From e-Government to Digital Government: Recent Advances and Lessons Learned From the Korean Experience

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Abstract

Despite significant progress in e-government initiatives across many developing countries, as reflected in the UN e-Government Development Index (EGDI), several nations—particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa—continue to face substantial challenges. These include inadequate IT infrastructure, low digital literacy, severe budget constraints, bureaucratic resistance to change, among others. Sharing lessons from successful countries in building digital government can provide valuable guidance to these nations. This is can helping them to consolidate best practices and overcome common pitfalls. To this end, this study highlights the key success factors, experiences, and lessons learned from the development of Korea's digital government. Beginning with the computerization and informatization eras and progressing to the current digital transformation era, Korea has pursued advancements over the past 40 years that have laid the foundation for its emergence as one of the leading countries in e-government and the digital revolution. This workr explores and emphasizes the socio-technical development pillars and elaborates on the key services provided. It also summarizes the challenges encountered and lessons learned. The paper employs qualitative methods to examine how the core policies of Korean e-government were formulated and implemented. It includes document analysis and reviews of key stakeholder websites..

Keywords: *digital government, e-government, Digital Platform Government, AI and Data, Korean Experience, government Development Index, SDGs*

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1. Introduction

Based on the UN e-government survey, South Korea is among the leading countries in the E-government Development Index (EGDI). It has achieved this position due to its continuous development starting in the early 1970s (Chung, 2015; joon, 2009). As shown in Figure 1, beginning with the introduction of computers in the departments of statistics and planning in the 1960s, and extending to the current era of digital government characterized by the use of advanced ICT and the adoption of AI technologies, the country has leveraged these advancements to achieve significant socio-technical and technical progress. Today, e-government is a cornerstone of all advanced economies. It plays a crucial role in modernizing public administration by leveraging Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance service efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement. E-government also reduces operational costs, provides better and more convenient access to services, and fosters trust by creating more transparent, accountable, and responsive interactions between governments and citizens(Khanova, Matyushenko, Shtal, Rudych, & Grygorova-Berenda, 2025).

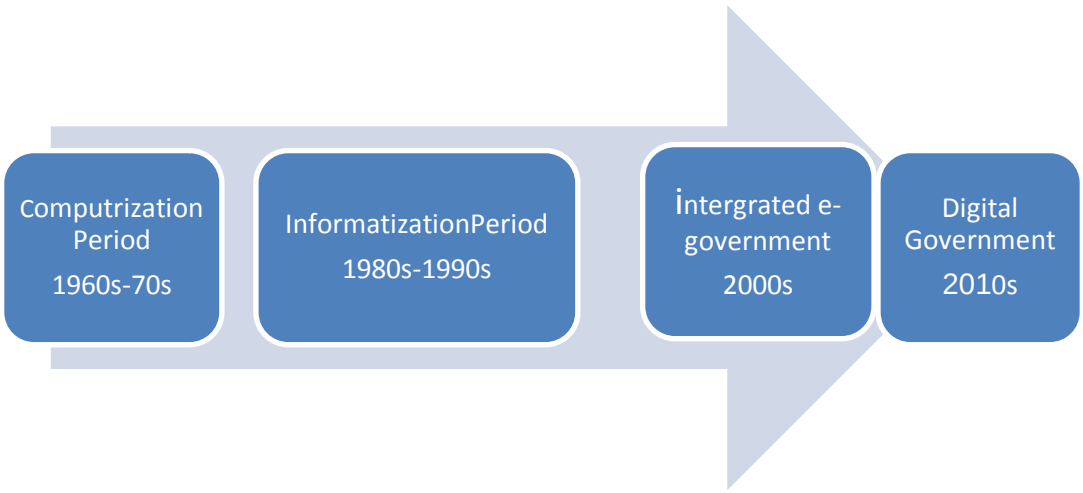

Figure1. Historical development of the digital government in Korea

In addition to supporting overall economic development, today's e-government services constitute a crucial catalyst for achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)(Durkiewicz & Janowski, 2021; Solomon & Van Klyton, 2020). They accelerates progress on goals related to poverty reduction, quality education, gender equality, and sustainable cities. Additionally, they enhance service delivery, boost accountability, and increase citizen engagement(Islam, Ya, & Sultana, 2025; Lim, 2015). To this end, many researchers believe that the implementation and effective utilization of the surplus benefits of e-government are crucial for developing countries and Sub-Saharan African nations to reduce administrative bureaucracy, increase transparency, enhance public accountability, foster trust in government institutions, reduce corruption, and facilitate economic growth by streamlining interactions among citizens, businesses, and government(Rarhoui, 2024a; Twizeyimana & Andersson, 2019).

