

---

# **New Models of Collaboration: An Overview**

---

**Center for Technology in Government  
University at Albany, SUNY  
187 Wolf Road, Suite 301  
Albany, NY 12205  
Phone: (518) 442-3892  
Fax: (518) 442-3886  
E-mail: [info@ctg.albany.edu](mailto:info@ctg.albany.edu)  
[www.ctg.albany.edu](http://www.ctg.albany.edu)**

**October 2004**

This material is based upon work supported in part by the National Science Foundation under Grant No. EIA-99832.  
Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the authors  
and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

©2004 Center for Technology in Government  
The Center grants permission to reprint this document provided this cover page is included.



---

# Exploring new models of collaboration

The search for more effective ways to deliver public services dates back to the early 1980s. Service innovations increasingly rely on cross-boundary collaborations among government agencies, the private sector, and nonprofit organizations. Within the advent of e-government, these attempts to improve public services now make extensive use of advanced information technologies. The synergy between government reform and new technologies has opened new opportunities to redesign public services.

This overview summarizes a more complete guide that was developed from the results of a multinational research project designed to understand how these collaborations work. It involved a network of field researchers in Canada, the US, and Europe who studied more than a dozen collaborations to uncover critical success factors and lessons about how these new organizational forms are designed, managed, and perform.

Four critical success factors were evident in these experiences:

**Leadership** – political, managerial, and individual leaders play mutually reinforcing roles.

**Trust** – public trust and interpersonal trust are both necessary for project success.

**Risk management** – risks to sustainability lie in the external environment and in the inner workings of the project itself.

**Communication and coordination** – principles, structures, and innovative problem solving all contribute to good performance.

The complete guide, including management essays, twelve case study narratives, and more information about the research can be found on our Website at [www.ctg.albany.edu/projects/newmodels](http://www.ctg.albany.edu/projects/newmodels).

---

## The Keys to Success

A cross-national analysis of the cases revealed four critical success factors that transcend national boundaries: leadership, trust, risk management, and communication and coordination. These were crucial in every setting regardless of service focus, level of government, or type of collaboration structure.

### Leadership

All of the projects were initiated by public sector leaders who shared a vision of better government. The leaders in each project were committed to developing working relationships within government and between government and private and nonprofit organizations. Commitment of top political leaders proved critical to initiation and sustainability of these efforts. Leadership also emerged within project teams, not only from project managers, but also from different individual participants who had the necessary skill or knowledge to lead specific tasks or respond to particular problems.

### Trust

All of the cases involved the development and exercise of trust. Two kinds of trust relationships were critical to the successful implementation of these projects:

- public trust or the degree to which citizens and other groups in society believe the project or service program can be trusted to treat them fairly; and
- professional trust or the degree to which people and organizations charged with developing and delivering a service believe they can rely on the motives and predict the performance of other participants. Three types of trust (calculus-based trust, identity-based trust, and institution-based trust) were evident in the ways that project teams handled issues they faced.

### Risk management

Collaboration within government or between the public and private sectors involves partners from different organizations pursuing different, sometimes conflicting, objectives. These are usually large-scale projects that address very visible problems, making significant use of new processes and technologies. All these factors are potential sources of risk. Two categories of risk were important in these initiatives:

- external risks that come mainly from the socio-economic, political, and technological environments; and
- internal risks that stem from the nature of the project, the participants, and their relationships.

Fortunately, most risks can be managed if they are identified and understood early in the process.

### Communication and coordination

High levels of information sharing, good communication, and well-orchestrated coordination and problem solving help a collaboration project succeed. The likelihood of success depends on how well managers can leverage technology, organizational, and human resources in coordination with collaborating partners. These initiatives require employees of all partners to work in a highly coordinated fashion and require the partnering organizations to provide the motive, opportunity, and structure for this to happen. The case studies demonstrated a related set of effective approaches. These include clear governance principles, both formal and informal structures, and innovative problem solving mechanisms such as “war rooms.”

## The Case Studies

Twelve case studies tell the stories of two European, six Canadian, and four American public service projects. Each story recounts and assesses the experiences of developing and implementing a collaborative IT-enabled public service delivery

system. The cases address a variety of service areas including human services, business development, employment, taxation, public access to information, and others.

