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Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the Future of Public Engagement

How government and public sector organizations are using AI to streamline communication and drive measurable efficiency.

January 2025

Government and public sector organizations today face an uphill battle when it comes to establishing trust with the populations they serve.

The public's expectations for transparency and responsiveness are higher than ever, demands for accurate and timely information continue to grow, and agencies must meet these challenges with constrained resources and a shrinking workforce—all while navigating complex regulatory frameworks and policy changes.

At the same time, AI-driven solutions are rapidly transforming industries, revolutionizing how organizations process information, engage with stakeholders, and deliver services.

Just one year after the release of OpenAI's GPT-4, our research found that nearly 1 in 4 commercial organizations had already integrated AI into their outreach and engagement efforts.[1] This rapid adoption underscores a crucial reality:

AI isn't just a passing trend— it's redefining how we process, understand, and share information.

Government agencies and public sector organizations have a unique opportunity to harness AI in ways that create immediate and measurable efficiencies, particularly when it comes to outreach and public engagement.

By streamlining public affairs operations, automating time-consuming outreach processes, and optimizing constituent interactions, AI can enable government organizations to do more with less— improving efficiency while simultaneously strengthening public confidence.

That said, the over-abundance of information available on AI across industries can make it difficult for public sector leaders to pinpoint practical, easily-implementable AI applications that align with their mission. To cut through this noise, leaders from Deloitte's Government and Public Services (GPS) Advertising, Marketing, & Commerce (AM&C)[2] practice have identified three key AI-driven opportunities that can dramatically enhance public sector engagement.
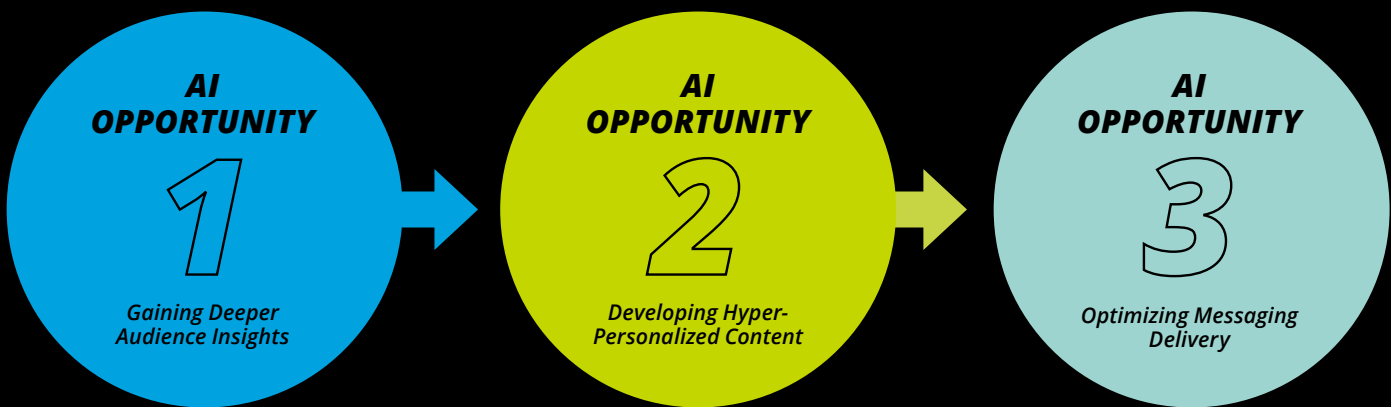
The case studies that follow highlight public sector organizations that are already demonstrating how AI can cut costs, reduce administrative burdens, and deliver better outcomes for the communities they serve.

USING AI TO ENHANCE PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

AI offers new opportunities for public sector communicators at each step of the marketing and outreach process. AI-powered analytics can uncover behavior patterns and preferences with precision in real-time, Generative AI (GenAI) tools can produce hundreds of tailored content options, and Machine Learning (ML) technologies can now make real-time data-driven decisions to maximize every dollar.

Public sector organizations don't have to re-invent the wheel — they can infuse AI into their Existing Outreach and Engagement Frameworks.

At Deloitte, we see three clear ways for public sector organizations to utilize AI in existing processes, reducing barriers to creating impactful outreach and engagement with their constituents.

