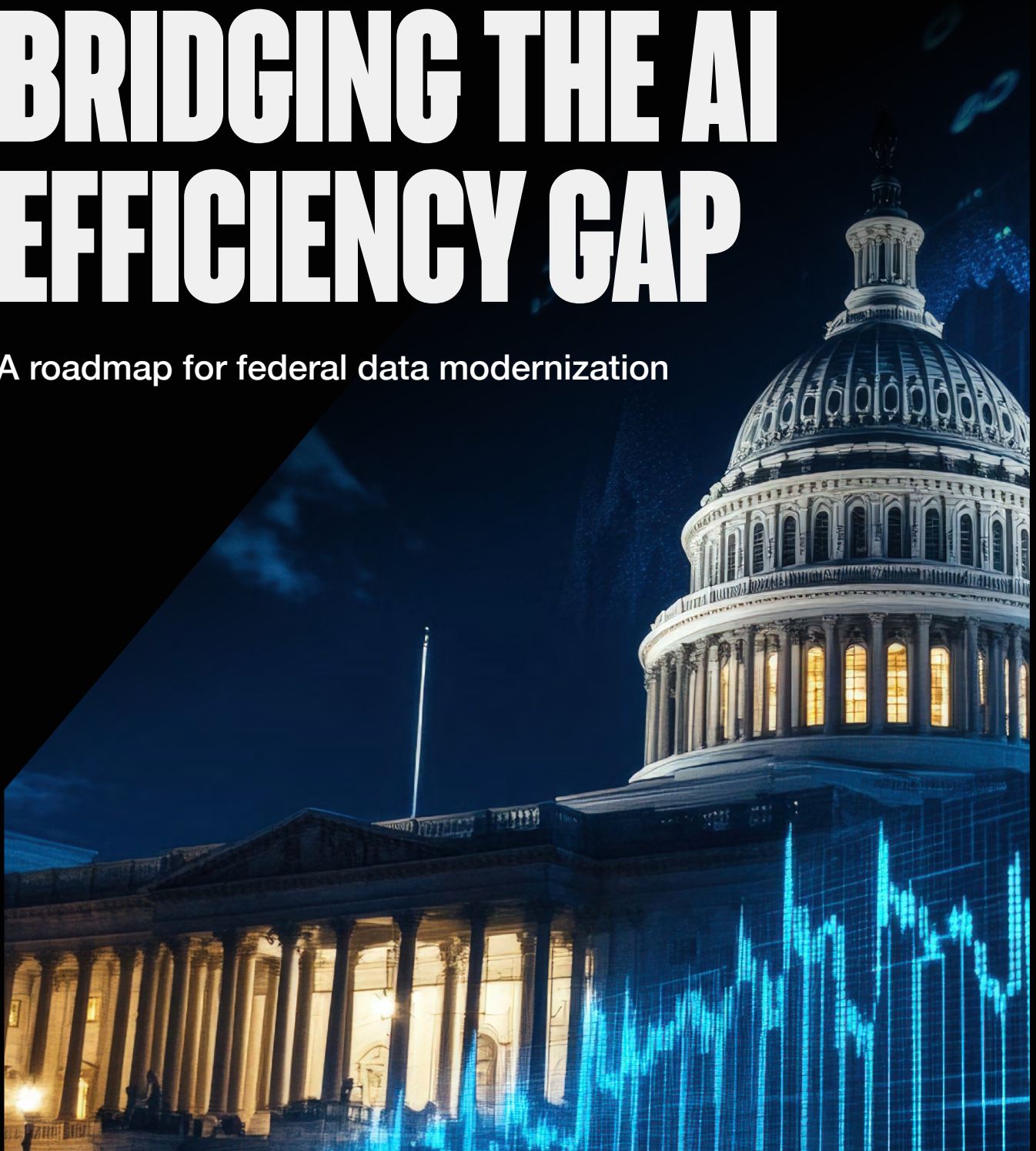# NetApp

BRIDGING THE AI EFFICIENCY GAP

A roadmap for federal data modernization

GOVERNMENT IT LEADERS KNOW the mandate well: Do more with less. But siloed systems, sprawling data environments and manual processes make efficiency elusive. For leaders tasked with balancing mission outcomes against shrinking budgets, the question is no longer whether to modernize, but how. Increasingly, that answer depends on harnessing artificial intelligence and streamlining data environments to support it.

