

Whitepaper

A network diagram consisting of several circular nodes, each containing a stylized person icon. The nodes are interconnected by lines, forming a complex web. The background is a gradient from purple to blue.

Empowering Local Governments: Unleashing Efficiency & Innovation Through Integration

Practical knowledge to help kickstart your council's integration journey.

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Introduction - Integration Today

In a digitally connected world, no piece of software can effectively deliver on the promise of digital transformation, unless it is connected to other software. Even the most comprehensive ERP solution must integrate with multiple systems to enable organisational optimisation, efficiency gains and step-change in the customer experience. Effective integration is essential for every local government today.

In this guide we demonstrate how integration is the glue that connects and optimises local government processes and operations. Integration is integral to making them more efficient, cost-effective, and responsive to the needs of citizens.

“To make government easy to deal with, you need simple and intuitive services that support your needs and life events.”

Government’s Digital Transformation Strategy (DTS), Vision 2025

In our language, integration is the “SmartGlue” that sticks all your transformation efforts together and enables holistic, organisation-wide change.

Of course, your integration strategy is not a stand-alone initiative, it should dovetail and be informed by your IT and digital strategies and must support your Council plan. With that in mind, this paper considers the benefits of integration projects, including improved data management, enhanced service delivery, and increased operational efficiency. We explore the strategic advantages of using an integration platform over point-to-point integration and the long-term cost and efficiency benefits that come with it. We highlight and emphasise the opportunity councils have to collaborate, to share code and integration patterns, and to leverage open standards and open-source solutions.

‘**Beatrix**’, our digital mascot appears throughout the paper with insights from council staff, case studies, and practical advice for local governments to navigate the challenges and opportunities presented by integration.

As your digital transformation and system integration journey proceeds, let this whitepaper be your compass, leading to optimised operations and more engaged and satisfied citizens.

Welcome to **"Empowering Local Governments: Unleashing Efficiency & Innovation through Integration."**



Fergal Coleman
Director



Thomas Hynes
CEO

Who is this paper for?

In the evolving digital transformation landscape in local government, the importance of integration cannot be overstated. The purpose of this whitepaper, "**Empowering Local Governments: Unleashing Efficiency & Innovation through Integration**" is to provide an introductory resource for local government leaders and IT and digital professionals who are navigating the complexities of integrating myriad council systems. It is a tool to inform key stakeholders on what integration technologies are, and the benefits of using them.

Background and Context

Over the past decade, APIs (Application Programming Interfaces) and system integration have revolutionised how organisations in every industry deliver services. The technology improvements have facilitated change but the main driver has been changing customer expectations. Today's customers demand **better services, delivered faster**, and at **less cost**.

In local government, this transition to an integration mindset has been slow. However, change is afoot since we entered the post-Covid era. To paraphrase Steve Jobs, Councils are increasingly adopting best practices, starting with the customer experience and working back toward the technology, not the other way around. This is combined with a deepening understanding among councils that integration can fundamentally change the way local governments operate and deliver better services to the community.

Historically, government entities have struggled with siloed information systems that hindered efficient data sharing and process integration. APIs, the fundamental building block of integration, have emerged as a powerful tool to bridge these gaps, enabling different software systems to communicate seamlessly. This shift has been driven by the broader digital transformation trend across industries, where there is a growing emphasis on interoperability, real-time data exchange, and user-centric services.

At Federal and State level, APIs facilitate the integration of various government functions such as tax collection, public safety, and social services, allowing for more coordinated and efficient operations. At local government level they are beginning to enhance planning applications, customer service experiences, optimisation of government waste and maintenance services and much more.

APIs also enable local governments to leverage external data sources and technologies, enhancing service delivery and decision-making capabilities. The adoption of cloud computing, mobile applications, and IoT (Internet of Things) technologies in the public sector has further accelerated the use of APIs and will continue with the ongoing development of AI. This evolution reflects a significant cultural and technological shift towards more open, agile, and collaborative government systems, paving the way for smarter cities and communities.

And ultimately, a community of happy customers that receive better services, more quickly and at less cost.

APIs, Integration Technology Evolution and the Common Features of Integration Solutions

What are API's

The API (Application Programming Interface) is the basic building block for integration. API's can be described as:

- The customisable software layer built on top of applications.
- APIs expose data to external third-party applications.
- APIs dictate how to interact with an application, they provide the messaging format, the structure, and the contents.
- The design of an API is critical in ensuring an application is easy to use without compromising security.



