public cio

Special Report

Rethinking Citizen Engagement

Your constituents are connecting in new ways. Here's how to reach them.

Table of Contents

e.Republic SMART MEDIA FOR PUBLIC SECTOR INNOVATION

Introduction

Engagement at the Intersection of Tradition and Transformation

Phoenix, the nation's sixth largest city, has never had a mass transit system that matched its size. Automobiles and highways have been the preferred method of transportation. But that's beginning to change. The city's first light rail line has been a resounding success, both in ridership and its boost to the economy. Based on evidence from community feedback, however, it was clear the city was still not meeting the transit needs of its 1.4 million residents.

City leadership decided to ramp up transit spending, but knew they first had to understand what residents really want when it comes to a modern mass transit system. By combining traditional city hall meetings with new technology tools, such as the network platform "mySidewalk," the Phoenix Transportation Department was able to engage residents in an unprecedented way. The result was passage of a transportation tax package that, when combined with federal funding, will generate $31.5 billion for new transit projects.

Why was the transit initiative so successful in car-friendly Phoenix? "We reached out to parts of the community that had been silent," said Maria Hyatt, the city's public transit director, in an interview with *Public CIO*. "Technology is an incredible tool for reaching a lot of people quickly."

Civic engagement has undergone a profound shift in recent years. Besides traditional town hall debates and printed materials, a digital version of engagement has developed where Web platforms, mobile apps and live-streaming video have pushed the process online, making it more participatory, compelling and potentially transformational. At the same time, a new kind of citizen has emerged — one who behaves differently than before. These citizens are used to engaging online with the private sector and are more distrustful of government. "Interest in civic engagement is directly proportional to the public cynicism in government," Steven Bosacker, director of public sector innovation at Living Cities, told *Public CIO*. "Dissatisfaction with government is a big driver for people who say we need something new and different."

These shifts present a dilemma for state and local governments. First, they must manage civic engagement across a continuum — from passive engagement, where citizens' smartphones become sensors to spot traffic congestion or automatically record the location of potholes, to single-issue engagements around parks or school problems, to full-on engagement, such as debating a proposed budget either virtually or in person at city hall. Second, state and local governments must contend with community and business engagement, understand what types of behavior and issues drive these two different groups, and then devise the right kind of engagement.

Given the public's level of distrust in government and their high expectations of public officials and institutions, civic engagement has arguably never been more important. Yet, governments struggle to engage citizens effectively today — and that problem may become more prevalent in the future. This raises several key questions:

- Are governments prepared to engage a new generation of citizens who expect engagement to be done on their terms?
- Do government leaders truly understand the concept and its importance, particularly as it becomes driven by technology and social platforms?
- Do governments have a grasp on how traditional and new forms of engagement fit together?

To answer these questions, the Center for Digital Government (CDG) surveyed 213 state and local government officials to understand their current civic engagement activities and plans for the future. This report analyzes those results and also draws heavily on CDG's annual Digital Cities surveys and Best of the Web awards to understand current best practices and trends. On the following pages, we examine what's driving today's engagement efforts, the types and methods of engagement, and the technologies that support engagement. We also provide real-world examples from key locations.

DAVID KIDD

Civic Engagement:
So Many Definitions

> **"** Civic engagement or civic participation is the encouragement of the general public to become involved in the political process and the issues that affect the community."
> — Wikipedia

> **"** Being sensitive to and understanding the world's problems as well as addressing them through collaboration and commitment."
> — Duke University

> **"** Civic engagement is increasing civic participation by encouraging participation in civil society."
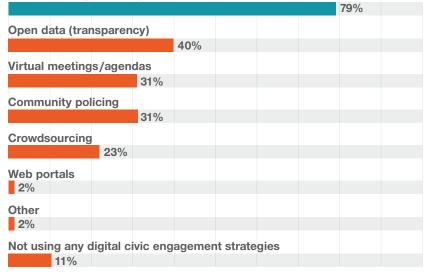> — Civic Honors

What is it for Government?

"Civic engagement is the process of engaging constituents through active or passive processes to increase the collective intelligence and well-being of a community."
— Center for Digital Government

Governments Are Finding New Ways to Engage

What types of civic engagement strategies are you using?

Social media (platforms)
79%

Open data (transparency)
40%

Virtual meetings/agendas
31%

Community policing
31%

Crowdsourcing
23%

Web portals
2%

Other
2%

Not using any digital civic engagement strategies
11%

They Are Blending Tech-Based and Traditional Methods

What is your primary strategy for civic engagement?

Inform and get quick feedback from residents on city actions through social media and other digital means
14%

Deeper, longer, deliberative conversations about issues of common interest that may involve social media along with conventional surveys, town halls, public meetings, focus groups and citizen advisory groups
21%
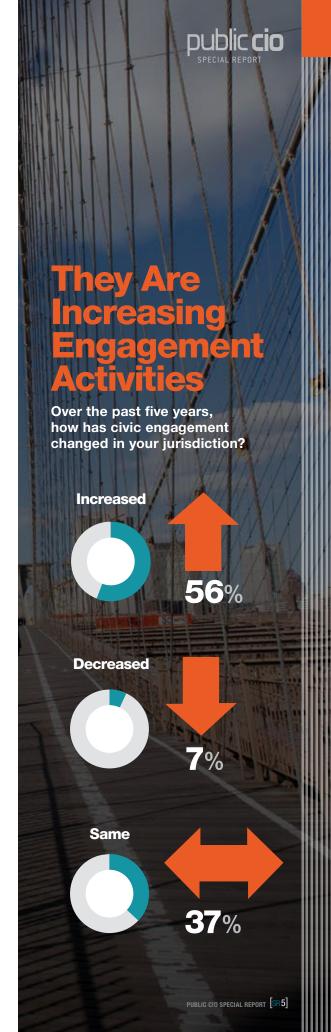
Hybrid of the two, weighted toward digital media
20%

Hybrid of the two, weighted toward conventional means
40%

Social media and other digital means are not part of our civic engagement
4%

Source: 2016 Center for Digital Government Civic Engagement Survey

They Are Increasing Engagement Activities

Over the past five years, how has civic engagement changed in your jurisdiction?

Increased
56%

Decreased
7%

Same
37%

DAVID KIDD

Rethinking **Why** and **How** You Engage

In 1964, America's space program was well underway, construction of the interstate highway system was going at full tilt and President Lyndon Johnson was launching his war on poverty, while putting together the framework for what would become Medicare — a safety net health care system for the elderly. There seemed to be little that government couldn't do and America's trust in government — at 74 percent, according to Pew Research Center data — reflected our belief in the public sector as a valued institution for problem solving.

