DocuSign®

The paperless government mission

Today, there's a better way to serve the public. Replace paper documents with digital services.

Dear Agency Leader,

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, your agency's mission is more important to the American people than ever. And yet every year, government agencies spend a combined $38.7 billion[1] on paper- intensive, manual processes that have nothing to do with their missions. Time and money that could be spent creating value is wasted on paperwork that frustrates both citizens and government employees and creates unnecessary risk.

COVID-19 taught us that the old way of doing business in person (or by phone, fax or mail) is over. Almost overnight, hundreds of thousands of government employees found themselves working remotely like everyone else, with their agencies scrambling to adjust.

It's an always-on, digital world now. People want — and increasingly expect to have — the ability to conduct business securely through self-serve, mobile-friendly, digital tools that are available 24/7. (Think: Amazon, Google, Netflix.) Doing business with the federal government should be no exception.

Government employees aren't too happy about processing mountains of paperwork either. Now, you have both a need and an opportunity to innovate in the way you do business with the public.

Start by accelerating the adoption of electronic signatures to achieve quick wins for efficiency and compliance. Then, move to modernize your most burdensome business processes — those involving written agreements and forms that must be prepared, signed, acted on, and managed by both citizens and employees. You'll deliver better experiences faster, with less risk and lower costs for everyone (including the planet) in the long run. That's what we call agreeable government: easy to do business with, easy to do business for, and easy on the environment.

At DocuSign, we have helped more than 500,000 organizations — including thousands of government agencies at the federal, state, and local level — work better remotely by modernizing their forms, signatures, and agreement processes. We are FedRAMP authorized and ready to help.

We invite you to read further and contact us with questions or requests for follow-up.

Sincerely,
Team DocuSign

We've entered the paperless era.

1940s–1970s
Invention of photocopiers and fax machines.

1970s–1990s
Birth of personal computers, the Internet, and the World Wide Web.

1990s–2000s
Rise of e-business, CRM, and the PDF.

2000s–2010s
Broad adoption of mobile technology and cloud computing.

Today
Focus on process automation and digital experiences.

Paperwork is not a mission.

As a public servant, you have dedicated your life to public service that no private entity could undertake: responding to global pandemics, providing affordable healthcare to millions, protecting national security, and everything in between. Whatever call beckoned you and your peers to service, one thing is certain: filling out mountains of paperwork was not part of it. And yet, paperwork has become a major part of doing business with the public. According to data published by the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, paperwork costs the government $38.7 billion and the public $117 billion each year.[2]

At this scale, it is clear that you need to eliminate more than paper to drive real, lasting change. Modernizing your agency's system of agreement— the people, processes, and technologies your agency uses to prepare, sign, act on, and manage forms and agreements— is key to delivering the efficiencies and experiences people expect in a digital world. This guide quantifies the opportunities for investing in digital citizen experiences, and helps you prioritize your transformation efforts for both quick wins and continuous improvement.

Government paperwork by the numbers

$38.7 billion
Annual cost of paperwork to the government

$117 billion
Annual cost of government paperwork to the public

11 billion
Hours spent by the public on government paperwork

23,000
Number of unique federal government forms

No one needs a Federal Department of Paperwork.

Paperwork costs the government $38.7 billion a year.

According to the White House Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs (OIRA), the federal government spends $38.7 billion a year just managing paperwork, such as forms, surveys, and other types of written documents and agreements.[3] There are a whopping 23,000 unique forms currently in use across 66 government agencies that deal with the public, around half of which are paper-only or printable-only forms that require manual processing.[4] To put this in perspective, if there were a Federal Department of Paperwork, it would have the 7th largest budget of any government agency – bigger than that of the Treasury, EPA, NASA, and many other agencies.[5]

Government paperwork costs the public $117 billion a year.

