# Access Minnesota*

## The Information and Public Services Initiative

Information Policy Office
Department of Administration
State of Minnesota

*This report was released under the title "Minnesota Public Information Network."  Based on the response we received through both electronic and more conventional means that title was dropped.  The electronic release of this draft was a experiment in electronic democracy that worked.  The following paper is the original document and should be viewed as a "white paper" or vision paper.  This draft paper has not been edited or updated as of 3/9/1994 and should be read within the context of current updates and the description given in the Governor's supplemental budget.

ʳ Steven Clift,
ı Policy Office
·hoc Electronic Access to Public Information Task Force

AGENCY: Administration, Department of     PROGRAM(S): Information Policy Office

ITEM TITLE: Electronic Access to Government

| | Current Biennium | | Next Biennium | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | F.Y. 1994 | F.Y. 1995 | F.Y. 1996 | F.Y. 1997 |
| Expenditures: ($000s) | | | | |
| General Fund | | | | |
| - State Operations | $-0- | $550 | $-0- | $-0- |
| Federal Fund | | | | |
| - Grants | $-0- | $250 | $-0- | $-0- |

Statutory Change? Yes _____ No __X__

If yes, statute(s) affected: M.S.

RECOMMENDATION: The Governor concurs with the Information Policy Offices' (IPO) recommendation of $550,000 for F.Y. 1995 to develop a state-wide comprehensive, coordinated electronic access system to government information and services. Funding will support coordination of government applications and demonstration projects through the Department of Administration.

RATIONALE: Currently, state agencies, local government, private citizens and businesses do not have timely, inexpensive access to public government information and may not even be aware of what information is available or where to get it. The demand for government services is outstripping the public resources available to provide them. Minnesota must develop more effective and efficient ways to deliver public services.

A comprehensive, coordinated electronic access system will improve public access to government information and the delivery of government services through the creation of an open, organized and easy to use electronic communication environment that uses multiple information technologies. These technologies include home and business computers, public access terminals in libraries, touch-screen kiosks, fax-based systems and access through many software applications including those that are Internet-based. Examples of uses might include: searches for job openings, license applications or renewals, voter registration, or ordering a birth certificate.

The U.S. Department of Commerce will soon be announcing a new federal matching grant program to encourage the use of advanced telecommunication technology by state and local government. The new program will be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

Federal matching funds would help us meet our goal of providing more government information and services electronically. Based on Minnesota's current efforts in building a statewide government information network through MNet (STARS) and the recent work of our inter-agency task force on electronic access to public information, Minnesota should be in a strong position to compete for federal matching funds.

PROGRAM IMPACT: The purpose of the electronic access activity is to make government more open, efficient, effective and responsive to citizens and businesses through the application and use of a wide array of information technologies. It will help build and organize an electronic communications environment that will allow interaction with all levels of government. While service delivery will be centrally coordinated to leverage resources and eliminate redundancy and confusion, agencies will develop the applications as part of their ongoing operations.

This initiative will change the way information is collected and stored, and the way information and services are provided. Standards, policies and procedures will need to be established to deal with concerns such as sale of government information, security, privacy, data ownership, etc. and provide for a common interface.

LONG-TERM IMPACT:
- Improve public access to electronic government information and the delivery of services to the public through the use of information technology.
- Develop a common access point to government information and services that can be accessed through multiple technologies and applications. This will include the use of the computers, public-access terminals and kiosks through the Internet, dial-up connections, and through future high-speed information networks that will provide service to homes and businesses.
- Help organize a user-friendly electronic communications environment that will allow citizens and businesses to interact more effectively and efficiently with all levels of government.
- Lead state-wide planning project and demonstration projects from all levels of government.
- Provide outreach, training and educational programs for government and the public.

# Minnesota Public Information Network.
## January 18, 1994  Release 1.0* (*see cover sheet)

## Introduction

During the 1993 legislative session, a proposal was introduced that raised a number of issues around the need to improve public access to government information and the delivery of services through the use of information technology.  The Information Policy Office, with the support of the Information Policy Council, established the Ad-Hoc Electronic Access to Public Information Task Force to address those issues and propose an overall strategy for coordinated state-wide electronic public access and service delivery.

## Summary

The Minnesota Public Information Network will be established to improve public access to government information and the delivery of government services through the use of information technology.  This draft legislative proposal covers the purpose, responsibility, and authority of the MPIN.  The MPIN will assist government planning, coordination, and collaboration to ensure that the public interest is served through the creation of an open, accessible, and organized electronic communication environment for the citizen's interaction with government.  It will develop access methods to government information through a common access point that use multiple information technologies.

Most information and services will be provided by State agencies, local governments, educational institutions, libraries, and other government units through the expanding government information networks. This proposal takes the approach that the use of information technology in services to the public need to be integrated into the work of a government unit.  It also defines a set of information resources, the "Tools of Democracy" that are important for citizen participation and should be made available at no or low cost.

