Trust in Government Cross-Boundary Information Sharing Initiatives: Identifying the Determinants

J. Ramon Gil-Garcia*, Ahmet Guler**, Theresa A. Pardo**, and G. Brian Burke**
*Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), Mexico
**Center for Technology in Government, University at Albany, SUNY, USA
joseramon.gil@cide.edu, aguler@ctg.albany.edu, tpardo@ctg.albany.edu, bburke@ctg.albany.edu

Abstract

This paper identifies a set of determinants of trust in government cross-boundary information sharing (CBI) initiatives. Although there are some studies that identify the antecedents of trust in collaboration, research about trust relationships in government interorganizational initiatives is lacking. Little attention, in particular, has been paid to the determinants of trust in government CBI. To fill this gap in the literature, our study analyzes eight separate case studies of information sharing initiatives from criminal justice and public health organizations to identify new determinants of trust. Drawing from the case analysis we present three propositions related to trust determinants in the context of CBI initiatives, specifically, clarity of roles and responsibilities, knowledge of participating organizations, and exercise of authority.

1. Introduction

Governments around the world are increasingly turning to information sharing as a lead strategy for developing response capacity for problems in a wide range of programs and policy arenas. As information sharing is pursued the complexity of this strategy is becoming clear. Developing cross-boundary information sharing (CBI) to support government response capacities requires change, in some cases, significant changes in organizational and technological processes. These changes are influenced by specific types of social interaction, which take the form of group decision-making, learning, understanding, trust building, and conflict resolution, among others [9, 36, 39, 45].

New research examining the nature of these social interactions and the influence of these interactions on information sharing as a response strategy is called for. Previous research has shown the importance of trust and trust building for CBI initiatives. Much of this work has focused on the specific risks to trust in an information sharing context. These risks include losing control over highly valued organizational information and knowledge, the possibility that information disclosed is misused against the interest of the organization or individual who made the disclosure, the potential imbalance of the knowledge exchange itself, and the transaction costs and uncertainty associated with the interdependence that may result from CBI [10]. However, little attention has been paid to the determinants of trust in the context of government CBI initiatives.

The next section provides an overview of the literature related to trust, determinants of trust, and CBI. Following this section we draw on the presented literature and the results of a systematic and rigorous qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews of eight CBI initiatives as the foundation for a set of propositions about the determinants of trust in CBI in government. The paper closes with a discussion of the results and a set of concluding remarks about the significance of the study and its contribution to new knowledge about trust determinants in the novel context of CBI in government.

2. The influence of trust on interorganizational collaboration

Throughout the literature, trust is related to interpersonal relationships. Recent studies however, have extended the concept to interorganizational and cross-boundary relations [32]. Benefiting from Anderson and Narus[1], Neergard and Ullhoi define interorganizational trust as “a company's belief that another company will perform actions that will result in positive outcomes, as well as not taking unexpected actions that would result in negative outcomes for the company” (p.522) [32]. Interorganizational trust then can be seen as based on implicit assumptions [25], positive expectations and confidence to the other party in achieving common goals.

Interorganizational trust has been regarded as an alternative control mechanism in interorganizational relations; substituting or complementing market prices and hierarchical authority [7]. To construct
alternative governance mechanisms, participants can develop close collaborations by depending on their trusted connections, rather than forming arm’s-length relations [26]. Trust is one of a number of major constructs that determine the effectiveness of organizational networks. In Thompson’s economic model of networks [43], for instance, transaction costs in a network is a function of the number of its participants, density, degree of embeddedness, and the level of trust; the higher the level of trust, the lower the transaction costs. Zaheer, McEvily, and Perrone distinguish between interpersonal trust (individual level) and interorganizational trust (organizational level) and finds the two reinforce each other. The results of empirical analyses by these authors show that interorganizational trust reduces negotiation cost and conflict and increases performance in interfirm networks, but that interpersonal trust does not have similar significant effects [47].

