WHITE PAPER

How trustworthy AI transforms public service:

Core foundations, key capabilities and real-world results



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Overview

From gradual beginnings to more deliberate acceleration, AI adoption in the public sector is steadily reshaping how governments operate. It's not replacing human judgment but instead opening new possibilities for more agile, data-driven approaches. Whether improving community safety, modernizing tax systems or managing public health, governments are using AI tools to unlock greater value from their data to drive well-informed and accountable decisions.

However, the path to AI maturity is not always clear. Many agencies still face challenges in turning AI potential into proven value for citizens and stakeholders. Leaders are being asked tough questions: How is AI being applied? Are outputs transparent, explainable and accountable to regulators and oversight bodies? As governments plan for an AI-driven future, the reality is that many organizations remain underequipped and are struggling to provide clear, confident answers.

The public sector is not alone in this dilemma. Globally, 46% of recently **surveyed** organizations face misalignment between their confidence in AI and actual system trustworthiness. In this research, two clear patterns have emerged:

- Underutilization of reliable systems when trust remains low.
- Overreliance on unproven systems when confidence is disproportionately high.

While some governments, notably in Europe, are embedding responsible AI practices, most still face significant gaps in data management, governance and worker skills. Despite meaningful strides, the full promise of AI can still feel elusive without the right foundations built on trust and accountability at every stage of adoption.

Closing these gaps calls for more than technology. It requires clarity around accountability, a sharper focus on creating value, and a workforce ready to embrace and sustain AI adoption. Based on proven expertise, we will explore the path forward, highlighting:

- The "why" behind AI adoption.
- Crucial foundations of trustworthy AI and governance.
- AI capabilities that are reshaping public services.
- How partnering with SAS accelerates confident and trustworthy AI transformation.

> "Stronger infrastructure and compliance frameworks improve the trust dilemma, but globally, many organizations must still invest in data strategy before scaling transformative AI."
>
> **Neil Ward-Dutton,**
> VP AI, Automation, Data & Analytics Europe, IDC

Why AI?

Every turning point in transformation invites a fresh look at AI's potential and how it can shape an organization's progress. AI should not only enhance service delivery for citizens but also improve the work experience for employees. This includes streamlining processes, reducing manual tasks and enabling faster, more informed decision-making.

Unlocking insights

While government organizations operate around strict regulatory and legislative guidance and even stricter budgets, innovation can appear beyond reach, and focus remains on holding the status quo. Agencies that are bursting with data can lack the means to use it, missing opportunities to strengthen operations and enhance lives. The right tools change that paradigm by uncovering long-hidden insights and harnessing large volumes of data.

Enhanced decision-making

Policy change is constant across all types of public agencies, often triggered by emerging events. Whether initiated internally or mandated by legislative and regulatory bodies, agency leaders recognize that every shift creates a ripple effect that requires thoughtful analysis and coordinated response. At the same time, the volume of decisions and the expectation of faster outcomes continue to increase, along with the need to build trust in those decisions. Long gone are the days of depending on spreadsheets and intuition. Instead, organizations are using real-time data and AI to simulate policy impacts, surface hidden risks and guide strategic interventions.

Effective service delivery

Government programs and policies touch nearly every aspect of citizens' lives, and people expect those services to be timely, fair and responsive to their individual needs. Across national and local levels, governments are making meaningful strides to improve outcomes and elevate the citizen experience. Now, with technologies like AI and generative AI expanding the boundaries of what is possible, public sector leaders have new opportunities to reimagine service delivery, strengthen communities and build lasting trust.

> "AI is not standing still. Neither can we. Let us move for an AI that is shaped by all of humanity, for all of humanity."
>
> **Antonio Guterres,**
> Secretary-General,
> United Nations

Trustworthy to the core

Trust is the cornerstone of every successful AI initiative in government. Without it, even the most advanced technologies risk becoming stalled pilots rather than scalable solutions. Crucial to the mix are three factors:

- AI-driven decisions that are fair and transparent.
- Outputs that are explainable, auditable and aligned with ethical standards.
- Employee trust in the data and skills matched to implement it.

Recent research, including the **IDC Data and AI Impact Report: The Trust Imperative**, underscores that trust is not a soft concept but a measurable driver of adoption and impact. Agencies that embed governance and accountability into every stage of the AI life cycle consistently achieve higher levels of confidence and sustained value. According to Mohammed Mysara, Principal Business Solutions Manager, SAS Middle East, "This means building systems where transparency is not bolted on after deployment. It has to be built from day one."

