

**HORIZONTAL MANAGEMENT AND THE GOVERNMENT OF
SASKATCHEWAN**

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Saskatchewan Government, like most governments around the world, is under pressure to deliver quality services within an environment of increasing public expectations and a fixed budget. Issues are often complex, crossing the boundaries of departments that are traditionally organized along vertical accountability lines.

There is no theory or standard rulebook for fostering collaborative relationships between departments or practicing horizontal management. Jurisdictions left to their own devices engage in a hit or miss testing of practices and formal mechanisms designed to facilitate interdepartmental cooperation. The Canadian Centre for Management Development notes that when it comes to managing horizontal initiatives, “little in the way of practical advice is available” (Hopkins et al. 2001, 1), and “we do not yet have evaluation tools that can fully assess the value of horizontal initiatives” (Ibid, 37).

Definitions of horizontal management are many and varied. Horizontal management has been described as an attempt to address complex problems by collaborating across departments, with other organizations, and with citizens. Horizontal management generates new ideas and, in the opinion of some, is a process that develops the creativity of managers. Bourgaut argues that horizontal management, “fosters coherence, enriches outlooks, forces delegation, brings in new ideas and improves creativity; it facilitates co-ordination and vision-sharing, gives influence to the small departments, and enhances the legitimacy of government” (Bourgaut 2003, 24).

Horizontal management is not new to the Saskatchewan Government. Civil servants have been engaging in partnerships of various forms for years. This research project explores the rhetoric and examines the reality of horizontal management as practiced in departments and agencies across the Government of Saskatchewan. While there is no standard rulebook to default to in crafting a strategy, it was found that there is considerable horizontal management experience within the Saskatchewan Government on which to draw and to begin to build upon.

This paper includes several components: First, the paper presents existing theory in order to arrive at a satisfactory—though not necessarily exhaustive—definition of horizontal management, and to identify the perceived benefits and risks of horizontal management or joint initiatives; In the body of the paper, horizontal management practices in Saskatchewan and other jurisdictions are examined; Finally, the paper discusses the outcomes of interviews conducted with Deputy Ministers and Assistant/Associate Deputy Ministers in Saskatchewan; this discussion is an attempt to identify successful practices and mechanisms that could strengthen the culture of horizontal management in Saskatchewan and lead to a more collaborative, results based approach in devising inter-departmental solutions.

SECTION 1:

THEORY OF HORIZONTAL MANAGEMENT

Definition

Similar to ‘collaborative public management’ (McGuire 2006), ‘network structure’ (Keast et al 2004) or ‘joined-up public management’ (Perri 6 et al 1999), ‘horizontal management’ is broadly defined as “working collaboratively across organizational boundaries” (Hopkins et al. 2001, 7.). Bakvis and Juillet further define horizontal management as the coordination or management of activities between two or more organizational units. The units—in this instance—do not have hierarchical control over each other. The aim is to generate outcomes that cannot be achieved by units working in isolation (Bakvis and Juillet 2004).

The definition of horizontal management varies depending on the scope of the activities being described. For the purposes of this paper, we define the scope exclusively as the activities undertaken by the provincial government. More specifically, our focus is on the interdepartmental activities and management in the provincial government. As such, Bourgault’s definition of horizontal management appears more fitting. Bourgault describes horizontal management as “including any development, policy-management or program issue with bi- or multi-departmental involvement that pertains directly to the department’s mandate” (Bourgault 2003, 19).

The Benefits

In the stream of new public management that emerged during the 1980s, governments in Canada began to recognize or identify citizens as “clients.” Efficiency and effectiveness became high priorities and indicators of sound public management (Aucoin 1995). For many, horizontal management is explained as a part of the new public management initiative, stemming from the need to provide quality services to the citizens (or clients.)

In 1999, Perri 6 et al described the new societal expectations. They argued that the problems that citizens care about are not defined or shaped in the same ways that departments and agencies are shaped (Perri 6 et al. 1999). Horizontal coordination across the government therefore becomes essential to better policy development and service delivery. Others have described this same phenomena as a transformation of the culture in government - “from ‘silo’ mentality to a collaborative, results-focused mentality” that seeks to respond to the changing expectations of the public (Peach 2004).

Success Factors

It would be moot to argue against the necessity and benefits of horizontal work in government, unless one wanted to argue against responding to the changing needs and expectations of citizens. The discussion in the public service has therefore come to focus

on how to successfully implement mechanisms of horizontal management. This study is a continuation of the discussion on best practices in horizontal management.

The Canadian Centre for Management Development (CCMD) has done considerable work on horizontal management issues, including a roundtable on the Management of Horizontal Initiatives in 2001. Discussions at the CCMD roundtables helped to identify the following four key dimensions of Horizontal Management, or principles for successful horizontal management:

- (1) Mobilizing teams and networks**—*leadership has a significant impact on mobilization and teamwork can help to insure that horizontal partnerships are consistent.*
- (2) Developing shared frameworks**—*developing a shared framework is a key to certify that everyone is working for the same goals.*
- (3) Building supportive structures**—*each organization according to their environment might develop a different structure. Informal structures have proven more flexible and less resource intensive, while formal structures are less indefinite and more resource intensive.*
- (4) Maintaining momentum**—*organization should work through keeping the momentum.* (Hopkins et al. 2001, 7-9)

Bougault's observations around best practices in horizontal management are more specific to executive government. Bourgault stresses the importance of the Deputy Minister to the success of horizontal management. More specifically, he argues that interdepartmental cooperation, among Deputies, must be understood and genuinely accepted, along with the corporate aspects of the Deputy Minister's role. For horizontal management to produce positive results, certain basic rules must be developed by executive government and then followed. Bougault suggests that the specific rules developed may differ according to the organization/government and resists offering universal best practices, though the author does recognize that basic time-management principles are critical (Bougault 2003).

One of the themes echoed in the literature on horizontal management is the importance of informal relationships to the success of horizontal management. Keast et al argue that informal relationships are critical, forming the basis for the development of trust that they see as crucial in a network structure (Keast et al. 2004). McGuire makes a similar argument, insisting that collaboration is achieved by establishing both formal and informal communication. Building relationships is—according to McGuire—the simplest and more effective way to share knowledge and create trust (McGuire 2006).

