

GLOBAL TOP 50  
**GOVERNMENT  
INNOVATORS  
2023**

# FOREWORD

## Global Top 50 Government Innovators 2023

This report stands as a testament to the power of innovation, a celebration of those who strive for excellence in the design and delivery of quality public services.

Within these pages, we spotlight more than 50 extraordinary individuals who have made citizen-centricity and transformative leadership their guiding principles. As we journey through the 2023 Global Government Innovators Report, let us be inspired by the passion, dedication, and ingenuity of those featured within these pages.

In its second year, the Global Government Innovators eBook is back as a tool to encourage collaboration by breaking down siloes and connecting innovative thinking. This report embodies the ethos on which Public Sector Network is founded. Through Public Sector Network's online platform, annual series of free-to-attend events, and library of content, government professionals worldwide have found a space to collaborate, learn, and solve challenges collectively.

For those engaged in public service, Public Sector Network offers a free, exclusive platform where professionals can connect, learn, network and benchmark with their peers. [Learn more about the platform and sign up for free today.](#)

We hope you are inspired by the stories within the report and that they encourage open dialogue and transformative thought.



**Ross Ashman**  
Co-Founder and CEO  
Public Sector Network



**Charlie Hamer**  
Co-Founder and COO  
Public Sector Network

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# INTRODUCTION

**Government is now less trusted than business, with global trust in government sitting at 50 percent compared to 62 percent for business.**

Trust in government is eroding globally. Fuelled by misinformation, economic and security anxieties, and Covid-19 aftereffects. Across almost the entire Western World trust is down. In fact, according to the Edelman Trust Barometer Global Report 2023, trust in government has dropped 3 percent since 2021.

Trust in government institutions is not merely a sentiment, but a linchpin for effective policymaking, innovation, and societal functionality. Public trust is crucial; forming the foundation of a healthy democratic society and fostering social cohesion, stability, and effective governance.

As public sector professionals we all have the same simple goal - to deliver meaningful, convenient, and accessible services for citizens. Simple goals however often become overwhelmed amongst a mass of noise, constantly shifting dynamics and seemingly endless competing priorities.

But when done right, simple, intuitive, accessible, and inclusive services build public confidence and help us gain - and regain - citizen trust. This forms a virtuous cycle - more trust leads to more engagement, more data, improved performance, and the cycle continues.

Recognising that rebuilding trust isn't just a 'nice to have' but in fact a prerequisite for progress, in the 2023 Global Government Innovators eBook we focus on humanising the public sector entity and look to connect people with the faces, stories and projects advocating for, and shaping their future.

**This year we spotlight 50 dedicated and passionate individuals who prioritise citizen centricity. Who strive for innovation in the design and delivery of quality public services. And who, through their work and candour, aim to improve public policy and rekindle public trust.**



The image features a solid green background with a decorative pattern of white dots and thin white lines. The pattern consists of interconnected geometric shapes, primarily hexagons and pentagons, arranged in a way that suggests a molecular or crystalline structure. The dots are of varying sizes, and the lines are thin and light gray. The pattern is most prominent in the top and bottom corners, fading towards the center.

# AUSTRALIA



## FAWAD ABRO

Assistant Commissioner - Enterprise Data & Analytics  
Australian Taxation Office

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job ever was running a paper route in high school! It's amazing what you see walking the streets during the depths of the night to ensure people get their paper the next morning.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

It's ever evolving, however lately it's been about being ultra-disciplined with my time. Ensuring that I have deep work/thought time and admin time each day, while also ensuring that meeting blocks are chunked with breaks in between so my brain doesn't catch fire. Additionally, it's about ensuring I switch off when I'm not at work.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

We're currently running one of the largest data transformation programs in the southern hemisphere, so leading at scale is the challenge. Really, the challenge is only overcome through the power of people. My biggest learning was understanding that the development of the right leadership culture and our people's capabilities is the true secret to success. We're running a multi-disciplinary team, made up of Australian Public Sector staff and strategic partners with sponsors from across the Organisation's business units, including IT and Data & Analytics.

**“ My biggest learning was understanding that the development of the right leadership culture and our people's capabilities is the true secret to success.”**

The program set out to establish a hyperscalable data pattern in the cloud, while retiring legacy platforms on premises and enabling our first legislative use cases. Without going into the specifics too much, stakeholders from across industry, government and within the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) have been involved in making this program a success. It has been interesting and exciting to reflect upon the potential use-cases now lining up to use/build upon/extend these patterns we have now established. It's an exciting time for the ATO.

The biggest takeaway from this project? People, people, people. Humans are always at the centre of success.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Good decision making often requires 'undifferentiated heavy lifting'; when making a decision, you really need to see behind the data to rationalise between choosing effectiveness and efficiency. For example, in IT or data terms, it can often refer to the non-functional requirements.

However, when it comes to practical decision making in delivering programmatic outcomes, it's often what the data isn't telling you.

For example, survivorship bias is the perfect example of this, which is a logical error of concentrating on the things that seems to pass a test. This is illustrated by the story of [Abraham Wald](#), where in WWII engineers kept re-enforcing parts of planes that had bullet holes, based on planes that survived/returned successfully. Wald recognised that it was arguably the parts of the planes that had the least damage where they needed to focus on re-enforcement, inferring that these planes were more likely to be lost.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

To ensure the equitable application of law, enabled at scale through event-based and frictionless citizen experiences, where law-abiding and well-intentioned citizens are treated with trust and can access government services seamlessly by leveraging natural ecosystems, in a highly integrated digital economy and society.



**You really need to see behind the data to rationalise between choosing effectiveness and efficiency.**

- FAWAD ABRO



## ROD APOSTOL

Chief Information Officer  
Victorian Ombudsman

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I started my working life and electronics engineer for a television network. This led to a truly IT role as ICT manager for a food manufacturing organisations retail stores division. From there I entered the public service supporting the ICT systems and applications for a health network, local councils, waterboard and then I was fortunate to be offered my current role with the Victorian Ombudsman. For me, even if it sounds a little corny, I get excited by technology but want to be able to support and improve the lives of the community. Public service fulfils both.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I have a thirst for knowledge and want to understand how things work, be that technology or processes. I get excited when I see where technology is now and can't wait for what comes next.

I like to always ask; "why not?" 'Find a way to yes' is a personal saying that I have and don't put limits on our dreams.

I also outsource my memory, spelling etc. to any systems that can assist me. I use whatever is available to keep track of just about everything in my life, set reminders and checkpoints so that I don't have to worry about remembering things.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

The project I'm proudest of is the development of the Victorian Ombudsman into a data led organisation that is led by the what the data shows us.

We collect a substantial amount of data from our complainants and investigations. Our challenge was to turn this data into information that was able to inform our decision making, identify trends and highlight issues either across an organisation or systematic across a sector. This is critical to be able to take a step back from an issue and see the broader picture that was able to highlight to us when we are buried in data about one particular issue.

To this end we started with validating data on entry and standardising information into formats. We used algorithms to update historical cases to be used to gain a benchmark of what has occurred in the past.

**“ Our staff are more empowered... and are able to identify systematic issues far more easily.”**

We took an organisational approach with our developers and vendors to improve input screens to validate on entry, worked with staff

to understand their information gathering and calls to ensure that systems aligned to their workflows. Our reporting teams developed business rules for reporting and were refined to ensure that upwards and mandatory reporting requirements were accommodated and then with the support of the executive team established a requirement that all reporting and analysis was to use the analytics that were presented. Our last step was to then develop visualisations and dashboards that were provided to all staff within the organisation.

The outcome is that we are now an organisation that follows the data and listens to what the data tells us. We have been able to make informed decisions and become more productive, with staff able to quickly move through cases and close more cases without expanding the size of teams.

Our staff are more empowered and have a much better sense of the wider picture of what is happening across the sector and are able to identify systematic issues far more easily. Into the future we see that we are able to accommodate greater caseloads without increasing team sizes, provide advice to complainants much quicker.

The biggest take-away from this transformation was that we needed to involve all teams across

the organisation to buy into the project. First to ensure that the data coming into systems was standardised and then the executive team to ensure that the data informed our decision making.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Be bold, think big, and trust in your and your team's ability to recover if something doesn't go to plan.

Really understand the needs of the teams delivering the service and put yourself in the shoes of your customers. Sit with staff on the front line and experience a day in their life, what doesn't work and their challenges. Most times the front-line staff or those delivering the service know what needs to be done to improve the service and customer experience. Consultants have a place but value your own staff's insights and opinions.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

A joined-up government that from local government to federal agencies that is seamless, no duplication in data and systems, that is transparent to the customer and is held accountable for privacy, security and value for money.



## AMRITA BHATTACHARYYA

Chief Customer Officer  
Townsville City Council

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I'm an engineer by training. My career began with an Electronics Engineering degree from one of India's IITs. I then pursued an MBA in the United States, which was a valuable blend, especially in the consulting world where I ended up working with Accenture and Deloitte.

I later went into executive positions in the commercial sector. During the pandemic, I was approached by an old colleague who encouraged me to take on the role of Director of Data and Analytics for Testing and Vaccination in Victoria. Things changed for me after that. This was a pivotal role for me professionally and personally. This experience, though challenging with almost non-stop work for eight months, and I loved every minute of it as I was working on something bigger than myself.

After a well-deserved break, I came into my current role. The idea of building a city for the future was incredibly exciting. It meant relocating from Melbourne to Townsville, but I was driven by the desire to explore what future city services could look like. For example, in the future world of drones, how much do we need to invest in expanding our existing transport infrastructure? Our mission is to create a resilient, adaptive, and sustainable community in Townsville, and I am excited to be part of that.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I like to slow down to speed up, and despite being digitally savvy prefer the analogue tools of pen and paper. There is something about the tactile nature of pen and paper that enhances my thinking process. I also have a learning journal which drives my reading habit. There is always so much to catch up on and learn.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Being a part of the Covid-19 response was a remarkable experience, one that I consider a true privilege, and one that provided me the opportunity to give back to the country that I call home.

At the onset of the pandemic, we essentially started from scratch. Existing infrastructure wasn't equipped to handle the overwhelming demands that the pandemic placed the system - particularly in terms of data and processes. It felt like launching a startup, requiring us to build and run the organisation from the ground up. It was the most exhilarating ride of my life, and I never want to do it again.

My specific role as Director of Data and Analytics for Testing and Vaccination with the Covid-19 Response Unit focused on capturing data and initiating the daily reporting process. Timely and

accurate information was crucial for shaping our strategy and we needed the information fast. Perfection wasn't attainable from the outset, as it rarely is with data, and we had to manually address various challenges. But we persevered and made it work.

**“ It felt like launching a startup, requiring us to build and run the organisation from the ground up. It was the most exhilarating ride of my life, and I never want to do it again.”**

Every day our Commander would stand in front of the press reading out numbers around testing and vaccination that were critical to the Covid response, and they were generated by my team.

It was a privilege to serve in this capacity. On a personal level this experience helped me clarify what I truly wanted from my career. I realised that my passion lay in giving back to the community.

#### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Firstly, in leadership, it's crucial to remember that we're only as successful as the people around us. As I've taken on leadership roles, my primary objective has been to empower my team to be

as effective as possible. I'm constantly on the hunt for good talent, not only from external sources but also within the organisation. Often, we overlook the hidden gems of talent within our own teams, they just need to be given an opportunity. For me recognition and nurture are key in enhancing productivity and maximising your team's potential.

Finally, have a sense of humour, it goes a long way to building resilience.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

One aspect that's been on my mind is the issue of trust in government - it's a multifaceted challenge with complex underlying factors.

When you look at the trends around trust in public institutions, they're declining. Over the last five years government has gone from a trusted entity to a not trusted one, which is surprising considering that as a country we did well during the pandemic. We took care of our people, and the damage was not as high when compared to other western nations.

My aspiration is to restore trust, not blindly, but in a way that promotes a functional democracy where citizens question and hold us accountable while having confidence in our intentions.



**My aspiration is to restore trust, not blindly, but in a way that promotes a functional democracy where citizens question and hold us accountable.**

- AMRITA BHATTACHARYYA



## KURT BRISSETT

A/Chief Technology & Innovation Officer - Customer Strategy and Technology  
Transport for NSW

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

When I was 15, I worked at Kmart where I stacked shelves. My first real job was at the age of 18 when I enlisted as an officer in the Australian Army. I went on to serve for 15 years, during which time I deployed on operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, UAE, Solomon Islands and Indonesia. I then went on to work in the private sector in a number of senior technology roles, prior to then working at Transport for NSW. As CTIO I have the privilege of leading a team that are truly invested in leveraging technology to improve transport services across NSW.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

It probably comes as no surprise, but self-discipline is something that I have grown up to value. It is synonymous with reliability and trustworthiness. The other things that I think is essential for success is being decisive, taking calculated risks and challenging the traditional ways of thinking and doing things. Keeping a positive outlook is also something that I try to maintain.

**“ Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo or be the first to do something. The public sector needs more trailblazers.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Increasingly our customers were saying that they wanted to access public transport using their credit or debit card or via their smart phone of watch, rather than using an Opal card (Opal cards are smartcard tickets used to pay for travel on public transport across the state). This was especially the case for infrequent travellers or tourists visiting New South Wales.

We partnered with our ticketing vendor, the financial services industry and engaged with our government colleagues from interstate to design a transit payments solution that met our customer's needs whilst managing regulatory, compliance and risk management considerations.

With contactless transport credit and debit card payment acceptance our adult passengers can now use their Visa, Amex or Mastercard to tap on and off our Opal network which extends across Bus, Ferry, Light Rail, Train and Metro services. Transport for NSW was the first jurisdiction in the Southern Hemisphere to introduce this solution, and 60% of all adults that use public transport in NSW are now using contactless payments.

My biggest lesson learned from this transformation is to never lose sight of the citizen outcome that you are trying to achieve. If it is a compelling, and

customer centric vision, then your stakeholders will get on-board and support you with the change implementation.

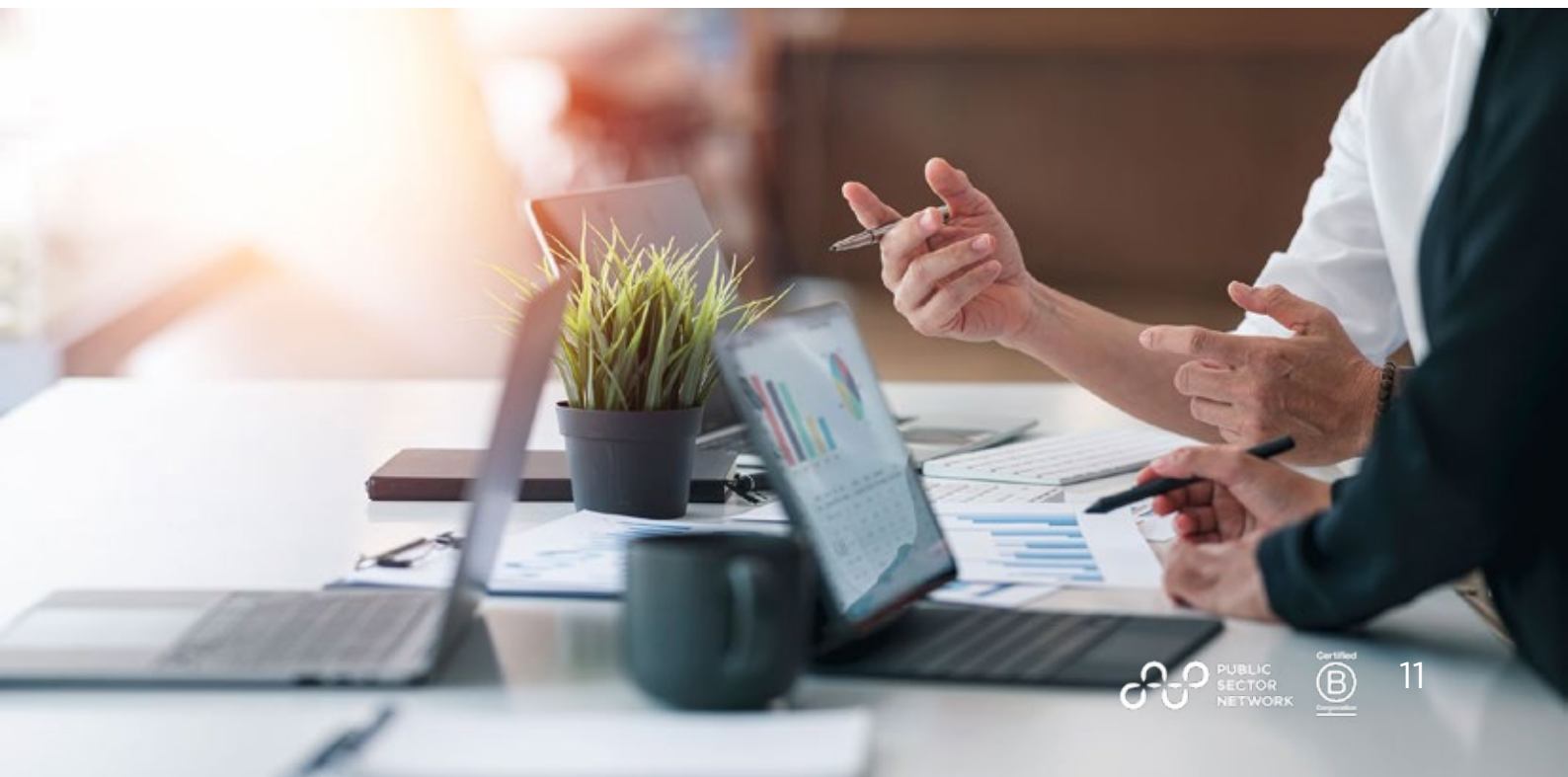
**“ [We] engaged with our government colleagues from interstate to design a transit payments solution that met our customer’s needs whilst managing regulatory, compliance and risk...”**

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Don't be afraid to challenge the status quo or be the first to do something. The public sector needs more trail blazers, as our customers are increasingly desiring products and solutions that are contemporary, citizen centric and accessible.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My greatest aspiration is that government is viewed as an employer of choice. There are amazing experiences to be had, fantastic and talented people to work with, and where you can make a real difference. No where else can you work on projects at the scale that we do, and where you have the opportunity to make a positive impact to people's lives.





## ELOISE BURGE

Product Manager

Department of Premier and Cabinet, South Australia

### BACKGROUND & CAREER JOURNEY

I began my career as a lawyer, driven by a passion for justice and equality. However, I soon realised that as a lawyer, I could only address issues after they'd already occurred. I yearned for a role where I could proactively prevent problems and create meaningful change. A pivotal moment occurred during my tenure as an Associate to a Victorian Supreme Court Judge when I was tasked with overseeing a pilot for the court's e-filing system. Despite having no prior experience in digital or transformation projects, I decided to take a unique approach. I engaged directly with the end-users, seeking their input and understanding their needs. This transformative experience opened my eyes to the power of leveraging technology and innovation to drive positive change.

I dedicated several years to working with digital agencies, particularly focusing on government services, to absorb as much knowledge as possible. It was during this period that I made the conscious choice to transition to the public sector. I saw it as a platform where I could leverage my legal background, coupled with my newfound expertise in digital transformation, to make a substantial and meaningful impact, shaping the future by preventing issues before

This journey allowed me to merge my legal advocacy and my passion for innovation, ultimately leading me to the Public Sector, where I believe I can drive transformative change that benefits all citizens.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Success, for me, is a team effort. I'm driven by my passion for empowering and supporting my teams. I consider my mission accomplished when my role becomes redundant, having empowered my teams to be confident, self-sufficient, and capable of leading and nurturing their own teams. I firmly believe in the "pay it forward" philosophy, where the knowledge, support, and opportunities I provide create a ripple effect of achievement within our community.

This approach to success, rooted in empowering and mentoring others, has been a guiding principle throughout my career, driving positive change within the Public Sector.

**“ I firmly believe in the “pay it forward” philosophy, where the knowledge, support, and opportunities I provide create a ripple effect of achievement within our community.”**

## PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

The project I'm most proud of is the South Australian government's One Stop Shop initiative. We faced a significant challenge due to the complex, fragmented nature of government services. Citizens often found it difficult to locate and access the services they needed, as they were unaware of which agency provided each service. Information was scattered, hard to decipher, and lacked consistency, given the varying look and feel of agency websites. Service delivery processes were disjointed, leading to limited transparency once a citizen initiated a service request. Finding a solution was crucial as it directly impacted the quality of services we provided and our ability to meet the ever-evolving needs of our community.

