

Tennessee's Alternative Workplace Solutions Initiative

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As the home of more than 2,100 state employees and a fixture on Nashville's skyline, the William R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower Complex ("Tennessee Tower") is one of the State of Tennessee's flagship facilities.¹ Yet in 2011, when Governor Bill Haslam came into office, the 43-year-old building was a relic.² Robert Oglesby, the Commissioner of the Department of General Services (DGS) reflected, "[It had] 70s color schemes, and people just showed up and went to work in their high-walled cubicles or offices and didn't interact, didn't collaborate, [and] weren't focused on anything other than just putting in their time and just doing what they were tasked to do."

Six years later, the Tennessee Tower has undergone a metamorphosis. In lieu of drab colors, the facility has sleek, modern designs. The state has replaced high-walled cubicles with open, sun-drenched co-working spaces, replete with standing desks, whiteboards, and airy conference rooms.³ Most importantly, the revamped space has awakened a previously stagnant culture. "What we have now is the antithesis of the [old] work environment," Oglesby observed. "Now, people work together to solve problems and create better solutions for the citizens."

*"Work is what we do;
not where we are."*

– Reen Baskin,
Director, Alternative Workplace Solutions,
State of Tennessee

The initial transition began in 2011 with a purely real estate initiative aimed at modernizing the furniture, brightening the workplace, and eliminating underutilized space.⁴ However, the real cultural transformation occurred and the physical workspace transition was furthered by Alternative Workplace Solutions (AWS), a program that allows eligible employees in participating agencies to work from home, a "free address" in the office, or a mobile location.⁵ Initially conceived as a strategy to reduce the state's real estate footprint and decrease associated expenses, AWS has morphed into a multifaceted program that, according to state officials, has bolstered productivity, innovation, collaboration, customer service, retention, and recruitment. The latter impact is especially significant because half of the state's workforce is eligible to retire in the next five years. "This initiative is a full-blown, culture-changing initiative," said Reen Baskin, a former Deputy Commissioner and COO for DGS who, until August 2017, also served as the Director of AWS.⁶ Added Oglesby, "It's really getting back to...improving the legitimacy of government and increasing the value we're bringing to citizens."

While AWS has gained steam (it is in place in some capacity in 17 of 23 state agencies) and many now see it as a boon, that success was not as certain in its early days. Rather, state officials have had to wrestle with and confront challenging questions. Among them: How would they design the program and pace change? How would they

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- [1] "William R. Snodgrass Tennessee Tower Complex," Tennessee Department of General Services, available at <https://web.archive.org/web/20090203180800/http://state.tn.us/generalserv/psm/tennesse.htm> (accessed on July 26, 2017); and Interview with Robert Oglesby, Commissioner, Department of General Services, State of Tennessee, by telephone, July 10, 2017. Hereafter cited as Oglesby interview. Unless noted, subsequent quotations from and attributions to Oglesby come from this interview and prior interviews, also conducted by telephone, on April 25, 2017 and May 30, 2017.
- [2] Robert Oglesby, Commissioner, Department of General Services, State of Tennessee, available at <https://www.tn.gov/general-services/article/the-tennessee-department-of-general-services-commissioners-page> (accessed on July 26, 2017); and "Tennessee Tower," Nashville Downtown Partnership, 2015, available at <http://www.nashvilledowntown.com/go/tennessee-tower> (accessed on July 26, 2017).
- [3] "Alternative Workplace Solutions," State of Tennessee, available at <https://www.tn.gov/serem/section/alternative-workplace-solutions> (accessed on July 26, 2017); and Interview with Reen Baskin, Robert Oglesby, and Evan Smith, by telephone, April 25, 2017. Hereafter cited as Baskin interview. Unless noted, subsequent quotations from and attributions to Baskin come from this interview and a pair of follow-up interviews, also conducted by telephone, on May 30, 2017 and July 7, 2017.
- [4] The initial reform was part of Transforming Tennessee for Tomorrow (Project T3), an effort "to reduce the State's real estate footprint by migrating from leased space to owned space, to reduce costs, to improve office environments and make them more efficient, and to assist in changing the culture of the workplace." "Transforming Tennessee for Tomorrow (Project T3)," Department of General Services, State of Tennessee, available at http://c.ymcdn.com/sites/www.nasfa.net/resource/resmgr/Innovations/2014_Tennessee_-_Transformin.pdf (accessed on August 28, 2017).
- [5] "Alternative Workplace Solutions," State of Tennessee.
- [6] In August 2017, Baskin was appointed as Tennessee Governor Bill Haslam's Director of Communications. Jordan Buie, "Reen Baskin To Be Gov. Haslam's New Communications Director," *The Tennessean*, August 7, 2017, available at <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/politics/2017/08/07/haslam-announces-new-communications-director/545640001/> (accessed on August 25, 2017).

cultivate buy-in among participating agencies and outside stakeholders? How would they evaluate impact? Finally, as Haslam prepares to leave office in 2019, how will they position the program for long-term success?

