

A Digital Transformation Report:

5 Ways Technology Can Transform Government Operations



Governments at all levels deliver critical services that citizens depend on for safety, health, transportation, and education—and even scientific innovations such as space travel—yet Americans’ trust in government is at near-historic lows. According to the [Pew Research Center](#), today, only 17% of Americans say they can trust federal government agencies to do the right thing “just about always” (3%) or “most of the time” (14%).¹

Governments and agencies are increasingly feeling pressure to deliver better service to citizens with dwindling resources. According to a [report from McKinsey & Company](#), “Citizens today expect more transparent, accessible, and responsive services. And those expectations are rising... Part of the problem is that despite their best intentions, many governments continue to design and deliver services based on their own requirements and processes instead of the needs of the people they serve.”² But, the report finds, some federal agencies are stepping up and implementing a more customer-centric approach to service design and delivery.

While shifting the focus of workflows to center around citizens’ requirements can help build trust, so can improving efficiency by using modern technologies instead of outdated manual workflows. This includes using technologies that help to speed processes, boost budget insight and program transparency, and increase agility in managing change and risk stemming from events such as natural disasters, unexpected funding cuts, and government shutdowns.

Many state and local governments and federal agencies are already adopting technologies to improve transparency, efficiency, and public trust. However, as with many industries, this is not an easy task. A [2018 survey of nearly 3,000 public officials](#) conducted by the McKinsey Center for Government finds that across 18 countries, 80% of government agency efforts to transform performance using technology don’t meet established objectives. According to the report, “The failure rate of government transformations is far too high. It represents a huge missed opportunity to tackle society’s greatest challenges more effectively, to give citizens better experiences with government, and to make more productive use of limited public resources.”³

To help improve the outcomes of agencies’ digital transformations, government mandates—such as the [Modernizing Government Technology Act](#)—help fund technology adoption. In addition, the [Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program \(FedRAMP\)](#) provides agencies with a growing marketplace of pre-approved, cloud-based technologies. As a result, agencies can streamline their migration from unsecured legacy technologies to secure and cost-effective cloud-based applications that drive progress towards digital transformation in five critical ways.

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1. Pew Research Center, 2019; Public Trust in Government: 1958-2019

2. McKinsey & Company, 2015; Implementing a Citizen-Centric Approach to Delivering Government Services

3. McKinsey & Company, 2018; Delivering for Citizens: How to Triple the Success Rate of Government Transformations



1. Drive Powerful Collaboration

Effective collaboration requires team members to be able to easily communicate and share information in real time. However, this can be difficult when people—who work in the same office or across sites and time zones—use different IT tools. Cloud-based technologies can help overcome the challenges stemming from siloed systems by giving people a unified digital platform that they can access using a web browser. By giving team members a common digital foundation, governments and agencies can dramatically improve the efficiency of collaborative workflows by simplifying file and calendar sharing and updating, minimizing version-control issues, and improving transparency and accountability. For example, operations teams can use a work execution platform to collaborate on disparate and complex workflows in everything from construction projects, to real estate acquisitions and facilities and asset management.

This technology is particularly valuable when multiple local, state, or federal organizations—each with a different internal technology stack—need to work together efficiently. Some tools offer collaboration capabilities that can connect teams regardless of existing technologies by providing seamless integration across applications.

One powerful example from the [Deloitte-NASCIO Cybersecurity Study](#) details how chief information security officers in state Health and Human Services agencies and Federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services are collaborating to implement more effective cybersecurity programs. By working together, the agencies have established Minimum Acceptable Risk Safeguards (MARS) recommendations for systems supporting Medicare and Medicaid data, to better protect citizens' data—despite budget challenges. Not only were the participating agencies more effective via collaboration but also, their shared voices were able to secure the additional funding required for the initiative.⁴

To help drive strategic initiatives that facilitate digital transformation and increased collaboration, many agencies establish project management offices (PMOs). In addition to standardizing policies and project management methodologies, PMOs also help to ensure that agencies adopt the appropriate digital tools to transform workflows in a way that will deliver the best results for citizens. But any government or agency, whether large or small, can utilize cloud-based collaboration tools to drive tangible returns in terms of work efficiencies that can have real impact on their ability to better serve its citizens.

