

# Governance Challenges for a results-oriented Public Administration

Meredith Edwards, University of Canberra  
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# Outline

(1) *The governance problem:*

- mismatch between current problems and institutions

(2) *Challenges* arising from new governance environment:

- leadership; accountability; boundary relationships; capabilities

(3) *Next steps?*

# 1. The Governance Problem

The new governance environment means:

- Growing tensions between vertical and horizontal aspects, leading to:
- A growing mismatch between current problems and public administration institutions and practices.

# New Governance Environment

Many results government alone cannot achieve:

- Increased *complexity* and *unpredictability*  
(e.g. hurricanes and climate change)
- High degree of *interdependence*
- More *networked society*
- Broader *dispersion of power*

(See also Bourgon 2008 and [www.ns6newsynthesis.com](http://www.ns6newsynthesis.com))

# Growing Tensions

Increasingly tensions in managing for results:

- *Vertical* as well as *horizontal* dimensions
  - at the *boundaries* across agencies, levels of government, civil organisations and out to citizens
- Means *accountability* both upward and outward
- Balancing strong *leadership* and use of *networks*
- Balancing political *demands* and *capabilities*
- Other tensions

# Mismatch between problems and public institutions

- Causes:
  - public administration changes too slow
  - misalignment of responsibilities and institutions – especially at the boundaries
- Results:
  - Government no longer in control, so
  - delivery systems failing to match problems (e.g. Hurricane Katrina)
  - performance affected

# Mismatch example

## Hurricane Katrina

- Many players *but* operated in silos
- No-one in control
- Key players tried *but* focus on wrong problems
  - Routine procedures *but* non-routine problems
- Failed government performance

*“Biggest administrative failure in American history”*

(Kettl 2009:15)

## 2. Challenges arising from new governance environment

- *New leadership: strong and networked*
- *Reshaping accountability - single and multiple*
- *Cross- Boundary relationships*
- *Developing relational capabilities*



# Challenge 1: New Leadership

New governance environment demands:

- Authority *and* collaboration across boundaries - sharing of power
- Informal leadership
  - e.g. building and managing networks
- Communicating up, down and out
- Finding capacity for the unpredictable

(Kettl 2009; [www.ns6newsynthesis.com](http://www.ns6newsynthesis.com), Report 5, 2010)

# Challenge 2: Reshaping Accountability

The new governance environment will bring:

- Increased accountability conflicts
- Increased issues around what to prioritise
- Professional and personal accountabilities more important
- Less dominance of political accountability, but
- Increased meta-accountability roles for political representatives

(Adapted from UN, *Towards Participatory and Transparent Governance: Reinventing Government 2007:32-33*)

# Challenge 2: Some Questions

- Difference between ‘accountability’ and ‘responsibility’?
  - Australia introducing ‘shared accountability’ (Sedgwick 2010)
- If no one in charge, can accountability be pinpointed? (Kettl 2009:123)
- Can ambiguity in accountability be tolerated?
- What accountability frameworks work best?

# Challenge 3: Cross-Boundary Relationships

- Costly and takes time to gain trust  
- how to balance with efficiency?
- Requires clarity around respective roles, responsibilities and expectations
- Means sharing of power; so
- Requires major cultural change

(Edwards 2008)

# Challenge 3: Boundary Relationships

“ The importance of boundary spanning... suggests a new approach for government –... that democratizes the process by spreading participation, privatizes government by relying more on nongovernment partners, governmentalizes the private sector by drawing its organizations more into strong public roles, and ultimately challenges the framework of... democratic institutions”  
(Kettl 2009:239)

# Challenge 4: Relational Capabilities

“Unlike both traditional public administration and the new public management, the ‘new governance’ shifts the emphasis from management skills and control of large bureaucratic organisations to enablement skills, the skills required to engage partners arrayed horizontally in networks, to bring multiple stakeholders together for a common end in a situation of interdependence” (Salamon 2002:16)

# Challenge 4: Capability example

Australian Indigenous partners identified needed skills for public officials:

“good listening; acting in good faith; high levels of good will; willingness to share power; recognising and acknowledging intra-community and familial relationships ....; understanding the pressures on communities; being honest and open; and being human.” (Morgan 2006 quoted in Edwards 2008:17)

# 3. Next steps?

- High level guidance available: e.g.
  - Guiding principles in Bourgon's New Synthesis Project
  - Australian Public Service Commission Governance Building Blocks
- Now need to go from 'knowing' to 'doing' but
- How to make it all happen?



# NS6 Guiding principles

- *Vision*: Embrace complexity
  - don't be afraid
- *Organisation*: Create space for exploration and experiment
  - don't rigidly stick to predefined plans
- *Setting goals*: be careful with measures
  - don't be complacent by success

([www.ns6newsynthesis.com](http://www.ns6newsynthesis.com), Report 1 2010:37-38)

# Building Blocks for effective governance

- Strong Leadership, culture, communications
- Appropriate governance structures
- Clear accountability mechanisms
- Comprehensive risk management
- Strategic planning monitoring and evaluation
- Flexible and evolving principle-based systems
- Working effectively across organisational boundaries

(Australian Public Service Commission 2008)

# From 'knowing' to 'doing'

- A lot of guidance and rhetoric on *what* to do:
  - collaborate across government; engage citizens ( or citizen-centred delivery); be adaptive and innovative; build resilient organizations; manage complex systems; build new capabilitiesbut
- *How* to make it happen?

# How to make it happen

- Better Practice Guides (e.g. MAC 2004)
- Constant monitoring and review helps:
  - improve on accountability
  - reduce the 'evaluation gap'
  - build learning organisations (GFC example)
- UN role: develop global mechanisms to share what works, when and why

(See OECD 2005; Involve 2010)

# Example of Organisational Learning

## Response to GFC in Australia

- Lessons from 1990's recession
- Reassessed use of fiscal policy
- Scenario and modelling
- Quick cash injection *before* unemployment
- Had capacity to intervene in time

# References

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