Chapter 2. Governing the digital transformation of the Argentinian public sector

This chapter analyses and discusses the governance of the digital transformation of the public sector in Argentina, based on the OECD Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies *and the analytical work conducted on the governance of digital government in a number of OECD member and partner countries. The chapter starts by touching on the current governance landscape of the Argentinian public service, and discusses Argentina's recently released Digital Agenda and its associated objectives. It then discusses the government of Argentina's institutional governance frameworks and the leadership of digital transformation efforts, followed by a discussion on its capacity to leverage systems approaches to achieve its digital government objectives and goals. The chapter concludes by exploring the legal and regulatory framework and funding mechanisms that may contribute to enabling the digital transformation of the public sector.*

Introduction

The digital transformation of the public sector can have major cross-cutting and transversal impacts on all levels of government that cascade across all parts of the economy and to citizens. The challenges associated with achieving digital transformation are as significant as its potential for impact. In order to overcome these challenges, a clear, solid and comprehensive governance structure is critical. Such governance generally takes the form institutional arrangements that secure a clear mandate for action and facilitate stakeholder involvement and whole-of-government, cross-government and cross-sector co-ordination and collaboration. It also includes a legal and regulatory framework and funding mechanisms that can be used as policy levers that support moving from analogue or electronic processes to full digital transformation that changes the underlying processes and practices in ways that allow governments to move in a unified fashion toward the achievement of national policy goals and better lives for citizens. In line with the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* (2014), Figure 2.1 illustrates these and other factors that have been considered as part of this review.

Figure 2.1. Governing the digital transformation of the public sector: Contributing factors

Source: OECD (2017c), *Digital Government Review of Norway: Boosting the Digital Transformation of the Public Sector*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264279742-en.

Argentina is taking a portfolio approach to public sector reform with the goal of building a national public policy framework and leadership that moves the country forward in a consistent and united way. The Argentinian administration sees strengthening digital government as a keystone in the broader context of its reform agenda along with open government, public sector integrity and regulatory policy reform. Reflecting these central priorities, the government of Argentina has worked with the OECD to conduct nearly concurrent reviews in the areas of regulatory policy and open government (OECD, 2019;

forthcoming). In terms of digital government efforts, Argentina has defined a number of clear policy priorities, developed relevant initiatives and delivered on specific policy commitments since December 2015.

Argentina has had to build much of its work from the ground-up. All countries face challenges in bringing about the digital transformation of the public sector. However, the challenges that Argentina has had to overcome to begin its digital transformation journey have been particularly acute. 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. For example, only three cross-government information systems existed when the current administration took office in December 2015, and those that did exist only had limited coverage for their respective focus areas across government. All other systems were siloed at ministerial or jurisdictional levels, resulting in many duplicative and often incompatible information systems across the public sector.

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.

In the context of this unique challenge, this chapter analyses the governance of digital government in the public sector in Argentina. It first explores the current administration's existing landscape and the factors that have led up to the launch of Argentina's first government Digital Agenda. The second section touches on institutional governance in the public sector of Argentina, with an emphasis on leadership and digital stewardship of the Digital Agenda and initiatives. A related third section explores leveraging systems approaches through cross-government and cross-sector co-ordination to achieve digital transformation goals. Finally, the last section explores policy levers that can be critical enablers of the digital transformation: a legal and regulatory framework and funding mechanisms that facilitate transformation and moving away from the status quo.

A new administration: A new beginning

Despite the major challenge of kick-starting the digital transformation of the public sector when very few enabling conditions had been cultivated by the previous administration, the current government has stepped up to the challenge.

A number of conditions have enabled this progress and provide a context in which continued advancement and success is possible. Arguably the most important, the digital transformation of the public sector is one of the highest priorities on the agenda of President Mauricio Macri, who was inaugurated on 10 December 2015. Political commitment is a prerequisite for policy and institutional changes. The president has demonstrated this commitment through the issuance of numerous presidential decrees, akin to executive orders, a push for new legislation and the creation of a digital service team (the National Direction of Digital Services) (Box 2.1) and an innovation lab (LABgobar). Through one of these decrees,[1] the president created the Ministry of Modernisation (MoM) on his first day in office, which housed the digital services team and LABgobar. Through a series of additional presidential decrees, he empowered the then-MoM to catalyse the digital

transformation of the public sector through the development of cross-cutting technologies and government-wide policies. President Macri established the Undersecretariat of Digital Government within the MoM and charged the ministry with the co-ordination of the whole-of-government modernisation framework. Annex A lists relevant laws and decrees that have been executed during the current administration.

Box 2.1. Digital government: Argentina's National Direction of Digital Services

The president launched the National Direction of Digital Services upon taking office in December 2015. Since then, this team has grown to over 70 technology experts that focus on several key areas:

- developing government-wide platforms

- designing and implementing citizen-centred digital services

- creating digital-assisted tools and services for use in physical environments (e.g. face-to-face service offices).

Some of the key successes of the National Direction of Digital Services include:

- building Argentina.gob.ar, a single domain central website for government information and services

- closing over 1 000 separate government websites to centralise information in Argentina.gob.ar

- developing Mi Argentina, and single sign-on digital identity, citizen profile, and public digital service platform and dashboard

- transforming over 800 business services.

Sources: https://www.argentina.gob.ar/modernizacion/gobiernodigital; https://public.digital/2018/06/01/why-were-so-impressed-by-argentinas-digital-services-team; interviews with government officials.

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, 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, where President Macri served as the Chief of Government from 2007 until his inauguration as president. These experts have managed to launch and accelerate the digitisation of public services, government operations and a paperless government beyond all expectations. The talent of these individuals has enabled the completion of many important initiatives in a very short period of time, in many instances starting from scratch.

In September 2018, the president reorganised the government by presidential decree,[2] 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[3] 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 policy-making and oversight responsibilities while also serving in a separate, non-central ministry. The fact that the MoM was a line ministry meant that it had to rely on soft means to convince actors of the benefits of public governance and digital government reforms in order to engage them in its agenda. As a result of the reorganisation, more policy areas now intersect with the SGM at the centre of government, which helps it to promote horizontality, coordination and inclusiveness, and reduces the risk of fragmentation, better enables the SGM to achieve its mission and contributes to the long-term sustainability of efforts. This facilitates the digital transformation of the public sector by sending a clear political message in terms of the relevance of this agenda for the current administration.

Another enabling condition, tied directly to the current administration, is a clear sense of urgency expressed unanimously by the government officials who have interacted with the OECD through the course of this review. The term of office for the presidency in Argentina is four years, with the possibility of re-election. President Marci's current term therefore extends until the end of 2019. Officials believe it is critical to ensure that a sustainable path for the digital transformation is established before the end of the president's term. It is important that these new initiatives and associated governance models reach "escape velocity"[4] for a potential scenario in which the current president is not re-elected in 2019. A key contextual underpinning to Argentina's efforts, and another driver of the sense of urgency that sustained the Government's efforts the last couple of years, is that the country held the Presidency of the G20 in 2018, culminating in the annual G20 Summit on 30 November and 1 December. The digital economy served as a key G20 workstream, with digital government recognised as a key theme.[5]

The effects of the push for digital transformation are cascaded throughout government. An OECD (2018) survey of Argentinian public sector organisations administered within the frame of this review showed that 71% of line ministries have started implementing digital government programmes, and 83% have started implementing open data initiatives. 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 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 and inclusive narrative

A clear scenario of "who are we" and "where do we want to go" is one of the basic prerequisites of sound governance. This is often laid out in the form of a digital government strategy. As set out in the OECD (2014) *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies*, governments need to develop digital government strategies consistent with a strategic vision and align their capacities, norms, structures and risk management models in order to achieve this vision. When the underlying practices are aligned under a common vision, governments unlock technology as a driver to create open and innovative public sectors, to improve social inclusiveness and accountability, and to bring together government and non-government actors to contribute to national development and long-term sustainable growth. According to the OECD Digital

Government Survey 1.0 (2018b), all OECD countries stated having a national digital government strategy. The composition of the strategy and the institutional frameworks to implement the strategy vary from country to country.

The Digital Agenda

In Argentina, the need to deliver quick results has led to a very dynamic set of individual actions and initiatives since the early inception of the current administration. Until recently, the country's digital vision was not codified in any sort of overarching, guiding governance document. In thinking forward, the government has demonstrated the intent to secure long-term sustainability and provide clarity in terms of policy goals. This intent is reflected in the current development of Argentina's Digital Agenda (Government of Argentina, 2018).

