



eGovernment Strategy 2010

Department of Finance

December 2009

1. Introduction

1.1 Previous Strategies/Action Plans

In 1999, the Government published its initial Action Plan for the Information Society¹. Among other things, it included specific targets for the electronic delivery of public service information and services. This strategy was updated in 2002 with the publication of “New Connections”². A number of progress reports on these strategies were published by the Department of the Taoiseach³.

1.2 EU eGovernment Benchmarking

The European Commission developed and implemented a benchmarking exercise of eGovernment progress in 2001 (see Annex I for a listing of services included). It included the EU Member States plus some additional countries. Since then there has been 8 benchmarks with the latest published in November 2009. While Ireland was ranked well in early benchmarks, that ranking slipped to 17th in 2007. In May 2008, the Government consolidated responsibility for eGovernment policy and central operations in the Department of Finance. The Government also prioritised progress with the 21 services included in the EU eGovernment Benchmarks that are applicable to Ireland. The effort arising from that has resulted in Ireland increasing its ratings across most of these 21 services to the point where Ireland is now ranked joint 7th for online sophistication. A chronology of the EU eGovernment Benchmarks is included at Annex II.

1.3 Dáil Motion on eGovernment

In April 2008, the Dáil agreed a motion on eGovernment that called for greater use of online facilities for specific services (see Annex III for a full listing). Three of these are now available online. Progress with the remainder is more difficult for a range of reasons such as those set out at Section 2.2 of this Strategy.

¹ <http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/upload/publications/238.pdf>

² http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/attached_files/Pdf%20files/NewConnectionsMarch2002.pdf

³ An example is available at - http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Publications/Publications_Archive/Publications_2006/Publications_for_2004/New_Connections_2nd_Progress_Report.pdf

1.4 Government Policy

In July 2008, the Government approved a range of measures to renew focus on eGovernment, *viz.*

- i). the Department of Finance should seek to agree specific eGovernment targets with individual civil and public service bodies over the following 12-18 months, with the individual organisations maintaining responsibility for the development and delivery of the agreed targets;
- ii). agreed targets should be set in the context of the wider modernisation programme underlying the need to improve the quality of customer service, drive administrative and process simplification, improve value for money in a tightening fiscal environment, improve Ireland's standing in international benchmarking, and improve the public's perception of ICT usage in the public service;
- iii). the initial focus should be on those services included in the existing EU Benchmarking exercise and the Joint Motion on eGovernment agreed by the Dáil on 30th April 2008;
- iv). where it is determined that it would not be feasible or practical to implement on-line delivery mechanisms that this should be agreed with the Department of Finance;
- v). agreed targets should be reported on in terms of feasibility, ownership, development and delivery capacity, timescales, costs, etc.;
- vi). the Department of Finance should submit progress reports to Government every 6 months;
- vii). the Department of Finance should engage with the various international benchmarking exercises that take place to ensure that they properly reflect the situation in Ireland and elsewhere and that they reflect services that are important and feasible; and
- viii). the Department of Finance should examine the potential to develop a number of central eGovernment services including, a system to improve identity data quality and provide online authentication; a system to electronically publish citizen events such as deaths, births, and marriages; and facilities to help small and medium sized public bodies put services online.

1.5 Transforming Public Services

The OECD Report “Towards an Integrated Public Service” published in April 2008⁴ suggested that eGovernment efforts should be renewed but highlighted that the emphasis should be on improving service qualities and revising business processes to make services more user-friendly. In November 2008, the Task Force on the Public Service, in response to the OECD Report, set out a range of eGovernment recommendations at Chapter 5 of its report “Transforming Public Services”⁵. These recommendations endorsed the measures already put in place by the Government (as detailed at Section 2.4). The Task Force also highlights the need for –

- i). public service bodies to be able to share data to a greater extent than is currently possible; and
- ii). a re-examination of eGovernment initiatives already undertaken to ensure administrative simplification, enhanced user choice and experiences, and a reduction in the duplication of any data collection.

1.6 Department of Finance Administrative Arrangements

The Department of Finance issued Circular 6/09 on Arrangements for eGovernment⁶ in March 2009. This Circular, which is applicable to all civil and public service bodies, details how such bodies must plan eGovernment projects appropriately; directs all bodies to implement certain project management and reporting structures; and describes the reporting regime with which they must cooperate. On foot of this, the Department of Finance provides regular updates to the Cabinet Committee on Transforming the Public Service and provides progress reports to Government every six months. The Department of Finance has also set up a website⁷ on eGovernment specifically for civil and public service bodies (i.e., it is not available to the general public). The website provides a range of resources to aid and guide public bodies in progressing their eGovernment projects and programmes including, definitions for eGovernment, information on central eGovernment infrastructures, and advice on eGovernment project plans and management.

