Public Sector Digital Trends

AI: From expert systems to agentic AI

4 decades of change in public sector work

1980s-1990s

AI as rules

- Expert systems codify rules from human experts
- Automate routine decisions in narrow domains
- Improve consistency and reduce errors

2000s

AI as learning

- Machine learning finds patterns in data
- Models improve with more data and feedback
- Better predictions support data-informed decisions

2010s

AI as perception

- AI perceives images, text, speech and signals
- Extracts meaning and understands context
- Enables real-time insights at scale

2020s

AI as generation and action

- AI generates content, recommendations and plans
- Agents take actions across systems and workflows
- Supports adaptive, outcome-driven public services

Then:
Rule-based action

Systems followed predefined rules to automate specific tasks and improve efficiency.

Now:
AI-powered insights

AI learns from data and perceives the world to inform better decisions and deliver value.

Next:
Agentic AI at work

AI acts on our behalf, adapts to change and orchestrates outcomes across the public sector.

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