

# ***HOW THE AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SECTOR CAN DELIVER GREAT DIGITAL EXPERIENCES***



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## SECTION 01

# ***THE PUBLIC SECTOR, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE GAP IN UX***



Can your government agency tick ‘yes’ to all **seven components of user experience** (UX)? That’s having useful, findable, accessible and credible content, a website that’s easy to use, with an attractive image, brand, identity or other design elements. And there’s one more component – ensuring users find value in what your site offers.

For more than six years, the Federal Government’s **Digital Service Standard** has set the benchmark for designing and implementing the online user experience for constituents. It also assesses how public sector sites have fared against the 13 standards that the **Digital Transformation Agency** has set down. That agency publishes its reviews and self-assessment reports of services that the standards cover. With just one agency report for this year and another for 2020 made public, it appears that very few government websites are availing themselves to this assessment opportunity.

Of the Australian public sector sites that do opt to self-assess, many fare poorly. Readability of Australian government documents is poor with

overlong sentences and overuse of the passive (rather than active) voice, an **Ethos CRS 2021 Readability Scorecard** has found. Only one agency – **Services Australia** – scored above the benchmark of 100. Another touchpoint for governments to improve UX is form-filling. It is important enough for the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet to issue a 28-page **better-practice guide on improving government forms** in 2020.

Those guides and nudges are needed, as are UX audits, usability testing and contextual observations of the customer experience. Australian government agencies lag well behind the private sector in user experience, **research** shows. It revealed agencies that didn’t have a UX design skillset were hesitant to outsource to bridge the gap. Significantly, the research found that each dollar invested in boosting UX at the design stage could return between \$10 and \$100 to the agency. **As well, Ethos CRS found adopting greater clarity in documentation saw a 19% reduction in help desk calls.** This led to an annual \$445,000 saving for one agency.

In this e-book, we describe the steps that federal, state and local government agencies could consider to improve the digital experience for their constituents. People visit government websites for two reasons: to find accurate, up-to-date information or to transact with government services. Get those right, and you are well on the way to improving UX.

The first reason has prompted us to look at best practices for managing and presenting content at scale. The second reason relies on personalisation. That means governments must have a keen understanding of citizens’ needs based on rich data. We will discuss new approaches and tools to analyse and use citizens’ data in a privacy-preserving manner. In conclusion, we reveal tested ways agencies can offer a great digital experience while maintaining the highest levels of governance and security.





Federal, state and local government agencies have been using Acquia to cater to citizens' information and services needs for over a decade now. We're a software-as-a-service company that offers products, services and technical support for the open source web content management platform, Drupal.

**More than 1.4 million people actively work with Drupal open source code.** They're on a quest to improve Drupal by reviewing code, creating documentation, testing and listening to feedback from other users. Drupal developers live in 230 countries and they bring a diverse range of world views, cultures and ways of operating that flavours the user experience. This is important because it also reflects points of difference that are common among constituents that Australian government agencies serve. Drupal also demonstrates a strong and continuing commitment to **accessibility standards** for people with disabilities. Importantly, Drupal is suited for government agencies

on a quest for digital transformation. **More than 150 countries use it for government and intergovernmental agencies.**

We draw on that broad and deep experience to share how the most progressive agencies have harnessed the latest principles of modern customer experience to bring exceptional service to their constituents. You'll learn from your peers around the globe the tried-and-true practices and tools your agency can leverage while keeping the highest standards and meeting the strictest expectations for constituents' data privacy and security.



