The Digital Transformation of Public Administration

How Technology Improves Effectiveness and Builds Public Trust

OPENGOV

Competent administration fuels effective government. Scholars and government leaders have spent decades developing best practices in public administration; nevertheless, the ideas are sometimes impossible to implement. Many governments struggle to plan and build budgets, to make informed, data-driven decisions, and to communicate meaningfully with all stakeholders for increased transparency. While public administrators strive to serve citizens as successfully as possible, outdated government technology impedes effective and accountable administration.

In this guide, you'll learn how you can strengthen budgeting, improve operational performance through enhanced reporting and analysis, and communicate clearly to engage the public and demonstrate your success — all by connecting your government with the right technology. These processes all facilitate more efficient, effective government administration.

This is government — and information — in action.

Contents

Introduction

"Administration is the most obvious part of government; it is government in action; it is the executive, the operative, the most visible side of government, and is of course as old as government itself." -Woodrow Wilson[1]

Effective administration accomplishes wonders.

In January 1858, the *Chicago Tribune* said the project "excited the public curiosity."[2] But the crowd that watched workers raise a four-story brick house six feet off the ground saw more than a curiosity — the crowd saw an effort that slashed commute times, liberated women from carrying chamber pots to the river, and saved thousands of lives from the scourges of cholera and dysentery. Citizens saw the initial steps toward finishing America's first comprehensive sewer system.

Nineteenth-century Chicago was only a few feet above Lake Michigan, so water seeped into the dirt when rain fell. In turn, commuters languished in muddy streets. The mud accumulated human waste and ravaged Chicago with disease — cholera killed five percent of the city's population in 1854 alone.[3]

The newly-created Board of Sewer Commissioners decided to build a sewage system to fix the problem. But because Chicago's buildings were too low, engineers had to raise almost every building and street several

---

1   Wilson, Woodrow. "The Study of Administration." Political Science Quarterly, Vol. 2, No. 2. http://www.iupui.edu/~spea1/V502/Orosz/Units/Sections/u1s5/Woodrow_Wilson_Study_of_Administration_1887_jstor.pdf. June 1887.

2   "The Lifting of Chicago." Chicago Tribune. http://users.ox.ac.uk/~sedm1912/csc.html#y1858_m01_d26. July 12, 1854.

3   Hrala, Josh. "The Raising of Chicago Meant Literally Raising an Entire City Ten Feet." Modern Notion. November 19, 2014.

Workers raise the Briggs House in Chicago.

feet off the ground without disrupting city life. The government pooled its money with private funds, elevated the city, and built the system.

We need similar effectiveness today. The American Society of Civil Engineers estimates governments requires an additional $2.0 trillion to repair, replace, and upgrade crumbling infrastructure over the next decade.[4] While fiscal pressures mount on all levels, priorities like public safety, social services, and quality education remain as pressing and urgent as ever, forcing local governments to do more with less.

America's public institutions must solve major problems through smart policymaking and efficient administration. Today, running a government to meet modern challenges naturally requires the most modern software. Unfortunately, many agencies lack the technology necessary to implement

---

4   "2017 Infrastructure Report Card: A Comprehensive Assessment of America's Infrastructure." Amereican Society of Civil Engineers. http://www.infrastructurereportcard.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/2017-Infrastructure-Report-Card.pdf

effective solutions. Technology innovations have transformed other areas of our lives: cloud computing and data science let us shop from our living rooms, predict consumer behavior, and find love with a swipe on a smartphone. Yet often, public sector agencies have not benefitted from similar transformational technology advances.

Fortunately, government leaders are catching up and beginning to leverage modern technology to implement administrative best practices easily. Increasingly, vendors are building and hosting government-specific platforms that integrate with and enhance existing tools. Better technology improves public administration. Better administration improves citizens' lives. And better quality of life improves trust in government institutions.

In this guide, you will learn how modern technology improves three pillars of public administration: budgeting, performance management, and open data. Get these three right, and the odds of successful policy implementation and development increase exponentially.

