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## White Paper

### E – Governance – The Real Story ©

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Prepared by

**R.S.Murali, Director & Principal Consultant  
NCR Consultants Limited**

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## **E – Governance – The Real Story**

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E-Governance is possibly the hottest topic today in almost all the countries. The objective of e-gov initiatives is to provide more efficient and effective governance. There is a very strong responsibility on the persons who run the government: the politicians, the bureaucrats, the citizens to make the government more responsible, responsive and participative. Increased involvement of citizens, decentralization and restructuring of processes with proper technology and e-enablement are the main features.

E-Governance should not be construed as just a technology initiative. The current trend has been to focus e-gov as a solution to problems in governance. Also, it is considered as a panacea for all the negative aspects of inefficient governance. It should be appreciated that there are very specific preconditions and enabling conditions that are required for implementation of successful e-gov.

This white paper looks at e-gov issues from these perspectives and attempts to provide an overview of the main ingredients that are needed to successfully implement e-gov initiatives.

### **E-government – a status**

“The business of government is not doing business but enabling proper conduct of business”

“We don’t need less or more government, we need *better* government”

In the 1990s many governments have attempted to leverage technology for the benefit of improved service delivery, decentralization, better information management, enabling and increasing transparency, increased involvement of the citizen’s in government, and so on. Countries like the USA, UK, New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, Malaysia, India, South Africa, etc have been attempting various e-gov initiatives. Each of these countries represents a different bracket of economic development; nevertheless feel that e-gov is the right direction for development.

A very important feature in this regard has been the impetus that the internet has given to the e-gov initiatives. Today almost all the countries are talking about e-gov initiatives, as they are expected to be provide *cheaper, faster* and *better* services to the citizens. As at the beginning of 2002, there have been several cases of e-gov implementation at various levels and in varying degrees.

“E-government services are catching on with the public, outpacing some common commercial services, according to figures released today from the 2001 National Technology Readiness Survey by the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland and Rockbridge Associates Inc. of Great Falls, Va”<sup>1</sup>. This shows the situation in the USA.

“E-government means people will be able to access all government departments and organisations through one website (portal) on the Internet, regardless of physical location or

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<sup>1</sup> “Survey finds e-government is a hit”: [www.GCN.com](http://www.GCN.com) (09-01-02)

the time of day. This is already happening - companies can file their annual returns on the Internet, teachers can check out their curriculum. There is a lot more to come”<sup>2</sup>.

Several surveys have been done many governments with the help of consulting agencies and also by independent consulting companies on this hot topic. While there has been a common consensus as to the fact that many governments have started considering the e-gov initiatives with seriousness, the approach followed by these agencies reporting on the progress and prospects needs to be examined. For instance in the report published by [accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com) on eGovernment leadership<sup>3</sup> discusses about the “service maturity” and “delivery maturity” concepts based on the extent to which technical infra has been created and accepted in various countries. The research has also rates countries based on this approach. But governance is actually delivery of service relating to basic responsibilities of the government like: primary health, primary education, basic infra etc. If there is actually no system for delivery of these services and are currently inefficiently handled then any amount of technical interventions will result in “value added waste”. Hence the focus has to be on BPR enable e-gov interventions. This is confirmed by Holmes when he says, “Most of the problems in delivering e-government are organizational and political rather than technical.....It is not a techie’s job to reinvent government”<sup>4</sup>.

“As is true all over the world, government in the developing nations costs too much, delivers too little, and is not sufficiently responsive or accountable.

Good governance reforms aim to address these shortcomings. Yet progress – after many years of effort in implementing such reforms – has been much more limited than expected”<sup>5</sup>. This shows that while lot of positive claims on e-gov successes could be there, the other side of the picture needs to be examined in proper light.

Hence the status of e-gov scenario across the globe is varying, it is advisable to have a focused definition of what e-governance is all about.

## What is e-government?

“Electronic government, or e-government, is the use of information technology, in particular the internet, to deliver public services in a much more convenient, customer oriented, cost-effective, and altogether different and better way”<sup>6</sup>.

