Creating A Citizen-Centric Digital Experience: How Far Have We Come?

September 2023

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Representing Chief Information
Officers of the States

Dear Friends,

I hope my fellow state CIOs and other NASCIO members and partners find this report useful in advancing our digital government journeys. Reading the first report of its kind, *Creating Citizen Centric Government – A Guide for States* published by NASCIO (then NASIRE) in 2001, I'm surprised with the strategic vision outlined over 22 years ago. And while we have made significant progress in many areas of digital government, we are still on a similar path and vision towards making digital government more prominent across our states. I look forward to supporting each other in our continuing journeys, sharing our successes and lessons learned and leaning on each other when the going gets tough—for this work is not for the faint of heart!

I would like to personally thank NASCIO staff professionals Amy Glasscock and Eric Sweden for their dedication and hard work on this project. I also thank Doug Robinson for his unwavering support of this important initiative for our states.

Stephanie Dedmon

State Chief Information Officer, State of Tennessee

President, NASCIO

Focus on Citizen Experience

In 2001, NASCIO issued a report that presented calls to action for delivering a citizen-centric digital experience. Fast forward to 2023 and we wanted to determine if states have made progress toward realizing that vision. NASCIO President Stephanie Dedmon made this her presidential priority, calling for an evaluation of progress regarding the delivery of a citizen-centric digital experience across the states. This report examines progress over the last 20 years since NASCIO's initial report and video production on this topic. This report includes several recommended calls to action for state CIOs to consider.

NASCIO's 2001 report presented insightful calls to action focused on examining state government from the citizen's view. Recommendations called for citizen centricity; citizen trust in online services; efficiency and accountability; and innovative and continual investment. The question we're seeking to answer is, have states made substantial progress in improving the citizen experience of digital government?

Our Approach

We conducted a number of interviews with state chief information officers (CIOs) and their leadership teams. We reviewed state information technology (IT) strategic plans, the NASCIO Technology Awards Library, past state CIO surveys and State CIO Top Ten Priority lists. All of these sources provided corroborating evidence that digital government and providing a positive citizen experience is top of mind for state CIOs.

The Importance of Digital Government

Today, citizens are interacting with state government through digital services which are available at any time and from any device. "Digital government / digital services" has been in *NASCIO's Top Ten Priority Strategies, Management Processes and Solutions* every year since 2018 and has been holding the second highest priority every year since 2020. Second only to cybersecurity, this priority reflects state CIOs' persistent objective of delivering digital services and improving the citizen experience.
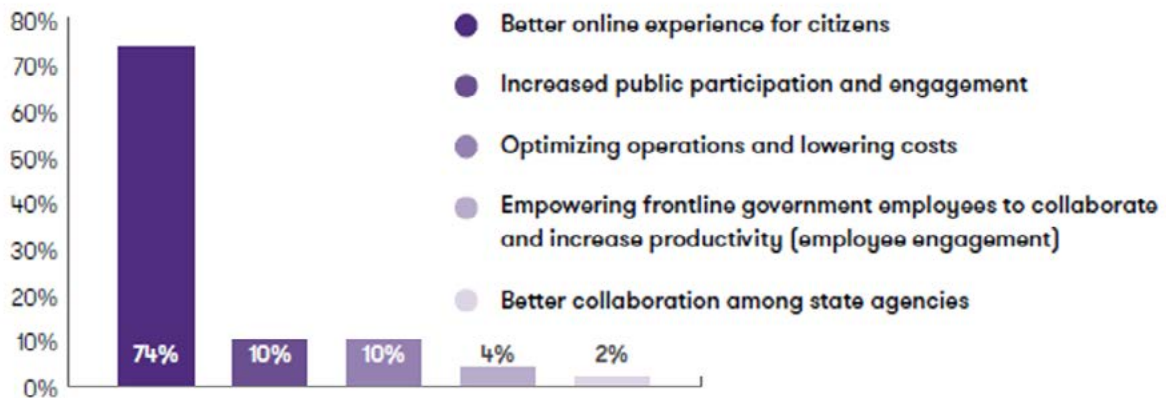
The annual state CIO surveys over the past few years have presented various considerations regarding digital services including the motivations and the challenges. The *2021 State CIO Survey* presented the motivations state CIOs consider a priority for pursuing digital government services and at the top of the list is providing a positive and effective citizen experience.