Global thought leaders and some governments are reinforcing this imperative:

- The World Economic Forum has proposed a **World Council for Cooperative Intelligence** to ensure intelligent systems are safe, compatible and credible.
- The UK Government Digital Service has published its **AI Playbook** to guide agencies in embedding trust and governance into their strategies.
- The European Union became the world's first governing body to implement a comprehensive AI law, with the **EU AI Act**.
- The US has created the **AI Guide for Government**, which is continuously updated as technology and applications quickly evolve.

For governments, the charge is certain – trust must be treated as a strategic component that is quantified, managed and continuously reinforced. By prioritizing transparency, explainability and governance, leaders can ensure that AI delivers not only innovation but also legitimacy in the eyes of citizens, regulators and employees alike.

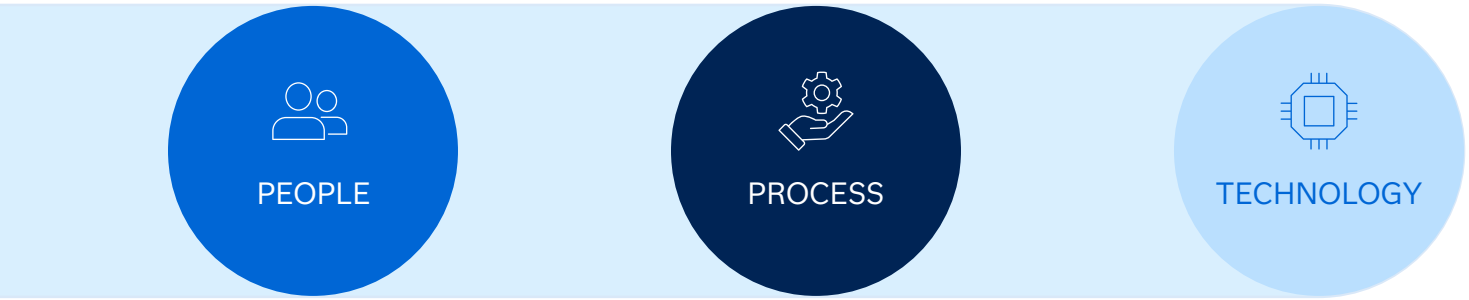
Guiding the way: The AI blueprint

Beyond legal requirements and broad guidance – or in the absence of them – still lies the vast and often uncharted terrain of AI. Leading government organizations realize that navigating this landscape requires more than ad-hoc projects or isolated experiments. They also acknowledge a simple truth: Much about the journey remains unclear. Can they trust where they are heading?

Centuries ago, explorers like Ferdinand Magellan, Captain Cook and Christopher Columbus relied on reading the stars to guide them to distant horizons. Today, modern government organizations have their own star to follow, one that reduces uncertainties and provides a strategic guide, ensuring that AI initiatives are aligned with their goals and creating scalable, sustainable impact.

The SAS **AI Blueprint** helps transform public sector organizations beyond AI experimentation to deliberate, enterprisewide integration. This methodology unites the three main components of transformation – people, process and technology – to navigate uncertainty with confidence and trusted outcomes.

> "To navigate the chaos of AI adoption, organizations need a north star – a repeatable, modular AI blueprint built on trust, scale and real-world impact."
>
> **Manisha Khanna**, Global Technology, AI and Emerging Tech, SAS



AI cannot replace human creativity, critical thinking and emotional intelligence. Without hands-on involvement, AI systems cannot achieve reliable, beneficial and trustworthy outcomes.

Upskill from within. Invest in targeted and continuous training for existing employees. Create blended teams that combine domain experts with technical talent.

Effective change management. Communicate frequently and identify champions to maximize adoption and ensure technology meets strategic goals.

Reinforce accountability. Regular checkpoints, escalation protocols and policy alignment assure autonomy never comes at the cost of control.

Governance, compliance and operational discipline from the start. When embedded throughout the AI life cycle, these components ensure models are transparent, auditable and aligned with regulatory expectations.

AI engineering and XOps practices manage complexity and scale responsibly. The processes enable agile development, continuous monitoring, ethical safeguards and rapid iteration across data, models and decisioning systems.

Cross-functional collaboration and continuous oversight. Sustained outcomes come from skilled teams jointly monitoring performance, ensuring ethical use and maintaining transparency through shared tools and role-specific insights.

Trusted data: The nonnegotiable foundation. High-quality, well-governed data ensures accuracy, reduces ethical and regulatory risk and prevents flawed insights and costly missteps that stem from poor-quality data.

Modern data management. Simplify access to all data, build robust pipelines to prepare it for AI and embed governance at every layer, breaking down silos and ensuring end-to-end trust.

