



Capacity Development and Consultation Workshop on a
**Samoa National Data Governance
Framework**

Concept Note

Samoa National Data Governance Framework

1. Background

The past decade has been one of digital activity and development in the Pacific region. In 2014, the SAMOA (Small Island Developing States Accelerated Modalities of Action) Pathway regional initiative, endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly, was established. The initiative addresses diverse development needs and underscores the pivotal role of modern technologies and robust information and communication technologies (ICTs) infrastructure in achieving sustainable development. The ICT4SIDS Partnership, established to expedite the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), offers decision support tools and specialized smart hubs globally, aiming to accelerate progress for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) through location-specific solutions and capacity building.

For Samoa, national initiatives over this time have been equally robust. In 2021, the Samoa National Computer Emergency Response Team (SamCERT), funded by the Australian Government, was established to enhance critical infrastructure resilience and workforce capacities for protecting digital technologies and services. In the same year, Samoa's Digital Readiness Assessment (DRA) tool was launched, with support from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).¹ In 2022, with support from UNDP, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the India-UN Fund, the Samoa Knowledge Society Initiative (SKSI) concluded with the creation of the Samoa Digital Library (SADIL), part of an effort to safeguard citizens' freedom of expression and access to information. The International Telecommunications Union's (ITU) Smart Islands Initiative has started consultations with communities and stakeholders from Manono-Tai island between December 2022 and January 2023 to inform the selection and design of the digital services.²

Along with all United Nations Member States, Samoa's digital government development has been tracked biennially through the UN E-Government Survey, a flagship publication of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). In 2022, Samoa's E-Government Development Index (EGDI) ranking in the Survey was 152. The country's EDGI was lower than the sub-region average and has been declining in global rankings from 117 in 2003. Though it has a rather high Human Capital Index, it underperforms in online services delivery, probably owing to unevenly developed infrastructure.³ Its OGD I moved from low to middle group from 2020 to 2022.⁴

¹ 'Samoa hold Digital Readiness Assessment Tool Results Workshop', UNDP Cook Islands, Niue, Samoa and Tokelau website [accessed 8 April 2024] - <https://www.undp.org/samoa/press-releases/samoa-holds-digital-readiness-assessment-tool-results-workshop>

² 'Smart Villages and Smart Islands – Asia Pacific' page, ITU website [accessed 8 April 2024] <https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/ICT-Applications/Pages/Initiatives/ASP/Smart-Islands/Smart-Islands-Initiative.aspx>

³ United Nations, 2020, UN E-Government Survey 2020: Digital Government in the Decade of Action for Sustainable Development, p. 23.

⁴ The Open Government Development Index (OGDI) is derived as a supplementary index to the Online Service Index (OSI). It extends the dimension of the Survey by focusing on the use of open government data (OGD). The OGD I identifies three key dimensions in its current framework, which are:
(i) policy and institutional framework (as foundation) 30%;

