

**Government
Business
Council**

Paving the Way Toward Mission-Aligned IT

A Candid Survey of Federal Leaders

Underwritten by



December 2015

Overview

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Purpose

The digital revolution has given rise to profound changes in the federal workplace, and, in keeping with the 2012 Digital Government Strategy, organizations are increasingly putting a premium on modernizing technologies. Modernization can improve productivity, service, and collaboration, but today's government agencies face a host of challenges in utilizing technology to upgrade the workplace and facilitate day-to-day mission objectives.

To better understand the state of federal IT from the perspective of the workforce, Government Business Council and Lockheed Martin conducted an in-depth research study of federal employees.

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Methodology

To assess the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of federal employees regarding agency IT, Government Business Council deployed a survey to a random sample of *Government Executive*, *Nextgov*, and *Defense One* online and print subscribers in October 2015. The pool of respondents includes those from more than 29 federal civilian agencies, including GS-11 through -15 grade levels and members of the Senior Executive Service. For more information on the survey participants, please refer to the Respondent Profile.

Executive Summary

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IT modernization efforts have been a step in the right direction

Although 72% of respondents report being completely, very, or moderately satisfied with their agency's IT services, respondents still report several areas in which their agency can improve. These include compatibility, collaboration, and data-oriented capabilities that can enhance day-to-day operations, both in providing service and improving business processes. In addition, a plurality of respondents feel that their agency is not spending enough on implementing new technologies.

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Agencies do not fully leverage the technology at their disposal

Federal employees are clear on how they would like IT services to function and assist their work. Device agnosticism, cross-platform compatibility, and availability of metrics are rated by the bulk of respondents as important or very important when providing better service to customers. However, respondents are also largely unsatisfied with their agency's IT ability to provide such capabilities. The same pattern applies to technology in the context of business operations. While data-sharing, program performance visibility, collaboration, and data connectivity are all identified as important features of IT services, few respondents are currently satisfied with their agency's IT services in these capacities.

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Many agencies lack a mission-focused strategy

Agencies may benefit from adhering to a cohesive, forward-facing IT strategy, as it appears that many organizations are acquiring new technologies on a piecemeal basis rather than with long-term interoperability in mind. This may be reinforced by a lack of communication or coordination between agencies and IT providers: 1 in 3 respondents feel that their agency's IT contractors lack an understanding of organization mission objectives, and perhaps as a result, respondents also report difficulties in identifying new innovations to solve mission challenges.

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When Washington lags a generation behind in how we do business, that has **real and serious impact on people's lives**. When we waste billions of dollars, in part because our technology is **out of date**, that's billions of dollars we're not investing in better schools for our children, in tax relief for our small businesses, in creating jobs and funding research to spur the scientific breakthroughs and economic growth of this new century.

President Barack Obama

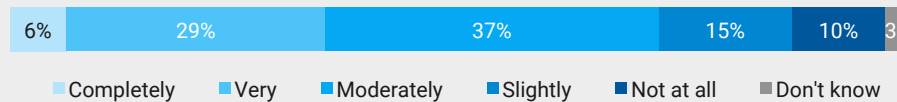
Remarks by the President at Opening Session of the Forum on Modernizing Government, January 14, 2010.

Research Findings

Agencies still have room for improvement when it comes to IT services

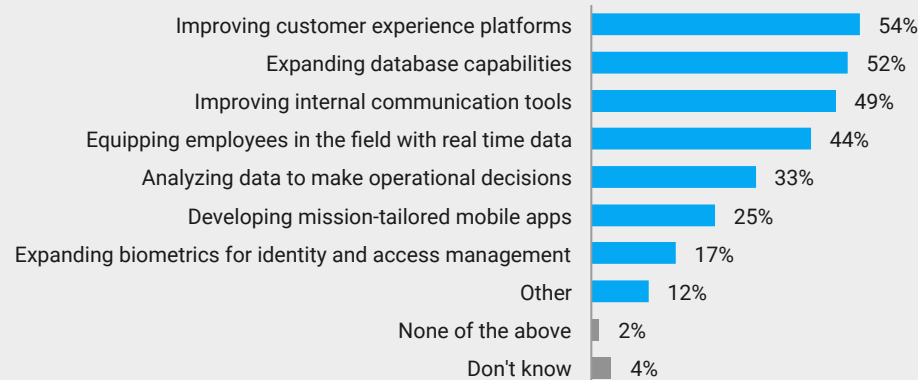
With 72% of respondents reporting that they are at least moderately satisfied with their agency's IT services, the government's push toward providing high-quality digital tools and services has been a step in the right direction. However, gaps in progress still remain, and the implementation of technologies varies by agency.

