2022 - 2024 IT Strategic Plan

Agency: 132 Department of Elections (ELECT)

Date: 2/22/2023

Current IT State

In this section, describe the high-level strategy the agency will use to manage existing operational IT investments over the next year to 5 years. This section should align with identified Business Requirements for Existing Technology (BReTs). At minimum, please address the following questions in your description of your agencys strategy for managing existing operational IT investments:

Are there existing IT investments that will require additional funding over the next year to 5 years, such as license renewals, re-competition of current IT contracts, or system enhancements required by the Agency Strategic Plan?

If there are systems that will no longer support the agencys business needs, either through poor performance or excessive cost, how does IT leadership in the agency plan to address the issues?

If the agency does not have the staff or funding to meet increasing demand for IT services, how will IT leadership fulfill the requests?

Current system spending (Non-human resources) apps and hardware:

The Department of Elections (ELECT) operates these primary applications: the statewide Virginia Election and Registration Information System (VERIS), the electronic pollbook program (EPB), the statewide campaign finance disclosure application, known as Committee Electronic Tracking (COMET), the Election Night Results application (ENR), the Voter List Maintenance and the Citizen Portal used for online voter registration. There are additional applications which support the operations of these primary applications and other administrative needs of the agency.

Over the prior biennium, the Department embarked on several significant initiatives to address key issues in these systems and improve elections in the Commonwealth. These efforts share a common approach of bringing control of core solutions within the agency in order to better support, maintain and improve these critical systems.

VERIS Enhancements and Support – VERIS is a 15-year-old system which was procured from an outside vendor who originally built and maintained the system. ELECT has since successfully maintained and enhanced VERIS in-house, with the agency supporting the solution going forward. Additionally ELECT has increased its efforts to minimize costs related to support. Relationships have been cultivated with vendors who provide competitive rates for skilled IT workers. Furthermore, ELECT's in-house support team has addressed significant VERIS system deficiencies. ELECT has applied over one hundred fixes and over 50 enhancements to the core solution, as well as numerous data and reporting fixes and enhancements over a 2-year period ending June 30, 2022. Further, updates to VERIS related to legislative changes were implemented in alignment with the corresponding law effective dates. The past year has brought the need for additional changes within this system in order to comply with a number of legislative requirements prior to the general elections. The most important of these enhancements were (a) Same Day Voter Registration (Register and vote on the same day), (b) Pre-Registration of 16 year olds and (c) reporting absentee ballots by precinct. Last but not least, there have been significant improvements of the VERIS infrastructure, including upgrading windows servers and SQL databases and moving the entire platform to VITA's Azure environment in the cloud (lift and shift migration.)

Electronic Pollbooks – ELECT's IT staff continues to maintain this solution, thus, enabling the agency to more easily, cost-effectively and rapidly modify the solution as needed to meet the requirements of new laws and court rulings.

Voter List Maintenance – ELECT strives to make Virginia a national leader in the practices of voter list maintenance. This requires ongoing cooperation with many other states, including neighboring states, by sharing list information and voter registration data. This cooperation is streamlined through Virginia's participation in a nationally-recognized voter file list maintenance partnership: the Electronic Registration Information Center ("ERIC"). The partnership agreement for this organization ensures that the data is properly managed and places certain requirements on each partner state related to improving data quality. In addition, ELECT partners with several other organizations and agencies such as the DMV, VDH, VSP and others. ELECT is currently mandated by the General Assembly to provide two additional staff resources to maintain this program. The following is a link to the last few Annual List Maintenance Reports released by the agency: http://www.elections.virginia.gov/resultsreports/maintenance-reports.

Election Night Reporting – System fixes have been applied to improve performance. The system was also enhanced in 2022 to include absentee ballot by precinct reporting.

Citizen Portal – the agency implemented improvements to make the process easier and more intuitive for the citizens and added multi-language support.

ELECT provides an online application for candidates and political committees to file campaign finance reports, known as COMET which stands for Committee Electronic Tracking. We continue to support and enhance this system which is provided free of charge.

