Public Administration and Information Technology 16

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Building Digital Government Strategies

Principles and Practices

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Public Administration and Information Technology

Volume 16

Series Editor

Christopher G. Reddick, San Antonio, USA

More information about this series at http://www.springer.com/series/10796

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ISSN 2512-1812 ISSN 2512-1839 (electronic)
Public Administration and Information Technology
ISBN 978-3-319-60347-6 ISBN 978-3-319-60348-3 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-60348-3

Library of Congress Control Number: 2017943516

Printed on acid-free paper

This Springer imprint is published by Springer Nature
The registered company is Springer International Publishing AG
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Foreword

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, we are able to witness the advent of new technologies that are adopted and appropriated by people, businesses, and governments around the world. Social media; cloud computing; open, big, and linked data; and other digital innovations are being used to connect people, to facilitate access to computing resources, to deliver innovative services, and generally to improve our quality of life. Such technologies deeply transform people's daily behavior and interaction with businesses, governments, and each other. They also transform institutions—how they conduct operations, deliver services, and cooperate.

Such transformations are associated with not only benefits but also risks and challenges. Among them are deepening digital and social divides between those who have access and can benefit from new technologies and those who do not have access or cannot benefit from access, exposure of our personal data on digital platforms and consequent threats to our privacy, and manipulation of people's sentiments and fears through precisely targeted political marketing based on the personal data available about them. Examples of government challenges include classification of government information to decide which data can be disclosed to the public and which one should be kept closed on the grounds of national security or individual privacy; countering cybersecurity attacks on nations, institutions, and people; or building capacities within institutions to be able to utilize new technologies and address their negative effects.

The commitment and responsibility to address such risks and challenges rests primarily with government institutions. This commitment includes efficient and equitable delivery of public services, ensuring and protecting social equity and inclusion; building social consensus to address threats of violence, social instability, climate change, and others; and protecting national, urban, and territorial assets and interests. At the same time, governments are expected to respond to citizen needs, to facilitate citizens' participation in public affairs, to increase transparency in their operations and decision processes in order to build trust, to empower various social and economic actors to take responsibility for their own development, and to ensure proper use of scarce public funds. To fulfill their missions and to

provide effective responses to existing and new problems facing their communities and territories, government organizations should have sufficient resources, capacities, and partnerships.

Undoubtedly, digital technologies serve as essential tools for government organizations today. During the last two decades, governments have been utilizing the latest technological inventions to respond to the problems and challenges faced by their societies and to transform themselves in the process. According to the well-known digital government evolution model,[1] such transformations take place in four distinctive stages: deployment of technology to digitize and automate government operations (Digitization stage); deep transformation of government structures and operations to improve internal efficiency and facilitate institutional and administrative reform (Transformation stage); involving citizens and other non-public actors in government decision-making (Engagement stage); and creating better conditions for pursuing development within healthcare, education, justice, and other sectors and within communities and territories under jurisdiction (Contextualization stage).

Despite ample evidence of digital government evolution provided by government policy and research literature, still many governments around the world lack the resources and capacities to benefit from the strategic use of digital technologies and address associated risks. Such capacities include qualified human resources as well as methodologies, techniques, and guidance for planning, designing, implementing, and sustaining digital government initiatives.

Recognizing the need to assist government institutions in the strategic use of digital technology in various stages of the digital government evolution, this book consolidates knowledge and experiences in seven areas: (1) defining strategies for information systems development and how such systems and strategies can deliver public value; (2) conceptualization of digital government projects, including dimensions of data and information quality, information technology, organizational structures and processes, institutional arrangements, and economic, political, and social contexts; (3) strategies for financing and resourcing digital government projects, including financial management cycle, sources of funding, and principles for sound financial management; (4) delivering one-stop seamless services through networked government underpinned by interoperability standards and intergovernment collaboration; (5) principles for managing government information technology projects including agile deployment of information technology solutions; (6) opening of government data, local open data ecosystems, and collaboration among social actors to promote data-enabled innovation; and (7) the use of social media and other technologies to engage citizens and improve government-citizens interactions.

[1] Janowski, T. Digital government evolution: From transformation to contextualization, Government Information Quarterly, vol. 32, pp. 221–236, 2015.

In addition to covering these areas by different chapters, another objective of the book is to serve as a reference to relevant concepts, principles, and techniques and a source of meaningful advice for practitioners responsible for planning, implementing, and sustaining digital government initiatives. Written by academics and experts with record of experience conducting digital government projects in collaboration with government agencies, the book is grounded in both theory and practice of digital government.

I trust that this book will empower its readers with awareness, knowledge, and capacity to plan and implement technological change to serve their institutions and constituencies better.

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Acknowledgments

This book is the result of the collective effort of a research team that collaborated over a period of about 3 years, but it summarizes insights and experiences of more than a decade working together. This volume would not have been possible without the hard work and collegiality of the team; the series editor, Christopher Reddick; and the staff at Springer.

This project has also received valuable feedback from Elsa Estevez and Donna Canestraro, whose comments and suggestions were extremely valuable to highlight the contribution and improve the clarity of the book. We are grateful to them for their help and willingness to share their impressive knowledge with us. In addition, we would like to thank Elsa Estevez for writing the preface.

We want to especially thank Jana Hrdinova whose dedication and tireless effort have been instrumental for the completion of this book. Jana's editorial support along the development of the multiple chapters of the book was critical for the completion of this editorial effort.

We are also grateful to our home institutions, the Autonomous University of the State of Mexico, Universidad de las Américas Puebla, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas, and the Center for Technology in Government and Rockefeller College of Public Affairs and Policy both at the University at Albany, State University of New York. We have found support and sponsorship to our joint research agenda from these institutions in the last 15 years. Research featured in this book has received partial support from our home institutions, as well as from the National Council for Science and Technology (CONACYT) in Mexico and the National Science Foundation (NSF) in the United States. The book editorial work has been partially funded by CONACYT under grant number 240992. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this book are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of NSF, CONACYT, or our home institutions.

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