Building trust is viewed as an important antecedent to establishing successful cross-functional shared knowledge [33]. Mutual trust plays a particularly important role in interorganizational information sharing because knowledge-intensive activities are not easily contractible, which leaves participating partners vulnerable [5]. Qualitative case studies of the IT industry by Scott identifies a lack of trust among organizations as the biggest barrier for information technology to facilitate interorganizational learning. The author finds that trust develops slowly, often over the course of years, from rational cognitive trust to social affective trust and is reinforced by face-to-face interaction, knowledge of mutual benefits, common professional bond, and communities-of-learning [38].

One of the challenges involved in the study of organizational trust is the lack of clear understanding and consensus on the relationship between trust and its determinants and outcomes [28]. A number of different sets of factors have been proposed as antecedents of trust in the organization literature. As Mayer et al point out, however, the constructs discussed most frequently are ability, benevolence, and integrity [28]. First, ability, also identified as competence or expertise, is the “group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence within some specific domain (p.717).” Second, benevolence, intention, or motive is the “extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive (p.718).” Finally, integrity is the “trustor’s perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable (p.719).”

Sydow states that these antecedents of interpersonal trust can also be applied at the interorganizational level if these features are viewed as the features of organizations. Thus, organizations can assess their counterparts with using signals about these features although it is more difficult than interpersonal level [41].

Several studies in interorganizational collaboration have stated that clarity of roles and responsibilities is an important factor in trust building. Having a clear sense and knowledge about the distribution of roles and responsibilities in interorganizational collaboration helps participating organizations form their expectations about their own organization and other participating organizations’ contribution to an initiative [21, 22, 35]. Since participants in interorganizational collaboration are generally autonomous and semiautonomous [19, 20, 44], establishing clarity of roles and responsibilities reduces the risk of opportunistic behaviour by building trust relationship among participants [16, 32]. If participating organizations discuss their roles and responsibilities to clarify unclear aspects and confirm their expectations in the early stages of the initiative, this process will provide an opportunity to build trust among participants [21, 35].

To be sure, trust-building in cross-boundary contexts involves unique challenges as well. Developing trust across organizations can be more difficult than within an organization because of the lack of a common goal and organizational ties among participants, less stability in terms of participation and membership, more anonymity of individuals, and difficulty in rewarding positive behavior and punishing misbehaviour [42]. Moreover, Cresswell et al. state that existing competition among participating organizations, lack of leadership, and
collaboration. Knowledge of participating organizations facilitates the understanding of similarities and differences in organizational structures, functions, and styles [22]. Such knowledge contributes to trust building among collaborating partners through a better understanding of one another’s interests, capabilities, and operating styles [17, 26].

Eglene et al. state that public sector knowledge networks are generally initiated by a specific legislation; thus, authority comes from legal action. However, they state that this legal authority needs to be supported by other factors to ensure collaboration [12]. Providing proper authority to participants for solving problems in collaborative efforts influences trust building among participating organizations [35]. Participants develop trust while working on finding best solutions for emerging problems during the initiative. These repeated interactions provide a base for mutual understanding and trust while reducing fear and dissonance between participants [33]. Therefore, it is better to delegate authority to participants to determine best practices to solve problems in interorganizational collaboration rather than enforcing specific strategies for problems [35].

Respecting autonomy of participating organizations and using participatory decision making builds trust among participating organizations in interorganizational collaboration. Being respectful to each organization’s autonomy and acknowledging each as a unique entity eases tensions between protecting organizational autonomy and participating in joint ventures [35]. Similarly, Sydow states that balanced relationships of autonomy and dependence assists in forming trust in interorganizational networks [41]. In fact, tension between protecting organizational identity and taking part in collaborative process are typical [44]. Therefore, a balanced relationship will bring productive results for a collaboration by establishing trust relationship among participants.

