



E-Government for Government

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Distribution: Municipal Clerks, Municipal Chief Financial Officers, Clerks to the Boards of Chosen Freeholders, & County Chief Financial Officers.

How To Use GovConnect

This Notice reviews the rules and procedures for using GovConnect, and for those local units that are using a computer or the Internet for the first time, general guidance on policies they should adopt.

There are several steps users should take to begin using GovConnect. They include:

- Have computer "appropriate use" policies in place
- Signing up with GovConnect
- GovConnect Features
- GovConnect Usage Policies
- GovConnect Access for Deputies
- Individuals who serve in more than one position

It is important for local officials to keep in mind that starting January 1, 2002, State agencies (particularly the Division of Local Government Services) will start using GovConnect as their way to communicate with them. That means, for some purposes, paper-based materials will no longer be used and information will only be transmitted through GovConnect. Thus, it is important that by January 1 the local officers (at this time this includes municipal clerks, municipal and county chief financial officers, and clerks to the Board of Chosen Freeholders) in the program must be signed up in order for them to receive communications from the State. While there is no need to immediately rush out

and get a computer and sign up in the next 10 days, progress is necessary.

Division staff will be attending the Government Finance Officers Association, the Municipal Clerks Association, and the State League of Municipalities Conferences and will have staff available to demonstrate the system, as well as sign-up users. For local officials who are not part of the roll out, we will be able to help you sign up for the My New Jersey system, which is available to anyone.

The Division is prepared to assist local officers or local governments that have difficulty in meeting this requirement. In addition to the GovConnect Grants (see EGG # 8) made available to meet the cost of complying with this mandate, local units that have concerns or need additional support complying with this technological advance should contact us to review them. We appreciate that using the Internet may raise concerns and we look forward to working to resolve them.

Please carefully review the balance of this Notice as you move forward.

Adopt Computer "Appropriate Use" Policies

Every local government unit whose employees use a computer or the Internet should have policies that recognize their

employee's right to privacy, but balance that with the responsibility to protect the employer from employee improper use of public resources. Thus, every local unit should adopt an "appropriate use policy" to ensure that employees know what is expected of them with regard to the use of e-mail, the Internet, and the use of the computer to ensure that, like any public resource (like the telephone), its use is for public, not private purpose.

The expectation of an appropriate use policy is to ensure that computer resources:

- are not used for personal gain;
- are used to conduct government business, not personal business;
- that privacy is not an absolute guarantee, and that the public employer has the right to observe and inspect use of computers and their use;
- shall not be used to create offensive or disruptive e-mail
- that information stored on computers may be used for legal proceedings and that local unit officials shall have access to the systems, regardless of individual security or password systems that may be used;
- that violating policies or laws may subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination or prosecution.

These are normal policies that are used in government and private corporations around the world. Local units should contact their legal advisors for the proper form that fits their needs. The New Jersey League of Municipalities has a sample policy available from their Municipal Information Bureau. The policy was published in the October 2000 issue of *New Jersey*

Municipalities, is available on their web site (www.njslom.com), and by calling the League's office at 609.695.3481.

There is no reason why every local unit should not have this type of policy in place.

This is stated with the understanding, that like telephone use, there will be times where web or e-mail resources may be used for personal purposes, however, these should always be incidental and not take away from performing public business. Local choices drive these decisions and local officials should be sure they follow local policies.

We are aware that some local officials are concerned that employees with Internet access will not focus on their work and use the Internet inappropriately. While this is possible, we also know that employees can abuse other technological tools. We can guess that when it was new, the telephone was seen is a similar light. However, the role of management is to ensure that employees understand their responsibilities. Management should adopt appropriate policies and rules to make it clear that employees use all tools as expected and appropriate. It is the role of management to take action when the rules are violated; applying these tools to Internet use is no different than any other work policies or rules.

Signing On to GovConnect

The GovConnect folder contains several items that will help guide local officials to sign-on and use GovConnect. **Please review them all before continuing with the GovConnect signup process.** They include:

1. **EGG Notice #6**, personalized with the local official's name and

the authentication code necessary to access GovConnect

2. **EGG #8**, information on GovConnect grants for the local officers that do not have an Internet capable computer or Internet access.
3. A GovConnect **Grant Application** form.
4. A **CD Tutorial** (and instruction sheet) demonstration of how to sign-on to GovConnect, as well as programs that may be necessary to install on a computer used to access GovConnect.
5. A printed step-by-step **Registration Guide** to signing on to GovConnect.
6. A **"Help" sheet** with information on what to do if you have problems signing onto GovConnect or other issues with the system.

