DEPARTMENT OF THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Digital Strategy 2021–2024

Contents

Introduction

Innovative, efficient and effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) is vital to the ongoing operation of the department. ICT is a key enabler to allow the department to support business needs and the operation of the Parliament.

This Digital Strategy for the Department of the House of Representatives is intended to provide a framework and approach to a wide range of ICT challenges and opportunities.

The principles set out in this strategy underpin the department's decision-making processes and resourcing. It must be a tool to drive innovation, better system integration and digital uplift. The strategy aims to articulate the department's priorities for technology reform, and information and data management.

This will be a living strategy. It will be refreshed on an 18 month to two-year cycle. It recognises that most, but not all, of our ICT services are delivered on behalf of the department by the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS).

Implementation of specific initiatives to support the ongoing delivery of this strategy are outlined in an accompanying annual Digital Strategy Action Plan.

November 2021

Strategic context

There is an overarching Australian Parliament Digital Strategy 2019–2022 which is a high-level statement of intent for the delivery of digital services for the Parliament. That document is agreed between all four parliamentary departments and is underpinned by a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for service delivery by the Department of Parliamentary Services (DPS).

This document complements that overarching strategy. It is intended to bridge the gap between those shared objectives and additional priorities and business needs of the department.

The strategic objectives detailed in this document directly align with and extend the strategic themes from the Australian Parliament Digital Strategy.

Historically there have been low levels of ongoing investment by DPS into the department's ICT systems. As a result, we have a legacy of many ageing, bespoke systems which need urgent remediation or replacement. Many systems are approaching or have exceeded product end-of-life, have compatibility issues or do not adequately meet the needs of an increasingly sophisticated ICT security environment.
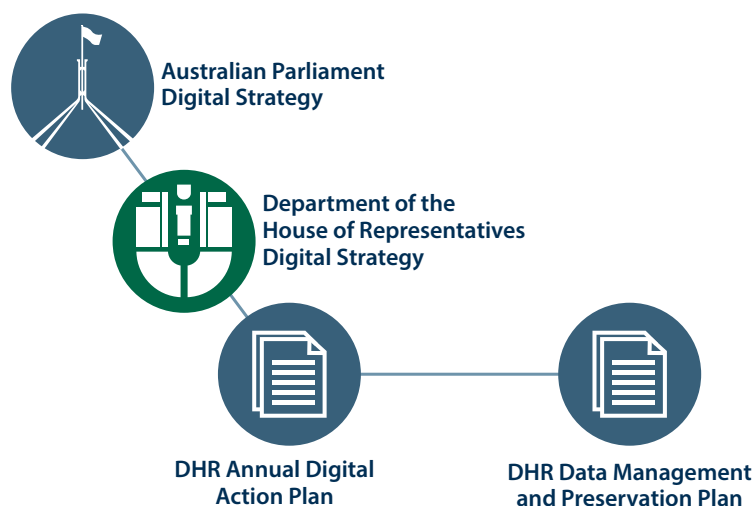
Our systems have evolved organically, and the department has poor integration between core enterprise systems. We must implement and modernise our ICT solutions to ensure that they

are fit for purpose, increase our ongoing capability and meet current ICT security requirements. A consistent and pragmatic approach is needed to mitigate the considerable risk to the ageing systems that support the smooth operation of the Parliament and many of our corporate operations.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has also forced changes to how we conduct business and has highlighted gaps in our ICT and digital capability. This strategy recognises the need for general digital skill and a capability uplift of staff.

As the rate of technology change increases, the expectations for us to work in more innovative and efficient ways rise.

Tradition remains important in informing innovation but not as a barrier to it. Not all services can or should be provided in a digital way. Where it makes sense, we are placing technology at the centre of our decision making as a tool to drive better outcomes for the Parliament and the department.

Australian Parliament Digital Strategy

Department of the House of Representatives Digital Strategy

DHR Annual Digital Action Plan

DHR Data Management and Preservation Plan

Vision

To create a contemporary business environment with a focus on business processes which are supported by suitable technology and systems.

Embracing a digital first approach to make the department more efficient, productive and flexible to better support the work of the House and the broader Parliament.

> " Tradition remains important in informing innovation but not as a barrier to it. Not all services can or should be provided in a digital way. "

Objectives

This strategy seeks to establish and embed an agreed framework and understanding of our digital priorities and directions. It highlights the importance of building capability that supports the delivery of services to the Parliament.

Key principles for the strategy are:

- a focus on effectiveness and value
- fewer, rationalised systems
- better integration and support for enterprise systems (interoperability)
- a more enabled and digitally confident workforce
- ensuring we have the right business structures in place
- modern, supported systems that are fit for purpose
- taking advantage of opportunities presented by emerging technologies.

To achieve these objectives, the principles underpinning this strategy provide a framework to guide and inform all management decisions relating to ICT projects and systems.