API's are the waiter between the customer and the kitchen

In one of Symphony3's earliest webinars, we described APIs and compared them to a waiter in a restaurant liaising between the kitchen and the customer. You can still watch the webinar entitled: "An introduction to integration for local government" here:

[YouTube - An Introduction for Local Government](#)



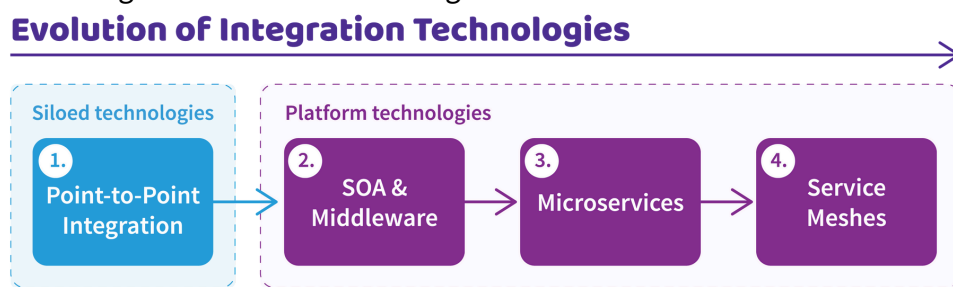
An overview of how integration platforms have evolved

Over the years, integration technology and techniques have evolved significantly, reflecting changes in technology trends, business needs, and changes in software development. This evolution has been marked by a shift from simple, point-to-point integrations to more sophisticated, scalable, and flexible approaches. *(For a detailed technical explanation of this evolution read: [The evolution of integration - a comprehensive platform for a connected business](#). We've provided a simplified explanation of the evolution for non-technical readers below.*

- 1 Point-to-Point Integrations:** In the early stages of integration technology, point-to-point integrations were common. This approach involves directly connecting two systems or applications, usually through custom code. While straightforward for small-scale integrations, point-to-point connections become unmanageable and risky as the number of integrations grows, leading to a complex and tightly coupled architecture.
- 2 Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) and Middleware:** To address the limitations of point-to-point integrations, the concept of Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) emerged. SOA promotes the idea of decomposing applications into discrete services, which can be reused and combined in different ways. We often use the analogy of Lego Bricks to explain this concept.

Middleware, such as Enterprise Service Buses (ESBs), became popular for facilitating communication between these services, providing capabilities like routing, transformation, and orchestration. SOA and middleware help organisations create more modular and manageable integration architectures and continue to be in use today.

- 3 **Microservices Architecture:** The advent of microservices marked another significant shift. In a microservices architecture, applications are composed of small, independent services that communicate over lightweight protocols. This approach offers even greater modularity and scalability than SOA. Think smaller, lighter Lego blocks! Microservices can be developed, deployed, and scaled independently, enabling more agile development and better alignment with cloud-native principles.
- 4 **Service Meshes:** As microservices architectures became prevalent, managing the communication between numerous services became a challenge. Service meshes emerged as a solution, providing a dedicated infrastructure layer for handling service-to-service communication. Service meshes offer features like load balancing, service discovery, encryption, and observability, allowing developers to focus on business logic rather than networking concerns.



These advancements reflect a broader trend towards decoupling, modularity, and scalability in integration technology. Each stage has brought improvements in flexibility, maintainability, and the ability to handle more complex integration challenges, aligning with the evolving needs of modern businesses and their digital transformation journeys.

In the local government context we have observed 1 and 2 above to be most prevalent. Councils are now moving to 3 with 4 being still some way off. For the purposes of the next section of this document, we will distinguish between point-to-point integration and Integration platforms (which in local government largely consist of 2 and 3 at present).

Point-to-point V. Platform

Systems can be ‘glued’ together directly via APIs (Point-to-point). However this becomes unmanageable in a council where there are typically 40 plus systems, with a large number needing to talk to each other to enable digital transformation. Look at diagram 1, We have inserted 21 systems. A small number are connected and already you can get a feel for the complexity of managing every integration. **If all 21 systems were connected together that is over 200 integrations. Each one needs to be maintained and monitored individually! Connecting 40 systems results in 780 integrations each needing to be managed individually!** Clearly this is unmanageable.

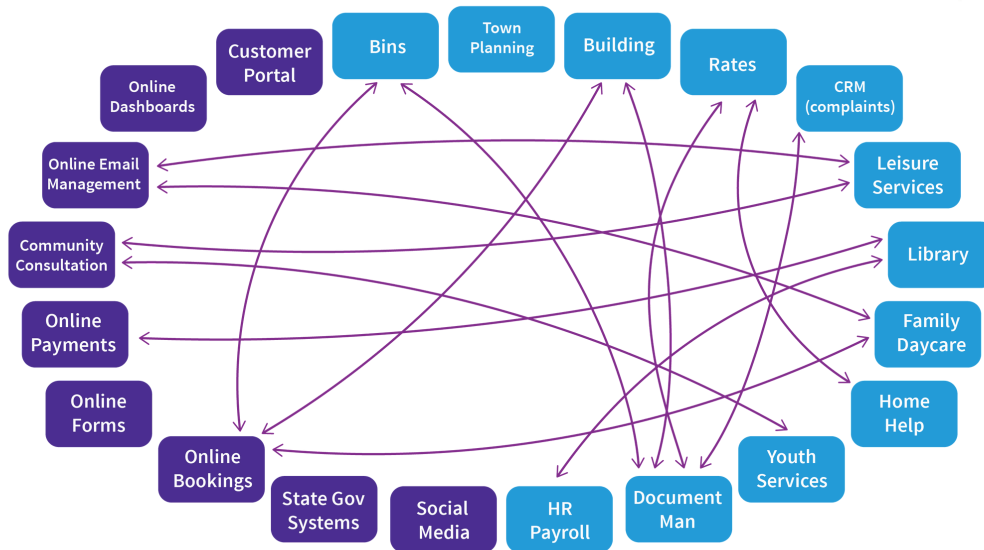


Diagram 1

To scale integration in an organisation, you need an integration platform that manages integration between all your systems. This is why integration platforms are so important. They are the management hub through which all integrations pass and are managed. This is shown in Diagram 2 below as a simple hub and spoke model.

