



Rialtas na hÉireann  
Government of Ireland

# Better Public Services

A transformation strategy to deliver for the public and build trust





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## Our Vision is to deliver



## Our Commitments

In delivering on this strategy we will be guided by these drivers to serve the public and to build trust in public institutions



\*The drivers of trust were identified by OECD research.

# Foreword

I am very pleased to present Better Public Services – the Public Service Transformation 2030 Strategy. This ambitious strategy comes at a very important time for our country as we continue to seek to improve the delivery of public services. Public servants and public service organisations play a critical role in providing frontline services to help meet the needs of people and implement government policy.

The new Public Service Transformation Framework at the heart of this strategy provides the direction for strategic reform in the Public Service with a vision for:

Inclusive, high quality and integrated Public Service provision that meets the needs and improves the lives of the people of Ireland

This strategy is a successor to the *Our Public Service 2020* programme and it will build on the achievements that have been made in every facet of the Public Service in recent years. It will also align where appropriate with the priorities in the Civil Service Renewal 2030 Strategy and other major strategies. Our experience in particular of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic has shown the tremendous commitment, resilience and ability of the Public Service to respond with innovation and determination to meet complex challenges. This new strategy also seeks to build on the success of the Public Service response to that crisis.

The strategy is framed around three core themes:

1

**Digital and Innovation at Scale**

2

**Workforce and Organisation of the Future**

3

**Evidence-informed policy and services designed for and with our public**

Making progress on these themes will help the Public Service to deliver for the public it serves, build trust in public institutions and help to address some of the major challenges we face. Key to this is how the Public Service will listen and engage with the people it serves, deliver Project 2040, the National Development Plan, use innovation and digitisation to tackle major challenges and work collaboratively to achieve the ambition set out in the strategy.

**Paschal Donohoe, TD**

Minister for Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery and Reform



# Introduction

The Public Service works every day to provide frontline and vital services to meet the needs of the people of Ireland. Working on behalf of the Government in a broad and diverse range of organisations, public servants have an important role to play in the economic and social life of the country. Today governments around the world must respond to constantly emerging challenges and trends connected to climate change, public health, population changes, geopolitical security, and others that arise which require public policy actions. In addition, fostering the conditions for a competitive economy that continues to support trade and investment is a key concern. Government policy in these areas is central to ensuring the continued economic and social development of Ireland. A forward looking, innovative and agile Public Service, working together on behalf of the Government, can help to anticipate the implications of these challenges and deliver and design public services to meet the needs of citizens, businesses and customers by putting them at the centre.

## Public Service Transformation Strategy

Public servants have a long and proud tradition of public service ethos in their roles. The ambition of this strategy reflects public service values which are evident in every public service organisation around the country and in every workplace that provides public services. The ambition is to collaboratively deliver impactful outcomes for our public through implementing the Public Service Transformation Framework and the success of the strategy will be measured on the outcomes which it achieves to 2030.

## Operating Environment

The environment in which the Public Service works has seen immense change in recent times. Ireland's economic growth supporting the highest level of employment in the history of the state and continued strong economic performance has enabled significant investment in public services, income supports and infrastructure. The Public Service is now comprised of approximately 370,000 staff delivering a wide range of public services to meet the needs of a diverse and growing population. This is relatively small compared to other European countries at 14.4% of the labour force. There are opportunities to improve the ways the Public Service provides services and we have a duty to improve public services to meet emerging challenges.

## Key challenges

There are however current and future challenges facing the country, and the Public Service contribution to addressing those challenges is critical. The challenges

are complex. Trends in population growth and associated demographics have implications for the delivery of public services. Ireland's economy is highly globalised and this carries with it risks during times of global uncertainty and geopolitical developments. Economic uncertainty around the world also poses risks to our open economy. It is critical that Ireland continues to remain attractive for international and domestic investment and provides an excellent environment for business. The Public Service has an important role in addressing these trends, supporting the plans for a green and digital economy and maintaining Ireland's attractiveness for investment.

Addressing climate breakdown is imperative for the future of our country. In line with our Climate Action Plan commitments, the public sector will play a leadership role in driving far-reaching climate action across its buildings, transport, waste, and energy usage, as well as wider society. This will include reducing emissions by 51% by 2030 and increasing the improvement in energy efficiency in the public sector from the 33% target in 2020 to 50% by 2030. It must also help address the sustainability of Ireland's energy needs into the future.

