

# International Conference on Public Finance in the Digital Era

19-20 November 2024



South Africa



ODI Global



## Overview

Around the world, optimism about how digitalisation can improve government performance is tempered by the disappointment of expensive technology failures. Nonetheless, the digital era has raised people's expectations of their governments, and the emergence of digital public infrastructure (DPI) on the global development agenda continues to fuel these expectations.

Meeting these expectations will take more than simply adopting the latest technologies. It will require new ways of thinking and working across government. Ministries of Finance have a key role to play, not just in bringing the management of public finances into the digital era, but also in supporting and responding to the broader digital transformation of government, the economy and society.

The Collaborative Africa Budget Reform Initiative ([CABRI](#)) and [ODI](#) are pleased to be co-hosting an International Conference on [Public Finance in the Digital Era](#) in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 19-20 November.

This conference presents an opportunity for finance, digital, and development leaders to:

- (i) Share their experience and views on using digital tools to improve financial management and service delivery; and
- (ii) Consider the broader role of the finance ministry in the digital transformation of government, the economy, and society, and how they can play that role effectively at the national level, and through regional and global initiatives.

## AGENDA

<b>Public financial management in the digital era</b> <b>Tuesday, 19th November 2024</b>	
<p>The digital era is raising people's expectations for how governments raise and spend money – citizens and businesses expect better interactions with governments, politicians expect more timely information on how their policies and programs are being implemented, and civil servants expect better tools to do their jobs. The first day of the conference will take stock of where we are, and where we can do better.</p>	
08:30 – 09:00	<i>Registration</i>
09:00 – 09:30	<b>Welcome and Opening Remarks</b>
09:30 – 11:00	<p><b>Session 1: Digital tools for managing our public finances - how well tooled are we?</b></p> <p>Financial management is an area where governments have and continue to invest a lot in digital tools. Nevertheless, some parts of government are less well tooled than others, and some users feel frustrated with their tools. What are the common problems across different levels of governments? And how might finance ministries address them?</p>
11:00 – 11:30	<i>Networking Break</i>
11h30 – 13:00	<p><b>Session 2: The Digital Public Finance Bazaar</b></p> <p>The Bazaar will provide opportunities for peer learning on ongoing digital initiatives to improve financial management as well opportunities to join discussions on common financial management problems governments are trying to solve through digital initiatives.</p> <p><b>Circuit 1: 11:30 – 12:10 &amp; Circuit 2: 12:10-13:00</b></p>
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch and Networking Break</i>
14:00 – 14:40	<p><b>Session 2: The Digital Public Finance Bazaar</b></p> <p>The Bazaar will provide opportunities for peer learning on ongoing digital initiatives to improve financial management as well opportunities to join discussions on common financial management problems governments are trying to solve through digital initiatives.</p> <p><b>Circuit 3: 14:00-14:40</b></p>
14:40 – 15h00	<i>Networking Break</i>
15h00 – 17h00	<p><b>Session 3: Bringing Public Finance into the Digital Era</b></p> <p>How can innovation in public finance keep pace with other areas of government and the private sector? How can finance ministries make good technology choices on behalf of the rest of government, and how can they empower the rest of government to do the same? What changes in approach and ways of working are required? And what are the challenges to making these changes and how can we overcome them?</p>
17h00-19h00	<b>Evening Networking Event</b>

## The role of the finance ministry in digital transformation

WEDNESDAY, 20 November 2024

The second day of the conference will focus on the role of the finance ministry in the broader digital transformation of government, the economy and society, and if and how finance ministries in Africa should take a bigger role in digital transformation at the national level and through regional and global initiatives.

08:45 – 09:00	<b>Welcome back and reflections from Day 1</b>
09:00 – 10:30	<b>Session 4: What is Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), and why is it relevant for finance ministries?</b> Digital public infrastructure (DPI) refers to foundational technologies as well as an approach to solving societal scale problems. What is DPI and what is it not? How it is similar and different to other approaches to digital transformation? And why and how should finance ministries support the DPI agenda?
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Networking Break</i>
11:00 – 13:00	<b>Session 5: DPI for what? African perspectives</b> What are the ‘use cases’ that are likely to drive the adoption of DPI approaches and principles in African contexts? What are the safeguards that need to be put in place to make these investments inclusive and sustainable? And why and how should finance ministries support these investments?
13:00 – 14:00	<i>Lunch and Networking Break</i>
14:00 – 15:30	<b>Session 6: Workshop on the role of finance ministries in supporting DPI</b> What is the role of the finance ministry in the digital transformation of government, the economy and society? A team from University College London and Cambridge University will run an interactive workshop with participants working in small teams to discuss the economic case for investing in DPI.
15:30 – 16:00	<i>Networking Break</i>
16:00 – 17:30	<b>Session 7: Shaping the global and regional agenda on DPI in 2025 and beyond</b> How can South Africa's upcoming G-20 Presidency in 2025 build on the DPI agenda established by India and advanced by Brazil? And how can it be leveraged to take forward a DPI agenda for Africa?
17:30 – 17:45	<b>Closing Remarks</b>