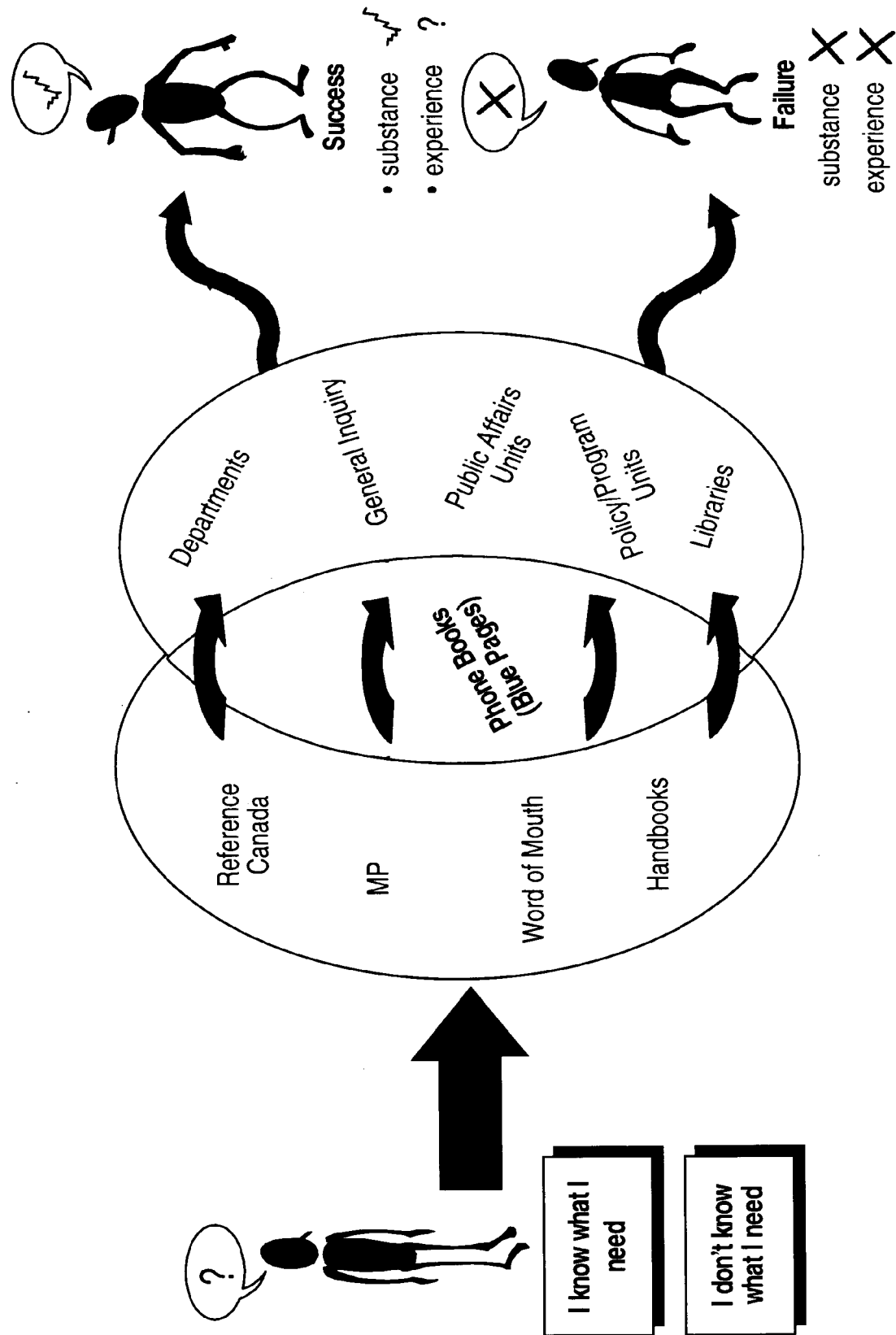
It is important first to recognize that the notion of an existing, overarching service delivery system is in its own right a stretch; to the extent it exists, it is essentially the sum of all the delivery systems of individual departments. In this sense, the system consists of a large number of service deliverers that typically see themselves as largely independent from others in the federal government.

A service delivery system can be characterized by the two sides of the service equation and by the stages of the interaction. The *demand side* is characterized by clients seeking information or service, while the *supply side* is characterized by the government seeking to satisfy those demands.

In terms of the stages of the interaction, the system is marked by the initial approach or entry stage, the processing stage, and the outcome stage. It is useful to track how the current system works given this framework. The objective, of course, is a **successful outcome** as viewed from the client’s perspective. Chart 3 illustrates the current state of this interaction process.

The nature of the request may be looked at from the *demand side*. At the **initial entry stage** the individual has a need or request; it could be as simple and clearly defined as ‘when will I begin receiving my OAS benefit’ or it could be more complex as in ‘how do I go about importing spices from Asia and where can I get financing for the venture?’ The request could also be poorly defined as in ‘I’m interested in doing research into exotic fungi in the high Arctic, can you help me?’

Service Canada - Current State



In still other cases, the individual may simply be aware that he requires something from government; they may not know exactly what they need (someone seeking a passport may also require a birth certificate, for example), where within the maze of government services they need to go, or indeed what level of government they should be dealing with.

