



## Digital Government Strategies: Good Practices

### United Kingdom: Local Declaration

The OECD Council adopted on 15 July 2014 the Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies. The Recommendation provides a set of 12 principles structured around 3 pillars. The OECD Secretariat developed a Digital Government Policy Toolkit to support OECD member countries and non-member adhering countries with the implementation of the Recommendation. This practice was submitted by the government of United Kingdom to be considered as a good practice in the implementation of one or more of the principles contained in the Recommendation.

#### Description of the practice:

**Organisation:** Government Digital Service

**Name of the practice:** Local Digital Declaration

#### **Principles implemented:**

Principle 1 Ensure greater transparency, openness and inclusiveness of government processes and operations.

Principle 3 Create a data-driven culture in the public sector.

Principle 5 Secure leadership and political commitment to the strategy.

Principle 6 Ensure coherent use of digital technologies across policy areas and levels of government.

Principle 7 Establish effective organisational and governance frameworks to co-ordinate the implementation of the digital strategy within and across levels of government.

Principle 9 Develop clear business cases to sustain the funding and focused implementation of digital technologies projects.

Principle 10. Reinforce institutional capacities to manage and monitor projects' implementation.

#### **Description:**

The **Local Digital Declaration** is a joint endeavour between the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), the Government Digital Service (GDS) and a collection of local authorities and sector bodies from across the UK.

The declaration has 5 key principles:

1. Design services around the needs of people.
2. 'Fix the plumbing' of technology infrastructure, systems and data.
3. Use and share information safely.



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4. Demonstrate digital leadership.
5. Embed an open culture that promotes digital ways of working.

The declaration is a framework that recognises the challenges local authorities face when trying to implement and embed the necessary cultural and process changes to transform digitally.

### Results

- More than 45 co-publishers, including local authorities, ministerial bodies and private sector organisations
- A route for local authorities to access peer support
- 1000 public sector staff from local authorities to access GDS Academy Digital Training via the MHCLG Innovation Fund
- Exposure of best practice in a sector that has previously suffered from isolation

### Development

#### **Design:**

The declaration was conceived within GDS and a partnership was formed with MHCLG. Ownership of the programme was then successfully transferred to MHCLG.

For the programme to be impactful it was important that the strongest voice in the authorship of the declaration was local authorities. This was to avoid the impression of central government dictating to local government.

Over a short period of time, the team co-ordinating the declaration conducted a series of workshops around the UK, direct face-to-face engagement and targeted influential bodies connected to local authorities. All parties were given the opportunity to feed in, and change control over the drafting of the declaration was managed with painstaking detail. The brief was clear - local authorities should feel total ownership of the declaration.

The result was that more than 40 co-publishers stepped forward to put their brand and name against the declaration, creating a positive route towards better digital local government services.

#### **Testing:**

The primary stakeholder in the project was the Chief Executive level of the local authorities. The language within the declaration went through many rounds of changes to incorporate their needs and their understanding of what digital is.

The team working on the project had to prevent the risk of the declaration becoming political in any way as this would alienate a number of local authorities from signing it. With this objective, the text was also tested with a select number of the elected councillors of local authorities to ensure it could not be interpreted as being political in any way.



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### Implementation:

#### Tool:

To promote and maintain interest in the declaration MHCLG published [www.localdigital.gov.uk](http://www.localdigital.gov.uk), which provides:

- an explanation of the declaration
- instructions for how to sign up to the declaration
- information on how to bid for MHCLG funding for eligible of local authorities

The website will continue to grow with examples of best practice and successful business cases, and opportunities for local authorities to share information around projects to be more open and transparent

#### Resources:

GDS supplied a senior level member of staff to support MHCLG to develop and engage across central government as the declaration was developed.

MHCLG developed and grew the Digital Innovation Team, which originated in the engagement space, as per the needs of the declaration as it developed. This team has now incorporated DDaT functionality to assist the digital projects it will undertake. A digital innovation fund of £7.5 million has been secured by MHCLG to be awarded to projects put forward by local authorities that will be most transformative across the local sector.

### Diffusion and scaling:

As part of the strategy to increase awareness of the declaration, it was officially launched by an MHCLG minister. In addition, co-publishers used their own channels to promote the work via blogs, social media channels and statements. This created a wave of interest and was supported by a series of roadshows across the UK to promote the opportunities.

Interest in the declaration is being sustained by further announcements around funding opportunities from MHCLG and creation of a communication channel via the website [www.localdigital.gov.uk](http://www.localdigital.gov.uk).

The private sector has been involved but are aware they are not the primary stakeholder for the declaration.

#### Expansion

The declaration was designed to be a supportive collaborative bridge between multi-layers of government, both central, local and additional public sector organisations and their influencers. It has created a template that if applied to other sectors can support in galvanizing organisations around a shared approach to digital despite diverse geography, politics or level of government.

### Partnerships:

Private, Academic, and Public sector organisations.



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Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). A full list of partners can be found here: <https://localdigital.gov.uk/declaration/>

### Lessons learned

The declaration was originally written for sign off at a Chief Executive level in consideration of local authorities. However, the understanding of opportunities and benefits are owned by the digital staff working on the front line of service development for UK citizens.

Retrospectively, we would recommend using the development of a local digital declaration as an opportunity to address the divide between those digital staff on the front line and their leadership, bridging the communications and understanding gaps between these levels.

### Conditions required:

The declaration benefited hugely from the groundswell and enthusiasm for joint working around digital projects that impact most local authorities. There is an understanding that isolated procurement and development is putting such projects at risk. This has motivated signatories to commit to a unified set of standards and open approach to working, which are necessary conditions for the successful implementation of this project.

### Additional information: