



Digital Government Review of Argentina

Accelerating the digitalisation
of the public sector

Key findings



Contents

1. BACKGROUND	1
2. GOVERNANCE FOR DIGITAL GOVERNMENT	4
3. PUBLIC SECTOR COMPETENCIES FOR DIGITAL GOVERNMENT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION	15
4. OPENNESS AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY	19
5. BUILDING A DATA-DRIVEN PUBLIC SECTOR	24
REFERENCES	28





1. Background

The *OECD Digital Government Review of Argentina* builds on the close and growing collaboration between the OECD and the Argentinian government in recent years. It adds to the broader activities of Argentina's OECD Action Plan, which was presented by the Argentinian government to the OECD in the context of the Meeting of G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors held in Baden Baden, Germany, on 17-18 March 2017.

This document presents the key findings resulting from a series of activities carried-out by the OECD Secretariat in the context of the digital government review. These activities include i) the OECD peer review mission to Buenos Aires, Argentina, held on 5-9 March, 2018; and, ii) the workshops and follow-up meetings held in Buenos Aires on 25-27 July 2018, and September, 2018.

The peer review mission (March, 2018) benefited from the participation of the OECD Secretariat and peers from OECD member countries, namely:

- Mr Enrique Zapata, Office of the President, Mexico.
- Mr Daniel Hernández, Ministry of Public Administration, Mexico.
- Mr Timothy Szlachetko, Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, Norway.
- Ms Gemma del Rey Almanza, Ministry of Finance and Public Administration, Spain.

The key findings presented in this document benefited from the direct contributions of all peers involved in the peer review mission to Argentina. The findings and specific policy recommendations are further discussed in the final version of the *Digital Government Review of Argentina*.

This document was prepared by the OECD Secretariat under the leadership of Barbara-Chiara Ubaldi, Deputy Head of the Reform of the Public Sector Division and Head of the Digital Government and Government Data Unit. Jamie Lee Berryhill, Policy Analyst, Public Sector Innovation, OECD, drafted section 2. Jacob Arturo Rivera Pérez, Policy Analyst, Digital Government and Government Data policies, OECD, drafted sections 3, 4 and 5.

This document, and the upcoming full digital government review, was prepared in the context of the ongoing restructuration of the government of Argentina (September, 2018). The Ministry of Modernisation (MoM), the original main counterpart for this study, was moved to the Chief of Cabinet of Ministers Office in September 2018. As a result the former MoM was replaced by the Government Secretariat of Modernisation (*Secretaría de Gobierno de Modernización*, SGM).¹ The document will therefore:

- Refer to the “Ministry of Modernisation” or “the then MoM” when presenting, discussing and highlighting digital government initiatives that took place prior to the restructuration of September 2018.
- Refer to the newly established “Government Secretariat of Modernisation” or “SGM” for any future recommended actions and policy interventions provided to the Argentinian government by the OECD.

The *Digital Government Review of Argentina* focuses on strategic policy areas of analysis, including:

1. The governance for digital government in Argentina, including the institutional, legal and policy frameworks.
2. Public sector competence for policy implementation, including ICT commissioning and the development of digital innovation skills in the public sector.
3. Openness and public service delivery, including digital services, key enablers and the implementation of citizen-driven, digital by design and open by default approaches.
4. Data-driven public sector, including data governance, data management practices and open government data.

1. See <https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/#!DetalleNormaBusquedaAvanzada/190820/20180905>



The assessment draws upon the *OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* (OECD, 2014) (See Figure 1) which provides a set of 12 strategic recommendations to help governments to move from e-government towards a digital government (See Figure 2).

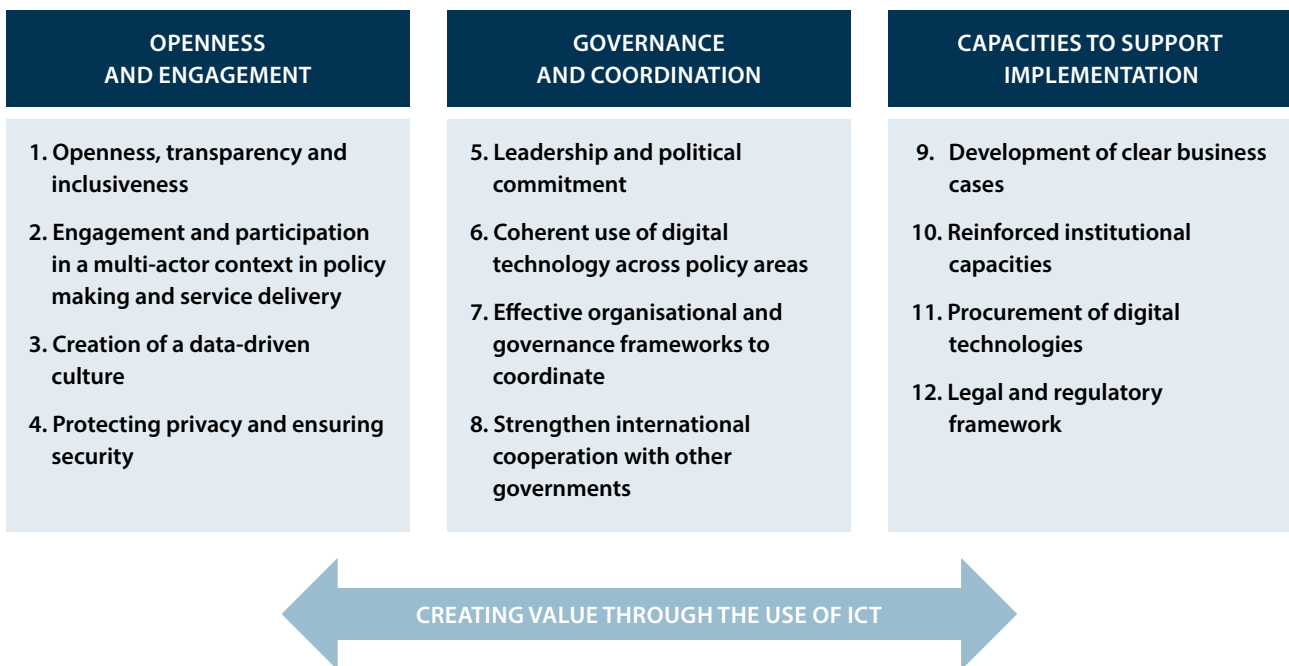
The *Digital Government Review of Argentina* highlights the key enablers of digital government as identified by the OECD Secretariat’s Framework for Digital Government (OECD, forthcoming):

- **User-driven:** The extent to which governments are adopting approaches and taking actions to let citizens and businesses (i.e. users of the services) determine their own needs, which serve to drive the design of policies and public services.
- **Proactiveness:** The extent to which a government reaches out to the public without waiting to react to formal requests. This includes: i) data disclosure (in open formats), with the exception of data that the government is required to protect due to privacy or security; ii) service delivery to the users before they

are requested; iii) governments proactively seeking feedback directly from citizens about the quality of services; and, iv) enabling citizens to access real-time information on public services.

- **Data-driven:** The extent to which a government informs and approaches the design, delivery and monitoring of public policies and services through the management and use of data.
- **Digital by design:** The extent to which a government embeds the full potential of digital technologies when formulating policies and designing services. This involves mobilising new technologies to rethink and reengineer internal processes and simplify internal procedures in order to deliver the same efficient, sustainable and citizen-driven services, regardless of the channel used by the user to interact with the public authorities.
- **Government as a platform:** The extent to which governments use technologies (and data) to harness the creativity of people in groups and create collaborations to address policy challenges.

Figure 1. **OECD 2014 Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies**



Non-OECD members: Colombia, Costa Rica, Egypt, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Morocco, Romania, Russia

Source: Elaboration based on the Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, 2014



- **Open by default:** The extent to which a government uses digital technologies to: i) engage and collaborate with all actors and collect insights towards a more collaborative, evidence-based, user- and data-driven policy making; ii) share government data in open and machine-readable

formats (within the framework of data protection, security, confidentiality, and privacy protection legislation); and iii) open up to external knowledge in order to co-design its processes (e.g. policy life cycle, public service delivery, and ICT commissioning).

Figure 2. **Digital transformation of the public sector**

E-GOVERNMENT

“The use by the governments of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and particularly the internet, as a tool to achieve better government.”

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

“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 an access to data, services and content through interactions with the government.”

Source: Elaboration based on the Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies, 2014



Trámites a Distancia (TAD) is the platform that allows paperless online government-citizen interaction in Argentina.



2. Governance for Digital Government

Argentina is taking a portfolio approach to public sector reform with the goal of building a national public policy framework and leadership that advances in a consistent and united way to achieve national priorities and objectives. The Argentinian administration sees strengthening digital government as a keystone in the broader context of its reform agenda along with open government and public sector integrity. In terms of digital government, Argentina defined a number of clear policy priorities, developed relevant initiatives, and delivered on specific policy commitments since December 2015, building much of this work from the ground-up.

Previous central administrations did little to construct and support the necessary strategies, goals, governance structures, organisational arrangements, ecosystems, and legal and regulatory frameworks to build a solid foundation for an effective, responsive and user-driven digital government. Nevertheless, despite this major challenge, the current central administration has made significant and rapid progress in addressing these inherited shortcomings and has put Argentina on a solid path for success.

