# Chapter 10
# Using Web 2.0 to Reconceptualize E–Government:
## The Case for GovLoop

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## ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the growing literature on e-government and Web 2.0 with particular attention to online collaborative platforms, such as GovLoop, that complement government. The authors present a thorough background to the topic of Web 2.0 in e-government and present numerous examples of how these technologies are used across government both in the U.S. and globally. This chapter explores two main areas: first, how Web 2.0 and social media are being used as a vehicle to enhance e-government, and second, to present a case study of GovLoop, which is a collaborative social media platform designed to complement the work of government. GovLoop provides those working within and external to government—citizens, government employees, academics, non-profit professionals and contractors—with the ability to share information and collaborate on issues of public benefit. The chapter presents a starting point for future research on how Web 2.0 is changing the very nature of e-government and service delivery, and how governments are in a unique position to utilize these tools to expand collaboration and openness with their communities.*

## INTRODUCTION

A communications revolution is happening and its hallmark is faster and more efficient methods to share, connect, and spread information through the use of social media and mobile technologies.

The creation of hundreds of thousands of blogs, countless photos and online videos, and millions of Facebook and Twitter accounts are a testament to the power of these technologies. Viral videos, crowd-sourcing, geosocial mapping tools and more are just some of the features that governments are experimenting with and adopting to

enhance their e-government and communications efforts. Ranging from the U.S. State Department's use of online SMS text service donations to the Haiti earthquake and now the Pakistan floods, to a tiny town in Texas where citizens are rewarded "Innobucks" for their creative ideas to improve service delivery, federal, state and local governments have begun to harness just a sliver of what these technologies truly have to offer.

Until recently, email was the prime vehicle for communication and despite its continued use, updating one's status via several social media applications is far quicker than sending an email and waiting for a response in order to engage in dialogue. Consider that it took more than fifty years for radio and television to reach an audience of 50 million, and only seven years for the Internet and iPod to reach the same number of users.[1] Facebook, the most popular social media platform, is documented as adding over 200 million users in one year, with a total of more than 500 million users.[2] Twitter, a social media platform with over 125 million users worldwide, is credited for adding on average 10 million users per month since February of 2010 and is expected to reach even higher numbers as it continues to evolve and grow.[3]

So what do we mean by Web 2.0 and social media? "Web 2.0 represents a collection of Internet-based tools that enhance communication through openness and interactive capabilities. Through the use of these tools, such as blogs and social media platforms like Facebook, people have the added capability of producing content and being engaged in two way communication. One of the main concepts behind the birth of these tools is to empower individuals through open dialogue" (Sadeghi, 2012). Coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2004, Web 2.0 represents the notion of maximizing social capital and intelligence through information sharing and content creation. Examples of Web 2.0 tools include multimedia sharing sites like Youtube and Flickr, wikis such as Wikipedia, social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and cloud hosted services. Where instant two-way communication was once considered impossible through the Internet, Web 2.0 technologies continue to evolve at a breathtaking pace, making peer to peer connectivity and collaboration easier and faster.

With the advent of these technologies, government is radically changing how it conducts its business (Tsui et al., 2010). This rapid growth in technology has redefined how communication and collaboration can be made possible through a variety of Internet-based tools that are relatively easy to use and cost effective. For a little over the last decade, efforts to enhance e-government, particularly to improve service delivery, have grown as Web 2.0 and social media become more widespread and agencies and departments realize the power in using these tools to reach across government and within communities. These enhancements to the Web provide enormous opportunities for governments, societies and individuals to create new forms of social capital as a result of open communication. Even for those who are not familiar with Web 2.0 technologies, this explosive growth in the Web is driving more efficient and effective collaboration and decision making among masses of people across diverse communities.

As Web 2.0 technologies continue to evolve, government is faced with renewing their e-government strategy to provide more open communication and access to data, while enhancing online services to meet the growing expectations of a technically sophisticated public. Through the utilization of online tools, the very essence of how government demonstrates transparency and accountability to the public has changed significantly. This leaves many questions for to consider, such as: What information should government produce online? Which Web 2.0 platforms can assist government to achieve collaboration with the public? How should Web 2.0 tools and platforms be used to inform smart policy? How will government meet the changing needs of the public?

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