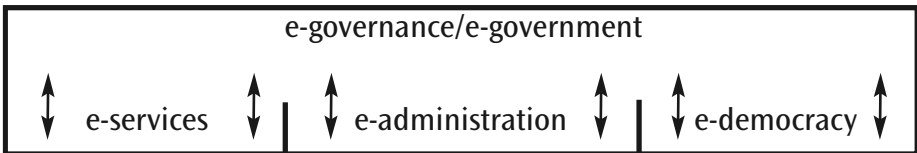


# Principles of e-Governance

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## The new model of e-governance

We begin by articulating a new model of e-governance that has arisen from experience accumulated in applying technology to government infrastructure.



1. E-governance and e-government are used interchangeably.<sup>3</sup> With some users, the choice of term depends on what they are emphasising: e-governance emphasises the governing processes, whereas e-government emphasises the electronic infrastructure. The rationale for this model is that it covers three different types of activities which can be identified and analysed in terms of their own goals and operations.
2. E-services refers to those aspects of e-governance involved in information and service distribution, both to and from the public (both citizens and businesses) in the form of documentation and remuneration, and to and from other governments in the form of information-sharing (best practices) and joint programme delivery (funding and/or facilitation).
3. E-administration entails those aspects of e-governance that require policy and workflow co-ordination; it comprises 'horizontality' between member departments and sections, and 'verticality' between decision-makers (supervisors) and knowledge workers (service-providers).
4. E-democracy concerns those aspects of e-governance that engage the public in electronically-mediated consultation and participation, whether these occur during elections (electronic voting), in the process of policy formulation (electronic meetings), or subsequently during programme implementation (online feedback and fine-tuning of regulations).

## International standards

The use of electronic infrastructure for the purposes of governance is now, in the twenty-first century, a globally accepted goal. Literally every country, party, jurisdiction and candidate endorses this goal, regardless of their position in the ideological spec-

trum. Where differences emerge, they typically concern how quickly to proceed, the amount to be invested and which functions should be prioritised.

In response to these concerns, international agencies, after considerable research efforts, have created a variety of guidelines. These address what are considered from a comparative perspective to be the most salient issues in the efforts to apply electronic infrastructure to governance. This chapter presents the results of a major sampling of such standards. It identifies the points on which there is general agreement and those that reflect the particular concerns of each authoring agency.

Organisations whose guidelines were reviewed include International Business Machines' (IBM) Institute for Electronic Government, the OECD, the Pacific Council of International Policy (PCIP), the Commonwealth Centre for e-Governance and the World Bank.

### **IBM's Institute for Electronic Governance**

<b>Implementation stage</b>	<b>Transformation agenda</b>
Milestone One	Integration
Milestone Two	Economic development
Milestone Three	E-democracy
Milestone Four	E-communities
Milestone Five	Intergovernmental
Milestone Six	Policy environment
Milestone Seven	Next generation internet

The approach behind this agenda is the quintessential chronological paradigm. There is a succession of stages, each one building on previous accomplishments. The implicit rationale for this approach is Eugene Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth* model that served as a guideline for international assistance for industrial investment in the post-second world war era.

All these milestones represent worthwhile achievements,<sup>4</sup> although a number of questions can be raised. For instance:

- Is the indicated sequence set in stone or simply a suggestion? Are other sequences, or concurrent approaches, possible? Have they been tried?
- To what extent have various jurisdictions progressed through any of these stages?

- Has the transition to each stage been smooth or has it been problematic (and if so, in what way)?
- What are the costs and impacts of each stage? Are all the costs and impacts similar or are they different? (One suspects the latter.)
- Lastly, how evenly or disparately do these stages affect the three areas of e-governance: e-bureaucracy, e-government and e-democracy?

These questions illustrate the general principle that any such guidelines should be thoroughly investigated by prospective users, who need to look at the size of the sample on which they are based, the methodology behind the analysis and the assumptions that the organisation brings to its policy work.