A number of conditions has enabled the abovementioned progress and has therefore provided a context in which continued advancement and sustainable success is possible. Critically, the digital transformation of the public sector is one of the highest priorities of the current administration. This is evidenced by the President's dissemination of numerous relevant presidential decrees—akin to executive orders, and the creation of the Ministry of Modernisation (MoM) in 2015, which had a digital service team and the innovation lab LABGobAr (see Section 2). Through a series of Presidential Decrees, the President empowered the then MoM to catalyse the digital transformation of the public sector through the development of crosscutting technologies and government-wide policies. President Macri established an Under-secretariat of Digital Government and placed the then MoM in the central coordination role of a whole-of-government modernisation framework.

Within the then MoM and in several other strategic areas in the federal government, the President assembled a team of proven experts in areas such as digital policy,



Progress of the connectivity plan in rural schools, Jujuy province.



service design and implementation, public sector innovation and open data to drive Argentina's digital government efforts. Many of these officials were behind the successful digital transformation of the local government in the City of Buenos Aires. These experts have managed to launch and accelerate the digitisation of public services, government operations, and a paper-less government beyond all expectations. The talent of these individuals has enabled the completion of many important initiatives in a very short time frame.

In September 2018, the President re-organised the government, which resulted in the renaming of the MoM to the Government Secretariat of Modernisation (*Secretaría de Gobierno de Modernización*, SGM) and moving this new institution to the Cabinet Office, an office at the centre of government led by the President's Chief of Staff. Prior to the move, the then MoM sat in the challenging position of being charged with government-wide policymaking and oversight responsibilities while also serving in a separate, non-central ministry. As a result of the move, more policy areas now intersect with the SGM at the centre of government, which reduces the risk of fragmentation, better enables the SGM to achieve its mission, and contributes to long-term sustainability of efforts.

The empowerment of the SGM, and the subsequent placement at the centre of government sends a clear political message in terms of the relevance of the digital transformation of the public sector for the current administration.

Yet, despite the significant advancements to date, some challenges need to be addressed particularly if the Government aims to move from a start-up approach to an increased maturity and sustainability of the digital government agenda in the country. This necessitates progressing from efforts targeting *digitisation* (i.e. *e-government*) to a full shift towards the *digitalisation* (i.e. *digital government*) of the administration and of the delivery of public services.

POLICY FRAMEWORK: ESTABLISHING A COMMON, STRATEGIC NARRATIVE

A clear scenario of the vision, its strategic objectives and the defined path to achieve them (i.e. “*who are we*” and “*where do we want to go*”) is one of the basic prerequisites of sound governance. While the need to deliver led a very dynamic course of action since the early inception of the current administration in 2015, the intention to secure long-term sustainability and provide clarity in terms of policy goals were reflected during the development of Argentina's Digital Agenda. The Secretary of Digital Government and Innovation Technology within the then MoM led this process, which now still continues under the leadership of the SGM.

The draft version of the Agenda was discussed and approved by those secretariats and ministries involved in its development (Secretariats of Modernisation, Agroindustry, and of Government of Science and Technology; ministries of Education, Science and Technology; Culture; Production and Labour, and Foreign Affairs). The vision and key pillars of the Agenda were approved by Presidential Decree on 5 November, 2018².

The Digital Agenda is designed to help provide government-wide guidance and priorities to accelerate the digital transformation of Argentina. The Agenda adds to the Government's priorities in terms of



2. Decree 996/2018. For more information see: <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/315000-319999/316036/norma.htm>



Hackathon “Ambiente”, 2017, organised by the Secretariat of Modernisation together with the Secretariat of Environment, Science, Technology and Productive Innovation and the Government of Mendoza, in Mendoza.

digitalisation in the context of the Argentinian 2018 Presidency of the G20. It also seeks to meet OECD standards for digital government, as described by SGM officials, and identifies a number of priority projects and areas of focus, as well as short and medium-term goals for them.

A steering committee—the Ministerial Council for Planning and Monitoring of the Digital Agenda Argentina—oversees the agenda and will work to ensure it is being carried out. Argentina has formed an executive committee led by the secretaries and deputy secretaries from these ministries to help implement the Agenda. Subgroups are organised by topic and will help coordinate individual projects.

The Agenda was developed in order to bring about a unified vision and roadmap for the digital transformation of Argentina that achieves digital inclusiveness for all citizens (“zero digital poverty”) and a more efficient, effective, citizen-driven public sector that works better at lower costs. It also seeks to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the economy. The objectives of the agenda include:

- Promoting an open, transparent, efficient, effective, and citizen-centred government, including ensuring the free and unrestricted access to information and knowledge and de-bureaucratising the public sector to reduce costs and simplify processes.

- Transitioning to a data-driven public sector for decision making and the creation of anticipatory citizen services.
- Developing cybersecurity skills, build trust in digital environments, and collaborate across sectors to protect cyberspace.
- Promoting the leading role of Argentina in the digital world.

During the peer review mission to Argentina (March, 2018), among the stakeholders that were aware of the then-draft Agenda, there was general enthusiasm for the Agenda and a belief that it would serve as the overall strategy and vision for digital government in the country. In developing the Agenda and getting broad buy-in and engagement across government relevant ministries, Argentina has taken significant steps to set priorities for projects and principles that are of importance to the administration or are mandated in law, which previously had been fragmented across various ministries with no central guiding force.

The Digital Agenda is an important umbrella policy document and represents a significant step forward in establishing a common vision, defining leadership roles and responsibilities, fostering coordination across government, and setting common strategic digitalisation objectives in a broad sense. It will provide a policy basis



to build a comprehensive digital government strategy, which is a key element of the governance for a digital government.

The Digital Agenda puts in place a high-level vision for where the country wants to be. Beyond that vision, the Agenda is generally project-based (e.g., digital signature, single window) and principle-based (e.g., openness, co-creation). While this is a major step in achieving digital transformation, opportunities exist to set strategic goals with related objectives in order to provide an articulated roadmap for digital government that everyone in government can rally behind and work towards.

The Agenda is helpful for surfacing and guiding priority projects, providing unity around key principles, and raising the need to develop specific strategies. Nevertheless, digital government efforts in Argentina could benefit from a strategic-level action plan with a medium and long-term perspective in terms of policy milestones and delivery times. A number of officials from different parts of the Government noted the same in interviews during the peer review mission that took place in March 2018.

Without an articulated action plan that sets the roadmap to achieve the goals it can appear that all initiatives are equally important. Over time, this can make it difficult to enable a whole-of-government approach, where ministries advance the Agenda towards shared strategic purposes rather than individual initiatives and/or projects. Initially creating project-based agendas is a common and useful step as a government seeks to bring about a digital transformation. However, when thinking forward, additional measures, such as the development of a more concrete Digital Government Strategy, may become necessary to ensure digital efforts continue to advance beyond silo-based approaches. Such horizontality, sharing and integration will be instrumental to fully enact digital government.

The OECD and peer review team perceived that government officials were starting to strategically advance in a united way under the vision of the Agenda and the priorities of the administration. It was also observed that many of these officials had previously worked together to advance digital government for the City of Buenos Aires, hence

having the advantage of established formal and informal relationships. This dynamic environment promotes efficient, accelerated collaboration in the short run. In order to ensure progress is maintained in the long-term, it will be important to promote broader cultural change within the public sector to embed the practices and mind-sets brought about by the current administration.

While pre-existing relationships have helped Argentina to make immediate and rapid progress, a long-term strategy and set of actions to lock in a sustainable path for ongoing progress could help amplify and perpetuate current and future successes. This would assist in future-proofing digital government efforts and strengthen them against potentially adverse scenarios. A full digital government strategy could assist in this, by helping to set the tone for cultural change within and across public sector organisations.

Thinking forward and long-term, a systems-wide culture that fosters digitalisation would be incredibly valuable for the sustainable evolution towards efficient and effective digital government operations. This would require supporting the existence of networks within the public sector that are resilient to political and government changes and support sustained change.

The Digital Agenda has secured the backing of all involved ministries and secretariats through internal consultations, and the key pillars of the agenda were approved by Presidential Decree. Although several meetings have been held among public and private sector representatives and various stakeholders, the Agenda has not undergone a formal open public consultation process in order to obtain views and opinions, and potentially crowdsource new ideas and priorities, from the public and other external stakeholders. However, government officials plan to hold open consultations in the future.

Not bringing in the public earlier on in the process of policy design may represent a missed opportunity for the government to build policy ownership across the ecosystem, and demonstrate its responsiveness and its commitment to building a citizen-driven digital government. It also means that a core document that is intended to guide digital projects for a number of years has not yet been afforded the opportunity for the public to review it or provide their feedback.



When consultations are made late in the process, government officials leading and contributing to agenda development run the risk of being closed off to changes and good ideas that may have been easier to act upon earlier in the process. Initiatives to ensure public feedback and comments may help in this respect.

A formal stand-alone Digital Government Strategy could help in promoting policy coherence across government, avoiding fragmentation, shifting efforts to focus more on internal and citizen demands, and providing a path to maturity for digital policies and services. This is critical to ensure that decisions on national digital government priorities are driven by national needs.

Prior to the current administration, there was little effort to coordinate the ICT-related initiatives of the different ministries at the central level of government. Without coordination, the government risked the potential that various initiatives across government could operate in duplicative, fragmented, or overlapping ways.

The current administration has made major steps in improving this, especially through its empowerment of the SGM to serve as a central policymaking, coordination, and enforcement body. The Digital Agenda is also contributing to this. However, a more strategic document could help to reduce this fragmentation over time.

