

Overview of case studies

The case studies complement the Handbook's analysis with practical GRP reform experiences. The Handbook compiles four case studies – Costa Rica, Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand – that examine the motivations and context for specific reforms aimed at improving authorization procedures with particular relevance to the services sector. Each case study maps legal anchors and institutional arrangements, traces implementation (including digital tools) and distils observed effects and lessons learned from implementation. Evidence draws primarily on laws and regulatory instruments, official government documentation and reports, as well as structured analyses by various international organizations (such as the World Bank, the OECD and APEC) documenting achievements and challenges of the reforms in each case.

The case studies explore the following reform experiences:

- **Costa Rica:** To overcome fragmented and time-consuming licensing procedures, Costa Rica launched the Single Window for Investment (VUI – *Ventanilla Única de Inversión*) in 2017 as a flagship reform to embed GRPs in its investment and business-licensing framework. Led by the Foreign Trade Promotion Office of Costa Rica (PROCOMER) with support from key ministries, the VUI progressively digitized and streamlined procedures through successive legal and institutional milestones between 2010 and 2023. It introduced core GRP principles such as transparency obligations, statutory deadlines and digital workflows. These changes have markedly shortened business start-up times, for instance reducing the approval time for service companies entering the Free Trade Zone from 406 days to just 30–45 days. Building on this progress, the government is now working to evolve the VUI into a fully integrated, nationwide platform supporting faster, smarter and more transparent authorization processes.
- **Indonesia:** Over the past two decades, Indonesia has transformed its business licensing framework from a fragmented, paper-based system into a digitally integrated platform that embeds GRPs. This reform trajectory reached a major milestone in 2021 with the launch of the Online Single Submission Risk-Based Approach (OSS-RBA). More than a licensing portal, the OSS-RBA functions as a core governance instrument: it introduced a risk-based methodology that calibrates licensing requirements to the potential risks associated with different

business activities. While the OSS-RBA has already delivered notable implementation results, the Indonesian government has recently taken steps to consolidate the OSS-RBA's gains and address existing gaps, by incorporating additional GRP features.

- **The Philippines:** The Philippines pursued a sustained and ambitious reform agenda to embed GRPs in public service delivery and business facilitation. Anchored in the *Anti-Red Tape Act* of 2007 and significantly expanded through the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act* of 2018, these reforms have aimed to make business licensing and other government services more transparent, predictable and citizen-centred, thereby enhancing the competitiveness of the country's increasingly services-driven economy. The Philippine regulatory reforms have yielded measurable results: in the World Bank's *Business Ready (B-Ready) 2024* report, the Philippines ranked in the top 20 of 50 economies, performing well in the quality of its regulatory framework.
- **Thailand:** In response to persistent bureaucratic inefficiency and limited transparency, Thailand launched a broad reform agenda to embed GRPs into its domestic governance framework through key legal instruments, including the *Licensing Facilitation Act 2015 (LFA)*, the *2017 Constitution*, and the *Rules on Legislative Drafting and Evaluation of the Outcomes of Law Act 2019*, as well as two digital-era laws adopted in 2019 and 2022. These reforms helped lift Thailand's standing in international benchmarks, including a rise in the UN *E-Government Development Index* from 77th in 2016 to 52nd in 2024. While challenges remain, the government is continuing to advance its reform efforts, including revising the LFA and integrating more public services into centralized digital portals for both citizens and businesses to further improve service quality.

Cross-cutting insights from the case studies

1. Effective reform starts with clear legal anchors and empowered lead regulatory agencies.

Clear legal anchors and empowered lead agencies are central to translating reform objectives into implementation. Statutes and decrees set regulatory objectives, establish timelines for service delivery, impose transparency obligations, include provisions

on simplifying and digitalizing authorization processes and provide for applicants' review rights. These legal anchors are then implemented and overseen by designated lead agencies, which coordinate ministries and other involved institutions, issue implementation guidance, monitor compliance against established service standards, take corrective action where necessary, and sustain reform momentum across political cycles.

