

# A Strong Foundation For Growth

The Department of Labor's (DOL) foundation not only matches up with the culture changing possibilities, but also DOL's technical capabilities to make it happen.

**A**t the Department of Labor (DOL), the focus is on: How do we provide new opportunities to advance the mission? That translates into not just doing “cool” things for cool sake, but focusing on how you enable the mission and how we are improving the work that we're doing now in a fully shared services environment for IT.

We are at more of a foundational level; and while DOL values emerging technologies and we are starting to make some really good headway there, at the same time we are thinking about



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how cost factors into that. So to make it a reality there are three foundational areas that we've focused on.

One is we've created a new CTO branch on technologies. Its focus is on how do we identify pilot programs and advanced emerging technologies within a cabinet level agency. And this includes hiring staff that can really support, talk about and champion the work. That is really key.

We are also building an enterprise architecture and IT governance process to support the use of emerging technologies. This includes as part of that, not just the infrastructure but also what's the model we're using to incubate and test these new technologies that are coming in. That includes discovery, prioritization, doing proof of concepts and piloting. Finally what is the funding model for that as we think about how we scale emerging technologies within the department.

## Enterprise-wide RPA

And then most recently we have established an enterprise-wide RPA capability for automation. We want to be a leader in this area and so today we have four RPA bots that deployed around purchasing, acquisitions, market research and other early tasks.

We have one on data cleansing for an HR performance review that's going on and we have several more of the pipeline. These are all very foundational starts to really get the agency to buy into the concept, see the value and for us to make sure that the cost and benefits are mapping out in other cases. And if it's not a good approach, we'll chalk that up to testing and

evaluation. But all this has given people the ability to experiment in a safe environment. That's been really good.

As this is unfolding, we see the real need for education. The technology part is a lot easier that getting people to understand the value and the impact. We need to have the discussions around costs and the responsible use of things like AI. That active education component — and the culture change it fosters — has been really crucial to get people to want to adopt, buy in and actually make things happen.

The other is just the emphasis on the need for strong data. On that front we have two parallel efforts. One is not just how are we doing emerging technologies, but how do we make sure that we have the data infrastructure in place so we can fully leverage the value of AI and ML. Without those two things happening in combination you really can't leverage the value in



Sanjay Koyani spoke at the Federal Executive Forum on Federal News Radio

that area quickly. The bottom line is at DOL a lot of foundational things are happening here, while at the same time creating a strong infrastructure so that DOL can really take a lead role in this area.

### **Profile of Success**

From a foundational aspect DOL is doing a number of things.

Recently we have been piloting form organizer using AI to help DOL process worker eligibility forms faster and automate the manual processes

for a faster, quicker approach to customer service that usually took a lot of human hours. We're looking at that as a service that we offer.

At a more of a complex level, our office has been partnering with DOL's veterans and employment training services to pilot AI tools that can be used to more successfully transition veterans, service members, military spouses and other active duty members to civilian employment by trying to match their skills with employers and their education.

Currently transitioning service members have to navigate a sea of support and information systems that can lead to a number of challenges and finding the right opportunities.

In the pilot we are leveraging AI to pull information from a number of sources and then adding intelligence on top of it. In that way vets and their spouses can recommendations with options for what might be better ways to re-enter the workforce.

As we are starting to look at these more complex cases and piloting it out, we are eager to see what the possibilities are not only with helping to drive that mission support but also how do we look at responsible AI and ensuring that it's helping to make the right decisions.

## Future Vision

We are going to be more AI and data ready and I think that whole culture change piece is super critical and so how do we make sure that the agency is much more attuned to how we leverage these AI capabilities.

Our mission is ensuring the welfare of our job seekers, enabling workers, protecting benefits and rights of workers so they can retire with dignity. There are an incredible number of areas that we could speed the eligibility determinations, free up backlogs, and really drive value in what the agency is doing. And as everybody experiences this future where we are asked to do more with less and it seems that there are more requirements coming from Congress, we need to speed things up with less funding and staffing to make that happen. That's why we are really focused on that data infrastructure and that starts not only with our AI/ML capabilities, but also with our data foundation.

So if you have faulty data, you have faulty decisions; you've got lack of quality data; you have lack of quality decisions. Again we have a parallel process and in the next couple of years we hope will catch up to one another.

One is stronger better quality data and structured data and then how it's going to be leveraged around our AI/ML capabilities. That foundation not only matches up with the culture changing possibilities, but then also our technical capabilities to make it happen.

So we'll be looking at our foundational work, we'll be looking at how data, AI and ML are going to be jointly synced and how we build up that infrastructure. ■

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