AI OPPORTUNITY 1
Gaining Deeper Audience Insights

AI OPPORTUNITY 2
Developing Hyper-Personalized Content

AI OPPORTUNITY 3
Optimizing Messaging Delivery

EXISTING OUTREACH PROCESS:

UNDERSTAND YOUR AUDIENCES

Public sector organizations are charged with delivering tailored services to populations that span a wide range of demographics. The key to success is developing a deep understanding of their audience groups, but capturing the nuanced needs and desires of vastly different populations can prove challenging.
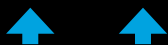
AI Injection: AI-powered analytics tools can provide insight into public sector organization's audiences that no human eye or focus group can conjure up.

EXISTING OUTREACH PROCESS:

DEVELOP CONTENT FOR YOUR AUDIENCES

Citizens demand messaging that resonates with their individual lives and situations. Gone are the days of a "one-size fits all" outreach approach. While this challenge is a universal hurdle for all communicators to overcome, it takes center stage with public sector organizations that must, at times, address an audience of 334+ million.
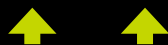
AI Injection: GenAI tools and AI-powered Chatbots can deliver hyper-personalized content to their audience groups with the click of a button - making public affairs offices more efficient.

EXISTING OUTREACH PROCESS:

DISTRIBUTE CONTENT TO YOUR AUDIENCES

It isn't only about crafting the perfect message — public sector organizations must also make sure that message lands in front of their primary targets at the right time. This goes beyond effort and money; it's about guaranteeing that every ounce of investment results in a maximum impact when reaching the public.
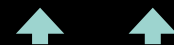
AI Injection: Machine-learning models can analyze performance of content in real-time and optimize distribution to maximize campaign impact - meaning taxpayer dollars go further.

Gaining Deeper Audience Insights

PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE DEEPLY PERSONAL SERVICES TO VASTLY DIFFERENT AUDIENCE GROUPS.

Populations aren't just growing — they're aging and becoming more distinct. Nearly 1 in 6 Americans are over the age of 65, a proportion projected to rise to 1 in 5 by 2030[3]. Further, the 2020 Census[4] showed that 67.8 million US residents (almost 20%) speak another language other than English at home. GPS organizations serve this range of population groups on the front lines, directly administering essential services that maintain the prosperity of communities. The need to cater to constituents with varied reading levels, native languages other than English, and a variety of accessibility requirements makes a one-size-fits-all communications approach insufficient.

Whether a public sector organization is seeking to communicate about a newly developed policy or legislation, increase usage of their services, or send out an emergency notice, it is critical to know what makes their audiences tick and how best to reach them: *How old are they? Do they live in urban or rural areas? How do they get their news? What do they care about most?*

AI-POWERED ANALYTICS TOOLS CAN HELP PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS UNDERSTAND THEIR AUDIENCES' UNIQUE NEEDS BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE.

AI-powered analytics tools use advanced algorithms and machine learning (ML) techniques to analyze large quantities of both historical and current data, extracting meaningful patterns and insights about audience behaviors and preferences. Through examining these patterns, public sector organizations can better understand the constituents they're serving to develop personalized strategies for better serving them. This approach allows for highly-accurate audience segmentation and sets a solid foundation for developing compelling content.

OPPORTUNITY 1 IN ACTION

Michigan State University uses AI and ML Insights to Increase Enrollment[5]
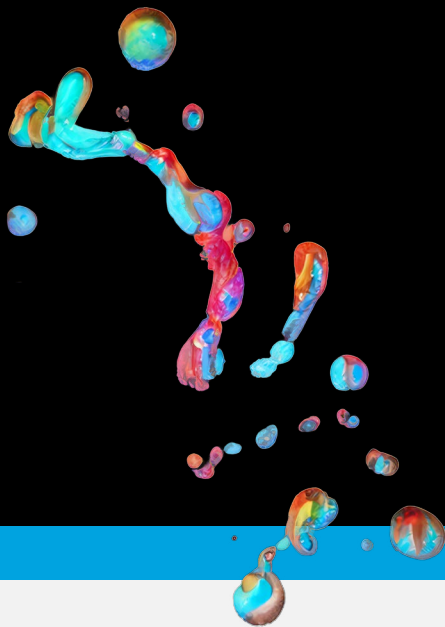
Challenge: Universities across the country are experiencing increased enrollment pressure in the face of a shifting higher education landscape. To combat this pressure and stay competitive, Michigan State University (MSU) partnered with Deloitte to develop new enrollment strategies that would balance MSU's headcount, selectivity, and net tuition revenue goals. Before they developed these strategies, MSU needed a deeper understanding of their current student population.

