

## Which role do you want or need to play as government?

### *Governance & Finance articles*

A global digital economy has national and local challenges where public value has to be delivered. As seen in the [first](#) and [second](#) article, also citizens and private sector expectations have to be met or managed. To face the different public challenge, you have to be clear about the different solutions and roles government can play.

So if you don't want to have a single point solution approach as was shown in the second article, what options do you have as government?

#### A different view on society: solution economy

Government needs to change glasses and see society differently: shift from the traditional liberal democracy in which government represents society, towards a situation where government empowers citizens, and consequently where society becomes a part of government.

Empowering citizens' means giving trust, gaining trust, being accountable and being transparent towards them. Empowering should be inclusive and requires customized approach. Also, there is a need for two direction communication and action. Some say 'you get what you give'. If a government is willing to share responsibilities, be transparent and be open to feedback, society is more likely to see government as key player in digital transformation.

Empowering citizens in the first step. The second is to build a solution economy. This empowering of citizens helps the development towards to a so-called solution economy. A solution economy is an ecosystem of stakeholders, including government, the empowered citizens, and also businesses and non-profits.<sup>1</sup> Within the solution economy, government works with (instead of 'for' or 'against') citizens and other stakeholders. Government embraces new technologies, values public and private ideas, and is open to new business model alternatives. An example of what this new ecosystem thinking could lead to is Acumen: a non-profit organization that initiated to combat poverty by looking at all human beings not as distant strangers, but as members of a global community, where each has the opportunity to build a life of dignity. The organization created a global community of philanthropists and involved many partners. Partners instead of investors or governments, to encourage ownership and collaboration.

#### PPPs for societal problem solving

What might be required is a new, more collaborative system where business, government, philanthropy and social enterprise converge to solve big problems and create public value to complex societal challenges. Social Impact bonds (SIBs) can play a crucial role in that, because Private-public partnerships are no longer restricted to financing and building roads and bridges. In an SIB a private investor will need to focus on 'impact first' instead of 'finance first' and the government shifts from 'solution provider' to 'solution enabler'.

The government is no longer in the lead, but co-operates with the other parties to make the solution work. This new wave of partnership options offers a diverse set of players' new opportunities to work together towards shared goals. No longer is government the slow, traditional actor, but they can adopt the enabler role, and demonstrates its ability to meet citizens expectations quickly, effective and in an inclusive way.

---

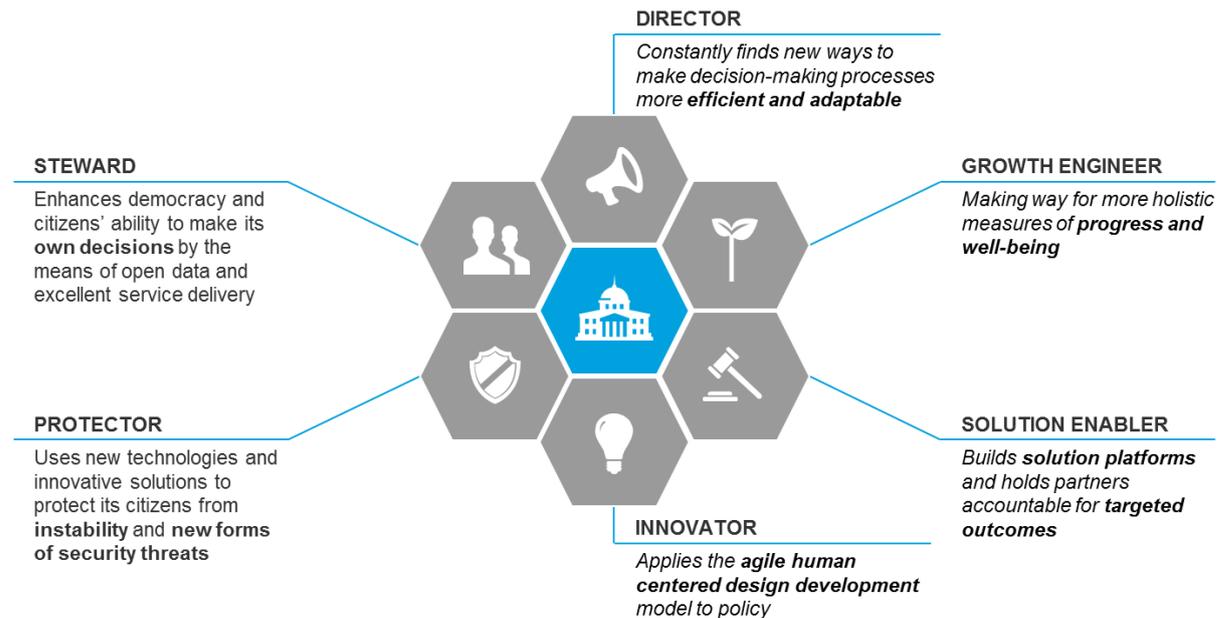
<sup>1</sup> Eggers and Macmillan (2013). The Solution Revolution. Harvard Business Press. September, 17, 2013

So with every challenge in society where government should act, all governmental organizations have to think through which lenses they want to look at the problem and towards the solution.

### Roles of the government

When you've explored the new approach, the next step is to explore which role(s) the governmental organization need to play, and which role(s) they see for their partners in their specific field of work.

We determine six different shifting roles government can play:



This is different than the traditional roles like policy-maker, executer, enforcer, regulator and facilitator. Off course, this does not mean that the traditional roles must disappear: the above shifting roles are a way to fulfill the traditional role in a new way.

Not each shifting role suites every traditional role or governmental challenge. In fact, in the process of choosing your role(s) you have to determine where most public value is acquired. The DNA of the field of work, the challenge itself and possible partners you need will be essential in choosing the most successful role(s).

How can you implement this in different areas? This will be explained in the next blog.