<h1 style="text-align:center">E-governance: Meaning and Definition</h1>

Though the term 'e-Governance' has become very popular in the recent years, there is no standard definition for the term. Sometimes, the term 'e-Government' is also used instead of 'e-Governance'.

Some widely used definitions are listed below:

Dictionary of Public Administration: According to the dictionary of Public Administration, e-Governance or Electronic Governance implies a smoother interface between government and citizen with the help of information technology.

World Bank Definition: According to the World Bank, "e-Government refers to the use by government agencies of information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks, the Internet, and mobile computing) that have the ability to transform relations with citizens, businesses, and other arms of government. These technologies can serve a variety of different ends: better delivery of government services to citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information, or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth, and/or cost reduction. The stress in this definition is on use of information technologies in improving citizen-government interactions, cost. cutting and generation of revenue and transparency.

UNESCO Definition: UNESCO has defined e-Governance as "Governance refers to the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country's affairs, including citizens' articulation of their interests and exercise of their legal rights and obligations. E-governance may be understood as the performance of the governance via the electronic medium in order to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating information to the public, and other agencies, and for performing government administration activities. This definition visualized the use of the electronic medium in the exercise of authority in the management of a country's affairs along with articulation of citizens' interests leading to greater transparency and efficiency.

U.S. E-government Act, 2002 Definition: The US e-Government Act, 2002 defines 'electronic government' to mean 'The use by the Government of web-based internet applications and other information technologies, combined with processes that implement these technologies,

- to enhance the access to and delivery of Government information and services to the public, other agencies, and other Government entities; or
- To bring about improvements in government operations that may include efficiency, effectiveness, service quality or transformation.

The definitions reflects the strategy of the US government regarding the use of ICT in improving government operations on the one hand and enhancing the access and delivery of information and services to citizens and government entities on the other.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Definition: The OECD says e-government is more about government than about 'e' that improves efficiency, services, achieves specific outcomes and contributes to broad policy objectives. It can be a major contributor to reform and help build trust between governments and citizens by opening up the policy process and challenging existing ways of working.

Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam 's Definition: Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has visualized e-Governance in the Indian context to mean "A transparent smart e-Governance with seamless access, secure and authentic flow of information crossing the interdepartmental barrier and providing a fair and unbiased service to the citizen.

Subhash Bhatnagar's Definition: The meaning of e-Governance can be better summarized in the words of Subhash Bhatnagar, an authority on e-Governance. e-Government is about a process of reform in the way governments work and share information; and deliver services to external and internal clients. Specifically, e-Government harness information technologies (such as Wide Area Networks (WAN) the Internet and mobile computing) to transform relations with citizens business and other agencies of the government. These technologies can serve a variety of ends: better delivery of government services to the citizens, improved interactions with business and industry, citizen empowerment through access to information or more efficient government management. The resulting benefits can be less corruption, increased transparency, greater convenience, revenue growth and/or cost reductions

e-Government Versus e-Governance

The term 'e-Government' and 'e-Governance ' are generally used interchangeably. However, the two terms in the narrower context have different shades of meaning. E-government is the efficient delivery of government services using emerging technologies like the Internet. On the other hand e-governance uses these technologies to facilitate effective decision making in the context of e-governance as a tool to achieve good governance. E-governance can be understood to be focused on processes whereas e-government is predominantly concerned with Improving the outcome in service delivery for all the stake holders.

E-Governance is a broader concept that encompasses the state's institutional arrangements, decision making processes, implementation capacity and the relationship between the government officials and public. It is the use of ICT by the government, civil society and political institutions to engage citizens through dialogue and feedback to promote greater participation in the process of governance of these institutions. E-Government can be viewed as a subset of e-governance and its focus is largely on improving administrative efficiency and reducing administrative corruption.