This initiative sets the stage for a digital ecosystem where citizens can confidently self-serve, interact with the South Australian government, and reduce the need for status updates. A significant lesson learned from this project is that we don't need to transform the entire service delivery process for each agency; our focus should be on enhancing the user experience on the front end. Extensive user testing, involving over 1,000 South Australians, has been integral, and we will continue these efforts to ensure our services align with their needs and expectations.

A crucial lesson learned from this project is that we don't need to transform the entire service delivery process for each agency. Rather, our

focus should be on making the citizen experience more accessible and user-friendly on the front end. We've also conducted extensive user testing with over 1,000 South Australians and plan to continue these efforts to ensure our services align with their needs and expectations.

## YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

My top tip is to remember that change doesn't have to be complicated, expensive, or solely reliant on digital innovations. Often, the most significant impact can come from the simplest of initiatives. Start by engaging directly with citizens and asking them what they need and desire. Involve your stakeholders and collaborate with the community in designing solutions that are not only usable but also feasible and viable. By putting people at the centre of the process and embracing a user-driven, collaborative approach, you can initiate transformative changes that truly matter.

**“ Change doesn't have to be complicated, expensive, or solely reliant on digital innovations... Start by engaging directly with citizens and asking them what they need and desire.”**

## YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

My greatest aspiration for government is to create a seamless and inclusive system where every individual is not only fully aware of their entitlement to services but can effortlessly access them, ensuring equitable access for all citizens.



## SIMON CLEVERLEY

Assistant Secretary - Digital Health Branch  
Australian Government Department of Health

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job was working as an outdoor educator where I developed a great passion for experiential learning and the impact of knowledge sharing to build life-long resilience. I continued to seek out roles in both the education and healthcare fields in a broad range of public policy and management disciplines.

Over the last 12 years I have worked for the Australian Public Service where my career has centred on progressing Australia's national health reform agenda which is where I have developed a passion for digital health policy. Digital health capabilities represent the single greatest opportunity we have in Australia to improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians. I joined the public service because I wanted to be a part of overcoming some of Australia's most complex social-policy challenges and I know I am privileged to have the opportunity to positively contribute to improving health outcomes on a national scale.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Always taking a people-first approach. I know that empowering people and building strong culture translates into long-term success. This has proven true no matter where I have worked and what role I have held. It is the key ingredient for success every time.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

When the Australian Government established the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce in 2022 to drive primary health care reform in Australia, my team was able to support the Taskforce by highlighting opportunities for harnessing the full potential of digital health capabilities to improve patient outcomes through a more connected Australian health care system.

Building on national projects implemented during the Covid-19 pandemic, including electronic prescribing, we were able to present short and long-term national digital health reforms required to increase the ability of Australian's to more actively participate in their health and wellbeing journey and ensure healthcare professionals can have a more joined up real-time view of their patient's health information at the point of care to provide better, safer and higher quality care.

In the 2023-24 Budget, the Australian Government responded to the recommendations in the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report by providing \$960 million in new digital health funding to modernise primary care and (1) better connect health data across all parts of Australia's health system by establishing a national healthcare data-sharing standards agenda, (2) modernise My Health Record by mandating the uploading of pathology and diagnostic imaging reports and

transition the My Health Record system from a pdf filing cabinet to a data-led platform, and (3) uplift clinical information systems to enable the establishment of new capabilities like electronic clinical decision support capabilities to assist Australia's health workforce.

**“ I am privileged to have the opportunity to positively contribute to improving health outcomes on a national scale.”**

I'll be honest, it has been a real challenge to develop and communicate an approach to such a significant national reform agenda that will ensure we get the best possible outcomes for all Australians and their health care team. I am really proud of my team for their sustained efforts to develop such a significant program of work. Over the next 2 years, we will work in close partnership with health care consumers, the Australian Digital Health Agency, states and territories, Australia's health software industry and other delivery partners to implement these initiatives. We

know that if we can implement these reforms as a part of a community, we will be able to strike the right balance to ensure we meet the needs of all Australians.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Build strong networks and relationships. I have found that having a really diverse network helps me to 'phone a friend' whenever I am not sure about what step I should take next. It's amazing how many times I have used my network to build a better picture of the problems I am trying to solve and get clarity over how to resolve them.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My greatest aspiration for government is that we harness this time of incredible opportunity to build and connect Australia's digital and data systems to enable all Australians to actively participate and make informed decisions about their care with the support of their care team.



# Global Perspectives

## TRUST

“

My aspiration is to restore trust, not blindly, but in a way that promotes a functional democracy where citizens question and hold us accountable while having confidence in our intentions.”

- Amrita Bhattacharyya



“

Trust comes into town on a tricycle and leaves in a Formula 1 Ferrari...Deliver what you promise as trust is hard-won, but easily lost. It's impossible to accurately value, yet fiscally devastating in the absence.”

- Michael Dart



“

Government needs to be genuinely trustworthy when it comes to people's information: that is, we have to be skilled and competent, keep our promises, always respect the people and their communities who are behind the information we hold.”

- Katrine Evans





## MICHAEL DART

Chief Customer Officer  
Energy Queensland

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first ever job was as a cook at a Kentucky Fried Chicken. I learned a lot in that job as a sixteen-year-old from a regional Queensland community. After achieving degrees in Environmental Science and Environmental Health I began work in the environment and health fields with Local Councils and the Local Government Association of Queensland (LGAQ). I then began a decade long career in the Queensland Government in a number of portfolio departments from Health to Environment and Treasury. I took my first role in the Public Service as I was given the opportunity to write laws for the Queensland Parliament to ban tobacco smoking in clubs and pubs, vehicles and public spaces, as well as an opportunity to be involved in policy for delivery of an Environmental Health program for First Nations Communities. Post my public service career I took a role in an Energy Government Owned Corporation (GoC) where I have worked for 14 years and am now the Chief Customer Officer for Energy Queensland which includes distribution network, retail and energy services business with an asset value of \$30B and 4 million customers and a footprint of 1.7 million square kilometres.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Self-Awareness. I always advocate doing work on yourself, to be your best self. Whether that

is through your own personal development, mentoring, study, reading or coaching to learn as much as you can about yourself. With that, then learn as much as you can about your peers, stakeholders and customers and you will always, armed with that knowledge, get a better outcome.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

With the war in Ukraine impacting energy prices and causing energy disruption combined with interest rate increases and inflation, there were significant impacts on customer bills. Our team in Energy Queensland worked with the Queensland Government Department of Energy and Public Works as well as Treasury to develop and deliver channels to customers to address cost of living relief. The Government provided a significant funding package, the largest of its kind, to assist all customers and businesses but particularly vulnerable customers. Our businesses were able to promote the rebate criteria and accessibility to ensure those that needed it most could automatically receive the benefits. In addition, we were able to amplify the benefits through promoting adjacent opportunities through tariff optimisation, energy efficiency tips, hardship relief and other services for customers. It was deliberately engaging activity for our people

**“ By working with other agencies with a common goal significant benefits can be delivered for our citizens that will have lasting benefits for them and their communities.”**

A significant financial benefit was provided to customers. The rebates provided bill relief of up to two years for some segments of vulnerable customers. There was stability in CSAT (Customer Satisfaction) score in a period when a significant drop would be expected. An additional 5000 customers in Regional Queensland took up the pensioner/health care card rebate. Debts were wiped for many customers. In the retail area of the business customers were also able to sign up for new tariffs and our Energy Analysis product to give them information on the best rates for them as well as information on their usage patterns and emissions profile. This sets our customers up for a sustainable energy future and opportunities for our business to provide additional products and services for our customers to meet the needs of the energy

transition under the Queensland Government's Queensland Energy and Jobs Plan (QEJP). There was also a 10% increase in the engagement scores for my division of around 800 staff over the period, putting the team into the ANZ Top Quartile for employee engagement.

By working with other agencies with a common goal significant benefits can be delivered for our citizens that will have lasting benefits for them and their communities.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

“Trust comes into town on a tricycle and leaves in a Formula 1 Ferrari.” It is critical to know your customers, make it easy and deliver value. Deliver what you promise as trust is hard-won, but easily lost. It's impossible to accurately value, yet fiscally devastating in the absence. It's the essential glue in social cohesion, but a potential morass for businesses and individuals.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

To lead citizens where diversity is truly valued and therefore deliver vibrant communities that imbeds trust in government and government services.



## MIKE DUDARENOK

Chief Information and Digital Officer  
NSW Education Standards Authority

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

While still in university, I joined Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) in a temporary capacity on a 6-8-week assignment, which ended up being a 15-year-long career, taking me from an accountant to running FCTG's Innovation Lab and FCTG was named one of the top 20 ASX most innovative companies and one of AFR BOSS Most Innovative Companies 2019.

During that time, I worked across almost all parts of the business. Jokingly, I used to introduce myself as someone who had done every job besides selling a ticket to the public.

The move to the public sector was deliberate – to use my skills and expertise for the betterment of the community and citizens. So far, my last five years have given me opportunity aplenty – from supporting gender equality to business during COVID to disadvantaged fine payers to teachers, schools, principals, and children.

“ I cherished the ability to be part of the solution, help my people be the most productive they can be, and drive the culture of delivering public good.”

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

**Don't allow meetings to run your day;** this usually doesn't give you time to be productive, thoughtful, innovative, and creative.

**Don't allow someone's lack of planning to become your (or your team's) emergency.** While it is OK occasionally, if this goes unchecked, the morale and culture suffer, leading to reduced performance in the mid-long term.

**Find your email and communication rhythm, then plan your day around it.** If doing emails first thing in the morning is your thing, block that time so you don't fall behind. If you prefer reading them on the couch at night, do that and use schedule sends so your recipients don't feel obliged to respond.

**Read and listen far and wide.** While it is tempting to only engage in the most interesting content, dabbling in the unfamiliar is a great way to extend your horizons and spark a thought.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

While we may want to wipe the Covid-19 years and lockdowns from our memories, these were the years when the Public Sector stepped up and delivered when asked. Several months into my role with Revenue NSW, a second lockdown was looming, and the New South Wales Government was looking at ways to support jobs and businesses.

Several programs progressed from an idea to a pilot program to support available to businesses quickly ([learn more about the NSW Government's Covid-19 support programs](#)). Being accountable for Revenue's Digital capability, I saw firsthand how multi-disciplinary teams came together across the government. People's creativity shone, and their innovative ways and persistence delivered results that kept the economy and state running. I cherished the ability to be part of the solution, help my people be the most productive they can be, and drive the culture of delivering public good.

Clear shared goals are critical to success, no matter how big the endeavour is. Clarifying 'why we do what we do' creates a shared team consciousness, the team's primary lens to validate all decisions, actions and inactions. The leader's job is to build a culture of shared consciousness and enable delivery without compromising the policy outcomes and quality.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Don't let your own biases limit who you recruit and promote. While public sector experience can be valuable, it should not be the core deciding factor or an essential criterion. The best teams bring people with different backgrounds and experiences and build a culture of trust, so ideas are challenged, hard conversations aren't avoided, and the status quo rarely becomes the outcome.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

Embracing the idea of becoming the most customer-centric government and continuing to challenge your teams, peers and public sector colleagues to focus on improving customer experience and reducing the digital divide



**While we may want to wipe the Covid-19 years and lockdowns from our memories, these were the years when the Public Sector stepped up and delivered.**

**- MIKE DUDARENOK**



## JODY GRIMA

Chief People Officer  
Department of Customer Service NSW

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I commenced my career as a social worker in Child Protection and Domestic Violence within NSW Family and Community Services. This firmly embedded in me a desire to improve services and work on transformational programs that put people at the centre of what we were trying to deliver. My roles following this were largely transformational, leading significant reform in service provision, including being one of the founding staff in the inception of Service NSW, where I was Executive Director of Service Delivery for several years, before becoming Chief People Officer for the NSW Department of Customer Service, a role I have been in for almost three years.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

**Continuous Learning** - It's important to stay curious and open-minded, be it through books, podcasts, courses, challenging conversations, and taking up opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills.

**Adaptability** - In our changing world it's critical to be flexible, open to change and to adapt to new circumstances, we have seen this more than ever over the past couple of years.

**Communication** - Listening and communicating is one of my key areas of focus as a leader - being

responsive to our people and customers is critical to success.

And of course...travel - which incorporates all of the above and keeps your mind open to new perspectives, experiences and cultures.

“ In our changing world it's critical to be flexible, open to change and to adapt to new circumstances.”

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Being involved in taking Service NSW from business case to establishment was a career highlight I am proud to have been a part of.

Previously, New South Wales citizens faced a fragmented and often frustrating experience when dealing with government services. Basic tasks, such as renewing a drivers licence, were difficult and required engaging via several unconnected channels. We wanted to transform this, and reimagine how our people interacted with government, creating a seamless experience which put 'customers' at the centre by giving them a one-stop-shop via a multi-channel experience.

Under strong leadership, Service NSW has continued to go from strength to strength. Regarded as a global leader in the delivery of government services, Service NSW now serves over 168.5M customers per year, has over 150 points of presence across NSW and maintains consistently high customer satisfaction rating above 97% across all channels, as well as strong employee engagement.

My biggest takeaway from this project is that to deliver success like that of Service NSW, it is absolutely critical that you bring your people along on the journey. By creating a service-led culture you will grow an engaged workforce that delivers exceptional experiences.

#### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Listen! Spend time with customers understanding pain points and accept these as their experience rather than challenging them. Spend time with your teams, get insights from frontline teams,

and staff across all levels and grades to understand the challenges they face and bring them along on the journey. Work to create a safe, diverse and inclusive workplace, where differences in background, perspective, and experience are valued and everyone can bring their true self to work.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

I'd like to see the continued development of a truly integrated and inclusive government, one where Departments and Agencies are connected, our customers only need to tell us once, and all parts of the communities we serve feel confident they are able to access the services we provide across all areas of government, with ease, comfort and care.



**Service NSW now serves over 168.5M customers per year... and maintains consistently high customer satisfaction rating above 97% across all channels.**

**- JODY GRIMA**



## GREG ITALIANO

Government Chief Information Officer  
Office of Digital Government, WA

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job was working for BHP Iron Ore in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. I started as a graduate working in Human Resources. I spent a number of years working in the private sector before commencing work in the public sector with the Western Australia Police.

I can't say that I had a clear plan to work in the public sector, circumstances played a part, but I certainly knew I was looking to do something more impactful with my career that contributed to the public good.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

There are some key personal habits that work for me. Being highly organised is important, being structured and efficient with my work. Talking directly and frequently with my work colleagues is another habit, you don't get the same insights and relationships any other way.

Another habit is that I am continually re-evaluating where I need to apply more attention and dive deeper in detail. It's impossible to be across everything as the same depth, so it's critical to have a good sense of where risk and opportunity is distributed in your operating environment.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Since the 1970s, Western Australia has been recognised as a leader in the use of linked data to identify trends and evaluate the impacts of government intervention and investment. The Office of Digital Government is growing this legacy and in August 2023 launched a powerful new whole-of-government linked data asset.

Called PeopleWA, the asset links 75 million unique person-level records to support sophisticated and comprehensive studies of whole populations in a way that protects individual privacy. Delivered under the Digital Strategy for the WA Government 2021-2025 and enabled by the WA Government's Digital Capability Fund, PeopleWA is the result of strong and ongoing collaboration led by the Office of Digital Government.

“ Shifting the focus of government use of technology and data from internal organisational functions to customer focused outcomes is the key.”

By streamlining the availability of quality data and analytics, PeopleWA supports research to develop a richer understanding of the impacts of government decisions, services and programs over time. The WA community will benefit from PeopleWA's capability to drive informed decision-making and improve service delivery by government and its partners.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

What matters to government should matter most to you and that is having a positive impact on citizens. Teams that can see and feel their impact are typically high performing teams. Shifting the focus of government use of technology and data from internal organisational functions to customer focused outcomes is the key.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

My aspiration is that government is trusted so that we are able to provide the most convenient, safe and secure services to the communities we serve.





## LEAH KELLY

Deputy Director-General, Infrastructure and Regional Strategy  
**Department of State Development, Infrastructure, Local Government and Planning**

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job was working at a car auction during holidays to make money to study and travel. I was studying at UQ and then started my career as a graduate with Queensland Treasury. I had a choice between a banking job and Queensland Treasury, and the rotation program offered by government was what decided it for me. The public service provides amazing opportunities to work on projects that impact communities and where you can really get involved and shape outcomes. I left the public sector for a while, but major opportunities in infrastructure delivery over the next decade drew me back.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Self I focus hard when I'm at work but try not to take myself too seriously. When opportunities come up, I say yes, even if that little voice tells me I may not be ready. I make time for things I love outside of work - family time and stuff just for me. I don't beat myself up over the things I can't do well right now (I'm a terrible cook and outsource jobs around home where I can). I like to read widely and use time in the car to listen to books and podcasts.

My biggest one is that if something is not working for me, I change it - life is too short not to be happy. I try to look for the good in things (or at least the funny).

“ To provide opportunity and prosperity - my aspiration would be to have a greater level of trust from the community, social licence for the change that is needed in the coming years and to implement policy that makes things a bit easier for people and their families.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Probably not a single project that I'm most proud of but successful outcomes achieved on many of them- I've been involved in a range of projects that are high profile, high impact or stuck and need a change in approach to move forward - this has been in the infrastructure space - planning, procurement or delivery or managing programs.

My biggest takeaway from all the projects I've been involved with is to seek advice, use your networks and surround yourself with smart people. Share information and breakdown silos. It's critical to keep an eye on the end goal or outcomes needed and make the decisions necessary to get there.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Remember the end goal when it seems like the minutiae is taking over, make decisions that are either brave or pragmatic as the situation requires – what we do impacts real people, and we need to remember that at all times. Also, learn how to write briefs that are short and have impact!

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

To provide opportunity and prosperity – my aspiration would be to have a greater level of trust from the community, social licence for the change that is needed in the coming years and to implement policy that makes things a bit easier for people and their families.





## KATHRINA LO

Commissioner  
NSW Public Service Commission

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

When I was 16 years old, I worked as a school cleaner to earn money to attend a youth camp in New Zealand.

I am a career public servant. When I was still at law school, I made a deliberate decision to join the public service because I wanted to do work that is in the public interest. I have never regretted the decision to join the public service. The work we do is purposeful, interesting, challenging and impactful. What we do makes a real difference to people's lives.

During my public service career, I have had the opportunity to work in a wide range of roles - from legal, policy and strategy to regulatory, service delivery and at integrity agencies.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

- I am an early riser, so I get across the media stories first thing in the morning.
- I am in the 'inbox zero' camp when it comes to dealing with emails. I am ruthless about promptly responding to, delegating, filing or deleting emails.
- I turn briefs around within 24 hours. The only exceptions are briefs dealing with very complex matters or lengthy reports.
- I build my 'to do' list into my calendar.

“ I have never regretted the decision to join the public service.

The work we do is purposeful, interesting, challenging and impactful”

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I am proud of our work to improve career opportunities for First Nations peoples in the New South Wales (NSW) public sector. This includes internships, leadership development programs, and facilitating networking. Lifting cultural capability of the sector through training programs is also crucial.

The sector has over 430,000 employees and First Nations people have been disproportionately represented in certain types of roles and at lower grades. Across the community, we see poorer socio-economic outcomes for First Nations people, including over representation in the criminal justice and child protection systems.

Since 2014, the NSW public sector has exceeded targets and achieved 170% growth in senior leadership roles held by First Nations people. Since 2014, nearly 450 First Nations emerging leaders

have graduated from our Leadership Academy. In 2022, 3.8% of our workforce identified as

Indigenous, a 2.9% increase from the 2014 baseline. Indigenous people comprise 3.4% of the NSW population.

The success of our programs hinges on partnerships and co-designing solutions with First Nations people, as well as a combined effort throughout the sector.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Combine data, evidence and research with the lived experience of those involved, whether that be our own teams or the citizens we serve.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Given the remit of my role, I would like the public sector workforce in NSW to reflect the diversity of the community we serve. This will enable us to better understand and meet the needs of the community, and in turn design and deliver high-quality services that result in improved outcomes.



**Since 2014, the NSW public sector has exceeded targets and achieved 170% growth in senior leadership roles held by First Nations people.**

**- KATHRINA LO**



## REBECCA MCKENZIE

Chief Executive Officer  
Glen Eira City Council

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY


Long before leading a Victorian council, I grew up in Queensland and worked as a dental nurse as my first job. I wanted to further my studies and go to university, so I took an opportunity to join the Queensland Public Service as a clerk and they sponsored me to do my studies part-time. I entered human resource management – which was my profession before becoming a CEO – where I picked up a very transferable skillset.

