

OH



**Award Category:** Enterprise Technology Management

**State:** State of Ohio

**Agency:** Ohio Department of Administrative Services

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**Project Title:** The CCoE Way: Teach Them to Fish, and They'll Modernize for a Lifetime

**Project Dates:** July 2024 – April 2025

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



In a world where digital agility determines mission success, Ohio's cloud modernization approach is built on a simple but powerful principle: teach to fish. Rather than merely delivering transformation, we empower our partners, government agencies entrusted with vital public services, to become self-sufficient stewards of their cloud journey. This project goes beyond technology; it is about resilience, sustainability, and scale. We cast a wide net across legacy application portfolios, reeling in complexity, and delivering tailored solutions through strategy, architecture, design, and deployment. But most importantly, we leave behind not just a modernized environment, but a team equipped to navigate, innovate, and thrive in the cloud seas ahead.

The State of Ohio aims to be a leader in adopting modern cloud technologies. To this end, the Ohio Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Cloud Center of Excellence (CCoE) initiated a Cloud Modernization program to help agencies expand and optimize their cloud footprint.

The state is working with its partners to ensure this program, and ultimately the CCoE itself, are flexible and focused on unlocking value for agencies and ultimately Ohioans. The program is flexible in that it supports agencies at varying levels of cloud maturity, with different business needs and priorities. It unlocks value by carefully selecting and designing modernization projects to provide business benefits like security, maintainability, scalability, and resiliency for strategically important applications. This is the essence of the state's *Cloud Smart* philosophy - adopting cloud technologies not as a default, but when there is a clear and compelling business case.

The program's goal is not to simply modernize applications for the agencies; it is also to upskill and empower the agencies to carry on modernization work on their own in the future. If the agencies are taught how to "fish," they will be able to support their own modernizations well into the future.

This work is not a simple "lift-and-shift" of applications to the cloud; it aims to take advantage of cloud-native architectures and Platform-as-a-Service solutions. Hence, DAS deliberately refers to the work as "modernizing" applications rather than simply "migrating."

