NASCIO
Representing Chief Information Officers of the States

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Harnessing GenAI

to Elevate the Citizen Experience

A joint report by NASCIO and Accenture

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Executive summary

State chief information officers (CIOs) recognize the transformative potential of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) to reduce administrative burden, improve citizen access and empower frontline workers, yet adoption remains cautious and uneven. Most efforts are still in the early stages, often limited to internal use cases or isolated pilots. While the vision for GenAI in government is bold, leaders must navigate a landscape of limited budgets, complex stakeholder needs and widespread public skepticism.

Against this backdrop, public sector leaders today face a conundrum: The promise of GenAI to revolutionize service delivery stands in stark contrast with low public trust in automated systems. Citizens are wary of AI, especially in critical government interactions—yet the expectation for seamless, responsive services has never been higher. With private sector adoption of GenAI accelerating, a clear dichotomy is emerging between what consumers expect and what government can currently deliver.

State CIOs are caught between these rising expectations and their responsibility to uphold trust, equity and security. This report, grounded in insights from 48 state CIOs, 300 US government workers and 1,000 US citizens, provides six imperatives for responsibly scaling GenAI for state governments. Together, these imperatives offer a strategic framework to move from experimentation to enterprise transformation—where GenAI not only enhances public service but earns and sustains the trust of the people governments serve.

In brief, the six imperatives outlined in this report are:

- Start with strategy and sponsorship
- Strengthen governance and funding foundations
- Place the worker in the center
- Enable the right technology and data
- Scale at the speed of trust
- Design GenAI services for diverse consumer segments

These imperatives are explored in detail in the following sections, providing state CIOs with practical guidance for responsibly scaling GenAI in government.

The AI moment in government

Demand for digital government services is rising sharply. Roughly 75% of US government workers have observed increasing expectations from the public for higher quality digital experiences. This surge is occurring amid tightening budgets, an aging workforce and workforce reductions at the federal level that are likely to impact decisions at the state level.

It also comes at a time when GenAI is rapidly advancing across other industries, offering the promise of delivering more responsive, personalized and efficient services. Accordingly, state CIOs are asking how they should harness and scale GenAI to gain value and improve service delivery.

It has been a difficult question to answer—strict privacy regulations, budget constraints and skepticism among both workers and citizens have made it hard to know how hard to push and how fast to scale.

This report seeks to offer some clarity. Based on a survey of 48 state CIOs in addition to insights from a parallel public service experience survey of 300 US government workers and 1,000 US citizens, we explore the current state of GenAI adoption today for state government services.

Additionally, we examine the challenges state CIOs face in scaling GenAI and how their views align and where they diverge with those held by government workers and consumers.

Finally, through our own experience and interviews with 15 state CIOs, we provide lessons learned and actionable advice for a path forward.

Our findings show the following:

Consumers want simple, human-centric and secure services.

Most consumers don't trust AI when it comes to government services—many are even willing to give up convenience over using AI in their dealings with government.

State CIOs are broadly in sync with consumer sentiments and their decisions to scale slowly to date are in step with worker and consumer concerns about AI.

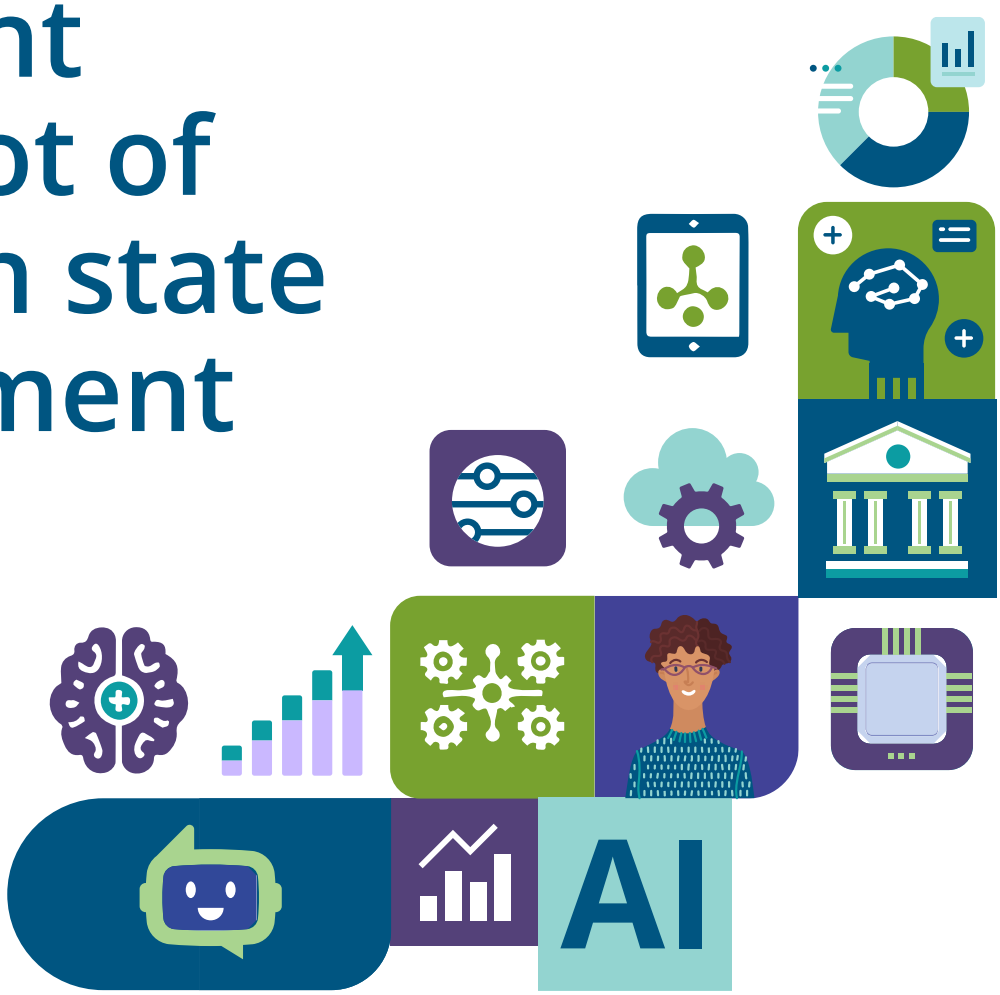
State government CIOs must redesign and reinvigorate efforts to build trust with workers, with the goal of cascading that trust downstream to the end consumer.

