Connections

Transport Global Practice

Assessing Country Progress Towards Digitization

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Today, almost all developing nations' public administrations are going digital, leveraging disruptive technologies for better service delivery and improved efficiency. The question countries ask most frequently is "where do we start?" and while the answer may seem daunting, the key to success is not where to start, but how to sustain what has most certainly already started.

First Step: Digital Readiness

During 2018, the World Bank created the Digital Government Readiness Assessment (DGRA) Tool-kit. DGRA is used to assess a country's readiness for digital government transformation. It can inform governments of their "as is" status, highlight gaps, and suggest priority actions. The survey asks questions on leadership, enabling environment, data-driven, enterprise architecture, interoperability, user focus, change management, and innovation ecosystems.

During its testing period, The DGRA Toolkit has been used to assess the digital government readiness of Myanmar, Senegal, Lebanon, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. Its French language version is now being used in Tunisia and Burkina Faso, and in several candidate countries of the Smart Africa alliance. Today an online survey version of the tool is being developed with ITS to enable benchmarking and multi-year comparisons among countries.

The assessment provides the opportunity to convene a policy dialogue on digital transformation among government leaders who have not historically worked together.

Economic value of government digitization worldwide[1]

Digital Government Enables Innovation in Public Services

Most countries faring in the top ten of the UN eGovernment Readiness Index (EGRI),[2] a bi-annual survey by the United Nations, have introduced legislation and invested in programs to enable their societies to reap the benefits of digital opportunities. For many of them—including South Korea, Denmark, Singapore, UK, Estonia or Finland—the policies have unleashed innovation and the growth of new services, creating an environment for a vibrant digital economy and new business models. New private-sector jobs in fintech, digital advertising, social networks, gaming, online services, robotics, and 3-D printing were created.

The high demand from citizens and businesses—equipped with mobile phones and social media skills—is a big plus, accelerating the uptake for digitization of government services. Most of the top 20 services delivered by government are common to all countries. Of the 193 countries surveyed, the

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1   https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/digital-mckinsey/our-insights/public-sector-digitization-the-trillion-dollar-challenge
2   https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Reports/UN-E-Government-Survey-2018

three most commonly used online services in 2018 were: paying for utilities (140 countries); submitting income taxes (139 countries); and registering new businesses (126 countries).

Disruptive Technologies and Transport

Disruptive technologies are changing the ways transport authorities interact, and more importantly, altering the ways by which transport data is shared. In a 2017 study,[3] it was estimated that "lack of sharing and opening transport data could cost the UK £15bn by 2025."

Open data, Big Data, the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are examples of disruptive technologies (DTs) that can transform mobility if governments agree on a standardized method to collect and use data.[4]

Transport authorities in South Korea and Singapore are leveraging DTs to improve traffic management and vehicle routing, decrease traffic congestion, pollution, likelihood of accidents; and provide innovative mobile-based solutions to drivers and riders, allowing them to make better decisions. In AI, researchers report transport and health as priority sectors for AI-based innovation.

This is good news for transport. Unlike the health sector, which requires extra caution for data privacy to protect patients and health care workers, most transport data—pollution, congestion, noise, traffic, weather—is collected through sensors, IoT, and the cloud, and requires less effort to anonymize for the AI algorithms. The World Banks's **Mobile-based ITS Guidebook** provides a comprehensive service catalogue of thousands of proven mobile solutions that make transport smarter and safer for its users.

Where Things Stand

According to Gartner Group, there are five stages to digital transformation: desire, designing, delivering, scaling, and harvesting. Most World Bank clients are still in Phase 1, 2, or 3, with much work and investment to be made in digital platforms, applications, and shared services. Today, cloud-computing solutions, core digital infrastructure, and shared services can be deployed in an agile way, customized to the government's needs, including charts of accounts, levels of government, catalogues of services, and chosen languages. With a cloud-based, shared-services

platform, various agencies can efficiently transact with citizens and businesses, allowing them to register, obtain permits or licenses, pay online, and update their data.

Digital transformation is high on the governments' agendas. However, governments consistently lag behind private sector, according to Gartner's 2018 survey comprising mostly OECD countries. The study found that 91 percent of government respondents consider themselves in the first three stages, focused on the development and introduction of new services. Only 9 percent identify their digital initiatives as being in the later stages, where the focus is on scaling up and transforming.[5] The survey results indicate misalignment between digital strategy and business priorities, lack of readiness for change, and lack of both "digital dexterity" and sense of urgency in public administration.

The Way Forward

Governments can meet their constituents' expectations by investing in a comprehensive public-sector digital transformation. Collaboration among policy makers, donors, private sector, and civil society is critical to the success of any digital agenda.

The top priority should be the development and completion of a shared digital infrastructure, with key enablers such as digital identifiers for people, entities, and assets, and shared services used across the public administration, such as authentication, record management, digital payment systems, storage, and cybersecurity. Greater integration of data, improved management, and productivity enhancements enable system-wide efficiencies. At a time of increasing budgetary pressures, governments at national, regional, and local levels cannot afford to miss out on those savings.

The digital infrastructure construction phase must happen in parallel with "soft" change management programs for the digital, paper-less space, including services redesign, modernization of legal and regulatory frameworks, and re-skilling. It requires adopting new laws on digital transactions, digital identifiers, cybersecurity, data protection, and privacy. Successful adoption of digital government requires investment in digital skills for all, a focus on youth and women, and re-training for civil servants and the people and businesses they serve.

All successful digital nations have traveled that road.

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[3]   https://www.transportxtra.com/publications/local-transport-today/news/58074/platforms-to-help-manage-the-transport-data-explosion/
[4]   https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/media.ts.catapult/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/12092544/15460-TSC-Q1-Report-Document-Suite-single-pages.pdf
[5]   https://www.gartner.com/en/newsroom/press-releases/2018-09-12-gartner-survey-finds-governments-making-slow-progress-with-digital-initiatives

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