Building trust is also affected by past experience and past interactions which provide references for future expectations [6]. Knowing each other and having former relationships creates familiarity among participants which leads to trust or distrust in collaboration [3, 4, 18, 23]. Trust develops gradually [24, 38] and needs repeated interactions [15, 37, 44]. Credible past interactions provide the basis for establishing trust relationships among participants because trust is “based on behavioral expectations embedded in a history of trust” [8].

Having knowledge of the environment also contributes to building trust relationships among participants in interorganizational collaboration because having updated information about what is going on in the broader environment of the collaboration is viewed as a competence [17]. Competence has been identified as the antecedent of trust [28, 31]. Having good knowledge of the environment will create trust between participants because they will think other participants are aware of the broader environment of the initiative. Thus, they will trust participants who have enough competence to follow and comprehend the broader environment of collaboration.

Good communication and collaboration among participating organizations enables trust in interorganizational collaboration [11, 35, 41, 46]. Thompson et al. state that because of a lack of traditional coordination mechanisms in interorganizational collaboration to oversee and monitor activities, there should be an effective operating system that ensures routinized communication channels for effective communication [44]. Effective communication facilitates collaboration and coordination while providing quality information sharing among participants [2]. Communication also ensures continued interaction between participating organizations which enables trust building relationships [27]. In addition, Ostrom states that face-to-face communication is an important factor in increasing the level of trust and levels of cooperation because face-to-face interactions provide opportunity for each participant to assess other participant’s trustworthiness [34].

As evidenced by this review of the literature on interorganizational collaboration, several factors have been identified as determinants of trust in interorganizational collaboration. However, this review also highlights the lack of research on the determinants of trust specific to the government CBI setting. To fill this gap in the literature, our study analyzes eight separate case studies of information sharing initiatives from criminal justice and public health organizations to identify determinants of trust. Drawing from the case analysis we present three propositions related to trust determinants in the context of government information sharing initiatives, specifically, clarity of roles and responsibilities, knowledge of participating organizations, and exercise of authority.

4. Research Methods and Design

The Center for Technology in Government at the University at Albany, SUNY conducted a research project entitled “Modeling the Social and Technical Processes of Interorganizational Information Integration” (MIII). This project was partially
supported by the National Science Foundation. The main objective of this study is to explore and test important social and technical factors that influence government CBI. For this research cross-boundary information sharing is defined as government led-efforts to develop the necessary institutional, organizational, and technological policies, processes, and systems that allow organizations or multiple units within a single organization to share and use both internal and external information. An example of a CBI initiative is the development of a single state-level Web-based information network to collect, share, and disseminate animal and human health data across state, local, and federal government public health agencies and in collaboration with private sector laboratories and universities to track cases of communicable diseases throughout the state.

To understand the nature of CBI in government settings, eight separate case studies of criminal justice and public health initiatives were conducted. While cases from the criminal justice policy arena included one county and two state level CBI initiatives, which each aimed to share information among several criminal justice agencies, cases from the public health policy arena were related to collaborative efforts of state and local government agencies to respond to the West Nile virus outbreaks in four different states. Data collection from these eight cases included approximately 70 one-on-one and small group interviews and meeting observations involving government criminal justice and public health agency IT and program managers. The interview questions focused on identifying which policy, management, and technology factors influenced the CBI initiatives in question.

The overall project employed a multi-method approach which is a powerful way to research complex social phenomenon, such as the interorganizational information sharing occurring in these cases [29, 30]. The multi-method strategy included two main phases. The first phase consisted of individual and group interviews, as well as some direct observations. This information was analyzed using qualitative techniques. The second phase was a national survey, which was administered to public servants and political officials with responsibilities related to either the criminal justice of the public health domains. This paper reports findings from, phase 1, the qualitative analysis which was carried out using a grounded theory approach [13, 14, 40]. In this analysis, we identified several factors that affect the success of interorganizational information sharing initiatives among government agencies and organizations from different sectors. Trust was among the primary factors identified. We also identified several determinants of trust in government CBI initiatives. Following, we describe three important determinants of trust in government CBI initiatives.