Note: *If you participated in the GovConnect Pilot program, it is necessary for you to follow the enclosed authentication instructions in order for you to establish your role. Refer to the instructions that describe what to do if you are already registered with My New Jersey (which you are).*

The GovConnect sign-up process is easy for anyone, as long as they review the information in the package first. The first step is to make sure you have a computer and a connection to the Internet. Once that is available, watch the "movie" on the CD, then log-on to the Internet and follow the step-by-step printed instructions. The CD also contains file viewer programs that you can install. These are primarily intended for users new to the Internet and those users that do not have the Microsoft Office program.

It is that simple.

GovConnect Features

The GovConnect "Home" page contains "channels" of information related to the role of each participating official. If an official has more than one role (i.e., is a CFO and a Clerk), all role channels will appear on the page. Each user can customize the content and layout of the page by clicking "Content" or "Layout" at the top of the home page.

The following are primary Channels made available to all GovConnect users:

- **GovConnect News** contains priority information and links to new Local Finance Notices (LFN), *E-Government for Government* notices (EGGs), links to document library information (see next item), information about legislation and important reminders and dates. Also included is a "site of the week" for user tips and other useful information. (Users are urged to submit suggestions for this feature to us.)
- **Document Libraries** are usually files with information on specific subjects. They may include summaries of new Notices with links to them, information from State agencies on current issues, common forms, or other information. Two libraries are available; one containing documents that are specific to your organizational "role" and a second "GovExchange" library that contains documents related to common areas of local government.
- **Discussion Forums** are moderated "discussions" between members and State agencies for discussions on role-specific questions or reply to questions among group members.

It's a great way to exchange ideas or develop resolutions among peers.

- **White Pages Directory** is a government-to-government directory containing the name, address, phone number and e-mail address of other GovConnect members. While this is a rudimentary function at this time, its functionality will grow as the system evolves.
- **MyNJ govlinks** – contains direct links to other governmental sites containing useful information such as City Connections and Governing Magazine. You can also bookmark your own favorites on this channel for future reference.

Eventually, as State agencies develop new applications, more channels may be added. Please also be sure to take advantage of the other basic My New Jersey channels that can be added from the Content function.

GovConnect Usage Policies

As a government resource, it should not require repeating that the GovConnect web site and governmentally owned computer resources are to be used for government purposes only. The rules for website use are simple and clear:

1. GovConnect is for local government workers to conduct local unit and related professional business
2. It is not to be used for lobbying local, State, or federal legislators or to advocate positions on proposed legislation; though GovConnect "Discussion forums may be used to discuss legislative proposals"
3. Information posted in GovConnect "Discussion Forum" is subject to editing and moderation by the DLGS role administrator. This means that

offensive or material irrelevant to the conduct of business may be removed.

4. Starting January 1, 2002 local officials who are participants must check the web site and their e-mail at least once every two days to be sure they receive up-to-date information; this is a new responsibility of their appointed or certified position; it is similar to opening the mail.
5. Reasonable communications related to local unit professional organizations are permitted as being part of local unit affairs. However, lobbying is not permitted.
6. Only the local official in whose name access is granted shall use access granted to that person. If other officials in an office are required to assist the local officer, the local officer may request that "Deputy" access be made available to those individuals.

Use of Deputies

In many local government units, the appointed local officials may use one or more deputies to assist in the operations of the office. Often, these individuals are authorized to act on behalf of the appointed official. To permit these individuals to participate in GovConnect, and, once applications that require the use of an authenticated individual, the appointed official may request "deputy status" for those subordinate individuals they determine are necessary to perform the official's required activities. The GovConnect Document library for each role includes a "Deputy" form that can be downloaded and returned to the Division for approval and issuance of an authentication code.

Individuals Who Serve in More Than One Position

There are a number of local officials who serve in more than one local unit, occasionally in different positions. Examples include serving as Clerk in one municipality and CFO in another; serving as CFO and Clerk in one, or as CFO or Clerk in two or more municipalities). There are two issues that affect these individuals: how to register in the different positions, and eligibility for GovConnect grants.

An individual has to register only once in MyNewJersey and have one log-on and password. However, it **is** necessary to use the authentication code assigned to each position to ensure that the individual is properly registered for each official position held.

Thus, an individual who received more than one EGG 6 (one for each position they hold in each municipality or county) must register in MyNewJersey once, but authenticate for each position they hold. This will ensure they are properly registered in the White Pages and will receive communications targeted to the position. The sign-on instructions in the GovConnect package include instructions on how to authenticate if you are already registered as a MyNewJersey user.

GovConnect requires that the individual have access to the Internet and network in a place where they conduct work for the local unit. Details on eligibility for grants are found in EGG 8.

In Closing...

The use of GovConnect and the My New Jersey portal is the start of new ways of performing government activities. We respect that some local officials may be

reluctant to embrace these changes. We ask that those organizations contact us so we can personally discuss their concerns and show how these changes will improve the way government services are delivered and administered. Please contact us at 609.943.4724 or e-mail us at egg@dca.state.nj.us if you have these concerns.