This Federal Department of Paperwork – and, let's face it, there might as well be one – imposes an even greater burden on the American public. Each year, individuals and businesses spend 11 billion hours on government forms: reading instructions, printing them out, filling them out, sending them in (often by mail), and correcting errors. The cost to the public, even with some digital options, is estimated to be $117 billion annually.[6] This is the equivalent of a 7 percent income tax increase for every taxpayer.[7]

"Federal Department of Paperwork" compared to other agencies' budgets

Rank	Agency	Budget ($)
1	Defense	574.5B
2	HHS	86.3B
3	Veterans	77.3B
4	Education	67.8B
5	HUD	47.7B
6	DHS	44.1B
7	**Paperwork**	**38.7B**
8	State and other Int'l	38.1B
9	Energy	30.0B
10	Justice	28.1B
11	Agriculture	22.5B
12	Transportation	19.2B
13	Interior	13.4B
14	Treasury	12.6B
15	Labor	12.0B
16	Commerce	9.3B

Everyone wants more agreeable government.

What is agreeable government?

Business runs on agreements. Government business is no exception. In fact, the federal government uses 23,000 different "agreements" to do business with the public every year. Forms, a staple of government business, are simply templates for agreements that must be prepared, signed, acted on, and managed. Agreements are also used for internal activities — from facilities and IT to human resources, procurement, and inter-agency business. When agreements can be done faster with less risk, lower cost, and better experiences for everyone involved — especially citizens — that's agreeable government.

Agreeable government makes citizens happier.

Agreeable government meets and exceeds citizens' digital expectations. Citizens are able to fill out forms, sign agreements, and submit them all electronically, at any time, from any place, on nearly any device. No printing, scanning, or faxing. No waiting in line or on hold to talk with a live person. No 9-to-5 time constraints.

Agreeable government makes employees happier.

Government employees expect digital experiences too. Agreeable government empowers them with digital tools that make their jobs easier. No more hours wasted on manually processing paperwork. That time is invested in higher-value work that directly supports their mission. For example, the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service implemented a secure self-help portal powered by DocuSign and Salesforce that eliminated administrative burdens on USDA staff responding to FOIA, OIG, and OSEC requests. Now they can focus on high-impact tasks like supporting investigations, making decisions, evaluating policy, and analyzing operations. This is directly in line with the President's Management Agenda goal of shifting from low-value to high-value work.[8]

Agreeable government makes administrators happier.

In addition to the above benefits, government administrators can especially appreciate that agreeable government saves money by using fewer materials and labor, enables compliance with new laws and regulations, and requires less oversight from Congress and regulators. And it's good for the environment.

Agreeable government is

Easy to do business with
Easy to do business for
Easy on the environment

Eliminating from the agreement process

Hassles
Errors
Delays
Risk
Paper

And building into the agreement process

Time savings
Cost savings
Security
Trust

For better employee and citizen experiences.

How do we get there?

Step 1:
Start working with an e-signature provider now.

The right e-signature provider can set you up for greater success at every milestone down the road — and for greater efficiencies across your entire agreement process, not just at the moment of signing (see steps 2 and 3).

Look for an e-signature solution that citizens and employees already know and trust to lower your agency's cost of supporting adoption. Along those same lines, think about the business applications your agency uses today, and go with a solution that is already integrated with them or does so easily. Better yet, partner with a provider that offers a comprehensive solution for streamlining the entire agreement process, and you will have a solid foundation for future innovation. Finally, make sure your e-signature solution has been FedRAMP authorized to meet rigorous federal standards for security.

Step 2:
Digitally upgrade all of your forms.

Your e-signature provider should help you prioritize your modernization efforts for optimal efficiency and customer experiences. At a minimum, digitize your paper-only forms. But don't stop there. Your goal should be to make every form digitally fillable, signable, and searchable — from nearly any mobile device.

Even PDF forms could benefit from an upgrade, especially those we call "DINOs" (digital-in-name-only forms). DINOs are publicly available PDFs that need to be downloaded and printed, filled in and signed, and then scanned and uploaded or emailed. While better than an all-paper process, the DINO process is still needlessly slow, error-prone, and manual for everyone involved.

OIRA's excellent database can help you identify which specific forms are most challenging, whether physical or digital. Start with the most expensive forms in terms of cost to your agency, and then tackle those most costly to the public. Next, move on to the most time-intensive forms (forms with the highest burden hours to the public). Finally, upgrade the most used forms (forms with the highest volumes). There will be overlap in those categories, so you'll see the paper piles dwindling, figuratively and literally, at an exponential rate.

Step 3:
Modernize your entire system of agreement.

