ACQUIA
EXPERIENCE DIGITAL FREEDOM

FROM CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE TO CITIZEN EXPERIENCE

A Roadmap for Government Agencies
to Become Digital Leaders

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CX, DX AND THE PANDEMIC

88%

OF U.S. CITIZENS EXPECT TO INTERACT WITH FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES DIGITALLY.

Digital transformation in the public sector demands a better citizen experience.

Digital transformation in government has never been more critical. Public sector agencies across the world are in various stages of reimagining the citizen experience to address changes in the public's behavior and growing preferences for digital services.

This shift was greatly accelerated by a global pandemic that strained the ability of federal, state and local government agencies to meet an unprecedented need for a range of services delivered digitally. The sudden demand for information and services was too much for many government agencies to handle with outdated technology. Websites for vital services such as **unemployment claims** and **vaccine appointments** crashed, and data remained trapped in individual silos at different agencies, preventing the sharing of important information.

While the COVID-19 pandemic forced government digitization into overdrive, digital transformation of the public sector was already well underway. In December 2018, for example, the **21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA)** was launched, compelling federal agencies to deliver the kind of web experiences and customer service that consumers typically expect from private sector businesses. **And for good reason — a whopping 88% of U.S. citizens expect to interact with federal, state and local authorities digitally.** These constituents demand up-to-date online information and support, especially in times of crisis.

WHY WE NEED
STRONG CITIZEN EXPERIENCE

People visit government websites for two reasons. The first one is to find information, which requires public sector agencies to manage and present content at scale, mainly on websites and mobile applications. The second reason is to transact with government services. Such transactions require personalization, which in turn requires a keen understanding of citizens' needs based on rich data.

In this e-book, we provide federal and local government agencies a systematic, step-by-step process for improving the digital experience for their constituents, while meeting today's stringent security standards. We discuss new approaches and tools to analyze and utilize citizens' data in a privacy-preserving manner, and illustrate real-world examples and best practices of how government agencies have optimized the digital services and experiences they provide their constituents. Readers will also learn what a modern digital experience platform (DXP) needs to empower public sector agencies to deliver exceptional digital experiences that are always safe and secure.
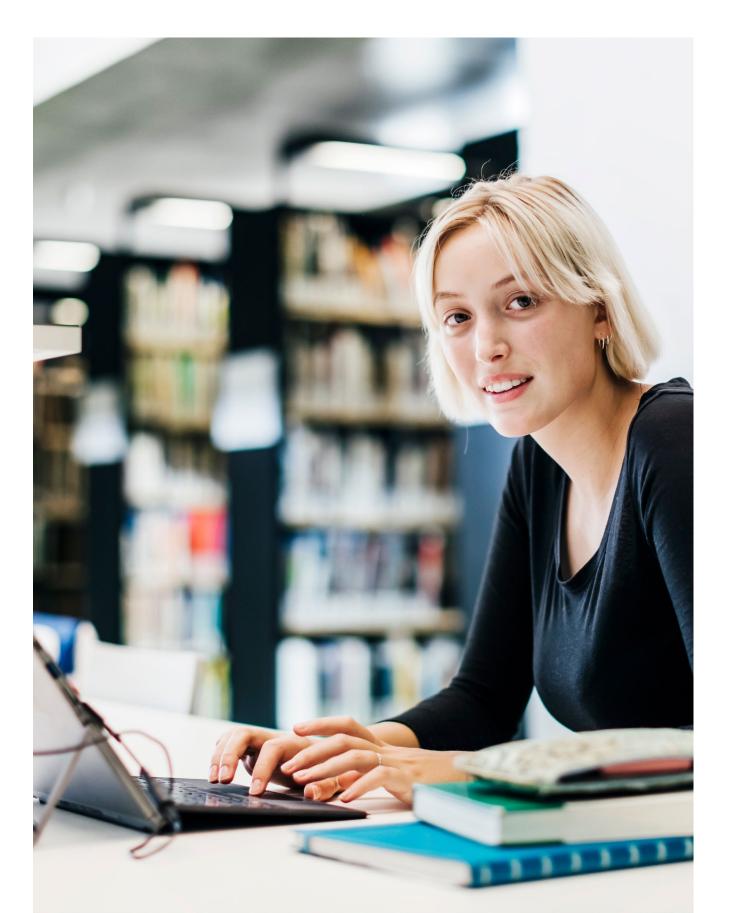
SECTION 02

GIVE CITIZENS THE CONTENT AND SERVICES THEY WANT

In order to meet the rapidly evolving demands of a digitally enabled public, government agencies need to deliver the following fundamentals:

/ **Choice.** Citizens want to access digital content on any channel they access commercial content (websites, apps, voice assistant, digital signage and so on). In 2020, 62% of the visitors accessing public sector websites did so via a desktop or laptop computer, while 32% opted for their mobile device, according to **CFI Group's Government Websites 2020.** This mobile usage number has tripled in just four years, demonstrating the importance of building sites that are mobile-friendly.

