Preface

OVERVIEW

E-government is a concept in government aimed at ensuring more efficient and cost-effective online provision of information, service delivery, transaction processing, and interaction within and between government agencies, as well as between governments and citizens or the business community. It involves the use of information and communication technologies to provide not only government services and information, usually over the Internet, but also to streamline internal operations, with the potential for enhanced citizen involvement, improved service quality, and increased transparency. The importance of e-government has been realized by most countries around the world, and many of these countries are spending substantial amounts of money and other resources in order to have web presence and gain operational efficiency.

Despite the huge investments, empirical evidence suggests numerous e-government projects are characterized by untimely completion, budget overrun, and improper functionality. Thus, studies show that many e-government projects fail to meet expectations in terms of cost, schedule, and specifications, and therefore, often fail to deliver the intended products or results. In developing countries, the barriers to successful implementation of e-government projects are even higher due to the lack of finances, poor infrastructure, lack of skilled personnel, and many other factors. The problems with e-government implementation are compounded by the fact that information technology (IT) project management in the public sector is complicated by public scrutiny, political pressures, uncertainty, ambiguity, multi-faced stakeholder management issues, and public accountability.

Given the situation mentioned above, the need for efficient management of e-government projects to ensure effective utilization of public resources is crucial. Although numerous scholarly work has been done on e-government, little work has been performed on the effectiveness of e-government project management and its implications for cost-savings, efficiency, and effective governance. This book is intended to fill this research gap through the compilation of the work of some of the best scholars and practitioners in the fields of e-government and project management.

WHERE THE BOOK FITS INTO THE WORLD

E-government is recognized internationally as an enabler toward achieving good governance, operational efficiency, cost effectiveness, and increasing ability of citizens and businesses to access public services in an effective and efficient manner. Successful implementation of e-government is essential to deliver project and programmatic objectives that are aligned with broader organizational and societal goals.
Considering government budgetary constraints, the dwindling resources available for public programs, the increased focus on judicial utilization of public finances, and the pressure to deliver quality e-government systems timely, within budgets and according to specifications, it is crucial that e-government projects are properly managed, planned, executed, and controlled. This is particularly important for developing countries, because as compared to developed countries, the problem of limited funding and deficiencies in the internal operations of the former make the need for effective management of e-government projects paramount.

Studies on e-government projects around the world conducted by the Institute for Development Policy and Management (http://www.egov4dev.org/success/sfrates.shtml) revealed that more than one third of e-government projects in transitional/developing countries are total failures; a further half are partial failures; and roughly one seventh are successes. It is no surprise that many other studies have concluded similarly, as the limited funding and other problems faced by some of these countries do have adverse impact on project design and conception. Given this situation, it is essential that appropriate project management techniques and methodologies be adopted for successful project implementation, while keeping in mind that each country and organization is different and that methodologies and frameworks need to be adapted to the local and organizational context in order to ensure success.

To successfully manage e-government initiatives, there is also the need to identify and address key variables that could potentially impact the performance of e-government projects. To accomplish these, a collection of research work that brings together the key elements of e-government adoption from project management perspective is needed more than ever before. To the knowledge of the editor, although there are published conference proceedings on e-government initiatives, an edited book that focuses on e-government project management did not exist at the time of compilation of this edited work. This edited collection helps to fill the existing void in that it focuses on e-government related projects, the factors affecting their success and failures, existing best practices, and their implications for governance. In so doing, this book provides relevant literature that enhances the understanding of e-government from a project management perspective.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The book will provide a good source of reference for both academics and practitioners looking for techniques and concepts that can be applied to ensure successful e-government project outcomes. For scholars, the availability of literature, theoretical concepts, and empirical findings will serve as a rich source of reference for investigations that could lead to the expansion of knowledge on e-government. Additionally, the book could provide resource materials for supplementing college level lectures on project management and e-government. Practitioners will find in the book, not only cases and best practices for managing e-government projects, but also empirically-based rich information on the factors that impact success and failure of e-government projects to serve as a guide for on-going and future initiatives.

PROGRESSION OF THE BOOK

The book is divided into three sections. The first section consists of five chapters that provide the theoretical and conceptual basis for understanding and successfully guiding e-government project implementation.
in the public sector. Together, these chapters provide insights to key concepts which, if properly understood and applied, could have positive impact on the outcomes of e-government projects and help ensure efficiency, cost-effectiveness and responsiveness of government information technology investments. These include organizational change, effective leadership, adoption of methodology, strategic alignment, project risks, and e-government visioning. The link between the chapters in this section is that understanding and dealing with organizational change from the standpoint of e-government transition requires effective leadership, which also provides the guidance for the adoption of appropriate methodology and strategic alignment of e-government project goals with organizational goals. Additionally, e-government projects cannot be effectively managed for successful outcome unless organizational change, leadership, and strategic alignments are conceptualized within the context of appropriate e-government visioning and project risk management.

