

10 Service design and delivery

While Norway has showed progress towards user-centred service design and delivery, there are some remaining challenges that the Government could address to improve its approach within a decentralised system and ensure a better experience for its users.

To overcome the challenges of this decentralised model, Norway could aim to evolve its design and delivery of government services to ensure that it is responsive to the changing needs and expectations of users.

With a score of 70% in the 2023 DGI, Norway showed progress towards user-centred digital service design and delivery and alignment with the OECD's Good Practice Principles for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age. However, there are some remaining challenges that the Government could address to improve its approach within a decentralised system and ensure a better experience for its users, including implementing mandatory service standards, better integrating of the 'Once Only' principle, developing an omnichannel strategy, and incorporating more comprehensive performance monitoring.

Progress to date

Norway showed progress in its digital service design and delivery in the 2023 DGI, largely thanks to its guidelines, proactive user engagement, use of digital tools, monitoring for meeting user needs, and comprehensive service catalogue. The findings demonstrate Norway's commitment to maturing its digital service delivery in alignment with the OECD's Good Practice Principles for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age (OECD, 2022^[11]) described in Box 10.1 (the Good Practice Principles hereafter).

In the 2023 DGI, Norway scored 70% for its maturity in service design and delivery, compared to the OECD average score of 52%. This score was based on strong maturity demonstrated in some of the key foundations in place for effective digital government services. These include Norway's (DGI, 2023):

- **guidelines:** while Norway does not have mandatory service standards, Digdir guides agencies on best practices via mandatory and recommended ICT standards, the Digitalisation Memorandum, and accessibility requirements.
- **proactive user engagement:** Norway engages proactively with diverse user groups during service development, which aligns to the recommendation in the Digitalisation Memorandum for all agencies to put the user at the centre and consider their needs, involve them in the process, test services with them to ensure an efficient and coherent approach.
- **use of digital tools:** Norway encourages the use of digital tools, amongst other channels, to engage with a diverse range of user groups in the design process, which is outlined in the Digitalisation Memorandum, Digitalisation Strategy, and Principles of Architecture, among others.
- **monitoring for meeting user needs:** while its application varies across Norway's decentralised service delivery model, there is monitoring in place at different stages of the service lifecycle to determine if services are meeting user needs. Although the following section will discuss how this could be enhanced further to provide greater insight and data-driven decision-making.
- **comprehensive service catalogue:** Norway has comprehensive and accessible catalogues on Norge.no and Altinn of services that can be completed digital (with some paper applications and options for phone and in-person support if required).

These areas cover a number of areas measured in the 2023 DGI, where Norway scored 100% and far exceeded the corresponding OECD average scores. In building its maturity in these areas, Norway has shown its commitment to effective service design and delivery that aligns with the Good Practice Principles (Box 10.1) to build accessible and user-centred services; to deliver with impact, at scale, and with pace; and to be accountable and transparent in order to continue building public trust in digital services.

Box 10.1. Good Practice Principles for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age

The OECD's Good Practice Principles for Public Service Design and Delivery in the Digital Age were developed to give clear, practical, and actionable standards that countries could implement to improve the quality of their digital service design and delivery. They advise countries to:

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

1. Understand users and their needs.
2. Make the design and delivery of public services a participatory and inclusive process.
3. Ensure consistent, seamless and high-quality public services.

Deliver with impact, at scale and with pace.

4. Create conditions that help teams to design and deliver high quality public services.
5. Develop a consistent delivery methodology for public services.
6. Curate an ecosystem of enabling tools, practices and resources.

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

7. Be open and transparent in the design and delivery of public services.
8. Ensure the trustworthy and ethical use of digital tools and data.
9. Establish an enabling environment for a culture and practice of public service design and delivery.

