Innovations and Good Practices in Single-Window Service

Stephen Bent
Kenneth Kernaghan
D. Brian Marson

CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICE NETWORK
CANADIAN CENTRE FOR MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT

March 1999

To obtain publications by the Citizen-Centred Service Network, please visit CCMD's website at http://www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca, or limited copies can be ordered from the Canadian Centre for Managment Development by e-mailing: info@ccmd-ccg.gc.ca; telephoning: (613) 943–8370; or faxing your order with your name and address to: (613) 995–0286. For more information, please call (613) 996–3955.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Bent, Stephen

Innovations and good practices in single-window service

Includes bibliographical references
ISBN 0-662-27654-X
Cat. no. SC94-70/1999E

1. Civil service – Customer services – Canada.
2. Administrative agencies – Customer services – Canada.
3. Customer services – Canada – Management.
I. Kernaghan, Kenneth, 1940- .
II. Marson, Brian.
III. Canadian Centre for Management Development.
IV. Citizen-Centred Service Network (Canada).

JL111.C87B46 1999 352.7'48'0971 C99-980135-X

Preface

The Citizen-Centred Service Network (CCSN) was established by the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) in July 1997 to accelerate the modernization of service across the public sector in Canada. Facilitated by CCMD, the network is composed of over 200 officials from the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government as well as leading academics and outside experts in the field of public sector service delivery.

Members of the CCSN identified a number of areas where further research was needed to help the public sector improve the delivery of government services to citizens. One of these areas was single-window service delivery. This study on innovations and good practices in single-window service is one of several research projects initiated by CCMD. The case analyses contained in the study were written by Stephen Bent and are based on interviews he conducted with practitioners between January and September 1998. The purpose of the study is to assist those who wish to learn more about single-window service at all three levels of government. Public sector managers are invited to draw on the lessons learned from practitioners involved in single-window service delivery.

Many people across Canada have contributed to the success of this project. Of particular note are those who were interviewed for the case studies: Rick Magus, Marg Garey, and Bob Cunningham, Human Resources Development Canada; Mary Elin Sim, Privy Council Office; Marie Mullally and Clyde Horner, Government of Nova Scotia; Gary Kelly, Unisys Canada; Ardath Paxton-Mann and Susan Park, Government of British Columbia; Joanne Bree, Regional Municipality of Halton; Jeff Labonte, Natural Resources Canada; Jim Saunderson, Western Economic Diversification; Sayeed Reta, Canada Post; Marie Carrière, Industry Canada; Dwight MacAulay, Government of Manitoba; Suzanne Beaudoin, Public Works and Government Services Canada; Bruce Young, National Energy Board; Rod Quiney, Revenue Canada; Maggie Henderson-Davis, Government of New Brunswick; David Mee, Maxine Walsh, Jim Evans and Kristine Tape, Government of Ontario; and Judy Rogers, City of Vancouver.

Samuel Wex, formerly of CCMD, deserves special mention for his contributions to this initiative. His direction and insight contributed significantly to the success of the project. Ralph Heintzman, formerly of CCMD and presently Assistant Secretary, Service and Innovation Sector, the Treasury Board Secretariat, deserves recognition for his invaluable input and direction throughout the project. Geoff Dinsdale, Research Analyst at the Canadian Centre for Management Development, also merits special recognition for his support in bringing this project to fruition. His critical analysis, timely insight and efforts were greatly appreciated.

We hope that this study will be helpful to public sector managers as they work to improve service delivery by designing government services to meet the needs of citizens.

Stephen Bent, Kenneth Kernaghan and D. Brian Marson

Table of Contents

Citizens Want Single-Window Service Delivery

Governments have a responsibility to design the delivery of government services based on the needs of citizens.[1] Recent surveys have shown that citizens want government services that are easy to find and access. For example:

- In a November 1997 Ekos Research *Rethinking Government* survey for the federal government, 77 percent of respondents gave high priority to making government services easier to find and access. In addition, 68 percent of respondents gave high priority to providing one-stop service where a wide range of services can be accessed in one place.[2]

Recent surveys also illustrate that citizens are having difficulty obtaining the services they need. For example:

- The 1998 Erin Research/Citizen-Centred Service Network *Have Your Say* National Survey asked respondents to recount a recent service experience in light of several factors. The results showed that 25 percent of respondents did not know how to get the service they needed (eg., knowing the service location or phone number). Of the 75 percent who did know how to get the service they needed, an additional 55 percent had one or more problems accessing the service (eg., being bounced from one person to another or receiving incorrect information). When the findings from both of these groups are considered together, nearly two-thirds of respondents had one or more difficulties finding or accessing the service they needed.[3]

Governments must take a citizen-centred approach to service delivery. Citizens want government services that are as accessible, convenient and seamless as possible. One way of achieving this is through single-window service delivery. The essence of the single-window approach is the bringing together of government services, or information about them, in order to reduce the amount of time and effort citizens must expend to find and obtain the services they need. While single-window service is only one of several approaches to improving service to citizens, it has become an increasingly important one.

Why Is This Report Useful to Public Sector Managers?

The concept of single-window (SW) service delivery is now interpreted very broadly and encompasses a considerable variety of mechanisms. A major purpose of this report is to provide a tentative classification of the various approaches to SW service delivery in Canada. In doing so, it is hoped that public sector managers who are not familiar with SW service delivery will understand better the opportunities available to them. A complementary purpose is to draw out the lessons learned and the success factors identified by those involved with the SW initiatives studied for this report. Finally, for those who are currently involved in the rapidly growing and changing field of SW service delivery, this report may provide new information and insights. Illustrative references are made throughout this report to the various initiatives studied. A short description of each of the SW initiatives referred to in this study is provided in Appendix I.

Why Is More Research Being Done on Single-Window Service Delivery?

SW service delivery is not a new area of interest for public officials or researchers. A number of studies of this topic have been undertaken in the past five years (KPMG, 1997 and Seidle, 1995). One such study was the extensive Deputy Ministers Task Force on Service Delivery Models completed in 1996. This Task Force examined several SW initiatives in Canada and served as a rich source of information for determining the cases selected and the research approach for this study. However, it was decided that more study of SW service delivery would be helpful for the following reasons:

- the Citizen-Centred Service Network (see Appendix III) identified it as an important area for further research to help public service leaders make informed decisions concerning service delivery;
- the former Clerk of the Privy Council, Jocelyne Bourgon, in her Fifth Annual Report to the Prime Minister, identified SW service delivery within and between all three levels of government as an area that required further progress;
- the Ekos and Erin Research survey results noted above show that SW service delivery is a priority for citizens;
- the SW service delivery field is changing rapidly. The pace and scope of change is accelerating, driven primarily

by technology. Innovative approaches in this area are always developing and it is important for these innovations to be communicated to public servants and researchers;

- there is a need to map out the SW service delivery field so that researchers and administrators can more easily comprehend the different elements in this area.

What Is Single-Window Service Delivery?

A very general definition of SW service delivery was provided at the beginning of this study:

The essence of the single-window approach is the bringing together of government services, or information about them, in order to reduce the amount of time and effort citizens must expend to find and obtain the services they need.

This definition gives one a basic sense of what SW aims to achieve. However, SWs can vary in *purpose* and *structure*. The *Single-Window Service Delivery Matrix* (Figure 1) illustrates these variations (the cases reviewed for this study can be located within it). The purpose of this section is to define the various purposes SWs can serve (the vertical axis of the matrix) and the variations in structure that are used to facilitate them (the horizontal axis of the matrix).

The Purposes of Single Windows

SWs can serve *one or more* of the following purposes: (1) improve accessibility through SW "gateways"; (2) improve convenience through "one-stop shopping"; and/or (3) overcome jurisdictional divisions by providing "seamless service." These purposes are explained in more detail below.

Improving Accessibility through Single-Window "Gateways"

SWs can provide a "gateway" to government services through government information and referral services such as call centres, Internet sites and information bureaus. This type of SW serves to make government more *accessible* by connecting citizens with government services regardless of how the service delivery structures within a government are defined. Improving accessibility through "gateways" refers here to facilitating citizens' access to government information about available services and/or referring them to the appropriate service. As noted, gateways usually take the form of call centres (e.g., Enquiry BC), Internet Sites (e.g., the Intergov Website) or general information offices. Thus, in many instances citizens do not need to leave home to get this service if they have a telephone or a computer. This type of service can be provided by a single government or it can be multi-jurisdictional.

Improving Convenience through "One-Stop Shopping"

SWs can provide a "one-stop shop" where citizens can access many or all of the services (related and unrelated) provided by government in one *convenient* location (physical or electronic). In addition to improving accessibility, "one-stop shopping" initiatives involve the actual delivery of government services to citizens. Improving convenience is usually a major driving force behind bringing related and unrelated government services together in one location. This is why it is referred to as one-stop *shopping*. The actual provision of service through one-stop SWs normally requires investment in "bricks and mortar" (e.g., Service New Brunswick), but there are other approaches in the form of electronic SWs (ServiceOntario kiosks and Atlantic Canada On-line). The continuing development of government services delivered through the Internet also offers new opportunities.

Overcoming Jurisdictional Divisions through "Seamless Service" Initiatives

SWs can provide "seamless service" in a specific service area or for a specific client group. This approach aims to integrate the provision of related government services, within or between governments, to meet a service need that spans multiple jurisdictions. Typically, seamless service initiatives *overcome jurisdictional divisions* to improve service. Seamless service can be delivered for a particular program area (e.g., business services from three levels of government are delivered at the Edmonton Business Link Business Service Centre) and/or for specific groups (e.g., for urban Aboriginal people through the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative in Winnipeg). Seamless service can also be delivered across departmental boundaries within a single government (e.g., bringing city departments together around common issues through the Vancouver Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams (NISTs)) as well as across

SINGLE-WINDOW SERVICE DELIVERY MATRIX

SINGLE-WINDOW SERVICE DELIVERY MATRIX	OWNER-DELIVERED	OWNER-DELIVERED IN A CO-LOCATED ENVIRONMENT	SHARED DELIVERY THROUGH INTEGRATION	DELEGATED DELIVERY THROUGH A CORPORATE SERVICE UTILITY	DELEGATED DELIVERY THROUGH AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL SERVICE UTILITY	DELEGATED DELIVERY THROUGH ANOTHER SERVICE PROVIDER (MULTIPLEXING)
This matrix illustrates the various types of single-window service delivery initiatives in Canada. The vertical axis illustrates the different **purposes** that single-window initiatives can serve. The horizontal axis illustrates the various **structures** used to achieve single-window service delivery.	Owner-delivered single-window services delivered directly by a department or government.	Single-window services that are owner-delivered in a co-located environment.	Single-window services delivered by multiple governments or departments in partnership through service integration.	Single-window delivery of a range of services from one government through a service utility. (Defn. - A service utility is defined as an organization that delivers services on behalf of other government organizations but delivers no services (or very few) of its own.)	Single-window delivery of services from more than one level of government through an intergovernmental service utility. (Defn. - A service utility is defined as an organization that delivers services on behalf of other government organizations but delivers no services (or very few) of its own.)	Services delivered for governments or departments by another service provider. (Defn. - "Multiplexing" connotes the delivery of multiple services through an existing or partnered delivery channel.)
"GATEWAYS" Improving *accessibility* through single-window information and referral.	• Enquiry BC* • Reference Canada • The Canada Site • New Brunswick Inquiries	• The Intergov Site* • The Canadian Business Map (Strategis)	• Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service* • Communication Quebec • Landowner Resource Centre (Ottawa-Carleton)	Most call centres are inherently utilities in that they do not have ownership of the services for which they are providing information or referral.	• *An intergovernmental service utility to provide integrated call centre information and referral services?* • *An intergovernmental service utility to provide integrated Internet-based information services?*	
"ONE-STOP SHOPS" Improving *convenience* and accessibility to a wide range of related and/or unrelated services and information.	• Access Nova Scotia* • CentreLink**	• BC Access Centres* • HRDC InfoCentre Kiosks		• BC Government Agents* • Service New Brunswick* • Accès Montréal	• *An intergovernmental service utility to provide one-stop shopping for services, information and referral on behalf of all levels of government?*	• Atlantic Canada On-line* • Canada Post/ HRDC Kiosk partnerships* • ServiceOntario • Canada Post/ Passport Office
"SEAMLESS SERVICES" Single-window access to *related* information, referral and services *across jurisdictional lines* (either within or between governments).	• Revenue Canada Business Number* • Vancouver Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams* • Ontario Business Connects Workstation* • Community Care Access Centres* • Canadian Food Inspection Agency	• Aboriginal Single Window Initiative* • National Energy Board – Sable Island Joint Review*	• Edmonton Business Link Business Service Centre (one of 12 CBSCs)* • Burlington Resource Centre* (one of many HRDC co-locations/ integrations) • National Energy Board – Common Reserves Database* • Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure* • Tawatinaw Regional Innovation Centre • Calgary Corporate Planning Applications Group		• *Intergovernmental service utilities in strategic areas?* • *Health* • *Business Development* • *Employment* • *Social Services*	• Ontario Business • Connects Service Delivery Strategy* • Atlantic Canada On-line (intergovernmental services)* *Cases covered **Australian example © Canadian Centre for Management Development

governmental boundaries (e.g., the Burlington Resource Centre – a federal, provincial and municipal human resource initiative). While seamless service initiatives improve accessibility and convenience, they primarily strive to rationalize service delivery by providing seamless service in specific program areas that span government or departmental jurisdictions.

As noted, specific SWs can meet *one or more* of the three purposes explained above. For example, most one-stop shops and seamless service initiatives also serve as gateways, that is, they improve accessibility by providing information and referral to other government services. However, SW gateways can also exist independent of the service delivery structures created by government to deliver services (e.g., Enquiry BC and the Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service serve as gateways between citizens and government departments. These initiatives do not deliver any government services directly). Furthermore, one-stop shopping initiatives, such as BC Government Agents, serve a different purpose from that of seamless service initiatives, such as the Ontario Business Connects workstation. The former provides access to a wide range of related and unrelated services in a one-stop shop format while the latter draws a number of business-related government services together around a specific service event, namely starting a business.

Ultimately, each of these applications connects citizens with the services they need without obliging them to make needless multiple contacts with government to obtain these services. Many governments in Canada utilize a combination of these approaches when providing SW services, with the aim of improving accessibility and convenience and/or providing seamless service.

Variations in the Structure of Single Windows in Canada

The horizontal axis of the matrix illustrates another dynamic to SW service delivery in Canada. Given that SWs typically involve bringing services together, the level of service integration or delegation that is involved in the creation of the SW is another distinguishing feature. Some SWs involve the integration of services between levels of government; others involve delegation of the service delivery function to another government agency. The matrix shows that the major purposes of SWs outlined above can be accomplished through these different structures. The case studies indicate that certain types of SWs have been used more frequently than others – in part, perhaps, because they can be used to pursue a combination of the major purposes noted earlier. The blank sections of the matrix, particularly in the area of inter-governmental service utilities, suggest the possibility of still other variations of SWs. The various structures created to achieve SW delivery are described briefly below.

Owner-Delivered: Direct delivery of services by a department or government through an SW. For example, the Revenue Canada Business Number project enabled the creation of Business Window offices across Canada. These Revenue Canada offices provide an SW for many Revenue Canada services. Other examples include Access Nova Scotia through the Department of Business and Consumer Services and the Vancouver NISTs.

Owner-Delivered in a Co-located Environment: SW service delivered by governments (or departments within one government) in a co-located environment (eg., sharing space within the same building) with other governments or departments. One example of this is the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative which serves as a location where departments from three levels of government can independently deliver their services in an SW environment.

Shared Delivery through Integration: SW service delivered by multiple governments or departments in partnership through integration. The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service and the Edmonton Business Link both involve intergovernmental partnerships that integrate their services into a SW.

Delegated Delivery through a Corporate Service Utility: SW delivery of services from one government through a service utility. In British Columbia, the BC Government Agents Branch is a service utility that delivers services on behalf of many other provincial organizations but does not have services of its own to deliver. In New Brunswick, roughly 95 percent of the services delivered by Service New Brunswick Centres are delivered on behalf of other provincial organizations.

Delegated Delivery through an Inter-governmental Service Utility: SW delivery of services from more than one level of government through an integrated service utility. There are currently no known examples of this approach in Canada. However, this may be the next step for SW service delivery.

Delegated Delivery through Another Service Provider (Multiplexing): Services delivered for governments or departments by another service provider through an existing or partnered delivery channel. The provision of HRDC kiosk services in Canada Post offices in rural and remote communities such as Belle Island, Newfoundland, and the use of the IBM network for the ServiceOntario kiosks are both examples of multiplexing.

One caveat regarding the horizontal dimension of the matrix is that some SWs fall clearly within the defined boundaries while others do not fit so neatly. For example, certain SWs utilize a combination of co-location and integration to deliver their services. Many of the partnerships between HRDC, provincial governments and municipal governments integrate some components of their service while co-locating others. The Burlington Resource Centre is an inter-governmental human resource service initiative involving HRDC, the Province of Ontario and the Region of Halton. While primarily a co-location, HRDC and the Region of Halton have integrated their reception and employment resources. Furthermore, they established a partnership to deliver shared training services.

Compared to the other options on the horizontal axis of the matrix, the “multiplexing” mechanism may appear complicated. It is, however, a simpler concept than it first appears and may have potential as a means of improving service delivery. As explained earlier, multiplexing involves utilizing the existing service delivery channel of one service provider to deliver the services of another provider. For example, as an organization with approximately 7000 points of service, Canada Post is currently piloting various ways of delivering federal, provincial and municipal government services through these points of service. One pilot project involves the placement of HRDC kiosks, an electronic SW to federal human resource services, in a number of remote post offices (eg., The Canada Post/HRDC Belle Island Partnership). While multiplexing is not necessarily SW service delivery in and of itself, it can be used to create SWs or make them accessible and, when considered in this context, presents tremendous opportunities to improve service to citizens. More consideration will be given to the multiplex approach later in this report.

The matrix demonstrates that SWs can be defined by the purpose(s) they serve and their structure. However, categorizing SW service delivery is of limited use in isolation from consideration of the importance of different SW mechanisms to governments pursuing citizen-centred services. Among the important questions to be asked are these: Are certain purposes more important than others? Do certain structures prove more effective than others?

The main *purposes* of SW delivery strategies (shown on the vertical axis of the matrix) – to improve accessibility, convenience and/or provide seamless service – are complementary and should not be considered mutually exclusive. In fact, it is likely that any effective citizen-centred SW strategy would try to achieve all three elements and many governments in Canada have strategies in place to meet all of these purposes. For example, the Nova Scotia government, through its Department of Business and Consumer Services, currently has an SW strategy that includes provincial call centre and Internet services that act as “gateways” to provincial government services; “one-stop shops” known as Access Nova Scotia offices; and a number of seamless service initiatives including a Canada/Nova Scotia Business Service Centre and the Nova Scotia Business Registry (an electronic business registration initiative also involving the Nova Scotia Worker’s Compensation Board and Revenue Canada). This is just one of many examples of how Canadian governments are working to improve service delivery.

The diverse *structures* utilized for SWs (shown on the horizontal axis of the matrix), and the varying degrees to which they are characterized by integration or delegation, raise important issues for SW service delivery strategies. As one moves from the left to right side of the matrix, the level of service delivery ownership (direct involvement in service delivery) a service provider (owner) has in the actual delivery of its service(s) decreases. For example, co-locations do not involve service delegation or integration. Service providers locate close to each other to make services easier to access. However, corporate service utilities are based on service providers delegating their delivery functions to a corporate utility that provides a wide range of services on behalf of a number of departments and/or organizations. With this approach, the original service provider is no longer directly involved in the service delivery function. The degree of service delivery ownership, and by extension the degree of integration or delegation that takes place when adopting SWs, can affect how citizen-centred an SW truly is. An SW functions more easily and effectively when the organization operating it has direct control over the services delivered through it. The unwillingness of departments or organizations to delegate their delivery functions, described in this report as “turf tension,” can impede the effectiveness of SWs. This issue is examined in more detail in the Problems and Pitfalls section of this report.

Common Findings from the Cases Studied

SW mechanisms, despite the differences in their purposes and structures, share some common challenges and offer some useful lessons. These challenges and lessons are examined in the next two sections of the report.

Problems and Pitfalls

A number of common problems and pitfalls can be drawn from the cases.

Turf Tension

Protection of departmental jurisdiction has been an impediment to the growth and development of several of the SWs discussed in the case studies (e.g., Service New Brunswick and BC Government Agents). Typically, a number of these cases involve the use of corporate service utilities (please see the matrix) because these service utilities must enter into agreement with departments to deliver services on their behalf. This approach makes it difficult for the utility to obtain services if departments are not willing to have their services delivered by it. However, Access Nova Scotia illustrates one solution to this impediment. The Province of Nova Scotia consolidated the service delivery functions of nine operating units from seven departments to create the Department of Business and Consumer Services. This department is responsible for over 80 percent of all provincial government transactions with individuals and businesses. As the service delivery wing of this department, Access Nova Scotia encounters less departmental turf protection than corporate service utilities such as Service New Brunswick and BC Government Agents because it has direct ownership of most of the services it delivers. The impact of internal barriers like turf protection can impede the formation of truly citizen-centred SWs and should be an important consideration for governments pursuing initiatives in this area.

While turf protection is often a feature of inter-governmental administrative relations, this problem did not emerge in any of the case studies prepared for this report. This may be indicative of the typical motivation for many inter-governmental SW initiatives, that is, governments are willing to put the turf issue aside to facilitate SWs that improve service to the public and/or reduce costs.

Technological Travails

Advances in information technology have greatly facilitated the creation and operation of many types of SWs. But when SWs involve coordination of services across departments – and especially across governments – the incompatibility of technologies can seriously impede the SWs' operations (e.g., Ontario Business Connects has had to overcome technological variations across a number of departments and the Atlantic Canada Online initiative has faced similar challenges involving four provincial governments). Another compatibility consideration is that some partners in an SW may not have adequate access to, or knowledge of, the necessary technology (e.g., the Vancouver NISTs). It is essential to resolve these technological problems before implementation is attempted.

In large part because of privacy, accountability and ownership issues, many IT-based SWs (Revenue Canada, Ontario Business Connects, Atlantic Canada On-line, Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure Initiative) have not pursued integration of their information systems but have opted instead to use technology to link existing systems. Revenue Canada staff describe the Business Number system as a "federation" of databases. Both it and the Ontario Business Connects initiative are designed around a single user interface that disperses common data to a number of existing databases in one transaction (a change of address, for example). These approaches illustrate how technology can be used to overcome barriers to providing SW service.

Data security over the Internet is also an ongoing issue for electronic SW delivery. Governments do not currently engage in widespread electronic commerce/sensitive information transactions over the Internet. Initiatives such as Atlantic Canada On-line, Ontario Business Connects and the HRDC kiosks rely on dedicated access lines for the transmission of such information in the absence of information security solutions. Encryption – encoding messages so that they can be understood only by their intended recipients – is a rapidly developing concept that will make possible expanded government services over the Internet.

Establishing Internet-based systems that protect confidential information and electronic commerce is only the first step towards on-line government services. A recent Ekos survey[4] revealed the following:

- 56 percent of Canadians agree or strongly agree that the information highway is reducing the level of privacy in Canada today; and

- 87 percent of Canadians are reluctant to provide basic information (in the form of a credit card number) over the Internet in order to purchase a product or service.

Ultimately, implementing and promoting encryption solutions should encourage expanded use and acceptance of Internet-based SW service solutions.

Great Expectations

To avoid unrealistic expectations about what various SWs can actually do, it is essential to define clearly at the outset their purpose and to specify the services that will be provided. One of the reasons for the success of Service New Brunswick is that it will only accept services that fall within its mandate to deliver non-specialized transactional services. The Vancouver NISTs ran into the problem of some staff members wanting them to do things beyond their central purpose. Furthermore, one risk of improving access to information about services and to the services themselves is that the result is sometimes unexpected demand for the services.

Partnership Perils

The concept of partnership has a deceiving simplicity to it – at least for the uninitiated! Many of the issues associated with partnerships in general arise in the context of SW partnerships in particular. Perhaps the major lesson on this point drawn from the cases is that all partners must have a roughly equal say in the direction of the initiative (Edmonton Business Link, Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure); otherwise the partnership will fail. Advocates of SW partnerships must also be acutely aware of the range of complicated operational issues that can arise in such areas as accountability, visibility, and human resource policies.

While accountability is more of an issue for SW partnerships than for other SWs, it has not proved to be a significant barrier to inter-governmental collaboration. At the Burlington Resource Centre, the three partners – the federal, Ontario and Region of Halton governments – each have on-site managers who are accountable, in the traditional hierarchical manner, for their own staff and for the services they provide in their program area. A different approach is taken by the Edmonton Business Link which is a federal-provincial-municipal partnership with an integrated accountability structure. A general manager is accountable for day-to-day operations to a management committee composed of representatives of the three partners; each partner is in turn accountable to its own government.

Like accountability, visibility has not been a major issue. The general approach is to ensure that all partners receive recognition of their involvement. For example, the Burlington Resource Centre recognizes all three partners on its signage, the Edmonton Business Link includes all three governmental logos on joint correspondence, and the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative has a distinct logo which captures images from the logos of the three governments. It appears that visibility has not been a major issue, since a key success factor for any good partnership is that the participation of all partners be identified and recognized.

SW partnerships face some difficult issues in the coordination of human resource and other policies. The Edmonton Business Link brought together employees from three governments, each with its own job descriptions and pay scales. The need to move towards equity for all employees in these areas has now been recognized. The Business Link's experience indicates also that no one partner can change its organizational policies or the extent of its involvement in the partnership without taking account of the impact of such changes on the other partners.

Signposts for Success

Some of the critical success factors identified from the case studies are the obverse of the problems and pitfalls just discussed (e.g., for success, avoid incompatible technologies). However, we need to post several additional signs along the road to SW success.

Encourage a Citizen-Centred Culture

The creation and operation of SWs will be greatly eased if they are established in, or by, organizations with a firm commitment to citizen-centred service delivery. As painful experience with departmental mergers and partnership arrangements has shown, incompatible cultures can confound brilliant organizational designs. Hence, when more than one organization is to be involved in an SW, it is prudent to assess the extent of shared commitment to improving service delivery. While SWs are likely to be less successful when they involve organizations without this commitment, the "chicken-and-egg" nature of the structure-culture relationship allows for the possibility that the adoption of SWs can be a significant step on the road to culture change.

Enhance Citizens' Choice and Capacity

There are two issues that must be considered by governments pursuing SW delivery strategies: providing freedom of choice as to how citizens receive government services, and building their capacity to use the new means of service delivery.

It can be argued that true citizen-centred service will give citizens service the way they want to receive it. For example, some clients do not want to conduct government business electronically or on the Internet. Most governments seem to be aware of this issue. The Province of Ontario has two initiatives that are designed with this in mind. The Ontario Business Connects strategy will provide several service delivery options from which clients can choose, and the ServiceOntario kiosks in place throughout the province serve as an additional means of service to those that already exist (such as the traditional government office). An added challenge for government service delivery leaders is to predict and plan for the future service needs and demands of the public.

A related issue is the need for governments to help citizens learn how to use the new approaches to service delivery. In the short to medium term, there are likely to be two major groups of citizens: those who are technologically capable, and those who are not. During this period, governments must avoid creating two classes of citizen for government services – the haves and have nots. As in the case of freedom of choice, governments seem to be conscious of this issue. For example, kiosk services are typically designed around the first-time user to ensure that everyone can use them. Internet-based services, however, presume that the public has access to the Internet and knowledge of how to use it effectively. Some organizations (BC Government Agents, HRDC) are examining the possibility of delivering Internet-based information on a wide range of government services through kiosks so as to ensure that all citizens have access to Internet-based information and services. Initiatives that aim to make the Internet more accessible, such as the federal Community Access Program,[5] also play an important role in this respect.

Seek and Sustain Political Support

The success of several SWs has been significantly influenced by the support of political "champions" (e.g., Service New Brunswick, Access Nova Scotia). Indeed, the Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure was one of the minister's main priorities. On occasion, however, unduly overt political championing can inhibit SW partnering.

Lead and Collaborate

Successful SWs emerge not only from political and public service leaders at the top of the organization but also from informal leaders at other organizational levels. As with public sector innovations generally, successful initiatives with SWs often depend on public service "local heroes" or champions (e.g., the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative, the Intergov Website). Leadership at all levels is needed both for initiating SWs and for fostering the teamwork and horizontal linkages that are critical to minimizing turf battles and maximizing synergy.

Plan and Pilot

The case studies demonstrate the value of having a long-range plan for the implementation of SW initiatives (e.g., B.C. Government Agents) and keeping staff informed of how changes affect this plan. It should be noted, however, that over-planning was identified as something that should be avoided (e.g., the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative, Vancouver NISTs). Several cases indicated that once the planning has been done, the implementation period should be short (e.g., Enquiry BC, Ontario Business Connects), but there was an anomalous case which warned against unduly rapid implementation (e.g., Edmonton Business Link). One of the primary benefits of piloting SW projects like Service New Brunswick and Ontario Business Connects is that deficiencies can be found and corrected before full-scale implementation takes place.

Consult with Key Stakeholders

During this decade in particular, commitment to consultations with stakeholders has become more deeply imbedded in both the political and public service cultures. While genuine consultation with all – or even the key – stakeholders necessarily slows down the planning and implementation stages of the policy process, this delay must be balanced against the likely long-run benefits. For example, consultations conducted in relation to the Canadian

Geospatial Data Infrastructure shed light on issues that had been overlooked and enhanced understanding of the entire project. Departments and agencies involved in the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative meet monthly to share information and develop strategic partnerships with a view to maintaining and improving the range and quality of services provided.

Invest and Evaluate

The overriding purpose of SWs is to enhance access and service delivery. While many SW initiatives will reduce costs, especially over the long run, cost saving should not be the driving force behind their creation. In some instances, particularly those that involve major information technology capital outlays, start-up costs may dwarf immediate efficiencies that are gained from the initiative (e.g., Ontario Business Connects). Inadequate investment in human and financial resources has prevented certain SW initiatives from meeting their full potential (e.g., Edmonton Business Link, the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative) and some SWs have been negatively affected by budget cuts (e.g., B.C. Government Agents).

Investment in training, however, has enhanced the effectiveness of some SWs (eg., Service New Brunswick, Edmonton Business Link). Resources also need to be committed to careful and constant evaluation of SWs so that deficiencies can be corrected and continuous improvements can be made. The experience of Service New Brunswick has shown that it is extremely important to know your product and your customer.

Harness and Harmonize Technology

A primary reason for substantial start-up and operating expenditures for some SWs is the need to have knowledge of, and access to, the requisite technological resources. SWs, especially those involved in partnership arrangements, can reduce technology costs by sharing information about technological requirements and actually sharing communication equipment and facilities. Technological issues are a constant concern because of the need to ensure continuing compatibility among the partners and to take advantage of technological innovations. Some SWs have approached technological renewal on an ongoing basis by contracting out the service and incorporating technological changes into the contracting process (e.g., Enquiry BC, Atlantic Canada On-line).

Partner Properly

The case studies are a rich source of information about how SW partnerships can be successful. The importance of SW partners having roughly equal influence on decisions was noted above. Partners must also ensure that their objectives are the same, or at least mutually compatible, that they communicate clearly and constantly with one another, that they reconcile differences in their human resource policies, that they make sure that all partners receive an appropriate measure of visibility, and that they build in an allowance for flexibility.

Possible Next Steps for Single-Window Service Delivery in Canada

The goal of this study is not to identify definitively the “best” approach to SW service delivery in Canada. Any SW service delivery initiative that contributes to removing barriers within or between governments to accessible, convenient and seamless service facilitates citizen-centred service. Rather, the preceding sections have illustrated some of the issues and challenges that must be considered when implementing SW service initiatives. However, one question still remains. Where will SW service delivery in Canada go from here? This section outlines some possible next steps for SW service as a basis for thought and discussion; these next steps are not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive.

