Channels framework

Delivering government services in the new economy
Preface

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Electronic channels can radically alter the way government delivers its services and change its relationship with those it serves. They also play an important part in the government’s objective to make the UK a leading knowledge economy. Pervasive online access must be a key characteristic of the UK economy in the future, where citizens can access online services irrespective of location – whether at home, at work, on the move, or in the community.

Electronic channels also provide us with the opportunity to truly organise public sector services around the needs of citizens, and not current government structures – services that are more accessible, convenient and responsive. These improvements are dependent on building confidence in the new channels, through demonstrating their benefits to citizens and ensuring that all channels – including intermediary and traditional face-to-face, voice and postal channels – support and complement each other.

Success is dependent on public sector organisations co-ordinating with other public sector bodies to ensure that services delivered via a mix of traditional and electronic channels are structured around the needs of citizens. The challenge for government and public sector organisations is to develop channel strategies to provide this co-ordination. The channel strategies should remove barriers such as lack of skills, confidence and cost in using electronic channels, so that they drive up usage of the internet by encouraging new and more frequent usage.

The guidelines within this framework provide the foundation for achieving these objectives. They clearly set out the government’s aims for channels in the context of the UK knowledge economy and provide valuable guidance and insights into the decisions required to develop effective channel strategies.
Executive summary

Electronic channels and the need for channel strategies

Electronic service delivery offers significant opportunities to meet the needs of citizens by improving access to and interaction between government, citizens and businesses in an inclusive and integrated manner. Electronic channels also offer the ability to combine the functions of audio, video and text to create a rich blend of content that provides exciting new opportunities for public sector organisations in the marketing of their services and messages to citizens.

Understanding the needs and preferences of citizens as ‘customers’ is vital in this new environment. The contest for customers, combined with abundant choice, has pushed customer expectations to new heights. Today’s customers are demanding that government services are accessible and easy to use. Underlying this is that citizens have a choice of traditional and electronic channels for accessing services.

In view of this rapidly changing environment, government recognises that there are significant opportunities to exploit new technology capabilities to meet raised customer expectations for access and service delivery. Successful exploitation of these opportunities should allow for citizens to have a choice of devices which allow for pervasive online access by enabling internet to be available at home, at work, on the move, or in the community. There is also a tremendous opportunity to use electronic channels to open up government to create more seamless delivery of government services through the use of intermediaries and private sector partnerships.

However, strategic planners within public sector organisations face complex decisions regarding the appropriate mix of channel deployment for delivering best value for both the organisation and customers.

These difficulties are further compounded by the current lack of guidance and mechanisms for public sector organisations to join up and co-ordinate their channel strategies, which is leading to sub-optimal service delivery and inefficiencies. Where public sector organisations deploy channels in isolation from their other channels, or in isolation from other bodies serving the customer group, government services will be fragmented and may waste money through duplication and overlap.

If public sector organisations are to avoid these problems and take advantage of the opportunities offered by the knowledge economy, each organisation should develop a channel strategy. A channel strategy will typically consist of a mix of different channels, as experience of introducing new electronic channels has shown that their successful take-up is dependent on support from traditional channels.

The channels framework

This channels framework sets out the strategic direction for public sector organisations to plan and shape the future development of channel strategies for the delivery of electronic services. In particular, it attempts to provide guidance on, and insights into, the decisions required for developing a channel strategy.

A channel is defined in this framework as a means for organisations to deliver services to customers. It could be electronic, voice, face-to-face or post. Government services can be delivered either directly by public sector organisations, or indirectly using intermediaries. A channel strategy is therefore a set of business-driven choices about how, and through what means, these services will be delivered to the customer. The Office of the e-Envoy has worked across central and local government, and closely with industry, to develop the following set of guidelines to help public sector organisations make these choices:
• Guidelines 1–3 cover the need to develop strategies within a wider business and government context
• Guidelines 4–10 provide more tactical guidance on implementing channel strategies within the public sector

The guidelines developed in this framework are presented below.

1. All public sector bodies should have a channel strategy for service delivery to customers. This should form an integral part of their business strategies and support wider government policies on universal access, modernising government and social inclusion. (p.12)

2. Public sector organisations should co-ordinate their channel strategies with other organisations around a thorough understanding of customer needs to provide best value and joined-up services. (p.13)

3. Channel strategies should reflect the balance between customer and business needs and demonstrate clear value to both the organisation and its customers, underpinned by an understanding of end-to-end delivery costs. (p.14)

4. To encourage take-up of electronic channels, organisations should first build customers’ confidence and trust in those channels. This will require the promotion of the benefits of using those channels, reassurance about privacy and security, and access to online and offline personal assistance. (p.15)

5. Public sector organisations should consider in the implementation of electronic channels how to use and combine different media content which allows for the delivery of more powerful marketing messages and encourages greater customer access and usage of electronic channels. (p.15)

6. Public sector organisations should use a mix of electronic and traditional channels to ensure customer accessibility, which needs to be managed together for effective and efficient service delivery. This channel mix should change over time with greater acceptance of electronic channels and advances in technology. (p.17)

7. A choice of devices - PCs, telephones, digital TV, mobile devices and kiosks - should be considered to create and support an infrastructure to facilitate pervasive online access, subject to device suitability to support transactions. (p.20)

8. Organisations should reflect customer preferences in their channel strategies to promote social inclusion, so that cost, skill and lack of confidence are not impediments to channel use. Telephones, digital TV and public kiosks should be considered because of their availability across all groups in society. (p.20)

9. Public sector bodies should consider partnering with intermediaries to create opportunities to open up government, and, where applicable, they provide a more appropriate route for delivering improved customer service and value for money. (p.22)

10. Partnership decisions should seek to open up government and not exclude competition in the intermediaries market, which is necessary to drive innovation, improved customer service and value for money. Public sector bodies should define the standards for interfacing with government as part of the e-GIF process, to encourage competition and maximise customer choice. (p.24)
The way forward

This document outlines the vision and initiates a framework for the support of the delivery of government services across multiple channels in the new economy. The Office of the e-Envoy in the Cabinet Office will work collaboratively with stakeholders, including central and local government bodies, organisations and citizens, to enable the framework to evolve, and to capture latest thinking and experience of deploying channels. In view of the rapidly changing environment in which this document has been set, we will update it at appropriate intervals – including the progress on actions detailed in section 6.

The latest version of this document can be found at www.govtalk.gov.uk
1. Introduction

Background

The Office of the e-Envoy is leading the drive to get the UK online, to ensure that the country, its citizens and its businesses derive maximum benefit from the knowledge economy. It is leading by giving direction and guidance and by providing the focus for the development of the e-economy and e-government initiatives, including the development of the www.ukonline.gov.uk portal. As part of the e-business planning process for public sector organisations, the Office of the e-Envoy is co-ordinating and facilitating the development of public sector channel strategies.

The previous channels framework focused on the electronic delivery of services and the use of intermediaries. The principles of channel management set out in that document still apply. However, this framework goes further by providing insight into the decisions required in developing a channel strategy.