Today, public trust in government is at less than 25 percent, one of the lowest points since surveys on the topic were first conducted. When you ask people why civic engagement is needed, many reasons are given, but one of the top concerns is the public's historically low confidence in government. Without trust, it becomes harder for government at any level to move forward with new, innovative programs to better serve the public, while maintaining the existing services that we expect government to perform on a daily basis. Much of this distrust is aimed at the federal level, Pew Research data shows, but states and to a lesser degree, local governments, also are viewed with skepticism.

Get the public and government engaged with each other and the chances of bringing about more positive change — whether it's to help revitalize

old neighborhoods, improve transit services or ensure public participation in the budget-making process — are likely to improve, say experts and public officials.

But there's another issue that is pushing the civic engagement process in new directions. Today, people have far different expectations compared to past generations. Face-to-face meetings on a weekday evening down at city hall just don't work in today's digitally dependent society. "The digital culture is changing expectations," said Eric Gordon, a professor at Emerson College and director of the Engagement Lab, in an interview with *Public CIO*. What's happening is an expansion in the kinds of engagement that occur in our social, professional and personal lives.

People interact and engage with online retailers and with friends on Facebook on a regular basis. That expectation is now spreading into government. "The institution of government is having to respond and change, like every other institution, because of changing expectations of feedback and interactivity," said Gordon.

As noted, everyone from online retailers to the entertainment industry to newspapers has had to adapt to meet the public's expectations, a change that has been fueled by social media and other digital platforms. "Every industry has to shift in order to accommodate new modes of participation and interaction," Gordon said. "Government has to shift as well, but it's more complicated than an industrial shift, so it needs its own kind of thinking about how to make those shifts smartly."

There's a third, far-reaching reason why civic engagement is growing in interest and value. The 20th-century version of government operated by centralizing decision-making and problem-solving within a bureaucracy, which was well-skilled at collecting, sorting and analyzing information to develop policies that responded to society's challenges. But as Beth Noveck, director of GovLab, a data research network at New York University explained in an interview with *Public CIO*, that mindset has changed with the start of the 21st century. "We know from wide experience from business and other domains that the best ideas, the most innovative ideas, develop from expertise that's never exclusively within the four walls of an institution." The underlying assumption and vision is that government has to engage and collaborate with citizens to solve the complex problems society faces today.

Meet Your New Citizens

35% Then
of American adults owned a smartphone in 2011

64% Now
of American adults owned a smartphone in 2015

7% Then
of American adults used social networking sites in 2005

65% Now
of American adults used social networking sites in 2015

77% Then
of Americans said they trust the government in Washington always or most of the time in 1964

24% Now
of Americans said they trust the government in Washington always or most of the time in 2014

7% Then
of U.S. consumers used a mobile payment application in 2013

40% Now
of U.S. consumers used a mobile payment application in 2014

"We know from wide experience from business and other domains that the best ideas, the most innovative ideas, **develop from expertise** that's never exclusively within the four walls of an institution."
— Beth Noveck, director of GovLab

Sources: Pew Research Center; Walker Sands Communications

Unpacking Your Engagement Options

At the broadest level, civic engagement is about how government, society and citizens interact. To engage requires knowledge, skills, values and motivations to make a difference. The outcomes can vary, from more voter participation and volunteerism to increased feedback that improves the quality of life in a community.

There are many ways that state and local governments can foster engagement. On one end of the spectrum there is passive engagement. This could be something as simple as an app on a smartphone that automatically records a bump on a city street and transmits that data to the department of public works as a geo-coded alert about a possible pothole. Engagement becomes progressively more active, depending on what is happening and what level of communication is required between government and citizen. The town hall meeting is perhaps the most active form of engagement, in which face-to-face dialogue — possibly blended with live, online surveys — takes place to tackle a critical issue, such as new spending for a city budget or plans for neighborhood revitalization.

4 Ways to Engage

Services
Putting the citizen's experience at the center

At first glance, customer service may not seem like your typical type of engagement. But for many jurisdictions, serving citizens has morphed into a type of engagement that reflects, to some degree, what Amazon has done to customer service — turning it into an interactive experience that can take place at a time and place of the customer's choosing. Customer-oriented service is one of the leading trends in local government, and by approaching it through the lens of engagement management, cities believe they can not only improve services, but also generate the kind of feedback — and high-value data — that can improve quality of life and the public's trust in government.

Crowdsourcing
Engaging citizens and businesses to help produce new services

This modern era form of engagement digitally collectivizes work or funding. Wikipedia, the crowdsourced online encyclopedia, is perhaps one of the more famous examples. All levels of government have used the concept to tackle a range of thorny issues, from traffic congestion and health care (crowdsourcing has been used to track flu activity) to public safety. Police departments have used crowdsourcing to gather additional information on recent crimes or criminals, while 911 services have used crowdsourcing tools to alert CPR-trained citizens to help cardiac-arrest victims who may be in their immediate vicinity.

Transparency
Strengthening government accountability through open data and records

The open data movement has unleashed a wave of previously locked-up data for public consumption. The impact has been tremendous in terms of generating new tools and conversations between the public and government officials on everything from crime to health care. Transparency is also crucial to improving political engagement, according to the Sunlight Foundation, which advocates for better public records campaign finance laws. Transparency has fast become the fuel for civic engagement throughout all levels of government.

Democracy
Bringing citizens into the decision-making process using traditional and tech-driven methods

Some might argue that any form of civic engagement, no matter how passive, represents some form of democracy in action. Civic engagement certainly has its roots in town hall meetings that can be traced back to the colonial era. Today, those meetings continue to be the bedrock of democracy-driven engagement in small towns and large cities. But the practice has taken on new meaning in the digital era as the format evolves, including the addition of live-streaming meetings, online surveys to measure citizen sentiment around an issue, and participatory budgeting, which lets citizens make informed decisions on how a portion of a budget will be applied to services.

A Continuum o

Traditional citizen engagement activities and newer technology-based techniques form a continuum of options that require varying degrees of effort and commitment from citizens. Effective engagement strategies combine both traditional and tech-based methods that let citizens choose how to get involved in their communities.

Passive engagement:

Constituents unconsciously engage in processes for government.

Riverside, Calif.

The **Engage Riverside** transparency site serves up city information via infographics, dashboards, interactive visualizations, maps and video. The site has logged more than 540,000 page views since its debut in 2014.

Tallahassee, Fla.

The **DigiTally app** lets mobile users connect with city information and conduct a wide range of transactions. Residents can **report problems** such as potholes, graffiti and broken street lights, and track progress on repairs. They can also use the app to pay utility bills, track bus locations, report electrical outages and calculate property taxes.

Alexandria, Va.

