



Closing the engagement gap in government

Using Adobe solutions to create satisfying and successful online experiences

Governments today are being challenged to find ways to improve their service levels. Limited by internal processes and procedures that were developed before the digital age, agencies must nevertheless respond to increased constituent expectations, growing security concerns, and demands for greater accountability—often without increased operating budgets. Earlier investments in technology helped streamline internal workflows, but agencies continue to struggle with how to use technology to best interact with citizens, businesses, and other agencies.

Although most departments have created some sort of web presence, in many cases, these are static pages that simply present information rather than an effective channel for two-way communications or transactions. Early attempts at adding interactive capabilities to portals have not been successful, and a high percentage of users abandon their efforts midstream. The primary reason is that the technology was designed to streamline back-end processes, not to help the person who is trying to apply for benefits or file tax returns. As a result, agencies have failed to effectively engage constituents.

A 2007 survey of government and public-sector officials conducted by *The Economist* found that more than 80% of the respondents thought that engagement is either very important or important to achieving their mission. Yet, for many agencies, this goal of engagement is elusive. Citizens must still wait hours in line to receive basic services and benefits. Companies are forced to devote costly resources to comply with regulatory requirements—resources that could be better used to help grow their business.

This “engagement gap” has negative consequences for the agencies as well. More than three-quarters of the respondents in *The Economist* study said that lack of engagement interfered with their agency’s ability to fulfill its mission. More than half said that lack of engagement cost their agency 20% or more of its budget annually, which translates to millions of dollars wasted.

To close this engagement gap, forward-thinking agencies around the world have turned to Adobe. Adobe solutions enable agencies to create online experiences that help constituents navigate smoothly through government processes using intuitive forms, rich Internet applications (RIAs), and tailored documents—all with enhanced security capabilities. Agencies can also create online environments to simplify cross-agency communications, making it easier to share information and reach decisions, thus improving their ability to respond to their constituents in a timely manner.

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Support for both technological and legislative standards make it easy for agencies to develop, deploy, and modify Adobe solutions as their requirements evolve over time. The solutions also allow agencies to tackle their most pressing challenges first and address others in a phased approach, with each step building on the previous ones.

Whatever their mission—providing social services, protecting communities, administering taxes—agencies that use Adobe solutions have benefited from increased awareness and usage of the services and benefits they provide, dramatic reductions in processing times and costs, and higher rates of compliance.

This paper examines the causes, symptoms, and consequences of the engagement gap in government. It then profiles several agencies that have successfully tackled this challenge and provides guidance on how leaders can begin to close the engagement gap in their organization.

Challenges facing government agencies today

Government agencies at all levels are struggling to provide quality service to their constituencies. This includes ensuring that:

- Constituents are aware of the services available to them, and can access and benefit from them as quickly and easily as possible
- Employees are provided with complete, accurate, and timely information to make consistent decisions and provide appropriate services
- Leaders and external oversight authorities are able to measure the effectiveness of their efforts toward the mission

Regardless of their mission—providing benefits and services to citizens, processing tax returns, administering justice—agencies face several challenges in meeting these objectives.

- **Balancing 21st-century requirements against 20th-century rules.** Most government entities operate under laws and regulations that were devised long before today's technological capabilities could even be imagined. So even when agencies invest in advanced technology systems, their existing processes and procedures prevent them from taking full advantage of the systems' capabilities. For example, while technology now enables data to be transferred virtually instantaneously, many agencies have rules that prevent them from sharing information across borders and jurisdictions.
- **Constituents' growing expectations and demands for services.** People have become accustomed to and dependent on the conveniences of e-commerce, online banking, instant messaging, mobile communications, and other technologies that have made it possible to get what they want, when they want it, how they want it. Filling out dozens of forms by hand (even when the forms are available online to download), taking time off from work to stand in line at some agency's office because it's only open during business hours, or providing the same information repeatedly is unacceptable.

When faced with such poor service, many citizens choose simply to give up on the process altogether, preventing them from receiving the benefits or services to which they're entitled. For example, an abused spouse may be too daunted by the bureaucratic process to file for a restraining order, or a company may not be able to obtain necessary licenses to serve its customers.

