Oxford Policy Management

DEVELOPMENT PATHWAYS

Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Key aspects to consider when setting up an integrated system for data and information management… and international best practice

Keynote Speech, Day 2

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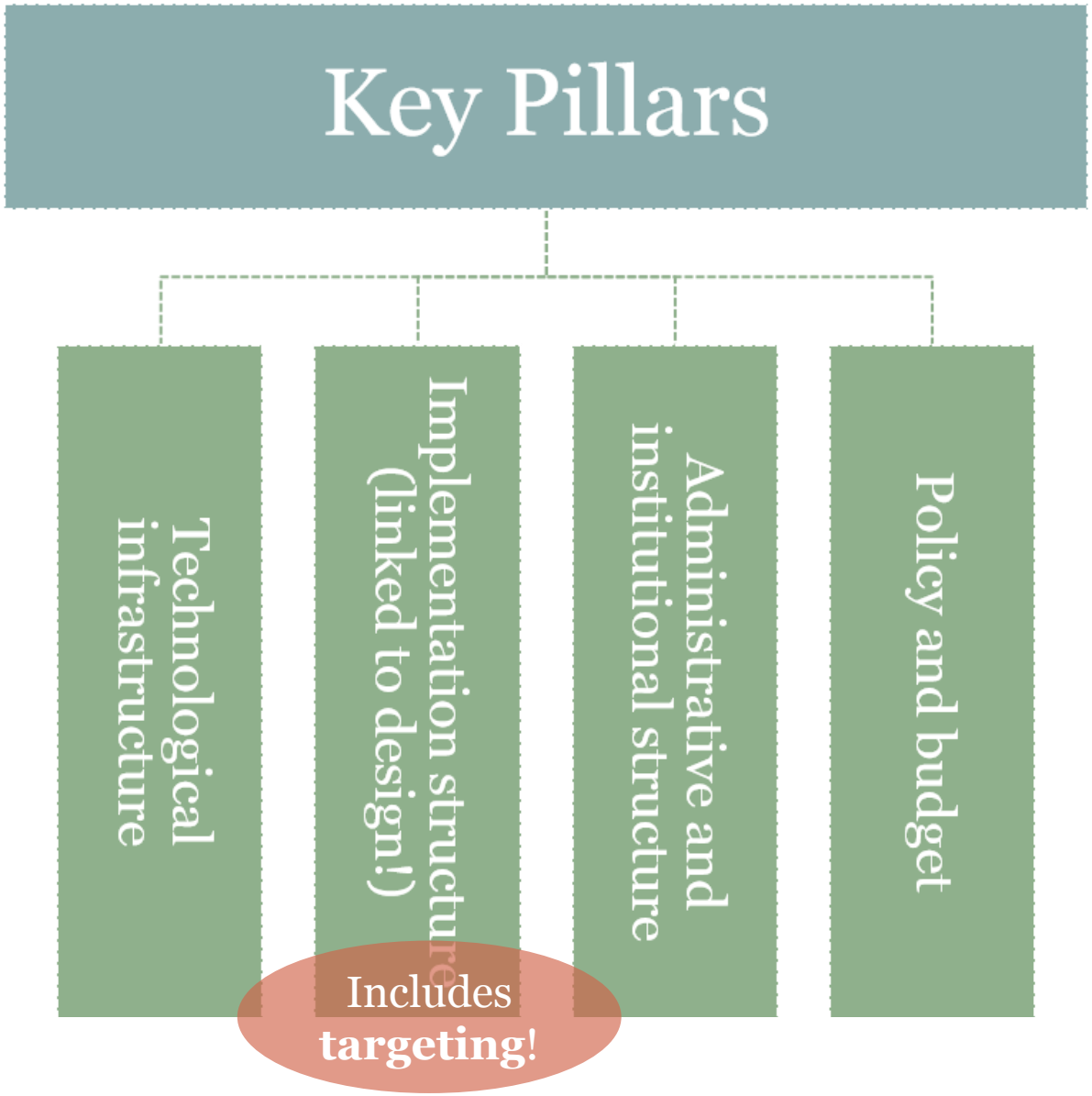
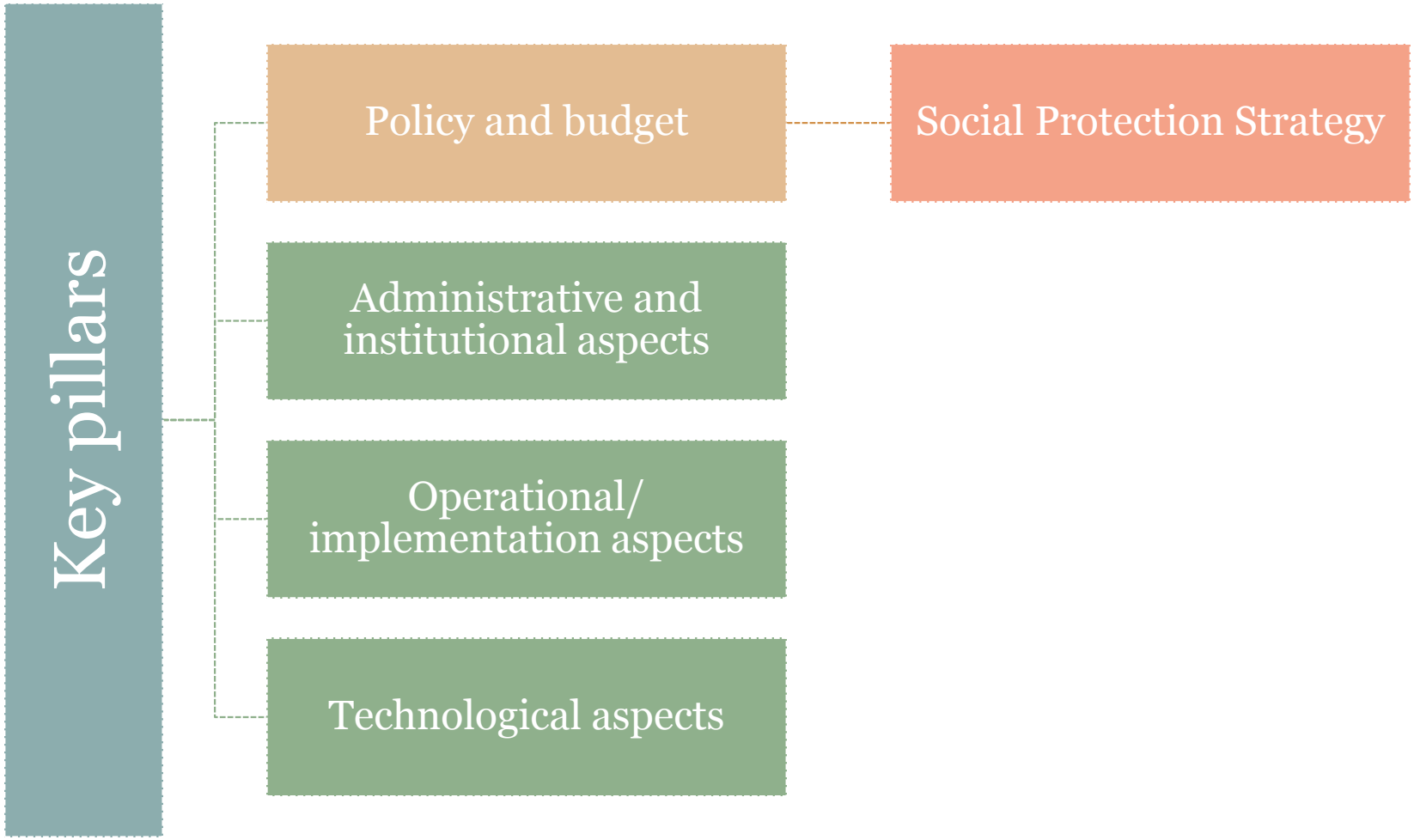
Jakarta Workshop – March 12, 2015

