

21st Century IDEA Act Issue Brief



Technologically Transforming Citizen Services

Technology in 2019 is advancing at full throttle, and Federal agencies are not exempt from having to keep pace. Signed into law by President Trump on December 20, 2018, the 21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act (IDEA) has placed new minimum requirements for basic functionality and security of Federal websites and digital services. Pages are legally required to be designed around user needs, with data-driven analysis influencing management and development decisions.

The initiative was designed with Americans' wallets in mind. Taxpayers can anticipate significant savings due to the productivity increase – as well as decreased need for in-person interaction with government staff and more digital citizen services. In fact, each agency will be required to submit a report on the cost to modernize web pages, so transparency and efficiency are of the utmost importance.

More, with this legislation, the White House has established an expectation for collaboration between agencies. Federal CIOs have been instructed to “seek to maintain as much standardization and commonality with other executive agencies as practicable.” This opens the silos previously stifling communication between agency IT departments, and pushes Federal services forward into the modern era – the digital era.

Closing the Digital Divide

As part of a larger initiative boosting maximum technology usage when appropriate, forms and other content that were formerly paper – and outdated digital services and web-based applications – need to give way for more customized digital experiences. Agencies are required to quickly make sure users will be able to complete digital transactions with greater efficiency and accuracy.

“ I wanted to make sure that when every American interacts with their government, they have a positive experience. ”

said Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif, the bill's sponsor

“ Too many folks felt their experiences with government were outdated and not user-friendly; websites felt clunky, forms needed to be printed out, signed, and then faxed. ”

This legislation is a win for all Americans, but most notably a win for users with disability; it requires that agencies build web pages with search functions, and each website needs a consistent appearance. The emphasis the bill places on long-term maintenance and planning also ensures that these needs must be considered going forward as well. More, the legislation does not just target new websites; legacy websites need to be regularly reviewed, eliminated, and/or consolidated, too.

The coming digital deluge – of records, forms, and requests – may present a strong barrier to digital transformation projects without the proper guardrails in place. Agencies can meet this need by connecting content to process, and establishing a development framework that can handle the new load.

New Timelines for Offices With Minimal Scalability

As important as the bill is for Federal IT modernization, it is certainly an immense task, and the White House has given agencies very little time to complete it. New websites and legacy redesigns have only 180 days from the date of the law's enactment, December 20, 2018, to make sure they are complying with requirements. Additionally, agencies have only two years to transition paper forms to digital.

Even if agencies can complete the overhaul within this time period – using their already overburdened staff and systems, at that – they will need to strategize for future processes and establish an efficient, easily maintained system of modernization. Website owners will need to continually test their public-facing websites, web-based forms, web-based applications, and digital services to ensure that they have addressed user needs.

Ultimately, this responsibility of going digital “to the greatest extent practicable” falls on agency heads. These decision-makers have other pressing tasks to address, and building a new system with existing staff and platforms to track modernization progress, as well as other projects – even constituent cases – is too much to bear.

What It All Means

With citizens being able to submit forms and complete formerly in-person transactions online, agencies will need to find a way to handle the increased volume of content, case management issues, support tickets, and more. For maximum effectiveness, Federal agencies need to rely on a solutions provider that establishes a framework and guardrails for teams to operate with; it needs to provide agencies the type of structure that promotes and unlocks the type of professional creativity that is the key ingredient to real digital transformation. CTOs and CIOs consistently have to decide between structure and freedom, but with Alfresco allowing both, they do not have to.

Win-Win – A Better Experience for Agencies and Americans

While the government itself is quickly modernizing, Alfresco has already beaten the learning curve. Alfresco solutions help connect content to process so that an agency's content management, business process management, and case management can all be housed in a single application platform. These platforms include the unified Digital Business Platform, Process Services, and the cloud-native Content Services.

Built on an open source core with open application program interfaces (APIs) and open standards support, the Digital Business Platform allows agency IT the flexibility to easily build on and customize modernization solutions – combining process, content and governance services with rapid application development tools to connect people, processes, and information.

Through this, agencies can:

- **Improve efficiency:** Connectivity/interoperability of information to improve collaboration within/ across agencies & integration with legacy systems. Streamlined tasks & process automation
- **Enhance citizen experience:** Omni-channel user experience. Ability to serve up info via self-service channels. Centralized information storage, reducing the need for repetitive submission processes
- **Improve Governance:** Integrated audit, content & records management enabling secure information storage & accessibility

Features like the Alfresco Search and Insight Engine can identify trends in data without the need for a separate data warehouse or a complex Extract - Transform - Load (ETL) process. And more, the Digital Business Platform integrates seamlessly with many applications Federal agencies already use – like Microsoft Office, Google Drive, Salesforce, and SAP – without disruption, and with greater accessibility within the context of core agency systems. However, the platform also allows users to develop new applications with speed and precision, thanks to modern UX/UI technologies like Angular Material Design and pre-built Angular components and services.

Alfresco Process Services is an enterprise Business Process Management (BPM) solution that at its core is a high performance, open-source business process engine – based on Activiti – with the flexibility and scalability to handle an abundance of critical processes. The services provide a powerful suite of end user tools and integrates with a range of enterprise systems, including Alfresco Content Services, Box and Google Drive. Adding context to content to support better decision making, Alfresco Content Services is a cloud-native solution that provides open, flexible, highly scalable Enterprise Content Management (ECM) capabilities. Improving productivity, enhancing information governance, collaboration inside and outside of your agency is easier and more secure than ever.

Alfresco is strictly committed to regulation adherence and is the only open-source platform certified to the U.S. DoD 5015.3 standard for Records Management. With more availability to focus on constituent needs, and to track cases that are still open or need attention with greater ease, the platform transcends agency IT, and serves as a purposeful investment for all Americans. With Federal needs kept in mind from as early as the platform's initial design, integrating the Digital Business Platform into agency IT processes is painless and effective.