GOVERNANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF E-GOVERNMENT

T he development and deployment of the e-government project requires a strong political will and a well-defined governance structure capable of implementing all planned projects in order to ensure that the government's vision and orientations in this regard are put into practice. This is key to the success of the e-government project. The *Office de la langue française* defines governance as "a way of directing, guiding and coordinating the activities of a country, region, social group or private or public organization."[25]

As it relates to ICTs, governance can be defined as "the system that enables leaders to manage, set objectives, guide and control with the goal of creating value. It means assuring shareholders that the organization is well managed."[26] The Auditor General of Canada defines governance as it relates to e-government as "the organizational structures and processes to help ensure that the government achieves its vision for [this project]."[27]

As well-defined governance structure must include centralized mechanisms for overall strategic planning, coordination, risk management, and results follow-up and evaluation, as well as accountability mechanisms. The follow-up and evaluation of results necessarily involves drawing up and implementing standards and rules for the regulation of e-government projects.

1. Governance Structure

1.1 Current Situation

Currently, the governance of the development and administration of the delivery of e-services is shared by all departments and agencies. In addition to the responsibilities assumed by all of the D/As, those with a horizontal structure, including the MRCI, MDER and OQLF, play an additional role in development.

The *Public Administration Act* mandates the *Conseil du trésor* to determine the strategic orientations that will promote the optimal development of the delivery of e-services and the management of informational resources. The *Conseil du trésor* can establish measures to ensure government consistency and promote the pooling of infrastructures or services.

In support of the *Conseil du trésor*, the *Sous-secrétariat à l'inforoute gouvernementale et aux ressources informationnelles* (SSIGRI),[28] assisted by the *Bureau pour le développement du gouvernement électronique* (BDGE), is responsible for:

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[25] http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/

[26] ACADYS, http://www.acadys.fr

[27] Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons,* November 2003, p. 13.

[28] The *Secrétariat de l'autoroute de l'information* (now the *Direction de l'autoroute de l'information*) originally reported to Cabinet. Subsequently, it reported to the Minister for Culture and Communications. In 1998, following the adoption of the *Politique québécoise de l'autoroute de l'information*, the responsibility for implementing the government's information highway then fell to the *Sous-secrétariat à l'inforoute gouvernementale et aux ressources informationnelles* (SSIGRI) of the *Conseil du trésor.*

GOVERNANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF E-GOVERNMENT (cont'd)

- Exercising government leadership to optimize the development of e-government and the management of informational resources;

- Advising the government on which strategies to adopt and informing the D/A of the selected orientations;

- Ensuring government consistency by coordinating the planning and follow-up stages;

- Proposing strategic projects that require close monitoring on the part of the *Conseil du trésor*;

- Collaborating with horizontally structured D/As, such as the MRCI, to consult citizens on their e-service needs, identify possibilities for pooling infrastructures and develop standards and support guides;

- Conducting a strategic watch to identify exemplary initiatives;

- Implementing support and guidance measures;

- Coordinating, developing, disseminating and ensuring security measures, and defining required reporting functions.[29]

In terms of **authorization**, only projects involving a departure from regulations or decisions already made by government authorities require prior authorization from the *Conseil du trésor*. Such authorization is not required for any other departmental or multidepartmental project, provided it is carried out under programs and budgets that have already been authotized.

In terms of **planning**, the exchange of information via strategic plans, expense management plans and annual management reports is the mechanism adopted to try to satisfy the need for consistency on the part of the government. Accordingly, the D/As must produce an informational resource management plan that draws a link with their strategic objectives. The plans are submitted to the *Conseil du trésor*. Moreover, the D/As must also provide an informational resource management report as a complement to their annual management report.

In terms of **follow-up**, projects deemed to be of strategic interest by the *Conseil du trésor* can be monitored more closely to ensure they are managed within an overall government policy.

In terms of **funding**, it is anticipated that departmental projects and specific infrastructure services will fall under the budgets of each D/A. The financing of interdepartmental projects and shared infrastructure services can be shared by the D/A involved or funded by the *Fonds de partenariat interministériel* and/or the *Fonds des services gouvernementaux*, depending on the circumstances. The management of certain projects can be charged and/or billed at a rate that ensures self-financing. Finally, funding of the development, implementation and management of any project can also be done as part of public-private business partnerships.

