

**Ministry of Finance
General Accountant Office
“E-government” Initiative**

**A Three-years Master Plan
“E-Government” Initiative
2003-2005**

“... together, by cleverly using technology, we can guarantee that by the year 2005 we will look back to this time of pre “e-government” age, and it will seem distant and out-dated just as the times before cellular phones and the fax machines look to us today.”

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Executive Summary

The ministry of finance (general accountant) with the guidance of the inter-office steering committee headed by the Prime-minister's office general manager, are interested in developing and forwarding the "e-government" program, which presents the government preparation towards a computerized world by creating virtual service counters that are always available to the public. The "e-government" program will significantly contribute to develop, strengthen and improve the following connections:

- Government to Citizen.
- Government to business.
- Government to government.

The program is based on government resolutions that were made in the subject since the beginning of the 90's, dealing with the need to improve governmental services to the citizen, to public bodies and to businesses by using information technology.

The "e-government" program is a natural and direct continuation to the Ministry of finance activities, starting with the governmental Internet committee (1997), the "Tehila" project (1998) through recent years' projects among which the "Shoham" (governmental payments service) the "Merkava" (ERP system to government offices) and "Tamar" (public key infrastructure).

"E-government" program deals with technological infrastructures set-up, applications and contents that serve the general public: citizens, businesses and public bodies that contribute to a more efficient work, cooperation and strengthen the connections with government offices. Furthermore, the program emphasizes the need to narrow the digital divide and to give population classes the opportunity to use "e-government" program services.

The ministry of finance is the primary factor among the government offices that is capable to push and apply this program. Other advances to forward "e-government" initiations through other channels ran into lack of infrastructures, knowledge and skilled manpower problems. The general accountant responsible for all information systems' infrastructures in the government believes in its ability to execute the program, mainly thanks to the already existing infrastructure, the knowledge and the skilled manpower existing in its midst.

A synchronized and agreed-upon activity of the government offices, in a frame of a **three-year master plan**, will significantly advance the "e-government" program to achievements both from the local perspective -- aiming to improve the services given by government offices, to bring improvement and efficiency to the connection with the public and commercial sectors -- as well as in an international perspective, reviewing Israel's position in this area in comparison to other western countries.

We think that acting in a frame of an **agreed working plan** will better forward the development of "e-government" program.

1. Historical Background

1.1 Term definition: “e-government”

There is no single Hebrew definition for “e-government”. The Hebrew term “Mimshal”-Zamin was first presented in a report made by the sub committee of computer and information, in the 1997 Knesset, as a description for a new policy in Israeli civil service: “The new policy will be called “Mimshal-Zamin/e-Government”, which means, in the contents of the information revolution, leveraging the information technology to improve, make efficient and strengthen the mutual connection between the public and the government”.

“E-government” is the government version to the term “e-Business”, developed in the last decade. A broader definition to the term is: “using technology to fulfill government roles”. A more accurate and realistic definition would be:

Providing governmental information and services, using technology as the communication channel to the citizen

1.2 Various levels of “e-government”

“E-government” is an abstract term that may be realized in many different ways. There are several methods to evaluate the availability level of “e-government”; most of them are based on a step-by-step, phase-forwarding model. A common model, based on a developing process of a complete “e-government”, includes 5 phases²:

- First phase – **Publishing** governmental information by the government.
- Second phase – **Communicating with the citizen** via e-mail and other electronic instruments.
- Third phase – Providing ways to **perform activities**, such as payments, forms filling etc.
- Forth phase – Personalization of services.
- Fifth phase – Complete organizational change, enabling handling of fully on-lined services and end-to-end activity performance including on-line citizen recognition.

Recently, in a report reviewing the status of “e-government” in the world³, the U.N. used a similar scale, trying to be more general (to fit less developed countries). In this scale there are also five phases of “e-government” relating to the status of each country and the services it provides:

- Emerging – Existence of several static governmental sites with limited information.
- Enhanced – Content and information are updated in an on-going way.
- Interactive – Governmental sites allow downloading of forms and contacting governmental bodies (e-mail and web).
- Transactional – Governmental sites enable on-line payments.
- Seamless – Full integration of all governmental services on the Internet¹. Any activity with government bodies is available through the web.