On the whole, how satisfied are you with the IT services your agency provides to its customers?



Percentage of respondents, n=433
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

In which of the following areas would you like to see your agency place greater priority?



Percentage of respondents, n=378
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

1 in 4

respondents are still only slightly or not at all satisfied with the IT services their agency provides to customers.

With regards to how agencies should organize their IT priorities, respondents support procuring and implementing mission-specific technologies that will enhance day-to-day operations. Specific areas include customer experience platforms (e.g., applications, web portals for agency information), database capabilities (e.g., records management, data access), and internal communication tools (e.g., file-sharing, presentation tools, discussion forums). These functions, if tailored and implemented according to specific agency needs, might dramatically improve both employee and customer experience.

"Other" includes responses such as cyber security, sharing data with other federal agencies, providing knowledgeable tech support, and greater training for employees.

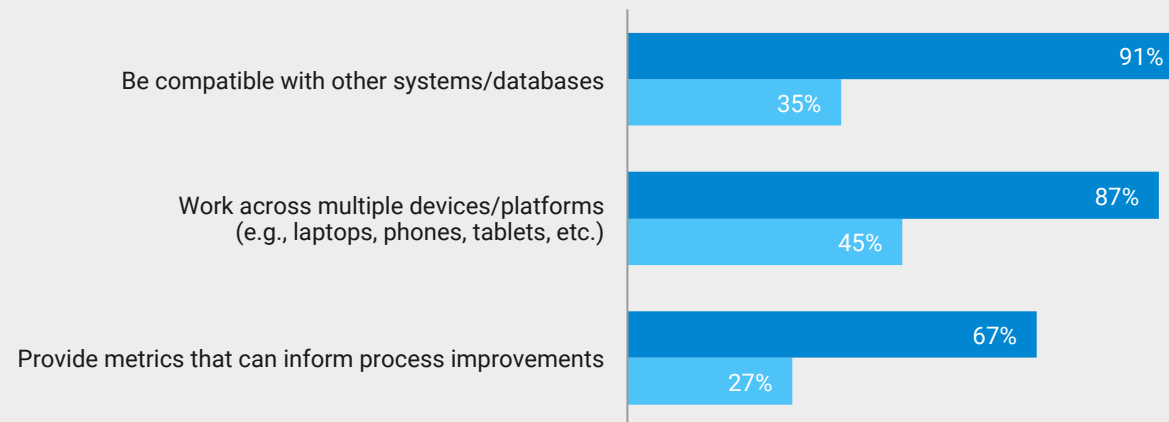
Agencies should focus on improving the service aspects of IT

In January 2015, White House Chief Technology Officer Megan Smith remarked, “We’re the country that created Facebook and Twitter and created the Internet. Why shouldn’t the websites and the mobile services and the way that we do customer service with the American people from the government – why shouldn’t it be that good?”

Federal employees appear to agree. When it comes to improving service, respondents have a firm idea of what agencies should be prioritizing. A clear majority indicate that it is important or very important that federal IT services be compatible with other systems/databases, work across multiple devices/platforms, and provide metrics that can inform process improvements.

Qualities of IT services that can help agencies provide better service

- Percentage of respondents who say it is important or very important
- Percentage of respondents who say they are satisfied with their agency’s IT in this area



Percentage of respondents, n varies, 381-395
See Appendix for further detail

However, there is a gap between how federal employees would ideally like their agency’s IT to function and the reality of current capabilities: 35% are satisfied with compatibility, 45% are satisfied with their ability to work across multiple platforms, and 27% are satisfied with the availability of existing metrics.