With the hub model below, instead of over 200 integrations to be managed you have 21 integrations to manage but this can all be done from a single interface. This is why councils need an integration platform. This is the most important concept to grasp when considering how integration will work between systems in your organisation.

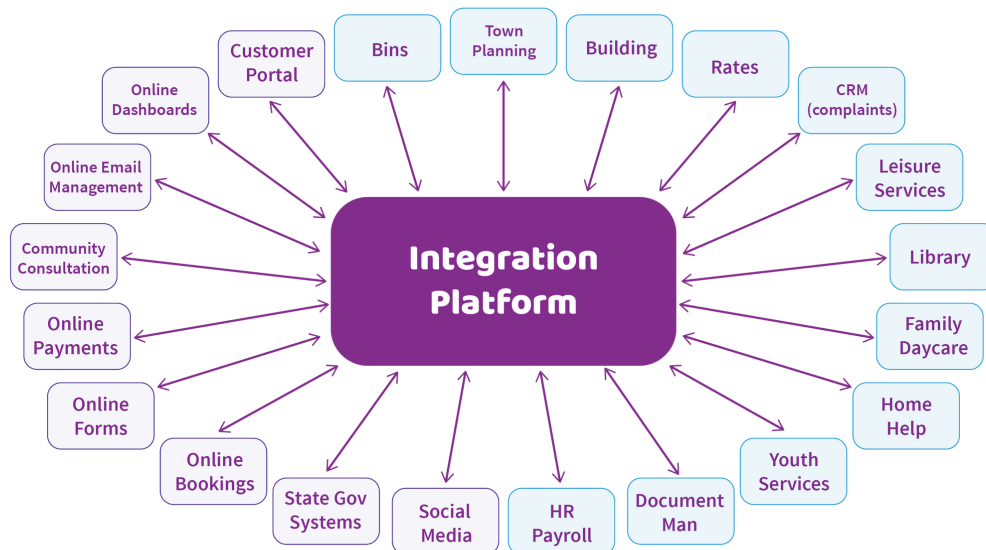


Diagram 2



LET ME CHAT TO YOU ABOUT API'S

Case Study: Colac Otway Integration

Case Study: Banyule City Council

To explain the concept above think about an online travel company such as Webjet.

A user goes to the Webjet website and outlines what service they would like (e.g. flights to and accommodation in Brazil). Webjet uses API calls to search and request information from hundreds of different systems somewhere on the cloud before returning the best service to the user on the website. The user has no idea where Webjet found the information and doesn't really care. The user can book and pay for the service on the website but the transaction is executed on different systems (potentially an ERP) somewhere in the cloud. Again the customer doesn't care.

Every time someone in your municipality wants a service they don't want to be sent to one of 50 systems. They want to go to the same website every time, to use the same interface every time and to have the same customer experience every time.

Colac Otway customer portal integrates submit a request form to Civica CRM.

- Colac Otway Council have streamlined online customer service by integrating customer service requests on their online customer portal with. Benefits include:
- Improved customer experience
- Elimination of manual handling
- Quicker resolution of service requests
- Read [full case study](#) .

Banyule City Council have integrated their online planning forms with the planning module in their ERP system.

Some of the benefits realised include:

- Improved front-end customer experience with simplified forms
- Improved accuracy of data collection reduces time and effort in accessing applications
- Reduction of planning applications processes by up to two weeks.

What are the key features of an Integration Platform?

There are multiple Integration platforms on the market that are suitable for use in councils. What you choose will depend on your size, budget and the technical maturity of your organisation. Common proprietary systems include AWS Application Integration Suite, MuleSoft Anypoint, Boomi and Azure Integration Services. An Open Source (licence-free) alternative is WSO2.

