WHITE PAPER

What Analysts are Saying About Digital Government in Action

Public sector service has always been centered around community and resident needs. To meet these needs while simultaneously navigating crises and innovating for future stability, governments must focus on digital transformation strategies.

Gartner analysts note that "digital government technologies have taken a center stage to ensure resilience in communities."[i] The COVID-19 pandemic forced many community services including businesses, schools, nonprofits, and some government operations such as social services, parks, and libraries, to shut down. Many government services pivoted to a remote-only posture.

According to Gartner analysts, "Technology was and continues to be pivotal to ensure governments can serve their citizens in every sense. The pandemic created unprecedented urgency and unforeseen momentum for many digital government services."[ii]

In practice, this abrupt increase in service demand and change in service delivery accelerated digital government into action. Below, we level-set what makes a digital government then follow with how to leverage crises and other events for modern tech adoption that results in innovation and tangible outcomes.

What is digital government?

Digital government is one that uses modern technology to connect silos and agilely adapt to feedback loops. Breaking down silos is a result of going digital by progressing down a pathway of integrated and increasingly mature technology stacks.

According to Gartner analysts, **"Siloed, legacy government systems and business processes increase risk and exacerbate challenges in data sharing and service delivery in the agency and across the ecosystem, inhibiting agility for government agencies."**[iii] In addition, **"Governments are implementing an increasing number of digital services and capabilities, but most remain siloed and fail to integrate across service delivery partners."**[iv]

CIOs agree. In a recent survey, state and local government CIOs ranked "organizational data silos and legacy technology" among the top reasons why states aren't pursuing artificial intelligence initiatives, for example. These CIOs also noted "modernizing IT infrastructure" as a top priority. Illustrating the point, the Center for Digital Government's 2020 Digital Cities survey winners shared success with a strong IT foundation that prepared them for agile, innovative pandemic response.

Digital government, then, is one of integrations and connections. Greater connectivity means greater efficiencies and greater insight. A modern digital infrastructure bridges government agencies, jurisdictions, and the public across department and geographic boundaries. It looks like a completed puzzle in which the pieces of data and analytics; modern data storage and integration; integrated, cloud-enabled business and administrative management systems; and robust, two-way citizen engagement fit seamlessly together.

Emergency and Event Response

Digital government also has distinct capabilities, the most important of which is facilitating interactions. Interactions include government-to-business or government-to-citizen experiences. Many, if not all, of these are triggered by an event. Obtaining a permit for outdoor restaurant seating, finding information on vaccine locations or COVID-19 testing sites, or applying for unemployment benefits are common examples of government-to-business and government-to-citizen interactions that increased dramatically with the pandemic.

Gartner analysts note that, **"Urgency for digital government services has increased exponentially due, in part, to the challenges wrought by the pandemic, as technology has become essential to remote working, distance learning, maintaining economies, and keeping governments running."**[v]

In response to the ripple effects of COVID-19, the City of Los Angeles Controller's Office used Tyler's
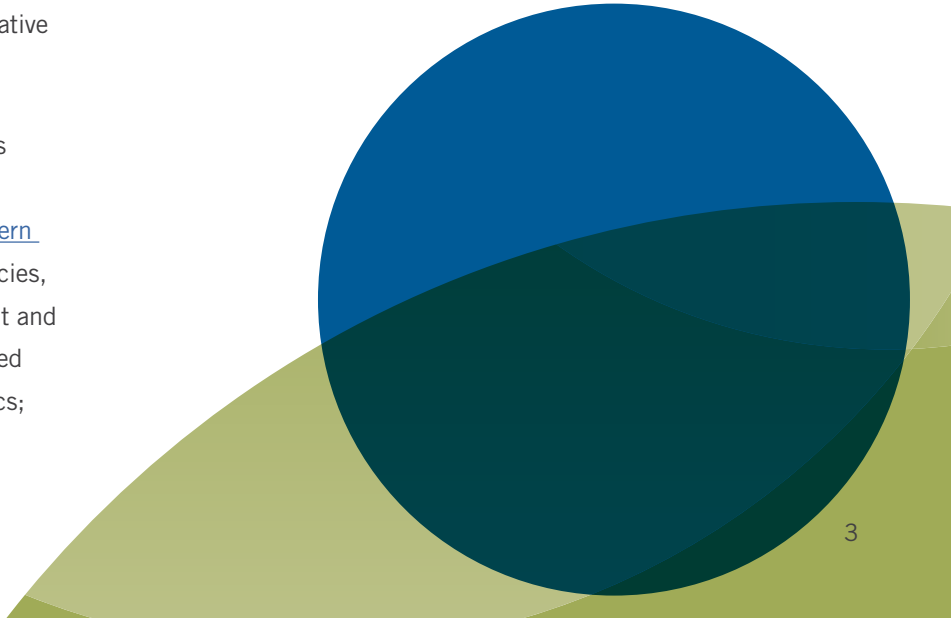
Open Data Platform to fuel a [food access map](#) to serve increased need. Mandatory school and business closures along with quarantines and other isolating measures presented new challenges for low-income families in need of food. To increase food security and meet all residents' needs, the map shows food pantry locations as well as American Red Cross and Los Angeles Unified School District "Grab and Go" sites for free student meals. The map further illustrates the ease or difficulty of supermarket or farmer's market access in the city, specifically whether populations in poverty live within or beyond a mile's walk (or more) of such resources.