“E-government is a way for governments to use the new technologies to provide people with more convenient access to government information and services, to improve the quality of the services and to provide greater opportunities to participate in our democratic institutions and processes”<sup>7</sup> – New Zealand

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<sup>2</sup> [e-government.govt.nz](http://e-government.govt.nz)

<sup>3</sup> “Rhetoric vs Reality – Closing the Gap”:[www.accenture.com](http://www.accenture.com)

<sup>4</sup> Douglas Holmes (2001), “e.gov”, Nicholas Brealey Publishing, London, -pp10

<sup>5</sup> Richard Heeks (2001), “Understanding e-Governance for Development”, IDPM, University of Manchester, UK, i-Government Working Paper Series - 11

<sup>6</sup> Douglas Holmes (2001), *ibid*, pp-2

<sup>7</sup> E-government Vision 01-05-2000: [www.e-government.govt.nz](http://www.e-government.govt.nz)

“E-governance is not just another facet of governance or one or more interface between citizens and government. It is a whole new opportunity..... Interestingly, we did discover that e-governance would actually be not less governance but more governance<sup>8</sup>”.

These normally accepted definitions of e-government or e-gov is limited, it talks about the demand side and does not cover the supply side. By providing an e-methodology the managerial capacity of the government does not improve. Also, the financial management of the governments – the weakest part of governments at any level – does not just improve by this e-tool. It needs to be clearly understood that **“e-governance is efficient and effective delivery of governmental services using relevant and appropriate e-tools”**.

‘If Government is keen to deliver good governance, then its process need to focus on three main goals, namely, quality, transparency and time management<sup>9</sup>’. This clearly brings out the following points:

- The focus needs to be on **process**
- Key words of governance are: **quality, transparency and time management**

Any solution on e-gov initiatives need to take care of these elements. It is to be examined, based on the government under consideration, the extent to which these issues can be addressed from the stand point of technology.

“e-Governance offers a new way forward, helping improve government processes, connect citizens, and build interactions with and within civil society”<sup>10</sup>. Here the focus has been the improvement of **government processes, connections with citizens and interactions of civil societies**.

However, this definition does not completely cover all the stakeholders involved in the governance process. There are three basic interactions involving government and the other stakeholders. These can be broadly divided in to three:

- **G to A**: Government to Administration (includes inter and intra departmental transactions and relationships)
- **G to B**: Government to Business (various aspects of procurement, contracting and e-commerce)
- **G to C**: Government to Citizens (interaction of citizen for information and interactive convenience, service delivery)

Unless these three elements are fully understood and addressed no e-gov initiative will be complete or fruitful. The limited review of existing information available shows that there has been no clear and well laid approach evolved for tackling e-gov issues. While it is a fact that e-gov initiatives needs to be tackled on a case to case basis **no comprehensive process** seems to have been evolved.

### **What e-gov is not**

- is not about setting up portals
- is not possible with out good governance
- is not about technology
- is not possible without stakeholders participation
- is not a top down initiative

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<sup>8</sup> Kiran Bedi et al, (2001) “government@net”, Sage Publications India Private Limited, pp-2

<sup>9</sup> Kurien, V. (2001) in his foreword in “government@net”, Kiran Bedi et al, Sage Publications India Private Limited

<sup>10</sup> Richard Heeks, ibid

- is not tool based but need based
- is not of value if it does not result in better use of resources
- is not about machines; it is about people
- is not about state-of-the-art technology; it is about appropriate technology

## E-Gov Process

Many approaches have emerged and are being discussed widely on setting up of the e-gov process.

Process enablers<sup>11</sup>:

- *Put everything (information and services) online and do everything online*
- *Ensure easy and universal access to online information and services*
- *Skill government employees to be knowledge workers*
- *Work in partnership to make it happen*
- *Remove barriers and lead by example*

Holmes also suggests that the approach should be “think big, start small, and scale fast”.

The theme here is that introduction of e-technologies for government needs to have certain enabling factors and “plug and play” approach will not provide the right answers.

Another approach to the e-gov process has identified seven milestones<sup>12</sup>:

Milestone One:	<i>Integration</i>
Milestone Two:	<i>Economic development</i>
Milestone Three:	<i>E-democracy</i>
Milestone Four:	<i>E-communities</i>
Milestone Five:	<i>Intergovernmental</i>
Milestone Six:	<i>Policy environment</i>
Milestone Seven:	<i>Next Generation Internet</i>

Here again the focus is on building consensus within the existing system and scaling up of e-gov technologies in a systematic manner.