Consumers engage with AI in government services in distinct ways, so agencies must move beyond one-size-fits-all solutions even as GenAI advances.

As GenAI accelerates across the private sector and gains traction in pockets of the public sector, the case for caution in state government will become harder to justify. Encouragingly, state CIOs recognize this, with many planning to expand GenAI use cases over the next 12 months. Balancing scale with trust in these efforts presents complexities. We found state CIOs can take the following actions to overcome challenges and enhance service delivery:

1. Start with strategy and sponsorship.
2. Strengthen governance and funding foundations.
3. Place the state worker in the center.
4. Enable the right technology and data.
5. Scale at the speed of trust.
6. Design GenAI services for distinct consumer segments—one size does not fit all.

A current snapshot of GenAI in state government



The will to pursue

CIO optimism is high: Over 90% of state CIOs believe GenAI can enhance citizen experience. Their hopefulness is grounded in the belief that GenAI can help reduce administrative backlogs, free up human workers for more value-added services and create more efficiency on the front end to resolve consumer issues faster and more seamlessly than ever before.

State CIOs' top goals for GenAI include improving service accessibility and automating repetitive tasks—priorities that directly align with citizen and worker needs. In fact, faster access to services is the number one issue identified by citizens seeking government support.

> Accenture's global public service experience survey recently found that employees who spend only 0–10% of their time on repetitive tasks are 3x more satisfied with their roles than those spending over 75% on such tasks.

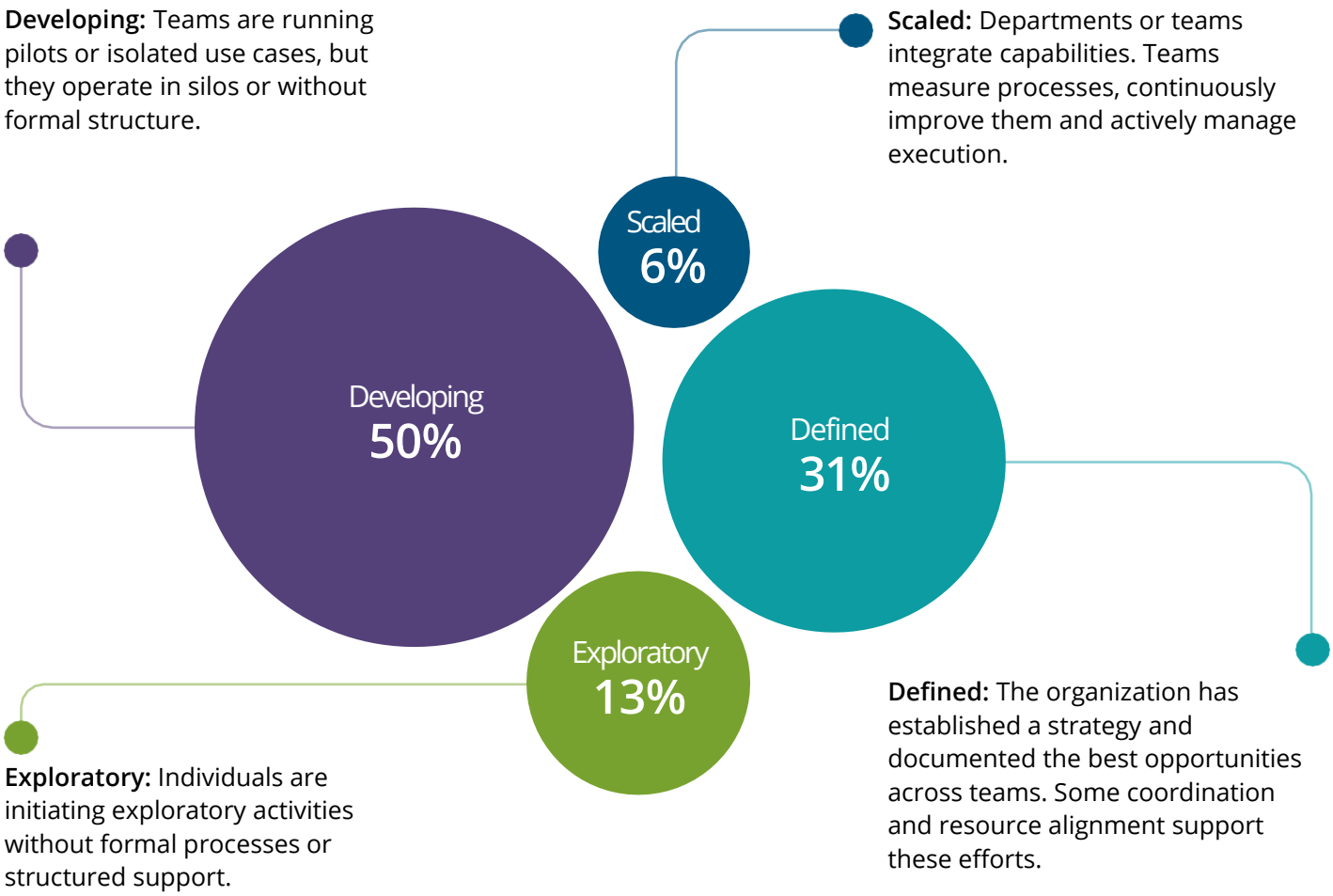
GenAI is thus seen as a force multiplier—capable of reducing administrative backlogs and allowing human workers to focus on more value-added tasks. However, despite the enthusiasm from leaders, scaling remains limited.

Limited scaling, growing interest

Our survey and interviews with state CIOs revealed that most state government GenAI efforts to date have focused inward on employee-facing applications rather than citizen-facing solutions. Furthermore, scaled implementation of such internal solutions remains rare: Only six percent of state CIOs report mature, scaled GenAI capabilities today. Most deployments remain in pilot phases within controlled environments and are often confined to specific departments (Figure 1).