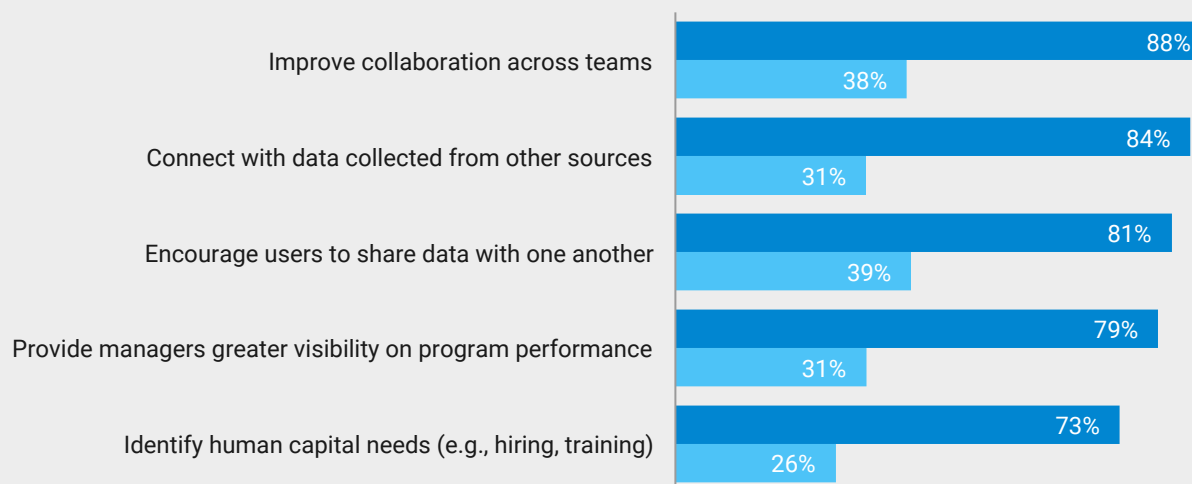
91%
of respondents say it is important that agency IT be compatible with other systems.

Agencies should prioritize technologies that can further business operations

Respondents note similar gaps when it comes to leveraging technologies in order to improve business operations. The vast majority of respondents assert that it is important or very important for agency IT services to improve collaboration across teams, connect with data collected from other sources, encourage users to share data with one another, provide managers with greater visibility on program performance, and identify human capital needs.

Qualities of IT services that can help agencies improve business operations

- Percentage of respondents who say it is important or very important
- Percentage of respondents who say they are satisfied with their agency's IT in this area



Percentage of respondents, n varies, 378-394
See Appendix for further detail

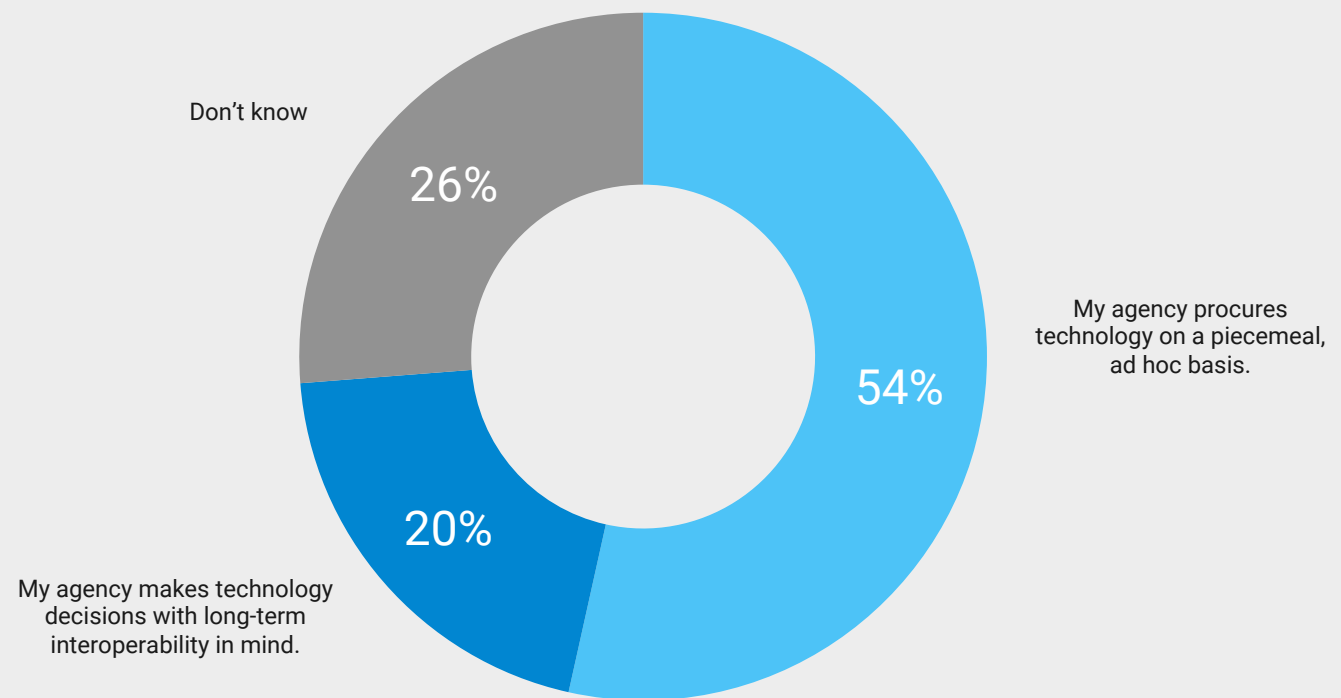
Although respondents are largely in agreement on the importance of the qualities listed above, few report satisfaction. Only 38% are satisfied with the way their IT services currently facilitate collaboration. Similarly, less than 4 in 10 are satisfied with how their IT connects with data from other sources, and even fewer are satisfied with how it encourages users to share data.