In Chapter 1, Goodyear develops a framework focused on the people aspect of technology transitions as organizational change, from the standpoint e-government project implementation. The chapter provides insights for researchers and practitioners in addressing resistance to change through the use of specific communication protocols. In Chapter 2, Streib examines the dynamics of local government e-government implementation and discusses opportunities for improved leadership through reengineering of the CFO role to help ensure more desirable outcomes. Aikins suggests in Chapter 3 the need to adopt project management methodology, align project goals with organizational goals, develop project management competences, and understand the critical factors for successful e-government initiatives.

In Chapter 4, Hamner, Negron, Taha, and Brahimi explore the use of system dynamic modeling to drill down into an e-government system’s behavior and illustrate how foreign direct investment flows through finance, technology, and strategy to impact risk in developing countries. The authors argue much of conventional wisdom has not worked and call for a completely different set of tools and methodology to identify and manage risks associated with human factors. Ochara proposes a framework for realizing effective e-participation relevant to developing countries in Africa in Chapter 5, based on the premise that e-government visioning forms the foundation for the articulation of e-government strategies that are linked to specific e-government projects. The author argues the process of developing a holistic e-government vision and e-government strategy is crucial for successful e-government project planning and implementation.

The second section contains chapters that mostly focus on managerial challenges inherent in e-government project implementation and their remediation. These chapters collectively provide analyses and discussions of the issues faced by various e-government initiatives, the steps needed to address these challenges, and the managerial implications. Consisting of chapters on the implementation of community-based residential broadband, public library networks, new electronic modes of transacting social services, as well as the development of inter regional academic network, this section draws attention to implementation issues such as administrative, communication, technical, organizational, and financial constraints and the need for understanding the pertinent challenges in order to ensure successful outcomes. The common thread running through these chapters is that those in charge of e-government projects need to pay careful attention to the processes and related challenges and find antidotes to those challenges if those initiatives are to succeed.

In Chapter 6, Cole, Kurtz, and Cole explore the risks, challenges, and remediation efforts encountered in community-based residential broadband implementation efforts. The authors examine communities that have implemented, as well as those that are implementing residential broadband initiatives to understand the patterns of risks and challenges and how they have been addressed in the past. Additionally
they suggest performance metrics for evaluating the risk and success of residential broadband projects. Bertot and Jaeger examine the challenges of implementing public library networks and connectivity to support e-government access and education in Chapter 7, as well as the numerous management issues raised by providing these services. The authors draw from data collected through a 2009 national survey of public libraries, a 2009 series of site visits of public libraries, and their own previous research.

In Chapter 8, Johnson, Kioko, and Pirog provide a case that illustrates the administrative and managerial challenges of incorporating information and communication technologies (ICTs) into the delivery of child support services, along with solutions to overcome those challenges. Deakin draws attention in Chapter 9 to University-Industry-Government collaborations and the underlying web service to support Inter Regional Academic network as a community of practice. The chapter highlights the critical role business-to-citizen applications play to help democratize the customization of e-government through multi-channel access and via user profiling.

The third and final section of the book contains chapters dealing with cases of e-government project implementation in local and national authorities from selected developed and developing countries. The first three chapters in this section discuss the factors that impact success and failure, as well as the challenges and implications for the various e-government initiatives studied. They conclude in diverse ways that managerial function and support as well as political leadership are significant ingredients for e-government project success. The final chapter of this section studies the degree of transparency in Italian municipalities’ websites, and suggests a discussion of the managerial implications for governments that aim to reach higher degree of transparency via their websites.

In Chapter 10, Abdelsalam, Reddick, and Elkadi survey selected local governments in Egypt to determine the factors influencing the success and failure of e-government projects. The results of this study highlight the importance of net benefit as a success factor, which examines the organizational and managerial context of e-government development. Additionally, the authors found that increased user satisfaction explains e-government project success, something that can be easily addressed by education and training in the workplace. In Chapter 11, Hamner, Negron, Taha, and Brahimi examine the case of one developing country’s attempts to implement e-Government. The authors conclude that until the political turmoil within this country is resolved, e-government and likely many other government initiatives will continue to be unsuccessful.

Juntunen examines, in Chapter 12, the case of openness strategy and e-governance at the ministry of interior in Finland, and assesses the challenges and implications. This author provides insights into how a bureaucratic organization, with top management support, can renew itself and its image through strategy planning and creation of a future roadmap of technology and services needed, without hindering or destroying existing departmental services. In Chapter 13, Cucchielli, Nasi, and Saporito develop an assessment framework for measuring the degree of transparency and interactivity based on the multiple dimensions of information published on the institutional websites of Italian municipalities. The authors find low degree of transparency for certain relevant dimensions of government operations, such as service delivery and the financial-related dimension. They also conclude that although it is well-maintained, the online information does not provide a great deal of added-value with regard to ongoing operations and programs, performance, and feedback.

Overall, this book progresses from the theoretical and conceptual basis for understanding and guiding e-government project implementation, through the administrative and managerial challenges and their solutions, to the cases of e-government project implementation in local and national authorities of selected developed and developing countries. In choosing this progression, the editor hopes to enable
readers to not only understand the underlying concepts of e-government project management, but also apply some of the concepts to address the managerial challenges inherent e-government projects, and to solidify their understanding of the concepts through the reviews of the cases in the last section of the book.

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