Improving Accessibility through “Gateways”

One purpose that could be better served by expanded SW initiatives is accessibility through gateways such as call centres and the Internet. These offer the greatest gains with the least amount of effort. Currently, only two provinces have integrated federal-provincial call centres, including the one in Manitoba which has been in place for 20 years. It is notable that there were at one time five such centres (in four provinces and one territory). Since many citizens cannot or do not differentiate between levels of government, integrated call centres between the federal government and every provincial/territorial government are an essential component of citizen-centred service. It is questionable whether such centres could involve municipal services because of the high level of fragmentation at the municipal level. However, there may be opportunities for federal-provincial-municipal call centres in large urban areas.

Accessibility to services from all three levels of government would definitely be improved through an integrated Internet-based information and referral service covering the three levels. Internet technology provides governments with the opportunity to provide multi-jurisdictional information and referral services in an important emerging service delivery area. Initiatives like the Intergov Website and the recently created Canada Business Map[6] are important first steps but much more needs to be done in this area. Until such time as secure transactional services can be delivered over the Internet, governments from all three levels should work together to create virtual Internet-based SWs to make government information services more accessible to Canadians.

Improving Convenience through "One-Stop" Services

It is not clear whether the bricks and mortar approach to one-stop shopping is the appropriate course of action for governments that do not already have one-stop offices. The centres established in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and British Columbia are certainly an effective approach to providing services to citizens. However, Internet, telephone-based transactional services and kiosk technologies may advance faster and prove more effective than the one-stop office approach to SW service delivery. Furthermore, kiosk services may prove very practical, cost effective and efficient when considered in terms of the "multiplex" approach to service delivery. While SWs are created to improve service to citizens, the cost to taxpayers has to be a significant consideration. In this respect, kiosk, Internet and telephone technology may present opportunities for substantial increases in access and convenience at lower cost than the bricks and mortar approach. Furthermore, as Internet-based services develop, this medium could prove to be more convenient than physical one-stop offices.

Perhaps another avenue for improved service delivery is through the development of SWs that provide one-stop access to a wide range of related and unrelated services from multiple levels of government. This could be in the form of an electronic kiosk or an Internet site. The rapid development of integrated technological platforms suggests that this may be possible in the future. A bricks and mortar one-stop shop where federal, provincial and municipal governments deliver services in partnership may be possible as well.

Encouraging More "Seamless Service" Initiatives

Jurisdictional division within and between governments is a feature of Canadian government. SW initiatives that aim to overcome these divisions prove that citizen-centred service can still be achieved within this context. Seamless service initiatives such as the Canada Business Service Centres, the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative, and the Vancouver NISTs have all proven to be very effective SWs for serving particular program areas. In the absence of large-scale jurisdictional realignment within and between governments, this approach appears to be very effective for providing service to citizens. Governments must continue to evaluate the needs and priorities of citizens for seamless services and encourage initiatives that address them. In particular, it is important to encourage an intergovernmental focus on the redesign of service delivery from a citizen's perspective.

In Conclusion

A major purpose of this study has been to provide public service leaders and managers with a better understanding of the SW service delivery concept. The Single-Window Service Delivery Matrix illustrates that SWs can vary in purpose and structure. The major purposes of SWs – to improve accessibility, convenience and/or seamless service – are complementary in nature and are all essential components of an effective service delivery strategy. However, the degree of integration or delegation in SW structures can have a bearing on the effectiveness of SWs. This study has also illustrated that many SWs share common challenges and success factors that should be carefully examined by those considering SW initiatives.

The surveys by Ekos Research Associates and Erin Research, mentioned at the beginning of this report, provide important data about citizens' perceptions of SW service. The findings illustrate the difficulties citizens have in finding and accessing services, the priority they place on SW service, and the clusters of services they require. By continuing to engage and survey citizens, governments can build upon these findings and ensure that both the form SWs take and the services they provide reflect the real needs of citizens – that they are truly citizen-centred. A definitive conclusion that can be drawn from this study is that there are still tremendous opportunities for improving SW service delivery in Canada. Governments will no doubt create more SWs as they continue to work together to create a citizen-centred system of service delivery.

It cannot be overstated that the design of these SWs must be driven by the needs of citizens. As governments develop new SW initiatives and move existing ones forward, it is essential that this action be rooted in the voice of the citizen. This study began with the assertion that governments have a responsibility to provide citizens with service that is as accessible, convenient and seamless as possible. SW service delivery is an important means to this end.

Endnotes

1 In this study the term "citizens" includes both the direct recipients of government services (referred to sometimes as clients) and those citizens who do not necessarily benefit from a specific service improvement but do benefit from an effective citizen-government relationship. For example, a single-window initiative that improves services to small business is of direct benefit to entrepreneurs and of indirect benefit to the larger citizenry through potential economic growth and associated benefits.

2 Ekos Research Associates, *Rethinking Government Survey*, 1997.

3 Drawn from Canada, *Citizens First*, Erin Research Inc. (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, October 1998).

4 Ekos Research Associates, *Information Highway and the Canadian Communications Household*, 1998.

5 The Community Access Program (CAP) is an Industry Canada initiative to provide access to computers and the Internet in communities across Canada.

6 The Canadian Business Map is an Internet site which provides quick and seamless access to international, national, provincial, territorial and municipal business information.

The Aboriginal Single Window Initiative

Introduction

In the past, governments have generally been ineffective in coordinating services to specific target groups if these services span several government departments and/or levels of government. Recent intergovernmental single-window initiatives such as the Canada Business Service Centres are an attempt by government departments and agencies from all levels to deliver information and services relevant to a specific target group in a coordinated fashion. The Aboriginal Single Window Initiative (ASWI) uses the same approach in an attempt to improve access to services provided by departments and agencies from all levels of government that are relevant to urban Aboriginal people.

Background

In January 1998, the federal government announced an urban Aboriginal strategy as part of *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. The strategy was implemented to respond to the growing socio-economic needs of urban Aboriginal people, particularly those in western Canada. While the federal government maintains the position that Métis and off-reserve Aboriginal people are primarily a provincial responsibility, the strategy marks a greater federal effort to address urban Aboriginal issues.

The Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians has the lead role on the strategy with support from the Privy Council Office. The Aboriginal Single Window Initiative was one product of the strategy. Support for the ASWI proposal from the federal government, the Manitoba government and Aboriginal groups was such that it was initiated prior to the announcement of the urban Aboriginal strategy with recognition that the ASWI would be part of it.

Aboriginal Single Window Initiative

Located in downtown Winnipeg, the Aboriginal Single Window Initiative office officially opened on June 26, 1997. It resides in the Aboriginal Centre of Winnipeg, a building that houses over fifty Aboriginal service organizations. This location positions the ASWI strategically within the Aboriginal community. The ASWI project is led by Human Resources Development Canada – Manitoba (HRDC Manitoba) with support and coordination from the Privy Council Office, Aboriginal Affairs (PCO).

The goals of the ASWI are threefold:

- to coordinate, concentrate and improve services and programs targeted at urban Aboriginal peoples by the federal government, other levels of government and other organizations;
- to provide better access to and information on general government services not targeted specifically at urban Aboriginal peoples; and
- to serve as a conduit of information between stakeholders and government policy makers from all orders of government.

The ASWI is not an attempt to integrate programs from various government departments. It aims to provide single-window service delivery to Aboriginal clients in the Province of Manitoba, primarily those in the Winnipeg urban area. To this end, the office performs three main functions. First, it serves as a single-window information and referral service for Aboriginal people to a wide range of government services. ASWI staff provide information on a variety of programs and services, provide "light" processing of some government forms and connect clients with the appropriate government department(s) or agency(ies) wherever necessary.

The second main function of the centre is to provide administrative support to government administrators who wish to deliver their programs or services from the ASWI. In instances where a desired service/program is delivered from the ASWI, staff will arrange a meeting with the appropriate administrator and ensure that working space within the office is available. In most instances, these administrators are based out of other locations and use the space at the ASWI periodically throughout the week to conduct meetings and interviews.

Finally, the third main function of the ASWI is very much a product of the previous two. Staff at the ASWI are in the unique position of being involved in the delivery of a variety of Aboriginal services and interacting with various administrators involved in Aboriginal programming. As a result, ASWI staff are in an excellent position to coordinate resources between organizations and facilitate community-based initiatives through multi-organization partnerships. The ASWI can broker between organizations to pool resources, maximize the use of Aboriginal funding and reduce overlap. Ultimately, such initiatives might not take place without the synergy that exists between partners in the ASWI.

The ASWI functions with a relatively small complement of staff. HRDC Manitoba has five full-time employees at the ASWI and there is one full-time employee from the Province of Manitoba, Native Affairs. Federal departments that utilize the ASWI to provide information or deliver their services are National Defence, Aboriginal Business Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs and Canadian Heritage. Provincial departments involved include Training and Education, Rural Development, and Industry, Trade and Tourism. Winnipeg 2000, a municipal economic development agency, also utilizes the site for service delivery.

Issues Encountered

The following issues were encountered during the development of the ASWI:

Financial Resources. It was and continues to be difficult to obtain the funds necessary to ensure the ASWI is effective.

Turf Protection. Some departments are still reluctant to participate in the initiative. Generally, there is a misguided belief that departmental staff are best suited to provide services that could easily be delivered by ASWI staff such as light processing and form completion. Furthermore, some senior officials may be reluctant to participate because they are protective of their jurisdiction.

Different Human Resource Policies. Staff at the provincial level are less empowered than their federal counterparts. For example, managers at the provincial level have a lower signing authority limit than their federal counterparts. However, this has not been a major issue and the diversity that the partnership brings can also be useful for encouraging innovation.

Premature Expectations. Some groups involved in the ASWI project have suggested that the initiative has not been as effective as was hoped. Furthermore, it has been suggested that the initiative has peaked without realizing the proposed objectives. In response, project leaders have continually communicated to all stakeholders that the ASWI is a work in progress and continues to evolve.

Success Factors

The following factors were crucial to the development and/or ongoing success of the ASWI:

Timing. Urban Aboriginal issues were high on the agenda at the time the ASWI was proposed. Others have proposed similar initiatives in the past to no avail.

Engagement and Visibility. It was important to engage and garner the support across federal departments early in the process. This served to add visibility to the initiative and made it more effective. Gaining broad support and participation also encouraged latecomers to participate in the program.

Ministerial Support. As part of *Gathering Strength*, federal ministers approved an urban Aboriginal strategy which included strengthening partnerships with the provincial governments and the Aboriginal community to develop practical approaches for improving the delivery of programs and services to Aboriginal people.[1]

Leadership. The manager of the ASWI was instrumental in the initiation and growth of the project and continues to play a key role in the ongoing development of it. Having a champion directly involved in the initiative is crucial.

Constant Feedback from Stakeholders. Participating government departments and agencies meet on a monthly basis to discuss the operations of the ASWI, to share information, develop strategic partnerships and consult with Aboriginal organizations. These meetings are essential to maintain and improve the range and quality of services that are provided.

Communicating Change to Staff. Staff have been kept up-to-date as to the strategic direction of the ASWI. When the ASWI was started there were expectations that staff would provide more direct services. This role will likely not materialize for some time and staff have been made aware of this. Given that the ASWI is evolving, communicating this change to staff is important for their support and effectiveness.

Pitfalls

The following pitfalls should be considered when implementing a similar initiative elsewhere:

Make the Initiative Self-Sustaining. Most innovations begin with the idea of a single leader. As such, it is not uncommon for this leader to become an integral part of the operations of the initiative. However, it is important to ensure that other leaders involved in the project have equal interest in the sustenance and growth of it. Without this, the project will quickly become unstable.

Select Your Team Carefully. The quality of the project team will make or break an initiative. An ideal team should be made up of seasoned administrators who are familiar with and support the initiative and its objectives.

In Hindsight

When the ASWI project was initiated, the manager in charge did not have the staff resources necessary to continually approach prospective partners. Hence, most were only approached once. As a result, it is likely that more partners could have been involved in the project from the outset had certain negotiations been pursued. A larger complement of staff may have improved the breadth of the partnership.

Key Lesson: Just Do It!

It is natural for governments to try to consult with all stakeholders prior to implementing change. However, it is rarely possible to achieve this. At a certain point, government officials must be leaders and accept the risks that are associated with innovation.

Evaluation and Accountability

The ASWI is establishing service standards for implementation. One challenge for managers at the ASWI is to evaluate its effectiveness. This challenge is rooted in the inability to evaluate the “effectiveness” based on certain results. More specifically, it is very difficult to determine those initiatives that are directly a result of the ASWI and those that would have developed without it.

Accountability for the ASWI occurs at two levels. At the operational level, HRDC Manitoba is accountable for ASWI operations. At the policy level, PCO is responsible for the coordination of the overall urban Aboriginal strategy. The accountability structure between the federal government and the provincial government is purely ad hoc and the dialogue between the federal and provincial governments is amicable and ongoing. Given that ASWI primarily refers and coordinates services rather than directly delivers them, the formal accountability structures found in other service delivery partnerships are not needed.

Next Steps

The ASWI is a work in progress. Staff at the ASWI continue to investigate partnerships with other government departments and Aboriginal organizations to improve access to relevant government and non-government programs and services for urban Aboriginals.

Endnote

1 Government of Canada, *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (Ottawa, 1998), p. 12.

Sources Consulted

Interview with Rick Magus, Manager of Aboriginal Affairs. April 7, 1998.

Government of Canada. *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*. Ottawa, 1998.

The Aboriginal Single Window Initiative Website: *http://www.mb.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/~asw*

Contacts

Rick Magus
Manager of Aboriginal Affairs
Human Resources Development Canada
(204) 983-3798

Mary Elin Sim
Policy Advisor, Aboriginal Affairs
Privy Council Office
(613) 992-7042

Access Nova Scotia and the Department of Business and Consumer Services

Introduction

Many government departments and agencies deliver services that require interaction with citizens and many of these departments dedicate a portion of their organization to delivering these services. Unfortunately, many such government services have been far from accessible and convenient for the public to access. Government services are often fragmented and require the public to travel to various points of service depending on their needs. Governments committed to improving the delivery of public services must eliminate or reduce the fragmentation of service delivery functions to provide access to government services that is convenient for the public.

Nova Scotia: Creating the Department of Business and Consumer Services

In 1994, the Nova Scotia government identified responsive government as a key objective. Government at that time was not very accessible or responsive to the needs of its individual and business customers. The Nova Scotia government was divided by a number of "stove pipes." Departments delivered their own services in different ways through different locations, leaving the citizen to navigate the maze of government services. Furthermore, many departments were sustaining separate registry databases when it would have been logical to create centralized databases.

The Nova Scotia government had two primary options for streamlining departmental process and service delivery functions. First, it could create a service delivery agent. This agent would deliver front-line services on behalf of government departments through interdepartmental agreement. The downside to this approach rests primarily with the "stove pipes" that would continue to exist within the government. Departments would still have the opportunity to resist logical functional streamlining. Furthermore, the service delivery agent approach requires a substantial amount of negotiation and compromise.

The second option available to the Nova Scotia government was to combine the service delivery functions of the main government departments into a new department dedicated to service delivery. The primary benefit to this approach is that it avoids the continued turf protection that is characteristic of the service delivery agent model. A department dedicated solely to business and consumer services would offer improved service to the public through streamlined service delivery and processing. This was the option chosen by the Nova Scotia government.

The Department of Business and Consumer Services was created in April 1996. As the title denotes, this department is mandated with developing and delivering innovative, high quality, convenient services to business and consumers to the benefit of Nova Scotians. The department consolidated nine operating units from seven different departments including the Provincial Tax Commission, the Registry of Motor Vehicles, the Registry of Joint Stocks, Consumer & Commercial Relations, Financial Institutions, Vital Statistics, the Government Bookstore, Public Enquiries and Access Nova Scotia.[1] These organizations all had similar front-line service functions and combined for over 80 percent of all government transactions with individuals and business.

The Department of Business and Consumer Services has six strategic goals:

- To make it easy to conduct business with the government of Nova Scotia;
- To improve access to services;
- To encourage compliance and enhance public understanding of registration, licensing, the issuing of permits and other compliance issues;
- To improve the public perception of government services;
- To optimize provincial revenue; and
- To encourage business development and economic growth in Nova Scotia.

One division of this department is the Service Delivery and Operations Division. Created in November 1996, this division is responsible for the service delivery responsibilities of the new department. It is mandated with developing effective strategies for connecting consumers and businesses with government and it coordinates services delivered through five primary modes: the front line Access Nova Scotia centres, the public enquiries call centre and telephone-based services including integrated voice response and touch-tone services, the Internet, fax-to and fax-back services, and mail. The Access Nova Scotia centres are a key element of the Nova Scotia service delivery strategy.

Access Nova Scotia

Access Nova Scotia centres deliver most of the high-volume front-line transactional services provided by the Nova Scotia government. The concept is based on the principle of creating a single window for access to multiple services. There are three centres currently in place, with an additional three planned for 1998/99. When completed, there will be fourteen Access Nova Scotia centres across the province. This number is based on the standard that 90 percent of Nova Scotia residents should need to drive only thirty minutes to reach the nearest centre. At the present time these centres deliver over 50 services including motor vehicle registration services, business registrations, debtor assistance, and residential tenancies. Furthermore, the Access Nova Scotia centres serve as a point of inquiry for government services and programs.

The Department of Business and Consumer Services is not restricted to delivering those services mandated to it through the government reorganization in 1996. The department is currently negotiating with other departments to deliver the remaining 20 percent of transactional services it does not currently deliver. The goal is to provide all government transactional services through the various single-window mediums including the Access Nova Scotia centres.

The Access Nova Scotia centres have also presented the opportunity for partnerships with other departments, governments and organizations to provide single-window service that crosses governmental and departmental lines. For example, the Access Nova Scotia offices provide information on behalf of certain regional development authorities in some instances. Access Nova Scotia is also co-located with the provincial Department of Economic Development and Tourism in another instance. Finally, the centres provide information and referral on behalf of various federal and municipal programs. This type of information and referral service has been provided based on the belief that residents do not distinguish between levels of government when seeking government information and services.

Issues Encountered

The following issues were encountered during the development of the Department of Business and Consumer Services and Access Nova Scotia:

Financial Resources and Raising New Revenue. Securing adequate financial resources for staffing and services has been a challenge for the department. While the services delivered through the Access Centres and other modes do generate revenue, the organization has a limited number of revenue-generating options. For example, the department will issue a fixed number of driver licence renewals regardless of the level of service that is provided. Access Nova Scotia cannot function to the same extent as a private sector organization, that is, by increasing the volume of service with the aim of increasing revenue. Hence, the primary source of funding in order to improve service is through the provincial government. However, pending government cutbacks make increased funding uncertain and unlikely.

Protectionism. The Department of Business and Consumer Services has experienced a limited amount of protectionism when developing strategies that involve services outside its departmental mandate. For example, some departments have been reluctant to integrate services with the department during the development of the Nova Scotia Business Registry. Management also anticipates additional resistance from other departments that provide front-line services where further integration of services is pursued.

Keeping the Integrated Service Concept on the Agenda. When the Department of Business and Consumer Services was created, it was the product of a government priority to improve government services. However, since over 80 percent of front-line services are now within the new structure, further development of the concept through the transfer of more services is not an immediate government priority. The challenge for the staff at the Department of Business and Consumer Services is to move the strategy back up the government agenda given other competing government priorities.

Creating a Service Culture. It is a challenge to create a service culture. Management at the Ministry of Business and Consumer Services have continuously encouraged staff to perform their duties with the customer's needs and interests in mind. This is a challenge given that many of the staff that make up the department, including those in the Access Nova Scotia centres, came from typical old-style government departments where services were delivered from a program/policy perspective.

Implementation Time Frame. Implementing the entire Access Nova Scotia initiative will take several years. There are only three of 14 centres operating at this time. This is somewhat of an issue because of the uncertainty this pace creates for the project managers. The longer it takes to implement an initiative, the greater the opportunity there is for the government to change policy and eliminate or redesign the project.

Success Factors

The following factors were identified as key to the success of the Department of Business and Consumer Services and Access Nova Scotia:

Leadership. As noted, the Nova Scotia government elected in 1993 was committed to improving the delivery of services to the public. The creation of the Department of Business and Consumer Services was fully supported and championed by Cabinet. Furthermore, the Minister and Deputy Minister assigned to the new department also provided leadership as the organization developed. This leadership was key to the successful growth and development of the initiative.

Developing a Vision. Immediately after the department was created, management at Business and Consumer Services undertook a six-month strategic planning exercise. It was through this process that the strategic directions, goals, vision and mission statement for the department were defined. Developing a vision prior to pursuing change was critical to the success of the initiative.

Having the Right Team. It is important to make sure you have the right people on your service delivery team. Front-line staff must be capable of embracing the concept of a citizen-centred service culture. Without their efforts and commitment, the Access Nova initiative in particular would not be as successful as it is.

Recognizing the Need for Better Government, Not Cheaper Government. Many single-window initiatives have been pursued with the goal of reducing costs. This approach has been most common during periods of government cutbacks. However, the majority of effective citizen-centred single-window initiatives do not save any money in the short term. It may cost even more to provide the same types of services through these initiatives because they are being delivered more conveniently (and possibly through more points of access).

Communicating Change to Staff. It is essential to communicate the direction of such an initiative to staff on an ongoing basis. Creating the Business and Consumer Services Department resulted in tremendous staff movement and adjustments. The impact of this period of change was also compounded by prior reductions in staff. Many staff were concerned the project was aimed at reducing costs and positions. Communicating the purpose and the status of such change was important to the overall success of the initiative. Ultimately, it had to be imparted that the initiative was primarily focused on improving service and was not a downsizing exercise.

Communicating Change to the Public. Many of the government offices that existed in Nova Scotia prior to the implementation of the Access Nova Scotia initiative had been the primary points of access in certain communities for quite some time. As a result, it has been crucial to communicate change in those areas that now have Access Nova Scotia centres. This communication was done through a variety of advertisements and media events.

Pitfall

It is important for project managers implementing similar initiatives to recognize that implementation of an initiative like Access Nova Scotia will not happen overnight. Furthermore, it is essential for project managers to avoid over-promising and to recognize the various time frames. However, managers must also be willing to challenge implementation time frames and push the envelope. Otherwise, the initiative will never be fully implemented.

Key Lesson: Department or Agent?

Access Nova Scotia is a different approach to single-window service delivery than some other service delivery initiatives. Access Nova Scotia is one component of a department dedicated to the delivery of public services. As noted, the new Department of Business and Consumer Services controls over 80 percent of all front-line delivery. The alternative was to create a service delivery agent that would deliver services on behalf of the various government departments. However, the experiences of other governments with variations of this model have illustrated that encouraging government departments to voluntarily delegate their services to a delivery agent is difficult and occasionally futile. Creating one department with jurisdiction over most government service delivery functions was the most effective way to avoid this type of "turf" protection.

Evaluation and Accountability

Evaluation of the Access Nova Scotia centres is accomplished three ways:

Performing Customer Satisfaction Surveys. These surveys are done through on-site and telephone surveys on a monthly basis. The data from these evaluations are reviewed monthly and benchmarked against past evaluations. The results for March-April, 1998 show an overall satisfaction rating for the service of 8.8 /10.[2]

Using Staff Satisfaction Surveys. Staff satisfaction surveys are used to evaluate the success and performance of the centres and staff satisfaction levels. This is important because the quality of service provided by staff to customers is correlated to employee satisfaction. The results for the July 1998 staff satisfaction survey in part shows that 66.5 percent of employees are somewhat/very satisfied with their jobs. Furthermore, 60.2 percent somewhat/strongly feel that they play an important role in the future of the department.[3]

Implementing Service Standards. This involves monitoring the turnaround time and the timeliness of service in relation to specific service delivery standards. For example: 80 percent of customers will receive service within six minutes of arrival at a centre; 80 percent of calls will be answered within twenty seconds; and 80 percent of scheduled appointments will start within five minutes of the scheduled start time.

A follow-up strategy for these evaluations is being developed. In the interim, some changes have been made through incremental improvements. Accountability for these results rests with the Executive Director who is accountable to the Deputy Minister of Business and Consumer Services through a standard departmental hierarchical structure.

Next Steps

The following initiatives are immediate priorities for the Department of Business and Consumer Services in terms of the service delivery infrastructure:

- Three more Access Nova Scotia centres will be opened in 1998/99;
- Electronic services will be expanded by providing more information and services on the Internet and other electronic service delivery means;
- Building and implementing the Nova Scotia Business Registry. The Registry will provide a one-stop vehicle for businesses to register, obtain licences and other approvals from all government departments and agencies. Businesses will also have the ability to make payments relating to these transactions and the Registry will be client-centred in that services will be delivered through multiple channels such as the telephone, computers and physical centres.

Endnotes

1 Access Nova Scotia existed for approximately two years prior to the creation of the new department. However, this "original" Access Nova Scotia served primarily as an information distribution centre and did not deliver transactional government services. In 1996, the name "Access Nova Scotia" was selected as the brand name for the new multiple service, one-stop service delivery concept.

2 Over 1600 customers were surveyed over a two-month period in March-April 1998 by Research Department Inc., using in-person and telephone interviews, and focus groups.

3 360 employees were voluntarily survyed by Research Department Inc. in June 1998.

Source Consulted

Interview with Marie Mullally, Executive Director, Service Delivery and Operations Division, on May 5, 1998.

Contact

Marie Mullally
Executive Director, Service Delivery and Operations Division
Department of Business and Consumer Services
(902) 424-4597

Atlantic Canada On-line

Introduction

Governments collect and retain tremendous amounts of information. Much of it is public information that is of strategic use to businesses and individuals. The advent of current information technology has enabled governments to improve the ease with which this information can be accessed. Atlantic Canada On-line (ACOL) is one such example of how electronic information technology can be used to improve accessibility to information held by governments.

Background[1]

Atlantic Canada On-line is a strategic business alliance between the governments of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island and a private sector consortium led by Unisys Canada Inc. Its purpose is to provide businesses and citizens with electronic access to information databases currently stored and managed by government and is a convenient alternative to traditional service delivery methods. Users pay a fee for this service and the revenues generated are shared by the participating governments and Unisys Canada.

The ACOL concept evolved through the efforts of the Interprovincial Task Group on Information Technology Sharing under the guidance of the Conference of Atlantic Premiers. With representation from four provinces, the Task Group was mandated to identify opportunities for provincial governments to cooperate in order to improve service delivery, improve the business climate, generate revenue, and achieve cost savings by sharing resources and leveraging on economies of scale. This approach would emulate successful cooperative regional initiatives in several other sectors.

Key factors considered by the Task Group in developing the ACOL concept included:

- increasing pressure from business and public clients for greater access to a wider range of government information and services;
- a growing awareness throughout government that one of the greatest costs of running government lies in the managing and delivering of information and services;
- a fundamental belief that a single Atlantic-wide infrastructure could offer significantly more economy of scale to governments than each province or department pursuing its own direction; and
- a strong desire from the business and public clients of government to deal with government through a single window of service across a province and indeed the region.

On the recommendation of the Task Group, the Conference of Atlantic Premiers initiated a feasibility assessment of an interprovincial on-line information service in July 1994. The publicly tendered three-phase feasibility assessment completed in April 1995 evaluated the concept, including availability and readiness of government databases for electronic access; established the feasibility and economic justification; and examined business models and technology architecture that could be applied. The feasibility study reached the following conclusions:

- there is a rapid growth in the provision of on-line electronic information services in Canada and worldwide;
- there is a significant and growing market in Atlantic Canada for on-line information services;
- government can improve service to its constituents and decrease delivery costs by providing electronic access;
- governments typically view such initiatives as strategic and of critical importance in reducing the costs of information handling, in re-engineering service delivery, in providing a single window to government services and obtaining new sources of non-tax revenues;
- demand is likely to increase as products are defined, developed and marketed;
- there are valuable sources of information that could be readily transformed using current technologies;
- providing the service on a regional basis could potentially add value to information that has a regional perspective; and
- the best organizational model for service delivery would be a public/private partnership, with government retaining ownership of the data and controlling related public policy issues, and the private sector responsible for development and operation of the service.

Having received the consultant's report, the Conference initiated a competitive procurement process for the creation of a regional electronic access service to be called ACOL. In October 1995, a private sector consortium consisting of Unisys Canada, Software Kinetics and the CCL Group of Companies was selected to develop and undertake the Atlantic Canada On-line initiative.

Atlantic Canada On-line (ACOL)

There are six main goals of the ACOL initiative:

- to provide an economically viable electronic access service;
- to capitalize on government information resources in Atlantic Canada;
- to provide more effective, efficient and economical services to businesses and residents of Atlantic Canada;
- to encourage and support economic development of knowledge-based industries in the region;
- to secure new sources of revenues for the provinces; and
- to ensure the rights of individual residents to personal privacy.

How Does It Work?

Registered users access the system with their personal computer through special software provided by ACOL at no charge. This software automatically connects the user to the ACOL system via modem. Once the user is logged on, he or she can perform a variety of information queries through the system and the system automatically levies a charge when a transaction occurs. Prior to using the ACOL system, users must have a positive balance in their ACOL account. Transaction charges are debited from this account as they occur. Funds can be transferred into an ACOL account by the user using a major credit card or direct bank withdrawal authorization.

Services to Be Made Available through ACOL

The ACOL initiative is still in its formative stages at this point in time. Personal Property Registry[2] (PPR) databases for the provinces of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island are currently available on the ACOL network. It is anticipated that personal property registries for all four Atlantic provinces will be in place by mid-1999. This will enable users to access personal property information from all four Atlantic provinces via ACOL. In addition to the services provided to ACOL users, the ACOL infrastructure is also used to provide server, database facility and Internet connectivity to the Geonova Land Titles, Property Mapping and Assessment system. The Province of Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Workers Compensation Board, and Revenue Canada are also planning to use the ACOL infrastructure for the Nova Scotia Business Registry initiative.[3] The ACOL vision is one where there are a variety of intergovernmental and province-unique services delivered through the system.

Only information that is public is considered for delivery through ACOL. Each application that is processed through the ACOL infrastructure is evaluated prior to implementation. Such services must provide a reasonable rate of return to the governments involved and Unisys Canada through revenues generated via fees paid by clients for access to the databases. However, it is possible for alternate cost recovery arrangements to be made between Unisys and the participating governments if there is a need to place non-revenue generating services on the system.

Formal arrangements between the Atlantic provinces and the Unisys Consortium are governed by a three-tier agreement. The Master Strategic Alliance Agreement, signed by the four premiers and Unisys in May 1996, established the overall framework for the partnership, and defined the purpose, goals and scope, the commitments of the parties, entitlement, management, terms and related conditions. Access Agreements that detail the terms and conditions of Unisys' access to the provinces' databases have also been signed by the implementing department in each province. Finally, schedules are in place that outline specifics relating to each database to which access is being granted.

The ACOL agreement between the Atlantic Provinces and the Unisys Canada consortium is for seven years with a three-year renewal provision. Under the agreement, Unisys has been granted the exclusive, non-transferable rights to the "ACOL" and "Atlantic Canada On-line" trademarks (which are owned by the provinces). Furthermore, Unisys has obtained the non-exclusive and non-transferable right and licence to access specific provincial databases and to provide access to clients for information retrievals, searches, updates and registrations.

Unisys has committed ten million dollars to develop the infrastructure necessary to accommodate the initiative. This infrastructure includes computer networks, human resources and the necessary business practices. Unisys is committed to using the most advanced proven technology for ACOL. Unisys recovers its costs through a portion of the registration and search fees paid by users. Fees to be retained by Unisys for the provision of the services are jointly established by Unisys and the provinces, recognizing that there may be statutory, regulatory or provincial government policy factors that restrict pricing for a specific database. The governments of the Atlantic provinces have not made any direct financial contribution to ACOL.

Unisys has exclusive use of the ACOL name and has first right of refusal regarding the automation of public government databases. Government departments are required to demonstrate that the ACOL platform is not suitable for their data if they wish to pursue other arrangements. If it is proven that the ACOL infrastructure is not the system of choice, departments may utilize other systems for their data.