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[29] See *Cadre de gestion des ressources informationnelles 2002, Conseil du Trésor*, p. 15-17.

There are several joint discussion groups for the D/As, such as the *Comité stratégique des ressources informationnelles* (CSRI), the *Table de concertation interministérielle*, the *Conseil des directeurs généraux de l'administration* (CDGA), the *Comité consultatif sur la gestion du personnel* (CCGP) and the *Conseil des responsables de l'informatique du secteur public* (CRISP). These groups can be consulted and used to develop and manage informational resources.

1.2 Observations

Despite a real willingness by the *Secrétariat du Conseil du Trésor* to coordinate initiatives related to the delivery of e-services, several observations lead us to believe that the current governance structure will not enable us to reach our target objectives. Moreover, e-government involves sectors other than electronic administration, i.e., the "My Gov. Info." citizen's page, the systematic use of information and communication technologies in the networks and the establishment of e-democracy, which are incompatible with the current governance structure.

On this point, consultations with public servants indicate that the governance model has institutional limitations. In fact, it appears that:

1.   The subject of governance is poorly defined;
2.   Subjects of concern are quite limited;
3.   Operating rules are mostly *ad hoc*;
4.   There is no obligation to produce results;
5.   There is a lack of political strength, i.e., a strong, clearly defined political willingness;
6.   The current situation encourages and reinforces the compartmentalization of operations.

This is corroborated by the departments' and agencies' report sheets (see Appendix). In fact, the report on the delivery of e-services shows a contrast between the D/As: A digital divide exists within the very core of the government structure, which is due in part to the government's compartmentalized operations and a lack of concern in the D/As.

First, the report clearly indicates the presence of this divide with respect to informational services on the various D/A sites. Some sites have very little content, particularly those of the agencies, while others have highly developed content. This is quite surprising, since it is simple and relatively inexpensive to create and update Web sites rich in content in this day and age. Also, the report on the D/A Web sites clearly shows little uniformity among the D/As regarding their priorities for implementing transactional services.

Second, the government's strategic orientations do not always seem to be applied. The priority given to projects is determined according to individual preferences and opinions rather than a clearly defined vision and an exhaustive analysis of the needs of citizens and businesses. Moreover, certain departments and agencies are still developing their own e-service delivery solutions without regard for existing or pending infrastructures. Hence, the sharing of expertise and infrastructures developed by the departments and agencies is not generalized and is still done on an informal and voluntary basis.

Third, since it is difficult to know whether set objectives have been reached, accountability mechanisms seem insufficient. In fact, the management reports and statements of services to citizens suggest that certain D/As, particularly the agencies, have not clearly defined their e-service objectives. Moreover, when they are stated, they are not done so in a uniform manner, which makes it difficult to implement evaluation mechanisms.

Finally, external stakeholders have noted problems similar to those related to the governance structure and mechanisms in other public administrations, particularly in the federal government. They have unanimously petitioned for a stronger governance of the projects in question, supported by the management of these projects and the highest decision-making bodies.

Since Québec's e-government project is still in its infancy, it is not too late to change the current governance structure and mechanisms to take into consideration all of these observations, which have been inspired mainly by the experiences of other administrations. Clearly, some improvements have been made over the past year. However, it appears that only a new impetus marked by structural and organizational changes will enable Québec to implement the e-government project fully. In Québec, as elsewhere, the status quo is unacceptable. If the status quo is maintained, the public will perceive the government as being set in its ways and incapable of learning from the experiences of others.

1.3 Proposed Governance Principles

In light of these observations, certain governance principles appear essential to ensure this project receives all the leadership necessary for its implementation.

The Premier's leadership in getting all of the various stakeholders to commit to the development process according to a comprehensive vision is imperative for the success of e-government. The project manager must have sufficient authority to ensure that the D/As participate in the project. Their autonomy in terms of implementation and management must be clearly defined so that projects can be prioritized according to the overall government policy. While implementation and management could be accomplished by other organizational bodies, it is crucial that the Premier show the leadership needed to implement the overall vision of e-government.