STATE CIO TOP 10 PRIORITIES
Priority Strategies, Management Processes and Solutions for 2023

Cybersecurity and Risk Management:
resource requirements; security frameworks; data protection;

02 **Digital Government / Digital Services:**
framework for digital services; state portals; improving and digitizing citizen experience; accessibility; identity management; digital assistants; privacy

03 **Workforce:**
preparing for the future workforce and reimagining the government workforce; transformation of knowledge, skills and experience; more defined roles for IT asset management, business relationship management, and service integration

04 **Legacy Modernization:**
enhancing, renovating, replacing, legacy platforms and applications; business process improvement

05 **Identity and Access Management:**
supporting citizen digital services; workforce access; access control; authentication; credentialing; digital standards

06 **Cloud Services:**
cloud strategy; selection of service and deployment models; scalable and elastic services; governance; service management; security; privacy; procurement

07 **Consolidation/Optimization:**
centralizing; consolidating services; operations; resources; infrastructure; data centers; communications and marketing "enterprise" thinking

08 **Data and Information Management:**
data governance; data architecture; master data management; open data; sustained access to government data; data portals; enhancing the role of data; information and intelligence, knowledge management; data integration; data management strategy; roles and responsibilities; DataOps

09 **Broadband / Wireless Connectivity:**
strengthening statewide connectivity; implementing rural broadband expansion; 5G deployment

10 **Customer Relationship Management:**
internal customer service strategies; building customer agency confidence and trust; collaboration; service level agreements (demand planning)

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The Challenges of Advancing Digital Government Services

What is the biggest driver to expanding digital services?

- ● Better online experience for citizens
- ● Increased public participation and engagement
- ● Optimizing operations and lowering costs
- ● Empowering frontline government employees to collaborate and increase productivity (employee engagement)
- ● Better collaboration among state agencies

Bar values: 74%, 10%, 10%, 4%, 2%

The _2022 Annual State CIO Survey_ presents the importance of relationships in its title, "The People Imperative," emphasizing the notion of a relationship management ecosystem. This was also the core message of NASCIO's publications on customer relationship management and business relationship management. The graph shown here from the 2022 State CIO Survey presents the challenges state CIOs identify as most formidable and which must be addressed when developing and executing digital government strategy.

The challenges identified here are in line with the considerations presented in the NASCIO initial report on digital government published in 2001. Additional challenges surfaced in our recent interviews with state CIOs:

- Many states have hundreds of websites all with a different look and feel.
- Agency platforms do not integrate and don't share data on any particular citizen.
- It can be a challenge convincing an agency that they are all part of the same state government.
- Technical debt and workforce capability debt is a barrier to moving forward with an enterprise-wide citizen experience strategy.
- Some project teams do not want to slow down their project to take the time to consider citizen engagement activities as part of the project delivery.
- Some states don't have expertise in user experience and human-centered design in-house.
- As states make things more convenient, they are exposed to more risk of opening the door to bad actors.

What major challenges do you face in meeting demand for digital services?
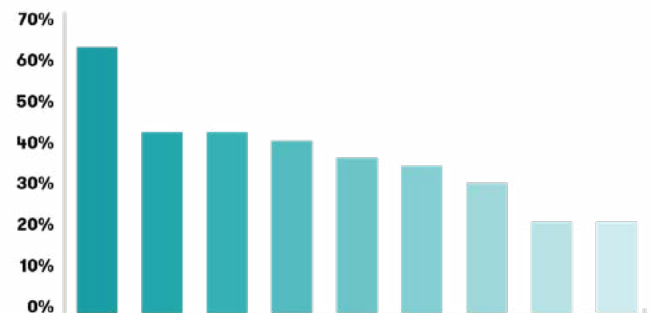
Challenge	%
Workforce skills and capability constraints to deliver / implement digital services	63%
Lack of organizational agility / flexibility	43%
Lack of adequate funding and budget to balance immediate public needs with future critical investment	43%
Data and information quality requirements and digitization complexity constraints	41%
Lack of internal willingness to take risks or embrace innovation	37%
Inability to envision and operationalize new ways of providing government services	35%
Lack of trust in shared digital solution provisioning, coordination and effective support for digital solution offerings	31%
Citizen expectations exceed organizational capabilities	22%
Lack of strategy and vision to implement	22%

The Current State of Citizen Digital Experiences

The NASCIO State IT Recognition Awards program includes the category of "Digital Services: Government to Citizen," and all submissions can be accessed via the NASCIO Awards Library. A quick search on the aforementioned category presents an extenisve list of projects that address everything from taxes to online permitting and licensing, to vital records, to employment which highlights not only the volume of state projects, but also how long states have been framing projects to address the priority of the citizen experience and digital government services.

State IT strategic plans have also echoed the importance of digital services and ensuring a positive citizen experience in their interaction with state government. These are themes we found in state strategic plans and heard in our interviews with state CIOs and their leadership teams.