Flexible, AI-first infrastructure is essential for long-term success. Scalable architectures, specialization for parallel-processing, model-agnostic integration and ready-made models accelerate adoption, support complex workloads and ensure organizations can adapt as AI evolves.

Empowering people for scalable AI growth

Redeveloping the workforce will be one of the most significant and impactful actions an organization can take. People are the critical enablers who bring AI to fruition. They sit at the heart of AI adoption, ensuring that technology strengthens, not replaces, human capability. AI serves as an augmentation tool, and without human involvement in data curation, model evaluation, feedback loops and strategic oversight, reliable and useful outcomes will remain out of reach.

To translate concept into reality, public sector organizations must:

- **Identify and invest** in key roles to guide responsible AI transformation.
- **Foster collaboration** across technical, operational and leadership teams.
- **Build infrastructure** that supports continuous learning and sustained innovation.

True transformation goes far beyond training and requires reimagining how work gets done. AI should be positioned to elevate the uniquely human strengths it cannot replicate – creativity, critical thinking and emotional intelligence. The objective goes beyond automating tasks but in rethinking work to generate higher value. Delivering on this promise calls for:

- **A long-term, iterative approach** to workforce transformation.
- **Leadership commitment** to reshaping roles and expectations.
- Last, but not least, **a willingness to rethink traditional organizational paradigms**.

When people and technology evolve together, AI becomes a catalyst for smarter decisions, stronger teams and more resilient organizations.

Confident innovation, grounded in governance

What thoughts come to mind with the word "governance?" For some, it's a steady lifeline in the chaotic seas of AI adoption. For others, it raises concerns that well-intentioned rules might slow momentum. But, what if the two opposing thoughts converged, creating a third way that strengthens outcomes, accelerates innovation and safeguards public trust all at once?

As AI rapidly transforms public sector organizations, robust governance is essential to ensure ethical, transparent and effective use of these technologies. While many organizations have implemented governance, only 5% of recently **surveyed** government leaders expressed confidence in their AI governance frameworks. Beyond the compliance and reputational risks, the perils of weak governance can multiply as technology becomes even more capable of producing new data and insights. Strong governance ensures:

- **Compliance**: Anticipate and meet evolving regulations.
- **Trust**: Build stakeholder confidence through transparency and accountability.
- **Productivity:** Empower staff decision-making with clear guidelines and training.
- **Protection**: Safeguard the public and organizations against harm.
- **Purpose**: Attract and retain talent by demonstrating responsible and effective AI use.

Adopting a comprehensive approach to trustworthy AI is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage. It enables government organizations to drive innovation, ensure regulatory compliance and create a positive impact on society. It's not a one-and-done event. It's a journey that requires tested tools and strategies to support trustworthy AI across the entire life cycle. Learn more about how **SAS Data Governance** translates into powerful, repeatable and explainable insights.

> "Our vision is a world where data empowers people to thrive. We pursue that vision through trustworthy and responsible innovation."
>
> **Reggie Townsend,**
> Vice President, SAS
> Data Ethics Practice

Real-world applications in government

As AI becomes woven into everyday life, citizens are accustomed to instant answers and seamless experiences, and they want public services to keep pace. In this pivotal moment for government leaders, the goal isn't to be the hammer in search of a nail – it's about choosing with intention. The array of AI capabilities is dazzling, and the problems that need fixing are seemingly endless, but the real challenge is to stay aligned with your organization's mission and to scale not just for today, but for the future.

Choosing when – and where – to put AI to work

The success of any AI strategy ultimately depends on its ability to deliver measurable business value that aligns with your agency's priorities and maturity. That means choosing use cases that can show clear ROI within the first year that will build confidence, accelerate adoption and avoid costly projects that look promising on paper but fail in practice.

To select the right opportunities, government leaders should anchor decisions in tangible outcomes and ask:



What specific problem are we trying to solve?



Who will use this technology?



How will impact be measured, monitored and sustained?

Organizations with moderate AI experience consistently evaluate success through operational metrics, including outcomes and cost-efficiency, rather than the number of models built or tasks automated.

As AI maturity increases, objectives evolve. The highest value emerges when organizations shift from short-term cost reduction to long-term transformation, focusing on:



Organizational acuity, responsiveness and resilience.



Citizen experience and satisfaction.

Where inspiration meets reality: Capabilities and use cases

Identifying the right opportunities is only half the journey. Turning them into measurable progress requires the right tools, thoughtfully applied to the unique challenges of government. Let's explore how AI capabilities are unlocking new possibilities across public sector organizations.

