

## Cloud offers efficiency, scalability and cost savings to government organisations

Government agencies can access a range of benefits from utilising cloud computing, says **Yasser Zeineldin, eHostingDataFort**

Over the last few years, 'Cloud' has become the buzzword amongst businesses and IT professionals alike. Migrating data and applications to the cloud can help any organisation save costs, improve business processes, and enhance overall efficiency and productivity. More and more organisations are exploring the potential benefits associated with the cloud and are ready to make the shift. Hence, Gartner's prediction that cloud computing will become the bulk of new IT spend by 2016 comes as no surprise.

Today, cloud computing is transforming the way business is done across verticals and government organisations have also begun to capitalise on this trend.

Cloud offers government organisations several benefits right from cost savings to operational efficiency, flexibility as well as better collaboration between various government departments. It also gives them the flexibility to deploy the latest services with increased agility.

In this article, we highlight the top four benefits of cloud computing for the government sector.

### FINANCIAL BENEFITS

The most alluring benefit of cloud is its ability to reduce expenditure on IT systems. The need to invest in servers, networking equipment, storage resources and software is mitigated by the shift to a utility based model offered by the cloud. So rather than requiring significant upfront CAPEX investment, expenditure becomes OPEX.

Cloud, being a 'pay-as-you-go' service, offers government entities immediate as well as long term cost-savings and frees up government funds for other purposes. While moving to the cloud, the government organisation not only saves on upfront costs involved in buying IT equipment, but also on its depre-



← Cloud computing offers a number of benefits to government organisations, including cost savings and greater flexibility, says Zeineldin.

ciation over time. Also, when computing systems and applications are moved from on premise to a cloud services provider, government organisations are able to save on power and energy consumption, and on the costs associated with them. Moreover, the organisation will no longer need systems management and maintenance staff.

All this results in overall reduction in expenditure on IT infrastructure, operations and resources. The potential savings allow governments to allocate funds to more citizen-facing and service activities.

### SECURITY BENEFITS

Even though cloud security is a major concern for government organisations, the technology is being touted as the best delivery model in times of trouble. By enabling the decentralization

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of critical computer functions, data storage and applications, cloud computing helps the government organisation withstand the damage in the event of a disaster by preventing any data being lost, damaged or made unavailable and also helps in the recovery process later.

#### DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION BENEFITS

Moving to the cloud allows government organisations to use the latest technologies as well as upgrade seamlessly to newer technologies in future. Cloud also allows an organisation to increase its capacity and systems when required and scale back if a project doesn't take off.

Cloud enables government departments to become more innovative in their internal projects as they are able to make the most of the latest technologies. Also, working with a cloud services provider ensures that the systems are up to date with the newest technologies and solutions in the market, allowing the government entity to focus on its core business and operations. This also frees up their IT staff and lets them focus on developing and delivering innovative services to citizens as well as concentrating on broader IT initiatives for the city such as Smart City, Smart Government initiatives, Big Data, and so on.

#### SERVICES FOR CITIZENS

Governments can leverage cloud to keep their citizens connected and educated. For instance, self-service options can enable citizens to integrate and track their credit records, loans and government-based paperwork. It also provides access to dashboards on their energy and water consumption, thereby encouraging sustainability in the long run, which traditional hosting solutions do not offer.

Overall, governments are able to provide services to citizens much faster, and can also address their complaints, issues or feedback by engaging with them on a more regular basis.

Here are two examples that illustrate how governments can become more efficient by embracing the cloud:

**Energy:** Due to expanding population growth and urban density, cities will experience an unparalleled demand for energy and water. The UAE consumed about 1.8bmWh of energy in 2013 alone. Municipal bodies can better monitor the utilisation of energy sources through smart grids. Governments can implement a private cloud across their power grids, which will offer them real-time visibility and minimal downtime on generated data, as well as analytics and forecasts for the energy industry and its verticals.

**Infrastructure Networks:** According to HVS, a hospitality consultancy, the UAE is projected to spend \$300 billion on infrastructure development by 2030. Cloud technology can thus strengthen the physical infrastructure of cities via IaaS (Infrastructure-as-a-Service), PaaS (Platform-as-a-Service) and SaaS (Software-as-a-Service) for efficiency, quality of service on demand and green infrastructure.

Cloud computing can help track mismanaged or broken traffic lights, road blocks or public transport inefficiencies. Cloud analytics systems provide data on street conditions, repairs, traffic patterns and potential solutions in real-time, enabling quick, coordinated responses based on environmental factors. This solution will reduce citizens' travel time, road congestion, and CO2 emissions — paving the way for not only a smarter, but a greener city.

By adopting cloud computing, government entities benefit from the latest computing innovations and technologies, better data security and availability and overall cost savings. Cloud computing ensures each department has the flexibility to scale up their operations when required, and government resources and IT personnel are used optimally on improving services for citizens.

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