

Improving Operational Efficiency with Operations Cloud

by Granicus



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The Pressure to do More With Less

For as long as there have been governments, they have been tasked with serving the businesses and constituents within their communities. Those who choose a career in government are often driven by a commitment to providing exceptional customer service and ensuring transparency. However, with limited resources, it becomes difficult to prioritize high-impact projects when daily tasks consume so much of the staff's time. Even today, basic government services remain heavily dependent on walk-ins and public phone calls, leading to frustrating and costly experiences for both staff and the public.

Technology has helped mitigate many of the challenges faced by modern governments at the state and local level, helping them move the needle on creating more effective and efficient services and working toward such goals as:

- » **Developing streamlined and automated intake and workflow processes** like meeting information, communications, and records requests.
- » **Building and distributing information efficiently**, securely and remotely to staff, boards, committees, and the public.
- » **Increasing transparency** while reaching more residents and businesses to account for the needs of the whole community.
- » **Cost effectively collecting feedback and insights** from residents and businesses in the community.
- » **Enhancing cybersecurity and data protection** to mitigate increasing cybersecurity risks.
- » **Improving compliance** with public records, open meetings, and accessibility laws and regulations.
- » **Solving staffing challenges** by attracting and retaining high-quality employees with agile, innovative tools.

FACING NEW CHALLENGES

While the tools available to agencies have advanced significantly, many organizations have only implemented patchwork solutions to automate some of these daily tasks. While most government employees recognize the potential for improvement, they often lack the experience or resources to fully leverage technology. More often than not, the technology that is implemented consists of siloed solutions from multiple providers, each addressing a specific issue without enhancing overall government efficiency.

Attention to budget and proper stewardship of public funds have long been a guiding force for governments. However, public organizations and agencies currently face a renewed and intensified focus on efficiency and increased scrutiny from their constituents and oversight agencies. For many states, the impacts of austerity efforts either related to federal Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) actions or other efficiency mandates are creating uncertain funding streams, leading to cautious tightening of budgets that impact both the state and local levels. In this current climate, uncovering efficiencies and demonstrating real return on investment (ROI) on technology programs will be more important than ever.



A THREE-PRONGED APPROACH TO INCREASING EFFICIENCIES

This guide presents the impact of a holistic approach to government operations, using technology to leverage connected tools, data insights, and managed services with experienced partners dedicated to creating more efficient and effective digital government. Such a shift is also essential to fostering understanding and driving better government experiences.

Connected technology addresses how residents and others requesting public information can access government services effectively. Implementing tools and platforms that enable seamless engagement ensures information and services are readily available and easily accessible. This includes user-friendly digital interfaces and communication channels that foster interaction and support.

Experience services and capabilities illuminate what is important to staff. By consulting with staff and reviewing the processes and systems used, experience services help staff get a better idea of how they are using technology to uncover greater opportunities for efficiency. These insights not only unlock the power new technology can bring, but they also drive a deeper adoption and use of technology by staff.

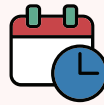
Data insights can further paint the picture of how technology impacts staff processes. Staff can get a better understanding of such metrics as:



The number of
record requests
handled



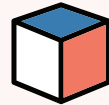
The time required
to process requests



Time required to
compile agendas



The number
of departments
contributing to
agendas



Agenda packet size

These and other metrics can connect directly to cost savings within an agency while improving employees' capabilities and morale. Integrating these elements empowers agencies and organizations to truly fulfill their goals with greater efficiency.



CONNECTED TECHNOLOGY

The foundation for operational efficiency

In an increasingly data-driven world, helping customers spot trends, improve processes, and demonstrate ROI of technology investments have all become nearly as valuable as technology solutions themselves. Yet, for decades, the reliance on single, standalone digital government tools has shown to be an inefficient means of uncovering the efficiencies really needed by public organizations.

While usually developed from a well-intended vision, technology has grown in ways that creates tangled and inefficient environments for organizations to effectively operate, including:

» Point solutions cobbled together

Various individual — or point — solutions that have been implemented to solve one particular problem or challenge for a single department often do not have the flexibility to grow with organizational needs over time. These solutions also frequently are unable to easily connect and share data with other systems across the organization, creating an inefficient online experience, vendor sprawl, and department misalignment.

