

SLG CIO Advisory Board

Strategic Blueprint

Executive Summary

This report provides a strategic blueprint for a full-day State and Local Government (SLG) CIO Advisory Board. The objective is to create a high-impact, peer-driven forum that allows Dell Technologies to engage with senior government IT leaders on their most critical challenges. The methodology synthesizes the top priorities identified by leading research organizations—including the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO), Gartner, and Forrester—with proven executive engagement formats. This approach is designed to foster candid discussion, gather invaluable feedback, and build strategic partnerships. The agenda is structured around the core themes dominating the SLG landscape in 2025: the unceasing demands of cybersecurity, the transformative imperative of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the persistent workforce crisis, and the foundational challenges of legacy modernization and budget constraints. The intended outcome of this Advisory Board is to position Dell Technologies not merely as a technology vendor, but as an indispensable strategic ally that deeply understands and can help solve the complex, interconnected problems facing SLG CIOs today and tomorrow.

The Strategic Landscape for the 2025 SLG CIO: Navigating the Nexus of Pressure and Opportunity

To facilitate a meaningful dialogue, it is imperative to first establish a nuanced understanding of the environment in which SLG CIOs operate. Their world is defined by a series of interconnected pressures and opportunities, where progress on one front is often dependent on—or constrained by—another. The following analysis explores the dominant strategic themes that will shape the conversations and decisions of the attending leaders.

The Unwavering Primacy of Cybersecurity

For the twelfth consecutive year, Cybersecurity and Risk Management has been identified as the number one priority for state CIOs.¹ This consistent ranking underscores that cybersecurity is no longer just a technical function but a core component of government's ability to maintain operational stability and public trust. The strategic focus has matured beyond traditional perimeter defense to embrace more sophisticated, holistic models. Key among these is the operationalization of Zero Trust frameworks, which Forrester advocates as a foundational anchor for security

funding and initiatives.³ Concurrently, CIOs are grappling with the expanding attack surface created by complex digital ecosystems, placing a greater emphasis on managing third-party and supply chain risk, and combating the rise of identity-based attacks.⁴ Federal initiatives like the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program introduce both opportunities for investment and complexities in compliance and implementation.⁶

A critical development in this landscape is the dual nature of artificial intelligence in the cybersecurity domain. CIOs face a burgeoning challenge from cybercriminals who are weaponizing AI to create sophisticated, evasive malware and disinformation campaigns. This necessitates a parallel investment in defensive AI. The use of AI-driven analytics for real-time threat detection and anomaly identification is becoming a mandatory capability, not a luxury. This dynamic creates a new battleground where a mature cybersecurity strategy is inextricably linked to a coherent AI strategy. Government IT leaders must now plan to defend

with AI against attacks launched from AI, making the convergence of these two top priorities a central theme for any strategic discussion.

The Al Imperative: From Experimentation to Enterprise Integration

Directly following cybersecurity, Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, and Robotic Process Automation rank as the second-highest priority for state CIOs.¹ The conversation has rapidly evolved from theoretical exploration to the practicalities of enterprise-wide implementation.² The most significant hurdles are not purely technological but are rooted in governance, data, and finance. CIOs are focused on establishing robust governance and regulatory frameworks to ensure responsible, ethical, and secure use of AI.⁶ This includes building guardrails to protect citizen privacy and developing risk-based maturity scales for deployment.⁶

The success of any AI initiative is fundamentally dependent on the quality and accessibility of underlying data, making data governance a critical prerequisite. However, a significant tension exists between the executive and legislative push for AI-driven innovation and the stark reality of aging legacy systems. CIOs from states like Tennessee and Hawaii have explicitly stated that modernizing core legacy platforms is a necessary precursor to any large-scale AI adoption. This creates an infrastructure paradox. To innovate with AI, agencies require massive investment in new, scalable infrastructure, including AI-ready servers, high-performance storage, and edge computing capabilities. Yet, this demand for new spending runs directly

counter to the fifth-ranked CIO priority: budget and cost control.¹ This forces CIOs into a difficult position where they must fund the modernization of old systems and the acquisition of new ones, all under severe fiscal constraints. A successful strategy, therefore, cannot focus on AI in isolation; it must address the full lifecycle of modernizing foundational systems to generate efficiencies that can be reinvested into a scalable AI platform.