ParkLink, an interactive GIS-based "parks and amenities finder," combines information about all of Alexandria's publicly accessible open spaces into a single application. Besides helping residents and visitors **locate the nearest park,** the app includes an extensive list of searchable amenities such as playgrounds, swimming pools and dog parks.

Austin, Texas

The city hopes to harness GPS location information from motorists' mobile phones to **re-time traffic signals**. The technology would track drivers' speed and location, and that data would be used to sense potential traffic jams and adjust traffic signals accordingly.

Boston

Boston's Street Bump app uses the accelerometer and GPS technology in citizens' mobile phones to **automatically detect potholes** and notify city officials about needed repairs. As users drive, the mobile app collects data about the smoothness of the ride, giving the city real-time information it uses to fix problems and plan long-term investments.

f Engagement

Columbia, Mo.

The city website provides **historical electric and water usage data** for rental units in Columbia. Renters can search expected utility costs for a property by entering a street address or locating it on an interactive map.

Kansas City, Mo.

The **Art of Data initiative** selected 10 local artists to turn information from Kansas City's open data site into visual art. The artists pulled information from 10 different data sets, ranging from life expectancy by ZIP code to citizen satisfaction with the safety of their neighborhoods. An exhibit of the art drew more than 3,000 people.

Seattle

The city holds multi-subject meetings that allow **citizens to participate** in several topics during **a single live event.** The approach reduces the number of events that interested citizens must attend, and it breaks down single-topic engagement silos.

Active engagement:

Constituents consciously engage in processes for government.

Baton Rouge, La.

Open data is the foundation for a city-created GIS portal that uses a combination of cloud-hosted technology and server-side Web services to provide authoritative map data to city decision-makers and citizens.

Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

Citizens can access **live and archived video** from city commission meetings, as well as submit electronic comments about agenda items.

Phoenix

An online engagement platform lets **citizens suggest ideas** for new transit services and street infrastructure. Using polling, mapping, open-ended questions and discussion prompts, residents directly helped develop a new transportation plan. The city also used traditional **in-person meetings** to gather input.

Tech Makes a Difference

Public officials say technology can strengthen government-to-citizen relationships.

Do you believe innovative technology can improve civic engagement?

Yes	91%
No	0%
Don't know	9%

Are you seeing evidence of innovative technology improving civic engagement in your jurisdiction?

Yes	57%
No	23%
Don't know	20%

How would you rank the relationship between innovative technology and improved civic engagement?

Very high	12%
High	68%
Neither high nor low	18%
Low	1%
Very low	1%

What are the most significant benefits from using new technological tools in support of civic engagement?

Better services for citizens	44%
Increased transparency	58%
Improved citizen perception of government	41%
Greater citizen participation in government services	34%
Greater democratic participation in policy issues	10%
Better communication between public figures and citizens	56%

Source: 2016 Center for Digital Government Civic Engagement Survey

Tech Tools for Expanding Your Engagement Activities

It's hard not to find technology's role in civic engagement — it ranges from the databases used to keep track of projects, to online surveys, social media platforms and streaming video from live forums. Just a few years ago, incorporating technology into civic engagement was novel enough that everyone wanted to do it, according to Emerson College's Gordon. "Now, when you decide to create or implement a technology [for an engagement project], there is a sense that there at least be some justification for doing that. And even with the best justification, there's always an acknowledgement of what it doesn't do."

As state and local governments have learned how to adapt technology tools to engagement (rather than the other way around), a rich ecosystem of digital solutions has emerged that can be leveraged throughout the continuum, from passive to active engagement.

Platforms: The term "platform" has become ubiquitous in technology today. For the purposes of engagement, they tend to be networking platforms that foster peer-to-peer communications and interactions, and transparency platforms that support the publication of open data. Some of the networking tools that exist include: Nextdoor, mySidewalk and Neighbor.ly to name a few. Transparency platforms exist as commercial ventures, as well as platforms run by transparency advocacy organizations, such as Code for America, Sunlight Labs and CivicLabs.

Social media: Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram and even Yelp have become universal onramps to engagement. While technically platforms, they provide a variety of ways to trigger engagement that can be both passive and active. Although it's tempting to make social media the default engagement tool because adoption has become nearly universal, smart public officials recognize they have their limits.

Mobile: Smartphones and tablets, combined with the apps they run, have transformed how and when people interact. The days when going online meant booting up a desktop PC are long gone, allowing citizens to engage while untethered. Mobile devices help engagement spread across the continuum, giving citizens the ability to passively engage through apps, such as Street Bump and Citizens Connect, as well as engage online in a more active fashion, without actually having to attend a neighborhood meeting.

CRM: Originally developed as a type of call center technology to support 311 and similar hotline systems, customer relationship management (CRM) software has morphed into an engagement management system for many cities. Recognizing that citizens use different channels to reach government besides the phone, CRM has incorporated a variety of online communications technologies, as well as feedback mechanisms that inform citizens on the status of a query, request or complaint. Some cities even use CRM as an enterprise-wide customer service platform where engagement is proactive and ongoing.

Data analytics: With so many tools and platforms available, it has become increasingly evident that state and local governments are collecting vast amounts of data, which has to be quickly and effectively analyzed if an engagement project is going to succeed. Cities and states are currently in the early adoption phase of data analytics for engagement. If it's done, it happens as a human endeavor. But technology is moving rapidly and already there are efforts underway to analyze engagement data and give it a storytelling component so the public better understands the outcomes, said Gordon. "There's more of an emphasis on making the input and output a little bit more human."

Engagement Types:
Democracy, transparency
Engagement Tech:
Platforms, data analytics
Engagement Summary:
As Atlanta builds a new stadium for its professional football franchise, it also seeks to revitalize the surrounding Westside community in ways that don't overlook longtime residents. An online, interactive database will become a hub of conversation, information and strategies to ensure residents of these historic neighborhoods share in the growth and progress as a result of the new facility.

Engagement Profile: Atlanta
Remembrance and Revitalization

Urban living is back in vogue.
But just about every city that has experienced a surge in urbanism has found the growth and benefits can take place at an uneven pace. Atlanta's Westside community is about to experience a boom thanks to the construction of the new Atlanta Falcons football stadium. However, the Westside is also a cluster of neighborhoods rich in African-American history, but poor when it comes to economic development, housing, transportation and other urban amenities.

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed wants to make sure the Westside neighborhoods aren't overwhelmed, or worse, bypassed as urbanization projects, such as the new stadium, get underway. Westside Future Fund, a multi-partner project, was launched to help ensure Atlanta's historic neighborhoods share in the city's growth and progress. The project has since been selected by the City Accelerator initiative (a joint project of Living Cities, the Citi Foundation and the Governing Institute) to explore innovative ways to revitalize inner-city neighborhoods.