31%
of respondents are satisfied with the visibility on program performance their agency's IT currently provides to managers.

Agency technology decisions are largely made on an incremental basis

Respondents identify potential areas of improvement in the way their agency approaches the acquisition and implementation of new capabilities. According to respondents, many agencies may not be considering the long-term implications of individual IT procurement decisions.

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In your opinion, which of the following statements more closely describes the way your agency approaches technology decisions?

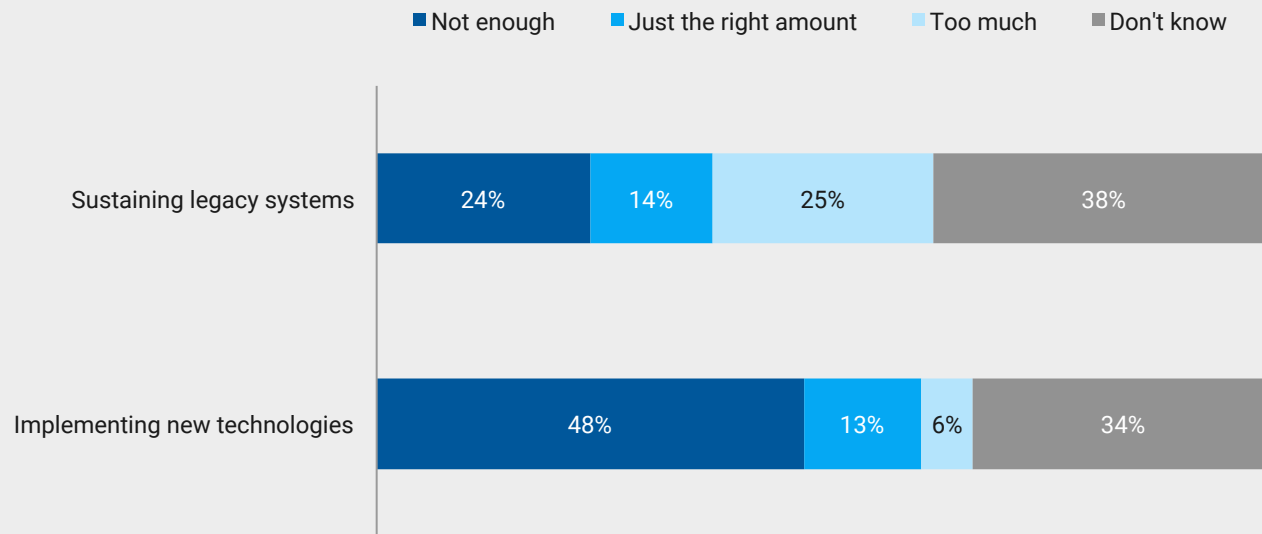


Percentage of respondents, n=374
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Respondents report an imbalance between types of agency IT investment

The study also points to difficulties posed by agency budget constraints, which may force IT leadership to make difficult decisions between maintaining existing technologies and implementing newer capabilities.

In your opinion, how much of your agency's IT budget is being allocated to each of the following?



