



## **An Overview On PICNet's Governance**

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# Why Discuss Governance?

The Working Groups identified three common themes during their work:

- virtual unanimity on the desirability of PICNet as, literally, a network...however.
- a general lack of trust in the “system”, concern about the use of performance information and the role of the Ministry in relation to PICNet, etc., ...and
- general uncertainty about processes for decision-making in PICNet

# WHAT IS GOVERNANCE?

- governance is to management as steering is to rowing.
- the set of arrangements for decision-making with respect to setting:
  - strategic objectives,
  - pursuing and determining success in the attainment of these objectives, and
  - engaging and reporting to all stakeholders.
- the management infrastructure

## WHAT IS PICNet?

PICNet (the Network) is an “entity”, with a mandate and role distinct from the Health Authorities

## **WHO ARE THE PLAYERS?**

The Community of Practice  
involved in infection prevention,  
surveillance and control of health  
care associated infections across  
the continuum of care

# **WHY DOES PICNet EXIST? That is: WHAT OBJECTIVE (S) IS IT INTENDED TO SERVE?**

- many potential roles for PICNet, such as:
  - providing strategic advice
  - supporting and co-ordinating communication and research
  - advocating on behalf of the community of practice
- is there an over-arching focus to these roles?

# **WHY DOES PICNet EXIST? That is: WHAT OBJECTIVE (S) IS IT INTENDED TO SERVE?**

- the over-arching, or strategic objective of the Network is to optimize sustainable capacity (or “effectiveness” or “readiness”) for available resources, that is, cost-effectiveness or value for money.
- operationally, the measurable outputs that constitute sustainable capacity are an evolving set of Best Practice Guidelines

# HOW IS THIS OBJECTIVE TO BE ACHIEVED?

- four critical success factors as identified at the First Stakeholder Summit in May 2005. The success factors are:
  - Effective Communication: use a common language and give a consistent message
  - Team Approach: develop multi-disciplinary teams that work on common solutions
  - Empowerment and Respect: ensure ownership is both top down and bottom up
  - Good Science, Good will: use an evidence-based approach
- so what mode of governance for the Network would best enable it to play its roles and achieve its purpose?

# HOW IS THIS OBJECTIVE TO BE ACHIEVED?

- **market model**, which relies on prices and competition.
- **hierarchical model**, which relies on rules and regulations (coercion), sustained by budgetary control, as the mechanism of coordination.
- **network model**, which relies on voluntary participation

# HOW IS THIS OBJECTIVE TO BE ACHIEVED?

The success of any model depends on  
**incentives:**

- economic incentives (the market model)
- coercive authority and budget control (the hierarchical model)
- non-financial professional inducements and constraints (the network model)

# HOW IS THIS OBJECTIVE TO BE ACHIEVED?

- for practical purposes the commercial market model can be excluded.
- an alternative would be a hierarchical model, in which government prescribes how the good is to be provided.
- a government-funded hierarchical model needs a budget
- every region has expressed an absence of willingness to be coerced

# HOW IS THIS OBJECTIVE TO BE ACHIEVED?

- so what would a network model look like?
- collegiality and trust are the mechanisms of co-ordination
- practice is horizontal not hierarchical
- similar to a voluntary trade or professional association
- operates by the dissemination of information on practices, collaboration on the development of practices, advice and recommendations on “best” or “preferred” practices, and agreement on the co-ordination of information flows and practices
- incentives are professional
- insofar as the Network exercises authority, it is moral and professional authority rather than coercive or directive authority.

# ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE NETWORK:

- accountability is primarily horizontal and internal.
- shared expectations about conduct and performance and a shared language or currency
- PICNet Steering Committee is accountable horizontally to members of the network for arriving at Network outputs—the set of Best Practice Guidelines
- PICNet has the delegated role of final provincial authority on Best Practice Guidelines
- there is a strong form of implicit external accountability
- formal external accountability from the PICNet Steering Committee to the PMSC for the effective facilitation of the activities of the Network.

# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Should there be perhaps just a little coercion, to keep the participants in line?
- No effective blending of voluntary action and coercion is possible-except of course in emergencies
- PICNet model of governance are founded on peer to peer trust
- Any superimposition on that model of coercion of any kind-say, the use of the information freely and openly provided as a basis for evaluation and budgetary control-would destroy the trust on which the model is based.
- As well, it is worth noting that no budget has been provided to drive a hierarchical model, and that the regions are unwilling to hand over control of part of their budgets.

# OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- this does not mean that there can be no evaluation or performance management but it does mean such processes are part of the voluntary agreement to share and coordinate information and practices.
- the strategic accountability framework links the performance measures foreshadowed in the PICNet Charter paper in a causal sequence to the overarching strategic objective of optimizing the cost-effectiveness of provincial capacity.

## TO SUMMARIZE

- literature on the performance of network models of governance is to date inconclusive,
- PICNet's model is much more likely to optimize the prevention, surveillance and control of health care associated infections for the Community of Practice, and therefore for the public interest, than a commercial market model or a government hierarchical model.
- PICNet is, in effect, a voluntary collaborative barter market providing a knowledge buffet from which each participant can make choices.
- there are choices and therefore variety, but also influence, leadership and advocacy.