

Have you spotted these trends?

CSG has identified these trends that may be significant to state government. Are we on track? Let us know whether these trends are affecting your state. Send your comments to trends@csg.org.

CSG is on a mission

Most state agencies, legislatures and state government associations devote their resources to dealing with the pressing policy issues of the day. They have less time to spend looking ahead to foresee policy priorities of tomorrow or looking around to find innovative solutions that are working in other states.

State officials need an alert system, so they can put emerging issues on their radar screens quickly. They also need a network to share successful policies and programs, keeping each state from “reinventing the wheel.”

The Council of State Governments is implementing a national trends mission to meet these needs. CSG will focus the organization’s resources on identifying emerging trends and proven innovations in state government. CSG will provide the critical foresight capability that state officials need to make proactive policy and program decisions.

“Moving towards a trends mission focus will be a long-term transition for CSG,” said Dan Sprague, CSG executive director. By December 2002, CSG’s national trends mission will provide the overarching context and framework for all CSG products and services.

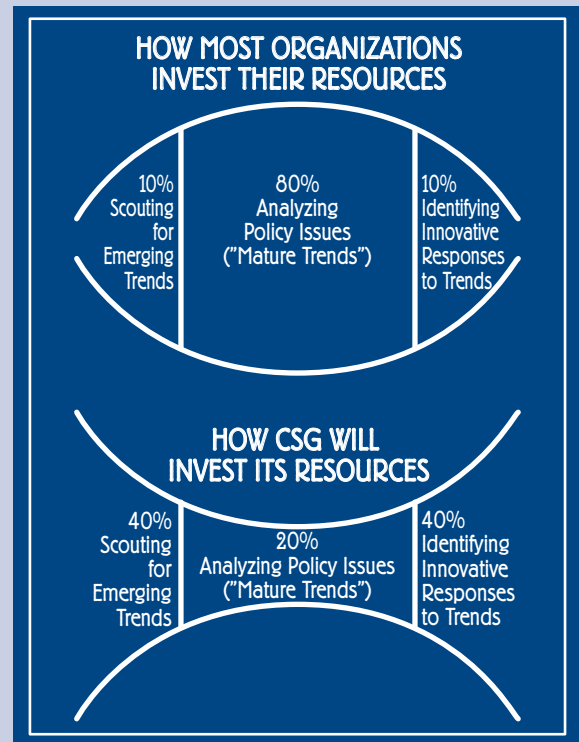
Scout teams

During the transition period, CSG will use “scout” teams to identify emerging trends in state government. These teams bring together the vast talent pool at CSG’s disposal, including state legislative, executive and judicial leaders; CSG associates; CSG headquarters and regional staff; CSG affiliate organizations; and CSG’s international partners. CSG also is tapping recognized experts to serve on scout teams.

The scout teams track “megatrends,” or the forces that have the potential to change the priorities or operations of state governments. Megatrends include shifting demographics, evolving political conditions and economic changes. The scout teams also track trends within policy areas such as health, telecommunications and the environment.

CSG committees and task forces review trends identified by the scout teams to gauge the trends’ potential impact on state policies and resources.

“We are excited to take the organization in this direction,” Sprague said. “CSG’s national trends mission provides an



urgently needed service and keeps CSG, its members and staff, in the forefront — on the cutting edge of state government.”

“State Trends”

The new “State Trends” section of *State Government News* will allow CSG to engage state officials, including our readers, in the national trends mission. The four-page “State Trends” section will appear at the center of *State Government News* in eight issues annually.

Within the “State Trends” section, there is a feature article, which provides in-depth analysis of one trend in state government. The section also highlights several potential trends and innovative responses identified by CSG scout teams and asks readers, “Have you spotted these trends?”

— Rachel E. Zietlow is staff coordinator for CSG’s national trends mission.

‘I don’t feel safe’

The violent crime rate in the United States plunged 15 percent last year, according to the Bureau of Justice Statistics. There were an estimated 25.9 million violent and property crimes in 2000, nearly 3 million fewer than the year before. This is the lowest figure since 1973, when the bureau began surveying for this data.