Although this guide makes distinctions between budgeting, reporting, and open data, modern software integrates all three functions to reflect their natural linkages and dependencies. As the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) describes in *Recommended Budget Practices: A Framework for Improved State and Local Government Budgeting,* governments build budgets, report on performance, adjust as necessary, and share results with citizens throughout the year.[5] These processes drive government effectiveness and accountability across all stakeholders.

5   National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting. "Recommended Budget Practices: A Framework for Improved State and Local Government Budgeting." Government Finance Officers Association. Page 38. http://gfoa.org/sites/default/ les/RecommendedBudgetPractices.pdf. 1998.

A Unique Moment in History

The history of public administration features two key paths: 1) advances in best practices and 2) advances in the technologies that implement them. These paths should evolve in concert, but for the past several decades, the former has surged past the latter.
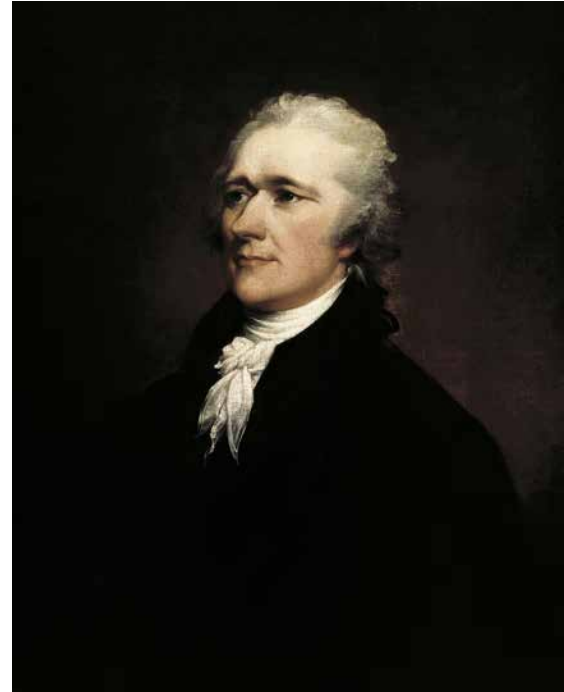
Public Administration Techniques March Forward

For most of history, few scholars had rigorously studied how to run governments. Academics focused on political philosophy instead: Where is the legitimate source of political authority? What are the states' rightful prerogatives? Which rights should the people retain?

Alexander Hamilton was critical to advancing public administration in America.

This began to change by the end of the 18th century:

- In America, Secretary of the Treasury Alexander Hamilton enacted a series of successful administrative reforms during the 1790s.

- In Europe, Napoléon Bonaparte improved French administration in 1803 when he began consolidating expenditures to mimic his British rivals. France had a universal accounting system, a standard fiscal year, and written budget documents by the 1860s.

It was not until the 1880s, however, that public administration as a social science emerged. In a famous 1887 essay, "The Study of Administration,"

future American President Woodrow Wilson argued the importance of studying and developing best practices for administration in democratic societies:

"There is scarcely a single duty of government which was once simple which is not now complex; government once had but a few masters; it now has scores of masters. Majorities formerly only underwent government; they now conduct government. Where government once might follow the whims of a court, it must now follow the views of a nation."[6]

Public administration soon emerged as an academic discipline, catalyzing reforms throughout the 20th century. The Council-Manager form of government, designed to bifurcate politics from administration as much as was reasonable, spread across America.

Cities and counties adopted better budget and audit procedures, rooted out endemic corruption by weakening powerful political machine bosses, and upgraded their management systems.

Today, academic institutions combine with organizations such as the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) to offer best practices, governing paradigms, and insights.

Technology Falls Behind

Governments once sat on the cutting edge of technology and were the envy of American businesses. Few advancements in public administration would have been possible without innovations such as the printing press, electricity, calculators, and personal computers. These improvements

---

6   Wilson, Woodrow. "The Study of Administration."

enabled leaps in public finance and services, such as municipal bond markets, civil service systems, and stricter audit standards.