Heeks<sup>13</sup> has analyzed various perspectives and prescribes a pragmatic approach to e-gov initiatives:

- To develop the high-level awareness and commitment that will carry forward e-governance for development
- To develop the capacities necessary to address e-governance strategically
- To develop the human and data infrastructure necessary for e-governance pilot projects
- To implement a number of 'networked government' pilot projects

This again brings about the fact that sensitization of various stakeholders is important, apart from tackling the initiatives in a systematic manner.

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<sup>11</sup> Douglas Holmes (2001), *ibid*, pp-8-9

<sup>12</sup> Janet Caldw, (2001), Seven E-Government Leadership Milestones, Director, Institute for Electronic Government IBM Corporation, [www.ieg.ibm.com](http://www.ieg.ibm.com)

<sup>13</sup> Richard Heeks (2001), “Building e-Governance for Development: *A Framework for National and Donor Action*”, IDPM, University of Manchester, UK, i-Government Working Paper Series – 12, pp-3

A survey<sup>14</sup> in the USA on the “In general, we find that the e-government revolution has fallen short of its potential. Government websites are not making full use of available technology, and there are problems in terms of access and democratic outreach. E-government officials need to work to improve citizen access to online informative and services”. This again confirms the fact that human resource aspects and planning aspects.

The inadequate use of available technology needs to be examined as to whether the governments were provided appropriate or advanced technologies.

One major issue in this regard is the “e-readiness” of a government before it starts e-gov initiatives. Many of the problems that arise in setting up e-gov processes are due to lack of adequate “preparation” by the government or understanding of “implications” of various activities with in the processes.

“For e-governance to succeed in developing countries, 'e-readiness' must be built. This means the barriers to e-governance must be reduced by strengthening infrastructural inadequacies, and the drivers must also be strengthened. The priority ..... is therefore to build e-readiness in six areas:

- Institutions
- Laws
- Leadership and commitment
- Human capacities
- Technology
- Data systems<sup>15</sup>”

All these clearly show that while e-gov is technology enabled, it is not just technology that would make it work. Hence, ***any e-gov solution that is planned needs to address all the above mentioned issues.***

## **Why Governance is an issue? The four key dimensions**

While e-gov seems to have taken the driver’s seat today, the real issues relate to governance. “Governance is concerned with structures and processes for decision-making, accountability, control and behavior at the top of organizations<sup>16</sup>”. So, while e-gov is oriented towards decentralisation and involvement of stake holders, the aspect of governance is to do completely with the persons manning the government.

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<sup>14</sup> Darrell M. West (2000) “Assessing E-Government: The Internet, Democracy, and Service Delivery by State and Federal Governments”, Brown University – survey of 1,813 websites

<sup>15</sup> Richard Heeks (2001), *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> “Governance in the Public Sector: Governing Body Perspective”, (2001), International Federation of Accountants, Canada, Study No13, pp-1

Also, while for the under developed and developing countries the governments in the developed countries seem to be performing well, an average citizen of all the countries expect more from the government in terms of the following. These are the **four key dimensions** for good governance:

- **Service delivery** has always been the bone of contention. In general, the peoples expectations are never met fully or completely. “Of the listed services, renewing a driver's license, voting on the Internet, having access to one-stop shopping, filing state taxes, and obtaining state park information were the most popular. Additional services, chosen by less than 30 percent of the respondents, were reviewing state police reports, paying parking violations, reviewing real estate records, and paying taxes by credit card<sup>17</sup>”. This clearly shows that citizens want easy access and disposal of various services in a simpler and easier way so that they can spend less time in this regard.
- **Service quality** is dependent upon both demand and supply aspects. Service quality is also related to service delivery. For instance admission is available freely and in plenty in primary schools (Corporation and Municipal run schools in the developing countries); but the quality of education is bad. Here though the service is available for delivery there is no service quality. Many of the government services are not rated at all. In countries like India having a report card on how a government performs is of a very recent origin. This is to evaluate both the demand and supply aspects of service quality and delivery. “The Report Card methodology presents a simple but highly flexible approach for organizing public feedback. The methodology can be used to...generate citizen feedback on the degree of satisfaction with the service provided...<sup>18</sup>”.
- **Service quantity** could be in terms of vertical or horizontal. *Verticals* deal with the “depth” of various services. This would answer the questions of level and accessibility of services of a government department to citizens. The *horizontal*s would imply all the functions of a department and its links with other departments / agencies. Health department should not only focus on the status of health of citizens or prevention of epidemics but also focus on health insurance information and links to such agencies. Service quantity is also addressed by the limitations to the multiplicity of agencies that a citizen has to approach furnishing the same information: ration card, driving license, etc.
- **Value for money** is answer for the question: does the citizen get services for the money he pays as tax to the government? Citizens pay property tax to the local government or municipality. Does the city management provide the citizen with good roads, sanitation and basic health facilities in this regard? “When asked about funding for e-government services, both citizens and business preferred a fee for online transactions rather than have it reflected in tax increases<sup>19</sup>”. This shows that the citizens felt that when the service is fee based better service is possible.