## New Models of Collaboration: Case Profiles

Case	Service focus	Government sponsor/ Political context	Predominant collaboration type	Service type
Access Indiana	Public access to state government information and transactions	State of Indiana, US	Public-private	Public access to multiple services and/or information sources
Ambassadeur	Citizen Internet exposure & training program in rural areas	Province of Quebec, Canada	Public-nonprofit	Public access to a single service type
Bremen Online Services	Public access to city information and transactions	City of Bremen, Germany	Public-private	Public access to multiple services and/or information sources
Quebec Cadastre	Real property tax mapping	Province of Quebec, Canada	Public-private	Support for governmental operations
FirstGov.gov	Public access to federal government information	Federal government, US	Public-private	Public access to multiple services and/or information sources
Hotjob.be	Job offers portal	National government, Belgium	Public-private	Public access to a single service type
Internal Revenue Service (IRS) e-file	Filing of personal income tax returns	Federal government, US	Public-private	Public access to a single service type
NYS Geographic Information System Coordination Program	Data sharing and development of data analysis expertise	State of New York, US	Public-public	Support for governmental operations
OneStop Business Registration	Unique kiosk allowing electronic filling of all forms required to open a new business	Province of British Columbia, Canada	Public-nonprofit	Public access to a single service type
Ontario Business Connect	Unique kiosk of government services to businesses	Province of Ontario, Canada	Public-private	Public access to a single service type
Partners in Change	IT system to manage welfare benefits delivery	Province of New Brunswick, Canada	Public-private	Support for governmental operations
Service Canada	Online government information to citizens	Federal government, Canada	Public-public	Public access to multiple services and/or information sources

---

## Types of Collaboration

Our study defined collaboration as “a *reciprocal and voluntary agreement between two or more distinct public sector agencies, or between public and private or nonprofit entities, to deliver government services.*”

These arrangements often rest on a formal agreement specifying the purpose of the collaboration, and the allocation of associated responsibilities, risks, benefits, and resources. Often these agreements take the form of time-limited contracts. In general, each collaboration project involved:

- a minimum of two organizations,
- a formal agreement about roles and responsibilities,
- a common objective, activity, or project aimed at the delivery of a public service, and
- the sharing or allocation of risks, benefits, and resources - both tangible and intangible.

Many of the projects involved all three sectors, but one of the following main types dominated each arrangement.

**Public-public collaborations.** This category includes both horizontal agreements between two agencies or departments at the same level of government, and vertical agreements or intergovernmental alliances among federal, state, and local levels.

**Public-private collaborations.** Public-private partnerships go beyond traditional contracting and outsourcing to include a more equal sharing of the resources, risks and benefits associated with project operations. In these cases, government hands over part of its management responsibilities while retaining enough control to ensure the protection of the public interest.

**Public-nonprofit collaborations.** Traditionally, the relationship between nonprofit organizations and government has been characterized by fee-for-service contracts. Today, we are beginning to see joint development of service programs in which the public and nonprofit participants share responsibility for program design, performance, and evaluation.

---

## Types of Government Service Offered

While the policy domains and customer or user groups varied widely, all the projects can be categorized into three main service types.

### ***Public access to a single service type.***

Most of the projects were collaborations to provide citizens and businesses easy access to one specific type of service. Several organizations both inside and outside government may be involved but the service itself is focused on one particular citizen or business need such as jobs or business registration. These online services simplify government by providing a one-stop access point to complete a process or obtain information that previously required visiting several government offices.

### ***Public access to multiple services or information sources.***

The second type of service offered public access to multiple services and information sources. These generally involved portals that went far beyond a single theme such as paying taxes or finding work. Instead, they provided public access to national, state, provincial, or regional information and transactions on a variety of subjects.

### ***Support for governmental operations.***

The third category of service supported the back office operations that underlie service delivery. These projects aimed to integrate processes, facilitate management, streamline workflow, and foster information sharing and re-use to improve service quality, accountability, and efficiency.

