



Rethink human experience beyond one point in time

What it takes for governments to deliver equitable experiences

Changing needs require different service delivery

Social movements from Black Lives Matter to LGBTQ equality to Stop Asian Hate, along with the June 2021 Executive Order on Advancing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility in the federal government, have motivated federal, state, and local government leaders to take a close look at how their agencies interact with employees and customers. State and local governments especially are under pressure from their leaders, citizens, businesses, and employees to make sure everything they do is equitable to meet society's needs.

Governments' constituents, including citizens and employees, have changed. The way people work. Digital advances. Economic ups and downs. Organizations serve constituents from five generations. Each person's journey is unique. These journeys shape individual's needs and preferences that call for equitable service delivery—especially for underserved populations. Many government organizations are unsure how to react, and politics have made determining how to approach equitable service delivery complicated. This article is intended to help federal, state, and local government leaders identify critical considerations for a common vision and secure resources that will help ensure each experience they deliver is equitable no matter who people are and what channel they use.

Why modern government is important

Government agencies in the U.S. must modernize in order to keep up with changing user needs, regulations, and health and public safety requirements. Leaders of modern governments rethink business processes and service delivery models to more effectively achieve their mission. This article is one of a series that features how modernizing affects the government workforce and the user experience, improves security and public trust, and accelerates the digital journey. KPMG team members offer insights intended to help guide governments in their modernization efforts to encompass all processes, technologies, policies, and the workforce so each works together to create connected, powered, and trusted organizations.



Service delivery must be equitable to improve outcomes

Every organization should strive for equitable service delivery, so **each employee, constituent, or beneficiary receives fair, equal, and unbiased access to services and treatment in receiving them.** However, in a recent study, only 38 percent of people feel like a valued customer when dealing with the government.¹

In order to improve outcomes for people, organizations must **rethink the way they operate and engage.** In spite of the rocky economic situation, fewer people received help via welfare programs in 2020.² The cause is unclear, but the need to get to the bottom of what keeps people, especially the underserved, from accessing and receiving the services they need is critical.

Some organizations limit the human experience to only include the period of time a person interacts with the organization. We have found people's expectations form before the moment they realize they need a service. A tragic example is the story of a couple who lost a brief battle with COVID-19, leaving two teenage children. According to family, the government's syphilis experiments on Black men in the 1930s influenced the couple's choice to not get vaccinated.³ This is an example of how the journey leading up to that moment often dramatically influences people's needs, expectations, and actions, and potentially those of their future generations.

Organizations need to **engage with people** in proactive, empathetic, and respectful ways so they maintain dignity. To achieve this, organizations must understand what goes on in the communities they serve and each constituent's needs and preferences. Then they can begin to create the best method and experience that works for all to deliver services based on the total experience—within the context of the journey.

Leaders within and across departments should **agree on why equitable outcomes are important in their organization.** One important challenge to face is to work through unconscious bias each person brings to their decision. Once leaders share a vision and their commitment to achieve it, each constituent's experience and the service they receive should be equal across all interaction channels and across all constituent groups. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, for example, created a Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Office to help protect its vulnerable populations on behalf of all of its agencies.⁴

Organizational processes can have a significant impact on an organization's ability to deliver services. For example, employees in agencies that rethink and automate processes and add self-service channels to speed up eligibility can focus more on working with clients to help them get past their current situation and become sustainable. Leaders may need to push to change policy in order to rethink processes and deliver equitable experiences.

Following are some ways organizations can rethink processes to achieve equitable service delivery and better citizen experiences:

- **Blend funds** with adjacent agencies and programs to streamline service delivery for clients.
- **Offer programmatic service coordination** so clients who could benefit from more than one program can access their preferred channel to seek services without multiple applications and appointments.
- **Address bias in service delivery processes.** Analyze laws, policies, and procedures and change them if they have a negative impact on communities, especially their underrepresented populations. Openly acknowledge that unconscious bias exists and offer training.
- **Meet with constituents** to learn more about their unique journeys, needs, and preferences.
- **Design experiences as if citizens and employees are customers.** Reimagine the way your organization delivers services around people's needs and deliver them in consumable ways.
- **Recruit former program beneficiaries** to redesign experiences. Individuals with lived experience will bring valuable and empathetic perspectives as former service recipients.