## SECTION 02

# KNOW CONSTITUENTS' PAIN POINTS





## Poor digital experiences with government sites cause confusion and frustration.

Despite the standards and guidelines, there are still **11 common pain points** constituents have in dealing with governments online, says the Digital Transformation Agency. Those pain points are:

1. **Not being aware of progress or a significant change**
2. **Difficult to find information**
3. **Difficult to understand or use information**
4. **Not being aware of available support**
5. **Uncertain about entitlements and obligations**
6. **Unclear how to reach an outcome**
7. **Too much time and effort to complete tasks**
8. **Required to provide information multiple times**
9. **Unable to use their preferred channel**
10. **Difficult or impossible to complete tasks**
11. **Not getting the right support**

Australian governments can improve how constituents interact in digital environments with agencies, their services and their products. It's become even more crucial because of the pandemic.

Overlaying constituents' needs for better UX during a pandemic creates an extra impetus to get it right. Consider locked-down residents in south-western Sydney trying to rely on state government websites for updates on restrictions. Recently, volunteers had to step in to fill gaps in the NSW Government's **critical health messaging**, with some government information a month or more out of date.

So how are other nations tackling the UX challenge?



## SECTION 03

# ***TRACKING UX ACTION AT HOME AND ABROAD***



## Increasing demand for digital access to public sector agencies has spurred new initiatives to improve digital experience.

Government agencies around the world have been facing increasing pressure to focus on their websites' UX. In the U.S., for example, the **21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA)**, launched in December 2018, compels federal agencies to deliver the kind of web experiences and customer service that consumers typically expect from private sector businesses.

The pandemic is accelerating the pace of change as social distancing and remote work have intensified the need for government agencies to provide a full array of digital services. There's been progress, but also some setbacks. One unintended consequence of the rush to digital, for example, was the **crashing** of many unemployment claims websites.

Meanwhile, the UK has been working on UX for considerably longer. Its government announced its digital transformation strategy to boost digital services in 2012. **GOV.UK** even won a Design of the Year award the following year.

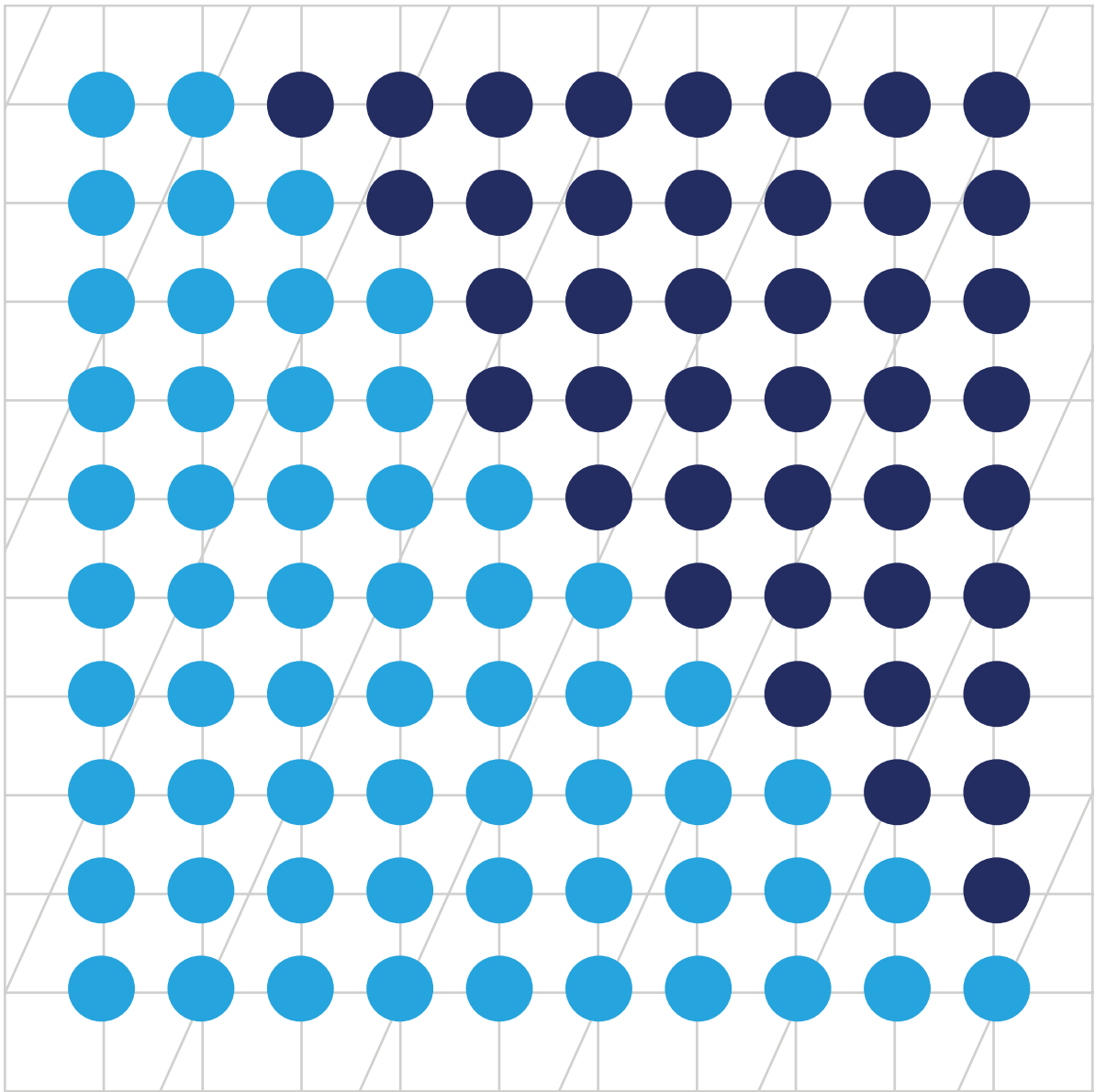
Back home, Australian governments are still falling short of constituents' expectations despite their continuing work on digital transformation. People are used to interacting with national and global brands that prioritise the customer and deliver consistent, personalised experiences without long waits or bureaucratic pitfalls.