As experts increasingly emphasized collaborative budgeting to increase involvement across the organization and data-driven decision-making, technology failed to keep pace. Now, many governments face technical barriers that inhibit effective administration:

- **Scattered data.** Information is strewn across departments and different systems. Managers need a comprehensive source of reliable information to make informed decisions. Such limits inhibit offering officials confident, informed insights.

- **Rigid financial and budgeting systems.** Although every accounting system logs transactions, when it comes to creating and sharing reports essential for management, most fall short. Some financial systems have reporting tools, but they are often too cumbersome for managers to use. It is no wonder analysts and finance directors often find themselves manually entering data into spreadsheets to prepare reports, answer questions, and even build budgets. Spreadsheets and legacy systems are often misaligned with the functions for which public sector teams use them. The result is often unwieldy processes, increased errors, limited collaboration, and frustration.

- **On-premise software.** On-premise software requires expensive IT maintenance, quickly becomes outdated, and makes it tough to access information across departments and away from the office.

> **"A government should evaluate its financial performance relative to the adopted budget."**
>
> **GFOA,** *Recommended Budget Practices: A Framework for Improved State and Local Government Budgeting*

Examples of the gap between best practice and technological possibility abound. In GFOA's *Recommended Budget Practices: A Framework for Improved State and Local Government Budgeting, Practice 11.2* says, "A government should evaluate its financial performance relative to the adopted budget."[7] GFOA then explains why this practice supports effective governance:

"Regular monitoring of budgetary performance provides an early warning of potential problems and gives decision-makers time to consider actions that may be needed if major deviations in budget-to-actual results become evident. It is also an essential input in demonstrating accountability."[8]

Many governments struggle to implement this practice. For example, in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, a legacy financial management system made applying GFOA's best practices largely unfeasible. Inadequate reporting infrastructure burdened overworked IT staff, already busy with a barrage of information requests from other departments and the public. Most staff and managers found the financial system too complicated to use themselves.

Inadequate reporting infrastructure routinely forced departments to wait months before receiving expense and revenue packets. Although accountants entered the data on time, there was a delay until they could reconcile the numbers.

Tony Cholewinski, an assistant to Allegheny's Deputy Controller, asks, "What good is a report on May's activities if I get it in September?" He adds, "Data delayed is data useless." Allegheny County's team addressed the problem by introducing a web-based reporting solution that made its data

7   Government Finance Officers Association. "Recommended Budget Practices..."

8   Ibid.

> **"Data delayed is data useless."**
>
> **Tony Cholewinski**
> **Assistant to the Deputy Controller, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania**

available on-demand in an easy-to-use format.[9] And it was not alone: at OpenGov, we speak with thousands of public sector agencies — from small towns and counties to special districts to states — facing similar challenges.

Government Technology Catches Up

New technology trends have finally closed the gap between best practice and technology.

Cloud Computing and Software-as-a-Service (SaaS)

Cloud computing is a common theme in discussions around smart government today. Historically, governments used on-premise technology solutions, tying staff to the office and limiting access to data. Cloud-based software, however, eliminates machine-specific installations and

---

9   "Allegheny County, PA Streamlines Management Reporting with OpenGov." OpenGov. https://opengov.com/customers/allegheny-county-pa-streamlines-management-reporting-with-opengov

manual software updates by providing online data centers with far greater computer power and storage capacity.

Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) is delivered in the cloud and gives agencies on-demand access to software through a web browser. Consequently, the software always has the latest enhancements. Cloud-based systems are not only more cost-effective than traditional software solutions, but they also improve internal operations by freeing up time spent on updates, synchronization, constant maintenance, and IT headaches.

Special Applications for Government

The transition to SaaS has a long way to go. For example, 50 percent of counties still have less than a tenth of their systems in the cloud.[10] But the tide is turning. SaaS vendors dedicated to governments' needs, such as OpenGov, build software designed for public sector use. Companies in Silicon Valley and elsewhere helped create the emerging GovTech industry to meet governments' unique needs with cutting-edge technology.

The Smart Government

At OpenGov, we believe we are entering the *Era of Smart Government,* where agencies are more efficient, more effective, and more accountable. Smart governments integrate modern technology into their day-to-day operations to enhance engagement with citizens and other stakeholders to drive better outcomes.