Trust in Government and in public institutions is an emerging issue in many countries. Maintaining trust is crucial in ensuring the success of a wide range of public policies that depend on acceptance from the public. The OECD has identified five key drivers of trust in public institutions which are responsiveness; reliability; integrity; openness and fairness. This provides a practical framework for the Public Service to take pro-active and collaborative steps to enhance trust in public institutions, learn from international best practice, measure trust levels over time and how we compare internationally. The Public Service is uniquely positioned to enhance trust in Government and public institutions and to ensure transparency and integrity in the conduct of public administration that will further increase trust.

There are also complex policy and delivery issues. The Public Service must do all it can to solve those major issues within and across sectors that require sustained urgency. Issues such as housing provision and tackling homelessness, delivery of healthcare and education services and social and economic infrastructure, particularly remain key challenges. Enhancing the collective approach to solving these issues and accelerating the implementation of existing strategies will require innovation, better use of evidence and data, emerging technology and digitisation where applicable, and more efficient service delivery. We can also achieve our ambition by reimagining how services are delivered, reengineering our structures to support people centred delivery and by ensuring that we have the right culture to implement the changes required.

## Building on Achievements

The Public Service has a strong track record in implementing change and reform for better service delivery. Since 2011, successive public service reform plans and sectoral level reform programmes have been implemented to improve how the Public Service works and to ensure that public service bodies have the capacity and capability to carry out their functions. The most recent phase of public service reform, *Our Public*

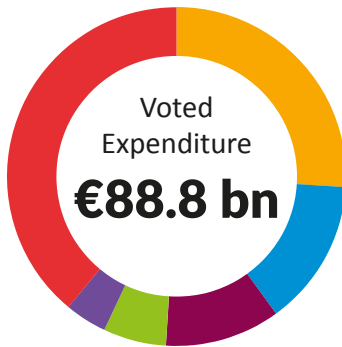
*Service 2020*, published in December 2017, focused on supporting the ongoing transformation of the Public Service to fully embrace digitisation, drive innovation and further enhance collaboration and capacity to meet the needs of the public. Some examples of the building blocks of reform achieved and/or underway in public service transformation and other related reforms that have been delivered outside of public service reform programmes are shown below.

## Building Blocks of Reform





# The Public Service in Numbers



- Health - 26%
- Social Protection - 14%
- Education - 11%
- Housing, Local Government & Heritage - 6.3%
- Transport - 3.9%
- Other - 38.8%

**372,451** Public Service Employees at end September 2022

Civil Service	47,551	
Defence	8,386	
Education	119,862	
Health	135,245	
Justice	14,215	
Local Authorities	31,085	
Non-Commercial Stage Agencies	16,107	

<b>9.8m</b> Revenue electronic payments 	<b>1.1m</b> passports issued 	<b>560,000</b> primary students <b>406,000</b> post-primary students 	<b>1.5m</b> attendances to Emergency Departments <b>530,000</b> GP Card visits <b>375,440</b> emergency calls to National Ambulance Service 
<b>1.9m</b> phonecalls with taxpayers 	<b>121,000</b> Basic Payments Scheme applications from farmers 	<b>58,443</b> new births registered 	<b>43,600</b> nurses <b>13,000</b> doctors 
<b>306,000</b> Personal Public Service Numbers issued 	<b>66m</b> visits to gov.ie 	<b>308,800</b> full-time third level students and <b>26,325</b> apprenticeships 	<b>29.7m</b> pandemic unemployment payments under the scheme 
<b>3.8m</b> MyGovID accounts of which 1.89m are verified 	<b>56,324</b> An Garda Síochána contacts/attempted contacts with victims of domestic violence in 2020-2022 <b>24h</b> 	<b>15,000</b> datasets from 160 PSBs on open data portal 	
<b>5th</b> Ireland's ranking in the EU on digitalisation 	<b>1,547</b> deployed overseas in 13 missions by the Defence Forces 	<b>12</b> Local Authorities use online planning 	

All figures are rounded and relate to a full year where applicable. Most recently available figures are used.

## Lessons Learned

The experience of public service organisations responding to the COVID-19 pandemic showed the art of the possible in terms of innovative service delivery. This period created an unprecedented challenge for public service organisations delivering key services to their customers. Major disruption to public service delivery was avoided through productivity reforms, rapid digitalisation and the widescale adoption of blended working practices. The Public Service showed exceptional levels of collaboration, inventiveness and organisational agility to deliver at scale during the response to the crisis. This period also demonstrated the breadth of important services provided across the public service and enabled the Government to deliver vital supports to help society and the economy manage through the crisis.