OUTLINE: What is needed? Four key pillars…



What is needed? Policy and budget



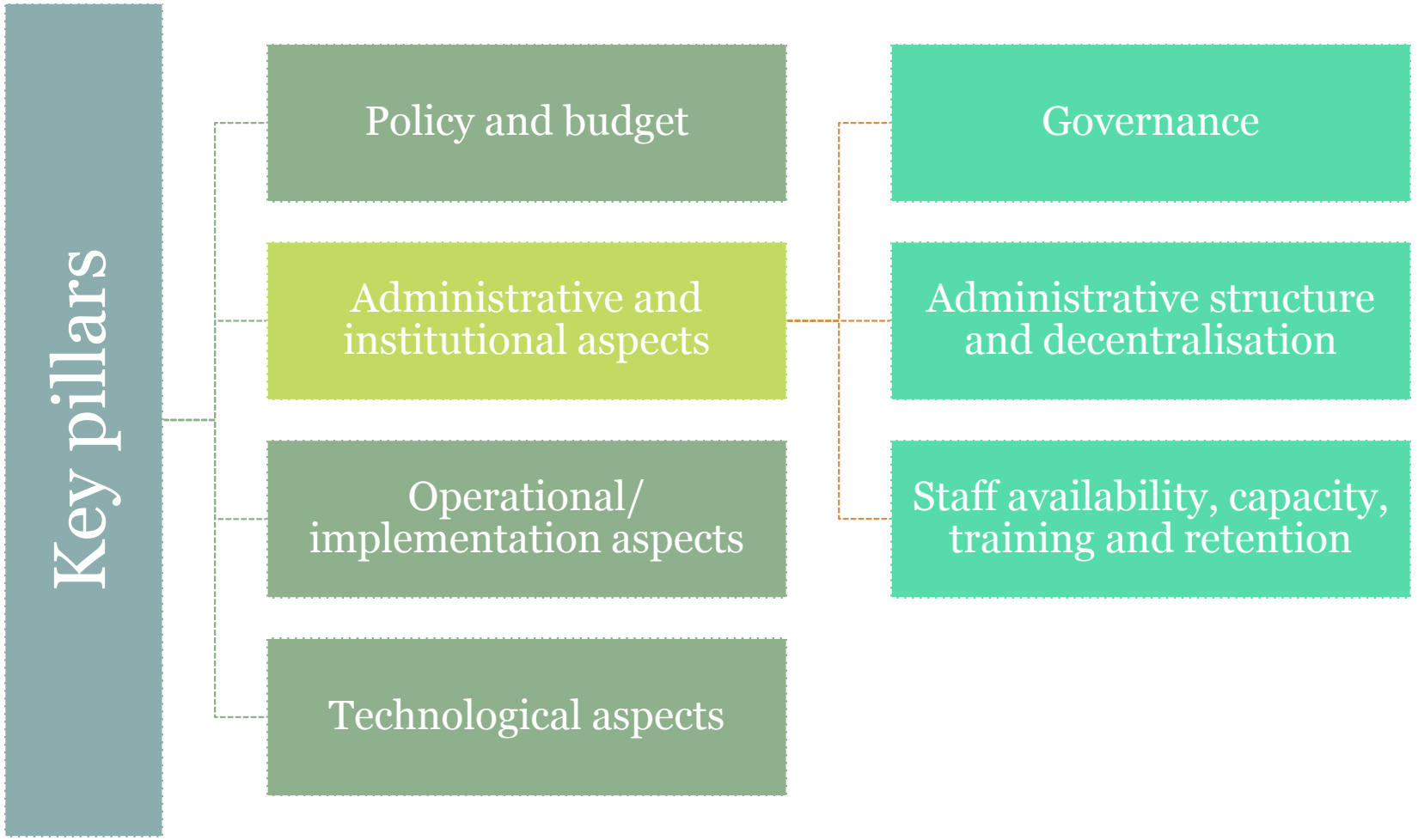
First of all, commitment to integration! And availability of budget…

- Integration is mainly a policy issue requiring political and institutional arrangements and commitment rather than technical 'fixes'!