The Foundation: January 2011 - September 2014

The reforms that created the foundation for AWS began to take shape in January 2011 when Haslam became Governor of Tennessee. A highly successful businessman and former mayor of Knoxville, Haslam hoped to leverage his leadership and management experience to transform state government. “Governor Haslam had a passion,” explained Chief Operating Officer (COO) Greg Adams, “for Tennessee to have the most efficient and effective state government in the country.”⁷

To realize this vision, Haslam employed several strategies. One was introducing a pair of structural changes to strengthen enterprise-wide coordination. Initially, in 2011, Haslam created the Office of Customer Focused Government (CFG), focused on bolstering transparency, improving performance, and generating efficiency. Two years later, he appointed Adams, a longtime IBM executive, as the state’s first COO; Adams would report to the governor and was responsible for “work[ing] with state departments to ensure they’re operating in the most efficient way possible.”⁸

A second aspect of Haslam’s approach involved implementing policies to reduce duplication and improve efficiency and customer service. This included introducing annual expense reduction targets for agencies, passing legislation to create individual pay-for-performance plans for employees, and elevating the importance of the state’s shared services agencies.^{9,10} This latter reform was imperative in part because it helped the state save money by consolidating back-office functions; equally important, it freed citizen-facing agencies to focus more on serving clients.^{11,12}

Finally, Haslam, Adams, and other senior state officials worked with cabinet members to develop strategies to improve efficiency and customer service in their agencies. This included DGS, where one of the highest priorities

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– Greg Adams
Chief Operating Officer, State of Tennessee

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- [7] Interview with Greg Adams, Chief Operating Officer, State of Tennessee, and Terry Cowles, Director, Customer Focused Government, State of Tennessee, by telephone, June 14, 2017. Hereafter cited as Adams and Cowles interview. Unless noted, subsequent quotations from and attributions to Adams and Cowles come from this interview.
- [8] “Customer Focused Government,” State of Tennessee, available at <https://www.tn.gov/main/section/main-customer-focused-government> (accessed on July 27, 2017); and Greg Adams, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Governor, State of Tennessee, available at <https://www.tn.gov/governor/article/chief-operating-officer-governors-office> (accessed on July 27, 2017).
- [9] Adams and Cowles interview; and “Compensation Enhancement Act,” Office of the Governor, State of Tennessee, available at <http://tn.gov/governor/article/compensation-enhancement-act> (accessed on July 27, 2017).
- [10] The proposal to introduce a merit-based system prompted pushback from some state legislators and the Tennessee State Employees Association in part because the initial plan called for the elimination of longevity pay. To some, this was emblematic of a broader shift. As Randy Stamps, who in 2016 became the Executive Director of the Tennessee State Employees Association, said, “Governor Haslam has made a lot of changes to employee rights and [the] work environment.” Chas Sisk, “Haslam Forced To Bend As State Workers Attack Merit Pay Plan,” *Nashville Public Radio*, March 9, 2015, available at <http://nashvillepublicradio.org/post/haslam-forced-bend-state-workers-attack-merit-pay-plan#stream/0> (accessed on July 27, 2017); “TSEA Hires Randy Stamps As Executive Director,” Tennessee State Employees Association, March 31, 2016, available at <https://tseonline.org/tsea-hires-randy-stamps-as-executive-director/> (accessed on July 27, 2017); and Interview with Randy Stamps, Executive Director, Tennessee State Employees Association, by telephone, June 21, 2017. Hereafter cited as Stamps interview. Unless noted, subsequent quotations from and attributions to Stamps come from this interview.
- [11] The shared services agencies include DGS; the Department of Human Resources; and the Department of Finance and Administration, which contains Strategic Technology Solutions, a division focused on working with state agencies to manage their information systems. Oglesby and Baskin interviews; and “Strategic Technology Solutions,” Department of Finance and Administration, State of Tennessee, available at <https://www.tn.gov/finance/section/strategic-technology-solutions> (accessed on July 27, 2017).
- [12] Cowles and Adams interview.

