The OECD Council adopted on 15 July 2014 the Recommendation on Digital Government Strategies. The Recommendation provides a set of 12 principles structured around 3 pillars. The OECD Secretariat developed a Digital Government Policy Toolkit to support OECD member countries and non-member adhering countries with the implementation of the Recommendation. This practice was submitted by the government of Canada to be considered as a good practice in the implementation of one or more of the principles contained in the Recommendation.

**Description of the practice:**

**Organisation:**
Digital Investment Oversight Division (DIOD), Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat

**Name of the practice:**
Digital Project Review and Oversight

**Principles implemented:**
Principle 10 – Reinforce institutional capacities and monitor project’s implementation

**Description:**

OCIO/DIOD provides several types of oversight:

**Digital Project Investment Planning**

To ensure digital business projects are well conceived and effectively planned from the onset, prior to coming to TB for approval.

**Policy & Enablement**

To guide and enable departments to adopt effective project governance and management practices for digital business projects.

**Point-in-time project oversight (Treasury Board) Submission Due Diligence Reviews**

To ensure the conditions for success are present at the time of a TB submission for digital business projects.

**Ongoing Project Oversight on a $4.5 Billion portfolio of 21 projects**
Digital government toolkit

To ensure effective project management and governance practices are consistently applied throughout the life of the digital business project.

**Project Portfolio Management**

To provide key decision makers (e.g., Treasury Board) and Canadians with a portfolio view of the most complex and/or high-risk digital business project investments from across the GC with the aim of enabling informed decision making.

The Oversight Program is led by the GC CIO in consultation with the Office of the Comptroller General and Program Sectors in the Treasury Board Secretariat.

**Results**

The program’s expected outcome include:

- Improve strategic alignment of project investments.
- Improve project definition and ensure realistic approaches taking into account lessons learned.
- Enable projects to deliver more rapid and iterative value to clients.
- Reduce likelihood and impact of project failures.
- Provide Treasury Board Ministers with better line of sight on project investments from outset.
- Increase transparency of project investments to Canadians.

**Development**

2006: *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the House of Commons, Chapter 3: Large Information Technology Projects, November 2006*

The programme was developed following an audit of seven large, high-risk projects across multiple federal government departments, subsequently, Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat commissioned a study in 2007: “Improving IT Project Performance: Conception, Assessment and Monitoring”, March 31, 2007, Report prepared by David Archer and Richard Manicom which led to the design of the oversight program.

**Implementation:**

2008 Establishment of IT Project Review and Oversight Division of the Chief Information Officer Branch now known as the Digital Investment Oversight Division.

Digital government toolkit

Project Gating for IT-enabled Projects, Project Plan Template. These are available at the following link:

https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/information-technology-project-management/project-management.html

Resources: 21 staff.

Diffusion and scaling:

Enabling tools, guidance and best practices are being applied to a large extent in the management, governance and oversight of high-risk, complex digital projects.

Intranet and Internet websites, participation in functional community meetings, as well as engagement via subject matter conferences and symposiums.

DIOD/OCIO also provides oversight on a portfolio of high-risk, complex projects by reviewing all relevant project documentation, such as business cases and dashboards. It participates in various governance committees (e.g., steering committees, advisory committees, working groups) and provides oversight and advice.

The tools and guidance (such as the Business Case Guide and Template, Executive Project Dashboard Guide and Template, Independent Review Program, Reviewer’s Handbook and Lines of Enquiry, Project Charter Guide and Template, Guide to Project Gating for IT-enabled Projects, Project Plan Template) are being used by a number of government departments leading digital initiatives.

The current portfolio ranges between 20-25 high-risk, complex digital projects valued at 4.5 billion dollars. The program is looking at future opportunities to broaden the oversight to more GC digital projects through the use data analytics and other technologies.

Partnerships:

Yes, the Office of the Comptroller General and various Program Sectors with the Treasury Board Secretariat

Lessons learned

DIOD has developed a Logic Model and Performance Measurement Framework to better measure its impact in the future.

In 2015, the DIOD collected and analyzed 45 Independent Reviews, and 9 Close-out reports (2007 to 2015) to complete a study of common challenges and issues faced by the GC related to IT-enabled projects. In 2017, the study was updated to include an additional 14 Independent Reviews (IR), 4 Close-out reports, and 1 Lessons Learned (2015 to 2017).

The top individual findings identified as areas of concern in both studies were:
Digital government toolkit

- Stakeholder Engagement
- Changing Scope/Requirements
- HR Capacity

We continue to see issues with engagement of senior leaders and sponsors as well as effective transition to operations during project deployment. TBS is in the process of updating its Policy on the Planning and Management of Investments. Related guidance and tools related to the new policy will also be updated in the coming year.

Conditions required:

A willingness on the part of government organizations to be engaged, share best practices, and collaborate.

Additional information:

As an oversight body, the Digital Investment Oversight Division of the OCIO conducts analysis and provides observations on the management of a select portfolio of high-risk and complex IT-enabled projects. However, accountability for project delivery remains with the sponsoring department. We reinforce the policy on Project Management by offering tools to implement best practices (which have been well received). These are available at the following link: https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/information-technology-project-management/project-management.html