

# Overcoming Innovation Challenges in the Federal Government

New technologies aren't the only focus for federal agencies to modernize.

[Abigail Blue](#)

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Chief information officers from across the federal government are addressing the challenges of a demanding data-driven world by ramping up efforts to improve innovation.

One of the greatest challenges is instilling a culture of change in the workplace, according to leaders from the U.S. Army, Department of Homeland Security and Office of the Director of National Intelligence at Tuesday's GDIT Emerge event in Washington, D.C.

One sentiment among them during a panel session was that software typically provides notification of when it needs updating, but knowing how and when to update the workforce is not as clear. For DHS CIO John Zangardi, that means taking a look at capabilities of your staff.

"You've got to look at the technical acumen of your staff," he said. "We have spent the last 18 months trying to bring on board that critical, technical expertise that can fuel innovation."

That is not to say agencies shouldn't invest in making their current talent more technically proficient. Zangardi noted that the agency is sending someone to get their master's degree in systems engineering.

Recognizing the impact of workforce training, DHS is not the only [federal agency](#) determined to find solutions.

Having copious amounts of data stored across multiple domains has presented another challenge of innovation, particularly for the intelligence community.

"We have some of the challenge of we're on multiple domains ... and most of the information is actually at the higher-level domain," said Deputy CIO La'Naia Jones for the intelligence community at ODNI. "It's the balance of how can we embrace technology to help modernize user application tools but ... help to expedite the processes."

One solution that ODNI is working toward with regard to cloud architecture is integrating multiple clouds and focusing on the interoperability of government and commercial technology products, Jones said.

Without data analytics, though, the abundance of data collected by federal agencies doesn't serve much purpose in providing information. There is no context. "We're data-rich, but analysis-short," noted Zangardi.

For this reason, the Army has a chief analytics officer whose job is to turn data into actionable intelligence.

At a time when "data is the new oil," said U.S. Army Deputy CIO Gregory Garcia, finding value in collected data is more important than ever.

A final sentiment shared among the panelists was the lengthy, paperwork-filled risk-management process that hinders innovation can benefit from industry collaboration.

"One of my great frustrations is the amount of paperwork that goes along with that compliance," said Zangardi. "One of the things industry can really help people like me with is how do we get to a greater degree of automation to bring that paperwork down because it really slows us down."

Garcia echoed similar frustration in terms of artificial intelligence. "You're writing algorithms every day that are different ... you can't have a 90-day risk-management framework process to approve that ... For us, it's the risk-management framework. It's not the risk-management-compliance framework."

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