Target audience

This channels framework focuses on the electronic delivery of public services and is intended to cover the development of channel strategies, in the context of both electronic and traditional channels. It is primarily aimed at strategic planners in public sector organisations who are responsible for service delivery. This would also typically include marketing and communications people in public sector bodies who are responsible for considering the incorporation of electronic channels alongside other traditional channels. In addition, the framework aims to inform a wider audience of intermediaries, industry stakeholders and citizens of the government’s approach to multi-channel service delivery.

Objectives

The objectives of this framework are to:

- promote a co-ordinated approach in the development of channel strategies across the public sector
- provide insights into the decision-making process involved in formulating a channel strategy

Definition of channels and channel strategy

A channel is defined in this framework as a means for organisations to deliver services to customers. Services can range from pure information provision to transaction-type services, which may be delivered either directly by public sector organisations, or indirectly by intermediaries.

Channels could be electronic, voice, face-to-face or post. The term ‘customer’ in the context of this framework includes businesses, organisations and citizens.

A channel strategy represents a set of business-driven choices about how and through what means services will be delivered to customers. For example, deciding what target proportion of services, if any at all, will be based on the use of PCs, digital TV, or call centres.

1 http://www.e-envoy.gov.uk/publications/frameworks/channels/channels_intro.htm
**Document structure**

The document structure is outlined below.

**Section 2** provides an overview of the current situation in channels, aiming to illustrate both the need for a channel framework and the opportunities and benefits attached to the successful introduction of a channel strategy. The section introduces guidelines 1–5, which cover:

- channels strategies as an integral part of all public sector organisations' business strategies
- co-ordination of channel strategies within the public sector
- using channels to deliver value
- promoting customer confidence and trust in channels
- use of a variety of media content through electronic channels to allow for more effective communication with citizens

**Sections 3–4** cover guidelines 6–10 and aim to provide more tactical guidance on implementing channel strategies within the public sector. Section 3 deals with the importance of a channel mix, a customer-centric approach and the consideration of multiple devices and content issues. Section 4 focuses on the importance of intermediaries and private sector partnerships in opening up government for the delivery of government services.

**Section 5** brings together the analysis from previous sections and provides a decision framework that can be used by public sector organisations in developing a channel strategy.

**Section 6** outlines the proposed actions for both the Office of e-Envoy and the public sector with regard to achieving the guidelines presented in this document.
2. Unlocking the potential of new electronic channels to deliver value

Creating new opportunities
New channels open up new choices for customers. Understanding the needs and preferences of customers is therefore vital in this rapidly changing environment. The contest for customers, combined with abundant choice, has pushed expectations to new heights. Customers are demanding that government services are accessible and easy to use. Government is committed to meeting this expectation, and this section sets out in more detail how this commitment can be achieved.

Channel strategies in the new era
The Modernising Government White Paper\(^2\) sets out the government's programme of renewal and reform. Service delivery in an inclusive and integrated manner is an essential commitment of this programme.

Good channel strategies in the new era will leverage electronic channels to help to:

- deliver public services that are high quality and efficient
- make sure that public service users, not providers, are the focus, by matching services more closely to citizens’ lives
- support the infrastructure to get the UK online by the provision of joined-up services

A holistic and co-ordinated approach to channel strategies
Figure 1 shows that there are a number of competing government priorities and customer needs that influence the channel decision-making process. The business strategy of a public sector organisation should, for example, reconcile various targets, such as customer access, customer satisfaction, social inclusion and cost. Consequently, the effects of pursuing one particular target over another should be assessed. This strategic view of organisational activity is essential if the channel strategy is not to be developed in isolation.

If public sector organisations are to deliver integrated services effectively, the development of channel strategies to co-ordinate service delivery across public sector organisations is a crucial requirement.

The starting point in developing a channel strategy should therefore be an understanding of customer needs and government’s priorities in supporting these needs – understanding what the organisation delivers, for whom and why. Only then is it possible to derive an effective channel strategy.

Consequently, organisations need to consider the implications of channel decisions in the context of their wider business objectives and recognise that channel strategies are not an end in themselves. Furthermore, developing channel strategies is a key part of wider existing business planning processes – not a separate exercise resulting in a stand-alone, one-off document divorced from the overall business strategy.

Another important consideration for organisations in the development of their channel strategies is the degree of organisational change required to deliver them. Culture, employees’ skills and their ability to change will all affect the feasibility of particular strategies, as well as pay, training and job descriptions. A capability audit, which defines these characteristics and assesses an organisation’s capacity to change in deploying new channels, is therefore useful to determine the foundations on which a channel strategy will be built.

If each public sector organisation develops its channel strategy in isolation, this could lead to fragmented services and may waste money on duplicated and overlapping channels. Furthermore, without a strong, centralised and joined-up framework co-ordinating the delivery channels of different public sector organisations, there is the danger of a multitude of different services being delivered to varying levels of quality. There are considerable benefits to be realised by adopting a joined-up approach to developing channel strategies in terms of improved service delivery and resource savings – particularly given that many public sector organisations deliver related services to similar customer groups, for example pensioners and students.

**Guideline 1**

All public sector bodies should have a channel strategy for service delivery to customers. This should form an integral part of their business strategies and support wider government policies on universal access, modernising government and social inclusion.
Reaping the benefits of a joined-up channel strategy requires organisations to move to a model where services are built around customer needs and not organisational structures. Figure 2 illustrates the context in which public sector channels need to operate under this customer-centric approach. Focused on particular customer segments, co-ordinated services need to be delivered either directly or via intermediaries and supported by an integrated back office. Public sector organisations will need to co-ordinate their channel strategies around a thorough understanding of the customers they serve and their corresponding needs, to provide best value and effective joined-up services.

While it is the responsibility of each public sector organisation to develop a channel strategy, the Office of the e-Envoy recognises its ongoing role in co-ordinating these channel strategies.

**Guideline 2**
Public sector organisations should co-ordinate their channel strategies with other organisations around a thorough understanding of customer needs to provide best value and joined-up services.

### Using channels to deliver value

Government is committed to bringing services closer to where customers live and work, and in the public places they use. However, public sector organisations will inevitably need to balance customer needs with resource constraints. Organisations should therefore seek to deploy resources and use channels in a manner where they provide value to organisations and their customers. Value is deemed to be provided where additional benefits are gained from consumption or provision of services and/or cost savings are generated (without a corresponding drop in quality or level of service). Whilst technology provides opportunities to create new ways of interacting with customers and providers, it is only a means to an end. New electronic channels can only be exploited if organisations can ultimately demonstrate the value of those channels to organisations and their customers.

The business case for public service channels should therefore recognise the value to the organisation (including benefits for staff), along with the value to customers. Essentially it is a ‘deal’ between the provider and the customer. To achieve organisational benefits,
customers must both want to use and actually use the channel. Consequently, channel strategies should be structured around an understanding of what investments in terms of people, processes and technology an organisation must make to influence customer behaviour.

