

NC Innovation Center Report



Report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology

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Executive Summary

In 2013, the General Assembly endorsed the creation of a State Information Technology Innovation Center (iCenter) “to develop and demonstrate technology solutions with potential benefit to the State and its citizens.” The complete text of the legislation can be found in the appendix. The legislation requested quarterly reports about initiatives being developed and the resources used to support the center. This report provides an update on those initiatives for the first and second quarters of the 2014-2015 fiscal year, and a high-level summary of planned activities and policy.

Accomplishments & Ongoing Activities

Projects

State Sensor Implementation

The Office of Information Technology Services (OITS) is currently evaluating sensor options available to the State that would allow for consistent monitoring of the conditions in data and telecom server rooms. OITS network engineers currently do not have the necessary tools to monitor our server rooms remotely or consistently. Sensors will allow OITS to monitor conditions such as temperature, water activity and humidity, maintain the full value of all State equipment, and ensure that the equipment does not pose a safety risk to State employees. The Innovation center is currently undergoing a pilot which sensors are placed within three OITS data rooms. Implementing sensors throughout the state will lead to financial return on investment and increased longevity of IT equipment. Conservative estimates indicate approximately five-hundred thousand dollars in cost savings in a statewide implementation of sensors. These sensors lead to better use of tax dollars and maximize return on investment on IT equipment.

Digital Commons Project

The Innovation Center, the OITS Digital team and Cabinet Agencies initiated the Digital Commons project in late 2013. The redesign of Executive Agency websites will provide a consistent design and intuitive navigation that improves the user’s online experience. Based on requirements gathered across the agencies and work teams, a contract was awarded in July 2014 for a vendor to assist in design, user experience, information architecture, and content management strategy for Cabinet Agency primary websites. In October 2014, an additional contract was awarded to a second vendor to assist in developing and deploying the primary agency websites through an enterprise Content Management System (CMS) that enables non-technical users to manage site content in an efficient and user-friendly manner. The new websites will enable a similar user experience across desktops, tablets, and mobile devices by using a responsive design. By sharing resources, the cost associated with agencies pursuing these efforts individually is greatly reduced. Digital Commons will also consolidate the majority of websites to the same enterprise CMS and underlying platform, providing for standardization and leveraging similar resources and skillsets.



A web content management system has been selected (Drupal), a unified design direction has been established, and three websites are targeted to transition to the new platform by May, including NC.gov, Department of Cultural Resources, and the Governor's Office). In addition, the design-oriented vendor is actively working with OITS, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Office of State Human Resources on the first phase of their migration process. These agency sites are on track to launch on schedule, beginning in June 2015.

Endpoint Management System

Endpoint security management is a policy-based approach to network security that requires endpoint devices to comply with specific criteria before they are granted access to network resources. Endpoint devices can include PCs, laptops, smartphones and tablets. The Endpoint Security Management market is one that is evolving quickly. New security solutions for virtual environments and mobile technologies are on the roadmaps of many established vendors, and the State of NC needs to know what is coming. OITS will be presenting upcoming technology challenges to leaders in these markets and inviting them to present solutions that will be of strategic value to the State of NC.

Hosted Virtual Desktop

Hosted Virtual Desktop is a viable means of managing endpoints while potentially reducing the endpoint hardware costs. Endpoint devices such as thin client computers could replace more expensive traditional desktops. Selecting the most effective devices to work with North Carolina's infrastructure is critical to cost savings. The iCenter is working directly with OITS and our business partners to test the latest thin client devices as OITS works to implement this technology.

Events

Morning Java

The iCenter Morning Java is a collaborative meeting with interested parties to discuss what the iCenter does for the State. These informal conversations can range from ideation sessions for how an emerging technology could benefit the state to informational meetings on current iCenter projects. These meetings also allow the iCenter to develop a culture of innovation within State government by empowering state employees to pursue innovative ideas within their agencies.

Microsoft Training

Microsoft and the iCenter partnered to train state employees on how to adequately use the Microsoft Office Suite, Windows 8.1 and the Microsoft Surface devices. This training will allow individuals to be prepared for an agency-wide adoption of Office 365 which will be deployed throughout State agencies throughout 2015. Additionally, it will give users the ability to understand the benefits of this technology and how it can help increase efficiencies throughout the state.

Cisco Training

The iCenter partnered with Cisco to educate public agencies about the benefit and use cases of communications equipment. Cisco is working with existing state agency customers to improve awareness and productivity



utilizing communication technology. The training has benefited multiple agencies including: Office of the Courts, Department of Public Safety, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the Lottery Commission as well as several other programs.

