Report

Our digital jump into the future

Report of the LOLA conference
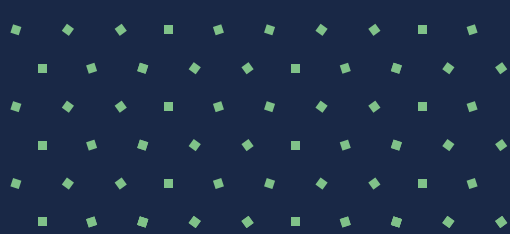
Online, 27 January 2021

February 2021

Socitm inform

LOLA **Linked Organisation of Local Authority ICT Societies**

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SESSION 1

Covid-19 has catapulted us into the future

By Eddy Van der Stock, president, Linked Organisation of Local Authority ICT Societies (LOLA)

Covid-19 has speeded the adoption of digital technologies by several years and many of these changes could be here for the long haul. According to a McKinsey global survey of executives, companies have accelerated the digitisation of customer and supply-chain interactions and internal operations by three to four years. And the share of digitally-enabled products in their portfolios has accelerated by a shocking seven years.

We are literally jumping into the future.

Digital adoption has taken a quantum leap – some are talking about a paradigm shift – at both government and industrial levels. During the pandemic, citizens have moved dramatically toward online channels and governments, companies and industries have responded in turn.

Services no longer need to be designed in silos that we used to know. Governments have an opportunity to offer speed-to-market and proven results by connecting services, designers and customer journeys.

At the global scale, many governments can learn from peers in other countries and territories, like we do with our LOLA network, which provides a valuable source of ideas. Leading practices and evidence of what can work are being shared.

This is also true within government where the same challenge is often being addressed separately by different departments, regions and levels of government.

Digital tools and databases should enable governments to share and re-use service components that meet the needs of citizen cohorts and improve their experiences. In that way, the product of design thinking can be used to strengthen government processes as well as individual services, improving value for money.

After all, we all want value for our taxes.

We step behind this to explore government as a platform, providing a type of common framework by which governments can interact with other governments, companies and citizens, connected with each other

Rather than connecting designers, a whole-of-government platform only requires one delivery method – an example is a payment system – and integrates the citizen-customer journey.

Developing data access safeguards is a pre-requirement for such kinds of platforms. It reduces the risk that is posed by sharing personal data held by a variety of organisations with differing levels of cyber resilience. Cyber security is, everywhere, high on the agenda.

Establishing digital identity within that environment is critical. In the post-pandemic period, a new reality is that digital identity will likely be far more than a mechanism to enable security. It is expected to be the foundation on which citizens, businesses and other customers can store and use their personal data for their needs, their preferences and of course eligibility for government services.

While the main body of citizens will probably have access to these new types of services, we still need to keep an eye on the digital divide, which can be resolved by positioning public services in a new more open, social role oriented towards the needs of citizens.

In summary, Covid-19 has demonstrated that policy and service design do not need to be slowed down and this is where we all can learn in a governmental environment.

By stripping the process back to focus on the customer needs and journey, government services can become more effective and provide once again more value for money. The building blocks are available, and we learned a lot over the last few months.

Prior to the crisis, the sector was comfortable with policy changes going quite slowly. It took us years, while downloading new upgrades to technology each month. Recent pandemic experience has shown that this does not need to be the case anymore.

While the pressures it has placed on governments are huge, and the human consequences of the crisis are tragic, Covid-19 has presented governments with an opportunity by removing the inaction that previously constrained them.

Traditionally, the public sector was regarded as being behind the private sector in many areas, particularly customer experience, but it has shown that it can be agile and fast-moving in a crisis. Let's follow this fast lane for a while and not fall back into an old way of working and change.

Recording of the full session:
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=20s

LOLA: www.lola-ict.org

SESSION 2

How Auckland rushed capacity data into its travel app

Auckland Transport added live information on bus capacity (see figure 1) to its app in just two days, in time for the start of New Zealand's Covid-19 lockdown.