» Mixing open-source and legacy technology

While some departments might embrace open-source solutions that allow customizations (with the required IT resources to create them), other departments might rely on legacy tools that have been in place for years. However, these solutions are frequently inflexible to change or customization due to their hard-coded software. Again, the result creates inefficiencies between departments.

» Relying on off-the-shelf solutions not developed specifically for government needs

To find budgetary savings, many organizations have settled for commercial platforms and off-the-shelf solutions that might or might not have been built with government in mind. As a result, using a solution that was originally created for a commercial purpose like Zoom or YouTube for streaming public meetings, for example, might leave governments without the functionality they need to create the best experience for viewers while paying for features that they never use. As with the other types of well-intended solutions mentioned above, downstream issues such as management difficulties for IT, long implementation windows, or even requiring unique statements of work for each change to a system create service inefficiencies and budget overruns.



»» Creating agenda management solutions in-house

While bespoke agenda management solutions sound great at first, they come with a long list of shortcomings, many of which are only realized months or years down the road. Tailor-coded agenda solutions require a heavy lift for IT staff, both initially and ongoing. Writing code for a complex agenda product requires a certain level of knowledge not standard for every IT professional, and subsequent improvements and additions also require those coders to have or gain familiarity with the foundational code. IT staffing changes can severely impact their ability to service and support the solution. In-house solutions also lack the functional integrations and security assurances of commercially available solutions. Finally, ongoing training on the solution further consumes IT resources.

»» Using email and spreadsheets to manage complex records requests

Relying on tracking requests with a spreadsheet and cc'ing everyone on the team on every email is as inefficient as it sounds. From tracking individual requests and digging through shared inboxes to time-consuming status updates and less secure access to data, managing complex record requests with spreadsheets, email inboxes, and binders leaves teams exposed to security risks, audit trail issues, and significantly slower processes for fulfilling requests.

The concept of connected technology looks to move away from a siloed and piecemeal approach, instead providing, as the name suggests, technology that works together, developed in a way that helps alleviate customization delays and focuses on efficient and effective engagement and configurability for both government staff and communities, all with an outcome-driven approach designed for long-term connected success.

ESTABLISHING A ROADMAP FOR CONNECTED TECHNOLOGY

Granicus' Operations Cloud provides state and local government organizations and agencies with a means by which to create a culture of connected technology easily. Designed with flexibility to meet the unique needs created by various government priorities and processes, an Operations Cloud package can consist of multiple core components, along with supporting add-ons.

For state and local governments in key areas (Governance, Transparency, and Record Request Management), connected technology through Operations Cloud is developed with three critical benefits in mind:



Maximize operational efficiency and tech value

Organizations can use connected technology to simplify operations, recover valuable staff time and resources, and create space for high-impact projects. Further, organizations can more easily attract and retain quality staff with modern software solutions that automate repetitive and mundane tasks.



Avoid risk and ensure compliance

Connected technology removes the inefficiencies and systems incompatibilities that can create roadblocks to meeting legal reporting, accessibility, and transparency requirements, helping organizations avoid costly fines, fees, and penalties. It also helps eliminate technology security and data confidentiality worries.



Build trust, accountability, and informed public participation

By increasing opportunities for self-service and improving public access to information, organizations that employ connected technology tools can improve the ease and quality of public participation.

CONNECTED TECHNOLOGY IN ACTION

Creating simple and efficient processes for otherwise complicated tasks in state and local government is at the core of connected technology. In essence, connected technology identifies the common bottleneck points in processes and finds the right tools to overcome challenges to create better overall experiences. In the case of Operations Cloud, that starts with an Experience Partner who works with organizations before, during, and after tech implementation, providing assessment of processes, identifying time-consuming tasks, helping support change management, and more.

This is further reflected in the configurability Operations Cloud offers in options for Governance, Transparency, and Record Request Management areas, designed to create the optimal solution for almost every clerk.

» Governance over compliance efforts and legislative processes

Governance solutions that help automate and streamline agenda management demonstrate the impact of connected technology on efficiencies. Operations Cloud governance solutions provide workflows that help more easily set and approve agendas, while mitigating delays in approvals and agenda packet compilation. Leveraging connected engagement tools, Operations Cloud provides automatic notification of posted meeting materials to interested members of the public, making it easier to gather community feedback well ahead of public meetings.

