

Agency of Digital Services

The governor is establishing the Agency of Digital Services (ADS) now in order to address issues that have resulted in some of the state's biggest technology failures. These failures have wasted taxpayer dollars. The current model isn't working. We've listened to complaints from agencies, departments, legislators, and vendors. The governor believes a unified organizational structure for information technology (IT) will help address core technology, procurement and project management challenges.

The state is having difficulty capturing comprehensive IT metrics, including spending. We intend to account for every penny spent on IT. This information is needed to guide strategy and optimize service delivery.

Policy and standards are sometimes contradictory or nonexistent. We will publish clear statewide policy, standards and procedures that will mitigate risks to citizen data while allowing service providers access to the information they need to make decisions. We will fix inconsistent security practices that put state data at risk.

We will create a strategy that aligns with the Governor's priorities and reflects a statewide collaboration. We will do this in the context of the Program to Improve Vermont Outcomes Together (PIVOT).

The work of ADS will include a complete IT procurement review to understand and plan for reuse of data and systems. Specifically, we will inventory every IT contract in state government to make sure governance bodies understand opportunities to leverage the success of other state agencies and departments. This work will serve to increase transparency as well as feed the process to actively plan for technology use and reuse where appropriate.

Success criteria includes establishing baselines that don't currently exist and/or improving documentation of baseline data: IT spending, number of IT positions and their skillsets, systems and software currently in use and associated metrics, projects planned and in flight, catalog of policy and procedure, inventory of IT contracts for commodities and services, and a complete inventory of hardware. When these baselines are established and well understood, we will set about using the resulting data to influence outcomes across state government. Specifically, we will manage IT positions in terms of the skillsets required to support technology strategy. We will fully document and understand application attributes including requirements fulfilled by each system, annual costs and total cost of ownership, so we can see clearly the opportunities to create economies without sacrificing service to Vermonters. We believe an accurately documented project portfolio will lead to a process that gives us a better chance to prioritize IT expenditures and also create economies of scale. Procurement process and the resulting contracts will be optimized by using the same data. For example, by analyzing existing contracts, we will be able to create economies by consolidating some redundancies and optimizing licensing models.

Other success criteria include the creation or expansion of functioning, effective IT governance that guides the selection and sponsorship of IT projects. Transparent and accurate reporting to the Governor and the Legislature will help us analyze and identify strategic technology funding requirements, and avoid costs associated with decisions based on bad data. ADS will ensure appropriate disaster recovery plans and funding requirements are known to ensure business continuity. Furthermore, we are planning a framework for articulating and measuring exactly what success is. The PIVOT executive order and subsequent work sets out an approach and framework to measure success in terms of tangible outcomes for Vermonters. Improvement in technology and technology service will support those outcomes.

Every entity in state government is facing the challenge of having to provide more services with fewer resources. The Governor has focused his early efforts on identifying ways that the delivery of state services may be modernized and made more efficient. Many of these efforts rely on investment in the coordinated delivery of IT solutions to streamline processes and allow state personnel to get the most out of the effort that they put in. The 2016 Employee Engagement Survey provides documented evidence that only 35.2% of respondents feel that their organization have the staffing necessary to achieve its mission and only 56.7% believe they have the technology needed to get their work done. If the State is to be able to meet its mission and is to ask its employees to do more with less, the way that IT services in support of these efforts are delivered needs to change. We believe the Agency of Digital Services is the best course of action.