I've been very fortunate and had a diverse career since, working in three countries and three different sectors. The theme throughout my career has been public purpose – I'm passionate about working with and leading organisations who do good for the communities they serve.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I'm strongly guided by my values. I invest in relationships, follow through on my commitments, and take time to connect with people. To me, that's what being an authentic leader is all about. I learned some time ago not to sweat the small stuff and focus on the big picture. As a senior leader, you set the tone that cascades through the entire organisation. Because I'm driven by public purpose, I have always worked to create an environment where everyone can achieve their best. This means making sure that

people feel safe, supported and encouraged. It also means they see and understand the link between the work they do and the organisation's purpose and objectives.

 Because I'm driven by public purpose, I have always worked to create an environment where everyone can achieve their best. This means making sure that people feel safe, supported and encouraged.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Without a doubt, one of our most transformative projects in recent years has been the introduction of our new digital workspace, which we call Gecko. Before we introduced Gecko, our intranet was what I suspect many local governments' intranets are – static, out-of-date, convoluted and seldom visited.

It's absolutely transformed how we interact with each other in the hybrid workplace – with news, information, and handy resources producing a 1,220 per cent increase in mobile use and 214 per cent increase in engagement. We did this by turning our old intranet into a new, SharePoint-based system through a long-term transformation project that involved staff at all levels from across the organisation.

**“ People want to do more than just come to work – they want to connect to each other and to their organisation. If you give them the modern and accessible tools to do so, they’ll take it and run with it.”**

We’ve also seen three award nominations internally and within the wider tech universe, including earning the highly coveted ‘Highly commended’ at the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) Tech Awards.

In today’s hybrid workplace, having genuinely transformative digital tools is essential – and that’s exactly what we’ve put in place. My biggest takeaway was that people want to do more than just come to work – they want to connect to each other and to their organisation. If you give them the modern and accessible tools to do so, they’ll take it and run with it.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Driving change is all about being agile. You can’t wait for everything to be perfect, or you will become constrained by trying to have everyone on board before you move forward. My approach has always been to find and work with early adopters and use that momentum to bring others along on the journey. Some may never come on the journey, so I’ve tried to support them to change course instead. For the most part, it has been a successful strategy.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

I believe that in local government, we can break down barriers between sectors to focus on better community and citizen outcomes rather than working in siloes, competing or blaming each other.



**Driving change is all about being agile. You can’t wait for everything to be perfect, or you will become constrained by trying to have everyone on board before you move forward.**

- REBECCA MCKENZIE

# Global Perspectives

## CULTURE

“

[The] culture and people of any organisation are key to success... My top tip for government professionals is that any organisation can do great things when you put people first.”

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- Tom Willner



“

We need to embrace a culture of continuous improvement to regularly assess and refine processes based on feedback and changing needs of our people.”

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- Purna Mahajan



“

To have a thriving and resilient culture employees need... encouragement and acknowledgment from their leader for doing a fantastic job, and they need to know WHY they do what they do.”

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- Rick Offenbecher





## LUCY POOLE

General Manager Digital Strategy,  
Architecture and Discovery  
Digital Transformation Agency

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first 'proper' job was as a graduate at the Australian Bureau of Statistics in their Brisbane office. At the time, I had no real concept of what it was to be a public servant - like many graduates looking for their next challenge, I played the numbers game. I applied for as many programs as possible and hoped that something would stick! I couldn't have asked for a better grounding in public administration. Contributing to the strategic direction being set by the Canberra office meant finding a strong, evidence-based voice.

I have very fond memories of my first graduate project, which was to review the effectiveness/usefulness of the copper price index. This involved measuring the price movements of copper used in electrical equipment. This meant many on-site visits, wearing hard hats, to understand the how copper was used in power transformers. It was a real education.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I'm determined and hardworking, but I learnt long ago the value of surrounding myself with more intelligent and capable people, who bring the best out of me and fuel me to do and be better.

One of the most important things for me is being someone who others want to work with. Work

(either at the office or virtual) should be a place where people feel safe and accepted for who they are. This means I prioritise understanding my colleagues and building relationships, seeking out their opinions, and sharing good humour.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

ChatGPT captured the public's attention and demonstrated, on a global stage, what artificial intelligence (AI) can do now. More importantly, it also captured the world's imagination of where AI could go and demonstrated the potential of AI to dramatically transform the way we live and work.

**“ We put forward a case for the creation of a cross-agency taskforce to help put government on the right track to safely and responsibly harness the opportunities of AI.**

The potential in government is just as great, but there are also challenges in the use of AI including around accuracy, privacy, bias in data, transparency and accountability in decision-making.

To respond to this urgent challenge, we put forward a case for the creation of a cross-agency

taskforce to help put government on the right track to safely and responsibly harness the opportunities of AI. We are leading this with the Department of Industry, Science and Resources and are consulting widely across government while also drawing on industry and public views.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Three tips: (1) spend time working out your personal motivations for driving change - this is important for when the going gets tough and you feel like giving up, (2) define your journey's milestones - this is important for measuring your progress and importantly, celebrating successes, and (3) build a trusted, diverse and honest network of people to support you - you don't need to go it alone!

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

To continue building a workforce of highly talented people with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences, with the confidence to experiment with and apply emerging technologies to the most important and wicked problems of our generation, including climate change and transition to renewable energies





## JANE STROUD

Chief Executive Officer  
Kiama Municipal Council

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I joined local government in my 20s as a town planner at a Council in Queensland on the Sunshine Coast. Over time, I have held a variety of management and senior roles, from community and customer services, strategy, development assessment and innovation. A few years ago, keen to expand my knowledge beyond Queensland and learn what other state's approaches were, I pursued an opportunity to become Kiama Municipal Council's CEO, re-settling my young family on the NSW South Coast. I joined the public sector because I believe that being part of the government system you can affect real change in the lives of communities.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Work hard, engage with employees and community regularly - being genuine in every interaction. Really listen to folks, welcome dissent and diversity of views, sometimes it's in the collision of ideas that you find the solutions. Most importantly, embrace change and be personally resilient. As a leader your responses to change, hardship or success are the yard stick for workplace reactions and acceptance.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Kiama Council has been undertaking a process to divest of its aged care business, Blue Haven, for the past 18 months. We are the largest local government owner/operator of aged care in New South Wales and this investment has pushed our organisation beyond its financial capabilities without a sufficient return on investment. This process has been a long and challenging journey, involving much community consultation, reclassification of land and intense scrutiny into councils' finances, asset management and purpose.

“ A key feature of this work has been engaging the community and sharing the uncomfortable truth with them.”

Without radical and profound change, coupled with strong decision making and leadership, the organisation and local democratic system would have collapsed, resulting in administration.

The staff worked with urgency to address this situation, divesting assets and concentrating on cash flow, liquidity and savings. Working closely with our financial lenders, the State Government and key stakeholders we were able to navigate the situation successfully.

A key feature of this work has been engaging the community and sharing the uncomfortable truth with them, key to this was the creation of a local citizen expert panel called the Finance Advisory Group. They have worked with us every step of the way, giving local expertise and advice to Councillors and helping get the real facts out there. Sometimes, transforming public sector organisations might be driven by historical financial reasons, but creating the new future of Kiama Municipal Council is exciting new task ahead.

#### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Become part of the system, your ability to influence from within far exceeds what you can outside. Remain open and communicate often and remember you don't need to do it all yourself. Collaboration and trust will get you further than you can go alone

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

That commitment to public service drives every level of government's decision making, we work for the people of Australia, because we are part of the people.



**Really listen to folks, welcome dissent and diversity of views, sometimes it's in the collision of ideas that you find the solutions.**

**- JANE STROUD**



## JONATHON THORPE

Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
- Service Delivery Excellence  
Services Australia

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first ever job was in a regional bike shop which taught me important foundations such as customer experience and service, which I still apply today. Of interest, some of my former bike colleagues are now successful business leaders across the county.

I joined the public sector in a junior role with the Australian Taxation Office and was attracted to the technology delivery, design and innovation space before moving to the Digital Transformation Agency to lead the Digital Identity program. More recently I joined Services Australia and have been promoted to Deputy CEO, Service Delivery Excellence. All my roles have been centred around delivering and improving customer service.

**“ Not every innovation is a million-dollar transformational investment, sometimes it’s just about helping teams be better.”**

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

My personal habits for success have been finding a healthy work life balance. For me, it’s really important to respect the time spent with my family and stay fit. I love squash and I find smashing that ball a great stress management

tool. I also love to get out on my motorbike, which allows me to focus and minimise distractions. I call it mindfulness, but my wife disagrees.

At Services Australia we support millions of Australians, many who are experiencing challenging times in their lives, and this resonates with me, which is why I’m here. However, this comes with significant responsibility, particularly in senior roles, so it’s essential to find alignment with personal values and the organisation’s purpose and mission. Aligning these three elements has helped me advance my career, drive innovation and manage the level of responsibility that goes with my role.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU’RE MOST PROUD OF?

The ability to prove who you are is a fundamental human right, allowing people to participate in society and access essential services. In 2018 I started working at the Digital Transformation Agency on a draft policy and prototype called Digital ID.

Digital ID aimed to introduce a whole of economy system where Australians would be able to prove their identity entirely online, with the potential to unlock \$10 billion per annum in economic benefits while also improving privacy and minimising the impacts of data breaches. Within four years, supported by an amazing team across

government and industry, we turned Digital ID from a prototype into a whole of economy digital identity solution that works for all levels of government and the private sector.

This was made possible by focusing on human centred design and building partnerships across the whole economy. We wouldn't have had major financial organisations and other entities such as Australia Post coming to be accredited if they didn't see value and weren't engaged in design of policy.

**“ Digital ID ... [has] the potential to unlock \$10 billion per annum in economic benefits while also improving privacy and minimising the impacts of data breaches.”**

My biggest takeaway from this program was the need to establish strong partnerships, apply a systems-thinking view and ensure the delivery is aligned to solving genuine user needs.

At Services Australia I'm continuing to look at opportunities to improve the experience of all our customers which includes digital identity, however it's how we continue to create a connected service experience. This includes the transformation of the agency's service

centres, improving our approach to customer service through service design and innovation so payments and services are designed to ensure no one is left behind.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

If you're in the design or innovation space, the best way to drive change and deliver outcomes for people, businesses and government is to understand the broader system that you operate within. This includes the ability to understand the government's priorities, agency pressures and constraints, the economic conditions and look for opportunities that contextualise the situation, and deliver on user needs, whether they be customers or internal stakeholders.

Innovation can also mean different things to different people. Not every innovation is a million-dollar transformational investment, sometimes it's just about helping teams be better. The most important aspect for gaining traction is aligning innovation and design practices to actual real problems. If you can't apply your craft to the organisation or the context you're operating within you're not going to succeed.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

To deliver on connected and seamless whole of government service delivery.

We're not there yet, but I'm up for the challenge.



# CANADA



## JOCELYN BAKER

Acting Public Service Commissioner & Assistant  
Deputy Minister, HR Operations  
Government of Manitoba

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

If we skip past the teaching piano lessons, swimming instructor, lifeguard and baby-sitting of my youth, and jump forward to my first job out of university, I worked for a crown corporation helping farmers learn and manage their woodlots; I then moved into a public service role as a forester.

Since then, my career in the public sector has always been people focused. Whether it was in Indigenous forestry economic development; leading the development of policy for conservation, environment and sustainable develop, leading legislation development or Indigenous consultation and land use planning, my focus has always been on the people. The people I lead and the people I serve. I believe in public service. So, it was not surprising that my career in public service shifted to working within the Public Service Commission ensuring we have an ethical and effective public service to meet the needs of the people of our province of Manitoba.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

To be successful in the public service can take many forms but you will never go wrong by valuing the diversity around you; listening to the ideas of others; being open to seeing situations or challenges from different perspectives;

working collaboratively will always give you more robust outcomes. And I try to do this daily while modelling kindness. You will never go wrong by being kind.

**“ You will never go wrong by valuing the diversity around you; listening to the ideas of others; being open to seeing situations or challenges from different perspectives.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

It is difficult to choose a project I am most proud of as there have been many. An honourable mention would be a land use planning project that I led covering over 5 million hectares of land involving multiple First Nations communities and many government departments. It created a tool for use in planning economic development and protected spaces in the years that followed.

I'm also proud of our work as a public service in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic. We had to shift many of our approximately 12,000 employees to working remotely if they could for the safety of them and all the Manitobans they would normally interact with in person. We had to overcome hardware and software challenges, expanding VPN

capacity which involved key support from other departments.

Adding to this we also had to ensure we had effective policies and guidelines for our employees for working in this new hybrid environment - allowing us to road-test and put our new Flexible Work Arrangements policy into practice.

We were able to successfully navigate the pandemic state while continuing to provide services to citizens. We have now updated and modified our attendance reporting so that we have metrics now for the number of employees working remotely part of the time.

My biggest lesson learned from this is that the public service is counted on by the citizens it serves to be there in the worst of times. As a public service we need to be able to pivot to meet the needs of our citizens whenever we are called upon to do so.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

If something doesn't work out, don't give up; try again. Sometimes it is all about timing; not that the idea is bad. I believe in continuous improvement which allows me to live in a world where everything has the possibility for improvement so when something changes, I am able to embrace that to provide better results for my team or our clients.

At the same time, it's important not to be tied exclusively to that idea as there could be something that makes it even better.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

I always want the government to be able to provide the services that the citizens need when they need them, but currently my greatest aspiration for government is to follow through on our commitments to indigenous reconciliation through meaningful action.





## DAFNA CARR

Associate Deputy Minister  
ServiceOntario

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first-ever job was a paper route, and after that I worked in retail. My first “all grown up” job was at the Canadian Anaesthesiologist Society. It helped me recognise that I wanted to make an impact in the healthcare sector. Since then, I’ve focused my work on quality improvement and modernisation. I spent 25 years in the broader public sector, but I knew that I could make the biggest difference working in the Ontario Public Service. Making a difference for Ontarians is why I do what I do.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I make sure I take care of my mental health through exercise, some meditation, and getting outside as much as possible (walking the dog is a great way to accomplish all of those things). I also strive to stay calm, avoid jumping to conclusions, and assume the best in people. Overall, I try to contribute positively by being a good member of society.

**“Persistence goes a long way in driving lasting change.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU’RE MOST PROUD OF?

As the ‘front door to government,’ ServiceOntario serves 15 million people and businesses who live and work across an area of more than 1 million square kilometres. Over the last few years, ServiceOntario – as part of the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery – has implemented so many simpler, faster and better ways to connect people and businesses to the services and information they need.

For instance, businesses can directly access more than 90 government business services online -- anytime, anyplace. We’ve launched self-serve online vehicle registration for car dealerships and online marriage licence registration. People can save time by booking an appointment at 141 of our service centres, while eligible Ontarians can choose to book a virtual appointment to renew their Health Cards conveniently from home. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg.

It’s tempting to think that making more services available online is all you need to do to meet customers’ needs these days, but I’ve learned there is no one-size-fits-all approach to good customer service.

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is seeing how our work with communities helps to build trust in government because we're co-designing the services they depend on. Collaboration and community engagement lead to better customer experiences and outcomes.

**“ [Working] with communities helps to build trust in government because we're co-designing the services they depend on. Collaboration and community engagement lead to better customer experiences and outcomes.”**

That's why we are developing and testing new and adaptable service delivery models that enhance the customer experience and respond to communities' unique needs. For instance, the North Shore Tribal Council recently launched its first-ever Indigenous-led ServiceOntario, operating a service centre in the Council headquarters in Cutler, Ontario, along with a mobile service unit operating within the Robinson-Huron Treaty area.

As a result of this partnership, families and businesses can conveniently access the services they need – right in their community. This closes service gaps, saves people time and money commuting across long distances, and strengthens community presence – something we know many Ontarians value. The feedback we've received from our partners has been incredible and we're excited to continue learning from and building on this successful model.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Persistence goes a long way in driving lasting change. It's easy to have great ideas, but much more difficult to bring about long-term commitment. You have to actively create the conditions for follow up, collaboration, accountability and delivery.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

Government, especially in this day and age, represents the hopes, dreams and values of a society – it should strive to understand and deliver on those ambitions.





## NATASHA CLARKE

Deputy Minister  
Nova Scotia Department of Cyber Security  
& Digital Solutions

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first professional job was as a Business Analyst with a local IT firm in Halifax, Nova Scotia. As a consultant, I found myself working mostly with public sector clients and found the work very interesting. I was helping to solve problems that were helping my community and was helping organisations to understand what it meant to put people at the centre of their delivery.

When the opportunity to join the public sector presented itself, I was eager to join the team. At the time, I was a new mom and was looking for that work-life-balance. In those early days I was focused on delivering services to businesses and it was transformation based, which was a space I was comfortable in.

However, once I got here, I was surprised at how much I didn't know about how government operates - I had much to learn. This new career path gave me the opportunity to leverage my skills and experiences and be part of a bigger mission. I really enjoyed the accountability and shaping broader ideas and strategies for government.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

First it is about people and relationships - they are foundational and core to success. Having empathy, understanding and compassion when

working in partnerships and leading others. You will accomplish so much more with an empowered team, than going at it alone.

Being very focused on delivery and action, making a difference is a core value of mine.

Finally, understanding how to take care of yourself - you need to establish your boundaries and stay true to your values.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

One thing that stands out for me, is how my Department has supported government's response to recent unforeseen and unplanned events and crisis. In the past year, Nova Scotia has been hit by unprecedented wildfires, flooding, and hurricanes, in addition to the pandemic.

The main challenge with these events was the vast number of government departments and partners that were involved with each response plan. It required horizontal collaboration across government at an extremely accelerated pace, to ensure we could respond to these events within days rather than weeks, to provide Nova Scotians with the information and supports they needed, when they needed them.

**“ In September of 2022, Hurricane Fiona made landfall in Nova Scotia. In response, government announced multiple relief programs... and by Wednesday, two of the services were already available online. That’s a 48-hour turnaround.”**

One example I can share is related to a hurricane relief program. In September of 2022, Hurricane Fiona made landfall in Nova Scotia and the devastation was widespread across the Province. In response, government announced multiple relief programs on the Monday afternoon following the storm and by Wednesday, two of the services were already available online. That’s a 48-hour turnaround. Importantly financial supports were ready when people needed them.

My biggest take away is that the public service rallies and comes together in a crisis and it is incredible. Now we are applying these

approaches and ways of working into our daily work lives. We are putting people at the centre and leveraging an agile and iterative approach to new and existing challenges to make incremental changes that will provide Nova Scotians with the solutions and services they need in a way they expect today.

#### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Find your people, start small and just get started.

Stay focused on the people that will use your services – citizens or internal to government. Be in their context and understand their needs. Prototype, test with your users, implement feedback and repeat, until you know it works.

It’s about building agile and responsive services, so you can continue to meet evolving user needs.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Be relentlessly focused on the people that you serve, to make a difference in their lives.



**We are putting people at the centre and leveraging an agile and iterative approach to new and existing challenges to make incremental changes.**

**- NATASHA CLARKE**



## ALEXANDER COLEMAN

Assistant Deputy Minister & CIO - Children, Youth and Social Services I&T Cluster

Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, Ontario

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I'm a trained design architect and started my professional career journey as an architect, designing and constructing buildings. I then transitioned into technology and have found the balance between the science of management with the art of leadership, organisational culture and innovation.

Since then, I have been blessed with a career spanning 25 years across public, private, and international sectors, including healthcare consulting, insurance and finance.

**“ In our Ministry... we're responsible for over a million of the most vulnerable Ontarians... My mission is to leverage technology to make a meaningful difference in the lives of these individuals.”**

Joining the Ontario Public Service was a deliberate choice; it satisfied the deep-seated common thread, the “WHY” behind all my career choices. I have always been driven to make a difference in the lives of the underprivileged throughout my career in consulting, province-wide, state-wide and in international sectors.

In our Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services we're responsible for over a million of the most vulnerable Ontarians, and by extension

a majority of the Ontarians. Our portfolio includes social assistance, child welfare, developmental services, youth justice and others. My mission is to leverage technology to make a meaningful difference in the lives of these individuals and in the short time I have been here, it's amazing to see the difference we have already made.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I believe in the power of preparation because preparation always meets opportunity. This means you must spend time preparing for whatever opportunity is ahead. I prepare on multiple fronts: leadership, technical skills, emotional intelligence, on anything I need to make me the kind of leader and person that I need to be, and I am always primed for the next opportunity.

