

Chapter 1

Transforming public service delivery

Partnering with citizens and civil society in public service delivery has emerged today as an alternative approach to innovate public service delivery furthering some trends already underway in OECD countries.

This chapter discusses the rationale, nature, scope and objectives of the OECD work on partnering with citizens and civil society in public service delivery. It also illustrates the methodology adopted including details on data collection and countries participating in the project.

Rationale for the study

Public services play a critical role in creating more prosperous, fair and inclusive societies. Today, more than ever, public services are called on to protect the welfare of society while creating the conditions for social and economic development (*e.g.* empowering individuals and communities, improving health conditions, increasing educational attainment). In times of economic uncertainty, public services can help to re-build capacities and restore public trust in government by helping those who lose their jobs to get back into active life (*e.g.* through education, training, job searching). OECD countries are looking for ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery while reducing inequalities in access to and use of these services (OECD, 2009b).

Government capacity to respond to societal demands for inclusive and high-quality public services is challenged by both internal and external factors, such as tight budgetary and fiscal environments, changing individual and societal preferences and needs, and new and complex societal problems (*e.g.* ageing populations, climate change, and spread of chronic illnesses). Governments have recognised that innovation can help increase the performance of public services in terms of outputs, efficiency, effectiveness, equity and responsiveness to user needs. This report analyses how innovative approaches to service delivery can help achieve these objectives through the active involvement of citizens and service users.

Collaboration with citizens and users plays an increasing role in the larger debate on the transformation of public services towards new forms of production and delivery. This includes movements from supply-side to demand-side delivery logics; from internal (in-house) to external (outsourcing) production models; and from “command and control” interactions between actors to those based on contractual arrangements. While market-type instruments and mechanisms based on competition (such as public tendering and concessions) help to draw on the comparative advantages of the private sector, the results in terms of service quality and satisfaction are still being debated. Experience indicates that while these measures can push down the cost of services, savings may be neutralised or reversed by higher transaction costs associated with contract preparation and monitoring. Short-term perspective, rent-seeking behaviour and opportunism associated with market practices can counteract public service objectives in terms of equity, inclusiveness and sustainability.

Partnering with users and citizens has emerged today as an important approach to innovate public service delivery, furthering some trends already underway in OECD countries (*e.g.* client orientation, service

personalisation). This paradigm considers that public services work better when designed and delivered in partnership with citizens in order to harness their interest, energies, expertise and ambitions. Collaborative rather than competitive arrangements, and targeting of citizens and civil society organisations are key foundations (Cabinet Office, UK, 2009). Co-production corresponds to the direct involvement of individual users and groups of citizens in the planning and delivery of public services. This umbrella term covers a range of more specific concepts – such as co-design, co-creation, co-delivery, co-management, co-decide, co-evaluate, co-review (Pollitt, Bouckaert and Löffler, 2006) – which reflect the different stages and types of citizen involvement and input. For example, governments co-produce with citizens when they release information which is then re-used by citizens to produce improved or new services (*e.g.* to combine information on local bars and crime data to help people plan safer routes home); or when they partner with citizens or volunteer groups to monitor the physical conditions of public infrastructures and services, or to increase safety in their neighbourhood.

Box 1.1 ParkScan: Co-monitoring neighbourhood parks (United States)

ParkScan is a project of San Francisco's Neighbourhood Parks Council. It teams dedicated volunteers and user-friendly technology to help the City, the general public, and park advocates communicate more effectively. Volunteers in a number of neighbourhood parks around the City are achieving measurable results by rating the conditions of their parks. Park groups learn to use mobile technology to survey their park. Volunteer observers rate a uniform set of park conditions using handheld computers and digital cameras. Their observations and their priorities help managing agencies determine how to achieve measurable improvement in park upkeep. ParkScan is being introduced to more neighbourhood parks as part of a city-wide roll out of the programme. Individual citizens can also register comments about their neighbourhood parks at the ParkScan website. The website shows comments and “before” and “after” photos of the sites.

