



California State Digital Strategy: An Innovation Roadmap



Introduction

The California Department of Technology (CDT), in consultation with the Office of Data & Innovation (ODI), has embarked on a journey to revolutionize how the State serves its residents. The State of California's digital strategy sets the stage by providing a comprehensive framework for all levels of California Government and education systems to innovate using technology to improve experiences and services for their residents. It serves as a blueprint that will shape the digital future of the State, leveraging innovative technology and humancentric design to make public services more accessible, efficient, and responsive to the needs of Californians.

Core Values

The following core values drive the State's Digital Strategy:

1. **Committing to Digital Services.** The State recognizes that the digital transformation of its services is not just about technology but, more importantly, about using technology to improve the delivery and accessibility of services to Californians. The State should consider digital options first for service delivery.

2. **Sustaining an Innovation Culture.** The State is committed to fostering a culture of innovation, continuously exploring, and adopting new and better service delivery methods. This commitment to innovation extends not just to technology but also to processes, systems, and partnerships.
3. **Putting Californians first.** The State is committed to ensuring its digital transformation efforts focus on Californians' needs, experiences, and contexts. This involves designing technology solutions that are intuitive, user-friendly, and responsive to the diverse needs of Californians. Californians should be involved throughout the design of new services and solutions, and direct user feedback considered as part of any technology operations plan.
4. **Developing meaningful partnerships across the State.** Recognizing that digital transformation is a collaborative endeavor, the State is committed to fostering strong, productive partnerships with other departments. These partnerships are critical to harnessing the collective expertise, resources, and perspectives necessary for a successful digital transformation.

By adhering to these values, the State of California ensures that its digital strategy is both technologically advanced and resident-focused, innovative, and collaborative. These values serve as the crux of the strategy, guiding the State's efforts to transform its digital services for the benefit of all Californians.

Goals

The California State Digital Strategy aligns with CDT's Vision 2023. This strategy builds upon three overarching goals:

- **Simplify:** Streamline access to government services.
- **Enable:** Empower government work and decision-making with data, evidence, and information.
- **Evolve:** Adapt and grow with our diverse residents to meet their current needs and future expectations.

Focus Area 1:

Human-Centered Design

When designing technology solutions to improve service delivery, the primary consideration is the people who will use these services. The State considers Californians' entire experience to understand their needs, pain points, and preferences when they request or access State services. This approach ensures that the solutions we create are not only technologically advanced but are also intuitive, user-friendly, empathetic, and genuinely responsive to the needs of Californians. Departments should Establish standards and best practices in design thinking, user research, iterative development, and data-driven decision making to ensure government services are designed *with* and not *for* Californians.

The State utilizes data and evidence, including direct resident feedback, that meets the needs of Californians. This means understanding the diverse contexts in which Californians live and designing services that are accessible and useful to them. The strategy aims to identify ways to simplify services across the state, reducing the time and paperwork required for residents to use them. Departments should gather and incorporate user feedback including surveys, page feedback, and web analytics.

The approach also emphasizes the importance of equity and accessibility throughout product or system life cycles. This means that the digital services design considers the diverse needs, abilities, and circumstances of all Californians, ensuring that these services are inclusive and accessible to all.

Lastly, the State encourages a mindset of continuous improvement and actively seeks feedback from Californians and other State partners. This feedback is valuable for refining and improving the design and delivery of services, ensuring that they continue to meet the needs and expectations of Californians. By focusing on Californians through human-centered design,

Focus Area 2:

the State of California is committed to delivering digital services that are truly for and by the people.

Efficient Growth Scaling

The State aims to use a product mindset to build technology. This involves focusing on the end user's needs, developing minimum viable products, testing them in real-world settings, learning from feedback, and making iterative improvements accordingly. This iterative approach ensures that the solutions developed are not just technologically advanced but also responsive to the needs of Californians. Departments should model product thinking and iterative development best practices in practical and applied settings, showing what's possible while delivering for Californians.

Moreover, the State seeks to adopt agile and modular development methodologies. By embracing a product mindset and these methodologies, the State can deliver services quickly and efficiently, allowing it to respond quickly to changing needs and circumstances. Agile and modular development also enable continuous improvement and adaptation, ensuring that digital services remain relevant and effective.

Recognizing the need for sufficient funding for innovative technology projects, the State also explores alternative funding vehicles for "shovel-ready" modernization and innovation projects. By coupling a commitment to innovation with robust IT governance, the State ensures that red tape does not hinder innovation and that promising projects can progress.

To drive this efficient growth, the State encourages the formation of multidisciplinary and crossdepartment project teams. These teams bring together diverse perspectives and expertise, prioritizing usability, accessibility, and efficiency, to develop user-friendly, inclusive, and costeffective systems.