Although the majority of literature on horizontal management in Canada is focused at the federal level, there are several studies focused on the provincial government. Indeed, Peach argues that the majority of practical experience with innovations to foster horizontal policy-making, as distinct from integrated service delivery, is situated in the provinces (Peach 2004). Peach assesses the experiences of Canadian provinces, as well as several American states and the Government of the United Kingdom in implementing horizontal management in their jurisdictions. Despite the diverse cases he selected, he identifies several common themes in the experiences of these governments: (1) the importance of a strategic framework; (2) the importance of

results-oriented benchmarks; (3) the leadership of central agencies, such as the Executive Council; and, (4) the quality of citizen engagement.

Risks of Horizontal Management

Improved horizontal management is not the final treatment for all deficiencies arising in government. Horizontal management may be inevitable—considering the changing environment in which public servants are required to make decisions, develop and implement policy and programs, but horizontal management also involves certain risks, which deserve mention.

While horizontal management aims to improve efficiency and effectiveness and ultimately delivering better public services, working horizontally can also hinder these advancements if there is no clear direction, leadership and accountability. Horizontal management will often make the decision making process longer. Great investment of time and energy is required to gain the trust and securing the collaboration of a network. Organizational theory warns that collective action—horizontal management—could result in what has been described as the ‘free-rider’ problem: actors could choose to take advantage of the collective efforts, instead of engaging actively (Kickert et al. 1997). The risk of this occurring is generally increased when no clear goal is mutually agreed upon.

In 1999, Rasmussen interviewed Deputy Ministers in the Government of Saskatchewan. The interviews were consistent in identifying the necessity of horizontal work, particularly in policy-making. Obstacles, such as the willingness of each department to engage meaningfully, were also identified. Rasmussen noted that “the majority of interviewees saw departmental loyalties as a major barrier to horizontal policy-making” (Rasmussen 1999).

Similarly, Keast et al noted that one of the difficulties in a “network” structure is in dealing with the conflicts that emerge between the individual members’ goals and the need to commit to joint, overriding goals. Keast made the observation that power and authority do not work the way they do in a traditional hierarchical structure. With horizontal initiatives, many times there is no one “in charge”, making it difficult to talk about responsibilities and hold individuals or departments to account.

In a related teaching, Hopkins, Couture and Moore discussed the importance of respecting the realities of working in a traditional/hierarchical or “vertical” institution. The authors argued that when working horizontally in a traditional institutional setting, it is important to link back to the vertical structure that is normally the source of funding and authority. Neglecting these links—the authors argued—could be fatal. Strong vertical links can be as important as strong horizontal links and without vertical support, horizontal initiatives are vulnerable. One frequent and frustrating barrier to success these authors identified was participants who lacked delegated authority from home organizations to make decisions (Hopkins et al. 2001).

Horizontal processes can become disconnected from the channels of authority; accountability and action when an initiative is not linked back into its supporting —often-vertical — structures. This can happen when the people sitting around the table either fail to communicate decisions “back home” or have not been given the authority to negotiate. Ensuring the horizontal initiative becomes part of the organization’s official planning process is critical in order to leverage support and resources (Hopkins et al. 2001).

This paper is by no means an exhaustive accounting of the many and competing theories around horizontal management. Theoretical teachings on the subject are many and varied. In researching this project, we discovered that far less information is available relating to best practices or practical advice when engaging in horizontal management. Sharing real governing experience is necessary. As Hopkins, Couture and Moore note, there is a need to acknowledge the continuing real-world difficulties of managing horizontally in order to more successfully respond to the institutional and cultural obstacles (Hopkins et al. 2001).

SECTION 2:

ACROSS CANADIAN JURISDICTIONS: HORIZONTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

The following section explores horizontal management practices in other Canadian jurisdictions and endeavours to set the context for practices currently employed in Saskatchewan. Generally, it was found that the larger the size and scope of the provincial government, the more complex and formalized the horizontal management initiatives employed. The identification of alternate practices stimulates discussion on their potential application to Saskatchewan. Best practices are grouped according to key success factors found in other jurisdictions.

Leadership

A major success factor identified in horizontal management practices across Canada is leadership at all levels (political and bureaucratic). Leadership must be committed to the delivery of results and be supportive of the collaborative culture required to implement initiatives that cross the traditional boundaries of line departments.

To ensure alignment of departments, leadership at the political level is crucial. Inter-departmental initiatives that are not a government priority are very difficult to implement. This difficulty is compounded when the initiatives require extra staff or have other publicly visible implications. Political support and an understanding of the full implications of an initiative are imperative in overcoming barriers. For example, in Ontario, the Minister of Management Board Secretariat (a sub-committee of Cabinet Ministers and Parliamentary Assistants who manage the fiscal plan on the government) championed the integration of certain Ontario Housing Tribunal transactions to common counters. The transition of these services would likely not have occurred without the Minister's support and understanding of the value of integration.

All jurisdictions place significant importance on central direction as a prerequisite for the implementation of successful horizontal management strategies. Larger jurisdictions, such as British Columbia and Ontario have incorporated horizontal management strategies into their corporate structure through central agencies. Smaller jurisdictions, such as Manitoba and Prince Edward Island, also identify central direction as an important factor for implementing or improving horizontal management. However, they have not adopted any formal structures.

In addition to leadership and direction from central agencies, other jurisdictions identified additional supports that they require from central agencies to advance horizontal management strategies more effectively. These supports include staff and resources to organize and support interdepartmental committees. An example of this is the Deputy Ministers' Policy Secretariat in British Columbia. This organization is located in the Office of the Premier. It not only provides information to the Premier's Office on horizontal issues, the secretariat provides administrative and coordination services for Deputy Minister Committees. This support infrastructure enables the committees to be more effective in their horizontal management capacity. Without the proper administrative support, interdepartmental committees and taskforces are medium for sharing information but lack the ability to follow up on decisions and recommendations.

The leadership of central agencies at the initiation and development stages is crucial; however the participation and support from line departments in the development and implementation stages is equally vital for success. Deputy Ministers play a key role in the advancement of horizontal management initiatives in line departments. Their role varies in terms of time spent and organizational structures in place, but the importance of participation and leadership from Deputy Ministers is universal.