Samoa National Data Governance Framework

Figure 1 Samoa EGDI 2022⁵



Figure 2 Samoa EGDI 2003-2022⁶

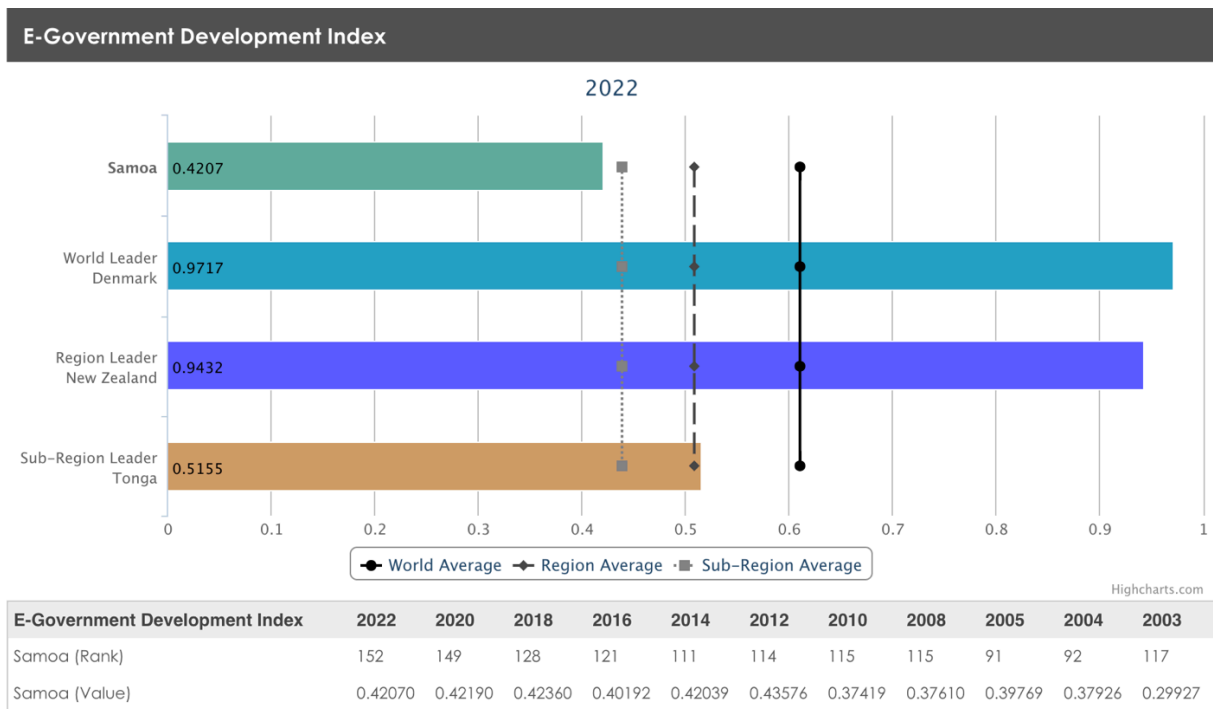


Figure 3 Samoa's OGD Index 2020-2022⁷

- (ii) platform (existence of OGD portal and features) 50%;
- (iii) data availability in various sectors such as health, education, employment, social security, environment and justice) and data application (such as through organizing hackathons) 20%.

⁵ <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/146-Samoa>

⁶ <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/146-Samoa>

⁷ <https://publicadministration.un.org/egovkb/en-us/Data/Country-Information/id/146-Samoa>

Samoa National Data Governance Framework

	OGDI Group	OGDI
2022	Middle OGD	0.3127
2020	Low OGD	0.2208

The data governance framework

This project makes use of the framework for data governance that the 2020 UN E-Government Survey provides. According to the report, data governance refers to a homogeneous set of principles and practices that guide the formal management of data assets within all public institutions. The key principles include effectiveness, accountability, and inclusiveness. The principles and elements serve as a guide to developing a data governance system. For doing that, they need to be operationalized using various strategies, some of which are directly relevant to data governance, and some are indirectly relevant. The direct ones, for instance, include data sharing, public disclosure of information, and data disaggregation. The indirect ones include transparent financial management and control, budgetary transparency, and participatory budgeting.

The framework provided in the E-Government Survey also emphasises the importance of inclusiveness in data governance. Firstly, inclusive data governance is essential in promoting e-participation, which is about using ICT to engage people in public decision-making, administration, and service delivery. Secondly, data is considered one of the three essential elements for e-governments to ensure no one is left behind. Those three elements are data, design and delivery.

