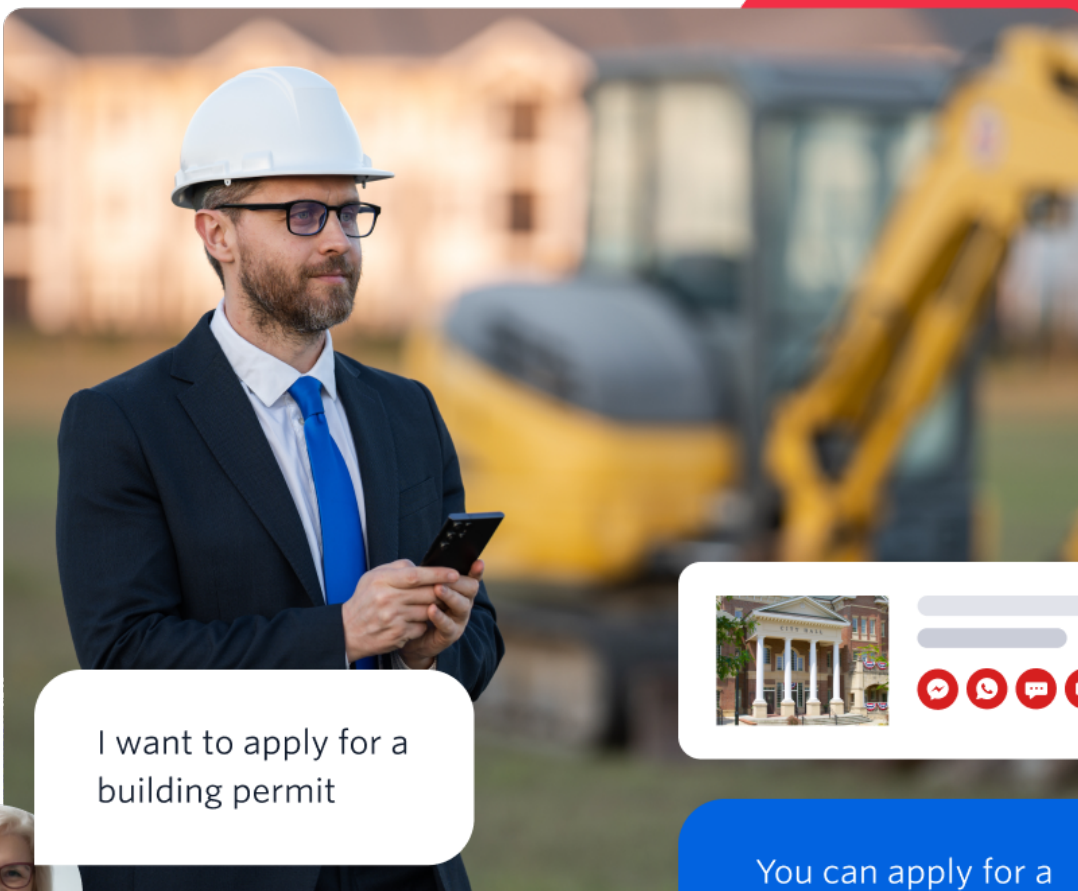


# The High Stakes of Digital Citizen Experience

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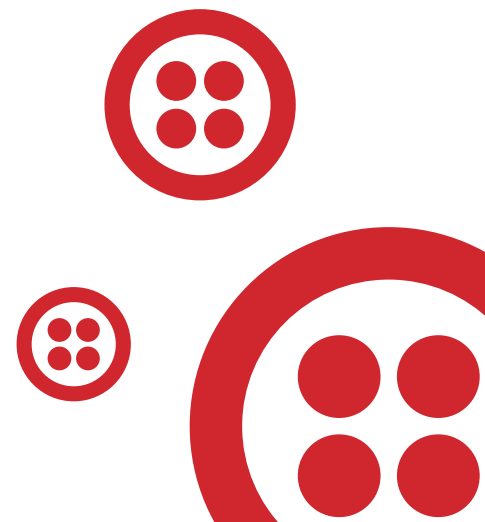


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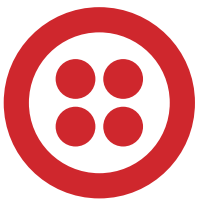
# The Rising Expectations for Digital Public Services

Every communication is a moment that matters to citizens.

