



Rethink Online

A new approach for government use of and
investment in online channels

July 2011

Contents

Defining online channels	2
Executive summary	3
A new approach for government online	3
Introduction	4
Demand for online information and services is growing	4
Duplicated investment in online channels	4
Mandate for change	4
Methodology	5
A new approach for government online	6
Implementing Rethink Online	7
Linking the strategic interventions in Rethink Online	8
1. Set up effective cross-agency planning for online delivery	9
2. Have a single point of contact and responsibility for online in every agency	11
3. Measure and report the business value and quality of online channels	12
4. Concentrate skill in centres of expertise, for use by all agencies	14
5. Share technology components, designs and contracts across government	16
6. Cluster online information and services around shared topics and audiences	18
7. Bring all ‘government to government’ information and online tools together	20
8. Open up access to information, non-personal data and services	21
9. Partner with third parties and communities for effective government online delivery	23
Appendix A: Key roles	25
Chief executive	25
Senior manager for online	25
Cross-agency planning group member	26
Online champion	26
Web professional	27
Project manager	27
Communications professional	28
Chief information officer	28
Business owner	29
Appendix B: Some of government’s customers	30
Small business	30
Recent graduate	30
Parent	31
Recent immigrant	31
References	33

Defining online channels

Throughout Rethink Online, the term ‘online channels’ has been used as shorthand to describe the many individual locations where government information and services are provided to customers using Internet technologies.

This includes websites; online feeds and web services (such as RSS and APIs); mobile technologies (such as SMS, mobile websites and applications); and government use of third party websites and social media (such as YouTube and Twitter).

For the purpose of this document the term online channels excludes non customer-facing enablers such as data exchange between agencies and back-end service infrastructure. It also excludes business systems used within agencies (such as email, remote desktop access and VOIP).

Executive summary

To keep pace with fast changing technology and increasing customer expectations, we need to build government's collective capability in online information and service delivery.

Increased collaboration between government agencies in online information and service delivery is required to achieve the following desired outcomes:

Better customer experience

- Reduced fragmentation of information and services across agencies and channels
- Increased focus on the usability and usefulness of online information and services

Improved value for money

- Reduced duplication in infrastructure, content and people capability
- Better coordinated investments across government
- More effective use of online channels to reduce the cost of service delivery

Increased strategic agility

- More flexibility to manage changes in customer demand, technology and government
- Increased ability to leverage capability outside of government

Achieving these outcomes will require government to take a new approach to its investment in and use of online channels, moving from single agency initiatives and investment toward cross-agency approaches. This document is intended to direct government use of and investment in online channels (defined on page 2) in order to address existing fragmentation and inefficiency in online information and service delivery and to support government to meet people's expectations and its own changing needs.

A new approach for government online

This document outlines four principles and nine strategic interventions required for collaboration in online information and service delivery across government to become the norm, not the exception.

1st principle: Coordinate how online is managed across government

1. Set up effective cross-agency planning for online delivery
2. Have a single point of contact and responsibility for online in every agency
3. Measure and report the business value and quality of online channels

2nd principle: Share capability and adopt common approaches

4. Concentrate skill in centres of expertise, for use by all agencies
5. Share technology components, designs and contracts across government

3rd principle: Design and deliver around people's needs

6. Cluster online information and services around shared topics and audiences, not agencies
7. Bring all 'government to government' information and online tools together

4th principle: Partner outside of government for better online delivery

8. Open up access to information, non-personal data and services
9. Partner with third parties and communities for effective government online delivery

Introduction

The New Zealand government has had a strong focus on online information and service delivery since the first e-government strategy in 2001. Much of New Zealand government's information and many services are online as a result.

Demand for online information and services is growing

While New Zealanders prefer to use a combination of channels to access public services, and will choose different channels for different types of interactions, online channels have the highest customer satisfaction of any channels, and online is the only channel for which preference exceeds use¹.

Research suggests that between 55-59% of people currently seek information about government services online and between 30-40% of people currently transact with government online². There is steady growth in people's use of online channels to interact with government.

Outside of their interactions with government, New Zealanders have high rates of Internet usage and are increasingly engaging with social media and transacting with the private sector. Of the 83% of New Zealanders using the Internet, 66% are booking travel online, 60% are shopping online every month, 55% are using Internet banking and 27% are paying bills online each week³. Government investment in ultra-fast broadband will accelerate demand for online information and services.

The Internet has great potential to further improve New Zealanders' experience with public services. Making effective use of online channels is an increasingly important part of getting the overall government information and service delivery experience right. This means being able to keep pace with information and service delivery in the private sector and with technology trends such as mobile and social media. Failure to do so will impact New Zealanders' overall service experience with government.

Duplicated investment in online channels

After more than a decade of development, New Zealand government has a plethora of websites and underlying technology platforms that represent duplicated investment and a fragmented user experience. There are now approximately 600 websites across government and approximately 50 different content management systems in use, which is inefficient.

Government must manage its collective online investment more effectively. The amount government invests in online channels is significant – conservatively estimated as at least \$40 million each year but likely to be far greater⁴. Many agencies do not know what their total online information and service delivery expenditure is but anecdotal evidence suggests that budgets and resources are being spread too thinly across all of government's online channels to be effective.

From a customer perspective, the resulting duplication in online channels means they are not always easy to use. A striking example of this is government's online response to the 2010/11 Christchurch earthquakes. Each government agency involved in the earthquake response responded from its own perspective, resulting in over forty central and local government websites with content relating to the Christchurch earthquake, which people in Christchurch are expected to navigate. Some agency websites were unable to cope with unprecedented levels of use at peak times and numerous agency web teams were stretched to capacity trying to keep up with demand.

Mandate for change

The Directions and Priorities for Government ICT [EGI (10) 226]⁵ agreed by Cabinet in October 2010 [CAB MIN 10(35/5A) refers] set a broad strategic direction of coordination, collaboration and shared investment for government use of information and communications technologies (ICT) and outlined

Government's expectation of agencies collaborating to improve information and service delivery and support open and transparent government.

Under Direction 3.2 of the Directions and Priorities for Government ICT⁶, the Department of Internal Affairs has, in consultation with other agencies, developed the new approach for online information and service delivery outlined in this document, to direct how government invests in and manages its online channels.

Methodology

Rethink Online takes into account lessons from similar initiatives in comparable jurisdictions including the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada. This document was developed by a cross-agency working group and reviewed by a cross-agency advisory group, including representatives from the Ministry of Economic Development, Land Information New Zealand, Inland Revenue, Ministry for Culture and Heritage, Ministry of Education, Department of Labour, New Zealand Police, and New Zealand Post.

A number of other government agencies and other key stakeholders were involved in workshops during September 2010, which identified the key concepts, issues and ideas that inform Rethink Online. This thinking was further elaborated through an online consultation held in November 2010 and targeted at key stakeholder groups - web teams, communications teams, IT teams, other public servants, private sector suppliers and non-government experts⁷.

The Rethink Online consultation sought feedback on how to build capability, how to measure quality and how to improve the customer-centricity of online information and services. It attracted 1,337 unique visitors and received 226 separate comments from a total of 51 participants.

Overall, the consultation saw repeated calls for user-centred approaches rather than agency-centric development, more collaboration and coordination, more sharing of skills, technologies and designs, and stressed the need for online strategy and governance at both the cross-government and individual agency levels.

A new approach for government online

To keep pace with fast changing technology and increasing customer expectations, we need to build government's collective capability in online information and service delivery.

There are nine strategic interventions required for collaborative online information and service delivery to become the norm, not the exception. These nine strategic interventions are grouped under the four broad principles outlined below: coordination, sharing, user-centricity and partnership. How the nine strategic interventions will work together in practice is described in the following pages.

