



2020 Outlook: “Building the Government of the Future, Right Now”

by Mike Canning



2020 marks the beginning of a new decade and a future where government’s ability to adapt and evolve will define success in serving citizens. Governments aren’t just adopting new technologies, but many are embracing a “digital first” approach. While the use of technology by government rightly garners a lot of attention, it is people that are still the heart of government. It is the power of people plus technology that can drive true transformation.

To me, the power of people is centered on diversity and inclusion. A diverse workforce in government—and in the organizations serving government – brings better ideas to the table, which helps drive innovation. Ultimately, it’s all about delivering a great experience to those served by government, which is why diversity and inclusion will continue to be a passion of mine in 2020 and beyond.

Technology is a critical tool in responding to citizen needs. By enabling governments to be far more efficient internally, it allows them to devote more resources to their mission of serving citizens.

But technology alone isn’t enough. It’s all about using technology to deliver customer service that matches the best organizations in the private sector. Government agencies are becoming more agile, both in their internal processes and in meeting their overall missions. Citizen-centered design needs to be a priority government-wide to help ensure that new technology delivers for people.

What does the future of government look like? In our work with the most innovative public sector leaders, we’ve seen several trends that will shape the coming years. The “Future of Government” is upon us—and it is promising. Here are some key trends.

1. A shift to anticipatory government

Governments are increasingly adopting an anticipatory stance toward addressing public policy, identifying problems in advance and taking appropriate pre-emptive measures. The rise of data analytics, coupled with AI-enabled technologies, has made it possible for the public sector to anticipate problems, rather than dealing with problems after they arise.

Agencies are using analytics to predict cyberattacks, contain health epidemics, and even reduce traffic congestion. For instance, the Los Angeles Police Department has been using models to predict crime events more accurately than crime analysts.ⁱ And the US Department of Veteran Affairs is leveraging big data and predictive models to assess future levels of homelessness among veterans.ⁱⁱ

For government to use data insights most effectively will require tech-savvy people at all levels. From Chief Data Officers to data analysts to designers, the government workforce will need to be more adept at “peeking around corners,” identifying issues before they occur and delivering better public outcomes at all levels of government. ([Read more](#))

2. A focus on the citizen

The citizen lies at the heart of public service. To create a better citizen experience, agencies are increasingly adopting human-centered design, an approach which makes the user experience paramount. For instance, US Department of Veteran Affairs has developed a more personalized interface to offer a seamless experience, while also eliminating the need for multiple logins.ⁱⁱⁱ The redesign has led to a 50 percent increase in online health care applications by veterans.^{iv}

Agencies are also applying behavioral science, sometimes known as “nudge thinking,” to better understand how it feels to walk in a citizen’s shoes. In Philadelphia, some seniors weren’t applying for the reduced water bills to which they were entitled. The city tried several different “nudge” messages, learning which worked best to increase the number of senior citizens applying for the discounts.^v

In some instances, governments are also co-creating solutions along with those who understand their users best—the citizens themselves. The city of Albuquerque hosts “design days” for co-designing solutions with immigrant entrepreneurs.^{vi}

The more inclusive the design, the better it connects with the citizen. By designing solutions for those with physical challenges, city governments are providing access for all, while at the same time gaining citizen confidence. Austin launched a pilot program to provide visually impaired riders with real-time information via audio clues delivered on their mobile phones on the status of city busses, including arrival times and any route changes.^{vii}

The combination of digital workflows, better data, and human-centered design holds the potential to offer greatly enhanced service delivery. Governments will need to keep treading the path of innovation to build better solutions, engaging with citizens along the way. [\(Read more\)](#)

3. The power of AI in Government – driving better outcomes

Agencies are primarily using AI to augment workers, thus relieving government employees from more mundane tasks to focus on delivering better outcomes.^{viii} A Deloitte study estimated that AI and automation could free up to 1.2 billion federal working hours, with a potential annual savings of \$41.1 billion.^{ix}

The power of AI is about optimizing the use of the best capabilities of both humans and technology. For example, the United Kingdom’s National Health Service is using AI-based chatbots to assist patients with non-urgent conditions. This helps doctors devote more time to patients who actually need emergency care.^x In the US, the Army uses SGT STAR, a chat-bot, to answer routine questions from potential recruits on-line. SGT STAR does the work of 55 recruiters and has an accuracy rate of more than 94 percent.^{xi} Chicago is looking to combat crime by running spatial algorithms that identify when and where crimes are likely to happen.^{xii}