Factors Impacting the Current IT

In this section, the agency will describe the changes in their business environment that will require or mandate changes to the agencys current IT investments. These are requirements and mandates from external sources, such as other agencies or business partners, the agencys customer base, product and service providers, or new federal or state legislation or regulations. The agency must identify the business value of the change, any important deadlines that must be met, and the consequences if the deadlines are not met. In your discussion, be sure to note whether the proposed enhancements are funded or not. If the agencys existing current IT investments will not need enhancement due to requirements or mandates from external sources in the foreseeable future, the agency should enter the following text rather than leave the Factors Impacting the Current IT section blank

For each mandated change, summarize your agencys response from your Agency Strategic Plan, and is it the opinion of agency IT leadership that the IT portion of the response is adequately funded?

Do the mandated changes effect IT in other Commonwealth agencies, or in other states? If so, how?

ELECT faces unique challenges as compared to other state agencies with a similar relative size and mission that have a significant impact on the agency's ability to support, maintain and improve key elections IT systems. In general, the agency's IT budget and corresponding staffing make-up is not sufficient or built to accommodate new requirements every year. New legislation impacts IT operations – laws relating to elections are in a constant state of flux, thereby impacting the IT investments of this agency. Each year, approximately 10% of the proposed legislation introduced by the General Assembly impacts the agency. ELECT is committed to ensuring that fiscal impact statements are as accurate as possible and include funding requirements for the ongoing operational needs to support the proposed legislative changes. Special elections require significant IT operational support – although the name suggests otherwise, special elections are a regular occurrence throughout the year. Like standard elections, special elections comprise a cycle of activities across approximately a 60-day period leading up to and following Election Day. The Governor, the General Assembly and various courts can call special elections at any time to fill needed office vacancies. ELECT is often not consulted on the scheduling of special elections and has little time to prepare. Given the frequency and unpredictable timing of special elections, these factors create a substantial strain on IT staff to support the administration of the full election cycle. This link provides a list of upcoming elections with 4 specials in early 2023, just to provide a better picture: https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/calendars-schedules/upcoming-elections.html.

Third party requests present substantial disruption to normal agency operations – the agency's IT organization is inundated with unforeseen requests from external, third party entities for system functionality, reports, data extracts, litigation discovery requests, and FOIA requests to name the most common examples. These requests often come with heavy pressure that results in delays to timelines for critical, in-progress IT projects. In addition, system changes required due to these requests rarely include additional funding, requiring the agency to constantly re-prioritize their workload and often de-prioritize critical efforts, challenges partnering with local General Registrars

(GRs) to meet IT demands – there is a lack of clarity of roles, responsibilities, process governance, and root cause of IT issues between local GRs and the Department. ELECT lacks the ability to enforce uniformity and compliance at the local level which leads to multiple system enhancement requests for individual locality-specific business processes. As a further example, GRs and localities have the responsibility for procuring and maintaining local information technology and voting infrastructure.

However, ELECT IT staff are often leveraged to provide technical support for local technology and emergency response support related to the ever-increasing security issues and concerns with voting infrastructure. The Department of Homeland Security has included the Department of Elections (ELECT) in its nationwide designation of a Critical Infrastructure organizations. As such, ELECT is subject to the many mandates and requirements set forth by Homeland Security as a result of this status. This status will continue to require that ELECT dedicate financial and human resources towards heightened security measures, high availability as well as disaster recovery and continuity planning. Elections has been reliant on State funding, since federal funds were no longer available after FY 18. As a result of this loss, the agency requires regularly sustained investment in agency IT resources by the General Assembly, in order to: 1) proceed with in-progress work, 2) improve voter registration and election management in the Commonwealth, and 3) provide a modern, maintainable, cost-effective election IT infrastructure.

Proposed IT Solutions

In this section, describe the high-level strategy the agency will use to initiate new IT investments over the next year to 5 years in support of the agency strategic objectives documented in your Agency Strategic Plan. The agency does not need to consider specific technologies at this time, however, the strategy should identify how the IT implementation will provide business value to the organization. This section should align with identified Business Requirements for New Technology (BRnTs). At minimum, please address the following questions in your description of your agencys strategy for initiating new IT investments:

What are the most important solutions, based on the priority assigned to the requirements by the business sponsors in your agency, and what is the approach to achieving these priority solutions?