Budgetary Process

Other jurisdictions argued that horizontal initiatives have an adequate financial base to be successful. The reality is that budgets are limited and new horizontal initiatives, although able to provide tangible benefits, are not always implemented, without a ready vehicle to fund them. Some believe that the traditional budgetary process of allocating funding to separate "siloed" departments amplifies competition and creates a culture of "turf protection" and "buck passing." From this view, government is not perceived as a single organization but an entity consisting of separate competitive parts that are not supportive of horizontal initiatives.

Initiatives that cross department boundaries create unique opportunities for innovation in the budgetary process. Extra effort is need in the financing, staffing and allocation of non-financial resources (i.e. office space, administrative capacity etc.) for horizontal initiatives, as accountability lines are not as clear as they are in single-department projects.

Recognizing the unique circumstances and barriers that face horizontal initiatives, some jurisdictions have modified their budgetary processes to better engage departments to work with one another. In Nova Scotia, officials planned to dedicate a pool of funds specifically for the use of horizontal initiatives. An interdepartmental committee would be tasked to develop policy to allocate funds according to the province's strategic policy framework (Peach, 2004). In Ontario, the initiative SuperBuild pooled infrastructure planning and budgets into one agency, the SuperBuild Corporation. The agency worked with departments to fund a horizontal, strategic plan. SuperBuild has since been dismantled and its duties have been designated to the department of Public Infrastructure Renewal. However there is continued emphasis on long term, horizontal strategic planning and financing for infrastructure renewal (Peach 2004).

These jurisdictions demonstrate that pooling resources, although challenging, can be achieved in a way that provides clarity of roles and incentives for departments to be engaged partners. Jurisdictions also noted that a key success factor of horizontal initiatives is to put in place firm multi-year funding commitments, alleviating the uncertainty of joint ventures and allowing departments to move beyond fundraising to concentrating on the implementation of the initiative.

Organizational Structure

Jurisdictions choose to organize themselves in various ways to facilitate cooperation between departments. Ontario, the largest jurisdiction examined, created permanent Deputy Minister and Associate Cabinet Secretary positions to manage cross-government policy. The Deputy Minister, with the help of two Assistant Deputy Ministers, manages five executive policy clusters. The clusters include health and social, education and children, economic and resources, intergovernmental and justice, and environmental policy. The Executive Director of each of these policy clusters coordinates interdepartmental policies and reports to the Deputy Minister, who subsequently reports to the Cabinet Secretary. In this structure, Cabinet and government executives have the power to directly influence broad, interdepartmental strategies through one Deputy Minister.

The Alberta Premier and Cabinet initiated the Priority Policy Cross-Ministry Initiative (PPCMI) in 2000 to address issues of duplication, overlap, and a lack of interdepartmental cooperation. The PPCMI is comprised of five separate policy clusters: the Aboriginal Policy Initiative, Children and Youth Initiative, Economic Development Initiative, Health Sustainability Initiative, and the Skilled Labour Initiative. The clusters are ‘championed’ by a Deputy Minister and a working group of Assistant Deputy Ministers. Each of these four initiatives coordinates government-wide policy in their area and reports annually to a steering group of Deputy Ministers and Cabinet. According to Alberta’s Executive Council, the initiatives have been quite successful since their inception.

In smaller jurisdictions, similar corporate structures are not feasible and Deputy Ministers use other means to advance horizontal management. This includes the use of committees, task forces, and existing relationships between executives. Smaller jurisdictions tend to manage horizontal policies on an issue-by-issue basis between the Deputy Ministers concerned. In Prince Edward Island, Deputy Ministers are able to develop and implement horizontal initiatives without the presence of formal incentives or corporate structures. The small size of their organization makes it easier for them to work horizontally without formal structures. However, even with the advantage of smaller size, Prince Edward Island emphasizes the importance of leadership from central agencies like Executive Council.

Accountability

Successful cross-government initiatives require the identification of a lead department and clear accountability lines to delineate roles and responsibilities between department partners. The lead department is usually assigned a coordinating role for the

development of the strategy and for monitoring and reporting on the outcomes. Partner departments are responsible for the identification and action on key tasks that support the strategy. Usually, they are required to report on the results of their actions to the lead department.

Jurisdictions have various ways of establishing accountability frameworks. Saskatchewan, for example, has drafted an accountability statement into each key cross-government strategy that outlines department's roles and responsibilities (accountability statements are discussed in further detail in the subsequent section). Further along the continuum of formality, accountability can be written into contracts between the lead department and partner departments or between the lead department and the Deputy Minister to the Premier.

In some jurisdictions, to enhance accountability Cabinet monitors departments' performance in the implementation of horizontal initiatives. For example, a Cabinet Committee supervises Newfoundland and Labrador's horizontal initiative, the Strategic Social Plan. This sends the signal that the department's performance is monitored on an ongoing basis. In Ontario, Cabinet reviews the performance of departments working together to determine weaknesses and identify potential areas to support future collaboration. In Alberta, an external review committee (five people from outside government) rates the government's overall performance on its horizontal initiatives in order to determine the magnitude and number of performance bonuses to give each year.

Performance Pay

The use of performance measures and evaluation is another means of facilitating cooperation among departments. Many jurisdictions in Canada use quality participation in horizontal initiatives as a core competency in senior performance evaluation (Deputy Minister and senior management level). The rationale of inserting this competency in performance evaluations is that it would act as an incentive for Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers to prioritize horizontal initiatives. However this may come at the expense of achieving goals within their own department plans.

Nova Scotia has created a system where the quality of participation in horizontal initiatives is written into all participating Deputy Minister's performance reviews, not just the lead department's Deputy Minister's evaluation. Similarly, Ontario has declared effective collaboration as a core competency for senior management within the Ontario Public Service. Alberta goes farthest in terms of formalizing performance evaluation incentives. In Alberta 20 percent of a Deputy Minister's pay is derived from performance pay (15 percent of this amount is based solely on their performance on horizontal management initiatives). As of 2002-03, 7 percent of Assistant Deputy Minister's pay is contingent on quality participation in horizontal initiatives (Peach, 2004). In Alberta, central agencies and an external review committee assess Deputy Minister and senior management performance. Saskatchewan has built a reference of evaluation of performance in the participation of horizontal initiatives into Deputy Minister's performance contracts, however the weighting has not been formalized in their performance evaluation (Peach 2004).