It is proposed that the MPIN be administered through the Department of Administration.  A direct Legislative funding request will be developed and it is likely that Federal matching funds will exist for planning and demonstration projects.  The final section lists a number of recommended changes to the Data Practices Act to ensure electronic access to public information and it addresses some other  important issues.
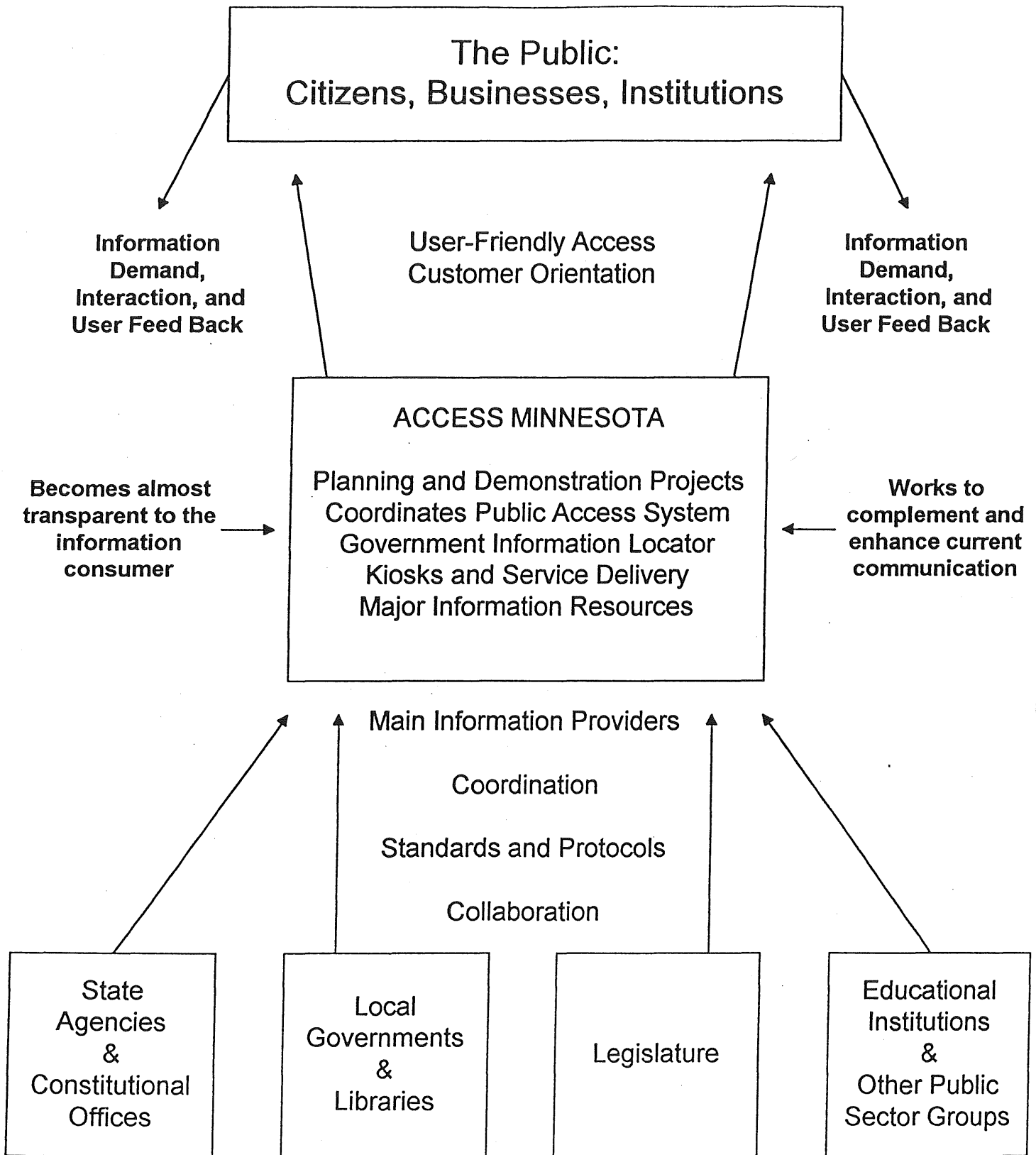
## Comments and Suggestions

This proposal will be widely circulated in both paper and electronic formats. Written comments and suggestions are requested through Friday, February 4, 1994.  The proposal will then be written into legislative form for consideration during the upcoming legislative session later in the month.  Please send your comments to the IPO:

Electronic Access to Public Information Task Force
c/o Steven Clift
Information Policy Office
Minnesota Department of Administration
320 Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155  Telephone: (612)297-5561

Fax:
(612)296-5800

Electronic Mail:
steven.clift@state.mn.us

## The Public:
## Citizens, Businesses, Institutions

**Information Demand, Interaction, and User Feed Back**

User-Friendly Access
Customer Orientation

**Information Demand, Interaction, and User Feed Back**

**Becomes almost transparent to the information consumer**

### ACCESS MINNESOTA

Planning and Demonstration Projects
Coordinates Public Access System
Government Information Locator
Kiosks and Service Delivery
Major Information Resources

**Works to complement and enhance current communication**

Main Information Providers

Coordination

Standards and Protocols

Collaboration

| State Agencies & Constitutional Offices | Local Governments & Libraries | Legislature | Educational Institutions & Other Public Sector Groups |
|---|---|---|---|

General Information - Directory Information - Information Services - Transactions

Reports - Press Releases - Rules - Educational Material - Correspondence

Answers to Frequently Asked Questions - Forms - Registrations

# Minnesota Public Information Network

## 1.0 Overview - A Time for Action

The time for action is here. The demand for government services is outstripping the public resources available. This requires that Minnesota to develop more effective and efficient ways to deliver public services. The use of information technology in the interactions between the public and government will be a public investment that will allow us to develop those methods.

