

Information Technology Innovation Center



Report to the Joint Legislative Committee on Information Technology Oversight

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Legislative Request

The General Assembly in 2013 endorsed the creation of a State Information Technology Innovation Center (iCenter) “to develop and demonstrate technology solutions with potential benefit to the State and its citizens.” Section 7.13 of Session Law 2013-360 requested quarterly reports on initiatives being developed and the resources used to support the center.

The complete text of the legislation can be found in the appendix.

Report Focus

This report outlines the activities and accomplishments of the Innovation Center during the first and second quarter of FY 2013-2014, planned activities for the next quarter and future high-level activities, and policy implications. The report also discusses initiatives being developed through the iCenter, and the resources used to support the initiative.

Introduction

Through efforts by the General Assembly, the Governor and the State Chief Information Officer, the Innovation Center was created to address multiple challenges facing North Carolina’s information technology leaders, including silos, duplicative and non-interoperable technologies, and investments in technology solutions that did not work as expected. The iCenter seeks to change this paradigm by providing a venue to test and evaluate technologies across agencies before a purchase to validate functionality, ensure interoperability and understand the organizational and cultural impacts.

The Innovation Center, located in previously unused space in the new Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) building in downtown Raleigh, is a vehicle for transformational change that will be used to evaluate emerging technologies in security, cloud computing, mobility and other areas. The center is a proving ground for technology that has not been used or evaluated across the enterprise, but is deemed a strategic priority by the agency CIOs and State CIO.

Collaboration and connection are key themes of the iCenter. The environment is designed to be a focal point for teamwork and change. Agencies are showcasing their innovative technology solutions to increase visibility across agencies and to determine if they can be used across state government. They are sharing test results and evaluations and the best practices they develop.

The iCenter has engaged private sector partners to tap into their knowledge and learn best practices in both technology and change management. This knowledge sharing will continue.



Educational institutions are being engaged to leverage their expertise, seek collaboration opportunities, broaden agency capabilities, provide hands-on experience for students and create a pipeline for the next generation workforce. Communications with other states that are creating similar centers have been established in order to share and learn from one another.

Policy Considerations

Vendor Participation

One potential policy issue is the possible perception by vendors that participation in center activities provides them preferred status or an expectation of a future business relationship. The legislation authorizing the Innovation Centers raises this concern.

The State's procurement process is, and will continue to be, followed to ensure a competitive bid process for all technology purchased by the state. All technology demonstrated at the iCenter is for testing and evaluation purposes. This is made clear to the private sector participants.

Resources

While the Innovation Center was established with minimal costs and no full-time dedicated resources, a small staff and budget may be necessary in the future for the center to carry out the mission envisioned in the legislation.

Roadmap

Since the Governor's announcement of the iCenter in April, the initiative has focused on developing capabilities and initiating projects to test the processes the center will utilize in addressing strategic technology gaps. Accomplishments and ongoing initiatives include:

- Formation of an executive steering committee comprised of cabinet agency Chief Information Officers and Chief Technology Officers
- Collaboration with NC State University on web and mobile user interface interactions
 - Business Link Express website redesign, in partnership Department of Commerce
 - Log into North Carolina website redesign, in partnership with Office of State Budget and Management
- Hosted Virtual Desktop proof-of-concept test for desktop and application virtualization. This work will help guide decisions about user-centered technology, desktop remediation, mobile



device management and bring-your-own-device strategies. Seven agencies, the Governor's and Lt. Governor's offices, and a number of commissions participated.

- User interface testing of nc.gov with smartphone and tablet technologies
- Demonstrations of the following technologies and solutions:
 - Wearable computing
 - Consumer endpoints (laptops, desktops, smartphones, tablets, zero clients, thin clients)
 - Immersive video conferencing
 - Citizen self-service kiosks
- Training of state information technology personnel on virtualization hardware and software applications
- Creation of an Innovation Fellows and Innovation Internship program through collaboration with the Office of State Human Resources
- Development of a responsive website: icenter.nc.gov
- An iCenter brand, in collaboration with the Department of Commerce
- Connections established with local government, local open data community advocates, and the entrepreneurial community in Raleigh to look for collaboration opportunities
- Completed the physical iCenter space transformation in collaboration with the Department of Administration and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources
- Formally opened the iCenter on October 10, 2013
- Completed a number of rooms and meeting areas that will provide space for collaborative work

Short term

Goals for the next 3-6 months include:

- Additional enterprise strategic project collaborations as determined by the steering committee
- Structured executive committee meetings responsible for establishment of key strategic priorities and projects

Middle term

- Formalize a consortium of states' innovation capabilities
- Create collaborations with additional North Carolina university system partners



- Build a strong iCenter project pipeline that follows an efficient and effective project path from concept and initiation, to sunset or transition to production

Long term

In addition to a continuous improvement and refinement of Innovation Center processes for projects and collaborations, the long-term roadmap includes innovation in areas such as business process management, customer service and skills development.

Issues & Cost

Issues

As previously mentioned, the primary issue facing the viability and longevity of the Innovation Center is the lack of a dedicated staff and budget to initiate and manage iCenter projects and to demonstrate technology in the iCenter.

Costs

DENR incurred minimal costs, such as the purchase of whiteboard paint and the installation of electrical connections to support the technologies being demonstrated in the iCenter. Staff from a number of agencies helped prepare the center for opening.

Next Steps

- Executive committee approval on focus areas and specific metrics to measure the overall impacts of projects initiated through the iCenter
- Refine the iCenter engagement and project process
- Refine the procurement process to account for iCenter efforts
- Graduate hosted virtual desktop from the iCenter to an enterprise production service that is available to all agencies



Appendix

Section 7.13, Session Law 2013-360

STATE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INNOVATION CENTER

SECTION 7.13. The State Chief Information Officer (CIO) may operate a State Information Technology Innovation Center (Center) to develop and demonstrate technology solutions with potential benefit to the State and its citizens. The Center may facilitate the piloting of potential solutions to State technology requirements. In operating the Center, the State CIO shall ensure that all State laws, rules, and policies are followed. Vendor participation in the Center shall not be construed to (i) create any type of preferred status for vendors or (ii) abrogate the requirement that the State CIO ensure that agency and statewide requirements for information technology support (including those for the Office of the State CIO and the Office of Information Technology Services) are awarded based on a competitive process that follows information technology procurement guidelines. Beginning July 1, 2013, the State CIO shall report to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Information Technology on a quarterly basis on initiatives being developed and implemented within the Center, as well as on the sources and amounts of resources used to support the Center.

