Beyond Service Delivery: Why the Time is Right for Digital Governance
Digital solutions are disrupting every sector. To retain customers and fuel growth, commercial organizations are crafting customer-centric experiences. Many have already demonstrated disruptive, digitally enabled changes to their business and operating models. Within public service organizations, digital often has been viewed as a driver of higher efficiency—a new way of doing more with less. Many have embraced digital for its ability to provide a convenient “veneer” to public service delivery.\(^1\) Today, however, public service organizations—including those throughout Canada—are at a critical juncture. Digital solutions now present an unprecedented opportunity to drive deep public service transformation in two crucial areas: digital governance and digital service delivery. While Canadian governments seem to be keeping pace in terms of digitally enabled service delivery, Accenture believes that Canada has game-changing opportunities to embrace new technologies, insights and ways of working to drive digital governance. Here, we explore the why—and the how—of digital governance and opportunities for Canada’s governments to foster true co-creation of public policies and services.

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**Unmet expectations**

As rapid adopters of innovative technology, Canadian citizens see a significant gap between what they want from their government and the services and opportunities for engagement currently available to them.

When it comes to digital delivery of public services, Canada is on par with some of the leading governments of similar size and structure around the globe. Six in ten Canadian Internet users have used the Internet for government services and more than three-quarters (77 percent) report having done so in the past 12 months.\(^2\) In another survey, 42 percent of Canadians indicated that government is doing a “good” job making effective use of electronic technology.\(^3\)

But when it comes to engaging citizens in the democratic process—through e-voting, online transparency and policy development—survey results point to significant opportunity for improvement. In these areas, Canadian citizens appear to feel less connected, with three-quarters (77 percent) thinking that government is not responsive to citizen priorities and needs. More than half (58 percent) think government cannot be trusted, and two-thirds (66 percent) think government makes poor decisions or do not agree with policies. Fully 65 percent want more consultation with government through online platforms—with 79 percent wanting more information to be published online about how government decisions are made.\(^4\)

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\(^1\) For more on the need for digital transformation, see Digital Government: Pathways to Delivering Public Services for the Future, Accenture 2014

\(^2\) Citizens First 7, Institute for Citizen-Centred Service Webinar 2015

\(^3\) Canadian Public Opinion on Governance and the Public Service, Institute on Governance 2014

\(^4\) Canadian Public Opinion on Governance and the Public Service, Institute on Governance 2014
The case for digital governance

Digitally enabled service delivery remains an important element of digital transformation. Yet, governments that focus solely on digital services at the expense of digital governance are missing an important opportunity.

For the first time in history, technology is both widely available and widely adopted. Digital devices and platforms make it possible to share information with incredible speed and accuracy. They offer efficient tools for collecting input on policy design and service delivery. They enable government to be far clearer in communicating what it’s doing and why. Ultimately, digital technologies can truly “democratize” governance—making it easier for everyone to have a say in the process.

As governments across the globe begin to embrace digital technologies to better engage their citizenries, the Canadian public sector should explore ways to implement digital governance—using digital technology and platforms to:

• Share information with and include citizens in decision making.
• Implement new tools and frameworks to help manage trends and engage citizens.
• Provide easy access to government data so that citizens and other stakeholders can review and analyze it themselves.

Digital governance will be crucial to helping Canada’s public sector improve citizen engagement, trust and sentiment towards democracy in general as well as towards specific public institutions. Digital governance is an essential foundation for creating larger “digital ecosystems,” which enable service delivery by participants from multiple sectors. What’s more, digital governance can actually help governments achieve greater agility, deliver more innovation and make better and timelier decisions.

UK aims to 'Open Up!'

The UK has articulated a strategy for using digital technology to bridge the gap between the public and Parliament. The Open Up! Plain Language Summary—which communicates in large type and easy-to-understand prose—sets forth five concrete goals for enhancing digital governance:

1. By 2020, the House of Commons should make sure that everyone can understand what it does.
2. By 2020, the House of Commons should be fully interactive and digital.
3. After the General Election, the House of Commons should set up a new way for members of the public to have their say during House of Commons debates.
4. In the 2020 General Election, all voters should be able to vote online.
5. Parliament publishes and broadcasts a lot of information about its work. By 2016, all this information should be freely available online.

Open Up! Plain language summary
To measure the impact of digitization on a country’s economic performance, Accenture conducted in-depth research across 30 countries. We combined those findings with practitioner experience of working with global public service entities to benchmark digital maturity against six criteria:

- Economic competitiveness
- Public sector productivity
- Constituent satisfaction
- Citizen engagement
- Information communications technology (ICT) development
- Digital priority

The report uncovered that a 1-percent increase in digitization yields a 0.5-percent increase in gross domestic product (GDP)—along with a 1.9-percent gain in international trade. At the same time, a 10-percent increase in digitization is correlated with a .86-percent decrease in unemployment.  