We are in a new information era and with it comes opportunities for the citizens of Minnesota and their government. Advancing information technologies and expanding information networks make the citizen a more active and energetic information consumer and producer. The challenge for our democratic society and its governing institutions is to determine how we will use this energy and possibility to address the public challenges that face us all.

Whether it is Vice-President Al Gore giving a speech about the "information super highway," another cable and telephone company partnership, or a story about the millions of people using electronic mail, we sense that a fundamental shift in how communication determines what kind of world we live in is occurring. The State of Minnesota must begin to address these challenges by concentrating its efforts on organizing a portion of this new communications environment.

The **Minnesota Public Information Network** will be established to improve public access to government information and to improve the delivery of services to the public. The general purpose of the Minnesota Public Information Network is to make government more open, efficient, effective, and responsive to each and every citizen through the application and use of a wide array of information technologies. It will help build and organize an electronic communications environment that will allow the citizen to interact with all levels of government by concentrating on improving public access to government information and the delivery of public services.

While the private sector and government as a whole addresses the building of the "information super-highway," and the development of more advanced information technologies, the Minnesota Public Information Network will create a central coordination point for government information in electronic form. It will be built with citizen, government, and private sector involvement and with the needs of the information consumer in mind. While the Nation determines what "universal service," "open access," or "public-right-of-way" will mean in this new information age, Minnesota will work to ensure that its citizens have information tools, resources, and services to make those concepts mean something.

# Minnesota Public Information Network

## 2.0 Principles, Responsibilities, and Authority

The MPIN will be responsible for developing a state-wide, comprehensive, and coordinated public access system to government information and services. It will provide leadership in planning and help set Minnesota's direction in the creation of major government information resources and initiatives geared toward the public. It will help coordinate and bring together demonstration and planning projects. It will work to ensure that the public interest is served through the creation of an open, accessible, and organized electronic communication environment for the citizen and their government.

## 2.1 Guiding Principles

1. It is in the public interest to improve and promote public access to government information in electronic forms.

2. It is in the public interest to use information technology to improve the delivery of public services and to encourage more convenient and efficient transactions between the public and government.

3. The application of information technology in communications between government and the citizen is by its very nature interactive and should be used to help the citizen access and develop an interchange with government institutions.

4. Scarce resources and significant costs make it imperative that government entities at all levels coordinate their efforts and integrate these activities into the whole of their organizations in order to achieve the best possible outcome for the public.

5. Government collaboration and cooperation must ensure the inter-operability of public access systems, a diversity of information sources, and the development of an open, accessible, and organized electronic communication environment that is user-friendly.

6. This communications environment must be designed from the citizens' perspective and allow for broad public involvement in its growth and development. The public access system should also be developed with an understanding of the global nature of information networks and of the important role the private sector will play in the development of the Nation's information infrastructure.

7. The MPIN must work to ensure universal service and open access to government information and services through libraries, schools, businesses, and homes through telecommunications and information networks.

## 2.2 Responsibilities and Authority

1. Lead State-wide planning efforts and assist state agencies, local government, educational and other public sector entities in the planning and development of information resources and services geared toward the public.

2. Coordinate and assist demonstration projects at all levels of government in this area. With sufficient funding, the MPIN will help support initiatives requiring matching funds from the Federal government or other funding sources. (See funding section.)

3. Ensure inter-governmental coordination and collaboration and the adoption of general standards and protocols where appropriate. These standards must be flexible and anticipate the introduction of new technologies and applications.

3. Ensure that planning and project evaluation efforts include public involvement and user feedback. This should also include an evaluation of consumer interest and demand.

4. Develop a pro-active approach in the promotion of public access to government information and improved delivery of services.

5. Develop outreach, training, and education efforts geared toward the public and government.

6. Develop positive relationships with community-based and civic networks, Freenets, commercial information services in order to broaden public access to the state-wide public access system.

7. The MPIN is not authorized to serve as a network service provider (i.e. full Internet access, sale of individual electronic mail accounts, etc.), where other commercial, non-profit, government telecommunications and Internet providers are more appropriate. (i.e. USWest, Minnesota Regional Net, MNet (STARS), etc.)

# 3.0 Common Access, Resources, and Methods

## 3.1 Common Access Point and Government Information Locator System

The MPIN will create a government information locator system and a common access point. The common access point will bring together all networked government information resources and services in order to present a "single-face" to government that is organized and user-friendly. The government information locator system would provide details on possible government information resources and provide directions on where to obtain government information not accessible through the common access point.

The distributed nature of government information networks and resources will require an approach that understands that participating government units will likely be the primary information creators and providers. Also, the expansion and increasing inter-operability of government information networks and the need for government agencies to integrate electronic access and service delivery in to their work at all levels, will require a coordinated approach. The past models of information service centralization will not meet the requirements of the new information age.

These systems will be accessible through the Internet (see Section 3.6) and through dial-up connections with a modem and computer. As digital data networks expand, whether it be through a "digital dial-tone" or through cable television lines, the MPIN will seek to ensure that these services are accessible through those networks. Also, the common access point must support widely accepted network applications and government information resources must be flexible enough to allow access through multiple interfaces and applications.

During its initial phase the common access point will provide access to Minnesota government based information servers that are geared toward the public, government sponsored computer bulletin boards and databases, library catalogs, local, educational, Federal and other important public sector information resources and to the "Tools of Democracy" which are described in the next section.

