

ICA 40th Conference

Conference Summary

Review of the Opportunities and Conclusions

Rapporteur: Darlene Meskell, USA

To summarise this conference is like climbing a huge mountain but I will make an attempt to capture what I heard, to report what you all had to say and to put it in the context of the theme of this year's conference addressing the whole of government, and trying to find ways to fill the holes. So, these were the themes that dominated in conference sessions this week.

We talked about integrated government; in Singapore for example, they now using the term 'i-gov' instead of 'e-gov'. Integrated government is the way forward, bringing all services together jurisdictionally, inter-jurisdictionally for client service delivery. Canada has also expanded this to incorporate other segments of society. So we are talking about bringing all services together to serve the citizen throughout society?

We talked about agile government, thanks to Abraham Sotelo for setting it all out for us and to Edwin Bruce for also bringing the issue to the table. Agile government is fast, flexible, its nimble, its quick-footed, proactive, responsive and collaborative. This is another issue that is fairly new this year but it's going to be in our lexicon in years to come.

We talked about collaborative government. Collaboration is a big issue; one of the brainstorming sessions identified collaboration as whole of government, or whole of government as collaboration. Many of the industry leaders are selling collaboration consulting and collaborative tools. This is very much in our future, and it was very much in our discussion points for the groups here.

We talked about accountability and transparency. I had noted that in the past few years these concepts, which are significant concepts, have never received this kind of treatment; I had not heard them mentioned as much as I have heard here.

We talked about trust in government, and e-democracy, and we talked about, significantly, e-inclusion. This was the theme of the first day and I think it may indicate where we are going from here.

Frank McDonough, in the paper that he wrote about the whole of government, described three phases of e-government. The first phase was basically providing service and consolidating functions. In effect, providing efficiencies to government through automation. This is a culmination of many years of computerisation, many decades of computerisation. But in the e-gov era we moved into phase II which can be referred to as a government without boundaries phase. We are really starting to talk about crossing the silos, breaking down barriers and really effectively having an integrated government. In phase III is what we are talking about the whole of government approach. It's an approach that provides all their support for making decisions for the benefit of the government as a whole.

What came out, I think in the first day, was a discussion of moving beyond that an emerging vision, if you will, of what e-government can be in the future. We talked a lot about making decisions and supporting IT and e-government for the good of society as a whole, not just the government, we are moving beyond the boundaries of the government itself.

Speakers earlier in the week talked about e-inclusion and we were also, as I mentioned before, talking about crossing sectors now. Mr Bertucci, from the UN, mentioned that e-inclusion goes beyond e-gov to actively promote the inclusion of all segments of society. His study

suggested that there is a correlation between income and the effectiveness and participation in government. He is trying to expand access of e-government to all people.

William Heath talked about his ideal government concept which requires empathy and intuitive understanding. He also was talking about something that goes beyond the efficiencies, the achievement of efficiencies through IT. Frank McDonough raised the issue that one government, or a whole of government, requires a public/private partnership to bring all the needed skills to bear in achieving our joint objectives. Jon Udell talked about the untapped potential for social software tools to bring people together in ways that we may never even anticipate. We are being brought together even today through the use of electronic technology in ways that nobody envisioned twenty, thirty years ago.

On the issue of e-inclusion, Mexico has always been a leader in this area. Its been a major tenant, a major objective of the Mexican e-gov programme to expand the access to digital technologies and to eliminate the digital divide in this community. They have been developing a system of 7200 digital community centres throughout the country, which are becoming more and more popular – I'm told that children go into these centres and use the technologies online and largely, to communicate from one family to another. So the next generation is, at the very least, being taught through this digital community centre. They had 400,000 users last month and they are moving further along to promote other digital opportunities.

We are moving from e-gov to i-gov and Singapore has a definition of integrated government which can potentially change the structure of government, so we are talking about important concepts. They are largely using web services, provided by the government to get on this pathway. Canada were looking for better management through acting as one. That's the term that Jim Alexander used. We are talking about consolidating the government services in a number of different ways. One is through shared services, through shared administrative IT services, now they are starting to consolidate their procurement and real property programmes as well. Canada is talking about developing enterprise policies, investment decisions and enterprise focus in alignment for IT within the government. Finally, Canada's concept of the service value chain is an interesting new thought: the finding that there is a linkage between employing and engagement, and the quality of services. This is their finding on the implementation, the delivery of internal services but I'm sure that they will find the same when they look at the participation and the engagement of employees in conducting and delivering external services.

