3 Case studies

BizPaL (Canada)

Background

BizPal was established in 2005 as a pilot project with a lead group of participating governments of two provinces and one territory. Initial federal government funding was CAD 2.5 million in 2005.

The growth of BizPal has been fairly organic as other levels of government have seen the benefits that BizPal has brought to businesses. Increasing participation from the municipal level of government has been the sole responsibility of provinces and territories. One difficulty experienced early on with the rate of growth was that there was a very high focus placed on expanding the reach of the programme, to the detriment of the quality of service that could be provided. This approach however has largely disappeared as the programme has matured, with a much increased focus on the content provided to users.

Level of government

BizPal currently involves the federal, provincial/territorial and municipal governments. There are currently 17 Federal ministries/agencies that contribute content. All provincial and territorial governments are currently involved in BizPal, along with 1 058 municipalities and four Indigenous governments covering 80% of the Canadian population.

Clients

Its clients are businesses, in particular small and medium enterprises.

What does it do?

BizPal enables Canadian businesses to readily identify which permits and licences are required as well as how to obtain them in order to start and grow a business. Over 14 450 permits and licenses across the various levels of government are registered in the BizPaL data base.

How does it operate?

BizPaL is jointly managed by a partnership involving governments at the federal, provincial, territorial and municipal levels. This multi-jurisdictional partnership operates under a shared governance and costing model, outlined through the Federal/Provincial/Territorial Intergovernmental Letter of Agreement (ILA).

Innovation Science and Economic Development (ISED) Canada provides leadership for the initiative on behalf of the Government of Canada. ISED is the steward of the BizPaL service and houses the National BizPaL Office (NBO).

The NBO is responsible for managing the centralised governance structure, providing expertise and development for BizPaL federal content, and design/development of the website. The BizPaL content is integrated into each of the respective provincial/territorial and municipal partner’s websites.

The BizPaL Steering Committee (SC) is the main governing body responsible for decision making. The SC members represent their respective jurisdictions (ISED, Federal Departments, provinces/territories, municipalities), and provide a broader national perspective to guide governance of the BizPaL service and horizontal issues through a whole-of-government and consensus-based approach.

The multijurisdictional partnership is supported through a Specified Purpose Account (SPA) to which annual contributions are made by each partner.

Activities to be carried out by the partnership are articulated in the SPA budget which is approved by the SC.

The cost model agreed upon is based on population and covers the costs of system hosting, maintenance and activities related to the centralised function of the BizPaL service.

Type of service offered

BizPal covers a broad range of policy areas. At the federal level, information is available in areas such as international trade, fishing, and the environment. At the provincial/territorial level, information is available on exploration and mining, gambling, real estate, pesticide use, and child care among others. At the municipal level, information is more specialised and includes zoning and development, road use, home-based businesses, and food premises.

Information is provided to prospective or existing businesses about the licencing and permit requirements of these various policy areas/activities. In that sense, the information offered is shallow in that actual assistance to complete the regulatory requirements is not currently provided by BizPal. That said, BizPal is currently investigating opportunities where it can become a transactional one-stop shop by additionally providing advice and guidance to its business clients to assist them with their regulatory obligations.

Currently, services are offered on an integrated basis so that a business in one geographical area can obtain a list of the requisite regulatory information that it needs to complete at the municipal, provincial/territorial, and federal levels.

Communication mediums

BizPal is an online only tool for Canadian businesses.

BizPal is currently an informational one-stop shop in that it presents the regulatory requirements that exist in terms of requisite licences and permits. It does not however actually provide assistance to businesses in the completion of their regulatory requirements. That said, this is currently an area that BizPal is looking to expand into, thus offering more assistance to businesses. As a potential transactional one-stop shop, BizPal is currently evaluating the most appropriate model. However it is important to BizPal that any transactional based one-stop shop allow for interoperability given the breadth and depth of its permits and licences database.

Selected features

Governance

- BizPal has a range of objectives stemming from the *Department of Industry Act 1995* to provide co-ordinated support for small and medium-sized businesses. Additionally, BizPal’s operations have been found to be consistent with federal priorities related to supporting small business and the reduction of red tape, and are in line with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada’s priorities related to assisting Canadian businesses to be competitive. However, due to its governance structure in the Canadian system of government, the mandate only applies at the federal level. This has resulted in challenges as the goals of each jurisdiction, be they federal, provincial/territorial, municipal or Indigenous governments do not always have mandates or priorities that align together.

Monitoring and evaluation

- BizPal has instituted a programme of monitoring and evaluation. Google Analytics are used to record usage by clients. This data are analysed to determine where resources can be better allocated across the range of information that BizPal provides. Annual performance management frameworks are supplied and reviewed.
- BizPal has been reviewed on a number of occasions and is subject to a five-yearly review programme to ensure that continued funding remains justified. The Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses conducted a review. Cost value analysis is conducted, as are client audits. An extensive client experience audit is scheduled for 2019.

Other matters

- Users can submit complaints via a generic email account on the website. Reports identifying broken links are conducted for the partnership. Each jurisdiction has the responsibility to update its content within a specific timeframe. Usability testing is conducted regularly.
- In addition to a possible expansion to a transactional service, BizPal is currently undertaking a marketing campaign to improve businesses' awareness of their services. Additionally, BizPal is expected to be updated through new designs and improved search results to the tool.

Key learnings

- One key observation is that a flexible governance model to support swift changes (explained above) has been instrumental to BizPal's smooth operation and expansion over time.
- Periodic reviews of the BizPal service have helped to ensure that it remains a justified public expense. They have also helped to highlight both challenges and solutions to various problems that have been experienced over the years ranging from early BizPal growth targets, to technological solutions, and the appropriateness of the governance model as more jurisdictions join. This has in part helped to foster an open and consultative culture within the organisation.

Service Canada

Background

Service Canada's origins date back to 1998 when the Government of Canada began developing an integrated citizen-centred service strategy based on detailed surveys of citizens' needs and expectations. Service Canada was created in 2005 and is a single point of access for many of the Government's largest and most well-known programmes and services (e.g., Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS), Employment Insurance (EI), and passports). It manages 1 800 O-Canada (call centre), Canada.ca (web presence), and in-person points of service through which Canadians can access information on Government of Canada (GC) programmes.

Service Canada is an institution under the federal department of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and operates within the legislative mandate of the Department of Employment and Social Development Act (DESDA).

Level of government

Changes were recently made to DESDA which allow ESDC to provide service delivery services for various levels of government including federal, provincial, territorial, municipal, and to any other partner entity authorised by the Governor in Council.

ESDC also partners with other levels of government to provide in-person services in a single location. For example, the City of Ottawa, the Government of Ontario and the Government of Canada have a co-located site where clients can access federal, provincial and municipal services.

Clients

Service Canada delivers a range of programmes and services that affect Canadians throughout their lives and help them move through life's transitions, from school to work, from one job to another, unemployment to employment, from the workforce to retirement.

What does it do?

Service Canada delivers some of the Government's largest and most well-known programmes and services for example:

- New-borns and children, e.g., Social Insurance Number
- Youth, e.g., Canada Apprentice Loans
- Adults, e.g., Employment Insurance
- Supporting employers, e.g., Temporary Foreign Worker Program
- Reaching vulnerable populations, e.g., Indigenous programmes, Guaranteed Income Supplement, Employment Insurance Sickness, Canada Pension Plan - Disability
- Seniors, e.g., Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security
- Not for profit and for-profit organisations, and academia through grants and contribution programming
- All Canadians, e.g., passports

How does it operate?