This value exchange concept – the clear demonstration of benefit to both the organisation and customer – is therefore essential for the success of a channel strategy, especially for electronic channels, both in terms of end-to-end delivery costs and customer take-up.

Guideline 3
Channel strategies should reflect the balance between customer and business needs and demonstrate clear value to both the organisation and its customers, underpinned by an understanding of end-to-end delivery costs.

For electronic channels, greater value creation is more likely to be achieved by the offer of more transactional online services and richer information services. However, to achieve this value creation, customer behaviours will need to change so that they are confident to use electronic self-service channels instead of traditional channels.

Achieving this change in customers' behaviour requires the promotion and marketing of the benefits to customers while providing reassurance that the electronic channels are secure and private.

Confidence and trust in channels

Customers' confidence in an electronic channel is based on their ability to use the channel and trust that the service will work in the manner intended whilst safeguarding their interests.

Improving customer confidence in the channel will be dependent on factors such as providing clear and easily accessible customer interfaces on electronic access devices, online and offline help facilities, and the promotion of the channel's benefits.

The protection of personal data is important for building trust in electronic channels. Sharing information between public sector organisations to improve service delivery would need clear permission from customers. This point is reinforced in a recent survey of several European countries, in which the UK showed the strongest attitude toward privacy enforcement. Indeed, the main factors influencing customers' perception of value and trust in electronic service delivery are security and privacy concerns.

Different electronic services will require different levels of security. To ensure customers are provided with appropriate levels of security, the Office of the e-Envoy has developed a security framework, which recommends how security levels reflect the risks associated with a service. Some applications, which are low-sensitivity and low-risk, may require only PIN-based authentication, whereas others may require

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encryption. Guideline recommendations to provide customers with confidence in the services they use can be found in the Trust Services Framework.4

Guideline 4
To encourage take-up of electronic channels, organisations should first build customers’ confidence and trust in those channels. This will require the promotion of the benefits of using those channels, reassurance about privacy and security, and access to online and offline personal assistance.

Using electronic channels to provide rich content
Electronic channels offer the ability to combine the functions of audio, video and text to create a rich blend of content that provides exciting new opportunities for public sector organisations in the marketing of their services and messages to customers. The use of a rich array of different media content not only allows for opportunities to deliver more powerful marketing messages, but also provides customers with greater incentive to activate access and increase usage and time spent online. Public sector organisations should consider this in their implementation of electronic channels.

Guideline 5
Public sector organisations should consider in the implementation of electronic channels how to use and combine different media content which allows for the delivery of more powerful marketing messages and encourages greater customer access and usage of electronic channels.

3. Creating a mixed channel environment

Customer accessibility

Today’s customers increasingly have a choice of traditional and electronic channels for accessing services. The choice of channels available to customer groups will differ depending on the services provided, as it is expected that some customer groups will have a faster transition to electronic channels than others. Choice of channel should reflect:

- abilities and preferences of customers
- capability of the channel to support services
- the economics of anticipated customer take-up

Preferences vary considerably by age, socio-demographic group and location. Universal preferences cannot be assumed and therefore, to ensure accessibility, each organisation should find out the preferences of their customer segments in relation to the services and the types of transactions required.

Customers place importance on accessing government via a mix of channels and in particular via one-stop shops, post offices, call centres and libraries in addition to the internet and other electronic media. This is supported by a Gartner survey,5 which found that 73 per cent of respondents attached great importance to the ability to access public sector services through a variety of channels. The majority of respondents also indicated that they would be likely to use different channels for the same transaction, for example initial information via mobile short message service (SMS), further details from a contact centre and completion of the transaction via internet-enabled PC.

Private sector experience of multi-channel access has shown that support from traditional channels has been critical in the uptake of new electronic channels. The channel structure proposed by the Cabinet Office’s Performance & Innovation Unit (PIU),6 as shown in Figure 3, provides a framework in which traditional channels can support the uptake of electronic channels. This is premised on customers using fully automated channels for simple queries (first tier: self-service), but maybe wanting human interaction for more complex transactions (second and third tier: direct contact).

Take-up of the first-tier channels on a regular basis is dependent on customers being able to bridge out from self-service channels to access support from traditional channels if required.

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5 Gartner Group, May 2001
6 Electronic Government Services for the 21st Century, Performance & Innovation Unit, September 2000
Hence in the short to medium term, whilst the usage of electronic channels will increase, they will not replace traditional channels altogether. Organisations’ adoption of a portfolio approach in the management of their channels – emphasising a mix of traditional and electronic channels – will therefore not only assist in the broader goals of accessibility and choice but also provide support for greater acceptance and take-up of electronic channels.

Technological advancements in the capabilities of access devices, improvements in bandwidth and/or transmission speeds, and greater customer acceptance of electronic channels are all helping the progression of the knowledge economy within the UK. E-government is not only for those with personal computers at home, it is about using the technology to create new, but complementary means of access to public services. Pervasive online access through multiple channels offering quality choice will be a key characteristic of the UK knowledge economy. Customers will have a range of complementary access devices at their disposal to support access of online services irrespective of location – whether at home, at work, on the move or in the community. In the future the UK will benefit from a richer multimedia environment, providing accessibility in ways previously unavailable, i.e. packaging video, voice and text services to create new customer experiences.

Drivers and inhibitors for different electronic channel media and devices in this environment are presented in the Appendix.

Guideline 6
Public sector organisations should use a mix of electronic and traditional channels to ensure customer accessibility, which needs to be managed together for effective and efficient service delivery. This channel mix should change over time with greater acceptance of electronic channels and advances in technology.
Prominent devices for access in the knowledge economy

Deciding which electronic channel device to deploy requires that organisations understand what level of take-up they are seeking to achieve, by when, and by how much.

In determining which devices will be prominent for the promotion of the knowledge economy and the transformation of the way government services will be delivered, digital TV, PCs, telephones, mobile devices and kiosks are particularly important. Each is considered below.

**Digital TV**

Over 97 per cent of households possess at least one television set, making it one of the most pervasive, familiar and accepted devices in the home. Digital TV is key to bringing multi-channel connectivity into tomorrow’s digital homes. It offers the potential to reach a wide and inclusive audience for home online access, especially to those sections of the population who do not have home access to a PC. Digital TV offers a convergence of technology and media which, coupled with the added functionality of interactivity and internet access, offers the potential to transform and carve out new ways for government to deliver its services.

Today’s cutting-edge pilot services already enable viewers to engage in transactions with local government and obtain advice on, for example, items such as health, education, and law and order. The Office of the e-Envoy has produced a separate guideline framework for the delivery of government services to the home through digital television.7

In June 2001, the NHS commissioned a pilot digital TV project – Living Health – to 50,000 homes in Birmingham. Living Health gave access to NHS-accredited health information and advice 24 hours a day on Telewest’s Active Digital Platform. The service was designed to be complementary to the existing NHS Direct operation and is non-diagnostic in nature.