⁴ http://www.onegov.ie/eng/Publications/OECD_Review_of_the_Irish_Public_Service.html

⁵ http://www.onegov.ie/eng/Publications/Transforming_Public_Services.html

⁶ <http://www.finance.gov.ie/documents/circulars/circular2009/circ62009.pdf>

⁷ www.ict.gov.ie/egov

1.7 Current Position

Most services that are readily amenable to delivery by electronic means have been delivered. Access to many of these are available through the Online Services portal on the Government website www.gov.ie. Additionally, Ireland has significantly increased its standings in the EU eGovernment Benchmarks and is considered one of the top two performers in the delivery of eProcurement services. However, it is clear that much remains to be done, both in terms of eGovernment being prioritised within civil and public service bodies, and in terms of moving services or part of them more online.

This Strategy details the Government's goals for the next phase of eGovernment development. It acknowledges the particular difficulties there are with further provision of online facilities. It sets out the phased approach that can be taken to overcoming these barriers and achieving those goals.

2. Goals, Barriers and Approaches

2.1 Goals

The Government wants to see a significant improvement in the use of electronic means for delivering public services and sets the following goals for the next phase of its eGovernment Programme –

Goal 1

Enhanced Information Provision

Information about all services (in terms of how they work, availability, access, eligibility, and costs) will be improved.

This improvement will be in terms of its quality, i.e., written in such a way that it is easy to understand and in such a way that it provides full details about the service, including examples and Frequently Asked Questions where appropriate.

The improvement will also be in terms of provision over as many channels as are appropriate such as the web, through mobile phones/technologies, and by intermediaries.

Goal 2

Enhanced Electronic Delivery of Services

The online delivery of all services by all public bodies will be improved and every effort will be made to eliminate the need for non-online channels.

Public bodies will endeavour to ensure that their services are as amenable to self-service as possible, and in this way, will strive to reduce staffing requirements by minimising the need for keying-in and validating data, and verifying eligibility.

Goal 3

Enhanced Use of Shared Approaches

The public service will seek to make as much use as is feasible of shared approaches in the achievement of Goals 1 and 2.

In this regard, public bodies will make greater use of centralised process support systems such as identity registration and authentication, means assessment, payments, and forms services, as they become available.

Public bodies will seek to aggregate and centralise the delivery of services of the same type which are now distributed across bodies and authorities.

2.2 Barriers to Further Progress

The Government acknowledges that there are particular difficulties with moving certain services online quickly, such as –

- i). Many services require one or more of the following to satisfy legal, international, eligibility or anti-fraud obligations -
 - good quality authentication of the identity of the applicant;
 - substantial supporting or original documentation from the customer,
 - means tests to be carried out,
 - statutory declarations or affidavits by law,
 - photos or other types of biometric data,
 - police/immigration checks;
- ii). Many systems and processes would require Business Process Improvement analysis before they would be amenable to change and to delivery over non-traditional channels. That analysis would have to identify how risk could be redefined, what legislative change/s would be required, what Business Process Reengineering and Staffing Deployment this would facilitate, and how all of that could be implemented and operationalised; and
- iii). Public bodies may lack the necessary capabilities to advance these exercises in both their internal business and ICT staffing complements, and face difficulties in affordably sourcing such capabilities.

Therefore, the Government believes that, as a consequence, efforts will have to be phased in over time, and in some cases, services will have to be delivered electronically on a partial basis. The Government proposes to concentrate on this under two distinct categories. The first involves service-specific improvements, which should be possible in the short-medium term. The second relates to organisation or sector or system-wide improvements that are likely to take a medium-longer term.

2.3 Service-Specific Improvements

The Government is committed to using electronic methods to minimise the need for paper-based transactions; to re-use existing data to simplify or streamline service provision; to reduce the need for or time spent queueing; and to improve public sector business opportunities for SMEs.

