



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



Approved by NALA

Digital Local Government: **Working for Everyone**

Ireland's Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy 2030



Rialtas Áitiúil Éireann
Local Government Ireland



LGMA
An Ghníomhaireacht
Bainistíochta Rialtais Áitiúil
Local Government
Management Agency



Cumann Lucht Bainistíochta Contae agus Cathrach
County and City Management Association



An Roinn Tithíochta,
Rialtais Áitiúil agus Oidhreacht
Department of Housing,
Local Government and Heritage

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About this document

This document tells you about the **Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone** strategy and what it means for you. The document has six parts.

In the Foreword, we talk about why and how we put our strategy together, and what we aim to achieve with it.

In Part 1, we tell you about the different national and European strategies that our strategy is aligned with. For instance, our strategy is in line with the **European Declaration of Digital Rights and Principles**, which encourages putting people at the centre of digital transformation.

Part 2 gives you an overview of our vision to use technology to provide modern local government services.

In Part 3, we give you a detailed look at our themes. We also tell you about what supports we will put in place to help us achieve our goals.

We have put together thirty-eight statements of intent. These are what we plan to do to achieve our goals. You can read about these in detail in Part 4.

Part 5 tells you about our approach and gives you a breakdown of the timeline involved.

Finally, Part 6 looks to our future, where our staff are making the most of digital advances, where people's needs are at the centre of the design and provision of our services, and where everyone has easy access to our services.





Foreword

About Local Authorities

Local authorities play a vital role in Ireland.

Your local authority:

- manages the physical, economic, social and cultural development of your area;
- promotes wellbeing and quality of life; and
- provides a wide range of services to the public and to businesses.

What is Ireland's Local Government Digital and ICT Strategy 2030?

We are all aware of the important role that technology plays in the world today. Technology is advancing more rapidly than at any other time in our shared history. This strategy is about making the most of what technological progress offers to support local authorities and the work that we do.

Local authorities have succeeded in using technology to improve the way we provide services and to improve the way we work.

Our progress includes:

- digital systems that speed up how we provide our services;
- online services that are easier to access; and
- new and innovative ways to support communities through new technologies,

community hubs and digital skills training.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, technology enabled us to roll out supports and services rapidly, including community supports and grants schemes.

Digital Local Government: Working

for Everyone is the new digital and ICT strategy for local government in Ireland.

This strategy sets out our ambition:

- to build on what we have already achieved; and
- to use technology to support local government in working for everyone.

We carried out extensive research and analysis when planning this strategy. We also consulted with the public and a range of stakeholders, including local authority staff. The strategy focuses on the following four linked themes:

1. Digital services
2. Digital communities
3. Digital workforce
4. Digital systems

The strategy sets out a plan for how the local government sector will develop these four themes significantly by 2030.

You can read more about these areas in the section on **Our themes and supports** on page 10.

Digital local government is about more than just technology – it is about thinking, leading and providing services in a different way. As set out in the **European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles** we want to make sure that we put people at the centre of our approach to providing digital services and enabling digital communities.

Our national policy objectives

This strategy will help local authorities to achieve national policy objectives. These include:

- climate action;
- housing delivery; and
- sustainable development.

Technology can support us in many ways to reach our goals. For climate action and sustainable development, it can:

- help us to reduce our transport needs;
- help us check and control water levels and quality;
- help us monitor air quality and measure energy use; and
- help us design and construct smart buildings – these are buildings that use technology to automatically control things like light, heating and security.

For housing and planning, it will:

- help us reach our delivery targets

through digital changes in our service model; and

- support the digital growth of the planning service.

Overall, local government will use technology and innovation to make sure we are more flexible in how we use technologies. This will help us to be more customer-focused and offer more innovative services.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence provide new opportunities for local authorities which will help us to work and plan better. However, it is important that the introduction of any such technologies is accompanied by appropriate governance and ethical arrangements. For example, we need to make sure that technology is used fairly and that people's privacy is respected.