Issues Encountered

The following issues have been encountered during the development of ACOL:

Timing and Competing Government Priorities. Competing government priorities in other areas have hampered progress in advancing the ACOL business development program for new database applications.

Legislative Change. Considerable provincial legislation had to be repealed or amended to initiate PPR, the first service provided by ACOL. Eight different Acts were augmented or rescinded in Nova Scotia alone. Generally, this has not been a major issue because the governments involved have been supportive of the initiative.

Multiple Jurisdictions. ACOL involves four provincial governments and a private sector consortium. This has made it challenging to reach consensus on major issues. However, all partners involved realize that a dynamic relationship and constant communication have been essential to avoid misunderstandings or conflicts. It is important to note that all partners involved are willing participants; this helps encourage a sound partnership.

Variations in Data Standards. Given that ACOL involves departments from four provincial governments, it was expected that there would be variations in the data standards. The CivicLink system on which ACOL is based has been able to overcome some of these variations. However, some departments used or continue to rely on paper records for some data. Subsequently, these data collections must be converted to electronic format before they are available on the ACOL system, potentially delaying projected time lines.

Learning About Public/Private Partnerships. ACOL and the four provincial partners had to gain a better understanding of the challenges involved in a public/private partnership. Unisys is now more aware of some of the institutional requirements of government, such as public accountability, and the provinces have a better understanding of the financial risk Unisys is facing in the endeavour.

Critical Success Factors

The following factors were identified as critical to the ongoing success of ACOL:

Political Support and Championing. The ACOL initiative originated at a Conference of Atlantic Premiers held in July 1994. From the outset, the premiers of all four provinces have been very supportive of the ACOL initiative, approving the feasibility study and the tendering process.

Understanding What the Public Wants. The four provincial governments initiated the feasibility study to ensure that citizens and businesses wanted and would benefit from a regional electronic information system. This information was secured through consultations with citizens and businesses via surveys, focus groups and consultations with major business groups. The results indicated that both groups wanted accessible, convenient access to public information.

Communicating Change and Project Development to Clients. ACOL has endeavoured to communicate on an ongoing basis through their newsletters with the 3000+ clients registered to use ACOL. Furthermore, ACOL has proactively communicated the development of the initiative to major associations whose members utilize the data ACOL is coordinating. For example, the Canadian Bankers Association and major business groups are regularly informed of coming changes and developments and their input is solicited.

A True Partnership. The ACOL initiative is a true partnership between the four provincial governments and Unisys Canada. Each partner has made a commitment to the success and longevity of the project and each partner has made a long-term commitment to being involved in the project. Another element of this partnership is patience and understanding. Unisys endeavoured to have the Personal Property Registry in place for all four provinces by mid-1998. Unfortunately, this deadline has not been achieved due to unexpected challenges such as data standardization. The provinces have not raised these delays as major issues because there is an understanding that the ACOL concept is a learning process for all involved.

Having a Good Project Team. Unisys Canada constructed an effective consortium of companies to develop the ACOL initiative. The partnering companies brought additional knowledge and vision to the project, contributing to its success.

Pitfalls

The following pitfalls were identified as issues that others implementing similar initiatives should be aware of:

Don't Underestimate the Need to Communicate with Departments. Extra effort has had to be made to communicate the purpose and structure of the ACOL initiative to government departments. It has had to be reinforced that ACOL was a government-led initiative and not a privatization exercise.

Communicate the Risks Involved. It is important for all partners involved to communicate the risks they will endure during the initiative. Without this communication, misunderstandings may develop over expectations and limitations.

Be Cognizant That Working with Government Can Take Longer. Private sector companies must recognize that partnerships with government can involve challenges and delays that would not occur if the initiative involved only the private sector. Legislation, accountability requirements, and the political environment can all contribute to project delays that would not occur in the private sector.

Hindsight: Involve Departments in the Development Process

In hindsight, government staff involved with ACOL feel that they would have been more successful in attracting government departments to the initiative had they involved the departments, and senior management in particular, in the entire development process to a greater extent. This would have given departments a better understanding of the purpose of the initiative and fostered early buy-in and ownership.

Key Lesson: Build a Sound Partnership

The success of ACOL is and will continue to be based on a sound partnership. All partners have a stake in the initiative. Each partner has certain risks and has projected certain rewards. This approach encourages the best outcome for everyone involved, including the public.

Evaluation and Accountability

Formal evaluation processes for the ACOL initiative have not yet been developed. However, Unisys continuously monitors the types of queries received by the ACOL client support centre to ensure there are no major problems or recurring complaints. Furthermore, client surveys have been sent out to ACOL users to get feedback from service users. Preliminary usage data also illustrates that the initiative is a tremendous success. Ninety-nine percent of all registrations to the Nova Scotia Personal Property Registry now occur through the ACOL system, with the remaining one percent continuing to be processed at registry offices. Subsequently, substantial revenue is being generated through ACOL at a reduced cost. These results clearly indicate that ACOL is the medium of choice for users of this service and illustrates the incredible potential for other services that will be brought on-line in coming years.

Accountability for the ACOL initiative is jointly shared by Unisys and the four provinces involved. Given that ACOL is an operational division of Unisys Canada, Unisys Canada is accountable to the four provincial partners for the effective operation of the service. In turn, the provincial governments are accountable for the quality of the service provided for their constituents through the ACOL initiative.

The relationship between Unisys Canada and the four provinces is governed in two ways. First, Unisys works unilaterally with each provincial government to develop applications within each province. Second, an intergovernmental committee (the Executive Advisory Committee) meets regularly to guide and direct the intergovernmental aspects of the initiative. Liaison coordinators from each government also meet on a weekly basis through a conference call to discuss projects being pursued by each government and opportunities for the development of regional applications.

Next Steps

Unisys Canada hopes to have the Personal Property Registry in place for all Atlantic provinces by mid-1999. Other information sources are also being investigated to determine the feasibility of bringing them onto the ACOL platform. These include motor vehicle registrations, driver abstracts and used vehicle information packages. Unisys and the Atlantic provinces want to fully exploit the capabilities of ACOL. Unisys Canada also hopes to use the ACOL experience to illustrate to other governments that it is capable of delivering leading-edge services in the electronic information market.

Endnotes

1 Sections of this case study were taken from *Atlantic Canada On-Line: A Strategic Alliance Between Business and Government*, published by Unisys Canada in March 1998.

2 Personal property registries identify any outstanding liens on an item. Legal and financial institutions are required by law to utilize such a registry if they want first right of refusal should the item be sold or transferred to another owner. Prior to the advent of ACOL, such registries were maintained by each county within a province (there were 18 in Nova Scotia alone). Hence, if an institution or individual wanted to determine if there were any outstanding liens on an item, they would have to contact each county within the province. ACOL will provide single-window access to all personal property registries within and across the four provinces.

3 The Nova Scotia Business registry will allow entrepreneurs and business owners to perform multiple registrations, federal and provincial, through a single electronic window.

Sources Consulted

Interview with Gary Kelly, Unisys Business Development Manager, on April 15, 1998.

Interview with Clyde Horner, ACOL Liaison, Nova Scotia Department of Business and Consumer Services, on July 9, 1998.

The ACOL Website at *http://www.acol.ca.*

Unisys Canada, *Atlantic Canada On-line: A Strategic Alliance Between Business and Government*, (March 1998).

Contacts

Gary Kelly
Unisys Business Development Manager
(902) 421-2257

Clyde Horner
ACOL Liaison, Nova Scotia Department of Business and Consumer Services
(902) 424-7539

BC Government Agents

Introduction

Providing public services to residents in rural and remote communities is an ongoing challenge for governments. Sparsely populated areas do not possess the critical mass necessary to rationalize the same level of service provided in urban areas. In many cases, residents in rural and remote areas must travel farther to obtain those government services readily available in urban areas. The challenge for responsible governments, those that are conscious of the citizen-centred approach to service delivery, is to ensure that the services they provide are not out of reach of any citizen who may need them. Ultimately, the approach, or lack thereof, that governments take in this area will have a direct impact on residents in rural and remote communities.

The British Columbia Solution: BC Government Agents

The Province of British Columbia has long met the challenge of ensuring all residents have equal access to government services through a network of Government Agent offices. Originally established in the mid-1800s to collect taxes and maintain law and order, the responsibilities assigned to Government Agents has evolved throughout the twentieth century. Currently located in 58 rural and remote communities throughout the province, Government Agent offices have become the single-window providers of hundreds of services in 50 program areas on behalf of more than 30 provincial government client ministries and agencies. Through the use of cross-trained staff, Government Agent offices use the single-window service approach to provide information, process forms and applications, and collect fines and fees. In 1997/98 Government Agents collected $1.77 billion in revenue, processed 2.7 million customer revenue transactions and handled 1.2 million non-revenue customer enquiries.[1] They are the “face of government” for rural and remote British Columbians.

Government Agents are also increasingly providing services on behalf of other levels of government on an informal basis where access to these services is not readily available in the community. For example, Agent offices help customers complete Old Age Pension and Employment Insurance applications before they are forwarded to federal government agencies for processing. Some Agent offices also house and service the employment kiosks operated by Human Resources Development Canada. The provision of private sector services is another emerging area in which Government Agents are involved. One Government Agent office is currently providing banking services in a northern British Columbia community while another Government Agent office is co-located with a bank.

The Government Agents Branch does not have a monopoly on providing provincial government services to rural and remote areas. Hence, government departments can opt to use the Government Agent offices to deliver their services or they can utilize alternate delivery modes. As a result, a flexible approach is taken in the service delivery design of each Government Agent office. Nearly half of all Government Agent offices co-locate with other provincial departments, partners from other levels of government or the private sector in what are known as Access Centres. It is not uncommon for government departments to deliver their own services rather than have them delivered by the Government Agents. However, it is through the Access Centres that these departments can take advantage of partnering with the Government Agents to maintain the single point of access for delivering government services, to share overhead costs and utilize the existing Government Agents infrastructure, and to streamline administrative services.

Recent Challenges

The BC Government Agents Branch has faced a number of challenges over the past ten years:

Government Cutbacks. Like many governments, British Columbia is working towards deficit and debt elimination. Consequently, the Government Agents Branch has struggled to maintain service levels with fewer resources. Two Government Agent offices were closed in 1996 and each Government Agent office has gone through a space rationalization process to reduce costs.

Increasing Client and Customer Expectations. Client and customer expectations have been increasing at a time when resources are not. Customers want more services that are bundled more efficiently and conveniently. Furthermore, they want to receive their services through multiple points of access such as the Internet, telephone, automated kiosk and the in-person kiosk.

Competition from the Private Sector. The Government Agents Branch has faced increasing competition from the private sector in recent years. Unlike the single-window service initiatives of some other governments, the Government Agents Branch does not have a monopoly on providing services to rural and remote areas. As the private sector develops new technologies and continuously markets them to government departments, the Government Agents Branch must be in the position to meet the changing needs of client departments by offering similar services or competitive alternatives. This is a considerable challenge given the fast pace of technological change.

Turf Protection. Some government departments continue to resist using the Government Agent offices for the delivery of their services. This problem persists even though financial analysis clearly shows that the Government Agents can deliver many government services more effectively and at a lower cost than the client departments from which they originate.[2] Hence, the ongoing challenge for the Government Agents Branch is to clearly illustrate the advantages of the service to government departments.

Staff Skills and Training. Ensuring that Government Agent staff continue to possess the skills necessary to perform their duties effectively is an ongoing challenge. Training is particularly important for Government Agent staff given that all staff are cross-trained to deliver all services provided within an office. Even with diminishing resources, the Government Agents Branch has recognized the importance of staff training and has consciously chosen to sustain a training budget. This has forced the Branch to make reductions in other areas.

Meeting the Challenges: The Government Agents Strategic Directions Initiative

In 1993, cognizant of the many challenges facing it, the Government Agents Branch undertook a strategic planning process to map out the way to address these challenges. Through the Government Agents Strategic Directions (GASD) initiative, the Government Agents Branch established a plan to move the organization into the twenty-first century. From this exercise came five strategic innovations that the organization has implemented:[3]

Creating an Entrepreneurial Corporate Culture. The Government Agents Branch now proactively markets the organization to prospective client ministries, other levels of government, and the general public. Furthermore, staff are encouraged to take an entrepreneurial approach to service delivery and to maintain their skills. By encouraging an entrepreneurial corporate culture, the Government Agents Branch hopes to improve the delivery of services to the public and to secure new services to deliver.

Better Service through Technology. Recognizing the importance of technology, the Government Agents Branch has completed the Government Agent Technology Renewal project. Through this project, the Government Agents have established an Internet-based single-window computer network of 300 workstations that makes possible service delivery anywhere in the province. This technological renewal has also realized significant savings and has improved office productivity. Furthermore, it enables Government Agent offices to access a host of Internet-based resources from all levels of government. The Government Agents Branch has also developed plans to use automated kiosks as a means of improving service and reducing costs.

Increased Customer Responsiveness. The Government Agents Branch has instituted a variety of customer satisfaction initiatives such as customer comment cards, omnibus surveys, exit surveys, telephone surveys and wait-time analysis.

Public Accountability. The Government Agents Branch makes use of a number of instruments to ensure the public accountability of the organization, such as the Multi-Year Business Plan; monthly reporting and performance standards; and reporting sessions with partners to discuss service delivery results.

Alternative Service Delivery. The Government Agents Branch is constantly seeking to reduce overhead cost and improve customer service through co-location with other service deliverers in Government Agent offices or Access Centres.

It is through the strategic innovations of the GASD initiative that the Government Agents Branch hopes to efficiently and conveniently provide a wide range of government services in a cost-effective manner.

Critical Success Factors

Government Agents have provided government services to rural and remote areas of British Columbia for over one hundred years. The following factors have been highlighted by Government Agent staff as critical to the success of the organization, particularly over the past five years:

Leadership and Vision. It is imperative for leaders in an organization undergoing change to have a clear and articulate vision and to constantly evaluate the implementation of that vision. The Government Agents Branch implemented the GASD initiative for this reason. Having such a vision in place allows members of the organization to follow the progress of the strategic direction and understand why change is occurring. It is also important for leaders to recognize that change is ongoing and that the key to success is effective change management.

Service Culture and Innovation. A strong service-oriented culture must be encouraged. This includes fostering ideas from the lower tiers of the organization. Furthermore, it is important to recognize these ideas regardless of whether or not they affect any change in the organization. Ultimately, innovation is an essential part of any citizen-centred organization.

Customer and Client Expectations. It is imperative to evaluate and adjust to meet customer and client expectations on an ongoing basis. A successful citizen-centred service delivery organization must always be conscious of and responsive to what the clients and citizens want, and constantly evaluate how well these expectations are being met.

Pitfalls

The following pitfalls have been identified by BC Government Agent staff:

Keeping Integrated Service Delivery on the Government Agenda. It is becoming increasingly difficult to draw the attention of government departments and agencies to the Government Agents initiative even though it is clear that this type of integrated service delivery improves service and reduces costs. The effort must be made to keep integrated service on the government agenda.

Public Service Deliverers Must Manage Customer and Client Expectations. It is important to be honest and straightforward with clients and customers. This will ultimately result in a better understanding of what citizens want and the limits to what government can deliver.

Evaluation Methods and Accountability

British Columbians who use the Government Agent offices or Access Centres are generally very satisfied with the services they receive. One survey done in 1994 found that there was a customer satisfaction rate of 92 to 95 percent with the overall service provided by Government Agents.[4]

The BC Government Agents Branch utilizes a number of evaluation techniques to ensure that both client and customer satisfaction levels are high and to make changes in service delivery should they be necessary:

- a Balanced Scorecard approach is utilized to ensure that the Government Agents are effective and efficient in the areas of financial performance, client/customer satisfaction, internal business process performance, and innovation and learning;
- customers are surveyed using comment cards, omnibus surveys, exit surveys and wait-time analysis;
- a monthly analysis of service delivery is prepared by each client ministry to evaluate service delivery trends at various locations and to adjust services where necessary;
- a yearly evaluation with client ministries is carried out to ensure all agreements are met; and
- an annual report of performance results, as compared to the Multi-year Business Plan, is submitted to the provincial Legislature and the Treasury Board.

Accountability for the results of the evaluations noted above is an important component of the service culture of the BC Government Agents Branch. Each Government Agent office is held accountable for its performance as measured through monthly evaluations. Furthermore, the Government Agents Branch and client ministries meet on an ongoing basis to review overall performance measures to ensure that all services are being delivered in the most effective and efficient way. Finally, the Government Agents Branch is accountable to the provincial government through the annual reporting process.

Hindsight: Having a Political Champion

Unlike some single-window service delivery initiatives being pursued by other governments, the BC Government Agents Branch has not had the benefit of a political champion. Hence, at no time have provincial government departments and agencies been politically encouraged to embrace Government Agents as the most effective deliverer of integrated public services to rural and remote areas. This has resulted in some government departments continuing to deliver services directly at a higher cost than would be incurred if the same services were delivered by Government Agents.

The Government Agents Branch has been able to rely on its long-standing reputation to encourage government departments to utilize the service. However, having a political champion to further foster such action would encourage provincial government departments to pursue initiatives that would clearly improve the delivery of services to citizens at a reduced cost, very much in line with current government fiscal priorities.

Next Steps

The BC Government Agents Branch envisions a number of immediate priorities. First, the Government Agent offices must be utilized to further integrate government services and ensure that public access to these services is maintained or expanded in light of dwindling fiscal resources. Second, the scope of partnership arrangements must be expanded, particularly to include partnering with the private sector. Finally, the BC Government Agents Branch will continue to work towards citizen-centred service delivery by overcoming jurisdictional boundaries between and within governments.

Endnotes

1 Government Agents Branch, *Government Agents Branch Business Plan*: 1997-99 (Victoria, 1997), 2.

2 The Government Agent offices can deliver services at a cost of $6.11 per transaction as opposed to $12.23 when delivered directly by a department. Government Agents Branch, *Government Agents Branch Business Plan*, 8.

3 Government Agents Branch, *Government Agents: British Columbia's Service Solution*.

4 Government Agents Branch, *Government Agents Branch Business Plan*, 5.

Sources Consulted

Canadian Centre for Management Development. *Delivering Clusters of Services to Clients: Innovation from Outside the Government of Canada*. Ottawa: CCMD, 1995.

Government Agents Branch. *Government Agents Branch Business Plan: 1997-99*. Victoria, 1997.

Government Agents Branch. *Government Agents: British Columbia's Service Solution*. Victoria, 1997.

Interview with Ardath Paxton-Mann, Director, Government Agents Branch, on March 26, 1998.

Mitchell, W.D. “Rebuilding the B.C. Government Agents' Branch Around Customer Service” in *The Well-Performing Government Organization*. Eds. James C. McDavid and D. Brian Marson. Victoria: The Institute of Public Administration of Canada, 1991, 68-73.

Seidle, Leslie. *Rethinking the Delivery of Public Services to Citizens.* Montreal: The Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1995.

Contact

Ardath Paxton-Mann
Director, Government Agents Branch
Ministry of Small Business,
Tourism & Culture
(250) 356-2035

The Burlington Resource Centre

Introduction

Meeting the needs of the unemployed in Ontario is the responsibility of both the federal and provincial governments. At the federal level, Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) is responsible for providing financial assistance through the Employment Insurance program. It also directly provides a wide range of labour market services to assist the unemployed in securing new employment. The provincial government is responsible for providing social assistance to those who are in need of income support but are not eligible for Employment Insurance. To this end, the province has legislated regional municipalities and counties throughout the province to provide social assistance through the *Ontario Works* program. In this capacity, the various municipal governments also provide job placement and counselling services to help social assistance recipients re-enter the work force. The provincial government also continues to be directly involved in assisting disabled people to re-enter the work force. Tremendous opportunities for partnerships between the three levels of government have developed to streamline income support and employment services as a result of their common goal of helping the unemployed of Ontario find employment.

It should be noted that negotiations between the Province of Ontario and the federal government in this area are currently underway to develop a Labour Market Development Agreement like those in other provinces and territories. Subsequently, any such agreement reached will likely have a major impact on the way employment services are delivered in Ontario. This case study should be considered with these changes in mind. Commentary on the implications of these changes is provided at the end of the study.

Partnerships between HRDC and the Regional Municipality of Halton first began to develop in 1995 through similar co-location initiatives in other locations within the region. It was at this time that HRDC was pursuing partnerships across the country to reduce costs in response to major downsizing and restructuring within the department. Prior to 1995, Halton strategically located its welfare sub-offices as close as possible to the HRDC offices within the region so that social assistance recipients could utilize the job listings as part of their mandatory job searches. As a result, there were four welfare sub-offices and four Canada Employment Centres within the region.

Ongoing discussions between HRDC and Halton enabled Halton to co-locate within the HRDC Oakville centre on a part-time basis in 1995 and resulted in permanent co-location in 1997. Partnerships were established at two other HRDC offices in Milton and Georgetown. The Burlington site was officially opened in August 1997 as the fourth partnership initiative. The Burlington Resource Centre differs from the other three co-location initiatives in that the provincial Ministry of Community and Social Services opted to participate as well. Also, unlike the other three initiatives where Halton moved into existing space occupied by HRDC, the Burlington site involved securing a new location to accommodate all three partners.

Negotiations for the Burlington centre began in the summer of 1996. Creating and designing the centre involved weekly meetings for seven months prior to opening. A number of management committees were established to deal with various aspects of the project. Furthermore, staff transition teams were created to deal with issues affecting day-to-day working relationships and areas of shared responsibility. The partnership also utilized the strengths of each partner to maximize efficiency. For example, Halton staff negotiated the lease for the location and HRDC provided design services. The Centre itself was designed based on past experiences at the other centres and through informal discussions with clients and staff.

As noted, the Burlington Resource Centre is an intergovernmental single-window initiative involving three levels of government. The Centre can be described as primarily a co-location initiative in that all budgets, human resource structures, records management, computer systems and most program delivery areas for each level of government are operated independently. However, the Centre does have some elements of integration. Clients who enter the Centre are greeted at a single reception counter. This counter is staffed by workers from each level of government who are informally cross-trained to provide some basic information and to refer clients to the appropriate staff depending on their service need.[1] Synergies between HRDC and Halton are such that they also cooperate to provide certain services of interest to both of their sets of clients. These services include the employment resource centre and various workshops. In any event, each of these services appears integrated to clients regardless of the level of integration that actually exists.

The layout of the Centre also exhibits some characteristics of an integrated structure. While each level of government has separate workstations and computers, a uniform style of workstation is utilized by all staff at the Centre. The importance of workstation uniformity may not be readily apparent. From a social assistance perspective, workstation uniformity is an important element because the common observer cannot discern whether a client is receiving Employment Insurance or social assistance services. This anonymity, and the overall anonymity that is provided by the entire single-window service, is important to social assistance clients who wish to ensure their needs are concealed.

The three levels of government located in the Centre occupy two floors of the facility. Federal and municipal workers are located on the main floor to provide an open access environment where clients can be served at staff workstations. Provincial regulations are such that a higher level of security is required in certain instances. As a result, provincial staff offices are located on the second floor of the facility and staff are provided with both secure/limited access and open access interview rooms on the first floor.

Centre operations are governed by a number of Memorandums of Understanding. These MOU's govern issues such as hours of operation, areas for joint service and financing. Common equipment such as fax machines and photocopiers are shared by all three governments. Halton is the lease-holder for the site, with HRDC and the Ministry of Community and Social Services sharing in the costs.

The primary benefit of the Burlington Resource Centre is apparent. As a single window for employment and social assistance services, the Centre makes it easier for clients to obtain the services they need. Furthermore, it reduces overlap and duplication in a variety of service areas and enables all partners to share costs.[2] Finally, it encourages synergies between the partners involved and positions them well for pending legislative changes in the employment service field.

Issues Encountered

The following issues were encountered during the development of the Burlington Resource Centre:

Corporate Procurement Standards. Each level of government functions within a distinct set of corporate standards. For example, all three levels of government have different standards and needs for workstations and the federal government also has a specific standard for lighting. Issues of this nature predominantly resulted in accepting the highest standard, illustrative of the need for compromise and flexibility when pursuing partnerships.

Corporate Client Access Policies. Establishing a mutually agreeable level of client access within the centre was an issue during negotiations. The provincial corporate policy on client access restricts clients to secure interview rooms in exceptional circumstances (eg., threatening behaviour). However, the federal and municipal governments do not have a similar requirement and federal and municipal staff will typically interview clients at their workstations. As noted, this challenge was dealt with by locating the provincial staff on the second floor of the facility and providing them with access to both open workstations and discretely located secure interview rooms on the main floor.

Information Security/Privacy. Sharing personal computers and software platforms was considered during negotiations for the partnership. However, open access to certain government applications posed security and privacy concerns. As a result, all partners agreed to operate separate servers and personal computers to ensure security and privacy is maintained.

Legislative Change. Changes in policy at the federal and provincial levels have resulted in major changes to employment and social assistance programs delivered by all three levels of government. HRDC undertook a major restructuring initiative in 1995. The provincial government also made major changes to the way social assistance is delivered in Ontario, delegating more responsibilities to regional and county governments in 1997. Finally, there will likely be further changes in policy as the federal and provincial governments negotiate the Ontario Labour Market Development Agreement. The ongoing changes in this policy area have had a tremendous impact on the development and operation of the Burlington Resource Centre. A certain amount of tension exists among staff as responsibilities are transferred between levels of government and some staff have been hesitant to cross-train and share responsibilities due to this high level of uncertainty.

Variations in Decision-Making Authority. Variations in decision-making authority have meant that certain partners are required to seek authorization in instances where others are not. While this is not a major barrier to the development of the initiative, there is recognition that such variations are a reality and must be considered when taking strategic directions.

Different Human Resource Regimes. Staff from all three levels of government are governed by separate collective agreements and different pay scales, and they belong to different unions. As a result, it is necessary to consider each of these variations when developing areas for shared responsibility between levels of government. While most staff have been supportive of sharing responsibility, formalized cross-training has not been implemented at this point primarily because of existing human resource policies, collective agreements and other competing priorities.

Success Factors

The following were identified as critical to the success of the Burlington Resource Centre:

Utilizing a New Facility. Designing and moving into a new facility has contributed to the success of the Centre in a number of ways. First, it has given staff from all three levels of government a sense of ownership in the initiative in that they were consulted on all aspects of the project and worked cooperatively to design a facility that met the needs of all partners. Past projects involved Halton staff moving into existing HRDC locations, resulting in far less sense of ownership by Halton staff. Second, the conditions at the new facility are much better than the inadequate facilities each partner previously occupied. This made it easier to obtain staff buy-in for the initiative.

Communicating and Consulting with Staff. Management from all three levels communicated with staff throughout all stages of the project. This communication was essential to make sure the Centre was designed to meet the needs of clients and staff and to sustain high staff morale.

Learning from Past Experiences. Management from HRDC and Halton were able to draw on past experiences, primarily at the Oakville site, when developing and designing the Burlington Resource Centre.

Sharing a Client-Centred Philosophy. Improving client services was and continues to be the main motivation for all partners involved in the Centre. A fundamental priority for each partner is to reduce the amount time clients spend dealing with red tape and bureaucracy so that they can focus on their own challenges.

Leadership. It was important for each partner to have a strong leader during the development of the Centre. Furthermore, it was essential that the leaders involved be knowledgeable in the business practices of the other partners to expedite design and development.

Capitalizing on the Strengths of Each Partner. Partnerships present the opportunity to capitalize on the strengths of each member. Each partner in the Burlington Resource Centre brought different strengths to the table. For example, HRDC contributed design expertise to the project while Halton coordinated the procurement and lease arrangements. Sharing responsibility and capitalizing on strengths was an important factor in the success of the initiative.

Pitfall: Policy Interconnectedness

Organizations involved in partnerships must recognize the interconnectedness of their policies with those of the other partners. Once you are in a partnership, it is important to consider the implications any changes in strategy or philosophy will have on the other partners, as any such changes can have an adverse impact on them. Consequently, major changes in policy may damage or destroy the existing partnership.

Hindsight

In hindsight, the following would be done differently if implementing a similar initiative elsewhere:

Finalize All Agreements at the Outset. After nearly one year of operation, some of the agreements between the partners have not been finalized. While no serious issues have developed as a result of these outstanding agreements, there is potential for problems to develop.

Involve All Partners from the Outset. The Ministry of Community and Social Services was not involved in the initiative from the outset. Subsequently, there has been less time for all partners to gain a better understanding of corporate philosophies and to define shared values. Having all partners involved from the outset would likely have resulted in the initiative developing more smoothly and advancing more quickly.

Evaluation and Accountability

HRDC, Halton and the Ministry of Community and Social Services each evaluate their individual services within the Centre and an evaluation of the Centre as a whole is not done. The results from the latest HRDC survey, which includes an evaluation of the joint service areas such as reception, resource centre and workshops are as follows:[3]

- 84 percent of clients surveyed rated the resources as Good or Excellent;
- 77 percent of clients surveyed rated the level of service received as Good or Excellent;
- 90 percent of clients rated the Burlington Centre as Good or Excellent.

Informally, Halton staff ask clients for their feedback regarding the co-location and resources offered and the response is always positive. Clients state that the wide range of resources is a major motivator for them. Furthermore, the single-point entry for income support has also been identified as a major improvement for clients who transfer from EI to social assistance.

Staff have identified the need for a joint evaluation by an external group as an important next step for the development of the Centre.

Given that there is limited integration at the Centre, the accountability structures are such that the on-site managers from each level of government are responsible for their own staff and the services provided in their program area. The managers report through a typical hierarchical structure, and to date accountability has not been an issue at the Centre.

Next Steps

In May 1996, the federal government proposed major changes to the roles and responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments in providing labour market services to the unemployed. The proposed changes would allow the federal government to delegate responsibility for delivering labour market development programs to the provincial governments and to fund the provinces to deliver these programs. The federal government would continue to manage the Employment Insurance program and other national aspects of labour market development.[4]

To date, with the exception of Ontario, all provinces and territories have signed Labour Market Development Agreements with the federal government. However, the federal government and the Government of Ontario recently entered into negotiations for such an agreement. Any agreement reached could have a major impact on the Burlington Resource Centre and it is likely that there will be a transfer of some or all responsibilities from the federal government to the Ontario government and possibly to all Regional and County governments. Within the Centre, this will likely translate into a shift of certain responsibilities (and some or all associated staff) among the various partners.

Endnotes

1 HRDC staff are invited to attend when Halton management interview staff for front-line positions.

2 An illustration of financial savings is not yet available.

3 Human Resources Development Canada – Burlington Resource Centre, *Quality Service Initiative – Summary of Results*, January 19-23 and February 2-6, 1998.

4 Human Resources Development Canada, *Getting Canadians Back to Work: A Proposal to Provinces and Territories for a New Partnership in the Labour Market*, (Ottawa, May 30, 1996).

Sources Consulted

Human Resources Development Canada – Burlington Resource Centre. *Quality Service Initiative – Summary of Results*. January 19-23 and February 2-6, 1998.

Human Resources Development Canada. *Getting Canadians Back to Work: A Proposal to Provinces and Territories for a New Partnership in the Labour Market*. Ottawa, May 30, 1996.

Interview with Joanne Bree, Income & Employment Director, Regional Municipality of Halton, on April 20, 1998.

Interview with Marg Garry, Manager – Burlington & Oakville Human Resource Centres, on June 23, 1998.

Interview with Kristine Tape, Manager – Income Maintenance, Ministry of Community and Social Services, on July 15, 1998.

Contacts

Joanne Bree
Income & Employment Director
Regional Municipality of Halton
(905) 825-6000, ext. 7947

Marg Garey
Manager - Burlington & Oakville, Human Resource Centres
Human Resources Development Canada
(905) 637-4518

Kristine Tape
Manager - Income Maintenance
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Government of Ontario
(905) 637-4507

Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure and Single-Window Geospatial Data Access

Introduction

The Internet continues to provide opportunities to make government-held information more accessible to citizens. Certain types of information hold a strategic value in that they can be used for commercial, research, and educational purposes. Recognizing the role this information plays in economic growth, development and competitiveness, governments have endeavoured to make these types of information more accessible through the use of the Internet in a single-window format.