# Information Resources and Services

## 3.2 General Information and Services

State agencies, local governments, educational institutions, and other units of government produce and distribute information in the pursuit of their mission. This is the kind of information that governments are beginning to distribute electronically. In most cases, through information servers housed at a government agency they will provide access to the electronic equivalent of newsletters, brochures, press releases, reports, and other publications. Of the 14 government agencies present at the first Electronic Access to Public Information Task Force meeting in October 1993, almost all reported current activities or plans in this area.

Governments are also developing more convenient and efficient ways to deliver services to the public through the use of information technology. These transactions with government may take place in the home, at a public access terminal, or through an information kiosk. Examples of services include renewing motor vehicle tabs, ordering an official copy of a birth certificate for mail delivery, or registering for an interview at your local Jobs and Training Office.

## 3.3 "Tools of Democracy"

The MPIN will plan and help develop major state-wide information resources and tools that will provide means to help the citizen access the government bureaucracy, find government information, offices, and services, and improve democratic participation. These core information resources must be made available to the general public at no or low cost. Local and regional units of government will be encouraged to complement these tools with information resources that encompass similar information geared toward their citizens. The "Tools of Democracy" include:

A. Directory of Government Services and Institutions - This directory would be a combination of the State Telephone Directory and the Guide to State Agency Services which would eventually cover all levels of government and allow for easy access to government contacts within government and by the public. (A Request for Proposals has been issued by the State for the integration of disparate electronic mail systems and for directory services which should offer a base for activities in this area.)

B. Legislative Information - The MPIN will work with the State Legislature and the Revisor's Office to provide electronic public access to legislative information including public information newsletters, bill text and summaries, meeting schedules, research reports, and other information vital to the promoting citizen participation and understanding of the legislative process. This also includes electronic access to the basic text of the State Statutes and Rules. (The House of Representatives and the Revisor's Office have developed "Gopher" servers that are accessible through the Internet at: gopher.revisor.leg.state.mn.us . It is likely that these legislative branch gopher servers are some of the most developed in the world.)

C.  Governor's Office, Constitutional Officers, and Executive Branch Information - The MPIN will work with the Governor's Office to make important documents, releases, speeches and proclamations available to the public in electronic form.  Much of the core information about the Executive Branch and information from the office's of other Constitutional Officers will be contained in the "Directory."  The MPIN will provide access to the information resources and services developed and maintained by those offices through the common access point.

D.  State Virtual Public Library - Working with the various networks of libraries in Minnesota a information system containing the digitized text of important government documents and publications will be created.  This is a long-term project that will require planning, the major involvement of the State's libraries, and an allocation of resources.


## 3.4  Fee-Based

Many of the services of this type would likely find an increase in demand for their services if they made them available through the common access point.  The Data Practices Act allows agencies to charge a fee that recovers demonstrated information development costs when it is commercially valued.  In most cases this type of public information is on individuals, entities, or properties.  Many of the currently operational government information services are the result of demand from the private sector for information.  In many cases the State Legislature has developed special requirements that State agencies fund the provision of those resources through fees on the information user.  Examples include the electronic provision of business registrations by the Secretary of State or motor vechicle record searches in the Department of Public Safety.   (Section 6.0 addresses some of issues in this area.)
Another type of fee-based service might include an information service geared toward a narrow constituency.  The agency might decide that this service should not be subsidized by the taxpayers as a whole because the benefits are received by a small portion of the public.  In these cases the agency may charge no more than the cost to provide the service.  However, when such a service is made available through the common access point the agency may be able support an expanded level of service due to an increase in demand.
The third fee-based arrangement may include the enhanced delivery of a public service or government product, like a form, license, etc..  In some cases the development of an enhanced level of service may be supported by what amounts to a surcharge to support the operation and development of that service.  This is used to support a portion of the costs for a number of kiosk networks in other States.

# Public Access Methods

## 3.5 Internet and Dial-up Connections

The Internet is often referred to as a precursor to the "information super-highway." It is a global network of networks that allows for the transfer of digital information of all kinds. It will likely provide the most cost efficient method to ensure broad public access to government information over the long run. In the short-term allowing for dial-up connections and public access terminals to the common access point will need to be available.

The most frequently cited Internet information server is called "Gopher." The software was developed by the University of Minnesota and is now used around the world to present basic textual information and link access points to other information systems. For those with a high-speed data connection, it is possible to use a program called Mosaic which allows for the use of graphics, linked text, sound, etc. through these networks. Also some cable system and telephone companies in the United States are now offering high-speed digital access to the Internet. The MPIN will work to assist the public sector in efforts to take advantage of these advancements, but will ensure that technological capacities do not create barriers for the public attempting to access government information or services.

## 3.6 Electronic Mail Distribution

The MPIN will develop an information server that can distribute selected government information and documents through electronic mail and eventually through a fax-back system. This server will allow most citizens who have commercial or Internet electronic mail accounts to retrieve documents by sending basic commands to the server. This is based on a model currently used by the USDA Extension Service and the Americans Communicating Electronically initiative. To test their systems send an empty e-mail message to: info@ace.esusda.gov .

