



Building a Pathway to Better Government with Workforce Transformation

Modernization is a common term that comes up whenever we talk about improving government service delivery. However, people and workforce transformation are just as important.

Sometimes the major barrier for governments isn't technology. It's transforming their organizational structure and culture to empower employees with data, automate their work and help them clearly understand the impact they're delivering to constituents.

As governments emerge from the pandemic and prepare for a new normal, they can drive digital transformation by putting employees at the center of their modernization efforts. Here's how governments can successfully enact workforce transformation.

Why Workforce Transformation Now?

Technology modernization will still be critical to workforce transformation, as legacy technologies can discourage younger employees and those with advanced technology skills from joining government agencies. In a recent KPMG survey, 72 percent of senior leaders said outdated technology hindered their ability to effectively recruit talent.¹

To deliver a better constituent experience, governments must shift some of their focus to employee retention, implementing digital skills training for employees and building data proficiency within their organizations. Governments have already had to innovate how they do business, with a rapid transition to remote and hybrid work during the pandemic. They can capitalize on these lessons to build a foundation for long-lasting people and workforce transformation.

Agencies also need to understand what motivates employees. Whether it's through feedback surveys, team meetings or one-on-one conversations, gathering these insights will give agencies a deeper understanding of how they can retain talent and maximize their institutional knowledge to deliver better constituent services.

Some agencies have already taken significant steps to transform and empower their workforce.

Workforce Transformation in Action

Like many government agencies, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) in Massachusetts was focused on serving its constituents in the best way possible. The core challenge was figuring out how, says Migdalia Diaz, the agency's Chief Operating Officer.

EOLWD decided to launch an initiative to improve its operations and constituent service delivery. As its leadership team engaged in planning conversations, Diaz says her organization found that technology alone wouldn't help EOLWD achieve its mission. Instead, the agency needed to modify its internal business processes and how employees used technology.

Diaz relayed this information to the secretary of labor and workforce development. The issue was that the employees using the technology and business processes the agency had in place weren't sold on them and didn't embrace them. They also didn't understand how they were impacting constituents' lives. EOLWD leaders realized they needed to better serve their own employees to better serve constituents.

"It became a really inclusive conversation around the entire work environment with the employee as a focus," she adds.

To help guide its workforce transformation, EOLWD collaborated with KPMG, a leading professional services firm that works with governments to transform their operations and service delivery models. The agency began by focusing on its economic research group, adopting an incremental approach that it can scale to enact transformation throughout the entire organization.

KPMG started by asking EOLWD about its "people vision." The firm also conducted persona activities to help the agency understand how employees manage their day and serve constituents. KPMG then developed a robust transformation and change management plan and operating model for EOLWD to execute.

"This was all about organizational transformation and helping people do things differently," says Paul Lipinski, State and Local Government Industry Leader for KPMG's Transformation Delivery Practice.

With this roadmap, EOLWD took steps to increase transparency into how employees' work impacted constituents. Diaz says data fragmentation and sprawl made it difficult for employees to understand how they could use data to make better decisions. The agency has sought to create a more holistic view of constituents' interactions with government by increasing data accessibility.

"We're continuing to have conversations around how we connect data in ways that will really help our constituents," Diaz says.

EOLWD has changed its operating structure, hiring for roles that better align with its constituent service goals. In addition, it has increased connection points among its employees, including them in brainstorming sessions about how to solve problems, which also gives them more visibility into what leadership and their colleagues are doing to move the agency forward.

EOLWD has begun to transform its workforce by creating room for more open dialogue within all levels of the organization and by taking the time to truly understand what drives employees. The agency discovered its employees want to feel they are making a difference, that they need greater access to data to better understand their impact on constituents and that they want to be engaged in strategic decisions about how the organization can achieve its mission.

With this understanding, EOLWD now has a solid plan for how it can improve the employee experience, and by extension, the constituent experience.

Workforce Transformation Leading Practices

As agencies consider enacting their own workforce transformations, they should keep these leading practices in mind:

Set the vision.

Agencies should clearly communicate their "people vision" and transformational vision at the outset to build employee buy-in.

EOLWD's vision centered around bringing technology, people and processes together to foster greater collaboration, unlock employees' experience and institutional knowledge to solve problems, and give employees more insight into their impact. The agency discovered that having these goals and working to achieve them motivated employees and increased their connection to the organization.

Communicate with a purpose.

To remind employees of the organization's north star, EOLWD worked with KPMG to create a communications program in which leaders consistently messaged and reiterated their vision and emphasized to employees "the why" behind the organization's transformation.

Cultivate engaged leadership.

One of the typical failure points for government transformation is a lack of leadership engagement, vision and buy-in. Therefore, leadership must be invested in change management initiatives from the beginning to the end of the process.

One way to increase leadership engagement is to clearly and consistently communicate the potential business value of certain changes — whether it's establishing monthly cross-functional team meetings or creating an internal business dashboard to drive better decision-making. Using metrics where

possible can also bolster the case for transformation and accelerate leadership buy-in.

Harness data.

Agencies can use data analytics and advanced technologies like the cloud, artificial intelligence and machine learning to consolidate data about and gain visibility into constituents' interactions across government. They also can use these tools to illuminate employees' contribution and impact.

Making information more accessible and actionable will give employees insight into how they can better serve constituents and allow them to connect their work to results. This can increase their engagement and remind them of why they entered this line of work in the first place — to give back and make a difference.

Focus on training and business process improvements.

Agencies can use cloud-based technologies to streamline business processes and facilitate greater employee collaboration.

They should also find ways to build employees' digital skills and data literacy. Creating tailored learning plans and ongoing in-person, virtual and on-demand training can help employees build their skills and grow with the organization.

Implement a journey map.

Agencies can use data-driven tools to map employees' growth trajectory. This can create a modern employee value proposition and help employees cultivate a sense of purpose about the work they are doing.

Conclusion

The valuable role government plays in residents' lives has never been clearer. Many government organizations now have a renewed sense of purpose and sense of urgency to deliver a better constituent experience, but achieving this goal requires significant changes in how governments traditionally do business.

It's not just about technology transformation, but people and process transformation as well. Employees are governments' most valuable resource, but far too often these organizations don't fully equip or empower employees with the tools, training and insights they need to maximize their contributions to the organization's mission.

As the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development in Massachusetts shows, this is starting to change. "The reality for our constituents is always changing depending on what's happening in the market or in the world, in general," Diaz says. "We need to have enough dexterity to pivot to whatever those needs are. It's not necessarily going to be as fast as we would like it to be, but engaging employees in conversations about how we do that honestly has changed everything."

This piece was written and produced by the Center for Digital Government Content Studio, with information and input from KPMG.

¹ CDG/KPMG Webinar: "Creating a Modern Government Workforce"



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