LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS:
A REVIEW OF IDRC SECRETARIATS

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LITERATURE REVIEW

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LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS: A REVIEW OF IDRC SECRETARIATS

LITERATURE REVIEW

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READERS' NOTE

This Literature Review was carried out with the assistance of the IDRC Library staff. The detailed electronic search revealed that hardly any research has been published that directly relates to the Secretariat modality or to collaborative partnerships. To further explore the availability of published literature and reports on the topic, the 20 donors and partners that were interviewed as part of the Review process were asked to identify other innovative organizational forms and models used in international development. Again, this line of questioning underlined the fact that little if any literature exists on the topic. However, there was a considerable amount of literature on creating more autonomous agencies and building organizations to foster innovation and creativity.

Fortunately, over the past two years, I was commissioned by other clients to prepare research papers on several related topics including: alternative service delivery, public sector reform, public sector innovations, public interest issues, governance, and strategy. These assignments have been drawn upon in the preparation of this Literature Review.

Dr. Jim Armstrong
November 1998
The new politics calls for new skills—skills in building bridges and alliances, brokering interests, forging consensus, articulating shared values... [It] calls for the courage to take risks and to give up some degree of control—this is inevitable in citizen-based government, in the idea of partnership. The new politics calls for greater transparency, a serious commitment to accountability—for values and for results... [and] humility—a willingness to admit that our knowledge is imperfect, that we must continuously learn and improve, that we are all stronger together. The future will require governments centred on citizens. The future of governance is partnership and shared responsibility.

Marcel Massé, “Governing for the Future”, Quebec City, July 15, 1997

INTRODUCTION

There is an extensive amount of current literature and research on many topics related to the IDRC Secretariat Review. For the purposes of the Review, and the discussion that follows, this body of work is organized around four themes:

• Current Trends in Public Sector Management
• Managing for Results in Research, Innovative, and Development Organizations
• Public Sector Accountability and Governance Issues
• Strategic Frameworks for Collaborative Partnerships

COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

In practice, these themes are tied together by a common and relatively novel thread—collaborative partnerships. Collaborative partnerships involve a formal agreement to plan and work together in specific ways to promote specific outcomes. The commitment can be fairly limited in scope, like a partnership agreement to work together to provide integrated business information services to the
public; or it can extend to the co-management of an entire set of activities as is the case with the partnership between IDRC, donors, and Secretariats.

Unlike traditional partnerships, which are based on a contract for the performance of specific tasks, collaborative arrangements are based on a contract for results and a commitment to share decision making. As with intergovernmental agreements, the government and its partner(s) negotiate a framework of outcomes, principles, objectives, and indicators. The partner(s) then commit(s) to achieving the outcomes and to having their/his performance evaluated against the indicators. At the same time, they acquire some flexibility regarding the design and delivery of services, tasks that may even include elements of policy making.

The discussion that follows details representative publications dealing with each of these topics. While this overview of literature does not pretend to be exhaustive, the discussion includes a spectrum of major influential works under each heading. IDRC Library staff carried out an extensive electronic search for source material. They designed and managed a process that identified many useful documents. Key words for the search included: Collaborative Partnerships, Alternative Service Delivery, Organizational Innovation, Alternative Organizational Forms, Secretariats, Development and/or Research and (Organization, Structure, Accountability, Governance, Management, Administration, Organizational Performance, Organizational Capacity, Leadership, Strategic Planning).

SYSTEMS THINKING

Both inside and outside of government, there is serious interest in collaborative partnerships and a willingness to experiment with them. At the same time, the challenges are daunting. If a single obstacle looms largest in our minds, it is that posed by the existing organizational culture. The collaborative approach, and the values of mutual respect and cooperation underlying it, is unsustainable in traditional, command-and-control organizations or by old-style technocratic, compliance-centred approaches. What, then, must be done to change the culture?

Developing and managing public sector partnerships shifts attention onto results. Collaborative partnerships begin with a shared vision and clear, shared objectives. Thinking collaboratively requires that we think clearly about where we want to be, not just where we are. Moreover, it forces us to consider people, communities and issues as wholes rather than focusing on fragments of them.

Beginning with a shared vision of where we want to be and taking a holistic approach are two hallmarks of systems thinking. It stands in contrast to the technocratic kind of thinking that is preoccupied with immediate concerns and analyses the parts without reference to the whole. Technocratic thinking concentrates on maintaining an existing structure, identifying and solving problems; and it does so from within a predetermined frame of reference. Typically, it is
preoccupied with following process and preventing errors, rather than achieving results and learning. The contrast between technocratic and systems thinking is illustrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE ANALYTIC / TECHNOCRATIC APPROACH</th>
<th>THE SYSTEMS THINKING APPROACH ANSWERS FIVE KEY QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Starts with today and the current state, issues, problems</td>
<td>• Where do we want to be? (outcomes, purposes, goals, vision)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Breaks the issues/problems into their smallest components</td>
<td>• How will we know when we get there? (quantifiable feedback system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Solves each component separately</td>
<td>• Where are we now? (issues, problems, practices, values)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Often has no far reaching vision or goal, just the absence of the problem</td>
<td>• How do we get there? (implementation planning, change management)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What's the environment/how is it changing? (policy groundwork and preparing for the future)</td>
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Collaborative partnerships and results-based management require something like a systems approach to planning and analysis. In this view, the essential properties that define a frame of reference:

...are properties of the whole, which none of the parts have. They arise from the interactions and relationships among the parts. These properties are destroyed when the system is dissected... into isolated elements.

Systems thinking is "contextual," which is the opposite of analytical thinking... Analysis means taking something apart in order to understand it; systems thinking means putting it into the context of a larger whole.

Capra, 1996

Capra goes on to argue that there are six critical principles of organization in human communities: interdependence, relationships and cooperation, feedback loops (continuous learning), partnership, and diversity. These principles fit well with what we heard about collaborative partnerships:

• **Interdependence:** Interconnectedness in an intricate network of relationships. The success of the whole community depends on the success of its individual members, while the success of each member depends on the success of the community as a whole.

• **Relationships and cooperation:** Understanding relationships, shift in thinking from the parts to the whole, from contents to patterns.
• **Feedback loops**: Multiple feedback loops, continuous learning, and awareness of the cyclical nature of processes.

• **Partnership**: The tendency to associate, establish links and cooperate. It is one of the hallmarks of all life including organizational life. In human communities, partnership means democracy and personal empowerment. Each member plays an important role. In a true, committed partnership both partners learn and change—they evolve together.

• **Flexibility**: A consequence of multiple feedback loops that tend to bring the system back into balance. The more variables are kept fluctuating, the more dynamic is the system; the greater is its flexibility; and the greater is its ability to adapt to changing conditions. Lack of flexibility manifests itself as stress. The principle of flexibility also suggests the need for a corresponding strategy of conflict resolution. Communities need stability and change, order and freedom, tradition and innovation. These unavoidable conflicts are much better resolved by establishing a dynamic balance. Knowledge that both sides of a conflict can be important and that the contradictions within a community are signs of its diversity and vitality and thus contribute to the system’s viability.

• **Diversity**: Many different relationships, many different approaches to the same problem. A diverse community is a resilient community, capable of adapting to changing situations. However, diversity is a strategic advantage only if there is a truly vibrant community, sustained by a web of relationships. If the community is fragmented into isolated groups and individuals, diversity can easily become a source of prejudice and friction. But if the community is aware of the interdependence of all its members, diversity will enrich all the relationships and thus enrich the community as a whole, as well as each individual member. In such a community, information and ideas flow freely through the entire network, and the diversity of interpretations and learning styles—even the diversity for mistakes—will enrich the entire community.

Capra, 1996

From the point of view of traditional public sector thinking, the change in outlook implied by these principles is Copernican in magnitude. At bottom, they imply a shift in management style from one based on what Capra calls self-assertive thinking to one that balances this against integrative thinking. Self-assertive thinking is rational, analytical, reductionist and linear. Integrative thinking or systems thinking is synthesizing, holistic and nonlinear. Values central to self-assertion are expansionism, competition, quantity and domination. Integrative values are conservation, cooperation, quality, and partnership.

There are several reasons to conclude that systems thinking is a good starting point for a theory for collaborative partnerships. First, the contrast with traditional technocratic thinking sheds light on the self-assertive values underlying command and control systems. Second, Capra’s six key principles provide positive guidance for conceptualizing the culture underlying successful collaborative partnerships. Finally, there is a remarkable similarity between the approach implied by systems theory...
and citizens’ demand for more integrated, holistic, horizontal, transparent, and participative government.

1. CURRENT TRENDS IN PUBLIC SECTOR MANAGEMENT

This section is based on research undertaken in 1997 and 1998 by Jim Armstrong for the Institute of Public Administration of Canada and the Public Service Commission of Canada. Both institutions were acutely aware that very little published information existed that synthesized current trends in public sector management and presented it in a way that made it accessible to a large number of people.

There was also recognition that, in light of the public sector reforms sweeping the globe, very little, if any literature or research was available on the impacts of human resource management of trends such as alternative service delivery. The situation was even worse when it came to collaborative partnerships. Again, he was commissioned by the Institute of Public Administration of Canada to carry out research in these areas.

