



Intergovernmental Relations in the Context of Governmental Digitalization Initiatives

*3rd Annual Conference on “Digital
Transformation in Government”*

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Agenda

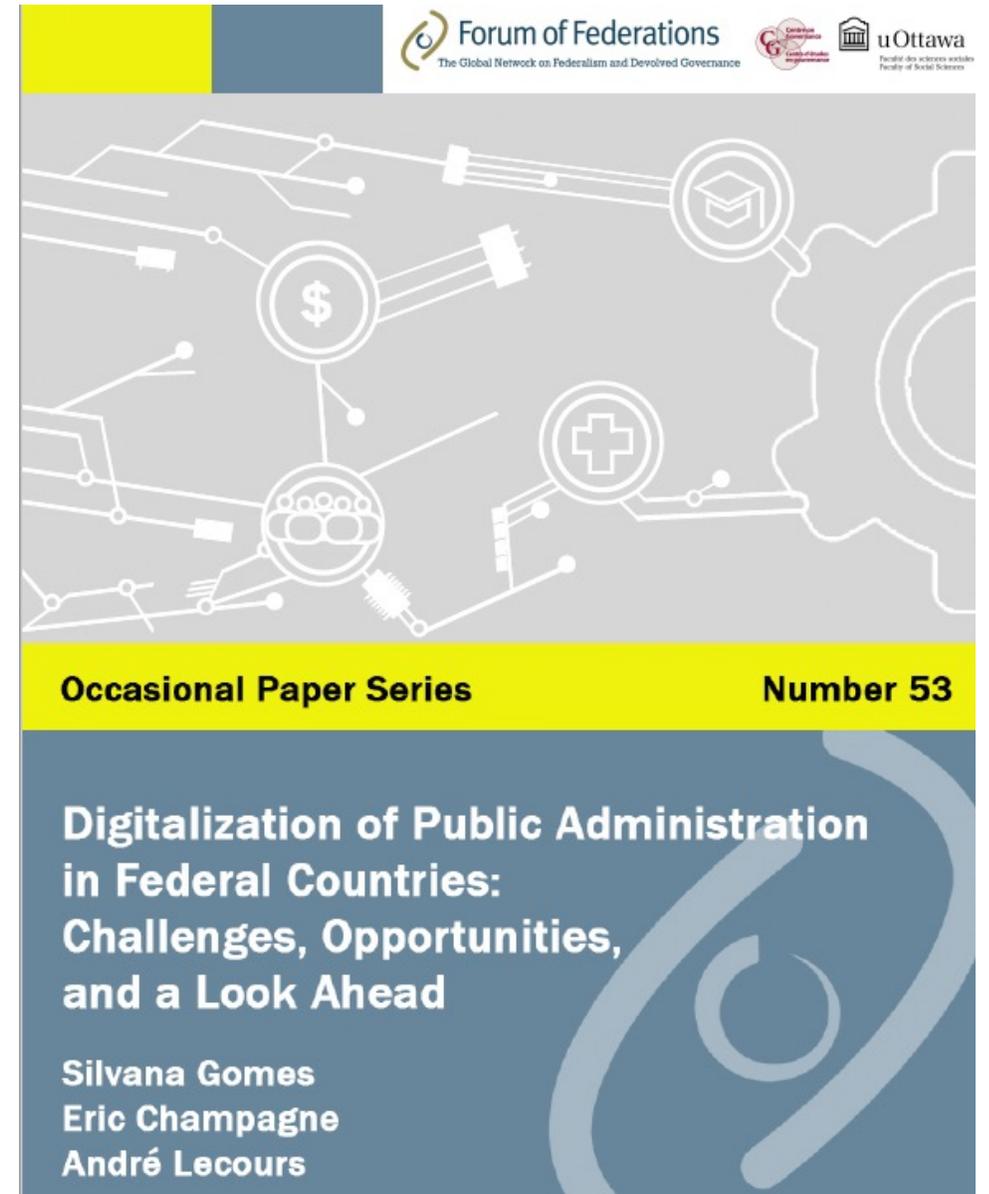
- Context
- Key concepts
- Linkages and ambiguities between intergovernmental relations and digitalization
- Pressing issues
- Best practices
- Key takeaways



Context

Context

- Research project conducted with the Forum of Federations
- Initial report – Scoping note
- In federal countries, the division of powers and responsibilities between levels of government adds important challenges to digitalization efforts, which often require cross-jurisdictional joint action to implement digital reforms
- Definition of clear roles and responsibilities and intergovernmental coordination and cooperation are needed.



