

Catalyzing Collaboration:

Navigating Digital Transformation
in the Federal Government

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INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by rapid technological advancement and evolving opportunities, digital transformation in the federal government represents a pivotal and ongoing paradigm shift. Cutting-edge technologies, data-driven decision-making, and the reengineering of traditional government processes to foster agility, efficiency, and innovation all mean the federal government faces an imperative to not only adopt digital tools but reimagine how they communicate and interact. The COVID-19 pandemic significantly increased both the demand for and the means of digital collaboration with colleagues, partners, and the public. Concurrently, a digital-first approach is now more vital than ever, as statistics reveal that only 2% of federal forms are digitized, 45% of federal government websites do not function on mobile devices, and 85% of the public expect government services to match or surpass those of commercial service providers.^{1 2}

As the government strives to keep pace, digital transformation has become more than just a buzzword; it is a strategic imperative to better serve the public and to build internal resilience and adaptability in a rapidly changing world.

TRANSFORMING THE GOVERNMENT

At its core, federal digital transformation is the application of modern technology to improve government performance. In practice, this can be a much more complicated process that varies from agency to agency. Leaders must balance simultaneous and sometimes conflicting concerns around security, budgets, and mission needs.

All this is compounded by an increasingly digitally savvy public that is now used to seamless digital interactions – and expects its government to modernize to that standard. OMB Memorandum M-23-22, released in September 2023, acknowledges this modernization gap. Building upon the 21st Century IDEA, the memorandum offers concrete suggestions for agency digital modernization strategies, focusing on integrating digital experiences.

MAJOR MANDATES

Digital transformation is not a new concept within the federal government. Current strategies build upon years of mandated investments into digital technology.



- ☑ [E-Government Act of 2002](#)
- ☑ [Digital Government Strategy \(2012\)](#)
- ☑ [OMB Circular A-130, Managing Information as a Strategic Resource \(2016\)](#)
- ☑ [OMB Policies for Federal Agency Public Websites and Digital Services \(2016\)](#)
- ☑ [21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act \(IDEA\)³ \(2018\)](#)
- ☑ [Executive Order 13028, Transforming the Federal Customer Experience and Service Delivery to Rebuild Trust in Government](#)
- ☑ [OMB Memorandum M-23-22, Delivering a Digital-First Public Experience \(2023\)](#)

“Many Federal agencies have already begun their digital modernization journey, while others are just getting started. **By identifying each agency’s progress, we will be able to target the right investments** to support digital delivery, consolidate and retire legacy websites and systems, work with our private sector partners to implement leading technology solutions, maximize the impact of taxpayer dollars, and **deliver a government that is secure by design and works for everyone.**” — CLARE MARTORANA, FEDERAL CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER⁴





REIMAGINING DIGITAL COLLABORATION

Collaboration tools play a central role within broader digital transformation strategies of the federal government. These tools serve as the linchpin in enhancing inter-agency communication, streamlining workflows, and promoting cooperation both within and beyond government boundaries. The pandemic contributed to a swift reimagining of what these collaboration tools look like, bringing virtual collaboration to the forefront. While some agencies have brought workers back into the office, that focus on digital collaboration – being able to work with colleagues anytime, from anywhere – remains crucial.

Some agencies were able to harness these tools more quickly than others. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) prioritized investments into remote access and collaboration early, which allowed them to rapidly shift to virtual work in the early days of the pandemic and has kept them at the forefront of digital transformation both internally and externally, such as their mobile telehealth care carts for veterans.⁵

Other agencies faced more challenges. In January 2023, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) published a report urging the Internal Revenue System (IRS) to complete their modernization plans, including updating their cloud IT environment and legacy systems.⁶ While the agency has taken steps to improve external collaboration, including the introduction of a chatbot for taxpayers, the IRS still faces challenges in adopting these changes.

The Department of Defense, with its imperative to stay on the mission edge, is focusing on tools that promote interoperability and agility. The DoD is unique in that its collaboration tools must not only speak person to person, but to unmanned devices as well. From the Navy's Project Overmatch to the Army's and Air Force's new Digital Acceleration Task Force, all branches of the DoD are examining what investments will allow them to communicate most efficiently and securely.

Efficient collaboration tools, virtual or not, are a mission-driver. They contribute to better information sharing, enabling seamless collaboration between potentially siloed groups, as well

as empowering government officials to make data-based decisions in real time that improve efficiencies and response agility. All of this enhances the citizen experience and mission outcomes. However, choosing these tools means balancing competing needs for security, workflow, and a meaningful digital experience.

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CHALLENGE OF TRANSFORMATION

Digital transformation efforts within the federal government encounter a series of interconnected challenges.



The complexity of legacy systems and outdated infrastructure can hinder integration of modern technologies – older computers may simply not be able to run newer applications, for example, or handle multiple video conferencing tools at once.



The vast amount of sensitive data handled by government agencies also raises serious security and privacy concerns. Any new technologies must have or conform to robust cybersecurity standards to safeguard against cyber threats.



Cultural or bureaucratic resistance to change, as well as stringent procurement and regulatory requirements, can slow down the agility and speed at which agencies are able to adopt new technologies.