---

## Public-Public Collaborations

### *Fostering information sharing across government (US)*

#### **New York State Geographic Information System Coordination Program**

In the early and mid 1990s, a central issue facing New York State was how to organize collaborative effort across all levels of government to harness the analytical power of geographic information systems (GIS). The goal was to use geospatial analysis to improve government services, drive down costs, and stimulate economic development. A statewide policy on GIS issued in 1996 established the NYS GIS Coordination Program with a broadly representative coordinating body drawn from state and local government, universities, and the private sector. Today, the Program hosts a formal data sharing cooperative that supports easy sharing of spatial data sets among federal, state, and local government agencies, universities, and other nonprofit organizations. The program also offers a variety of educational and support services to encourage state and local development and use of spatial data.

### *Integrating multiple information service channels (Canada)*

#### **Service Canada**

Launched in 1999, Service Canada was an experimental project designed to improve the accessibility and quality of government services for citizens. The project rested on the idea of integrating existing information services: the 1-800-O-Canada phone line for inquiries, the Canadian Web site, and in-person access centers. The main challenge in this project was its attempt to encompass the thousands of services offered by government departments and agencies through transparent links. Service Canada was sponsored by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and developed through agreements with various departments and agencies and coordinated by a multi-agency committee. It set up 122 access centers, overhauled the Canadian Web site, and classified services in an improved database underlying 1-800-O-Canada.

---

## Public-Nonprofit Collaborations

### *Empowering citizens through Internet education (Canada)*

#### **Ambassadeur**

Ambassadeur provides citizen education and training in the use of information technology to obtain government information and services. The project aims to empower citizens and create relationships within the community at both local and regional levels. It is carried out as a partnership among the Jonquière Office of Human Resources Development Canada and the six Community Development Assistance Corporations in the Saguenay/St-Jean Lake region. Taking advantage of Internet Community Access Centres as forums for discussion and business opportunities, the project promotes the use of information technology to access the resources, products, and services of the Government of Canada and other providers.

### *Encouraging and supporting small business development (Canada)*

#### **OneStop Business Registration**

This pilot project aims to make it easier to launch businesses in British Columbia. Sponsored by the Small Business Development Branch of the British Columbia Ministry of Small Business, Tourism, and Culture, the project involves a network of nonprofit organizations as lead partners plus more than ten partners from the public and private sectors. The service offers kiosk-based one-stop electronic business registration, eliminating the need for entrepreneurs to visit several offices, learn about the different registration procedures, fill out multiple forms and repeatedly provide the same information. OSBR is available throughout the province; it offers fledgling businesses numerous services from three levels of government on the Internet and through 88 booths in 77 different public places.

---

## Public-Private Collaborations

### *Bringing e-government to state residents (US)*

#### **Access Indiana**

The Access Indiana Information Network (AIIN) is a self-funding, state-owned, state-regulated network operated by a private partner, Indiana Interactive, Inc. The private partner provided the initial startup capital as well as a consumer-oriented, market-driven approach which was instrumental to the success of the network. Access Indiana's policies, design, and interactive services were determined by task forces comprised of state agencies, professional associations, businesses and citizens. Access Indiana contains approximately 100,000 pages of government information from more than 75 state agencies, departments, and commissions, the judiciary, and the legislative branch. Most of the information and services on the network are available to the public at no cost. Only those services that have a commercial value, such as drivers' records, vehicle titles, or health professional licenses include a fee. These fees are the source of revenue that supports the network.

### *Securing a common platform for governmental transactions (Germany)*

#### **Bremen Online Services**

Financed by the federal government in Germany, Bremen Online Services aims to develop and implement e-government by developing a secure technology platform for transactions and payments. Through a public-private partnership, the Hanseatic Free City of Bremen is collaborating with regional and national partners from private industry including financial institutions and technology providers. The success of this project is due to an interdisciplinary problem solving approach that brings publicly and privately managed firms together as full partners.

### *Innovations in tax mapping and parcel information (Canada)*

#### **Quebec Cadastre**

In 1992 Quebec established the statutory authority for digital cadastre information. The term "cadastre" refers to an official register of the description, value, and ownership of real property used in apportioning taxes. The cadastre reengineering project involves developing and installing information and management systems that combine cadastral data with graphic representation. This kind of data integration represents dramatic change in information management as well as a technological innovation. Overseen by the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR), the project is being implemented by a private partner, the DMR Consulting Group, which is integrating products and services, providing the technological infrastructure, and developing geospatial reference information systems.