Additionally, agencies face repercussions to morale and effectiveness as they see their mission's success undermined by their technological inadequacy. There's been a growing trend of people recording or videotaping their frustrating encounters and posting them online for the world to see, which causes embarrassment to the department and distractions from the mission.

For public servants committed to serving the greater good, this is an unwelcome trend. Even for those citizens who may not be dependent on government services for themselves, their personal sense of civic pride and duty is damaged by a stagnating bureaucracy. They don't want to see inefficiencies that illustrate the waste of their tax dollars, long waits that translate to lost productivity, and paper-intensive processes that disregard environmentally conscious practices.

- **Security and fraud concerns.** As mentioned earlier, many government processes in place today were designed at a time in which technology played less of a role in people's lives, a time when there were no such things as hackers, spammers, or phishers. But these undesirable creations of the digital world have become commonplace, and people are justifiably concerned about the privacy of their personal information. Even noncriminal occurrences, such as the loss of a laptop containing thousands of Social Security numbers, have made many constituents wary of sharing their information electronically. As new threats and risks are discovered, legislators enact new laws that agencies must comply with, forcing them yet again to reevaluate their processes and the technology that serves them. Likewise, as new opportunities or services are offered—for example, a government-supported prescription drug benefit—the agencies must consider how to deliver them efficiently while still protecting data security.
- **Accountability in an always-on world.** A by-product of increased expectations and security concerns is a greater emphasis on the need for governments to be more accountable and their processes more transparent. Citizens want to make sure that victims of a natural disaster can obtain assistance quickly, but they also want to be sure that the assistance is going to the people who truly need it.

As local and national governments become more interconnected, the concepts of working hours and geographic borders no longer have the same meaning. Today, agencies need to have processes in place that allow them to respond to situations at any time of the day from potentially anywhere in the world. A good example is the now famous Nigerian mail fraud scam, where investigators must try to track down criminals that target their victims around the clock from around the world.

Additionally, citizens are more aware of what's happening (or isn't happening) behind government walls these days because they have access to so many more channels of information, from 24-hour news networks to blogs that allow readers to provide their own insights into a story. In this always-on world, agencies don't have time to quietly fix problems and prevent them from becoming public.

The increased need for accountability requires governments to be able to better track their activities and measure their results. It also requires them to locate and share information on a moment's notice. These requirements are virtually impossible to meet when critical data is tied to a piece of paper in a manila folder under a stack of files on someone's desk.

- **Budgetary constraints.** There's nothing new about the requirement to do more with less. However, as demand for services continues to increase because of the economic downturn and an aging population, it's become even more important for agencies to find ways to deliver these services within the same operating budgets. An investment in technology is a critical component of the solution.

When it comes to such investments, governments must carefully examine which ones provide the greatest return, taking into account the upfront expenditures on software and hardware as well as ongoing costs, like maintenance and user training. Additionally, agencies must balance their desire to take advantage of new technologies against their need to ensure that the technologies have proven to be reliable and effective (typically based on adoption within the commercial sector). Finally, they must also consider whether the systems can scale and adapt as requirements grow over time.

How technology helps—and how it doesn't

There's no question that technology has helped agencies become more efficient in many aspects of carrying out their mission. However, the downside of technology is that it has often increased complexity for agencies at a time when greater simplification would be more welcome.

For instance, many departments have implemented ERP, content management, and other large-scale applications designed to serve back-office activities. These have helped streamline internal workflows and basic administrative functions such as payroll processing, leave requests, and expense claims. However, these types of systems are not designed to support a critical area for service improvement: helping agencies interact efficiently with their constituents, other agencies, and third-party service providers.

While governments have made great strides in providing information to citizens through departmental websites, most of these portals serve mainly as a one-way information delivery system. They rarely have the depth of capability to support two-way interactions between agencies and those they serve.

Government-issued health insurance is an excellent example of a complex process that begins with enrolling a citizen into a program and then coordinating activities among multiple agencies and partners to ensure that benefits are being delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible. It's also an excellent example of the many types of challenges agencies are facing.

