

eGovernance Development Initiation Initiative for Republic of Armenia

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This paper proposes a concept for the development of eGovernance in the Republic of Armenia by conceptualizing the problem solution methods and its management. The paper brings a new vision to existing Armenian reality, shapes fundamental basis for the further Governmental proceedings and summarizes methodologies for Project Management and eGovernance Development model.

Concept
Paper

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Introduction

With recent calls for government to prioritize the new good governance methods and define measuring criteria for services provision, so as to see the citizens as primary stakeholders and encourage partnerships within business and the community, new innovations such as the Internet have been heralded as an effective mechanism by which government of Republic of Armenia is able to communicate and interact with organisations and citizens. A UN report (UN, 2006) has provided a wide definition of eGovernment as the use of the internet and information and communication technologies (ICTs) and particularly the internet as a tool for achieving better government. eGovernment may be applied by legislature, judiciary, or administration, in order to improve internal efficiency, the delivery of public services, or processes of democratic governance. The primary delivery models are Government-to-Citizen or Government-to-Customer (G2C), Government-to-Business (G2B) and Government-to-Government (G2G). The most important anticipated benefits of e-government include improved efficiency, convenience, minimizing corruption and better accessibility of public services.

Background

The implementation of eGovernment systems is not enough for general development of Government-to-Citizen services, there is much hidden problems inside this development which normally affect all developing countries which started development from technological implementation of technologies.

Anyway, there are levels of integration of technologies and legislative or framework change within good governance development. The latter indicates the levels of these both terms and the relations within them:

- eGovernance – A renewed Public Sector for the Knowledge Economy
- eGovernment – A subset of eGovernance, concerned with ICT projects in the Public Sector
- mGovernment – A subset of eGovernment, concerned with mobile ICT applications
- tGovernment – A subset of eGovernance, concerned with the Transformation of the Public Sector required to make it fit for the Knowledge Economy

Imagine having a big replacement of whole administrative governmental Public Sector with the term eGovernance. The replacement of public records on citizens from paper based to database records can serve as a good example of eGovernance. It is obvious that it should be the highest level that includes everything in itself. Then, there is a specific electronic communication technology which can be easily imaged by eGovernment. eGovernance is a little bit more complicated. It is the logical and technological use of new electronic methods of interaction of Government with citizens, business and other governmental bodies. A good example of eGovernance can serve the voting by mobile phones.

Government's Role

So with this concept we believe that eGovernance should now be at the heart of national ICT strategies to make the development of eGovernment sustainable. *The Government of RA should state that the concept of eGovernance, is much broader than eGovernment, encompassing the wide-ranging challenges to corporate management brought about by technological advancements.* We are offering the concept of e-governance at five different levels:

1. Transforming the business of government.
2. Increasing participation, openness, transparency, and communication.
3. Fighting against corruption.
4. Transformation in the interactions between government and its internal and external clients.

5. Transformation of society through the emergence of e-societies, which comprise networks of relationships such as citizen-to citizen connections and relations between non-government organizations (NGOs).

Implementation methodology

Developing countries take very different approaches to e-government applications. In industrial countries the delivery model is based on self-service through the Internet, while in developing countries it is a hybrid of automated and manual processes. An increasingly popular model is being used in Bahia, Brazil, where citizen assistance service centres integrate federal, state, and municipal agencies in a single location (Portal approach).

To ensure effective coordination of interdepartmental initiatives, many countries have opted for centralized implementation of e-government efforts. This approach is more likely to succeed in small countries such as Dubai, Jordan, Mauritius, and Singapore. But for most developing countries, where manual processes remain the norm, a centrally driven strategy is complex and difficult. Thus, many countries are trying to decide which strategy is best: central or departmental.

In choosing the right approach, an associated concern is the size of budget allocations. Centrally driven initiatives tend to be expensive. But again it remains the most important centralized development for country as Armenia in the field of ICT implementation in the governmental bodies.

This leads to specific approach which defines creation of *Central Support Agency* which can manage the whole implementation as Program and specifically creating a small projects management framework. If Government of RA will choose to create a central support agency, then it has to define its role, location, mandate, and size, which are also very important for centralized development of eGovernance. Central agencies should have a mandate to perform many tasks, including assessing and enhancing readiness, developing a strategy and implementation plan, building shared infrastructure, finding resources for reengineering, application development, and change management, developing guidelines, standards, and best practices, forging public-private partnerships, identifying departmental champions, monitoring progress and impact, and overseeing pilot projects.

