

## Case Study #7 – SERVICES QUEBEC (English version)

### 1. Background

By creating Services Québec, the government was looking to reorganize delivery of public services to facilitate access to services for all citizens and businesses, to simplify processes, optimize use of technologies, and ensure delivery of quality service at lower cost. Initially, a government portal was developed to provide access to information and to raise awareness of government services. An analysis of options made it possible to evaluate various approaches used by other governments to modernize how they do business, provide better services to citizens and meet their budgetary challenges.

The creation of Services Québec responded to the expectations of citizens and businesses seeking easier access to government services. The business start-up process was also a concern because it was noted that numerous initiatives to set up businesses were abandoned before completion because of the complexity of the process and the significant number of departments and agencies that had to be contacted. The main barriers were:

- Developing a common understanding of the mission of Services Québec and its mandate of service delivery integration;
- Entering into agreements with departments and agencies;
- Difficult process of distinguishing between so-called front-line services that can be offered by Services Québec and so-called specialized services that will continue to be delivered by the departments and agencies;
- Problems related to the sharing of authority and responsibilities;
- Setting the service fee schedule;
- Transfer of resources;
- Implementation within a network of existing public services in various departments and agencies for optimum regional deployment;
- Legislation that favours vertical service delivery;
- Obtaining the necessary funding to ensure organizational capacity and credibility for Services Québec.

Services Québec is one of the major modernization projects in the 2004-2007 Modernization Plan of the Quebec government. By creating Services Québec, the government wanted to transform services as follows by:

- improving accessibility for citizens and business to documents of public agencies and ensuring their effective dissemination;
- developing an integrated approach to service delivery to facilitate access to services and simplify processes, while ensuring quality delivery at lower cost;
- promoting optimum use of information technologies in service delivery and migration toward the most economical delivery modes;
- encouraging cooperation and partnership in delivery of public services for greater consistency across government.

## 2. Organizational structure and governance

Services Québec is a corporate entity, that is, a legal entity under the conditions set out in the legislation and thus able, as is an individual, to hold rights and obligations.

Services Québec is a Crown agent. Thus, it is an agency, other than budgetary, administered by a board of directors. Services Québec is part of a portfolio, including the Ministère des services gouvernementaux, which among others is responsible for government on-line and the related policies, and for the Centre de services partagés, which in turn is focused on integration of the government's internal services. Services Québec was created under the *Act respecting Services Québec*, sanctioned by the National Assembly on December 17, 2004. The Act can be consulted at:

[http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/S\\_6\\_3/S6\\_3.htm](http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=/S_6_3/S6_3.htm)

Government departments and agencies are not required to use Services Québec to delivery services on their behalf. Instead, the *Act respecting Services Québec* states in section 7:

*A public body and Services Québec may enter into an agreement by which the latter agrees to carry out specific operations related to the delivery of services to citizens or businesses on behalf of the public body and on the conditions stipulated in the agreement. [ . . . ] Services Québec may also enter into such an agreement with the National Assembly, with any person appointed or designated by the Assembly to exercise a function under the authority of the Assembly or with any legal person established in the public interest.*

However, section 8 stipulates that the government can make use of Services Québec mandatory:

*The Government may, on the conditions it determines, require one or more public bodies to have recourse to Services Québec for the carrying out of specific operations related to the delivery of services to citizens or businesses.[ . . . ] This section does not apply to the Conseil de la magistrature, to the committee on the remuneration of the judges of the Court of Québec and the municipal courts or to administrative bodies exercising adjudicative functions.*

Section 19 of the Act sets out the organization and operation of Services Québec :

*The affairs of Services Québec are administered by a board of directors composed of*  
*(1) ten members, including a president and director general, appointed by the Government; and*  
*(2) the chief information officer appointed under section 66.1 of the Public Administration Act.*

*Except for the president and director general and the chief information officer, four board members must be deputy ministers, associate deputy ministers or assistant deputy ministers appointed under the Public Service Act or chief executive officers of public bodies, and five board members must be from sectors interested in the affairs of Services Québec,*

*including a representative of the municipal sector and a representative of the Conseil des aînés.*

Chapter II of the *Public Administration Act* (chapter A-6.01) applies to Services Québec, which means that it must prepare a strategic plan, publish a statement of services to citizens, and develop an annual expenditure management plan. It is also required to table in the National Assembly an annual management report on the achievement of its strategic objectives and of achievement of its commitments to service quality.

### **3. Operating model**

Services Québec's structure is based on five separate components:

- Institutional business: governance functions, legal functions, reporting;
- Business strategies and transformation of delivery across government;
- Development: pilot projects, technological development, implementation of new services, optimization of service supply, implementation of different delivery modes;
- Operations: direct services to citizens and businesses by four delivery modes and operational support;
- Organizational support (communications, human, financial, material and technological resources).

