Chapter XL
The Örebro City Citizen–Oriented e–Government Strategy

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ABSTRACT

This chapter discusses practices, opportunities, and challenges in local e-government project management by means of a case study involving interviews, document studies, and an element of action research, over eight months. The analysis against e-government success factors finds seven "critical issues"; political timing, resource allocation, political mandate, distinction between administrative and political responsibilities, coordination of departments, dependence on providers, and use of standards. We found these issues open for local choice, influences of strong individuals and groups, and chance. This is a consequence of the prevailing strategic model for the public sector, New Public Management, which leaves these issues to be filled by negotiations among many actors with different roles, goals, and action space. The general lesson is that there is a need for practical ways of acting strategically to reduce the risk level and increase the ability to implement policy.

INTRODUCTION

Electronic Government (eGovernment) is typically defined as a positive development concerning three main actors; government administrations; users of government services, i.e. citizens and companies; and the political system due to "better democracy" typically meaning more openness (Gore, 1993; Grant & Chau, 2005, Grönlund, 2002; 2005; OECD, 2003; UN, 2004; UNDESA,

2003). eGovernment definitions across the globe unanimously point to these three things, more efficient operations, better services and better democracy. An example is the EU definition:

Electronic Government is the use of Information and Communication Technologies in public administrations combined with organizational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes. [EU, 2004]

The value of *eGovernment* is supposed to come as (1) administrative rationalization, in particular government reorganization and integration across and within government agencies, and (2) increased value for citizens due to more openness, better integrated and hence better, quicker and more transparent services (Grönlund, 2002). Values of eGovernment are hence mainly conceived at system – whole-of-government – level. It is conventional wisdom that eGovernment benefits come from reorganization, not from ICT directly. Adding ICT to existing processes means added costs. Benefits have to come either by reduced production costs or better services, or both. The academic discussion of values is well summarized by Table 1 (adapted from Lau, 2007), and includes both tangible and non-tangible costs and benefits.

While these values can seem reasonable enough, achieving them is altogether a different challenge. Not only are intangible values just that, intangible and hard to measure, also, even if measured they are hard to balance against more tangible costs. Attempts have been made and measures devised (e.g. eGEP, 2006a; 2006b), but it has proven hard to implement such criteria in the incentives of individual government agencies, where the development is supposed to take place. Hence basic tangible economic measures so far prevail and grander plans for interoperability, better services to citizens, etc. come second. Also in terms of doability eGovernment implementation is a challenge because of the complexity of government organization, the complexity of demands, and the lack of general standards to follow.

Swedish government is organized in three tiers, national, regional and local, each politically governed. Many tasks cut across levels, e.g. health care which involves both local and regional levels as producers of health care and national government as providing health insurance and regulation, mainly for the medical part. The Swedish public sector has a strict new public management (NPM) management model, which means governance is by budget and goals, not detailed regulation. This means coordination and standardization are for the most part not issues for enforcement but up to negotiation among many actors with both political and economic agendas. The NPM mode of governance is at work not only at the organizational level, it also applies within cities and regional organizations.

eGovernment in Sweden, as in the industrialized world in general, is funded within the ordinary budgets. This means any investment will have to pay back within the budget of the involved organization. Guiding the development are gen-

Table 1. Values pertinent to eGovernment (Lau, 2007)

	GOVERNMENTS	NONGOVERNMENT STAKEHOLDER
Direct financial costs and benefits	Reducing costs, increasing value of services	Better services, reduced administrative burden
Direct non-financial costs and benefits	Synergies across delivery channels, sharing and reusing data resources	Increased user satisfaction, increasing privacy
Indirect costs and benefits	"Good governance"; supporting legitimacy, supporting growth	

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