Governing in the digital age

Embracing digital governance has clear benefits both to citizens and to government itself. But by its very nature, digital governance is not something government alone can accomplish. It requires true collaboration among government, private and not-for-profit organizations, and individual citizens. All stakeholders need to understand and help communicate the value of digital governance, and all must bear some of the risk. As a result, investing in digital tools will be a necessary—but insufficient—condition for change. The impact of digital transformation depends on the caliber of a federal, provincial or municipal government’s vision, along with its level of commitment to seeing it through.

Through research and practitioner experience, Accenture has identified six characteristics essential to being a future-ready government. Every future-ready government needs:

1. An entrepreneurial and performance-driven workforce, with the right incentives and conditions for entrepreneurs to thrive and for the public service workforce to be digitally savvy and productive.
2. An engaged citizenry, with a political culture where citizens are motivated and engaged with their representatives in co-designing public policies.
3. Open and insight-driven services, with an “open paradigm” of government and the ability to leverage big data to enable digital

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4. A collaborative service ecosystem, with new, innovative ways for the private and not-for-profit to work with government and experiment with new models of public service delivery.

5. A resilient mission-critical infrastructure, with the ability to support “always-on” services, the agility to support fast-paced technological change, and the security necessary to assure citizens that their personal information is safe.

6. A disruptive culture, with the view that government can and should take risks and disrupt “business as usual” to deliver public service for the future.

Start today

To move the needle towards digital governance—and meet citizens’ growing expectations for transparency and engagement—Accenture recommends that Canada’s federal, provincial and municipal organizations:

• Rethink risk. Historically, governments have been highly risk averse. While the notion of full transparency can be daunting, governments need to refocus on their ultimate responsibility and accountability. While continuing to identify and to mitigate risk, governments should be guided by the fundamental duties to be fair and open and to deliver the best value to the people they serve.

• Start small. Digital governance will be an ongoing journey. Start by embracing innovation pilots and nurture a “fail fast” environment. Use proofs of concept to test participative democracy, such as mobile voting or e-legislation.

• Open up. When it comes to Open Data and Open Information, it’s time to up the ante. Most governments will need to revisit data ownership and regulation, updating regulatory frameworks to reflect today’s realities and opportunities. To encourage citizen collaboration and co-creation, publish more information and Open Data—ensuring that data sets are machine readable. To support advanced analytics, implement open data standards.

• Collaborate within and across government. Promote collaboration and encourage the flow of information across all levels of government, which requires disruption to traditional organizational barriers. That will require operating model changes—including reducing layers, merging entities, implementing e-workflow, sharing information across departments and jurisdictions, defining departmental mandates/services and reorganizing workers. To support smarter processes and encourage sharing across agencies, governments need to streamline parts of the middle and back office, implement shared services and adopt cloud platforms. Above all, envision a future with a back-office digital operations centre that supports centralized citizen service centres—yielding a citizen-centric view of both online services and participative democracy and governance.

Thriving commercial organizations have fully embraced digital, and Canadian governments that will meet their political and service ambitions need to do the same: addressing the requirement for both digital governance and digital services. Doing so will improve public engagement with public institutions. It will fuel confidence in governments’ ability to govern effectively. And it will support long-term economic vitality. In short, those that get digital governance “right” will have a more engaged citizenry, will make more informed decisions and, ultimately, will support better outcomes for the individuals and communities they serve.
Digital governance in Canada

Across Canada, governments are making headway in engaging citizens via digital democracy. Some examples include:

• Cobourg and Port Hope, Ontario
  – Following the introduction of online voting, Cobourg and Port Hope, Ontario, have seen a rise in voter turnout. After first introducing online voting in 2010, Port Hope saw turnout rise slightly from 45.28 percent in 2006 to 46.48 percent in 2010. When Cobourg introduced Internet and telephone voting systems in 2006, voter turnout improved to 44.91 percent. By 2010, Cobourg had eliminated paper ballots and saw voter turnout continue to rise, with 47.3 percent of eligible residents casting their vote.9

• British Columbia
  – The Province of British Columbia has taken a formal approach to improving citizen engagement, including publishing a detailed handbook10 to help public agencies in nurturing greater communication and collaboration. In an interesting marriage of digital governance for digital services, British Columbia conducted a formal Digital Services Consultation11 for exploring future uses of digital services and the BC Services Card. The goal: to provide all British Columbians with the opportunity to have their say.

• Edmonton, Alberta
  – Edmonton has established its Analytics Centre of Excellence (ACE) to provide "leadership, evangelization, best practices, research, support and training for analytics across the City." By providing a central, consolidated resource for both city staff and individual citizens, ACE encourages the use of data, supports collaboration around the data and offers a focal point for sharing methodologies and gaining knowledge through the effective use and development of actionable analytics.12

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11 http://www2.gov.bc.ca/govtogetherbc/consultations/digital_services.page
12 http://www.edmonton.ca/city_government/initiatives_innovation/analytics.aspx
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What does it take to deliver public service for the future? Public service leaders must embrace four structural shifts—advancing toward personalized services, insight-driven operations, a public entrepreneurship mindset and a cross-agency commitment to mission productivity. By making these shifts, leaders can support flourishing societies, safe, secure nations and economic vitality for citizens in a digital world—delivering public service for the future.