/ **Accessibility.** The content of public sector websites has to be accessible to visitors, regardless of their language or disabilities. For example, **Boston.gov**, the site for the City of Boston, is available in nine languages and offers localization into more than 30 others. Many countries have explicit laws in place to ensure that content is accessible to the differently abled (those with permanent or temporary visual, hearing, physical or cognitive impairments).

/ **Relevancy.** Agencies need the ability to update digital content in minutes, providing information that is relevant to the present hour. Editing, removing and replacing content needs to be simple and intuitive. Agencies must be able to orchestrate messages in real time across all communication channels, including email, social, SMS/push and direct mail. Agencies must also be able to launch new websites in response to public needs, as we saw during the pandemic. New sites can't be built from scratch in a timely or cost-efficient manner, so governments need reusable templates and components to quickly build and launch new sites that are secure, compliant and functional.

CASE STUDY

NOAA FISHERIES

INCREASING USER ENGAGEMENT

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Fisheries division had a website intended to serve a diverse audience, including government employees, commercial and recreational anglers, educators and non-government scientists. Complex processes for creating and sharing content frustrated the site's editors and an unwieldy navigation system with overly technical language confused users.

With testing of key audiences, the NOAA Fisheries team and their digital agency saw where navigation, architecture and terminology could be improved. After deploying **Acquia Drupal Cloud** (which enables public sector agencies to assemble and deploy digital experiences for each phase of interaction with a citizen) and the COPE (create once, publish everywhere) method of content creation, the editors could do their jobs far more efficiently. **Improved navigation boosted user engagement by 13%** and the site has seen significant gains in both mobile traffic and search engine optimization.

SECTION 03

PERSONALIZE THE CITIZEN EXPERIENCE

DX ROADMAP FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Digital experiences in the public sector need to meet the standard found in the private sector.

When a citizen transacts business with a government agency, the relationship resembles that of an e-commerce operation, where customers expect quick, convenient and personalized service. Government agencies need to figure out how to organize their citizens' data to the point where they can act on it to provide the same level of service and personalization as the private sector.

These are the best practices from private sector businesses that public sector agencies must now embrace:

/ Enabling citizens to create profiles that include contact and payment information: A saved profile automatically makes things more convenient. The constituents don't have to share personal information every time they want to conduct a transaction with a public agency.

/ Learning more about citizens' preferences and behaviors over time: A citizen profile enables public agencies to build out a robust, up-to-date record of individual citizens and their transaction history with agencies.

/ Using citizens' data to personalize the experience on multiple levels: Citizens' data enables agencies to personalize the web experience every time the citizen visits. It also helps to ensure that the agency uses the citizen's preferred channels (email, text, etc.) to contact them with important alerts such as a fire or outage in the vicinity of where they live.

Delivering this level of personalization for public sector organizations requires each individual agency to gather all of its data and share it across separate departments or agencies so it can be used for a single, personalized experience.

Getting tax assessment data, applying for a building permit, renewing a driver's license and paying a utility bill involve multiple departments and multiple systems. A citizen trying to complete these different tasks will usually have to access several different sites and, if payment is involved, enter personal payment information into several different systems. This results in an inconvenient, confusing and frustrating experience.

Citizens expect better collaboration between agencies in service of the people. That the Department of Public Safety is separate from the Department of Public Works may be a fact of life, but from the citizens' perspective, it doesn't make sense. It's all part of the same government, just like the sales department and the service department are part of the same company.

This challenge must be addressed through cooperation and alignment between agencies around data privacy and protection. The technology is here today to support secure data sharing. Consistent policy and mutually agreed standards, however, are not. Ultimately, governments should be striving for enabling citizens to create a "citizen profile" that would follow them from department to department.

Given the current complexity of interagency cooperation, data standards, secure data transfer, oversight and more that would be involved, it will take some time before this is possible. The key is to choose an architectural framework now that is capable of supporting both current and future efforts to smooth the citizen experience across multiple government departments while complying with applicable data protection regulations.

