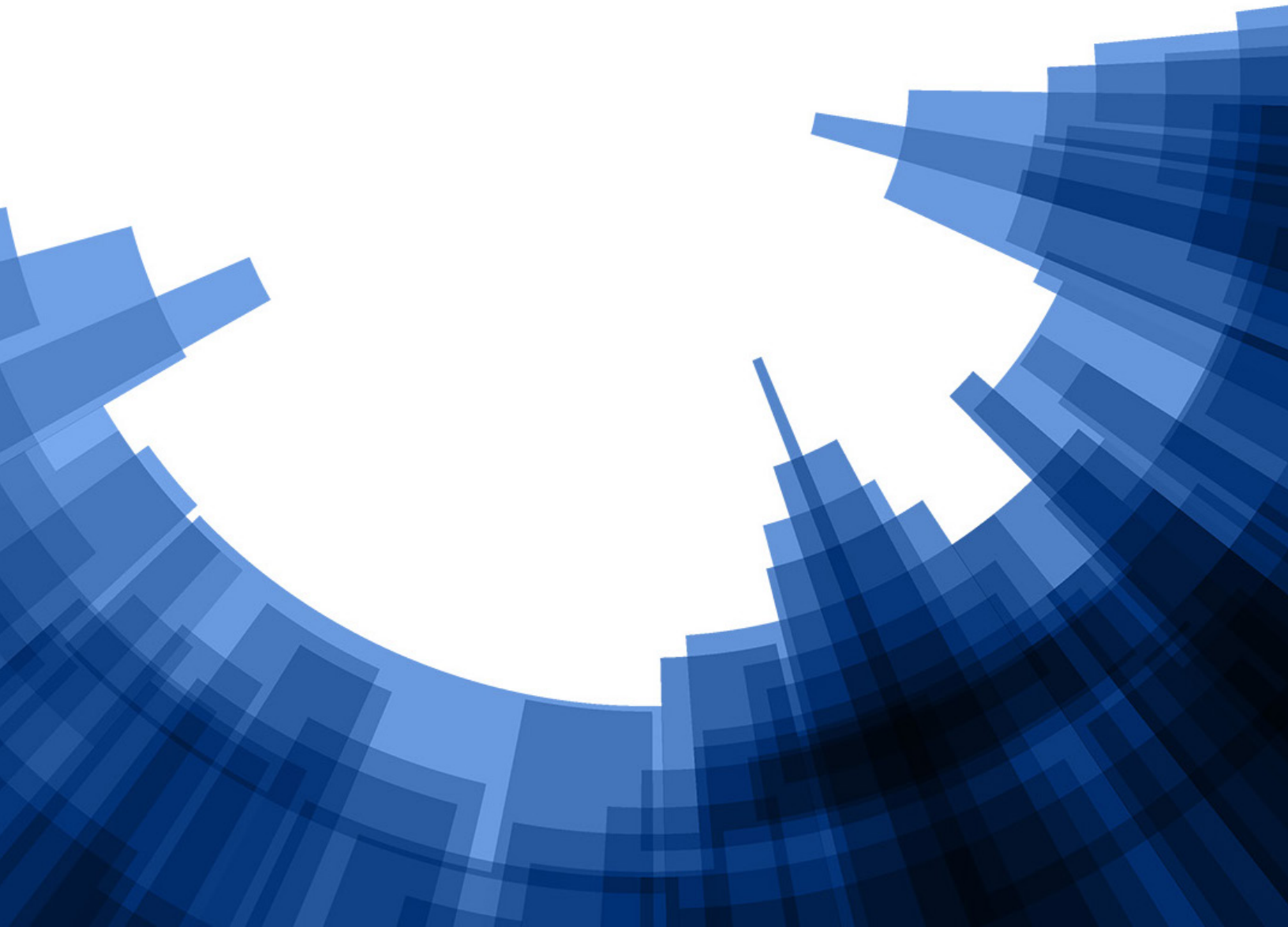


How Digital Data Tools Can Help Agencies

Transform the Federal Construction Life Cycle





In the federal property portfolio, construction projects range from those nearing completion to those still in their infancy. These projects can be time-consuming and difficult to manage. Digital transformation is poised to change that.