Percentage of respondents, n=374 and 368, respectively
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

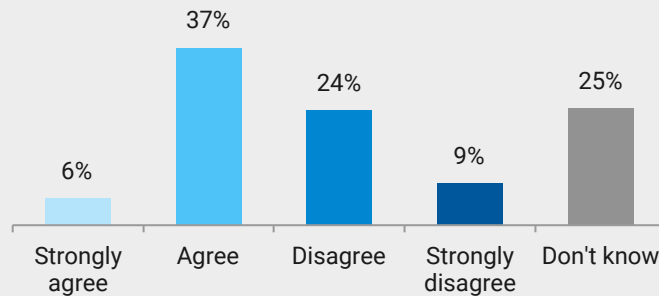
Respondents indicate that their agencies tend to focus more on maintaining existing systems rather than on implementing newer capabilities. 48% of federal employees feel that their agency is not investing enough in new IT, and only 13% feel that the right amount is being spent. At the same time, 24% of respondents believe that their agency doesn't spend enough on sustaining legacy systems, indicating that budget constraints may be impacting both categories of investment.

48%

of respondents say their agency doesn't spend enough on implementing new technologies.

Better communication between agencies and contractors may be required to address technology gaps

"The IT contractors hired by my organization understand the agency's specific goals and needs."



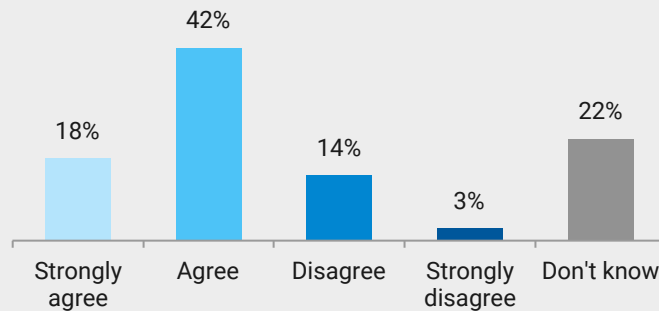
Percentage of respondents, n=375
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

1 in 3

respondents disagrees or strongly disagrees that their organization's IT contractors understand their specific goals and needs.

At the same time, more than 60% of respondents indicate that their agency struggles with identifying new IT innovations that can solve mission challenges. Together, these two findings may signal a potential disconnect in communication and collaboration between industry and agencies. As government looks both externally and internally to explore new technologies, better communication between both parties may help agencies to more readily identify tools needed to improve the way they do business.

"My agency struggles with identifying new IT innovations that can resolve mission challenges."



Percentage of respondents, n=375
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

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IT isn't an area of expertise for my agency and/or its network of agencies. Hence, it's critical to invest and partner with companies that know IT. A major investment is warranted to ensure we're able to proactively manage and deal with **21st century opportunities and challenges**.

Survey Respondent

Respondents anticipate greatest gains from productivity, interoperability, and capability deliveries

Although IT modernization is often touted for its ability to enact budget savings, respondents recognize the wide range of potential benefits beyond cost. Respondents cite greater productivity and interoperability across systems as the most positive outcomes of IT modernization, but appear optimistic in seeing further outcomes as well. On average, respondents identify 6 potential outcomes that could have a great impact on mission effectiveness.

Potential outcomes of IT modernization

Ranked by respondents in order of greatest impact on mission effectiveness



Ranked by Borda count, n=354
Respondents did not have to rank every choice

19%

of respondents select greater productivity as the most impactful outcome of IT modernization – the most for any answer choice. 78% consider it to be an impactful outcome.

However, although the two options were ranked lower by respondents overall, both strengthened cybersecurity and better employee morale were also ranked first by a large percentage of respondents (18% and 14%, respectively).

Respondents appear to recognize the potential benefits of even the lower ranking items listed. For instance, although ranked 6th in overall impact, better employee morale was selected as an impactful outcome by 72% of respondents. The lowest ranked option, improved citizen engagement, was selected as a positive outcome by 47% of respondents.

