ACCELERATING GOVERNMENT
INNOVATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

When the fast-growing City and County of Denver stood up a new government organization to identify solutions for affordable housing, developing an application to address compliance issues became the number one priority, says Deputy CIO Christine Binnicker. Rather than create a solution on its own, the Denver Technology Services department reached out to its counterpart in Boston, which had developed a similar application, and wound up reusing much of its code and the concepts behind it.

"We were able to stand up something much more quickly than if we had started from scratch," Binnicker says, crediting the project's success to "our ability to collaborate not only with the technology but also through the lessons they learned."

State and local governments are facing the need to innovate like never before. And as they redouble their efforts to modernize services for citizens and internal customers, technology leaders also must rethink isolated IT development models that can't keep pace with the innovation required to serve the public.

"The days of making the business wish list with 20,000 requirements is out the door. We need to move from ideation to implementation more quickly," says Texas CTO John Hoffman.

The state's Department of Information Resources developed a contracting application used by all of its agencies and is encouraging shared solutions around common business practices.

Collaboration within and across state and local government organizations can be the catalyst for solutions to universal public sector challenges. While governments have long made ad hoc attempts to share best practices, and in some cases code, to date these efforts have often been fragmented and uncoordinated, forcing many individual agencies to reinvent the wheel.

This paper explores the potential of new models for collaboration that can transform how agencies develop and deploy the solutions their citizens need.

Creating a Community for Collaboration

Agencies are quickly finding that traditional development models can't provide the speed required to meet customer demands for digital services. Only 13 percent of respondents rated their IT service delivery as highly effective in a recent Governing Institute survey of 237 state and local government decision-makers.

Improving the development and deployment of mission-critical applications starts with moving to a standardized, cloud-based platform like Salesforce. This low-code/no-code approach significantly reduces application development time and allows agencies to easily scale services.

As more agencies adopt the same platform and approach, it opens the door for greater collaboration within and across jurisdictions. To facilitate this, Salesforce created the **AppExchange**, an online community where agencies can come together to share ideas and best practices.

Communities like this can be a catalyst for innovation. Agencies no longer have to build applications in a vacuum. They can learn lessons from others who have been there before and come together to find solutions to common problems. In fact, more than three-quarters (76 percent) of Governing Institute survey respondents said their agency would find value in participating in such a public sector community.

The real potential in these communities, however, will come when more agencies take collaboration to the next level and share actual applications like Boston and Denver.

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The Next Evolution of Government Collaboration

Online repositories such as GitHub have allowed developers to share, adapt and collaborate on open source software projects for more than a decade. But efforts to share public sector solutions have been limited by the wide range of IT environments across — and within — state and local governments. While 72 percent of Governing Institute survey respondents say they would be somewhat or very likely to use applications created by other governments, only 20 percent are currently engaged in such partnerships.

Now, as governments adopt cloud platforms such as Salesforce and use the **AppExchange**, they have the opportunity to share code across a common ecosystem.

"Everything from the database to the logic to the dashboard and reports can be put into a package and moved from organization to organization," says Mike Yeganeh, Salesforce vice president of solution engineering. "It's a much more seamless transfer."

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> *— JOHN HOFFMAN, CTO, TEXAS*

The Salesforce **AppExchange** model addresses many of the logistical challenges that governments have historically faced when trying to adapt and reuse application from other organizations. For example, it:

- Allows full source code transfer and reuse, packaging together the data model, business logic, and associated dashboards and reports.
- Provides opportunities for users of shared code and applications to continuously improve solutions through a variety of channels, including **AppExchange** but also direct transfers between individual government agencies and the open source GitHub platform, which has the ability to share Salesforce metadata packages and allow the community to adapt and improve them.
- Offers a licensing model that addresses a wide range of challenges involving legal disclaimers and intellectual property rights.

- Allows independent software developers and solution providers that serve public sector customers to collaborate with each other on shared challenges.

The public sector applications that emerge from collaboration on shared platforms like **AppExchange** can help governments become more agile and drive the backbone of the government of the future.

Conclusion

Collaboration on developing and refining applications that address common public sector challenges remains in its infancy. But over time, the potential benefits could be transformational. App exchanges could evolve into full-fledged libraries of solutions built by governments and their solution providers to address a range of public sector needs. Governments could even market components of solutions which tackle universal challenges to private sector organizations, helping offset development costs.

But perhaps the greatest benefit to individual state and local governments could be the development of a robust community focused on working together to share best practices and improve business processes to better serve all citizens. Doing so, say government technology leaders, will require a significant mindset shift.

"It's becoming less and less about technology and more and more about the business services we provide," Denver's Binnicker says. "I've learned more from the collaboration I've had with my peers and others in the same boat who are doing the same things than anything else. Sometimes we forget that."

"The collaboration and sharing of these lessons and experiences gives us a moment to reflect on how far we've gone," agrees Hoffman. "So many times we're hustling from one project to the next. Collaboration gives us a common point of reflection on how we can continue evolving and open new opportunities."

This piece was developed and written by the Governing Institute Content Studio, with information and input from Salesforce.

76%
OF STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS WOULD FIND VALUE IN AN ONLINE COMMUNITY TO SHARE BEST PRACTICES.

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