THE FUTURE OF

DIGITAL SERVICES

Five Trends Transforming Government

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Government is often perceived as being behind the digital innovation curve, taking significantly longer to adopt web-based solutions than the private sector, with less enthusiasm and less skill. But in recent years, federal, state, and local agencies are challenging that perception. Creating and optimizing digital services has become a top priority for government.

The pressures forcing this change are varied. From the public, we hear calls for heightened transparency, accessibility, and user experience in government services. Internally, government sees digital governance as a way to cut costs and increase efficiency without deteriorating customer service.
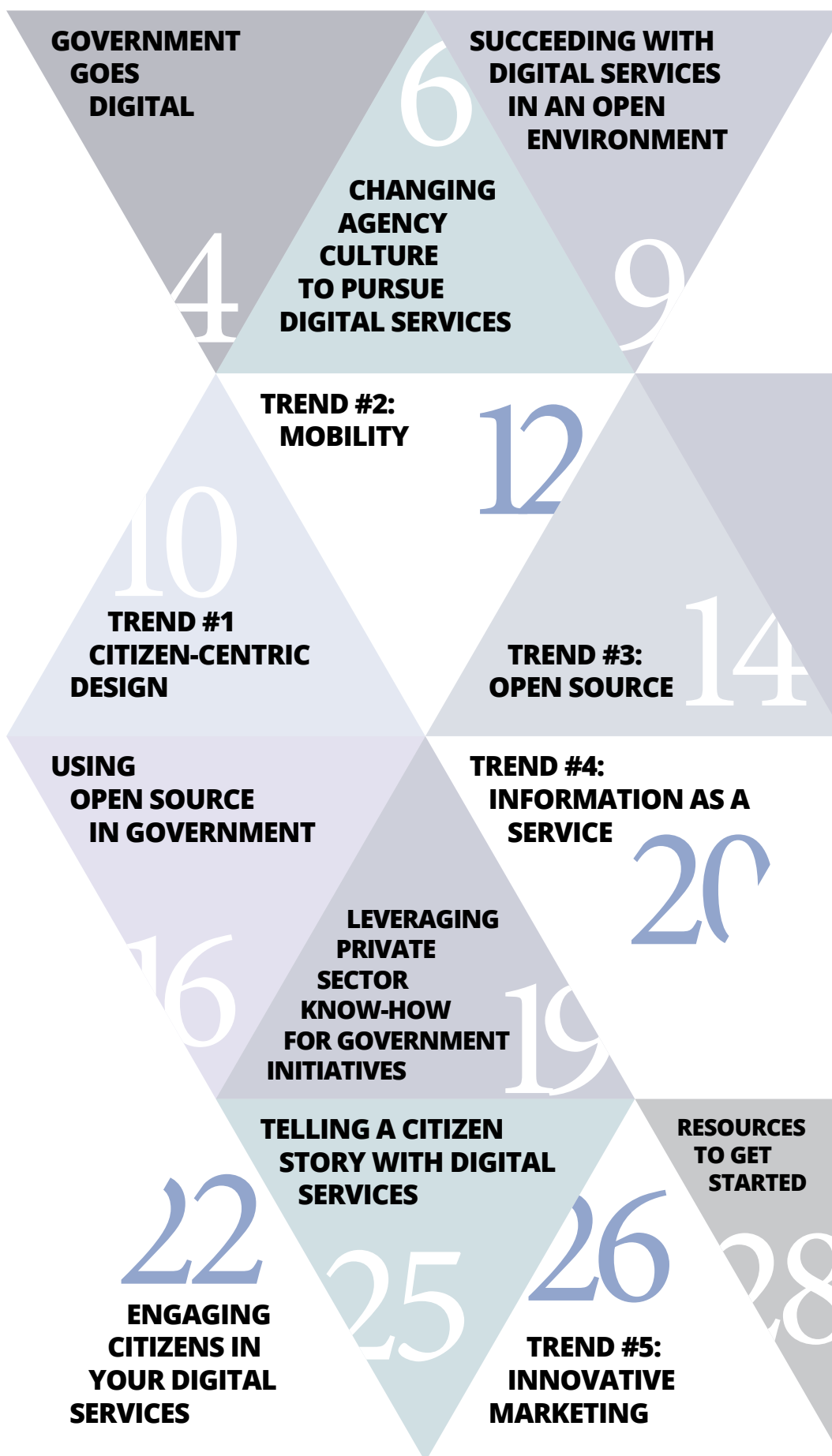
But no matter the incentive, government is transforming. Now the question is, "How are public sector organizations going to catch up with, and possibly even surpass, the private sector's digital progress?"

In the next few years, we see five major trends — many of which have already become a standard component of our interactions with private organizations — dominating government's digital strategies. These are citizen-centric design, mobility, open source, information as a service, and innovative marketing. In this guide we will:

- ▲ Explore these five trends that are guiding the transition to web-based services.

- ▲ Discuss the challenges of digital governance with public and private sector leaders.

- ▲ Highlight examples of digital innovation in federal, state, and local governments.

- ▲ Provide guidance and resources to help agencies get started on digital initiatives.

Digital innovation is no longer optional for government agencies, but that doesn't mean the federal government will provide a template for digital services. Instead, it will ultimately fall to individual agencies and departments to determine the purpose, design, and medium. But before you begin investing in these new virtual service models, you should learn the basics of what's guiding digital service strategies and where they're going next. This guide will help you do just that.

CONTENTS

Introduction

GOVERNMENT GOES DIGITAL

Federal, state, and local agencies make strides toward 21st century governance

In May 2012, President Obama issued a Presidential Memorandum calling on agencies to "build a 21st century digital government that delivers better digital services to the American people." Along with that memorandum, the Office of the Federal Chief Information Officer released a 12-month strategy to jump-start a digital transformation of government services.

Nearly three years later, the federal government has put even greater resources behind the effort. Most notably, it's created two new departments — 18F and the U.S. Digital Service (USDS) — to aid other agencies in the transition to digital.

18F
Named after the agency's location on 18th and F St. NW this tech startup is the pilot brainchild of the General Services Administration (GSA). According to its website, "18F builds effective, user-centric digital services focused on the interaction between government and the people and businesses it serves." The key word in that statement is "builds." Instead of offering guidance to agencies, the team of technologists comprising 18F actually provides the ideas, coding, and execution for various digital services initiatives across government agencies.

U.S. DIGITAL SERVICE
The White House announced in August 2014 that it was launching USDS, to be housed within the Office of Management and Budget. The selection of Mikey Dickerson, an engineer who played a key role in revamping HealthCare.gov, to lead USDS hinted at the motivation of the new service. It will provide consultative services and, according to the White House, "work to find solutions to management challenges that can prevent progress in [information technology] delivery."

In addition to providing support services, the White House continues to place executive force behind digital efforts through executive orders and cross-agency priority (CAP) goals.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13642
President Obama's mandate of "Making Open and Machine Readable the New Default for Government Information" was a clear call to digitally transform government. It also required the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) to craft a more explicit and actionable open data policy, eventually launched as Project Open Data, in collaboration with the Federal CIO.

NEW CAP GOALS

In March 2014, the White House revamped its list of CAP goals. While three former goals remained on the list, many of the new additions, including customer service, smarter IT delivery, open data, and shared services, called on agencies to review the way they deliver services to the public.

Not to be left out, Congress is also taking action through the dual approach of enacting legislation and forming internal cohorts to bolster digital initiatives.

DATA ACT

Both the House and Senate approved this amendment to the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act in May 2014. The addition became the first federal law to mandate standardized data transparency, requiring all government bodies to publish any data related to federal spending in a standardized, digital format. The Treasury Department and OMB are now developing that format, so that agencies can begin publishing more easily scrutinized accounts of their spending. To further increase access, all data will be made available to the public through a single portal.

BULK DATA TASK FORCE

Created by the 2012 House appropriations bill, the Bulk Data Task Force is an "internal task force to expedite the process of making public information available to the public." While the group of representatives from House leadership, Library of Congress, and Government Printing Office was not mandated to exclusively focus on digital services, most of the resultant initiatives have placed more information online for public access. For example, the group is spearheading the Amendment Impact Program, which will show in an accessible online portal how a potential amendment could affect a bill and the law. It has also solicited pledges from the House and Senate to begin placing all legislation online in bulk Extensible Markup Language (XML) format for easy consumption.

And in case you thought state and local governments were letting feds lead the way, think again. More and more, we're seeing all levels of government create positions dedicated to digital transformation.

CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICERS

Dedicated executives provide the oversight necessary to execute digital initiatives and also serve as advocates for those projects. Boston hired its first Chief Digital Officer (CDO) in 2014, while New York City has maintained the position since 2011. At the state level, Rhode Island, North Carolina, and New York have also hired CDOs to lead the digital charge.

Of course, the goals and resources the government created are just the beginning of the digital transition. Throughout this guide, you'll see how every level of government is answering the mandate to change by creating innovative digital services.

CHANGING AGENCY CULTURE TO PURSUE DIGITAL SERVICES

An interview with 18F innovators, Hillary Hartley and Gray Brooks

Whether government will embrace a digital strategy is no longer a question. Consumer expectations and legislative directives are two undeniable forces pushing a digital agenda. That being the case, agencies are focusing on how — rather than if — they can revamp their services.

To learn how agencies can start taking steps toward the digital tomorrow, we spoke with Gray Brooks, Senior Application Programming Interface (API) Strategist, and Hillary Hartley, Deputy Executive Director, both at 18F. They said the future digital services agenda will center on six initiatives: user-centered design, API deployment, open source collaboration and coding, agile project development, staffing and funding, and data management.

TECHNOLOGY IS EASY
Surprisingly, Hartley and Brooks spent very little time discussing the technology that will power these digital initiatives. "I've ended almost every presentation that I've given over the past couple of years with a slide that simply says, 'Technology is the easy part,'" Hartley said. Instead, it is cultural change that will be the cornerstone of government's digital transformation.

Of course, technology will be required. But that technology doesn't have to be complex, expensive, or even cutting edge, as many public sector organizations assume. So the first step is changing that perception. "You know, you can have a fantastically boring old legacy system, but if you put an API around it, you can do beautiful, new, amazing things with it," said Hartley.

CULTURE IS KEY
Creating digital services requires embracing the possibility of change with or without heavy technical support. "There is a sense that digital efforts can be left to the tech people," said Brooks. "But many factors have helped nontechnical staff at agencies appreciate that it's not an afterthought that can be left to a new media team or the IT shop. It's actually the way in which everyone will need to work that has to change."

Even securing staffing and funding is a matter of culture. "The fact that we can actually devote an appropriate amount of people's attention to a project is how we're able to do good projects," Brooks said. "We want and need agencies to be inspired to invest the human capital to do digital well."

> # "What we're bringing to the table is empowerment and education."
>
> *Hillary Hartley*
> *Deputy Executive Director at 18F*

Along with investing in manpower, agencies will have to transform the way they approach projects. "We want anyone who's interested to be able to quickly throw together a prototype, share with the team, with stakeholders and with potential users, and truly fail fast," Brooks said. "Then, iterate [a design] until you can release it and create a feedback loop."

This idea of quick deployment, called agile development, is at the heart of digital services strategy, but agency employees may be reticent to embrace such tactics because they run counter to typical bureaucratic processes. Therefore the first step toward transformation is gaining buy-in for the process itself, rather than its digital outcomes.

18F LEADS BY EXAMPLE
Given that 18F is trying to change the culture of government, it may be surprising that the team's modus operandi is to actually design, code and incubate digital projects for other agencies. Instead you might expect them to provide consultation, so that agencies are the ones actually executing new initiatives and changing their culture along the way.

Actually, Brooks and Hartley explained that, by creating successful digital initiatives and then transplanting them into agencies, 18F is able to prove the validity of its methods and secure buy-in for future projects. "What we're bringing to the table is empowerment and education," said Hartley.

"We partner with agencies on the understanding that the work is going to be done as an open source project unless there's a vastly compelling reason. It's going to be with real cloud hosting and it's going to be very agile, using user-centered design principles," Brooks said. "And even if it's a somewhat new paradigm for a team or an agency, we've had a lot of success explaining the reasons behind this [process] and the benefits of it."

Hartley explained how creating a project with agile processes can change agency conceptions about how projects are executed. "We tell them up front that we are working in two- or three-week sprints: 'In two weeks, we're going to check and see if this is on the right track. In another two weeks, we're going to check in again,'" she said. "And through that, we are able to challenge a lot of the misconceptions about how products get built and delivered."

"What we're seeing is that people get that spark from working with a team like ours, and then they are able to send that spark out into the rest of their agency," Hartley said.

THERE IS NO TEMPLATE
But while 18F inspires agencies to change the way they approach digital services, it doesn't prescribe a one-size-fits-all model. The motto at 18F is, "Delivery is the strategy." In other words, there is no template for creating effective government digital services. Each department must determine how it can adopt open, agile and user-focused processes in a way that transforms its culture while adhering to its mission.

"18F fundamentally wants to change government, and I think we've seen from experience that the best way to do that is to actually do it," said Brooks. Innovation simply requires a willingness to invest and take risks.

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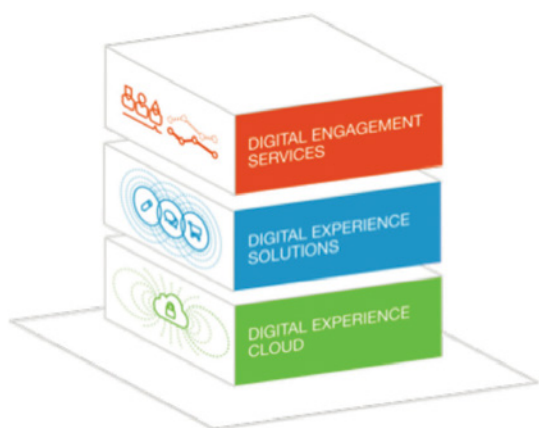
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Find out how governments and agencies around the world are using Acquia to meet their digital delivery needs.

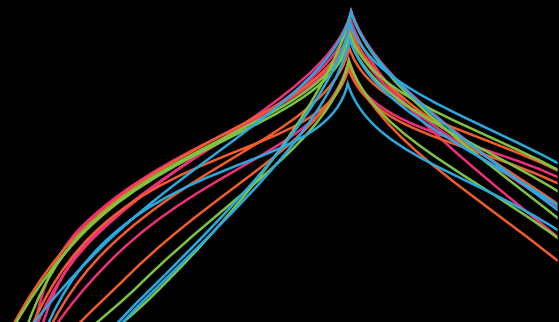| STATE OF GEORGIA CASE STUDY → | CITY OF LOS ANGELES IN THE NEWS → | FEMA CASE STUDY → | AUSTRALIAN GOVT. IN THE NEWS → |

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SUCCEEDING WITH DIGITAL SERVICES IN AN OPEN ENVIRONMENT

An interview with Dan Katz, Public Sector Technical Director at Acquia

G iven increasing government mandates and citizen demands, it's imperative that agencies adopt digital solutions. To discuss best practices for maximizing investment in those solutions, we spoke with Dan Katz of Acquia, a company that provides open source digital platform solutions and services to organizations worldwide.

Katz discussed the proliferation of successful digital initiatives executed using open source software and cloud platforms: "We've seen agency after agency leaving behind legacy content management tools and following the government's recommendation to go cloud first and open source first."

However, not all open source platforms—and the providers behind them—are created equal. Katz explained that the ideal platform combines agility, security, and resiliency to create integrated experiences for agency users and the citizens they serve.

AGILITY
One of the biggest benefits of open source digital platforms is their agility. Open source allows those responsible for publishing content and maintaining systems to rapidly respond to changing customer needs. "[Acquia] allows rapid publishing of content—even the creation of new websites—that is governed by the agency," said Katz. "No technical knowledge or coding is required. That enables agencies to get their message to citizens as quickly as possible."

Functionality and enhancements can be added without spending on unnecessary procurements. Expertise and collaboration can be developed in house, and the agency can maintain complete control over its technology. As a result, Acquia's open source platform ensures project teams retain the agility to transform without having to re-engage with outside vendors.

SECURITY
Yet while agency staff require the ability to independently edit content and continuously improve their sites, they also need the assurance from a platform vendor that their data will be safe.

Acquia's cloud platform is FISMA compliant and is currently being vetted by FedRAMP. It also provides the flexibility to customize security and offers options like Acquia Shield, a segregated data tier and VPN solution. "I don't think there's a one-size-fits-all model for security," said Katz. "It's important to look at the specific needs of an agency and help them map the right solutions to those needs."

Additionally, Acquia's open source model allows organizations to take advantage of one of the largest, most active open source communities. "Working with a company like Acquia allows an agency to leverage not just the company and support staff at Acquia, but the entire Drupal community," said Katz. "If a security vulnerability is found, because the code is open, it's addressed very quickly. And with the support of Acquia, it can be addressed on an enterprise scale."