Mahatma Gandhi's words may inspire government leaders to take their first or next steps, "Whenever you are in doubt, ... apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man (woman) whom you may have seen, and ask yourself if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him (her). Will it restore him (her) to a control over his (her) own life and destiny? Then you will find your doubts... melt away."⁵

¹ "Impacts of COVID-19 on digital transformation strategies and the future of work," Forrester Consulting and KPMG, July 2020.

² Amy Goldstein, "Welfare rolls decline during the pandemic despite economic upheaval," Washington Post, August 1, 2021.

³ Matt Johnson, "Georgia couple dies within hours of one another from COVID-19," WSB-TV, July 21, 2021.

⁴ "Wolf Administration Creates Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Office," governor.pa.gov, May 26, 2021.

⁵ "Gandhi's Talisman," from "Mahatma Gandhi – The Last Phase, Vol. II," MK Gandhi.org, (1958).



Deliver services with a customer experience approach

Federal, state, and local health and human services organizations grapple with similar challenges in delivering equitable experiences. While each experience has different characteristics and scale, depending on the constituents, services, and department, governments can use a similar customer experience approach. Taking a **customer experience approach** delivers individual, human-facing services. The approach gives organizations insight into who customers are, their needs, how they choose to interact with the organization, and how they go about their daily business and lives. They also show how to identify operational gaps and determine the best way to fill those gaps.

Equitable human experience definition

KPMG defines customer experience as the sum of all interactions a customer has or perceives to have with an organization from the point of awareness and consideration through purchase or acquisition and use of the product or service. When an experience is equitable, each employee, constituent, or beneficiary receives fair, equal, and unbiased access to services and treatment in receiving them.

Human-centered design is another method that can help build equity into the experience from start to finish. Human-centered design guides the experience creation process by helping contextualize to understand the high-level problem to be solved and empathize by talking directly to individuals the program most affects. It also helps to ideate with program beneficiaries to bring new perspectives and unheard voices to help solve the problem and design to represent the vision of the experience. This is also where looking at the experience within the context of individuals' journeys can help build experiences that are equitable for all.

Typical governments push services out to citizens without looking at the service from the customers' points of view. Needs have changed. Both methods help organizations understand if the service is what people need and consumable in the way they want it. They also help organizations recognize if they market and communicate information at the right time and in ways people can access the service. For example, demand for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) has surged in many states. Many have a smart phone but have no internet access, so they may have learned about TANF via community outreach or word of mouth, not from a web banner ad. Another example that might inspire equitable service delivery ideas is the new alliance between TD Bank and Canada Post to improve access to personal loan products for remote and Indigenous communities.⁶

⁶ Stefanie Marotta, "TD Bank to offer new personal loan product at Canada Post outlets in rural and remote communities," Financial Post, July 29, 2021.



Equitable experiences with fiscal responsibility

The challenge for public sector organizations is **balancing the ability to deliver equitable experiences while being good stewards of public funds**. KPMG offers its customer experience excellence methodology as an option to deliver services more equitably while also enabling fiscal responsibility. The customer experience strategy created using this method will provide a:

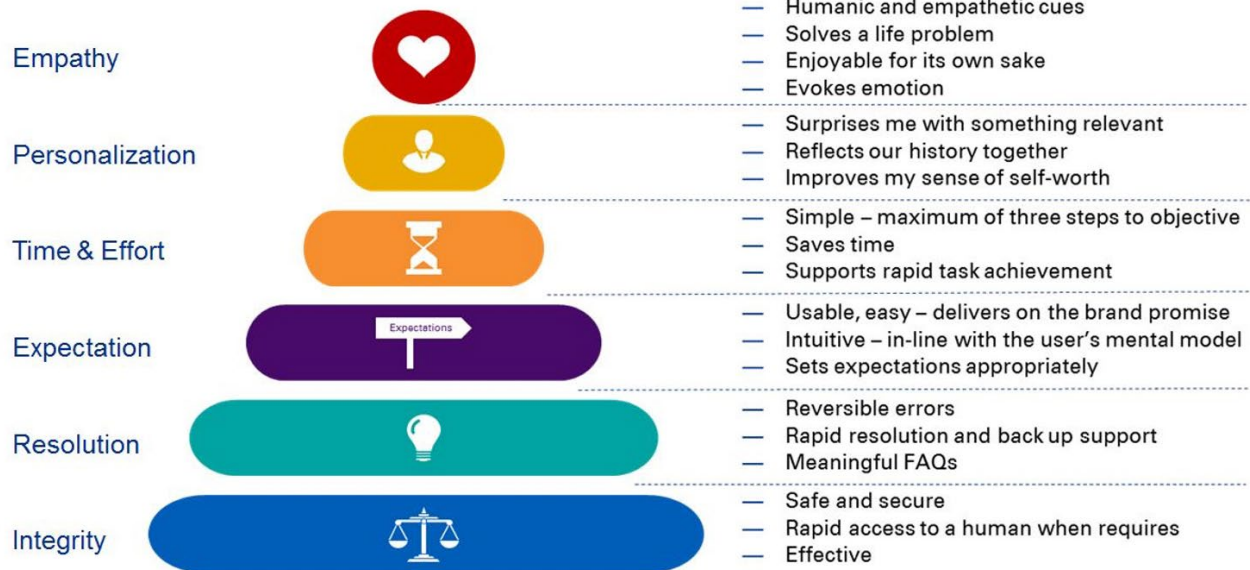
- Complete picture of your customers
- Detailed outline of how customers interact with your organization and which touch points matter most
- Customer experience strategy and delivery model that meets customers' needs and delivers return on investment
- Tactical plan for your organization to cost-effectively deliver thorough, personal, and equitable customer experiences

The customer experience excellence **approach includes six fundamental components**, or pillars, of every great experience that we identified and validated through more than 3 million evaluations across multiple markets over 10 years. Digital basics, as illustrated, are personalization, time and effort, resolution, and integrity. Once organizations effectively deliver digital basics, they focus on the human differentiators, empathy and expectations. These pillars are the basis of employee and citizen interviews and deep analysis to identify the main gaps in equitable service delivery and possible solutions.

With an equitable service delivery strategy in place, organizations can establish and execute change management, communication and training plans, and transition employees and citizens to their more equitable experience. By following this strategy, each experience will be the same whether people are on email, at a storefront, using chat or a virtual assistant, or on a phone by voice or mobile app.

Learn more about developing a strategic approach to delivering experience in our article, "[Improve your citizen experience.](#)"

The Six Pillars of Customer Experience



Source: KPMG Nunwood 2017 US Customer Experience Excellence Analysis

Get better at serving each person for the long term

Imagine a time when a citizen hits a rough spot and applies for benefits or services. Their application triggers notifications of other cash assistance programs for which they qualify without additional applications. A finger tap sets up a video, voice, or in-person meeting with a case worker who automatically receives their information. Citizens and employees all have equitable experiences. Their experience is the same no matter who the person is or what channel they use.

This vision needs to become real. Understanding people and their journeys and rethinking and redesigning experiences to meet individuals' needs is what it takes. When governments understand the benefits of applying scientific methods to what can be an emotional and political topic, they can take steps to achieve the equitable outcomes they need. Putting in the work to deliver equitable experiences is worth the effort. It will strengthen families, communities, and our nation for generations to come.



About KPMG

KPMG has worked with federal, state, and local governments for more than a century, so we know how agencies work. Our team understands the unique issues, pressures, and challenges you encounter in the journey to modernize. We draw on our government operations knowledge to offer methodologies tailored to help you overcome these challenges and work with you from beginning to end to deliver the results that matter.

The KPMG team starts with the business issue before we determine the solution because we understand the ultimate mission. When the way people work changes, our team brings the leading training practices to make sure your employees have the right knowledge and skills. We also help your people get value out of technology while also assisting with cloud, advanced analytics, intelligent automation, and cybersecurity. Our passion is to create value, inspire trust, and help government clients deliver better experiences to workers, citizens, and communities.



Contact us

Arthur Higbee

Managing Director, Advisory
Transformation Delivery
KPMG LLP
703-286-6608
ahigbee@kpmg.com

Christina Melton

Experience Design Director, Advisory
Transformation Delivery
KPMG LLP
216-926-6766
cmelton@kpmg.com

Todd Ellis

Principal, Advisory
Health & Government Solutions
KPMG LLP
678-761-3063
tdellis@kpmg.com

Carole Hussey

Director, Advisory
Health & Government Solutions
KPMG LLP
717-860-7873
chussey@kpmg.com

read.kpmg.us/modgov

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