Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies

OECD

BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

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Background Information

The Recommendation on Digital Governance Strategies was adopted by the OECD Council on 15 July 2014 on the proposal of the Public Governance Committee. The Recommendation is the first international legal instrument on digital government. It aims at helping Adherents adopt more strategic approaches for a use of technology that spurs more open, efficient, participatory and innovative governments. The Recommendation offers guidance for a shared understanding and a mind-set on how to prepare for, and get the most out of, technological change and digital opportunities in a long-term perspective to create public value and mitigate risks related to: quality of public service delivery, public sector efficiency, social inclusion and participation, public trust, and multilevel and multi-actor governance.

THE COUNCIL,

HAVING REGARD to Article 5 b) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960;

HAVING REGARD to the Recommendation of the Council concerning Guidelines Governing the Protection of Privacy and Transborder Flows of Personal Data [C(80)58/FINAL, as amended]; the Recommendation of the Council on Improving the Quality of Government Regulation [C(95)21/FINAL]; the Recommendation of the Council on Improving Ethical Conduct in the Public Service Including Principles for Managing Ethics in the Public Service [C(98)70/FINAL]; the Recommendation of the Council Concerning Guidelines for the Security of Information Systems and Networks - Towards a Culture of Security [C(2002)131/FINAL]; the Recommendation of the Council on Electronic Authentication [C(2008)36]; the Recommendation of the Council for Enhanced Access and More Effective Use of Public Sector Information [C(2007)68]; the Recommendation of the Council on Enhancing Integrity in Public Procurement [C(2008)105]; the Recommendation of the Council on the Protection of Critical Information Infrastructures [C(2008)35]; the Recommendation of the Council on the Protection of Children Online [C(2011)155]; the Recommendation of the Council on Principles for Internet Policy Making [C(2011)154]; the Recommendation of the Council on Principles for Public Governance of Public-Private Partnerships [C(2012)86]; the Recommendation of the Council on International Mobile Roaming Services [C(2012)7]; the Recommendation of the Council on Regulatory Policy and Governance [C(2012)37]; the Recommendation of the Council on Effective Public Investment across Levels of Government [C(2014)32]; the Recommendation of the Council on the Governance of Critical Risks [C/MIN(2014)8/FINAL];

HAVING REGARD to the Agenda on "Trust in Government: Evidence, Policies and Decision-making" welcomed by the 2013 Ministerial Council Meeting [C/MIN(2013)4/FINAL, Annex III];

RECOGNISING that public investments on digital government occur at all levels of government thus creating a context of shared responsibility across levels of government;

RECOGNISING a new stage of maturity in the use of digital technologies by governments and a shift from e-government to digital government with a view to opening, innovating and modernising public sectors;

RECOGNISING that both in times of fiscal pressure and of fiscal expansion, governments require improved efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, including for digital technologies;

RECOGNISING the need of a common vision to ensure coherence in the use of digital technologies across policy areas and levels of governments;

RECOGNISING that digital government can make a crucial contribution to sustainable development and growth at the national and sub-national levels, as well as anticipate current and future steps needed to increase citizen trust and well-being;

NOTING that the OECD plays a leading role in supporting the use of technology to promote good governance at national and sub-national levels of government;

HAVING REGARD to the background document on the principles embodied in the present Recommendation noted by the Network on E-Government of the Public Governance Committee [GOV/PGC/EGOV(2013)1];

On the proposal of the Public Governance Committee:

I.   AGREES that, for the purpose of the present draft Recommendation, the following definitions are used:

-       E-Government refers to the use by the governments of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government

- Digital Government refers to the use of digital technologies, as an integrated part of governments' modernisation strategies, to create public value. It relies on a digital government ecosystem comprised of government actors, non-governmental organisations, businesses, citizens' associations and individuals which supports the production of and access to data, services and content through interactions with the government.

- Digital technologies refer to ICTs, including the Internet, mobile technologies and devices, as well as data analytics used to improve the generation, collection, exchange, aggregation, combination, analysis, access, searchability and presentation of digital content, including for the development of services and apps.

- Public value refers to various benefits for society that may vary according to the perspective or the actors, including the following : 1) goods or services that satisfy the desires of citizens and clients; 2) production choices that meet citizen expectations of justice, fairness, efficiency and effectiveness; 3) properly ordered and productive public institutions that reflect citizens' desires and preferences; 4) fairness and efficiency of distribution; 5) legitimate use of resource to accomplish public purposes; and 6) innovation and adaptability to changing preferences and demands.

II.   RECOMMENDS that governments develop and implement digital government strategies which:

1.   Ensure greater transparency, openness and inclusiveness of government processes and operations by:

> i)   adopting open and inclusive processes, accessibility, transparency and accountability among the main goals of national digital government strategies;
>
> ii)   updating accountability and transparency regulations recognising different contexts and expectations brought about by digital technologies and technology-driven approaches;
>
> iii) taking steps to address existing "digital divides" (i.e. the fact that societies can be divided into people who do and people who do not have access to - and the capability to use - digital technologies) and avoid the emergence of new forms of "digital exclusion" (i.e. not being able to take advantage of digital services and opportunities).

2.   Encourage engagement and participation of public, private and civil society stakeholders in policy making and public service design and delivery, through:

> i)   addressing issues of citizens' rights, organisation and resource allocation, adoption of new rules and standards, use of communication tools and development of institutional capacities to help facilitate engagement of all age groups and population segments, in particular through the clarification of the formal responsibilities and procedures (e.g. adoption of guidelines clarifying roles and procedures for establishing and managing official government accounts on social media, norms of data sharing);
>
> ii)   identifying and engaging non-governmental organisations, businesses or citizens to form a digital government ecosystem for the provision and use of digital services. This includes the use of business models to motivate the relevant actors' involvement to adjust supply and demand; and the establishment of a framework of collaboration, both within the public sector and with external actors.

