Citizen-Driven Government: Boundaryless Organizations

Sukumar Rao

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By Sukumar Rao

In 2040, the government will be led by citizens in a network of boundaryless organizations. Citizen leaders will shape and drive government management and operations in a co-creation process that involves public, private and social sector organizations. In this networked world, partners will work together to provide services to fellow citizens and have equal responsibility and accountability for service delivery; boundaries between institutions will be less critical, and institutions will be interdependent on each other.

> *Governments (at each level) will compete to recruit new citizens and residents, offering numerous incentives to attract and retain engaged citizen leaders. People will frequently travel and move residences between and among cities, states, and nations due to the nature of work and their personal choices. Going across borders is seamless— advanced biometric technologies, such as facial recognition, will automatically check people in and out at boundaries and borders.*

Citizen services will be personalized, based on events and activities in a citizen's life journey, and will span all levels of government (federal, state, local and international), making this personalization seamless and transparent to users. A network of teams, organized around citizen lifecycle events or transactions, will provide services.

Government will be a facilitator and enabler of service delivery, and government operations will be lean and leverage advances in technology. In this digital future, automation and artificial intelligence, along with other new and emerging technologies of 2040, will amplify the impact on work. As a result, the workforce of the future will undergo dynamic skill refreshes and constant training.

This chapter describes a future vision for government management and operations in 2040. It is structured around four main ideas:
- the role of the citizen as a leader and co-producer
- a citizen-centric approach to providing government services in a future digital economy
- government services delivered by a network of boundaryless organizations and talent
- a workforce skilled in leading networks through relationships

Citizen as Leader and Co-Producer

In 2040, government will be centered around the engaged citizen. Citizens will shape and drive government management and operations. The citizen leader will be skilled in negotiation, facilitation, and collaboration. More importantly, citizen engagement will be proactive—the design and delivery of government policies and services will not only be considered a great opportunity, but a valuable credential and experience in a personal and professional career.

The level of citizen engagement will vary by the citizen, with different roles based on the level of participation. Disengaged citizens will be incentivized to participate. Building on a citizen's willingness to contribute, the government will create the right incentives, such as reinforcing a citizen's ability to make an impact, providing constant training and skill refreshes, and providing incentives.

Citizens will lead and own the design and delivery of policies and services. They will be assigned to lead specific services based on their skills and expertise, and held accountable for their performance. They will recruit team members from a network and form interdisciplinary teams (composed of the public, private, and social sector). This will involve a fundamental change in the identity of citizens: citizens as value creators in a co-creation process working within a network.[1]

Co-design will involve citizen participation in the design process, and will be a building component of co-production in which multiple organizations or entities come together to produce desired outcomes. Co-production will involve forming new relationships, improving interactions, and thereby the experience for all participants in the ecosystem—the process of co-creation will often lead to a reconfiguration of roles. There are examples of co-production in various governments today.[2] So, what will it look like in practice?

- **Scenario One: Improving education in an underperforming local school district.** Consider a scenario involving the design of a program to improve education in an underperforming local school district. First, active citizen leaders in the community and local education will be chosen. Citizens lead multiple competitive teams, and each group will publish a digital agenda used to recruit organizations from the network. Each team will embark on a co-creation process that involves government (federal, state and local), the private sector (with expertise in training, education, and performance management), academia (best-in-class universities with high-achievement programs), and community associations that understand the pulse of the community.

    Each team will draft their design of the program and associated policies—they will be implemented as multiple pilots, with performance tracked by another set of citizen leaders. During the pilots, citizens will sign up to be part of the teams in areas where they can contribute (we discuss the concept of work in the last section of this chapter). Data and evidence from the pilots will be used to make decisions and design the

program—best practices from the various pilots will be incorporated. Once the program is implemented, an innovative competition will be formed to help address any issues that may arise.

- **Scenario Two: Improving road maintenance.** Consider another scenario: the delivery of local government services, such as road maintenance. In 2040, materials that can self-repair will be used to build roads—in this case, however, there is a malfunction. A citizen finds the issue and submits a service request to the government—the citizen request will serve to reinforce data from traffic sensors the government has already received. The citizen will get a message upon completion of the repairs, and citizen volunteers will assess if the problem is fixed. All of the interactions and updates will be transparent to the public. Technology will help to identify the root cause of the issue from previous service requests and sensor data. Citizens will offer ideas and solutions to address problems— they work on the solutions in teams and, as a result, improve services for others.

Personalized, Citizen-Centric Services

Design and delivery of services will focus on finding solutions for citizen problems and needs, based on events and activities in a citizen's life journey. Services will increasingly span all levels of government (federal, state, local, and international) and will become more seamless and transparent to users. Services will be designed in an iterative process using a user-centric approach to understand what citizens need—developing, experimenting, and testing multiple ideas and prototypes.

