How cities and states can successfully manage their security stack

State and local governments are popular targets for threat actors. Managed service providers can help agencies fight back.

68% of IT thought leaders from across the public and private sectors believe that there is work to be done in order to address cyber risk, says one **Harvard Business Review report**. And for Jennifer Pittman-Leeper, a former public servant, minimizing this risk requires addressing a lack of resources within the public sector.

"We did not have the resources to appropriately keep up with the challenges presented to us," said Pittman-Leeper, now a customer engagement manager for the cybersecurity firm, Tanium. "Retention of good quality candidates was always a struggle. We would take time, get them trained up and then [the employee] would leave to go to the private sector."

This resource deficit creates significant challenges for local governments, who face an increase in threat actors, and are often forced into **paying the ransom** — an action that may cost state and local agencies **an average of $240,361**.

To effectively combat threat actors, agencies need cost-efficient tools that support and address these resource challenges and managed service providers are one such option.

The benefits of MSP's in SLED organizations

With hundreds of new cybercriminals emerging in 2021 alone, state and local governments face a complex and frightening landscape full of potential threats. Ransomware attacks directed at the government **increased by 1,885% in 2021 alone**.

An increase in ransomware prompts organizations to reassess their frameworks for patching, maintenance and updates — but with limited resources — this may be easier said than done.

This is where managed security providers can help, says Ken Ludeman, regional sales director for Tanium.

"One SLED customer was concerned that their existing technologies were giving them a false sense of security and coverage," he said. "Come to find out that their existing patch technology was missing 40% of the environment's systems."

Unlike traditional security solutions, MSPs help agencies rapidly address and remediate security concerns. For example, **one-click patching** is a remarkable feature that can help agencies patch critical vulnerabilities in under 60 seconds.

Furthermore, MSPs can help smaller agencies create a unified security posture by integrating and connecting disparate security sources into one source of truth, thereby improving compliance and diminishing risk. "State and local governments are popular targets for threat actors, and managed service providers can help agencies fight back. MSPs are uniquely positioned to help since they are technology experts that can and can alleviate resource constraints, make recommendations based on an agency's environment, and continuously improve the security posture as an agency grows and changes," said Ludeman.

Selecting the perfect match

For **94% of IT leaders**, holistic endpoint solutions helped them uncover vulnerable endpoints and effectively manage risk. Investing in MSPs is a cost-effective way for agencies to invest in the people, processes and tools found within the security operations center.

"Having accredited, certified MSP providers partnered with world-class technologies like Tanium can help the customers realize time to value," said Ludeman.

And as state and local agencies look to select a partner in the MSP space, it's important to remember that a good relationship relies on communication. "You have to be prepared, and there has to be good communication and escalation processes. All of the required attributes of good communication flow and execution have to be in place because tools alone cannot solve the problems that many organizations face today," said Ludeman

Pittman-Leeper agreed, "Tools don't just work sitting in a box. You're not protected [that way]. You have to have someone prepared to use it."

Good MSPs should provide you with holistic solutions, therefore, agencies should contemplate and know what they're looking to accomplish.

For Pittman-Leeper, a crucial part of this self-reflection requires the creation and mapping of key performance indicators that will then define how the MSP is actually meeting the goals set forth by the agency.

"It's impossible for you to determine if they're successful if those goals and objectives aren't defined with numbers," she explained. "What is it you're looking for them to do?"

It's through this combination of innovation, contemplation and communication where the value of MSPs comes alive and benefits public sector organizations.