In short, at this initial entry stage, the nature of the requests or service needed will vary tremendously with the need and understanding of the client/citizen. This complexity can range over matters of substance as well as clarity.

How does the citizen actually **enter the system** with his or her requests? For those making unsolicited requests (i.e. they have not been informed to call a specific office for some reason) there are a number of avenues through which the individual enters the system. The most likely “pointers” into the federal system are the blue pages found at the back of the local telephone book, telephone numbers referenced in related government documentation that may come into the possession of the individual, the office of the local MP, friends, associates and so on.

One of these pointers may lead to **Reference Canada**. Reference Canada provides a path finding service to government departments and programs. It is most effective as a service when requests are simple and clear. It provides very little substantive information and so on the second point of contact – the referral – the client is in the hands of the individual department or agency and subjected to whatever service culture might be in place in that organization (see discussion on processing stage, below). This could range from excellent service to an experience marked by multiple hand-offs, delays, limited respect, indifference, and ultimately improper information. If the individual’s requests span a number of departments, the frustration is magnified.

Other pointers include publications such as the Canadian Federal Government Handbook: A Guide to Dealing with the Federal Government or the Canadian Government Programs and Services publication produced by Commerce Clearing House. Both of these are available to citizens to guide them and direct them to government services/programs. However, for the average individual these are probably not the pointers they will use.

In short, the process of approaching or entering the system is not effectively structured. The large number of entry points and varying quality of service and service standards at those points makes the entry process difficult, confusing and frustrating for many.

As the individual passes through this initial entry stage and into the **processing stage**, there is a high probability that they will not achieve a successful outcome without some, often significant, redundant handoffs, contacts and processing. There are two main reasons for this.

First, there is no centralized, consistent, methodical filtering of client needs to ensure that requests are clearly understood. Without this filtering process it becomes very difficult

for a referring agent to make a reliable, pin-point reference into the system. And without any centralized processing, the quality of entry experience is likely to be highly variable. What the system really needs at the entry stage is to help the individual articulate and clarify needs in a consistent way.

And second, even with a pin-point reference, the department or agency to which the individual is referred may not be organized to provide quality, efficient service. The government does not have an overarching service culture with consistent performance standards and organizations can be characterized by sub-standard information systems, lack of a service culture, redundant administrative procedures and so on. As a result, the initial hand-off or entry can be unreliable and inefficient from the client's perspective and the overall experience unsatisfactory.

During the **processing stage** the citizen is confronted with a *supply side* characterized by fragmentation and, as noted above, by a wide range of deliverers, typically organized around departmental silos. While efforts have been made to introduce service cultures within some of these "silos", these efforts have had limited success and in any case are generally unable to deal with horizontal or cross-departmental issues.

For issue specific needs or requests such as tax-related issues, the processing stage may be fairly straightforward, although the service experience may not necessarily be satisfactory. Similarly, for business start-up information Canada Business Service Centres (CSBC) are emerging as reasonable one stop shop **information** centres where citizens can have questions answered on a host of issues related to doing business in Canada. This being said, the ability of the business person to locate a CBSC may be hit and miss and in any case the CBSC is often a pointer/referral function to other federal and provincial government departments – multiple contacts on a single inquiry.

2.3 Addressing the Frustration Factors

The **outcome stage** is simply the point in time at which the client feels their request has been satisfied. There are two broad success indicators involved in a satisfactory outcome – substantive (did the client get what they needed?) and experience (was the client satisfied with the overall process?).

Whether the outcome stage is a success depends on the perception and reality of the service experience and the frustration factors that arise on both the demand and supply sides of the service delivery equation. If the system is to be client focused, it needs at a minimum to address the three key factors identified above that can lead to frustration:

1. The complexity of the client's needs or requests.
2. The simplicity and reliability of the system entry point.
3. The overarching service culture throughout the processing stage.

At the front end – the initial approach or entry stage -- the model needs to be structured in such a way that it draws out the client’s true needs; if the individual is to be referred in an accurate and reliable fashion, their needs be clarified, understood and articulated. This focusing process is a first critical step in enhancing the service relationship between the government and citizen. Done properly it will both encourage the client and, down the road, have the potential to limit the number of redundant points of contact between the citizen and the federal government.

But this articulation and drawing out of needs is only a first step; it does little to guarantee that the client is ultimately successfully serviced and that the experience is satisfying. The next critical point in the process where frustration can arise is in the actual referral of the client to the right “window” or organization – the beginning of the processing stage. (In a single window model this referral stage is largely redundant except for the fact that the individual must first find the window itself.) Without a properly structured and efficient referral/pointer capability, the client can be ‘bounced’ from phone number to phone number and from office to office in search of the ‘right’ location. In the limit, the frustration could very well lead to the client giving up altogether.

Even the best referral system can lead to service delivery that comes up short if the client is not referred into an organization that has the service culture and infrastructure to manage their requests satisfactorily – the processing stage must be marked by a clear service culture. Once handed off to the ‘right’ location, the officials or agents dealing with the client need to be capable of servicing the client according to performance standards that are clearly defined, understood and consistent with the client’s expectations.

It should be noted that addressing these three frustration factors are the minimum necessary requirements in building a client-focused service culture. The following section turns to organizational models within which these factors can be addressed.