Expenditure authorities, through ESDC, come from annual appropriation acts or other specific statutes such as the Employment Insurance Act that authorise payments which are approved by the Parliament of Canada through the annual budget expenditure process. Funding is annual, but could be multiyear or statutory under special operating exceptions.

Partnerships between Service Canada and other government departments or levels of government are managed through agreements which set out the framework for the partnership, including roles and responsibilities, privacy considerations, cost recovery, and more. The partner maintains responsibility for the programme overall and Service Canada takes on the responsibility for service delivery. Agreements are not legally binding between federal institutions, but instead act as an understanding between the organisations.

Type of service offered

General information about Service Canada programmes and services can be accessed online, by phone, and in person in both official languages. However, as Service Canada transitions to a "digital first" service model, service delivery varies from programme to programme. In 2017-18, ESDC started to implement the Service Transformation Plan (STP), a roadmap for the transformation and modernisation of ESDC's services in the coming years. For example, in August 2018, the Department implemented Automatic Enrolment for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) programme, which builds off the success of the launch of Automatic Enrolment of the Old Age Security (OAS) programme. As of April 30, 2019, more than 1.1 million seniors have been advised they do not need to apply for the OAS benefit since auto-enrolment began in 2013. Approximately 15 000 seniors each month are now advised they will be automatically enrolled for the OAS and the GIS.

Communication mediums

With respect to online services, Service Canada maintains a digital presence on Canada.ca from which general information on programmes and services is found. The department further has separate online tools enabling citizens and businesses to view and update their information as well as conduct transactions online.

With respect to telephone services, the 1 800 O-Canada service provides general information on Government of Canada programmes, services and initiatives as well as information on how to access them. Services are available from Monday to Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., local time. As well, the Call Centre network consists of specialised networks dedicated to helping Canadians access information related to Employment Insurance (EI), Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS), in addition to services for employers. Clients can receive and update EI, CPP and OAS information. In particular, its EI section provides access for clients to receive latest and past claim information (e.g. claim status, aligned messages, additional claim details, and payment information), 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

With respect to in-person service delivery, services can be accessed at any one of Service Canada's 611 Points of Service; 209 of these provide services in both official languages, while all 611 Points of Service make services available in either official language by telephone. Currently, there is an option being piloted of Video Chat that provides Canadians visiting select Service Canada Centres (SCCs) with the option of being served using Video Chat technology by Citizen Services Officers located in different offices in the region. This improves access to agents, and allows workload distribution in high volume offices.

Service Canada also uses social media outlets to communicate general information.

Selected features

Co-operation and co-ordination

- ESDC and Service Canada have traditionally had a culture of experimentation. This was not borne out of a formal strategy, but more from a recognition that its role is to best serve client needs. For example, the Enabling Accessibility Fund will experiment with new approaches to increase the number of eligible youth participants who partner with and support an organisation in submitting a proposal for funding consideration under the Youth Innovation Component. In addition, the programme will explore opportunities to implement a new intake mechanism to find efficiencies and better respond to the needs of applicants. In addition, the Department is conducting experimentation and testing new approaches to reduce administrative burden and barriers for organisations serving vulnerable populations in accessing grants and contributions programmes. This culture of experimentation aligns with the Government of Canada's emphasis on continuous learning and innovation.

Role clarity

- Service Canada is developing simple, practical, standardised approaches for engaging the public and other end users in the development of ESDC policies related to its programmes and services. This is being done to help ensure that clients are driving how we do business. For example, in 2018, the department conducted in-person focus group sessions with youth clientele regarding employment. Additional sessions were conducted with a variety of client groups including Indigenous peoples, recent immigrants, people with disabilities and people living in remote areas.
- A Client Centric Policy Playbook has been launched by the department in order to provide ESDC employees with insights, best practices, tools and resources for engaging clients.

Human capital

- Service Canada has put a focus on human resources management and development, considering that its employees must be equipped with appropriate skills, attitudes and behaviours, and that they need to share the values and beliefs of Service Canada. Service Canada College was established in 2005 as the corporate learning institution, and provides consistency in the courses and programmes for Service Canada employees. The reason for its creation was that at the time there was a significant amount of variance in the quality of service delivery. The objective of the College was to provide reliability and professionalism to service delivery through the promotion of the principles of Service Excellence. The key offering of the College is the Service Excellence Certification Program, that it is an applied learning programme that includes on the job coaching, in class instruction and follow-up online sessions, complementing functional and operational training. The service excellence stream of courses was developed and delivered in-house at Service Canada, but in 2014 it was transferred over to the Canada School of Public Service (CSPS) and is currently available to all federal employees.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Evaluation information includes visits to the website, social media channels and in-person centres, as well as calls to the 1 800 number. Each of the department's three key service delivery channels has formal performance metrics.
- The department also conducts annual client experience (CX) surveys with Canadians to understand how clients perceive their service experience with Service Canada.

- In addition, the Policy on Results obligates internal evaluation to evaluate programmes regularly and to conduct full programme evaluation research studies to examine their effectiveness and efficiency in achieving outcomes. For example, recommendations from the Employment Insurance Automation and Modernization evaluation led to the enhancement of programme delivery and service to Canadians. Service Canada responded to this evaluation finding by dedicating resources to three key initiatives focused on the modernisation of Information Technology infrastructure, namely:
  - Migrating to a centralised, hosted call centre telephony platform
  - Streamlining Information Technology infrastructure, and
  - Enhancing security.
- A multi-year evaluation of the service delivery channels is currently being completed

Other matters

- Different systems were developed over the years to satisfy the needs for making services available digitally. Examples of systems are My Service Canada Account (MSCA), Job Bank, Grants and Contributions, Records of Employment, EI applications and reporting systems. A key priority continues to be the streamlining of provision of digital identification as well as integration of services in order to better serve individuals and businesses with work underway. For example, through the My Service Canada Account, clients can securely access tax and benefit information on their Canada Revenue Agency MyAccount through a single secure login. Clients do not have to go through a revalidation step once they logged in securely in either account. Canada Pension Plan clients are also able to update their direct deposit information using either account and have this information shared with the other department in near real-time.
- Service Canada has launched a Benefits Delivery Modernization initiative, which is a business-led transformation programme in collaboration with IT experts, that aims to modernize the service delivery of EI, CPP and OAS. The new core technology and redesign of businesses processes will allow increased policy agility and streamlined processing of EI, CPP and OAS benefits through data sharing, policy and legislation simplification across programmes.
- As part of the Call Centre Improvement Strategy the Department is implementing a Hosted Contact Centre Solution (HCCS) in EI Call Centres, CPP/OAS Call Centres and Employer Contact Centres. The HCCS is a modern and supported technology that will provide enhanced functionalities to support future business requirements for phone services.
- Protecting the Department's programmes and services from errors, fraud and abuse is an important business activity. The Department has shifted its focus from a "pay and chase" approach to an "integrity-by-design" approach. Instead of focusing on addressing issues identified post payment, integrity-by-design aims to integrate control measures from the inception of a programme or service all the way through its lifecycle. This provides a more comprehensive approach, placing emphasis on preventing/deterring, monitoring/detecting and enforcing/addressing error, fraud, and wrongdoing or abuse/misuse in services and benefits delivery.
- The department has established a client journey mapping capacity within the department to better define and understand client interactions with the department and the underlying processes that support them.

Key learnings

- The ability to adapt and transform quickly to client needs and expectations is critical to ensure the delivery of high quality and client centric services.

- All service channels are critical to ensure that government services are reaching all Canadians. In-person service including outreach, call-centres, partnerships with organisations, as well as digital service, must work in parallel to ensure no client is left behind.
- Consolidate resources such as front-line staff, policy/programme experts, IT resources, and enablers in order to co-create solutions and foster greater innovation.
- Build a strong enterprise foundation and identify investment requirements early, to ensure sustainability and ongoing renewal of core systems.
- Collaborate with a wide array of partners with diverse skill sets in order to support service transformation required for one-stop-shops. Learning from others is a critical success factor.