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4. 2018 Deloitte-NASCIO Cybersecurity Study; States at Risk: Bold Plays for Change

Make Technology Work for You

Improving collaboration is easier when people have technologies that can simplify and improve communication, information sharing, and workflow automation.

Provide powerful visibility. A common work execution platform that serves as a single source of truth for an organization can help facilitate collaboration, and reduce friction that stems from people using different technology silos. For example, shared dashboards give team members real-time insights into data to help them make better decisions, and quickly provide status reports to managers and agency leads. Customized portals give teams one platform to store, access, and manage files.

Enable real-time alignment. Collaboration is easier and more effective when people can use a cloud-based work execution platform that supports real-time information sharing. In addition to being able to access the platform at any time and from any location, people can also respond to update and approval requests on the fly and instantly update project information in the field to ensure everyone is operating with the latest information.

Share only what collaborators need to see. While government workers need the efficiency gains that come from work execution platforms, they also need to comply with stringent data-protection regulations. Smartsheet makes it possible for government staff who are working inside and outside of offices around the globe to safely collaborate in real-time. That's because the platform provides data-protection controls that administrators can use to control and monitor who has access to what, so collaborators only see what they need to see to do their jobs.

Before You Buy

Consider these points before purchasing technologies to help boost collaboration:

Is the solution FedRAMP approved? Cloud services that are FedRAMP approved have demonstrated their ability to meet federal security requirements through standardized baselines and common criteria, so agencies can save time, boost ROI, and reduce risk. [Smartsheet Gov](#) is the version of Smartsheet that is the only work execution platform in the [FedRAMP marketplace](#). It offers fast user adoption as well as seamless, secure data sharing that helps organizations deliver better results faster for their citizens.

Smartsheet Gov also runs on the FedRAMP-approved [AWS GovCloud](#). As a result, agencies that use Smartsheet Gov know that they are using the most secure cloud available today for hosting sensitive data, regulating workloads, and addressing the most stringent US government security and compliance requirements.



Smartsheet is the leading work execution platform for global government agencies. Smartsheet Gov is now available to assist US Federal agencies in keeping data secure, controlling user access, and safely sharing information inside and outside of their organizations. Smartsheet Gov is the first work execution platform in the FedRAMP marketplace and runs on the FedRAMP-approved AWS GovCloud.

Does the solution offer robust administrative controls? Securing systems, applications, and data from unauthorized access begins with identity-based access controls that allow administrators to control and monitor who has access to what. Smartsheet has extensive identity and access management controls that administrators can use to govern and audit data access, ownership, and usage—as well as account discovery. As a result, individuals and collaborative teams can quickly access the information they need to work from any location at any time, while agencies meet stringent data-protection regulations.

How easy is it to create portals and dashboards? Government workers can save significant time and ensure everyone is operating with the same information by creating custom portals and dashboards in Smartsheet. For example, groups can use portals as a central location for document sharing, so people don't waste time looking for the right file. Any user can easily create custom dashboards—without help from IT—enabling their teams to quickly get the real-time insights they need from large amounts of data without having to manually compile and analyze information.

Is sharing frictionless? Boosting effectiveness and ROI is easier with a solution that supports intuitive digital workflows. Smartsheet makes it easy for collaborators to quickly and seamlessly share workspaces, individual sheets, or even a specific row in a sheet, so collaborators see only what they need, when they need it, and nothing more.



2. Transform Workflows Through Automation

Historically, the efficiency of governments and agencies has been throttled by paperwork required to record and track processes, approvals, and communication. It's no wonder that a [survey by the Governing Exchange](#) reports that more than half of local government officials struggle to complete their work in 40 hours per week. When asked which activities take up too much of their time, respondents cite meetings, paperwork, email, data collection, and reporting as the largest inhibitors to more important tasks such as strategic planning, analysis, and collaboration.⁵

Thanks to automation, governments and agencies are beginning to realize gains in efficiency and cost-savings that enable them to spend more time working on more critical tasks such as the delivery of citizen-centric services. A [Smartsheet automation survey](#) finds organizations that automate previously manual processes—such as data entry and processing—are saving significant time.⁶ For example, 59% of survey respondents say they could save six or more hours a week if the repetitive aspects of their job were automated. Sixty-six percent indicate they could eliminate human error. And 72% note that the time saved through automation would allow them to perform higher-value work.