To help avoid unneccesary upgrade challenges, security vulnerabilities and integration issues, we will aim to move away from complex, bespoke and custom ICT solutions. Where possible we will take advantage of cloud-based systems to provide flexible and easy access to software capabilities.

It is important that as a department we ensure we have the right organisational structures in place to support staff in all business units to maximise the benefit of our existing and developing ICT systems.

We will provide digital uplift training and targeted systems education to help staff be more productive and make the most of technology.

Through a clear articulation of our priorities and business needs, we will act as a responsible and fully engaged ICT customer working with DPS, external vendors and internal stakeholders to deliver our solutions.

Although there is some overlap, broadly speaking the Action Plan does not include ICT projects proposed or managed through the DPS MoU.

Strategic priorities

Significant elements of our operating environment are out of our direct control. DPS remains our main IT services provider. This strategy builds on that relationship and does not reduce or diminish DPS's responsibilities.

This strategy identifies a focus on four priority themes: technology reform; capability uplift; data and information management; and harnessing opportunities and reducing risk.

Technology reform

- Better integration of corporate and parliamentary systems
- Cloud based – flexible, scalable, efficient, supported
- More contemporary user-centric, mobile-ready systems (mobile and agile workforce)
- More efficient and responsive

Capability uplift

- Improving and expanding the range of in-house digital skillsets
- Improving digital literacy
- Accessible collaboration tools
- Targeted training
- Improved understanding of cyber security issues

Data and information management

- Identifying our datasets and recognising their potential value as a business asset
- Enhance the use and sharing of our trusted data
- Improving data governance and security – data management framework
- Facilitating open information and data policies
- Investigating a move to 'in-place' records management (managing records in their native systems)

Harnessing opportunities and reducing risk

- Supporting new ways of working
- Robust integrated corporate systems
- Contemporary, integrated productivity solutions
- Improved business continuity resilience
- More robust chamber support systems with improved redundancy

Technology reform

Technology reform is an ongoing commitment and focus.

Technological change is driving and redefining the way we work. It is providing opportunities to innovate, improve our business processes and to work smarter. Technology and approaches will continue to evolve rapidly.

Our technology reform priority is to provide ICT systems and solutions that are well integrated, easy to use, fit for purpose, cost effective, robust and secure.

As we modernise our legacy solutions, we will aim to make better use of common platforms and explore opportunities presented by emerging technologies. We will rationalise our systems and internal platforms.

The department should adopt a more innovative and flexible approach – including considering a greater use of commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) and cloud-based solutions. This approach will help reduce the time to implement, offer better upgrade paths, require less dependency on the limited DPS resources, and potentaily reduce the DPS security assessment burden. We need to be prepared to map, modify and evolve existing business processes.

The department will aim to enhance the use of common platforms and commission contemporary systems and technologies that are fit for purpose.

Cloud-based services or COTS will be our first consideration with in-house bespoke systems our least preferred option. This approach will help us to improve productivity and meet business needs while reducing project cost and timeframes.

We will:

- map and assess existing business processes to identify business inefficiencies
- seek better integration of both corporate and chamber focused systems
- use cloud-based or COTS systems – flexible, scalable and efficient software-as-a-service options
- provide more contemporary user-centric, mobile ready systems to support a mobile and agile workforce.

Capability uplift

A major priority for the department is to upskill and empower our staff.

IT capability and digital literacy uplift are critical to realise the benefits of a more technology-enabled digital workplace.

We will only realise cost and productivity benefits promised by technology through a digitally enabled, adept and skilled workforce.

Through this strategy, we acknowledge the desire and need to invest in our people.

While traditional approaches play an important role, there are several benefits to be realised by adopting an increasingly digital workplace, including employee productivity and satisfaction, staff retention and talent attraction.

We cannot effectively realise the benefits offered by emerging technologies and a more flexible and agile workforce without first embracing a 'digital first' mindset. We must evolve the ways we work as an organisation and identify the digital skills required for the future to prepare our staff to meet coming challenges.

We will foster digital uplift through a combination of face-to-face and online training, guidance materials and on the job learning. We will also support less formal digital learning initiatives and skill sharing.

There is momentum towards digital transformation. Improvements to remote access options and office productivity tools have enabled greater flexibility, including better capacity for working remotely.

As we work to understand the range of skills, technologies and cultural change needed, the immediate focus is to further develop and build the digital skills of our staff.

To promote a culture of supporting innovation and nurturing staff to upskill for the future, we will:

- develop general digital literacy awareness materials
- promote and enable the use of collaboration tools
- provide targeted training
- encourage an improved understanding of cyber security issues
- foster an innovation and 'digital first' culture
- strengthen internal ICT project delivery
- establish an internal champions group for the sharing of existing expertise

Data and information management

Our data is a valuable asset that must be managed.

We must better understand the range of data that we own and take a considered approach to information management, data security, management, privacy and sharing.

Our range of data falls within two broad categories: corporate data with an internal focus and application, and our parliamentary records and information. Both types require careful, considered management and governance approaches. We will improve our data management practices to better leverage the value of our data holdings.