The draft version of the Digital Agenda was discussed and, through negotiation and consensus building, approved by those secretariats and ministries that contributed to its development (Ministries of Production and Labour; Education, Culture, Science and Technology; Foreign Affairs; and Government Secretariats of Modernization; Labour and Employment; Agroindustry; and Science, Technology and Productive Innovation). On 2 November 2018, the president issued a decree that formally approves instituting the Digital Agenda, and sets forth a path and structure for finalising and implementing it, as well as for ensuring it is updated over time as digital norms and technologies evolve (Box 2.2).[6]

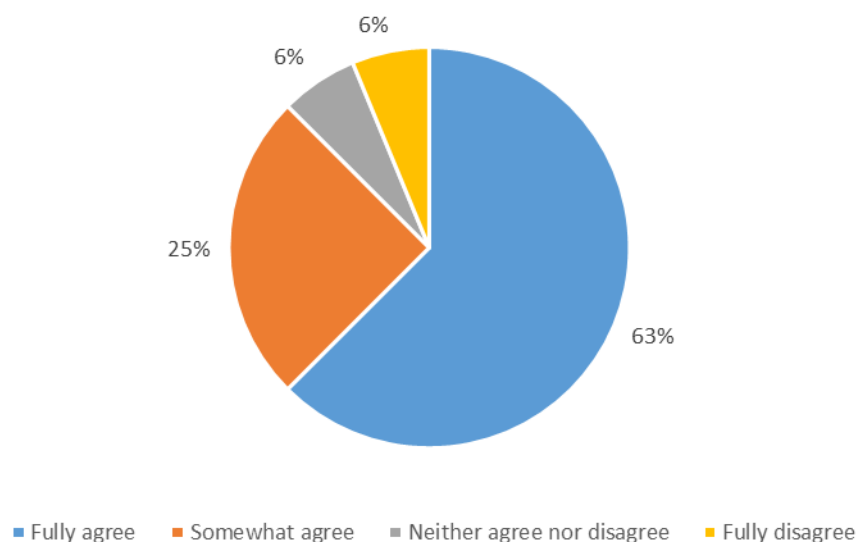**Box 2.2. Decree 996/2018 – Argentina's Digital Agenda**

Considering a number of factors, including Argentina's intention to join the OECD and to improve public policies for a stronger positioning in the global context, Decree 996/2018 approved the vision and key pillars of Argentina's Digital Agenda. The key provisions of the decree include:

- The establishment of a Planning and Follow-up Council, comprised of representatives from many ministries and secretariats, responsible for defining strategic guidelines and objectives for managing and co-ordinating digital government efforts across government.

- The creation of an Executive Board, co-ordinated by the Secretariat for Digital Government and Innovation Technology, dependent of the Government Secretariat of Modernisation (SGM), responsible for elaborating and executing an annual action plan for the Digital Agenda, including concrete work plans and projects, goals, and performance indicators. The Executive Board is also charged with reviewing the Digital Agenda on an annual basis and proposing updates to ensure it remains up-to-date. It is also charged with keeping the Planning and Follow-Up Council apprised on progress in meeting objectives.

- Delegation of authority to the SGM to dictate all complementary and supplementary regulations for the decree's implementation.

Source: www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/#!DetalleNorma/195154/20181105.

The Digital Agenda is the Government's key guiding document for digital government. It is designed to help provide government-wide guidance and priorities and to accelerate the digital transformation of Argentina, and adds to the government's priorities in terms of 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. The Digital Agenda, digital laws and government efforts have resulted in general belief among survey respondents that "a clear vision in terms of digital government is available in Argentina" (Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2. Extent to which respondents agree that a clear vision in terms of digital government is available in Argentina

■ Fully agree   ■ Somewhat agree   ■ Neither agree nor disagree   ■ Fully disagree

Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations".

Through the issuance of Resolution 138/2018 in December 2018, the SGM formally implemented Decree 996/2018 (Digital Agenda). Shortly after, in January 2019, the SGM issued Resolution 5/2019, which created the Special Temporary Executing Unit within the Secretariat for Digital Government and Digital Innovation. The unit works in a coordinating role for the overall Digital Agenda, and it has been assigned a number of objectives:

- intervene in the definition of initiatives and work proposals within the framework of the Digital Agenda aimed at accelerating the digital transformation of the country

- prepare concrete work plans and projects of the Digital Agenda, and the management goals and indicators applicable to their implementation by the public entities that serve as project leads

- design and implement a monitoring methodology for the different initiatives of the Digital Agenda

- direct studies of international positioning of the digital competitiveness of Argentina in relation to the selected indicators

- assist the Secretariat of Digital Government and Technological Innovation of the SGM in the co-ordination of the actions of the Executive Board

- assist the Executive Board in the formulation of an annual follow-up plan for the Digital Agenda to monitor compliance with the objectives established for it

- intervene, in conjunction with the Executive Board, in the preparation of progress reports for review by the Planning and Follow-up Council

- assist and advise the ministries, agencies and departments as needed on the implementation of the Digital Agenda.

A steering committee – the Ministerial Council for Planning and Monitoring of the Digital Agenda – is chaired by the SGM and oversees the agenda. Its role is to ensure the Digital Agenda is being carried out. A number of ministries that are most crucial to achieving the Digital Agenda are also involved, including the ministries of Production and Labour; Education, Culture, Science and Technology; and Foreign Affairs. An Executive Committee is led by the secretaries and deputy secretaries from these ministries to help implement the Digital Agenda. Subgroups are clustered into working groups by topic and will help co-ordinate individual projects.

The Digital Agenda focuses on the digital transformation of the broad digital economy (see Box 2.3). A number of objectives focus specifically on the digital transformation of the public sector, including those related to promoting an open, transparent, people-centred, and secure digital government.

Box 2.3. Objectives of the Digital Agenda

The Digital Agenda was developed to bring about a unified vision and roadmap for digital transformation in 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 Digital Agenda include:

- promote regulatory frameworks that allow taking advantage of digital opportunities, contemplating an adequate treatment of public and private information

- facilitate the development of infrastructure and accessibility that connects everyone in an intelligent way

- foster digital literacy as a driving force for inclusion

- develop an efficient and effective government, oriented to people, with values of openness and transparency

- promote digital education to encourage the employability of citizens in the future

- boost the economic growth of the country through digital development, through a quantitative and qualitative jump in productivity and competitiveness

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- develop cybersecurity capacities to build trust in digital environments
- promote the international prominence of Argentina in the digital transformation process.

Source: www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/#!DetalleNorma/195154/20181105.

Most stakeholders interviewed during the OECD peer review mission to Argentina (March 2018) were aware of the draft Digital Agenda, there was general enthusiasm for it, and a belief that it would serve as the overall strategy and vision for digital government in the country. In developing the Digital Agenda and getting broad buy-in and engagement across the 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 were previously 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 co-ordination across government, and setting common strategic digitalisation objectives in a broad sense. It puts in place a high-level vision for where the country wants to be. The Digital Agenda is generally project-based (e.g. digital signature, single window) and principle-based (e.g. openness, co-creation); in the future it will be helpful to guide priority projects, provide unity around key principles and develop specific related strategies (e.g. procurement strategy).

The design and development of the Digital Agenda has also provided crucial opportunities to bring the relevant stakeholders together, enabling discussion about the objectives to be achieved and the institutional tools to be mobilised. In many instances, the development of such a Digital Agenda is a major and necessary step in achieving digital transformation, and it will likely have significant influence throughout the government. This is evidenced by results from an OECD survey administered among Argentinian government organisations for the purpose of this review, where most participants indicated that central/federal direction for digital government has strong relevance for their institution (e.g. mandates, alignment and relevance of the central/federal goals with the institutional goals, etc.) (Figure 2.3), and most are also fully aware of the content and goals of the digital government policy.

Figure 2.3. Respondents' ranking of the relevance the central/federal strategy direction has for their institution
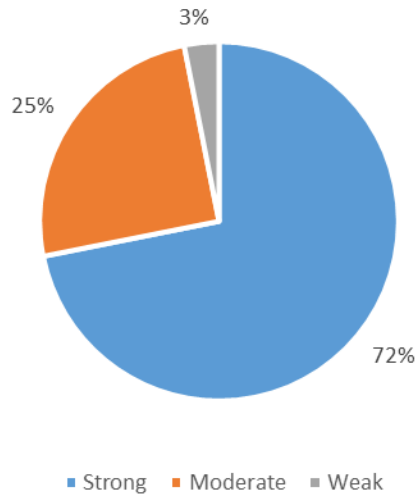
Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations".

In addition, as evidenced by the OECD survey on government organisations in Argentina, the ecosystem within government provides a positive environment for the adoption of the Digital Agenda and subsequent strategies and policies. As illustrated in Figures 2.4 and 2.5, most respondents are fully aware of, and committed to, the Digital Agenda. This is a good sign that the Digital Agenda will likely be embraced by public officials.

Figure 2.4. Respondents' response to whether they are "fully aware of the content and goals of the digital government policy"
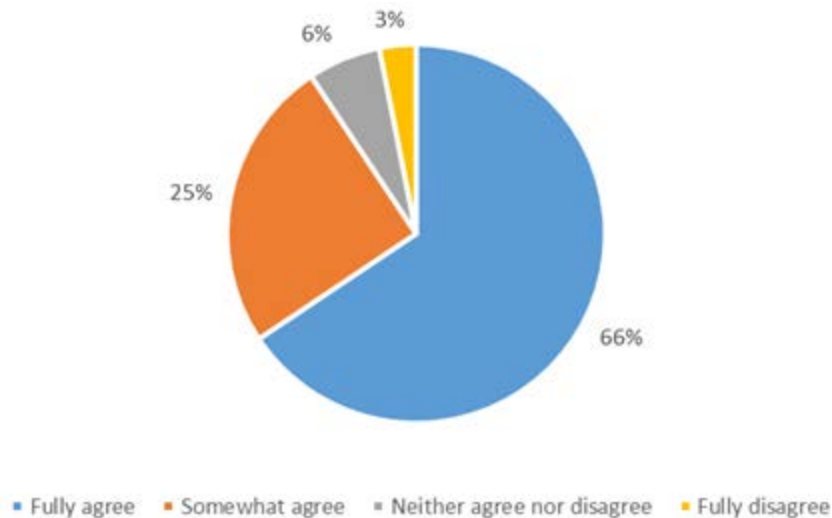
Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations".

