County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

March 29, 2022

TO: Jeffrey C. McKay, Chairman and Members
Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

FROM: Edward H. Blum, Chairman and Members *EHB*
Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee (ITPAC)

SUBJECT: FY 2023 ITPAC Budget Letter to the Board of Supervisors **DRAFT**

ITPAC's recommendations to the Board draw on the combined expertise and experience of its IT professional members as well as regular interactions with DIT senior leadership. ITPAC reviews IT-based services, staffing, cost-effective technology use, technology strategy, and IT investments. This allows the Committee to knowledgeably recommend innovative, responsive County practices and expenditures.

Effectively using and leveraging technology has been vital to keeping the County fully operational during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now the basis for developing and implementing data-driven insights and evidence-based strategies. DIT actively develops innovative ways to maintain and provide quality sustainable services to residents. ITPAC supports efforts to do so in an agile, responsive, and equitable manner. To ensure this, ITPAC supports expanding and strengthening IT investments even in an uncertain fiscal environment. Doing so will provide DIT the ability to adapt as needed to address new opportunities, repurpose resources, and help ensure high-quality IT services across County agencies.

ITPAC endorses the DIT strategic roadmap. Focus areas include enhancing and expanding mobility, re-shaping the organizational culture, building a digitally focused government, and enabling an empowered workforce.

Flexible, Cost-effective IT Leadership Is County Strength:

ITPAC is pleased that the County's IT Program continues to be recognized by independent IT professional groups and publications as a national best practice for governance, investment, and low-risk delivery supporting the Board's goals and strategies.

During the pandemic DIT, with the assistance of DMB and other partners, identified and implemented technology options to support the needs of a remote workforce. In implementing technologies to enhance the ability of staff and BACs such as ITPAC to work remotely, DIT has addressed work options likely to reflect how government operates into the future, some of which might notably reduce overhead and operating costs such as office space. This thrust should be supported in budget planning.

Areas of Concern/Opportunity:

Staffing Challenges: As the DMV region continues to build its reputation as a hub for IT and cyber security talent, the marketplace for that talent is constantly growing more competitive. Many IT professionals are lured to private sector employers at speeds and compensation the County's hiring practices cannot match. DIT is continually challenged to identify, hire, and retain needed IT talent. In addition, nearly 25 percent of DIT staff is either in DROP or eligible to retire within the next two years.

Maintaining DIT's high level of performance is in serious jeopardy unless a new plan for hiring technical talent can be implemented. ITPAC strongly recommends the County seek creative opportunities, collaborations, and solutions in this area. For example, following a model used successfully with specialized technical professionals in several Federal agencies, make arrangements for and recruit IT professionals who can maintain their private sector employment while realizing long-term career benefits by working on assignment for a time with local government helping residents and businesses and influencing positive change in the community. This model may be an option for identifying a candidate for a position such as Chief Data Officer for an initial or transitional period.

Protection/Use of Wide-Spread County Data: Cyber threats continue to grow and become more sophisticated while the County's technology footprint is expanding. Timely deployment of security protection supporting all levels of applications across the entire County is critical to ensure resilient and uninterrupted operations as well as protected access to a wide variety of data. This is now a key component of the County's overall security infrastructure and must continue to be a priority in the budget.

Data Proliferation and Data Analytics: Expectations for DIT and County agencies to securely gather, manage, preserve, and analyze data are increasing since those actions are critical to support service efficiency and agency productivity. Managing data with its growing value and building data analytics will be a key to measuring the success of the County's and DIT's strategic initiatives. This opportunity area will require innovative solutions due to the extensive proliferation and complexity of data.

