



MASSACHUSETTS CX CENTER OF EXCELLENCE

Building Capacity for
People-Centered Government

NASCIO State IT Recognition Awards Submission
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Massachusetts is advancing the next phase of its digital service transformation by building the statewide capacity, shared standards, governance, and operational supports needed to deliver people-centered government at scale.

Launched in 2023, the Commonwealth Digital Roadmap established a vision for improving how people access and experience government services. The goal was to provide accessible, simple, and secure digital experiences that adapt to a person’s needs. As implementation has matured, Massachusetts has recognized that lasting transformation requires more than individual service improvements or one-time technology modernization efforts. It requires a sustainable enterprise model for helping agencies apply people-centered practices consistently across programs, channels, and services.

To meet that need, Massachusetts has evolved the Roadmap’s original Capacity Building initiative into the Massachusetts Constituent Experience Center of Excellence, or CX COE. The CX COE serves as a collaborative enablement function within Mass Digital, helping agencies embed constituent feedback, accessibility, experience research, service design, content strategy, shared standards, and continuous improvement into digital service delivery.

The Center partners with agencies on real service delivery challenges while helping teams build the internal capability to understand constituent needs, guide vendor work, apply shared standards, and improve services over time.

Early results show the CX COE model is gaining traction through agency enablement engagements, growing communities of practice, and shared resources such as the Massachusetts Design System, launched earlier this year.

Together, these efforts are helping Massachusetts move beyond isolated digital projects and toward a sustainable model for delivering seamless, trustworthy, people-centered experiences across the Commonwealth.

Through the CX COE, Massachusetts is moving from a roadmap vision to an operating model for lasting systems change...



IDEA

Building public-sector capability to deliver better services

As Massachusetts began implementing the Commonwealth Digital Roadmap, a central lesson became clear: delivering better constituent experiences at scale requires more than modern technology, redesigned websites, or individual service improvements. It requires agencies to be equipped to understand constituent needs, apply shared standards, guide vendor work, and continuously improve services over time.

In practice, that means teams can use research to inform the services they build or buy, apply accessibility and content standards earlier in the process, test designs with real constituents, and use what they learn to improve services after launch.

A small, centralized team cannot do all the constituent experience work required across state government. To be sustainable, constituent-centered design must become a shared public-sector practice: something agencies understand, own, and apply as part of everyday service delivery.

The Massachusetts CX Center of Excellence was created to meet that need. Originally launched as the Roadmap's Capacity Building team in 2024, the CX COE is run by practitioners -- experience researchers, service and experience designers, and content strategists -- who partner with state organizations to improve services while helping teams build the internal capability to sustain those improvements.

The CX COE's strategy focuses on scaling people-centered practices through iterative, research-informed approaches, practical enablement, and community-building. Its partnerships address real agency goals while helping staff adopt new skills and practices in experience research, experience management, usability testing, content strategy, accessibility, service design, measurement, and continuous improvement.

The CX COE also builds statewide capability beyond individual engagements. It establishes Communities of Practice that connect practitioners across agencies, develops shared resources, templates, and guidance to accelerate adoption, and helps agencies create dedicated Experience Design and Research teams that can serve as internal strategic resources. Together, these efforts help agencies align with enterprise standards while contributing to statewide knowledge and best practices.

One proof point is the Massachusetts Design System, developed and supported by designers within the CX COE. It translates shared standards into reusable resources agencies and vendor partners can adopt, helping teams build from a common foundation rather than recreating basic patterns independently.

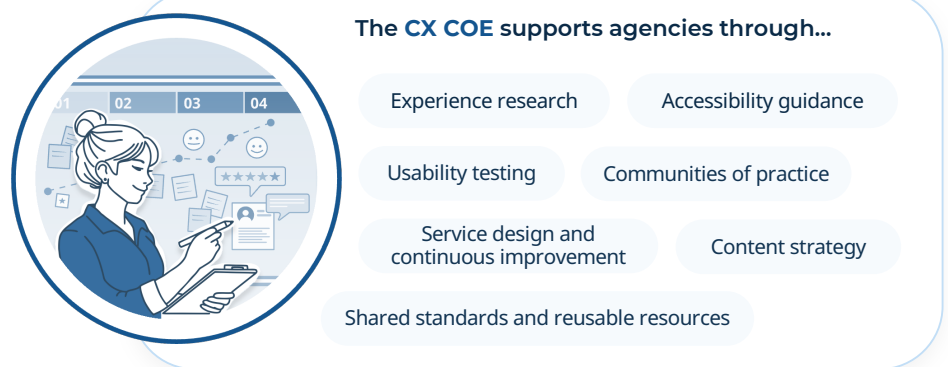
IMPLEMENTATION

Scaling CX through collaboration, capacity-building, and practice

Massachusetts implemented the CX COE as an iterative enablement model designed to help agencies apply constituent-centered practices in real service delivery contexts. Rather than launching as a fixed set of services, the COE has evolved through direct partnership with agencies, testing and learning from engagements, building shared resources, and strengthening communities of practitioners across state government.