Here are a few examples from state strategic plans that demonstrate the commitment to delivering a citizen experience digitally and the use of the necessary methods and practices for effectively understanding and delivering what citizens require:

"Build closer relationships with the people we serve by instilling adoption of human-centered design principles and practices within our organization and across the executive branch."

"Our state will be a leader in the delivery of secure, digital government through well-designed and innovative technology solutions."

"The State Strategic Plan aims to aid agencies as they evolve to meet [citizens'] expectation that government provide a high level of secure, convenient, and reliable digital service. Each agency can use the strategic goals outlined in this plan to identify actionable objectives."

"Advance the state's ability to analyze and create value from online digital services data to measure and improve the citizen experience."

"[Providing a] seamless user experience across state channels, portals and intranets allows agencies to focus resources on what matters most to the people they serve, making it easier for [citizens] to access the state services they need."

We heard similar sentiments in our interviews with state CIOs and their leadership teams:

"We do provide a lot of services via mobile or through other online services. I think over the years we've improved our online presence."

"Last year as a state we did 69 million transactions through our digital spaces. There's already a significant scale of digital services happening. We save a lot of money that way. We saved somewhere between $12-13 per transaction."

"The [digital] platform itself works and people are able to engage with [our digital services team]. We add as much automation and self-service as we can. We've got some pre-qualified contracts around external facing websites to ensure a consistent [citizen] experience."

"[Our vision is to deliver] seamless and easy access, at constituents' fingertips, to the full array of governmental services that enhance their living, learning, working, and recreation."

"We've been able to streamline the process for services such as driver's license renewals and vehicle registration renewals. I think we've been able to ensure that the experience is efficient for the end user and everything they do is for a purpose. No extra steps."

Assessment of the Current State of Digital Citizen Experience

We asked state CIOs a series of questions regarding authority and responsibility, funding, marketing and communication, what is currently working and what could be improved. We learned that responsibility and authority for digital services is sometimes explicitly stated in legislation or executive order. The consensus is that the role of the state CIO should include responsibility and authority for leading and guiding the development of strategy and operations for digital delivery of state government services. Some state CIOs that don't have this explicitly established stated that it is implied by the fact that the role of the state CIO exists.

From our interviews and research, we found that the current state of digital citizen experience in states includes the following concepts:

1. The citizen experience should no longer be about individual department services. There are strong collaborative relationships that are necessary and present to support these departments. These include business relationship management, enterprise architecture, enterprise portfolio management, human resources, training and professional development, marketing and communications.

2. States have made delivering a positive citizen experience through digital services a high priority as demonstrated by investments, workforce roles, strategic plans and projects. See Appendix One for examples.

3. Governors and legislators are supporting strategies and operations aimed at delivering on an imperative for enhancing the citizen experience through digital government services. This is evidenced by state of the state addresses, legislation, executive orders and organizational change. See Appendix One for examples.

4. New disciplines have arrived with new roles and job titles such as "director of customer experience"; "director of digital services"; "chief of service experience"; "chief experience officer"; "chief engagement officer."

5. These well-outlined initiatives are part of an ongoing journey. States continue to innovate, explore and gain insights through various techniques, tools and disciplines such as human-centered design.

6. Dedicated funding remains a challenge. Previous annual state CIO surveys have also identified funding as a persistent challenge.

Calls to Action

Given what we learned from these various resources it was obvious that states are pursuing this vision to deliver an effective digital citizen experience. We wanted to hear directly from state CIOs about what they believe are two or three priority actions state CIOs across the country should be doing.

Create an Enterprise Vision and Strategic Roadmap

Engage Stakeholders

Prioritize Cybersecurity, Privacy and Identity Management

Embrace No Wrong Door

Create a Promotional Agenda

Look Toward the Future

Create an Enterprise Vision and Strategic Roadmap

Focus on governance and project oversight. Create an enterprise vision. Establish appropriate governance and project oversight. Guide the journey with a well-constructed roadmap. That roadmap needs to be continually evaluated and updated as necessary.

Engage Stakeholders

Engage stakeholders including the citizens, employees, policymakers and legislators to learn what's working and what isn't. Integrate human-centered design and gain insights and recommendations from citizens to continually improve and innovate.

Prioritize Cybersecurity, Privacy and Identity Management

Prioritize cybersecurity and privacy of citizen data and identities. Invest in cybersecurity and provide security and privacy training for employees. From the *2022 Deloitte-NASCIO Cybersecurity Study* we learned that although almost all states provide cybersecurity training to employees, only about half of responding states actually require cybersecurity training every 12 months.

