Australian Government

DATA AND DIGITAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGY

What we heard

Key findings of the feedback received on the initial Data and Digital Government Strategy

Where and how did we engage?

Over 6 weeks in June-July 2023,
the Australian Government held consultation
on the initial Data and Digital Government Strategy.

We heard from members of the public, community and advocacy groups, state and territory governments, industry, academia and the Australian Public Service (APS).

They were engaged in-person and online, and invited to 'have their say' through a survey and open call for submissions via dataanddigital.gov.au.

Feedback will inform the final Strategy and Implementation Plan.

In-person locations: Bendigo, Melbourne, Hobart, Perth, Darwin, Adelaide, Brisbane, Townsville, Sydney and Canberra

10 locations across Australia

7 state and territory engagements

21 engagements with public, advocacy and community groups

15 APS townhall sessions

7 industry and academia engagements

117 online submissions and survey responses

What did we hear?

2030 Vision

The Australian Government will deliver simple, secure and connected public services for all people and business through world class data and digital capabilities.

the large majority of stakeholders support the Strategy's vision

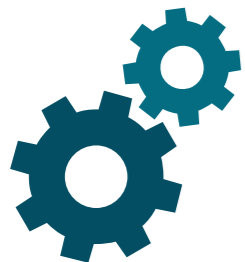Partnership with all sectors will drive data and digital progress

All sectors support the strong focus on accessibility and inclusion

Many are concerned about cybersecurity and privacy, and suggest stronger frameworks, accountability and culture

There's a clear call for a measurable, outcomes-driven approach

Improved workforce capability and greater investment is considered vital to progressing the vision

Respondents identified how the Strategy connects with other government initiatives

Public and Community

With services increasingly shifting online, the public and community want to ensure people aren't left behind. Community groups, particularly those representing First Nations peoples, also expressed an interest in improving access to government-held data to meet their community needs.

> "Those who are most (digitally) excluded are those who need the services most. It's really upside down."

Make inclusive, accessible services for all

There's strong support for the focus on digital inclusion and accessibility and a call for a more coordinated approach.

They want to know how government will improve its engagement with those affected by the digital divide and that over-the-phone, in-person and other, non-digital channels will still be supported.

Protect government systems and data

Many community groups and advocates, particularly those working with vulnerable communities, want clear and transparent frameworks to protect government-held data from cyber-attacks and ensure it's used ethically and responsibly.

Build trust and confidence when engaging online

The public highlighted trust in government and its services must be earned with vulnerable communities and people. These groups can lack digital literacy, exposing them to increased scams, mis- and disinformation.

To help them confidently engage with the government's digital channels, government should support people with digital literacy and online safety skills, and support businesses and community groups on their cybersecurity and access to information.

Engage people with tailored, proactive services

The public see an opportunity for government to engage with them sooner. They want to see the government anticipate and proactively guide people to the services they might need.

Industry and academia

Industry and academia want to see expanded standards, transparent reporting and new investment models to drive the government's uptake of new technology.

> " We are encouraged by the government's mission to partner with people and business to build trust. "

Set the standards to ensure trust and security

Industry wants the Australian Government to ensure its technology ecosystem is equipped to respond to current and future requirements, with up-to-date legislation evolving to maintain pace. They encourage adoption of clear standards that improve data sharing, interoperability and both data and digital security, and recognise the government's role in driving adoption of consistent standards across sectors.

Enable and enhance inclusion and accessibility

Inclusion and accessibility is very important to industry and academia, who recognise the diverse needs of different community sectors. There were calls to strengthen existing frameworks and standards and look at other government's inclusion models to better articulate principles like 'digital by design' and its impacts. They believe schemes, for sharing data collected by government agencies, like the scheme established by the *Data Availability and Transparency Act 2022* should be expanded to include the private sector and others and better meet whole-of-community needs.

Implement with clear metrics and accountability

Industry and academia see high value in clear measures and metrics, published transparently and honestly. This will support discussion of gaps and opportunities in current metrics and how they might be addressed. They value clear accountability for implementation across government.

Innovate and embrace emerging technology

Industry and academia believe the government should embrace emerging technologies to drive innovation, increase efficiency and build sovereign capability. They consider contemporary investment models provide better value for money and support technology uptake. These sectors want the government to develop frameworks and legislation to facilitate and accelerate technology adoption within government systems.

State and territory

State and territory governments called for the Strategy to align with policies, initiatives and strategies of other jurisdictions, such as those advanced by the Data and Digital Ministers' Meeting (DDMM). They also identified the opportunity for all jurisdictions to improve coordination of their data and digital initiatives.

> " There is a significant opportunity (for) collaboration between governments to deliver better outcomes for citizens. "

Convene and create a national approach

States and territories support national systems and platforms that can be used by all jurisdictions. They asked the Australian Government to facilitate continued cross-jurisdictional efforts, to achieve ongoing national data and digital transformation to improve peoples' experiences with government.

Learn from others' experiences with connectivity

State and territory governments support the focus on digital inclusion, but consider connectivity issues, especially in regional areas, still necessitate non-digital pathways. States and territories support working together and information sharing to deliver better outcomes to remote and regional communities.

Break down barriers to data sharing

State and territory governments called for greater two-way data sharing to achieve improved policy decisions and service delivery. They offered to continue working with the Australian Government to break down legislative, cultural and other data-sharing barriers.

Share infrastructure and unify services

State and territories sought stronger emphasis on unified digital service delivery, such as through 'life events' and 'tell us once' approaches. They called for strong progress on a national digital ID system, noting some jurisdictions have progressed their own solutions. State and territory governments identified shared funding models could accelerate delivery of shared safe and secure infrastructure, and achieve linked or unified digital services.

Australian Public Service

The Strategy should align to other policies, initiatives and work across government, such as APS Reform, the *Privacy Act 1988* Review, myGov User Audit and the upcoming 2023-2030 Australian Cyber Security Strategy.

> " The 'people and capability' enabler is a critical component of this strategy. "

Transform the culture around data sharing

The APS called for the Strategy to recognise legislative, cultural and other barriers to data sharing, and identify plans to overcome them. Some proposed reforms to legislation and governance on how data is collected, used and handled.

Build, expand and uplift capability

APS staff called for an uplift of data and digital capabilities, including the skills of decision makers, and the need to attract and retain skilled employees. They see a need for financial investment to achieve the Strategy's vision. Evidence from tools such as the Data Maturity Assessment Tool can help target data and digital investment.

Ensure inclusion with people-focused implementation

Public servants strongly support the focus on accessibility and inclusion, with particular attention on how to support regional communities and Closing the Gap reforms. Robust user experience design processes, multi-channel pathways for citizens, and commitment to best practices are key to meeting and exceeding these goals.

Responsible adoption of emerging technologies

Many APS staff saw the opportunities presented by emerging technologies. They want to understand how the government will encourage innovation while managing risks. Artificial intelligence, quantum computing and digital twins are at the front of many public servants' minds, who described challenges in keeping pace with rapid development of such technologies.

Public trust is the deciding factor

Public trust was rated the most important factor in the Strategy's success. A balance should be struck between data sharing and privacy to meet community expectations on data security. Many staff want to see government lead by example on transparency, management, security and governance of its data and digital systems.