During this pilot, users were able to view 21,000 pages of NHS-accredited health information and advice, use interactive health tools, book an appointment with their GP, access a local services directory for surgeries and pharmacies, etc. The project also included NHS Direct inVision, a service that allows callers to view an NHS Direct nurse on-screen. The nurse was able to show videos and images to help identify medical conditions and advise on the best course of action.

Living Health was well received by both customers and health professionals. Over 45 per cent of Telewest customers in Birmingham used the service at least once since its launch and up to 50 customers a week also requested a live consultation with an NHS Direct nurse via their TV with the NHS Direct inVision service.

Personal computers
PCs are well established in the UK, providing access to online services at work, at home and in the community (libraries, schools, etc). They are particularly important for access to UK online services. The penetration of those PCs connected to the internet is growing in both the workplace and in homes, and increasingly whilst on the move. Highest levels of home penetration lie with higher educated households and those households with families and grown-up children. This leads to high PC literacy in those groups.

Improvements in broadband technology will alleviate many of the response time issues of PC internet access. Additionally, PCs offer capabilities not provided by other channels, such as software download and usage, and home-office functionality.

Telephone
With 90–95 per cent penetration, the telephone will remain an important means for the government’s universal access objectives. Call centres required to support telephone access, or increasingly multi-channel contact centres, can also be used as a stepping stone for customers who do not want or cannot use electronic channels. Web-enabled contact centres can be used as a support for other channels, including email, video agents providing visual contact, and ‘call me button’ with push page technology and co-browsing providing web support to users.

Mobile devices
Mobile devices, including mobile phones and personal digital assistants, provide the opportunity for service providers to be more responsive to customers’ needs, particularly with time- or location-sensitive information. There is now a 65 per cent penetration of the UK population with mobile phones and they are increasingly being used to replace the conventional fixed line. They have the potential to further the government’s goals of universal access and transform the way in which government interacts with customers – around their lifestyle needs, not restricted by physical location. In the future the wireless data market is expected to grow substantially as higher-speed digital packet data networks are rolled out. The introduction of GPRS (General Packet Radio Service) and 3G mobile services will increase the scope of applications that can be delivered over mobile devices. Applications such as email, messaging, corporate information, consumer-specific information, games and mobile commerce are expected to motivate users to access wireless data in the mobile environment. Channel strategies should anticipate and incorporate these advancements in broadband mobile services.

Kiosks
Public access kiosks with customer-focused applications have the potential to break down barriers to technology and provide a starting point for increased use and acceptance of electronic channels. They have the potential to bring online services to all and so play an important role in positively changing customers’ attitudes to, and behaviours towards, technology. Applications can range from simple information provision via text to interactive videoconferencing with a call centre agent.
Access for all

The key groups at risk from social exclusion are those that use public sector services most heavily and are often those that currently have the lowest levels of access to, and confidence in, electronic delivery channels. Equity and fairness, which drive the government’s social inclusion aims, dictate that disadvantaged groups should not experience inferior access to public services compared to other groups.

Specific barriers affect certain groups disproportionately in their access to channels, for example:

- 5–10 per cent of households do not have a telephone connection
- 2.5–3.5 million adults do not have a bank account
- basic literacy problems affect 20 per cent of the adult population

Findings from the Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Unit identified barriers to online access to include:

- costs and perceived costs of access
- lack of opportunities to gain ICT skills for those living in low-income neighbourhoods

The Office of the e-Envoy is currently conducting further studies, which may provide greater detail on those social groups that will need support in accessing electronic delivery channels. This work is looking into the role and function of representatives who access public services on behalf of someone else, for example younger relatives on behalf of elderly relatives.

Successful take-up of electronic services to include all in society requires the identification of those channels where lack of skills, confidence and cost are not impediments to their use. Digital TV, telephones and public access kiosks are the electronic channels that are likely to be important in addressing social inclusion requirements.

Content delivery

Public sector bodies face a number of issues surrounding the delivery of content to different devices, including:

- designing content to meet the needs of customers
- formatting content to cope with the capabilities of different devices
• sourcing content
• content management
• branding

**Designing and formatting content**
Issues around designing and formatting content primarily focus on the conversion, or ‘re-purposing’, of content for different devices which is not only required to accommodate device constraints, but also to accommodate the needs of customers who use the device. For example, kiosk users may find a PC-style web interface too complex – it is therefore important to create an interface with easy navigation that is simple to use. The Office of the e-Envoy will develop a framework regarding content to assist organisations with issues of formatting content on devices (refer to supporting action, Guideline 5).

Designing content to meet customer requirements includes the need to consider the interaction of different content media (audio, video and text) that enable the delivery of more powerful marketing messages and entice users to access the content or service being delivered. For example, the BBC website allows users the choice of viewing news via text or video and audio streaming either singularly or simultaneously on the same screen.

**Sourcing content**
Sourcing of content refers to the collection and delivery of content, either directly or indirectly, from content providers. Content could be sourced from the private or public sector. In relation to public sector content there are a number of options for the sourcing and delivery of government content. For example, content could be sourced from government portals (e.g. UK online), through the government gateway or directly from government organisations’ content servers. The key criteria underpinning organisations’ decisions on where to source content should be based on customer requirements and the cost of the different content-sourcing options available.

**Content management**
Efficient content management is vital to provide the high standards of service delivery expected by increasingly demanding customers. To avoid customer frustration and a potential loss of trust and confidence in the channel, data must be available, up-to-date, accurate, complete and ‘clean’. Data archives should also be accessible and effective content retrieval systems need to be in place.

**Branding**
Brands provide customers with recognition of organisations and services they are using. Each brand has its own values and customer associations attached to it.

With the increasing numbers of channels available and potentially used for the delivery of government services, effective and integrated branding of services is becoming increasingly important. Whilst it may be appropriate for the delivery brand to be different for different channels, it is essential that the brands are suitably integrated.

Where a service is also supported by face-to-face or other offline channels and communications, government/individual departments will need to make sure that these are also integrated into the overall customer experience. Multiple co-branding should be avoided, as should unnecessary switching between numerous brands.
4. Involving intermediaries

Intermediaries and their importance

Intermediaries may be defined as third parties that act on behalf of organisations or individuals in the delivery of services. Intermediaries may be public, private sector or voluntary organisations. The term ‘intermediary’ can cover a wide spectrum of roles in the delivery of public services. Within this framework, it is restricted to the position of service delivery provider.

Intermediaries such as banks, post offices, employers and voluntary organisations have traditionally played an important role in managing customer relationships on behalf of either the government or the customer. The use of intermediaries and private sector partnerships for electronic service delivery currently provides a tremendous opportunity to open up government to create more seamless delivery of public services. Intermediaries are expected to play an increasingly important role in the delivery of government-to-citizen transactions. Indeed, 72 per cent of individuals expect intermediaries to take a greater role in the delivery of electronic government services.9

In developing a channel strategy, public sector bodies should therefore determine whether they are the most appropriate organisation for the delivery of particular services, or whether an intermediary (be it a private or public sector intermediary) is more suitable. The test for this is whether the organisation or intermediary is able to provide improved customer service and value for money for the services being delivered based on an understanding of the customers’ needs.