Regardless of the solution you select, all mature integration platforms share common features and functions that make them powerful tools for integrating diverse systems and applications (many with technical names which we try to avoid here!). These common features include:

- **Connectivity and Integration Capabilities:** Mature platforms offer a wide range of connectors and integration capabilities to seamlessly connect various applications, data sources, and services, whether on-premise or in the cloud. They also include support for different protocols and standards. (We discuss common Local Government integrations more further in this document).
- **API Management:** As API use proliferates in councils comprehensive API management functionality become increasingly important. These functions enable users to create, manage, and secure APIs. This includes API design, testing, deployment, monitoring, and analytics.
- **Data Transformation:** The platform you choose should facilitate data transformation and mapping, allowing users to convert data from one format to another and to ensure that data from different sources can be integrated and used together.
- **Orchestration and Workflow Automation:** Most integration platforms today offer tools to design and automate complex workflows and business processes, orchestrating interactions between different systems and services. These tools can drive real operational efficiencies and optimisation in councils.
- **Security and Compliance:** Making sure your APIs are secure is critical. Increasingly hackers look for API vulnerabilities. Ensuring data security and compliance with regulatory standards is a key feature. This includes features like encryption, access control, and auditing capabilities.
- **Scalability and Performance:** Most importantly the reason to choose an integration platform over point to point integration is to allow you to scale and to get optimal business value from your integration. A platform must be built to scale, to handle increasing loads and data volumes efficiently, and to ensure high availability and performance.
- **Monitoring and Analytics:** Built in monitoring tools track the health and performance of integrations in real-time, while comprehensive analytics provide your technical and management teams with insights into data and integration processes.
- **Developer and User-Friendly Interfaces:** As this part of the software industry has matured, most platforms typically offer user-friendly interfaces for designing integrations often with drag and drop interfaces.* There are also tools and SDKs for developers to extend capabilities or build custom integrations for those councils with more advanced integration skills

** Disclaimer: At Symphony3, we work with all the common proprietary platforms. However the platform most use with councils (who have no integration solution in place) is WSO2 due to its lower cost and ease of implementation.*

- **Cloud and Hybrid Integration Support:** Importantly, as councils are still in a transition phase from on-premise to cloud, your platform must support both cloud-based and hybrid integration scenarios, allowing for the integration of on-premises and cloud-based applications and services.
- **Community and Support:** An important component in choosing any solution is ensuring you have access to active user communities and can access robust support options, including documentation, forums, and professional support services (see collaboration section later in this document).

As your council assesses its options, you should be looking for most of the features listed above. You need to ensure the platform you choose is versatile enough to handle various integration scenarios, ranging from simple data synchronisation tasks to complex enterprise-level integrations. While an integration platform will cost money, be clear that in the long term it is a much more cost effective option than doing point to point integrations.



Some advice from Beatrix in closing this section

When commencing on the integration journey it is tempting to choose expensive premium versions of the most well-known solutions. On top of this, recruiting in-house integration developers can be expensive and they may not understand the dynamics of the local government sector. We recommend starting small and taking your integration journey step by step. If you are new to integration look for a starter kit or consider using open-source tools that are licence free. And work with a partner who can provide you with external integration skills until you are clear on what expertise you really need in-house. This approach allows you to dip your toe in the water, and you will learn how best to deploy integration technologies before making any major investment decisions.

Now that you've received a simple explanation of integration, let's discuss how integration benefits councils. If you are considering bringing a business case for integration to your management team you need to understand where you can save money and deliver a return on investment.

Building the Business Case Diffuse the “Our ERP will do everything” argument

Integration projects delivered well, significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of local government operations and services. They are fundamental to the delivery of digital transformation in every council. However, at the time of writing, this is not universally accepted in local government circles.

In the local government landscape there is still an old argument being advanced by some ERP vendors, technology consultants (and most likely some of your IT staff fearful of change), that integration is a ‘nice to have’ rather than ‘a must have’. Some vendors, and their consulting partners, will argue that moving your old ERP to the cloud and consolidating your major systems with one provider will deliver holistic enterprise-wide digital transformation.

The counter argument that Symphony3 and modern ERP vendors advocate, is one that is validated by the digital advancements in several other industries from finance, to retail, to travel, to manufacturing is as follows:

- ERP’s remain crucial to delivering core back-end functions, and are a major foundation piece in digital transformation. However, **a standalone ERP cannot deliver true holistic digital transformation on its own.**

In the internet age, API’s are the glue that connect people, systems, data and process end-to-end. Successfully connecting all your customer touchpoints, systems, data and processes via integration is the only way to deliver digital transformation.

Using a business lens to identify where integration can deliver optimisation in your council



Challenge: In reading this section think of the 5 business benefits discussed, and find three use cases where you can realise these benefits in your organisation.

If you can find 12 integration use cases you can build a compelling business case for funding your integration project. (Note: For each use case you will probably find more than one of the benefits apply.)

Business benefits of integration

- ★ ★ ★ Enhanced service delivery
- Cost reductions
- Improved data management and accessibility
- Better resource allocation and planning
- Increased operational efficiency

Footnote: Your challenge is to prove this in your business case and this is best done by identifying real tangible areas for improvement, ideally with case studies from other councils (If you would like assistance with building your business case and the Return on Investment you can expect from your integration strategy ask us about our Integration ROI calculator). In the next section we look at using a business improvement lens to find use cases

Business Benefit No. 1: Enhanced Service Delivery to Citizens

Integrated systems provide streamlined and user-friendly services. Ideally, a citizen should be able to go to a single digital interface for its council (the website or a portal) and access all services. The service is presented or requested on the website but the activity is completed in another system and all data resides in a separate system. The resident has no idea and doesn't care which system is used to deliver and action the service.