#### *3(a) Activities, delivery modes and adoption*

The activities undertaken made it possible to implement the Services Québec development strategy, which is build on the following elements:

Bring together and integrate a critical mass of the key services from among those most commonly used by citizens and businesses.

Services Québec plans to add quickly to its offer of services operations related to business and civil status registers, delivery of driver's licences and vehicle permits, and delivery of health and drug insurance plans. In addition to this basic basket of services, the services offered will continue to evolve when agreements are entered into with other departments and agencies. Services Québec plans to move forward with a detailed evaluation of the services to be integrated by 2010.

Implementation of a Client Relations Centre (CRC) and integration of certain existing call centres with it mandate.

The CRC was launched last year. It has IP technology and is currently deployed in three physical locations. A single number, established in the first quarter of 2007, allows citizens and businesses to access public services more easily. For clients, this number is the most visible and concrete element of the implementation of Services Québec.

As for the integration of other call centres, to date Services Québec has established a simple interconnection between a few centres to ensure transparent routing of specialized calls.

Optimum deployment of a physical network across Quebec to improve regional delivery of government services.

The approach adopted involves building the Services Québec network by bringing together existing government networks. The network of the Société de l'Assurance automobile du Québec (SAAQ) is being used as the foundation of regional deployment while ensuring high enough transaction volume and customer traffic to optimize use of the resources required for delivery of other services to the regions.

In the past year, almost 30 new offices have been opened, including 3 regional services centres, 25 local services centres and 21 other access points at self-serve stations.

Optimum use of technologies and support for migration to electronic delivery, which is the less expensive mode.

To this end, Services Québec manages the government services portal and is responsible, in particular, for the Citizens, Businesses and In the Regions sections. The portal offers directed routing based on various events in the lives of citizens and businesses. It gives access, on a self-serve basis, to forms and other available electronic services.

Services Québec also manages the Service québécois de changement d'adresse (SQCA) [Quebec change of address service], which provides citizens with a one-step process to change their addresses with six Quebec departments and agencies.

Services Québec also contributed to the development of the Service québécois d'authentification gouvernementale (SQAG), presented under the banner of ClicSÉQUR, which enables citizens and businesses to use a unique identifier to securely access the online services of Quebec departments and agencies. The service consists of a common identification approach that operates on a user code and password, similar to the systems used by financial institutions. By registering with ClicSEQUR, a person obtains a unique identifier to access electronic delivery of services (ESD) offered by participating departments and agencies.

Lastly, Services Québec is developing Infothèque gouvernementale [electronic government library] This project will provide 24-hour access at all times to complete, accurate, relevant, consistent and current government information so that it becomes a unique, reliable and effective reference tool for citizens, businesses and the government community.

Services Québec offers several delivery modes: telephone, electronic service delivery and in-person services. Ultimately, Services Québec plans to integrate the delivery modes to create a single service experience. For the moment, it is relying mainly on employees in the Client Relations Centre to promote the electronic mode, which is the least expensive, when the necessary services are available in this mode.

Here are a few examples of cases where officers should direct the citizen to electronic services:

- With a citizen who calls to make a change of address, the officer should ask if he or she has Internet access, tell him or her that the electronic service is available and can even help him or her navigate the system so that he or she can make the change.
- When a citizen needs information on a program or service, the officer can provide him or her with the necessary information, ask him or her if he or she has Internet access and tell him or her that the information provided is available on the government services portal.
- When a citizen asks to be sent a publication, the officer can refer the Internet user to the government website where the electronic version of the publication is available.
- The officer can, upon occasion, provide initial support for consulting the government portal.
- In some very specific cases, the officer can direct the citizen to a departmental website that provides access to the information requested (for example, he or she can provide information available on the waiting time for certain surgeries and indicate to the citizen that the list is available and constantly updated on the site of the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux).

At Services Québec's service counters, self-serve information stations provide access to the government portal and personalized guidance is available to help those who want it.

Lastly, Services Québec plans to develop a more comprehensive strategy soon for migration to electronic service delivery.

### *3(b) Funding*

Services Québec's funding policy was developed to meet the main challenges that the organization faces in funding its activities.

As a non-budgetary organization, Services Québec's recurring funding must come from fees, which limits the grants that can be accessed to fund one-time projects.

Ultimately, Services Québec plans to base its funding on three sources: fees charged to partners (departments and agencies) for activities and functions contracted to it, fees charged to clients (citizens and businesses) for certain specific services, and statutory charges to the government. In the short term, interim fees to government and grants will be used to provide Services Québec with its funding.

### *3(c) Human resources*

Based on forecasts, the massive transfer of new employees from departments and agencies over the next few years will increase the number of Services Québec employees from about 450 to over 2,000 by the end of 2010, an increase of over 337%. This rate of transfer is in itself a major challenge for adapting and mobilizing all the players (managers, personnel and partners).