Atlanta wants to use engagement strategies to help unify the people who live in the Westside neighborhoods. "There have been efforts in the past to revitalize neighborhoods, but without a focus on the people," said Terica Black, Atlanta's manager of grants and partnerships. The goal is to have the residents define their greatest needs rather than have the city presume what those needs are.

Black and others are aware of engagement problems from past projects. Besides the issue with top-down approaches, fragmented engagement practices have been another problem. "We wanted to avoid engagement fatigue when too few residents are asked for their input too many times," said Black.

So Atlanta is working to engage a larger base of residents and develop strategies that continue the conversation even when administrations change.

Christopher Le Dantec, a professor of digital media from Georgia Tech who is helping build tools for the Westside engagement project, said one of the goals is to create a community narrative to help spark interest. That might take shape using some old-fashioned media: a local newspaper with stories by and about residents.

ATLANTA WANTS TO LET RESIDENTS OF ITS HISTORIC WESTSIDE COMMUNITY DEFINE THEIR GREATEST NEEDS.

But there are more modern ways to help residents be remembered, while pushing forward with revitalization efforts that will range from economic development and housing to social services, transportation, public health and education initiatives. "Technology offers a way to capture what the residents are doing, as well as their perspectives, in tangible ways that we can access at different points," said Nasim Fluker, director of programs for the Westside Future Fund. "Everybody has a smartphone these days, no matter their income level; technology is a way to connect this community that has been somewhat isolated economically."

Already, the project has set up a database of unique entries, ranging from the types of engagement practices and organizations that are involved to a list of the key stakeholders. As the database grows, it will become public and interactive, capturing not just information but knowledge that will allow conversations and strategies to move forward. That's important, because the project has been underway for just several months out of an 18-month timeframe.

Engagement Types:
Crowdsourcing, open data
Engagement Tech:
Social media, platforms
Engagement Summary:
Long Beach engaged local experts and citizens at large to create a strategy for attracting new businesses to the city. These efforts led a major automaker to locate a new logistics hub there. Long Beach also crowdsources input from city residents to set the direction of open data activities.

Engagement Profile:
Long Beach, Calif.

From Crowdsourcing to Corporate Sourcing

It has the second-busiest container port in the country and is one of the largest ports in the world. With a population approaching 470,000, the city is solidly in the mid-tier of urban centers in the country. But Long Beach is almost surrounded by the much larger, brasher Los Angeles, which makes it harder to stand out, whether it's to attract new industry or the next generation of digitally savvy workers.

So Long Beach decided to rely on its smarts to build economic activity and find ways to leverage its open data to support growth and skills building. First came economic development. Bloomberg Philanthropies gave the city an Innovation Grant that has been used to tap into area expertise — such as the California State University at Long Beach — to help the city think about how it can better meet the needs of area businesses. The city

has also turned to the expertise of its residents, using civic engagement to start the conversation about economic direction, according to Bryan Sastokas, the city's director of technology and innovation.
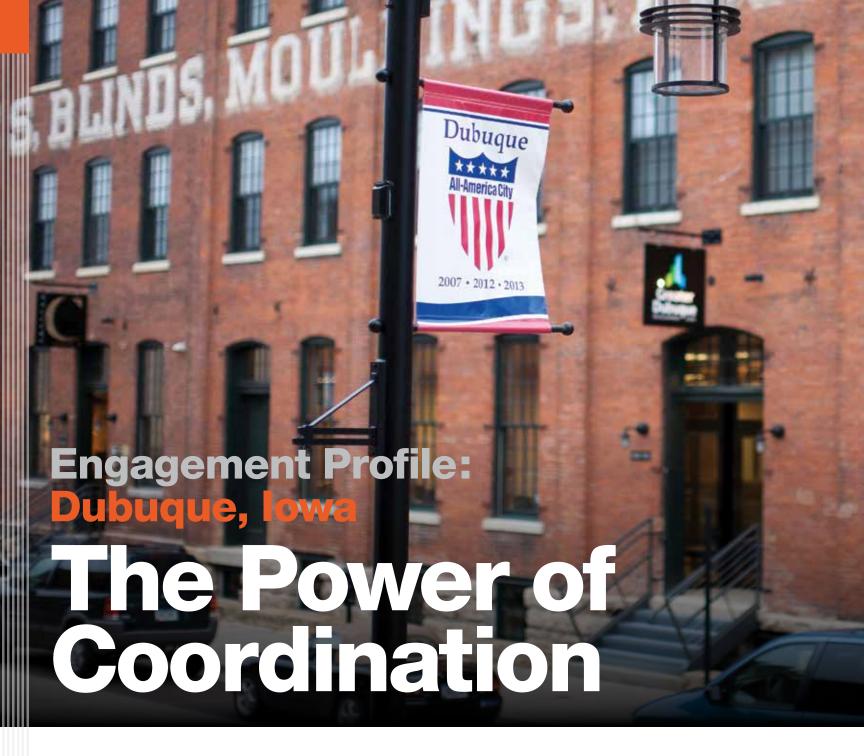
The effort is beginning to pay off, with a new technology park located on the site of a former Boeing aircraft manufacturing facility. Already, Mercedes-Benz has set up shop there, creating a major logistics hub for the company. Sastokas attributes the landing of Mercedes to the fact that the city's residents and business leaders engaged and then decided that Long Beach's road to economic success lay through its past history as a leader in transportation.

Engagement has also worked in a more unique way. Rather than hire (a rather expensive) chief data officer to lead the city's open data initiatives, Long Beach turned to crowdsourcing to figure out what data would benefit

its citizens and how open data should be presented for maximum transparency and value. "We wanted to develop a new open data policy and really try to provide data that will be impactful from the user experience," said Sastokas. So, citizens interact with city officials on new ideas through the city's Web portal, events and group meetings. The portal allows citizens to launch discussions, as well as participate in forums, meetings and surveys.

The city is also maximizing civic engagement through social media and, in a unique twist, tapping the media that is available through the city's television production studio. "We try to help businesses gather information, film them and put together presentations for events, such as 'innovation week,' which can be marketed around so that businesses in other cities can see what's happening here," said Sastokas.

Engagement Profile:
Dubuque, Iowa

The Power of Coordination

Engagement Types: Transparency

Engagement Tech: Data analytics

Engagement Summary: Dubuque uses a data publishing platform to release detailed information on tax revenue and spending. The city also is creating easy-to-understand performance metrics for the general public designed to increase accountability.

Civic engagement has many important parts. But one that doesn't get a lot of attention is the role of the coordinator. This person must have the ability to understand whether or not an issue needs outreach or engagement, identify the right resources needed to move engagement forward, work with different groups — both inside and outside of government — to get the project off the ground, help identify the kinds of information that must be collected and then help city staff correctly analyze the data to ensure the outcomes are of value.

