DIGITIZE AND MODERNIZE:
The path for efficient federal agencies

BY TERRI JONES

Hyland®

Drive digital transformation at the federal level

With increased pressure on federal agencies to modernize IT and increase efficiency, finding the right solution is an ongoing struggle. Where do you begin? With such a wide variety of challenges to overcome at the federal level, it's difficult to know.

The following information will help you navigate the many twists and turns of the IT world so you can determine exactly what you are looking for – or are missing – in your hunt for the right tools and strategies for your organization.

THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT –
THE IT CHALLENGE IN THE APP GENERATION

DURING MY ANNUAL HOLIDAY PURGE, I came across one of my most beloved devices at the bottom of one of my drawers – the now-chubby feeling, eight GB powerhouse that was the original iPhone. I kept it, I admit it. It isn't often that I own something that started a revolution.

The effects of that original device can be seen far and wide. Is it any surprise, then, that I have to add an "app purge" to my annual cleaning now that my iPhone has grown from eight GB to 128 GB of app sprawl and photos (gasp, all that in my hand?!) that help me remember what my rental car looks like.

In fact, I have 12 apps just for photography.

So, what if you are a CIO or IT Director coping with smartphone fallout and the ease of the app generation? To put it another way, what if your organization expects an app (or solution) for every business challenge? And what if you, as a good team member, have accommodated this?

IT sprawl, meet app sprawl

You might find yourself staring in your metaphorical IT drawers and asking yourself how you ended up with the kind of IT sprawl that is hard to support and fit into your budget. You might even find that on top of too much to support, you have those legacy systems – the ones that aren't secure, don't have a mobile component or are feature poor – the ones that cost so much to hold together that you can't afford to replace them. You're trapped!

Much has been discussed about the need to centralize, consolidate and simplify IT solutions and infrastructure. But what rarely comes up is that IT leadership may perpetually fail a generation used to small, easy-to-get tools they can download themselves, which automatically tell you when there is an update (which you probably get for free).

If only my life as an IT Director had been that easy. Imagine no network software compatibility issues, no security problems, no firewall…. well, you get the point.

But here's the challenge. Your portfolio of solutions is not a smartphone. It is a complicated set of mission-critical solutions, security barriers, policies, hardware, phones and people. It has things that absolutely, positively need to keep running. It requires training every time you change solutions. It eats maintenance money and it has to keep up with the next political whim or valid constituent need.

