

THE INSTITUTE FOR CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICE

Working Horizontally across the Canadian Public Sector

BY CHARLES VINCENT AND NICHOLAS PRYCHODKO

Horizontal management. Joined-up government. Cross-agency collaboration. Across Canada and around the world, these and dozens of similar phrases are being used by public servants to describe a relatively recent reorientation of public service organizations.

Traditionally organized along rigid bureaucratic lines defined by ministry, department, or agency, today public servants talk about breaking down barriers, working across boundaries, and collaborating with others in order to serve the public interest. Regardless of the terminology used, however, the challenges for governments looking to adopt new horizontal work patterns are largely the same: reconciling different organizational cultures; developing trust; maintaining momentum, commitment, and leadership support; defining lines of accountability and authority; aligning support systems; and sharing knowledge—to name just a few.

Any way you look at it, the challenges are formidable and the examples of success few and far between.

As the importance of working across organizational boundaries becomes widely accepted, governments, academics, and think-tanks alike have turned their attention toward exploring different models of horizontal management and identifying common success factors. This article proposes to offer additional grist to the analytic mill, describing the origins and early work of the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS) as an example of working horizontally across the Canadian public sector.

Origins

In 1998-99, the award-winning, inter-governmental Citizen-Centred Service Network (CCSN) released a series of reports, tools, and recommendations aimed at improving citizen satisfaction with public-sector service delivery in Canada. These included:

- Citizens First, a national survey of citizen expectations, satisfaction levels, and priorities for service improvement;
- The Common Measurements Tool (CMT), a survey tool for assessing client satisfaction; and
- A database highlighting good practice in service delivery.

While the reports and tools themselves have proven to be extremely valuable, the ongoing legacy of the CCSN is found in the way these products were produced – by interdisciplinary teams working across jurisdictional and organizational boundaries.

Having achieved a degree of success in managing projects horizontally, Ralph Heintzman (Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat) and other key members of the CCSN decided to continue their intergovernmental working relationship under the auspices of the Public Sector Service Delivery Council (PSSDC). Coming together twice a year, the PSSDC serves as a forum

Award-winning CCSN

The Citizen-Centred Service Network was recognized for its work with the Gold Award for Innovative Management from the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC) in 1999, and with the Silver Medal from the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management's (CAPAM) 2000 International Innovations Awards.

for sharing lessons between federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments. Working together, PSSDC members maintain an ambitious set of projects that are managed and financed across jurisdictional boundaries.

Managing and financing projects such as the Common Measurements Tool and Citizens First across jurisdictional boundaries is one thing, but the products of these projects also require ongoing maintenance. In response to this need for a stable home – an intergovernmental home to sustain and further their work regardless of policy priorities – the members of the PSSDC created the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service (ICCS). Further, just as the CMT and Citizens First were originally conceived and managed as horizontal initiatives, so too, the new Institute was born to fulfill the promise and vision of working across organizational borders. It was with this spirit of collaboration that Brian Marson and Art Daniels, co-chairs of the

PSSDC Research Committee, set about building the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service.

Making it Happen

With a mandate to establish the ICCS, the first step for Marson and Daniels was to find a home for the initiative. Through their experience with the CMT and Citizens First, they knew that financial and human resources could be solicited from supporting jurisdictions, but the Institute needed a home in which to grow. In tackling this problem, Marson and Daniels turned to Joseph Galimberti, Executive Director of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada (IPAC). In addition to being a successful non-profit organization, IPAC also has a history of “incubating” other non-profits with complementary mandates, such as the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM). IPAC had successfully managed the Citizens First 2000 project and was launching a new study on single-window services (published under the title Clients Speak). As a nationally recognized, bilingual organization, long-dedicated to public administration in Canada, IPAC presented itself as the ideal partner to nurture the ICCS.

By the middle of 2001, the foundation of the ICCS was in place. Two full-time staff were seconded – one from the federal government and one from the Government of Ontario – and jurisdictions from across the country had offered financial and in-kind resources to get the ICCS off the ground. With the support of IPAC and PSSDC members from the Yukon to Nova Scotia, the ICCS held its first

learning event “New Frontiers and Best Practices in Citizen-Centred Service” in November, attracting nearly 100 participants from all levels of government. The new Institute has a clear mandate, and with the momentum generated by the learning event, set about turning the mutual interests of different jurisdictions into reality.

Common Measurements Tool and Benchmarking

One of the primary roles of the ICCS is to promote and support use of the Common Measurements Tool. In fact, like the ICCS, the CMT itself is the product of cross-jurisdictional collaboration. Led by Dr. Faye Schmidt from the Government of

British Columbia, an intergovernmental team of public servants developed the CMT as an easy-to-use survey design tool that could be used by managers throughout the public sector and could facilitate benchmarking between organizations.

As a tool that is used and promoted by many jurisdictions, any change, improvement, or development must be made in co-operation with all jurisdictions. To this end, users of the CMT collaborate through the CMT Standards Board. While the Standards Board serves as a governing body for the CMT, it does not have any codified rules by which decisions are taken. Growth and change of the CMT are achieved by consensus through debate and deliberation.



