How Government Can Modernize and Meet Federal Data Mandates Faster

By FedScoop Staff

CIOs and CDOs can improve outcomes to the public—and avoid disrupting data interdependencies—by harnessing new enterprise data intelligence tools.

Government agencies are straining daily to modernize their information management systems and make more effective use of their data. One factor that complicates those efforts—and routinely goes underestimated—is the task of assessing exabytes of data moving across government’s sprawling IT networks and then adapting those data streams for the cloud age, without disrupting critical work.

Federal agencies have made major strides toward adopting cloud-based infrastructure and software services into their IT operations. However, officials continue to face a host of practical challenges around their data.

Foremost among them: cataloging the nature, value and trustworthiness of the data they create; knowing where their data actually resides; and understanding how it flows and is transformed from one application/system to another, who’s using it and how. That’s not to mention dealing with an unprecedented rate of growth in the volume and complexity of all data—or how best to secure it.

Adding urgency to those initiatives: the OPEN Government Data Act and the Foundations of Evidence-Based Policymaking Act, signed into law in January of 2019, and the Federal Data Strategy action plan, issued by the Office of Management and Budget in June. Agencies must now meet new mandates to standardize and share their data, including requirements to:

- Make federal data available publicly by default—and in formats the public can readily use.
- Maintain a comprehensive inventory of datasets—cataloging the data assets agencies create, collect, control or maintain for public use.
- Make administrative records accessible electronically—for the purpose of developing evidence and insights on the efficacy of programs and policies.
- Prioritize leadership on data quality and use—to provide governance and direction for developing and using data and ensuring data quality over its lifecycle.
- Assess data engagement capacity—to gauge and develop an agency’s capacity to engage in data management and analysis activities.
- Extend data privacy and risk practices—expanding efforts to protect the privacy of confidential information and coordinate disclosure policies.
- Manage government data as a strategic asset—giving external users the means to access and use government data for research and commercial purposes and internal stakeholders the ability to use data to improve decision-making and accountability.

Brace for Impact

To accomplish those mandates and continue modernizing coherently, agency leaders—including the chief data officers now being appointed under the new law—need a more comprehensive view of their data estate, according to Ian Rowlands, director of product marketing at ASG Technologies, a global provider of enterprise information management software.

That means not only knowing the structure and meaning of an agency’s data assets. “It also requires a deeper understanding of your agency’s data-flow. How your data is processed. What services is it supporting? Who are the interested stakeholders? And how is it deployed and transformed across platforms—that’s critical,” Rowlands said.

“When you consider a modernization project, you have to be able to draw lines around a portion of the application portfolio and a portion of a data portfolio...
Most organizations understand how [insights from] data can fuel efficiency and effectiveness; far fewer understand how to harness data to create new products or services. Executives must bridge the divide between their structured and unstructured data management systems.

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“We have been doing this for better than 30 years, meaning we really know what we’re doing with legacy sources often deployed in the federal government as well as modern sources,” Rowlands said.

ASG Technologies also has developed advanced solutions that allow agencies to quickly understand the movement and processing of structured and unstructured data across diverse technologies and specifically across multiple platforms, according to Rob Perry, ASG Technologies’ vice president of product marketing.

In particular, he pointed to ASG's Mobius Workflow and Mobius Content Services as a powerful suite of no-code/low-code tools that can help agencies leverage their data to automate repeatable and scalable business tasks. Mobius Workflow Designer, for instance, provides users an easy-to-learn platform for assembling embodied workflows that align with ERP, finance, project management and other processes. Mobius Workflow Inbox and Workflow Monitor similarly facilitate next-step processing tasks and streamline administrative reporting. Collectively, they support a wide range of content types and can scale easily.

“Having the right enterprise data intelligence tools in place can give agencies a powerful leg up in being able to define, manage and track workflows through reports and dashboards to help collaboration teams understand where issues have arisen and how they were being addressed,” said Perry.

But perhaps more importantly, it also gives agency leaders a crucial platform to “properly involve multiple stakeholders in the performance of those projects,” he said.

Understanding the potential impact of data and application rationalization decisions is crucial to avoiding the perils of “moving from silos of legacy technology only to end up with silos of modern technology,” said Perry. And it’s equally important to building and sustaining a data-driven enterprise.

Learn more about how ASG Technologies can provide your agency with the enterprise data insights it needs to modernize successfully. www.asg.com/government

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