Public service organisations worked closely together, in many instances enabled by the better use of data and technology to deliver for the people of Ireland and the Government. This strategy will build on those achievements and lessons learned during the Public Service response to the pandemic. It will seek to ensure that trust in Government and the Public Service remains strong and that the momentum for change seen during that public health crisis continues. The Government recently reaffirmed the importance of the Quality Customer Service (QCS) Initiative, and the implementation of Customer Action Plans and Customer Charters across our Public Service will be strengthened over the course of this strategy emphasizing the commitment to deliver the best services possible to customers.

## Outcomes Focused

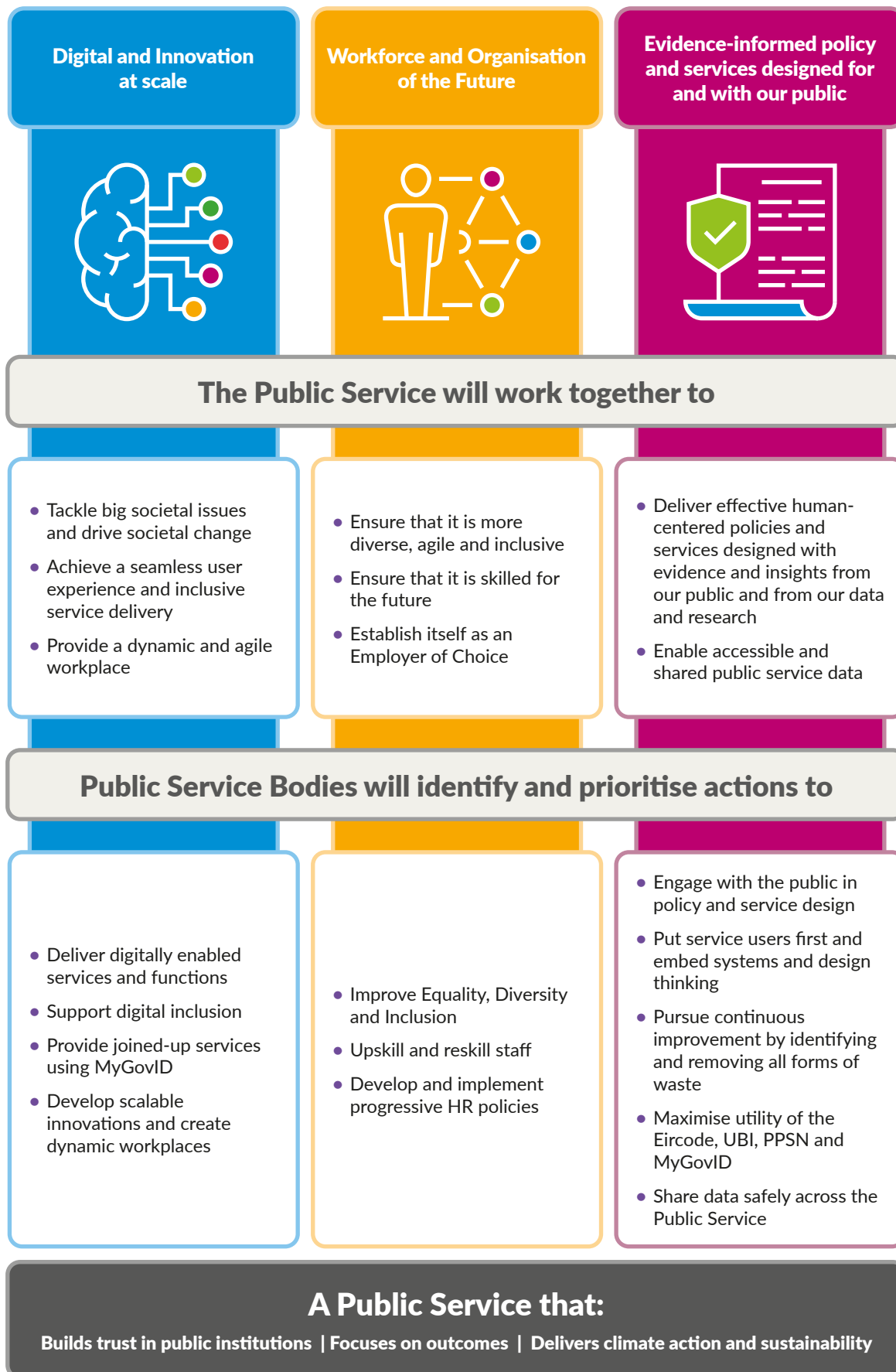
This strategy is focused on high level outcomes which will help the public service to continuously improve the delivery of its services to the public.





