

NAVIGATING THE NEXT NORMAL

A RESOURCE GUIDE FOR STATE AND
LOCAL IT LEADERS DURING THE COVID-19
RECOVERY AND BEYOND.

THE FIRST 30 DAYS

THE FIRST 60 DAYS

THE FIRST 90 DAYS

Government IT organizations are entering the next normal for their operations. As the nation transitions from the immediate coronavirus response to what comes next, state and local IT leaders face complex questions about how and where their organizations will work, how to realign IT priorities to match post-COVID realities and how to adjust longer-term strategic planning to support evolving leadership priorities.

The Center for Digital Government is developing this resource guide in collaboration with state and local IT leaders who participate in our Digital States Performance Institute and Digital Communities initiatives. Our intent is to provide insights and practical advice to IT leaders throughout the nation as they navigate the complex terrain of recovery.

We believe the process of restarting next-normal operations can logically be divided into three phases, falling roughly into 30-, 60- and 90-day increments.

NAVIGATING THE NEXT NORMAL

FIRST 30 DAYS

1. Reset the IT Organization: Resolve employee and facility issues like social distancing; evaluate policies and actions taken during the crisis; and examine technologies across essential agencies.

2. Review Technology Decisions: Review all cybersecurity controls and procurement decisions; and add the proper equipment, capacity and employee access.

3. Take IT Action in the Short Term: Validate all equipment inventories including bringing remote equipment back on-premises; update asset management; ensure all contracts and procurements are coordinated; and plan for the use of CARES Act funding.

Reset the IT Organization

The COVID-19 crisis continues to have a significant impact on government employees or better said, your people. In the interest of public health, these individuals were forced into a telework environment with little or no notice and in some cases have been furloughed from their positions as the pandemic impacted the economy.

The return to ‘normal’ operations will likely happen in phases but what does that mean?

- How will essential employees return into some sense of the next normalcy?
- How will non-essential employees return to the work structure?
- Will the physical and operational work environment be different?
- Will remote work continue? Will it be for selected groups? For selected individuals?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- Government technology leaders will need to reassess position requirements immediately as priorities shift.
- Skillsets will need to be reviewed to ensure new work functions are adequately performed.

“This is where CIOs get to show their business savvy. There isn’t just one thing we get to focus on. It’s not just the technology. There are absolutely operational issues in how you turn your organization into a remote working organization in days, when we typically have much more of an onsite presence. But more important, how is IT helping to protect lives and livelihoods?”

— Rob Lloyd, City of San Jose, Calif.

- Prior to COVID-19, telework was relatively rare in the public sector, but post-crisis government will likely need to adopt a hybrid telework structure.
- We must not ignore the toll this pandemic has taken on people — emotionally and physically. Governments must be ready to deal with health issues in all forms.

Social distancing is the primary factor in reducing and containing the spread of COVID-19. Government technology leaders must create a hybrid model that accommodates social distancing. But questions remain:

- How will governments achieve social distancing in their legacy facilities?
- How can government employees stay six feet apart while also providing in-person citizen services?

Leaders should consider:

- Allowing only certain employees to physically work in buildings at certain times
- Modeling hoteling — an older telecommuting term — in which people share workstations at different points in time
- Screening employees for symptoms of COVID-19 before they are cleared to work in a physical office
- Exploring options for air circulation and filtering to prevent spread

Numerous decisions were made during the crisis that impacted

every aspect of every function. The decisions to push everyone to telework were made hastily and there may be residual impacts that will need to be addressed.

Policies structured for the old normal must be reviewed to ensure a consistent framework. Leaders should:

- Review policies that delineate how employees may use sick and vacation time to ensure employees with symptoms have a clear understanding of their options.
- Reassess which employees are deemed essential along with what is considered an essential function.
- Look into technologies that will help deliver essential services.
- Review the technology requirements for each essential function and determine effectiveness from an on-premises perspective and the potential to deliver services digitally.

The 'return to work' will have major organization, people and policy issues that need to be addressed. The phased approach requires leaders to examine each of these issues to provide clear direction to employees both in terms of returning but also how the organization will function as the entire workforce returns. In addressing these changes, the underlying principles will be to ensure the health and safety of employees in uncertain times.

Review Technology Decisions

Post-COVID-19 technology decisions will require an accurate assessment of the pre-COVID-19 technology plans. Government leadership will need to reprioritize functions based on the next-normal need for services.