# Solving the digital UX problem requires expertise and investment.

Even before the pandemic, public sector websites were lagging behind customer expectations for seamless, contextual digital experiences. A **2019 report** commissioned by the Australian Government found 58% of public sector agencies said they were “under-skilled in the digital aspects of delivering for the Australian people.” Only 56% of Australians were satisfied with the government’s digital services. The review revealed they needed significant investments in capabilities and digital expertise overall, with many agencies’ legacy computing systems nearing the end of their life.

The problem is agencies tend to spend more on running and maintaining IT systems than driving digital transformation. According to the review, a \$100 million a year fund would help kickstart digital transformation. Using the private sector as a template, however, they need to invest \$1 billion annually to “support better services and outcomes through digital transformation and to sustainably fund other public capital.”



58%

of public sector agencies are underskilled in providing digital services



## SECTION 04

# ***CITIZENS EXPECT TIMELY INFORMATION AND DIGITAL SERVICES***

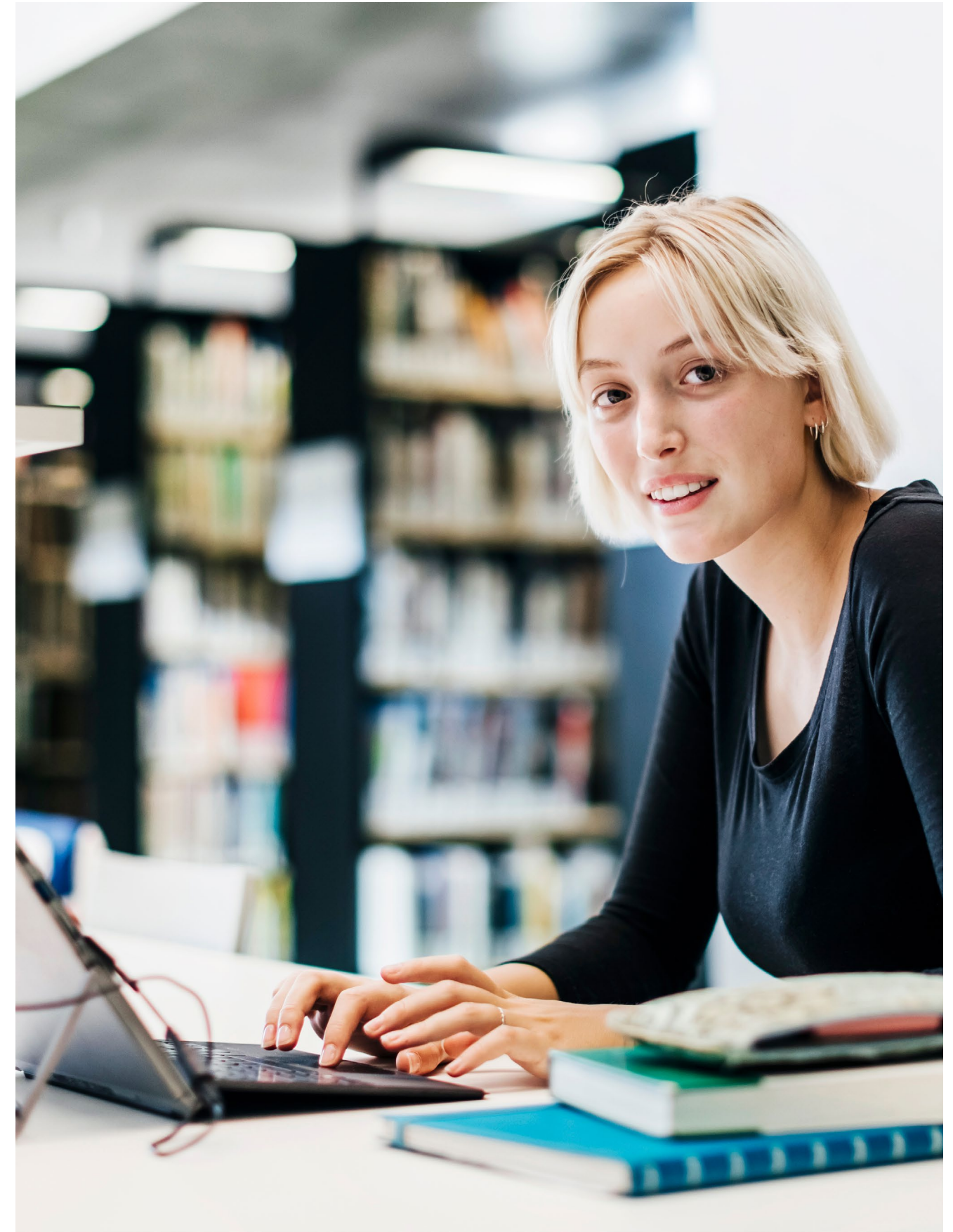


Citizens demand up-to-date online information and support, especially in times of crisis. They also want to consume government services and resources – again, all online. To meet those growing demands, agencies need to deliver the following fundamental benefits:

/// **Choice.** Citizens expect to interact with agencies across multiple channels, such as government websites, chat apps, social media and even digital signage, as one may find in a subway system or airport. They also expect to be able to use their device of choice – be it a laptop, smartphone or tablet. Although 62% of visitors access public sector websites via a desktop or laptop computer, 32% opt for their mobile device, as per **CFI Group's Government Websites 2020**. This mobile usage number has tripled in just four years, demonstrating the importance of building mobile-friendly sites.

/// **Accessibility.** The content of public sector websites has to be accessible to visitors, regardless of their language or disabilities. Many countries have explicit laws in place to ensure that content is accessible to the differently-abled (those with permanent or temporary visual, hearing, physical, or cognitive impairments).

/// **The ability to quickly and easily update and disseminate information.** Agencies need to frequently update the information on their sites to ensure it is accurate and relevant. Editing, removing and replacing content needs to be simple and intuitive. Agencies must orchestrate messages in real time across all communication channels, including email, social, SMS/push and direct mail.