The benefits of using intermediaries include the advantages they offer through specialisation and grouping of service offerings and aggregation of customers. Intermediaries have typically invested in building relationships with particular market segments, whereby this specialisation has enabled them to understand the needs of customers more accurately, and in turn to better structure services around these needs. The ability to aggregate similar service offerings and customer groups of different organisations allows for the generation of economies of scale and scope, as well as improving purchasing or buying power. The aggregation of services also provides customers with the added convenience of providing a ‘one-stop shop’ for the seamless access and choice of services.

Guideline 9
Public sector bodies should consider partnering with intermediaries to create opportunities to open up government, and, where applicable, they provide a more appropriate route for delivering improved customer service and value for money.

Two approaches exist for involving intermediaries in service delivery:

- the intermediary interacts with the customer directly on behalf of a public sector body (i.e. a public sector-commissioned intermediary)
- the intermediary interacts with a public sector body acting on behalf of the end customer (i.e. a customer-commissioned intermediary)

The nature of the relationship for each of these approaches is illustrated in Figure 4. Both approaches are welcomed by government for the delivery of services. However, the consequences for customers and government are different for each approach. In the former, the intermediary may be viewed by the customer as an extension of government and consequently issues of service quality, private–public sector bundling of services and brand image apply. With the latter approach, the intermediary acts on

9 Gartner Group, May 2001
behalf of the customer and can represent the end-users' interests within the bounds of the relationship permissions. Clearly, value must be created for both the intermediary and the customer for the relationship to be established. Such an intermediary could be either a ‘for profit’ enterprise or a ‘not-for-profit’ enterprise such as the Citizens Advice Bureau.

To provide more detailed guidance in this area, the Office of the e-Envoy is currently developing a guideline framework on the ‘rules of engagement’ for intermediaries (refer to supporting action, Guideline 10).

**Encouraging a competitive and innovative intermediary market**

A competitive intermediary market is a key requirement for opening up government and promoting value for money and encouraging innovation in the delivery of improved customer service. To encourage competition between intermediaries and government organisations through the creation of a mixed economy (of public and private sector participation), it is essential that government organisations do not use their influence to take decisions which may impede the long-term competitiveness of intermediary markets. Government organisations’ influence can be powerful, due to their size, their customer bases and the strength of their brands.

Organisations should consider the implications not only at the organisational level, but also for the overall market. Public sector bodies should therefore not use their position to lock out competition, particularly by prohibiting fair access to government back office systems. Value for money decisions should ensure that intermediary transaction costs are compared equitably with direct public sector transaction costs. The government–intermediary interface should be fair and transparent to encourage this competition and must comprise clearly defined process and technical standards.

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Over 40,000 customer-commissioned intermediaries act as professional agents for customers’ tax issues when interacting with the Inland Revenue. Additionally, many of these customers use other bundled services from these intermediaries, including business advice and accountancy, to address their overall needs.
Entering a partnership with one intermediary should not preclude organisations’ relationships with other intermediaries, which could stifle competition in the intermediary market or limit consumer choices. Indeed, public sector organisations should define the standards for interacting with government as part of the e-GIF process, to encourage competition and maximise customer choice.

**Guideline 10**

Partnership decisions should seek to open up government and not exclude competition in the intermediaries market, which is necessary to drive innovation, improved customer service and value for money. Public sector bodies should define the standards for interfacing with government as part of the e-GIF process, to encourage competition and maximise customer choice.

**Government-commissioned intermediaries - issues to be considered**

Public sector organisations should be aware of and consider the following issues when commissioning intermediaries:

- **Cost benefit analysis** of individual channels, which ignores the total cost of operating multiple channels, may result in false economies and understatement of the value added by intermediaries.

- **Preferential selection of segmented customers** that are either high value or easy to reach by private sector organisations may also introduce false economies for the public sector. Higher unit costs may be incurred for those customers not served by intermediaries.

- **Bundling and cross-selling** of higher margin private sector services will be a prevalent part of intermediary business models if intermediaries receive no, or low, transaction fees. Results from the People’s Panel show that almost 90 per cent of customers resent cross-selling on the back of government services.

Whichever commercial model is used, there should be a clear value exchange – a ‘win-win-win’ along the entire delivery chain to ensure that the relationships are sustainable.

The incentives for intermediaries will be determined by the return generated, which will be based on both expected volumes and the fit of e-government services to their core business services. Uncertain volumes will mean high risks for intermediaries and will deter investment. Public sector organisations should examine how best to partner with those intermediaries of strategic importance to the delivery of government services to ensure sustainable relationships.

The challenge for all public sector bodies is therefore to:

- deliver value for money and improved customer service by encouraging a competitive and innovative market for intermediaries
- by taking decisions that will not impede the market
- providing a clear win-win-win for government, intermediaries and customers

Public sector organisations’ discussions with potential intermediaries – on suitability, legality, security/privacy, procedural and technical issues – could involve considerable duplication of effort by individual public sector bodies.

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Branding, sponsorship and advertising

When commissioning intermediaries, public sector organisations should consider the degree of association that could exist with an intermediary’s brand, as well as the potential impact the intermediary brand will have on the government brand.

Typically, commercial intermediaries will want to apply their brand to customer interactions in order to maintain control over the customer experience. Government departments should be aware of this and ensure that the intermediary’s brand is complementary to their own.

Digital channels commonly use overlaying of images, for example digital TV channels or internet portals pulling content into their own frame or navigational system (although the terms and conditions of some websites do not permit them to be imported in an intermediary’s frame/user view). This ensures that the user can easily exit any content and return to the entry point of that particular service without getting lost.

The example opposite shows how government content, in this instance UK online for business, may appear in an intermediary’s holding/navigational frame (Ask Jeeves). This example also highlights the potential problem of unsolicited advertising. In the case of digital TV the intermediary’s branding may even further envelope the content. Public sector bodies should avoid any co-branding where the existence of the intermediary’s logo appears to be exclusively endorsed by virtue of its proximity to, for example, the UK online brand.

Detailed discussion of issues around branding, sponsorship and advertising are outside the scope of this guideline framework. However, in dealing with intermediaries online there are a number of existing guidelines on branding, sponsorship and advertising that should be referred to.\(^{11}\)

Customer data ownership

With government-commissioned intermediaries, ownership of customer data is also a critical issue that could potentially damage the government brand, especially in the area of private sector data selling but more widely in relation to the public concern over data security and handling. Successful adoption of these intermediary-led services will be dependent on reassurances based on the code of practice being communicated to customers to allay customer security and privacy concerns. Protection of the public service brands will require protocols to be enforced for the protection of public sector bodies from intermediaries that have brand incompatibility, aggressive cross-selling and unethical selling practices.

