

Government Beyond Recovery: Towards a future-fit public sector

This report reflects on the path ahead for innovation in the public sector, building on lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis context and reflecting on insights from the Government Beyond Recovery Conference.

LEARNING FROM CRISIS TO SHAPE A FUTURE-FIT PUBLIC SECTOR

During the **Government Beyond Recovery** conference, participants reflected on the importance of innovation, co-creation, agile regulation and inclusion as the world emerges from a period of crisis and prepares for the complex challenges ahead. The time of crisis has led to shifts in the relationship between citizens and government, new perspectives on trust and democracy, changing attitudes towards innovation and emerging approaches to crisis management and uncertainty. Over the course of these discussions, one thing was made clear: Governments must take immediate action to leverage lessons learned and new tools and approaches which emerged from the COVID-19 crisis to face the complex challenges ahead, notably to fight the climate crisis.

GOVERNMENT BEYOND RECOVERY AT A GLANCE:



117 COUNTRIES REPRESENTED



2050 + ATTENDEES



95 SPEAKERS



18 PANEL DISCUSSIONS

» If we talk about climate change, by far the biggest challenge is innovation ... if we only deal with the consequences we will never solve the problem. «

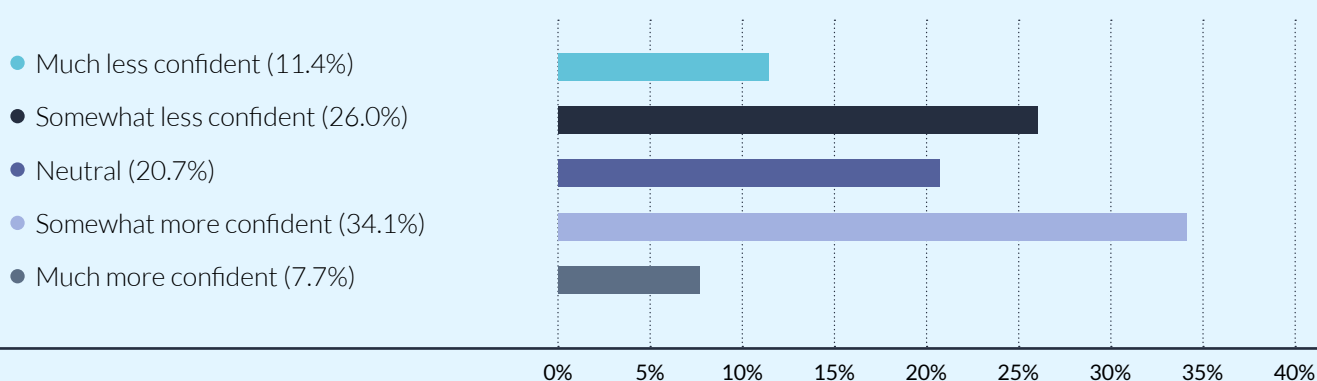
- Prime Minister Janez Janša, Republic of Slovenia¹

¹ Quote taken from: *Opening Remarks: Building innovative and inclusive governments. 18 October 2021*: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/online-session/3f5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

Polls conducted during this event showcase a lack of confidence in the ability of governments to face the complex challenges ahead: now is the time for public servants and governments at large to demonstrate they are ready and willing to learn and do better (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Opening Remarks.

Compared to before the start of the pandemic, are you more or less confident in government's ability to face and address complex challenges?



HOW CAN GOVERNMENTS TRANSLATE LEARNINGS INTO ACTION?

There are many tools and approaches that can support governments in moving this agenda forward, including the [Common Assessment Framework](#),³ the [OPSI Innovation Facets Framework](#), the [OPSI Case Study Navigator](#) and the [European Public Sector Awards](#)⁴ which showcase best practices in innovation, quality and public administration. Furthermore, below we detail a number of key approaches, learnings and methods highlighted at the [Government Beyond Recovery](#) Conference that can help public sectors work towards being future-fit. Building a future-fit public sector demands strategic skills development, talent management and deliberate supports for innovative practice to emerge and flourish in the public sector. Furthermore, in an era of declining trust and increasing user demands, inclusion, co-creation and democratic innovation are essential to effective public governance.