Embrace No Wrong Door

Adopt a "no wrong door" approach. Citizens should be able to come to any state government door (in line or online) and be recognized, and each agency should have the same look and feel. States should anticipate and offer other services the citizen may be eligible for. States should create and manage a single secure and recognizable citizen profile the citizen can use to access all government services independent of what agency delivers that service.

"No wrong door" should work for all citizens. States must work toward making digital services accessible to all and employ best practices for accessibility. See NASCIO's 2021 Q&A publication on IT accessibility.

Create a Promotional Agenda

Create a promotional agenda to highlight the value of digital services. Messaging should be specific and directed for various audiences such as employees and citizens.

Look Toward the Future

Establish sustainable funding for the initiative. Establish metrics to track progress and improvement over time. Ensure the metrics used are the right ones. We expect the goal of improving the citizen experience to grow and mature over time and remain an ongoing high priority.
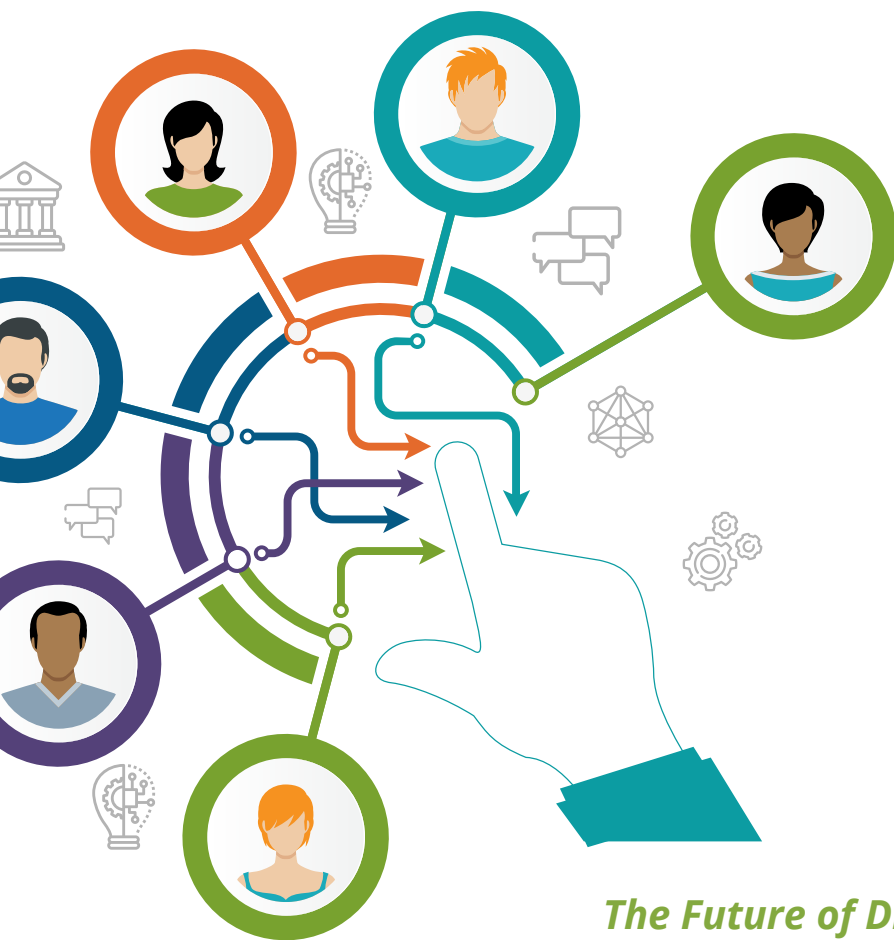
The Future of Digital Government

When we asked state CIOs what the citizen experience will look like in the next ten years, we received a host of visions for the future. The idea of the "no wrong door" approach was reiterated not only when it comes to digital interactions, but also in-person with fewer physical buildings. One idea was that citizens could get any state service completed in any state building.

That said, digital will still be the preferred option and digital divides will be bridged with broadband internet available everywhere. Digital duplicates of identity such as driver's license or fishing license will be the norm. At some point, everything may be digital.

When a citizen comes into state government, they will not only be guided toward any relevant assistance from the state (with a common look and feel across agencies), but also from the federal or local government--a whole-of-government vision. State government will make that connection for them, and there will be a blurring for citizens regarding who is providing the digital government services – city, county, state. They won't necessarily need to know who is delivering a particular service.

With the increased use of artificial intelligence and generative artificial intelligence, employees will be freed up from routine and often mundane tasks to higher level activities. Employees will be able to be more productive, helping to alleviate workforce constraints.

Conclusion

Our recommendations compare well with the "calls to action" presented in the 2001 report on digital government.

