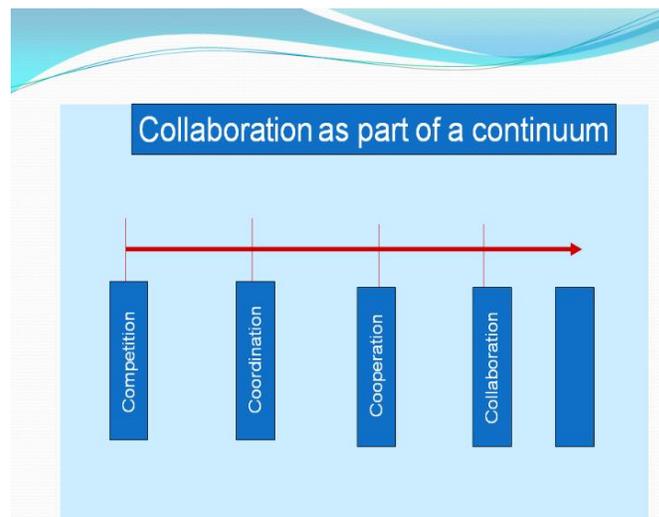




One of the biggest problems civil servants face while delivering public services is how to ensure collaboration across various organizations. In fact, it is absolutely necessary for government departments to support and collaborate with each other for providing instant and quality services to the masses in the wake of growing public demands and increasing number of challenges governments have to take these days.

### What is Collaboration?

Collaboration is actually a system of doing certain things which is based on shared agendas and interests. When teams work



The collaboration can be explained in another way. It is a complete process that starts from competition followed by coordination and cooperation and these processes join together to form collaboration as indicated by the following diagram.

### The Importance of Collaboration:

in collaboration, they actually do the following.

- No one exercises authority over the other.
- The mutual relationship is never contractual as they work for attainment of common goal.
- The power relationships are weak.
- All partners are dependent on each other to achieve the goal.

In United Kingdom, most of the



government departments worked in competition because employees were usually rewarded for their individual contributions and they were organized and funded in silos. However, authorities decided to abolish competitive style of working in favor of a collaborative approach and it has really earned rich dividends for government agencies.

In fact, the importance of collaboration can never be undermined both in public and private sectors because of the following reasons.

- Many problems related to service deliveries fall between the boundaries of different government departments.
- It is important for them to eliminate contradiction between policy areas and in turn avoid duplication in public programs and make better use of expenditures and resources by increasing the policy effectiveness.
- Improve the flow of ideas and communication about public policies between various stakeholders for producing more integrated

set of public services for users.

- Collaborative working is also necessary for strategy management and setting clear objectives for public sector. A collaborative approach is also required because many strategic initiatives and objectives extend beyond the boundaries of certain organizations.

#### **Public Service Agreements:**

Public Services Agreements (PSAs) were initially introduced in United Kingdom in 1998 as part of comprehensive strategic review to formulate and maintain long term strategic policy accompanied with clear objectives and goals.

PSAs also make it mandatory for governments departments to work together to obtain common goals. PSAs are actually a mechanism for treasurer of Her Majesty to monitor the performance of various government departments.

The basic purpose of establishing PSAs was to enhance alignment of government priorities with departmental activities and accountability.

#### **Barriers to Collaboration:**

According to the Dr. Winston Sutherland, National School of Government, many barriers to collaboration still exist in government departments as people are naturally resistant to change.

- Current resource allocation procedures and accounting practices are the biggest barrier to the collaboration in various organizations.
- Unresolved and contradictory policies and goals of various organizations aren't helping the situation either.
- Data sharing that is not having the knowledge about the working style and culture of other organization also prevents collaboration across them.
- When key stakeholders are omitted from public policy making, it makes it difficult to determine who is responsible and accountable for completing certain tasks.

#### **Challenges to Collaboration:**

Some of the challenges government department face while adopting a collaborative approach of working are as under.



- When two nontraditional partners have to work on a common goal, it gets difficult for them to collaborate with each other.
- People intuitively know that collaboration is a good thing but hesitate to adopt a collaborative working style because they will have to develop new ideas to shift resources and everything else.
- Getting collaboration embedded as a way of working down the delivery chain is a difficult task to accomplish.

#### Enablers:

Following are some of the “enablers” that promote collaborative working across various organizations.

- Develop trusting relationship across the organizations that is to address your failures openly as well as recognizing the achievements of others.
- Intervention and specific arrangements by the government to ensure collaboration across its organizations.

- Political sponsorship can also encourage departments to collaborate with each other to increase the quality of public service delivery.
- Creation of shared agendas, goals and interests will also enforce collaboration across organizations.

#### Collaborative Skills:

To ensure collaboration across organizations, it is also very important for government servants to develop key collaboration skills, most important of which are as under.

- Team Building
- Engaging the Organization
- Stakeholders’ Management
- Understanding the problems and sensitivities of other agencies and departments
- Power to Negotiate Successfully
- Thinking Innovatively
- Influencing Powers
- Be able to play to the strengths of the team
- Visionary Approach to keep a team united.

#### Incentivizing Collaboration:

Finally, it is also very important to give various incentives to the government servants to encourage collaboration among departments.

- The process of collaboration made a big difference in UK but would have benefitted from greater ministerial involvement and ensuring that priorities remained the same.
- Originally, traditional rewards were not seen as a motivator as most people are passionate about doing a good job. However a more sophisticated system should be developed to acknowledge and reward performance.
- Influential stakeholders should support the new approach of working.

This is the summary of the webinar, “[Collaborating across Organizational Boundaries](#)” By Dr. Winston Sutherland, (Principle OD Consultant) National School of Government.





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Below is the link of MILE blog where you can find Dr. Winston Sutherland's webinar video:

<http://blog.mile.org/collaborating-across-organisational-boundaries-dr-winston-sutherland-on-good-governance/>



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