\(^{11}\) For specific details, refer to the Guidelines for UK Government websites illustrated handbook for web management teams, Section 1.3. For more details on sponsorship and advertising, refer to: www.e-envoy.gov.uk/webguidelines.htm. For further details on advertising, refer to Web Quality Briefings 1: Case study of advertising on a government website, also available at www.e-envoy.gov.uk/webguidelines.htm.
5. A channel decision framework

A channel framework

This section pulls together the threads of the preceding sections in outlining a channel decision framework which public sector organisations can use as a starting point for developing their channel strategies.

Public sector organisations’ need for a channel strategy derives from their requirement to make decisions on how government services may be delivered and accessed by customers. These decisions include deciding on the communication type, channels of communication, media used and access devices, and whether to serve customers directly or through an intermediary. Channel decisions are also influenced by customer preferences, content type, media and device capability. This is illustrated in Figure 5 below.

From this we see that devising a channel strategy involves organisations making a number of challenging and complex decisions. Underpinning these decisions is the need for channels to provide value for both the organisation and customers, which adds another level of complexity to this decision-making process.

Creating a channel service delivery model that demonstrates value

Mapping organisational objectives to customer preferences allows organisations to produce a service delivery model that demonstrates the necessity for and value of each channel. This is illustrated in Figure 6, which outlines examples to illustrate the complexity of an effective channel strategy decision framework.
In line with the government vision, public sector bodies should aim to provide services to their customers through means most convenient to the customer, not to the service provider. However, the challenge for organisations is maximising the benefits customers receive from services delivered against the constraint of having limited resources. This therefore requires organisations to consider wider government and departmental objectives, the similarity of different customer segments, the type of products and services demanded, the nature of the transaction and the capability of the channel to execute the transaction. Good channel strategies will also highlight an organisation’s current channel service delivery model, for example where 60 per cent of the business is delivered through a traditional face-to-face channel. Outlining the future service delivery model is equally important, where the benefits of electronic channels are more widely available, for example reducing face-to-face business to 15 per cent and increasing electronic channels (e.g. digital TV, PC, mobile devices) to 50 per cent.

**A channel decision framework**

Figure 7 outlines a five-step process for creating a channel strategy framework.

**Figure 6. Illustrative channel strategy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government and departmental objectives</th>
<th>Support people in need</th>
<th>Provide education</th>
<th>Effective use of information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer segmentation</td>
<td>Low income – lone parent</td>
<td>18-year-old unemployed</td>
<td>Woman returner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products and services</td>
<td>Welfare benefit</td>
<td>Employment advice</td>
<td>Training services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of transaction</td>
<td>Benefit application</td>
<td>Search for jobs</td>
<td>Signposting to specialist provision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel capability</td>
<td>Internet/PC Call centre Mobile device Digital TV Face to face</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service delivery model</td>
<td>Current 5% 25% 0% 10% 60%</td>
<td>Future 10% 35% 15% 25% 15%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer preference</td>
<td>Low income – lone parent</td>
<td>18-year-old unemployed</td>
<td>Woman returner</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This figure is provided for illustration only and does not reflect the segmentation approach of either the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).
Step 1: Define who you are providing services to and group them into segments based on their needs

As highlighted in section 1, the channel strategy should be aligned with the organisation’s business objectives to ensure the correct ‘business’ proposition is delivered. The process of developing a channel strategy should start, therefore, with an understanding of which customers the organisation is serving to meet its business objectives.

Understanding the customer base is required for identifying both customers’ service requirements and their preferences for particular channels. Customer segmentation allows for customers to be divided into manageable segments that have distinct characteristics. Through the identification of these characteristics, the needs of a particular customer set can be determined and services then tailored to meet those needs. For illustrative purposes, the demographic variable of age is used in the segmentation examples contained in this document. However, it should be noted that this is not intended to infer a preference for any segmentation approach. Indeed, a number of different criteria are available to segment customer markets. Criteria available for customer segmentation include: need or benefit sought; geographic (e.g. region, city size); demographic (e.g. age, gender, income, occupation); psychographic (e.g. lifestyle, personality); behavioral (e.g. usage, loyalty); and access (e.g. internet channel, face-to-face, mail, telephone).

Each organisation will use different criteria to segment their customers, based on both needs and preferences. Each segment will have unique needs and preferences for service delivery, and the ‘deal’ for each may be different. Organisations should restrict themselves to identifying and focusing on a few main segments initially, otherwise the cost to manage each segment will exceed the value created by offering different service and access routes.

As highlighted in Figure 6, many customers’ needs will span the services provided by several public sector organisations, for example the ‘unemployed 18 year old’ is likely to require welfare benefits and employment advice. Effectiveness of service delivery from a customer’s perspective may therefore require that public sector bodies have an understanding not only of the segments they serve, but also of segments served by other public sector organisations, the services provided and the channels used.

Step 2: Determine content requirements based on segment needs, nature of service and channel constraints

As outlined in section 3, public sector bodies face decisions about the delivery of content to different devices, including:

- formatting content to cope with the capabilities of different devices
- designing content to meet the needs of customers
- sourcing content
- managing content
- branding

In deciding which content to format, it is important to note that not all content should necessarily be made available on all devices. The cost implications for re-purposing content for each channel can be significant and may force some organisations to prioritise which devices are to be used. Explicit decisions are required on whether devices have specific content generation, or whether generic content can be used. The key to understanding which content to re-purpose is dependent on device constraints and the projected volume of users based on customer preferences for both device and service. This will enable organisations to prioritise content for the most appropriate devices.
Designing content requires organisations to account for both customer needs and the technological capabilities of the various devices. However, these are not mutually exclusive. For example, a web page with a rich combination of video, audio and text will only be appealing to consumers if they have the necessary bandwidth or devices which support the content to provide fast, easy access and navigation. Content-rich web pages are more likely to be appealing to customers who have PCs with high processing power and ADSL or cable modem internet connections than to consumers with older-style PCs and dial-up analogue modem internet connections using PSTN lines.

Decisions surrounding the design of content should therefore account for customer preferences and the technological capabilities and surrounding bandwidth limitations of the access devices being used by customers.

Public sector bodies also need an understanding of the opportunities and potential challenges surrounding the different content-sourcing options. Organisations will need to make business decisions on whether to source content for channels directly from content providers or from government content sources. The key criteria underpinning organisations’ decisions on where to source content should be based around customer requirements and the economics of the different content-sourcing options available.

In the sourcing of content, public sector bodies need to consider:

- whether to source content through the government gateway, UK online portal or direct from government or department content servers
- avoiding over-reliance on a single supplier - thereby avoiding dependence
- potential to co-ordinate needs between public sector organisations to increase bargaining power and reduce the cost of content
- ensuring content is presented in the best possible format (refer to the above discussion on re-authoring)

Lastly, decisions surrounding content management need to balance the objectives of providing accessible, timely and relevant information to customers against the costs of different content management options.

**Step 3: Determine capabilities of devices to support transaction requirements of services**

Once decisions around content have been taken, it is necessary to understand the devices’ capability to support particular transactions. At this stage, an organisation must understand the full nature of the transactions required. This should also include an assessment of future services and the transaction implications to ensure the channel strategy has sufficient flexibility.