5. Analysis and Findings

The three identified determinants of trust are: clarity of roles and responsibilities, knowledge of participating organizations, and exercise of authority. These three determinants of trust will be discussed in detail below with quotes from case study interviews to illustrate the influence each had on trust building within the context of a government CBI initiative. The discussion of each determinant also concludes with a proposition that states the relationship between each determinant and trust to test in future research.

5.1. Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities

Clarity of roles and responsibilities has been identified as an important factor in interorganizational collaborative efforts, more generally, as mentioned above. However, it has received little attention as a determinant of trust in government CBI initiatives. The case studies indicate that a clear sense of roles and responsibilities in government information sharing initiatives facilitates building trust relationships among participants; providing participants with an understanding of their roles and what they should expect from other participants during an initiative. Moreover, having a clear sense of roles and responsibilities helps reduce the complexity of efforts to build information sharing within the complex cross-boundary government environment.

The case data shows the importance of creating clarity of roles and responsibilities among participating organizations to build trust relationships. According to one IT manager from a state police agency,

“In the past we were insular and we did things in a stove-piped way. What we see with our systems and I'm sure with other criminal justice agency systems is a lot of duplication. We have this state-wide police information system here that uses data from other organizations and gee, because in the past we really didn't trust their capabilities. …[W]e needed the other copy out there and the instantaneous access to it. And yeah, we know that they've got the ability to produce the rap sheets over there in that other agency but we need them here in our system so we're going to duplicate the process. And that's the way
things were done in the past. And what you can see with this new approach, this new model, is a very concerted effort to clearly define those domains. …And when you build the next generation of systems, you need to eliminate all this duplication and you need to start building the trust level, where you're comfortable getting rid of that.”

In addition, one IT director from a state level criminal justice agency who had participated in a statewide criminal justice information sharing initiative explained how the lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities influenced distrust among participants which then, in his opinion, led to failure of the project.

“There was always distrust, I think. Even though there was more open dialogue there was still a distrust that what we recommended might not go forward and what form was this thing going to take when we made our recommendation. …And as it turned out, some of those fears were played out in the sense that at the eleventh hour of this project it ended. I'm not sure that they really incorporated much of what we did in that group, which is unfortunate in terms of, for example, decision-making criteria. How do you decide, how do you make decisions? How does a group like that make a decision if there's a deadlock or if there's no consensus? And what is the role of the director of the advisory board versus the other members? And I think now, I think right now there's a little bit, quite frankly, my own impression is there's a little, probably a little bit of lack of clarity, certainly from my perspective, on who's supposed to be doing what. And this is my impression but it's shared by other people, not just me.”

Moreover, an epidemiologist from a county level health department commented on how clarifying the information you would and would not be willing to share with collaborating government partners ahead of time helped achieve a trusted information sharing relationship.

“But I think also, like when you are working with these other agencies, like in our BT [bioterrorism] exercise--FBI guys are like, you can collect all that data and process it? [A]nd I'm like, yeah, we do. And I was talking with the EPA guys the other, I'm like, you know, we do surveillance. There's an event--we could like set up maybe a hospital-based surveillance system in a day and like collect all the data and get it back to you. They're like, really? So I think it's like sharing information, working it out ahead of time, you know, we're not going to share personal, patient-identifying information with the FBI. [A]nd they're not going to share criminal information with us. And so how, working out ahead of time, what information can be shared and how is it shared, you know.”

Lastly, another IT manager from a state level criminal justice agency noted how providing clarity to participating members led to a trustworthy environment and honest relationships,

“Well, I mean, it's the part; I think that the organizations are so stressed at this point in time that if they had some clarity and some straightforward mandate, I think they'll work better. Technical staff tend to do better when you let them be technical. And during times of stress, they start making decisions as far as priorities and things like that and they start crossing over boundaries where they get uncomfortable from time to time. ….But in order to do something like this, there has to be a large amount of honesty in an organization.”

