Chapter 5
A Cloud-Based Framework for Connected Governance

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ABSTRACT
The advancement of various computer technologies has led to the migration of traditional governance to e-governance that enables the citizens to access the government services through Internet. Although, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) act as backbone for e-governance in helping the government meet its citizens’ needs through efficient service delivery, e-governance lacks the cross-agency communication as the e-services are offered by the government agencies independently. A better version of e-governance is c-governance (connected governance) in which the government agencies are connected and offer an integrated service to the citizens. Cloud is now a leading technology that enables collaboration across agencies and seamlessly integrated services. This chapter suggests the importance of adopting cloud technologies for c-governance and presents a discussion of the existing government clouds of Singapore and UK. A c-governance framework is also presented to illustrate how the cloud deployment and service models can be adopted for c-governance.

INTRODUCTION
Continuous and persistent transformation from traditional method of governance to e-governance to the more recent and still evolving c-governance (connected government) is attributed to the advancement and appropriate exploitation of technology, more specifically the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The presence and influence of ICT along with other social trends is not only unavoidable but also

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all encompassing. This evolution to the cyber age has facilitated and upheld the notion of always being connected and making information available and easily accessible due to which the existing governance and its traditional form is giving way to its ICT-enabled counterpart all round the world.

This transformation has necessitated the requirement of changing the current status involving the traditional method of hierarchical governance, embracing the available technologies and progressing towards the future potential.

As an initial step towards this transformation, the ‘old’ style of governance that lacks both transparency and communication with its citizens, has adopted ICT in governance addressing critical issues by bringing in what is called as the e-governance paradigm. This has brought in a lot of changes in the way the government must work. Many countries have adopted partial or even complete e-governance thereby taking the first step.

The essential features of an e-governmental setup are efficiency, accessibility and interactivity. In this scenario, online service delivery to citizens takes care of efficiency to a large extent. This reduces the paperwork and it also speeds up the process. Accessibility and interactivity are assured in an ICT-enabled, e-government scenario since the citizens have multiple channels for communication such as portals, mobiles, etc. for interacting with their government.

According to The World Bank (2011), “E-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reductions.”

In this form of governance, the citizen becomes an active participant in the policy and decision making process, rather than just being a passive service recipient. Thus, e-governance through online has introduced convenience, efficiency and transparency into government services, establishing a two way communication between the citizens and the government.

Emergence of more and more such online services has resulted in public expectation for the round-the-clock availability. Moreover, with the technological advancements like mobile services, crowd sourcing and cloud computing, it has now become increasingly important for the governments to look out for integration and collaboration between its agencies to bring about further improvement of its services and present to the citizen one interface rather than the traditional department-wise view.

While e-governance brought about a sea change in the governmental processes, the scope of improvement is far from being over. The delivery platforms are still agency-based and compartmentalised continuing the traditional compartmentalised set-up. As mentioned by Dais, Nikolaidou, et. al. (2008) “Governments are realizing that continued expansion in e-services is not possible without some kind of integration between individual public agency information systems. For instance, public service delivery cannot be isolated since it may involve collaboration between agencies. In the case of e-governance, this sort of collaboration is not accommodated. The increasing importance of cross-organizational coherence has clearly shifted the focus towards managing, integrating and coordinating government e-services”. However, there is no built-in mechanism for the agencies to communicate with each other to deliver seamless services in the existing e-government scenario. Neither is there a single point of delivery for people to access personalized government services. It is important and definitely required to have a fully personalized e-government portal that would provide citizens with exactly those services they
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