Difference Between E-government and E-governance

E — Government	E — Governance
Narrower notion	Broader notion
Focused on outcomes	Focused on processes
Subset of e-governance, application of ICT is focused largely on improving administrative efficiency and reducing administrative corruption.	Use of ICT by the government, Political Institutions and citizens through dialogue promote greater participation,
Electronic Voting	Electronic Engagement

E-governance Models

Fundamentally, e-Governance is an application of ICT to governance activity which can be manifested in multifarious ways and models. Models for e-governance are essential for a right perspective on e-governance implementation.

Some e-governance models being used in developing countries are:

- Broadcasting / Wider Dissemination Model
- Critical Flow Model
- Comparative Analysis Model
- Mobilisation and Lobbying Model
- Interactive — Service Model

1. **Broadcasting / Wider Dissemination Model Principle:** The model is based on dissemination of information that is already in the public domain into wider public domain through the use of ICT and convergent media. The wider dissemination Model opens up an alternative channel for people to access information available in the local domain from external sources. Some of the applications putting government laws on line and making available the names, contact addresses of government officials online.

2. **Critical Flow Model:** The model is based on channelling information of critical value to a targeted audience or spreading it in the wider public domain. The model requires foresight to understand the significance of particular information set and use it strategically. Some of the applications of this critical flow model are the research studies, enquiry reports and appraisals commissioned by the government to the affected parties

3. **Comparative Analysis Model**: The Comparative Analysis Model is based on explaining information available in the public or private domain and comparing it with the actual known information sets to derive strategic learning and arguments. Enabling informed decision-making at all levels by enhancing the background knowledge and provide a rationale for future course of action and evaluating the performance record of a particular government official a ministry are some examples of the comparative analysis model.

4. **Mobilization and Lobbying Model:** Mobilization and Lobbying Model is based on planned, directed, strategic flow of information to build strong virtual allies to strengthen action on the real-world. It takes up the proactive approach of forming virtual communities which share similar values and concerns, promoting active sharing of information between these communities, and linking them with real-world activities. The applications of this model include formation of pressure groups to pressurize decision-makers to take their common concerns into cognizance and amplifying the voices of marginalized groups such as backward classes or minorities who are traditionally marginalized from the decision-making process.

5. Interactive-Service Model/Government to Citizen to Government Model (G2C2G):

This model fully captures the potential of ICT and leverages it for greater participation, efficiency and transparency in the functioning of government. It makes possible various services offered by the government to be directly accessible to citizens. This model helps in establishing an interactive communication channel with policy-makers such as video conferencing and online dialogue

UN Five Stage Development

United Nations has given five stage evolution model as explained in the following lines.

Stage I — Emerging: A government's online presence is mainly comprised of a web-page and/or an official website; links to service providing ministries or departments may or may not exist. Much of the information is static and there is little interaction with citizens.

Stage II — Enhanced: Governments provide more information on public policy and governance. They have created links to archived information that is easily accessible to citizens, as for Instance, documents, forms, reports, laws and regulations, and newsletters.

Stage III — Interactive: Governments deliver online services such as downloads, forms of tax payments and applications for license renewals. In addition, the beginnings of an interactive postal or website with services are evident.

Stage IV — Transactional: Governments begin to transform themselves by introducing two-way interactions between 'citizen and government' includes options for paying taxes, applying for ID cards, both certificates, passports and license renewals, as well as other similar G to C interactions, and allows the citizen to access these services online 24/7. All transactions are conducted online.

Stage V— Connected: Governments transform themselves into a connected entity that responds to the needs of its citizens by developing an integrated back office infrastructure. This is characterized by:

- Horizontal connections (among government agencies)
- Vertical connections (central and local government agencies)
- Infrastructure connections (interoperability issues)
- Connections between governments and citizens.
- Connections among stakeholders (government, private sector, academic institutions, NGOs and Civil society)
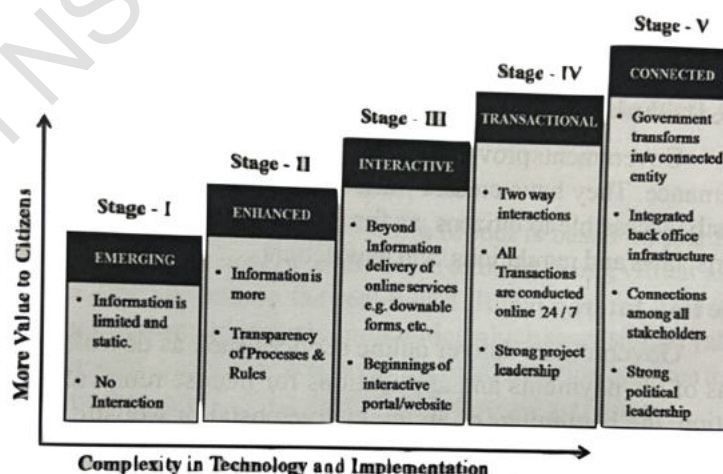
E-governance facilitates interactions between different stake holders in the process of governance. Based on the nature of stake holder/cliental served, the interactions may be classified as follows:

G 2 G— Government to Government: In this case the interaction is within the sphere of government and can be both horizontal i.e., between different government agencies as well as between different functional areas within an organization or vertical i.e., between national, provincial and local government agencies as well as between different levels within an organization. The primary objective is to increase efficiency' performance and output.

G 2 C — Government to Citizen: In this case, an interface is created between the government and citizens which enables the citizens to benefit from efficient delivery of a large range of public services. This expands the availability and accessibility of public services on the one hand and improves the quality of services on the other. It gives citizens the choice of from where to interact with the government e.g. service centre, unattended kiosk or from one 's home/work place.

G 2 B— Government to Business: In this, e-Governance tools are used to aid the business community providers of goods and services — to seamlessly interact with the government. The objective is to cut red tape, save time, reduce operational costs and to create a more transparent business environment when dealing with the government. The G 2 B initiatives can be transactional, such as in licensing, permits, and revenue collection. They can also be promotional and facilitative, such as in trade, tourism and investment.

G 2 E— Government to Employee: Government is by far the biggest employer and like any organization, it has to interact with its employees on a regular basis. This interaction is a two-way process between the organization and the employee. Use of ICT tools help in making these interactions not only fast and efficient but also increase satisfaction level of the employees.

Social Media: Social Media involves a transformation of society itself, through the emergence of 'e-societies', made up of networks of relationships between communities and citizens at the individual level, be sides networking various government and non-government organizations (NGOs).

Barack Obama in a Memorandum to departmental heads, list transparency, participation and collaboration as three priority area for open governance. The announcement in July, 2010 by Philippino President Benigno Acquino that his government would use Facebook and Twitter to enlist public co-operation for government campaigns, such as crackdown on tax evaders and smugglers, is magnificent, especially for the developing world.

Social media networks are emerging as game-changers in the manner in which information is disseminated and administrations reach out to the people under this mode. Networked individuals can have an impact on governance through the use of the Internet. For this global resource to be harnessed effectively, two ingredients are essential.

1. A two-way flow of timely and credible information.
2. Response mechanism from government agencies.

These media tools give governments the added advantage continuously engaging citizens. This can help foster mutual trust and bring governance closer to the people. In addition, the 'Fifth State 'as sociologist William H. Dutton of the Oxford Internet Institute calls the social media, can make meaningful interventions in shaping public policy.

Principles of E-governance: Based on the analysis of the reasons for the success and failures of e-Governance initiatives in India as well as in other countries, core principles essential for success of e-Governance initiatives have been formulated, which are discussed:

1. **Clarity of Purpose:** There needs to be a clear understanding and appreciation Of the purpose and objectives to be achieved through e-Governance. An e-Governance initiative should not be taken up merely to demonstrate the capability of an existing technology, but the technology should be adopted to solve existing problem

2. **Environmental building:** This suggests the need to change the mind set of all the stake holders involved, i.e., politicians, government officials and civil society at large. As the task involves redesigning of governmental processes at various levels, Implementing e-Governance requires political support at all levels. Government personnel would have to be motivated to change old habits and acquire new skills. In the public, awareness needs to be created so that there is a constant demand for reforms in governance through implementation of e-Governance. The environment should be such that the resistance to change is addressed by dealing with actual grievances.