This readiness also extends to punctuality, having a well-structured agenda, and maintaining discipline. These values have been constant throughout my journey, ensuring I'm always prepared to make a positive impact.

The other important habits are having a vision, confidence to execute the vision and overcome any hindrances, and always building relationships. I always have a vision in seven areas in life, namely my faith, family, friends, food, finances, Fitness and Fun. In every period of growth, there is bound to be some discomfort. Growth and discomfort should be expected, and that's okay. Secondly its

critical to have the confidence to execute and deliver on your vision. Find ways to personally encourage yourself and surround yourself with people who will encourage you.

Lastly, most things in life happen through relationships. Cultivate relationships with everyone you meet if possible and especially with people from different cultures, interests and professions. This makes you a better person, enables continuous learning and cultivates a leadership mindset. Public sector project you're most proud of?

### **PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?**

The pandemic gave us a unique chance to change the way we help the most vulnerable people in Ontario. Before that, picture this: people had to line up at an office for their cheques or deposits, often having to travel long distances, which was a huge burden. Sometimes, they'd even sleep outside the office overnight because they had to rush back to their jobs. Meeting their caseworker meant a lot of effort, and everything involved loads of paperwork and multiple meetings.

But when the pandemic hit, we went all-in on tech to take these services online, and the results have been amazing.

Now, no more waiting in long lines. We've got a fully digital online system. People can apply for services online, and when approved, see their info online, and exchange messages with their caseworker through secure messaging. The customers can even send and receive documents using document imaging and it's accessible anywhere from any device.

**“ Over 15 million documents have been digitised, saving an unbelievable amount of paper. We're talking the height of Toronto's CN Tower levels of paper saved.”**

Plus, we've made sure financial support gets directly deposited into bank accounts, complete with a debit card. This change maintains peoples' dignity, allowing them to shop without anyone knowing their situation or having those using

this service feel in any way different or less than their peers. It's had a tremendous impact on their mental health and self-esteem.

This transformation is one of our most significant achievements to date. Over 4.6 million messages and counting have been exchanged between clients and caseworkers and an over 15 million documents have been digitised, saving an unbelievable amount of paper. We're talking the height of Toronto's CN Tower (that's 553 metres or 1820 feet) levels of paper saved.

This is just one example of how tech can change lives, especially for those who need it most. It's about more than just finances; it's about improving mental well-being and giving them hope.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

I think it's important to have empathy and compassion for the people you're serving. Empathy means; 'I'm here, I'm here with you.' Compassion is; 'what can I do to help?' Compassion drives action and ensures a focus on making lives better. Keeping this mindset drives better outcomes for both your teams and citizens.

The second tip I have is to empower your teams by hiring skilled individuals and giving them space. As a leader, embody the role of 'Chief Encourager' and motivate your teams to exceed their own expectations. Provide the necessary guardrails but let them innovate and improve the work. Leadership with both heart and head, valuing people and applying knowledge, creates an environment where everyone can excel and become who they were created to be. Together, with the right motives and knowledge, you can make a lasting difference.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My aspiration is to be able to provide the best possible service to everyone in Canada, irrespective of their tech proficiency, vulnerability, age, income or any other factors. Inclusivity is key in providing digital government services that cater to the entire citizen cohort, ensuring accessibility and equality for all..



## MATT DAVIES

Chief Technology Officer  
Shared Services Canada

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job ever was delivering the Ottawa Journal newspaper. It taught me a lot about the importance of timely and quality delivery on products – something that I now use daily in my career.

My professional career started in the private sector. This was until recently, when I joined Shared Services Canada (SSC) in 2020 during the Covid pandemic. I joined SSC because the opportunity sounded both interesting and challenging given that SSC provides the infrastructure for a large number of Government of Canada departments. It also provided me with a new experience working for the public sector and to see how I could help to transform the everchanging technology that is used on a day-to-day basis.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

My personal habits for success start with having a positive and optimistic attitude, a commitment to continuous learning, being adaptable, and the recognition that you need to surround yourself with talented people.

There is also something to be said about the importance of understanding and reviewing your priorities and then focusing on the most important ones.

I have also learned that it is incredibly beneficial to allow yourself some ‘time to think’ and reflect on what is going on. This gives me the opportunity for some self-reflection and also time to review and adjust my priorities.

My final comment – look for people that can help you! I’ve been incredibly fortunate since joining SSC that so many people have reached out to help me. I’m truly grateful for the advice and guidance I’ve received.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU’RE MOST PROUD OF?

One of the greatest challenges I faced when joining SSC was the incredible volume of activities and priorities for our branch. It was incredibly challenging to determine how best to prioritise amongst the many competing activities. This led to us changing the way we prioritised our work by implementing an Objectives Key Result (OKR) pilot program for our Chief Technology Officer Branch.

Each area reviewed all their work activities and needed to decide on one key priority. That’s how we started: each area had to identify one ‘no-fail’ objective and the associated key results to focus on for the upcoming year. It was important for that objective to have a significant impact for our client(s) and that we could identify the key results including the metrics to measure success. We needed to ensure that we had a plan on how

we would be able to deliver within the year. The overarching intent of the pilot was to create shared focus and alignment for our team.

**“ That’s how we started: each area had to identify one ‘no-fail’ objective and the associated key results to focus on for the upcoming year.”**

It is important to mention that we had limited experience implementing an OKR program in a public sector environment. As a result, the first step was to provide the right training and support for the team to get started on the right path.

This pilot OKR program proved to be incredibly successful. A great example was our OKR to implement a new Government of Canada Application Platform as a Service (GCaPaaS) solution, whereby working with one partner department, we were able to consolidate many different departments onto a single shared platform that can be used by many departments.

The benefits of the GCaPaaS were grouped by three areas, which helped us in understanding how this service will aid our clients. Our objectives included; delivering a modernised, standardised GC application platform, simplifying and integrating the delivery of common GC applications in the SSC cloud platform, and increasing efficiency and decreasing our operational costs.

In the end, it helps to create focus within our branch and more importantly, to deliver on some key objectives that would help our partner departments.

#### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Focus on talent! You need to be continually attracting, developing and retaining talent since nothing is possible without recognising that you need employee engagement and commitment to make a difference. You also need to provide an environment that allows your team to learn, embrace, and implement new and innovative solutions that leverage technology.

**“ You need employee engagement and commitment to make a difference.”**

Encourage your teams to focus on continuous improvement and business outcomes! Collective team effort is required to drive both innovation and change.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

A strong focus on culture and talent is imperative. We need to create a culture of innovation with a focus on improving ‘user experiences.’ We need to collectively work together to create an environment that embraces diversity to achieve better outcomes for all stakeholders.



## MANDEEP FLORA

Director Data Strategy and Solutions Platform  
Ontario Ministry of Children,  
Community and Social Services

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I knew I wanted to work in public service as far back as I can remember, as I was involved in community building growing up in a diverse Toronto neighbourhood at a very young age. I entered government through a public policy practicum program at university, with an interest in health and social services policy design and delivery, but began at the Ontario Ministry of Transportation.

I've worked on large, transformative transportation projects and social program redesign over the years, leading to being asked to drive a data and analytics agenda for public sector at the Ontario Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, which is where I've spent the last eight years.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Being curious and taking the time to continuously learn with respect to data and analytics practices and technologies is more important now, more than ever. So much has changed in the last decade and the rate of change is also accelerating, particularly in the ability for government to keep up, upskill and onboard to new data practices.

**“Curiosity, as an inherent trait, is essential if we want government to keep up with modern data and analytics practices.”**

For example, in the time that it's taken us to understand why we need to move beyond the traditional enterprise data warehouse approaches of the last few decades into new approaches that leverage data lakes to that we can use increasing amounts of raw data from a growing number of sources, we've already evolving again with concepts of data fabric and data mesh, to say nothing of how Generative AI beginning to disrupt our thinking altogether. Curiosity, as an inherent trait, is essential if we want government to keep up with modern data and analytics practices.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

We've transformed how we work across a number of legislative, business practice and technology streams over the last few years, but I'm particularly proud of the efforts we took to design new data infrastructure in cloud - in order to meet the mandate of a new social services data platform where we're ingesting and consolidating government data at scale to get more timely, accurate data out to users quickly.

**“ We had to prove it every step of the way. That resilience, as well as building the trust and partnerships... was critical our success.”**

Early adaptors always pay a price, not just financially, but it is also an investment in time, training and effort. In this case, we faced a lot of scrutiny and resistance. Cloud adoption was culturally unpopular at the time, and largely unproven by way of privacy, security and capabilities.

That investment has paid off now, as we continue to surge our data and analytics capabilities and services, but at the time – we had to prove it every step of the way. That resilience, as well as building the trust and partnerships with our public sector I&IT community and our technology partners, was critical our success.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Build relationships and partnerships. Anywhere and everywhere you can. Time is precious and we all have so much on our plates, but it's important to nurture relationships over time – you'll be surprised the number of times you'll end up calling a favour from someone that you too have helped along the way. The challenges that we're looking to solve are bigger and more complicated than any one level of government or partner can solve for – it takes a community to improve the lives of the communities we serve.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Deliver frictionless government services and supports that people want and need, through digital, integrated and inclusive service delivery, and data-driven service design.



**Build relationships and partnerships. Anywhere and everywhere you can... It takes a community to improve the lives of the communities we serve.**

**- MANDEEP FLORA**

# Global Perspectives

## LEADERSHIP

“

The development of the right leadership culture and our people’s capabilities is the true secret to success.”

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- Fawad Abro



“

Invest in your employee’s development... Building the capacity of public sector employees to better manage projects; to be resilient when faced with challenges and setbacks; and to apply creativity and strategic solutions will deliver massive results for the public.”

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- Cardell Johnson



“

The best teams bring people with different backgrounds and experiences and build a culture of trust, so ideas are challenged, hard conversations aren’t avoided, and the status quo rarely becomes the outcome.”

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- Mike Dudarenok





## UMA GOPINATH

Chief Information Officer  
Metrolinx

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My career journey began as a software developer in the Middle East, where I started the IT division for an electrical trading firm. This role set the stage for a decade-long tenure in software consultancy within the region, cultivating a rich tapestry of technical expertise and strategic operations.

The turn of the millennium marked a new chapter in Canada, where I navigated through the vibrant sectors of telecom, consulting, and retail. My most recent step is the transition to the public sector with Metrolinx to serve the community by leveraging technology in service of community enrichment and operational excellence.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

To achieve success, I maintain a practice that includes continuous learning, proactive planning, and reflective practice. I prioritise setting clear goals and breaking them down into actionable steps. Regular exercise and a balanced diet keep me physically sharp, while setting aside time for reading and hobbies ensures mental well-being. Embracing innovation, fostering collaboration, and practicing gratitude also play essential roles in my professional and personal growth. These habits help me stay focused, adaptable, and grounded in both my career and life.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

One of the public sector projects that fills me with immense pride is our strategic transformation from waterfall to agile on how we approach the work. The challenge was monumental; we needed to enhance our responsiveness to client needs while delivering value for money. Traditional waterfall methods were too rigid, delaying feedback and escalating expenses.

**“ In the first year alone, we achieved a staggering \$40 million in savings. The feedback from stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive...”**

The transition was critical to deliver customer value more efficiently. We embarked on comprehensive training, revamping our processes, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Collaboration was key, involving our dedicated team, solution providers, and cross-functional leads.

The outcome was transformative. In the first year alone, we achieved a staggering \$40 million in savings. The feedback from stakeholders has been overwhelmingly positive, citing improved service delivery and increased project transparency.

This shift not only generated immediate financial benefits but also laid the groundwork for a more

dynamic, customer-focused approach to service delivery. The biggest takeaway? Agile isn't just a methodology; it's a mindset that, when embraced at all levels, can lead to unprecedented value and efficiency.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

To drive meaningful change and deliver enhanced outcomes for both teams and citizens, my tip is to invest in people and embrace diversity. This involves actively nurturing future talent through mentorship, continuous learning opportunities, and fostering a culture that values different perspectives.

It's also crucial to stay ahead of the technological curve. This means not only adopting new technologies but also understanding their impact on society and governance. By doing so, we can create a more inclusive public sector that not only reflects the diversity of the populace it serves but is also equipped to navigate and leverage the rapid evolution of technology for the public good. This approach will ensure that our teams are not just efficient and diverse but are also innovators and leaders in public service.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My greatest aspiration for government is to foster an innovative, transparent, and responsive system that empowers all citizens through the seamless integration of technology with human-centric services.



**Invest in people and embrace diversity...  
[actively] nurture future talent through  
mentorship, continuous learning opportunities,  
and [by] fostering a culture that values  
different perspectives.**

**- UMA GOPINATH**



## VALERIE KELLY

Director of Digital Transformation  
Department of Social Development,  
Government of New Brunswick

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I started my career in the public sector – working on a team to design and configure a new system to manage vehicle assets across the province. That experience sparked a desire to use technology to create better pathways to help people.

Since then, I have worked at both the municipal and provincial levels of government for most of my career, transforming areas within Public Safety (Fire, Police and 911), Corporate Services (HR, Payroll, Finance, Assets, Training, Communications) and now Social Services. Working at Social Development, finding better pathways for those in our community that need help the most, has been the most rewarding and fulfilling experience for me to date.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Finding connections and cultivating relationships. One person alone can't do all the work required to bring significant and meaningful change about. I spend time seeking out and building relationships with those that can champion, lead and power the change to move forward.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Growing pressures on staff due to outdated technology, staff shortages, increased demand for services from citizens and new complex

community problems, spurred Social Development to redesign how we work and deliver services – centred around delivering the best experiences for citizens of New Brunswick (NB).

*“Getting help for my son is a part time job.” ~ Client*

Our staff, clients, and partners were ALL saying the same thing. Our people are usually great, kind, and helpful, but our systems and processes made it hard for clients to get the support they need and for our partners to work with us. Our talented employees spend much of everyday in repetitive and system generated paperwork, leaving little time helping people live their best lives.

Redesigning our system at this scale required representation from the entire Department. We assembled broad internal teams of staff that could affect change to legislation, policies, programs and service delivery models. We included clients and community partners on our teams to codesign solutions. Our leadership team practiced good stewardship, overseeing work to ensure alignment to our vision and the outcomes we hoped for citizens.

**“ If we are working on the right things, for the right reasons, change is easier - to understand, communicate, manage, measure and support.”**

Early in our journey, we explored adopting a common client service delivery model and common system to drive a fully integrated client experience between Health and Social Services. Leadership supported this direction and blended team approach, and we began co-designing and configuring integrated experiences for clients across Health and Social Services on the Salesforce platform.

We have made a lot of progress over the past year – defining outcomes, improving processes, piloting and implementing digital solutions that have resulted in things like:

- A new and improved website – designed for and with citizens of NB to easily learn about and access services from Social Development or within our communities
- Online portals for clients, partners and staff to engage, collaborate and interact online in the care of the client.
- A digitally enabled care model that ensures clients have one point of contact and a multi-disciplinary care team that helps address the needs of our clients more quickly.

Our work goes well beyond digitising forms. It unleashed passion and talent using agile methods, journey mapping, person centred design, testing with clients and partners, re-positioning risk, and considering the real costs of administrative burden.

While we are early in our journey, we are realising benefits already. For example, we reduced time spent ordering services (very high-volume activity) by 75% with a simpler, digitised solution.

*“You listened, you actually listened.” ~ Client*

*“[t]he improvements will undoubtedly result in increased efficiency and effectiveness for us agencies as well as [your] team.” ~ Partner*

The best solutions are iterative digital AND program co-design. Partners and clients will be onboard if we solve the problems that matter most to them and they’re part of the solution. Their biggest pain points are ours too.

Including clients and partners in solving problems and designing solutions empowers them and broadens our ability to affect the right change faster. The results and feedback that we have attained to date have proven that transformative and innovative change is required in government.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Focus on the why – the citizen; identify and work towards solving their problems. If we are working on the right things, for the right reasons, change is easier - to understand, communicate, manage, measure and support.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Practice leadership and work together; across levels of government, with community partners, with and for the people; together, we can lift people up and make a difference in their lives



## RENU KULENDRAN

Deputy Minister  
Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery Ontario

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job was as a summer camp counsellor, outside Barrie, Ontario. After completing an Honours Bachelor of Arts in English and History at the University of Toronto, I joined the public service with the intention of staying long enough to finance my post-graduate studies. But I was immediately impressed by the diversity of opportunity available, and I have never looked back.

Over a 35-year career, I have worked in policy, program communication and regulatory environments - on Occupational Health and Safety legislation reform, with education bargaining agents and school boards to resolve disputes and led on Ontario's cannabis legalisation. For several years now, it has been a privilege to work with an amazing group of people at the Ministry of Public and Business Service Delivery.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I love learning - it's important for me to find an opportunity for personal growth in every new role I take on. I make sure I build time in the day for "think time" - even if it's just a long morning walk with my dog. And I try to stay positive and optimistic in my interactions with others - it's infectious!

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I am really pleased with the work we have done to provide more digitised and accessible services to Ontario citizens and businesses.

The pandemic was a real catalyst to digitise and move public products and services online quickly. Online or in person, accessibility is vital. We developed some solutions with accessibility stakeholders, such as making it possible to book virtual appointments for health card renewals. Our goal was to modernise how photos and signatures are captured across all channels and reduce barriers to online uptake, especially for vulnerable and marginalised populations.

**“ We look forward to providing services, including virtual appointments, in languages in addition to French and English, and to enhance community partnerships with First Nation and Indigenous organisations.”**

Appointment booking has expanded to 141 service centres this year - up from 62 in February 2023, and the uptake in virtual appointments is making progress, with 288 appointments to date.

We are learning what works well, and what we need to fix. We look forward to providing services, including virtual appointments, in languages in addition to French and English, and to enhance community partnerships with First Nation and Indigenous organisations.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Break down departmental siloes and collaborate - we learned so much by working horizontally when we had to, and it's important to keep that momentum going.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

All governments should continue to work together and improve services to ensure positive interactions - regardless of the channel.



**Break down departmental siloes and collaborate - we learn so much by working horizontally...**

**- RENU KULENDRAN**



## STEPHEN LEPONE

Director  
Infrastructure Ontario

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I started my career on the trade floor of a major Canadian financial institution. Working in capital markets, I was afforded the opportunity to do impactful work in a fast-paced environment, surrounded by smart and ambitious people. This opportunity instilled a strong work ethic in me, and a sense of urgency in everything I do.

I moved to the public sector to satisfy my urge to help solve some of the biggest challenges facing Ontario. While a significant shift from the world of banking, my role at Infrastructure Ontario (IO) allows me to play a variety of roles (from negotiator to relationship manager to auditor – and everything in between) to make real differences in the lives of Ontarians.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

1. Working out in the morning for an energy boost – win the morning, win the day
2. Making a list at night of things I want to accomplish the next day, and then checking them off as I complete them
3. Balancing short-term activities with long-term vision – ensuring that the two are always aligned, and that the long-term vision is consistent with my personal goals and objectives

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

When the pandemic hit in 2020, the Government of Ontario made a commitment to ensure access to high-speed internet to all Ontarians by the end of 2025. At the time, ~700,000 homes and businesses across the province lacked access to even minimum speeds, and it was becoming increasingly clear that bridging the digital divide was critical to advancing health, educational, and commercial opportunities. To help solve the divide, my team developed and executed the Accelerate High Speed Internet Program (AHSIP), an innovative reverse auction procurement to award subsidies to internet service providers to connect underserved communities in the province.

**“ It was becoming increasingly clear that bridging the digital divide was critical to advancing health, educational, and commercial opportunities.”**

This was a tremendous effort which required enhanced stakeholder coordination and buy-in (e.g. municipalities, utility companies, contractors, etc.). In addition to the reverse auction, we also developed legislation (such as the Building Broadband Faster Act, 2022) to alleviate some of the (financial and non-financial) barriers to building broadband infrastructure quickly, and

implemented tools such as the Broadband One Window platform, which serves as an online coordination platform for 500+ stakeholders who must work in unison to meet the province's ambitious 2025 target.

While work remains underway, significant progress has already been made towards our goal. In 2022, the Province of Ontario announced that it had signed agreements with 8 ISPs under AHSIP to connect up to 266,000 premises.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Fostering relationships within government (ideally at various levels and within various ministries/agencies) is critical to help drive meaningful change. New and bold initiatives can often meet resistance within government as it (rightfully) errs towards caution and precedent.

