



**CHRISTOPHER WILSON  
& ASSOCIATES**

**DISTRIBUTED GOVERNANCE  
& ACCOUNTABILITY  
WORKSHOP SERIES**

## **Workshop Outline**

### **Background**

---

The aim of this workshop is to explore the complex coordination challenge imposed by environments in which power, knowledge and resources have become increasingly distributed. In such situations, governance has become a ‘game without a master’ and organizations have found they can no longer simply impose their will on employees or suppliers or partners because of the voluntary or interdependent relationships that exist. In this context, governance becomes an exercise in constant negotiation and accountability has become diffused among multiple parties.

Inspired by some success under the umbrella of the New Public Management and often enabled by the capabilities of new and emerging technologies, governments in Canada and in many western countries have sought to engage in greater cooperation both horizontally and vertically across the public sector and with private and not-for-profit sector organizations to:

- reduce public sector service delivery costs,
- improve the quality of public service delivery,
- increase the efficacy of public sector interventions,
- rationalize administrative systems, and
- increase the legitimacy of the public process.

In pursuit of these goals governments have moved steadily down the path of collaborative action to the point where today there is near consensus among the senior ranks of Canadian public servants<sup>1</sup> that:

- Partnerships are a necessary requirement of policy development, programming and service delivery;

---

<sup>1</sup> *Transformational Changes and Policy Shifts in Support of Partnering – Within, Across and Outside Government*, Results of National Survey on Partnering, CBNC, 2006

- Involvement in partnerships is a legitimate role to generate economic and community development;
- The federal and provincial governments do not have all the resources they need to fulfill all of their policy intents;
- That current and previous federal and provincial experiences with partnerships suggests there could be a better sharing of risks and rewards; and
- That public expectations and formal accountability at a senior management levels have changed and partnerships present a new and not yet clearly defined challenge for this new regime.

This has produced a multi-stakeholder leadership challenge that has encouraged strategic organizations to take on more of the role of a broker, or *animateur*, among collections of individuals, firms, governments, and communities in an interconnected and interdependent ecology of actors.

In this distributed governance world power is shared and each participant assumes some degree of collective duty and obligation and therefore carries some *burden of office*. Unfortunately, those duties are often ill-defined. Since each person may act as both governed and governor depending on a socially-based set of expectations and justifications, the specific nature of his or her *burden of office* can become rather fuzzy and contestable. Added to this, different stakeholders may impose separate notions of *burden of office* quite apart from any formal responsibility.

This fuzziness of the *burden of office* tends to infect the notions of accountability with similar uncertainty. *Accountability* refers to the requirement to “answer for the discharge of a duty, or for conduct” -- presuming acceptable performance is defined. Yet in a world of distributed governance there are many claims to authority, and many different kinds of accounting that may be required (for partners, for citizens, for politicians, for stakeholders, for international authorities, for professional associations, etc.) – all in addition to a complex unfolding of events for which one may be held accountable for. Thus accountability in this context becomes far from clear and straightforward.

Standing in contrast to this day-to-day reality, are our traditions of single, ministerial accountability, which hold that a single person is accountable (and often interpreted as responsible) for the complex dynamics that generate outcomes in this multi-stakeholder environment. Indeed, recent Federal statutes have reinforced this notion and ignored the increasingly distributed nature of the governance challenge.

Therefore, this workshop will undertake to identify some of the public sector challenges posed by more horizontal and collaborative action and try to realign the practice of accountability to fit the demands of modern multi-stakeholder governance. **Session 1** will provide an introduction to governance, the burden of office, and accountability and identify some of the pressures which are pushing governance to become more distributed. **Session 2** will review traditional accountability and the tensions that have been observed as the concept of “someone in charge” has become over stretched in a modern context. **Session 3** will explore the idea of 360° accountability and the need to adapt accountability to the contingent behaviour of partners and collaborators. **Session 4** will look at how Canadian organizations are faring in the practice of horizontal governance and present the concept of stewardship as means of furthering the commitment of both employees and partners while satisfying multiple claims for accountability. Since the change effort required to move a public organization from a paradigm of single accountability to one of shared accountability is likely to be large, **Session 5** explores some of the mechanisms, techniques and tools that may be applied to foster that shift without having to entirely re-engineer the organization from top to bottom. Finally in **Session 6**, the workshop ends with a discussion of the idea of re-designing accountability to foster organizational learning and to emphasize results.

## **Workshop Objectives**

---

- To provide an overview of the changing governance environment in which public sector organizations are increasingly required to cooperate, collaborate and partner with other public, private and not-for-profit organizations in order to satisfy the expectations of Canadians;
- To develop a understanding of the accountability challenges faced by organizations when they choose to collaborate;
- To identify some of the mechanisms and ‘winning conditions’ that may be employed to facilitate more effective accountability; and
- To explore how accountability for learning and results may be utilized to effect shared accountability in environments of distributed governance.

