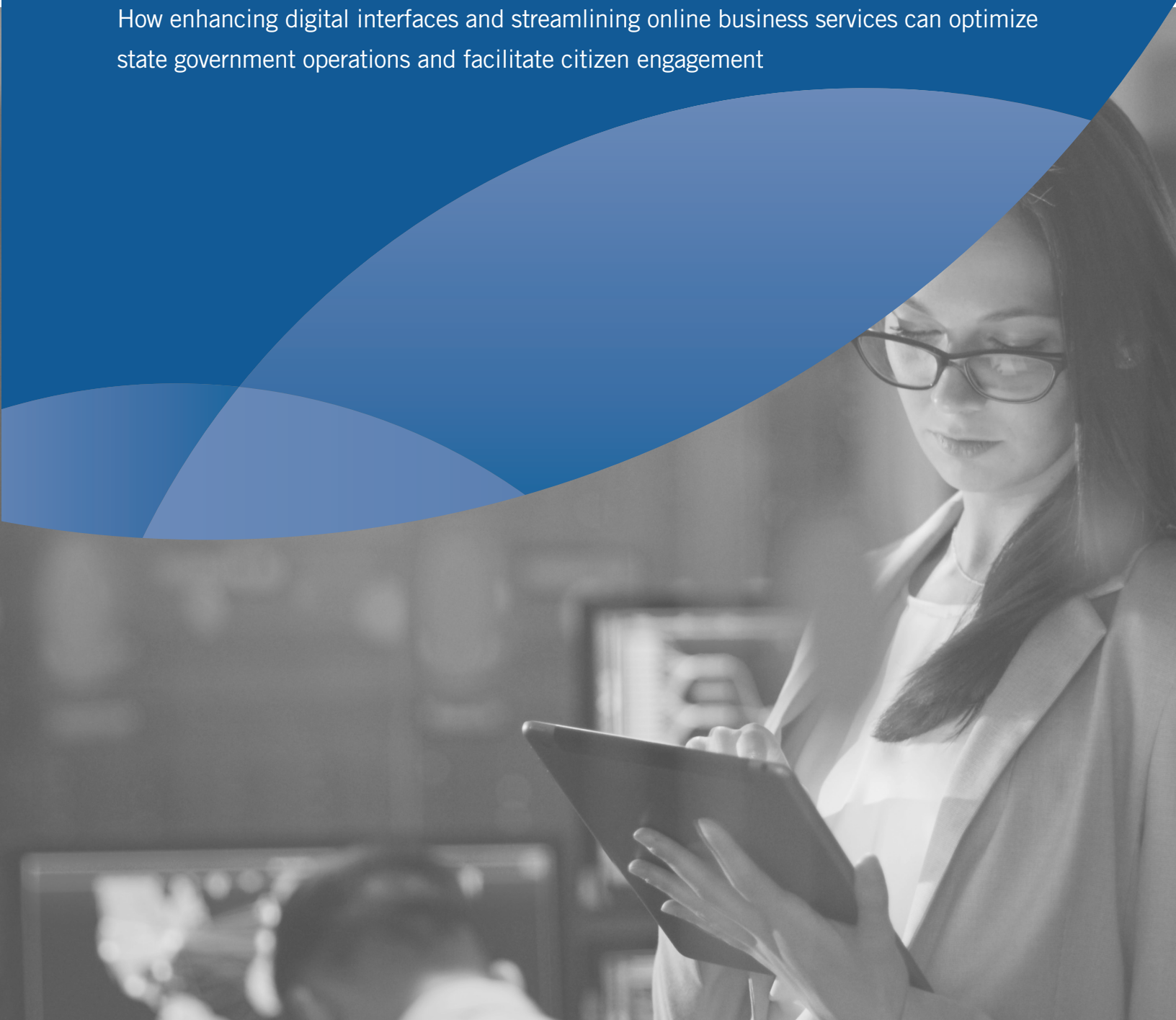




WHITE PAPER

# Strategies for Enhancing the Digital Citizen Experience

How enhancing digital interfaces and streamlining online business services can optimize state government operations and facilitate citizen engagement



# Strategies for Enhancing the Digital Citizen Experience



## Introduction

As noted on [digital.gov](https://www.digit.gov), “Customer expectations are being ratcheted up by the private sector. Government services should be delivered in ways the public now demands and expects — quick, easy, secure, and accessible.”<sup>1</sup> When it comes to digital government, citizens expect more than online access to information. In an overwhelmingly web-based world, providing customer-centric government services means enabling and empowering citizens to complete transactions electronically instead of in line and on paper. Ensuring that these online transactions are seamless, effective, and trust-building is critical to improving the way that governments serve their communities.