1st principle: Coordinate how online is managed across government

For government to effectively manage its collective investment in online information and services, government must have a clear picture of its assets and must have the governance mechanisms and reporting lines in place to support effective collaboration across agencies. This requires government to:

1. Set up effective cross-agency planning for online delivery
2. Have a single point of contact and responsibility for online in every agency
3. Measure and report the business value and quality of online channels

2nd principle: Share capability and adopt common approaches

To reduce duplication of assets and maximise use of limited resources, government agencies must be able to access people capability across government and share investments in technology, designs and contracts between agencies. This requires government to:

4. Concentrate skill in centres of expertise, for use by all agencies
5. Share technology components, designs and contracts across government

3rd principle: Design and deliver around people's needs

To deliver effective information and services for customers and gain efficiencies within government, government must apply the principle of user-centricity, grouping online information and service delivery around audience needs and eliminating duplicate channels. This requires government to:

6. Cluster online information and services around shared topics and audiences, not agencies
7. Bring all 'government to government' information and online tools together

4th principle: Partner outside of government for better online delivery

Third parties, such as businesses, non-government organisations and communities, have strengths and resources that government lacks and can add significant value if government plans online information and service delivery with partnership in mind. This requires government to:

8. Open up access to information, non-personal data and services
9. Partner with third parties and communities for effective government online delivery

Rethink Online is intentionally non-prescriptive regarding the future number and configuration of government's online channels. Instead, Rethink Online challenges agencies to apply the principles of coordination, sharing, user-centricity and partnership in the belief that this will lead to unanticipated and innovative ways for government to work together towards better online information and service delivery.

It is expected that alignment with Rethink Online will not impose additional costs on agencies but may require some reprioritisation of current spending.

Implementing Rethink Online

As Rethink Online forms part of the deployment of the Directions and Priorities for Government ICT, Public Service departments are directed to align their online work programmes with the new approach and State Services agencies are invited to do so.

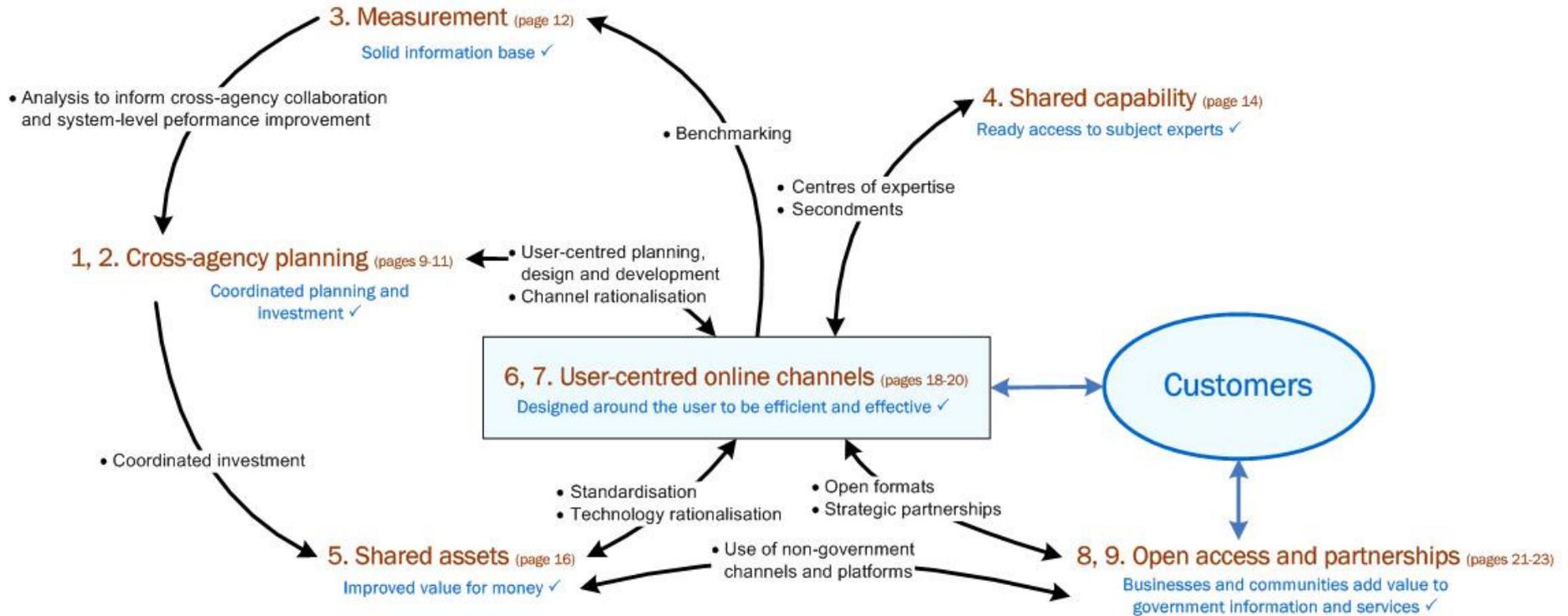
The intent of this document is not to direct 'what' government agencies should do online, which is the responsibility of business owners within agencies, but to guide 'how' agencies invest in and manage their online channels. Rethink Online does not negate the need for agencies to comply with existing standards and guidance applying to online channels but it does suggest ways for agencies to increase their capability, in order to meet their legislative obligations in areas such as accessibility and privacy and required standards in areas such as security.

Rethink Online excludes from its scope the redesign of services across channels and agency boundaries but is intended to complement and sit alongside service transformation initiatives.

While the Department of Internal Affairs will continue to have an oversight role for government online through its custodianship of key common capability (such as .govt.nz domain names, the Government Web Standards, newzealand.govt.nz and the Public Sector Intranet), it is expected that more agencies will be involved in the leadership of government online in future.

This document introduces a new cross-agency planning function, whose scope will include oversight of online delivery (see page 9) and it is expected that other agencies will play an increasing leadership role in their particular areas of expertise by providing shared capability and shared online channels (as outlined on pages 14-18).

Linking the strategic interventions in Rethink Online



1. Set up effective cross-agency planning for online delivery

What this means

A multi-disciplinary, cross-agency planning group is responsible for coordinating collaborative online information and service delivery by helping agencies find opportunities to work together and helping them remove barriers to collaboration.

Why do this?

To plan, initiate, drive and embed these strategic interventions at a cross-government level.

