

How to Address Leading GovTech Development Challenges



Introduction

Domestic and international government agencies are turning to a new generation of technology solutions to meet the demands of the digital age. With policies and compliance requirements rapidly evolving, however, government organizations need to know that their latest tools and processes will meet these increasingly complex standards. The goal of GovTech is to improve the delivery of services to the public.

Imagine what your local Department of Motor Vehicles or Federal Highway program would look like without any modern technology in place. Scheduling appointments, requesting services, and getting records would be much more cumbersome. When implemented and integrated properly, GovTech helps local, state, and federal governments deliver services more efficiently.

There are several important factors that go into building successful GovTech tools and platforms. From collaboration tools and security to automation and user experience concerns, the government space needs solutions that enable much-needed services to be provided in a compliant manner.



Growing Governance & Information Regulations

In the United States alone, there were more than 90,000 federal, state, and local government entities [as of 2017](#). With so many moving parts, widespread policy changes can create long-lasting bottlenecks as technical debts accumulate and valuable knowledge is lost due to turnover and reorganizations.

Every time government-wide legislation is introduced that affects information privacy, security, or service delivery, agencies need solutions that can help them move into compliance efficiently.

From The Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program ([FedRAMP](#)), The Federal Information Security Modernization Act ([FISMA](#)), The Freedom of Information Act ([FOIA](#)), and [The Privacy Act of 1974](#) that provide federal regulations for information security to [NIST Special Publication 800-Series](#) that can be applied across most federal, state, and local agencies to comply with HIPAA and FISMA, government agencies have a plethora of rules to follow.

FOIA extends into every federal agency and has especially impacted [U.S. intelligence agencies](#) trying to balance the need for national security with legislation designed to improve operational transparency and accountability. Despite good faith efforts, U.S. government agencies are struggling to respond to FOIA requests in a [reasonable timeframe](#) of around 20 business days.

What's more, disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic and the [growing volume of requests](#) are overwhelming outdated technologies to create even longer delays. As the sheer volume of government information and regulations increase, effectively managing and aggregating terabytes of data spread across thousands of locations becomes the primary barrier to compliance.





GovTech Modernization Trends

If the recent investments of top productivity, cloud, and information management vendors tell us anything, it's that there's a deep need to fix information management issues in the government space. [Microsoft](#), for instance, hired five former U.S. government CIOs over the span of four months in 2020. Meanwhile, [Amazon](#) has created an incubator for start-ups willing to build GovTech solutions using the AWS platform.

The purpose of emerging GovTech solutions is to help government agencies better connect legacy systems in efficient ways that improve security and compliance with relevant regulations as well as service delivery to information requesters.

Agencies required to respond to FOIA and similar requests are looking for ways to gain efficiency in data collection, processing, and collaboration across geographically diverse locations without compromising security. The only reasonable way to navigate the ocean of data many government agencies have amassed is to completely [digitize](#) and deploy the latest technology to manage it.

Advanced algorithms, artificial intelligence, and machine learning technologies can help locate the proverbial needles in the data stack via de-duplication, workflow automation, and powerful document collaboration integrations—thereby reducing request turnaround times, minimizing backlogs, and freeing up government personnel to focus on more strategic tasks.





What GovTech Pioneers Need to Consider

Why do some solutions and tools get rapidly adopted while others fizzle out or struggle to find a user base? After reviewing the strategies of a few [successful companies](#), we've determined that these are the eight core success factors involved in determining a GovTech solution's adoption rate.

Let's explore some of these factors together.





1. Ease of Use

Complexity is the enemy of a good user experience. Many government entities already utilize a diverse web of solutions in day-to-day operations. With so many moving pieces at play, adding or removing a new solution could have unintended consequences.

Making your GovTech solution easy-to-use extends beyond the user experience; it must solve a significant challenge in a way that saves time and is easy for not only government employees to use, but their end users alike. Where possible, including automation and self-service elements can go a long way in convincing agencies that your solution is the right one.



2. Transparency

Algorithms often exhibit unintended biases due to developer oversights or poorly defined parameters. Being transparent about objectives and willing to not only accept feedback but also make meaningful changes to algorithms can help weed out unjust biases over time. This is a journey that requires ongoing collaboration. Incorporating feedback loops into the process ahead of time helps optimization recommendations flow freely.



3. Ease of Implementation

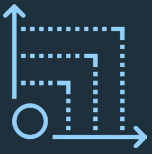
Powerful features are often purchased but never fully implemented or optimized due to implementation challenges. While no two technology environments are identical, understanding where your GovTech solution fits best from a technology stack and agency maturity level can help prevent missteps that could tarnish your brand's name.



4. Integration

GovTech solutions that can integrate into existing dashboards—like those you'll find in a customer relationship management (CRM) or enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform—provide more value to customers in terms of visibility and oversight.

While integrating with every top solution might not be realistic, consider providing an open application programming interface (API) and software development kit (SDK) to give developers the option of building further integrations between your solution and their existing technology stack.



5. Scalability

As new administrations come into office and shift priorities, local, state, and federal budgets feel the impact. For this reason, making it easy for organizations to add, remove, or move seats provides more peace-of-mind to agencies than less flexible alternatives, thereby giving you a competitive advantage in contract negotiations.



6. Ongoing Maintenance

One of the biggest security challenges facing government agencies at every level is staying on top of software vulnerabilities. When updates and patches aren't delivered in a timely manner or applied by the customer, weaknesses and security gaps arise that can be exploited by threat actors.

In an interview with [Dark Reading](#), a ransomware propagator stated, "As soon as a CVE [common vulnerabilities and exposures] is published, we take advantage of it because it takes a long time for people to patch."