When CDG surveyed state and local governments on this topic, 47 percent said they had a coordinator who was responsible for overseeing and implementing civic engagement efforts. Nikola Pavelic is Dubuque, Iowa's civic engagement coordinator. He was the first to hold the position, so he has helped create and shape it.

DUBUQUE SURVEYS CITIZENS VIA COMMUNITY CENTER KIOSKS, ONLINE PLATFORMS AND IN-PERSON MEETINGS.

Dubuque isn't a big city — with a population of 60,000 — but it has the same problems that confront every modern urban center. At the heart of the matter is the fact that city leaders recognize they need to better connect with their citizens, so they understand where their tax dollars are going and why. "Transparency is a big reason behind the engagement projects," said Pavelic. "It's also about aligning the city council's priorities with the public."

Pavelic works with the city manager and city council on strategic planning to identify which goals and priorities should involve civic engagement. So far, the city has launched two broad initiatives: one centers on the city's budget, and the other involves a new ordinance for a resiliency advisory commission that will deal with adverse events that may impact the Dubuque region economically, environmentally or even socially.

The city has used technology as a foundation for its civic engagement,

contracting with a commercial data publishing platform to create a public face to Dubuque's budgeting process. This allows citizens to see how the city is spending taxpayer money and from where the money is coming. As for engagement itself, technology is not a driving force in how things get done. "A lot of our engagement involves surveys, so we use a combination of community center kiosks, online platforms for surveying and then traditional in-person meetings," said Pavelic.

With limited resources, Pavelic doesn't want to go too broad with technology in civic engagement, but rather use it in a targeted way. "I'm working with our IT department on how we can use technology to identify performance metrics. We have some [metrics], but in terms of results-based accountability, we have to come up with a tool that the public can make sense of, instead of something that is only understood internally."

Pavelic would also like to use technology to combat a common problem in his field of work: engagement fatigue. It's not just government that wants to engage citizens these days. "It seems like everyone wants to engage the public for everything," he said. His solution would be a website or an app that would be a central repository of engagement opportunities, the documents that are part of each opportunity, as well as meeting information as the project goes live, so citizens can view what is going on, what the topic is and when it is taking place. "Ideally, the software would have the ability to integrate into the public's own online calendars, if they choose, so they can view everything automatically, by date and so on," he said.

Engagement Types: Democracy
Engagement Tech: Platform
Engagement Summary:

To reduce engagement fatigue, Seattle created multi-subject meetings that allow citizens to participate in several topics during a single event. The approach reduces the number of events that interested citizens must attend, and it breaks down single-topic engagement silos. Now the city plans to create an online repository of the conversations taking place.

Engagement Profile: Seattle

Reforming the Engagement Proce

Seattle has a rich history of civic engagement that has worked well over the decades. But today, the city, with an estimated population of 662,000, is growing rapidly. The tried and true methods of engagement, involving a small group of active neighborhood residents meeting at a specific time and location to discuss and plan, were considered out of date.

Adding impetus to change was the fact that the city needed to update its comprehensive 20-year roadmap for growth at a time when it was already facing a significant housing crisis. Seeing an opportunity, Mayor Ed Murray appointed Kathy Nyland as director of the Department of Neighborhoods. One of her first tasks was to engage Seattle's disparate neighborhoods with the knowledge that adding more housing could be both necessary and tricky at the same time.

According to Nyland, the Department of Neighborhoods is the city's eyes and ears, so having a well-run engagement plan is vital. "We feel we are operating from an antique model when it comes to engagement, so we decided to drill down to examine the mechanisms of what we do to engage citizens and find out what works and what doesn't," she said.

Two related problems quickly rose to the surface. First, it was clear the city's various departments engaged the same community about different projects within a short period of time, with a lot of overlap and not a lot of talk among departments about what was going on. To reduce the number of engagement silos, Nyland and her staff tried to understand how each department approaches engagement and then develop a process so engagement projects could be better coordinated. The other problem was engagement fatigue: too many projects involving the same small group of citizens over and over.

The initial process to untangle problems around silos and fatigue was to create a robust, centralized calendar, "so that everyone can see what's going on," she said. While the idea has been tested out in a few departments, Nyland says the concept needs more testing before it can be made scalable across the city.

The other process was to develop a multi-layered approach to neighborhood participation so citizens could have the flexibility to choose which project they wished to attend. Initially, departments resisted the idea of holding more than one neighborhood meeting at the same time, but as Nyland explained, multi-purpose meetings would work the same way a newspaper worked: different messages, about news, sports, entertainment and so on, all in the same format. "We have found that communities appreciate that there is a multitude of topics at the same time, with a variety of staff on hand," she said.

COORDINATING MULTIPLE DEPARTMENTAL OUTREACH EFFORTS IS A CORNERSTONE OF SEATTLE'S ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY.

Like other engagement projects, the use of technology is still in the early stages. Shifting from a traditional model of neighborhood meetings to something that is more asynchronous takes time. "We are looking at developing an online repository of all the conversations taking place," said Nyland. "This calls for a platform that would allow the right people access to the conversations."

Already, the coordinated approach to neighborhood engagement is paying off in savings as the city reduces the need to rent public spaces for multiple meetings. As a result of the work, Nyland's Department of Neighborhoods is fast becoming the city of Seattle's civic engagement hub.

Engagement Types:
Democracy, crowdsourcing
Engagement Tech:
Platform
Engagement Summary:
Phoenix used a mix of new and traditional engagement methods to build support for a transportation tax. An online platform lets citizens mark desired transportation improvements on an interactive map. The city also held live meetings to discuss the plan. In all, more than 6,000 comments were collected to help shape the transportation plan.

Engagement Profile: Phoenix

Boosting Transit Spending with a Blend of Engagement

The success Phoenix had with its transportation tax initiative mentioned at the beginning of this report came from a blend of old and new engagement techniques. Maria Hyatt, the city's public transit director, pointed out that Phoenix's demographics have been changing recently, making it harder to reach constituents, especially younger people, through evening meetings. "They don't attend meetings to get information, so we looked for another way to capture the input of the community," she said.

The mySidewalk platform the city uses is multi-dimensional. "We can do surveys; we can ask citizens to pin on a [digital] map what they want, where they want it and when they want it," Hyatt said.

Compared to traditional meetings, the tool proved dynamic for communications. The city ended up engaging 3,700 citizens through the software platform and, when combined with people who showed up at live meetings, garnered more than 6,000 comments that helped shape the transportation plan.

Nyland said technology injected some flexibility into the engagement process that wasn't there before. "With the software, we could start with a big category of information and then narrow down what the citizens wanted. We gathered input, analyzed it and then put it back out for another survey. That helped us narrow down the community's priorities."