In addition, as often occurs in a country's digital transformation journey, many priorities are being driven by international rankings and indicators. While such metrics are helpful in a general sense, they might focus on areas that are not critical for the unique context of a given country. This opens a window of opportunity to develop indicators that focus on gaps specific to the context in Argentina. Signals of internal demand from either users, civil servants and other members of the digital government ecosystem can therefore be identified.

Argentina's digital government efforts could benefit from strengthened documentation and communication of the status and progress of digital government efforts. This issue exists within and across government, as well as externally towards the broader ecosystem. The agenda may assist over time, and a formal Digital Government Strategy that further prioritises what is important may also help.

The reluctance of the government to “write things down” or document processes, decisions, plans, progress, and problems emerged as a common theme during the peer review interviews. This can have detrimental effects for government's digital government policy and associated iterative processes.

For instance, reports could be used as potential knowledge sources to inform a formal cross-cutting strategy and guiding its planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. In addition, external communication about digital government progress to citizens and business can enhance trust and confidence in government.

Without documentation enabling recording and storytelling, it is difficult or perhaps even impossible for the Country to establish a baseline for a level of consistency across government. This also exacerbates the ability of the Government to overcome existing challenges related to inconsistent and fragmented processes throughout government. Unless improvement is made in this area, Argentina will struggle to learn from the problems it encounters and methods devised to overcome them, and to foster the nature of its public sector as a learning organisation – based on knowledge sharing. For example, different agencies are likely to encounter similar issues as they work to bring about a digital government. Nevertheless, if they are not documented and shared, those facing similar problems may waste time on devising potential solutions that have already been identified and tested, rather than learning from others' experiences, leveraging synergies and scaling up what works.

This challenge can also have a detrimental effect in how the Government is perceived by the public and the broader digital ecosystems.

Argentina has focused increasingly on the importance of communicating with the public and telling stories and progress updates related to digital government. An example of advancement in this sense is “the regular publication of interesting and insightful public blog posts on a variety of digital government topics”³. In addition, the SGM is currently working on

3. For example, blogs from the Administration Modernisation Secretariat can be found at <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/node/5396/noticias?nodo=5396> and blogs related to Digital Government can be found at <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/node/2441/noticias?nodo=2441>.



institutionalising frameworks to ensure coherence. However, it was often communicated to the peer review team that there is still not enough public-facing reporting and communication on government progress, performance, and impacts.

Without such external communications and “storytelling”, the government can look like a black box to the public, and citizens are unable to see the important and positive work the government is doing, and the results and impacts it is achieving to improve the lives of its citizens. This is known to affect the level of trust citizens have in government (OECD, 2017).

Several officials communicated to the peer review team a desire for the digital government work to be more visible so that the public in Argentina could be aware of it and be able to form and express their opinions about it.

INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE: LEADERSHIP AND DIGITAL STEWARDSHIP

Considering the size and complexity of the task to be undertaken to fully enact a shift towards digital government, it is important that roles and responsibilities be clear to the different stakeholders involved. This is especially true in Argentina’s context where most digital efforts are relatively new.

Governance and authorities for SGM (then MoM) were formally clarified and strengthened in 2016 with a presidential decree.⁴ These authorities are broadly recognised and respected. During the peer review mission to Argentina, there was a general consensus among the different stakeholders in the central government, as well as in sub-national governments,

4. Presidential Decree 13/16 – 5 January 2016



Punto Digital, Vicente López, Province of Buenos Aires. Currently, Argentina has more than 430 Puntos Digitales throughout the country.



civil society organisations, and private sector companies about the central role of the SGM in bringing about and advancing digital government in Argentina. There was also near consensus regarding the major positive impacts and improvements that have already come about over the last few years.

Many interviewees from other ministries also expressed a strong willingness to work and collaborate with the SGM. This is a very positive sign that the fairly recent mandates and the centralised authorities within SGM have been well understood and accepted, that the actions taken by the SGM to-date have been well received, and that the SGM (and predecessor, MoM) has taken steps to solidify their authority for overseeing and coordinating digital government efforts.

The government of Argentina has reached a level of maturity where agencies and ministries now seek cross-government solutions and guidance, rather than making all decisions from an organisational perspective. It appears that a governance framework that more explicitly delineates roles and responsibilities of the SGM and provides for strong leadership across government would help advance digital efforts.

The SGM appears to be dedicating significant time and energy to conducting hands-on implementation and development work to help other ministries achieve policy goals and requirements. This may have been an important step at the onset of the current administration's digital transformation efforts; however, it appears that the time is right for ministries to dedicate more efforts to implementation and for the SGM to shift more towards central coordination, convening, and oversight. A more explicit articulation of the roles and responsibilities of the SGM and the other ministries could assist.

In addition, beyond the SGM, the digital governance of agencies throughout central government remains somewhat fragmented. For example, some organisations may include positions like Chief Information Officers (CIO), while others may not. Agencies also generally do not include Chief Digital Transformation Officers (CDTO), Chief Data Officers (CDO), and similar positions that could help serve as points of guidance and accountability for each agency in meeting the policy directives set forth by the SGM and the President.

Peer review interviewees described the current state of digital governance in other ministries as siloed



International Open Data Conference (IODC), Panel "Open Data in Latin America & Caribbean," 2018, Buenos Aires.



within their ministry, and in some cases, project and challenge-based ICT teams within the ministry are themselves siloed, with limited ability to understand the authority and scope of the other teams. For instance, in some cases, different teams could believe they are responsible for an area of work, reportedly resulting in duplication of efforts and potential missed opportunities for synergies. Other times, according to interviewees, no one seemed to be responsible for important areas, leading to gaps. Because each ministry has the ability to independently determine their own governance structure, the SGM may face challenges in coordinating the implementation of government-wide policies.

A few agencies have established formal governance roles and structures under the current administration. For example, the agencies for Tax and Social Security have established central CIO positions, put in place their own digital government strategies, and formalised governance structures to develop strategic roadmaps and review ICT and make decisions on ICT projects. Such practices are promising and appear to add significant value to these ministries, but they are not currently promoted or mandated in a government-wide



manner and would benefit their contribution to broader Government's goals from the existence of an overarching Digital Government Strategy.

The combination of ensuring a clear governance structure for the role of the SGM relative to the other ministries, as well as a clear governance structure for each other ministry, is a critical enabler of the digital transformation of the public sector. This will increasingly be the case as Argentina seeks to adopt systems approaches and generate a whole-of-government momentum, as further discussed below.

LEVERAGING SYSTEMS APPROACHES TO ACHIEVE STRATEGIC GOALS

In addition to a solid governance framework, the establishment of appropriate mechanisms for coordination are also necessary to assure the proper cooperation, engagement and co-responsibility of all the relevant players, whether from a public, private or civil society background.

In a context of modern advances in technology, coupled with the increasing complexity and uncertainty of today's challenges faced by governments, traditional analytical tools and problem-solving methods no longer work nor produce their intended purpose. Simply put, making decisions, designing policies and delivering services used to be easier and less complex. In the past, one of the primary ways that decision makers benefited from complexity reduction was in the simplified classification of information into well-delineated silos. This made diagnosis of problems much easier. With less information and fewer variables, especially those that could be contradictory, decision making could proceed unencumbered by uncertainty or complexity (OECD, 2017b). These classic approaches no longer work.

Similarly to other countries, Argentina will need to adapt by employing systems approaches. In this regard, the most significant enabler is the government's capacity and ability to connect and move as one. This includes also connecting with the broader external ecosystems thus becoming hubs of the system's network.

Fostering systems approaches in the administration should be a central priority for the Argentinian public



sector, at the core of the development of digital government. As Argentina strengthens its governance structures and frameworks, the government will be better positioned to seize the potential of systems approaches.

Identifying or creating connection points among ministries and external entities, finding leading agencies with good examples to scale or replicate in other parts of government, aligning the incentives and the organisational objectives, monitoring practices and identifying long-term and shared necessities for the administration are important contributing factors.

Fostering systems approaches would help to institutionalise Argentina's Digital Agenda as a policy tool to steer decisions and better align priorities across the whole administration in line with the main policy goals.

Argentina has made progress on building the conditions that enable the country to leverage systems approaches. For instance, as discussed previously, a steering committee and an executive board, coordinated by the SGM, has been formed to guide the implementation of the Digital Agenda. The executive board contains representatives from relevant jurisdictions and is responsible for elaborating and executing an annual action plan, including concrete work plans and projects, and for reviewing the Digital Agenda annually in order to make recommendations for updates. In addition, ministries have identified topic-specific points of contact (POCs) for a variety of digital and non-digital initiatives (e.g. open government, *Mi Argentina* website content).

Continuing to build on these and new foundations will help to position the Government to take a systems approach on its goals and challenges. Such an approach should also be considered as a strategic effort to bring “all the voices in” this common effort, enabling a more structured involvement of citizens, companies and general interest groups such as civil society organisations.

Holistic and strategic systems approaches can also accelerate the awareness of the digital journey among the public leaders in order to overcome vertical thinking and increase awareness around the networked role of ICT. Together with a sound governance framework,

this approach could ease the endeavour of ensuring the sustained commitment and support to the digital transformation across the top political leadership within and across government.

Opportunities exist to coordinate government activities in a holistic, horizontal, and joined-up way.

Although improving, general cooperation and coordination across ministries, agencies, and levels of government is often fragmented, not systematic. Coordination occurs mainly through specific projects. For many ICT issues, there is no formal body for coordination and cooperation at the ministry level, and coordination and cooperation at the underlying agency level can be inconsistent.