> We are looking at agentic AI. It seems to be faster to market and people are willing to adopt it faster. It's not replacing you; it's just making you 10 times more productive.
>
> – State CIO

Figure 1: Reported level of GenAI maturity across state CIO organizations related to citizen services

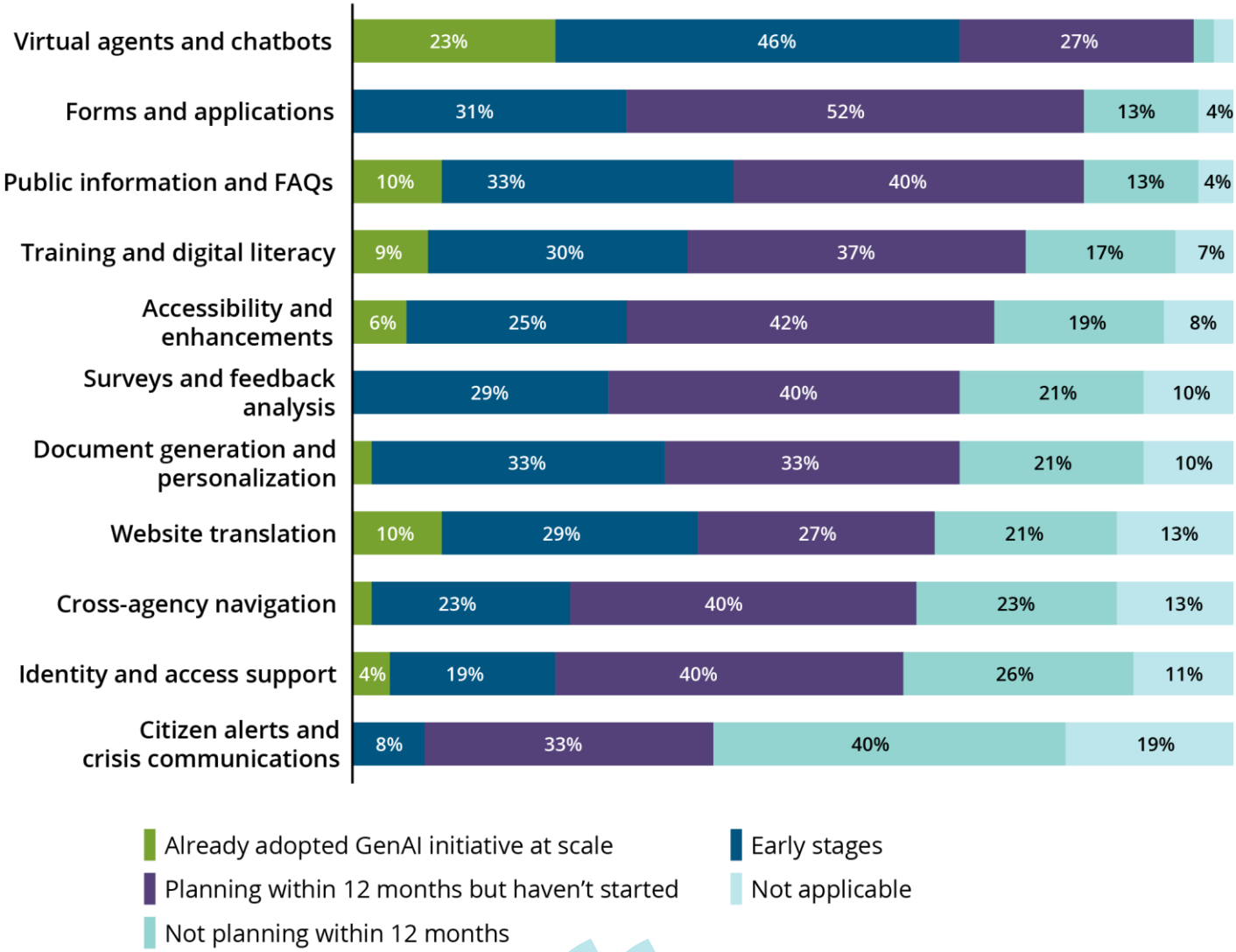


Additionally, State CIOs reported that pilots often focus on low-risk applications to build internal confidence and allow for failure. A phased approach—one that gradually expands the scope of GenAI use—is emerging as the dominant strategy for balancing innovation with accountability.

Despite such incremental exploration, momentum is growing. Nearly all state CIOs anticipate significantly increased GenAI investments and deployments within the next 12 months relating to citizen service capabilities (Figure 2). Importantly, the focus is also shifting from internal use to citizen-facing solutions.

To succeed, however, states will need to design service programs strategically to address the myriad concerns of all stakeholders.

Figure 2: The citizen service capabilities that states agencies have deployed / are deploying with support of GenAI



> We have a lab to help people get started. We've encouraged people think about this as 'cook it low and slow.' Low risk, roll it out slow.
>
> – State CIO

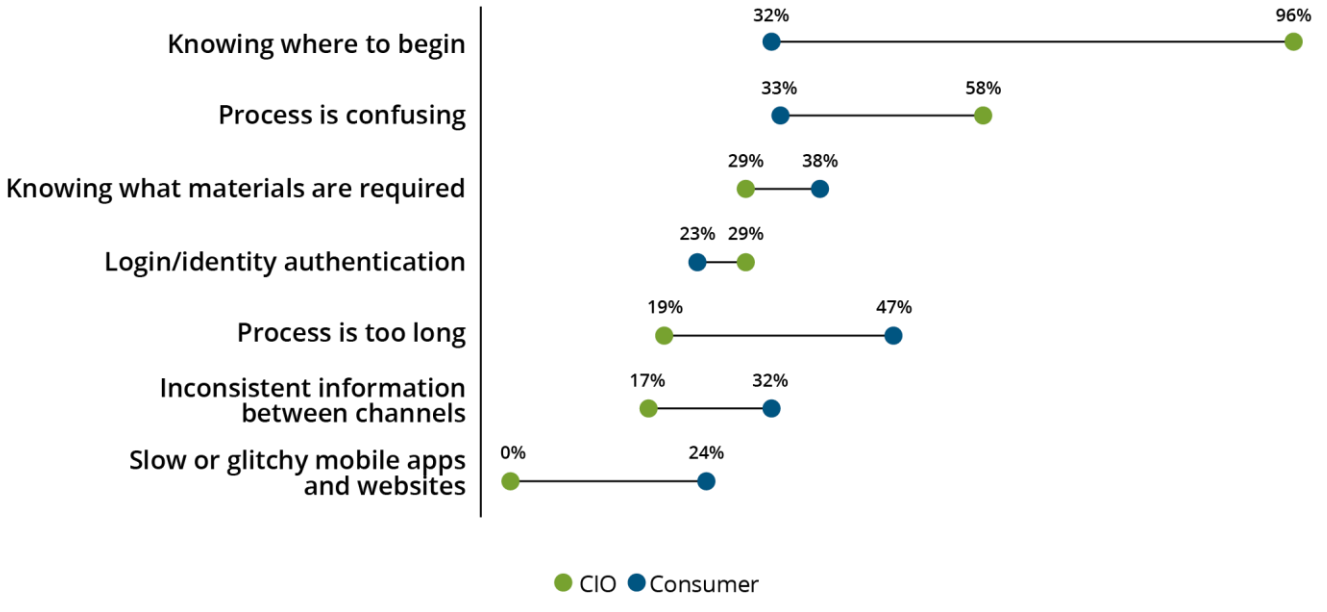
Knowing where to start: Concerns, challenges and misalignments

Improving public digital services, like in any sector, demands a clear understanding of the customer, frontline employees and the headwinds at play. State CIOs have a strong awareness of all these fronts, yet our findings uncovered some areas for growth.

