

Case #5 – SERVICE NEW BRUNSWICK

1. Background

The creation of Service New Brunswick (SNB) was a response to citizen demand for higher quality services, combined with a provincial financial crisis. In 1990, the services of the various government departments were being delivered by a large number of offices spread across the province. Each department delivered its own services. Citizens were faced with about 1500 provincial government offices in seventy-nine communities. The Department of Finance proposed that several offices be brought together into a one-stop shop. Following a successful pilot project that involved consultations with citizens and other stakeholders, an early version of SNB was created that grouped together about 15 government services. Also in 1990, the New Brunswick Geographic Information Corporation (NBGIC) was established to integrate three departments responsible, respectively, for mapping services, real and personal property registries, and land assessment. It was therefore decided to expand the mandate of NBGIC to make it government's service delivery organization and in 1998 its name was changed to Service New Brunswick.

Over the next decade, SNB gradually developed its in-person service delivery channel into a system of 38 service centres across the province, a tele-services centre and an online delivery channel. This citizen-centred multi-channel service delivery organization responsible for delivering services and products on behalf of all government departments has received international recognition and many awards for its service innovations.

2. Organizational Design and Governance Arrangements

SNB is a Crown corporation owned by the Province of New Brunswick. The Service New Brunswick Act specifies that SNB is the principal provider, on behalf of government, of non-specialized customer services through physical offices and the telephone and electronic channels. The Act also sets out the Corporation's responsibility for coordinating geographic information services, real property assessment and registration and the administration of tax-related benefit programs, personal property registration, the Corporate Affairs Registry, Vital Statistics and the promotion of the geomatics industry.

Government departments are not mandated to deliver services through SNB. For each service identified as a potential single-window service, SNB works with the responsible department to develop a business case to have SNB deliver services on their behalf. In some instances the business case has to show that service efficiencies and quality will be maximized by a transfer of full delivery responsibility to SNB. In these cases the department and SNB jointly seek Government approval for the transfer.

SNB has a dual accountability structure. It is headed by a President who reports both to a government minister and to an 11 member Board of Directors that is appointed by Cabinet and composed of representatives drawn from SNB's client base. The Board administers the affairs of the Corporation on a commercial basis. The Board also has two committees: an Audit Committee that reviews the financial statements of the

Corporation and a Development Committee that oversees new system development. The Minister answers to the legislature for overall policy direction of the corporation but not for its day-to-day operations.

3. Business Model

Service New Brunswick's mission is to provide excellence in access to information and government services for citizens and businesses.

3(a) Activities, Channels and Migration

Activities

Currently, in 2007, SNB offered about 365 services to citizens on behalf of government departments, municipalities and public utilities (an increase from 270 in 2005). Examples of its services are:

- motor vehicle related services: issuance of driver's licences, renewals of registration, placards for disabled persons
- recreation: issuance of hunting and fishing licences, online tickets for some major attractions in New Brunswick
- citizen services: Medicare, change of name, water testing
- business services: food service license, professional & trade licenses
- municipal services: water and sewer payments, parking fine payments

SNB has four lines of business:

Service Delivery. SNB is the gateway for the public to government services offered through a multi-channel single window:

- in person, through a network of 38 service centres, located throughout the province,
- over the phone (TeleServices), toll-free at 1 888 762-8600, and
- on the Internet at www.snb.ca.

SNB delivers services on behalf of a variety of service delivery partners, which include provincial and federal government agencies, non-government agencies, utilities and municipalities. In addition to the general public, key client groups include lawyers, surveyors, appraisers, realtors, financial institutions, engineers, auto-dealers, consultants and resource-based industries.

Registries. SNB maintains four electronic registries that provide authoritative public information:

- the Real Property Registry – deeds, wills, subdivision plans, etc. related to land

- parcels in New Brunswick
- the Personal Property Registry – security interests, judgments and other claims related to personal property such as automobiles, recreation vehicles and furniture, and
- the Corporate Affairs Registry – corporations, partnerships and business names registered in New Brunswick
- the Vital Statistics Registry – registration of births, deaths and marriages

Property Assessment. SNB assesses all land, buildings and associated improvements for property taxation purposes and operates the province's Property Assessment and Taxation System. SNB Assessment Services are also responsible for administering a number of property tax-related programs.

Geographic Information Infrastructure. SNB is responsible for the creation and the maintenance of the province's control survey network and base mapping data.

