

# *Paving the way for the next generation of eservices:*

How the public  
sector can meet  
Canadians'  
expectations



A young woman with dark, curly hair and blue eyes is smiling slightly while holding a grey tablet. She is wearing a light grey sweater over a white top. In the background, a man is blurred, sitting and reading a document. The overall scene is brightly lit, suggesting an office or professional environment.

*Enabling the  
next generation  
of eservices*

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Over **80%** of Canadians like the idea of receiving automatic notifications through email and SMS

Our Citizen Compass study enrolled over 3,000 Canadians in an online consultation to address the central question, “What should the future of government services look like?” In our report, *Next generation of eservices: Enhancing service delivery in the Canadian public sector*, we explored the results. The research revealed that mobile devices, social media and other technology innovations are changing citizens’ expectations and governments must raise their game to match the customer experience of banks and retailers. The challenge before the government is to satisfy these rising expectations during a period of austerity.

“...technology innovations are changing citizens’ expectation and governments must raise their game to match the customer experience”

Governments are actively exploring the issues and challenges of enhancing self service by migrating services to the online channel. To date, however, progress has been incremental. With the exception of British Columbia, which is often considered an innovation leader in Canada,<sup>1</sup> other governments are in varying stages of defining an end-state vision, with a roadmap identifying the key enablers and new capabilities which must accompany the shift to digital services.

In this report, we explore some ways in which the Canadian public sector could move forward towards constructing a roadmap for the next generation of eservices.

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1 Stratford Institute for Digital Media. April 2012. *Becoming a Digital Nation: An Evaluation of Provincial and Territorial eGovernment Initiatives*. [http://stratfordinstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/eGovernment\\_final\\_web.pdf](http://stratfordinstitute.ca/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/eGovernment_final_web.pdf). Accessed December 17, 2012.

## About the project

Citizen Compass was an online initiative designed to provide Canadians with the opportunity to express their opinions through informed participation and deliberation. Over a three week period, 3,147 Canadians participated to address the central question posed in this project, “What does the future of government services look like?”

The research was conducted through a ‘Choicebook’ which took respondents through an interactive experience. They learned about government eservices, explored important questions related to the issues and were presented with some of the advantages, disadvantages and trade-offs involved.

The second stage of the engagement process was the Idea Forum. Participants were given the opportunity to submit their ideas on what eservices they would like to have now and in the future. They could also read, share and comment on ideas submitted by other Canadians.

The first report, *Next generation of eservices: Enhancing service delivery in the Canadian public sector*, focused on the qualitative and quantitative results from the Choicebook. The report can be found on [www.pwc.com/ca/citizencompass](http://www.pwc.com/ca/citizencompass). This report builds on the research to help identify what the government needs to keep in mind as it moves towards delivering the eservices that Canadians need and want, while simultaneously reducing costs.

### Some key Citizen Compass research highlights are listed below.

Citizens are seeking convenience and expect services to be available across the channels they use, in the manner they use them. There’s an increasing demand for online service delivery, but traditional channels such as telephone, in-person and mail will not go away yet.

There’s a preference for consolidating service delivery, with 62% of respondents being supportive of the idea of having a single government identity card.

Over 80% of Canadians like the idea of receiving automatic notifications about available government services which are relevant to them, through channels such as email and SMS.

Canadians like the idea of getting services based on their location at the time they require the service. The top location-based services that Canadians are interested in are weather conditions, road construction, traffic information, walk-in health clinics and public transit information.

Many Canadians (65%) like the idea of taking their own photos and submitting them electronically to renew their identification such as driver’s licences, health cards and passports. This eservice has the potential to replace in-person signature procedures with electronic signatures.

There’s a general unwillingness to pay for services through new channels if the information provided was available for free through other channels. There’s greater willingness however to pay for ‘skipping the line’ or receiving documents faster.

‘Tombstone’ data such as name, email address and mobile number, is readily available and people largely don’t mind having that information shared. However, information such as social insurance number is regarded with more caution, and people require assurances of high levels of control from the government on sharing of such information.

While Canadians are willing to share information, they expect information to be protected. They hold federal and provincial governments to the same high standards of accountability that they hold private institutions such as the banks and credit card companies.

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# *What does the next generation of eservices look like?*

Our research strongly indicates that citizens want to be treated like consumers even for government information and transactions. The majority of Canadian government websites serve content that is static, difficult to search or navigate and simply doesn't take advantage of dynamic Web 2.0 offerings and innovations which have proven to work elsewhere on the web. The availability of transactional government services has grown modestly online but appears to have reached a plateau, with the exception of health care where a number of health providers are introducing patient-centred services.

As a starting point, it's important to define what the next generation of eservices could look like.

## *From the citizen's perspective*

- Service that's virtual and accessible to citizens whenever they want and wherever they are, on the device of their choice.
- Content that's well designed, easy to navigate, has robust search capability and is written in plain language, enabling rapid and effective consumption of information.
- Transactional eservices that conveniently authenticate the citizen's identity and offer a service experience that's well designed and flows from beginning to end, permitting all supporting processes digitally - by web or smartphone.
- Their data and information is secure and enhances privacy.