- **Best Practice**:
  - *Clear objectives* (why are we doing this, what are we aiming at, who is on board?)
  - *Commitment to holistic/integrated approach* to Social Protection (how do/should the various parts fit together?)
  - Acceptance of *slow, iterative process* and failures!

- Need for an upfront assessment of costs…
  - *External financing* appears to be key in allowing the initial disbursements needed for such systems.
  - Very difficult to *compare costs* across countries. Implementation costs ($0.2-$9 million yearly), data collection costs ($4-14 per applicant) and development/infrastructure costs ($1-5 million).

What is needed? Administrative/institutional set-up



Governance and institutional arrangements

- **International best practice (e.g. Argentina, Mexico, Chile, Indonesia)**:
  - Coordination and management is independent from the management of individual programs (for example, independent agency) and is high enough in the government hierarchy to effectively coordinate with all stakeholders.
  - Clear identification of stakeholders and formalisation of their roles and responsibilities, possibly through legally binding agreements (MoUs), carefully designed incentives and mutually agreed terms of reference.

- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - transaction costs to coordination…
  - Increased risk of errors being propagated across programs that have common points of entry, stifling creativity and responsiveness…

Administrative structure and decentralisation

- **International best practice (e.g. Brazil, Chile, Colombia, South Africa, Turkey)**:
  - Decentralisation of implementation while maintaining design and control functions at central level (including verifying and validating data and targeting functions).
  - Share consolidated data through web access with decentralised levels of government (limited, secure access)

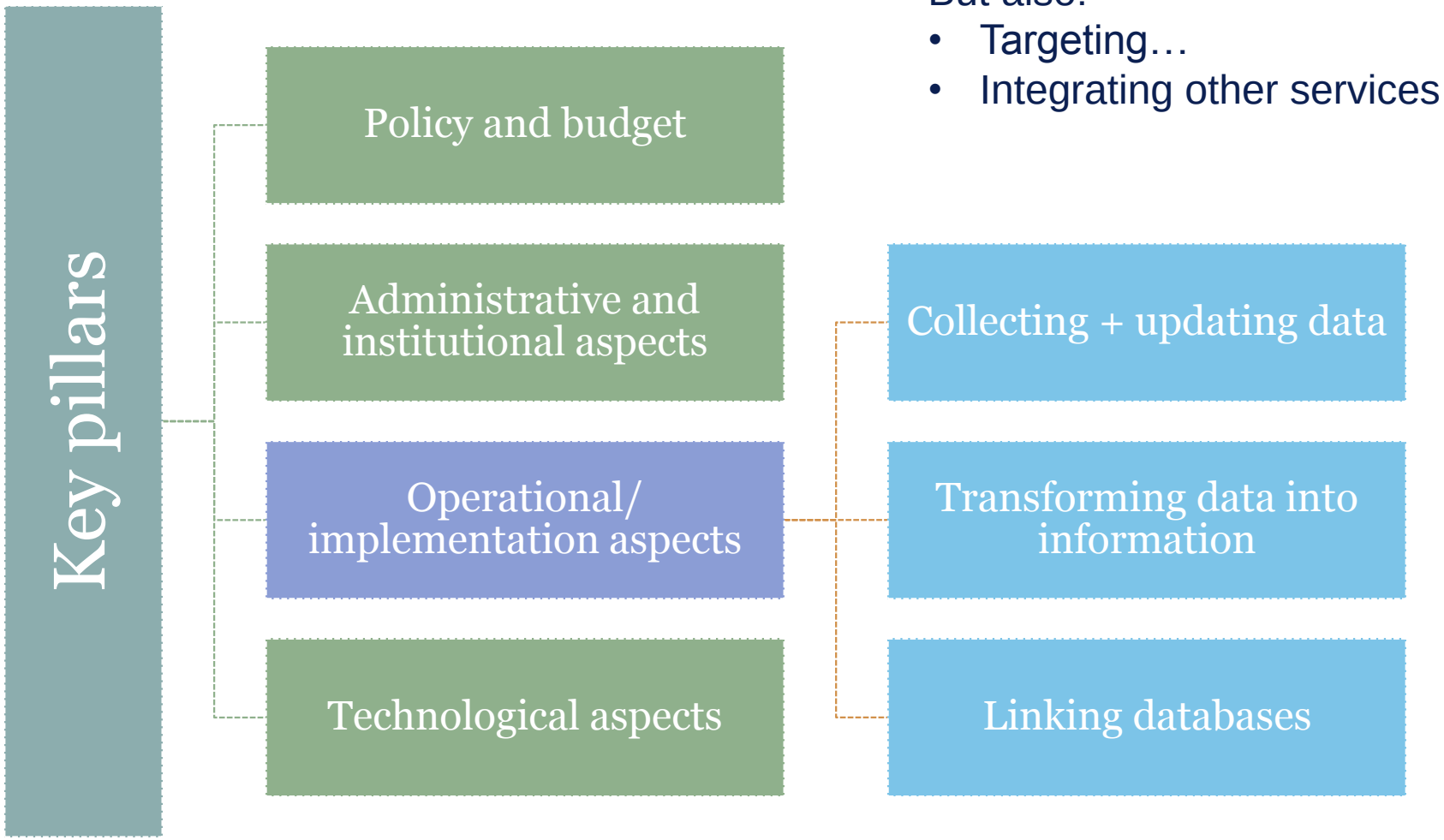
- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - While decentralisation guarantees local government involvement (the ones most likely to understand the socio-economic situation of the population they serve), local authorities might have stronger incentive to facilitate access to social protection programs to those not necessarily eligible.
  - Web access not always possible…

