

# Performance

All participants in the Alliance for Change project have very vivid memories of it, and they all describe it in terms resounding with praise: a fantastic project, exciting and lots of fun, nerve-racking and exhausting, a source of personal growth and development, a tremendous success, a good business venture, a highly complex and innovative project, a project that generated substantial gains, a big exciting challenge, a wonderful success. They all emphasized the impact the project had not only on their professional careers, but also on their personal development.

## Project and Collaborative Performance

The Alliance for Change attained its objectives. The Department achieved the planned reductions and savings. The number of social assistance cases dropped from 42,000 to 28,000, and the case managers handle 75 to 125 cases instead of 300 to 400. Income-assistance cheques are sent out within 24 hours instead of seven days. Project implementation fell at least two years behind the original schedule. Yet annual savings of \$8 million were achieved, and reimbursement of A/A's fees took 30 instead of the expected 60 months. Moreover, the savings were sufficient to cover the maintenance costs of the computer system. NB Case performs all the desired functions and put an end to the abuses generated by the old system.

HRD-NB expressed a high level of satisfaction with the project and the collaboration with a private partner. Most participants would do it all over again and only a few had reservations about the collaboration with A/A. These reservations concern the difficulty in forming a genuine partnership between a public organization and private enterprise. A real partnership implies that both partners have equal influence on the entire project and decision-making power. Yet because HRD-NB depends on government decisions (whether or not to approve), it had no real control over project developments. By the same token, neither did the private firm.

The project brought about a major change in clients' attitudes. Beneficiaries now feel more in control of their situation; they can make choices. They also realize how much faster, fairer and more equitable the system is. They know that, if they want to break out of the vicious circle of poverty and dependency, the case managers can help them do it.

## Project Benefits

The savings generated by the new service-delivery system make it possible to subsidize an entire series of new programs, many of which target youth both at home and in schools. The Saint John region now has a training program for its clients valued at \$3 to \$4 million. Program management partnerships have also been formed with community groups. The severance pay plan created during the project provided the model that the provincial government uses for the entire public service.

A/A also benefits from a computer system maintenance contract that earns it \$5 million a year. The 17 programmers assigned to the main office are in charge of the computer network, infrastructure, and system applications.

Despite its success, the project received negative media coverage, which marred its reputation. First of all, the Opposition parties pursued a strategy of trying to convince the public that the McKenna government's agenda was purely economic and that the government was insensitive to social issues. The media then got hold of information about a dozen lawsuits brought against Andersen/Accenture in both the United States and Europe over failed projects. And in Canada, the federal government cancelled a \$44.5-million Public Works contract because of major delays and failure to attain objectives. In New Brunswick, there was the failed attempt to transform the Department of Justice. All these problems tarnished the firm's reputation. Finally, there were the poorly timed statements by senior A/A officials describing the delays in delivering cheques to financial assistance beneficiaries as negligible. Nonetheless, the success of the Alliance for Change enabled the firm to land a \$200-million contract for a similar project in Ontario.

Despite these occasional problems with the media, the Alliance for Change project is considered a tremendous success. It not only brought about the reorganization of a department, but also fostered a change of culture with respect to social benefits and income-assistance services.