Having all this information in Smartsheet saved us countless hours researching invoice status for vendors. We have immediate access, even if we're not at our desks, to how much money is left in a specific budget. Invoices are rarely misplaced or lost because of the process we have set up and the tracking that Smartsheet has instilled.

—Justin Kanoya,
Marketing Project
Manager, Port of
San Diego

5. [Governing the States and Localities Magazine, 2016; Is a 40-Hour Workweek Enough in Government?](#)

6. [Smartsheet, 2017; Automation in the Workplace 2017](#)

Make Technology Work for You

Many manual processes can be automated so that staff can work on more value-added tasks and improve citizens' service levels. Evaluate current workflows and consider how your organization can use automation to:

Enable greater efficiency. Automating workflows and simplifying tasks such as project tracking and management is straightforward and cost-effective with the right work execution platform. For example, many local and state governments and federal agencies are using Smartsheet to automate project update and approval requests. This includes configuring automated alerts that prompt specific team members to review and update project milestones—at set intervals or when specific events occur, such as a task completion. Automated approval requests can help to keep projects and third-party bids on schedule.

Reduce repetitive, manual tasks. Governments and agencies can boost efficiency and reduce errors and frustration with automation. For example, cities can use a work execution platform such as Smartsheet to automate pothole-management workflows. Citizens can quickly and easily submit information about a pothole using an online form that allows them to upload a picture or a document to the form. In seconds, the employees who manage street repairs will be alerted about the new pothole—a process that could easily take days if managed manually. There will also be less risk of misinformation stemming from typos and managers can receive an automated alert about potholes that are not fixed within two days, for example.

Before You Buy

As you evaluate technologies to facilitate automation, consider these points:

Is the solution easy for the business staff to use? Deploying solutions that can only be used by IT staff or that require extensive training to use reduces efficiency and ROI. Look for technology that employees can use independently to automate the workflows that they are responsible for managing, with little or no formal training. Smartsheet has a simple, intuitive interface that empowers any user to quickly create and improve work processes, without a heavy burden on technical resources.

Where is data stored and how is it collected? Automated processes depend on data, so it's important to consider where your information will reside and how users can provide inputs that are required by processes. Smartsheet is cloud-based, so agencies can quickly automate data collection and workflows across departments and regions in real time.

How will you measure success? As you automate workflows, it will be important to measure how they boost efficiency and service levels. With Smartsheet, staff can quickly and easily build reports and dashboards that provide high-level and detailed insights into data that measures workflow efficiency and other service-level indicators.



3. Make Better Decisions, Faster

Data provides a concrete foundation for governments and agencies that need to make decisions that transcend political viewpoints and other personal biases. However, gathering insights into large amounts of information, especially when it resides in numerous silos, can be extremely time consuming. With the right cloud-based solution, organizations can save time and boost effectiveness by rapidly answering questions based on facts. Data-based insights are especially critical for agencies responsible for public safety, such as first responders, who need real-time visibility into data to make quick, effective decisions about rapidly evolving and potentially life-threatening situations.

Today, many governments and agencies are benefiting from technology that gives them insight into real-time data. Deloitte Insights' report, [Mission Analytics—Data-driven Decision Making in Government](#), reviews how state governments and federal agencies are using data to improve decision making and citizen outcomes. For example, every summer, the Office of Justice Programs (OJP) in the Department of Justice has two to three months to distribute \$2 billion to more than 2,000 grantees working on public safety programs. For years, staff managed grant applications and distributions using paper-based workflows. However, after a recent digital transformation initiative that helped minimize data silos and automate processes, the time needed for grant managers to capture grantee data has gone from 30 minutes to just a few seconds—or almost zero. The agency has also improved the accuracy of its decision making and overall confidence in the office because people know that resources are allocated based on data instead of opinion.⁷

Make Technology Work for You

Give your staff the tools they need to make use of available data to improve decision making by:

Facilitating the right insight at the right time. Individuals and teams can make better decisions when they can easily create and share reports and dashboards that provide insights required to excel in their jobs, such as continuous visibility into KPIs, budgets, and project status. In addition, given the increasing mobility of workforces, people need to access their digital tools and insights from any location, plus easily share reports and dashboards with authorized individuals. By improving insight as well as mobility in information access and sharing, decision makers can improve effectiveness and agility—and spend more time resolving pressing issues, identifying trends, and shifting the focus of workflows to be citizen-centric. Facilitating shared views of information by key stakeholders also improves accountability, and minimizes finger-pointing.



