

# **STRATEGY 2025-2029**

**Developing Digital Governance  
for Global Justice, Resilience, and Sustainability**

# Context

Digital governance has rapidly evolved due to technological advancements such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), big data, and the Internet of Things (IoT), fundamentally reshaping public service delivery and government-citizen interactions. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption, emphasizing the need for resilient digital infrastructures to ensure service continuity during crises. Governments are progressing beyond basic digitization toward more integrated, citizen-driven models, aligning digital policies with regional socio-economic contexts. Despite significant strides, digital transformation remains uneven, with disparities persisting in developing regions, particularly in Africa and small island nations.

Key challenges impede digital governance progress, particularly in the Global South. Outdated infrastructure, unreliable Internet connectivity, and limited technical expertise impede modernization efforts. Financial constraints exacerbate these challenges, restricting investments in digital infrastructure, training, and innovation — cultural and organizational resistance to change, coupled with bureaucratic inefficiencies, further slow digital adoption. Additionally, the lack of robust cybersecurity frameworks and evolving regulatory landscapes pose significant risks, making it difficult for governments to balance data protection, transparency, and accessibility.

Addressing inclusivity is crucial, as the digital divide disproportionately affects disadvantaged populations. Socio-economic factors, gender disparities, and low digital literacy hinder access to online services, reinforcing existing inequalities. Governments must implement policies that promote equitable digital access, enhance digital skills, and build trust in new technologies. Sustainable digital governance requires strategic investments in secure, adaptive, and inclusive systems to bridge gaps and meet the evolving expectations of citizens in an increasingly digital world.

# UNU-EGOV's Mission and Vision

The mission of the United Nations University Operating Unit on Policy-Driven Electronic Governance (UNU-EGOV) is to support the United Nations and its Member States in strengthening governance through the strategic use of digital technologies. By conducting policy-relevant research, translating insights into actionable policies, and building capacities across governments and organizations, UNU-EGOV fosters inclusive social and

economic development, environmental sustainability, and global peace. Its vision is to be a global leader in digital governance, particularly in addressing challenges in the Global South. Through innovation, collaboration, and advisory services, UNU-EGOV aims to bridge research and public policy, enhance sustainable governance, and promote active citizenship while solidifying its role within the UN system.

# UNU-EGOV's Guiding Principles and Values

UNU-EGOV operates with core values of integrity, respect for diversity, accessibility, collaboration, innovation, academic rigour, and professionalism. Its guiding principles emphasise citizen empowerment, inclusion, and evidence-based policymaking, ensuring that digital governance solutions enhance human rights, participation, transparency, and resilience. By fostering global collaboration and adaptive governance, UNU-EGOV promotes

sustainability, well-being, and peace, leveraging technology to build effective, safe, and future-ready governance frameworks that benefit all segments of society. For the strategy 2025-2029, UNU-EGOV will direct her core activities to contribute specifically to Global justice, sustainability and resilience to encompass most of the guiding principles and values.





# Looking Back: UNU-EGOV's Strategic Plan 2020-2024

Since its inception, UNU-EGOV has evolved through various research frameworks, initially focusing on administrative burden reduction, public service delivery, and smart cities (2014-2017). From 2017 to 2019, UNU-EGOV established its first Core Research Programme, which was structured around three main research axes and seven research lines. The most impactful lines were carried forward into the 2020-2024 Core Research Programme, emphasizing key areas such as e-governance, digital transformation, smart cities, data-driven policymaking, and digital inclusion.

The 2020-2024 programme was organised in three interconnected research lines: *Governance*, which focused on digital policies and regulatory frameworks; *Technology*, which explored emerging innovations like AI and blockchain for public services; and *People*, which emphasized human-centred digital transformation, tackling issues of equity, inclusion, and well-being. This framework balanced technological advancements with policy and social considerations, leading to significant contributions, including 171 publications and extensive global collaborations. Through this approach, UNU-EGOV reinforced its role in shaping digital governance research and policy worldwide.

