



national treasury

Department:
National Treasury
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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SPEECH BY DIRECTOR-GENERAL

KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY DIRECTOR-GENERAL, DR DUNCAN PIETERSE, AT THE MZANSIXCHANGE PILOT LAUNCH

9 OCTOBER 2025

Honourable guests and colleagues,

It is my privilege to welcome you to the MzansiXchange Pilot Launch. Thank you for being here to mark this important milestone in South Africa's digital transformation journey.

Globally, data has moved from being used administratively to being considered a strategic asset and a key part of our digital infrastructure. Just as road, electricity, and water infrastructure drive development, data is the backbone of digital transformation and inclusive service delivery.

South Africa's government data landscape has been characterised by fragmentation, siloed systems, and limited interoperability. These challenges have constrained our ability to make evidence-based decisions, deliver integrated services, allocate resources efficiently, and build public trust in government systems. MzansiXchange addresses these gaps by enabling secure, structured, and coordinated data sharing across government.

Today, we launch the MzansiXchange pilot, which takes an important step towards a future where Government works together more efficiently through trusted, secure, and seamless data sharing.

DATA-DRIVEN DECISION AND POLICY MAKING

The National Treasury has a longstanding commitment to leveraging data for policy and decision-making. The MzansiXchange builds on the National Treasury Secure Data Facility (NT-SDF) and Spatial Economic Activity Data South Africa (SEAD-SA).

These initiatives provide critical data for research, policymaking, and planning – demonstrating the value of secure, de-identified administrative data in shaping inclusive development.

The National Treasury Secure Data Facility has, for over a decade, handled anonymised tax records in support of rigorous policy analysis and public sector decision-making. During a visit



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to our offices today, you will find a data facility, or lab, where researchers are accessing this data and using it to conduct innovative economic research on a wide range of issues from assessing firm-level productivity to evaluating government programmes, such as the employment tax incentive. South Africa is one of the few countries globally that makes this kind of micro-level administrative data available for research and evaluation.

The spatialised tax data housed within the National Treasury Secure Data Facility enables provinces and municipalities to access detailed economic insights for local planning and decision-making. It improves our understanding of the geographic distribution and characteristics of economic activities within South Africa.

These foundational initiatives have shown what is possible when data is responsibly shared and used to inform better outcomes for society. And we have learned valuable lessons along the way – about what it takes to build secure systems, foster collaboration, and earn trust. These lessons are now embedded in the design and governance of the MzansiXchange.

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION ROADMAP

In March this year, Cabinet approved South Africa's Roadmap for the Digital Transformation of Government, which was officially launched in May 2025 under the leadership of the Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) and the Interdepartmental Working Group (IDWG) on Digital Transformation.

The roadmap forms part of Operation Vulindlela Phase II, a joint National Treasury and Presidency initiative. It provides the strategic direction for government to modernise services, break down data silos, and build the digital public infrastructure (DPI) required for inclusive growth. The Roadmap has four key pillars: Data Exchange, Digital Identity, Digital Payments and Digital Services.

MzansiXchange is the data exchange pillar of the Roadmap, supporting the broader MyMzansi initiative, which will provide a single digital entry point for accessing government services. It will connect digital identity, payments, and services. This will:

- Help to streamline administrative processes, which improves service delivery and reduces delays.
- Enable government institutions to securely access relevant, verified information already held by other departments. This will help to reduce duplication and making it easier for citizens, who won't need to repeatedly provide the same details when accessing services.



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- Support greater efficiency and cost savings by eliminating redundant systems and enabling faster fraud detection.
- Will empower policymakers by making timely data available to inform planning and decision-making.

MZANSIXCHANGE: UNLOCKING THE POWER OF DATA FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

In 2024, we commenced with the due diligence and design phase of the MzansiXchange. It focused on:

- Finding the best technical architecture
- Prototyping secure data access systems
- Assessing the legal and governance landscapes
- Engaging stakeholders across government

This design phase has informed the pilot's scope and design. MzansiXchange is not a central data repository. It does not store any data. Instead, it acts as a secure bridge – a structured and governed exchange that allows departments to retain ownership of their data while sharing their data with other authorised entities, when needed. This approach balances departmental data sovereignty with secure, cross-government data sharing through a structured and governed framework.