This server will also have mailing list capabilities (often referred to as a "listserver") that will allow agencies to broadcast or distribute information to established lists of subscribers. State Agencies and other government units will also be able to use this server to develop electronic mail working groups for a specific program or within the context of their mission. This server will not be the host of general social or political debate which should remain unencumbered by government sanction or oversight.

## 3.7 Kiosks

The MPIN will be the host for the coordination of an information kiosk initiative. This initiative will involve interested State Agencies and other units of government. The information kiosks will be used to improve the delivery of public services and allow for transaction based services. The MPIN will be responsible for the development of a general kiosk platform and network for government use in Minnesota.

Kiosk initatives are highly visible and currently provide the best platform for secure transactions bewteen a member of the public and government services. The Info/California kiosk effort and the activities of other States need to be fully examined and the lessons from their experience should be integrated into Minnesota efforts.

## 3.8 Clearinghouse

The MPIN will develop a clearinghouse on the use of information technologies, including interactive voice mail response systems, fax back retrieval systems, used to improve the dissemination of information or delivery of services to the public. This clearinghouse will also collect information from sources both inside and outside of Minnesota on information services and activities used in the public sector. The MPIN will also use its electronic mailing list capabilities to establish links for the sharing of knowledge and experience among those government units using or developing plans to use specific information tools in their interactions with the public.

# 4.0 MPIN Location and Structure

1. The Minnesota Public Information Network will be administered through the Department of Administration.

2. The Information Policy Council and the Information Policy Office will act as the advisory bodies to MPIN.

3. The MPIN will create working groups that involve other units of government in state-wide planning, the development of major services, assist with the creation of standards and protocols for public access systems, and work to integrate the use of information technology into government interaction with the public generally.

4. The Information Policy Office will have the ultimate authority to establish standards and protocols for government organizations to follow in the development and use of information kiosks, network applications and systems used to access government information, government computer bulletin board systems, and other systems that allow electronic access to government information and services. These standards and protocols must be flexible in nature and not constrain the use of new technologies and applications. They must focus on ensuring the development of user-friendly systems and the creation of common government electronic communication environment. The MPIN will work with the IPO in this area.

5. The IPO and MPIN will report on policy issues that arise during the development and implementation of this initiative. They will also lend advice on issues related to government access to the advancing information and telecommuncations networks and develop policy guidelines and recommendations for legislative action. The IPO must address the development of fee guidelines to assist government units in pricing of information services according to the Data Practices Act.

6. The MPIN will issue a report during the 1995 Legislative Session about how it proposes to carry out its mission and meet its responsibilities.

# 5.0 MPIN Funding and Resources

Appropriations and other funds made available to the Minnesota Public Information Network for staff, operational expenses, and grants will be administered through the Department of Administration.

The majority of the initial planning, demonstration, and general operating resources will come from an appropriation from the Legislature and matching grants from the Federal government. The MPIN will explore the issue of whether it should establish fees to fund a portion of the operating costs and future development of information resources and public access systems.

It is likely that major public investment in this area will be spread out across all levels of government. This view fits with the perspective in this proposal that the use of information technology to improve public access and service delivery must be integrated into the work of government. The MPIN will assist government units by developing a state-wide framework and with an appropriate level of funding, issue grants for planning and demonstration projects in this area.

## 5.1 Legislative Appropriation

The MPIN will request a $_____ appropriation for FY95 for the first phase of the development of this initiative. They will return to the Legislature with a budget request for FY96-97 during the next legislative session.

## 5.2 Federal Matching Grants

The United States Department of Commerce, National Telecommunications and Information Administration, will be releasing a request for proposals for its National Information Infrastructure Planning and Demonstration Grants Program in the near future.

The MPIN will apply for major matching grants in the areas of State planning and demonstration projects. The total amount to be distributed this year is $26 Million. (Pending U.S. Senate approval the authorization for FY95 is $100 million and FY96 is $150 million.) It looks like they will be allocating sixty percent for demonstration grants, twenty percent for local planning and twenty percent for State planning. Overall, if Minnesota received only two percent of the total matching grants in these areas it would total over $500,000.

The NTIA expects proposals to come from all levels of government and from other organizations. With adequate funding the MPIN will assist selected Minnesota based proposals. This assistance may include contributions toward planning or demonstration projects of up to full amount required by the Federal matching grant program. We will be watching for more details about this program as they emerge.

# Amendments to the Data Practices Act
## 6.0 Ensuring Electronic Access to Public Information

MS Section 13.03, Subdivision 1. requires that for public data, "The responsible authority in every state agency, political subdivision and statewide system shall keep records containing government data in such an arrangement and condition as to make them easily accessible for convenient use." The advancing use of information technology and information networks in both business and society requires that government maintain a relative level of convenience. The amendments to the Data Practices Act will affirm this analysis by establishing the State's interest in promoting electronic access to public information and the use of information technology to improve the delivery of public services and allow for electronic transactions.

### 6.1 "Tools of Democracy"

Define a core set of government electronic information resources that must be provided at no cost or low cost to the general public. These "Tools of Democracy" (as mentioned in the MPIN section) are geared to help the citizen break through government bureaucracy, find government information, offices, and services, and improve democratic participation. The core information resources are:
1. Legislative information, reports, documents, meeting notices and bill text
2. Releases and official documents of the Governor's Office
3. Basic text of the State Statutes and Rules
4. State Telephone Directory and Guidebook to State Agency Service's or a new combined electronic version thereof.
5. Development of a State-wide Virtual Public Library over the long-term.