<https://forumfed.org/document/digitalization-of-public-administration-in-federal-countries-challenges-opportunities-and-a-look-ahead/>

Research questions and objectives

Questions:

- Is federalism an obstacle or a driver of digitalization?
- Does digitalization inevitably lead to centralization?
- What strategies are being adopted to tackle the challenges of implementing digital policies in multi-level systems?

Objectives

- Study the design and implementation of cross-jurisdictional digital initiatives
- Case studies involving selected federations that will shed light on different aspects of digitalization in federal countries
- Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, Germany, India (TBC), Switzerland, and the United States
- Book in preparation (Palmgrave)



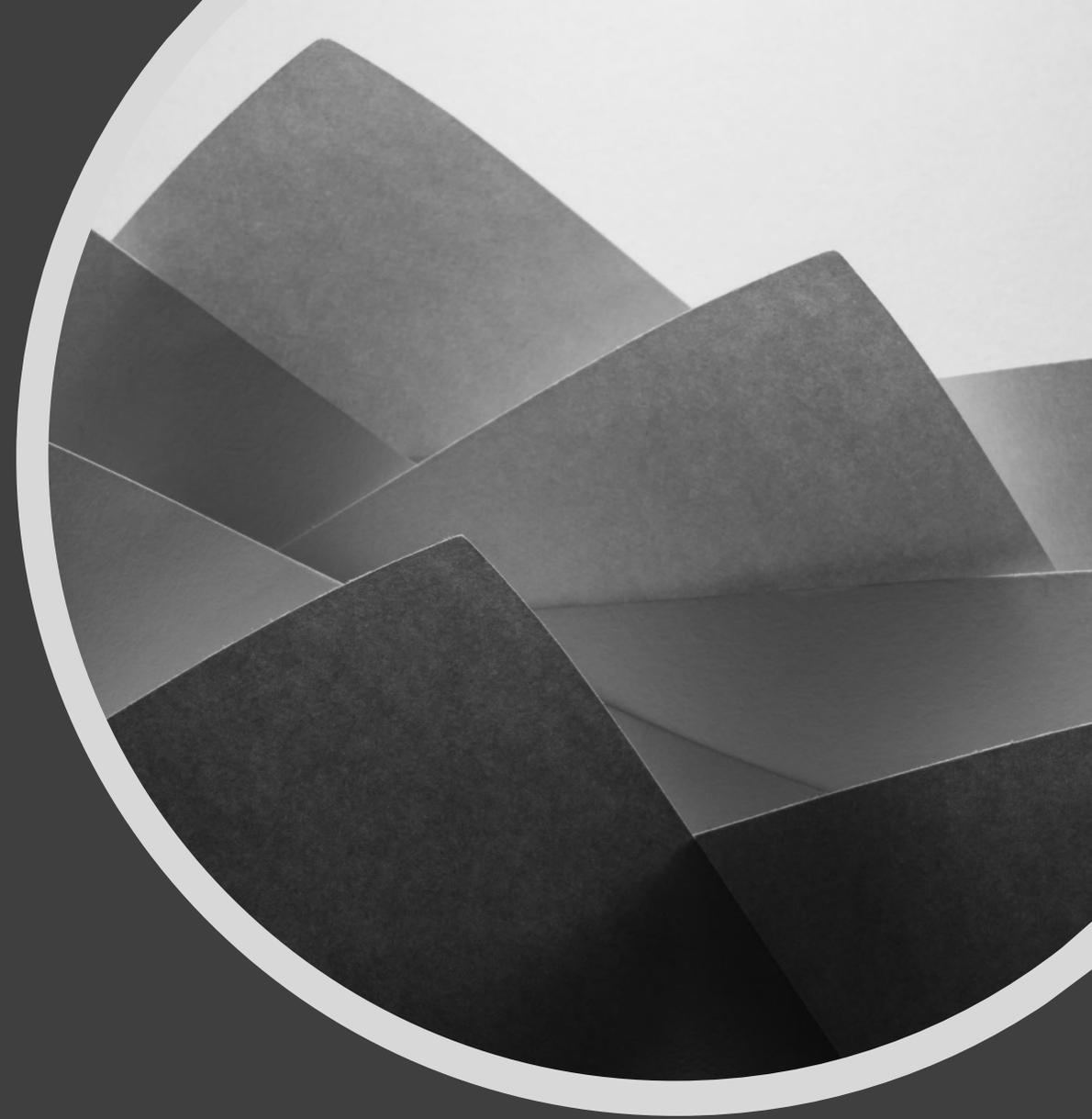
Key concepts

Key concepts – intergovernmental relations

Set of formal and informal channels through which governments from different levels cooperate and jointly act upon policy matters

Dynamic and ever-evolving nature of intergovernmental relations

Consensus-building, negotiation, and exchange of information



Key concepts – multilevel governance

- “[S]et of general purpose or functional jurisdictions that enjoy some degree of autonomy within a common governance arrangement and whose actors claim to engage in an enduring interaction in pursuit of a common good” (Zürn, Wälti, and Enderlein, 2022, p.4)
- Speaks to issues of policy cohesion and implementation
- Polycentric regimes where multiple actors and jurisdictions interact to achieve common goals

Key concepts – collaboration and coordination

- Collaboration: “a process in which organisations exchange information, alter activities, share resources, and enhance each other’s capacity for mutual benefit and a common purpose” (Himmelman, 2002, p. 3)
- Conditions for collaboration: perspective of mutual gains; interdependence; institutional incentives; similar values, ideas, and interests
- Coordination: it “occurs when decisions made in one program or organization consider those made in others and attempt to avoid conflict” (Peters, 2018, p.2)

Key concepts – digitalization

- According to the UN definition, “leveraging digitization to effect limited change to local business processes”
- For governments, it means a comprehensive process through which ICTs are employed to improve how governments run and deliver public services
- It affects all levels of government

Linkages between intergovernmental relations and digitalization

- Why is such relationship important?
 - Intergovernmental relations play an important role in the success – or failure – of initiatives involving two or more governments
- How do intergovernmental relations affect digitalization?
 - Good intergovernmental relations can streamline the design and implementation of digital policies; evidence suggests that intergovernmental collaboration yields better outcomes in the face of complex policy problems, as is the case of digitalization (Lundin, 2007)
- How does digitalization affect intergovernmental relations?
 - Digitalization is a common challenge across governments; it can spur competition and conflicts or partnerships and collaboration.



CANADIAN CENTRE FOR **CYBER** SECURITY

Cybersecurity and interdependence

- Certain issues have a strong cross-jurisdictional component, such as cybersecurity. Prevention and responses to cyber incidents frequently require joint action by public organizations across levels of government.
- Example: Canadian Centre for Cyber Security
<https://cyber.gc.ca/sites/default/files/cyber-centre-banner-image-e.png>

Emerging issues

- The dynamic nature of digital transformation entails the emergence of novel issues. Sharing learning, experiences, and resources can benefit different levels of government as they strive to make sense of the best way(s) to approach emerging problems.
- Example:
 - Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy
<https://www.investcanada.ca/programs-incentives/pan-canadian-ai-strategy>



CIFAR Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy

User-centered service delivery



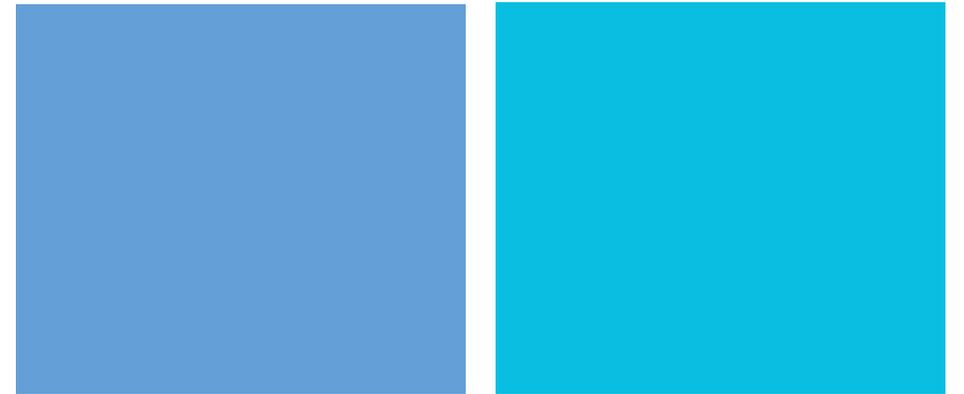
- Addressing the needs of citizens and stakeholders often means delivering seamless and integrated services.
- Example: BizPal – free online service jointly managed by federal, provincial, municipal, and territorial governments to help entrepreneurs identify which licenses and permits they need to operate their envisaged business
- <https://www.bizpal.ca>

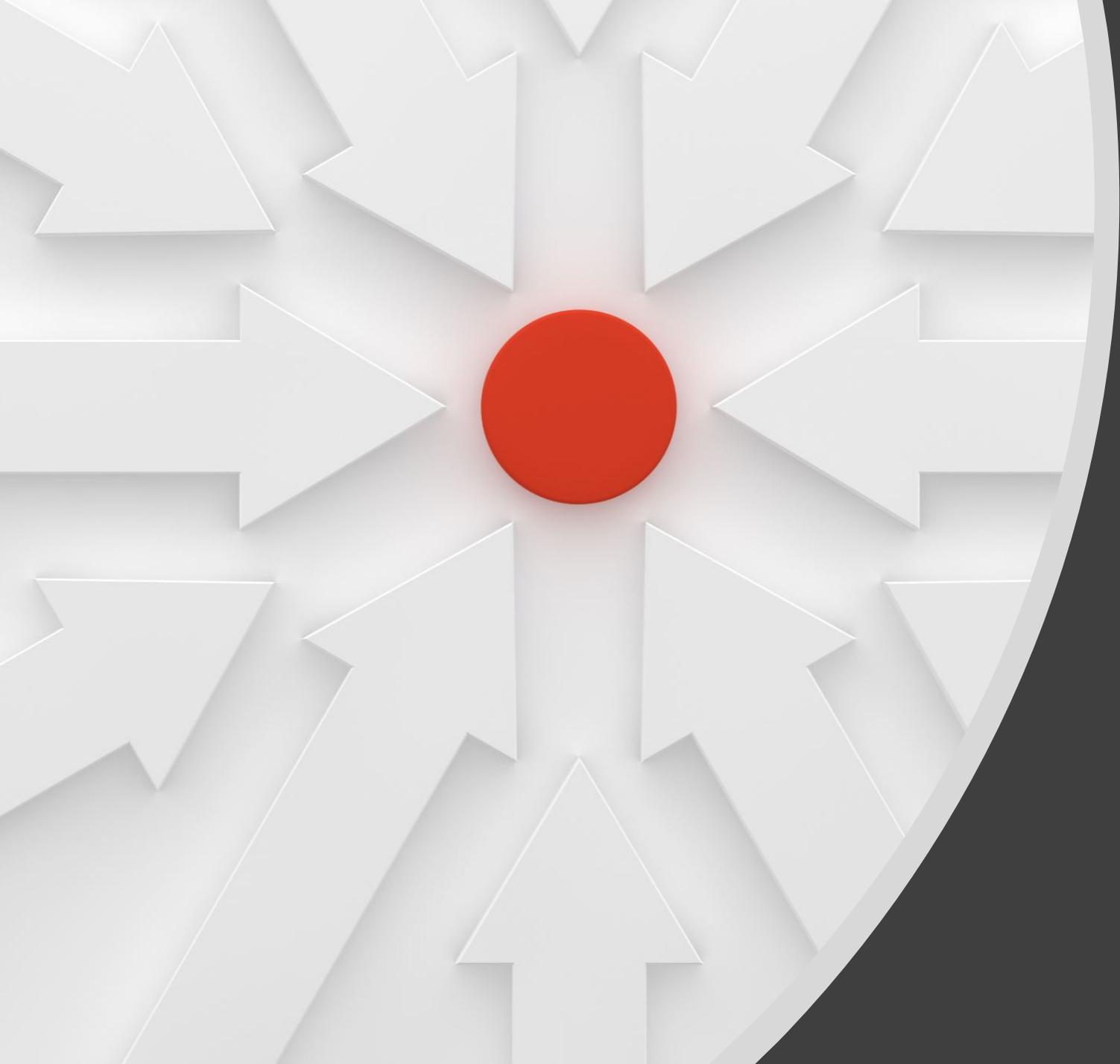
Why BizPaL?

- ✓ **It's free**
Search for the permits and licences you may need to start or grow your business.
- ✓ **Improve business planning**
Know which permits and licences are needed so that you get it right the first time.
- ✓ **Save time and money**
Spend less time searching for information and more time building your business.
- ✓ **Get answers**
Available 24/7 to help you navigate government requirements specific to your business type.

Lack of collaboration

- One of the most striking example of lack of collaboration is in the realm of regulation: broadband infrastructure regulation in Canada
- Canada lacks a coherent framework to enable carrier access to passive infrastructure.
- So far, the federal and provincial governments have not been able to find a solution to the problem, which creates entry barriers and other detrimental effects (e.g., regulatory fragmentation and costly services).
- With the rise of 5G technology, this issue has gained even more prominence
- <https://www.cdhowe.org/media-release/5g-rollout-requires-expanded-access-infrastructure-regulatory-framework-update>





Linkages and
ambiguities

Linkages between intergovernmental relations and digitalization

- What kinds of digitalization initiatives have a strong intergovernmental component?
 - One-stop and no-stop shops
 - Interoperability frameworks
 - Policy labs
 - Joint procurement
 - Open data and open government initiatives
 - Data commons
 - Cybersecurity
 - AI regulations
 - Privacy and personal information protection

Linkages between
intergovernmental relations
and digitalization –
examples



Business starts here



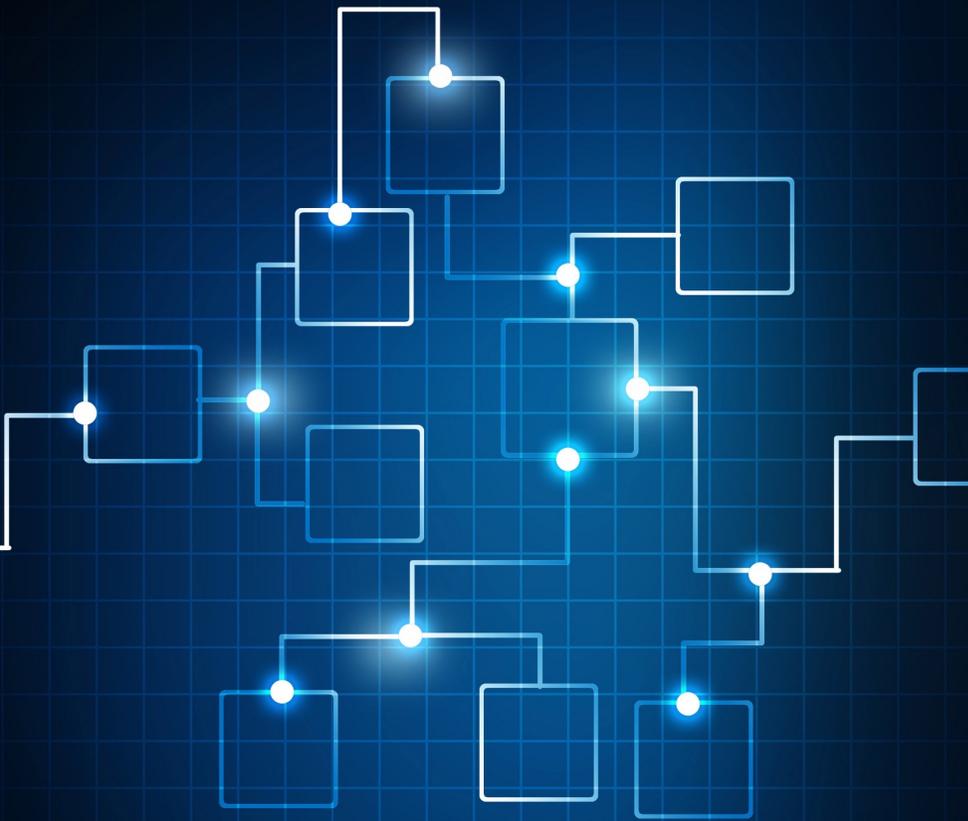
eOperations

Schweiz
Suisse
Svizzera

Ambiguities surrounding intergovernmental relations in the context of digitalization initiatives

- Positive outcomes:
 - Enabling joined-up projects of common interest
 - Promoting mutual learning
 - Enabling experimentation and scaling-up solutions
- Potential drawbacks:
 - Conflicts around strategies and instruments
 - Accountability weaknesses
 - Ensuring coherence in the implementation of initiatives spanning across governments

Most pressing issues to
address those ambiguities?

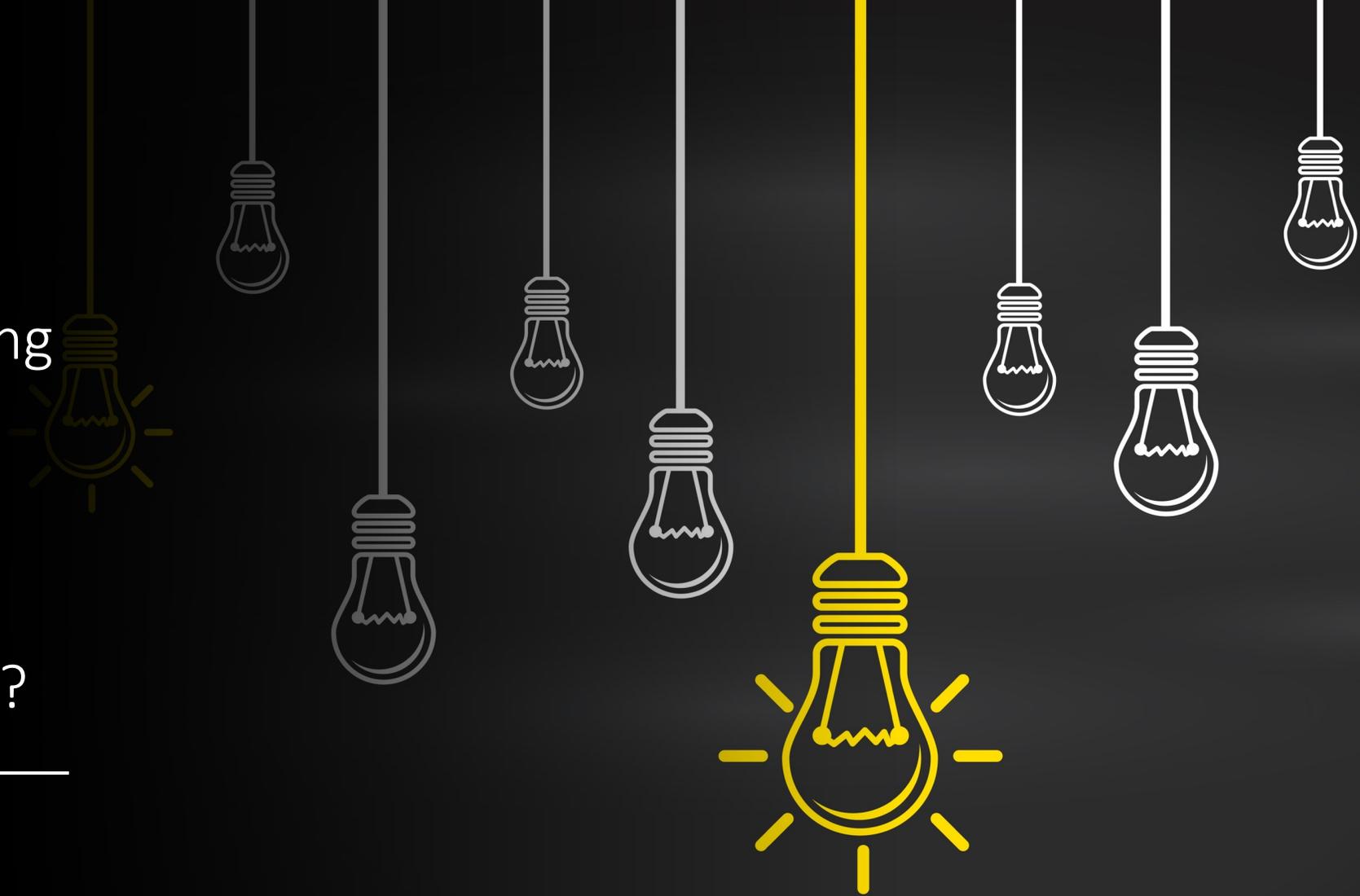


Pressing issues

- Clearly defining roles and responsibilities
- Establishing governance regimes that foster collaboration
- Ensuring coherence in the implementation of digitalization initiatives across governments
- Providing integrated solutions to citizens, businesses, and stakeholders



What practices are being
adopted to promote
successful
intergovernmental
collaboration in
digitalization initiatives?



Digital government units

- Digital government units “are dedicated in-house units of digital expertise operating at the center of government, versus being line department-specific” (Clarke, 2020, p. 361)
- They help ensure coordinated responses, coherent policy design and implementation, as well as agile and user-centered approaches to service delivery





Formalizing intergovernmental spaces for collaboration

Allows different levels of government to work together on a continuous rather than ad hoc basis

- Example: Digital Public Services Switzerland

“The objective of Digital Public Services Switzerland is to coordinate and promote the digital transformation between and within the three levels of government”

Joint innovation procurement

This approach favors economy of scale, innovative solutions to complex problems, and mutual learning through the exchange of best practices

- Example: Municipal Innovation Exchange (MIX) in Canada

Partnerships to develop innovative solutions to municipal challenges

Better equipping cities to deal with complex problems

Cities become early adopters of innovative technologies

Interoperability frameworks