Alignments and disconnects

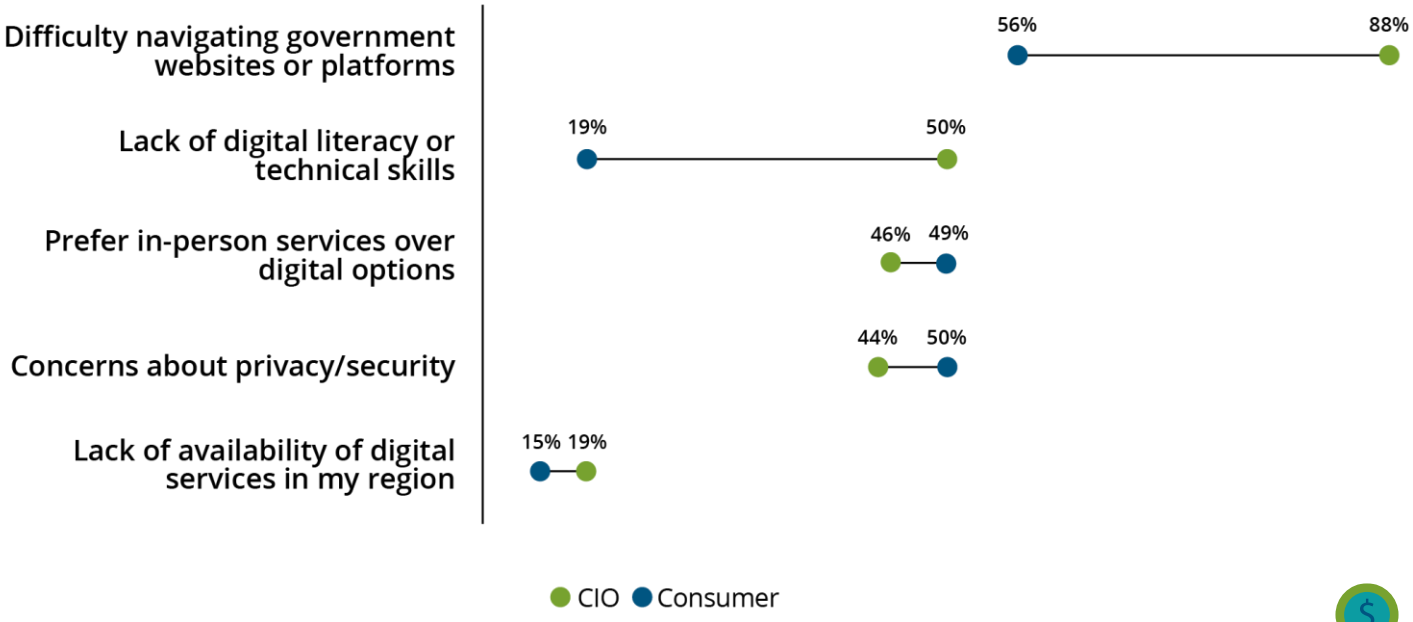
State CIOs generally understand consumer pain points, but key gaps remain. Most believe the biggest barrier to service access is a lack of clarity on how and where to begin. In contrast, nearly half (47%) of citizens say the process simply takes too long—an issue only 19% of state CIOs identify as a top concern. In short, state CIOs see confusion as the main obstacle, while consumers point to speed (Figure 3).

Figure 3: What are the top issues consumers face when accessing government services?



Similarly, 50% of state CIOs cite low digital literacy as a top barrier to accessing digital government services—an assessment not shared by most consumers. Still, both groups show strong alignment on other challenges, including concerns about privacy and security, a preference for in-person services and limited digital access in certain regions (Figure 4).

Figure 4: What are the top issues consumers face when accessing government digital services?



While state CIOs show strong awareness of service challenges, there's still room to deepen their understanding of consumer needs. Doing so will help to ensure that government efforts target the most pressing barriers in the service experience and that pilot programs and scaled solutions align directly with a consumer strategy focused on the highest-impact pain points.