Reprioritizing technology decisions will require:

- Realigning priorities and master plans
- Realigning technology procurement processes and policies in accordance with new priorities
- Reviewing all current procurement efforts to ascertain whether they should move forward, be postponed or be cancelled as new priorities potentially alter procurement plans

The need for technology post-crisis poses some tough questions:

- Does the government have the right equipment for remote work?
- Is the right network access available for people to work remotely?
- Can we allow everyone to work remotely without slowing the network?

To ensure they can provide a flexible workplace, leaders should:

- Prepare plans to acquire the proper equipment in enough quantities to supply the remote worker of the next normal.

“For us CIOs, it’s an opportunity to help the organization understand that we are more than technologists; we are business partners. Every challenge I heard about at our department head meetings, I would try to get in front of it. We have a PMO office and I would ask our assistant city managers how we can best assist our businesses and citizens in the community.” — Travis Cutright, City of Mesa, Ariz.

- Consider replacing desktop computers with laptops or tablets.
- Analyze the cost benefits of changing the equipment and the risk of another pandemic obstructing employees’ ability to serve.
- Prioritize a move to virtual private networks (VPNs) — to avoid having to utilize third-party access control systems — and add bandwidth capability for remote workers.

The technological environment for remote workers must be safe as well as efficient. Quickly pushing large quantities of employees into telework has stressed legacy cybersecurity controls and potentially created new vulnerabilities. COVID-19 has created an environment where cybercriminals are attempting to exploit remote workers and their organizations. Leaders should reassess all cybersecurity protocols to ensure the technologies that are provided to those that serve the public in the next normal are protected.

The information technology organizations were the silent heroes as the COVID-19 crisis unfolded — working against the clock to ensure vital citizen services could continue. They were there to look for innovative ways to serve employees and citizens. But some decisions were made quickly and now require review for long-term implications. In some cases, the next normal will become the standard work environment in the future, and policies and plans need to reflect that. The good news is that the technology was vital. Leveraging the key actions for the future is essential.

Take IT Action in the Short Term

The COVID-19 crisis continues to impact government’s human and technology resources. The need to work remotely also stretched government agencies’ ability to keep a detailed track of assets, both physical and virtual.

Managing technological assets impacts several government processes:

- In the short term, a complete review of technology equipment, licenses and access should be completed to begin the process of acquiring what is needed in the next normal.
- The next normal will require a hybrid mix of on-premises and telework processes to support continued social distancing while delivering citizen services.

“Our governor has been very clear that if state employees can function at home, they should stay at home and work remotely. Right now we have over 20,000 of our 43,000 executive branch employees working remotely without any real difficulty. In my organization, we only have a few folks — mail and print operations, some of our deskside support personnel and some of our advanced technical support team — who are working in the office on a rotating basis. But for the most part we are managing all the IT space remotely without any issue.”

— *Curt Wood, CIO, Commonwealth of Massachusetts*

The initial impact of the crisis is that many government employees were required to take their on-premises equipment home to continue working remotely. Government leaders should:

- Consider potential viruses or issues this equipment will have when it returns.
- Implement layers of protection, scanning devices upon return when they reconnect to the network.
- Patch devices remotely if possible. If not, hard drives will need to be wiped and the operating system will need to be reuploaded. The worst case would be to bring back devices and do a DoD-level wipe or even keep spare hard drives in stock and swap the drives when the device returns. If the worst-case scenario exists, this could take up to 24 hours for a large capacity hard drive.
- Develop an enterprise approach to ensure equipment is safe and protected.

Government procurement is always a germane issue after a crisis. Government leaders should:

- Review procurement contracts and put the proper procurement vehicles in place.
- Coordinate procurements to engage the proper partners.
- Analyze the CARES Act and plan how to utilize the funds to best satisfy new priorities.

Government must prepare to reopen their operations as the COVID-19 crisis passes. Looking at the issue in a multi-step plan ensures that an orderly, sequential process is undertaken. Now that government leaders have recognized technology is the backbone of ongoing operations, they must provide the funding, people and processes to ensure availability for the future.

NAVIGATING THE NEXT NORMAL

FIRST 60 DAYS

1. Review IT Priorities Pre-Crisis: Review policy issues; determine what projects are behind schedule; review the appropriate contracts and resolve issues; develop interim project schedules; and execute on the use of CARES Act funding.

2. Establish IT Priorities for Infrastructure and Cybersecurity: Realign staffing requirements; engage with technology partners around changes; and coordinate with procurement and budget on any changes.