Citizens who preferred to use technology to engage offered different viewpoints than citizens who attended meetings or who talked directly with staff at transit stops and centers. "People online were focused on the economic aspects of transit, connecting businesses with neighborhoods, while people we talked to directly, such as riders, focused on issues like the need

for more shade at stops, more frequent bus and light rail, longer hours, those sorts of issues."

The use of technology was a breakthrough for the city's public transit agency. "We can't go back to the old ways," said Hyatt. "We have to figure out new ways of engagement. We continue to evaluate different kinds of software to find which one meets our needs the best. This kind of online engagement is very effective."

States of Engagement

Cities may have the greatest opportunity to engage citizens directly, but states also are working to build stronger connections with their residents, often through better customer experience and transparency.

In 2015, a number of states unveiled innovative enterprise Web portals intended to link citizens with information and services faster and more easily. For instance, Utah analyzed how citizens historically have used its website and then created targeted microsites that curate the most frequently used state and local government information. In addition, the state classified and geotagged 7,000 searchable items to ensure the portal's search function delivers what citizens are looking for.

Texas revamped its website too, releasing a radically simplified single-page portal in 2015. The state used analytics to pare down homepage content to services and information sought most frequently by citizens. In addition, a powerful search function helps users locate whatever they need.

Arkansas began thinking beyond the portal with Gov2Go, a mobile app described by state officials as an intelligent "personal government assistant." The app, available for iPhone and Android, delivers hyper-relevant information and services to state residents, tracking deadlines and issuing reminders for common transactions like property tax payments and license renewals. The more citizens use it, the smarter the platform becomes about their individual needs.

And Iowa piloted a digital driver's license that ultimately may let motorists replace physical licenses with a digital copy they carry in a smartphone. Approximately 100 employees at the Iowa Department of Transportation tested the digital driver's license app late last year. "It's about offering customers choice and convenience," said Andrea Henry, director of strategic communications for the Iowa DOT, in an interview with Government Technology. "Choice in how they get their services from a government agency, and choice in the fact that they can have their driver's license in a digital format in addition to the plastic card."

On the transparency front, California broke new ground in 2014 by creating an open data portal for health and human services information. Initially stocked with data sets from the California Department of Public Health — including birth profiles, popular baby names, poverty rates and asthma statistics — state officials say the portal eventually will serve as a hub for open data from other California HHS departments.

PHOENIX.GOV

5 Reasons Why Engagement Can Be Hard

1 **Engagement fatigue:** The phrase pops up throughout this report and it really is one of the defining challenges of modern civic engagement. Citizens are being asked to engage on just about everything, and not just from government, but from other sectors, such as health care and online retailers, said Dubuque's Pavelic. Exacerbating the issue is that engagement projects too often involve the same people showing up for meetings. "We are casting a wider net to engage a larger base of residents," said Atlanta's Black, in reaction to the problem. Seattle's Nyland said fatigue happens because too many departments keep reaching out to the same people for engagement. The need to reach the so-called silent members of the community, the ones who don't attend the live meetings, is critical to successful engagement, said Hyatt, of Phoenix.

2 **Staffing issues:** The use of civic engagement continues to grow. A demanding public expects to be engaged and public officials recognize how it can help drive modern government on many levels. Likewise, government workers recognize the enormous potential that can come from a well-crafted, well-run engagement project. But is there enough capacity in government to meet the demand? Emerson College's Gordon has studied civic engagement and sees a strain as the amount of civic engagement grows. "I'm seeing this demand being placed on people who have no training on how to do this and haven't had the time to think about what it means to engage well; it's just not part of their job. We're kind of seeing some stresses on what's expected of city government and how they may act." The solution? More capacity and training, according to Gordon.

3 **Complexity vs. speed:** Civic engagement is not easy. And it's getting harder all the time. Governments need to engage new populations that have been under-represented in the past. There also are engagement disparities between renters and homeowners, according to Bosacker, of Living Cities. It adds up to trickier demands for public officials, he said. So, engagement has to be done thoroughly and diligently, making planning complex. But that complexity shouldn't slow down how information and results are communicated back to participants, said Pavelic. "You have to have a quick way to get back to those who have participated and tell them what we have learned and explain what we are going to do with their input." The issue of turn-around keeps coming up as jurisdictions do more engagement projects, according to Pavelic. Just as important, the information needs to be in a summary format that the general public can understand, he added. While technology can help with dissemination, it has its limits when it comes to synthesizing the issues and outcomes and then clearly communicating them back to the citizens who were part of the engagement process.

STATES AND LOCALITIES FACE CHALLENGES AROUND COMMUNICATING COMPLEX FINDINGS AND SETTING CITIZEN EXPECTATIONS, BUT ULTIMATELY NEW TECHNOLOGY COUPLED WITH BETTER STORYTELLING MAY BE THE KEY TO STRONGER ENGAGEMENT.

4 **The direct democracy conundrum:** Has technology created unrealistic expectations when it comes to just how much citizens can engage with their local governments? Bosacker cautions that while technology can quickly gauge how citizens feel on a certain issue, he doesn't think it results in a higher caliber of engagement. "The danger is that if you use technology to increase the frequency of asking citizen input on just about every issue, then they can expect that to be the case." The problem that can ensue is one where citizens expect to see their response showing up in most of the decisions made by city government. "I fear that we are moving away from our current form of representative democracy towards direct democracy. I would never want to see engagement get to a place where we expect all decisions to be made directly, because citizens become less willing to accept a decision that doesn't reflect their choice made through technology."

5 **The sharing challenge:** Technology has helped make civic engagement more inclusive. By extension, it could make the role of government more collaborative. Imagine a wiki-type public sector, with government using technology to match people with certain skills to certain problems, so that it can find the best, most innovative ideas to help solve the complex problems we face today. Imagine a LinkedIn for government, said GovLab's Noveck, author of the book, *Smart Citizens, Smarter State*. "It would be a talent bank, a digital directory of people and their skills." The cornerstone of this type of engagement is skills sharing. The challenge is finding people who are willing to share, whether they are individuals in the private sector, or public servants who have skills outside their domain of work. Noveck also points out that in order for this unique type of engagement to succeed, a legal framework needs to be set up so impediments to this kind of public service can be removed, enabling people to participate in collaborative problem solving. "We have lots of mandates that say government needs to be more consultative, but we don't have practical ways to make that happen," she said.

The Future of Engagement

State and local officials recognize the problem. It goes deeper than long-term fiscal problems, neglected infrastructure and a lack of jobs. The public trust in government has plummeted to record lows, and without trust it becomes harder for public officials to launch new practices and policies.

When asked about the most important benefits that come from the use of technology to support civic engagement, public officials highly rated "increased transparency," "improved perceptions of government" and "increased public trust" as key factors. So too were "improved communications" and "improved services."