2.4 “Service Canada” – Client Centred Service Delivery Options

There are two polar structural/organizational approaches to “inventing” a Service Canada model that is capable of addressing the fundamental frustration factors set out above. At one extreme is the Service New Brunswick (SNB) model: a physical, walk-in set up with face to face delivery of most provincial services, with comprehensive geographic coverage in the province, and plans to improve and enhance the attractiveness of an electronic interface.

At the other extreme is a “virtual” service delivery model which builds from existing infrastructure – Reference Canada, CBSCs, Canada Employment Centres and so on – by enhancing the front end of the system, filling in technology and other infrastructure gaps and developing system wide performance standards.

The Service New Brunswick Model

The Service New Brunswick model has considerable appeal. It is, in many ways, the public sector incarnation of the private sector customer satisfaction model. One of its greatest strengths is its breaking down of departmental silos and resulting capacity to deliver services horizontally.

SNB's presence is growing in the province – it is becoming easier for clients to “find” -- which enhances the front end or entry stage of the process considerably. The processing stage is handled through a single service representative and managed against clearly defined, quantifiable performance standards. And the outcome stage is monitored through client satisfaction surveys. By all accounts satisfaction ratings are very high for a government service organization.

As Service New Brunswick is the focus of one of the case studies produced by the Task Force, it is not described in detail here. However, it is useful to briefly review its key characteristics as a backdrop to assessing its appropriateness in a federal context. The key characteristics include:

1. A clear vision of, and objective to create, a customer satisfaction culture.
2. Strong sponsor commitment by the Premier and the Ministry.
3. Vested authority in a change agent for full implementation, planning and ongoing operations.
4. The delivery of some 90 provincial services under one roof and through a single, cross-trained service representative.
5. A “front desk” that operates according to rigorous, measurable customer service standards.
6. A “backroom” that must embrace the culture change necessary to deliver services of different departments through agents not associated with those departments.
7. Customer satisfaction exit interviews that serve, in a feedback loop, as a basis for continuous service improvement.
8. Geographic coverage that limits travel time from any point in the province to no more than 20 to 30 minutes.
9. A mid-tier technology and information system that links SNB offices to the major provincial data bases, thereby supporting and enabling the initiative.

The first three of these are fully transferable to a Service Canada model. They are among the most important generic factors determining the success of a change initiative. They are discussed in more detail in the next section of the paper.

The next six characteristics describe the SNB model. These are the features that would need to be replicated in principle in a Service Canada model. The model clearly has the capacity to address the frustration factors noted above; indeed all indications in New Brunswick are that customer satisfaction is running at a very high rate.

At the same time, the model also raises some important questions:

First, does the range of exclusive federal transactional and informational services lead to a critical service mass that would justify a federal stand alone physical network?

In this regard it is worth noting that SNB is developing service packages for groups such as truckdrivers, homebuilders and small businesses; are there similar synergies that can be developed by packaging federal services?

Second, does it make sense to cross-train service representatives in matters as complex as income taxation on the one hand and export financing assistance on the other?

Third, replicating the SNB model at the federal level would involve a ground-up reconstruction of the federal service delivery capability – would the costs justify the benefits?

