GOVERNMENT WHITE PAPER

Pivoting for the Future: Building the Modern Government Network
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By definition, the term “modernization” is defined by change. In the business world, this adaptation allows organizations to align for future success. Whether updating a strategy, enhancing a product, or even changing a way of thinking — modernization is critical for organizations to become more competitive, efficient and innovative.

Across government agencies, modernization is also essential — especially for departments to keep pace with changing needs of the state. Whether updating policies and procedures or adapting spending and budgets — modernization allows state and local departments to serve constituents better. During the past decade, one of the most notable modernization efforts focused on the government IT network.

The Aging Infrastructure

Network modernization at the state level is an ongoing challenge. That’s because so many systems are old and out of date. As the public sector seeks to keep pace with big data, cloud, and mobility — infrastructure shortfalls become obvious. The numbers are sobering: Recent analysis notes three-fourths of all government IT budgets are spent just keeping legacy networks up and running. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports that — of the $80 billion the Federal government spends on IT systems — more than $60 billion is used for operations and maintenance, not innovation and growth.

A survey also reports nearly two-thirds of state CIOs categorize their IT systems as older and out-of-date. The National Association of State Chief Information Officers notes a majority of those surveyed are working with highly outdated infrastructures. In fact, almost 100 percent feel at least a quarter of their infrastructures are in dire need of replacement.

And if the supporting infrastructure needs improvement, the push towards network convergence is almost impossible.

Bringing the Pieces Together

A core element of modernization efforts, network convergence refers to integrating telephone, video and data communications over a single IP network. Bringing these elements together, governments can dramatically improve both operations and efficiency. By simplifying the structure, agencies increase employee productivity, improve service delivery to citizens, and enhance continuity of operations.

More than a technology, convergence is a modernization strategy allowing state and local governments to more effectively meet constituent demand for digital services and respond to a data-rich world. This evolution allows organizations to meet current needs, while preparing for future requirements such as increased demand for storage, computing power, communications bandwidth and other resources on-demand. Basically, it’s baking agility right into the network.

Unfortunately, according to a July 2016 survey by the Center for Digital Government, forty percent of respondents claim the current network fails to meet their needs. And while 58 percent are actively planning to transform these infrastructures, 60 percent say they’re constrained by insufficient funding and nearly 40 percent are stifled by resistance to organizational change. That’s a problem, considering respondents are fully bought into the benefits of network modernization.
The Case for Change

Despite a proven ability to accelerate cost savings, modernizing government IT environments is not always fiscally-driven. When agencies have the power to integrate tools and collaborate more effectively, they benefit from improved decision-making, better policy development, and more effective service to the public. With a modern and converged network, emergency responders, law enforcement and case workers can tap into unified communications when and where they need it, regardless of device. Remote workers can securely access and submit data from the field, use enterprise applications, consult with colleagues, monitor equipment and perform key tasks in real-time. This dramatically streamlines processes and empowers organizations to quickly and efficiently respond to events on demand.

Time and again, one of the biggest complaints about government services is lack of efficiency and reliability. While digital services are designed to tackle these issues, departments cannot keep pace due to older infrastructures. Sometimes, it can take as long as six months to plan and execute new services. But by converging the network, agencies can better scale on-demand. Integrated public services can be delivered in days not months – backed by performance and reliability to fuel rapid, reliable access to services. In terms of reliability, consolidated networks provide organizations with end-to-end visibility across all endpoints and resources. This enables users to more rapidly identify and respond to threats and vulnerabilities, while seamlessly managing resources to ensure maximum uptime.

But is this transition even possible built on top of the aging infrastructure? Sometimes, transformation requires a different approach.

The Reality of Network Modernization

But there is an alternate path for modernization at the state and local level. While insufficient funding remains one of the biggest barriers to advancing infrastructures, managed services can often help agencies make the switch.

Under a managed services approach, government agencies minimize upfront costs for capital investments, while additionally reducing requirements for highly skilled staff — ultimately contributing to reduced long-term operational costs. When converging networks, state and local agencies can tap into managed services to insert the infrastructure and management layer between the enterprise, cloud, and managed network services. With full visibility into network resources throughout the enterprise, Managed Service Providers (MSPs) can monitor and manage routers, switches and other technology to optimize performance, security and other key parameters. Ultimately, the approach dramatically reduces capital investments, creates an environment of predictability in long-term operating costs, and offers the ability to scale, on-demand as needs evolve.
Aligning with a Partner

The challenge for state and local governments is aligning with the right partner to implement the strategy. A strong partner not only has the necessary technology expertise to spur transformation, but can build effective roll-out strategies specific to the organization or department.

At the front-end, this means asking a lot of questions, such as: What organizational problems are we trying to solve? What mix of insourced, outsourced and cloud-based services makes sense? Do proposed solutions meet required security and compliance standards, and how can private data be kept safe?

A qualified Managed Solution Provider (MSP) helps navigate the barrage of technology and configuration decisions — allowing agencies to sort through their options and make choices that fit each unique situation. Specific to the “MSP checklist,” it’s critical to consider the following:

**Scale and Scope**
Evaluate the partner’s portfolio. Is it extensive to handle such challenges like big data and next-generation security — while scaling for future needs? The last thing anyone wants is a provider stringing together a series of disparate solutions.

**Hands-on Experience**
The chosen provider must have experience meeting unique challenges of the public sector. Check for successful implementations across not only voice and data networks, but also the cloud.

**Interoperability**
The most valuable MSP is one leveraging open standards-based technology not focused on any one brand or product. This simplifies integration of legacy systems, keeping it flexible for a multi-vendor approach.

Taking the Next Step

Network modernization is no longer optional. To deliver the highest quality of service to the public, drive efficiencies, and meet strict budget requirements — the public sector must align for the future now. Evaluate the role a valued partner can play within your organization and take the next steps towards transformation. Why not start by contacting CenturyLink today? There’s really no time to waste. Visit www.centurylink.com/sled for more information.

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