The data governance framework model is based on four pillars and six elements. The four pillars include 1) policy, 2) institutions, 3) processes, and 4) people. The six elements cover 1) data standards and classification; 2) data sharing, exchange, and interoperability; 3) data security and protection; 4) data privacy and ethics; 5) data infrastructure; and 6) digital identity. The table below provides more details:

Key points	Descriptions
The four pillars of data governance	
Legal and policy framework	A set of laws and policies that provide principles and management intent into fundamental rules governing the creation, acquisition, integrity, security, quality, and use of data and information
Institutional framework	Institutional and organisational arrangements which define the roles, responsibilities, and coordination among key stakeholders
Processes and procedures	Processes and steps by which specific tasks of data management are performed in accordance with key principles in the broader data governance
People and resources	Human and financial resources are needed to support the implementation of the data governance and management tasks.
The six elements of data governance	

Samoa National Data Governance Framework

Data standards and standardisation	Data classification is a process of classifying data according to their sensitivity, whereas data standardisation is about ensuring uniform identification, collection, relating, validation, and sharing of data. They are crucial to breaking down data silos, creating interoperability, and ensuring data integrity.
Data sharing, exchange, and interoperability	Managing the movement and consolidation of data within and between applications and organisations in accordance with the regulatory framework.
Data security and protection	The planning, development, and execution of security policies and procedures to provide proper authentication, authorization, access, and auditing of data and information assets.
Data privacy and ethics	Procuring, storing, managing, interpreting, analysing, and disposing of data with careful attention to the protection of individual and business entities's data privacy and in line with ethical principles.
Data infrastructure	Various components, including hardware, software, networking, and services needed to enable data consumption, storage, and sharing.
Digital identity	A safe, secure, and convenient way to prove who you are online for work, for education, for personal use, and when accessing government online services.

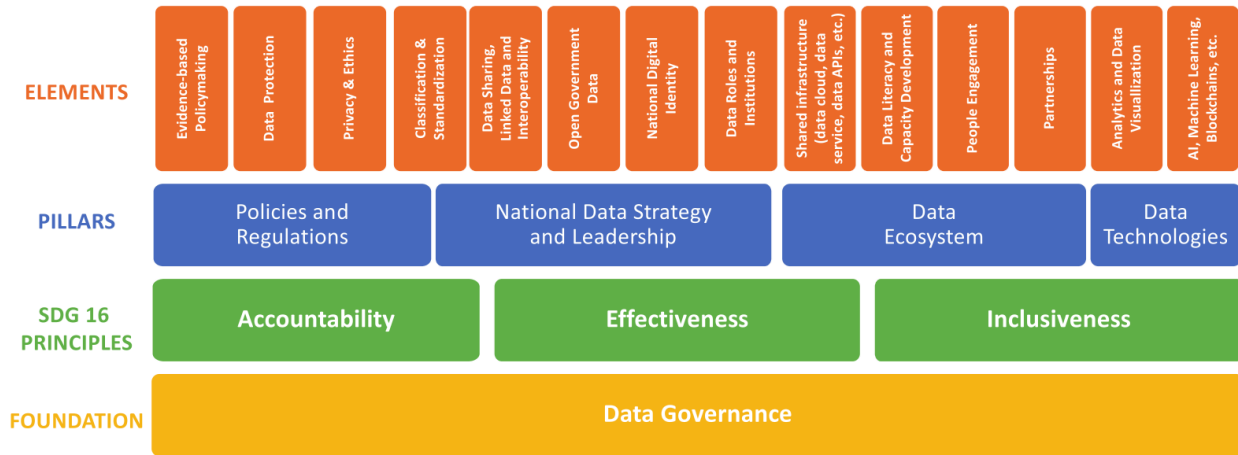
Source: (UNDESA, 2020) (D4D, 2022) (Digital Transformation Agency (Australian Government), 2023)

While there is no one-size-fits-all prescription, there are common approaches that a country can consider when developing its data governance system. Various documents offer different versions of such approaches, all of which emphasise the need for a coherent policy direction, a clear institutional setup, capacity development, and regular monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation.

The dynamic relationship between policies, institutions, people, processes, and enabling technologies is what drives data governance. According to the UN e-Government survey (2020), an effective national data governance framework for e-government should be underpinned by four pillars: policies and regulations, a national data strategy and leadership, a data ecosystem, and investment in data technologies. With appropriate data governance, decisions based on available data do not place the Government or the public at risk because of low data quality, data falsification, data obsolescence, or security or privacy threats.

