

# Impacts

**in Federal  
Technology**



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# From the editor's desk



Amy Kluber, Editor-in-Chief

## Snapshots of Innovation across Federal IT

Federal agencies are faced with a growing number of evolving priorities around key frameworks like zero trust and improving the customer experience, plus adopting new technologies to meet evergrowing demands in data processing, government services and software development.

We spoke to five leaders who are innovating in various pieces within the federal tech ecosystem.

Digital services have a growing role in making health services more equitable. CMS' Andrea Fletcher shares more on how she took lessons learned from backpacking around sub-Saharan Africa to innovating care and payments at the agency.

NASA's procurement chief has a critical role not just within the agency, but also across government overall. As one of only three authorities who can execute procurement policy on behalf of the government, Karla Smith Jackson

tells us more about how the agency is innovating acquisition and its workforce.

VA also is prioritizing zero trust so much so that the concept underpins its entire cybersecurity strategy — which CISO Lynette Sherrill describes in greater depth.

With AI perhaps becoming the next greatest innovation in government, the entire chief digital and AI officer role is booming at the Defense Department. At the Air Force, longstanding data leader Eileen Vidrine describes how the service is enabling and maturing the tech and associated environment across the enterprise.

Of course, industry partners play a key role in making all these and more happen. Tech expert Joe Jeter from a leading services provider, Maximus, shares more about how the organization is thinking about these areas and more to help government agencies modernize their tech postures. 🌸

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# Air Force AI Leader Eileen Vidrine is ‘Laser-Focused’ on Fueling Innovation

The data chief returns to the Air Force focused on data preparation to enable AI across the service.

BY ANASTASIA OBIS

**E**ileen Vidrine has always “focused on performance optimization” and emerging technology, which helped position her to be the Department of Air Force’s new chief data and artificial intelligence officer (CDAO) this year.

Vidrine, who started her career as an enlisted soldier in the U.S. Army and was commissioned as a transportation officer, has always pursued emerging technology and innovation.

“I look back ... even as a transportation platoon officer, I was looking at how many miles ... I got on a tire, how to operationalize and work smarter. I would say condition-based maintenance was definitely part of my journey as a transportation logistics officer, but tech enabled me to work smarter,” Vidrine said in an interview with GovCIO Media & Research.

Throughout her career, Vidrine supported the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) and the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and was subsequently selected to serve as a White House Leadership Fellow, where she had the opportunity to support the Office of Management and Budget and the Office of Personnel Management. (ctd.)



**Eileen Vidrine**  
Chief Data and AI Officer,  
Department of the Air Force

**“AI readiness is about setting the enterprise conditions for successful AI for all of our workforce to leverage at the speed of mission.”**

**— Eileen Vidrine,  
Chief Data and AI Officer,  
Department of the Air Force**

Dedicating a significant portion of her career to federal service, Vidrine is also well acquainted with the Air Force. She became the service’s first full-time civilian chief data officer and was deeply involved in developing and implementing the enterprise data management strategy. Now, as the service’s CDAO, she and her team are focused on developing strategies to manage data and AI more efficiently across all mission areas.

“Our team is really empowered to posture the Department of the Air Force with the ability to harness the power of data for mission success and competitive military advantage,” Vidrine said. “In January 2022, our team integrated AI into our portfolio to fully leverage the broad and diverse capabilities.”

The Air Force set a goal to be “AI ready” by 2025 and “AI competitive” by 2027, an aim informed by the congressionally mandated National Security Commission on AI report, which recommended a common digital infrastructure, more agile acquisition and oversight processes, and education for warfighters to reach digital literacy.

“But when I look at it ... it is really about providing our workforce — military, civilian, Active Guard Reserve — with the AI infrastructure, the workforce development, the responsible AI policies that will enable innovative organizations to develop AI tools and ... solve operational challenges,” Vidrine said. “AI readiness is about setting the enterprise conditions for successful AI for all of our workforce to leverage at the speed of mission.”

To achieve the goal of being “AI ready” by 2025, the service’s Chief Data and AI Office first set up an innovation lab located at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland, where any airman or guardian is able to leverage the available capabilities.