### *A nationwide portal to information and services (US)*

#### **FirstGov.gov**

The official US federal government Web portal enables information access and transactions for citizens and businesses. Launched in 2000, FirstGov.gov offers about 200 million pages of government information, services, and online transactions. Initiated through a public-private partnership involving the loan of powerful search engine, FirstGov development was supported by a cross-agency board and carried out by the US General Services Administration. It provides a topical index to content that covers federal and state governments, some local governments, and U.S. territories. It was initiated as a public-private partnership.

---

## ***Consolidating employment opportunities across communities (Belgium)***

### **Hotjob.be**

Hotjob.be is an Internet portal for employers and job-seekers. It is a jointly managed public service with easy access to over 500 job and training sites. The program involved not only the creation of an employment service portal. It also rested on a total reorganization of work processes and information flows across multiple levels of government. The process of setting up the portal platform was assigned to a private partnership that also conducted the reengineering necessary for its implementation. Since its initial implementation, the Hotjob service has been enhanced by two new international partnerships with ANPE (France's public employment service) and APEC (an agency specializing in executive jobs in France and Europe).

## ***Making it easier to file and pay taxes (US)***

### **RS e-file**

Electronic filing of US Federal government income tax returns began with a partnership between the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and H&R Block in 1985. It has since grown to include a large number of private tax preparation companies and individual and business taxpayers. Citizens can use the services of a private tax preparer who can submit the tax return electronically or they can file electronically from their home computers using commercial software or the services of private contractor that has established electronic links directly to the IRS mainframe computers. IRS e-file speeds up the tax filing process guaranteeing faster processing, fewer errors, and quicker refunds.

## ***Public-private partnership to serve businesses (Canada)***

### **Ontario Business Connect**

In 1994, in response to business community pressure, Ontario enacted business regulation reforms and developed a strategy to modernize services for the business community. Ontario Business Connect was created to provide registration services for new businesses at multiple access points. Users can access OBC directly or through sites that bundle government and commercial services together. Sponsored by the Ontario Ministry of Consumer and Business Services, the main partners are the government departments and agencies involved with new businesses at the provincial and federal level, IT firms, point-of-service partners, and three private service wholesalers.

## ***Reengineering human services (Canada)***

### **Partners in Change**

An overhaul of the New Brunswick Department of Human Resources Development (NBHRD) aimed to eliminate the Department's budget deficits as part of a broad economic restructuring policy. Lacking the financial resources and know-how to make the necessary changes, the Department established an innovative public-private partnership. The private partner, Accenture, provided not only technological infrastructure and project-management expertise, but also financed the entire \$21 million project. The project successfully developed new service strategies, including an automated case management system and reengineered work processes, geared to the needs of clients and focused on results.

---

# Research Partners

## Canadian Team

### Centre Francophone d'Informatisation des Organisations (CEFRIO)

**Lise Préfontaine**, Research Associate, CEFRIO, Professor, Department of Management and Technology, School of Management Science, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

**Line Ricard**, Associate Professor, Marketing Department, École des Hautes Études Commerciales (HEC), Montreal

**Hélène Sicotte**, Professor, Department of Management and Technology, Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM)

## US Team

### Center for Technology in Government (CTG)

**Sharon Dawes**, Director, Center for Technology in Government, University at Albany

**Ophelia Eglene**, Graduate Assistant, Center for Technology in Government, University at Albany

**Jon P. Gant**, Assistant Professor, Maxwell School and School of Information Studies, Syracuse University

**Patricia Diamond Fletcher**, Associate Professor, Policy Sciences Graduate Program, University of Maryland Baltimore County

## European Team

### Cellule Interfacultaire de Technology Assessment (CITA)

**Martin Hagen**, Analyst/Consultant, Researcher, Cellule Interfacultaire de Technology Assessment (CITA-FUNDP), Namur, Belgium

**Herbert Kubicek**, Analyst/Consultant, Researcher, Cellule Interfacultaire de Technology Assessment (CITA-FUNDP), Namur, Belgium

**Sylvie Nigot**, Analyst/Consultant, NSI-SA, Researcher, Cellule Interfacultaire de Technology Assessment (CITA-FUNDP), Namur, Belgium