As UNU-EGOV transitions into the 2025-2029 period, its strategic focus evolves to address emerging challenges and opportunities in digital governance. Aligned with the UNU Strategy 2025-2029, this approach is rooted in knowledge creation, global partnerships, and measurable impact. The UNU-EGOV Strategy 2025-2029 is structured around five core activities, ensuring meaningful contributions to global governance challenges.

## UNU-EGOV's Core Activities for 2025-2029



### • Knowledge and Research

Driving high-quality, policy-relevant research that shapes digital governance theory and practice. By prioritizing impactful projects and fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, UNU-EGOV aims to expand the global knowledge base in digital governance.



### • Capacity Development and Education

Enhancing skills and competencies in digital governance, with a focus on the Global South. Capacity Development and Education includes training programs, academic courses, and workshops designed to empower public officials and institutions.



### • Global Networks and Partnerships

Strengthening collaboration with governments, international organizations, academia, and civil society to foster knowledge exchange and cooperative solutions for digital governance challenges.



### • Advisory and Consultancy

Translating research into actionable policy recommendations and solutions. UNU-EGOV's expertise bridges the gap between academic research and practical governance improvements.

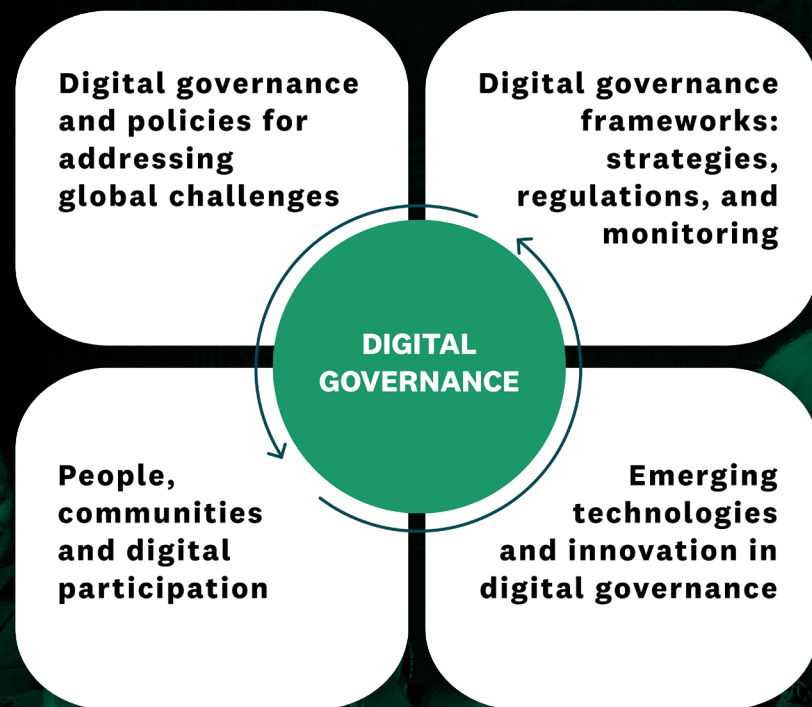


### • Institutional Development

Reinforcing UNU-EGOV's capacity and sustainability by enhancing its institutional standing, governance structures, funding models, and human resources.