E-government project implementation in developing countries and Sub-Saharan African nations faces critical challenges, primarily due to inadequate ICT infrastructure, limited financial resources, and a significant digital divide. Additional key obstacles include a shortage of qualified personnel, resistance to change within bureaucracies, and heavy reliance on external technology vendors, among others(Nkohkwo & Islam, 2013; Pramuditha, Muhafidin, Sumaryana, & Susanti, 2025; Rarhoui, 2024b; Saeid, 2025; Saikia, 2024; Thorpe & Pokhrel, 2024). The purpose of this work is to highlight several key lessons for policymakers and practitioners derived from the successful global implementation, design, and execution of e-government, with a particular focus on the Korean experience and its e-government development journey. To this end, the remainder of the work is organized as follows: Section 2 rigorously highlights and explains the key socio-technical and technological success factors of Korea's e-government development project; Section 3 describes the main services provided by the project; and Section 4 summarizes the key challenges and recommendations.

2. RESEARCH Methodology

This research employs qualitative methods to examine how the core policies of Korean e-government development were formulated and implemented. It includes document analysis and reviews of key stakeholder websites. Additionally, policy evaluations are conducted to gather data on both intended and actual practices. Reports from the United Nations e-Government Development Index (EGDI) and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) on e-government development in Korea are also utilized.

3. Key socio-technical success Factors of the e-government development of Korea

Over the last three decades, Korea has made significant progress in e-government thanks to the development of 'joint optimization', which is a complex interdependent system of social and technological elements (socio-technical). This socio-technical advancement results in an excellent e-government technological design that meets social needs for better performance. The main socio-technical success factors of Korea's e-government development journey can be identified from the Korean e-government policy framework, which consists of five pillars, as shown in Figure 2. These include strong political leadership, excellent governance and a robust legal framework, sustainable advancement in project funding (financial resources), systems operation, technical support, and innovation(Karippacheril, Kim, Beschel Jr, & Choi, 2016).