Figure 2.5. Extent to which respondents stated that they feel committed and ownership in regard to the digital government policy
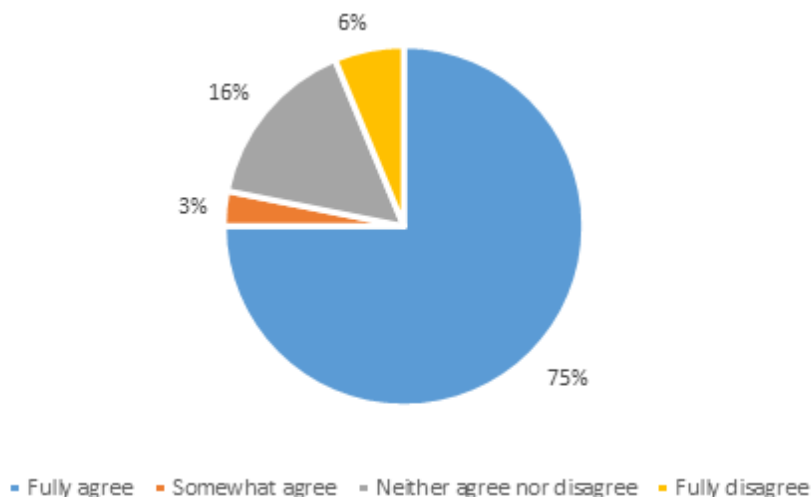
- Fully agree - Somewhat agree - Neither agree nor disagree - Fully disagree

Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations"

According to SGM officials and backed by the results of the recent OECD digital government survey of the centre of government, however, the Digital Agenda is not intended to constitute a full digital government strategy in itself. It does, however, provide a policy basis to build a comprehensive digital government strategy, which is considered a key element of the governance for a digital government. This is in line with SGM officials' stated intent to first construct the Digital Agenda in order to set forth a broad framework under which a full digital government strategy can be subsequently developed.

Initially creating project and principles-based agendas is a common step as a government seeks to bring about a digital transformation. For example, the first Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the Obama administration in the **United States** began his tenure by launching the "25 point implementation plan to reform federal information technology management" (The White House, 2010), and then subsequently launched a formal Digital Strategy with specific actions and associated time horizons (The White House, 2012), as well as specific sub-strategies, such as the "Federal Cloud Computing Strategy" (The White House, 2011).

Although not intended to serve as the digital government strategy, the Digital Agenda has the potential to better align the country with the OECD *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies* in a number of important ways (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Examples of alignment between the OECD *Recommendation of the Council for Digital Government Strategies* **and Argentina's Digital Agenda**

OECD Recommendation	Argentina's Digital Agenda
Efficiency and effectiveness; openness and engagement	– Core objective to "Develop an efficient and effective government, oriented to the citizen, with values of openness and transparency" – Actions to make public initiatives more citizen-focused and to create opportunities for dialogue and co-creation with civil society and citizens – Actions to make information free, open and available for reuse
Data-driven	– Action to promote automatic exchange of data across levels of government – Action to promote an intelligent government that takes decisions based on data
Security and privacy	– Core objective to "develop cybersecurity capabilities to build trust in the digital environments" – Actions to "develop a system for monitoring and managing cyber threats at the national level", "develop a cybersecurity ecosystem" and "strengthen the leadership of the state and public-private co-ordination for the development of policies to safeguard critical infrastructures"
Leadership commitment and co-ordination within and across governments, sectors and countries	– Digital Agenda enacted through presidential decree, signalling political commitment – Core objective to position Argentina as "a protagonist in the digital world" – Action to "promote the adoption of international standards and good practices" – Action to "maintain an active participation in forums and international organizations" – Actions to build an "innovation ecosystem" and a "new business ecosystem"
Processes and capacities to support smart implementation	– Commitment to "establish a system of indicators that provide accurate information" to enable monitoring of Digital Agenda action items – Actions to build foundational enablers: digital identities and signatures and unified and interoperable platforms – Commitment to make services easier for citizens and businesses through one-stop shops, once-only data principles, and process and contract simplification
Legal/regulatory framework and security/privacy	– Core objective to "ensure that legal frameworks allow to seize digital opportunities, while ensuring the appropriate treatment of public and private information" – Supports "updating those regulations that became obsolete in the face of advances in technologies, as well as those that represent obstacles to innovation and progress in ICT" – Action to "establish a legal framework that promotes diversity and competition among providers of communications services to create a convergent and equitable ecosystem" – Action to "maintain updated legal frameworks that allow the adoption and incorporation of new technologies" – Action to establish legal a framework that "comprehensively protects personal data while allowing [people] to obtain the benefits linked to digitization"

Sources: Based on OECD (2014), *Recommendation of the Council on Digital Government Strategies*, www.oecd.org/gov/digital-government/recommendation-on-digital-governmentstrategies.htm; Government of Argentina (2018), Digital Agenda, https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/detalleAviso/primera/195154/20181105

While the Digital Agenda brings Argentina more into alignment with the Recommendation, digital government efforts in the country could benefit from a more explicit strategic-level action plan with a medium- and long-term perspective, goals and outputs. In addition, the process of developing such an agenda with the participation of all key players can further the government's goals to build consensus and a sense of shared ownership and accountability for its success or failures.

When thinking ahead to the stated intent of developing a digital government strategy, opportunities exist to set strategic goals with related objectives in a fuller, more detailed way in order to provide an articulated roadmap for digital government that everyone in government can rally behind and work towards together. This will help to secure alignment

and facilitate the engagement of the whole ecosystem. A number of officials from different parts of the government noted this in interviews during the peer review mission in March 2018.
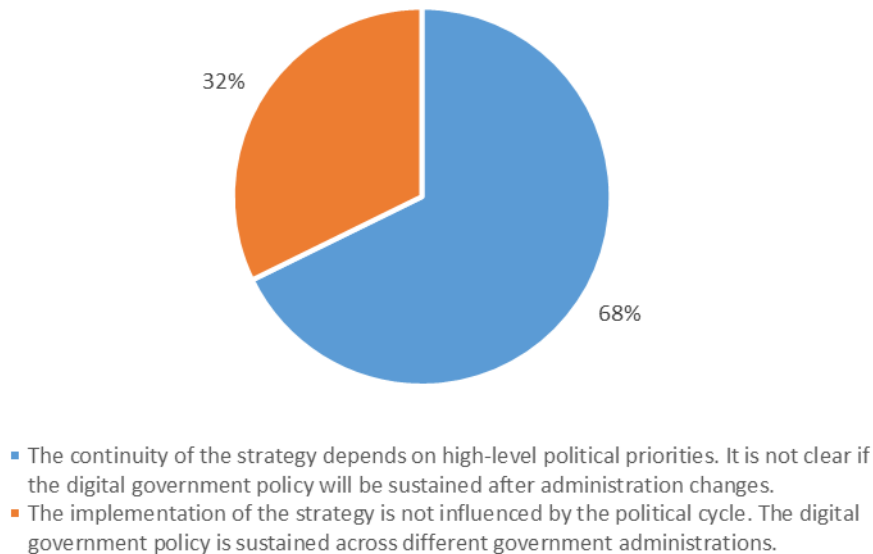
Moving towards collective and sustainable action

Without an articulated action plan and roadmap to achieve national objectives, all initiatives may appear to be equally important. Over time, this can slow down or limit the potential for leveraging whole-of-government approaches, where ministries advance the Digital Agenda together towards shared strategic purposes rather than driven by individual initiatives and projects. Enabling this whole-of-government approach could help Argentina to continue to advance beyond silo-based approaches. Such horizontality, sharing and integration will be instrumental to fully support the digital transformation of the public sector.

This is not to say that efforts made to-date have not helped make government actions more cohesive. The work carried out under the current administration, including the development of the Digital Agenda, appears to already be contributing to the types of collective drive that could be further enhanced with a digital government strategy. The OECD and peer review team perceived that government officials were starting to strategically advance in a united way under the vision of the Digital Agenda and the priorities of the administration. 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. These pre-existing relationships have helped Argentina to make immediate and rapid progress. 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 mindsets brought about by the current administration. 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 strengthening them against potentially adverse future scenarios. Many participants of an interdisciplinary OECD workshop held in Argentina in July 2018 also spoke of the need for a broader cultural change across government to sustain the digital transformation.

A full digital government strategy could assist in this, by helping to set the tone for cultural change within and across public sector organisations. This was also stressed in the OECD *Open Government Review of Argentina*, which found that "*while this informal network of contacts has been beneficial to kick off the national open government agenda, it will now be important to institutionalise open government frameworks in Argentina in order to reduce the dependency on personal networks and guarantee continuity in the medium and long term*" (OECD, forthcoming). The OECD survey of public sector organisations in Argentina reflects some uncertainty among officials as to whether digital government policies will be sustained after the administration changes (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.6. Respondents' opinions on whether there is a relationship between central/federal digital government policy and the political cycle

- The continuity of the strategy depends on high-level political priorities. It is not clear if the digital government policy will be sustained after administration changes.
- The implementation of the strategy is not influenced by the political cycle. The digital government policy is sustained across different government administrations.

Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations"

A key component of this long-term future-proofing is establishing solid foundations that can promote broader cultural change within the public sector. 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 (e.g. of careers civil servants) and support sustained change, which will enable systems approaches to the digital transformation (as discussed later).

Enhancing inclusiveness could further drive digital efforts

Even though the Digital Agenda was only recently implemented, it is already clear that the work undertaken to develop and put it in place, and the priorities and objectives that it has signalled, have improved the functioning of government operations. This is due in part to the inclusive nature of how the Digital Agenda was formulated within government. In the survey of Argentinian public sector organisations, 87% of respondents indicated that the "current central/federal strategy/policy was developed as a co-ordinated process between public sector institutions, e.g. ministries". The Digital Agenda has secured the backing of all involved ministries through internal consultations, and the process to finalise and implement the Digital Agenda was through presidential decree and associated resolutions, as discussed previously.