Identifying eReadiness

One of the key questions facing eGovernance development in Armenia will still remain the eReadiness to implement eGovernment. Readiness depends on an enabling environment that includes:

- Mature technical infrastructure in various government departments. This is obviously not at the required level right now.
- Civil service willing to reengineer, share information, and treat citizens as Customers. Here we would require more political will from not only Federal Government but also from Department and local authorities.
- Deep Internet penetration or presence of many public access points.
- Legal framework that fosters public confidence and supports a government mandate to conduct transactions online.
- Political commitment from departmental champions and managers.
- Demanding, aware citizenry that understands its rights and is willing to express them—and fight for them in cases of laxity and inefficiency.

Nowadays the authors of this concept think that Government of Republic of Armenia is nearly ready on all the abovementioned dimensions. The evaluation of eGovernment projects and creation of Central Support.

Strong project management skills

Project managers should clearly identify goals and benefits. The task is often vast, and not manageable with the resources available to a single government department. Adopting established standards and protocols can minimize the need for customization. If off the shelf software is available, it should be used instead of reinventing the wheel. Systems analysis, which provides the cues needed for reengineering, should be done

internally involving professionals from Central Support Agency. But design, software development, data preparation, training, and the like can easily be outsourced.

Proficiency Building

Central Support Agency actually can't drive changes within one department. Agencies can be useful in mobilizing resources and providing technical inputs. But departments need to have champions who can conceptualize an application and implement it successfully. Successful eGovernment projects typically spend about 10 percent of their budget on trainings and capacity building. Awareness about project benefits has to be raised among senior civil servants and political leaders. Training is required for project managers, who need to define project deliverables, negotiate with consultants and vendors, and manage outsourced development efforts. Clerical staff needs to be trained on specific applications. Supervisors and managers need to be trained on using information. And citizens need to be made aware of online services and how to use them.

Significant process reengineering

An important aspect of initiating eGovernment is documenting existing procedures and simplifying them into tasks that can be completed in a few steps without compromising their basic purposes. The process of simplifying documents and workflows, points of approval, and audit is termed reengineering. Most eGovernment projects that have reduced processing time and costs have done so through substantial process reengineering. Such reengineering must precede any effort at automation.

Reengineering modifies processes to reduce steps and the number of necessary employees. This often creates the greatest challenge in eGovernment implementation: overcoming resistance from civil servants. Automation imposes more regulated workflows, and civil servants often lose the flexibility to deal with applications in any sequence other than the one dictated by computerized workflows—eliminating the power of patronage.

Private partnership

The choice of eGovernment project partners can vary from multinational management consultants to information technology vendors to local companies (Such as Microsoft or Local Web Development Company). Partners may be asked to build a project, to build, own, and operate, or to build, operate, and transfer. Regardless of the specific agreement, partnerships should build local capacity. If private partners are involved, contracts should be fair for both parties—so that the private sector earns reasonable profits and the public sector achieves its goals for efficiency and service delivery. This is extremely important for Armenian reality and enrolment of business should be done on fairly open and transparent way.

Government Interoperability Framework Basement

One of the most important reason for strategic development of eGovernance also the possibilities to provide public services tailored to the needs of the citizen and business, as it should be outlined in the Armenian eGovernance Development strategy, require the seamless flow of information across government. The e-Government Interoperability Framework (eGIF) sets out the government's technical policies and specifications for achieving interoperability and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) systems coherence across the public sector. The eGIF defines the essential prerequisites for joined-up and web-enabled government. It is a cornerstone policy in the overall eGovernance strategy development.

Adhering to the eGIF, policies and specifications are mandatory. They set the underlying infrastructure, freeing up public sector organisations so that they can concentrate on serving the customer through building value-added information and services. It will be for the organisations themselves to consider how their business processes can become more effective by taking advantage of the opportunities provided by increased interoperability.

Suggested methodology for Strategy Creation Initiative

Generally we could only conclude the development on centralized approach but we have to also specify the methodology for development of eGovernance in Armenia. A framework development suggests common

guidelines and principles but can incorporate more than a single approach or solution. As to the basement for methodology selection we suggest the *Blueprint methodology*. A blueprint translates a goal or vision down to a single action plan that needs to be closely followed in order to achieve the desired result.

This methodology is fairly the most convenient for Republic of Armenia in nowadays development trends. It suggests creating simple National Action Plan which will guide the whole eGovernance Strategy creation and Project execution.

Proposed Project Management Concept

This concept paper establishes the basis for Project Management Methodology concept proposed in this section for development of Central Support Agency. On the basis of effective project management principles, we are proposing to run the entire proposed strategy creation on PRINCE2 project management standards and managed by Project Board.