Signing is not the only step in your agreement process. Think about all the manual steps before and after the signature (or form submission) that waste too much time, money, and goodwill. How do you prepare forms and other agreements? How many people need to review and approve them? Can digital forms be pre-filled with the right personal information? Does data need to go into other systems after forms are signed and submitted? How do citizens make payments or fulfill other obligations? Are signed documents securely stored and easily retrieved when needed?

Your system of agreement is at the heart of these questions. It includes all the people, processes, and technologies involved in your entire agreement process – from preparing and signing documents to acting on terms and managing completed agreements. The more digital, automated, and connected you make it, the faster and easier it will be to get agreements done, and the better the experience for both citizens and employees.

Also, don't forget that the OIRA database only tracks the paperwork burden of public-facing processes. There are thousands of intergovernmental agreement processes – used in interagency business, task forces, working groups, and the like – that can be modernized for even greater efficiency and productivity. Again, if you select the right e-signature provider from the start, you'll later be able to modernize your entire system of agreement to accelerate any process.

Seize your $16.7 billion opportunity.

We estimate that there is $16.7 billion in potential value to the federal government by digitally transforming every federal agency's forms and agreement processes.

Here's a breakdown:

Save $6.5 billion by eliminating paper
Estimated potential value to be realized immediately by replacing all paper forms with digital self-service solutions

Save $6.5 billion by streamlining digital-in-name-only forms
Estimated potential value to be realized by streamlining "DINOs" (e.g. static PDF-based forms and processes).

Save $3.7 billion by modernizing systems of agreement
Estimated potential value to be realized longer-term by automating the entire agreement process and connecting siloed systems.

Estimated value to the federal government

$38.7B	-$6.5B
	-$6.5B
	-$3.7B
	$22.0B
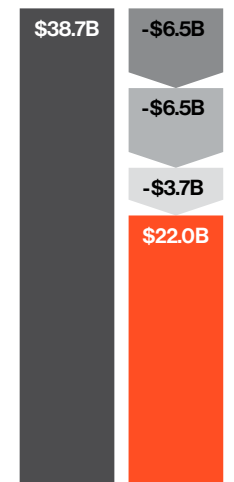
■ **Current State**
■ **Eliminating Paper**
■ **Eliminating DINOs**
□ **Modern System of Agreements**
■ **End state**

Ready to get started?

At DocuSign, we have helped more than 500,000 organizations — including thousands of government agencies at the federal, state, and local level — work better remotely by modernizing their forms, signatures, and agreement processes. We are FedRAMP authorized and ready to help.

We have included our high-level analysis of the federal government's biggest sources of paperwork. But the OIRA data covers all 66 federal agencies, and we've done the analysis on all of them. We can help you identify your most burdensome forms and agreement processes and put you on a faster path to agreeable government. Contact us today to get started.

How DocuSign is helping government agencies respond to COVID-19

Emergency government services

Helped one of the world's largest cities establish process to redirect PPE supplies to hospitals and health centers

Emergency lending

Enabled regional banks to process thousands of Small Business Administration (SBA) loans under the Paycheck Protection Program

Hiring and onboarding

Helped one of the world's largest retailers hire and onboard more than 100,000 store and online-fulfillment workers

Work from home

Helped hundreds of government agencies adjust to the new reality by quickly implementing timesheets, telework agreements, and other critical paperwork

Which federal agencies generate the most paperwork?*

Top 20 by cost of paperwork to the government

Agency	Cost to government ($)
Department of Health and Human Services	10.6B
Department of Homeland Security	8.4B
Department of State	3.4B
Department of Commerce	2.2B
Social Security Administration	1.5B
Department of Agriculture	1.4B
Department of Labor	905.7M
General Services Administration	828.1M
Department of Transportation	568.9M
Department of Veterans Affairs	498.2M
Environmental Protection Agency	491.3M
Department of Defense	463.0M
Department of Education	404.4M
Department of the Interior	345.3M
Department of Housing and Urban Development	253.8M
Department of the Treasury	230.3M
Department of Justice	194.1M
Securities and Exchange Commission	191.7M
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	187.5M
Federal Communications Commission	93.2M