The Evolving Workforce Challenge: From Recruitment to Augmentation

While "Workforce" as a priority dropped from fifth to ninth place in NASCIO's 2025 survey, this shift in ranking belies the persistent severity of the government IT skills shortage.² The change does not signal a resolution to the problem but rather a strategic evolution in how CIOs are addressing it. As noted by NASCIO leadership, agencies are moving beyond a singular focus on hiring and are now concentrating on reskilling and upskilling their existing teams, expanding skills-based hiring practices, and, most critically, leveraging technology to augment the capabilities of their current staff.²

This strategic pivot directly connects the workforce challenge to the AI imperative. The emergence of technologies like "Agentic AI"—which can autonomously execute tasks—and AI "copilots" for employees is viewed as a direct response to the inability to fill critical vacancies. To For SLG leaders, the most compelling business case for AI is increasingly centered on workforce augmentation to ensure mission continuity. By automating repetitive back-office tasks, handling initial citizen inquiries through chatbots, and providing data-driven insights to human decision-makers, AI can amplify the impact of a limited workforce. This reframes AI not as a tool for innovation for its own sake, but as a strategic solution to one of the government's most enduring operational challenges.

The Foundational Pillars: Modernization, Budget, and Data

The success of the top-tier priorities is entirely dependent on a set of foundational pillars: Legacy Modernization (NASCIO priority #4), Budget/Cost Control (#5), and Data Management (#9).¹ These are not independent issues but are the critical enablers—or formidable blockers—of progress. As previously noted, AI initiatives are non-starters without modern platforms.² Without disciplined cost management, there is no capital for innovation.¹ And without robust data governance, AI models produce

unreliable and untrustworthy results.6

This interplay is sharpened by what Forrester has termed the "Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)" mindset, a growing political and fiscal pressure to drive mission-aligned efficiency. This reframes the conversation from simple "cost-cutting" to strategic reinvestment. CIOs are now tasked with finding savings not just to reduce budgets, but to reallocate those funds toward high-priority initiatives like AI and cybersecurity. This provides a powerful narrative for CIOs: investing in infrastructure modernization with solutions like hyperconverged platforms is not merely a technical upgrade. It is a strategic mechanism to generate tangible operational savings that can directly fund the administration's most visible priorities. The Illinois State Treasurer's Office, for example, leveraged Dell solutions to achieve an 80% reduction in backup management hours, freeing up valuable staff time for higher-value work—a perfect proof point for this efficiency-to-innovation pipeline. 15

Rank	Priority Area	Key Challenges & Sub-Themes	Strategic Implication / Tension
1	Cybersecurity & Risk Management	Zero Trust implementation, AI-powered threats, third-party risk, identity management, grant program compliance. ³	The AI-Cyber Symbiosis: CIOs must defend <i>with</i> AI against attacks <i>from</i> AI. A mature cyber strategy is now inseparable from an AI strategy.
2	Artificial Intelligence / ML / RPA	Governance, data quality, privacy/security risk, legacy system barriers, demonstrating ROI, ethical use. ⁶	The Infrastructure Paradox: Pressure to adopt AI clashes with the reality of aging infrastructure and tight budgets, requiring investment in both modernization and new platforms.
3	Digital Government / Digital Services	Enhancing citizen experience (CX), omnichannel service delivery, accessibility compliance, modernizing service platforms. ¹	The Expectation Gap: Citizen expectations for seamless digital services, shaped by the private sector, often outpace the government's ability to deliver due to legacy and budget constraints.
4	Legacy Modernization	Renovating or replacing core platforms (e.g., ERP, unemployment), managing technical debt, business process improvement. ¹	The Innovation Prerequisite: Modernization is not an end in itself but the necessary foundation for enabling higher-level priorities like AI and advanced digital services.
5	Budget / Cost Control / Fiscal Management	Managing budget reductions, finding savings, justifying IT investments, improving ROI metrics. ¹	The Efficiency Mandate: The focus is shifting from pure cost-cutting to finding efficiencies that can be strategically reinvested into innovation and mission-critical initiatives.
9	Workforce	Skills gap, recruitment/retention, reskilling/upskilling, skills-based hiring, succession planning. ¹	Al as a Workforce Strategy: Technology is increasingly seen as a way to augment existing staff and automate tasks to mitigate the impact of the persistent skills shortage.