"AI is a data problem," explained Matt Lawson, director of federal solutions engineering at NetApp. "It's about how organizations best prepare their data, locate their data and how they can best synthesize their data to prepare for AI capabilities."

In today's government IT landscape, where data spans across on-premises systems, multiple clouds and edge locations, agencies need consistent approaches that make data usable, secure and cost-effective.

Lawson knows this challenge firsthand, having previously served as an agency CTO. "With siloed infrastructure, you have different technologies, different access points, different vendors and different security threats," he recalled. "It becomes very difficult and complex to manage."

For AI to succeed, he said, agencies must eliminate that inefficiency by consolidating and centralizing their data. "It doesn't matter the workload, it doesn't matter the security requirement, it doesn't matter the performance profile. There's a single way to manage the data."

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AI IS A DATA PROBLEM."

Matt Lawson
Director of Federal Solutions Engineering, NetApp

AUTOMATING OPERATIONS FOR EFFICIENCY

Even in consolidated environments, agencies face constant pressures: respond quickly to citizen needs, keep critical systems running and secure sensitive information, often with limited staff.

This is where automation becomes essential.

With AI-enabled operations (AIOps), agencies can spot performance issues or security threats before they impact services. "We can proactively see how the infrastructure is operating and detect when it's starting to run into limits," Lawson said. Predictive analytics can flag a system nearing capacity, allowing action before disruptions occur.

Automation also eases the manual burden of monitoring and troubleshooting, enabling staff to focus on higher-value tasks. "It allows agencies to start figuring out how they can mitigate an issue before it actually becomes a citizen-facing challenge," Lawson explained.

In practice, this means fewer service delays, smoother digital interactions and a more resilient infrastructure where human and machine oversight work hand in hand.

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>
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CUTTING COSTS THROUGH SMARTER MODELS

Beyond performance, agencies are under pressure to be better stewards of taxpayer dollars. Modernization efforts can be expensive undertakings, but consolidation and smarter consumption models help agencies save money in the long run.

As Lawson explained, many of NetApp's management capabilities now exist in software, enabling users to apply the same capabilities and management instrumentation across both on-premises and cloud environments.

NetApp's integration with AWS, Azure and Google Cloud also boosts efficiency by letting agencies use existing contracts rather than creating new procurement channels. Modernization becomes less about new spending and more about maximizing what is already budgeted. On-premises options mirror this model, allowing agencies to pay only for what they use. By shifting from capital expenses to operational ones, agencies gain flexibility to scale up or down without waste.

SECURING DATA WITHOUT ADDED COMPLEXITY

Efficiency is impossible without strong, manageable security. Agencies hold highly sensitive data, and public trust depends on their ability to safeguard it.

Lawson highlighted how centralization contributes to stronger protections: "In a siloed environment, you have to get it right for every single silo. In a centralized environment, you only have to get it right one time." With fewer points of entry, attackers have fewer opportunities to exploit vulnerabilities.

Agencies also save effort with built-in classification tools that automatically identify sensitive data types such as PII or HIPAA-related records. By providing visibility, classification tools eliminate the guesswork of compliance and help agencies allocate security resources more efficiently.

And when attacks do occur, recovery is critical. Lawson described NetApp as "the last line of defense" in ransomware scenarios. Even when other security layers fail, agencies must be able to retrieve and restore their data quickly.

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A ROADMAP FOR THE FUTURE

For federal agencies, efficiency isn't just about saving money or simplifying IT. It's about ensuring they direct resources where they matter most: citizen services, national security and public trust.

Lawson stressed that efficiency is a means to an end. By consolidating systems, automating routine work, adopting smarter cost models and embedding security at the core, agencies can unlock AI's full potential and focus more directly on mission outcomes.

"We need to make sure we're helping our customers absolutely protect [their data]," he said, but the larger vision is about enabling agencies to respond faster, deliver services more effectively and keep pace with the expectations of a digital-first society.

LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW AGENCIES ARE LEVERAGING NETAPP'S AI CAPABILITIES TO MODERNIZE AND BOOST EFFICIENCY.