/// **The ability to quickly and easily launch new websites.** Agencies need to be able to launch new websites, as needed, in response to public needs, as we have seen during the pandemic. Those can't be built from scratch in a timely or cost-efficient manner, so governments need reusable templates and components to quickly build and launch new sites that are secure and functional.

This last requirement can be particularly difficult for government IT departments to address. Cumbersome, legacy technology can pose problems in this area, as can workflows that make IT staff directly responsible for deploying content. Making it easier for stakeholders to publish content is part of the solution, as long as this doesn't create issues around governance and security.

Meeting the content needs of constituents thus calls for a website or digital infrastructure that is capable of:

- /// Delivering content to the channels and devices that constituents prefer
- /// Presenting content in a way that is easily accessible to constituents
- /// Publishing content quickly and securely as per the needs of both governments and constituents
- /// Scaling content across websites rapidly, as needed







## CASE STUDY

# STATE OF GEORGIA

## GAINING CLOUD-BASED AGILITY AND EFFICIENCY

The State of Georgia in the U.S. depends on its own Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) to track and manage 55 state agency websites. It was relying on a 10-year-old proprietary platform that was costly to maintain and used two separate versions of a CMS, one of which was no longer supported. The state wanted a new platform that was cloud-based to avoid the maintenance responsibilities and costs of their current platform. They also needed greater scalability to respond to traffic ups and downs around calendar events, an intuitive design that simplified publishing and the ability to swiftly add extra websites.

After switching to **Acquia Drupal Cloud**, Georgia launched all 55 sites on the new platform in 12 months. Freeing itself from managing at least 20 servers, the state is expected to save \$4.7 million over five years. What's more, it partnered with Acquia to build a pilot project, in which a user can find what they need via Amazon's Alexa conversational interface.



## SECTION 05

# ***PERSONALISING THE CITIZEN SERVICES EXPERIENCE ONLINE***





## Digital experiences in the public sector need to meet the standard found in the private sector.

When a citizen transacts business with a government agency, the relationship resembles that of an e-commerce operation, where customers expect quick, convenient and personalised service. Government agencies need to figure out how to organise their citizens' data to the point where they can act on it to provide the same level of service and personalisation as the private sector.

These are the best practices from private sector businesses that public sector agencies must now embrace:

### **Enabling citizens to create profiles that include contact and payment information:**

A saved profile automatically makes things more convenient. The constituents don't have to share personal information every time they want to conduct a transaction with a public agency.

**Learning more about citizens' preferences and behaviours over time:** A citizen profile enables public agencies to build out a robust, up-to-date record of individual citizens and their transaction history with agencies.

**Using citizens' data to personalise the experience on multiple levels:** Citizens' data enables agencies to personalise the web experience every time the citizen visits. It also helps to ensure that the agency contacts the citizen on their preferred channels (email, text, etc.) to contact them with important alerts such as a fire or outage in their vicinity.

Delivering this level of personalisation for public sector organisations requires each agency to collect all personal data and share it across separate departments or agencies so it can be used for a single, personalised experience.

Getting tax assessment data, applying for a building permit, renewing a driver's license and paying a utility bill involve multiple departments and multiple systems. A citizen trying to complete these different tasks will usually have to access several different sites and, if payment is involved, enter personal payment information into several different systems. This results in an inconvenient, confusing and frustrating experience.

Citizens expect better collaboration between agencies in service of the people. That the Department of Public Safety is separate from the Department of Public Works may be a fact of life, but from the citizens' perspective, it doesn't make sense. It's all part of the same government, just like the sales department and the service department are part of the same company.