As Executive Director to the Deputy Ministers’ Task Force on Service Delivery Models, he also supervised the development of over forty case studies and many major research projects into the areas of changes in the delivery of government services, partnerships, use of information technology, and accountability issues. The first section of this Literature Review is based on this intensive work, therefore it reads more like analysis than the remaining three sections which highlight current literature in the area.

Four main forces drive the movement of governments towards collaborative partnerships. First, citizens want to see governments design and follow strategies for big issues such as health care, education, and employment, implemented cooperatively, transparently, and with ample opportunity for engagement. Second, management practices borrowed from the private sector have made it obvious that the State is not the necessary and only provider of public services and that it is possible to do much more with less, to deliver services in non-traditional ways, and to measure performance. Third, advances in information technology, besides providing opportunities for evolving citizen-government relationships, have resulted in more democratized and freely accessible information and many new forms of service delivery possibilities. Finally the increasingly complicated interdependence of international and domestic policies, and other international political factors, render the likelihood of good global governance dubious.

The public service has responded to these influences with a number of innovations, which are detailed below. Partnerships are perhaps the most interesting of these initiatives because they call for the most radical change in traditional public service practice. They encompass all of the key features of the other innovations: collaborative business planning, improved accountability, performance measurement, results orientation, integration of related services, citizen engagement, and power sharing. Social,
market, information technology, and political forces have pressed the public sector into trying many types of new approaches. Collectively, these alternative approaches exhibit features of collaborative partnerships, as described below, thus indicating a trend in that direction.

**AGENCIES**

Agencies are seen as a way of improving service and performance by separating policy from operations and then locating the latter in new structures outside of the existing bureaucracy. This independence allows the agency to establish new rules and procedures that make its operations more flexible, cost effective, responsible, and responsive. At the same time, it must continue to operate within the policy framework set by its governing body. Examples abound:

- Canada Food Inspection Agency
- Canada Revenue, Customs and Excise Agency
- Crown Corporations
- Executive Agencies in the UK
- State-owned Enterprises in New Zealand
- Business Enterprises in Australia
- Secretariats housed at IDRC
- Special Operating Agencies
- Delegated Administrative Organizations in Alberta
- Designated Service Agencies
- Semi-autonomous Commissions providing services to municipalities in NB

**HORIZONTAL INTEGRATION**

Notoriously, government organizations tend to act in isolation, turning themselves into a series of unconnected “stove pipes.” Issues, by contrast, often cut across several departments. In recent years, much talk and experimentation has been aimed at dealing holistically with issues by getting different departments and levels of government to coordinate and integrate related services. Examples include:

- Government Agents empowered to perform a wide variety of public sector functions in British Columbia
- Canadian Food Inspection Agency integrating food inspection services formerly provided by three federal departments, provinces, and municipalities
- Neighbourhood integrated service teams working across departments and agencies to solve community problems in Vancouver
- Integration of regional service delivery in Ontario with civil servants working for Enterprise Ontario rather than for individual departments
- Saskatchewan’s Child Action Plan integrating government and voluntary agencies to focus on preventive programs for youth.

**SERVICE IMPROVEMENT**

Improving service to citizens is another recent management trend that contributes to the general interest in collaboration. Service improvement initiatives require clear channels of communication between server and served. In this view, quality service requires that the server get regular feedback from the served who, on that basis, regularly adjusts the service.
improvement thus rests on a culture of communication and improvement through learning. Examples include:

- Canada’s Service Standards and Quality Service Initiatives, whereby the government is committed to publishing service standards and issuing declarations of quality service based on consultation with clients
- The Citizens’ Charter in the UK which guarantees the publication of service standards and redress processes for all government services provided to citizens
- Service guarantees for public service and performance in New Brunswick
- The US’s requirement for all departments to have output measures in place within two years
- New Zealand’s 18 years of experience refining output measures and its move toward outcome measurement
- Australia’s sophisticated program evaluation process.

**CITIZEN-CENTRED SERVICE** An important subdivision of the service improvement movement is the trend toward citizen-centred service. In a citizen-centred approach, services are designed and delivered around citizens rather than around the bureaucracies providing them. The idea that services should be integrated around the citizen, rather than expecting the citizen to fit into the bureaucracy, has gained wide acceptance. Moreover, this approach encourages governments to deal with whole issues, i.e. horizontally, rather than parts of issues. Examples include:

- The application of Labour Market Development Agreements (LMDAs) and employment programs in many provinces
- Canada’s Business Service Centers
- Portugal’s citizen-oriented public sector modernization and democratization
- Social and health service programs in PEI, Alberta, Newfoundland, BC, Saskatchewan
- Access Montreal
- Neighbourhood Integrated Service Teams in Vancouver
- Environmental Registry and Wisdom Exchange in Ontario

**DEVOLUTION AND DECENTRALIZATION** Devolution of public authority to other levels of government and decentralization of responsibility for service delivery to local agencies, boards and commissions have also been important instruments in the public sector trend towards collaboration. Examples include:

- Various federal initiatives to devolve programs including forestry, employment programs, and aspects of health and education
- Aboriginal self-government and innovations in justice
- France’s public sector reform, which had at its core the decentralization of most management duties to the local level
- Provincial devolution of program delivery responsibilities to local and regional boards and municipalities
• Charter schools in Alberta, which devolve much responsibility for education to communities
• Decentralization of Children and Family Services to regions in BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland
• Significant devolution (without financial support) to municipalities in Quebec, including police, roads, public transit
• Delegation of service delivery to industry sectors in Alberta and Ontario
• Widespread delegation of traditionally centralized processes including staffing, classification, training, financial management, in most OECD member countries.

REGULATORY CHANGE

Public sector reformers view cumbersome or restrictive rules and regulations as a major obstacle to meeting public expectations. They argue that by simplifying regulations and placing greater emphasis on results, governments encourage individuals and organizations to work together in new and innovative ways. This has contributed significantly to a more collaborative outlook in the public sector, as the following examples illustrate:

• The 1992 Regulatory Policy in Canada, which resulted in the Citizens Code of Regulatory Reform
• The US’s elimination of over 16,000 pages of administrative procedures and regulations
• New public service acts simplifying regulations and procedures in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and financial management acts in New Zealand, Australia, and Portugal, streamlining accountability and processes
• Regulatory reform program in Newfoundland and ongoing deregulation in NB, Saskatchewan and Alberta
• The Ontario Red Tape Commission which eliminated thousands of prescriptive or anti-business regulations. It was re-convened to ensure regulations focus on customer service.

PARTNERSHIPS

Most reformers agree that many of the major issues facing governments, including health, security, environment, employment and competitiveness, involve multiple jurisdictions and sectors. Effective strategies for dealing with them therefore require collaboration and partnering, often at a number of levels. Recent examples highlighting this trend include:

• Municipal partnerships with the private sector for waste and utilities management; research; capital development programs, from highways to computer systems, in several provinces; justice services, and integration of social assistance between the Ontario government and municipalities
• Community Health Services in NB, PEI, Saskatchewan, and BC
• Partners in Innovation to develop new technologies in road construction between NS and its universities
• Knowledge Economy Partnership between PEI, Industry Canada, educational institutions, and the private sector
• IDRC Secretariats that collaborate with other international development organizations to focus on specific development issues
Human Resource Development Canada's Labour Market Development Agreements aim at re-establishing an entire policy field as a collaborative enterprise.

**KEY ELEMENTS: LESSONS FROM EXPERIENCE**

Making collaborative partnerships work in the public sector often involves a sharp learning curve. Typically, they involve people from outside the organization in program design and delivery, including donors, clients and other stakeholders. This puts pressure on managers to clarify roles, overcome differences in organizational culture and build trust.

Management lessons from experience and literature fall into four broad interrelated categories: supportive environment, strategic management, new tools and new approaches, and planning and evaluation. Success depends on all of them. Without a strongly supportive environment, the best strategic management in the world won’t go far. Further, without a systems thinking, results-based approach to planning, and the continuous learning that comes from evaluating and monitoring progress, long term success is unlikely.

**SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT**

Key elements of a supportive environment include long term, high-level commitment, leadership, relationships based on trust, central agency support and clear accountability frameworks.

**LONG TERM, HIGH LEVEL COMMITMENT, AND RELATIVE STABILITY** Collaborative partnerships add new complexities to the challenges of restructuring, downsizing, and service improvement initiatives faced by public servants. Implementing collaborative partnerships can involve rapid and profound change in difficult circumstances. As seen in the IDRC Secretariat Review Case Studies, there can be a wide gap between the decision to embark on a new collaborative venture and implementation—making it work on the ground. Developing collaborative partnerships and the organizational environments that sustain them often amounts to a long term change management project. This requires enduring commitment from senior management to ensure stability.

**RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST** Collaborative partnerships require a shift in traditional thinking since they are relationships built on power sharing, interdependence and joint management and planning. Shared needs, interests, and objectives should be central to the project. The emphasis must be on trust, consensus building, and conflict resolution. These characteristics are foreign to traditional command and control hierarchies where authority is exercised in quite a different way. The use of results-based, collaborative management practices instead of control approaches will not succeed without a corresponding change in the organizational culture.