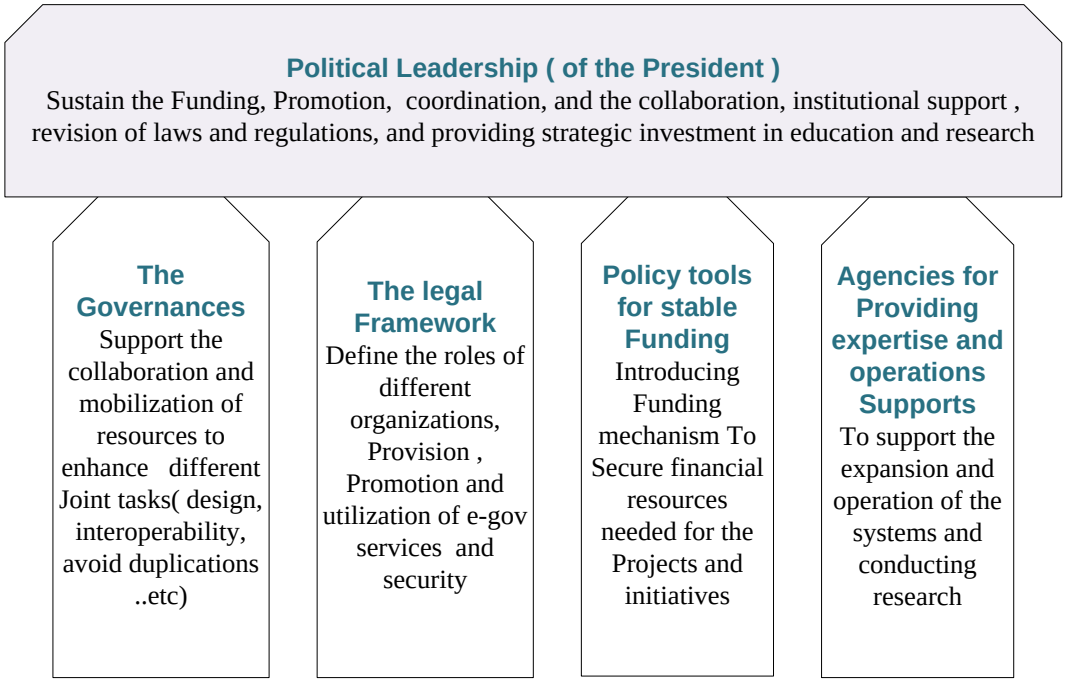

Figure 2. Key social-technical success Factors of the e-government development of Korea

Political leadership and good Governance Pillars

First of all, the strong political leadership demonstrated by the President of Korea, regardless of the regime/period, for the e-government project not only supports coordination and collaboration among different entities but also promotes and sustains a commitment to continuously energize innovation and development in all aspects of the project and its initiatives throughout the entire process(joon, 2009). For example, over the past 30 years, digital government innovation issues has been promoted as a national agenda regardless of changes in the political regime (Chung, Choi, & Cho, 2022). Another important aspect related to leadership is its role and position in the top of the overall governance of e-government projects, which involves the institutional arrangements that support mission, collaboration and the mobilization of resources and initiatives to enhance different tasks.

Excellent e-government governance is critical for the successful implementation of e-government projects because it provides the strategic framework, policy alignment, coordination, sustainability, and oversight the projects to ensure efficiency, transparency, accountability, and risk management. In fact, in the Korean case, its proper governance successfully manages complex stakeholder interactions, reduces the digital divide, and ensures that technology adoption aligns with public service goals(Chung et al., 2022). The detailed structure of the current Presidential Committee on Digital Platform Government (DPG) and the corresponding governance framework for Korea’s

digital government are illustrated in Figures 3 and 4, respectively. This innovative governance framework is responsible for executing the current mission and key initiatives to advance the digital government to the new Digital Platform Government, which will be powered by AI and data and characterized to be a people-centric, a one-team government, a growth platform for public-private collaboration, and a foundation of trustworthiness(Bang et al., 2024; Moon, 2024; Myeong, 2025). Furthermore, a careful examination of the historical records of various institutional arrangements used as governing bodies during the different development phases of e-government projects of Korea listed in table 1, along with the current Digital Platform Government governance summarized in Figures 3 and 4, highlights the significant role of effective governance in the development of e-government(J.-S. Hwang, 2023; the Presidential Committee on Digital Platform Government 2023).

Table 1. Presents the major governance bodies responsible for the successful implementation of the e-government development strategy throughout its journey. Source (J.-S. Hwang, 2023)

Period	Key Objectives	Key Organizations	Characteristics
1987-1995	• Computerization of National Basic Data	• National Computerization Board under President • National Computerization Agency	• Computerization of 5 key areas such as public administration, finance, education, national defense, security • Lay the foundation for e-government and data era
1995-2000	• Information Superhighway (Broadband Internet) • Digital & Online Service	• National Informatization Committee chaired by the Prime Minister • establish of Ministry of ICT (MIC)	• Enact of Framework Law on National Informatization • Integrated approach to digital government • World first nationwide roll-out of broadband Internet
2001-2007	• e-Government Development (Integration) • Ubiquitous computing	• special committees on e-Government **under President** • National Informatization Committee	• Strong leadership from the President • Upgrade to integrated e-Government and services • Two separate governances for e-Gov and national ICT
2008-2012	• e-Government (governance)	• dismantle of MIC and distributed governance • National Informatization Strategy Committee	• Weakening of ICT governance with distributed organizations • Introduction of new ICT management such as CIO position and enterprise architecture
2013-2016	• Smart Government (Gov3.0)	• Government 3.0 Committee • establish of Ministry of Science and ICT	• Focus on government innovation based on emerging technologies such as data analytics • Two separate governances for e-Gov and national ICT
2017-2022	• The Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIR)	• **Presidentia**l Committee on the Fourth Industrial Revolution • National Data Policy Committee	• Focus on national ICT for FIR • Development institutions and organization for data and AI
2022-Present	• Digital Platform Government	• **Presidential** Committee on Digital Platform Government	• New government innovation model based on data infrastructure and close collaboration between the public and the private sectors