So how do you solve your IT challenges in the era of apps? Change the search from apps (individual solutions) to a platform that can check off several boxes with a single investment.
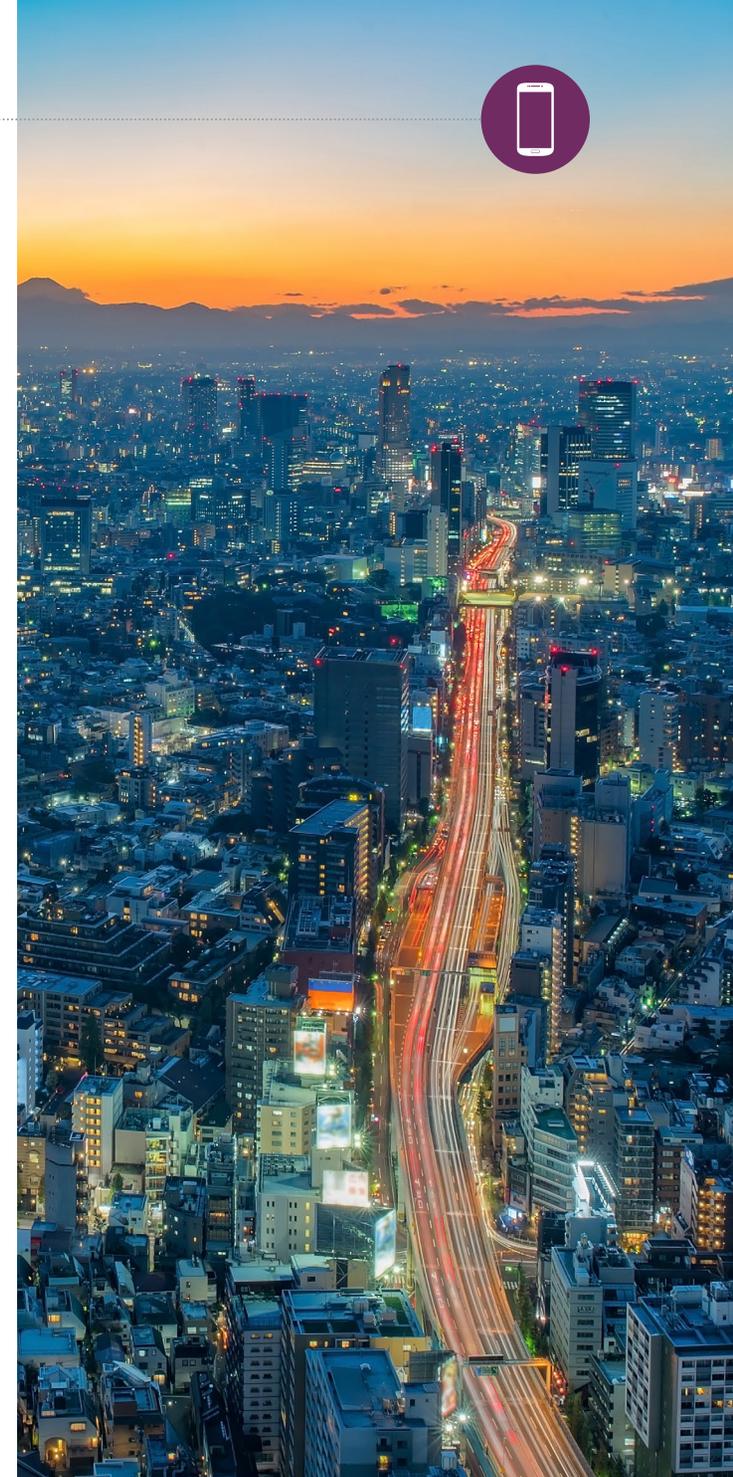
What should you look for? Here are a few tips:

A proven government platform

Not just a solution that solves AP or HR paper-based processes, but one that drives a digital transformation, because a paper-based world is jarring in an app generation. And, because simplifying and centralizing saves budget and resources, you need a platform that has proven itself across many government functions and departments. This helps remove the risks associated with investing in something new.

Flexibility

Because government doesn't control its destiny and can't always predict the next mandate or political cycle, you need flexibility in your tools. Integration capabilities are key. Who doesn't like the automatic switching between email, browser, etc. that we've gotten used to thanks to our smartphones?

Actually having tools that connect solutions and make them easy to use is part of the new expectation driven by our smartphones.

Case management tools

The ability to rapidly and affordably develop solutions to manage new programs and responsibilities – all while collecting required data and reporting results – has to be in a CIO's toolkit. A platform that includes case management software can offer integration, the capture of related documents and data and workflow management.

Security

While you investigate platforms, why not look into investing in encryption? You need encryption at rest and in transit as well as the ability to manage users in a granular fashion.

Overall, the app generation has been good for the user. It has really driven technology into our psyche and done it in a way that shows almost everyone the value. For IT Directors and CIOs trying to meet business needs, it has raised user expectations. This is good, but difficult if you choose the wrong solutions, as the exit strategy is not as easy as simply deleting it and looking for another $1.99 photo editing program.

The features above are a good working checklist that mitigates classic risks for government IT, while providing the flexibility you need to make sure the next solution you deliver is as responsive and user-driven as the app generation now demands. ∎

PART 2:

FIVE KEYS TO A FEDERAL DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION

RECENTLY, THE GENERAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO) RELEASED A SOBERING VIEW of federal agency budgets and the financial effect of legacy systems on IT expenditures. About 75% of funds now go towards keeping dated hardware and software solutions running. The effect? A seven-year trend of declining expenditures on new solutions, about a $7B reduction.