PRINCE2 was designed to incorporate the requirements of existing customers and to enhance the method to become a generic, best-practice approach for the management of public projects developed by Office of Commerce of British Government. PRINCE2 takes all the simple and obvious lessons learned by thousands of professionals in the past 20-odd years and presents them in a checklist for present clients, managers and their teams. PRINCE2 method includes in itself development of special Information Systems Projects and could be used in eGovernment projects management. This methodology is extremely important for development of high level accessible governmental web portals and Intranet systems.

eGovernance Project Board

The focal point of the eGovernance project management architecture is the eGovernance Project Board. The Board is the overall authority of eGovernance General Project and is responsible for its initiation, direction, review and eventual closure which is the managerial body for Central Support Agency. Within the Central Support Agency the main project will be defined as eGovernance General Project and the Board is the highest authority for that project.

The eGovernance Project Board represents at managerial level the interests of the following roles and the respective organizations:

- *Project Executive* (National Coordinator) – Minister of Economy is proposed to be the project National Coordinator and has overall ownership over project results and chairs the project board. The Minister of Economy represents the main project beneficiary who has the overall coordination responsibility in the area of information society development in Republic of Armenia.
- *Senior beneficiary* - Government Office, Central Elections Committee and other potential project beneficiaries as required;
- *Senior supplier* – from possible project donors: International Organization, Supporting Organizations (other donors as identified during the project implementation)
- *Other stakeholders* – include other organizations having a specific or general interest in the project results, such as Universities, Business, Academy of Sciences and etc.

Board members will consist of senior level decision makers and will have authority and responsibility for the commitment of resources to the project, such as personnel, cash and equipment. The eGovernance Project Board will “manage by exception”, meaning Board members will be regularly informed of eGovernance Project progress but will only be asked for joint decision making at key points in eGovernance Project implementation managed by eGovernance Project Manager from Central Support Agency.

The eGovernance Project Board is appointed to provide overall direction and management of eGovernance General Project. It would be responsible for ensuring that the project remains on course to deliver products of the required quality to meet the expected outcomes defined in the eGovernance Project Document. Furthermore, the Board is accountable for the success of the eGovernance Project and has responsibility and authority for the Project within the instructions set by eGovernance Development Strategy.

eGovernance Project Manager is the key person in project development process. It is the responsibility of the eGovernance Project Manager to plan, oversee and ensure that eGovernance Project is producing the right outputs, at the right time, to the right standards of quality and within the allotted budget. The main tasks of the e-Governance Project Manager include:

- Overall planning for the whole project
- Motivation and leadership of eGovernance Project staff
- Supervise the eGovernance Project
- Liaison with UNDP Programme Management
- Fund management, allocation, coordination
- Reporting progress to the eGovernance Project
- eGovernance Project quality management

eGovernance Project Assurance

Another key fact for success of proposed eGovernance development concept is eGovernance Project Assurance. Assurance is a key element of the PRINCE2 management method, upon which the eGovernance Project Management Arrangements are based. ‘Assurance’ is essentially an independent audit function, whereby the eGovernance Project Board would be able to monitor progress against agreed work plans. The Project Assurance role supports the Project Board by carrying out objective and independent project oversight and monitoring functions. This role ensures appropriate project management milestones are managed and completed. The Project Assurance is the responsibility of each eGovernance Project Board member.

Public awareness and advocacy activities will be an integral part of every activity.

A Blueprint Method Proposal

In this paper a proposed method for eGovernance development is presented for designing innovative ICT services: the Business Blueprint. This method supports the design of new ICT services and also facilitates cooperation between the involved actors. The Business Blueprint consists of four sketches that the actors draw and explore together:

1. Value Proposition: the service as seen from the end-user perspective.
2. Value Network: all the roles necessary for realizing the new service.
3. Revenue Model: all activities that create value, and all streams of high level eServices.
4. Technological Architecture: functional building blocks and architecture.

The method addresses the design choices in the different perspectives in a coherent manner. The practice of joint sketching greatly aids a shared vision among the proposed partners which could be the most suitable model for eGovernance development in Armenia. The sketches provide a very visual way to gain insight in the complex value web surrounding the eService. The involved parties may easily compare and combine the different sketches and decide on the actual design choices which lead to simple Action Plan generation.

The Business Blueprint method is useful in a preliminary stage when a small number of potential partners want to explore an idea for a new eService and identify the necessary actors in the value web. In a later stage the Business Blueprint assists proposed partners in creating a shared vision and filling-in the three models in the Business Blueprint with actual design choices.