ParkScan is an example of combining ICTs with community activity. It has mobilised community groups and individual citizens to provide services which could not be funded if the city had to pay for professionals. It can therefore be regarded as substitution. It also provides an input which professionals can then use to manage the parks. It has begun to demonstrate measurable improvements in the parks where surveys are being done and its success is reflected in its city-wide adoption. Like other citizen-based co-production, it highlights the benefits of transparency, with visual evidence of government action available to the public on the City's website. This approach was piloted in one park, and positive results at little additional cost have led to it being extended and becoming embedded in park management and the delivery of the ongoing service.

Source: www.parkscan.org.

While co-production is not a new concept – it is already part of the standard process for a wide array of services (*e.g.*, health, education) – the aim of this report is to better understand the potential of co-production as a source of innovation, *i.e.* new or significantly improved ways of providing public goods and services (OECD, 2011a). Co-production transforms the relationship between service users and providers, enabling the user to take more control and ownership. It contributes to aligning results with citizens’ aspirations and needs. As a result, co-production can lead to better outcomes in terms of reducing production costs (*e.g.*, creating savings on hospitalisation costs through better preventive care), increasing satisfaction (*e.g.* offering more personalised services or giving more choice and control over services) and creating capacities to face complex societal problems (*e.g.* overcoming obesity requires both professional intervention and behavioural changes).

While examining the potential of co-production for improving public services, this report also explores the risks and limits of the use of co-production. Working together with citizens and civil society organisations in service delivery is about sharing benefits, costs, risks and responsibilities to achieve better outcomes. It opens up new opportunities, but also raises important challenges for governments. These include the issue of government accountability when responsibilities and risks are shared with or transferred to citizens. There could be danger of fraud or malpractice, especially in the context of devolving budgets to users. There is also a risk that less vocal citizens or those “willing but unable” do not participate; this can lower the capacity of society to contribute, rather than strengthening it. It is also important to understand what happens to roles and responsibilities (*e.g.* for setting quality criteria and standards, and enforcing them) when a service is co-produced. Finally, financial sustainability of co-production represent an important issue, and calls for a better understanding of the real costs and benefits for governments and citizens of these collaborative arrangements.

Many OECD countries have developed approaches to involve citizens and users in public service delivery, ranging from simple interaction (*e.g.* feedback on service quality) to more active consultation in decision making. Co-production represents a step beyond public consultation; it refers to a more in-depth and systematic association of citizens and users who are not only consulted, but also help to create services. However, a careful categorisation of co-production needs to take into account the context in which public engagement practices are developed in individual countries. Countries are at different stages of engaging citizens and users, and what could be considered as innovative in one context may be part of mainstream practice in another. For example, while building community capacity to

participate and using technology to involve citizens or to obtain user feedback may not be new in absolute terms and are now part of mainstream practice in several OECD countries, these practices are considered innovative in other countries. In addition, simple forms of engagement in service delivery can be considered as important first steps towards more complex forms of co-production.

The report focuses on co-production experiences within the community of OECD countries, recognising, however, that forms of citizen and civil society participation in service delivery are also present in developing or emerging countries. While lessons drawn from this study can be of use for developing countries, the impact of these practices – *e.g.* on public sector organisations' capacity – in a development context will require more in-depth examination.

Study objectives and content

The purpose of this report is to:

- Present an analytical framework for understanding how governments can involve citizens, users and CSOs in public service delivery;
- Provide an initial map of existing co-production practices in different public service areas;
- Identify which of these practices are potentially important sources of innovation; and
- Draw the lessons learned in terms of policy implementation.

The report represents an initial step towards a more in-depth understanding of co-production as a tool for innovation. These new models are still in early stages, and many experimental approaches have been used or are currently underway in OECD countries. The report builds on the recognition that relatively little is known about the innovative potential, risks and opportunities offered by these approaches. The debates focus on who should co-produce (individual users, citizens, third sector), and at which stage governments should encourage co-production (planning and design, co-delivery and co-creation; co-review and evaluation) (Pestoff & Brandsen, 2008). However, as yet there is insufficient evidence about what works and what does not, and about what can be delivered in terms of service effectiveness and value for money.

This report provides OECD member countries with a comprehensive view of the potential and challenges of working with citizens to deliver user-centred services. As collaborative approaches can be a source of innovation, the report contributes to the cross-cutting synthesis work on innovation in public service delivery. While this issue is addressed in other contexts, none has taken such a close look at co-production.

