

Frequently asked questions about IT CONSOLIDATION

August 1, 2011

A new law resulting from the 2011 legislative session calls for the consolidation of Minnesota executive branch information technology under the State Chief Information Officer. Read the law's language [here](#).

Obviously, this statute significantly affects every aspect of state IT business and operations. In particular, it affects over 1800 state employees and the IT systems upon which the State of Minnesota depends to get its business done. As a result, planning is on the 'fast track' at the enterprise level and outreach has begun to agency leadership and IT staff to coordinate implementation. Done well, this consolidation offers the State a unique opportunity to position IT as an enabler of exciting programmatic government reform.

Communication on the planning efforts is a key to the initiative's success. Therefore, updates from State CIO Carolyn Parnell and state leadership will continue on a regular basis throughout the planning process.

This is uncharted territory and there is, of course, a lot to figure out and do. As a result, much of people's most immediate questions and concerns cannot be answered yet. But here is a basic start.

GENERAL INFORMATION

What will "IT Consolidation," as described in law, entail?

The IT consolidation law mandates that the State CIO shall control and direct all executive branch information and telecommunication technology spending by July 1, 2013.

What agencies and entities does this include?

The language is very broad, encompassing the executive branch. A few entities were directly excluded in the language. OET is verifying and will communicate a complete list as soon as possible.

What job classifications are included in the consolidation?

The statute does not dictate the exact job classifications that are included. Rather, it focuses on IT as a business line within state agencies, and specifies that "support" for IT functions is included, too. OET will work with the agencies to identify the actual activity that is dedicated to information technology and develop a methodology to ascertain who is "in" and who is "out." This will take time to work out.

What responsibilities will OET have?

Beginning October 1, OET will be "responsible" for IT systems and services to state agencies. That includes, but is not limited to data centers, mainframes, servers, desktops and laptops, networks, e-mail and other office systems, business application software, and help desk and maintenance for all of these systems and services. How OET centralizes that responsibility is something to be carefully worked out. OET leadership does not have all the answers. OET leadership also does not yet have definitive answers about what "systems" are in scope. That will be reviewed and analyzed in the months ahead, with the help of agency IT staff.

What will OET's approach be to the planning and the staging of the consolidation?

OET and its agency partners will begin with the immediate milestones: centralizing the management of staff and associated dollars. The timeline to do this is very short, and OET and MMB aim to develop a workable plan that will not interrupt the IT business and momentum at the agencies. It is very important that the process minimizes disruption to state business and to the people who provide excellent IT service within the current structure.

Therefore, once the mechanics of the initial transfer is worked out, we will step back to do the strategic planning necessary to meet the intent of the law and integrate state IT in the best way possible over the long term. In the meantime, the actual operations at OET and at the agencies will generally run as they normally do.

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION

How will OET assume its new responsibility?

The law specifies that within one year, OET will enter into service level agreements with each state agency regarding their IT systems and services. In the meantime, OET will work out with MMB and the agencies the appropriate means for coming to agreement about the methodology and scope of the immediate transfers. There is still a lot to be worked out.

How will IT staff be integrated? Is my job in jeopardy due to IT consolidation?

There is no way of knowing at this point whether changes in roles and responsibilities will occur either at the agencies or in OET. The goal is to keep operations running to continue and improve on meeting the business needs of agencies through IT. What we do know, is that with this consolidation, all IT employees – regardless of where they work – will have the same opportunities for career advancement and retraining.

When will OET and agencies begin to negotiate the Service Level Agreement?

The first phase of consolidation is to keep operations running while changing the HR and Finance relationships from agencies to OET. The SLAs related to how service is delivered will come subsequent to that, but we don't have a more specific date at this time.

Will all state IT employees move immediately to the Centennial Office Building?

No, the legislation allows the state CIO to assign employees to work for agencies and does not require a physical move. Thus, all agency state IT employees will still work on behalf of their agencies and be housed in their current location. And their primary responsibility will remain the same – *to serve the business needs of their agency*. Physical changes for individuals over time will only happen when there is a business need.

How will all of the classifications, pay scales and seniorities of different staff be handled?

This will be addressed in long-range planning. At the time of the transfer, OET leadership anticipates that staff will maintain their current positions, classifications and salaries.

When will OET be responsible for IT projects?

IT projects are part of the overall IT activity and spend, so management of them will move within OET's responsibility. However, the implementation/management of existing projects is unlikely to move or change. The timeline and reporting for specific projects will be worked out. Eventually, the appropriation for state IT projects will be made directly to OET, and not to individual agencies, and OET will manage and disburse the appropriation on behalf of the agency.

When will the transfer of MNGEO take place?

The consolidation mandates the transfer of the Minnesota Geospatial Information Office from the Department of Administration to OET. The timeline for this transfer has not been decided.

Does this mean that agencies will be required immediately to consume OET services as utility services and what happens to the customer/service provider relationship?

This consolidation, in itself, does not change the existing definition of “utility” (required) and “market” (optional) services for individual agencies. Agencies will continue to operate as they are while we work together on a strategic plan. That long-range plan will outline the State’s opportunities and strategies for service delivery efficiencies that benefit all. It is likely that there are efficiencies to be gained from consolidating some “low hanging fruit,” just as there are reasons for some functions remaining distributed. We simply don’t know until we plan. Ultimately, the law stipulates that the State CIO has discretion in granting exceptions to sourcing decisions made on behalf of the enterprise. Those decisions will be based on the business case and business needs of the organization.

How can I stay informed?

Your agency CIO will be the main conduit for information about what is happening as the first “ramp-up planning” occurs over the next few weeks. As part of this early effort, we are putting together some direct information channels that you can also consult. First up is the [OET website](#), where we will continue to post FAQs as details become available. Also check out the OET [FaceBook page](#), an informal forum for news of interest to state IT professionals. Coming soon – a SharePoint site for statewide IT staff.