

# Electronic Government Back-Office

# Overview

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1. concepts
2. reasons
  - 2.1. efficiency
  - 2.2. customer focus
  - 2.3. policy outcomes
  - 2.4. economic objectives
  - 2.5. public reform
  - 2.6. citizen engagement
3. challenges
  - 3.1. legislative barriers
  - 3.2. budgetary barriers
  - 3.3. technology change
  - 3.4. digital divide
4. front office
  - 4.1. on-line services
  - 4.2. citizen engagement
- 5. back office**
  - 5.1. organizational change**
  - 5.2. leadership**
  - 5.3. coordination**
  - 5.4. inter agency collaboration**
  - 5.5. e-government skills**
  - 5.6. public-private partnership**
6. summary

# Back-Office and Reform

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## Definition [Back Office]

Back-office is the internal operations of an organization that support core processes and are not accessible or visible to the general public.

e-Government versus back-office reform:

- e-government helps to reform administrative back-office
- e-government also needs such reform in order to be successful

# Back-Office Implementation

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Back-office implementation issues:

- 1) organizational change
- 2) leadership and coordination
- 3) inter-agency collaboration
- 4) e-government skills
- 5) private-public partnership

# ICT and Process Change

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The introduction of ICT into government requires accompanying process changes in order to make the most of e-government.

However:

- ICT are often **overlaid** on an existing organizational structure without any thought how those structures can be improved.
- Governments tend to regard ICT as a **patch** to seamless interface with users to a complex administrative structure.
- National portals often involve **rearrangement** of existing information without any change in processes and procedures.

# Types of Organizational Change

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Small-scale ICT activity – development of a website as an additional information channel – may not require complex supporting changes.

Far reaching organizational change will be required when:

- 1) The website begins to offer **deeper, more complex services**.
- 2) Agencies are asked to **work together** to deliver services according to the needs of citizens and not their structure.
- 3) **New work styles** - tele-working, virtual teams - emerge.
- 4) With increased **data-sharing and communication**:
  - particular data holdings become redundant
  - more decisions are made at the lower organization levels
  - special units are established for government-wide projects

# Internal Resistance to Change

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Government structures are traditionally resilient to change.

Two issues to address when planning change:

1) **The willingness and ability to adopt new ways of working:**

- helping staff understand their role in ICT-enabled processes
- providing job redesign and training programmes
- establishing ownership of reform
- maintain dialogue with stakeholders

2) **The need for understanding/support by senior management:**

- more than the statement of principle and good intentions
- understanding the impact, benefits and risks of reform
- willingness to sell the reform to staff and leaders

# Example: Change

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## Example [Creating an Agile Workforce in Canada]

Public expectations for high-quality public services requires an agile, adaptable workforce.

Government agency as a “learning organization”.

Agile workforce initiative by the Organizational Readiness Office in the Chief Information Officer Branch of the Treasury Board of Canada:

- 1) competency-based staffing
- 2) greater use of pre-qualified posts
- 3) generic competitions for executive-level positions
- 4) repositories of work descriptions
- 5) e-learning gateway

Based on communities of public servants who play strategic roles in transforming and e-enabling service delivery.

# Exercise: Change

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## Exercise [Creating an Agile Workforce in Canada]

Consider what organizational changes had taken place in your agency in order to support the introduction of new ICT.

1) .....

2) .....

Consider what organizational changes had taken place in your agency that were enabled by the introduction of ICT.

3) .....

4) .....

# Leadership

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e-Government implementation can be difficult, risky and expensive.

Governments are asked to translate a broad vision into effective public services, while facing time constraints, lack of resources and political pressure.

**Sustained leadership is essential:**

- 1) to motivate people
- 2) to create incentives for action
- 3) to motivate and break down barriers to change
- 4) to put the right administrative mechanisms for e-government

# Types of Leadership: Stage

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Depending on the stage of e-government:

- **early stage** - obtain views on what needs to change, share a common vision with staff, evaluate new ideas
- **middle stage** – selling the benefits of the vision, creating personnel commitment
- **late stage** – sustain momentum and enthusiasm among stakeholders as benefits take time to emerge

# Types of Leadership: Level

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Leadership is needed at all levels:

- **political** – establish the vision, define priorities, express citizen's needs, make decisions, provide the will to carry them out
- **ministerial** – ensure vertical planning, get the resources, motivate staff, ensure cooperation across agencies/ministries
- **middle-level** – innovation, ability to translate the vision or objectives into precise actions and policies

Many e-government advances were driven in the past by the enthusiasm of individuals and individual agencies.