The SGM has demonstrated leadership in connecting with ministries; however, the focus has largely been on bi-lateral cooperation on a ministry-by-ministry basis, and not on bringing all of the relevant players together as a whole.

Throughout the peer review mission, many leaders in the SGM and in line agencies and ministries highlighted that coordination should be strengthened and that focusing on the harmonisation and alignment of designing and implementing policies and services would prove valuable. Furthermore, nearly all ministries spoke about the need to institutionalise current efforts in a more consistent, unified and collaborative way. There are some notable exceptions to this challenge, however, where a sustainable model for a systems approach has been reached. Several efforts coordinated by SGM, including *Argentina.gob.ar*, electronic document management (GDE), and the open data plan are key examples of cooperation across ministries in a multi-lateral way to achieve a systems approach. Argentina may look to these instances to apply their most successful elements elsewhere.

Challenges remain in considering and involving provincial and local governments in systems approaches.

During the peer review mission, difficulties coordinating with sub-national government organisations was one of the challenges most frequently raised by interviewees. This is largely due to the federated government



structure in Argentina, in which provinces and local governments have significant independence and autonomy.

Sub-national governments generally have the ability to design and administer their own ICT policies, services, and products. As a result, each level of government, and different agencies across those levels, may use different and potentially incompatible technologies and approaches. This limits the potential for information sharing, collaboration, and the achievement of a whole-of-government approach to tackle common issues and achieve common goals.

Indeed, there are few levers that the federal government can use to obtain cooperation from the sub-national governments. The SGM coordinates with the 24 provinces through the Federal Council on Modernisation and Innovation for the Public Administration (COFEMOD)—the key and only element for coordination between the national and subnational governments—and its various topical subcommittees, but the decisions of the Council are non-binding.

One significant example of coordination through COFEMOD is the creation of the “Federal Commitment to Modernisation”, which is the main instrument for coordination across levels of government for ICT and for the other priorities of the SGM. The Commitment was signed in 2017 by 19 provinces and the City of Buenos Aires and sets agreed-upon objectives around several lines of action for modernising provinces, such as administrative modernisation, open government and innovation, and technological infrastructure.

Also under COFEMOD, public policies are coordinated and developed to promote digital government in provinces, including through innovative means. For example, the “Argentina Innova” competition aims to promote the co-creation of public policies between governments and citizens.

While COFEMOD has had significant impact and many successes, central government officials expressed a desire to improve in this area and were often unsure of whether other approaches could assist. It may be worth exploring whether other opportunities may exist to bring levels of governments further

into alignment, such as through funding incentives or conditions. It may also be worth exploring how COFEMOD is used and whether officials are fully aware of its programmes.

ENABLING SUCCESS WITH LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND FUNDING

Argentina’s legal and regulatory framework for Digital Government provides the SGM with strong authority for making policies, conducting oversight, coordinating the design and delivery of digital services, and prioritising which processes must be digitalised.

One of the key instruments for ICT modernisation is the “State Modernisation Plan”.⁵ This “State Modernisation Plan” provides a framework on modernisation of the Government of Argentina and establishes digital government as a key component of the whole-of-government modernisation strategy. The decree places the SGM in the central coordination role for the framework.

In holding interviews during the peer review mission, it was clear that the authority of the SGM in these areas is universally recognised.

While some laws and regulations appear to be out of date, policy areas in Argentina have conducted reviews of existing legislation related to core issues, and some new legislation has been proposed. Argentina’s efforts in this area could be enhanced by developing a fuller, evolving baseline of the legislative and regulatory landscape to help identify what needs to change now and on an ongoing basis.

Some aspects of the legal and regulatory framework could be updated, as some of the norms appear outdated and not flexible enough to keep up with the pace of technological change, as described by peer review mission interviewees. The government is taking steps to modernise laws. For example, a draft law on data protection is now under consideration. If passed into law, it would replace the current Personal Data Protection Law from the year 2000.

5. Presidential Decree 434/2016 (3 March 2016). <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/255000-259999/259082/norma.htm>.



While progress is being pursued, it was not clear to the peer review team that the government has done a thorough review of all of the existing laws, regulations, and decrees to establish a baseline of how they may affect digital transformation efforts.

One of the drivers of Argentina’s recent digital government efforts has been the use of Presidential Decrees (i.e., executive orders). Such decrees are an easy and efficient method of advancing the digital agenda. However, they are less permanent than some other types of mandates, such as laws. Seeking to enhance permanence of successful aspects of the decrees could strengthen the long-term sustainability and continuity of efforts.

During the peer review mission, public officials from the SGM and other ministries (e.g., Ministry of Production) highlighted the difficulty of passing legislation in parliament, which has therefore resulted in the use of executive decrees. While this has been a successful approach in kick-starting and advancing Argentina’s digital transformation, it is possible that these decrees, and the efforts carried out under them, could be reduced or eliminated in the future more easily than laws.

SGM officials have taken steps to push for legislative changes, such as lobbying for a new modernisation law. The efforts are starting to show signs of success, as a draft modernisation bill was very recently finalised.⁶ While this is a promising sign, it remains unclear whether this will fully lock in the positive changes of recent years. In addition, it is unclear how specific such a law would be, as being overly specific may raise challenges in future years.

Government officials recognise the policy making and oversight authority of the SGM, signalling readiness for strengthened central guidance and coordination from SGM.

Nearly universally during mission interviews, public officials expressed recognition of the SGM as the government’s policy making and oversight body for all aspects of ICT. This is a positive and encouraging indicator for Argentina’s digital government efforts as a whole. The digital government environment in Argentina



appears to have matured to such an extent that stronger policies and additional enforcement and oversight from the SGM could help further digital efforts across government.

In terms of policy, SGM officials so far have held off from making more interventions because of concerns related to regulating before fully understanding an issue. To illustrate this, some of the guidance put by SGM is thorough and aligned with best practices but remains optional for ministries to adopt. For example, the “Guide for the Publication of Data in Open Formats” (see Section 4) provides excellent instructions for how to publish OGD. However, the document consists of non-binding recommendations and good practices.

If made mandatory, the guide could make discovery of data easier for the government and for the public. In addition, draft “Standards of Attention to the Public”,⁸ “Services Standards”,⁹ “Web Standards”,¹⁰ “API Standards”,¹¹ (see Section 3) and others have been developed to provide guidelines to strengthen the quality of services provided by the government and to help bring about the digital transformation of the public sector. However, it does not appear that these have been formally put into action.

The peer review team observed a number of areas where stronger direction from the SGM may be valuable, including general guidelines for the full life cycle of digital projects, and policies for ICT and digital procurement.

6. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/noticias/el-comite-ejecutivo-del-cofemod-concluyo-la-redaccion-del-anteproyecto-de-ley-de>

7. http://paquete-apertura-datos.readthedocs.io/es/stable/guia_abiertos.html.

8. <https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-atencion-al-publico.md>.

9. <https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-servicios.md>.

10. <https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-web.md>.

11. <https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-apis.md>.



3. Public sector competencies for digital government policy implementation

Moving from policy goals to actual implementation requires developing specific capabilities within public sector organisations. These competencies are strongly related to the development of skills supporting digital innovation, as well as the shift from traditional public sector procurement approaches to the commissioning of ICT goods and services based on a whole-of-government perspective and relying on new forms of collaborations between the public sector and non-governmental actors. In the context of digital government policies, building these capacities contributes to the preparedness and readiness of the public sector to move towards a digital government.

FROM ICT MANAGEMENT TO ICT COMMISSIONING

While there is evidence of existing efforts in terms of ICT procurement coherence, there does not appear to be a clear system for assessing and formulating the value proposition, the monitoring and the evaluation of ICT investments.

The Information Technologies National Office (ONTI) has developed standards to support public sector organisations in the development of their ICT projects. For this reason, the ONTI created the *Decálogo Tecnológico*¹², which is based on 10 principles that public sector organisations can follow to better design and submit their projects for ONTI's certification.

For this purpose, the ONTI developed the Technological Standards for the National Public Administration (*Estándares Tecnológicos para la Administración Pública Nacional, ETAP*), the Standardised Technical Requirements (*Requerimientos Técnicos Estándar, RTE*), and the Complex Technical Requirements (*Requerimientos Técnicos Complejos, RTC*).

The RTE and the RTC stand as standardised business case models for ICT projects with different levels of complexity (the RTE format is simpler in terms of the information organisations should submit, while

the RTC aims to those projects with a higher degree of complexity). All public sector organisations are required to submit their projects' business cases for ONTI's revision using the RTE and the RTC on-line formats. Once submitted, the ONTI's analyses the information and issues a final statement on the project (*dictamen técnico*). However, this statement or *dictamen* stands more as a recommendation as they are not of mandatory observance.

While ONTI's activities provide evidence on the willingness of the Argentinian government to bring further order and standardisation to ICT project development, there is still room for improvement. For instance, ONTI's role starts at the project design stage but stops once the *dictamen* is issued, thereby there is no clarity on the follow-up and monitoring phases that take place after ICT projects are approved and inputted into the Argentinian public procurement platform COMPR.AR (*comprar.gob.ar*).

Also, the RTE and the RTC projects' unique identifiers seem disconnected from those of the procurement platform therefore affecting the possibility of tracking projects' life cycle (from conception to finalisation) and to use standardised data to carry-out advanced data analytics practices to inform a more evidenced-based and data-driven decision making process.