Illustrative data governance framework for e-government

Samoa National Data Governance Framework



Source: (UNDESA, 2020)

Development in Samoa

Samoa has been progressively building policies, strategies, and legislation for ICTs and e-government. In 2016, the government published the National Cybersecurity Strategy 2016–2021, with the goal of strengthening existing IT systems and critical infrastructure sectors that support economic growth and protect the public. In the same year, The Government Internet and Electronic Mail Policy was released with the objectives of encouraging communication access to facilitate and enhance government services; improving the quality of work and employee productivity; and creating security standards to protect and maintain Government resources. The 2017 Social Media policy for Government further provided a framework for Government outreach and citizen engagement using social media.

Digital transformation is well recognized in national development. As a regular Voluntary National Review reporter, in 2020 Samoa prioritized affordable ICT and effective national data management.⁸ In 2021, the National Development Plan-Pathway for the Development of Samoa listed ‘innovative ICT use’ as one of its key priority areas. Samoa 2040 recognizes that digital technologies present transformative opportunities for the Samoan economy and emphasizes the importance of trust and access to digitalization, as well as investment in education, skills, and digital literacy. In 2022, the ICT Sector Plan 2022-2026, a continuation of Communication Sector Plan 2017-2021 was released to advance the goal of ‘affordable and appropriate ICT accessible to all’, with a SWOT analysis of the sector included.

⁸https://hlpf.un.org/sites/default/files/vnrs/2021/26192Samoas_Second_VNR_Key_Messages_FINAL_for_submission_to_699.pdf

Samoa National Data Governance Framework

Objectives underway are the development of a National Digital Transformation Strategy,⁹ National Digital Identity,¹⁰ Passenger Data Exchange Systems,¹¹ Information Security Policy,¹² Open Access for Information Policy,¹³ and Right to Information Legislation.¹⁴

Overall, Samoa's digital focus, bolstered by regional and international support, has been centred around ICT infrastructure development and affordable access to connectivity, in which it has made notable achievements. Data governance, on the other hand, seems to be overshadowed. Establishment of data/security standards, procedures and protocols; policy coherence, reviewing and developing legislative and regulatory instruments governing ICT aspects across all of Government and working with legislators to draft instruments are yet to be listed as priorities to ensure digitalization is properly leveraged. A whole-of-government data governance should be integrated into the National Digital Transformation Strategy to provide further guidance. Notably, in the Ministry of CIT's Corporate Plan 2022-2026, goals around data standardization, data security were set.

The next policy-step could be for Samoa to develop a National Digital Transformation Strategy where data governance should be integrated, adopting a whole-of-government approach and coordinating the existing policies and strategies to offer a comprehensive national digital guidance. It is vital for the Government to evaluate its digital landscape to avoid project fatigue.

While development in data classification, standardization, sharing, security, privacy, and identity is developing, there are great resources and opportunities that the Government can leverage. Domestically, Samoa can continue on strengthening the ICT infrastructure to provide easier access to public services, boost the digital economy, and raise digital awareness, laying the foundation for a capable data governance. Internationally, as an SIDS, it can take advantage of the strong partnerships Samoa has established with regional and international countries and organizations.

⁹ 'Samoa's Digital Strategy takes another step closer to being realized' UNDP website, 16 December 2022 -

<https://www.undp.org/samoa/press-releases/samoas-digital-strategy-takes-another-step-closer-being-realized>

¹⁰ 'Parliament debates the National Digital Identification Bill' Talamua Online News, 15 June 2023 - <https://talamua.com/2023/06/15/parliament-debates-the-national-digital-identification-bill/>;

¹¹ 'Supporting the Government of Samoa to Strengthen Passenger Data Exchange Systems' IOM UN Migration website, 2023 -

<https://www.iom.int/project/supporting-government-samoa-strengthen-passenger-data-exchange-systems>