In Costa Rica, successive laws and decrees created the VUI as an integrated, centralized system for handling business authorization procedures. Strategic coordination of the VUI rests with its Steering Committee, which is empowered to lead ministries and agencies in implementing the system, and which evaluates regulations for simplifying authorization procedures, identifies bottlenecks and recommends corrective measures. The PROCOMER is entrusted to act as the administrator and technical secretariat of the VUI, hosting and operating the platform, coordinating participating ministries and agencies through delegated powers, and following up on the Steering Committee's decisions.

Indonesia's reform under the *Law No. 11/2020 on Job Creation* introduced a risk-based approach to business licensing, with *Government Regulation No. 5/2021* operationalizing this approach through an electronically integrated system – the OSS-RBA. The Ministry of Investment/Indonesia Investment Coordinating Board (BKPM) is responsible for developing, operating and managing the OSS-RBA; coordinating with sectoral ministries and licensing authorities to ensure administrative and technical integration; as well as handling public complaints related to the implementation of the OSS-RBA.

In the Philippines, the *Anti-Red Tape Act* of 2007 introduced the framework for the Citizen's Charter and public service delivery standards. The Act was subsequently strengthened by the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act* of 2018. The latter also established the Anti-Red Tape Authority (ARTA) as the central oversight body with authority to set templates for the Citizen's Charter, issue implementing guidelines, monitor compliance and require corrective action.

Thailand's experience reflects a multi-pillar reform effort anchored in several interlinked laws. The LFA of

2015 seeks to enhance transparency and predictability of administrative procedures through a variety of measures, including licensing manuals and time-bound decision-making. The *2017 Constitution* further boosted the implementation of GRPs by requiring stakeholder consultation, impact assessment and periodic law reviews. Subsequent instruments, including the *Rules on Legislative Drafting and Evaluation of the Outcomes of Law Act* of 2019 and digital government laws of 2019 and 2022, extended this framework to promote evidence-based policy-making and digital service delivery. Each pillar of the reform is led by a specialized agency: the Public Sector Development Commission on administrative simplification and licensing facilitation, the Office of the Council of State on legislative quality and evaluation, and the Digital Government Development Agency on digital public service delivery.

2. High-level sponsorship helps, but doesn't guarantee, delivery; sustained results require consistent political backing across election cycles.

High-level sponsorship catalyses reform – establishing objectives and responsibilities, clearing bottlenecks and mobilizing resources – but it does not, on its own, ensure delivery. Durable results depend on continuity of direction, protected budgets and consistent follow-through across election cycles.

The Thailand case study illustrates both sides of this dynamic. Early top-level backing enabled the Regulatory Guillotine initiative in 2016, which aimed to streamline over 1,000 laws and boost Thailand's position in international competitiveness rankings. Yet, subsequent shifts in political attention and bureaucratic resistance slowed implementation, causing the initiative to lose traction.

In contrast, the Philippines' reform demonstrates how sustained political commitment across successive administrations can preserve momentum for change. The *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act*, enacted under the Rodrigo Duterte presidency in 2018, built on the *Anti-Red Tape Act*, introduced in 2007 during the Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo administration – deepening earlier reform efforts and institutionalizing the ARTA. This continuity across political cycles helped maintain reform direction and deliver stronger implementation results.

3. Institutions are as important as regulation: strong mandates, clear responsibilities and sustainable resourcing ensure effective, consistent implementation and enforcement of regulatory reforms.

Institutions determine whether rules translate into consistent practice. Clear mandates, defined responsibilities and adequate resourcing enable coordination, quality control and day-to-day enforcement of service standards.

Costa Rica's VUI illustrates such an institutional backbone. Deadline monitoring, audit trails and reporting obligations created operational accountability and made clock-stops and escalations more transparent and manageable in routine case handling.