The arrival of a great many new employees, the gradual integration of new services, the major shift in the way services are provided, and the emergence of a new organizational culture are only a few of the elements that will lead to a transformation of the functions

and responsibilities assumed by staff and of the type of relationship staff will have with citizens and businesses.

There are many issues in this area:

- Adequately support managers;
- Help staff adapt to organizational changes, especially in work processes and practices and technological changes;
- Develop a common client service culture;
- Integrate, train and equip a large number of people (skills and knowledge) in a short period of time;
- Maintain and develop new knowledge along with the integration of new services;
- Ensure that effective mechanisms for continuous training and the transfer of skills and knowledge are put in place.

The hiring of personnel is governed by uniform government-wide rules applicable to all potential candidates. All candidates applying for employment with Services Québec go through a selection process even if they are already qualified for the type of employment sought: only those candidates who best meet the values of the organization are retained. Services Québec believes it is easier to motivate people if they already share the organization's values.

Regardless, the Quebec government is evolving in a context of diminishing human resources and Services Québec therefore does not need to establish a specific recruitment strategy for direct service personnel, especially since it will be receiving employees transferred from the departments and agencies for which it will be delivering services.

As for special training for employees, Services Québec's information officers are trained on the following elements:

- The values and culture of service (PEOPLE SKILLS)

This aspect of the training allows the organization to disseminate the messages that it wants its employees to incorporate in their practices, whether in terms of the quality of the relationship with the client or the quality of the response.

- The content to transmit to the client (KNOWLEDGE)

This involves the information that officers must disseminate or the content that enables them to understand the context, notably training on government administration.

- The tools to use and procedures (KNOW-HOW)

The information is contained in reference tools that the officer must consult to answer the questions received from citizens or businesses. There are several tools and the officer must be able to find the desired information quickly, even if it is the first time the question has been asked. The officer must know how to use these tools and apply the appropriate procedures when handling requests. The tools are constantly changing and employees are required to upgrade their knowledge in order to use them.

### 3(d) *Performance measurement*

“Quality management” is one of the major business functions incorporated in the vision of the Client Relations Centre (CRC) and services network. Services Québec recently launched a project to assess the quality of services provided by CRC and the services network personnel. All delivery modes (telephone, e-mail, in-person and mail) are covered by the project. While each mode has its own unique features, the basis on which quality is to be evaluated must be consistent for all modes.

As for evaluating the actual performance of Services Québec personnel, Services Québec has developed a reference framework entitled “Management of performance contribution and evaluation”. This reference framework applies to all Services Québec personnel and refers to the following guiding principles:

- Services Québec recognizes the importance of the contribution of all its personnel in achieving the organizational objectives it has set.
- Managing the contribution flows from Services Québec’s strategic plan. Thus, the organizational objectives are translated into specific objectives for personnel.
- Performance evaluation is considered a mobilizing tool to foster recognition within Services Québec. It is also a co-responsibility activity that is based on communication, participation and collaboration of the manager and the person evaluated.
- The managing contribution and performance evaluation process requires feedback and depends on regular monitoring of the progress of work.
- Assessment of the achievement of objectives is based on significant, concrete and observable facts and on objective measurement indicators that are communicated to the person evaluated. It takes into account personal and organizational factors that influence the achievement of objectives.
- Assessment of contribution also makes it possible to highlight outstanding contributions. Thus, professional unionized and non-unionized employees and non-unionized government employees are eligible for a bonus for outstanding performance.

Managing employee performance is considered a continuous management process. The evaluation meeting normally takes place once a year. There are also follow-up meetings during the reference period to make adjustments if required. The reference period is normally 12 months. The immediate superior:

- Sets the annual objectives and measurement indicators, informs the person evaluated, discusses them with him or her, and invites the person to participate in this step;
- Ensures regular follow-up on the progress of work and agrees with the person evaluated on adjustments if required;
- Evaluates the contribution of the person evaluated, shares his overall assessment with the person evaluated, and discusses it with him or her;
- Works with the person to identify any skills development requirements.
- Standardized forms specific to personnel categories are used to record annual evaluations

### *3(e) Use of information technology and Web 2.0*

The information and communications technologies that Services Québec currently uses provide core services. They are not sufficiently advanced to support deployment of the multimode single-window services, which require, among other things:

- Interconnection of Service Québec's work stations with partners' systems;
- Development of effective work tools for personnel to ensure efficient and effective direct service delivery to citizens and businesses;
- Continued development of the government services portal and Infothèque gouvernementale;
- Integration of government call centres with Services Québec's Client Relations Centre;
- Support for strategic and tactical management of the organization, notably in the area of resource management.