A “Virtual” Service Canada Model

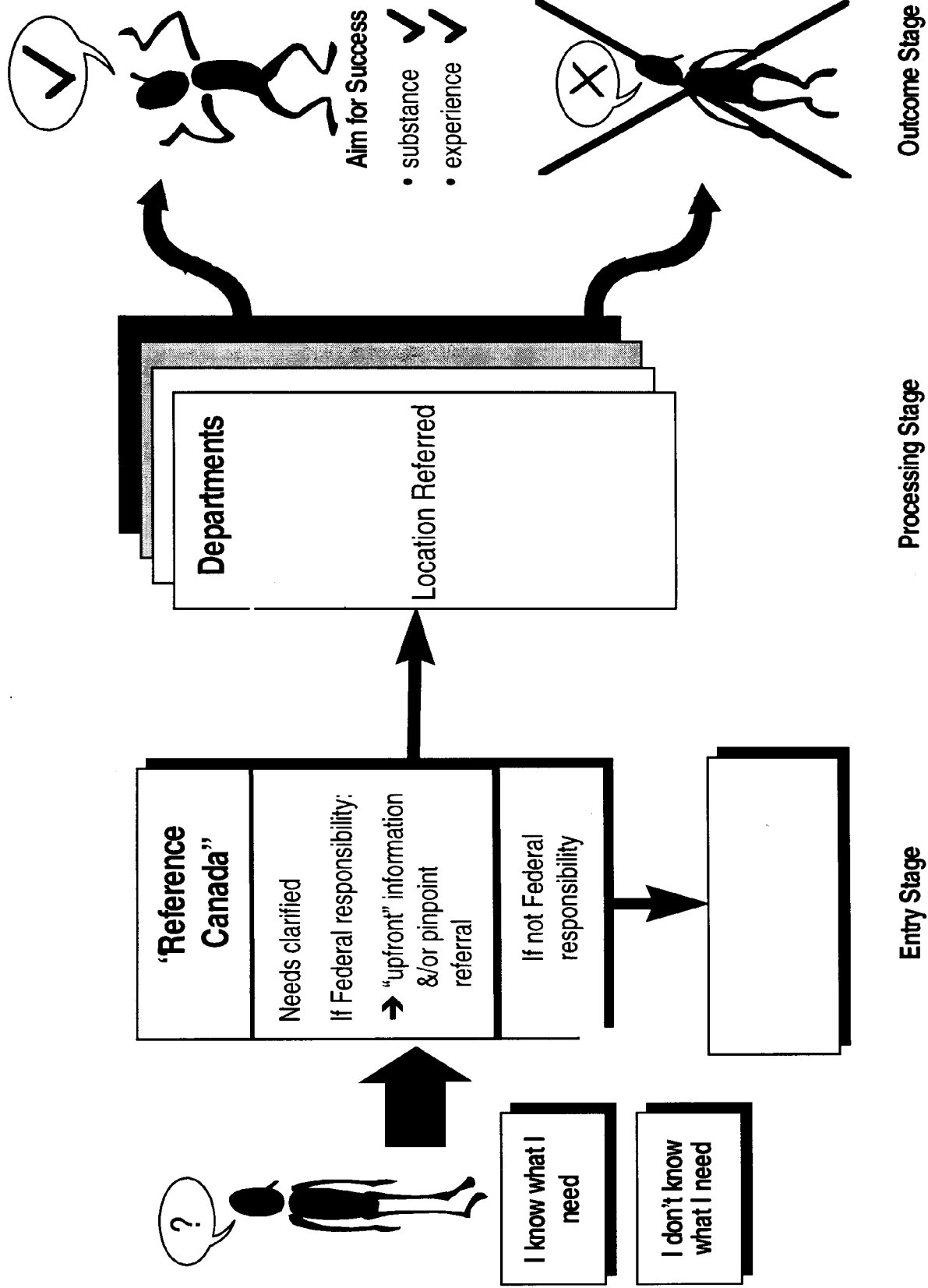
At the other end of the spectrum is a model that would directly address the three key frustration factors identified above by building on both existing infrastructure and capabilities and recognizing that the complexity of many of the federal services at stake do not lend themselves to a simple “over-the-counter” approach. The model would be **comprehensive** – it would get clients to the information or service delivery agent they need -- but **virtual** in that people would be referred to the services rather than having them delivered through a single window, see Chart 4.

There would be two major elements to the model: an enhanced entry stage mechanism – possible through a strengthened Reference Canada; and a new approach to the processing stage which would be marked by consistent, government-wide service culture supported by performance standards – possibly a citizen charter – appropriate networked technology and trained service representatives within departments. The goal, of course remains an outcome stage characterized by high customer satisfaction ratings.

At the front end of the system, a Reference Canada type capacity would be strengthened and enhanced in three ways:

- Service representatives would be trained to help clients articulate their real needs so that when they are referred to other departments/agencies their requests can be handled without any further, unnecessary hand-offs.
- Service representatives would be trained to fully understand not only departmental responsibilities, programming and policy activities, but to deal with horizontal or cross departmental issues as well – small business for example; clients would be referred out from Reference Canada only once and would know with a high degree of certainty that the referrals would be to the right locations.

Service Canada - A Virtual Service Canada Model



- A formal networking of Reference Canada and departmental service representatives as a basis for creating a stronger, more cohesive and consistent service culture across government; the network would allow for immediate transfers of clients, feedback between service agents at the “centre” and in departments, development of a best-practises data base, tracking of client satisfaction and so on.

The second major component of the system would be the development and implementation of government-wide performance standards. These would cover key elements of service quality – wait time, reliability, effectiveness, accuracy and so on. Establishing overarching service standards that identified departments and related agents of the federal government were required to adhere to would be a major step forward.

A key consideration in this regard would be the extent to which departments would be required to standardize their service infrastructure in addition to meeting performance standards. A second consideration would be the need for grievance procedures and sanctions to deal with situations where performance standards were not met.

As developed here, the model is not structured around a physical/walk in presence. The front end, Reference Canada, would be accessed electronically – essentially by telephone, fax or internet. Many of the specific services would continue to be accessed physically – CBSCs (where they are walk-in as opposed to call centres), Revenue Canada offices, Canada Employment Centres and so on. Moreover, there would be no requirement to use Reference Canada as an access point – it would be an enabling service for those uncertain about where in the system to proceed.

The major advantages of such a model are that it would recognize and avoid huge costs associated with developing a single window model given the complex nature of many of the service-related contacts between citizens and the federal government, the magnitude of the cross-training and technology issues, and the limited inherent advantages – as compared to the provincial scene – in clustering services.

At the same time, the model would fundamentally re-vamp the service culture across the federal government and provide citizens with a clear understanding of what to expect in terms of service delivery.

Its major disadvantage would be its inability to break down, at the front end, the vertical departmental silos and allow for services to be delivered in a way that focuses on clients despite departmental boundaries. However, this should not be interpreted as a fatal or permanent shortcoming. Performance standards could be established in such a way that they would pressure departments into working more effectively together on horizontal service delivery and client satisfaction matters.

Other important issues that may arise in this model, are the “level of government confusion factor” – what happens if the request is not within federal jurisdiction? -- and

the “information provision” function – does Reference Canada provide baseline information for straightforward requests, or is it a referral service only?

