

The Project

The Mandate and the Deliverables

The initial objective of the OBC was to make the procedures required to start a new business easier for entrepreneurs. In the long term, the objective was to facilitate the relations between businesses and government.

Within the framework of Ontario government's e-gov vision, the fundamental role of OBC consists of the following: (1) to monitor and develop a vision of strategies and technologies adequate for electronic service delivery; and (2) to operationalize practical steps for the improvement of the relation businesses-government (B to G). These two roles are based on an implementation approach based on relational management.

The programs currently offered electronically (from the beginning) are:

- Registration of a business name (Ministry of Consumption and Trade) through search, registration and renewal.
- Commercial license (Ministry of Consumption and Trade) for phase 1 of the certificate
- Registration for a sales tax matriculation (Ministry of Finance)
- Registration for the employer health tax (Ministry of Finance)
- Registration with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

This implementation required an analysis and re-engineering of the processes of the five programs in order to provide an application that allowed capturing the client information, validating it, and forwarding the specifically required information to the different programs. For the client, the result is a user-friendly interface that makes transparent the diverse perspectives and processes of the target organizations where data are forwarded. As early as the summer of 2000, a partnership with the Agency of Customs and Revenue of Canada offered the issuance of the federal business number.

In the short term, OBC will continue to broaden the range of transactions and information it offers while increasing the number of sites and the hours of service, and improving the Internet site. Links need to be created and processes need to be unified for an increasing number of the 100 programs related to businesses. The five programs currently offered through the workstations are considered to be a starting point which will demonstrate the viability of the project and test the systems and agreements with the private partners. However, this minimal basis would be insufficient to ensure the viability of the approach to the partners.

In the long term, all transactions between government and businesses will be targeted, not only the registrations and renewals but also reporting activities and transfer of funds. The Committee of Deputies in Charge of Public Administration Re-engineering charged OBC with creating an interdepartmental work team to study the barriers and problems that needed to be solved in order to start the transactional activities of reporting and transfer of funds.

A master business license will be issued under the direction of the cabinet. The license will gather all critical business information and will prevent businesses from having to provide the same information repeatedly. Eventually, it will replace several permits, licenses or certificates currently used. For this to happen, the idea of a master permit will have to first be accepted by businesses and the different governmental levels. Then effective rules of information dissemination to the different organizations will have to be finalized. In a parallel effort, the design of the business registry directory is currently being developed. It will contain database information about the businesses as well as their relationships with government and current links with the programs. Security remains an important issue. It is approached from a technical, as well as institutional, legal, organizational, and cultural point of view.

The Management Framework

Responsibility for each department's public service delivery reengineering project falls under the respective Minister or Deputy Minister (DM). However, a Deputy Ministerial Steering Committee at the sub-ministerial level oversees all projects. The committee has the support of the Public Services Reengineering Bureau. OBC is considered a major project. Representation in this committee allows OBC to be aware of any innovative project or any relationship that could be developed.

The ministerial steering committee supervises the governing modes and major initiatives of OBC. Representatives of all ministries interested in the issue of government-business relationships can participate.

In order to stay in touch with the business clients community, OBC appointed a Business Advisory Group, composed of representatives from the business associations, industry leaders and municipalities.

As a crucial element of OBC's mission is the creation and sustainability of partnerships, OBC leaders have developed standard agreement methods and tools that can be adapted to each situation and all partners: federal and provincial programs, IT internal providers, external providers, wholesalers and retailers. Basic principles or letters of intention are drafted in an attempt to understand and adopt the needs and values of the partners. This process is executed rapidly. An agreement is then formalized on the joint development of the business process and its implementation. Details are worked out for its operationalization, which leads to the definition of performance standards, agreements on service levels, roles, and responsibilities. Currently, the preferred mode of agreement in government is the MOU (Memorandum of Understanding), which often requires signatures from several levels or more formally, letters of intent. Regarding relations with private partners, responsibilities, and conditions are usually defined through licenses and agreements on business relations. Relations with providers of products and services are more standard, consisting of RFPs (Request for Proposals) often based on proof of concept. However, RFPs are restricted to accredited providers.

When a more important problem comes up, which has happened two or three times, a consulting company is used to facilitate the negotiations towards an acceptable agreement. This recourse is also considered to be profitable from a political point of view.

Thirteen of the 34 people on the team are dedicated to the conception and management of the relationships infrastructure.