Solution: Deloitte helped to implement the Candidate360™, [6] solution, which used AI and ML predictive models to combine US lifestyle data from 250M+ households with MSU data and uncover meaningful behavior patterns and preferences. The insights — which provided individualized profiles of in-state, domestic, and international prospects — helped recruiters prioritize limited time and resources. The data in-hand empowered recruiters and provided insight into optimal communications channels for reaching students, helping them increase responsiveness and avoid phone call screening.

Outcome: The Candidate360™ models enabled both recruiters and enrollment directors to better understand their key geographic, demographic, and academic student profiles when crafting their strategic and operational plans. In the first year of utilizing the analytical models, MSU benefited from a 24% increase in out-of-state student enrollment and a $5M increase in net tuition revenue.

DELOITTE AI CAPABILITY
DELOITTE'S DISCOVER.AI PLATFORM PRODUCES REAL-TIME, DEEP AUDIENCE INSIGHTS

To help public sector organizations track, measure, understand, and improve interactions audiences have with the services they provide, Deloitte has teamed up with Qualtrics[7] to provide an experience management platform called Discover.ai. The platform, currently used to support a large state public health agency, combines real-time audience insights with powerful AI capabilities. Coupling those capabilities with expert advisory services creates a powerful foundation for continuous improvement of the programs, policies, and applications used by the public and workers.

Consider a state transportation agency, for example, that has implemented a new vehicle policy and is receiving hundreds of calls per day from concerned constituents. Audio recordings from more than 100,000+ customer service calls can be fed into the Discover.ai platform, powered by Qualtrics AI. The system can transcribe and analyze those calls using natural language processing (NLP), allowing the agency to see what questions their audiences are asking most, and why. This AI technology can also integrate other audience interaction points (*e.g., voice, text, survey, email, web, and social media*) which would allow the state agency to have a more holistic picture of their targets and how to better serve them.

With unparalleled insight into targeted audiences, public sector organizations can reduce the time and resources spent on broad, ineffective communication campaigns. Insights derived from these AI analytics tools can increase the accuracy and relevance of information disseminated, fostering trust among the public. These insights can be paired with generative functions of AI to develop meaningful and receptive content that is personalized to the audience specifications identified within the AI Analytics tools.

Developing Hyper-Personalized Content

## TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION IS ESSENTIAL FOR BUILDING TRUST IN GOVERNMENT.

That said, engaging with the masses at the 1:1 level presents a unique series of challenges. A recent report[8] showed that 82% of survey respondents indicated if government wants to earn or keep their trust, governments need to hear the public's concerns and let them ask questions. But this kind of listening at scale is often resource-prohibitive. On the outreach front, public sector organizations face an increasing demand for content. And not just for any old content—but they want increasingly dynamic, personalized, evolving content delivered in real time. A survey[1] we conducted with 650 communications executives showed that the volume of content that organizations need to meet demand has increased by 54% on average in the last year, and that organizations are only able to meet content demands 55% of the time on average.

In this landscape of heightened demand for personalized, real-time content, the challenge lies in transcending traditional communication barriers to effectively listen and cater to individual needs, ensuring meaningful engagement at a scale never before possible.

## AI CAN HELP HUMANIZE GOVERNMENT SERVICES BY DEVELOPING INDIVIDUALIZED CONTENT AT SCALE.

Conversational and GenAI[9] tools, powered by large language models (LLMs), are a cutting-edge branch of technology that create new, original content or data by learning from existing examples — transforming how we generate ideas, solve problems, and create across various fields. Adobe Firefly, Google's Gemini, OpenAI's ChatGPT and DALL-E, and many others can analyze extensive data on text, images, and videos, and create new, human-like content that speaks to a unique individual's needs at a superhuman pace. This technology synthesizes information about tone, structure, and visuals from existing content to produce original, audience-specific materials at scale.