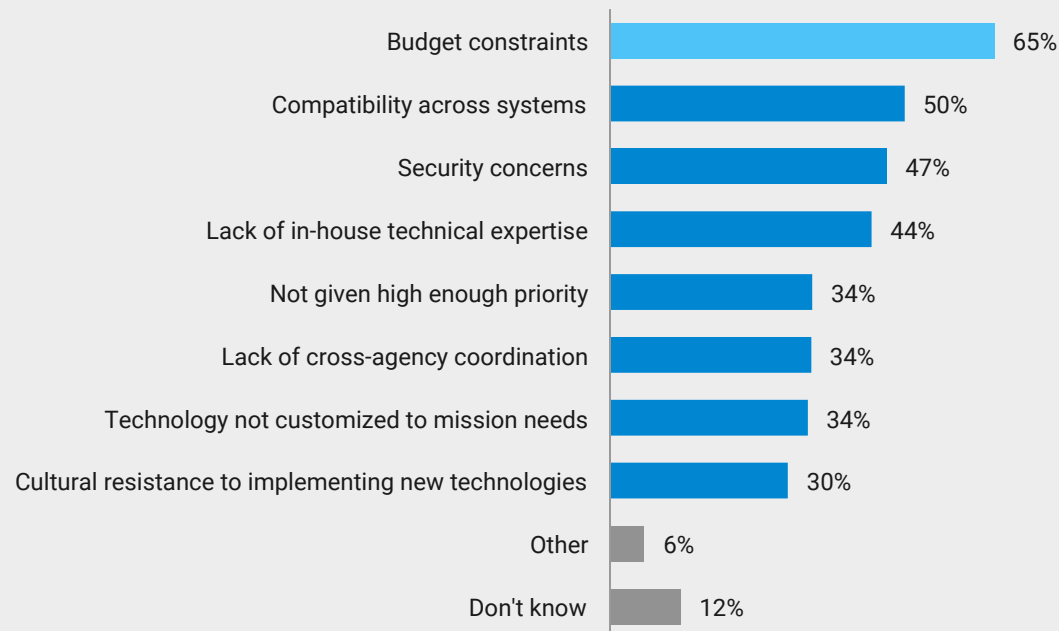
Respondents were asked: "The following are potential outcomes of IT modernization that could improve agency mission effectiveness. Which do you expect to have the greatest impact on your mission? Please rank your selections in order of impact. You do not have to rank every choice."

Rankings and total scores are displayed here using the Borda count method, where each answer choice earns points based on the order in which respondents placed them. Each respondent's top answer choice receives the maximum score of n points for that respondent, where n is equal to the total number of options. Each subsequent choice receives 1 less point than the one ranked ahead of it. Unranked answer choices receive zero points. Please see Appendix for further detail.

IT modernization efforts are most hampered by budget and technical issues

Along with devising and implementing an overall IT procurement strategy, agencies can also focus on overcoming specific challenges to leveraging mission-specific IT.

Barriers agencies face when aligning IT more closely with agency mission



Percentage of respondents, n=367
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

Although budget, compatibility, and security rise to the top as the greatest barriers, other cultural and logistical challenges appear to play a significant role in preventing further progress. Over one third of respondents say they believe IT modernization is not given high enough priority, while others attribute cultural resistance and lack of coordination as factors. In addition, respondents also cite a lack of in-house technical expertise, which may be related to agencies' inability to customize their technology to meet mission needs.

65%
of respondents cite budget constraints as a barrier to aligning IT more closely with agency mission.

Final Considerations

When considering how to align IT more closely with mission:

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Invest with long-term priorities in mind

With only 20% of respondents asserting that their organization makes technology decisions based on long-term interoperability, agencies should take care to develop a comprehensive, mission-aligned strategy. Rather than devoting an already-constrained IT budget to maintaining legacy systems and procuring incompatible, often short-term technologies, organizations might consider investing in tools specifically designed to further service and business operations, including improved customer experience platforms, database capabilities, internal communication tools, and real-time data provision.

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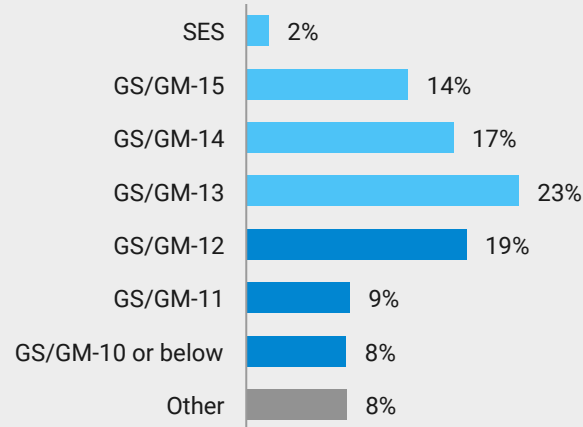
Ensure that IT providers understand agency mission objectives

Looking ahead, agencies might consider working more closely with federal IT providers to clearly define which IT capabilities would most enhance agency mission and long-term objectives. Currently, 1 in 3 respondents disagrees or strongly disagrees that contractors have a clear sense of specific agency goals and needs. Opening lines of communication between agencies and industry partners could help improve the likelihood of mission-enhancing IT.