Public sector organizations are undergoing significant transformation to meet the growing demand for accessible, efficient, and personalized digital services. In Australia, over 94% of citizens use at least one digital government service, with rising expectations for seamless interactions across various channels.

However, challenges such as budget constraints, resource limitations, data privacy concerns, and fragmented systems make it difficult for government services to match the convenience of private sector offerings.

This whitepaper explores strategies to address these challenges, leveraging digital engagement platforms, automation, and AI. By implementing integrated solutions, governments can enhance service delivery, streamline operations, and build trust. Through real-world examples such as Service NSW, [Polaris](#), and Google Flood Hub, we illustrate how AI and digital platforms can improve service efficiency, citizen engagement, and public safety while maintaining transparency and trust.



## Citizen-Centric Digital Demands

The need for digital transformation in the public sector is driven by citizen demand for efficient, personalized, and accessible services. With the rise of digitally enabled services across other industries, citizens expect their interactions with government agencies to be equally seamless, whether they are renewing licenses, accessing healthcare, or applying for benefits. This shift towards a digital-first approach is not optional but necessary for maintaining citizen trust and satisfaction.

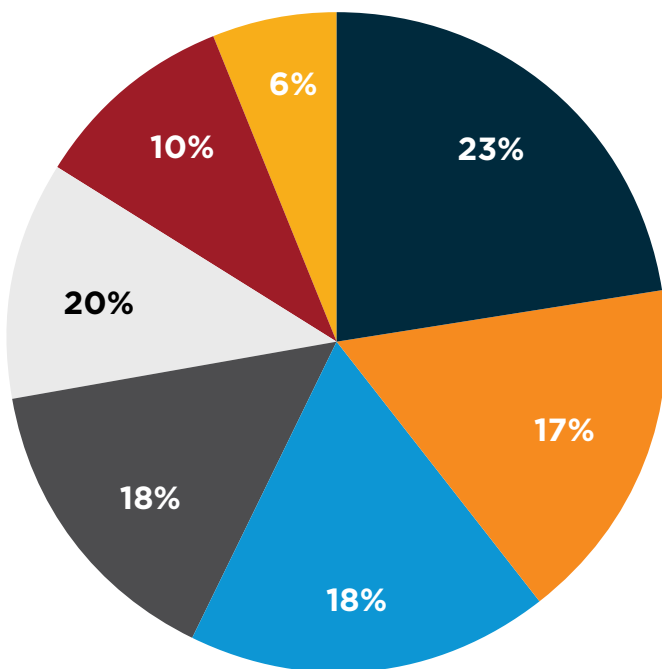
However, public sector organizations face unique challenges in delivering these services. Limited resources, budgetary pressures, and resistance to change hinder progress. Additionally, concerns about data privacy and security make it challenging to fully embrace digital solutions. The complexity of public sector service delivery,

combined with data silos and fragmented systems, results in disjointed experiences for citizens, reducing trust in government services.

The rise of fraudulent activities, such as scam calls and spam emails, further erodes public confidence. Boston Consulting Group's (BCG) [Trust Imperative 3.0 survey](#) found that 81% of respondents indicated that a negative experience with government services would diminish their trust in public institutions.

To meet these evolving expectations, public sector organizations must rethink their service delivery models and embrace intelligent solutions and digital platforms to improve service efficiency and build lasting trust.

**What is your organization, department or function's top priority over the next 12-24 months?**



- Transforming and automating processes
- Updating workplace culture and upskilling the workforce
- Becoming more data driven in decision making
- Investing in new technology and digital
- Collaborating with other departments/tiers of government
- Modernizing data and cyber security
- Building resiliency and improving business

**Source: State of the Service Australian Innovation 2024 Report**  
**Total Sample Size 708 Australian Gov Executives**

Further integration and adoption of the opportunity in AI-Powered services is no longer a hard sell for fast-following government agencies, illustrated by the latest national sentiment, touting process excellence through automation as a top priority over the next 12-24 months, a major catalyst of service reform.