For federal agencies, this is a devastating trend. Behind the numbers, you might be using older software solutions that can't run under the newest (and most secure) operating systems, require outdated hardware and can't be enhanced because they were written in programming languages that are no longer taught. The GAO report referenced several agencies using systems that are at least 50 years old. And, in at least one case, still looking at 8-inch floppy drives to run a key system.

If you are a CIO, applications manager or analyst, you are probably watching this budget effect with extreme alarm. Not only do you face a lack of funding for security, your users are less efficient. On top of that, you are unable to afford the latest solutions that could lead a transformation of your agency. Your agency may also be facing the retirement of some of your most capable and experienced staff, and with the recent hiring freeze, leaving you very understaffed.

Countries around the world are speaking about a digital transformation of government. There are many facets to this transformation, but it includes using solutions that allow agencies to implement digital and online processes. At its core,

this transformation requires agencies to abandon paper while demanding new platforms that can meet their customers' needs online with 24/7 convenience and design that works on mobile devices.

Normally, you would address the staff concerns, security needs, new customer efforts and replacement cycles by purchasing better solutions. But, as the GAO analysis shows, your agency may have a very limited budget to move forward and replace aging systems. This means that your purchases must be flexible and able to simultaneously solve many problems to maximize impact and ensure you can use the investment successfully in the future.
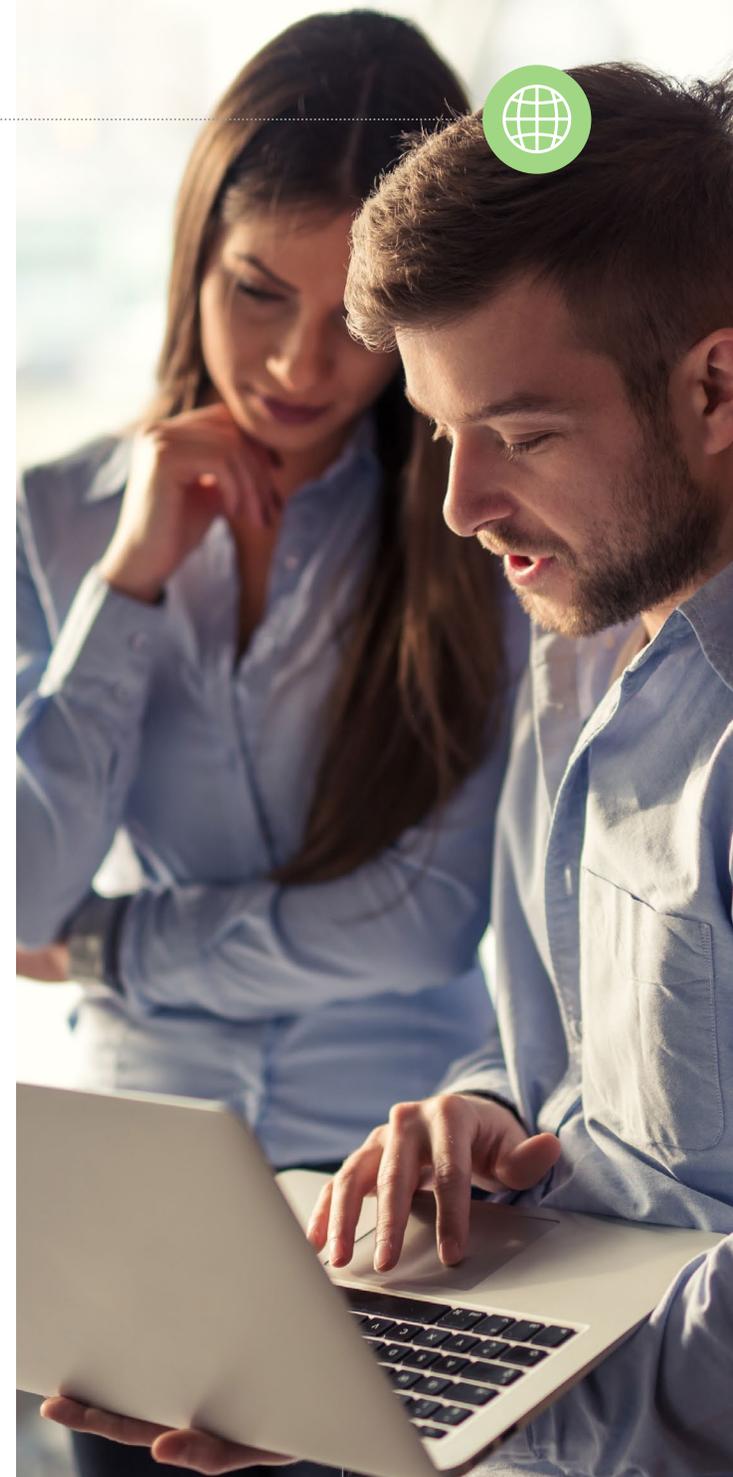
What should you look for?