Jurisdictions, large and small, have various means to implement cross-government initiatives. From innovation within the budgetary process to the

implementation of various accountability frameworks and performance incentives, practices in other provinces and territories offer key insights into potential mechanisms and structures that may have application in Saskatchewan. Now discussion turns to current policy and practices within Saskatchewan.

SECTION 3:

CURRENT POLICY AND PRACTICES: HORIZONTAL MANAGEMENT IN SASKATCHEWAN

In an attempt to further direct collaborative efforts across departments, the Government of Saskatchewan has drawn up Interdepartmental Planning Guidelines. In the government's statement of organizational culture, it lists "teamwork" among its core values. Teamwork is defined as the ability to learn from each other and collaborate across departments.

The term "interdepartmental initiative or strategy" is also widely used in government documentation and can be understood to apply to a wide range of activities, from broad issues that transcend the mandate of any single department, to more operational issues on which two or more departments are working. The described guidelines apply to interdepartmental initiatives that are identified as strategic, collaborative and directly related to government priorities. These initiatives are referred to as key cross-government strategies to distinguish them from those strategies that are more operational in nature.

Definition of Key Cross-Government Strategy

The Government of Saskatchewan has an agreed upon definition to explain the importance of cross-government strategies to the overall mandate of the provincial government. The goals and objectives of "key cross-government strategies" are explained as extending beyond the mandate of a single department. They require collaborative planning among departments to develop new and innovative approaches. A key cross-government strategy can best be understood as an initiative, which is strategic in nature (outcome-focused and intended to achieve substantial change) rather than operational (output-focused and intended to facilitate departmental activity).

A cross-government initiative, requiring horizontal management, is designed to address a government-wide priority. The initiative will be developed using a rigorous planning process involving a number of departments. Such an initiative will often receive formal endorsement of government.

This definition serves to limit the number of key cross-government strategies to those strategies that are high-level and high-priority initiatives and for which a planning and performance measurement approach is appropriate.

Other joint initiatives that do not meet the above criteria still need to be routed through the decision-making process (e.g., joint Cabinet Decision Items or budget proposals) and also need to have clearly defined accountability, funding, and reporting requirements.

Elements of Key Cross-Government Strategies

In order to ensure that government is able to hold departments accountable for achieving its desired results (and ultimately, that the public is able to hold government accountable), it is important that goals, objectives and measures be articulated and approved for each key cross-government strategy.

Ideally, each key cross-government strategy that is brought forward for review would include the following elements: (1) An explanation of *how the strategy supports the government's key priorities*. This will keep interdepartmental efforts focused on those areas that government has decided are most important. (2) An *accountability statement* that clearly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the lead department and other participating departments. This will explain to decision makers which party is responsible and answerable for what. (3) A *vision, goals, objectives, actions, performance measures, and other elements* consistent with the Planning Guidelines for executive government. Goals and objectives are statements of expectation as to what should be achieved; actions specify what will be done when; measures are the means for gauging progress. (4) A *financial plan* that indicates how the strategy will be funded over a multi-year period. This is essential to informed decision-making, to ensure that the proposal is achievable within government's fiscal context. The financial plan should incorporate core funding from the participating departments *for actions that specifically support the strategy*. *The financial plan should outline what is being done with existing resources and what could be done differently to more effectively support the strategy*. (5) A commitment to prepare an *annual report on performance results*, in accordance with the reporting guidelines for executive government. Reporting closes the accountability loop and allows ministers to compare expected results with actual results.

Accountability for Key Cross-Government Strategies

In Saskatchewan, key cross-government strategies are characterized by a decentralized model of accountability. In theory, under a decentralized model, accountability for delivering on the outcomes identified in the cross-government strategy is shared among the individual participating departments.

The lead department's responsibility consists of: (1) facilitating and coordinating the development of a strategic plan; (2) the preparation of a financial plan; (3) monitoring of the on-going results; and, (4) coordinating the annual reporting on overall results.

Each participating department is responsible for: (1) the direct delivery and funding of the actions required to support the outcomes in the interdepartmental strategy; (2) the inclusion of key actions supporting the interdepartmental strategy within its own departmental strategic plan; and, (3) reporting on the results of its interdepartmental efforts within its own departmental annual report.

While this model provides for clear accountability by defining roles and reporting structures, in practice the roles and responsibilities are less than clear and have shown to vary widely depending on the initiative.

Deputy Ministers and Horizontal Management

At the Deputy Minister level, several committees have been formed. These committees often lead the key cross-government strategies and, ideally, enhance interdepartmental dialogue and planning for issues that extend beyond the mandate of any single department. These committees and forums include: (1) Deputy Minister Cabinet Debriefing; (2) Committee on the Environment and the Economy; (3) Committee on Aboriginal Issues; (3) Human Services Committee; and, (4) Management Services Committee.

Deputy Minister Cabinet Debriefing (DMCD)

The Cabinet Debriefing is co-chaired by the Deputy Minister to the Premier and the Cabinet Secretary. Conducted weekly, the meeting is used primarily for information sharing purposes. Ideally, the time is used to present key corporate/policy issues, and to propose recommendations and directions in an environment where each department is able to respond in a timely matter to these recommendations.

The Cabinet Debrief is also meant to act as a link, strengthening the other existing DM committees and forums. The desire of the Deputy Minister to the Premier is that all Deputy Ministers be actively engaged and prepared in advance of these weekly Wednesday meetings. To this end, an agenda—planned in advance—is distributed prior to the meeting as well as materials that will help to facilitate more meaningful discussion.

Deputy Minister Committee on the Economy and the Environment

The Committee on the Economy and the Environment is co-chaired by the Deputy Minister of Industry and Resources and the Deputy Minister of Environment. It is intended to be a monthly meeting, and is attended by Deputy Ministers and their senior management when required. The committee serves mainly as a forum for information exchange where participants can flag issues that may impact other departments. The committee has been praised with maintaining key relationships and communication avenues for departments.

However, the committee has also been criticized for not having a clear direction or stated purpose. The committee currently has not developed terms of reference. Attendance and overall commitment levels of members have been identified as problems. In order to be effective it was determined that the commitment level of members needs be enhanced, this could potentially be achieved by developing a defined set of terms of reference and increasing the accountability of the committee by creating a direct reporting relationship. It was also mentioned that perhaps a larger role for ADMs would improve commitment levels.