In general, Services Québec strives to have the technologies used to deliver services to clients meet the following criteria:

- They will represent a combination of the best, most reliable solutions and will be adapted to requirements;
- They will ensure interoperability with existing infrastructures, notably those of partner departments and agencies;
- They will represent a satisfactory level of maturity, having been previously used in other comparable organizations.

Based on the availability of resources, infrastructures and technologies will be offered and used, in whole or in part, by the Centre de services partagés du Québec (CSPQ), a public partnership acting as a supplier for contracted services for Services Québec.

Services Québec is not yet using Web 2.0 technologies but is ultimately planning to develop a wiki (collaborative website) where each Internet visitor can easily participate in developing its content) to support a strategic monitoring network on the integration of services and to promote knowledge sharing.

### *3(f) Partnerships*

To date, Services Québec has been working to build a partnership with the departments and agencies that provide the services that are part of the target basket of services or that have an existing physical regional network. Consequently, it has not considered partnerships with commercial organizations or with those involved in the social economy. However, to the degree that some departments and agencies make use of the networks of private agents, Services Québec plans to maintain these networks when it takes over the services concerned.

## **4. Community engagement**

Services Québec involved the organizations concerned in development of information clusters and service clusters by life event for citizens or businesses. In several instances, it created hyperlinks to other levels of government or to other organizations.

## 5. Problems/difficulties encountered

Services Québec's ability to meet its objectives for improved service delivery to citizens and businesses, of cost reduction and of improved effectiveness depends on the conclusion of service agreements with the departments and agencies that presently provide these services.

In this spirit, Services Québec has set the main targets for its deployment, which has led to several forums. However, very few experiences had proven conclusive to date, Services Québec's agenda not being the same as that of its target partners. The main areas of resistance to change hindering the conclusion of service agreements involve:

- Non-recognition of Services Québec's mission to integrate public services;
- The very strong position of departments and agencies to limit the transfer to information and reference functions;
- The transfer of personnel being limited to officers and clerks without recognition of the need for management and support of service delivery;
- The review of documentation, processes and other internal actions considered necessary by departments and agencies before possible discussions with Services Québec;
- Operational fears, such as the loss of the relationship with the client and technological incompatibility;
- Denial of the benefits for the department or agency, as well as for the government as a whole
- Lack of trust in the continuity of Services Québec, its ability to integrate a large volume of operations and to obtain the necessary expertise.

In short, in a partnership approach, Services Québec has few levers to use with the departments and agencies, which are in a position of strength, demanding proof that the single window will be better and less costly before considering any transfers.

## 6. Key success factors

### Based on a government-identified priority

Services Québec was created as a result of a commitment made by the government in its 2004-2007 Modernization Plan to move closer to the population by improving how it provides public services to citizens and businesses. Since passage of the *Act respecting Services Québec*, the government has confirmed on several occasions, and by several decisions, its desire and support for the implementation of Services Québec.

### Meet the expectations of clients for simplified access to government services

For the client, facilitating access to government services is a major issue. Services Québec proposes to meet that need by providing integrated services and assistance for specialized services offered by some other department. The multimode single window, and an integrated infrastructure ensuring a faster, quality response, will be significant value added for citizens and businesses.

## Offer to departments a solution in the context of retirements and workforce reduction objectives

Departments and agencies will be faced with significant workforce reductions because of retirements and the government's decision to reduce the size of the public service. Some departments are already having difficulty meeting their own service standards or assuming the costs of a regional presence. Pooling resources and integrating services will make it possible to maintain the level of client services and, in some case, increase the services offered in the regions through the services network of Services Québec.

### **7. Next Steps**

Services Québec is relying on two main sources to move its business plan forward:

- A strategic watch related to best practice in service delivery and deployment of a multi-service window;
- Implementation of a strategy of consultations with citizens and businesses to measure their expectations and level of satisfaction, and to evaluate Services Québec's performance. This strategy will use the Outil québécois de mesure (OQM), a standardized tool developed by the Quebec government, and strategic alliances with various partners.

For the moment, Services Québec plans to continue pursuing the following objectives for the next few years:

- Advance its offer of service by integrating the services used most by citizens and businesses;
- Continue with the physical deployment of its services network;
- Speed up development of its Client Relations Centre;
- Introduce communication mechanisms to improve and support the relationship between citizens and the government, notably through a secure messages centre and a personalized calendar alerting the client to events involving a file or various actions to be taken;
- Promote self-service and development of client independence by offering Internet users guidance and assistance mechanisms;
- Improve the government portal through a complete overhaul – Citizens, Businesses, In the Regions and International sections;
- Contribute to the government service portal, notably by developing components for the "Citizen File" project and posting new electronic guides;
- Integrate new services like the unified service for updating business information and changes of addresses;
- Continue work on the Infothèque gouvernementale project as a common platform offering quality information that is accurate, complete, consistent and current, and available in all modes.

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