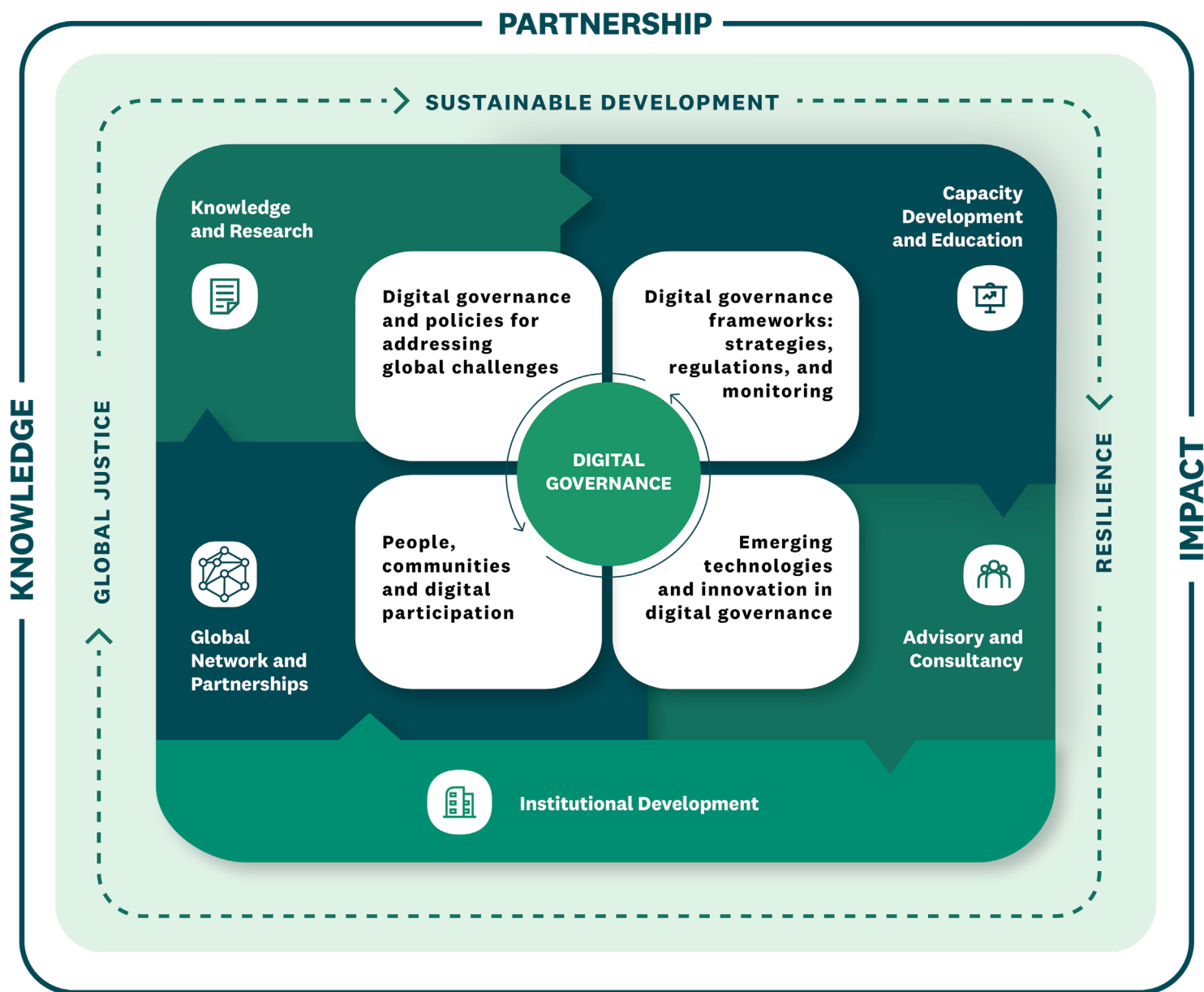
# UNU-EGOV's Thematic Areas for 2025-2029

## THEMATIC AREAS



The transition to UNU-EGOV's new strategy builds upon the strengths of the past core research program while expanding the scope to address broader global challenges in digital governance. This evolution includes a stronger focus on the specific needs of the Global South, aligning with UNU's commitment to addressing these countries' unique challenges. The new strategy integrates core values such as sustainability, inclusion, resilience, and justice, which are fundamental to our research and activities. These values guide UNU-EGOV's work in alignment with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the principles of the Global Digital Compass, emphasizing the importance of an inclusive approach, fostering resilience to global crises, and promoting justice and peace through improved governance. Additionally, UNU-EGOV is enhancing its evidence-based, interdisciplinary approach to bridge the gap between research and policy, ensuring that findings contribute to education, capacity development, and practical policy solutions. This transition represents a natural progression, enabling UNU-EGOV to adapt to the evolving digital governance landscape and increase its impact by addressing critical global and regional challenges.