① Case management tools: These solutions include platform tools that allow rapid application development to avoid the time and cost of custom code. They allow modular deployment and can support many program and mission objectives. Case management is the right approach to equip staff and provide better service to your customers. With a platform of configuration tools that doesn't require custom code, you not only have the tools to solve solution needs, you've invested in a philosophy that is financially sustainable and agile.

② Content services platform: Government often means paper. And most government transactions begin, progress and end with paper. Securing paper while providing collaboration options and ending the cost and time associated with paper filing and archiving saves budget and improves efficiency. Being paperless means finally being able to move to mobile access and online services. A content services platform offers that potential by eliminating paper–created silos with a single, secure, central repository.

③ Capture: The paperless potential is more than just eliminating file cabinets. It includes capturing paper, automatically pulling out the information it contains without manual data entry and providing tools to move to electronic forms. Pursuing capture tools can reclaim staff time and support other efforts like online services and paper reduction.

④ Business process automation: If you face a hiring freeze and a retirement surge, automation seems like a good answer. The right platform connects ontent services tools, case management tools and workflow to allow you to relieve workload pressures (faster government) and enforce business rules (better government) – supporting less experienced staff while ensuring compliance with programmatic and statutory requirements. Additionally, the combination of case management, automation and going paperless provides increased visibility for business unit managers who are responsible for process improvement and identifying bottlenecks. Automation is an essential functionality for future federal investment and the goal of providing online services.

⑤ Enterprise File Sync and Share: Many federal government processes require consultation and collaboration with other agencies or external organizations. This means emails back and forth as well as the sharing of documents and content like reports, photos videos, etc. Even within agencies, securing critical content and tools for collaboration is essential. Documents and document review is an essential activity of government and an integrated and secure way to share them is a welcome tool that speeds up extra–agency tasks while providing an audit trail of that activity.

The five functions above are critical to drive a digital transformation in an agile, modular and affordable approach. These tools avoid the type of investments that have led to the disturbing budget numbers collected by the GAO. The capabilities above hit on core challenges and pains faced by the government and address customer demands. Frankly, they help meet the expectations of a labor force whose smartphones may have more features than the critical systems they use for their jobs. As you drive your own agency's digital transformation, consider these keys to a way forward. ■

3 WAYS A CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM HELPS FEDERAL IT AND CIOS

THE EBB AND FLOW of agency mission change and new program delivery is dictated by the political cycle, national need and new funding for programs. When this happens, particularly with new programs, the information technology (IT) – including data systems, reporting and process automation – is already behind before the ink is dry on the new program rules. These new needs add to the large pile of modernization, security and solutions concerns already on a CIO's to-do list.

With this in mind, it isn't surprising that there are always more tasks and program and solution needs for a federal CIO. The sad news is that it comes at a time when federal infrastructure is both behind and facing budget crises provoked by the extreme costs of keeping legacy systems alive. These systems have no replacements in sight, drain resources, are written in antiquated programming languages and cannot, in most cases, be modified to take on new needs.