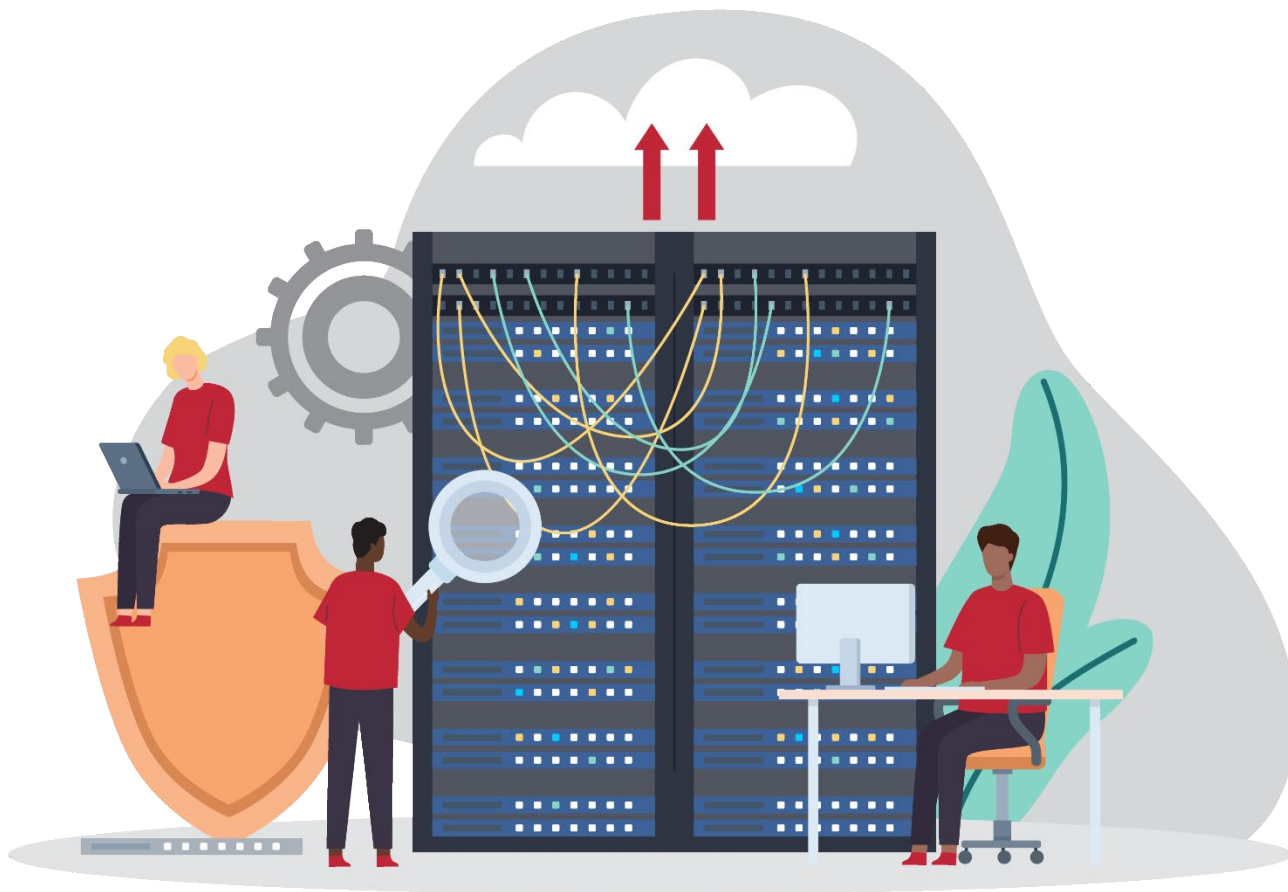


### What problem or opportunity does the project address?

The State of Ohio Computer Center (SOCC) plays a crucial role in the state's IT infrastructure by reliably hosting state applications. In addition to using the SOCC, many agencies also seek to utilize cloud capabilities to provide greater benefits to Ohioans. While many agencies are keen to adopt these services and enjoy the benefits, they do not have the capacity or resources to rapidly do so.

### Why does it matter?

The CCoE and this program fill this gap by providing technical experts and modernization delivery pods to ideate, design, and execute cloud modernizations that meet the state's Cloud Smart criteria. By leveraging the cloud for suitable use cases, the state ensures that both cloud and on-premise resources complement each other effectively.



# IMPLEMENTATION



## Who was involved?

The program started well before the point of executing application portfolio reviews and modernizations. The state's first step was to conduct a visioning and operating model design project to better equip the CCoE organization. In 2023, the state gathered feedback from seven agency IT teams to design a new vision and mission, roles, organizational structure, services, governance, and talent plan for its cloud team. The state emerged from this phase with strong momentum for the new CCoE and excitement from the agencies to partner further. The inclusive design process was the key to success. The state designed the new CCoE explicitly to meet agency needs, and agencies felt a strong sense of contribution to the new direction.

## What was the roadmap?

To maintain this momentum, the state initiated plans for a cloud modernization program to execute on two key services identified in the design phase: application portfolio optimization (APO) and modernization. This multi-year journey began in July 2024.

In APO, a team works with the agencies to review their application portfolio, identify high value opportunities to use cloud services, and align IT and business leaders on a path forward. In modernization, service delivery pods work with an agency's technical team to execute the build, test, deploy, and hypercare for applications.



### Strategic Cloud Vision

How we're aligned to business

Vision

Serve as the strategic partner helping agencies fulfill obligations to Ohioans by securely and optimally utilizing cloud's full potential at all levels of government

Mission

Maximize enterprise synergies across DAS teams to create scalable, secure, and financially responsible cloud services to best meet a given business need



