Canton of Zurich: Blockchain in the cantonal government – a guide

It is more transparent, more efficient, and more trustworthy, so it is no wonder that blockchain holds considerable potential for the public sector. In partnership with the Cantonal Chancellery of Canton Zurich and the University of Zurich, Ergon has developed a practical guide to analysing the blockchain compatibility of business cases in the cantonal administration.
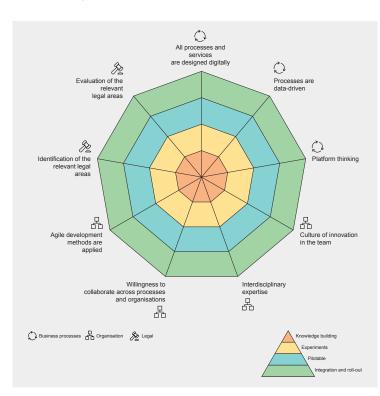
Blockchain technology offers enormous potential as part of the digital transformation. Used properly, it optimises inter-entity processes, improves the transparency of business flows, and creates a basis of trust between the parties involved. On behalf of the Cantonal Chancellery of Canton Zurich, Ergon teamed up with the University of Zurich Blockchain Center to draw up a practical guide. It dives deep into the particular whens and hows of using blockchain technology in cantonal government, and offers useful evaluation and examination tools. The guide is intended to create clarity, objectivity and uniformity in the way in which the individual cantonal departments and agencies examine, evaluate and decide on blockchain.

Conditions and potential uses

Work on the guide began with an analysis of current documents. This covered both the literature on blockchain-based systems and the documentation that already existed within the cantonal administration. There were also workshops with a group of experts drawn from the different government departments. To analyse the potential uses of blockchain technology and the conditions that cantonal business cases must satisfy from the specialist, organisational, legal and technical perspective, Ergon worked with academics and professionals in these fields to develop decision- making tools.

Quickly identifying added value and relevance

With a variety of tools such as checklists, two decision

"The guide is directly applicable and academically sound. That's very much the product of Ergon's specialist expertise."

Benjamin Lehmann
Project Manager, Digitale Verwaltung und E-Government, Cantonal Chancellery, Canton Zurich

trees and a maturity model, individual business cases can swiftly be assessed and evaluated for their feasibility and benefits. The first task is to identify what the organisation is really trying to achieve. Using blockchain makes less sense if there is no need for inter-organisational cooperation, for example. A practical checklist and wide-ranging evaluation questions highlight the added value that blockchain can offer and its relevance to the business case in question. A suitability assessment then indicates appropriate types of blockchain. This process highlights where blockchain pays off – and where it doesn't.

Successful implementation step by step

What does it take to implement a blockchain-based application successfully? How is the culture of innovation in your particular office? The four phases of the maturity model illustrate where an institution stands and what it can still improve to get the best out of blockchain. Knowledge-gathering should be followed by trials. Then, and only, then does it make sense to tackle a pilot project with a view to integration and rollout. A simple formula gives a fast cost estimate, and a network diagram with integrated traffic-light system shows when conditions are met. At the final stage, a questionnaire helps with an initial assessment of the professionalism and integrity of external blockchain providers.

Efficient, transparent decision-making

The guide enables the specialist departments of the cantonal administration to decide for themselves whether and how blockchain makes sense in their particular business cases. It offers an efficient, transparent way of assessing blockchain's potential in that field. The cantonal government overall benefits from a standard approach, which optimises collaboration between departments and saves costs and resources.

Is blockchain a good fit for cantonal government? Find out with the practical guide from the Cantonal Chancellery of Canton Zurich.