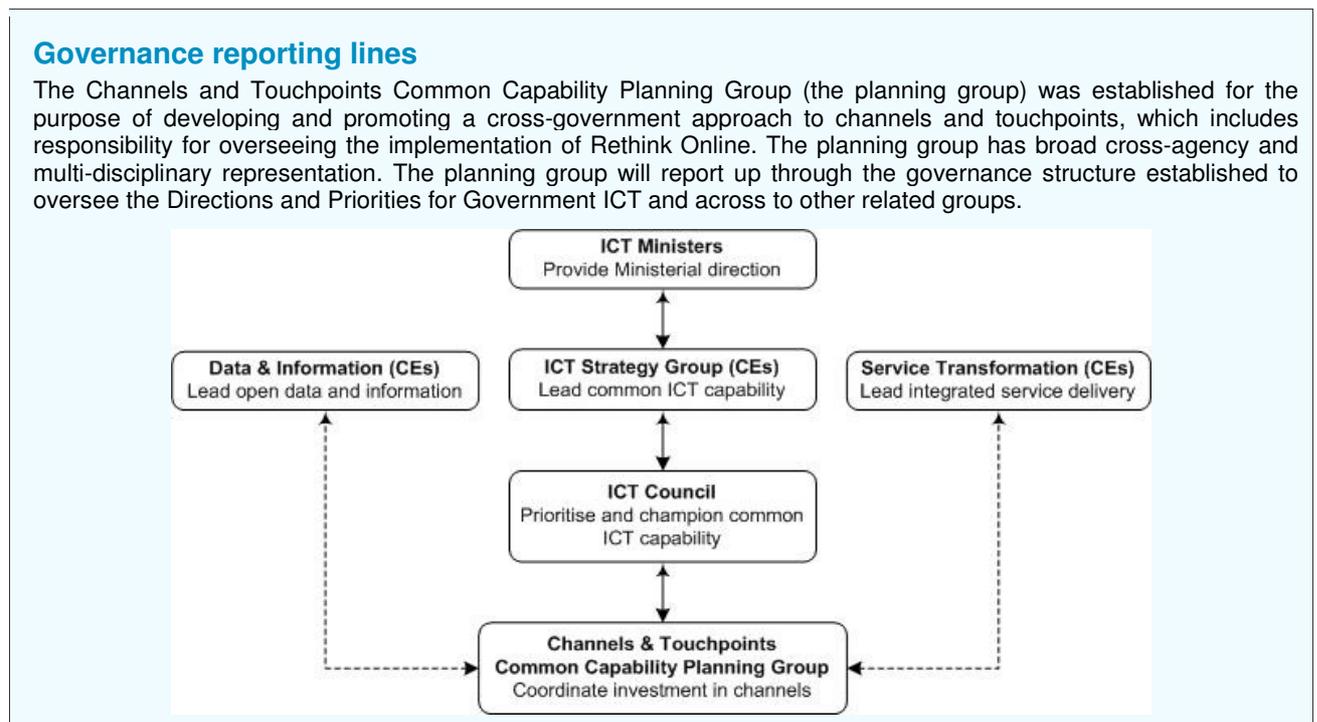
What this will look like

A planning group whose scope includes responsibility for government online channels will be created within the cross-government ICT governance structure (which reports up to Ministers). This will place use of online channels and supporting technology alongside other ICT areas, ensure consistent guidance to CEs and agencies, and foster agencies' ability to plan and work collaboratively.

This group will be responsible not just for technology, but for looking for opportunities for agencies to work together by sharing technology, resources, plans and channels.

The planning group will analyse use of online channels across government, looking at gaps and overlaps, identifying and sharing good practice across agencies, and address common barriers and systemic performance issues, escalating these if required through the ICT governance structure for resolution.

The group will engage with related governance groups in the areas of information reuse and service transformation, to make sure that government uses online channels effectively to deploy other cross-government strategies and policies.



Scenario: Finding and acting on opportunities to work together

The planning group (see page 9) responsible regularly reviews the status of government online channels, looking at sources of information including the register of government online channels (see page 12).

In this review, a number of patterns become clear to the planning group:

1. A growing number of agencies are converging on a single content management system. Agency A in particular has built a number of websites using this CMS, and all these sites have high compliance with government web standards.
2. A number of agencies are having trouble meeting costs around providing translations on their websites.
3. Several agencies are maintaining old websites that exist to deliver similar content.

The planning group identifies these patterns as opportunities to improve online channel performance. In the first case, they ask Agency A to take the lead on creating a community of practice around this CMS and to run a workshop through the Government Web Community network for other agencies interested in learning more about it.

In the second case, the planning group convenes a meeting with the agencies and the Translation Service to look for a way of reducing translation costs.

In the third, a member of the group works with the agencies to form a proposal to amalgamate the different websites as part of a redevelopment project and recommends to the agencies' CEs that they accept the proposal and share the redevelopment costs.

Case study: Removing barriers to using free online software

In the past decade, free and low-cost online platforms and services have grown exponentially, offering government agencies a wide range of cheap solutions for their technical and communication needs, including YouTube, Facebook and Google Analytics. However, until recently, a clause in the Public Finance Act 1989 prevented agencies from agreeing to indemnity provisions in standard terms of use for such services, meaning they could not take advantage of these tools and the resultant cost-savings.

By 2009 this had become a widespread problem, and individual agencies were expending time and resource trying to resolve it on their own. To stop this duplication of effort and reach a solution all agencies could use, the legal advisors for ICT at the Department of Internal Affairs (then part of the State Services Commission) began working with Treasury to identify the best solution.

After assessing the options, they worked with the Treasury team and the Parliamentary Counsel Office to amend the regulations to allow agencies to sign contracts with providers such as Google, Flickr and YouTube. Enabling departments to use these services means they can carry out parts of their work more efficiently, avoids the need to replicate such services locally, allows them to take advantage of innovative new technologies and, perhaps most importantly, saves money.

2. Have a single point of contact and responsibility for online in every agency

What this means

Each agency has a clear and uniform chain of command that enables it to take responsibility for its own performance and engage effectively with other agencies on joint initiatives.

Why do this?

To ensure that the voice of the customer is taken in to account in decision making and to clarify who has oversight of an agency's online channels and can progress joint initiatives with other agencies.

What this will look like

Agencies will identify at least two people to take the lead in all online information and service delivery:

- A senior manager for online who is responsible for coordinating their agency's investment in online channels and reviewing their business value and quality.
- An online champion (e.g. a web team leader) whose day job is to coordinate their agency's online activities and to seek and act on opportunities to collaborate across agencies

These people will be passionate customer advocates and strong supporters of the use of online channels. They will lead online strategy and governance inside the agency and be the conduit for any inter-agency work. They will monitor their agency's performance and resolve any issues in the use of online channels. They will work with other groups in their agency to align online and other channels.

These don't have to be new positions, but might require some negotiation in agencies if agency-wide responsibility for online channels isn't already clear or is under-resourced. Agencies with a large service delivery responsibility could consider whether these people should oversee other channels as well.

The Department of Internal Affairs will maintain a register of these key agency contacts and agencies will be responsible for providing the Department of Internal Affairs with up to date contact information for their senior manager for online and online champion.

Scenario: We need a new website

A programme manager in Department A approaches their senior manager for online, to approve funding for a new website for their business owner to communicate a project they will be announcing in a month's time. Under Department A's online governance arrangements, the senior manager for online must approve any new investment in online channels, to ensure alignment with the agency's online strategy.

The senior manager for online meets with their online champion to discuss the programme's options. The online champion is aware that agency B already has a website that covers very similar ground to the new project, and sets up a meeting between department A and agency B to discuss whether it will be possible to collaborate in order to achieve the programme manager's objectives with a minimum of extra cost.

The discussion reveals that agency B's website has an established audience and flexible CMS and design templates, meaning they can build and brand new sections easily. They're also happy to wrap this new project into the existing site, and co-promote their activities.

The online champion then goes back to the programme manager to propose delivering the new content through Agency B's website, explaining that this will be faster and cheaper than building a new site, and moreover an opportunity to get this new information in front of an existing audience.

This option is agreed and the funding is approved.

3. Measure and report the business value and quality of online channels

What this means

Government and other interested parties have a simple, clear view of the purpose, business value, performance and compliance of all government online channels (from websites to transactional services to Twitter accounts).

Why do this?

To ensure that the purpose and performance of all government channels is clear and publicly available, giving us a stronger understanding of our assets and allowing us to identify where there are opportunities to collaborate.

What this will look like

Agencies will supply and maintain basic information about the purpose, business value, performance and compliance of their online channels for inclusion in a public register (see the definition of online channels on page 2).

Better management of information about government's online channels and assets will result in better decisions and more opportunities to work together on shared objectives and reduce duplication.

At minimum, the public register of online channels will include:

- what is the purpose of the channel
- who are the audience/s for the channel
- what technologies the channel uses
- whether the channel complies with government requirements (standards, legislation, etc)

Over time we may begin to add other information as it is required, such as:

- how much the channel costs
- how effective the channel is for its target audience/s

The Department of Internal Affairs will provide a simple public register, where agencies can record and update this information. Agencies will be expected to supply basic information about each channel, including a declaration of compliance (or not) with government requirements, with justification for lack of compliance left up to the agency to defend.

