

Executive Summary

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
- Develop an environment that supports the efficient operation of *e-Government*.

Commission Recommendations

- 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 to be appointed by the Governor and the Legislature.
- 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 and self-funding to provide revenues for the development and sustainability of Mississippi *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) Each public agency should expand its usage of electronic funds transfer, and the Department of Finance and Administration should assist with this effort.

Other Considerations

- 1) The Governor and the Legislature should enact Model Internet Privacy Protection legislation as suggested by the Council of State Governments with modifications appropriate for the State of Mississippi.
- 2) Each public agency should develop and implement a privacy policy notice consistent with federal and state laws.
- 3) Each public agency should conduct a review of its processing activities and recommend a two-year action plan to move processes online.

The Vision of *E-Government*

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, 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.

Questions Posed and Findings of the Commission

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 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), providing a seamless appearance to Mississippi government, increase efficiency in operations, and improve the effectiveness of public services.

<Include graphic of well-designed portal>

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 in the decision process. The Governor should appoint a group to oversee the implementation of *e-Government* and related technology. 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 minimum enterprise *e-Government* hardware, software, and services.

E-Government Applications

Successful *e-Government* initiatives will focus on three government-to-consumer 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 incorporate the payment of refunds to taxpayers.

<Provide a graphic distinguishing the relationships>

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.

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 agencies 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 quick-start *e-Government* through a partnership with an established provider of *e-Government* development services. *This partnership will bring the vendor's ready-made solutions and lessons learned to the table. (What does this sentence mean?)*

By August 31, 2001, the State should premier an enhanced portal as the single point of entry to government services.

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

- Conducting business process re-engineering across agencies (*Explain this?*)
- 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
- Addressing the training of agency employees in using *e-Government* technologies to ensure that they are used to their fullest capacity.

Environment Supportive of e-Government

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 five million dollars. Other states have also indicated that full implementation of all *e-Government* infrastructure components should take eighteen to twenty-four months. 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 two to four 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.

The Future of Mississippi Government

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.

Appendix – Glossary

Business Process Re-engineering

E-Commerce

EFT

Enterprise

E-Government

Internet

Mississippi Inter@ctive (<http://www.state.ms.us/>)

Web Portal

WWW