These are the realities that might encourage a CIO to stay in bed and call in sick.

360-degree views of information

Much has been written about case management solutions, usually countless flavors of customer relationship management (CRM) solutions. The benefit of these solutions? They approach the business of government recognizing that program delivery requires content (documents), data and unstructured information. The truly effective programs and staff are those that have all of these in their solutions.

Often left out – but especially important – is the idea of bringing automation and process into the view of data and unstructured information. This provides staff with the support of a 360-degree view of the information to deliver a service. It means that low-value tasks are automated and compliance is enforced by the solution's workflow management.

If all of this sounds exactly like what you need to deliver good service, take on new work and escape legacy systems, here are three features you should consider:

❶ Rapid application development

Case management doesn't help if you can't deploy it in a modular and agile way. Seek out a vendor that offers a platform with a track record of fast solution development and that empowers your solutions team to build using the same base of licenses. If you do, you'll start delivering better solutions faster.

❷ Intimate connection to automation and content

Don't just replicate separate data and content systems (file cabinets and network file shares). Invest in a case management platform that is content and automation enabled so your staff can see data, content and process in one place. This drives efficiency through automation that prompts staff with timers, reminders and notifications to keep processes moving along while staying within compliance requirements. Better program decisions and compliance is another great accomplishment for your solution to deliver!

❸ Flexible and scalable

As was said, programs, rules, staff and more change over time. Look for a platform that is flexible and scalable so you can easily and quickly change program solutions, add new ones and modernize as new features are needed.

Faster and future-proofed IT awaits CIOs that can wrap these capabilities into their investments.

Case management as a philosophy makes good sense for any agency interested in improving service and program delivery. Beyond the empowerment of staff, these solutions recognize that more information means that staff do a better job.

If you combine the potential of rapid application development that is flexible and scalable with the automation required to relieve workload and compliance concerns, you get a toolkit that can change with the programmatic and political winds. It can even solve the budget and time puzzle of outdated systems. Pick that platform and your CIO might even show up for work early with a smile on her face. ■

CONTENT SERVICES PLATFORMS: THE CORE OF GOOD FEDERAL IT

THE CALLS FOR A DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF GOVERNMENT are popping up across the globe and, increasingly, in the United States. A key part of the transformation blueprint is the idea of meeting constituents in the digital world. Specifically, to accept that there are new and essential ways to communicate – and governments of all sizes can only ignore this concept at their own peril. Embedded in this assertion is determining the best way to engage citizens and how to leverage data to inform policy decisions.

As a CIO, you probably wish you had a dollar for every trend you're told to follow. Generally, I agree with many things experts advise us to do, but fewer are valid and useful for the public sector.

However, digital transformation is essential, not only because constituents are different, but because the public sector is always asked to do more with less, to improve decision-making and to provide transparency.

So, what if a single investment could affect a digital transformation for today's constituent and for your agency? What if it could transform how you communicate with your constituents AND transform the efficiency with which you deliver programs and services?

ⓘ

If all of this sounds exactly like what you need to deliver good service, take on new work and escape legacy systems, here are three features you should consider:

① Manage content

The sheer amount of content generated by federal business, program delivery and administrative responsibilities creates tasks. These tasks do not improve services, and the paper–based world of government isn't transparent.

Going digital means content is available and your agency can check transparency off its to–do list. And, with the security inherent in an enterprise information platform, it also means that you enhance the security of your agency.

② Transform content

Storing paper in a file cabinet is no way to improve efficiency. Go digital by transforming the content from paper to electronic files, eliminating paper forms for smarter electronic forms and pairing them with automation. This transformation means paper doesn't go into a file to die.

The right platform includes workflow management, which will automatically trigger notifications and timers that keep processes on track. It also provides a dashboard to measure progress and make your content accessible from mobile devices so field workers can use it. That's the kind of transformation that helps your staff complete more work and makes the impact of that work easy to track and measure.

