



Initiative for Collaborative Government

Partnering for Mission Results

Seminar Series

Collaboration: An Effective Tool for Government Executives

Executive Summary

Enhancing Mission Results through Information Collaboration

About the CGI-GMU Initiative for Collaborative Government

The ***CGI-GMU Initiative for Collaborative Government***, a joint public policy initiative by CGI and George Mason University, was launched in 2008. The mission of the ***CGI-GMU Initiative for Collaborative Government*** is to analyze models of collaboration between government and the private and nonprofit sectors, and how to examine the government can best leverage these models to maximize mission results.

Collaboration and the networks, partnerships, and relationships that underlie them have become prominent elements of governance at the federal, state, and local levels in the U.S. and abroad. The past two decades have seen recognition of the many ways to serve public purposes through cooperation and collaboration among agents of government, industry, and nonprofits, as well as citizens and stakeholder groups.

Government today collaborates with the private and nonprofit sector in executing a broad range of mission and administrative functions. The question is not whether collaboration will occur, but rather how agencies can capitalize on collaborative government models to enhance mission results, speed, and efficiency, while retaining strategic alignment, control, and accountability.

The ***CGI-GMU Initiative for Collaborative Government*** is focused on helping the government answer this challenge. To this end, the Initiative has commissioned four cutting-edge research projects on collaborative government to be undertaken by George Mason University faculty. We will be releasing these important studies during 2008. In addition, the Initiative hosted a series of seminars on "Collaborative Government: An Effective Tool for Government Executives." These events provided public sector, private sector and nonprofit leaders a forum for discussing mission challenges and potential collaborative government solutions. Additional reports and events are planned for 2009 and beyond.

These are exciting times for our nation with the 2008 Presidential election and a new Administration in 2009. We encourage you to join our Initiative to enhance the management of government through effective, accountable collaboration.

To find out more about the Initiative:

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Executive Summary

Enhancing Mission Results through Information Collaboration

Introduction

Government managers face an increased need to share information through data exchanges with other agencies, governments, companies, and universities to get their missions done. Specifically in the United States, these efforts involve exchanging data across federal, state, and local governments, as well as across multiple agencies and agency partners.

A key challenge for agencies in this environment is to achieve results that benefit all stakeholders—the federal government, state and local governments, regions, industry, and the public—when building data exchanges. An overarching challenge is to build the trust necessary between all of the parties to make information collaboration successful.

As part of its mission to analyze models of collaboration between government and the private and nonprofit sectors, in 2008 the CGI-GMU Initiative for Collaborative Government launched a series of seminars to provide public sector, private sector, and nonprofit leaders a forum for discussing mission challenges and potential collaborative government solutions. The seminar series, “Collaboration: An Effective Tool for Government Executives,” included three seminars that examined different types of collaboration.

- *Managing Effective Collaboration with Multiple Service Providers* (May 15, 2008) analyzed applicable lessons in successfully managing multiple service providers and discussed their applicability to the federal government, where agencies manage a blend of commercial service providers, in-house service providers, and services provided by other government agencies.
- *Maximizing Mission Value from Enterprise-wide IT* (June 18, 2008) examined how foreign, federal, state, and local governments leverage collaboration among mission and IT experts to apply enterprise-wide IT approaches (e.g., IT consolidation or centralization) to maximize mission results.
- *Enhancing Mission Results through Information Collaboration* (July 22, 2008) analyzed the experiences of successful data exchanges across multiple jurisdictions and stakeholders and how federal executives might apply successful strategies to enhance information collaboration via nationwide data exchanges.

To help the government capture and leverage ideas that emerge from the series, the CGI-GMU Initiative is publishing executive summaries of each seminar. This document summarizes the results of the third seminar, “Enhancing Mission Results through Information Collaboration

On July 22, 2008, the CGI-GMU Initiative for Collaborative Government hosted an executive seminar to help federal agency executives address this challenge. The seminar, “Enhancing Mission Results through Information Collaboration,” examined two successful information collaboration initiatives within the federal government, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s Central Data Exchange (CDX) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN), and outlined the critical success factors from each initiative.