From the perspective of e-gov the basic question that comes up is how is e-enabling would answer all the **four key dimensions** discussed above and to what an extent. This is a major issue that needs to be addressed while creating a system of e-governance.

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<sup>17</sup> "What Citizens Want from E-Government" (2001)–Survey Conducted in the USA, [URL: http://www.ctg.albany.edu](http://www.ctg.albany.edu)

<sup>18</sup> Samuel Paul, Gopakumar K (2002), “How Public Feedback aids Public Accountability”, India Infrastructure Report 2002, Oxford University Press, pp-68

<sup>19</sup> "What Citizens Want from E-Government" (2001)– ibid

Also, governance is still in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats. E-gov should not be yet another gimmick by these constituencies in order to postpone major governance issues in the economy. When this happens it is sure that one day in the future the “scam” will be exposed and common man will loose faith in technology.

## **Neglected areas of governance that needs to be addressed in e-gov initiatives – the three major constituents**

“..... governments the world over are now chronically plagued by resource constraints without any let-up in the expectations of people from them”<sup>20</sup>. This defines the major reason as to why governments are looking out for new and better instruments of governance. It is the financial crunch that is forcing them to look for alternatives. While financial problems seem to be the major issue always, e-gov initiatives are viewed differently from a financial restructuring exercise. It needs to be understood that while the *objective* is financial restructuring the best *tool* to smoothen the process and to provide better solutions is e-governance aspects. There is confusion between objective and tool; this myopia of governments is likely to create more problems than before.

In order to tackle the situation, government needs the following *three major constituents*:

- Financial info
- Integration of financial and service delivery parameters
- Capabilities for finance / resource management

The **financial info** is available in bits and pieces as the government mostly follow cash basis of accounting and follows budgetary accounting. This means that the focus of government is on expenditure as per budget and invariably prepares expenditure budget and then accordingly try to balance the same. This does not bring objectivity in budgeting and the classical four governance dimensions are left out.

When the government is not able to balance the budget what does it typically do? The government goes to people for increased tax revenues or goes in for borrowings internally or externally. People are not prepared to pay more for the services due to the four dimensions discussed in the previous section. Borrowings from the higher level of government can be successful depending up on: the financial condition of the state or the higher government authority, political connections (generally if the body in the state and the local government belong to the same political group things are slightly easier). However, borrowing from external agencies is often rendered difficult as most of the government does not have financial information that are often interpretable with evaluation possibilities. This is one of the most neglected areas of governance that has not been addressed even in most of the e-gov initiatives across the globe.

Also the **financial and physical parameters are not linked** in government. This coupled with the limited MIS and DSS in the government all expenditures are incurred with out any relevance to the turnout of services. Hence integration of financial and service delivery information is extremely important.

The **capabilities in finance / resource management are limited** in government. The limitation is both system and human capability related. *System*: Finance management begins where accounting ends. The cash basis accounting system followed by the governments does not

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<sup>20</sup> Kiran Bedi et al, (2001) “government@net”, Sage Publications India Private Limited, pp-15

provide the required information for appropriate decision making<sup>21</sup>. It is a fact that most of the governments do not have even information about the numerous assets they own. *Human resource*: some how the governmental system has not been able to recruit, develop and retain professional capabilities for managing the government finances. Generalists invariably manage finances of such a macro order, though it is a specialized technical activity.

These three major constituents need to be addressed in any e-gov initiative. It may be necessary to conduct a post-mortem study of various cases from this view point and study the success / impact in terms of value addition to the economy.

## Gaps in e-gov initiatives

The four dimensions of governance and the three major constituent limitations discussed in the earlier sections provide a backdrop for analyzing the “gaps” in e-gov initiatives. The points given below are some of the major gaps in various e-gov initiatives. Actually, there are many more gaps, but most of them stem from these discussed below. Moreover, the gaps also need to be examined on a case to case basis.

