

# Transforming ambitions into action: from GCC national strategies to AI-powered execution

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# How AI enabled by EY Consulting Services and powered by ServiceNow platform, are shaping the future of xMOs

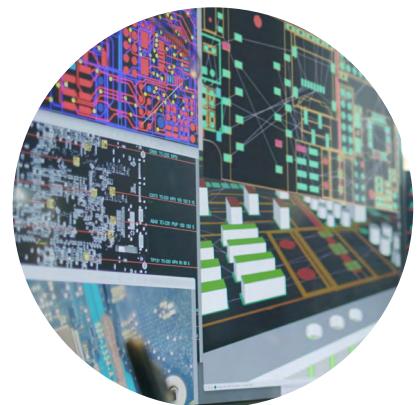
## In brief:



GCC nations are undergoing rapid transformation derived by national visions like Saudi Vision 2030, UAE AI 2031 and Qatar National Vision 2030.



xMO offices (PMOs, SMOs, TMOs) are facing challenges in speaking to strategies, execution, decision-making and data quality.



AI-powered strategy to execution solutions, such as ServiceNow SPM, offer a path to more agile, interconnected and data-driven transformation.

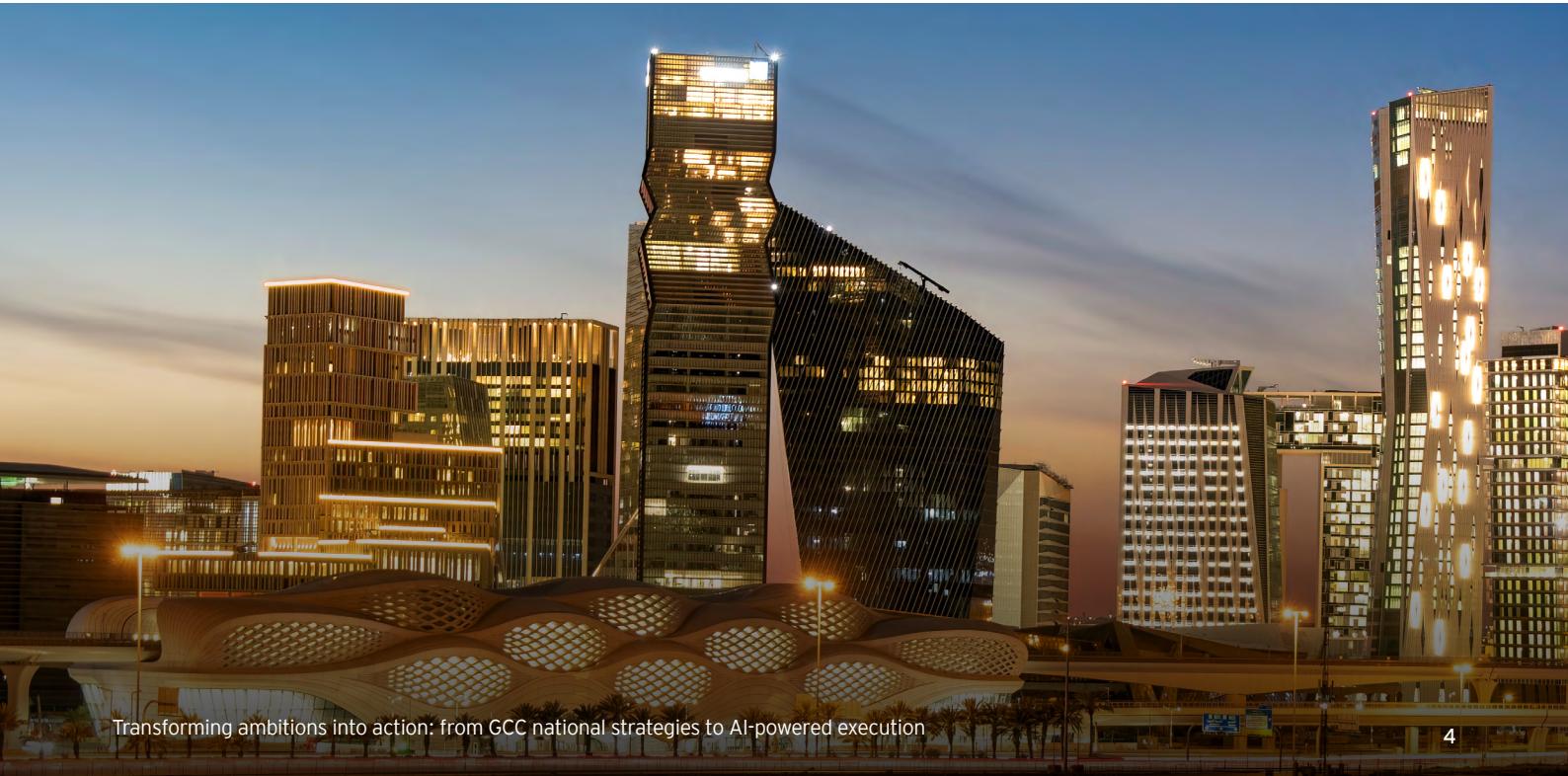
# Executive summary

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries are navigating an era of national reform. This reform is driven by bold national visions for economic diversification, digital transformation and the recent adoption of artificial intelligence (AI). At the heart of these transformations are execution enabler offices. These include Strategy Management Offices (SMOs), Transformation Management Offices (TMOs) and Project Management Offices (PMOs) collectively referred to as **xMOs**. These entities are the navigational and operational muscles behind both national and organizational strategic ambitions.

Yet, many xMOs still contend with manual coordination, fragmented data and tools, and evolving decision-making frameworks. These challenges slow transformation momentum. To meet the pace of reform, they must evolve into AI-enabled orchestration hubs. These hubs should be capable of real-time insight, agile decision-making and seamless execution.

Drawing on global EY insights and leveraging AI-native platforms like ServiceNow's Strategic Portfolio Management (SPM) suite, GCC governments can leapfrog legacy constraints. They can build next-generation planning and delivery engines. By combining platform intelligence with EY teams tailored and best-fit strategic and execution consulting capabilities, xMOs can shift from reactive oversight to proactive, agentic control hubs. They can anticipate needs, align priorities and accelerate national reform.

To meet the pace of reform, xMOs must evolve into AI-enabled orchestration hubs.



