

# Chapter 19

## Building a Future-Ready Public Sector

### Cultural Shifts in Digital Governance

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#### ABSTRACT

*The rapid advancement of digital technologies is transforming the public sector, requiring a fundamental shift in organizational culture to meet the demands of digital governance. This chapter explores the critical role of culture in building a future-ready public sector that can effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities of digital transformation. It examines the key cultural shifts needed to foster innovation, agility, and citizen-centric service delivery. The chapter also discusses the barriers to cultural change within government organizations and presents strategies for cultivating a digital-first mindset among public sector employees. By analyzing case studies and best practices, this chapter provides a comprehensive guide for public sector leaders seeking to drive cultural change and enhance digital readiness. The insights presented are essential for understanding how to align public sector culture with the evolving landscape of digital governance.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The public sector is undergoing significant transformation as digital technologies reshape how governments operate, engage with citizens, and deliver services. This shift toward digital governance is driven by the need to enhance efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness in public administration (Mergel, 2019). However, achieving these goals is not merely a matter of technology adoption; it also requires profound cultural changes within public sector organizations. The culture of government agencies, often characterized by hierarchy, risk aversion, and rigid structures, must evolve to embrace values such as agility, innovation, and citizen-centricity (Bannister & Connolly, 2020).

Digital governance emphasizes the integration of digital technologies into the core functions of government, which necessitates a shift in how public sector employees think and work (Dunleavy & Margetts, 2015). According to Eggers and Bellman (2015), successful digital transformation in the public sector hinges on a cultural shift that encourages experimentation, continuous learning, and collaboration across departments and with external stakeholders. This cultural realignment is crucial for fostering an environment where digital solutions can thrive and be sustainably implemented.

One of the key challenges in this cultural transformation is overcoming institutional inertia and resistance to change. Traditional public sector culture often prioritizes compliance, control, and stability, which can stifle innovation and slow the adoption of new technologies (Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug, 2019). To build a future-ready public sector, leaders must actively work to create a culture that supports digital innovation, empowers employees to take initiative, and prioritizes the needs of citizens. This requires clear communication of the vision for digital transformation, targeted training programs, and the establishment of cross-functional teams that can drive change from within (O'Reilly & Binns, 2019).

Case studies of digital transformation in governments worldwide highlight the importance of leadership in shaping public sector culture. Leaders play a pivotal role in setting the tone for digital adoption and in fostering an organizational culture that values data-driven decision-making, openness, and flexibility (Veit & Huntgeburth, 2014). By embracing these cultural shifts, public sector organizations can better navigate the complexities of the digital era and deliver services that are more efficient, accessible, and responsive to the needs of citizens.

Digital transformation in the public sector refers to the integration of digital technologies into the operations, processes, and service delivery of government organizations. This transformation goes beyond simple technology adoption; it encompasses a fundamental shift in how public services are designed, delivered, and managed to meet the needs of citizens more effectively (Mergel, Edelmann, & Haug,

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