During 2005-2006, SNB completed a total of 5.2 million transactions for these four lines of business compared to 5.1 million for the preceding year.

Channels and Migration

SNB's multi-channel single-window service delivery means citizens and businesses can choose the delivery channel that is the most convenient for them. With more services available on the web and the ease of use and convenience this creates, SNB continues to experience increased take-up of the electronic channels (web and TeleServices). The migration towards these channels frees up capacity in the 38 service centres to allow the Corporation to increase the volume of services and number of service offerings while managing costs. As well, the use of virtual fulfillment technology has allowed the Corporation to utilize staff in its less busy locations to process vehicle stickers and other physical products for transactions conducted via the call centre or over the Internet. From 2003-2004 to 2005-2006, online transactions have increased from 33.9% to 37.4%; teleservices transactions have declined from 7.4% to 6.3%; and over-the counter transactions have fallen from 58.7% to 56.3%.

To promote take-up of the online channel SNB has used a variety of incentives. Some business services such as the personal property registry are offered only via the Internet. For other business services such as Corporate Affairs services, lower fees and faster turn around times are offered for online services. For services to the general public, marketing campaigns are undertaken to encourage increased use.

To ensure back-end integration of service delivery SNB has used a spin-the terminal development strategy. To the extent possible the same user interface is used whether it is a tele-services agent, a customer service representative or a New Brunswicker accessing the service via the Internet. This delivery approach ensures integrated back-end processing and reduces development and maintenance costs.

3(b) Funding

Revenues are acquired through a combination of service fees (Real Property, Personal Property and Corporate Affairs Registries fees), payments (the Province and the municipalities pay for the property assessment service), and grants (the Province provides funding to the Corporation to deliver services on its behalf). SNB reinvests from these revenues in the further improvement of its business processes and service delivery to make it easier for citizens to do business with government.

Revenues for the year ended March 31, 2006 were \$54.9M and for the previous year \$50.8M. Provincial revenues increased by \$0.4M to \$25.9M in 2005/06 from \$25.5M in 2004/05. Funding from municipalities increased from \$7M to \$7.4M. Fees from registry service delivery were \$18.0M compared to \$14.7M the previous year. Product and service revenues remained constant at \$2.8M. Other revenues are from interest, software sales and salary recoveries under student, internship, and equal opportunity subsidy programs. Other revenues totaled \$695K and \$853K in 05/06 and 04/05, respectively.

3(c) Human Resource Issues

SNB employs about 743 people in 38 communities, the majority of whom are permanent employees. Over 73% of SNB's employees provide service directly to its customers while 203 are employed in head office functions such as human resources, service delivery support, business development, marketing, communications, corporate strategy, finance, technology and systems development.

Succession planning is a major focus for SNB. A multi-phase Succession Planning Initiative has begun to address high-risk areas over the next 3 years. In 2007 SNB also began development and implementation of a competency-based Employee Growth and Development Program. Components of this program include exposure to a diversity of experiences through on the job training, learning events, courses, certifications, and professional development activities. In 2005-2006, SNB began to implement a new Wellness Program. The program's focus is on promoting activities related to employee health through events such as flu shot clinics, a physical activity promotion program, and ongoing tips on various health-related issues shared with staff across the Corporation. In 2007 SNB also undertook its first Employee Engagement Survey to measure employee satisfaction and it is currently developing a strategy to address employee concerns.

In addition to these programs SNB regularly provides specialized training for both current and new service representatives and management. New service delivery staff are trained through both classroom training and on-the-job training. Train-the-trainer programs are often organized for service representatives so that all staff across the province can be trained on a new service or feature within a two-week period. In addition several times each year refresher training is provided for services that are infrequent or have higher than average error rates. Driver Examiners and assessment staff are also provided specialized training annually.

3(d) Performance Measurement

In February 2003, SNB prepared a *Handbook on Operations for Customer Satisfaction Service Standards for Service Delivery at SNB*. The Handbook contains the customer service standards for transactional service delivery for the in-person, Internet and telephone channels. The quality drivers, for which service delivery standards and indicators are set, include; timeliness, knowledge/competence, extra mile/extra smile, and outcome.