Technological compatibility can be a tremendous challenge for governments as they move towards integrated single-window initiatives. The purpose of this case study is to illustrate many of the challenges faced by governments as they move towards standardized electronic data to allow for integrated service delivery. The Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (CGDI) initiative presents an ideal example of the approach governments must take in this area as this strategy aims to address many of these challenges.

Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure[1]

Governments at the federal, provincial and municipal levels, universities and the private sector collect and maintain a tremendous amount of geographic information.[2] This information serves a wide range of purposes. It is an important tool in public policy areas such as national defence, resource management, transportation, and demographic analysis, to name a few. It can also serve as a strategic tool for commercial interests and economic development. Public and private interests utilize, manipulate, combine and develop these data to produce information products for use in public policy and commercial areas.

The Internet provides an opportunity to improve access to geographic information held by various institutions. It can enable information producers in the private and public sectors to conveniently obtain data from a variety of information providers and combine these data to produce knowledge products. However, access to and coordination of geographic information on the Internet is lacking despite the fact that government agencies from all jurisdictions have made significant investments in geographic databases and information resources. At present, access to information is limited by the amount of information available on-line, a lack of standardized means to find information and different conditions for use and resale across different government agencies.

Since 1996, three primary organizations and the university community have been involved in the development of the Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure, a strategy to facilitate effective access to geographic data through the Internet. At the federal level, the Inter-Agency Committee on Geomatics (IACG), a committee of fifteen federal agencies that produce and use geomatic information, has worked extensively to develop a common vision for CGDI. Participation in the development of this vision at the provincial/territorial level has been provided through the Canadian Council on Geomatics (CCOG) with membership from all federal, provincial and territorial geomatic-producing agencies. The Geomatic Industry Association of Canada, representing the private sector, has also participated as have university researchers from the major geomatic information producing institutions.

What Is CGDI?

CGDI is an intergovernmental strategy to develop the geographic information component of the Internet, with the goal of reducing duplication and overcoming many of the existing barriers to sharing digital geographic information over the Internet. Such an infrastructure will support the collection, management, sharing and distribution of digital geographic data by all levels and orders of government. The CGDI initiative will provide easy, consistent and harmonized access to geographic information and services.[3]

Challenges

The CGDI strategy exposes some of the challenges for governments as they move towards improving data integration, access and utility. The challenges CGDI will address include:[4]

Pursuing and Solidifying Partnerships. The collaborative nature of the CGDI initiative to this point is indicative of the types of partnerships required to advance the geospatial agenda. Partnerships within and between governments are a key component to ongoing production, management and distribution through CGDI. National access will not be achieved without such partnerships.

Creating a Data Framework. The CGDI initiative aims to enable geographic data held by various government and non-government agencies to be manipulated and integrated. A major challenge to this initiative is the diversity of the data held by these agencies. CGDI will develop a national geo-info framework that will facilitate the integration of various forms of data through a data alignment layer. This layer will ensure that all data within the infrastructure contain a set of base characteristics to allow for integration.

Implementing Data Standards. Ensuring that the data made available through CGDI have been collected and made available to certain standards is essential to maximize the utility gained from the initiative. To this end, CGDI will ensure that all data made available meet international and industry standards.

Creating a Supportive Policy Environment. Providers of geographic data have and will continue to place conditions on the use of their data. In many cases this is in the form of licensing or royalty requirements. An essential component of the CGDI initiative is the harmonization and simplification of these requirements across government to reduce barriers to the use of geographic data on the Internet.

Providing Single-Window Access to Geographic Data and Products

Each of the challenges noted above are integral parts of the larger goal of CGDI which is to facilitate access to geographic data. At the forefront of the CGDI vision is single-window access to geographic data. The CGDI window will enable both access to geographic information bases from across the nation and access to government products that have been developed by government for the public good. Each of these is discussed in turn.

Single-Window Access To Geographic Data

The primary benefit of the CGDI initiative is that it will allow governments to develop single-window access to the multitude of datasets that they maintain. To this point, Natural Resources Canada and the Canadian Space Agency have already developed the first generation single window through the Canadian Earth Observation Network (CEONet) initiative.[5] CEONet currently acts as a clearinghouse for suppliers and users of geographic data and related services. Users can search the CEONet databases to gain information on databases held by all levels of government, the private sector and international organizations. The tools in the CEONet database provide the user with detailed technical information on the data as well as the contact through which it can be obtained.

CGDI will advance the approach taken by the CEONet to enable interested parties to search, view, obtain and purchase geographic data through the Internet. Whereas CEONet provides the linkages through which one can locate the distributor of information of interest, the next generation clearinghouse will allow for electronic data transfer and will include electronic commerce capabilities.[6]

A move towards the next generation of single-window geographic data environment is dependent on the data framework, standards, supportive policy environment and partnerships noted in the previous section. These elements are essential to advance the geospatial agenda.

Access to Integrated Government Products

The other component of the CGDI initiative is that it serves as an enabler of an enhanced range of government-delivered products. CGDI will enable governments to utilize the vast inventories of geographic data from across the nation to provide powerful information tools for education and research. One such example is the National Atlas. In use for over one hundred years, the National Atlas is a key educational tool used by schools across the nation. Currently, the National Atlas is available on-line in a limited form. Users can use the on-line atlas to manipulate a fixed number of geographic databases to develop information products. The next generation National Atlas, as available through CGDI, will offer a much greater range of information than is currently provided. It too will be delivered via the Internet but CGDI will allow users to access a much greater number of databases to create custom data products for educational and personal use.

CGDI: A Federal Perspective

At the federal level, the CGDI initiative has been developed and led by the Inter-Agency Committee on Geomatics. The committee consists of fifteen federal agencies and is an excellent example of interdepartmental cooperation. The committee meets on two levels. First, a steering committee comprised of Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers provides direction to the committee. Second, a working group consisting of Directors and Directors General meets regularly to implement the initiative. The committee has taken an interesting approach to the CGDI initiative in that it has divided the initiative into various issues which are led by different departments. Utilizing this approach ensures that the initiative remains an interdepartmental partnership.

Issues Encountered

The following issues have been encountered during the development of the CGDI strategy within the federal government:

Organizational Culture. In the beginning, many departments participating in the initiative questioned the intentions of the lead departments. Given that the project was initiated at a time of major government restructuring, some questions about motives arose. However, this issue has been resolved for the most part as the various partners recognize the advantages to the CGDI initiative in advancing the geospatial agenda.

Success. In some ways a successful initiative can become a victim of success. As the number of departments participating has increased, the amount of discussion and consultation has increased as well. This is primarily due to the desire for the committee to operate by consensus, an important characteristic of a successful partnership. Hence, it takes longer to reach agreement.

Internal Policy Barriers. Corporate policy at the federal level has made it difficult for the CGDI initiative to advance on some fronts. For example, different departments apply the Treasury Board policy on cost recovery differently which has resulted in different cost recovery policies. As a result, the committee has agreed to allow some variation in this area. However, a uniform approach and user-pay policy would be ideal.

Encouraging Agencies to Participate. For various reasons, some relevant agencies are not participating in the CGDI initiative.

Critical Success Factors

The following factors have been identified as key to the ongoing success of the CGDI initiative:

Having Champions. Senior political and administrative officials from a number of government agencies have championed the CGDI initiative. Having champions who believe in the initiative and believe in the collaborative approach has been essential to the progress already made.

Strength in Numbers. The CGDI initiative was not developed at the central agency level and then dispersed to the various line departments. Instead, Natural Resources Canada encouraged the twelve participating departments to discuss the issue and CGDI developed from that point. Subsequently, it was very challenging to raise the profile of the initiative and gain the support of the central agencies. Having the support of many departments has provided CGDI with much needed visibility in this regard.

Flexibility. Given that the CGDI initiative involves twelve departments, a flexible approach to the various structures and policies that exist within these departments is essential. Recognizing this diversity is critical to sustain the involvement of all partners; the cost recovery issue noted earlier exemplifies this. Failure to overcome this issue may have stalled the entire initiative.

Managing Expectations. When building support for and participation in CGDI, it has been important to manage the expectations of the federal, provincial, territorial and private sector partners. Given that the federal government is coordinating the development of CGDI, it is essential that the other partners be kept informed of fiscal and technical realities that may impede it.

Consult with Key Stakeholders. The federal government undertook extensive consultations with the provinces, the private sector and education institutions. These consultations shed light on issues that had been overlooked and served to enhance comprehension of the entire project.

Keep the Initiative Moving. Some issues are resolved more expediently and more easily than others. Managing issues is essential to keep the initiative on track. Long-standing issues may have to be reconsidered further into the initiative if resolution is not immediately foreseeable. Many such issues will resolve themselves as the initiative develops. However, others will remain and must eventually be dealt with.

Pitfall

From a federal perspective, it is important that an interdepartmental partnership be governed by consensus as much as possible. Unilateral action by any one player can impede and/or permanently damage such an initiative. Furthermore, financial resources must also be managed in partnership. Control by any one agency will lead to suspicion on the part of other partners. To this end, the IACG has proposed developing a management board for the CGDI initiative. The board will have representatives from all the federal departments involved and will also have representatives from the provinces, universities and the private sector.

Next Steps

The following have been identified as next steps for the CGDI initiative:

- Continue to work to attract new financial resources to the initiative;
- Advance various technological capabilities to further the move to a single-window environment;
- Continue to manage national consensus on geospatial policy.

Endnotes

1 *http://cgdi.gc.ca*

2 The terms geographic and geospatial will be used synonymously for the purposes of this case study.

3 Mark Corey, Jeff Labonte, and Tim Evangelatos, "Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (CGDI) - Geospatial Information for the Knowledge Economy," *Geomatica* Vol. 52, No. 2 (1998):3.

4 Ibid., 4-6.

5 *http://ceonet.ccrs.nrcan.gc.ca*

6 Electronic commerce can now be used when purchasing products from Natural Resources Canada. The credit card-based system performs card validation, transfer of funds and financial reporting.

Sources Consulted

Corey, Mark, Jeff Labonte and Tim Evangelatos. "Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure (CGDI) – Geospatial Information and the Knowledge Economy." *Geomatica* Vol. 52 No. 2 (1998):194-199.

Evangelatos, Timothy V. and Jeff Labonte. "Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure Activities in the Federal Government." *Geomatica* Vol. 52 No. 2 (1998):214-222.

Inter-Agency Committee on Geomatics & the Canadian Council on Geomatics. *Creating the Canadian Geospatial Data Infrastructure –"CGDI" Progress Report.* 1997.

Interview with Jeff Labonte, CGDI Advisor, Natural Resources Canada, on April 17, 1998.

Contact

Jeff Labonte
Advisor, CGDI
Natural Resources Canada
(613) 992-8609

The Edmonton Business Link Business Service Centre

Introduction

Business start-up and small business services have been the focus of a variety of single-window initiatives pursued by various levels of government in Canada. Small business creation and development continues to be viewed by government as an important factor in economic growth and stability. Governments at all levels recognize the need to improve access to information and services aimed at the entrepreneur or small business owner. To this end, governments have pursued a number of single-window initiatives aimed at providing seamless business development information and services. One such initiative is the Business Link Business Service Centre in Edmonton.

Background[1]

In 1992 the federal government approved a six-month pilot project to amalgamate the business information services of eighteen different federal departments into sites known as Canada Business Service Centres (CBSC). The mandate of the three selected pilot sites was to provide single-window access to information and referral on business-related programs and services delivered by the federal government and other service providers. The Edmonton CBSC was the first to open, followed by Halifax and Winnipeg.

Funding for the original Centres was allocated from each of the participating eighteen federal departments. Representatives of each department participated in an advisory group to the project. At the conclusion of the pilot, the project was deemed to be successful and a CBSC was subsequently established in each province and territory. In 1995, responsibility for the CBSCs was transferred to the four regional agencies: Western Economic Diversification, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec) and Industry Canada (Ontario).

The Edmonton Business Link Business Service Centre

1995 served to be a watershed year for the CBSC in Edmonton. It was at that time that a partnership agreement was secured with the Province of Alberta and the City of Edmonton. The agreement, termed the *Edmonton Economic Development Initiative*, resulted in the creation of a one-stop business centre to provide support for entrepreneurs and small business owners. This agreement also provided for joint initiatives in the areas of Labour Force Development and Community Development.

In early 1996, the existing CBSC operations were moved from 3,500 square feet of space in the Canada Place complex and integrated with the provincial and municipal services in a 25,000 square foot office located in downtown Edmonton. Subsequent agreements were signed that defined the management and staffing provisions. These included:

- The creation of a management committee with representation from Western Economic Diversification, Alberta Economic Development and Economic Development Edmonton. This committee has responsibility for annual budget and operation plans, the development and implementation of an evaluation framework, and communications related to the Business Link;
- The creation of the position of general manager. The general manager supervises the day-to-day operations of the Centre and reports directly to the management committee. This person is currently an employee of Economic Development Edmonton;
- The finalization of staffing and funding arrangements for the Centre. Western Economic Diversification provides 40 percent of the annual budget and six staff, Alberta Economic Development provides 40 percent of the annual budget and seven staff, and Economic Development Edmonton provides 20 percent of the budget and four staff. EDE is also responsible for Centre operations.

The shared objectives of the three partners through the Business Link are as follows:

- to provide business services for clients and to improve access to those services through single-window service delivery;
- to provide seamless service delivery in which clients cannot distinguish between federal, provincial and municipal services; and
- to reduce the overlap and duplication of government services aimed at the business sector.

The Business Link services are aimed primarily at small and medium-sized enterprises. It is specifically focused on pre-start-up, start-up and micro-enterprise entrepreneurs. Services provided include information and referral. Furthermore, government departments from all levels offer specialized services at the Centre on an ongoing basis. For example, Revenue Canada periodically offers a half-day Small Business Taxation seminar. Private sector financial institutions, accountants and management consultants are also available on-site on a regularly scheduled basis.

Services are provided through a number of service delivery modes. A major component of the Centre operations is a call centre through which clients can obtain program and service information and request fax-back services. The Business Link also maintains an Internet site with various types of information. Finally, there are a number of in-person services that are provided through the Centre itself.

All staff assigned to the Business Link continue to be employed by their respective agency or government. However, the Centre does not function solely as a co-location initiative. The staff at the Business Link operate as one cohesive unit. Staff from the three levels of government do not provide services strictly within their program areas. Staff are cross-trained in all program and services areas. The manager of the Centre coordinates and assigns duties as required which enables staffing to be adjusted to meet changes in demand. The partners also endeavour to provide staff with the necessary skills if required. For example, the federal government recently assigned a computer specialist to meet Centre needs.

Co-location is another aspect of the Business Link initiative. The Alberta Women's Enterprise Initiative Association (AWEIA) leases space at the Centre and this co-location encourages synergies between the two organizations. AWEIA provides business financing, counseling and training for women entrepreneurs throughout the province of Alberta from two central locations in Calgary and Edmonton. This provides tremendous opportunities for referrals between the two organizations and furthers the single-window purpose of the Business Link. The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is co-located in the building and this also encourages relevant synergies.

Issues Encountered

The following issues have been encountered throughout the development of the Business Link initiative:

Unexpected Demand. The demand for services provided by the Business Link has been much greater than expected. Indeed, demand has continuously increased since the Centre opened. The largest demand areas are the call centre and the Internet. The largest volume of inquiries to the Centre is generated through the Business Link website. The Centre adapts to the increasing service demands as much as possible, given limited resources.

Variations in Human Resource Policies. Understandably, each level of government has unique human resource standards and staff from each partner are governed by different collective agreements. As a result, the staff have different pay scales and job descriptions. When the Business Link was initiated, the staff involved were immediately willing to accept these variations given that the Centre was a new and developing initiative. However, it is now evident that the Business Link is a secure, long-term initiative. As a result, the management committee recognizes the need to evaluate the staffing regimes to move towards an equitable arrangement for all staff and it is evaluating the staffing needs to this end.

Policy Interconnectedness. Having three partners involved in the Business Link initiative makes it difficult for any one partner to modify organizational policies or their level of involvement in the initiative without considering the impact this will have on the remaining two partners. This complexity should not be viewed as an impediment to the partnership. However, it does translate into more complex project planning.

Conflicting Mandates. Recent changes to the CBSC program have resulted in the expansion of the CBSC project to create 371 satellite offices in urban areas surrounding the existing centres. These offices will be coordinated by "hub" centres such as Edmonton. This new approach creates complexities in that Economic Development Edmonton is not mandated to promote economic development in other urban areas while the federal and provincial partners are. This is a major challenge for the Centre as service projects and priorities are defined.

Visibility. As noted, operations at the Business Link are such that it is impossible to distinguish staff at one level of government from those at another. Subsequently, significant efforts have been made to communicate the identity of the various partners in the initiative wherever possible. For example, the logos of each organization are displayed in several locations and on various products. Furthermore, flags and signs for the three levels of government are prominently displayed at the Centre. Ensuring visibility is an ongoing issue. Thus far, the various partners have been satisfied with the level of visibility maintained.

Technological Change. Technology is a key service enabler within the Business Link. The Internet, fax-back services and information systems are key components of Centre services. However, the rapid changes in technology make it challenging for the Centre to provide services in the emerging mediums through which clients wish to receive them.

Success Factors

The following factors have been identified as critical to the success of the Business Link initiative:

Support from Senior Management. Senior politicians and administrators at all three levels of government provided tremendous support for the initiative and this support was essential in bringing the concept to fruition.

Flexible and Supportive Staff. As noted earlier, staff at the Business Link were willing to temporarily accept variations in the human resource regimes. This enabled management to focus on the development of the initiative without becoming preoccupied with this issue.

Having a Service Culture. Staff at the Business Link are committed to meeting the needs of their clients. This service culture has elevated the level of service at the Centre. However, while this commitment is an essential factor in the overall success of the initiative, it can also lead staff to attempt to provide services at a level that is beyond the resources of the Business Link. Subsequently, management at the Centre has had to communicate the limitations of the service to staff.

Reasonable Time Frames. All partners involved recognized the need to set reasonable deadlines. You cannot build a complicated intergovernmental partnership like the Business Link overnight.

Start Small. It is also important to start with a small and manageable level of service. Otherwise, the initiative will be overwhelmed by demand.

Recognize All Partners as Equals. The Edmonton Business Link partnership is such that some partners have more resources than others. However, it is crucial that all partners be considered as equals at the management and negotiation tables. It is also essential for all partners to recognize value-added assets other than funding, such as expertise, insight and creativity. Ensuring this fairness and recognition is essential to a successful partnership.

Training. Staff at the Business Link are required to be knowledgeable about a wide range of programs from all levels of government. Furthermore, government programs and services are always changing. Staff are trained on an ongoing basis to ensure that they possess the necessary knowledge to effectively carry out their duties.

Pitfalls

The following pitfalls should be considered when implementing a similar initiative elsewhere:

Once You're In, It Is Hard to Get Out. Committing to an integrated partnership like the Business Link reduces the flexibility of each partner to change participation levels. Any changes in policy made by one partner consequently affect the other partners. Because of this interconnectedness, it would be difficult for any one partner to terminate the partnership.

Recognize the Complexity of the Partnership. It must be recognized that complex integrated partnerships make it more difficult and/or time consuming to make policy or administrative changes. For example, it may take longer to obtain the support of the partnering governments because senior officials from three levels of government must be consulted.

Hindsight

From the outset, the management committee did not play an active role in the implementation of the Business Link initiative and delegated many of the authorities to the general manager. In hindsight, greater involvement from the committee would have solidified partnerships with a number of other government departments that are not currently participating in the initiative.

Evaluation and Accountability

At a national level, all Canada Business Service Centres participate in an annual performance evaluation. The Business Link will be participating in this evaluation for the first time in the 1998/99 fiscal year. Furthermore, the management committee of the Business Link prepares an annual plan and budget for which it is held accountable by the parent organizations.

Accountability for the operations occurs at a number of levels. The general manager is responsible to the management board for the day-to-day operations of the Centre. Accordingly, the management board members are responsible to their respective organizations.

Next Steps

In the September 1997 Speech from the Throne, the federal government committed to increasing opportunities for Canadians in rural communities. Consistent with this direction, the additional funding has been provided to expand the number of access points through the national CBSC initiative from 12 to 371 over a three-year period. To this end, the Business Link will serve as a hub for the development of future Regional Access points in other Alberta communities.

Endnote

[1] This case study was co-written with Jim Saunderson, Senior Policy Analyst, Western Economic Diversification. Special thanks also to Bob Hirst, Senior Policy Analyst, Treasury Board Secretariat for his assistance in the production of this case study.

Source Consulted

Interview with Jim Saunderson, Senior Policy Analyst, Western Economic Diversification, on June 1, 1998.

Contact

Jim Saunderson
Senior Policy Analyst
Western Economic Diversification
(403) 495-4301

Enquiry BC

Introduction

Finding the appropriate point of contact can be a daunting task for citizens trying to access government services. Telephone call centres are one tool that can be used to connect citizens with government services. Many governments across Canada have established toll-free call centres through which citizens can obtain general information about where they should go for the services they need. The level of service provided by these centres varies depending on the organization. Some call centres provide very basic information on government services from one or more levels of government while others also provide transactional services. In any event, these call centres serve as a single window for residents to access various government services.

Enquiry BC

The Province of British Columbia undertook a major service quality review in the early 1990s. Under the banner of *Service Quality B.C.*, this initiative examined various aspects of provincial government service delivery. As a result of extensive consultations with staff throughout the province, one of the premier recommendations of this review was the creation of a toll-free telephone information line. Subsequently, Enquiry BC was established in 1991.

Enquiry BC is a telephone-based single window to provincial government services. As such, it serves primarily as a referral service. Citizens who call Enquiry BC are referred to the appropriate government department or organization that can address their query. In certain circumstances, staff may also provide basic program information.

As a referral service, Enquiry BC also provides a call transfer service for citizens. Calls are transferred from the call centre to the appropriate government department or official as a result of a query or at the direct request of the citizen. This service enables all residents throughout the province to contact provincial officials without incurring long distance charges. Prior to the establishment of this service, residents in Victoria were in the advantageous position of having the provincial government within local calling range. The call transfer function has equalized the access to provincial government services for all residents in British Columbia.

Enquiry BC staff use an automated database to refer and/or transfer citizens to the services they need. This database enables staff to make keyword searches and also to verify government telephone numbers prior to transferring calls. This latter capability ensures that citizens do not misuse the system to gain access to non-government numbers via the service. Departments submit information to Enquiry BC for the database and staff also proactively research changes in government services approximately four times per year to ensure that it is up-to-date. Enquiry BC is projected to handle over 1.2 million calls during the 1997/98 fiscal year. Fifty-two percent of these calls relate to information and referral while 47 percent are call transfers.[1]

Program Mandate[2]

The Enquiry BC mandate has four components:

- to provide equal access to current, reliable provincial government information for all British Columbia residents;
- to provide excellent service as the first point of contact with government and refer and/or transfer to the correct point in government;
- to provide direct answers to common program enquiries; and
- to assist individuals in identifying the responsibilities of the various levels of government.

Service Innovation: Contracting Out

One innovative feature of the Enquiry BC call centre is that the service is provided by a contractor. When the call centre concept was developed in the early 1990s, the provincial government was considering privatization and contracting out as an option for a range of services. As a result, it was quickly assumed that the call centre should be a contracted service. No cost comparison was done at that time to ensure it would be cost effective. However, cost comparisons done in recent years have shown that the contractual arrangement reduces staffing costs by 10 percent to 15 percent.[3]

The Program Manager is the only provincial government employee directly assigned to the service. Contractual agreements between the contractor and the provincial government are for three-year terms. The agreement outlines a number of service standards the contractor must meet while operating the service. For example:

- During peak hours, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily, 85 percent of calls must be answered within 20 seconds;
- On average, each full-time telephone answering staff member at the call centre is expected to answer between 200 and 250 calls per day; and
- The error rate of factual material dissemination by staff utilizing the Enquiry BC database will at no time exceed 0.5 percent.

The contractor is responsible for the maintenance and development of the information database used for the service, and the terms and conditions of the agreement require that all data developed by the contractor remain the property of the provincial government. However, the contractor retains ownership of any software applications developed to manipulate these data. This software can, in turn, be sold by the contractor to other organizations. Contracting out the enquiry service also provides advantages for technological renewal. Enquiry BC staff can build system changes into each three-year contract which allows the service to capitalize on the latest technology and to share the cost of such upgrades with the contractor.

Contracting out aided in the protection of the enquiry service during the government cutbacks of the 1990s. Program delivery via three-year contracts has provided stability for the program in that it has not been possible for the government to reduce funding on an annual basis in recent periods of fiscal restraint. Furthermore, reductions in staffing could not be pursued because there is only one provincial staff person associated with the program. Generally, Enquiry BC has been in the position to request increased funding due to continuous increases in service demands. Funding reductions were suggested in 1997 which would have meant the discontinuation of the call transfer service. However, this suggestion was disregarded due to public opposition.

One difficulty with the contracting model is that the staff used within the call centre lack the public sector background that government workers typically possess. As a result, they are usually not as familiar with the hierarchy/structure of government. Another challenge with the contracting model is that the government does not have direct management rights over employees and must rely on the actions of the contractor.

Issues Encountered

The following issues have been encountered during the operation of Enquiry BC:

Clarifying Roles. Upon the creation of Enquiry BC, other government departments and service providers were concerned that the service would encroach on their program delivery areas. As a result, it was necessary for staff to communicate that Enquiry BC was a referral service and not a direct service provider. Enquiry BC will only directly provide basic information on a government service with the consent of the originating government department. Ultimately, it is the departments that define the boundaries of the information provided by Enquiry BC.

Establishing Effective Hours of Operation. Enquiry BC has undergone two adjustments in hours of operation. When established, it was intended that the call centre would be open seven days per week. However, within six months of operation it was recognized that the service demands did not exist and access hours were reduced to six days per week. Later evaluations led to further adjustments. The service is currently provided Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Weekend service was discontinued due to ineffectiveness of the referral and transfer services, since very few government services are available during the weekend.

Advertising. Given the scarcity of fiscal resources, it was a challenge for Enquiry BC staff to rationalize spending money advertising the service. As a result, Enquiry BC is only advertised in the Blue Pages and low-cost government brochures. It does not appear that this has adversely affected the popularity of the service, which handles over one million calls per year.[4]

Obtaining Information from Government Departments. The accuracy of the information database used by Enquiry BC staff is of paramount importance. Unfortunately, some government departments do not immediately inform the enquiry service of changes in government program areas. Consequently, Enquiry BC staff proactively research changes in government programs on an ongoing basis to overcome this barrier and ensure that their database is as up-to-date as possible.

Critical Success Factors

The following factors have been critical to the success of Enquiry BC:

Short Implementation Period. The service was established within nine months of initiation. The short time frame ensured that the development of the service did not become entangled in excessive planning and bureaucracy.

Ongoing Service Delivery Evaluation. Service delivery evaluations are conducted in two ways. First, the contractor conducts ongoing informal customer surveys. The results of these surveys are included in monthly reports submitted to the Program Manager and distributed across government. Second, the provincial government conducts an annual formal customer survey that focuses on the services delivered by the contractor and, if applicable, the services delivered by ministry staff once their call has been transferred.

Pitfalls

The following pitfalls should be considered when implementing a similar initiative elsewhere:

Clearly Define the Services Provided. Prior to implementation, it is important to define clearly what services a program will provide. Associated with this is a proper costing of the services to ensure they are sustainable. Generally, it is difficult to discontinue a service once it has been provided.

Planning. Spending inordinate amounts of time in the planning phase of any project can jeopardize its implementation. As noted, the short time frame in which Enquiry BC was established was a success factor.

Organizational Change. It is important to be conscious of organizational change and ensure that it does not jeopardize the implementation and effectiveness of an initiative. British Columbia has undergone significant departmental reorganizations in the past five years and this type of change has forced Enquiry BC to ensure it remains a government priority.

Key Lesson

If an organization intends to utilize the contractual method, it is important to establish a diverse team of staff members who can work on the various aspects of the contracting process. Given that Enquiry BC has only one government employee assigned to it, it is challenging to secure technical support from other government departments when developing and evaluating a contract. Ultimately, securing this support is essential for a successful contractual operation.

Evaluation and Accountability

Enquiry BC call centre staff conduct standard exit surveys with approximately 500 callers each month. The names and telephone numbers of customers are taken between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. each day and these customers are contacted within the same morning to evaluate client satisfaction with the call centre service. Each January the provincial government conducts a formal customer survey evaluating all aspects of the service. This type of survey enables the Enquiry BC Program to track the effectiveness of both the call centre service and the departmental service to which the customer is transferred. If problems are found with a department or the call centre service itself, the Enquiry BC Program Manager works with either the department or the contractor respectively to affect the necessary changes.

1998 survey results for the service show that it is very successful:[5]

- ✓ 90 percent of callers experienced no difficulty reaching the Enquiry Centre;
- ✓ 90 percent of callers rated the staff performance as very satisfactory;
- ✓ 98 percent of callers requiring transfer were transferred to the correct program or person;
- ✓ 70 percent of callers reached the appropriate program/person on the first attempt;
- ✓ 71 percent of callers rated the ministry staff performance as very satisfactory;
- ✓ 72 percent of callers completed their business/enquiry with one ministry contact;
- ✓ 58 percent of callers use Enquiry BC on a monthly basis at the least; and
- ✓ 97 percent of callers feel that Enquiry BC has improved their access to provincial government programs, staff and information.

The results of the surveys and a performance report are distributed across all ministries on a monthly basis. Furthermore, an annual report is distributed to all departments and organizations affected by Enquiry BC such as the provincial Ombudsman and BC Tel. All reports are also sent to the Deputy Minister who is ultimately responsible for the service.

Next Steps

Discontinued in 1995, the BC Guide is a written manual that outlines all government programs and services. The Program Manager of Enquiry BC plans to resurrect the BC Guide in electronic format. Unlike previous editions, the new guide will be developed for publication on the Internet. As such, it will serve to provide information on all government departments in a standard framework. Consideration is being given on how to make the guide available to those who do not have access to the Internet.

Endnotes

1 Susan Park, *Excerpt from the 1998 Enquiry BC Customer Survey* (Victoria: Enquiry BC, 1998), 1-4.

2 Ibid.

3 Interview with Susan Park on April 9th, 1998.

4 Park, *Excerpt from the 1998 Enquiry BC Customer Survey*, 1.

5 Ibid.

Sources Consulted

Canadian Centre For Management Development. *Delivering Clusters of Services to Clients: Innovations from outside the Government of Canada*. Ottawa: CCMD, 1995.

Interview with Susan Park, Program Manager, Enquiry BC. April 9, 1998.

Park, Susan. *Excerpt from the January 1998 Enquiry BC Customer Survey*. Victoria: Government of British Columbia, 1998.

Contact

Susan Park
Program Manager
Enquiry BC
(250) 387-9273

The Human Resources Development Canada – Canada Post Partnership in Belle Island, Newfoundland: The "Multiplex" Approach to Service Delivery

Introduction

Post offices are a common fixture in urban and rural communities across Canada. No public or private sector organization can rival the 7300 points-of-service Canada Post has in place across all parts of Canada. In recognition of this extensive presence, the federal and provincial governments have utilized Canada Post to a limited extent to make certain information materials and services available to citizens. Probably the best-known example is the distribution of Revenue Canada income tax forms through post offices at tax time. Recent pilot partnerships between Canada Post and a number of government departments further illustrate the potential that exists for delivering government services through the Canada Post retail network.

One example is the current Canada Post pilot project with the Passport Office. Canada Post is currently operating pilots in two communities that do not have Passport Offices (Sudbury and Cornwall). At these outlets, Canada Post employees act as receiving agents and accept passport applications, certify that the applications are correctly completed and the appropriate identity documents are produced, and accept the associated fees. The applications are then sent to the central passport office for processing. These pilots clearly illustrate that Canada Post retail outlets can be used to deliver services in communities that would not otherwise receive them, improving the level of service to citizens in those areas.

