



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

December 6, 2012

TO: Mr. Edward L. Long, Jr.
County Executive

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

SUBJECT: Recommendation Regarding the IT Budget Plan for FY 2014

Based on ongoing review with DIT of Fairfax County IT investments, resources, budget, and service needs, ITPAC has summarized information about and strategic priorities for Fairfax County IT we believe are critical in preparing the FY 2014 budget.

ITPAC is aware that all departments have been directed to develop budget reductions, with specific programmatic reductions for FY 2014 and themes for FY 2015. Based on budget reductions over the past years, including particularly deep cuts in DIT resources in FY 2004 and FY 2010, ITPAC recommends that the DIT reductions be as small as practicable.

DIT mostly operates behind the scenes. But it has become the central enabler for much of what the County does and what County citizens see. The IT infrastructure furnishes essential operational support to most functions and programs of the County government. IT enables maintaining critical services and delivering high-quality, responsive services and open government in response to growth in demand and public expectations— allowing county agencies that directly provide services to the public to do more with less.

Seriously reducing DIT resources below already Spartan levels will reduce DIT's ability to support existing infrastructure and services and, especially, to add or improve important services in agencies that need them. We all need to understand the results of lowered support levels and ensure that effects on specific County programs or slower response times to citizens over all programs are recognized and acceptable results.

Agencies often assume that DIT can pick-up their current IT support work (e.g., help desks or data management) in response to their own budget reductions. While there may be savings to that agency, and perhaps some consolidation cost savings to the County, there would be a cost increase in DIT operations. There is a strong need for governance policies and procedures that determine what resources would need to be transferred to DIT to meet such shifted requirements.

DIT staffing has been decreased by over 30 positions since FY2000, while during the same period DIT's responsibility and workload have increased significantly, with mounting responsibility for essential County systems. For example, County website use is up substantially – for information and for services such as tax payments, licenses, recreational management, and zoning matters that previously required many more personnel. Security incursions and attempted invasions that must be blocked have more than quadrupled. The ratio of IT expenditure to total value of the enterprise is now below nationally recognized median levels for organizations of the size and complexity of Fairfax County. If this continues or worsens, quality, service options, and reliability will be noticeably affected.

In this context, ITPAC identifies the critical strategic considerations for the coming budget year to be:

1. Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Strategy. Enabling and/or requiring County employees to provide their own IT devices (e.g. tablet and notebook computers, smartphones, etc.) is a potential opportunity to both reduce capital expenditures (e.g., for desktop computers and land-line phones) and improve employee satisfaction. We suggest establishing the standards and policies necessary to ensure that network compatibility and information security requirements are met while at the same time providing employees the freedom to conduct business on their personally-owned devices.

2. Consolidation. Even early in its use, FOCUS has already shown the value of consolidating some IT services provided by both the County and the County Schools. The County should examine the feasibility of consolidating additional IT support between the County and the school system to drive efficiencies and potentially enable reductions in overall headcount and labor cost. In particular, based on highly successful corporate implementations, we suggest considering an IT Skill Center to which all IT employees across systems and agencies would be assigned, to provide matrix support to the County and/or the school system depending on skill needs and priorities.

3. Cyber Security. Going forward, cyber security will be an increasingly important issue facing all organizations, including the County. We suggest the County plan for increasing its focus (and expenditures) in this area.

4. IT Staff Compensation. As Fairfax County seeks to reduce cost, it will continue to face significant challenges in recruiting quality talent in Northern Virginia's very competitive IT labor market. Freezing or reducing compensation levels for IT staff would only exacerbate these challenges and increase the risks associated with attracting and retaining the IT talent the County will require.

5. DIT-Agency Resource Reconciliation and Governance: As the County faces new budget challenges, increasing agency requirements for new external or internal connections and automated workload, 24 x 7 IT support for citizen services, and rapidly improving technology capability, the necessary IT resources must be available. Each agency project justification should include the IT resources and DIT budget required. For example, if an agency eliminates an IT function to meet its budget needs, unless the function is to be permanently eliminated in the County, the resulting implied increased expense for DIT must be part of the plan for this action. Although the County has some means of dealing with the DIT resources new agency applications require, a rigorous County-wide governance system for overall Agency-DIT resource reconciliation is needed to ensure effectiveness and affordability.

6. Revenue Generation. As Fairfax County faces potential budget challenges in future years, potential exists to generate revenue as an alternative to simply cutting spending. This could be done by leveraging the County's IT expertise, in conjunction with its cloud strategy, to provide services to smaller or less IT-savvy local governments. We suggest conducting a serious study that would quantify this potential along with the appropriate policy, governance, and risk management approaches.

ITPAC recommends continued focus on IT as a core resource for productivity, citizen service, and managing County growth through deliberate pursuit of useful technologies (phasing out expensive obsolete technologies and operational requirements) and usage strategies.

Cc: Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee
David J. Molchany, Deputy County Executive
Wanda Gibson, Chief Technology Officer
Susan Datta, Chief Financial Officer
