Conversation Design Institute



CDI AND GOVERNMENT

Conversational AI for Government: Supporting Citizens at Scale



Government is a different beast

At Conversation Design Institute, we understand the higher stakes governments face when serving citizens. Answering a passenger query about their gate number is important — but guiding a vulnerable citizen through a benefits application demands far greater care, empathy and responsibility.

Having worked with multiple government bodies across more than ten countries and three continents, we understand these nuances deeply.

Whether it's supporting transportation services in Dubai, improving social programs in the Netherlands, or helping the World Health Organization deliver health updates, our approach blends empathy with efficiency.

CDI supports public sector teams through both education and consulting — helping organizations build the skills and strategies needed for safe, human-centered AI interactions.

Our growing community of government professionals reflects a shared commitment to designing trustworthy services that meet citizens where they are, with dignity and clarity.

Sincerely,



Hans Van Dam

CONVERSATION DESIGN INSTITUTE • FOUNDER & CEO

CASE STUDY

Dutch Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND)



Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst
Ministerie van Veiligheid en Justitie

Summary

The Immigration and Naturalization Department of The Netherlands (IND) has successfully piloted a Conversational AI chatbot 'Sofia' to help applicants get answers and find information. The goal is to help people self serve more. Simultaneously, IND has added live chat as a channel. The result is a successful 1 year chatbot pilot with over 200.000 conversations in two languages over that time. Containment, though not a goal, is at around 33% of conversations.

200,000
Conversations over 12-months

2
Languages for Citizen Interaction

33%
Containment

The Challenge

IND serves a very disparate group of applicants. Matters regarding immigration are often both complicated and personal. And, the language used by applicants is often quite different from the more formal and legal language used by the agency itself. So the main challenge was dual: recognising what applicants needed and then answering general questions clearly and concisely.

How we supported

CDI was involved in training the IND team through workshops while helping determine chatbot scope. Then a duo of CDI AI Consultants became an integral - if temporary - part of the team helping make chatbot Sofia a success. Conversational AI has become an established channel for IND. And, CDI has gained valuable experience working with both the constraints and great talent and dedication of a government agency like the IND.

Conversational AI in Government has distinctive challenges

Having worked intimately with major government departments as varied as Employment Agencies, Chambers of Commerce, Defence Departments and more, there's a raft of sector specific considerations that should be thought about to achieve the best outcomes with any Conversational AI initiatives:

CONSIDERATION #1

Language Gap between Citizens and Government

Even more so than in (most) business there is a large gap between how citizens speak and ask questions and the way that government names, describes and explains their processes, forms etc. In Conversational AI a huge challenge is matching Customer queries to correct answers, this challenge is greater for governments than for most businesses.

CONSIDERATION #2

Complexity and Scale of Information

Most government agencies have a vast set of processes, to which there are often exceptions or special cases. Explaining these things clearly and succinctly is a challenge that is incomparable with for example explaining how to return a pair of sneakers you ordered.

CONSIDERATION #3

Rules and Regulations

Government authorities are held to stricter norms, rules and regulations than most businesses. This has implications for building conversational AI - technology that involves customer data, that can involve linking different databases, integrating into websites and so forth. Another aspect of this is that switching technology providers often involves a tender process which is time consuming and expensive.

CONSIDERATION #4

First Time Right as a Rule

This may seem self evident but most government authorities feel obliged or are obligated to deliver services and products that are 100% complete and accurate upon delivery. Whereas businesses can experiment and allow for failure in unlocking a channel like Conversational AI, governmental authorities struggle to take this approach. This can lead to falling behind in technological innovation - which is not necessary, because there are ways to implement Conversational AI 'first time right'

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Got a question?
Let's talk.



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