Staff availability, capacity, training and retention

- **International best practice (e.g. Costa Rica, Iraq, Lebanon, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Kenya, etc)**:
  - Incentives for attracting and retaining staff.
  - Design of: strong manuals and enforcing their use; capacity-building days and ongoing training; thematic working groups; online education, online consultations.
  - Need for a hybrid figure at central level that understands context, organisation processes and work processes of each sector and the role of information systems.

- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - Increasing complexity can lead to increasing difficulty in recruiting and training capable staff, including hybrid figures.
  - An integrated system ideally needs a network of staff at local level who can act as entry points. Establishing such a network can be expensive.

What is needed? Implementation



But also:

- Targeting…
- Integrating other services

Collecting data

- **International best practice**:
  - Two main methods prevail—on-demand registration and census methods. Best practice is to combine the two to gain maximum benefits from the pros (e.g. Chile)
  - Four ways to create a national comprehensive Single Registry: each country should choose depending on what exists already – none is best
  - Collecting data as a 'side-product' of programme operations (no extra burden on staff) (e.g. Moldova)

- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - Each piece of information collected costs.
  - The adoption of one model or another mostly depends on the historical trajectory of social protection within the country and other country characteristics (for example, availability of local network of staff and density of poverty).
  - Could use Statistics Bureau, but they would lose 'independence' (Indonesia)

Transforming data into information

- **International best practice**:
  - The characteristics of high-quality information include accuracy, correctness, currency, completeness, and relevance to the business processes it supports.
  - Even complete, high-quality data have no value unless they can be converted into information that is useful for making decisions and improving programs
  - This entails clear processes for verifying (subjecting data to an external verification process), validating (completeness, consistency checks, duplication, standard formats..), updating and reporting on data (too often disregarded)

- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - Process can be lengthy and costly.
  - Without a unique identifier that can be used to verify data across databases there is much less potential for clean, updated data.

If a focus: targeting… (controversial!)

- **International best practice (e.g. Chile, Indonesia, Brazil)**:
  - Scoring and ranking of households based on their levels of poverty and vulnerability is completed at central level by the agency or unit responsible for the Single Registry to avoid political interference
  - Program implementers use the national list as a base and adapt it to their purposes by: a) adding further criteria; b) validating lists provided; c) choosing what percentage of households ranked nationally are to be included

- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - Systematic exclusion of certain types of households due to problems with data collection, in data requirements (for example, lack of an ID card) or in determining eligibility (for example, if the targeting formula does not accurately capture those in need).
  - Exclusion from multiple social sector schemes (one error affects all programs).

