

Why Assess Information Sharing Capability?

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Anthony M. Cresswell, Theresa A. Pardo, Donna S. Canestraro, Sharon S. Dawes

Government faces many challenges that can be addressed more successfully when information is shared across organizational boundaries. These challenges differ widely in scope and complexity. One may involve linking the different databases and case management processes in a single human services agency where organizational units operate under one executive leader, working toward a common goal. Another challenge may involve enterprise-level initiatives, such as a statewide crime communications network, consisting of many different agencies at several levels of government engaged in diverse but overlapping business processes using similar, if not identical, information. Some challenges, such as emergency response, are so extensive that they require information sharing and work processes that cross the boundaries of the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

Initiatives that depend on these kinds of information sharing are typically complex, difficult, and prone to failure. They are more likely to succeed when they include a comprehensive and systematic assessment of both organizational and technical information sharing capabilities. Such an assessment identifies the strengths and weaknesses of all participants, points out risks and risk mitigation strategies, and therefore leads to better planning and execution of cross-boundary programs and services.