A Blueprint for the Dell Technologies SLG CIO Advisory Board: An Agenda for Strategic Dialogue

The following agenda is meticulously designed to create a collaborative, high-value experience for attending CIOs. It prioritizes peer-to-peer interaction and candid discussion over traditional presentations, ensuring that the primary focus remains on the attendees' challenges and insights. The structure is intended to flow logically from high-level context-setting to deep, interactive problem-solving, culminating in a synthesis of the day's dialogue.

Time	Session Title	Format	Lead(s)	Objective
8:00 - 8:45 AM	Arrival, Registration, and Networking Breakfast	Informal Networking	N/A	Allow attendees to arrive, settle in, and begin networking with peers in a relaxed setting. ¹⁶
8:45 - 9:15 AM	Welcome & The Day's Purpose: Your Voice, Our Commitment	Opening Keynote	Senior Dell SLG Executive	Set a collaborative, non-sales tone. Frame the day as a true advisory board for listening and partnership. ¹⁷
9:15 - 10:15 AM	Keynote: The 2025 CIO Strategic Compass	External Keynote + Q&A	Invited Analyst (NASCIO/Forrester) or State CIO	Provide an objective, third-party validation of the strategic landscape, grounding the day's discussion in shared reality. ¹⁹
10:15 - 10:30 AM	Networking & Coffee Break	Break	N/A	Informal networking opportunity. ²⁰
10:30 AM - 12:00 PM	Interactive Roundtable: The AI-Cybersecurity Battleground	Facilitated Roundtables	Dell Facilitators	Facilitate deep, candid peer-to-peer discussion on the intertwined challenges of AI and cybersecurity in small groups. ¹⁹
12:00 - 1:00 PM	Networking Lunch	Seated Lunch	N/A	Continue informal networking. A Dell subject matter expert at each table to listen and answer questions, not present.

1:00 - 2:30 PM	Interactive Workshop: The "World Cafe" of SLG Grand Challenges	World Cafe Workshop	Dell Facilitators	Gather targeted, actionable feedback on key operational challenges (AI Governance, Funding, Workforce) in a highly interactive format. ²²
2:30 - 2:45 PM	Networking & Coffee Break	Break	N/A	Informal networking opportunity.
2:45 - 3:45 PM	"Birds of a Feather" Peer Exchange	Birds of a Feather Sessions	Peer-Led	Enable unstructured, peer-led conversations on niche topics of interest (e.g., State vs. Local challenges, Quantum, Procurement). ²⁴
3:45 - 4:30 PM	Closing Session: Synthesizing the Dialogue & Charting the Path Forward	Moderated Panel + Q&A	Senior Dell Strategist & Facilitators	Play back the key themes and insights gathered, demonstrating active listening and committing to a follow-up insights report.
4:30 PM onwards	Closing Remarks & Networking Reception	Informal Reception	Senior Dell SLG Executive	End the day on a high note, allowing for final conversations and relationship building. ¹⁶

Detailed Agenda Breakdown

8:00 - 8:45 AM | Arrival, Registration, and Networking Breakfast
This initial period provides a crucial, low-pressure environment for attendees to connect with
one another before the formal program begins. It sets a collaborative tone for the day.16

8:45 - 9:15 AM | Welcome & The Day's Purpose: Your Voice, Our Commitment
Led by a senior Dell Technologies SLG executive, this opening session is critical for
establishing trust. The remarks will explicitly state that the event is a true advisory board, not
a sales forum.27 The objective is to listen, learn from the collective expertise in the room, and
reinforce Dell's commitment to the SLG mission as a long-term strategic partner.18

9:15 - 10:15 AM | Keynote: The 2025 CIO Strategic Compass - Navigating Priorities & Paradoxes

An external, objective perspective from a respected industry voice (such as an analyst from NASCIO or Forrester, or a prominent former State CIO) lends significant credibility to the event.19 This keynote will validate the challenges discussed in Section 1, including the NASCIO Top 10 priorities, the AI-Workforce nexus, the infrastructure paradox, and the government efficiency mandate, ensuring all participants begin the day with a shared understanding of the strategic landscape.

10:30 AM - 12:00 PM | Interactive Roundtable Session 1: The AI-Cybersecurity Battleground This session moves from presentation to active participation. Attendees will be broken into small groups of 6-8 peers, each with a Dell facilitator. This format is designed to foster more candid and detailed conversation than is possible in a large group setting.21 The discussion will focus on the dual challenge of defending against AI-powered attacks while simultaneously leveraging AI for enhanced threat intelligence and response.

