

Case Study #3 – SERVICE BC (British Columbia)

1. Background

Service BC is the government's chief provider of front-line services to the public. When citizens, businesses or visitors are looking for information and services for programs offered by ministries, agencies and the private sector or other governments, they often begin by contacting Service BC. Customers can connect in person by contacting Service BC Centres – formerly known as Government Agents - at 59 physical locations around the province; by phone using the Service BC Contact Centre – formerly Enquiry BC; or online through BC Online and the government's primary web presence "gov.bc.ca". By using one or a combination of these channels, customers can access programs, services and information in ways that suit their personal and business needs. Service BC brings together the multiple service delivery channels that exist today - in person, phone, e-mail and online.

In addition to these three channels, Service BC is also supported by and responsible for BC STATS which conducts surveys and provides statistical information and analysis for government departments, and plays a key role in government's ability to measure performance and plan service improvements.

Origin and History

The history of service delivery in British Columbia can be traced back 150 years. Government Agents were formed as the service delivery channel during the 19th century Gold Rush and provided provincial services to British Columbians when the rush for gold inspired new communities, and a new province¹. Government Agents served as a single point of access to government services for many of the residents of BC.

BC Online was created in the 1980's as a transaction fulfillment mechanism. BC Online provides access to information on Land Titles, Property Assessments, BC Companies, registrations under the Personal Property Security Act (i.e. Liens and Security Agreements), and a range of other useful information services².

As government continued to develop in BC, the ministries developed their own service delivery capabilities. The 1990s brought about the advent of Enquiry BC, a call centre providing information on government services to citizens. The Service BC Contact Centre (Enquiry BC) serves as the initial entry point for customers, who can then be redirected to the appropriate ministry providing the service. In essence, Enquiry BC serves as a "triage" centre for customer issues.

Service BC is the corporate service delivery organization for the BC government. Service BC is a division within the Ministry of Labour and Citizen Services and was established in 2004 to bring together the existing service delivery channels. It encompasses services for 43 ministries harbouring 50 program areas.

¹ <http://www.governmentagents.gov.bc.ca/about/index.htm>

² <https://www.bconline.gov.bc.ca/>

Service BC has two components:

- an operational function to deliver services
- a strategic function dealing with horizontal integration focused on the delivery of citizen centred services

During the transition to Service BC, the line branches retained their organizational structures. The roles and responsibilities of staff within the line areas did not change.

In May 2006 the Ministry of Labour and Citizens' Services was given the mandate to work with ministries across government to implement a citizen-centred approach to service delivery in British Columbia. There are over 40 projects that have been initiated to support the achievement of the following 5 goals:

- *Excellence in Service Quality*
- *Easy Access to Services*
- *Make Government Services Efficient to Provide*
- *Public Confidence in Government's Electronic Service Channels*
- *Transformation of the Workforce – Skills and Culture*

2. Organizational Design and Governance Arrangements

As a division within the Ministry of Labour and Citizen Services, Service BC is headed by an Assistant Deputy Minister who reports directly to the Deputy Minister. While there is no formal "board" structure for Service BC, there is a DM-level board of directors that addresses the Shared Services within the BC government.

Service BC follows auditing and reporting requirements as mandated by the ministry:

- Contributes to the annual Ministry Service Plan
- Outlines performance metrics for service delivery
- Participates in the audit program conducted by the BC government
- Conducts audits on an ad-hoc basis of the individual service delivery components

Service BC is not governed by any legislation and government departments are not required to use Service BC to deliver services on their behalf.

There are two Acts that are relevant to the operation of Service BC

- BC Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy guides all aspects of Service BC's delivery of provincial government's services.
- BC Stats is the only service within Service BC that is mandated by legislation under the Statistics Act.

3. Business Model

Service BC's business model is based on our value proposition - *Access to Government Services Made Easy* – and is enabled through service design, service delivery and service leadership.

- Service design: Service BC's extensive experience and expertise lets it design and implement coordinated web, phone and in-person service solutions;
- Service delivery: Service BC's province-wide web, phone and in-person service channels meet the needs of citizens and government; and
- Service Leadership: Service BC's service delivery knowledge, market research, performance management and strategic partnerships drive service delivery excellence across government.

3(a) Activities, Channels and Migration

Service BC uses multiple channels to provide service to its customers.

- A fully functional counter service is provided through the Service BC centres.
- The Service BC Contact Centre – formerly Enquiry BC - offers telephone access to service delivery
- At present, the Service BC Contact Centre serves primarily as an information and referral service. Customers calling in are re-directed to the appropriate office/ministry providing the service. However, in the future there are plans to make it a more integrated transactional service delivery channel.
- BC Online offers online transaction services and is operated by a third-party vendor. In addition to BC Online, Service BC houses the Online Channel Office that is responsible for the management of the government's primary web channel.