Understanding your audience and its goals and objectives will go a long way. Sometimes the way your message is delivered is just as important as the message itself.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My greatest aspiration for government is that we can be bold enough to make tough decisions, not just expedient ones.



**Fostering relationships within government (ideally at various levels and within various ministries/agencies) is critical to help drive meaningful change.**

**- STEPHEN LEPONE**



## WENDY MACDERMOTT

Chief Experience Officer  
Department of Social Development,  
Government of New Brunswick

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

Prior to joining the public sector, I led my local United Way to prioritise impact above fundraising. This experience prompted me to explore whether similar impacts could be achieved within the public sector. As luck would have it, the leadership at the Department of Social Development was hiring for a newly created a position, Chief Experience Officer. It felt like the job description was written for me.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I believe that the quickest and easiest way to improve the experience of others is by asking them about it! Whether this be with employees, partners, or most importantly those we serve, be curious and act.

**“ We need to ‘re-think’ risk. We often don’t give as much consideration to the risks of maintaining the “status quo” as we do to the potential risks of implementing changes.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU’RE MOST PROUD OF?

Growing pressures on staff due to outdated technology, staff shortages, increased demand for services from citizens and new complex community problems, spurred Social Development to redesign how we work and deliver services - centred around delivering the best experiences for citizens of New Brunswick (NB).

*“Getting help for my son is a part time job.” ~ Client*

Our staff, clients, and partners were ALL saying the same thing. Our people are usually great, kind, and helpful, but our systems and processes made it hard for clients to get the support they need and for our partners to work with us. Our talented employees spend much of everyday in repetitive and system generated paperwork, leaving little time helping people live their best lives.

Redesigning our system at this scale required representation from the entire Department. We assembled broad internal teams of staff that could affect change to legislation, policies, programs and service delivery models. We included clients and community partners on our teams to codesign solutions. Our leadership team practiced good stewardship, overseeing work to ensure alignment to our vision and the outcomes we hoped for citizens.

Early in our journey, we explored adopting a common client service delivery model and common system to drive a fully integrated client experience between Health and Social Services. Leadership supported this direction and blended team approach, and we began co-designing and configuring integrated experiences for clients across Health and Social Services on the Salesforce platform.

We have made a lot of progress over the past year – defining outcomes, improving processes, piloting and implementing digital solutions that have resulted in things like:

- A new and improved website – designed for and with citizens of NB to easily learn about and access services from Social Development or within our communities
- Online portals for clients, partners and staff to engage, collaborate and interact online in the care of the client.
- A digitally enabled care model that ensures clients have one point of contact and a multi-disciplinary care team that helps address the needs of our clients more quickly.

Our work goes well beyond digitising forms. It unleashed passion and talent using agile methods, journey mapping, person centred design, testing with clients and partners, re-positioning risk, and considering the real costs of administrative burden.

While we are early in our journey, we are realising benefits already. For example, we reduced time spent ordering services (very high-volume

activity) by 75% with a simpler, digitised solution.

*“You listened, you actually listened.” ~ Client*

*“[t]he improvements will undoubtedly result in increased efficiency and effectiveness for us agencies as well as [your] team.” ~ Partner*

The best solutions are iterative digital AND program co-design. Partners and clients will be onboard if we solve the problems that matter most to them and they’re part of the solution. Their biggest pain points are ours too.

Including clients and partners in solving problems and designing solutions empowers them and broadens our ability to affect the right change faster. The results and feedback that we have attained to date have proven that transformative and innovative change is required in government.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

We need to ‘re-think’ risk. We often don’t give as much consideration to the risks of maintaining the ‘status quo’ as we do to the potential risks of implementing changes. Admin burden has a real cost to both those we are here to help and those who we are helping (employees and service partners). Maintaining the status quo does NOT protect us.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Just start and keep it simple; nuance and complexity will be added; resist the pull.



## KANARIS PARASKEVOPOULOS

EVP & Chief Digital & Information Officer  
Saskatchewan Government Insurance

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My career in IT began in desktop support, and over the years, I have had the opportunity to take on various roles - it's been quite the ride! I've worked in both the private and public sector, but my path ultimately led me to stay in the public sector driven by a deep-seated desire to make a meaningful difference. The public sector has offered me a unique platform to leverage technology for the betterment of society, and I am excited to contribute my expertise to drive positive change and innovation.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

A mentor of mine once challenged me to read more and I'd say that is my number one personal habit for success. In today's fast-paced world, keeping up on the latest trends, innovations and market insights helps me make more strategic choices in an increasingly complex world.

In addition to being a voracious reader, I make sure to do what I need to maintain my overall productivity and well-being. This includes physical activity, practicing mindfulness, and getting support from coworkers.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I'm most proud of our current transformation program at Saskatchewan Government Insurance. We're currently halfway through a complex business transformation centred around business outcomes that drive us toward our future state operating models. It represents a strategic shift aimed at redefining the organisation's fundamental structure and operations to align with long-term goals and emerging market dynamics.

**“ ...Clarity of purpose will help you make the right decisions, prioritise, and ensure that the changes you drive positively impact both your team and the citizens that you serve.”**

This transformation involves a comprehensive analysis of current processes, technologies, and workforce capabilities, seeking to optimise and innovate across the board. The end goal is a more

agile, customer-centric, efficient, and competitive organisation prepared to thrive in a rapidly evolving business environment. This program will not only change our tools and processes but will fundamentally change how we work.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

My top tip for government professionals is to keep a clear and unwavering focus on the needs and expectations of the citizens you serve. By consistently aligning your actions and decisions with the broader objectives of improving the well-being of your community, you can better navigate the complexities of government work. This clarity of purpose will help you make the right decisions, prioritise, and ensure that the changes you drive positively impact both your team and the citizens that you serve.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My greatest aspiration is to improve the well-being and functioning of our community in whatever way possible.



**Keep a clear and unwavering focus  
on the needs and expectations of the  
citizens you serve.**

**- KANARIS PARASKEVOPOULOS**

# Global Perspectives

## CITIZEN EXPERIENCE

“

Sit with staff on the front line and experience a day in their life... Most times the front-line staff or those delivering the service know what needs to be done to improve the service and customer experience.”

- Rod Apostol



“

Change doesn't have to be complicated, expensive, or solely reliant on digital innovations... Start by engaging directly with citizens and asking them what they need and desire.”

- Eloise Burge



“

Keep a clear and unwavering focus on the needs and expectations of the citizens you serve... This clarity of purpose will help you make the right decisions, prioritise, and ensure that the changes you drive positively impact both your team and the citizens that you serve.”

- Kanaris Paraskevopoulos





## PENNY RAE

Chief Information Officer  
Alberta Health Services

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I've had an eclectic career path. I'm a chemical engineer by training and work with Exxon in Australia and Canada as a reservoir engineer at the start of my career. From there I moved to HR in a professional services firm, moving into client facing consulting and internal audit engagements where I was eventually seconded to AHS during their merger. I became an employee of AHS in 2010 leading their infrastructure team and moved to lead IT in mid 2013.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

There are two that have been consistent and important throughout my career. One inward facing and one outward facing.

The first is the knowledge that **you need to be your own caretaker**. It's easy to put everyone and everything ahead of your own health and wellbeing (particularly for women, I think). You cannot perform to the best of your ability if you are not looking after yourself. It's important to make time for yourself and find whatever balance means to you. For me that's spending time with family and friends, exercise, painting and reading.

The second is that **every person is important and deserves to be treated with compassion and respect**; whether that's coworkers, clients, leaders or custodial staff. Some people come to

interactions with others with an intent to judge where they fit relative to us and adjust their behaviour accordingly. It is important to me that everyone is valued equally. We are all, after all, just people doing our respective jobs. If we truly care about the people around us, we can achieve amazing things.

**“ Every person is important and deserves to be treated with compassion and respect... If we truly care about the people around us, we can achieve amazing things.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

The Connect Care program is by far the most impactful work I've undertaken. As one of the largest clinical information system implementations worldwide, it has the potential to impact the lives of Albertans for generations.

When complete, we will have approximately 140K clinicians using a common system, with common clinical guidance and practices. For the first time 4.5 million Albertans will have comprehensive access to their health information generated through interactions with those clinicians, including being able to communicate with their care team.

**“ For the first time 4.5 million Albertans will have comprehensive access to their health information... including being able to communicate with their care team.”**

Programs like this are a team sport. It requires a vast group of talented, multi-disciplinary people with a common vision to make it successful. At the peak of this program, we had 190 concurrent streams of work happening. That would not be possible without teamwork and honest, timely communication.

#### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

It's a cliché but 'seek first to understand.' Listening is a very underrated skill. It's only when you understand the people you're trying to influence that you will know how to bring them with you.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

I would love for government to focus on what is the right thing to do, rather than what is going to get them re-elected. Those two are not always in alignment.

Additionally, I would love to see government step boldly into the use of technology to both advance its service to our citizens and collaborate with our private sector partners.





## ISABELLE TANGUAY

Chief Information Officer and Director General  
Department of Finance Canada

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first role was as a LAN Administrator at Canada Post during the summer of 1994, a humble beginning that laid the foundation for my expansive journey in the realm of information technology.

Over 28 years, I have traversed through diverse domains within the federal government, engaging in roles across nine different departments and agencies. This journey was driven by a desire to make impactful contributions to the public sector. My work has spanned IT operations, service delivery, and project management, with a deep focus on IT security, system architecture, and data management. It's the allure of implementing systems that not only support but revolutionise public services, which drew me to this sector. My path is a testament to the philosophy of 'transforming ordinary things into extraordinary achievements.'

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

The cornerstone of my success lies in the power of collaboration, communication, and continuous learning. Breaking down silos and embracing cross-sector collaboration, especially with the private sector, has been crucial. I believe in a mindset that fosters partnership, both internally and externally, recognising our shared challenges and common goals.

My approach combines a blend of breadth and depth in skills, adaptability as a change agent, and a strong network. I focus on re-using, modernising, and innovating processes, tools, and platforms, grounded in best practices and standards. This approach, coupled with an agile response to changes and an empowering leadership style, has been my formula for success.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Among the projects I've been part of, digitising records from the World Wars at Library and Archives Canada (LAC) stands out. The challenge was monumental: to preserve invaluable historical documents for future generations. This task was critical for educational and research purposes and to honour our history.

The project involved extensive collaboration with teams specialising in system development, automation, and digital security. We employed state-of-the-art data management and cloud technologies. The outcome was a digitised repository accessible to researchers and families, fostering a deeper connection with our past.

This project underscored the importance of safeguarding our heritage and propelled us towards a future where history is preserved and accessible to all. My biggest takeaway was the

profound impact of preserving history through technology and the power of collaborative innovation in achieving it.

**“ The cornerstone of my success lies in the power of collaboration, communication, and continuous learning. Breaking down silos and embracing cross-sector collaboration, especially with the private sector, has been crucial.”**

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

To drive change and deliver better outcomes, I advise embracing the ‘Simplify, Modernise, Innovate’ approach. Look beyond conventional methods and be open to learning from global best practices, especially in IT security.

It’s vital to balance improving customer service with maintaining security. Encourage policy changes where necessary and foster a culture of active listening, clear communication, and collaboration. Transform complex challenges into clear, actionable solutions, and remember, the best is indeed yet to come.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

To transform ordinary government processes into extraordinary services that elevate the quality of life for all citizens.



## SID TOBIAS

Director of Digital Services  
Government of British Columbia

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I grew up on a farm in the Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia. My first job was working on our horse farm and helping my friends out who had different farms. Working with animals has always been a great joy of my life.

After my undergrad I joined the Canadian Navy and became a specialist in sharing joint tactical data. I completed a master's degree while in uniform. One of the highlights of my career was to serve as a Chairman for a NATO working group. I retired from the military after 25 years and joined the Government of British Columbia seven years ago to assist with technology transformation projects.

I have been fortunate that all my life's work has been associated with providing power to edge of decision making which continues to fuel my fascination with how we make decisions that can improve the lives of others.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I am not so sure I have well controlled personal behaviour that is always successful. I wake up early and spend time thinking about the problem. I research the problem and ask hard questions to myself and others with the hope of understanding the problem. I challenge others to do the same because I think it is essential to see

the problem in the same way before we embark on a solution. Otherwise, we could be creating a solution to a problem that may not exist, or a solution that gives false hope that the problem has been solved.

I also like to build self-organising teams that solve their own problems. I enjoy creating opportunities for others to build their personal capacity for decision making in a safe to fail place and gradually drop the safeguards. If I am to be successful as a public servant than creating leadership capacity in others that exceeds the best of my abilities is always my goal.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Almost two years ago I was tasked with developing a Modern Engagement Tool set for the Environmental Assessment Agency, the Ministry of Energy Mines and Low Carbon Initiatives and Government Digital Experience.

The tool set was built out in open-source code and used Government of British Columbia and the Federal Government of Canada's Common Components and Services. The new tool set allows the public to obtain the latest information on Government Projects all in an accessible mobile first framework. In my role as Product Owner, I had the honour of building a team to deliver exceptional value for the public.

“ The new tool set allows the public to obtain the latest information on Government Projects all in an accessible mobile first framework... The system was developed as a single and multi-tenancy for expansion to... other government agencies.”

The team delivered a prototype a month early, and under budget, and we were able to exceed expectations and had enough remaining from forecast to extend two months to ensure the product is bug free and had all of the user research, feedback and testing to ensure it meet government and public expectations.

The system was developed as a single and multi-tenancy for expansion to the rest of the government and other government agencies. The system has the ability for the public to subscribe for updates and generates exceptional analytics for decision makers and the public. I am proud of the product, but much prouder of the team who delivered it.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Ship the problem to your team not the solution. By loving the problem space together and distributing the problem we can generate the passion required for innovation.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

I would like our municipal, regional, provincial, and federal governments to work much more closely together on issues that are urgent and emergent such as public engagement, First Nations Reconciliation, the affordable housing crisis and community health and wellness. Too often the public interest is trapped in the middle of a labyrinth of bureaucracy, roles, and responsibility. We need to do a better job in imagining a future where effective decision making can transcend silos of political power.





## JAKE VAN DER LAAN

Chief Information Officer  
Financial and Consumer Services Commission

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I was trained as a lawyer and practised law for a dozen years, before deciding to go back to school and pursue a computer science education. I was recruited to join the public sector about halfway through. The public sector has always been attractive to me, given the opportunities for public service that it offers.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Be kind to others. Get up early and get the hard stuff done first.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Leading the development of a new online licensing portal solution, with a dictated timeline of four months. It was tough, but a great team with a positive 'can do' attitude made it happen.

We delivered it, but not without some launch hiccups (doesn't every launch have some hiccups?). The new portal dramatically increased our ability to serve our regulated communities, by allowing them to complete their applications online and automating much of the data validation (which was a big challenge in the previous paper-based process). The time for approving applications went from several weeks to a few days. The portal was well received by

our stakeholders, and we continue to improve and migrate other regulatory areas and functions.

Know your business. Take your time to get your requirements right. It is 90% of a successful IT project. A positive and "safe" culture is also very important.

**“ The new portal dramatically increased our ability to serve our regulated communities, by allowing them to complete their applications online and automating much of the data validation... The time for approving applications went from several weeks to a few days.”**

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Do an assessment of your readiness for the tech change you are thinking about. Ask the following questions:

1. Do you understand the tech sufficiently? Do you understand its broader impacts?

2. Do you have the right budget, personnel, and infrastructure to effect change?
3. Do you have the right culture to innovate, collaborate and “handle” change?
4. Have you thoroughly explored the use cases, are benefits clear, and are your customers/clients ready for the change?

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

Demonstrable evidence-based bang for the public buck.



**Do an assessment of your readiness for the tech change you are thinking about. First ask yourself [these four] questions...**

**- JAKE VAN DER LAAN**



# NEW ZEALAND



## MARY CRAIG

Deputy Commissioner, Enterprise Design and Integrity  
Department of Inland Revenue

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first ever job was sorting mail in a midnight to 6am shift. I loved it and got really skilled at sorting the right letters into the right slots from quite a distance.

I have had several jobs throughout the years but predominately in the Public Sector and for the majority of that time, operating in many different roles in Inland Revenue. I joined the Public Sector because I wanted to do my bit to make New Zealand a better place for its people. That ethos is as strong with me today as it was when I joined in the 1990's.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Be passionate and engaged with what you are doing otherwise you won't have the energy or the will to carry things through, especially when it gets tough

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I'm really proud of being part of an executive team which led Inland Revenue's multi-stage transformation. This was one of the largest and most ambitious programmes in the Southern Hemisphere and was delivered on time and within budget.

**“ We have worked closely with customers, other departments and stakeholders... to ensure New Zealanders continue to have confidence that the revenue system treats them fairly [and] everyone pays their fair share...”**

The adoption of digital technologies, systems and processes and the investment in new capabilities and skills for our people enabled different ways to deliver services, helping people and businesses get things right from the start, with less effort.

We have worked closely with customers, other departments and stakeholders to embed changes which help to ensure New Zealanders continue to have confidence that the revenue system treats them fairly, everyone pays their fair share and non-compliance is not tolerated. The changes also mean we can now respond quickly to the changing needs of our customers and Government can support businesses stay afloat during challenging times.

We continue to challenge ourselves to make it as easy as possible for customers to meet their obligations and receive the payments they are entitled to, enabling them to participate in society.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Be clear about what you want to change and who it will benefit. Put the customer at the centre of your design thinking and be sure of the problem(s) you are trying to solve, before you invest a lot of time and money.

Engage and work collaboratively with others for end-to-end solutions to benefit the customer

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My aspiration for government is that it can find the mechanisms to drive forward this beautiful country of ours in a way which leaves no-one behind.





## KATRINE EVANS

Government Chief Privacy Officer  
Department of Internal Affairs

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first privacy job was as a law academic, teaching at Victoria University of Wellington. In 1996, I got to set up a brand-new course in privacy, which I ran for several years as well as researching and writing. I learned a lot more than my students did!

After that, I joined the Privacy Commissioner's Office in 2004 as Assistant Commissioner, so saw privacy from the regulatory side. In 2015, I went contracting inside a variety of government departments, where I learned a lot about operational practice. I particularly liked working in multi-disciplinary teams. And now I'm in a cross-government role, trying to support the whole system.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Privacy is all about people, so I focus a lot on relationship building. Practicality is also really important to me. I like to understand what people who come to me for advice want to achieve, and I get a real kick out of helping them work out how to get there successfully. Keeping learning is also essential. I'm a pain if I get bored!

While I prefer to please people, I'm also prepared to stand firm and say that a proposed approach is not ok. It's important to be courageous, and to give the best advice I possibly can, even in the

face of strong opposition. If someone then makes a different decision, that's their call. Usually, though, people quickly click that a privacy lens enables them to achieve more successful and sustainable results.

**“ I like to understand what people who come to me for advice want to achieve, and I get a real kick out of helping them work out how to get there successfully.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

The recent project that I'm most proud of is probably developing our micro-credential in foundational privacy skills, which started in June 2023. Our team wrote the content and our partner, Wellington Uni Professional, delivers the course. It's a six-week course focused on the key basic privacy concepts that people working in the public service need to know.

There's a real shortage of experienced privacy advisers in government and a huge need. So, one aim for the course is to encourage more people into this area of work. Equally important, though, is to equip people in privacy-adjacent roles with some basic privacy knowledge. This includes IT, business analysis, data analysis, HR, risk, service

design and so on. If others are confident with the basics, that enables privacy specialists to come in where there's a harder question to answer. It also makes it less likely that problems will slip through the gaps.

**“ Government needs to be genuinely trustworthy when it comes to people's information.”**

So far 38 people have been trained or are currently being trained through the programme. That's a great start. And the feedback has been amazingly positive. In particular, it's confirmed that people can immediately apply their knowledge to the work that they do, which is exactly what we wanted.

My biggest take-away? What you do is never enough! We're already thinking about what comes next.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Stop making government a black hole of information. Too often, we still collect a whole load of details, and nothing comes back out past the event horizon. There's at least one person behind nearly every bit of "data" that we collect and use. See that person, or their community, and recognise them as a partner. Genuinely listen to them. And share what you learn back with them.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Government needs to be genuinely trustworthy when it comes to people's information: that is, we have to be skilled and competent, keep our promises, always respect the people and their communities who are behind the information we hold, provide choices wherever possible, and show that we are doing the right thing.