Along with the 2020 presidential election, many states also held high-stakes elections for state and local offices. Washington state launched a comprehensive [campaign finance app](#) to make campaign finance reports approachable and useful to voters and the media interested in these competitive races. The Tyler-hosted site offers the public an easy-to-use way to visualize the state's campaign finance data, drill down into maps, and share those findings. Because open data was already at the core of the Washington State Public Disclosure Commission's broad data access strategy, adopting campaign finance mapping and visualization features was an evolution of an already robust program.

The interactions above were driven by events — the COVID-19 pandemic and competitive statewide elections. They were also facilitated by modern technology. A key nuance here is that events not only trigger interactions, but public buy-in for technology adoption also spikes in response to an incident or obvious need.

Can events drive modern tech adoption?

Events like the pandemic compel CIOs and other government leaders to work iteratively, resulting in innovation and improved outcomes for residents, businesses, and communities.

According to Gartner analysts, **"In the face of these massive challenges, many governments have implemented parallel technologies to ensure continuity of services and, in many cases, improve them."**[vi]

In many examples, the pandemic drove the adoption or expansion of enterprise data platforms such as Tyler's, especially as the ensuing challenges brought a new recognition of the need for central data repositories.

In [San Francisco, California,](#) leaders quickly leveraged the Enterprise Data Platform data platform to centralize data around all COVID-19 efforts. Analysts across the city used self-service access to the data to make and support decisions with data-driven evidence. Because of this data-first approach, San Francisco was one of the most successful large cities in the U.S. in handling the pandemic.

The [State of Connecticut](#) similarly expanded its use of its Tyler-hosted open data program in response to COVID-19. The state specifically increased engagement of agencies including the Department of Public Health and the Connecticut State Department of Education in the open data program, developing a repeatable framework for interagency collaboration.

These enhanced connections across a strong digital foundation facilitated weekly official updates that met the public's demand for in-depth and contextualized information. In addition, timely and accurate data supported critical decisions across agencies and jurisdictions on public health and school learning models.

Proactive Service Models

The crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic is instructive in that it refocused government service delivery on citizen needs. This presents a unique and still-open window of opportunity for government leaders to become more proactive in approach. Public sector CIOs and other leaders can advance service model maturity by focusing on events that trigger business and resident engagement.

Beyond COVID-19, governments must examine what those triggering events look like in their jurisdictions and for their constituencies. Where is there opportunity to truly break down barriers between service providers and service users? What can provide a constituent with a seamless interaction during a commonly occurring event? Using those points of interaction to drive modern tech adoption can answer those questions with specific outcomes in mind. It can also help governments:

- Secure and maintain funding
- Achieve broad buy-in of policy and projects
- Illustrate visible impact with citizen-facing wins

What's more, this approach moves government service from reactive to proactive to predictive. At these later stages, people and communities are served before needs even surface. This trajectory holds great promise for tackling some of society's greatest challenges. At the same time, leveraging events for meaningful action promotes positive outcomes in the public's day-to-day interactions with government. These functional connections between constituents and government are the building blocks of thriving, successful communities.

[i] Gartner, Digital Government Transformation Is at an Inflection Point and CIOs Must Lead Into the Momentum, 2021 (G00721016) Published January 6, 2021; Analyst: Alia Mendonsa

[ii] Ibid., 2

[iii] Gartner, Drive Adoption of a Digital Government Technology Platform for Government Transformation, 2020 (G00721194), Published December 16, 2020; Analyst: Bill Finnerty

[iv] Ibid., 1

[v] Gartner, Digital Government Transformation Is at an Inflection Point and CIOs Must Lead Into the Momentum, 2021 (G00721016) Published January 6, 2021; Analyst: Alia Mendonsa

[vi] Ibid., 2

Tyler Technologies, Inc.

Tyler Technologies (NYSE: TYL) provides integrated software and technology services to the public sector. Tyler's end-to-end solutions empower local, state, and federal government entities to operate more efficiently and connect more transparently with their constituents and with each other.

By connecting data and processes across disparate systems, Tyler's solutions are transforming how clients gain actionable insights that solve problems in their communities. Tyler has more than 37,000 successful installations across more than 12,000 sites, with clients in all 50 states, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, and other international locations.

Tyler was named to Government Technology's GovTech 100 list five times and has been recognized three times on Forbes' "Most Innovative Growth Companies" list. More information about Tyler Technologies, an S&P 500 company headquartered in Plano, Texas, can be found at tylertech.com.

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