As Milan Zeleny in “Spontaneous Social Order” points out, you can change the structure and establish new organizational arrangements, but without an underlying change in the rules of conduct the change will not be viable, long-lasting or capable of its own self renewal. In other words, the creation of a new
style of organization such as Secretariats housed at IDRC, which are build around collaboration and partnerships, have little chance of long-term vitality unless the culture and processes of the host organization adapt to address the needs of the new structures.

**CORPORATE FUNCTIONS: SUPPORT AND LEADERSHIP** Collaborative agreements are often at risk of breaking down at the program level, as a result of unresolved differences in program delivery philosophies (culture), priorities (strategic direction) and systems (processes). Often this is a result of inertia, reluctance or inability on the part of corporate functional groups to facilitate or permit operational units involved in partnerships to arrive at suitable resolutions. By-and-large, central support functions are not organizationally, philosophically, or culturally inclined to be supportive of collaborative approaches. For example, they often lack the sense of urgency about such problems experienced by those who deal with partners and clients face-to-face. Typically, these functions are focused on process and compliance rather than performance and results.

Collaborative partnerships will be sustainable only if significant changes are made to typical command and control approaches normally found in financial management, audit, accounting, evaluation, and personnel. These changes include:

- Changes to labour management practices—Are confrontational strategies suitable for a collaborative world?
- Classification systems that place value on service, performance, and problem solving
- Recruitment practices based on service values, relationship building, and collaborative skills
- Compensation and promotion systems that reward new desirable behaviour rather than the old compliance and conformity
- Strategic planning systems that involve stakeholders and set out clear visions, leadership, and action planning
- Financial management systems and policies designed to help achieve the desired results
- Technology infrastructures designed to facilitate citizen service rather than control
- Evaluation is seen as an important tool for organizational learning.

**ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS** Although asymmetry in program delivery is widely seen as a virtue of collaborative partnerships, central hierarchies still have difficulty accommodating or accepting it in practice. One reason is that asymmetry raises important issues regarding accountability. For example, if programs are designed and delivered differently in different places, who is responsible for differences in the quality or level of the service that may result? To whom should they answer? Strong accountability frameworks must underwrite collaborative partnerships without compromising the flexibility in program design and delivery that such partnerships permit. While more about this subject is explained in Section 4, the point that IDRC Secretariats differ greatly giving rise to a number of accountability issues, must be highlighted.
STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

Key elements of strategic management include strategic direction, capacity, results-based management, and change management.

STRATEGIC DIRECTION A critical first step of collaborative partnerships consists in setting strategic objectives. For collaborative partnerships to work, multiple, often-competing objectives and priorities need to be balanced. Effective collaborative partnerships require a mechanism for collaborative planning. At the highest level, this involves setting strategic objectives and managing the competition between them in order to allow enough asymmetry to meet specific and diverse needs while ensuring a reasonable consistency across the organization. In addition to setting realistic goals and targets, developing and maintaining a strategic direction requires consensus building, facilitating buy-in, sorting out accountability and visibility issues, and communicating effectively with all involved. This takes time and requires considerable expertise and planning among the partners.

Setting the direction is thus the cornerstone of an effective strategic management process. Ensuring that it is both appropriate and sustainable requires:

- Long-term agreements
- Realistic goals and objectives
- A well thought-out implementation strategy based on consultative/collaborative planning
- Realistic measurement and review mechanisms.

CAPACITY Many practical, operational issues also need to be explored. What support systems, skills, training, qualifications, management frameworks, etc. will be needed to make these arrangements work? Do we know what core competencies an effective front line worker will need in the new world of collaboration? Perhaps as important is the question of donor capacity: Is it reasonable to expect that many organizations have the internal capacity to engage in the kind of strategic planning and performance management that collaborative partnerships require?

Another important question is: What levels of expertise and capacity it is necessary, or prudent, to keep in-house? There is a tendency for organizations to divest themselves of in-house expertise once someone else has the responsibility, or to ignore the in-house expertise that may be essential to maintain and nurture a collaborative partnership. Over the long run, this can have serious consequences.

RESULTS-BASED MANAGEMENT Both experience and published research demonstrates that collaborative partnerships lead governments toward results-based management. By focusing on outcomes, an organization can leave choices open to its partner about the means by which they are to be achieved. Organizations assess the partner’s success through the use of performance measures.

Setting effective measures can be difficult and complex. For example, in policy areas such as the environmental effects on economic development of programs to improve health and well-being,
outcomes are often the products of multiple causes originating in a variety of policy fields, governments, or sectors. Results-based management also helps integrate planning and service delivery. Because outcomes are often dependent on horizontally coordinated inputs, managing for them automatically involves collaboration across boundaries.

CHANGE MANAGEMENT

A frequently overlooked task is assessing the human, financial and other resources required to manage the change process itself and complete it. Moreover, operating effectively with new organizational approaches such as partnerships requires a formidable workforce cultural change. In the midst of major reorganization, change management questions like these often go unasked, sometimes with devastating results. Collaborative partnerships raise a plethora of management issues. But they do more than that. They demand a different kind of management approach, one based on trust, consensus building, and conflict resolution, as opposed to command and control.

NEW TOOLS, NEW APPROACHES

In dynamic organizations, the classical view that action begins with debate (ideas), flows through decision making (policy), and results in implementation (programs) must be taken with a large grain of salt. Indeed, as with Secretariats housed at IDRC, the arrows sometime point in the other direction, as the practice runs ahead of the theory. Introducing new instruments, mechanisms, methods and models of public management often propels organizations in new directions. As we have seen, experiments with new management tools are being tried across the country. Canadian governments have:

- Tried new techniques of policy development
- Established new planning, evaluation and reporting processes
- Arrived at major new agreements for the co-management of key policy areas
- Experimented with new service agencies, and
- Entered into new arrangements with private and voluntary sector organizations for the delivery of public services.

These arrangements go beyond mere management improvements. They are about more than management because they redesign traditional practices of governance by changing how organizations and governments work, how they work together, and how they relate to constituents and partners. Therefore a more informed and open discussion of the mechanisms, strategies and consequences of change is called for. Insight is needed into how the new approaches can be used to construct such partnerships and where they can be applied.

PLANNING AND EVALUATION

Many organizations have recently introduced results-based planning and evaluation processes. They are supposed to lead to more coordinated, effective, transparent and accountable governance. If there is a
central idea here, it is that bureaucracies have become too focused on process (how it does things) and not enough on outcomes (the results of what it does).

The new planning processes play a critical role in efforts to change this focus. They do so in at least two ways. First, they commit officials to publicly evaluating and reporting on their policies and programs from the standpoint of the results they produce and the citizens they serve. Second, they require that officials produce and adhere to organizational plans that provide the following terms of reference:

- A clear statement of the broad outcomes the organization aims to achieve (its mission)
- A clear statement of the core businesses in which it is engaged to achieve the outcomes
- A clear statement of the specific objectives of its policies and programs
- An analysis of how those policies and programs will achieve the objectives
- An analysis of how the objectives, if achieved, will contribute to the broad outcomes in the plan
- A list of performance indicators that will help assess the effectiveness of policies and programs in achieving their objectives and, ultimately, the outcomes.

Having said that, however, it must be noted that research results are difficult to deal with. Often it is not known where the research will lead requiring ongoing adjustments.

Evaluations are carried out by using the performance indicators in the plan to assess the effects of a particular policy or program in achieving its objectives. Officials are expected to evaluate programs and policies regularly and to adjust them to achieve a better fit with the objectives and outcomes. Results-based management thus encourages a culture of continuous learning, innovation and improvement, a crucial condition for an effective organization.

Moreover, by adopting outcome and performance indicators, each sub-unit is supposed to contribute to a greater integration and coordination of the entire system. However, you have to know the desired results of the entire system so there must be central strategic leadership—a strategic framework. If individual units pursue common goals, adopt the same performance indicators, and use the evaluation results to improve their own policies, programs, and approaches to service delivery, within a well understood strategic framework, a natural integration and coordination of activity should result. This spreads the task of coordination around the system and, at the same time, encourages some decentralization with respect to policy making and program design and delivery.

Such an approach departs from the traditional view that system-wide coherence is most effectively achieved from the top down by central authorities, who shape and maintain a system of governance through a combination of policy directives, rules, and regulations. The old model requires a considerable centralization of policy-making authority that, notoriously, is controlled by a small group of functional experts. In contrast, the new decentralized approach allows for much greater flexibility in policy making, program design and service delivery methods. It demands strong strategic leadership which necessitates the wide involvement of employees at various levels in the strategic planning
process. In addition, to ensure the ongoing learning that is required to keep the organization regenerative, planning and evaluation need to be linked as parts of one dynamic process.

Finally, if the plan is a public document, it can serve as a clear statement of the organization’s or agency’s mission and core businesses and the specific purposes of its programs and policies, as well as provide performance indicators for assessing their effectiveness. If, in addition, evaluation reports are made public, they can be used to call upon responsible officials to account for successes and failures. In principle, this should improve transparency and accountability.

All in all, some clear advantages come with the use of new planning and evaluation tools:

- It should make organizations more integrated and coordinated
- The more decentralized approach should mean less top down control by small, centralized authorities and, correspondingly, more bottom up influence for collaborating partners, service providers, constituents and other stakeholder groups
- Organizations should become more transparent and accountable
- Bad programs and policies should be gradually improved or weeded out through the threefold process of monitoring, assessment, and adjustment.

