



Deera Editorial

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Restructuring as Redesign:

Five Ideas for Kuwait's Next Administrative Era

On 3 May 2026, the Council of Ministers held a dedicated meeting to review and advance the restructuring of state institutions and public agencies, with a stated objective of building an administrative system characterised by efficiency, transparency, and the capacity to anticipate future change (Al Qabas). This is a moment Deera believes deserves substantive engagement rather than commentary. A restructuring exercise of this scale will only deliver on its ambition if it is treated as an act of redesign rather than an act of reorganisation. The difference matters. Reorganisation moves boxes on an organisational chart; redesign rebuilds the underlying experience of the state for the people who interact with it every day.

This brief offers five concrete ideas drawn from the most successful international precedents in public-sector modernisation, alongside a clear marker of what Kuwait has already achieved. The argument is supportive and forward-looking. The premise is that Kuwait now has, in its existing infrastructure and institutional appetite, the raw material to build one of the most modern and citizen-centred state operating models in the region. The path requires sustained political continuity, design discipline, and the will to centre the user journey rather than the agency boundary.

I. THE STARTING POINT IS STRONGER THAN MOST

Any honest blueprint for restructuring must begin with what already works. Kuwait's Sahel platform, launched in September 2021 by the Public Authority for Civil Information, is a regional success story. By September 2025 the platform had completed 111 million electronic transactions for 2.9 million users, with 32 million of those transactions taking place in 2025 alone (Times Kuwait). The service catalogue grew from 123 services at launch to over 460 services

from more than 40 government entities by September 2025. The Newborn Journey, the country's first integrated cross-agency digital workflow covering registrations, allowances, and family-status updates triggered by a single life event, demonstrates that Kuwait has both the technical capacity and the institutional coordination to do far more.

The Ministry of State for Communications Affairs has signalled a clear direction of travel: extending Sahel into business and investor-facing services through the Sahel Business stream, with additional features such as integrated bill-payment and consolidated civic-reporting in development (GCC Business News). The restructuring conversation should be understood within this trajectory. Restructuring is not a substitute for digitisation; it is its institutional complement. Both succeed together or not at all.

II. ESTONIA AS THE OPERATING MODEL, NOT AS A METAPHOR

Estonia is the most cited and most carefully studied example of a modern digital state, and the right way to engage with the Estonian model is to borrow its operating principles rather than its surface features. By December 2024, Estonia had reached 100 percent digitisation of government services, ranking second on the United Nations E-Government Development Index, having risen from sixteenth place in 2018 (Frost & Sullivan Institute). The country's X-Road data exchange layer connects 929 institutions and enterprises, supports more than 3,000 digital services, and processed over 2.7 billion data queries in 2024 alone, saving an estimated 1,345 working years annually for the state and its citizens (Future Shift Labs; Wikipedia, Once-Only Principle). According to the 2025 Eurobarometer, 79 percent of Estonian citizens consider that digitisation of public and private services is making their lives easier (European Commission).

Three principles underwrite this performance and would translate well to a Kuwaiti context. **The first is the once-only principle:** by Estonian law since 2007, public-sector bodies are prohibited from creating separate databases for the same data, and citizens are required to provide each piece of information only once (Wikipedia). **The second is decentralised interoperability:** X-Road is not a central database that absorbs every agency's records but a secure data-exchange layer that lets each ministry retain its own systems while federating its data

through a common channel. **The third is radical transparency:** every Estonian citizen can see, through a personal data tracker, exactly which agency has accessed which record at which time, and unauthorised access is a criminal offence (LOTI). These three principles, taken together, are the architecture of trust. Without them, digital government becomes faster bureaucracy. With them, it becomes a different kind of state.

III. FIVE IDEAS FOR THE RESTRUCTURING AGENDA

Idea one: build a national interoperability layer. The most transferable Estonian lesson is architectural. Kuwait should establish, as a foundational element of any restructuring programme, a national data-exchange layer modelled on X-Road. Such a layer would not require any single ministry to surrender its operational systems. It would, however, require a legal mandate for secure cross-agency data exchange, a clear consent and audit framework for citizens and residents, and a once-only rule that applies to all major public transactions. The European Commission's 2024 study estimated that full deployment of the EU's once-only technical system could halve administrative costs for small and medium-sized enterprises in cross-border procedures (Wikipedia). The domestic gains in Kuwait would be at least as significant.

