



Building a Blueprint for Modern Government:

How Modernization Enabled by Digital Transformation Can Reshape the Workforce and Constituent Experience and Build Trust

Modernization has been a goal in the public sector for more than a decade, but the last year has shown governments the true power of transforming their people, processes and technologies.

The COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent federal stimulus aid have given many state and local governments the opportunity to streamline their operations, but they must have a defined strategy going forward to help ensure the operational changes they make serve them well over the long term. They also must plan for cultural transformation.

Modernization is now more important than ever to meet constituents' rising expectations, deliver a better employee experience, navigate an ever-evolving compliance and regulatory landscape, and reap the benefits of automation and new technologies. Those benefits can include lower costs, an improved constituent and employee experience, and efficiencies in how public services are delivered.

Modernization can have a positive effect on the public sector in four key areas:

1. **Attracting, creating and supporting a skilled workforce**
2. **Improving the constituent experience**
3. **Building trust through greater transparency and accountability**
4. **Harnessing technology to enable digital transformation**

Here's how state and local governments can bring together people, processes and policies while using emerging technologies to modernize their operations and better serve their communities.

The Advantages of Modernization in the Public Sector

Attracting, Creating and Supporting a Skilled Workforce

Modernization is key to helping governments fulfill a modern employee value proposition. The opportunities that originally attracted workers to the public sector — job security, consistent work hours and pensions that provided a secure retirement — have been replaced by a desire among workers for

more flexibility, transparent communications and safety in light of the pandemic and increased calls for more equitable and inclusive workplaces. Today's worker also desires a workday enabled by the latest technology.

Modernization can transform the organizational culture of governments in other ways. It can help these organizations better train their talent, improve their recruiting processes, and increase their agility by creating a flexible, work-from-anywhere environment. Government workers are already looking for a hybrid work environment just like their peers in the corporate workplace.

It's important for governments to realize that the employee experience begins at the candidate stage. The recruitment and onboarding process should give new hires the impression their role will be personally fulfilling, and they will have access to modern tools to complete their work. Data shows this cultural and digital commitment at the beginning contributes to long-term career satisfaction.¹

"The same transformation that we need in the delivery of government services applies to government as the employer. If governments modernize, they'll be a much more attractive employer to the workforce of the future," says Lorna Stark, national industry leader for government and public sector at KPMG, a leading professional services firm that works with governments to transform their operations and service delivery models.

Legacy technologies can discourage employees with advanced technology skills from joining the public sector workforce, so agencies must factor this into their talent recruitment strategies. Modernization may incentivize younger, more skilled workers who are interested in public service to use their expertise to help these organizations achieve their missions. Digitally enabled modernization can also facilitate a more streamlined onboarding experience for new employees.

"One of the things governments must do to be more of a draw for young people is to get away from using older technologies," says Brenda Decker, a Center for Digital Government (CDG) senior fellow and the former CIO for the state of Nebraska. "Over the years, we have fixed the things that needed to be fixed, but we haven't actually done anything really drastic toward modernization.

When you're talking to somebody about working in state government, the first thing that everyone thinks is, 'I'm going to have to learn COBOL or I'm going to have to get back into mainframes.' We need to start having conversations about using new technologies that will actually be a draw for new people."

It also will be important for government agencies to revamp their training processes to streamline how they upskill their current workforce. Only 53 percent of government employees are satisfied with the training they receive compared to 66 percent of private sector employees.² Training existing employees on new innovations and new business processes can help agencies build new skills from within their organizations, rather than constantly competing with the private sector for talent.

Learning-as-a-service is one strategy governments can adopt to transform their talent processes. This approach uses software-based applications to provide ongoing, dynamic, collaborative training for employees that aligns with an organization's most mission-critical and timely needs. In government, for example, this could be training non-technical employees on low-code/no-code tools that enable them to conduct data analysis, whether it's assessing participation in various parks and recreation programs or measuring how many individuals recertify for different social service programs every year.

One recent national CIO survey indicated that digitally enabled government organizations perform better or significantly better than their peers on metrics such as operational efficiency and employee experience.³ By focusing their modernization efforts on how they can attract, develop and nurture a skilled workforce, governments will not only build digital literacy within their organizations, but nurture their own "homegrown" talent to drive innovation.

Improving the Constituent Experience

To modernize effectively, governments also must put constituents' needs at the center of their business process and procurement decisions. They must assess their current service gaps and key customer pain points and determine how operational inefficiencies affect service delivery across programs.