Deputy Minister Committee on Aboriginal Issues

The Committee on Aboriginal Issues is chaired by the Deputy Minister of First Nations and Métis Relations. In practice, meetings are held every four to six weeks, subject to individual Deputy Minister's schedules. The Committee is primarily used for purposes of information sharing. As of late regular reporting on horizontal initiatives such as "Duty to Consult" and "MLFN Self-Government" have been undertaken at this Committee. Limited central agency involvement at this Deputy's committee has been cited as a problem.

Management Services Committee

When both the Management Services Committee and the Human Services Committee were formed, statements were written that sought to outline the objectives of these committees. At their inception these committees were understood as initiatives that would improve interdepartmental cooperation. These statement documents outline the perceived importance of such initiatives and address several issues related to interdepartmental cooperation.

The primary objectives of the Management Services Committee are to: (1) promote a best practices approach to government business and lead efforts to streamline and standardize government administrative systems and processes and improve internal government performance; (2) draw on a variety of skills and expertise to critically assess system-wide issues; and, (3) lead a "managing by results" approach within government (i.e. regularly monitor and report on the results of priority initiatives.)

The Management Services Committee is intended to promote a stronger corporate perspective and this corporate perspective would be developed by (1) strengthening the integrated decision making processes; (2) ensuring corporate objectives are pursued and implemented; (3) encouraging more proactive and focused efforts aimed at rigorously addressing system-wide challenges and opportunities; and, (4) supporting a managing for results approach within government with shared accountability. Despite the best efforts of members of the Management Services Committee, existing organizational culture is slow to change. Some have postured that the committee composition and mandate of the committee could unintentionally impede achievement of its intended objectives. The work undertaken by the Management Services Committee is also time and resource intensive, although this does depend on the nature of the projects undertaken and issues at various times throughout the annual cycle (i.e., existing resource constraints may impact the depth and breadth of reviews.)

Deputy Ministers Human Services Committee

The Human Services Committee focuses on social policy initiatives requiring comprehensive and integrated approaches. The primary functions of this committee are to: (1) set broad provincial strategy; (2) define priorities with the expansive social policy/service integration agenda; (3) weigh competing initiatives regarding critical nature to government; (4) set the agenda; (5) align resources to priorities; and, (6) implement evaluative, monitoring and reporting processes.

The Human Services Committee has specific criteria for engagement. The committee endeavours to add value to initiatives that meet the following criteria: (1) that they be issues and strategies involving more than two departments/sectors; (2) politically sensitive; (3) have significant resource implications; (4) require significant interdepartmental involvement and ownership; and, (5) require broad systems or cultural change.

The role of the Deputy Ministers Committee in defining priorities within the social policy/integration agenda is critical. Currently the breadth and array of social policy issues, requiring collaborative and integrated approaches is far out-distancing the capacity of department resources. In addition, it has become increasingly difficult to attract, develop and retain people with the critical skills of interagency planning and cross-sectoral policy and development in government. These skills include conceptual and analytical strengths, capacities in collaboration, and a results orientation.

SECTION 4:

INTERVIEWS: REFLECTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE GOVERNMENT IN SASKATCHEWAN

Through a summary of discussions with Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers in departments across the Government of Saskatchewan, this section will examine issues relating to the province's policies on interdepartmental cooperation and attempt to identify successful practices and mechanisms that could strengthen the culture of horizontal management in Saskatchewan.

Exploring the Role of DMs and ADMs in Successful Horizontal Management in Saskatchewan

“Horizontal management is not simply the business of deputy ministers; those above and below must also be part of the process. This calls for involvement by ministers and cabinet committees, as well as by departmental employees” (Bourgault 2003, 30).

Leadership and Horizontal Management

Leadership, at all levels, was identified as a critical factor in the success of horizontal initiatives. The interviews emphasized that leadership must be consistent and committed to the delivery of quality services that cross-traditional boundaries. Horizontal initiatives often change the day-to-day operations of line departments and are met with significantly greater barriers than initiatives housed within single line departments and need to be considered in this context.

Leadership at the political level was thought essential to ensure the alignment of departments. A major barrier identified in the practice of horizontal management was the lack of clarity in political direction. Some DMs felt that directions from Cabinet were often convoluted and subject to frequent change. One interviewee stated “a successful approach to horizontal management seeks to galvanize political support, based on shared analysis, shared understanding, and shared briefings with Ministers.”

Horizontal projects that are able to receive high Cabinet priority early in the process were thought far more likely to succeed. A recent horizontal initiative gained momentum after support was attained through a presentation to Cabinet. The presentation provided Ministers with a greater understanding of the interdependence of each of the department's strategies and subsequently the departmental budget submissions received a higher profile/priority. Successful horizontal management requires commanding political support early on in the project and engaging Cabinet in new and creative ways to ensure that eventual budget submissions receive high priority.

Leadership at the departmental level was also identified as critical in the interviews we conducted. One interviewee argued that horizontal management is not an issue for cabinet, once direction is set. Rather, it is an administrative issue for which the civil service has a responsibility to ensure top quality policy and programming. Effective leadership was defined as line departments giving up a little authority and being more willing to take risks: "Priorities need to be challenged by those who have the ability and administration to do so. Deputies should perform this important central agency function."

Some interviewees saw an opportunity to engage ADMs more in horizontal management. ADMs should actively be networking with each other within and across departments, making collaborative work easier. At the implementation level, staff who network beyond the departmental boundaries will be more able to execute horizontal programming.

A key barrier to horizontal management identified in the interviews was information delay. ADMs lamented that they often receive information that impacted their departments "too late in the game". One suggestion to increase ADM participation in horizontal management was more frequent meetings between ADMs of different departments to build relationships and increase information sharing. Within departments some felt that silos exist at the ADM level within departments.

Interviewees felt that that different skills sets and a broad perspective of government were required to lead horizontal work. One respondent commented that DMs should be "cross-dressers". Stated differently, DMs and ADMs should rotate through line departments, central agencies, and crown corporations to gain key insights into other organization's challenges, stakeholders and opportunities.

Interviewees cited that DMs/ADMs in the federal service are subject to constant churn with this exact goal in mind. For this reason federal DMs/ADMs were viewed as generalists rather than specialists. It was thought that increasing the rotation of DMs has the potential to foster a stronger corporate culture of horizontal management. DMs would possess a broad view of government and their allegiance to their home department and stakeholders may become more diluted.

