Pandemic puts spotlight on state and local government IT infrastructure

New challenges bring business continuity, disaster recovery and IT modernization to the forefront
Before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, state and local governments already struggled with diverse network challenges. The challenges escalated when employees began working remotely, constituents increased their use of digital services and agencies needed to provide public health updates promptly. CIOs focused much of their attention in 2020 on assessing their network needs and finding ways to keep up with employee and citizen traffic.

So how can state and local governments ensure their networks are ready for future disruptions, and what will be required going forward to complete IT modernization projects? This white paper reviews the challenges of state and local government IT departments in the wake of the pandemic. It examines solutions that address common obstacles to IT modernization and network services, and business continuity and disaster recovery planning.

Network preparedness for pandemic demands
The COVID-19 pandemic brought state and local government network shortfalls into stark relief. Caught off guard, they couldn't keep up with business as usual and discovered how unprepared they were for disruptions. According to a recent Center for Digital Government survey, sponsored by Spectrum Enterprise, only 22 percent of state and local government IT departments are prepared to respond to a future disaster or disruptive event. How big of a role networks played in that response was significant.

The survey found that over half of respondents desire a network capable of supporting increased demand. CIOs put increasing network availability as the top priority (56 percent), followed by migrating IT infrastructure to the cloud (41 percent) and developing a unified or centralized communication system (40 percent). In a way, the pandemic resulted in an acceleration of IT modernization initiatives and a more thorough assessment of what’s needed to deal with future events. Respondents listed their most significant network needs regarding IT modernization as ensuring network flexibility (56 percent), expanding network functionality (53 percent) and mitigating security risks (45 percent). A full 40 percent plan to modernize by increasing network availability. To prepare for future disruptions and facilitate business continuity planning, 67 percent expect their IT modernization to better support remote work.

Leverage enterprise connectivity solutions and managed services to overcome IT modernization challenges
There is no question that network services play a crucial role in business continuity and disaster recovery planning. Roughly 90 percent of government CIOs think their network needs to be improved to meet the demands of their IT modernization initiatives.
To overcome IT modernization hurdles, state and local governments are turning to enterprise connectivity solutions and managed services. As an experienced IT solutions and service provider to government agencies, Spectrum Enterprise understands the unique challenges of state and local governments and is ready to assist with network needs.

Managed services free up government agencies from the day-to-day tasks associated with managing network technology. This allows lean IT teams to focus more on serving their constituents, and less on troubleshooting technology issues. Spectrum Enterprise fully supports all equipment and automatically applies patches and updates to software. By using managed services, agencies gain the flexibility to meet changing needs and access new technology as it becomes available. Predictable monthly rates make it easier to budget, moving expenses from capital to operating. Since Spectrum Enterprise offers 24/7/365 U.S.-based support, IT staff doesn’t need to perform routine maintenance or be constantly on call.

Designed to address the challenges agencies face as they emerge in the post-pandemic world, Spectrum Enterprise offers multiple high-performance network and managed services solutions.

**Ethernet Services:** The first step in meeting data needs is connecting agency departments and distributed locations. Spectrum Enterprise Ethernet Services offer a fast, reliable wide area network (WAN) solution with bandwidth available from 10 Mbps to 100 Gbps. Our reliable, private network can link different locations, providing a strong backbone for delivering services throughout the state or municipality and to constituents. Organizations can scale as needed to support increased bandwidth needs for business continuity and disaster recovery. Additionally, Ethernet Services provide network visibility through a secure portal, allowing IT staff to proactively monitor and report on the network.

**Managed SD-WAN:** Post-pandemic, state and local governments will need to adapt to different workloads. They will also need greater visibility into their networks, which can be provided by using Managed SD-WAN. This solution is a virtualized WAN service that can also connect with Spectrum Enterprise Ethernet locations. It allows for application-aware routing while reducing network complexity, management effort and cost, critical for IT teams that are already stretched too thin by everyday challenges. Intelligent routing prioritizes network traffic, and multiple configurations, connectivity options and transport types are utilized. This ensures that high-priority applications and workloads are available at the performance levels required.

