

CAIO Connect Podcast: Taka Ariga Says Government Must Reimagine AI, Not Just Automate Old Systems

On the CAIO Connect Podcast, Taka Ariga told host Sanjay Puri that government must reimagine systems with AI, not just automate old processes.

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, May 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- On the latest episode of the [CAIO Connect Podcast](#), host [Sanjay Puri](#) spoke with the founder of Sol Imagination LLC, [Taka Ariga](#), about the future of artificial intelligence in public institutions. The conversation explored how agencies can adopt AI responsibly while balancing innovation, governance, workforce concerns, and public trust. Ariga, who previously led AI and data initiatives at the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), argued that government agencies must rethink their entire operating model instead of simply adding AI to outdated processes.

During the discussion, Ariga explained the role of the GAO, which serves as Congress's watchdog agency and audits federal programs across sectors such as healthcare, defense, and education. He described the organization as a "candy store" for data scientists because of the massive amount of public data and policy work involved. He also outlined OPM's role as the federal government's human resources agency, managing more than 2.3 million civilian employees. According to Ariga, both organizations taught him that AI in government is not only a technology challenge but also a policy, ethics, and workforce challenge. "To me, AI is much more than just technology," Ariga said on the CAIO Connect Podcast. He stressed that public sector AI systems must address privacy, security, data sovereignty, and workforce anxiety. He noted that government agencies cannot follow Silicon Valley's "move fast and break things" culture because



Where AI Meets Leadership

CAIO Connect Podcast



Taka Ariga, Founder of Sol Imagination LLC, with Sanjay Puri, President of CAIO Connect



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but nobody wants change."

Taka Ariga

mistakes in government can damage public trust and expose sensitive information. Instead, agencies need responsible systems that protect citizens while still improving efficiency.

Ariga also shared details about launching the GAO

Innovation Lab, which operated almost like a startup inside a century-old audit institution. He described the early months as difficult because the agency traditionally focused on risk reduction and strict auditing standards. The lab had to build cloud infrastructure from scratch, create secure AI testing environments, and develop new procurement rules for emerging technologies. Ariga said the biggest challenge was managing change inside a highly skeptical organization. "Everyone wants innovation, but nobody wants change," he said. One major theme of the podcast focused on AI leadership and workforce transformation. Ariga argued that middle managers play the most important role in successful AI adoption because they control workflows and influence employees directly. He also emphasized the importance of hiring mission-driven talent, even when government salaries cannot compete with major technology companies. According to Ariga, many AI professionals still choose public service because of the scale and immediacy of government impact. At GAO, he created a flatter organizational structure where employees led projects directly and worked across technical and policy disciplines.

The conversation later turned to AI agents and autonomous systems in enterprise and government settings. Ariga warned that many organizations still focus only on small productivity gains rather than end-to-end transformation. He said agencies must learn how to orchestrate multiple AI systems responsibly while keeping humans involved in critical decisions. He also noted that workers must adapt to probabilistic AI systems, where outputs are based on likelihoods instead of fixed answers. "The spreadsheet that you open on Monday is the same spreadsheet you open on Thursday," Ariga explained. "But with AI, the answer may be slightly different every time." Throughout the CAIO Connect Podcast episode, Ariga repeatedly argued that governance should accelerate innovation instead of blocking it. He criticized traditional approval systems that move too slowly for modern AI development and called for more agile oversight models. According to him, organizations should continuously revisit AI policies as technologies evolve. He also warned that many companies invest heavily in AI without solving meaningful problems. In his view, successful AI adoption starts with identifying the right use case, building systems that can scale beyond prototypes, and redesigning workflows for a digital-first future.

The episode ended with Ariga encouraging organizations to move beyond hype and focus on practical impact. Hosted by Sanjay Puri, the CAIO Connect Podcast highlighted how government leaders are approaching AI adoption with caution, accountability, and long-term strategy. Ariga's message was clear: AI should not simply automate the past — it should help organizations reimagine the future.

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