From its inception, SNB has regularly consulted its stakeholders on service design and service quality measurement. Each year SNB conducts public and service delivery partner surveys to measure client satisfaction. These surveys can be targeted at the general population or a particular client or partner group and are a blend of national surveys such as Citizens First and Taking Care of Business and local surveys. During 2005/2006, Service New Brunswick conducted a first satisfaction survey with customers who had received a service from Assessment. The overall level of satisfaction was 89% from residential customers and 82% from government departments, agencies, corporations, secretariats and municipalities. In June 2005, Service New Brunswick conducted a customer satisfaction survey with services received from Corporate Affairs. Service New Brunswick has obtained a satisfaction rate of 86%, exceeding the provincial rate from the *Taking Care of Business* survey of 73% in 2003.

SNB also conducts consultations every 18-24 months to seek stakeholder input on desirable changes in service delivery via any of the three major delivery channels. For example, consultations with the trucker industry led to the development of a special section on the SNB website for information on weather, bridges and other transportation issues. In addition, province wide focus groups were held to provide input into the redesign of SNB's Internet site.

3(e) Use of Information Technology/Web 2.0

SNB's technology strategy is to maintain a balance of contracted IT expertise and internal IT expertise. A large percentage of application development is contracted out. However, project management, technical architecture, and system testing are staffed internally.

As SNB has increased its electronic service delivery, its reliance on technology has increased. It is dependent not only on its own systems but also on communications networks and services such as credit card verification operated by third party providers. It employs a security officer to assess risk and uses state-of-the-art methods to protect its systems. In 2006 it initiated a security audit program. To date, it has had few service outages. The Corporation manages a growing number of systems and products. In 2005, Service New Brunswick added a Manager of Systems Maintenance to oversee enhancements to applications so that they are maintained at appropriate levels to ensure ongoing reliability, security and suitability. Activities are underway to upgrade several systems. For example, SNB assumed responsibility for the Vital Statistics program and its systems from the Department of Health on July 1, 2006. It is anticipated

that this system and the Assessment system will be in need of significant modernization in the near future.

SNB is currently piloting Web 2.0 technologies to support internal and external service delivery. Operations staff are piloting instant messaging and live chat to improve communication among geographically disparate staff, to improve access to subject matter experts and to support collaborative work teams. SNB is also piloting the use of live chat to provide online support to the public using online services. SNB has partnered with Government departments to host discussion forums and online surveys. These forums are being hosted by Government to solicit citizen participation in the development of new public policies and programs.

3(f) Partnerships

SNB partners with a wide variety of both private and public organizations. An especially important private sector partnership is with CGI Information Systems and Management Consultants that began in the late 1990s and has included the development of gBIZ, a template for expediting the roll out of a broad range of secure eGovernment transactions. SNB enters into partnerships for specialized geomatics and technology work with private sector companies that subsequently showcase the finished product when seeking national and international contracts. Examples of this work are quality control and project management for topographic database collection and the project management and technical architecture related to large information technology projects.

SNB also has partnerships with federal and municipal bodies and with public utilities. It partners, for example, with Service Canada to provide licencing services for pleasure craft. SNB's Business Development unit has regular meetings with all of its service delivery partners (mainly departments and municipalities). Staff visit both those agencies with which it already has agreements as well as potential partners to listen to concerns and discuss possible collaborative arrangements.

SNB is a member of PSSDC and actively supports many of its initiatives. The sharing of best practices with other provinces that occurs at this forum is invaluable.

4. Community Engagement

Covered above

5. Issues Encountered/Challenges

SNB has recently begun to address its next challenge - fully integrated service delivery. The Single-Window model, one of the world's first modern re-designed government portals as envisioned and introduced by Service New Brunswick, will be redeveloped and reenergized in the period between 2007 and 2012 to support NB's Self-sufficiency Plan.

The underlying theme or imperative is customer/individual choice. This will require a complete re-think and a complete re-design of government. SNB's new mandate will re-

orient government to put the citizen and business first. All transactions and interactions with government will be redesigned in such a way as to let the customer dictate how he/she wishes to interact with government. For the citizen, all permits, licences, registrations and bills will be grouped in one place – making it as easy and convenient as possible for them. They'll have one government ID number that they can use to authenticate themselves and enter "their government" at their will. Taking this a step farther, not only will services be grouped but the citizen will choose when and how he/she interacts with government, when those permits come due and how they will be paid – by credit card, via debit, in one lump sum in 2, 10, 12, 24 100 equal payments, whatever.