**Managed Network Edge:** Network modernization is an opportunity to streamline network processes and management. Managed Network Edge from Spectrum Enterprise is a modular service that can bring internet connectivity, security, routing, LAN services (like WiFi and switching) and SD-WAN under one umbrella. Agencies can improve network flexibility and scalability to meet increased demand from internal and external requests, as well as expand internet connection options to include dedicated Fiber Internet Access. Managed Network Edge, delivered with the Cisco Meraki platform, can reduce the effort spent administering the network, saving valuable time for
overextended IT departments. Have confidence in network availability when traffic is routed across the best performing internet connection or automatically transfers to another connection if there is a problem. Seamlessly bring together connectivity, equipment and network management, along with our certified network experts, cloud-based management portal, national reach and multiple connectivity options with Managed Network Edge.

**Managed Security Service:** As citizens demand more digital services, the amount of sensitive information being transmitted and stored grows exponentially. Additionally, nonessential employees logging in remotely also brings more security risks, which can affect business continuity. A fully managed and maintained firewall helps plug holes that malicious actors could exploit. Remote user virtual private networks (VPNs) and unified threat management (UTM) with features like anti-malware, URL content filtering and automated security policy updates all help to keep critical government systems secured and online. Agencies can also protect their network from malicious volumetric attacks with world-class threat identification and mitigation with DDoS Protection from Spectrum Enterprise.

**Cloud Connect:** With the use of public cloud services, like AWS and Microsoft Azure, to augment existing IT solutions and reduce costs, state and local governments need a secure, reliable way to connect. It becomes imperative for business continuity and disaster recovery to have a fast, high-performance, private connection to protect against intrusions and attacks. Combined with Spectrum Enterprise Ethernet Services, Cloud Connect offers single or redundant dual paths to meet security requirements and improves performance, reduces risk and simplifies cloud connectivity by allowing agencies to link multiple cloud environments to any resource. Agencies can get maximum value from their cloud investments.

**Fiber Internet Access and Wireless Internet services:** Minimizing disruption is a critical component of disaster recovery and business continuity planning. Fiber Internet Access from Spectrum Enterprise provides dedicated connectivity (up to 100 Gbps) backed by an industry-leading service level agreement (SLA) and proactive, 24/7/365 monitoring to ensure uptime. Our Wireless Internet and Wireless Internet Backup solutions provide cost-effective redundancy to help organizations continue to operate through an interruption. Wireless Internet Backup provides automatic failover services while Wireless Internet enables clients to control when wireless connectivity should be activated.

**Why choose Spectrum Enterprise?**
Spectrum Enterprise is a trusted partner for state and local governments. We are not just a technology provider; we are fully invested in your success. We can help with every step of the process, including disaster recovery and business continuity planning, and rolling out government internet and network services. Here are just a few reasons why we’re a top choice for government agencies:

**Advanced technology**
We pioneer and use industry-leading technology to provide high-quality performance, speed and efficiency to our customers. Our private fiber network has a local presence and nationwide reach to offer secure, fast and reliable connectivity.
**Cost-effective solutions**
By providing services through multiple contract vehicles and participating in group purchasing programs such as MiCTA, we can help procure the best solutions at the best prices. And in many cases, IT modernization can bring costs down by replacing aging, maintenance-heavy legacy systems with lighter weight, pay as you go or pay for what you need cloud solutions.

**Industry leadership**
Our size, capacity and expertise — including 1,400 IT certifications and multiple MEF Enterprise Application of the Year awards — helps us meet the needs of state and local governments. For over two decades, we have a proven track record of success in serving more than 80 state and local government agencies, and we understand the unique needs of the public sector.

**Extension of your IT team**
With our managed services, we design, deploy, operate and monitor your network. Our SLA provides 24/7/365 support with access to a dedicated account team and local technicians.

**Get your network ready for the future today**
The key to meeting challenges and ensuring continuity in a disruption is modernizing your network. This includes incorporating a high-performance network infrastructure that can support both citizens and employees, even during remote work. State and local governments can improve their efficiency, reduce costs, meet security requirements and provide better services to constituents, from any location, by choosing enterprise connectivity solutions and managed services from the right technology partner. Let the government IT experts at Spectrum Enterprise help you get started.

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3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

**About Spectrum Enterprise**
Spectrum Enterprise, a part of Charter Communications, Inc., is a national provider of scalable, fiber technology solutions serving America’s largest businesses and communications service providers. The broad Spectrum Enterprise portfolio includes networking and managed services solutions: Internet access, Ethernet access and networks, Voice and TV solutions. Spectrum Enterprise’s industry-leading team of experts works closely with clients to achieve greater business success by providing solutions designed to meet their evolving needs. More information about Spectrum Enterprise can be found at [enterprise.spectrum.com](http://enterprise.spectrum.com).