



## The Future State CIO - How the Role will Drive Innovation

### Series 1: Creating an Innovation Culture

NASCIO and Accenture have teamed up on a research project about [the role of state CIOs in government innovation](#). As part of the research, we surveyed and conducted in-depth interviews with state CIOs. Our interviews are a treasure trove reflecting the combined experience, insights and wisdom of these state CIOs. In this NASCIO blog series, we will share some of that wisdom. In this post we'll start with a focus on *culture*.

Think of culture as an organization's "DNA." This is what people really think and feel regarding the organization, its leadership and its membership, as well as each individual's role within it. An organization can be the whole of state government or a person's immediate organization or team. Either way, culture includes attitudes, perspectives, expectations, relationships and peer groups. It shapes many dynamics including what government leadership expects and what government workers *think* or *perceive* management expects of them.

For an innovation culture to thrive in government, a key element for a team's culture is an **environment of trust**. Trust is the glue that holds a group together to maintain a positive purpose and drives effective relationship between leadership and the workforce as well with their government customers. Trust is based on an assessment of honesty, integrity, intent and credibility.

At the same time, an innovative culture must **create a positive vision of the future**. As documented by Warren G. Bennis, a trusting culture is "enabled by a shared set of goals or vision." What are our anticipated outcomes of our innovation? In the absence of a vision, teams will struggle to support each other get excited about the future.

Finally, in a innovation culture, **every member of the team is a player** in building that vision. No one member of the team has all the answers and it is critical to create a collaborative environment to get to the right answer. With the pace of disruption and fundamental shifts in citizen and employee demands, innovative organizations are "human-centered approach" to build their vision and overall implementation strategy.

In every interview, state CIOs told us that culture is foundational to innovation: it can be a barrier, or it can be an enabler. Most often, it was cited as a barrier due to underlying change resistance and risk aversion. As one state CIO told us, "*Leadership of the agencies*

*remains in place; there's no change out. So the benefit of that is there's a lot of continuity [and] stability. There's a lot of great programmatic things that are going on within the agencies. But the bad thing about it is there's less likelihood of doing change. What I've learned here [so far] is there is a culture that is somewhat resistant to change."*

To support better results, state CIOs are working to create cultures of innovation. That shift requires consistent determinants of behaviors and actions from top management to middle management to the teams that are formed and, finally, to the individuals who make up the organization.

People always look beyond "official" written rules to detect the reality of what leadership thinks and what behaviors are encouraged. Given that, leadership must understand the critical role of trust in the organization's DNA and ensure they are worthy of their people's trust.

Once trust is built, we can begin to encourage risk taking, cultivate ownership, motivate continual improvement and maintain mutual respect. These are the building blocks of innovation—the essential foundation for state organizations to move into new and amazing territory on behalf of the people they serve.

### **Points of Contact**

#### **National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO)**

Eric Sweden, Program Director, Enterprise Architecture & Governance  
859.514.9189 | [esweden@nascio.org](mailto:esweden@nascio.org)

#### **Accenture**

Rick Webb, Senior Advisor  
2020 Chair, NASCIO Corporate Leadership Council  
919.522.7747 | [rick.webb@accenture.com](mailto:rick.webb@accenture.com) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#)