It is also important that we continue to invest and develop our cyber security, resilience and skills so that we can continue to protect our systems and our customers' personal information.

Our staff

To meet the objectives in this strategy, we will give our workforce the tools and the training that they need. Through the use of technology, we have provided blended working for our staff. This is a combination of working from home and working from our offices. We will continue to use technology to:

- enhance the working environment;
- support a healthy work-life balance; and
- make local government an attractive option for potential employees.

You can read more about how we will support our workforce in the section on **digital workforce** on page 14.

Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies (RSES)

Three **Regional Spatial and Economic Strategies** (RSES) are in place to guide the development of the country in the future. Each of the RSESs has objectives relating to smart cities and regions. These objectives include:

- an improved digital infrastructure (technologies such as connectivity and data storage);
- technologies that will improve quality of life;
- co-working hubs; and
- support for technological innovation.

The digital community objectives within our Digital and ICT strategy will provide a common framework for local authorities. This will allow us to support, enable and further develop the smart community objectives set out in the RSESs.

Our ambition

As we continue to modernise the way that we work and adapt to the ever-changing world, technology has a huge part to play to help us achieve our commitments to the public and to businesses. We will support

and empower people in our communities to benefit from the opportunities that technology can unlock. This will benefit everyone: young and old, individuals and businesses, urban and rural communities. We will continue to cooperate and build on what we have in common while celebrating where we are different.

We are fully committed to making sure that no one is left behind as services continue to be moved online. We know that there are people and communities who have challenges using technology or who would prefer to engage in different ways. Although we will improve our services using technology, we will continue to provide the option to avail of our services in person.

Digital technology offers enormous potential, and we want to take full advantage of it. This strategy is a roadmap to make sure that over the remainder of this decade, and for everyone's benefit we:

- build on our success and make the most of the opportunities that technology brings; and
- continue to modernise and improve our services and how we work.





Part 1: Context

Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone has been developed in the wider context of the following European and national digital strategies:

Europe's Digital Decade

Europe's Digital Decade is the European Union's digital transformation programme up to 2030. It has four key pillars:

- skills;
- digitalisation of public services;
- digital transformation of businesses; and
- secure and sustainable digital infrastructures.

The European Union has also adopted the **European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles**. This declaration:

- says that people and their rights should be central to the digital transformation, and
- encourages people to take part in the digital public space.

This declaration is particularly relevant to our strategy, **Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone**.

Harnessing Digital

Harnessing Digital – The Digital Ireland Framework is Ireland's Digital Strategy. This framework places a strong emphasis on:

- more flexible and remote working opportunities;
- new job opportunities;
- new markets and customers for businesses;
- more efficient and easy-to-access public services for all; and
- empowerment and choice in how we learn or take part in social activities.

Connecting Government 2030

Connecting Government 2030 is the Digital and ICT Strategy for Ireland's Public Service. It sets out a way to provide digital government for all, making sure that people and businesses are at the centre of our approach.

This will help to:

- achieve a significant change in how people, businesses, and policymakers cooperate; and
- make sure all levels of government operate in the same way across public services.

Better Public Services – the Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy also sets out an ambition for major digital innovation in providing public services.

Digital Strategy Framework

The Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage has set out its framework for digital strategies for the areas under its remit. This framework covers the areas they are responsible for and includes four pillars:

- Citizen digital experience;
- Innovate to create;
- Data; and
- Sustainable cities, regions and communities.

These framework pillars are key areas for **Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone**.

Designing Our Public Services

Designing Our Public Services: Design principles for Government in Ireland aims to put people at the forefront of public services. The principles will enable the public service to use design tools and techniques to design an integrated service that focuses on the needs of people.

Digital for Good: Ireland's Digital Inclusion Roadmap aims for everyone to have the chance to use digital public services in a meaningful way.

Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone is in line with and supports all the above strategies. The main points outlined above from each of these strategies are included in our strategy.





