

Driving Efficient, Effective Public Sector Websites with IT Modernization

Agencies are adopting user-first digital services to provide citizens with the IT-forward processes, programs and services they need.

People expect government services to be as seamless as private sector offerings.

To meet these needs and keep up with the pace of innovation, agencies must modernize their IT infrastructures and leverage the tools that streamline workforces, enhance user experiences, integrate secure digital services, improve program efficacy and reduce costs.

At a recent [FedInsider webinar](#), thought leaders from government and industry discussed strategies for modernizing agencies' web and mobile platforms to enhance usability and accessibility, ensure digital assets are future-ready, decrease their costs and achieve additional benefits.

Prioritizing Accessibility and User Experience with Digital Services

For Amy Hepler, lead UX/accessibility developer for the North Carolina Department of Information Technology's Digital Solutions Team, embedding accessibility into the department's digital government services means ensuring all residents can fully engage with state websites and access critical government information.

"Accessibility is not just a compliance requirement, it's a fundamental aspect of usability, equity and good governance," Hepler said. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act does help shape this vision, mandating that state and local governments provide equal

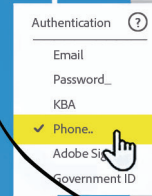
access to all digital services, programs and activities. Still, ensuring compliance is only part of the focus.

Hepler emphasized that fostering a culture of proactive accessibility — where usability, assistive technology, compatibility and inclusive design are prioritized from the outset — is essential. "Given the increasing reliance on digital services, we have a responsibility to remove barriers and create an inclusive online experience for all residents," she said.

She's excited by the advancements in natural language processing with AI chatbots offering greater inclusive digital assistance like biometric authentication, fingerprint recognition, facial recognition and retina scanning — helping users with cognitive disabilities access services easily.

Gabe Paley, assistant secretary for technology in the Office of the Governor of New York State, said his team is also prioritizing customer experience in its IT modernization journey — like reducing barriers for childcare enrollment services by making the website easier to navigate.

"There was disparate information across a lot of government websites, and [it was] hard to figure out if you are eligible or not for certain things, and people would give up," Paley said. "Effective and easy-to-navigate websites are at the core of government services and their delivery."



Featured Experts:

Amy Hepler

Lead UX / Accessibility Developer, Digital Solutions Team, North Carolina Department of IT



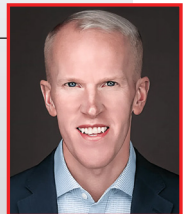
Gabe Paley

Assistant Secretary for Technology, Office of the Governor of New York State



Brian Chidester

Head of Global Strategy & Innovation for Public Sector, Adobe



Today, the state has dedicated IT and technology staff to keep systems running smoothly, policy and program experts to ensure legislative tasks are accurate and achievable, and user experience initiatives in place to gather ongoing feedback and address accessibility challenges and enrollment barriers.

However, Head of Global Strategy and Innovation for Public Sector at Adobe Brian Chidester believes that, based on his observations with public sector customers and partners, technology isn't necessarily the biggest challenge. He said it's more about the investment and strategy around the technology. "Being able to run alongside the strategies and helping

organizations become more data-driven has been really important in helping them optimize some of the nuances there," he said.

The government must meet people where they are and efficiently and effectively deliver services they are eligible for. "The government has to serve people who show up in person as well. So, how do we converge, track and optimize all of the experiences, whether it's in person or digital?" Chidester asked.

Those are some examples of the strategy and intentionality challenges Adobe is helping agencies overcome. Part of that means tracking key performance indicators and helping organizations improve their public interactions wherever needed as quickly as possible.

Putting Users First in Design

Paley's office is working to embed human-centered design principles and accessibility into the very beginning of state agency modernization efforts. Rather than starting with the technology, Paley's team is instead asking, "What do users need to achieve with this modernization effort?"

By communicating with various state agencies about user needs, Paley and his team can identify the low-hanging fruit before jumping into a new system. "There's a lot of areas where users were just confused about the process itself or constantly filling in incorrect information on forms, and that was slowing down the process of getting money out the door or processing things," he said. "Now, we're really trying to build efficiency into many efforts right at the beginning."