CASE STUDY
FOIA.GOV

STREAMLINING FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS

Acquia built and currently hosts FOIA.gov on behalf of the Department of Justice. The purpose of this government-wide portal is to effectively streamline the highly complex and painful process of making FOIA requests across the U.S. federal government.

Before the agency chose Acquia, FOIA requests were complex, time-consuming and often plagued with inefficiency. Citizens had to know what agency in the government had the information they were requesting and make a FOIA request to that specific agency's FOIA office. The request then kicked off a manual process that typically took weeks and sometimes months to fulfill, while oftentimes the requested information was already publicly available.

FOIA.gov now serves as a one-stop shop to help citizens find out if their requested information is already publicly available, and if not, directs them to the relevant agency or enables them to make the request through the FOIA portal. It also provides a reporting mechanism for government agencies to report on FOIA compliance and stats around the number of requests fulfilled, those still in process, the average time for fulfillment to be completed and other important information.

The Role of Consolidated, Cross-Channel Data

A new practice in data management has emerged, one that enables best-in-class consumer brands to deliver seamless customer experiences across channels. This practice is based on the use of a modern customer data platform (CDP), which collects, consolidates and activates layers of personal data. This data in turn powers convenient and contextual experiences. CDPs can make it easier for organizations to conform to all aspects of data privacy legislation while helping them deliver a better experience for their customers.

The same will be true for government agencies that adopt CDP technology to power citizen experiences. By using CDPs, public sector agencies will gain the following powerful capabilities:

/ Consolidating data from every relevant source within the agency: Agencies will be able to create comprehensive citizen profiles that reflect each interaction between the citizen and the government agency.

/ Propagating data to all relevant users and channels: In the private sector, the marketing department would want to know if a customer is experiencing a service issue so they don't send marketing messages that may be perceived as annoying. Likewise, the public sector agencies should be aware of a citizen's history of interactions with the agency and not send requests or messages that are no longer relevant.

/ Leveraging cutting-edge analytics, including machine learning, to deepen citizen insight and understanding: This insight itself can support hyper-personalization of interactions with constituents or even predict potential issues. Determining whether or not a citizen qualifies for unemployment benefits, for example, is a critical task with serious consequences. Machine learning can not only analyze consolidated data to expedite the decision, but could also determine when a human should take over to provide advice and encouragement.

/ Complying with relevant data privacy requirements: From both a credibility and a compliance standpoint, maintaining trust and transparency with the data organizations collect from individuals, as well as quickly and accurately fulfilling any requests to remove their information, is crucial for private and public sector organizations alike.

Not all CDPs are created equal or meet the needs of public sector agencies. CDPs consolidate data from online and offline sources and can activate it, but for the public sector these tools need to balance personalization with trust, governance and security expected from government agencies.

CDPs vs. CRMs

CUSTOMER DATA PLATFORMS LEVERAGE ALL SOURCES OF CUSTOMER DATA

There can be confusion in the market regarding the difference between customer data platforms (CDPs) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. CRM systems are used to manage interactions with current and potential customers. Unlike CDPs, CRMs are not designed to facilitate personalized customer experiences. They are limited with regard to the number of channels and data sources they can interact with.

A traditional CRM cannot, for example, pull in information from a customer service solution or a social media tracking system, nor can it deliver relevant content to diverse channels. The modern CDP arose as a response to these limitations, when enterprises needed "analytical CRMs" that could access and incorporate customer data from any online or offline source.

CASE STUDY

THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

PERSONALIZING THE CITIZEN EXPERIENCE

The City of Los Angeles needed greater coordination and consistency across its web properties to ensure that as users hopped from one city site to another, the experience was simple and frustration-free.

The city wanted high availability and personalization for its residents. By leveraging Drupal and Acquia, the city was able to provide a universal navigation system for all sites and give users the transparency and information access they needed to effectively interact with the city government.

Most importantly, the city was able to introduce personalization to its websites. The implementation of the **Angeleno Account** provides access to many City of Los Angeles websites, apps and services with just one user ID and password, and tailors the experiences on the sites to individual users. Additionally, through on-site personalization, when a visitor enters their address, they can get neighborhood-specific information, such as contact information for their councilperson, parks & rec info, notifications of upcoming events, scheduled road construction, and other information that impacts them directly.

