Challenges and Opportunities – Intergovernmentalism –
E-Government is Pervasive…

Beyond an agency or organization, beyond National, State or Local, it is critical that the technology solutions which sit on top of an e-government infrastructure are within the reach of all citizens. Successful e-government projects not only attract those citizens who are already connected to the Internet, but they must also be able to move people online who are not already there. To achieve this, the ability to provided value added services to citizens and businesses, hosted on the e-government infrastructure, is key.

Today, government services are provided through a variety of channels, including retailers, banks and the post office. Public agencies have agreements with service companies so, for example, citizens and businesses can pay their bills and taxes at their local bank. Or, if somebody needs a fishing license, they are more likely to buy one at the store where they buy their fishing tackle than at a government office. An integrated government service network needs to be developed to reach the citizen in the physical world is also the best way to reach the citizen in the virtual world. Somebody who banks over the Internet should be able to pay their bills and taxes through their online financial institution. Somebody who buys their fishing gear from an e-commerce site should be able to buy their fishing license from the same Web merchant.

Online public service provider channels can be a government Web site, they can be an e-commerce site, or they can be a public portal such as Yahoo, AOL and Microsoft's MSN. It is in government's interest to reach their citizens through as many service provider channels as possible, and public portals can reach as many citizens in one day as a government Web site can in one month or even one year.

A typical e-government system has one or more public sector organizations participating to support a particular service. These agencies may conduct online transactions with the public themselves through a government Web site, but more likely they will work in partnership with a service provider that acts as a distribution channel for the service. The service provider, in turn, will work with different Web merchants and public portals to reach a maximum number of citizens.

The development of a successful online government service network requires technical integration between the public portal at the front end, and the service provider and the government agency at the back end. So when a citizen logs on to an on-line service such as MSN home adviser to register to vote, for example, there is an interface with a service provider, a company called election.com, which in turn is integrated with the back-end system of the government agency responsible for voter registration. The public does not have to see or deal with
these behind-the-scenes relationships; they simply log on to their usual home page and register to vote.

The various players within a government service network do not strike agreements with each other on an exclusive basis. In the same way that a government agency would not give a certain chain of sports stores the exclusive right to sell fishing licenses online, all service providers and public portals which want to provide a public service should be allowed to. Public portals need to be affiliated with as many service providers as possible in order to connect to a variety of government agencies. Service providers require affiliations with various public portals and Web merchants in order to reach as many citizens as possible. To have the integration that's required to ensure relationships are non-exclusive, each player relies on open and standardized technical requirements and published business rules for providing a service.

While the business model for conducting online transactions cannot be exclusive, governments will want to be sure that the public service being delivered is of high quality. So when a government organization makes an agreement with a service provider, and a service provider signs a contract with a public portal, there are usually terms and conditions guaranteeing a certain quality of service. For example, each party will ensure the service is up and running 7 days week, 24 hours per day. Or the government agency will want to ensure compliance with citizen privacy and data protection regulations.

Finally, once there is an online service network where government, service provider and public portals are all working together to deliver high-quality services to the public, customer relationship management becomes all-important. The relationship with the customer must be managed end-to-end. A government employee might have some questions and will need to contact a citizen who has filed their tax declaration through a public portal. But because that citizen is not a direct customer of tax office, the government has to be prepared to use the relationship with service provider and public portal to send a queries and reply back to the citizen. And the service provider and public portal must provide the ability for government to reply back and ensure that when an email is sent, for example, that it is actually delivered. In order to manage the customer relationship end-to-end, government, service provider and public portals must all use common or interoperable tools.

Collaboration through organizations that provide forums for the intersection of all levels of government with industry such as the Congressional Internet Caucus, the Council for Excellence in Government, the E-Government Alliance and the is key. These organizations/forums provide:

- Forums for learning about best practices from every level of government (Local, State, and Federal) as well as many governments (international)
- Incentives for award winning solutions that engage multiple levels of government and industry
• “Safe” pilot/prototype environments to test new e-government solutions
• Collective market dynamics to hone and increase the effectiveness of solutions

It is through these efforts that E-Government will successful span the existing barriers between Local, State, Federal and International government services.