---

10   Wood, Colin, Noelle Knell, Elaine Pittman, Tod Newcombe, Eyragon Eidam, Ryan Mccauley, and Jessica Mulholland. "Digital Counties Survey 2016: Winners Make Collaboration, Innovation, Civic Engagement Top Priorities." Digital Communities. July 20, 2016.

Smart governments are built around the efficient use of data to drive decision-making, with integrated systems providing increased speed, accessibility, and functionality. For managers to successfully learn, adapt, innovate, and respond more effectively to changing circumstances, how their data is made available is just as important what data they collect. Leveraging data in this way drives effectiveness and accountability because changing dynamics are a mainstay of government decision-making.

In the next three sections, we show how the Era of Smart Government dramatically improves three core administrative processes: budgeting, reporting, and open data.

Budgeting in the Smart Government Era

In government, money is policy. Thus, budgeting illustrates a community's priorities and touches local government's most pressing issues. Take police relations, for example. Police departments face a crisis of confidence: a 2015 Gallup poll indicated barely half the public trusts their governments' most critical programs and institutions, especially public safety.[11]

Police want to regain citizen confidence, but initiatives such as community policing and body cameras cost money. As resources tighten, governments must balance public safety against

Budgets authorize our most important programs, including Public Safety.

11   Jones, Jeffrey M. "In U.S., Confidence in Police Lowest in 22 Years." Gallup. June 19, 2015.

other priorities like maintaining infrastructure, providing clean water, and delivering countless other core services.

The budget process determines the tradeoffs a government must make. Department managers, executives, elected officials, and citizens collaborate to build a budget that provides the best possible array of services. This stakeholder participation forms the core of the budget process. GFOA reiterates its importance:

"The mission of the budget process is to help decision-makers make informed choices about the provision of services and capital assets and to promote stakeholder participation in the process."[12]

Organizations can now accomplish this mission more effectively than ever before. In this section, you will learn how new SaaS budgeting solutions improve the budget process by streamlining proposals, reallocating staff time to critical strategy and analysis, creating one single source for budget truth, and integrating performance management and transparency solutions.

Increase Stakeholder Participation

Stakeholder input promotes effective budgeting, yet many governments struggle to obtain an adequate level of stakeholder involvement. Approximately 75 percent of local government managers consider convincing elected officials to adopt budgets or collaborating with department heads their top management challenge.[13]

---

12   Government Finance Officers Association. "Recommended Budget Practices…"

13   "ICMA SmartBrief." E-mail. August 11, 2016.

The budget process determines the tradeoffs a government must make. Department managers, executives, elected officials, and citizens collaborate to build a budget that provides the best possible array of services.

The problem is that existing technology has not enabled the collaboration necessary for managing the budget process effectively. Budget teams often resort to exchanging hundreds of emails that shuffle proposal drafts, constantly evolving Excel spreadsheets, and supporting documents. Imagine an in-depth email chain with five people, then add a few department heads, then add other managers, plus relevant staff. Email threads like this quickly descend into confusion. Version control is a constant challenge.

On top of that, unwieldy Excel spreadsheets grow to thousands of rows. For a spreadsheet-based budget process to work, governments must limit collaboration dramatically. Many budget tools are not much of an improvement because they are so rigid and convoluted that few people within the organization become adept at using them.

For a spreadsheet-based budget process to work, governments must limit collaboration dramatically.

And that is just within the management team. Add in the preparation of frequent, summarized updates for elected officials and citizens, and best practice around stakeholder engagement have been even more difficult to achieve.

Modern SaaS budgeting software like OpenGov's end-to-end budgeting solution removes technological barriers to substantive collaboration around the budget's development and publishing processes. From one platform, analysts, division leaders, and department heads can create online proposals, justify their adjustments, submit them for approval or review, and draft budget document narrative.

Because the platform centralizes proposals and content, the entire organization stays in sync with the budget's process — no matter how many stakeholders there are. Intuitive user interfaces make building and reporting on the budget user-friendly and collaborative, while automatically updated figures and total offer immediate access to up-to-date details. Approval options keep budget managers in control.