## **Approach**

---

This workshop is instructor led and will be presented through a series of six workshop sessions, lectures, and discussions typically over three days. The primary reading materials will be provided at the beginning of the course and will be organized according to each session.

## **Schedule**

---

### **Session 1 The Challenge of a Distributed World**

Readings:

*Nobody in Charge*, Harland Cleveland

*Transformational Changes and Policy Shifts in Support of Partnering – Within, Across and Outside Government*, Results of National Survey on Partnering, CBNC, 2006

<http://www.crossingboundaries.ca/files/transformationalchange.pdf>

*P3s and the Porcupine problem*, Hubbard & Paquet

Additional Readings available on website:

*Canadian Federal Public Service: The View From Recent Executive Recruits*, Larson & Zussman <http://www.optimumonline.ca/article.phtml?id=269>

“Third Party Governance: Accountability Challenges”, in *Comparative Trends in Public Management* (pg 48-70), Posner [http://www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca/Research/publications/pdfs/p135\\_e.pdf](http://www.ccmd-ccg.gc.ca/Research/publications/pdfs/p135_e.pdf)

### **Session 2 Accountability in a Westminster System**

Readings:

*Responsibility, Accountability and The Role Of Deputy Ministers In The Government Of Canada*, James Hurley, CISPAA, 2006

*Testimony before Standing Committee on Public Accounts*, Patrick Boyer and C.E. Franks, Thursday, May 6, 2004

Additional Readings available on website:

Federal Accountability Act- [http://www.faa-lfi.gc.ca/index\\_e.asp](http://www.faa-lfi.gc.ca/index_e.asp)

*Just Trust Us*, Patrick Boyer

**Session 3 360° Accountability and the Management of Contingent Cooperation**

Readings:

*The Burden of Office, Ethics and Connoisseurship*, Gilles Paquet,  
*Facilitating Contingent Cooperation: I will if you will*, Wilson  
<http://www.optimumonline.ca/article.phtml?id=271>

Additional readings

*What is Shared Accountability?* Donald G. Lenihan, John Godfrey, Tony Valeri, and John Williams  
*Social traps and the Problem of Trust*, Bo Rothstein, Cambridge University Press, 2005

**Session 4 Managing Horizontality Through Stewardship**

Readings:

*How to Scheme Virtuously*, Pierre Lecours & Gilles Paquet  
*Cat's Cradling: APEX Forum on Wicked Problems*, Hubbard & Paquet  
<http://www.optimumonline.ca/article.phtml?id=279>  
*Managing Complexity*, Peach

Additional Reading available on website:

*A New Way to Govern*, ShannTurnbull

**Session 5 Mechanisms**

Readings:

*New Directions: Managing service transformation relationships between government and industry*, Dutil, Langford & Roy  
<http://www.ipac.ca/files/New%20Directions%20%2317.pdf>

Added Reading available on website:

*Betting On Mechanisms*, Hubbard & Paquet

**Session 6 Accountability for Learning**

Readings:

*Accountability for Learning*, Lenihan, et al. 2003  
<http://www.crossingboundaries.ca/files/ppg4.pdf>

Additional Readings:

*Gomery's Blinders and Canadian Federalism*, R. Hubbard & G. Paquet

**Assignment**

---

Prepare a stakeholder map of an activity or initiative in which multiple interdependencies exist. Conduct an assessment of the collaborative activities in your organization utilizing the *CWA Partnership Test*. Identify some of the accountability obligations and burden of office for each stakeholder. Prepare to discuss the different accountabilities and how they have been reconciled and the mechanisms that may have been utilized in doing so.

## **Text**

---

While there is no specific text, key handouts will be provided at the beginning of the workshop and additional materials provided online.

## **Bibliography**

---

- *Gomery's Blinders and Canadian Federalism*, R. Hubbard & G. Paquet, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 2007
- *Getting to Maybe: How the World Has Changed*, Frances Westley, Brenda Zimmerman and Michael Quinn Patton, Random House Canada, Toronto, 2006
- *The New Geo-Governance*, Gilles Paquet, University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 2005
- *Just Trust Us*, Patrick Boyer, Dundurn Press, Toronto, 2003
- *Nobody in Charge*, Harlan Cleveland, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2002
- *Making Local Governance Work: Networks, Relationships and the Management of Change*, Sue Goss, Palgrave, 2001
- *Birth of a Chaordic Age*, Dee Hock, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, San Francisco, 1999
- *Crossing Boundaries: Collaboration, Coordination, and the Redefinition of Resources*, S. Sarason & E. Lorentz, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1998

## **Important Administrative Information**

---

Website:	<a href="http://www.christopherwilson.ca">http://www.christopherwilson.ca</a>
Readings:	A package of suggested readings will be provided online at the beginning of the workshop
Mailbox:	PO Box 62024, Ottawa, ON K1C 7H8
e-mail:	<a href="mailto:info@christopherwilson.ca">info@christopherwilson.ca</a>
Voice Box:	613-569-0100