- *Technology as an end in itself*: Most of the initiatives look at technology as an end in itself. It needs to be understood that ICT is not an alternative to good governance, it will help in providing better enabling conditions for good governance like providing faster information, make possible better analytics, single source information for multiple departments and so on. However, does not assure correct and timely decisions – as these are handled by human beings. Hence IT enabling does not offer complete solutions. These are often missed while planning e-gov initiatives.
- *Accounting as a terminal activity*: In all government departments accounting is considered as a terminal activity. This means that accounting is taken as the last activity where accounting is done as per budget allocations and rules governing the same. The accounting information is capable of providing necessary intelligence for decision making, as it happens in business systems – particularly when it is linked to other service delivery parameters. Actually accounting should be considered as “core” activity rather than terminal; this would prime excellent analytical / creative inputs to decision making and governance.
- *High end technology instead of appropriate technology*: The governments, for several reasons, always look to high-end / state-of-the-art technology instead of *appropriate* technology. This results not only in high cost initiatives, but also in inappropriate solutions several times.
- *Top – down approach*: Most of the e-gov initiatives are currently top-down. While all the three-tiers in governments have to be prepared for e-enablement, the e-gov initiatives need to start bottom-up. The first interface between citizens and government is at the “municipal level” – the third tier of government. Unless the e-gov initiatives start at this level and scaled up proper governance solutions are not possible.

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<sup>21</sup> The discussion on “appropriate accounting system for the government” is beyond the ambit of this paper

## What needs to be addressed for e-gov implementation?

Prof. Heeks as a part of i-Government initiative provides a four stage framework for implementing e-governance<sup>22</sup>.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
<b>Stage 1: Building e-Governance Awareness and Commitment</b>					
1.1 National e-Governance Summit	X				
1.2 Raising Awareness and Commitment Among Leaders	X	X	x	x	x
1.3 Awareness-Raising Among the Donor Community	X	X	x	x	x
<b>Stage 2: Building e-Governance Strategic Capacity</b>					
2.1 Building Strategic Institutions for e-Governance	X	x	x		
2.2 Building Legislative Infrastructure for e-Governance	X	X	x	x	x
2.3 Building Leadership and Commitment for e-Governance	x	x	x	x	x
2.4 Building e-Governance Strategy	X	X	x		
<b>Stage 3: Building e-Governance Implementation Capacity</b>					
3.1 Building Human Capacities for e-Governance Implementation	x	X	X	X	x
3.2 Building Technological Infrastructure for e-Governance Implementation	x	X	X	X	x
3.3 Building Data Systems for e-Governance Implementation	x	X	X	X	x
<b>Stage 4: Building e-Governance Pilot Projects</b>					
4.1 Identifying e-Governance Pilot Projects	X	X	x		
4.2 Implementing e-Governance Pilot Projects		x	X	X	x

**X** - major/main activity at this time  
**x** - minor activity at this time

The stages of awareness building, building strategic capacity, building implementation capacity, making a pilot project for scaling up and replication would be major considerations for design and implementation of e-government initiatives. If these are systematically addressed then various gaps discussed could be easily tackled. However, various activities / sub-activities in each of these stages need to be tackled as per specific requirements on a case to case basis.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Heeks (2001), *ibid*, pp-6

## PPI™ model of NCRCL for e-gov initiatives

The **Process Policy Integration** model of NCR Consultants Limited has been a very effective implementation approach for e-gov initiatives. In this approach **process** gets the main focus. Processes and policies are properly integrated from the view point of the *four key governance dimensions*. This is to take care of the gaps in current approaches in e-gov initiatives where policies are designed based on top-down approach. Necessary and proper links between process and policy are established by this model.

This PPI™ consists of the following stages in its generic model:

- Stage 1: Status analysis: Policy / Process
- Stage 2: Process mapping
- Stage 3: Analytical review (including stakeholders analysis)
- Stage 4: Functional requirement analysis (decision – info analysis) & Policy links
- Stage 5: Process redesign
- Stage 6: Specification for process implementation (including technology / hardware / software / manpower aspects)
- Stage 7: Process implementation, trial run
- Stage 8: Training
- Stage 9: Review
- Stage 10: Documentation

Several of these stages could run parallel depending up on the needs of the particular government or governmental agency.