## *From the government's perspective*

- Government portals have more condensed and information rich content that's been redesigned to enhance navigability and search capability, applying current web content standards and tools.
- Departmental silos will converge as new content standards are adopted and information is tagged differently so that it's brought together in one place for easier access.
- Data repositories will be open and be accessible to a community of third party developers applying open source approaches, who can create new offerings and products to enhance the service experience for citizens.
- Creative partnering arrangements with third parties will allow government to remove the burden of maintaining little used content.
- Common platforms and processes will support self service and avoid replicated efforts and data, with associated cost reductions.
- The digital experience will be citizen-centred and will translate equally well across human assisted channels such as contact centres and service counters, making these traditional channels more productive and cost effective.

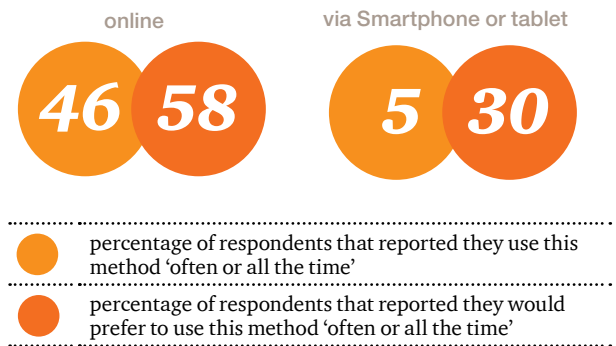
# Getting started

## Setting the vision

A first step towards achieving the next generation of eservices is for governments to identify the desired future state of digital government. Whether cast as a digital blueprint or strategy, it's critical for governments to put a stake in the ground and commit to specific goals, actions and timelines. The UK government for example has set an ambitious course through its Digital Strategy published in 2012, which identified fourteen specific actions for it to become "digital by default". Their vision is to create digital services that are so convenient, they become everyone's first or default choice.

### Identifying a champion The UK government example

Martha Lane Fox is the founder of Lastminute.com and one of Britain's most successful dot-com pioneers who has gone onto lead a successful business career in retail as CEO of Selfridges and later a board member of Marks & Spencer. In 2009 she was appointed the UK Government's Digital Inclusion Champion to head a two year campaign to make the British public more computer literate. In 2010 the newly elected Cameron government increased the profile of her role when it announced that she would set up a new Digital Public Services Unit within the cabinet office and assume a new role as UK Digital Champion, advising on how online public service delivery can be better and more efficient, and getting more people online.



## ***Understanding citizen trends and preferences***

Understanding consumer preferences is key to getting citizen-centred service delivery right. To achieve this, the public sector needs to carry out research on the channels citizens currently use and better understand these choices. Trend data shows that online services grew rapidly following their introduction in 2005, but have now stagnated. Online banking saw a similar trend until marketing studies were conducted and action was taken to address the root causes and promote the online channel. Market research can help answer questions such as:

- Citizens are increasingly online through their mobile or tablet devices and the banking industry experience has shown that simple, straightforward transactions are ideally suited to this channel. Well designed web services can significantly shift volumes from call centres to the less expensive online channel – where are these opportunities for government?

- Is there a certain demographic that prefers traditional channels such as in person, mail or telephone? Why do they prefer these channels and what needs to be done to encourage a channel shift?
- Call centre volumes are high and while less expensive than in-person services, they still represent a significant cost. What calls can be shifted to interactive voice response (IVR) systems or the web while maintaining high customer satisfaction? And what calls can be avoided by redesigning government services on the web?

Being able to answer such questions through consumer research is critical in making the right decisions for eservice delivery and redesigning services around the needs of citizens.

## ***Eservice delivery: The banking sector experience***

When cost effective and nimble eservices such as online banking and automatic teller machine (ATM) banking were first introduced, uptake was slow. People were not used to conducting transactions by themselves, and online security made people wary. As people gradually realized the convenience and security of eservices from the experience of the early adopters, they migrated to online and self-serve channels. This migration was aided by well-informed bank staff.

The adoption of eservices delivered by governments across Canada is likely to be significantly faster. Not only have Canadians become more used to self-serve channels through their banks, but they're also more comfortable using online services in general compared to their counterparts around the world. According to the 2011 TD Canada Trust Everyday Banking Poll, over 65% of Canadians cite online banking as their most preferred method of paying bills.

With a population that already prefers to interact online, the next generation of eservices will gain significant adoption if the three Cs that citizens demand – convenience, cost and control – are met.

# Key enablers

Beyond a digital strategy and consumer research there are a number of other building blocks which will enable the next generation of eservices:

## Rethinking digital services

While considerable results have been achieved over the past decade in breaking down silos and presenting a holistic presence to citizens accessing information or services through government websites, the work is still incomplete. The homepages of government websites are well designed with engaging visuals and clear brand identification, but the problems start when you're unfamiliar with government services or simply don't know where to start. The language is often very "official" sounding and not consumer friendly, and routine transactions such as changing your address remain an obstacle.