The office attempts to start small and scale out the opportunity. To date, it has completed over 100 use cases across the spectrum, including condition-based maintenance, personnel, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

“It’s really our airmen coming from the field and saying, ‘I have this challenge, let’s work on it together,’” Vidrine said. “I always like to say data and

AI are team sports because it's really about taking ... the digital experts and partnering them with the functional experts because that helps us maintain the context of the data so that we can really come to solutions together."

Another core capability the office implemented early on was the program where they brought the citizen airmen, reservists and National Guard personnel back on active duty for up to 12 months at a time, putting them in 'centers of gravity' where they were able to coach and mentor the Air Force citizen coders and airmen on active duty.

"Brining that, what I would say, industry capability back on to active duty and to coach our ... really amazing talent up to tackle them together, so it really helped to grow our acumen and our workforce on tactical solutions," Vidrine said.

Last week, the Air Force and MIT's Artificial Intelligence Accelerator finished the CogPilot Data Challenge 2.0, which explored AI research to support and optimize pilot training.

Optimizing pilot training is a big investment for the service and a core area where it continues optimizing performance with AI.

"It's always fun to have a little bit of a competition, and it's amazing the diversity of thought that these challenges bring in because you're bringing in not just uniformed personnel, but industry and academia to be part of the solution," Vidrine said.

Some of the challenges faced by the office, as well as the Defense Department (DOD) at large, include data sharing at the speed of mission relevency

"We are being very proactive in terms of making sure data sharing is at the speed of mission, and we have made significant progress in that field. Showing that all of these pipelines actually aren't just notional but actually exist, but that is an area that we are continuing to mature because there's always an opportunity to improve," Vidrine said.

The Air Force's largest investment is in its people to build the data talent pipeline and allow leaders to emerge and improve their skill set, Vidrine added.

The service stood up intern programs along with college transition programs for data and AI. Airmen can major and minor in data science at the Air Force Academy, and they are able to go in all mission areas in both air and space.

The service also invests in upskilling people throughout their careers to ensure that strategic leaders are well-versed in this capability.

"Early in the standup of our organization, we recognized that it wasn't just about building technical capability, but building that workforce piece. And if we go back to being AI-ready in 2025, the talent piece is critical," Vidrine said.

Vidrine's team is almost a startup in a mature military department, but it is essential to the service's overall success.

"But today, we are seeing ... that data and artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming part of every airman and guardian's core DNA," Vidrine said.

"Because whether we're talking about strategic-level decisions or tactical decisions, we're looking at data to drive insight to decision-making at all levels of our department, and that is really true cultural change." ✨



# VA Eyes Strong Identity Management in Robust Cybersecurity Strategy

CISO Lynette Sherrill outlines how the agency is using a zero trust mindset at the heart of the agency’s cybersecurity approach.

BY SARAH SYBERT

In an environment where increased phishing attempts and ransomware threats continue to grow, federal government agencies have taken on new strategies to bolster their cyber posture. For the Department of Veterans Affairs, this is taking shape in its “Zero Trust First” strategy — a plan that outlines a robust framework that puts identity management, automation and continuous improvements at the forefront.

Heading this effort is VA CISO Lynette Sherrill, who took on the role in a permanent capacity in September. She discussed more behind the strategy, and what that means for veterans, agency partners and the cybersecurity community overall.

## How is VA using federal cybersecurity requirements and legislation to inform its cyber strategy?

**Sherrill** For VA, we have been using the recent legislation to strengthen our cybersecurity all throughout fiscal year 2022. We made some significant advancements with deployment of endpoint detection and response capabilities.

We also implemented and improved our security vulnerability management program. We have more than 93% of our vulnerabilities managed on our




**Lynette Sherrill**  
CISO, Department  
of Veterans Affairs

**“Zero trust is really at the heart of our cybersecurity strategy. What that means is we enforce strong identity verification.”**

**— Lynette Sherrill, CISO,  
Department of Veterans Affairs**

network, well above the industry standard of about 70%. We've enforced multi-factor authentication with 96% of our end-user community.