The planning group (see page 9) will analyse the public register of online channels and will use this information to identify and act on opportunities for cross-agency collaboration. They will also use this information to identify and address systemic issues across government, such as non-compliance with government standards.

Case study: A simple view of the business value of online channels

In 2009 the Ministry for Economic Development (MED) recognised that while the Ministry was highly dependent on the web as the key channel for business-related transactions and as a key communication mechanism, over the years the approach to technology, process and strategy had become entirely fragmented.

As part of its solution to this problem, MED established a central Web Team as a shared service for web solutions across the Ministry.

The Web Team now works with business owners from the beginning of projects to create their web strategy. Business owners are guided towards the benefits they gain from using existing platform (including data.govt.nz, med.govt.nz and business.govt.nz) rather than building independent sites.

The Web Team is also working to establish a model to manage MED's online channels that encompasses strategy, operations, technology and cost. This model includes working with each website owner to develop and document their web presence strategy annually. Each strategy must outline how it will contribute to the success of the MED's Statement of Intent.

As part of this work, the Web Team is developing a Web Scorecard. Each MED online presence will be reviewed each year in a 'one-pager' that includes a high-level summary that shows the strategic outcomes or organisational goals delivered through the channel, measures of success, and the total cost of delivery.

The Web Scorecards will enable the Web Team to:

- assist MED to identify the real benefits that can be achieved through an effective web presence
- expose the true costs of web presences
- provide business intelligence for MED to prioritise resources
- create opportunity and incentives to use existing online channels, web tools and solutions.

Case study: Creating a stocktake of government's online assets

In June 2010 the Australian government launched its Web Accessibility National Transition Strategy, to guide the implementation of WCAG 2.0 (the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines version 2.0). One of the first steps in the Strategy's workplan was a stocktake of all government websites. Agencies were asked to review all their online properties to:

1. gauge the scope and complexity of upgrading to WCAG 2.0
2. begin archiving or decommissioning non-essential or outdated websites
3. plan the amalgamation of web content or websites (where appropriate)
4. provide baseline data for future reporting

Agencies were supported through the stocktake with the provision of information and tools online, including a classification spreadsheet to help agencies categorise their websites and advice on archiving websites. 92% of Australian government agencies completed the stocktake.

4. Concentrate skill in centres of expertise, for use by all agencies

What this means

Government agencies specialise in particular areas of online expertise, growing their capability and making it available to other agencies, which won't need to maintain that expertise themselves.

Why do this?

Government can reduce costs and make better use of limited expert resources by sharing resources across agencies. This will help retain skilled employees by providing them with variety and challenge, ensuring that lessons learned are shared and their knowledge stays in government.

What this will look like

The planning group (see page 9) will identify where expert capability exists across agencies and will coordinate the development of centres of expertise in specialist areas in online delivery, such as mobile, open data, IPv6, security, te reo Māori, web standards, branding and user experience. Agencies who have, or are willing to build, expert capability in a particular area would provide training and guidance, and make their expert staff available to other agencies who need their knowledge and skills. Policies are already in place to support such activities, including an active practice of secondments across agencies to help fill skill gaps and experience with cross-charging, to ensure agencies are not disadvantaged when their employees are working elsewhere.

Government web professionals can use the Government Web Community to declare their expertise, availability and interest in teaching others. Agencies can use the Government Web Community to find people with particular skills and experience. Web professionals will benefit as they develop their skills through working across government on new and different projects; the resultant job satisfaction will enhance agencies' ability to retain expert staff.

Case study: Accessing expertise when you need it

In 2010 and 2011, the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) supplemented its own web team with expertise from the Department of Internal Affairs (Internal Affairs) in three specialist areas.

First, the Ministry contracted Internal Affairs to benchmark its online performance against other ministries in terms of governance, leadership, measurement and strategy. Internal Affairs' knowledge of activities across other agencies meant they produced an evidence-based report that triggered the Ministry to invest more in its online channels.

Second, the Ministry seconded a Senior Technical Analyst from Internal Affairs to review the requirements and lead user acceptance testing in the development of www.health.govt.nz. This project had a short timeframe and high expectations and benefited from the connections and cross-government knowledge Internal Affairs brought to the project (for example, knowing which agency had staff with expertise in workflow issues).

Third, when reviewing vendor proposals and conducting interviews for the www.health.govt.nz project, the Ministry borrowed a Technical Specialist from Internal Affairs to sit on their review panel. The Ministry did not at that time have a security specialist on staff, and Internal Affairs was able to fill this gap.

Case study: Shouting out to colleagues for advice

The Government Web Community (GWC) is a longstanding informal network of government web professionals.

The GWC facilitates professional networking in a number of ways. Perhaps most importantly, it provide a common sense of purpose – members come together through their shared interests, and have a place to ask questions and share expertise. The GWC maintains a shared workspace on the Public Sector Intranet for members, and also runs regular meet-ups. Members and non-members are regularly invited to give presentations on matters of interest to the group (such as Software as a Service, social media, and accessibility).

More recently, the GWC has started using the micro-blogging tool Yammer (an equivalent to Twitter, in which access can be restricted by email addresses) to facilitate real-time conversations. Government web professionals have been enthusiastic adopters of social media tools, and this gives them a secure place to hold internal conversations using a style of communication they've become accustomed to. The GWC Yammer community has members from over 20 government agencies, who use it as a place to put up questions, promote vacancies, share links and interesting information, and stay in touch. It has proven to be a useful (and free) tool for reinforcing the web professionals' network.

5. Share technology components, designs and contracts across government

What this means

Government agencies have access to a common pool of resources for building online channels, from technology components to standard interface designs to shared supplier agreements.

Why do this?

To spend less time on procurement, contract negotiations and technology maintenance, reducing the cost of developing and managing online channels and releasing scarce resources for improving content, user experience, customer satisfaction and data release.

What will this look like?

Agencies will work together to solve common demand for online delivery products and services. This might mean two or more agencies working together on a project (such as replacing a content management system) or sharing a supplier. Agencies with well-developed technology platforms and strong support might also be able to support other agencies, by providing technology components, designs or contracts for reuse. It may mean one agency negotiating a supply arrangement that is also available to other agencies.

The planning group (see page 9) will ensure that these initiatives are incorporated into the Government Common ICT Capability Roadmap for reuse by other agencies, as part of a reusable online environment for government.

Over time, government will converge on a smaller number of technical solutions that meet our needs for usable, standards compliant online platforms. There are many simple websites and web services that could be developed and maintained using a common set of technologies that are shared across government. Better standardisation and widespread use of a smaller number of platforms will reduce overall development and maintenance costs and make it easier for to share resources.

Case study: Reusable tools for government

Inland Revenue (IR) sees the development of their open source online consultation platform as a building block for a cross-government online tool-kit. When their Policy and Advisory Group wanted to run a wide-reaching online consultation in 2010, the IR web team drew on their experience of providing an online tool for the 2009 Student Loan consultation. As the team explains:

“Building a consultation website that was accessible to everyone, where people could relate to specific changes that would affect them personally, and was simple yet functional was now the easy bit. We wanted to develop a tool which could be re-themed, could be modified with ease and could be maintained and moderated by non-technical users.”

The IR web team focused on building a reusable administrative framework for a consultation model that could be used by all government agencies. The framework was built using the open-source content management system Drupal, and the IR web team built and released four new Drupal modules for moderation tasks. As the team notes, not only did they help run an extremely successful consultation, “we also built a tool that really can be re-used by any government agency or city council to ask people for their view on something”.