In the Philippines, legal mandates were paired with oversight instruments – most notably the Report Card Survey and the Citizen's Charter reviews. These mechanisms test service quality across agencies, trigger corrective action and reinforce accountability.

Thailand's experience indicates that, while reform laws such as the LFA established important service delivery standards, gaps in implementation capacity and coordination produced uneven compliance across agencies. By leaving practical parameters to the discretion of individual licensing agencies, the LFA has led to uneven implementation – emphasizing that the existence of a regulatory framework and lead agencies does not suffice when reforms lack clarity and enforceability. This highlighted the fact that implementation arrangements and resourcing are as important as the regulatory text.

In addition, sustainable resourcing is critical: platforms and integration require ongoing operation and maintenance funding. Costa Rica's VUI, financed since its inception from PROCOMER's own budget and now authorized under *Law No. 10234 (2022)* to charge service-at-cost fees, highlights the need for a clear tariff/fee model to support long-term operation, maintenance and upgrades. Similarly, in the Philippines, limited budget allocations delayed the rollout of ARTA's electronic complaint management system launched in 2022, slowing case resolution and illustrating how resource constraints can impede the implementation of otherwise well-designed reforms.

4. Meaningful inter-agency coordination – both horizontal across regulatory agencies and vertical across levels of government – is key to reform: it connects political will with institutional practice, prevents siloed implementation and enables (digital) interoperability.

When inter-agency coordination functions well, applicants experience a single, predictable process rather than a sequence of fragmented steps, and governments can monitor performance, enforce deadlines and share data seamlessly.

In Indonesia, the OSS-RBA is designed to serve as the backbone linking its core licensing subsystem to sectoral systems for key technical approvals that are required in the authorization process. It interfaces with dedicated systems, for instance for environmental approvals or building permits, with integration continuing to expand over time; this allows applications to be routed consistently across authorities, tracked against shared service-level commitments, and with decisions made based on the same data.

In Costa Rica, the VUI formalized coordination among participating agencies and institutionalized joint inspections and real-time data verification for the authorization procedures handled directly through the platform. These arrangements reduced duplicative visits and conflicting instructions, while allowing requirements to be checked against authoritative sources.

In the Philippines, the coordination architecture – including the Philippine Business Hub (PBH), the Philippines Business Database, and the local government units' e-Business One-Stop Shops (eBOSS) under oversight of the ARTA – is still being scaled. Uneven local capacity and staggered integration schedules show that without sustained cross-agency coordination, front-end portals cannot yet deliver end-to-end services.

In Thailand, efforts to consolidate public services through multi-agency platforms – such as the Government Central Service System for Businesses (Biz Portal) – have been constrained by partial back-end integration and fragmented agency systems. This underscores that coordination must be backed by shared data standards, enforceable service-levels and central quality assurance.

Across all the case studies, inter-agency coordination – supported by standardized procedures, data-sharing arrangements and escalation protocols – has helped replace sequential, paper-based hand-overs with a single, traceable process. Yet, coordination at the subcentral level remains a persistent challenge. This is evident in delayed onboarding of local government units into the eBOSS network in the Philippines, variation in institutional capacity and regulatory alignment across provinces and districts in relation to the implementation of the OSS-RBA system in Indonesia, and heterogeneous data systems across agencies in Thailand. These observations show that coordination must extend not only vertically but also horizontally to ensure reform objectives are effectively implemented.

5. Digitalization can only deliver its full benefits when it is paired with process simplification and interoperable systems.

Digitalization delivers results only when it is matched with process simplification and interoperable back-end systems. Without these, technology risks merely replicating bureaucratic inefficiencies in digital form.

Indonesia's experience exemplifies this dynamic. The OSS-RBA system couples digitalization with a risk-based licensing approach, cutting processing times for low- and medium-risk activities and enabling the registration of nearly ten million micro and small businesses after just three years of implementation. Yet, incomplete integration between the OSS-RBA and sectoral systems for required technical approvals in the authorization process has forced manual checks and delays in many cases.

