

Driving resident adoption of digital government

The definitive guide

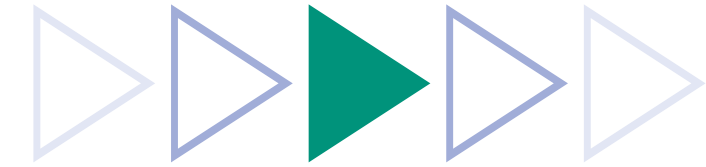


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Introduction:

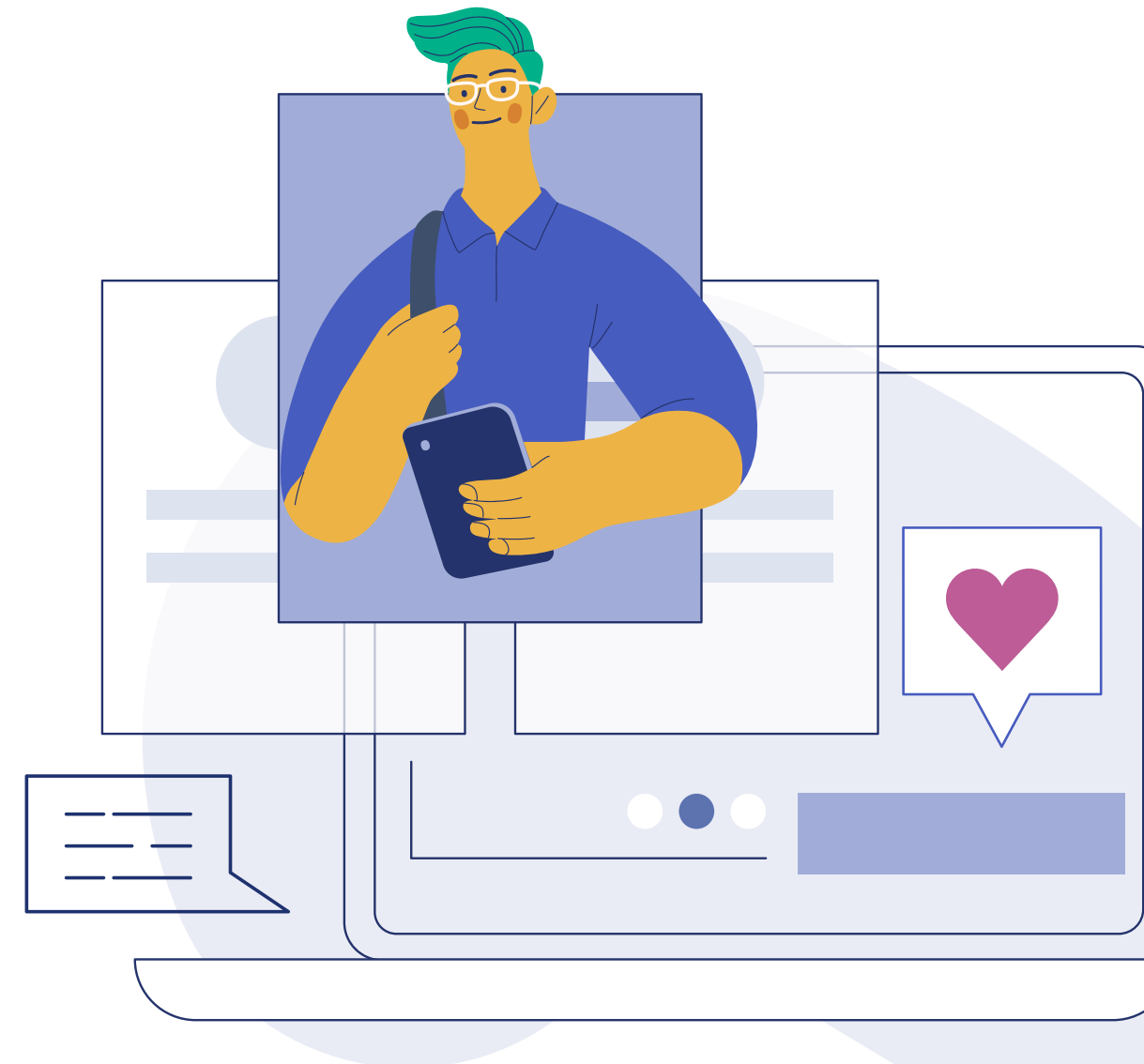
Shift residents to digital (and keep them coming back)



What's the purpose of GovTech? Ease? Security? Efficient service delivery? Absolutely. But the overarching goal is **connection** — improving how people engage with government.