2. MANAGING FOR RESULTS IN RESEARCH, INNOVATIVE, AND DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATIONS

Collaborative partnerships signal a movement away from command and control hierarchies designed for an industrial age. This movement is not only structural, it is social-organizational as well. This signal is greatly amplified when we begin looking at changes in management approaches in organizations designed to carry out research, develop new innovations, and perform community or international development activities. The challenge of focussing on results rather than process has led to a questioning of the applicability of traditional organizational arrangements for knowledge work.

Since Peter Drucker coined the term “knowledge worker” and began writing extensively about the subject (The Age of Discontinuity, 1968), there has been an increasing interest in how to design organizations to increase innovation and improve learning and adaptability to new and ever-changing circumstances. Perhaps most directly related to the work of IDRC and the question of Secretariats, is Warren Bennis’ Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration, (1997). The idea to write Organizing Genius began with an interest in writing a book on how networks of gifted people have changed the world. Bennis examined seven creative collaborations that have had enduring impact: Walt Disney Studio; Xerox’s Palo Alto Research Center, the 1992 Clinton campaign, Lockheed’s Skunk Works, Black Mountain College, and the Manhattan Project. He dubs these as Great Groups recognizable by huge and enduring innovations performed by small, dedicated teams and collaborative networks.
These collaborative partnerships have some rather distinct characteristics:

- Great Groups offer a new model in which the leader is an equal among Titans.
- Great Groups are intrinsically motivated. People in them are buoyed by the joy of problem solving.
- Typically they are composed of people who want to break the rules—they are never insider or corporate types on the fast track: They are always on their own track.
- Great Groups are inevitably forged by people unafraid of hiring people better than themselves. Such recruiters look for two things: excellence and the ability to work with others.
- Many of these groups are fueled by an invigorating, completely unrealistic view of what they can accomplish.
- They regard failure as a learning experience, not a pretext for punishment.
- Great groups require a more flexible kind of leadership that has more to do with facilitating than with asserting control.
- Dissent tends to be encouraged because it serves the spirit of discovery.
- These groups usually disintegrate when the project is finished.
- Intense focus on a single problem is a critical element of every Great Group.

Based on the examination of the seven cases, Bennis offers a number of lessons directly relevant IDRC's Secretariat Review. These include:

- Greatness starts with superb people: They see connections. Often they have specialized skills, combined with broad interests and multiple frames of reference. They tend to be deep generalists, not narrow specialists.
- Collaboration is essential: The standard models, especially the command-and-control style, simply won’t work. The heads of Great Groups have to act decisively, but never arbitrarily.
- Every Great Group has a strong leader: This is one of the paradoxes of creative collaboration. Within the group, the leader operates as a good steward and is almost never bureaucratic. People in them feel liberated from the trivial and the arbitrary. People are in them not for money, not even for glory, but because they love the work, they love the project.
- Leaders of these groups love talent and know where to find it. The quality of the group often reflects the network of its leader.
- They are staffed with talented people who can work together. The right people are always in the right job. Certain tasks can only be performed collaboratively, and it is madness to recruit people, however gifted, who are incapable of working side by side toward a common goal.
- Great Groups believe that they are on a divine mission. Their work has true meaning.
- Every Great Group is an island—but an island with a bridge to the mainland. While they may tend to be physically removed, they are able to tap a wide range of resources.
• Great Groups perceive themselves as winning underdogs—as the feisty David, hurling fresh ideas at a big, backward-looking Goliath. They often perceive a common enemy such as poverty.

• Staff in these groups get what they need to perform their tasks and have freedom from typical organizational burdens, trivial duties and obligations. Great Groups are never places where memos are the primary form of communication. They aren’t places where anything is filed in triplicate. Time that can go into thinking and making is never wasted on activities, such as writing reports, that serve only some bureaucratic or corporate function outside the group. Hence, they often need protection since they are susceptible to being misunderstood, resented, even feared. They need relative autonomy, the sine qua non of creativity. No Great Group was ever micromanaged. The illusion of control that micromanagement gives is traded for the higher satisfactions of orchestrating extraordinary achievement.

• While the work is its own reward, Great Groups know how to meet deadlines and know when the project is over and that it has to end.

Bennis’ Organizing Genius: The Secrets of Creative Collaboration, offers many insights into the use of collaborative partnerships and the use of highly focused creative teams to solve specific international development problems. However, it is not unique. There are numerous other current works on similar subjects. Highlighted below are other works offering insights to the use of Secretariats as a modality.

**Management of Research and Development Organizations: Managing the Unmanageable** (R.K. Jain and H.C. Triandis, 1990) Creative tension serves an important role in research and development organizations. The disruption and challenge which characterizes creative tension leads to the development of new ideas, as opposed to stability and security which simply serve to perpetuate the existing way of thinking.

It is also important for research and development organizations to find the correct balance between self-reliance and interdependence. This balance must be achieved with minimum structure or direction from management. Likewise, it is important that researchers not only be provided with the freedom to complete their work as they best see fit, but also be provided with an explanation of the significance of their work. Feedback on the progress of their work is equally helpful. There must be clear communication between researchers and management.

Management can achieve control when objectives and goals are set cooperatively by management and researchers. These goals should be specific, difficult, but yet attainable.

Research benefits from a diversity of views and skills. It is important for research organizations to promote the development of a diversity of views and to employ people with a diversity of skills. This diversity facilitates the development of new thinking. Innovative new ideas are often the results of concepts and/or facts from two separate fields coming together. Conventional wisdom blurs one’s ability to look at things critically. Newcomers, or people with diverse backgrounds, bring a more creative, critical eye to conventional problems.
Creativity is influenced by people and their environment. It is the role of management to encourage people to challenge assumptions, focus on different aspects of problems, and generate new and innovative solutions. It is also important for those engaged in research and development to pay attention to the needs of users.

**THE CREATIVE PRIORITY: DRIVING INNOVATION IN THE REAL WORLD** (Jeffrey Hirshberg, 1998)

Hirshberg outlines the need for creative solutions during our current times characterized by rapid change, instantaneous communication, and globalization. Bureaucracy is often “stuck”—doing things the way they have always been done. The author uses his experience as the head of the Nissan Design Institute to illustrate the means of organizing a corporation around the creative process. Hirshberg, and the writers that follow demonstrate that conditions and organizational limitations are not that dissimilar between the private and public sectors.

Bureaucracies limit creativity. He maintains that there is no such thing as a creative bureaucracy. You must liberate ideas, and accept creativity as the goal of your business. The goal of business is to manage and harness this creativity, the seeds of which exist within all organizations and can be extracted through a variety of techniques. The author outlines four such techniques: polarity, creative priority, unconventional thinking, and synthesis:

- **Polarity** refers to working from opposite ends of an issue towards the development of a common idea. It forces new thinking about ideas to emerge as people work from opposite sides on the same issue. This creative tension brings out the best and leads to the development of new ideas.

- The creative priority breaks across all boundaries. Fear of failure inhibits and stifles risk taking. It is often helpful to back away from a project, and return with a clear mind and fresh ideas.

- Unconventional thinking stems from an atmosphere that is conducive to people taking risk. It stems from interrupting our daily routine and breaking our rhythms. By looking at things differently and moving beyond traditional perceptions, new and innovative ideas emerge. Unconventional thinking results in one questioning why things are done the way they are.

- Synthesis strives to achieve greater thought through disciplined thinking. It calls for flexibility in responding to changing situations. The creative plan has to be capable of growth and development. If the strategic plan is too rigid, it will inhibit free and creative thinking.

**THE INDIVIDUALIZED CORPORATION: A FUNDAMENTALLY NEW APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT** (Sumantra Ghoshal and Christopher A. Bartlett, 1997)

A new model of management has replaced the traditional mode of management that viewed people as minutiae to be controlled and trained. This new management model values the knowledge and skills of individuals. An individualized corporation believes in the ability of the individual. As opposed to exercising control over its employees, it gives its employees a sense of ownership and self-discipline. When it comes from within,
discipline will develop to the point that management is freed to do other things. Such a company grows from the bottom up and not the top-down.

The individualized corporation encourages its employees to set their performance standards by comparing their work with that of their peers. Achieving this takes time. Failure must be tolerated, as it encourages further risk-taking. Lack of failure indicates an inadequate level of risk-taking. It is important for workers to have faith in management and vice versa. The result is employees who have faith in themselves.

As opposed to extracting all value from its resources, including people, it is better to create value through education and training. Collective learning and organizational learning must become part of the strategic plan that has as its goal the development of human knowledge. The employees must be viewed as the productive resource of the company. The individualized corporation strives to create a culture where the sharing of information is the norm.

Individualized corporations are aware that yesterday's bright ideas become today's norm - hence the need to continue coming up with bright ideas. Organizations need to continuously reinvent themselves. The rapid rate change requires a fast and timely response to change. This is a continuous requirement.