Evaluating “e-government” services from a user perspective (the general public) requires the evaluation of every single service. The basic need of the average citizen is to be able to perform a certain activity with the government. “e-government” services can address this need in the following levels:

1. **Providing initial information** – Explanation on laws, regulations and private rights, service centers, opening times, items required to receive a service, previous conditions, forms samples, etc. – this information may prevent mistakes, long waits for answers and useless travels to the service centers.
2. **Partial service** – Providing an option to partially shorten a process such as: downloading forms to fill and send, using e-mail for on-line approach and any mean that will enable the citizen to perform parts of the process without coming to the service center – in this case the technology acts as a mediator between the citizen and the clerk performing the activity. Though this service is usually slower than the one in the service center, it saves the citizen the need to travel to the service center and to depend on limited opening times.
3. **On-line service** – Performing the entire service on-line – Technology allows for self-service, immediate response and 24-hours availability.

The objective of the “e-government” program described in this document in each of the above describes levels is to reach on-line service, entire organizational change and seamless government.

1.3 Israeli government resolutions in the last decade regarding information technology

During the last decade Israeli governments were aware of the information technology development and in a number of resolutions, made from the beginning of the 90's until recently, tried to harness this technology to improve the civil service.

In 1989 the government was presented with the “Kubersky” committee conclusions that include a recommendation “to make a quick move toward full computerization of the governmental administration as the primary method to make it efficient and to prepare a comprehensive program in the subject”. The committee thought at the time, that the civil service commissioner should be appointed responsible to forward this subject and he established the “Civil Administration Computerization” committee which conclusions were published in 1993 to include:

- Increasing national computerization level and using resources to provide efficient service to public establishments and to the public sector.
- Provide the general public, including private businesses and establishments a monitored access through computerized means to existing visible governmental offices' information.
- Set a policy and tools of operation to coordinate between the governmental and public systems that deal with the different aspects of the subject, mainly to coordinate between the ministry of finance, budget department, general accountant, ministry of communications and computerized system in the public sector.

- Appoint the offices' general managers responsible for the execution of the computerization, and appoint an inter-office general managers' committee for coordination and monitoring.

In 1997, the deputy to the general accountant, Mr. Yizhak Klein together with the General accountant computer unit headed by Mr. Yizhak Cohen, established the Governmental Internet committee. The committee's goal was to set working regulations for building governmental Internet sites and to assimilate information technology in governmental offices by setting appropriate working regulations, conducting sample projects and preparing manpower training plans. The committee worked in coordination with the government offices through a steering committee that gathered regularly. One of the committee's conclusions was the need to establish a central governmental infrastructure to provide secured Internet services to the government. The outcome of the discussions that took place in the general accountant between heads of the departments brought the initiation of the "Tehila" project (Governmental Secure Internet infrastructure for the information age) that began operation in 1997.

The governmental Internet committee's activity in the ministry of finance in addition to the Knesset special sub-committee for computerization and information (that published a special report on the subject during 1997), brought a government resolution on "Israel's preparation to the information age" in September 8th, 1997 in which the following was decided –

- Initiate a legislation change in order to lead Israel's preparation to the information age.
- Bring efficiency to the market and the public sector by using information technologies.
- Work to provide governmental services through the Internet in order to increase service level.
- Build a site for governmental services on the Internet (Government portal).
- Define an affirmative standard for personal identification and security methods (smart card).
- Initiate a pioneer plan in the area of information technology.
- Establish a public council for computerization and information.

