

LEVERAGING IDENTITY AND ACCESS MANAGEMENT HELPS STATE OF UTAH STREAMLINE SERVICES

How a state's move to consolidate access management improves online services to the public, reduces IT costs and sets the foundation for more ambitious projects.

By StateScoop Staff



As the public grows more accustomed to using online services and applications for everything from banking or shopping, they expect the same from their interactions with government agencies. State government officials recognize that need, but they're also grappling with a host of technology challenges.

Among those challenges are the cost, complexity and security demands of managing access privileges to hundreds of online services and applications, which have mushroomed in recent years with the proliferation of mobile apps and digital services.

Those and other factors have driven identity and access management (IAM) concerns into state CIOs' [Top 10 list of technology priorities](#) for the first time in 2019, according to a report from the National Association of State Chief Information Officers.

Dave Fletcher, Utah's chief technology officer, has been on the leading edge of leaders trying to address those challenges. Having worked on ways to improve the user experience for Utah's employees and citizens since the days of Y2K, he recognized early on why moving to a modern, scalable and centrally managed IAM platform was essential if the state was to deliver IT services more seamlessly and securely.

That led the Utah Department of Technology Services to embark two years ago on a sweeping deployment of a centralized access management platform, developed by ForgeRock, that Fletcher estimates has helped save the state up to \$15 million.

Those savings came in part from reduced support costs associated with updating applications and [managing user access credentials](#) across multiple applications. No less important, however, are the increased productivity and ease of use that employees and citizens experience by accessing interconnected online services.

"When you look at the state [IT] enterprise as a whole, we have over 1,400 online services and applications," Fletcher said. Compounding matters was the legacy of independently developed systems and applications. "Before

we consolidated IT in the state, agencies were doing a lot [of IT development] on their own."

Since initiating the conversion process, "we've tied over 900 services and applications to the ForgeRock identity platform," Fletcher said. "And that's going to grow pretty significantly over the next months and years."

CHANGE WAS IMPERATIVE

When Fletcher became Utah's CTO in 2006, he inherited an early effort by the state's IT department to develop its own approach to managing employees' access to multiple internal applications. Over the years, in-house developers updated and modified the system to include access by citizens to government services as well, Fletcher said.

But the more services and applications IT teams added, "the more brittle the system became," Fletcher said. "Replacing talent that was supporting those internal developments was also becoming challenging," he said.

Like cracks in a building foundation, accumulated outages and downtime continued to compromise Utah's ability to incorporate new applications and scale to the levels it needed for all the state's employees and its more than 2 million adult citizens.

When the state first considered available options, the primary concerns were cost and time management because managing multiple solutions and servicing duplicate user profiles for the same citizens were already costly and no longer made economic sense.

But Utah also needed a solution that could work on top of the state's existing infrastructure while also streamlining the ability to integrate agencies' databases to [centralize user profiles](#). And it needed to manage and scale security controls centrally while preserving flexibility to align those controls with specific business requirements, for instance, by requiring multi-factor authentication where it was needed to make the login process user-friendly but secure.



“We have a lot of federal partners...and federal data security requirements, so we needed... the ability to implement various types of authentication and authorization.”

—Utah CTO Dave Fletcher

“We have a lot of federal partners as well as federal data that has requirements that we have to ensure a certain level of security,” Fletcher said. “So, we wanted to make sure we had the ability to implement various types of authentication and authorization.”

Fletcher was also looking for a way to give state employees more consistent user data across departments, such as connecting social services data across state agencies using APIs.

And finally, with an eye toward the state’s future — Utah is currently the third-fastest-growing state by population in the nation — Fletcher wanted to ensure they would have a solution that would be adaptive to cloud environments, could scale easily, and give the system flexibility to accommodate future developments.

“For us, ensuring integrity, uptime, reliability as well as openness as we move more services to the cloud is most important. We wanted a platform that is easy to integrate with a growing variety of solutions, which is why we settled on the ForgeRock Identity Platform as a solution, and ultimately on ForgeRock as a provider and maintainer of that platform,” Fletcher said.

SINGLE CONSOLE CONTROL

“Utah's experience is a very familiar one when it comes to identity and access management,” said Jeff Brooks, regional vice president, public sector, at ForgeRock.

“Agencies spent the past 15 years cobbling together different technologies mostly to serve internal IAM needs. Then as consumer identity requirements grew, organizations had to try to extend those systems to support expanded environments or invest program by program. That greatly increased costs, cyber risk and time to value adding new applications.”

According to Brooks, ForgeRock’s [Identity Platform](#) solution offers a full suite of advanced tools [for government](#), including mobile push authentication and contextual authorization, real-time identity verification and adaptive risk assessments.

“ForgeRock’s IAM platform operates on an open architecture, gives enterprises one system to download and deploy ... rather than having to integrate or configure a grab bag of disparate products.”

— Jeff Brooks, ForgeRock

“Because ForgeRock’s IAM platform operates on an open architecture, it gives enterprises one system to download and deploy, providing comprehensive access control to virtually everything operating across the network rather than having to integrate or configure a grab bag of disparate products,” he said. “It works with people, services and things, giving IT departments greater ability to adapt to changing needs in the future.”

DELIVERING BETTER SERVICE

From Fletcher’s perspective, the process of integrating Utah’s services into a central access management platform proved remarkably simple and fast: One of the first software-as-a-service (SaaS) applications his team integrated into the platform was an online training tool. The job was complete for the entire IT department in just 15 minutes, he said.

More broadly, there has been a significant reduction in terms of user administration. Employees and external users can now create online accounts and reset passwords on their own. Internally, there is a team of two who can run the access management platform, who in turn, rely on ForgeRock as a partner in development and integration to help whenever Utah’s team runs into a more challenging integration issue.

Looking ahead, Fletcher said the state plans to expand the use of ForgeRock’s IAM solution

to support user access for larger and more sensitive state services, including Utah’s health and tax department systems.

“ForgeRock is an essential component for Utah’s ambitious plans to integrate state-provided health services into a comprehensive service portal for citizens by 2025,” Fletcher said. “It wouldn’t have previously been possible to easily connect a citizen’s birth certificate, immunization records and other health care data in a uniform way without first connecting a centralized identity system.”

In the meantime, once the state’s services are all tied into the ForgeRock Identity Platform, Fletcher expects to begin incorporating a variety of other identity and access management capabilities, such as intelligent authentication that can that can be configured to meet specific needs and track customer journeys across Utah’s networks. ●

[Find out more](#) about how modern, centrally-managed identity and access management platforms can lower your agency’s IT costs and improve user satisfaction.

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