Case study: A common approach to verifying identity online

The Department of Internal Affairs (Internal Affairs) provides the world leading logon and identity verification services (igovt) for use by government agencies to verify the identity of customers securely online. The igovt services reduce cost and risk for government agencies by avoiding the need for agencies to develop and maintain their own logon and identity verification systems.

The igovt logon service allows people to use the same logon details to access all participating agencies' online services. This saves people from having to remember multiple logon details for different services.

The igovt identity verification service allows people to verify their identity to a high level of confidence online with participating government agencies. This saves people time and money because they will not have to use documents repeatedly to verify their identity to every individual government agency.

The igovt services are designed in a way that gives individuals more control of their own information and allows government agencies to offer more personalised services involving more valuable transactions, by giving them confidence in the identity of the customers they are dealing with.

Internal Affairs is now working with New Zealand Post to make igovt services available for use by the private sector.

In 2011 igovt is supporting around 1 million online government transactions per annum - in 2020 this is expected to rise to 25 million per annum for government and 50 million across the whole economy.

Case study: Canada – shared technology for government agencies

The Government of Canada made the decision that consolidating web tools and solutions across government departments would reduce costs and improve compliance with standards.

The Web Experience Toolkit (WET) includes ready-made tools and solutions Canadian government departments can use for building and maintaining accessible, usable, and interoperable websites. The tools and solutions are open source software, free for use by departments and external developers. They are not mandatory but are highly recommended to departments.

The tools and solutions in WET were developed to comply with Canadian government web standards. Plans are in place to release a new version of WET every six months to keep pace with technological change, add new features and enhance existing features. The core framework and themes are separate and modular to make it easy for departments to change the layout and design of websites. Departments only have to download the features they need and update them as needed, meaning updates are cost and time efficient.

WET is led by the Treasury Board Secretariat and collaboratively developed and maintained by Government of Canada departments and external web communities.

6. Cluster online information and services around shared topics and audiences

What this means

Agencies cluster together to converge information and services into the right number of shared online channels, based on people's needs, not government's structure.

Why do this?

To reduce the fragmentation and inefficiency that arises when government creates more than one channel for a particular audience or topic.

What this will look like

Agencies will be expected to recognise where they share audiences and topics with other agencies and take steps to align their investment in online channels.

To begin with, agencies with shared audiences or topic areas will form clusters to share work plans and address gaps and overlap. These groups of agencies will develop strategies that move them toward developing shared channels (or sharing existing channels) clustered around audience groups and topics, rather than focusing on having their own place to host information and services.

Over time, this will result in the right number of people-centric shared channels, with agency-neutral branding, so that all agencies can use them to engage with common audiences. If there is a need for one agency to take a leadership role, this will be agreed by the agencies involved and appropriate governance and support arrangements will be put in place. Collaborative arrangements between agencies need to be balanced so that any compromises are fair.

The planning group (see page 9) will use the public register of online channels (see page 12) to identify where audiences and information overlap and will support agencies to work together, by advocating for a customer-centred view and by helping to address any systemic barriers to joint initiatives.

Case study: A partnership based on a common purpose

For the past six years, the Office of the Clerk and Parliamentary Services have partnered to make www.parliament.nz a single place to access all information related to New Zealand's parliament. The shared site replaced the individual Office of the Clerk and Parliamentary Services websites, and consolidated information previously held in multiple locations, often with small differences in completeness and accuracy.

The partnership started with commissioning user research to discover what people wanted from a parliamentary website. This created a compelling vision of user needs and expectations for the development of the website, which everyone in the project could unite around.

The Office of the Clerk and Parliamentary Services attribute the site's ongoing success to several factors:

1. Ongoing user research
2. Strong governance arrangements
3. Shared ownership and responsibility

The partnership between Office of the Clerk and Parliamentary Services is itself strengthened by the positive response www.parliament.nz has received. User feedback is positive, usage has steadily increased, key stakeholder groups (including MPs) are satisfied, and the site is seen as a world leader in parliamentary websites.

Case study: Bringing information for businesses together

Business.govt.nz is a first stop shop for everything a New Zealand small to medium sized enterprise needs to start-up, manage, grow or exit their business. The website saves business owners time trawling across different government and private sector websites by putting the information and services they need in one place, in consistent language that they can understand.

The website is maintained by a small team at the Ministry of Economic Development (MED). The team works with over 25 government agencies and a similar number of private sector organisations to deliver relevant information and support to New Zealand businesses.

Looking at the demands of managing the site, MED acknowledged they were not experts in writing content for SMEs and decided to contract this service from a private sector provider, The Small Business Company (TSBC). This has reduced staff and infrastructure overheads at MED, and resulted in better, more targeted content. Partnering with TBSC also means being able to leverage their contacts, networks and knowledge to promote the site to New Zealand businesses.

The establishment of business.govt.nz has reduced or limited the need for partner agencies to create and deliver their own content. For example, the Companies Office has transitioned all their business management content to the website. The content also has a life outside the website, with organisations including Business New Zealand, Otago Chamber of Commerce, Venture Taranaki and several banks syndicating content from the site.

The steering group for the website includes representatives from Inland Revenue, New Zealand Trade and Enterprise and MED to jointly guide the ongoing development and maintenance of the site.

Case study: Streamlining processes for business by working together

Before Inland Revenue (IR) and the Companies Office started to collaborate, people wanting to register a company with the Companies Office and register with IR for a Non Individual IRD number and or GST number had to provide essentially the same information twice, using two different sets of forms, and deal with two different agencies.

As well as creating frustration for people tackling the process, the manual application process created an unnecessary delay, and the chance of errors in completed forms was higher than desired.

Now the process is automated. Clients can now incorporate their company and apply for a tax number in a single process, electronically. They receive their Certificate of Incorporation, Non Individual IR and GST numbers in real time and can be confident that both the agencies have received the required information.

There are now, on average, 2900 Non Individual IRD applications processed via the Companies Office per month and of this volume 2000 also apply for a GST number and receive their Company, Non Individual IR and GST numbers by email within five minutes of finalising the application process.

As a result, the Companies Office sees higher customer satisfaction with a simpler and faster process and IR no longer has to manually process as many paper applications. Applications are less likely to contain errors or omissions, and the registration process triggers IR to contact the new business with information on their tax obligations.

As is common with such projects, the technology solution was reasonably easy to establish. Reaching common understanding of the business requirements, content, data architecture and protocols was more challenging than initially anticipated. Now that the process is entrenched in both agencies, ongoing communication and cooperation over change management and planning maintain the value of this shared service.

7. Bring all ‘government to government’ information and online tools together

What this means

The existing Public Sector Intranet and Shared Workspaces are upgraded and developed into the primary online channel for ‘government to government’ information, best practice and tools.

Why do this?

Bringing content for public servants together into one place will make it easier for us to collaborate and share best practice with colleagues inside and outside of government. Removing this material from public facing channels will also improve the public’s experience when using government’s online channels.