Informationsportal Arbeitgeber (Germany)

Background

The establishment of the information portal for employers (*Informationsportal Arbeitgeber*), which first went live in January 2017, was part of a longer-term effort to digitalize and simplify notification requirements for employers to social insurance organisations. The German social insurance system and services are financed by employers as well as through contributions deducted from the salary of insured employees. In that context, employers face a number of notification and reporting requirements to the various social insurance organisations (health and long-term care insurance as well as, accident, pension and unemployment insurance) that form the German statutory social insurance system. These notification procedures had been gradually converted into to purely electronic transmission already since 2006. While this transformation was generally considered successful, it provided further impetus for the simplification and optimisation of reporting and application procedures.

With the purpose to identify further areas for improvement, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs conducted a project that lasted from 2012 and 2014 and resulted into the decision to create the one-stop shop. A central finding of the simplification efforts was the need to provide information concerning the various pillars of the German social security system in a more integrated way. The project supported by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs identified that especially employers in small and medium-sized enterprises were often overwhelmed with the complexity of regulatory requirements and various procedures. Further, the project revealed a lack of support specifically at the stage of the data collection on the employer's side, prior to the actual transmission of data to the social insurances.

In December 2014, the federal government officially adopted the one-stop shop as part of its wider government strategy of administrative simplification and the reduction of compliance costs for businesses. With the "Key Issues Paper to Further Reduce Burdens for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises", the federal cabinet adopted a wide range of measures with the goal to reduce bureaucracy and red-tape. In addition to the introduction of the information portal, these measures included for instance the further development of one-stop shops for the creation of businesses (*"Single Point of Contact 2.0*"). The portal was finally legally established in 2016 through an amendment of Volume IV of the German Code of Social Law (*Sechstes Gesetz zur Änderung des Vierten Buches Sozialgesetzbuch und anderer Gesetze*).

A first evaluation report from 2018 drew a positive conclusion and recommended that the portal should be continued to be operated and further developed. In the first year of its implementation, around 150 000 visitors of the portal were registered, with numbers forecasted to rise in 2018.

Level(s) of government

The portal is operated and supervised jointly by the umbrella organisations of four pillars of the German social insurance system: the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Funds, the German Pension Insurance Association, the Federal Agency for Employment and the German Social Accident Insurance. Although these bodies are public-law corporations, they organize and provide the respective parts of the social insurance system according to the principle of self-government. While the state prescribes the legal framework, the insured as well as the service providers organize themselves in associations to provide social insurances in their own responsibility.

Clients

The target group of the one-stop shop are employers, and especially start-ups and SMEs, who are hiring employees for the first time and / or need assistance to fulfil their legal requirements with regards to the different branches of the social security system. However, the portal is generally freely accessible to everyone.

What does it do?

The information portal assists employers and entrepreneurs to identify registration and notification requirements to social insurance organisations. The portal is especially designed for those who have little experience with social security issues. The website also provides general information on notification requirements and contributions law.

How does it operate?

The involved social insurance institutions operate the information portal jointly through a Steering Committee that consists of representatives from their respective umbrella associations. The Steering Committee convenes as required and decides annually on the budget plan and the service portfolio of the portal. The costs for the operation of the portal are distributed proportionally according to a fixed key that is formalised in the law that established the one-stop shop.

The management and technical operation was commissioned to an existing working group of the National Association of Statutory Health Insurance Funds. This working group had been already responsible to conduct the initial study to identify ways to simplify social insurance related notification requirements as well as to design a prototype of the website. The individual social insurance organisations are responsible for providing and updating the content of the website.

Types of services offered

At the time of its inception, the one-stop shop was purely of informational nature and had narrow focus on a specific type of services in the area of social security. For the actual application and notification processes, the users are directed to the website of the relevant social security organisation via weblinks. However, it is currently being considered how to expand the functions of the portal in the future, and specifically to move from a purely informational offer towards a more transactional website. For that purpose, it is planned that users will also have the option, in addition to receive the requested information, to directly apply for a certification or provide the necessary notifications via the portal. The possibility to establish an integrated platform for both informational as well as application purposes had already been considered as part of the impact assessment and development of the portal and was explicitly noted in the federal government’s Key Issues Paper from 2014.

Communication mediums

The one-stop shop serves as an integrated virtual “front-office”. It displays the obligations employers face when registering employees and notifying social security contributions to the various social insurances. The information provided are exclusively delivered via the online digital platform. However, the information portal does not replace the existing virtual and physical offers of the individual social insurance organisations. Rather, it aims to bundle information on a single web portal. This helps to avoid that employers need to conduct time-consuming research via different sources. At the same time, it should help to reduce the amount of requests that are currently being directed to the information hotlines of the individual social security funds.

The information portal is structured according to the concept of "life events". Visitors of the website can for example chose between events such as "new employer", "illness of a worker" or "opening of another enterprise". Users are currently directed through the portal through an interactive sequence of Yes/ No questions. The final goal is to provide a summary of all relevant information and a checklist with next steps that fits to the concrete situation and problem the employer faces. In case the request cannot be clearly assigned to a specific situation, the user is referred to corresponding further information via a web link.

In case of technical problems, users can also directly contact the operator of the website via an online contact form.

Information on the website is only provide in German. However, it is currently being considered to add a multi-language capability to the website. This would enable to translate the entire content into one or more official European languages. The underlying technology is already embedded in the current version of the portal.

Selected features

Political commitment

- Political commitment was ensured through a cabinet decision to set up the information portal for employers in 2014. As a result, the information portal was legally established as a joint task of the involved institutions. Thus, the purpose of the portal, the governance structure and roles of the involved social insurance organisations as well as a fixed financing key was firmly enshrined in the German social security code.

Public consultation

- Stakeholders were engaged at multiple stages of the process to develop the one-stop shop, including at the problem identification stage. For instance, experts and affected stakeholders were involved at an early stage via a standardised survey and workshops to document the relevant procedures and to identify the resulting compliance costs. Further, involved stakeholder were invited to submit proposals for the optimisation and simplification of the identified procedures. For the actual design of the web portal, valuable input was provided through a co-operation with other agencies that provide services for employers.

Legal framework

- During the assessment of different options as part of the feasibility study, stakeholders raised the concern of providing legally secure information through the one-stop shop. For legal reasons, technical questions on individual cases cannot be answered conclusively on the website, especially because no legally binding answers can be given by the moderators of the information platform. As a result, a disclaimer was added to the website that makes users aware of the fact that the information of the portal only provides guidance and cannot replace a proper legal assessment of individual social insurance cases.

Monitoring and evaluation

- A continuous monitoring and an evaluation of the functioning of the portal provided input whether to further operate and develop the one-stop shop. Already when establishing the information portal as a statutory task of the social insurance institutions, a reporting obligation towards the Federal Government after two years was introduced. To fulfil this obligation, a number of key performance indicators were established. These included for instance the number of users and registrations, number of clicks on the various sub-pages, an analysis of the search function of the website and availability of the system. One result of the evaluation was that the portal is mostly used during the week. This lead to the conclusion that the website is preliminarily used by employers for work related purposes. Another finding was that, although the portal was mostly accessed from Germany, a considerable number of users also accessed the portal from other, non-German speaking countries.

Other matters

- The establishment of the one-stop shop was only the final step of a longer lasting effort to reduce compliance costs for employers. It has proven as particularly useful that, prior to the actual establishment of the one-stop shop, an in-depth analysis of existing procedures and requirements had been conducted, including a baseline calculation of compliance costs. On the basis of this baseline assessment, an analysis of various options how to address the problems that had been identified was conducted.