Despite this decline in crime, many Americans — especially women and minorities — still feel threatened by violence, according to a June 2001 survey *The Christian Science Monitor*. Of those polled, 56 percent thought violence was on the rise and only 32 percent agreed with the government’s crime statistics. The survey also showed that many people believe that “get tough on crime” efforts are ineffective and that better parenting and education are the only ways to reduce incidents of violence.

Lawmakers urge fuel efficiency

As gas prices rise and the threat of global warming looms, state lawmakers are paying more attention to vehicle-fuel efficiency. By increasing the number of fuel-efficient vehicles on the road, states intend to decrease fuel consumption and lower hazardous air emissions.

States are turning to consumer incentives, such as sales-tax exemptions or tax rebates for purchases of electric or hybrid-fueled vehicles, to stimulate the market for fuel-efficient vehicles. Arizona’s tax-rebate program — which resulted in a loss of sales-tax revenue 20 times greater than predicted — highlighted the need to maintain tax neutrality. A proposed Massachusetts program would offset lost sales-tax revenue by doubling the sales tax paid by buyers of fuel-inefficient sport-utility vehicles.

States debate ag biotech

Statehouses across the country are at the center of a debate over agriculture biotechnology, which derives new products from plants and animals. With little action at the federal level, supporters and opponents of increased regulation of agriculture biotechnology are turning to state lawmakers.

State legislatures considered more than 70 bills related to agriculture biotechnology in 2001. Legislation ranged from authorizing studies of the technology to requiring new regulations such as labeling requirements for genetically modified seeds or foods. The hottest legislation condemned acts of terrorism against agriculture research. Nineteen states passed versions of the anti-terrorism bill by mid-July.

Economy of aging boomers

The demands of an aging population could significantly affect America’s economy in the near future. The fastest-growing age group in America is people 35 to 54 years old. The U.S. Census Bureau projects that the over-65 population will more than double between 2000 and 2050.

Despite the convenient “baby boomer” label, anticipating the various influences of 76 million people is no simple task. Some obvious policy areas for state officials to watch are health care, workforce planning and retirement and pension laws. But the aging boomers’ influence will be felt in less obvious areas, too, such as tax law, immigration policy and education.

Technology in your car

New York recently became the first state to ban drivers from using hand-held cell phones. Other states have introduced similar restrictions, but state officials have been reluctant to act given the conflicting data on whether cell-phone use causes more accidents than other driver distractions.

The emerging field of telematics — the convergence of the automobile, computing, wireless communications and Global Positioning Systems technology — is likely to heighten the debate between convenience and public safety. The growing number of professionals who routinely use their cars as offices will fuel the demand for such high-tech mobile capabilities.

Health care’s pulse

The future of health care does not appear bright. Just as the ’90s dot-com economic dynamo is slowing, health-care costs are soaring. Employers and state governments are facing double-digit increases in health-care costs at a time when managed care — seen as the magic bullet of cost control — is unpopular with consumers and doctors.

Under threat of rising costs, some evidence shows that employers and governments already are scaling back health insurance benefits or coverage, which may increase the number of uninsured in the United States. Another challenge for the nation’s health-care system will be caring for a growing elderly population, who tend to require more, higher-cost treatments.

Federalism in flux

The political agenda of the Bush administration and the evolving role of the U.S. Senate are two factors changing the face of federalism. States tied to federal income and estate-tax formulas stand to lose billions as a result of the recent changes in these taxes. Federal budget cuts, mandates, pre-emptions and grant conditions also will affect states’ bottom lines.

The business community is affecting federalism by seeking federal regulatory oversight to avoid having to comply with 50 sets of state controls. To maintain their constitutional authority, states can respond with practical solutions such as interstate compacts. State officials, attorneys general in particular, also see merit in forming multistate coalitions to protect the rights of their constituents.

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levels of criminal justice professionals — from the governor through all the committee levels represented in the JNET governance structure,” Rosenberg said. “Everyone involved has a sense of ownership ... and we’ve needed that to make the project successful.”