NCRCL has been implementing several e enabled government initiatives:

- **Government of Karnataka:** Introduction of Fund Based Accounting System in Bangalore City Corporation and Tumkur City Municipal Council
- **Government of Andhra Pradesh:** Transformation in the Government from traditional department to farmer / user based organisation and introduction of complete management systems
- **Government of Madhya Pradesh:** Introduction of Intelligent Double Entry Accounting System and MIS for the Jabalpur Municipal Council
- **Government of Orissa:** Implication study of policy implementation and setting up of efficient processes for policy implementation
- **Government of Sikkim:** Setting up of MIS for departments of Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Services and Department of Horticulture.

## Frequently Asked Questions on e-gov<sup>23</sup>

### 1. **Why is government getting involved in the Internet?**

E-government will make it easier for others to embrace technology, which should be society's servant. Increasingly the Internet is being relied on as a research tool, and its flexibility has helped improve working efficiency as people become more comfortable about running their bank accounts or paying bills online.

### 2. **How much are people using government websites?**

AC Neilson's latest research shows that New Zealand government websites as a whole group (.govt.nz) are in the top five accessed by New Zealanders. Web access statistics need to be combined with our understanding of people's actual use of the information or services on sites once they access it.

In the case of other countries there are varying levels of internet access. However in all the countries across the globe, including underdeveloped and developing countries the use of internet is increasing. Also, various initiatives like cyber cafés, internet kiosks at village level and community computer centres are becoming increasingly popular providing scope for stakeholder participation.

### 3. **What does e-government mean?**

E-government means people will be able to access all government departments and organisations through one website (portal) on the Internet, regardless of physical location or the time of day. This is already happening - companies can file their annual returns on the Internet, teachers can check out their curriculum. There is a lot more to come.

It's important the Government provides a common set of standards so all government information is equally accessible. This will involve a number of management, legislative and infrastructure decisions, which will benefit other institutions. E-government is a technology enabled, sector-wide, cultural, organisational and business transformation programme - it is not a massive Information Technology project.

### 4. **Is e-government cheaper for the economy as a whole?**

E-government is also much cheaper. In Australia it has been estimated that providing the traditional counter/mail/telephone and brochure mix of providing

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<sup>23</sup> Based on FAQs from e-government.govt.nz

information costs \$2 - \$200 per service, compared with \$1 - \$7 per electronic service (once it is fully operational).

**5. What about those who don't have computers?**

It is important to reassure people that the traditional methods of contacting government departments will remain operational - offices and telephone - so no one will be disenfranchised. At the same time, it's important people realise the Internet will be the dominant means of delivering certain government services by 2004

**6. Is the issue of rural bandwidth very important?**

The issue of rural bandwidth has to be taken seriously. In New Zealand, as a result of the recent [Inquiry into Telecommunications](#) the government has recently altered the provisions of the Kiwi Share to include provision of 9.6kbps to 99% and 14.4kbps to 95% of residential lines over two years. In addition, the government will work with key stakeholders to help solve the problem of electric fence interference with Internet access in rural areas.

**7. Can you guarantee this project won't be abandoned when another important initiative comes along?**

E-government is not a fashion item; it's a major step forward in communications that has been accepted internationally. It's not an option. It's important the government helps minimise the time the public and business community spends on transactions with government. Tax dollars need to be spent efficiently to improve the service continuously, and e-government is the key.

**8. How can we be sure the money is being spent on the right things?**

We are focusing on getting the right building blocks in place. Technology is a rapidly changing area, so it is inevitable our plans will need to be adapted, which is why the e-government strategy is flexible and will be reviewed every six months. It's a bit like building a house - once the foundations have been laid, providing they are sufficiently solid, changes to the design can be made as the work progresses.

**9. What will e-government mean to ordinary Kiwis?**

As a one stop shop it will provide a faster and more flexible service so people will be able to conduct their business with government when it suits them - no more trips to the nearest office, lengthy queues or formal business hours. This will be a huge advantage for people living in remote areas. It will make it easier for people to participate in government consultations - eventually, even voting online will be a

possibility. People will become better informed as it will be easier to find the information wanted for leisure, education, work or home life.

Examples include:

- a. Registration of births, deaths & marriages
- b. Applications for social welfare benefits
- c. Paying tax and other bills
- d. Research into Parliamentary activities, including online access to legislation

#### **10. What will e-government mean for small and large businesses?**

We expect the cost of doing business with government to reduce gradually – this will range from business people being able to find the right information and regulations to their being able to conduct a series of related transactions quickly and in an integrated way. Additionally, as people become more confident with Internet usage, there will be an increased demand for service and shopping online - a real boost for businesses with small workforces. Large businesses will also benefit from the growing pool of Internet-ready customers wanting to purchase online.