Not all of the provincial government's services are completely delivered by Service BC. The delineation point is not the same for all ministries – in some cases Service BC is responsible for the full delivery of the services, but in other instances Service BC only completes a part of the transaction. In such cases service level agreements with ministries exist to address:

- What is being done by Service BC on behalf of the Ministry?
- What is the expected level of service by the Ministry?

Typically, Service BC's business is created when ministries have new business requirements as opposed to the transfer of existing functions.

Benefits of the model are that the channels are all corporate service delivery in nature and don't have program responsibility. The Division also leverages these channels and the service delivery expertise of the organization to deliver the Province's citizen-centred service delivery strategy across government. Moreover, Service BC reports to the same ministry as Shared Services BC (internal shared services). This creates greater alignment of service delivery capability.

Inter-governmental interaction occurs at all levels of the organization as Service BC can have strategic and/or operational directives with various ministries.

Service BC has the following 4 lines of business:

- Service Delivery Operations (59 service centres - over the counter service)
- Online Channel Office (web and contact centre) and BC Online (e-business transactions)
- Service Solutions and Planning (client relationship management, corporate divisional support, Citizen-Centred Service Delivery Initiative)
- BC Statistics

3(b) Funding

As a part of the ministry, Service BC operates on an annual provincial budget cycle. Most services are funded through a voted appropriation; however, Service BC has several costing and pricing models for those services that are charged back. For example, Service BC Centres - formerly Government Agents - will use activity based costing to determine the price to charge ministries if they take on a new service function. This is based on the duration and cost of delivering the transaction. BC Online transactions use a transaction fee model.

3(c) Human Resources Issues

Service BC is within the provincial government organization. Employees are government employees and are unionized. Service BC has 350 FTEs. 250 of these employees provide front-line services in the 59 Service BC- Government Agents centres throughout BC, with the balance located at headquarters in Victoria.

As with all levels of government, current HR issues revolve around the recruitment, retention and retraining of employees. To address this growing need, the Citizens' Services Training and Development plan - a three-year rolling plan – has been developed in conjunction with the Ministry HR Workforce Plan that uses a strategic, focused and themed approach to offer employees a variety of formal and informal developmental opportunities. Seven job streams, eight skill sets, and nine competencies have been identified and are the starting focus of this three-year plan. The training and development opportunities are for all ministry employees, and specifically target new employees, managers and supervisors. The plan also targets specific skill sets and competencies that will allow the ministry, through its employees, to continue to achieve international recognition for its many accomplishments.

3(d) Performance Measurement

Currently Service BC employs the traditional pyramid performance management methodology. Through an annual strategic planning exercise, the organization defines its strategic goals (high-level, broad categories of action) and its strategic objectives or

desired outcomes. Initiatives or programs are linked to each objective, and some performance indicators are defined. Achievements and progress are followed up every quarter, and high-level outcome measures are reported and analyzed on an annual basis.

At the operational level, several performance indicators are monitored monthly. These measures are focused on the budget and the satisfaction of Service Level Agreements (SLA).

Also, as the leader in implementing the Citizen-Centred Service Delivery (CCSD) strategy for Government, Service BC reports progress on over 40 cross government initiatives. This report is prepared quarterly and is distributed among stakeholders.

Parallel to the current performance management methodology, Service BC is developing a new performance management framework based on the balanced scorecard that is expected to be implemented in early FY08/09. The performance management framework will link the corporate vision to actions and initiatives, and performance measures will be defined by service, program, channel, and point of service. The current reporting framework will be aligned with the performance management framework

3(e) Use of Information Technology/Web 2.0

New technology platforms to enhance access to information and allow a more seamless service experience have been completed for the web-channel, and implementation to support the telephone channel is in progress.

The Ministry currently has a Blog/Discussion Board, and RSS is used by the Knowledge Centre to aggregate news feeds for users.

The public government website is making quite a bit of use of RSS (<http://www.news.gov.bc.ca/rss/default.asp>) and Podcasts (http://www.gov.bc.ca/premier/media_gallery/podcasts/, <http://www.gov.bc.ca/al/mediaroom/podcasts/>) and 3rd party sites such as You Tube (http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=Minister+Pat+Bell&search=Search).

3(f) Partnerships

Service BC is working with regional staff across government ministries to develop a process and determine what the service footprint of government should look like at the community level. This planning process is driven by community-based demand for services and community service delivery stakeholders. It will reflect practical needs and forecast demand at the community level.

A Community Service Delivery and Facilities Planning model and recommendations have been developed for use in future cross-government coordinated community-based service delivery planning.

Through a partnership with other jurisdictions (federal – Service Canada; municipalities; libraries) there is an opportunity for Service BC to extend its presence into the urban areas or elsewhere in the Province and look at rationalization of the various offices or physical presences.

Service BC provides its contact centre, online transaction services and web portal services through the private sector. These relationships are an important component of the Service BC multi-channel delivery model.