Another example, one that is the focus of this case study, is the partnership that is currently in place between Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) and Canada Post. HRDC kiosks have been placed in five post offices in Quebec and one in Newfoundland. While the Quebec kiosks are JobBanks that solely provide automated job search services, the Human Resource kiosk in Newfoundland supports both JobBank services and Employment Insurance application processes. In support of both types of kiosks, Canada Post provides basic care and feeding of the kiosks (ie. replacing paper, attending to paper jams, etc.) as well as providing assistance by answering general questions and aiding in the completion of EI applications.

The purpose of this case study is to examine the kiosk partnership between Canada Post and HRDC in Belle Island, Newfoundland that is outlined above and illustrate the opportunities for single-window delivery in this area.

What Is Multiplexing?[1]

As the title of this case study denotes, the Canada Post/HRDC partnerships described in the previous section are examples of what this study refers to as "multiplexing." Multiplexing is the delivery of multiple services through an existing or partnered delivery channel. The essence of this approach is for one service provider to utilize the delivery channel (physical or electronic) of another service provider (one that already exists or is developed through partnership) as a vehicle to deliver its services. In the case of the HRDC/Canada Post partnerships, HRDC utilizes the points-of-service and the associated physical and human resource infrastructure Canada Post already has in place to deliver services through a kiosk in locations that would not otherwise receive these services.

Why Is Multiplexing Important to Single-Window Service Delivery?

The multiplexing approach to service delivery is *not* single-window service delivery in and of itself. For example, delivering passport services through a post office does not create a single window because the services involved are not directly related (beyond the need for an applicant to mail the paperwork), nor is there a wide range of related and unrelated services being delivered through the post office in a one-stop shop format. However, as additional government services are delivered through a point-of-access (such as a post office or other service delivery channel), the more it resembles a single window where a wide range of related and unrelated government services are delivered.

Depending on the channel being used for multiplexing, various types of services can be provided. For example, using the electronic channel owned by another service provider (such as Atlantic Canada On-line or ServiceOntario) limits the services to the electronic medium. However, multiplexing through bricks-and-mortar infrastructures such as a post office or municipal office expands the possibilities. This approach can involve the delivery of a wide range of related and unrelated over-the-counter services such as form completion, licence renewal and fee payments as well as making electronic government services available at the location in a kiosk format.

Currently, the HRDC/Canada Post partnership in Belle Island, Newfoundland makes an HRDC kiosk, a single electronic window to a range of human resource and employment-related services, available in a remote community where residents would not otherwise have access to these services. Without such a partnership, HRDC would have difficulty establishing a kiosk in this community (costs, servicing needs). By multiplexing with another service provider, HRDC can provide cost-effective single-window service to the community.

Multiplexing is also an innovative approach to address many of the long-standing criticisms of kiosk services. It has been suggested that unassisted kiosk services do not adequately meet the needs of users because there is no direct means for the user to obtain in-person support. It should be noted that many kiosk services (HRDC, ServiceOntario) are designed on the principle they should be useable by the first-time user without assistance. However, the HRDC/Canada Post kiosk partnerships provide additional support in this regard because kiosk users can also obtain basic assistance from the Canada Post employee at the counter when using the kiosk or completing forms. Other benefits to this approach are that the kiosks can be quickly restocked by Canada Post staff who are trained to do so and that the kiosks are safe, secure and constantly monitored.

The importance of multiplexing to single-window service delivery is further illustrated by kiosk prototypes currently being developed by HRDC. The next generation of kiosk, the InfoCentre kiosk, will provide a wide range of government services from a number of government departments. In essence, the kiosks will become a one-stop shop for a range of government transactional and information services that are compatible with a kiosk format. Once the InfoCentre kiosk is developed, multiplexing partnerships with Canada Post and other service providers will enable the federal government to significantly improve access to government services in under-serviced areas by capitalizing on the existing service delivery channels of others.

The Canada Post Vision

Canada Post began to examine opportunities for partnership with governments in the early 1990s. Management at Canada Post was faced with the challenge of maximizing the use of its rural service delivery network and began to examine ways to reduce operating costs by using the spare capacity to deliver other services. As noted, Canada Post is the primary service provider in rural Canada with a network of approximately 5000 points-of-service. Discussions with government resulted in a number of limited arrangements to deliver information materials on its behalf. However, it was not until 1995 that formal service delivery arrangements with the federal government, such as the HRDC partnerships and later the Passport Office partnerships, were piloted. These arrangements have allowed Canada Post to offset some of the cost of its service delivery network and improve service delivery to Canadians. The Canada Post vision is one where a number of government services are delivered efficiently through Canada Post offices, particularly in rural areas, to provide equitable access to government services for all Canadians. These services could include over-the-counter services (such as passport services) or the maintenance and support of electronic service delivery mechanisms such as kiosks.

The Belle Island Newfoundland Kiosk Initiative: A Case Study

In 1997, members of the community on Belle Island became critical of a lack of human resource services in the area. Up until that point, HRDC did not provide services in the area because the population on the island did not warrant the establishment of a Human Resource Centre. Upon further evaluation, HRDC deemed it appropriate to place a Human Resource kiosk in the area to provide some human resource services to the community, such as job searches and EI application processing. HRDC then began to evaluate potential places to locate the kiosk.

Establishing a kiosk at a location does not solely involve connecting it to a network. Kiosks require a certain amount of general maintenance such as restocking paper supplies. Furthermore, access to technical services is required should the kiosk malfunction. Given these requirements, HRDC needed to engage a partner who would be willing to perform some of these basic services. Furthermore, it would also be ideal if the partner could provide basic assistance to users by answering questions or aiding in form completion. A Canada Post outlet in Belle Island seemed particularly appropriate to meet these needs. It was noted that Canada Post has approached various departments on an ongoing basis in order to maximize the utility of its rural network. The Belle Island project seemed a perfect fit with this goal and both agreed to pursue the partnership.

The agreement between Canada Post and HRDC is governed by a Memorandum of Understanding. This MOU clearly outlines the responsibilities of both parties. Furthermore, it assigns a fee that Canada Post can charge for each transaction (ie., restocking the kiosk, answering a query) that occurs at the outlet. The MOU is an agreement in principle that will govern the partnership for three years with the opportunity for a two-year extension. A more formal agreement will be entered into when the pilot is complete.

Critical Success Factors

The following factors have been identified as critical to the ongoing success of the HRDC/Canada Post partnership on Belle Island and other locations:

Understanding the Service Demands Involved through Piloting. The Canada Post/HRDC partnership on Belle Island is a learning experience for both parties. As such, the project is seen as a pilot at this time. Canada Post and HRDC are using this process to gain a better understanding of the service demands involved (ie., the volume and length of queries). To date, the pilot project has proven very useful. For example, Canada Post now has a better understanding of the level of support it must provide for the kiosk and intends to lower its transaction fee as a result.

Not Adversely Affecting Existing Service Priorities. The first priority for Canada Post is effective and efficient postal service. Multiplexing initiatives must not overshadow this priority. This becomes an issue if the new service is demanding substantial staff or facility resources and results in reduced service levels or service quality for Canada Post clients. From an HRDC perspective, Canada Post must always be able to provide basic services to the kiosks to ensure that clients within the area receive an adequate level of employment service.

Understanding the Benefits Involved for Both Partners. Most partnerships must be mutually beneficial to all partners involved and the HRDC/Canada Post initiative is no exception. As noted, HRDC benefits from the use of the Canada Post infrastructure and, in return, Canada Post receives transaction fees that are used to offset operating costs at the outlet. It is essential that all partners clearly understand and recognize benefits others derive from the partnership. For example, it has been suggested that Canada Post benefits from having other services within its outlets because it attracts customer traffic to the location. However, the HRDC kiosk services, as an example, do not attract users or involve transactions that necessarily require postal services and are of very little direct benefit to Canada Post in this regard. Having a clear understanding of the benefits involved for all partners is essential in order to reach an agreement acceptable to all.

Communicating with Staff. For multiplexing initiatives such as the HRDC/Canada Post project in Belle Island, Canada Post staff are required to learn about and be knowledgeable of services that are typically unrelated to everyday operations. Hence, it is important to clearly communicate new or emerging issues and responsibilities related to the new service through training and re-training on an ongoing basis.

Communicating with the Public. It is important to constantly communicate the introduction and evolution of additional service to the public. In the Belle Island case, challenges have been experienced trying to make the service visible so that people know it is there. Communication to the public is particularly important given that multiplexing can involve delivering government services through new unconventional channels.

Communicating the Limitations of the Service. The public must be aware of the limitations of the service being provided. Canada Post staff on Belle Island do not perform client assessments and approvals. They only help facilitate basic transactional services such as form completion.

Ensuring that Infrastructure Needs Are Compatible. It was necessary for HRDC to work with Canada Post to make modifications to the Belle Island outlet. Although the facility itself was handicap accessible, the location within the facility where the kiosk is located was not. While this was a relatively minor issue, it does point to the need to make certain that the infrastructure provided by the service host is compatible with the needs of the other service provider.

Evaluation and Accountability

As with all Human Resource kiosks, the kiosk at the postal outlet in Belle Island has the capability, through an electronic suggestion box known as the Information Gathering System, to collect data on user satisfaction. These data are tabulated and monitored by HRDC headquarters on an ongoing basis. Canada Post consciously avoids evaluating client satisfaction with the service because it has no direct involvement in its design or modification of the service.

Accountability for the kiosk services rests at two levels. HRDC is responsible for the service provided through the kiosk and is ultimately responsible for the quality of service that is received at the postal outlet. Canada Post is accountable for its involvement in the kiosk services and is held accountable through the MOU signed with HRDC.

Next Steps

Human Resources Development Canada is currently evaluating other locations in Newfoundland and other provinces that might benefit from a multiplexing partnership with Canada Post. Canada Post continues to work with all levels of government to identify opportunities for such partnerships as well.

Conclusion

Multiplexing presents interesting opportunities for improving the delivery of services to citizens. Utilizing the existing service delivery channels of others, or partnering with them so that these channels can be created, can be a cost-effective way to deliver services in areas that would not otherwise receive them. Approaches to multiplexing are virtually limitless. Multiplexing can involve physical points of access such as post offices, municipalities, and shopping malls. Examples of this type include the Canada Post/Passport Office partnership or the Canada Post/HRDC partnership. It can also involve the use of electronic channels to deliver electronic services. For example, the Atlantic Canada On-line initiative involves a partnership between the four Atlantic provinces and Unisys Canada in which Unisys' electronic infrastructure is developed and used to deliver electronic government services to citizens. Furthermore, multiplexing can also involve a combination of both of these approaches. For example, the Ontario Business Connects service delivery strategy (currently under development) involves the use of private sector and public sector information systems to deliver government services through both public sector and private sector points-of-service. Ultimately, multiplexing could be described as any initiative in which one service provider uses the service delivery channel of another provider to deliver services.

The HRDC/Canada Post case outlined earlier illustrates tremendous opportunities for multiplexing in providing single-window service delivery. As governments create single windows through electronic kiosks such as the Human Resource kiosk, Services Canada, and ServiceOntario, the potential for improved service is substantial. Government services delivered through these systems could be made available at a wide range of public locations across the country, particularly in rural areas. Furthermore, a wide range of over-the-counter government services that are not compatible with an electronic format could be delivered through the same location, further expanding and improving the single window. From an electronic service delivery perspective, the Canada Post/HRDC initiative in Belle Island also shows that such an approach to service delivery can be undertaken while continuing to ensure that basic in-person support is available for those who need it.

Endnote

[1] The expression multiplexing was first coined by Brian Marson at the Canadian Centre for Management Development on June 8, 1998.

Sources Consulted

Bent, Stephen. "Human Resources Development Canada Automated Kiosk Approach To Service Delivery" in *Good Practices in Citizen-Centred Service*, prepared for the Citizen-Centred Service Network by D. Marie Blythe with Brian Marson, (CCMD, 1998), 49-52.

Interview with Sayeed Reta, Manager - Government Services Delivery, Canada Post Corporation on July 6, 1998.

Interview with Bob Cunningham, Program Officer, Human Resources Development Canada on July 8, 1998.

Contacts

Sayeed Reta
Manager - Government Services Delivery
Canada Post Corporation
(613) 734-4352

Bob Cunningham
Program Officer
Human Resources Development Canada
(709) 772-0501

The Intergov Website and the Canadian Municipal Information Service

Introduction

The Internet continues to provide exciting opportunities for governments to provide information and services to citizens. Unfortunately, the flexibility and efficiency that make the Internet so useful can also serve to impede citizens as they utilize the information and services provided by governments through it. This is particularly so for citizens who are not conversant in Internet technology. It can be very challenging for the public to search through the volumes of government information that exist on hundreds of government websites. The division of services between three levels of government only adds to this challenge as citizens are forced to navigate their way between jurisdictions via the plethora of websites. In order to capitalize on the Internet as a means to connect citizens with government, all levels of government need to work in partnership to apply some structure to government information and services available on the Internet.

This case study will outline two initiatives coordinated by Industry Canada. The analysis will focus primarily on the Intergov website. Initiated in 1995, the Intergov website provides single-window access to federal, provincial and municipal information and services provided on the Internet. The second portion of the analysis will outline an emerging project, the Canadian Municipal Information Service (CMIS). CMIS is a private/public partnership that will enable municipalities to establish websites that can provide single-window access to on-line government information and services from all three levels of government.

The Intergov Website

The Intergov website was a bi-product of the Canadian Governments On-line (CGOL) initiative. In 1995, representatives from all ten provinces, two territories and the federal government initiated the CGOL project.[1] The purpose of CGOL was to encourage the sharing of information and expertise on the use of on-line information technologies to provide information and services to the general public. The objectives of the initiative were fourfold:[2]

- to promote collaboration across governments in the development of alternative service delivery options using information technologies;
- to facilitate the transfer of expertise and technology between governments;
- to assist government managers in the identification of strategic initiatives and priorities for joint action across jurisdictions; and
- to promote proven service delivery solutions and efficient government using a user/taxpayers' perspective.

In order to facilitate the research being undertaken during the CGOL initiative, Treasury Board Secretariat staff created the Intergov website. Staff there never expected the Intergov site would become so popular. This site served and continues to serve as a single window to the official government websites of all three levels of government. Users can gain access to the primary federal government Internet site, the official websites of each of the ten provinces and two territories, and over 350 official municipal websites.

The Intergov site also provides several other services. Users can access a number of interactive discussion forums related to on-line service delivery, they can browse a services catalogue that allows them to determine what on-line services available from their government are of interest, and they can access the official press release sites for the federal and provincial governments. There is also a variety of technology-related links available. The Intergov site is the primary referral service for access to government services on the Internet. As a result, very little documentation is stored on the Intergov site.

What began primarily as an internal research tool for the CGOL initiative has become a well-regarded and highly demanded service. The Intergov site experienced approximately 180,000 user sessions in 1997. The average session duration for 1997 was 8.92 minutes.[3] This illustrates that users are utilizing the site as a means of accessing other government websites and are likely finding the links they need within a relatively short time frame.

While the Internet site is now maintained by Industry Canada (transferred from the Treasury Board Secretariat in 1997), the direction and development of the site is governed by the same steering committee that directed the overall Canadian Governments On-Line initiative. This committee consists of twenty-six members, two representatives from each of the provinces, territories and the federal government. The steering committee is an illustration of the collaborative nature of the CGOL and Intergov initiatives.

Issues Encountered

Acting as the coordinating team, Industry Canada staff identified the following issues that were experienced during the development of the Intergov site and the CGOL initiative:

Some Governments Lacked an Internet Presence. Some governments at the federal, provincial and municipal level did not have Internet websites when the Intergov site was being developed. Hence, the development of the Intergov site served as a catalyst for the CGOL initiative in that it encouraged participating governments to share information with these governments to accelerate their arrival on the Internet.

Researching Municipal Sites. Staff assigned to the CGOL initiative made a tremendous effort to research and find as many municipal sites as possible. This was a major challenge, given the number of municipalities that exist in Canada and the fact that not all have official websites.

Insufficient Resources at the Provincial Level. Many partners at the provincial level supported the Intergov and CGOL initiatives whole-heartedly. Unfortunately, many of them did not have funds to expend on Internet development at the time of the CGOL and Intergov projects. Staff at the Treasury Board Secretariat also feared that a systematic request for funding from each province could slow down the process and fragment the partnership. Subsequently, Treasury Board Secretariat provided the majority of the funding for the projects.

Insufficient Resources at the Federal Level. Even the Treasury Board Secretariat itself received limited funding. The entire CGOL initiative, including the review commissioned by the steering committee[4] on areas for joint action, cost $145,000. As a result of the limited resources allocated, two Treasury Board Secretariat staff coordinated the entire CGOL initiative, including the Intergov site. This made facilitation of the CGOL initiative and the Intergov website very challenging.

Success Factors

The following factors were identified as key to the success of the Intergov site and the CGOL initiative:

A True Partnership. Although the Treasury Board Secretariat primarily coordinated and financed the Intergov website and CGOL initiative, all partners involved were conscious that it was important for all groups to receive equal recognition for their contribution to the partnership. Industry Canada now maintains the Intergov site, but it continues to be governed by the intergovernmental steering committee of which the federal government has only two of 26 representatives (one from Treasury Board and the other from Industry Canada). This approach is indicative of the emphasis placed on partnership in the Intergov site and CGOL initiatives.

Avoiding Unilateral Political Championing. Although endorsement was received from the Secretary of the Treasury Board, it was deemed advisable to avoid unilateral political championship of the Intergov and CGOL initiatives by a single province or the federal government. This approach was based on the desire to strengthen the partnerships and the concern that unilateral political championing could adversely affect them.

Short Deadlines. The deadline for the entire CGOL initiative was twenty-four months. The Intergov website was one of a number of projects that developed within this short time frame. Utilizing a short time frame kept the initiative on track. It was noted that any on-line project that takes more than twenty-four months will likely fail because new solutions will develop before the project is completed.

Hindsight

In hindsight, the coordinators of the Intergov and CGOL initiatives wonder what might have been accomplished had they secured a senior official as a champion who was willing to encourage the initiative while seeking or accepting little praise for his or her efforts. Securing such a champion would likely have attracted more resources to the project without jeopardizing the delicate nature of the intergovernmental partnership.

Evaluation and Accountability

The Intergov site is evaluated in two ways. First, users of the site can submit comments on the site through an electronic comment and rating card. Each card that is completed is reviewed and the appropriate action is taken.

The second method of evaluation is through the site statistics generated and reviewed every month. Statistics show that the site was used 180,000 times in 1997 and there was substantial increase in usage throughout the year. For example, there was a 100 percent increase in use for the month of January when comparing 1997 statistics to those collected in 1998 (11,883 users in January 1997 compared to 23,881 in January 1998). The site is also monitored to ensure that users are finding the information they need within a relatively reasonable time. Furthermore, statistics are kept on those pages that are used and those that are not. This information is used to refine and improve the site.

As noted, the Intergov site is governed by the intergovernmental steering committee. In practice, however, many technical issues surrounding the site are dealt with informally by Industry Canada staff. Subsequently, the committee has yet to effect major changes to the Intergov site.

Next Steps: The Canadian Municipal Information Service

Further to the CGOL initiative, Industry Canada is currently developing a unique approach to single-window access of on-line services. The Canadian Municipal Information Service (CMIS) is centred around the municipal sector and is based on the premise that single-window Internet access to all government services should occur at the municipal level. The rationale for this approach is that communities know best what bundle of services meets the needs of their community and what government services are irrelevant to local needs. Furthermore, most citizens do not understand government from a program or jurisdictional point of view. Hence, CMIS provides services to them based on areas of interest regardless of the level of government providing the service.

CMIS aims to establish a standardized navigation layout for all municipal websites across the country. This infrastructure will enable each municipality to modify the content of each site to meet local needs while standardizing access nation-wide. These are the benefits of a standardized navigation scheme:

- it provides a standardized single-window Internet interface to all levels of government across the country while allowing communities to adjust the content to meet local needs;
- changes to the single-window interface of each participating municipality can be made easily if required. This saves duplication in effort, saving time and money;
- it reduces duplicate efforts by the federal, provincial and municipal governments to develop single-window on-line kiosks. This project establishes a common interface at the municipal level that can be utilized by all three levels of government; and
- it provides a common infrastructure on which to build an electronic commerce platform.

If the project is successful, on-line services at the municipal level will open a window to all government services. Hence, communities will only need to access one government Internet site for access to most on-line government information and services from all three orders of government. It is intended that the common interface will be utilized by over 4000 municipalities in the next two years. The standardized interface will provide a number of "thematic" categories from which to choose. Each municipal website will have indexes for city hall, tourism, economic development, and services. Information and services relevant to the community will be included within these themes. For example, the economic development index may include links to the local chamber of commerce and the local Canada Business Service Centre.

Another interesting aspect of the CMIS project is that it will be delivered primarily by the private sector. At present, both pilot websites have been constructed through a joint effort between the public, private and volunteer sectors: the private sector has provided the technical infrastructure, and local schools have provided the human resources required to build the site.

Concluding Remarks

The Intergov site and the Canadian Municipal Information Service are two very different approaches to the single-window delivery of on-line government services and information. The Intergov site serves primarily as a referral tool that citizens can use to find specific government websites. Alternatively, the CMIS approach clusters related on-line government services and information from all three levels at the municipal level. Both approaches strive to provide needed structure and accessibility to government services and information on the Internet. Ultimately, structure and accessibility are fundamental components of any government-led citizen-centred service strategy.

Endnotes

1 The Quebec provincial government representatives chose to participate as observers.

2 As outlined on the Intergov website at: http://www.intergov.gc.ca/about/index.html

3 Interview with André Fauchon and Marie Carrière on April 16, 1998.

4 The *Canadian Governments On-line: Study of On-line Access to Government Information* document is available on the Intergov website at: http://www.intergov.gc.ca/docs/cgol/index.html

Sources Consulted

The Intergov website at *http://www.intergov.gc.ca*

Interview on April 16, 1998 with André Fauchon, CGOL Intergovernmental Team Manager, Industry Canada and Marie Carrière, CGOL Liaison & Services Coordinator, Industry Canada.

DMR Group Inc. *Canadian Governments On-line: Study of On-line Access to Government Information – Executive Summary.* (1996); available on-line at: *http://www.intergov.gc.ca/docs/cgol/execsu96/exece.html*.

Contact

Langis Gagnon
CGOL Liaison & Services Coordinator
Industry Canada
(613) 941-0251

The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service: A Canada/Manitoba Partnership

Introduction

Many Canadian governments make government more accessible to the public through toll-free call centres which provide single-window referral to a plethora of departments and agencies. Unfortunately, while these call centres help streamline access within governments, very few have systematically developed integrated solutions that streamline access across governments. Hence, most residents must still use a different toll-free number for each level of government. Furthermore, some governments have multiple toll-free numbers on a department-by-department basis. One way to improve service to citizens in this area is to move to a more seamless service by integrating call centres so that residents need only call one toll-free service to access many levels of government.

The Canada/Manitoba Partnership: The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service

The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service is a good example of how call centres from two levels of government can be integrated to provide single-window access to government. Residents in Manitoba can call one toll-free number to obtain basic information on or referral to federal and provincial services. This integrated service is delivered by the provincial government via a contractual agreement with the federal government.

Background

In July 1977, the federal government established the *Task Force on Service to the Public*. One key recommendation of the task force was that toll-free access to a government information call centre should be available to all citizens regardless of location.[1] The federal government saw the value in pursuing joint-delivery partnerships with the provinces to provide such services as it was recognized that the public did not usually distinguish between the services delivered by the various levels of government. Furthermore, telecommunications technology at that time did not permit establishing a cost-effective single toll-free number for the entire nation.

The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service, the first joint federal-provincial telephone inquiry service, was established as a pilot in 1978. Viewing the Manitoba pilot as a success, Cabinet authorized a national program the following year. Subsequently, partnerships were established with New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the Yukon. With a goal to provide toll-free access across Canada, federal call centre offices were established under the name of the Canada Service Bureau in those provinces where partnerships were not formed. These call centre services were delivered by private sector contractors. Other partnerships were created in later years. Quebec became a partner in 1986 and Saskatchewan participated in the program for a short period from 1990 to 1992. The Saskatchewan partnership was unique in that the *integrated* call centre service was delivered by the private sector. This arrangement was short-lived due to budget constraints at the provincial level.

By 1992, new technology was in place that permitted the cost-effective implementation of a single toll-free number across Canada. This would allow for the entire federal call centre operation to be centralized with the Reference Canada national information management centre in Ottawa. Centralization would reduce duplication and save the federal government substantial resources in telecommunication costs and space rental. It should be noted that this occurred during a time of severe fiscal restraint.

Reference Canada also saw the cost-effective value in automating the call centre information base at this time to make the service more efficient and to provide the flexibility to use the data for other information delivery purposes. After discussion and negotiations, the partnerships in Manitoba and Quebec were retained while all others were terminated. As a result, apart from these two provinces, Reference Canada currently manages a single toll-free number across Canada for federal services only.

The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service

The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service is based on the notion that most citizens cannot and do not distinguish between federal and provincial services. As a result, providing an integrated call centre for government queries provides residents of Manitoba with single-window access to information on services and programs from both levels of government. In addition to answering queries, the Inquiry Service also refers callers to the appropriate government department at either level if required. Furthermore, it will also mail out basic information related to high volume queries on federal or provincial programs. Through a staff of seven people, the Inquiry Service handles over 150,000 calls per year on federal and provincial programs. On a yearly basis, 50 percent of these inquiries relate to provincial programs, 40 percent to federal programs and 10 percent to unrelated programs.

From a citizen's perspective, the primary benefit of an integrated inquiry service is that information on programs from the federal and provincial levels can be accessed through one telephone number. From the federal and provincial government perspectives, the operational benefit of an integrated call centre is that it reduces the number of misdirected calls between governments and hence reduces the burden placed on staff from various government departments at both levels. Inquiry Service staff strive to avoid transferring or referring calls if it is possible for them to effectively answer the query, especially since many callers are only interested in general information and hence do not need to be referred.

Another benefit to having an integrated call centre relates to emergency situations. The Manitoba floods of 1997 were a major test for the Inquiry Service. It played a major role in the flood relief initiative as it served as the central number for all flood-related services. In this respect, the Manitoba government is currently developing an emergency plan to capitalize on the capabilities of the call centre.

The partnership between the federal and Manitoba governments is governed by contractual agreements which are typically three years in duration (two years, with an option to extend for an additional year). The federal government provides the province with hardware, software, and the database of federal information (which is updated by both Reference Canada and the Inquiry Service) and the province delivers the federal/provincial service with provincial staff. The Inquiry Service is required to deliver services in both official languages and must provide Reference Canada with monthly statistics. Operational costs such as salaries, benefits and office space are divided evenly between the federal and Manitoba governments. Although the agreement does not stipulate specific service standards for the province to meet, the provincial government standards are similar to those applied by Reference Canada for its operations.

Staff at the Inquiry Service must be very capable and the nature of the Inquiry Service is such that all employees must have a variety of skills and abilities. Given that the federal government requires that the federal component of the service be available in both official languages, some staff must be bilingual. The nature of the service is such that all staff must be capable of dealing with the public and working under very stressful conditions. While there is no difficulty in finding people willing to work for the service, it is a challenge to find staff who have the appropriate mix of skills.

Issues Encountered in the Partnership

The following issues have been encountered during the operation of the Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service:

Centralization by Reference Canada. As noted earlier, the federal component of the Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service was almost centralized in 1992 when Reference Canada consolidated its operations. As noted earlier, both parties were able to agree to maintain the partnership.

Providing Bilingual Services. The federal *Official Languages Act* requires that all government services be available in both English and French. Hence, the federal government requires that the provincial government provide the federal component of the service in both languages. Given the relatively small population of French-speaking Canadians in Manitoba, it is unlikely that Manitoba would provide this service if not in partnership with the federal government.

Technological Change. Technological advances are challenging the way information services are provided. Subsequently, both levels of government must ensure that new means of information provision such as the Internet are not developed independently of existing information services such as call centres. It is essential that the technological infrastructure for all information services be compatible to allow for the sharing of information resources. Furthermore, it is also essential that information providers are knowledgeable of the types of information provided through other delivery modes.

Hours of Operation. The hours of operation of the service are currently from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The management of the Inquiry Service would like to expand the hours so that the service is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Ensuring the Information Is Up-to-Date. It is always a challenge to keep the provincial and federal databases up-to-date. Staff at the provincial level accomplish this in two ways. First, the service receives information on new programs and services from provincial departments on an ongoing basis. Unfortunately, departments do not always provide the information in a timely fashion and occasionally do not inform the Inquiry Service of program changes. Hence, staff at the Inquiry Service proactively research new government initiatives by monitoring the newspapers and government press releases. Similarly, staff at the federal level do not always receive the information on time. As a result, federal staff undertake a systematic review of each program on an annual basis (or in some cases a biannually, depending on the volume). During this process they contact all departments to verify and update the information. Like their counterparts in Manitoba, federal staff also monitor press releases and newspapers on an ongoing basis.

Partnership Success Factors

The following factors were identified as crucial to the success of the Citizens' Inquiry Service initiative:

Having a Shared Purpose. Both levels of government have a similar goal to provide efficient and effective call centre services to the general public as the foundation for their partnership. This has fostered an open, amicable partnership between the two levels of government and has made problem solving much easier. Possessing a similar commitment to serve the public was and is essential to the overall success of the Inquiry Service.

Communication between Partners and Systematic Reporting. The federal and provincial partners in the Citizens' Inquiry Service maintain an open dialogue to address issues and find ways to improve the service within the context of fiscal restraint. Working groups representing the two partners meet at the management and operational levels to review and discuss the delivery of joint services by the Citizens' Inquiry Service. Furthermore, the Citizens' Inquiry Service reports issues and performance to Reference Canada on a monthly basis. Having this type of open communication between partners is essential to ensure that the needs of citizens are being considered during service design, development and delivery.

Political Support for the Service. At the provincial level, political support for the Inquiry Service has been essential. This was crucial in sustaining the partnership during the call centre centralization action that took place in 1992. At the federal level, the Program Review process of the early 1990s reaffirmed support for the Reference Canada service and it remained an essential program.

Pitfalls

The following were identified as pitfalls that officials considering a similar initiative must be conscious of:

Incompatible Technology. It is important to make sure that the technology being used by all partners is compatible. The efficiency and the success of the initiative will be impeded if it is not.

Service Requirements. It is important for both partners to discuss and agree on service requirements for such issues as data integrity, bilingual service provision and federal/provincial identity. Inherent in this, it must be ensured that all partners can meet these requirements.

Objectives. It is important that all partners have similar objectives. For example, problems could develop if the objective of one partner is improved service while the objective of the other is reduced costs.

Key Lesson: It Can Be Done

Joint inquiry services such as the Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service are a cost-effective way to improve service delivery to the public. Statistics illustrate that the service is well used. As noted earlier, the Citizens' Inquiry Service handles over 150,000 inquiries per year in a province with a population of 1.1 million people. The longevity of the partnership, in place since 1978, is testament to the fact that intergovernmental call services can be developed to provide single-window information and referral to government services.

Evaluation and Accountability

The contractual agreement between the federal government and the Province of Manitoba requires that Manitoba provide Reference Canada with service data on a monthly basis. Information provided includes call volumes, database changes, query volumes on a program-by-program basis and any planned service changes. Two types of audits have been performed on the Inquiry Service. First, management from Reference Canada and the Inquiry Service meet approximately every six months to review the monthly reports and the operational agreement. A second type of audit was also recently undertaken by Reference Canada through a quality services survey. This 1997 survey involved interviewing callers from all provinces and territories to determine service quality and customer satisfaction. In the survey, approximately 1100 clients were interviewed, 50 of them users of the Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service.[2]

On a seven-point scale, with 1 meaning "Disagree strongly" and 7, "Agree strongly," respondents were asked to rate their overall levels of satisfaction for several aspects of the Inquiry Service. The mean scores were as follows:

- *The Inquiry Service is a valuable government service* received a mean score of 6.6/7.0. 83 percent of respondents gave the service a score of 6 or 7 out of 7.;
- *The Inquiry Service is a reliable source of information* received a mean score of 6.6/7.0. 90 percent of respondents gave the service a score of 6 or 7 out of 7; and
- *The Inquiry Service is responsive to the needs of customers* received a mean score of 6.4/7.0. 92 percent of respondents gave the service a score of 6 or 7 out of 7.