3. **E-Governance as an Integral Part of Reform in Governance:** E-Governance cannot be taken as an adjunct of governance. Rather it is an integral part of the governance structure and processes. Thus, every government organization or entity, every government programme or policy and every law and regulation would have to integrate e-Governance modules within itself rather than brought in as an afterthought or introduced as an adjunct.

4. **E-Preparedness:** A country needs to be ready to fully adapt to e-governance. e-Preparedness for e-governance implementation, ore-readiness, as is generally referred to, means the pre-requisites required to be taken care of up any e-governance initiative. These pre-requisites. i) Data System Infrastructure, ii) Legal Infrastructural Preparedness, iii) Institutional Infrastructural Preparedness, iv) Human Infrastructural Preparedness, v)Technological Infrastructural Preparedness

I. **Data System Infrastructure:** The core of e-governance IS the electronic Management Information System (e-MIS). Whatever data conventionally was being procured and maintained manually needs to be computerized or brought into electronic form.

II. **Legal Infrastructural Preparedness:** The fundamental issue that needs to be addressed before any e-governance initiative is taken up is to have a legal structure to permit and support the move towards e-governance initiatives, e.g. recognition of digital signature under Information Technology Act, 2000, or legal acceptance of computer printed document.

III. **Institutional Infrastructure Preparedness:** For any government to implement successful e-governance projects, the requisite institutional infrastructure has to be in place. In the Indian context establishment of National Informatics Centre is an example of building of institutional infrastructure.

IV. **Human Infrastructural Preparedness:** Human Infrastructural Preparedness comes from well-trained manpower, both technical and non-technical. The technical Manpower resources are essential for all the phases of e-governance and related information system life cycle comprising systems analysis, systems design, programming, implementation, operationalising and documentation.

V. **Technological Infrastructure Preparedness**: Technology is fast changing, more particularly that of Information and Communication. Hence, Infrastructure needs to be updated accordingly irrespective of fiscal and administrative constraints.

Step-wise approach: E-Governance cannot be introduced in the whole country across government organization at one go as different organizations are not at the same level of e-preparedness. Hence there is a need for step-wise approach to e-governance as mentioned below:

- Identification of e-governance projects by each organization/ entity.
- Prioritisation
- Business process re-engineering
- Develop technological solutions.
- Implementation of e-governance Projects.

Disciplined way of working: E-Governance requires a disciplined and systematic way of working in organizations. Most technologies pre-suppose a set of rational behaviour on the part of users. This element needs to be emphasized during the capacity building as well as in the life cycle of the project.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Close monitoring of e-governance projects is necessary in both the pilot phase as well as during the actual working of the up-scaled projects. There would also be need for evaluation of the impact of such initiatives through independent agencies.

Developing Secure, Fail-Safe and Disaster Recovery Systems: The technological architecture on which e-governance applications are mounted would need to be made not only secure but also fail-safe on 'safe-mode' in times of crisis. Further, depositories and 'mirrors' would need to be created with sound disaster recovery modules with adequate security features to prevent loss of data and collapse of the system.

Sustainability: Successful e-governance projects should not be allowed to get derailed on grounds of expediency.

Allowing for Horizontal Applicability: To make e-Governance more cost effective and successful, successes need to be adopted across states and organizations thereby minimizing costly repetitions. A co-ordinating mechanism is needed to prevent cases of re-inventing the wheel.

Development of Local language Interfaces: As India is a multi-lingual society, e-governance initiatives need to provide citizen interfaces in the respective local language. Thus, displays and key-board should be based on localized interfaces and multi-media instructions should be commonly used to make the interface accessible in rural areas, where low literacy rates and less acquainted with English language could be an obstacle.

E-Governance— a Continuing Process: e-Governance represents a paradigm shift in the field of governance reforms. Bringing it about would have to be a continuous process which would require many adjustments. It has been well said that e-Governance is journey and not a destination.