THE CENTERLESS CORPORATION (Bruce A. Pasternack and Albert J. Viscio, 1998) In the Centerless Corporation the authors present the reader with a fictitious corporation that has no corporate center. This corporation works out of the global core, which does only what the various parts of the corporation cannot do themselves. Everything else is delegated and distributed to the various parts of the corporation. The global core consists only of the Chief Executive Officer and his/her immediate team.

The centerless corporation understands that knowledge, people, and strategic coherence are what drive its success. This is different from the traditional management model based on command-and-control. With change taking place so quickly, it is important to decentralize the corporation and some of its decision-making processes. They authors argue that by strategically decentralizing the decision-making processes, it is possible to gain increased control by ensuring that everyone shares the same strategic vision and organization values.

The centerless corporation is built around people and knowledge, instead of its physical assets. New linkages must be forged and knowledge created. In such a corporation, there is no hub and spoke. Knowledge and ideas flow freely in the most effective means. Globalization and advances in telecommunication have rendered the traditional linear chain of command ineffective. Change now takes place at break-neck speed. Business is attempting to simplify what it does in response to the increasing complexity of the world in which it must operate. Companies must be adept and quick in adjusting to change. They must be precise in targeting opponents, more creative than the competition, and customized in what they do.

The centerless corporation consists of four elements: the global core, business units, services, and governance. The mission of the global core is to provide strategic leadership, distribute access to
capabilities, identify and provide access to low-cost capital, and control. These things need to be carried out where they are needed, i.e. locally, which results in faster decision making. The centerless corporation must also learn by asking questions about itself and measuring the value of its missions. Further, it examines whether or not each part of the business contributes to the whole. Success is measured by one’s ability to adapt to the changing world. In this age of global specialization, corporations must focus on what they do well and forge links with other corporations who have a comparative advantage in a particular field. These corporations recognize that employees own their careers and the organization owns the work representing a new people partnership.

The centerless corporation applies four approaches in leveraging knowledge. Pushing the frontier is a continuous synthesis and improvement of our understandings of a given paradigm. Big ideas change the rules of the game. Operational excellence refers to the continuous identification and application of best practices. Last but not least, the capability paradigm shift is a one-time shift to a broad set of state-of-the-art understandings followed by continuous improvement. Pushing the frontier and operational excellence represent continuous change, while big ideas and capability paradigm shifts represent leaps of change or dramatic change. Pushing the frontier and big ideas represent synthesized learning while operational excellence and the capability paradigm shift represent applied learning. Strategic innovation is important in the creation of a culture of growth.

The author presents six priorities for the future of any organization that will be able to sustain itself:

- **Vision**—the ability to communicate leadership and provide a shared vision for the organization.
- **Shared Values**—the building of trust and the development of shared corporate and individual values.
- **Strategy**—the strategic plan must be clear and well integrated into the operation of the organization.
- **Trust**—this cannot be prescribed. It must be earned and fostered over time. Once trust is achieved, it will direct the behavior of the corporation.
- **Recruitment of Disciples**—a good leader is a person who has trained and developed a core of new leaders.
- **Communication**—what your message is and how it is delivered.

The centerless corporation must focus on activities that create value. The result is a flat, nonlinear, focused corporation, which encourages the sharing of knowledge and ideas.

In the concluding section of the book, the authors provide a checklist to help managers determine whether or not their organization has what it takes to become a centerless corporation. Not only does this checklist help determine if your corporation can make the shift to a centerless corporation, it helps determine if you have what it takes to lead a centerless corporation. The authors then explain how to go about implementing and managing the shift from a traditional corporation to a centerless corporation. In the simplest of terms, the shift to a centerless corporation involves the development of a shared vision, mission and goals; the development of an executive that will be the disciples of change; the communication and explanation of the future of the corporation to the employees; and the setting of objectives and targets that, while ambitious, are attainable.
3. **PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

**ACCOUNTABILITY FRAMEWORKS**

Accountability and governance issues have recently been the focus of a great deal of thinking in the public sector. For example, these issues were central to the Deputy Ministers’ Task Force on Service Delivery during their deliberations in 1995 and 1996. Their four volume report (published on-line on the Canadian Centre for Management Development’s home page) reflects these central concerns. Contained in this published research is a paper on accountability commissioned from Roger Tassé (Ministerial Accountability and The Citizen-centred Renewal Initiative).

Tassé examines ways of ensuring accountability in government organizations, including those operating at arms-length. Because renewal and significant public sector improvement were deemed impossible without finding ways of using collaborative partnerships to increase the effectiveness of services provided to citizens, new approaches to accountability needed to be found. Therefore, special attention was given to maintaining accountability in emerging horizontal, collaborative arrangements.

Tassé makes some profoundly insightful observations about financial administration. He notes that most administrative impediments to collaborative partnerships are found in the regulations and guidelines issued for the application of the Financial Administration Act, rather than in the Act itself. In other words, they are self-imposed and therefore can easily be changed. The focus in achieving the goal of financial accountability (ensuring that expenditures are made in accordance with authorities conferred by Parliament) should not be a complex set of rules that limits flexibility in service delivery or achieves important organizational objectives. Rather, the focus should be on:

- Transparency and readily accessible clear and concise financial information; and
- Transparency and readily accessible, clear and concise information about the collaborative partnership arrangements, its objects, monitoring and evaluation processes, and governance framework.

Tassé points out that the existing frameworks for accountability suffer from a good deal of *ad hocery*, noting that it is difficult to get information about existing accountability arrangements and that there are no clear rules regarding ministerial or administrative accountability. Monitoring mechanisms, he observes, where they exist, are uneven. Adding to the already imperfect situation is the necessity to add even more complex horizontal and collaborative partnership arrangements. In response to this challenge, Tassé developed a Policy Framework. While the focus of this framework is on arrangements involving decision-making, there are many helpful suggestions for clarifying IDRC’s accountability arrangements with Secretariats and partners. The following list is modified to reflect IDRC’s immediate concerns.
Is the Board of Governors satisfied that the arrangement will achieve the goals of the legislation under which it operates:

1. Is the Board satisfied that the persons who will carry out the tasks under the arrangement are properly qualified, trained, etc., to do so?
2. Is there a need for, and in the affirmative, does the arrangement contain proper provision for the monitoring, control, etc. of their work?
3. Are proper means in place to receive reports on the carrying out of the tasks and for dealing with problems as they arise?

Does the arrangement clearly spell out the responsibilities of each party to the arrangement, the objectives pursued, and the information that will be collected and provided to monitor the carrying out of the arrangement?

Does the arrangement achieve the goals of other federal legislation and policies that are relevant?

Will information on the arrangement, financial and other, be readily available?

1. More particularly, was there adequate consultation with affected publics before the arrangement was put in place?
2. Is there transparency in the arrangement, i.e. is the arrangement itself and essential facts concerning its operation on the public record in a way that is easily accessible to the Board, partners, and the public?

Generally speaking, if the responsible Minister and the Board are satisfied with the answer to the foregoing generic questions, then, when called to account to Parliament (or the media, or the public) for the arrangement and what has taken place under it, the Minister and the Board should be able to state credibly that what was done has been both prudent and reasonable. While this framework is no guarantee against any or all accusations, it should assist governors in taking the necessary steps to ensure that, when arrangements are put in place, they can account properly for the decisions they have taken and defend them effectively.

Tasse’s study concludes with the following:

Parliament has recognized the need to ensure flexibility in government organization. It has accomplished this by utilizing a variety of techniques. All of these techniques also recognize the concomitant responsibility to ensure accountability while providing for flexibility in organization. In moving to new initiatives and arrangements in support of the Citizen-Centred Renewal Initiative, it is important not to forget these techniques for ensuring flexibility and recognizing and maintaining accountability.
The three instruments discussed in this paper (delegation, designation and cross-jurisdictional or horizontal arrangement), where properly framed, will not only maintain but could reinforce the accountability ultimately owed to Parliament.

The adoption of an appropriate Policy Framework by government would indeed ensure that all matters essential to give meaning to the principle of ministerial accountability to Parliament are considered in proper and timely fashion. Such a Policy Framework is essential to ensure a maximum of transparency in these arrangements without which accountability, in practice, would remain an elusive objective.

**Changing Role of Audit and Control**

Achieving accountability in government and nonprofit organizations has received a great deal of attention in management literature over the past several years. Much of this attention has been focused on the role of audit. For example, D. R. Sheldon, in “Achieving Accountability in Business and Government: Managing for Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Economy”, (1996) examines the means by which audits of various aspects of organizations combine to provide a comprehensive and all-encompassing audit. The combination of the financial audit, operational audit, compliance audit, management audit, and value for money audit produces what is called the comprehensive audit.

- The financial audit is used to provide a picture of the fiscal risk an organization takes. While financial audits do not eliminate the risk of fraud, they highlight the potential trouble spots, therefore allowing for the implementation of measures to control fraud.
- The operational audit examines the operation system of the organization, specifically the hiring, purchasing, job classification, etc.
- The compliance audit looks to see if the organization is following the rules and regulations it has set for itself. It sees if the organization indeed upholds the laws and standards that it set. Simply, the compliance audit sets out to determine whether or not the organization practices what it preaches.
- The management audit is designed to determine how well management is meeting its strategic goals in the planning and controlling of the corporation. Management audits attempt to determine whether or not the managers are actually doing their job and if they are achieving the goals set for themselves.
- The value-for-money audit is used in questioning whether or not the organization is achieving its goals at the lowest possible cost. Are the organization's resources being allocated in the most efficient and effective manner possible?