We use Smartsheet for data request management. We had limited visibility because external parties would make requests of individuals who kept data in their own databases and requests in their email. Creating a Data Request form provided a single entry point for external parties. The resultant sheet helped us track quantity, assign work, track turnaround time, and helped make the case for additional resource needs.

—Enrique Velazquez,
Special Projects and
Business Support, City of
Minneapolis Public Works,
Surface Water and
Sewers Division

7. Deloitte Insights, 2016; [Mission Analytics—Data-Driven Decision Making in Government](#)

Saving time and boosting accuracy. Automate data collection using online forms to speed workflows and eliminate errors that come with manual processes so that decisions are being made with accurate, up-to-date information. Governments and agencies can also improve the speed and accuracy of data insight using point-and-click reporting and dashboard tools instead of copying, pasting, compiling, and calculating insights themselves. Automated notifications can also remind staff of upcoming tasks and deadlines, to ensure decisions are timely.

Before You Buy

When you evaluate technologies to improve and accelerate decision making, choose a solution that enables staff to:

Create configurable reports—independently and securely. Improving decision making requires anytime, anywhere access to data insights. Collaborative work management platforms such as Smartsheet can empower staff to create their own reports based on the data they are authorized to access, so they can quickly gain the insights they need without having to wait for help from IT staff. This includes being able to change views of the same data set and visualize tasks in Gantt, card, grid, and calendar views.

Smartsheet also makes it easy to set up automated report sharing on a recurring basis, which simplifies collaborative decision making and required reporting to auditors and executives. With seamless Smartsheet integrations, staff can incorporate data from sources such as Google Drive, OneDrive, and Box. And while staff can get the insight they need in less time, administrators also have the controls required to enforce data-protection policies.

Quickly create real-time dashboards. Giving employees the ability to quickly create custom dashboards that deliver real-time insight into small or massive amounts of data is a transformative capability that can improve decision making, efficiency, and citizen outcomes. Look for a solution that simplifies the creation process including an easy-to-use interface that provides intuitive dashboard-building widgets, so that people can quickly get up to speed and work independently.



Smartsheet has brought flexibility, ownership, and transparency to our organization, with quantifiable improvement in customer relationships.

—Blessing Ugbo,
Project Manager,
Consolidated Fire
Agencies



4. Do More with Less

Today, the budgets of most governments and agencies are shrinking. The [2018 federal budget](#) included \$54 billion in reductions.⁸ In 2019, the budget mandated \$65 billion in reductions. The 2020 budget proposes \$2.7 trillion in cuts. The story's the same for state agencies, which are also operating with dwindling purses, according to the Pew Charitable Trusts. Its [Fiscal 50: State Trends and Analysis](#) report reveals that state governments "face fiscal constraints today because of inherited shortfalls in funding for public employees' pension and retiree health care benefits; recurring deficits between annual state revenue and expenses; and weak population growth, which can affect economic prospects and revenue collections. Among other challenges facing states are rising costs for Medicaid, a healthcare program that accounts for the largest share of total federal aid to states, and tax revenue volatility, which can confound policymakers' efforts to balance budgets."⁹

As governments and agencies at all levels struggle to accomplish their missions with fewer resources, the public is expecting better and more modern services. Accustomed to having instant, anytime answers to questions and access to services, citizens expect government to deliver the same level of responsiveness and support that they enjoy from retailers, social media platforms, and other commercial ventures.

Make Technology Work for You

By using technologies such as work execution platforms, governments and agencies can drive successful digital transformations that:

Boost efficiency. Technology that automates repetitive tasks, streamlines communication, improves collaboration, and accelerates insight into operations and services is critical to help bridge the gap between shrinking budgets and increasing demands for services. The less time people spend manually tracking project milestones, creating reports, composing repetitive emails, and sitting in meetings, the more time they will have to better understand citizens' needs and revamp services to meet them. Increased efficiency can also help improve job satisfaction among employees, who get to spend more time on what matters most: achieving their mission.