The National Defense Authorization Act banned certain devices on federal networks. We've been able to accomplish removing 80% of those devices, and the ones that are still left on our networks are completely isolated, so they can't impact our network. Then we've also continued to modernize and improve our cybersecurity strategy all throughout fiscal 2022.

 **As the threat landscape continues to change and expand, how is VA taking an agile approach to ensure the protection of VA and veteran information?**

**Sherrill** Zero trust is really at the heart of our cybersecurity strategy. What that means is we enforce strong identity verification. For every end user on our network, we know who they are and where they're authorized to go. We also ensure that the devices that are connecting to our network are healthy, meaning they haven't been compromised, they have all the latest patches and security configurations.

We're currently deploying telemetry and advanced algorithms to be able to detect attacks faster and isolate them in a more automated way. We're also enforcing least privilege access. With the size and scope of VA, it's difficult, but we work to ensure all 580,000 people that have accounts on our network only have the level of privileges necessary to do the job they need to do.

Assuring the health of our IT supply chain is also a top priority. Legislation, as well as advancements in supply chain risk management, have become one of the new cyber venues, if you will, that we all must pay attention to. For us, we're really planning for and preparing for a breach or an incident and making sure our teams know how to respond.

Those are just the core tenets. My mantra with the team lately had been that if we have an event or even if we hear of an event that's happening in



industry, we take that, we bring it into our environment, we try to learn from it so that we are more secure on the on the other side. Let's constantly be learning and improving everything that we do today, so we're more secure than we were.

### **How is VA enhancing cybersecurity through partnerships and information sharing?**

**Sherrill** It's a team sport. Clearly, we have to always be latched in with our business partners because we certainly don't want to ever deploy cybersecurity that impacts the ability to deliver care to veterans.

That can easily happen. With cybersecurity tools, we have the ability to shut systems down and prevent network access. We don't want to do that. We have to take a risk-based approach. We have to understand the level of risk and how to mitigate that risk to an acceptable level to allow operations to continue.


Everything brings risks. We all make risk-based decisions as we go throughout our day, and it's really just partnering to have those conversations and to understand the current threat landscape, so that we're all stronger together.

### **Moving forward, what do you see as VA's top cyber threats, and what will you do to proactively combat them?**

**Sherrill** I don't think that VA cybersecurity threats are different than anyone else's. We're taking an industry standard approach to them. The top cyber threats in health care, finance and even the federal government are phishing, web-based attacks to deliver malicious code, and we continue to see ransomware attacks all around the health care industry.

We're challenging our teams to find out what the indicators of compromise are, find out how that happened, and figure out how we make sure they won't happen again, and that we are as secure as we possibly can be against that.

As we see those cyber threats, we're really trying to take on the stance of double checking everything, including the elevated privileges and work stations

Then to combat it, it's thinking about what can we do more? Then, just ever-evolving our security detection and response capabilities to continuously improve and challenge ourselves to protect ourselves better. How do we automate that? Those are some of the ways that we're trying to combat our top cyber threats at this point. 



# How Digital Services Can Change Health Care

CMS' digital services chief sees tech as a key enabler for mission-critical services around equity, payments and recruiting.

BY AMY KLUBER

**D**igital services are showing great promise for enabling technology teams to solve complex challenges quickly and with human-centered design principles front and center. Andrea Fletcher, chief digital strategy officer at the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, has a passion for helping solve problems for some of health care's biggest challenges.

From a technology standpoint, a critical component of that is building the right tools for the right contexts. Even more importantly, she said, is recruiting the necessary workforce that government technology desperately needs.

GovCIO Media & Research spoke with Fletcher about her start in digital services and where she sees it growing at the agency as it strategizes how to make health care more equitable and accessible for the 88 million beneficiaries and 34 million people who sign up for healthcare.gov each year.