## The Pressures of Trust, Budget, and Compliance

Public sector organizations are under pressure to improve service delivery and meet rising citizen expectations, but they face three significant barriers:

### **Problem #1. Rising Citizen Expectations:**

Citizens increasingly expect public services to match the quality and accessibility of private sector offerings. They seek quick, seamless, and omnichannel interactions, whether renewing a license, accessing healthcare, or applying for benefits.

### **Problem #2. Resource Constraints:**

Governments face the challenge of delivering more services with fewer resources. Budget limitations, technical challenges, and resistance to change further complicate efforts to enhance service delivery.

### **Problem #3. Data Privacy and Security**

**Concerns:** Growing concerns about data privacy and security hinder the adoption of digital government services. Citizens want transparency about how their data is collected, used, and protected.

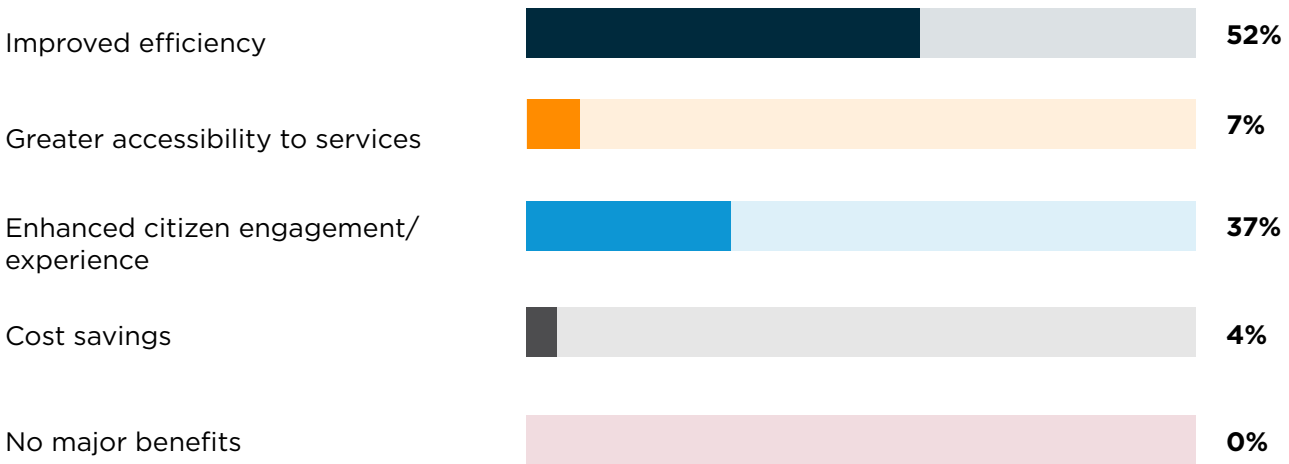
Behind these three issues, technical debt and legacy communications compound the overall challenge by keeping data siloed and digital channels limited for an increasing number of fragmented government services. The result is a trend towards inefficient experiences for citizens, inhibiting satisfaction and accessibility unless we see an acceleration of highly efficient omnichannel experiences emerging in government.



# The Path to Citizen-Centric, AI-Assisted Government Services

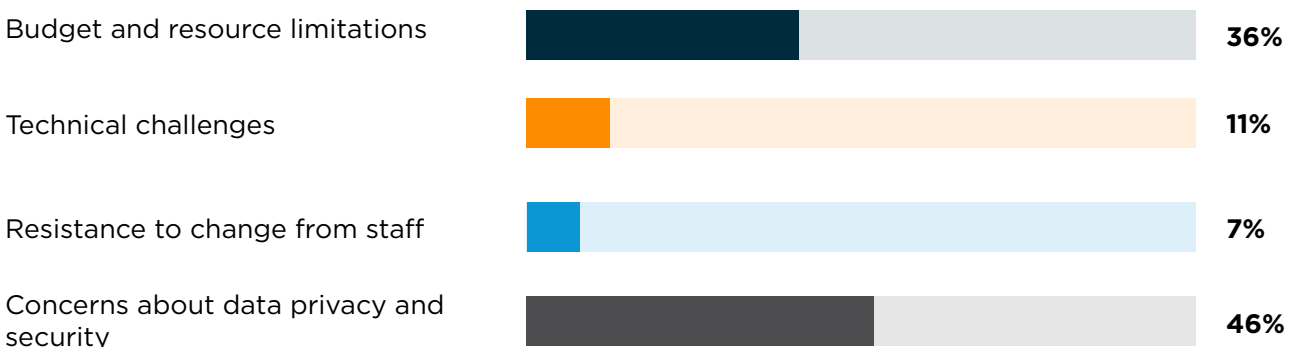
To support the directives of modern digital services, we have been able to profile a specific set of service-centric Australian Public Sector Digital Executives to provide valuable insights into the perceptions and priorities surrounding AI and automation in public sector service delivery.