In three government resolutions (two from March 22 1998 and on from June 25 1998) that were accepted through the ministers' committee for science and technology and were added to the government protocol, the following was determined:

- Government offices and their affiliate units will start operating electronic mail boxes for the public in the minister's chambers, deputy minister, general manager, spokesman, public complaints and the post unit through "Tehila" project.
- Government offices will be obliged to build Internet sites to publish their information.
- The governmental forms of all government office will be circulated through the Internet as well.

- **The “Tehila” project is responsible for the infrastructure, counseling and training including information security needed to execute the government resolutions.**

In the government protocol from May 12 2002 the resolutions accepted were a direct continuation to the previous resolutions setting government offices activity in “e-government” program to include:

- Building a comprehensive infrastructure to realize “e-government” services in Israel through “**Tehila**” project.
- Building a payments system and a central on-line products acquisition system for the public (“**Shoham**”).
- Establishing identification and electronic signature in the government through “**Tamar**” project including the use of forms system for the citizen and a secured connection to governmental databases.
- Establishing support systems to assimilate the use of information technology in peripheral areas and closing the digital divide through the “**Lehava**” project.
- Building telephone-based support centers for public that cannot use information technology.
- Establishing the realization of “e-government” program inside government offices through the “**Merkava**” project that will make efficient, upgrade and simplify the information flow inside the government.
- Building a governmental intra-net that will allow transfer of secured information between government offices.
- Forming an inter-office steering committee headed by the Prime Minister’s general manager, participated by government offices’ management to apply the decision.

In addition to this decision, in October 28 2002 another decision was made in the ministers’ committee for science and technology meeting to establish a “national committee for the information technology society”. In this committee it was decided to act to forward the following issues:

- Forming a committee that will be a national level guiding body to leverage information technology in order to achieve social and economical objectives in Israel.
- The committee will set a policy in a national perspective and will be a coordinator and an advisor in matters of decisions and policy-setting in different intersection in the country.
- The committee will upgrade Israel to advanced countries’ standards and establish Israel as one of the world’s leaders in this area.
- Head of the committee will be “e-government” program manager in the ministry of treasury.

The minister of finance appointed Mr. Yizhak Cohen to head the program.

1.4 Five layers model for “e-government” program

The five layers model divides the “e-government” layout technologically, and describes the entire systems required for the realization of the “e-government” program.

The layers are laid horizontally. Each layer deals with a certain depth level along the line of communication between the citizen and the government.

The citizen is at the head of the pyramid. The lower the level is - so it contains a more infrastructure technologies. In spite of their relative distance from the end-user, they are the foundation allowing the required functionality.

The aspiration for excellence in the government service that includes upgrade of infrastructure governmental information systems requires parallel handling in all five layers.

The five layers can be divided to three leading ones:

- **Inter-governmental infrastructure** including the government information systems and the communication net that connects the different offices (layers 1 and 2)
- **Information systems infrastructure for the public** including “e-government” applications and the communication platform connecting between the inter-governmental information systems and the Internet (layers 3 and 4).
- **A communication infrastructure to the citizens** that includes training, assimilation, identification systems and smart card (layer 5).

Following is a description of the layers:

- **Layer 1 – Inter-governmental communication infrastructure:** The basis to the government’s ability to take care of the citizen is the existence of an inter-governmental communication infrastructure that will allow information flow within the government and will give the different governmental bodies the ability to provide services under the same umbrella. Without such infrastructure, each office is forced to work independently, and the level of service is directly damaged. Both for the lack of unity as well as for the fact that not all offices will forward “e-government” in the desired pace.
- **Layer 2 – Horizontal applications:** An inter-governmental layer of horizontal applications and databases in the government. This is the governmental ERP, covering a variety of subjects, which are in the heart of the organization: budget, logistics, manpower etc. This integration of the information and the systems enables a unified terminology and accessibility needed to reach full integration of services.
- **Layer 3 – Infrastructure for the citizen:** This layer includes communication-infrastructure as well as technologies that allow for certain governmental-systems transparency, while maintaining information security, in order to communicate with the citizen. The existence of layers 1 and 2 enables usage of an all-governmental, unified infrastructure for communication with the citizen.