This evidence shows the lack of a comprehensive ICT procurement strategy for the public sector. In addition to the absence of a strategy on ICT procurement, there is no evidence on current efforts to scale up existent tools such as País Digital's measuring model to achieve higher efficiencies in public procurement. Moreover, framework agreements for public procurements seem to be widely absent.

ONTI's efforts aimed to implement a focus on the sustainability and lifecycle of ICT projects, but the peer review team also observed that some public officials did not appear to be too concerned either

12. <https://www.argentina.gob.ar/onti/decalogo-tecnologico-onti>



with the relevance of keeping track on how the money is invested or by budgetary constraints. While public officials' statements in this regard cannot be considered as a reflection of the whole public sector, ICT project monitoring and evaluation should be a priority, particularly in light of the overall anti-corruption agenda for the Country and the need to strengthen a public sector measurement and performance culture.

The then MoM had the authority for setting digital government policy for the rest of the central government, but it was often not involved or consulted in decisions made by the centre of government that are relevant to this role, also in relation to major public investments and expenditures on digital government projects. However, the location of the new SGM within the Centre of Government opens a window of opportunity to lever its political authority, monitor and assess policy results, and advice the Government in terms of policy direction.

As the cross-cutting authority on ICT policy and services, there are many areas where the role and function of the SGM could be better leveraged to improve outcomes of the management of relevant projects and/or initiatives.

The then MoM was already charged with prioritising ICT projects across government. Yet, with the new SGM's cross-cutting visibility into other ministries' ICT activities, the SGM could also advise on large contracts and help to link up projects across ministries

to mitigate duplication and fragmentation and to help ensure they are structured in a way that maximises the chances for success (e.g., agile development versus traditional waterfall). This can also help ensure that projects and investments are in line with the overall strategic priorities set by the Digital Agenda.

The SGM could also serve an important role at monitoring and evaluating project performance and helping to allocate ICT budgets for each ministry strategically, which is a point raised by central government survey participants. In the near future, the role of the SGM as an advisory entity could be largely untapped. The value that can be generated by positioning the SGM in such a role will grow as it formalises government-wide strategies that can serve as the criteria and guiding force by which its advisory decisions are based; and in line with OECD good practices, thresholds could be set requiring the SGM's approval.

SKILLS FOR PUBLIC SECTOR INNOVATION

The then MoM pursued an ambitious agenda to drive innovation in the public sector. However, this work remains fragmented and needs to be embedded in the entire government through the development of capacities and skills at all levels.

From a digital government perspective, two key variables influence the need to rethink public sector employment policies in Argentina. First of all, there are major legacy issues due to the absence of significant reforms across



the public sector in the last decades. Legacy issues are not uncommon, and are observed also in other countries but they need to be addressed as they can represent significant blockages to the digital transformation (e.g. outdated skill frameworks that respond to analogue and paper-based or e-government models).

There are clear efforts in terms of the development of skills in the public sector. Initiatives led by the Secretariat of Public Employment (a body within the SGM) are examples that show the work being done to build capacities of civil servants and leaders and link them with key strategic policy objectives (similar efforts have taken place in countries like Ireland and the United States). For instance, altogether, skill development programmes like *Líderes en Acción* (focused on young officials), *Construyendo Nuestro Futuro* (focused on high-level public managers), and *Protagonistas de Recursos Humanos* (focused on human resource management officials) illustrate the multi-faceted nature of those efforts implemented by the Secretariat of Public Employment.

However, these efforts have been built on a heritage of inaccurate data on public sector employment, therefore highlighting the need of (re)constructing the basics in terms of good quality data in this realm. Stakeholders expressed that the provision of data on public sector employment by the Under-secretariat of Planning of Public Employment (for instance, data on the current profile of the public service) would enable comparisons and improve understanding of the current context and forecasting capacities. This will help appraise future needs and develop a forward-looking approach towards skills in the public service for the next 5 to 10 years.

Political changes have a direct implication on the permanence of public officials in high-level positions. In this light, the sustainability of capacity building efforts of key bodies within the public sector such as the Public Administration National Institute (Instituto Nacional de la Administración Pública, INAP) would require taking action to further build up public sector digital competence, and reinforce the skill base in the broad public sector.

As in many other countries, the Argentinian public sector is not fully protected from political transitions. Public officials at director level and in positions above are normally replaced as a result of political elections and subsequent transitions. In this light, the interviewed public officials expressed how these changes could cause instability in terms of the long-term sustainability of actions and results.

The abovementioned context not only also poses a policy challenge particularly for digital government considering the fact that in Argentina, several key initiatives are formed at the director, or top management level, but also in terms in terms of human capital losses and long-term effectiveness of skill building programmes (e.g. such as the *Construyendo Nuestro Futuro*).

This reinforces the need to secure and retain an adequately skilled public sector workforce at all levels in order to address instability and human capital turnover during political changes. It also highlights the need to decrease the negative impact of political transitions, increase organisational resilience, and build up long-term public sector collective knowledge.

Also, during the peer review mission to Buenos Aires (March, 2018) public officials expressed that roughly 75% of ICT professionals stay less than 2 years in the public sector, and in general terms lack formal tertiary education (e.g. university-level degrees).

Key bodies within the SGM in charge of digital and innovation efforts have also faced employee turnover as job opportunities and salaries in the private sector (together with a more agile and innovation driven mind-set) are simply more attractive to skilled employees (a context which is not endemic only to the Argentinian case). This is pivotal in light of the clear needs to attract and retain skilled human capital with background on data-driven and digital innovation. This scenario has led the government to opt for temporary employment models that provide higher compensation when compared to market costs. However, it also opens a window of opportunity to streamline government, making it more agile by increasing collaboration with the private sector, creating new job profiles and positions, and defining dynamic talent commissioning models that are appealing to external talent.



The first edition of the training program for high-level officials on public policy by the Design Academy of Public Policy at the Undersecretariat of Public Innovation and Open Government of the Government Secretariat of Modernization.



Created in 1973, the INAP stands as a long-term government ally in terms of building public sector capability, even as it benefits from support and credibility from other government institutions and external actors. The INAP seems to have a progressive approach to capacity building with a clearly defined strategy in terms of reach, scalability, relevance, digital transformation and training quality. The fact that various actors interviewed mentioned the INAP's role in providing key support to build capacities points to the fact that the Institute is well present in the minds of high-level public servants as a key resource to build a modern public sector in Argentina. Yet, the lack of secured funding and the official and/or legal recognition of its training certificates may affect the long-term sustainability of INAP's initiatives.

INAP's potential is key to help develop digital innovation skills in the public sector and support moving towards a digital state where digitalisation efforts are detached from specific administrations. In addition, attracting skilled human capital to the public sector would require moving from monetary incentives to creating the needed environment and culture to attract talent into the administration (e.g. creating profiles, harnessing civic passion, working environment), and incentivise human capital to stay.

The SGM's Government Lab of Argentina (LABGobAr) is a good initiative and shows emerging efforts in terms of mainstreaming innovation across the public sector, but it also reflects a niche and elite mind-set that might not be mirrored across the whole public sector.

The creation of LABGobAr (a multi-disciplinary team which depends on the Under-secretariat of Public Innovation and Open Government of the SGM) has been successful in terms of providing project-specific assistance to ministries and municipalities centering on the use of tools that can help foster innovation and start bolstering a culture of experimentation¹³.

In addition, the Lab's Design Academy of Public Policy – managed in coordination with the INAP - provides a learning environment to establish and scale up innovation skills and tools in the public sector in order to drive and grow an innovation-prone culture in public sector organisations.

The value of the Lab is at the moment marginal, as it works at the edge, and its innovations remain isolated best practices considering that they are difficult to be mainstreamed across the whole public sector. Challenges remain in terms of scalability, to make innovation part of "business as usual", hence the need of reinforcing the role of the Lab as a hub and incubator of ideas that can be mainstreamed, scaled-up and measured in order to turn innovation capabilities into concrete actions and demonstrate real-world impact. Yet, roughly 20,000 public officials took training courses at the Lab's Design Academy of Public Policy between 2015 and 2018 thereby providing evidence to Argentina's positive progress towards that direction.

13. See for instance: https://apolitical.co/solution_article/in-argentina-public-servants-get-promoted-for-learning-how-to-innovate/



4. Openness and public service delivery

DIGITAL BY DESIGN: FROM E-GOVERNMENT TO DIGITAL GOVERNMENT

Building a paperless government, improving digital public service delivery, and streamlining the government-citizen relationship have been priorities for the current administration. Yet, this shows that to date e-government and digital government co-exist in Argentina.

On the one hand, the development of the Electronic Document Management Platform (*Plataforma de Gestión Electrónica Documental*, GDE) and its underlying platform for the paperless on-line government-citizen interaction (*Trámites a Distancia*, TAD) have focused on making paper processes and services electronic (digitisation).

Efforts paid off and by March 2018, the central government achieved the digitisation of 100% of organisational procedures within central ministries (which add up to 92 public sector organisations). These achievements result from the interaction of clear policy goals and political will and provide a platform to further advance interoperability efforts in the public sector and the construction of a data-driven, digitalised, and smart government.

On the other hand, an approach running in parallel is focused on building a single government digital identity. This approach is propelled by the development of the National Public Sector Digital Platform (*Plataforma Digital del Sector Público Nacional*), its interface design and the consolidation of information about, and access to, digital public services – in particular through *Argentina.gob.ar* & *Mi Argentina* (see section 3.3).