Clients were also asked to rate the level of service:

- 100 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the accuracy of the information provided;
- 100 percent of respondents were satisfied with the time taken to answer questions; and
- 98 percent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the knowledgeability of staff.

Accountability for the service rests with both levels of government through the traditional Minister/Deputy Minister accountability structure. At the provincial level, the Director of the Information Services Branch is responsible for the service and is ultimately responsible to the Deputy Minister of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship. At the federal level, the Director of Public Access is responsible for the service under the Communications Coordination Services Branch which reports to the Deputy Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada.

Next Steps

At the provincial level, the Director of the Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service is also responsible for all information provided on the Internet and in paper format. As such, he envisions breaking down some of the "stove pipes" that exist between these forms of information dissemination to provide a streamlined one-stop government information service.

At the federal level, Public Works and Government Services Canada was recently restructured to consolidate Government of Canada public access programs/services within the Communications Coordination Services Branch. The purpose of this restructuring was to better coordinate federal public access services with an objective of providing the Canadian citizen with easy access to information on government services. To this end, the Communications Coordination Services Branch is also currently evaluating ways to streamline and improve citizen access to government.

Endnotes

1 Government of Canada, *Task Force on Service to the Public – Discussion Paper*, (Ottawa: Supply and Services, July 1980):3-4.

2 These survey results were taken from the *Reference Canada Client Assessment – Final Report* (1997) produced by Opinion Search for Enquiries Canada.

Sources Consulted

Interview with Dwight MacAulay, Director of Information Services, on April 8, 1998.

Interview with Suzanne Beaudoin, Manager, Communications Coordination Services Branch, on April 27, 1998.

Government of Canada. *Task Force on Service to the Public – Discussion Paper*. Ottawa: Supply and Services, July, 1980.

Opinion Search. *Reference Canada Client Satisfaction Assessment – Final Report*. Ottawa, 1997.

Contacts

Dwight MacAulay
Director of Information Services
Government of Manitoba
(204) 945-3746

Suzanne Beaudoin
Former Manager, Communication Coordination Services Branch
Public Works and Government Services Canada
(613) 946-9148

National Energy Board – Sable Island Joint Review

Introduction

The regulation of oil and gas extraction and refinement is an area of divided jurisdiction between the federal and provincial governments. Governments from both levels have their own regulatory bodies and procedural requirements for the approval of new extraction and processing facilities. Multiple approval authorities and approval processes can complicate an already complex process and make it difficult for citizens, applicants, and interest groups to access and participate in the approval process. The Sable Island Joint Review Process is one example of how regulatory bodies can cooperate to create single-window regulatory reviews to make the process more accessible and efficient.

In 1996, two related natural gas extraction and processing projects in Atlantic Canada were proposed. One was known as the Sable Island Offshore Energy Project (SOEP). This project involved the development of six offshore gas fields near Sable Island, Nova Scotia, the construction of a central processing facility at one of the offshore fields (known as Thebaud), an offshore pipeline to take the extracted resources to a processing plant located in Goldboro, Nova Scotia, and a natural gas liquids line to deliver the natural gas liquids component to Pt. Hawkesbury, Nova Scotia. The second project, directly related to the first, was known as the Maritimes Northeast Pipeline (MNP). This pipeline would carry the processed gas from the Goldboro processing plant through Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to an export point at the Canada/United States border at St. Stephen. Given the complexity of the project, a number of federal and provincial authorities were responsible for the approval process:

- under the *National Energy Board Act*, the National Energy Board had jurisdiction to review the Goldboro gas processing plant, the offshore pipeline from the Thebaud processing facility to the Goldboro gas plant and the entire MNP project;
- under the *Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Resources Accord Implementation Act*, the Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board had responsibility to authorize and permit all offshore facilities. The Board also felt it had jurisdiction over the offshore pipeline;
- under the *Nova Scotia Environment Act*, the Province of Nova Scotia had authority to approve the liquids line from the Goldboro plant to Cape Breton, to permit the gas plant and approve the MNP pipeline in Nova Scotia;
- under the *New Brunswick Environment Act*, the Province of New Brunswick had authority to approve the MNP component that was in New Brunswick; and
- the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) was responsible for ensuring that all aspects of the initiative complied with the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*.

It was quickly recognized by many of the regulatory bodies involved that conducting their approval processes completely independently of each other would create a very complicated and time-consuming process for the citizens, the applicants, and interest groups. These bodies saw the value in designing an integrated review process that would satisfy the needs of all regulators and meet the requirements of all acts.

To develop an integrated review process, eight parties were identified as essential:

- The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency
- Natural Resources Canada
- The Nova Scotia Ministries of Natural Resources & Environment
- The New Brunswick Ministries of Natural Resources & Environment
- The National Energy Board and
- The Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board.

The New Brunswick government chose not to participate in the process because it felt that its needs would be met through the process followed under the CEAA, reducing the number of parties to six. The remaining six participants became the signatories of the Sable Island Joint Review agreement. The foundation of this agreement was the formation of a five-member panel that would hold hearings and produce a report for use by the various regulatory bodies. The composition of the five-member panel was as follows:

- two members were from the National Energy Board;

- the Chair of the panel was chosen by the federal Minister of the Environment, the Nova Scotia Minister of the Environment, the Chair of the National Energy Board and the acting Chair of the Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board. The Chair of the panel was also made a temporary member of the NEB through a Governor in Council appointment. This allowed for an NEB quorum to be derived from the panel (three members) which allowed them to collect evidence in accordance with NEB hearing procedures and to use this information when the NEB made its final decision;
- the fourth member was chosen by the federal and Nova Scotia Environment ministers and the Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board. The person selected acted as a Commissioner for the Offshore Board, allowing him to submit a separate Commissioner's report; and
- the fifth member was chosen by the federal and Nova Scotia Environment ministers.

The rationale behind structuring the panel in this way was to allow for three primary reports to be produced from the five-member joint panel report. First, the joint review would serve as the environmental assessment required under the CEAA and used by the federal government. The provincial ministries of environment would also produce decisions based on the joint review report. Second, the NEB would produce a report outlining the final decision on matters under its authority. Finally, the Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board would produce a report based on the joint review report as well.

The Sable Island Joint Review agreement also set out how the panel was to conduct its business. Given that the NEB functions as a quasi-judicial board, its processes (formal interveners, letters of comment, a hearing, the swearing of witnesses) were used as the foundation for the design. However, scoping sessions, a practice that is used for CEAA hearings, were also part of the joint review process.

One challenge experienced in the design of the process was assigning administrative support to the panel. There was a concern that having the NEB provide a majority of the technical support for the process would give the appearance that it was an NEB-controlled process when, in fact, it was a joint hearing held by a number of independent boards and governments. Subsequently, an independent secretariat was established through a secondary agreement. A number of staffing positions such as a project manager, a media relations person, legal counsel and some technical experts were created. Some staff were seconded from the participating organizations and others were brought in from the outside. The Project Manager reported directly to the Chair of the panel and was responsible for the operation of the secretariat. The secretariat also projected an independent identity through the use of unique letterhead and business cards. It also had a separate budget provided by the NEB, the Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board and the Province of Nova Scotia.

The Process

The panel was formed in September 1996. The following three months were used to run scoping sessions. These included looking for deficiencies in the project and drawing on public participation to identify issues. Furthermore, this period served as an opportunity for stakeholders to gain a better understanding of how the joint review process would work. A hearing order was issued in December 1996 and the hearings began in April 1997.

The first two days of the hearings involved receiving statements from members of the public who had not identified themselves as formal interveners in the hearing process. An additional fifty-four days were spent hearing from the applicants, 125 interveners, and a range of expert witnesses. These hearings were held in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

The joint review report was issued in October 1997. The report covered a wide range of issues and included forty-six recommendations. The joint review report was subsequently used by the various regulatory agencies to make their decisions. The NEB utilized the report for its decision, giving approval to the project in December 1997. The Canada-Nova Scotia Offshore Review Board and the provincial governments used the joint review report to issue their decisions in December 1997.

Benefits of the Single Window Review

There is no question that the joint review process saved substantial time and financial resources for all the regulatory bodies involved by reducing duplication. Given the complexity of the projects and the number of regulatory agencies that had jurisdiction over certain components of it, it would have taken more time than was required under the joint review process. Furthermore, the process would have been further fragmented since the SOEP and MNP projects were separate but related projects. An expedient process was also of direct benefit to citizens, stakeholders and applicants alike given that the public would have become"saturated" with public consultation.

Those involved with the joint review have received significant amounts of positive feedback regarding the integrated hearing approach. This feedback has come from participants from the general public, government and interest groups. Most groups directly involved with the hearing also felt the process was generally open and fair.

Issues Encountered

The following issues were encountered during joint review:

Balancing Public Participation and Process Efficiency. When designing the joint review process, it was essential that process efficiency gains not be had at the expense of public participation. The joint review process was designed to simplify the regulatory process and make it more accessible and convenient for the public.

Clearly Communicating the Role and Authority of the Joint Review. It was essential to ensure that it was clear that the joint review panel was functioning independently of the various participating agencies. This was accomplished primarily by the creation of the independent secretariat. Furthermore, it was also important to make it very evident that the joint review panel had no authority to make decisions on behalf of the participating bodies but would make recommendations to these bodies based on the review process.

Conflicting Jurisdictional Claims. There were multiple claims of jurisdiction in some areas of the project. For example, the Canada/Nova Scotia Offshore Petroleum Board felt it had jurisdiction to regulate the offshore pipelines, an area also claimed by the National Energy Board. It is significant that this posed no major problems for the joint review process, given that both parties were involved in the selection of the joint panel which helped these parties come to agreement and put jurisdiction aside.

Key Success Factor:
A Shared Commitment to an Efficient Regulatory Process

All of the regulatory agencies involved in the process had a shared commitment to provide citizens, applicants and interveners with the most accessible and efficient process possible. None of the regulators let jurisdiction become a barrier to this goal. The composition of the membership of the joint panel and the fact that the regulatory agencies made the final decisions were key contributing factors to the success of the process.

Evaluation and Accountability

Overall feedback from governments, NGOs and the general public illustrate that the joint review process was very well received. Beyond these comments, no major evaluation of the review process was undertaken after it was completed. All regulatory agencies involved in the process were jointly accountable for the smooth operation of the joint panel in accordance with the procedural agreement.

Next Steps

The Sable Island Joint Review process illustrates how various regulatory agencies can work together to integrate regulatory processes to improve effectiveness and efficiency. It integrated the feasible aspects of the review process while ensuring that the participating agencies remained independent and capable of making decisions within their jurisdiction. Those involved with the Sable Island Joint Review are not certain that this will become a common approach to the oil and gas extraction and refinement process. However, it has set a standard that all other processes will be compared to, particularly in the evaluation of large initiatives like Sable Island.

Source

Interview with Bruce Young, former Project Manager, National Energy Board, on May 5, 1998.

Contact

Bruce Young
former Project Manager
National Energy Board
Mr. Young is now with the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency; (819) 994-5227

Ontario Business Connects Workstations

Introduction

Inherent in single-window service delivery is the goal of streamlining the bureaucratic process. It should not be necessary for a citizen to visit multiple locations to complete one government transaction type. Business start-up and small business services have been the focus of a variety of single-window initiatives pursued by various levels of government in Canada.[1] Small business creation and development continues to be viewed by government as an important factor in economic growth and stability. To this end, many governments have endeavoured to reduce the web of bureaucratic procedures and requirements that must be met in order to start a small business.

Background

Simplifying and improving the interactions between business and government has been a priority in Ontario since 1992. Following some initial investigation and analysis, the government of the day mandated the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations with initiating and implementing Clearing the Path in early 1994. The goal of the Clearing The Path initiative was to simplify the business registration and reporting processes. From this initiative came a wide range of "red tape" reducing projects. One product of this initiative was the Ontario Business Registration Access (OBRA) workstation launched in 1994.

In 1997, the Ontario government initiated a comprehensive service delivery strategy (and subsequently renamed the OBRA workstation). Under the banner Ontario Business Connects (OBC), the new strategy advances the vision of business-government relations to where businesses can interact with government through the medium of their choice. This could include obtaining services from private sector service providers or directly from government via a range of public access points such as the Internet, workstations or in-person service. A fundamental component of this strategy continues to be the Ontario Business Connects (formerly the OBRA) workstation.[2]

The Ontario Business Connects Workstation

The OBC workstations enable entrepreneurs to complete a number of government transactions required to start or expand a business through the use of a single-window electronic format. These workstations also provide information on a range of government programs, services and regulatory requirements relevant to the small business owner. The primary objective of OBC is to reduce the amount of time clients spend dealing with government when starting or expanding a business. The electronic single window significantly reduces the amount of time clients spend submitting information to the provincial government. Clients need only provide information once in those instances where the same data are used for a number of transactions. The workstation automatically distributes the requisite information to the relevant department or departments when transmitting the data. For example, an applicant need only enter in a business mailing address once when performing more than one transaction at the workstation even though it is electronically distributed to more than one government ministry.

There are also tangible benefits for the ministries involved. For example:

- administrative processes are simplified and there is less data entry performed by ministry staff;
- information received is always complete; and
- the integrated nature of the workstation encourages compliance with a range of government programs.[3]

There are three provincial ministries that are directly involved in the OBC project. The Ministry of Consumer & Commercial Relations is the lead ministry with participation from the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Labour. Other departments that have a stake in business services have also been involved in the development of the initiative. Furthermore, the federal government and municipal governments have been working with the Ontario Business Connects team to pursue the integration of federal, provincial and municipal services within the electronic workstation.

Entrepreneurs and small business operators can complete the following registrations or obtain the following services at the OBC workstations:

- business name searches;
- business name registration and renewal for unincorporated businesses (business names must be renewed every five years);
- retail sales tax vendor permit applications;
- employer Health Tax registration;
- Health Tax registration for self-employed persons who make over $350,000 per year;
- workplace Safety and Insurance Board registration; and
- applications for a Revenue Canada Business Number.

Located in municipal offices, libraries, chambers of commerce and busy government offices, there are currently 80 workstations located throughout the province. It is projected that there will 150 workstations in place by the year 2000. It should be noted that almost 60 percent of all unincorporated business registrations in the province are currently done through the workstations. It should also be noted that the workstation is a relatively inexpensive proposition because it utilizes a standard PC framework and does not require special hardware. One workstation costs less than ten thousand dollars.

Implementation of the workstation technology has not resulted in the elimination of the traditional methods of service delivery for these services and registration processes. The Ontario Business Connects philosophy is founded on the notion that new services should not be implemented as a means of dismantling existing services. It is the clients who will determine how they want services provided and responsive government must act accordingly. As noted, the Ontario Business Connects vision is one where clients have a range of options for engaging government to obtain transactional services.

Issues Encountered

The following issues were encountered during the development of the OBC workstation initiative:

Securing True Partnerships. Given that the OBC workstations are predominately located in offices that are not owned by the provincial government, it was essential that a partnership policy be defined from the outset. The OBC team saw the need to ensure that potential partners truly supported the goal of the strategy, which was to streamline and improve the delivery of government services to the business community. There was concern that some potential partners would only agree to participate if the provincial government provided monetary compensation and that this approach would encourage partners to participate for the wrong reasons. It was recognized that the tangible benefit for municipalities and chambers of commerce was that they could use the workstations to further their mandates in the area of economic development. As a result, the OBC team decided not to provide any monetary compensation to partners. Although some potential partners were initially reluctant to participate due to this stance, this has since ceased to be an issue.

Sustaining True Partnerships. From a provincial perspective, the OBC team must also contribute to the partnership on an ongoing basis and continue to demonstrate interest in the project. As a result, the provincial government provides continuous computer and software support and training. Furthermore, in many instances it has provided the hardware as well (future partners are required to provide their own hardware). It is important for the provincial government to show that it is committed to the OBC strategy.

You Can't Build It Overnight. Throughout the development of the OBC workstations, there has been a recognition that new processes cannot be put in place overnight. It is important that all partners understand that it may be some time before the old technical processes (such as data processing) are phased out by the new initiative. Some departments were too quick to call the project a failure because it could not be fully implemented immediately. It is also crucial for all partners involved to recognize the complexity of the technical processes of the other partners and to be patient.

Establishing Uniform Standards. Different government departments have different standards for data collection, processing and interfacing. One of the most challenging tasks during the OBC project has been the establishment of uniform standards. Initially, uniform standards could not be agreed to and OBC had to lead the initiative by being flexible enough to accommodate a range of standards. Subsequently, the standards agenda was set aside to advance the initiative more quickly. However, once the initiative was underway the OBC group encouraged (and continues to encourage) departments to adopt uniform standards with the aim to improve service to clients.

Success Factors

The following factors were identified as crucial to the ongoing success of the Ontario Business Connects workstation initiative:

Properly Gauging Success. The OBC team measures the success of the workstations in terms of the savings realized by the private sector through reduced processing and waiting times. The OBC approach may actually result in increased costs to government in the short term. However, it is expected that savings to government will be realized over time.

Implementation Time Frame. At the initiation of the workstation project, the OBC team was instructed to have a pilot workstation in place within four months. This is an incredibly short period of time for such a technical initiative. The project executive views this short time frame as a critical success factor because it forced the OBC team to keep the initiative moving and helped keep the project at the forefront of the government agenda.

Technology. The rapid pace of technological development has seen the advent of a range of high productivity tools that can aid in completing complex projects quickly. The pilots could not have been put in place so quickly without the use of these tools during the design and development stages.

Pilot Testing. The first OBC workstation was launched in the smaller city of Timmins and the second in Smiths Falls. Relatively small cities were deliberately chosen to ensure that the product was sound prior to a wholesale launch. It is important to pilot to implement quality assurance and ensure that the product is effective.

Legislative Change. In 1995, the Ontario government implemented the *Business Regulation Reform Act*. This Act brought about a variety of procedural changes aimed at simplifying the regulatory processes governed by the provincial government. The first regulations passed under the Act made electronic business registration possible through the OBC workstation, eliminating past requirements for signatures and paper copies.

Pitfalls

The following were identified as pitfalls that implementors of similar initiatives should bear in mind:

Managing Expectations. It has been a challenge for the OBC team to manage the expectations of political leaders and stakeholders in the business community. Many believe that if the development of a policy is done easily, the implementation of that policy should also be easy. However, this is certainly not the case for technically oriented projects such as OBC. OBC staff had to continuously communicate that implementation of the workstation technology would take time. This problem was exacerbated by the short turnaround time for the first pilot workstations as this contributed to making a very complex project look simple. Subsequent changes could not be made to the workstation as expediently. Ultimately, it is important to manage the expectations of those with a vested interest in the product.

Understand What the Public Wants. Too often governments design the solution before fully understanding what the public wants. Pilot projects and public consultation can help ensure that the right solution addresses the right problem.

Don't Overestimate Efficiency Gains. Be careful not to overestimate the short-term efficiency gains that come from this type of project. As noted, significant procedural and structural change within government takes time and may cost more money in the short run. Ultimately, any administrator would be hard pressed to make a business case for this type of project at the operational transaction level. This approach is more about effectiveness to the client than about operational efficiency.

Project Managers and IT Staff Must Cooperate. It is essential for the project managers and information technology staff to work together when designing and implementing such an initiative. This will ensure that the project staff have a sound understanding of the IT issues involved and will also ensure that the IT staff have a sound understanding of the policy limitations and implications. Otherwise, there is a risk that the product may not meet the expectations of either party.

Key Lesson Learned

Government priorities change on an ongoing basis. As a result, departmental priorities change as well. A major challenge for leaders of long-term change initiatives like Ontario Business Connects is sustaining the attention and participation of program departments. Government departments see a variety of programs and initiatives pass on a yearly basis. The OBC project team had to prove that the project would continue for the long term before they were taken seriously by the program departments. Ultimately, change agents must prove that they will be involved for the long term to gain the support of program departments.

Evaluation and Accountability

Management at Ontario Business Connects is hesitant to embrace the traditional client satisfaction-based methods of evaluating service delivery. The services delivered through the OBC workstation are unique in that most clients do not start a business on a regular basis. Hence, it is very difficult to gauge client satisfaction effectively because clients do not typically have a recent experience to serve as a benchmark.

As noted, the goal of the OBC workstation is to reduce the amount of time entrepreneurs and small business owners spend interacting with government. Subsequently, OBC uses a set of basic measurements based on this principle to evaluate the effectiveness of the workstations. Some results are:[4]

- the transaction time for a business name search has been reduced from four weeks to five minutes; and
- the transaction time for business name registration has been reduced from approximately eight weeks to twenty minutes.

The OBC initiative is overseen by a joint ministry steering committee with membership from all departments with an interest in business relations. The breadth of this steering committee serves to create a government-wide community of departments, each with an interest and stake in the OBC initiative. The OBC team is responsible to the ADM, Business Division, Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. Led by the project executive, the team is required to submit a yearly business plan and the project executive is held accountable for meeting the goals outlined in the plan.

Next Steps

The Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations will be undertaking a number of initiatives over the next few years:

Internet-based Services. The OBC team is currently developing an Internet-based application that will enable clients to perform many of the services available at the workstation on their personal computer. The interface design will likely not be identical to the workstation interface because the target groups are somewhat different. The workstation is designed to support those users who know very little about computers. Hence, there are many easy-to-use functions. Conversely, Internet users are more articulate at computer operations and will be provided with a more expedient interface.

The OBC Service Delivery Strategy. As noted, the OBC workstation initiative is only one component of a much larger strategy. The workstation primarily covers the start-up component of the business life cycle. The goal of the overall Ontario Business Connects Service Delivery Strategy[5] is to enable "...business clients to choose how and where they deal with government..."[6] in all stages of the business life cycle. This approach is based on the notion that clients know best how they want their services delivered. Hence, the OBC Service Delivery Strategy will create the infrastructure necessary to encourage a wide variety of public/private partnerships, including the delivery of public services by the private sector. The private sector will utilize government databases to provide certain services. This approach will allow business customers to purchase the bundle of government services that meets their needs. For example, a business owner may utilize her accountant to complete a range of government regulatory filing requirements as well as standard accounting practices.

The Master Business Licence. A fundamental component of the OBC Service Delivery Strategy is the Master Business Licence (MBL). The MBL provides a consolidated view of a range of business-related information that may be pertinent to a number of departments. It will replace existing permits, licences and registrations. All primary business-related data will be assigned to the MBL and changing the data on the MBL will result in changes to all applicable government programs. This process will significantly reduce the amount of overlapping data that is currently maintained by a range of departments. Furthermore, the MBL will allow clients to register for multiple programs though one access point. Ultimately, this approach will provide clients with consolidated single-window access to a range of business-related data.

Endnotes

1 Another example contained in this case study report is the Edmonton Business Link.

2 The Ontario Business Connects project team and the Ontario Business Connects Workstations are referred to as such throughout this case study. However, prior to 1997 they were known as the Clearing The Path project team and the Ontario Business Registration Access workstations.

3 "Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Relations – Clearing the Path for Business Success," *Public Sector Management*, Vol. 7 No. 2 (1996),14.

4 Ibid., 14.

5 The overall strategy is outlined in: Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, *A Strategy to Transform Service Delivery to the Business Community*, (Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1997).

6 Ibid., 2.

Sources Consulted

Deputy Minister Task Force on Service Delivery Models. "Clearing the Path and the Ontario Business Registration Access Program," in *The Report of the Task Force on Service Delivery Models, Vol. 2, Toward Citizen-Centred Service Case Studies*. Ottawa: Privy Council Office/Canadian Centre for Management Development, 1996: 109-122.

Interview with Jim Evans, Project Executive, Ontario Business Connects, on April 16, 1998.

Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. *A Strategy to Transform Service Delivery to the Business Community*. Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1997.

Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations. *Business Strategies and Implementation Plans – Updated Following the Vendor Consultations*. Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1997.

"Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Corporate Relations – Clearing the Path for Business Success." *Public Sector Management* Vol. 7 No. 2 (1996):12-14.

The Ontario Business Connects website at *http://www.ccr.gov.on.ca/obcon/welcome.htm*

Contact

Jim Evans
Project Executive, Ontario Business Connects
Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations
(416) 314-4976

Ontario Community Care Access Centres

Introduction

In 1996, the Government of Ontario announced that 43 Community Care Access Centres (CCACs) would be established across Ontario to improve the coordination of long-term care (LTC) services and to simplify access to these services. The responsibilities of the CCACs were to include the provision of a single window into the service system, managed access to community and facility services, service planning and case management, and information and referral to long-term care and related services. By January 1998, all CCACs were open for business.

Background

To understand the significance of CCACs, it is important to appreciate the complex assortment of services that comprise long-term care in Ontario and the circumstances which prompted change.

Long-Term Care Services: LTC services include a range of community, personal support and health care services that are required on a periodic or ongoing basis by people who, because of a physical disability or aging, or who are recuperating from an illness or injury, need help to function as independently as possible. The delivery of services involves numerous private and non-profit agencies, voluntary organizations, agencies that provide nursing and professional services, and facilities that offer personal care and treatment.

Home Care Programs: Prior to the introduction of the CCACs, 38 home care programs assessed needs, determined eligibility and arranged services for people who required assistance to remain in their homes.[1] Home care provided access to visiting nursing, professional therapies, and, where necessary to prevent institutionalization or to provide for treatment or recovery at home, homemaking services. The home care program primarily purchased services on behalf of the client from local service provider agencies (i.e., non-profit agencies such as the Victorian Order of Nurses, the Red Cross Society and private service providers). Some professional and support services were provided by staff directly employed by the home care program. For years, the funding of home care services operated on an open-ended health insurance model. The province paid for whatever level of service was deemed appropriate by the home care programs. However, in 1994 the Ministry of Health began moving toward greater control of home care funding with the implementation of a fixed budget system: the allocation of new funding is now based on an equity formula which takes into account the age/sex mix of the population (determinants of need).

Community Support Services: Numerous community support service agencies complemented the role of the home care program. These various community support services include Meals-on-Wheels, home help/homemaking, friendly visiting, security checks, adult day programs, caregiver respite and counselling and transportation. Many of the agencies providing such services are grass roots in origin, and the coordination and delivery of services is supported by a significant volunteer component. The agencies negotiate their funding requirements with the Ministry's LTC Regional Offices and are directly funded by the Ministry.

Placement Coordination Services: Up until 1994, LTC facilities (nursing homes and homes for the aged) managed their own waiting lists and admitted applicants according to their own internal selection processes. In 1994, placement coordination services became a mandatory mechanism for determining eligibility, authorizing admissions and managing waiting lists for facilities. Placement coordinators worked with clients and their families to ensure that people who were most in need gained access to facilities and determined whether or not a person could be served in the community instead of in a facility.

The operation of the 36 placement coordination services programs was separate from that of the home care programs, even though both programs assessed people's need for LTC services and frequently worked with the same clients and families.

Need for Change

The most frequently heard complaints about long-term care concerned the lack of coordination among service providers, the difficulties involved in getting clear information about available services and in accessing services, and the varying eligibility and assessment practices. The need for changes in the management and coordination of LTC services precipitated a decade of discussion by a succession of provincial governments.

One proposed approach to improving service coordination was the multi-service agency (MSA) model. This model not only involved the consolidation of placement coordination and home care functions under one administration, but also the direct delivery of specific mandatory services. In general, the model was not regarded as an acceptable solution. Fearing the end of independent service delivery agencies, the proposed streamlining of the administration and delivery of services under a single agency alarmed both non-profit and private service provider agencies. There were also concerns that the MSA model would simply create another level of bureaucracy.

In July 1995, the government cancelled the implementation of the MSAs. In January 1996, subsequent to discussions on options for improving service access and coordination with representatives from various organizations involved in long-term care, the Minister of Health announced the plan to establish CCACs.

The province's reorganization of homecare services and placement coordination services involved a number of changes to the existing system:

- The services formerly performed by the 38 home care programs and the 36 placement coordination services were consolidated under 43 CCACs. The merger was intended to ensure that people have more equitable access to services through a single window to key community services and facility care and receive care appropriate to their requirements, whether in their home or in a facility;
- CCACs were established as non-profit corporations governed by independent boards of directors. The directors of the first boards were appointed by the Province; subsequent boards will be elected by the general membership of the CCAC. Board membership represents a mix of the broader community and a balance of health and social services perspectives. To ensure consumer involvement, one quarter of the directors must have used long-term care services. A key stipulation of board membership is that an individual who is in a conflict-of-interest situation cannot be a director (e.g., a representative of a service provider agency who is under contract with the CCAC to provide services);
- Through service agreements, Boards are directly accountable to the Ministry of Health for CCAC expenditures. CCACs are allotted a fixed level of funding that is determined by an equity-based funding formula, and are expected to manage within their allocations;
- The CCACs have the following responsibilities:
    - determining eligibility for visiting professional and homemaking services provided at home or in publicly funded schools and for purchasing services on behalf of clients from local service providers;
    - determining eligibility for and authorizing all admissions to long-term care facilities (although three existing LTC facilities located on reserves and administered by First Nations are exempted by legislation from admission requirements);
    - service planning and case management for each client; and
    - providing information on and referral to long-term care and related services, including volunteer-based community support services.
- When fully mature, CCACs will purchase key community services from local service providers, including visiting professional and homemaking services. One purpose of a brokerage approach to securing professional and support services is to support a fair and equal competitive process for selecting service providers. In contrast, the former home care programs not only purchased services from local agencies, but most also employed staff who directly delivered professional and support services;
- CCACs are required to use a request-for-proposal (RFP) process for purchasing professional and support services from local providers on behalf of clients. Private and non-profit service provider agencies are invited to compete on an equal basis for service contracts. The purpose of the RFP process is to obtain the highest quality of services for the best price. Criteria for selecting service providers include both the cost of providing service and indicators of quality (e.g., staff training, consumer satisfaction indicators, experience, references, agency track record);

- CCAC personnel are expected to know about the long-term care and related services in their catchment areas, including community support services. They should be able to provide information on all available services within their service borders and, if asked, should make referrals.

The CCACs provide a single contact and point of entry for people in need of long-term care community and facility services. The CCAC case managers are responsible for assessing client needs, determining eligibility for services, developing service plans, authorizing the provision of services, coordinating the delivery of multiple services, monitoring ongoing service needs and planning for discharge when services are no longer required. They also assist clients who are not eligible for services to explore other options and make appropriate referrals.

A key function of the CCACs is to determine eligibility and authorize admissions to long-term care facilities. A functional assessment is required to determine whether or not the person's needs can be met by community services or if care in a facility is required. CCACs may carry out the assessment or arrange for the assessment to be carried out by a service provider in the community.

Issues Encountered

The following issues have been encountered during the implementation of the CCACs:

Managed Competition. Local services are provided by both non-profit and private providers. The move to a competitive request-for-proposal was not meant to foster privatization of services, as had been feared by some, but rather to preserve the mix of service types and auspices. However, to be competitive, agencies must focus their resources on services and look for efficiencies in administrative costs. Recognizing that providers required time to restructure their organizations to adjust to the new RFP process, the government agreed to a transition period of up to three years. During the transition period, market share protection is available to all existing non-profit and private agencies, and cost protection is extended for non-profit providers. The transition period ends March 31, 1999.

Divesting Service Staff. Implementation of a fully competitive purchase-of-service policy requires the divestment of service staff directly employed by the CCAC. To ensure a planned approach to divestment, so that valuable skills were not lost to the field and services to clients were not disrupted, the Ministry indicated that direct service staff were to be divested within three years of start-up of each CCAC. During this period, divested staff are entitled to service volume guarantees and to severance payments in some cases.