## CASE STUDY

# NHSBT

### ATTRACTING NEW DONORS THROUGH A STREAMLINED DX

The National Health Service Blood and Transplant (NHSBT), a public body sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Care, manages NHS blood donation services in England and transplant services across the UK. NHSBT needed to quickly respond to the increased interest in blood donation in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and to capture new donors. Amplified interest led to spikes in web traffic on the [NHS website](#), and their Give Blood forms required speedy modernisation to both maintain uptime and to attract new and diverse donors for future blood intake.

NHSBT decided to build and host a temporary, brand-compliant registration landing page to handle the additional demand without overtaxing their internal

systems and to quickly filter through registrants to prioritise donors with rare or high-demand blood types.

Working with partners to map out the existing customer journeys and modernise the donor registration process, NHSBT chose Acquia Site Studio and its low-code approach to accelerate the delivery of the website. NHSBT and its partners also used Acquia Personalisation Profile Manager to build enhanced user journeys and data profiles of site visitors for future touchpoints and execute A/B testing to draw actionable insights from user visits. The new Give Blood form receives an average of 25,000 daily visitors and provides a significantly improved user experience.





## The Role of Consolidated, Cross-Channel Data

A new practice in data management has emerged, one that enables best-in-class consumer brands to deliver seamless customer experiences across channels. This practice is based on the use of a modern customer data platform (CDP), which collects, consolidates and activates layers of personal data. This data in turn powers convenient and contextual experiences. CDPs can make it easier for organisations to conform to all aspects of data privacy legislation while helping them deliver a better experience for their customers.

The same will be true for government agencies that adopt CDP technology to power citizen experiences. By using CDPs, public sector agencies will gain the following powerful capabilities:

- Consolidating data from every relevant source within the agency:** Agencies will be able to create comprehensive citizen profiles that reflect each interaction between the citizen and the government agency.

- Propagating data to all relevant users and channels:** In the private sector, the marketing department would want to know if a customer is experiencing a service issue so they don't send marketing messages that may be perceived as annoying. Likewise, the public sector agencies should be aware of a citizen's history of interactions with the agency and not send requests or messages that are no longer relevant.

- Leveraging cutting-edge analytics, including machine learning, to deepen citizen insight and understanding:** This insight itself can support hyper-personalisation of interactions with constituents or even predict potential issues. Determining whether or not a citizen qualifies for unemployment benefits, for example, is a critical task with serious consequences. Machine learning can not only analyze consolidated data to expedite the decision, but could also determine when a human should take over to provide advice and encouragement.

- Complying with relevant data privacy requirements:** From both a credibility and a compliance standpoint, maintaining trust and transparency with the data organisations collect from individuals, as well as quickly and accurately fulfilling any requests to remove their information, is crucial for private and public sector organisations alike.

Not all CDPs are created equal or meet the needs of public sector agencies. CDPs consolidate data from online and offline sources and can activate it, but for the public sector these tools need to balance personalisation with trust, governance and security expected from government agencies.



# CDPs vs. CRMs

## ***CUSTOMER DATA PLATFORMS ARE BUILT TO LEVERAGE ALL SOURCES OF CUSTOMER DATA***

There can be confusion in the market regarding the difference between customer data platforms (CDPs) and customer relationship management (CRM) systems. CRM systems are used to manage interactions with current and potential customers. Unlike CDPs, CRMs are not designed to facilitate personalised customer experiences. They are limited with regard to the number of channels and data sources they can interact with.

A traditional CRM cannot, for example, pull in information from a customer service solution or a social media tracking system, nor can it deliver relevant content to diverse channels. The modern CDP arose as a response to these limitations, when enterprises needed “analytical CRMs” that could access and incorporate customer data from any online or offline source.



## CASE STUDY

# THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES

## PERSONALISING THE CITIZEN EXPERIENCE

The City of Los Angeles needed greater coordination and consistency across its web properties to ensure that as users hopped from one city site to another, the experience was simple and frustration-free.

