

Outsourcing State and Local Government Services: Decision-Making Strategies and Management Methods

John O'Looney



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Should we be doing—or trying to do—everything ourselves, or might it be better to contract some tasks out to others? Could they do them better and cheaper than we can? More and more state and local governments are asking these questions, and while there are many answers on the Federal level, these answers often don't apply lower down the line. Nevertheless, it is evident that contracting out is often the better strategy—but how best to go about it? What are the benefits and what are the hidden risks? Dr. O'Looney's book provides precisely the guidance that state and local managers need: first, how to decide to outsource a government service, then step-by-step how to proceed. Based on extensive interviews and other research, O'Looney takes managers through the intricacies of contract outsourcing and administration, but in doing so he makes clear that he appreciates the importance of government. His book is not an argument for privatization, as so many other books are; rather, it is an affirmation of government and the benefits of its many services.

Readers will find theory and advice on the services that are most suitable for contracting out; a listing and review of the components of a high-quality analysis, including the analysis of often overlooked political, organizational, and functional aspects of government; advice on how to go from deciding to outsource to actually designing, implementing, and monitoring a contract in situations that could prove hazardous to the livelihoods of government workers. He also discusses the changes that need to be made in the organizational culture, management, and employee training as a result of the change to a contract-based system of providing services; the considerations in designing work specifications and other critical aspects of the government-vendor relationship, and how ideal contracting processes and ideal contracts can differ according to the nature of the service being contracted. The result is a thorough and highly practical volume for executives and managers in the public sector, and for those who hope to do business with them.

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