How a Unified Public Sector Operations Platform Can Transform Government Service Delivery

Government agencies agencies face new hybrid work challenges, increased demand for digital services, and calls for greater transparency and accountability. At the same time, the federal funding environment has never been more favorable. From remaining American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) monies to Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) funding, agencies have an opportunity to improve their technology infrastructure and innovate service delivery.

Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District (EVMWD) — a public, nonprofit entity that oversees water, wastewater and recycled water services for more than 160,000 people in Lake Elsinore, California — demonstrates a potential path forward for government agencies. The organization has taken a service-centric approach to modernization, investing in a unified public sector operations platform to improve financial and supply chain management, human capital management, payroll, and planning and permitting processes.

Though EVMWD took most of these steps well before the pandemic, its efforts showcase how agencies can build on carefully considered technology investments to meet evolving business needs.

Government agencies throughout the country now have an opportunity to do the same. They can apply for current federal funding and take advantage of existing budget resources to invest in a public sector operations platform and lay a solid foundation for future water and sewer infrastructure modernization.

Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District demonstrates a potential path forward for other government entities.

Tackling Operational Challenges

EVMWD manages more than 46,000 water, wastewater and recycled water service connections, serving a 96-square-mile area and a population of approximately 160,000 in Southern California's Riverside County. EVMWD's service area has experienced rapid growth and a high volume of new land development and building.

"We work closely with five different public agencies and strive to ensure the water district's services meet their needs," says Matthew Bates, EVMWD's engineering manager.

EVMWD has gradually moved much of its technology operations to the cloud to improve employee productivity and organizational efficiency and reduce IT burdens. EVMWD adopted Infor's unified public sector operations platform to support this transformation. Infor, a leading provider of enterprise cloud solutions for the public sector, offers an integrated suite of tools across nearly every facet of government operations — from asset management to HR and financial management.

EVMWD started with financial and supply chain management, using the Infor platform's comprehensive enterprise resource planning (ERP), financial and accounting capabilities to significantly improve its efficiency.[1]

EVMWD employees have access to a mobile app where they can view their pay stubs, W4s, taxes and other pertinent payroll information, anywhere and anytime.

Modernizing Permitting and Planning

EVMWD is now leaning on Infor's public sector operations platform to revamp its planning and permitting processes, improve collaboration with developers and better support a surge in development activity. According to Bates, the district is currently managing more than 240 projects in different stages of development.

That development process looks like this: A developer requests water service to their parcel of land. EVMWD works closely with the developer, performing a plan check to ensure the plan meets its standards and design requirements. From there, the developer proceeds with the build, and the district conducts inspections to ensure the development meets its standards.

What follows is a complex set of processes, including issuance of fees, payments, deposits, inspections and meter installations. These processes require a high degree of collaboration and information exchange. However, EVMWD historically has not had the right tools to streamline the activities or make the process more transparent.

"We relied on disparate, non-interoperable solutions and hundreds of Excel files to manage planning and permitting. This approach was inefficient and time-consuming," Bates says. With antiquated systems, the district desperately needed to upgrade to systems that would allow for online payments, plan checks and project tracking for developers.

By embracing a service-centric platform approach, EVMWD is expanding its capabilities. The district is in the process of using the Infor platform to implement revamped planning and permitting processes. Integrating these capabilities into the platform will help EVMWD manage development with greater transparency; create more agile, resilient operations; and deliver more responsive service — which is critical for the district to better manage water availability as the local population grows.

Transforming Government Financial Operations

Infor's unified platform offers several benefits for EVMWD. Its modern user interface is more user-friendly than the legacy, on-premises ERP system the district had relied on for years. The platform also helps EVMWD improve employee productivity. It allows the district to remove function codes and consolidate multiple forms into tabs so employees no longer have to switch between forms to get information.

EVMWD has also made its accounting processes more efficient in other ways. Using the public sector operations platform, EVMWD can separate its accounting units into dimensions, or user-defined sections of its general ledger code block. This allowed the district to eliminate accounting units and consolidate from 70 funds to eight funds.

EVMWD also leverages the platform to improve human capital management and payroll processes. The district cut payroll processing time and reduced payroll interfaces. EVMWD automated payroll approvals for employee timecards, time off and leave requests. Employees have access to a mobile app where they can view their pay stubs, W4s, taxes and other pertinent payroll information, anywhere and anytime. The modern user interface helps employees work productively from wherever they may be. Modernizing

"In the digital day and age, customers have an expectation of information that's available at their fingertips. For us, implementing our new permitting software is just one more tool to provide the customers with that information in a more modern and accessible way."