These critical features improve collaboration by enabling input from throughout the organization. Collaborative budgeting lets the entire management team make their cases in writing as part of the permanent record in the budget system. The budget team and other reviewers can see requesters' narratives in their own words.

Collaborative budgeting improves public administration in five critical ways:

- **Saved time.** Engaging more stakeholders in the budget process saves analysts' time because work is spread across multiple departments and not duplicated among staff. Additionally, automating manual processes frees up staff time to focus on strategy and analysis. User-friendly reporting functionality empowers department staff to answer their own questions in real time without waiting for the Finance Department to create an ad-hoc report.

- **Increased engagement.** Think of the difference between a public works director reviewing a pre-calculated budget and a more engaging process of them developing and justifying their proposals. When a department's management team works through the budget puzzle together, they feel more responsibility for inevitable compromises. Engaging stakeholders earlier in the process develops a better understanding of tradeoffs and constraints and creates cohesion and buy-in.

- **Improved accuracy.** Budgets are estimates. However, estimates built closer to the "ground-level truth" tend to track with actual results more accurately because they align better with actual operating and financial realities. Budgets that use current work practices, taking associated activities into account, produce more reliable estimates at the detail level. A budget grounded in accurately modeled activities will be more dependable at every summary level.

- **Better execution of the council's vision.** Governments have high-level, long-term goals they want to accomplish for residents and stakeholders. The programs authorized by budgets bring those visions,

strategies, and priorities to life. Engaging the entire management team and other stakeholders making budget development collaborative often leads to greater success in the government's daily work.

- **Bolstered results.** When governments successfully make the budget process more inclusive, the reward is an accurate budget that enables the organization to perform at a higher level — adequately funding each department's work while minimizing budget revisions, funding scrambles, and last-minute shortfalls. It allows for long-term planning and the efficient overall use of resources.

Focus on Strategy

The budget process involves your most important strategic work, but clerical work often bogs down the process. Analysts must reconcile numbers and maintain spreadsheets, all with a high risk of error.

Modern technology lets you focus. It eliminates the need to reconcile numbers in Excel spreadsheets manually over and over again. Instead of waiting days or weeks for revisions to be combined, summaries to be generated, and reports to be distributed, collaborators can instantly see proposals' impacts on the final budget as the budget develops in real time.

Modern technology lets you focus. It eliminates the need to reconcile numbers in Excel spreadsheets manually over and over again.

Centralize Credible Budget Information

Budgeting involves dozens of stakeholders across different departments. But all stakeholders should budget in a single system so the organization remains in sync on proposals' statuses, the budget's overall progress toward balance, and other information such as justifications for requests (subject to privacy constraints, of course).

When confined to spreadsheets, however, maintaining one centralized environment proves difficult — if not impossible for some organizations. It is not always obvious which sheet contains the most up-to-date numbers, and in many cases, only one user can work in a spreadsheet at once.

Two features of modern budgeting software address this problem:

- Automatic revision tracking automatically integrates changes when approved, eliminating the need to ensure spreadsheets have the latest numbers.

- Automatic audit trails of proposal justifications, approvals, and rejections improve accountability, enable better follow-up and engagement, and provide easy access for future reference.

Because modern budgeting software operates in the cloud, stakeholders across the organization can access accurate information at any time and from any place using a web browser.

Integrate with Reporting and Transparency

GFOA views budgeting, reporting on performance, and transparency as interdependent processes. Modern SaaS budgeting solutions support this by seamlessly providing performance management and transparency from

the same platform. For example, when a government wants to publish its final budget in an interactive form for the public, the agency can click a button, and users can explore the new budget immediately.

Better Budgeting for Better Administration

When your budgeting infrastructure is not up to par, when you cannot fully involve stakeholders, and when you have to worry about reconciling spreadsheets, it is impossible to engage fully and achieve full buy-in on critical administrative and policy issues.

Modern budgeting software solves these problems.

Budgeting as a Smart Government involves more stakeholders, automates onerous tasks to enable more emphasis on strategy, and leads to more meaningful engagement. These are all improvements in administration. These are all improvements for citizens.

