

# Public accountability

**Public accountability is the means by which government can be held accountable to citizens.**

It includes a variety of rules, mechanisms and institutions which prevent arbitrary or corrupt actions by government or its officials (elected or unelected), discourage such actions by shining a light on them, or bringing them to account if their actions require it.

Together, these arrangements play a fundamental role in ensuring government openness. Accountability is important because:

- It helps to fight corruption
- It promotes better decision-making
- It promotes public confidence in government

## The challenge

**To achieve genuine improvements in accountability in an atmosphere of public suspicion through channelling the potential of technology to connect government, citizens and elected representative in a dynamic and constructive way.**

There is a danger that improvements in accountability may be dismissed as insufficient, ineffective or irrelevant. Nevertheless, the rapid development of internet-based technologies and the growth in the number of mobile devices brings the potential to use technology to connect the government, citizens and elected representative in a dynamic and constructive way. This too brings many challenges. How can government and representatives digest and respond meaningfully to mass inward communications? How can we encourage those who are not taking part in traditional routes for engagement to participate electronically (assuming that they have access to the internet in the first place)?

## The outcome

**By 2018, we will have made a real advance in digital democracy – proving the concept and using it as appropriate – and demonstrating that it is possible to open genuine dialogue between government and citizens using technology.**