was real estate management.¹³ Before Haslam took office, there were concerns about the condition of many state buildings, a problem that stemmed in part from the fact that no single agency was responsible for managing Tennessee's real estate portfolio. In 2011, Haslam therefore issued an executive order creating the State of Tennessee Real Estate Asset Management (STREAM), a new DGS division that would be responsible for "operating, managing, and maintaining the state's real estate assets...."¹⁴ Over the next three years, STREAM pursued different ways to achieve its mission, including exploring opportunities to lower operating costs by selling unneeded buildings and optimizing the portfolio through AWS.¹⁵

The Launch: October 2014 - June 2015

In fall 2014, just as they were contemplating implementing AWS, Oglesby and Baskin learned that the Department of Children's Services (DCS) had ordered 2,000 electronic tablets. The reason was that then-DCS Commissioner (and now Deputy to the Governor and Chief of Staff) Jim Henry wanted to enable his case workers to work remotely. As Baskin recalled, this led to a conversation between Henry and DGS officials about "letting them [DCS] be the pilot for the state to develop what we now call Alternative Workplace Solutions."

While Henry's support was integral, implementing the pilot proved to be more challenging than initially expected. Baskin recalled the difference of opinions as she worked with the DCS leadership team. One deputy commissioner was "cautiously optimistic about AWS" and collaborated with Baskin to address obstacles, such as identifying technology that would allow a remote case worker to access files. By contrast, the other deputy commissioner was more often than not opposed, and when a concern came up surrounding records management or a related issue, that official's perspective, as Baskin recalled, was, "Well, I guess we can't do AWS after all." That leader, Baskin added, would also ask, "Why do you keep acting like we need to change the way we're doing business?" Baskin met with the deputy commissioners every Wednesday when she would stand in front of a whiteboard, write down challenges, and attempt to build consensus. Baskin recalled, "We'd move forward one inch at a time."

The work with DCS attuned Baskin and DGS officials to another issue: they needed to define more precisely what AWS entailed, identify the technology on which it depended, and determine how to implement it. Consequently, she and other state officials began studying best practices and conducting site visits at other organizations (including the U.S. General Services Administration in Washington, D.C. and businesses in Nashville) that had implemented AWS-style programs. This research informed the creation of an AWS policy, completed in partnership with the Department of Human Resources, that defined three forms of AWS (Work From Home, Mobile Work, and Free Address) as well as guidelines for critical topics (e.g., eligibility, supervisor and employee responsibilities, and handling of confidential information).¹⁶ This research also contributed to the development of a 204-page Deployment Reference Guide (DRG) that overviewed AWS policy, best practices for training and change management, and technology that would be integral for implementation (e.g., IT work stations, encryption, and VPN accounts).¹⁷ The work on the DRG—which

[13] According to DGS's website, the agency "is responsible for providing goods and services to the State government of Tennessee. Its primary customers are other State departments and agencies. It also serves vendors wishing to do business with the State, and citizens and organizations interested in purchasing surplus State and federal property. The Department's services include centralized procurement for State departments; management of the State's real estate assets; motor vehicle and equipment management; printing, media, and photographic services; postal services; warehousing and distribution; State employee parking, badging, and shuttle services; and assistance to small businesses and businesses owned by minorities, women, and veterans." "Welcome to General Services," Tennessee Department of General Services, available at <https://www.tn.gov/generalservices/section/general-services-main> (accessed on August 1, 2017).

[14] "Real Estate Strategy," State of Tennessee Real Estate Asset Management, February 2017, p. 1, available at https://www.tn.gov/assets/entities/generalservices/stream/attachments/Real_Estate_Strategy_-_Final_Draft_White_Paper_-_Final_-_February_2017.pdf (accessed on July 27, 2017); and "State of TN Real Estate Management (STREAM)," State of Tennessee, available at <https://www.tn.gov/generalservices/section/real-estate> (accessed on July 27, 2017).

[15] "Real Estate Strategy," pp. 8-9 and 12-14.

[16] AWS Policy, Tennessee Department of Human Resources, Effective Date February 1, 2016, obtained via a personal communication by mail with officials from the State of Tennessee in summer 2017.