Even the steps required to simply get a person's name into the system can be overwhelming. Like most government activities, it begins with a form or, more commonly, several forms. So the first question that agencies must face is how to get these forms to the applicant. A person who is very comfortable with technology and familiar with conducting electronic transactions will expect to be able to access information and complete and submit a form online. At the other end of the spectrum are constituents who prefer to do things the way they always have, using the paper forms that are familiar to them. They may not have access to a computer, or they're not comfortable sending personal data over the Internet, or they simply prefer dealing with agency employees face-to-face or over the phone.

To satisfy both groups, many agencies have created separate processes—an electronic one and a manual, paper-based one. Others, because of resource constraints, have simply chosen to go with the lowest common denominator. Both approaches create inefficiency.

- Employees spend more time on routine data entry and less on constituent assistance.
- Rekeying information into multiple systems can cause data-entry errors such as the creation of duplicate IDs and other inaccuracies that result in slow service or poor decisions.
- Missing or incomplete information requires employees to go back to constituents, further delaying the process.
- Agency employees who provide call-center support don't have access to the same forms and applications, nor to information already provided through other channels, so they are unable to provide consistent assistance across communications channels.
- The status of an application becomes difficult to track across processes.
- Constituents receive information that is inapplicable or inaccurate for their specific situations.

These problems add up to frustrated constituents, wasted resources, lack of transparency and accountability, and compromised data integrity and security.

The above scenario describes the challenges in terms of capturing and sharing information with constituents. Agencies also need to share data with other departments and agencies—each of which may have back-end systems that are incompatible with one another. It's easy to see how processes can break down at any stage. In such cases, technology becomes a disabler rather than an enabler.

The engagement gap

Based on its findings from a study conducted in 2007, *The Economist* defines engagement as “the extent to which an agency creates meaningful and sustainable interactions with the users of its services, with the goal of improving user participation, compliance, and satisfaction.”¹

Based on that definition, it’s clear that most agencies today are experiencing at least some level of gap in their engagement capabilities. Some of the key symptoms that can help agencies identify the extent of their own engagement gap include:

- **Overabundance of paper.** Wherever paper is used in a process, there’s a strong likelihood of missing information, data entry errors, misplaced files, and other problems that make it difficult to provide the level of service demanded by constituents.
- **Lack of adoption of services.** Many agencies have provided some kind of online forms believing that would address their electronic government requirements, only to discover that many users run into difficulties—such as application and platform incompatibility—that cause them to give up and return to more familiar processes. The greater the rate of abandonment, the greater the engagement gap.
- **Inability to locate information.** When data is collected from various sources and then stored across multiple systems, employees find it difficult to obtain all the information they need to make decisions or even to provide constituents with simple updates of their status.
- **Overambitious plans.** Many agencies’ technology strategies involve budgets that run into the millions of dollars for multiyear projects that require ripping out existing systems. In many cases, by the time the new systems are deployed, they’ve already become obsolete.
- **Using technology to “pave the cow path”.** Many organizations have difficulty recognizing that the engagement problem isn’t with the technology—it’s with the underlying process. When they implement electronic-based systems to replicate an inefficient paper-based process, the result is not an improvement in the engagement gap, but rather a faster and more automated version of the same problem.
- **Inability to measure results.** If agencies have no way of understanding whether what they’re doing is working well or not, they can’t identify which processes need to be fixed.

When agencies find themselves dealing with any of the above situations, it’s a good bet that the gap between their services and those serviced will only widen.

How Adobe can help close the engagement gap

Many government agencies are already using Adobe solutions to better engage with their constituents. For example, the U.K. Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) has implemented solutions to streamline their processes for reconciling payments to local authorities, allowing municipalities to provide housing benefits more efficiently to their citizens. The Kane County Circuit Court in Illinois chose Adobe solutions to reduce the time required to issue orders of protection for victims of domestic violence. The challenges faced by these and other agencies, and the results they achieved by adopting Adobe solutions, are described later in this paper.

Adobe solutions have enabled agencies to dramatically reduce the amount of paper moving around the office, thus eliminating a major source of delays and errors. Because these solutions are based on familiar applications that are already in widespread use, like Adobe® Reader® and Adobe Flash®, agencies have found that citizens are more comfortable adopting the new systems, and are less likely to abandon a process midstream. Employees are also able to easily find the information they need in a single location, regardless of where the raw data may be stored, so productivity is greatly increased.