### 6.2 Equity of Access to Fee-based Services

Government units that provide fee-based information services must also ensure equity of access to public information contained in those services. Options include on-site public access terminals, arrangements by the government unit with public libraries or other institutions, a rebate system, time-based no-fee or subsidized access (non-peak hours), or a base time or search allotment of free trial access.

> Note: The current Statute allows agencies to charge for an information "service" that goes beyond basic "convenience" at fee no higher that cost to provide that service. In cases where the information has "commercial value" fees may be set to recover "actual development costs of the information." The cost savings or benefits to both the consumer of government information and services and to the government itself will be difficult to measure until such services are developed. This proposal, which establishes the "Tools of Democracy," assumes that more specialized information services created by an agency and a core group of client institutions, for example, may require a fee based set-up to fund the development and delivery of such a service. The question of when an information service should subsidized by the taxpayers as a whole must be viewed within the context of a government unit's mission and authority.

## 6.3 Public Access to Search Tools

Establish the right of public access and use of electronic search and database tools. In situations where a government unit has created a database or information system where the value of the information, or combination/manipulation of pieces of public data is affected by the use those search tools the public shall have the right to use those search tools. Government units shall have the authority to determine how best to ensure access, but it is the State's interest to promote both on-site and remote access.

## 6.4 On-site Electronic Inspection

The notion of electronic inspection will be established as it relates to the public's right to view information stored on-site in electronic form. Government units must ensure that the public has access to public information in whatever form, but may develop policies and procedures that maintain the security of their information system. These policies and procedures must not deny the public the right to inspect government information in a timely manner nor may they inhibit the public's access to the available public information. (In some cases an agency may have an employee assist someone or they may ultimately print the information and allow inspection that way.)

## 6.5 Government Subscription-based Publications in Electronic Form

If a government units function is to develop and distribute fee-based subscription based information in print form, the addition of electronic dissemination or access may be integrated into the overall fee structure. A government unit may choose to provide subsidized or free access to past publications and must provide for electronic dissemination when possible and found to be in the interest of the information consumer. (i.e. State Register, etc.)

## 6.6 Monopoly Control Prohibited without Statuatory Exemption

Units of government shall not enter into agreements that provide for exclusive of monopoly control of public information in electronic form through a single commercial entity unless provided for under Statute. This does not prohibit non-government entities from offering value-added services that contain public information. Also, government units may enter into non-exclusive agreements with commercial or non-profit information services.

## 6.7 Commercial Provision of Public Information

The provision or sale of public information by a commercial information provider must contain accurate information on how and where that information may be obtained directly from government. This applies to situations where the information has not been

enhanced significantly or was copied from the government information providers public access system without an agreement between the government unit and the commercial information provider. This section represents a balance between the private entities right to use the public information for whatever purpose and the public's right to access it as established by government.


## 6.8 MPIN and Non-exclusive Arrangements with Non-Government Entities

The Minnesota Public Information Network is authorized to establish non-exclusive arrangements with commercial and non-profit information and network service providers. These arrangements may allow access to the state-wide public access system through those service providers. Fees may be established in accordance with the Data Practices Act, but should be structured to ensure broad public access. This provision, for example, could provide for access to the state-wide common access point to be available through a community-based information network or Freenet at no cost to that provider. A commercial information provider through negotiations with the MPIN may be charged a fee associated with the commercial value of the information service.

# Minnesota Public Information Network Highlights

**The Minnesota Public Information Network will:**

* Improve public access to government information and the delivery of services to the public through the use of information technology.

* Help organize an user-friendly electronic communications environment that will allow citizens and businesses to interact more effectively and efficiently with all levels of government.

* Lead state-wide planning projects and help bring together demonstration projects from all evels of government that are geared toward the public.

Provide outreach, training, and educational programs for government and the public.

Develop a common access point to government information and services that can be ccessed through multiple technologies and applications. This will include the use of the omputers, public-access terminals, and kiosks through the Internet, dial-up connections, and 1rough future high-speed information networks that will provide service to homes and usinesses.

Be funded through an appropriation from the Legislature and through potential Federal 1atching grants.

Be located within the Department of Administration and the Information Policy Office and e Information Policy Council will act as advisory bodies.

**ate Agencies, Local Governments, Libraries, Educational Institutions, and Other >vernment Units will:**

Be the primary information and service providers through the common access point that is ordinated by the Minnesota Public Information Network. The expanding information tworks will allow government units to develop, organize, and maintain responsibility for the ormation and services they provide from almost any location.

Need to integrate the use of information technology throughout their organization to assist its dealings with the public where useful and appropriate.

Begin to develop plans and proposals for public information electronic access and service ivery. The MPIN will be a major information resource in this area and will help develop laborative projects that allow government units to pool their resources and expertise. This help address budget constraints for both large and small government organizations

'articipate in working groups organized by MPIN to help government units share wledge, expertise, and develop appropriate and flexible standards and protocols for public :ss systems.

# ELECTRONIC ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT INFORMATION AND SERVICES

## BACKGROUND

The demand for government services and information continue to grow while resources to provide these services continue to shrink. Citizens want to obtain services and information at a time and place that is convenient to them, not the government. Minnesota government must reform the way it delivers services and information. These demands can be coupled with the high level of public attention that has been focused on the possibilities of a future "information highway." With the federal government's National Information Infrastructure initiative and activities in the telecommunication and technology industries the agenda is set for these issues to be addressed at the state level.