RESILIENCY
Furthermore, this security and support is not compromised during times of heightened use. Especially for agencies who must rapidly deploy new content and features, or whose user traffic may fluctuate with unexpected events, it's important to have the technology and assistance to ensure digital services remain online at all times.

Acquia ensures their open source technologies are resilient enough to withstand even the worst-case scenarios for government agencies. For instance, preceding Hurricane Sandy, the company worked with New York's Metro Transit Authority (MTA) to ensure emergency information portals remained online during the disaster.

"We worked with MTA to do a simulation before the hurricane actually struck," said Katz. "And during that simulation our team identified areas of improvement, which we addressed so they'd be responsive even during extremely high traffic. During the storm, there was no down time for their site. We were serving more than 30,000 concurrent users and pushing large amounts of data, even when MTA editors were creating new content simultaneously."

INTEGRATED EXPERIENCES
Each of these attributes—agility, security, and resiliency—helps agencies achieve their missions. However, Katz noted that the true benefit of these open source elements comes when they are integrated to form a holistic experience for both the government organization and end users.

Katz offered an example to highlight how Acquia provides this integration. "We worked with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to consolidate all of their public-facing websites, which were at one point on 16 different content management systems, multiple hosting providers, and various software licenses. We created a roadmap and helped support the design and implementation of a central Acquia and Drupal-based platform," he said.

"Additionally, we worked with DHS to do training and onboarding. What developed out of that is not just over 24 sites being migrated from different systems into Drupal, but also an internal DHS government community of innovators who are all very passionate and committed to making this platform successful."

Katz concluded, "Digital services enable strong relationships between government and citizens. What Acquia, as a vendor, can provide is an enablement platform for the next great wave of digital services."
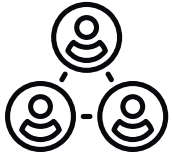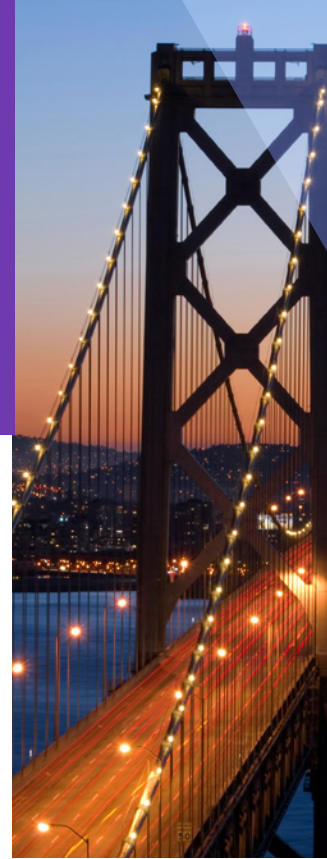
Trend #1:

CITIZEN CENTRIC DESIGN

Ensuring citizen needs and preferences drive the digital agenda, rather than focusing solely on cost cutting & efficiencies

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

Cost cutting and efficiency are two buzzwords that often accompany the push for government services to go digital. But these internal pressures should be extra incentive — not the driving force — behind digital service initiatives. Why? Simply put, an internal-facing digital strategy leads to stakeholder-centric design and runs counter to government's mission of serving citizens.

Just as our government is for the people, by the people, so should our digital services be designed by and for the people who will use them. Agency officials who find it difficult to justify investment in digital services without a financial incentive should consider the funds wasted on a portal or website that goes unused. Digital strategies must be user-centric in their design if we are to reap any return on investment.

CHALLENGES:

To truly allow consumers to guide the decision and design of digital services, organizations must diligently solicit input from that cohort. But there is no template for citizen engagement, and many agencies may find it challenging to attain meaningful feedback from their full cohort of users. For instance, solicitation for comment may require using a variety of mediums if users do not have the same access to or knowledge of digital services. The process itself may also consume significant resources if agencies choose to conduct user groups or alpha tests with a wide range of users.

This latter challenge is only compounded by the fact that citizen-centric design is not a "one and done" initiative. It requires consistent solicitation for feedback from users and revision based on that input. For a government agency with tight resources, the commitment required to engage citizens in design can be daunting. Other agency pressures, such as a desire to cut costs in digital service projects, can also challenge investment.

GETTING STARTED:

Engaging citizens in the design process can seem overwhelming, but you don't have to launch a series of focus groups or poll half the U.S. population to get a better understanding of what consumers want from your digital services. Sampling a small group of end users can go a long way toward determining what digital services you need and how they should look. Additionally, 18F encourages agencies to consider federal employees as citizens with preferences, too. An internal request for feedback from your colleagues — called "hallway tests" — can yield great input without the same concerns about privacy and marketing costs that accompany external campaigns.

If you do want to create more formal programs for citizen-centric design, don't forget to check out the many government resources that provide how-tos on getting citizens engaged. The U.S. Public Participation Playbook provides a checklist, case studies, and suggested metrics for designing public participation programs. Additionally, the TechFAR Handbook explains how the federal procurement process can be leveraged to "support an iterative, customer-driven software development process."

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CASE STUDIES:

1

2

3
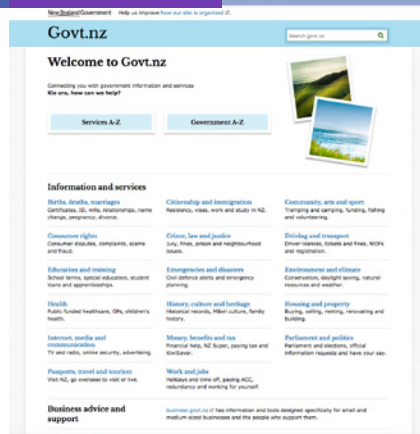
Oakland's Digital Front Door:
In partnership with Code for America, the city of Oakland, Calif., is taking strides to find out what citizens want from government digital services. This pilot program is multifaceted, including surveys to find out how citizens use city services, a digital dashboard that displays current activity on the city website, and virtual town halls for direct feedback on services needed. Oakland has also assigned an "MVP" whose sole responsibility is to ensure that initiatives are "putting emphasis on the way users outside of city hall approach finding services."

Government Citizen Engagement Index:
GSA's government citizen engagement index (GCXi) measures customer satisfaction across government websites. The index asks four questions, which vary slightly in wording depending on the website and transaction, to target four dimensions: overall customer experience, ability to complete tasks, proclivity to recommend the service, and willingness to return to the website for future transactions. These four questions are rated and averaged, according to a specific equation, to allow agencies to quantify their level of citizen engagement and pinpoint areas where service could be improved. And because GCXi is uniform across government websites, it can be used to compare service in one transaction against satisfaction in others.

Govt.nz:
When officials at the New Zealand Department of Internal Affairs decided to revamp their website, they started by gathering feedback and analyzing statistics from their existing portal. From that data, they determined that users wanted a simple design that consolidated all government services in a single domain, and then executed that vision to create Govt.nz. Since deploying the new site, department administrators have continued to gather feedback from users and make additional small improvements as they see opportunity.

Trend #2:

MOBILITY

Creating information & services
that are available any time,
anywhere, and on any device

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

Given the influx of mobile devices into the marketplace, agencies can no longer assume that citizens will use traditional routes to access resources and information. According to a recent General Accountability Office (GAO) report, the number of individual users accessing one agency website via a smart phone or tablet rose from 57,428 in 2011 to 1,206,959 in 2013. Mobile solutions are necessary for agencies to continue serving the public.

However, mobility goes beyond offering services on a phone or tablet. Consumers and personnel alike increasingly expect the same level of service from government as they do from the private sector. That means making information as accessible as possible, whether that information is used simply to make the public aware or to allow an employee to work remotely.

CHALLENGES:

Creating effective mobile solutions requires more than designing websites to be mobile-friendly. For many agencies, security concerns are especially daunting because mobility extends security to a variety of settings including cloud storage and devices themselves. From a citizen's perspective, privacy is also a concern because many device-enabled applications use some location-aware components and require personal information for access.

Iowa's recent pilot of a virtual driver's license is a prime example of how such concerns may impede innovation. Although the virtual license may be easier to carry and use, it also blurs the line between public and private information. For instance, if police officers request a license and are handed a phone, they immediately have access to a plethora of information beyond what is displayed on a physical ID. What's more, if the license displays a Social Security number, that information could be stored in a potentially insecure cloud used to house the rest of a phone's data.

GETTING STARTED:

You don't have to build a mobile application from scratch in order to make strides toward mobile governance. Mobility can take many forms and serve many ends. The first step to creating a robust mobile strategy for your department or agency requires setting an objective. That objective, whether it's increasing remote opportunities for employees or reaching more tech-savvy citizens, will heavily dictate the regulatory, privacy, and technology considerations of solution development.