However, the development of the Digital Agenda could have benefited from being more inclusive to those beyond Government. The Government made an effort to involve different public and private representatives and other stakeholders in the design of the Digital Agenda. For example, a meeting in the House of Government (Casa Rosada) was held on 30 October 2018 with digital experts in order to brainstorm and discuss the agenda's roadmap. While this is positive, the Digital Agenda did not undergo an open public

consultation process, or potentially crowdsource new ideas and priorities from the public and other external stakeholders. This is also reflected in the survey of public sector organisations, where more than half (52%) of respondents indicated that the central strategy was not developed in formal consultation with other non-governmental stakeholders. This approach appears to be an example of a broader issue, as the regulatory review (OECD, 2019) also found that the most common way to perform consultation is through ad hoc meetings, without necessarily conscientious effort to reach out to a broad range of target groups, and at a minimum, consultation with the public. Such a consultation could have been carried out on https://consultapublica.argentina.gob.ar, which was implemented in May 2016 as a platform that can be used to undertake public consultation in the development of new rules. Such platforms foster the generation of collaboration spaces between the state, civil society and the private sector, to co design and co-produce public value.

Not bringing in the public early in the process of policy design may represent a missed opportunity for the government to demonstrate its responsiveness and commitment to building a citizen-driven digital government. It also means that a core document that is intended to guide digital efforts for a number of years did not benefit from feedback from the public while the document was still malleable. When consultations are not conducted or are done late in the process, government officials run the risk of being closed off to changes and good ideas that may have been easier to act upon earlier in the process. In the future, processes to ensure public feedback is fully considered would help.

If Argentina takes steps to mitigate this potential missed opportunity, it is unlikely that this will be a major detriment to the success of its digital government efforts, as there are other opportunities to ensure the public's feedback is taken into consideration. In particular, in thinking forward to the development of a digital government strategy, bringing in external perspectives early in the process may add value to the process and the end results, and foster a sense of joint ownership and shared responsibility towards the overall strategic objectives.

Beyond the Digital Agenda, in interviews, there was little discussion among government officials that indicated that they recognise the importance of the broader ecosystem of digital government efforts, including players and stakeholders from the private sector, academia and civil society. The first and second principles of the OECD Recommendation (2014) underline the importance of engaging citizens, businesses and civil society in the design of digital government. Additional emphasis on this area, as discussed in Chapter 5 of this report, would strengthen the Government's strategic ability to secure the commitment and co-responsibility of stakeholders sharing the successes and failures of the agenda, strategies and policies. Inclusive design and implementation processes ensure that the policy output is rooted and grounded in the ecosystem.

A digital government strategy could promote coherent operations based on internal demand

The formulation of a formal stand-alone digital government strategy could also 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 and priorities.

Before the current administration took office, there was little effort to co-ordinate the ICT-related initiatives of the different ministries at the central level of government. Without co-ordination, the government risked the potential that various initiatives across government could operate in duplicative, fragmented or overlapping ways.

The current administration has taken major steps in improving this, especially through its empowerment of the SGM as a central policy-making, co-ordination and enforcement body. The Digital Agenda is also contributing to this. However, a more strategically focused document could 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. Opportunities exist for the government to better develop indicators that focus on gaps specific to the context in Argentina. Signals of internal demand from either users, civil servants or other members of the digital government ecosystem could be evaluated to establish such indicators.

Documentation challenges limit learning and storytelling

Argentina's digital government, and perhaps broader, efforts could benefit from improved documentation and communication on the status and progress of efforts and results achieved so far. This issue exists within and across government, as well as externally towards the broader ecosystem. The Digital Agenda may assist over time, as may a formal digital government strategy that further prioritises what is important.

In interviews during the peer review mission, a number of officials expressed that the government could be inconsistent about "writing things down" and documenting processes, decisions, plans, progress and problems. This can have detrimental effects on the government's digital government policies and associated iterative processes, as well as on the public perception on accomplishments and efforts. For instance, reports could be used as potential knowledge sources to inform a formal cross-cutting strategy and guide its planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation. Such reports could also be used to inform external communications to keep the public up to date on government activities.

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. These challenges also have affects outside of government, as without storytelling citizens do not see the important and positive work the government is carrying out, 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, 2017a). Finding ways to enhance trust in government is very much needed in Argentina, where only 26% of the population had faith in the government as of 2018, compared to an average of 43% in OECD countries.[7]

Unless improvements are made in these areas, 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 public sector organisations are likely to encounter similar issues as they work to

bring about a digital government. If they are not documented and shared, those facing similar problems may waste time devising solutions that have already been identified elsewhere, rather than learning from others' experiences, leveraging synergies and scaling up what works. Likewise, without improvement in storytelling, Argentina may struggle to strengthen the levels of trust citizens have in government. The need for change was clearly recognised by participants of the OECD workshop in July 2018, who stated that one of the biggest needs for the country is widespread knowledge on what has been done already as well as good practices and lessons learnt.

Although challenges exist, Argentina appears to be taking steps in the right direction to improve its documentation and storytelling practices. For instance, Argentina has increasingly focused on the importance of communicating with the public and giving progress updates related to digital government.

This is reflected in the OECD survey of public sector organisations, where 88% of respondents indicated that their institution has a communication strategy in place (i.e. through social media) to inform citizens on the outcomes of the institutional digital strategy/initiatives (e.g. the availability of new digital services). Mediums used for such communications are illustrated in Figure 2.7. This is a positive sign that government organisations are making efforts to communicate on work and progress being made. It is important to note, however, that the OECD (2019) *Open Government Review of Argentina* found somewhat contradictory results from a separate survey, nothing that only 20% of ministries have a specific communication strategy. This may indicate that the strategies that do exist may not be formal.

Figure 2.7. Mediums used to conduct external outreach
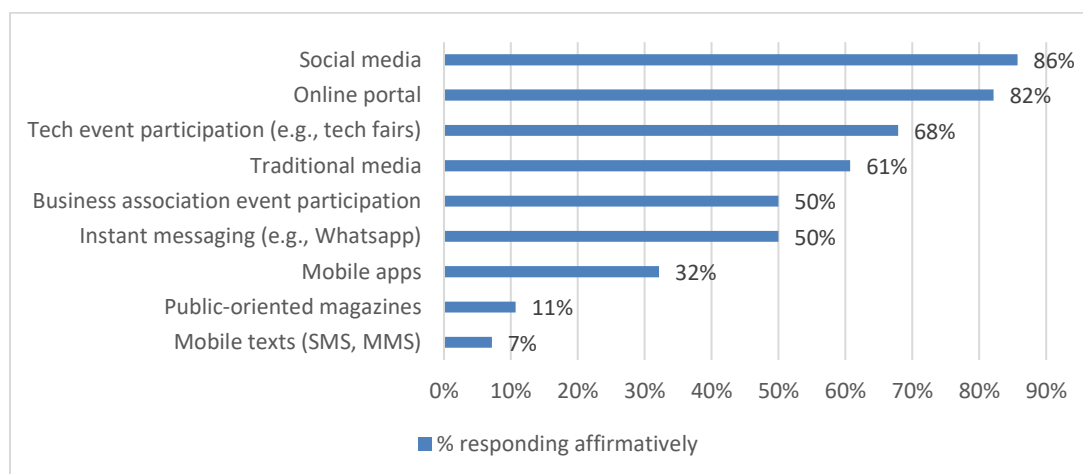
An additional example of progress in this area is the regular publication of interesting and insightful public blog posts on a variety of digital government topics.[8] In addition, according to SGM officials, the SGM is currently working on institutionalising frameworks to ensure coherence, including with documentation and communications practices. The Digital Agenda is also driving some progress in this area, as it calls for a communications manager as a senior position in its governance structure. However, many peer review

participants told the peer review team that there is still not enough public-facing reporting and communication on the government's progress, performance and impacts. This was also noted in the OECD (2019) *Open Government Review*, which noted that citizens are generally unaware of existing initiatives and progress towards opening up government, which is a challenge shared by many OECD member and non-member countries.

As an additional step, the National Office of Information Technologies (Oficina Nacional de Technologías de la Información, ONTI) is working to overcome documentation challenges for both sharing information inside government and storytelling outside government. This office is well positioned to affect change in this area, and the government of Argentina should evaluate how to best leverage ONTI to drive progress with documentation and storytelling across government. See Box 2.4 and Chapter 3 for additional information on ONTI. It remains to be seen how well Argentina's efforts to improve documentation and communication practices will succeed, but the government's actions are promising.

Box 2.4. National Office of Information Technologies

The National Office of Information Technologies (ONTI) is a sub-component of the Secretariat for Digital Government and Innovation Technology. It promotes the transformation and implementation of technological solutions for the Argentinian national public sector. Its mission is to be a reference in the field of ICT for the public sector by promoting the modernisation of the state through guidelines and regulations together with proactive support for projects and initiatives of the sector.

ONTI launched Argentina's Innovation on New Technologies for Government EXPO on 8 November 2018. This was the government's first event regarding new technologies. It carried out workshops to share experiences and tackle problems in a collaborative way.

The Technological Standards Directorate:

- defines technological standards

- performs reviews of all new or expanded ICT projects in the public sector

- advises and supports entities in ICT projects

- oversees the governance of public software, promotes its diffusion and reuse

- facilitates areas of collaboration in ICT among government agencies.

The Innovation Directorate:

- develops guidelines and assists in the adoption of new technologies applied to government

- develops concept, tests and pilot solutions for government

- audits, analyses and proposes efficiencies in infrastructure and solutions for government ICT

- participates, assists and fosters co-operation in government ICT areas.

> ONTI has developed the *Decálogo Tecnológico* (https://www.argentina.gob.ar/onti/decalogo-tecnologico-onti), which gathers and shares best practices for ICT projects across government. It offers a series of guidelines to help public sector organisations design useful and sustainable ICT projects. It has also launched the "Guidelines of Good Practices for the Development of Public Software" (https://www.argentina.gob.ar/onti/codigo-de-buenas-practicas-para-el-desarrollo-de-software-publico) that fosters software development in a sustainable and collaborative way.
>
> *Sources:* Interview with government officials; https://www.argentina.gob.ar/onti/innovacion-tecnologica.