# Leadership and Decentralisation

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Leadership is not about centralisation of competencies.

Instead, **e-Government Organization** should be in line with the delegation of power and responsibility.

The key is to **create local leaders**:

- team leaders
- project leaders
- coordination leaders, ...

With team-working and data-sharing, the crucial asset is the ability to coordinate people, resources and responsibilities.

# Example: Leadership

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## Example [IT Strategy Headquarters in Japan]

IT Strategy Headquarters were established in 2001 to “promote policy measures to create an advanced Information Society”.

The Headquarters:

- 1) is chaired by the Prime Minister
- 2) consists of all Cabinet Ministers, private sector, etc.
- 3) has explicit duties and powers written in law
- 4) has its own secretariat with exclusive staff
- 5) is in charge of formulating and adopting the overall national
- 6) IT strategies and policies, including e-government.

IT Headquarters reviews the IT policy annually, studies the implementation twice-annually, makes the study results public.

# Exercise: Leadership

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## Exercise [Leadership]

Consider what leadership potential exists in your agency, at all levels, for leading e-government projects.

Provide examples, specify strengths and weaknesses:

1) .....

.....

2) .....

.....

What measures could your agency adopt to create more leaders?

.....

# Central Coordination

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Central coordination is a feature of most e-government strategies

This may take different forms:

- **formal units** located within public administration
- formal units linked to broader Information Society units
- a **coordination committee** comprising representatives of key agencies, private sector and other levels of government
- a committee of agency heads and chief information officers

# Coordination - Roles

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The roles differ: from advisory and information sharing, to policy development and implementation oversight.

In particular:

- 1) **developing** e-government strategy
- 2) **monitoring** progress towards goals
- 3) **promoting** benefits to the public
- 4) **linking** e-government to broader public reform
- 5) **linking** e-government to broader Information Society
- 6) **reasserting** strategies in the light of experience and progress

# Coordination - Implementation

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Central coordination can facilitate efficient implementation by:

- 1) promoting **sharing of information and good practices** – online registers of projects, seminars, publications, websites, etc.
- 2) facilitating **efficient acquisition of ICT products and services** - e-procurement, central purchasing, sharing of information
- 3) promoting **shared frameworks and standards** across government to facilitate interoperability and efficiencies
- 4) taking steps to **avoid duplication of efforts** – information sharing, expenditure approval, brokering of joint contracts

# Example: Coordination

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## Example [Standards and Architecture for e-Government, Germany]

The German government consolidated all government-wide standards and guidance into one document:

- SAGA – Standards and Architecture for e-Government Applications
- Aim: to develop standards for the smooth flow of digital information, to build electronic services using uniform procedures and data models.
- SAGA describes:
  - 1) compliance requirements (standards and architecture)
  - 2) components for the functioning e-government architecture
  - 3) standards for the basic components, such as:
    - content management system
    - platform for payment transactions, etc.

# Exercise: Central Coordination

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## Exercise [Central Coordination]

Do you think there is a need for a central unit to coordinate e-government activities in your government? If so, why?

1) .....

2) .....

3) .....

What kind of support your agency would need from this unit to carry out e-government projects?

1) .....

2) .....

# Seamless Services

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## Agency-based division versus cross-agency services:

- governments are divided into vertical units with mutually exclusive responsibility areas, control and political accountability
- e-government enables seamless, cross-agency services so that users can interact with the government as a single organization

Seamless services are central to customer-focus:

### Definition [Seamless Services]

Seamless services are services that transcend the agency-based structure of the supply of information and services, and present users with a coherent, integrated package of information and services.

# Inter-Agency Collaboration

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Development of seamless services requires greater collaboration between agencies: authentication, shared processing, data exchange.

Collaboration is needed in both aspects:

- front-office – better service to the customers
- back-office – efficiency and interoperability in government

Two complementary views:

- customer's view – government appears as a single organization
- government's view – customer appears as a single customer

Attempts to implement seamless services highlight the need for change in internal governance frameworks of public administrations.