Once you determine which mobile solutions you want to develop, leverage the successes of other government agencies to help you get started. The mobile section of DigitalGov.gov periodically highlights examples of effective mobile initiatives in government, while open source websites like GitHub house free coding for mobile solutions developed by other government agencies. Additionally, the Guide to Telework in the Federal Government and the Bring Your Own Device Toolkit, offer guidance on how to execute and communicate easy first steps toward creating a mobile workforce.

2

3

You don't have to build a mobile application from scratch in order to make strides toward mobile governance. Mobility can take many forms and serve many ends.

CASE STUDIES:

1

PTSD Coach App:
Created by the Department of Veterans Affairs in conjunction with the Department of Defense's National Center for Telehealth and Technology, this mobile app allows government to connect with victims of posttraumatic stress disorder without further straining government medical and psychiatric resources for veterans. It provides information on PTSD and potential treatments; tools to screen, track, and manage stress symptoms; and links to additional resources and support. Since its launch in 2011, the application has been downloaded more than 100,000 times in 74 countries.

2

Mobile Restaurant Inspections:
Instead of taking notes on-site, returning to a desktop to complete official forms, and then mailing a completed inspection to the business owner, restaurant inspectors in Mecklenburg County, N.C., can now complete an entire inspection without entering a government building. The county supplied inspectors with Microsoft Surface Pro tablets and mobile printers, allowing them to file and print scores on the go. As a result, inspectors are able to check more restaurants in less time and business owners can display improved safety scores as soon as they are determined onsite.

3

U.S. Postal Service Stamp Tracking:
One way USPS increases revenue is by designing and selling stamps for seasonal occasions. But when a vendor or post office unexpectedly runs out of holiday stamps, consumers can take the temporary shortcoming as a broader reflection of poor customer service. To avoid disappointing customers, USPS has created a desktop and mobile application that allows office staff to track their stock of holiday stamps at any time and in any setting. The data from this application is used to stock offices with additional stamps before their supplies are depleted, and it alerts the national office to adjust levels of production as needed.

Trend #3:

OPEN SOURCE

Collaborating within and across agencies to leverage economies of scale, share ideas, and streamline the customer experience

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

The U.S. Digital Services Playbook notes that, "By building services more openly ... we allow the public to easily provide fixes and contributions, and enable reuse by entrepreneurs, nonprofits, other agencies, and the public."

In other words, the benefits of an open source approach to digital strategy are threefold. For starters, open source development accelerates government's digital transformation by allowing agencies to reap the benefits of others' progress. Secondly, it creates a transparent process that can foster public faith in these new government initiatives. Finally, an open source approach ensures that digital initiatives will be maximally effective because it provides channels for users to report bugs and provide suggestions for improvement.

CHALLENGES:

Many assume that the primary barrier to open source implementation is technology. This is only partially true, since the technology and skills associated with open source development can be acquired. However, getting agencies to invest in acquiring these skills is another issue, making current culture and processes the true challenges to open source adoption.

Open source is more than coding in a certain way. It requires adjusting workflows to be transparent and collaborative — two adjectives that only recently entered agency vernaculars. To conduct open processes, agencies must revise existing security constraints on information and top-down project management structures. Moreover, an aversion to releasing government products before they are fully tested — an inherent step in the iterative process of open source — can prevent buy-in at many agencies.

GETTING STARTED:

The great thing about open source is that, by nature, there is a wide range of templates, codes, and technologies available for use. But before you dive in, you'll want to tackle the basics. Learn how open source works and what it will require for your organization to make the transition. GitHub and other open source websites are a great first stop, since most offer free tutorials in addition to their available coding.

To address cultural challenges, 18F recommends first identifying what barriers — whether they be privacy concerns, varying priorities, or simply inertia — are preventing open source from being the default strategy for digital services development. Then start addressing those challenges by validating concerns, informing them of secure alternatives, and mentoring and empowering early adopters. In the next section, Ben Balter from GitHub offers further advice on surmounting the cultural transition to open source.
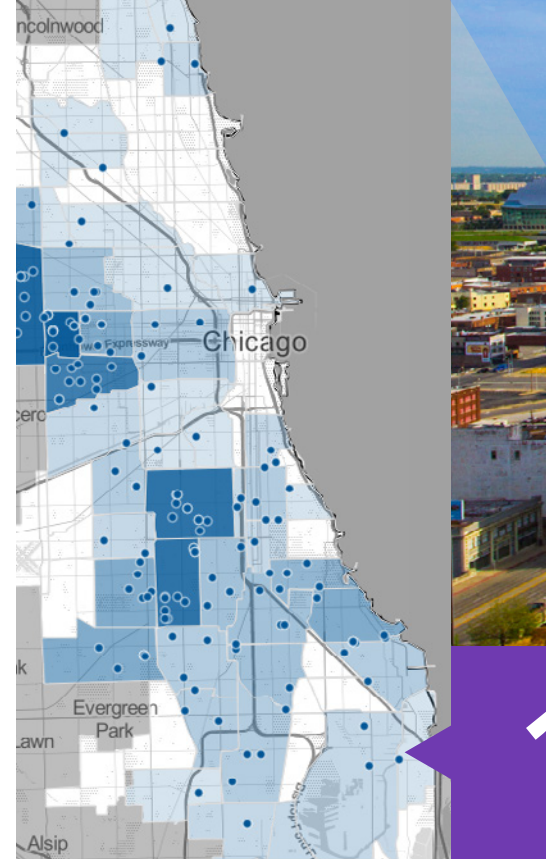
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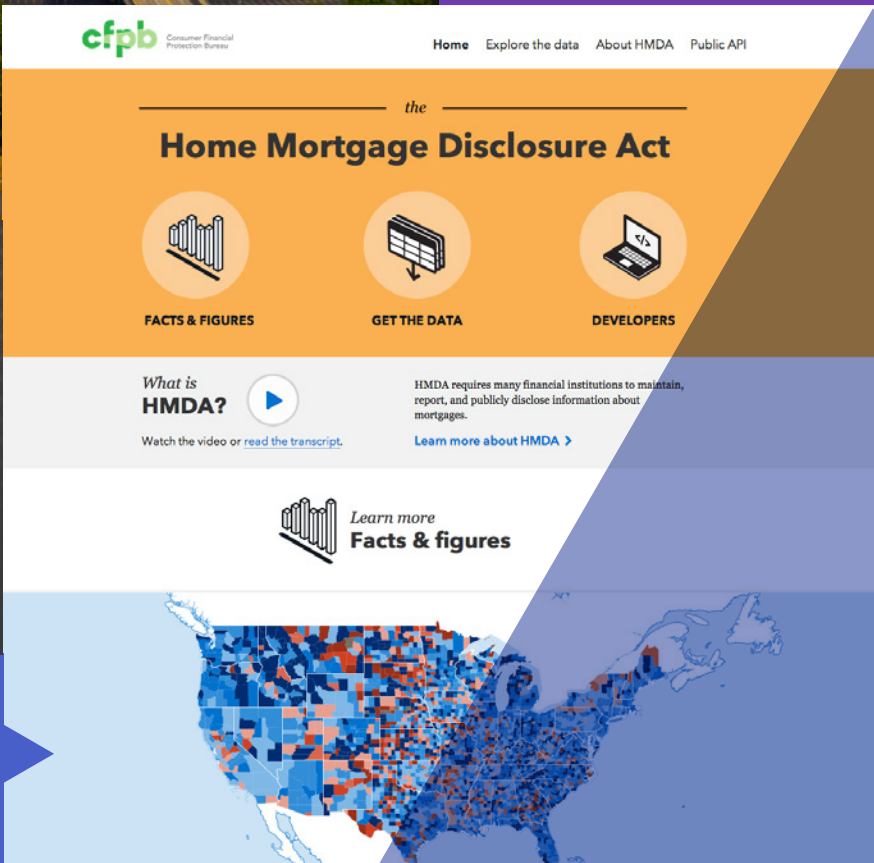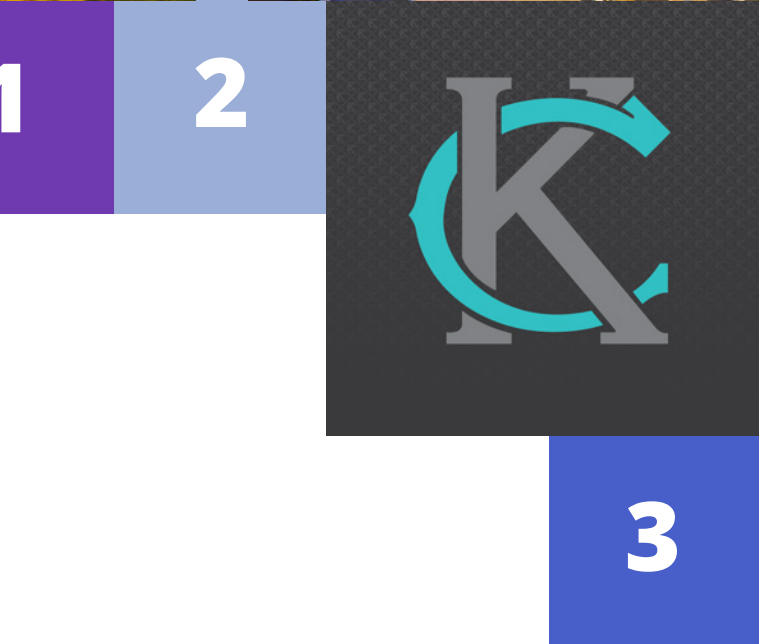
CASE STUDIES:

1

Data.gov:

Arguably the largest open source endeavor undertaken by government to date, data.gov is powered by two open source applications, CKAN and WordPress, and was developed through open processes on GitHub. To date, it houses more than 130,000 datasets, which are also published via open source processes. The website's applications page highlights ways the portal's information has been leveraged to build other free government applications, such as a crime analysis platform in Chicago and a college costs portal for the Department of Education.

2

Kansas City website:

Kansas City, Mo., launched a new website, KCMO. gov, in early 2014. Instead of using an external design team, the city government built the entire website using internal talent and open source hosting. The resultant website is the largest municipal open source WordPress site in the country. In addition to allowing the city the flexibility to customize the website to specific local needs, officials said the open source approach reduced the cost of launching a new web portal by 75 percent.

3

CFPB IdeaBox:

The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) used in-house staff and resources to build an application to help the organization collect, organize, and solicit comments on innovative ideas. After formalizing the application process at CFPB, the agency published the IdeaBox source code on GitHub so that it can be downloaded, customized, and implemented at any other federal agency. Additionally, CFPB created an instructional webinar to help other agencies implement the application.

USING OPEN SOURCE IN GOVERNMENT

An interview with Ben Balter, Open Source Developer and Government Evangelist at GitHub

You only have to glance at the public sector projects hosted on portals like GitHub, Madison, or Red Hat to realize that open source is becoming a primary way to develop and test government digital services. Yet many agency employees and private citizens question why government is embracing this new process and, more importantly, how it's going to deliver any of its promised benefits.

To better understand the why and how of open source in government, we spoke with Ben Balter, an open source developer and Government Evangelist for GitHub, a web-based platform for hosting, controlling, and collaborating on open source projects.

THE BENEFITS:
COST SAVINGS & EFFICIENCY

Balter began our discussion by laying out why open source was gaining traction in government. "Government agencies are expected to do more with less, not just in technology, but across the board. [But] the traditional government playbook is very high cost, low risk," he said.

"If you're building a tank, that makes a lot of sense. You build the thing and then it lasts for 20 years. That works in IT if you're building a mainframe but we don't do that anymore. Parts are very lightweight and cheap, and they last for a lot shorter period of time. So open source becomes attractive because, by virtue of it being open, it's iterative."

It also allows agencies to test services before they fully invest in development. "Government is realizing that open source is a mechanism by which they can get immediate feedback from end users; and all this happens before the first dollar is ever spent, before procurement ever begins," Balter said.

And when an agency does invest in a service, other government organizations can benefit from that development, too. "Open source gives agencies the opportunity to find common challenges, to solve the problem once and solve that problem everywhere," said Balter.

THE CHALLENGES:
EXPERIENCE & FUD

Despite the advantages to an open source approach, many government digital strategies have not yet fully incorporated new processes.

To some degree this is a technical expertise problem. "Government isn't made up of open source developers," explained Balter. "It's not made up of people who grew up on open source as you might see in most of the development shops out in Silicon Valley." More experience with open source is necessary for projects to be executed.

"Start as small as possible, then probably start a little bit smaller than that."

Ben Balter
Open Source Developer and Government Evangelist at GitHub

But before that experience can be gained, agencies must overcome the real barrier to open source, which Balter calls "FUD" — fear, uncertainty, and doubt. "When government agencies start going down the open source route, they're using [it] as a vehicle for organizational change," he said. "There's a clash of cultures. Government is very command and control. It's very top-down, and that's the antithesis of open source. Open source is very much 'best argument wins.'"

There are also concerns regarding return on the investment to change. Some employees simply doubt that a free technology and process can yield results. "Government is used to spending millions and millions of dollars on something, so when they see the price tag is zero, they assume it's too good to be true," Balter said.

For others, the bigger concern is getting the most out of a new process. "Transparency is still seen as a liability," said Balter. "If you don't do open source right, it can come back not necessarily to hurt agencies, but to show that they didn't capitalize on an opportunity as much as they could have. Some agencies look at that as a very high risk and not worth it."

THE SOLUTION: STEP-BY-STEP TESTING

Balter asserted that these cultural challenges shouldn't prevent an agency from embracing open source. Instead, they should indicate that transitioning to open source should be executed gradually and with caution.

"Start as small as possible, then probably start a little bit smaller than that," said Balter. "Just to go through the motions of learning what a pull record is, what an issue is, and what a repository is... Even creating a list of non-code things will make the conversation a bit more concrete and tangible." Examples he offered were using open source to track favorite chocolate chip cookie recipes or get feedback on the best lunch places near the office.

When you're ready to further engage with open source, continue to do so incrementally. "Once agencies are ready to push outside the firewall and begin engaging with external developers, the best thing that we've seen take off is what I call 'feedback repositories,'" said Balter. "The idea is not putting code in the repository, but servicing those existing one-on-one conversations that usually happen between the agency and stakeholders outside the agency. Just creating a data repository and using issues to engage the community."

This easy step also helps connect the agency to support services. Within open source, one of the greatest resources is the community itself. "On GitHub, we have GitHub.com/government, a semiprivate community open to government employees," said Balter. "Because the only person who knows the answer to those types of questions are the other government agencies that are either currently going through that challenge or have already gone through that challenge." With that support and experience, your agency may be ready to take on a low-risk project.

Balter concluded by noting that although open source is dependent on rapid, iterative testing, its deployment at novice agencies may take time. But even starting small and slowly can set your agency on a path to reaping the benefits of open source. "Before you contribute to open source, you need to be building on an open source platform," he said. "That's the first and most important step."

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LEVERAGING PRIVATE SECTOR KNOW-HOW FOR GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

An interview with Brian Paget,
Technical Director Public Sector at Adobe

L ike any other major transition, there are ways to make government more efficient at developing and deploying digital services. To learn how agencies can advance their initiatives without accruing unnecessary costs, we spoke with Brian Paget, Technical Director Public Sector at Adobe, a content management and digital services provider for government.

"One reason government IT projects fail is because most of the time agencies deliver new digital experiences by writing lots of unmanageable code. Other major brands would never build a new digital experience from scratch. They partner with leading enterprise companies to build experiences on top of proven technology stacks," explained Paget. "When you deliver these experiences by writing a lot of code, its expensive, it's scary, it's difficult to maintain, and there's a lot of risk."

Partnering with a provider like Adobe can reduce risks by providing experience, guidance, and enterprise technologies that maximize return on investment in digital services initiatives.

EXPERIENCE
It's a common complaint that the private sector has outpaced government in the evolution of digital services. However, Paget said this could actually be an advantage for agencies that partner with companies like Adobe, because they already have experience with digital initiatives.

"When people talk about digital marketing solutions, a market Adobe lead's according to Gartner and Forrester, they're talking about optimizing cross channel experiences, managing these experiences in a more efficient fashion, and making something that's easy and simple for people to interact with" Paget said. "That's really the core of what the digital services initiatives talk about, we just happen to be doing it in government now."

GUIDANCE
The first step to mitigating risk is to scrutinize the needs of your agency. Paget explained, "It's one thing to say we need a better experience in digital services. Everybody agrees with that. And to say that government should have commercial-like experiences, everybody agrees with that as well. The challenge is figuring out how to go about that."

"The mistake agencies often make is that they don't look at what the user experience should be. They try to make something that looks pretty, rather than something that works. You need to do both," said Paget.

Adobe helps agencies strike that balance by aligning agency needs with potential services. "The first thing we look at is an agency's mission. What do citizens expect from you? How are you trying to empower your employees to meet their mission objectives better?" he said. "We approach it from that perspective, and determine how we can help optimize the service that you're trying to deliver to meet that mission."