In a 2020 survey conducted by the Center for Generational Kinetics, nearly 30% of respondents noted that their greatest barrier to engaging with government is overall frustration with the process, and more than 85% of respondents agreed that government can do a better job engaging citizens. Every generation surveyed cited clear, easy-to-use technology as the top-ranked strategy for improving online interactions with government.<sup>2</sup>

Citizens should be as confident in their digital transactions with government agencies as they are with buying their favorite products online. As the U.S. Digital Service states, the “private industry knows how to work fast, lean, and keep the focus on the user.”<sup>3</sup> Incorporating private-sector best practices into public-sector service delivery models is key to offering a user experience that instills confidence and trust in citizens across communities.

By enhancing the digital government experience to bring citizens toward the solutions they seek, state governments can simultaneously optimize operations and strengthen citizens’ confidence that elected officials are present, listening, and efficiently meeting community needs.



Customer expectations are being ratcheted up by the private sector. Government services should be delivered in ways the public now demands and expects — quick, easy, secure, and accessible.”<sup>1</sup>

## A Digital Experience That Builds Trust

Strong governments and communities are built upon relationships of trust between stakeholders and government leaders. This trust is strengthened when constituents have positive, hassle-free online experiences with state government that understands and prioritizes their needs and concerns. Fortunately, enhancing digital interfaces and streamlining online business services does not have to mean a complete overhaul of existing systems and processes. In fact, many modern-day solutions adopted by state governments work together with existing infrastructure to optimize day-to-day operations.

In a 2020 survey conducted by The Center for Generational Kinetics, nearly 30% of respondents noted that overall frustration with the process is their greatest barrier to engaging with government.

Governments of any size can take simple steps to modernize their digital interfaces and online business services to better connect with citizens digitally. While needs and system considerations will vary by jurisdiction, the following components can provide a basic starting point:

- **User-Centered Website Design.** Having a well-designed, mobile-optimized site is paramount to earning the trust of online users. As pointed out by Kyla Fullenwider, U.S. Census Bureau's first chief innovation officer, "The fundamental principles of design – placing users at the center and building empathy to understand their needs – are proving to be uniquely suited for identifying and tackling some of the most complex problems in government and building trust and confidence in our institutions."<sup>4</sup>

When citizens visit government webpages and online forms, those pages should instill confidence that:

- 1) users are in the right place,
- 2) users will find the answers to their questions, and
- 3) users can trust that any sensitive information they submit through the site will remain secure.

### DIGITAL FEATURES TO CONSIDER

- **User-centered website design:** A clean, intuitive experience helps ensure that citizens can easily navigate toward the information and resources they need.
- **Robust site search:** Prominent search bars and robust search functions help citizens accomplish tasks more quickly by making the information they seek easy to find.
- **Chatbot or live chat:** Sometimes the best way for citizens to get the assistance they need is through simple communication. Chatbots and live chat features enhance government responsiveness and instill trust in constituents.
- **Secure online transactions:** Giving citizens the option to submit forms and payments anytime, anywhere strengthens civic engagement and streamlines government processes.
- **Self-service web portals:** Offer citizens the opportunity to manage civic tasks securely all in one place and automate government activities at the same time.

A strategic website design that better serves the public in turn better serves government personnel, ensuring that they are not spending more time than necessary fielding routine requests and inquiries that could reasonably be fulfilled via a well-designed, user-centric agency website.

- **Business Service Offerings and Secure Online Transactions.** Sometimes features as simple as secure online transactions and form submissions can transform the way citizens engage with state government. This goes beyond the ability for users to download and print out forms, the submission of which requires them to take time away from work to stand in line at a government office. By making traditionally in-office transactions accessible and

submittable online, state governments ensure that residents can do business with their government anytime, anywhere. Coupling this with self-service web portals and digital business permitting, licensing, and reporting functions not only makes it easy for entities to conduct business online — it also streamlines government operations. Integrating these online services with existing accounting and reporting systems simplifies these processes and contributes to time savings for citizens and government staff alike.

- **Chatbot Integrations and Live Support.** A positive online experience is more than an informative, aesthetically pleasing website. By adding automated, user-focused support features to their website, state governments can provide constituents with individualized assistance in real time. Sophisticated chatbots and live chat features are efficient ways to bridge the gap between constituent inquiries and their knowledge of or access to government solutions. These integrated components enable governments to respond to citizens quickly, individually, and with fewer resources.