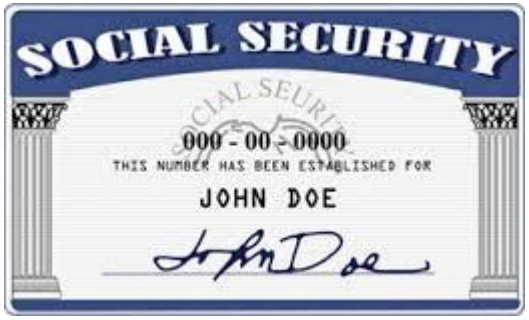
Updating of data

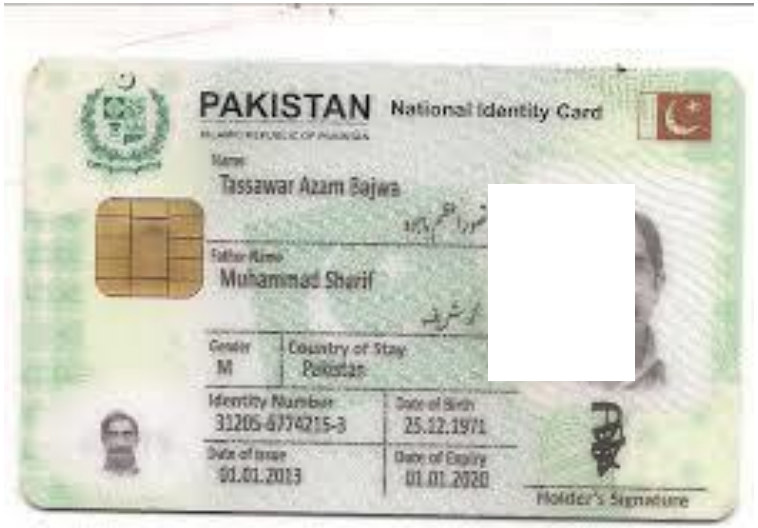
- **International best practice**
  - Scheduled deadlines for updating data through the census survey set for every two to three years (but often not respected) (e.g. Colombia, Indonesia).
  - Online integration of data from local to central level and integration of data with the Civil Registry and other institutions (e.g. Chile, Argentina, Turkey)
  - Countries integrating on-demand data collection approaches with census approaches are more likely to succeed in continuously updating information (e.g. Chile)

- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - Static snapshot: challenges in providing support to those most in need.
  - The cost of continuous updating is high (especially if no local network of staff exists to manage on-demand applications).
  - Where no infrastructure (computer and Internet access) exists at local level, there is no possibility for updating online data.
  - Risks to modifying data in Single Registry based on programme decisions (un-transparent).

