

2. Purpose

Snapshot

Voices

"We like everything to be instant, that's why we carry our phones around with us all the time." -- College student

"If we regard the law as programming code, then we currently have a cathedral model with outdated code which is poorly executed. What we need is to shift to open source code where success is predicated on 'release early, release often' and where 'many eyeballs make bugs shallow'." -- Workshop participant

Quote

"By 2020, people's engagement with the government will have been transformed, as increasing and innovative use is made of the opportunities offered by network technologies."

2006 E-government Strategy (<http://www.e.govt.nz/about-egovt/strategy/>)

Key messages

- To meet future challenges government, at all levels, will need to use all available channels to draw on a wider range of knowledge and ideas than ever before. Technology is one small part of the picture.
- New Zealand has set ambitious goals for transforming government. These are expressed as concrete development goals for the State Services and milestones for e-government.
- This Guide to Online Participation is designed to support State servants as they explore how to use new tools to engage with New Zealanders. It is a living document that will need regular updating to reflect a rapidly changing environment and what we have learned.

Highlights

- The future is here. Technologies and people are changing. Internet and Web 2.0 applications are enabling new forms of social networking and collaboration. State services are changing to keep pace with these changes and online participation is part of the picture.
- Why is participation important? Public participation can help improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of service delivery through crowdsourcing, user-centred design and tighter feedback loops. It can also improve the quality of public policy and the chances of successful implementation.
- Who is this Guide for? New Zealand State Services that are seeking to provide people with additional electronic channels for engaging with government on policy and service design, development and delivery.

- Who helped to develop this guide? A broad-based community of practice with members drawn from across the State Services, local government, business and civil society.
- Why has the State Services Commission developed this Guide? The State Services Commission is committed to leading thinking and development of good public sector management practice. Part of its job is to help agencies to achieve the Development Goals for State Services, reach the E-government Strategy milestones and deliver on the Digital Strategy.
- How to use the Guide. This Guide is a practical primer for both newcomers to the field and experienced practitioners seeking to engage people online. It supports State servants in using new tools to improve service delivery and policy design.
- What online participation can and cannot do. Online participation is neither a panacea nor a gimmick. It offers an important additional channel for conducting meaningful public participation.

Full story

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2. Why is participation important?
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The future is here

Technologies are changing. Information and communication technologies (ICTs), like personal computers and the Internet, are facts of life in New Zealand. Close to two-thirds of New Zealand households are now online. More than 90 percent of New Zealand businesses use the Internet. Business, government and people use the Web to work, shop and play. Today, 90 percent of young New Zealanders (aged 15-24 years) have a mobile phone in their pocket. Connecting is easier than ever.