While these considerations are critical to providing quality service to the public online, they are by no means the only way for state government to facilitate stronger digital connections with constituents. User-centered design, efficient business solutions, and real-time citizen support are only the beginning: myriad digital solutions exist to enhance citizens' experience with everything from election and voter services to public safety operations.

In a 2020 survey conducted by The Center for Generational Kinetics, every generation surveyed cited clear, easy-to-use technology as the top-ranked strategy for improving online interactions with government.

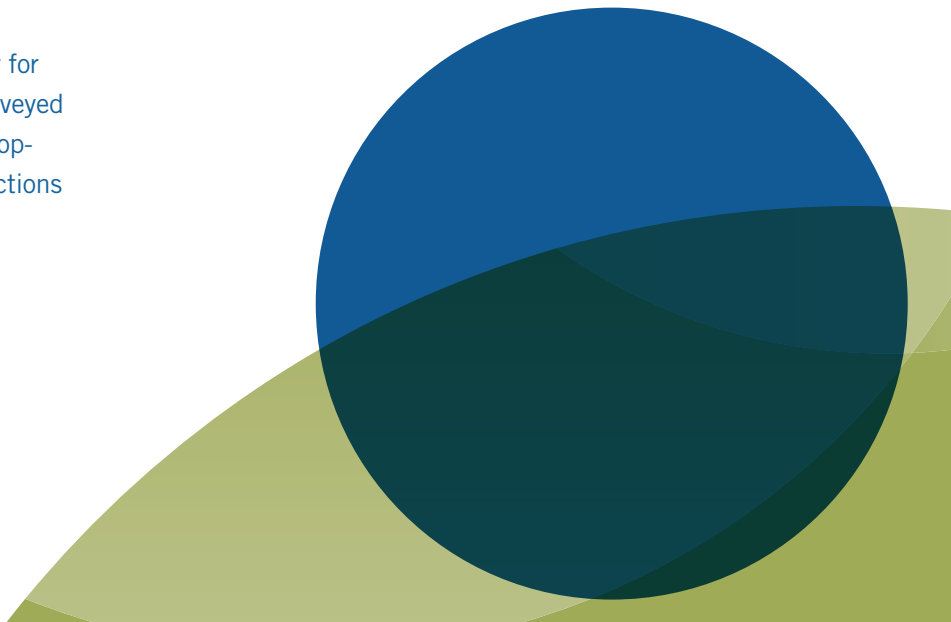
## BENEFITS TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT

- Improve communication with citizens
- Promote economic development
- Streamline and optimize government operations
- Drive community connections

## Benefits to Government

As stated in a 2020 joint study by the Partnership for Public Service and the Tech Talent Project, “Users of government services bear the cost of administering government programs if services are not designed to minimize burdens of time, money and complexity.”<sup>5</sup> So, too, do government personnel: when constituents are digitally disconnected from the resources and services they need, trained government staff inherently spend more time fielding routine inquiries and requests that could otherwise be automated or more effectively communicated to the public.

**Assistance for Citizens, Time Savings for Governments:** New chatbot features added to Arkansas.gov and state agency websites in 2021 answered 75% of visitors' routine questions without the need for human response.



Take Arkansas as a recent example: new chatbot features added to Arkansas.gov and state agency websites in 2021 answered 75% of visitors' routine questions without the need for human response.<sup>6</sup> Because government staff can trust their digital interface to respond to routine questions from the public, they are now free to spend their time responding to more complex requests.

The city of Lexington, Nebraska also recently embraced user-centered digital strategies. By switching from managing utility payments manually to accepting online and interactive voice response payments, the city saved 80 hours of monthly staff time.<sup>7</sup> Offering digital solutions to fulfill everyday citizen needs not only increases efficiency for citizens; it enables governments to accomplish more, too, especially when those new solutions integrate seamlessly with existing digital infrastructure.

**Optimizing Government Operations:** The city of Lexington, Nebraska, has saved 80 hours of monthly staff time after switching from managing utility payments manually to accepting online and interactive voice response payments. Offering digital solutions to everyday citizen needs not only increases efficiency for citizens: it enables governments to do more, too.