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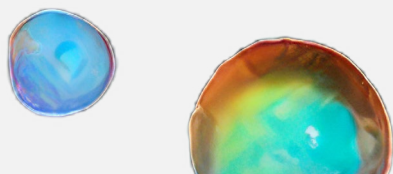
OPPORTUNITY 2 IN ACTION

Colorado Uses GenAI to Produce Personalized Answers to Policy Questions
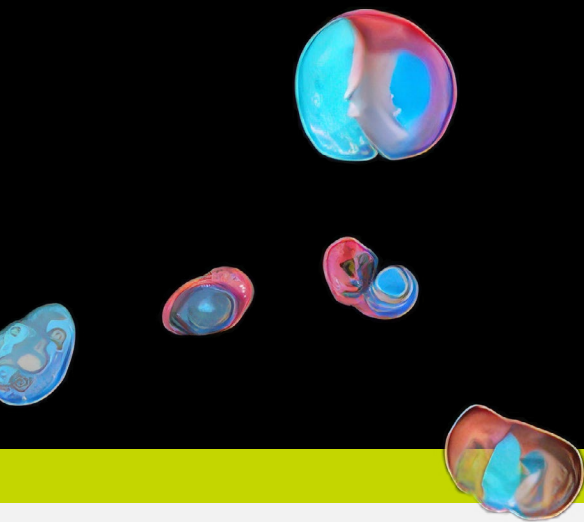
Challenge: Every year, the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS) is inundated with thousands of policy-related questions from case workers across the State about their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) programs. To answer each appropriately, policy analysts are forced to navigate hundreds, if not thousands, of pages of technical, complex policy and process rules.

Solution: Deloitte collaborated with CDHS to implement the Program Area Natural Dialogue Assistant (PANDA). PANDA is a Generative AI powered Policy Engine that makes documents and internal knowledge available through an AI-search. Rather than combing through documents, policy analysts can now type their question into PANDA, which identifies relevant policy and provides reasoning and references for support.

Outcome: PANDA has allowed policy staff to comb through 500+ pages of content in an instant, and has equipped them with more tailored, personalized responses to inquiries. In addition, the solution has significantly reduced research times — on average it only takes between 20-30 seconds to search all policy documents, formulate a response, and provide the customer with references and reasoning.

DELOITTE AI CAPABILITY
DELOITTE'S CREATIVEDGE TOOL USES AI TO GENERATE ON-BRAND, AUDIENCE-TAILORED CONTENT

As GPS organizations continue to face increasing demand for more creative assets needed faster, in multiple languages, and with decreasing budgets, tools that streamline content development are becoming more and more essential.

CreativEdge[10] is designed to address these challenges by generating audience-specific, brand-compliant content with the click of a button. After collecting a simple set of inputs from a public sector user — outreach goals, existing audience insights, and an organization's brand guidelines — CreativEdge develops an editable, one-paragraph description of your target audience persona. Using this persona, the tool can then generate a variety of tailored content in the form of social media posts, printable assets, emails, and even several creative brand campaign concepts that can serve as thought-starters for a public sector outreach team. It can even translate this content into 19 different languages.

Tools like CreativEdge can empower public sector outreach coordinators and communicators with the level of hyper-personalization required for trust building and effective communications with the public.

These types of AI systems foster two-way communication, which meets the communication preferences of a digitally connected audience and helps humanize public sector organizations, making them more relatable and accessible to the populations they serve. In addition, through innovative content creation, agencies can bolster their public engagement strategies, ensuring relevance and effectiveness in a rapidly changing digital landscape. Combining these generative AI tools with machine learning algorithms can ensure that personalized content is shared with audiences effectively and timely.

AI OPPORTUNITY 3

Optimizing Messaging Delivery

UNDERSTANDING AUDIENCES AND CRAFTING THE PERFECT MESSAGE IS ONE THING — EFFECTIVELY DISSEMINATING AND ACTIVATING THOSE MESSAGES OVER MULTIPLE CHANNELS IS AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT BEAST.

