



Engineering the future: Technology in government performance, Part 1

By Lori A. Sexton, CPA, CGMA

The role of the finance professional within the public sector possesses unique and specific challenges. Based upon research done by the AICPA and CIMA, four areas of further exploration were identified as key areas with ongoing challenges in performance for this sector:

Transparency - Making government more accountable to its citizens by providing insight into how money is spent and decisions are made, allowing citizens to make informed decisions about the public services they use, and giving providers incentives to improve the quality of their services

Technology – Making the right investment choices that will support and enable the transformation of government services

Talent – Recruitment and retention of the right capabilities within the finance function and raising financial awareness across the organization

Transformation – Supporting significant change in approach to the organization's operating model, technology, process and/or service delivery to improve efficiency and deliver better outcomes

Identified within the research and reported within the initial report, is the need for sustainable success and effective performance achievement. The first report in the series, "[The future is now – Transparency in government performance](#)" addressed practical ways in which the objective of transparency can be met by local governments (city, metropolitan, regional, state). To support this objective in addition to strategic and performance objectives, the latest report, "[Engineering the future - Technology in government performance: digitalization and open data, Part 1](#)" brings to the forefront the technological and digital tools that are enhancing services to citizens.

In recent years, we have seen governments move from digitization (the transfer of manual records to digital formats) to digitalization (the leveraging of digital technologies to do different things). Yet we still see some public services running on slow, fragmented computer systems which increases their challenges exponentially. The use of the cloud and interactive online tools, which can be developed and maintained with limited resources, has propelled many governments to a successful, efficient and effective state of operations enjoyed within the finance function as well as by the citizens.

Sustainable and current practices outlined include website and mobile apps to address regional emergencies, the reduction of administrative burdens for employees and citizens, the engagement of citizens in developing and prioritizing a budget, and real-time communications to and from citizens with access to critical information. The use of open data, which is often without charge,



has been shown to dramatically reduce the time and money citizens need to invest to understand what government is doing and to hold it to account.

Benefits of widely available and easy-to-use data can be significant and their broader potential has yet to be realized. Among other positive outcomes, strategically used open data can improve policy-making and service efficiency, stimulate growth, improve public safety, and the list goes on. Specific success stories in the United States, the United Kingdom and Nigeria demonstrate how data and digital transformation is at the heart of sustainability at local governments and empower citizens and finance teams towards increased collaboration, change management and better community service.

You will find the full report here: "[Engineering the future - Technology in government performance: digitalization and open data, Part 1](#)"

Author Bio

Lori A. Sexton, CPA, CGMA is a Senior Technical Manager, Management Accounting with the Association of International Certified Professional Accountants (AICPA). Research and development of management accounting resources, serving as an advocate for the public sector and liaison to the Government Performance and Accountability Committee (GPAC) are included among her responsibilities. Other experiences include providing audit, attest, tax and consulting services to public sector and not-for-profit entities as well as those in healthcare, manufacturing, financial services and other niche sectors. Her roles within the private sector included international financial services and GSEs (Government Sponsored Entities) with a focus on financial and risk management.

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