Given the high expectations for civic engagement to address government's trust and perception problems, not to mention the need to continuously improve services, it's easy to predict that engagement — both online and offline — will become an increasingly important strategy going forward.

When it comes to specifics about the future of engagement, especially around technology, the possibilities are intriguing and could lead to some novel practices. In Atlanta, Georgia Tech is helping the city track cyclists. The cyclists would produce data with an app on their phones that will tell city planners everything from the routes they use to the quality of the air at a particular location.

"It changes public engagement because instead of holding a public meeting, the data is captured privately while the cyclist is on a bike path," said Georgia Tech's Le Dantec. The project mirrors others that turn people into data collection points — sometimes referred to as "instrumenting people" — that in turn facilitate digital democracy, according to Le Dantec. Tech tools, like the one used in Atlanta, help to "decouple some of the normal processes of democratic participation" from traditional types of engagement.

Another future for engagement might involve more storytelling, said Gordon. Unlike the digital app that silently captures data while cycling in Atlanta, Gordon sees the need to make the input and output process of engagement a little more human, "so it's not just about 'put your opinion into an entry box' but creating some framework that is meaningful in the process of gathering information and feeding it back," he said. The reason this is important to engagement is that government is ripe with big data sets that can be hard to comprehend. Storytelling can bring meaning to aggregated data that ordinary people will have a better chance of understanding, if presented in the right context.

Gordon points out that while many people might participate in a meeting or an online survey, it's not the same as engaging. But storytelling is a way to create a relation between people, the data and a process. "What we want to try and do is create sustainable relations for the purpose of efficacy, to empower people," he said. Bring technology and storytelling together and engagement is more likely to take root. "That's why I'm most encouraged by the role that technology can play in making those interactions successful."

Whether it's done passively through apps or live meetings, or by combining the two and using new storytelling tools to bring meaning to the experience, the merging of technology with engagement will continue to grow. Long Beach CIO Sastokas has seen engagement grow at all levels in the city and sees it expanding as he looks out over the next five years. "There's a lot of civic engagement we're going to be seen doing and that we're going to actively engage in," he said. "It's going to be part of the fabric of how we operate this technology organization forever, and it's how we will move forward into the future."

Sponsors

Microsoft

OPENTEXT

ORACLE®

PURESTORAGE

VERINT®

Acknowledgments

Microsoft Civic Engagement Solutions:
Putting Citizens First with CRM

For a government agency focused on increasing civic engagement, nothing is more crucial than delivering excellent customer service. That's why many forward-thinking agencies are taking a cue from the corporate world to embrace a more citizen-centric model using customer relationship management systems (CRM) within a mobile- and cloud-first framework.

With a CRM solution, agencies can maintain a history of their interactions with a citizen — regardless of whether those interactions occur via phone, Web or another channel. This insight can help caseworkers, call center representatives and other agency personnel respond more quickly to a citizen's current needs, and mine this data to better understand what he or she might need in the future.

See how public sector agencies are using Microsoft Dynamics CRM solutions:

State of Alabama

The state of Alabama is implementing Microsoft Dynamics CRM solutions to simplify the eligibility enrollment process, and create a single point of contact for its social services programs. Supported by Microsoft Cloud for Government, the initiative will add convenience for participants, significantly reduce paperwork and help caseworkers provide better services more quickly.

Orange County Sheriff's Department
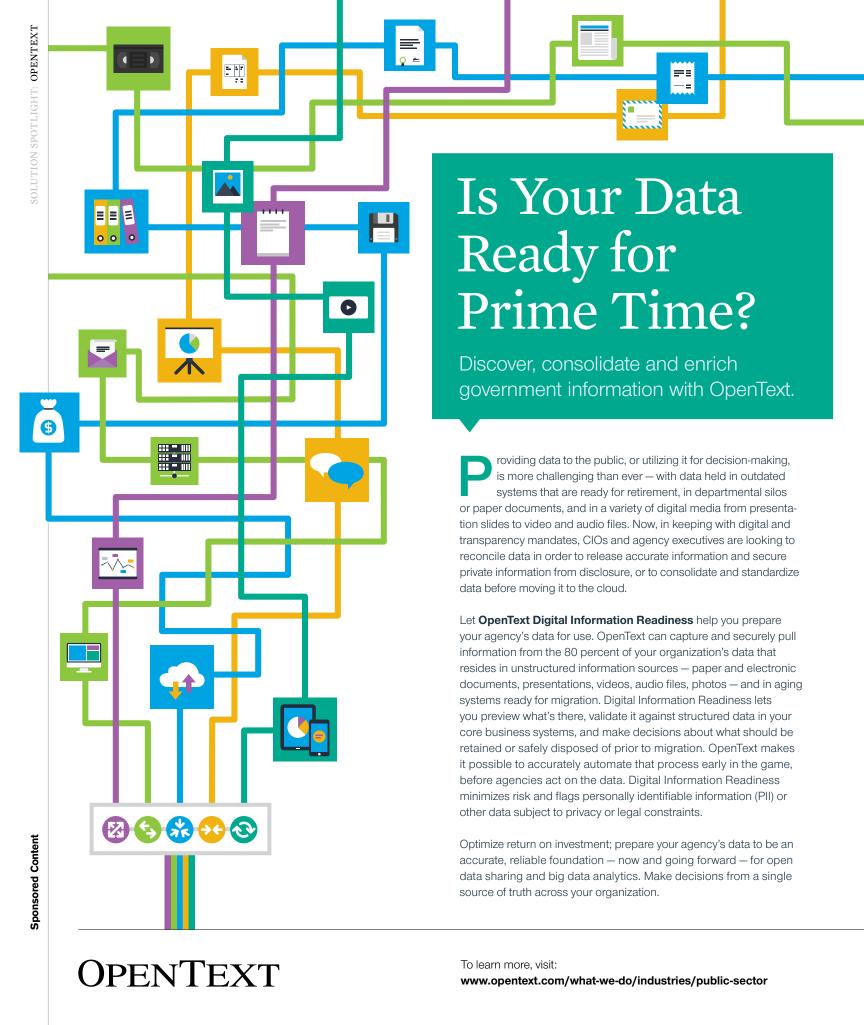
In Southern California, the Orange County Sheriff's Department relies on Microsoft Dynamics CRM, in part, to track when individual officers use force, or receive complaints, to head off potential problems and help ensure better community relations.

Grand Rapids, Mich.