Agencies can also better measure the results of their efforts by tracking a process from beginning to end and discovering bottlenecks and inefficiencies that may be preventing effective service. Tracking also helps agencies discover an underlying process problem, so they can take the appropriate actions.

¹The engaged constituent: Meeting the challenge of engagement in the public sector. *The Economist Intelligence Unit*, www.adobe.com/engagement.

Adobe's technology platform

Adobe solutions for government are powered by Adobe® LiveCycle® ES (Enterprise Suite).

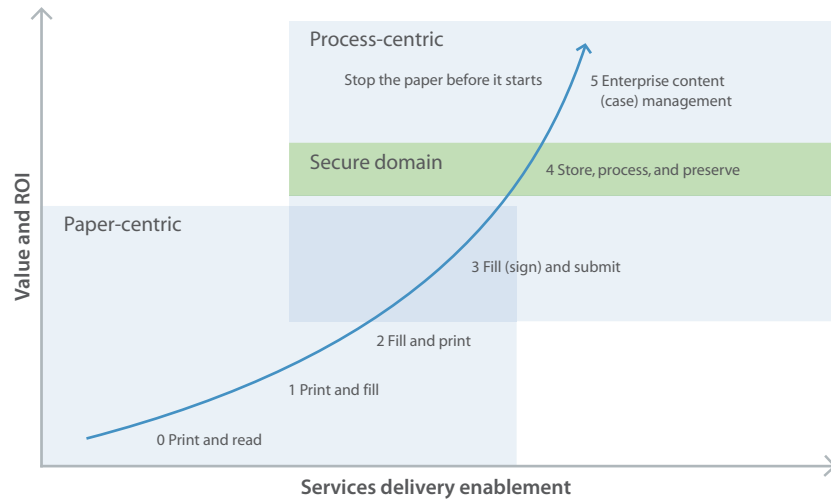
Adobe LiveCycle ES can help agencies:

- Build more engaging experiences that scale from paper forms to rich and interactive online applications
- Extend the enterprise with new applications that span data capture, process orchestration, and document generation—inside and outside the firewall
- Protect sensitive information to inspire confidence on both ends of a transaction
- Simplify cross-agency information sharing and collaboration
- Reduce development time with intuitive and integrated developer resources

To learn more about LiveCycle, visit www.adobe.com/products/livecycle.

By deploying Adobe solutions in stages, agencies can deal with their most pressing problems first and then introduce additional capabilities that build on the work already done. This way, full enterprise-scale solutions can be constructed using a phased approach as resources allow, without requiring a major upfront investment in time, money, or resources. Also, because the solutions are based on standard technologies like XML and PDF, agencies reduce the risk of investing in systems that will be obsolete by the time they're rolled out.

By increasing adoption rates, reducing processing times, and enhancing citizen satisfaction, governments at all levels can deliver on their mission more effectively and efficiently.



Services and benefits delivery value curve: As agencies leverage Adobe solutions to help them deliver services and benefits more efficiently, they achieve greater value and ROI from their investment.

Intuitive, dynamic forms

Many processes in government start with a form—tax returns, benefit applications, information requests—so that's the logical first place for dealing with the engagement gap.

By making electronic forms more intuitive and dynamic, agencies can help their constituents and employees fill them out faster and with fewer errors. These forms can be delivered as guided wizards or as intelligent PDF documents, both of which provide built-in capabilities for prepopulating fields, validating data, and tailoring the forms so that only those sections that are relevant to any specific situation are displayed. Agency call-center workers can also access the identical forms, prepopulated with data that has already been provided. So when citizens phone the agency with questions, employees are better prepared to assist them.

Because users interact with these forms using familiar client applications like Adobe Reader, Adobe Flash Player, and web browsers, agencies who adopt Adobe solutions achieve high rates of user adoption. For example, Australia's Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research (DIISR) was able to simplify how small to medium enterprise businesses interact with government agencies for business assistance programs and services. Because this system enabled businesses to fill out forms electronically using Adobe Reader, an application they were already comfortable using, a major potential barrier to change was removed.

Australia's DIISR uses Adobe PDF forms that can be completed by local businesses using the free Adobe Reader.