Focus Area 3:

Lastly, the State incorporates best practices in digital security throughout the development of new digital solutions. This approach ensures that the digital transformation does not compromise the security of Californians' data and that the digital services are trustworthy and reliable. By scaling growth efficiently, the State of California ensures that its digital strategy delivers maximum benefit to its residents.

Promoting Standards and Best Practices

The State collaborates with local governments and educational institutions to construct robust policies aimed at eliminating barriers to innovation. These policies focus on security and equity, so that all Californians can benefit from the digital transformation and that their data is safe and secure. Where feasible, Departments should establish public-private partnership programs with Californian's most innovative companies as well as with the non-profit and academic community to generate innovative ideas, grow our capacity for innovation, and ensure California government always leads.

Recognizing that innovation is a dynamic field with rapidly evolving trends, the State also builds partnerships with private industry leaders, regional bodies, and community groups. These partnerships help the State to stay at the forefront of innovation while safeguarding Californians' data across all State departments and platforms. The State is dedicated to ensuring the highest levels of data security, enabling residents to confidently interact with digital services.

Furthermore, the State encourages departments to adopt scalable platforms that promote accessibility and provide a consistent user experience. This aligns with the Strategy's focus on human-centered design, ensuring that digital services are user-friendly and cater to the diverse needs of Californians. By promoting these standards and best practices, the State

Focus Area 4:

ensures that its digital transformation is not just innovative but also secure, accessible, and beneficial for all residents.

Empowering Partners

Equipped with leading-edge skills, technology, and product management methodologies innovative talent from CDT and ODI work with departments to train, upskill, and mentor departmental teams to foster a culture of continuous learning and innovation. The State leverages existing curricula and developing new materials in data, design, and development through initiatives like Cal Academy, Information Technology Leadership Academy, and Digital Services Innovation Academy. This capacity-building extends beyond departmental teams to ensure widespread knowledge and skill development.

Under this approach, the State takes the lead in sustaining communities of practice and more formal technology governance in innovation, data, and design. These efforts facilitate the sharing of knowledge, best practices, and create a supportive environment for innovation to thrive. The State further builds this innovation culture through specific training and bridge funding so that departments have the necessary resources and skills to effectively utilize these tools.

Recognizing the importance of attracting and retaining top tech talent to drive its digital strategy, the State pairs CDT and ODI with the California Department of Human Resources (CalHR) and HR and procurement teams at state departments. This multi-disciplinary approach aims to share the latest recruitment and retention techniques, ensuring that the State remains a desirable destination for the best tech talent in California. By empowering its partners in this manner, the State of California strives to create a dynamic, collaborative, inclusive, and innovative environment to drive its digital transformation.

Digital Strategy Objectives, Outcomes, and Expectations

Focus Area	Objective	Outcome	CDT	State Entities	Timeframe
Focus Area 1: Human-Centered Design	Improve digital access to residential government services.	Reduce the number of touchpoints for State information and services.	Increase compliance with the State's domain name policy and adoption of the CAWeb platform.	<p>Review current domain names to eliminate misleading, outof-date, and non-functional web domain names.</p> <p>Consider using the CAWeb platform and building from pre-existing websites before building a new one.</p>	<p>Completed – Early 2025</p> <p>Statewide efforts led by CDT to consolidate *.ca.gov web domains, enhance CAWeb adoption, and reduce resident touchpoints for digital services have been successfully implemented. Departments are now operating on clearer, more accessible and policy-compliant web platforms.</p>
Focus Area 1: Human-Centered Design	Modernize the State's web and mobile presence.	Improve the baseline usability of State websites.	Expand the availability of components, tools, and support guides.	Participate in a policy review of current UX standards and implement new policy and guidance towards mobile implementations of new digital services.	<p>Planned for late 2025 rollout</p> <p>CDT is actively supporting departments in adopting mobile-first approaches and improving usability through expanded CA Design System</p>

					tools and guidance. A revised Statewide Website Standards policy is in development and scheduled for release in late 2025 to unify expectations across channels and platforms.
Focus Area 1: Human-Centered Design	Scale design thinking throughout State digital services.	Expand the capability and adoption of the CA Design System.	Expand the availability of components, tools, and support guides for the CA Design System.	Consider the CA Design System first when designing new or updating current web services.	Completed – Late 2024 The redesign of CA.gov marked a major milestone in expanding the adoption of design thinking across State digital services. The project showcased the effective use of the CA Design System and user-centered design principles, setting a strong foundation for departments to build consistent, accessible, and resident-focused digital experiences.