At the federal level, where the governance structure is similar to the one in Québec, the Government On-Line Advisory Panel (whose members come from the university, private, volunteer and high-tech sectors) concluded in its December 2003 report that the Government On-Line initiative should be headed by the Prime Minister, without whose leadership the planned transformation of services could not be achieved. It also stated that:

"our experience demonstrates that it will be impossible for the federal government to transform its services without strong leadership from the very highest levels of the government and public service. [It is] essential that there be central leadership, management and governance of the service transformation initiative, ideally by the Prime Minister" (p. 20).

Moreover, in its final recommendations on leadership, management and governance, the Advisory Panel proposed that:

"the Prime Minister should [assume] responsibility for leading the […] service transformation initiative, or assign this responsibility to the Deputy Prime Minister" (p. 33).

Finally, in terms of communication and promotion to the members of parliament, citizens, businesses and the media in Canada, the Advisory Board also considered the Prime Minister's involvement as essential in supporting these groups:

"The federal government's initiative must ensure that these groups are fully informed about the challenges and opportunities presented by service transformation, and that they are able to contribute to its success. This initiative must be led by the Prime Minister" (p. 8).

In a similar but different situation, i.e., that of creating a Department of Youth in Québec, Mr. Charest stated:

"I quickly learned that within government structures, it is virtually impossible to coordinate things from the bottom of the pyramid. Coordination only happens from the top down, where you can command a certain moral authority. We recommended [to the Bourassa government, which planned to create a Department of Youth] that if they wanted to do something significant, to create a secretariat within the cabinet so that the coordination of various measures aimed at youth and stemming from different departments could benefit from the full moral weight of the Premier. We told them this would be effective."[30]

Finally, the role of the Premier appears invaluable, since his authority and leadership are needed to carry out the e-government project, which far exceeds the simple delivery of e-services. In fact, this project involves all of the networks, particularly the health and education networks, as well as all municipalities. It also aims to improve the democratic process. Mobilizing all network stakeholders, as well citizens and businesses, is one of the key conditions for the success of the project. It cannot be implemented under the direct control of a single administrative entity, but requires the involvement of the entire government and, above all, the Premier.

A survey of other experiences conducted abroad shows that similar choices have been made in other public administrations which have resulted in tangible, beneficial developments in terms of e-government. This is specifically the case in the United Kingdom, whose *e-Envoy Office* (www.e-envoy.gov.uk) reports directly to the Prime Minister, has 244 employees and a budget of approximately CAD$50 million.

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[30] Jean Charest, *J'ai choisi le Québec*, 1998, p. 52.

For its part, France has created the *Agence de développement de l'administration électronique* (ADAE), under the direct responsibility of the Prime Minister (www.adae.gouv.fr). The tabling of the ADELE, *pour vous simplifier la vie* project in February 2004 is indicative of France's progress since the implementation of the ADAE.

Closer to home, New Brunswick has created Service New Brunswick (SNB), a service agency for citizens and businesses which reports directly to the Premier. The strategic development of projects related to e-government is coordinated by SNB. Again, the results are highly conclusive: The one-stop service outlet via telephone, the Internet and service counters have become a province-wide reality.

Nonetheless, other jurisdictions have opted for alternative solutions that could also be valid. This is the case in British Columbia, where responsibility for developing and commissioning e-government projects is assigned to a special department, the Ministry of Management Services (www.gov.bc.ca/mser/). The minister for this department must exercise leadership in developing delivery routes for all government services distributed throughout the D/As, especially in terms of e-government. The department also offers alternative access routes other than the Internet, including call centres and counter services where government employees answer questions and provide services. The minister is also responsible for applying the legislation governing the protection of privacy and access to information. The case of British Columbia shows that it is possible to combine all elements involving e-government and multiservice centres within a single department.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1   We recommend that the Premier assume a leadership role in the development of e-government and make it a priority of his government.

4.2   We recommend creating the position of Chief Information Officer (CIO).

4.3   We recommend creating a *Secrétariat au développement du gouvernement en ligne* that is managed by and reports to the Chief Information Officer.

4.4.   We recommend creating a strategic committee on e-government which would be comprised of external stakeholders from the private and research sectors, as well as interest groups. Criteria must be established so that the makeup of this committee reflects the diversity of sector resources. The members of this committee would be appointed by the government and would support the CIO in his development strategies.