Effective performance management gives elected officials, managers, and staff insights into operations, financials, and performance.

Performance Management in the Smart Government Era

When an elected official asks a county administrator during a public meeting how much the county spends on travel, she knows better than to promise an immediate answer. Instead, the seasoned executive, all too
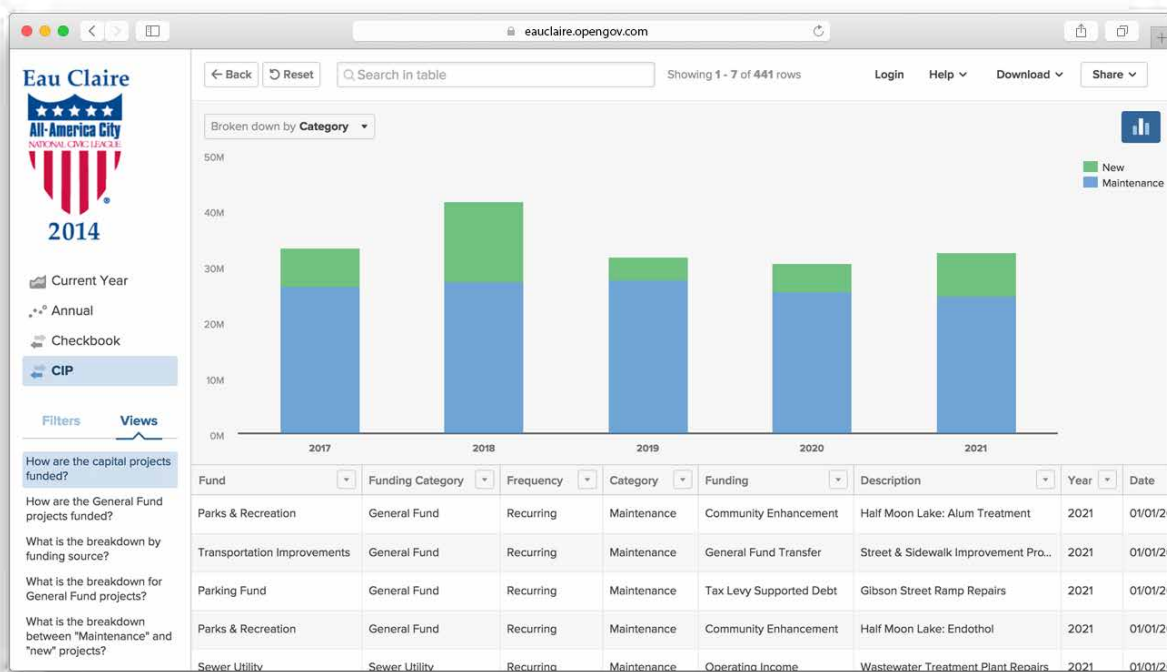
Effective management reporting gives elected officials, managers, and staff insights into operations, financials, and performance.

aware of how long it may take to respond to questions like this, pledges to return later with the number.

It is not that she does not want to answer the question immediately and inform the policy debate. Rather, legacy technologies make rapid answers difficult to find. Data is often siloed within departments and different systems, and it is difficult to compile from across funds. Often, specialists must run the necessary queries and manipulate the information in Excel, further slowing access to answers and decision-making.

That is why improving management reporting improves operational performance.

Performance Management software gives decision-makers immediate access to financial and operational performance reports with relevant,

actionable insights. These reports intuitively present complex information with easy-to-understand visualizations that track both high-level key performance indicators (KPIs) and detailed trends. They maximize understanding of current and historical performance and inform planning. Management reports are up-to-date, reliable, and convey short-, medium-, and long-term value.

Management reports go hand-in-hand with budgeting because they allow managers to track performance, operational, and financial metrics relative to the budget, and adjust as necessary. Modern and purpose-built tools understand complex governmental accounting, allowing organizations to run and share interactive versions of core reports quickly. Examples of such reports include:

Budget-to-Actual Reports

Shortly after a month or quarter ends, finance directors should ensure department heads see how expenditures and revenue compare to their budgets, then drill down and pivot for more information. City managers and county administrators should review these insights for every department.