**I like to understand what people who come to me for advice want to achieve, and I get a real kick out of helping them work out how to get there successfully.**

**- KATRINE EVANS**



## CRAIG JONES

Deputy Government Statistician &  
Deputy Chief Executive - Data System Leadership  
Stats NZ

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first ever job was selling spare parts in a farm machinery dealership. My first career job was researching the relationship between illicit drug control policy and drug-related harm. I started my career in the New South Wales public sector, mainly because the job sounded interesting. I quickly realised that I could use the social science skills I had learned at university to inform policy makers about 'what works,' for whom and under what circumstances.

Since then, I've spent 23 years in different parts of government, always in the relentless pursuit of improving the use of data and evidence in the policy process.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I've never been the cleverest person in the room, so I work hard. I always prepare well for tomorrow by spending tonight thinking about the contribution I'm going to make. I envy people who don't have to do that.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

The Ministry of Education and Stats NZ recently won a Public Service Award for developing an Equity Index as a replacement for the school decile system in NZ. The decile system ranked

schools by the level of disadvantage faced by students in the school. The problem with the system was that it was based on the area the students lived, rather than their own individual circumstances. (It had also mistakenly become synonymous with school performance, which is another story). The decile system had perverse effects where some schools who attracted the richest students from the poorest areas had inflated disadvantage scores and associated equity funding.

The Ministry of Education worked in the Stats NZ Integrated Data Infrastructure (IDI) to develop a new index based on the individual markers of disadvantage faced by students. My team led the analytical work on this when I was in the Ministry of Education, and I ended up moving to Stats NZ to lead the team that manages the IDI, so I experienced this work from both sides.

The Equity Index has now been implemented in the NZ education system to direct equity funding, with a lot of support from the school community. There is huge opportunity to use this kind of modelling in other areas of public service delivery too.

The biggest takeaway from this project was that perseverance pays off - it took a lot of work to get this across the line.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

I like the quote Andreas Schleicher, the head of the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment uses in his email signature: “without data, you’re just another person with an opinion.” This is a truism for me, but we need to recognise that not everyone has access to the data needed to move from opinion to evidence. We need to democratise access to data to address that inequity.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

My greatest aspiration for all those involved in policy making or administering public services is to understand what good evidence looks like, and to value evidence more highly. Too much of what we deliver is based on guesswork and good intention, and that’s not satisfactory in modern society.



**Too much of what we deliver is based on guesswork and good intention, and that’s not satisfactory in modern society.”**

**- CRAIG JONES**

# Global Perspectives

## COLLABORATION

“

International cooperation in addressing cyber threats has never been more critical... Increased collaboration among government entities, nations, and the private sector to establish norms and confront the continually evolving cyber threat landscape [is key].”

- Ryan Macfarlane



“

“Remember you don’t need to do it all yourself. Collaboration and trust will get you further than you can go alone.”

- Jane Stroud



“

“I would like our municipal, regional, provincial, and federal governments to work much more closely together on issues that are urgent and emergent... We need to do a better job in imagining a future where effective decision making can transcend silos of political power.”

- Sid Tobias





## MALCOLM LUEY

Director - Innovation, Business & Consumer  
Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first public service role was helping to establish the New Zealand Health and Disability Commissioner's Office and creating the Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights.

Since those early days with the first Health and Disability Commissioner's Office, I have held positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade, Ministry of Justice, Crown Law Office, Department of Prime Minister & Cabinet, Customs, Ministry of Education and now the Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment.

I have always had an interest in social justice issues and the belief that the public service, with the right customer focus and tools, can do so much to help build an economically prosperous, socially resilient and environmentally sustainable Aotearoa New Zealand.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I help public service organisations through change or significant policy and service delivery challenges by building strong, and diverse teams that have good communications and analysis skills. These teams can tackle the big complex challenges in efficient, sustainable and resilient ways. So, I try to teach and pass on habits relating to good communication and psychological safety, systems thinking, understanding how to operate with complexity and ambiguity, and how to create, manage and drive innovation.

**“ Learning how to create agile governance and to proportionately manage risk enables teams and organisations to efficiently operate with minimal viable bureaucracy.”**

At a personal level, I believe you can be the 'master of your faith' and the 'captain of your soul.' But learning that outcomes like 'success and failure' in life eventually comes from your own actions and beliefs (rather than externally in the form of 'destiny' or the actions of others) takes time, self-contemplation, actively listening to others, and a healthy dose of work-life balance.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

In my career so far, I have fortunately been involved in a wide range of significant policy, law reform, and service delivery projects. However, I am particularly proud of the Digital Boost programme that the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) created during the Covid-19 period.

In the middle of the 2020 Covid-19 lockdowns, small business and their workers were struggling to safely do business and earn incomes. Research indicated that increased use of digital tools and technology would improve businesses productivity, resilience and sustainability.

Following some amazing online industry workshops, where so many thought leaders and companies generously gave their time and ideas, MBIE designed a programme centred around a free online video training platform where the focus was on attempting to 'digitalise the Kiwi business peer-to-peer learning experience' and connecting them with private sector organisations that could help these small businesses access fit for purpose technology. This programme represents a public-private collaboration for the benefit of all New Zealanders.

In 2022, independent research verified that:

23% of all business users reported improved revenue after using Digital Boost, this lifted to 39% of businesses for those that engaged weekly with the platform,

- 80% of business users created a website with many engaging in digital commerce,
- 79% of Digital Boost trainees recommended the platform to others,
- 26% of Digital Boost trainees reported increased resilience
- 55% of Digital Boost trainees reported greater optimism and hope regarding their future (this was 17% above the national average in June 2022).

Our second independent evaluation in 2023 found that:

- 35% reported increased engagement from potential customers
- 25% more had a website with payment options (engaging in e-commerce)
- 20% more used digital marketing or social media management tools
- 29% reported an increase in resilience in their business
- 20% reported an increase in revenue

In addition to the above metrics for the Digital Boost platform, the private sector organisations that are members of the Digital Boost Alliance have collaborated to provide millions of dollars of value to New Zealanders through discounted, subsidised or free digital products and services.

The Digital Boost programme has demonstrated to me that with the right levels of governance, customer focus and trust, the private and public sector can collaborate to efficiently create and maintain digital products that offer significant benefits to all New Zealanders. Together, along with honest conversations about risk and the best ways of managing those challenges, the public sector and private sector technology experts can work together to achieve change quickly and efficiently.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Too many times we operate a deliberate divide between policy and operations. This often leads to poor service design, resourcing, governance, and a failure to meet Ministers' and customers' expectations.

Our risk adverse cultures and blanket approaches to managing identified 'real' and 'hypothetical' risks often prevents government services from being agile and working with the innovative parts of the private sector. Learning how to create agile governance and to proportionately manage risk enables teams and organisations to efficiently operate with minimal viable bureaucracy.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

I believe government and the private sector collaborate to help the public, communities, and businesses to learn digital skills and safely adopt technology, in order to make prosperous economies, resilient societies and sustainable environments to the benefit of future generations.



## JAN SHEPPARD

Chief Data and Analytics Officer  
Environmental Science Research, NZ

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My career is built off my drive to utilise the power of data to see things not possible before, and to utilise that new knowledge to deliver better outcomes. My first job was in the private sector where the only innovation valued was what could push up profits sufficiently to get the year-end bonuses. This myopic view of what was important motivated me to join the public sector where I have had many opportunities to use data to shift the dial in areas that really matter to people, societies and the environment, both now and into the future.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

For me there are two key factors to success. First, having the courage to hire people who are smarter than myself, this challenges me to aim higher. And second, to enjoy what I do as that makes the hard work worth it.

**“ We are operating in times of exponential change, as a public sector we need to be thinking differently and acting differently to have a chance of keeping up and staying relevant.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I have recently had the opportunity to stand up a data science practice in a scientific research organisation and as a science - the science of data. We are tackling some of the big issues facing our country and the planet including living with the effects of a changing climate, including the spread and impact of new viruses. These are big topics that we have traditionally react to as they arise, and going forward we need to be proactive to thrive into the future.

We are using a range of AI technologies including digital twins, to safely experiment into the future to understand potential outcomes so we can make the right decisions today. Stepping into this new frontier takes a new mindset and we have to have the courage to take responsibility tomorrow for our actions today. A big responsibility but as Warren Buffet said; “risk comes from not knowing what you are doing.”

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Go harder than you think you possibly can, and then be prepared to be amazed. We are operating in times of exponential change, as a public sector

we need to be thinking differently and acting differently to have a chance of keeping up and staying relevant. Now is a time for courage, where innovation is the norm. As a guide to help you know you will be on track is ask yourself ‘what would the future you say thank-you to the current you for?’ Then be that person.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

Give ourselves the opportunity to understand how things work and what actually makes a difference, so we can focus our limited resources on making our country the best version it can be for all.



**“We are using a range of AI technologies including digital twins, to safely experiment into the future to understand potential outcomes so we can make the right decisions today.”**

**- JAN SHEPPARD**



# UNITED KINGDOM



## EMILY CAMPBELL-RATCLIFFE

Head of AI Assurance  
Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

Straight out of university I ran a business with a friend, so I was a very young Managing Partner! We provided executive briefings, speech writing services, and wrote a fortnightly journal for clients. The business was acquired by a major PR firm, and after that it was a very non-linear path to where I am today.

I eventually ended up specialising in AI and AI ethics through roles in the private sector, eventually focusing on AI governance in a policy team. I decided that I could make more of a difference with my skills on the inside of government rather than lobbying from the outside, and so made the move into the public sector.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

It's not an unusual answer, but organisation to me really is the foundation of success. Knowing I have all of the basics covered means that I can focus on the most pressing and complex issues in my area, stretching myself beyond just managing the bare minimum of what I need to get done on a day-to-day basis. Organisation also helps me to maintain a work-life balance, which is so important for not ending up burnt out when you're working in a high-intensity role, and where others rely on you being on top of your portfolio.

**“ Lean on your peers for their advice and input – their collaboration will only strengthen your own thinking.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

It's still ongoing, but I'd say the Fairness Innovation Challenge that we're running is something that I'm incredibly proud of. As so many people know, building and using AI systems fairly and avoiding bias can be challenging, but is hugely important if the potential benefits from better use of AI are to be achieved.

Bias and fairness have been receiving an increasingly strong focus across industry, academia and government, but organisations seeking to address these concerns in the real world continue to face a range of challenges, including: a lack of access to the data they require to identify and mitigate unfair bias and discrimination in their systems; understanding how to usefully apply a complex range of statistical notions of bias to understand real-world fairness; and ensuring that any bias mitigation techniques used are themselves ethical and legal in the UK context.

In response, we launched our “Fairness Innovation Challenge,” providing grant funding to support

the development of novel solutions to address these challenges. We have partnered with key UK regulators – the Information Commissioner’s Office and The Equality and Human Rights Monitor – who will work with winners to ensure solutions are fit for purpose and compliant with data protection and human rights law. The applicants are being provided with a real-world healthcare use-case, to ensure that solutions are being tested beyond a lab environment.

The biggest lesson learned to date is the importance of collaboration. This project wouldn’t

**“Building and using AI systems fairly and avoiding bias can be challenging but is hugely important if the potential benefits from better use of AI are to be achieved.”**

have happened without input from a whole range of different government teams, regulators and academia, and its success to date has been with thanks to all of those individuals coming together and working so effectively to try and solve such a complex issue.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Take ownership of your ideas and act on them. So often I think innovation in government can be held back by officials having good ideas, but being reticent to promote them or develop a vision to take to leadership and gain their buy-in. I’ve been really lucky that the parts of government I’ve worked in – particularly currently being in a new department dedicated to promoting innovation – have really encouraged those kinds of ways of working.

I’d also add that taking ownership of ideas doesn’t mean not sharing them! Lean on your peers for their advice and input – their collaboration will only strengthen your own thinking.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

To be as effective as possible in maximising the use of advanced technologies to improve the lives of the public, whilst doing so in a responsible, ethical, and democratic manner.



**Lean on your peers for their advice and input – their collaboration will only strengthen your own thinking.” confidence that the revenue system treats them fairly [and] everyone pays their fair share...**

**- EMILY CAMPBELL-RATCLIFFE**



## MIKE HILL

Chief Digital & Information Officer  
Cabinet Office, UK

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

For the majority of my career I have either worked for or into the public sector, the values of public service are very important to me. As a 16-year-old I joined the British Army as an apprentice in the Royal Signals and I enjoyed very much my 13-years of service in the forces. Throughout my service my personal values of leadership, empowerment and determination were developed, and they have held me in great stead ever since.

Post my armed forces career I have been fortunate enough to work on some really interesting public sector challenges; leading the UK MoD tech refresh of their global IT estate, providing cyber and data services into the rail sector and latterly the Home Office and the Cabinet Office. At the Home Office I was responsible for developing, running and sustaining all national data systems for Public Protection across the UK. Here at the Cabinet Office, I am responsible for the B2B provision of digital, data and technology products and services; enabling and transforming the Cabinet Office. I really enjoy the variety, responsibility and challenge of public sector leadership and would not want to be anywhere else!

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I put a significant emphasis on leadership, encouraging diversity and empowering people. Organisations, programmes and projects are

ultimately people centric endeavours; therefore, really focusing on creating a highly performant organisation is paramount.

I have done this through acting as a Servant to my organisations, as it is not I who will deliver against our user commitments, it is the people in my teams who will do so

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I have been fortunate to have been involved in some incredibly interesting and challenging public sector programmes; the one that stands out though is the National Law Enforcement Data Programme (NLEDP). NLEDP is one of the largest and most complex programmes within the Home Office, which will deliver a flexible and modern data service for law enforcement; also enabling the 48-year-old (and counting!) Police National Computer (PNC) to be retired.

NLEDP when I took on the role of Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) in October 2020, the programme had a problematic history and had been reset twice before. It was however plain to see that the underlying issues had not been resolved and a bow wave of pressure was about to break upon the programme's critical path.

I instigated a red team review, which was purposefully warts and all in order to identify and address the fundamental challenges the programme was facing. One of these was the

relationship with policing, which historically had been poor; this was solved through moving away from a customer/supplier dynamic, towards partnership and indeed bringing senior officers into the programme leadership team. We were highly transparent with the red team report, which helped to build a culture of trust and engagement.

The next 6-months were spent in reset, reshaping the engagement model with policing, changing the underpinning architecture of the capability and focusing on organisational shape and culture. Throughout this time, we were also being audited by the UK National Audit Office (NAO), which subsequently led to a Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearing in September 2021. This hearing recognised the challenges the programme had faced; as well as acknowledging a more positive approach to delivery going forwards.

In July 2021, the programme came out of reset with renewed purpose, structure and momentum; focused on iterative delivery of products to the user community. Subsequently the programme has gone from strength to strength and has delivered a number of products to date and indeed has been recognised in a defence and security programme awards ceremony.

**“ Enabling equity and creating a diverse organisation, which is self-confident, empowered and has the psychological safety to make mistakes is in my experience best set-up for success.”**

#### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

As leaders we need to create an environment for success, taking the “grit” out of the system and enabling our people to thrive. Enabling equity and creating a diverse organisation, which is self-confident, empowered and has the psychological safety to make mistakes is in my experience best set-up for success.

#### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

A government that has digital in its DNA when creating policy and strategic intent, this will really accelerate the transformation of public services; significantly improving citizen outcomes.





# UNITED STATES



## TAKA ARIGA

Chief Data Scientist & Director of Innovation Lab  
Government Accountability Office

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first ever job was to help my piano teacher organise her vast collection of sheet music she uses to teach students. I really enjoyed the job as it gave me a chance to qualitatively figure out the most optimal approach to organise the information (is that too nerdy?!) My career arc mostly spanned consulting companies but always served public sector clients in some capacity.

I joined the Government Accountability Office as the Chief Data Scientist and the Director of its Innovation Lab because it was (and still is) a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to be at the forefront of adopting use of emerging technologies with the goal of enhancing GAO's unique oversight mandates as the supreme audit institution of the United States. It was hands down the best career move for me.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

There are two habits that have helped my career along the way. The first one is working backwards from a desired end state and logically lay out a strategy as well as concrete step towards where we are today. This approach helps me to think about a vision as well as all the different paths that could be taken along the way to achieve that vision.

The second, and I am much less successful at this in general, is to carve out time to purposefully think and not be consumed by the moment-to-

moment fire drills. Even if that means creating tactical mess sometimes, the ability to see the forest from trees is vital.

**“ Be willing to proactively engage with discomfort at personal, institutional, and strategic levels.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

In 2021, I led a team to develop and publish first-of-its-kind accountability framework for artificial intelligence to ensure AI implementations by federal agencies are done responsibly, effectively, and equitably.

The Framework laid out 33 key practices across four pillars to serve as an adaptive blueprint for oversight entities evaluating AI systems throughout the development lifecycle. I am very proud of this work because it represented the essence of how “trust but verify” ethos is a critical part of realising the aspiration that AI shall do no harm – and we did it before there was any legislative effort or executive action!

More importantly, we did not treat AI as a unique novelty and instead grounded the Framework in familiar accountability principles to promote consistency and adoption.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Be willing to proactively engage with discomfort at personal, institutional, and strategic levels so that you get opportunities to ask better questions. Because better questions lead to better answers.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

I dream that one day we will have a government where seamless, frictionless, and scalable data centricity is at the forefront of mission delivery, citizen service, policymaking, compliance functions, and technology modernisation.



**[The] ‘trust but verify’ ethos is a critical part of realising the aspiration that AI shall do no harm.”**

**- TAKA ARIGA**



## GERALD CARON

Chief Information Officer  
International Trade Administration,  
U.S. Department of Commerce

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My very first job saw me mowing lawns for the town and the local cemetery. After college I joined the Army which eventually led me to the Washington DC area. I spent seven years with the Army.

I started my current role as Chief Information Officer for the International Trade Administration at the U.S. Department of Commerce in February of 2023. Prior to that I was Chief Information Officer for the Office of the Inspector General at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for approximately two years, preceded by approximately 20 years at the U.S. Department of State where I first became a Senior Executive in government after initially starting out as a contractor answering telephones on the IT Help Desk.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Use common sense, work on communications skills to become an effective communicator, and never stop learning.

**“ Comms 101 has three parts; sender, receiver, and feedback. All three of these must be working to effectively communicate.”**

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I am most proud of the work I have done in regard to cybersecurity and specifically Zero Trust. At the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Inspector General we took an approach to inventory our current capabilities and their maturity.

From that we were able to develop a road map and identify foundational projects to kick off our journey knowing our gaps, strengths and needs. To assist in fulfilling the journey we pursued and were able to successfully secure Technology Modernisation Funds (TMF) to aid in accelerating our projects which would not have been possible with the current budget situation.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

My top tips for Government professionals are to be a good communicator and inclusive. Comms 101 has three parts; sender, receiver, and feedback. All three of these must be working to effectively communicate. Sometimes it is the simple things to remember, and good communications will go a long way to aid in success.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

My biggest aspiration for Government is to continue striving to enable the government mission I support through IT. Understanding the mission priorities and needs helps in identifying and delivering on the technologies that can best be leveraged by those carrying out their mission.



## MICHAELA DOELMAN

State Chief Human Resources Officer  
State of Washington

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first ever job was hauling branches. My friend's dad did residential tree trimming on the weekend, and I was too young and probably too uncoordinated to handle a chain saw so I hauled all the branches they cut down and put them into a pile to be carried away.

Growing up as a first-generation, bi-racial American and I saw firsthand how my parents had very different experiences navigating systems when the only thing different between them was their gender and skin colour. My passion for social justice and system reform work was born from those experiences.

I kind of fell into government HR work thinking I'd only be here for a year until I was ready to move to a larger city and go to law school. That was almost 17 years ago as once I started with state government work, I realised how much opportunity there was to make a difference for the community I live in. I've always said I leave once we've solved all the problems, or I get too burnt out and need to pass the baton, but I'm still here and loving the work I do.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

- Wake up and work out every day (unless I'm feeling sick as listening to my body is important too). This isn't about evangelising exercise but instead about making space to

have something that centres you, allows you to think clearly and fills your bucket.