**Efficiency Over Accessibility:** The majority (52%) of respondents believe that improved efficiency is the greatest opportunity offered by AI in the public sector. While enhanced citizen engagement (37%) is also a key priority, efficiency should be the primary focus, particularly in areas where current resource limitations (see next paragraph) hinder service delivery.

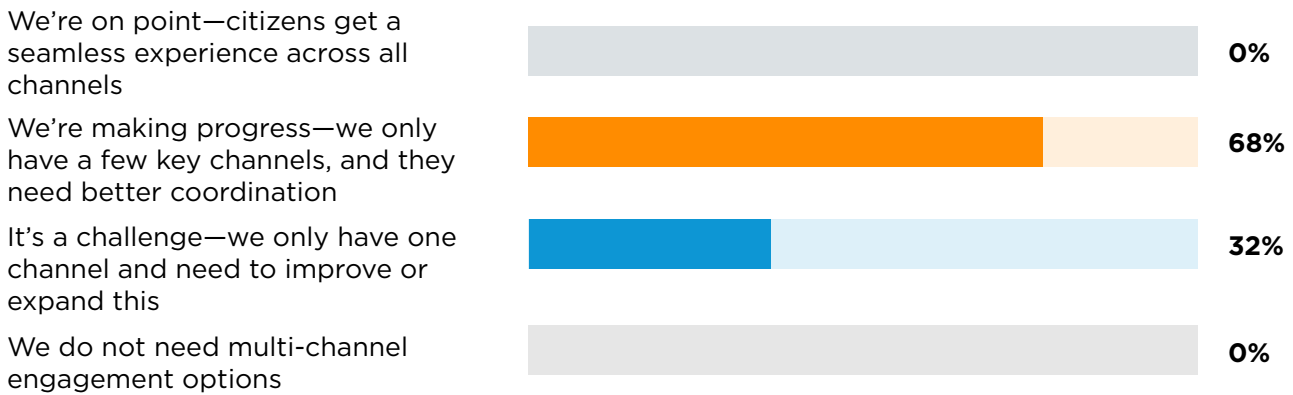


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**AI isn't just about replacing human interaction; it's about making it easier for staff to focus on higher-value work by enhancing efficiency.”**  
Andrew Leang Public Sector Lead APAC, Twilio

**Heightened Awareness of Privacy and Security Concerns:** Data privacy and security were flagged by 46% of respondents as the most significant barrier to AI adoption. Public sector organizations must establish robust security frameworks and transparent data practices to allay fears and encourage greater adoption of digital services and how well citizen data flows across them.



**Progress in Unified Engagement, but Room for Improvement:** While 68% of respondents acknowledged progress in delivering unified citizen engagement across channels, more work is needed. Organizations should focus on coordinating key digital channels to ensure a more consistent and integrated citizen experience, an area many whole-of-government functions are spearheading.