# UNU-EGOV's Strategy Framework



# Strategic Priority

# 1

## Advancing Digital Governance Research and Knowledge for Global Impact and Sustainability

The first strategic priority focuses on enhancing knowledge and achieving research excellence in digital governance. Research is at the core of UNU-EGOV's mission, focusing on generating valuable evidence-based insights to inform research, policy, and implementation on digital governance and public sector innovation.

### Objectives

- Develop and publish high-quality, influential research projects across the four research fields, focusing on pressing digital governance issues.
- Hold public events to strengthen the impact of research.
- Increase inter-institute collaboration on cross-cutting themes and emerging research areas.
- Contribute to knowledge production for effective, inclusive, gender-inclusive digital governance, with particular emphasis on contributions from the Global South.
- Provide proactive research support to member states.
- Provide and maintain a Global Digital Governance Resource Platform (GDGR).

### Key components

- Positioning UNU-EGOV as a global research reference in digital governance.
- Influencing policy-making with research evidence-based policy at national and international levels.
- Producing research reducing the digital divide and promoting inclusive governance.
- Advancing a responsible use of emerging technologies for sustainable development.



# Strategic Priority 1



In pursuing this strategic priority 1, ***Advancing Digital Governance Research and Knowledge for Global Impact and Sustainability***, UNU-EGOV aims to position itself as a global reference in digital governance. We are committed to influencing policy-making through evidence-based research that informs decisions at both national and international levels. Our research initiatives will focus on reducing the digital divide and promoting inclusive governance, ensuring that marginalized communities are represented and empowered. Additionally, we will advance the responsible use of emerging technologies to support Sustainable Development Goals. By achieving these outcomes, UNU-EGOV seeks not only to enhance its impact within the digital governance landscape but also to contribute meaningfully to global efforts in fostering equitable and effective governance practices.

# Strategic Priority 2

## Digital Governance Capacity Development and Educational Initiatives for Inclusion and Global Impact

The second strategic priority focuses on enhancing capacity development and education initiatives in digital governance, especially in the Global South. This pillar includes training, academic courses, seminars, and workshops that enhance the skills of students, public officials, and institutions, preparing them for digital transformation.

### Objectives

- Establish/strengthen (joint) degree programmes with partner universities.
- Enhance capacity-building offering.
- Engage with youth, fostering inclusivity in offerings.

### Key Components

- Develop online courses and MOOCs on digital governance topics.
- Create specialized training programmes for government officials and policy-makers.
- Establish joint educational programmes with partner universities.
- Offer internship and fellowship programmes to nurture young talent in the field.
- Organize summer schools and intensive training sessions on emerging digital governance topics.



# Strategic Priority 2



Implementing education programmes and capacity development is anticipated to produce significant outcomes that will enhance digital governance capabilities, especially in the Global South. Equipping public sector leaders with the necessary skills is critical to implement digital transformation initiatives effectively. Tailored approaches to capacity building contribute to improving policy development and implementation processes, ensuring that they are responsive to local contexts and challenges. Furthermore, strong networks will be established with educational institutions and organizations in the Global South, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing in digital governance education. Collectively, these outcomes are essential to empowering local communities and promoting sustainable development and inclusive governance practices throughout the region.

# Strategic Priority 3

## Strengthening Global Partnerships and Networks for Navigating Global Challenges and Advancing Resilience and Sustainability

The third strategic priority focuses on building and strengthening global networks and partnerships to enhance UNU-EGOV's impact and reach in digital governance. Advisory and consultancy initiatives shape the practical output of UNU-EGOV's efforts, providing actionable solutions and policy recommendations to governments and organizations from member states, countries or the international community.