The process continues by integrating tools that help simplify meeting preparation and participation for elected officials by providing quick reference to notes and community comments on items that help them make data-driven decisions. The same integrated connected technology features in Operations Cloud also impact management of meeting tasks, helping easily capture roll call, minutes, and in-meeting actions (with block voting and motion shortcuts in some solutions). Finally, Operations Cloud expedites finalizing and posting meeting minutes online quickly and efficiently, indexed to video recordings and available for easy public searching.

For smaller organizations, Operations Cloud's Governance Agenda PE option offers automated agenda creation and workflow approvals, one-click agenda and minutes publishing to a public portal, an easy-to-use and intuitive modern dashboard, and public notification of agendas via web posting. The Governance Agenda OE option, suited for medium to large organizations, expands to include highly customizable forms for agendas, resolutions, and other documents; in-depth, automated, and configurable workflows with granular document permissions; the ability to create agendas in more than 100 languages; and Microsoft Word, Laserfiche, and Google Translate integrations.

» Transparency through video streaming and recording

Access and clear understanding of the legislative process is key to building not only engagement with communities but increasing trust in government. For years, state and local agencies and organizations have used video as an important tool in their public outreach for meetings. However, as technology has expanded, so too have the expectations of a public that is increasingly savvy in both their consumption and knowledge of video technology.

The connected technology philosophy at the heart of Operations Cloud helps provides agencies and organizations a way to meet those needs with core features such as 99.9% uptime from video servers, extended support hours, and the ability to simulcast video directly to social media. As with public meeting governance, Operations Cloud also provides flexibility to help organizations grow their video transparency within the context that is right for their individual agency.



With self-managed, partially-managed, or fully-managed video streaming options, Operations Cloud offers organizations great flexibility:

Self-managed video



- Best for small organizations or those with well-resourced IT departments
- 100% cloud-based streaming and meeting management access
- 1080px resolution available
- Built-in video indexing with agenda
- Record minutes in templates created from meeting agenda
- Live, remote voting available

Partially-managed video



- Best for organizations that don't want to manage time-consuming post-meeting tasks, like video timestamping and indexing
- Customer manages streaming and recording; Granicus does the rest
- Professional, post-meeting polishing, timestamping, and indexing
- Proprietary search by spoken word
- Industry-best closed-captioning, translation, and transcription services

Fully-managed video



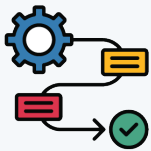
- Best for organizations that want to fully outsource video management
- Granicus manages all aspects of video streaming and recording including multi-camera switching
- Multi-camera broadcasting, streaming, and recording with live, remotely managed direction
- Professional, post-meeting polishing, timestamping, and indexing
- Proprietary search by spoken word
- Industry-best closed-captioning, translation, and transcription services
- Playout system to integrate with cable or web channel (24/7 LiveStream of client's cable channel)

» Record request management

Record requests — including those for public records — can have the same impact on government trust and engagement as public meetings. Missed deadlines and delays, inconsistent responses, incomplete exemption logging, and accidental release of confidential or protected data are all hurdles that are challenging to clear without the right tools and configuration. The threat of non-compliance lawsuits, fines, and diminished trust makes it vital to overcome common delays and bottlenecks in the request management process. Whether an agency is actively concerned about the risk of litigation or is focused more on balancing record request processing with other important projects, the unique time-savings, efficiency, and security functions in Operations Cloud Record Request Management have enormous value and impact. By [neutralizing complexity in the record request process](#), agencies can expect the following beneficial outcomes aligned to the typical record request lifecycle:



Intake: The dynamic intake fields and patented deflection technology found in the public request portal help reduce friction for both named and anonymous requests, building public trust and accountability with improved access to records and information while reducing phone calls and walk-ins to maximize operational efficiency.



Vet/Triage: Automated workflows in the staff portal route, escalate, and remind of request status, while linking and flagging similar requests, frequent requesters, and media requests. These tools can also create pinpointed groups for bulk notifications that streamline processing, reduce workload, and promote on-time responses to ensure compliance.