- Greg Thomas, General Manager, Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District

its overall HCM and payroll operations enabled EVMWD to redeploy IT staff to more innovative, strategic projects.

All these improvements positioned the district to avoid payroll disruptions during the pandemic because its processes were already equipped to handle remote work needs.

The Value of a Public Sector Operations Platform

Now is the time for agencies to accelerate modernization. As the EVMWD example shows, a public sector operations platform like Infor's solution is one of the most powerful tools agencies can use to digitize their operations and increase efficiency and transparency.

This platform offers several advantages and advanced capabilities. First, it's a single multi-tenant platform with a cloud-based enterprise operating system and is built using Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud infrastructure services.

"A multi-tenant architecture is extremely valuable for government organizations because it lowers maintenance costs and time, accelerates application upgrades and speeds time-to-value for agencies," says Bob Benstead, vice president of strategic planning at Infor.

The cloud enterprise operating system serves as an innovation layer, allowing agencies to take advantage of embedded capabilities such as document management, personalized communications, and homepages tailored to each employee's role and out-of-the-box integrations. This operating system also enables agencies to adopt other capabilities and increase the platform's functionality cost-effectively and without a heavy IT lift. In addition, built-in integrations to various business applications and systems reduce the need for time- and labor-intensive customizations.

Using AWS Cloud makes Infor's platform highly scalable and flexible, and ensures better performance and greater reliability and resilience.

"A public sector platform architected on AWS infrastructure allows agencies to optimize their operations, better harness their data and deliver an omnichannel constituent experience," says Harshil Shah, solutions architect for worldwide public sector at AWS. For example, public utilities can access dashboards and analytic tools to better manage water infrastructure and integrate mobile applications into their services, so residents can access utility information on the go.

"You get tools, services and products that are built out-of-the-box to maintain your customer experience," Shah says.

Robust security is another benefit. AWS employs a shared responsibility model with its government technology partners, which ensures both parties prioritize security in the development and management of applications and systems. The AWS Cloud includes important security features — such as data encryption at rest and in transit — that help critical infrastructure operators like EVMWD meet regulatory requirements.

Infor's unified platform lets agencies maximize the value of data and strengthen data management, which supports improved permitting efficiencies and infrastructure management.

"When you have a water system that is expected to double its capacity in the next 40 years, you must be able to plan for water availability. The public wants to know agencies are being good stewards of this vital resource," Bates says. "It's very important to have those tools that facilitate not only the growth of the community, but a full understanding of the transparency."

Benstead adds that a public sector operations platform allows agencies to deploy new constituent-facing capabilities, such as self-service tools that let developers submit applications and check plans online. Modernizing technology infrastructure in this way will become even more critical as agencies adopt permanent hybrid work environments and focus on improving their service delivery model.

"Customer satisfaction, as a service provider, is at the top of our priorities," says Greg Thomas, EVMWD's general manager. "In the digital day and age, customers have an expectation of information that's available at their fingertips. For us, implementing our new permitting software is just one more tool to provide the customers with that information in a more modern and accessible way."

Conclusion

As agencies focus on modernization, moving to the cloud is essential to fulfill their mission and develop more agile, digitally driven organizations.

Using AWS Cloud makes Infor's platform highly scalable and flexible, and ensures better performance and greater reliability and resilience.

A unified public sector operations platform can help government organizations make this transition. With the availability of federal infrastructure funding, investing in an operations platform can enable agencies to improve downstream management as they upgrade their infrastructure, modernize permitting processes and expand customer self-service capabilities. This technology also lets agencies increase transparency and implement other business process improvements and automations to improve customer service.

Modernization can no longer wait. With the right technology investments, agencies will be better equipped to meet their needs today and prepared for a future that will rapidly usher in a true digital government.

This piece was written and produced by the Government Technology Content Studio, with information and input from Infor and EVMWD.

1. https://webassets.infor.com/resources/Case-Studies/Elsinore-Valley-Municipal-Water-District.pdf?noRedirect=1

Produced by:

government technology

Sponsored by:

infor™

Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District

Government Technology is about solving problems in state and local government through the smart use of technology. Government Technology is a division of e.Republic, the nation's only media and research company focused exclusively on state and local government and education. **www.govtech.com**

Infor is a global leader in business cloud software designed specifically for public sector and utilities. Over 1000 public sector clients worldwide use Infor to streamline operations, manage finances and human capital, and improve service to their constituents. **www.infor.com**