- **Layer 4 – Applications for citizen service:** This layer includes the layout of “e-government” applications, through which the citizen can use on-line sites and perform activities in them. These applications are especially built for public service and are adjusted to its needs. Some of the applications are central but most of them are office-specific.
- **Layer 5 – Support and assimilation:** A layer that consists technologies and physical resources required for education and assimilation of the technology in challenged populations. This Layer is responsible for closing the digital gap and the actual usage of the systems by the common citizen.

1.5 “E-government” program status in Israel at the end of 2002

Israel was included in two separate, prestigious surveys. In the “World Market” report Israel was positioned in the seventh place and in a UN report in the seventeenth place⁵. These positions give a comparable indication to the activity in this area in Israel and to the great progress that was made in the last few years.

This progress was achieved mainly due to the great activity in the subject in 1997-2002 in the ministry of finance and other government offices.

Nevertheless there is still a lot to be done to promote “e-government” program, and it requires infrastructure unification in the government offices and greater availability of governmental information systems to the general public. In addition an investment has to be made to promote the public awareness to the subject of “e-government” services and the ability of all population classes to conduct wise usage of the information technologies developed by the government. A coordinated activity by the governmental offices in a frame of a **three-years master plan** will contribute to a significant progress of the “e-government” program in the coming years and to achievements in this area both from a local perspective and from an international one.

A coordinated plan can make the service given to the public by the government more efficient and to improve the work with the public and commercial sectors.

2. Objectives

2.1 Customers

The program has several customer groups:

- a. First and foremost – the general public that will be able to use the products of the program to improve the connection with governmental offices and improve the service level received.
- b. Large public bodies, big businesses, small businesses and organizations that will be able to improve the work and the time required communicating and transferring information to and from governmental offices.
- c. Public servants of all government offices will enjoy an upgrade in their working environment.
- d. Information systems managers in the offices and content leaders in different areas will be able to establish services to the citizen in a quick, cheap and convenient way.

In the “needs definition” phase for the master plan, the customers’ representative will be Mr. Yizhak Cohen, “e-government” program manager.

In the detailed characterization and execution phase, an application specialist will be defined to each project separately and in coordination with the offices participating in the project.

2.2 Goals

The program goals are as follows:

- Significant progress in communication and transferring of information between the government and the citizen, between governmental offices and businesses while making the services **more efficient**.
- Creating a **unified interface** to the on-line services provided by the government to the public, institutions and businesses.
- **Cost reduction** by unification of infrastructures and preventing multiple developments of systems in different offices.
- Keeping government **data bases and information nets secured** in one of the world’s highest security level.
- Moving **20% of citizen and businesses activity** with the government in the coming three years, to “e-government” program applications.
- **Internal upgrade** of governmental information systems to create an advanced computerized infrastructure in coordination with “e-government” program.
- **Narrow the digital divide** by providing support to the population that is not exposed to information technologies.

2.3 Problems in the existing situation

Old infrastructures and information systems in the government:

- Old governmental information systems, that do not communicate with each other and are based on internal developments hard to maintain, causing duplication of information between the systems.
- Difficulty to synchronize the systems with each other.
- Difficulty to maintain the systems.

Difficulty in locating governmental on-line information:

- The governmental information is not fully accessible to the citizen and businesses. The government portal that is used as the main point of entrance is old. There are no horizontal search engines and poor access to services, forms etc.
- Too few services allow citizens and businesses to receive personal information from governmental information systems.

Limited number of governmental payment and acquisition systems that allow on-line payment transactions between the citizen and the government (taxes, fees and sale of governmental services):

- Many governmental services are not offered due to lack of ability to collect payments for them.
- Citizens’ time is wasted in the existing processes of payment of taxes, fees and payment for services.

There are no identification methods for secured activity in the digital media between the government and the citizens and between the government and businesses.