[17] "Alternative Workplace Solutions (AWS) Deployment Reference Guide," Strategies for Efficiency in Real Estate Management (SEREM),

was finalized in spring 2016—helped state officials appreciate AWS’s complexity and communicate it more effectively. Baskin reflected:

It was like peeling an onion. We would start and think that we knew everything about a particular topic, and we would realize, ‘Oh my goodness, records management is also a part of AWS. Oh my goodness, digitization is also part of AWS’.... So every time we completed a revision, we would sit in our regular leadership team meetings, and we would say, ‘We’ve got to add more, we left this part out!’

Even as state officials wrestled with how to design AWS, they realized that if they did not start, the program would never get off the ground. “We were building the plane while we were flying,” Oglesby reflected. “But the fact is, sometimes you just have to get started. If we were going to let 23 agencies dictate what this became, we’d probably still be talking about it.”

Expansion: July 2015 - June 2016

AWS gained momentum in the second half of 2015. This was in part because DCS’s pilot, though not complete, was progressing. In addition, commissioners from the Department of Economic and Community Development (ECD) and the Department of Financial Institutions (TDFI) expressed interest in participating in a second round of pilots. For ECD, the draw, as Baskin explained, was the opportunity to energize “a culture of closed offices” and reduce spending. TDFI saw AWS as a natural fit because approximately two thirds of the agency’s staff were bank examiners who mostly worked remotely. What’s more, TDFI Commissioner Greg Gonzales felt AWS could help the agency save money on field offices that received sparse use and that he could reinvest those savings in employee salaries. (Other commissioners could redeploy savings differently, at their discretion.) This would improve retention and, with it, employee and customer satisfaction. Thus, after learning of the initiative through Terry Cowles, a longtime senior principal at a major consulting firm who had become the Director of CFG in 2014, Gonzales said, “I’m interested in getting this done. How fast can we get it implemented?”¹⁸

“We were building the plane while we were flying. But the fact is, sometimes you just have to get started.”

– Robert Oglesby
Commissioner, Department of
General Services, State of Tennessee

This increased interest in AWS elevated the importance of addressing several questions surrounding how to scale the initiative. One was whether AWS should remain in DGS. Although AWS had a substantial real estate component, state officials decided that it would be better to situate the program—which required involvement from all of the state’s shared services agencies—in CFG, whose purpose was to coordinate enterprise-wide initiatives. This also represented an opportunity to leverage AWS to bolster synergies and connections across shared services agencies to accelerate enterprise-wide efforts. Thus, in January 2016, Baskin transitioned from DGS to CFG, where she would focus exclusively on AWS. “I think that DGS greatly valued the shared services model...and has always supported the shared services model,” said Baskin. “So, I think that they knew that [transitioning AWS to CFG] was the best answer.” Oglesby recalled, “I recognized that having the support and drive of the Governor’s office and CFG on this enterprise-wide initiative would enable AWS to gain momentum and transform state government better and faster than DGS alone could expect to achieve. It’s all about the outcome and results.”

Another priority was securing funding from the legislature. As Baskin recalled, when she and her colleagues began working on AWS, they focused on their work in the executive branch and had not briefed members of the legislature in advance of the FY ’16-’17 budget cycle. However, as more agencies expressed interest in AWS, they realized that

Tennessee State Government, April 2016, obtained via a personal communication by mail with officials from the State of Tennessee in summer 2017.

[18] Interview with Greg Gonzales, Commissioner, Tennessee Department of Financial Institutions, by telephone, June 16, 2017. Hereafter cited as Gonzales interview. Unless noted, subsequent quotations from and attributions to Gonzales come from this interview.

they would need to request capital funding. This was because even though some agencies had funds that could be used for AWS expenses (e.g., purchasing technology, improving facilities, and completing real estate transactions), others did not. What's more, agencies' funding mechanisms and processes differed based on numerous variables (e.g., whether they were federally funded). Thus, in early 2016, the governor's budget included a request to fund projects for AWS. To the disappointment of Baskin and her team, the legislature significantly reduced the request. "I don't think it was that they were against AWS," Baskin emphasized, "but I think during that first year, we had not fully communicated the initiative."

These difficulties notwithstanding, the state completed the pilots in DCS, TDFI, and ECD in spring 2016, and the results were impressive. In TDFI, 88 percent of the agency's 163 employees participated in AWS, enabling the agency to reduce its real estate footprint by 74 percent and avoid approximately \$475,000 in annual real estate costs.¹⁹ Similarly, ECD saved more than \$500,000 in recurring annual costs. More significantly, both agencies identified benefits that transcended a straightforward cost benefit analysis. In ECD, the creation of more open spaces contributed to an increase in collaboration. Meanwhile, TDFI reinvested the savings from office spaces in salaries, technology, and other innovations that bolstered retention. As Gonzales said, "it's been a great win-win."