In 2023, a report[11] estimated that as much as $20 billion of global digital advertising spend was wasted by reaching consumers who weren't their intended audiences. This figure represents more than just a monetary loss — it means that a significant amount of effort was put into outreach that did not result in a real impact. Given the roles public sector organizations play in stewarding taxpayer dollars, it is important that campaigns target the right segments at the right time. Achieving this, however, is no small feat.

Audiences engage with content on different channels in a variety of mediums, and at different times — some are more likely to open an email and engage with content if they receive it at lunchtime. Some utilize Instagram to consume short form video content across a variety of platforms and genres.

AI SOLUTIONS CAN HELP PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS MORE ACCURATELY REACH THE RIGHT AUDIENCE WITH THE RIGHT MESSAGE AT THE RIGHT TIME.

ML solutions are uniquely suited to address this challenge by optimizing real-time outreach across digital media channels. ML tools can learn and adapt based on performance of content in real-time, enabling public sector organizations to make data-driven decisions more quickly and efficiently. These algorithms can process vast amounts of data from previous campaigns, including user engagement, click-through rates, and demographic information. They can then identify which content performs best on which platforms and at what times, and then automatically distribute those messages or adjust the allocation of outreach resources on different channels.

OPPORTUNITY 3 IN ACTION

A State Public Health Agency Expands SNAP Access Using AI-Powered Outreach

Challenge: Due to the difficulty in communicating complex policies to widely diverse populations, constituents are not always aware of the programs for which they are eligible. Not only is it difficult to uniquely identify this underserved population, it can also be difficult to reach them in a way that resonates.

Solution: Deloitte is collaborating with a major state public health agency to enhance the accuracy and effectiveness of educational outreach by utilizing AI capabilities, beginning with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). By integrating existing data on current SNAP enrollees with insights from HealthPrism™, [12], a proprietary Deloitte asset containing over 1,700 Social Determinants of Health (SDOH) for more than 250 million adults in the United States, Deloitte can identify all adults across the state who are predicted to be eligible for SNAP benefits but are not currently enrolled. With this identified population, Deloitte assisted the state in conducting hyper-targeted outreach and educating potential enrollees about the program and the enrollment process. This was achieved by using Salesforce Marketing Cloud (SFMC), an AI-enabled marketing automation platform, to perform direct-to-consumer outreach.

Outcome: By delivering direct communications tailored to each recipient's preferences with personalized information about the SNAP program and how to check eligibility, the agency was able to successfully reach several underserved populations, many of whom had children, to educate them on the nutrition assistance program and how to enroll. To date, roughly 30% of the successfully contacted individuals took action to either check eligibility or apply for the program.

DELOITTE AI CAPABILITY
DELOITTE'S ALLIANCES ALLOW CLIENTS TO MAXIMIZE IMPACT AND CAMPAIGN EFFECTIVENESS

Deloitte's significant investment in unique AI capabilities is bolstered by strategic alliances with over 60 of the world's leading companies[13], including many of the major AI innovators. This combination of our own in-house business acumen and technologies, paired with industry-leading tools from organizations like Salesforce, Google, Amazon, Medallia, Adobe, Sprinklr, and many others, positions Deloitte to deliver tailored solutions for optimizing messaging delivery in all forms — not just on a single messaging platform or medium.

For example, Deloitte can help a public health agency working to promote flu vaccinations to leverage a variety of messaging optimization solutions in their end-to-end outreach process. Deloitte's alliance with leading graphic design software companies ensures clients have visually compelling and

adaptive content creation through AI, while powerful customer relationship management (CRM) platforms can use AI to re-segment audiences based on demographics and past campaign engagement. Deloitte can then connect clients with search engine and social media platforms who then can use AI targeting to pinpoint the precise digital channels and times to reach underserved communities. After deployment of the messaging, our strategic allies with AI-powered social media monitoring tools can analyze sentiment in real-time, allowing the campaign to course-correct messaging based on public response.

This collaborative model gives public sector organizations an unprecedented level of precision and agility, maximizing the impact of every message.