Both of these could be overcome. As noted earlier, the level of government confusion factor could be handled, at a minimum, by recommending, when appropriate, that the client call the general inquiry number of the relevant province. In a “fully” integrated system, there could be a federal-provincial “Reference Canada” which had the capacity to make pinpoint referrals not only into federal departments and agencies but provincial ones as well. On the question of information provision, there is no reason why simple, straightforward packages could not be provided to clients, and indeed where requests were straightforward, they would eliminate a major “bounce” in the system.

3.0 PARTNERSHIPS

Trends in government point increasingly towards working in collaboration with other levels of government and with other organizations outside of the public sector. It is difficult to think that clients can be put at the centre of the service delivery equation without involving partners.

Where no single provider has full responsibility for the entire range of services, partnerships are at the core of a true client-centred approach. Without a collaborative effort between the various levels of government and between government and the private sector, clients will have to continue to access services from different locations. In many cases, partnerships will enhance access to services and information where they do not exist currently. In the longer term, partnership arrangements may also reduce costs and the role of government. As well, partnerships may provide mechanisms to reduce duplication and increase efficiency of government service delivery.

Partnerships in the Service Canada Model Context

The term “partnership” is used to refer to a variety of arrangements or working relationships between parties. Traditionally, true partnerships connote some sort of joint action, power sharing and the existence of mutual benefits such that those involved in partnerships share in decision-making and benefit from the outcomes of joint activities.

In the context of the Service Canada model, there are three kinds of partnerships that could improve overall service to the client.

- ⇒ *Service partnerships:* This type of partnership is characterized by the collaboration or joint action by different levels of government or other organizations to fill in service packages – travel packages, small business packages and trucking packages, for example. Partners may involve other levels of government, non-governmental organizations or private organizations that can service the client. In the case of the virtual model, consideration may be given to cross training Reference Canada service representatives to provide pathfinding to provincial services as well. Or, perhaps more efficient, to have a referral out to a Reference Province service.

- ⇒ *Delivery agents:* Delivery agents are the vehicle through which the actual services or pathfinding is delivered. In the case of a SNB-type model, the actual operation and maintenance of the walk-in centre could be contracted out (as SNB is in fact doing

with Canada Post). Existing infrastructure, federal and otherwise, could be used to achieve appropriate penetration rates. In the case of a virtual Service Canada model, similar contracting out arrangements could be considered for the Reference Canada element of the model.

⇒ *Infrastructure agents:* Infrastructure agents can be thought of as those that provide the “wiring” behind the service. In most cases, there is little direct interaction between the client (public) and the partner except through technology. A seamless Service Canada model – whether physical or virtual – would require extensive information system upgrades to connect a range of departments, programs and information sources together. Similar to the Service New Brunswick model, the federal government could consider leveraging the strengths of organizations that are in the business of providing telecommunications infrastructure such as telephone and cable companies.

It is also worth noting that some partners may play a number of roles. For example, in a walk-in model, Canada Post could be a natural delivery agent -- Post offices are located in most small towns across Canada so the physical network is in place. In addition, many towns and villages see the post office as the natural location to pick up/drop off information. However, Canada Post can also be considered as an infrastructure agent. If call centres become a central feature of a Service Canada model, Canada Post may prove to be a logical partner. Requests for forms or applications initiated at the call centres may potentially be generated by Canada Post and sent to customers across Canada through a service called Volume Electronic Mail. Since Canada Post is in the business of large volume mail handling, it may prove to be a reliable partner for the generation and delivery of standard applications and forms.

4.0 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS - LESSONS LEARNED

Governments across Canada have begun experimenting more intensively with client focused service models. These initiatives have led to significant changes in the way people, processes and technology interact. These experiments with alternative models of service delivery have provided a series of lessons that can be drawn on for future change initiatives. These are briefly highlighted below as *critical success factors* necessary for implementing a successful client-centred service delivery model. While some were referenced earlier in this paper, it is nevertheless useful to keep the full range of success factors clearly in focus when moving forward.

1. A clear and articulated vision
2. Strong and consistent sponsor commitment
3. An action plan
4. Cultural and organizational alignment
5. Open consultation and communication
6. A lead change agent
7. A cross functional design and implementation team
8. Compatible front-end and back-end processes
9. An attitude that does not see legislation as a barrier
10. Success momentum

1. A Clear and Articulated Vision

Many people overlook the importance of the role a vision plays in a change initiative. The vision is often described as a “motherhood” statement that provides little value. In actual fact, the vision plays a very important role. It states the fundamental reason for the existence of a program or initiative, it establishes the scope of the initiative at a high level, it provides long term direction and acts as a foundation for developing goals and objectives. A vision can be narrowly or broadly defined. But it is not just an idea in somebody’s mind. It must be articulated and communicated.

The actual process of articulating the vision in the case of a Service Canada model may be just as important as the vision itself. The vision development process will bring the key players and potential partners together to help formalize the concept of a Service Canada model. The process will help foster the buy-in by partners and foster the

development of a working relationship among players who traditionally may not have worked together.