The case analysis shows that participants in a government CBI initiative seek clarity in their roles and responsibilities and then use this clarity to develop trust relationship with other participants.

P1: Clarity of roles and responsibilities affects trust in a government cross-boundary information sharing initiative.

5.2. Knowledge of Participating Organizations

According to the case analysis, knowledge of participating organizations also helps create realistic expectations. Having enough knowledge about how other organizations work and how their systems operate helps to develop trust among participants by understanding the positions and interests of others. This knowledge, according to respondents, provided participants with ideas about how to achieve the sometimes abstract objectives of a CBI initiative. Thus, knowledge of participating organizations helps build trust relationships among participants by providing a better picture about other participating organizations’ capabilities.
Based on the case analysis we found that the knowledge participants have about each of the organizations involved in the initiative influences the level of trust with respect to the initiative. According to an assistant district attorney responsible for leading an agency-wide information sharing initiative,

“And I think--just going back to what [she] is saying about the credibility--and lawyers are a tough group. We have prosecutors under tremendous pressure to get to court and they need things right away. And it's very easy to say, "Oh, there's MIS [Management Information Systems] again. They can never get anything right. I can't believe it. How stupid could they possibly be?" Now, it's very easy to say all of those things when you don't understand basically what MIS is doing and the challenges and so forth.”

According to a senior IT manager from a state level criminal justice agency, gaining knowledge about how other participating organizations operate provides a better sense of the complexity of other organizations. This better understanding of other organizations’ systems creates mutual respect and good relationships among participants.

“I think there's been such an increase in inter-agency dialogue that I think there's better understanding of each agency, what they do, the depth of their systems. We all tend to, you know, I guess it's a view--kind of to warp a saying, you know, the grass is always greener. Well, there's also that "always"--the grass is always simpler. You look at any given place, O.K., yeah, they do this, that and the other thing. And you see your own details and oh, god, our system's so complicated but they just do such-and-such. And of course that's not the case and every agency's got their issues, their complications and all that. And I think we all understand each other's systems better. I think there's, at more the line levels, if you will, middle managers and things and the people who get together and discuss things--there's, I think, a lot of mutual respect and good relationships that have been formed.”

Moreover, one senior manager from a state level criminal justice agency explained how knowledge about other organizations’ technical capabilities contributed to the building of trust among participants.

“One of the things that was important to do is to get everybody with a skin in the game in the room to basically start to describe from a technical perspective what can you share and what can't you share. Not from a political perspective and not from an organizational turf perspective--just get the technical people in the room--and letting them kind of set the standard of what you could achieve technically if all that other stuff wasn't in the way, if you didn't have the political barriers and the turf wars and those things. 'Cause when it gets right down to it, it's a matter of trust. If we don't trust then we don't, you know, then you can't move forward. But one of the things you could do is get the technical people to gain a level set about what's technically achievable.”

Data from the public health cases also indicated that having knowledge of participating organizations and being familiar with participants from other agencies influenced trust during the information sharing initiative. One program director from a state level environmental protection agency described:

“We have a really good working relationship, especially with the former director of public health. We knew him really, really well. I know the ones down there now because of my dealings with mosquitoes. And now I'm dealing with them over a couple of contaminated sites. So I already have a dialogue with them so I think that helps. They know us and we know them. They know whatever information, that they can generally trust what's coming from us is to be what we're really up to or what we're doing and so I think that's helped with the relationships.”

Furthermore, a manager from a state level public health agency also mentioned how having knowledge of and past relationships with another participating agency contributed to building robust relationships during the initiative and to the swift sharing of information.