# A vision for accelerated transformation

GCC national visions – driving economic diversification, digital transformation and AI adoption are not just changes in policy frameworks. They represent whole-of-government transformations reshaping economies, societies and governance models for a post-oil, digitally enabled future. These agendas demand unprecedented coordination across ministries, sectors and ecosystems. This includes economic diversification, digital government, sustainability, health care, education and AI leadership. At their core, GCC visions call for agile execution, citizen-centric services and institutional resilience delivered at scale and speed.

The transformation wave sweeping across the GCC has introduced significant complexity. Governments are not only scaling faster, but they are also managing dozens of interdependent national initiatives, digital reforms and policy shifts.

Despite the momentum, many xMOs are still evolving their practices to fully harness the pace of transformation. They are facing some legacy challenges:

- Manual reporting and inconsistent governance
- Misalignment between strategy and execution
- Low data maturity and limited integration

Significant opportunities exist to better leverage institutional capabilities and strengthen skills across strategy, delivery, data and digital transformation. To meet national ambitions, these offices must reimagine their role not as passive trackers of performance, but as real-time navigators of the full transformation lifecycle.

These barriers are not insurmountable but overcoming them requires understanding their root causes. Through collaborations with government and private sector organizations across the GCC, EY MENA has identified five critical challenges that consistently hinder xMO power and impact.

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# Challenges xMOs must overcome

## 1. Strategy-execution disconnect

Bridging the gap between strategy and execution requires both timely, data-driven decisions and strong leadership reinforcement. Many xMOs face challenges in translating plans into measurable outcomes. This is often due to fragmented oversight, siloed delivery streams and limited visibility into priorities. Without integrated planning and scenario analysis, resources are misaligned, and strategies remain on paper rather than delivered in practice.