The city's transport authority already collected data on how many people were on each of its buses and had plans to make it available to customers. When New Zealand's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, announced on 23 March 2020 that citizens would have to stay at home except for essential trips and exercise from midnight on 26 March, the organisation rushed through an update of its AT Mobile app to pass this information to its 250,000 users.

"It was available on the first day of lockdown," Mike Manson, chief executive of the country's Association of Local Government Information Management (ALGIM), told the event. This helped those who had to take buses to do so safely by showing them which vehicles were already full and which had plenty of space under social distancing rules.

The transport authority added data on train occupancy to its app on 6 April and occupancy status to digital signs at bus stops in May, using staff who were working from home to check what was appearing on local signs. It added similar information to train station signs in June then to audio announcements in July.

This iterative approach allowed Auckland Transport to respond within hours to a new lockdown announced in August and has helped passenger numbers recover to around three-quarters of pre-pandemic levels, as well as supporting an increase in customer satisfaction. It has shared the work with operators in Australia, Canada and the United States.

Manson said that the project also helped the authority improve collaboration and efficiency, which will save NZ$2m (£1.05m, €1.19m, US$1.44m, A$1.88) in the 2020-21 financial year: "That was a major bonus of the system."

Figure 1. Auckland Transport indicator board including occupancy data

ALGIM recognised Auckland Transport's travel app as the best fast- tracked project in a special set of awards announced in October 2020 for work during the pandemic. More than a third of the country's local authorities participated in the awards competition.

Auckland Council won an all-of-council supportive team award for the way it redeployed employees to communicate with citizens, with library staff making 15,000 welfare calls to those aged 70 and over and customer service staff handling 36,000 requests over three months for assistance. The council dispatched more than 37,000 food and welfare parcels from a repurposed indoor stadium and introduced its own track and trace system.

Manson also highlighted work by Far North District Council, which covers the lightly-populated northern tip of the country, to rush in digital support for the democratic process. Covid-19 followed a drought and serious flooding that at one point cut off the area's roads to the rest of the country.

The council went ahead with its digital democracy project, which involved staff driving as much as three hours to deliver iPads to councillors so that meetings could move online. Between the end of March and the end of June its team of five IT staff dealt with just under

5,000 support tickets and enabled 9,000 Microsoft Teams meetings. "They came through with a can-do attitude," said Manson.

ALGIM's special awards also recognised work by Tasman District Council, on the north coast of New Zealand's South Island, to expedite the introduction of two digital transformation projects, one known as Doris (digital office records and information system) which went live on 'Doris day'. The association also noted an 11-episode online video series organised during lockdown by Taranaki Regional Council in the south-west corner of North Island that encouraged families stuck at home to discover what wildlife they could find in their back yards.

Recording of this session: www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=15m47s

ALGIM's 2020 special awards: www.algim.org.nz/2020awards

Auckland Transport announcement of bus capacity feature: ourauckland.aucklandcouncil.govt.nz/articles/news/2020/03/at-mobile-app-now-showing-real-time-bus-capacity

SESSION 3

Victorian councils develop data exchange work

Twelve councils in the Australian state of Victoria are planning to pilot a system that will let them access each other's information, with the aim of producing useful intelligence and insights.

The Data Exchange Model will build on work by City of Greater Geelong and City of Ballarat, near-neighbours west of Melbourne, which share access to similar data sets from their respective unicipalities. They both use the same platform, and have pooled their information to allow generation of statistics, visualisations and dashboards.

"We can take data from many different platforms, devices and sources. We can collect it, enrich it and share it many different ways," said Matt Szymczak, senior lead smart city at Greater Geelong, told the event. "The beauty of this platform is that it's scalable across all our councils and across anyone who wants to be a part of it."

The project resulted from a MAVHack event, held in August 2020, focusing on how local authorities in the state could use data to support decision-making that would help communities recover from Covid-19. MAVHacks are organised by MAV Technology.