## Institutional governance: Leadership and digital stewardship

A clear scenario of "who is who" and "who does what" is equally as important as the "who are we" and "where do we want to go" questions discussed earlier. As also highlighted by the OECD (2014) Recommendation, setting clear institutional roles is one of the basic preconditions for sound governance of digital government and to sustainably support the digital transformation of the public sector. Considering the size and complexity of the task at hand to fully enact a shift towards digital government, roles and responsibilities must be clear to the different stakeholders involved. This is especially true in the Argentinian context, where most digital efforts are relatively new.

The SGM is a broadly recognised and respected leader

Governance and authority for the SGM (then-MoM) were formally clarified and strengthened in 2016 by presidential decree.[9] These authorities are broadly recognised and respected. During the peer review mission to Argentina, there was general consensus among the different stakeholders in the central government, as well as in subnational governments, 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 been achieved over the last few years.

This recognition is also mirrored in workshops held by the OECD in Argentina in July and December 2018, where clear central leadership was the most frequently raised positive factor of Argentina's digital transformation efforts. It is also present in the results from the OECD survey of government institutions in Argentina, where 94% of respondents stated that there is a leading public sector institution at the central/federal government level responsible for designing and setting the central/federal digital strategy, and 91% stated that there is a leading public sector institution (ministry or other public sector organisation) at the central/federal government level responsible for leading and co-ordinating the implementation of the decisions on the strategic use of digital technologies in the central/federal government. Nearly all of them specifically named SGM as that leading institution. Respondents also indicated a general belief that digital government leadership was strong (Figure 2.8).

Figure 2.8. Extent to which respondents agreed that there is clear and strong leadership in terms of the co-ordination of the digital government strategy available at the central/federal government
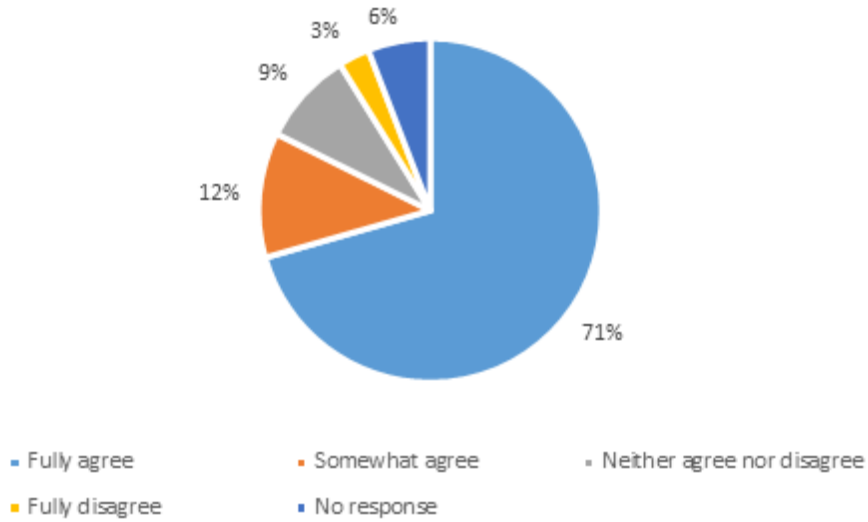
Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations"

Respondents to the survey perceived a variety of core responsibilities for the SGM, as illustrated in Figure 2.9.

Figure 2.9. Main responsibilities of the central policy co-ordinating institution
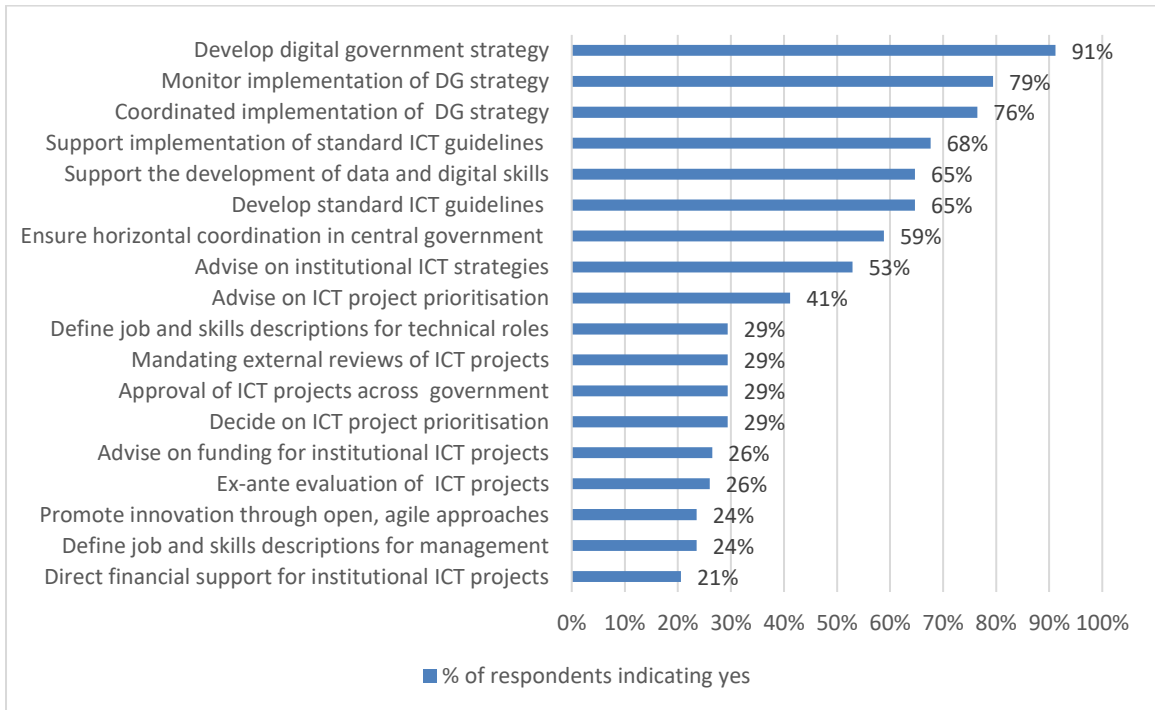
Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations"

Some respondents indicated that some of these responsibilities were more important than others with relation to co-ordinating digital government at the central/federal level.

Not surprisingly, the responsibilities indicated as the highest priority among survey respondents are:

- monitoring the implementation of the central/federal digital government strategy

- leading the co-ordinated implementation of the central/federal digital government strategy across the broad public sector

- promoting public sector innovation through the enhanced use of open, participative, inclusive, agile approaches to policy making and problem solving

- advising on the development and implementation of institutional ICT strategies (e.g. ministries and other public sector organisations)

- co-ordinating with local governments on the development of ICT projects aligned with the objectives of the central/federal digital government strategy.

These recognised priorities are generally aligned with the governance responsibilities set forth. However, it is noteworthy that responsibilities related to defining skills and capabilities and being involved with funding decisions for ICT efforts were not recognised as priorities. This could indicate potential challenges, as discussed later in this report.

In addition to the recognition of the SGM's leadership role in this space, 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 the 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 its predecessor, the MoM) has taken steps to solidify its authority for overseeing and co-ordinating digital government efforts.

Opportunities exist for clearer roles, responsibilities and structures within and outside the SGM

It is clear that the government of Argentina has matured greatly in terms of digital government in recent years, as has the SGM (and its predecessor, the MoM), which has established itself as the leader of the government's digital transformation. In fact, it appears that digital government in Argentina has reached a level of maturity where ministries and other public sector organisations now seek cross-government solutions and guidance, rather than taking all decisions from their own organisational perspective. In this context, a governance framework that more explicitly delineates the roles and responsibilities of the SGM, and provides for strong leadership across government, would help further advance digital efforts.

At a central co-ordinating level, there is also no government chief information officer (GCIO). The formal identification of a GCIO (or a position with equivalent responsibilities, such as the chief digital transformation officer in some countries) strengthens the effectiveness of the institutional set-up and related responsibilities within the governance framework (OECD, 2016). The figure of the central/federal government CIO or equivalent position has become the most common form of co-ordinating unit or body for digital

government activities. In some cases, the CIO's role is complemented by more experimental institutions, or units, depending on the government's priorities and efforts. Interdisciplinary participants at an OECD workshop held in Argentina in December 2018 stated that creating a government-wide CIO and chief data officer (CDO) could help further digital government efforts.

In addition, 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, including through its National Direction of Digital Services and LABgobar. 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 a central co-ordination, convening and oversight role. More explicit articulation of the roles and responsibilities of the SGM and the other ministries could help.

The structure of the digital services team and LABgobar could be problematic in the long run. Over the last several years, the concept of digital service teams and innovation labs has grown to be a popular solution in many countries. For instance, the first digital service team was the United Kingdom's Government Digital Service, founded in 2010. As digital teams and labs have grown, they have taken a variety of structures and activities (OECD, 2016). A common challenge of many of these units and innovation labs is that they have been relatively isolated from other parts of government. As a result, while they are able to make significant contributions to government operations, their methods, techniques and culture often fail to permeate to the rest of government and support mainstreaming and scaling up of good practices. The current structure and positioning of the lab and the National Direction of Digital Services resembles those of similar groups whose impact could be further magnified if more integrated with other public sector organisations. Box 2.7, shown later in this chapter, illustrates how New Zealand seeks to achieve this type of integration through its cross-government, cross-funded Service Innovation Lab. The government of Argentina and the SGM should consider whether introducing cross-organisational elements to the National Direction of Digital Services and LABgobar could enhance their potential for systems-wide impact.