Respondent Profile

Survey respondents are largely senior federal leaders

Job grade



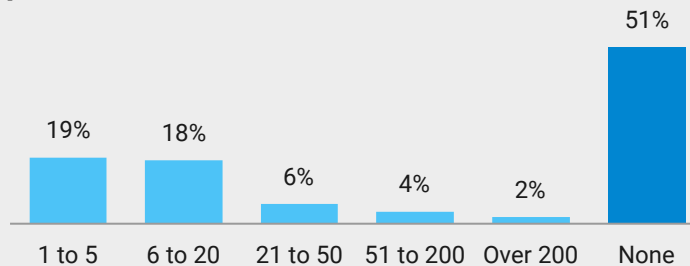
Percentage of respondents, n=367
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

56%

of respondents rank GS/GM-13 or above, including members of the Senior Executive Service (SES).

"Other" includes those employed under other pay scales or ranking systems (e.g., Military, Foreign Service, Federal Wage System, Executive Schedule, etc.)

Reports/oversees



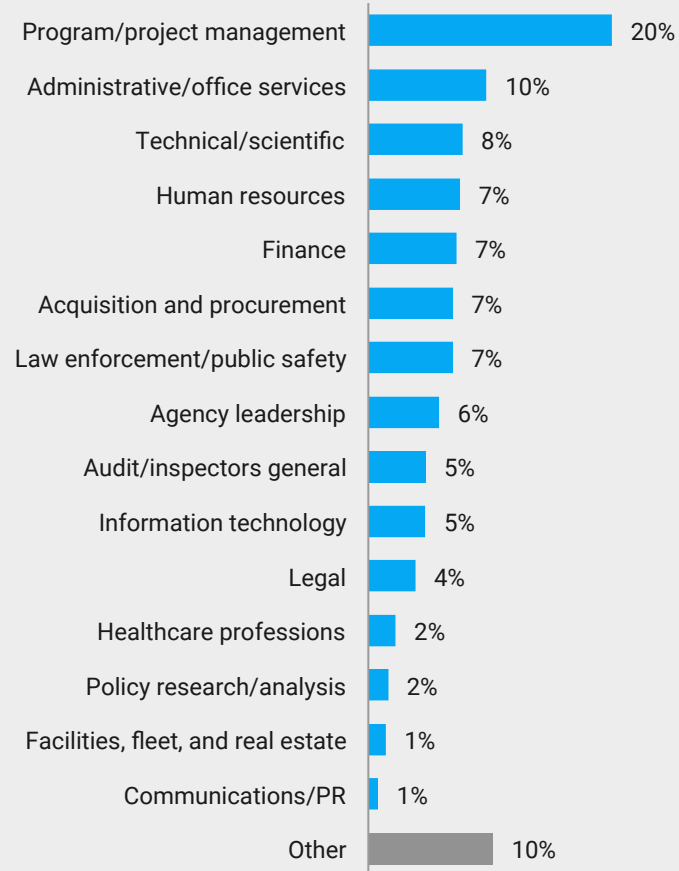
Percentage of respondents, n=367
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

49%

of respondents are supervisors who oversee at least one employee, either directly or through direct reports.

Respondents represent a wide range of federal agencies and job functions / Respondent Profile

Job function



Percentage of respondents, n=367
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Respondents were asked to choose which single response best describes their primary job function.

Departments and agencies represented

Agriculture	Energy
Homeland Security	Housing and Urban Development
Air Force	National Aeronautics and Space Administration
Interior	Labor
Treasury	Government Accountability Office
Veterans Affairs	Agency for International Development
Navy	Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Army	State
General Services Administration	Joint Chiefs of Staff
Health and Human Services	Marine Corps
Social Security Administration	Executive Office of the President
Transportation	Small Business Administration
Office of the Secretary of Defense	Multiple Departments/Agencies
Justice	Other Independent Agencies
Commerce	
Environmental Protection Agency	

Departments and agencies are listed in order of frequency.