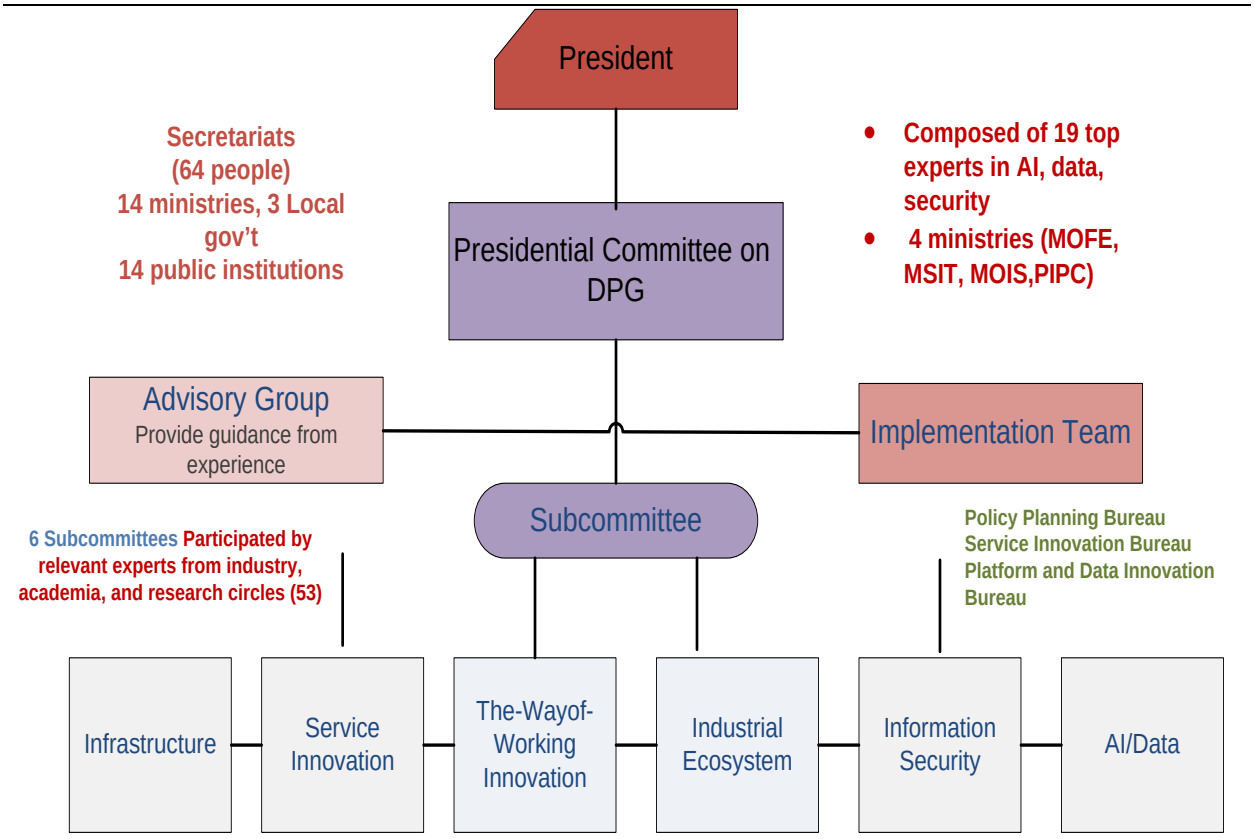

Figure 3. the Presidential Committee on Digital Platform Government.
Information Source (DPG) (J.-S. Hwang, 2023)

As shown in figures 3 and 4, the current Korean Digital Government Governance structure is composed of a set of ministries, government entities, research institutes, and technical and innovation creation agencies led by the Presidential Committee on Digital Platform Government at its core. Furtheremore, the Presidential Committee on Digital Platform Government in turn gathered a group of technical experts commitees and Subcommettees who were based in industries, academia, and research(such as ETRI, K-data, TTA, and NIPA). The strength of his Governance structure is driven by a combination of high-level political commitment that transcends administration changes, and the centralized and coordinated institutional model led by the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) as explicitly shown in figure 4. In fact, the success of the Korean e-government Project during its journey can be attributed to its strong governance(Chung et al., 2022; OECD, 2025).

