

Cloud first to cloud smart

A guide for digital growth in the public sector

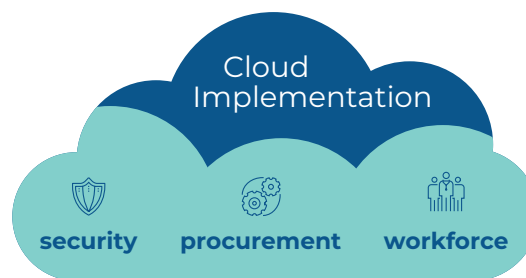
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The public sector's journey from cloud first to cloud smart

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB) [cloud smart program](#) focuses on providing practical cloud implementation support for three pillars: security, procurement, and workforce. Essentially, it seeks to implement strategies and tactics that will go beyond a mere technology upgrade to truly modernize public agencies' IT infrastructures.

The COVID-19 pandemic, among other major global events, has only amplified the focus on digitalization in the public sector. Along with shrinking budgets and ongoing economic concerns, there's a heightened urgency for federal agencies to increase their efficiency to reduce costs and respond more nimbly when the unexpected happens. When positioned strategically, a move to the cloud builds agencies' capacities for flexibility and innovation, leading to reduced costs and greater efficiency.



This guide is intended to be a road map for agencies as they continue implementing and refining their cloud smart plans.

Attributes of cloud smart federal agencies



Automated



Efficient



Flexible



Predictive



Sustainable



A cloud smart maturity model

While some agencies have taken the cloud smart guidance and run with it, others are in earlier stages of adoption. The best actions and next steps for your team will depend on where you fall within that maturity model.

Our maturity model involves four phases: reacting, improving, optimizing, and leading. Each phase is critically important and represents a step along a strategic cloud smart journey.

Leading

Optimizing

Improving

Reacting

Regardless of where you are on this maturity model, to get to your next phase, there are small steps you can take. The evolution to cloud smart doesn't have to be a major undertaking; it can be broken down into smaller milestones that are more easily achievable.

Keep reading to identify your agency's current status and get our advice for navigating the road ahead.



Phase 1:

Reacting

FOCUS AREAS:**Strategy****Compliance****Vendor Selection****Funding****Governance**

In the first phase of the cloud smart maturity model, agencies are typically just getting started on their moves to the cloud. There's a lot of foundational work that happens during this phase, making it an especially critical time that requires strategic planning, strong leadership, and clear direction.

Primary challenges and potential pitfalls

- Difficulty choosing the right vendor
- Choosing initiative leadership with the right skills
- Lack of internal expertise
- Trouble getting started

Questions for leaders

- How does this initiative align to our agency-level strategy?
- Which vendor is right for us?
- Who will lead this initiative internally?
- Do we need to solicit external expertise to be successful?
- How can we break our plan down into smaller, achievable steps?

Key actions

- Select vendor
- Establish a governance model
- Finalize digital strategy

PRO TIP**Accelerate maturity**

Consider starting with a pilot group as a way to get started with your cloud smart journey. This gives you an opportunity to make mistakes and learn along the way. It's better to move forward than to maintain the status quo. Plus, with technology advancements, it's easy to quickly pivot as you learn from your pilot.

Phase 2:

Improving

FOCUS AREAS:**Solution implementation****Change management****Leader and employee development****Communication**

In the second phase of the cloud smart maturity model, implementation is underway. Agencies should focus heavily on stakeholder engagement and communication. Now that the foundational elements of the strategy are in motion, it's essential to set your teams up for success by equipping them with the information, knowledge, and tools they need to thrive in this new environment.

Primary challenges and potential pitfalls

- Agency-level resistance to change
- Talent gaps
- Communication gaps
- Evolving requirements
- Maintaining stakeholder engagement over the life cycle of the project

PRO TIP**Accelerate maturity**

Don't underestimate the value of change management. Many agencies embed change management into the larger project rather than investing in it as a separate objective. Leaders often assume this area is being covered by the vendor or other teams. But it needs to be a very explicit part of the strategy and execution.

Questions for leaders

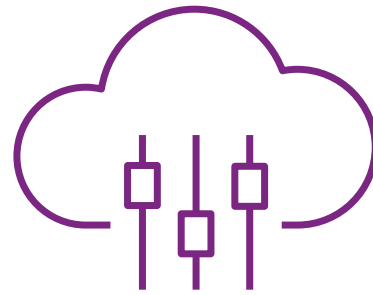
- How can I prepare my teams for this transition?
- Who are my key stakeholders?
- How can I develop a robust communication strategy to keep stakeholders informed?
- Have we set expectations for the project and our teams?

Key actions

- Develop and distribute an agencywide change management plan
- Establish communication protocols for all stakeholders
- Define objectives and success metrics

Phase 3:

Optimizing



FOCUS AREAS:

Process improvement
Automation
Operational efficiencies
Reporting

Now that your cloud solution has been implemented, it's time to optimize your operations for this new digital ecosystem. An intentional focus on the modernization and improvement of existing processes will be key. Agencies that dig in and go beyond the implementation phase will uncover significant cost and time savings.

Primary challenges and potential pitfalls

- Adherence to outdated processes
- Lack of user adoption
- Lack of standardization

Questions for leaders

- Which processes need to be modernized?
- Where are the inefficiencies in our operations?
- What data do we need to be able to refine?
- How can key processes be automated?

Key actions

- Establish reporting mechanisms
- Standardize process improvement
- Automate manual processes
- Review progress toward goals
- Identify opportunities for further refinement in the future

PRO TIP

Accelerate maturity

Define a go-forward plan for maintaining the cloud strategy as technology evolves.

Phase 4:

Leading

FOCUS AREAS:**Innovation****Strategic planning****Education**

At the last phase, your agency has become cloud smart. But this phase is not the time to stop pushing. It's in this final phase that you will begin to innovate and blaze new paths for other agencies to follow. You're a seasoned practitioner, and other agencies will be looking to you for guidance and education.

Primary challenges and potential pitfalls

- Complacency
- Competing priorities
- Funding concerns
- Keeping up with evolving technologies

Questions for leaders

- How can we think outside the box?
- What would we like to see in the future (even if it seems impossible now)?
- What strategies have worked for us that other agencies may want to adopt?
- What internal structures are needed to keep continued focus on our Cloud Smart objectives?

PRO TIP**Accelerate maturity**

This is not a one-and-done project. And it's not linear. Agencies that are truly Cloud Smart are agile in their approaches and continue to revisit and revise their strategies as conditions change.

Key actions

- Keep the focus on innovation
- Incorporate Cloud Smart into agency-level strategic planning efforts
- Build the internal structures needed to consistently evaluate progress toward Cloud Smart objectives

Next steps

The public sector’s history with the cloud is long and involved. Where many commercial industries have already sped through this maturity model, many federal agencies, with their hierarchies and red tape, are still in the midst of the transition.

Identifying where you stand on the journey is the first step to understanding how to accelerate your momentum, keep up with mandates, maximize current resource value, and shift to a modernization mindset.



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