## What is your background in health and what brought you to CMS in digital services?

**Fletcher** I have a background in public health. My first job out of graduate school was at a startup called Dimagi, one of the first companies to build apps for frontline health care workers in India and sub-Saharan Africa. I ran around sub-Saharan Africa for a few years, living mostly out of a backpack. I would show up to help build an



**Andrea Fletcher**  
Chief Digital Strategy  
Officer, CMS

**“Your job is to not think outside the box, it’s to think like there is no box.”**

**— Andrea Fletcher,  
Chief Digital Strategy Officer,  
CMS**

app and I would get a strange look: “This is the techie — a 25-year-old woman?” Very early on I learned to have the attitude of, “That’s me! I’m here to build you an app!” I would just roll up my sleeves and figure it out.

I learned a lot from that experience, particularly because it was a low-resource setting. We never had enough of anything — money, staff, time, but you still had to learn how to get stuff done. I worked with governments that had no laws on the books for collecting people’s health information on mobile technology; so we’d have to work with them to make sure that what we were doing was safe and trustworthy. Sometimes that meant writing the policy or processes to help ensure that the data collection was safe, sometimes that meant re-working processes or helping hire staff. I was fortunate enough to work in over 20 countries, mostly in Southern and Eastern Africa. In 2014, I also got to support some of the first contact-tracing apps to roll out during the 2014 West Africa Ebola Outbreak. It was an incredible opportunity to see how technology can impact a crisis.

I came into CMS in early 2021. My call to service, watching America and how we were handling COVID and realizing that our public health system needed help. I kind of looked around and realized that I might have the right skills to step into the U.S. health care system and be a part of the change. I remember thinking, “Put me in, coach!” My coach ended up being the U.S. Digital Service, and after applying I landed at CMS to join the team working on health care.

 **How have these experiences influenced how you view your priorities now?**

**Fletcher** When I think about early times in my career, what was interesting is how quickly countries could leap ahead. They didn’t have the legacy systems that we have in the U.S. — it was mostly paper-based. We were building stuff on tablets and mobile phones and end-to-end technology

systems for national health systems with very modern approaches. We built open-source software and designed with users because it helped us de-risk the technology and build better products. I also learned how to design with users, and the importance of including them in the process.

I spent a lot of days walking around villages with community health workers, getting an understanding of how difficult their jobs are and how much they care about the people they see. I needed to make their jobs easier with technology, not become an additional burden. The apps were always the easy part. But it's all the other things that have to happen in order to put that piece of technology in somebody's hand that is the difficult part of delivering great digital services.

At CMS, the scale is just unfathomable. We process 4.5% of the U.S. GDP through Medicare part A and B claims. Taxpayers pay into the Medicare trust, so it's an immense responsibility to ensure that we are paying claims on time and accurately. It can be easy to get lost in the scale of it all and forget that real people are using these services. Part of how my previous experiences have influenced me to always bring it back to the users — stay focused on their needs and design with them.

### **How do you see digital services impacting the health care system? What problems are you trying to solve?**

**Fletcher** I've been thinking about the meaning of the word service lately. Our team comes in for a tour of service, meaning they sign up to serve their country for a period. When I think about how digital service impacts an organization like CMS, we're bringing in the next generation of talent. It is very hard to get high-level technical talent hired into the federal government. One way of doing that is to use a tour-of-service model. I have people on my team who came from big tech companies, startups and across the federal government because they have a passion for health care, technology and

solving tough problems. Bringing in talent is the number one thing that we can do right now in the federal government.

The other way I think about the word service is service delivery — delivering services to the American people. I often think about how my grandparents signed up for Medicare — it was most likely a paper form at a physical Social Security location. That is very different than what the expectations are now. People want to go to a website or download an app. They want the information to be understandable, they want it to be fast and user friendly. Expectations of the American people on what their experiences are for interacting with the federal government are the same that they have for any online service, and it's our job to help these services live up to those expectations.

Our team partnered with SAMHSA to deliver a new website for issues with mental, drugs and alcohol. Findsupport.gov launched in May and is an incredible resource for navigating the health care space. Another example of




things our team has been working on in the digital services space is surprise medical billing. We recently led the collaboration on building out new content for people who get an unexpected medical bill, <https://www.cms.gov/medical-bill-rights>. Both of these websites were developed from hundreds of hours of user research, many versions of wire frames and mock-ups, and continual user testing to ensure that we are helping people navigating the complexities of the health care system.