2. *Strong and Consistent Sponsor Commitment*

Sponsor commitment is one of the single most critical elements of a smooth and successful change initiative. Often in the case of public sector change initiatives, ministerial sponsorship and commitment is crucial to a successful change initiative.

If the sponsor is not fully committed to the change initiative, there is a significant risk that the initiative will not move beyond the idea stage. In addition to having a strong sponsor, it is important to have a consistent sponsor throughout the major phases of the initiative. A focus on one sponsor promotes consistent leadership to those implementing change, reduces down time required to bring a new sponsor “up-to-speed,” and symbolically demonstrates the importance of the change initiative.

3. *An Action Plan*

A plan which lays out the who, what, where, when, and how is integral to successful implementation of the vision and change initiative. The plan must address a host of issues in a coordinated and consistent fashion. The range of issues could include those dealing with legislative changes to geographic location to what services will be delivered by whom. The core of the action plan takes into consideration strategic issues such as structure and coordination, but at the same time it maps out the linkages between each of the change initiative components. This is integral to a consistent application of the change initiative and leads to greater success at implementing changes effectively and efficiently.

4. *Cultural and Organizational Alignment*

To be successful, an organization that implements change must be concerned with the impact on not only the organization but on the people within that organization. The corporate culture of any organization can make or break a change program. Culture is always an issue when a strategic decision requires a major shift in the way management and/or employees operate. Strategic decisions are likely to require a significant realignment of organizational behaviours when the changes caused by those decisions are implemented. It is important to align not only the processes and systems but to also identify and begin to change the behaviours of those within the organization.

5. *Open Consultation and Communication*

In order to change culture, a strong communication and consultation process is necessary. A strategy must be developed early on in the change initiative to disseminate information to all staff and to communicate/consult with all potential stakeholders (this includes the unions, the clients, other levels of government or other branches within government and

private organizations). While senior management and the design team may lead the change process, staff, clients and the unions have the influence to stall or delay the success of a change initiative.

In essence, communication and consultation must begin early on to manage expectations, alleviate fears, dispel myths and encourage compliance. A Service Canada model will affect the way many people both inside and outside of government interact with government. The only sure fact is that Service Canada will entail different interaction. The notion of different will no doubt raise questions, concerns and fears. A strong communication plan will play a key role in reducing or managing those concerns.

6. *A Lead Change Agent*

The lead change agent puts the plan in place on behalf of the sponsor. The change initiative needs the right leader to set the course, take action and ensure the plan is implemented within a reasonable time frame. The change agent is the one that is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the initiative. Choosing the right person, with the right qualities and experience is essential. This individual should:

- be respected at the political level;
- be seen as a leader;
- have experience in large and innovative change initiatives;
- possess strong people skills;
- be well versed in alternative delivery mechanisms;
- understand technology, its potential and its limits;
- know how to work within and around government; and
- be committed to the success of the initiative.

7. *A Cross Functional Design and Implementation Team*

Another key ingredient of success is the team itself. There is a necessity for a strong team to manage and operationalize the concepts behind Service Canada into a working model. If we draw on the lessons learned from the Clearing the Path (CTP) initiative in Ontario, the project demonstrated the importance of a team that encompasses the skills and knowledge from both a technology and a program perspective. Program and information technology staff worked together throughout the entire process to ensure the program elements were successfully translated into the automated operational environment (e.g., computer workstation). Synergy was developed between the two segments of the team in order to effectively and efficiently achieve the single window model.

It is important to stress the significance of having integrated teams comprised of the relevant program and technology partners. Program and technology team members need to work together in the design and implementation phases in order to successfully integrate components of both. The program experts need to understand the limits and roles of technology, while the technology experts should understand the program

requirements. The best way to accomplish this is through joint design and implementation effort.

8. *Compatible Front-end and Back-end Processes*

Another lesson learned is that in implementing a “single window” approach, the design team cannot focus solely on the front-end process (the delivery structure). Because the “single window” concept artificially divides the front-end delivery from the back-end policy and processing aspects, it is relatively easy to segment the two. It is critical to ensure that those involved in the back-end processes are just as committed to change as those involved in the front-end process. Streamlining and simplifying the front-end of service delivery without altering the back-end program administration procedures will not result in significant change.

9. *An Attitude that Does Not see Legislation as a Barrier*

If government wants to apply the single window concept to service programs, it usually means crossing departmental lines, involving more than one jurisdiction and evolving legislation to keep up with technology. In order to address many of these issues, the political will and the right attitude must exist. Legislation and jurisdictional issues should not be seen as barriers, rather they should be seen as opportunities for change.

The example demonstrated by the CTP initiative with its Business Regulation Reform Act (April 1995) demonstrates that legislation can change to enable future streamlining and simplification of the regulatory process between government and business partners. In addition to streamlining the regulatory process, this legislation was required to accommodate a “single window” environment. In October 1995, the first regulations permitted electronic business registration and reporting procedures, without the traditional elements (paper or signatures). The Act also allowed delivery of other governments’ programs and permitted federal, provincial and municipal interaction.