Necessary architecture

The Department of Justice’s Office of Justice Programs is coordinating the national justice information network effort at the state level.

The office assists states in integrating their justice information networks into the nationwide network by providing consultation and targeted grant funds, said Patrick McCreary, program manager for the office’s Information Technology Initiative. The office is “not seeking to mandate technology solutions, but rather to offer strategic assistance and coordination within a national justice enterprise framework,” according to its Web site.

The Department of Justice awarded a grant to the National Association of State Chief Information Officers to assist states in establishing a common information architecture. Ultimately, the architecture that NASCIO is establishing will allow the states to integrate not only justice information systems, but all government systems.

“It is essential that agencies come together to agree on an appropriate architecture,” said Gerry Wethington, Missouri’s chief information officer and leader of NASCIO’s Justice/National Information Architecture Committee. Otherwise they “build their own infrastructure, they incur expense, select varying technology and establish different standards, and in the end they don’t communicate and they can’t exchange information.”

Road blocks

Integration is not cheap. Pennsylvania’s JNET system has annual operating costs of \$11 million. North Carolina is spending as much as \$91 million to integrate its justice information system, and Alaska expects to spend as much as \$84 million.

Federal agencies, such as the Office of Justice Programs, provide financial and other assistance, but the states bear the brunt of the cost for justice information integration.

“Turf wars” also inhibit the sharing of justice information, since agencies often jealously guard data. This means interagency collaboration is imperative when building an integrated system.

“You can’t just use law enforcement to drive integration, or the courts, or state government. You’ve got to have an inclusive process within a governance body where everyone can clearly articulate their issues and concerns,” Wethington said.

Confidentiality of justice system data always has been important, but sharing information through Web-based technology heightens privacy concerns. Not only must agencies guard sensitive data from the public, but also they must ensure they release only appropriate information to other agencies.

Typically, the justice community is conscientious of these risks and relies on the latest advances in Web security, including highly sophisticated encryption techniques and digital-signature technology. However, state agencies must remain vigilant in securing data, and the debate on privacy must be ongoing and more widespread.

Bottom line

Despite these obstacles, the benefits are clear and many. In a Web-based nationwide justice information network, there is a single point of data collection. Because multiple agencies do not have to enter the same data into different systems, there is less chance for data-entry error.


High-speed networks and servers allow the near-instant exchange of information. Data in an integrated network is “real time” and up to date.

In the long run, an integrated justice information system will save money. Eliminating paperwork and redundant data entry will reduce labor costs, and electronic data retrieval is cheaper.

More importantly, with an integrated justice network in place, better-informed justice officials can avoid tragedies such

as occurred in Minneapolis.

Pennsylvania’s JNET already has proven the value of integrated justice information systems. The murder of an elderly woman in Philadelphia was unsolved for 21 years. “Fingerprints at the scene had identified our prime suspect, but in 21 years we’d never been able to link the prints to an individual. Thanks to JNET, we matched those fingerprints with a man who’s currently in prison in Pennsylvania for another crime,” said Lt. Harry Giordano of the Philadelphia Police Department.

The realization of a fully integrated, nationwide justice information network is still several years away. But the goal is in sight and the path is clear. As a recent NASCIO report indicates, “The achievement of nationwide governmental information sharing does not depend on any future technological breakthroughs; present technology is sufficient. ... It depends on leadership, on funding, on participation and on patience.” 

Ed Janairo is a technology analyst for The Council of State Governments.

Internet Resources

National Association of State Chief Information Officers
www.nascio.org

This site provides information on “hot issues” in information technology, including NASCIO’s Justice/National Information Architecture project.

SEARCH, the National Consortium for Justice Information and Statistics
www.search.org

This site provides information technology headlines, resources for justice agencies and information on SEARCH’s upcoming Symposium on Integrated Justice Information Systems.

Global Justice Information Network
www.ojp.usdoj.gov/global/index.htm

This site explains the network and links to the Office of Justice Programs site for technical assistance and grants available to assist states to integrate their justice information systems.