GOVERNMENT DIGITAL SERVICES *That Work*

How Digital Service Teams Deliver Results Residents Can See

Institute *for* Responsive Government

OCTOBER 2026

Residents judge government by whether its services work, and right now Americans spend billions of hours each year navigating government paperwork. That's why states across the country are creating digital service teams to deliver the services and results residents expect. At least eighteen states already have statewide digital services, with a track record showing that effective, cost-efficient service delivery is possible.

WHAT IS A DIGITAL SERVICE TEAM?

A digital service team is a small, in-house group of designers, engineers, and product managers who fix the services residents use most. They work across agency lines and start with what residents actually need.

FIRST STEPS

- **Pick a problem people feel.** Start with a service residents already complain about, such as a long benefits application or a confusing permit process. A visible fix builds momentum fast.
- **Identify the viable policy pathway.** Governors can launch a team quickly by executive order, as New Jersey and Pennsylvania did. Legislators can create a team in law, which helps it last across administrations. Or, combine the two: an executive order to start fast, then legislation to lock in funding, authority, and staffing.
- **Put an experienced leader in place early.** Whether the team is created by executive order or by statute, a strong leader can shape its first projects and recruit top talent from day one.
- **Start small and ship.** A five-person starter team costs about $1 million annually with benefits and delivers fast results – a modest cost compared to typical IT budgets. If dedicated funding isn't immediately available, an executive order can reallocate existing staff and funds.

Funding *01*

Durable teams are multi-source: appropriation, cost-recovery, grants.

+

Leader *02*

A direct line to the executive, and the freedom to hire fast.

+

Early Wins *03*

Deliver tangible, noticeable results for residents within six months.

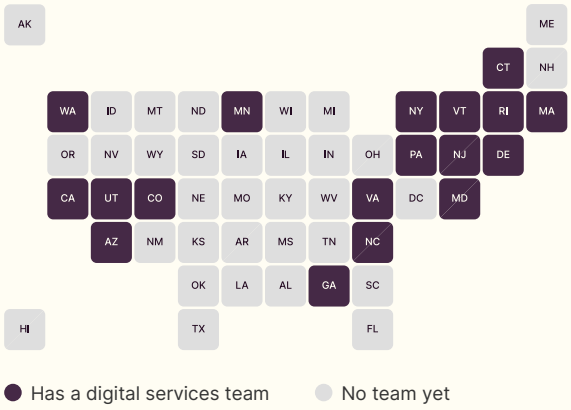
=

A Successful Team

The team that starts with momentum and delivers visible results.

DIGITAL SERVICE TEAMS DEMONSTRATING IMPACT

Eighteen States & Counting



Georgia: Accessible Services in Under a Year

Digital Services Georgia, operating within the Georgia Technology Authority, partnered with the Georgia Institute of Technology in 2015 to launch a comprehensive accessibility initiative. By late January 2016, every website hosted on the platform successfully aligned with both Section 508 guidelines and the elevated WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.

New Jersey: From Four Hours to 25 Minutes

Created in 2018 via executive action, the Innovation Authority partnered with the State Department of Labor to redesign the unemployment insurance process. Their work cut average application submission time from 4 hours down to under 25 minutes for most users, cut identity-related support calls by 70%, and saved the Department of Labor over $780,000 in operating costs.

Pennsylvania: $10 Million Saved in Three Years

Created in 2023 via executive order, CODE PA was instructed to consolidate the Commonwealth's web presence and build permitting transparency tools. The team transformed 64 separate Commonwealth websites into one site covering nearly 1,000 services, saving $10 million in its first three years by using in-house staff instead of vendors.

Utah: On Time and Under Budget

Given just over a year to move a decades-old state data center, Utah's Division of Technology Services, created in 2006 as a division within the Department of Government Operations, relocated more than 2,500 servers and critical systems serving everything from the DMV to public safety. The team finished on time with zero service disruptions and at less than half of the original $30 million-plus budget, while also upgrading the state's security and network infrastructure.

Additional Support

The Institute for Responsive Government and its partners, U.S. Digital Response, and Beeck Center at Georgetown University, can provide free technical assistance to educate stakeholders and help implement digital service teams with the best practices from across the country. Responsive Gov Action can assist with crafting digital service team legislation and executive orders.

For more information, please contact Marisa Bremer (marisa@responsivegov.org).