² Opening Remarks: Building innovative and inclusive governments. 18 October 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/online-session/3f5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

³ Panel Discussion: Accounting for Innovation in CAF. 19 October 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/445cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

⁴ Panel Discussion: Showcasing examples of Innovative public administration in the 2021 European Public Sector Awards. 19 October 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/465cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

LEVERAGING CUTTING-EDGE INNOVATION METHODOLOGIES

» Looking ahead, we need to foster public sectors that strategically embed innovation and foresight at the heart of all policy making. «

- Mathias Cormann, Secretary-General, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development⁵

INNOVATION PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

» If you're able to open up to the fact that you can say you don't know, if you're able to listen and engage with stakeholders at different levels, all of a sudden, you unleash this incredible potential of systems learning to learn and create new options where you actually thought you wouldn't have any. Because all of a sudden, it's not just you anymore, the lonely hero that produces solutions, you have this system around that can create. «

- Giulio Quagiotto, Head of Strategic Innovation, United Nations Development Programme⁶

The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the depth of complexity and uncertainty that governments and societies face. Current and future challenges such as the climate crisis, health emergencies, and migration shifts are similarly characterised by complexity, uncertainty, volatility and ambiguity. In the face of such problems, governments need to leverage portfolio approaches to innovation, including mobilising ecosystems and networks of stakeholders to develop common understandings of complex problems and work together to collectively commit, act, and find solutions to these challenges.

Portfolio approaches to innovation help to identify synergies between common projects and activities, build value chains amongst projects and programmes, convene stakeholders around common goals, and avoid fragmentation. Participants in the *Government Beyond Recovery* conference highlighted through their poll responses the importance of portfolio approaches in looking for relationships, connections and combinations among diverse innovation initiatives, the ability to enquire, listen and reflect, the importance of recognising complexity, uncertainty and addressing change, and the importance of keeping options open in order to iterate and learn (see Figure 2)⁷. The OECD Innovation Brief on *Innovation Portfolios* highlights approaches to innovation portfolio management, and showcases how governments can leverage portfolio approaches in practice.⁸

⁵ Quote taken from: *Opening Remarks: Building innovative and inclusive governments*. 18 October 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/onlinesession/3f5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

⁶ Quote taken from: *Panel Discussion: Managing innovation in the public sector: From ecosystems & portfolios to action*. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4a5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

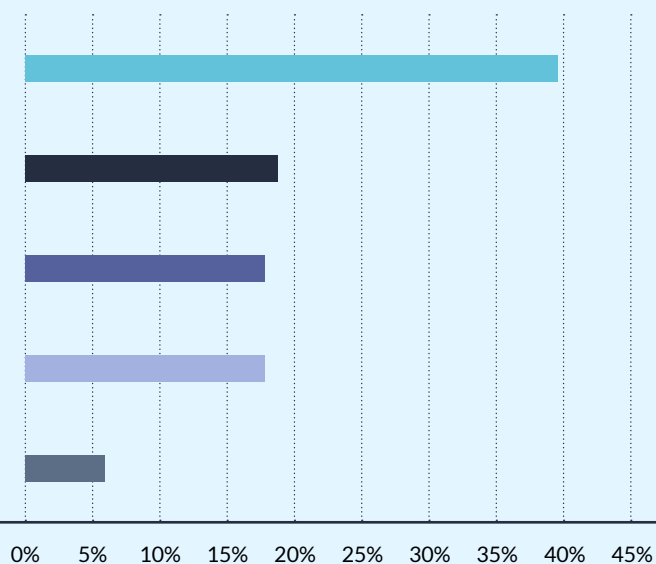
⁷ Panel Discussion: *Managing innovation in the public sector: From ecosystems & portfolios to action*. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4a5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

⁸ OECD (2021): *Public Sector Innovation Facets: Innovation Portfolios*. <https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/OECD-Innovation-Facets-Brief-Innovation-Portfolios-2021.pdf>

Figure 2: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Managing innovation in the public sector: From ecosystems & portfolios to action.

What is the most important facilitating element to work successfully with a portfolio approach to innovation?

- Looking for relationships, connections and combinations among diverse innovation initiatives (39.6%)
- Ability to enquire, listen and reflect (18.8%)
- Recognition of complexity and uncertainty in addressing change (17.8%)
- Keeping options open in order to iterate and learn (17.8%)
- Deciding not to put all your eggs in one basket (5.9%)



MISSION-ORIENTED INNOVATION AND ANTICIPATORY INNOVATION GOVERNANCE

In the face of complex challenges and as governments develop ambitious goals, mission-oriented innovation is becoming increasingly popular to collectively and systematically work towards common solutions. This reflects the reality we've observed during the COVID-19 pandemic: that siloed, single-stakeholder approaches are not sufficient to address major challenges.¹⁰ As the *Government Beyond Recovery* poll highlights, climate and social challenges are common areas in which governments are developing ambitious missions in the face of complexity and uncertainty (see Figure 3).¹¹

» COVID-19 is an opportunity to actually think about new missions, missions that we can fulfil not to end up in global crises in the future. «

- Piret Tõnurist, Innovation Lead, OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation⁹