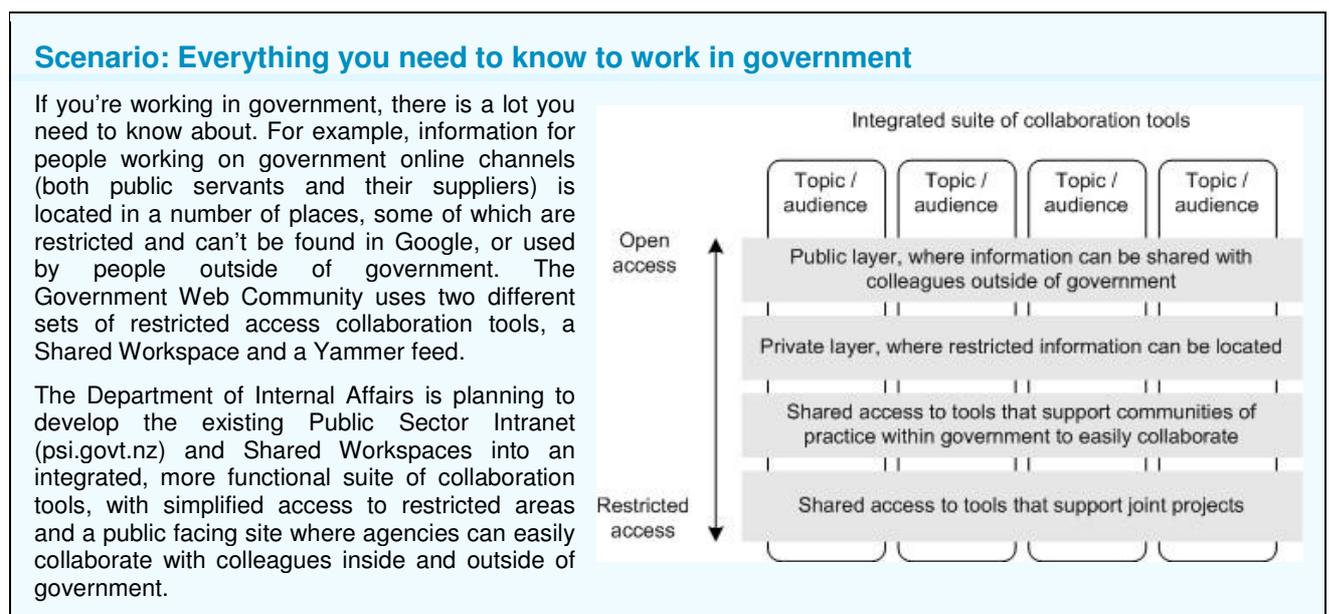
What this will look like

The Department of Internal Affairs will develop the Public Sector Intranet and Shared Workspaces into a fit for purpose online channel for the public sector, as a single place for all government to government information and tools. Over time, agencies will migrate content for public servants off public-facing channels and into the public sector online channel.

This channel will provide different levels of access and functionality for different user groups:

- a public layer, where information can be shared with colleagues outside of government
- a private layer, where restricted information can be located
- shared access to tools that support communities of practice within government to collaborate
- shared access to tools that support joint projects

This channel will be focused on supporting collaboration across and outside of government. It will not be a replacement for agencies’ intranets or document management systems.



8. Open up access to information, non-personal data and services

What this means

Information and data held by government is open and licensed for re-use, unless there are grounds for refusal or limitation, so that people and businesses can use this information and data to build the tools and services they and their customers need.

Why do this?

Releasing government information and non-personal data in reusable and machine-readable formats and licensing it for reuse or enabling open access means that anyone will be able to take this data and add value to it. Exposing services where viable means that third parties can deliver services on behalf of government and add value for government's customers.

What will this look like?

Cabinet has endorsed NZGOAL, which provides agencies with guidance on releasing information for open access and reuse, including adopting the New Zealand suite of Creative Commons licences⁹. As a result, agencies' focus will move from developing online interfaces to their data to releasing and managing trusted and authoritative information and data in formats that are suitable for data reuse. Agencies will focus on core business, and empower others to add value to government held content and source data released for reuse. Agencies will not release personal or sensitive information and data.

Information and data held by government will be open unless there are grounds for refusal or limitations. In such cases it is protected. Government's copyright works will be licensed for reuse and open access to and reuse of non-copyright materials will be enabled. Agencies will feel confident making decisions about which data and content can be released online and selecting the best ways to undertake this release. Agencies will listen to the needs of the external audiences and use this knowledge to prioritise release.

In the short term, government will open up the high-value information and data for which there is known demand, prioritising material where there is demand and which is easy to release. Agencies will develop their capacity to release government held data for re-use and to expose our services for third party partnerships, with due regard for concerns around issues such as anonymity, ongoing accuracy, and the need for trusted and authoritative sources.

In the longer term, the expectation is that information and non-personal data will be made available for reuse, unless there are grounds for refusal or limitations. Releasing data in ways that support and enable reuse will become part of the way government develops and maintains online information and services, rather than an add-on or overhead attached to agencies' normal ways of working.

Case study: Christchurch earthquake imagery available to the world for reuse

On 25 March LINZ released post Christchurch earthquake aerial imagery (the same imagery Police, Civil Defence and emergency responders were using) to the public under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand Licence (CC-BY). The imagery was made available to view through two online viewers and for free download through third party Koordinates.

Demand was so high that the image service was generating 2 maps a second after the press release went out. Eagle Technology (which supplies eqviewer.co.nz for Environment Canterbury) produced a mobile app for the imagery on that same day. Stuff.co.nz displayed the site on its homepage.

Civil Defence released Christchurch Earthquake video footage (the post production form shown at the Memorial) for re-use by media agencies and others also under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 New Zealand Licence. As of 30 March, there had been almost 50,000 views. The footage was also picked up by the media around the world.

Case study: Aggregating demand for broadband

Launched in 2007 after a three-month development period, the National Broadband Map (broadbandmap.govt.nz) provided the first clear and common view of broadband demand and supply in New Zealand. Developed to meet government's needs, the data gathered and tools developed have been made available for anyone to use.

Creating the National Broadband Map meant assessing and aggregating two sets of data that had never been publicly released. Demand data had to be obtained from government agencies. Supply data was obtained through negotiation with network suppliers. This data had not been released before, and suppliers had to be reassured that their data would not be misrepresented. Today, network suppliers around New Zealand voluntarily provide government with their network coverage.

The data powering the National Broadband Map has been openly available since the site was launched, and can be accessed in a wide variety of formats. The source code for the National Broadband Map is also available to developers. The team's view is, "We wanted to build something useful to people. We needed to create an interface so our application could talk to the data. Why not make that interface open, so anyone can use it?"

Case study: Promoting (re)use of New Zealand's digital content

To encourage re-use of New Zealand digital content and data, DigitalNZ ran the Great New Zealand Remix and Mashup competition in November 2010. DigitalNZ (digitalnz.org), a New Zealand digital content aggregation service managed by the National Library, worked with government departments to release new data sources for the competition, and promoted existing sources listed on www.data.govt.nz.

The competition received over 200 entries, and was supported by government and non-government organisations including the National Library, Archives New Zealand, Department of Conservation, New Zealand Transport Agency, Ministry of Education, Google, Microsoft and Internet New Zealand.

Entries included visualisations of walking tracks, localised demographic information, power usage, yachting conditions, statistical data about MPs, government expenditure and rental information. A number of entries reused cultural content, including the poems of Katherine Mansfield, images of Abel Tasman National Park and cartoons by Brunswick. The Judge's Discretionary Award, awarded for its ability to deliver savings through Creative Commons, was "RFP MIX", a web-based service that enables individuals and organisations to build requests for proposals (RFPs), quickly and painlessly, for more efficient purchasing.

9. Partner with third parties and communities for effective government online delivery

What this means

Agencies recognise when their online information and services are more effectively delivered by, or through, a third party and actively look for partnership opportunities.

Why do this?

To leverage capability and market share outside of government through partnerships, so that government information and services can be delivered through the online channels people are already using, and government agencies can focus their time, energy and budgets on core business.

What this will look like

Agencies will, when evaluating the need for an online channel, consider opportunities for partnership outside of government.

Where government information or services can be better delivered by someone else, such as an NGO or a private sector partner, agencies will endeavour to form strategic partnerships that are advantageous to customers, particularly when they can realise savings for government.

Agencies will regularly check whether their online channels are competing with non-government channels and if this is the case, investigate opportunities for partnership.

