

## Government 2020 and the perpetual collaboration mandate

*Six worldwide drivers demand customized strategies*

*The future of societies around the world is being shaped by six drivers outside the realm of government control. Powerful changes related to demographics, globalization, environmental concerns, societal relationships, social stability and technology will affect virtually every government, demanding individualized responses suited to each nation, region or locality. These nearly universal drivers will require “perpetual collaboration” that starts with intensified, multi-directional communications, and shared operational and technical standards. Beyond those core essentials, effective strategies also hinge on government commitments to facilitate efforts involving multiple agencies (within and across borders), and improve partnering with transnational organizations.*

Six inescapable forces are simultaneously now underway, over which governments and societies have limited control. Because of their virulent and simultaneous nature, we describe them here not just as forces, but as *drivers*. These six drivers share a striking commonality, in that each will touch virtually all nations in one way or another:

1. Changing demographics
2. Accelerating globalization
3. Rising environmental concerns
4. Evolving societal relationships
5. Growing threats to social stability and order
6. Expanding impact of technology.

No two nations are the same and so, each driver will play itself out uniquely in any given society. There are wide variations among nations as far as historical experiences, social values, aspirations and constraints. Addressing the challenges ahead will require a shift from the traditional government approach of slow, measured actions in the face of change.

Instead, governments must first anticipate change by determining which drivers are most critical in light of their own unique set of circumstances. Second, based on those priorities, nations must be proactive, designing and then implementing customized strategies and solutions.

Unquestionably, many types of challenges are underway and governments must respond in a more comprehensive manner than ever before. In developing tailored responses, a new dimension of greatly enhanced collaboration is the ultimate capability governments need, as it will form the foundation of strategies necessary for coping with these drivers. More connectedness and cooperation is needed than ever before: across agencies, across societies, across governments, and with more constituencies. This paper offers an approach for government action to achieve this intensified, multilayered, multidirectional capability that we call *perpetual collaboration*.

### Perpetual collaboration: What it will take

How well governments can respond to the positive and negative effects of the six global drivers will greatly influence the ability of citizens to prosper in the coming years. Each nation must begin to tailor perpetual collaboration strategies that address the impacts of the six global drivers – all within the context of its own unique mix of aspirations and constraints.

Every approach to strategy design must be related to improved collaboration. This is because the issues involved require enhanced communication and



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connectedness among growing numbers and types of organizations, governments, agencies or other private sector entities across multiple dimensions (see Figure 1).

Establishing and maintaining a framework of perpetual collaboration supports the objective of exchanging information in any form, for any channel, between any type of sender and receiver. It is intended to leverage available capabilities across all facets of a society, not just within the governmental environment. As organizations become more virtual, and shift from “hierarchical and vertical” to “diffuse and horizontal,” perpetual collaboration can enable greater teamwork and interconnectedness. The idea of “virtual organizations” will increasingly shift from being a concept to becoming the way successful governments function.

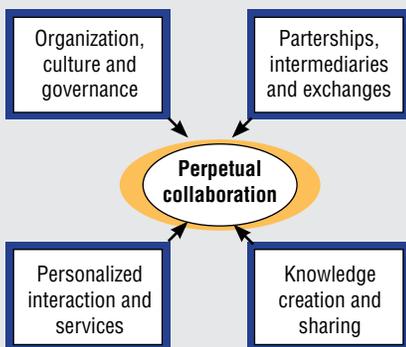
Starting now, governments must work to simultaneously deal with the effects of the six nearly universal drivers that are reshaping the world. Balancing the impact of these drivers with their own nations’ particular aspirations and constraints, each government and

society will need to develop suitable strategies. Establishing a framework of perpetual collaboration – multilayered communication in many forms, connecting with entities both within and across country and organizational boundaries – is the best first step to help the public sector meet its wide range of constituent needs.

Ultimately, one can ask the simple question, “How will we know that governments have implemented the kinds of changes needed to address the consequences of the drivers and public responses?”

We live in uncertain times of threats and great opportunities, when mega-drivers are profoundly starting to affect how governments function. There is no second chance for addressing these in a correct way – officials, their constituents and allies together must “get it right” the first time. Engaging large sectors of society in an effective process of perpetual collaboration holds out the greatest hope for success. That calls for facing facts, deciding what to do, and acting now.

FIGURE 1.  
**Perpetual collaboration – the core capability governments will need.**



Source: IBM Institute for Business Value.

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