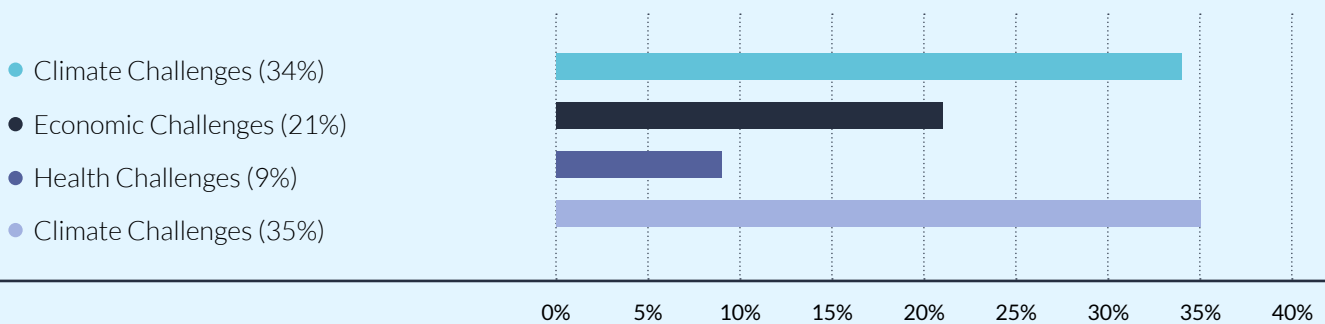
⁹ Quote taken from: *Panel Discussion: Anticipation to bold missions: Shaping the future through missions and anticipation*. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4b5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

¹⁰ OECD (2021): *Public Sector Innovation Facets: Mission-Oriented Innovation*. <https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/OECD-Innovation-Facets-Brief-Mission-Oriented-Innovation-2021.pdf>.

¹¹ *Panel Discussion: Anticipation to bold missions: Shaping the future through missions and anticipation*. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4b5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

Figure 3: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Anticipation to bold missions: Shaping the future through missions and anticipation.

In which challenge areas are missions most uncertain and influenced by continuous change?



Mission-oriented approaches to innovation gather a diversity of stakeholders to rally efforts around targeted and time bound goals and missions, working across policy areas and sectors to develop solutions for complex and interconnected challenges such as climate change. The recent OECD Innovation Brief on [Mission-Oriented innovation](#) highlights a number of factors that can lead to successful missions, including institutional entrepreneurship and mission governance that enable collaboration and experimentation, available funding for a portfolio of missions and the adoption of outcome-based procurement.¹²

Discussions from the *Government Beyond Recovery* conference highlighted the importance of recognising the inter-generational dimensions of mission-setting and design, including an inter-generational reflection on how resources are being invested in the COVID-19 recovery.¹³

» You're about to invest a whole series of money in the COVID-19 recovery that is going to indebt the next three generations. How are you ensuring that all these investments are assessed for who benefits and who pays across different generations? «

- Cat Tully, Founder, School of International Futures¹⁴

¹² OECD (2021): Public Sector Innovation Facets: Mission-Oriented Innovation. <https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/OECD-Innovation-Facets-Brief-Mission-Oriented-Innovation-2021.pdf>.

¹³ Poll results from the Panel Discussion: Anticipation to bold missions: Shaping the future through missions and anticipation. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4b5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

¹⁴ Quote taken from: Panel Discussion: Anticipation to bold missions: Shaping the future through missions and anticipation. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4b5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

Mission-oriented innovation is complemented by anticipatory innovation approaches that bring knowledge about the future into current decision-making. Missions that set a goal for the next decade need to be future-proof and continuously stress-tested for their relevance. For example, the European Union's Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change will need to reflect on both current projects for climate change, but also possible climate disruptions and related impacts that could be observed in the next decade and beyond. The [OECD Innovation Brief on Anticipatory Innovation Governance](#) showcases what this could look like in practice.

» Missions are expected to be future- proof or at least to be future oriented...it's not enough, of course to say that you want that, you need to wonder how does the future feed into these missions. «

- Philippe Larrue, Policy Analyst, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development¹⁵

BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

The *Government Beyond Recovery* panel on *Behavioural transformations for a more sustainable world* showcased many examples on how Behavioural Insights (BI) can help policymakers better understand the behavioural mechanisms that contribute to environmental problems and enable them to design and implement more effective policy responses.¹⁷ Changing how choices are presented can favour sustainable behaviours: some of the most successful BI interventions change contexts, remove hassle factors, and leverage social norms to make sustainable behaviours easier and encourage green habits and routines.