Key learnings:

- The user-oriented design of the communication interface is considered as a key element of the success of the online portal. The language and the content of the portal were specifically designed to be accessible for users without prior experience with social security issues and online services. Further, the design of the portal ensures that targeted answers to the user's request can be provided.
- An essential requirement was that the content of the portal can be created and updated by social security experts independently without any programming skills. For this purpose, a programme was created that automatically converts the content into the format required for the website. Thus, the maintenance and control of the content of the portal can be carried out without any intervention of a programmer. This helps to reduce the effort to maintain the portal and ensures a rapid implementation in practice.
- A key feature of the one-stop shop is that the information portal can be simultaneously displayed and used from the websites of individual social insurances. One of the aims connected to the establishment of the central portal was to reduce the amount of information and complexity that was already provided on the various websites that are operated by the different insurance carriers. The portal was therefore designed with the possibility to be connected and embedded on other websites. The interface can be adapted according to the look and feel of the website of each of the individual insurances, e.g. by adapting the design and embedding the logo. This has proven to be of particular added value, since the individual insurances can offer their customers additional, tailor-made information while the users do not realise that they are visiting a different website. According to the evaluation report from 2018, 44 health insurance companies had already put in place such an extended connection to the information portal.

Tu Empresa (Mexico)

Background

The website www.tuempresa.gob.mx was launched on 2009 aimed to facilitate the procedures for the constitution and operation of businesses. At the beginning, procedures related to the use of denominations or corporate names had no charge and no time restrictions. Citizens provided their data only once and the website transmitted electronically such information to the agencies responsible, and each agency processed the procedures of their responsibility and created a “Company deed” to be submitted to a notary or registered securities broker and to constitute their businesses.

In 2015, as part of the National Digital Strategy, the website tuempresa.gob was incorporated to the platform GOB.MX, since March 2016 with the amendment of the General Law of Commercial Companies, the Corporate Name can be authorised; the Company deed of “*Sociedad por Acciones Simplificadas* (Simplified joint-stock company) (SAS)” can be obtained, in addition to allow obtaining the Federal Taxpayer Registry (RFC) issued by the SAT (Taxpayer Administration System), e-signature, and employer registry before the IMSS (Mexican Social Security Institute).

In the period from January to May 2017, the website tuempresa.gob.mx received 348 722 requests in total for denominations or corporate names, of which 85 056 were authorised.

Level of government

It is currently only operational at the federal government level/Mexican federal agencies.

Early stage efforts have been started to link web pages of procedures issued by the subnational governments; in particular those in charge of granting licenses or permits to operate businesses; however, they have not been concluded to date, but this is a mid-term goal expected to be achieved.

Clients

Its clients are citizens that require information to register and operate a business in Mexico.

The web page tuempresa is for corporate persons and not for natural persons, which implies that a lot of citizens of SMEs intending to operate with the mode of natural persons with business activities cannot start their company through the website.

What does it do?

The website tuempresa is designed to guide citizens according to the three main stages of their business – opening, operation, and closure.

How does it operate?

In 2015, the website was integrated to the National Digital Strategy which defines the technical aspects for interoperability and usability.

One of the advantages of the website is that with the e-signature or electronic signature issued by the SAT, users are identified, have access to their information, and data is interoperable for the agencies participating in the website.

The e-signature is useful for authenticating taxpayers, as the main security item.

Type of service offered

The website provides information on the procedures for opening, operating, and closing a business; the website tuempresa, however, only manages the following procedures:

- Authorisation for using a denomination
- Constitution of Companies, referring to the modes of "Simplified joint-stock company (SAS)" or the typical Commercial Companies
- Notice of Denomination Use
- Incorporation to the Public Registry of Commerce
- Registration to the Federal Taxpayer Registry
- Employer registry at the Mexican Social Security Institute (IMSS)

Regarding the procedures for operating and closing a business, the website provides the links to the specific websites to perform the corresponding procedures.

As for the operation of businesses, there is a link to the Public Registry of Commerce, Digital Mexican Business Information System, National Register of Foreign Investment, and Movable Property Collateral Registry, and the Commercial Companies Publication System.

And for closing a business, there is a link to the simplified procedure for the dissolution and liquidation of businesses.

Communication mediums

It is an online only tool for Mexican businesses operating at the federal level.

Selected features

Political commitment

- For launching the website, it was necessary the political engagement of the highest level, since it was necessary that several federal government agencies converged for offering on-line procedures in one unique access point operated by the Ministry of Economy.
- Another aspect that required political commitment at the highest level was the amendment to the General Law of Commercial Companies on 2016, which enabled the Ministry of Economy to issue the Authorisation for the use of a denomination of a company

Altinn (Norway)

Background

Altinn started in 2003, as a collaboration on reporting between three government Agencies. Sixteen years later, the Altinn collaboration spans all major government agencies and furthermore serves the municipalities. All Norwegian enterprises and about 90% of the working population have switched from paper to digital dialogue via Altinn.

2005: Altinn was expanded from being a reporting solution to becoming a dialogue solution when creating the Altinn message box. From 2005, the agencies could send messages to the users' message box in ALtinn. And the users had both their private mailbox and mailboxes for the roles they had in business. The messages were also distributed via Altinn's APIs, so that they could also appear in the company's business system.

2005: The Tax Administration developed Tax Returns for employees and pensioners (citizens) in Altinn. The form was pre-filled with information from the Population Register, employers and banks so that very many did not have to do anything other than clicking "sign and submit".

2007: Altinn was extended with regulatory information written in plain language to help SMEs. The information was regularly quality assured by the agencies that managed the regulatory area.

2008: Legislation was changed so that taxpayers no longer have to sign and submit the Tax Returns if they have no changes to the pre-filled tax notification. Today, 7 out of 10 employees and pensioners use so-called "silent acceptance".

2009: Altinn was appointed Point of Single Contact (PSC) under the EU Services Directive. (248/5000)

2010: A new, modernised Altinn Platform was released, named Altinn II, with six different service types:

- Submission service
- Message service
- Access service
- Authorisation services
- Transmission service
- Collaborative services

The main idea was that there is possible to standardize the ways public sector exchange information with other entities in public or private sector. In Altinn II it was also established as a principle that all functionality in the portal should also be available from open APIs.

2010: The innovation@altinn programme was established. The programme benefits from input provided by service owners through strategic meetings, as well as from annual surveys to different user groups, and industry meetings.

2011: The information portal in Altinn (before logging in) was considerably expanded by adding two more portals with business information into Altinn.

2015: The a-ordning is a co-ordinated service used by employers to report information about income and employees to the Labour and Welfare Administration, Statistics Norway and the Norwegian Tax Administration.

The information is submitted electronically, either machine-to-machine via the employer's payroll system (integrated via Altinn's APIs) or via web forms in Altinn. The Norwegian Tax Administration administers the service on behalf of the other public agencies.

2016: Altinn launched its own payment solution, so that users can pay a fee for, for example, patent applications to the Norwegian Industrial Property Office.

2016: Altinn launched user-driven consent, as an extension of the authorisation solution.

Level of government

As of May 2019, 57 agencies, directorates and municipalities are involved in the Altinn collaboration. In addition, more than 400 municipalities use Altinn to send letters and messages to citizens and businesses in their Altinn inbox.

Clients

Altinn was originally a portal and platform for dialogue between business and the public, but also contains key services for private individuals, such as tax returns, requests concerning choice of name, application for sickness benefit etc.