Consequently, civil and public service bodies will seek to –

- a). put in place on-line facilities for some aspects of the type of services referred to at 2.2 (i) above. This would allow the customer to complete most of the data collection part of an application on-line and print off a transaction slip. This slip could be used for signing, witnessing, attachment to supporting documentation/photos etc. This would then be posted or delivered to the responsible public body. The slip would include measures that allowed for quick and easy association with the original electronic submission. This approach has value in terms of reducing the internal data rekeying effort, reducing the data validation effort, and reducing the effort in eligibility checking;
- b). put some services, that are typically directed at small groups of persons, on the Web (e.g., lodging planning objections or FOI requests, access to a social insurance record, etc.). These will be facilitated by access to a PPSN-based repository for authentication purposes which will be delivered by mid 2010 (see Annex IV for details). The Department of Finance will assist smaller bodies with the technical aspects of these;
- c). re-engineer the renewal aspects (as distinct from original applications) of some services to allow them to be completed on the Web;
- d). put in place online booking systems, where physical presence is required, to reduce the need for queueing, to help manage processes better, and get more throughput from a particular resource level;
- e). produce tamper-proof electronic documents that could be validated electronically, as a replacement for originals or paper copies; and
- f). use a new area on the Government eTenders platform for smaller value procurements that can only be conducted electronically. These procurements will have commensurate simplified documentation requirements. This will result in reduced internal administrative effort and stimulate opportunities for smaller indigenous enterprises.

2.4 Organisation/Sector/System-Wide Improvements

The Government recognises that improvements, beyond specific service improvements, that span organisations or sectors, will require significant work as per Section 2.2 (ii). The Government is committed to exploring how it may be possible to –

- a). deepen the quality of existing information sites by including and linking maps, geocoding, and directories (of people, places, hours of services, services, etc.). It may be possible to do such things using a common or centralised approach (the Health Atlas is an example of a good start in this area that could be improved dramatically with deepened information – it is also an example of the type of direction that other services could go);
- b). take a more centralised and templated approach for certain services, in much the same way as improving the quality of identity data is currently under consideration (as set out at Annex IV). Examples include application forms for things such as grants (e.g. grants.gov in the USA), various concessions (e.g., permits, licences, renewals, etc.), means declarations, etc.;
- c). aggregate or remove the distributed nature of certain services (e.g., revenue collections in the Health service, medical card issuance in the HSE, student grants in the Local Authority and VEC sectors, etc.);
- d). exclusively use online facilities for services of high-value that are provided primarily through intermediaries such as registered professionals (e.g., solicitors, accountants, etc.). Their professional body would provide such intermediaries with certified digital credentials that they would then use in their dealings with the public service on behalf of customers. As public bodies may have a higher degree of trust in such credentials, this might smooth the way to greater use of digitally signed documentation and affidavits online; and
- e). use on-line facilities to provide an integrated approach to life-events (e.g., unemployment) that span multiple public bodies.

2.5 Implementation Steps

The Government will ensure that all future customer surveys elicit views on missing on-line services of value, i.e., customers will be asked what they really want in on-line or automated service provision. Where possible, the responses will be used to develop priorities.

In the meantime, the Government requires all public bodies to –

- i). complete an analysis of their services to identify gaps in on-line service provision. As a first step, all organisations will develop a list of all of their services as set out in their FOI Section 16 Reference Book. They will also detail which of these have been provided on-line. In the case of those that are not yet available on-line, they will detail if and when it is planned to do so, and if not, why not. This information will be submitted to the Department of Finance by end January 2010 as part of individual Start of Year submissions required under Circular 2/09;
- ii). immediately concentrate on “service-specific” opportunities as set out at Section 2.3; and
- iii). prioritise the development of systems to support these opportunities.

In this regard, the Government requires Secretaries General to ensure that –

- a). eGovernment Plans as required by Circular 6/09 are revisited and recrafted in the context of this revised eGovernment Strategy and in the format specified in the Department of Finance eGovernment Planning Advice Note;
- b). their Departments coordinate the return of such plans from bodies, authorities and institutions under their aegis or in their sectors, and ensure that those plans are in keeping with this Strategy, the Department of Finance eGovernment Planning Advice Note, Departmental-set policies, and central initiatives; and
- c). all revised plans are submitted to the Department of Finance by end of March 2010.

Once this first phase is underway, the TPS Steering Group of Secretaries General will seek to identify organisation/sector/system improvements and at

least one lifecycle project to concentrate on. The Steering Group will also mobilise agencies to put these in place.

The Department of Finance will seek to put in place a dedicated team to assist civil and public service bodies with the development and implementation of on-line services. The Department will use the service listings submitted under Circular 2/09 and the eGovernment plans submitted under Circular 6/09 to identify targets. While the primary focus will be on social and employment related services, the actual determination of priorities will be dependent on the timeliness with which non-technology matters such as legislation, business processes and staffing issues can be addressed. Annex V provides an example of a possible initial listing of targets.