Idea two: expand Sahel into a sovereign super-app. The international super-app benchmark is Tencent's WeChat, which reached approximately 1.4 billion monthly active users in 2025 (Statista; The Global Statistics). WeChat's most relevant feature for a public-sector context is not its messaging or social layer but its Mini Programs ecosystem: roughly 945 million monthly active users in China access more than 4.3 million lightweight applications inside WeChat without separate downloads or logins (DemandSage). Kuwait does not need to replicate the commercial model. It can, however, adopt the design logic. Sahel can become the trusted single interface through which a citizen, resident, or business completes any meaningful interaction with the state, with private-sector services integrated where they reduce friction for the user and where they remain rules-based and supervised. The objective is a public-service environment, not a public marketing platform.

Idea three: organise services around life events. The Newborn Journey already in place inside Sahel is the prototype for this approach (Times Kuwait). A citizen does not naturally think in terms of ministries; the question that arises is ‘I have just had a child, what do I need to do?’ The interface should answer that question by composing the correct sequence of registrations, allowances, certificates, and notifications across the relevant agencies. The same logic extends to a clear set of high-value journeys: starting a business, hiring a worker, purchasing a home, renewing legal documents, retiring, and managing inheritance. Each life-event journey converted into a single guided workflow inside Sahel saves hours of citizen time, removes a category of administrative complaint, and demonstrates the value of restructuring directly to the public.

Idea four: build a civic-feedback layer with surveys and signal loops. Restructuring without measurement risks becoming invisible to the public it serves. A modern administrative system needs continuous, anonymous, structured feedback from the people using its services. Sahel is in a unique position to deliver this: short, well-designed surveys at the end of each completed transaction; a periodic citizen-experience index published in open-data format; and a formal channel for proposing simplifications of specific procedures. Denmark’s digital-government model has long combined service delivery with structured feedback as a design principle, and Estonia’s data-tracker functionality demonstrates that transparency about who-saw-what is itself a feedback mechanism. The objective is a state that learns from its users in real time rather than discovering its weaknesses through post-hoc audits.

Idea five: anchor the reform in performance-based budgeting and service-level commitments. The European Commission’s 2025 Digital Decade report highlights that successful digital-government transitions require more than infrastructure; they require legal, organisational, and budgetary frameworks that tie money to outcomes (European Commission). For Kuwait, this means publishing a small set of measurable service standards for each restructured agency: average processing time for a named transaction, percentage of services accessible inside Sahel, share of cross-agency journeys completed without manual handoff, and citizen-satisfaction scores. Budget allocations for the following year should reference

performance against the previous year's standards. This is not a punitive mechanism. It is the mechanism by which restructuring becomes self-reinforcing rather than episodic.

IV. WHAT MAKES RESTRUCTURING DELIVER

International evidence is consistent on one point: the difference between successful and unsuccessful public-sector restructuring is rarely the technical design of the reform. It is the institutional continuity behind it. Estonia's digital-state programme is the product of more than two decades of compounding investment, regulatory consistency, and political consensus across multiple governments (Frost & Sullivan Institute). The lesson for Kuwait is encouraging rather than cautionary: every year of continuity compounds into a measurable performance gap relative to peers. A multi-year roadmap published with named milestones, paired with a single empowered delivery vehicle inside the Prime Minister's Office, is the structural feature most likely to convert a restructuring agenda into a durable national capability.

Two complementary structural moves would strengthen the foundation further. The first is a clear consent and data-classification framework so that the expansion of Sahel does not outpace public trust. The second is a transparent procurement framework for the technology that supports the restructuring, with a deliberate preference for open standards and interoperable solutions over vendor lock-in. Both moves are well-precedented in EU practice and align with Kuwait's own established direction.

V. CONCLUSION

The restructuring conversation in Kuwait arrives at an opportune moment. The country has already proved, through Sahel and through the Newborn Journey integrated workflow, that it can build user-centred digital infrastructure at scale. The international playbook for the next stage is well-documented, well-tested, and increasingly affordable to implement. Five ideas frame a constructive path forward: a national interoperability layer modelled on Estonia's X-Road, the expansion of Sahel into a sovereign super-app inspired by the WeChat design logic, the organisation of public services around life events rather than ministry boundaries, a continuous civic-feedback layer built into the platform, and a performance-based budgeting framework that

ties resources to outcomes. None of these ideas is novel. All of them are within reach. The country has the appetite. The infrastructure exists. The political moment supports the work. Deera's view is that the next administrative era can be defined less by which entities are merged or renamed than by how much faster, clearer, and more legible the state becomes for the people and businesses who depend on it.

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