Partnerships

Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB)

The NC Office of Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB) has established a Contractor's College as a venue for HUB businesses to understand how to be effective in competing for the contracting needs for the State. HUB has partnered with the iCenter to host its meetings and to effectively use innovative technology to conduct their presentations and workshops. The meetings host speakers from around the nation who coach North Carolina companies on how to develop their businesses additionally the participants come from different areas of NC. By partnering with the iCenter, HUB has been able to effectively coach NC companies on how to improve their businesses.

North Carolina State University

The iCenter is partnering with graduate students at NC State's Global Innovation Management program. These students come from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds to explore innovation with both private and public agencies. The students have helped in the execution, planning and developing stages of our sensor project. Their input helps us understand how to improve the implementation of sensors throughout State government and how to standardize the process for further implementation.

Knightdale High School (Wake County Public Schools)

Knightdale High School is currently revamping the strategies used in the learning experience for the students at their high school. The school is partnering with the iCenter to evaluate technology that could be used to improve the method teachers use to instruct students. Knightdale H.S. is also working with the iCenter to understand how space and furniture improvements can enhance the learning experience.

National Innovation Community

The National Innovation Community (NIC), is a forum found within the National Association for Chief Information Officers (NASCIO). Members meet virtually once a month to discuss innovative applications of technology within the public sector. The iCenter, under the leadership of the State CIO, is leading the NIC collaboration, with members coming from all 50 states.

Carolina Business Interiors (CBI) & Knoll, Inc.

The Innovation Center extends its "try before you buy" approach to furniture and workspace design. We have partnered with Knoll, Inc. and their local reseller, CBI to design collaborative workspaces where the technology we test can be integrated into the space design.



Overall Agency Utilization

Over the last quarter a wide range of state agencies have used the innovation center. Agency participation can be seen in our both projects and partnerships as we strive to create a culture of ONE IT.

Commerce | DENR | Cultural Resources | OITS | DOA | Office of the Governor | DPI |
NC Community College System | Department of Agriculture | CGIA | DHHS | NC Lottery Commission | AOC
DPS | OSBM

Process

Vendor Participation

The State's procurement process is, and will continue to be, followed to ensure a competitive bid process for all technology purchased by the State. All technology demonstrated at the iCenter is for testing and evaluation purposes only, and does not provide any vendor with preferred status or an expectation of a future business relationship. This approach has been and will continue to be made clear to the private sector participants in every interaction related to the iCenter. The newly-hired vendor liaison in OITS Strategic Sourcing will continue to emphasize this approach for all iCenter engagements.

Process Improvement

The iCenter established a virtual process for cultivating innovation across agencies during this quarter. Interested parties from State government or the vendor community can now submit innovation project ideas. An online form allows stakeholders to nominate State government projects for an innovation award. This new form enhances the iCenter process, recognizes innovation throughout state government, and drives a culture of sustainability. It is expected that this process improvement will also assist with iCenter reporting.

Resources

The primary challenge to the viability and longevity of the iCenter is the lack of a dedicated staff and budget to initiate, set up, process and manage projects, and demonstrate technology solutions. The iCenter was established with minimal costs and no full-time dedicated resources, however, a small staff and budget are necessary to carry out the mission envisioned in the legislation. The iCenter has primarily functioned through a number of resources with full-time positions that have committed additional time outside of their primary job responsibilities to support the iCenter and its projects. The costs the iCenter has incurred to date have been primarily associated with setting up and maintaining the physical space for collaboration and testing of technology (i.e. electrical circuits and outlets placed throughout the space, monitor mounts, paint, etc.). A dedicated staff and budget are necessary in order to continue the successful operation of the iCenter.



Appendix

Section 7.13, Session Law 2013-360

STATE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION CENTER

SECTION 7.13. The State Chief Information Officer (CIO) may operate a State Information Technology Innovation Center (Center) to develop and demonstrate technology solutions with potential benefit to the State and its citizens. The Center may facilitate the piloting of potential solutions to State technology requirements. In operating the Center, the State CIO shall ensure that all State laws, rules, and policies are followed. Vendor participation in the Center shall not be construed to (i) create any type of preferred status for vendors or (ii) abrogate the requirement that the State CIO ensure that agency and statewide requirements for information technology support (including those for the Office of the State CIO and the Office of Information Technology Services) are awarded based on a competitive process that follows information technology procurement guidelines. Beginning July 1, 2013, the State CIO shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology on a quarterly basis on initiatives being developed and implemented within the Center, as well as on the sources and amounts of resources used to support the Center.