By combining the results of these audits, one is provided with a holistic view of the organization. This is the basis of the comprehensive audit. The comprehensive audit does not, and cannot, look at everything in the organization. It focuses on those areas such as risk analysis, review of internal controls and strategy, and those areas with the best cost-benefit.
There are many more references to this topic. Please refer to the Bibliography for some of them.

CORPORATIZING PUBLIC SECTOR GOVERNANCE

In “The Consequences of Reorganizing Government on Market Lines” (1995), Peter Self thoroughly examines the reorganization of government along market lines. Self points to the British government model of departmental restructuring in which departments now only fulfil a small coordinating and policy function. The remaining functions of the department were spun off to external agencies governed by contracts. These agencies apply user fees where practical and contract with the private sector for the provision of services.

The reorganization of government along market lines has included the privatization of a number of government services, the separation of policy from management, increased use of contracting out, the delegation of management to the lowest possible level, the use of contract positions for top posts, the increased use of financial incentives and penalties for performance, and the end of job security. This dramatic reorganization has raised some serious questions.

With governments increasingly contracting out and transferring their powers to agencies, the question of accountability becomes cloudy. It is no longer clear who is accountable when something goes wrong.

Increased efficiency and prompt service delivery are often pointed to as the benefits of contracting out and transferring government powers to agencies. These new efficiencies, however, are often achieved by dealing with only the "easy cases" and ignoring the more difficult cases in which equity is sacrificed for increased efficiency.

Increased use of contracting out also increases the need for coordination between related projects. When dealing with various independent contractors, it is difficult to coordinate their activities and foster cooperation and the sharing of ideas. In many instances, these contractors are actually in competition with each other for additional contracts – a situation that isn’t particularly conducive to cooperation and the sharing of ideas.

The downloading of government services also raises the very important question of democracy. When governments download services, they do so without providing those now delivering the service with the power they need to raise the funds necessary to support these services. Self also criticizes the situation in Australia and draws the conclusion that the trend of enlisting private companies to provide infrastructure is shortsighted. It lacks long-term vision in that it does not fully account for the full cost of borrowing. Nor does it ensure that disadvantaged areas received the required level of investment. He argues that the funds obtained through government privatization should be used for reinvestment in new assets. Governments, however, have opted to use these funds for current public expenditures.

Governments, Self contends, have turned their backs on bureaucrats. The goal of bureaucrats is to provide good administration, as opposed to that of private contractors, which is profit. While the goal of bureaucrats is to provide good administration, private contractors are driven by the market model that is not always consistent with good administration and, by extension, the public interest. The reorganization of government along market lines has seriously weakened governments’ ability to
independently formulate and implement desirable social goals. Democracy needs not only better politicians, but also a bureaucracy capable of supporting the wide range of tasks necessary for the maintenance of a fair and balanced society.

Stefano Baraldi, in “Management Control Systems in NPOs”, provides a case study of the management control systems (MCSs) in a number of Italian nonprofit organizations (NPOs). While technical in nature, the article provides some useful observations.

Recent government downsizing and reorganization along market lines have increased the importance and role that nonprofit organizations have in the economy. MCSs support different managerial styles that correspond to the two dimensions of nonprofit organizations. Erratic management is characterized by focusing on the day-to-day activities of the organization. Bureaucratic management focuses on the technical dimension of the mission, goals, and objectives of NPOs. The visionary management style focuses on the behavioural dimension of planning, programming, and budgeting. A new approach/style is needed which Baraldi labels the missionary management style. Missionary management, is a sophisticated combination of both the technical and behavioural dimensions of nonprofit organizations.

In order to be successful, NPOs need to be more strategic and clearly define their mission, and goals. Their strategic planning process needs to be strengthened. The MCS of the NPO must not only reflect the mission and strategy of the organization, but also be able to respond to diverse and changing situations. NPOs’ MCS must be multidimensional.

GOOD GOVERNANCE: LINKING PERFORMANCE ACCOUNTABILITY, AUDIT, AUTONOMY AND SELF-INFORMING OBLIGATIONS

In "Enhancing Public Accountability" (Optimum, 1993) Henry McCandless and David Wright opened debate on Canadian public sector accountability by proposing that accountability is a serious obligation. In setting out a framework for organizational accountability, McCandless and Wright propose five basic standards for public answering, and the need for independent validation of important performance reporting. They suggest that accountability reporting coupled with audit exerts a self-regulating effect on performance.

In "The Elected Representative's Role in Public Accountability (Canadian Parliamentary Review, 1994), McCandless argues that governments and their agencies need clear achievement objectives and fundamental rules included in their performance standards, and that public sector accountability standards must be forged as well as performance standards. He elaborates on the five public answering standards proposed earlier:

- Before taking action affecting the public in important ways, authorities must state for public challenge their rationale for their intended action and the outcomes they seek for others. This includes who would benefit, and
how, from what they intend, and why they should benefit, and who would bear the costs and risks and why they should

- Specific achievement objectives must be stated, not just activity intentions
- The key performance standards must be disclosed to clarify the outcome intentions, for whom
- Performance results and explanations of performance shortfalls must be reported as organizational effort progresses
- The learning from effort must be reported, and how it was applied. This exerts a self-regulating effect on the organization's learning responsibility
- The learning gained and applied completes the accountability loop by informing the next round of intentions

As to audit, McCandless argues that the most effective use of audit professionalism is attestation to the fairness and completeness of the most important performance accounting. It does not lie in doing management's job of reporting performance. In his writings, McCandless argues that audit must include compliance with fundamental rules and efficiency, but go beyond those responsibilities to tackle the adequacy and validation of public accountability reporting having to do with authorities' fairness intentions, performance and outcomes.

While complementary to Tasse's work, McCandless's writings introduce the idea that people in authority must not only learn and apply their learning; they must account for what they learned and how they applied it. He writes (1994): "Given that public servants are now expected to innovate rather than simply follow rules, top management's obligation to account for the quality of organizational learning would help those in the organization working for achievement in learning." This is particularly important to IDRC, statutorily charged to be innovative, in its role in identifying learning from developmental research and sharing the learning.

McCandless and Wright point out the importance of balancing autonomy and compliance, which is one of the critical issues in IDRC's responsibility for international secretariats. The trick is to determine the optimal balance of autonomy and compliance that is right for the responsibilities and organization involved. Just as IDRC itself is given a high degree of statutory autonomy, high autonomy is intended for the secretariats but they must comply with IDRC's administrative policies to preserve IDRC's stature. McCandless and Wright suggest that as we remove compliance requirements, thereby increasing autonomy to achieve innovation and higher performance, we reach a point where risk of imprudence in managers' decisions starts to increase significantly. The answer lies in developing "fundamental rules" that are not to be broken and are as few in number as possible.

In "Fulfilling the Need to Know" (Business Quarterly, spring 1997), an article on boards of directors' responsibilities and accountabilities, Neil Burk and Henry McCandless underscore the obligation of those in governance roles to inform themselves adequately for their decision responsibilities. At the governing body level this means that the members of the board must inform themselves adequately for their strategic-direction and oversight decisions, and at the management level it means that managers must inform themselves properly for their control responsibilities. The authors offer standards for self-informing.
Like Sheldon in “Achieving Accountability in Business and Government: Managing for Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Economy”, McCandless argues that audit must go beyond the assessment of compliance with prescribed rules and operating procedures. The assumption that following these rules and procedures will lead to the achievement of intended results is wrong-minded. Reminiscent of Sheldon’s stages in comprehensive audit, McCandless maintains that accountability has many levels:

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<th>Accountability for:</th>
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<td>1. Responding fairly to public needs</td>
<td>Policy outcomes</td>
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<td>2. Program effectiveness</td>
<td>Program outcomes</td>
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<td>3. Service quality</td>
<td>Quality of program outputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Efficiency</td>
<td>Quantity of program outputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Economy</td>
<td>Inputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Compliance</td>
<td>Rules and procedures</td>
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Clearly, public sector managers need to be responsible for more than compliance—they need to be accountable for results. However, this is only meaningful if the people being held to account have sufficient autonomy to bring about those results. McCandless goes on to point out the need for a balance between autonomy and compliance. This is, of course, a critical issue faced by IDRC in its stewardship of Secretariats. The relationship between compliance and the autonomy required to achieve results is both delicate and critical. As we remove compliance requirements, thereby increasing autonomy, we raise the potential for achieving results while simultaneously increasing the risk of imprudence and impropriety. The illustration below shows this relationship. The trick is to determine the optimal degree of autonomy and compliance that is right for a particular organization and situation.
4. **Strategic Frameworks for Collaborative Partnerships**

Strategic planning for government and non-profit organizations has received ample attention during the past decade. In many cases writers about strategic planning are presenting approaches that accommodate new management styles and collaborative partnerships. Not surprisingly many recent works on the subject offer strategic thinking as the conceptual base.

The literature ranges from descriptions and analyses of ways to deal with the growing complexity in these areas to specific how-to manuals on strategic planning. L. Douglas Kiel in his well-received book, *Managing Chaos and Complexity in Government: a New Paradigm for Managing Change, Innovation, and Organizational Renewal* (1994), provides us with an example of one end of the spectrum by analyzing ways to deal with growing complexity.