10. *Success Momentum*

It is important for there to be visible signs of change within a relatively short time frame (Service New Brunswick was up and running within six months). The reason is the need to demonstrate success early on to sustain the momentum for change. This does not mean that an entire initiative needs to be in place; rather, successful pilots need to be started. The key is to choose a successful pilot or one that has a strong possibility for success. Choosing “doable” pieces or small sites is critical to gain support from partners, the executive level and from clients. It may serve to alleviate fears from those that did not believe change was possible. Further, for those involved in the initiative, it will sustain the drive and the energy for full implementation.

5.0 BRINGING IT TOGETHER

5.1 Major Implementation Planning Issues

Getting a Service Canada model up and running will take time and resources. Regardless of the model, it will require initial capital costs, infrastructure costs and training costs which will bear on timing and design. There will be a requirement for on-going public resources devoted to developing and designing and maintaining of the organization. The nature of partnerships (either with government or the private sector) will need to be examined thoroughly; monitoring and evaluating the service delivery structure based on performance measures will need to be established in order to determine that the client is satisfied and receiving the appropriate services; and keeping abreast of any redesigning necessary as needs evolve, expectations change and new technologies emerge.

It is useful to briefly review some of the issues that would need to be addressed in planning for the implementation of a Service Canada model. Below, we briefly address:

- Accountability
- Finance
- Technology
- Organization

Accountability

From the federal government perspective, one of the most important concerns will be **accountability**. This issue is of great importance in a SNB-type model and of lesser importance in the virtual model where services continue to be delivered by individual departments. From an operational perspective, departmental 'silos' need to be overcome to allow for services to be focused on the client. This immediately raises potential questions around ministerial accountability; statutory authority; and accountability over financial and personnel matters.

In the day-to-day operations of a Service Canada model, the roles and responsibilities among departments and their relationships must be articulated. These will need to be clearly delineated but at the same time in such a fashion, that they are not constricting or indeed, inhibiting the ultimate goal, of creating a client-centred service capability. The federal government must strike a balance between having the flexibility required to

service a diverse client base (e.g., citizens) and the appropriate financial controls in place to ensure services and the structure(s) delivering them are operating efficiently and effectively.

Finance

When considering developing a service delivery model which combines a range of services/information across government departments, billing arrangements and budget management/control systems become a critical matter. Tied closely to accountability, the type of financial system(s) put in place will be important. Any financial system put in place will need to be flexible as the nature of client needs will be diverse and wide-ranging. Again this is an issue that pertains primarily to an SNB-type model.

Traditional financial controls may not be sufficient to handle the demands of such a diverse service delivery system as the Service Canada model. Specific information on operational performance and budget actuals/projections will likely need to be visited in the context of the model if they are to be used as meaningful indicators of how well the model is working from a financial perspective.

In addition, in the short-term, the federal government may face significant costs in implementing a more client-centred service delivery model. These costs could be due to technology related issues, training issues, hiring of new personnel, and so on.

Technology

Technology has rapidly changed the face of service delivery not only in Canada, but around the world. As the federal government moves to improve its delivery of services to citizens, technology will play a key role.

The federal government must grapple with how to connect its existing electronic systems, data bases and networks across the country if it is to enhance its service delivery to Canadians. Establishing platforms which communicate with one another or are compatible will be crucial for addressing client concerns over accuracy, reliability, speed and so on. While computers are an important part of this 'connectivity' concern, this also applies to telecommunication links as more and more information access points are being established using fiber optics.

A note of caution must be raised here though, as with more and more information/data (personal and private) available on computers, in data bases, etc., privacy issues will become a source of concern not only for citizens but for the federal government who must legislate and manage it (e.g., within government as well as amongst any partners). It will become important to determine how to limit and protect the access to personal information especially if databases will be accessible from a number of points. The government could become vulnerable to computer hacks; persons seeking access to confidential or private information; and fraud.

Organization

From an organizational perspective, a number of issues surface. Aside from how a Service Canada model will actually be structured, one of the most important organizational concerns will be on how to build a service **culture**. It will be important to establish close links between the people, processes and technologies in the new organization. Many government departments and agencies have embarked on renewal exercises which place an emphasis on service to clients. While many have made significant strides towards this, a Service Canada model will require them to go much further.

Employees will need to be part of a “culture” which values client service from top to bottom. The federal government will need to cope with bringing employees from different organizations and professions together to work under one roof. As has happened with recent government restructuring, the “pains” of restructuring can be severe and last for several years. In most cases, positive signs of major cultural change can take anywhere from 3 to 5 years to begin to show.

In addition to concerns over ‘culture’, the federal government will need to develop comprehensive **performance measures/standards** which will ensure and measure the level of service quality to its clients. These indicators should flow from the criticisms raised by citizens over government service delivery, e.g., reliability, accessibility, timeliness, accuracy and availability. Specifically, these performance measures should be based on traditional business performance standards such as:

- waiting time (in line, on the phone);
- processing time (depending upon the type of client request);
- time to answer questions;
- decision making (program dependent);
- exceptions (if there is an exception, how long should it take to process a client’s case);
- service (polite, friendly, knowledgeable, expedient); and
- others, as specified.

Aside from the need to develop performance measures, the federal government will have to invest in significant **training** of its public servants so that they have the foundation for delivering services to the public. Appropriate training will also reinforce the types of attitudes and behaviours the federal government will be demanding of its employees under the new model. Training in customer service, information retrieval, having a “client” focus rather than a bureaucratic/rules one, as well as attention to quality/presentation/detail will be required for service representatives.

