box

How to modernize state and local governments in the cloud

State and local government services already have a magnifying glass on their budgets, and that scrutiny will grow over the next few years.

The impact of the pandemic on reduced tax revenue hasn't been fully realized at state and local levels, but when it becomes apparent, IT budgets — and the costs of maintaining legacy processes and systems — will face close examination.

Rather than doubling down on legacy processes and systems, IT leaders have an opportunity to embrace digital systems and processes.

To be equipped with the right tools and knowledge for a successful modernization, IT leaders need to understand:

- The three biggest challenges government service agencies face today that modernization can solve

- The value and benefits that come with modernizing government services

- What to look for in a cloud system as they begin to modernize their services

Modernization: The key to overcoming challenges

State and local governments aren't just being asked to think differently; they're required to prioritize initiatives that address the major challenges their constituents are facing.

Challenge #1: Ongoing COVID-19 response

While many state and local government services quickly pivoted when the pandemic began, building basic policies to enable remote work, the challenge of maintaining secure processes remains as the pandemic's effects continue.

Many agencies scaled existing solutions and invested in new solutions to support secure remote work. They discovered that areas that were already working well scaled well, yet areas that didn't work well didn't scale well. This contributes to problems with friction in daily work, collaborative technology, and security — resulting in slower timelines, more difficult teamwork, and increased security risks.

When the pandemic began, the USDA Farm Production and Conservation (FPAC) realized they needed to go digital. The USDA FPAC pivoted their programs so they could continue to serve farmers, ranchers, and private forest managers. With a trusted partner, they transitioned to digital operations within weeks, enabling them to digitally connect farmers and producers, ensure the security and privacy of sensitive personal and financial information, and create a successful remote work culture.

As agencies continue to feel the pandemic's effects, they will still face challenges that prevent them from successfully serving citizens. With the right processes and the right partner, agencies can create digital programs to meet every citizen's needs

Challenge #2: Analog business processes

The back office and front office of local and state government services may have some digitization, but the frontend is largely still analog with paper form submissions, mail, faxes, and in-person services — resulting in complicated processes that prevent services from reaching their full potential.

This was a challenge for the Office of the Attorney General for the District of Columbia. Its legacy file shares and processes couldn't support attorneys and staff to complete basic tasks, such as reviewing evidence for child support payment cases. When the office converted to digital-only processes, they reduced the cycle time for case management by more than 200%.

A successful digital transformation is possible for local and state governments. By beginning with the right pieces of business processes and systems, they can build a foundation for fully digital experiences and services that previously required paper and in-person transactions.

Challenge #3: Budget pressures

Local and state government agencies are still two or three years away from seeing the full impact of the pandemic on their budgets. The effects of falling income, property, retail, and entertainment taxes, as well as millions of people filing for unemployment, will converge together in huge budget shortfalls. One estimate from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities puts state and local shortfalls in excess of $500 billion through fiscal year 2022.

Yet even with these budget pressures, citizens will still expect a more seamless, digital experience from agencies. Outdated legacy infrastructure simply can't support that experience.

IT leaders will be tasked with figuring out how to support citizens while their budgets are cut. This requires new ways of thinking, architecting, and reduced trade-offs, which can be accomplished by turning toward digital transformation.

The value of modernizing government services

IT leaders can't rely on legacy processes to overcome these converging challenges. Instead, they must use these challenges as a leverage point to aggressively modernize and get out of traditional spending categories.

Minimizing or removing legacy processes can lead to significant cost reductions with real estate, servers, and data centers while driving better business outcomes and user productivity. A digital approach, combined with the benefits of the cloud and low-code or no-code platforms, empowers local and state agencies to increase citizen engagement and satisfaction, reduce security risks, and accelerate and improve the accuracy of mission-critical processes across agencies and borders.

If IT leaders can incorporate the cloud and low-code or no-code platforms into their processes, lower costs will naturally happen — and they'll experience new, extensive benefits.