Grand Rapids, Mich., established its new 311 center using Microsoft Dynamics CRM. The "One Call to City Hall" initiative successfully consolidated 266 city department contact numbers to a single non-emergency dial-in where residents now ask questions, discuss utility bills, request services and address other issues. Because call center workers have access to a knowledge database and a history of citizen interactions, they can resolve 85 percent of inquiries without transferring the call. The solution helped Grand Rapids reduce average call time from 6 minutes to just 22 seconds. Citizens can also accomplish many of the same tasks online, and from their mobile devices.

Microsoft

To learn more about Microsoft Dynamics CRM and related cloud-service offerings, visit: **www.microsoft.com/en-us/dynamics/public-sector.aspx**

Is Your Data Ready for Prime Time?

Discover, consolidate and enrich government information with OpenText.

P roviding data to the public, or utilizing it for decision-making, is more challenging than ever — with data held in outdated systems that are ready for retirement, in departmental silos or paper documents, and in a variety of digital media from presentation slides to video and audio files. Now, in keeping with digital and transparency mandates, CIOs and agency executives are looking to reconcile data in order to release accurate information and secure private information from disclosure, or to consolidate and standardize data before moving it to the cloud.

Let **OpenText Digital Information Readiness** help you prepare your agency's data for use. OpenText can capture and securely pull information from the 80 percent of your organization's data that resides in unstructured information sources — paper and electronic documents, presentations, videos, audio files, photos — and in aging systems ready for migration. Digital Information Readiness lets you preview what's there, validate it against structured data in your core business systems, and make decisions about what should be retained or safely disposed of prior to migration. OpenText makes it possible to accurately automate that process early in the game, before agencies act on the data. Digital Information Readiness minimizes risk and flags personally identifiable information (PII) or other data subject to privacy or legal constraints.

Optimize return on investment; prepare your agency's data to be an accurate, reliable foundation — now and going forward — for open data sharing and big data analytics. Make decisions from a single source of truth across your organization.

OPENTEXT

To learn more, visit:
www.opentext.com/what-we-do/industries/public-sector

MODERNIZING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Oracle Customer Experience Solutions
Deliver 21st-Century Services

Connected Citizens

Today's connected citizens have more control at their fingertips than any other time in history. Citizens decide how, when and where they want to engage with government — through web content, on mobile devices or over a variety of social channels. Citizens also expect government to recognize them and use their past interactions to offer a personalized experience.

Modern Interactions

Oracle Customer Experience (CX) solutions enable government to deliver interactions that rival the best modern consumer capabilities, such as services that are optimized for mobile devices and tailored for simplicity. These solutions support personalized interactions, spanning automated self-service to assisted service across multiple channels, including chat, email, social networks and text. And it's all delivered from an adaptable, integrated platform.

Knowledge is Power

Oracle also provides knowledge tools, which can be embedded into an agency's existing systems and websites to help citizens and employees conduct transactions quickly and accurately. Whether in one-on-one scenarios or via social communities, agencies can learn from each interaction and tailor content to maximize effectiveness. The result is real-time, relevant insights at every touch point.

INNOVATIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE WITH ORACLE CX

Connected Citizen Journey: From initial contact to resolution, guide citizens through their government interactions.

Availability and Consistency: Operate anytime, on any device, from anywhere, using any platform — including social media — for seamless, omni-channel experiences.

Better, Faster Decisions: Use a comprehensive citizen view, analytics and social media insights to improve decision-making.

Modern Government: Modernize your agency's business with integrated mobile, social and analytic technologies to exceed rapidly evolving citizen expectations.

ORACLE®

To learn more, visit: www.oracle.com/cx

Setting the Bar for Success with Flash Storage

Private sector apps and online services now set the bar for the user experience, leaving government agencies on the hook to deliver the same fast, uninterrupted services to meet citizen expectations.

To match this demand, agencies need a scalable storage solution — spinning disk, a 30-year-old technology, is no longer sufficient. Enter Pure Storage. By moving to Pure Storage's all-flash array, agencies can deliver critical services faster, reduce their data center footprint, upgrade without disruption and free up IT staff time. Most importantly, agencies can scale seamlessly as storage needs, constituent usage and online transactions expand.

Mission Possible

Pure Storage's flash arrays help deliver mission-critical applications — whether it's a 911 call center, an online engagement platform, or first responder communications — faster and more securely.

Always On

As with any citizen service, outages are unacceptable. Pure Storage not only eliminates performance dips and maintenance outages, but it is fully non-disruptive. This means agencies can avoid forklift upgrades and update software and controllers without impacting performance.

Anytime, Anywhere

Just as governments are connecting with and serving their citizens 24x7, so is Pure Storage. Administrators can access Pure Storage from any browser and on any device from a cloud-based interface.

Regardless of service or circumstance, governments need to meet citizen expectations. Pure Storage can help your agency play in a cloud-based, ultra-connected and digital world.

To learn more about Pure Storage, visit:
www.purestorage.com/government

PURESTORAGE

CREATING A DIGITAL-FIRST, CITIZEN-CENTRIC ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Public sector agencies know they must go digital to better serve citizens, but oftentimes even their best-laid plans fall short. Digital-first strategies can be hard to implement because government agencies must integrate disconnected technologies to be successful. Verint can help with its Digital First engagement management solution, which combines customer relationship management, Web content management and an enterprise search tool.

Ideal Experience

The ideal citizen experience is personalized, consistent and secure. It's also intuitive, using previous interactions to pre-populate forms and suggest topics of interest. Citizens prefer to interact with government online and they expect their experience to mirror that of the private sector. Verint's Digital First engagement management solution enables governments to deliver services that align to citizen expectations.

Economic Advantage

When citizens can't quickly find answers, they pick up the phone or visit an office. This costs agencies time and money — and the inconvenience often does nothing to improve citizen satisfaction. Verint's Digital First engagement management solution can help agencies reduce overhead costs by ensuring services are readily available and easy to use.

Verint's Digital First Engagement Management Solution features:

- A customer online portal that runs alongside, and can integrate with, an existing agency website

- A foundational Web content management system that can be used as the entire agency website

- Self-service capabilities that enable citizens to quickly find information or services, complete digital forms and interact with an online community

- An underlying case management capability that manages the end-to-end fulfillment of services requested by citizens

- Assisted-service capabilities supporting phone, Web and social media contact

To learn more, visit: **www.verint.com**

VERINT®

public cio

Special Report

Don't miss any of the Center for Digital Government & Public CIO Special Reports

Upcoming 2016 Special Report Topics:

The Government Enterprise
The dos and don'ts of implementing enterprise-wide IT systems

**Government Data –
New Sources, New Challenges**
Sensors, cameras and other automated technologies bring new implications to government operations

Innovative and Evolving Technology
A look around the corner at what the future holds

Past Special Report Topics:

The Platform of Tomorrow

Big Data and Analytics

The Definitive Guide to Data Centers

24/7 Government

Download past reports at
www.govtech.com/library