Lisa Bennetto, MAV Technology's executive officer, said that IT has helped local authorities in the state to cope with the pandemic. This has included: establishing home working for staff, such as by accelerating the introduction of Microsoft Teams; moving services online; applying tax discounts and distributing grants; and assisting the State Government with contact tracing
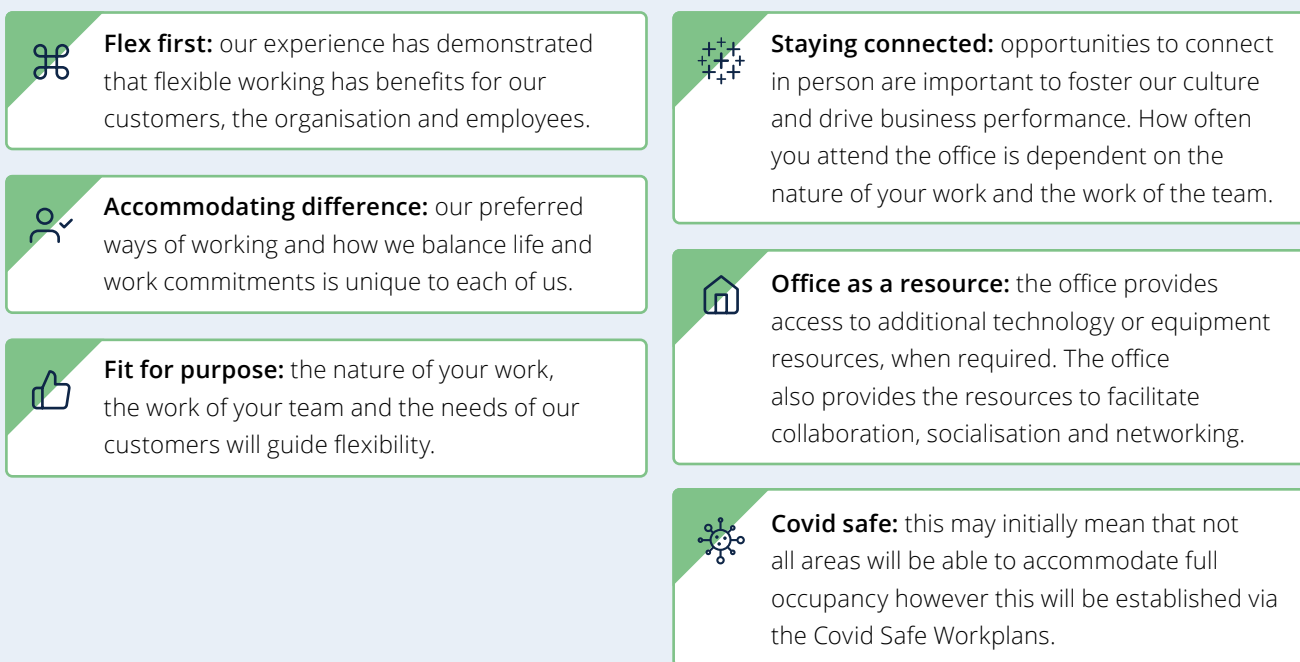
work. "It was centralised at the start of our first lock-down and that proved problematic for Melbourne and Victoria, and we changed that," she said.

As well as running MAVHack, MAV Technology reinvented its usual programme of physical events as 'MAVTV', with more than 50 online events over three months. It has also run a virtual version of its awards for excellence.

Melbourne endured a lockdown, lasting more than three months to the end of October, and Victoria applied strict rules, which for some periods banned people in urban areas from leaving their homes for more than an hour a day. Justine Resta, transformation office manager for City of Greater Geelong, said that councils are learning from the extensive periods of enforced remote working in their plans to reopen offices. "There are some really good opportunities, learnings and practices that our organisation didn't want to lose by going back to the same old way of working," she said.

Figure 2: Geelong's guiding principles for office re-opening flexibility
Source: City of Greater Geelong Council

Flex first: our experience has demonstrated that flexible working has benefits for our customers, the organisation and employees.