If any new IT initiatives will be started in the upcoming budget biennium, is it the opinion of agency IT leadership that it is adequately funded?

Does the agencys current IT staff have the appropriate skill set needed to support future agency technologies? If not, what skill sets need to be acquired?

If the agency will be engaged in multiple new IT initiatives, how will agency IT staff and agency subject matter experts be used across the initiatives?

Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS)

As VERIS is now a 15-year-old solution, the agency evaluated replacing it with a Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) solution. A COTS solution implementation could cost the Commonwealth approximately $31M with a 5-year timeline to design, customize, test and deploy for production use. Further, there is no industry-standard solution leveraged by a majority of the U.S. given the unique nature of elections management in each state. Additionally, ELECT issued a request for proposal (RFP) to gather requirements for replacing the system and solicit alternatives to the current system. ELECT received funding for the new Statewide Voter Registration System (SVRS) from the General Assembly and issued the formal Request for Proposal (RFP) in 2021.

The SVRS will support the Commonwealth's electoral process by providing improved technology and security as well as streamlined workflows and processes for voters, election officials, and department staff within an integrated system. Features of the new system will include: expanded candidate management tools, enhanced features for absentee voting, streamlined voter registration workflows (including Pre-Registration of 16 year olds and Same Day Registration enhancements), improved functionality for election night reporting (including reporting by precinct), ballot proofing, ranked choice voting, GIS capabilities, ability to manage poll workers, more robust correspondence and reporting functions, as well as increased capabilities for election security.

Update on 10/30/2022

Three proposals were received and evaluated based on the requirements contained in the RFP, including enhanced security and infrastructure requirements, current and future business needs, and customer maintenance and

service. On October 24, 2022, ELECT posted a notice of award of the contract to The Canton Group on the eVa system. The Canton Group has extensive experience working to modernize elections systems in states such as California, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, and Missouri. For more than a decade, Canton has served the Maryland State Board of Elections to deliver a tested, secure elections system through 3 presidential cycles. Canton is partnering with Provista, who brings extensive elections experience across multiple election platforms, and a unique election management software called ViBE to be used and customized for ELECT, and with Penacity, a Veteran Owned Small Business, that will provide a top-notch security plan for the system.

The initial multi-year project implementation is anticipated to cost $13.5 million dollars, after which, at ELECT's option, annual renewals including annual hosting and maintenance and support services are priced at $2.9 million per year for up to 10 years. The project initiation will begin immediately with a kick-off meeting and a three (3) months-long project organization and planning period. The initial project planning phase is underway and will finalize project governance for the project implementation.

The implementation of the new voter registration system is expected to take 24 months after completion of the planning period with a go-live date projected for February 2025. This includes development, customization, configuration, data conversion, delivery, installation, implementation, integration, testing and acceptance of all products and services necessary to implement the system, as well as user training, and mock elections for a primary and a general election. The Virginia Department of Elections (ELECT) will partner with local general registrars to evaluate and review new functionality as it is developed and implemented.

VERIS Upgrades, COTS Systems, Messaging Migration, Enhanced Results, SOCH Integra

The timeline of the implementation of the new system is 27 months, which means that ELECT will be required to continue to operate and maintain VERIS and its peripheral systems for the next two election cycles, including the 2024 Presidential Election. There is a large list of pending enhancements and bug fixes in the current VERIS backlog, which means that the ELECT IT team will be fully engaged in a bimodal operation with dual focus on both project and daily operations work. Some of the most important areas of improvement are to review our list maintenance processes and system integrations and clean and prepare our data stores in order to eventually migrate to SVRS.

Furthermore, we will be upgrading COTS systems as our current versions are being phased out. These include Atlassian's Jira and Confluence, ESRI's ArcGIS, Splunk and Tableau.