Beyond the SGM, peer review interviewees described the current state of digital governance at the ministry level as siloed, 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 wrongly 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 its own governance structure, the SGM may face challenges in co-ordinating the implementation of government-wide policies.

For instance, the digital governance of ministries and other non-central public sector organisations throughout central government remains somewhat fragmented. Ministries and other public sector organisations often lack a clearly identifiable digital champion responsible for leading and steering (e.g. traditional roles like CIOs and CDOs), which would serve as clear points of guidance, leadership and accountability. A few organisations

have, however, established formal governance roles and structures under the current administration. For example, the federal tax (Administración Federal de Ingresos Públicos) and social security (Administración Nacional de la Seguridad Social) administrations have established central CIO positions; put in place their own digital government strategies; and formalised governance structures to develop strategic roadmaps, review ICT and take decisions on ICT projects. Such practices are promising and appear to add significant value; similar positions can help serve as points of guidance and accountability for each organisation in meeting the policy directives set forth by the SGM and the president. However, they are not currently promoted or mandated in a government-wide manner. Similar to their suggestions for central governance, the interdisciplinary participants at the December 2018 workshop stated that creating a ministerial-level CIO, CDO or similar roles could help further digital government efforts and assist in generating collective knowledge.

The combination of ensuring a clear governance structure and actors for the role of the SGM relative to the other ministries, as well as a clear governance structure and actors for each 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

Systems approaches are related to, and enabled by, governance frameworks and solid, clear leadership. While a solid governance framework helps all actors in government to focus and move towards the same goals and milestones under clear leadership, systems approaches consider the establishment of appropriate linkages and mechanisms for co-ordination that are also necessary to assure the proper co-operation, 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 that governments must face, traditional processes, analytical tools and problem-solving methods no longer work or do not produce their intended purpose. Simply put, taking 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 diagnosing 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.

Similar to other countries, Argentina will need to adapt by employing systems approaches (Box 2.5). The most significant enabler of systems approaches 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.

Box 2.5. Systems approaches

Complexity is a core feature of most policy issues today, yet governments are ill-equipped to deal with complex problems. Governments are confronted with uncertain and complex challenges whose scale and nature call for new approaches to problem solving. Some governments have started to use "systems approaches" in policy making and service delivery to tackle complex challenges.

Such approaches analyse the different elements of the system underlying a policy problem, as well as the dynamics and interactions of these elements that produce a particular outcome. The term denotes a set of processes, methods and practices that aim to affect systems change. This holistic analysis puts the focus on the impacts and outcomes of policies, going beyond the linear logic of "input-output-outcome" of traditional approaches to policy design. It does this through the involvement of all affected actors inside and outside of government, as well as the importance of leaving room for iterative processes to account for the uncertainty associated with today's problems.

Such approaches differ from traditional approaches, in which policy makers address social problems through discrete interventions that are layered on top of one another. Such approaches may shift consequences from one part of the system to another, or address symptoms while ignoring causes. Looking at the whole system rather than the parts allows one to focus on where change can have the greatest impact.

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

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 public sector organisations 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 further institutionalise Argentina's Digital Agenda as a policy tool to steer decisions, foster innovation and better align priorities across the whole administration in line with the main policy goals.

Argentina has built foundations for systems approaches, but opportunities remain to build upon them

Argentina has made progress on building the conditions that will enable the country to leverage systems approaches. For instance, a Planning and Follow-up Council and an Executive Board, co-ordinated by the SGM's Secretariat of Digital Government and Innovation Technology respectively, have 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 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 to its goals and challenges. Such an approach should also be considered as a strategic effort to bring "all the voices" to the table, 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.

This objective can be achieved by putting in place some basic governance mechanisms that can help in the:

- orchestrated development and use of key building blocks (e.g. eID, e-authentication, e-payments, e-delivery, e-documents, etc.)

- adoption of common standards, architectures and norms

- development of common ICT procurement efforts, aggregating the demand, enabling savings and promoting the adoption of more interoperable solutions across the public sector

- adoption of common guidelines and shared efforts regarding digital service delivery, encouraging the development of more citizen-centred platforms.

While progress has been made, opportunities exist to further co-ordinate government activities in a holistic, horizontal and joined-up way. Although improving, general co-operation and co-ordination across ministries, other public sector organisations and levels of government is often fragmented, not systematic. Co-ordination occurs mainly through specific projects. For many ICT issues, there is no formal co-ordination and co-operation body at the ministry level, and co-ordination and co-operation at the underlying public sector organisation level can be inconsistent. Such co-ordination issues were frequently raised as challenges in interdisciplinary OECD workshops in Argentina in July and December 2018.

The SGM has, however, demonstrated leadership in connecting with ministries. Most of the respondents to the OECD survey indicated that their organisation co-ordinated with the SGM (Figure 2.10). However, these results could be stronger, and the focus has largely been on bilateral co-operation on a ministry-by-ministry basis, not on bringing all of the relevant players together as a whole.

Figure 2.10. Extent to which respondents indicated that their institution regularly coordinates with the central/federal unit responsible for leading and implementing the decisions on the use of IT in central/federal government
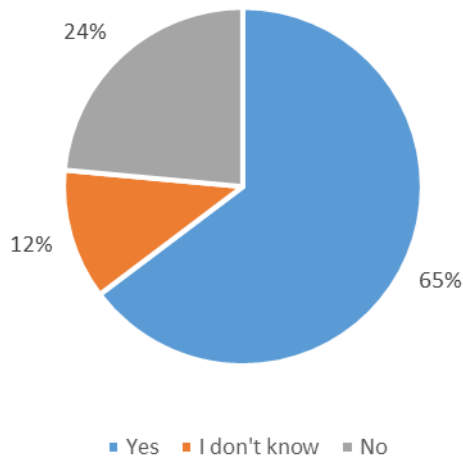
24%

12%

65%

■ Yes ■ I don't know ■ No

Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations"

Throughout the peer review mission, many leaders in the then-MoM and in line ministries and other public sector organisations highlighted that co-ordination should be strengthened and that an additional focus on the harmonisation and alignment of designing and implementing policies and services would be valuable. Furthermore, nearly all ministries spoke about the need to institutionalise current efforts in a more consistent, unified and collaborative way. This is also reflected in the survey results, in which very few participants found that the current level of inter-institutional co-ordination is sufficient (Figure 2.11). In addition, very few survey participants believed that the current level of inter-institutional co-operation and collaboration for policy implementation is enough.

Figure 2.11. Extent to which respondents indicated that they believe that the current level of inter-institutional co-ordination for policy implementation is sufficient to advance the digital government policy in Argentina
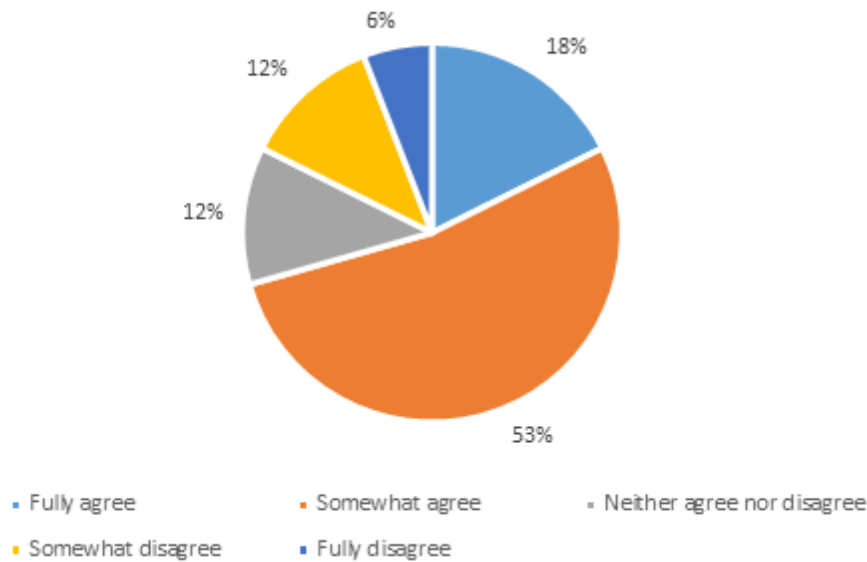
- Fully agree
- Somewhat agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Fully disagree

Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations"

Notably, far fewer were aware of formal mechanisms in place to enable inter-institutional co-ordination between ministries for digital government projects (Figure 2.12). The few mentioned examples include the then-MoM, the Federal Council on Modernisation and Innovation for the Public Administration (Consejo Federal de Modernización e Innovación en la Gestión Pública, COFEMOD; discussed below), and the National Direction of Digital Services. A roughly similar proportion were not aware of informal mechanisms.

Figure 2.12. Extent to which respondents were aware of formal mechanism(s) in place to enable inter-institutional co-ordination between ministries/organisations for the implementation of digital government projects
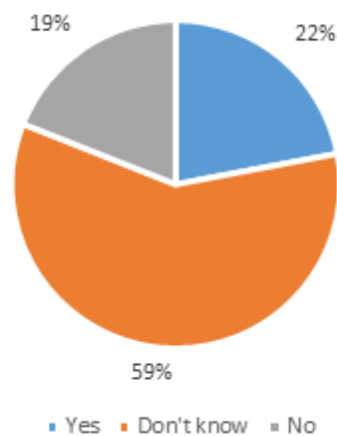
- Yes
- Don't know
- No

Source: OECD (2018), "Digital Government Review of Argentina: Survey for public sector organisations"

There are some notable exceptions to this challenge, however, where a sustainable model for a systems approach has been reached. Several efforts co-ordinated by the SGM, including Argentina.gob.ar, the Electronic Document Management Platform and the Open Data Policy are key examples of multilateral co-operation across ministries to achieve a systems approach. Box 2.6 provides an overview of how Argentina is taking a systems approach for open government data, and Chapter 6 discusses open government data practices in greater detail. Argentina may look to these instances to apply their most successful elements elsewhere.

