

Information & eGovernment
Authority



هَيْئَةُ الْمَعْلُومَاتِ وَالْحُكُومَةِ الْإِلِكْتَرُونِيَّةِ

Digital Government Policies

(Digital First Policy; Digital Government as a Right; Once only Data Policy)

Version 1.1

5th July 2021

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Abbreviations List

ICT	Information & Communication Technology
ICTGC	Information & Communication Technology Governance Council
iGA	Information & eGovernment Authority
NEA	National Enterprise Architecture
SCICT	Supreme Committee for Information & Communication Technology

Introduction

The expectations from the different constituents on the quality of public services has increased manifold over the years as more and more technology-based innovations permeate into their daily life. This has influenced the Government to embed technology in every services it plans, develops, implement, and deliver to ensure that these services stay relevant and efficient in meeting the constituents needs.

Government of Bahrain was prompt in recognizing the benefits of technology to enhance access and delivery of information as well as services to the public. The comprehensive kingdom wide eGovernment initiatives, implemented over the past decades, have steered, and enabled the government entities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in their operations and service delivery.

To maintain the momentum and attain new heights in the field of Digital Government and Digital Economy, Government of Bahrain has set out ambitious plans for advancing the utilization of digital technologies to enable a more open, responsive, and transparent government. The Government aspires to augment its decision making and data sharing capabilities as well as strengthen its digital services and functions by designing them around the needs and behaviours of constituents and delivering them in real time on the delivery channel they choose to use.

Towards this direction, Government is actively pursuing the promotion and enforcement of 'digital government' for the design of the new public services and concentrate on digitizing the entire chain of activities.

This document highlights the commitment of Government of Bahrain to focus on Digital Government, Digital Economy, Digital channels & behaviours. The Government will enable an ecosystem necessary to empower entities to make the fullest possible use of technologies to deliver digital services that users want to engage with while ensuring that the services become more efficient and cost effective.

The Digital Government Policy document consists of three supporting policies which are segregated as:

- Section A – Digital First Policy
- Section B – Digital Government as A Right
- Section C - Once Only Data Policy

Digital Government Policy

Scope of Digital Government policy

The Digital Government Policy will apply to all government entities who deliver public services to its constituents (*namely Citizens, Residents, Businesses, Tourists as well as Non-Government Organizations*)

Purpose of Digital Government Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure greater transparency, openness, and inclusiveness in government operations; create a data driven culture within government entities; encourage whole of government approach and participation in public service delivery design and policy making.

Policy Statement

The Government of Bahrain will promote Digital Government and the use of digital technologies across all levels to:

- Improve accountability, social inclusiveness, and partnerships.
- Encourage a data driven culture in public sector.
- Strengthen alignment with Government Action Plan, National Economic Vision and United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Address digital security and privacy concerns as well as uphold the highest standards of security and privacy for the individual, commercial and national data in accordance with the Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014 and Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018, and other relevant laws listed in appendix A>
- Reinforce institutional capacities to plan, implement, manage, and monitor strategic government initiatives.
- Develop and Enact appropriate rules, regulations, policies, procedures, and guidelines to adopt the opportunities created by digital technologies in public sector.

The Digital Government policy of Government is supported by three important policies which are as follows:

1. [Section A - Digital First Policy](#)
2. [Section B - Digital Government as a Right](#)
3. [Section C - Once Only Data Policy](#)

Section A – Digital First Policy

Scope of this policy

The Digital First Policy will apply to all new public services delivered by government entities to its constituents (*namely Citizens, Residents, Businesses, Tourists as well as Non-Government Organizations*) or to any integrated systems outside the government entities' internal network.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to facilitate the provisioning of all government services in a digital form where digital service offerings is preferred to the conventional non-digital government services offered by Government of Bahrain; increase innovation and improve interoperability between digital public services; reduce complexity and duplication in accessing and using public services. The policy mandates government entities to design public services digitally first then publish it on other channels for those who cannot use digital services.

Policy Requirements / Rules

As such, the following principles must always be observed considering the government entities readiness and the coverage of the applicable legal framework:

1. enhancing the Kingdom of Bahrain government's strategic directions of providing digital services as a priority and develop the required regulations to enable digital by default, digital by design and mobile-first concept.
2. improving user experience in getting digital government services through a deep understanding of the users' needs in order to create a new digital service that are simple, intuitive, and easy to use
3. Government entities must work toward raising trust in digital government services by providing adequate security controls to protect users data and secure their access to governments systems.
4. .Government entities must strive to develop digital solutions and services that are interoperable with other solutions in the public and private sectors by following a common frame of reference.
5. Government entities must identify and resolve issues pertaining to the current digital services that are prohibiting the increase in the uptake in the digital services.

