

# OECD Good Practice Principles for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age



# Introduction

Building on work done by the OECD Secretariat since 2017 and under the leadership of the Working Party of Senior Digital Government Officials (E-Leaders), and in particular the E-Leaders Thematic Group on Service Design and Delivery, the Good Practice Principles (GPPs) for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age provide the basis for the strategic and responsible use of digital technologies and data to improve the design and delivery of public services. As public services are the essential point of contact between governments and citizens, efficient,

proactive and user-driven services contribute to strengthening trust and promoting the reliability of governments through improving outcomes and increasing satisfaction.

Conceived to be applicable to different administrative environments, the Good Practice Principles are meant to inspire and inform concrete policy actions and contribute to the overall efforts to advance a digital transformation of governments that benefits societies and economies.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

These principles were prepared by the OECD Digital Government and Data Unit within the Open and Innovative Government Division (OIG), Public Governance Directorate (GOV).

Benjamin Welby, Policy Analyst, Digital Government and Data, served as the lead coordinator for this project, and co-drafted with Lucia Chauvet, Jr. Policy Analyst, Digital Government and Data, OECD. Felipe González-Zapata, Policy Analyst, Digital Government and Data and Seong-Ju Park, Policy Analyst, Digital Government and Data made an essential contribution to the final editing and refinement of the principles. Barbara-Chiara Ubaldi, Head of the Digital Government and Data Unit, OECD, provided strategic orientation and revisions to these principles.

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## METHODOLOGY

The principles were drawn from studying the standards and principles guiding digital government in Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Scotland, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States. In total, approximately 300 distinct ideas were contained within these standards of which, unsurprisingly there is quite a significant amount of overlap.

After carrying out a clustering exercise, it was possible to group these 300 ideas under different thematic areas, the final version of the Good Practice Principles for Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age benefitted from a one-month public consultation process, multiple rounds of internal reviews and comments from the E-leaders Thematic Group.

# Build accessible, ethical and equitable public services that prioritise user needs, rather than government needs

## 1. UNDERSTAND USERS AND THEIR NEEDS



- Explore, understand and solve a whole problem for users from an initial need through to its resolution.
- Involve users on an ongoing basis, using innovative methods for conducting regular user research, to identify insights for iterating the design of services, simplifying underlying procedures and increasing access for all user groups.
- Document the user journeys, data flows and organisational responsibilities to map the whole problem
- In line with the once-only principle, identify opportunities to pre-populate public services by reusing existing sources of data held by government and reducing the data submission overheads for users wherever possible
- Ensure users' ability to manage their personal data

## 2. MAKE THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES A PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE PROCESS



- Empower users to take an active role in co-creating and co-designing public services (e.g. implementing mechanisms to involve users in testing, iterating and improving the service)
- Use clear language that can be understood by all user groups
- Learn from research, feedback and performance indicators to iterate public services on an ongoing basis with the goal of becoming intuitive enough that users succeed in using them first time
- Keep users informed proactively and through trusted, official sources, rather than requiring them to initiate contact or seek out unverified third parties
- Address barriers that prevent people from accessing public services across all channels
- Recognise the value of non-digital channels to ease access and use them to engage users and equip them with new skills as needed
- Acknowledge that a minority of users will always be unable or unwilling to adopt digital public services and consider alternative mechanisms, where appropriate
- Provide the possibility to contact human support throughout the digital service cycle

## 3. ENSURE CONSISTENT, SEAMLESS AND HIGH-QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES



- Design an omni-channel experience that means user journeys provide the same outcomes across all channels
- Understand the channel access needs and preferences of different user groups to optimise the design, location and model of the omni-channel experience
- Design a visual identity that ensures a common look, feel and brand for public services
- Consolidate the channels of separate organisations to break down silos and help achieve coherent, integrated and interoperable public services
- Simplify the design of public services, and their underlying processes, ensuring users do not need to understand the internal structure of the public sector
- Respond to the needs of public servants when designing internal processes and systems
- Take a trustworthy and ethical approach to the use of data and technology to automate and personalise public services as a means of improving their proactive responsiveness to users' needs
- Design digital identity solutions as a seamless and user-friendly service with the ambition of ensuring all members of society can prove their identity online
- Explore the use of administrative data for better design, development, management and assessment of public services
- Ensure support to users is available no matter the chosen channel for accessing public services

