E-GOVERNMENT : LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGIES

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As means of delivering more effective and efficient government services and encouraging greater democracy and engagement from citizens, governments around the globe are starting to explore the use of web-based information technology (Grönlund, 2002). A lot of attention has been focused on the design and delivery of portals as a major component of government electronic service infrastructures. By using single-point web browser interfaces local governments can promote the gathering, sharing and dissemination of information and provision of services to communities of interest. The primary purpose of a portal is to function as a gateway to information products and services (Deltor and Finn, 2002). The structuring of information is particularly useful in the way stages of the policy process, that is, for identifying problems and elaborating solutions (Lenk, 1999 cited in Grönlund, 2002).

Today, local governments are faced with growing demands of delivering their information and services more efficiently and effectively and at low cost. Thus, the goals of the delivery of electronic government services are: simplifying procedures and documentation, reducing time taken queuing or waiting, minimising referrals between officials, eliminating interactions that fail to yield outcomes, extending contact opportunities (i.e., access) beyond office hours and improving relationships with the public (Grönlund, 2002). Information technology can, and has played a significant role in bringing about a new qualify of citizen-state interaction.

The study proposed to evaluate the Local Body web sites in order to explore how they can deliver information and services efficiently, effectively and at low cost. We also study the view of users and use of local government web sites. Also of interest and importance are the implications of the e-government strategy on the logical and physical concepts of the development and implementation of e-local government strategy. Issues studied will be focused on the information and services of the local authority web sites, such as: on-line rate payment, services co-ordinated around key life episodes via the portal, data security and authentication, on-line voting and registration, on-line consultation and debate.

The primary goal of my study was to objectively present findings and conclusions that define New Zealand e-local government environment and demonstrate its capacity to sustain online development. This was accomplished by conducting local authority and online user surveys, together with case studies. In determining what defines an e-enabling local government environment, or an effective local government web site, content analysis was performed to evaluate the local authority web sites and analyse critical factors using a model tailored from Hersey's e-commerce web site evaluation model and Paynter's and Chung's Usability model to suit the local government environment. The evaluation model primarily examined four dimensions (Information, Legal Statements, Promotional/Retention and Non-Functional).