1:00 - 2:30 PM | Interactive Workshop: The "World Cafe" of SLG Grand Challenges
This highly interactive format empowers attendees to contribute to multiple discussions on
topics they find most relevant.22 Three "cafe tables" will be established, each hosted by a Dell
facilitator and focused on a core challenge identified in the research:

- Table 1: The AI Governance & Data Readiness Playbook 6
- Table 2: The Modernization-to-Innovation Funding Pipeline ²
- Table 3: Building the Augmented Workforce of the Future ²

Participants will spend approximately 25 minutes at a table before rotating to the next. The facilitator remains at the table to summarize the previous group's key points for the new arrivals, allowing the conversation to build upon itself throughout the session.

2:45 - 3:45 PM | "Birds of a Feather" Peer Exchange

This session provides a forum for unstructured, peer-led dialogue on specific topics of interest.24 By allowing attendees to self-organize based on shared roles or challenges, this format ensures maximum relevance and empowers the participants to drive the conversation. Potential topics include federal funding strategies for State CIOs, smart city technology for City/County CIOs, long-term roadmapping for the quantum threat, or practical approaches to procurement reform.

3:45 - 4:30 PM | Closing Session: Synthesizing the Dialogue & Charting the Path Forward To conclude the formal program, a senior Dell strategist will moderate a panel of the World Cafe facilitators. Each facilitator will present the top 2-3 takeaways and key insights from their respective tables. This session serves to "play back" what was heard throughout the day, reinforcing to the CIOs that their contributions were valuable. The session will conclude with a commitment from Dell to synthesize all findings into a "Voice of the CIO" insights report that will be shared with all attendees.

4:30 PM onwards | Closing Remarks & Networking Reception

A final thank you from a Dell executive will transition the group into a relaxed networking reception, providing a final opportunity for informal conversation and relationship building to end the day on a positive and collaborative note.16

Facilitation Guides for High-Impact Interactive Sessions

The success of the interactive portions of the agenda hinges on skilled facilitation. The facilitator's role is not to lead but to guide the conversation, ask probing questions, and ensure all participants have an opportunity to contribute. The following guides provide a framework for the Dell team to execute these sessions effectively.

Facilitator's Guide: Roundtable on "The Al-Cybersecurity Battleground"

Desired Outcome: To gain a clear understanding of where CIOs perceive the
most significant AI-related threats and opportunities within their security posture,
and what they need from a technology partner to address them effectively.

• Probing Questions:

- "Beyond the media hype, where are you seeing the most tangible threats from Al-powered attacks today? Is it in more sophisticated phishing, new forms of malware, or the spread of disinformation?"
- o "Conversely, what is the most promising defensive use case for AI in your

- security operations? Are you seeing more value in real-time threat detection, automated incident response, or predictive analytics?" ⁵
- "Forrester emphasizes a shift toward 'continuous risk management'.³ How can Al help your organization move from a reactive security posture to a more proactive, or even predictive, model?"
- "When considering new AI-driven security tools, what are your biggest barriers to adoption? Is it the budget required, the lack of skilled staff to manage the tools, or a fundamental trust in the 'black box' nature of the algorithms?" ¹⁴
- Subtle Dell Connection: When the conversation turns to the foundational requirements for these advanced tools, the facilitator can introduce a relevant, non-promotional example: "That challenge of ensuring the underlying platform is resilient enough for these critical workloads is something we've seen before. For instance, in our work with the Lafayette Utilities System, strengthening the core infrastructure was the essential first step to enhancing their overall cyber resilience." 11

Facilitator's Guide: World Cafe Table on "The Al Governance & Data Readiness Playbook"

 Desired Outcome: To capture best practices, common hurdles, and policy gaps related to establishing effective AI governance and ensuring data is ready for AI applications.