### What does the ideal health care system look like to you?

**Fletcher** Equitable, affordable and high quality. I'm really excited about CMS' focus on health equity. It is imperative that we give people information they can find quickly and in accessible plain language. For health care, that also means that our services are easy to use for people using screen readers and with low vision, cognitive disabilities, low bandwidth and non-English speakers.

### What do you think is still needed to get there, and where do digital services fit in?

**Fletcher** I am constantly asking the question at CMS "How can we help?" A digital service team like the one we have at CMS are the team of helpers. Most of the time we end up helping defining the problem, building a prototype and demoing it, mapping out the processes, and talking with users and stakeholders.

You can't do this without having really good people. Hiring is everything, and making sure we bring in the best talent in the country into public service to tackle big problems is critical to ensuring that we deliver the best digital services that we can. Federal government service is both an honor and an opportunity. If you're waiting for the call to service, this is it! 



# New Acquisition Practices at NASA Reflect Modernized Procurement for Government

NASA's procurement chief highlights the agency's new Innovation Acquisition Launchpad, addresses tech challenges and outlines top priorities for 2023

BY NIKKI HENDERSON

**N**ASA is transforming how it is doing business, including meeting newly set goals for diversity in its contractor base and also developing and acquiring new technologies faster.

NASA Senior Procurement Executive and Deputy Chief Acquisition Officer Karla Smith Jackson described NASA's procurement process as being too slow for today's technological fast-paced environment. America's space agency also wants to diversify its mixed industrial base. Its procurement focus is shifting from one of traditional contracting to more modular approaches that encourage taking risks safely.

One aspect is the agency's new Innovation Acquisition Launchpad, which aims to accelerate the communication of innovation, focus on multiple types of procurement and offer a safe environment to manage risks. Jackson said NAIL will also encourage more innovative practices and improve customer experience. Jackson shares more about where she sees the state of procurement at the agency, how she wants contractors to engage and how the future of acquisition relies on modernized practices and technology. (ctd.)



**Karla Smith Jackson**  
Deputy Chief Acquisition  
Officer, NASA

**“You can’t just take an IT professional and throw them in procurement and say help me do procurement better. I need a procurement professional that understands information technology.”**

**— Karla Smith Jackson, Deputy Chief Acquisition Officer, NASA**

 **How will NASA’s new Acquisition Innovation Launchpad enhance the procurement process at the agency?**

**Jackson** NAIL is a framework of innovation with bodies of expertise. From the center level, which is our level of execution, to the senior executive level across the enterprise all the way through headquarters. We have representation not just within procurement, but also with our program managers, with our general counsel, with our Office of Financial Operations, our CFO. It’s also cross-functional stakeholders as well as industry partners to facilitate the use of innovative acquisition techniques and then identify and develop tools.

We are looking at sole-source procurement as well as competitive procurement. We’re also looking at smart program management as well as procurement strategy and procurement management. What we’re looking to do is provide a safe place to manage taking risks and allowing people to test out things safely so that if something fails, it’s not a big catastrophic failure to the enterprise. Then once we test those, I’ll call them hypotheses on a smaller scale, we can then determine whether it could be used on an enterprise-wide basis. We believe that if we stimulate more agile or better and innovative acquisition practices that we can have better procurement outcomes.

We think that we can improve the customer experience — that means industry as a customer as well as our technical counterparts that use contracts to execute their mission. With our industry partners, we’re looking for transformational business practices that we might be able to adopt. We’re looking at our data analytics to see if we are accumulating the right data and are we looking at the right things. And then there could be advanced technologies, we might be able to leverage technology to more seamlessly deliver our procurement services. (ctd.)

## What are some of the challenges you and your team face when it comes to getting tech in the door to accomplish NASA's vast missions?

**Jackson** There's always this clash of what people call "new space," meaning new companies that operate in the commercial space market or space industry within the past 20 years. And then what we call "traditional aerospace" — those who have been operating for the past 70 years. NASA is trying to diversify our supply chain or our industrial base by having a mix of these companies. We are also looking to both of those groups, be it traditional aerospace or the new space, to increase new entrants and help us with manage underrepresented groups through subcontracting and teaming agreements.