Over the course of the peer review mission in March 2018, the peer review team spoke to leaders of many ICT initiatives throughout the government. Many were working on innovative solutions and those that truly enable the digital transformation of the public sector (e.g. *Mi Argentina* is building new or transformed, including the underlying processes, digital services for citizens in a web-based and mobile platform). In addition, the then MoM developed guidelines on how services are to appear online.

The above mentioned scenario shows that e-government and digital government coexist in Argentina at the moment. Even though this is common in many countries, it is not the most efficient way to concentrate efforts to unleash the full potential of technologies and data so as to transform how the public sector functions and delivers public value. The absence of a Digital Government Strategy does not help to raise full awareness of this and to overcome this situation as a requirement to advance the digital transformation of the public sector, and transform underlying processes that the services are built upon.

E-government initiatives such as the Electronic Document Management Platform were non-existent before 2015 and have undoubtedly generated efficiencies and positive benefits and value for the public sector. But there is further room for Argentina to seize the opportunities of the digital transformation to optimise the delivery of public value for its economy and its society.

By focusing on transferring paper-based processes and transactions into an electronic environment, Argentina has achieved higher efficiencies and transparency across the public sector, but it may be missing opportunities to assess how processes work in their entirety, and “reboot” the administration when needed to better serve the public. This would imply a shift from an efficiency perspective towards one driven by public value creation. Although this distinction exists, the peer review mission interviews indicate that these two perspectives and subsequent efforts were generally seen as being equally relevant for public sector modernisation and transformation.

Without a formal and strategic articulation of what digital government is, and a clear understanding of how government agencies will work together to achieve it, efforts may continue to target e-government rather than channelling resources towards a true digital transformation.



KEY ENABLERS

The widespread use of physical IDs (Documento Nacional de Identidad, DNI) for a wide range of everyday transactions provides a good start to the implementation of eID. Yet, the basics such as a sound information and data infrastructure are missing.

During the peer review mission to Buenos Aires, the team found evidence of the then MoM's willingness to develop key enablers for digital government. For instance, the MoM developed the Digital Identity System (Sistema de Identidad Digital, SID) that is intended to draw upon the widespread use of the DNI, and the data available on the National Population Register (RENAPER) and the National Social Insurance Agency (ANSES), in order to develop a facial recognition eID system in the Country. A committee was established with the participation of the banking and financial sector to support the development, implementation, and adoption of the system (e.g. it will be used also for private services) but the public sector will remain owner of the system.

Current efforts, now under the leadership of the SGM, are focused on developing the eID solution and, in a later stage, this will shift towards increasing the number of services accessible and available (security, transport, health and social pensions) in order to spur adoption.

While the work on the digital signature and eID will help enable digital service delivery, the then MoM was also clear that there is still need to undertake major harmonisation work within the government in order to enable inter-operability and the development of shared services. But it seems that this sense of urgency is not being reflected into practice across the whole administration. This is particularly important, as the availability of services for which the eID can be used is a prerequisite to capture its value for the citizenry and to understand its strategic importance.

A hard governance for digital government seems to be missing as well. For instance, the ONTI is working to create IT and data standards for public sector but they will be not binding. Other countries that faced similar challenges (like Norway) took action and enforced the implementation of key standards through policy levers and conditional funding. The lack of interoperability between systems at the

federal and provincial levels remains another important challenge.

Given overall absence of good hard governance for IT policy, individual ministries and local authorities have the space to take decisions and actions in their own way. This may result in the development of a tangled IT infrastructure in the near future as observed in other OECD countries. Managing this risk is a precondition for advancing the shift towards digital government and learning from other countries which might be more advanced in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes.

Digital inclusion and accessibility emerge as a key challenge. Infrastructure and connectivity limit equality of access to digital services.

While there are clear efforts to increase digital inclusion and connectivity (like the Digital Inclusion National Plan, *País Digital*, and ARSAT¹⁴'s work on connectivity in rural schools), infrastructure challenges may result in unequal and low on-line access to public services.

Data for 2017/Q4 from the National Statistics Office in Argentina (*Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos*, INDEC) show that for households with people aged 4 years old or more, the rates for home-based internet access, computer access, and mobile-phone accessibility are 74.3 %, 44.8% and 81.2% respectively. However, disparities and opportunities arise when these figures are presented by educational attainment.

INDEC's data demonstrate lower levels of home-based internet access for the less educated households in Argentina (no education and basic education). For instance, only 46.8% of households with no educational background have home-based internet access vis-à-vis 80.5% of households with complete secondary education and 93.8% of households with complete tertiary education (see Table 4.1).

Disparities can also be seen when comparing data on home-based computer access by educational attainment. For example, 85.5% of households with complete basic education do not have access to

14. ARSAT is the national state-owned company for satellite communications.



computer whereas only 26.8% of homes with complete tertiary education do not have such access.

Altogether, these results indicate that there are still some challenges in terms of digital inclusion and digital rights in Argentina, with the less educated households facing greater issues to access basic digital tools such as mobile phones, computers or internet. However, results also evidence areas of opportunities for the government to invest further efforts. This can in turn lead to a democratisation of digital public service delivery in Argentina, whilst maintaining multi-channel accesses to public services.

For instance, figures for mobile phone access progressively increase from 34% to 96.5% between households with no educational background and those with the highest level of educational attainment (incomplete/complete tertiary education). This therefore opens a window of opportunity for investing more resources in the delivery of mobile-based public services (e.g. through Mi Argentina mobile app) (See next section).

DIGITAL SERVICES

Decree 87/2017¹⁵ gave birth to the Argentina.gob.ar & Mi Argentina as key elements of the National Public Sector Digital Platform. These platforms are crucial milestones in terms of digital service delivery in the Country. Yet, despite the availability of some regulations, common guidelines,

clear instructions, and designated responsible in each institutions, the lack of enforcement tools slows down the velocity of whole-of government efforts to enable the National Public Sector Digital Platform as the main online access point to the government.

Important work has been undertaken to consolidate digital public service delivery, driven by a presidential mandate, following the example of the United Kingdom (gov.uk), and other OECD member and partner countries in the region like Mexico (gov.mx) and Peru (gov.pe). As a result, the government-citizen relationship builds on the use of *Argentina.gob.ar* and *Mi Argentina*. These platforms were designed and implemented by the Service Delivery Team within the then MoM (now the SGM).

Efforts have been fruitful. For instance, as of October 2018, 1.2 million users had registered on *Mi Argentina*, the digital public service delivery platform (See Figure 3.1). The platform, launched in April 2016, is accessible through a registration process where users can provide either their Facebook or Google accounts to access basic services, or their national ID or passport to access more complex services.

Services provided include advanced booking (*turnos*) for document certification (*apostillamiento*), vaccination appointments and on-line certification from the National Administration of Social Services (*Administración Nacional de la Seguridad Social*, ANSES). An early version of a Citizens Folder (*Mis Credenciales*) where users can access and consult documents such as driving permits, their DNI, and disability certificates in one place is also available.

15. For more information see: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/decreto_publicado_87-2017.pdf

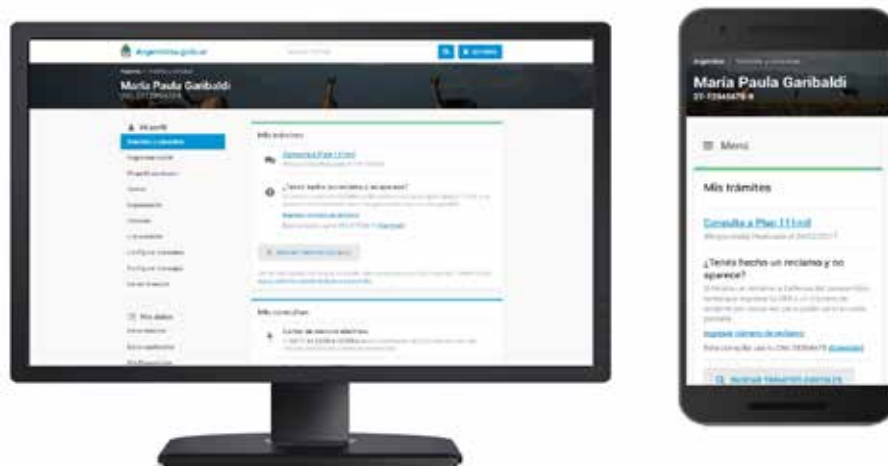
Table 4.1. Internet, computer and mobile-phone access by education level
% of households, data for households with population aged 4 years old or more (2017/Q4)

	Internet			Computer			Mobile phone		
	Yes	No	n.a.	Yes	No	n.a.	Yes	No	n.a.
No education	46.8	53.1	0.1	21.9	77.8	0.3	34	65.9	0.1
Basic education (incomplete)	59.7	40.2	0.1	36.7	63.1	0.2	51.6	48.4	0
Basic education (complete)	45.7	54.2	0.1	14.4	85.5	0.1	72	27.9	0
Secondary education (incomplete)	80.9	19	0.1	43.8	56.1	0.1	89.3	10.6	0
Secondary education (complete)	80.5	19.4	0.1	43.3	56.5	0.1	92.4	7.6	0
Tertiary education (university, incomplete)	94	5.9	0.1	72.7	27.2	0.1	97.4	2.6	0
Tertiary education (university, complete)	93.8	6.2	0.1	73.1	26.8	0.1	96.5	3.5	0

Source: INDEC, 2017. Available at: https://www.indec.gov.ar/uploads/informesdepremsa/mautic_05_18.pdf



Figure 3.1. **Mi Argentina: Web-based and mobile-based platform**



Source: Provided by the SGM.