A significant benefit for business will arise from the participation of government in the information economy. While the focus of this programme is on taking government online, the effect will be to stimulate the move of a critical mass of New Zealand business services online – that has major positive implications for our ability to operate in the global economy.

#### **11. What will e-government mean for public servants and government organisations?**

It will have a significant impact - strategically, organisationally and culturally. Individuals will need to ensure their computer skills are up to date and flexible.

The information rich nature of the portal means the public will need less help from government organisations; for example, some forms will be pre-filled; other areas will encourage self-service.

#### **12. Will e-government mean some people lose their jobs?**

Joining the information age will mean changes in the skills required for some roles; also some agencies will change in size (growing and shrinking). Some staff will move from manual processing to providing online services. There will be a growing role for people who can help those who want to use government services online, but lack the skills. The E-government Unit is coordinating its efforts to ensure everyone is equipped to take up the opportunities presented by e-government.

**13. Do government departments have the right type of employee?**

The public service's ability to meet modern government's needs is constantly being reviewed. We are broadening our capability in service delivery and technology. The E-government programme will lead to increased demand for people who are Internet literate, but generally it will simply move us further along our existing path.

**14. If many government agencies are already working online, why is your e-government strategy so urgent?**

It's important all the development work is done consistently and within the standard government framework provided by the E-government Unit.

**15. How will we know whether e-government is working?**

An evaluation and monitoring system is in place to ensure we are meeting our deadlines. In addition, we are working closely with government agencies track their progress with e-government. We will be seeking structured feedback about its success and know New Zealanders will tell us whether it is working.

**16. Why are you promoting a Secure Electronic Environment (S.E.E.™) when we all know that nothing is secure on the Internet?**

Security on the Internet will always be an important topic of debate and research. The Secure Electronic Environment targets shared business applications but we will continue to update our technical solutions as required. Some government-held information is unlikely ever to be stored on Internet-accessible databases.

**17. Will I always know when I have accessed the government portal?**

There will be many areas you can explore without any identification, such as obtaining information about government processes. There will be other times when your identity will need to be verified, to protect your private information (tax, benefits, health). Banks have developed ways to protect their customers and government will do the same.

**18. Will I just be a number to the government?**

We will be spending the next few months looking at a range of methods used internationally to securely identify anyone using the Internet to conduct their required transaction. Then we will decide which is the best method for New Zealanders.

**19. If the government opts for PIN numbers, will it be able to spy on me?**

People's personal information will remain protected by the Privacy Act and other legislation. These laws bind all government departments. There will be situations

where the integrated service provides real benefits to people because of the information drawn together - something that cannot be done yet, because of technology restrictions.

**20. What will happen if government agencies can't manage the change to e-government, in addition to their normal work?**

They will manage! The E-government Unit, as part of the State Services Commission, is working actively to ensure its e-government initiatives are achievable within realistic time frames. Indeed, many of its requirements are based on modern public management practice.

**21. Aren't there enough websites already?**

[New Zealand Government Online](#) served us well in the early days of the Internet but generally requires users to understand government's structure. We are planning a customer-focused portal so users can quickly get to the right services and information. It will be the only government portal for whole-of-government access. It is possible that, underneath this portal, there will be subject specific portals, such as a "green" portal or portals combining a range of services (public and private sector), if users would find that helpful.

**22. If I receive information or services through the portal, can I be sure it is correct and can be checked later?**

Any information received through the portal will be checked regularly to ensure only genuine information is displayed. Audit trails are used in Government today to test processes and accuracy, transparency of decision making and accountability. This is just as important today as it will be tomorrow. It will not change under e-government.

**23. If government departments are going to be more efficient, will I pay less tax?**

Our tax dollars will continue to be used for improving the government's quality of service.

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Please send your comments queries to the author at:

**NCR Consultants Limited**  
12 Karpagambal Nagar Mail Road  
Mylapore – Chennai 600 004  
India  
Phone: 044 2466 0955 / 5210 8209  
[ncrcl@vsnl.net](mailto:ncrcl@vsnl.net)  
[muralirs@vsnl.com](mailto:muralirs@vsnl.com)