Citizens just know that no matter what service they request it is always presented on the same secure, easy to use interface.

Every council can use integration to improve the customer experience. We have yet to find a council that provides a single digital interface. To find use cases around service delivery ask yourself:

- Where are my customers becoming frustrated? Where can integration provide instant customer service improvements?
- Does your website send visitors to multiple systems and interfaces depending on the service they are looking for?
- Does your council send residents to a clunky customer portal provided by an ERP vendor? Does it require a different login and registration process to your website? Does the customer portal only include some of your services, meaning residents have to navigate back to the website for many other services?
- Does your council plan talk about strategies that improve the customer experience? How can you most easily deliver an integration use case that will directly impact your customer experience strategy?

Simplification and automation of processes reduces time and effort, freeing staff to focus on higher-value tasks. Look for clunky and inefficient back-end processes with high levels of manual handling that cause time delays in service delivery for the customer. Ask yourself:

- What departments have the most inefficient processes?
- What inefficiencies in council are most costly? Deliver the most bad press?
- Could we get State or Federal funding to improve some of our most inefficient processes?

Business Benefit No. 2: Cost Reductions

Integrated systems reduce redundancies and improve process efficiencies, leading to lower operational costs.

In your organisation, look for areas where duplication of effort is occurring and staff are doing manual data entry. How many errors would be eliminated and how much time would be saved if you could automate?

Consider **Diagram 3** below. Is your council still operating like the 'Now' side of the diagram below? Do you identify with the numbered pain points where individuals intervene? What are processes like that in your organisation and how much do you think they are costing your council?

What would it mean if you were operating like the 'Where?'

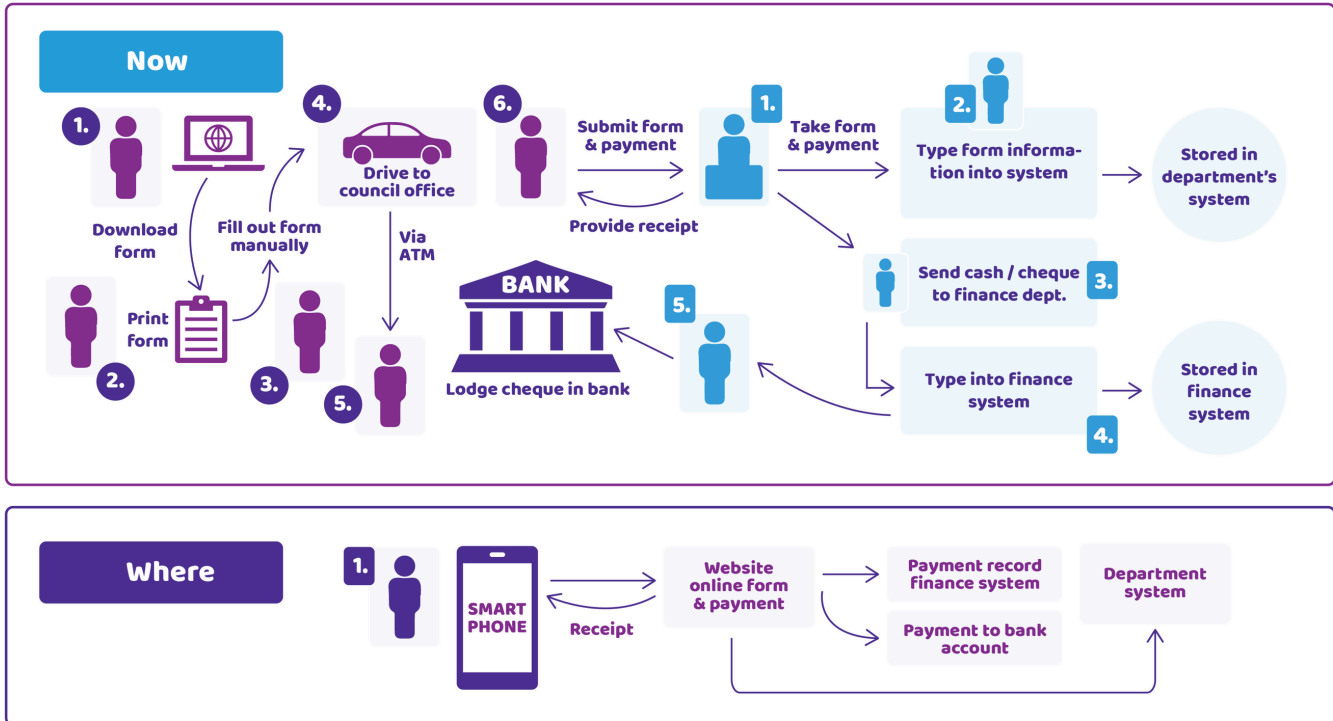


Diagram 3

Business Benefit No. 3: Improved Data Management and Accessibility

Integration projects consolidate diverse data sources, enabling efficient data access, management, and decision-making. This leads to more efficient service delivery and improved governance.

