

# White Paper

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## Hillwatch E-Impact Benchmark and Visitor Pattern Analytics Alignment With Government Web Asset Performance Measurement

How Hillwatch E-Services Uses 'Best Practices' Benchmarking and the Balanced Scorecard  
to create CITIZEN-CENTRIC Government Web Sites

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# White Paper : Hillwatch Alignment with Government Web Asset Performance Measurement

## Introduction

The past five years have seen an extraordinary effort by governments worldwide to make their services and information available over the web. Virtually all developed nations have launched comprehensive and challenging e-government initiatives in response to citizen demand for access, transparency and improved service. The result, according to a 2001 UN study, is that there are now well over 50,000 government-managed web sites.

As initial e-government milestones are being reached, governments are beginning to focus attention on measuring the efficacy, performance and impact of their web assets. This performance focus is driven by the cost of these assets and the need to determine if the initial promise and expectations of this new on-line channel is being realised. In the United Kingdom, the National Audit Office addressed online performance requirements this way:

"As e-government and e-services mature, the focus of attention will tend to shift from simply providing access to services in electronic form to actively managing take-up and usage of these options by the public. All government sector agencies should put in place appropriate management information to regularly monitor usage of their web sites and electronic services, and 'play-back' this information to the content providers and divisions responsible for originating Web material and Internet services."

Government on the Web II, 2002 (UK)

## International Performance Measurement Initiatives

Currently, no clear guidelines, benchmarks or measures exist to evaluate the performance (however that may be defined) of public sector web sites. Governments need to measure more than 'sales', 'revenue', and 'profits'. Many of the 'leading edge' private sector web site measurement techniques raise privacy issues that make their adoption by governments problematic. As a result, governments worldwide, and at all levels, are working to define their own return on investment (ROI) measures and criteria specific to the public sector. At the forefront of this effort is the OECD with a major project underway to examine web site evaluation and measurement practices. The OECD has defined five dimensions considered key elements of public sector web sites.

- 1) Accountability/openness;
- 2) Efficiency;
- 3) Participation;
- 4) Effectiveness/responsiveness; and
- 5) Citizen focused government.

While this approach and work by the OECD will be useful, it does not in any way address key issues such as site ROI and stakeholder uptake.

## Online Performance Measurement in Canada

Canada has been a leader in e-government internationally. Our federal government is further along in grappling with the issues of performance measurement and ROI than many other governments.

The lead agency in this regard has been the Chief Information Office Branch of Treasury Board (CIOB). The CIOB has championed an effort to set the performance measurement framework by providing a mix of policies, tools and guidelines to help government departments and agencies undertake self- assessments. Departments are free to use these CIOB elements and adapt them to existing internal evaluation criteria. The key CIOB initiatives at this time:

- *Adherence to Policies* such as *Common Look and Feel* and *Accessibility*, with more policies likely to come over time in the privacy and security areas. Understandably, CIOB is aiming to provide a uniform, consistent experience to users of federal on-line services and information, regardless of the agency or department.
- Evidence of ongoing process to *Evaluate and Measure Client Satisfaction* via tools such as customer surveys, visitor pattern analysis, focus groups, the Common Measurement Tool, etc.
- CIOB has already developed a *9 Stage Progress/Implementation Measurement Models* - one for services/transaction oriented sites and one for information driven sites. These classify the pace of implementation and degree of personalization and functional interactivity of government sites.
- *Benchmarking & Best Practices* are explicitly and implicitly built into all the approaches that CIOB is reviewing and advocating. The assumption is government organizations will benchmark their web assets against like or related entities inside and outside Canada.
- CIOB has established *11 Indicators of Success* as the core indicators departments are expected to use and adapt to measure their online assets. These are:
  - Convenience,
  - Accessibility,
  - Credibility,
  - Critical mass of services,
  - Take-up,
  - Service Transformation,
  - Citizen/Client satisfaction,
  - Security,
  - Privacy,
  - Efficiency/ROI, and
  - Innovation.