“So it's good to kind of forge those relationships. ….I mean, I have a very good relationship with the communications director at the Department of Environmental Protection…. I'm very comfortable calling him up and talking about an issue. We may not agree on everything but we have I think a pretty good working relationship. And sometimes you just develop those over time but to be able to have met somebody face-to-face, just that alone, whether it be for law enforcement or whatever, I think is helpful. And
you're more likely to pick up the phone and talk to them and coordinate with them and share information with them. And were it not for some of this planning and were it not for some of the real life scenarios that we've dealt with, I know myself, you know, just the normal day-to-day operations of your work, maybe you have no reason to get to know the PIO over at the FBI or what are the issues that they have over at the U.S. attorney's office. And then you can be more sensitive to those and just work together to get the job done.”

Collectively the criminal justice and public health CBI examples draw specific attention to the critical role of having knowledge of participating organizations and former relationships in creating trust relationships during such initiatives. The cases indicate that if participants have enough knowledge about other participating organizations, they have a better sense of participating organizations’ working systems which provides a more accurate picture about them. Thus, according to the cases, participants’ expectations about other organizations’ roles in the CBI initiative build on a realistic understanding of capabilities and interests; which helps alleviate ambiguity and complexity. In addition, the analysis from the case data shows that if participants have former relationships with individuals from other participating organizations, they tend to be more confident about their relationship in the current environment: this helps create trust in the initiative.

P2: Knowledge of participating organizations affects trust in a government cross-boundary information sharing initiative.

5.3. Exercise of Authority

According to the case analysis, how members exercise their authority influences trust among participants as proper use of authority creates mutual respect and trust. Respondents indicated that a lack of authority or improper use of authority created distrust and frustration among participating organizations leading to the failure of a collaborative effort.

The case data indicated that the role executive leaders played in the initiative, influenced the level of trust among the participating organizations. According to a state level wildlife pathologist, senior government leaders can play a critical role in creating trust relationships with participants, in particular, by using authority appropriately.

I think the commissioner was certainly a key in saying that, you know, we're going to do this and…. , you know, you had some respect for her. And she and I had some verbal combat over West Nile and I liked her. She said, "Oh, you're right, you're right on this. Come up to my office and we'll talk this over". So you knew you were going into a scientifically sound relationship here with the Health Department and it was going to be done right. And of course the doctors didn't know much about the HIN and the function of the HIN but their technical computer people were very, very nice. So with the directions and so on and their skills, we were able to put the thing together.

In addition, an assistant district attorney from a county level DA’s office explained how a project manager exercised his authority and was effectively in creating trust,

“The District Attorney’s credo about how he has been able to, at age 83 or 85, he had always said, "I hire the people and let them do their jobs". And we have a large amount of autonomy and discretion as district attorneys. That being said, we are also--because we work in such a close environment with each other, we hear about each other's cases. [My supervisor] puts his trust in us as the people who are to make the decisions on this case. And the flip side of that is that we come to [him] for help because his door's open and we trust [him] to tell us what the right thing to do if we are having difficulty with the decision.”

In addition to appropriate use of authority, some participants mentioned the vital role of establishing a proper structure of authority as a way to build trust relationships among participating organizations. However, our findings on this point are mixed. For example, while some participants stated that creating a steering committee to manage the project was the best way to establish consensus leading to trust among participating organizations, other interviewees noted that rather than a committee, it is better to give authority to a specific agency to have a proper structure of authority.

A chief information officer from a state level criminal justice agency focused on the necessity of giving authority to a specific agency rather than a steering committee to achieve the goals of an information sharing project.
And that's my read on where we are. And I've written a paper where I basically say, you know, there's what we call kind of an industry, emerging industry term, "shared infrastructure". And it basically means the plumbing, et cetera, that you don't build twice. And basically what I've suggested is some agency needs to be responsible for that. It shouldn't be four agencies doing it together. Some agency, and this is the most important thing from my perspective. It's far better that it's clearly assigned.

