

I. What is E-Government?

E-government is as varied and complex as government itself. While government is "a dynamic mixture of goals, structures, and functions" that serve multiple and diverse constituencies, electronic government initiatives incorporate technology to improve the way it serves those constituencies.⁽³⁾

What do people talk about when they talk about e-government?

"Imagine a future in which citizens can log onto one Internet site, easily find the government services they are looking for, and use that site to conduct an online transaction."⁽⁴⁾

"E-government refers to the delivery of government information and services online through the Internet or other digital means."⁽⁵⁾

"E-government links people...to the public marketplace of ideas, debate, priorities, initiatives, innovation, services, transactions, and results. It puts ownership of government in the hands of all Americans."⁽⁶⁾

"Digital (electronic) government is about transforming government service delivery through the use of technology."⁽⁷⁾

These statements may seem like visions of the future but all levels of government are grappling today with how to use electronic technologies to improve services to citizens, increase efficiency, and streamline traditional paper processes. At the federal level, electronic government is being driven by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 and the Government Paper Elimination Act of 1998. Both laws were designed to reduce the flow of paper throughout the federal government by encouraging increased use of electronic communication and documentation. In New York State, most e-government projects are part of the "Government Without Walls" initiative launched by Governor George Pataki in early 2001.

Technologies like the Internet may be changing the way that governments interact with citizens and businesses, but that's only part of the puzzle. What happens behind the Web site is a fundamental change in the way that government business is being conducted. For example, in New York City, citizens and visitors can log on to the City's Web site at any time, from anywhere to find out if the cafe where they intend to have lunch has had any recent health violations. While this move to the Internet changed the way people can access information about the places they eat, the process of completing restaurant inspections has changed as well. Public Health Sanitarians now carry around wireless PDAs (personal data assistants) as they inspect food service establishments. When they complete their inspections, they jot their notes into their PDA and send them directly to the department's network information system.

(3) Theresa A. Pardo, *Realizing the Promise of Digital Government: It's More than Building a Web Site*, iMP Mag., Oct. 2000, at http://www.cisp.org/imp/october_2000/10_00pardo.htm.

(4) Robert D. Atkinson & Jacob Ulevich, *Digital Government: The Next Step to Reengineering the Federal Government*, Progressive Policy Institute, March 1, 2000, at http://www.ppionline.org/ppi_ci.cfm?contentid=606&knlgArealD=140&subsecid=290.

(5) Darrell M. West, *State and Federal E-Government in the United States*, 2001, Inside Politics web site (2001), <http://www.insidepolitics.org/eovt01us.html>.

(6) Council for Excellence in Government, *E-Government: The Next American Revolution* Technology Leadership Consortium web site, Sept. 2001, <http://www.excelgov.org/egovpoll/index.htm>.

(7) Pardo, *supra* note 3.