# Collaboration and Customers

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Close cooperation is necessary for seamless transaction services:

- 1) pooling of market research on shared customers
- 2) common approaches to data presentation
- 3) data sharing within government
- 4) joint authentication

Cooperation is imperative when agencies share customers: **the greater the sharing, the greater the level of required cooperation between agencies.**

A key organizational principle for e-government.

Emerging organizational structure: **clusters of agencies with shared customers and strong levels of cooperation.**

# Example: Agency Collaboration

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## Example [Processing Migration Cases, Sweden]

Wilma is an IT tool shared by Swedish authorities involved in processing migration cases: (1) Migration Board, (2) diplomatic missions, (3) Aliens Appeals Board and (4) police border units.

Wilma supports the entire chain from application for a visa at the diplomatic mission to a decision in the case of any appeal.

Wilma has been part of broad process and structural changes:

- 1) IT support
- 2) central help desk
- 3) skills development
- 4) improved information and follow-up
- 5) more migration officers posted overseas

# Exercise: Collaboration

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## Exercise [Collaboration]

Consider in what ways your agency collaborates with other agencies to serve the shared groups of customers.

Provide examples of the resulting seamless services:

1) .....

2) .....

Provide examples of the resulting process/organization changes:

1) .....

2) .....

# e-Government Skills

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ICT skills have become a new general skill, like literacy or numeracy.

e-Government increases the importance of ICT skills required by public administration workforces.

Four skills sets are considered essential:

- 1) **Information Technology (IT) skills**
- 2) **Information Management (IM) skills**
- 3) **Information Society (IS) skills**
- 4) **updated management skills**

# Who Needs the Skills?

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e-Government skills are technical matters best left to specialists? No.

## Information Technology

- IT literacy
- specialist IT skills

all employees

## Information Management

- internal information management
- external information management
- privacy protection

managers, IM specialists

## Information Society

- understand capabilities of ICT
- ability to evaluate trends
- ability to set ICT strategy

managers

## Management/Business

- organizational change
- accountability frameworks
- cooperation and collaboration
- public-private partnership

managers

# Skills for Managers

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Public managers must be able to:

- lead (and not be led by) the IT departments
- integrate ICT strategy with organizational goals
- **match government processes with technical solutions**

To this end, they need to:

- 1) have basic IT skills
- 2) understand how ICT works
- 3) understand limitations of ICT
- 4) understand how ICT can be used
- 5) manage the agency's information strategy
- 6) deal with the impact of e-government on the agency
- 7) see how e-gov applications can build new services/products
- 8) see how e-gov applications can open new delivery channels

# Example: Manager Skills

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## Example [Skills for Public Managers, Italy]

Department of Public Administration and Department of Innovation Technologies promote two new training programmes for managers:

- Providing top management at the state government with training to develop IM and IS skills.
- Provide top- and middle-level managers of regional and local administrations with training to develop managerial skills in the context of e-government and modernization plans.

# Management/Business Skills

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e-Government has a major impact on public administrations.

Public managers must update their traditional management skills to meet new organizational needs:

- 1) managing **organizational change**
- 2) improving **customer responsiveness**
- 3) developing **accountability frameworks**
- 4) creating **incentives for cooperation** and collaboration
- 5) managing relationships with the **private sector**

# Skills Development

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The scale, complexity and rate of e-government-related change requires **structured initiatives to ensure that skills remain relevant.**

Example approaches:

- 1) in-house training
- 2) hiring of skilled professionals
- 3) partnering with outside organizations
- 4) more flexible remuneration arrangements
- 5) use of contractors and private outsourcing companies
- 6) more information on skills needs and opportunities
- 7) new pathways to IT jobs for non-IT staff

Maintaining skill levels is an **ongoing process**, not a one-time fix.

# Example: Skills Development

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## Example [Information Skills Map, UK]

The Office of the E-Envoy has outlined a skills map to prepare government agencies for e-government adoption. Seven skill areas:

- leadership
- project management
- acquisition
- information professionalism
- IT professionalism
- IT-based service design
- end-user skills

Skills assessment toolkit:

- the level of e-readiness by agencies
- what skills are available internally
- what skill-gaps exist and how to address them (hiring or outsourcing)

# Chief Information Officer

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Many countries have created **CIO positions**:

- within individual government agencies
- for the whole of government

in order to improve:

- **organization practices** for the management of IT
- **coordination and cooperation** within government

Some provide specific training opportunities for CIO positions.

# Example: CIO

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## Example [CIO University, US]

The Chief Information Officer University is a government-sponsored training programme for those aspiring to take up CIO positions.