Top 20 by cost of paperwork to the public

Agency	Cost to public ($)
Department of Health and Human Services	46.0B
Department of the Treasury	31.9B
Securities and Exchange Commission	15.9B
Department of Labor	5.3B
Department of Commerce	3.8B
Department of Homeland Security	3.3B
Environmental Protection Agency	2.5B
Department of Defense	1.5B
General Services Administration	1.5B
Department of Transportation	1.4B
Department of State	1.1B
Federal Communications Commission	954.1M
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	611.0M
Department of Agriculture	391.8M
Department of Justice	184.0M
Department of the Interior	170.7M
Department of Energy	120.0M
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	110.3M
Federal Energy Reliability Commission	86.3M
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	78.3M

Which agencies are most reliant on paper?

Homeland Security

$3.1B per year

Most money spent on paper-only forms

* The "cost" of paperwork encompasses the time and money required to manage government forms (digital and physical).

Which federal agencies generate the most paperwork?*

Top 20 by paperwork burden hours to the public

Agency	Hours Spent
Department of the Treasury	8.1B
Department of Health and Human Services	1.3B
Securities and Exchange Commission	248.7M
Department of Transportation	191.3M
Department of Homeland Security	190.2M
Department of Agriculture	179.0M
Environmental Protection Agency	171.0M
Department of Labor	165.6M
Federal Trade Commission	124.6M
Department of Education	95.5M
Federal Communications Commission	70.0M
Department of State	50.0M
Social Security Administration	47.8M
Office of Personnel Management	44.6M
Department of Commerce	42.4M
Department of Defense	40.8M
General Services Administration	33.9M
Department of Justice	33.6M
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	31.8M
Department of Housing and Urban Development	25.8M

Top 20 by number of unique forms

Agency	Number of Forms
Department of Health and Human Services	5,349
Department of Agriculture	4,360
Department of Commerce	2,065
Department of the Treasury	1,717
Department of the Interior	1,194
Department of Housing and Urban Development	951
Department of Labor	889
Department of Homeland Security	665
Environmental Protection Agency	630
Department of Transportation	501
Department of Justice	475
Department of Education	438
Department of Veterans Affairs	427
Social Security Administration	315
International Trade Commission	299
Department of Energy	229
Federal Communications Commission	223
Federal Reserve System	204
Railroad Retirement Board	199
Department of Defense	194

Which agencies are most reliant on paper?

Veterans Affairs

46%

Highest proportion of paper-only forms

* The "cost" of paperwork encompasses the time and money required to manage government forms (digital and physical).

Which federal agencies generate the most paperwork?*

Top 20 by total forms processed

Agency	Volume
Securities and Exchange Commission	41.9B
Federal Trade Commission	31.8B
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	14.4B
Department of Health and Human Services	7.4B
Department of the Treasury	4.0B
Department of Transportation	3.0B
Department of Labor	2.6B
Department of Homeland Security	2.3B
Consumer Financial Protection Bureau	1.6B
Department of Agriculture	1.1B
Department of Housing and Urban Development	485.6M
Department of Education	383.6M
Environmental Protection Agency	366.3M
Federal Communications Commission	320.2M
Social Security Administration	303.1M
Department of Justice	188.3M
National Credit Union Administration	113.9M
FDIC	76.9M
Department of Defense	66.1M
Department of Commerce	59.2M

Which agencies are most reliant on paper?

Health & Human Services

930M per year

Most paper-only forms processed

* The "cost" of paperwork encompasses the time and money required to manage government forms (digital and physical).

Notes

1   OIRA. (2018). Current Inventory Report. XML Database of paperwork burden under the Paperwork Reduction Act.
    Retrieved from https://www.reginfo.gov/public/do/PRAXML in October 2018
2   Ibid.
3   OIRA
4   Ibid.
5   Budget of the United States, 2019. Summary Tables (p. 144)
    https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/budget-fy2019.pdf (Accessed on Jan 24, 2019)
6   OIRA
7   Budget of the United States, 2019. Summary Tables (p. 119)
    https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/budget-fy2019.pdf (Accessed on Jan 24, 2019)
8   OMB Memorandum M-18-23: Shifting from Low-Value to High-Value Work.
    https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/M-18-23.pdf (Accessed on February 28, 2019)