Appendix

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When thinking about IT services that can improve how your agency executes its mission, how important is it that they _____ ?

	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important	Don't know
Work across multiple devices/platforms (e.g., laptops, phones, tablets, etc.)	61%	26%	7%	3%	1%	2%
Be compatible with other systems/databases	67%	24%	4%	1%	2%	3%
Provide metrics that can inform process improvements	33%	34%	15%	5%	2%	11%

Percentage of respondents, n varies, 393-395
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

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How satisfied are you with your agency's IT services' ability to _____ ?

	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Don't know
Work across multiple devices/platforms (e.g., laptops, phones, tablets, etc.)	45%	41%	14%
Be compatible with other systems/databases	35%	49%	16%
Provide metrics that can inform process improvements	27%	39%	34%

Percentage of respondents, n varies, 381-382
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Appendix (continued)

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When thinking about IT services that can improve how your agency executes its mission, how important is it that they _____ ?

	Very important	Important	Moderately important	Slightly important	Not important	Don't know
Encourage users to share data with one another	48%	33%	12%	2%	2%	4%
Provide managers greater visibility on program performance	41%	38%	12%	3%	2%	4%
Improve collaboration across teams	53%	35%	7%	2%	1%	3%
Identify human capital needs (e.g., hiring, training)	39%	33%	14%	4%	4%	5%
Connect with data collected from other sources	55%	30%	8%	3%	1%	5%

Percentage of respondents, n varies, 392-394
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

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How satisfied are you with your agency's IT services' ability to _____ ?

	Satisfied	Not satisfied	Don't know
Encourage users to share data with one another	39%	44%	18%
Provide managers greater visibility on program performance	31%	41%	28%
Improve collaboration across teams	38%	43%	19%
Identify human capital needs (e.g., hiring, training)	26%	43%	30%
Connect with data collected from other sources	31%	49%	20%

Percentage of respondents, n varies, 378-381
Note: Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding

Appendix (continued)

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The following are potential outcomes of IT modernization that could improve agency mission effectiveness. Which do you expect to have the greatest impact on your mission? Please rank your selections in order of impact. You do not have to rank every choice.

	Count per rank									Total	Borda count
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9		
Greater productivity	67	51	48	41	36	13	12	6	2	276	1875
Interoperability across systems	42	41	48	39	27	25	13	11	13	259	1585
Faster capability deliveries	34	45	50	43	23	25	12	11	9	252	1556
Streamlined business operations	35	53	39	34	31	22	19	11	7	251	1545
Strengthened cyber security	63	38	39	24	18	12	13	19	11	237	1514
Better employee morale	50	30	35	28	20	27	20	20	24	254	1435
Increased customer satisfaction with technology offerings	38	41	34	28	29	17	29	15	9	240	1415
Cost efficiency savings	18	31	28	30	30	31	25	22	16	231	1195
Improved citizen engagement	7	14	9	10	15	12	18	32	50	167	589
Number of respondents	354	344	330	277	229	184	161	147	141	-	-

Ranked by Borda count, n=354
Respondents did not have to rank every choice

Rankings and total scores are displayed here using the Borda count method, where each answer choice earns points based on the order in which respondents placed them. Each respondent's top answer choice receives the maximum score of n points for that respondent, where n is equal to the total number of options. Each subsequent choice receives 1 less point than the one ranked ahead of it. Unranked answer choices receive zero points.

For instance, if a respondent's ranked choices were 1) greater productivity, 2) strengthened cybersecurity, and 3) cost efficiency savings, those responses would receive 9, 8, and 7 points respectively. These points would be added to Borda count of each answer choice.

With 354 respondents and 9 choices, the maximum score possible for any single answer choice (i.e., if every respondent ranked it as their top outcome) is equal to 3186 points (354 x 9).

About

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Government Business Council

Government Business Council

Government Business Council (GBC), the research arm of Government Executive Media Group, is dedicated to advancing the business of government through analysis and insight. GBC partners with industry to share best practices with top government decision makers, understanding the deep value inherent in industry's experience engaging and supporting federal agencies.

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