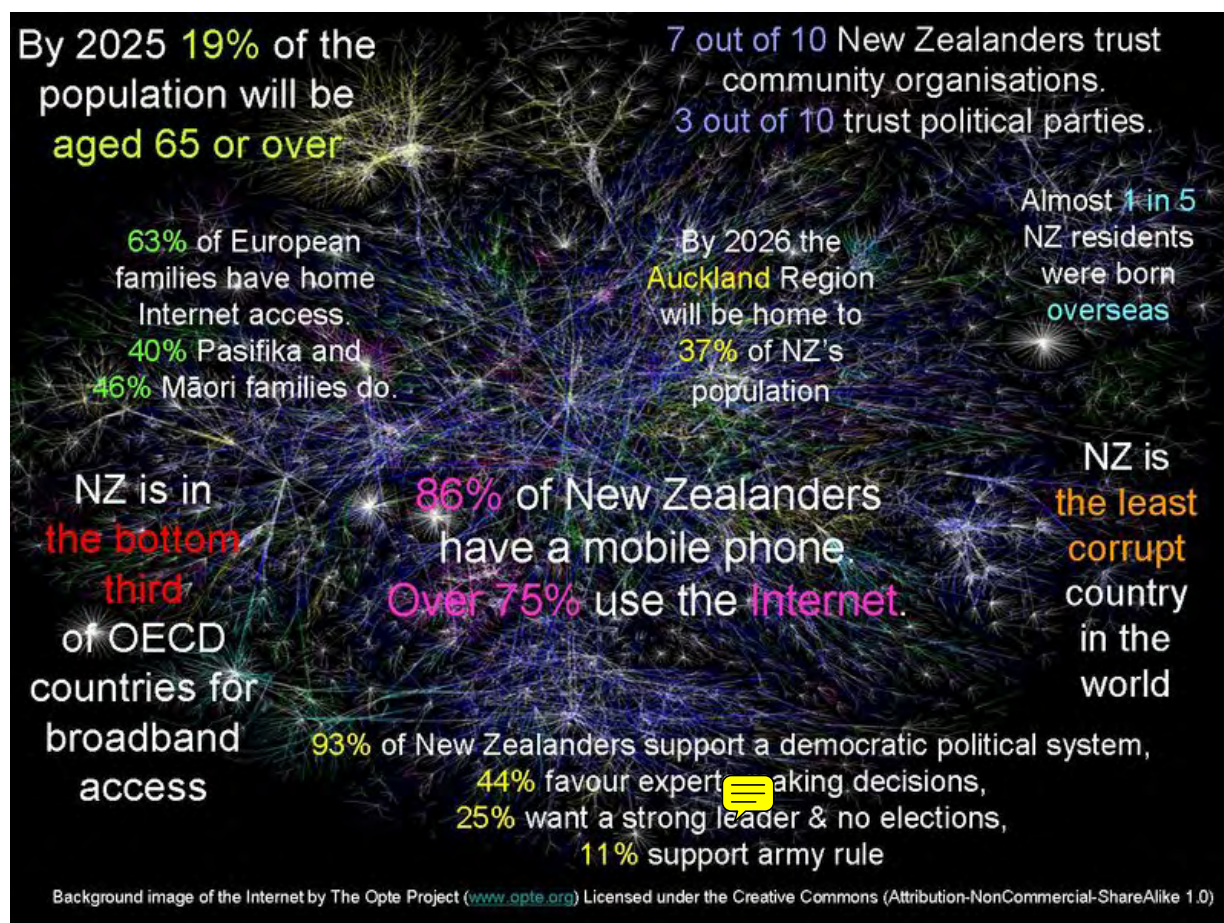
People are changing. The Internet is evolving, as shown by the rise of [social media](#) and [Web 2.0](#) applications. This new online space is about social networks and collaboration. It is powered by people's expression, curiosity and creativity. Today's digital generation has come of age in this environment and is New Zealand's future.

State Services are changing. E-government is not just about technology -- it's about putting people first. It's about making government work for you. The [E-government Strategy](#) aims to help agencies reap the benefits, minimise the risks and meet New Zealanders' expectations for online service delivery and participation - today and in the future.

Online participation as a social setting: Government's role in online participation is like a shopping arcade. An arcade is an open public space where people are free to move and gather. Along its edges are shopfronts or cafes which invite the public to enter and feel welcome. Once inside the shop or cafe, people are in a quasi-public space. It's highly structured and their behaviour is constrained by the owner's expectations. If people have a positive experience they may become 'regulars' and even tell others about the shop. At the same time, shop owners can take proactive steps to mingle with the crowds in the arcade. They can take part in conversations to find out what potential visitors are saying and how they express their likes, dislikes and needs. This Guide is designed to support State agencies in shaping good online participation. It aims to help you design an attractive shopfront and provide useful content and an environment that encourages exchange and discussion. It also recognises that many of the most meaningful conversations may be taking place beyond your front door.

Online participation is part of the solution. The Internet and other technologies will not replace all the other ways government relates to people. Better technology alone does not guarantee better public sector performance. Success also depends on improving the design, operation and culture of the public sector, so that it can better respond to New Zealanders' changing demands. A multi-channel approach that combines traditional and electronic tools to engage people, is more likely to reach a wider, more diverse audience and contribute to better policy and service. The contours of this emerging [Participation 2.0 model](#) have yet to be defined. But clearly the model offers government new opportunities and new challenges.