Accommodating difference: our preferred ways of working and how we balance life and work commitments is unique to each of us.

Fit for purpose: the nature of your work, the work of your team and the needs of our customers will guide flexibility.

Staying connected: opportunities to connect in person are important to foster our culture and drive business performance. How often you attend the office is dependent on the nature of your work and the work of the team.

Office as a resource: the office provides access to additional technology or equipment resources, when required. The office also provides the resources to facilitate collaboration, socialisation and networking.

Covid safe: this may initially mean that not all areas will be able to accommodate full occupancy however this will be established via the Covid Safe Workplans.

She said that Greater Geelong has set principles for re-opening its offices (see figure 2) including 'Flex first', under which the council will ask 'why not' rather than 'why' when considering flexible working, and recognising that employees have their own preferences on work-life balance so options should be worked out for each individual.

"My favourite one is the office as a resource, so rather than the place you go where you have to clock-in and clock-out, it means you would use the building in the same way you would use other resources," Resta said, such as for a meeting space or access to technology not available at home.

She plans to work remotely full-time with face-to-face catch-ups when necessary: "Even then it doesn't need to happen within the organisation's offices or buildings, it can be in a café or somewhere else."

Recording of this session: www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=37m43s

City of Greater Geelong office reopening: www.geelongaustralia.com.au/news/item/8d8bb8e80119b55.aspx

MavHack: www.mavdigital.com/portfolio/mav-hack

SESSION 4

Georgia brings down curtain on courtroom theatre

Digitisation of court processes has improved both the speed and quality of justice in Georgia, partly by reducing the scope for lawyers to indulge in theatrics, according to the chief information officer of the US state's attorney general's office.

Clark Rainer, who is also international director of GMIS International, told the event that before Covid-19 nearly every legal process took place in a physical court, with five to ten in-person court sessions often required before a typical trial including hearings, depositions and jury selections.

These often generated delays when participants could not attend and encouraged lawyers to use dramatic emotional techniques to gain an advantage, speaking over each other or producing material at the last minute. "That's not necessarily in the best interest of the law," said Rainer. "It's a lot easier to do in person. It's a lot harder to do that if you're on a Webex, Zoom or Teams call."

As a result of the pandemic, courts in Georgia have introduced audio and video calls for everything non-essential. Fulton County's chief judge Christopher Brasher recently noted that remote working has led to pre-trial hearings and arraignments (where defendants are charged and enter a plea) taking place three times as fast as previously, and improvements in the quality of legal practice and argument.

Rainer added that not everyone is happy, however: "Lawyers who rely on courtroom theatre rather than the law don't necessarily like the new formats, because it takes away one of the tools in their tool chest, or weapons," he said.

Covid-19 has also led the state to consider running juries by video, but poor broadband in rural areas makes this hard to achieve. It has also experimented
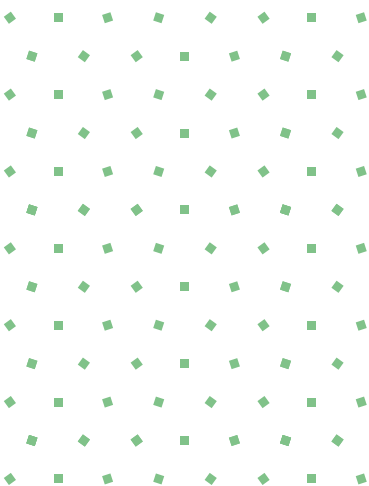
with putting in-person juries in larger rooms and decreasing the number of jurors, but it still has a backlog of cases that need jury trials.

Chris Carr, Georgia's attorney general, has set a goal of "maximum flexibility" and has introduced other new technologies to help staff work remotely, with 95% still doing so in January 2021. The office prefers to use Webex for video conferencing due to better security, although other platforms are allowed. Among other changes (see figure 3), it is in the process of introducing VMWare's Horizon virtual desktop infrastructure to allow users to work remotely with low bandwidth.