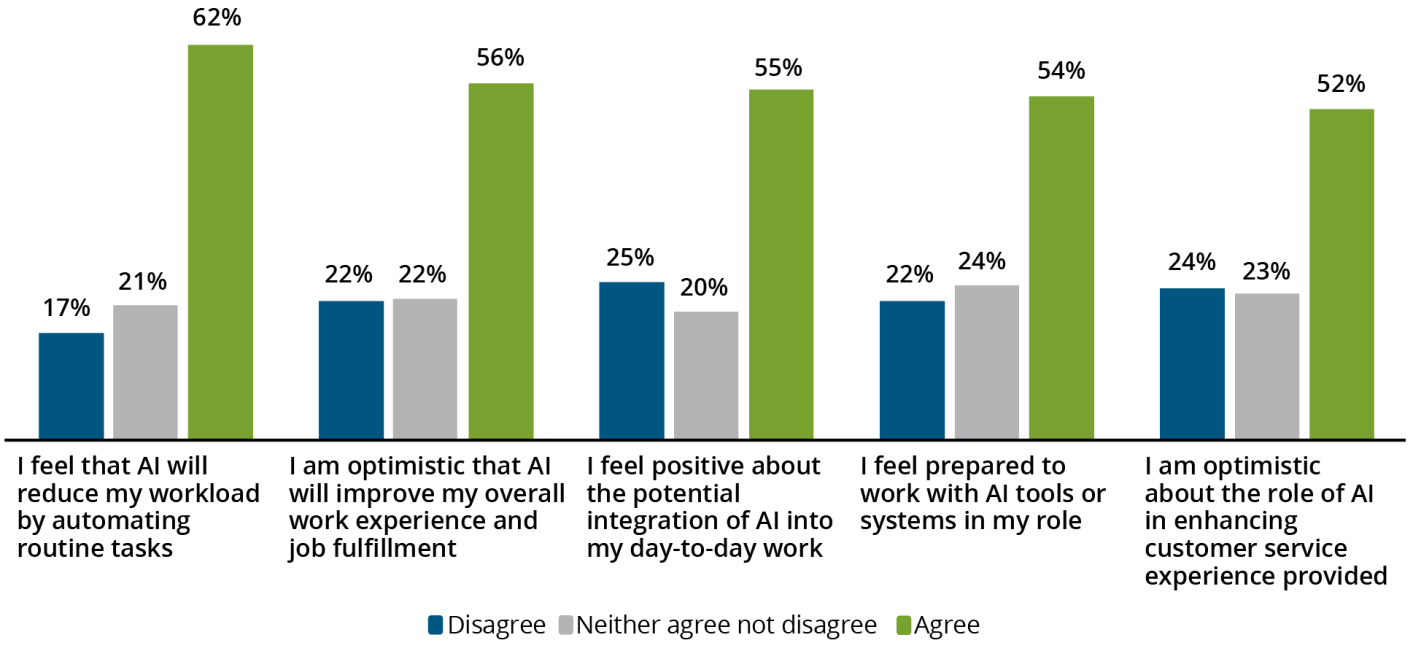
Government workers: Cautious optimism

Understanding employee sentiment is just as important as knowing how citizens feel, especially when it comes to service delivery. While GenAI remains a major investment area, Accenture's survey found that only slightly more than half of frontline government employees have a positive view of AI's impact on their roles (Figure 5). Just 32% feel encouraged to use AI and only 28% report using AI tools at least several times a week.

The findings point to a clear need for greater investment in educating, upskilling and encouraging government employees to use AI tools in alignment with state policy.

Without this focus, efforts to scale will falter due to limited capability and willingness to fully leverage new solutions.

Figure 5: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about AI and its potential role in your work?



Pressure from external AI agents

The rapid emergence of autonomous agents—AI systems acting on behalf of users or other systems independently—poses a new challenge. Bots capable of interacting with public portals could soon overwhelm systems or exploit weak processes.

As state CIOs work to address citizen and employee pain points, they must also develop an AI strategy for managing external AI agents—both identifying them and controlling their access to public systems. That strategy should also define how states will deploy their own agents to interact with external ones and deliver services more efficiently.

The trust and consumer confidence gaps

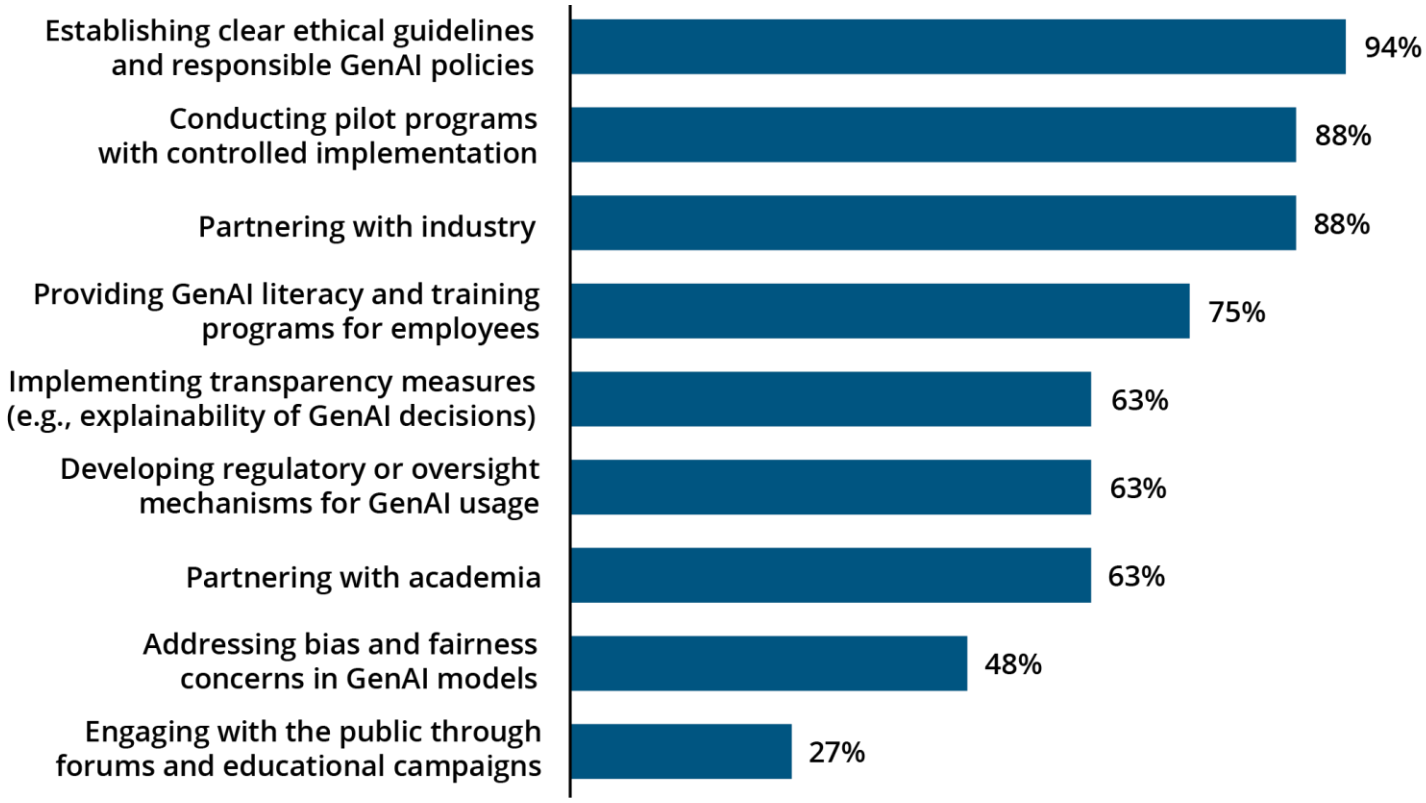
A deep trust deficit: According to Accenture's 2025 Technology Vision, 73% of public sector executives believe AI's benefits hinge on trust and 76% say their organizations will need to prioritize trust strategies that evolve alongside technology strategies. These views closely match those of state CIOs.

