



County of Fairfax, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

December 8, 2020

TO: Bryan Hill
County Executive

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

SUBJECT: FY 2022 ITPAC Interim Budget Letter to the County Executive

Faced with Covid-19, the County has proved exceptionally adaptable in addressing changing requirements as needs grow and circumstances and technology rapidly evolve. ITPAC commends the County management team and Department of Information Technology (DIT) Director Greg Scott and his team for leadership and professionalism in effectively addressing the many technology-related challenges.

As input to the FY22 budget, ITPAC is providing an analysis of the County's IT plans. This assessment draws on our expertise as IT professionals as well as regular interactions with DIT senior leadership reviewing IT-based citizen services, staff facilitating, cost effective technology use, technology strategy, and IT investments.

Broad Areas of ITPAC Support

Strengthen IT Investments: As you, the CFO and DMB know, strategic, effective use of IT enables and enhances substantial parts of County services. It must play a significant role in maximizing opportunities for handling the current challenges. We strongly believe that in the midst of uncertain revenue forecasts and serious community needs, it is important to strengthen IT investments. We appreciate knowing the County leadership understands how critical this is.

Implement the DIT Strategic Roadmap: With the implementation of the DIT strategic roadmap, presented to the Board IT Committee in late June, DIT is positioning itself to be more proactive, effective, innovative, and strategic. Immediate focus is on enhancing and expanding mobility, re-shaping the organization culture, and building a digitally focused government with an empowered workforce. DIT must be able to pivot as needed to address new opportunities and repurpose resources, and when necessary, it must be a "positive disruptor" for the potential of IT. Technologies delivered must achieve County goals and be sustainable. ITPAC strongly supports fully following the Roadmap.

ITPAC Encourages Acknowledging Successes

Nationally Recognized Best Practice: The County's IT Program continues to be acknowledged as a national best practice for governance, investment, and a low-risk delivery model. It has continually delivered relevant technology solutions supporting the Board's goals and strategies for government service efficiencies.

Aggressively Pivoting to Address Covid-19 Operational Requirements: DIT, with the assistance of DMB and other partners, identified and implemented technology options to ensure a more mobile, nimble Fairfax County workforce. This was a far-reaching, complex undertaking, and included:

- procuring additional mobile hardware (laptops/tablets),
- identifying the viability of virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) software,
- augmenting the existing network bandwidth,
- reviewing and increasing licenses to ensure the full support of a more mobile workforce, and
- reviewing current help desk services, IT equipment and related software to ensure sufficiency for the mobile workforce future.

Additional recurring funds will be required to support this mission, especially as it pertains to licensing costs.

Stepping up Support for Remote Functions Driven by Covid-19: Successes include the roll out of Microsoft TEAMS organization wide, establishing a framework to allow Boards, Authorities and Commissions (like ITPAC) to meet remotely and thus continue to serve in our advisory role, and implementing various improvements to enhance the ability of staff to work remotely.

This may signal a new way for operating into the future and needs to be supported in budget planning.

Key Challenges to Achieving the Mission

Being an Attractive Technology Employer: DIT is continually challenged to identify, hire, and retain needed IT talent. 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 a speed the County's hiring practices cannot match. In addition, currently over 20 percent of DIT staff is either in DROP or eligible to retire at any time. By the end of calendar year 2022, that percentage increases to approximately 33 percent.

Protection of Wide-Spread County Data: Cyber threats are growing and the County's technology footprint is expanding. Timely deployment of security protection must ensure resilient and uninterrupted operations as well as protected access to data. This is now a key component of the County's overall security infrastructure.

Proliferation of data and growing value of data analytics: Data expansion and use drastically increases requirements for technology to gather, manage, preserve, and analyze data. This is critical to support service efficiency and productivity for County agencies. Satisfying demand for these new capabilities must be balanced with investments to maintain existing automation.

Agencies' Business Process Transformations: As agencies seek to be more efficient through process transformation, proposed changes often have significant IT implications. To achieve effective and successful results, it is critical for DIT to be engaged early in the process working as a trusted partner. When developing cost plans, it is important to consider IT implications (both within the agency and in the central IT department) to achieve the goals and long-term sustainability.

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 and other related requirements often extend the timeframe required to implement needed technology investments. Slow contracting can actually prevent implementation in certain circumstances.

Efficiency and Effectiveness Recommendations

Tying in with Key Themes of the Nine Strategic Planning Areas, ITPAC supports the following for more effective use of resources.

- Focus on projects and expenditures that increase mobility and improve the ability for a mobile, nimble workforce to conduct County business remotely while maintaining a secure framework. The criticality of managing Cyber Security and reducing risks of disruptions to operations and services is paramount.
- Implement BizTech operational ideas to help customers streamline, automate and get more value from business applications and technology that enhance operational success.
- Collaborate and partner with others (such as FCPS or IT companies with a significant local presence) to co-create solutions and services. Examples include predictive analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), and other related “smart/connected communities” concepts.
- Seek ways to incorporate equitable access to technology across Fairfax County.
- Expand work on enterprise-wide data governance with analytics and citizen portals.
- Harness the enormous amount of data to make more effective budget and programmatic decisions aligned with the nine priority areas in the County’s strategic plan.

Additional FY22 Recommendation Highlights

- Implement the phased funding strategy noted in the recent memo to the Board to advance the DIT Strategic Roadmap. The approach seeks to align General Fund support and charges to other agencies with ongoing costs (such as staffing, software licensing costs and security measures) while one-time funds will support projects. This is a sound plan.
- 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 to achieve operational improvements while benefiting from 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 throughout the industry and will continue to grow in future years.

Conclusion

In closing, as the County’s reliance on technology continues to increase, the County must stay abreast of the latest technologies to meet its goals and protect its operation. ITPAC appreciates the opportunity to have direct input in the County’s IT processes. It will continue to support Fairfax County’s best practices for technology governance and implementation strategies.

Cc:

Information Technology Policy Advisory Committee

Joseph Mondoro, Chief Financial Officer

Gregory Scott, Chief Technology Officer

Christina Jackson, Director, Department of Management and Budget