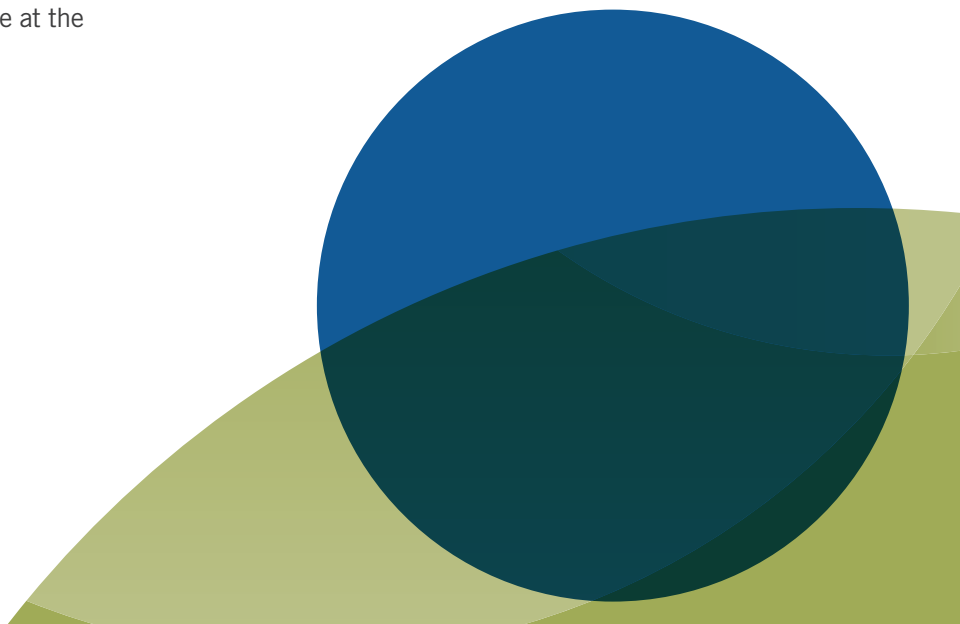
## Strategic Solutions = Connected Communities

According to the latest President's Management Agenda, IT modernization is a critical tool that "must be at the foundation of Government management."<sup>8</sup>

State governments that prioritize strategic, citizen-centered digital design, secure and seamless online transactions, and user-focused customer service features will succeed in enhancing overall constituent experience, thereby strengthening state government's connection with the public. Taking the time to enhance the way state governments interface with the public online makes those governments more efficient and effective, in turn driving civic engagement for stronger, more connected communities.

### Sources:

- <sup>1</sup> Digital.gov, "21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act," [digital.gov/resources/21st-century-integrated-digital-experience-act/](https://digital.gov/resources/21st-century-integrated-digital-experience-act/).
- <sup>2</sup> The Center for Generational Kinetics, "Generational Interactions with Government: National Quantitative Research Study," prepared for Tyler Technologies, March 2020, <https://www.tylertech.com/resources/resource-downloads/genresearch-by-tyler-technologies>.
- <sup>3</sup> U.S. Digital Service, [usds.gov/how-we-work](https://usds.gov/how-we-work).
- <sup>4</sup> The Partnership for Public Service and The Tech Talent Project, "Tech Talent for 21st Century Government," April 2020, <https://ourpublicservice.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tech-Talent-for-21st-Century-Government.pdf>.
- <sup>5</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>6</sup> "Arkansas Redefines Citizen Experience," Tyler Technologies, <https://www.tylertech.com/resources/case-studies/arkansas-redefines-citizen-experience>.
- <sup>7</sup> Peter Weed, "Boost Community Use of Engagement Tech," Tyler Technologies, December 18, 2020, <https://www.tylertech.com/resources/blog-articles/boost-community-use-of-engagement-tech>.
- <sup>8</sup> "The Biden-Harris Management Agenda Vision," [performance.gov/pma](https://performance.gov/pma).



## About Tyler Technologies and NIC

Acquired by Tyler Technologies (NYSE: TYL) on April 21, 2021, NIC is a leader in digital government solutions and payments, partnering with government to deliver user-friendly digital services that make it easier and more efficient to interact with government. NIC and Tyler are united in their mission to empower public sector entities to operate more efficiently and connect more transparently with their constituents and with each other.

Tyler has more than 27,000 successful installations across more than 11,000 sites, with clients in all 50 states, Canada, the Caribbean, Australia, and other international locations. Tyler has been named to Government Technology's GovTech 100 list five times and has been recognized three times on Forbes' "Most Innovative Growth Companies" list. More information about Tyler Technologies, an S&P 500 company headquartered in Plano, Texas, can be found at [tylertech.com](https://www.tylertech.com).

[info@tylertech.com](mailto:info@tylertech.com) | [tylertech.com](https://www.tylertech.com)