### Objectives

- Expand partnerships with the Global South.
- Unlock funding for collaborations with the Global South.
- Revitalize and develop networks globally-
- Enhance contribution to member state policy-making.
- Deepen connections with the UN system
- Establish work strands on emerging topics of relevance to policy-makers.
- Facilitate structured exchange between academia and practitioners.
- Contribute to inter-institute collaboration under one UNU brand.



# Strategic Priority 3

## Strengthening Global Partnerships and Networks for Navigating Global Challenges and Advancing Resilience and Sustainability

### Key Components

This priority aims to position UNU-EGOV as a main bridge in the global digital governance network, facilitating the exchange of ideas, best practices, and resources. It emphasizes the importance of collaborative efforts in addressing complex digital transformation and governance challenges.

- Growing a network of partners with academic institutions, specifically in the Global South.
- Developing formal partnership agreements with key institutions.
- Creating platforms for regular dialogue and collaboration among partners.
- Initiating joint research projects and publications with partner organizations.
- Facilitating staff and researcher exchanges with partner institutions.
- Organizing annual or regular conferences such as ICEGOV conference.
- Establishing regional hubs or networks to address context-specific challenges.

# Strategic Priority 3

Implementing Strategic Priority 3 is expected to generate significant outcomes that enhance digital governance capabilities and foster collaborative efforts with priority given to the Global South. An expanded network of academic and non-academic partners will be consolidated and further developed, facilitating a robust knowledge repository that supports sharing best practices and research findings. This will lead to an increased impact on policy-making and the implementation of digital governance initiatives, ensuring that decisions are informed and evidence-based.

Moreover, there will be improved capacity for digital governance in countries within the Global South, empowering institutions and researchers to contribute meaningfully to the field. Collaborative research efforts will address pressing digital governance challenges, strengthening integration and visibility within the UN system. Ultimately, sustainable partnerships will be developed, enabling institutions and researchers from the Global South to play a critical role in shaping the future of digital governance on a global scale.

# Strategic Priority 4

## Bridging Knowledge and Practice: Strategic Advisory Services for Global Digital Governance Challenges

The fourth strategic priority focuses on leveraging UNU-EGOV's expertise to provide advisory and consultancy services in digital governance. Network building and partnerships are essential in facilitating advisory services with governments from member states, international organizations, or other entities. This priority aims to translate UNU-EGOV's research and knowledge into practical, actionable solutions for governments and organizations. It emphasizes the importance of context-specific advice, particularly for countries in the Global South.

### Objectives

Advisory and Consultancy Services provides expert guidance to governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders on critical digital governance issues. The main objectives include offering tailored solutions and recommendations to address specific challenges faced by member states, conducting thorough assessments and evaluations of existing digital governance initiatives, and providing technical assistance in the design and implementation of effective digital transformation strategies.

### Key Components

Additionally, UNU-EGOV aims to support the development of robust policy frameworks and regulations related to digital governance while offering insights on best practices in digital government, digital public services, and citizen engagement. By leveraging its expertise and collaborative networks, UNU-EGOV seeks to enhance the capacity of public sector leaders and contribute to the successful implementation of digital governance initiatives worldwide.



# Strategic Priority 4

The implementation of Strategic Priority 4: Advisory and Consultancy Services is expected to produce significant outcomes that enhance digital governance capabilities across the Global South. The efforts aim to reduce the digital divide between the Global North and South while increasing the representation of Global South perspectives in global digital governance discourse.

Partner countries will experience sustainable and long-term digital transformation, supported by effective knowledge transfer and strengthened South-South cooperation. Enhanced policymaking and implementation in emerging areas will result from tailored advisory services, leading to increased funding and resources for digital governance initiatives in the Global South. Ultimately, these efforts are anticipated to produce measurable improvements in digital government rankings and higher scores in international surveys for partner countries, reflecting the tangible impact of UNU-EGOV's advisory and consultancy services on digital governance practices worldwide.