# Public Service Transformation 2030 Framework

## Inclusive, high quality and integrated Public Service provision that meets the needs and improves the lives of the people of Ireland.



## How the Framework supports Public Service Transformation

The strategy is designed to provide a direction for reform that will help the Public Service to identify and prioritise actions for Public Service Transformation. It will also support each sector of the Public Service to achieve its own sectoral level reform programmes and help the delivery of Project 2040, the National Development Plan. The strategy is aligned to *Civil Service Renewal 2030* and complements other reform strategies and initiatives. This ensures a coherence of reform across the Civil and wider Public Service.

The priorities of the strategy complement and interlink with each other across the three themes. Successfully achieving them together will help maintain and build trust in public institutions and provide the building blocks to help the Public Service play its part in delivering climate action and sustainability and carry out its functions effectively on behalf of Government.

## Public Service Leadership Board (PSLB)

The Public Service Leadership Board (PSLB), with Secretary General/CEO level representatives from Government Departments and a broad range of public service organisations, will play a key role in achieving the ambition of the strategy, in particular, by working together on shared priorities at a strategic level.

## Public Service Bodies

Public Service Bodies are critical to realising the ambition in this strategy. They should identify and prioritise actions that are contained in the Framework. They should also have regard to them in developing their corporate strategies and align the delivery of their reform priorities in their business plans with the Framework and report on progress in their annual reports.



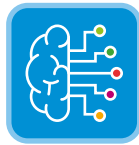
## The Public Service will collaborate on whole of Government cross cutting projects that will:

- Tackle big societal issues and drive societal change by working in a collaborative way to tackle the major issues facing society through using emerging technology, harnessing the potential of digitisation and applying innovation. It will lead by example in meeting its decarbonisation targets and by supporting society to play its role in meeting Ireland's climate change commitments.
- Achieve a seamless user experience by putting the customer at the centre of the design of service delivery, by providing globally recognised digital services and by developing a Life Events Portal.
- Provide a dynamic and agile workplace by creating an environment that supports a culture of innovation and continues to respond to the needs of citizens and customers.

## Public Service Bodies are asked to identify and prioritise actions that:

- Deliver digitally enabled services and functions to meet the needs of citizens, customers, businesses and users of services.
- Support digital inclusion to make sure no one is left behind.
- Provide joined-up services using MyGovID to ensure they are consistent and accessible.
- Develop scalable innovations and create dynamic workspaces to replicate successful approaches and support the right environment for innovation and customer focus.

Public Service Bodies should also have regard to these priorities in developing their corporate strategies and align the delivery of their reform actions in their business plans with the Framework and report on progress in their annual reports.



## Digital and Innovation at scale

Digital technologies play an increasingly important role in the way people live, learn, work and participate in the economy and in society. Ireland, like other progressive countries, has benefited from technology as an accelerator of change which has opened enormous possibilities in the Public Service and wider economy. Citizens, customers and businesses increasingly expect to access public services online. Leveraging new and emerging technologies and the use of data which can drive more seamless delivery presents exciting opportunities for public services. The Public Service therefore needs to have the infrastructure in place and the capability to deliver digital services and to maximise the use of MyGovID.

It is also at the same time committed to continuing to meet the needs of people that are unable to use online services. *Connecting Government 2030: A Digital and ICT Strategy* for the Public Service sets out an approach to deliver digital government for all, benefitting both society and the broader economy. Ireland's *Digital Inclusion Roadmap* sets out a range of actions to make sure no one is left behind with the ambition to make Ireland one of the most digitally inclusive states in the EU.

Technology and culture are key enablers for innovation as is staff willingness to embrace new ideas. New ways of thinking and working are required to tackle complex challenges and to maximise the impact of policy and services. Public servants must embrace a culture of innovation to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for the Government and the people of Ireland. This will support the exploration and adoption of new approaches to policy and delivery and promote open collaboration to deliver with the citizen at the centre. The use of *Design Principles in Government* can inform the development of services by placing users at the centre of the service design process. Progress already made on implementing *Making Innovation Real*, the Public Service Innovation Strategy, will be built upon. The Public Service is committed to showing leadership and working together to collaborate and innovate to solve some of the major challenges within and across sectors. It is also committed to leading by example in addressing climate breakdown and meeting its climate targets.