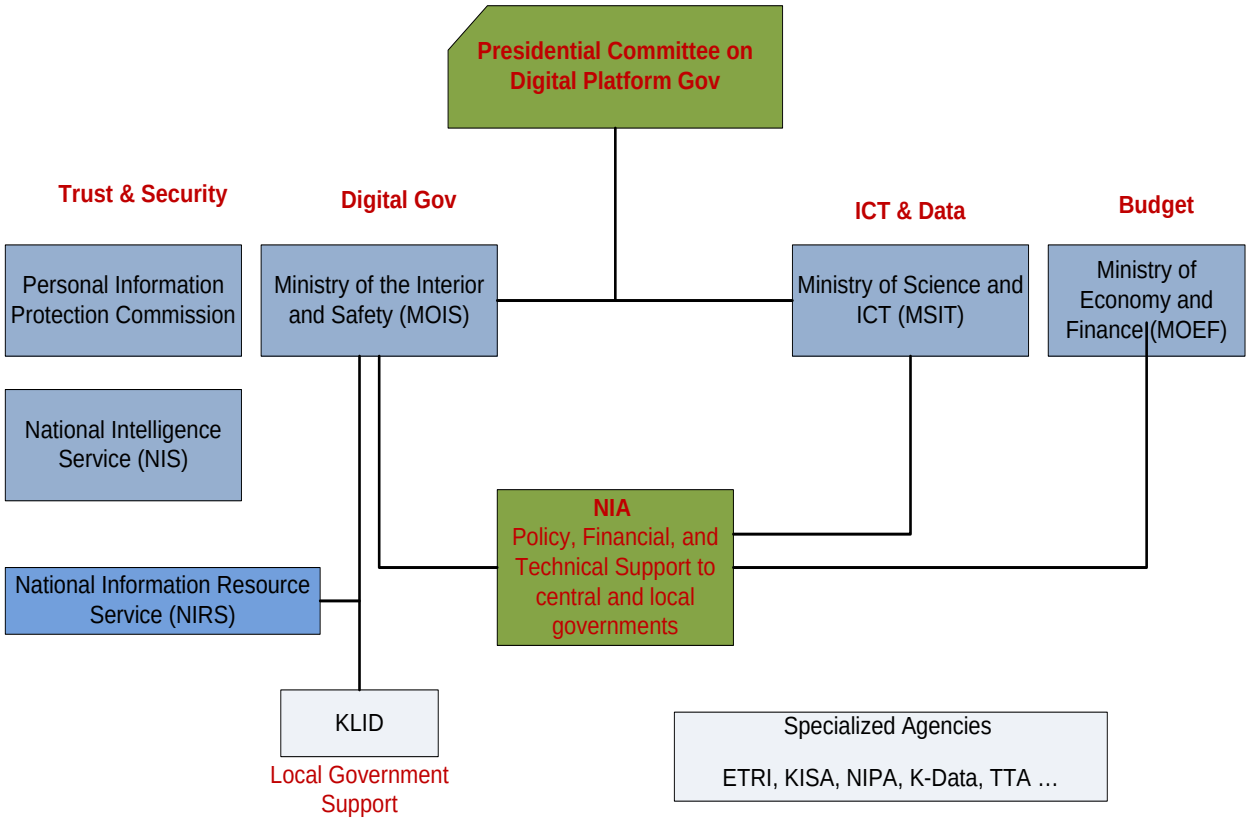

Figure 4. Korean Digital Government Governance structure

Information Source (J.-S. Hwang, 2023)

