

Technology must interact with and enable the policy and management dimensions of interoperability.

In many cases, the organizations that form a network are engaged in diverse but overlapping business processes and depend on similar, if not identical, information. They also generally interact with the same population or stakeholders, but at different points in time (Cresswell et al 2005b, p. 5). Therefore, improved interoperability among these organizations is a key enabler of better programs and services. However, working across the traditional boundaries of agencies, levels of government, and with the private sector is difficult and complex. It is difficult and complex because it often requires fundamental organizational change and must contend with current political, social, and economic realities. Often the government capabilities necessary to affect change across the boundaries of organizations are missing. Many efforts to improve government interoperability have been invested in over the years, however, the challenge facing most of them has been an over emphasis on the technology dimensions of working across boundaries and an under emphasis on the policy and management ones related to the kind of fundamental organization change necessary.

Improving interoperability through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) can deliver value to governments and the public. ICTs, when effectively designed and deployed, can enable interoperability within networks of government, private sector, and other key organizations. However, improving interoperability depends not on the technologies alone, but on a mix of capabilities that can produce organizational as well as technological interoperability. These are capabilities that may already exist or need to be developed within the networks of organizations working together to deliver government programs and citizen services.

Research and practice shows that most governments are inconsistent and ad hoc in their abilities to operate in a network form. Many governments have developed successful interoperability in individual policy areas such as criminal justice, public health, and environmental protection, or in various e-government areas such as integrated government accounting systems and online tax filing and educational resources. However, there is little evidence of any government that has demonstrated the level of government interoperability that brings together multiple policy domains in support of a broader citizen need; for example, creating interoperability between the criminal justice and public health communities in support of more effective public safety.

Examples of Network Capability in Single Policy Domains or Government Program Areas

- **Justice Network (JNET)** – U.S. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's state and local criminal justice information sharing
- **Federal Accounting and Budgeting System** – Austria's consolidated federal accounting and budgeting
- **Service New Brunswick** – New Brunswick, Canada's online citizen-to-government and business-to-government services
- **BioSense** – U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's federal, state, and local integrated public health disease surveillance system
- **E-learning portal (MyGfL)** – Malaysia's citizen online learning tools
- **eGov Portal payment server** – Israel's online citizen and business payment of taxes
- **Europass CV** – EU's online, pan-European standardized curriculum vitae (CV) sharing system