Timing. Some CCACs were in operation in less than a year after the January 1996 announcement, and all were in operation by April 1997. Given the degree of expected change, the time frame was very short. To avoid wholesale disruption, key components of the initiative were deliberately introduced in phases (e.g., transition periods applied to achieving a fully competitive selection process and full staff divestment).

Growing Demand and Finite Fiscal Resources. CCACs across the province were struggling with growing service demands that were proving difficult to accommodate within current fiscal resources. Hospital restructuring and an aging population placed additional pressures on CCACs and other long-term care service providers. Some areas of the province continue to deal with a shortage of therapy providers and waiting lists for homemaking services. In April 1998, the government announced the allocation of $551 million to CCACs over an eight-year period through the equity funding formula to help alleviate service shortfalls.

Automation. Existing CCAC information systems are outdated and need to be replaced. However, CCACs have lacked the financial resources required to upgrade their existing systems. The need for a province-wide automated information system is regarded as a priority and the province is working with CCACs to establish a Common Information System.

Success Factors

The following factors were identified as key to the ongoing success of the CCACs:

Communication. Ongoing communication with affected parties is essential to the success of most endeavours and the establishment of the CCACs was not an exception. As a province-driven initiative, it was and continues to be very important that the provincial government communicate clearly and in a timely manner its expectations and policies on procedures, practices and roles to the CCACs and other LTC service providers. The LTC regional office structure of the Ministry of Health aided the timely dissemination of information; their experience and understanding of local structures and concerns enabled regional office staff to provide information and explain new expectations and changes to local groups and authorities and to assist in the transformation. Ongoing communication at all levels within the CCAC organization was equally important throughout the transition, and was achieved through various means, including staff forums and newsletters.

Political Support. Without support at the political level, it is unlikely that the initiative would have been implemented.

Recognizing the Importance of External Agencies. The CCAC model is based on the assumption that external service providers are the most effective and efficient means of delivering long-term care services. Given that the participation of these agencies is fundamental to the service delivery component of the CCAC model, maintaining ongoing communication and creating venues for consultation was essential. Throughout the implementation process, senior Ministry staff met frequently with the association which represents non-profit and private service providers.

Pitfalls

The following were identified as potential pitfalls that others pursuing similar initiatives should consider:

Models Used by Other Governments May Not Work for You. Ensure that the design of the model fits the unique requirements and circumstances of the targeted jurisdiction. Avoid the tendency to base new designs on research and work undertaken in other jurisdictions without taking into account the potential impact of differing realities, expectations and systems.

Know the Client Group, and Design Services Appropriately. It is crucial that administrators understand and respond to the particular needs of their client group to ensure that service delivery design is suitable. CCAC administrators, recognizing that their clients are largely seniors, were aware that cutting-edge technology, such as Internet and automated voice systems, was not likely to make information more accessible to their dominant client group and planned accordingly.

Do Not Amalgamate without a Common Information System. It is prudent to develop and install the technology required to support a new service model before an initiative is launched. Although long-term care costs the province nearly $1 billion annually, CCACs are largely paper-driven systems. It is recognized that the ability to access specific data, collected and compiled using a standardized approach, is essential for examining outcomes and determining practices that will achieve optimum levels of effectiveness and efficiency. Such analysis is crucial for setting standards for practices, improving service planning and managing financial resources. However, at the time of writing, the CCACs were not yet linked by a common computerized information system and many are working with outdated systems. In addition to dealing with the technical logistics of introducing a new province-wide system, the technology component requires a substantial financial commitment. However, the CCAC information system project is identified as a high priority and a detailed implementation plan is currently under review.

Key Lesson: It is a Challenge to Change an Entire System

Changing a service system is a tremendous challenge. In this case, the introduction of the CCACs signalled the beginning of a period of change, with existing structures being dismantled and new ones taking their place. Some components of the new model were particularly sensitive (the amalgamation of placement coordination and home care functions under a new entity, the shift to a competition-based service contracting process and the divestment of direct service staff). In addition, long-term care has a variety of stakeholders – the people who rely on LTC services, their families, friends and caregivers, community service providers, facility operators, community volunteers, consumer organizations, provider associations, worker unions and professional associations – which increased the complexity of implementation. Ideally, an initiative will garner support from all groups affected by a proposed change and be introduced in a manner which reassures most, if not all, that change will be beneficial overall. Although there will be resistance or outright opposition to change (and usually more than anticipated), effective communication at all levels and throughout the transition process is crucial. Also, since complete buy-in to a new system is unlikely, the process should respond to the information needs of the affected groups and the public and provide opportunities for their input. The implementation process should allow interested individuals and groups to participate in the change process, rather than subscribe to a process which ignores issues, concerns and questions.

Evaluation and Accountability

The evaluation of the effectiveness of the CCAC model is a high priority. The development of a new computerized information system, based on standardized data elements and definitions, will enable the province to compile, compare and analyse outcomes, and ultimately to improve practices. To this end, the Ministry is working with CCACs to develop an information system which will standardize case management practices and improve efficiencies in operations.

The Ministry has significantly strengthened the accountability relationship with funded agencies to better manage resources. In particular, important improvements have been made through service agreements. The service agreement framework sets out the budget, service levels, and protocols for operation, and defines reporting requirements. All agencies are required to sign a service agreement with the Ministry in exchange for provincial funding, including the CCACs (which receive the largest portion of community service funding). The management framework was developed with the cooperation and involvement of LTC partners. The Ministry's accountability process will include regular performance reviews of all community service agencies under service agreement.

The Ministry is also working with CCACs to develop service standards and performance measures for CCACs and other community based LTC service providers. Activities already underway include improvements to existing monitoring tools and the development of new monitoring tools where warranted.

Next Steps

- In partnership with CCACs and their funding agencies, work to develop an effective evaluation framework will continue;
- Development of a new computerized information system, which will link case management practices, outcomes and financial systems, is a priority. Implementation of a new system in all 43 CCACs is expected to occur in 1999-00;
- Regulations to support the new service system have been developed and will be released for consultation in 1999; and
- A common assessment instrument for determining eligibility for services will be in place in 1999. Such a tool is necessary not only for ensuring province-wide consistency in approach, but also for acquiring outcome data that result from standardized practices (i.e., outcomes that can be compared and analysed).

Endnote

[1] The programs were administered under various sponsorships. Twenty-nine were sponsored by local boards of health; four were managed by the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON); three by hospitals; one by a regional municipality's department of social services; one by an independent board of directors.

Sources Consulted

Interview with Maxine Walsh, Manager of Program Development, Ontario Ministry of Health, on April 23, 1998.

Ontario Ministry of Health. *Government Unveils Plan for Speedy Long-Term Care Reform*. Media release and backgrounder, January 25, 1996.

Contact

Maxine Walsh
Manager of Program Development
Ministry of Health
(416) 326-9748

The Revenue Canada Business Number

Introduction

The government-business relationship is one of great complexity. Businesses interact with governments in a wide range of program areas on an ongoing basis. Much of this interaction is required by government acting in a regulatory capacity. A goal for many governments is to reduce the amount of time businesses spend interacting with government to meet their regulatory responsibilities through a reduction in duplication and red tape, and through process simplification. Such improvements will reduce the cost to business of interacting with government and should result in savings to governments through increased efficiency and reduced duplication.

The Revenue Canada Business Number initiative is one illustration of how governments can create integrated business processes and technological platforms to reduce duplication and improve service. The Business Number initiative has laid the foundation for the integration of business-related services within and between governments. This foundation is essential to foster effective single-window service initiatives that cross government jurisdictions. The Business Number initiative is also illustrative of many of the challenges organizations must face when undertaking significant change in existing relationships with the client for whom the service is being improved.

Background

Prior to the introduction of a single Business Number in 1994, Revenue Canada maintained separate databases and operations for four major aspects of government-business interaction: Payroll Source Deductions, GST, Corporate Income Tax, and Customs Import and Export Duties. This fragmentation was primarily a remnant of departmental restructuring in 1992 that resulted in the merger of two federal departments, Revenue Canada-Customs & Excise and Revenue Canada-Taxation to create Revenue Canada. Prior to the advent of the Business Number, businesses were required to submit information separately for each of these four program areas and utilized different points of access within the department for each. For example, a business was required to inform each program area if a change of address occurred so that each individual database could be revised. Furthermore, it was necessary for those starting a business to travel to more than one location to complete such transactions. The process was further complicated by the fact that each of these program areas used different identifiers to identify a business. Ultimately, businesses faced substantial fragmentation, duplication, and unnecessary overlap when dealing with the federal government in this area. Furthermore, such fragmentation, overlap and duplication were very costly to government at a time when cost effectiveness was of the essence. The Business Number initiative aimed at and has succeeded in eliminating these problems.

A federal commitment to a single business identifier was first made in the February 1992 budget. The Business Number initiative was initially conceived as an interdepartmental project. Later that year, an interdepartmental working group led by Statistics Canada with Revenue Canada (Taxation), Revenue Canada (Customs & Excise) and Consumer and Corporate Affairs, recognized that the first component of an integrated system and single business identifier for the federal government should involve consolidating the four main Revenue Canada accounts.[1] This decision was based on the fact that Revenue Canada interacted with business more than any other federal department. Subsequently, the entire Business Number project was transferred to the newly merged Revenue Canada in the fall of 1992.

The size and scope of the Business Number initiative was such that Revenue Canada undertook extensive consultations with the business community throughout the development and implementation. These consultations served to make the business community aware of the purpose of the initiative and were a valuable source of feedback on how implementation should be approached to avoid unnecessary difficulties. A variety of business associations such as the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, and intermediaries such as the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, the Payroll Service Bureau and the Customs Brokers were consulted. A number of potential problems were raised during these discussions. Two main issues were of concern:

Transition Costs To Business. The GST program had only been in place for one year when the Business Number initiative was announced in early 1992. Businesses had incurred substantial expenses to accommodate the GST. One major expense was the requirement that business GST numbers be printed on all invoices, bills and credit card receipts. Given that the new Business Number would eventually serve as the GST number, Revenue Canada recognized that replacing the GST number would force business to incur needless expenses. Hence, the Business Number was based on the GST number to avoid this. Businesses also expressed concern that they would be forced to incur substantial costs to upgrade computer systems to accommodate the new number. To lessen the impact of this change, Revenue Canada utilized a two-year transition period to allow companies to phase in the changes concurrently with their own plans for system upgrades.

Information Confidentiality. Businesses expressed concern that the move to a single business identifier would make it easier for third parties to access confidential commercial information such as profitability. In the past, corporations typically did not make their corporate income tax number widely known so there was a sense that this information was protected by keeping this number secret. Under the new system, the Business Number would be much more accessible as it would be reflected in the GST numbers on all invoices, bills and credit card receipts. To alleviate these concerns, Revenue Canada undertook an internal audit to demonstrate that confidentiality would be ensured.

The Business Number initiative posed a number of challenges for Revenue Canada as well. The Business Number system was a very large and complex information technology project.[2] It was necessary to introduce a new computer system without disrupting client services. Hence, the Business Number project involved linking the four existing legacy systems at two different data centres to the new Business Number registration system. The system is a very large client-server application that enables registration data to be transmitted in a synchronized fashion from the Business Number system to the four legacy systems simultaneously. This approach eliminated possible disruptions in service.

What Is The Business Number?

The Business Number itself consists of three components. The first component is a nine digit number that uniquely identifies the business.[3] This is followed by two letters. These letters identify the four main Revenue Canada programs. For example, the number would be followed by RT if it was being applied to a GST account. The final component consists of four digits. These digits allow large corporations to use multiple accounts in a program area. An example of a Business Number would be 123456789 RT0001.

Benefits To Clients

The Business Number initiative presents a number of immediate and long-range benefits to business. As a result of implementing the single Business Number, clients can now register, access or submit information for all four main Revenue Canada accounts through one telephone call or a visit to one Revenue Canada office. Furthermore, information that is of use to more than one program area need only be submitted once. An important bi-product of the initiative is the Business Window concept. Business Windows have been established in all Revenue Canada offices. Business Windows integrate the previously fragmented office operations for income tax, GST and export duties to offer Revenue Canada clients single-window service. While the Business Number system was not a prerequisite for integrating field office operations of the two former departments, it made the integration an obvious next step. Another product of the Business Number was the creation of a single toll-free number through which clients can apply for the Business Number and make inquiries on all program areas.

The Business Number initiative also offers opportunities to improve program service and compliance simultaneously in that registration for the number automatically registers a business for all applicable Revenue Canada programs and, in the future, possibly programs from other levels of government. Prior to this, the fragmented nature of the system placed the onus on businesses to know and understand what programs they should be registered for.

Other important values to such an approach were also identified and are now being realized. Implementing the Business Number created the infrastructure to simplify the interactions between business and other government departments through further process simplification and integration. For example, Statistics Canada and Revenue Canada can now share Standard Industrial Code (SIC) information and avoid substantial duplication because they both utilize the common business identifier system. The federal Treasury Board Secretariat has made the business number an information technology standard that all government departments must utilize (or justify why they should not) when creating information systems that contain business-related information.[4] This requirement ensures data compatibility and encourages information sharing within the federal government.

Perhaps the greatest opportunity for the Business Number initiative is the integration of processes between levels of government. Creating a "federation" of business information databases with a single business identifier has presented such opportunities. For example, Revenue Canada is currently working with the Nova Scotia Department of Business and Consumer Services and the Workers' Compensation Board of Nova Scotia to develop the Nova Scotia Business Registry. This electronic system is based on the Business Number system and will enable businesses to register for programs from both levels of government through a single window. Clients will be able to provide their registration information to the Registry system on-line, at Access Nova Scotia or Revenue Canada offices or over the telephone. The system functions in such a way that all systems receive the appropriate information regardless of where the transaction is initiated. Similar projects are also underway in British Columbia and Ontario.

Issues Encountered

A number of issues were encountered by Revenue Canada staff during the development and implementation of the Business Number:

Resistance to Change. Businesses and Revenue Canada staff both exhibited a reluctance to move to the new Business Number. For businesses, this reluctance was based on a number of factors such as cost, possible disruptions in service and privacy concerns. Staff reluctance was rooted in the recent departmental reorganization involving the merger of two departments and further organizational change that would result from the introduction of the Business Number. Management overcame this resistance to change through extensive internal and external communication.

Skills and Training. Management at Revenue Canada recognizes that training needs for the project were underestimated. The training needs of front-line staff should have been initiated earlier in the project and follow-up training was also needed to reinforce staff knowledge.

Building and Sustaining a Strong Project Team. Good people gravitate to sound, challenging projects. However, the possibility of failure can drive these people away. Consequently, project managers must work hard to attract and keep strong, skilled team players by communicating the project vision and direction on an ongoing basis.

Inadequate Time Frames. The original time frame for the development of a pilot was approximately one year from when the Business Number was announced in 1992. Project managers were able to negotiate more realistic time frames, providing a pilot in 1994 and full project implementation in 1995. However, there was continuous pressure for results from within the department as part of the departmental reorganization. IT staff at Revenue Canada produced a system in 13 months that should typically have taken 19 months to develop. An evaluation of the Business Number project by the Auditor General argued that product testing was subsequently compromised by these tight time frames.[5] Ultimately, the system worked well in production regardless of this pressure.

Different IT Systems. Creating an integrated IT system was a major issue for the Business Number project team. This was accomplished by linking and synchronizing the four existing programs to a new IT system. Data are transferred from the Business Number system to the four other systems using client-server architecture on large mainframe computers. However, these programs were located at different data centres and utilized a variety of technology.

Success Factors

The following factors were identified as critical to the success of the Business Number initiative:

Goals and Priorities Were Defined Early. The groundwork done by the study definition team led by Statistics Canada, and the subsequent evaluation and consultation allowed for the major goals and priorities of the Business Number initiative to be defined and approved by the Deputy Minister within the first two months of the project.

This ensured that there would not be changes in the goals or priorities during the implementation of the project. The goal of the project was to deliver a single business identifier for the four major Revenue Canada programs with minimal disruption to business; this was to be done within two years with the aim of improving service to Canadian businesses and reducing the compliance burden. Furthermore, the Business Number initiative would allow the identifier to be used by all government departments and agencies that have a legal right to such an identifier.

Having One Project Leader. Given that the Business Number initiative impacted a number of government departments, including Revenue Canada, Statistics Canada and Consumer and Corporate Affairs,[6] one conceivable way to manage the initiative would be through a joint management structure involving these departments. Typical of such an approach is the need to govern by consensus which can create barriers and lead to project delays. The Business Number initiative was not structured in this way. The Deputy Minister of Revenue Canada was given direct responsibility for the initiative. Furthermore, he had complete control over project finances. While the other departments were consulted extensively throughout the project, this approach was a success factor in that it allowed for decisions to be made quickly when necessary.

Utilizing Emerging Internet Technology. When the Business Number project was initiated in 1992, technology at that time required that all data be collected and maintained on a central mainframe. This meant that all departmental mainframes needed to conform to the system standards. As a result, any changes in system specifications made it necessary for all participants to modify their systems and hence forced project staff to seek consensus on system changes on a widening basis as more partners joined. The rapid development of Internet technology soon after has made it possible for all partners to work towards a common interface. This has provided the partners with the flexibility to make system changes without affecting others. Furthermore, the Business Number system can now interact with any system that can meet this interface standard.

Consulting with Clients and Stakeholders. As noted, Revenue Canada undertook extensive consultations with both clients and stakeholders throughout all stages of developing the Business Number. A variety of client groups, such as the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and the Business Council on National Issues, were consulted throughout the conceptual and planning stages and provided invaluable insight into the emerging needs of the business community and how the Business Number should be designed. Within government, a Deputy Minister steering committee was established to guide the project with representation from Revenue Canada, Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Statistics Canada. Furthermore, a wide range of departments with a stake in the project were consulted early in the process to gain further insight and feedback on the Business Number concept.

Managing Expectations. It was important for Revenue Canada and its partners not to over-emphasize the immediate and long-term benefits of implementing the Business Number. Very little publicity of the initiative was undertaken to keep expectations in check until a tangible product was in place.

Pilot Projecting. Revenue Canada ran concurrent pilots in eight smaller cities prior to national implementation to identify problems with the system. Feedback was obtained from local coordinators assigned from each region and changes were made to the system as a result of these pilots. For example, it was quickly realized that the training process needed improvement. Utilizing these pilots also encouraged the move to consolidating office operations into Business Windows in those cities operating separate income tax, GST and customs offices. These offices were not forced to consolidate their operations prior to the pilots. However, those offices that chose not to integrate their operations in the beginning soon realized that integrating was a natural next step for the Business Number project. This approach avoided forcing offices to consolidate their service delivery functions and made it easier to convince other offices to consolidate as well.

Effective Use of Contractors. Contractors were used as advisors and trainers throughout the project, primarily to train staff on the use of new technologies related to the new system. However, management was careful not to rely solely on contractors and ensured that staff were trained to use the new technologies as well. This approach boosted staff morale and developed corporate memory.[7]

Ongoing Independent Evaluation. An internal auditor from Revenue Canada was assigned to the Business Number project for over one year to develop an evaluation process for the pilot and provide ongoing feedback before and after the launch. Furthermore, a pre-implementation audit was conducted by the internal audit group to ensure the process would work prior to launch. External studies were also utilized throughout the project. The involvement of the internal and external audit groups served as an important source of independent feedback throughout the project.

Evaluation and Accountability

Revenue Canada performed a number of quantitative surveys to gauge the acceptance of the Business Number during the piloting stage of the project. The results show that there was substantial support for the Business Number initiative:

- 82 percent of businesses felt the Business Number was a good way for government to increase its efficiency; and
- 72 percent of businesses felt the Business Number will help Revenue Canada improve service to them.[8]

In addition to the surveying done during the piloting stage, the entire Business Number project was evaluated by internal and external auditors throughout the implementation of the entire initiative.

Now that it is in place, the effectiveness of the number itself is not directly evaluated because it is a strategic platform that has resulted in other service improvements. However, the various services and procedures surrounding it are evaluated on an ongoing basis. For example, focus groups are utilized to evaluate the ease with which one can apply for a Business Number. Furthermore, client surveys are done on Revenue Canada services in general, of which the Business Number is an integral part.

Accountability for the Business Number project itself rested with the Deputy Minister of National Revenue. Revenue Canada services surrounding the Business Number such as the Business Window are also the responsibility of the Deputy Minister.

Next Steps

Revenue Canada is currently pursuing a number of strategic directions that have been made possible by the Business Number initiative:

- As noted, Revenue Canada is currently undertaking initiatives to share the Business Number with provincial systems in British Columbia, Ontario and Nova Scotia. Such approaches, particularly in the area of business services, will enable users to submit information to both levels of government through one transaction via a single window.
- Revenue Canada is currently developing a new accounting platform for income tax, payroll, customs and excise and GST so that service for revenue programs can be simplified and the compliance burden on business reduced. This system will allow businesses to deal with Revenue Canada through a single electronic service window.

Endnotes

1 Interview with Rod Quiney, April 24, 1998.

2 Rod Quiney, *The Adoption of a Single Business Number by the Government of Canada*, Paper presented to the Third International Tax Administrators Conference, April 1998, p. 5.

3 This was the old GST number for businesses that pre-dated the introduction of the Business Number.

4 Quiney, p. 6.

5 Section 20.69 of the *Report of the Auditor General*, September 1996, Chapter 20, “Revenue Canada – Creating One Revenue Canada: The Administrative Consolidation of Customs and Excise and Taxation” (available at www.oag-bvg.gc.ca).

6 Consumer and Corporate Affairs is now Industry Canada.

7 Section 20.67, *Report of the Auditor General*.

8 Prairie Research Associates, *Single Business Registration Number – Initial Scan – Final Report*, Prepared for Revenue Canada (Winnipeg, 1995).

Sources Consulted

Auditor General of Canada. "Revenue Canada – Creating One Revenue Canada: The Administrative Consolidation of Customs & Excise and Taxation" in *The Report of the Auditor General of Canada*, September 1996, Chapter 20. (http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca).

Interview with Rod Quiney, Director General, Business Returns & Payments Processing Directorate, Revenue Canada on April 24, 1998.

"Revenue Canada: The Business Number." *Public Sector Management* Vol. 7 No. 2 (1996): 20.

Quiney, Rod. "The Adoption of a Single Business Number by the Government of Canada." Paper presented at the *Third International Conference on Tax Administration*. University of New South Wales, April 16, 1998.

Contact

Rod Quiney
Director General
Business Returns and Payments Processing Directorate
Revenue Canada
(613) 941-5007

Service New Brunswick

Introduction

It has been recognized for some time that governments can and should make it easier for citizens to obtain the services they need. The reality is that many citizens have a difficult time finding their way through the maze of government services and must contend with fragmented points of access, bureaucratic red tape and government overlap throughout the process. Surveys illustrate that citizens want government services delivered in a streamlined “single window” fashion.[1] Ultimately, the onus is on governments to find ways to become more accessible and useful to the public.

The New Brunswick Solution: Service New Brunswick

In 1991, the Province of New Brunswick was contending with the same fiscal pressures facing other jurisdictions. In the fall of that year the Minister of Finance for the province initiated a public consultation process to hear how residents of New Brunswick felt these pressures should be addressed. Through a range of focus groups, surveys and town hall meetings, it soon became apparent that the public was frustrated with government. They wanted government to provide better services more conveniently and at a lower cost.

In response to the findings of the consultation process, the Province announced in January of 1992 that it would embark on a pilot project to test the “single-window” government service centre concept. Operated by Service New Brunswick (a Crown corporation), these centres are designed to serve as the primary vehicle for the integrated delivery of non-specialized, transaction-oriented services. For example, they serve as a point of access to pay a variety of fees, obtain and submit a range of government applications, and obtain general government information. Staff at these centres are not trained or equipped to provide specialized services such as parole services, career counselling, health services or certification testing. For the most part, such services continue to be delivered by the parent departments. However, specialists from a range of departments do utilize workstations at the centres as needed and the Service New Brunswick offices will arrange meetings for the specialists with clients when necessary.

Since 1992 the Service New Brunswick initiative has been a tremendous success. Ongoing exit surveys at each centre show satisfaction rates between 87 percent and 95 percent. What began with two pilot offices in the communities of Caroquet and Woodstock has grown into a service delivery network of eight offices across the province. There are also plans to establish five additional offices in the 1998-99 fiscal year. The benchmark established is that 85 percent of the population should be within a thirty-minute drive of a Service New Brunswick Office. Establishing five more offices may help exceed this benchmark.

Service New Brunswick Offices currently deliver 110 services on behalf of client departments through cross-trained staff. This list continues to grow. Furthermore, bill payment services are also provided on behalf of the City of Saint John, NB Tel and NB Power. Service New Brunswick is also in ongoing discussions with other cities and federal departments to deliver services on their behalf.

A complementary service delivered by Service New Brunswick is the NB Inquiries telephone information call centre. Similar to inquiry systems available in other provinces, NB Inquiries serves as a cost-efficient, effective alternate means of obtaining information on government services. One major benefit of the call centre is that it is open for extended hours during the week and on Saturdays. The NB Inquiries service provides immediate access to government, an important element for those who reside in remote communities.

Currently, residents can also renew their vehicle registrations via this phone system. Service New Brunswick is currently evaluating ways to expand the types of services available through the telephone system. Further to this, various driver-related services and an order service for applications and permit forms will be introduced shortly.

Issues Encountered

There are a number of issues that have been encountered during the development of the Service New Brunswick initiative:

Organizational Culture and Turf Protection. It was difficult at first for government departments to embrace the concept of having their services delivered by another organization. Departments had to begin thinking of government services from a customer service perspective rather than from a program perspective. Some were concerned that their clients would not receive the same level of service that was currently being provided and had to be convinced, through participation in the service design process, that integrated service would maintain and possibly improve service levels.

Staff Culture and Training. Staff for the Service New Brunswick offices have been drawn from departments within the provincial government. As a result, these staff have had to become knowledgeable about a wide range of services and programs, typically contrary to their previously specialized responsibilities with their old departments. Designing a training program to communicate the necessary knowledge to staff was also a tremendous, time-consuming challenge.

Technological Compatibility. From the outset of the project there was a wide range of information technology being used by the client departments. This made it very difficult for Service New Brunswick to integrate the various systems for use in the Service New Brunswick offices. As a result, it was necessary to compromise with departments on how information would be communicated to and from the Service New Brunswick offices until such time as compatible systems could be put in place.

Financial Resources. As a Crown corporation, Service New Brunswick is required to become self-sufficient by the year 2002. This has forced the organization to focus continuously on this goal when accepting new responsibilities and modifying existing approaches to service delivery.

Success Factors

The following factors have contributed to the success of Service New Brunswick:

Having a Champion. From the outset, the Service New Brunswick initiative has always had a senior political or administrative official promoting it. In the early stages, the Service New Brunswick concept was championed by the Premier and the Minister of Finance. They, in turn, directed a senior bureaucrat to develop the initiative which sustained the championship. Finally, the President of Service New Brunswick is the ongoing champion of the integrated service delivery body. Having an influential and visible champion has been critical to the success of the initiative.

Always Staying Focused. Politicians, the management at Service New Brunswick, and government departments have not lost sight of the purpose of the organization, which is to provide non-specialized transaction and information services. Service New Brunswick will not accept any and all government services that are offered to it. Occasionally Service New Brunswick refuses to deliver services on behalf of government departments because those services are too specialized and lie outside its capabilities.

Establish Goals and Communicate Change with Staff. While it is acceptable to set ambitious long-range goals, it is also important to set reasonable short and medium-range goals. It is also essential that managers communicate the status of these goals to staff on an ongoing basis to give them a better understanding of the direction of the organization and to sustain the momentum of change.

Involve Client Departments. Client departments are as important to Service New Brunswick as consumers are. It is essential that client departments be involved in the design of service delivery and that they have regular input regarding service changes and demands. Failing to do so could strain relations and ultimately impede service delivery.

Use Pilot Projects. The Service New Brunswick initiative was piloted in two smaller communities prior to wholesale application to the entire province. Numerous lessons with respect to technology, access and facility design were learned through this process. The use of smaller locations allowed for services to be adjusted with more ease. It is also important to choose pilot locations that have a good chance of succeeding.

Short Time Frame. The Government of New Brunswick committed to the single-window delivery model in January 1992 and the first office was opened in December 1992. Within this time frame government departments had to be consulted, agreements reached and infrastructure put in place. Having such a short time frame kept the initiative on track and on the government agenda.

Flexible Service Priorities. The Province of New Brunswick is very diverse culturally and economically. As a result, different regions have different service needs and priorities. Hence, each Service New Brunswick centre has a distinct and flexible set of service priorities to ensure that each centre is meeting the needs of the customers in its region.

Emphasis on Training and Re-training. Staff are trained/re-trained twice per year. These training sessions outline much of what staff already know and introduce new services that Service New Brunswick will be delivering.

Pitfalls

The following pitfalls should be considered when implementing a similar initiative elsewhere:

Know Your Product and Know Your Customers. Never assume that what you are doing is meeting the needs of your clients and customers. Constant feedback and evaluation is essential.

Treat All Partners as Equals. Client departments and other organizations participating in service delivery are equal partners with you. There is a tendency to focus solely on the public and forget about the clients being served.

Make Sure You Are Adding Value. Only deliver services if you are providing a better service than clients would receive if they went directly to the parent department.

A Legislated Mandate Does Not Guarantee Success. As a Crown corporation, Service New Brunswick has a legislative mandate to deliver non-specialized government services. However, this mandate is not used to force departments to surrender their services. Such an approach could damage relations between the client departments and Service New Brunswick, ultimately leading to a reduction in the quality of service at the expense of the public. As noted, all partners involved must work together to effect positive service improvements.

Hindsight

An important lesson to be noted is that very specific measurement tools need to be in place prior to the implementation of such an initiative. In the case of the pilot Service New Brunswick centres, information on the efficiency and satisfaction of the old method of operation was limited to anecdotal evidence. As a result, although progress on the project was measured from the first opening of the Service Centres, it was not possible to compare it objectively with prior operations. This information would have been useful when measuring the true success of the pilot.

Evaluation and Accountability

Service New Brunswick has nine criteria on which the service being delivered at each centre is evaluated: reliability, responsiveness, competence, access, courtesy, communication, security, understanding/knowing the client, and tangibles (ie., equipment). However, as noted earlier, the order of importance of these criteria varies from centre to centre, given that the province is very diverse and citizen needs vary from region to region. To accommodate these differences, the criteria are ranked by a Customer Service Advisory Committee composed of members of the public. These criteria are monitored by the Committee via exit surveys provided to citizens at the Service New Brunswick locations and are also used by the Head Office for monthly reporting. As noted, satisfaction rates are between 87 percent and 95 percent for the various centres.

The managers of each Service New Brunswick location are responsible for the performance of the staff within their facility. The functional departments through which services originate have no authority over staffing but do have authority over program content. Each facility manager reports the performance of his or her branch to the head office. The President of Service New Brunswick is accountable to the Board of Directors of the agency which is made up of private sector representatives. Service New Brunswick is also accountable to the legislature and reports its performance through an annual report.

Next Steps

The following is an outline of the planned direction of Service New Brunswick for the next few years:

- Open five more Service New Brunswick Offices in 1998-99;
- Expand and develop the types of services delivered through the NB Inquires Call Centre. This serves as an affordable, easy-to-use alternative for those people who don't want to visit a Centre or are located in the rural or remote areas of the province;
- Utilize other methods of service delivery such as the Internet, Integrated Voice Response (IVR) and other emerging electronic service delivery options;
- Pursue Internet commerce;
- Encourage vertical integration of services through intergovernmental partnerships;
- Deliver more private sector services;
- Make use of other points of access where it is convenient, such as the private sector, post offices and other government offices;
- Enable the private sector to deliver more services using government information.

Endnote

[1] Ekos Research Associates Inc., *Rethinking Government*. Presentation to the Canadian Centre for Management Development (November, 1997).

Sources Consulted

Baseline Market Research Ltd. *Final Report: Evaluation of Service New Brunswick*. 1993.