- Daily developmental practice - I don't follow a calendar year but instead whatever natural cycles make sense. I pick a few things that I want to practice and improve upon until they become second nature. Public speaking was one of those things that I was extremely uncomfortable with, but I said yes to a virtual presentation as a form of practice. Now, it's something I feel like I'm pretty good at. My current intentions are: "adequate sleep", "courageous truth telling", and "setting healthy boundaries".
- Gratitude and humour: I find a reason to be grateful and a reason to laugh every day. I don't shy away from all of the atrocities that are happening across our globe and in our local communities every day. We must confront those hard truths if we want to make any progress on ameliorating them and I do not let them consume me.
- Visual goals and milestones: we live in an age of complexity and distraction. I could spend my entire days "working" without ever making progress on our goals. We've got four key priorities for our work in my team, and I make sure those are in my line of sight every day as well as what key milestones need to be accomplished to help us get there.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?**

We rolled out a Directive requiring all state employees (approximately 68,000) to take a new equity training. We know through various data (workforce and resident demographics, feedback from customers, outcomes and access of different communities) that as a state government not all residents are receiving the same level and quality of service and that people that government systems (and the people who administer those systems) have contributed to the historical marginalisation of communities.

As one step in helping build our workforce's competency and knowledge base - allowing them to provide culturally relevant and equitable services to the people of WA, we partnered with the Office of Equity, our business resources groups, external customer stakeholders and our statewide training team to build a Directive and a training that could be delivered to approximately 68,000 state employees.

Knowing how vast of a subject equity work is in government, we knew this training was just a foundation. We also know that there are so many intersections of marginalisation and identities that could be covered so the big challenge was building a curriculum that covered as much of the foundation as possible on an impossibly large and complex subject that has also been highly politicised and comes with a lot of emotions.

The outcome after years of stakeholding and working with the legislature to properly fund it was the ability to build a foundational curriculum that can be facilitated by DEI experts and could be delivered to all 68,000 state employees at no additional cost to them or their organisation and a subsequent directive to ensure everyone would take the training.

In a topic like this, you'll never make everyone happy but in general we're getting positive

feedback from folks who have taken the training. This also sets the stage for future work we plan to do to talk about what competencies and knowledge anyone must have to be a public servant in the state of Washington as we re-look at our job qualifications and performance management of what success means in the workplace.

My biggest lesson learned from all this is Progress > Perfection. Often times in Government projects stall or momentum stops because we can't design the perfect solution. We've also been taught to be risk adverse when it comes to doing new things for fear that our mistakes may waste taxpayer dollars or cause harm to our constituents. Those are always great lenses to look through but we're already causing harm to certain communities and every day we delay our work to get it "just right."

## **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

This advice is specifically focused on folks who are wanting to come in with energy to change the system. To be effective in driving change at a systems level, you must first learn the rules of the current system before you can effectively change them. I see so many (myself included) people come into government work with all this energy to change the system and then get frustrated and burnt out when things don't immediately change.

What I realised fairly early on was that I didn't know the current rules well enough, so I either wasn't proposing the right solutions, or I was getting stuck when someone who knew the rules found a way to block me. It was only after I really got curious about why things work the way they do right now that I got more effective in helping build sustainable changes for the future.

## **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

That we become something our communities trust and believe work for them.

# Global Perspectives

## DIVERSITY

“

Listen! ... Work to create a safe, diverse and inclusive workplace, where differences in background, perspective, and experience are valued and everyone can bring their true self to work.”

---

- Jody Grima



“

[Build] a workforce of highly talented people with diverse backgrounds and lived experiences, with the confidence to experiment with and apply emerging technologies to the most important and wicked problems of our generation.”

---

- Lucy Poole



“

Invest in people and embrace diversity... actively nurture future talent through mentorship, continuous learning opportunities, and fostering a culture that values different perspectives.”

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- Uma Gopinath





## ANTHONY FISHER

Head of Data Management & Analytics  
Department of Revenue Colorado

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job ever was as an investment banking intern for Madison Street Capital, a global boutique investment banking firm headquartered in Chicago, with offices across the US, Asia, Africa, and the UK. I truly enjoyed interacting with engaged clients and helping them solve complex challenges within their respective companies.

However, as I rose through the ranks, I became fascinated by the way our firm handled and used data to drive decision-making. This then led me to pursue a consulting role at S&P Global. Since S&P is a large data company with a plethora of datasets in their product portfolio, I was able to interface with several different datasets and step outside of my comfort zone. I then reached a point where I had the knowledge and skills I desired, but I wanted to give back to society in some capacity. So, in the summer of 2019 I made the decision to leave S&P to pursue freelance consulting opportunities with some Government Contractors I had networked with.

As I stated above, I wanted to give back to society. I volunteer regularly and am active in my community, but I did not feel that I was making as big of an impact as I felt I truly could. When I decided to leave S&P to explore freelance consulting, I did so under the guise of aligning myself with Government agencies.

I realised that there are a ton of Government agencies sitting on mountains of public data, but most do not have the tools or capabilities to use this information to make decisions. And ultimately, it is the citizens that suffer. So, my aim is to ensure that we use data when making decisions, first and foremost, but we must do this in an ethical and thoughtful manner. And I feel that if we can do that, we will truly give the citizens of Colorado the best possible outcomes.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I do a ton of check-ins with myself. As a data scientist by day and rugby player by night, my schedule is packed. These check-ins allow me to reflect on the projects I am working through, understanding my physical and mental health, and ensuring that I am still on the right path to hit my personal and professional goals.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

I am currently working on developing the Data Governance Strategy for Department of Revenue Colorado (DOR), as well as our Five-Year Roadmap. This involves a lot of data stewards across the Department, as well as leadership at the Executive Director's Office. Together we are working to advance DOR and pioneer the use of data in creative ways.

I started this journey back in February when I joined the Executive Director's Office. I reached out to my network of other CIOs, CDOs, and CTOs to learn what they were doing or how they had implemented a Data Governance strategy in their respective organisations. After a few months of ingesting all this information I simply spent the next month writing the policy. As of right now, the policy is written but will be left in draft form to aide in the ebbs and flows of our ever-changing data environment; that way amendments and revisions can be made seamlessly.

**“ As technology leaders we are tasked with innovation and changing the status quo. Sure, mistakes can be made but in order to progress we need to step outside of our comfort zone.”**

We are working on a training module that will be fully interactive and take a deep dive into the policy. I hope to get this out by 01/01/2024 to all of our data stewards. From there I will be conducting audits and mentoring sessions with our mission divisions' data stewards to ensure compliance of the policy. My estimation is that DOR will be ready for an internal audit over the next three years.

Some of the challenges we will face of the implementation of this policy will largely be a skills and knowledge gap. There are a few folks across DOR that have skills within data engineering, data management, and data analytics but not as many as we would like. I plan to hold trainings and providing resources through the Data Management Group I lead for DOR. In addition, our leadership does not have some of the technical knowledge to truly grasp the importance of this policy. I plan to approach this challenge by creating dialogue with both the data stewards and their leadership so that the data stewards can in their own words explain the impact and the benefits of implementing data-driven practices into their day-to-day.

#### **YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?**

Relinquish fear. As technology leaders we are tasked with innovation and changing the status quo. Sure, mistakes can be made but in order to progress we need to step outside of our comfort zone. And the thing that keeps us in our comfort zone is fear.

#### **PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?**

I want the Government to be more data driven and to create more partnerships with the private sector's technology initiatives. We are perpetually behind the private sector, and I feel we need to shorten that gap. Again, our role is to serve our citizens, so why not given them the best possible service using state-of-the-art technology?



## LUCI HOLEMANS

Air Traffic Organisation Cybersecurity Manager  
Federal Aviation Administration

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job will be telling of my age! In High school, I worked in a VHS rental store. In college, I had various job including being a bank teller and interning for a nuclear power plant agency. After graduating college, I worked for the Department of Navy on the testing of GPS systems. The Navy base where I worked closed during the DoD Base Realignment and Base Closure effort in the mid-1990's, and I transferred to the Federal Aviation Administration. I worked on several types of programs including voice switching, to GPS navigation, telecommunications, resiliency, and cybersecurity.

While working in telecommunications, my work with cybersecurity began. I have been focused on cybersecurity since 2014 and established a cybersecurity group within the FAA Air Traffic Organisation. The team is an outstanding, multi-disciplined, diverse, and high-performance team of 50 federal positions and 120 contractor support. This team ensures that cybersecurity is incorporated into every part of the critical infrastructure lifecycle. The identification, mitigations, and remediation of cybersecurity risks are vital to the FAA's mission of safety. I am proud to lead a team that enables the ATO to continue its mission of being the global leader in aviation safety.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I read books about new technologies, leadership, historical fiction, and mysteries. I also read newspapers, periodicals that cover geopolitics and world events. Reading me keeps me informed and also provides an outlet for stress relief. Playing board games and doing puzzles help me keep sharp. Walks, yoga, and meditation help me with focus.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

In my current position, I established and built the FAA's Air Traffic Organisation's Cybersecurity Group (ACG) as a catalyst for change in multiple functional areas including acquisition strategy, contracts management, enterprise architecture, and workforce development.

**“ Being resilient and adaptable is crucial in a complex environment. If the members of a team are well-integrated and know and trust each other well, the team can act effectively and efficiently.”**

Until ACG, the cybersecurity mission was decentralised and fragmented, which created competing and conflicting policies, strategies, budgets, and organisational confusion. A 2014 GAO report of the FAA's cybersecurity programs specifically noted these challenges and made over 180 recommendations for improvements.

I overcame considerable resistance to the organisational changes by successfully communicating the mission benefits of an integrated team, acknowledging and addressing the risks, and gaining support and ownership of senior leadership.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Investing time in your team makes a significant difference in workforce cohesiveness and productivity. I meet with my management team at set intervals to work on improving the team culture. We have monthly virtual All Hands with the entire team and include breakout session to allow for team interaction and engagement.

This has made a big difference in behaving as one unified entity during times of increased threat alert levels. Being resilient and adaptable is crucial in a complex environment. If the members of a team are well-integrated and know and trust each other well, the team can act effectively and efficiently.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Enabling more collaboration and partnership with Industry is becoming increasingly more important in these times of rapid technological changes, especially with respect AI and Quantum Computing.





## CARDELL JOHNSON

Director, Natural Resource and Environment Team  
U.S. Government Accountability Office

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I obtained my first work permit at age 14 through the Detroit Compact Program—an initiative aimed at providing mentorship and summer job opportunities to high performing inner-city students in Detroit, Michigan. Beyond maintaining high grades, the program required students to participate in several after school career exploration workshops, as well as mentoring activities with local business leaders.

My first job was a 10-week summer internship with a local suicide and crisis prevention centre. I provided administrative support to the counsellors and organisation's management team. I was given a few opportunities to shadow the crisis counsellors. This job had a tremendous impact on me. As a 14-year-old, I learned the importance of patience and empathy. It also affirmed my commitment to a pursuing a career where I could use my talent to help people and improve livelihoods. As such, I studied political science and public policy during my undergraduate and graduate studies. Along the way, I interned with several non-profit and government organisations. Upon graduation, I began work with the U.S. federal government. In 18 years, I've grown my federal career from a junior analyst to a senior executive.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Three personal habits that drive my success are: 1) expressing gratitude; 2) leading with empathy; and 3) sharing my thought and decision-making process with others.

Expressing gratitude is very natural to me. My family raised me to always appreciate and respect others. Daily, I thank people for their efforts and recognise their contributions to tasks and projects. Seeing people feel more confident, valued and energised from the recognition is heartwarming.

Leading with empathy positioned me to be a dynamic leader of people. I understand unique situations and believe that people cannot be best version of themselves 24/7. We all face challenges and setbacks. That is life. The most important thing is to work through it to get to a better place.

**“ Invest in your employee's development... Building the capacity of public sector employees to better manage projects; to be resilient when faced with challenges and setbacks; and to apply creativity and strategic solutions will deliver massive results for the public.”**

The third personal habit that drives my success is sharing my thoughts and decision-making process with others. I do not presume that I know everything and always have the best solution. I often tell the teams I lead “Just because I sit in this executive role does not mean that I’m always right. My thoughts are shaped by my experiences, just like you.” I like to walk through where I land on issues before acting. Maybe I came to the right decision, but the rationale was flawed. Or maybe my decision was wrong altogether. I find that this approach promotes psychological safety, inclusiveness and makes people feel valued—especially when the decision shifts based on their input.

### **PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?**

I am very fortunate to lead a body of oversight work on land management and water resources. Recently, I was invited to testify before the United States Senate (Committee on Energy and Natural Resources) on GAO’s wildfire oversight work. A year before the hearing, Congress specifically asked GAO to examine barriers to recruitment and retention of federal wildland firefighters. We were asked to look at this issue because in recent decades, the size and severity of wildfires has increased across much of the United States, as has the length of wildfire seasons. This has increased the demands on the federal wildland firefighting workforce who respond to those fires.

Many non-government entities have done studies to examine federal wildland firefighter workforce issues. The majority of these studies focus on pay issues. The goal of GAO’s review was to identify and describe additional barriers beyond low pay. Our analysis identified seven barriers: 1) low pay; 2) career advancement challenges, 3) poor work

life balance, 4) mental health challenges, 5) remote or expensive duty stations, 6) limited workforce diversity, and 7) hiring process challenges.

Through our report and my testimony before the Senate on June 8, 2023, we brought important issues to the surface. Many of the barriers we identified had been given much public attention but are equally important as low pay. For example, some firefighters reported living out of their cars, or tents because they cannot afford the cost of housing in their duty locations. Also, my testimony before the Senate provided critical insight and context on these seven barriers and led to government action. These actions will go a long way to support federal firefighters who risk their lives to protect our communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Focus on people leadership. You cannot get results without people! Therefore, it is important to invest in your employee’s development (technical and leadership skills). Building the capacity of public sector employees to better manage projects; to be resilient when faced with challenges and setbacks; and to apply creativity and strategic solutions will deliver massive results for the public.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My aspiration for government is for it to always be transparent and accountable. We serve the people! Our processes should always be easy-to-understand and efficient. Additionally, we must quickly adapt to change and be agile in our approaches in order to meet the needs of our communities.



## DR GARFIELD JONES

Associate Chief of Strategic Technology  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job was a paper route after school where I delivered the local city paper. My first real job in high school was a janitor for JC Penny. My career has taken a lot of different roads as I joined the military, worked in the commercial and government contracting, finally as a government employee. In my current role as Associate Chief of Strategic Technology I'm responsible for developing the strategy and providing guidance on the use of innovative and leading-edge technology across CISA, including articulating and documenting the future technology vision to achieve the Organisation's mission objectives and goals.

I joined the public sector because I am big proponent of service and the mission of protecting the public interest.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

Personal habits for success are continuous learning, being curious, reading technical journals, and knowing when to relax and decompress. I am always cognisant of burn out and knowing my limitations.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Quantum is a challenging concept to grasp. As 2020 ended, the pandemic was in full swing as well as the concern of securing

information in the event of the development of a cryptographically relevant quantum computer. Although NIST is proactively attempting to develop quantum resistant algorithms the Federal Government agencies were at the initial stages of understanding the potential threats.

We started to investigate and research how we could approach securing the agency. About this time, the new agency Director was confirmed, and a team was formed to deepen understanding of what is now deemed the Post Quantum Cryptography era. I was invited to work with some extremely intelligent individuals within the agency. During this time, the team contributed to the development of the DHS Quantum Strategy. As the working group started to develop our strategy for the agency, it then became a multi-agency collaboration with the larger DHS, NIST, EOP, ONCD, and other federal agencies.

**“ The team invested heavily in educating other agencies on the effects of quantum and how to effectively prepare for the PQC era... as we tackle this new frontier.”**

The main product of this multi-agency collaboration was the development of the **M-23-02**. As part of the team, we contributed to detailing tasks that needed to be completed in preparation for the movement to PQC.

The team laid out directions for agencies to ensure compliance with **National Security Memorandum - 10**. The collaborators worked extensively to disseminate information regarding the dynamic situation with the state of quantum. They reached out to industry partners and academia, conducted in-depth research, and developed an inventory collection spreadsheet to enable agencies to gather the cryptographic systems.

The team invested heavily in educating other agencies on the effects of quantum and how to effectively prepare for the PQC era. They continue to work closely with CISA's external partners as we tackle this new frontier.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

We can never really be satisfied with anything we do. Always look to fine-tune and iterate or innovate on past work. I consider it a privilege to serve. It is rewarding to know that every day we are working to make a difference for the nation.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

Collaborate, Collaborate, Collaborate! We have to work with industry, academia, and other government agencies. There is so much we can learn from working with other sectors regarding problem perspectives and solutions.





## RYAN MACFARLANE

Assistant Legal Attaché  
Federal Bureau of Investigation, US Embassy - Canberra

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job was at Fermilab in high school, where I helped a physicist with microwave-induced plasma research, essentially working as a ‘particle accelerator janitor.’ It was a fascinating start which revealed the amazing opportunities in government work. Prior to re-joining the public sector, I gained experience at Georgia Tech Research Institute, IBM, and at a small Internet security startup, working IT and cyber security.

I re-entered the government, specifically the FBI, with the goal of making an impact and leveraging my technical skills in support of a mission I deeply believe in. My two-decade journey in this role has been remarkable, and I am incredibly fortunate for the experiences I’ve had.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

I possess a strong curiosity and a commitment to ongoing learning, which has been a significant asset throughout my journey in the field of cybersecurity. My enduring passion for this domain and our community has been very important. My natural optimism and resilience have served me well, particularly in law enforcement, as you experience some challenging situations. I actively seek out mentors and provide mentorship whenever possible.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU’RE MOST PROUD OF?

I am most proud of my contributions to countering highly sophisticated state-sponsored cyber threats. When I began my career with the FBI, I specialised in responding to state-sponsored intrusions and conducting in-depth technical analyses. It became evident we were witnessing massive global intellectual property theft, primarily originating from China.

In response, we adopted a comprehensive, whole-of-government strategy to combat these threats, through technical operations, public awareness, and diplomatic efforts. Our early efforts laid the groundwork for the present-day global condemnation of state-sponsored cyberattacks and disinformation, underscoring the vital role of cybersecurity, international collaboration, and adherence to digital-age norms.

The importance of international cooperation in addressing cyber threats has never been more critical. I remain committed to advocating for increased collaboration among government entities, nations, and the private sector to establish norms and confront the continually evolving cyber threat landscape.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Take care of your people and lead from the front. If your team believes in a shared vision/mission and their leadership results will come.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

I would love to see genuine pride in our government. In every service rendered or interaction, it's essential to reflect on whether we can take pride in what we've delivered from the perspective of those we serve.



**The importance of international cooperation in addressing cyber threats has never been more critical. I remain committed to advocating for increased collaboration among government entities, nations, and the private sector to... confront the continually evolving cyber threat landscape.”**

**- RYAN MACFARLANE**



## PRERNA MAHAJAN

Chief Executive - Projects Oversight  
and Strategic Technology Branch  
California Department of Social Services

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I was lucky to start my career in Technology with one of the top Technology consulting firms in India as my first job was as a Software Engineer with Infosys Technologies Ltd.

After that I worked with Big 4 Consulting and Fortune 500 organisations but was mainly focused in serving Public Sector Clients such as State of California, Texas, South Carolina, and Oregon. My passion for public service and purpose to serve made me switch to public service after working in private sector for more than 15 years. I truly enjoy the purpose driven work of how Technology enables providing better services to the vulnerable population.

I am a global Women in Tech award winner for my passion to serve and mentor others while fostering diversity, equity and inclusion. I've been a speaker on Oprah Winfrey' show, Global Women in Tech forums and featured on social platforms to raise awareness on various well-being and workforce topics.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

**Meditation:** I've been practicing meditation for more than 15 years which keeps me grounded and calm in handling various stressful situations with great calm and poise as a leader. It's very

important for me to be mindful and prioritise my mental health first by managing stress so that I can help my teams to navigate through high pressure, stressful and demanding environments especially in the technology world.

**Journaling and Goal Setting:** I love to journal every day and set clear, specific, and achievable goals for the year and day which are essential for success. As a leader, we need to learn effective time management by prioritising tasks, setting deadlines, and staying organised to make the most of our time in the day so I journal my top priorities for the day to accomplish which helps me to stay focused on my goals and consistently work towards them.

**Empathy and Active Listening:** As a leader, it's very important to put yourself in the shoes of your team members to understand their feelings, concerns, and perspectives. Empathy enhances communication by allowing me to actively listen and acknowledge the emotions and needs of my teams. This fosters trust and open dialogue.

**Continuous Learning:** I am always hungry to learn new things professionally and personally and have a habit of lifelong learning to stay updated in my field and adapt to changing circumstances. It empowers me to adapt to change, develop new skills, and maintain a competitive edge. It also fosters innovation, problem-solving, and adaptability.

## **PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?**

As a public servant, I am proud of all projects which benefit the lives of the people.