Data use by councils today lags behind other sectors. We see this as a positive as it means there is massive upside if you can improve your data management.

How can your council consolidate data sources and enable easier access to information, improving decision-making? Does your council have a proper data strategy that incorporates integration as a key foundation piece? Has your council thought about the value of organising its data better?

Business Benefit No. 4: Better Resource Allocation and Planning

A holistic view of operations aids in informed decision-making and resource allocation. Consider how you can integrate solutions to present a more holistic view of operations to senior management in a timely manner.

What is the information your CEO most wants to see? Does it come from multiple systems? Can it be consolidated and presented in a simpler fashion?



“It’s an incredibly transparent and efficient way of communicating the performance of our project delivery to our community, councillors, government and internal team members.”

Charlie Bird, Former CEO Alpine Shire Council.



Case Study: Alpine Shire Council Dashboard

Alpine Shire Council developed a dashboard that integrated project management of their capital works projects with their finance system and Active Directory. Data was presented on:

- 80% plus of capital works budget delivered year on year (councils are usually around 60%)
- Visibility - Instant visibility of project progress to senior management enabling faster and better decision-making
- Accountability - clear communication of ownership of projects

“When building your business case, review your Council Plan – you’ll find that some of the key goals and strategies can be enabled by integration. This includes improving customer service, better management of assets and capital works projects, streamlining the planning process, and increased transparency and consultation with the community.”

Business Benefit No. 5: Using a systems/technology lens to identify where integration can deliver improvements in your council



Challenge:

In reading this section think of the common (non-ERP) systems in your organisation. Which ones are most used by the public? What kind of experience do they provide? How could they be optimised by integration?

Write down three highly used systems and the reasons why integrating them to another system would benefit your organisation and its stakeholders.

Integrations that deliver immediate benefits



Online forms to ERP/CRM



GIS to website/digital maps



SAAS Based payment systems to finance

Technology Use Case No. 1 - Integrating Online Forms to your ERP or CRM

Integrating your most common, widely used online forms and services with your CRM (often a module in your ERP) can deliver immediate benefits including:

- **Streamlined Processing** with immediate entry of requests into the management system. This reduces manual data entry, minimises errors, and speeds up the process of addressing requests.
- **Improved Tracking and Accountability:** With an integrated system, each request can be tracked end-to-end. This improves the efficiency of response but also ensures accountability in handling requests from the community.
- **Enhanced Communication with Citizens:** Two-way integration enables automatic updates to be sent to citizens regarding the status of their submissions. This increases transparency and trust, as residents stay informed about the progress of their concerns.
- **Data Analysis and Reporting:** Integration allows councils to better collate data and to better analyse and present it to managers, improving decision making.
- **Increased Public Satisfaction:** Making it easier for the community to access and receive your most important services leads to quicker service delivery, which in turn increases public satisfaction.

Technology Use Case No. 2 - GIS to website or digital maps

Integrating your GIS system to the online maps on your website and/or digital platforms can deliver immediate benefits that greatly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of various council services. This is a step change from simply uploading location data to a map on your website. Here are five key reasons for such integration:

- 1 **Accurate and up-to-date Information:** By linking online maps with the GIS system, the maps displayed on the council's website will always reflect the most current data. This ensures that residents, businesses, and council staff have access to the latest information about zoning, land use, public facilities, and more.
- 2 **Improved Public Access and Engagement:** Making GIS data available through online maps enhances transparency and allows the public to easily access relevant location based information. This can improve community engagement and participation in local planning and development processes.
- 3 **Efficient Resource Management and Planning:** GIS systems provide powerful tools for analysing spatial data. By integrating these tools with online maps, the council can better manage resources, plan infrastructure projects, and respond to environmental challenges. In addition, by allowing input by the public it can allow council to better understand the needs and requirements of the community.
- 4 **Cost and Time Savings:** Integration reduces the need for maintaining separate systems for the website and GIS data. This leads to cost savings in terms of software and hardware. Additionally, it saves time for staff who no longer need to manually update the website with new GIS data.
- 5 **Single source of truth:** Many councils have multiple systems providing location based information including the website, consultation platforms, planning portals and so on. Integration of these systems has enormous benefits and ensures everyone can trust the location information being provided on all map based applications.

Technology Use Case No. 3 - SaaS Based payment systems and ERP/Finance System

Local governments typically have myriad 3rd party systems that take payments like ticketing solutions for art centres, leisure centre membership systems, kindergarten booking systems, library systems.

Often they are quite easy to integrate to your ERP and can deliver substantial benefits, including:

- **Enhanced Financial Accuracy and Timely Reporting:** Integrating these payment systems directly into the ERP's Finance System ensures that all transactions are automatically recorded and reconciled. This reduces errors associated with manual data entry and enhances the accuracy of financial reporting. It allows for real-time visibility of financial data, aiding in more accurate budgeting and forecasting.