During the 1993 legislative session, a proposal was introduced that raised a issues around the need to improve public access to government information and the delivery of services through the use of information technology. The Information Policy Office, with the support of the Information Policy Council, established an ad-hoc task force to address those issues and propose an overall strategy for coordinated state-wide electronic public access and service delivery.

The task force began meeting in the fall of 1993 and it sought to better understand what services state agencies were either providing or planning to provide electronically. It was clear that many agencies were active in this area and that there was little coordination or collaboration. As the proposal work in this area progressed, it became quite evident that local governments, libraries, educational institutions, other government units, businesses and the public need a process for greater involvement.

On January 18, 1994 a draft legislative proposal for providing coordinated planning and demonstration projects was released, including an electronic release on the Internet. The draft presents a vision of potential services, demonstration projects, planning processes, and some data practices changes. Funding has been requested to support coordination of government applications and demonstration projects through the Department of Administration. The response from the electronic release of the document has been very positive and requests from government, the public, and other states and nations for more information arrive daily.

## ISSUES

*Limited Access, Growing Demand for Services*
Currently, state agencies, local government, private citizens and businesses do not have timely, inexpensive access to public government information and may not even be aware of what information is available or where to get it. The demand for government services is outstripping the public resources available to provide them. Minnesota must develop more effective and efficient ways to deliver public services.

*Demonstration Projects, Long-term Planning*
The release of the draft proposal and resulting high-level of interest make it clear that there is a need for long-term planning that involves a broad spectrum of interested parties in the development of services in this area. The development of demonstration projects in the near-term will be important to move government forward, gauge consumer/citizen demand and interest, and to build public sector experience in this sector.

*Use of Multiple Technologies, Applications*
A comprehensive, coordinated electronic access system will improve public access to government information and the delivery of government services through the creation of an open, organized and easy to use electronic communication environment that uses multiple information technologies. These technologies include home and business computers, public access terminals in libraries, touch-screen kiosks, fax-based systems and access through many software applications including those that are Internet-based. Examples of uses might include: searches for job openings, license applications or renewals, voter registration, or ordering a birth certificate. A core set of information resources essential to citizen participation, "The Tools of Democracy," would be available through the common access system as well as access to other government information services. These information services may be made available at no or low cost to the user or on a fee basis in accordance with the current data practice statutes and a government organizations mission and programs.

*Federal Matching Funds*
The U.S. Department of Commerce is providing a new federal matching grant program to encourage the use of advanced telecommunication technology by state and local government. The new program will be administered by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA). Federal matching funds would help us meet our goal of providing more government information and services electronically.

## RECOMMENDATIONS
The State of Minnesota should focus electronic access activity on ways to make government more open, efficient, effective and responsive to citizens and businesses through the application and use of a wide array of information technologies. This includes long-term efforts to build and organize an electronic communications environment that will allow citizen interaction with **all** levels of government. Also, service delivery should be more centrally coordinated in order to leverage resources and eliminate redundancy and confusion. Agencies will need to build applications and collaboration into their ongoing operations, and separate agencies, boards, or commissions should not develop isolated or incompatible systems.

This initiative will change the way information is collected and stored, and the way information and services are provided. Standards, policies and procedures will need to be established to deal with concerns such as sale of government information, security, privacy, data ownership, etc. and provide for a user-friendly, common interface where appropriate.

This initiative should lead a statewide planning project a ensure broad public and government participation. It should also begin demonstration projects that involve many levels of government. To complement the planning and demonstration efforts it should provide outreach, training and educational programs for government and the public. This initiative should serve as a clearinghouse for information on how governments have used information technology in the delivery of services and to improve public access.

## For more information about this initiative contact:

Electronic Access to Public Information Task Force
c/o Steven Clift
Information Policy Office
Minnesota Department of Administration
320 Centennial Office Building
St. Paul, MN 55155

Fax: (612)296-5800

Electronic Mail:
steven.clift@state.mn.us

Telephone: (612)297-5561

# Access Minnesota

*Electronic Access to Government Information and Services*

## Purpose:

To improve the public's access to government information and democratic processes and to help government become more efficient, effective, and responsive in providing public services through the use of a wide array of information technologies.