The COE's implementation strategy is grounded in a simple premise: agencies build stronger constituent experience capability when they are supported while working on real problems. Through collaborative enablement engagements, CX COE staff partner with agency teams to make progress toward immediate service delivery goals while helping staff adopt new skills and practices they can continue using after the engagement ends.

This model allows the COE to meet agencies where they are —whether teams need support learning from constituents, testing content, improving accessibility, redesigning service touchpoints, or applying shared standards to products built internally or with vendor partners.



Since the team formed in 2024, the CX COE has supported enablement engagements with people and teams across the Commonwealth. Examples include working with the Department of Unemployment Assistance to hire a content strategist and redesign Mass.gov content in preparation for launching its new Unemployment Services site; collaborating on stakeholder research with the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program within the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; and helping a MassHealth team incorporate iterative usability testing into content design for Medicaid recipients.

The COE uses what it learns from these engagements to develop resources that can benefit teams beyond a single project. This includes a growing resource library with guidance, templates, and practical tools that help agencies accelerate their own work. Examples include guidance on compensating research participants, archiving documents, conducting a plain language review, and creating template job descriptions for experience design and research roles.

The COE also supports statewide learning and adoption through Communities of Practice. These communities help practitioners build critical skills, share knowledge, and learn from one another across organizational boundaries. Current communities include the Content Lab, the Experience Research Community of Practice, the Design System Community of Practice, a Product Management Community of Practice started by the Department of Early Education and Care, and a forthcoming Service Design Community of Practice. Together, they create a structure for democratizing access to CX knowledge, connecting practitioners and advocates, and reinforcing constituent-centered design as a shared government practice rather than a specialized function held by one team.

Another key implementation strategy is helping agencies build dedicated Experience Design and

Research capacity within their own organizations. The CX COE has supported secretariats as they begin developing internal XDR teams made up of experience owners, designers, researchers, and writers who understand their organization's services, goals, and constituents. Since engaging with the CX COE, the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services have begun building these teams. This approach positions agencies to own and sustain CX practices while contributing to statewide knowledge, standards, and communities.

A major proof point of the COE's model is the Massachusetts Design System. Developed and supported by designers within the CX COE, the Design System translates enterprise standards into practical tools agencies and vendor partners can use. It provides shared design standards, a reusable component library complemented with code components, accessibility-informed patterns, and collaborative resources that help teams build digital services from a common foundation rather than recreating basic patterns independently.

To support adoption at scale, Massachusetts transitioned to a shared Figma Enterprise environment in January 2026, enabling agencies and vendor partners to access centralized design resources, collaborate in shared workspaces, and reuse standardized components and templates. This shared environment allows the COE to distribute design resources, support adoption, and update shared standards as the Design System evolves.

Accessibility is embedded throughout this implementation model. Through accessibility guidance, shared standards, training, and Design System resources, the COE helps agencies consider accessibility earlier and more continuously across research, content, design, procurement, development, testing, and improvement.

By partnering with agencies, translating lessons into shared resources, connecting practitioners through communities, supporting internal XDR capacity, and providing reusable standards and tools like the Massachusetts Design System, the COE is building the infrastructure needed to make constituent-centered design a durable practice across Massachusetts government.

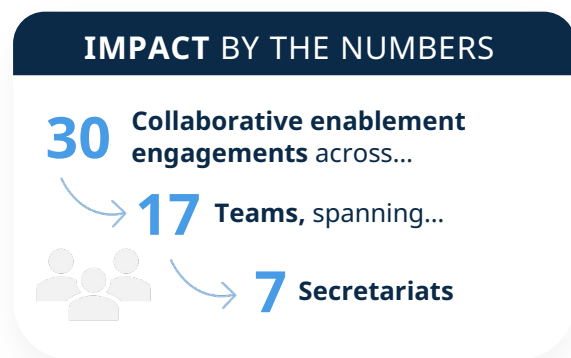
IMPACT

The impact of the CX COE is now felt across the entire state, with every Secretariat engaged with multiple offerings.

Expanding the reach of constituent-centered practices: Enablement Engagements

The CX COE is helping Massachusetts move from individual digital improvement projects to a statewide model for applying constituent-centered practices across agencies.

To date, the CX COE has conducted 30 collaborative enablement engagements across 17 teams spanning 7 Secretariats. These engagements demonstrate growing demand for hands-on support that helps agencies apply research, accessibility, content strategy, service design, and usability practices to real service delivery challenges.



Just as importantly, the engagement model is designed to leave capability behind. Agencies do not only receive project support; they gain practical experience using methods they can apply again. By working with teams on real problems and goals, the COE helps agencies make immediate progress while building longer-term capacity to improve services continuously.