The unspoken hesitation

Our survey found that nearly 75% of state CIOs have serious concerns about using GenAI in direct citizen services. Their top worries include AI accuracy, data security and privacy and availability of adequate training and support. Citizens share these concerns. Nearly half feel uncomfortable with AI-generated decisions. Digging deeper, 63% cited fears of data misuse or compromised personal information, while around 50% pointed to a lack of transparency, potential for bias and limited options for recourse.

Interestingly, this lack of citizen trust persists even as state CIOs have made strong efforts to build trust, confidence and transparency with their workers in using AI for service delivery (Figure 6). This gap suggests that state CIOs must extend these trust-building efforts downstream—from the workforce to the end user.

Figure 6 : Strategies state CIOs are implementing to build trust and confidence in the use of GenAI among government workers in serving the public



Human touch still matters

Trust concerns shape preferences. Nearly half of citizens (49%) prefer human interactions over digital options. An even greater number (63%) prefer in-person services over AI—even if it means longer wait times. Surprisingly, only 25% prefer faster, AI-driven interactions.

These findings suggest that consumers want AI to augment—not replace—human service channels, especially for complex or sensitive needs. They also point to a broad spectrum of comfort levels and expectations with digital government, reinforcing the importance of designing multi-channel experiences that reflect this diversity.

To explore this further, we conducted persona analysis on our consumer survey data and identified four distinct consumer types across the US: digital natives, early adopters, skeptics and traditionalists. These groups vary widely in their demographics, expectations, concerns and desired experiences with government services.

Digital Natives

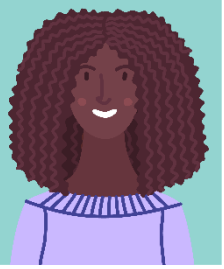
This group is **young**, tech-savvy and well-employed—mostly **Millennials and Gen Z** in full-time jobs with high incomes. They are very **comfortable with digital tools** and are early adopters of technology. They rarely face barriers in accessing digital government services and show **strong confidence in AI systems**. Their expectations are high and they value seamless, efficient digital interactions. While generally positive about AI enhancements in public services, they still care about privacy, data security and potential bias in automated decisions.

Early Adopters

A mixed cohort of **Millennials and Boomers** who use digital tools regularly but appreciate clear guidance. They feel quite **comfortable with everyday online tasks** (like mobile bill payments) but **occasionally need help** understanding required documents or where to begin a process. Though many report no major barriers, they can be unsettled by long or inconsistent procedures. Their **attitudes toward AI are cautious:** they remain skeptical about accuracy and transparency and only about half feel confident that agencies will deploy AI responsibly.

Skeptics

Primarily **Gen X and Boomers** who are moderately engaged but often frustrated by digital experiences. They face technical and trust-related barriers, such as navigating websites or trusting technology. While not entirely disconnected, **they are cautious, often uncomfortable and skeptical about the use of AI** in government services, harbor deep concerns over data deep concerns over data privacy and bias and express in agencies' ability to safeguard personal information.



Traditionalists

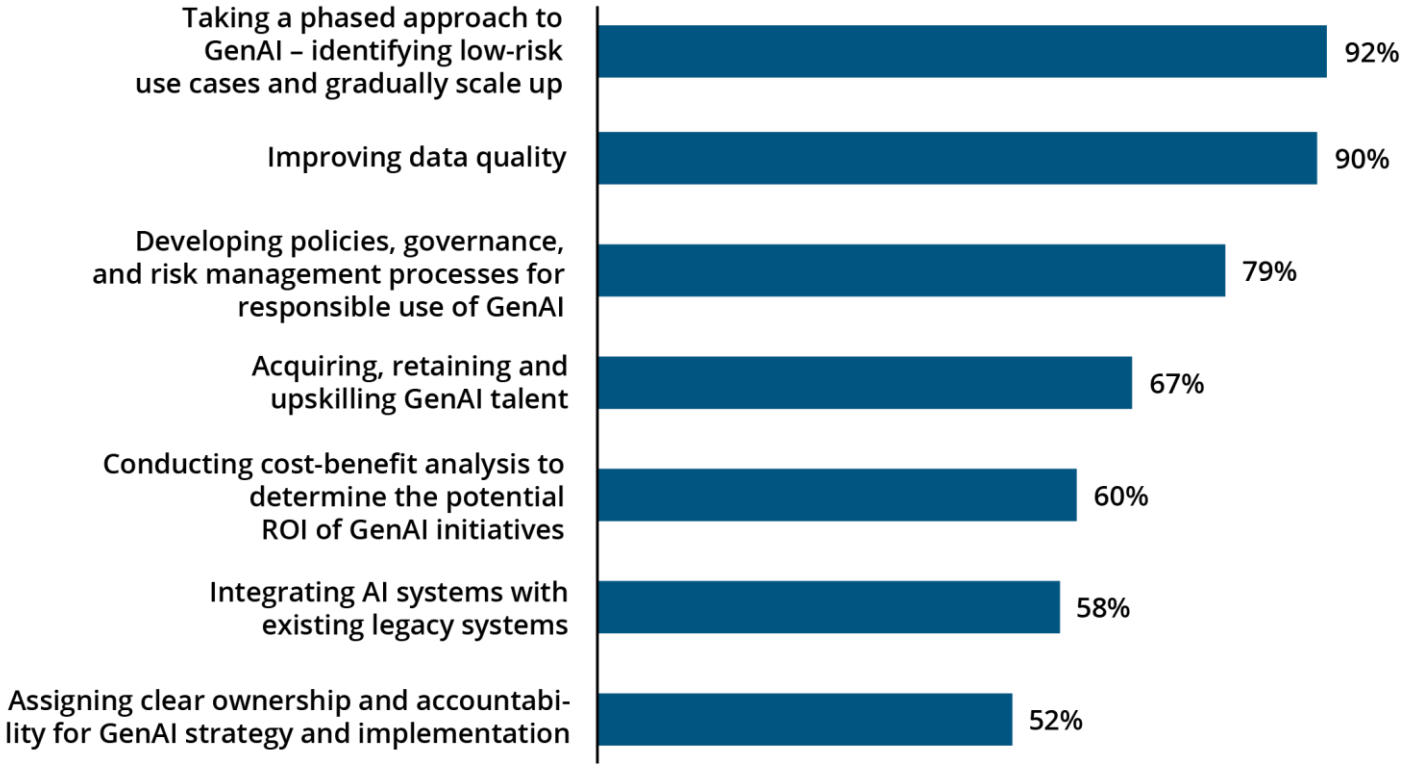
Predominantly older women **(Boomers and Silent Generation),** this persona is mostly retired or unemployed, with low income and **very limited digital literacy**. They strongly **prefer in-person services** and find digital platforms confusing or inaccessible. They harbor **deep concerns about AI** decision-making, including issues of privacy, fairness and trust and lack confidence in digital systems overall.