**Dealing with Growing Complexity**

Kiel argues that the pace of change is so rapid it has resulted in a climate of chaos. This is opposed to the long held tradition of change coming to public management slowly and in a piecemeal fashion. Increasingly governments are being asked to do more with less. He uses chaos theory to explain the erratic and unpredictable nature of human and organizational behaviour. Chaos theory attempts to explain how the changing relationship between various parts results in an erratic and unpredictable system. Even the smallest level of change can dramatically alter outcomes over time. Changing relationships can impact an entire government organization.

Employees and the factors that motivate them do not function in a simple carrot and stick fashion. The linear world is a simple one consisting only of machines. In the nonlinear world the relationships between variables is dynamic and continuously changing.

Nonlinear behavior is best represented through graphs and pictures. When illustrated graphically, it becomes clear that nonlinear systems have three types of behavior. The movement is either towards stability and equilibrium, stable oscillation with predictable moves towards and away from stability or chaos.

The world of public management is one in which managers cannot predict how time will judge the quality of their decisions. It is nonlinear in nature with the results of actions not always being immediately visible.

The uncertainty that occurs during changes to organizational processes and structures can result in either improved performance or declining performance and service. This is what scientists call
bifurcation. As managers work to improve things, instability becomes more frequent and changes follow more rapidly. The resulting periods of instability become longer and soon they become the norm as change occurs more often through symmetry breaks. A level of instability is desirable as it allows for positive fluctuations to flourish and realize their potential for change. This disorder permits the exploration of new possibilities. Disorder leads to order.

The dynamic systems theory illustrates that the location of work combined with the rules governing action interact to determine the motion of the workplace. The result is agency outputs and performances. The performance of the workplace is affected by various rules—change the rules, or just one rule, and you change the performance of the workplace. The goal is to move through the work situation and environment with a minimum impact from the rules.

Not only do the rules of action have an impact on the dynamics of the workplace, so does the location or environment in which one works. The field of action has been broadening, as public managers must now contend with the external environment as well. By making changes to the environment or the rules of the workplace, managers can alter the dynamics and observe the effects these actions have on the workplace. Small changes can be made, the results observed, and decisions made as to whether or not the change represents the best course of action. It must be noted that if the system used to do the work is flawed, the resulting incremental adjustments to the system won't help. In this situation, a new method of work would be the real solution to the problem. This is achieved through dramatic or substantial change.

Activity-based costing (ABC) provides a moving picture of employees' activities and their associated labour costs. Using ABC, one can observe how employees' costs change over time.

Public managers must be sensitive to the rhythms that drive their workforce if they are to achieve success. They must be flexible in responding to changing needs.

Employees also bring with themselves their own goals. As their attitudes and motivations change, the possibilities of unintended consequences appear, resulting in non-linear change. Individual self-interest has a huge impact. More detailed information about organizational, and in particular, employee activities in government will soon be routinely required. This is part of the total quality management. As pressure increases to identify cost, this approach becomes essential in improving efficiency and service.

It is the unique aspects of organizations that create their special organizational dynamics. When examining the nonlinear dynamics of the workplace, what initially appears to be erratic and chaotic will often give way to a deeper order. Through the use of a line graph, it becomes evident that the data appears to be "attracted" to certain regions on the graph. Thus the graph can tell managers how much variation and change is occurring in the data over time. It provides them with upper and lower values. The graph can show a stable equilibrium that doesn't reflect the true nature of work, a limit cycle where change takes place in a consistent and stable manner, or chaotic time series data that resemble a butterfly with two wings spread over the graph. In each one of these examples the graphs illustrate that there is
order to the chaos. They show a pattern, albeit an erratic pattern. Unstable order is presented in the much more complex graph in which multiple attractors provide for many types of behaviour over time.

If there is order to the chaos, it then becomes important for managers to determine what the source of the order in the chaos of work is. Soldiering is often pointed to as the source of order in work data. It occurs when workers group together and work at a consistent minimal level. The only way to see this is happening is to increase demand for output and observe the results.

Managers need to have a sense of control over operations while allowing the dynamic of ongoing change to occur. Traditional management control limited positive change and adaptation. The dynamics of ongoing change result in variations in production quality. Efforts to loosen control can create chaos, as can efforts to increase control. All of this depends on factors such as rules; field of action and your employees. One must understand that order comes from recognizing the fluidity and the shifting nature of the workplace—it's dynamic nature.

The goal of continuously trying to improve things results in periods of stability followed by instability. Stability gives way to instability as improved services are introduced. There is a break in order to expand quality and improve production. By understanding chaos one is better able to control it. You know what and when to expect things, within certain limits. By keeping chaos in the workplace within certain defined limits, one is able to control quality and productivity within those limits.

While traditional thinking would favour stable work teams, research has shown that while unstable teams start off slowly, they quickly pick up speed and surpass stable work teams. Unstable work teams exhibit a greater ability to learn and advance. As opposed to stable work teams that work in a known and predictable fashion, unstable work teams question the status quo and search out new ways of doing things. The instability of the work team brings out the best in people.

Budgeting is often used as a means of affecting change. Stable budgets often result in stable and unchanging programs. Changing the budget forces a re-examination of programs that must now either be altered or replaced. The change in budgets forces a critical examination of existing programs and the development of new and innovative programs.

Flat hierarchies facilitate the flow of information and enable employees to make quick decisions in response to client needs. While such a system is less rigid and orderly, it increases organizational efficiency. However, it must be pointed out that a change in structure alone will not lead to success. Social-organizational systems or culture and administrative processes must also change in order to support the new structure. The example of government partnerships with other groups or nonprofit organizations is provided to illustrate the new managerial approach based on less control and accountability and increased autonomy and instability.

The increased downloading of government services raises questions concerning citizen involvement and disorder in the decision-making process. Citizen involvement raises the issues of time commitment, scheduling and quality control for the decision-making process.
The advent of computers greatly changed the nature of work. However, instead of rethinking the way in which we work, we simply used computers to work faster. There was no re-evaluation of the way we worked. We ignored the opportunity to re-engineer the way in which we work brought about by computers.

It is best to organize work around your desired outcomes as opposed to dictating how you want the work to be completed. This increases employee responsibility and their potential to be creative and innovative in achieving the desired outcomes. This increased freedom separates the risk takers from the rational thinkers, who will stick to the safe way of doing things. The risk takers, on the other hand, will develop new ways of doing things. It could be said that the risk takers are the leaders and the rational thinkers are the followers.

As plans and strategies develop over time, they should take on a tree like structure as new ideas branch off of the base strategy. Such a structure is evident in self-organizing agencies that undertake a constant process of program review. The manager must be viewed as the liberator who encourages employees to measure their own performance and to take corrective measures to improve their performance. We are now beginning to see the entry into the work force of the "self-developers" that are individuals who thrive on varied work experiences and want liberating work and expanded responsibility. They welcome change and learning. These self-developers generate positive fluctuations. They recognize that nonlinear dynamics favour instability as a means for change.

Public management must be viewed as a roller coaster ride that is marked by stability in chaos. Fighting the ups and downs in chaotic swings will likely only bring frustration. Uncertainty and unpredictability are the essence of the administrative adventure - they comprise the dynamic environment that is public management. Being able to understand and control this chaos, within certain upper and lower limits, is what makes some managers stand out from the crowd.

To be sure, there are many other books dealing with systems thinking and chaos theory related to the complexities of organization life. Among them are Margaret Wheatley’s Leadership and the New Science: Learning about Organization from an Orderly Universe (1992), and A Simpler Way, by Margaret Wheatley and Myron Kellner-Rogers. Yet another new book exploring this topic is Strategic Thinking and the New Science by Irene Sanders.

**APPROACHES TO DEVELOPING STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS**

Whether or not we agree with the applicability of chaos theory in the work place, one message remains clear: ways need to be found to conceptualize growing complexity and interdependency in organizational life. The fact that there is more complexity and interrelationships in a globalized world seems beyond debate. Within this complexity, interdependence and what some authors call chaos, we must still plan and strategize. In fact, to do so effectively presents more challenge than ever before.

Representing the other side of the spectrum (from the generalists and chaos theorists), Jack Koteen, in Strategic Management in Public and Nonprofit Organizations: Managing Public Concerns in an Era
of Limits, provides a manual for a specific approach to strategic planning. Koteen holds that new strategic management techniques that reflect updated business models are having an impact on how governments and nonprofit organizations work. The focus is on finding new ways to use a specific strategy to enhance an institution's performance. Less attention is being paid to process and more to performance and results.

Koteen points out that, increasingly, organizations are being asked to "do more, better, smarter, with less". This stems from the fiscal crunch of the 1990s. In this time of quick paced change, strategic plans have to be capable of functioning in both good and bad times. The plan either works or it is time for a new plan. A good strategic plan must be based on realistic goals. It must correspond to an organization's budget and available resources as well as respond to the changing environment. It needs to be more of a process that is ongoing and flexible to change.

