

Public and private sector organizations alike are striving to improve their productivity and effectiveness by rethinking missions, reengineering processes, and implementing information technology (IT) solutions. Experience has shown that IT offers substantial potential benefits to organizations, but it also gives rise to new management and policy challenges. Government program managers and government information resource managers are faced with new challenges as priorities shift and program goals and objectives change with the political, economic, and social environment. The effective use of information and information technology tools are essential to meeting these shifting programmatic goals. As a consequence, technology and government objectives, and practices and policies, are interlinked in a ongoing circle of influences as shown in Figure 1. While many factors outside the boundaries of the figure have an impact on those included, this discussion focuses on the interrelationships among these four elements.

Emerging IT tools such as the World Wide Web, geographic information systems, and data warehouses, are being used by government agencies to support programmatic objectives and to change practice in terms of the way agencies communicate internally, and interact with citizens, the private sector, non-profits, and other government agencies. The implementation of these technologies raises new and different information management and policy challenges and increases public expectations with respect to information access and service delivery. New information policy issues generated by IT use, also influence practice as new legislation and regulations are developed that affect the way agencies collect, use, and disseminate information. As government is also a substantial market for the IT industry, its needs and uses of IT have an effect on industry development of new technologies and applications.

Government has a complex role in the IT environment - as a user of information and information technology, as a custodian and disseminator of information, and as a policymaker. Government is also responsible for setting priorities for and funding IT research and development.