

# MISSISSIPPI eGovernment

## A REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR



A Report Written by:  
The Governor's Commission  
on Electronic Government

December 1, 2000



## I. Executive Summary

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Governor Ronnie Musgrove established the Commission on Electronic Government (*e-Government*) to examine the important issues involved with providing public services through the Internet. More than 25 public employees, elected officials, and business leaders have devoted time and resources to answering this charge. This report reflects the deliberations and recommends action for government to provide services to the public in the new millennium.

The Commission believes that *e-Government* will provide access, information, and efficiencies not currently enjoyed today by all citizens across our state, nation, and world. Many Mississippians are realizing tremendous benefits through the convenience and richness of electronic services and transactions with the private sector. Online shopping, financial services, directories and consumer research, education and entertainment are transforming consumer expectations at a rapid pace. Citizens should expect no less from government.

The goal of the Commission on *e-Government* is to expand the World Wide Web to include Mississippi government and to provide accessible, accountable, and responsive public services, while at the same time enabling the public sector to operate in the most efficient manner possible.

In order to accomplish this, Mississippi should:

- Create an Internet web portal for government information and services, and,
- Work together with private industry, educators, and civic leaders for the efficient operation of *e-Government*.

## II. Commission Recommendations

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1. Mississippi should move forward with the implementation of *e-Government*, providing public services electronically, via the Internet.
2. Mississippi government should use an “enterprise approach” to develop its web presence as a single resource rather than as fragmented entities.
3. Oversight of *e-Government* activities at the state level should be conducted by a group of high-level policy makers and private citizens to be appointed by the Governor. The existing *e-Government* Task Force should continue to function and should serve as technical advisors to the oversight group.
4. The Department of Information Technology Services should manage and operate the *e-Government* portal and infrastructure.
5. The Governor and the Legislature should use a combination of existing funding, new appropriations, and self-funding to provide revenues for the development and sustainability of Mississippi’s *e-Government* web portal.
6. The Governor and the Legislature should enact the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act (UETA) with modifications appropriate for the State of Mississippi.

7. Mississippi should expand its usage of electronic funds transfer, and the Department of Finance and Administration should assist with this effort.
8. Mississippi should ensure that the advantages of *e-Government* are available to all of its citizens by bridging the digital divide between those that have Internet access and those that do not.
9. The Governor and the Legislature should enact Internet privacy protection legislation with language appropriate for the State of Mississippi.
10. The previously recommended oversight group should develop a model privacy policy notice to be adopted and implemented by each public agency.
11. As a part of the Information Technology Strategic Planning process, each public agency should conduct a review of its processing activities and recommend an action plan to re-engineer these activities and move appropriate processes online.

### **III. The Vision of *e-Government***

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Government, by definition, is the reflection and embodiment of the people's desires for an improved quality of life. Whether it is through public protection of life and property or educational or economic advancement, government strives to meet the public demand for efficient, effective, and accountable services. Much like the inventions of the printing press, radio, telephone, and television, the Internet will prove to be the next dynamic environment for citizens to obtain services and information.

Recall, if you will, how Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek* challenged us to go where no human has ever gone before. Although we are not yet ready for interstellar space travel, the Internet provides us the newest frontier for human interaction and challenge.

The Internet provides 24 hours, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, access to stimulating, interactive, informative environments. As we become more familiar with using the Internet, we begin to expect Internet services that are more efficient. Regardless of what a person seeks of government, they have a growing expectation of effective and efficient services.

As policymakers, we can learn from the examples of e-Commerce. Businesses with successful Internet implementations are not simply moving existing services to the Internet. Rather, they are taking the time to re-engineer their processes, allowing technology to move them toward more efficient operations.

Electronic Government offers an opportunity for Mississippi to take full advantage of the Internet. The opportunities afforded by *e-Government* underscore the united purpose of state government to be viewed as one enterprise with the common goal of delivering services to our citizens conveniently, economically, and without violating their trust.

### **IV. Questions and Findings of the Commission**

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The Commission's work has been summarized into the following four questions:

1. What is *e-Government*?
2. Should Mississippi provide public services via the Internet?
3. How do we implement *e-Government* in a user-friendly manner?
4. When can Mississippians expect to see changes and at what costs?

### **What is *e-Government*?**

*E-Government* is the transfer of public services, funds, and information electronically.

Mississippi government is currently participating in electronic government through electronic mail, web sites, tax collections, economic development, health notices, and electronic forms.

### **Should Mississippi provide public services via the Internet?**

**YES!** Employing *e-Government* strategies should improve public services for Mississippians by reducing the use of paper, automating tasks, and cutting processing times and costs. The federal government estimates that it will save \$0.40 for every paper check converted to an electronic payment, amounting to an average annual cost savings of \$100 million.