2001	2023
A Citizen-Centric Digital Government	Create an Enterprise Vision and Strategic Roadmap Engage Stakeholders Create a Promotional Agenda
Trust in Online Services	Prioritize Cybersecurity, Privacy and Identity Management
Efficiency and Accountability	Embrace No Wrong Door
Innovative Investment	Think Toward the Future

This report evaluated the recommendations from the 2001 report and sought input from the current state CIO community regarding our progress. We included challenges, the current state of digital services and what is working and outlined several calls to action for states to consider. We look forward to continuing to see our collective progress and the promise of digital government from the citizen's perspective going forward. We appreciate the participation and input from many within our NASCIO community.

Despite the progress we've made in 22 years, there is still more work to be done to realize the vision that so many state CIOs hold for the future of the digital citizen experience.

Appendix One

NASCIO State Recognition Awards –
Digital Services: Government to Citizen

See award nominations dating back to 2015 for ideas and contacts. The year 2023 presents solutions from Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Florida, Michigan, North Dakota, Ohio, Tennessee and Utah. There are other nominations in other categories that also address government to citizen digital services. Use the search tool to find specific services.

Recipients for 2023 were Minnesota, Ohio and Tennessee.

Ohio - Streamlining Access to Child Care Benefits in Ohio

Tennessee - MyTN: Placing Government in the Palms of Citizen Hands

Minnesota - Delivering Swift Relief to Minnesota's COVID-19 Frontline Workers: Creating Value Through Digital Transformation

The recipient for 2022 was Texas.

The recipient for 2021 was Louisiana.

Examples of Strategic Plans

State of Georgia

Georgia's 2025 IT Vision

View citizens as digital services customers; create agency content strategy awareness.

Establish a framework for digital services for citizens.

State of Montana IT Strategic Plan

Citizen one-stop shop anywhere, anytime, any device.

The state will provide a secure digital access option for all citizen services offered by the state. This requires a digital redesign of our website to be more citizen centered.

State of North Carolina

Enable trusted business-driven solutions that meet the needs of North Carolinians.

State of Washington

Enterprise IT Strategic Plan | Washington Technology Solutions

The new Enterprise IT Strategic Plan for 2023-2025 will guide our journey towards an exciting and transformative future for a 'Connected Government, Strong Communities, Better Washington.'

Examples of State of the State Addresses

State of Louisiana

We committed to close the digital divide by 2029, and we are well on our way to accomplishing that goal.

State of New Jersey

[P]rojects that will improve the customer experience, improve reliability, and improve on-time performance.

State of North Carolina

We're going to ensure that every home in North Carolina has access to high-speed internet.

And our Office of Digital Equity and Literacy — the first in the nation — is working to ensure that everyone can get online with affordable devices and good training.

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Created the Office of Transformation and Opportunity

Streamlining government processes

Targeted licensure, certification and permitting

State of Montana

Emphasize providing exceptional customer experiences to all Montanans.

Not just dollars and cents. It's about service. What kind of customer experience is state government providing to Montanans?

Examples of Governor's Orders on Digital Services

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

There should be no wrong door through which a Pennsylvanian can access or communicate with their government and get answers.

Pennsylvanians are increasingly accessing government services predominately or entirely online.

State of Montana

As part of Gov. Gianforte's commitment to improve customer service and modernize technology in state government, he charged the Department of Administration with leading an enterprise-wide digital redesign and digitization effort to cut waste, eliminate inefficiencies, and streamline operations.

Governor Gianforte issued the challenge to all state agencies to be 'digital first' by the end of this fiscal year.

Examples of Multi-lingual State Websites

State of California accessible via over 130 languages that present in a drop-down menu.

State of New York accessible via 13 languages listed at bottom of webpage.

APPENDIX TWO – Additional Resources

State of Georgia – Digital Roadmap

State of Maryland - "Ask Agent Mary" Chatbot / myMDTHINK Portal / Maryland OneStop

State of Minnesota Modernization Playbook

State of Ohio Innovate Ohio Platform – Citizen Experience

State of Texas – A Guide for Digital Transformation

"Creating Citizen-Centric Digital Government: A Guide for the States" - 2001 Report and Video

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Founded in 1969, the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) represents state chief information officers (CIOs) and information technology (IT) executives and managers from the states, territories and District of Columbia. NASCIO's mission is to foster government excellence through quality business practices, information management and technology policy. NASCIO provides state CIOs and state members with products and services designed to support the challenging role of the state CIO, stimulate the exchange of information and promote the adoption of IT best practices and innovations. From national conferences to peer networking, research and publications, briefings and government affairs, NASCIO is the premier network and resource for state CIOs.