7 Ideas for Next-Generation Strategic IT Planning

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Strategic planning is an act of optimism about an organization's future. For an era in which uncertainty is common and optimism hard to find, it's notable that 28 states have refreshed or rewritten their strategic IT plans over the past few years.

At the other end of the spectrum are 17 states whose plans date back to 2006. Five other states have successfully hidden their plans on their websites (and from search engine algorithms) to thwart even a guess as to their ages. Technology plans age about as well and as quickly as technology itself. That isn't to throw stones at these 22 states. Rather, I'm suggesting they may have a chance to leapfrog the conventional wisdom and map technology investments to outcomes that matter beyond the four walls of government.

Technology plans are anchored by a core set of objectives around " identify(ing) future statewide technology needs and information resource management issues" (Alabama, 2011), including agility, capacity and security (Alaska, 2010). Many include an aspirational quality — with seemingly obligatory nods to transformation and transparency.

California may be the furthest along in articulating an expansive vision of IT's role in state government. In the 2012 iteration of its IT strategic plan, the California Technology Agency lays out a handful of crisply worded goals:

1. accessible and mobile government;

2. leadership and collaboration yield results;

3. efficient, consolidated and reliable infrastructure and services;

4. information is an asset; and

5. capable IT workforce.

But what does it mean to treat information as a yieldable asset? That may be the unpaid bill of the public-sector IT community insofar as our attention has historically been weighted toward the " T" in IT, sometimes treating the "I" as silent. That said, capital " I" information — sometimes called "data" by its friends — is instrumental as the focus expands from a narrow view of what IT does to a definition that includes the important work of producing the results people want from government.

If the citizen is the common decision point in how government functions and what government does, it seems right to redouble our efforts to group and measure outcomes related to doing the public's business in ways that reflect people's experiences with government.

Consider this first cut at a seven-bucket framework that could help reinvigorate discussions around what should be called out in the next generation of strategic IT plans:

1. Responsive and anticipatory — indicators of improved service delivery and greater citizen engagement.

2. Trustworthy — measures of transparency, privacy and security.

3. Available — government services through all channels — mobile, social, Web, physical — all supported by IT systems and networks.

4. Fast — the speed of connections via a robust broadband infrastructure that lets people live, work and interact with their government online.

5. Strong and flexible — demonstration that IT has increased government's capacity to meet growing demand for service at less cost.

6. Affordable — demonstration that IT has been used to cut cost structures and deliver services cheaper than conventional means.

7. Catalytic and collaborative — demonstration of how technology is being used to foster collaboration across boundaries and with private and nonprofit sectors.

Planned and measured in these terms, IT becomes inextricably linked with the things elected officials care about and the public wants. If IT becomes more fully understood for its results, governors, mayors and county executives may even get to the point that they want to be seen in public with their CIOs.

http://www.govtech.com/policy-management/7-Ideas-for-Next-Generation-Strategic-IT-Planning.html