Deputy Minister Task Force on Service Delivery Models. "Service New Brunswick" in *The Report of the Task Force on Service Delivery Models, Vol. 2. Toward Citizens-Centered Service Case Studies*. Ottawa: Privy Council Office/Canadian Centre for Management Development, 1996: 101-107.

Interview with Marilyn Driscoll, Service New Brunswick. April 1, 1998

Revenue Division: Department of Finance. *Service New Brunswick: Past, Present and Future*. Fredericton, 1994.

Contact

Maggie Henderson-Davis
Director of Planning
Service New Brunswick
(506) 444-2207

ServiceOntario Kiosks

Introduction

The ServiceOntario kiosk initiative is a partnership between the Ontario Ministry of Transportation and IBM Canada to deliver a number of provincial government services (and some municipal services) in an electronic kiosk format. This project has provided an electronic single window to offer a range of transactional services in public locations throughout the province. The ServiceOntario kiosks serve as a convenient, cost-effective vehicle that provides the public with equitable, one-stop access to government information and transactions.[1]

Background

The Ministry of Transportation began investigating automated service delivery in the belief that it could significantly improve service and reduce costs. The Ministry began investigating the feasibility of delivering transactional services in a kiosk format in 1993. This involved the in-house design and development of a prototype that was eventually introduced into seven test sites across the province. The rationale for piloting the kiosk was to learn more about delivering services through a kiosk and to illustrate the utility of such a concept. The Ministry learned a number of important lessons on user preference and the limitations of the kiosks during the pilot process. For example:

- the pilot kiosks provided for the use of either the touch screen or a standard computer keyboard; 80 percent of users opted for the touch screen. As a result, the final design of the kiosk did not provide a standard keyboard; and
- most paper-based government applications require an authorization signature. In the pilot, a slot was provided for the client to deposit a signed, paper copy of the application. Research during the pilot showed that customers did not want to file paper when using this channel. Furthermore, Ministry staff also concluded that it would be very difficult to incorporate a digitized signature into the system. Subsequently, they opted to use an authorization statement that must be approved by the user to complete a transaction.

The pilot process ran for two years, ending in the spring of 1995. Government approval for a full-scale launch was sought and received in the fall of 1995. The pilot kiosks were in operation for a total of two years to allow for the approval and Request For Proposal (RFP) processes to be completed and a vendor-designed kiosk to be developed.

The Ontario/IBM Partnership

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) set specific requirements in the RFP released in the fall of 1995. The successful candidate would be responsible for all aspects of the kiosk project including design, production, implementation and ongoing maintenance. IBM was the company of choice and was engaged for a six-year partnership beginning in early 1996. An interesting feature of the IBM/Ontario partnership is that IBM did not receive any financial support from MTO for the design and development of the system. The corporation only receives compensation from charges levied for every transaction processed through a kiosk.

IBM has a number of responsibilities under the terms of the agreement, such as stocking and supplying the kiosks, servicing and maintaining the network and equipment, and providing hotline support for clients using the kiosks. Some of these responsibilities are met directly by IBM while some services are provided by third parties as arranged by IBM. A number of service standards have also been established that IBM must meet:

- they must respond to an inoperable kiosk within 2 hours. Performance in this area must be acceptable on a continuous basis;
- 97 percent of all kiosks must be working at any given time; and
- mandatory site visits must be undertaken on a regular basis to inspect the equipment.

The agreement between IBM and MTO is such that IBM owns the kiosk hardware at the end of the six-year agreement. However, MTO has the opportunity to purchase the equipment from IBM for one dollar at that time if so desired. There is also a process in place as part of the agreement that allows for technological change such as upgrades and modifications, if necessary. Furthermore, IBM has the right to utilize, market and sell elsewhere any software or hardware solutions designed for the initiative.

The ServiceOntario Kiosk

All services delivered through the ServiceOntario kiosk network are transactional in nature (transactions that typically last three minutes or less and do not involve detailed information or browsing). Most involve MTO but services are also provided on behalf of the Ministries of Health and the Attorney General, and the cities of Toronto and Ottawa. Services delivered include:

- vehicle validation tags;
- driver and vehicle abstracts;
- address changes for MTO and the Ministry of Health;
- used vehicle information packages;
- personalized plate ordering;
- fine payments to the Attorney General;
- parking fine payments for the cities of Toronto and Ottawa; and
- promotional and safety advertisements displayed when the kiosk is not in use.

The ServiceOntario system has been designed to interface with departmental legacy systems without the need for modifications. Information is distributed from the kiosk network to the various departmental systems much in the same way data is transferred from departmental computer terminals situated in government offices. Each kiosk is connected to the IBM network via dedicated access lines and this network communicates with the various department legacy systems.

The kiosks operate with touch screen technology and are designed for easy use by the first-time user. They are fully bilingual and handicap accessible. The kiosks are also capable of accepting credit card payments and it is expected that Interac services will be available shortly. There are 61 kiosks in place across Ontario, predominantly located in shopping malls. This enables users to access the kiosk whenever the malls are open, and expands accessibility beyond regular government office hours. Between 50,000 and 60,000 transactions are processed through the kiosk on a monthly basis and approximately 60 percent of these transactions occur outside of regular business hours. It is projected that over one million transactions, amounting to $60 million in gross revenues, will be achieved yearly by 1999.[2]

The ServiceOntario initiative has provided other opportunities as well. Placing certain services such as driver abstracts on the kiosk platform has made them more visible and accessible to the public. Subsequently, demands for services like the abstracts are growing even though previously there was little market demand. This has allowed for expanded use of the kiosk and improved service to the public.

Issues Encountered

The following issues were encountered during the development of the ServiceOntario kiosks:

Poor Marketing. The ServiceOntario kiosk service shares many of the features of a retail initiative. Its success depends entirely on the amount of use it receives. As a result, it is crucial to market this type of initiative so that people know of and are comfortable with the concept. MTO staff recognize that there should have been better marketing of the concept outside of the traditional government avenues to encourage people to learn more about the concept and to utilize it.

Failure to Anticipate Certain Needs. Flexibility was built into certain components of the contractual arrangement in anticipation of possible future needs. For example, the agreement includes a clearly defined process for adding services to the kiosk platform to ensure that it is agreeable to both parties. However, there are certain aspects of the agreement that were not accorded the same level of flexibility because this was not deemed necessary at the time. Issues such as marketing could not be easily re-negotiated because the terms of the agreement had already been set. It is important for initiative planners to anticipate possible future needs.

Government Legacy Systems. Most government departments are still operating large, complex legacy computer systems. Those involved in utilizing new technologies in conjunction with these systems must be cognizant of the need to accommodate older technology. The ServiceOntario kiosk was designed to ensure that no major modifications to departmental legacy systems would be necessary.

Reluctance on the Part of Some Departments to Utilize the ServiceOntario Platform. Some departments within the Ontario government are reluctant to place their transactional services on the kiosk platform because of the initial design, development and implementation costs that are involved. Furthermore, some departments are still not sure where kiosk services fit within their overall service delivery strategy.

Success Factors

The following factors have been critical to the success of the ServiceOntario kiosk initiative:

Recognizing That Kiosks Must Generate Revenue. Some governments have unsuccessfully used kiosks solely as a means of making information accessible to the public. The difficulty with this approach is that it does not generate revenue to offset the development and infrastructure costs involved, consequently making the kiosk a very expensive way to distribute information. Furthermore, providing information services through a kiosk encourages browsers with no particular service need to use the kiosk, making the service even more costly. The Internet serves as a better approach than kiosks if the aim is solely to provide information.

Having Something in It for the Client. Initiatives such as the ServiceOntario kiosks must improve the level of service citizens are getting in order to be successful. Simply replacing existing government offices with kiosks would not have achieved this. The ServiceOntario initiative significantly improves convenience to clients by increasing the points of access available and expanding the hours of operation. This has resulted in a customer satisfaction rating of 95 percent for the kiosk services.

Having a Solid Business Case. The ServiceOntario project team put tremendous effort into formulating a concrete business case for kiosk services. This involved an extensive proof-of-concept/piloting phase to show that kiosks could be used successfully to improve service and that the public was receptive to the concept. Having solid evidence to this effect made it much easier to obtain approval for the wholesale implementation of the project.

Short Implementation Time Frame. Once the contract was in place, IBM was given nine months to design and build a kiosk and network system. This short time frame was made possible through the partnership with IBM in that the corporation could utilize its expertise to this end. Within government, a short implementation time frame served to keep the initiative on the government agenda.

Senior Political and Administrative Support. It was important to have support from senior political and administrative officials within government. This also contributed to keeping the initiative a government priority.

Pitfall: Make Sure Kiosks Are the Right Instrument

Kiosks are not the “be all or end all” for government services. MTO management recognizes that the majority of transactional services will still require in-person service and that kiosks only account for 10 percent to 15 percent of all Ministry transactional services. However, the kiosk has worked well for certain types of transactional services and has improved the level of service received by clients. Anyone considering using kiosks should be certain that kiosks are the right instrument for what they hope to achieve.

Hindsight: Market Your Initiative

MTO staff define the ServiceOntario kiosk initiative as a government-based retail business. As such, it is important to let clients know that a new service is available. Because MTO did not make marketing part of the agreement with IBM, it has been difficult to substantially raise the visibility of the initiative. In hindsight, a marketing strategy should have been a major component of the partnership.

Key Lesson: Working with the Private Sector Can Improve Service

The ServiceOntario kiosk initiative illustrates that government can work with the private sector to improve service. The MTO/IBM partnership is a mutually beneficial relationship that has been of little cost to the public. Clients are receiving better service and IBM has proven its abilities with kiosk technology, making the company and its services marketable to other governments.

Evaluation and Accountability

The Ministry Of Transportation evaluates the performance of the kiosks in a number of ways:

- Users of the kiosks are asked to complete a voluntary satisfaction survey at the end of their transaction. On average, the kiosks receive a satisfaction rating of 95 percent even though most transactions revolve around taxes or fines. The October 1997 results of the monthly survey provide some other interesting findings: 97 percent of respondents feel the kiosks save time; 95 percent would use the kiosk again; 95 percent found the kiosk easy to use; 94 percent felt the kiosks were placed in a convenient location; and 94 percent found the kiosks *enjoyable* to use;[3]
- Performance of the kiosks is monitored on an ongoing basis by the Ministry. 97 percent of the kiosk must be operational at any given time and IBM (or their contractor) must respond to a failing kiosk within 2 hours; and
- MTO and IBM executives meet at both the executive and working levels on a monthly basis to discuss the performance of the system.

IBM handles most front-line customer queries and problems at the kiosks. However, complaints or issues raised by clients can be submitted to the Ministry. Although IBM is the service provider, MTO is ultimately accountable for the performance of the kiosks. The department communicates the performance of the kiosks to all ministries involved on a monthly basis (Health, Attorney General, Consumer and Commercial Relations, Natural Resources and MTO).

Next Steps

MTO is looking for ways to expand the number of services delivered through the kiosks. Many users who have completed the electronic survey have indicated that they would like to see more services available through the kiosk. Some possible services that MTO is investigating for delivery through the kiosk network include: writs and judgment certificates; JobBank information; tenant protection packages; campground and recreational bookings; and special occasion permits. Furthermore, MTO is evaluating all service delivery options such as counter, telephone, Internet and kiosk services to maximize service delivery.

Endnotes

1 David Mee, “ServiceOntario Kiosk – A Service Improvement Case Study.” Presentation slides from the Ontario Regional Forum of the Citizen-Centred Service Network (Toronto, 1997).

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

Sources Consulted

Canadian Centre for Management Development, *Delivering Clusters of Services to Citizens: Innovations from outside the Government of Canada*, Ottawa:CCMD, 1995.

Interview with David Mee, Director, Business & Technology Integration Group, Ontario Ministry of Transportation on April 29, 1998.

Mee, David. “ServiceOntario Kiosk – A Service Improvement Case Study.” Presentation Slides from the *Ontario Regional Forum of the Citizen-Centred Service Network* held in Toronto in November 1997.

“Ontario Ministry of Transportation – ServiceOntario Kiosk.” *Public Sector Management* Vol. 8 No. 2 (1997):10.

The ServiceOntario Kiosks website at *http://www.mtogov.on.ca/english/kiosk/main.htm*

Contact

David Mee
Director, Business and Technology Integration Group
Ontario Ministry of Transportation
(416) 235-3589

Vancouver Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams

Introduction

Finding solutions to community problems or issues that span a number of departments from various levels and forms of government requires the coordination and cooperation of all organizations involved. It is to the detriment of the citizen when these organizations fail to work together to understand and resolve such issues. Most citizens cannot readily discern the division of powers and responsibilities within and between the various governments, organizations and other bodies. Furthermore, they cannot and should not be expected to effectively engage each of these organizations simultaneously when trying to communicate community problems or issues. It must be ensured that citizens can clearly impart issues in their community to all levels and forms of government and that there are procedures in place that ensure governments will work together to find solutions.

Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams: City of Vancouver

In 1994, the City of Vancouver launched a program entitled *Better City Government*. The purpose of this initiative was to improve city operations so that citizens would receive more efficient and effective service delivery from the City. To this end, the Better City Government program involved a wide range of reviews and strategic projects.

One key review was a workshop held by staff from all City departments with residents from two neighbourhoods. Under the banner of *Neighbourhood Partnership and Integrated Service Delivery*, the workshop considered ways that City services could be integrated and made more accessible so that staff could work with the community to resolve local issues. It was clearly recognized that there was a need for a mechanism through which front-line staff from all departments could work together with residents on issues raised by the community. As a result of the workshop, the City designed and implemented the Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams (NISTs) in 1995.

The concept of the NIST is simple. The municipality is divided into fifteen communities and one team is assigned to each community. Capitalizing on the ninety-plus municipal facilities and 113 schools dispersed throughout the city, the NIST teams are made up of front-line staff from each department who, for the most part, work within their community. The departments involved include: Parks, Police, Library, Fire, Health, Engineering, Planning, Social Planning, Permits & Licensing. School board representatives, health board officials and other community-based organizations also work with the teams on an issue-by-issue basis. This intergovernmental aspect encourages governments, regardless of level or jurisdictions, to work together to meet the needs of citizens.

Each NIST team has approximately 10 members. One of these members is a facilitator whose roll is to coordinate and motivate the teams. All staff involved with the NIST continue to perform their regular duties and report to their parent departments. Hence, they serve as the direct link between the NIST and their department. Given that staff continue to perform their regular responsibilities, another attractive feature of the NIST model is that no additional staff need to be employed to staff the teams. The only staff member assigned directly to the teams is an administrative coordinator who ensures that referrals from staff and citizens are directed to the appropriate team.

The goals of the NISTs are fivefold:[1]

- to ensure accessible, efficient, effective and friendly service delivery;
- to establish approaches at a neighbourhood level on issues and service;
- to involve the community in issue identification and problem solving;
- to result in creative, collaborative problem solving; and
- to provide the community ready access to City information.

There are two ways the NISTs can become involved in community-based issues. First, each NIST can identify and pursue issues in its community. Second, issues can be referred to the NISTs by the various departments or organizations. The teams meet monthly and communicate with each other on an ongoing basis through voice mail, e-mail and Internet newsgroups. If an issue does not require input from all team members, the relevant members are assigned to pursue the matter. Further to the goal of making government more accessible to the public, most NIST meetings are held in a facility within the community the NIST represents.

Issues Encountered

The following issues were encountered during the development and implementation of the NIST project:

Internal Stove Pipes. Initially, some departments were not receptive to the new team approach to problem solving. There was a belief that the processes already in place were adequate and effective. Furthermore, some staff continued to try to solve cross-jurisdictional problems independent of the teams because they felt they had viable department-based solutions. However, these stove pipes have been eroded slowly over time as staff begin to realize that the NIST teams can help deal with very difficult, long-standing problems.

Turf Protection. The nature of the service teams is such that staff members must now hand over issues that they were previously responsible for solving. As a result, some staff have been protective of their duties because they are worried about being replaced by the NISTs. Senior staff have resolved this issue for the most part by communicating that the NISTs are not intended for this purpose.

Organizational Culture. Some municipal departments adapted easily to the team approach to problem solving. Others departments, such as the fire and police departments, have very strict hierarchical structures. This has made it difficult for staff from these departments to participate in team-based problem solving. This issue has been overcome by continuously encouraging team members to actively participate in the teams.

Understanding Roles and Responsibilities. The NISTs were created to deal with problems in the community. However, some teams attempted to expand their mandate to include proactive involvement in community development. Given that this was not the purpose of the teams, senior management had to reiterate the roles and responsibilities of the teams.

Access to and Knowledge of Technology. The City of Vancouver has over 8,000 staff in various locations throughout the City. At the outset of the initiative, it was assumed that all staff had access to the standard complement of equipment such as a telephone, voice mail and a fax machine. What the project leaders soon realized was that some staff assigned to the teams did not have access to these devices. Subsequently, the project leaders had to work extensively with the various departments to ensure that communications equipment was readily available to all team members. Furthermore, some staff required additional training in order to use newer technologies such as the Internet and newsgroups. The teams now make use of Internet newsgroups, databases, e-mail and voice mail to communicate with each other and share information.

Critical Success Factors

The following factors have been critical to the success of the NISTs:

Limited Piloting. A pilot NIST was established for two months prior to the wholesale implementation of the project. Initially, it was intended that the pilot would be run for an extended period prior to expansion. However, senior management determined that implementation should go ahead as quickly as possible in all communities once success was experienced in the pilot.

Ensuring Objectivity. It was a challenge to ensure that the NISTs remained objective when dealing with issues within their community. It was feared that the NISTs could become a means for community interests to lobby the municipal government if the NISTs did not maintain their objectivity.

Leadership. At the executive level, the NIST concept has been embraced by all senior management at the City of Vancouver. At the operational level, each team has been assigned a facilitator. While leaders in their own right, the group facilitators also liaise with senior management on ways to motivate and develop the NISTs.

Communicating Change to Staff. It was essential for staff to have an understanding of the direction of any initiative that might have an impact on them. This helped encourage staff buy-in and active participation. With the NIST initiative, senior management communicated the direction of the project to staff on an ongoing basis.

Training. All staff received substantial amounts of training at the beginning of the NIST project. Given that this model would have a direct impact on middle management jurisdiction, senior management ensured that middle managers understood their role in the new model as well.

Pitfalls

The following pitfalls should be considered when undertaking an initiative similar to the NISTs:

- Some people do not know how to work in groups or share responsibility. The traditional, hierarchical organization does not typically foster these skills. As a result, substantial time must be taken to make sure that staff are capable of teamwork. The NIST model will not work if staff cannot work together.
- Management must give the teams the freedom to solve problems independently. It is natural for management to want to be directly involved in problem solving. While the teams may want management to take a prescriptive approach and provide extensive guidance, managers must leave the teams to work on their own.

Hindsight

An essential component of the NIST model is the facilitator that leads each team. The success of a NIST depends largely on the leadership abilities of the facilitator. Recognizing this from the outset of the project, NIST organizers selected facilitators who were key leaders in the organization. However, an ongoing challenge has been to retain these leaders given that they are continually attracted to other projects and responsibilities. In hindsight, management sees the benefit of securing effective facilitators on a long-term basis to bring stability to the project.

Key Lesson

Management must take the time and patiently challenge team members to operate outside the mindset of their project areas and to consider issues holistically. It is natural for group members to view issues from their parent program areas. However, staff can and will become effective team-oriented problem solvers with the proper encouragement and training.

Evaluation

The City of Vancouver is currently developing a benchmarking process to allow it to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the NISTs on a yearly basis. Generally, the areas examined include the number of issues handled, the number of issues resolved and the timeliness in which the issues were dealt with. Results from the first completed evaluation illustrate that the teams are working well in this regard. The City is also considering developing a follow-up survey to ensure that the teams are meeting the needs of citizens.

All evaluations of the NISTs are reported to Vancouver City Council on a yearly basis and the accountability structure is such that the Chief Administrative Officer is directly responsible for their performance.

Next Steps

Senior management at the City of Vancouver recognize that their citizen base is very diverse. Hence, they are striving to expand the skills and abilities of their staff, particularly those who deal directly with the public on an ongoing basis. For example, staff are being trained in conflict resolution and other problem-solving techniques.

Management may also propose the reallocation of some of the NISTs. Over the past two years it has become apparent that some areas of the City generate more issues. It is in these areas that the NISTs are most active. Conversely, some areas generate fewer issues requiring resolution and under-utilize their NISTs. Consequently, management may propose adjusting the allocation of the NISTs to maximize their use.

Endnote

[1] City of Vancouver, City Manager, *Administrative Report – Integrated Service Teams* (November 28, 1995), 2.

Sources Consulted

City of Vancouver. City Manager. *Administrative Report – Integrated Service Delivery*. September 20, 1994.

City of Vancouver. City Manager. *Administrative Report – Integrated Service Teams*. November 28, 1995.

City of Vancouver. City Manager. *Administrative Report – Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams – Staffing.* January 17, 1997.

City of Vancouver. *Integrated Service Teams – Orientation Session (Guide)*. October, 1995.

"City of Vancouver – Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams." *Public Sector Management* Vol. 8 No. 2 (1997):8.

Interview with Judy Rogers, Deputy City Manager – City of Vancouver, on April 14, 1998.

Contact

Judy Rogers
Deputy City Manager
City of Vancouver
(604) 873-7626

Appendix I – Case Summaries

ABORIGINAL SINGLE WINDOW INITIATIVE (ASWI)

The Aboriginal Single Window Initiative aims to improve access to federal, provincial and municipal programs and services for urban Aboriginal people. Located in downtown Winnipeg, the ASWI is a partnership between all three levels of government.

ACCESS NOVA SCOTIA AND THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND CONSUMER SERVICES

Access Nova Scotia centres deliver many of the high-volume front-line transactional services provided by the Nova Scotia government. The concept is based on the principle of creating a single window for access to multiple services.

ATLANTIC CANADA ON-LINE (ACOL)

Atlantic Canada On-line is a strategic business alliance between all four Atlantic provinces and a private sector consortium led by Unisys Canada Inc. Its purpose is to provide businesses and citizens with electronic access to information databases currently stored and managed by government.

BC GOVERNMENT AGENTS

BC Government Agent offices are the single-window providers of hundreds of services to rural and remote communities throughout the province.

BURLINGTON RESOURCE CENTRE

The Burlington Resource Centre is a federal/provincial/municipal single-window initiative to provide employment and human resource services.

CANADIAN GEOSPATIAL DATA INFRASTRUCTURE (CGDI)

CGDI is an intergovernmental initiative that aims to promote the sharing of digital geographic information over the Internet. The goal of CGDI is to reduce the duplication and eliminate the barriers that impede the growth and development of the geographic information component of the Internet.

EDMONTON BUSINESS LINK BUSINESS SERVICE CENTRE

The Edmonton Business Link Business Service Centre is a Canada Business Service Centre partnership involving the federal government, the Province of Alberta and the City of Edmonton.

ENQUIRY BC

Enquiry BC is a telephone-based single window to provincial government services. As such, it serves primarily as a referral service. Citizens who call Enquiry BC are referred to the appropriate government department or organization that can address their query.

HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT CANADA(HRDC) / CANADA POST PARTNERSHIP IN BELLE ISLAND, NEWFOUNDLAND

In Belle Island Newfoundland, HRDC has an agreement to locate one of its Human Resource kiosks in a Canada Post outlet. This agreement assigns responsibility for stocking the kiosk and answering basic questions to Canada Post which in turn receives a fee for every transaction made.

INTERGOV WEBSITE & THE CANADIAN MUNICIPAL INFORMATION SERVICE

The Intergov website provides on-line single-window access to the main federal government website and all provincial/territorial websites, and hundreds of municipal websites. The Canadian Municipal Information Service is a federal initiative to encourage single-window Internet-based information service delivery at the municipal level.

MANITOBA CITIZENS' INQUIRY SERVICE

The Manitoba Citizens' Inquiry Service is a partnership between the federal and Manitoba governments to provide an integrated call centre for government queries. It provides the residents of Manitoba with single-window access to information on services and programs from both levels of government.

National Energy Board – Sable Island Joint Review	The National Energy Board has undertaken a number of initiatives to eliminate duplication and encourage single-window service in a regulatory environment. The Sable Island Joint Review was an integrated multi-jurisdictional hearing for a major drilling, pipeline and processing project in Atlantic Canada.
Ontario Business Connects Workstations (OBC)	The OBC workstations enable entrepreneurs to complete a number of government transactions required to start or expand a business through the use of a single-window electronic format. These workstations also provide information on a range of government programs, services and regulatory requirements relevant to the small business owner.
Ontario Community Care Access Centres (CCACs)	The Community Care Access Centres provide single-window needs assessment, information and referral for home care and long-term care in communities across Ontario.
Revenue Canada Business Number	The Revenue Canada Business Number serves as a common identifier for four major Revenue Canada accounts. As a result, clients can now register, access or submit information for these accounts through one telephone call or a visit to a Revenue Canada Business Window office.
Service New Brunswick	Service New Brunswick offices are designed to serve as the primary vehicle for the integrated single-window delivery of non-specialized, transaction-oriented services. For example, these offices serve as a point of access to pay a variety of fees, obtain and submit a range of government applications, and obtain general government information.
ServiceOntario Kiosks	The ServiceOntario kiosks provide single-window access to a number of government services in an electronic format. These kiosks are located in high-volume locations such as shopping malls and are the product of a partnership between IBM Canada and the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.
Vancouver Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams (NISTs)	The Vancouver Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams serve to overcome jurisdictional barriers within the City to encourage interdepartmental solutions to issues that span multiple departments. Made up of members from all City departments and some external agencies, one NIST has been assigned to each of the 15 communities in Vancouver.

Appendix II – Methodology

The project was divided into four stages between January and September, 1998. The first stage involved surveying the field of SW service delivery in Canada to gain a better understanding of the extent of activity in this area. Sources consulted included the 1996 Deputy Ministers Task Force on Citizen-Centred Service Delivery; publications on service delivery, including *Alternative Service Delivery: Sharing Governance in Canada* (KPMG, 1997) and *Rethinking the Delivery of Service to Citizens* (Seidle, 1995); public management journals and magazines; and a variety of government and government-related websites. Findings from meetings of the Citizen-Centred Service Network were also utilized and a request was sent out over the Network e-mail Listserv for examples of SW service delivery. In all, over forty examples of Canadian SWs were identified through this review.

The second stage of the project involved selecting the cases for further study. Selection was based on such considerations as ensuring coverage of all three levels of government; providing examples of intergovernmental, public-nonprofit, and public-private SW service delivery partnerships; and illustrating the different SW mechanisms such as the Internet, telephone services, kiosks, and physical “bricks and mortar” approaches. Twenty-two cases were chosen for further investigation with the recognition that approximately eighteen would be developed into case studies and included in this final report.

The third stage of the study consisted of interviewing senior officials involved with the cases selected and communicating their stories in the form of written case studies. A standard questionnaire was used for all case studies. It should be noted, however, that a certain degree of flexibility was used to capture the salient points as effectively as possible.

In the fourth stage, these studies were analysed so as to provide an overview of the major issues and success factors for SW service delivery initiatives, and key considerations for those undertaking SW service delivery in the future.

Appendix III –
The Citizen-Centred Service Network

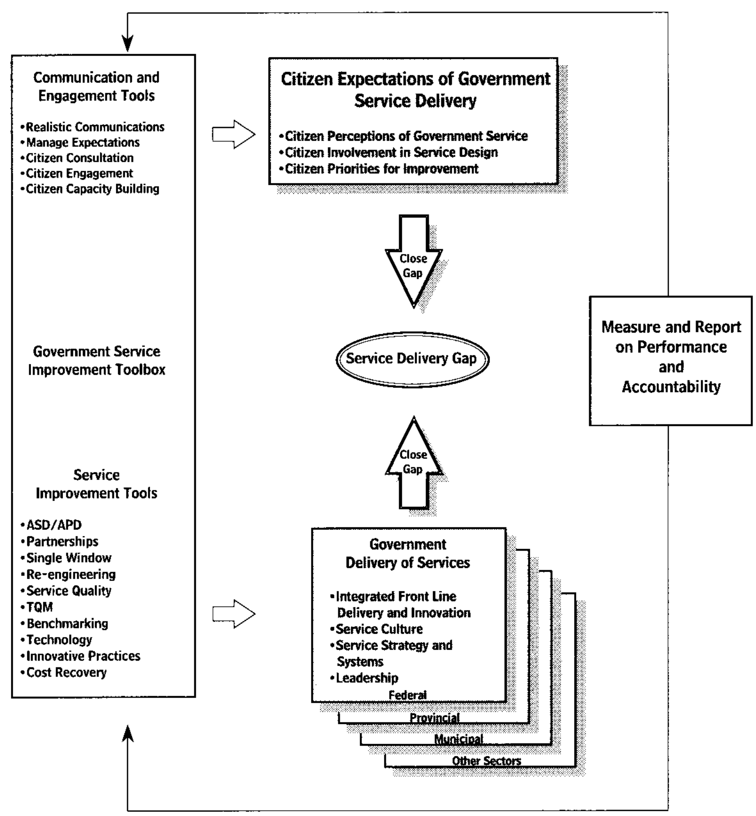
Background

Established by the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) in July 1997, the objective of the Citizen-Centred Service Network is to accelerate the modernization of service delivery across the public sector in Canada. It is composed of over 200 senior officials from the three levels of government as well as leading academics and outside experts in the field of public sector service delivery.

At its founding workshop in July 1997, the participants used a "service gap model" (Figure 1) to assess the current gap between citizens' expectations of service delivery and the current performance of the public sector in Canada. Participants drew the following conclusions:

- Despite significant progress in modernizing service delivery, a significant gap still exists in Canada between citizens' expectations and actual service delivery as experienced by clients of public sector services.
- A citizen-centred service delivery strategy needs to be developed and implemented within the public sector to accelerate the closure of the service delivery gap.
- The gap-closure strategy must be founded on a better understanding of citizen priorities for service improvement, and on a better understanding of current levels of satisfaction with individual public services.
- The service-gap closure strategy must also be founded on a cooperative approach across governments in response to the public's demand for a more integrated, citizen-centred delivery of public sector services.
- To be successful, a citizen-centred service delivery strategy must ensure that public managers are properly supported in improving citizen/client satisfaction with public sector service delivery and are also held accountable for achieving results.

FIGURE 1



Illuminating the Path Forward: the Network's Research Track

The members of the network proposed an ambitious short-term research program to identify citizen priorities for service improvement, to establish common measurement tools, and to explore, document and share innovative practices in citizen-centred service delivery.

In response, CCMD and the Network established several research projects, including research to better understand citizens' current levels of satisfaction with service delivery, the drivers of that satisfaction, and citizens' priorities for service improvement. To this end, a national survey on citizen attitudes on public sector service (led by CCMD and co-sponsored by Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Ontario, Canada Post and the federal Treasury Board Secretariat) was developed and sent to 35,000 Canadian households in April 1998. On behalf of the Network, Erin Research then generated a report based on the survey findings entitled *Citizens First*. This report not only sets the record straight about citizens' ratings of public sector services but provides managers with clear direction for continuing to improve service to citizens. Other research projects include the development of best practices guides, a manager's guide to surveying, and a common measurements tool to promote consistency in client satisfaction measurement over time and between organizations.

Closing the Service Gap: the Network's Strategy and Action Track

The members of the national Citizen-Centred Service Network recommended that a series of regional service forums be held across Canada to engage senior officials at the three levels of government. The Network's experiences and research results are used in these forums to help assist in the development of a forward strategy for closing the "service gap." Between November 1997 and May 1998 events were held in Charlottetown, Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver, with the National Forum being held on June 15-16, 1998 in Ottawa.

In most regions, ongoing networks have been established to manage specific cooperative service improvement projects, and to share innovative practices. At the first regional workshop in Ontario, held in November 1997, an ongoing network of senior officials was established, co-chaired by representatives of the three orders of government in Ontario. A follow-up meeting was subsequently held in June 1998.