

In this and the following two chapters, we present a specific framework for making WWW investment decisions. Although this framework consists of several tools and should be considered a holistic suite. However, each may be used individually for specific purposes, or may be modified to suit unique circumstances.

The first step in making the decision is to be as explicit as possible about the features and functionality of the Web-based services that you plan to deliver. There are many ways to identify service objectives. Although you probably will not need to have every last detail worked out, there are some important questions about system features and functionality for which you should have clear and ready answers:

- Who are your customers?
- What information-based services will you provide?
- How will customers get access to these services?
- What will customers be able to do?
- What system features will be included?
- What internal and external information sources must be coordinated?
- What security and confidentiality measures must be implemented?
- What activities will be outsourced?

The methods described in *Developing & Delivering Government Services on the World Wide Web: Recommended Practices for New York State* can be used to help find answers to these questions.

Three levels of aspiration

Plans can be developed with different levels of aspiration. (An optimist typically will have grander schemes than a pessimist.) In resource-poor situations, agencies may want to invest slowly and carefully in Web-based services. In other circumstances, the WWW may be exactly the big investment opportunity the agency seeks for significant change. The cost and performance assessments described in Chapters 4 and 5 will be especially useful when they are calculated for at least three different levels of aspiration. At what level of aspiration does the performance of Web-based services best justify the associated costs: modest, moderate, or elaborate?

Modest

System features and functionality at a modest level are the minimum investments that might define an initial exploration of WWW potential for the agency. The development of a modest set of Web-based services would include relatively inexpensive features and limited information sources. Modest objectives would be consistent with a somewhat skeptical management team that is willing to "test the water" but not "take the plunge."

Moderate

At the moderate level, a plan for Web-based services might include additional advantageous features and a wider range of internal and external information sources. Delivery might be targeted distinctly at several different types of customers. Overall, this would offer mid-range functionality with some economy-of-scale advantages built in by expanding beyond the modest level. The moderate level of aspiration, however, should not be viewed as an excessive commitment of agency resources to the WWW initiative.

Elaborate

Realistically, what is the most you could hope for? The highest level of aspiration could be a set of objectives that offers a wide range of Web-based services, and/or technically sophisticated design goals, consistent with the resources potentially available to the project.

Of course, one agency's modest level of aspiration might be the elaborate version of service objectives for another agency. In detailing the elaborate level, be imaginative enough to be called "optimistic" but not "dreamer."

A blank worksheet for defining your project is provided for your use on the next page. Completed examples are found in the case studies on pages 24 and 29, these illustrate the process of identifying system features and functionality at modest, moderate, and elaborate levels of aspiration.

Identification of system features and functionality

Figure 2. Blank Worksheet for System Features and Functionality

System Features and Functionality			
	Modest	Moderate	Elaborate
Who are your customers?			
What information-based services will you provide?			
How will customers get access to these services?			
What will customers be able to do?			
What system features will be included?			
What information sources (internal and external) must be coordinated?			
What security and confidentiality measures must be implemented?			
What activities will be outsourced?			