Rainer said this shift to remote working has led him to sell his apartment in Atlanta, where he used to stay during the week to avoid spending three hours driving each day. He now works from his farm south of the city, where he lives with his fiancée. "The quality of life for me, and I think all the employees in our office, has increased tremendously," he said.

*GMIS will host LOLA's conference at its own annual event, which it plans to hold in Disney World, Florida on 22-25 August 2021.

Recording of this session: www.youtube.com/ watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=3h04m15s

GMIS Meets event, 22-25 August, Florida: www.gmis.org/events/EventDetails. aspx?id=1420805&group=

Figure 3: New technology and procedures following Covid-19

1. **Webex**

2. **VMWare Horizon VDI**

3. **All laptops** (132 newly-purchased)

4. **Netscaler WAF**

5. **Adobe DC** with Adobe Sign

6. **Cisco Umbrella** and **Cisco Email Security Appliance** (cloud)

7. **Upgraded firewalls**

Source: Georgia Office of Attorney General

SESSION 5

Remote managers will have to motivate and coach

The widespread shift to remote working means that public service managers need to become much better at motivating and coaching, Socitm's learning programme manager Aidan Matthews told the event.

He outlined a hierarchy of what employees want, starting with basic needs such as materials, equipment and technology. "Then we can think about management support, contributing as team members and then we can think about growing," he said.

In many cases, such needs are still not being met. Socitm, the UK-based society for innovation, technology and modernisation in local public services, carried out research on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on local authorities, with the support of the Linked Organisation of Local Authority ICT Societies (LOLA) and Major Cities of Europe (MCE).

This found that while nearly half of local government respondents said they had become more productive since moving to remote working, half had experienced an issue with remote working tools and less than a quarter

had received appropriate training on how to use them. Many also said they had not felt involved in setting up new ways of working used during lockdown.

"A remote team member can lose a sense of connection and become disengaged very quickly," Matthews said. He added that it helps if managers consider invisible diversity traits, including culture, ethnicity and communication styles, as well visible ones, when determining how best to work with colleagues. "The more diverse a team we have, the stronger that team will be – if they are managed and led in the correct way," he added.

Socitm recently launched new online training courses to support managers and staff continuing to work remotely. These offer remote management techniques, including a conversation planner designed to help managers with questions including 'Do you get a chance to share your opinions?' and 'Have you seen any progress in your work in the last six months?'

Other techniques involve helping employees to find what sort of roles they like to play in a team, using the Belbin assessment that includes a variety of role types such as co-ordinator, specialist, shaper and implementer, and using coaching approaches that talk to staff about what they are doing well rather than focusing on their mistakes.

Nadira Hussain, Socitm's director of leadership development and research, said that such coaching techniques can be more positive, engaging, nurturing and empowering for staff. "The traditional ways of working in a physical world, the hierarchical, controlling, more structured types of leadership and management styles have really been replaced," she said.

Socitm's Leadership Academy offers a range of courses for managers, including Empowering Women, Senior Leaders and Top Talent for those moving towards senior roles. It also runs an alumni community and a Returners programme, the latter in collaboration with the UK Government Equalities Office (GEO) and the Local Government Association (LGA) to support those returning to work after a career break to care for children or relatives.

Martin Ferguson, Socitm's director of policy and research, outlined the society's work on digital ethics, which will comprise a series of roundtables focused on ethical, sustainable and inclusive recovery post the Covid pandemic. These roundtables will be followed by a high-level consultation with key policy influencers to be held at St George's House, Windsor Castle, a centre established by the Duke of Edinburgh to nurture wisdom on contemporary issues, which can be put to use in the wider world.

Socitm is developing an ethical, digital place-making model that encompasses a number of key policy themes (see figure 4). Founded on the principles of 'doughnut economics', which focuses on social and ecological outcomes, the aim is to equip members with the relevant tools to apply ethical principles in their practice.