When it comes to information about duties, rights and opportunities, there is mainly information for the business community on Altinn.no, while residents can find information on Norge.no and on the government agencies' own websites.

What does it do?

The Norwegian one-stop shop solution Altinn fulfils the most sophisticated one-stop shop model. It is a common web portal for transactions and information, but it is also a platform where governmental agencies can develop and run their services.

The service owners have developed about 1 000 forms and services on the Altinn platform. Citizens and companies find these services in the forms overview on altinn.no.

How does it operate?

The Brønnøysund Register Center has been responsible for the management, operation and further development of Altinn, on behalf of the co-operating agencies and the municipalities, since May 2004. Nevertheless, the co-operation - the organisational interoperability - has been central to the whole process.

The Norwegian Tax Administration led the first Altinn project in 2002/2003 and has always accounted for 80-90% of the transaction volume through Altinn. Statistics Norway is the agency that has the most services on the platform. Both these and the other service owners in the Altinn collaboration have considerable influence on strategy and further development of the platform.

The Altinn Governance Structure comprises the Director General of the Brønnøysund Register Centre (BRC) who makes the final strategic decisions, supported by the Altinn Guidance Council which comprises nine Altinn Government bodies. The BRC User Council is an advisory body and comprises selected end-users and organisations, primarily representing businesses, the organisations representing accountants and auditors, and representatives from several Government bodies.

The annual expenditures for management costs and basic maintenance costs of Altinn are funded by specifically allocated amounts in the annual government budget on a multiyear basis.

Funding of development costs are applied for on an annual basis, by a separate application to the respective ministry. If approved, the funds will be included in the government budget for the succeeding year. The platform is developed according to the needs of the end users and service owners, and it is possible for service owners to fund concrete development projects on the platform as long as the functionally is in accordance with the general strategy.

Operating costs are covered by the government entities that are service owners in Altinn. The service owners pay their share of the annual operating costs based on how many transactions their services generate on the platform.

Type of service offered

Altinn is both an informational and transactional web portal. The users (businesses/citizens) can both submit forms and receive messages from the public agencies in their Altinn inbox, i.e. digital dialogue.

Altinn has replaced physical offices. Norway is a very elongated country with a scattered population. While, for example, the Tax Administration previously had tax offices in all Norwegian municipalities, digitisation has meant that the need for the physical presence has now been drastically reduced. 100% of the business community uses Altinn for reporting and dialogue with the public, and about 90% of the working population have switched from paper to digital dialogue via Altinn.

Altinn is integrated with the municipalities for some citizen services. For instance, development applications by citizens can be lodged with the relevant municipality, but in addition, the service is also linked to architects. Lastly, Altinn's peer-to-peer service allows citizens to notify their neighbours of the application for the purposes of public consultation.

Communication mediums

Altinn has its own support centre, for requests by phone and email about how to use Altinn. In addition, service owners have their own support for governmental and legal issues. The Altinn support centre can easily redirect users to the different agencies' support centres. The users may also use the Altinn app.

The Start and Run of Business section of Altinn also has its own business support desk that guides entrepreneurs and SMEs by phone and email. They also regularly offer start-up seminars across Norway.

The Starting and running a business section contains comprehensive and co-ordinated information across agency boundaries, quality assured by the agency that is responsible for the laws and regulations.

Information provided by Altinn is at a general level, with links to more detailed information on the agency's own website, or to the web portal www.lovdata.no that contains all national laws and regulations.

Selected features

Leadership

- As Altinn has had an incremental development based on common needs, the co-ordination has emerged without being part of a master plan.
- With the upgrade of Altinn to Altinn II, it became a suitable platform for a co-ordinated service on setting up and running a business in Norway, named "Start and run Business". In 2011, the transition of these web-services was completed. To ensure that information quality was established and maintained, a quality assurance system was established. Key factors in this are an editorial board and explicit procedures for content creation and approval from information owners (competent authorities). The procedures have developed over time as technology and user needs have changed. The editorial board remains operational in 2019.
- Users experienced major performance issues with the new Altinn II platform at peak load events like the annual disclosure of tax settlement notices. An investigation concluded that the project had too much focus on functionality at the expense of non-functional requirements, such as performance. Capacity was increased, and today, the capacity of Altinn is high and sufficient.

Co-operation and collaboration

- Altinn has paid particular attention to collaboration between the various agencies, with joint reporting and feedback adapted to the user's business processes, cutting across formal organisational boundaries between government agencies and administrative levels.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Altinn collects a range of usage statistics:
  - Approximately 95% of citizens of working age use Altinn. Data on users' age as well as gender are available.
  - Altinn is used by 100% of businesses for tax returns and annual accounts, with some 99% using it for VAT. It is also heavily utilised for shareholder register statements (98%), bankruptcy proceedings (95%), and co-ordinated register notifications (91%).
- The EU Single Digital Gateway team conducted an evaluation of the user-friendliness of all European contact points in 2018. The user tests ranked the information content under "Start and run Business" in the Altinn information portal as the best in Europe.

Other matters

Technological considerations

- Users are uniquely identified by their social security number from the Norwegian population register. Authentication of users is established by a national service for authentication (ID-porten) which is an interface and technical solution that accepts several ID authentication solutions developed by the private or public sector. It has also been very important to know who is responsible for operating a particular enterprise. For this purpose, Altinn uses the Central Coordinating Register for Legal Entities.

Expansion of services

- Altinn is currently looking to expand its services based on various life events. Individual service owners are responsible for devising the life events that best suit them. One area currently under investigation is to facilitate the administrative proceedings after a death, which would bring together a range of public and private services.
- Altinn's authorisation module is being further developed into a more comprehensive solution, with a direct look at even more public (and perhaps even private) registers than today.
- Altinn is currently developing a completely new service development solution, Altinn Studio, which should be operational in 2020. The Altinn Studio platform will provide support for modern, responsive design, as well as allow for automatic testing, and the self-service migration of services into the cloud-based runtime environment.

Key learnings

- A key factor has been that the design of Altinn from the outset was on business needs. This has helped to ensure that Altinn remains user-focussed and subject to change as user needs differ over time.
- The integration of Altinn with professional software systems has been the single most important factor in Altinn's success as a one-stop shop.

- The Tax Administration as part of the one-stop shop Altinn developed tax returns for employees and pensioners. Forms were pre-filled with information from the Population Register, employers, and banks – so that a number of citizens were only required to click “sign and submit” and the form was complete. Legislation was changed in 2008 to go to the next step – the requirement for signing and submission was no longer needed unless there had been changes. Now around 70% of employees and pensioners use the so-called “silent acceptance” mechanism
- Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) for integration with professional software systems for business and industry. This has been the single most important factor for Altinn’s success. For services like tax returns, VAT and annual accounts, as much as 90% of the data is transferred directly from the businesses own software systems via the Altinn APIs and also to the connected governmental agencies. The APIs have also been important source of innovation in the way that Altinn delivers its services.
- Powerful authorisation solution built on roles in national business registers. The creation of Altinn was based on the amalgamation of five existing business registers, thereby establishing the Central Coordinating Register for Legal Entities. Altinn’s authorisation module is currently being further developed into a more comprehensive solution, with the possibility of including more public (and possibly private) registers.
- Prefilling of forms based on central registers and the agencies’ own data sources. This was an important development to reduce demands on users in instances where data already existed on government systems. It also gave users access to their personal and if applicable, enterprise archive which stored all previous communications.

ePortugal

Background

ePortugal.gov.pt was developed to aggregate the three main government digital portals "Citizen Portal", "Citizen Map" and "Entrepreneur's Desk" under a single domain for government services in 2019.

