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Modernizing Public Services in Canada: Enabling an Experience-driven Government

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Abstract: The Canadian public sector distributes billions of dollars in grants and services to its citizens, who have come to expect the same kind of seamless experience with government agencies that they enjoy in the commercial sector. Making that a reality requires a digital-first systems mentality that emphasizes personalized, citizen-focused experiences and attention and surfaces the availability of vital services to Canadians who most need them.

The Canadian Grants and Services System

Each year, the Canadian government funds and delivers hundreds of billions of dollars in grants and services to its citizens. Individual citizens and organizations receive grants from the government for a wide range of needs, such as healthcare, energy, education, job training, housing, and the arts.

As part of its commitment to helping citizens access the services they're entitled to, Canada is working to simplify the often-complex process of navigating a maze of agencies requirements and documents. For example, Ontario premier Doug Ford's recent budget proposal included substantial funding for the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to further accelerate the identification and implementation of regulatory burdens across all of government.[1] Similarly, the province of Quebec has committed to the increased use of technologies such as AI as part of its core vision of "faster and more intuitive public services, powered by digital technology."[2]

Online portals, e-signature processes, and other technological-driven steps now supplement or even replace traditional grant processes, such as paper forms, call centers, and in-person interactions in far-flung remote offices. Still, Canadians must overcome a wide range of challenges that make it time-consuming and confusing to understand and access the full array of grants and services to which they are entitled. This puts pressure on the Canadian government and its many departments and agencies to become more efficient, transparent, and accessible in helping its citizens.

Technological Challenges for Canadian Grants and Services Delivery

Given Canada's ambitious programs for funding and delivering a wide cross-section of grants to its citizens, it has become far more challenging to manage the process using legacy systems and outdated tools. As a result, the number of technological challenges that must be overcome by the Canadian public sector to achieve its goals efficiently and create a more positive "citizen experience" are sizable and include the following:

[1] Source: Report: "Ontario Election: Here's What the Main Parties are Promising on Five Key Issues," thecanadianpressnews.ca, February 2025.
[2] Source: Joel R. McConvey, "Quebec digital strategy commits to digital ID by 2028," Biometricupdate.com, July 2024.

Legacy systems that use outdated and inefficient technology. Historically, governments across the world have lagged their private-sector counterparts in upgrading and modernizing their infrastructure, architectures, and applications portfolios, resulting in a hodgepodge of technology that is difficult to manage and inefficient in spotting opportunities to provide personalized services to citizens. Having multiple point systems for different applications, workloads, and grants/services delivery is fiscally wasteful and inhibits the creation of personalized experiences in services delivery. This results in a lack of full visibility into all relevant and timely data, creating a potential for errors and an inability to provide a 360-degree view of the citizen.

A proliferation of data silos. The inability to share data in a timely manner ultimately affects Canadian governmental agencies' ability to provide citizens with a consistent, unified, and satisfying experience. This disconnect creates frustration, as it fails to meet citizens' expectations shaped by the efficient, personalized experiences offered by the private sector. For example, individuals and businesses often must apply for grants, contributions, or other services through multiple, unconnected systems. These platforms frequently rely on manual data entry, leading to processing delays and errors. Implementing integrations that sync data with backend systems can significantly reduce application times, improve data quality, and lower operational costs.

Challenges in integrating new technologies. A lack of strategic direction in using technology to deliver personalized, efficient, and repeatable citizen services often stems from an inability to support transformative new solutions. AI and machine learning, in their many forms, are natural catalysts for modernized identification and delivery of citizens services, but many government agencies lack the trained personnel and in-depth AI experience to plan, develop, deploy, and manage important new tools. Even well-established technologies such as cloud computing and edge computing are difficult to implement without a strategic view of technology as a catalyst for more efficient and personalized services delivery.

Security vulnerabilities. The very nature of governments makes their systems prime targets for fraud. This is accelerated by the presence of multiple data silos since it's more difficult for systems to talk with each other, making it easier for hackers to manipulate systems that lack the proper authentication and verification. This is likely to result in costly and embarrassing data breaches, data leakage, and regulatory compliance or data governance problems.

Subpar system performance, especially at scale. With more and more citizens looking to leverage a growing number of government services, application performance is critical. The expanding scale and scope of systems and applications puts intense pressure on governmental agencies to optimize performance even during peak usage or risk losing constituent satisfaction. It might even force some citizens to revert to inefficient processes like paper forms and in-person or in-office transactions.

Accessibility issues. Even as Canada becomes increasingly sophisticated in the use of technology in both government and the private sector, there remains a tangible "digital divide" within significant portions of the citizenry, making it far more difficult for Canadians to adequately access the services and grants they are entitled too. Governments also must make sure their systems adequately anticipate and meet the needs of people with physical and cognitive disabilities, provide digital-first but not digital-only options, as well as ensure they support the country's commitment to bilingualism.