The state's human-centered design team within the IT office has grown to over 30 people, all working to deploy strategy at the beginning of

modernization efforts. When it comes to the demand for embedding AI-powered tech, Paley said preparing for AI includes website accessibility, getting the right infrastructure to the site, considering content strategy and more. "We're not skipping over the infrastructure work," he said.

Implementing technology innovations is also a shared responsibility, Hepler added. "A key approach is fostering a culture of accessibility across stakeholders, developers, designers and content creators — and we strive to achieve this through a multilayered approach," she said. That includes training programs, manual feedback cycles, direct consultations, state UX accessibility standards and the state's digital community of practice.

Hepler's team also provides content editors with real-time automated accessibility checkers. As someone adds content to a site, the system will flag any accessibility errors like not adding alt text or putting headers out of order. The developers are warned about those errors long before a site ever goes out to the public. "It's about integrating accessibility and user needs into the development and design processes from the start," she said.

Chidester also said it's important to consider the entire website lifecycle, including the public-facing site accessed by residents and what goes into deployment and content on the back end. For example, Adobe created a use case where users can take any PDF and convert it instantaneously into a 508-compliant document. "It's the only toolset that can do that for teams like Amy's," he said.

Adobe is also leveraging generative artificial intelligence to create content and automati-

cally tag it to make it easier to find and deploy. "Speed-to-market is sometimes an underrated KPI within government," he said, but "being able to provide citizens from different areas and regions with information dynamically is always vitally important."

The Road to Accessibility-Forward Modernization

While getting started with better accessibility programs for government content can be daunting, Chidester said agencies could best begin their modernization journey by identifying internal friction points. They then need to optimize what services are getting the highest usage and map out an efficient technology plan.

"Make sure your foundation is strong and agile because we do not want to spend a lot of investment into a platform that immediately becomes outdated, or one where you can't then iterate on top of," Chidester said.

Conversation around resilience and adaptability is also key. "There's a lot you can do to become more resilient that you will get value from. And just working on a foundation that allows you to provide resilience, but also the flexibility and agility that is required to support this generation of citizens, is where I would start that effort," Chidester added.

Ultimately, consistency across state agencies is essential for a seamless and accessible experience. "We coordinate efforts by maintaining our standards, and that provides clear expectations for agencies," Hepler said. This helps build trust within the community, provides centralized resources to all agencies and fosters a network of accessibility.

FEDInsider

Hosky Communications Inc.

3811 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20016
Contact: **John Hosky**

- ☎ (202) 237-0300
- ✉ Info@FedInsider.com
- 🌐 FedInsider.com
- 📘 Facebook.com/FedInsiderNews
- 🌐 LinkedIn.com/company/FedInsider
- 🐦 [@FedInsider](https://Twitter.com/FedInsider)

carahsoft

Carahsoft

11493 Sunset Hills Road, Suite 100
Reston, VA 20190
Contact: **Adobe Team at Carahsoft**

- ☎ (877) 992-3623
- ✉ Adobe@Carahsoft.com
- 🌐 Carahsoft.com/vendors/Adobe
- 📘 Facebook.com/Carahsoft
- 🌐 LinkedIn.com/company/Carahsoft
- 🐦 Twitter.com/Carahsoft

Adobe

Adobe

7930 Jones Branch Drive, 5th Floor
McLean, VA 22102
Contact: **Brian Chidester**

- ☎ (703) 209-4066
- ✉ BChidester@Adobe.com
- 🌐 Adobe.com/government
- 📘 Facebook.com/Adobe
- 🌐 LinkedIn.com/company/Adobe
- 🐦 Twitter.com/Adobe

© 2025 Hosky Communications, Inc. All rights reserved. FedInsider and the FedInsider logo, are trademarks or registered trademarks of Hosky Communications or its subsidiaries or affiliated companies in the United States and other countries. All other marks are the property of their respective owners.

carahsoft | Adobe

MISSION BRIEF | FEDINSIDER.COM