## 2. Overwhelmed resources

Resource constraints often stretch xMO teams, creating risks of burnout and diluted project focus across overloaded portfolios. In many cases, teams are forced into reactive firefighting, addressing risks and delays only after they escalate. Without automation and predictive insight, leaders struggle to balance demand with capacity, leaving portfolios vulnerable to inefficiencies.

## 3. Resistance to change

Transformation often stalls not because of unwillingness, but because the benefits are not clearly visible to stakeholders and citizens. Skill shortages and limited governance frameworks can reinforce this resistance, especially when strategic initiatives feel disconnected from tangible outcomes. Without translating strategies into services that deliver measurable impact, reforms struggle to gain traction and sustain momentum.

## 4. Capability gaps

To fully realize their transformation mandate, xMOs need strong internal capabilities in digital delivery, data management and emerging technologies. The EY global government survey highlights the importance of strengthening talent and governance as critical enablers of sustainable reform. Without continued investment in upskilling and skill development, it becomes harder for xMOs to build confidence in new systems, interpret insights effectively and embed long-term adoption.

## 5. Data quality and availability

Strong data foundations are critical for any transformation.

According to EY global survey,

**45%**<sup>1</sup>

of leaders cite inadequate data infrastructure while

**51%**<sup>2</sup>

lack a clear data strategy.

Without structured, complete and accessible data, even the most advanced tools struggle to deliver meaningful insights. This lack of governance and transparency undermines trust in digital systems and slows AI adoption. As EY research demonstrates, pioneers distinguish themselves by embedding data capabilities organization-wide, not just in isolated teams. This creates unified approaches to data governance that enable scalable, trustworthy AI deployment.

# Why AI?

Overcoming these barriers requires a step-change in how xMOs operate. This change is powered by AI, strong data governance and platform-based execution models. This shift is not just operational; it is cultural and strategic.

As AI gains recognition across businesses, its key layers – machine learning, generative and agentic offer leaders and organizations immense potential. This potential extends deeply into strategy and project portfolio domains. **In the xMO world, AI brings together data from across portfolios, programs and projects to provide real-time visibility, predictive insights and automated recommendations. This elevates the role of xMOs from traditional reporting functions to proactive orchestration hubs, capable of aligning strategy and execution at the speed of reform.**

EY research shows that only **26%**<sup>3</sup> of global governments have integrated AI across their operations, yet **58%**<sup>4</sup> agree they must accelerate its adoption.

When applied to strategic portfolio management, AI transforms xMO operations across five dimensions:

- Real-time decision support
- Scenario-based planning
- Risk prediction and mitigation
- Resource optimization and alignment
- Data integrity and reporting automation

## The question becomes:

What specific capabilities must a platform deliver to address these five challenges simultaneously? ServiceNow's Strategic Portfolio Management solution was designed precisely for this purpose.

# ServiceNow SPM: empowering transformation offices

Addressing the challenges outlined above requires more than incremental process improvements. xMOs need platforms that unify strategy, data and execution in real time. This is where ServiceNow's SPM solution comes in.

SPM is more than a project tracking tool. It is a transformation orchestration platform that directly responds to the pain points xMOs face today: misalignment between plans and outcomes, fragmented data, resource bottlenecks and lack of foresight. By integrating AI, automation and data-driven planning, SPM

provides a single system of intelligence and action that enables xMOs to deliver with speed and confidence.

Unlike standalone PMO tools, ServiceNow SPM natively integrates with IT, HR, risk and citizen service workflows, creating a holistic execution layer across government ecosystems. This unified fabric is a differentiator, enabling GCC xMOs to operate on a scale while avoiding the fragmentation common in other solutions.