The digital gap between the weak classes and the strong classes is getting wider in terms of use of information technology and “e-government” services.

- Low accessibility to information technology in areas of low socio-economic status.
- Lack of knowledge, training and support of citizens from low socio-economic status on how to use information technologies.

Failures in exposing governmental information to the general public in a secured way:

- Information systems are connected through un-secured networks.
- There is no unification in the standards used by the different offices, as to the way to connect their databases to the Internet (some of the offices still use private suppliers).

1.4 Integration with organizational objectives

- Increasing computerization in a national level and using resources to provide efficient services to public institutions and the public sector.
- Giving monitored access to the general public including private businesses and institutions, to the public information existing in government offices.
- Make government sector efficient in order to provide better and quicker services to citizens and businesses.
- Increasing quantity of the accessible governmental information to the general public. Providing simple tools to publish and retrieve the information.
- Concentrate the governmental information in known entry points for higher accessibility to the information by the public.
- Broader abilities to sell services and products by government offices using electronic channels, and providing citizens with the ability to pay taxes and fees electronically.
- Content and horizontal relation to the information rather than office relation. It is the public interest to receive the entire information on a certain subject rather than falling between different offices’ responsibilities.
- Increased connection and information sharing between government offices to improve the work and the coordination.
- Information sharing between government offices using technological tools. Cooperation between government offices in application development and use of existing ones.

1.5 Connection to an annual working plan

The document will be the basis to a three-years working plan in the area of “e-government” for 2003-2005, depending on technological and organizational changes.

2. Application

2.0 General

The purpose of the “e-government” program is government preparation toward a computerized world by creating virtual service counters, always available to the public.

This program does not encircle the entire subjects included in the area of “e-government”. Its purpose is to promote the main issues that can create a leverage to promote the entire subject in government offices.

An outcome of this program may be a complementary action of government offices in the area of “e-government” according to the models and standards that will be set by this program.

The goals of the program emphasize the synergy between similar services throughout the government, and allow reaching a level of service that could not be otherwise achieved by the government offices independently.

The master plan is based on the program to promote “e-government” model consolidated in the ministry of finance and known as “The Five Layers Model”.

2.1 Current status and objectives for the next three years

2.1.1 Governmental computerization infrastructure – “Merkava”

The huge gap between the need for horizontal systems and the lack of them in the government brought the ministry of finance to initiate the “Merkava” project. This project is the largest governmental computerized project aimed to form the face of computerized governmental offices in the next decade.

“Merkava” project represents the frame plan, aimed to bring improvement of service to the citizen and in government activities quality, through improvement of work processes and the computerized infrastructures serving it. The project answers the horizontal demands of systems, today operated by different governmental units, through integration with the designated systems of each office. The first subjects that will be addressed in the first phase of the project will be financial issues, human resources management and logistics as well as managerial systems (of the Israeli police and public housing). These applications are lead and managed by the state’s civil service, the Israeli police and various bodies in the ministry of treasury.

The project will allow resources allocation that could not be allocated until now in order to open the system to the citizen. As opposed to the current structure in which a separate characterization and development is required for each office interface separately (which was done carefully) a one-time investment will enable to open the entire governmental system in a unified way and in a high level of service.

A unified infrastructure will enable each office to achieve better integration between different areas that were computerized separately and without unification. This will allow better management of the office, better system

ability to grow and adjust to office changes and improved capabilities of offering centralized open information to the public. None of the offices possessed the ability to create such unification on its own resources.

The project is being set up these days, following a large tender out of which the technological infrastructure of SAP was selected.

The system will be first applied in the ministry of finance offices and its affiliated management systems as well as in the ministry of science offices.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Construction and adjustment of the SAP system to the specific government needs.
- Assimilation of the “Merkava” system in 40% of government offices.
- Creating interfaces to the applications included in the “e-government” program.
- Upgrading the central information systems in the government.

