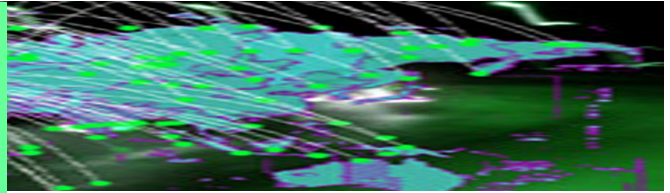


SINGLE-WINDOWS AND INTEGRATED SERVICE DELIVERY



In several countries, political and public service leaders have significantly improved the delivery of government services by using an *integrated service delivery* (ISD) approach or, as it is often known, *single window* (SW) service delivery. The SW approach brings together government services, including information, so that citizens can access the services quickly and efficiently. Ideally, citizens should be able to access services from any of the main delivery channels — the Internet, telephone call centers, or walk-in centers that provide over-the-counter service.

Types of SW Delivery

The benefits of SW delivery can be seen in its three main types:

- *Information Gateways* improve access to government information and referral services through the main channels.
- *One-Stop Department Stores* improve convenience and accessibility to a wide range of government services, again through each channel.
- *Seamless Service Boutiques* provide SW access to a related cluster of services, including the provision of services across departmental and governmental boundaries and across channels. Citizens should not have to think about what department or even about what level of government is providing the service.

Types of SW Structures

SW service can be delivered through a variety of structural arrangements:

- the *owner-delivered* approach simply involves SW delivery by a department or a government.
- the *owner-delivered in a co-located environment* approach refers to SW delivery by departments or governments that share space at a particular location.
- the *shared delivery through integration* approach involves SW delivery by a partnership that integrates the services of more than one department or government.
- the *service utility* approach involves an organization that delivers services *on behalf* of government organizations but delivers no services, or very few services, of its own.
- the *ISD department* approach takes the form of a department or agency focused on improving service delivery, with a division concerned with promoting SW service — or what is increasingly described as integrated service delivery (ISD).

Integrated Service Delivery

The concept of ISD is the bringing together — and fitting together — of related government services through one interface that is accessible to the citizens in a single seamless process where the focus is on citizens' needs and wants. There is an enormous range in the scope of ISD initiatives. At one extreme, some of them involve one department partnering with another department for the delivery of a single service. At the other extreme are ISD initiatives that include several government departments in partnership with departments in other governments and with business and non-profit organizations. Some ISD initiatives, such as Australia's *Centrelink* and *Service New Brunswick (Canada)*, provide services for several government departments. *Service Canada* is a government-wide initiative that not only provides services on behalf of 14 federal departments and agencies through several delivery channels but that also has service delivery partnerships with other levels of government, business firms and voluntary organizations.

Barriers to ISD

Creating and sustaining SW initiatives, especially those involving service integration across departments and governments, can be a difficult challenge. The barriers to effective ISD include

- *political* barriers, such as lack of support from political leaders;
- *structural* barriers, such as undue emphasis on the vertical dimension of government to the detriment of horizontal initiatives like ISD projects;



- *operational* barriers, such as incompatible technologies between organizations forming 151) partnerships;
- *managerial* barriers, such as different financial and human resource policies and practices among the partners, and
- *cultural* barriers, such as resistance to information sharing.

Overcoming the Barriers

Among the means for reducing or eliminating obstacles to ISD are:

- selecting the most appropriate mechanism for service integration (e.g., a service utility);
- setting out the governance arrangements carefully in the initial partnership agreement;
- ensuring adequate funding;
- ensuring political support, and
- marketing the benefits of ISD arrangements to the public

Integrated Channel Delivery

Integrated channel delivery (ICD) involves joining together the major service delivery channels (e.g., the Internet, the telephone) to provide seamless service to citizens. Many SW services are available only over the Internet, and the Internet often serves as the “backbone” for the other channels by providing quick access to information. However, *citizens expect to have a choice of service delivery channels*. Some citizens will not or cannot use the Internet channel. Thus, the other channels retain their importance. In Sao Paulo, Brazil, 68 federal, state and municipal agencies have partnered with community groups and private sector organizations to establish one-stop walk-in citizen service centers and Internet sites to deliver such services as drivers’ licenses and passports. Similarly, in Andhra Pradesh, India, state and local government agencies have joined together to provide multi-channel access to several services. In North America, several cities have adopted a “311” telephone call centre system to enable citizens to access government services at any time.

In developed countries like Australia and Canada, governments are moving beyond multi-channel service to seek efficiency and improved service by rationalizing the use of the various channels. Citizens are encouraged to “migrate” from the walk-in and telephone channels to the much less expensive Internet channel.

The barriers to ICD are similar to those for ISD. For example, politicians like to ensure that citizens have *equitable access to all delivery channels*, and there is reluctance to shift financial resources from the older channels to the Internet channel. Most of the various means for overcoming obstacles to ISD can also be used to remove or reduce obstacles to ICD.

While many countries have applied SWs, the results are often mixed. SWs can nevertheless be important tools in improving service delivery. SWs should however not be a substitute for further streamlining regulatory requirements, as there is the danger that SWs add yet another stop to citizens and businesses.

Readings

Australian Government Information Management Office. *National Strategy for Integrated Service Delivery*. Canberra: Government of Australia, 2005. Available at http://www.agimo.ov.au/services/tipers/projects/service_delivery.

Bent, Stephen, with Kenneth Kernaghan and D. Brian Marson. *Innovations and Good Practices in Single-Window Service*. Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Management Development, 1999. Available at <http://www.myschool-monecole.gc.ca>.

Kernaghan, Kenneth. “Moving Toward the Virtual State: Integrating Services and Service Channels for Citizen-Centred Service.” *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 71 (March 2005), pp. 119-331.

New Zealand. State Services Commission. *Integrated Service Delivery*. Occasional Paper No. 12. Wellington: State Services Commission, 1999. Available at <http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?NavID= 11 6&DocID=2907>.

