

Roadmap to the Resident Portal



Transform and personalize the way Washington residents engage with state government.

The Blueprint for Belonging: Washington's Resident Portal Roadmap

PROJECT: Washington State Resident Portal: Roadmap and Pilot Implementation

CATEGORY: Digital Experience: Enterprise Solutions

PROJECT TIMELINE: March 2023 – April 2025

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Washington state faces a pivotal challenge: its residents navigate a fractured digital experience when interacting with government. Each agency operates in silos, websites lack cohesion, and services are difficult to find, especially for those with accessibility needs, limited digital literacy, or English language barriers. Compounding this, the legacy [SecureAccess Washington \(SAW\)](#) platform—the current central state access point—is nearing obsolescence, providing limited functionality and outdated architecture.

WaTech's [Resident Portal initiative](#) fundamentally reshapes this narrative. Driven by a vision to **transform and personalize** the way residents engage with state government, the Resident Portal will act as a digital front door to every agency and service—intuitive, equitable, and centered on resident needs.

Before building a new portal, Washington chose to [build a roadmap](#)—a strategic, research-backed framework to reimagine how digital government should work for everyone.

This initiative wasn't about delivering a single product. It was about aligning a statewide enterprise vision, unifying technical infrastructure, and centering the voice of residents in every step. The roadmap was not an output of the work—it is the foundation of the state's digital transformation.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

What problem or opportunity does the project address?

Washington residents face a deeply fragmented digital landscape when accessing government services. Each agency has its own siloed website, login requirements, and forms, leading to frustration, redundant paperwork, and reduced trust in state services.

With over **7.8 million** Washingtonians and **hundreds of agencies**, the impact of seamless access is enormous:

- Avoiding fragmented portals reduces support overhead—projected savings of **\$4.5M annually** from decreased phone and in-person inquiries.
- Enhanced satisfaction drives trust and compliance: improved access to benefits, increased on-time payments, and more efficient licensing processes.
- AI-assisted self-service reduces average task completion time by **40–60%**, improving productivity for both residents and agencies.

Why does it matter?

Without a coordinated approach:

- Agencies would continue duplicating investments and failing to meet rising expectations.

- Washingtonians—especially the most vulnerable—would remain underserved.
- The deprecation of SecureAccess Washington (SAW) could have left a critical identity access gap.

The roadmap addressed this head-on by:

- **Synthesizing user pain points:** 68% cited problems with communication, access, or functionality.
- **Evaluating 30 national and international digital portals** to benchmark best practices.
- **Mapping residents' journeys** using five detailed personas including veterans, caregivers, entrepreneurs, and disabled users.
- **Creating a multi-year, phased strategy** to guide enterprise-level decisions on architecture, funding, and agency onboarding.

The roadmap established a unified digital strategy grounded in inclusivity, personalization, and transparency. It was shaped by direct input from more than 5,000 residents who participated in surveys, co-design workshops, and usability testing—ensuring that core capabilities and priorities reflected real user needs.

What makes it different?

While many digital government projects begin with code, **Washington began with community.**

Key differentiators:

- **Residents as co-creators**, not just testers—ensuring solutions met real needs from day one.
- **Reusable components and standards**—including WCAG-compliant design libraries, open APIs, and privacy-by-design principles—that reduce future project cost and risk.
- Integration of **generative AI** to power contextual help, task guidance, and form completion, reinforcing digital equity for low-literacy and multilingual users.

Key innovations of the roadmap process include:

- **Persona-driven planning:** Real stories grounded technical and policy decisions.
- **Capability-based design:** 30+ resident capabilities were defined to reflect life tasks, not agency structures (e.g., “Book a Resource,” “Manage Profile,” “Receive Alerts”).
- **Tiered integration model:** Enables agencies to join at different tech maturity levels—maximizing inclusivity while ensuring quality.

By defining *what good looks like* across design, functionality, privacy, and scalability, the roadmap de-risked implementation and built alignment before a single line of code was written.

What makes it universal?

Every state faces the same challenge: dozens or hundreds of agencies, each with unique services, siloed data, and inconsistent user experience. Most struggle to modernize coherently.

Washington’s roadmap answers a universal call:

- It aligns with **NASCIO's CIO Top Priorities**, including:
 - Digital Services
 - Cybersecurity and Privacy
 - Identity and Access Management
 - Customer Relationship Management
- It responds to **federal mandates** around accessibility, equity, and language access.
- And most importantly, it models how any state can turn fragmented services into a unified, human-centered system—**by starting with a roadmap**.

IMPLEMENTATION

**The roadmap is more than a plan—
it's a *promise of transformation with accountability*.**

The roadmap is the **foundational product** of this initiative, developed through a six-month, enterprise-wide engagement process.

Core Elements:

- **Five strategic goals** focused on equity, integration, satisfaction, trust, and cross-sector alignment.
- **Over 30 capabilities** defined, spanning from “Apply for a Service” to “My Services Dashboard,” “BigFoot Bot,” and “Fraud Management.”
- **Phased rollout strategy:**
 1. Build momentum.
 2. IAM MVP to sunset SAW.
 3. Quick wins (unauthenticated Service Finder, unified navigation).
 4. Portal MVP with dashboards, personalization, alerts.
 5. Agency Cohort Onboarding for long-term growth.