Why the cloud?

Over decades, government agencies have collected, managed, and created data that lives in cabinets, drawers, storage, and archives. Agencies can't easily leverage this data, and they spend too much time managing cases reviewing archives, moving hard drives, and shipping information across agencies.

Going forward, case management data will be richer and more complex, and there will be much more of it. Inefficient processes that can't keep up with the data will cause employees to lose even more time as citizens expect faster service.

Working in the cloud provides both immediate and long-term benefits. Short term, organizations spend less time and money on case management. Longer term, it enables agencies to garner intelligence from their data, which means staff and workflows can better meet citizen needs.

Major benefits of moving to the cloud:

1. Real-time data access

Capture video, audio, images, notes, and scanned files directly in the field and automatically add them to case folders from any device, anywhere. With a single source of truth, agencies no longer work with outdated information, enabling real-time collaboration between stakeholders inside and outside your perimeter wall.

2. Automating processes across your tech stack

Automate end-to-end case management process using integrations with best-of-breed apps so employees spend less time doing manual work to maintain case data.

3. Enable secure workflows across your agency

Empower mission owners to self-govern collaboration roles, without violating agency IT security policies, and with access, domain controls, and data classification.

4. Reduced costs of on-premises infrastructure upkeep

Agencies gain more control over their budget as they reduce (or remove) legacy infrastructure.
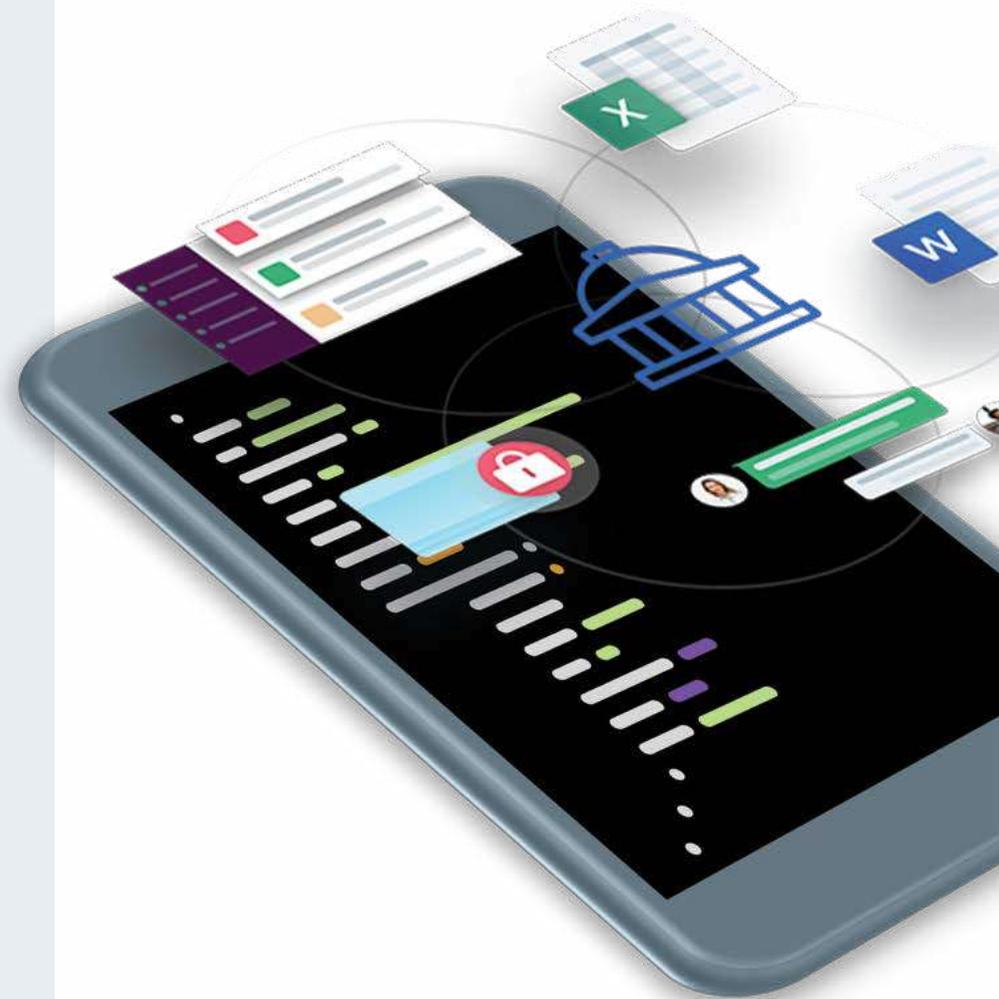
Why low-code or no-code?