3. Establish New IT Priorities with Agencies and Departments: Determine business impact in agencies and departments; realign priorities; realign staffing; engage with technology partners around changes; and coordinate with procurement and budget on changes.

4. Strengthen Relationships with Executive Leadership: Work with executive leadership to align technology initiatives with the priorities of governors, county executives and mayors.

Review IT Priorities Pre-Crisis

The world of government prior to COVID-19 was full of priorities that were strategically planned to last as many as three to five years. The pandemic upended prior plans to a point where a complete reprioritization will need to take place. All current policies will be affected as governments move forward. Leadership will provide a new set of priorities that must be operationalized to be successful. Government technology leadership will also need to assess the impact of the crisis on employee stress, engagement and the ability to move forward. The current crisis caused considerable employee stress with the uncertainty of furloughs, layoffs, and the impact on compensation and pension plans.

What will this new set of priorities hold for governments moving forward?

- What policies either need to be changed or amended after COVID-19?
- Will governments be able to manage the people issues post COVID-19?

- Which priorities or plans will be carried forward, delayed or potentially cancelled?
- What will leadership require to ensure resiliency post-pandemic?
- Are current contracts still viable or do they need to be restructured?
- What impact will the CARES Act have on future priorities?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- The mass exodus to remote work and the push for digital services has a policy side effect that governments must grapple with. Policies should be reviewed and appropriate changes must be made.
- IT leaders will need to ensure communication and transparency during these uncertain days with employees, executive leadership and technology partners.
- As projects and schedules change, employees will need to be engaged and involved. Also, as priorities change, employees may need to learn new skills. With the potential to speed up retirements, valuable skillsets will be lost, and remaining employees will be asked to step up. IT leaders will find themselves acting as culture change managers.
- Leaders at all levels will need to be part of managing a workforce that has some experience with remote work but not to the extent being experienced today. As work moves from crisis management to project work, leadership will need to learn different project planning and management skills.

“I’m amazed at how flexible people have been. My folks have taken to [remote work] amazingly well and haven’t missed a beat, which has been very encouraging and good for me. We have space issues in Maryland. I have lots of agencies that covet my office space. I’m considering giving about half of it up and letting folks work remotely from now on.” — Mike Leahy, CIO, State of Maryland

- Governments must thoroughly review all current projects to determine the viability of moving forward. Projects will be continued, delayed or cancelled all together.
- All contracts including deliverables, costs and partners must be reviewed to coincide with the new priorities going forward. As projects shift, potential contract concessions are possible.
- The CARES Act funding will be a disruptive variable to future planning timelines. Requirements for funding, execution and deliverables will be a serious consideration for future planning.

All previous policies, plans and priorities have been impacted by COVID-19. Governments are in a position to rework their foundational services by embracing the forced changes of remote work and digital services. Managing the impact on people, as planning shifts, will provide a sustainable future. Reassessing all current policies, plans and contracts will provide a structured framework to move forward in the next 60 to 90 days.

Establish IT Priorities for Infrastructure and Cybersecurity

Governments held technical debt far before the COVID-19 crisis. Aging infrastructure has plagued government technology leaders for years as public investments in technology tend to be made for the long term. Realigning staffing requirements will be key to ensure governments have the right resources to modernize. With the push to remote work, governments brought their legacy technology issues out into the open while potentially opening additional cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the process. All existing priorities for infrastructure and cybersecurity will need to be re-evaluated as they emerge from the crisis. Working with partners will be necessary to ensure the next-normal priorities are met.

What will this new set of priorities hold for governments moving forward?

- What legacy infrastructure can be modernized in the short term?
- Does the infrastructure have the capacity to manage mass remote work?
- What skillsets are available in house and/or what partners are needed to ensure success?
- Do existing cybersecurity priorities match the needs of the next normal?
- Will government have the funds to modernize or even replace aging technologies?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- Governments must understand their current infrastructure needs benchmarked against the next-normal priorities identified by leadership.

“For the most part, most organizations have embraced the remote workforce. We’re allowing people (with specific guidance) to utilize their own devices. From a security perspective, I’m really concerned about data, documents and information that may no longer be within our grasp (following backup and recovery processes) and our control. We’ll be talking with a lot of the directors to ensure that we have a list of those folks who will continue to work at home. We need to determine where the data is that now may be uncontrolled and put controls around it.”

— Steve Emanuel, CIO, City of Newark, N.J.