The U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has been offering its huge inventory of tax forms in PDF for years. However, while the agency also made it possible to complete and submit some of these forms electronically, they discovered that many filers still preferred to print the completed forms and mail them for processing. As a result, IRS employees were spending too much time on routine data entry tasks, slowing down the process and increasing the risk of errors. Using Adobe solutions, the agency now includes 2D barcodes on many of their fillable PDF forms, so when the paper copies arrive, they can be scanned. The stored data is easily extracted and quickly reintegrated into the automated workflow, speeding up return processing and freeing staff for more value-added activities.

These forms can also be used on virtually every major device and operating system, providing constituents and employees with many more options for working together. For example, victims of a natural disaster could apply for benefits faster and more easily if relief workers were able to enter data offline into laptops or tablet PCs while they're on-site, and then upload the information when they reconnect with their office systems. The forms can also be delivered in a format that supports accessibility requirements to ensure that citizens with disabilities can use them as well.

Another benefit of Adobe forms is that they allow agencies to support paper-based workflows for those constituents who are not able or willing to share data online. A person could choose to save the same form locally, fill it in offline, and then print it with a dynamic 2D barcode that contains all the data entered. When the constituent submits the paper form in person or by mail, the barcode is scanned to extract the data into the agency's back-end system. The information can then be reintegrated into the automated processes, thus eliminating the costs, errors, and delays that arise from manual data entry.

The Ministry of Justice of the Generalitat de Catalunya in Spain uses the above approach for several of its forms, such as one that community-based associations must submit whenever there is a change to their board memberships. In addition to streamlining the data capture process, the Ministry also benefits because they can use the exact same forms for online and print requirements, significantly lowering their development costs.

Enhanced information protection and control

Intelligent documents and forms can also incorporate information protection and controls that are recognized by Adobe Reader, the free application that already resides on most people's computers and other electronic devices. These measures allow constituents to trust that they're dealing with the agency and not an imposter, and that the information they share is protected from unauthorized access or modifications, whether intentional or not.

Adobe solutions support critical security capabilities such as digital signatures, third-party document certification, customized distribution and access controls, and rights expiration and revocation to help create a trusted relationship between agencies and their constituents.

For victims of domestic violence, waiting days to be granted an order of protection can cause undue hardship. The Kane County Circuit Court in Illinois has developed a system using Adobe solutions that has significantly reduced processing times for issuing these critical protection documents.

Applicants can now access intelligent PDF forms online that help guide them through the completion process, which includes applying an electronic signature. After the forms have been electronically submitted, they are automatically routed to the appropriate judge for approval and then sent to the county clerk's office, which e-mails the official documents to the sheriff's office.

"With Adobe solutions, we overcome obstacles to connecting with our constituents and collaborating across agencies," says Deborah Seyller, Clerk of the Circuit Court. "Processes that took hours can now be handled in a fraction of the time and at a fraction of the cost. Given our agency's commitment to excellent service and efficiency, the more automated processes support our success."

For example, the Tribunale di Cremona in Italy protects trial-related documents using Adobe digital signatures and rights management capabilities. "These features are critical," says Pierpaolo Beluzzi, the court's District Representative. "A trial transcript can be shared among participants, downloaded, digitally signed just as if participants were physically next to each other. In addition, the transcript goes through a workflow and is automatically added to the remaining court papers."

