Chapter 2

Government Information Sharing: A Framework for Policy Formulation

Elsa Estevez
United Nations University, China & Universidad Nacional del Sur, Argentina

Pablo Fillottrani
Universidad Nacional del Sur, Argentina & Comisión de Investigaciones Científicas, Argentina

Tomasz Janowski
United Nations University, China

Adegboyega Ojo
United Nations University, China

ABSTRACT

Information sharing (IS) is a key capability required for one-stop and networked government, responding to a variety of intra-organizational, inter-organizational, or cross-national needs like sharing service-related information between parties involved in the delivery of seamless services, sharing information on available resources to enable whole-of-government response to emergencies, etc. Despite its importance, the IS capability is not common for governments due to various technical, organizational, cultural, and other barriers which are generally difficult to address by individual agencies. However, developing such capabilities is a challenging task which requires government-wide coordination, explicit policies and strategies, and concrete implementation frameworks. At the same time, reconciling existing theoretical frameworks with the IS practice can be difficult due to the differences in conceptions and abstraction levels. In order to address such difficulties, this chapter proposes a conceptual framework to guide the development of Government Information Sharing (GIS) policies, strategies, and implementations. By integrating theoretical frameworks and the GIS practice, the framework adopts a holistic view on the GIS problem, highlights the main areas for policy intervention, and provides policy makers and government managers with conceptual clarity on the GIS problem.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-60960-753-1.ch002
INTRODUCTION

Electronic Government (e-Government) refers to the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government (OECD e-Government Studies, 2003). Accordingly, e-Government is not an aim in itself but a tool leading to better policy outcomes, higher quality of public services, more efficient government processes, more efficient use of public funds, higher citizen engagement, etc. While different maturity models exist to assess the level of e-Government development, all models agree that at the highest maturity level, called data-sharing or seamless government, government agencies are able to share information.

Information Sharing is a key capability required for one-stop and networked government. For example, sharing service-related information between parties involved in the delivery of seamless public services, sharing information on critical resources to enable whole-of-government responses to emergencies, etc. Government Information Sharing initiatives attempt to “unlock” data on fragmented information technology infrastructures spanning multiple agencies, making it readily discoverable and accessible to authorized users for direct consumption or further processing. Contexts for IS range from intra-organizational - for instance sharing citizen data among functional units within a single government agency; through inter-organizational - for instance the delivery of seamless services involving cross-agency processes; to inter-governmental - for instance the exchange of health or security surveillance data among neighboring countries or among different states in a federal government system.

Traditionally, most IS initiatives are functionally oriented or program-specific, referring for instance to health, environment or security areas. The shortcomings of program-specific Information Sharing which lacks an overarching framework have been highlighted extensively, with evidence, particularly in the context of counter-terrorism efforts (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, United States of America, 2008). Also regional integration efforts and globalization are generating more dynamic and complex cross-border IS scenarios. For example, global flu-pandemic, global financial crisis, delivery of pan-European services, and the emerging Pearl River Delta cooperation in Asia, etc. all require more generic and cross-boundary IS capabilities.

Developing the capabilities that enable agile responses to events as well as effective sharing of program-specific information, is both important and difficult. Existing literature presents various approaches to GIS. These include the development of information sharing strategies, integration of IS and interoperability initiatives, development of enterprise architecture programs, etc. For instance, the Federal Enterprise Architecture (FEA) (Office of Management and Budget, USA) by the US Government and Information Interoperability (Australian Government Information Management Office, 2006) by the Government of Australia have been directly designed to enable GIS.

This chapter presents a review of the theories underpinnings GIS as well as country-specific frameworks developed over the recent years, as a basis for defining a Government Information Sharing Framework (GISF). This conceptual framework has two main objectives: (1) provide a holistic framework for understanding IS in government and (2) articulating strategies for enabling GIS. Concerning the former, GISF captures and relates the main GIS concepts at intra-organizational, inter-organizational and inter-governmental levels. Concerning the latter, GISF identifies the core IS intervention areas, conceptualizing IS according to different stages of maturity in the IS practice. All these contribute to the definition of IS policies, strategies and concrete implementations. Finally, the chapter evaluates IS challenges in different organizational contexts and points at the emerging solutions to some of them. Overall, the chapter addresses the needs of policy and decision makers in government:
Related Content

A Multiagent Service-oriented Modeling of E-Government Initiatives
[www.igi-global.com/article/multiagent-service-oriented-modeling-government/2037?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/multiagent-service-oriented-modeling-government/2037?camid=4v1a)

Ecology of E-Governance
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/ecology-governance/9694?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/ecology-governance/9694?camid=4v1a)

Conceiving Community Knowledge Records as e-Governance Concerns in Wired Healthcare Provision
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/conceiving-community-knowledge-records-governance/46475?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/conceiving-community-knowledge-records-governance/46475?camid=4v1a)

Web 2.0 Applications and Citizen Relations through E-Government Websites
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/web-applications-citizen-relations-through/45602?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/web-applications-citizen-relations-through/45602?camid=4v1a)