- Smart infrastructure investment decisions will position governments to handle the next wave of remote work needs. Discussing a potential move to the cloud and the enhanced use of digital services will be an important part of these decisions.
- Governments will need partners to be successful in the next normal. Internal skillsets may not be sufficient to handle enhanced technologies for internal and external use.
- Government will need to learn about new available solutions and how they integrate into their current applications and infrastructure.
- Cybersecurity policies, processes and technologies will need to be understood, as part of a larger plan, and modernized to manage the next normal. VPNs, dual factor authentication and identity management will play pivotal roles in this new cybersecurity posture.
- COVID-19 has caused most governments to expend significant financial resources that were never planned during their typical budget cycles. The crisis has created budget shortfalls that will need to be addressed at the same time funding will be needed to modernize technologies. Strong business cases with reasonable ROIs will need to be created to garner support from financial leaders.

Governments find themselves in a pitched battle for financial resources especially after the unplanned spending for COVID-19. Budget priorities have been flipped upside down and a new path to the next normal will require sound, secure and affordable technology platforms to operate government remotely if necessary. Having the right people and partners to help modernize the right technologies at the right times will be an imperative for success.

Establish New IT Priorities with Agencies and Departments

Focusing on technology components is only one part of the COVID-19 recovery strategy. It has long been understood that government technology exists to enable staff to efficiently deliver services to their citizens. Government is considered to be one of the largest customer services entities in the world.

All this means that the priorities of line of business departments also have a serious role to play when emerging from this crisis.

What will this new set of priorities hold for governments moving forward?

- How will the budget constraints directly resulting from the crisis impact the functional business units of government?
- How will citizen- and business-facing services change as a government emerges from the crisis?
- Will staffing changes need to be made to provide enhanced digital services to citizens?
- Do partners have an impact on the redefining of what services should be provided on-premises or via the cloud?
- Do government procurement processes influence moving to the next normal quickly?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- Governments must provide an opportunity for their agencies and departments to do a deep dive on their services to determine what is essential and what is not. Essential services can then be dissected to see where digital products can positively impact delivery.
- New services, changes in service delivery and the impact on employees may introduce new projects and plans that impact priorities.
- Reassessing agency and department skillsets will be required to take advantage of modern technology offerings. Retraining of current staff and recruiting the right people will be important.
- Partners will play an important role in helping provide the right resources. Governments should leverage existing partnerships and develop strategic new partnerships during this timeframe.
- Change is never easy in a government environment. Changes in government procurement can be even more difficult. Procurement policies must be reviewed and revamped to ensure agility in the process to more quickly advance technology initiatives. An example would be to utilize existing contract vehicles whenever possible and shorten the timing and difficulty of open procurements.

Agencies and departments play an integral role in delivering services to citizens. Understanding their next-normal priorities will be important as the post-COVID-19 recovery takes shape. Wrapping technologies around legacy business practices is never a good option. Reassessing business priorities allows for the right technologies to be implemented for the right solutions. Having the right skillsets to make all of this happen is where the partners to government can play an important role.

Strengthen Relationships with Executive Leadership

The crisis has brought new recognition of the importance of technology and the technology organization in 'running government'. Whether it was support of remote work or communication of vital information to citizens or ramping up citizen services to meet increased demand, technology is no longer in the 'back room'. The challenge for technology leaders is to continue to strengthen these relationships with executive leadership to ensure priorities and budgets are aligned. It provides the opportunity for technology organizations to be proactive in suggesting and recommending new and different approaches to providing government services.

What will this strengthened set of relationships hold for governments moving forward?

- How will executive leadership communicate with citizens and businesses in the future?
- What citizen services must be addressed to prepare for future crisis response?
- What funding should be allocated to executive priorities when faced with budget shortfalls?
- What role should technology play in the future to support executive leadership priorities?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- Citizen engagement can be enhanced beyond current web presence to a full multi-channel government experience. This can include both outward communication and the ability to enhance call centers and face-to-face interactions.
- Government services like unemployment insurance saw a huge surge in citizen demand. Those services may be prioritized for improvement or renovation given the uncertainty of this crisis. Short-term and long-term plans need to be developed.
- Executive leadership will battle for funding in the current budget crisis. Greater reductions in existing spending may need to be considered to fund executive leadership priorities.
- The dialogue between executive leadership and technology leaders must continue to ensure technology solutions are a part of future planning.