On a related note, the federal government will also have to ensure that all services (and service representatives) are offered in **both official languages**. This could mean significant training expenses as well as heavy implications for technology applications such as computers or video-display terminals as these will have to be made available in both languages.

Finally, the federal government will likely have to embark upon a **public education/awareness** campaign with the public at large. Citizens will need to know not only that they can access government services in a “new fashion”, but that they are encouraged to do so. Government services should be made not only easily accessible by all, but user friendly. The federal government will need to “market” its services and its new approach to service delivery.

As noted earlier, there are probably many more ‘wiring’ issues the federal government will need to concern itself with. This list, while not exhaustive, has provided a sense of the complexities involved.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The notion of re-inventing the service culture within the federal government is certainly not new. The parameters for the reinvention were conceptually laid out in PS 2000. Since that time there has been much experimentation with service delivery cultures, models, and the supporting infrastructure including training, physical presence, technology and so on.

These experiments have produced many lessons and enhanced our understanding of what is required for a successful initiative. It is clear that introducing and growing a service culture requires vision and strong commitment. It is equally clear that it requires a detailed business and implementation plan that includes all aspects of the initiative.

A first step in this process would be the development of a more detailed business policy/strategy. This piece would first spell out the proposed structure of the model(s), methodically address the specific gaps in each of the key parts of the model, and establish the work planning requirements necessary to address them. This task would require a detailed assessment of Reference Canada, the development of performance standards that could be adopted government wide, and the identification of key generic issues that would have to be addressed in individual departmental implementation plans.

The piece should also identify the prospects for piloting some parts of the initiative either at the departmental or Reference Canada level. It could also develop the “quick hits” that are crucial to establishing success momentum for the initiative.

It is only once this conceptual work was complete that it would be fruitful to move on to a detailed business/implementation plan for such an initiative.

Guiding Principles

Having established the guiding principles, a key consideration in delivering transactional/informational services is how to group the various services being offered by the federal government to meet the needs of citizens. This *clustering* enables the federal government to adopt and modify a service delivery model which meets (and exceeds) client expectations.

As a start, by clustering clients into broad groupings, the federal government will be able to enhance its delivery of services. Typically, clients can be clustered according to: geographic/regional location; age; sex; language; and so on. For illustrative purposes, the Service Canada model has clustered citizens into three broad groupings: Business, Citizens (generally), and Special Interest. These broad categories are meant to encompass the entire population within Canada as well as those beyond our borders who may for one reason or another, need to perform transactional/informational requests with the Canadian government. This clustering also reflects the reality that citizens may interact with the federal government individually or as part of a larger group. It should be noted, that a hybrid cluster may be preferred in some instances, e.g., cluster based upon broad categories, but done on a regional/geographic basis.

Having clustered clients, the Service Canada Model then looks towards how best to cluster federal government services to best meet the needs of clients. For instance, Reference Canada, a path finding information and referral service to federal programs and services, has found that most of its requests fall into the following broad categories: jobs, starting a business, taxation, income/benefits, and so on. Building from there, services could be clustered based on the nature of client requests, e.g., Jobs, Tax, Income Security, Starting a Business, Statistical, Regulations, General Services, and so on. It should be noted, that due to the broad range of requests, it may not be possible to cluster all client requests. For illustrative purposes, Chart 3 sets out the type of client and transactional/informational service clusters possible in a Service Canada Model.

In operationalizing a Service Canada Model, it will be important to build upon the existing service delivery infrastructure, rather than duplicate or re-invent delivery mechanisms already in place. As all ready noted, the federal government has utilized telecommunication services with its 1-800 Reference Canada call centres. The Service Canada Model would link up with that existing service and become part of the wider Service Canada network. Furthermore, the usage of technology (e.g., computers, video-

display monitors, expert/AI systems, etc.) will become an integral part of the Service Canada Model.

As the Service Canada Model is put in place, it will be important to consider where services will be delivered. Aside from several service delivery mechanism in place, there is an existing infrastructure throughout Canada. Post offices, libraries, Canada Employment Centres, Revenue Canada offices, Citizenship and Immigration offices, available federal real estate, already occupy space which could be utilized for the Service Canada Model. Depending upon the type of delivery mechanism put in place (e.g., walk-in; single-window service counter; call centre; remote access; mall kiosk, etc.) these existing federal locations could be re-designed or reconfigured to meet the needs of a Service Canada Model. For instance, computer networks may be required to link up existing data bases and to allow customer service representatives fast, accurate information. These may be located in any one or all of the above. It must be recognized though, that delivery of federal government services to citizens in Canada is difficult from a geographic perspective, however, by using and linking up the existing infrastructure, the challenge this poses, could be minimized.

In moving towards a Service Canada Model it is important to also identify those partners which are required to make the service seamless to the client. As noted in the introduction of this paper, Citizens have been disgruntled with the level and quality of service provided by governments. One contributing factor has been concerns over duplication and red tape. Much of this hinges upon cooperation with a variety of public or private organizations to ensure that the delivery of services to citizens is seamless. The following section elaborates on the nature of this relationship with partners in the context of a Service Canada Model.