To improve and increase customer relationship management, Service BC has implemented citizen segmentation as a key component of working with other Ministries on service solutions. The following have been completed: identification of key population segments; in-depth survey of key population segments as per Ministry client requests; and embedding of segmentation methodology in Service BC business solutions for Ministry clients.

Through participation on the Public Sector Service Delivery Council (PSSDC), Service BC is actively involved in cross-jurisdictional initiatives such as the Service Functions Management Certification program, service mapping, and research such as the Citizens' First series through the Institute for Citizen Centred Service Delivery (ICCS).

4. Community Engagement

Community participation has been mainly through Service Delivery Networks (SDNs). SDNs are comprised of representatives from provincial ministries and agencies, and broader public sector organizations that have knowledge, influence and decision making authority for program delivery. Participation from broader sector partners (e.g. local governments, community organizations, First Nations, health authorities, colleges, school districts, federal government, etc.) is part of the mandate of SDNs who facilitate the identification of opportunities for service bundling and integration at the community level.

Service Delivery Networks (SDNs) are a vital part of Government's efforts to establish citizen centred service delivery in British Columbia. The SDNs have representation in approximately 50 communities across the province with a membership comprised of more than 500 provincial public servants, as well as representatives of various public sector organizations. These networks work collaboratively to identify opportunities for improving government service delivery in their communities and the province. The SDNs are an important link for government to the communities and regions across B.C., and continue to be a key success factor in the progress of citizen centred service delivery.

Service BC engages with this network, which is really best described as a community of practice, through monthly newsletters and teleconferences, as well as through specific projects and various learning events. Service BC also works with the SDNs to deliver bi-annual workshops focused on identifying priorities for the continuous improvement of government service delivery across the province.

The SDN recommendations from the 2005 workshop series contributed to the development of citizen centred service delivery initiatives such as a new front counter service model for natural resource services, the piloting of a community-based approach

to service and facility planning and training and a corporate approach to government acceptance of credit cards, and a community-based approach to training.

For the 2007 workshops, the SDNs identified that the 'people component' of service delivery was the most pressing issue that would need to be addressed in order to support service excellence in B.C. Communities. Specifically, the SDNs identified recruiting, training, and retaining as topics to be discussed at future workshops.

Service BC has worked with the United Ways BC and the Information and Referral community to develop an implementation plan for a province-wide 211 service.

Some of the key advantages of establishing relationships with stakeholders representing various business lines (or client segments) are

- Enhancement of reach and presence as well as support for the development of programs and services
- Shared investment to co-develop so as to increase capacity
- Shared infrastructure / applications / business capabilities

Some of the challenges are

- Quality control / Service Levels – depending upon the organization that delivers the services, Service BC's agreements with its clients will need to flow through to its partners
- Privacy/ security – a critical component of the Service BC value proposition is Service Delivery excellence which includes significant capabilities for privacy and security. As a result, only partnerships that could meet the strict requirements should be explored

5. Issues Encountered/Challenges

One of the critical challenges facing Service BC is that its operating environment is complex and involves multiple stakeholders that have the ability to influence service processes and outcomes.

Government offers multiple programs and services to the same citizen. These are typically difficult to coordinate effectively, thereby impacting the effectiveness of the programs in meeting citizens' expectations.

Ministries or program areas are responsible for outcomes and have the budget to deliver upon individual commitments. Service BC does not have the investment capacity to drive all the changes required and will need Ministries and other jurisdictions to partner along the way.

Multiple points of access, multiple brands and a limited understanding of citizen service requirements exist throughout government, causing confusion to citizens and staff.

6. Critical Success Factors

- Service BC is well positioned to be the primary point of access to government services for citizens, providing seamless access to government services.
- Citizens will have their choice of commonly used channels and media. Channels will provide the functionality required to support the service request or transfer the citizen quickly to the appropriate channel.
- A common set of core functions will be provided through each main channel.
- Citizen Service excellence will be defined and monitored within and across channels. Common metrics of success will be defined and used to embark on a continuous improvement process.
- Program specific channel strategies will be deployed.
- For most services supported by Service BC, citizens will be able to enquire, interact and transact through each channel.
- Service BC will implement a multi-channel offering for presentation to clients that focuses on defined client needs.
- Service BC will continually examine the needs of various citizen segments and adopt the channel mix based upon changing needs, technology and program area outcome objectives.

The value proposition for Service BC is “access to government services made easy”.

7. Next Steps

Planned activity includes:

- A redesigned Service BC website;
- Design and implementation of a channel migration marketing program;
- Ongoing training and coaching in citizen-centred service delivery;
- Revised recruitment and hiring criteria to meet the needs of the channel strategy;
- Alignment of performance goals and metrics to the new channel strategy;
- Ongoing “partner” and vendor management to ensure objectives are met;
- Continuous improvement process to examine and implement ongoing changes to the channel operations.

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