- Citizen Portal: provided services specifically for citizens (national and foreign). For example: request a passport, renew driving license, and request a residence permit renewal.
- Entrepreneur's Desk: provided services for businesses. For example: industrial licensing, start a company, etc.
- Citizen Map: georeferencing of physical locations to perform public services and a portal where people could get their tickets for some specific physical service counters, namely those located on the Citizens Shops

It combines in a single governmental programme the objectives of better regulation, reduction of administrative burden, service interoperability, procedures digitisation, red tape cutting, and digital government promotion.

ePortugal.gov.pt is the Point of Single Contact under the EU Services Directive and the Single Digital Gateway to access electronic public services. It promotes the dematerialisation and simplification of services, as well as bringing the public administration closer to citizens, businesses and society at large. The portal is available to everyone, while offering the possibility to create an account choosing from six registration and authentication mechanisms available. Some of these require a prior registration on the national electronic authentication system, autenticação.gov.

The National Digital Strategy outlines how the single domain was created in order to organise information and electronic services around both life and business events. The domain is intended to meet citizens' and companies' expectations and demands, pursuing the citizen-driven approach that the Portuguese government has been implementing for the past number of years.

ePortugal was developed under the SIMPLEX+, the Portuguese simplification and modernisation programme that follows a citizen-driven approach with the ultimate goal of having citizens' and businesses' everyday life and their interaction with the public administration as seamless as possible. Since 2016, SIMPLEX+ launched a total of 602 simplification measures, and in 2019 a new version was launched, iSIMPLEX, where the "I" stands for innovation. With 119 planned projects, the iSIMPLEX is based on 5 main areas: once only; sharing and reuse; digital by default; behavioral economy; and emergent technologies.

Level of government

ePortugal.gov.pt operates at the level of both central and local government (municipalities) administration in Portugal, providing services to both business and citizens.

Clients

Its clients are both Portuguese businesses and citizens, as well as visitors to Portugal.

What does it do?

ePortugal.gov.pt is the starting point for over 1 000 essential government services, providing information, guidance and services for citizens and businesses, as well as detailed guidance for professionals and specific groups such as employees, migrants and others and information on government and policy. The services offered are provided by 590 entities, from both the central government (17 ministries), local government and private entities.

How does it operate?

The Administrative Modernisation Agency (AMA) is the sole entity responsible for the management and co-ordination of ePortugal.gov.pt having the responsibility to obtain, update and upload content of services and entities of all the Public Administration. At the operational level, the AMA co-ordinates the collection and gathering of information from the different entities and publishes the content regarding the services available.

The portal uses several digital infrastructures and platforms, which are at the core of the Portuguese digital transformation efforts such as:

- the **national e-id and authentication provider** (autenticação.gov), providing access through the Portuguese Citizen Card and the Digital Mobile Key (DMK).
- The former effectively allows citizens to securely perform various operations without the need for face-to-face interaction. It has a smart card format and it integrates in a single document the Civil Identity Card, the Social Security card, and the National Health System and User, and the Taxpayer identification cards. In order to use its electronic features, a card reader is required.
- The latter is a national mobile eID solution which only requires a mobile phone. The DMK system allows secure access to most public, and some private companies' websites by relying on a customised keyword (a 4 to 6 digit PIN) chosen by the user which generates a temporary code numbers sent via SMS or push notifications to the user's smartphone.
- the **Interoperability platform – iAP**: this is part of the government's efforts to achieve a fully digital public administration. The idea behind this is that connecting the multitude of public entities and digital platforms that accumulate public information allows public services to exchange data in real time, facilitating the "only-once principle", whereby citizens don't have to provide information that is already in a public administration database.
- the **national Catalogue of Entities and Services**: located inside iAP, this is the central repository of information about public organisations, services, points of care, websites, apps, etc.
- **SIGA, the ticket dispenser system:** part of the social security platform, it is used for most public services in Portugal and is also accessible through the ePortugal.gov's map application.

ePortugal acts as the central point to access information regarding all public administration services, directing citizens to either online services or physical locations if the specific service has still not been digitalised.

The portal offers a channel of direct assistance with the Citizen Helpline and Business Spot Helpline, both ran by AMA. These operate by email and phone offering the possibility to contact them directly or to request a contact, by filling out a specific form. The Chatbot SIGMA, based on artificial intelligence, is another user-supported channel. It helps the users to get information about the services available on the portal, and through the Chatbot, users can also ask to be contacted by one of the existing helplines for a more personalised service.

Type of service offered

Being the entry point for over 1 000 services, ePortugal's scope is extremely broad and includes both informational and transactional services aimed at facilitating citizens' access to all public services. As for those which are not available online, guidance is provided mainly through the Citizen Map section and largely refers to so-called Citizen Shops which are physical one-stop shops spread across the country, where several Portuguese private (mostly commodities suppliers) and public entities have their own physical counters and human resources providing their services, with a face-to-face approach.

Communication mediums

ePortugal.gov.pt is an online service which also provides guidance about services requiring physical interaction. It presents information regarding all public services, independently of the channel used to perform them. In addition, when the service can be done through different channels (online, face to face, etc), the ePortugal.gov.pt has information regarding all the channels available for that particular service. For example, for the renewal of the Citizen Card, the portal provides information on what is required to do this service in person and what is needed to be done online.

Selected features

Role clarity

- The rationale for the creation of ePortugal.gov.pt was to increase the accessibility and interoperability of public services. This was achieved by joining in a single portal informational services (irrespective of the channel used to provide the services) and transactional services for citizens and businesses. Examples of the latter include making changes and requests regarding the Citizen Card, requesting certificates and business licenses and permits. At the same time, role clarity has been maintained by retaining an internal distinction between the Citizen Map and “Business Spot” (previously called “Entrepreneur’s Desk”).

Human capital

- The portal draws from the pre-existing human resource structure that is located at AMA. There are several AMA teams working with the ePortugal.gov.pt: these are dedicated to the digital management of the portal, and maintaining relationships with citizens and businesses and cross-sectorial tasks, mainly aimed at digitalising services and marketing strategy purposes.

  Before the launch of ePortugal, several people from the AMA teams had a one-day training with the company that had developed the technological part of the portal to familiarise them with the new system. AMA is also continuously looking to expand its in-house technical expertise in order to both improve its efficiency as a provider of digital solutions and to assist other organisations in their process of digitalisation of services.
- The AMA Academy develops projects in the areas of formation, qualification and development of skills for the Public Service Network and for the Public Administration as a whole. In this context, it developed specific pedagogical contents concerning ePortugal.

Public consultation

- There were user testing activities with other public entities, end-users, and business people were also consulted during the design and implementation phases. These parties mainly influenced general design decisions or functional details that emerged from usability testing.
- For the development of the portal, several design thinking and user research activities were undertaken, leading to the creation of personas, tests and user-experience led development cycles, based on the collection of feedback from end-users (citizens and/or businesspeople).

Co-operation and collaboration

- While the infrastructure largely relies on a central uniform basis country-wide, synergies among different levels of government allow for some room for manoeuvre for local government administration (municipalities) to implement customised solutions (e.g. unique forms or special customised taxes). This is reflected accordingly on the ePortugal platform.

Monitoring and evaluation

- The portal features built-in feedback visualisation and export tools and has been configured for analytics tracking. A wide range of statistics are being collected as part of an ongoing process of review of monitoring and evaluation practices. Among these are: page views, sessions, visitors, registered users, number of authentications, most viewed pages, most viewed services, most performed services, and user satisfaction.
- Every user can leave feedback about the content of the portal: the user can assess whether the information is useful, and, if not, leave a message with suggestions.

  The feedback mechanism is available on every page of the portal.

