



# Linking Local E-Government Development Stages to Collaboration Strategy

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## ABSTRACT

*The purpose of this study is to explore the connection between the stages of e-government development and collaboration demands in local government. Specifically, this study analyzes the demand for inter-governmental, interagency, and intersectoral collaborations during the three stages of local e-government development, including e-government initiation, application development, and integration. Based on an in-depth case study, this paper identifies specific collaboration types demanded during local e-government development in the Gangnam district government in Seoul, Korea. In each stage of e-government development, the local government encountered varying degrees and types of resource dependence upon internal and external organizational units. A particular type of collaboration became dominant in each stage as the relative importance of each collaboration type changed.*

*Keywords:* collaborative work; electronic government; stage theory

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## INTRODUCTION

All levels of government organizations have adopted electronic government (e-government) as a strategic tool for enhancing the quality of external services as well as streamlining internal operations (Ho, 2002; Holden *et al.*, 2003; Norris *et al.*, 2001; West, 2004). E-government

development requires collaboration among government agencies to ensure interoperability, avoid duplication, ensure coherent action in a range of crucial areas such as security and privacy, and provide the framework and capacity for seamless services (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Develop-

ment [OECD], 2003). Allen, Juillet, Paquet, and Roy (2005) note that e-government must be built on a fluid, constantly adapting collaborative governance system that responds to several challenges in the public sector: 1) new opportunities to link agencies through online applications; 2) policy challenges demanding a growing level of coordination across all levels of government and sectors; and 3) an emphasis on performance requiring external alignment and internal integration and cooperation.

In order to develop e-government, customer-centric government agencies that traditionally focus on their own missions and narrowly defined publics must now communicate, share information, and cooperate to enhance services across government agencies and levels (McDaniel, 2003). E-government leaders in local governments particularly need to both identify potential barriers in central government legislative and regulatory frameworks, and make sure that the necessary collaboration strategies are in place to facilitate and promote e-government development (GSA, 2002; OECD, 2003).

Studies of local e-government development found that collaboration and partnership are essential to the implementation of local e-government (Center for Technology in Government [CTG], 2004; Improvement and Development Agency [IdeA] and Society of Information Technology Management [Socitm], 2002). These studies emphasize that collaboration is essential to focus on e-government services and to integrate the processes necessary to address the issues faced by citizens and customers of locally-delivered e-government services. While prior research studied specific cases and best practices of collaborations and partnerships, there is limited discussion about the connection between local e-government development stages and collaboration strategy.

The objective of this paper is to explore the relationship between the stages of e-government development and collaboration demands, and to propose a framework outlining the particular types of collaboration that are critical for achieving the goals of each e-government development stage. The paper analyzes how and

why particular types of collaboration become important at different stages of e-government development in the context of local e-government. Based on an in-depth case study, this paper examines specific collaboration types demanded during local e-government development in South Korea. Specifically, this study analyzes the demand for intergovernmental, interagency, and intersectoral collaborations during the three stages of local e-government development, including e-government initiation, application development, and integration.

The local government selected for this study is the Gangnam district ("Gangnam-gu"), located in Seoul Metropolitan Government, South Korea. Gangnam-gu has been acknowledged for innovative local e-government services (Intelligence Community Forum, 2006). For example, the National Committee of E-Government Development in South Korea recognized the development of e-government in Gangnam-gu as the best e-government practice in the country for three consecutive years, starting in 2001.

This paper first reviews the current literature on e-government development stages and the types of e-government collaboration. The second section describes the research setting and research method. The following section presents the findings about the linkage between e-government development stages and three types of collaboration demands. Finally, implications and lessons of this study for effective local e-government development and managerial leadership are discussed.

### THREE STAGES OF E-GOVERNMENT DEVELOPMENT IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

E-government can be broadly defined as the electronic provision of government services through electronic means, especially e-government applications (e-applications) (Holden et al., 2003; Norris et al., 2001; West, 2004). E-applications are the web-based information systems that perform e-government transactions between government and citizens and

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