**The following capabilities illustrate how ServiceNow bridges the gap between the barriers discussed earlier and the needs of the next generation xMOs:**

## 1 Orchestrating strategy through services of intelligence:

xMOs often struggle to translate strategic intent into measurable outcomes. SPM bridges this gap by aligning national strategies with on-the-ground execution. Leaders can compare multiple scenarios, assess risks and returns in real time, and reallocate resources with confidence. Delivery teams benefit from unified backlogs that integrate "build" and "run" activities, maintaining continuity across daily operations and long-term transformation goals.

## 2 Proactive execution with agentic AI:

Resource constraints and overloaded portfolios create risks of burnout and diluted focus. With Agentic AI, Now Assist and Workflow Data Fabric, SPM automates monitoring and launches workflows when risks or delays emerge. It can even recommend reallocation of funding or talent, reducing manual effort, freeing up capacity, and allowing scarce resources to focus on what matters most.

# ServiceNow SPM: empowering transformation offices

## 3 Connecting strategy to citizen impact:

SPM helps overcome organizational resistance by creating clarity, alignment and transparency. Through real-time dashboards, leaders can link strategy directly to portfolios, while teams see how their work contributes to broader objectives. Automated workflows and low-code tools simplify adoption and reduce friction in daily execution. Importantly, SPM leverages the Public Sector Digital Services data model to facilitate these internal improvements, which are connected to external outcomes. This translates strategies into citizen-facing services. This dual focus strengthens internal buy-in while demonstrating measurable public impact.

## 4 Trusted AI and data governance:

Foundational data issues often limit the ability of xMOs to leverage advanced tools. SPM embeds governance by design, with explainability, traceability and audit controls that make data-driven insights transparent and trustworthy. These features help leaders build confidence in AI-enabled decisions and overcome one of the biggest barriers to adoption.

## 5 The future: autonomous orchestration:

With a unified platform, GCC governments can now empower xMOs to act as orchestration hubs:

- Aligning national strategy and initiative execution
- Automating decisions and actions based on data insights
- Scaling service delivery through intelligent workflows

This shift reflects a new model where the platform acts not just as a tool, but as a strategic technology partner enabling governments to lead with AI, foster public trust and deliver better outcomes for citizens.

# EY MENA's role: from strategy to sustainable execution

As one of ServiceNow's leading global alliance partners, EY MENA brings both deep local GCC presence and proven delivery credentials. Together, we've supported transformation offices in the region to accelerate reporting cycles, enhance portfolio transparency and embed AI-enabled decision making at scale.

**EY MENA brings more than platform implementation. We help xMOs transform into strategic control hubs that deliver measurable impact. Our approach includes:**

**1**

**Turn vision into a clear, actionable roadmap:**

EY teams work with leaders to define AI strategies aligned with national priorities and to prioritize high-impact use cases. This promotes investments in areas that can create value.

**2**

**Build the capabilities to sustain transformation:**

We design tailored upskilling programs that strengthen PMO skills, AI fluency and governance competencies. This empowers internal teams to lead digital transformation from within, reducing reliance on external resources over time.

**3**

**Embed change that lasts:**

Using the Transformation Realized™ framework, we help secure stakeholder buy-in, manage resistance and design human-centric processes. This approach sustains adoption long after the initial deployment.

**4**

**Unlock the power of trusted data:**

EY MENA supports clients in developing robust data architectures, cleansing protocols and real-time dashboards. This enables high-confidence decision-making and accelerates AI readiness.

**5**

**Track and prove value delivery:**

We establish clear KPIs and value-realization frameworks that measure speed to delivery, initiative alignment and citizen-centric outcomes. This provides leaders with the evidence they need to demonstrate transformation return on investment (ROI).

This integrated approach delivers a measurable outcome: xMOs equipped not just with advanced platforms, but with strategies, skills and governance needed to drive lasting reform and deliver better outcomes for citizens.

# Shaping the future of strategy execution

The xMOs of the GCC are at a turning point. They can continue to operate as administrative reporting centers or emerge as strategic control towers for national reform.