- In addition, Treasury Board, through its **Service Improvement** and its **Citizens First Initiative** has identified *Citizen-Centric Drivers of Satisfaction* for Internet sites. These are
  - Ease of Navigation
  - Outcome
  - Visual Appeal
  - Fast Page Loading

Online performance measurement also has to be assessed against the broader obligation of Canadian public service managers, as part of the *Results Based Management Accountability Framework*, to plan, measure, evaluate and report on results throughout the life cycle of a policy, program or initiative. Managers are expected to define strategic outcomes, continually focus their attention on results achievement, measure performance regularly and objectively, learn from this information and adjust to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

This will increasingly require public sector managers to ‘crosswalk’ between online and off-line programme outputs and performance indicators

### **Hillwatch Alignment with Government Web Asset Performance Measurement**

*Hillwatch E-Services* creates management evaluation tools to help government align online web performance with strategic programme objectives and ensure web assets are citizen-centric. Our key products are:

***E-Impact Benchmark Report*** is the leading web site benchmarking methodology based on 325+ quantifiable ‘best practice’ indicators. The deliverables are senior management reports providing objective performance measurement against peer sites, strategic insight and direction, and a detailed action plans for site improvement.

***Visitor Pattern Analytics (VPA)*** address the inherent limitations of existing web traffic software. VPA is a proprietary product that reduces the mountain of data from server logs into simple, compelling and manager friendly Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) tailored to specific programme objectives. VPA enables public sector managers to see underlying trends in visitor traffic and to understand how these can be leveraged to improve the site. VPA also helps managers ‘crosswalk’ between online and offline performance measurement.

Hillwatch E-Services products strongly support (and often anticipate) the emerging guidelines put forward by government for web site measurement. (See table below.)

- Our benchmarking approach provides objective, quantitative, fact-based results.
- Our ‘outside-in’ user perspective is, by design, citizen-centric. Important drivers of citizen satisfaction such as ease of finding, ease of use, informative, responsiveness, transparency, accountability, credibility, etc. are captured by our methodology.
- Results are easy to ‘report up’ – results can be aggregated or disaggregated depending on the level of detail required by the client and/or central agencies.
- Performance improvement is tracked on an ongoing basis. Results remain comparable year over year and clients’ performance measurement investments are protected.

### **Table 1: Indicators comparison between Government Requirements &**

### Hillwatch E-Services products

TBS CIOB Success Indicators	Hillwatch E-Impact & VPA
Convenience	Yes
Accessibility	Yes
Credibility	Yes
Critical mass of services	Unique to client
Take up	Yes
Service transformation	Unique to client
Client satisfaction	Yes
Security	Yes
Privacy	Yes
Efficiency/ROI	Yes
Innovation	Yes
Progress/Implementation	Yes
TBS Citizen First - Drivers of Satisfaction	
Ease of Navigation	Yes
Outcome	Yes
Visual Appeal	Yes
Informative	Yes
Fast Pages	Yes
OECD Dimensions	
Accountability/Openness	Yes
Efficiency	Yes
Participation	Yes
Effectiveness/ Responsiveness	Yes
Citizen focus	Yes
Other	
Programme & Web Site Strategic Alignment	Yes
Balanced Scorecard	Yes

By design, Hillwatch 'best practices' methodologies help individual government managers 'drill down' to detailed performance data in order to develop clear action plans. They also provide a ready-made vehicle for departments and agencies seeking a consistent, rigorous and mature tool to address current and future central reporting requirements for web site assets. As governments develop new measures, we believe we can develop new indicators that roll into our existing methodologies.

### Hillwatch E-services Experience

Hillwatch E-Services Government clients have included:

- SchoolNet – IHAB
- Grassroots SchoolNet – I HAB

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\* Two success indicators identified by the CIOB, *client satisfaction* and *take-up*, warrant additional discussion. Traditional methods to address these indicators would be through *Focus Groups* and *Customer Surveys*. These tools are valuable and complementary to our own methodologies. Hillwatch recommends and uses them in our own practice. However, the cost of implementing focus groups and surveys on a regular basis is expensive. It is more likely to be done by larger government web sites. It will not be feasible for the majority of government sites on an on-going basis. As such, more affordable options will be required. Our *Visitor Pattern Analytics* can deliver the information required to assess these indicators and reporting requirements in a substantive and credible way and still continue to meet site managers' need for ongoing site improvement.

- Community Access Program – IHAB
- National Roundtable on the Environment & the Economy
- Health Canada – Media Relations
- Health Canada – Consultations
- Canadian Grievance Board
- Canadian Biotechnology Secretariat
- Defence Canada

Hillwatch Private Sector Clients have included:

- Canadian Labour and Business Centre
- Friends of Canadian Broadcasting
- Canadian Food Information Council
- Canadian Chemical Producers Council
- American Chemistry Council

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