To engage consumers effectively at different stages of AI adoption, governments must align their AI initiatives and broader consumer experience strategies with the needs and concerns of each consumer segment. The value of AI will depend on designing user journeys tailored to distinct profiles, while identifying opportunities to lower the cost to serve. For example, for a digital native needing to renew their driver's license, AI may send a push notification telling them their license is ready to renew with a button to "click here." Renewal is completed in under two minutes. For a traditionalist, AI can help staff pre-fill digital forms, so the in-person visit is short. This eliminates office visits for those comfortable with technology while decreasing service windows for those who prefer in-person assistance.

Overcoming challenges: State CIOs' needs

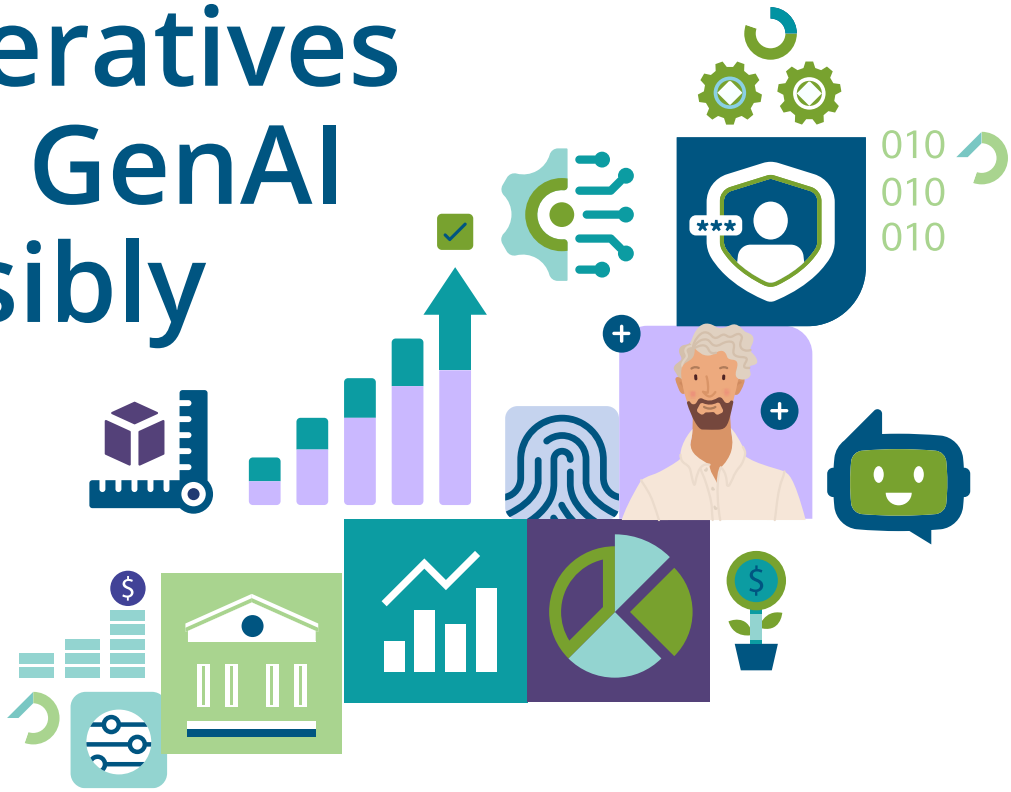
State CIOs see a clear set of actions to overcome persistent barriers. Encouragingly, their priorities align closely with the concerns of consumers and workers alike.

Figure 7: Main actions that would help overcome challenges to deploying and scaling GenAI-powered citizen service initiatives serving the public



Looking holistically across our three surveys, as well as the findings from our CIO interviews, we have identified the following recommendations for how state CIOs may get started on their path to scaling GenAI responsibly in the coming months and years ahead and how they can do so with the support of the whole of government.

Six imperatives to scale GenAI responsibly



Achieving responsible, scalable GenAI implementation in government demands a deliberate, multi-faceted approach. The following six imperatives provide a blueprint for state CIOs and state leaders to turn promising pilots into transformative, trustworthy solutions.

1. Start with strategy and sponsorship

A clearly articulated statewide AI or GenAI strategy, backed by executive sponsorship, can accelerate transformation. Leaders at the highest levels—especially governors and agency heads—can remove barriers, accelerate alignment and reinforce urgency. Without this mandate, GenAI efforts risk fragmentation and stagnation. Similarly, assigning clear ownership and sponsorship provides greater accountability for sound GenAI strategy and its implementation.

> It's very beneficial when you have the governor's and secretary's sponsorship. When you have that level of visibility—good or bad—and it's a priority for the administration, I think it really makes things happen at a speed you wouldn't have otherwise.
>
> – State CIO

2. Strengthen governance and funding foundations

Robust AI governance—including the policies, processes and oversight that guide GenAI systems—is critical to build internal accountability and public trust. This should be complemented by clear protocols for data sharing across agencies, without which many GenAI use cases remain infeasible. At the same time, dedicated and sustainable funding for AI is also critical to ensure that states avoid "pilot paralysis."

3. Place the worker in the center

Frontline government workers should be engaged in GenAI design and deployment from the outset to ensure relevance, usability and sustained adoption. Empowering workers through reskilling, co-creation and ongoing support builds internal trust and increases readiness for change. This inclusive approach also ensures that GenAI enhances—not replaces—the public service workforce.

4. Enable the right technology and data

State CIOs recognize the need to improve data quality and interoperability across state systems as a foundational step. Clean, connected and well-governed data is essential for training GenAI models and delivering accurate, reliable and personalized public services at scale. Additionally, conducting cost-benefit analysis to determine the ROI of various GenAI solutions and the way in which they will integrate with existing systems is critical for success.

5. Scale at the speed of trust

Prioritize trust and transparency in design and delivery by starting with low-risk GenAI applications that offer quick value while minimizing potential harm. At the same time, strengthen state systems by improving security, data governance, integration readiness and staff preparedness to ensure they can safely interact with external GenAI agents as the technology evolves. Ongoing measurement of performance, bias and error rates is essential to nurture trust and ensure responsible AI use.