We're incentivizing that particular piece of doing business by having a diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility plan similar to subcontracting plans. So when you win a contract or you're awarding a contract at NASA from now on, it's a requirement to have a DEI&A plan, and that is reviewed annually to ensure that you're meeting your obligations both with your organic workforce as well as your teaming industrial base and supplier base.

We do have a challenge that the Biden administration has given us to increase the amount of spend with small businesses, in particular small, disadvantaged businesses. Last year, our goal was 8.2%. We achieved 7.9%. While that represented almost three-quarters of a billion dollars of increased spend, it still didn't meet the goal. We're steadily increasing our obligations and spend with small business, but we didn't quite achieve our goal. It was moved up mid-year, and then we did have a case where some of our requirements kind of transitioned into the next fiscal year. So they weren't able to be counted. So this year we have a pretty heavy duty strategy. We're trying to hold the schedule, meet schedule and meet our numbers.

The third challenge is another piece of it, which is our Historically Black Colleges and University Minority Serving Institutions (HBCU MSI) goal. NASA is

the only executive agency that has an HBCU MSI goal. We've selected 1% as our goal, but we've fallen woefully short of that historically to something like one-tenth of 1%. So we're doing a lot of outreach to HBCUs and MSIs. We're teaming with some of our larger corporations to help HBCUs and MSIs talk and think about contracting because this does not pertain to grants and corporate agreements. We're talking about contract award dollars. And then the last thing that we're doing is we're planning to put an RFI together and develop a consortium manager, which would manage a consortium of HBCUs and MSIs that have research capabilities in areas of interest to NASA.

Our fiscal year 2023 priority is to increase obligations with small businesses and small disadvantaged businesses to include HBCU MSIs. We're focusing on prime awards, but we're not ignoring the idea that subcontracting and teaming is another way to be able to get those dollars up. We're helping our Office of Small Business Programs with matchmaking with the large businesses and small disadvantaged businesses. We're collaborating with the Small Business





Administration (SBA) very closely, and we do an equity action report to look at the gaps that we believe we have to be able to meet our goals.

 **How are you thinking about emerging technology, whether it's in regard to the strategies to procure it or enhancing the procurement function to work better?**

**Jackson** Last year I set up a new organization called Enterprise Services and Analysis. I call it my analysis division. They have an e-business systems office, so right now we're in the throes of reviewing options and doing market research for our next-generation contract writing system. We're looking at ways to gather and assimilate data across the enterprise on contractor performance. We're looking at ways to gather and assimilate data across the enterprise on contractor performance. We're able to start to look at incentives across the enterprise, what works, what doesn't work. We're also able to track over time trend data with respect to performance as opposed to an individual point in time.

As we move forward, we've made investments first in personnel with the proper educational experience background because you can't just take an IT professional and throw them in procurement and say help me do procurement better. I need a procurement professional that understands information technology — and there aren't that many of them. We've attracted a lot of talent from both the Defense Department as well as other government entities that have come to work with us.

The NAIL also is a part of the data management piece, and we're looking at integrating all of our OP enterprise applications. We have too many varied tools, so we're going to try to integrate that, get it down to a handful of tools that are multifunctional and have the opportunity for scaling or growth.

Our contractors are another piece of it. We're testing out systems on the pricing perspective where a contractor could develop a price proposal on their side instead of giving us all that data that they would submit with a proposal. If they develop it and they put it into a virtual database that we have access to





with controls, then we can get in and see the records without having to have so much paper and e-mail so we're working on a pilot to be able to do that.

We do want to look at our spend under management. That means of our services contracts — are we doing strategic sourcing or category management? Are we pooling our resources instead of making one-off buys? We do have over 20 different lines of effort there, everything from administrative services to logistics services, custodial services, administrative services.

### **What's on the horizon at NASA for 2023?**

**Jackson** For fiscal year 2023, we're looking at how do we go to the next level with respect to acquisition excellence through better acquisition outcomes, so part of it is that data analytics. We need data analytics for better decision-making.