Another important project for ELECT is our migration from Google desktop to the Microsoft O365 platform, as part of the Statewide VITA sponsored Messaging Migration project. We are scheduled to migrate in early February 2023.

There is new legislation which requiring ELECT to implement Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for local elections. Arlington County will be using RCV for their June primary in 2023 for board of supervisors' races. This is quite a significant shift in Election result tabulation as voters can rank candidates in order of preference instead of selecting a candidate. The new SVRS system includes the RCV functionality, but our legacy VERIS and ENR systems would require significant complex upgrades in order to meet this new requirement. Therefore, ELECT chose to partner with an outside vendor for this solution. Our chosen vendor is Enhanced Voting (EV) and the solution is called Enhanced Results (ER). ELECT already has an existing contract with EV for the Enhanced Ballot solution which is used by localities to create their ballots. The new ER solution will replace our in-house ENR solution and will be able to display the RVC results in addition to all other functionality currently in ENR including the latest Absentee Ballot by precinct. The solution will be housed in the cloud at AWS and ELECT has been working with VITA and DGS on the procurement process, including ECOS assessment, cloud standard Terms and Conditions, software and content escrow, and submitting a PGR. The total cost of the project is approximately $280K for a 2-year term and we are leveraging SHI's existing contract as a purchasing vehicle. The intention is to use this as an interim solution and migrate all its data to the new SVRS at the end of the 2 years.

Finally, ELECT is planning to migrate the legacy SOCH Integra application to a modern system using the Microsoft Teams and or SharePoint using the new O365 platform.

IT Strategic Plan Budget Tables

Agency:	132 Department of Elections (ELECT)
Date:	2/22/2023

Current IT Services				
		Costs Year 1		**Costs Year 2**	
Category	**GF**	**NGF**	**GF**	**NGF**
Projected Service Fees	$1,704,900.00		$1,713,424.50	
VITA Infrastructure Changes				
Estimated VITA Infrastructure	$1,704,900.00	$0.00	$1,713,424.50	$0.00
Specialized Infrastructure				
Agency IT Staff	$4,137,359.00		$4,344,226.95	
Non-agency IT Staff	$3,671,648.17	$2,645,058.00	$3,855,230.58	$2,777,310.90
Cloud Computing Service				
Other Application Costs	$829,332.00	$601,698.00	$870,698.60	$631,782.90
Total:	$10,343,239.17	$3,246,756.00	$10,783,580.63	$3,409,093.80

Proposed IT Investments				
		Costs Year 1		**Costs Year 2**	
Category	**GF**	**NGF**	**GF**	**NGF**
Major IT Projects:	$1,264,079.60	$5,056,318.40	$815,920.40	$3,263,681.60
Non-Major IT Projects:				
Agency-Level IT Projects:				
Major Stand Alone IT Procurements:				
Non-Major Stand Alone IT Procurements:				
Agency-Level Stand Alone IT Procurements:				
Procurement Adjustment for Staffing:	$200,000.00	$800,000.00	$200,000.00	$800,000.00
Total:	$1,464,079.60	$5,856,318.40	$1,015,920.40	$4,063,681.60

Projected Total IT Budget				
		Costs Year 1		**Costs Year 2**	
Category	**GF**	**NGF**	**GF**	**NGF**
Current IT Services:	$10,343,239.17	$3,246,756.00	$10,783,580.63	$3,409,093.80
Proposed IT Investments:	$1,464,079.60	$5,856,318.40	$1,015,920.40	$4,063,681.60
Total:	$11,807,318.77	$9,103,074.40	$11,799,501.03	$7,472,775.40

Business Requirements For Technology

Agency:	132 Department of Elections
Date:	2/22/2023

BReT - Tableau	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for Existing Technology
Date Submitted:	1/5/2023
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
Yearly Renewal of Tableau software	

ELECT BReT - Voter Registration & Election Mgmt	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for Existing Technology
Date Submitted:	3/19/2021
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
ELECT is required to maintain a statewide voter registration system on behalf of the localities. The current system will continue to be maintained and improved while at the same time, we will build a new SVRS which is scheduled to go live in 2025.	

