Chapter 46

E–Government Transparency and Citizen Engagement Increasing Accountability

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ABSTRACT

The chapter focus is on accountability and transparency through E-Government. With the increasing trend of users getting online and the opportunity for ubiquitous reach, state governments have begun to utilize social media to engage, communicate and inform their citizens. Therefore, this chapter also discusses ways to better engage citizens in government accountability and transparency discussions. With the transition from government to E-Government, greater transparency in government accountability has occurred. There is a need for government Websites to promote public trust while providing understandable, meaningful and usable government accountability information securely. The recommendations and solutions discussed are centered on enhancing E-Government transparency and citizen engagement resulting in enhanced government accountability.

INTRODUCTION

Advocates have asserted that enhanced transparency efforts can reverse distrust in government, improve program efficiency and outcomes, and help fight public corruption (Grimmelikhuijsen & Porubescu, 2013; Heald, 2006; Posey, 2006; Roberts, 2006). 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. This chapter expands

upon and closely follows the earlier research by Carstens, Kies and Stockman (2014). 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 and the importance 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. Improvements in ways to better engage citizens are also discussed.

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 access of information to the public and an increase of citizen engagement. Then, solutions are presented focused on the topics of citizen engagement, government citizen relationships and customer, or rather citizen, satisfaction is discussed. Conclusions are discussed leading to future research within the topic of transparency in government accountability.

BACKGROUND

Thornton and Thornton (2013) discuss the increasing demand by the public for government fiscal transparency by the public. Lee, Hwang and Choi (2012) suggest that the Obama administration committed to the Open Government Initiative through allowing members of the public to con-

tribute ideas and expertise to government policy making. In 2010, the Australian government displayed their commitment to open government to promote greater participation in Australia's democracy through improvements in the quality of services available online. Companies also are launching different openness as a new paradigm, called open innovation, where large corporations such as IBM, 3M,

DuPont and Boeing are participating (Gassmann, 2006). Bommert (2010) suggests that openness in the private sector tends to focus on new product development the public sector tends to focus on improvement in service performance for public benefit. In the public sector service may include the importance of negotiation and dispute resolution (Cunningham & Kempling, 2009).

With the increasing trend of users getting online and the opportunity for ubiquitous reach, state governments have begun to utilize social media to engage, communicate and inform their citizens. 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 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 to include the importance of citizen engagement and have open government.

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