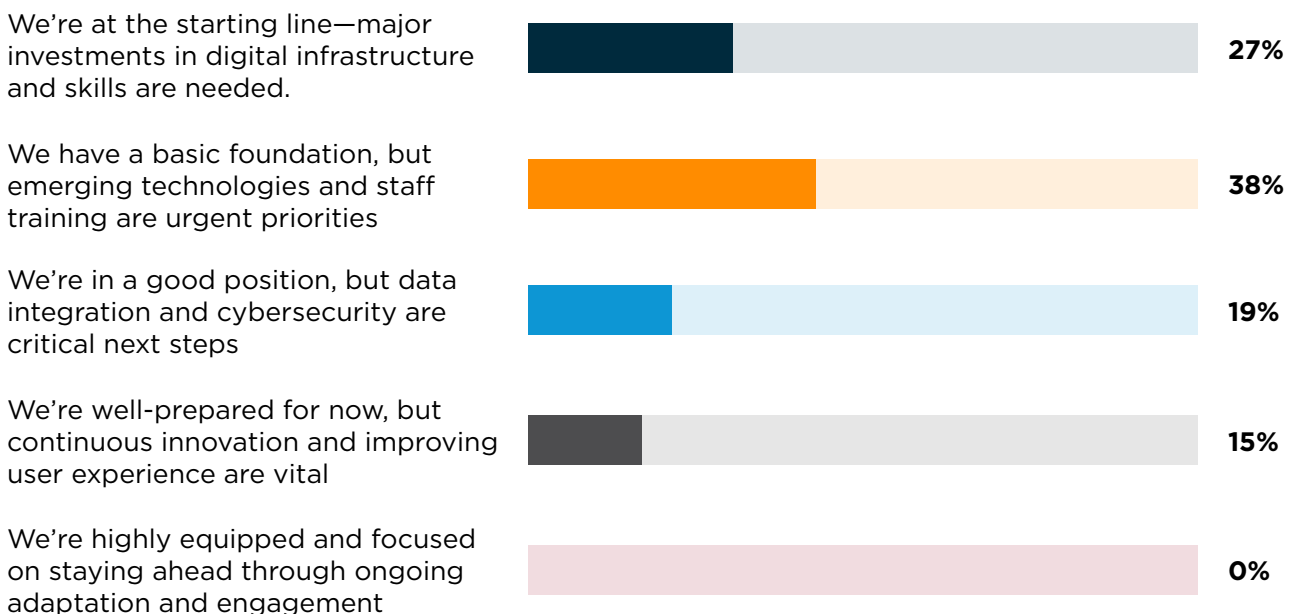
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**Omnichannel communication reduces the complexity of siloed systems and improves accessibility, enabling citizens to reach out on the channel of their choice.”**

**Ruma Nair**

Principal Product Manager – AI and Customer Engagement,  
**Twilio**

**Digital Readiness:** A significant portion (38%) of respondents indicated that while their organizations have a basic foundation, there is a pressing need for further investments in emerging technologies and staff training. This highlights the drive for upskilling, cross-functional teams, and the future vision of digitally-enabled public sector professions.



## Smart Services: How AI, Automation, and Data Integration Form the New Frontier of Public Sector

The ultimate digital platform or technology stack does not just exist at a single instance of customer service, it connects the entire experience. Public sector organizations will be able to increasingly benefit from the rapid democratization of AI-augmented tools and connected insights that feed modern digital communications, whether virtual, in-person, or hybrid, if they are able to safely keep pace with technology transformation sweeping across industry.

### Unified Digital Engagement Platforms:

Digital engagement platforms allow governments to communicate with citizens across multiple channels, including web chat, SMS, voice, email, and WhatsApp. By consolidating these channels into a single engagement hub, organizations can create a seamless experience for citizens, improving efficiency and reducing complexity. [Twilio Flex](#) helped [Maricopa County](#) save \$185k in human resources spending by deploying customer centric experiences. This approach enables organizations to manage citizen interactions more effectively while ensuring compliance with data governance and regulatory standards.

### Breaking Down Data Silos:

Without connected information, public sector organizations are hindered from having a complete view of citizen interactions, leading to persistent inefficiencies. By boosting the flow of data across departments and systems to create unified citizen profiles, organizations can provide personalized and consistent services. This approach enables better decision-making at the frontline, and event policy levels in the effort to enhance the overall citizen experience. Thus, governments are recommended to prioritize interoperable platforms that facilitate seamless data sharing across agencies.

### Implementing Automation and AI:

AI-powered agents are now much more than simple chatbots, handling routine inquiries with increasingly relevant knowledge bases and interpretive capabilities, remaining always on and reducing the workload on human agents. AI tools can also play a part in analyzing performance data to identify service bottlenecks and suggest improvements. Tools like [Twilio Flex](#) enable governments to deliver consistent, scalable service across multiple channels. High volumes of transcripts and service usage patterns can now be analyzed with greater ease to better understand the nuance of citizen interactions at scale. For example, [Twilio Flex](#) helps [Polaris](#) and the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline save time in supporting victims by reducing screen loading workflow steps, and wait times by adding new channels.