Ferguson said Socitm aims to share its experiences and develop resources with other members of LOLA: "We also want to raise our voices, as a CIO and digital leaders' community, about the role that we now have in helping to embed ethical use of data and technologies to improve outcomes for people and communities in the local places that we are responsible for and work in."

Recording of this session: www.youtube.com/watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=56m12s

Belbin team roles: www.belbin.com/about/belbin-team-roles

Covid-19 digital and ICT impact survey: socitm.net/improve/covid-19-digital-and-ict-impact-survey

Doughnut economics: doughnuteconomics.org/about-doughnut-economics

Socitm Leadership Academy: socitm.net/lead

Socitm report on digital ethics: socitm.net/download/digital-ethics-the-ethical-use-of-emerging-technologies-and-data

Figure 4. Socitm's ethical, digital place-making model
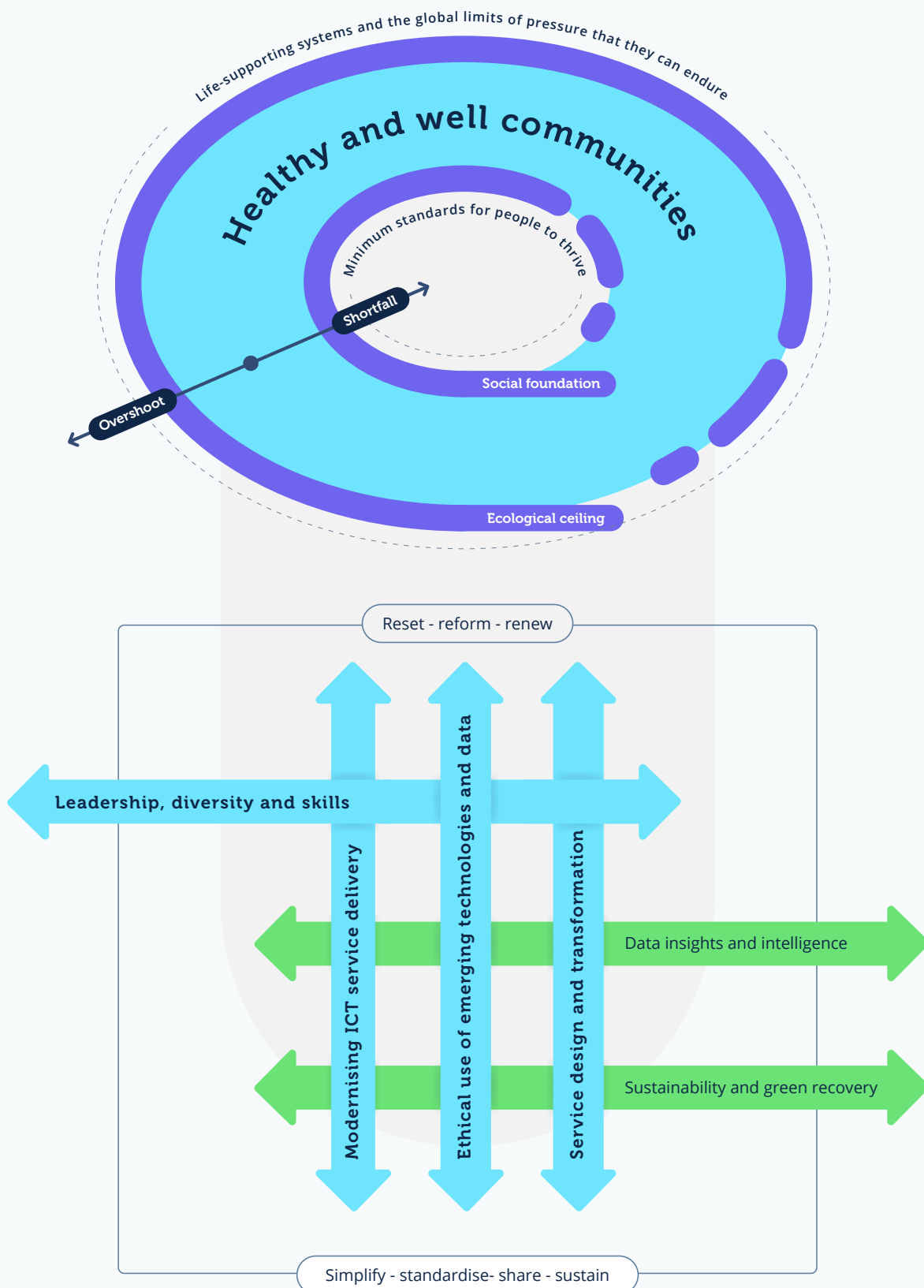
OTHER SESSIONS