Making parliamentary information and data available and transparent (where appropriate) supports the department's corporate objectives to deliver information about the work of the Parliament and to increase public knowledge, participation and engagement.

The department is open to opportunities for data sharing. We have valuable information that can be shared under an 'open data' policy. The idea behind open data is that some data should be freely available to anyone to use and republish as they wish without restriction. It is key to enhancing our transparency and accountability.

In line with the government's commitment to open data, we will identify mechanisms to release our public and non-sensitive data. Making our information searchable and accessible unlocks a range of opportunities for researchers, educators and the public to use our data in innovative ways.

Internally, we will better use common and shared data sources to improve our reporting and analytics options, processes and capabilities. We will strengthen our capacity to analyse data and gain insights. The department aims to build data analytics and visualisation capabilities.

These objectives directly align with the National Archives Digital Continuity policy which supports the Australian Government's digital transformation initiatives and drives e-government. The policy promotes interoperable information, systems and processes, and encourages agencies to transition to entirely digital work practices.

Our ambitions for data and information management are to:

- identify our datasets and their potential value
- enhance use and sharing of our trusted data
- improve data governance and security
- make better use of our data to inform and support decisions
- enable better reporting
- facilitate open information and data
- move to 'in-place' record keeping where appropriate.

To support this strategic priority and associated objectives, the department will develop a *Data Management and Preservation Plan*, to draw out considerations and inform our approach.

Harnessing opportunities and reducing risk

We work in an increasingly complex business environment. Through the smart and careful adoption of emerging technologies, we have opportunities to harness significant productivity and efficiency benefits. There are also substantial risks that we must address and mitigate. They include the increasing risk from cyber security threats, issues of privacy, data protection and business continuity.

We understand that digital transformation is an important factor in helping us address these challenges. It is also important that we understand which services, processes or solutions need to remain non-digital.

As our existing ageing and bespoke systems require replacement, we will look to emerging technology to explore better ways to work and to rationalise our systems. We will look for better integration between platforms and be open to innovating and piloting new approaches. Where possible, we will be alert to the availability of COTS solutions instead of commissioning custom development.

When working with DPS as our ICT service provider, we will strongly advocate for, and articulate our business needs and priorities.

For any internally led ICT projects, the department will apply rigour to our processes – including stakeholder engagement, business and needs analysis, process mapping, project management, solution architecture and reporting. We will also promote Product Owner training for stakeholders/ business owners involved in our ICT projects.

We need to develop our approach to project co-design and technology transformation. Where necessary, we will evolve and adapt our internal structures to meet these challenges and to ensure that we have multi-disciplinary teams with the expertise to successfully progress a transformation agenda.

The department is focused on developing in-house capabilities to strengthen our skills and capacity in ICT project management, business analysis and system administration.

Working with DPS to deliver our ICT projects, we will consciously embed consideration of privacy, security, scalability, interoperability, resilience and risk into all our future technology projects.

We will seek to identify innovative ways to deliver more effective systems and solutions that:

- support business needs
- encourage new ways of working
- provide robust integration of our corporate systems
- offer contemporary, integrated productivity solutions
- improve our business continuity resilience.

Measuring success

To measure the broad success and gauge the impact against each of the strategic themes, the individual initiatives outlined in the annual Digital Action Plans will include specific benefit and success metrics.

> " The department is focused on developing in-house capabilities to strengthen our skills and capacity in ICT project management, business analysis and system administration. "

Alignment to our Corporate Plan

The matrix below maps each of the priorities to the objectives outlined in the Department of the House of Representatives Corporate Plan.

Corporate Plan 2021-22	Technology reform	Capability uplift	Data and information management	Harnessing opportunities and reducing risk
Environment				
▪ Stakeholder responsibility and engagement		●		●
▪ Human resources capacity and capability	●	●		●
▪ Business domain	●	●	●	●
Capability				
▪ Workforce capability		●		●
▪ Information capability			●	●
▪ Community awareness	●		●	●
▪ Stewardship		●	●	●
Risk oversight and management				
▪ Independent audit				●
▪ Risk management				●
▪ Business continuity	●		●	●
▪ Financial compliance	●		●	●
▪ Fraud control	●		●	●
Collaboration				
Department of the Senate	●	●	●	●
Department of Parliamentary Services	●	●	●	●
Parliamentary Budget Office		●		●

Legend:

Technology reform

Capability uplift

Data and information management

Harnessing opportunities and reducing risk

Digital Action Plans

Annual digital action plans will be produced as separate documents to support the ongoing delivery of the Department of the House of Representatives' Digital Strategy.

With a few exceptions, the action plans sit apart from the projects delivered by DPS on our behalf. They map out the range of department-led and managed initiatives aligned to the priority themes from the digital strategy.

> " ICT capability and digital literacy uplift are critical to realise the benefits of a more technology-enabled digital workplace. "