ELECT BReT – SOCH Integra Tool	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for New Technology
Date Submitted:	3/19/2021
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
Tool allows Elections to improve compliance and monitoring activities related to the localities' voting and pollbook systems, vendors, solutions and devices. Elect plans to modernize and move to the Cloud.	

ELECT BReT – Staff Augmentation	
BRT Type:	Business Requirement for Existing Technology
Date Submitted:	3/19/2021
Mandate:	
Mission Critical:	
Description:	
Augment IT Support Staff in order to support the implementation of the new SVRS.	

IT Strategic Plan Projects

Agency:	132 Department of Elections (ELECT)
Date:	2/22/2023

Primary Election System - Project	
Category 1	Project Initiation Approval

 In collaboration with ELECT, the selected vendor will deliver all functionality using a hybrid agile/waterfall project methodology. Development cycles will be done in sprints, following agile best practices. Final deliverable approvals and project milestones will follow a more traditional waterfall approach.

The Project effort will result in the full replacement of the existing elections system, VERIS.

Key delivery areas include:
• Project Initiation
• Gap Validation, Requirements Validation, and System Specification
• Configuration and Data Conversion
• Software Integration Testing (SIT)
• Training
• User Acceptance Testing (UAT)
• Implementation and Go Live
• Maintenance
• Plan for and decommission of VERIS

Benefits
All stakeholders will benefit from replacing a technology framework that is reaching end-of-support and end-of-life with a system running on newer, scalable technology with the ability to reduce performance degradation and increase availability. Improvements from the new SVRS include:
• Voters and Department staff will have an enhanced Voter Registration system that will streamline workflows and processes including Pre-registration of 16 year olds, Same Day Registration (SDR), increased scanning capabilities
• Election officials will have improved Election Administration features including expanded candidate management, the addition of candidate scanning capabilities, the ability to manage election officials (poll workers) within the system
• Election Officials will have improved capabilities for Election Preparation including ballot proofing and rank choice voting

(RCV)
• Election Officials will have enhanced features for Absentee Voting including streamlined workflows and processes, increased scanning and vote by mail capabilities
• All Stakeholders will benefit from improved Election Results & Certification capabilities that will streamline workflows and processes including CAP (Central Absentee Precinct) reporting by precinct for in-person early voting, mailed absentee ballots processed through Election Day, and mailed absentee ballots received by the deadline and processed after Election Day
• Department Staff will have enhanced features for Election Security including increased capabilities for auditing and protective scans
• Election Officials and Department Staff will have improved capabilities to Maintain Geographic Data that will streamline processes for redistricting and reprecincting efforts
• Election officials and Department staff have the ability to work more efficiently utilizing a system that supports multiple browsers

Project Start Date		5/31/2021	Project End Date	9/7/2023
Estimated Costs:	**Total**		**General Fund**	**Non-General Fund**
Project Cost		$25,839,544.00	$61,779,687.00	$20,220,313.00
Estimated first year of biennium:		$8,000,000.00	$8,000,000.00	$0.00
Estimated second year of biennium:		$12,000,000.00	$2,000,000.00	$10,000,000.00

Project Related Procurements

Primary Election System - Procurement

IT Strategic Plan Procurements

Agency:	132 Department of Elections (ELECT)
Date:	2/22/2023

Stand Alone Procurements:

Procurement Name:	ELECT Staff Augmentation
Procurement Date	5/13/2023
Procurement Description:	Augment IT Support Staff - Some critical staff require approval to exceed the maximum yearly salary guideline. These staff members have specialized talent associate with the proprietary system for statewide voter registration (VERIS). These resouces are required to safeguard and conduct elections during this calendar year.

Procurement Name:	Enhanced Results
Procurement Date	12/19/2022
Procurement Description:	ELECT is procuring additional services from an existing vendor, Enhanced Voting, to deliver required rank choice voting and other additional enhanced voting reporting. This product will provide participating localities within Virginia the option to use rank choice voting for its vote tracking. The Rank Choice voting option is a legislative requirement.