6. Design GenAI services for diverse consumer segments

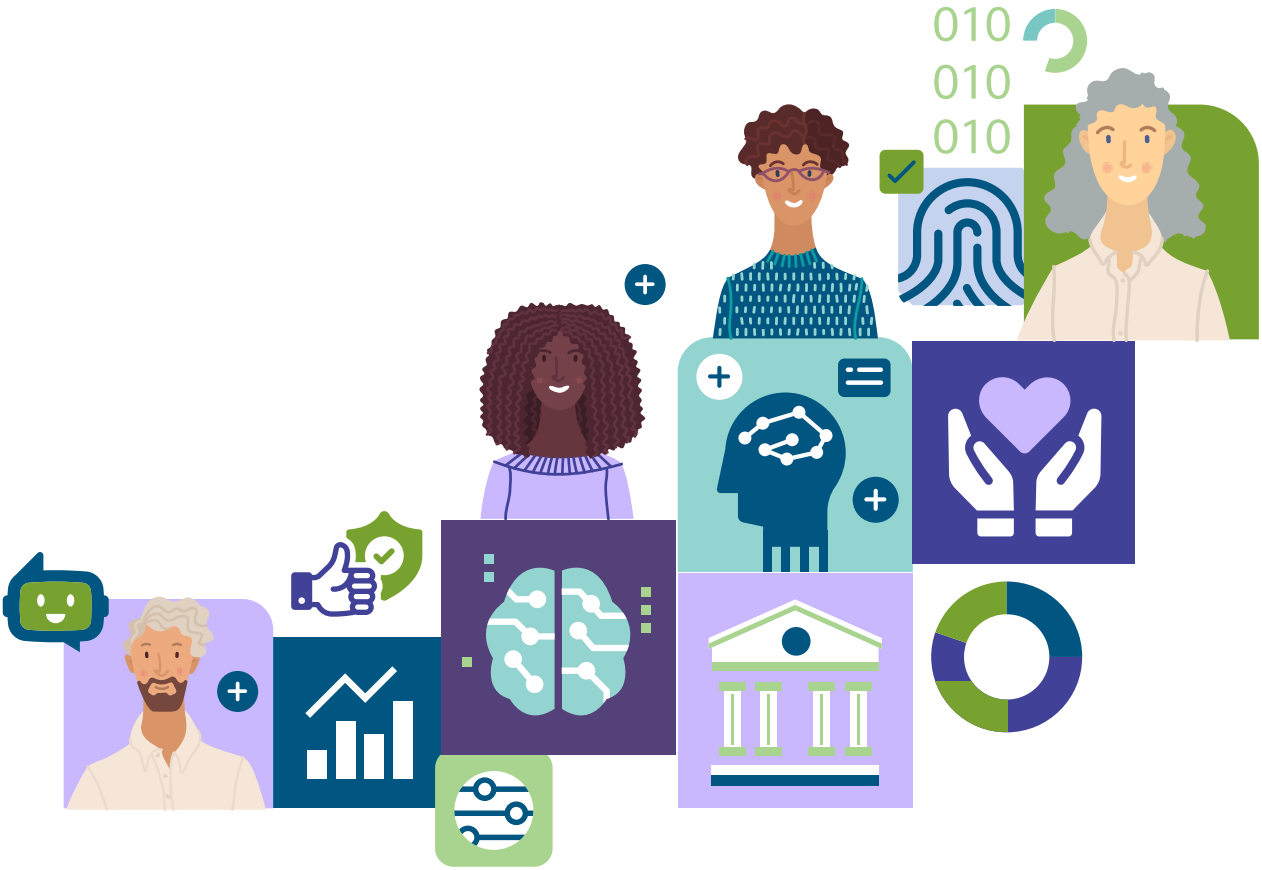
Citizens have different needs, preferences and levels of comfort with AI—and services must reflect that. Governments should tailor digital channels, touchpoints and GenAI applications based on consumer segments to maximize adoption and satisfaction. For example, an unemployment benefits system could instantly pre-fill and submit claims for digital natives, guide early adopters through an interactive online wizard, provide skeptics with clear explanations of how decisions are made or provide access to a caseworker and arrange phone or in-person appointments with pre-completed forms for traditionalists. This approach not only enhances equity and access, but also reduces the overall cost to deliver services by creating efficiency and time savings for all consumer types.

> **"I like to look at where we are the most behind. In two years, I would like to see that we've improved productivity by 10x using agentics."**
>
> **– State CIO**

Building a citizen-centered GenAI future

Generative AI has the potential to fundamentally improve how state governments serve the public—but only if it is implemented with intention, coordination and trust. Meaningful progress will depend on a whole-of-government approach: one that brings together state CIOs, agency leaders, frontline employees and policymakers to shape not only where, but how, GenAI should be used. Scaling responsibly will require strong sponsorship from the top, governance structures that support ethical use and sustained investments in the infrastructure and data foundations that make GenAI effective and secure.

Crucially, this transformation cannot be driven by technology teams alone. It must be supported across all levels of government and grounded in a shared commitment to improving service outcomes. The imperative now is to move beyond pilots and isolated successes toward scaled, integrated solutions that earn public trust and deliver public value. States have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to redefine public service in the age of GenAI—it's time to set a new standard for public service in this new digital era.



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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 advance government excellence through trusted collaboration, partnerships and technology leadership. 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.

For more information, visit www.nascio.org.

About the Research

The National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) and Accenture surveyed state CIOs through an electronic survey conducted from April–May 2025 and hosted and distributed by NASCIO. Forty-eight state CIOs responded, resulting in a 95 percent confidence interval and a three percent margin of error. Additionally, in May 2025, we interviewed 15 state CIOs to deepen our understanding of their current challenges and the opportunities they see ahead with GenAI.

This paper also draws on two online surveys conducted by Accenture between March and April 2025: one across 300 U.S. government workers and another across 1,000 U.S. residents who identified as regularly interacting with government services. The purpose of these surveys was to assess the impact and potential of artificial intelligence (AI) on public sector service delivery.

Based on these responses, persona analysis was conducted to identify clusters of characteristics among U.S. residents based on their perception of using AI for government service delivery.

Together, these perspectives provide a holistic view of evolving experience needs in public services as viewed by consumers, workers, and CIOs alike.

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