Building a statewide practitioner network: Communities of Practice

The CX COE is also expanding the network of practitioners, learners, and advocates who are applying constituent-centered design across government.



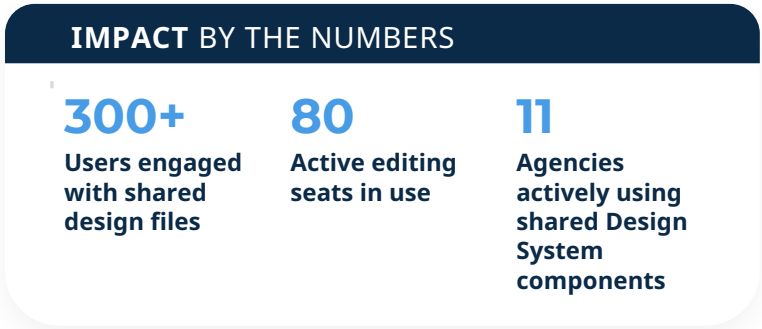
Communities of Practice create a structure for staff to learn from one another, share examples, ask questions, and build skills across organizational boundaries. Current participation includes 104 members in the Content Lab, 90 members in the Experience Research Community of Practice, and 59 members in the Design System Community of Practice.

These communities help democratize access to CX knowledge and reduce reliance on a small, centralized team. They also help normalize constituent-centered practices across agencies by creating visible pathways for staff to participate, learn, and contribute back to a growing statewide body of practice.

Turning shared standards into reusable infrastructure: Massachusetts Design System

The Massachusetts Design System demonstrates how the CX COE turns enterprise standards into practical infrastructure that agencies and vendor partners can use.

Since the transition to a shared Figma Enterprise environment in January 2026, more than 300 users have engaged with shared design files, with 80 active editing seats in use. Adoption has expanded from 2 pilot agencies to 11 agencies actively using shared Design System components in production work.



This growth shows that agencies and vendor partners need shared resources that make standards easier to apply. By providing reusable components, accessibility-informed patterns, shared libraries, and collaborative tooling, the Design System helps teams reduce duplicated effort, improve consistency, and build more accessible and recognizable digital services.

The Design System also strengthens the Commonwealth's ability to guide work delivered by vendors. When agencies and partners work from a common foundation, they are better positioned to align digital products with enterprise expectations for accessibility, usability, visual consistency, and constituent trust.

Embedding accessibility into constituent-centered practice: Reusable Resources

Accessibility is a core part of delivering better constituent experiences. Through the CX COE model, accessibility is being reinforced as a shared responsibility across research, content, design, procurement, development, testing, and continuous improvement.

Massachusetts has also advanced broader enterprise digital accessibility efforts aligned with WCAG 2.1 and Title II ADA requirements. The model of our digital accessibility program aligns closely with that of the CX COE – focused on growing teams with deep expertise, providing training and supports that help improve existing teams' capabilities, and developing guides, tools, and standards that make it easier for everyone to incorporate accessibility best practices into their day to day.

The CX COE has amplified these efforts by embedding accessibility into the practices, communities, and resources it supports. The Content Lab team develops accessibility training resources for Mass.gov authors, offers regular accessibility trainings, and connects community members with content designers who bring accessibility expertise. Accessibility is also built into major phases of CX COE enablement engagements, including training teams on accessible content practices and helping them apply those practices to real service delivery work.

The collaboration between the CX COE and our digital accessibility recognizes that meaningful accessibility starts with understanding the needs of the people you're serving and then using those insights to inform service improvements. Together, the CX COE and the Commonwealth's digital accessibility efforts are helping shift accessibility from a reactive compliance activity to an ongoing quality practice embedded in how digital services are designed, delivered, and improved.

Strengthening agency ownership and sustainability: Team Building

The CX COE's long-term impact is not only measured by the number of engagements, resources, or community members. Its larger contribution is helping Massachusetts build the internal public-sector capability needed to sustain people-centered government over time.

The COE's support for Experience Design and Research teams within secretariats is one example of this shift. As agencies develop their own teams of researchers, designers, and writers, they are better positioned to understand their own services, constituents, and operational context. These teams can serve as strategic resources within their organizations while contributing to shared standards, communities, and lessons learned across the Commonwealth.

This model also helps Massachusetts make better use of external partners. Rather than relying on vendors to define constituent experience practices on behalf of agencies, state organizations are building the internal capability to guide vendor work, apply shared standards, test with constituents, and evaluate whether solutions meet public needs.

What began as a roadmap vision for accessible, simple, and secure digital experiences is becoming an operating model for statewide service improvement: one that builds capability inside government, supports agencies through shared standards and resources, and helps make constituent-centered design part of how Massachusetts delivers services.