Partnering outside government will not mean agencies sign away their authority, interest or innovation. Partnerships will be regularly reviewed to ensure agencies' objectives, particularly those around meeting customers' needs, continue to be met.

Case study: Helping New Zealanders find cultural events

In March 2010, Manatū Taonga – Ministry for Culture and Heritage (MCH) entered into a partnership with Eventfinder (www.eventfinder.co.nz), to merge New Zealand's two biggest events websites into one website for their shared audience. Coverage on the combined site is broad, and takes advantage of Eventfinder's existing syndication network to sites such as Stuff and the NZHerald.

The partnership arose from the perception that MCH's NZLive website (which listed New Zealand events information) was in competition with private sector website Eventfinder, creating division in the online cultural events sector.

Now, MCH concentrates on content while Eventfinder runs the technology. MCH benefits from not having to develop and maintain technology, and so can focus on content creation and enhancement. Eventfinder benefits by being able to concentrate on developing new features, with input from MCH to plan the technology roadmap, allowing MCH to ensure it meets the needs of stakeholders such as cultural organisations.

Through the partnership, MCH continues to meet its business objective of supporting the cultural sector.

Case study: Value-added services for road-users

InfoConnect (infoconnect.highwayinfo.govt.nz) allows developers and third parties to access real time travel information from the New Zealand Transport Agency (NZTA) for free. In return, these external parties add value to government data by republishing and repacking road-related information in a timely and accurate manner via their own specialised communication channels.

NZTA's focus is on mainstream communication methods and on the capture, storage and verification of the road event information. In the past, NZTA had encountered challenges trying to get this information to road users in a timely and accurate manner. With technology and devices continually changing, it had also been difficult for NZTA to determine how best to invest.

NZTA saw an opportunity to improve the way traffic information is shared by providing it to third parties who have the time, resource and expertise to create the communication channels required to satisfy all customer needs for information about road conditions.

NZTA made the strategic decision to stick to its core business, which is to provide traffic information to the public for free. Opening up the data meant others could create targeted applications and add value. The real benefits are obvious in the value-added services already created by organisations including AA, MetService, and a range of developers specialising in mobile applications.

Appendix A: Key roles

At heart, moving from an agency-centric operating model to a model of cross-agency collaboration requires behavioural change that we, as individual public servants, must lead. The following role descriptions suggest the qualities and leadership expected from people in key roles in government agencies needed for effective online information and service delivery to government's customers*.

Chief executive

Setting a people-centred approach for their agency's use of online channels

Knowledge

- Understands and advocates for the business advantages of online channels
- Understands that online channels need to be funded for maintenance/enhancement as well as development
- Understands the agency's customers and their needs

Leadership

- Supports innovative practices
- Empowers a senior manager to lead all online strategy, governance and implementation
- Supports reuse of existing channels
- Supports the opening up of non-personal information, data and services

Collaboration

- Supports collaboration across business units and agencies (including staff secondments/mentoring)
- Support cross-agency partnerships to deliver information and services
- Open to opportunities to partner with third parties outside government

Senior manager for online

Responsible for the performance of their agency's use of online channels

Knowledge

- Keeps up with changes in online behaviour and technology and use of online channels across government
- Deep understanding of their agency's customers and their needs

User experience

- Advocates a people-centred approach when devising online channels

Leadership

- Passionate customer advocate
- Seeks opportunities to innovate
- Has control over the resources needed to make things happen
- Leads online strategy and governance within their agency

Collaboration

- Facilitates collaboration within their agency
- Partners and shares resources with other agencies
- Seeks opportunities to partner with third parties outside government

Accountability

- Accountable for performance of their agency's online channel (measurement, costs, benefits, compliance)
- Accountable for leading agency online strategy and governance
- Accountable for engagement and partnership with other agencies and third parties

* Depending on the size of the agency, these roles may be combined or there may be more than one person responsible for them.

Cross-agency planning group member

Coordinating collaboration across government online

Knowledge

- Understands and advocates for the business advantages of online channels
- Understands what is required to deliver cross-government channels and technologies on the Government Common ICT Capability Roadmap
- Understands the big picture for government

User experience

- Advocates people-centred approaches to the development of online channels across government

Leadership

- Advocates a cross-government approach to government online
- Champions cross-government strategic interventions
- Identifies and progresses opportunities for agencies to work together

Collaboration

- Supports colleagues in other agencies to take a cross-government approach
- Supports cross-agency partnerships to deliver information and services

Accountability

- Ensures the performance and quality of cross-government channels and technologies on the Government Common ICT Capability Roadmap

Online champion

Joining the dots throughout their agency and across government online

Knowledge

- Keeps up with changes in online behaviour and technology
- Deep knowledge of web best practice
- Deep understanding of their agency's customers and their needs

User experience

- Passionate customer advocate
- Advocates within the business for people-centred approaches to the development and ongoing maintenance of online channels

Leadership

- Seeks opportunities to innovate and experiment
- Seeks opportunities to partner and share resources with other agencies
- Seeks opportunities to partner with third parties
- Shapes online strategy within their agency

Collaboration

- Is the single point of contact for all online matters relating to their agency
- Provides expert advice to business
- Facilitates collaboration within their agency
- Facilitates collaboration across agencies
- Shares information and expertise across agencies

Accountability

- Effectively channels all online conversations within their agency
- Engages effectively with other agencies
- Measures and reports on the performance and quality of online channels

Web professional

The glue that holds their agency's use of online channels together

Knowledge

- Keeps up with changes in online behaviour and technology
- Understands and follows all relevant standards and regulations
- Understands and implements open data initiatives
- Understands their agency's customers and their needs

User experience

- Tireless advocates for the customer
- Takes a people-centred approach to development and ongoing maintenance of online channels

Leadership

- Seeks opportunities to innovate and experiment

Collaboration

- Provides expert advice to colleagues and business owners
- Educates and advocates related teams on web best practice and opportunities
- Shares information and expertise through the government shared workspace
- Seeks opportunities to partner and share resources with other agencies
- Forms smart partnerships with suppliers

Accountability

- Ensures the performance and quality of online channels

Project manager

Delivering effective online channels through partnership and relationship management

Knowledge

- Understands and implements web development best practice and methodologies
- Understands relevant standards and regulations
- Understands their agency's customers and their needs

Leadership

- Manages relationships across the business and out to suppliers to ensure good results

Collaboration

- Provides expert advice to colleagues and business owners
- Shares information and expertise through the government shared workspace
- Forms smart partnerships with suppliers

Accountability

- Ensures time, budget, quality and user experience expectations are met
- Ensures that planning for ongoing operations is sufficient to ensure ongoing success

Communications professional

Using online channels wisely to serve their customers

Knowledge

- Understand and advocate for the business opportunities in online channels
- Use online channels to help customers, not for corporate marketing
- Seek advice from the experts in their web teams

Collaboration

- Work with their web team from the beginning of projects
- Seek opportunities to work with other agencies

User experience

- Understand the concept of people-centred approaches to online channel design and development
- Want to create a seamless experiences for customers across channels
- Willing to downplay their agency's brand in the interests of the user experience
- Open to opportunities to partner with third parties

Chief information officer

Supporting online channels through smart technology decision making

Knowledge

- Understands how quickly online technology changes
- Understands the role of technical standards
- Understands that online channels needs to be funded for maintenance/enhancement as well as development
- Understands the agency's customer groups and their needs

Leadership

- Advocates for online channels
- Supports and aligns common ICT capability with online channels
- Makes smart choices around use of SaaS technologies
- Supports the opening up of non-personal information, data and services

Collaboration

- Bring together the business and IT strategies to support efficient, effective online channels
- Seeks opportunities to partner and share resources with other agencies
- Forms smart partnerships with suppliers
- Open to opportunities to partner with third parties

Business owner

The voice for their customer in online channel decisions

Knowledge

- Understand their own business objectives and customer needs, and use this knowledge to make best use of online channels
- Understand the business objectives of their partners inside and outside government
- Understand that online channels need to be funded for maintenance as well as development

Leadership

- Are the voice of their customer within their agency

Collaboration

- Partner across and outside of government to better meet customer needs

Accountability

- Set goals for, measure and report on business value of online channels
- Accountable for ensuring their online channels comply with legislation, government standards and government policies, and gaining Chief Executive approval for any exceptions
- Accountable for integration between online and other channels for service and information delivery

Appendix B: Some of government's customers

The people who use government services are diverse and need different things from government at different times in their lives. While overall Internet use by New Zealanders is growing, people also have different abilities and preferences when it comes to technology. The four personas below give a sense of how some New Zealanders use online information and services from government**.