Part 2: Our vision

Our vision for the delivery of modern local government services, powered by digital technology, is to:



make sure members of the public and businesses have easy access to relevant government services online;



support the development of more sustainable digital communities;



make use of the information we manage to improve the way we make decisions;



make sure our online services are designed for and with members of the public and communities;



use technology to help us improve the way we work;



work in partnership to share ideas and solutions;



make sure that members of the public who cannot or do not want to use technology do not get left behind; and



encourage a culture that enables staff to continually improve how they provide services through technology and innovation.



Part 3: Our themes and supports

Our strategy is structured around four linked themes:



We have seven key supports that underpin the above themes:



Build to Share

We will make the most of opportunities to share services, systems, platforms and best practice across our organisations.



Cyber Security

We will make sure that we have the right capacity, capabilities and practices to protect us from cyber-attacks and to protect members of the public's data.



Capability and Culture

We will identify the human and financial resources and the approach to change needed to deliver on this strategy.



Digital Skills

We will support members of the public, businesses and staff to develop the skills needed to take part in a digital world.



Data Management

We will continue to develop our technologies, processes, policies and guidelines to help us to use data and analysis to inform the work that we do.



Infrastructure

We will maintain the appropriate supported digital technologies (infrastructure) to help us provide local government digital and information technology services.



Governance

We will continue to develop and use appropriate structures and decision-making processes to manage local government digital and information technology services while enabling innovation to thrive.

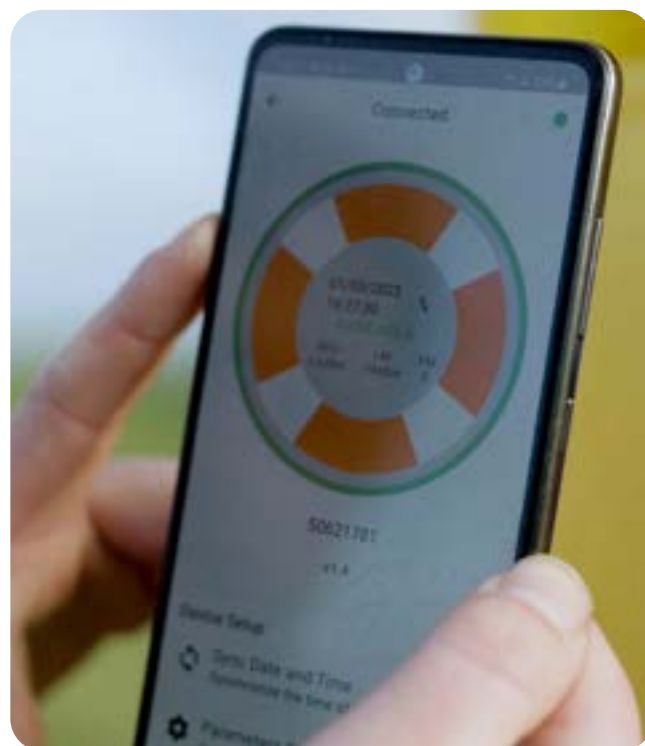


Part 4: Our statements of intent

We want our vision in this strategy to become a reality. To do this, we have come up with thirty-eight statements of intent. These statements will tell you what our aims are and how we plan to achieve them.

Digital services - statements of intent

1. We will use common technologies, applications and design across the sector, while allowing for flexibility where it is needed.
2. We will continue to make sure that our online services are inclusive, literacy-friendly and accessible to all.
3. We will provide a consistent and comprehensive user experience by enhancing and expanding our online services.
4. We will use a people-centred approach to designing our online services in partnership with members of the public, communities and businesses.
5. We will seek opportunities to improve the way we work by using technology when we change or develop our services.
6. We will make it easy for members of the public and businesses to use our services online.
7. We will aim to minimise data duplication for members of the public and businesses by collecting data only once where possible.
8. We will make sure our data is clear and accessible and will meet our obligations under the European Union's Open Data Directive by continuing to publish our data.
9. We will create a more joined-up, efficient and effective local government by improving the collection and smart use of data.