2.1.2 Connecting government offices to the Internet (“Tehila”)

The “Tehila” project was established in 1997 to provide the various offices with two primary services:

- a. Providing government users with high security access to the Internet services from their individual workstations. Until “Tehila” was set up, the connection of government offices to the Internet risked the inter-government information systems. The solutions varied from a single Internet station in the library, through providing 2 computers to an entitled employee, and up to a direct connection to the Internet, risking the office network information security (and of the entire governmental network).
- b. Building a secured infrastructure to host government sites that will provide information and services to the public, in a secured “server farm”. Information security devices will protect the data. Until “Tehila” was set up, the sites were hosted by private ISPs, at a very low security level. Some of them were actually breached and damaged. (Six governmental sites that were hosted at private ISPs were breached during 2001)

The primary motive for the “Tehila” project was the need to protect governmental databases in the Internet and prevent cyber-terror attacks.

“Tehila” allows its visitors to be a part of the “e-government” revolution, while maintaining maximum-security level.

In the current state “Tehila” has limited redundancy level. Furthermore there are still a large number of infrastructures and horizontal services that need to be added to “Tehila” in order to increase its security level on one hand, and the level of services provided on the other.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Dealing with cyber-terror attacks and breaching attempts to the governmental information system by organization and foreign governments.
- Adding redundancy infrastructures and enlarge the systems in order to comply “e-government” program’s objectives.
- Adding the required services needed to realize “e-government” program (“The Safe”, “Tamar” and “Merkava”).

2.1.3 On-line payments service (Shoham”)

In the western world the issue of electronic payments through the Internet is developing in a fast pace. This capability enables the user to purchase products and transfer funds without wasting time in waiting or searching. In most of the advanced countries in the world it is possible to pay taxes and fees through the Internet as well as to purchase services and information that the government offers its citizens. These capabilities enable shorter waiting time for the citizen and allow the government to offer many services that were not possible before.

“Shoham” was developed during 2001 and 2002 and today includes some 20 services out of which 5 are significant (fines payments, license renewals and VAT payments). During 2002 a sum of NIS 250,000,000 was collected through the payment system. In order to increase the number of services provided to the citizens and businesses, the project must be further developed, both technologically – by developing suitable software and hardware infrastructures, as well as by increasing the number of services offered to the citizen through it.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Increase the number of services so that every government office/affiliate unit will have a digital payment infrastructure, with strong emphasis on central services in the government (such as tax departments).
- Develop designated services for businesses and large organizations.
- Increase commerce through the service up to 20% of the total business activity conducted between the public and the government.
- Support electronic commerce in large magnitudes and prepare a pay-off mechanism that will allow on-line payment with all banking establishments while dealing with information security problems.
- Add services such as – support for digital products, combining with forms and tenders projects, combining with smart card project to identify the payer and pull out personal payments.

2.1.4 Smart card (“Tamar”)

Physical identity cards that citizens hold today and used as a national identifier do not suit the information age, and cannot be used to provide services that require secured, logic identification for governmental databases.

For the “e-government” services age there is a need for an identification method that will allow:

- Remote identification through information technology, needed to use governmental information databases and receiving sensitive, personal information.
- Executing transactions that require identifications.
- Signature capability on documents and remote confirmations.

In order to provide advanced “e-government” services to citizens and businesses, and in view of the progress in the electronic signature law, the “Tamar” project was set-up. The project was meant to allow citizens, civil servants and businesses to receive services and perform activities with the government offices in a secured and convenient way.

The project includes the following:

- An identity card based on smart card and electronic signature to every citizen (“Telem” project)
- Worker certificate based on smart card and electronic signature to all government workers (“Tamuz” project).
- Smart card-based certificate to business owners, to enable receiving information and conducting activities with governmental bodies.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Issuing new identity cards based on smart card to 60% of Israeli citizens.
- Issuing governmental smart card to all government workers.
- Standards’ definition to the electronic signature issue in the government and building suitable applications to assimilate the subject.