¹² Corporate Plan 2022 – 2026, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Government of Samoa -

<https://mcit.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/APPROVED-CORPORATE-PLAN-2022-2026..pdf>

¹³ Presentation – Samoa's Digital Journey (MCIT) -

<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Regional-Presence/AsiaPacific/Documents/Events/2020/RDF2020/Pre%20Forum%20Day%201/Samoa%E2%80%99s%20Digital%20Journey%20v4.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://mcit.gov>. Corporate Plan 2022 – 2026, Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, Government of Samoa -

<https://mcit.gov.ws/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/APPROVED-CORPORATE-PLAN-2022-2026..pdf>

Samoa National Data Governance Framework

To discuss and work through these matters, UN DESA in collaboration with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology of the Government of Samoa will be hosting a national consultation workshop with representatives from governments, private, public sector, civil societies, academia and other key stakeholders to develop a national data governance framework.

2. Objectives of the Workshop

The objective of the National Consultation Workshop is three-fold, as follow:

- engage stakeholders from different agencies and other non-government stakeholders to participate in the official dialogue and knowledge exchange on proposing a national data governance framework for Samoa
- discuss the existing opportunity and gap assessments for proposed focus areas, emerging from dialogue and interaction among workshop participants, including the proposed UN DESA data governance framework of 4 pillars and 6 elements
- identify the next course of action in strategic planning and implementation for setting up a national data governance framework

3. Thematic Areas and Guiding Questions

The primary thematic areas of the Workshop are as follows:

Four (4) pillars of National Data Governance: Policy, Institutions, People/Partnerships, Processes:

- Policy: existing policy and regulatory framework;
- Institutions: existing institutional framework
- People: existing data ecosystem and mapping of stakeholders
- Processes: existing data processes

Six (6) elements of National Data Governance:

1. Data standards and classification;
2. Data sharing, exchange, and interoperability;
3. Data security and protection;
4. Data privacy and ethics;
5. Data infrastructure
6. Digital identity

Guiding Questions for focus group discussions:

- a. For the specific focus areas, what are the key strengths and weaknesses in the existing national data governance?

Samoa National Data Governance Framework

- b. For the specific focus areas, what are the opportunities and threats in building national data governance?
- c. In relation to the specific focus areas, which concerns might be considered in planning and implementing the national data policy and strategy?
- d. How do we co-create a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach in national data governance, including the effective participation of the private sector and civil society?
- e. Which approach should we follow: a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach, a silo approach (e.g. achieving quick wins) in national data governance?

4. Expected Outcomes

The following are the expected outcomes of the Workshop:

- To build institutional and individual capacities, with participants get insight on issues of national data governance
- To build a shared understanding on issues of the data governance in the public sector
- To identify the strengths and weakness of potential national data governance
- To identify the next course of actions and potential interventions with a proposed timeline

The outputs of each of the sessions and a follow up action plan will be captured in the summary report. A policy brief may be issued by UN DESA in consultation with the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Government of Samoa.

5. Date and Venue

Date/time: **8-9 May 2024**

Venue: **Tanoa Tusitala Hotel**

(lunch and coffee breaks will be provided at the Workshop venue)

Number of participants: **60 (approx)**

(Note: by invitation only; including organisers, resource persons and support staff)

6. Participants

It is expected that the participants for the workshop to include:

- Senior government officials
- Non-governmental experts from the private sector, civil society, think tanks, academia, with knowledge and experience in national data governance frameworks
- Experts from other countries
- Staff representatives from UN Resident Coordinators' Office and other related UN agencies
- Experts and staff members from UN DESA and Government of Samoa

7. Surveys and evaluation

Pre-workshop surveys and post-workshop evaluations will be circulated. A follow-up questionnaire could be sent out to participants after the Workshop.

8. Organisers and Facilitators

The Workshop is jointly organised by the Division of Public Institutions and Digital Government (DPIDG) of UN DESA and the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), Government of Samoa.