# Strategic Priority 5

## Strategic Growth and Institutional Strengthening: Positioning UNU-EGOV for Future Digital Governance Challenges

Strategic Priority 5 focuses on Institutional Development, emphasizing the need for strategic growth and institutional strengthening to position UNU-EGOV for future digital governance challenges. Recognizing that impactful knowledge creation and robust partnerships cannot be realized without a solid institutional foundation, this priority aims to enhance UNU-EGOV's capacity for long-term success.

### Objectives

The main objectives of this strategic priority include transitioning UNU-EGOV from an operating unit to a fully-fledged UNU institute, which will enhance its autonomy and ability to fulfil its mission effectively.

- Establish new collaborative institutional structures.
- Build, maintain, and strengthen a donor base that facilitates expansion in new and emerging regions.
- Increase diversity of personnel, including geographic diversity.
- Tailor communication to key audiences for impact.

### Key Components

Strengthening internal governance structures and processes is essential to support the organization's growth and operational effectiveness. In addition, developing and implementing a sustainable funding model will ensure long-term financial stability while enhancing UNU-EGOV's visibility and reputation as a leading centre of excellence in digital governance, which is crucial for attracting partnerships and resources. Investment in human resources development is also a key focus aimed at attracting and retaining top talent in digital governance. Furthermore, improving internal systems and infrastructure will facilitate efficient operations and collaboration among staff.



# Strategic Priority 5

Strategic Priority 5 emphasizes the importance of building a resilient and adaptable organization capable of responding to the evolving challenges and opportunities in digital governance. The transition from an operating unit to a fully-fledged UNU institute will enhance its autonomy and operational capacity, allowing for greater recognition globally. This transition is anticipated to foster a wider network of partnerships with academic institutions, governments, and international organizations, thereby increasing UNU-EGOV's influence on global digital governance policies and practices.

Moreover, the strategic focus on institutional growth will expand global reach and influence, ensuring financial sustainability and diversification of funding sources. Enhanced research capacity and output will improve the organization's diversity and inclusivity, elevating public engagement and visibility. As a result, UNU-EGOV is expected to be recognized as the primary UNU entity for digital governance expertise, making measurable contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals through its initiatives. Ultimately, these outcomes will establish a solid foundation for sustainable development impact and reinforce UNU-EGOV's role in addressing the complex challenges of digital governance on a global scale.



# Conclusion

In conclusion, the UNU-EGOV Strategy for 2025-2029 is a comprehensive document designed to enhance the unit's role in digital governance. The strategy focuses on five strategic priorities — Knowledge Enhancement and Research Excellence, Capacity Building and Education, Global Network and Partnership, Advisory and Consultancy Services, and Institutional Development — defining the Unit's objectives, key activities and KPIs. It also highlights how each strategic priority will focus on the Global South and the expected outcomes.

UNU-EGOV aims to address the pressing challenges faced by governments and societies in the digital age through the research areas studied in compliance with the core values of UNU-EGOV, UNU and the UN system. The strategy also underscores the importance of collaboration, inclusivity, and innovation, particularly in engaging with the Global South to bridge existing gaps in digital governance capabilities.

As UNU-EGOV transitions into a fully-fledged UNU institute, it will strengthen its institutional capacity and enhance its visibility as a centre of excellence. The anticipated outcomes include improved digital governance capabilities across partner countries, increased representation of diverse perspectives in global discourse, and measurable contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals. By prioritizing strategic partnerships and fostering knowledge transfer, UNU-EGOV is well-positioned to effectively influence global digital governance policies and practices. Ultimately, this strategy aims to consolidate UNU-EGOV's reputation and seeks to impact governance systems worldwide, ensuring resilience, sustainability, and inclusion, and equipping to meet future challenges.



#### **UNU-EGOV**

Campus de Couros,  
Rua de Vila Flor 166  
4810-445 Guimarães,  
Portugal

📍 [unu.edu/egov](https://unu.edu/egov)  
✉ [egov@unu.edu](mailto:egov@unu.edu)

Last updated in July 2025