



# E-PARCC

COLLABORATIVE GOVERNANCE INITIATIVE

Syracuse University

Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs

Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration

## **Kujichagulia: Actively Building a Public-Nonprofit- Community Partnership**

### **Teaching Note**

This case highlights the array of issues facing a government organization that wishes to engage a cultural community to reform service delivery for disadvantaged citizens. It shows how giving this community an active role in addressing the problems required a fundamental change to the way the government did business. It also provides a glimpse into the challenges of collaborative management in two organizations with dramatically different goals and methods of going about their work. The case can be used in master's public and nonprofit management classrooms and for executive education. This note is provided to give some guidance about how to facilitate such professional education using this tool.

#### **Learning Points**

The two case segments illustrate how collaborative public management is an ongoing process requiring leaders and managers to cross boundaries and challenge norms to enable innovation. It also highlights the ambiguity and risk involved in

This case was a first place winner in our 2008 "Collaborative Public Management, Collaborative Governance, and Collaborative Problem Solving" teaching case and simulation competition. It was double-blind peer reviewed by a committee of academics and practitioners. It was written by Catherine Eichers Penkert, Nicholas Dobbins, and Jodi Sandfort of the University of Minnesota and edited by Khris Dodson. This case is intended for classroom discussion and is not intended to suggest either effective or ineffective handling of the situation depicted. It is brought to you by E- PARCC, part of the Maxwell School of Syracuse University's Collaborative Governance Initiative, a subset of the Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration (PARCC). This material may be copied as many times as needed as long as the authors are given full credit for their work.

such efforts. Public accountability, while essential, might need to be based upon unconventional practices. The case illustrates a few key ideas:

- The strengths and challenges of turning over the development of a solution to a community.
- The significance of government officials acknowledging and directly addressing the importance of race and ethnicity in citizen experience. This often requires new public management practices and comfort with a different type of risk.
- The ‘socially constructed’ nature of contracting. When facing complex social problems, many technical decisions are made which influence the likely probability of success. Proponents of the ‘new’ public management often offer contracting (and other policy tools) as if they are values free. Yet there is little evidence that this is true. Although not often recognized, public managers possess discretion in how they publicly announce contracts, in how they specify the terms of performance, and how results are monitored. There are consequences for each of these decisions. Governing bodies also hold discretion in determining contract terms and public accountability.
- The challenges faced when changing organizational processes. Organizational development is slow and difficult work. It requires both leadership and management at various levels in the organization. It requires grappling with both ambiguity and facts, creating both adaptive and technical solutions to problems. Such leadership which inspires others to share accountability and learn from each other can enable changes in organizational culture and processes. Such changes are often needed by both public and nonprofit agencies working in partnership.

### **Facilitating Learning**

Like many teaching cases, there are a number of ways to use this tool in the classroom. We highlight the four below because they relate to particular issues we focus on in our own work. There are, however, other possibilities:

1. We have used it to illustrate issues in the use of the purchase-of-service **contracting tool** used so often by government. In this regard, it can be paired with readings from Lester Salamon’s *The Tools of Government Action* (2002) or other public management studies of contracting. We ask for volunteers with public sector experience to create process flow charts of ‘typical’ contracting practices and contrast it with the processes

- used in this case. This allows for an in-depth discussion of how management practices create different degrees of inclusion and exclusion.
2. The case also can provide a concrete example of **leadership**, pairing it with readings such as Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky's *Leadership on the Line* (2002) or Barbara Crosby and John Bryson's *Leadership for the Common Good* (2005).
  3. It also can provide a reality-based discussion of **public-private partnerships**, drawing upon chapters from Chris Huxham and Siv Vangen's *Managing to Collaborate* (2005). To illustrate the dramatically different cultures in each organization, we have brought in various portions of the agency's web pages (<http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/workforce/> and [http://www.ppcwc.org/our\\_philosophy](http://www.ppcwc.org/our_philosophy)). Such artifacts quickly convey additional dimensions of the culture differences between the partners.
  4. Finally, the case is an illustration of the challenges of **performance measurement** when dealing with complex social problems and third-party government. In that regard, it can be paired with Don Moynihan's *The Dynamics of Performance Management* (2008) and offered as a local government case. Students can be asked to define success from the perspectives of various parties and try to negotiate a compromise given the values expressed by each of the partners.

Other strong themes in the case include political accountability, power analysis, and managing conflict.

There are many questions that can be posed to explore dimensions of the case. In particular, faculty might lead a discussion of *Part A* by asking the following:

- What are the risks, and the potential gains, of going to the community to seek advice on addressing Ramsey County's MFIP problems? Do you think the rewards outweigh the risks?
- How might the mission of a community and culturally-based independent organization like the CWC be impacted when it enters into a contractual relationship with a governing body such as Ramsey County?
- Where are the examples of leadership in this case? By whom? Why?
  - How is race important in the exercise of leadership?
  - What are the ethical issues that must be navigated?

Additionally, the case allows students to explore analysis of complex organizational and implementation questions from various perspectives. For example, an instructor might ask, "do you think renewing the contract with the

Cultural Wellness Center is worth the risk? How does your opinion change if you ...

- Are a County Commissioner?
- Are a County staff member?
- If you work for the Cultural Wellness Center?
- If you are a Ramsey County taxpayer and member of the African-American community?
- If you are a Ramsey County citizen and a European-American MFIP recipient?

Case **Part B** can be used to elaborate on the reasonable disagreements of interpretation given these various perspectives. The opening of the segment illuminates challenges in communication with the Board and highlights issues of accountability, value framing, and group deliberation around the decision to enter into a second contract. It also highlights ongoing management and leadership issues inherent in a partnership of this type. Some questions to inspire deeper analysis include:

- Why was it necessary to manage the rebirth of this process after the second contract was renewed? Who emerged as leaders? Why?
- What continued to be the main points of tension and conflict in this partnership? How were they addressed? Were they resolved?
- How did trust impact the relationship between the partnership members? How important is it that members of partner organizations trust each other?
- How do you think convincing front-line workers from Ramsey County and the CWC to work together will change the way they do their jobs? Will it affect the way the organizations themselves go about their work at other levels?
- Can the model these groups have used to work together be used on a larger scale? Can it be replicated in other communities? What core elements would need to be present to successfully translate their work into other venues?
- What indicators of performance are relevant to this case? Can these indicators capture policy outcomes and other dimensions of effectiveness, such as systems change?

To assist in the discussion of these and other issues, a **Timeline** of the project is included as an attachment to Part B.