Addressing the Risks of AI In Public Sector Outreach and Engagement

While AI solutions may usher in radical efficiencies and deeper connections with the public, they must be adopted responsibly. Deloitte is prepared to help agencies navigate the key considerations and risks related to successful adoption of AI-assisted outreach solutions, including:

Data Security. AI applications often handle sensitive citizen data. Understanding where and how AI tools store and protect data, and regularly auditing for compliance, can mitigate the risks of data breach or misuse.

Bias and Fairness. AI may inadvertently perpetuate existing biases. Identification and correction of these biases, employment of comprehensive and representative datasets in model training, and continuous algorithm monitoring can promote more reliable and objective outputs.

Transparency and Clarity. Advanced technologies often lead to questions about accountability. Choosing AI tools that offer user-friendly explanations and clearly communicating when and how AI in used communications can build trust and understanding with stakeholders.

Regulatory Compliance. Use of AI in government communications must conform to policy and regulations. It is critical that AI deployment is sufficiently informed by legal and compliance expertise, particularly as the law evolves with novel technologies.

Oversight. Reliance on AI could lead to reduced human oversight. A balanced approach, where AI augments human expertise, insight, and creativity, is key to developing effective communications that get the best out of both the workforce and the technology that aids it.

Deloitte's Trustworthy AI™, [14] framework aims to help public sector organizations address these risks by using ethical safeguards across seven dimensions related to fairness, transparency, accountability, robustness, privacy, safety, and security. The framework analyzes these dimensions throughout an AI system's lifecycle, from the initial design and training to the deployment and ongoing monitoring, to ensure that partiality is minimized across stages.

By acknowledging and addressing these risks, government and public sector organizations can leverage the transformative potential of AI in a responsible and effective manner, ensuring their outreach and engagement efforts are citizen-centric and aligned with ethical standards.
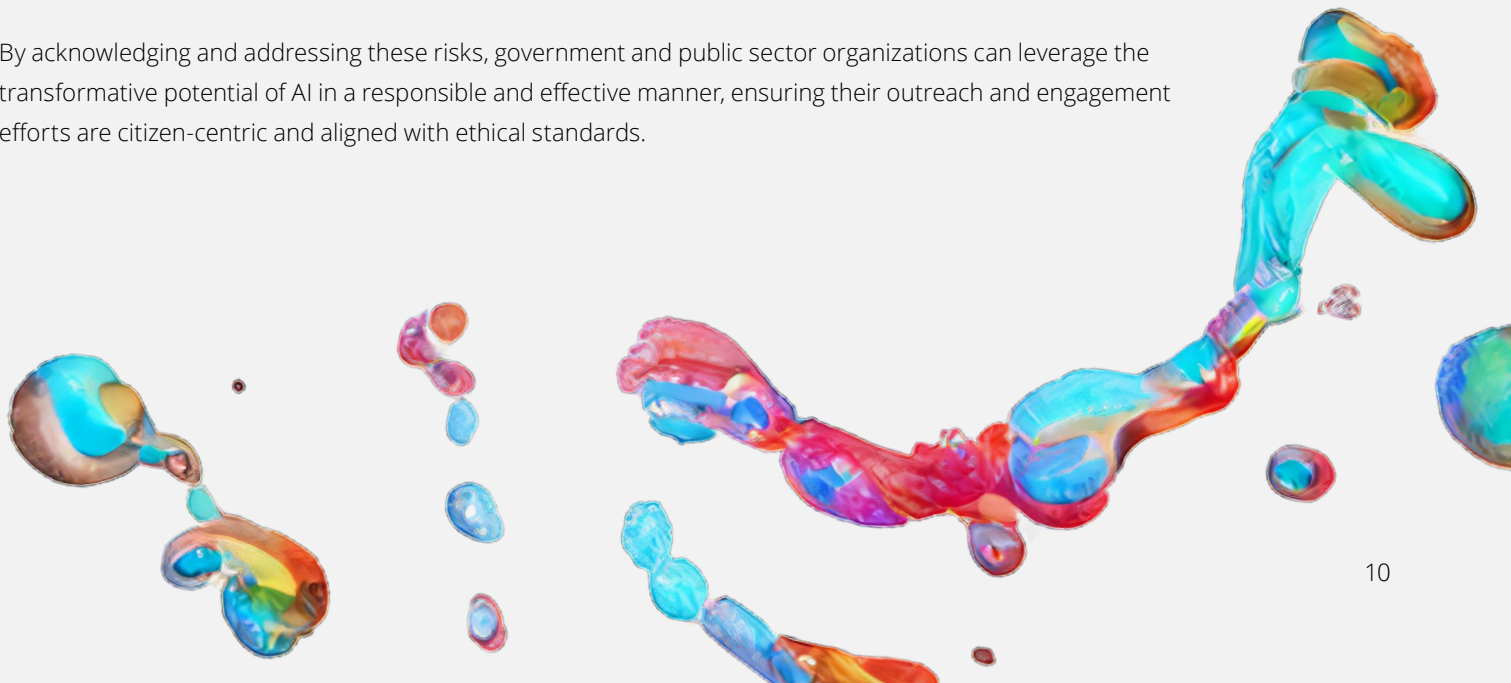
IN AN INFORMATION -AND CHANNEL- SATURATED ENVIRONMENT, THE CHALLENGE IS NO LONGER JUST ABOUT GETTING A MESSAGE OUT. ENSURING MESSAGES REACH, INFORM, RESONATE, AND INSPIRE IS CRITICAL TO THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOVERNMENT AND THE CONSTITUENTS THEY SERVE.