## Coordination and Demonstration Projects:

Minnesota needs to develop a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated electronic access system to government information and services. Many state agencies, constitutional offices, the legislature, local governments, libraries, educational institutions and other public organizations are exploring the use of technology to improve the delivery of their services. These efforts will help bring them together to participate in the creation of an open, organized, and easy to use electronic communication environment for citizen and business interaction with all levels of government.
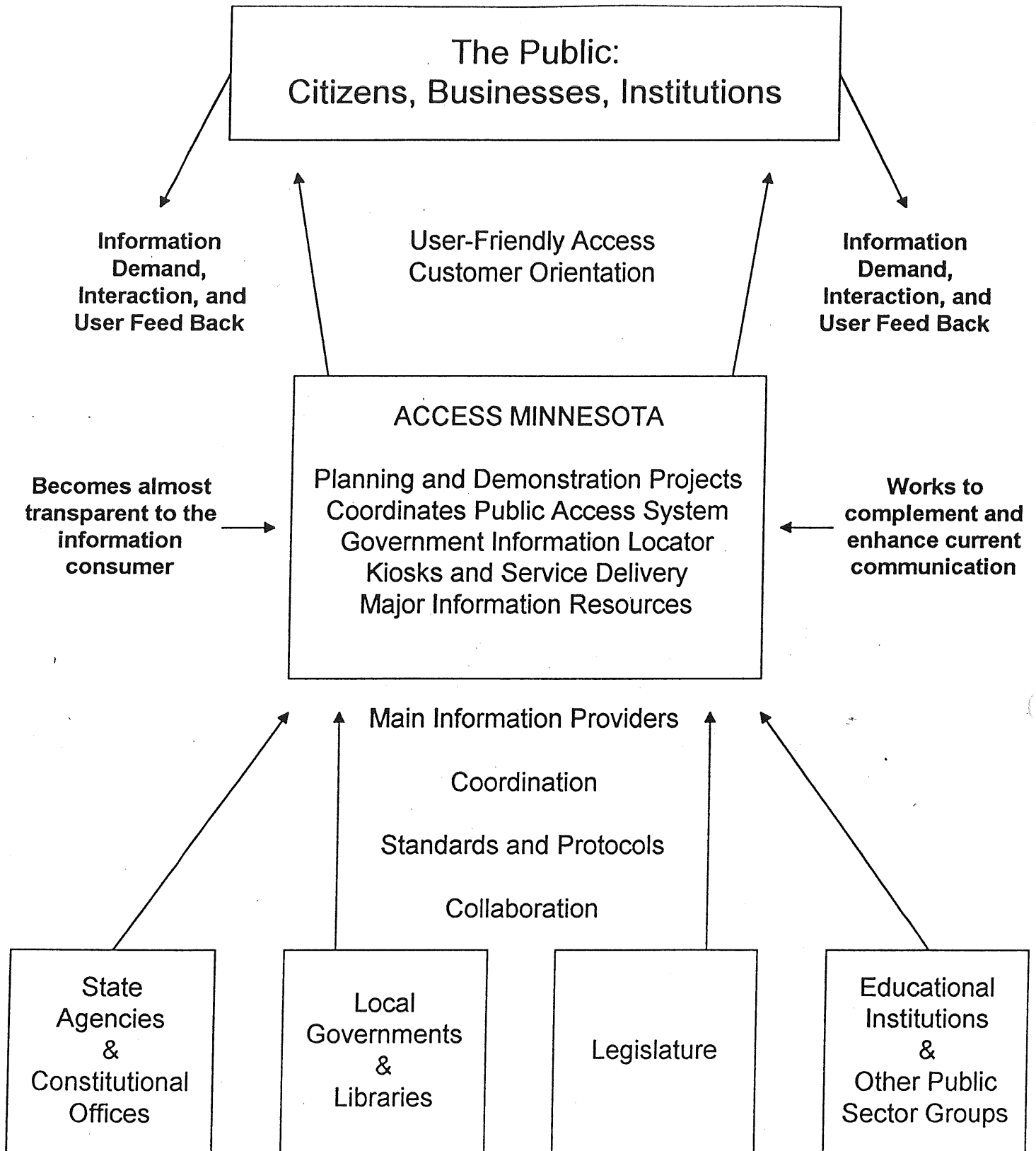
Demonstration projects will be the first phase of implementation and will help the state gain needed experience in this area. Demonstration projects will also be complemented by a process to inform and involve all levels of government, non-profit organizations, the citizens, and the private sector. As the electronic access systems develops a distributed mix of computer based on-line information resources, a network of kiosks in convenient locations, and a system of fax-based and interactive telephone response services may be utilized. Examples of potential applications and technology include searching for job openings, renewing a license, or registering to vote through a kiosk, getting background on a legislative proposal or searching a directory for a government expert through a computer-based on-line service, or receiving notice for a government meeting through fax or electronic mail.

## Funding:

The Governor has recommended $550,000 for F.Y. 1995 to support the planning and coordination of applications and demonstration projects through the Department of Administration. Federal matching grants are available from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).

## Technology:

The electronic public access system will use a mix of technologies that are designed serve citizen needs and demands. The state must make strategic public investments in information technology and develop public-private partnerships; embrace evolving advancements in interoperable computer information networks like the Internet, the use of touch-screen kiosks for government services and licenses; and keep a watchful eye on future applications for the emerging "information superhighway." We must also ensure broad public access through the better use of telephone and fax-back based services and through public access terminals in libraries, schools, and other public places.

# The Public:
# Citizens, Businesses, Institutions

**Information Demand, Interaction, and User Feed Back**

User-Friendly Access
Customer Orientation

**Information Demand, Interaction, and User Feed Back**

**Becomes almost transparent to the information consumer**

## ACCESS MINNESOTA

Planning and Demonstration Projects
Coordinates Public Access System
Government Information Locator
Kiosks and Service Delivery
Major Information Resources

**Works to complement and enhance current communication**

Main Information Providers

Coordination

Standards and Protocols

Collaboration

| State Agencies & Constitutional Offices | Local Governments & Libraries | Legislature | Educational Institutions & Other Public Sector Groups |
|---|---|---|---|

**General Information - Directory Information - Information Services - Transactions**

**Reports - Press Releases - Rules - Educational Material - Correspondence**

**Answers to Frequently Asked Questions - Forms - Registrations**