Annual Reports

Properly built management reporting solutions should be able to display multiple years of revenues, expenses, and budgets onscreen. This information can inform planning and other policy debates, illustrating trends during legislative sessions and other meetings.

Performance Measures

To facilitate stronger performance management, reports on operational performance should be able to provide both a high-level overview of important performance measures for management, offering clear information around progress towards targets. Additionally, those high-level summaries should link to more detailed information.

Capital and Operational Budgets

These reports convey information on capital and operational budgets to stakeholders across the organization. When management reporting tools integrate with budgeting software, generating such reports becomes seamless.

Budget Milestones Reports

These reports bridge the gap between reporting on current budget performance and building the next budget. They broaden participation in the budget process by providing read-only access to budget details at key milestones throughout the process, such as department requests, budget committee review, and the executive's recommendation to the legislative body.

Transaction Reports

As an example, department administrative assistants spend valuable time responding to vendor inquiries about pending or in-process payments. With a daily checkbook report, they have a robust, up-to-date resource at their fingertips to answer these questions in seconds, without callbacks or other time-consuming procedures. When such reports are publicly available, vendors and citizens alike can answer their own questions in seconds by drilling down to find the information relevant to them.

Allegheny County Improves its Reporting

Returning to our Allegheny County, Pennsylvania example from earlier, the county decided to solve its reporting problem by purchasing a management reporting solution to improve its performance management:

"There's now no excuse for directors not to take a given number from a monthly update and make a decision on it, verify it, or learn more. All the tools are there," said Tony Cholewinski, Assistant to the Deputy Controller for Management Systems.

Before, if a manager looked through her static 25-page report and saw $50 million in unexpected spending, she was stuck with just a number and could not drill down to learn more. With modern performance management software, she can select the number and drill down to determine which divisions generated the expense, find the source, and validate numbers or find any accounting issues.

"Instead of taking the book and going back to our financial system to make decisions and assess metrics, I can do it in OpenGov by putting on a couple of filters to find important trends," Cholewinski adds.

Reporting, like budgeting, enables effective administration. It shows governments how well they serve citizens and, if done correctly, allows time for mid-course adjustments.

Open Data in the Smart Government Era

Citizens are critical stakeholders in public sector success. Throughout the budget process, governments should publish iterations of the budget publicly for feedback. Throughout the year, governments should share their operational and performance measures with citizens — visually connecting data to initiatives the public cares about.

Modern transparency and open data solutions help governments connect with their citizens. Through interactive reports, governments empower the public to learn and participate. The benefits of transparency, however, are not limited to strengthening trust. In this section, we survey four ways your government can benefit from deploying robust transparency technology that makes data publicly available for use and consumption.

Citizens want to see that their tax dollars are being used to repair roads, fund police, and address other pressing challenges.

Support Difficult Conversations

Public trust makes tough conversations easier. Leaders can educate citizens and interest groups about budgetary tradeoffs and decisions, promote measures or bond issues, and advocate for 'rainy day' or infrastructure replacement reserves. By pointing constituents to transparency sites with compelling visualizations and annotations that provide critical context, governments can better engage citizens and tell their stories.

For example, the City of Stanton, California, passed a one-cent sales tax to hire new deputies. Stanton used its transparency platform to inform the public of how the city spent the tax revenues: they added two new deputies to fight sex trafficking. This openness helped Stanton maintain support for this an important tax.

Improve Labor Negotiations

Disagreements occur during labor negotiations, but discussions often languish in requests for financial information and disputes over facts and assumptions.

Transparency can solve this problem, helping both sides along the way.

Technology solutions that present current and historical data reduce the need to comb through CAFRs, budgets, and personnel reports, or to query enterprise systems for data. The narratives on a public-facing open data portal can explain the numbers so everyone can work from the same set of facts.