- **Streamlined Financial Operations:** By automating the flow of transaction data from third-party systems to the ERP, local governments can streamline their financial operations. This integration eliminates the need for manual processing of payments, leading to increased efficiency and productivity among staff members.
- **Improved Audit and Compliance Management:** Having a centralised system for all financial transactions simplifies the process of auditing and compliance reporting.
- **Enhanced Customer Experience:** For citizens using these services, integration means smoother transactions. Payments for different services can often be processed more quickly and efficiently, improving overall customer satisfaction.

Collaborating with Other Councils on System Integrations

When it comes to utilisation of technology not just integration, councils have one major opportunity that doesn't exist for most other organisations - the ability to collaborate and share resources. Councils don't compete for customers and can work together. Symphony3 advocates for open standards, shared code, shared resourcing, and knowledge transfer between councils. Our client community operates in this spirit and it brings many benefits.

Many council's will view this as the Shared Services model but it is distinctly different with the way technology has evolved. We call it a **Shared Platform Model** and it is best explained using the Lego blocks analogy used earlier.

With a shared service, typically councils share an ERP. System, data and workflows are all shared and are all the same. However, every council is different, with different cultures, different organisational structures and different processes and ways of working. These differences have unfortunately led to many costly failed Shared Services projects in local government.

With the Shared Platform model, the modular approach can be adopted. Councils can choose to work together in areas where they have similar processes, data and so forth. These Lego blocks are shared and developed by councils working together, sharing and developing code, processes and workflows and knowledge. For processes and data that are unique to your council you can choose to work alone and plug your unique configuration into the platform alongside the components you share with other councils. This modular approach eliminates the conflicts that occur with shared services model, leading to much higher success rates.



To understand Lego Block thinking I highly recommend you watch these videos on our blog from some years ago which is as relevant today as it was then.

[Why your IT should look like Lego blocks.](#)

This one provides a [quick and easy introduction.](#)

It's a massive opportunity for the sector, as a whole, to collaborate. Sharing resources can bring the following benefits:

- **Cost Efficiency:** Collaborating on integrations and sharing resources significantly reduces costs for each participating council. Development, maintenance, and support costs are distributed among the councils, making it more affordable than if each council developed its own integrations independently. Open source solutions often come with lower licensing fees than proprietary software, further reducing costs.
- **Shared Expertise and Innovation:** Collaboration allows councils to pool their collective knowledge and expertise. Finding, hiring and retaining integration developers is difficult and expensive. It makes sense to pool resources when you do find good people. It is likely the challenge of working on a shared platform will be appealing to innovative and engaged developers. This approach also leads to more innovative, standardised solutions and better long-term outcomes for the community. Sharing experience and lessons learned ensure common pitfalls are avoided and can lead to sector wide adoption of best practices.
- **Enhanced Interoperability:** By working together, councils can ensure that their systems are compatible with each other, that they use common integration code and integration patterns, and often work towards common processes. This facilitates smoother inter-council collaborations and better interaction with State and Federal Government. It also improves data sharing. Where councils are working on joint-initiatives for example as a regional grouping this interoperability ensures systems can be utilised for maximum benefit.
- **Quicker Implementation and Iteration:** Sharing code and integration patterns speeds up the implementation process. Councils can leverage existing work, adapting and iterating on it for their own needs. This not only saves time but also allows for quicker responses to changing requirements or new technological advancements. At Symphony3 we have substantially reduced implementation times with our client community by re-using code and patterns from council to council.
- **Fostering a Community and Open Standards:** Collaborating on Open Source solutions fosters a community of practice among local governments. This community can advocate for open standards and collectively push vendors to adopt them ensuring that system providers are accessible, transparent, and accountable. Open standards also facilitate easier integration with other government systems and third-party vendors. In local government many vendors continue to make it very difficult to integrate, stymieing some of the best-intentioned digital strategies. Working together councils can eliminate this risk.

Talk to other councils before committing to a technology or an approach. There may well be a collaborative community of councils you can join to enjoy the benefits above.

So far, this whitepaper has provided an overview of integration technologies and their evolution, explained the benefits of integration at a holistic level, provided specific guidance on areas where integration can offer most benefit, and talked about the advantage of collaborating with other councils .

By reading this, you should have enough ammunition to develop a compelling business case for integration in your organisation. The next question is how to get started?

Getting Started

How to get started

We recommend two things:

1. Ensure your digital roadmap is fit -for-purpose. If it is there will be some integration goals in there that you can review and action.
2. Write a simple practical integration plan that outlines how you can implement and deliver incremental improvement.

Benefits of Using an Integration Starter Kit Solution

Key reasons to use a starter kit:

Rapid Prototyping and Faster Deployment: License-free Starter kits enable quick prototyping of integrations, allowing local governments to test and refine their systems rapidly. This agility can significantly shorten the time from concept to deployment, ensuring that communities benefit from new functionalities sooner. Open Source Starter kits have the added benefit of being license-free.

Skills Development and Knowledge Building: Working with integration starter kits provides valuable hands-on experience for IT staff. It helps in building internal expertise in system integration, reducing reliance on external consultants. This knowledge accumulation is an asset for the local government in the long run.