The one project I am proud of is for State of California – Enterprise Human Resources to implement HR technology solutions across state. There has been a bad reputation of technology projects taking too long to implement in Government, but we were able to implement Learning Management System (LMS) across 28 departments and agencies throughout State of California within 1.5 years by offering the choice of pre-certified LMS SaaS Products for the entities to pick from.

This was the first of its kind product service offering done by California Department of Human Resources and Department of Technology and I am proud to be part of this Program helping the state entities to implement their solutions at a rapid pace to meet their employee and customer needs faster and effectively.

In addition, I managed and successfully delivered large-scale California's statewide Learning Management System (CalLearns) within a year leveraging SaaS solution and agile methodology utilised by 250,000+ state employees.

## **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Government has a great purpose, but the regulations, policies and processes are complex with lots of documentation and approvals involved to ensure the taxpayer funds are leveraged properly.

As government professionals, we should work to hack bureaucracy, in a positive sense, by finding creative and efficient ways to navigate and improve bureaucratic processes.

Before attempting to improve a bureaucratic process, we need to thoroughly understand how it works, where the bottlenecks are, and what the pain points are for both employees and public. We should analyse the process to identify redundant steps, unnecessary paperwork, or delays to simplify complex procedures and paperwork. We should simplify approval processes and ensure that decision-makers have the necessary information at the right time to avoid unnecessary delays.

We need to embrace a culture of continuous improvement to regularly assess and refine processes based on feedback and changing needs of our people.

Last but not the least, as government officials don't re-invent the wheel to solve the same business problem but collaborate with other state entities and private partnership to identify areas of overlap or opportunities for shared services. This can lead to more efficient resource utilisation. This not only save time, money but a lot of effort and frustration to solve business problem in a very efficient and effective way.

Remember that hacking bureaucracy is about making positive changes even if it's in small steps that benefit both government operations and the citizens we serve. Stay patient, persistent, and be open to innovative solutions!

## **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

Providing Public Services at the fingertips of people. We live in an era where consumer technology is available at the fingertips and a person can just order about anything sitting at their home but there are still so many public services still unavailable digitally or in simplified user interactive way.

The biggest aspiration for government leveraging technology is to create a truly efficient, inclusive, and responsive public sector that empowers citizens and enhances their quality of life.



## OSWALDO MESTRE JR

Executive Director of Citizen Services  
& Senior Advisor to the Mayor  
City of Buffalo, New York

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

I grew up in New York City, which was a melting pot of culture and personalities. I got to see firsthand how people mesh together and how people are able to align their differences to accomplish common goals, which would prove useful to me in the future. My first start to my professional career was a job as a counsellor and caseworker, which really helped me to finetune my attention to details and make thorough assessments. I've now been with the City of Buffalo for over 26 years and have the distinction of being the longest tenured senior level appointee. And even after 26 years it never gets old.

Municipal government, to me, is where the rubber hits the road. In the grand scheme of government layers, the local level is unparalleled. The beauty lies in the accessibility— you can be doing everyday tasks—getting gas, a haircut, or shopping—and casually run into the Mayor or a Council person and you can talk with them, influence decisions. My career in municipal government is driven by a commitment to equity and purpose and I take very seriously the role and the responsibility that's been given to us as municipal government leaders, our purpose is to serve.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

**Mindful Reflection Breaks:** Set aside a portion of your day for mindful reflection. Close the door, find a quiet space, and indulge in a 15 to 30-minute meditation. I am very purposeful about that because if you can't take care of yourself mentally, how are you going to lead other people?

**Attentive Presence and Insightful Observation:** Embrace the art of active listening, extending beyond just hearing words. Observe your surroundings and be present in the moment. This habit allows you to tap into your imagination, gaining a deeper understanding of situations and people, and open the door for innovation. It's not just about what you hear but how you perceive and connect with the world around you.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Currently one of my key responsibilities involves overseeing a municipal call centre, what we commonly call a 311 call centre in the United States.

When I was appointed to run the Division, it was known as the 'Mayor's Complaint Line,' and I realised we needed a name change. Complaints don't foster confidence, and I wanted our citizens to see this as an opportunity to resolve an issue, actualise their corners not just a place for them to vent. So, we revamped it, starting with a simple

yet powerful change – the name. We became the ‘311 Call and Resolution Center,’ emphasising our commitment to finding solutions.

The term ‘resolution’ became central, signifying our dedication to addressing citizens’ concerns. Now they know when they called, clicked, walked-in they could expect a resolution. Technology staffing (people) and process modernisation supported all of this.

Now, after about 15 years, we’re going through the modernisation process all over again. This time we’re looking at AI and making our system intuitive. We’re looking at chatbots, and mobile response features. It’s not just an upgrade; it’s a model for seamless integration, prioritising citizen satisfaction and employee experience too.

**“ I thought ‘why don’t we look at the areas that are most challenged and instead gather all city departments simultaneously to address multiple challenges in a targeted area.’ ”**

Building on the success of the 311 transformation and harnessing the data the 311 platform collects I created a new program and introduced the “Clean Sweep” initiative in Buffalo, which is also run out of my Division. This program has a focus that utilises data to support and enrich our communities. Clean Sweep takes a holistic approach, addressing entire neighbourhoods, not just individual concerns.

Often times, when there’s a problem, our mentality says to send one unit to fix it and resolve an issue. Instead, I thought ‘why don’t we look at the areas that are most challenged and instead gather all city departments simultaneously to address multiple challenges in a targeted (or you could say an identified) area. This collaborative effort helped transform

neighbourhoods collectively rather than incrementally. (In 2015 the Clean Sweep program won an award for [significantly reducing overall crime by 25 percent.](#))

Beyond the tangible improvements, Clean Sweep became a catalyst for community engagement and support. Departments, community partners, and volunteers collaborated not only to address existing issues but to connect residents with essential resources about job opportunities, health insurance, and education, as well as develop an overall rapport so that residents would know that we were there for them and available.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

As administrators, no matter how technically intricate our tasks may be, it’s crucial to keep the end goal in mind. Personally, for me, that means always prioritising residents and citizens, being intensely citizen-centric and people-centric in our approach to the work.

It’s about being mindful of the entire process— from start to finish. While not rigidly sticking to predefined endpoints, it’s vital to understand the journey and ensure that we reach the intended destination. The key is to put people first in our minds when doing the work. The philosophy of servant leadership resonates with this approach— focusing on how we serve and paving the way.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

I’m all about making government services more responsive, purposeful and people centric. By embracing innovative solutions, leveraging technology, investing in skilled individuals, and cultivating a purposeful culture of service, we ensure our commitment to continuous improvement. Let’s get those processes clean and focused, really orient ourselves toward being mindful, and serving folks in the best possible way.

# Global Perspectives

## RISK

“

We are operating in times of exponential change, as a public sector we need to be thinking differently and acting differently to have a chance of keeping up and staying relevant. Now is a time for courage, where innovation is the norm.”

- Jan Sheppard



“

Our risk adverse cultures and blanket approaches... often prevents government services from being agile... Learning how to create agile governance and to proportionately manage risk enables teams and organisations to efficiently operate with minimal viable bureaucracy.”

- Malcolm Luey



“

We need to ‘re-think’ risk. We often don’t give as much consideration to the risks of maintaining the ‘status quo’ as we do to the potential risks of implementing changes.”

- Wendy MacDermott





## SEAN MOONEY

Director of Digital Service and Open Government  
City of San Rafael

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first job was working for my father's environmental planning firm. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to work with the graphic design and archaeology teams surveying cultural resource impacts for development. I had a circuitous path to my current role that took me from working in libraries, to teaching public school in New York City, web development and then into the public sector. I have always wanted to work towards the common good and found the opportunity to work for the City I live in and contribute to making change in the town where I'm raising my family.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

The skills and habits that have helped me find success are time management, running efficient meetings, leveraging digital tools to organise my work, and leaning on creative problem solving to take initiative when tackling a problem.

In smaller cities one of the greatest challenges, and opportunities, is getting the chance to tackle a diverse set of community needs (in any week I could be working on projects related to public safety, homelessness, or sustainability). To avoid falling behind it's imperative to be organised as work comes in so I can prioritise my week, keep myself and my team on task, and roll up my sleeves when the work needs to get done.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

If I had to choose one project, I am most proud that our team was able to launch a performance measurement program for the City of San Rafael's City Council goals and objectives as part of a wider launch of comprehensive data program at the City. That program was a first step in a wider effort to bring data to the forefront of our organisational culture and begin quantifying the impact of our work for the community.

Creating a performance measurement program involved building alignment with leadership in the City Manager's office and the City Council and elevating the importance of metrics to measure the impact the City was making in key policy focus areas. Building a data program from scratch meant everything from identifying data leaders across the City to help understand what metrics we should be measuring, learning where the data lived and how to access it, defining the underlying philosophy of how the City should govern and secure data, and then telling the story through data visualisations.

**“ [The] program was a first step in a wider effort to bring data to the forefront of our organisational culture and begin quantifying the impact of our work for the community.”**

The effort was led by our Product Manager of Data and Insights, Vedika Ahuja, our Data Engineer Sherman Peng, and representatives across all City Departments and was a first step in an iterative process to improve the way our City works with data to measure our impact and work more effectively in response to our community needs.

Our performance metrics were adopted and approved by our City Council. Immediately our team began thinking about we can continue to improve the program and integrate performance measurement more fully with our goal setting and budgeting process. We are continuing to look at ways that we can bring data into daily operations, and we have integrated metrics into the structure of our work as a key component of reviewing the success of our work and scoping any new project with Departmental teams.

This project took over a year to come to fruition and at the outset we had to define the metrics we wanted to measure. Over the course of the year and as we got closer to the finish line it became more apparent that these might not be the best metrics to tell the story, but they were the metrics that Council approved at the outset of the project. If we did it again, I would have suggested we take the initiative to go back to leadership when we had an inkling that there were better metrics to measure and ask to revise them. It was my first year as a Director and I didn't feel in a position to upset the apple cart, so we ploughed ahead. Overall, we were successful

in delivering on what we promised, and we can always improve next time.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

The public sector is ripe for more creative minds and outside the box thinkers to help develop innovative solutions for our communities. All too often people are trained to stay in their lane, or see their role as constrained, which stifles the opportunity to escape the traditional confines of red-taped bureaucracy. I have been fortunate to be on a City team that embraces innovation and change. I know that isn't always the case at all agencies.

Take initiative to propose creative solutions or prototype process improvements that inspire leadership to consider a fresh perspective. When that work comes from an intrinsic desire to make things better, often it will be embraced. The key consideration for innovating in government is to consider whether it can outlive your place in the organisation or if it is dependent upon you to thrive.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

The weight of the world's problems lay upon the shoulders of government. Those problems won't be solved with yesterday's solutions but with creative, non-traditional approaches and collaboration across the spectrum of government.



## RICK OFFENBECHER

Chief Information Officer  
Wisconsin Department of Revenue

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

When I was 13 years old in 1979, my parents decided that it was time for me to learn some responsibility and work ethic. So, I became a paper boy for the Appleton Post Crescent in my hometown of Appleton, Wisconsin. Who knew this simple job would teach me customer service, account receivables, quality control, and logistics skills.

Since then, I have worked in a variety of industries from retail to restaurant, finance, and information technology. I ended up joining the public sector in 1999. This was an attractive move to me due to the level of career growth opportunities available, great benefits, excellent work life balance, job stability, and the positive impact your work has on citizens.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

For me I have found that my success is attributed to several personal habits. The most important is prioritising my health, sleep, and fitness. This is key to ensuring that I can give everything my best by always being well rested and feeling great.

I am a constant learner and strongly believe you can learn something new every single day, so I read a lot. I have made a habit of reading at least 30 minutes every day.

Lastly, I am very goal oriented and love getting things done. As a result, I approach my goals with a sense of urgency and a strong bias toward action. The glue that holds these habits together and helps make me successful is discipline.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

For many years, my team has been focused on multiple strategies that have converged into a successful technology organisation within an agency that has been recognised nationally for its innovative accomplishments. A few of these strategies include employee engagement, technology simplification, focus on innovation, and business application modernisation.

Employees are at the centre of everything. Improving employee engagement starts by demonstrating to employees that we value them by recognising their contributions, valuing their opinions, supporting their development, and communicating clear performance expectations. By doing this we create a better culture, reduce turnover, increase productivity, and build better relationships. This has resulted in happy employees who are committed to the success of our organisation.

Continually focusing on simplifying our technology environment allows us to create value for the agency in three important ways: by generating

financial capacity that can be invested in new growth opportunities, by managing risk, and by increasing our technological capabilities. This has allowed DOR to be more responsive and to innovate much faster.

Our focus on innovation is agency wide. In fact, all employees have the ability, and are encouraged, to suggest ways to improve how we operate. We receive many ideas every year, last year alone we completed more than one thousand enhancements to our systems that stemmed from employee ideas.

Our business application modernisation has been nothing short of incredible in what we have achieved and the impact to our operations and our interactions with citizens. Since we started our modernisation efforts, we have consolidated over fifty-five siloed applications into three fully integrated modernised applications. Many of these siloed applications were over 20 years old and required extensive re-engineering. With a constant stream of employee driven innovative ideas we are constantly improving. At this time, we have almost no technical debt and have modernised over 95% of our technologies.

### YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?

Ensure that everyone in your organisation understands the why behind what they do every day. To have a thriving and resilient culture employees need to enjoy what they do. They need encouragement and acknowledgment from their leader for doing a fantastic job, and they need to know why they do what they do.

The author Simon Sinek in his book 'Start with Why' said; "all organisations start with WHY, but only the great ones keep their WHY clear year after year." That means if you are a leader you need to consistently remind your team how the great work they are doing is contributing to the organisation's mission. It is easy to lose track of this over time.

### YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?

My greatest aspiration is for Government to be so good at what we do that our customers cannot believe it.



**Employee engagement starts by demonstrating to employees that we value them by recognising their contributions, valuing their opinions, supporting their development, and communicating clear performance expectations.”**

**- RICK OFFENBECHER**



## MELINDA STEWART

Chief of Enterprise Solutions  
Virginia Information Technologies Agency

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My first real job was as a marketing liaison for a mortgage company. This position relied on IT for accomplish a lot of what we need to do. While I appreciated the experience, I wasn't fulfilled marketing products just to be focused on the bottom line. After some time, one of my professors suggested working with a state agency on several projects. I jumped right in creating websites, marketing IT products and conducting business analyses. The work was very meaningful - everything I did directly impacted our Virginia residents and end users.

Since then, I have spent the last 15 years as IT director for two state agencies, including the Governor's Office of Virginia, before moving into executive leadership. Every day I'm grateful for the opportunity to support my teams, the agencies we serve and the Governor's Office - we all provide critical connections between Virginians and the government services they need. Our work in the Commonwealth has been tremendously fulfilling.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

**Refresh:** I believe that every day is a new day. Start with the mindset that you'll let the previous day go and start fresh.

**Reconnect:** I also believe in connecting with people and taking time to appreciate what others do. Check in with them - sharing a simple hello, asking what they're working on, and sharing positive encouragement goes a long way.

**Recharge:** Make sure to get sleep and recharge however works best for you. It's critical to function properly. When you are rested, it also sets an example for your teams that they can and should rest, too.

**Review:** With a fast-paced industry, it's important to stay updated on industry trends. Make sure to spend a few minutes reading up on current IT news.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

The work started as a project but became a full-fledged program, called Virginia's Website Modernisation Program. The goal was to modernise Commonwealth agency websites to provide an accessible, trusted and secure experience for all Virginians.

Our Commonwealth websites needed updates; they were lacking needed accessibility considerations and a cohesive look and feel. To overcome this, we partnered with multiple departments across every agency, including security experts, IT liaisons, web teams and

communications partners through town halls, weekly office hours sessions, a website and regular newsletters to understand each other's needs, create a program for the most critical requirements, and provide important updates.

**“ The program had built-in, incentivised opportunities to share progress and updates...**

**This supportive, partnership-based approach helped create a positive environment of progress instead of a mandated, negative focus.”**

It was a true partnership. We created a full portfolio of shared tools, services and solutions that everyone could use, and then we provided training so that everyone had the same level of knowledge and experience to achieve the program goals.

Since the program provided an open, collaborative approach, we were able to ensure that everyone had a stake in the outcomes. The program included central scanning tools for security and accessibility, and, together, we built a new statewide branding mechanism for all websites to ensure a consistent look and feel.

The program had built-in, incentivised opportunities to share progress and updates. One recent opportunity was a friendly competition among all agencies to share jumps in scores across several factors, which resulted in impressive movements and updates from dozens of agencies. This supportive, partnership-based approach helped create a positive environment of progress instead of a mandated, negative focus.

The team also created certifications for staff who went the extra mile to learn new technologies or succeeded using the new standards or frameworks.

The program has been remarkably successful. In just a year, we improved from 44% accessibility compliance to over 88%. We also deployed a shared branding bar to 100% of public-facing sites to ensure consistency. Using similar tools and programs provided shared knowledge and collective problem solving, which saved money, time and resources across the enterprise. This programmatic partnership sets us up for compounding success in future opportunities together.

My biggest lesson learned from this project is that people want to do the right thing. If you meet them where they are as a partner, you'll find that progress is much easier to make. Additionally, there are so many talented people in state government who want to share what they know and learn from others. Providing the right tools, working together as partners, and celebrating good work all pave the path to success.

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Partner with others, listen to challenges, be positive, share knowledge and celebrate wins together

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My greatest aspiration is to enable government to think and work collaboratively for everyone we serve.



## TOM WILLNER

Director of Enterprise Applications  
Georgia State University

### BACKGROUND AND CAREER JOURNEY

My father was a builder, and I helped him on various projects primarily during the summer months. The physically demanding nature of his work prompted him to encourage me to pursue a career in a less strenuous field. Heeding his advice, I became the first person in my family to earn a college degree. I have since worked in various industries and sectors within the technology field. Recently, I transitioned to the public sector in higher education, where I am committed to helping others achieve social mobility, as I was fortunate to do.

### YOUR PERSONAL HABITS FOR SUCCESS?

First, I prioritise my physical and mental health. I exercise six days a week, alternating between running and other forms of exercise. I also journal regularly, and I find running to be a meditative experience.

Next, I set goals that align with my core values and prioritise the most important tasks to achieve those goals.

Finally, I focus on continuous improvement through reading, deliberate practice, experimentation, and seeking out guidance from others with expertise and experience. I meet with a coach weekly to help me stay on track. At the heart of my approach is a commitment to providing value and service to others.

### PUBLIC SECTOR PROJECT YOU'RE MOST PROUD OF?

Lack of access when information is confined to silos and unavailable across related procedures can be a barrier to efficiency at any organisation, and one important thing my team at Georgia State University does is help surface data. Being in position to understand complete processes by making data accessible makes an organisation more flexible, better able to react and simpler for customers and stakeholders to navigate.

During my time at Georgia State, I have been particularly proud of the work my team has done and continues to do integrating data from various systems to provide more information and better insights to help our students find their way through the university experience digitally. Our systems are also becoming more personalised and dynamic, designed to step each student through exactly what they individually need to do at a given point in interacting with the university. Through standardisation, data integration and consistent interfaces, we are working to simplify the journey through a variety of institutional processes. These integrations have also allowed us to utilise more advanced and best-of-breed products more seamlessly.

By focusing on effective data and systems integration, we're providing a foundation for more efficient development of future technologies that use data and analysis to improve processes from enrolment to instruction, and many more.

**“ By making data accessible [it] makes an organisation more flexible, better able to react and simpler for customers and stakeholders to navigate.”**

### **YOUR TOP TIP FOR GOVERNMENT PROFESSIONALS?**

Having worked in numerous industries and sectors, I believe that the culture and people of any organisation is key to success. At Georgia State, I have the privilege to work with some of the most dedicated, collaborative, and effective people I've ever met. My top tip for government professionals is that any organisation can do great things when you put people first.

### **YOUR ASPIRATION FOR GOVERNMENT?**

My biggest aspiration for government is to deliver results for its citizens such that it is a trusted resource known for helping improve people's lives efficiently and effectively.





## About Public Sector Network

Public Sector Network is a research company that represents public sector professionals across Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA. It develops multimedia content, as well as roundtables, seminars, and conferences to suit current areas of interest to government agencies and their suppliers.

Public Sector Network's growing community spans across federal, state, and local government departments, healthcare, and education, allowing members to share information, access the latest in government innovation, and engage with other like-minded individuals on a secure and closed-door network.

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