



Centralizing data – the key to enhancing citizen experiences

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Extracting maximum data value is now a top priority for government

Government data is a critical resource that can be used to deliver better citizen services and improve democracy – essential to every operation and every decision, from determining the effectiveness of programs to analyzing healthcare provision. However, in the digital age data is growing faster than ever before, and owing to it being traditionally kept in silos, sharing across systems and services presents a significant challenge.

Going back as little as 10 years, it was common to find different government ministries functioning as unique corporations – separate in all ways. So, if human services and education wanted a similar solution, the answer was to build two solutions with two sets of costs and siloed

data – with each ministry justifying this decision by saying they needed a solution that would prioritize **their** unique criteria. From a data perspective this approach is inefficient, from a financial perspective it's costly and from a citizen perspective it's frustrating.

Every time a citizen needs to access a different ministry service, they are required to input all their data again. Multiply this over a dozen ministries and it's easy to see the problem. Everything's siloed and independently stored, and with no means to integrate this data, it's impossible to provide better citizen experiences both in terms of interacting with the application and understanding their needs.

Drivers for data centralization

Rising demand for consumer Amazon-like services

Digitally savvy citizens, used to Amazon-like services throughout their lives, want to consume government services in the same way. They expect to switch between government ministries with ease and access everything they want online. Take the example of driver license renewal – citizens don't want the hassle of renewing in person. They want to log in to the appropriate government service, click on license renewal, choose their preferred option, check out, pay and receive their license in the mail. However, for this to happen, the first step is to get over the siloed approach with the rollout of a digital ID solution that offers government entities, with 99.9% certainty, the assurance that the person consuming the service is the person they say they are.



One way to address this is to create individual ID solutions – which is something that the state of Colorado has done. They've created an electronic person that allows citizens to identify themselves clearly and reliably, however, there are a couple of downsides to this approach. Firstly, it only works within the state of Colorado and secondly, it creates a lot of technical debt due to the processes, infrastructure and maintenance needed – and technical debt is something the public sector needs to reduce not grow. Canada has a different approach. They offer two options, they say we can create that ID for you, or you can access our systems through partners. So, for example, they allow citizens to access ministries via personal banking verification which is highly secure and creates no technical debt.



Using data insight to improve government services

With petabytes of quality data at their fingertips, government entities have the power to dramatically improve citizens' lives. For example:



- If a youth is receiving benefits because they are below the poverty line, do they have a higher rate of consumption in health services? And if so, how much money needs investing in human services to see a matching reduction in health costs?



- If a person is under 25 and unskilled, does it make sense to give them a grant to go to school because if they're better educated, they're less likely to be unemployed and will make larger contributions through the tax system?

With any of these examples, data centralization is key to delivering the insight needed to improve lives, enhance services and save budget – which is huge.

Overcoming the data challenges

From a technical standpoint, the single biggest challenge in centralizing data is integrating existing data and getting rid of duplicates – a citizen's name and address should be available to every ministry without duplication. However, aggregating data from what realistically could be 1000s of sources is very complex. It will take a lot of technical leadership using data scientists and the latest technology, data volumes will be huge and storage requirements will add an additional challenge. In addition, there are also challenges around the ethical use of data, and while this is something that will need to be carefully watched, managed and closely monitored, the benefits of centralized data far outweigh the risks.





Contact us at Fujitsu and discover how we can help you overcome the technical challenges of integrating databases. Find out how we can help you tie data together consistently and accurately to produce the insight needed to improve government decision-making and enhance citizen services.

For more information check the [Public Sector webpage](#).

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