» It's now time to move from systematic behavioural solutions to systemic change ... to lead the way with a new choice architecture where information, regulation and financial incentives make it easier for all of us to develop green habits. «

- Chiara Varazzani, Lead Behavioural Scientist, OECD Observatory of Public Sector Innovation¹⁶

Discussions from the panel also highlighted that behavioural science needs to be more systematically introduced in the policymaking process: policymakers should consider how to use behavioural insights earlier in the policy process: while environmental policies are being designed and laws and regulations are being drafted. The poll results below display how attendees could envision behavioural science supporting green governance, the most popular response highlighting that behavioural science can provide new types of tools for green policy proposals. By modifying the choice architecture, behavioural insights complements traditional public governance tools used to tackle climate change by making information, regulation and financial incentives more likely to change behaviours.

¹⁵ Quote taken from: *Panel Discussion: Anticipation to bold missions: Shaping the future through missions and anticipation*. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4b5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

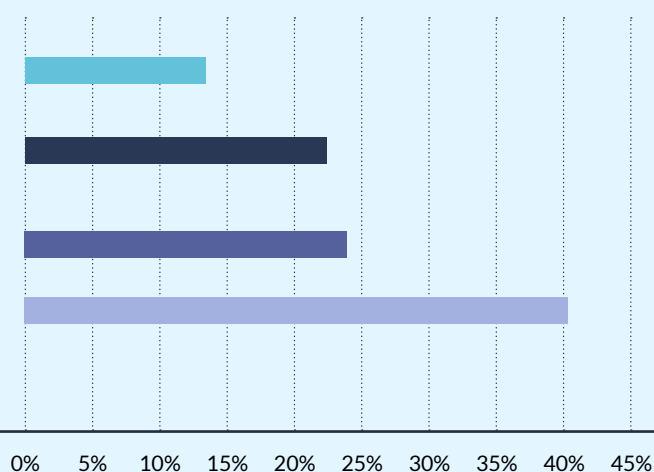
¹⁶ Quote taken from: *Panel Discussion: Behavioural transformations for a more sustainable world: behavioural science to support green public governance*. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4e5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

¹⁷ Panel Discussion: *Behavioural transformations for a more sustainable world: behavioural science to support green public governance*. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4e5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

Figure 4: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Behavioural transformations for a more sustainable world: behavioural science to support green public governance.¹⁸

What do you think is the most promising way Behavioural Science can support Green Governance?

- Anticipate implementation and evaluation issues of green reforms (13.4%)
- Anticipate how people are likely to respond to specific policy measures and green reforms (22.4%)
- Improve the acceptability of green reforms (23.9%)
- Provide new types of tools for green policy proposals (changing choice architecture, leveraging social norms etc.) (40.3%)



STRATEGIC FORESIGHT, ANTICIPATION & TALENT MANAGEMENT

For innovative practice to flourish in the public sector, one of the key starting points is the people: public sectors need to attract, recruit and retain talent in a competitive labour market. This includes paying special attention to the emerging skill sets required for public sectors to be future-fit. With changing circumstances such as demographic shifts, increased life expectancies and decreasing birth rates, public administrations need to work to keep up to the shifting needs and demands of new entrants to, and future pressures on, in the labour market. A recent project conducted between the OECD and the Government of Slovenia on Ageing and Talent Management in Public Administration highlighted the need for innovative and diverse hiring processes, recognition and adaptation to shifting values of the labour force and changing labour market trends, as well as the need to anticipate and adapt to emerging technologies and changes in the way we work.¹⁹

This study leveraged strategic foresight techniques to envision scenarios of the future and the implications that those scenarios could have for the present. This study serves to challenge assumptions and reveals gaps in our knowledge about the future that can be used for better decision making; it serves as an example of how governments need to constantly perceive, make

¹⁸ Panel Discussion: Behavioural transformations for a more sustainable world: behavioural science to support green public governance. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4e5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

¹⁹ OECD (2021): Futures of Public Administration: Scenarios for Talent Management in Slovenia. https://oecd-opsi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Slovenia_Talent_Management_Scenarios_Final.pdf.

sense of, and act upon future challenges as they emerge in the present. By leveraging anticipatory innovation governance and strategic foresight methodologies, public administrations can seek to be future-fit and responsive to shifting societal and labour market pressures.