Our prototype has been built with X-road as the foundational technology for the MzansiXchange, supporting flexible mechanisms and enhancing resilience with robust design, ensuring standards harmonisation, digital inclusion and long-term sustainability.

MzansiXchange will have governance frameworks, standardised data protocols and will set clear expectations for metadata standards, data quality, and interoperability. It will provide standardised legal instruments – such as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) or Service Level Agreements (SLAs) – to guide secure and compliant data sharing.

MzansiXchange will provide four distinct data access components, each designed to meet the needs of different users. These are the four pillars of MzansiXchange.

- The first pillar is data sharing for regulation, compliance, and verification
 - This provides authorised public entities with real-time access to identifiable data for verification and compliance purposes.



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- For instance, the data exchange can be used to securely verify key information when enrolling citizens into public programmes or grants – helping ensure accuracy while simplifying the process for applicants.
- The second pillar is data sharing for evidence-based policy, planning, and research
 - MzansiXchange enables bulk sharing and integration of de-identified data from government institutions to a secure data facility.
 - For example, de-identified administrative data – such as education outcomes, tax records, or social protection information – can be securely shared with a secure data facility. This enables researchers and policymakers to generate insights that support more targeted, evidence-based decision-making and planning.
- The third pillar is data sharing for operational analytics
 - This facilitates bulk transfers of both de-identified and identifiable data between public sector institutions to support service delivery and the fulfilment of operational mandates.
 - For example, MzansiXchange can support the bulk sharing of financial and procurement data between public sector institutions. – helping improve coordination and strengthening planning and oversight.
- Finally, the fourth pillar is open access data sharing
 - Enables users to explore data catalogues, dashboards, data stories, download aggregated datasets and view metadata through secure protocols.
 - For example, the spatialised tax data housed within the National Treasury Secure Data Facility, local data and other insights will be shared via MzansiXchange.

This one-year pilot will test the MzansiXchange in real-world conditions, strengthening the foundations for a broader national rollout. Ayanda, the Chief Data Analytics Officer of the National Treasury, will share more details in her presentation.

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

South Africa is in a unique position of being able to learn from those who have already embarked on this journey. Countries including Estonia, Benin, India, the Dominican Republic and Kazakhstan have been generous in their knowledge sharing.

This also means there are countries which have realised substantial returns from investing in the development of a national data exchange. To understand the transformative potential of



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MzansiXchange, we can look to international examples: in the case of Brazil, their authorities estimate that they have saved more than R4 billion from their data exchange in 2023.

This shows what is possible when data infrastructure is done right – when it is secure, interoperable, and designed with the public in mind.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It has been a joint journey to this point – one built on collaboration, commitment, and shared purpose – and I would like to thank the Presidency and the Department of Communications and Digital Technologies, our co-lead departments in the implementation of the digital transformation roadmap. All the Departments that have supported the MzansiXchange and will be participating in the pilot:

- Statistics South Africa
- Department of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development
- Department of Home Affairs
- Department of Basic Education
- Department of Higher Education and Training
- The Presidency and the Digital Services Unit
- South African Revenue Services
- South African Social Security Agency
- National Student Financial Aid Scheme
- Council for Scientific and Industrial Research
- South African Reserve Bank

I would also like to thank the MzansiXchange technical team led by Open Cities Lab. The international advisory board members. As well as our development partners that have provided funding, including the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (UK FCDO) and the Gates Foundation.

CLOSING

Today marks the start of an exciting journey. However, the success of MzansiXchange depends on how each of us commits to supporting and using it. Ensuring that all departments work towards integrating and being able to fully leverage the potential of the MzansiXchange.



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While today's focus is on MzansiXchange, this is ultimately a whole-of-government effort. To succeed, we must build trust – trust between departments, trust in the system, and most importantly, trust with the public. MzansiXchange is designed with governance, transparency, and accountability at its core to earn and sustain this trust.

MzansiXchange is a national commitment to harnessing data for the public good. It is a platform for collaboration, innovation, and transformation.

Let us continue to work together to build a digitally empowered, data-smart South Africa.

Thank you.