Taking a Platform Approach to Enhance Grant Delivery to Canadian Citizens

In order to help Canadian governmental agencies enable more proactive, personalized, and efficient service delivery to their citizens, technology modernization is a must. But that doesn't necessarily mean dramatically escalating Capex spending on new infrastructure and rip-and-replace overhauls.

Instead, technology decision-makers should adopt a "platform-centric" mindset in envisioning and deploying the right technology for improved delivery of grants and services. A platform-centric approach offers a number of key benefits, such as the seamless integration of both new and existing services on the same systems, as well as the ability to improve agility and enhance the intelligent identification of personalized services and grants for citizens.

This offers a number of key benefits for Canadian government agencies. First, it significantly improves reliability by creating and presenting a single view of the "customer" (i.e., Canadian citizens). A consolidated, all-encompassing perspective on each individual citizens' rightful benefits helps governments deliver personalized services without, or before, citizens do manual inquiries.

Next, it also creates a more secure and resilient operational framework with fewer security gaps and reduced risks from hackers. A platform architecture enables multiple data sources to be brought together quickly and efficiently, making it easier to systematically validate citizens' rightful access to services rather than relying upon traditional, inefficient, and often inaccurate manual processes for validation.

Additionally, technical decision-makers and line-of-business stakeholders should ensure that their systems support automated workflows that result in faster application processes, as well as real-time tracking and status updates.

Proactive and personalized identification and notification of services and grants to which citizens are entitled must be engineered into the system from the start, along with accessibility features identified under the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, in order to meet the needs of those with physical or learning challenges.

Finally, a modernized, platform-based grants and services system has to seamlessly link to additional tools and applications that are often used for purpose-specific capabilities, including electronic document signature, document management, authentication systems, CRMs or databases, and data analytics.

Adobe's Role in Transforming the Delivery of Canadian Grants and Services

Relatively few technology companies offer the right combination of applications, platform-centric architecture, and deep public sector to address the needs outlined in this paper. One organization that checks those boxes is Adobe. Its **Adobe Experience Cloud**—a suite of tightly integrated marketing and digital experience tools—helps Canadian governmental agencies deliver services and grants to citizens in a more personalized and efficient way.

The Adobe Experience Cloud is built upon the **Adobe Experience Platform**, a customer data platform and data infrastructure solution that integrates customer data from multiple applications, tools, and other sources for personalization and real-time profiling. **Adobe Experience Manager** is an application for content management and digital experience. It helps create, deliver, and manage personalized digital experiences across different channels, such as forms, portals, and websites. **Adobe Sign** is an e-signature and document workflow manager that enables users to send, sign, track, and manage workflows for signatures and approvals. Finally, **Adobe Document Cloud** is a set of tools for PDF creation and document workflows, including editing, collaboration, and document automation. Together, these and other Adobe document management solutions help Canadian governmental agencies create an "experience-driven" approach to delivering services and grants to citizens. The integrated solutions help form a seamless, personalized, and connected experience across the different points of access Canadian citizens use to identify and receive appropriate government services.

Adobe-based systems help Canadian governmental agencies deliver services in a highly secure manner, using web-based forms and e-signatures to improve efficiency and enhance the citizen-government relationship.

Agencies benefit from integrated analytics tools and AI-driven insights that personalize citizens' experiences with grants and services, helping to build a more trustful relationship between the government and its citizens.

The platform's lightweight design simplifies management and eases the administrative burden that traditionally consumes substantial time, money, and staff resources in services delivery. It also facilitates citizens' interactions by using forms-based inquiries into services and grants, as well as self-service web portals.

By leveraging AI, data analytics, and digital-centric architecture, Canadian governmental agencies can more easily and efficiently meet the goal of giving citizens the same kind of personalized experiences they have grown accustomed to from their private-sector interactions.

Conclusion

Canadians expect the same kind of positive experience in the delivery of government grants and services they are used to receiving in the private sector. They have also become increasingly outspoken in their desire to have personalized, proactive interactions with government agencies, particularly when it comes to ensuring they are aware of all relevant services and grants they are entitled to.

To support that capability, Canadian agencies and bodies of government need to invest in modernized, intelligent, and automated services to deliver that personalized, proactive, and positive experience. Those systems must help the government become more efficient, transparent, and accessible in the delivery of grants and services to Canadians.

Adobe has developed a broad and deep suite of technologies to help Canadian governmental agencies meet citizens' needs. Solutions such as Adobe Experience Cloud, Adobe Experience Platform, and Adobe Experience Manager align tightly with the Canadian governmental agencies' need for personalized, automated, and contextually aware insights into the needs of Canadian citizens. And, when combined with well-known and widely used products such as Adobe Document Cloud, these and other solutions help create a comprehensive approach for Canadian government agencies' interactions with citizens.

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