TECHNOLOGY
Once Adobe helps an organization determine the goal of their digital initiative, they map technologies to the project. While many assert that digital initiatives are a matter of cultural change, more than technology, Paget said the two are inextricably connected. "Technologies actually help to create the change. Technology empowers end users to be able to make changes that they couldn't do in the past."

But more than changing culture, Adobe's technologies revise the way agencies create digital services by providing low-cost solutions that can be delivered straight to front-line employees.

Mobile applications are one example of Adobe's unique delivery. "If you look at a traditional development lifecycle for mobile applications,

[technology providers] will build one version for iOS, one version for Android, and one version for Windows," Paget explained. "[Adobe] provides a platform that allows you to build an application one time and deploy it to those different devices. Right off the bat, it cuts down your development cost for cross-platform apps."

Once the app is deployed, agency employees can optimize it over time. "It's not just about delivering an experience, but about measuring that experience. When we build and deliver a mobile application, we embed mobile analytics into that application as well," said Paget.

Adobe provides the resources to let agency employees truly own its maintenance and evolution. "One of the challenges is once you've built an app and you've delivered it, you need to keep the content relevant and refreshed," said Paget. "So we provide technologies that allow you to maintain the content within an app through a simple web-based interface that doesn't require any programmer or technical intervention."

And because Adobe solutions are built on an Open Source core and leverage Open Standards for all integration, Adobe ensures you avoid vendor lock-in typically experienced when implementing enterprise software stacks.

This isn't a novel idea, but it's rarely seen in government solutions. "These are patterns that commercial [companies] have used for years," said Paget. "What we've done is optimized a known solution that allows the government to execute [digital initiatives] without having to invest millions of dollars to deliver this capability."

That's the core of Adobe's proposition, according to Paget. "We understand the challenges that are unique to the government sector, and we've extended our platform of commercial based [solutions] to meet the needs of the federal, state, and local governments."

Trend #4:

INFORMATION AS A SERVICE

Providing public and accessible data on government programs and processes as a means of fostering transparency

Delivering inform as a service car innovation by g citizens data and to create their solutions to publi tor challenges.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

When people think of digital transformation, they often think of creating a new service, or something that does something for someone. But providing information in an accessible and usable way, without the bells and whistles of a dynamic service, can still produce powerful results.

Open data not only helps meet the transparency demands coming from legislation, advocacy groups, and citizens, it also ensures that government is directed by the people it serves. Delivering information as a service can spur innovation by giving citizens data and tools to create their own solutions to public sector challenges. Additionally, it provides a means for citizens to scrutinize and comment on current government processes.

CHALLENGES:

Data.gov and other online portals may suggest that government has already tackled the idea of open data. In reality, most agencies are still trying to nail down the nuances of information as a service — what it means, how to do it, and even why they should do it at all.

What information should be made available is a primary contention. There is a degree of risk associated with greater transparency because open data can expose agencies to additional scrutiny from external bodies. In the long run, this enhanced accountability should result in greater efficiency and public trust, but in the short term it may limit buy-in from risk-averse agency administrators.

Additionally, many agencies have yet to determine what formats and platforms are best for presenting information to their audience. If information is presented in a usable and accessible way, its value immediately increases. This challenge is closely tied to the broader question of, "What is the goal of releasing information to the public?" Until agencies determine how they want their employees, other agencies, and the public to use their data, attempts to present it in safe, usable formats will continue to be stunted.

GETTING STARTED:

Open data, and the transparency it provides, are top priorities for the federal government. As a result, a significant amount of guidance and resources, including Recommendations for Standardized Digital Privacy Controls, OMB's upcoming standards for DATA Act formatting, and GSA's guide to getting open data onto Data.gov, have been created to support agencies in creating information portals for internal and external use.

But before you can start publishing data, it's crucial to first determine what you hope to achieve by providing information as a service. Are you hoping to educate citizens, solicit feedback, or provide a tangible service like Data.gov/disaster's disaster tracking portal? Defining your goal is a crucial first step, because it should guide decisions about the datasets, format, and medium you use to provide information as a service.

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CASE STUDIES:

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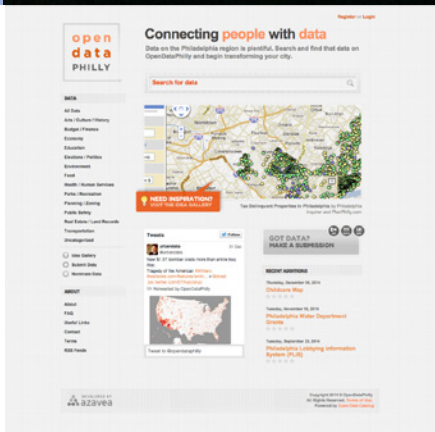
We the Geeks:
Hosted by the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP), this series of Google+ Hangouts is part of the department's larger Open Government Plan. Through interactive video sessions, the OSTP convenes public and private sector leaders with citizens across the country to learn about the future of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) in the United States. The goal is to engage more citizens in STEM fields while simultaneously illuminating government initiatives.

U.S. Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative portal:
Launched in December 2014, the USEITI interactive data portal showcases U.S. natural resources, the revenue earned from their extraction, and how those funds are spent within government. The website is the result of collaboration between the Department of the Interior (DOI) and 18F. The site's data is showcased in interactive graphs and maps to offer easy comparisons and highlight the geography of U.S. resources. The portal is part of a larger U.S. implementation of an international effort to improve government transparency around the management and accountability of revenue from natural resources.

Open Data Philly:
In April 2012, Mayor Michael Nutter established a formal open data policy for the city of Philadelphia with Executive Order 1-12. Opendataphilly.org now provides open data on an extensive range of Philadelphia's regional issues, such as elections, health and human services, real estate, public safety, and transportation. It also provides an idea gallery that highlights how other citizens and organizations have used Philadelphia data to power tools and generate insights to better the community.

ENGAGING CITIZENS IN YOUR DIGITAL SERVICES

An interview with Rosetta Carrington Lue, Chief Customer Service Officer of the City of Philadelphia

There's more to digital services strategy than placing information online. You also have to draw citizens to your portal and get them to interact with it. After all, what good is a service if no one uses it?

To learn how the city of Philadelphia is engaging citizens with its services, we spoke with Chief Customer Service Officer Rosetta Carrington Lue. She said that although some cities are hesitant to invest in digital services, Philadelphia's government is diving in: "People are talking about the city online anyway. You might as well join the conversation."

However, the city wants to use digital services for more than simply talking to customers. Officials want to serve the city. Carrington Lue refers to this as value. "[With every project] I keep coming back to this thing called value," she said. "We need citizens to see the value in what we're doing to make government better."

So how do you make sure your digital services deliver this value to the consumer? Carrington Lue outlined a strategy to engage citizens in your services.

GET TO KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Before you launch a portal or website, you have to determine what the community wants you to provide. "We look at everything in order to define what we want to design," said Carrington Lue. "You have to bring the customer's feedback to the table, not just the internal people. You need everybody's ideas, but specifically you need to know what your customers want and then design something around meeting their needs."

This doesn't necessarily require bringing citizens into City Hall, however. "In Philadelphia, we are data-driven," she said. "We look at trends. We are on social media. We do a lot of surveys. We go into the community and listen to what the communities are talking about. And where we do see trends, we look to see if we have the data to support what we're thinking."

This input should not only guide decisions for what services to offer, but also what they should look like. That means that any solicitation for input should query what methods of communication are available to residents and what preferences they have for the design of that communication.

MAKE A PLAN

Once a service is defined, Carrington Lue impressed the need to plan before you leap. Otherwise, the launch of a program may go unnoticed or be poorly received. "We do a lot of planning as a team so that we are not overstepping each other and sending mixed messages," she said. "We sit down with our team and various stakeholders, and we develop a weekly plan as to what we want to communicate and the various channels we are going to use to do that."

USE EVERY MEDIUM

This planning is especially crucial because digital services should never be deployed in a silo. Instead, they should take into account every channel of communication that might be used to reach citizens and drive them to a service.

"We're finding success just by using data, building these programs, and getting the community more involved."

Rosetta Carrington Lue
Chief Customer Service Officer of the City of Philadelphia

But even as you leverage every communication channel, Carrington Lue warned against assuming you can use the same content for every access point. "Whatever channel we're using, we need to identify the best way to make sure that people understand what's going on and that it is of value to them," she said. "We look at all channels that are available to our customers, and we customize communication for each channel. You're supposed to be able to go online and get the same information, the same level of service and response that you would regardless of the channel that you come into."