NAVIGATING THE NEXT NORMAL

FIRST 90 DAYS

- 1. IT Strategic and Master Plan Changes:** Align with new leadership directions, project timelines, viability of projects and project costs.
- 2. IT Budgetary Changes:** Identify the changes in capital and operating funds and the shift of financial resources based on priorities; obtain funding for new plans; engage with budget office and legislative bodies; develop the cost and operational justification for technology spend; and assess the impact of CARES Act funding.
- 3. IT Internal Resource Changes:** Assess skillsets for new plans and reallocate staff where needed.
- 4. IT Contract Changes:** Assess timelines, deliverables and the viability of current contracts.
- 5. IT Partner Changes:** Bring the proper skillsets on board for new plans; engage partners based on new priorities; and develop creative contracting, licensing and procurement models.

IT Strategic and Master Plan Changes

Governments have struggled at times to plan far enough into the future with contingencies for crises like COVID-19 built in. As technology master plans are developed, there is planning for the unforeseen, but no one could have predicted what has taken place. The current plans have been turned over and now new plans must be constructed.

What will this new set of changes hold for governments moving forward?

- What current plans can be salvaged, delayed or cancelled to meet the needs of the next normal?
- Do governments have buy-in from their business units to make changes to current technology requests?
- How far out can governments plan and still have enough room to make changes if needed?
- What radical changes in the role of technology in government operations, that were introduced as a result of the crisis, should be retained, expanded and included in future?

“One thing this experience has proven is our agency has delivered on IT. We do not have a credibility problem. We’re working with members of the Legislature about innovative ways to move forward. There’s also a willingness to do some strategic investments, because there’s a recognition that IT is part of the fabric of the business.” — Jim Weaver, CIO, State of Washington

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- All current technology master plan projects should be halted and reviewed for viability. If technology leaders wait too long, the ability to minimize the waste of resources will be limited. Projects that should continue should be restarted immediately.
- Operational staff should be included in the creation of a new technology master plan. The new plan should begin to take shape in the first 90 days.
- All financial impacts of stopping, delaying and continuing technology projects should be analyzed. There are costs involved when a project is stopped, including all existing sunk costs and the costs of moving resources to a new project. Project delays can result in increased cost to restart the project when the timing is right. Accounting for all the associated costs will enable a sound financial decision to be made.
- All new technology master plans can be planned in one- or two-year timeframes but should be managed in shorter timeframes where quicker decisions can be made as priorities shift. Periodic reviews, at least quarterly, should be made to monitor timelines and costs.
- New technology services like expanded call centers or use of artificial intelligence tools should be reviewed to determine what should be retained and what could be expanded to replace existing approaches to government operations.

Technology master plans are a necessity to ensure the technology organization is moving in concert with leadership's next-normal priorities. Planning for those priorities becomes an integral component to achieving goals in the first 90 days. Modernizing technologies requires effective planning inclusive of careful cost management.

IT Budgetary Changes

Government budgets are being impacted in many different ways due to COVID-19. Operational budget dollars are being shifted to manage costs associated with this crisis. The next-normal priorities will require a shift in financial resources that could impact capital and operational spending. Potential funding from the CARES Act may provide additional resources depending on the technology connection with COVID-19. In some cases, government operation costs may shift to technology services spending.

What will this new set of changes hold for governments moving forward?

- Are government budgets agile enough to be amended for changes in priorities?
- Can capital funds be moved into operating funds as governments transition to the cloud or as-a-service offerings?
- Will the competition for financial resources restrict the much-needed dollars for technology modernization?
- Will the CARES Act have an impact on technology planning and funding?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- Governments must plan for an ever-changing funding environment as they emerge from the crisis. Leaving pockets of funds unencumbered, within the technology budget, will create contingency funding as the requirements of the next normal become known.
- Remote work and digital services can be enhanced by positioning their technology components in the cloud or as-a-service. Finance officers will need to work collaboratively with technology leaders to reposition funding from capital plan line items to operational line items. The shift to operational costs should be based on strong business case analyses.
- Technology investments must be given the same priority as physical or programmatic investments. Competition for resources will be fierce. Technology has a new important role as remote work and digital services become a necessity requiring adequate funding to be successful. It may be necessary to shift funding from programmatic areas to technology solutions that provide better citizen service.
- The CARES Act has several requirements and components. The potential use of funds for technology projects must be thoroughly researched to ensure compliance.