From chess to self-driving cars, we see evidence that AI can achieve amazing results. But as AI plays an increasing role in government, we will need to be mindful of the ethical issues posed by AI, especially when they are the result of difficult to explain—and hence impossible to defend—AI algorithms. As AI systems make more decisions, AI ethics become increasingly important, and public officials may need to create governance structures to ensure the ethical deployment of AI.^{xiii} From algorithm bias to a lack of transparency, we need to ensure fairness as government use of AI accelerates.^{xiv} [\(Read more\)](#)

4. 5G & the connectivity of tomorrow

The 5th generation (5G) of wireless technology will usher in an era of ultra-reliable, high volume, high-speed internet connectivity. By 2024, 5G networks are expected to handle 35 percent of mobile data.^{xv}

Advanced connectivity like 5G can extend AI, image recognition, facial recognition, and other powerful tools. It may take some time for 5G to become transformative in government. And once 5G infrastructure becomes widespread, the technology still needs to be integrated with cloud computing and artificial intelligence to realize key use cases, such as hyper connected smart cities, smart military bases, and real-time traffic management.



Better rural connectivity combined with AI can potentially impact rural communities in fields such as rural health and precision farming. For instance, realizing the full potential of connected precision farming could add \$47-\$65 billion annually to the US economy.^{xvi}

But widespread deployment of 5G technology in rural areas may prove challenging, as the infrastructure needed for 5G coverage is usually more cost-effective in densely populated urban areas.^{xvii} To tackle this issue, in the near term, governments can provide a hybrid network of 5G and rural broadband to improve connectivity in rural areas.

At times, the technology tsunami that we are experiencing can feel overwhelming. But if we keep our focus on how technology will benefit the people government serves—and help ensure that the workforce using technology is diverse and inclusive—I feel confident that the future is bright. ([Read more](#))

i Stuart Wolpert, “Predictive policing substantially reduces crime in Los Angeles during months-long test,” UCLA Newsroom, October 7, 2015. [View in article](#)

ii The National Center on Homelessness among Veterans, Research annual report FY 2017, accessed May 7, 2019; Jack Tsai, “Homeless veterans,” US Department of Veteran Affairs, accessed May 7, 2019. [View in article](#)

iii Tajha Chappellet-Lanier, “VA celebrates early success metrics from the VA.gov relaunch,” Fedscope, February 19, 2019.

iv <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/government-trends/2020/citizen-experience-in-government.html>

v <https://thephiladelphiacitizen.org/govlabphl-philadelphia-behavioral-science-initiative/>

vi Frank Mirabal et al., “Albuquerque: Connecting immigrant-entrepreneurs to financial services,” The Public Engagement Roadmap, accessed May 24, 2019.

vii <https://www.curbed.com/2018/5/1/17309110/app-bus-austin-transit-connectings>

viii <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/government-trends/2020/ai-augmented-government.html>

ix <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/cognitive-technologies/artificial-intelligence-government.html>

x Tiffany Dovey Fishman, William D. Eggers, and Pankaj Kishnani, AI-augmented human services, Deloitte Insights, October 18, 2017.

xi <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/focus/cognitive-technologies/artificial-intelligence-government.html>

xii Deloitte case studies, “Predictive police in Chicago,” accessed April 30, 2019

xiii <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/government-trends/2020/government-data-ai-ethics.html>

xvi <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/government-trends/2020/government-data-ai-ethics.html>

xv <https://www.networkworld.com/article/3403358/17-predictions-about-5g-networks-and-devices.html>

xvi <https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/the-promise-of-smart-rural-communities.html>

xvii <https://www.thefastmode.com/expert-opinion/15733-what-s-needed-to-deploy-5g-in-rural-environments>



About Deloitte

Deloitte refers to one or more of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited, a UK private company limited by guarantee (“DTTL”), its network of member firms, and their related entities. DTTL and each of its member firms are legally separate and independent entities. DTTL (also referred to as “Deloitte Global”) does not provide services to clients. In the United States, Deloitte refers to one or more of the US member firms of DTTL, their related entities that operate using the “Deloitte” name in the United States and their respective affiliates. Certain services may not be available to attest clients under the rules and regulations of public accounting. Please see www.deloitte.com/about to learn more about our global network of member firms.

Copyright © 2020 Deloitte Development LLC. All rights reserved.

Designed by CoRe Creative Services. RITM0394290