In Costa Rica, process re-engineering helped simplify and standardize authorization processes, which were then digitalized through the VUI. As a result, overall processing times have shortened considerably – for services companies, from 406 days to 52.5 days. However, since not all processes on the VUI are fully end-to-end, applicants still have to deal with offline checks and duplicative information requests.

In Thailand, the development of multi-agency digital portals has improved access and transparency, yet fragmented legacy systems and uneven coordination have constrained end-to-end automation. This underscores the need for shared data standards and interoperability frameworks.

In the Philippines, the digital architecture is being scaled nationwide through process mapping and the integration of central and local systems. Progress is uneven where back-office changes have yet to be simplified and aligned with the new digital systems.

Across the case studies, the lesson is clear: digital rollouts must go hand in hand with simplification – through standardized forms, once-only data collection, pre-validation – and underpinned by interoperable systems. Otherwise, their benefits risk remaining partial.

6. Infrastructure is a key enabler – given the strong emphasis on digital tools, reforms need reliable power supply, robust connectivity and functional IT systems to produce tangible results.

Infrastructure is a prerequisite for digital reform to deliver tangible results. Reliable power supply and connectivity ensure that digital platforms function smoothly, data systems remain stable and users can access services without interruption. Without this foundation, even the most well-designed reforms risk remaining fragmented or ineffective in practice.

Costa Rica's experience illustrates this interdependence. The VUI was conceived as a technology-driven reform to simplify, digitize and centralize investment and business authorization procedures through a single online platform. Its effectiveness hinges on the strength of the digital backbone that supports it: robust IT infrastructure, interoperable government systems and the continuous maintenance of its technological architecture. Where these elements are well established, the platform delivers tangible efficiency gains; where they are not, progress stalls.

Indonesia's early OSS-RBA rollout brought these challenges into view. Constraints in electricity supply, connectivity and data migration, which slowed onboarding and hampered implementation, highlighted the need for resilient power networks, reliable connectivity and contingency arrangements to ensure uninterrupted digital service delivery across the archipelago. The system's high volume of use – processing up to 50,000 business identification numbers in a single day at peak periods – also revealed the importance of scalable hosting and robust system architecture. Likewise, standardized interfaces

proved essential to enable seamless data exchange and integration between the OSS-RBA and other technical approval systems that are essential for the authorization process.

In the Philippines, many local government units lagged in establishing fully automated eBOSS systems due to limited IT infrastructure, particularly in remote and island provinces where digital networks remain patchy. These infrastructure gaps curtailed the country's progress towards end-to-end digital processing. Likewise, the deferral of the ARTA's e-complaints platform led to slower resolution of complaints under the *Ease of Doing Business and Efficient Government Service Delivery Act of 2018*, illustrating how institutional performance and transparency ultimately hinge on digital readiness and IT capacity.

In Thailand, the mandated migration of thousands of public services to the Biz and Citizen Portals – the latter is a central platform consolidating government services for individual citizens and residents – between 2025 and 2027, is expected to be an IT-intensive undertaking, whose success will depend on agency readiness to upgrade legacy systems, clean and harmonize data, and expose interoperable interfaces. Without parallel upgrades to back-end systems, front-end gains will remain partial.

Across these cases, the implication is clear: reforms must be underpinned by sustained investment in connectivity (especially at subcentral level), secure digital identity and e-signature, resilient hosting and monitoring, and shared components (payments, logging/analytics). Without these, digital tools alone cannot deliver truly end-to-end improvements.

7. Continuous agency upskilling is essential to ensure that staff is well equipped to adapt and foster a service-oriented culture that supports the effective implementation of reforms.

Continuous upskilling is critical to turn legal reforms and new platforms into consistent day-to-day practice. Regular training, peer learning and institutionalized knowledge-sharing mechanisms help build technical and managerial capabilities needed to embed new processes, close implementation gaps and sustain reform performance over time.