Box 2.6. Systems approach for open government data

The Open Data Policy (Plan de Apertura de Datos) was established by Presidential Decree 117/2016 soon after the new administration came into office, setting up a simple but coherent policy framework that helped to ensure government-wide coherence while allowing for flexibility at the ministerial level for achieving open data objectives. The policy generally created three levels of structure.

1. Principles level: Sets overarching principles data should be generated, made available and properly documented by every public entity.

2. Policy level: Established a strict and ambitious timeline for the publication of critical datasets, sets forth a centralised publication scheme and a set of common guidelines and standards for publication, and requires that public data should be published in a proactive, complete and timely way, and through channels that facilitate their accessibility, use, reuse and redistribution through the central open government data portal (Datos.gob.ar).

3. Implementation level: Grants ministerial flexibility and discretion in how to achieve the principles-level and policy-level objectives.

Officials from the Government Secretariat of Modernisation (SGM) state that this flexibility can help promote ministerial proactivity, co-operation and innovation throughout implementation. While ministries had flexibility in implementation, government-wide co-ordination is necessary to ensure centralised principles and policy objectives are met. To achieve this, the SGM developed recommendations, guidelines (e.g. metadata standards) and a number of best practice documents for opening up government data.

As a result of the Open Data Policy and centralised co-ordination, 28 entities within the public sector in Argentina publish their own open data catalogues, which are then "federated" into the central data portal Datos.gob.ar.

Sources: https://datos.gob.ar; http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/255000-259999/257556/norma.htm; interviews with officials from the SGM.

These positive examples tend to orient around specific projects and goals, which is one successful strategy. Emerging best practices from other countries demonstrate that another successful approach may be to build cross-government connections into the very design of organisations and their structures, as New Zealand has achieved with its Service Innovation Lab (Box 2.7).

Box 2.7. New Zealand Service Innovation Lab

The Service Innovation Lab is an all-of-government neutral space enabling public sector organisations to collaboratively innovate to make it easier for people to access government services. It is a design and development lab to experiment, drive and enable the systemic change of government for the benefit of society. The lab also works to direct public funding to systemic improvements, horizontal efforts around shared goals, high-value reusable components and actionable innovation for all participating public sector organisations.

Importantly, the lab is funded through a cross-organisation innovation fund. The lab's work is prioritised by a cross-organisation Service Innovation Working Group comprised of members from participating organisations across government. Because cross-government connections and inputs are designed into the fabric of the organisation, it is well-positioned to engage with the full ecosystem of players in the systems and champion systems approaches.

Source: https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/the-service-innovation-lab.

Co-ordination with subnational governments is a challenge

Significant challenges remain in considering and involving provincial and local governments in systems approaches. During the peer review mission, complexity of co-ordinating with subnational government organisations was one of the challenges most frequently raised by interviewees. In addition, as for the OECD regulatory review (OECD, 2019), the OECD and peer review team found that co-ordination between the national and subnational levels of government are generally carried out on an ad hoc basis. These challenges allow for both gaps and inconsistent overlaps in policies. This is largely due to the federated government structure in Argentina, in which provinces and local governments have significant independence and autonomy.

Subnational 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 organisations 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, even within the specific administrative context, lessons from OECD governments operating in similar environments show that there are few levers that the federal government can use to collaborate with subnational governments. This is important, as the provincial and local levels of government are where the most benefits of any national

strategy can be made tangible and bring concrete value to citizens. While mechanisms are few, the SGM does co-ordinate with the 24 provinces through COFEMOD[10] (Box 2.8).

Box 2.8. Federal Council on Modernisation and Innovation for the Public Administration

The Federal Council on Modernisation and Innovation for the Public Administration (COFEMOD) aims to foster administrative simplification by digitising and streamlining internal and external administrative procedures to facilitate the government's relations with citizens, subnational (namely provincial) governments and businesses.

Chaired by the Government Secretariat of Modernisation (SGM) and comprised of representatives of the provinces and the city of Buenos Aires, members meet four times a year to discuss issues relating to administrative simplification by means of digitising administrative procedures, formalities and services, as well as to share good practices on the governments' management of processes and systems.

COFEMOD is the key and sole element for co-ordination between the national and subnational governments – and its various topical subcommittees. COFEMOD's recommendations and decisions carry significant weight, but they are non-binding.

One significant example of co-ordination through COFEMOD is the creation of the "Federal Commitment to the Modernisation of the State", which is the main instrument for co-ordination across levels of government for ICT and for the other priorities of the SGM. Its objectives are to bring about a "modern state with digital government, transparent and with broad citizen participation, with trained human resources." 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. The signatories stated their belief that "consolidation of modernization in an adequate manner requires a broad and federal commitment in which the national public sector and the provincial public administrations are fundamentally united."

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

COFEMOD recently developed a draft law on state modernisation, as discussed later in this chapter.

Sources: www.argentina.gob.ar/cofemod;
www.argentina.gob.ar/sites/default/files/compromiso_federal_para_la_modernizacion_del_estado_0.pdf;
interviews.

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 further align levels of governments, such as through funding incentives or conditions. Considering incentives for co-ordination was also recommended more broadly by the

OECD regulatory review of Argentina (OECD, 2019). Argentina could consider exploring how COFEMOD is used and whether officials are fully aware of its programmes. Participants of OECD workshops in July and December 2018 also stated that the government could better leverage COFEMOD for transversal co-ordination and agenda setting.

Enabling success through the legal and regulatory framework and funding

Legal and regulatory framework

A robust legal and regulatory framework forms one of the essential building blocks and necessary pre-conditions for the successful design and implementation of digital government strategies and initiatives. Argentina's legal and regulatory framework for digital government provides the SGM with strong authority for making policies, conducting oversight, co-ordinating 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, set forth by Presidential Decree 434/2016.[11] This plan provides a framework for the modernisation of the government of Argentina and establishes digital government as a key component of the whole-of-government modernisation strategy. The plan has five branches, three of which are heavily related to digital transformation.

1. technology and digital government

2. integral administration of human resources

3. results-oriented administration and public commitments

4. open government and public innovation

5. digital country strategy.

The decree places the then-MoM in the central co-ordination role for executing the plan, including promoting it in provincial and municipal governments, as well as in the city of Buenos Aires. The SGM is also responsible for developing plans, guidance and training programmes for ensuring the plan is implemented.

It was clear from the interviews during the peer review mission that the authority of the SGM in these areas is universally recognised. Major pillars of this framework that support the SGM and promote important aspects of digital government are presented in Annex A.

In discussions with stakeholders during the peer review mission, it seems that some laws and regulations may be out of date, and 91% of survey respondents stated that there is potential for improving the regulatory framework. To address this, policy areas in Argentina have conducted reviews of existing legislation related to core issues. First, to eliminate fragmented and unneeded policies, as part of Presidential Decree 27/2018 on "Simplification and Less Bureaucratic Procedures" (see below), the government conducted consultations with line ministries and public sector organisations to identify legal provisions liable to be eliminated or reformed, which mostly eliminated "deadwood" (OECD, 2019) that was already in disuse.

To help identify areas where new or changed policies could help strengthen transformation efforts, some new legislation has been proposed, illustrating that the Government is taking steps to modernise. 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 2000.

Argentina's efforts in this area could be enhanced by developing a fuller, evolving baseline of the legislative and regulatory landscape to help identify how laws, policies and other rules interact and affect digital transformation efforts, and to surface what needs to change now and on an ongoing basis. Such a baseline would help the Government to identify policy gaps where scarce resources and energy can be prioritised for improvement; policy excesses that may hinder efforts and could be targeted through policy or legislative change; areas that are not technology "neutral" and may become quickly outdated and hinder the government in adapting to future technologies and norms. Such a baseline could be potentially built by developing criteria for reviewing existing laws and policies, as well as for reviewing proposed laws and policies to ensure that they are tech-neutral and digital-ready. Optimally, this would be done at a granular level that breaks down each specific requirement within the various rules and regulations. This would assist in remedying challenges identified also by the regulatory policy review (OECD, 2019), which found that line ministries do not have a list identifying the complete stock of citizen and business formalities under their jurisdictions, which imposes challenges for a programme and an administrative burden reduction for citizens and business, as the first building block is to have an inventory of information obligations clearly defined.

While progress is being pursued, it was not clear to the peer review team whether the Government has carried out a thorough review of all of the existing laws, regulations and decrees to establish a baseline of how they may affect digital transformation efforts. As an example of such an initiative, the United States White House Office of the Federal CIO launched "Project Cruft", as described in Box 2.9.

Box 2.9. Project Cruft

The term "cruft" refers to anything that is left over, redundant and getting in the way. It is used particularly for defective, superseded, useless, superfluous or dysfunctional elements in computer software.

The United States White House Office of the Federal CIO launched Project Cruft as an effort to cross-analyse requirements within all existing policies, in order to identify targets for rescission and revision to reduce burden, particularly in cases where requirements are duplicative, outdated or impede innovation. The backbone of the initiative is a policy schema, which represents government technology policy in a machine-readable format. The schema creates new possibilities for automatically parsing policy and linking it with other related rules. It can also inform the policy-drafting process, helping the Office of the Federal CIO to craft more carefully structured and targeted policies.

Sources: www.techopedia.com/definition/15410/cruft; https://policy.cio.gov/policy-schema.

In looking at current digital government efforts as a whole, one of the main drivers of Argentina's recent digital government focus 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 not as permanent as some other types of mandates, such as laws. Seeking more permanence of the 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 and Labour) 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, thus producing a negative impact on long-term sustainability of results.

