State of Vermont
Joint Fiscal Office

Independent Review
of
State Information Technology Projects,
Operations, and Organizations
(Act 42/H.543 Sec. 32)

Consolidated Summary

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The following sections describe those IT Projects and Operations that are being evaluated and monitored by the Legislative Joint Fiscal Office (JFO). In each case the process begins with a formal review that is usually, but not always, conducted by the JFO. For example, in the case of Health Information Technology Activities (section 2), the most recent evaluation was conducted by an external contractor, HealthTech Solutions. For most projects, once the initial review has been completed there may be one or more follow up reviews in the form of an Interim Update. These updates are less extensive than the original review, and are used when there have been significant changes in project direction, activities, or risks. For projects that are past planning stages and in the process of executing, there may not be a recent update if the project is generally on track. In all cases, the JFO continues to monitor project status through ongoing reviews of project management documents, status reports, independent reviews, and other documentation.

For the projects and operations listed below, evaluations are as of the date of this document and are based on the most recent documentation and information. These evaluations may be better or worse than those contained in the most recent formal review, whether a complete initial review or an Interim Update. For the most part, those projects that are facing challenges (Neutral or Weak ratings) are experiencing difficulties due to limited resources or aggressive schedules, or both. Project evaluations and related documents can be found on the JFO's web site in the "State IT" subject area: https://ljfo.vermont.gov/subjects/state-it.

1. Agency of Human Services – Integrated Eligibility and Enrollment Program

Poor	Weak	Neutral	*Strong*	Excellent

Last Project Review: Interim Update of August 30, 2019. Legislative updates and Informal reviews were continued through 2020, and the program continues to be generally on track. This program is in a combined execution and planning phase, as multiple projects are at different points in their life cycle. Overall the program continues strong, however some projects have experienced difficulties or delays due to Covid-19 and other factors. While many areas evaluated are in good shape, organizational, financial, and technical subject areas continue to present challenges. The next Interim Update is anticipated for the fall of 2021.

2. Health Information Technology Activities (HIE/HIT/VITL)

Poor	Weak	*Neutral*	Strong	Excellent

Last Review: Independent Evaluation of Vermont HIE/HIT (HealthTech Solutions) of November 10, 2017. The most significant events during the recent involved legislative hearings, discussion, and action regarding the issue of patient consent. As a result of Act 187 of 2018 DVHA had prepared and submitted a report on this issue and recommended that Vermont switch from an opt-in model (patients must specifically authorize data sharing) to an opt-out model (data sharing is authorized unless a patient forbids it). House and Senate committees heard testimony on this issue throughout the past session, and in Act 53 of 2019 directed that this change be made. During the coming months DVHA will be preparing their report on how the transition went, and will be reporting to various committees. On January 15 of 2021 the VITL Annual Report will also be submitted for review by the Green Mountain Care Board and interested committees.

3. Department of Labor – Unemployment Insurance Modernization Project

Poor	*Weak*	Neutral	Strong	Excellent

Last Project Review: Interim Update of April 10, 2020. This project originally appeared strong, as it was to build on a proven solution from another state and did not require any Vermont funding. However, the multi-

state consortium that was supposed to implement the project was dissolved in early 2020 for a number of reasons, and the project is essentially starting from scratch. At this point it appears that Vermont will attempt to complete the project on its own, however the risks of this approach are high and warrant further review. A future Interim Update has not yet been scheduled, as it will depend to some degree on DOL and ADS's finalization of planning. In any case, it is recommended that the appropriate legislative committees conduct hearings on this project during the current session.

4. Judiciary – Next Generation Case Management System Project

| Poor | Weak | *Neutral* | Strong | Excellent |

Last Project Review: Interim Update of September 30, 2017. This project continues to be strong from the Judiciary standpoint, in that it is remaining in scope, on schedule, and within budget. The phased rollouts to the various Courts has generally gone well. However, the integration of the system with external users (State's Attorneys, Defender General, Bar Association, and Law Enforcement) has raised issues over the past nine months, resulting in an overall evaluation of neutral. These issues have been the subject of several legislative committee hearings during 2020, and this focus will likely continue through 2021. At this point the JFO is continuing to monitor the project and work with the various participants to try to determine the best path forward. This path may involve requests for additional funding in order to move external participants off of obsolete systems towards more modern ones that more easily integrate with the core system.

5. Agency of Education– Shared School District Data Management System Project (Review Pending)

| Poor | Weak | *Neutral* | Strong | Excellent |

Last Project Review: None. This project was initiated through Act 58 of 2015, in which the legislature directed that all Supervisory Unions (SUs) and Supervisory Districts (SDs) must begin using a common application for tracking and reporting financial data in order to implement a Uniform Chart of Accounts. Compliance with this directive is being achieved through the Shared School District Data Management System (SSDMS), which is being implemented through the use of eFinancePlus, a commercial off the shelf (COTS) software system that is currently provided by PowerSchool, Inc. This Act originally had an implementation deadline of July 1, 2019, however this was subsequently extended via Act 6 of 2019 (deadline extension to 2020) and Act 076 of 2019 (deadline extension to 2022). Actual system deployment began in the summer of 2018 via a phased rollout model. In this model, deployment is initiated via multiple rounds, in which one or more SUs/SDs implement the SSDDMS. During the fall of 2020 reports from several SUs/SDs were received that indicated that the rollout of eFinancePlus was not proceeding smoothly, and the JFO began reviewing the project. A very high level review was conducted for the Joint Information Technology Oversight Committee in December of 2020, and a more detailed review is currently underway. While there are known weaknesses in the project, the overall status will be considered neutral until the current review has been completed.