

## Chapter 7

# Developing E-Government Readiness Factors: A Bottom-Up Approach

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### **ABSTRACT**

*E-government readiness is critical and fundamental to e-government success. This paper reviews and differentiates the definitions of e-readiness, e-government readiness and e-government maturity, and examines the literatures on current assessment practices to identify issues, controversies and problems. The chapter then proposes a bottom-up approach to develop a field-based E-government readiness assessment method and factors that could be usable and applicable for a specific local government with its own unique e-government priorities and goals, and then tests the approach in a city government in China and receives positive feedbacks. As a result of this new approach and methods, a set of specific readiness assessment factors, rather than predefined all-size-fits-all criteria, are derived. The method takes both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and collects both primary and secondary data.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Since the emergence of e-government, a number of e-government assessment surveys and rankings have been conducted throughout the world to evaluate the success of e-government. However, these surveys are evaluating different

aspects of e-government success with various methods. Some attempt to carry out global or regional benchmarking and rankings, some intend to implement national assessment across states, provinces or cities, and some are simply evaluating one specific local government. To make the assessment meaningful and useful, different as-

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assessment purposes may and should take different approaches and methods. The chapter will discuss the approach of assessing e-government readiness with a local government.

E-government readiness assessment (ERA) evaluates how ready a country, a city, or a particular government agency is to develop e-government. E-readiness assessment can be an effective tool to carry out planning, monitoring and evaluation of the initiatives toward Information Society in general and e-Government in particular (Ojo, Janowski, & Estevez, 2007). It can serve as a useful starting point, because when deciding where to go, one must first know where it is now. Thus, the assessment could “provide a firm base upon which to make strategy, plan, policy and decisions” (Dada, 2006). Through ERA, a government can assess its stage of readiness, identify its gaps, and then redesign its e-government strategy. Therefore, E-government readiness is critical to e-government success and is especially relevant for a government at its preliminary or intermediate development stage of e-government. Particularly, e-readiness assessment can help developing countries to measure and plan for ICT integration. It can help them focus their efforts from within, and identify areas where external support or aid is required (Rahman, 2007). In short, it is of great importance to establish a useful and feasible framework, methods and factors of ERA.

The chapter starts with reviewing and clarifying the definitions of e-readiness, e-government readiness and e-government maturity. Next, the chapter examines the literatures on current e-government readiness assessment practices with regard to their features, issues and problems, followed by suggestions for improving current practices. Based on the literature review, the chapter proposes a bottom-up approach to develop a field-based E-government readiness assessment method and factors that could be applicable for a specific local government with its own unique e-government priorities and goals. Furthermore, the study also applied the approach in a city gov-

ernment in China. The detailed procedures of the experiment are illustrated and lessons learned are shared. In the end, the chapter is concluded with discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.

## **EXAMINING CURRENT E-GOVERNMENT READINESS INDEX**

### **Differentiating E-Readiness, E-Government Readiness and E-Government Maturity**

The section will first differentiate three related but different concepts--e-readiness, e-government readiness and e-government, while all three concepts are essential for e-government success. Currently, there does not exist a standard and universal definition for e-government readiness. According to Ojo, Janowski, and Estevez (2007), E-readiness measures the extent to which a society is prepared to reap the opportunities from the information and communication technologies. The notion of e-readiness broadly covers political, regulatory, organizational, cultural, communication and technological factors. “To comply with e-Governance, one must first be e-Ready” (Rahman, 2007), and e-Readiness is the ability to use ICT to develop one’s economy and to foster one’s welfare (Rahman, 2007).

Some scholars have clearly differentiated e-readiness assessment for particular themes, such as e-commerce or e-government, from e-readiness assessment for general purpose without focusing on any particular aspects of government society. One example of the former is the World Economic Forum Networked Readiness, and examples of the latter includes the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA) e-government survey and the Economist Intelligence Unit E-readiness Index which focuses on e-commerce (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2005).

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