The capability of devices to deliver content varies significantly, from PCs displaying elaborate web pages, to digital TV screens that are only capable of lower resolution and so require longer viewing distances, to the four lines of text on a WAP phone, to public access kiosks with distinctive navigation and layout tailored to their users. It should be noted, however, that device capabilities are improving rapidly.

Devices have various drivers and inhibitors, as outlined in the Appendix, which determine their suitability to support particular transactions. The Device Capability Matrix in Figure 8 presents the major devices that we believe will be prominent for the support of public services over the next three years. This can be used as a starting point by strategic planners in public sector organisations in considering what services their organisation could offer to customers across different access devices.
To ascertain the effectiveness of delivery, each device in Figure 8 is rated against its capability to support a type of communication, along the dimensions of:

- channel of communication – web, voice, face-to-face or print
- supported media – visual, audio or paper
- dialogue – mono-directional or interactive
- temporal – does the communication occur in real-time or serially (like the post)

In addition to device capability to support different types of communication, identification of devices should also consider their quality and reliability in delivering electronic services.

Private sector organisations have found that it is better to have a simple service that is reliable, than one that has more functionality but is unreliable or difficult to use, as customers will not use an electronic channel again if they have a poor initial experience.
At their highest level, communications can be separated into three types: publish, interact and transact. In the conceptual framework in Figure 9, the left-hand side maps these communication types to the devices to indicate their capability. It can be seen that the online PCs and kiosks, along with the traditional phone, post and face-to-face channels have the capability to support the widest range of services.

**Step 4: Map devices against target segments for service delivery, based on customer preferences**

The next step in the decision framework is to understand how each customer segment can best receive the services provided. This requires mapping the channel devices to the segment preferences. Figure 9 also illustrates the customer preferences for the take-up of each device. Propensity based on age group is shown for illustrative purposes only. The dimensions of segmentation defined in Step 1 should be used when developing the channel strategy.
Figure 10 illustrates an alternative way of mapping customer preferences by viewing the customer in the environment in which they interact with the organisation. Again, this uses segmentation by age for illustrative purposes and identifies the predominant devices likely to be used.

**Figure 10. Device acceptability 2001 and 2005 (projected) providing pervasive access to government services**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age segments</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15–24</td>
<td>PC, game console, fixed phone</td>
<td>Mobile phone, game console, laptop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25–34</td>
<td>PC, fixed phone</td>
<td>Mobile phone, laptop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35–44</td>
<td>PC, fixed phone, digital TV</td>
<td>Mobile phone, PDA, laptop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45–54</td>
<td>Fixed phone</td>
<td>Mobile phone, PDA, laptop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55–64</td>
<td>Fixed phone</td>
<td>Mobile phone, PDA, laptop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65+</td>
<td>Fixed phone</td>
<td>Mobile phone, PDA, laptop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Step 5: Assess options to use intermediaries and choose appropriate partner(s)

In this step, public sector bodies should determine whether they are the most appropriate organisation for the delivery of particular services, or whether an intermediary (private or public sector) is more applicable. The test for this is whether the organisation or intermediary is able to provide improved customer service and/or value for money for the services being delivered based on an understanding of the customers’ needs.

As outlined in section 4, in choosing intermediaries, organisations should consider:

- a cost benefit analysis of intermediaries
- there is no preferential selection of segmented customers
- issues surrounding bundling and cross-selling of services
- the delivery of value for money and improved customer service by encouraging a competitive and innovative intermediary market
- taking decisions which do not impede the market
- providing a clear win-win-win for government, intermediaries and customers
- branding, sponsorship, advertising and customer data ownership issues
Considerations in developing a channel strategy

This section has described a high-level approach to developing a channel strategy using a decision framework. However, specific channel decisions should not be taken in isolation. Organisations should consider the wider context of service delivery to understand implications of potential inter-channel conflict/synergies both with the organisation’s other channels and between channels used by other public sector bodies; for example, to what extent will demand for call centre access change with the introduction of public kiosks? These considerations are an important aspect for the provision of joined-up services oriented around customers’ needs, capacity planning and for the efficient sourcing of channels.

The Office of the e-Envoy recognises it has an essential role to play in identifying synergies in organisations utilising intermediaries and providing joined-up services, and will proactively identify areas where co-operation between organisations will add value. As part of this, the Office of the e-Envoy will reconstitute the working groups created for the development of this Channels framework (refer to supporting action, Guideline 2).

Finally, experience in the private sector demonstrates that the degree of organisational change to support the customer-centric delivery of services should not be underestimated. As identified in section 2, it is recommended that public sector organisations conduct a capability audit in conjunction with the channel strategy to understand the required skills to develop, use and maintain new channels. Training to bridge a skills gap should be an integral part of the programme to implement the channels.
6. Next steps

The government recognises that the successful implementation of channel strategies in the public sector is key to delivering the full potential of electronic services and positioning the UK as a leading knowledge economy.

However, reaping the full benefits of this opportunity will require commitment from all concerned.

The following table summarises the way ahead and the 10 guidelines and supporting actions contained within the document. It also indicates roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders for each action.