Probing Questions:

- "NASCIO has published a 12-point roadmap for developing AI strategy.⁶ In your experience, which of these steps—like establishing governance, addressing data quality, or assessing risks—is proving to be the most difficult for your organization to implement, and why?"
- "Many agencies are observing 'shadow AI' adoption, where staff use public tools for work-related tasks. How are you trying to balance the need to empower innovation with the critical responsibility of maintaining enterprise governance and data security?"
- "Data quality is consistently cited as a primary dependency for successful AI.⁶
 What are the most significant political and technical hurdles you face in creating the 'clean and reliable data' needed for effective AI models?"
- "As you look at procurement and implementation, how are you embedding ethical considerations like bias monitoring and model explainability into your processes to build and maintain public trust?" ¹⁴

• Subtle Dell Connection: As the discussion touches on citizen-facing AI, the facilitator can pose a question and link it to a real-world case: "How do you ensure these new AI-powered services are both accessible and trustworthy for all citizens? The City of Amarillo, for example, made multi-language support a core feature of their 'Emma' assistant specifically to improve access and equity for all residents, which was a key part of their design from the start." 11

Facilitator's Guide: World Cafe Table on "The Modernization-to-Innovation Funding Pipeline"

 Desired Outcome: To understand the practical strategies CIOs are using to build a compelling business case for modernization and to translate the resulting efficiencies into funding for new strategic initiatives.

Probing Questions:

- "Forrester research suggests anchoring efficiency initiatives in 'mission alignment'.¹⁴ Can you share a success story of how you've tied a major legacy modernization project directly to a key priority of your Governor, Mayor, or agency head?"
- "When you go to the CFO or legislature to justify a modernization investment, what metrics have you found to be most effective in demonstrating ROI? Is it hard cost savings, quantifiable risk reduction, reallocation of staff time, or improvements in citizen service delivery?" 3
- "Many of you have noted that modernization is a prerequisite for AI.² How do you construct a business case that effectively bundles these two initiatives together, showing that one enables the other?"
- "The Illinois State Treasurer's Office was able to reduce backup management time by 80% after modernizing its data protection.¹⁵ What is the most time-consuming legacy process in your organization that, if automated or modernized, could free up the most significant amount of resources for innovation?"

Dialogue to Partnership: Post-Event Strategy & Maximizing ROI

The value of the CIO Advisory Board must extend beyond the single day of the event. A deliberate post-event strategy is essential for solidifying relationships, demonstrating the value of the engagement, and creating a foundation for future strategic partnership.

The "Voice of the CIO" Insights Report

The primary post-event deliverable will be a professionally produced "Voice of the CIO" insights report. All notes from the roundtables, World Cafe sessions, and Birds of a Feather discussions will be synthesized and anonymized. This will not be a simple transcript but an analytical document that identifies the top 3-5 macro themes that emerged during the day. It will detail the key challenges, peer-suggested solutions, and strategic priorities discussed, incorporating direct (but anonymous) quotes to provide authenticity. This high-value asset, shared with all attendees, serves as tangible proof that their contributions were heard and have contributed to a larger body of knowledge.

Personalized, Strategic Follow-Up

Within one week of the event, the Dell Technologies SLG strategist and relevant account teams will conduct personalized follow-up with each attendee. This communication will go beyond a generic "thank you" note. It will reference a specific point the CIO made during one of the sessions (e.g., "I was particularly interested in your comments during the AI-Cyber roundtable about the challenge of finding skilled staff to manage new security tools..."). The follow-up will offer a relevant, non-sales resource, such as a targeted case study on workforce augmentation, a whitepaper on AI governance, or an offer to connect them with a Dell subject matter expert for a deeper conversation. This approach demonstrates active listening and a continued commitment to providing value.

Internal De-brief and Strategy Alignment

An internal de-brief will be held with the Dell SLG team, product specialists, and marketing leadership. The "Voice of the CIO" report will serve as the core document for this session. The team will analyze the findings to identify key trends, competitive

insights, and potential gaps in Dell's current messaging or solution portfolio for the SLG market. The direct, unfiltered feedback from these senior government leaders will be used to refine go-to-market strategies, inform future product development priorities, and ensure that all external communication resonates with the true pain points and strategic objectives of the SLG CIO.

Planning the Next Engagement

This Advisory Board should be positioned as the beginning of an ongoing dialogue, not a one-time event. This aligns with the successful model of organizations like NASCIO, which prioritize continuous relationship building.³⁰ Based on the feedback and success of the event, planning should commence for the next touchpoint. This could take the form of a six-month virtual check-in to discuss progress on key issues, a smaller deep-dive workshop on a specific topic that generated significant interest (such as Quantum Security or Procurement Reform), or the next annual in-person Advisory Board. This cadence of engagement transforms the relationship from transactional to strategic, cementing Dell's position as a trusted, long-term partner in the SLG community.

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