③ Access content

Good program delivery, public policy and citizen engagement are all supported by the ability to easily access information. Paper files make this difficult, whether you are a staff member or a citizen trying to understand the basis for a policy decision.

By going digital, you are able to place this content on the web for citizen access. It also makes it easy for your staff to find the information so they can make good, timely decisions. You can even create external and internal access with a single initiative that includes content services.

There are many technology trends and plenty of experts suggesting which the public sector should follow. Digital transformation checks many boxes for a government IT investment, including: eliminating cost, automating process and compliance, speeding government, tracking process and impact, securing content and building the infrastructure that today's constituents expect.

And, with a single investment to drive this transformation, it is a trend that has the impact and ease that would make any CIO happy. ∎

WHY FEDERAL IT NEEDS A CONTENT CAPTURE STRATEGY
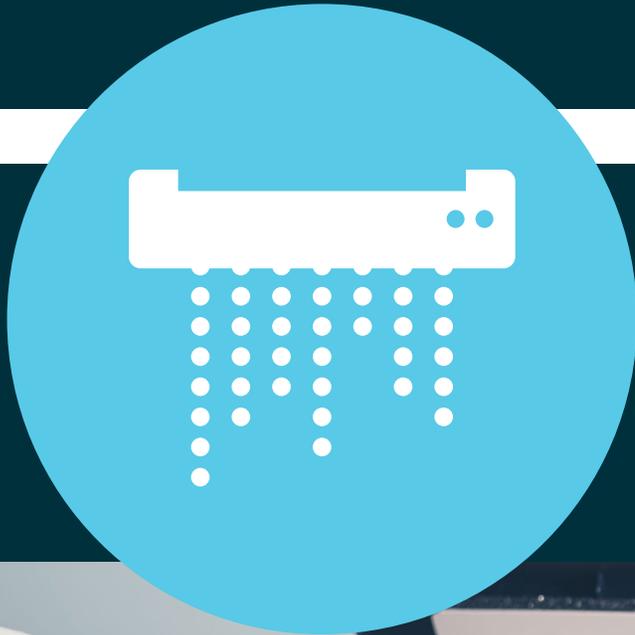
MODERNIZING FEDERAL INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY is a far-reaching and possibly overwhelming task. There is limited budget for modernization, according to GAO data. But the upkeep of existing systems is essential. At the same time, a hiring freeze and accelerated retirement compound the potential for slower program and service delivery with a smaller workforce for program delivery.

Normally, technology is the logical answer for a mismatch between the amount of required work and the people available to do that work. But it isn't just about transferring tasks to a technology tool. It's about changing paper-based government processes to eliminate the government tasks that only exist because they're run on paper.

It's also about taking our citizen interactions online, as they now expect, and reaping the efficiency gains.

3 keys to content capture

To accomplish these goals and increase efficiency, federal agencies need a content capture strategy. They need a way to gather and collect the information transferred to agencies in the millions of interactions they have every day.

There are at least three areas where you can apply capture strategies that can both transform and improve government:

1 Shed the paper, save time and money

As discussed above, paper creates extra work. By creating ways to capture information and begin processes without paper, you can move things online and eliminate work. This means web-based electronic forms, automation like workflow software to move those forms and capture from communication channels like email or even fax.

Starting a process without paper removes tasks up and down the line while making it impossible to lose documents.

2 Replace manual entry, change the service paradigm

As an example of the work created by paper, think of the hours spent transferring data from forms into data systems. A capture strategy using the array of tools that can read paper and transfer data without manual entry allows you to re-allocate staff time, make faster progress on transactions, and eliminate errors that come from typing thousands of data points into systems.

3 Go electronic and meet the new constituent

Your constituents expect the same online options they get from the private sector. Leaving behind paper forms and changing the capture of that data to an electronic form helps the digital transformation of government. The internet is where our constituents are, and it is time for all processes to be available online. Doing so makes it easier for your staff to focus on the important work of impactful and efficient programs and services.