### The Right to Privacy:

Ensuring robust data protection is crucial for building public trust in digital government services. Governments must adopt transparent data governance frameworks, employing techniques like anonymization, encryption, and stringent access controls. Public sector organizations should also work closely with tool and service providers to ensure accurate and clear communications with citizens about how their data is collected, stored, and used for the public good.

### Fostering Core and Common Capabilities through Democratized Services:

An aligned approach to digital service capabilities between government agencies can maximize reusable resources and reduce duplication of efforts. When designing digital services, agencies should consider not just the immediate functionality but also how the service can be shared and scaled across other departments or even sectors.



## Public Sector in Action: Modern Service Transformation

### Service NSW: Optimizing for Least Friction

New South Wales State Government's gold standard agency, Service NSW, has successfully implemented AI and digital platforms to improve both external citizen engagement and internal staff efficiency. Service NSW's use of conversational AI has streamlined citizen interactions and improved response times, handled routine inquiries and redirected live agents to the complex, and the human nature of citizen communications. These tools also surface relevant information to frontline staff, improving the speed and accuracy of responses. Service NSW's use of integrated digital channels (e.g., SMS, web chat) enables flexible service delivery, improving citizen satisfaction and reducing reliance on more expensive in-person interactions. The agency is also commended by the broader sector for its collaboration with various state and local agencies to share digital tools and platforms, improving service delivery across the entire public sector.

### Polaris and Twilio: Streamlining Crisis Communication

[Polaris](#) guides victims of human trafficking to the support they need, using data to help orchestrate and accelerate that support. Since 2007, the Washington D.C.-based organization has operated the U.S. National Human Trafficking Hotline on behalf of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, which helps victims and survivors of human trafficking and those close to them by quickly connecting them with local resources. Those resources include a safe place to stay, legal assistance, psychological support, or assisting with reporting to law enforcement.

Hotline advocates receive communications from people in need of varying levels of support and resources. Often those messages are not easy for victims to send, due to the seriousness and urgency of their situations. In every case, it's crucial that the person in crisis receives support fast and feels like they can trust the person on the other end.

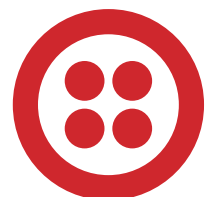
[Polaris](#) ensures that every person reaching out gets the attention, information, and support they need. In addition to their dedicated advocates, the right technology makes it possible. It unifies all that data, and ensures that each interaction is personalized to the individual's situation and needs. Polaris needed a solution that could align with their goals, and they found it with [Twilio Flex](#).

Since implementing [Twilio Flex](#), people contacting [Polaris](#) have experienced a significant decrease in wait times. Plus, hotline advocates' workflows have become easier. They can deliver more impactful support with a 45% reduction in workflow steps, plus half as many loading screens to wait through compared to their previous system.

"Now advocates can really see who they are communicating with, what referrals have been provided, what worked, what didn't, what we want to know, and the safety considerations," said Megan Cutter, Managing Director of the National Human Trafficking Hotline at [Polaris](#). "And the way that is all displayed now is much more clear, easy to access and navigate, and to update in real time. This has really changed how advocates work and helps them feel more confident when interacting with people in need of support."

This approach ensures that those seeking help feel heard, as the context from any previous interactions is maintained. This prevents individuals from being retraumatized by having to repeat their experiences.

In the future, the partnership between [Polaris](#) and Twilio is poised to help even more trafficking victims regain their freedom to choose how they live and work.



## Google Flood Hub and Twilio: Powering Real-Time Flood Alerts

Google Flood Hub uses sophisticated AI models to predict water levels that are hyper-targeted to specific locations around the world. This is increasingly important to mitigate the impact of water emergency disasters through saving lives and property damage as climate change worsens. FloodHub can then be configured to integrate with Twilio communications channels like SMS or Voice, to be able to notify people in real-time when there is increased flood danger. This is relevant for public sector emergency response organizations that would like to notify residents and/or staff of impending flooding to encourage precautionary measures.