4.5   We recommend creating an independent body (to be determined) to implement e-democracy projects.

4.6   We recommend creating a committee of champions comprised of senior managers of the major business sectors related to citizen services (health, education, justice, municipalities, etc.). These managers would include deputy ministers, company CEOs and mayors. The committee members would be appointed by the Premier, and the committee's operating rules determined by the government. The committee of champions would act as a liaison between the D/As, the networks, the municipalities and the CIO to ensure that e-government policies and strategic orientations are consistently applied.

4.7   We recommend making the CIO responsible for the strategic development of e-government projects in coordination, where applicable, with the network organizations and the National Assembly, while taking into account potential costs/benefits. We recommend that the CIO define the D/As' autonomy in terms of developing e-government projects.

4.8   We recommend that the commissioning of the multiservice centres and the government's one-stop service portal be assigned to an independent government service agency attached to the *Conseil du Trésor*. Their service agency would be headed by a director general acting under the authority of a board of directors chaired by the Chief Information Officer.

4.9   We recommend that the management of informational resources be assigned to an independent government informational resource agency attached to the *Conseil du Trésor*. The informational resource agency would be headed by a director general acting under the authority of a board of directors chaired by the Chief Information Officer.

4.10   We recommend that the government table a detailed strategic plan to implement the overall governance structure within six months of tabling this report.

GOVERNANCE OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF E-GOVERNMENT (cont'd)

a) Roles and Responsibilities

It is important to distinguish clearly between all parties involved in the development of e-government and to define each party's roles and responsibilities in terms of the recommendations listed above.

- **Political Body Under the Authority of the Premier**

  – Exercises leadership, i.e., the political ability to have all of the stakeholders commit to the process of developing e-government according to a comprehensive vision.

- **Chief Information Officer (CIO)**

  – Applies and coordinates the overall e-government policy;

  – Ensures consistency on the part of the government in coordinating the planning and follow-up stages and in defining the D/As' autonomy in terms of developing e-government projects;

  – Collaborates with horizontally structured D/As, such as the MRCI and the SCT, to consult citizens on their e-service needs, define possibilities for pooling infrastructures and develop standards and support guides;

  – Collaborates with network organizations to intensify the use of ICTs in their areas of expertise;

  – Supports and guides the development of e-democracy;

  – Takes all measures deemed necessary, such as security standards and appropriate practices, protection of personal information, etc.;

  – Defines reporting measures that departments and agencies should apply to assess the development, implementation and commissioning of e-government projects;

  – Supports and guides stakeholders in e-government projects (public servants in particular) through appropriate mechanisms: Funding programs and strategies to change/develop organizational capacity;

  – Conducts a strategic watch on e-government at the Canadian and international levels to identify exemplary initiatives and models with the aim of improving services to citizens and modernizing the Québec government.

- ***Secrétariat pour le développement du gouvernement en ligne (SDGL)***

  – Supports the CIO in all of his/her tasks.

- ***Comité stratégique du gouvernement en ligne (CSGL)***

  – Advises the Premier and the CIO on e-government development strategies;

  – Reviews and assesses progress reports on the implementation of e-government.

- ***Service Agency***

  – Acts as the e-service nerve centre for front-line services on behalf of the D/As;

    a) Manages and operates multiservice centres, including telephone, mail and counter services, for the delivery of services not provided on-line;

    b) Manages and operates the one-stop government portal for the delivery of e-services.

  – Provides front-line services in all areas of Québec, taking into account the special needs of each region and its clientele;

  – Promotes access to D/A documents (with their collaboration) for all citizens and businesses.

- ***Informational Resource Agency***

  – Supports the *Secrétariat pour le développement du gouvernement en ligne* and all of the D/As in implementing e-government projects;

  – Provides common, pooled infrastructures or services responding to a request in managing the D/As' informational resources;

  – Ensures technological integration to guarantee consistency in and coordination of the operation of common services and shared technological infrastructure;

  – Helps the networks and the municipalities, at their request, with various functions related to managing informational resources by providing advice, help and expertise in the field.