By embracing AI carefully and responsibly, GPS organizations aren't just adopting new technology; they can lead the way on more personalized, insightful, and proactive communications. Beyond increasing efficiency, leadership on AI demonstrates dedication to better understanding and more effectively serving the needs of citizens. Furthermore, the transformative potential of AI solutions can unlock communications barriers and streamline public engagement.

It's clear that AI isn't just a tool: it's a formidable ally, capable of amplifying and augmenting the impact, reach, and depth of how we communicate. Embracing this ally means embracing a future where public sector organizations don't just speak—they listen, understand, and respond—with precision and empathy.

ENDNOTES

1) Gen AI powers content marketing advantage for early adopters
2) Deloitte Government Marketing Services
3) U.S. Older Population Grew From 2010 to 2020 at Fastest Rate Since 1880 to 1890
4) Nearly 68 Million People Spoke a Language Other Than English at Home in 2019
5) Deloitte Higher Education Client Success Story — Michigan State University
6) Candidate360™ Higher Education Enrollment Solutions
7) Qualtricsxm | Artificial Intelligence (AI) For Experience Management
8) 2024 Edelman Trust Barometer
9) Designing for the Public Sector with Generative AI | Deloitte US
10) CreativEdge™: A GenAI digital marketing campaign engine
11) ANA Provides "First Look" at In-depth Programmatic Media Transparency Study
12) Deloitte HealthPrism™
13) Deloitte's Ecosystems & Alliances relationships: We're Better Together
14) Trustworthy AI™ Bridging the ethics gap surrounding AI
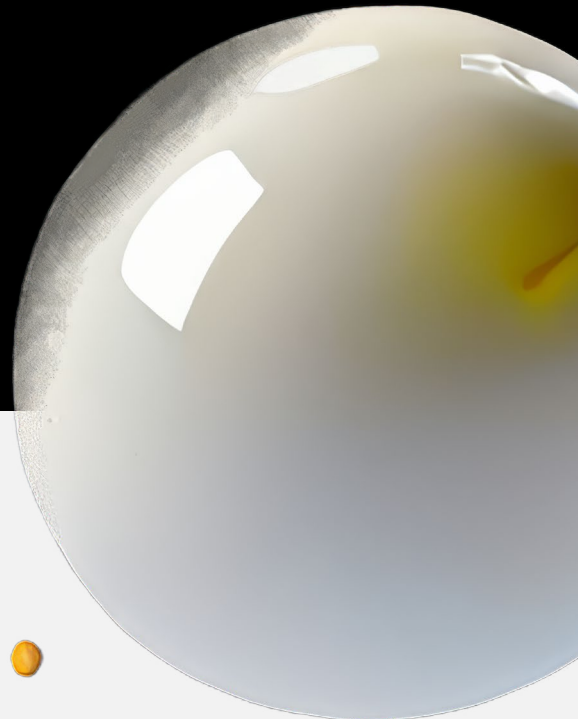
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