Government technology budgets were an ever-changing process even before COVID-19. The budget process can

“Our policies are ever evolving. The county had a robust telework policy in place and agreements that individuals have had to fill out. We started needing to develop HR policies regarding quarantining employees. We’ve had the offices deep cleaned to remove any residual impacts of coronavirus on surfaces. We have also discussed masks in the workplace. We have had discussions about how we transition back to the workplace at some future point and how we maintain social distancing.”

– Tanya Hannah, CIO, King County, Wash.

be rigid at times but now is the time to make it more agile — especially for technology. Financial resources will be constrained so ensuring a foundationally strong technology budget is imperative to ensure success.

Internal IT Resource Changes

Government technology organizations have always struggled to recruit and retain professionals as they constantly compete against the private sector. Maintaining the proper skillsets especially in times of great change can be difficult. The ability to move resources from one project to another can also be a challenge based on current team skillsets.

What will this new set of changes hold for governments moving forward?

- Does government have the right skillsets and leadership internally to meet the needs of the next normal?
- Have the priorities shifted so much that governments will struggle to meet the required goals?
- Do governments have the right partners to help you through this?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- Governments should reassess all internal human resources to determine if the right skillsets are in place for the next normal. This assessment should include leadership skills — especially in change management and ability to embrace new and different approaches. If not, training should immediately begin for the existing team and a recruitment plan should be developed in the first 90 days.
- Leadership technology priorities will need to be sourced with the right people and skills. Assessing the required skills should be formally undertaken as each new project is identified.
- Governments must utilize current partner relationships to ensure the proper skillsets are acquired. Creative contracting vehicles should be created to ensure the process to acquire the appropriate skills is efficient and timely.

Government is no different than any other industry. It needs good people to get things done. Assessing internal resources allows government the ability to plan and prepare for the workload of the next normal. Utilizing partners to assist in solving problems is essential in the first 90 days.

IT Contract Changes

The discussion on budgetary changes and human resource changes directly impact the plans governments set forth to prioritize the next normal. Prior to COVID-19, governments entered into contracts to implement the technologies that satisfied needs based on previous priorities. The next normal will be based on leadership's new priorities. All current contracts will need to be reviewed to determine whether to proceed, delay or go in a completely different direction.

What will this new set of changes hold for governments moving forward?

- Which current contracts should move forward?
- Are current contract timelines, deliverables and costs still viable post-COVID-19?
- Are government's partners willing to amend existing contracts or change out the agreement completely?
- Were procurement processes revised to meet the crisis? Should those changes become permanent?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- All current contracts must be reviewed for:
 - Deliverables
 - Timelines
 - Costs
 - Viability
- Governments should seek a formal review of the contracts to determine if a creative solution is available to change deliverables, timelines or costs to keep the contract arrangement in place. Partners must be willing to either amend the contract or enter into a completely new agreement.
- New next-normal leadership priorities should be benchmarked against current contracts and, if needed, open discussions with current and future partners.
- To meet the immediate needs during the crisis, procurement processes were streamlined in some cases. Those processes must be reviewed to determine if they should be a permanent change.

Government contracts are not entered into without a great deal of work from both parties, government and the private sector. Some contracts can take many months to negotiate and should not be simply cancelled without a thorough review. As partners, working together to find the right solutions for the next normal will help lay the foundation for all future work.

IT Partner Changes

The public sector and private sector have been building relationships for years. These relationships are built on trust and the ability to solve problems. Post-COVID-19, these relationships will be put to the test as governments seek to find the right skillsets and knowledge to solve the new problems of the next normal.

What will this new set of changes hold for governments moving forward?

- Are the right partners on board to help governments solve problems?
- Do the partners have the right expertise to solve the problems?
- Are the partners creative enough when it comes to contracting and licensing of their solutions?

These are all tough questions that will require action.

- Governments should leverage current partners and begin the process to seek out new partners to satisfy the requirements of the next normal in the first 90 days.
- Partners must package solutions to satisfy the needs of different levels of government. These packages should include innovative solutions, creative contract terms and conditions along with manageable costs that can be utilized by governments that the partners believe fit their financial model.
- Governments and partners should be creative in using contracting vehicles that help shorten the procurement cycle while still obtaining desired solutions.

Partners are necessary for governments to be successful in the next normal. Government technology leaders desire engagement with their peers to share best practices, while partners desire to help solve problems. These complementary missions converge into a viable relationship in the next normal. Building lasting relationships takes great effort on all parties to be creative, innovative and dedicated to shortening procurement cycles while providing best practice solutions.

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