This roadmap guides implementation priorities, funding allocations, RFPs, and performance measurement—and continues to serve as the **North Star** for cross-agency digital transformation.

Pilot phase

The pilot phase launched in early 2025, focusing on a select group of services including unemployment benefits, professional licensing, and childcare subsidy applications. Key features included:

- A single sign-on experience using SecureAccess Washington (SAW).
- A personalized resident dashboard showing application status and reminders.
- Contextual help and chatbot support for common tasks.
- Mobile-first, WCAG-compliant design.

The pilot demonstrated that a unified portal can improve equity, efficiency, and satisfaction across demographics. State agencies also reported operational savings and new opportunities to streamline backend processes through shared data and identity management.

Initial pilot results showed:

- **37% reduction** in time-to-completion for key services.
- **90% user satisfaction rate.**
- **25% drop in help desk inquiries** related to login and application status.

Who was involved?

The success of the roadmap rested on a **broad coalition of stakeholders**, including:

- **WaTech:** Led vision, strategy, and enterprise integration.
- **Launch Consulting:** Facilitated roadmap development, user research, and capability mapping.
- **State agencies:** Participated in co-design and cohort planning.
- **Residents:** Through persona-driven workshops, journey mapping, and live pilot participation.
- **Human-Centered Design, Accessibility and Equity Experts:** Ensured inclusive design and compliance.
- **Policy and Legal Teams:** Advised on consent, privacy, and identity management standards.

Buy-in was cultivated through:

- Persona-based storytelling to illustrate real-world impact.
- Journey maps that visualized current vs. future state experiences.
- Collaborative cohorts for agency co-design and implementation.

How did you do it?

Resources:

- **Financial:** Funded roadmap development phase and pre-implementation planning with state investment (mid-2024).
- **Human:** Cross-functional teams of researchers, policy analysts, UX designers, and IT architects.
- **Time:** 6-month roadmap engagement, with a 5-year phased implementation plan.

Technical Architecture:

- Identity-first design enables future-proofing of login, access, and consent management.

- Tiered integration supports onboarding from low-tech to high-tech agencies.
- AI visioning supports long-term resident autonomy.
- Modular architecture choices ensure platform scalability and agency choice.

IMPACT

What did the project make better?

Before the roadmap:

- Residents face confusing, disconnected agency portals.
- High support costs and slow transactions.
- Underserved communities struggle to engage digitally.
- No shared vision across agencies.
- Duplication of effort, ad hoc modernization, and inconsistent resident experience.
- Sunset of SAW loomed with no coordinated replacement strategy.

After the roadmap:

- All stakeholders have a **common enterprise playbook**.
- Agencies are aligned on phased onboarding, shared components, and data governance.
- Residents are centered from day one—with inclusive UX, personalized support, and proactive communication designed in.

How do you know?

Quantitative Indicators:

- Identified over **\$4.5M annual cost savings** from deflected in-person and phone support.
- Defined metrics across adoption, usage time, satisfaction, and accessibility improvements.
- Benchmarked future-state scenarios using data from 30+ evaluated portals.

Qualitative Validation:

- Positive feedback from pilot testers, especially those in multilingual and low-access communities.
- Agencies eager to participate in Phase 2 onboarding, citing streamlined workflows and reduced duplication.

“As someone who supports my disabled father, the idea of managing both our services in one place—with AI guiding next steps—gives me hope. I’ve never seen government work like this before.”

— Andrew, veteran and caregiver

What now?

With a strong foundation in place and demonstrated success from the pilot phase, Washington is poised to scale the Resident Portal initiative statewide. The next phase will focus on expanding access to a broader range of services, increasing integration with local governments, and introducing real-time digital notifications to keep residents informed and engaged. Continued collaboration with agency partners and community stakeholders will ensure the portal evolves to meet diverse needs.

Driving this transformation is the newly established Digital Experience Division (DEX)—a strategic investment in modernizing how people interact with government. DEX was created specifically to support initiatives like the Resident Portal, ensuring that digital services are designed with residents at the center. By bringing together the talent, tools, and technologies behind some of the state's most essential digital touchpoints, DEX is laying the groundwork for a more unified and intuitive experience across government.

Led by the newly appointed Chief Digital Experience Officer, DEX represents a milestone in our digital government journey. It exemplifies our commitment to not only scale the Resident Portal but also to embed equity, transparency, and efficiency into every digital interaction across Washington state.

CONCLUSION

Washington State's Resident Portal Roadmap is more than a strategic plan—it is a catalyst for statewide digital transformation. Grounded in equity, co-created with residents, and built for scalability, the roadmap has already demonstrated meaningful results in service efficiency, user satisfaction, and cross-agency alignment. By prioritizing the voices of those it serves and laying a resilient, enterprise-grade foundation, Washington is not just modernizing technology, it is reimagining trust and accessibility in government.