Australia talked about the whole of government through connective government: integrating the government systems via individual programmes that cut across programme areas. Issues like IPB6 which will be important to everybody in government; will help them to break down the barriers and the boundaries of government. Australia is looking to multiple layers of government from national to local, and also including New Zealand. Australia is therefore taking on the task of working inter-jurisdictionally. Then the question has been raised by a number of speakers, and by a number of individuals, whether centralisation, and this rush towards centralisation, is a good thing. I think perhaps we will all look at answering that next year.

We looked at some questions about what the citizens want. We are still asking the questions. That's what is most important. We had an interesting answer from Finland: they don't want to deal with us too much, they don't want to do too many transactions. Mexico claimed that citizens will demand the benefits of transparent and accountable government, and this may help to continue the existing programmes as the government changes, while Canada stated that citizens expect to be at the centre of a lot of focus from different segments in society, and we know from all around the world, that to be guaranteed privacy is a really important and critical concept for citizens.

I should also mention here the citizen's e-workbook from the Netherlands which is one of the ways that citizens are being encouraged to participate in government.

Some visions were laid out, some national visions: Singapore's vision is to be an integrated government that delights customers and connects customers through information communications. Korea wants to be the world's best open government. Canada didn't state its vision in so many words but described a vision where all segments of society are acting to focus on the citizen and strengthen trust and confidence in government.

We talked about some cross government solutions:

- Edwin Bruce gave an interesting presentation about New Zealand's e-governance group which reports to the Minister and raises the level of e-governance in the government and he says helps to build trust in government
- Australia's business transformation committee is a high level management committee that is in charge of business transformation
- the UK has instituted its transformational strategy
- Philip O'Reilly talked this morning about the Irish Department of Agriculture and Food and how it is using an engineering approach, cutting across the agencies within the department; and

I thought one of the other interesting things that was raised was Belgium's programme, Belgium's attempt to do a cross EU procurement process. This raises up the issue of the EU. The EU is another jurisdictional level that the Europeans are going to have to deal with.

We talked about IT workforce skills and the need to improve them and raise the professional levels of the IT workforce and a lot of work is being done in Finland and Australia, Ireland has instituted a new training programme and we in the US are developing new IT competencies.

We heard about an ICA study on e-identification, I was a little bit surprised to hear that 65% of the respondents had national e-ID's and another 21% had planned them. It was interesting that Estonia makes the most extensive use of electronic ID's against Frank's concept of the Anglo Saxon method of identification using passports and other ID tools.

Some of the open issues that were identified were:

- the need for a user friendly 'killer-app' to provide cross government ID management
- the need to articulate the value of proposition to our leaders and
- the need to create a legal framework.

From Belgium we heard how the multi-headed dragon of multiple jurisdictions was tamed with the use of the e-IDs and we heard how the ACLU and the US among other organisations I must say are very concerned about the misuse and abuse of electronic IDs.

Canada delivered a very interesting presentation on their government in the palm of your hand programme in which they are trying to communicate through wireless technology - through a wireless portal, while in Sweden they are using wireless cell phones to make it easier for commercial trucks to clear customs and Singapore has a programme to use multiple channels to deliver on line services. So the small screen is becoming more and more important.

We heard various ways in which government is on a par with private industry and fostering innovation and again I was happy to hear John Udell talk about that today.

Finally I wanted to emphasise a question and answer that I think leaves us poised for next year. Frank McDonnagh raised the question: 'Will governments that resist the whole of government approach be able to sustain their opposition as these changes across all

technologies role across society? And then he asked if the CIOs are not in a position to do it who else is in a position to do it?

I think that's a question worth pondering, Ann Stewart from Australia gave a partial answer when she said that the future of e-government is in our hands because CIOs are responsible for the application of technology and government and technology is the way to the future for government and for society as well.

In conclusion, I would invite any comments on any of the above or if I left out anything significant now is the chance to speak.