FOLLOW UP
Assuming your communication strategy is effective, you can expect citizens to start accessing your services. However, getting someone on your webpage or app is really just the first step in effective digital strategy, Carrington Lue said. "We need to look at more than just downloads, because people can download [an app] but not use it. It's the hot thing of the moment, but then nobody uses it."

Instead, Carrington Lue's team looks at all transactions associated with a service and monitors satisfaction levels. "We're constantly gathering data from customers as to what's working and what's not working in our operations with all of our channels, so that we can make the appropriate changes," she said. "Otherwise, nobody's really going to use it."

PHILLY 311
Carrington Lue offered an example of how her team married these engagement principles to design the digital interface of Philly 311, a citywide program to address citizen concerns in real time. When they decided to diversify the 311 service beyond a call line, they began by analyzing the customers who could benefit from the service.

Carrington Lue's team found that 20 percent to 30 percent of Philadelphia's residents didn't have internet in their homes but could benefit from some of the city's digital services. To overcome this barrier, her team began talking to these citizens and quickly found a solution. "Everybody that we talked with, they might not have internet in their house, but they all had smart phones with applications," she said.

It turned out the cost of owning a smart phone was less prohibitive for these residents than purchasing internet access for the household. So the Philly 311 service was pushed to mobile devices, to ensure these residents also had access. To further increase usability, the app was also made available in 17 languages. Because 21 percent of Philadelphia's residents speak a language other than English, this feature was crucial to reaching the maximum number of customers.

Once the app was deployed, program leaders continued to monitor and improve the service. "We collect customer feedback and convene people through customer focus groups," said Carrington Lue.

They also conduct web surveys following specific transactions. "That information is then compiled and we can tell every day what our customer service satisfaction levels were," she explained. "Then we can share that information with our frontline staff."

Carrington Lue's team also began targeting active users, especially residents who were submitting service requests for their neighbors in addition to their own. Through the Neighborhood Liaison Program, city personnel educated these users, called "community heroes," on ways to advocate the 311 program and teach others to use the service. As a result, others in the community were empowered to use the app.

Less than three years later, that app has become the number one way residents communicate with the city. Carrington Lue attributes that high user rate to a digital strategy. "We're finding success just by using data, building these programs, and getting the community more involved," she said.

Is your agency ready to be part of their digital journey?

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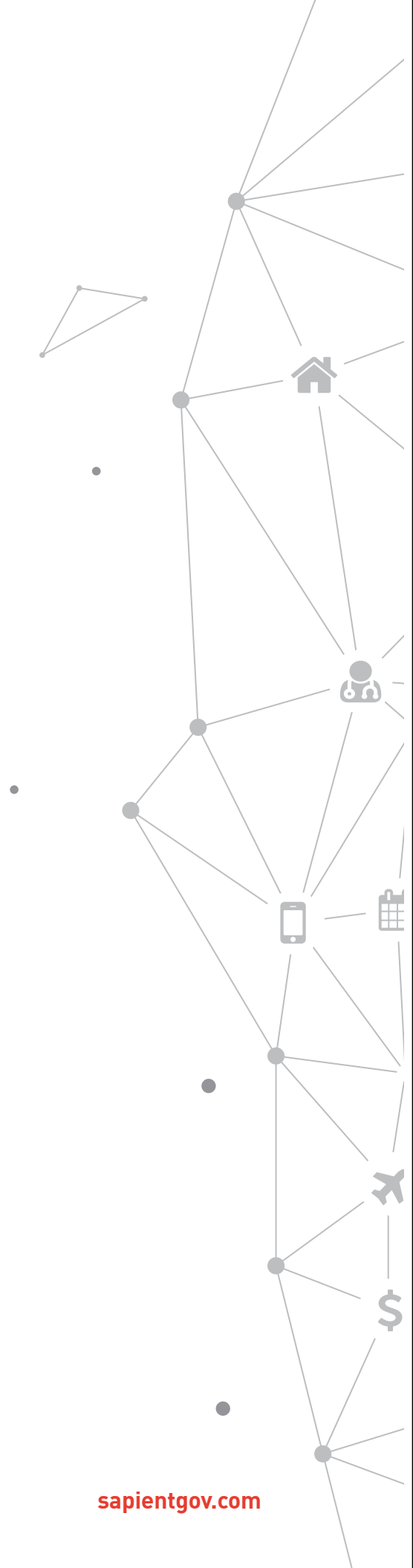
TELLING A CITIZEN STORY WITH DIGITAL SERVICES

An interview with Bill Annibell, Chief Technology Officer at Sapient Government Services

The fundamental goal of government digital services is to serve and engage citizens. Yet while many services are designed with this in mind, they often fail to achieve these ambitions in the long-term. Why?

Bill Annibell of Sapient Government Services explained that the main challenge to effective digital engagement isn't the quality of services created by government. Instead, the issue is that many systems are developed to fulfill singular needs, without deference to related government services or the lifecycle of a citizen.

"The mission focus of each agency often causes a silo effect in the services that they're offering which contrasts to how people see the government," Annibell said. "This limits the effectiveness of even the best citizen-centric experience when you have those silos because people see the government—health, immigration, education, etc.—as one entity."

Agencies must reconsider their approach. To provide a truly engaging experience, agencies must consider the holistic citizen story and then design their services to support that story. This provides an optimizing opportunity through the consideration of all chapters as one experience.

Sapient takes an extended view of the citizen lifecycle. "We call it storyscaping—taking multiple stories and making a holistic experience where stories continue on and on, rather than becoming a scenario of once in and once out," said Annibell. "That storyscaping is used to transform how government engages with citizens in the same way consumer brands do."

"Defining one story in one person's life is one thing, but actually going throughout the lifecycle of an individual and determining how they would interact with government services is an opportunity to truly shape and innovate the way government serves citizens," said Annibell.

EXTENDING CITIZEN-CENTRIC DESIGN

Before engaging in design, "There are still questions that have to be asked [about citizens]," said Annibell. "What do they use? What do they need? When do they need it? Where do they find the information?"

However, answering these questions is not enough to truly transform digital services. Agencies must consider how user needs might be best served through a variety of channels, rather than by one agency's service alone.

To design a truly integrated service offering, Annibell suggested considering a specific need as part of a larger, multi-dimensional process. For instance, a request for a marriage license is a specific need, but it should be framed as the first step of a longer government engagement. After all, getting married requires a myriad of government services across local, state and federal agencies ranging from legally changing names to securing a new passport and updating tax information.

The request for a marriage license will require a citizen to interact with a single digital service, but if that service maps to other relevant government services, organizations have an opportunity to truly engage the user. "We do this with our clients all the time. We define the entry points and then we consider the integration and the impact points from there," said Annibell.

This path should be made clear through your digital service. "Whether it's through a video or an interactive dashboard, tell the user what else you can assist with," he said. "Show what must happen now. Then, provide additional options associated with the things that might be nice to have, or that you haven't thought about. Next, provide related things you're going to be considering in the not-too-distant future. Bringing citizen needs together in an immersive experience is the best way to engage users, extending the impact and reach of the agency and the value to the citizen."

ANTICIPATING FUTURE NEEDS

Creating this network of resources is only the first step toward optimizing digital service, however, because it only addresses one scenario. While it may draw a citizen in for a single process, it may not engage them in the long-term. In order to ensure engagement, services must encourage a user to come back after a specific action is completed.

For instance, let your newlywed know that your agency offers services for first-time parents or provide information about home loans. Then, follow up on your suggestions. "If you're anticipating their needs ahead of time in a way that becomes part of their live, [citizens] will continue to engage and count on you," said Annibell.

Many agencies are already looking for ways to reach a greater audience with their digital services. However, if your service doesn't offer integrated solutions to both current and future citizen issues, the full potential of that service will be missed. By focusing service design on the citizen story, rather than specific scenarios, agencies can ensure users remain engaged in government.

Trend #5:

INNOVATIVE MARKETING

Leveraging the success of existing government services to engage citizens in additional or new digital services

1

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WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

The optimal time to engage citizens in new digital services is when they are already participating in government. Innovative marketing involves leveraging points of contact, whether it's a simple website visit or a complex transaction with a government portal, to build a stronger relationship with the consumer. Abhi Nemani, Chief Data Officer of Los Angeles, calls this creating a "ladder of engagement."

This ability to cross-promote digital services is unique to the public sector, because government agencies don't compete with one another in the way that private companies do. This offers them the ability to use success at one agency or with one service to promote services at another. In fact, this collaboration can help agencies better fulfill their missions by expanding the reach of their services.