For businesses, the changes will be even more profound. Re-orienting government to ensure self-service and transparency for business will create fundamental shifts in the business climate of New Brunswick and make this province the most advanced, business-friendly jurisdiction in the world. Like the citizen, a single portal will ensure that businesses have a "one-stop shop" window to what they require from government. All permits, licenses, registrations and fees will be handled through this portal and one unique identifier will eliminate duplication, redundancy, and red-tape. Most importantly, a new transparency in the process will speed approvals of all permits and regulations.

6. Critical Success Factors¹

Appropriate Organizational Design. As a Crown corporation, SNB has greater freedom than government departments in managing its financial and human resources and in taking innovative initiatives.

Innovation. SNB an organization removed from traditional norms of the civil service can engender an innovative organizational culture. Technological innovation drives organizational innovation and a business model with objectively measurable "fact-based" results allows for great focus and disallows stagnation.

Creating a Culture of Service Excellence. SNB is committed to creating a culture focused on service. To that end, substantial investments in general and specialized training have been made from the outset. SNB has also developed policies and procedures to identify and measure error rates and then take remedial action, including new training programs or assistance for specific employees.

Reacting to Shifting Demands. Citizens are increasingly seeking integrated service with assured security of communications and personal privacy. SNB keeps informed of citizens' changing expectations and examines the implications of citizen feedback for both current and new initiatives.

Benefiting from Partnerships. SNB's success is dependant upon maintaining great relationships with its service delivery partners. SNB is committed to working with its

¹ Much of this section is based on Theresa A. Pardo and Lucy Dadayan, *Service New Brunswick*, Centre for Technology in Government, University of Albany, SUNY, 2006, as updated and elaborated by SNB officials.

partners to help them effectively and efficiently deliver their services through an expanded single-window.

7. Next Steps

Over the upcoming year SNB will be focused on the development of a plan to respond to its expanded mandate as confirmed by the Government in recent announcements. On November 23, 2007, the Government of New Brunswick released “Our Action Plan to be Self-Sufficient in New Brunswick.” In regard to improving service delivery, this publication stated:

The effective delivery of government services must put citizens first. Services must be convenient, timely, easy to use, flexible and transparent. Orienting public services to these qualities will provide greater satisfaction to users, a more business-friendly environment for entrepreneurs and will ensure that tax dollars are used in the most effective and efficient manner possible. We will:

- *Reform the machinery of government to ensure effective and efficient management of public policy issues.*
- *Enhance the transparency of our relationships with Crown agencies, boards and commissions.*
- *Explore new ways to provide services to New Brunswickers and evaluate opportunities to obtain private-sector benefits from the marketing of public-sector innovations.*
- *Ensure that government departments work better together to enhance efficiency and improve services to the public.*

We will evaluate our programs, processes and policies with one question in mind: does this help or hinder our drive toward self-sufficiency? Consistent evaluation will set government services and programs on the course of continual improvement.

We will be a leader in providing high-quality and timely public services. With Service New Brunswick as the primary service provider, our province will have a solid foundation on which to develop new approaches to enhance the accessibility and quality of a wide range of services. We will:

- *Increase the use of “single window service,” making public services easier to use and more efficient to deliver.*
- *Streamline and modernize our processes for providing services to the public and the business community, improving the timeliness and reducing the cost of providing services.*
- *Enhance integrated electronic access to government services.*

The Speech from the Throne, delivered on November 27, 2007 during the Second Session of the 56th Legislative Assembly, stated:

Transformation of government requires further transforming service delivery to New Brunswickers.

An expanded mandate for Service New Brunswick will transform the way New Brunswickers and New Brunswick businesses interact with their government. By 2009, and with the endorsement of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, your government will introduce a new “one business - one record” system of business services that will make it faster, easier and more convenient for New Brunswickers to do business.

In the coming year, government departments will begin transferring their customer-facing services to Service New Brunswick as part of an overall quality service initiative. The Office of the Rentalsman will be the first program to move to Service New Brunswick in this transformation.

Service New Brunswick and the Department of Public Safety will also determine the optimal balance of shared responsibility in the delivery of motor vehicle registry services.

Contact:

Judy Ross,
Executive Director Corporate Strategy
Service New Brunswick.
Telephone: 506-444-4013
E-mail: judy.ross@snb.ca