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 1 provides the rationale for the study, its objectives and the methodological approach for data collection. Chapter 2 reviews the development of theories and practices of citizen involvement in service delivery, and how it fits in the context of public sector reform. The chapter also offers a working definition of co-production and presents the main policy context and drivers, along with the key elements of an analytical framework. Chapter 3 applies the analytical model to the co-production approaches used by OECD countries. The purpose is to identify the extent and depth of citizen and user input to public services, and identify which services are using which type of co-production. Chapter 4 identifies key success factors leading to effective citizen and user input in service delivery, as well as key implementation challenges. This chapter addresses the issue of skills and capacities which governments will need to develop to succeed in these endeavours. It also provides evidence on the benefits and costs in involving citizens and users, drawing on the analysis of country examples. Chapter 5 summarises the main conclusions of the study, offering a checklist for designing effective user- and citizen-oriented participatory schemes and indications of potential direction for follow-up work.

Methodology

The report is based on:

- Desk-based academic and policy research to identify and analyse available data on citizen involvement in service delivery, and the underlying theories and conceptual frameworks.
- Exploratory survey of OECD and non-OECD countries to provide initial quantitative and qualitative information on countries' experiences with citizen involvement in service delivery. The survey was designed to capture the perception of central (or federal) government officials on the extent of co-production. While recognising the importance of the views of service users and citizens on co-production, this dimension falls outside of the scope of this research.

- Examples of country practices to map current approaches and identify good practices in different service areas and for different levels of government. Examples have been collected through country pro-forma and desk-based research.

An overview of country input in the report is provided in Annex A. Of the 26 countries which responded to the survey, 16 countries also delivered country examples.

The aim of the OECD exploratory survey was to collect initial data and views from central government officials on key aspects related to public involvement in service delivery including: drivers and demands; approaches to co-production; partners involved; extent to which co-production is embedded in government practice as a means of service delivery; risks and barriers; and factors enhancing effectiveness. While the role and contributions of the different levels of government to service delivery – as well as the regional context (urban vs. rural) – have been recognised as important element in the analysis of co-production, for the purpose of this initial study, countries agreed to restrict the focus of the survey to the national (or federal) level.

This study focuses on understanding how governments can “work together” with others, referring in particular to the involvement of service users, individual citizens who are not users, and groups of citizens who may or may not be organised as a civil society or a third sector organisation. The study does not address other forms of collaborative arrangements with private sector organisations.

As the picture of public involvement in service delivery is likely to differ from service to service, the survey aimed at collecting information on several service areas: General public services; Defence; Public order and safety; Economic affairs; Environmental protection; Housing and community amenities; Health; Education; Recreation; Culture and religion; Education and Social protection (for details, see Annex B). In addition to general questions, respondents were invited to provide answers for each service category where one or more co-production practices were identified at national level. The survey was not designed to offer a comprehensive overview of all existing co-production practices in all administrative units for each service category. Its goal is to offer an initial mapping of significant practices in OECD countries as a basis for further research. The results of the survey are therefore not representative of countries as a whole.

In addition to filling in the survey, respondents were invited to provide examples of co-production practices in different services areas and for different levels of government through an *ad hoc* pro forma template. A

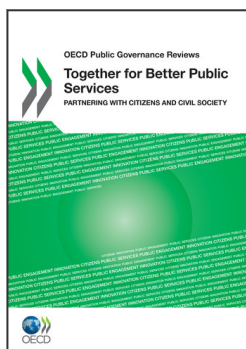
number of country templates were collected and reviewed, and a total of 58 country examples of co-production – collected from both country submissions and desk-based research – were selected and analysed (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 Overview of country examples of partnerships with citizens and CSOs in the delivery of public services examined in the report (by categories of services)

	General services	Defence	Public order and safety	Health services	Social protection	Economic affairs	Housing and community amenities	Environmental protection	Recreation, culture and religion	Education
Nr of examples	11	1	4	5	11	5	9	6	1	5
Levels of government	7 national 1 local 2 federal/ regional 1 national & local		2 local 1 national 1 federal (state)	2 national 2 local 1 federal (state)	4 national & local 3 national 3 federal 1 local	4 local 1 national	8 local 1 local & federal	2 national 2 local 1 national & local 1 federal	national	3 local 2 national

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