Increasing the Velocity of Change: July 2016 - June 2017

In the second half of 2016, state officials began a push to expand AWS. To some extent, this growth was organic; as Baskin noted, following the success of the ECD and TDFI pilots, many agencies were reaching out to her about participating in AWS. The interest was also a byproduct of gentle pressure from senior state officials. As Cowles explained, agencies were not required to implement AWS; however, the governor's staff communicated that they expected "all of them...to take a look" at AWS. Finally, Baskin and her colleagues highlighted AWS's multifaceted benefits. They had conceived of AWS as a space- and cost-saving endeavor; however, the success of the pilots reinforced their belief that AWS could improve customer service, aid employee recruitment and retention, and facilitate a cultural shift that prioritized collaboration and digital innovation. Oglesby explained, "It's transformational in every aspect: the type of people who work here, the work that's being done, and the value that we're bringing to our taxpayers and citizens."

By early 2017, Tennessee had begun to implement AWS in 17 of 23 state agencies. This created an opportunity to expand the initiative's impact but also introduced new challenges. One involved adaptability and bandwidth. While all agencies had to follow the AWS policy issued by the Department of Human Resources, they had flexibility for how to handle details, including how to pace implementation (e.g., by division, region, or number of staff members). With so many agencies introducing AWS in varied ways, Baskin—who in the past had played a hands-on role with each participating agency—employed a team-based implementation system. This included a Steering Committee consisting of cabinet commissioners from the state's shared services agencies, CFG leadership, and other senior officials; a Leadership Team; staff from CFG; and agencies themselves. "We got so overwhelmed with the desire to implement and the volume of leaders that wanted to participate," Baskin said, "that we had to divide and conquer. So, I took a specific focus on resolving the enterprise-wide issues, I put CFG team members on driving implementation in the different agencies, and the agency's own leadership teams began communicating and driving AWS in their own organizations."

Meanwhile, Baskin and other senior state officials had to navigate numerous challenges at the enterprise level. One was that demand for AWS outpaced the ability of IT and real estate to procure and supply the requisite services. Another obstacle involved helping managers grow accustomed to overseeing remote staff. AWS officials therefore included recommended trainings in the DRG and suggested technologies—such as WebEx, Jabber Instant Messaging and Video, and SharePoint—that facilitated remote communication and collaboration.²⁰ Finally, state officials had

[19] "Alternative Workplace Solutions Steering Committee: Meeting Two," January 27, 2016. Presentation PowerPoint obtained via a personal communication by mail with officials from the State of Tennessee.

[20] "Alternative Workplace Solutions (AWS) Deployment Reference Guide," pp. 33 and 47.

to adapt policies and approaches that conflicted with elements of AWS. These included whether remote staff should be given the day off in a snow emergency and whether productivity expectations should be adapted for remote staff who were performing at a higher rate than office personnel. “We don’t want people to get resentful,” Baskin said of the delicate task of setting expectations for remote employees.

“It’s really getting back to...the legitimacy of government and the value we’re bringing to the citizens.”

– Robert Oglesby
Commissioner, Department of
General Services, State of Tennessee.

Finally, Baskin and her team had to respond to concerns from the Tennessee State Employees Association (TSEA). In spring 2017, Baskin learned that Randy Stamps, TSEA’s Executive Director, wanted to meet to discuss AWS. Baskin prepared extensively for the meeting, including bringing the General Counsel from the Department of Human Resources with her. Stamps voiced the concern that AWS was part of a strategy to eliminate positions. Baskin emphasized that this was not the case and instead that AWS was part of an initiative to promote happier and more productive employees, retain and reward state employees, amplify workforce efficiency, and promote collaboration and innovation. From Baskin’s perspective, this dialogue helped to mollify TSEA’s concerns, though, as she noted, she continued to receive calls from TSEA staff about personnel issues (e.g., Internet access in rural areas). For his part, Stamps reported that AWS was the “number one topic at our annual meeting,” which occurred in June. Among other factors, TSEA members expressed apprehension about the rapid pace of change; the de-sanitization of office spaces (i.e., removal of personal items) to facilitate a “free address” environment; and the diminished peer support, an issue that was especially worrisome for personnel that engage in stressful work (e.g., child protective services). More broadly, Stamps, who acknowledged that some TSEA members supported the change, expressed concern that AWS was part of a broader reform environment that was creating unease. He said:

It just seems like right now workers are working harder than ever before. We’ve cut back on the state workforce, and this is a significant change to them. Some of them already felt overworked, and this change, I think, rather than seeing it as an opportunity to be more effective and to become more independent, they just see it as an additional change that they’re not ready to embrace just yet.