Thus, committing to delivering routine updates and patches that improve security outcomes for clients also increases the attractiveness of a solution to highly regulated government agencies.



7. Measurable Results

Providing your customers with measurable results can improve the perceived value of your solution. Benchmarking and measuring success metrics over time makes it easier to justify the ongoing investment in your service when budgets come up for review.

For example, [CivicSpace](#) helped the Chicago police department deliver measurable results by using predictive analytics to better allocate resources and help reduce the homicide rate.



8. Partner

Just because you can create your solutions and everything that supports it from the ground up doesn't necessarily mean it's the best option. Running out of time or money (or both) before a viable beta is ready for users puts a wrench in operations.

Up-and-comers in the GovTech space are partnering with other service providers to get to market before their capital runs out. This includes Cloud partnerships with companies like Amazon, Microsoft, and Google as well as white-labeled features like document processing, e-signature, and redaction—all necessary parts of meeting requirements in Open Records Acts, Privacy Acts, and federal as well as state-specific Freedom of Information Acts.





Essential GovTech Features

The World Bank [has identified](#) a number of foundational GovTech features, including connectivity, digital ID, e-payments, and national data registries. A key goal running through these features is the desire to put people first.

When users can securely connect to government services online, be accurately identified, and give and receive digital payments, service delivery times decrease while overall user satisfaction increases. It's an ideal combination that delivers greater ROI to taxpayers.



Becoming a Major GovTech Player

If the list of [top global GovTech players](#) for 2020 tells us anything, it's that these organizations gain momentum by following these three high-level principles when developing and advancing their solutions:



Improve Access:

With information spread across multiple agencies, citizens often find it difficult to obtain government services for which they're eligible. Streamlining processes, centralizing services, and automating responses to FAQs and repeatable tasks all improve access to services.



Be Altruistic:

Having an authentically feel-good element to your product capabilities can quite literally open doors. For example, Nextdoor's commitment to connecting neighbors has equipped it to expand into 11+ countries and 270,000+ neighborhoods across the globe.



Commit to Innovation:

In addition to building strategic partnerships and advancing core technologies via internal development plans, top GovTech players are acquiring complementary solutions to expand existing offerings and increase stickiness with users.

These are just a few high-level observations, much more can be gleaned from digging into the [Global GovTech Market Report for 2020](#).

What's clear across the board is that content processing solutions can help facilitate each of these underlying strategies that position GovTech solutions to gain traction. Secure e-signature, redaction, and forms processing as well as workflow automation can improve outcomes through efficiency, productivity, and security improvements.

Learn more about these vital capabilities in Building the Next Generation of GovTech Applications.

GovTech Opportunities

There's always opportunity for advancement in technology. In our next eGuide, we'll cover GovTech innovations and feature sets that can set the stage for better government processes. For example, SDKs and APIs can help GovTech developers and product managers integrate highly desirable capabilities into their core products. These capabilities could include:



Document viewing



File conversion



[Collaboration](#)



File compression



Form processing



[Redaction](#)

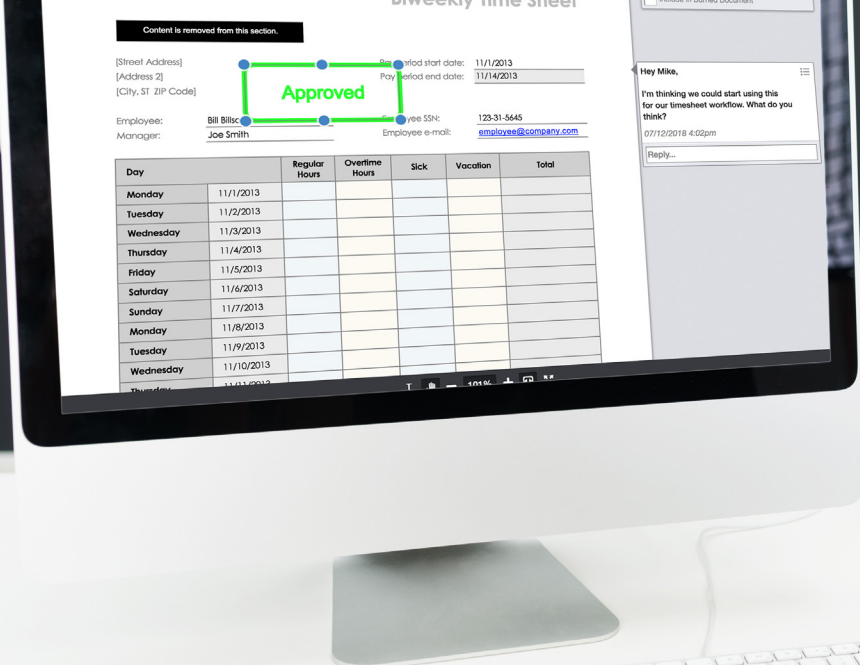


Data capture



[Annotation](#)

Many developers are choosing to partner with third-parties to improve outcomes for public records requests, case management, and workflow automation in the government space. By tightly integrating with a third-party's brandless document viewer and redaction tools, developers can deliver much-needed capabilities to government clients in less time.



Summary

GovTech is becoming more digital and automated all the time. With the introduction of advanced algorithms and machine learning, sorting vast amounts of data and knowing where to allocate limited resources is becoming easier.

Developers new to the GovTech sector can benefit from studying the most successful companies in the space and applying the three pillars found across the top global GovTech companies: a commitment to improving access to essential services, an authentically altruistic angle, and a dedication to innovation.

To learn more about achieving success as a GovTech developer, check out our next eGuide in this series, which dives into innovation and feature sets that improve government processes.



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