### Guiding Principles

What will guide us



Cloud Smart



State Tenant First



Operational Efficiency



Integrated Service Experience



Proactive Planning



Risk-Based Security

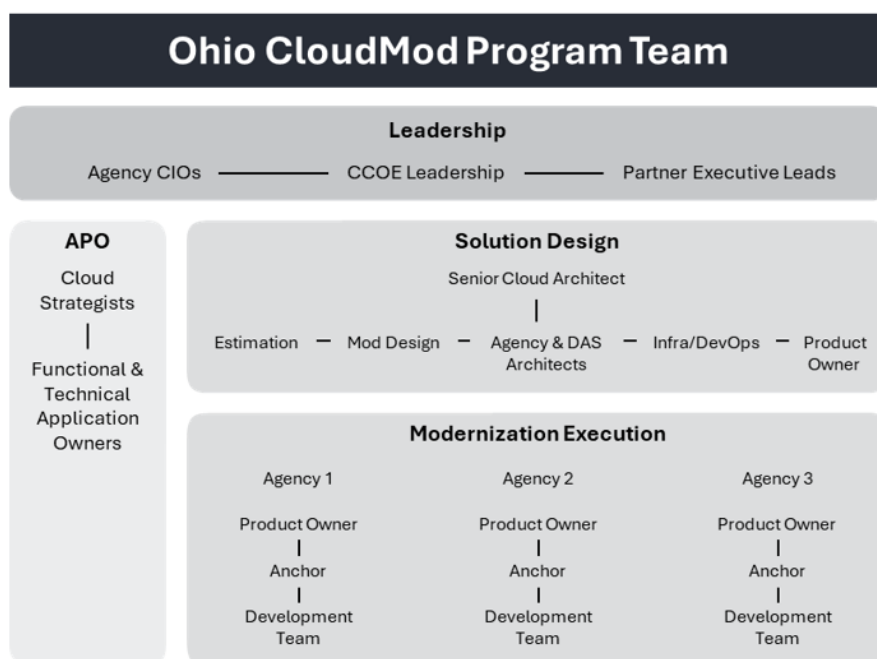
# IMPLEMENTATION



## How did you do it?

To be successful, the state needed to build a program structure with focused teams for each phase of work. A team of cloud strategists first works with the agencies to identify high value opportunities. Once this team identifies modernization targets, they transition the work to the solution design and estimation team. Solution design contains senior developers and solution architects from DAS, the agencies, and state partners. These resources are adept at tailoring proven patterns to the unique needs of each application. We also leverage cutting-edge code and database scanning tools to identify items which may need to be addressed in our scope. Modernization pods then come in to execute, leveraging developers, DevOps engineers, data migration experts, and product managers. All of this is overseen by an executive reporting structure which interfaces with DAS Cloud and IT leadership, agency CIOs, and cloud vendors.

With the right skillsets assembled, the final ingredients for success were the rigorous processes to govern the program. The team assembled a program “playbook,” documenting steps, templates, and artifacts to be used throughout each phase. Once the team arrived at execution, it followed a hybrid-agile methodology, with ceremonies such as sprint planning, stand-ups, and retrospectives. Program governance meetings were also established, including weekly risk management conversations and regular checkpoints with vendors. All these elements ensured that the team could track velocity, identify and mitigate blockers, and ultimately deliver modernized applications to help agencies.



# IMPACT



## What did the project make better?

This program measures its success not only in the number of applications modernized, but also in the expansion of cloud competency among agencies. Agency technologists are gaining exposure to emerging technologies, such as generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) for reverse engineering. Moving forward, they can use these skills to solve long-standing technical debt and improve service quality for Ohioans.

***“We’ve built a program structure with our partners that enables us to drive outcomes that matter.” – Hoang Duong, CCoE Lead***



Remediation of technical debt



Security enhancements, e.g., authentication



Automation of build and deployment



Agencies establish long term modernization pipeline



Agencies expand cloud competency

## How do you know? Outcomes?

Application portfolio reviews were completed with six agencies and there are an additional six that the CCoE is currently assisting. Modernization work is completed, ongoing, or planned across several agencies. The first application to go through this process went live in April of 2025 and there are other implementations planned for May and June.

# IMPACT



**OFCC**

The **Facilities Construction Commission** modernized applications used to plan and manage government construction projects

**ODH**

The **Department of Health** modernized an application used to track success of an AIDS prevention program

**DCY**

The **Department of Children and Youth** is modernizing an application used to manage early intervention service agencies which support at-risk youth

**DRC**

The **Department of Rehabilitation and Correction** is in the process of planning modernizations for several applications which support prison operations and inmate rehabilitation

Each of these pieces of work required a tailored solution that considered the agency's needs. Our unique program structure and collaborative approach allowed us to identify these opportunities and work with agencies to ideate and deliver the future state. Ultimately, the program is delivering enhanced applications that further each agency's unique mission in the service of Ohioans.

## *Year One Accomplishments*

**7**

*Agencies engaged*

**400+**

*Applications dispositioned*

**50+**

*Solutions designed*

**15+**

*Applications modernized*

## **What now?**

The program is still ongoing and will reach its two-year milestone in July 2026. We will elevate delivery of these services by further industrializing our processes and embedding automation into development. We will also scale compelling use cases - such as GenAI reverse engineering on legacy systems - to additional agencies. Agencies will continue "fishing" with the resources provided through this program – architectures, processes, frameworks – as well as with the skills they have gained by participating in it.