## Beyond Tech: A Primer on Human-Centric Design and Continuous Discovery in Digital Service Delivery

Diverse citizens have diverse needs. Public sector organizations can heighten the impact of relevant services, especially in the new age of generative AI through the adoption of a **human-centred design approach**. This involves using **design thinking** and **iterative methodologies** to ensure that digital platforms are tailored to the wide variety of demographics and life stages present in the community. While technology enables more efficient service delivery, it should augment, not replace, the human element. In certain cases, especially for more complex or sensitive services, the value of human interaction remains indispensable.

A best practice in ensuring service alignment with citizen needs is through **continuous discovery**. This means regularly revisiting and refining digital services based on real-time feedback from both citizens and frontline service providers. Agile release cycles can facilitate frequent updates and improvements without disrupting service delivery, allowing organizations to stay responsive to evolving needs. Additionally, combining data analytics with qualitative insights from citizens can help pinpoint areas for improvement and optimize service design.

While digitalization is the fast lane to enhanced service delivery, it is crucial to strike a balance between automated agents and human interaction. Starting with a **human-in-the-loop** approach—where AI supports rather than replaces humans—can help validate the effectiveness of AI tools before moving toward full automation.

“

**Needs and expectations change rapidly. One life experience can pivot a citizen's trajectory and what they seek from government.”**

**Kristin Bamford** Group Product Director, **Service NSW**

## Navigating the AI Hype: Moving from Demonstration to Real-World Implementation

When exploring AI as part of public service delivery, it's important to distinguish between marketing hype and genuine, practical use. AI often performs impressively in demonstration environments but may not translate seamlessly into real-world applications. Public sector organizations should focus on pilots and **early-stage deployment** of AI solutions, ensuring they move from testing to production quickly to validate usefulness in practical scenarios.

To successfully implement AI, organizations must also collaborate closely with **privacy and security teams** from the outset. Many organizations make the mistake of developing AI solutions and only involving privacy and security experts at the end of the process. By engaging these teams from the beginning, potential issues related to **data protection** and security can be identified and addressed early on, preventing costly delays or compliance issues later.

## Safe and Responsible Use of AI in Sensitive Areas

In areas such as law enforcement and public safety, the use of AI requires careful consideration. **Data anonymization** and privacy protections must be top priorities to ensure that sensitive information is safeguarded. Techniques such as **redacting personally identifiable information (PII)** and providing citizens with control over how their data is used are essential for maintaining trust.

AI can also be deployed in ways that support service delivery without infringing on personal data. For example, by focusing on **de-identified data**, machine learning can be used to assess the effectiveness of services, predict future needs, or analyze patterns in public safety incidents. This allows governments to improve operational efficiency and responsiveness without compromising the privacy of individuals.

Developing a strong **ethical framework** for AI use is essential. By establishing clear guidelines on how AI can and should be used, public sector organizations can ensure that AI applications remain aligned with the core values of transparency, accountability, and citizen welfare.

“

**AI works great in a demo environment, but it's difficult to get it into production. Start small and focus on real-world validation as quickly as possible.”**

**Ruma Nair**

Principal Product Manager – AI and Customer Engagement,

**Twilio**

## Building a Future of Trust-Driven, Digital-First Government Services

Digital engagement platforms, automation, and AI present significant opportunities for transforming public sector service delivery. By adopting these technologies, public sector organizations can address challenges such as data silos, resource constraints, and fragmented citizen experiences, all while maintaining public trust and transparency.

Real-world examples and the fast emergence of new use cases, while demonstrating the potential of AI and digital platforms to improve both service efficiency and citizen satisfaction, also necessitates strategic and

purposeful leveraging of the technology. Governments that prioritize citizen-centric design, privacy by design, and collaborative cross-agency delivery will be better positioned to deliver high-quality, accessible, and trustworthy services. As citizen expectations continue to evolve, it is crucial for public sector organizations to adopt innovative, technology-driven approaches to meet the needs of today's digitally savvy citizens.





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If you would like to learn more about what Twilio products can do for your organization, [please contact the sales team](#).



## About Public Sector Network

Public Sector Network (PSN) is a research company and insights exchange platform for government professionals. PSN connects public sector leaders to share knowledge, collaborate on solutions, and drive innovation in government services. Through events, workshops, and online communities, PSN fosters a culture of continuous learning and improvement in the public sector. PSN's mission is to support government organizations in achieving their goals through knowledge sharing and collaboration.

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