In Costa Rica, more than 370 officials were trained in process re-engineering methods during the VUI

rollout, while alignment and awareness-raising activities were carried out among 38 public institutions and 60 municipalities. These initiatives have helped standardize procedures, apply time-bound rules, and reduce the need for reworking.

In the Philippines, reforms were paired with domestic and international capacity-building partnerships – including with New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the World Bank, and the UN Agency for International Development (USAID). These collaborations supported ARTA in advancing e-governance and regulatory management initiatives; incorporating GRP tools such as RIA; strengthening process mapping; improving front-line service delivery; and promoting public awareness of reform objectives.

Experiences elsewhere in the case studies underline the point: where agency skills and change-management fall behind, implementation becomes uneven and the benefits of digital tools remain only partially realized.

8. User-centred design – including through help desks and unified portals – reduces search and compliance costs, especially for small businesses.

User-centred design reduces search and compliance costs – especially for small businesses – by making rules and processes easy to find, understand and complete. Clear guidance, intuitive layouts and integrated assistance tools allow users to complete transactions with fewer errors and less reliance on intermediaries.

In Costa Rica, efforts to make the VUI more user-centred – such as by introducing help desks, clearer procedural guidance and gradual improvements to usability – have made navigation easier for applicants. However, the platform is still structured around administrative categories rather than life events, and systematic feedback and monitoring mechanisms are yet to be fully established.

In the Philippines, the eBOSS and the PBH consolidate front-end steps for business licensing and are being scaled nationwide. As integration deepens, ensuring standardized guidance across local governments and targeted support for business remain a priority to sustain accessibility and uniform service quality.

Thailand's plan for the consolidation of thousands of public services into the Biz and Citizen portals aims for similar user-facing gains in discoverability, convenience and end-to-end navigation. Achieving these benefits will depend on applying consistent content standards, harmonizing data structures and ensuring back-end alignment across agencies.

9. Central oversight and regular monitoring and evaluation promote accountability and sustain reform momentum.

Central oversight and regular monitoring and evaluation translate legal standards into day-to-day accountability. When performance data are tracked, compared and acted upon, institutions can identify bottlenecks, target support and sustain consistent service delivery across agencies.

In Costa Rica, the VUI tracks statutory time limits and triggers alerts when deadlines lapse, while PROCOMER produces agency performance reports to enable targeted support and corrective action.

In the Philippines, ARTA's Report Card Survey and independent audits provide checks on service quality and compliance, exposing bottlenecks and prompting remedial measures.

Indonesia is embedding statutory service-level agreements in the OSS-RBA ecosystem and moving towards public performance dashboards and silent approvals when service-level agreements lapse, thereby raising accountability and incentives for timely compliance.

In Thailand, oversight mechanisms exist, with the Public Sector Development Commission (OPDC) responsible for monitoring the implementation of the LFA; however, its limited enforcement power has constrained follow-through. Two dozen complaints lodged between 2015 and 2020 revealed delays and procedural inconsistencies, underscoring that without strong consequences for non-compliance, accountability mechanisms struggled to ensure consistent application of the reform law.

10. Flexibility and progressive adjustment are essential to ensure that reforms meet evolving business needs.

Flexibility and progressive adjustment keep reforms aligned with business needs and implementation realities. Regular review and adaptation help ensure that policies remain effective, responsive and capable of addressing emerging challenges over time.

In Indonesia, authorities have iteratively updated the OSS-RBA framework – including, for instance, moving from *Government Regulation 5/2021* to *Government Regulation 28/2025*; introducing statutory service-level agreements and silent approvals; and adding new integrated subsystems (including a basic requirement subsystem covering environmental, building and spatial approvals) – to strengthen time-bound service delivery and address earlier interoperability challenges.

In Thailand, the planned revision of the LFA and the 2025–2027 scale-up of end-to-end services via the Biz and Citizen portals aim to lock in faster and more predictable licensing procedures through features such as e-submission, formal completeness checks and fast-track channels.