Secondly, we need transparent internal processes. That means understanding whether industry understands how we make source selection decisions, how employees understand how we make personnel decisions, how we make decisions to invest money and training opportunities for our workforce — to both the workforce and the public.

The third area we're focusing on is creating innovation opportunities. NAIL is a large part of what we're doing there.

The fourth area is robust industry engagement and collaboration where we are going out and talking about our mission and direction.

Lastly, increasing new entrants to NASA acquisition is a top priority. In order for us to have a healthy supply chain, we've got to diversify. We don't want to be insular. We want to attract new folks to do business with NASA, to include international partners and non-traditional business partners that might never have done business with the federal government. That's also a metric that the Biden administration is monitoring for all federal executive agencies. We're almost 50% into the fiscal year now, and we're seeing real movement in each one of these areas where I have tangible results. 

# maximus

## Federal Modernization Requires Collaborative Leadership

Today's market calls for evolving recruiting and upskilling programs for technology leaders.

 **What are you seeing to be current challenges to leading federal technology modernization efforts?**

**Jeter** Leading federal technology modernization efforts come with several challenges. One of the top challenges is the intersection of emerging technologies and the lack of skills needed for their execution. While there are numerous tools available to solve problems in different ways, the crucial factor is having the talent that can effectively leverage these tools. It's essential to strike a balance between selecting the right tools, employing the appropriate methods, and leveraging the workforce to create a sustainable, long-term impact in the modernization process.

Another significant challenge is ensuring pervasive cybersecurity throughout all aspects of modernization. This includes considerations for the edge, DevSecOps, fiber infrastructure and cloud providers. Orchestrating cybersecurity and adopting a zero-trust framework across these areas require careful planning and execution.

The evolving set of techniques used for



**Joe Jeter**  
Senior Vice President of  
Federal Technology,  
Maximus

**“From open-source libraries and methodologies to generative AI techniques, the range of options for coding is expanding. Incorporating these techniques into modernization efforts requires staying up to date with the latest advancements.”**

**— Joe Jeter, Senior Vice President of Federal Technology, Maximus**

coding poses another challenge. From open-source libraries and methodologies to generative AI techniques, the range of options for coding is expanding. Incorporating these techniques into modernization efforts requires staying up to date with the latest advancements and understanding how they can be effectively applied.

Additionally, the transition from legacy systems to modernized processes is a crucial challenge. Moving from established methods to new tools and processes requires a strategic approach. It's necessary to rearchitect processes while ensuring organizational acceptance and understanding of the benefits of modernization.

#### **What are some leadership use cases for carrying out successful IT modernization initiatives?**

**Jeter** Successful IT modernization initiatives require effective leadership and a deep understanding of existing processes, technologies and legacy systems. Our primary goal is to uphold the agency's fundamental principles of excellence.

Understanding the mission's "why" uncovers vital business rules and processes. Without a clear understanding of the purpose, even the best tools and technology cannot guarantee successful modernization.

We prioritize accurate data security and accessibility, constructing flexible tools and interfaces to enhance user experience while maintaining data integrity and reliability..


(ctd.)

## How are you prioritizing strong federal technology leadership over the next year?

**Jeter** Over the next year, we are focused on three key areas – zero trust, cloud and AI. We place a significant emphasis on implementing a comprehensive zero trust approach throughout the entire IT lifecycle to ensure that the concept of zero trust is ingrained in our operations, providing robust security measures and mitigating potential risks.

Additionally, the transition to the cloud remains a key priority for our federal clients. Our goal is to assist our clients in making informed decisions about technology while enabling a seamless transition of their business processes. By combining our expertise in cloud technologies and business process optimization, we aim to support our clients in maximizing the advantages of cloud computing.

We recognize the profound impact of AI on our clients and their operations. We are working with agencies to guide them on how to best leverage AI technologies to help automate tasks, analyze data, and identify potential opportunities and threats. By operationalizing AI, we aim to be at the forefront of innovation and provide our clients with the transformative benefits of AI-driven solutions.

By focusing on these areas and emphasizing transparency, we aim to position Maximus as a dominant leader in driving technological advancements and operational efficiency for our clients in the government sector. 



# Impactful solutions built to empower federal agencies



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