The legal framework of the e-government of Korea

In 2001, Korea established its first e-Government Act to reduce paper documents and provide electronic administrative services to the public. (Chung & Kim, 2019). The major laws and regulations that contribute to the advancement of e-government development in Korea are listed in Table 2. These ground-breaking laws are aimed at improving administrative productivity, transparency, and democracy by digitizing government operations, establishing online service delivery, and enabling electronic processes. In fact, Korea's current global leadership in digital government can be traced back to the 2001 e-government Act and its amendments in subsequent years and periods. It mandates the digitization of administrative procedures (innovation, governance, planning, implementations, and operations), as well as establishing and enforcing fundamental principles such as efficiency, transparency, and convenience of services to citizens. The following amendment deals with the introduction of cloud services, Open Data/Government 3.0, Intelligent Government, and Digital Platform Government, which are the major milestones in Korean e-government advancement (Chung & Kim, 2019)

Table 2. Major Laws and Regulations Enacted for the Development of E-Government

Name of the Law	Main Purpose
e-government act 2001(continuously amended to emphasizing the use of e-government services by developing and providing administrative services demanded by the public)(Chung & Kim, 2019)	Provision and utilization of e-government services and data
Set of ICT Laws for internet promotion and information industry (such as Information and	Related to Promotion of internet, enhancement of internet industry, cybersecurity and personal data protection

Communications Industry Promotion Act 2009)	
Personal Information Protection Act (PIPA amended in 2023.)D. H. Kim & Park, 2024(	Comprehensive data privacy law regulating both online and offline data processing
The Korean Open Data Act, 2013(Seo, Kim, & Kwon, 2021)	Established a legal framework for public institutions to proactively provide data, aiming to enhance transparency, improve public services, and boost the economy.
Korean Basic Act on Intelligent Informatization (2020)	Contribute to realizing an intelligent information society
AI Basic Act 2025 (South Korea AISI, 2025)	Establishing a new framework for artificial intelligence (AI) by laying the fundamental matters necessary to support the sound development of AI and to establish a foundation for trustworthiness in AI society, thereby protecting the rights and interests of the people and their dignity, contributing to improving the quality of life of the people, and enhancing national competitiveness.

Technical and financial supports and Innovation

The Korean e-government story has been successful by institutionalizing e-government and placing key institutions at the core of e-government governance to provide technical support and innovation. To this end, both the Korean National Information Society Agency (NIA) and the Korean Local Information Research & Development Institute (KLID) are introduced as core institutions in the development of Korean e-government. Their past role was to promote and establish the foundation for e-government projects. Currently, their focus has shifted to the development of e-government support projects, system operation and management, as well as research and innovation. In addition, Table 3 lists the main agencies contributing to the advancement of e-government. On the other hand, to sustain financial support for the continuous development of e-government, the Korean government has introduced the use of settlement after investment, information promotion fund, and general accounting budget funding mechanisms. In addition to service engineering, another fundamental component of Korea's e-government project is the telecommunications infrastructure developed through the Korea Information Infrastructure (KII) Project and the Three Government Data Centers Projects. These initiatives are essential, significant, and financially demanding projects

Table 3. lists the main agencies contributing to the advancement of e-government. Source (NIA and MOIS. 2025)

Agency	Main Function
National Information Society Agency (NIA)	Korea's leading government agency driving the development of an inclusive, innovative, and resilient digital society.
Korea Internet & Security Agency · (KISA)	Leads a Secure and. Reliable Digital Future Society
Korean National Central Intelligence Agency	Contribute to the Innovations in security and cybersecurity
National IT Industry Promotion Agency. NIPA	Reinforcing the competitiveness of the ICT industry and contributes to the economic growth through the efficient support and laying the groundwork for the industrial technology promotion
Electronics and Telecommunications Research Institute(ETRI)	Makes contribution to the nation’s economic and social development through research, development and distribution of industrial core technologies in the field of Information, Communications, Electronics, Broadcasting and Convergence technologies

Major and important e -government services

Table 4 highlights the most important e-government services in Korea, even though almost everything is digital. These services facilitate digital interactions between the government and citizens (G4C), the government and businesses (G4B), and the government to government (G4G). These services leverage the surplus generated by digital government technology for the benefit of Korean citizens and the nation as a whole (Panayiotou & Stavrou, 2021). More details on the full list of the services provided by the digital government of korea is available at(Ministry of Interior and safety, 2023). As shown in Figure 5, these e-government services are running on top and supported by a robust telecommunications infrastructure, which comprises the Korean information infrastructure and 5G broadband networks; a data infrastructure comprising three government data centers; and a cloud infrastructure consisting of G-Cloud and a public-private hybrid cloud. Notably, these infrastructures have been incrementally developed and built during different and successive planning periods.