More frequent rotation of DMs was seen as a trade-off: while individual DMs would gain a wider perspective, the development of in-depth knowledge that is fostered after being on a file for a longer amount of time would be restricted.

Some of the DMs/ADMs in the province have very specific skill sets. Several interviewees identified job sharing as a more desirable alternative to rotations for DMs or ADMs who are currently in their desired position, but also recognize the value of working outside their department for a time. These individuals would agree to a job sharing arrangement where there is a promised return to current positions.

DMs and ADMs felt that open communication above all else was the foundation for effective leadership. Interviewees commented that faulty communication impedes horizontal work. It was thought that when communication breaks down, people become isolated and walls go up.

Accountability and Horizontal Management

“Accountability is an issue that needs to be addressed; it is too easy for departments to deny responsibility for failures.”

A major barrier identified in the practice of horizontal management is the lack of clearly articulated roles and responsibilities between departments and central agencies involved in an initiative. One interviewee described the current operating environment as dysfunctional: “where there are gaps people try to pass the buck, where there is overlap people fiercely guard their territory.” Echoing this thought another respondent stated, “feet-dragging and non-participation kill horizontal management.” Interview participants pointed out that competition between departments caused people to hold back essential information. These statements make the case for increased and more effective accountability.

Senior executives interviewed argued that a number of items need to be negotiated early in the partnerships: financial investments, human resources and physical space requirements, reporting structure, risks of the project etc. Interviewees thought it was critical to have all participants at the table at the beginning of planning to develop a common/shared definition of the problem and the goals of the initiative. One interviewee believed that the fundamental step of identifying basic needs was often a step that government skipped in current horizontal work. Essentially, interviewees argued that the more groundwork that is completed upfront, the less work would be required later on. Having said this, a major struggle identified for departments engaged in horizontal work was also maintaining a coherent vision among partners throughout the progression of the project.

Some Deputies felt that direction should come from one lead department to prevent confusion and to move initiatives forward more efficiently. One DM stated, “one department should hold the pen.” The underlying sentiment being that departments are not equals – nor should they be. Departments are in a hierarchy, depending on the issue and if someone is not in charge there will be confusion and nothing will move forward. Other interviewees suggested that only having one lead department might become dysfunctional if this department becomes responsible for everything and other departments “free-ride”, abdicating their responsibility.

Department Cultures and Horizontal Management

Every department and central agency in the Government of Saskatchewan has its own unique culture, crafted in large part by the nature of their work and mandate but also by the individuals that it employs and political leadership provided. One interviewee commented that departmental culture has a lot to do with a DMs leadership and communication style. Departments use various channels to share information (all-staff

meetings, emails, weekly memos from the DM etc.) and internal committees (executive and management committees).

A formidable hurdle for partner departments, then, is arriving at a shared mandate, values, priorities and goals for any horizontal initiative. Departments have varying levels of formality, different levels of understanding of issues, conflicting priorities and timelines, and different mixes of employees (in-scope/out of scope, field workers etc.) and resources. Operating in an environment of limited budgets and conflicting priorities, it is not entirely surprising that “culture clash” between departments is cited as one of the main reasons for time delays and project failures.

Informal Mechanisms and Horizontal Management

“Successful horizontal initiatives are undertaken with the good faith of a few good people”

Horizontal initiatives must be allowed to unfold spontaneously and not be constricted to one template or model. One interviewee simply stated that, “when a horizontal initiative works it works, when it doesn’t it doesn’t”. There are no proven or foolproof rules that will lead to successful project outcomes. Flexibility was seen as vital to effective horizontal management as circumstances often change.

There seemed to exist an unwritten understanding that communication happen between similar levels in the hierarchy. However, one individual believed that horizontal management should be practiced at all levels in an organization. “Everyone should be allowed to explore informal relationships without being constrained by level, title, and organizational boundaries.” If public servants of all levels were engaged in the process, there would be less division of information. Division occurs when senior people executives understand the strategic issues but do not fully understand the operational implications.

Many interviewees cited existing personal relationships between DMs, ADMs, and other senior civil servants as a contributing factor to the success of horizontal initiatives. Trust and credibility in a relationship take years to accumulate, not months as is sometimes the timeline for a horizontal project.

The DM Debrief was viewed as an excellent place to nurture informal relationships. It was believed to provide a valued opportunity for DMs to chat informally: “It’s a useful function that the Wednesday debriefs serve because we’re all there.” Another DM saw the further value of the DM De-Brief as a mentorship opportunity to show support for more junior DMs. The interviews underscored the importance of trust being built by individuals and not organizations.

Formal Structures and Mechanisms Affecting Horizontal Management Practices

“No mechanisms for working together, no discipline around working together, no oversight, and no mechanisms for sharing resources: that’s a pretty frustrating list. When you try to get something done you always have to try to work around this list of problems.”

The Roll-up

In the interviews, concerns were expressed at the frequency at which promising horizontal initiatives result in broad based “roll-ups”. These roll-ups were described by one interviewee as “basically just a communications exercise, which talks about what departments are already doing.” Interview participants described a lack of meaningful dialogue about how to improve the delivery of important services. One participant commented:

“After years of doing roll-ups, no one’s asking the tough questions like: How do we change doctors’ prescribing practices in doctors’ offices to improve health outcomes? How do we improve the quality of what’s going on in the classrooms? How do we take someone with pretty low job and life skills and make them able to engage in the economy in a sustained fashion?”

There were significant concerns that large-scale roll-up strategies result in a lack of innovation and strategic dialogue. Government, it was observed, has limited policy capacity, both in terms of quality and quantity, and departments have to make difficult choices on how their policy capacity is deployed. Several of those interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the amount of policy capacity that has been allotted to incoherent horizontal management and broad roll-up strategies. One senior manager spoke to this issue specifically, saying:

“My priority is not to have a planning process that just moves blue chips around on a piece of paper. I want a government whose policy capacity is focused on the tough questions. We need to deliver services better and our services have to deliver outcomes more effectively. I want to talk about those things.”