The cloud enables scalability, giving agencies access to what they need to make decisions and to accomplish tasks faster. By combining low-code and no-code platforms with the cloud, government services can further enhance these capabilities.

The two major benefits of these platforms include:

1. Fast app development and deployment
Platforms require minimal coding, additional training, or support.

2. Internal and external use of apps
Secure apps can be deployed beyond agency walls, leading to improved productivity, greater constituent satisfaction, and more efficient case management.

Choosing your cloud solution

When evaluating potential solutions for government services, consider these must-haves to get the full benefits of working in the cloud.

#1: It simplifies case management

Approximately 80% of government work is case management, and this is problematic for agencies as they attempt to navigate custom-built apps and broken silos while sending information through disconnected channels. A modern cloud solution will allow government services agency to build an end-to-end connected experience that enables:

- Automated workflows across key stakeholder or citizens, enhancing user experiences with real-time access to secure, mission critical files from anywhere, on any device

- The protection of sensitive information with granular classifications, permission controls, and records retention

- Centralized case management content across your tech stack, allowing stakeholders to use the apps they like, without compromising security

#2: It improves online experiences

Online experiences have been notoriously bad for a while. Citizens expect to accomplish more with their cases online, which has required government services to rethink how experiences can become digital-first.

The Town of Cary, North Carolina, realized that it needed better digital experiences to better serve its citizens. Cary leveraged a [cloud solution](#) that enables its agencies to deliver a superior service for customers while also protecting citizens' information with frictionless security.

To experience a similar transformation, agencies need a superior cloud solution. These experiences go beyond traditional portals and can incorporate mobile capabilities that ease submission processes. The solution should create seamless collaboration across citizens, stakeholders, and internal teams while provide access to content from anywhere and on any device.

#3: It eases security compliance

Too many government agencies think of security as a firewall problem, and that's a dangerously outdated assumption. The data that agencies engage with constantly moves in and out of the organization as it's shared with each agency and citizens.

This new security model requires a new approach. Data not only needs to have trust, encryption, and protocols, but it must also be trackable and auditable. An exceptional cloud solution will help create a shared environment all users can work in that will:

- Empower mission owners to self-govern collaboration roles, without violating agency IT security policies, and with access and domain controls and data classification
- Ensure auditability regardless of endpoint, including BYOD
- Protect sensitive information with granular classifications and permission controls, records retention, and e-discovery
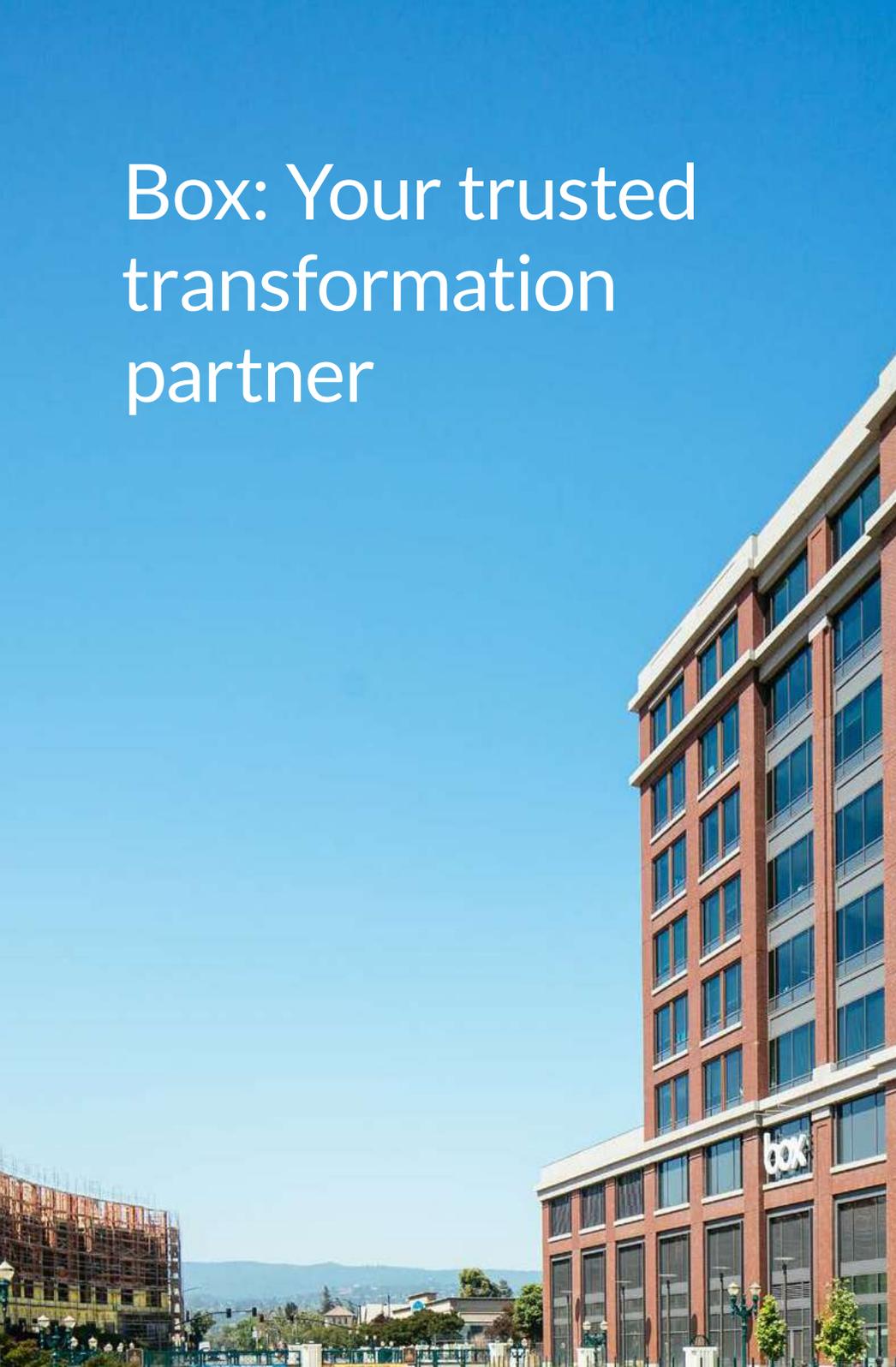
Box: Your trusted transformation partner

The demand for local and state government services to modernize and go digital will grow louder as budgets receive more scrutiny.

Rather than holding on to costly legacy systems, the answer to successfully modernizing lies in finding a cloud platform that improves online experiences with seamless collaboration across multiple stakeholders, simplifies mission-critical processes like case management with automations, and protects confidential content with robust permissions and controls.

Box has the technology and experience to help your agency transform its processes and technology, improve your productivity, and reduce your legacy costs. Box can power your government agencies with a frictionless security, seamless workflow and collaboration, and a connected technology stack with 1500+ integrations.

Learn more at box.com/government