Tailored documents

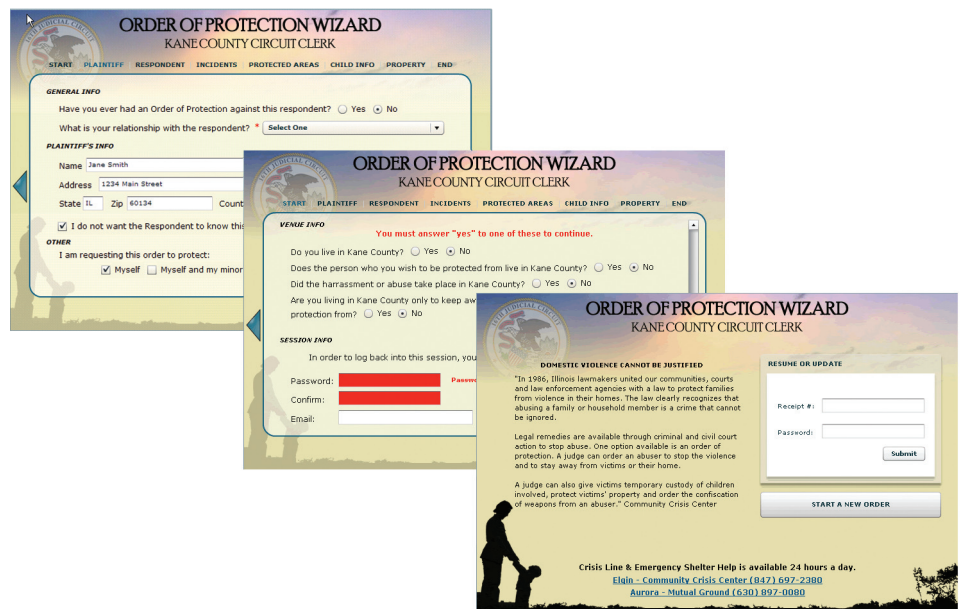
Governments aren't just in the business of gathering information—they also need to disseminate it. For example, when an individual applies for welfare benefits, the agency who receives the request needs to work with several third parties, such as nonprofit organizations, to provide the assistance. It's critical that everyone receives the correct information as quickly as possible.

With Adobe solutions, agencies can easily generate documents that are tailored to each individual situation. Forms and other correspondence can automatically be prepopulated with the data that has been captured during the application process, even if that data resides across multiple internal systems. Customized boilerplate information can also be included. For example, agencies can provide benefit recipients with a packet of documents that explains their rights and responsibilities and include a list of local contact information that is automatically generated based on the person's postal code. For example, the U.K. DWP can now create separate versions of their payment claim forms to accommodate slightly different processes used by local authorities in Scotland and Wales, and also generate customized guidance notes and cover letters to go along with the forms.

This kind of immediate, clear, and accurate information helps ensure that everyone involved in the process has what they need so that the constituent receives the best service possible.

Guided experiences

Instead of simply providing electronic versions of paper forms with text-based instructions, agencies can use Adobe solutions to create RIAs to help guide users through the experience from beginning to end. These applications can incorporate rich content, such as audio, video, animations, and 3D renderings, to illustrate the proper procedures.



The Kane County Circuit Court uses wizards to help people apply for orders of protection. After a certain piece of data is entered—for example, the applicant's name—it automatically populates that field everywhere it's required, saving time and reducing the risk of errors.

Adobe solutions reduce barriers to adoption with:

- Universal viewers: Adobe Reader and Adobe Flash
- Universal format: PDF
- Accessibility features
- Paper-to-digital compatibility
- Offline support
- Paper fidelity
- Document security

Developers can also create RIAs that serve as dashboards to enable managers to access information quickly and make decisions based on multiple sources of information.

Improved cross-agency communications

Many government services require cooperation among several agencies. Getting the right information to the right people as quickly and conveniently as possible is critical to ensuring that the right decisions are made and acted upon in a timely and effective manner.

Agencies can use Adobe solutions for sharing information in real time to simplify collaboration among all participants, across levels of government, jurisdictions, and time zones. For example, the Tribunale di Cremona uses Adobe solutions to enable judges, lawyers, detainees, and witnesses to participate in a trial without being physically present in the courtroom.

Agencies can also use the solutions to provide on-demand training, allowing employees to schedule their professional development around their other work priorities, so service levels are not negatively impacted.