CIO University covers 12 broad topics:

- 1) policy and organization
- 2) leadership and management
- 3) process/change management
- 4) information resources strategy and planning
- 5) performance assessment
- 6) project/programme management
- 7) capital planning and investment assessment
- 8) acquisition
- 9) e-government/e-business/e-commerce
- 10) IT security and information assurance
- 11) technical skills
- 12) desktop technology tools

# Private-Public Partnership

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## Definition [Private-public Partnership]

Private-public partnership includes all arrangements where governments contractually engage with a non-government entity to provide goods/services.

More narrowly, partnerships involve arrangements whereby work, risk and rewards are shared between partners.

In practice all private supplier relationships will involve elements of partnership, so it is useful to see them as part of a continuum.

# Partnerships - Evolution

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Evolution of private-public relations:

- 1) acquisition of ICT products
- 2) services for the use of ICT in government
- 3) direct provision to end-users of government services
- 4) access to advance technologies (public key infrastructure) for complex transactional services.

Integration of public services with private activity can make use of the **existing infrastructure and patterns of interaction** with citizens.

For citizens, **integration with private-firm and civil-society services** may be more relevant than linking government services.

# Partnerships - Reasons

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Why e-government increases the need to engage private partners?

- 1) With widespread use of ICT, governments may be drawn too deep into **ICT production issues**.
- 2) Partnerships can **free administrations** to focus on core policy and business issues, instead of technical IT issues.
- 3) Partnerships can be used to **access specialised skills** which may be difficult or uneconomical to maintain in government.
- 4) Partnerships can help **reduce risks** by formal assessment of technical solutions and sharing project risks.
- 5) Partnership can **reduce** the need to obtain sufficient up-front **funding** to establish a service.

# Partnerships - Features

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All partnerships are covered by some form of **contractual arrangement** of varying level of detail and complexity.

Such arrangements specify:

- outputs
- costs
- expectations
- dispute resolution mechanisms, etc.

Partnerships operated within **established arrangements** for procurement, accountability and reporting.

**Transparency** in such arrangements is a major governance issue!

While governments use private firms to deliver goods/services, **responsibility for the services ultimately rests with the government.**

# Partnerships - Challenges

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Some challenges for developing sound partnerships:

- 1) Accountability/audit - **balance** the need for flexibility to foster innovation while preserving oversight for public expenditure.
- 2) If specifications of outputs are too tight - they will require **renegotiation**, if too broad - they will require **clarification**.
- 3) Traditional procurement transfers risks but **retains control**. In partnerships, both partners **share the risks and benefits**.
- 4) **Risk management** should assign respective risks to the parties best placed to manage them.
- 5) A danger exists that existing partnerships will be seen as the only approach, effectively **excluding** other service providers.

# Partnerships - Collaboration

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It is difficult to determine which services:

- should use **public-private partnerships**
- should use **conventional supplier relationships**
- are best retained **within public administration**

A structured approach for the assessment of options should be made available to the agencies to make appropriate decisions.

Three forces:

- e-government coordinators
- procurement authorities
- key agencies

may develop an e-government **private-public partnerships framework** to help clarify what is allowed, but also retain decision on the merits.

# Exercise: Partnerships

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## Exercise [Partnership]

Consider public-private partnerships your agency has established.

Provide ICT-related examples, with reasons, scope and challenges:

1) .....

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2) .....

.....

How could the e-government public-private partnership framework help manage such relationships?

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# Summary: Back-Office 1

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Front-office improvement must follow more fundamental changes at the administrative back-office. The issues are:

1) **e-government challenges existing ways of working**

ICT should be incorporated into a package of modernization, organizational change and public reform, with greater team work, work flexibility, knowledge management practices.

2) **e-government requires leadership**

At all levels - from the political to the administrative, and stages: early - gain acceptance and create implementation frameworks, advanced - manage change and sustain support.

# Summary: Back-Office 2

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## 3) seamless services will draw agencies closer together

Development of seamless services require collaboration not just in technical terms but engaging deeper with share customers.

## 4) managers need e-government skills

e-Government increases the need for ICT-related skills: information technology (IT), management (IM), society (IS) and updated management skills (accountability, collaboration, etc).

## 5) e-government involves public-private partnerships

Governments work with private sector to access skills, products and capital, share risks, integrate public and private services.