Source: (OECD, 2022^[1])

Remaining challenges

While Norway's digital government services are strong, the 2023 DGI did identify some remaining challenges that the Government could address to improve its service design and delivery and ensure a better experience for its users, including the need to:

- implement mandatory service standards to build a more coherent approach across a decentralised service delivery model.
- integrate the 'Once Only' principle to promote the reuse of data to minimise administrative burden on users and enable more proactive government services.
- develop an omnichannel strategy to enable a more consistent user experience across all channels, as an extension of the digital experience.
- incorporate more comprehensive performance monitoring to enable a data-driven approach to future service enhancements.

By addressing these challenges in its new digitalisation strategy, the Government could ensure that its public service is able to keep pace with the evolving needs and expectations of users for years to come.

Mandatory service standards

Implementing mandatory service standards could support the Government in building a more coherent approach to service design across Norway's decentralised delivery model. Service standards are tools for regulating and organising a wide range of legal and regulatory domains that establish metrics for the implementation of digital government services. They provide a baseline expectation and guidance for how to develop these services in a consistent way. For example, Australia's Digital Transformation Agency does this with the Digital Service Standard 2.0 incorporated into its Whole-of-Government Architecture.⁹

In the 2023 DGI, Norway scored 0% for mandatory service standards, compared to the OECD average score of 37%. This is because Norway has opted for a softer approach, with Digdir working with various delivery agencies and levels of government to encourage best practices by providing information, guidelines, and principles for design approaches that are human-oriented and based on meeting user needs. (Norway's submission to the 2023 DGI) While this approach is understandable given the decentralised context within which the Government is operating, this approach risks greater inconsistencies in the process, quality, and experience of the various services being delivered. This could, in part, help explain Digdir's findings that only 30% of users and 25% of businesses report a coherent and seamless user experience, and many users are still reporting issues or dissatisfaction with their digital service experience. (Digdir, 2023^[2]) By building a more coherent approach to service design and delivery, the Government could enable more consistent approaches across all delivery agencies and levels of government. This would create a more seamless experience for users, as well as create opportunities for greater efficiencies and synergies across Norway's public sector.

'Once-Only' principle

By better integrating the 'Once Only' principle into its service design and delivery, the Government could promote the reuse of data to minimise administrative burden on users and enable more proactive government services. This is an area where the Government has been trying to make progress, scoring 66% in the 2023 DGI, compared to the OECD average of 36%. Skate has been working to determine how best to ensure that the public sector collects information only once, and that the quality of data is sufficient for use throughout the public sector. The 'Once-Only' principle has also been included as a required consideration in the assessment of digital investments going forward. However, there is still opportunity to further the integration of the 'Once Only' principle, including by requiring that it be considered as standard in the context of transaction costs and the overall value proposition of any new digital initiatives. Without this, the Government could risk the underutilisation of government data, with only 22% of agencies reporting to reuse data to a large extent in their work. By promoting the reuse of data in service design and delivery via the 'Once Only' principle, the Government could reduce the burden on users to provide the data, minimise the effort and time required to collect it, and create opportunities for innovation and enhancements in the service delivery. This should be considered alongside Chapters 6 and 7.

Omnichannel strategy

Developing an omnichannel strategy could enable a more consistent user experience across agencies and support channels (e.g. in-person, phone, etc.) as an extension of the digital experience. In the 2023 DGI, Norway scored 0% for having an omnichannel strategy and only 20% for its approach to service channels, compared to the OECD average scores of 45% and 71% respectively. This is because Norway reported having service channels focussed on digital channels, without any dedicated strategy to ensure inclusive multichannel access to services. The risk of this challenge is highlighted in Digdir's self-assessment, which found that while there is an increasing rate of digital communication with the public sector year-on-year,

⁹ Read more at: <https://www.dta.gov.au/DigitalServiceStandard>

users still prefer to leverage other channels when there is an important issue to be discussed or an unfamiliar situation. (Digdir, 2023^[3]) More concerningly, Digdir also found that 20% of Norway's population is vulnerable to digital exclusion and only 52% of citizens have trust in digital government services.