» Foresight is a must for governments to better prepare for the future and I am proud that Slovenia has made the first step. «

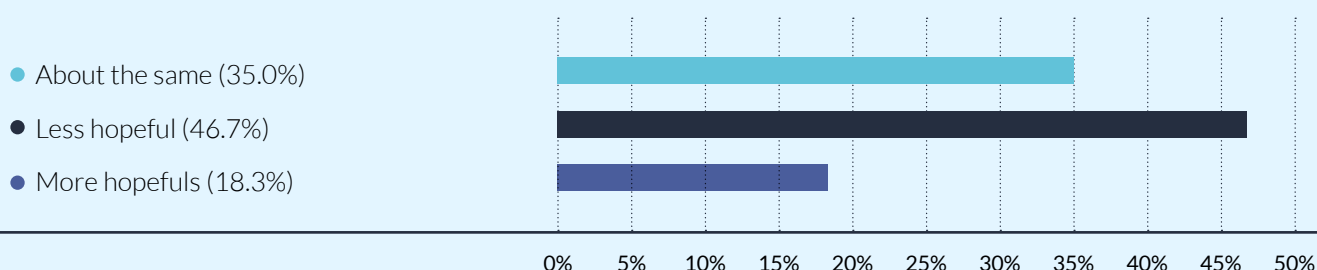
- Boštjan Koritnik, Minister of Public Administration, Government of Slovenia²⁰

DEMOCRATIC INNOVATION AND CO-CREATION

The COVID-19 crisis has led to new shifts and emerging understandings of the relationship between governments and citizens, as well as the importance of trust in ensuring policies, regulations and decisions are respected by the population. In a poll conducted at the *Government Beyond Recovery* Conference, 46.7% of respondents indicated that they are less hopeful in the future of democracy today compared to the beginning of last year (2020) (See Figure 5).²¹ Moreover, 55.9% of poll respondents indicated that they found that the distance between citizens and governments increased (See Figure 6).²² OECD work on *Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions* reflects on how deliberative processes can tackle complex policy problems by convening stakeholders to learn, deliberate and develop collective recommendations on complex and multifaceted public challenges.²³

Figure 5: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Changing the relationship between government and citizens through democratic innovations.

Are you more or less hopeful about the future of democracy today compared to the beginning of last year?



²⁰ Quote taken from: *Panel Discussion: Building national governance capacities to work towards desirable futures*. 18 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4d5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

²¹ Panel Discussion: Changing the relationship between government and citizens through democratic innovations. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/495cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

²² Panel Discussion: Inclusive Services: Building Trust in Public Institutions. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/455cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

²³ OECD (2020): *Innovative Citizen Participation and New Democratic Institutions: Catching the Deliberative Wave*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/339306da-en>.

» Public sectors around the world are facing increasing uncertainty and more complex challenges on one hand, and growing demands from citizens and businesses for faster responsiveness and flexibility on the other. In this case, participation and co-creation are even more important, because of the importance of sharing different use findings and especially knowledge and experience, which are all crucial for creating better and more sustainable solutions. «

- Matija Kodra, Project Manager at Inovativen.si, Ministry of Public Administration of Republic of Slovenia²⁴

The *Government Beyond Recovery* conference also highlighted the importance of co-creation in the public sector. Co-creation approaches can help public servants understand current and future needs of stakeholders to design policies and services that truly respond to the needs of the populace. Co-creation engages stakeholders to understand problems, share ideas, develop solutions and find a common path forward, including decision-making and strategies that stakeholders can stand behind.

While conference attendees noted the benefits of co-creation, including developing a better understand and trust among stakeholders, 41% of participants agreed that public sectors face the key challenge of a lack of vision and leadership to move on from “old ways”, and 29% noted the difficult of reach groups that feel forgotten or “left behind”.²⁵

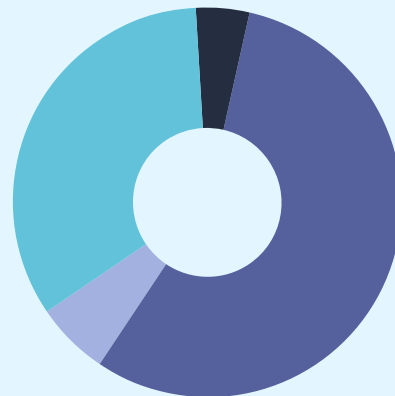
» There’s a really interesting question in co-creation, which is how we understand the stakeholders who aren’t currently in the discussion – the future generations - who will be significantly impacted by our actions. «

- Indy Johar, Founder of Dark Matter Labs²⁶

Figure 6: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Inclusive services: Building trust in Public Institutions.