Digital communities - statements of intent

10. We will continue to actively cooperate with government departments and partner organisations on current and future projects.
11. We will design digital and online services around the needs of members of the public, communities and businesses.
12. We will make sure that no member of the public is left behind when it comes to accessing our digital services and that services are also available in person.
13. We will continually improve how we provide services by sharing what we learn across the sector.
14. We will work with our communities to improve quality of life by offering digital access, connectivity and support.
15. We will support the achievement of climate action targets through the use of technology.

Case study - Digital services

Online planning system

The local government online planning system is a new national website. On this website, you can:

- apply for planning permission online; and
- make an online submission about planning applications that have been lodged.

The online planning system offers improved efficiency in the statutory planning process and helps towards the government's strategy to move more public services online.

Some of the benefits of the new system are:

- information is easier to access;
- it is quicker to upload electronic files than to wait for applications by post;
- it costs less for the applicant; and
- it is more environmentally sustainable.

At the time of writing twenty-three of the thirty-one local authorities are using the new system. We are currently working to bring the remaining eight local authorities online.



Case study - Digital communities

All-Ireland Smart Cities Forum

The main aim of the All-Ireland Smart Cities Forum is to enable local authorities to cooperate on Smart Cities in both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Smart Cities are cities that use technology and sensors to collect information and use that information to help improve quality of life. For example, traffic sensors can be used to measure traffic and traffic lights can then be changed to improve traffic flow.

The forum is a group of local authority staff who have a wealth of knowledge and experience of smart cities and the opportunities for future growth and investment.

Currently the forum is comprised of eight partner cities – Belfast, Cork, Derry, Dublin, Galway, Limerick, Newry and Waterford. It is preparing to expand membership to include all local authorities and to broaden its remit.

Digital workforce - statements of intent

16. We will continue to respond to the changing needs of members of the public, business priorities, changing government policy and changing technology.
17. Our senior leaders will continue to promote a people-centred approach to providing services.
18. We will give our staff the training and support they need so they can be

- confident in providing digital services.
19. We will create a culture where all staff embrace technology and innovation by bringing digital skills into our staff development plans.
20. We will encourage local innovation across the entire sector by aligning our governance approaches.
21. We will achieve consistency in the delivery of change and day-to-day services by strengthening standard practices and guidelines.
22. We will maintain openness, accountability, and data protection through appropriate governance structures
23. We will make sure our staff understand their role in cyber security and have the necessary skills to support our cyber security efforts by continuing to invest in educational initiatives.
24. We will continue to review how we comply with security requirements through regular testing of business plans.
25. We will set up common approaches to protect against cyber-attacks by using best practice and compliance standards.
26. We will identify the people and financial resources needed to achieve our digital and ICT ambitions and will aim to put these in place.



Case study - Digital workforce

Local Government ISAC

The thirty-one local authorities, led by Cork City Council, have come together to set up an Information Sharing Analysis Centre (ISAC) for cyber security.

There has always been a high level of cooperation between local authority Heads of Information Systems. The ISAC enhances this through its cyber security information-sharing community.

The risk of a cyber event is one of the highest ranked corporate risks in the local government sector. The European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) recommends setting up ISACs to defend against cyber-attacks. ISACs are typically made up of organisations in the same sector.

This project is supported by a) the IVI (Innovation Value Institute) Maynooth, b) the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre), and c) the LGMA (Local Government Management Agency) to set up the first Irish ISAC. Irish local authorities are working to reach best practice in ISAC.

Our greater awareness of possible cyber threats is already improving decision-making at all levels of the sector and increasing our understanding of how and when cyber-attacks happen.