Modern digital government solutions elevate the customer experience, but simply implementing one — no matter how elegant — won't yield the meaningful channel shift most agencies hope to see. Marketing campaigns can drive adoption and build momentum for your digital services.

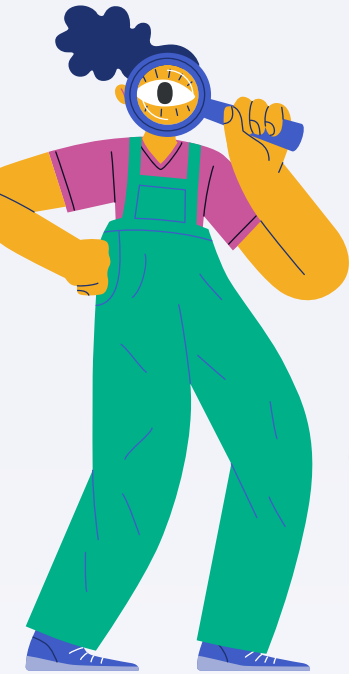
If you're reading this, you probably aren't a marketing or communications expert, but rather, an expert in serving your community. And you might not have a marketing or communications specialist on your team. That's OK. You don't need a degree in marketing to be successful in driving adoption, just a bit of time and effort. This guide will give you the frameworks and tools you need to shift residents to digital channels.



Start here

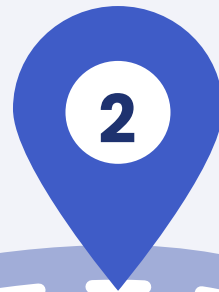
What does tech adoption look like for your residents? Before we dig into tactics, let's zoom out for a high-level view of the adoption journey for residents.

The resident's road to digital



1. Awareness:
"I owe money — and I can pay online."

Do you remember the time your friend told you about a new app, or your bank emailed you about a new security flow for logging in? That's the first step of the resident journey: people discover they have the option to try a new application or use a new feature. Digital channels can even help people realize they owe money in the first place.



2. Consideration:
"I wonder if this service is right for me?"

Just because someone has heard about a new app or game, doesn't mean they'll try it immediately. Once aware, the person might do some research or ask for reviews. Then they'll decide whether they want to use this technology (or not).



3. First use:
"I am ready to try this!"

Great news: Based on everything the person has learned and seen, they decide to try the new technology. The person gets signed up and completes a transaction — a successful interaction for them (and the agency).



4. Continued use:
"That was easy. I'll use it again."

Ideally, the resident was pleased with their first experience and makes additional transactions or tries a different feature. A great user experience leads to retention — and that's good for everyone.

Whose job is it to drive channel shift?

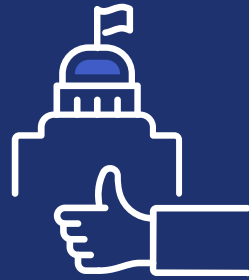
Maximizing adoption of digital services is a team sport with three key players.



The adoption champion

What do we mean by an adoption champion? Internal champions have embraced the goals of a new digital government program and are proponents of achieving those goals. They drive excitement in your agency about improving the resident experience and help identify necessary resources and key people that should be involved.

Simply put, your adoption champion is the person leading your team to success. They should be empowered to marshal resources, delegate related tasks, and set performance goals.



The agency advocates

Technology upgrades mean different things to different staff members. Find the folks who are particularly interested (and find out why). Your front-desk attendant could be excited about shorter lines in the office, and your finance person could be looking forward to simplified accounting.

These in-agency advocates partner with the champion to:

- Encourage the rest of the agency
- Help ensure execution
- Realize and communicate all of the benefits the tech can offer
- Help educate other staff and residents



The technology partner

Don't settle for a vendor that disengages immediately after launch. Find a vendor who is your partner in driving adoption.

- Help your agency find marketing tactics that fit your community and highlight the newly launched solution or feature
- Assist with troubleshooting
- Be available to educate agency staff as necessary

In other words, your digital government vendor should care as much about your residents as you do. Learn more about how to find a good one in our [Buyer's Guide](#).



Building an effective adoption plan

From making sure your new tech solution launches on time, to communicating changes with residents, to helping spread the word in person, six key concepts are important to driving channel shift to digital.



Set a North Star goal

What would success look like for your agency? Have a target number and a timeline to achieve it. For example, most agencies shoot for at least 50% of transactions completed online. Agencies that continually focus on driving the shift can exceed 75% within the first 24 months of having a digital option in place.



Create — and celebrate — a great brand

Your digital brand should have a name and look that ties it to your community. Use familiar visual elements and colors. Keep branding consistent across all channels and true to your local area to drive user trust.



