



Digital Government Strategies: Good Practices

United Kingdom: GOV.UK step-by-step navigation

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:	GOV.UK step-by-step navigation
Principles implemented:	<u>Principle 10</u> . Reinforce institutional capacities to manage and monitor projects' implementation.

Description:

Every week millions of people use the UK Government's GOV.UK website to do complex and sometimes life-changing tasks, such as learning to drive, getting a visa or starting a business. In the past, finding the guidance, forms and online services you needed could be difficult and time consuming. **GOV.UK step-by-step navigation** is a new feature on GOV.UK that allows any task to be represented as a series of simple steps.

Results

There are now 24 step by step journeys live on GOV.UK, including some of most important and difficult tasks a user might ever need to do. These include:

- Employ someone: step by step
- Apply for a Standard visitor visa: step by step
- What to do when someone dies: step by step

These have made a measurable improvement to user experience of these complex journeys.

Development



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Design:

The GOV.UK team ran extensive user research and analysis of user journeys for a variety of tasks. We saw consistently that many users struggled to find what they needed and to complete complex tasks. The difficulty was that to complete these tasks users often had to find and read multiple pieces of content and then fill out a series of forms or online transactions.

These content items, forms and transactions might be owned by separate and siloed parts of government. Users were often left to figure out for themselves the right time and right order to complete them. Because these content items and transactions were all hosted on GOV.UK, we were able to bring together all of the separate pages and present them as simple, clear services. These services were broken down into easy manageable steps, which we called step-by-step navigation.

You can see this feature in action at: www.gov.uk/learn-to-drive-a-car The process might sound simple but it required unprecedented collaboration between multiple government departments. Facilitated by the GOV.UK team, these departments worked together using service design methods to map end-to-end user journeys such as ' [Become a driving instructor](#) 'to ' [Set up a charity](#) '.

It also required GOV.UK's web developers to create a new interaction design pattern to present this journey in a simple, clear and accessible way. Behind what users see on the front end, we also applied a data structure to the step-by-step pages, which means machines can now read it like a recipe. This structure will be a source for increasingly high-quality answers in search engines and voice assistants over time. This is what happens today if you ask Google Assistant "How do I learn to drive a car?". There's a video demo at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=069EiXX7-XI>

Testing:

The GOV.UK team iterated the designs for Step by step navigation over eight rounds of usability testing, each time making it a little easier to use and more accessible.

Around this time the team also launched a new feature on GOV.UK that allowed users to provide feedback on every page on the site.

We knew this pattern had potential when we started seeing that the new step by step pages consistently scored higher than existing content. By measuring usage and usefulness we were able to demonstrate the value of this new approach.

Implementation:

Tool: GOV.UK is maintained and iterated by a number of multidisciplinary teams of around 8-12 people. We work using the Agile project management methodology, with a clear focus on meeting the needs of users.

Step-by-step navigation was developed by one of these teams, using user-centred design and service design methods.



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Resources:

A team of around 10 people has been worked on developing, testing, measuring, and scaling up step-by-step navigation for around a year. The team composition has changed based on the phase of the work but has included:

- A product manager
- A delivery manager
- A service designer
- Frontend web developers
- Backend web developers
- Content designers
- A user researcher
- A performance analyst

Diffusion and scaling:

The process of developing step-by-step navigation involves us facilitating collaborative workshops with multiple government departments, which helps upskill the participants in these methods. We've blogged about the methods we use [on the GDS blog](#) and shared on social media. We've also taken part in talks and conferences.

Within our organisations all our work is documented on an internal wiki. We've given lots of presentations at our work at conferences and events including a live-streamed presentation and Q&A for governments internationally.

Step-by-step navigation isn't just a one-off improvement to a single service that government provides. What we have created is a model of collaborative workshops and re-usable design components, which means this process can be replicated for any government service.

The GOV.UK team is now collaborating with more than 12 different government departments to roll out this approach to every area of government. We have also been talking to 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 be applied to their work.

No two governments services are the same, so we've built flexibility into our design pattern that accommodates the wide variety of shapes that different government services take. Early on in our prototyping we picked deliberately diverse and complex services to test with from 'Becoming a driving instructor' to 'Visit the UK on a standard visitor visa'. Based on these user research with these services we adapted our design to better highlight eligibility criteria and allow users to choose from

Iternative ways to complete a task. We think this approach could benefit any organisation presenting their users with complex multi-stage tasks to complete. All of our code is open source and hosted on github at: https://github.com/alphagov/govuk_publishing_components

Partnerships:



Public sector organisations and civil society.



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Departments we've collaborated with include:

- UK Visas and Immigration
- Department for Work and Pensions
- HM Revenue and Customs
- Home Office
- Driver and Vehicle Standards Agency

Lessons learned

What worked well: The team was given the support to experiment and iterate in a fundamental manner with the way government presents information and services online. This required backing from the GOV.UK programme and wider Government Digital Service.

We were also reliant on government departments who were prepared to collaborate with us and dedicate time to help us with this work.

Formal Evaluation

A performance analyst and a user researcher was embedded within the team.

The design evolved over 8 rounds of user research and iteration including a review at the Digital Accessibility Centre in Neath.

By the end of this process we could consistently demonstrate that regardless of the journey:

- organising complex tasks into clear steps helps users
- seeing the whole process makes it seem manageable
- our design is easily understood
- our design is accessible

Around halfway through the lab research we began testing the pattern on GOV.UK. This was just in time for us to use the data from our new 'Is this useful?' survey banners, which had been added to the bottom of every page on the site. We could see from our existing analytics that the first examples of step-by-step navigation were being used. But thanks to our survey data, we could see that users were finding them useful.

Conditions required:

The work wouldn't have been possible without the creation of the Government Digital Service, an expert in-house digital team working at the heart of UK Government. This allows multi-disciplinary teams like ours to work in an agile, experimental and iterative way to solve problems and put users first. We think this is the best way to ensure government innovation is focused on the needs of users.

Additional information:



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Working in the open is key part of what we do. You can [take a look at our code on Github](#) and find out more about what we're working on the [Government Digital Service blog](#) , [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) .