Do you think the COVID-19 crisis has:

- Brought citizens and governments closer together (33.8%)
- Not impacted the distance between citizens and governments (4.4%)
- Increased the distance between citizens and governments (55.9%)
- Don't know (5.9%)



²⁴ Quote taken from: *Panel Discussion: Building inclusive societies: The importance of co-creation*. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/485cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

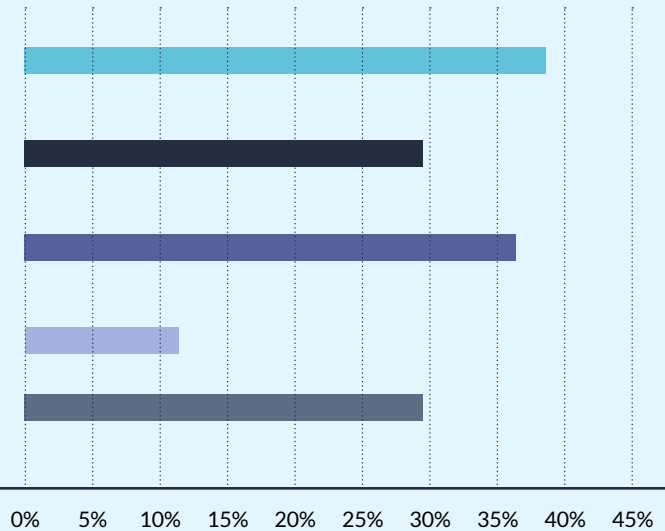
²⁵ Poll response to the question: During the COVID-19 recovery phase, what do you think are two key challenges for delivering better public services? Poll conducted at the Government Beyond Recovery conference on 19 October 2021.

²⁶ Quote taken from: *Panel Discussion: Building inclusive societies: The importance of co-creation*. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/485cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

Figure 7: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Building inclusive societies: The importance of co-creation.²⁷

What are the key benefits of co-creation in the public sector? (Multi-select)

- Better understanding and trust among stakeholders (38.6%)
- Higher trust among policy makers and policy subjects (29.5%)
- Involving stakeholders early on - to facilitate the passing of major public projects (36.4%)
- More robust policies (11.4%)
- Stakeholders/citizens have a say in policy- and service development (29.5%)



AGILE REGULATION

Another resource at the disposal of governments is regulation: regulation can be either a driver or inhibitor of innovation.²⁸ To allow for innovative solution development in the face of complex challenges, innovators need to have clarity on the regulatory and legal implications of new solutions. One flexible instrument can be regulatory sandboxes, which provide an opportunity for regulators to work with innovators to understand how regulatory approaches can be adapted in the context of challenges such as the green transition. Regulatory sandboxes provide a forum for collaboration, information sharing and data sharing between practitioners.

However, regulatory sandboxes are not a one-size-fits-all solution – they can be quite costly and resource intensive, and it would be impossible to have a

» A regulatory sandbox cannot be the only thing that a regulator does to support innovation and growth. Regulatory Sandboxes are important initiatives but they are focused on the most detailed projects that require detailed supports.... We need to think really hard then about how, as a regulator as a whole, we are supporting innovation. «

- Stephen Almond, Director of Technology and Innovation, Information Commissioner’s Office, UK Data Protection Regulator²⁹

²⁷ Panel Discussion: Building inclusive societies: The importance of co-creation. 19 October 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/485cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

²⁸ Panel Discussion: Building agile regulations for an uncertain future. October 19 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/435cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

²⁹ Quote taken from Panel Discussion: Innovation friendly regulation. 19 October 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/415cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>

regulatory sandbox in every topic area. Consequently, it is important to build openness between regulators and policy practitioners, and create forums where innovators can seek counsel from regulators on how their solutions may interact with existing or future regulations.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT & SERVICES

» Digital must help us be more reassuring, more comforting, like it's the contrary of robotization and disorganisation of the government... it can help us be closer to our citizens, and also give us more time to spend the time with the people who will not have the desire or the capacity to do digital. «

- **Marine Boudeau**, Chief, Design of Digital Public Services Team, France³⁰

Many of the innovations that resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic were in the area of digitalization and digital government. These domains offer popular examples of both enhancement-oriented innovation (ex. improving existing services) and adaptive innovation (responding to changing circumstances, such as the need to telework). While digital technologies offer immense opportunities for improving service delivery, participatory processes and engagement with citizens, there are also a number of challenges that governments must face, particularly with the notion of moving towards “digital by default” as a concept.

