

Issue Brief

Managing IT Project Implementation for Success

Four strategies make new technology deployment clearer, simpler and positive for everyone

The saying “the proof is in the doing” holds very true for government IT projects. In the project planning stage, new systems and technologies are so tantalizing and new IT services hold such promise for results. Yet these planning visions can’t be realized unless IT successfully manages the implementation stage.

If only achieving that successful project management was easy. Most IT projects involve numerous and complex elements, schedules and players, which means success can be long in coming and hard won. But by applying four key strategies for IT project management, it is possible to make the implementation effort clearer, simpler and positive for all stakeholders.

Strategy 1: Create an IT Project Roadmap

In government, the best laid IT plans can change with the next election, funding cycle or regulatory action. Your ability to adapt to these changes will be higher if you have established a comprehensive, multi-year roadmap of planned IT projects.

Creating a project roadmap also benefits your IT department’s efforts by providing clear direction on issues such as:

- Prioritizing implementation of specific IT projects, including new deployments and upgrade and refresh programs
- Establishing principles for measuring the outcomes and results of IT projects
- Identifying the role of “off-the-shelf” versus custom solutions and premises-based versus cloud solutions in your overall IT infrastructure
- Specifying the role of mobility support within IT services

Once this technology plan or roadmap has been developed, it’s important to maintain it as a living document. Regular updates will help your agency accommodate new technologies, business requirements and user needs. And a current roadmap can be useful for demonstrating the value of IT investments and garnering budget and organizational support for specific IT projects.

A best practice recommended in a Center for Digital Government Special Report notes, “Develop a long-term roadmap based on budget and achievable objectives...[but] don’t be afraid of changing course if things aren’t working the way you planned.”¹

For More Information

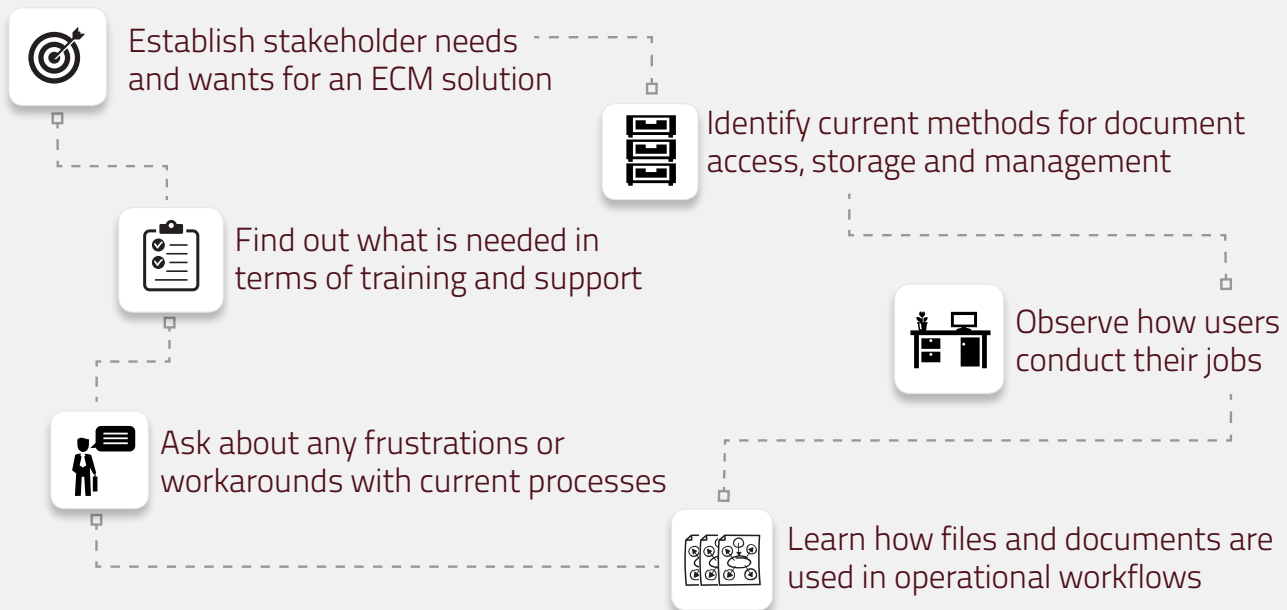
Detailed insights and recommendations for this topic are presented in the Center for Digital Government guide, “Selecting and Sustaining IT Investments in Government.” To download a free copy, visit www.govtech.com/technology-investment-guide or www.governing.com/technology-investment-guide.

Strategy 2: Define Specific IT Projects

Conducting both formal and informal discovery of stakeholder needs and wants, as well as identifying organizational goals, hurdles and opportunities, produces essential input for defining individual IT projects. One municipal executive noted that the ongoing role of government CIOs and IT departments will

THE DISCOVERY PROCESS:

An Enterprise Content Management (ECM) Example



have less to do with managing technical problems and be more focused on enabling the government's business and coordinating new technology deployments in alignment with the organization's goals.²

A clear and thorough project definition sets the stage for a successful IT project from the very start. One activity that is often overlooked in this definition process is the simple act of talking to users and observing how they do their jobs. These conversations will likely yield insights that not only point to potential new solutions, but also cast light on the operational, training and support factors that will influence user adoption.

For example, in an ECM project, users can help IT identify core factors such as current methods for document access, storage and management; how files and documents are used in operational workflows; and records retention requirements for inactive documents. User frustrations and workarounds for current processes can also become important criteria for selecting an ECM solution.

Strategy 3: Identify Project Success Factors

Which factors will really indicate whether *this* IT project is a success? To answer this question, establish the baseline measures of key project factors to assess before and after project implementation. These measures may be qualitative and quantitative, for example: What are you being asked to justify and count when reporting on results? How does your organization measure success for both IT and the business-side stakeholders you serve?