Risk Mitigation: Prototyping with a starter kit allows local governments to assess the feasibility and effectiveness of integration solutions before committing significant resources. This approach helps in identifying potential issues early in the process, thereby mitigating risks associated with system integration.

In summary, using an integration starter kit enables local governments to save costs, foster innovation, speed up deployment, build internal expertise, and mitigate risks, all of which are crucial for efficient and effective public service delivery.

Conclusion

It's clear that the journey towards effective system integration is both challenging and rewarding. This guide has navigated through the various facets of integration, highlighting its critical role in enhancing the efficiency, responsiveness, and service delivery of local governments.

We've seen how integration projects, when executed thoughtfully, can lead to significant operational optimisations. From improved data management to cost reductions, the benefits are tangible and impactful.

The collaborative efforts between councils, sharing of code and integration patterns, and the utilisation of open-source solutions provide an opportunity to unite and share innovation across councils, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and learning. It also paves the way for a more resilient and adaptable local government of the future.

The practical insights and case studies presented in this whitepaper are more than just informational; they prove that with thought and planning it is possible to achieve real benefits quickly without spending millions of dollars. We encourage your council to embrace the opportunities presented by integration, to experiment, innovate, collaborate and ultimately, to transform the way you serve your community.

In closing, let this guide serve not just as a resource but as an inspirational guide for continuous improvement and innovation. The journey of integration is ongoing, and the potential for transformation is limitless.

Our Vision

To help our clients deliver **simple connected customer experiences**.

Who Are We

Symphony3 is a rapidly expanding SaaS company dedicated to enhancing local government services in Australia and beyond

We care about

Our people, community and the environment.

Empowering Local Government

Established in Melbourne, Symphony3 has **purpose built a SaaS platform** for local councils that is **cloud-based, secure and scalable**.

Our digital solutions include **portals, DIY websites & online forms, dashboards** along with powerful **integration tools**.



SaaS Digital Platform



Customer Portal



Executive Dashboards



Integration Tool Sets



Commitment to local government



Long-term clients - currently 17 ARR clients



Established and focused team

Our Purpose

Simple Connected Customer Experiences



Our platform makes residents happy by giving them easy, 24/7 access to services and unlocks staff potential by giving them the tools and information to be more effective.

Our Solutions

Customer Portal



A user-friendly web-based environment for our clients to interact with their customers

- DIY Website
- Forms Library
- Corporate Website
- Personalised Customer Services Delivery

Executive Dashboard



A simple summary dashboard of critical information for internal and external audience

- DIY Capital Works
- Maps and Graphs
- Sustainability
- Traffic lights
- Public ready

Integration Tool Sets



An integration platform that can connect to and sync information between 40+ IT systems

- Forms
- Portal
- Single Sign On
- Corporate Data Coordination

Solving our client's problems...

- 24/7 Self Service**
Superior customer experience
- Visibility of organisational performance**
Publish key metrics
- Connect business processes**
Streamlined customer outcomes

Authors:



This paper was a collaborative effort with the initial document researched and written by Fergal Coleman, Director and Co-Founder of Symphony3 with additional insights and input from colleagues including Sekhar Vanka, Thomas Hynes and Trevor Vas. The document and diagrams were designed, edited and finalised by Julie Gentle and Louise Berger and Phillip Dooley.

In writing this paper we tried a new experimental approach. We created the framework of the paper and wrote large amounts of the content in the initial stage. We then incorporated content from our previous webinars and blogs and fed it into ChatGPT to help structure, change and add to our thoughts. We then re-edited and finalised. It was an iterative process and while it wasn't perfect we hope you found the paper useful and informative.

Stay Connected:

For the latest thinking on integration, digital technologies, AI and other trends impacting local government, join our LinkedIn group, subscribe to our Newsletter or follow us on Social Media:



Get in Touch:

If you found this paper beneficial and are seeking to involve your senior managers in understanding the advantages of integration, you might find our introductory workshops on integration of interest. For further details on workshops, our SmartGlue Integration solutions, and our Integration ROI calculator, please reach out to Julie Gentle at jgentle@symphony3.com or visit www.symphony3.com/smartglue.

Further Reading and Watching Material:



1. **Webinar:** [An Introduction to integration for Local Government](#)
2. **Whitepaper:** [The Evolution of Integration: A Comprehensive Platform for a Connected Business by Kasan Indrasiri](#)
3. **Webinar:** [What does the council of the future look like?](#) - Start at 21:22
4. **Case Studies:**
 - a. [Colac Otway Shire Council](#)
 - b. [Banyule City Council](#)
 - c. [Alpine Shire Council](#)
5. **Blog:** Three videos that explain [why your IT should look like lego blocks](#):
 - a. **Video:** [The Gubbins of Government](#)
 - b. **Video:** [The future of Local Government Services](#)
 - c. **Video:** [Warp Speed: A New & Important KPI](#)
6. **[Digital Strategy and Leadership with Prof Mark Thompson](#)**