Increase control. Responsible government operations know where the money is, how it's being spent, and whether budgets are balanced at any given time. This requires technologies that facilitate real-time insight into budgets as well as tools that can automate workflows such as milestone reminders, requests for status updates, budget tracking, and alerts about budget changes and overages. With accurate, real-time insight into budget status, agencies can more quickly pivot to contain overages or reallocate funds to make the most of scarce resources.

Accustomed to having instant, anytime answers to questions and access to services, citizens expect government to deliver the same level of responsiveness and support that they enjoy from retailers, social media platforms, and other commercial ventures.

8. Office of Management and Budget, 2018; America First—A Budget Blueprint to Make America Great Again

9. The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2019; Fiscal 50: State Trends and Analysis

Improve service levels and savings. The Deloitte report [The Future of Work in Government](#) finds that by automating routine tasks, government employees gain the time they need to rise above business as usual and improve services. “A Deloitte analysis of the potential savings from AI found the U.S. federal government could free up more than 25% of working hours (out of some 4.3 billion hours worked in total annually) and potentially save up to US\$41.1 billion by using cognitive technologies.” At the same time, the report states that, “We should be redesigning government work around the problems we hope to solve. To do this, leaders should figure out how to bring together the unique capabilities of humans and machines, so they can each contribute the work they do best.”¹⁰

Before You Buy

Government workers need more than just basic spreadsheets and word processors to manage budgets and processes in a way that improves savings and ROI. Look for a solution that:

Enables real-time visibility into current spend. Cloud-based applications that enable all stakeholders a current, continually updated view of available resources can help keep teams and programs on track.

Expands automation and collaboration. Technologies are available that support the creation of project sheets and allow staff to automate line-item tracking and schedules, reducing time spent on micromanaging. For example, Smartsheet enables conditional formatting, so that staff can easily see if a project goes into the red. Teams can also stay aligned on budget status using dashboards and reports, so everyone can see what funds still exist, and when reallocation of funds is needed to stay balanced. Automated milestone alerts can also help keep teams on schedule.



Smartsheet has streamlined our day-to-day practices. It has saved us thousands of dollars by allowing us to use forms, instead of snail mail, to communicate with our 800-plus election judges.

—Stephanie Taylor,
Project Manager, Harford
County Board of Elections

10. Deloitte Insights, 2019; [The Future of Work in Government—Navigating a Shifting Talent Landscape](#)



5. Attract a Talented Workforce

Workers are the lifeblood of governments, yet many are struggling to attract and retain the workforce they need. The [Center for State and Local Government Excellence](#) reports that 91% of agencies rank employee recruitment and retention as one of their highest priorities. One of the key reasons is that a significant number of government workers are at or nearing retirement age. In federal agencies, 25% of workers are older than 55 and only 17% are younger than 35.¹¹

While the need for workers is growing, government agencies are struggling to attract new talent. Perceptions about government workplaces being laden with bureaucratic red tape are widespread, often making private-sector jobs more attractive. Recent government shutdowns have also hurt hiring; [Glassdoor reports](#) that in January 2019, the number of workers from federal agencies affected by the shutdown increased by 10% and the number of applicants to affected federal agencies dropped by a “staggering 46%, and the trend continues to worsen.”¹²

Agencies also struggle to keep the interest of job applicants. The hiring process for federal agencies averages 106 days, which is three times longer than the private sector, according to [Workforce](#).¹³ Manual workflows supporting recruiting, screening, and onboarding can also turn away younger workers, who expect to be using modern tools including social media in their job searches.

To attract talent, agencies need to revamp workplaces, policies, and processes including onboarding, so that they can create positive first impressions. Smooth, seamless onboarding processes are also important for long-term staff retention. [Research from MIT Sloan Management](#) suggests that the onboarding period can be the most crucial time in an employee’s experience at an organization because first impressions influence initial and long-term engagement, performance, and retention.¹⁴

Make Technology Work for You

Attract and retain talented workers with a work execution platform that can:

Simplify and accelerate onboarding. Automated tools can facilitate data-driven recruiting to find the best candidates, faster. In addition, with a work execution platform such as Smartsheet, you can manage information and communication related to available positions, potential candidates, and new hires in a central location. Automating HR workflows such as onboarding checklists, completing required forms, and tracking training and certifications can also save time and set new workers up to succeed.