Start with the basics, then build

The most effective tactics are foundational (like putting a QR code on the bill and envelope and posting on social media). Once those basics are in place, you can set your sights on more advanced tactics.



Describe the service in plain language

Explain the service: how it works, who is eligible, and how to access it. Avoid the temptation to include a lot of “fine print” when you market the service.



Collect feedback

Talk to your residents (online and in person). Ask them what they like and don't like about the program.



Keep promoting to drive continued adoption and reuse

Although the effective frequency depends on the channel, people need to see ads several times before they take action. Researchers have found that it can take four or more message exposures per week to drive behavior change.

Why (and how) to create a brand identity for your digital program

Your agency's brand identity is an expression of your values — distinct and memorable. Creating a brand for digital services that is a natural extension of the overall brand gives users confidence. They know they can trust the service.

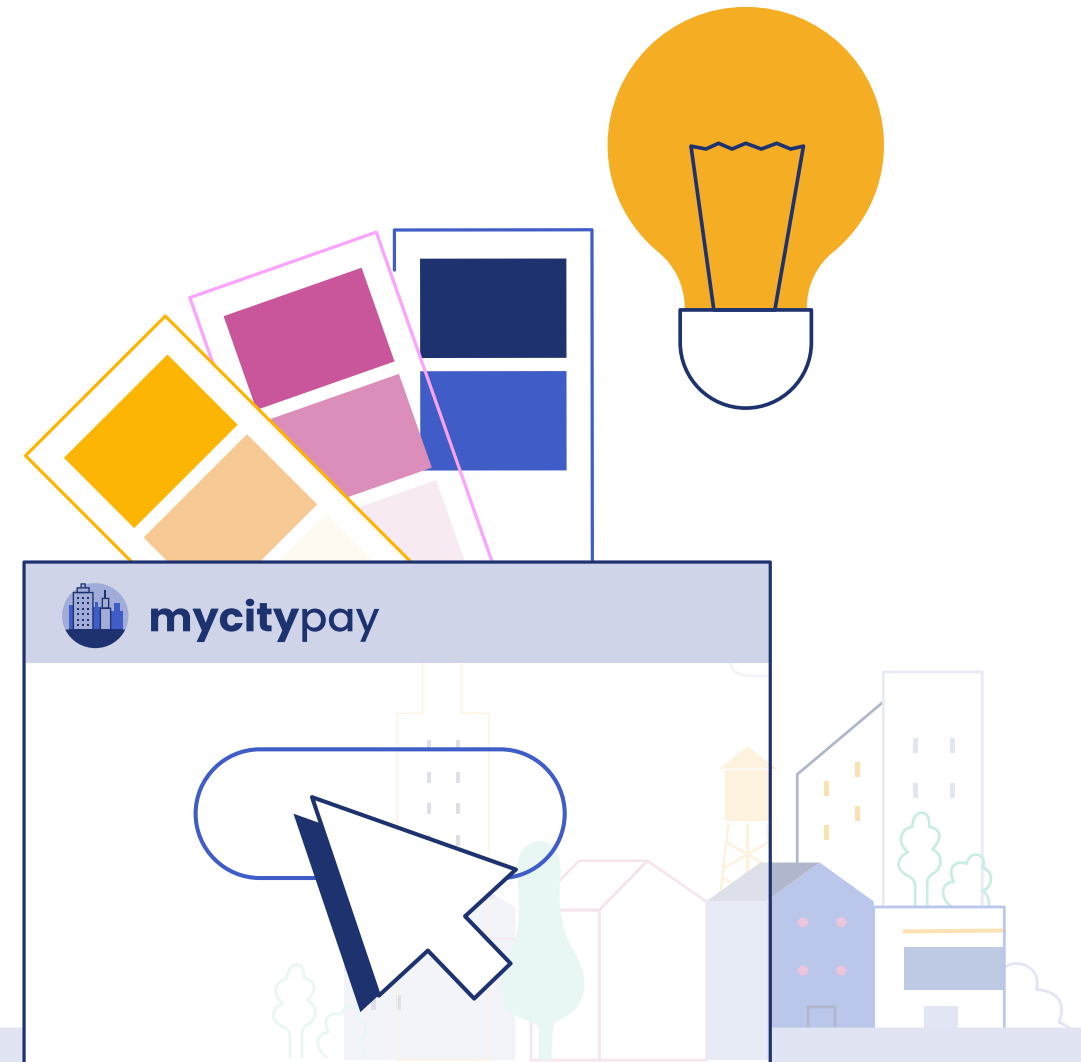
Keep it local

Your brand identity should reflect the unique qualities of your community. Use local lingo and images that highlight the best parts of your community to resonate with your residents.