6. Government entities must design the digital services that can be delivered over a range of channels based on the user behaviours, and encourage e-participation and constituents engagement in the design of digital services.
7. Government entities, while designing the digital services, should ensure that such services are inclusive and accessible for everyone. Special care should be taken to ensure that no constituents are excluded from being able to use any digital service due to lack of digital skills or internet access.
8. Government entities must continue to develop and update digitalization friendly regulations to facilitate provision of digital services. The entities must also ensure the compliance with appropriate regulations and requirements necessary for the users to have confidence and trust in using digital services in a satisfactory and secure manner.
9. Government entities must facilitate sharing and reuse of data to ensure better data quality and generate greater efficiency and transparency in Government operations.

Guidelines & Procedures

These guidelines and procedures must be followed by the Government entities to ensure the adoption of digital first approach in designing and developing public services that provides a high-quality experience for constituents while dealing with the Government entities.

- (a) Identify and prioritize the digitization of main new citizen/resident and business transactional services.
- (b) Determine the existing and planned service that should be delivered online and prepare a plan for transforming non-digital service to digital service.
- (c) Adopt Digital First approach to the design and development of new public services and make them securely available through various digital channels.
- (d) Ensure that the new and existing digital public services are easier to access and convenient to use; thereby compelling the constituents to make the digital approach the most preferred approach. This can be achieved through the adoption of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain, big data.
- (e) Deliver all government transactions through digital technology with the least cost for the constituents.
- (f) Extend support to non-digital public service users and build their capabilities to avail digital public services.

- (g) Develop infrastructure, policies and procedures supporting the design and development and usage of digital public services.
- (h) Protect data at the application and user end while designing and implementing digital public services.
- (i) Create awareness within and outside organization about the impact of digital on the public services delivery and how harnessing digital makes it easier and convenient for constituents.
- (j) Every digital public service must make use of the available common platforms and existing investments while ensuring adherence to the best practices and standards.

Section B – Digital Government as a Right

Scope of this policy

The Digital Government as a Right will apply to all government entities that provide public services to their constituents (*namely Citizens, Residents, Businesses, Tourists as well as Non-Government Organizations*).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to create the right environment for public sector that can operate in this Digital age; develop digital government strategy that sets out the practical steps for the proliferation of digital technologies towards a more open, transparent, innovative and open government; strengthen digital governance framework and build institutional, legal and human resources capabilities to deliver digital services catering to the needs and expectations of the constituents.

Policy Requirements / Rules

As such, the following principles must always be observed considering the government entities readiness and the coverage of the applicable legal framework:

1. Government must institutionalize a favorable ecosystem for Digital Government and Digital Economy
2. Government must update laws and regulations to safeguard constituents' digital rights.
3. Government must continue to invest in the development of key digital enablers and provide incentives for their use across public sector.
4. Government must promote and enforce the adoption of digital standards and guidelines ensuring more coherent, interoperable, and resilient digital infrastructures and solutions.
5. Government must establish an integrated service design and delivery to adopt User design (UX)
6. Government must simplify and enhance data sharing practices and actions across public sector.
7. Government must promote open data policy supporting re use of open Government data for value creation.

Guidelines & Procedures

These guidelines and procedures must be followed by the Government entities to ensure the adoption of Digital Government as a Right:

(k) Policy & Strategy

(a) Ensure the development and implementation of

- (a) Data access policy
- (b) Data exchange framework
- (c) Open Data Policy & Guidelines
- (d) Business Continuity Planning & Disaster Recovery Strategy
- (e) Cyber Security Strategy / Laws / Policies

(l) User Experience

- (a) Ensure that the digital public services are designed and developed based on life events.
- (b) Obtain continuous feedback on the digital services by involving users and constantly strive to improve the user experience in digital services.
- (c) Ensure that digital services are developed to cater to all stakeholders including marginalized and vulnerable groups ensuring digital inclusivity.

(m) Services & Service Enablers

- (a) Focus on simplifying the services and service delivery channels enabling the users to prefer digital services and channels over physical counters.
- (b) Strengthen identity and access management, platforms for content and platforms for managed services.

(n) Internal Capabilities

- (a) Build digital capabilities.
- (b) Strengthen cyber security, ICT infrastructure & applications.

- (c) Identify and prioritize the digitization of main existing citizen/resident and business transactional services.