"As government agencies begin to re-open their physical doors, they also will need to begin designing hybrid delivery models — keeping virtual delivery channels open and secure while re-designing the in-person experience to meet the constituent's needs and repurposing or even closing physical offices," Stark says.

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Research shows governments have plenty of room to improve when it comes to the constituent experience. Only 38 percent of people say they feel like a valued customer when they interact with government, according to a recent KPMG survey.⁴

Government organizations can integrate constituent or customer experience data (if they have it) with financial and operational data to identify what potential strategic investments and business process improvements will drive the most value.

As a starting point, governments should consider human-centered design, a philosophy that focuses on empathizing with the specific end users for whom you are creating a solution or product. One effective strategy is for governments to build personas that help them identify key challenges to achieve equitable service delivery outcomes.

While building personas is a good first step, governments must also keep inclusivity in mind as part of their technology modernization journey. Technology should accommodate those with different abilities, especially constituents or employees with learning and physical disabilities. Voice-enabled technologies, for example, can make self-service, constituent-facing applications more user-friendly.

Decker says the pandemic demonstrated the need for more equitable service delivery in government and that organizations must heed these lessons going forward.

"What we saw during the pandemic with people not getting their unemployment — rules getting changed and then employees not being in the office to make these changes — it was a nightmare for governments," she says. "If something happens like this again, constituents aren't going to put up with it."

Decker adds that governments should solicit as much community feedback as possible as they modernize, which will help ensure the solutions they develop meet constituents' needs.

"There are a lot of people who are represented by groups, including religious groups that provide services to the homeless and hungry and



unions that represent people in the labor force. These groups are more than willing to go to their constituents and say, “What do you think?” Decker says. “We need to have this kind of involvement, so we think outside the box instead of completely within our own experience.”

In addition, governments must address data and organizational silos to automate and enhance the experiences that matter most to constituents. Modern governments need to be connected enterprises — securely sharing data, fostering interoperability and collaborating to better meet constituents’ needs and fulfill their mission.

Decker says cloud and AI-driven technologies can help governments securely connect data across their enterprise. Better data management, for example, can power a connected constituent experience, where constituents essentially have one unified profile across all their interactions with government. Connecting data across their ecosystem can give every department visibility into the benefits and programs a particular constituent receives or participates in and provide insights agencies can use to improve how they serve that constituent.

Building Trust Through Greater Transparency and Accountability

As governments modernize their operations, increasing transparency and accountability should be their North Star. Data privacy and protection have become cornerstones of public trust.

“There’s a big component of trust in how data is stored, shared and provided not only between governments and people, but from agency to agency,” Stark says.

Because most legacy technologies are ill-equipped to handle today’s security threats, modernization is key to safeguarding constituent data and strengthening the faith constituents have in government. It’s also vital for increasing trust between government agencies and their partners, which can nurture a culture of data sharing. Ultimately, trust is a key component to creating a more connected government.

One way for governments to build trust is by implementing a Zero Trust architecture, as well as processes and policies that secure their supply chain, strengthen endpoint and vendor management, and minimize security gaps as they deliver a digital constituent and employee experience in today’s remote and hybrid work environments.

As government organizations onboard new cloud and AI-enabled technologies, they’ll have more endpoints connected to their networks and face greater third-party risks. Additionally, if they aim to eventually deliver a connected constituent experience, it will require significant identity protection measures and more robust user access controls.

If governments don’t take steps now to strengthen enterprise security, it could leave them more vulnerable to cyberthreats. And if a breach does occur, constituents likely won’t care whether it was caused by a third-party vendor or an insider threat within a government agency. All they will know is that government didn’t do enough to protect their data. For this reason, Decker says it’s critical for organizations to factor security into every step of their technology implementations.

“I firmly believe that if you do not bake security into your programs, you’re making a huge mistake. It cannot be an afterthought,” she says.

DevSecOps, or development security operations, is one approach governments can consider to integrate security into their technology development and implementations. DevSecOps is defined as a “cultural and engineering practice that breaks down barriers and opens collaboration between development, security and operations organizations using automation to focus on rapid, frequent delivery of secure infrastructure and software to production.”⁵

DevSecOps offers several benefits for governments, including accelerating software development and deployment while helping organizations enact more proactive and responsive security measures.