How to get started on a brand:

- Create a name and logo for the program that mirrors or incorporates elements from your agency or city/county/state
- Document usage guidelines for your logo, typography, voice, and colors so everyone stays consistent
- Update your websites, billing materials, signage, email templates and signatures, blog posts, support FAQs, etc.

Of course, not every agency has the know-how or time to do this kind of work. If your tech partner doesn't assist with this (they should), consider engaging an inexpensive resource from a freelancing platform like Upwork, or running a contest in your community to build the identity.



Reminder: Building your brand identity won't happen overnight. You can update your agency's look over time.



Driving digital adoption: a maturity framework

Every agency’s adoption plan will look slightly different depending on its residents and available resources. We’ve identified four maturity stages of adoption strategy: **Foundational, Proactive, Thriving, and Optimized.**

Foundational items are must-do tasks for launching your solution. From there, your agency will evolve into more advanced stages. Every community has unique needs, so the pace of progress and specific tactics will vary.

A PayIt client in the **optimized stage** more than tripled online property tax transactions in 3 years, from **\$29M to \$93M.**

				
Maturity stage	Foundational	Proactive	Thriving	Optimized
	Mostly low- and no-cost promotional tactics are deployed to capture ready users to drive basic resident awareness and consideration.	Ongoing promotion is underway, because repetition drives awareness and consideration of the service. Your agency is identifying ways to improve the performance of existing tactics.	Your agency is expanding into new promotional channels, such as other community programs where you can reach new users or specific segments of the community.	You experiment with advanced tactics like ad copy, imagery, and new channels. You might be investing budget in some paid channels that you know are ROI-positive.
Expected lift* in year 1	5-15%	15-25%	25-50%	50%+

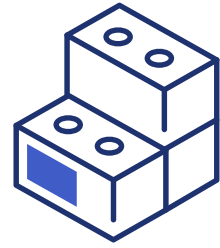
*Lift is the year-over-year share increase for digital channels.

Stage-by-stage playbook



Now that you have a general overview, let's take a look at practical execution at every stage of maturity. Note that each plan builds on the previous maturity level. Tactics in the Foundational stage carry over to following stages. So the most mature adoption marketing plan, Optimized, includes the tactics from the Foundational, Proactive, and Thriving plans — plus additional tactics to level up.





Foundational stage tactics



Awareness

- Launch with an official news release. Notify local news outlets.
- Announce the program on social channels and via email with a link to enrollment.
- About 80% of traffic to your website is people looking for a bill or a way to pay: present information prominently on your site.
- Place printed material and signage in your office.



Consideration

- If you are transitioning from one digital solution to another, redirect traffic with a brief explanation.
- Add a QR code on your bill and the bill envelope.
- Describe how the service works, but avoid excess “legalese” or fine print.
- Convey that this is an official service of your agency with the most stringent security in place.



First Use

- Make it as easy as possible to enroll in the service: Minimize the steps to create an account and provide helpful text to guide the users.
- Provide a closed loop of feedback: confirm payment was received and provide receipts and a transaction history.



Continued Use

- Once users have created an account, use email to inform them of additional services available, upcoming deadlines, etc.



The average email open rate across PayIt’s property tax clients hovers around

63.3%.

Compare that to the average government email open rate: 19.4%.



Proactive stage tactics



Awareness

- Post information about the service and its benefits at least 2x/week. Vary the visual treatments to keep it fresh.
- Are there other places you could put signage or announcements? Perhaps at City Hall, or the Courthouse?
- Piggyback on communications from other departments with physical or digital signage, inclusion in email newsletters, etc.



Consideration

- Redesign your bill: increase the prominence of the QR code and convey the benefit.
- Add a bill insert to 1-3 mailing cycles to highlight the service.



First Use

- Use social proof (quotes from user reviews, star ratings, etc.) to help users feel confident.



Continued Use

- Encourage “guest” users of the service to create an account, explaining the additional benefits of doing so.
- Send emails and reminders at billing cycles, deadlines, and when new features or services are added.

Wonder what an email sequence can do for you? One of PayIt’s clients sent an opening day email in 2022 that saw a 61.5% open rate – and collected

\$5.8 million
via digital transactions on day one.



Thriving stage tactics



Awareness

- Partner with local businesses or organizations to spread awareness. Would local real estate agents consider distributing a property tax flier for you?
- Find out if your agency is eligible for low- or no-cost remnant advertising. Remnant ads run in unused space on public radio, transportation facilities, newspapers, etc. Include a QR code wherever possible.