These trajectories underscore that durable reform results require built-in feedback loops – both ex ante and ex post review – together with the ability to recalibrate rules, service standards and digital systems as implementation realities change. In the absence of these, initial gains can plateau or fragment across agencies.

GRP aspects of the case studies

The case studies follow the GRP aspects outlined in Figure 1.

Figure 1: GRP aspects reflected in the case studies

GRP	Costa Rica VUI system	Indonesia OSS-RBA system	Philippines Ease of doing business reform	Thailand Ease of doing business reform
Processing of applications	Standardized processing via the VUI; statutory deadlines imposed on procedures; automatic approval (positive administrative silence) if the competent authority fails to act within the prescribed time frame	Standardized processing via the OSS-RBA; risk-tiered time frames for licence issuance, with automatic generation of the Business Identification Number for low-risk activities	Unified business application form; fixed processing deadlines (3–7–20 days depending on complexity); single extension allowed; written notice required for delays; silent-approval mechanism applied	Prompt document verification upon submission; time-bound decision-making, mandatory written explanations for delays
Electronic means for submission of applications	VUI enables e-filing, digital signatures, online payments, case tracking, digital notifications	OSS-RBA portal enables e-submission; digital case files and integration with sectoral systems	PBH/eBOSS enables online submission and tracking; use of electronic signatures is permissible	Biz Portal and Biz Regist platforms provide end-to-end digital services, enabling online application, renewal, modification and cancellation of licences, with the use of electronic signatures and the instant issuing of certified digital documents
Publication of information on authorization	Licensing requirements published via VUI and National Catalogue of Procedures	OSS-RBA's information subsystem publishes risk classification and licensing requirements openly	Licensing requirements, procedures, fees and processing time frames are made publicly available – both on-site and online	LFA requires competent authorities to prepare and publish a licensing manual – both on-site and online –detailing application procedures, required documents and processing time frames
Single window for information/submissions	VUI serves as the national single window for business and investment licensing	The OSS-RBA operates as the national single window for risk-based business licensing, integrating licensing procedures across 17 sectors of economic activity	LGU-level eBOSS and PBH operate as interconnected single windows for business registration and licensing at local and national levels	Biz Portal and Biz Regist platforms provide single interfaces for licence applications
Stakeholder engagement	The VUI implements a Net Promoter Score survey to assess internal and external users' overall satisfaction as part of its ex-post feedback process	Businesses and citizens can monitor licensing processes and provide feedback through the OSS-RBA's information subsystem	Consultations during law drafting and ARTA's Report Card Survey capture citizen and business feedback	Section 77 of the Constitution and the 2019 <i>Rules on Legislative Drafting and Evaluation of the Outcomes of Law Act</i> require that public consultation and stakeholder feedback be conducted both ex ante and ex post as part of the regulatory process
Enquiry points	PROCOMER acts as administrator and primary information point for investors using VUI	OSS-RBA portal offers public helpdesk and user support integrated with BKPM call centre	ARTA serves as central enquiry and complaints point for citizens and businesses; public assistance/complaint desk is established in each licensing office	One-stop shop services centre provides information and clarification on services to the public on licensing rules and procedures
Regulatory impact assessment	Not covered /examined in the case study	Not covered/ examined in the case study	ARTA's <i>RIA Manual</i> provides a structured methodology for conducting RIA to ensure quality of existing and proposed regulations	2019 <i>Rules on Legislative Drafting and Evaluation of the Outcomes of Law Act</i> requires ex ante RIA and ex post review of laws
Inter-agency coordination	The VUI links national and municipal agencies through interoperable databases and streamlined information flows	OSS-RBA mandates inter-agency coordination across licensing authorities via norms, standards, procedures and criteria established by the central government and joint oversight through integrated supervision mechanism	ARTA coordinates and monitors the implementation of ease of doing business and anti-red tape reforms across national government agencies and local government units	OPDC oversees licensing facilitation under the LFA, while DGA drives digital transformation through common standards and system interoperability across agencies