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Digital opportunity in cities: Actions for policy makers

Tags: Economic Growth, Programme Design, Digital, Urban, Infrastructure

Developing countries cannot view the digital transition as a luxury, but as a necessity if cities and countries wish to be a part of the new global economy. To support this transition governments, donors and the private sector each have a role to play, with key actions for each stakeholder group as set out in the ICED report 'Urbanisation in a digital world'. In this paper we therefore set out key actions for national and city policy makers as they consider how they can best harness the digital opportunity for their citizens.

For further context and information please consult the <u>full report</u>, and accompanying papers available on the <u>ICED website</u> or contact the ICED Facility at <u>connect@icedfacility.org</u>.

Actions for Policy Makers

1 - Market enablement – Governments have a clear role in enabling and promoting the new markets and business models needed to improve urban service delivery, and drive economic productivity. This will require creative thinking on the part of policy makers about the use of and access to public data, resources and assets, and development of a coherent suite of policies that will provide tax incentives, stimulate markets and provide the skills and expertise needed to drive innovative solutions.

2 – Using Data for their own government operations - With more data available governments primary challenge is no longer a lack of data, but poor capacity to manage and utilize data. Governments therefore need to plan for the systematic capturing and utilization of data, whilst ensuring future systemic interoperability. This will require data services, and support for data management to be made available across government, and a culture of evidenced based policy making and service design to be supported.

3 - Projects/services - City managers will need to pinpoint and prioritise the problems that need solving and guide service delivery solutions whether that involves deploying digital technology as an incremental innovation to an existing service, (i.e. day to day management and updates of transport data) or responding to 'disruptive' solutions that create new opportunities for citizens and challenge existing legal frameworks. Utiising evolving standards for smart cities, such as those developed by the British Standards Institute can help city leaders prioritise and sequence projects and avoid future redundancy.[1]

4 – Keep focused on citizens and outcomes – Fourth Industrial Revolution frontier technologies will continue to advance faster than traditional governance or policy making can keep pace. Rather than try to play catch up, governments that focus on outcomes will be more likely to incentivise appropriate uses of technology to achieve the social or environmental benefits that citizens are calling for.

5 – Strategic, not piecemeal, delivery– Governments should consider early on how they will oversee their support for digital solutions and ensure coherence. Lead agencies at national and city level should be nominated, and must be supported by senior leadership. Overarching data, privacy and cyber-security laws should be developed or updated, and support for digital solutions must be woven through sectoral policy and regulation and national and local strategies.

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[1] https://www.bsigroup.com/en-GB/smart-cities/