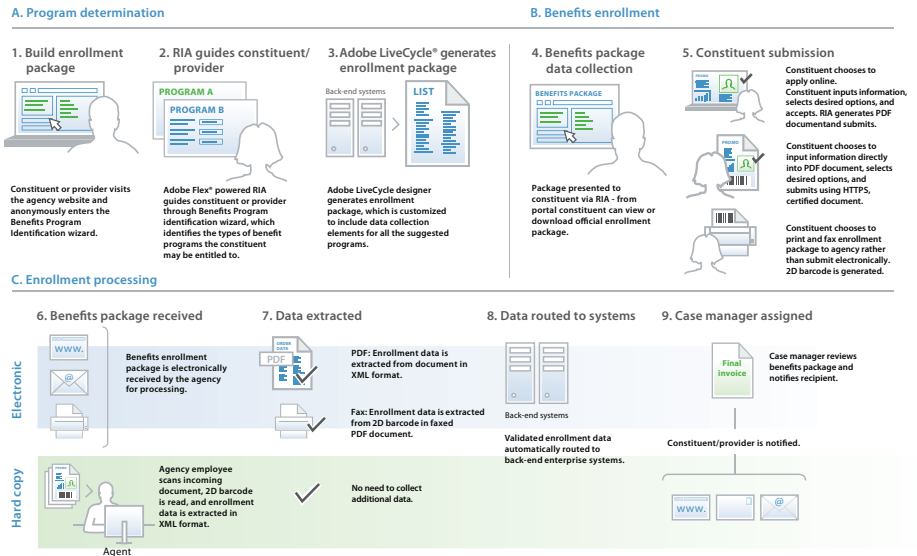
Streamlined development and deployment

With Adobe solutions, agencies can be confident that the systems they implement will support both technological standards, such as XML and PDF, and legislative ones, such as accessibility requirements for the sight impaired.

Adobe solutions allow agencies to build intelligent documents and RIAs using an intuitive visual design environment that makes it easy to incorporate business logic, security features, and interactivity. At the U.K. DWP, when an employee at the local authority enters a piece of data, the PDF form automatically populates all the fields where it's required. It also performs any necessary calculations, saving time and reducing the risk of data-entry errors. The standard use of PDF allows much of the development work to be done by line-of-business managers who can respond quickly to new requirements—for example, when a department issues a new regulation—thereby reducing the burden on the agency's IT resources.

Reduced need for paper

The Illinois Department of Human Services reduced their administrative costs by \$6 million annually simply by converting thousands of paper forms into PDF documents. In addition to eliminating printing, storage, and distribution costs, Adobe solutions also help agencies deal with the non financial challenges related to warehousing hard copies of documents, from version control management to mold-related health issues.



Closing the engagement gap in one typical government process: Adobe solutions for guided benefit enrollment can streamline the entire process, improving the user's experience, reducing costs, and accelerating decision-making.

Here are some common applications in which Adobe solutions are being used today to increase constituent engagement.

Social services

- Benefits enrollment
- Self-service for citizens and businesses

Justice and public safety

- Certified documents
- E-disclosure and court automation

Tax and regulatory

- Tax filing and reporting
- Self-service for citizens and businesses

For more information

For more details about how Adobe solutions can help your agency close the engagement gap, visit www.adobe.com/government or call 888-649-2990.

Start small, think big, act fast

By investing in Adobe solutions, agencies don't need to spend millions of dollars and wait years to see results. Instead, they can improve their processes on a step-by-step basis, where each stage adds on to the previous one, rather than having to start from scratch each time.

For example, one of the most common initial steps—creating intelligent electronic forms—can be done very quickly. Perhaps more important, the forms can be used right away by anyone with the free Adobe Reader. This small step can bring large returns immediately by increasing constituent adoption, reducing the need to rekey data manually, and strengthening data security.

At the same time, this initial step creates a technological foundation that the agency can build on over time to streamline enterprise-wide processes. Because the technologies involved are based on standards, agencies can also be confident that they will continue to be supported over the long term.

The Kane County Circuit Court in Illinois, which uses Adobe solutions to grant orders of protection, began by converting paper forms into online wizards that help guide users through the process, dramatically shortening the time it took to apply for an order. Next, they automated the workflows so that each step, such as reviewing the application and certifying the documents, could be completed faster and more efficiently. Finally, the court incorporated electronic signatures into the process, further reducing the time required to issue an order of protection.

Summary

Agencies that use Adobe solutions for government can engage with their constituents more effectively using more secure interactive forms, guided experiences, tailored documents, and cross-agency collaboration tools. Because they are based on standard technologies and applications and can be developed and deployed in a phased approach, the solutions reduce the risk associated with delivering enterprise-wide benefits.

With Adobe solutions, agencies can close the engagement gap and better fulfill their mission with streamlined processes, greater transparency and accountability, and increased constituent satisfaction.



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