District of Columbia Residents Manage Benefits with Easy Self-Service App

More than 250,000 District of Columbia (D.C.) residents depend on the District for vital cash, food, and health benefits. D.C. Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF), in collaboration with the Department of Human Services (DHS), were in the middle of a system modernization effort with KPMG when COVID-19 hit. Until then, residents had to go in person to service centers or phone into a call center to manage benefits. With service centers closing and the need for benefits surging, call volumes skyrocketed. D.C. DHS leaders and KPMG changed focus overnight: mobile-first.

Residents quickly adopted the mobile app, with over 50,000 downloads to date, consistent 4.6 to 4.7 ratings in the Apple and Google Play stores, and effusive reviews online.

KPMG developed a new mobile platform that provides an easy, self-service way for D.C. residents to apply for, recertify and update their human services benefits. The KPMG team used an agile approach to develop the mobile solution. The agile approach allowed the District to monitor progress and reduce functional and design gaps, especially important to avoid benefits interruptions and keep residents safer during the pandemic. KPMG used a human-centric design and change management approach to create a seamless digital experience for caseworkers and residents. The platform integrates with the case management system so caseworkers have fewer manual processes and can more efficiently and effectively serve residents.

Residents quickly adopted the mobile app, with over 50,000 downloads to date, consistent 4.6 to 4.7 ratings in the Apple and Google Play stores, and effusive reviews online. The benefits of the digital transformation of services continue to be felt by the residents of D.C. and the government agencies.

“The definition of modern government hasn’t changed. What’s really changed has been the accelerated path to digital transformation. Technology is evolving and it’s changing how we achieve modern government and make governments connected, powered and trusted organizations.” *Lorna Stark, National Industry Leader for Government and Public Sector, KPMG*

As the threat landscape evolves and becomes increasingly sophisticated, governments will need to make security an integral part of their application development and deployment processes. They’ll also need to adopt third-party solutions that are secure by design and implement robust threat mitigation and disaster recovery solutions to protect their infrastructure and recover with minimal disruption if they do experience a breach. Governments now have an urgent need to innovate. However, they must do so with a security-first mindset to mitigate threats that might undermine the public’s trust.

Enabling Modernization with Digital Transformation

To deliver a better employee and constituent experience, strengthen security and protect the public’s trust, agencies will have to accelerate digital innovation throughout their entire enterprise.

Cloud and AI-enabled technologies are now table stakes for digital transformation. AI and machine learning can drive robotic process automation and power low-code/no-code platforms that automate government processes and allow workers to build digital skills without deep technical knowledge — effectively helping governments create the workforce of the future.

AI and the cloud can help governments bring to life human-centered design that helps make their services more equitable and inclusive. These technologies also provide automated capabilities that allow agencies to implement a DevSecOps approach and Zero Trust design more effectively to combat security threats.

Stark says governments can accelerate value and power their transformation by onboarding cloud-based and AI-enabled platforms that easily integrate with or pull data from other applications, allowing their organizations to benefit from economies of scale.

“The benefit of a platform solution is that it helps you be more agile. You can achieve results and impact at a much faster pace,” says Stark. These solutions can be particularly beneficial in a shared services model — one platform can support many solutions across many different agencies and missions.

KPMG research indicates that embracing digital is key to reimagining the traditional IT operating model, scaling innovation and delivering real value for organizations. All organizations — private and public alike — must now deliver products, services and experiences as efficiently as possible and move at the speed of their customers or constituents.

Legacy technologies will continue to hamstring governments as they try to transform their processes but modernizing their technology infrastructure will allow them to enact a better operating model — one that is more agile, flexible and dynamic, and fully aligned with the needs of both constituents and employees.

A Pathway for Building Modern Government

Many governments are now on an accelerated path toward modernization. However, as they navigate this journey, they will have several important strategic considerations.

If governments start with a constituent-centric, security-first mindset, they will be better positioned to successfully transform their operations. Agencies should assess constituents’ needs — and understand their organizations’

unique business requirements in a post-pandemic world — as they develop their long-term strategy and roadmap to modernization.

Collaborating with a strategic transformation partner with extensive public sector expertise and experience reshaping business processes, implementing new operating models and leveraging emerging technologies can help these organizations identify what investments and internal changes will help them achieve their missions — better and in today’s environment. Agencies also can invest in innovation internally, using low-code/no-code tools to build internal applications and capabilities.

From there, agencies will have a solid foundation from which they can deliver a modern employee experience, build trust and more meaningfully engage with the constituents they serve.

“The definition of modern government hasn’t changed,” Stark says. “What’s really changed has been the accelerated path to digital transformation. Technology is evolving and it’s changing how we achieve modern government and make governments connected, powered and trusted organizations.”

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Endnotes

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