It is then clear that the Government could develop a more coherent omnichannel strategy to provide the best possible experience for these users regardless of the service channel that they choose, but also to ensure services are inclusive of varying levels of digital literacy and accessibility requirements. A more coherent approach across all services could ensure seamless integration between digital and non-digital channels. This includes users being able to access services through one digital platform, as well as maintaining access for users to be supported through phone and in-person channels that act as an extension of the digital experience. This would help to ensure that both citizens and businesses can enjoy a simple, fast, and consistent experience of interacting with government.

An effective omnichannel approach also ensures that government services are accessible to all user groups and inclusive of their needs, ensuring that any digitalisation efforts do not create a digital divide in Norway or create barriers to users accessing the services that they need, when they need them. By prioritising this, Norway could ensure digital government services remain accessible and inclusive.

Performance monitoring

Incorporating more comprehensive performance monitoring would enable the Government in taking a data-driven approach to future service enhancements. Across the metrics for performance and monitoring in the 2023 DGI, Norway scored:

- 50% for requiring testing for digital government services (compared the OECD average of 45%) because services are tested with users and providers, but it is not mandatory.
- 25% for the metrics it uses to assess the performance of digital government services (compared to the OECD average of 36%) because of various measures in place to monitor only user satisfaction (and not other key metrics), as well as the completion rate for certain transactions via Norway's joint national solutions.
- 0% for its standardised mechanisms or guidelines for measuring transaction costs (compared to the OECD average of 24%) because there was not a standardised approach in place for this.
- 0% for assessing and monitoring barriers to co-design with users (compared to the OECD average of 24%) because no such assessments had been undertaken yet.

From the evidence provided through the 2023 DGI process, it is clear that there are different approaches and levels of maturity across the Norwegian public sector, depending on which agency is delivering the service that is being monitored. The risk of maintaining the current approach is that Norway could see a continuing negative trend that has seen only 30% of users and 25% of businesses report a coherent and seamless user experience, despite an overall increase in the digital services made available to them. (Digdir, 2023^[2]) There needs to be more comprehensive monitoring of the performance of government services to provide the kinds of data needed to understand the reality of how users are experiencing these services in order to better inform future enhancements to address any pain point, barriers, or future needs.

The Government could address this by:

- making it mandatory to test all digital government services with users and providers.
- monitoring additional metrics for service performance, like average time to complete a transaction, the rate of incomplete transactions, and failure demand. This would complement existing monitoring and reporting on the user satisfaction and availability of services.
- developing standardised mechanisms to measure the transaction costs of digital services based on clear metrics and methodologies for evaluating the efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

- assessing and monitoring barriers in co-designing services with different user groups in order to ensure inclusivity and inform future enhancements to Norway's service design and delivery.

By addressing its maturity in these areas of performance monitoring, the Government could derive greater insight into how well services are performing and identify better target areas for future improvement, which would enable a more efficient allocation of resources for maximum impact.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, the Government could consider incorporating the strategic objective below into its new digitalisation strategy, which could be achieved by addressing the associated recommendations:

Strategic objective: Service Design and Delivery

Overcoming the challenges of a decentralised model, Norway could aim to evolve its design and delivery of government services to ensure that it is responsive to the changing needs and expectations of users.

- **Recommendation 21:**
The Government could implement mandatory service standards to build a more coherent approach across a decentralised delivery model for government services.
- **Recommendation 22:**
The Government could integrate the 'Once Only' principle to promote the reuse of data to minimise administrative burden on users and enable more proactive government services.
- **Recommendation 23:**
The Government could develop an omnichannel strategy to enable a more consistent user experience across all channels as an extension of the digital experience, as well as to ensure services remain accessible and inclusive of different users' needs.
- **Recommendation 24:**
The Government could incorporate more comprehensive performance monitoring to reinforce a data-driven approach to future service enhancements.

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