Diagram 1: The future is here



Sources: [2006 Social Report](#), [Public Life Values](#), [December 2005](#).

Why is participation important?

Finding solutions to the host of complex problems facing New Zealand -- today and in the future -- calls for all-of-government approaches. These need to respond to people's expectations that they will be more involved in the design and delivery of government policies and services.

Participation means more than consultation. It includes providing government information to people in ways that make it accessible and relevant, and creating opportunities for people to be actively involved in the design and delivery of government policies and services. Public participation is nothing new. Nor are efforts to describe it. Sherry R. Arnstein's seminal article proposing "A Ladder of Citizen Participation" (<http://lithgow-schmidt.dk/sherry-arnstein/ladder-of-citizen-participation.html>) may date from 1969, but it is by no means dated. Many variations on the theme have been proposed since then. See also OECD and IAP2 definitions.

Strengthening opportunities for [public participation](#) allows State Services to:

- tap into New Zealanders' collective wisdom to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of service delivery - for the public and businesses - through [crowdsourcing](#) and [user centred design](#)
- improve the quality of evidence which informs decision-making and the [policy cycle](#)
- save time and money by inviting the public and businesses to participate at the outset, instead of facing possible delays and potentially costly legal challenges once policy and services are put in place
- enhance their transparency, relevance, legitimacy and accountability to the public
- enhance their own understanding of the opinions and interests of the public and businesses
- increase public trust and understanding by providing greater opportunities for direct involvement and tighter [feedback loops](#)
- encourage individuals and communities to take action and help achieve public goals by drawing on, and adding to, government-held [information](#)
- strengthen democracy by supporting the public's active involvement in decision making, leading to better governance, stronger [civil society](#) and greater [social capital](#).

Who is this Guide for?

This Guide is designed to help New Zealand State Services to use electronic channels to give people opportunities to engage with government on policy and service design, development and delivery.

The Guide:

- presents the core **principles** that support online participation
- explains how agencies can **implement** online participation through attention to **design, management and evaluation**
- offers a range of tools and **resources** to support people's online engagement with government.

Our primary audience is New Zealand State servants (including policy analysts, business managers, communications managers and technical officers) as they navigate this complex and

exciting terrain. But we hope it will also be useful to a wider audience, such as local government officials, politicians, civil society organisations and international practitioners. It is meant as a first step in an evolving area of theory and practice. It will be subject to constant refinement and improvement as we gather new evidence and experience. It is designed to provide reassurance and encouragement to agencies that want to be creative as they explore new ways to engage.

Who helped to develop this Guide?

In developing this Guide, the project team at the State Services Commission (SSC) has sought to practise what it preaches. As a first step, it invested time and effort in building up a broad network of practitioners of public participation, online and offline. The Participation Community of Practice (PCoP) was officially launched at a workshop in Wellington on 7 December 2006. Members were drawn from across the State Services, local government, business and civil society. They continued to meet regularly from February 2007 at bimonthly lunchtime discussion sessions on participation hosted at the SSC.

One of the main requests from members at the 2006 workshop was for an online space to complement face-to-face meetings. On 30 March 2007 the ParticipatioNZ wiki was launched as a password-protected online platform with more than 100 registered members.

The wiki had the three-fold aim of providing:

- a social networking platform
- a shared knowledge resource pool
- a 'sandpit' where members could track and provide input to developing the Guide.

Indeed, during April 2007, the Guide was drafted entirely on the wiki. Any member was able to comment or edit the text as its drafting unfolded under their gaze. This Guide is itself the product of an unprecedented experiment in online participation in policy development.

The project team would like to acknowledge the many novel ideas, the friendly advice and constructive criticism provided by PCoP members. Their efforts have contributed greatly to strengthening the Guide's focus. Of course, any omissions or errors in the Guide are the responsibility of the project team.

