Chapter 2
Citizen–Centric E–Government

INTRODUCTION

Electronic government or e-government in this chapter can be defined as the delivery of government information and services to citizens through the Internet 24 hours a day, seven days per week. This definition has been used in other empirical studies of e-government adoption (Moon and Norris, 2005a). This chapter adds to this definition Grant and Chau’s (2005) interpretation of e-government as a broad-based transformative initiative, which is consistent with creating more citizen-centric government. Gronlund (2005) reviews the various definitions of e-government and has found they share a common theme of the need for organizational transformation through technological implementation.

Citizen-centric e-government is the delivery of government services continuously to citizens, businesses, and other government agencies through the Internet (Seifert and Relyea, 2004). Citizen-centric government through e-government acts as a transformational tool that provides a new government model based on being citizen focused (Schelin, 2003). Some scholars have argued that for e-government to fully realize its capabilities, it must transform government from agency-centric to citizen-centric (Seifert and Relyea, 2004).

The term e-government emerged in the late 1990s. It was born out of the Internet boom. The literature on information technology (IT) use within government is different from e-government because it more often focuses on external use, such as services to citizens’ and organizational change (Gronlund and Horan, 2004). Definitions of e-government that focus exclusively on service delivery components fail to capture the more complex aspects of government transformation because of IT (Grant and Chau, 2005).

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the e-government literature with a focus on how it influences citizens. In order to understand some of the issues associated with Homeland Security
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Information Systems (HSIS), we need to provide information on e-government and its impact on government. There is a discussion in this chapter of the evolution of the roles and responsibilities of federal CIOs. There also is a description of how the public sector CIO’s environment is uniquely different from what can be found in private sector. In this chapter, we identify what it means to create a more citizen-centric government through e-government. A conceptual framework is outlined explaining what factors one would expect to be associated with creating a more citizen-centric government. This chapter articulates how these findings can be used to move e-government to higher stages of development. There also are examples of HSIS creating more citizen-centric government towards the end of the chapter.

EXISTING RESEARCH ON CIOs

The existing research on Chief Information Officers (CIO) or Information Resource Managers (IRM) has focused on the federal government (Bertot and McClure, 1997; Bertot, 1997; Westerback, 2000; Buehler, 2000; McClure and Bertot, 2000), state governments (Ugbah and Umeh, 1993), local governments (Fletcher, 1997), and comparisons between the public and private sectors (Ward and Mitchell, 2004). There have been few scholarly studies that examine public sector CIOs and their opinions on e-government issues and effectiveness. This is most likely attributed to the Internet being a relatively new research area in the public sector. In general, the management of IT in private sector organizations has long been a focus of Information Systems (IS) research, but the extent of diffusion has not been as extensively explored in public sector organizations (Fletcher, 1997).

This study empirically focuses on the connection between e-government and creating a more citizen-centric federal government. The existing research has started to explore the relationship between e-government and increasing citizen-initiated contacts with government, and this study fits into that research area (Thomas and Streib, 2003; West, 2004). However, much needs to be done to identify the key attributes of CIOs, which enable them to create more citizen-centric organizations.

CITIZEN-CENTRIC E-GOVERNMENT ADOPTION

In a survey of state and federal government CIOs and an analysis of their Websites, West (2004) arrived at the conclusion that e-government has fallen short of its potential to transform government service delivery and trust in government - that is, creating a more citizen-centric government. E-government does have the possibility of enhancing the responsiveness of government by making it more efficient and effective. There is also evidence that e-government increases citizen-initiated contact with public officials (Thomas and Streib, 2003). The potential of the Internet to improve citizens’ access to government and involvement in policy-making is well articulated in the literature. However, citizen-centric government is difficult to achieve in the public sector since governments need to provide universal access to its services (Mahler and Regan, 2002).

Citizen-centric e-government is consistent with the four-stage model of e-government adoption, in that governments can reach higher levels of adoption if they become more citizen-centric. Layne and Lee (2001) proposed a “stages of e-government growth model” that begins first with cataloging online information, second moving to online transactions, and then third to vertical integration in which local systems are linked to the national systems. The fourth stage of adoption is horizontal integration across
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