- “Interoperability is the ability of government organizations to share information and integrate information and business processes by use of common standards and work practices” (Gottschalk, 2009, p. 75)
- Interoperability frameworks are the cornerstone of digitalization initiatives involving multiple government structures
- Essential to achieve several goals, including the delivery of seamless services and data re-use
- Example: Interoperable Europe
 - <https://joinup.ec.europa.eu/collection/interoperable-europe/interoperable-europe>

Service delivery partnerships

- In Canada, the Public Sector Service Delivery Council (PSSDC) published a Service Partnerships Playbook that provides strategies, tools, and solutions to intergovernmental service delivery through partnerships
- Four approaches: cross promotion; outreach; co-location; service integration
- Several examples and case studies
 - Service bundles: 5-in-1 Newborn Registration Service (ESDC and Government of Ontario)
 - Shared Counter Services: Service Ottawa, ServiceOntario, and Service Canada



International collaboration

- Agile Nations:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/agile-nations>
- Digital Nations:
<https://www.leadingdigitalgovs.org>
- Observatory for Public Sector Innovation (OPSI – OECD):
<https://oecd-opsi.org>



Key takeaways

The challenges are significant, but so are the opportunities

Governments need to enhance their collaboration strategies and mechanisms

Risk management, communication, roles, and responsibilities

Focus should fall not only on technical issues, but also on governance matters

Promoting a culture of intergovernmental collaboration is key

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Q&A