Small business

A small business owner's experience of government online

Meet Aimee

Aimee is the 37-year-old owner of a small software development company based in central Auckland. Her company employs four full-time and three part-time staff. Recently, with the growth in cloud computing, Aimee has shifted part of her company's focus from developing custom desktop-based software for her clients to building web applications that she hopes to turn into SaaS (Software as a Service) products.

Aimee spends most of her waking hours online. She checks her email on her smart phone first thing in the morning and last thing at night. She uses Skype at home and at work, for client catch-ups and to keep in touch with her sister and niece in Australia. She uses various web services for business and project management, and does all her banking, business accounting and most of her shopping online. She keeps in touch with friends through Facebook and with industry trends and news through Twitter. She likes to use web-based tools because she's always moving between her work computer, her laptop at home, and her phone.

How Aimee uses government services and information

Aimee's interactions with government are largely around compliance. She has interactions with Inland Revenue, ACC, the Companies Office, Statistics New Zealand, Department of Labour, and Immigration. She has a good idea of which transactions need to be conducted with each agency; it's only when she has to do something new or different that she occasionally gets frustrated looking for the right agency website to get the information she needs.

Aimee appreciates the occasions when she can use igovt, because it reduces her need to manage multiple accounts, but she's not sure why her igovt account doesn't work for all the government services she uses. She's glad that her payroll software can directly interact with Inland Revenue, making it easier to manage KiwiSaver, ACC and students loans for staff.

Last year Aimee applied for and received a TechNZ Technology Development Grant from the then-Foundation for Research Science and Technology. This year she is applying for the Postgraduate Internship programme through the Ministry of Science and Innovation. She finds the online application process reasonably straightforward, although she's a bit annoyed that she has to duplicate a lot of information about her business in the two applications.

Recent graduate

A recent graduate's experience of government online

Meet Jake

Jake is 25, and recently completed a one-year Diploma of Animation & Digital Video at NatColl in Wellington. While studying he worked part-time in a local design agency doing illustration and animation work, and now that he's completed his qualification they've offered him a full-time junior designer role.

Before he started the NatColl course, Jake was working in retail jobs. He'd done a Bachelor of Visual Arts at Otago Polytechnic when he finished high school, and decided to do the NatColl class to make himself more employable. He'd lived at home when studying in Dunedin, so while he had a student loan for both the Bachelor degree and the Diploma, he only applied for a Student Allowance when living in Wellington.

Jake spends a lot of time online because of his job, both using the web-based tools that his office uses, and looking at design sites and technology blogs. He has a laptop at home, and uses Facebook to stay in touch with his friends and family, and Skypes back home to Dunedin. He likes to manage his banking and bills online as much as possible, because he's moved flats a couple of times in the past two years and finds getting mail redirected a hassle. Now that he has a full-time job, he's saving up for a smartphone.

** Note: these personas are indicative and do not represent all customer groups. Government agencies should regularly undertake research to understand the specific needs and preferences of their customer groups.

How Jake uses government services and information

Jake's interactions with government have been almost exclusively around his study. He has found enrolment and getting set up with a student loan quite simple; in fact he felt like this process had gotten even easier since the last time he went through it with his Arts degree and he was able to do almost everything online.

Jake found the student allowance process more complicated, especially around figuring out his eligibility and providing certified documents. But the issue he most frequently struggles with is understanding how earning money while he's studying will affect his entitlement to a student allowance and his student loan payments, and which agencies he has to notify or provide information to.

Jake's tried to find answers to his questions online, but gets confused by all the interlinking between different agency websites. He usually resorts to calling either StudyLink or Inland Revenue to get help. He's also never had a clear picture of exactly how much he owes, because his debt is recorded and managed by different agencies, according to what stage of the school year he's in.

Parent

A parent's experience of government online

Meet Hekia

Hekia is the 26-year-old mother of four-year-old Aroha and 14-month-old Jacob. Hekia and her family live in Titahi Bay, Porirua. She has been a stay-at-home mum since Aroha was born; her partner Isaac works in the Parks section of Porirua City Council.

The family has a desktop computer at home, and Hekia spends a little bit of time online most days, usually at night after Isaac has gotten home and the kids have been put to bed. She mostly uses the internet to access Facebook, to visit news websites, and to use TradeMe (both for buying and selling, and for the community forums). She has an email address, but largely uses it to get alerts from the daily deal websites she's signed up to; most of her communication is done through Facebook, and for more official matters she prefers to use the phone or paper forms. The exceptions are the household bills, which she likes to manage with online banking.

How Hekia uses government services and information

Hekia's family receives Working for Families, applying each year directly to Inland Revenue and opting for fortnightly payments. Most of Hekia's other interactions with government are through healthcare for her children, such as the Well Child checks and immunisation. She finds out about most of these services through her midwife or her Plunket nurse, and sometimes from other mums. She has used the Ministry of Health's Healthline and Plunket's 0800 number on several occasions, when she's wanted to get advice on whether she needs to take Aroha or Jacob to the doctor or hospital.

Hekia's Plunket nurse got her involved in the Parents as First Teachers (PAFT) programme, which means an educator visits the house every so often to teach her about learning activities she can do with Jacob. She's also been to an occasional PAFT meet-up.

Recent immigrant

A recent immigrant's experiences of government online

Meet Maria

Maria is 27, and recently moved to Auckland from Mexico to take up a job as a translator. Maria and her husband had been thinking about moving to New Zealand, but found the process for entry under the Skilled Migrant Category a bit daunting; when Maria applied for and was offered a job with a New Zealand company, the application process became simpler.

Maria is not a big Internet user and did not immediately get set up with an Internet connection when she and her husband arrived in New Zealand. In Mexico they shared a laptop at home, and they brought this over with them. She tends to do most of her online activities while at work – browsing news sites, looking up questions she has about Auckland, and emailing her family and friends back in Mexico.

How Maria uses government services and information

Maria's interactions with New Zealand government services and information so far have been largely around the immigration process. Maria and her husband did as much of their application online as they could although usually they were printing off forms to fill out by hand and having to obtain certified copies of documents to accompany their forms. They used the Immigration website to try to identify which visas they should apply for and which forms they should submit but often felt confused about how the information provided matched to their exact circumstances.

Maria ended up calling the Immigration Service quite frequently, whenever she was confused by fields in a form or not sure how to provide documentation (for example when she had to validate her tertiary qualifications but the university she suggested at was not on the list of approved institutions she phoned the Immigration Service to find out what she should do). Maria's English is quite fluent, but she wasn't aware of the translation phoneline support provided by the government that she could have used.

Maria researched online to confirm whether she would be able to drive in New Zealand using her Mexican licence. Maria's new employer has recruited several staff from overseas, so is used to guiding new employees through things like getting GST numbers, tax codes and setting up New Zealand bank accounts.

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