Why has the State Services Commission developed this Guide?

The State Services Commission is committed to leading thinking and development of good public sector management practice. It has a leadership role in the field of **e-government** and in achieving the **Development Goals for State Services** (http://www.ssc.govt.nz/upload/downloadable_files/Development-Goals-diagram.pdf) while contributing actively to the **Digital Strategy**. This Guide to Online Participation contributes to all three of these strategic government goals.

The State Services Commission provides leadership and support, develops e-government strategy and policy, fosters collaboration and co-ordination and assesses progress towards achieving the e-government milestones. Agencies deliver e-government in partnership with other players including users, local government, intermediaries and ICT providers. This Guide is a first step along the path to achieving an ambitious milestone, namely that:

By 2020, people's engagement with the government will have been transformed, as increasing and innovative use is made of the opportunities offered by network technologies.

The Development Goals for State Services aim to improve the overall performance of the State Services to ensure the system can meet the needs of New Zealanders, while serving the government of the day. This Guide to Online Participation is also designed to contribute to the achievement of the Development Goals, in particular those for Networked, Co-ordinated, Accessible and Trusted State Services.

The Digital Strategy aims to ensure New Zealand is a world leader in using information and technology to realise economic, environmental, social and cultural goals. The Digital Strategy isn't just about technology, it's about people and their ability to connect to the things that matter to them. From the perspective of online participation this is where the Digital Strategy is most relevant, given its commitment to enhancing:

- **content** which is the information made available through digital networks
- **confidence** and the development of the necessary skills at all ages, in all parts of society, to use and participate in ICT effectively
- **connection** which is about having affordable access to ICT infrastructure such as telecommunications networks, computers, mobile phones and other devices. The other key element is understanding the benefits of connection.

Online participation is clearly enhanced by a supporting infrastructure and efforts to reduce digital and other divides. The issue of ensuring high speed broadband access to New Zealanders goes beyond the scope of this Guide, but without reliable, effective and affordable connection to the Internet the principles outlined in the next section cannot be fully applied. As a recent statement by the Mayor of Wellington suggests, Internet access will soon be part of the bundle of basic services expected by twenty-first century New Zealanders.

"The Council has a history of ensuring access to basic services such as water, sewerage and roads. Broadband is rapidly becoming one of these basic services." --Mayor Kerry Prendergast (27 April 2007)

What online participation can and cannot do

Online participation can help **Ministers and State servants** to:

- make existing policy and services fit better with people's experiences and needs
- navigate future uncertainty by tapping people's knowledge and experience to design better policies and services
- focus the public's good will and knowledge on big, complex problems that need local solutions (eg climate change, obesity, road safety).

Online participation can help **people** to:

- understand the purposes and processes involved in designing and delivering policies and programmes
- enhance accountability for the results of policies and programmes
- contribute to improving policies and services affecting them
- create communities around issues they see as important
- feel they can contribute and that government acknowledges and values their input.

Online participation **cannot**:

- make decisions for accountable Ministers and State servants
- be the only means of reaching out to people - many may not have access to the Internet
- be just about government - it's about creating a two-way conversation.

Links

Policy context

- Development Goals for the State Services , March 2005 (<http://www.ssc.govt.nz/display/document.asp?DocID=5438>)
- Digital Strategy: Creating our Digital Future, May 2005 (<http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/>)
- Draft New Zealand Digital Content Strategy Discussion Document, November 2006 (http://www.digitalstrategy.govt.nz/templates/Page_____120.aspx#Discussion%20Document)
- E-government Strategy, November 2006 (<http://www.e.govt.nz/about-egovt/strategy/>)

Future trends

- 2006 Social Report (<http://www.socialreport.msd.govt.nz/>)
- Our future: trends for land transport (<http://www.ltsa.govt.nz/about/land-transport-trends.html>)
- Future of Work (<http://www.dol.govt.nz/futureofwork/>)
- Future of secondary education (<http://www.secondaryfutures.co.nz/>)