2.1.5 Network connection between government offices (governmental Intranet)

Currently, **there is no governmental connection between the various offices’ networks**. E-mail, for example, travel through external mail-servers and thus is not suitable to use for subjects that are not public. Most of the governmental networks are not secured enough to allow reasonable protection of the governmental information databases. Building a secured inter-offices infrastructure is a must for any central application.

The existing infrastructure in the various government offices was developed gradually and separately for each office. Even today there are significant differences between the various offices inter-communication levels, and between different sites of the same office. In all governmental bodies today, there is an **internal network** based on TCP/IP, and in half of them there is internal usage of e-mail. In addition there are several designated horizontal networks, established for horizontal systems such as the network connecting the accountant units, serving the “Bohan” system (a financial system for budget management) and network connecting to the personnel system in the state’s civil service.

The purpose of the project is to connect all the government offices' networks to allow transfer of classified information between them (specifically e-mail) and to create a central site for centralized services and applications.

The new network will be created as an exchange site to which the offices networks can be connected in a way that will not compromise their existing security level. Meaning: the ability to move from one network to another will be blocked (as much as possible), and an intruder that will succeed in entering a single governmental network, will not be able to use it as a bridge to enter a more secured networks. In time, the network will replace the external connectivity that exists between the offices, risking the security of the inter-offices network.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Connect all the inter-offices networks in a secured connection.
- Develop secured information services for information exchange between the government offices.
- Allow government offices to connect external bodies only through secured connecting points, while maintaining high standards of information security.

2.1.6 Inter-governmental information services (Inter-governmental portal)

The information revolution brought, in addition to multiple information sites open to the general public over the Internet, also the building of inter-organizational information sites. Small organizations, as well as large ones, have set up information sites for internal needs, that allow transfer of information inside the organization, used by its employees and also in order to encourage transfer of information and communication between workers in professional issues. The governmental offices, lead by the ministry of finance built an internal Intranet that allows access to information that is not open to the public.

On the inter-offices level, on the other hand, very little has been done. Currently there are no technical ways to share information between offices, and transfer of such information requires time and a lot of human resources, something that is not done in the ordinary working process.

This lacking is especially significant since in many governmental areas of activity the importance of information sharing with professional co-workers from other offices is greater than sharing with workers of the same department. This cooperation can only be done today in professional forums meetings or as a favor to personal connections.

Information sharing in digital means is limited to e-mail between the offices that is unsecured on the public network.

Building a central information portal that will enable government offices to share services, resources and create an inter-organizational discussion can

make the inter-governmental work more efficient and consequently effect the quality of “e-government” services given to the citizen.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Allow sharing of applications that were developed in the various offices.
- Allow access to inter-offices information systems that will enable flow of information to the offices.
- Allow forums of professional workers in government offices. Each forum may include discussion groups, available information, public documents, price-lists, procedures and more.
- Allow distribution of procedures and decisions between the government.
- Provide inter-governmental address and phone directories for e-mail needs.

2.1.7 Government portal

The Government portal (<http://www.info.gov.il>) was built at the end of 1997 by the governmental Internet committee in cooperation with “Lapam”. The concept behind the portal was taken from other similar portals of the federal governments in Canada, Australia and the U.S. as well as of the British administration. The goal of this portal was to provide a detailed catalogue of all the governmental information that is offered through the Internet, and become a “One Stop Entry” to the government on the web.

In spite of the gradual development of the government portal, the concept of it as well as the information provided through it were not reviewed in recent years and no effort was made to develop its potential. In other countries around the world the portal site is used for various needs among which: access to governmental databases, transfer of horizontal information on the activities of governmental bodies, transfer of information as a governmental “News edition” etc.

A new government portal has to be developed to provide the citizen with updated and thorough information and become a one-entry point for the citizen to the government through the Internet, for the entire on-line information and services.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Central entry point to all governmental information on the web.
- Horizontal information – adding whole-governmental information that is not specific to one office, and consolidation of all the information that is spread throughout the governmental organization.
- Add lists and discussion groups as a tool to notify citizens on innovations and relevant information, and as an interaction channel with the citizen.

