Chapter 2
Achieving Useful Government Accountability and Transparency Websites

Deborah S. Carstens
Florida Institute of Technology, USA

Stephen Kies
Florida Institute of Technology, USA

Randy Stockman
Florida Institute of Technology, USA

ABSTRACT

With the transition from government to e-government, greater transparency in government accountability has occurred. However, state government budgets and performance reports are voluminous and difficult to understand by the average citizen. There is a need for government Websites to promote public trust while providing understandable, meaningful, and usable government accountability information. The public needs to have access to information that links the outcome of government spending so that government can be accountable for their spending. There are three fundamental functions for government: accountability, budgeting, and policy-making. The chapter discusses literature specifically relating to government accountability resulting in a checklist being developed to provide a mechanism for evaluation of government Websites from a technical and usability perspective. Therefore, it is not only important for a Website to have the government accountability information but to also display it in a useful and meaningful format understandable by citizens accessing the Website.

INTRODUCTION

There is a need for government Websites to promote public trust while providing understandable, meaningful and usable government accountability information (Posey, 2006). With the transition from government to e-government, greater transparency in government accountability has occurred. However, state government budgets and performance reports are voluminous and difficult to understand by the average citizen. There is a need for government Websites to promote public trust

while providing understandable, meaningful and usable government accountability information. The public needs to have access to information that links the outcome of government spending so that government can be accountable for their spending. There are three fundamental functions for government which are accountability, budgeting and Policy-making. The chapter discusses literature specifically relating to government accountability resulting in a checklist being developed to provide a mechanism for evaluation of government Websites from a technical and usability perspective. Therefore, it is not only important for a Website to have the government accountability information but to also display it in a useful and meaningful format understandable by citizens accessing the Website.

The chapter discusses literature helpful in the evaluation of government accountability and transparency Websites. The background section consists of a discussion on how government has transformed to e-government with the topic of transparency in government accountability emerging. The main focus of the chapter discusses literature that addresses the current issues, controversies and problems of transparency in government accountability as it specifically relates to budgeting, performance measures, social media, usability, accessibility, supportability, navigation and readability. Then, solutions are presented focused on the topics of citizen engagement, government citizen relationships and customer, or rather citizen, satisfaction is discussed. Furthermore, a checklist is provided to provide guidance to those that evaluate or develop transparency Websites. Conclusions are discussed leading to future research within the topic of transparency in government accountability.

The public needs to have access to information that links the outcome of government spending so that government can be accountable for their spending. There are three fundamental functions for government which are accountability, budgeting and Policy-making. Accountability is

enhanced through providing improved visibility into what government does, and how much it costs; a common managerial framework; connection of all costs to specific measurable activities. Budgeting is addressed through providing increased visibility into performance budgeting by displaying individual activities and reconciling total costs to budget. Lastly, Policy-making is more effective through providing a basis for prioritizing spending and ensures alignment with legislative priorities; identification of areas for program/process improvement; a foundation for establishing realistic performance targets, benchmarks for government activities/agencies.

BACKGROUND

Thornton and Thornton (2013) discuss the increasing demand by the public for government fiscal transparency by the public. There has been a rising demand to the economic slowdown, exposed government fraud and fiscal mismanagement. As the public's pure trust in the fiscal responsibility of their state and federal government has declined individual states have stepped up to provide more insight into government transparency and fiscal reporting. The primary way this has been done is through government transparency websites. Traditionally, detailed state government spending data was not available online. However, recently states have begun to release this information via government transparency websites, also known as e-government. Exploration of the topics of e-government, transition from government to e-government and accountability will lead into a discussion in the main section of the chapter regarding why transparency in government accountability is necessary.

E-Government

E-government is merely the conversion of government services, information, transactions and

Related Content

Identifying Forward and Backward Linkages From China's Infrastructure Investment in Africa
Ehizuelen Michael Mitchell Omoruyi (2021). *Journal of Comparative Asian Development (pp. 1-31).*
www.irma-international.org/article/identifying-forward-and-backward-linkages-from-chinas-infrastructure-investment-in-africa/272582

George Harrison and the Concert for Bangladesh: When Rock Music Forever Fused with Politics on a World Stage
Mohammad Delwar Hossainand James Aucoin (2017). *Music as a Platform for Political Communication (pp. 149-166).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/george-harrison-and-the-concert-for-bangladesh/178011

Decolonization and Peacebuilding: The Case of Timor Leste and Kashmir
Tamanna M. Shah (2024). *Dealing With Regional Conflicts of Global Importance (pp. 262-278).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/decolonization-and-peacebuilding/341477

Collaborative Governance Matters to E-Government Interoperability: An Analysis of Citizen-Centric Integrated Interoperable E-Government Implementation in Saudi Arabia
Akemi Takeoka Chatfieldand Jazem AlAnazi (2016). *Politics and Social Activism: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications (pp. 970-992).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/collaborative-governance-matters-to-e-government-interoperability/140010

It's Not Only Rock and Roll: The Influence of Music Preferences on Political Attitudes
Jessica T. Feezell (2017). *Music as a Platform for Political Communication (pp. 167-186).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/its-not-only-rock-and-roll/178012