Agencies are improving the simplicity and efficiency of their recruitment and onboarding processes so they can compete with the smooth and efficient hiring processes in the private sector. If processes take too long, top candidates go elsewhere because oftentimes, they’re pursuing multiple opportunities.

—Kristin Flandreau,
government industry expert, Smartsheet

11. Center for State & Local Government Excellence, 2017; Survey Findings June 2017 State and Local Government Workforce: 2017 Trends

12. Glassdoor, 2019; Government Shutdown Driving Both Current and Aspiring Federal Workers Away

13. Workforce, 2019; Talent Crisis Sends Feds to School to Attract Younger Workers

14. MIT Sloan Management Review Magazine, 2013; Reinventing Employee Onboarding

Reduce repetitive tasks. No one likes having to spend their days managing tedious processes such as manually entering information from a written job application into a database, or continually checking for job applications and then manually responding to each one. Free up time and reduce employee frustration by using a work execution platform to track and manage processes such as recruiting pipelines, benefits, and onboarding tracking. Streamline process and paperwork, maintain an auditable database without added effort, and grow a workforce of better informed, more productive employees.

Simplify data access. People should be able to quickly access the information they need to work, whether they are in HR or in any other department. Work execution platforms can simplify data access and sharing, while still ensuring that data-protection requirements are being met. This includes giving specific HR employees and hiring managers quick access to the most current materials—including job applications, resumes, and cover letters—by attaching them directly into a shared sheet or dashboard. In addition, agencies can save time for staff by providing quick, anytime access to documents such as contracts, benefits packages, and shared calendars that show important events such as training schedules and meetings. Agencies can get a birds-eye view of how they're tracking against hiring or onboarding goals by rolling up sheets into a centralized dashboard or a report.

Before You Buy

Give your HR and hiring staff the digital tools they need to improve recruiting, onboarding, and retention by looking for a solution that:

Simplifies lifecycle management. HR staff need instant insight into real-time data about potential hires as well as existing staff. For example, it's helpful to know how many people have applied for a specific position and the status of applicants. It's also important to quickly see how many people work in a specific department, along with insights such as the ratio of full-time, part-time, and temporary workers. With Smartsheet, agencies can use real-time dashboards to gain these and other insights at a glance, including data about performance reviews. Forms, automation, and portal capabilities can also streamline tasks required to manage benefits programs, vacation schedules, and employee development and training, so agencies can better meet their goals and those of individual employees.

Supports central portals. To expedite onboarding, many agencies use portals as an easy way to share, view, and complete important paperwork for workers who can be onsite or offsite. In addition to helping teams stay connected with each other by providing a single source of truth for important shared documents, portals can also provide team members with a consistent view of agency messaging and branding to help build employee morale and loyalty. To get the most from your IT investments including work execution platforms, look for solutions that support dynamic content, customizations such as user welcome screens, the scalability to support any number and size of documents, and shared access by team members.



Building Trust Through Transformation

Reducing red tape, boosting efficiency and transparency, and supporting the creation of citizen-focused services are all possible if agencies drive digital transformation using a secure work execution platform. The right solution will give staff the tools they need to collaborate more effectively across departments and agencies, automate key workflows, and gain the real-time status updates and data insight needed to improve and accelerate decision making. And as a result, agencies will be able to accomplish more with shrinking budgets and maintain a talented workforce. Perhaps even more importantly, however, the gains in efficiency, savings, and transparency will enable local, state, and federal governments to spend more time focusing on what matters most: delivering on their missions in more efficient and citizen-centric ways.

Smartsheet is the work execution platform that governments around the world rely on to increase productivity and performance, enable cross-agency and department collaboration, and track every step of every project. Smartsheet Gov is a version of the secure and reliable Smartsheet platform that is purpose-built for the US Federal Government to help agencies bring innovation, collaboration, and transparency to government initiatives. With Smartsheet and Smartsheet Gov, agencies can operate with an increased sense of agility, manage work in real time, and make better decisions with timely and accurate information. For additional information, visit www.smartsheet.com/government