Some states have already experienced cost savings and efficiencies. For example, the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue saved \$2 million last year through online tax filing, while the average processing time dropped from 38 to 18 days. In Alaska, registering a vehicle previously cost the state \$7.75 to process. With the use of electronic government it now costs \$0.91, resulting in a cost savings of \$6.84 per transaction.

### **How do we implement *e-Government* in a user-friendly manner?**

Mississippi should pursue an “enterprise approach” to implementing *e-Government* and maintain one major access point for governmental services targeted for consumer needs. Essential *e-Government* hardware, software, and services can be purchased once and made available to all government entities resulting in significant cost savings. An enterprise approach allows one governmental entity to address the standards for security and compatibility.

#### *The Web Portal—A Single Point of Access*

*E-Government* should provide a single point-of-entry to government’s online services and information – more than just a web site, but a web portal, offering an entrance into Mississippi’s public sector. Through a well-designed, interactive portal, citizens and businesses can obtain services without knowing specifics about Mississippi government.



Successful implementation of *e-Government* in Mississippi will improve services to all consumers (citizens, organizations, and businesses), provide a seamless appearance to Mississippi government, increase efficiency in operations, and improve the effectiveness of public services.

Web portals present information organized by subjects of interest to the citizen and are searchable using common words. Topics may revolve around life and business events such as getting married, having a child, starting a business, or obtaining a professional license. A successful web portal will offer citizens and businesses a personalized view of government. For example, a farmer might be greeted with a ticker showing current market prices, a link to the online market bulletin, a long-range weather forecast, or a bulletin posted by his county agent. Someone making a park reservation online might receive e-mail about events at the park or the latest fishing report.

### *Oversight*

Other questions arise regarding electronic government including administration, funding, oversight, and protection. Enterprise *e-Government* requires common infrastructure, policies, and standards and the administrative functions to provide information for strategic decision-making.

As the basic standards for *e-Government* will affect all state agencies, the Commission recommends continuing Governor Musgrove's approach to include high-level policymakers and private citizens in the decision process. The Governor should appoint a group to oversee the implementation of *e-Government* and related technology initiatives. Duties of the group would include prioritizing funding of applications; addressing policy issues such as privacy, security, transaction fees, and accessibility; reviewing ongoing fiscal and operational management and support of portal; and providing a mechanism for gathering input from citizens, businesses, and government entities.

The Department of Information Technology Services (ITS) should oversee the implementation and administration of *e-Government* at the state level. The department's responsibilities would include identifying and assisting pilot enterprise projects; operation and maintenance of the state's web portal; and acquisition and implementation of enterprise *e-Government* hardware, software, and services.

### *E-Government Applications*



Successful *e-Government* initiatives should focus on three consumer-to-government relationships: Citizen-to-Government, Business-to-Government, and Government-to-Government. First, Citizen-to-Government refers to the direct consumption of public services by the individual consumer for personal use. These services include licensing and permitting for

hunting, fishing, and driving privileges. This will not only include the payment of taxes, fines, and fees to state and local governments, but also the payment of refunds to taxpayers.

Second, the Business-to-Government relationship model refers to those services consumed by entrepreneurs, businesses, and corporations, for a commercial purpose (profit or non-profit). These include filing statements of incorporation, obtaining business licenses, assistance with site locations, and obtaining workforce information.

Finally, Government-to-Government refers to the coordination of both inter- and intra- agency cooperation to improve services. This includes travel requests, purchasing requisitions, payroll processing, intergovernmental fund transfers, and position applications.

#### Access to e-Government

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, 26.3 percent of Mississippi households have Internet access. Therefore, it is important that Mississippi promote access to the Internet by bridging the digital divide. The Governor's Classroom Technology Initiative is a great example of public and private partnerships working to bridge the divide. Mississippi government should continue to build partnerships among public, private, and non-profit entities.

**Deleted:** Full Citizen

**Deleted:** It is important, from both a good government and an economic development standpoint, to ensure that all of the citizens of Mississippi have access to *e-Government*. Because this state has a significant number of citizens without Internet access, it is important that the State encourage the establishment of community access centers where citizens may go to access the Internet.¶ There are significant funds (grants) available from governmental and private sources to assist in bridging the "digital divide" between those having Internet access and those without. These funds represent a sizable potential for new capital infusion into the State and also the opportunity to close the digital divide for our citizens. The State should identify resources available to assist government and private entities in locating and applying for these grants.