Gathering information: With capabilities for @mentions and request nesting, as well as optional Laserfiche integration, connected technology in Operations Cloud helps create more efficient information gathering. Secure requests and internal and external records exchanges reduce risk and can optionally also be used to help expedite interagency, discovery, lobbyist correspondence, and other non-public record requests.



Review and redaction: This critical phase benefits from a variety of efficiencies added through Operations Cloud, including PST Email extraction, image-to-text conversion (OCR), and Flatlock® redaction, as well as connection with Veritone video redaction tools. All of these capabilities create defensible audit trails and exemption logging to mitigate risk and ensure compliance.



Respond and release: Operations Cloud offers automated time and materials estimating and invoicing to recover costs where allowed by law to increase ROI and tech value. A gallery of best practice templates expedites consistent responses that reduce risk and build public trust. And secure records release with limitable links and no file size limitations save time, improve efficiency, and further reduce risk.



Reporting: The flexibility of connected technology to meet unique organizational needs while maintaining compliance is demonstrated in Operations Cloud reporting features, including customizable dashboards and configurable reporting to improve understanding of your processes for continuous efficiency gains and taxpayer value. These are balanced with vital CJIS and HIPAA security in a centralized request tracking hub that helps maintain defensible audit trail logging and reporting to meet legal requirements and avoid litigation.



**Driving outcomes from
technology with experience
services and data insights**

DRIVING OUTCOMES FROM TECHNOLOGY WITH EXPERIENCE SERVICES AND DATA INSIGHTS

For many organizations, the misconception that implementing new technology alone will generate positive change can, in reality, lead to new challenges and complications in achieving goals. These roadblocks can come from a lack of change management, incomplete buy-in from departments or leadership, and even from not fully understanding the capabilities a system may offer for uncovering the strategic insights that can drive progress forward.

As part of Granicus' broader Government Experience Cloud philosophy, Operations Cloud places a vital importance on marrying high-efficiency tech solutions with a deep understanding of the work done by government and public sector organizations, topping it all off with valuable data analytics that help guide and justify decisions.

» Experience services

Experience services are an important tentpole for success with Granicus' Operations Cloud. Working with a dedicated Experience Partner, organizations get assistance mapping their internal meeting and record request management processes to identify key touchpoints and bottlenecks for greater efficiency. Operations Cloud's connected technology can help break down siloes and improve staff collaboration, and the Experience Partner's knowledge and advice can further drive cooperative efforts across agencies.

Continuous, proactive, staff-focused support, orchestrated by a dedicated Experience Partner helps drive continuous process improvements and high-value tech usage by employing:

- ✔ Process reviews to detect and correct inefficiencies
- ✔ Analysis of solution adoption and usage with an emphasis on maximizing tech ROI
- ✔ Outcome monitoring
- ✔ Reporting and improvement
- ✔ Enhanced technical support and customer care experience

Using a partnership approach to evaluating processes and solution adoption helps catalyze an organization's digital maturity at a reduced risk:

- ✓ **Enriches organizational tech** and decision-making capabilities;
- ✓ **Deepens tech adoption** and feature usage;
- ✓ **Improves delivery** of public information; and
- ✓ **Enhances compliance** with records and meetings regulations and laws at the time of implementation and on an ongoing basis as new mandates emerge.

Importantly, this approach achieves desired outcomes while building a culture of continuous experience maturation, problem solving, and improvement.

Operations Cloud helps public sector agencies shift from a checklist-of-tasks mentality to one of continued development of positive digital experiences and services. It also benefits from support with capacity building, change management, on-demand consulting, form building, and aligning resources internally to drive this shift.

The Services Catalog offered as part of Operations Cloud's experience services leverages insights gathered from our customers over many years of community engagement, service delivery, and operational excellence initiatives to identify proven best practices that drive the outcomes that meet constituent needs.

Some of the benefits of the experience services catalog include:

- ✓ **Workshops** facilitated by Granicus' multi-disciplinary experts designed to uncover your unique pain points while fostering alignment across teams.
- ✓ **Access to a curated, evergreen online catalog** of expert-led training and strategic offerings established from our work with thousands of governments to help support better community engagement, improved service delivery, and increased operational excellence.
- ✓ **On-demand, self-guided lessons** illustrating step-by-step best-practice processes.
- ✓ **Real-world tested templates**, instructions, and success examples for each step in the experiences process from Granicus' communication, service delivery, and operations experts.