Obtain Better Vendor Prices

The State of Ohio powers its municipalities' online checkbooks with OpenGov.[14] Hundreds of local governments throughout the state load online transactions into a searchable open data site. Local government leaders report using this information to see what other governments pay for various services, giving them leverage in contract negotiations. Governments can also foster price competition among vendors. Public payment information lets vendors see what governments are paying

---

14   "Ohio's State and Local Governments Partner for the Most Ambitious Transparency Initiative in America." OpenGov. https://opengov.com/customers/ohios-state-and-local-governments-partner-for-most-ambitious-transparency-intiative-in-america.

competitors and offer cheaper alternatives. For its open data program, a major annual study of state transparency sites awarded Ohio the study's first-ever A+ rating.[15]

Provide Context for Media

Your local press probably loves to write about issues such as public safety and infrastructure, but they may not always have the full story. Transparency sites with intuitive interfaces and interactive visualizations give journalists the information they need to write accurate stories and enable citizens to contextualize news coverage. Because the most functional transparency software maps to a government's underlying financial accounting structure, press can trust the data — improving relations with the administration.

Transparency Is Critical Now

It is more important now than ever for governments to get transparency right. About 70 percent of surveyed Americans have at least a fair amount of trust in their local governments, but that trust is tenuous.[16] Residents agitate for police reform. Parents often worry whether their children will learn enough in school to get into college. They want to know their tax dollars are benefitting their communities.

Governments that fail to engage their citizens now will find it impossible to support difficult conversations when the time comes. As local governments take on ever more responsibilities with decreasing resources, pressure on city halls and county seats to maximize performance is high.

---

15   "Following the Money 2015: How the 50 States Rate in Providing Online Access to Government Spending Data." US PIRG. March 2015.

16   Trust in Government." Gallup.com. http://www.gallup.com/poll/5392/trust-government.aspx.

Conclusion: The Smart Government

Public administration is budgeting, performance management, and open data. These three interwoven processes enable governments to serve citizens. The budget authorized hiring an extra police officer who can respond to burglaries. Timely management reporting informed the public works department it needed to purchase more rock salt. And open data increased citizen support for a sales tax because the public could see how state and federal funding declined over the last year and which services would suffer without the tax.

Budgeting, performance management, and open data are government in action. Governments consider historical trends and citizens' priorities to strategize and craft a budget. Managers then report progress against the budget's objectives, and, throughout the year, governments share these results with elected officials, internal teams, and residents.

Administrators have a duty to run these processes as efficiently as possible. When technological barriers inhibit managers and staff from reaching their full potential, governments must remove those obstacles. Governments have a duty to empower effective leadership.

The Smart Government shatters these barriers. Information flows across agencies and organizations, broadening the intelligence leaders use when making important policy decisions.

And this is just the beginning of a new era.

Imagine the possibilities of fully Smart Governments. State and local governments will budget for shared infrastructure projects on a common platform, automatically integrating numbers into each government's capital budget. Agencies will seamlessly exchange information on gang movement across regions to coordinate public safety and education programs, tracking results with dashboards and maps. Driverless cars will tap into real-time traffic and infrastructure data to plot routes and reduce congestion. Citizens will follow their governments' operations and financials as easily as they would the activity of a friend on Facebook. These benefits will be so compelling that it will be difficult not to become a Smart Government.

This is a future that benefits managers and staff alike.
This is a future that improves millions of lives.
This is a future that will build and renew trust in our civic institutions.

And, when modern technology combines with excellent leadership and processes, this bright future of administration lies within our grasp.

⊙ OPENGOV

OpenGov is the leader in government performance management technology, with easy-to-use cloud software for better budgeting, improved operational performance, and comprehensive open data. OpenGov solutions give governments the right tools and relevant data for more informed decision-making and better outcomes for the public.

Over 1,600 public agencies in 48 states are part of the growing OpenGov network. Founded in 2012, OpenGov customers include the State Treasurer of Ohio, the city of Minneapolis, MN; Maricopa County, AZ; and Washington, DC. OpenGov is backed by Andreessen Horowitz, Emerson Collective, 8VC, and Thrive Capital and has headquarters in Redwood City, CA.

Learn more at www.opengov.com.