Overview

Rome wasn't built overnight, and federal-level projects are [no different](#), with some taking over a decade to complete and costing taxpayers upwards of \$1.5 billion. At a recent roundtable discussion titled, [Modernizing the Federal Construction Life Cycle](#), hosted by GovExec and sponsored by Gordian, federal and industry leaders discussed how agencies can leverage technology to proactively manage their real property assets.

Here are a few takeaways from the discussion.

1. Digital Solutions Can Help Agencies Ascertain Greater Cost Insights

Smart and sustainable planning calls for solid pre-construction services. Understanding the building rules and regulations, the cost of procurement, and working conditions at the build site are all important considerations during the planning phase.

"To be successful in any construction endeavor, it starts with good pre-construction services," said Tracy Thomas, managing director for construction, facility & security management at the State Department.

However, estimating the cost of pre-construction services can be a challenge. [Countless variables can impact the price of a project](#), whether it be labor costs or supplies and materials. Digital solutions, however, provide agencies with the tools needed to easily get a fix on the current costs for services, regardless of location. For example, [Gordian's RSMeans solution](#) offers seamless and instantaneous access to specific cost details of a given project.

"[With digital solutions] we can actually execute the contracts quickly and not push additional risk into the system," said Bryan Walter, vice president and general manager of federal solutions at Gordian.





"That's where something like RSMeans data becomes so valuable to help agencies quickly and accurately estimate the cost of projects."

And for Thomas, these digital solutions coupled with a flexible attitude toward the federal construction life cycle make a world of difference.

"You've got to have the tools in place to monitor those risks and make adjustments as you go," Thomas said. "If you're flexible, you can go into all the other unknowns of a construction project and maximize your chance of success."

2. Digital Solutions Can Help Agencies Predict Future Costs

Indeed, if organizations want to deliver projects on time and under budget, being able to leverage quality data is crucial. But according to Thomas, some associates are wary of leveraging these new technologies.

"I've got colleagues who are stubborn about it, and they don't want to embrace the data solutions that are there," Thomas mentioned.

When employees rely on outdated methods of predicting costs — like print catalogs — the risk of under or overvaluing a project increases.

"You don't want to overpay if you're in a low-cost area and you don't want to blow through your budget if you're in an area that's way above the national average," Walter explained. "Now with technology . . . we have a tool that updates [RSMeans] data quarterly for 92,000 units, line items for material labor and equipment prices."

Additionally, modern data solutions can help public sector organizations apply predictive analytics to determine how the project costs may change over time.

"That makes a huge impact, particularly when you think about federal contracts," Walter said. "You can have a five or 10-year life span. It can help federal customers really budget . . . and [determine]



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Managing Director for Construction, Facility & Security Management, *The State Department*

how much ceiling do I need to have for this contract and how much do I need to ask for in my fiscal year budget processes.”

3. Digital Solutions Can Help Agencies Effectively Plan for Maintenance and Repairs

In a 2021 [report from the Congressional Research Service](#), the cost of repair and maintenance for all GSA buildings was \$3.39 billion. Currently, the backlog contributing to this staggering dollar amount contains numerous requests ranging from minor building setbacks to dangerous and even life-threatening conditions.

For example, during a subcommittee meeting on the levels of asbestos within GSA buildings, the Government Accountability Office said that [improved data collection and management services](#) can help solve these issues. That will also require more advanced cloud-based solutions, Walter added.

“You really need software and tools to help manage that portfolio so you can get the right data,” he said. “First, you’ve got to really assess your facilities. What do you have? What condition is it in? What maintenance needs to occur and on what cadence? We’ve got a tool for that.”

And these digital data tools can help construction managers augment the federal construction life cycle, regardless of where they may be in the process. So that organizations can deliver projects on time and on budget.

“We’re seeing [a] shift in how we use data in construction,” Thomas said. “I think there’s lots of opportunity to leverage the data that’s available to minimize our risk and improve our process.”



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