

G2G initiatives require serious collaborative partnerships and use of technology to do intergovernmental work in new and innovative ways. This combination seems to drive the need for government to use its limited resources – funding, staff time, talent, accumulated knowledge of business processes, and ability to work within the organizational culture – in new ways as well. During the interviews, several important factors that influence the success of a G2G program emerged.

G2G as a component of G2C or G2B

While G2G initiatives are usually not apparent to the general public, government innovators are realizing the benefits of such efforts. Many pursue the idea of a more coordinated intergovernmental connection because of improved information access and greater service efficiency for customers. Consequently, G2G was often a secondary effort designed to support G2B and G2C initiatives.

Many of the states we contacted had not begun offering G2G services yet. Those that did usually built them after first establishing G2C and G2B services. This was the case in the City of Indianapolis, where the former mayor championed citizen focused e-government. The infrastructure created mainly for G2C applications is now being used for internal G2G services.

Developing G2G applications as a way to deliver G2C or G2B services seems to occur when two or more government entities are required to complete a particular transaction for citizens or businesses. In order to provide an online application for businesses or citizens, two or more government entities needed to connect their business processes to allow multiple databases to interact and in some cases accept or disburse fees appropriately. Once the governmental entities can interact with each other they can offer citizens or businesses access to the application, submit information and/or fees, and receive the service.

For instance, in the State of Maine, car owners must to go to both the Bureau of Motor Vehicles and their municipal government to obtain documentation required to renew their car registration. As described earlier, the state's Rapid Renewal program allows citizens to renew their motor vehicle registration and pay the local excise tax through an Internet application that meets both state and local requirements. Developing this G2G state local relationship was necessary for this G2C service to be possible.

Collaboration

The majority of interviewees cited collaboration as a critical success factor, whether among agencies, levels of government, or between government and non-government entities. New Jersey began its G2G effort with two state agencies; one agency had the expertise in technology and the other had solid pre-existing relationships with local governments. This combination of technical know-how and local insight helped them develop portal functionalities tailored for that user community.

Interviewees in New Jersey and at NYS DEC advocated building bridges with associations representing local governments. This strategy is intended to give the agency a measure of credibility as it begins to develop a working relationship with local governments. Interviewees in Washington suggested identifying local governments' needs and then creating a collaborative relationship that satisfies those needs. Fairfax, VA officials stressed the need to build a collaborative relationship and remember that it is necessary to build and maintain consensus among all the players.

Leadership

The main role for political leadership seems to center on getting projects started and funded. At the project level, leaders are the people who understand the political dynamics and know how to navigate through the turf obstacles. Some project leaders achieved an important level of credibility from serving in the agency for many years. They were able to maneuver projects through difficulties largely because of their understanding of the agency and its business processes, particularly with the knowledge of existing work practices and the history behind them.

In Indianapolis, the Mayor was the dynamic force behind the creation of e-government services. In New Jersey, the governor declared it a priority to build a Web-based portal for local governments to access state government agencies a priority and created a line in the budget for it. NYS SED decided to use portal technology to comply with the federally mandated reporting process but also took advantage of that situation to add applications that local school districts wanted.

Buy-in

Buy-in is a must at all levels if the project is to move forward. Project managers must have the ability to deal with the range of players, from those who think the project is a great idea to those who say they would rather have things stay the same. Keeping everyone at the table is paramount and making certain that buy-in is achieved and maintained is a difficult and unrelenting job.

One interviewee from the State of Washington said that the single most challenging process was getting all of the entities to agree on each aspect of the project. Others echoed this sentiment. The interviewee from the New York State Education Department suggested that those starting out use small successes to gain momentum and build buy-in by implementing applications incrementally. The CentraPort team made the point that the new application or system must offer more than the current system or there is no incentive for local governments to use it.

Managing expectations

Interviewees emphasized the need to keep communication lines open among stakeholders and to provide regular updates to keep everyone aware of the projects status in order to earn credibility and build trust. They emphasized the importance of making certain that all players have a shared view of the project and a common understanding of what will happen so that they will remain supportive of the effort. The NYS SED interviewee, as well as others, said to start small and build slowly. New Jersey and CentraPort project staff stressed the importance of delivering exactly what the users said they needed. Several interviewees advocated spending time to learn what needs to be done; figure out what to do when regulations don't agree; find the one thing that's easy to do, but make sure it's not so easy that it becomes 'so what.' The interviewee from the state of Washington stressed the need to resist aiming for 100% perfection. Instead, acknowledge up-front that there are aspects of any project that are very difficult and you cannot squander scarce resources trying to achieve the nearly impossible.

Cost Strategies

Funding with regard to dollars did not seem to be an overwhelming burden among those we spoke with at the state level. When a person in a leadership position designated a particular IT project as a priority, the money followed. The much larger costs for states seemed to be time and increased responsibility for staff members who carry the ongoing job of supporting and training local government staff. In Pennsylvania, local governments in certain regions received grant funding, training, and technical assistance to help them establish a G2C Web presence. In Indianapolis, costs were not a primary issue since existing infrastructures built for G2C services suited their purposes to advance G2G initiatives. In Virginia, the portal itself, which is managed by a for-profit company, is funded by small portion of fees from agencies. Several interviewees pointed to the costs associated with the time and effort needed for training and support which were described as being far more arduous than initially anticipated.

Common Problems

Interviewees spoke of the difficulties getting G2G intergovernmental projects started. They stressed the need to keep the applications easy for users; to be prepared to deal with issues related to business processes; and to be ready to make changes. They also discussed the need to cope with staff changes mid-project. Others pointed to the sizable commitment of staff time for training and support and that it will likely be far more than initially anticipated. They also emphasized the need to listen to users and the importance of implementing programs slowly and deliberately. As advanced as some projects sounded, most still had a parallel paper process and both needed to be managed.

At the time of this research there appeared to be little activity related to measurement – one interviewee said that his measure of success is that the system is still functioning. Most of those interviewed indicated that their project was either unfinished or too new to be able to apply any type of meaningful measurement. Others had not considered how to measure the success or failure of the project.