However, an IT supervisor from a state police agency stated that having a governance board for managing information sharing projects in the criminal justice area functions better than depending on one leader because it provides opportunity to ease conflict and gives each agency a chance for equal representation in decision making which engender trust relationship.

"I think you need some structured group and I emphasize group, not one person. Because the one person in the beginning that we were hearing was deciding on what the, the way this thing was going to happen was the Commissioner of Criminal Justice and, you know, I never even saw the guy. It was like the Wizard of Oz, you know. And you're wondering what his people are relaying to you is really his decision or their decision or their, you know, druthers, so to speak. So I think you need a group of people like the governance board.... But it's a group thing and everybody is equally represented and I think that that's important that that governance board is set up. I especially think it's important because of the kind of conflict interest, so to speak, that [one state criminal justice agency] might have because they're an agency that serves law enforcement, criminal justice and the public so they have a stake in the way this thing turns out. But they're also, their boss is not only the boss of [one state criminal justice agency] but he oversees [all of] criminal justice [for the state]."

Interestingly, the head of the newly created governance board of the CBI initiative mentioned in the above quote, had similar comments about using his authority. He said that in order to ensure faithful participation from participating agencies, he tried to engage all agencies in a decision-making process of the project.

"And that's--so I'm spending a little bit of time showing folks that we're going this way and then I got to back a little bit and let them drive the car to a certain extent. That's what we're trying to do as a committee and trying to share that image. And from an advisory council point of view, trying to get each one of us to share the dream so that either one of us could sit on any committee meeting and make the decision eighty percent of the time. 'Cause it's there; we just haven't gotten down to that level of detail. So if we can sign on to that part of the process, the four of us [state criminal justice agencies], and if we can be somewhat interchangeable culturally, I think the details of why that, fine. And that's what I'm shooting for, a certain amount of cultural honesty, no matter how bad it's--'cause we all know there's going to be some pain..... And we can only hope that we'll come up with a better idea and do something better at this point in time. And I believe that hurdle's been crossed to a certain extent, not to the point of being a Polly Ann-ish about it but delivered enough to make progress."

According to the cases, the relationship between the various approaches project managers and executive sponsors use in exercising authority and the building of trust has shown us two things. First, in some instances, it is necessary to exercise authority in such a way that enough discretion and power is given to participants so that they feel empowered to make decisions as a group. Second, project managers or executive sponsors also must be willing to exert their full authority and essentially dictate what must be done. Moreover, our case data indicates that there are mixed feelings about how to structure the authority relationship in government CBI initiatives. While there is some support for having a governance structure is important for decision making and respecting autonomy of participating organizations that construct trust relationship, some others think that giving the lead to a specific organization is a better strategy to achieve the initiatives' objectives. Thus, how to structure authority relationships in a government CBI initiative to support the building of trust warrants further research.

P3: Exercise of authority affects trust in a government cross-boundary information sharing initiative.

6. Conclusions

As discussed above, trust is widely viewed by researchers as an influencing factor in
interorganizational collaboration. However, much less research has been done on identifying and understanding the determinants of trust in government CBI initiatives. In the overall study several factors were identified as determinants of trust within a government CBI initiative. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, this paper presents three of these factors.

Determining the antecedents of trust in this setting makes an important contribution to the literature as well as to government practice. While helping to fill the gap in the research on this topic through the generation of these new propositions, this discussion also helps government practitioners to better understand which factors influence the creation of trust in their current or future CBI initiatives.

![Figure 2. Determinants of Trust in Cross-Boundary Information Sharing Initiatives](image)

Trust and trust building will continue to be important for government CBI initiatives. It seems clear that the clarity of roles and responsibilities, the knowledge of participating agencies, and the exercise of authority have an important influence on trust in these public health and criminal related government settings. Additional research will be needed to test the three propositions in different contexts, policy domains, other countries, and in multinational information sharing settings.

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8. References