## The Public Service will collaborate on whole of Government cross cutting projects that will:

- Ensure a Public Service that is more **diverse, agile and inclusive** and reflects Irish society to better serve the Government and the public.
- Ensure that its staff are **skilled for the future** to meet the needs of each sector of the Public Service and all Public Service Bodies.
- Establish itself as an **employer of choice** by attracting, retaining, upskilling and developing its staff, commencing with the development of a Public Service apprenticeship model.

## Public Service Bodies are asked to identify and prioritise actions that:

- Improve equality, diversity and inclusion and to ensure organisational strategies have regard for their importance internally and in service delivery.
- Upskill and reskill staff in accordance with the business needs of the organisation and by offering staff opportunities to develop.
- Develop progressive HR policies which together will help attract and retain staff and ensure the organisation can meet its business needs.

Public Service Bodies should also have regard to these priorities in developing their corporate strategies and align the delivery of their reform actions in their business plans with the Framework and report on progress in their annual reports.



## Workforce and Organisation of the Future

The quality and delivery of public services is heavily dependent on the skills, drive and commitment of the people who deliver them. As the biggest resource of the Public Service we need to ensure that we are harnessing the full potential of our staff and that our organisations provide the environment to support this. A vibrant, empowering and diverse Public Service can attract talented people who wish to serve the public and develop rewarding careers. Diversity – of background, of life experience – brings different insights, creates challenge and encourages change and innovation. Our vision for the workforce of the future is a skilled, motivated workforce, supported by dynamic career development, progressive policies and inclusive workplace cultures. Access to different pathways to careers in the Public Service and growing skills within organisations will help attract and retain staff. One such pathway is apprenticeship. The Public Service will grow the number of apprenticeship registrations across the sector, including local authorities, to reach 750 annual registrations by 2025. This will be achieved in accordance with the commitments in the Action Plan for Apprenticeship 2021-2025.

The OECD's work on the future of the public service suggests a public service employment model that is forward looking, flexible and fulfilling through

- A forward-looking public service that understands how the work of public servants is changing, and knows how to equip its workforce to get the work done
- A flexible public service that can move people with the skills it needs to the places it needs them in reaction to fast-changing circumstances, regardless of organisational or programmatic silos and
- A fulfilling public service that will attract, retain and make the best use of the skills it needs by appealing to the motivations of an increasingly diverse public workforce

Our plans for the workforce and organisation of the future will be guided by these key characteristics. Leadership at all levels in the Irish Public Service will be key to achieving our ambition, particularly at a senior level.

## The Public Service will collaborate on whole of Government cross cutting projects that will:

- Deliver effective human-centered policies and services designed with evidence and insights from our public and from our data and research.
- Enable accessible and shared public service data.

## Public Service Bodies are asked to identify and prioritise actions that:

- Engage with the public in policy and service design processes to inform evidence and insights for policy development and to ensure services are designed with them at the centre.
- Put service users first in all decisions and actions and pursue quality by implementing a formalised management method that embeds systems thinking, informed by operations management.
- Pursue continuous improvement, not by asking staff to work harder, faster or longer, but by identifying and removing all forms of waste from every process, including waste of staff and service users time and experience/skills.
- Maximise utility of the EIRCODE, Unique Business Identifier (UBI), PPSN and MyGovID as key parts of National Data Infrastructure (NDI) and to inform policy development and service delivery.
- Share data safely across the Public Service to improve the evidence base for policy and service development and so that individuals and businesses have to provide their details once to a Public Service Body.

Public Service Bodies should also have regard to these priorities in developing their corporate strategies and align the delivery of their reform actions in their business plans with the Framework and report on progress in their annual reports.



## Evidence-informed policy and services designed for and with our public

Well-designed policies and the delivery of efficient and effective public services can be informed by data and policy insights derived from evidence. This means that the Public Service must have the capability to analyse, use and share data to inform policies and services. As key elements of our strategic policy infrastructure, the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service (IGEES) and the Irish Government Statistical Service (IGSS), working within and across sectors, will play an important role in providing data and insights on priority policy issues. In addition, the planned establishment of Strategic Policy Units in Government Departments will strengthen our capacity and capability to provide evidence-informed insights for the Government.