While you may also measure financial factors such as return on investment (ROI), payback and total cost of ownership (TCO) in a fashion similar to private companies, these factors may not necessarily be at the top of your list. Instead, "public good" factors that reflect the mission and organization of the department or government as a whole may have an over-arching importance. Examples of these factors include:

- Reduced over-the-counter time for transactions
- Increased self-service opportunities to meet constituent expectations
- Reduced backlog of cases, permit applications, etc.
- Fewer calls for general information and help with applications and processes
- Increased client and citizen satisfaction because of better service

Strategy 4: Manage the Managers

The value delivered by an IT project and its impact on organizational goals may not be readily apparent to elected officials, business-side managers and users. A Center for Digital Government Special Report noted, "It has always been harder and slower to implement new technologies, processes and certainly business models in the public sector than the private. The difference can be even more pronounced when tackling technology projects that force people from their departmental comfort zones into the unknown wilderness of the connected, collaborative government enterprise."³

When talking with business managers and system users, the following points can foster a productive discussion about IT plans and priorities:⁴

- Engage in open discussions about proposed changes from the very beginning of the project.
- Share your business case with users as well as agency managers, elected officials and funding source representatives.
- Focus on constituent concerns, emphasize cost savings and highlight the user benefits delivered by the new IT solution.
- Make implementation simple for users and provide multiple options for user training.

At a minimum, an annual report on IT project status and outcomes can help your non-IT colleagues recognize the results achieved. An annual report also provides useful context over time, as different agency personnel and elected officials become involved in decision-making about technology directions and investments. The data collected for IT reports can also help to justify budget requests for the next round of IT initiatives.

How New IT Solutions Deliver Results for State and Local Governments

In addition to these four strategies, lessons from the solution choices and project strategies of government peers — as shown in the following case studies — can be very helpful in planning your own IT projects.

Higher Efficiency from Online Case Management

Even if this state's child support enforcement office could find file space for 60,000 active cases, a 40 percent reduction in staff made it difficult to keep up with document filing. Compounding the problem of difficult-to-find information, case data was dispersed between paper files and a legacy electronic case management system.

After implementing a new online system for managing child support cases, enforcement staff were able to process most files electronically; paper filing was performed only selectively and the amount of filing came under control. When actively working on a case, staff received the electronic files 60 times faster, which improved client service. The ability to store data and documents centrally benefited the entire organization with lower costs and improved efficiency.

Cost Savings and Increased Productivity from ECM

Employees in a state housing finance agency regularly handle files that range from 300 pages for a single-family home loan to more than 7,000 pages for a commercial loan. Staff continue to add documents to the file throughout the life of the loan.

Slow retrieval and paper-intensive loan processes hindered staff productivity. Complying with many regulations, including retention periods that stretch as long as 60 years, was difficult. Customers and partners sometimes found it hard to work with the agency, a concern for this customer-focused organization.

After implementing a new enterprise content management system, agency employees are three times more productive because they no longer need to search for paper documents. Electronic document storage allowed the agency to release almost 1,000 square feet of office space, saving \$175,000 in annual lease costs.

Increasing Workloads, Same Staff Levels

Departments that deliver employment and family services at the county level have realized increased caseworker efficiency after implementing ECM systems. In one county, the system makes it easier for caseworkers to manage the volumes of files they deal with and meet requirements for expedited

and routine processing of benefits. Without needing to handle and track paper, caseworkers can do their processing work much faster. Client appointments are expedited because employees can look up information on the spot and determine at a glance if all needed documents have been submitted, which eliminates the frustration of multiple visits for clients.

In another county, moving more than 300 unique forms to an electronic document system has produced a level of efficiency that allowed the government to forgo new staff hires but still respond to a 40 percent increase in caseloads caused by the recession.

Another county is improving client service by retrieving documents immediately instead of waiting for delivery of paper files. And with the associated reduction in document processing and storage costs, the county can reallocate funds to more direct services.

Repeatable Strategies for Every IT Project

The four strategies described in this issue brief — creating a roadmap, defining specific projects, identifying success factors and managing the expectations of business managers — are relevant for every project taken on by your IT department. Learn from your government peers' experiences and apply the strategies consistently, and you'll find the efforts for implementing IT projects become easier and more effective for everyone.

Endnotes

1. Center for Digital Government Special Report, "Smarter, Leaner, Faster: Governments in the Age of Enterprise IT Services,"
<http://forms.erepublic.com/gt-paper-step1-default?r=gt-paper-step2-default&contentID=155681845>
2. *Government Technology*, "Four CIOs Discuss the Future of IT,"
www.govtech.com/policy-management/Four-CIOs-Discuss-the-Future-of-IT.html
3. Center for Digital Government Special Report, "Smarter, Leaner, Faster: Governments in the Age of Enterprise IT Services,"
<http://forms.erepublic.com/gt-paper-step1-default?r=gt-paper-step2-default&contentID=155681845>
4. Ibid.

HYLAND
SOFTWARE

One of the world's largest independent ECM software vendors, Hyland Software is the developer of OnBase. An award-winning suite of document and process management solutions, OnBase has a proven record of solving problems resulting from time consuming, costly and error plagued manual tasks. Available on-premises or as software as a service (SaaS), OnBase installs quickly, cost effectively and is designed to grow with organizations. Today, people at more than 10,500 organizations in 67 countries have the time to do the things that really add value thanks to OnBase. For these and other successes in its 20 year history, Hyland Software is a Leader in the Gartner Magic Quadrant for Enterprise Content Management, 2011.

For more information, visit www.hyland.com and <http://www.hyland.com/government>.