As of October 2018, the SGM reported a total of 165,000 downloads of Mi Argentina's mobile application, and 105 thousand of advanced appointments performed through the portal. These results show MiArgentina's benefits in terms of social value.

The SGM's service delivery team within the SGM assists other agencies with their service processes, prioritising the provision of the assistance for services that are deemed to be a political priority and that respond to citizens' needs (e.g. healthcare services). It is expected that, by the end of 2018, 100% of public sector organisations will be migrated to Argentina.go.ar, unless exempted from migration by the SGM.

The key challenge in the near future will be to sustain and scale up these efforts and keep building services that are useful and meaningful to citizens, based on a user-driven approach, and drawing upon more capable public sector organisations.

For instance, the different levels of digitisation and digitalisation across ministries have stressed even more the crucial role of the digital service team not only as a developer of tools, resources, and platforms, but also as a direct provider of support and digital solutions. The vast majority of government portals were developed and managed by the digital service team, while ministries remained responsible for the content. This underscores the need of further moving towards a stronger

government role in terms of coordination, monitoring and oversight, but building also greater autonomy in terms of digital skills across public sector organisations.

Also, there is no clarity in terms of long-term clear policy goals and objectives, milestones, strategic direction and a broader vision, besides the general policy guidelines provided in the Decree 87/2017¹⁶, and those policy goals in terms of digital services set as part of the State Modernisation Plan¹⁷.

GOVERNMENT AS A PLATFORM

Opportunities exist to expand the involvement of the broader ecosystem of organisations and individuals who are concerned, or could be in the near future, by Argentina's digital government efforts.

Throughout the peer review mission, government officials spoke much about the need for better communication, coordination, and collaboration across the central government and sub-national governments. However, there was low recognition by government officials of i) the value of the broad external ecosystem of non-governmental actors—such as civil society organisations, companies, and members of the public—,

16. See Article 2 of Decree 87/2017.

17. See Decree 434/2016 available at <http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/255000-259999/259082/norma.htm>



and ii) how both the internal and external ecosystem are mutually reinforcing.

When asked about this by the peer review team, senior leadership at MoM indicated the primary importance of building confidence in the internal ecosystem before looking externally. While fostering the internal ecosystem is an admirable and understandable priority, it is important to consider the external ecosystem as well.

Mapping main goals to the specific actors, including external stakeholders, who can help move them forward may help the government advance in their achievement. Fostering an external ecosystem is critical to help create a sense of commitment and responsibility to achieve goals. This will in turn ensure the perpetuation of the relevant initiatives even in the event of a change in administration as a result of political elections.

The Open Government work appears to be a good example of this type of ecosystem building. By building communication efforts with 19 provinces and holding events that bring together thousands of interested external stakeholders, the Open Government team is showing great potential to leverage the power of the ecosystem to achieve policy goals.

The Open Government team has also developed a “Toolkit to Promote Open Government”¹⁸ to help other government offices engage the external ecosystem. As mentioned by the Director of Open Government during the peer review mission, after first making efforts to foster the ecosystem, “We noticed there are a lot of stakeholders we didn’t know were there”. It is likely that the same holds true for other policy areas. As identified through survey results, another example is LabGobAr’s efforts to foster an internal community of innovators and connect them with engaged external innovators from the private sector and civil society.

The fact that building and/or boosting the external ecosystems (e.g. for digital government and open data) has not been a priority is not completely the fault of the Government. Civil society representatives interviewed during the peer review mission described the external actors as often being “not well organised”, “fragmented” and often not open or willing to engage with the government. This will serve as a challenge for Argentina in trying to leverage data and digital technologies to create a space for collaboration and value co-creation.

18. See https://www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/kit_gobierno_abierto-alianza_para_el_gobierno_abierto.pdf.



Federal Internet Plan, La Quiaca, Jujuy. Now, the entire province has more than 1,149 kilometers of optical fibers that go from the town of Puesto Sey to Viñalito, passing through La Quiaca, Humahuaca, Tilcara, San Salvador de Jujuy and Perico.



5. Building a data-driven public sector

DATA GOVERNANCE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

There are clear efforts undertaken by the National Direction of Public Data and Public Information (DPDI, a body within the then MoM) which have focused on building a data architecture and infrastructure for the public sector. These efforts responded to the need of focusing first on technical matters that could be later scaled up to enable better service delivery and public value co-creation.

There are data and information systems currently under development, which could greatly benefit from common regulations/guidelines on how to establish an open by default culture and develop interoperability frameworks.

Limited data interoperability and standardisation remain priority issues hindering the construction of a data-driven public sector. A significant amount of basic data registries exist and are managed by individual ministries, by provinces and to a lesser extent by municipalities. As a result, the then MoM (through the DPDI) led data management, processing, interoperability and standardisation initiatives to bring some consistency, alignment and rationality to an otherwise very silo-based approach. These efforts will be sustained under the leadership of the DPDI, but within the recently created SGM.

For instance, a federated data interoperability and sharing platform, INTEROPER.AR, is being developed (following the Xroad Estonian model) as an effort to inter-connect existing data registers such as the National Population Register (RENAPER), the National Recidivism Register (*Registro Nacional de Reincidencia*, RNR), the Social Security Register (ANSES), and data from the General Inspector of Justice (*Inspección General de Justicia*, IGJ). The platform is intended to contribute to the development of integrated services, and automated data sharing through APIs.

In terms of the development of data skills, the DPDI has been at the forefront of government's efforts to enable data competence within the public sector towards the publication of government data since early 2017.

Even though SGM's 'Data as a Service' (DaaS) vision is an important step forward showing the willingness of the government to meet the strategic behaviour and perspective of the private sector, a sound data governance model for the public sector is still absent. Argentina would greatly benefit from establishing a clear data governance framework drawing upon official regulation and complemented by clear responsibilities, coordination and collaboration bodies, and capacity building initiatives inside government.

There is a strong technical focus on data exchange without a supporting data governance model for the public sector. For instance, the DPDI did great initial effort to document and propose standardisation according to W3C, ISO and other interoperability frameworks.

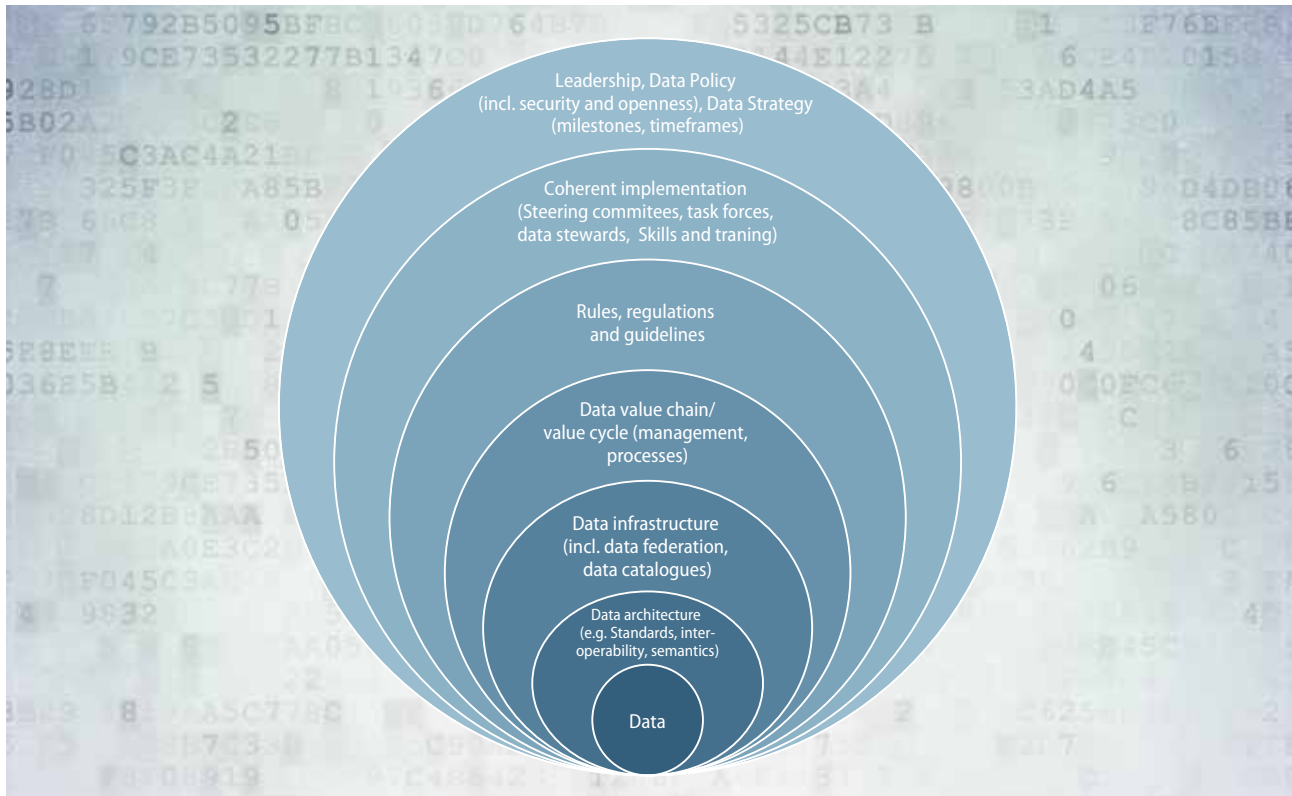
The DPDI's 'Data as a Service' vision is forward looking among Latin American countries, but it would greatly benefit from being supported by a stronger data governance framework (e.g. official regulation, clear institutional responsibilities, and data stewardship).

