

# CHILE

## BRINGING GOVERNMENT CLOSER TO CITIZENS

“For us, open government is a government that is closer to its citizens”, says Rafael Ariztía, head of the State Modernization Unit, when asked about the Chilean government’s vision of OGP. He means this both in a conceptual and a physical sense, where the idea that government is complex is broken down and the state provides a single platform through which citizens can access all its services. This is the goal of ChileAtiende, which has 190 offices, a [web portal](#) and a call center acting collectively as a one-stop shop for a range of public services.

### MAXIMIZING OPPORTUNITIES

Early in 2011, President Sebastian Piñera pushed for an aggressive modernization agenda of public institutions. The basic problem was one that afflicts most bureaucracies – an organizational structure that prevents horizontal coordination among institutions, and a citizen-centric outlook. That means inefficiency in the use of time and precious resources.

Chile’s membership to OGP in September 2011 created another impetus to work the agenda. “The President didn’t want us to write theories or imagine huge institutional changes but focus on a real initiative that could simplify state-citizen interactions and be implemented in a relatively short time”, Ariztía says about ChileAtiende, which became one of the commitments in the Chilean National Action Plan.

Rather than wait for the legal mandate, the Unit decided to work in reverse. The idea was to first prove the value of the service. The leadership at the Ministry of Labor was very open to reform and the Unit found an opportunity to pilot the initiative. Gradually nine institutions were integrated into the platform. Almost a year after ChileAtiende was launched a [Presidential Decree](#) came into force, mandating state agencies to proactively publish information on service delivery, data re-use and citizen participation in the design and monitoring of public policy.

### FEATURES OF THE INITIATIVE

ChileAtiende, which means ‘Serving Chile’, now provides over 150 public services from 24 different public agencies through its multi-channeled network. Seventy five percent of the national population has access to a ChileAtiende office in their locality. The offices are mostly used by the less educated and more elderly population. Not surprisingly, more than half the users, most of whom are young and educated frequent the [web portal](#). Some of the most visited services in the [web portal](#) are around housing subsidies, social security, cash incentives for health and education outcomes, and judicial case status inquiries.

### EARLY RESULTS

According to a recent independent study, the initiative has generated savings for both the government and citizens. Within a year and a half of implementation, ChileAtiende has saved citizens over 4 million person hours in travel and waiting time and considerable amounts in transportation costs. It has also saved over USD 30 million in infrastructure costs for the government. Citizens tended to be most satisfied with the quality of attention they received from ChileAtiende executives in the offices, in terms of their dedication and willingness to respond to their requests. However there is still room for improvement on how quickly these requests are addressed and solved.

As is the case with one-stop shop models, ChileAtiende solves some basic livelihood problems that have a snowball effect on the democratic quotient between state and citizen. First, the government is now physically closer to the citizen. The Chilean government is very centralized and the geographical proximity that ChileAtiende



LOGO OF CHILEATIENDE

offers has far reaching effects on those parts of the population that the state would otherwise not be able to reach. Emilio Moya, Director of Research at ChileTransparente notes that this face-to-face relationship between state and citizen and the information ChileAtiende provides benefits the most vulnerable groups. As of now, 66 percent of the rural population has a ChileAtiende office in its locality.

Second, ChileAtiende used existing government infrastructure to provide services, making efficient use of state resources to undertake a major reform program. This reorganization of government in a horizontal way, costing roughly the same amount of money, meant that there were little barriers for institutions to integrate.

Third, reducing the asymmetry of information was a blessing for both citizens and the government. Before ChileAtiende, information related to public services and benefits were dispersed, poorly managed and not citizen friendly. There was no clarity on simple procedures such as how, where and when to obtain certificates. With ChileAtiende, there is a centralized set of information which is edited, streamlined and then provided in a decentralized manner through various channels to

“ChileAtiende seeks to increase levels of trust in public institutions and this is very important because legitimate institutions strengthen democracies.”

- Emilio Moya,  
Director of Research, ChileTransparente

citizens. Ariztía notes that key to this change was the government's emphasis on digitization to not only increase citizens accessibility but to also make it easier for institutions to integrate services. But they quickly realized that this had to be paired with a nationwide campaign to address another kind of information asymmetry – 55 percent of users said they were not aware of certain services being provided online and 85 percent of that cohort mentioned that they wouldn't physically visit an office anymore. This campaign includes ads in national and regional TV channels as well as regional radio, public transport and online media in order to promote the use of ChileAtiende.

As an example, [Chile sin papeleo](#), or Chile without paperwork is acting on the public's recommendations on which procedures they'd like to see digitized and how to improve online transactions. So far over 200 procedures have been digitized, from which 69 are a consequence of requests for digitization from citizens. The opportunity not just to access but to act on information in ways that will influence government decision making will ultimately be the hallmark of Chile's open government agenda.

## FACING CHALLENGES

Perhaps the most exciting part of the [Presidential Decree](#) to look out for in the future is citizen's participation in designing and monitoring public policy.

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