

# Project Management in Government



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## INTRODUCTION

The case for 21<sup>st</sup> century government success continues unabated; impatient stakeholders are more demanding; people, process, and content are profoundly impacted; opportunity is rampant - but so is risk and complexity; still, transformational eGovernment looks to leadership, integration, change, and innovation through enhanced project management.

Enhanced project management has made progress in advancing eGovernment through a holistic manner so that project activities are fully integrated with on-going operational activities: all with an emphasis on measurable results and outcomes.

This paper builds upon previous publications that there is another dimension to the transformational eGovernment navigation tool-kit that coalesces with enhanced project management and creates a multi-dimensional approach to transformation; it is existential change leadership that focuses on human mindset behaviour along with critical leadership, integration, change, and innovation.

eGovernment, and especially transformational eGovernment, progress remains slow and halting and shackled to time-honoured approaches to project management, especially in the information communication technology (ICT) domain. eGovernment is the traditional, transactional, and service focused improvement on Government operations through the application of ICTs, whereas transformational eGovernment encompasses the reform and modernization of the business process reengineering opportunities and enterprise-wide reform, as well as what and how the government

achieves its mandate. Ineffective project management is one of most significant reasons for transformational eGovernment failure (Aikens, 2012b; Misuraca, 2009).

There are a number of reasons and examples for transformational eGovernment project failures, including the lack of capacity to manage unanticipated transparent and concealed organizational opposition; the inability to effectively and precisely identify current, changing, disparate, and conflicting key information requirements; and lack of insight into the obstacles in obtaining parochially coveted information. These are in addition to a review of literature (developed and developing countries) that outlines the most common issues and problems that cause eGovernment failure to be cultural barriers, infrastructure, resources, socio-economic barriers, security and privacy, and e-integration (Zhao, 2012). Previously, in 2007, a list representing 99 retrospectives in 74 organizations revealed the 36 most common mistakes in information technology (IT) management, with poor estimation/scheduling, ineffective stakeholder management, and insufficient risk and planning leading the list (Nelson, 2007).

Enhanced project management focuses on project integration and change leadership to respond to these mistakes and to specific eGovernment uniqueness because of the broad and disparate goal requirements, the multidimensional and conflicting policy and delivery responsibilities, the dearth of knowledge transfer due to the lack of a “whole of Government” culture, and the complex and competing interest and security concerns of disparate stakeholders (Sarantis, Smithson, Charalabidis, & Askounis, 2010).

## **BACKGROUND**

The eGovernment literature introduces a paradigm that examines the digital government evolution and includes a discussion whether digitization, when applied to internal structures and external relationships, changes them or not (Janowski, 2015). This is critical in determining expectations for change and the degree and impact from the application of technology. This paper builds upon previous research and is concerned with the transformational outcome and thereby attempts to assess the effectiveness of the digitization to transform structures and relationships.

eGovernment studies note that stakeholder disappointment is reported as a root problem that causes many unsuccessful projects (Eslerod, 2016). Other authors and papers as recent as 2016 also state that the management literature falls short in analyzing the impact of project management. Specifically the literature does not make the linkages and connections between stakeholders and the information needed to assist project managers in analyzing and prioritizing the challenges that confront them (Van Offenbeek, 2016).

In addition to this author's research about a compendium of ten eGovernment synergistic challenges and barriers that could be mitigated through enhanced project management, this paper builds upon other research, including the following ten principal challenges concerning eGovernment project management: human resources, work milieu, relations within and across organizational boundaries, project failure impact, goals definition, project dimensions, planning horizon, best practices, legal and regulatory issues, and politics driven nature (Sarantis, Smithson, Charalabidis, & Askounis, 2010).

Internationally, there has been a high and critical failure rate related to IT solutions (Aikins, 2012b; Fraser, 2006). More recently the failure in IT solutions that was the bane of transactional processing is now appearing in eGovernment initiatives (Heeks, 2008; Arif, 2008; Janowski, Estevez, & Ojo, 2007; Aikins, 2012b). eGovern-

ment failures are often hushed up (Heeks, 2008) and as Misuraca (2009) points out, the majority of eGovernment projects are failures as high as 70-80% and are not meeting the breakthrough expectations. Failures are costly; as per Irani, Al-Sebie, & Elliman (2006), the United Kingdom Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology reported that cancelled or over-budgeted eGovernment projects were greater than 1.5 billion British pounds. It is a mistake to automatically link IT investment with fiscal prudence even if eGovernment advocates regularly assert that IT investment in restructuring government programs and practices makes programs more cost-effective and affordable (Longford, 2001).

There are a number of reasons for the lack of transformational eGovernment success, including unanticipated organizational opposition, difficulties in communicating requirements, and obstacles to obtaining information from different government departments and agencies (Kamal, Weerakkody & Irani, 2011). However, there is some support for the belief that one of the most significant reasons for transformational eGovernment failure is ineffective project management (Aikins, 2012b; Misuraca, 2009). The literature refers to the dearth of peer-reviewed information on the effective role of project management, including front-end or early stages of decision making in project management (Samset 2016), and its impact on transformational eGovernment project success even though there are non-peer-reviewed business publications and country audits (British Computer Society, 2004; Fraser, 2006) that identify ineffective project management as an important cause of ICT failure.

The literature review finding is that ineffective project management is a leading cause of eGovernment failure. And the reason for this ineffectiveness is a result of the use of the traditional project management methodologies that do not meet the demands of transformational eGovernment for results, accountability, and problem solving.

This paper supports the importance of project management as a holistic discipline as opposed

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