(o) **Data Sharing**

- (a) Ensure the availability of datasets, spatial and real time data.
- (b) Strengthen data use and management within and outside entity.
- (c) Promote the use of Open Data.
- (d) Enable cross border data sharing.
- (e) Support advanced decision-making capabilities.

Section C – Once Only Data Policy

Scope of this policy

The Once Only Data Policy will apply to all government entities that provide public services to their constituents (*namely Citizens, Residents, Businesses, Tourists as well as Non-Government Organizations*).

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to increase efficiency and reduce administrative burden among government entities and constituents, enable communication across government entities while protecting personal information.

Policy Requirements / Rules

As such, the following principles must always be observed considering the government entities readiness and the coverage of the applicable legal framework:

1. Identify public services and purposes to which Once Only Data Policy must or may apply.
2. Establish a consistent and reliable legal basis for the purpose of Once Only Data initiatives
3. Develop a mechanism for proactive encouragement and administrative support for Once Only Data initiatives so constituents do not have to provide data to government entities more than once.
4. Adhere to Kingdom's data privacy and data protection regulations such as "Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014, Kingdom of Bahrain and Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018, Kingdom of Bahrain and other relevant Laws listed in appendix A.
5. Strengthen identification and data sharing mechanisms to facilitate Once Only Data initiatives.
6. Focus on user behavior while considering Once Only Data initiatives
7. Develop a roadmap for Once Only Data interventions.

Roles & Responsibilities

This policy is approved by Cabinet Office and implemented by Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA) with the support of Government and public sector entities. Any modifications on this policy will be approved by Supreme Committee for information & Communication Technology (SCICT). In addition, the following roles, and responsibilities for each stakeholder, involved with the policy implementation, have been listed below.

Prime Minister Office

- Set the strategic direction for 'Digital Government' in the Kingdom.
- Oversee the effective and consistent usage of the Digital Government policy.

Supreme Committee for Information & Communication Technology

- Approval authority for major changes in policies or standards relating to 'Digital Government'.
- Review and approve any deviations or exemptions requirements.

Information & eGovernment Authority (iGA)

- Management, administration, and maintenance of the Digital Government policies and standards.
- Monitor the usage of Digital Government Policy.
- Communication, marketing, publication, and awareness creation on Digital public services.
- Auditing and reporting.

Government & public sector Entity:

- Compliance and adoption of Digital Government Policy.
- Develop digital services as per the entity strategy and roadmap.
- Manage the quality of digital services.

Change to this policy.

Government may change this Policy statement from time-to-time. Such changes shall be notified through the NEA portal (www.nea.gov.bh).

Feedback & Suggestions

Feedback and suggestions on the Digital Government Policy are welcome. Any suggestion/feedback will help in enhancing/refining the policy further thus making this document more comprehensive and relevant. Feedback, suggestions, clarifications and queries on this document may be sent to standards@iga.gov.bh.

Sources of information on policies

Following documents/links may be relevant to this policy.

- a) Protection of Information and State Documents", Law No. 16, 2014, Kingdom of Bahrain
- b) Law of Protection of Personal Data, No. 30, 2018, Kingdom of Bahrain
- c) OECD Digital Government Policy Framework (www.oecd.org)

Appendix A: Data Relevant Regulations

- The Commercial Agencies Law (1992);
- Tender Law and Implementing Regulation (2002);
- Telecommunications Law (2002);
- The Patents and Utility Models Law (2004);
- The Geographical Indicators Law (2004);
- The Integrated Circuits Design Law (2006);
- The Industrial Designs Law (2006);
- The Optical Desks Manufacturing Law (2006);
- Decree on Organizing the Education and Training Quality Authority;
- Trade Marks Law (2014);
- The Commercial Register Law (2015);
- The Private Health Institutions Law (2015);
- The Regulation of Practicing the Engineering Professions Law (2014);
- The Health Insurance Law (2015);
- The Personal Data Protection Law (2018);
- The Promotion and Protection of Competition Law (2018); and
- The Regulation of the Real Estate Sector Law (2017).
- Law No. 22 of 2006 on Copyright and Neighboring Rights Law or Law No. 30 of 2018 on the Protection of Personal Data.
- Legislation on intellectual property rights in public sector information: Law No. 22 of 2006 on Copyright and Neighboring Rights and Law No. 7 of 2003 on Trade Secrets (as amended).
- Liabilities of public data use & moral rights, warranties on quality of data: Law No. 16 of 2014 on the Protection of State's Data and Documents.
- Use of public data in the media: Law No. 16 of 2014 on the Protection of the State's Data and Documents.