Executives from multiple federal departments and agencies participated in the seminar, which featured presentations by Marcus Peacock, Deputy Administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Dr. John Loonsk, Director of the Office of Interoperability and Standards in the Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The seminar also featured executive commentary by Tim Young, Deputy Administrator, Office of E-Government and Information Technology at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

Peacock shared approaches that EPA has taken via CDX, which facilitates both the reporting of environmental data to EPA, as well as the analysis and reuse of environmental data by EPA, states, tribes, regions, industry, and other partners across 18 states,

40 environmental programs, and 125,000 users. In addition, Dr. Loonsk discussed the lessons learned and successful approaches being applied to the NHIN, which seeks to enable widespread adoption of interoperable electronic health records nationwide across citizens, hospitals, pharmacies, labs, regional health information organizations,

10 Recommendations for Successful Information Collaboration

1. Organize your information collection and sharing approaches based on your data and stakeholders.
2. Demonstrate the value of sharing information in stakeholders’ everyday lives.
3. Lead boldly—take the plunge.
4. Consciously build personal relationships across organizational boundaries.
5. Establish clear and consistent commitments on data use and community ground rules.
6. Assign the right leaders.
7. Define clear roles among the partners.
8. Communicate with candor.
9. Deliver highly transparent and regular reports on program performance metrics.
10. Exploit shared services to realize increased outcomes and efficiency.

state and local government agencies, and federal agencies.

Executives at the seminar discussed the challenges inherent in managing broad data exchanges such as the NHIN and CDX, and outlined critical success factors for effective information collaboration and sharing. Specifically, the panel discussion highlighted 10 recommendations for successful information collaboration.

This executive summary provides an overview of the July 22 panel discussion and these 10 recommendations.

10 Recommendations to Build Trusted Information Collaboration

Executives at the seminar highlighted the critical importance of establishing trust among all stakeholders involved in a data exchange initiative in order to achieve successful information collaboration. They cited the following 10 critical success factors to building trust.

1. Organize your information collection and sharing approaches based on your data and stakeholders.

Executives discussed how there is no one set way to collect and manage data to build and retain the level of trust required for successful information collaboration. Instead they described the need to architect the data exchange according to the type of data and stakeholder issues involved.

For example, the CDX, Peacock described, involves largely public information and 125,000 users

across states, local governments, tribes, private industries, EPA program offices, and EPA headquarters. In order to maximize benefits to its stakeholders, the CDX operates as a central repository to receive, publish, validate, and distribute environmental data. This centralized approach reduces EPA customers' reporting burden and enhances ease and speed of access to data for reuse.

With CDX, EPA aligned outcomes with benefits from multiple stakeholder perspectives. "What's great about this is everybody benefits from it," said Peacock. "The facilities used to have to report separately to the federal government and to the states. They were filling out two forms. EPA would have to enter the information. States would have to enter that information. With CDX, now the information is sent electronically to EPA and we share that with the states."

Alternatively, to facilitate trust among payers, providers, labs, patients, and other stakeholders, Loonsk noted that the NHIN has focused on setting nationwide standards, articulating the national outcomes envisioned, and encouraging local partnerships to collect and manage the data. "The word central is not in the NHIN acronym. There is no central repository," said Loonsk, who emphasized that health information needs to stay local to engender confidence and trust that the data is being managed securely and confidentially. "Health record information is moved among stakeholders only as it affects or is needed to be used for the patient's

Agencies Encouraged to Sustain Data Sharing Successes across Presidential Transition

Government executives at the CGI-GMU seminar stressed the importance of maintaining the momentum of existing initiatives across the continuum of the current Bush Administration and the new Administration to come in 2009.

Participants in the seminar acknowledged that it will take a new Administration several months to get political appointees in place within agencies, especially in positions at the operational levels of government, such as regional administrators. The executive discussion highlighted three specific ways that today's federal managers can institutionalize successful information collaboration within their organizations in order to keep positive momentum going across the presidential transition:

- Have senior career federal executive champions in place for information-sharing programs, and empower them with the information and authority to lead the program during the gap in political leadership.
- Establish standard operating procedures for agency staff, as well as for stakeholders throughout the information value chain, in order to institutionalize successful information collaboration practices over the long term.
- Make the information available as a result of the data exchange program highly transparent and accessible for multiple stakeholders to use in their everyday lives—because the more people use and rely on the information, the more the program will become an essential part of the fabric of operations in that community and the government.