The Budget Process

The budget process and avenues for funding were routinely mentioned as a source of difficulty when it came to horizontal initiatives. Described by one participant as the “handcuffs” on important horizontal issues, the current fiscal mechanisms for horizontal management and planning were considered by many interviewed to be a major hindrance to interdepartmental initiatives. Interviewees focused on the significant barriers to reallocating resources between partnered departments: It is difficult for one department to give money to another department and there are limited mechanisms by which one can

contribute to a shared executive-government activity. Establishing collaborative joint accountability for horizontal initiatives is also difficult: “Either there’s one Deputy who’s responsible or none are.”

Several ADMs and DMs expressed a desire for adjustments to the budget process to make it more “friendly” toward horizontal projects and initiatives. Suggestions included looking beyond the submission of separate budget submissions by individual departments in multi-department projects and the creation of a pool of funds to encourage horizontal initiatives. One senior manager questioned:

“What would be the problem with departments being able to pay into a pool? What would be the problem with holding resources over fiscal years? As long as there’s accountability around it, as long as it’s transparent, as long as you can see that it’s for a government approved purpose, why would you care?”

Of course, this same respondent also acknowledged that “the Department of Finance has it’s own cross to bear” including concerns with public accountability and legal frameworks in place that build around fiscal years and financial accountability on the basis of sub-votes.

The potential pooling of funds for horizontal initiatives, although frequently mentioned as a possible remedy for current problems with the budget system, was itself raised as a source of concern by several of those interviewed. For these individuals, a pooling of funds dedicated to horizontal initiatives creates new concerns: it could prove distortionary, increasing the supply of horizontal initiatives beyond what is necessarily the most efficient simply because there would be an economic incentive to do so; the reallocation of funds could come at the cost of line department initiatives; questions and concerns were raised about who would set the direction and priorities for this separate pool of funds.

Instead of creating a pooled fund, several managers suggested that it would be more appropriate to use a horizontal lens when drafting Cabinet Decision Items (CDI) to ensure awareness of an issue’s horizontal implications. In response, others managers have argued that this “horizontal lens” is already in common use and that the status quo is insufficient, especially for smaller departments with smaller budgets attempting to take the lead on horizontal initiatives.

Committees and Forums

There was a general consensus from those interviewed that committees can be a valuable tool for information sharing and shared decision-making. However, it was a common complaint that current forums and structures have limited value for managers with strong demands on their time. Information sharing was not universally considered an effective use of Deputies’ time and frustrations were expressed regarding committees failing to get to more actionable decision-making.

In many of the interviews, however, effective information sharing was also identified as a key feature of successful committee work. The Deputy Minister’s Human Services Committee was specifically referenced in this case. Present in this committee’s

agenda is a round-table segment in which all attending Deputies are encouraged to give an update on recent events and activities. This was said to not only provide a useful exchange of knowledge but also to contribute to a team atmosphere and a sense of common purpose that was said to be sometimes lacking in other committees. The practice of Deputies delegating down at committees was identified as a common problem with committees. When senior managers view a forum as an inefficient use of their time, they tend to assign more junior people to attend. This, in turn, further reduces the effectiveness of the forum, aggravating the problem: “Our experience with that was that people are busy and after a while, if you weren’t solving a problem, they tended to start sending more and more junior people.”

In order to keep forums effective and participants engaged, it was argued by those interviewed that the “right” people be at the table to have the “right” conversations. The agenda of the meeting should be suitable to participants in order to retain their interest and commitment. Someone, ideally the chair, would monitor the agenda to determine the content and participants required for an effective meeting. In the case of standing committees, it was suggested that there be ample opportunity for all participants to have a hand in creating or contributing to the agenda.

We heard from those interviewed that leadership on committees should be everyone’s responsibility. It was suggested that committee work can sometimes lack a sense of group ownership. This responsibility should not fall entirely to the chair, the group, as a whole needs to be actively engaged. Efforts taken to involve only those who are going to be active in the process rather than attempting to include anyone with marginal interests can help resolve some of these issues.

While it may seem obvious, interviewees insisted that the formation of committees should begin with the identification of shared problems and common issues. In the interviews, some frustration was expressed that this step is often skipped in horizontal work. Complaints were made that several committees and forums appear to have lost their focus. Coherent problem statements should drive horizontal efforts. A clear understanding of a common issue affecting all involved was cited several times as a major contributor to successful horizontal efforts. This is particularly troubling given that several existing committees and forums appear to lack clearly articulated mandates. The creation of a clearly stated mandate or coherent vision should be considered an essential first step in increasing forum effectiveness and renewing the commitment of participants on committees.

Lack of formal accountability in the committees was also identified as a problem in the interviews. It was suggested that the Deputy Ministers’ weekly cabinet debriefing could be better used to ensure that Deputies have a clear understanding of strategic directions. At present, the Deputies Committees do not regularly report at the weekly debrief. If it was mandatory for DM committees to report to the DM Debrief, it could help these committees to remain focused and increase their effectiveness. According to one manager, “There would even be value in simple saying, ‘We don’t have anything major to report. We spent the time updating on current issues.’” Another participant also made this comment on the issue:

“It’s nice to meet but who cares. There’s certainly no reporting or expectation of a plan. There’s no framework that would give discipline to the process and as a consequence, life will just be less productive. That’s just Management 101.”

Accountability, clear direction, and leadership were all issues that led to comments on the roles and responsibilities of central agencies. These concerns and comments are summarized in the following section.

The Role of Central Agencies in Successful Horizontal Management

Maintaining Momentum on Horizontal Initiatives

Interviewees agreed that central agency leadership is essential to maintaining momentum and support for horizontal initiatives. Some interviewees felt that current leadership practices could be strengthened, insisting that Executive Council and the Deputy Minister’s Offices (DMO) are presently overspent.

Interviewees from line departments were appreciative of Executive Council’s arbitration function. Some interviewees insisted that being stretched too thin has led to a “relaxed” arbitration function, which they cited as less than desirable when trying to manage horizontal initiatives across government.

Communicating In All Directions

The communication of horizontal initiatives through the Deputy Minister’s Office was described as both informal and formal—taking place at the DM/ADM weekly meetings, management team meetings and through emails, etc. Some interviewees were pleased with the current practice of informally communicating on horizontal initiatives, while others expressed a strong desire for more direct involvement of both the DMO and the Cabinet Planning Unit (CPU) in communicating expectations and reporting to the “whole” on outcomes of horizontal work. The interviews did not reveal any commitment on the part of ADMs and DMs to help implement this change.