CHALLENGES:

As with many digital services initiatives, pursuit of coordinated marketing campaigns requires departmental processes that are integrated and streamlined. In many cases, this may also require partnering with external agencies or organizations in order to target users of related services. Given the silos and security concerns that traditionally haunt governance, these initiatives will require a reorganization of processes and culture to embrace greater collaboration.

Additionally, agencies will be challenged to scrutinize their existing and potential user bases to identify services most likely to increase engagement through cross-promotion or upsell. Then, strategists will need to create a campaign that links these programs to others while ensuring that the distinct value of each service continues to be communicated.

GETTING STARTED:

Analysis and brainstorming are two low-cost ways to get started on an innovative marketing strategy. Before you start leveraging existing points of contact with citizens, you first have to understand where those interactions take place, how often they occur, and what they look like. This data, which agencies can often acquire through simple website analytics, can highlight what services are already attracting visitors and how their success can be used to further engage your audience.

Once you have identified successful points of contact from your department or agency, schedule time to discuss those services with others. Other agencies may know of services in their wheelhouse that could logically cross-promote your initiatives. Additionally, citizens and current users can offer feedback on which services they would like to see better integrated. These brainstorming sessions can provide the groundwork for a plan to start leveraging digital services success to create an even wider base of engaged citizens.
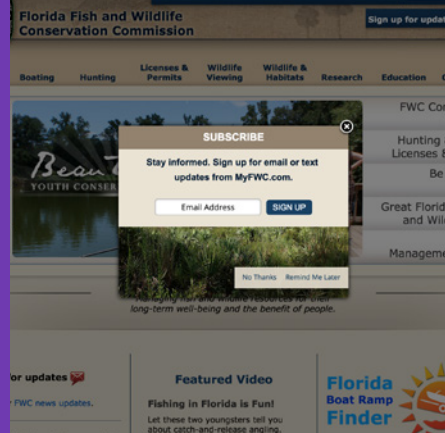
> The optimal time to engage citizens in new digital services is when they are already participating in government.

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CASE STUDIES:

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Florida Fish and Wildlife's Web Overlay:

When you access the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's (FWC) webpage, you'll see a little pop-up, called a web overlay, asking if you'd like to sign up for e-mail or text updates from FWC. The organization implemented the overlay in June 2013 and has since significantly increased the number of citizens subscribed to the service. Within 24 hours, FWC had 507 newcomers register, which is a more than 1,000 percent increase from their previous subscription rate of about 40 direct subscribers per day. Now FWC averages more than 7,000 new digital audience members per month.

2

FoodSafety.gov's Cross-Sell:

In December 2014, FoodSafety.gov, a Department of Health and Human Services website, saw a 233 percent increase in new subscribers of its digital alerts. Surprisingly, none of these subscribers actually visited the website before signing up. However, they did visit websites like ChooseMyPlate.gov, MedlinePlus, USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Vaccines.gov and Flu.gov. And when they signed up for information from those websites, they were prompted to also subscribe to federal food safety information. By leveraging a network of related services, powered by GovDelivery, FoodSafety.gov was able to increase its digital audience without altering its website.

3

St. Louis' Civic Upsell:

When you use the city of St. Louis' online portal to ask a question, you get more than an answer. You also get the opportunity to get more involved in government by registering to vote or finding local social services. Links to execute these actions are prompted with a simple message following question submission. Because the user has just successfully used the city's online portal, it's the prime opportunity to leverage that momentum and further engage the citizen.

GET STARTED WITH DIGITAL SERVICES

As you begin to embrace these digital trends, your agency may need a little guidance or support. Luckily, both the government and private sector organizations have provided numerous playbooks, guidelines, resource libraries, and training modules to help. Below are a few resources we recommend to help your organization begin transforming its services for the digital age:

Digital Services Playbook

This is the first collateral rolled out by the USDS. It is available on GitHub so that agencies and the public can offer feedback and suggestions. It provides 13 "plays" that agencies should make to improve their digital services:

▲ Understand what people need.

▲ Address the whole experience, from start to finish.

▲ Make it simple and intuitive.

▲ Build the service using agile and iterative practices.

▲ Structure budgets and contracts to support delivery.

▲ Assign one leader and hold that person accountable.

▲ Bring in experienced teams.

▲ Choose a modern technology stack.

▲ Deploy in a flexible hosting environment.

▲ Automate testing and deployments.

▲ Manage security and privacy through reusable processes.

▲ Use data to drive decisions.

▲ Default to open.

Each play is accompanied by a checklist of associated tasks and key questions that agencies should ask themselves as they execute digital services initiatives.
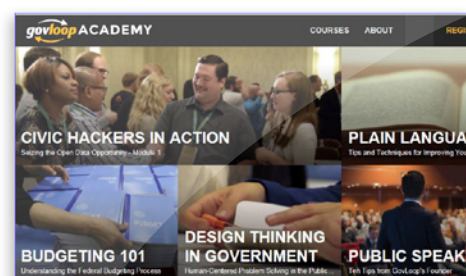

GovLoop Academy

Currently in its beta test, GovLoop Academy will offer virtual training on a variety of government topics. Trainings are detailed but broken into succinct segments of less than 15 minutes each. They also incorporate insights and experiences from real government employees. For agencies looking to build their digital know-how, courses on user-centric design and open data are particularly useful. The online portal will launch in early spring 2015.

DigitalGov.gov

More of a platform than a website, DigitalGov.gov was designed by GSA "to help agencies build a 21st century digital government." It provides resources and tools to help agencies achieve digital services initiatives. It also promotes successful digital initiatives and promotes public/private partnerships to achieve further success. The checklist of requirements for federal digital services, digital metrics guidance and best practices, and the federal-compatible terms of service agreements are particularly helpful for departments just getting started on digital services.
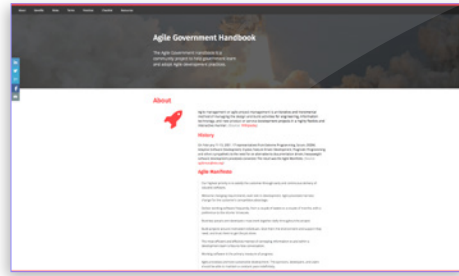
The Agile Government Handbook

In addition to making the case for integrating agile development into government workflows, this online handbook offers a wealth of articles, best practices, and a checklist to help agencies get started. It also outlines the ideal government team and contractor partners needed to effectively support agile software development.
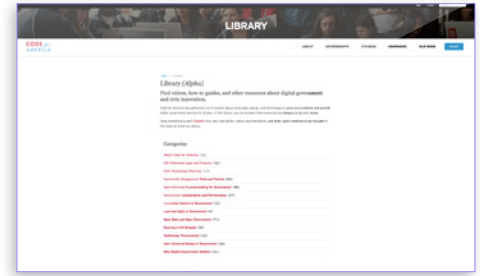
Code for America Resource Library

This compilation of videos, slide presentations, and reference documents covers a wide range of digital topics including lean and agile government, open data, user-centered design, and technology procurement. It also pulls information from a variety of leaders and sectors so that users can learn from diverse perspectives on how best to execute digital initiatives. And in the spirit of open development, the library also accepts resources submissions in case your agency has a tutorial worth sharing.

DigitalGov University (DGU)

Accessible via DigitalGov.gov, this federal program provides both in-person and online training for public sector employees working in digital media or on citizen engagement initiatives. These trainings, which are provided at no charge, cover a wide range of topics including content strategy, mobility, digital services management, and user design. They also educate students on other digital initiatives going on in government and how to get the most from them.

Accompanying these training events are myriad resources and case studies to help digital innovators get the most out of their government projects. The majority of materials DGU publishes are free of copyright so that they can be used and distributed across agency settings.

TechFAR Handbook

This subsection of the Digital Services Playbook deals directly with the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR). It explains how agencies can use FAR to develop or acquire necessary tools, partner with the private sector, and administer contracts to effectively execute digital governance initiatives.

U.S. Public Participation Playbook

This open source guide of tactics, case studies, and performance metrics to engage citizens in public services is the product of the General Services Administration (GSA).

The playbook is a work in progress. To ensure the result would be accessible and applicable to all federal agencies and their respective consumer bases, GSA placed a draft of the playbook on a collaborative document platform, Madison, and called on other government managers to comment on and edit the publication. The finalized document was released in February 2015.

ABOUT GOVLOOP

GovLoop's mission is to "connect government to improve government." We aim to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 150,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to connect and improve government.

For more information about this report, please reach out to info@govloop.com.

GovLoop
1101 15th St NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005

Phone: (202) 407-7421
Fax: (202) 407-7501

www.govloop.com
Twitter: @GovLoop

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govloop

1101 15th St NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20005

Phone: (202) 407-7421 | Fax: (202) 407-7501

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