Digital systems - statements of intent

27. We will improve the way we work by using technology to digitalise all of our processes from beginning to end.
28. We will continue to improve local government services by using new technologies.
29. We will make repetitive tasks more efficient so our staff can focus on solving complex problems and helping the public.
30. We will share solutions across local government by putting in place digital and ICT capabilities that can be reused.
31. We will seek the best commercial agreements by working together as a sector and with other public sector organisations.
32. We will aim for consistency in the design and provision of business processes across local government, whilst recognising our real differences.
33. We will adopt enterprise architecture and standards-based approaches to make sure we provide quality digital and ICT services. (Enterprise architecture is the method used to plan and put in place the information technology that an organisation needs to achieve its goals.)



34. We will cooperate across local government and with the wider public service to adopt best practice and to share and reuse technology.
35. We will continue to improve our services for members of the public, communities and businesses through enhanced use of data and analysis.
36. We will improve our decision-making processes and how we provide our services by using consistent data standards and governance.
37. We will define and maintain the highest level of cyber security to ensure legal compliance and protect local government services, data and infrastructure.
38. We will continue to develop and use shared services, shared approaches and shared technology across the sector to collectively strengthen the resilience of all councils.



Case study - Digital systems

Build to Share

The concept of Build to Share is a key pillar in national and sectoral ICT Strategies. Once digital solutions have been built their potential benefits can be easily shared with other public sector bodies.

The benefits of sharing digital solutions include lower costs and the speedier putting in place of systems. This is particularly the case in local government, where the thirty-one local authorities are broadly responsible for providing the same services – such as housing, libraries and parks.

Sharing over the lifespan of a solution can be complex, as all ICT solutions evolve as technology and needs change. The Build to Share model aims to set up the following:

- an approach to the development of digital systems;
- ongoing governance structures; and
- a way of showcasing solutions that local authorities can use if they wish to.

The goal is to provide a way for local authorities to develop solutions that can be shared and supported, and to encourage the further development and sharing of new solutions. For example, we may be able to build an online service where community groups can apply for funding for facilities.



Part 5: Our approach

We have already made great strides in improving our services by using technology. Our statements of intent give us a framework to build on the work to date. We have created an action plan, which sets how we plan to turn our statements of intent into real change.

We live in an ever-changing world, and local government is also changing. Similarly, technology continues to evolve and present new opportunities. To remain relevant in the years ahead, our strategy needs to be flexible and to adapt in line with any changes that come our way. We will review our action plan annually and will add and amend projects and activities when needed.

We will define specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound actions (SMART actions). We will measure the impact of those actions to make sure that we are succeeding. For example, we will measure the usage of online services. We will also ask for feedback from members of the public, businesses and staff. We will analyse these measures and use the information in our annual review. This will help us to make the changes we need to reach our goals.

Our action plan includes actions to be achieved in three phases:

- Now
- Next
- Later

When?	How long?	What will we do?
Now	1-2 years	Actions which will provide critical foundations for the strategy, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • governance models; • ways to provide services; • making sure benefits come from our actions; • people-centred design approach; • architecture and standards; and • staffing review.
Next	3-4 years	To be reviewed and amended as required during each annual review.
Later	5-6 years	To be reviewed and amended as required during each annual review.

You can read about our plan for the first two years on the following pages.

January 2024

January 2025

January 2026


Digital services

Access strategy
Setting out how members of the public will take part in the design of our services.

Online services
Planning and ongoing design and provision of online services for members of the public.


Digital communities

National Smart Communities Programme
Coordinating, planning and implementing of Smart Communities across all local authorities.

Digital Inclusion
Defining how we will make sure no one is left behind and putting this into action.


Digital workforce

Foundations
Making sure we have the staff structures and resourcing plan we need to provide digital and information technology services.

Staff digital skills and training delivery
Making sure that staff have the right mix of skills and experience to support members of the public and to work in a digital way.


Digital systems

Core systems review
Reviewing our core systems to identify where we can improve and make our systems more efficient.