Consideration

- Produce a short video about the service featuring an elected official. Put this video on your social channels and website.
- Look at the performance of your social posts: Which ones are getting the most engagement? Invest a small budget to “boost” those posts to expand your reach.
- Run low-cost ads: sponsor local transit cards or advertise in community newsletters and magazines.



First Use

- Encourage users to share their experience on social media when they have successfully completed a transaction.
- Reach specific segments of users with relevant content. Create a program for new homeowners, Spanish speakers, or people with disabilities. Engage community organizations, publications, and websites to reach those groups more effectively.
- Nail the onboarding experience. Ideally, the solution is intuitive, but it doesn't hurt to provide simple instructions.



Continued Use

- Publish feature-highlighting content that emphasizes value for residents.
- Use push notifications or SMS campaigns when deadlines are looming, payments are late, or new features are added.
- Add sticky features like partial pay, autopay, and eBilling.



Optimized stage tactics



Awareness

- Issue a press release about the impact of the program: Detail how many people have used the service, how they have rated it, and its impact on the community. Did you save paper? Shorten wait times? Disburse tax revenue more quickly? Celebrate these wins.



Consideration

- Experiment with more paid advertising. If you used remnant inventory in the earlier stage, identify a specific channel that seemed to have the most impact, and set aside some budget to increase your exposure there.
- Start A/B testing to maximize the impact. An A/B test is simple: run two versions of an email subject line or a social post and see which one gets more engagement.



First Use

- Have fun with an experiential marketing campaign so your residents can interact with your agency's new direction – for example, a town scavenger hunt, hidden QR codes, or “Easter eggs” in your digital material.
- Ask users how they learned about the program, and double down on the most popular channels.



Continued Use

- Get serious about retention: helpful content, FAQ pages, etc. Consider topics such as updating an address or credit card, how to set reminders, or a calendar of important local dates.
- If you offer more than one digital service, suggest them when a resident has completed a task.

Land your message: Here's how.

Even if your agency leans toward a formal voice, using human, relatable copy is more likely to resonate with your residents. Punch up your communications with these tips:

1. Lead with benefits

Does the feature or solution help residents save time? Allow them to set up a payment plan? Pinpoint the benefits of the new technology, and make those values highly visible. Your new platform or feature improves on older technology or other solutions. Point out these positive differences.

2. Use “weekend language”

You won't have long to get someone's attention, and most people will tune out if your wording is too complicated. Use clear, concise language, and avoid jargon. Speak to your audience the way you would speak to your next-door neighbor or colleague. An easy test: read it aloud. Does it sound like you would ever actually talk like this? This approach also ensures that people with lower reading competency will easily follow along.

3. Inform, and point to social norms

A recent [study](#) discovered a twofold messaging approach that can nearly double usage of digital services: providing informative and social norm messages. Provide information about the service and social norm messaging on themes such as the sustainability value of going digital, how many others have adopted the service, or how going digital improves government efficiency.

4. Make it concrete

Use phrases like: “More than 70,000 of your neighbors use the service today.” Or: “This program improves our sustainability by eliminating 10 pallets of paper every year.”

5. Create urgency

Use messaging that highlights upcoming payment deadlines, or draws attention to a compelling benefit of going digital, so that enrolling in a digital service becomes a must-have instead of a nice-to-have. This can be as specific as “Property tax payments are due by March 1,” or more general, like “Spend less time at the DMV and more time with the kids this summer.”

6. Add social proof

Have you collected user feedback about the service, or do users provide ratings and reviews? Use quotes and star ratings to convey that residents love the service.



Turn your adoption plan into reality

Digital service delivery improves resident satisfaction and increases efficiency – but you’ll have to help drive digital adoption through a range of marketing tactics.

Widespread channel shift doesn’t happen simply by introducing shiny new technology; focus on your community, tune in to how people think and act, and market your digital services smartly:

- Actively engage your residents, and consider how your digital services can make their lives easier
- Craft meaningful messages that steer them toward your new platform or feature
- Use a mix of tactics and channels, and a steady drumbeat to maximize your reach and drive behavior change
- **Have fun! Delighting your residents is worth celebrating**



About PayIt

PayIt is the solution state and local government agencies use to take the friction out of resident transactions. Our composable customer experience platform enables agencies to collect revenue faster, improve efficiency and sustainability, and give people the smooth digital experience they have come to expect online. PayIt integrates into any back-office system, launches in about 90 days, and provides residents with a single GovWallet™ to store digital licenses and registrations, transaction history, receipts, and payment methods for multiple agencies. Serving more than 100 million residents in North America, we have received awards from Fast Company, StateScoop, and have been listed in the GovTech 100 for 7 years and counting.