From left: Joseph Galimberti, Executive Director, Institute of Public Administration of Canada; Art Daniels, Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Public Service Excellence and Innovation Office; and Brian Marson, Senior Advisor, Public Service Excellence and Innovation, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

ICCS Mission

The mission of the ICCS is to promote high levels of citizen satisfaction with public sector service delivery. The ICCS intends to achieve this goal by undertaking research to identify citizens' service expectations, and by then assisting the public sector in applying innovative service solutions. In pursuing these objectives, the ICCS is guided by its mandate.

Mandate

- Supporting and promoting the Common Measurements Tool (CMT), the most effective tool currently available for public sector organizations to measure client satisfaction and to identify specific priorities for improving performance;
- Developing a benchmarking service based on the CMT client survey results, thereby enabling public sector organizations to compare their performance against others in the same business line and to identify best practices;
- Building a database repository of leading practices in citizen-centred public sector service delivery at all levels of government;
- Conducting research and producing publications, training modules, service improvement guides, and other management tools to promote the improvement

of citizen-centred service delivery. Specific areas of ICCS' research and support include:

- ESD (electronic service delivery);
- Phone, mail, and over-the-counter services;
- Single-window service delivery;
- Service improvement models;
- Customer surveying guides; and
- “Outside-In” quality service approaches.

Since its launch, the ICCS has participated in the deliberations of the CMT Standards Board and now serves as its chair. In 2002, the ICCS also became the formal home of the CMT, assuming exclusive license from the Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD). More than merely a licensing authority, however, the ICCS endeavors to support CMT users actively through consultations, user guides, and by linking together networks of CMT users.

Of particular note, the ICCS has built a CMT benchmarking database to facilitate collaboration across jurisdictions. Through this database, organizations using the CMT can bring their data together anonymously and benchmark their results against peer organizations. Using this database, the ICCS also hopes to learn more about quality service in the public sector, sharing these lessons with the broader community.

Citizens First 2002 tracks trends from previous studies while also exploring issues of multi-channel service delivery, electronic service delivery, and the relationship between service quality and confidence in government.



Citizens First

Citizens First and Citizens First 2000 were remarkable projects for a number of reasons. Landmark studies on government service delivery, these served to debunk many myths about the quality of public-sector service delivery, and identified the primary drivers of satisfaction. Beyond their substantive value, the Citizens First studies were also remarkable for the way in which they were managed and funded. Recognizing a common need to survey their respective populations, the participating jurisdictions (which, for Citizens First 2000, included the federal government, all ten provinces, the Yukon Territory, Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver), came together with IPAC to share

the cost and effort associated with undertaking a national survey.

Beginning with Citizens First 2002, the ICCS is now serving as the coordinating body for these and other intergovernmental research projects, bringing together public-sector organizations across Canada with a common interest in better understanding citizen needs, expectations, and experiences with service delivery.

Success Factors

The successful development of the ICCS in these early days can be attributed to a number of factors. Of these, three are of particular note:

- **Personal relationships within a community of practice:** Having worked together over many years, and more recently through the CCSN, members of the PSSDC have developed a level of trust and understanding that made the initial investment in the ICCS possible through a common research agenda focussed on the needs, experiences and priorities of Canadians. Members have developed a common understanding of the challenges they face and the tools they need to face those challenges successfully. Establishing organizations like the ICCS is possible without these relationships, but would take longer and require more work to build trust.
- **Resources not money:** While fiscal times ebb and flow, it is often easier for public-sector managers to contribute people and in-kind resources rather than dollars. The ICCS was founded, and continues to operate, with this idea as a central tenant. Some financial resources flow to the ICCS directly from public-sector organizations, but the majority of its resources come in the form of dedicated staff time, in-kind contributions, and contracts.
- **Visionary leaders:** ICCS staff are supported by two managers with unparalleled experience and vision in the public sector. Together, Art Daniels (Assistant Deputy Minister, Ontario Public Service Excellence and Innovation Office), and Brian Marson (Senior Advisor, Treasury Board of

Canada Secretariat), have more than 70 years experience in public-sector management. Without their vision, leadership and support, the ICCS would still be an idea rather than a living example of horizontal management.

Challenges to Come

Still in its infancy, the ICCS has come a long way as a body dedicated to facilitating collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. By serving as a home for the CMT, the CMT benchmarking service, and Citizens First, the ICCS is helping to resolve many of the problems that often hinder work across organizational lines.

The next year promises still more challenges as the ICCS continues to evolve. In May 2002, the PSSDC and their colleagues in the intergovernmental Public Sector Chief Information Officer's Council (PSCIOC) agreed to use the ICCS as a common platform to support their work. Sharing a need to work across jurisdictional boundaries as electronic service delivery continues to mature, the PSSDC and PSCIOC have found more and more overlap in their agendas. Through the ICCS, it is hoped that the Councils can advance their common agenda while continuing to build on the initial success of the ICCS in promoting horizontal collaboration across governments. 🌟

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