Budgetary constraints can limit the amount of technology acquired. At a time when different tools or systems may need to be updated simultaneously for functionality, this can cause challenges in applying and realizing these investments.



Achieving a unified vision of digital transformation across departments and agencies can be very challenging, requiring both a high degree of collaboration and coordination and a de-siloing of information.



TOP FEDERAL PRIORITIES



SECURITY

Ensuring a secure collaborative environment is paramount. In an increasingly sophisticated threat environment, this means that digital tools must adhere to the highest standards of cybersecurity. Zero trust frameworks, FedRAMP compliance, and other safeguards ensure that sensitive data remains secure.



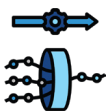
AGILITY

Federal digital transformation strategies are intended to make the government more responsive and efficient to change. Digital tools should be equally agile.



ACCESSIBILITY

Digital tools should be accessible and understandable both to federal employees and the public, prioritizing user needs and ensuring seamless and secure access, no matter where from.



SIMPLICITY

Though agencies are working to develop robust digital literacy amongst their employees, digital tools are intended to make lives easier – they should not be hard to use. Powerful and agile tools can still be designed with the user in mind, supporting their mission instead of adding to their burden.



NEXT STEPS



IDENTIFY THE GAPS

Though the overarching goal is to improve digital capabilities agency-wide, digital transformation strategies work best when they address identified problems, rather than choosing a solution without a problem. This assessment and analysis of where modernization gaps exist means smarter investments that spend taxpayer dollars where they are needed most.



COLLABORATE

Enterprise-level digital tools need to respond to different needs throughout the agency. Establishing cross-functional teams to drive digital transformation efforts promotes collaboration and understanding between departments and experts. Public-private partnerships can also leverage external resources and expertise throughout the modernization process.



THINK FORWARD

In what the DoD refers to as “overmatch,” agencies making investments need to think not only about their needs now, but several steps ahead. Artificial intelligence, automation, 5G (and beyond) and the Internet of Things will all be game changers for information sharing and collaboration. Investing in tools will be interoperable and supportive of these new technologies helps agencies set themselves up for the future of collaboration.

CONCLUSION

While “digital transformation” may sound like a buzzword, at its core it empowers the federal government to perform at its best by facilitating connections and supporting the people who drive it, both with each other and with the public.

In an era where information and expertise are distributed across a wide spectrum of stakeholders, the effective deployment of collaboration tools is integral to the success of digital transformation efforts, enabling the federal government to harness the full potential of modern technology for the benefit of its citizens and the nation as a whole.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS ON YOUR COLLABORATION JOURNEY

The journey towards comprehensive digital transformation is not a solitary endeavor — it necessitates a robust partnership ecosystem that understands the unique challenges federal agencies encounter with legacy systems and the constant need to modernize. In this transformative landscape, the collaboration between Presidio Federal and Cisco stands as a beacon, offering a comprehensive suite of products and solutions to support agencies both today and in the future. While, IT modernization is part of the solution we provide, we understand that the government also needs a partner who helps them anticipate, advocate, solve, and execute.

Together, we provide the necessary tools, expertise, and support to propel federal agencies towards a future where digital transformation isn't just a concept but a reality that redefines how the government serves its citizens. In the pursuit of a more agile and secure government, we empower agencies to embrace change, drive innovation, and ultimately transform the way they achieve mission success. Learn more about our partnership [here](#).

CITATIONS

- 1 - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/briefing-room/2023/09/22/why-the-american-people-deserve-a-digital-government/>
- 2 - <https://www.theacsi.org/news-and-resources/reports/2023/01/31/federal-government-report-2022/>
- 3 - <https://digital.gov/resources/21st-century-integrated-digital-experience-act/>
- 4 - <https://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/briefing-room/2023/09/22/why-the-american-people-deserve-a-digital-government/>
- 5 - <https://digital.va.gov/digital-transformation/>
- 6 - <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-23-104719.pdf>
- 7 - <https://governmenttechnologyinsider.com/west-2023-us-navy-focuses-on-collaboration-on-the-battlefield-of-the-future/>
- 8 - <https://www.afmc.af.mil/News/Article-Display/Article/3571278/digital-acceleration-task-force-to-drive-digital-integration-transformation/>

ABOUT



Government Business Council (GBC), the research arm of Government Executive Media Group, is dedicated to advancing the business of government through analysis and insight. GBC partners with industry to share best practices with top government decision makers, understanding the deep value inherent in industry's experience engaging and supporting federal agencies.

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Presidio Federal, a wholly owned subsidiary of Presidio, is a mid-tier integrator that is exclusively focused on federal government. We work with large prime contractors as well as small businesses to become a sort of “easy button” for our federal customers. We are proud to be an outcome focused, trusted advisor with a credentialed team that has experience and understanding with the legacy systems and unique challenges of government agencies.

We have an extensive partner ecosystem, including many of the best-of breed OEMs in the business like Cisco, to bring the right partners to the table to innovate beyond the challenge. Cisco helps to seize the opportunities of tomorrow by proving that amazing things can happen when you connect the unconnected. An integral part of their DNA is creating long-lasting customer partnerships, working together to identify a customers' needs and provide solutions that fuel ultimate success. For more information, visit <https://presidiofederal.com/partners/cisco/>

