



Getting Results Through Collaboration: Networks and Network Structures for Public Policy and Management

Myrna Mandell

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Public policy makers and managers in public administration operate under a unique set of circumstances that differ significantly from those in the private sector. Collaboration through networks is a feature of both sectors, but in the private sector it is often characterized by partnerships and alliances meant to benefit a particular company or industry, whereas collaboration through networks in the public sector involve disparate organizations working toward a common goal and not merely to enhance the performance of one among them. Therefore, much of the work that has been published in the business management literature on collaboration through networks does not apply wholesale, without revisions, to the public sector. Mandell and her contributors fill that gap by bringing together academic and practitioner perspectives into a coherent, holistic examination of the operative processes in public-sector networks and network structures.

Networks and network structures by definition imply interactions among many organizations, individuals, or interest groups. The definition is broadened here to include collaborative efforts that take place within different countries as well as those that cross national borders. Going beyond the usual emphasis on the opportunities and promises of collaboration through networks, Mandell and her contributors take a hard look at such pitfalls and constraints as those involving power conflicts between individual and organizational commitments, the dichotomy between the need for flexibility and the need for rules and procedures, the difference between the needs and expectations of a national public and a local public, and accountability issues that arise from the need to satisfy outside regulators as well as the goals of the network. In addition to these unique contributions to the literature on networks and network structures, Mandell addresses the important but often overlooked behavioral (micro) issues--e.g., motivation, change, and communication--that tend to be drowned out by the overriding emphasis in the literature on structural (macro) issues. Reflects the latest thinking in the field and explores up-to-the-minute innovations currently being developed.

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