

## II. E-Government Is a Four-Faceted Vision of the Future

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E-Government can be viewed from four distinct perspectives: e-services, e-commerce, e-democracy, and e-management.

### A. E-Services and Citizens

E-government opens up many possibilities for innovating and improving government services. Many governments are working toward providing citizens with access to information and services 24 hours a day, seven days a week from the convenience of their home or office PC. This requires organizing services by the needs of citizens, rather than by the agencies that provide them. E-government might enable a citizen to access the form they need to fill out to order a copy of their birth certificate without needing to know that the Health Department handles the request. Other services that citizens want online include renewing a driver's license, voting on the Internet, filing taxes, and obtaining park information.(8)

### B. E-Commerce and Government Transactions

Electronic commerce is the transaction of money for government services, or vice versa, government purchasing. People can pay Federal taxes electronically and many states are following suit by beginning to accept online tax payments. Another example of e-commerce includes a consortium of New York county governments that now purchase their office supplies from an electronic catalog over the Internet and receive them the next day.

Other forms of government e-commerce underway include online auctions of surplus equipment, renewing automobile registrations, and booking sites at public campgrounds. Processing these transactions electronically may create a more efficient and cost effective method than the traditional paper processes.

### C. E-Democracy and Public Participation

E-democracy is the political and public participation side of the electronic revolution. It refers to activities that increase citizen involvement including electronic voting, virtual town hall meetings, cyber campaigns, feedback polls, public surveys, community forums, and access to meeting agendas and minutes.

In the Town of South Bristol, N. Y., board members surveyed citizens to ask them whether or not they wanted to build a new firehouse. While the over 30 -percent return was perfectly acceptable, the board followed the survey with a community e-mail outreach effort that invited feedback on the issue. The responding electronic discussion increased and sustained public participation in the decision process and kept the issue on the community's radar.

### D. E-Management and Government Efficiency

E-management refers to the behind the scenes information systems that support the full range of management and administrative functions of a government agency, including integrating data across agencies and governments, maintaining electronic public records and digital libraries, and developing new forms of organizations and working groups. For example, to develop the prototype for the state's new Web portal, a workgroup of physically dispersed state agency representatives used e-mail to communicate and test the bulk of their work. As government continues to work across traditional boundaries, both physical and organizational, e-management will play a greater role in public sector business.

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(8) National Information Consortium, *Benchmarking the eGovernment Revolution: Year 2000 Report on Citizen and Business Demand: A Report by the Momentum Research Group of Cunningham Communication Commissioned by NIC*, NIC, The eGovernment Company Web site, July 26, 2000, [http://www.nicusa.com/NIC\\_flash/download/Benchmarking\\_eGovernment.pdf](http://www.nicusa.com/NIC_flash/download/Benchmarking_eGovernment.pdf).