AI capabilities	Real-world uses
Machine Learning Systems learn from data, identify patterns and make decisions with minimal human intervention.	• **Law enforcement**: Pinpoint offenders, patterns and trends and issue alerts about emerging threats. • **Public health care**: Understand, predict and reduce hospital acquired infections. • **Social services**: Identify complex relationships in social networks and collusive fraud rings.
Natural Language Processing (NLP) Enables computers to take raw language input and interpret it, measure sentiment and determine which parts are important.	• **Transportation**: Process data from sensors and social media to predict congestion and optimized traffic signals. • **Law enforcement**: Investigate online child exploitation and human trafficking. • **Social services**: Rapidly process information from forms, reports and applications.
Computer Vision Allows systems to see, identify and process images or videos in the same way that human vision does.	• **Natural resource management**: Prepare for disasters and address wildfire risk in real-time. • **Worker safety**: Identify hazardous situations and monitor equipment for maintenance. • **Transportation**: Monitor flows and trigger emergency responses for accidents and other hazards.
Large Language Models (LLMs) Deep learning algorithms that recognize, summarize, translate, predict and generate content.	• **Public commentary**: Uncover insights from volumes of public input on proposed laws and regulations. • **Education**: Track student progress and prompt reminders to meet next milestones. • **Research/investigations**: Mine data and receive guidance on furthering key projects.

AI capabilities	Real-world uses
Synthetic Data Data that is manufactured to mimic real data.	• **Policy development**: Simulate new policy impacts without creating public risk. • **Cross-agency collaboration**: Protect confidentiality when sharing data sets with trusted partners. • **Law enforcement**: Remove biases while training AI to detect crime hotspots and determine resource planning.
Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) Generates context-aware, accurate and trustworthy responses from your private data.	• **Procurement**: Streamline proposal processes from multiple bids to improve efficiency and decisioning. • **Internal management**: Quickly search and summarize policy manuals, legal texts and historical records. • **Public health**: Spot potential viral outbreaks (human and livestock), gather data and possible causes and alert authorities.
Digital Twin A virtual model designed to accurately reflect a physical object, system or environment.	• **Ports and airports**: Simulate traffic flows, parking, environmental conditions and passenger and cargo volumes to optimize resources. • **Flood prediction**: Anticipate flood events and allocate resources to minimize threats to the public. • **Urban planning**: Model new buildings, zoning and infrastructure to assess potential impacts.
AI Agent A sequence of AI models, rules and/or analytic algorithms that execute a workflow with little or no human intervention.	• **Citizen services**: Chatbots provide 24/7 answers to inquiries and process forms. • **Procurement and payment integrity**: Monitor financial transactions to detect suspicious patterns. • **Public health care**: Analyze medical data faster for diagnoses and predict outbreaks.

Case studies: Building trust, delivering impact

AI is transforming public service, not just behind the scenes, but in how governments can make lives better for their citizens. From streamlining operations to protecting in times of crisis, the potential is vast. With that potential comes a vital responsibility to ensure innovation advances the public interest.

From ideation through deployment, trustworthy AI requires human judgment, tested approaches and a deep commitment to transparency and equity, and **SAS Viya** enables public sector organizations to bring those principles to life.

50 years ago, a public sector agency became the first customer to put its trust in SAS. Today, more than 650 government ministries, departments, offices and agencies around the world use SAS. Here's a sampling of our recent AI use cases:

North Carolina Department of Insurance

CID Case Study

The opportunity

- ~ 5,000 fraud tips received annually.
- Manual review and routing by supervisors.
- Investigators spent up to 3 days compiling monthly reports.

The solution

- Insurance Crimes Investigation System (ICIS) built with **SAS Visual Investigator** + **SAS Visual Analytics**.
- Online interface for fraud tip submission.
- Algorithm instantly routes tips to districts.
- One-click case assignment by district commanders.
- Cloud hosting for secure, anytime access.

Key outcomes

- Success rate increased: **60% → 98.7%**.
- Reports generated in **7 minutes**.
- Every case investigated.

→ Learn more.

Jakarta, Indonesia
Smart City Case Study

The opportunity

- Siloed, unstandardized public data.
- 100+ fragmented public service apps.
- 40% of city below sea level, frequent flooding.

The solution

- Integrated millions of data points into digestible information for decision-making using SAS advanced **analytics**, **AI** and **machine learning** on **SAS Viya**.
- Connected SAS Viya to JAKI super app, enabling real-time insights.
- **SAS Analytics for IoT** was implemented to accelerate sensor data for flood detection.

