PARTNERSHIP
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

OUR VISION FOR A BETTER GOVERNMENT

Our reform agenda outlines five foundational reforms to improve government performance, support the federal workforce and rebuild public trust. In these documents, we'll dive deeper into the five priorities.

Read the full agenda at: bit.ly/3SWWxnd

PRIORITY 4

MAKE BETTER USE OF AI, TECHNOLOGY AND DATA

To meet public expectations of the digital era, agencies need to upgrade old IT systems and use emerging technology, including artificial intelligence, to understand customer data, analyze how government is performing and deliver accessible services that meet the needs of a diverse public. While the government has made progress in recent years toward modernizing its services, it still lacks the technology and tech experts to keep up with a fast-paced world.

IS THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PREPARED TO HARNESS THE POWER OF AI?

Implementing artificial intelligence requires thoughtful governance structures, quality data, secure IT infrastructure, qualified talent and meaningful accountability mechanisms. Yet as AI rapidly changes how the world works, our systems and processes remain outdated and underfunded, leaving the government unprepared to adapt to this evolving technology.

Chronic underfunding of IT modernization efforts and disinvestment in federal human capital capacity has resulted in outdated infrastructure and a workforce that lacks the skills and training to succeed. Federal agencies have yet to implement nearly 300 recommendations from GAO's High Risk List in the area of IT acquisitions and operations, including enhancing IT workforce planning practices and modernizing or replacing workforce systems.

Agencies are also behind in hiring and training employees who know how to implement and scale AI solutions. Moreover, federal agencies do not fully understand the skills a future workforce needs to use and procure government AI systems.

Finally, technologies like artificial intelligence come with significant concerns over privacy, bias and misuse. As such, policymakers need to develop government-wide approaches to expand AI thoughtfully in ways that improve transparency. Today, just 15% of Americans believe the government is transparent. Implementing AI effectively is one way to improve this perception and rebuild trust in government.

Recommendations for Unleashing the Power of Data and Technology

Invest in modern IT systems

THE CHALLENGE
According to the Government Accountability Office, the government spends 80% of its annual $100 billion IT budget on operating and maintaining existing IT investments, including old and outdated systems, not on new investments in leading-edge technologies.

SOLUTIONS

Congress must work with federal agencies to implement a long-term funding strategy, such as multiyear appropriations, to modernize badly outdated technology and strategically plan for future technological needs. Federal agencies should also implement the open recommendations from GAO in the area of IT acquisitions and operations.

Commit to quality data

THE CHALLENGE

Agencies collect a lot of data, but it is not often used to improve federal programs and typically housed in systems that cannot communicate with each other, hampering data sharing and more complex data analytics. Data on how the federal government is performing is not widely accessible for agency leaders, members of Congress and the public. This lack of transparency limits agency efforts to improve federal services and drives public distrust of government.

SOLUTIONS

Federal agencies must ensure data accuracy and consistency and mitigate inherent data biases. Additionally, they need to establish frameworks to share data while protecting constituents' confidentiality and privacy. Agencies should invest in data-sharing tools such as APIs, dashboards and clearinghouses. When feasible, agencies should also implement cloud storage and computing solutions that make data more secure, manageable and accessible to appropriate audiences.

Use and scale AI responsibly

THE CHALLENGE

Different agencies and levels of government have different levels of experience using artificial intelligence in public service delivery. Agencies lack the guidelines and processes needed to mitigate bias and misuse before implementing and scaling AI.

SOLUTIONS

Federal agencies should develop processes that enable collaborative AI decision-making and agility. Additionally, agencies should ensure they have sufficient expertise to evaluate and operate AI systems—whether they are built internally or acquired from outside vendors. Consistent human oversight and regular audits of AI tools will ensure they achieve their intended purposes.

AI and Data in Action

AIR FORCE LAUNCHES GENERATIVE AI PLATFORM

The Air Force launched a ChatGPT-like tool that will assist airmen, guardians and civilian employees with tasks such as coding, correspondence and content summarization. The tool is intended as an enterprise approach to creatively discover and develop AI uses for Air Force operations.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID CHATBOT ANSWERS FINANCIAL AID QUESTIONS

Federal Student Aid's virtual assistant uses AI to help customers get information about their federal aid. The assistant, "Aidan," has interacted with more than 2.6 million unique customers in just over two years.

NATIONAL OCEANIC AND ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION PROTECTS THE PUBLIC FROM EXTREME WEATHER

NOAA uses AI to analyze urban heat islands, locations where a highly developed community or neighborhood experiences much warmer temperatures than nearby areas.

Research and Resources

Find our AI-related work on the Partnership's Center for Federal AI webpage.

- Tips for federal human resources professionals to capitalize on artificial intelligence
- Improving customer engagement through federal AI
- Insights on the use of AI across government
- Why data matters: The case for evidence-based innovation
- Government use of AI requires that talent come first
- 4 keys to creating a successful data and digital maturity assessment
- Implementing digital transformation no matter the budget