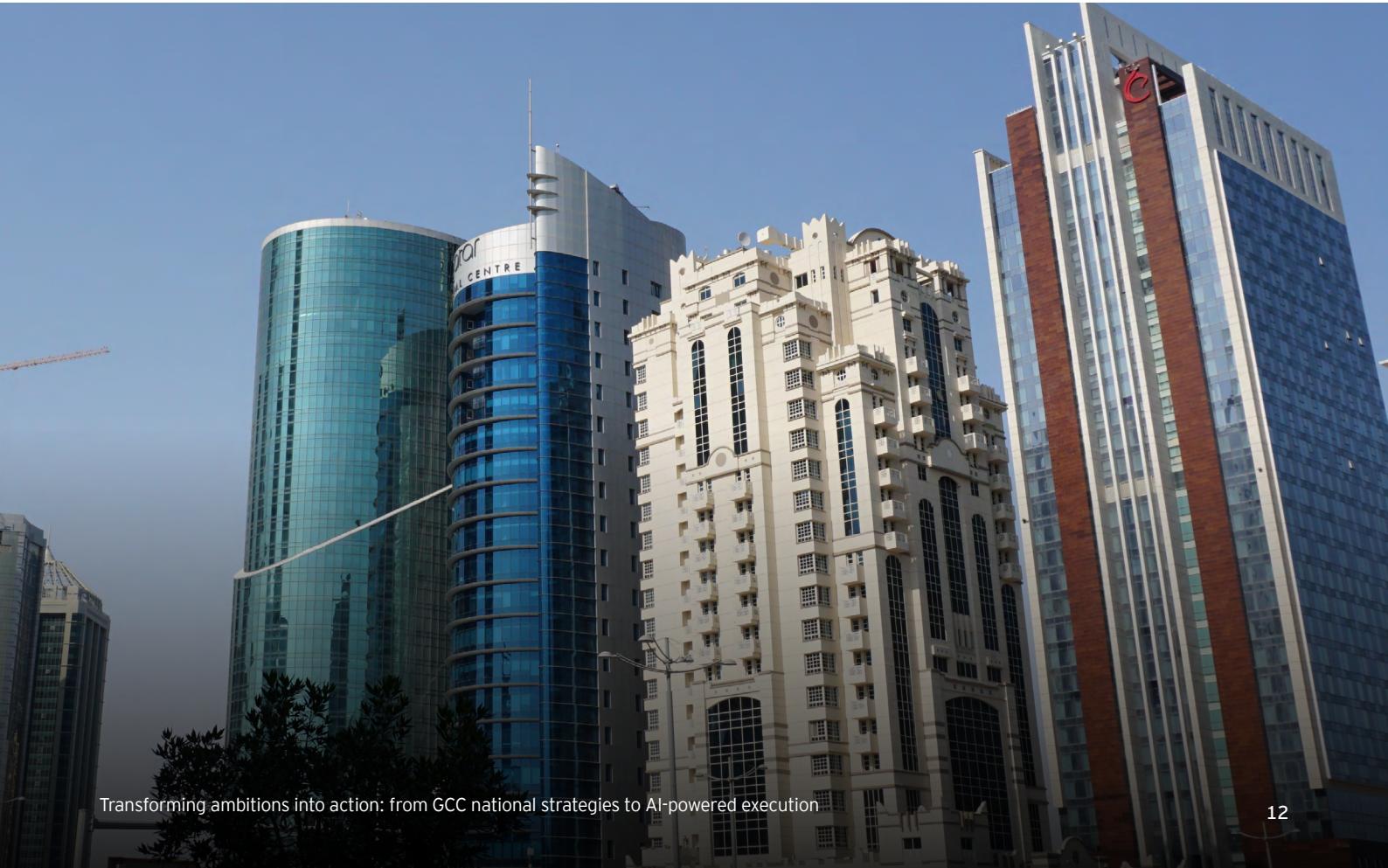
By combining advanced platforms like ServiceNow SPM with AI-driven insights and human-centered consulting, governments can finally bridge the gap between ambition and delivery.

When transformation offices transform themselves, the entire ecosystem benefits – accelerating national reform, strengthening public trust and creating lasting value for citizens.



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