» Data insights

Data — and its proper use to surface insights that drive decisions and achieve outcomes — has become more powerful than ever. For many organizations, data is often seen as an afterthought or a “nice-to-have” rather than crucial to operational improvement. After all, government agencies have to perform these actions and services, whether data is tracked or not. But for those organizations with an improvement mindset that takes a more holistic view of connected technology’s impact on outcomes, data is a vital and ongoing source of information that can help direct immediate changes. Perhaps more importantly, data can help demonstrate and maximize ROI.

Data insights, as part of Granicus’ Operations Cloud, help organizations better understand their internal processes and systems and how those are impacting or impeding desired outcomes. Moreover, analysis of community demographic information, access to information, and participation in the governing process helps paint a more complete picture of the unique needs and concerns of different people, segments, and audiences within the community. This understanding allows government agencies to tailor their approaches and communications, ensuring they resonate with the specific audiences they aim to support.

Operations Cloud offers data insights focused on analyzing and optimizing services within the organization. By seeing which actions users take and the metrics related to their interaction, Operations Cloud creates insights specific to the needs of state and local government.

Common areas include:



Governance

- ✓ **Workflow and user data:** Examines how internal users are adopting and using the various products and features available with their tech solutions, as well as evaluating workflow processes that could be more efficiently completed.
- ✓ **Public facing metrics:** Leverages analytic tools to track search interface usage, including public engagement with council actions, as well as various video viewing metrics.
- ✓ **Form usage data:** Monitors form submission trends — such as high volumes of board or commission applications or public record requests — and helps identify when to upgrade to tools that can handle increased volume efficiently.
- ✓ **Communication metrics:** Monthly summaries of audience behaviors with communications from the solution focused on a variety of subscriber data.



Video transparency

- ✓ **Uptime and service disruptions:** Monitors the reliability of video services to maintain seamless public access to government meetings.
- ✓ **Proactive communication metrics:** Tracks how many people are proactively subscribed to receive notifications of meeting materials and the percentage of the population engaging with these resources.
- ✓ **Hardware insights:** Tracks warranty and hardware status data to support proactive budget planning and avoid hardware breakdowns.
- ✓ **Public engagement metrics:** Demonstrates the value of video tools in improving constituent awareness and participation in government actions.



Public record request management

- ✓ **Benchmark report:** An **annual review** of the entire records request process that helps organizations measure themselves against benchmarks from across the country.
- ✓ **System usage report:** Identifies overwhelmed users or departments that might need additional resources or training and helps evaluate workflow processes to optimize and improve efficiency.
- ✓ **FOIA time expense by staff report:** Provides data on staff time spent on requests, giving admins and directors real-time data to justify budget increases for additional staff and resources, including add-on modules to improve efficiency.
- ✓ **Deflection optimization:** Tracks how patented tools reduce incoming requests by helping the public find answers independently, supporting self-service and reducing staff workload.

COMBINING TECHNOLOGY, EXPERIENCE, AND INSIGHTS FOR MORE EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

Leveraging the power of digital government tools to build positive outcomes, drive public participation, ensure compliance, and manage efficient internal processes requires a holistic approach both organizationally and technically. While some technology solutions present “platforms” that combine a variety of tools into convenient bundles, many government organizations and agencies have found that technology alone does not generate efficient outcomes.

Government needs a partner, not a vendor. As a longtime leader in government technology solutions for agenda management, meeting video recording and streaming, and record request management, Granicus understands that best-in-industry technology is only as good as the support for those tools and the outcomes they deliver. That’s why Operations Cloud places an importance on creating a partnership with organizations that goes beyond typical vendor service in order to fully support the important work done by our customers.

Only Operations Cloud layers deeply knowledgeable Experience Partners and data-driven insights on top of the industry’s best meeting and record request management solutions to offer a unique and innovative partnership. As a result, Operations Cloud customers are not only using premium technology, but they are also being empowered to use that technology better, improve related processes, and measure the impact of those tech investments on their priorities and goals.

Create efficiencies, focus on high priority projects, and demonstrate wise allocation of taxpayer dollars with the solution packaging of the future: **Operations Cloud.**



[Learn more](#)