- ### *Committee of Champions (CC)*

  - Leads and stimulates the business sector in the development of e-government;

  - Ensures the integration of strategic policies and guidelines in the business sector;

  - Ensures government consistency in collaboration with the CIO;

  - Advises the director of the service agency.

- ### *External Body for E-Democracy*

  - Ensures the creation of forums for public debate, the integrity of the consultation process and, eventually, the design and management of e-voting.

- ### *The Departments and Agencies*

  - Apply and respect the policies and strategies of e-government in their activities;

  - Establish clear objectives for the delivery of e-services within their strategies and guidelines, in compliance with standardization rules defined by the CIO in terms of reporting procedures;

  - Collaborate with the CIO in developing e-government policies and strategies via the committee of champions.

b) Authorization, Planning and Follow-Up

The following projects require specific authorization, follow-up and planning by the CIO:

- Horizontal and/or interdepartmental projects: Any project containing features that can be assumed or shared by several D/As and/or network organizations and/or containing solutions that involve integrated service delivery, such as the one-stop government portal;

- Sectorial projects: Any project that includes one or more sectorial aspects that involve one or more D/As and/or network organizations in one or more sectors, such as health, education and justice.

The authorization, planning and follow-up of these projects by the CIO is deemed essential to strengthening government consistency and coordination in meeting the objectives of e-government. However, the CIO's authorization is not required for a specific department or agency project unless the latter deviates from e-government objectives. The CIO should also define the degree of independence of the D/As with regards to management in terms of e-government development. The authorization, planning and follow-up mechanisms must be established by the CIO in collaboration with the relevant departments and agencies.

c) Funding

The costs of developing, implementing and commissioning e-government projects can be funded by one or more of the following:

1. The *Fonds pour le développement et le déploiement du gouvernement en ligne* (which would replace the *Fonds de partenariat interministériel*);

2. The specific budgets of departments and agencies;

3. Public-private partnerships: Partnerships between the departments and agencies and the private sector, enabling risk sharing and project funding;

4. Self-financing through the billing of value-added projects.

The funding rules and conditions of the *Fonds pour le développement et le déploiement du gouvernement en ligne* must be established in collaboration with all relevant departments and agencies. The rules and conditions for using the *Fonds* to finance projects and the rules for public-private partnerships must also be established by the Agency, whose creation was recently announced by the President of the *Conseil du trésor* to oversee public-private partnerships.

2. Consideration of E-Government by Senior Officials in the Public Administration

2.1 Analysis: Impact of the Briefs Submitted to Cabinet on the Development of E-Government

To reflect the government's priorities and especially to harmonize all procedures within each department and agency, steps should be taken so that all briefs submitted to Cabinet include a section on the implications of the proposed development measures for e-government. We suggest that the "Consultation Between Departments" section in the public section of the briefs submitted to Cabinet include a special provision to this effect, similar to the assessment of the impact of a given measure on the status of women or the access to information. As is the case with these two issues, when there is an exchange of ideas between departments, we suggest that the briefs describe the outcome of the resulting interdepartmental consultations.

RECOMMENDATION

4.11 **We recommend clearly showing that the implementation of e-government is a priority by ensuring that each brief presented to Cabinet includes a section on its effect on e-government. If exchanges of ideas take place, the section must describe the results of interdepartmental consultations.**

2.2 Performance and Accountability Agreement

Pursuant to the *Public Administration Act*, a minister and the director of an administrative unit in a department or body under the responsibility of the minister can enter into a performance and accountability agreement (Section 12). Each minister would therefore have to sign such an agreement with any person that he/she designates regarding e-government.

This agreement must contain an annual action plan for the development of e-government, as well as the indicators to be used in measuring results. At the end of each year, a management report describing the results achieved must be produced and tabled in the National Assembly by the minister concerned.

The signing of agreements specifically covering e-government will encourage the departments and agencies to grant this project the full importance it deserves. The accountability of ministers or deputy ministers to the members of the National Assembly will also encourage the former to be more consistent in their choices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.12   We recommend that Cabinet rule on the need for signing a performance and accountability agreement between the ministers and the individuals that they designate. Such an agreement must bear specifically on the development of e-government.

4.13   We recommend that the *Secrétariat au développement du gouvernement en ligne* implement follow-up mechanisms to ensure respect for such performance and accountability agreements.