

Insights from building the  
Government AI Navigator

# AI is revealing government's biggest problem: Discoverability

# At a glance

- 40% of public servants spend more than a week pulling together the comparative research and evidence that underpins policy and service design
- Governments everywhere are running AI pilots, but most have no idea what the city next door has already figured out
- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that countries could gain 30–40% more value for money just by adopting the practices that have already proven successful in other contexts
- Leaders need to empower their organisations to share what they’re working on with the global public sector community
- Apolitical is set to launch the Government AI Navigator in July 2026, a free tool designed to facilitate the rapid, large-scale exchange of information about AI applications in government

Gathering evidence — hunting down data, trawling through research, cross-referencing and identifying best practice, consulting colleagues, digging through journals, datasets and departmental records — takes up a staggering amount of public servants’ time. Apolitical surveyed nearly 500 public servants and asked: How long does it typically take to pull together comparative national and international evidence for a new piece of work?



# Governments don't share enough. And, even when they do, finding the information they need takes a long time.

This stage of work slows down the machinery of government. It turns action into waiting: drafting emails, chasing peers in other departments, regions or countries, rarely hearing back quickly, if at all. It's hours of reading and parsing, sifting out all the noise. And yet, skipping this step is not an option. This is the work that prevents governments from repeating costly mistakes and helps them build on what others have already proven as effective.

In 2025, McKinsey published [an updated version of its Government Productivity report](#), estimating that governments could save up to \$5 trillion by closing what they term as the “productivity gap.” The solution? A relatively simple behaviour change: governments documenting what they have done, sharing both wins and failures and making that information discoverable. Also in 2025, the [IMF's Fiscal Monitor](#) found that countries could gain a third more value for money on economic growth simply by adopting practices that have already proven successful in other contexts.

*“What matters isn't just the outcome — it's the process: the key stages of a project, how long each took, the overall timeline, and, where possible, the budget. These are the details that matter most when you're operating within the tight time and resource constraints of government.”*



**Mark Boris Andrižanič**

Former Minister of Digital Transformation,  
Slovenia

There is one tension worth naming. If governments only copy what's already worked, they stop innovating. It's important to do both: borrow proven approaches while still protecting space for experimentation.

## The more governments invest in AI, the more costly poor discoverability of information becomes

Applied to AI in government, the missed opportunity of learning from what's already been done becomes acute. Many public servants are experimenting with AI: running pilots, embedding AI into services, reshaping — and in some cases overhauling — how they work. Data from Apolitical's [AI Readiness Check](#) shows that 77% of potential AI users in government are already incorporating it into their work; a figure that rises to 91% among those charged with implementing AI across government projects and services. But without a way to share what's working, the same pilots keep getting reinvented in different departments, cities and countries.

A [case study published on Apolitical](#) from the City of Boston shows what's possible when the discoverability problem gets

tackled. Boston's transportation department kept running into the same problem: curb space. Who gets to use it, when and for what? The rules are complex, inconsistent and scattered. AI offers a potential solution. Machine learning models processing street-level imagery can automatically read thousands of signs, extracting rules and building a live digital model of the entire curb network. They roll it out. It works. What's notable is that they didn't figure it out alone. Other cities with congested roads had been wrestling with the same problem, so they started comparing notes: on vendors, procurement pitfalls and which technologies were actually ready. That information was live, accessible and came from people still close enough to the work to answer questions. The benefit is a quicker path to a scalable solution, without repeating mistakes others had already made.

*“Success or failure comes down to the accuracy of your data. Solving curb management requires collaboration and sharing — and if you're not collaborating and sharing, it falls apart.”*



**Michael Lawrence Evans**  
Director, Office of Emerging  
Technology, City of Boston



**Sam Brenner**  
Transportation Technology  
Strategist, City of Boston

Public servants know the alternative to this story all too well: hours spent researching what other regions have tried, drafting emails, waiting for replies, commissioning desk research, compiling briefs, only to arrive at something another team had already figured out.

## Building an AI case study navigator

Apolitical set out to solve the problem of discovering AI use cases by developing the Government AI Navigator, an interactive, dynamic and social database of AI case studies and policies from governments around the world, launching in July 2026. To understand why existing discoverability solutions fall short, and ensure the tool meets the needs of public servants globally, Apolitical convened two groups:

a global Advisory Council of government leaders and experts with experience turning to peers elsewhere to learn and solve problems, and a Co-Design Council of public servant practitioners. The insights in this report come from conversations with those two groups and have shaped the product's direction ahead of launch.

While Government AI Navigator addresses a specific problem, conversations with the councils surfaced some barriers that feel especially acute as AI gets introduced into government:



**Public servants rarely share what they've learned in general**

They feel they need permission, assume it's someone else's job or are unsure of the right forum to do so.



**What people think is interesting isn't always what's most useful**

When it comes to AI pilots, public servants may overlook details like the tech stack or the budget, assuming no one cares. In reality, detail is precisely what peers are looking for.



**Many public servants don't even know what's happening in their own country**

The evidence-sharing problem isn't just international, it's domestic too. Most governments lack the internal infrastructure to identify who might already have the answer to a problem.

This all points to the same underlying issue: institutional knowledge-sharing gaps are slowing governments down around the world. Managers and leaders need to acknowledge that a culture that rewards documenting and sharing quality insights and data is essential to accelerating knowledge sharing, which is core to making governments smarter and more efficient.

# Failures and missteps are often the missing part of the story

The Advisory Council's feedback pointed to two important nuances in this story. First, the most valuable knowledge rarely gets surfaced at all: governments are reluctant to share what went wrong. Second, the smallest, most instructive examples rarely appear. Not every AI use case is a landmark procurement or a citywide rollout. Some of the most transferable wins are modest: a workflow improved, a process made faster. Right now, there is no obvious place for those to be shared, found or built upon.

*“Recently, I came across a government that had implemented exactly what I was trying to do. I reached out — and they told me the project had closed a year ago, with no one actively working on it anymore. Nothing on their website said so. That’s the problem: resources go stale, and no one updates them. What makes a resource truly useful isn’t just the information — it’s being able to talk to someone. To ask about their experience, the roadblocks they hit, what they’d do differently. It’s the fact that it’s alive, and that you can actually interact with it.”*



**Pamela Krzypkowska**

Expert, Research and Innovation Department, Ministry of Digital Affairs, Poland

# You're invited — contribute to the global Government AI Navigator:

## 01. Add your government's project to Government AI Navigator

If your organisation has multiple case studies, we'd love to hear from you and make them available for free to other public servants. Please get in touch with the Partnerships Team at [partnerships@apolitical.co](mailto:partnerships@apolitical.co).

## 02. Don't miss the launch!

The Government AI Navigator will be available to all public servants and government officials from July 2026. [Save the date!](#)

## 03. Join the conversation

Share what this means for your organisation's culture by joining over 30,000 other public servants from around the world in the [AI in Government Community](#). Reply in the thread discussing how to bring about the behaviour change explored in this report.

## Add your project to the Government AI Navigator

The Government AI Navigator will be a free, living library of real-world government AI projects, built to be searchable, interactive and designed to grow. Whether you've run a small pilot or a government-wide rollout, and whether it worked or not, we want to hear about it.