Västerås learns that remote education works

The City of Västerås in central Sweden has offered all of its 12,000 employees use of a digital learning platform that works on mobile devices as part of its response to Covid-19, something its chief digital officer Jörgen Sandström described as a breakthrough: "We have learnt that almost all education can be made online," he told the event.

Sandström said that the city has found that online collaboration platforms such as Microsoft Teams are not suitable for all purposes, with questions over where documents are stored with the European Court of Justice's Schrems II decision of July 2020 making it harder for public authorities to use cloud data storage. The city has rapidly implemented an existing pilot of a secure online meeting system.

However, Sandström said that Västerås is planning to make working life platform and location independent wherever possible, meaning an end to standardised 'PC on a desk' infrastructure and a move towards all-digital administration allowing greater use of automation, machine learning and artificial intelligence. Strong leadership is going to be needed, he added: "If we don't do that, we will be stuck where we are and cannot take care of the possibilities that the crisis has made for us."

Recording of this session:
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=2h24m21s

Dutch authorities risk ransomware and legacy leaks

Local authorities in the Netherlands need to protect themselves against risks including ransomware, leaks of data from legacy systems and disruption of process automation systems, according to the annual threat report published by the country's information security service for municipalities.

Jule Hintzbergen of Informatie Beveiligings Dienst (IBD) said that the country's 355 municipalities need to encourage an open internal culture on security issues to allow them to be discussed and tackled. Since 2013, IBD has provided all of these authorities with incident support, crisis co-ordination, general advice and support and specific help on privacy, including sharing data protection impact assessments to help in producing these more efficiently.

Recording of this session:
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=1h26m59s

IBD (in Dutch):
https://www.informatiebeveiligingsdienst.nl

Government as a platform could cut data risks

Local authorities should explore the concept of 'government as a platform' where common systems such as for payments are used across the organisation, said Andreas Nikolakopoulos, chief operating officer of Flemish government IT association V-ICT-OR. Such an approach would integrate processes for citizens and should reduce personal data risks by reducing the number of organisations holding such information, he told the event.
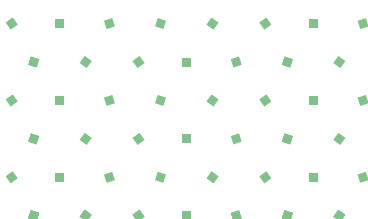
Nikolakopoulos said that this approach could build on the permanent changes that Covid-19 is likely to make to public services, such as apps that make things simple for citizens, making more use of data in management and no longer designing public services in organisational silos.

Recording of this session:
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=2h44m49s

V-ICT-OR (in Dutch): www.v-ict-or.be

Major Cities plans October meeting in Greece

Local government CIO group Major Cities of Europe (MCE) has rescheduled its annual conference to take place in Larissa in Greece in October 2021. The event had initially been planned to take place in 2020 and then in May 2021. Georgio Prister, the group's president, said that the event will cover transformation following Covid-19 including new ways of working and public mobility as a service. Although it has a focus on the European Union, the group includes members from outside the bloc including Israel, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States.