According to Koteen, the strategic plan cannot be based on top-down management. There is the need for the involvement and support of those at the community level for the plan to succeed. The strategic plan has to provide more than vision. It should contain an action plan and the tools for measuring progress towards the realization of this plan.

Strategic management in nonprofit organizations has taken on a new importance because of increased collaboration between organizations, governments, and the nonprofit sector. Increasingly, nonprofit organizations are being asked to fulfill functions that only a short time before, were the sole domain of government.

It is not simply a question of smaller government, but a government that is closer to the people and more responsive to their needs and desires. Governments no longer do—they provide the tools to enable people to do things for themselves. Governments decide what is needed, calculate the performance and cost requirements to respond to these needs, and then decides if they will respond to these needs themselves or if the task will be contracted out or delivered in some other way.

The reduced size of government has resulted in an increase in the size of the nonprofit sector. The nonprofit sector now plays a significant role in the financing and delivery of services. There is a growing reliance on the part of the government on the voluntary sector to fill the role it has abandoned.

In conjunction with the strategic plan comes strategic management. Strategic management reflects the continuing decision process that joins an organization's internal capability with the opportunities and threats it faces day-to-day as it pursues its strategic initiatives. Basically, strategic management refers to the day-to-day decisions made by managers in an ever-changing environment that will lead the organization to realize its strategic plan or goals. It is therefore important to think strategically, not only at the management level, but down the line as well.

Typically an organization has three types of strategy. The corporate strategy provides a big picture of the organization's mission and goals. The program strategy applies to a specific product or program. The resource support strategy applies to the infrastructure of the organization. This includes items such
as budget, human resources, and technology. There is sometimes a fourth strategy, the institutional strategy, which focuses on the organization’s ability to fulfill its strategic initiatives.

Koteen points out that during this period of constant change, there has been a move away from large strategic blueprints. The focus is now on providing support to smaller operating units. Strategic management and the decentralization of power in the organization have replaced the strategic blueprint. Organizations are increasingly seeking out strategic thinkers and empowering their workforces. Power has been given to those responsible for producing results.

Strategic management relies on the experience and judgement of individuals to develop action plans for problems as they arise. Not only is this oriented to the future, it presents a new way of thinking and behaving. As a process, strategic management is continuous and recurring. It is a demanding and difficult job that requires dedication, discipline, and commitment.

The result of strategic management is an organization that has direction, efficiently uses its resources, and has a standard of excellence built on shared values. It ensures that the organization is prepared to cope with uncertainty and change. It provides an objective basis for the control and evaluation of the organization’s performance. Individuals have been provided with the tools and measures to manage effectively.

In order for an organization to set its goals and objectives, prepare for the future, and seize new opportunities, it is important that it periodically goes through a process of self-examination. The organization must question itself to determine who it is and what it wants to achieve. Communication plays an important part in this process.

While strategic management encourages individuals to address problems as they arise, the need still exists for management controls to flag possible problem areas. These controls allow management to plan accordingly and increase quality consciousness. What then do you control and how do you control it? Managers must find the right balance of control as not to produce a negative impact on those being controlled or have control issues consume all of their time. The level of control has to be balanced as to not inhibit flexibility, innovation, and creativity.

To address the tension that exists between creativity and control, a series of four levers of control have been combined to form a control grid. The levers of control are as follows:

- **Diagnostic control system**—this system examines the traditional performance measures such as the establishment of goals and time frame benchmarks
- **Core values**—this consists of the pursuit of excellence, respect for the individual, and the promotion of an original belief system
- **Boundaries systems or risks to avoid**—this consists of rules and minimum standards
- **Interactive control system or concern for uncertainties**—this system tracks uncertainties and change. It encourages fresh thinking to address or resolve outstanding issues. These four levers of control build upon each other, providing measures of effective control to guide employee
behavior while providing clear limits and boundaries that help in avoiding the dangers associated with promoting creativity and empowering your workforce.

Evaluation is necessary for program improvement, maintains Koteen. This must be viewed as a knowledge building activity designed to improve programs with respect to their effectiveness, efficiency, and significance. This can be achieved through an annual evaluation plan that may examine all or parts of an organization. A review of the organization’s performance should also be part of this evaluation. Such evaluation studies help management to make decisions about the organization.

Following the completion of any evaluation one must sit down and examine what was learned. The before and after comparison model highlights changes between two particular points in time. The comparison of planned vs. actual performance models highlights the difference between the actual results and those that were anticipated. Comparison of the final model, with "ideal" standards, provides a measure between an organization’s actual performance and that of an external, or ideal similar organization. Each of these models provides a slightly different perspective of the organizations performance. The first model illustrates how the program is doing now, compared to some previous point in time. The second model shows how a program is doing in meeting its planned objectives. The final model tells us how well a program is doing compared to an accepted norm.

Various strategies can be used in the creation of an organization of learners. In an attempt to understand and deal with the forces that influence them, many organizations have adopted strategies that encourage employees to strive to learn what to do and how to deal with the forces that effect the organization. The learning organization movement is the combination of personal learning with the broader collective learning action of the organization. Systems thinking attempts to derive a better understanding of the parts of an organization by looking at the organization holistically. Personal mastery encourages employees to grow and learn. Smarter employees result in a smarter company that will undoubtedly perform better. The mental model encourages the questioning and examination of one's views of reality and encourages the change of these views when necessary. Many learning organizations strive to achieve a common vision that people find compelling. The result is a motivated and excited workforce striving towards a common shared vision. Organizations have also turned to team learning, where decisions are made in teams. These teams are then responsible for translating that decision into action.

There are numerous other books focussing on the step-by-step strategic planning process. James Ziegenfuss’s Designing Organizational Futures: A Systems Approach to Strategic Planning is an example. The author pays particular attention to the pre-planning process, environmental scanning, external review steps, and methods to monitor and develop a planning process establishing a vigorous and dynamic continuous process.

The Centre for Strategic Management’s founder, Steve Haines, author of Sustaining High Performance: The Strategic Transformation to a Customer-Focussed Learning Organization, presents a modernized approach to strategic planning. The approach is much more robust than others because it focuses on the strategic framework rather than simply on the plan. To this end, other tools are built into the process including strategic change management, strategic human resource planning, parallel
processes, and built-in strategic learning processes. His approach is dramatically different than Ziegenfuss' in another way as well in that he starts with the development of a desired vision of the future, then develops the strategy and plan to get there. Ziegenfuss begins with an analysis of existing capacity, then an examination of the environment, followed by an analysis of strengths and weaknesses and finally arrives at a determination of the desired future. Haines argues that this is reflective of the analytic approach as opposed to the systems thinking approach and will fail to take us any further than we have already been and has been the cause of so many strategic planning failures. In his words, the definition of insanity is continuing to do the same thing and expecting different results.

Haines' approach is differentiated from others by the fact that it identifies several preconditions that must be met before a strategic planning exercise begins. These conditions are that:

- There must be a process to actively involve employees at all levels
- A built-in parallel process involving and informing stakeholders throughout the process must be incorporated
- The senior management team must commit to full involvement in the exercise, have full awareness that there are no shortcuts or silver bullets, and take ownership of the process
- There needs to be agreement to produce a short, readable, user-friendly strategic directions document that can be shared with all employees and other stakeholders.

Like Ziegenfuss, Haines builds in a plan-to-plan stage before the process begins. However, instead of this being an analysis of existing capacity, for Haines, this pre-planning phase is intended to ensure that the senior management team agrees with the above pre-conditions and that they are fully aware of the commitment they are making. The first step in the actual process is developing a vision of the ideal future. Next, key success factors are identified so that the organization and individuals will be able to monitor their progress. This is followed by a current state assessment (note that most planning processes start here). Strategy development or determining how we will get to where we want to go is the next step. Regular plan review processes are then put in place. Haines' process is illustrated on the following page.

Planning exercises often fail because appropriate support systems such as performance management, recruitment and reward systems that support the new strategic direction, are not put in place. Therefore, Haines proposes that the strategic planning process be linked with strategic human resource management and strategic change management.

All of these approaches have some strong common threads. The strongest, although not the most obvious, is that they all build their analysis and processes around systems thinking. Systems thinking is described in Part 1 of this overview of relevant literature. The second, and perhaps most obvious similarity is that each process begins, not with an inventory and analysis of issues and problems to resolve, but with a vision to achieve. This echoes the importance placed on the higher level task of the public service by people like Ziegenfuss who talks about "designing futures" and Dror who is concerned with "weaving the future" activities.
CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Naturally many more published works affected the thinking behind the IDRC Secretariat Review. For example, IDRC's Institutional Assessment: A Framework for Strengthening Organizational Capacity for IDRC's Research Partners greatly influenced the thinking and the approach taken to the case studies but is not discussed in this overview of literature. The Institutional Assessment sets out a widely accepted and very useful approach for assessing organizations, developing institutional profiles, and enhancing capacity. Work by Chris Argyris, particularly Knowledge for Action: A Guide to Overcoming Barriers to Organizational Change, is another example that falls into this highly influential, but not discussed category, as do the works of Peter Drucker, Gareth Morgan, and Henry Mintzberg.

Finally, a large number of internal documents, reports, memorandum, and minutes of meetings are not listed in the bibliography. For information about these sources, please refer to the list of Reference Documents and Source Materials following the Bibliography.
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