Government officials have taken steps to push for legislative changes. A clear example of this, though broader than only digital government, is related to the issuance of Presidential Decree 27/2018 in January 2018. This decree specified legal provisions liable to be eliminated or reformed, with the aim of reducing red tape and improving the legal framework. It included 197 measures for reform and simplification. After a push for legislative reform, this decree was replaced by three laws, collectively called the "Law of Simplification and Debureaucratisation", which codify most of the efforts from the decree.

SGM officials are also lobbying for a new modernisation law to help permanently codify the State Modernization Plan and to establish guiding principles and common rules for the modernisation of public management at the federal, provincial and local levels (Box 2.10).

Box 2.10. Elements of the draft modernisation law

COFEMOD has drafted a new modernisation law that seeks to achieve implementation of policies, technological and management tools that provide an efficient and effective response to people's needs, rights and obligations. The draft law defines a number of general criteria and guiding principles for the modernisation of the state, whereof the following are related to digital government principles:

- co-operation between public sector organisations to achieve higher levels of efficiency and security in technological services, generating synergy through the use of shared services

- transparent and open management of information and data through the use of electronic means and systems

- promotion of digital inclusion with the aim of stimulating the use of digital channels for interaction with the state.

The draft law would also mandate:

- the simplification of administrative processes, through the use of electronic systems of document management and processing

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- the implementation of open, digital, agile, auditable and accessible public procurement processes and systems

- assistance and training in the use of digital public services, both in-person and through digital media.

Source: Government Secretariat of Modernisation (SGM) officials.

These efforts are showing signs of success, as the draft modernisation bill was recently finalised.[12] While this is a promising sign, it remains unclear whether it will pass, and if so, whether it will fully lock in the positive changes of recent years. SGM officials, and the government more broadly, should continue efforts to push for legislative change to lock in progress made through decrees. Critical to this will be securing the buy-in of the provinces and the city of Buenos Aires. Their adoption of the law is necessary for the effective implementation of the law across all branches and levels of government. This is also noted in the OECD (forthcoming) *Open Government Review of Argentina*, as the draft law also includes elements significantly related to open government.

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.

Despite the apparent readiness for SGM guidance and oversight, the OECD and peer review found that few formal oversight mechanisms have been developed to ensure compliance with ICT rules (laws, policies, decrees, etc.), especially horizontal mechanisms to ensure consistent and coherent implementation across government. This finding was mirrored by the OECD team conducting a review on regulatory policy (OECD, 2019). This makes implementation difficult and can significantly limit the potential to adopt a consistent whole-of-government approach.

According to SGM officials, they have 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 forth by the 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"[13] provides excellent instructions on how to publish open government data. However, the document consists of non-binding recommendations and good practices.

If made mandatory by the SGM, the guide could make discovery of data easier for the government and for the public. In addition, draft "Standards of Attention to the Public",[14] "Services Standards",[15] "Web Standards",[16] "API Standards",[17] and others have been developed to provide guidance 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, and/or mandatory adoption, may be valuable, including general guidelines for the full life cycle of digital projects, and policies for ICT and digital procurement.

Funding for digital government efforts

In addition to a legal and regulatory framework, digital government also requires appropriate considerations for funding, as important policy levers part of the broader governance framework. The funding for the SGM itself is clear – it is financed with funds provided by the National Treasury, supplemented with international loans by the World Bank and the Plata Basin Financial Development Fund FONPLATA.[18]

The funding model for digital government at the level of ministries and other non-central public sector organisations is a fairly traditional one. Each ministry or organisation makes its own budget based on the funding it is allocated from Argentina's legislative branch. Each ministry or organisation then executes its projects according to the objectives established for it. This includes providing for funding related to digital government and ICT. There are no provisions for funding distributions outside of this siloed structure.

This is a common approach; however, leveraging only this approach has the potential to hinder progress in achieving digital transformation that could be obtained through higher coherence, alignment and synergies across the entire public sector. In such a model, because each ministry and public sector organisation are driven by the mandates of their own individual mission, their spending tends to focus on their own mandate without broader consideration for horizontal opportunities and a systems approach to digital government. Opportunities exist to adapt alternative models to better allow for funding in ways that promote horizontality. A number of countries have established centralised funds for ICT. These funds can be an alternative source of funding to finance specific digital government projects, or can complement the national yearly budget for ICT. Relevant examples include the Technology Modernization Fund in the United States and centralised funding for ICT in Portugal (Box 2.11). A combination of financing mechanisms including, for example, an ICT dedicated fund combined with the generic budgeting process for ICT could help agencies in achieving their own individual missions, while leaving room for more strategic cross-cutting initiatives to grow.

Box 2.11. Sample countries with centralised funding for ICT

United States Technology Modernization Fund (TMF)

The TMF was created by the Modernizing Government Technology Act of 2017 in order to improve ICT and strengthen cybersecurity across the central government. Agencies may submit applications for TMF funding through a somewhat competitive process.

A Technology Modernization Board, comprised of experts in digital government and cybersecurity, evaluates applications and makes funding recommendations based on a variety of criteria, such as:

- potential impact

- probability of success

- strong executive support and champions

- clear milestones for success and roadmap for their achievement.

In particular, government organisations are encouraged to submit proposals for common platforms and shared solutions that will serve multiple components within and/or across public sector organisations.

Selected projects receive funding in an incremental manner, tied to specific project milestones and projects. The Board monitors each project for success.

The TMF is structured as a revolving fund. Public sector organisations that receive TMF funding must pay back the money within five years. The funds paid back to the TMF are then available to fund new rounds of projects.

Centralised ICT funding in Portugal

Portugal's Agency for Administrative Modernisation is responsible for the Portuguese digital government strategy, including overall co-ordination and ensuring its implementation. The agency is responsible for the management of European structural funds dedicated to ICT investments. These funds are centralised and complement national budgetary appropriations for ICT investments and represent a very interesting source of funding for public agencies' efforts to digitalise. These funds are a powerful lever to prioritise efforts and investments, ensuring their strategic alignment in support of the digital transformation of the public sector. They also serve to fund innovative initiatives that do not have easy access to the needed capital to be scaled up in order to enhance their impact for citizens, businesses and the public sector.

Sources: https://tmf.cio.gov; OECD (2016), *Digital Government in Chile: Strengthening the Institutional and Governance Framework*, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258013-en.

As discussed, a dual approach to funding ICT projects could contribute to success in individual organisational missions while also enhancing flexibility, better achieving a systems approach to digital government and providing room for innovation. When coupled with a comprehensive digital government strategy, it could help Argentina to better direct funding in a way that is aligned to national goals and priorities as set forth by the Digital Agenda.

Finally, as digital government is increasingly relevant for policies, programmes and services across the public sector, the government of Argentina should consider better involving the SGM in the budget deliberations and other high-level discussions related to governmental entities with major digital components or strong potential for digitisation. Panama has successfully adopted such practices (Box 2.12).

Box 2.12. Panama's National Authority for Government Innovation

In Panama, the National Authority for Government Innovation (*Autoridad Nacional para la Innovación Gubernamental*) is the public sector organisation responsible for the design, development, delivery and monitoring of the digital government policy.

As a mechanism to guarantee the whole-of-government alignment in the application of the legal and regulatory framework on digital government, the Authority participates in Cabinet meetings where funding bills are reviewed and approved before submission to the National Assembly.

In addition, the Administrator General of the Authority participates regularly in the meetings of the Council of Ministers. This participation is an important policy lever for the Authority to support the development and implementation of digital government policies across the government, which allows the Authority to ensure strong alignment with the government's strategy and priorities in different policy areas, acquiring a critical oversight capacity on public sector policies underway. Moreover, this facilitates the Authority's access to main decision actors and decision processes, providing a unique opportunity to embed digital technologies from the very start of the policy design process

Source: OECD (2019b), "Digital Government Survey of Panama, Central Version", OECD, Paris.

Notes

1. Presidential Decree 13/2015, 10 December 2015, http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/255000-259999/256606/norma.htm.

2. Presidential Decree 802/2018, 5 September 2018, http://servicios.infoleg.gob.ar/infolegInternet/anexos/310000-314999/314080/norma.htm.

3. Administrative structure that serves the executive (president or prime minister, and the cabinet collectively). The centre of government has a great variety of names across countries, such as general secretariat, cabinet office, chancellery, office/ministry of the presidency, council of ministers office, etc. In many countries, the centre of government is made up of more than one unit, fulfilling different functions.

4. Reaching escape velocity in this context is to achieve a pace and level of adoption of digital government efforts such that the efforts are capable of sustaining themselves without the constant pressure and drive of the current administration.

5. See: https://qa-g20.argentina.gob.ar/en/g20-argentina/work-streams/digital-economy.

6. Presidential Decree 996/20018, 2 November 2018, https://www.boletinoficial.gob.ar/#!DetalleNorma/195154/20181105.

7. Data are derived from the Gallup World Poll here, which is the most widely used survey instrument to measure trust in government. It is the only survey that collects data on levels of trust in government on an annual basis for OECD countries and other major economies. See: www.oecd.org/gov/trust-in-government.htm.

8. 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.

9. Presidential Decree 13/16 – 5 January 2016.

10. http://www.argentina.gob.ar/cofemod.

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

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

13. https://paquete-apertura-datos.readthedocs.io/es/stable/guia-abiertos.

14. https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-atencion-al-publico.md.

15. https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-servicios.md.

16. https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-web.md.

17. https://github.com/argob/estandares/blob/master/estandares-apis.md.

18. FONPLATA is a multilateral financial organism formed by the five countries of this South American sub-region: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay. See: http://directorio.sela.org/listado-de-organismos/fonplata.aspx for additional information.

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