The city wanted high availability and personalisation for its residents. By leveraging Drupal and Acquia, the city was able to provide a universal navigation system for all sites and give users the transparency and information access they needed to effectively interact with the city government. Most importantly, the city was able to introduce personalisation to its websites.

The implementation of the **Angeleno Account** provides access to many City of Los Angeles websites, apps and services with just one user ID and password and tailors the experiences on the sites to individual users. Additionally, through on-site personalisation, when visitors enter their address, they can get neighbourhood-specific information, such as contact information for their councilperson, parks & rec info, notifications of upcoming events, scheduled road construction and other information that impacts them directly.





## SECTION 06

# ***ENSURE GOVERNANCE AND SECURITY***





## Citizen experiences need to be compliant, composable and secure.

The balance between delivering a strong customer experience and ensuring adequate security and governance is unique for the public sector. The demand on IT to deliver trusted, non-intrusive and scalable service is significant and it's much easier said than done. Coupled with the fact that most public sector IT groups need to factor in many legacy solutions and technologies, the job may seem impossible at times.

A platform approach allows your digital footprint to grow in a logical, controlled way that is overseen from a single dashboard. There are certain critical attributes and capabilities, however, that a platform must have to modernise public sector infrastructure and deliver first-rate digital experiences to constituents:

### **It must be secure from the ground up.**

A modern public sector DXP needs to meet the most stringent government security standards and certifications right out of the gate.

**It should be composable.** Such DX platforms should enable the creation of reusable components that are easier for end-users to work with. They should also ensure the maintenance of compliance and security standards by building controls into the components themselves. This is the only way to get IT out of the content support game. No longer do IT departments have to waste valuable time supporting content updates — they can now enable non-technical, public-facing staff to do this on their own.

**It must maintain data security.** Through tight integration with a CDP, a modern web platform for public sector organisations needs to access and deploy data as needed without exposing it to risk or falling out of compliance with data regulations.

When you have a platform that is flexible enough to be responsive to the needs of citizens and stakeholders, but structured enough to be easily governed, you have the best of both worlds.



## SECTION 07

# THE LEADING DXP FOR THE PUBLIC SECTOR





## With the right DXP, government agencies can deliver the digital experiences today's citizens demand.

As digital-first initiatives sweep across all sectors — accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic — heightened citizen expectations for digital experiences are here to stay. For the public sector, delivering digital information and services is no longer a nice-to-have; it is imperative to provide the level of service constituents now expect and demand. The right DXP is critical to enabling public agencies to respond quickly to these evolving expectations and build a strong, scalable and secure digital foundation for the future.

With our long history of working closely with the public sector, Acquia has adapted solutions to provide what every government agency needs to deliver great constituent experiences:

- // **Flexibility to deliver new digital services and access emerging channels**
- // **Personalisation that serves customer needs and builds trust**
- // **A “golden customer record” that allows government agencies to have a single view of a constituent**
- // **Governance to manage a portfolio of websites and digital applications**
- // **Compliance with key government certifications**
- // **Reasonable total cost of ownership**
- // **Ease of use for non-technical stakeholders**

Acquia is not only a field-tested partner for federal, state and local government agencies — it is the DXP that meets and exceeds government standards with core certifications. Acquia has been granted an Authority to Operate (ATO) under the Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program (FedRAMP) by the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the Social Security Administration and the U.S. Department of Labor among others. FedRAMP is a government-wide program that provides a standardised approach to security assessment, authorisation and continuous monitoring of cloud products and services. Only cloud providers that meet the strict provisions of FedRAMP gain this certification.



# ***BRING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION TO THE PEOPLE***

Connect with us today to see how Acquia can enable your agency to deliver personalised digital experiences for your citizens.

**LEARN MORE ►**



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## **ABOUT ACQUIA**

Acquia is the open digital experience platform that enables organisations to build, host, analyse and communicate with their customers at scale through websites and digital applications. As the trusted open source leader, we use adaptive intelligence to produce better business outcomes for CX leaders.

