

The technological advances of the last decade have changed the way we live and work. The World Wide Web is a perfect illustration. The Web offers people and organizations a whole new way to interact and communicate.

Companies sell their products and services online. Universities offer distance learning classes and degrees through the Internet. Virtual banks provide teller-less savings and investment services. And for every one of these applications, there are customers at the other end. People are shopping, learning, and banking with the convenience of personal computers.

Governments are on board as well. Federal and state agencies, as well as many local and county governments, have realized the Internet can help them communicate with the public, with businesses, and with one another. The anytime, anywhere character of the Web allows government information and services to be more available to more people at greater convenience, and hopefully with increased satisfaction.

Untangle the Web is not designed to persuade you of the value of putting your government on the Web. Clearly there are both opportunities and challenges to embracing Internet technology. This report is designed instead to help government officials untangle the Web--to understand the new ways of doing business at the county and local government level. **Untangle the Web** provides a set of guidelines that can help governments achieve the benefits and opportunities of getting online without being overwhelmed by the inherent challenges of developing, launching, and maintaining Web sites.

Last summer, the Center for Technology in Government (CTG) met with a group of town, city, and county government officials to gather insight into how they launched and currently manage their Web sites. The group shared valuable insights, suggestions, and ideas about how they've moved their governments to the Web. This guide draws from those experiences.