STATE-LEVEL DOGE INITIATIVES AS A TOOL FOR GOOD GOVERNMENT OR THE CULTURE WARS?

Higher education has been propelled into the national cultural war and policy debates, a trajectory increasingly shaped by trends reflecting from individual state policies. This *States in Brief* is an overview of state DOGE initiatives, a recent trend where over a dozen states have advanced state-level initiatives fashioned after the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), established by President Trump's January 20, 2025 Executive Order.

Distinct from the federal DOGE, state DOGE initiatives operate more as a branded menu of options, rather than a fixed set of policies. State leaders have touted them as moves aimed to create efficiency, reduce unnecessary spending, and give citizens a direct line to spotlight inefficiencies. Common approaches include cancelling or returning state contracts and grants, terminating state employees, reducing state real estate holdings, crowd-sourcing citizen input on government inefficiencies, and mandating AI use. In Oklahoma, DOGE-OK's first report goes even further to recommend that the state return over $157 million in "unused or unnecessary" federal grants.

It's also important to note two prominent cultural narratives that are inextricably tied to the DOGE brand. First, an assumption of both widespread government waste and easy remedies: This feeds actions that emphasize cutting first and asking questions later. Second, there is the conflating of waste and inefficiency to resources that benefit the vulnerable or evoke concepts of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). In Florida, reports of the FL DOGE's requests for university presidents included "course, codes, descriptions and syllabuses; full details of all centers established on campus; and "the closure and dissolution of DEI programs and activities, as required by law." In April, they requested materials that reportedly included a six year lookback of "papers and drafts made available to the public or in online academic repositories …" raising concerns by faculty regarding the potential chilling effect on research and scholarship.

Certain states are adopting DOGEs with these cultural narratives in mind, while others seem to capture the brand's energy but are intentionally tailoring state-level DOGEs to better reflect state priorities without the same degree of culture war stridency. This has manifested differently in each state as they contour the mission, scope, and execution of their initiatives. State DOGE efforts have adopted use of artificial intelligence (Florida and Iowa); crowd sourced opinions through public portals (Kansas and Missouri); and made dramatic proposals for cutting state services and/or holdings (Oklahoma). States have also distanced themselves from certain aspects of the federal DOGE by emphasizing the role of the state legislature or targeting its mission to a particular area, such as South Carolina's focus on state regulatory burdens to businesses. This brief identifies multiple state DOGE models, including: executive orders, legislation, legislative committees, task forces, and public private partnerships.

Efforts to reduce government waste have a long history in both federal and state governments but coalitions such as American Legislative Exchange Council's AGE Coalition (ALEC Government Efficiency), capitalize on intrastate efforts. This combination of national momentum and a growing public acceptance to move fast and break things is resulting in a new political environment for state government accountability and spending with significant potential ramifications for higher education's state funding sources.

BACKGROUND

On January 20, 2025, the Federal Executive Order "Establishing and Implementing the President's 'Department of Government Efficiency'" was signed by the president with the purpose of modernizing technology and software to maximize governmental efficiency and productivity.

Since then, the impact of DOGE's activities has been wide-ranging and unprecedented. DOGE's work has been attributed to developing large-scale federal employee buyouts and terminations, cancelling federal contracts and grants, and identifying reductions in federal real estate.

DOGE's teams have embedded in federal agencies, gaining access to internal data systems, and leveraged this information to advance a wide range of administration goals.

As reflected in the sample list below, state DOGE models may be thematically aligned but they can vary significantly in terms of the policy tools.

STATE DOGE MODELS (as of May 2025)

COLORADO
Colorado Government Efficiency Authority
- Introduced Legislation

FLORIDA
EOG DOGE Team
- Established by Executive Order
- Expires March 31, 2026
- AI Component

GEORGIA
Red Tape Rollback Act
- Introduced Legislation SB28 for state agencies to analyze the economic impact of certain administrative rules

IDAHO
Idaho Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE Task Force)
- Idaho House and Senate Republican Leader Task Force
- Introduced Legislation HB 364 that did not pass 2025 session

IOWA
Iowa DOGE Task Force
- Established by Executive Order
- Final report within 180 days of the date of the task force's first public meeting
- AI component
- Establishes a public portal

KANSAS
Kansas Committee on Government Efficiency (COGE)
- Legislative Committee
- Establishes a public portal

Kansas Office of Government Efficiency (KOGE)
- Introduced Legislation SB 257

LOUISIANA
Fiscal Responsibility Program
- Established by Executive Order
- Report due December 31, 2025

MISSISSIPPI
Mississippi Office of Government Efficiency (MOGE)
- State auditor brand for audits
- Reports on Government Waste

MISSOURI
Missouri Government Efficiency Initiative (MODGE)

- Legislative Committee, the Missouri Senate Committee on Government Efficiency
- Establishes a public portal

NEBRASKA
Government Oversight, Accountability, and Transparency (GOAT)

- Legislative and nonprofit bill package initiative

NEW HAMPSHIRE
Commission on Government Efficiency (COGE)

- Established by Executive Order

NEW JERSEY
New Jersey Delegation on Government Efficiency

- Introduced Legislation AJR 213

NEW MEXICO
Government Accountability to Taxpayer Office (GATO)

- Introduced Legislation SB 484

NEW YORK
Commission on Government Efficiency

- Introduced Legislation S 4959/A 6089

NORTH CAROLINA
Division of Accountability, Value, and Efficiency (DAVE Act)

- Introduced Legislation SB 474
- AI component

Interim House Select Committee on Government Efficiency

- Legislative Committee

NORTH DAKOTA
Legislative Task Force on Government Efficiency

- Enacted Legislation HB 1442

OKLAHOMA
Oklahoma Division of Government Efficiency (DOGE-OK)

- Established by Executive Order
- Expires July 4, 2026
- Report issued
- Establishes a public portal

PENNSYLVANIA
Pennsylvania Department of Government Efficiency (Pa. D.O.G.E)

- Announced Intent to Introduce Legislation

SOUTH CAROLINA
Delivery of Government Efficiency Commission Act

- Introduced Legislation S 318

TEXAS
Texas Regulatory Efficiency Office (Texas DOGE)

- Enacted Legislation SB14

UTAH
Government Reform, Innovation & Transparency (GRIT)

- Established by Executive Order
- Expires January 19, 2029

WISCONSIN
Committee on Government Operations, Accountability and Transparency (GOAT)

- Legislative Committee