Core platforms implementation
Putting in place core platforms that will act as building blocks for new applications and online services.

Architecture
Developing and refining our Enterprise Architecture (see number 33 on page 15) to achieve consistency.

Core systems implementation
Putting in place core systems to modernise systems, increase response times and cost effectiveness.

January 2024

January 2025

January 2026



Supports

Foundations

Providing governance models, implementation mechanisms, measuring success and mapping the strategy to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Security

Enhancing our cyber security capability.

Architecture

Developing and refining our Enterprise Architecture to achieve consistency.





Part 6: Our future

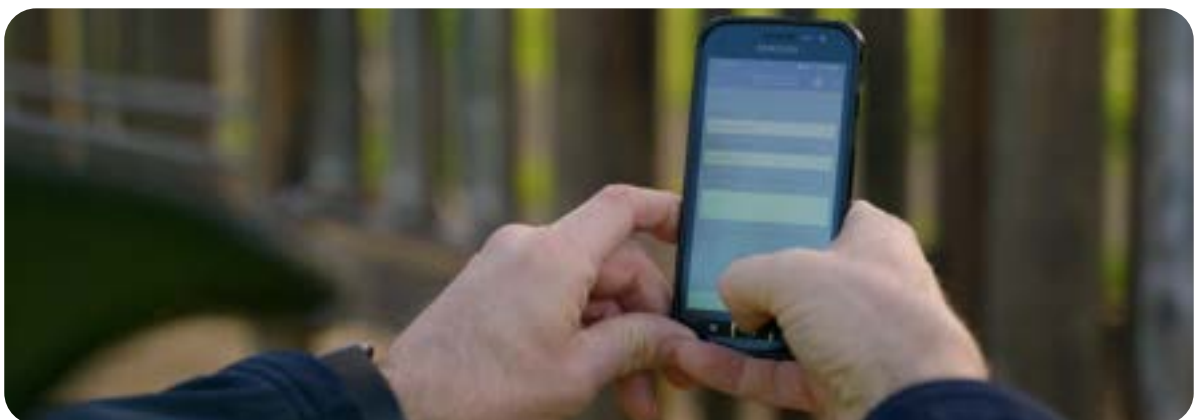
Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone sets out our ambition to use digital and ICT to improve the way we work and provide services in local government. We want everyone who works in local government to be part of this journey, to promote positive change, to continually learn and to innovate.

We have stated our vision for digital and ICT in local government up to 2030 and we have also committed to regularly reviewing our action plans to make sure that they are up to date and relevant. In line with the **European Declaration on Digital Rights and Principles**, we are putting people and their rights at the centre of our digital transformation. We have used a people-centred approach to developing this strategy and we will continue to involve members of the public as we deliver and develop this strategy.

By 2030, we aim to have achieved a clear shift in how members of the public interact with us. We will have more online local government services and we aim for uptake and usage to increase. We will make sure that members of the public and communities will still be able to interact with us in ways that suit them, including in person.

By 2030, the way we work in local government will be modernised and transformed by digital and ICT:

- our online services will be designed and provided with the needs of members of the public and communities in mind;
- our staff will have access to the technologies that they need to carry out their work safely and securely; and
- our staff will be supported by professionally trained ICT and digital teams.



Our vision will need all parts of local government to work with us. We will also need the rest of the public service to cooperate with our vision to enable real change in how we work. We acknowledge the support to date of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage and the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform. We look forward to continuing to work with these departments as we put this strategy in place.

These are the benefits we will see by 2030:

- 90% of applicable local government services will be online;
- our communities will have the connectivity, facilities and support that they need to take part in digital society;
- our staff will have the tools and skills to enable modern, digital working; and
- we will have secure, modern, linked systems that will make sure our service provision is efficient and effective.

We are looking forward to the journey ahead as we put in place **Digital Local Government: Working for Everyone** – our digital and ICT strategy for local government in Ireland.





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