



## Magdalena L. Mendoza

### Innovations toward smart, connected, citizen-centric governments

*"A citizen-centric government focuses downward, toward citizens, rather than upward toward elected officials; and looks outside government for outcomes rather than within government processes."*

*Don Kettl*

**T**oday's governments are expected to deliver services that citizens need while keeping tax rates low. Instead of pushing self-serving interests, governments must organize "from the outside in." To achieve this, they must be constantly on the lookout for innovations to overcome fragmentation, ensure responsive, efficient delivery of public services to satisfy their citizens, and in the end, gain public approval and confidence. These were the key takeaway lessons of participants in the recently concluded APO study meeting on Innovation in Public-sector Service Delivery, 1–5 November 2010, in Bekasi, Indonesia.

Public-sector organizations in the region are all looking for breakthroughs to ensure reasonably priced yet efficient, speedy, flexible services to the people, according to Dr. Bagus Marijanto, Director, Directorate General of Training and Productivity Development of the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration of Indonesia. While governments continually strive to develop better facilities for various services, a one-stop-service unit, for example, where people can readily access those services in one setting, at one time, would be ideal.

Canada is an excellent country to benchmark against in terms of a connected, smart, citizen-centric government. One of the architects of its transformation into such an entity is APO resource person Art Daniels, who served as former Assistant Deputy Minister of the Restructuring Secretariat under the Cabinet Office of the Government of Ontario, Canada. To him, public service excellence has five pillars: 1) citizen-centered, which means organizing from the outside in; 2) use of new technologies to allow e-government; 3) having a smart government, which requires regulatory reform; 4) public-private partnership (PPP), or collaboration with the private sector in providing public services; and 5) a connected government or horizontal integration of government. The bottom line of these pillars is citizen satisfaction. At the broader government level, as observed by the APO-led mission to Canada in August



2010, the key factors behind this successful transformative journey are: a shift in mindsets toward customer orientation; in-depth collaboration among central and local governments; and most importantly, willingness at the top level of government to champion and push through the necessary reforms.

The APO study meeting in November offered a venue to discuss similar improvements and the latest practices adopted by APO member countries to provide public services and examine the indicators and parameters being used to monitor citizen satisfaction and measure overall service effectiveness. For example, participants from Indonesia, IR Iran, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam gave presentations on one-stop shops, quality/productivity awards, e-governance through the use of ICT, ISO certification, and regulatory reform. The typical performance indicators and parameters used to measure effectiveness and monitor citizen satisfaction are customer satisfaction surveys, comprehensive performance evaluation systems, the balanced scorecard, and benchmarking. Three trends were notable in the country presentations: a shift from output-input to outcome measurement; increasing focus on monitoring citizen and stakeholder satisfaction; and initiatives for the adoption of a common measurement system.

The country papers and presentations demonstrated the pervasiveness of good

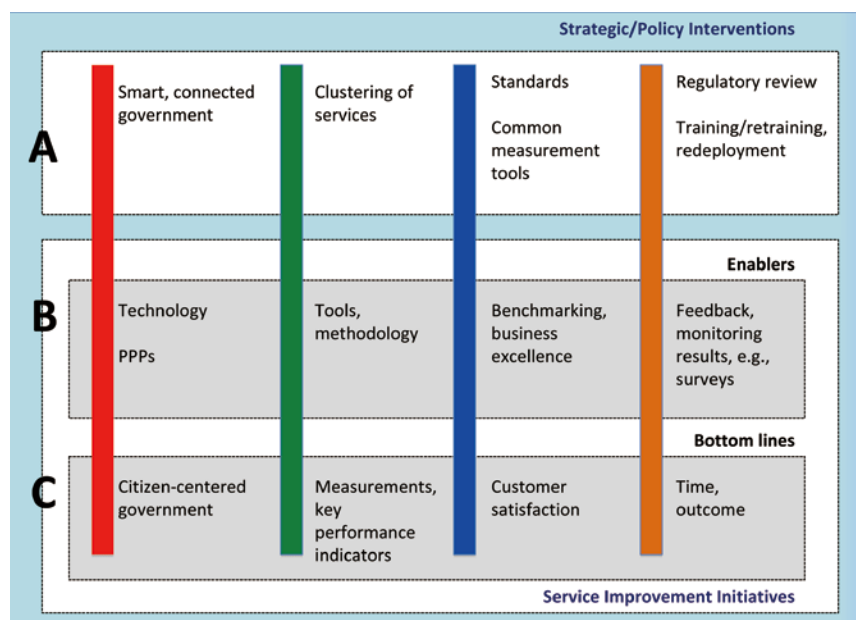
practices and models of citizen-centered government that NPOs can study and adapt. At the level of public-sector organizations, business excellence models such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award or the European Foundation for Quality Management could be extremely useful tools and methodology to drive service excellence, according to Dr. Robin Mann, Founder and Director of the Centre for Organizational Excellence Research based in Massey University, New Zealand. The good news is that several APO member countries have already institutionalized quality award systems based on these excellence models. Nonetheless, to achieve success in developing a service excellence culture, Dr. Mann cautioned APO member countries not to focus too much on the development process (framework design) and recognition process (award administration). Rather, APO member countries must exert more effort to establish self-assessment and improvement processes.

The array of public service improvement initiatives can be summarized in the service excellence odyssey (Figure), which consists of: strategic/policy interventions, enablers, and bottom lines. The study meeting participants fleshed out this framework and made proposals to enable governments in APO member countries to achieve their own breakthroughs:

- For strategic/policy interventions, a framework of a smart, connected government was proposed. This means a government that is able to break down the silos in systems and business processes and simplify the latter into a coherent set of services that meets citizens' needs. The starting point is therefore identifying and prioritizing citizens'



*Participants from nine APO member countries with resource speakers from Canada, New Zealand, the Philippines, and Indonesia discussing innovations in public-sector service delivery. Photo courtesy of Indonesia Productivity Improvement Center*



**Figure.** Public-sector service delivery: The service excellence odyssey.

or stakeholders' needs. Innovations that can enable breakthroughs include the rule of one, citizens first, government online, clean and green government, and smart regulation.

- The enablers are the methodological and practical tools that organizations can use to achieve customer focus. These include leadership and planning, benchmarking and business excellence, competent people, new technology, evaluation and monitoring, and resources through PPPs. Enablers link the strategic/policy interventions with bottom lines.

- For the bottom lines, a citizen-centered government, measurements/key performance indicators, customer satisfaction, time, and outcome were identified.

The participants also identified the innovations needed to achieve breakthroughs in meeting the expectations of customers. Among others, these were customer satisfaction survey tools, a common measurement system, a Pan-Asia one-stop shop, the APO Best Practice Network and website, and award systems. Accordingly, many APO member countries can catch up with the global models within a shorter period of time if a benchmarking network can be established early, since it can facilitate the exchange of ideas, expertise, and best practices. Dr. A.K.P. Mochtan, Director of the APO Secretariat Administration and Finance Department, noted these recommendations in the APO's current plans to customize tools such as the business excellence model for the public sector, produce manuals and guidelines on their application, and develop a program to train trainers like the Development of Productivity Practitioners course. He reiterated that the APO is a catalyst and promotes innovations in public-sector service delivery. The NPOs should act as champions of service excellence in the public sector. 🌐

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