Key outcomes

- Integrated city connecting government, residents and businesses for vital information.
- Streamlined database helping prevent fraud.
- Response time for flooding incidents decreased: **60 minutes → 1 – 5 minutes**.

→ Learn more.

Federal Public Service Finance (Belgium)
Tax Reform Case Study

The opportunity

- A single tax declaration consists of 3,000 declaration codes and 65,000 lines of business logic.
- Traditional analysis based on population sampling, which means answers are biased.
- Needed an analytics tool for small segments and for all returns to predict the impact of changes in tax laws.

The solution

- The agency's new tool, Aurora, based on **SAS Viya**, is a **digital twin** of the calculator that processes Belgium's income taxes.
- **SAS Visual Analytics** + **SAS Visual Statistics** to create dynamic visual reports.

Key outcomes

- Better estimations and better informed policymakers.
- Assessments validated with a variance of only 6.70 on 67 billion euros.

→ Learn more.

"We use Aurora [based on SAS Viya] whenever we need very accurate results or an analysis of a tax regime that is very rare. The better our estimations are, the better our policymakers are informed, and the better the results will be."

Adriaan Luyten, Head of the Tax Policy Unit, Federal Public Service Finance
Belgium's Federal Public Service Finance

Why SAS Viya for public sector

Government leaders face extraordinary complexity, balancing urgent demands with long-term transformation, all while earning and retaining public trust. From taxation to public safety, health care to environmental stewardship, the stakes are high and expectations from the public continue to climb. Public sector success depends on the ability to turn data into insight, insight into action and action into outcomes that serve communities with transparency, speed and care.

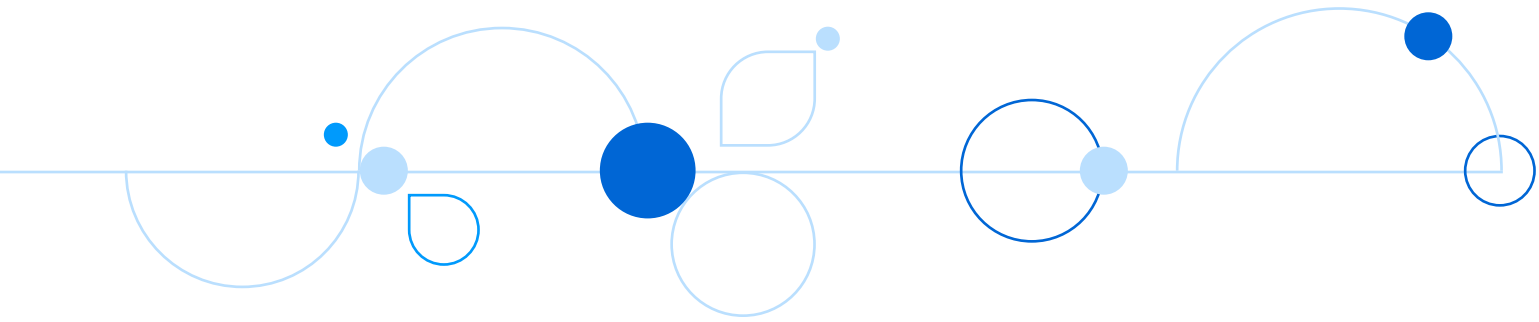
Across ministries, departments and agencies, SAS Viya is helping governments to manage their data and use it to unlock critical insights, anticipate needs and deliver services built for today and tomorrow. Whether modeling policy impacts, automating frontline decisions or predicting patient care needs, Viya equips leaders to act with clarity, scale with confidence and serve with integrity.

When advanced analytics meet public purpose, the results go far beyond technology. Data and AI catalyze enhanced leadership, meaningful transformation and deeper public trust. As governments look ahead, the objective is clear: Adopt smarter tools and secure trustworthy data to deliver public value with confidence. SAS Viya boosts public sector teams by building systems that are not only intelligent, but equitable, transparent and designed to scale with mission requirements.

> "SAS Viya was the only platform tested to continue scaling and producing results in minutes, where alternatives ran for hours or simply failed."
>
> **The Futurum Group**

What's next

Today's public sector leaders face mounting pressure to deploy AI quickly and demonstrate real returns. Yet AI can only deliver its full value when built on a foundation that preserves control and strengthens trust. Learn more about how **SAS Viya** helps governments create a unified platform with embedded data and AI to build and scale intelligent public services for meaningful, trustworthy and measurable success.



Explore how SAS empowers public sector organizations to deliver trustworthy, scalable AI by visiting sas.com/public sector/viya.

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