

Modernizing for Efficiency: A Smarter Approach to Government IT



As governments modernize, IT teams are rethinking how to make their systems more efficient — from the code they write to the infrastructure and networks that support it.

“Efficiency is no longer just about cutting costs; it’s about delivering better outcomes for constituents within existing budgets. CIOs must drive efficiencies in their organizations through smarter use of technology,” says Teri Takai, chief programs officer at the Center for Digital Government and leader of the Government Efficiency Council.

In this Q&A, Asim Iqbal, chief technology officer of emerging technologies for CDW Government, shares why code, infrastructure, and edge computing all play a vital role in improving efficiency.

What are the biggest code-related efficiency challenges in government?

One of the biggest challenges is clinging to outdated requirements and assuming that what was needed years ago is still necessary today. Many government systems were custom-built on aging frameworks, making them expensive and difficult to maintain. Keeping these legacy systems alive drains budgets and delivers diminishing returns for agencies and taxpayers.

Today, there are open source alternatives that achieve the same goals more efficiently. Even when buying licensed software, agencies can often scale down from enterprise to standard versions without losing capability.

Another major barrier is siloed thinking. Many governments have developed disconnected systems. A unified approach is more efficient. For example, the Small Business Administration merged three outdated applications into one modern platform to improve efficiency and user experience.

Finally, agencies often lock in budgets and success metrics too early based on current knowledge rather than future needs. A better approach is to plan for flexibility, setting broad goals and leaving room to adapt as new technologies emerge.

Where are government infrastructure costs being wasted?

First, many agencies are stuck in an outdated mindset — that is, spending heavily on hardware and hoping it meets future needs. This leads to overbuying in some areas and underinvesting in others. For example, an agency may purchase more storage than necessary but later realize it needs more computing power for artificial intelligence tools like Amazon Bedrock or Amazon SageMaker. Did we know two years ago that we’d be talking about AI? Nobody was budgeting for it.

Second, governments sometimes assume they must stick with a specific vendor or solution, regardless of cost. That’s not true. Look at open source. Look at alternative providers who may offer you better pricing.

Finally, agencies often overlook operational efficiency. Longstanding practices may no longer be the best option. Are there newer, more efficient ways to manage our systems? Nine times out of 10, the answer is yes. For example, tools like AWS Organizations and AWS Control Tower can improve governance and scalability, while AWS CloudWatch and AWS CloudTrail can enhance visibility into system performance and resources use.

Why should agencies rethink edge computing?

Much of today’s edge computing was built for older, slower networks. Modern networks are faster, more reliable, and higher capacity, meaning agencies no longer need as many edge locations.

By consolidating edge compute into central or cloud-based environments, agencies can retire outdated systems and maintain only what’s truly needed. Services like AWS Outposts and AWS Local Zones can securely extend cloud infrastructure closer to where it’s required.

Bringing compute and storage into data centers or the cloud improves resilience, efficiency, and security compliance. Since edge environments are frequent targets for cyberattacks, fewer, better-protected locations are safer and easier to manage.

Any final piece of advice?

Align funding and RFPs around not only how a solution will be built but also how it will be delivered and how constituent satisfaction will be measured — before, during, and after implementation.

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