## Identity management

A large number of government transactions must be conducted in person because there are valid legislative requirements to verify the individual's identity. Until recently the only viable way to perform this validation was through an in-person appearance and matching of credentials with a photo. Authenticating identity is a major contributor to the costs for a number of high volume transactions. New security technologies are now available that allow for online authentication of identity which can diminish or eliminate the need for in-person visits to a government service centre.

A number of Canadian governments are adopting a new service which allows consumers to use their Canadian online bank account credentials (username and password) to access their government account for online transactions. The service is fast, convenient and trusted. It benefits the consumer who doesn't have to remember yet another username and password and it significantly benefits the government which can leverage the infrastructure and technology of Canadian banks.

## GOV.UK: A case in innovation

An innovative case study of a government rethinking its organization and delivery of web services is the release this year of GOV.UK. Following extensive research, prototyping and testing, GOV.UK was launched as the single home to all UK government web services, replacing its two principal web sites: Direct.gov for consumers and Business Link for businesses. The design and development was led by Cabinet Office's Digital Government Service unit based on recommendations from the Digital Champion.

The design of Gov.UK was led by ten design principles. Testing was an important component, including online testing with 20,000 users and 11 rounds of face-to-face interviews. Results from the user testing validate this investment in design based on customer needs rather than official practices – the average time to complete tasks on [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) is one minute quicker than the legacy website Business Link.

Amongst the ten design principles, one stands out: Principle 4 - "Do the hard work to make it simple". It asserts that that the citizen shouldn't have to understand how government works to be able to interact with it. Government and the services it provides are often complicated, so design should hide complexity where possible. An example of where they've done the hard work to make it simple is GOV.UK's smart answer format. Both the Married Couple's Allowance and Maternity Pay Entitlement have been redesigned to take something complicated and make it simple for the consumer. The GOV.UK initiative is certainly work in progress and much remains to be done, but it's a very good example of what can be achieved when serving the citizen is the primary consideration in building government web services.



Another alternative which is gaining momentum is the introduction of chip-enabled smart cards which meet all payment industry standards. Following the lead of British Columbia which began issuing its CareCard this year, these chip-enabled smart cards allow governments to reduce the number of identity cards issued and acts as a secure way to access a wide range of government services. Since no personal data resides on the chip, these cards are also importantly seen as enhancing privacy.

The emergence of online authentication tools that are trusted is a potential game changer for online service delivery. Authentication of identity has been a major bottleneck for the introduction of a number of transactional services. With the possibility that citizens can now create an online government account and populate their profile with preferences and consents, whole new possibilities for digital services from governments opens up.

### ***The back end***

While redesigning web services and getting online identity management right are critically important steps, there remains one other important piece in the puzzle: restructuring the back end. As the government starts to rethink what it means to be digital by default, there's a need to create common back end data repositories and platforms keeping the future of eservices and cost containment in mind. In this context, it's important to consider the different tools that are becoming available and how these tools can be used to innovate, collaborate and provide the next generation of citizen-centred eservices. Cloud computing and crowdsourcing for example are some of the tools that are available, and these tools not only help deliver advanced eservices, but can also help curtail service delivery costs in the long run.

### ***The US Digital Government Strategy: Creating common and open platforms***

As an example of the benefits of sharing resources, the report identifies that close to half of all government websites do not currently use content management solutions, suggesting that considerable time and resources are applied inefficiently in maintaining these custom-built websites.

The strategy however goes well beyond simply recommending new standards and sharing of resources. It goes a step further and promotes open source platforms wherever feasible to encourage sharing and make the data more open and accessible. Throughout the strategy there's a clear theme of customer-centric design, but it also argues strongly that these new approaches will reduce the time, effort and cost associated with maintaining government web services.

An example of back end planning for eservice delivery is the US government's Digital Government Strategy. It was released in 2012 and gives prominent attention to the need to build a shared platform, so that agencies across government can share resources and infrastructure. It argues for common services and makes the call for new central support and governance mechanisms to usher in a new generation of digital services.

There's an opportunity for Canadian governments to study such examples while planning ahead for the next generation of eservices.

# Summary

There's an acute realization within the public sector that they need to increasingly be present on the channels that citizens use most. Our study results also show that Canadians are ready for the next generation of eservices and want their concerns addressed along the way. Some of the key components the government needs to keep in mind while rolling out the next generation of eservices are:

## ***Setting the vision***

As a first step, the government needs to identify what the future of digital services looks like.

## ***Understanding citizen trends and preferences***

To get citizen-centred service delivery right, the government needs to conduct research on citizen preferences and channels of choice.

## ***Identify and focus on key enablers***

The next generation of eservices needs to be supported by certain building blocks such as a citizen-centred digital service delivery model; identifying how people can be securely authenticated online; and building a common platform at the back end.



***Interested in learning more about our Citizen Compass research and how public sector organizations can deliver the next generation of eservices?***

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