

Public services that remain explainable

Processes, exceptions and professional knowledge during digital change

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The answer and the path to it

Good public service makes both the answer and the reasoning behind it clear. A resident receives an answer to an application and the system records the outcome. The organisation must also be able to explain which information was decisive, which rule was applied and who assessed the particular circumstances.

Digital support makes information accessible and helps staff carry out their work. The organisation keeps control of the sources, reasoning and authority behind its services. This starts with the actual work, including situations outside the standard flow.

Purpose of this paper

This paper turns that aim into practice: choose one service process, reconstruct a few cases and ask a colleague to continue the work. The approach connects process improvement, individual guidance and digital change. Process owners, staff, educators and IT teams work on the same question.

ALBIR brings together experience in public-sector analysis, individual guidance within administrations and IT education for adults. Our aim is clear: people should understand how their work takes shape and be able to continue when colleagues or systems change.

The central question: can the organisation explain the basis of its handling, who is authorised, and how an incomplete or unusual case will be investigated?

02 / Four things to keep distinct

1. The source

A rule, policy agreement, approved instruction or case document may support the handling. Identify which version applies to the selected point in time and why. An easily found document is not automatically the correct or complete reference.

2. The interpretation

A colleague applies a source to the particular case. What information mattered? Where was there uncertainty? When another colleague's interpretation is adopted, its basis should also be clear.

3. The authority

Subject expertise and formal decision-making authority are different. Name who advises, who may request further information and who may take the relevant decision. A suggestion from a digital tool does not automatically carry that authority.

4. The execution

Who implements the decision, informs the person concerned and follows up a correction? A well-supported decision can still be implemented incorrectly when a system status or handover is unclear.

Follow these four elements through one concrete process. Start with existing material and ask staff where difficult cases get stuck. Include the service user's experience. This attention to users connects with the OECD digital government framework [1].

03 / An unusual case as a learning exercise

Imagine a fictional administration handling applications for a local service. The standard instruction identifies the required documents. An applicant submits an unusual document. A digital assistant summarises the case and suggests that it is incomplete. That conclusion has not yet been established.

The colleague checks which source defines the requirement and whether the summary includes all relevant information. They then establish who assesses the variation. This leads to a concrete next step: request additional information, examine an applicable exception or continue the case.

Record the distinctions

- Source fact: what was received and what does it actually say?
- System suggestion: what conclusion does the digital support propose?
- Human reasoning: what was examined and what doubt remains?
- Authorised decision: which role approved the next step?
- Execution: how are the action and communication followed up?

A second authorised colleague receives the case and the recorded reasoning. Can they reconstruct why the next step was appropriate? If not, identify what is missing: source access, an explanation of the interpretation, authority or clarity about execution.

Find where the process needs better support. An unclear instruction, a missing source or unclear responsibilities become visible when a colleague takes over the case. Address that cause through the way of working and the guidance provided.

04 / Support people in the actual work

Presenting an instruction is different from finding out whether someone can work with it. Individual guidance creates room to see where a colleague gets stuck: unfamiliar terms, a source that is difficult to find, an unclear mandate or a system that obscures the reasoning.

A short learning cycle

- Demonstrate: an experienced colleague shows a suitable case and explains the reasoning.
- Work together: the learner handles a similar case and asks questions.
- Work independently: a new case is examined using the available resources.
- Reflect: discuss the sources, reasoning and points where help was needed.

Practise both the normal route and unusual information. Include a case that requires additional information or consultation. Staff learn when to act independently and when to involve someone else.

With AI support, make clear which source underpins a suggestion, which information is missing and who can correct the outcome. Give the colleague the information, time and authority to assess and adjust the proposal.

Describe the learning aim as a capability to demonstrate, such as finding the relevant source and explaining why consultation is needed. Ask the colleague to show this in a new case. Discuss what works and which support will enable the next step.

05 / A case record for reconstruction and handover

Complete this record for one process. Refer to the existing case file and applicable sources. Record who needs access and which information must remain available to the next colleague.

1. Service and boundary - What handling are we examining, for which situation and point in time?
2. Relevant sources - Which rules, agreements and case documents were used? Which versions?
3. Facts and uncertainty - What is established, what is interpretation and what is missing?
4. Digital contribution - Which selection, summary or recommendation came from a system?
5. Reasoning - Which options were examined and why was the next step chosen?
6. Authority - Who advised, who decided and under what authority?
7. Follow-up - Who executes, communicates and handles further questions or corrections?
8. Reconstruction - Could an authorised colleague follow this? Which gap needs an action?

Make improvement visible

Record where help was needed, which source was missing and which uncertainty affected the next step. Compare different interpretations and discuss their basis. This shows which agreement or instruction needs to be clarified.

Assign each gap to an owner, a concrete improvement and a follow-up date. Then ask a colleague to handle a comparable case. Check whether the source is found faster, the reasoning is clear and the next step can be taken independently.

06 / Start small and make learning visible

Choose a process facing change: a new system, a changing way of working or an experienced colleague's departure. Define the exercise together and record the question it should answer. Involve people who know the operation and someone who can act on the findings.

- Select a normal case, an unusual case and a handover situation.
- Use an exercise set that lets colleagues work through the full process.
- Reconstruct the handling with the sources and authority of that situation.
- Choose one improvement to instructions, education, access or role allocation.
- Repeat a comparable exercise and discuss what improved and what remains uncertain.

Assess the benefit in the work: can a colleague find the relevant source, understand the reasoning and get the case to the right person? Retain what helps and simplify what consumes unnecessary time.

ArtiProof develops these same questions about knowledge, evidence and review [2]. For public service, the aim is concrete: know what supports a decision, find the reasoning and carry the service forward.

Sources

[1] OECD (2020), The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework: Six dimensions of a Digital Government.

[2] ArtiProof, Keeping Organisational Knowledge Dependable in the Age of AI, 1.2 EN (2026).

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[OECD \(2020\) - The OECD Digital Government Policy Framework](#)

[ArtiProof - Public Whitepaper 1.2 EN](#)