

ICA 40th Conference

The Challenges & Issues of WOG Brainstorming Networking Session: Group 1 Moderator: Bob Assirati, UK

These are the results from the Group 1, and we too were clear that whole of government is not an IT concept, its very much a business concept, the way we will organise ourselves and provide our services. And we saw it in two levels, first of all integrating and acting as one in terms of providing services externally, but of course also integrating in the back office. Singapore, in fact, had a very clear set of stages, from common standards of policies, common infrastructure, sharing of data, sharing of system services, and sharing of processes, a process for working through. I think we felt that although we all have a very similar vision for whole of government, that we would actually need very different journeys, depending partly on a level of security but particularly on cultural issues. We saw a big difference between some countries moving towards a centralised approach to joining up, and others wishing to keep more de-centralised in seeing more flexibility in that. Other cultural differences were the degree of trust in governments, and this is reflected in things like attitudes to identifiers. So although the vision is the same, we may have to do some very different things to get there.

The second question was, how will whole of government look in a few years time to citizens and businesses. And here we felt the back office changes would not be very visible but obviously the provision of services where the citizens would see the difference. A key part will be that they won't need to bother which part of government to go to in order to get a particular service but on the concept of a one-stop service will be expanded and the concept of service to the door, the service coming to you, will be more important. And indeed, we did think that part of our vision was that those public service workers who need a physical presence in the community, features social care workers, medical staff, etc, could increasingly become agents for the individual in accessing government services so we had a vision of these people having laptops and expanding their role to help citizens to access government services. And we felt that this in turn, would help to tackle the digital divide for those who don't have access for their public service workers who can bring the service to them and help them to understand, perhaps encourage them to use it in the future.

I think Singapore explained that already they have a situation whereby insurance agents going out into the community are authorised to represent the citizens in online transactions and indeed get paid \$2 per transaction completed so that's a case of that already happening. I

think for some citizens, the other big changes that we see less chance of being able to play the system, and of taking advantage of government, for example in claiming a wider range of benefits than they are entitled to.

The major challenges. The general feeling was that those countries that don't have a unique identifier would have much more difficulty in getting whole of government working effectively and efficiently. We certainly saw issues of accountability as we have joined up services will it be clear who is accountable for which part of the service. If, for example, we have a single name and address change transaction, put a new address in and one of the departments continues to mail to the old address, do I complain to them, do I complain to the service provider, who has overall responsibility?

People felt that a big challenge was just different use of language: semantic integral operability. Will people understand from one part of government to another, what the data and information really means? We thought there is a big challenge in training, that our training of public sector staff should perhaps be putting much more emphasis of the whole of government approach and trying to change the thinking. But this probably wouldn't be as powerful as changing our performance management; at the moment setting targets for individual organisations, to reduce costs, or to achieve certain targets is all forced against joining up, and we need perhaps better performance measures. And the other challenge is balancing costs benefits between organisations: if a new system is going to cost more to one organisation, the benefits accrue somewhere else, we tend not to have the mechanisms to balance those.

With first business case, obviously the balance of cost of service quality, the main driver is going to be financial, with the financial pressures on our organisations, we will always be looking for ways to make investment to drive down operating costs. At the same time, we will be wanting to try to improve services to join them up but we think it is unlikely we will be able to get them to spend more money overall. We certainly need ways of convincing politicians to invest and here the idea that joining up processes improves services are important but we also thought that the points made this morning about agility were particularly important and we need to sell the idea that joined up solutions can be more flexible for the future and perhaps support restructuring the government. But overall, I think that cost reduction seems to be the main driver. Our main recommendations, well the first one is, I think, around performance management to develop and to give people and organizations targets to become more joined up and measure them in that way. I think we recommend development as much to measure quality of service. We think that it would help if funding

instead of being given to individual organizations that significant funding was given to major programs so that the programs sponsor a program director and then give that money out to participating organisations would improve their involvement. We felt that constraints on head counts were often getting in the way of joined up services. There was a feeling that if we want whole of government approach, we really have to have unique identifiers, otherwise it is very difficult. And we also thought that a greater movement of people around the public services was important to improve our understanding, reduce independent support of organizations and the idea that people might have more than one role at a time, perhaps a role within their own organization while also spending half their time supporting a cross country program might also work. Hopefully that reflects the discussion in our group and thank you to our group members, we only finished up with seven people in our group so where the rest of you got to I don't know, but thank you.