Capturing the information we used to write on forms is critical to surviving the increasing workload of government with less staff. With hiring freezes and retirement, this is no longer "a nice to have," it's critical to your agency's survival. ■

PART 6:

# INVESTING IN BUSINESS PROCESS MANAGEMENT – **A MUST FOR TODAY'S FEDERAL IT**
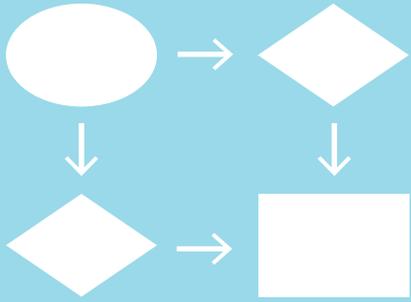
AS AN AGENCY CIO, it is easy to find more projects and ideas than you can actually take on. There's cybersecurity, cloud deployment options, consolidation, hardware upgrades, modernization, etc. The list goes on forever.

But which of those will your program staff remember you for? Recent news suggests you may be facing budget cuts and smaller staffs. Grappling with those realities could easily stop any modernization progress you are making. And, while those are necessary projects, they may not help your agency cope if you lose staff and funding.

I've written about some of the ways an enterprise information platform can transform federal IT. To date, much of that discussion centered on the value, agility and scope of those platforms and the business process management (BPM) tools they offer.

One of the key capabilities BPM offers is workflow software. Workflow provides benefits that help deal with less staff and reduced budgets. It also supports the crucial need to improve and accelerate your agency's processes.

5 ways to improve processes with workflow

Imagine an agile, codeless workflow engine, and consider how the changes it creates can benefit your agency:

1 Speeds processes

By automating processes, you complete tasks without staff interaction. You can even eliminate certain tasks. Using workflow management translates into the completion of more tasks and automated flagging of exceptions that require the attention of a staff member.

Processes are faster when a workflow handles tasks. Humans become involved only when it's time to review or make a decision.

2 Prioritizes important work

A workflow process that knows the rules of programs – things like supporting documentation for eligibility or deadlines you must meet – can help turn that pile of work into a prioritized set of tasks. That way, it organizes work into what is ready for staff to move along based on order of need, statute or other rules.

3 Supports compliance

While faster work and processing is great, another piece of program delivery is compliance. Federal staff running programs have rules to follow, as do your grantees. Workflows can remind staff of required documentation or tasks and email the same reminders to your grantees, applicants or extra-agency colleagues with whom you collaborate.

4 Links up with online transactions

Eliminating paper means removing dreaded government forms. By recognizing that interacting with today's citizens means having an online presence, you can use workflow automation to move your processes online.

This eliminates the cost of paper and lost documents and offers your services in a way your constituents now expect. And, because of workflow, the transaction is immediately traceable and visible.

5 Provides process transparency

Moving to paperless processing with workflow means understanding where a transaction is in a process and simplifying the identification of bottlenecks and impediments to faster processes. It also helps managers understand the status of individual transactions and see the speed at which program and service delivery move.

Sometimes, the challenges of political cycles and change create additional problems for CIOs. In this case, the potential of significant workforce reduction can complicate the ability to make good IT decisions. Fortunately, you can meet this challenge with technology.

Looking for an enterprise information platform with an integrated workflow engine can accomplish a number of goals including modernization, online services, cost reduction and faster program and service delivery. But the thing that might make the most impact in your agency is the positive benefit to your program teams.

With business process management tools, that's a must-do scenario that would be a high priority for any CIO. ■

Now that you know some of the IT strategies and tools that have the most profound effect at the federal level, all that's left is to put that information into action. Whether that means putting together a plan to revamp your IT infrastructure or finding the right replacement for one system that brings processes at your federal agency to a crawl, you have the knowledge.

One company **Unlimited possibilities**

Hyland®

For more information, visit **OnBase.com/Government ››**