In an era where digital has become the default, governments are urged to design and deliver public services, however, if not done well, citizens can be left behind. During the conference, panelists explored how omni-channel approaches which work across internal silos, recognise the needs of citizens, and help support citizens in skills development to access these services can be successful in a 21st century context. However, as noted in the poll results below (see Figure 8)³¹, attendees recognised the challenges of skills and capacities of citizens, lack of collaboration inside government to solve whole problems and silos in government which can hinder the establishment of “digital by default” services. Moreover, panelists noted key challenges in the areas of data protection, bringing a human dimension to services and ensuring a smooth user experience. The [OECD Digital Government Policy Framework](#) highlights some of these key challenges and Evaluating mission-oriented innovation showcases potential opportunities in addressing them.³²

³⁰ Quote taken from Panel Discussion: Building Digital by Default Services. 19 October 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/405cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

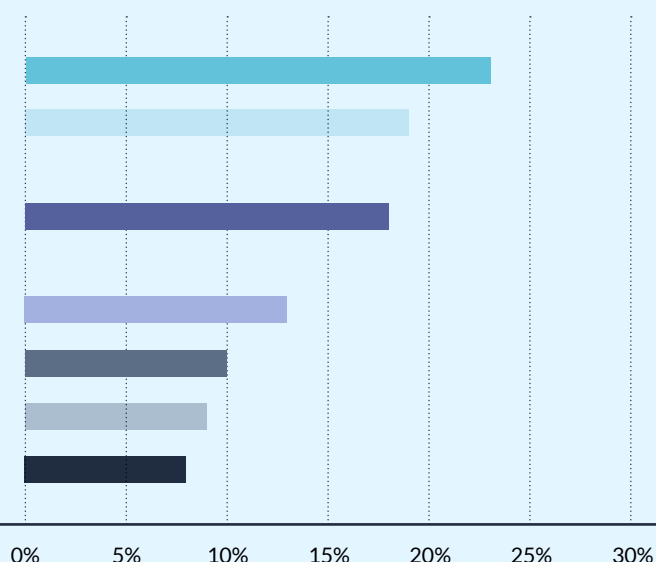
³¹ Gurciullo, S. (2021). “Deploying Systems Finance for Development: A Multi-Asset Approach to Accelerate SDG Localisation”, https://docs.google.com/document/d/1mIOOiXgwJSmDNpMXjt_msc8rz5DT55lwWpnJ-Ml6mw/edit?usp=embed_facebook (accessed 9 August 2021).

³² OECD (2020), “The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework: Six dimensions of a Digital Government”, OECD Public Governance Policy Papers, No. 02, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f64fed2a-en>.

Figure 8: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Building digital by default services.

What are the challenges and problems with 'digital by default' as a concept?

- Skills and capabilities of citizens (23%)
- The lack of collaboration inside government to solve whole problems (19%)
- Different siloes in government that operate services in different places(18%)
- Closing in-person access to government (13%)
- Access to the internet in society (10%)
- Accessibility needs (9%)
- Difficulties in getting access to data (8%)



CROSS-BORDER GOVERNMENT INNOVATION

The COVID-19 crisis highlighted that complex problems in a rapidly changing world often transcend national and regional boundaries, moreover, globalisation and increasing connectedness in the world can exacerbate the impacts of crises across domestic boundaries. The manner in which countries respond to the COVID-19 pandemic has direct implications on their neighbours, including impacts on trade, freedom of movement and travel. In the face of challenges such as climate change, cross-border collaboration and cross-border innovation initiatives are becoming increasingly essential, and so should the supports that allow such initiatives to flourish. A recent publication by the OPSI and the UAE's Mohammed Bin Rashid Centre for Government Innovation (MBRCGI) showcases some of the key challenges, leverage points, and global case studies in the areas of cross-border government innovation.³⁴ The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to develop concrete supports, flexibility and common understandings for cross-border innovation and collaboration to flourish.

» Climate change is certainly not going to wait for anyone. Cross-border collaboration in government needs to be systematic — it cannot be a political preference. «

- Marianna Karttunen, Head of Unit,
International Regulatory Co-operation, OECD³³

³³ Quote taken from panel discussion: Innovation through Cross-Border Collaboration: Governing Global Challenges. October 19 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/475cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

³⁴ OECD & MBRCGI (2021): Achieving Cross-Border Government Innovation. <https://cross-border.oecd-opsi.org>.

INNOVATION AND QUALITY

Quality and innovation are key and closely intertwined elements that enable organisations to gain competitive advantage and improve public outcomes. Fostering innovative approaches to understanding and improving the quality of public administration demands knowledge sharing, constant learning, willingness to improve, and readiness and capacity for innovation.

During the *Government Beyond Recovery* conference, panelists and participants explored how the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) has proven to help organisations prepare for uncertainty, innovate and constantly learn.³⁵ Reflecting on a diversity of enablers such as leadership, people management, strategy, planning, partnerships, resources and processes, the CAF serves as a resource to help organisations get started with driving and steering change and improvement in their organisations with ambitious but realistic goals and priorities³⁶. This holistic approach to performance analysis can help change the mindsets of organisations and their members.

The crisis has shown us that threats and challenges can be opportunities for public administrations: governments need to put more emphasis on building forward-looking, anticipatory organisations that are ready to invest in agile systems and collaborative mechanisms to face the challenges ahead. The CAF can serve as a resource and support for public sector organisations as they overcome disruptions, face complexity and steer towards better futures.