DX ROADMAP FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

SECTION 04

ENSURE GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY

Citizen experiences need to be compliant, composable and secure.

The balance between delivering a strong customer experience and ensuring adequate security and governance is quite unique for the public sector. The demand on IT to deliver trusted, non-intrusive and scalable service is stringent and it's much easier said than done. Coupled with the fact that most public sector IT groups need to factor in many legacy solutions and technologies, the job may seem impossible at times.

A platform approach allows an agency's digital footprint to grow in a logical, controlled way that is overseen from a single dashboard. There are certain critical attributes and capabilities, however, that a platform must have in order to modernize public sector infrastructure and deliver first-rate digital experiences to constituents:

▐ It must be secure and compliant from the ground up. A modern public sector digital platform needs to meet the most stringent government compliance standards and certifications right out of the gate:

- Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP)
- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS)
- General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)
- California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA)

▐ It should be composable. Such digital experience platforms (DXPs) should enable the creation of reusable components that are easier for end users to work with. They should also ensure the maintenance of compliance and security standards by building controls into the components themselves. This is the only way to get IT out of the content support game. No longer do IT departments have to waste valuable time supporting content updates — they can now enable non-technical, public-facing staff to do this on their own.

▐ It must maintain data security. Through tight integration with a CDP, a modern web platform for public sector organizations needs to access and deploy data as needed without exposing it to risk or falling out of compliance with data regulations.

When you have a platform that is flexible enough to be responsive to the needs of citizens and stakeholders, but structured enough to be easily governed, you have the best of both worlds.

CASE STUDY

RANCHO CUCAMONGA

PROVIDING A SECURE AND MODERN EXPERIENCE

The City of Rancho Cucamonga in California had an outdated proprietary web platform from a government solutions provider and their website was hosted on-premise, using staff-maintained web servers. The site's lack of responsiveness resulted in a less-than-stellar user experience for residents, and while 65% of users accessed the site on a mobile device, the site was not mobile-friendly.

The city wanted to gain independence from vendor lock-in and adopt a CMS that provided content creators with both flexibility and stability, allowing them to more easily update content for a mobile-oriented site while adhering to stringent security standards such as the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA).

Now, truly mobile and fully secure, the Rancho Cucamonga site provides the same high level of service to its majority-mobile audience as it does for its desktop users. Additionally, the city's hosting overhead costs have been slashed as they focus on improving the user experience — instead of on-site server maintenance. Content creation and editing tasks have improved exponentially and the team has removed extraneous pages, providing visitors with only the most relevant, up-to-date information necessary. Metrics show that the site's new streamlined approach is working well, with visitors needing to view fewer pages to achieve their goals.

SECTION 05

THE LEADING DXP FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR

DX ROADMAP FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

With the right DXP, government agencies can deliver the digital experiences today's citizens demand.

As digital-first initiatives sweep across all sectors — accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic — heightened citizen expectations for digital experiences are here to stay. For the public sector, delivering digital information and services is no longer a nice-to-have; it is imperative for providing the level of service constituents now expect and demand. The right DXP is critical to enabling public agencies to respond quickly to the evolving expectations and build a strong, scalable and secure digital foundation for the future.

With our long history of working closely with the public sector, Acquia has adapted solutions to provide what every government agency needs to deliver great constituent experiences:

/ **Flexibility to deliver new digital services and access emerging channels**

/ **Personalization that serves customer needs and builds trust**

/ **A "golden customer record" that allows government agencies to have a single view of a constituent**

/ **Governance to manage a portfolio of websites and digital applications**

/ **Compliance with key government certifications like FedRAMP**

/ **Reasonable total cost of ownership**

/ **Ease of use for non-technical stakeholders**

Acquia is not only a field-tested partner for federal and local government agencies — it is the DXP that meets and exceeds government standards with core certifications. Acquia has been granted an Authority to Operate (ATO) under the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Department of Labor among others. Only cloud providers that meet the strict provisions of FedRAMP gain this certification.

BRING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO THE PEOPLE

Connect with us today to see how Acquia can enable your agency to deliver personalized digital experiences for your citizens.

LEARN MORE ▶

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ACQUIA.COM

ABOUT ACQUIA

Acquia is the open digital experience platform that enables organizations to build, host, analyze and communicate with their customers at scale through websites and digital applications. As the trusted open source leader, we use adaptive intelligence to produce better business outcomes for CX leaders.

DX ROADMAP FOR GOVERNMENT AGENCIES