In part to respond to this concern, and to continue to demonstrate AWS’s virtues, Baskin and her staff endeavored to capture the program’s impact. Some outcomes were tangible. For example, as of August 2016, state officials were projecting \$39 million in general government real-estate-related operational cost reductions, after ten years and with full implementation of the initiative.²¹ However, other effects (e.g., increased collaboration and innovation through the creation of digital applications) were more abstract. CFG was therefore working with agencies to conduct surveys about the impact of AWS on productivity, employee satisfaction, retention and recruitment, and collaboration and innovation.²² According to Evan Smith, a Governor’s Fellow in CFG who has played an integral role in developing AWS surveys, the state has seen “increased productivity across the board in every agency that’s participating in AWS.” This data—along with anecdotal accounts of the program’s broader benefits (e.g., helping employees balance personal and professional responsibilities)—has reinforced state officials’ belief that they are pursuing transformational reform. “Top to bottom, we’re challenging the way that people think about AWS and what people think about state government,” said Smith. “Not only do state employees benefit from AWS, but in the long run, so will the citizens of the state of Tennessee. We’re saving the state money while increasing productivity: It’s an amazing thing to see.”²³

[21] “Alternative Workplace Solutions Steering Committee Meeting Three,” August 2, 2016. Presentation PowerPoint obtained via a personal communication by mail with officials from the State of Tennessee.

[22] State agencies that are client facing are also using ticketing systems and software (e.g., Zendesk) to measure how AWS is affecting customer service.

[23] Producing this evidence was critical in part because there continued to be conflicting reports in the public sphere about the impact of remote work. For example, IBM, once a “pioneer” for remote work, recently decided to reduce this setup because company officials believed that it was undermining collaboration and innovation. Sarah Kessler, “IBM, Remote-Work Pioneer, Is Calling Thousands of Employees Back To The Office,” Quartz, March 21, 2017, available at <https://qz.com/924167/ibm-remote-work-pioneer-is-calling-thousands-of-employees-back-to-the-office/> (accessed on August 2, 2017).



Sustaining AWS: Summer 2017 and Beyond

By summer 2017, state officials were evaluating the best way to position AWS so that it would endure after Haslam left office in January 2019. For DGS, this included exploring opportunities to sell valuable real estate in downtown Nashville that was no longer planned for future use. There was also an ongoing dialogue, as Adams said, about how to “operationalize” the program.

Yet, even as Tennessee explored how to cement the program, there was a sense that AWS had already created lasting change. State CIO Mark Bengel suggested that AWS was facilitating healthy risk taking. “It [AWS] is an enabler for people who think outside the box,” he said. “[If] we could do this, we could do something else differently.”²⁴ Baskin highlighted the program’s cultural impact, embodied in a refrain, first used by the U.S. General Services Administration, with which she often concluded presentations. “Work is what we do,” she said, “not where we are.” Oglesby similarly pointed to a deep, mission-driven impact. “AWS,” he said, “is helping us achieve a higher level of both direct and indirect performance and ultimately greater legitimacy [better, faster, cheaper] in the eyes of our citizens.” He elaborated:

The significance of AWS cannot be overstated. We were able to create this huge, comprehensive program [AWS] that, by rewarding customers, enables us to accelerate our addressing those challenging enterprise-wide operational issues faster, more efficiently, and more effectively. It is allowing us to improve customer service by enabling our workforce to spend more time on things that add value; recruit, retain and reward a high-performing workforce; change the workforce culture to be more customer-centric; increase cross-boundary collaboration; leverage technology; accelerate the digital transformation and automation of every agency’s processes; increase citizens’ ability to help themselves with self-service applications; and of course redistribute taxpayer monies previously allocated to operational costs to citizen programs and services. It’s a win-win-win for citizens, employees, and state government. What else could you ask for?

[24] Interview with Mark Bengel, CIO, State of Tennessee, by telephone, June 13, 2017.



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