Recording of this session:
www.youtube.com/
watch?v=F9NInSKQlVY&start=3h45m06s

Major Cities of Europe: www.majorcities.eu

APPENDIX 1

Participating organisations

ALGIM - www.algim.org.nz

ALGIM (Association of Local Government Information Management) provides professional development and thought leadership across a range of local government professions in New Zealand. We support traditional ICT roles, ICT infrastructure, web and digital, information and records management, customer service and GIS. Our vision is a digitally transformed, local government sector. Our mission is bringing people and technology together to deliver better services.

GMIS - www.gmis.org

GMIS International is a professional ICT association of worldwide government ICT and digital leaders based in the USA, dedicated to providing best practice solutions through professional development, training, conferences, awards and networking.

Kommits - www.kommits.se

Kommits is a forum for Swedish municipalities to exchange experience and discuss digitization issues and to access advance information from suppliers.

LOLA - www.lola-ict.org/who/executives/gmis

LOLA (Linked Organisation of Local Authority ICT Societies) is a non-profit organisation of international ICT professional associations. These associations comprise professionals who work in local authority and other local public service delivery organisations and their suppliers, in different countries worldwide. We aim to make a significant contribution to the development of European and/or international ICT standards, codes of good practice, cross national projects coordination and potentially drawing on national and European funding to achieve these objectives.

MAV Technology - www.mavdigital.com

MAV Technology is an independently funded group of local government ICT, digital and business transformation practitioners, who are committed to demonstrating leadership to improve council and community services in the Australian state of Victoria.

MCE - www.majorcities.eu

Major Cities of Europe: Our mission is to support local governments in sharing experiences, solutions and strategies in the use of information and communication technologies and leading edge innovation in the administration of local governments and in the development of new services for the well-being and the wealth of their constituents and for the local economy.

Socitm

Socitm - www.socitm.net

Socitm is the society for innovation, technology and modernisation for local public services in the UK. Its vision is to be the preferred network for professionals who are shaping and delivering public services. Its members benefit from being part of a growing community where collaboration is key. It brings people together to share experiences and best practice while learning from each other to the benefit of the public sector as a whole. Established for over 30 years, it continues to challenge convention, inspire change and power progress.

ViAG

VIAG - www.viag.nl

VIAG is the professional association for persons working in the local government in the field of information and communication technology.

V-ICT-OR
VLAAMSE ICT ORGANISATIE

V-ICT-OR - www.v-ict-or.be

V-ICT-OR is the umbrella organisation for information and technology at the local government level, and the creator of the Flemish Virtual Municipality.
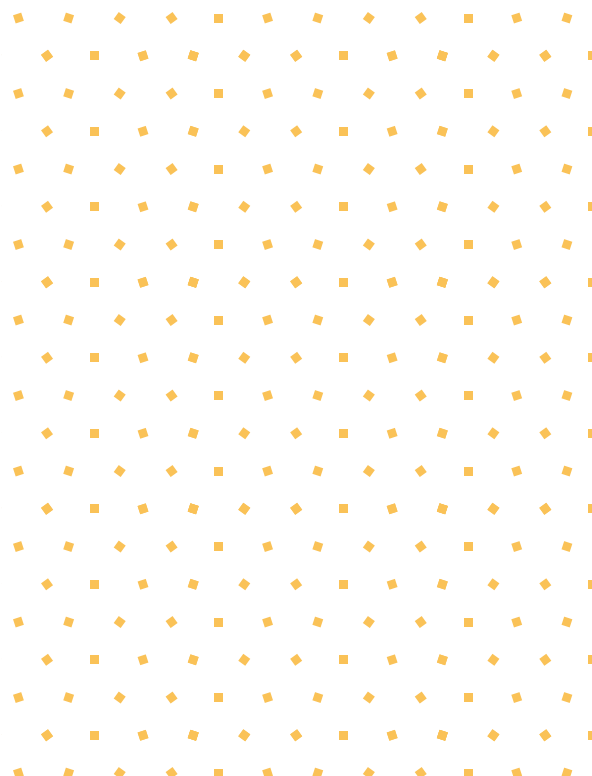
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