3.   Create a data-driven culture in the public sector, by:

> i)   developing frameworks to enable, guide, and foster access to, use and re-use of, the increasing amount of evidence, statistics and data concerning operations, processes and results to (a) increase openness and transparency, and (b) incentivise public engagement in policy making, public value creation, service design and delivery;

ii)   balancing the need to provide timely official data with the need to deliver trustworthy data, managing risks of data misuse related to the increased availability of data in open formats (i.e. allowing use and re-use, and the possibility for non-governmental actors to re-use and supplement data with a view to maximise public economic and social value).

4.   Reflect a risk management approach to addressing digital security and privacy issues, and include the adoption of effective and appropriate security measures, so as to increase confidence on government services.

III.   RECOMMENDS that, in developing their digital government strategies, governments should:

5.   Secure leadership and political commitment to the strategy, through a combination of efforts aimed to promote inter-ministerial co-ordination and collaboration, set priorities and facilitate engagement and co-ordination of relevant agencies across levels of government in pursuing the digital government agenda.

6.   Ensure coherent use of digital technologies across policy areas and levels of government, by:

i)   engaging relevant stakeholders and other levels of government to provide input to the development of the digital government strategy;

ii)   integrating the digital government strategy in overall public administration reforms;

iii)   identifying the complementarity, alignment and mutual reinforcement between the digital government strategy and other relevant sector strategies;

iv)   providing the institution formally responsible for digital government co-ordination with the mechanisms to align overall strategic choices on investments in digital technologies with technological deployment in various policy areas.

7.   Establish effective organisational and governance frameworks to co-ordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within and across levels of government, through:

i)   identifying clear responsibilities to ensure overall co-ordination of the implementation of the digital government strategy;

ii)   establishing a system for "check and balances" of governments' decisions on spending on technology to increase the level of accountability and public trust, and to improve decision-making and management to minimise risks of project failures and delays.

8.   Strengthen international co-operation with other governments to better serve citizens and businesses across borders, and maximise the benefits that can emerge from early knowledge sharing and co-ordination of digital strategies internationally.

IV.   RECOMMENDS that, in implementing the digital government strategies, governments should:

9.   Develop clear business cases to sustain the funding and focused implementation of digital technologies projects, by:

i)   articulating the value proposition for all projects above a certain budget threshold to identify expected economic, social and political benefits to justify public investments and to improve project management;

ii)   involving key stakeholders in the definition of the business case (including owners and users of final services, different levels of governments involved in or affected by the project, and private sector or non-for profit service providers) to ensure buy in and distribution of realised benefits.

10.   Reinforce institutional capacities to manage and monitor projects' implementation, by:

   i)   adopting structured approaches systematically, also for the management of risks, that include increase in the amount of evidence and data captured in the course of project implementation and provision of incentives to augment data use to monitor projects performance;

   ii)   ensuring the availability at any time of a comprehensive picture of on-going digital initiatives to avoid duplication of systems and datasets;

   iii) establishing evaluation and measurement frameworks for projects' performance at all levels of government, and adopting and uniformly applying standards, guidelines, codes for procurement and compliance with interoperability frameworks, for regular reporting and conditional release of funding;

   iv)   reinforcing their public sector's digital and project management skills, mobilising collaborations and/or partnerships with private and non-governmental sector actors as necessary;

   v)   conducting early sharing, testing and evaluation of prototypes with involvement of expected end-users to allow adjustment and successful scaling of projects.

11.   Procure digital technologies based on assessment of existing assets including digital skills, job profiles, technologies, contracts, inter-agency agreements to increase efficiency, support innovation, and best sustain objectives stated in the overall public sector modernisation agenda. Procurement and contracting rules should be updated, as appropriate, to make them compatible with modern ways of developing and deploying digital technology.

12.   Ensure that general and sector-specific legal and regulatory frameworks allow digital opportunities to be seized, by:

   i)   reviewing them as appropriate;

   ii)   including assessment of the implications of new legislations on governments' digital needs as part of the regulatory impact assessment process.

V.   **INVITES** the Secretary-General to disseminate the Recommendation.

VI.   **INVITES** Members to disseminate this Recommendation at all levels of government.

VII.   **INVITES** non-Members to take account of and adhere to this Recommendation.

VIII.   **INSTRUCTS** the Public Governance Committee to monitor the implementation of this Recommendation and to report thereon to the Council no later than three years following its adoption and regularly thereafter, notably in consultation with the Committee on Digital Economy Policy.

Adherents*

OECD Members		Non-Members	Other
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Belgium		Colombia	
Canada		Costa Rica	
Chile		Egypt	
Czech Republic		Kazakhstan	
Denmark		Morocco	
Estonia		Panama	
Finland		Peru	
France		Russian Federation	
Germany			
Greece			
Hungary			
Iceland			
Ireland			
Israel			
Italy			
Japan			
Korea			
Latvia			
Lithuania			
Luxembourg			
Mexico			
Netherlands			
New Zealand			
Norway			
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- **Arrangement, Understanding and Others**: several ad hoc substantive legal instruments have been developed within the OECD framework over time, such as the Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits, the International Understanding on Maritime Transport Principles and the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) Recommendations.