The County has established a multi-agency data analytics unit to develop policies, practices, data products, and tools. The intent is to increase access, produce actionable information, and foster continuous improvement. A first task is to develop a countywide "Data Analytics Framework," with guidelines and structure for consistent, repeatable data analytics. The framework includes developing a data management plan, establishing enterprise data governance, and creating the required technological infrastructure (architecture, security, software etc.) This enhanced use of consistent, repeatable data analytics, indicators, and metrics will be critical to identifying, extracting, and gaining key insights from the County's large and growing data resources. ITPAC strongly endorses increased investments in this essential area. As this area gains further importance, ITPAC further recommends that the Board consider establishing a Chief Data Officer to oversee and coordinate this multi-agency activity. This is an area of substantial interest to ITPAC and we will provide additional input and expertise to county leadership on this topic soon.

Agencies' Business Process Transformations: Successfully utilizing technology is now a key part of business process transformations. Often, agency business changes have significant IT implications not clear at the outset. To achieve effective results, it is critical for DIT to be engaged early in the process working with stakeholders and agencies as a trusted partner. When developing cost plans, it is necessary to consider required IT implications and investments (both within the agency and in the central IT department) to achieve the project goals and long-term sustainability of the transformation.

Agility and Time Required to Execute Contracts: The County would benefit greatly from increased contracting agility and a reduction in time to execute IT contracts. Current law, policy, and other related requirements often extend the timeframe required to implement needed technology projects. Slow contracting can actually prevent implementation or increase costs; it has done just that many times.

Efficiency and Effectiveness Recommendations: ITPAC supports the following for more effective use of resources.

- Continue to focus on projects and expenditures that improve service for a mobile workforce conducting County business remotely within a secure framework. The criticality of managing Cyber Security and reducing risks of disruptions to operations and services is paramount.
- Expand work on enterprise-wide data governance with analytics. Harness the enormous amounts of data to make more effective budget and programmatic decisions. ITPAC endorses increased investments in this essential area
- Seek ways to provide and incorporate equitable access to technology across Fairfax County.
- Collaborate and partner with others in the area (such as FCPS or IT companies with significant local presence) to co-create solutions and services. Examples include predictive analytics, artificial intelligence (AI) and related "smart/connected communities."
- Promote strategies encouraging future growth. These include efforts to explore and analyze opportunities to deploy innovative technologies that enable business growth across all sectors. Some ideas may include applications of blockchain, new electronic payment methods, artificial intelligence, robotics, automation, and others.

Additional FY23 Recommendation Highlights

- ITPAC supports utilizing federal and other outside revenues to make additional IT investments in areas such as reinforcing security of the County's IT infrastructure, expanding the County's video tele-conferencing capabilities, and enhancing/updating the WiFi networks in County facilities.
- The County and DIT should work with Federal and State agencies to benefit from the massive infrastructure investments funded by the Federal infrastructure legislation (PL 117-58). Billions of dollars are designated for broadband coverage equity and related areas within DIT's purview
- Continue the innovative multi-year, multi-budget process investment strategy for major IT projects such as the Planning Land Use System (PLUS), the Human Services Integrative Roadmap, and other similar projects. This achieves operational improvements while benefiting from improving technology innovations and providing timely funding.
- Provide additional funding as needed to obtain and maintain required licenses for software and other core systems. Costs here are increasing rapidly and will continue to grow in future years.

Conclusion

ITPAC appreciates the opportunity to have direct input into the County's IT processes. The County must stay abreast of the latest technologies to meet its goals. ITPAC looks forward to continuing advising on and supporting Fairfax County's best practices for technology governance and implementation strategies.

Cc:
Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee
Bryan Hill, County Executive
Christina Jackson, Chief Financial Officer
Ellicia Seard-McCormick, Deputy County Executive
Gregory Scott, Chief Information Officer

BACKGROUND:

ITPAC consists of 15 citizens with technology knowledge, expertise, and experience. Each BOS member appoints one ITPAC member. The others are appointed by the Fairfax County School Board, the Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Civic Associations, the League of Women Voters, and the Northern Virginia Technology Council. ITPAC meets regularly with DIT leadership to review plans and provide advice about challenges and IT solutions in light of developments occurring in other governments and the private sector