# Carlos Ramos Appointed State CIO of California

Matt Williams | June 28, 2011



California Gov. Jerry Brown stayed close to home in naming Carlos Ramos the state's top technology executive on Monday, June 27.

Having worked for more than two decades in various capacities for state agencies, Ramos, 48, is well known in the public-sector IT community for his project management expertise.

From 2006 to 2008, Ramos directed the newly created Office of System Integration that manages the state Health and Human Services Agency's multibillion dollar IT portfolio. Ramos said the new office has since enjoyed a string of project successes while avoiding a major failure.

"They've developed a model for managing large, complex technology projects which I think needs to be evangelized to the rest of the state – and really, beyond the state," Ramos said Monday evening in a phone interview with *Government Technology*.

His background in portfolio management likely caught the attention of the Brown administration, which recently has coped with unflattering headlines about expensive and long-running IT projects gone awry. A modernization of the state's financial information system, called "Fi$Cal, has struggled and is expected to cost in the neighborhood of $1.6 billion. Meanwhile, some Superior Court judges and counties are crying foul over the state's ongoing implementation of a unified court case management system, which is several years behind schedule and has ballooned to nearly $2 billion – eight times more money than projected a decade ago.

Ramos said he hasn't spoken yet with Brown about what the governor wants him to specifically do. Brown did make it clear, Ramos said, that the state's technology needs to work better and serve constituents more effectively.

"He's trying to implement fundamental, real reform in the way we do our budgeting and management of California, and he's looking at trying to make government function better – more effectively and more efficiently," Ramos said, articulating why he's excited to join Brown's Cabinet.

It remains to be seen how Ramos will change course from Teri Takai, who served as California's state CIO for two and a half years before leaving last October to become the Defense Department's IT chief.

Takai came to California after making her reputation in Michigan, where she led consolidation initiatives in the state government and in the automobile industry. Under ex-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Takai brought a similar approach to California by centralizing policymaking within the CIO's office, while allowing the state government's 130 agency-level CIOs and 8,000 IT workers a measure of day-to-day autonomy. She worked to consolidate data centers and reduce energy consumption while overhauling how the state's IT projects are monitored and managed through their life cycle. The ultimate aim was to eliminate waste and save billions of dollars as lawmakers in the California Legislature struggled to bridge gaping budget deficits – a problem that persists.

"I thought she had some really good ideas," Ramos said about Takai's work, "and I think some of the things she was trying to do for California were the right things to do. Fundamentally she was trying to rationalize the state's IT portfolio. I intend to do the same thing."

Ramos said he's keeping an open mind about his future plans as technology secretary. First he wants to take a close look at all of Takai's initiatives to see what's working and what isn't, and then he'll visit with the state's agency secretaries and department directors to learn more about their priorities.

He said he already knows many of them thanks to his work experience in state government. From 2004 to 2008, he was the "agency information officer" of the state

Health and Human Services Agency, with  IT portfolio oversight of the 14 departments under the agency's watch. During that time, Ramos said he provided guidance and mentoring to those department CIOs. From 2001 to 2004, he was director of the Stephen P. Teale Data Center, one of the state's two general-purpose data centers at the time. Other positions Ramos has held in California include: deputy director and CIO for the Department of Social Services (1999-2001), branch chief for the child welfare services case management system for the Department of Social Services (1997-1999), and principal budget analyst for the Department of Finance (1989-1997).

Since leaving public service in 2008, Ramos has started an IT consulting business and is a senior fellow for the Center for Digital Government, a national research institute that advises on the state and local government IT market. (The Center for Digital Government is owned by *Government Technology's* parent company, e.Republic.)

Ramos believes these close ties to California and government IT in general should be advantageous because he already understands each agency's mission, their ongoing projects and who is leading them. "So I don't think I'll have a steep learning curve," he said.

It appears California's technology secretary also will have support from vendors. Phil Bond, president and CEO of TechAmerica, a prominent advocacy association for the technology industry, praised Brown's selection of Ramos, citing his leadership in the technology field and his reputation for being a consensus-builder.

"This is a critical position in moving California's government forward and Carlos Ramos is the right choice to fill it," Bond said in the statement Monday.

Ramos will make a $175,000 salary as secretary of the California Technology Agency, pending confirmation from the state Senate.

http://www.govtech.com/policy-management/Carlos-Ramos-Appointed-State-CIO-California.html