Focus Area 2: Efficient Growth Scaling	Encourage robust State technology data architecture.	Create better Statewide understanding and adoption of data pipeline best practices.	Increase adoption of data pipeline best practices for more efficient use of State resources.	Review data pipeline policies & best practices and collaborate with CDT to improve compliance and adoption.	Completed – Mid 2025 CDT has established mission-critical technology tools and driven the adoption of standard data frameworks through key initiatives such as Build.ca.gov and the GenAI sandboxes. These efforts have laid a strong foundation for scalable, efficient, and interoperable data architecture across State departments.
Focus Area 2: Efficient Growth Scaling	Model product thinking and iterative development best practices.	Sustain a digital services community of practice to accelerate a state digital services culture.	Review the charter and implement a formal digital services community of practice and governance program.	Participate in a community of practice.	Completed – Early 2024 CDT established the Artificial Intelligence Community (AIC) in early 2024 is to bring state experts together in shaping the future of ethical, transparent, and trustworthy Artificial Intelligence (AI).

					The AIC meets monthly to foster the sharing of information from subject matter experts and the community at large to ensure the ethical, responsible adoption of AI technologies.
Focus Area 2: Efficient Growth Scaling	Leverage platforms as the backbone for digital government services.	Consider ways for digital services to improve resident user experiences with State services.	Clarify digital services offerings for State entities.	Collaborate with CDT on opportunities for service and technology infrastructure modernization.	<p>Completed – Mid 2025</p> <p>CDT has successfully positioned platform-based approaches as the foundation for statewide digital service delivery. Efforts such as ca.gov/LAfires illustrate how shared platforms can be used to rapidly deploy integrated, resident-facing services that improve consistency, scalability, and impact across departments.</p>

Focus Area 3: Promoting Standards and Best Practices	<p>Establish innovative digital service data standards for dashboards and visualizing data.</p>	<p>More freely share data to improve the State's data architecture and analysis.</p>	<p>Develop statewide data dashboard standards and datasharing agreement templates.</p>	<p>Review contracts and data needs to prepare for compliance with new dashboards standards and best practices.</p>	<p>Targeting completion by late 2025</p> <p>CDT is working closely with departments to develop statewide standards for dashboards, data sharing, and visualization to establish a common foundation for accessible, consistent, and user-centered digital data experiences across state government.</p>
Focus Area 3: Promoting Standards and Best Practices	<p>Collaborate to create first-of-its kind technology innovation governance.</p>	<p>Establish Statewide Technology Innovation governance.</p>	<p>Create an ITEC Technology Innovation Advisory Committee (TIAC).</p>	<p>Participate in the TIAC and have CIOs in ITEC nominate members from their department.</p>	<p>Completed – Mid 2025</p> <p>CDT completed this objective by revising the charter for the State Technology Council's Technical Operations Advisory Committee (TOAC) to incorporate the principles of the former Technology Innovation Advisory</p>

					Committee (TIAC). As a result, TIAC has been successfully consolidated into TOAC, streamlining governance and ensuring sustained focus on innovation within the existing statewide technology governance.
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Focus Area 4: Empowering Partners	Leverage emerging technologies as viable solutions for ongoing business and policy objectives.	Create an innovation environment where the State can securely evaluate new technology solutions.	Develop emerging technology guidance, definitions, and procurement language for AI, blockchain, and other innovative technologies.	Share emerging technology pilots, proof of concepts, and projects with CDT and ODI and highlight significant use cases of interest.	Completed CDT has issued statewide guidance for the use of generative AI and other emerging technologies, conducted proof-of-concept pilots, and provided procurement-ready language to support responsible adoption. Departments now have access to foundational resources that enable secure exploration and implementation of
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					new technologies in service of Californians.
Focus Area 4: Empowering Partners	Promote an Innovation culture with a focus on learning and skills development.	Develop innovation and leadership skills across State IT professionals.	Develop and manage a Digital Service Innovation Academy Incubator.	Identify innovation leaders to participate in the Incubator.	Completed CDT has delivered innovation-focused training and skills development through the Digital Service Innovation Academy, including curriculum on artificial intelligence and emerging technologies. These resources continue to support departments in building internal capacity and cultivating forward-looking leadership.

Focus Area 4: Empowering Partners	Share best practices and lessons learned across State departments to strategically and securely innovate.	Coordinate and collaborate across State departments on innovative technology projects.	Develop, maintain, and grow State IT innovation through collaboration and reporting.	Participate in the Innovation Community of Practice and share innovation project details, lessons learned, and best practices with CDT and ODI.	Completed and sustained through the AI Community CDT has actively coordinated cross-department collaboration on emerging technology initiatives, with learnings captured through proof-of-concepts, pilots, and guidance. These efforts are now being extended through the newly launched AI Community of Practice to continue advancing statewide knowledge-sharing and innovation.

Conclusion

This strategy, including the action items in the table above, have the capacity to bring about fundamental transformation in the delivery of services by the State of California, making them more accessible, effective, and equitable. Through innovation, residents will have simplified access to government services, while State departments will be empowered to utilize data to improve efficiency and effectiveness. More than just a strategy, this document is a commitment to accelerate California's robust innovation culture to better meet Californian's needs now, and in the future.