Linking data

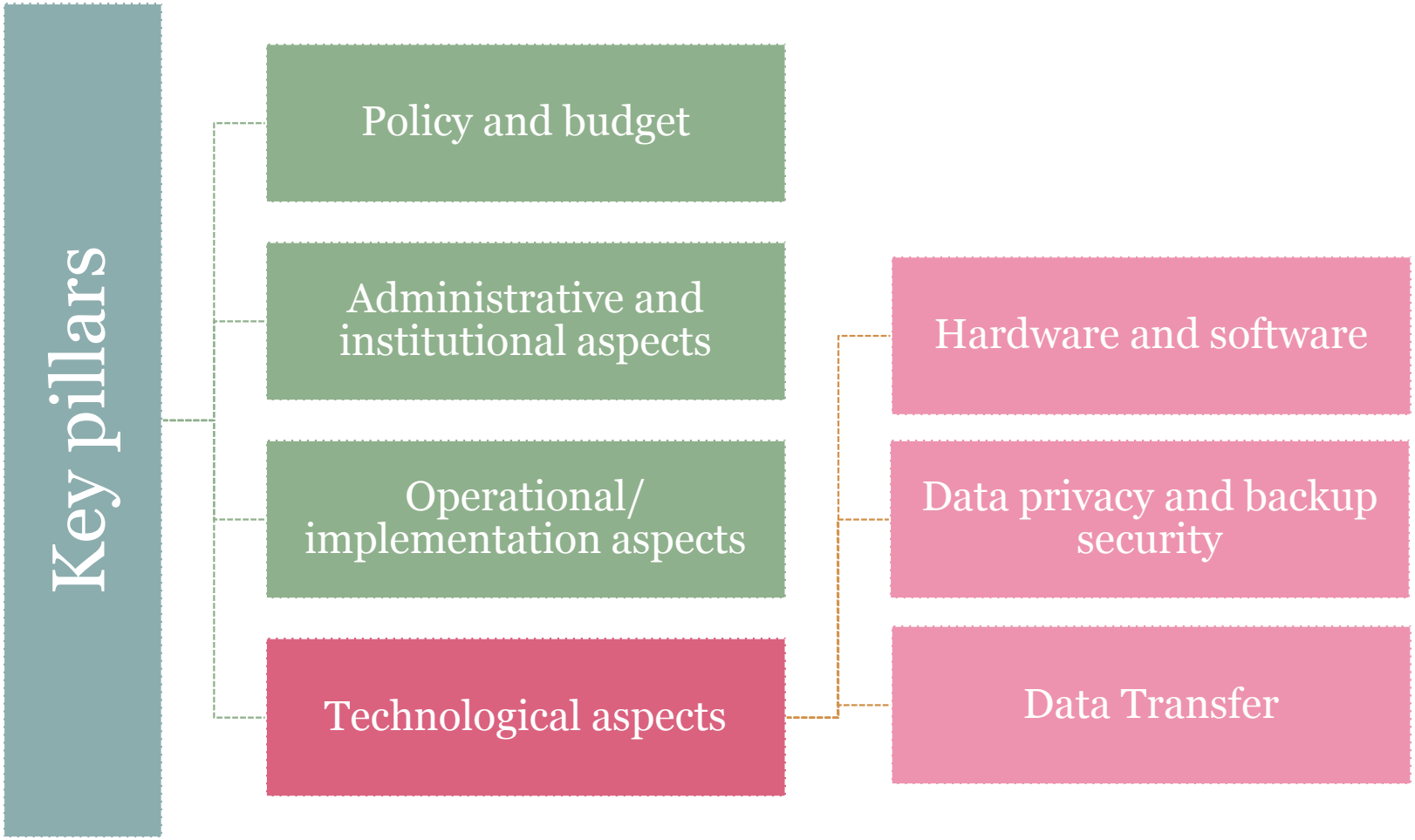
- **International best practice**:
  - Some form of unique ID for individuals is needed to link Single Registry information and beneficiaries with other systems and programs.
  - The solution to providing such ID has included working with national registry offices (Kenya, Uganda, Pakistan), assigning social ID numbers (Brazil, Mauritius, Mexico) and assigning new ID numbers for new applicants (risks of duplication - Colombia).





- **Main trade-offs/challenges**:
  - Risks of exclusion, privacy concerns, large initial capital costs, long timeline

What is needed? Technology



And…

- **Data Privacy**
  - Adhering to international protocols
- **Transfer of information**
  - Ensuring effective transfer to different segments and levels of government – if not web-based, batch process?
- **Hardware**
  - Enough memory, processing capacity, etc – sufficient servers
- **Backup and Security**
  - Must conform to ISO 27001—an approach to managing confidential or sensitive information—so it remains secure, confidential and with its integrity intact.
- **IMIS software**
  - Importance of iterative prototyping, whereby a system model is designed and used to customise based on feedback from users. This enables the system to be tailored to suit user needs and enhance a sense of local ownership.
  - Ideally non-proprietal (open source!)

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Thank you