The ADMs interviewed were highly critical, in most cases, of current communication practices downward—upward within departments on horizontal initiatives. Specifically, lack of communication between DMs and ADMs on horizontal initiatives was an issue. None of the DMs or ADMs interviewed identified a best practice for communication between Deputies and ADMs. There was some suggestion that “reporting on horizontal initiatives” be specifically built into performance plans, however not all interviewees agreed with the presumption that altered performance measures would lead to more success horizontal policy and planning.

Both ADMs and DMs interviewed believed that central agencies and especially Executive Council Office (ECO) and Public Service Commission (PSC) should be more engaged at the ADM level. ADMs self identified, in some cases, as not having what they believed was an adequate “corporate” orientation—they were not comfortable articulating their own responsibilities when it came to horizontal management.

ADM and DM forums are planned by ECO several times annually. While the forums were described by most as “useful in developing a corporate culture, a deeper understanding of the importance of horizontal management, and building the relationships critical to undertake horizontal work,” many of the interviews insisted that they were not sufficient as tools of learning and engagement and that more should be done.

Central Agency Leadership in Formal Committees

Central agencies were criticized, by many interviewed, as not demonstrating strong leadership on many committees. Lack on central agencies’ leadership was considered detrimental to successful horizontal policy development. Commitment from partner departments was thought to wane without central agency support.

Understanding the Political Context

Interviewees argued that one of the most important roles for central agencies in horizontal management tables is to create political context. In other words, “helping departments understand the context that they are working in.” Interviews agreed that this already occurred in some cases, but argued that more consistency would be desirable.

Interviewees argued that central agencies could help line departments by better articulating the “problems” that led to horizontal management solutions. Interviewees believed that much of this work could be done at existing committees, if central agencies would assume a more active role.

Sorting and communicating political expectations, while it occurs to some degree at the initial stages, is often lacking as horizontal work on an issue continues. An opportunity exists here for a more active leadership role for central agencies (specifically the CPU and ECO) at committees.

Easing Competition and Addressing Silos

Several interviewees suggested that central agencies could do more to ease competition between departments, rather than use this competition to their advantage. Interviewees argued that competition for money and people acted to hinder horizontal work. These interviewees were reflecting on the culture of the Government of Saskatchewan generally, but suggested that PSC, ECO and CPU could all do more to initiate change.

Interviewees generally agreed that the work of Cabinet planning is “siloes”—making horizontal work more difficult. DMs and ADMs indicated that CPU did offer some support for horizontal management around policy issues, while others contradicted this by insisting that they saw little “value add” in much of the work of CPU as it applies to horizontal initiative currently undertaken. Some argued that they or their departments have gone so far as to avoid CPU on horizontal management initiatives, especially on projects that required a quick decisions by Cabinet.

Moving Ahead

“Departments need something beyond altruism to get horizontal initiatives off the ground.”

Culture Change

Currently, expertise in government is organized within line departments and agencies that have vertical accountability structures. In the interviews participants stated that effective horizontal management required the government to move from a silo mentality to more collaborative results-based approach, not an easy task. One participant stated that in order to move forward, “we essentially need culture change.”

The tools mentioned in the above interviews such as: the use of strategic policy frameworks, leadership at all levels (political, departmental, central), ongoing relationship building, the development of shared goals and priorities and the adaptation of government processes and committees were believed to be crucial in achieving this fundamental culture shift.

One interviewee went as far to outline the steps for effective culture change:

- The first step of culture change would be to develop a solid “business case” for why a change is necessary. The case study would involve a diagnostic of what happened in a project, followed by a description of how using horizontal processes and mechanisms might have changed the outcome. The respondent believed that unless departments and agencies genuinely accept that they will not produce adequate and quality services in isolation, they will not have any motivation to work together.
- The second step would involve engaging the leadership to develop a statement of preferred culture. A starting point might involve a survey of the leaders (DMs/ADMs/Executive Directors). Out of the survey, key recommendations could be identified and actioned. The respondent believed that culture change would follow if departments changed the way that they work together.

In addition to a corporate vision across government, participants felt, it was equally important to formulate a common culture among partners within the context of a project. Adequate time must be spent in the joint planning phase to ensure that all participants have a shared understanding of where the project is going, how it will unfold and what the end result will look like. It was felt that culture change would not work if it were imposed on participating partners.

SECTION 5: CONCLUSIONS

“There are no hard and fast rules for leading a horizontal initiative. Nor is there a simple formula to successful horizontal management” (Hopkins et al, 2001, 2).

Complex issues that span multiple departments will continue to challenge public servants to work together in offering coherent, quality services and programming to the public. Current partnerships in Saskatchewan have largely been built on a project-by-project basis, usually without a consistent approach or formalized mechanisms. In the words of one Deputy, “horizontal management occurs in the good faith of a few good people.”

Key success factors identified in the interviews include: (1) committed leadership – at all levels; (2) developing an effective accountability framework that delineates clearly articulated roles and responsibilities between departments and central agencies; (3) maintaining relationships - building trust, credibility among individuals is essential; (4) shared purpose and culture – all partners must have an understanding of the problem, the project’s goals, outcomes and strategy; and, (5) developing horizontal relationships at all levels of an organization.

The challenges to effective inter-departmental cooperation within government were identified as: (1) traditional vertical accountability and governance structure of government; (2) culture barriers between departments: differing mandates, perspectives and priorities; (3) resource barriers: time, human resources, and space requirements; and, (4) inadequate planning: in the interests of time, crucial planning stages are sometimes not completed or are agreed to at a superficial level. Some of the challenges to interdepartmental cooperation, such as vertical accountability, are a fundamental to the structure and function of government, and therefore very difficult to address. Others such as common culture and shared goals can be addressed more readily.

This paper has shared some key lessons from other jurisdictions and from interviews with senior public servants inside the Government of Saskatchewan. The paper is an effort to provide considerations for those about to embark on a horizontal initiative or those in the midst of an initiative. It became clear through the interviews that there exists a wealth of expertise in interdepartmental cooperation in Saskatchewan. It is imperative that the Government of Saskatchewan further explore the key success factors and barriers as identified by Saskatchewan experts in this report if it is to support the transition from “one-off” issue-by-issue projects to a culture of strategic horizontal management and planning.

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