The then MoM focused on implementation, with the idea of learning first and regulating second – an approach levered by the need of delivering results fast in the context of 4-year political cycles at the central level. Building on this agile initial approach, it would be advisable to move towards higher institutionalisation to establish a more solid and stable data governance that would make the management of the data value chain more efficient and results more sustainable in the long-term – e.g. including open data efforts in all government institutions.

A sound data governance model (see Figure 4.1) would also consider regulatory, institutional and coordination frameworks, which could support and scale up on-going data standardisation and exchange initiatives. The development of such framework would also include the design of an overarching data policy, coordination mechanisms, and audits and metrics in terms of policy implementation. These governance elements would complement the current leadership of the DPDI (which



Figure 4.1. Data governance in the public sector



Source: Author. Originally published in *Digital Government Review of Sweden* (forthcoming).

act as a de facto Chief Data Officer), and help to move forward the DaaS approach across the whole public sector.

Complex federal-provincial relations with overlapping and unclear responsibilities for data collection and management, together with a lack of coherence (and measures that require compliance) negatively impacts data collection and quality. In addition, in many cases, registers are competence of the provinces, but these are still paper-based. This points to the need of actions towards the digitalisation and machine-readability of these data sources.

OPENING UP GOVERNMENT DATA

An executive decree creating the national open data policy was published in 2016. As a result, the MoM put in place actions to move forward the open data policy in the country in line with an incipient data governance strategy for the public sector.

Prior to 2016, data governance, control and accountability mechanisms were absent across the Argentinian public sector (See previous section). The trust in key public sector organisations such as the National Statics Office (INDEC) (a key player in terms of data management and open data in other countries) was at its lowest levels, with a direct impact on how data was governed, managed, shared and controlled inside the public sector. The difficulty of identifying key players inside ministries became quite critical in a context of political transition and public trust crisis faced by the Country; and ensuring data integrity through the whole data value chain became a challenge for the new administration.

By 2016, opening up government data was identified as an early priority for the incoming administration, together with restoring public confidence in government statistics, and investing in a digital infrastructure that would support broader modernisation efforts. This resulted in the publication of the 2016 Executive Decree establishing a government-wide open data policy,



targeting specific high value datasets and mandating government agencies to identify priority data assets to be released.

From 2017, open data efforts have moved from a focus on data publication towards the intention of “cleaning the house” and bringing order to the state of government data across the public sector.

In this context the DPDI became a hub to co-ordinate existing players and initiatives already available at the central government level, which were often siloed. The approach therefore changed from initial focus on data publication to stronger emphasis on data control and governance.

While efforts have moved from a focus on data publication to data governance, good quality data is increasingly becoming available in the central portal.

The central open data portal *Datos.gob.ar* is used as a tool to control the quality of government data in line with the standards and guidelines developed by the then Ministry of Modernisation. The development of data catalogues and open data plans for data publication are identified as priority activities for public sector organisations.

In addition, the then Ministry of Modernisation worked with the ministries and the provinces to encourage the publication of open data. Indeed, there was a generalised awareness in the ministries interviewed about the need to opening up government data, but the main work is done through informal channels and in many cases, it is difficult to get the necessary collaboration.

The current approach follows a federalised publication model based on three premises:

1. The SGM provides the supporting hard and soft infrastructure (e.g. IT infrastructure and guidelines) to help public sector organisations to catalogue and publish their own datasets.
2. Public sector organisations are responsible for maintaining their own data catalogues either based on the ‘Portal Andino’ tool (a CKAN tool developed by the then MoM), or other mechanisms in order to comply with metadata standards; and,
3. Only those datasets that comply with central data and metadata standards can be federated for publication through the central open data portal



Punto Digital, Lanús, Province of Buenos Aires. This is one of the more than 430 Puntos Digitales that citizens in Argentina can use.



While the abovementioned approach was initially useful to get public sector organisations on board, it also led to the proliferation of open data portals, therefore affecting data discoverability (for instance, some stakeholders expressed during interviews that the user community sometimes finds it difficult to find specific datasets).

This approach has also resulted on heterogeneous policy implementation with different public sector organisations progressing at different speed. Key players within the public sector include the Ministries of Energy, Justice, Transport, Agroindustry, Finance and Production. In Justice for instance, high-level support at the Ministerial level led to the creation of a team in charge of implementing the mandates of the Executive Decree (which include the publication of specific data taxonomies to fight corruption in the country). Others, like Finance and Production, have moved faster in implementing a DaaS approach, which resulted on the development of innovative data services such as the API Time Series. Yet, other public sector organisations have moved at a slower pace – a scenario that is sometimes aggravated by the difficulties faced in terms of enabling the necessary collaboration.

The DPDI's Data as a Service approach (inclusive of open data) was designed to ensure that government data can be produced as good quality and inter-operable data by design prior to their publication and sharing.

DPDI's early commitments focused on producing data governance instruments for data interoperability such as the 2016 Guide for the Identification and Use of Inter-operable [data] Entities (*Guía para la identificación y uso de entidades interoperables*).

The Guide stands as an on-going effort to ensure both public and private sector organisations can follow simple methods to generate, share and/or consume good quality government data. For instance, it provides guidance on how to produce simple identifiers for those data that are common to - and produced by - different public sector organisations, but that at the same time are regularly shared among them (e.g. country > country_id). From 2017 onwards, there have been consistent and increasing efforts to make sure this core-reference framework for government data is available through APIs.

For instance, the so-called GeoRef API (*API del Servicio de Normalización de Datos Geográficos de Argentina*)¹⁹ compiles and delivers common identifiers for those geodata produced by public sector organisations such as the National Statistics Office (INDEC), the National Geography Institute (IGN), the National Register of Working-class Neighborhoods (RENABAP), and the Ministry of the Interior. The API has helped to enable a user-driven and real-time approach for the standardisation of geodata in the Country.

These efforts have helped to ensure that data are been used both statistically and as a service for public sector systems that can generate quality data from scratch, thereby reducing the cost and burden of building value-added products and services resulting from low quality datasets.

Great opportunities remain to scale up the abovementioned efforts and formalise what might constitute Argentina's Strategic Data Infrastructure in the near future .

A national strategic data infrastructure builds upon the principle that good quality data publication and re-use are means towards better public service delivery, good governance, social and economic value, and the overall well-being of citizens.

It follows the premise that data can provide a platform for public value co-creation. Thus, the need of government action to prioritise the production, publication and re-use of specific datasets based on high-level policy priorities. For instance, using open contracting data as a tool for greater public sector integrity, or geo-data for better urban planning, mobility, and natural risk management.

A comprehensive strategic data infrastructure would also follow a demand-driven data publication rationale that reinforces the value of datasets for users (the publication of datasets that become a priority for publication based on the needs of the community).

In line with the above, as of November 2018, Argentina was carrying-out the Open Data Readiness Assessment (ODRA) with the World Bank as part of its

19. For more information see: <https://datosgobar.github.io/georef-ar-api/> & <https://github.com/datosgobar/georef-ar-api>



willingness to advance open data efforts and, more specifically, to follow a more user- and demand-driven approach for data publication.

While there is a widespread lack of understanding of who the data users are, and what open data is being used and for what purpose, engagement with the ecosystem stands a priority step by the DPDI. This will help to move forward the open data policy in the country with a focus on communities, re-use and value co-creation.

Some initiatives such as the API Time Series and upcoming open source efforts are in place to foster data re-use and data-driven innovation. For instance, the then MoM partnered with ministries and other public sector organisations to help them embrace open innovation and value co-creation methodologies such as hackathons organised with the Fin-, Agro-, and Health-Tech communities in the Country, and other analytical contests organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. These and other actions are linked to the commitments of Argentina in the context of the Open Government Partnership. The availability of entrepreneurship hubs at local level is also a clear sign of how the open data policy is moving forward country-wide.

Sustaining and scaling up the above mentioned efforts would require better identifying and mapping the data community in order to assess their needs, and develop their digital and data skills. Establishing partnerships with key partners such as journalists, universities, researchers and the private sector will also play a determining factor to ensure that open government data delivers widespread real value for all actors within the ecosystem beyond specific thematic actions and user clusters.

References

Government of Argentina (*forthcoming*), “Argentina Digital Agenda”.

OECD (2017), *Trust and Public Policy: How Better Governance Can Help Rebuild Public Trust*, OECD Public Governance Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264268920-en>

OECD (2017b), *Systems Approaches to Public Sector Challenges: Working with Change*, OECD Publishing, Paris. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279865-en>

OECD (2014), *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies*. <http://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/recommendation-on-digital-government-strategies.htm>

OECD (*forthcoming*), *Issues paper on the Digital Government framework*. Not available for public access.

Other publications



Digital Government Review of Brazil:
Towards the Digital Transformation of the Public Sector



Digital Government Review of Norway:
Boosting the Digital Transformation of the Public Sector



Open Government Data Report:
Enhancing Policy Maturity for Sustainable Impact



Open Government Data in Mexico:
The Way Forward

Visit us:

Digital Government: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/>

Open Data Project: <http://www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/open-government-data.htm>



OECD

BETTER POLICIES FOR BETTER LIVES

For further information:

@OECDgov

www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government



"Making the transformation work for growth and well-being"

Photo: Casa Rosada