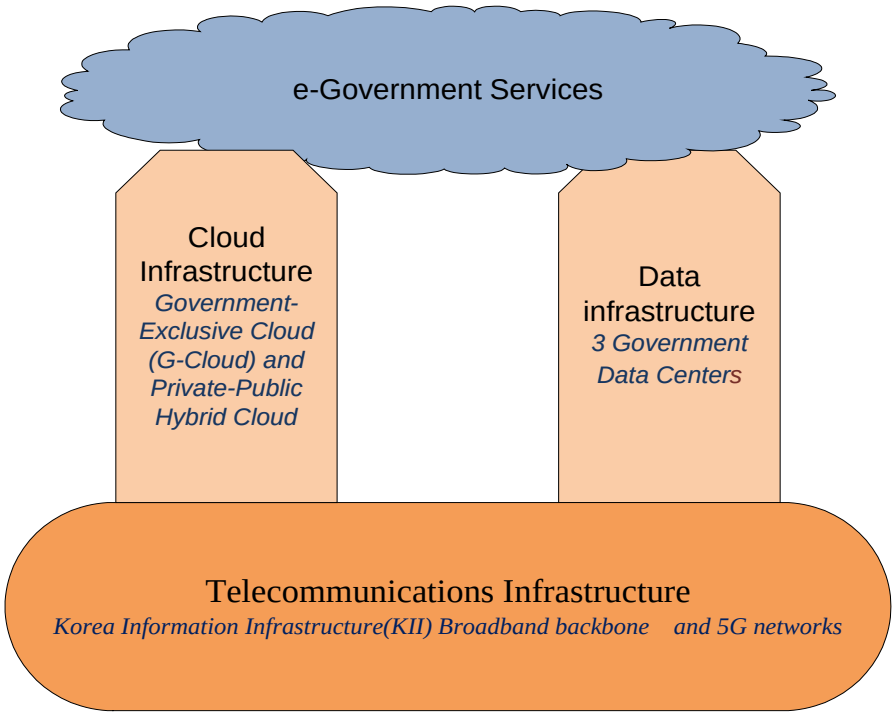

Figure 5. Shows the main infrastructure components supported the Korean e-government services

Table 4. Major and important e-government services provided by the Korean e-government

Name of the Services	Type of the Services	Main Functions
One-stop Government service Portal (government 24 at Gov.kr)	G4C	This is an Integrated platform for all public government services
Korean Online E-Procurement System (KONEP)	G2B	Facilitate the processes of E-Procurement From registration to Payment
UNI-PASS	G4B	Electronic Custom clearance system
National Electronics Tax system (HomeTax)	G4C	Facilitate Tax Services payment and filing online
Digital budget and Accounting system (dBrain)	G2G	Integrated financial management information system
Online petition and discussion portal (e-people)	G4C	Facilitate citizen participation in all kind of civil petition

Open data portal (www.data.go.kr)	G4B and G4C	Create value from free use of public data. This is very important for innovation and innovative systems development (for more details see the experience of the K-response for Covid-19)

Korean Progress from e-government to Digital Platform Government

Although the terms e-government and digital government are used interchangeably in this article, this may be because the concept of digital government has only recently been established and remains in the research stage. In fact the practice of digital government tends to be developed based on e-government, and the concept of digital government is not yet firmly established outside Korea. In fact Korea, several large-scale projects underway to transform it is e-government into digital government and what is called Digital Platform Government (DPG) . In today's world, the development and implementation of digital government services and applications are very important for economic growth. Many consider it one of the very important pillars of the overall country's digital transformation process. The digital government concept grew from the traditional e-government concept to incorporate a more comprehensive digital transformation of the public sector, embracing data as a strategic asset, adopting emerging technologies and ensuring government innovations to keep pace with industrial and societal change. The OECD defines digital government as using digital technologies to modernize and create public value. It depends on a digital ecosystem that includes government actors, NGOs, businesses, citizen groups, and individuals. This ecosystem supports access to data, services, and content through interaction with the government." On the other hand, the OECD's definition of e-government is basic: "the use of the governments of information and communication technologies (ICTs), and particularly the Internet, as a tool to achieve better government". According to the OECD definition, we can conclude that Korea is currently in the era of digital government

