Executive summary

Thailand has demonstrated ambition and commitment to developing an open and connected government. The Digital Government Development Plan (2017-2020) and the introduction of legal instruments related to digital government, stakeholder participation and access to information demonstrate Thailand's willingness to strengthen governance arrangements for open and digital government maturity. The assignment of institutional responsibilities to the Office of the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) and relevant line ministries places co-ordination of the open and connected agenda at the highest political level. However, achieving sustainable policy impact in Thailand implies mobilising resources efficiently and using governance structures to steer and co-ordinate policy actions and deliver user-driven services.

Thailand lacks an agreed-upon national open government strategy. As the appointed co-ordinator for Thailand's stakeholder participation initiatives, the OPDC is well placed to take the lead in designing such a policy document. Yet, the successful design and implementation of a national open government strategy also require building a culture of openness and participation in the public sector that is proactive, inclusive and uses digitalisation as a driver of open government.

Thailand has developed key enablers such as the National Digital ID to facilitate the digital access to and delivery of public services. Nevertheless, the implementation of these initiatives has been limited at the operational level. Thailand has to build its public sector preparedness and competency in several areas, including improving the use of policy levers, planning and monitoring information and communication technology (ICT) expenditures, and promoting the adoption of key enablers and stronger data governance for a digitally mature government.

Prioritising these elements could help the government of Thailand promote a more coherent open and digital transition across policy areas, levels of government and project lifecycles.

Key policy recommendations

A citizen-driven policy framework for open and connected government

- Design and implement a national open government strategy and link existing open government initiatives with a monitoring and reporting system to track progress.
- Engage relevant stakeholders in the development of the proposed strategy and the next Digital Government Development Plan.

Clear institutional governance for implementing open and digital government

- Develop sectoral and institutional digital government agendas and reinforce digital and data leadership across line ministries and relevant government agencies.

- Provide the OPDC with a legal mandate to co-ordinate all initiatives related to Thailand's open government agenda across government and clarify institutional responsibilities for open government for greater coherence in the implementation of related reforms.
- Make use of the OPDC's Government Innovation Lab and establish an Open Government Steering Committee (OGSC) to support collaboration around open and digital government initiatives.

Using legislation and regulations to promote open and connected government

- Build awareness of the Official Information Act, B.E. 2540 (1997), urge public entities to comply with the access to information and public information disclosure provisions therein and continue promoting access to public information through simple request procedures that are uniform across all public institutions.
- Strengthen the independence of the Office of the Official Information Commission (OIC) and its governing commission.
- Consider revising the Official Information Act, B.E. 2540 (1997), which is the key legal instrument for disclosing public information, to include provisions on open government data in line with the Digitalisation of Public Administration and Services Delivery Act, B.E. 2542 (2019).
- Consider creating a national council for citizen participation, guidelines and manuals on the implementation of the Act on Legislative Drafting and the Outcome of Law, B.E. 2562 (2019), and enable broader public consultation on draft legislation.
- Explore agile regulatory practices along with more traditional approaches, such as regulatory impact analysis, with relevant stakeholders working on the intersections of digitalisation, regulatory policy and innovation.

Reinforcing public sector coherence

- Promote inclusiveness and openness by applying gender budgeting approaches to public funding mechanisms and include earmarked funds for open government in the budget plan.
- Involve the Digital Government Development Agency (DGA) in planning and approving ICT/digital projects in the context of Ministry of Digital Economy and Society (MDES) and Bureau of the Budget (BB) funds and budgetary processes.
- Develop common project business cases and management tools, and framework agreements for the acquisition of ICT/digital products and services.
- Use Integrity Pacts to promote the publication of open data for projects funded with public resources as part of anti-corruption efforts.

Building talent and competencies for open and connected government

- Scale up efforts and programmes targeting skills development, mobility, talent recruitment and procurement to build stronger digital competency and leadership in the public sector.

Improving the design and delivery of public services

- Define and implement an integrated approach to digital identity to address legacy challenges, facilitate technical implementation and simplify the access to services.
- Promote a Data as a Service (DaaS) approach for public sector data, such as the identification of priority information for its generation as digital data, for greater interoperability, standardisation and exchange through shared data infrastructures.

- Implement user engagement exercises, promote the adoption of user experience (UX) service design and technology principles and standards, and promote the consolidation of services and the integration of available portals for services and formalities.

Enabling a data-driven public sector

- Consider granting the DGA greater authority in co-ordinating digital and data standards under the oversight of the MDES and OPDC.
- Develop an action plan for public sector data as a sub-element of the National Big Data Policy and the Digital Government Policy that includes the Digital Government Development Plans, which the DGA could lead.
- Strengthen the operationalisation of Thailand's Data Governance Framework 1.0 by providing and promoting practical measures, guidelines and good practices on data management.
- Clarify the synergies between the OGSC Skill Development Framework and the DGA Data Governance Framework 1.0.
- Scale up the DGA's efforts to deploy a data governance structure and network of data leaders across the public sector.
- Building on a Data as a Service (DaaS) approach, promote and monitor the development of digital data registers, data catalogues and implementation of data standards for high-value datasets.
- Promote a trustworthy environment for data management and use through the design and implementation of data ethical principles for the public sector.

Promoting open government data

- Promote user-driven and purpose-driven open government data availability, identify high-value datasets for publication accessibility and re-use, including through application programming interfaces (APIs).
- Embed open data in the proposed action plan for public sector data to ensure data governance coherence across the data value cycle.
- Enhance policy coherence across the public sector through communication, prioritising stakeholder engagement and collaboration, and promoting the use of open key performance indicators for monitoring the sharing of open data by public sector organisations.