  Feedback left in the portal by its users is taken into consideration to rectify information that may be out of date, to simplify the language in order to make the information more objective and clear, and, whenever possible, if some information is not available in the portal, to publish new services.
- There is also an electronic form for complaints, compliments and suggestions ("Livro Amarelo" – Yellow Book), and the citizen and businesses helplines.

Other matters

- LabX is the Experimentation Lab for the Portuguese Public Administration. It is led by an AMA team, which started in 2016 to embed a culture of experimentation in the Portuguese public administration, (re)designing public services around the citizen's needs and expectations and promoting an evidence-based approach to policymaking.

  It intends to be a safe space for experimentation, a disseminator of innovation, a promoter of citizen participation and a pivot for the innovation ecosystem.

Key learnings

- The role of AMA was of paramount importance for the realisation of ePortugal, providing both the human capital and the administrative expertise and, most importantly, taking over the everyday management and constant updating of the portal. The latter point is particularly important as the work on the portal is never finished and it is always necessary to create new content, update information, and to adapt the portal to users' needs and requirements.
- The portal's development greatly benefited from strong political commitment. It was part of the SIMPLEX Modernisation and Simplification Programme and a highly visible piece of public service delivery and digital transformation. This visibility has not wavered in recent times since the portal continues to evolve and host new digital services.
- ePortugal acts continuously as a central piece of government co-ordination between different entities, regarding the aggregation and cataloguing of information about public services. For these purposes to be achieved effectively and in order to improve interoperability, it is of key importance to develop comprehensive feedback tools together with a constant monitoring and evaluation of trends and turnout, which subsequently feed into a redesign of the services.
- Key success factors of the AMA's training programme have included: the involvement of all agents (Board of Directors, Management Units, Entities, Trainees); utilising a multidisciplinary team for delivery; the use of simple technology, that is both intuitive and interactive; a training model tailored to the target audience and particular context; diverse approaches to the design of teaching materials; and continual evaluation of learning and its effectiveness.

GOV.UK

Background

GOV.UK was part of the government's "Digital Strategy". GOV.UK replaced the two main government digital brands "Directgov" and "Business Link" as a single domain for government in 2012, thus enabling access to all departments', agencies' and arm's length bodies' digital information and transactional services to citizens and businesses, using one web address.

GOV.UK went live in 2010 as the UK's single government website creating a central place for citizens to access factual, relevant information about the government. Thousands of individual government websites and all the existing content was rewritten or republished to reflect user needs.

The single domain for government was created to provide value to the taxpayer by reducing the need to learn government structures and providing a consistent user experience with access to joined-up government services.

Level of government

GOV.UK operates at the federal government level in the United Kingdom.

Clients

Its clients are both businesses and citizens, as well as visitors to the United Kingdom.

What does it do?

GOV.UK is the starting point for 152 essential government services, providing information, guidance and services for citizens and businesses, as well as detailed guidance for professionals, and information on government and policy. It currently has 25 Ministerial departments and 405 other agencies and public bodies.

How does it operate?

Individual departments are responsible for managing their own services. GOV.UK and services are developed in line with the published service standard and with assisted digital support if necessary. The site is maintained by the Government Digital Service (GDS), where all government departments and agencies have a presence on GOV.UK.

There are over 500 000 web pages on GOV.UK. The GDS is responsible for writing and maintaining the content of just 1% of these pages, which meets the most common user needs. This includes clear explanations on how to claim benefits, renew car tax, and start a business. GDS writes the content and departments check the factual accuracy. This section of GOV.UK gets between 70 and 80% of all traffic. This content is referred to as "mainstream".

The remaining 99% of web pages on GOV.UK are written and managed directly by teams within departments and agencies, using the publishing tools that GDS builds, maintains, and improves. This covers things like government policy, detailed guidance for specialist users, news, speeches, and announcements and consultations. This content is referred to as "Whitehall". Individual departments and agencies are responsible for writing and updating Whitehall content that they own.

GOV.UK was built using agile methodologies and built to meet user needs, not government needs. Users no longer need to know which government department they need to deal with. They're simply dealing with government, and GOV.UK makes that easier.

Type of service offered

As the entry point for 152 essential government services, GOV.UK's remit is extremely broad and includes many policy areas such as taxation, transport, and the welfare sector.

Communication mediums

GOV.UK is an online only service.

Selected features

Role clarity

- An early operating principle was to not make a distinction between "business" and "citizen" needs, as at different times an individual will be one or the other. It was considered that individuals should not have to understand how government structures itself in order to accomplish their goals. Rather, the important issue was structuring content so each audience understood through context what was useful to them.

Human capital

- GDS provides content training for around 115 people per month and facilitates cross-government networks for the 3000+ content designers, including collaboration on content, training, events, recruitment, secondments and shadowing. This has also reduced the learning curve when digital staff move departments.

  Content designers adhere to a strict house style requiring content to be checked by another designer prior to publishing. This has led to a more consistent style over time. Publishing on the single domain allows departments and agencies to collaborate on content, reduce duplication and provide simpler and clearer content for users.

Public consultation

- All businesses and citizens are simply collectively considered "users", user research participants are drawn from everywhere. The various cross-government networks (such as content design, service design, and user research) regularly share their experience through meetups and blogs.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Feedback buttons for users can be found on every page of GOV.UK. For example, the feedback button data allowed determining whether users found the new Step-by-step approach valuable. To date, 5 859 users have given a feedback on "Apply for a standard visitor visa: step by step", with 77% saying they found it useful.
- GOV.UK is constantly being updated and improved in response to user feedback and changing circumstances. This is a continuous process. The design process is iterative where prototypes are tested with users in a user research lab.

  The development of GOV.UK is done in consultation with other government departments and agencies, however it is iterated to meet user needs and not government needs.

Other matters

- "Step by step" navigation is a new feature on GOV.UK that allows any service to be represented as a series of simple steps. At the moment, the GOV.UK team is scaling up this approach to some of the most complex areas of government including visas, childcare, and exporting goods.

  The learnings are being shared with other governments and a range of organisations that might benefit from this approach. There have been talks with other public and third sector organisations including the UK's Citizen's Advice Bureau and the New Zealand government about how a similar approach might work. The step by step navigation project has been designed to be replicated across government. There are already 18 examples live with more in progress and planned for the future.

Key learnings

- GOV.UK would not have been possible without the creation of the Government Digital Service (GDS), an agency working at the heart of UK government in the UK Cabinet Office. GDS is working with departments and agencies to curate content (both Whitehall and Mainstream) and transactions that pertain to a given task for users so that complex processes are presented in clear, manageable steps. Examples are based on life events and include: learn to drive a car; apply for a standard visitor visa; and get your business ready to employ staff.
- The establishment of a one-stop shop is a highly iterative process. From the conception to testing and piloting, onto going live, collecting and incorporating feedback, as well as technological advancements means that the development and improvement of one-stop shops never really ends.
- Having a team that are willing to experiment, make mistakes, and learn from them is critical to improving service delivery over time. Likewise, management need to be supportive of – and ensure strong political buy-in – for such an approach.
- Sharing experiences with others has presented opportunities to utilise existing solutions in more innovative ways, saving both time and resources. Creating a culture where staff can openly discuss both failures and successes has helped to increase awareness of shared challenges as well as the search for solutions.

Primary Authority (UK)

Background

The establishment of Primary Authority occurred when at a time the UK Government was focussed on administrative simplification, along with several other contemporaneous regulatory reform programmes. However, the largest driver for the establishment of the Primary Authority was in response to feedback from both businesses and local authorities that legislation was interpreted and applied inconsistently across the UK.

The *Regulatory Enforcement and Sanctions Act 2008 (UK)* legally established the scheme, making available a single, reliable source of tailored advice for businesses trading across multiple local authority areas. Primary Authority commenced in 2009 and the numbers of businesses taking advantage of the scheme quickly grew.