THE TIME FOR ACTION IS NOW

» We are in a very critical moment, in terms of organising our future.... Public administration is in a critical situation... but on top of this, we have new funding, strong funding to boost recovery, and we want to boost recovery based on digital, on greening, on a more cohesive approach. «

- Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner, Cohesion and Reforms, European Commission

The COVID-19 crisis forced public sectors to innovate, creating purpose and removing culture and institutional barriers which once stood in the way of testing and implementing new approaches to public governance. Governments and individual public servants have seen what is possible and what they are capable of: new horizons are opening for experimentation, digitalization, and leveraging innovation to improve public outcomes. Moreover, the crisis has shown that building trust and increasing deliberate, co-creative and inclusive processes and mechanisms in policy and decision-making will be crucial to the future of democracy. This includes building deliberative mechanisms into regulatory, policy and service delivery approaches and decision making to meet the needs of the populace now and into the future.

³⁵ Panel Discussion: Accounting for Innovation in CAF. October 19, 2021. <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/445cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

³⁶ European Public Administration Network (2019): "Common Assessment Framework 2020: The European Model for Improving Public Organisations Through Self-Assessment." <https://www.eupan.eu/caf/>.

³⁷ Closing Panel: Future oriented governance: Towards a future fit for all. October 19, 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4f5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

However, without this immediately tangible impetus for innovation observed in the COVID-19 pandemic, governments are likely to return to the status quo (see Figure 9).³⁷

Recovery funds from the COVID-19 pandemic provide a financial means to make innovation a reality in the public sector, including opportunities for governments to leverage approaches such as mission-oriented innovation and behavioural insights to achieve meaningful change in the face of the climate crisis. Moreover, organisations such as the OECD and the European Commission are committed to providing expertise and support to carry forward this innovative agenda. This includes providing advice and support for missions, anticipation, climate neutrality, cross-border innovation, and behavioural insights.

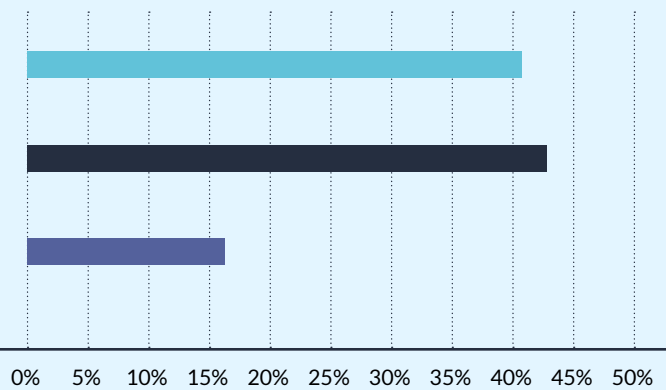
» One thing for me is clear: that it is important for governments to invest now in the foundations of their governing systems. This is truly how they can drive innovation, harness new opportunities, and remain resilient and adaptive as we continue to face unexpected challenges. «

- Jeffrey Schlagenhauf, Deputy Secretary-General, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Figure 9: Poll results from the Government Beyond Recovery Panel: Future-Oriented Governance: Towards a future-fit for all.

In the COVID-19 recovery, do you think that governments are:

- Willing and ready to learn from the crisis and take action to steer towards better futures (40.8%)
- Recognisant of the lessons learned, but taking no concrete action (42.9%)
- Eager to go back to the old normal/status quo (16.3%)



³⁷ Closing Panel: Future oriented governance: Towards a future fit for all. October 19, 2021: <https://oecd-events.org/gov-beyond-recovery/session/4f5cf966-b0eb-eb11-b563-a085fc3e7f45>.

The **Government Beyond Recovery** conference highlighted the opportunity we have to take concrete, deliberate action. It showcased a diversity of methods and approaches that can bring governments closer to citizens and support public governance approaches that are future-fit. Moreover, the event showcased a common understanding that the next crisis facing governments is already here: climate change. The tools for change and innovation are at the fingertips of governments and public servants: now is the time to embrace complexity and uncertainty, to develop new approaches and to improve public outcomes in order to work towards a future-fit public sector that understands and responds to the needs of all.

» it's time that we really take the learnings from the crisis and commit to governing differently to pave the way for more future-focused governance. From an OECD perspective, this means continuing to bring out the evidence of what is possible, and what has been done, but also to accompany countries in implementing new approaches and methods that can bring better results. «

- Elsa Pilichowski, Director, Public Governance Directorate, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

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**GOVERNMENT
BEYOND
RECOVERY**

Towards a future-fit
public sector