2.1.8 Transfer of secured information to citizens (“The Safe”)

Existing “e-government” application allows transfer of information from the citizen to the government but it is not possible for the government offices to securely transfer sensitive, personal information to the citizen. “The Safe” project will provide the option to transfer personal information and create a virtual file for every citizen. The file will collect the information that will be transfer to it by government offices and will allow the citizen to access this information personally and securely.

Furthermore the “Safe” project answers the following needs:

- A large part of the governmental information databases do not require on-line access and it is possible to provide the information from them through the “safe”
- It is not possible to develop on-line access to every application and government information system due to cost and security issues.

The purpose of this project is to allow secured transfer of sensitive personal information from the government offices to citizens and businesses. This transfer will become possible through the building of a virtual, central “Safe room”, which will hold a secured “safe” (personal file) for every citizen and every business.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Building a system that allows saving of and access to secured personal files for citizens and businesses in order to receive secured, personal information from government offices.
- Opening of 1,000,000 virtual personal files for citizens and businesses.
- Developing and adjustment of applications in government offices that will allow automatic transfer of information to the “safe” including taxes departments.

2.1.9 Governmental forms service (“Forms server”)

The forms-site is a system that consolidates all the different offices’ forms and allows filling and on-line transfer of them to the designated office. This way it is easier for the citizen and for the government offices to interact with each other in a computerized yet not on-line way.

The service went on-air for a pilot period during 2002, and includes, in the first phase, pointing to governmental information sites that contain forms that the citizen can print, and a small number of on-lined forms that can be filled and sent directly.

Further development of the forms server includes technological upgrade and integration with technologies that consist usage of electronic signature as well as significant increase in the amount of available on-line forms through the service.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Enable on-line filling of most of the forms used in the government offices through the service.
- Add electronic signature capabilities to the most used forms.
- Set a unified standard for the formation of governmental on-line forms.
- Transfer of information from the forms to the governmental information systems – on-line.

2.1.10 Designated information services for businesses and large organizations (“e-government” for businesses)

“E-government” program mainly deals with building “e-government” services aimed to the general public. With the development of infrastructures of “e-government” and making the Internet a primary communication tool for small as well as large businesses, it is important to provide information services directly from the governmental information databases, as well as to provide the ability to perform actions that save time and money and contribute to the development of the Israeli market.

Among other goals are the following:

- Develop general infrastructures that will make business processes easier and bring prosperity to the Israeli economy (for example: reduced bureaucracy in opening a business, or an On-line land registry office that will revolutionize the real-estate market, on-line invoices etc.)
- Develop designated projects for specific business sectors.
- Technological cooperation that will allow businesses to use governmental information or applications developed for the “e-government” program (like use of smart identity card in business projects).

These services will be based on “e-government” program infrastructures that were developed until now with particular reference to businesses needs.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Set up a commercial arena between businesses and the government that will include on-line tenders (including public tenders).
- On-line submission of invoices to the government.
- Transfer of payments and refunds to businesses through on-line systems.

2.1.11 “Lehava” project for narrowing the digital gap

The vision of the “Lehava” project is to narrow the digital gap in Israeli society, by assimilating technology, specifically information technology with citizens that do not realize their potential to use the information and that cannot afford a computer/Internet in their house.

In order to progress this goal in the coming years, the assimilation of the technology has to be made with the target audience defined for the project.

Project goals for the next three years:

- Set-up 100 local centers (or alternate existing ones) during 3 years, with 40 Internet connected workstations in each of them.
- Provide basic knowledge to citizens in each center (especially young people), required to operate the computer and to search the Internet for relevant information.
- Give citizens that do not own computers, the option to use the public computers regularly, for a few hours a week.
- Establish on-line experts counseling-channels to make “e-government” and other public services more efficient.
- Provide expertise in information-usage to citizens that may contribute to their education and welfare.