<ENDS>

Annex I

EU eGovernment Benchmarked Services

A.1 Citizen Services

1. Income Taxes (Revenue Commissioners)
2. Job Search (FÁS)
3.
 - a). Social Security Benefits - Unemployment Benefits (D/SFA)
 - b). Social Security Benefits – Children’s Allowances (D/SFA)
 - c). Social Security Benefits – Student Grants (Local Authorities)
 - d). Social Security Benefits – Medical Costs (Not Applicable)
4.
 - a). Personal Documents – Passports (D/FA)
 - b). Personal Documents – Drivers Licence (Local Authorities)
5. Car Registration (D/EHLG)
6. Application for Building Permission (LA Sector)
7. Declaration to the Police (D/JELR and An Garda)
8. Public Libraries (D/EHLG)
9. Birth and Marriage Certificates (D/SFA)
10. Enrolment in Higher Education (CAO)
11. Announcement of Moving (Not Applicable)
12. Health Related Services (Not Applicable)

A.2 Business Services

1. Social Contribution for Employees (Revenue)
2. Corporate Tax (Revenue)
3. VAT (Revenue)
4. Registration of a New Company (CRO)
5. Submission of Data to the Statistical Office (CSO)
6. Custom Declaration (Revenue)
7. Environment-related Permits (EPA)
8. Public Procurement (D/Finance)

Annex II

EU eGovernment Benchmark Chronology

Sophistication Levels

Report No	Year	Sophistication (%)	Ireland's Position
1	Oct 2001	68	1
2	Apr 02	85	1
3	Oct 02	85	2
4	Oct 03	86	Joint 2
5	Oct 04	84	4
6	Apr 06	84	11
7	Sept 07	78	17
8	Nov 09	94	Joint 7

Full Online Availability

Report No	Year	Availability (%)	Ireland's Position
1	Oct 2001	22	9
2	Apr 02	50	Joint 3
3	Oct 02	50	Joint 3
4	Oct 03	56	5
5	Oct 04	50	Joint 10
6	Apr 06	50	Joint 15
7	Sept 07	50	Joint 21
8	Nov 09	83	10

Notes: Reports 1–6 were based on a 4-stage methodology. Reports 7 and 8 have been measured on a five stage methodology.

17 countries in 2001 (Report No 1)
18 countries in 2002, 2003 (Reports No 2-4)
28 countries in 2004, 2006 (Reports No 5-6)
31 countries in 2007 and 2009 (Reports No 7-8)

Annex III

Services Included in Joint Dáil Motion

On 30th April 2008, the Dáil agreed a joint motion on eGovernment.

Listed here are those services that were included in this motion that are not already included in Annex I.

1. Application for Haulage Licenses
2. Application for Housing Grants
3. Lodgement of Planning Objections
4. Provision of Health Services Information
5. Access to Death Certificates
6. Payment of Court Fines
7. Payment of Commercial Rates
8. Provision of Public Transport Information (where possible)

Annex IV

Identity Authentication Services

The Department of Finance is developing a central system to provide a single view of the identity of public service customers (known as Single Customer View). It undertook an Open EU procurement exercise for a software solution to aid with this development and, following detailed evaluations, has selected a software solution. The Department is now using this software to build a working solution for the Single Customer View. Once completed, the Department will develop four pilot applications for testing with public bodies by the end of January 2010, *viz.*

i). Reporting

This application will allow public bodies that have provided data to the Single Customer View to create custom reports to compare their data against that held in other repositories – expected to provide benefits in terms of improving the quality and consistency of identity information in public bodies.

ii). Electoral Register

This application will allow local authorities check their electoral registers for entries likely to be incorrect.

iii). Control

This application will allow public bodies with a legally-defined control requirement to search and browse the Single Customer View to verify the identity of particular individuals, e.g., assist Social Welfare Inspectors ascertain the make-up of households, or assist the Passport Office to better determine the validity of applications.

iv). Online Authentication

This application will allow individuals to identify and authenticate themselves for access to online public services.

Annex V

Example of Possible Initial Targets

In addition to those on-line services that have already been delivered, and those that are currently underway as set out at Annexes IV and V of the Department of Finance's Second Progress Report on eGovernment, the following list may provide opportunities for a Department of Finance-based dedicated eGovernment team to engage in development and implementation of on-line facilities.

1. Change of Address
2. Application for Medical Cards
3. Social Welfare Services
4. Application for the Renewal of a Passport
5. Application for the Renewal of a Driving Licence
6. Application for the Renewal of a Road Haulage Licence
7. Services to streamline the processing of Redundancy Payment applications
8. Grant applications
9. On-line Consultation Mechanisms