Services will be designed for different citizen segments and personalized at the individual level using available information about the citizen, without requesting data again—in other words, if the citizen has provided information once to a government entity, that information will persist across all interactions and touchpoints. However, this sharing of information does not happen at the cost of privacy—the citizen will have a choice for different privacy levels.

Government will proactively communicate with and engage with the citizen, using data from all previous interactions with the citizen. Government will use advances in technology, such as deep learning and machine learning, to predict future citizen needs and requests. The government will communicate with the citizen's virtual assistant about transactions and requested services. In turn, a customer champion will be assigned to each citizen and serve as the primary touchpoint for providing a seamless, personalized citizen experience. The customer champion will orchestrate the delivery of services, performed by partners in the network.

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A co-production and user-centric approach will be critical in a future digital economy. Automation and artificial intelligence, along with other new and emerging technologies of 2040, will amplify the new approach's impact on work and continue to cause disruption. As a result, government's role will evolve and enable an ecosystem that allows people and organizations to innovate.

In this digital version of the future, the government could be described as a platform for the production and delivery of a range of services and activities that can be mixed and matched.[3] By opening this platform to citizen co-producers, government will extend its value chain to stakeholders with the goal of reducing public sector costs and increasing stakeholder satisfaction.[4] However, in the future, government will not necessarily build the platform but instead create the conditions to enable it.

> *Estonia, a small country of 1.3 million people, was widely considered in 2018 as one of the most advanced digital economies in the world. Building on its digital advances, the Estonian government continued to innovate between 2018 and 2040: it adopted blockchain to secure all aspects of financial, healthcare, real estate, and other transactions; it shared digital identities with other countries to make international transactions seamless for its citizens; and it made citizen services available on demand, in addition to predicting what services citizens will need.*

A Network of Boundaryless Organizations

In 2040, organizational boundaries will blur.

First, the network will include public, private, and social sectors as partners in the value delivery chain, with equal responsibility and accountability for service delivery. As a baseline, the partners will center around the mission but have varying incentives and motivations. The government will develop and sustain the network to ensure capacity and the best skills.

Second, governments will integrate across different levels (federal, state, local, and international) to form a service delivery chain. As described earlier, the focus will be on providing a seamless citizen experience, with boundaries across governments transparent to the user. Based on the service, this integration will happen between and among governments.

In some governments, many citizen services will be open to competition from either a networked system of domestic partners or partners consisting of other governments. Citizens will choose their service providers, and this will lead to a competitive marketplace of partners and service providers.

Third, the future workforce will have vastly more independent and freelance workers who find work by connecting through peer networks. As a result, far fewer people will work for an organization and, if they do, the type of organization for whom an employee works will not limit their collaboration, resulting in a networked system of boundaryless organizations. Groups of teams and a team of teams, aligned with specific services, will make up the network. The teams will be multi-disciplinary, composed of team members from public, private and non-profit sectors—the best minds brought together to solve the complex problems of 2040.

These networks of teams have specific objectives with clear timeframes—groups disband once they achieve their outcome or purpose. The teams will work in two timeframes:

- Long-term timeframes, where objectives are outcome-oriented for long-term issues, such as reducing poverty or homelessness
- Short-term timeframes, where objectives are smaller problem areas with shorter intervals, which in aggregate help to achieve a long-term objective

Government operations will be mostly virtual. There will be few formal departments or agencies—but rather networks of teams organized around providing citizen services. Government will enable and facilitate service delivery and ensure the efficiency and quality of services delivered. Government operations will be lean, automated, and driven by artificial intelligence. Data and analytics will be a fundamental component to provide and optimize service delivery.

A Relationship-Based Workforce

The role of government and its work will evolve and frequently change due to continued advances in technology. In this digital future, there will be fundamental shifts in jobs due to automation, artificial intelligence, and other technologies—while a few occupations will no longer exist, others will experience significant changes since many work activities will be performed using automation technologies.[5]

As a result, the future workforce will need different, and evolving, skill sets and attributes. The future workforce will have a set of generalists more focused on areas that require the human touch: engaging customers/stakeholders, applying context/expertise to problems, managing people and machines. Of course, a critical skill will be the ability to work alongside computers and advanced technologies.[6] The workforce of the future will need to

undergo skill refreshes and training before teaming assignments (to obtain the context of their focus problem/area), and a constant re-training and learning of new skills.

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Endnotes

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2   Panthea Lee, "What Makes for Successful Open Government Co-Creation?," Open Government Partnership, March 28, 2017.

3   Tim O'Reilly, "Government as a Platform," *Innovations: Technology, Governance, Globalization* 6, No. 1 (Winter 2011): 13-40.

4   Francis Gouillart and Tina Hallett, "Co-Creation in Government," *Stanford Social Innovation Review,* World Economic Forum (Spring 2015): 4–5.

5   James Manyika, et al, "Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transition In a Time of Automation," McKinsey & Company, December 2017.

6   James Manyika, et al, "Jobs Lost, Jobs Gained: Workforce Transition In a Time of Automation."