General development Goals

The eGovernance project will advance the use of ICT by public administration for a more transparent and efficient exercise of its functions. It covers four main areas of intervention including: Policy support, development of electronic public services, training, eDemocracy and public awareness. The main project deliverables envisaged are:

- Established legal framework for building eGovernance, including development of eGovernance Concept.
- Design the quality management system and quality control for public services in general.
- Designed technical specifications for e-services and mechanisms for providing e-services, including Digital Identity Management System.
- Developed methodological frameworks on training and certification of public servant in ICT.
- Legislative change for Implementation of Good Governance principles in public organizations.

- Open standards software in public administration applications to be tested to make services more affordable.
- Development of Government Interoperability Framework.
- On-line Digital Identity Management System creation and implementation
- On-line statistical reporting system creation by ArmStat.
- Wide awareness campaign implemented to show-cast benefits of eServices that stimulate access of citizens and businesses to public on-line services.

The project will build capacity of public servants to promote citizen-centred government on-line services and fulfil the right of citizens to: i) basic public information; ii) participation in decision making; iii) transparent and efficient public service delivery.

Strategic Vision

While Armenia has been making a steady progress since development of Information Society demonstrating the rise in all major ICT indicators - placing itself in some areas ahead of other CIS countries – the overall pace of developments is nonetheless lagging behind Europe’s average. It means that other countries are moving faster. Therefore, strategically, the most pressing challenge is to speed up the Information Society development in 2008 - 2009 in order to at least keep the same rather high development dynamics. In other words, Armenia needs not simply a fast development in the area of the Information Society but an accelerated development.

There are good opportunities to make this happen, with some basic instruments and general pre-conditions already being in place. Strengthening IT departments of government agencies and financing the establishment of the new eGovernance development Central Support Agency will be a challenge for the implementation of eGovernment strategy now. Some International Organizations are ready to play an important role in strengthening its capacity level and turning it into a well-functioning agency.

This will eventually lead to the creation of the 2008-2009 National Action Plan containing main projects and initiatives split into the following five generic thematic areas:

1. Legal and institutional base;
2. Access to public information and eGovernance services;
3. Formulation, development and implementation of state information systems;
4. eService delivery to citizens and businesses;
5. Training of government officials in ICT.

And therefore the authors of this concept paper propose the following target actions for development of eGovernance Strategy and creation of eGovernance National Action Plan.

This is not an easy task but, as other countries demonstrate, it is also not impossible, especially if the government possesses sufficient political will, patience, consistency and responsiveness to citizens’ needs. eGovernment may truly become an engine for Armenian public sector reform.

Focus on main target actions

As to the development offered by this proposal based on Blueprint methodology we are proposing the following short term actions for development of Start-up and Initiation stage of project and National Action Plan creation process.

1. Project Definition

As to developing project, based on proposed development methodology, we are proposing to create exact Project Definition proposal in cooperation with Government of Armenia and Ministry of Economy.

2. Scope statement

Together with project definition we have to create preliminary scope statement which will be proposed to various stakeholders and supporters for development. This also will include creation of Initiation stage plan according to PRINCE2 methodology.

3. Research Methodology development

As we have proposed the Blueprint method for development of eGovernance National Action Plan we have to create special approach to research methodology. This has to be selected very carefully to be based on statistical and empiric information.

4. Research Action Creation – eGovernance Development Conference

As a main research action we are proposing development of special conference which will join together different stakeholders and create situation analysis in a very short time. It is very important to give the opportunity to express and review all interested parties proposition to get right decision on the way for development the development strategy (For more information about proposed Conference please review attached Conference Concept Paper).

5. Situation Analysis Creation

After such an event as Conference, development of full situation analysis will be very easy. This has to be done on the basis of selected research methodology but anyway it will include the review of almost all parties interested by eGovernance development in Armenia.

6. Preposition of Project Initiation Document

After development of Situation Analysis we would offer already to create the team of individuals and start the development of future project full planning activities. It is already a very important stage as the whole planning will be done at this stage.

7. eGovernance Strategy development phase

As the individuals team will be created and consolidated under Central Support Agency the possibility of Strategy creation will be very big. This doesn't mean that in the development of eGovernance Strategy foreign consultant and international organization will not be involved, but the management and execution of project will be mainly focused under one strong and motivated team which will allow keeping risks under control and assure the success of the project.

8. National Action Plan development phase

Then the most important step will be the creation of eGovernance Nation Action Plan which will be already a tangible initiative towards development of infrastructure and other areas. This might include a number of sub-projects, which will still be managed by Agency supervision and be directed by eGovernance Project Board.