In 2013, the scheme was extended through the *Small Business, Enterprise and Employment Act 2012* (UK) to groups of businesses, who collectively share an approach with regards to compliance, such as trade associations and franchises. This gave many more businesses access to reliable, consistent advice through their trade associations or franchises. The number of businesses benefitting from Primary Authority advice increased dramatically, from just over 1 500 to around 25 000 businesses.

Feedback from business, local authorities acting as primary authorities and local authority inspectors highlighted that a number of administrative improvements could be made to the scheme, and a further extension would be beneficial. Following intense stakeholder engagement, the scheme was yet again extended through the *Enterprise Act 2015 (UK)*. This gave every business trading in the UK access to tailored and legally assured advice, and brought national regulators into the scheme to provide additional support to local authorities delivering Primary Authority.

The current version of Primary Authority came into force on 1st October 2017, which saw numbers of businesses with the legal surety of the advice they were following increase from 25 000 to around 85 000.

Over the past decade, Primary Authority has also expanded its scope. It originally covered predominantly trading standards and environmental health matters, but was extended to include age restricted sales of alcohol in 2011, and to cover specific elements of fire safety in 2013. In terms of scope, the primary authority partnerships originally mainly focussed on enforcement actions, but was expanded in 2011 to better include inspections by the relevant regulatory authorities. The partnerships were expanded in 2011 to also include franchise-based businesses.

Level of government

Primary Authority involves both national and local governments. Advice is provided by local and fire authorities. There are currently over 208 authorities acting as primary authorities as at September 2019.

National regulators, including the Food Standards Agency, the Office for Product Safety and Standards, the Health and Safety Executive, and the Gambling Commission are currently listed as “supporting regulators”, meaning that they are able to provide advice to businesses through their primary authorities.

Clients

Its clients are businesses, in particular small and medium enterprises.

What does it do?

Primary Authority provides assured regulatory advice to businesses. The advice is relevant to businesses, and anyone trading in the United Kingdom. Primary Authority advice is available in the following areas: environmental health, trading standards, and fire safety specifically relating to licensing, petrol storage certification, and explosives licensing.

How does it operate?

The Office for Product Safety and Standards, part of the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, are the administrators of the scheme.

Businesses and local authorities are required to apply for their partnerships using an IT system (the Primary Authority Register) provided and managed by the Office for Product Safety and Standards. Assistance is also available via the Primary Authority helpline for those who cannot use the digital service.

After the partnership is established, the local authority and business manage the relationship themselves. They are encouraged to agree on methods of communication prior to setting up the partnership. All advice that is provided to businesses by a primary authority must be published online, via the Primary Authority Register.

The primary authority partnership – which is usually between a business and a local authority – is responsible for giving advice and guidance to the partner business in relation to the relevant function(s) (eg environmental health etc) and is also responsible for giving advice and guidance to other local authorities about how they should exercise the relevant function(s) in relation to that business or organisation.

Businesses pay local authorities, fire services, and national regulators, on a cost-recovery basis, for the provision of Primary Authority services. This is designed to protect front-line services and to provide advice to businesses at a reasonable cost.

Guidance has been created by the Office for Product Safety and Standards, to explain how Primary Authority works, and how a business, local authority, fire service and national regulator should operate within the scheme.

Guidance is also provided for central government policy officials to explain how they should interact with the scheme and how their policy areas can be brought into scope of the scheme.

Type of service offered

Primary Authority services currently covers the areas of environmental health, trading standards, and fire safety specifically in the areas of licensing, petrol storage certification, and explosives licensing. While these areas may seem rather specialised, they are the responsibility of a number of different ministries across the UK.

Communication mediums

The services of the Primary Authority are primarily delivered via an online digital service. Additionally, the Office for Product Safety and Standards provides a helpline. These services relate to the creation of primary authorities which are then in turn responsible for providing the relevant information.

Local authorities also offer their own digital, telephony and physical shopfronts for the Primary Authority services that they deliver to their business clients. The Primary Authorities are then responsible for providing legally assured information about what various UK businesses need to do in the above areas of competence to be in compliance with the law. That said, the Primary Authorities are only responsible for the provision of advice, they do not actually provide assistance to businesses to complete their regulatory requirements.

Selected features

Political commitment

- The continual turnover of Ministers presents a challenge for the Primary Authority. As a very small entity in the British civil service, it is a continual challenge to educate decision-makers about the specific roles of the Primary Authority.
- Primary Authority has become an attractive political avenue for decision-makers to find out about regulatory burdens and impacts "on the ground". It is attractive as the main clients of the Primary Authority are SMEs which are typically difficult for decision-makers to reach.
- During the initial take-up phase, significant pressure was applied to have a target number of businesses in place by 2020. However, the target was not substantiated by an evidence base, and in any event, it does not appear that the target was reasonably robust, notwithstanding the increased scope of the Primary Authority in recent years.

Leadership

- The cost-recovery funding model has presented a challenge for some local authorities. This is particularly the case in Wales where it is not commonplace for the local authorities to charge users directly for their services. As a result, the Office for Product Safety and Standards has conducted extensive outreach programmes to assist local authorities understand how they can best structure such regimes, and also to explain to affected businesses what the benefits of the scheme are.

Public consultation

- At every stage of development, Primary Authority's scope has been driven by strong stakeholder engagement. This has been facilitated formally and informally, through public consultation means via impact assessments conducted on potential changes to the scheme; to the establishment of various working groups both overall and in specific areas such as supermarkets.
- The current size of the Primary Authority means that there are limits to what it can reasonably be expected to achieve in terms of scope of services offered. One concern is that if the scheme were to be increased at relatively short notice, the Primary Authority is not currently well-placed to process a potential deluge of applications. It has therefore been important to clearly communicate to decision-makers what the resource implications of any potential expansion would be. Historically, this has been done through a transparent impact assessment process where both internal and external stakeholders have had the opportunity to comment on the need for change, and any associated resource implications.

Monitoring and evaluation

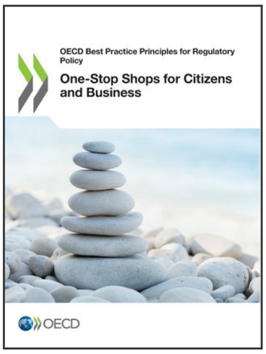
- The use of a Primary Authority by various businesses is now used as a factor in calculating the relative risk profile of businesses for compliance and inspections by relevant UK regulators. Those businesses that have formed a partnership under a Primary Authority are subject to less frequent inspections, relative to other businesses.

  One of the bases for this risk-based approach has been as a result of feedback from regulators. It was found that around two-thirds of regulators involved in the Primary Authority considered that general levels of compliance had improved. Further, where breaches were identified, three-quarters of regulators stated that outcomes were improved in that businesses in breach were easier to deal with in terms of improving their compliance.

- One difficulty experienced by the Primary Authority has been trying to establish what the scheme is worth to British taxpayers. To that end, it contracted a report in 2015 to assess the value of Primary Authority. It has now created an intelligence unit within the Office for Product Safety and Standards which is currently undertaking work to assess the value of the Primary Authority.

Key learnings

- Clear communications with clients has been vitally important. The role of the Primary Authority has at times been misunderstood by business as providing services in a broader range of areas than it actually covers. This has required staff at the Primary Authority to undertake active engagement and dialogue with the business community to ensure that its role is properly understood.
- Establishing a community of practice has been an essential part of securing continued buy-in from local governments and from business clients. It has also provided the opportunity to discuss challenges and share solutions in a collaborative manner.



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