### The OECD's ten guiding principles for e-governance

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Implementation</b>
Commitment	Rhetorical and financial support for electronic service delivery
Rights	Access, privacy and confidentiality guaranteed to all users
Clarity	Goals, objectives, budgets and standards should be spelled out
Time	Enough time to plan, implement, monitor and review facilities
Objectivity	Performance criteria for networks, services, content, and satisfaction
Resources	Sufficient to design, deploy, operate and respond to feedback
Co-ordination	Standardised 'look and feel', navigation and content formats
Accountability	Staff answerable for quality and quantity of information and service
Evaluation	Annual audits and performance reviews for continuous improvement
Active citizenship	Encouragement of citizens to use the facilities in civic activities

The approach behind these principles can be characterised as 'constitutional' and reflects many of the features of democratic government. It is, understandably, a consensus view based on the member countries of the OECD, many of whom were consulted during the project that produced the principles, and some of whom were involved in the research and writing of the project report. Some of the questions that arise from the project are:

- What is the relative importance of each of these principles or should they all be given the same priority?
- Is there a sequence in which all or any of these concerns should be considered or can they be implemented in any order?
- What are the financial costs and other resource requirements for each principle? Do they all cost the same or are some principles more expensive to implement?

This approach also appears to address the kinds of issues one would expect to be covered during any e-governance project. Would using them produce any significantly different results than following a sequential approach, like that of IBM? If there are no differences, what are the advantages of using one approach rather than another? If there are differences, what are they and do they matter? Can these approaches be combined and if so how? Are there advantages (or disadvantages) in combining both approaches? If so, what are they?

### **Pacific Council on International Policy**

The OECD guidelines were crafted to apply to all projects that have a mandate to implement e-government. However, some countries are more developed than others. In its publication *Roadmap for E-government in the Developing World* the PCIP posed the following questions for e-governance planners.

1. Why are we pursuing e-government?
2. Do we have a clear vision and priorities for e-government?
3. What kind of e-government are we ready for?
4. Is there enough political will to lead the e-government effort?
5. Are we selecting e-government projects in the best way?
6. How should we plan and manage e-government projects?
7. How will we overcome resistance from within the government?
8. How will we measure and communicate progress? How will we know if we are failing?
9. What should be the relationship with the private sector?
10. How can e-government improve citizen participation in public affairs?

*Roadmap for E-government in the Developing World, 2002*

These questions posed by the PCIP are directed at the clarity of objectives(s) towards which e-governance is aimed, rather than the sequence of stages through which it will pass or the political principles it seeks to re-inforce. The premise behind these questions is that ‘developing countries’ cannot afford the experimental extravagance that ‘developed countries’ can when contemplating e-governance, so the objectives should be well thought out before scarce resources are committed. What experience seems to show, however, is that unclear e-governance objectives in developed countries may jeopardise political support, resulting in consequences that are unacceptable.

### **Commonwealth Centre for e-Governance**

In one of its monthly publications, the Commonwealth Centre for e-Governance summarised the requirements for successful electronic governance as developed by, among others, the World Bank. The World Bank, in particular, tries to encourage governments to adopt electronic governance as a vehicle for enabling transparency and eliminating corruption, in both government processes and business transactions. Hence, the first ten requirements represent the infrastructure that can support the eleventh requirement, namely accountability mechanisms (tracking activity electronically so as to provide a forensic trail that can be the basis for assigning responsibility and ensuring accountability).

<b>World Bank’s requirements for electronic governance</b>	
Vision	Purpose, goals, objectives
Strategic plan	Timetable, resources, personnel
Leadership	Champion, authorisation, publicity
Information sharing	Vertically, horizontally and between project partners
Feedback mechanisms	Contact channels, message recipients, helpful responses
Realistic budgets	Long-term commitment, equipment and training
Cross-government co-operation	Within and between departments, and between governments
Appropriate technologies	Implement on the basis of availability and cost
Information management	Organisation, storage, retrieval and sharing
Accountability mechanisms	Who is responsible for what, when, where and why?

Are all the first ten requirements really necessary to support accountability? If so, are they all necessary to the same degree? Are the costs of their implementation the same, or are the costs significantly greater (or smaller) for some than for others? Is accountability so important that it provides a bottom line for rationalising e-governance? How do other political objectives, such as equality, accessibility or democracy, fit into this set of priorities? The point of these questions is that with limited budgets, only so much can be done at once – focusing on accountability may either delay the achievement of other objectives or leave them undone. Is this understood and acceptable to those who are actually seeking e-governance?

### **Assessing the principles**

All the principles mentioned above are worthy of attention by prospective adopters of electronic governance. There is nothing wrong with any of them – challenges arise from what is *not* covered by these principles. Are all the principles necessary, or are some of them good, but not essential? How much will each set of principles cost to implement? Is there a range for such costs and can effective strategising reduce any of them? Are the final costs reasonable for the governments that must bear them? It would appear from a survey of the available literature on this topic that the answers to these questions involve considerable political judgement rather than just administrative choice. In these circumstances, guidance from existing best practices can be of help.