# Deliver with impact, at scale and with pace

## 4. CREATE CONDITIONS THAT HELP TEAMS TO DESIGN AND DELIVER HIGH QUALITY PUBLIC SERVICES



- Understand the history of a service and its operational landscape, including suppliers, systems or other legacy considerations
- Encourage a service culture that is open to being adaptive, collaborative and focused on the needs of their users
- Fund teams so they can design, build, operate and iterate the service under their responsibility
- Build teams with a diverse set of skills and experiences that are representative of the users they serve
- Empower teams with the autonomy to make decisions throughout the service lifecycle, including prototyping, experimenting and testing different ways of solving user needs
- Ensure teams have access to the tools, training and technologies they need, especially those that require improvement in their working practices
- Consider cross-agency funding mechanisms to encourage multi-agency collaboration on public service design and delivery
- Ensure that teams have the flexibility and agility to adapt digital delivery to unexpected and exceptional use cases

## 5. DEVELOP A CONSISTENT DELIVERY METHODOLOGY FOR PUBLIC SERVICES



- Adopt delivery methodologies that favour continuous exploration, experimentation, learning and iterative improvement
- Control the scope of work and prioritise delivery to add the most value to users
- Use performance data to give teams actionable insights to inform decisions on channel strategy, identify underperforming services (e.g., in terms of cost-effectiveness and quality) and ensure value for money
- Frequently iterate the service in response to quantitative and qualitative data
- Understand the legacy technologies that services depend on and define the conditions under which systems and services will be retired or their contracts exited
- Agree on a common approach to selecting technology, digital architecture and tools
- Consider whether cloud-based software or infrastructure can meet your needs before committing to build or host solutions in-house
- Use scalable, cloud-based infrastructure to mitigate the risk of disruption

## 6. CURATE AN ECOSYSTEM OF ENABLING TOOLS, PRACTICES AND RESOURCES



- Implement clear and transparent governance mechanisms to cover accountability, quality, security and coherence of public services
- Use a common value proposition model (e.g., business cases) to help teams estimate multidimensional benefits and costs of a service
- Implement and use public procurement processes that are agile, open, fair and effective in line with agreed key performance indicators
- Create shared tools, components, platforms, databases, guides, manuals and standards to avoid duplication of effort
- Connect service teams and build professional networks to share experience and resources
- Establish a standardised process for service teams to present their research and showcase their delivery
- Stimulate the private sector and civil society sectors by exploring ways to meet user needs through non-public services they operate and involving suitable partners as suppliers or participants in the design and delivery of public services
- Ensure you have the appropriate data governance to share information and data across government to reduce the burden on citizens and other public sector organisations
- Make all non-sensitive data, information, code and software systematically available for sharing and reuse under an open licence by using open standards, practices, frameworks and reusable components

# Be accountable and transparent in the design and delivery of public services to reinforce and strengthen public trust

## 7. BE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT IN THE DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES



- Work in the open by publishing research and sharing journey maps of the end-to-end service when appropriate (user-facing and back-office)
- Publish the quality standards and performance indicators for each service
- Be transparent in the use and explicability of algorithms within public services and address the biases built into them
- Collaborate at all levels of government, between all disciplines and with all sectors
- Provide clear information about the service (e.g., expected length for completion and cost) and its expected users to set clear expectations and avoid frustrations

## 8. ENSURE THE TRUSTWORTHY AND ETHICAL USE OF DIGITAL TOOLS AND DATA



- Recognise security and privacy as foundational to the design of a service and not something overlaid at the end
- Anticipate the unintended consequences of redesigning services and deploying different technologies, and work to address possible concerns of users
- Take a balanced approach to mitigate risks and limit burden on users.
- Evaluate the data a service will gather, store or use and address the resulting security considerations, legal responsibilities, data retention practices, privacy issues and risks
- Equip all public servants with the knowledge of their responsibilities in terms of protecting personal data
- Consider the environmental and climate implications of technology choices and proactively explore ways to reduce waste and energy consumption
- Practice service unavailability (e.g. reliability, incident management response) and ensure there are alternative solutions
- Take actions to avoid biases in service design and ensure public services are universal and built for all users