4. Key Challenges Recommendations

Based on Korea's experience in implementing and developing e-government, several key lessons have emerged for policymakers and practitioners in designing, executing, and sustaining innovations in the development of digital government, as demonstrated in the previous sections. Our focus in this section is to highlight the main challenges and open-ended problems that must be addressed for greater innovations, and the key recommendations that can be learned from past experiences.

Key challenges

The Korean government is facing several challenges as it tries to incorporate and use AI, big data, blockchain, and increased citizen inputs into service design and provisioning. Privacy concerns, scalability issues, ethical regulations, and change management issues are all part of this. Bridging the digital divide for vulnerable groups and addressing skills gaps are additional challenges that need to be addressed.

Key recommendations

- Have strong political will and Strategic vision are Paramount: This is justified because successful e-government projects require strong commitment from top management to drive coordination and implement the necessary structural, organizational, and cultural changes(Elmatsani, Widianingsih, Nurasa, Munajat, & Suwanda, 2024).
- Institutionalize (establish good governance legal framework) and adopt an incremental approach to develop the digital government: Rather than implementing massive systems all at once, it is often better to begin with phased and targeted outcomes. This agile approach supports preserving interoperability, making open sources, reusability, standardization, and the use of e-GovFrame and common Enterprise Architecture (EA) (Ahmad, Drus, & Kasim, 2020; Lee, 2016; Lucia Kim & Teo, 2013).

- Focus on User-Centric Design: E-government should be designed around the needs of citizens rather than the bureaucratic structure of departments. This approach is supported by recent advances in e-government research, as reported by(Bokayev et al., 2021; Durmuş, 2012; H. Hwang & Kim, 2025)
- Bridge the Digital Divide , Literacy and skills Gap: Inadequate infrastructure, limited digital literacy, and insufficient digital skills are reported as major barriers. Therefore, policymakers must invest in public education reform at both basic and higher education levels, as well as provide training for employees by developing sharing and collaboration strategies at national and international levels. Additionally, they should strive to ensure minimum accessibility and connectivity for all(Ishak, Khalid, Jenal, Rizal, & Abd Rashid, 2024; Myeong, Kwon, & Seo, 2014).
- Prioritize Data Security and Privacy: Concerns about data breaches are a major barrier to adoption. Therefore, robust cybersecurity measures—including strategies, laws, and regulations—should be developed or enacted, and clear privacy policies are essential to foster public trust(Feigenbaum & Nelson, 2021; D. K. KIM, 2019; Paz, Tejerina, & Kang, 2024).
- Sustainable Financial Planning: E-government is a long-term strategic project that requires sustained investment—not only for initial setup (to buildcommunications, data and cloud infrastructure), but also for ongoing maintenance, upgrades, and capacity building. Classical funding techniques are insufficient; innovative funding approaches are necessary. This can include the use of centralized revolving funds, public-private partnerships, results-based financing, among others(Chima & Kasim, 2018; Owusu, 2015).
- Leverage the making use of the Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs): In addition to funding, partnering with the private sector can enhance capacity building, address the digital divide, and bridge gaps in technical expertise and infrastructure. This is justified by the practice reported by (Kaliannan, Awang, & Raman, 2010; Palaco, Park, Kim, & Rho, 2019; Sarker, 2025; Sharma, 2007).
- Focus on Change Management and modernization: Resistance to transitioning from manual to digital processes is a significant traditional challenge. A robust change management strategy is essential to address resistance within the civil service departments(La Bella & Santoro, 2025)

5. Conclusions

This article highlights and deeply researches and explains the key policy socio-technical pillars contributing to the success of the Korean e-government project. Additionally, it lists and elaborates on the major categories of services. Finally, the article summarizes the key recommendations and challenges. Our aim is to provide policy guidance to developing and Sub-Saharan African countries on how to implement e-government and maximize the benefits of ICT technology. The aim is to encourage their economic growth and contribute to the global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

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