

# Public Leaders Emerge in Innovative Partnerships

Our recently completed multi-national study of new models of collaboration for delivering government services provides yet more evidence of the importance of leadership in the success of public organizations. All of the projects were initiated by public sector leaders. And much of the leadership exhibited in this research illustrates the definition above - *the ability to get good things done with the help of others*.

*What are the "good things" here?*

Our case studies suggested a range of goals for the government projects studied - but all of them shared a vision of better government. The leaders in each project were committed to partnerships and innovation.

To do this they engaged in new relationships within government and between government and private and nonprofit organizations. They often embraced information technology to enable a government that is available to everyone at any time; a government that provides quality services; a government that meets top standards of performance. Their commitment was demonstrated at all levels, from the President of the United States to the project team members at the Canadian Treasury Board Secretariat, to local government GIS experts.

- In the FirstGov case, presidential leadership was visible from the start as then President Clinton believed in the power of the Internet to create a more accessible and useful government for citizens. Leadership was also visibly assumed by the U.S. General Services Administration whose leaders and staff worked "tirelessly" because they "knew it was right."
- At Ontario Business Connect, leaders believed that service delivery in general, and job creation in particular should not "be hampered by the red tape of government." In this project, the overall goal of the Ontario government was to increase citizen satisfaction with government services. In New Brunswick, the "Partners in Change" project was led from a belief in doing good things. One of the key success factors for the NB Department of Human Resources Development was an inspirational vision of enabling self-sufficiency for all of its clients.
- In the case of the New York State Geographic Information Coordination Program, the lack of state-level leadership was seen as an early barrier that kept New York from influencing, participating in, and benefiting from the national spatial data infrastructure. When state leadership was established to promote this common good, both the state and all its partners began to benefit from more robust and flexible data.
- One more example of leading with the power of the common good comes from the City of Bremen in Germany. Its Online Services project was based on voluntary participation by public agencies responding to the visible and active support of the First and Second Mayors. The Mayors made clear the economic good that would accrue to the City from the successful innovation of Bremen Online Services.

*What is the value of the "help of others?"*

A second clear lesson from these projects is that a leader cannot be successful without the help of others who offer commitment, engagement, and belief in the goals of the project. Often these people are also leaders in these initiatives.

- At the Internal Revenue Service (U.S. Department of Treasury) one aspect of leadership that was consistently stressed was the ability of the program director to engage the staff in the job at hand. Making tax payments available online was a complex and risky business for the IRS. As a consequence, the project team had to buy into the leader's vision that this was a worthy and achievable goal.
- The Service Canada initiative shows that leadership had to come from the ranks to motivate people to be committed to success. Leadership had to arise from the peer group itself to sustain the necessary cooperation for this government-wide project.
- At FirstGov, a number of stakeholders noted that it was the very visible leadership from the President of the United States that motivated them to work together to meet the extremely demanding goals for the creation and implementation of this portal. The CIO at the General Services Administration got the team excited and engaged in meeting the very tight and very visible project deadlines. And the effort of the team itself was also a critical success factor for this project - without the team's extraordinary commitment, the FirstGov launch would not have occurred on time or with a high level of quality.

Another way leaders engage the support and help of others is by having a top level official create oversight, advisory, or decision groups composed of project stakeholders.

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- This occurred in the Access Indiana case, where the Governor of Indiana created the Enhanced Data Access Review Committee, composed of top agency administrators and other key public and private stakeholders. This committee is directly involved in the workings of the program and gives Access Indiana strong and visible promotion.