## 9. ESTABLISH AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR A CULTURE AND PRACTICE OF PUBLIC SERVICE DESIGN AND DELIVERY

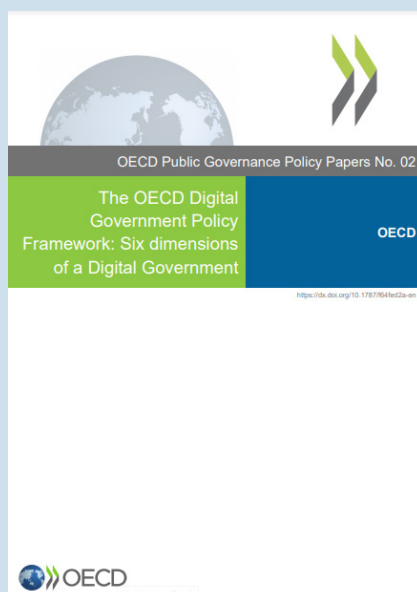


- Identify a political leader to champion the vision and promote it among their peers
- Encourage leaders within public sector organisations to enhance their own digital government user skills and actively create organisational environments that support public service design and delivery in the digital age
- Establish a monitoring system to measure performance in terms of whole services and whole outcomes, not just by focusing on discrete transactions or interactions with an individual agency
- Assess how the organisation will be affected in its work processes, structure, culture, stakeholders' relations; and define actions to manage possible implications
- Build a shared vision of change for public servants directly involved in designing and providing services, as well as the multi-disciplinary nature of related supporting roles (e.g., procurement, legal and operational colleagues)
- Equip public servants with the digital user skills to support digital government maturity
- Nurture relations with legislators and regulators to design new legislations and regulations with digital in mind and ensure rule-making accounts for the needs of service users





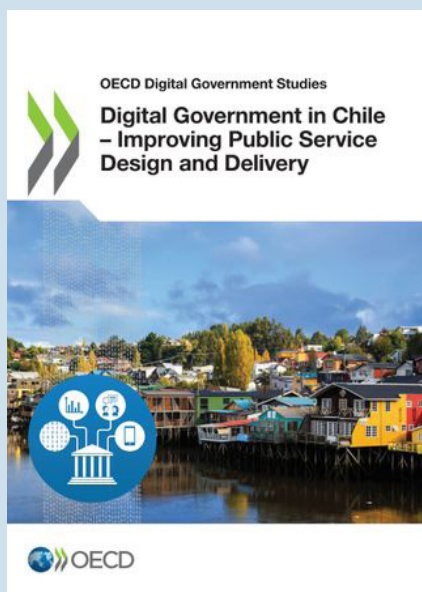
**2014 Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government**  
<https://oe.cd/digitalgovrecommendation>



**OECD Digital Government Policy Framework**  
<https://oe.cd/il/diggovframework>



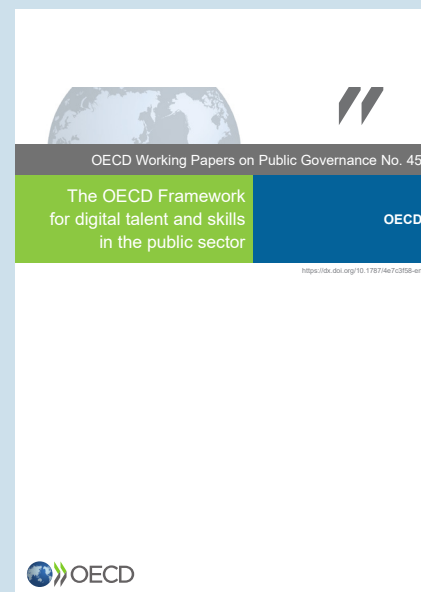
**OECD Good Practice Principles for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age**  
<https://doi.org/10.1787/2ade500b-en>



**Digital Government in Chile – Improving Public Service Design and Delivery**  
<https://oe.cd/chileSDD>



**Designing and delivering public services in the digital age**  
<https://oe.cd/il/going-digital-SDD>



**The OECD Framework for digital talent and skills in the public sector**  
<https://oe.cd/il/framework-digital-talent-skills>

