SECTION 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW AND BEST PRACTICES

Currently there are no academic studies about the agenda process for government entities. The review of the many best practices collections about e-government reveals only one citation of the agenda process– a survey of municipal governments among cities whose population exceeds 100,000, conducted by the Public Sphere Information Group (PSIG) in 2003. The report of PSIG indicates that 3 municipalities in the USA (Irving, TX, St. Paul, MN, and Phoenix, AZ) have implemented an advanced system of "minutes meeting dissemination." These systems provide citizens and other users with advanced search engines for the council meeting agendas; however, no information about interaction among the government employees in the process of agenda creation is provided.

More information exists for processes similar to the agenda process, such as legislation tracking systems, document and record management products, and e-filing software. The analysis of existing software products results in the following characteristics important for the successful implementation of a document management system:

Best Practices

Accessibility

The document management system needs to make documents and records easily accessible and searchable for external (citizens and business) and internal (employees) customers (NECCC, 2002). To ensure document accessibility, leading government software developers include multilevel indexing, multiple search engines and automated track reporting to make creation, tracking and maintenance of the necessary government documents easy and fast.

Software products: Leading software products providing high accessibility are:
* Legislative tracking solution by NIC, Inc.
* Record Management and Archiving Solutions by CBOSS
* Government Record Management by ACS, Inc.

Best practice examples: A high accessibility of government documents was recognized in such best practices cases as:
* Texas legislative tracking system (best e-government award of NASCIO in 1998)

- San Diego Department of Child Support Services (winner of NACO achievement award in document management, 2003)
- Grand Forks County, ND (TexasOnline best practice nomination)

Flexibility

The document management system needs to follow the life of each type of government document. Because each government document has unique conditions for creation, maintenance, storage and deletion (users, content, access, alteration permission, etc.), the documentation management system needs to be flexible and diversified to provide each document with appropriate management levels (Center for Technology in Government, 1997; NECCb, 2002). In government software solutions, such flexibility can be reached by including workflow modules, diversified users account systems, tracking reporting and notification of the document progress.

Software products:
- Enterprise Document Management by HR Doctors
- Smeadlink Express Recordkeeping by Smead Express
- PaperGate by CCPartners

Best practice examples: Examples of successful flexibility feature implementation can be found in such projects as:
- American Hospital Association government relations (empowered by Vocus)
- Electronic Information Sharing Law and Justice Group Strategic Plan (NACO achievement award, 2003) San Bernardino County, CA
- Alaska legislature (Council of State Government award)
- City of Virginia Beach Public Document Archive

Integrity/Unity

The document management system needs to support a united database for all types of documents, and also have standard data input/output requirements, compatible document forms

and the integrity of a single government document (NECCC, 2001; CIO, Miami-Dade Working Group report, 2000). To guarantee integrity, government software developers are offering diversified users access (approval, routing, notification, reporting, tracking), support data sharing between several databases maintaining and storing different types of government documentation, and user-created forms for government documents.

Software products:
- Minus Workflow by Minus
- Record Management and Archiving Solutions by CBOSS

Best practice examples: Examples of successful projects supporting government documents unity/integrity include:
- Electronic Information Sharing Law and Justice Group Strategic Plan (NACO achievement award, 2003), San Bernardino County, CA
- Minnesota Legislature (winner of Council of State Governments best legislature web site award)
- Indiana BillWatch service (empowered by NIC)

Conclusion

To summarize, best practices suggest that successful document management systems should have the following characteristics:
- Provide fast and easy access and searching for all maintained records.
- Follow the unique life of each government document.
- Support standard requirements for all managed agendas and minutes.
- Ensure its compatibility with other documents.
- Share data of maintained and stored records between the different departments and government entities.

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