



A New Vision for Government Transformation

Three core principles for navigating an evolving landscape

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic forever changed expectations around how public agencies work, deliver services and engage with their communities. These forces are pushing state and local governments to an inflection point.

"Government agencies must refocus around how they can make their operations smarter and more sustainable than they were 18 months ago," says Lynn Moore, president and CEO of Tyler Technologies. "It's a perfect moment for leaders to step back, leverage their skills and elevate their roles."

Moving forward on critical government transformation will require strategies encompassing three core principles:

- **Building systems with equity in mind:** Ensuring access and broadening the reach of government programs must be core components of digital services strategies.
- **Adopting purpose-built, agile solutions:** Technologies like the cloud are vital to improve flexibility and responsiveness, but these solutions must be designed to meet unique public sector needs.

- **Ensuring sustainability in the face of future challenges:** Governments must replace multi-year capital projects and on-site computing infrastructure with modern approaches that reduce overhead expenses, make budgeting more predictable and strengthen business continuity.

With leadership attention currently focused on the importance of IT modernization and significant federal funding resources available to support these efforts, there's a powerful opportunity now for public sector CIOs to set a technology vision for the future.

1/ Building Systems With Equity in Mind

As governments plan for a future in which they deliver many more services digitally, they must find ways to address the connectivity gaps that surfaced in many communities during the pandemic. But that's just the start of how smart technology implementation can support equity.

An important lesson government agencies learned during the pandemic is that digital services they stood up out of necessity also provided better access for constituents who traditionally have struggled to get to a government office during normal business hours. Online transactions and mobile apps offered 24/7 access to important programs and services — and often automated back-end business processes to speed up service delivery.

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Lynn Moore, President and CEO, Tyler Technologies

Looking ahead, digital solutions offer even greater opportunities to improve access and increase the reach of government programs and services. For example, online mediation tools can provide alternatives to traditional court proceedings and the attendant costs and disruptions in work and childcare they entail, according to Jeff Puckett, Tyler's chief operating officer.

But planning for equity must extend beyond service delivery. Effective approaches to collecting and analyzing data across multiple departments and agencies will be needed to ensure complex policy decisions consider the needs of all constituents.

“There are a lot of different data points, so we need the ability to bring all that data together and create insights that guide good policy development to make sure all people are being served

equitably,” says Kelley Shimansky, Tyler's chief human resources officer.

These efforts also build trust and transparency by making it easier for governments to aggregate and share information with the public. “There's been a lot of societal attention to that aspect of government service,” Puckett says, “and a lot of the solution has to do with shining a light on what government does.”

2/ Adopting Purpose-Built, Agile Solutions

As they modernize, governments must tap into technologies like the cloud that will make them more flexible, efficient and responsive. But these solutions also need to be designed for public sector needs.

“Technology can either be an enabler to achieving your business outcomes, or it can be a headwind,” Puckett says. “What I think has become obvious to people through the pandemic is that it is very rarely neutral.”

To serve as an enabler, the next generation of solutions must leverage the agility and scalability of cloud solutions while meeting unique government requirements. Workflows, compliance rules and regulations, and security and privacy standards all can be different for public sector, making it difficult to adapt

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commercial-off-the-shelf technologies to the needs of critical government functions and programs.

Government-specific solutions built on leading cloud architecture can provide the best of both worlds. Agencies get the agility, efficiency and scale of the cloud along with specialized capabilities that support their unique mission.

“It's the perfect marriage — a solution that takes advantage of what the cloud can offer while meeting all the functional, regulatory, security and compliance needs,” Puckett says.

Striking that balance also helps connect once-siloed data on a common platform, enabling governments to address complex problems in new ways. It's an approach that helps agencies shed new light on issues like homelessness, addiction and public health that require coordination across multiple departments and jurisdictions.

“The data silos that exist at different levels of government get in the way,” Puckett says. “Putting in place a data platform where you can connect the dots to see what's really going on can help show if a piece of the service pipeline is broken so leaders can create the outcomes they want to achieve.”

3/ Ensuring Sustainability

As governments map plans to address future needs, they also must shift away from traditional deployment models for IT modernization. Large-scale, multi-year capital projects have been typical in the public sector, but they take too long to deliver value and are difficult to modify in response to shifting priorities. Too often, Puckett says, this approach puts governments “on a path to obsolescence.”

By contrast, modern, cloud-based environments let governments focus on the continuous deployment of iterative updates that respond to expected changes like policy shifts, as well as unexpected events, such as new constituent needs triggered by a global pandemic.

Cloud environments, like those offered by Amazon Web Services (AWS), can also ensure the long-term financial sustainability of mission-critical applications.

"Governments are always going to be asked to do more with less," Moore says. "Moving away from large, on-site IT infrastructure makes budgeting more predictable by eliminating the need to plan these large capital infrastructure projects."

Shifting to a cloud-based approach can save money, too. Scalable, hosted applications let governments lower or eliminate capital expenses related to on-premises computing environments and improve agility to accommodate fluctuations in usage.

And given the critical need to safeguard sensitive constituent information and maintain essential services during disasters of all types, cloud providers offer resources — including cybersecurity expertise and redundant, physically distanced systems that can enable rapid disaster recovery — that few governments can match.

“The biggest challenge in change is invariably overcoming the inertia of how we’ve always done things.”

Jeff Puckett, Chief Operating Officer, Tyler Technologies

"Leveraging the expertise and scale of cloud providers means you can invest your time and resources into things that make communities better," Moore says.

Conclusion

Historic federal investments in pandemic relief and infrastructure improvements provide a unique opportunity for governments to transform their technology in ways that make important services more accessible, sustainable and equitable.

However, government leaders must address a longstanding roadblock. "The biggest challenge in change is invariably overcoming the inertia of how we've always done things," Puckett says.

Overcoming inertia will require CIOs to work with their counterparts throughout government to build a comprehensive roadmap for transformation.

"When you make an investment and implement new technology, it's not just the features and functions," Puckett says. "How

are you going to engage with citizens? How will you deal with data and analytics to get the insights to make decisions, and how will you share information with your counterparts? When CIOs talk to their stakeholders, they need to broaden their vision."

That vision expands by leveraging the power of cloud-based solutions that are purpose-built for government, connecting siloed departments to gain new insights from data, and embracing strategies that give residents broader and more convenient access to vital services. It's an approach that enables governments to navigate current and future challenges — and address complex issues in new ways.

"These are big challenges, but they also create big opportunities — and that's where we are now," Moore says. "The public sector has traditionally lagged, but I think we're at an inflection point where the need for transformation is going to be a driving force."

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