In acknowledgement of the fast-changing environment, we must continue to be responsive to changes in technology, markets and the demands of citizens and their representatives. We therefore aim to update this table regularly to reflect work in progress (refer to supporting action, Guideline 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Guideline</th>
<th>Supporting action</th>
<th>Who</th>
<th>By when</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 1</td>
<td>All public sector bodies should have a channel strategy for service delivery to customers. This should form an integral part of their business strategies and support wider government policies on universal access, modernising government and social inclusion. (p.12)</td>
<td>Develop and review channel strategy as an integral part of the business strategy in light of the framework's guidelines</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Share leading practice on channel deployment in public sector bodies on GovTalk</td>
<td>Office of the e-Envoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Review the content of the Guideline framework and update next steps on GovTalk</td>
<td>Office of the e-Envoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 2</td>
<td>Public sector organisations should co-ordinate their channel strategies with other organisations around a thorough understanding of customer needs to provide best value and joined-up services. (p.13)</td>
<td>Co-ordinate public sector channel strategies to facilitate the identification of synergies</td>
<td>Office of the e-Envoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Reconstitute the working group created for the development of the Channels framework to monitor and oversee co-ordination between channel strategies</td>
<td>Office of the e-Envoy and Channels Working Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identify opportunities for channel co-operation with other public sector bodies using the working group as a channel for communication</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 3</td>
<td>Channel strategies should reflect the balance between customer and business needs and demonstrate clear value to both the organisation and its customers, underpinned by an understanding of end-to-end delivery costs. (p.14)</td>
<td>Apply a structured approach to demonstrating the value of chosen channel strategies by using the proposed channel decision framework or alternative frameworks/tools</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 4</td>
<td>To encourage take-up of electronic channels, organisations should first build customers' confidence and trust in those channels. This will require the promotion of the benefits of using those channels, reassurance about privacy and security, and access to online and offline personal assistance. (p.15)</td>
<td>Ensure the marketing/communications plan includes promotional messages around: • benefits of using electronic channels • privacy/security reassurance • commitment to supporting electronic services with personal assistance</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 5</td>
<td>Public sector organisations should consider in the implementation of electronic channels how to use and combination of different media content which allows for the delivery of more powerful marketing messages and encourages greater customer access and usage of electronic channels. (p.15)</td>
<td>Aim to present content to customers in the most attractive and enticing way by considering the use and combination of different media in designing content format. This goal should form part of the marketing/communications plan and needs to be included in briefings to all relevant parties, e.g. web design agencies.</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 6</td>
<td>Public sector organisations should use a mix of electronic devices and traditional channels to ensure customer accessibility, which needs to be managed together for effective and efficient service delivery. This channel mix should change over time with greater content of electronic channels and advances in technology. (p.17)</td>
<td>Develop a content framework to assist organisations with issues of formatting content on devices.</td>
<td>Office of the e-Envoy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 7</td>
<td>A choice of devices – PCs, telephones, digital TV, mobile devices and kiosks – should be considered to create and support an infrastructure to facilitate pervasive online access, subject to device suitability to support transactions. (p.20)</td>
<td>Consider a choice of devices when devising channel strategy to facilitate pervasive online access.</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 8</td>
<td>Organisations should reflect customer preferences in their channel strategies to promote social inclusion, so that cost, skill and lack of confidence are not impediments to channel use. Telephones, digital TV and public kiosks should be considered because of their availability across all groups in society. (p.20)</td>
<td>Develop high-level customer segments based on customer needs.</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline 9</td>
<td>Public sector bodies should consider partnering with intermediaries to create opportunities to open up government and, where applicable, they provide a more appropriate route for delivering improved customer service and value for money. (p.22)</td>
<td>Ensure intermediaries are considered as an alternative service delivery route in channel strategy.</td>
<td>All public sector bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guideline</td>
<td>Supporting action</td>
<td>Who</td>
<td>By when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guideline 10</strong></td>
<td>Define standards for interfacing with government to encourage competition and maximise customer choice</td>
<td>Office of the e-Envoy and all public sector bodies</td>
<td>Q4 2002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Partnership decisions should seek to open up government and not exclude competition in the intermediaries market, which is necessary to drive innovation, improved customer service and value for money. Public sector bodies should define the standards for interfacing with government as part of the e-GIF process, to encourage competition and maximise customer choice. (p.24)
# Appendix. Drivers and inhibitors of electronic media and devices

## Government and customer drivers

**Internet**
- Available 24 hours, 7 days a week
- Ability to present large volumes of information
- Ability to converge with other different media such as voice over internet and video streaming
- Integrates with other channels such as call centres
- Accessible via a number of devices, such as PCs, interactive TV, mobile devices, gaming consoles
- Wide range of services provided, e.g. online shopping, online banking, software downloads, information provision

**Devices**
- High penetration rate (est. 60–75 per cent of UK households will have digital TV by 2005)
- Broad appeal across many social groups
- Increased bandwidth providing capacity to serve minority interest groups and provide data-intensive services
- Wide variety of services to accommodate specific needs of citizen

## Government and customer inhibitors

**Internet**
- Currently predominantly targets high-income households via PC
- Connectivity via phone line provides poor performance and can be costly
- Concerns around security of personal information

**Digital TV**
- Conflicting standards require content ‘repurposing’ for each type of set-top box
- Screen display limits range of applications
- Cultural barrier – entertainment vs. business
- High operating costs charged by walled garden operators
- Satellite and terrestrial broadcasting require use of telephone line for return path

**Mobile devices (incl. phone)**
- Screen size restricts range of applications and information that can be viewed
- Limited processing power and memory
- Bandwidth constraints (although alleviated with introduction of third-generation technology)
- Inadequate security
- Restricted input capabilities
- User running costs

**PC**
- Relatively high costs may lead to social exclusion
- Limited bandwidth reduces current functionality

**Kiosks**
- Potential conflicts around government and commercial branding
- Lack of privacy—partially mitigated through deployment of video booths
- Potentially expensive channel for providers

**Gaming console**
- High-speed Internet access is required for full functionality
- Mass appeal may be limited to the 16–35 age group
- Cultural barrier of conducting government business on an essentially entertainment device
- Inconsistent platforms may limit applications and thus attraction of console

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- **Available 24 hours, 7 days a week**
- **Ability to present large volumes of information**
- **Ability to converge with other different media such as voice over internet and video streaming**
- **Integrates with other channels such as call centres**
- **Access to a number of devices, such as PCs, interactive TV, mobile devices, gaming consoles**
- **Wide range of services provided, e.g. online shopping, online banking, software downloads, information provision**
### Media

#### Government and customer drivers
- Email will account for 30 per cent of global contact by 2004. High growth due to low cost to user and wide availability.
- Easy to implement.
- Email nine times more popular than post.
- Wide availability of free web-based emails.
- Usage driven by: convenience, inform – no need to discuss, need to send attachments, documented audit trail.

#### Government and customer inhibitors
- Difficult to effectively engage customers via email.
- Manual response is expensive – time to respond (average 12 minutes), agent written skills and typing proficiency, message management.
- Prevalence of spam emails ‘hides’ valuable communications.

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### Email

- High user familiarisation and penetration of TV in the UK.
- Highly attractive medium (video, audio).
- Potentially provides effective interactive capability for inclusive delivery of government services.
- Opportunities to personalise and localise content.

### TV channel

- Can be linked to text over voice – for delivery of specialised audio information while on the move.
- Multi-session chats are possible with one agent controlling three to four sessions at one time.

### Messaging

- Offers a greater level of support to users – ‘call me’ button, voice support for web application form completion.
- Reduced organisational operational costs vis-à-vis fixed voice lines.

### Telephone

- High penetration of fixed and mobile telephones in the UK, providing familiarity with call centre support.
- Interaction with citizens offers opportunities to gather user information and personal data.
- Call centres are a well-established support channel with available and well-tested technologies and skills.
- Provides a higher level of personal interaction than electronic channels and can effectively be used to complement these.
- Voice assistance for advice and help in filling out application forms, etc.

### Voice over internet

- Can be streamed to multiple users in parallel.
- Compatible with a number of devices, including kiosks, internet, interactive TV, etc.
- Provides a visual aid for support functions.
- Allows visual interaction with users.

### Video streaming

- High penetration of analogue radio in the UK, especially within particular segments such as over-65s.
- Digital radio will allow more targeted programming on special interest topics and two-way interaction with listener.
- Analogue and digital radio accessed via a range of devices, e.g. car radio, home, via PC, via iDTV.
- Familiarity with analogue radio.
- Ease of accessibility via a range of devices.

### Radio channel

- Transaction process is currently restricted to publishing.
- Digital radio take-up has been slow in the UK due to the cost associated with receivers.
- Currently digital radio is not interactive.