These three actions, executives agreed, can help agency leaders maintain continuity of data exchange programs across Administrations.

care," noted Loonsk.

2. Demonstrate the value of sharing information in stakeholders' everyday lives.

Loonsk highlighted the importance of making data exchanges about data usefulness—not about data entry. He stressed the value of demonstrating how the resulting

information can help stakeholders achieve their goals. For example, how does the data help patients receive better quality care? Or, how does it help providers get their jobs done better using quality information? "They need to see the benefit of improved quality through the reduction of errors and reduced costs," said Loonsk.

Executives noted that successfully achieving this link between a specific data exchange effort and daily usefulness requires managers to broaden their view of the impact of their programs. OMB's Young specifically encouraged agencies to extend their stakeholder view. He cited his recent experience discussing lessons learned from worldwide IT initiatives with colleagues in other countries at a recent meeting of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. He shared that a common lesson learned that emerged from those discussions was the value of extending the stakeholder view beyond the primary customer of an initiative to include the "customer's customer."

Young cited EPA's CDX as an excellent example. "In this case, EPA wasn't just focusing on serving the states and reducing the burden to industry; they were also focusing on how citizens can access this information in a streamlined manner with very little cost," he said.

Peacock noted that EPA is seeing CDX usage climb as stakeholders see value in how they can now access and use the information in their everyday lives. "This is also much better for the public," added Peacock, "because we can now not only get data that is more accurate, but we can turn this data around to the public much faster." He noted that CDX in 2008 delivered data on pollutants to the public three months earlier than in 2002 as a result of CDX. "So we've reduced the burden plus the public is getting

much better information sooner."

3. Lead boldly—take the plunge.

Both Peacock and Loonsk encouraged executives to be aggressive and bold in launching and continuing information collaboration programs. "The way to push ahead is to not wait for other people. But it's to go out and just do it," said Peacock. "You make much greater progress on these sorts of issues when you just do it, and once it starts working, everyone wants to be part of it."

"One does have to take the plunge a little bit here," added Loonsk. "This is about change. And having a certain level of trust is a critical component. But then one has to be willing to take that next step, whether it be in investing in this future with dollars or in social capital and trust."

Peacock added, "There's always going to be a segment of folks (and it's usually 20–30%) who are just not going to be with you, and you need the critical mass of 20–30% who are pushing with you, and it's winning the middle group of 30% that is the key."

4. Consciously build personal relationships across organizational boundaries.

Loonsk emphasized that building the required trust to make a complicated data exchange network work begins with building personal one-on-one relationships with other leaders in the "chain of trust." As Loonsk said: "The personal connection has to pre-exist the technical connection.

And that plays at many different levels—whether it's at the local level of people getting together and saying we can work this out, or whether it's at the national level. You have to establish the relationships first and the technology will follow."

Loonsk noted that exchanging health records is highly complex because those records contain very private citizen information that carries a high degree of confidentiality and legal protections. Legal protections, he added, are necessary and critical, but at times are very conservatively interpreted. This environment places a premium on building trust on a clearly communicated, mutually agreed upon foundation.

5. Establish clear and consistent commitments on data use and community ground rules.

Loonsk described how the NHIN establishes a foundation for trust by setting clear rules of engagement for NHIN participants. He said those participating in the NHIN agree to follow a Data Use and Reciprocal Support Agreement, or DURSA, which commits them to follow specific standards of data sharing and conduct. For example, this includes commitments to perform due diligence on data accuracy and to connect only with others who also commit to the DURSA standards of data use. "The users must share a commitment to security and privacy," said Loonsk. "The consumer needs to trust that the users are working for them and that their data is protected." Without confidence that the required level of security is in place, he said,

collaboration efforts will fail.

6. Assign the right leaders.

Executives discussed the critical importance of having committed and creative leadership to drive successful information collaboration initiatives.

Loonsk noted a key ingredient to the success of the NHIN has been the active involvement of HHS Secretary Michael Leavitt. He described how Secretary Leavitt has taken success of the NHIN as a personal mission, getting actively involved in discussions to bring the full complement of stakeholders to the table.