#### **When can we expect to see real changes and at what costs?**

By April 30, 2001, the State should implement a common set of tools, available to state agencies, for more expanded *e-Government* development. This will allow government to reduce implementation costs, develop business solutions that can easily communicate, use training resources more effectively, and share development efforts.

By June 30, 2001, the State should facilitate the implementation of *e-Government* through a partnership with an established provider of *e-Government* development services. This partnership will allow the State to benefit from the experiences providers have had in similar implementations. Mississippi should be able to use applications previously developed by this provider to implement *e-Government* in a faster time frame.

By August 31, 2001, the State should premier an enhanced portal as a single point of entry to government services. By October 31, 2001, the portal should feature several interactive *e-Government* applications.

State government should continue searching for opportunities to create greater efficiencies, including:

- Reviewing and redesigning agency business processes to improve government services;
- Providing assistance to small agencies without adequate resources or skills;
- Fully implementing electronic transfer of funds;
- Developing business models for common transactions such as licensing to use across agencies; and,
- Addressing the training of agency employees on the basics of using *e-Government* technologies to ensure that they are used to their fullest capacity.

### *e-Government Environment*

A significant investment should be made to create a technical environment at the state level to support *e-Government*. A review of other states indicates that this initial investment will be approximately six to eight million dollars. Other states have also indicated that full implementation of all *e-Government* infrastructure components should take approximately two years. However, benefits from improved electronic services could be realized within the first year.

The Commission believes that existing funds are available to make significant progress over the initial two years. The Commission recommends that alternatives be considered for funding of the ongoing maintenance, operation, and enhancement of the portal. This requirement is anticipated to be in the range of three to five million dollars per year, and can be addressed through direct appropriation and/or fees charged for services to government entities, businesses, and citizens. Actual costs will not be known until after vendors and products are selected.

*E-Government* is not a destination but a journey. The journey will continue as we provide greater services and citizen access to Mississippi government than ever before. Business applications will continue to be brought online, citizen access expanded, and greater efficiencies achieved.

## **V. The Future of Mississippi Government**

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As one accesses Mississippi Inter@ctive, the state's web portal, you are greeted with a button titled "Starting a New Business" and a search engine from which you can obtain direction and answers to your questions. Through a series of mouse clicks and easy to navigate screens, you find needed information and apply for desired services online. As you complete the registration of your business, you are prompted to think about areas of personal interest – purchasing a home, finding schools, buying a car tag, and registering to vote. You may even get an e-mail welcoming you to Mississippi from the State Senator or Representative's office in the district where your business will be located. You do all this without having to know which specific state agency to contact, making multiple phone calls, or standing in line. Just as the state's water ports and highways are clearly marked to direct the flow of traffic, Mississippi's web portal is designed to guide you to needed services.

The next business morning, public employees access Mississippi Inter@ctive at the start of their workday. The agencies serving you do not have to manually enter your business information, file forms, accept cash, or make the accompanying deposits. The forms are online and can be accessed readily. Your data is secure, and transactions are processed and reconciled timely and accurately. Operations are in place within state government for processing the information and handling credit card payments or cash transfers.

This can be the reality of *e-Government* in Mississippi. Private industry, state agencies, educators, and civic leaders must work together to make it happen.



## VI. Appendix – Glossary

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**Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)** – the analysis and design of workflows and processes within and between organizations to achieve breakthrough improvements in performance measures.

**e-Commerce** – the buying and selling of goods and services on the Internet, especially the World Wide Web.

**e-Government** – the transfer of government funds, goods, services, and/or information on-line, either over the Internet or over private networks, Intranets, or Extranets.

**Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT)** – a system of transferring money from one bank account directly to another without any paper money changing hands.

**Enterprise** – In the computer industry, an Enterprise is defined as the total view of an organization's business and its applications, seeing how existing applications fit into that view, and then devising ways to efficiently coordinate the reuse of what already exists while adding new applications and data.

**Internet** (sometimes called "the Net,") – a worldwide system of computer networks - a network of networks in which users at any one computer can, if they have permission, get information from any other computer (and sometimes talk directly to users at other computers). Today, the Internet is a public, cooperative, and self-sustaining facility accessible to hundreds of millions of people worldwide. Physically, the Internet uses a portion of the total resources of the currently existing public telecommunication networks.

**Mississippi Inter@ctive (<http://www.state.ms.us>)** – the state Internet portal providing interactive government services online to help meet the needs of businesses and the people of Mississippi.

**Web Portal** – a web site or service that offers a broad array of resources and services, such as e-mail, forums, search engines, and on-line shopping malls.

**World Wide Web** – the most widely used part of the Internet (often abbreviated "WWW" or called "the Web").