The Civil Service plays a crucial part in the policy process and strengthening policy development is a priority to ensure that it can meet the needs of the Government. The Department of the Taoiseach, with support from the OECD under the EU's Technical Support Instrument, is leading on a project to strengthen policy development which builds on the work in this area to date. Addressing increasingly complex policy challenges for a changing Ireland calls for more agile, responsive and evidence-based policy development. New ways of thinking and working are required to tackle big issues. Climate Action co-ordination for example across Government has been strengthened including commitments in relation to climate research, the delivery of Local Authority Climate Action Plans and development of the Green Budgeting agenda.

Advancing our data infrastructure will help to leverage the potential for seamless digital delivery and improve the evidence base for policy development. The further development of the National Data Infrastructure (NDI) will allow for an innovative approach to providing information and insights to support policy development and service delivery. The Data Sharing and Governance Act allows for sharing and reuse of personal data in compliance with Data Protection legislation and providing greater transparency to the public on how data is managed and used will foster increased trust. Ireland has comparatively high levels of trust in most public institutions however there is scope for improvement. Engaging with citizens and customers will improve the legitimacy of policy and services development and this will also increase trust. Levels of trust will be tracked through existing trust surveys across the Public Service and through participating in the biennial OECD surveys on the drivers of trust. The new Open Data Strategy will ensure that more high



quality datasets are published and made available in an accessible way.

A particular area where the evidence base for policy development and planning could be enhanced is strategic foresight - perceiving emerging future changes, then making sense of them, and using them to shape policy. This will help the Public Service to anticipate and respond to emerging risks and opportunities. Steps will be taken to strengthen our approach to using foresight in the Public Service. Engaging with stakeholders in the policy development process and using data from customers and users of public services will also enable better evidence-informed outcomes. The *Design Principles in Government* and associated action plan provide the opportunity to trial a new approach to

developing services by placing users at the centre of design of those services. Lessons in implementation can then inform the policy development process and better service delivery.

Using systems thinking and operations management can help to put service users first in all decisions and actions where applicable. This will also support continuous improvement by identifying and removing all forms of waste from every process.





# Evidence Base and High Level Outcomes

## Evidence Base

The strategy has been informed by an extensive evidence base collected during the period 2020-2022 which includes:

- A review of the implementation of *Our Public Service 2020*
- The Public Service response to COVID-19
- Excellence in Customer Service Case Studies
- Ireland's 2021 survey on the drivers of trust in public institutions
- *Towards a strategic foresight system in Ireland* report
- The achievements of public service transformation initiatives to date and the ambition of existing strategies such as *Civil Service Renewal 2030*, *Connecting Government 2030* and *Making it Real*, the Public Service Innovation Strategy and
- Consultation with public service organisations, members of the Public Service Leadership Board (PSLB) and other stakeholders.

## High Level Outcomes

Over the course of the strategy there will be a focus on measuring the high level outcomes related to the 7-year Public Service Transformation Framework. The strategy is aimed at ensuring the Public Service is better equipped to respond to current and future challenges. It is aimed in particular at delivering for the public and building trust in public institutions. It is focused on outcomes and supports the delivery of climate action and sustainability in the public sector and society.

Achieving the outcomes within the strategy will enable the Public Service to better support the Government to deliver policy and services for the public. It will also provide public servants with the opportunity to fulfill their potential in a rewarding, supportive and agile working environment. A number of indicators will be developed to underpin our approach to monitoring and evaluating the progress and implementation of the strategy through measuring:

- customer satisfaction
- public trust
- use of digital to do business with the Public Service
- employee engagement
- quality of public services
- Government effectiveness

### Digital and Innovation at Scale

- 90% of applicable public services available consumed online and designed with the customer at the centre
- Dynamic and agile workplaces enabling an innovative and digitally capable workforce
- Stronger collaborative approaches to solve complex problems and deliver innovations at scale

### Related Outcomes

Increased use of digital

Increased customer satisfaction

Increased public trust

### Workforce and Organisation of the Future

- A skilled workforce that meets the business needs of each sector of the Public Service and of Public Service Bodies
- A Public Service that is an employer of choice and that can attract, retain, upskill and develop its staff
- An equal, diverse, inclusive, engaged and empowered workforce

### Related Outcomes

Greater employee engagement

Improved quality of public services

Better Government effectiveness

### Evidence-informed policy and services designed for and with our public

- Effective human-centred policies based on enhanced data, analytics and insights
- Services designed and delivered with the customer at the centre
- Availability of accessible and shared public service data which also supports evidence-informed policy and services

### Related Outcomes

Improved quality of public services

Better Government effectiveness

Increased public trust



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