Peacock also noted that a key lesson learned to build trust for CDX, in addition to having actively involved senior leadership, was to assign the right people at all levels as peer leaders who bring a collaborative mind-set to the project. “It gets down to picking the right people, who may not necessarily trust each other at the beginning but who are open-minded enough to develop that relationship,” said Peacock.

7. Define clear roles among the partners.

Peacock further emphasized the importance of establishing clear roles among partners. “One of the lessons we learned was that the roles of the state agency, industry, and EPA needed to be very clear in this collaboration. People had to feel that they shared in the decision making regarding how it was set up, including how it would be funded. And there was a trust factor. You

had to trust the other party, and that took a while to build up,” said Peacock.

8. Communicate with candor.

OMB’s Young highlighted the importance of frequent communication to build consensus. “How do you get trust? It’s through candor, honest two-way communication, shared commitment, and true discussion of security and privacy issues,” he said.

Peacock specifically called out the importance of face-to-face communication among stakeholders—especially in this age of increased use of e-mail, telephone, teleconferencing, and online collaboration tools. “The face-to-face contact is so important. You can’t over communicate. Reliance on e-mails and even teleconferencing just doesn’t do it,” said Peacock.

9. Deliver highly transparent and regular reports on program performance metrics.

Peacock encouraged agencies to build trust with stakeholders by setting clear program performance metrics, producing regular performance reports, and making the results highly transparent. “Transparency is very important,” he said. “We’re the only agency that puts out a quarterly report of our performance metrics—good, bad, and ugly.” He noted that this transparency allows the public to ask questions about the data and identify trends in program performance that can lead to greater understanding of what the agency

is accomplishing. He added that the more transparent the results, the higher the trust will be.

10. Exploit shared services to realize increased outcomes and efficiency.

Executives also discussed the value of leveraging shared services to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of information collaboration initiatives.

“Early on, we didn’t understand the power of shared services,” said Peacock. Now CDX looks to leverage other services that exist in the market, such as reuse of Google Earth or Mapquest, to provide new ways to analyze environmental data.

Young also encouraged agencies to leverage shared services to achieve both better outcomes and increased efficiencies. “By leveraging what is working in other organizations, agencies can realize efficiencies that lead to greater savings and ease of adoption,” said Young. “Whenever I face a challenge, my first gut reaction should be to ask someone else where a solution has existed elsewhere. Whether it’s somewhere else in the government at another agency, internationally, state and local, or private sector, there’s very little in the government that we have as a challenge that is truly unique.”

Executives concluded that the combination of having the right leaders willing to take the plunge, backed up by institutionalized processes such as those outlined above, can lead to successful government data exchanges.



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About CGI

CGI provides effective IT solutions for government by combining over 30 years of government experience and technology skills. Founded in 1976, CGI Group Inc. is one of the largest independent information technology and business process services firms in the world. CGI and its affiliated companies employ approximately 26,500 professionals. CGI provides end-to-end IT and business process services to clients worldwide from offices in Canada, the United States, Europe, Asia Pacific as well as from centers of excellence in North America, Europe and India.

For more information about CGI, visit their Website: www.cgi.com.

About the Department of Public and International Affairs George Mason University

The Department's undergraduate and graduate students receive unparalleled educational and internship opportunities. George Mason's close proximity to the nation's capital provides a wide array of settings, while our curriculum prepares students for positions of leadership in government, public agencies, nonprofits, and the private sector.

The Department is home to nationally recognized biodefense, political science and public administration programs and many world-renowned faculty who are experts in their field. The Department's students' internship and post-graduate experiences include placement in offices of the federal government, private contracting firms, international organizations, embassies, political campaigns, and lobbying or nonprofit organizations.

The Department's Master of Public Administration (MPA) program is designed for people who hold or aspire to hold leadership positions in organizations that participate in the development and implementation of public policy. The mission of the MPA program is to give graduate students the opportunity to build their knowledge of politics, policy, and management and to enhance their analytic, problem solving, and communication skills. MPA students choose an established concentration or, with advisor approval, create a specialized concentration from other departments and schools within the university.

For more information about the Department of Public and International affairs, visit their Website: pia.gmu.edu.