

## Summary

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Though important for all governments, e-governance can play a crucial role in addressing the particular challenges faced in small states. By modernising government processes and enhancing the ability of the public sector to overcome the barriers associated with small size and isolation, e-governance can enable small state governments to cost-effectively and efficiently deliver services to their populations, as well as strengthen social accountability.

The mobilisation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) for ‘micro-governance’ of small developing states also improves the quality of institutions, which in turn has been shown to improve political stability, raise the public debt threshold, decrease growth volatility and increase foreign aid and investment. As government is often the largest business and economic player in small states, the move towards e-governance will have a far larger impact and ripple effect on the country’s economic and social development than one would see in larger or developed countries. It is therefore a key tool to further economic development and good governance in small states.

However, small states face considerable challenges in developing e-governance, including the high cost of technology, the lack of infrastructure, limited human capital and a weak private sector. Eighteen of the Commonwealth’s thirty-two small state member countries are ranked in the bottom half of e-government indices.

This book was motivated by a desire to leverage e-governance lessons in Commonwealth countries and small states in order to maximise the success of future country initiatives. Recognising that there is no ‘one size fits all’ e-governance solution, it outlines the essential elements and prerequisites for e-governance in small states for use by policy-makers and government officials who are responsible for or associated with managing e-governance projects in small states.

One fundamental theme of the book is that e-governance is not a technology project; it is a government transformation project. It is not merely the computerisation of government operations, but a process that supports fundamental elements of good governance such as democracy, democratic processes and institutions that reflect fundamental human rights, openness, participation and effective, just and honest government.

E-government tools should be linked to wider good governance goals. As such, like any government reform effort, significant political will is required for its success. E-governance should not be led by technicians but by policy-makers, and a strong political champion for e-governance is essential. Leaders must understand how to customise applications to policy goals, in concert with how to revamp underlying business processes and organisational structures and capacities, and with an

understanding of the importance of data standards and architecture for systems interoperability. This book thus familiarises policy-makers with the processes involved and ‘best fit’ practices in e-governance from a small state perspective.

**Chapter 1** provides an outline of e-government and e-governance, including an overview of their potential benefits, a description of ICT and e-government strategies, an e-governance framework and an explanation of the stages of maturity of e-governance.

**Chapter 2** outlines how challenges faced in common by small states – including isolation, susceptibility to natural disasters and income volatility, and limited institutional capacity – can be mitigated and managed through the use of ICTs in government operations and practices. It provides a framework of the specific prerequisite conditions essential for e-governance success in small states.

Aligning ICTs with a well-developed strategy that addresses a country’s own economic, social and transformational needs and goals will leverage this critical resource to provide more citizen-centric services. **Chapter 3** outlines the e-government strategy development process, highlighting good practices in terms of leadership, corporate governance, consultation and strategy development, financing, and monitoring and evaluation.

The potential of e-government to improve efficiency, citizen-centricity, transparency and accountability will not necessarily be delivered until public sector processes are reconfigured and redesigned. Government process re-engineering (GPR), explained in **Chapter 4**, is a methodology for the analysis and redesign of organisational processes. However, as a process of change, e-governance and GPR must be accompanied by appropriate leadership, as well as strategies for change management and communication, in order to succeed.

E-governance is an iterative process; plans and strategies must be updated to reflect new government priorities and innovative technologies. An approach to the attainment of e-governance should therefore be designed as multi-pronged from the outset of the implementation process. **Chapter 5** elaborates key steps in the successful implementation of e-governance, including the development of legislative, regulatory and policy components, ICT architecture and standards, and ICT infrastructure.

In the implementation of e-government applications, cost and reach are paramount concerns to ensure sustainability and impact. **Chapter 6** explores emerging directions in e-governance that are of particular relevance to small states. The rapid growth as well as the affordability, usability and mobility of mobile technology herald the importance of ‘m-governance’ as a service delivery channel and a tool to strengthen citizen–state relationships. Moreover, the need to reduce the capital costs associated with e-government has also led to the increased use of cloud services within and outside government.

E-government catalyses the public service so that it can achieve its broader goals. E-government is thus a tool, a facilitator and an enabler, rather than an end in itself. As the public sector reforms structural processes and institutions for greater efficiency and better service delivery, creates institutional inter-linkages between government and offers greater participation for citizens, e-governance will increasingly become a key enabler of sustainable development and democracy in small states.