

# Building IT Systems: Best Practices for States

The purpose of this document is to provide suggestions, or best practices, to states on how to approach building IT Systems.

## 1 Strategy Planning and Assessment

- ✓ Use your network and conduct a survey of other states
- ✓ Hold focus groups of key stakeholders
- ✓ Develop specific data requirements
- ✓ Determine methods to acquire data
- ✓ Document how you will measure success
- ✓ Document business objectives
- ✓ Engage federal liaisons
- ✓ Plan for Business process engineering
- ✓ Identify collaboration avenues your vendor partner may already provide
- ✓ Consider a Request for Information (RFI) to learn vendor capabilities and experiences
- ✓ Consistent and continued end user involvement

## 2 Request for Proposal (RFP) Development

- ✓ Determine the type of contract (fixed price versus time & material)
- ✓ Select a vendor who understands the business, and has recent relevant implementations in the last three years
- ✓ Define the contract administration plan to evaluate performance
- ✓ Build your system for the majority of your requirements and not for the exceptions (the 80/20 rule)
- ✓ Establish core requirements and priority groupings to get corresponding estimates that enable the state to make more informed decisions
- ✗ Do not include unnecessary systematic limitations – this limits your solution options and drives up overall project costs

## 3 Approaching RFP Reference Conversations

- ✓ Have detailed questions to discuss when calling references; for example:
  - ? Did you feel like the people delivered on the ground were qualified to complete their tasks?
  - ? Were services provided remotely; if so, how did you partner with the vendor to handle tough situations (especially related to timelines and costs?)

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## 4 State and Federal Funding

- ✓ Have periodic communications with funding agencies
- ✓ Be aware of the specific requirements for State funding
- ✓ Align all state funding requests with the state budget cycle
- ✓ Have an Advanced Planning Document (APD) process for federal funding
- ✓ Have a good understanding of the reporting requirements

## 5 Project Management

- ✓ Establish a project management office
- ✓ Build a strong governance structure
- ✓ Maintain effective communication planning and coordination
- ✓ Define key project deliverables by phase
- ✓ Expect and plan for new business processes to result in Organizational Change Management

## 6 Design and Development Phase

- ✓ Establish scope confirmation checkpoints, during both the initial requirements selection and the finalization of design
- ✓ Design and create reusable assets
- ✓ Define and monitor quantifiable metrics to measure outcomes
- ✓ Data migration from the existing data sources is usually a major effort by itself and critical to the success of a project
- ✓ Ensure there is a process to document and validate the design code
- ✓ Include time for the training/implementation team to walk through the design documents with the development team before development begins to identify any open questions
- ✓ Include time for the training/implementation team to review system test scenarios

## 7 Testing

- ✓ Include time for the training/implementation team to walk through the design documents with the development team to identify any open questions before development begins
- ✓ Include time for the training/implementation team to review system test scenarios
- ✓ Ample time should be allocated for testing and full regression
- ✓ Include performance testing to uncover architecture or design defects

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### 8

### Training

- ✓ Key questions to consider when creating RFP:
  - ? How many end users will be trained (including their role and location)?
  - ? Does the state have a Learning Management System (LMS) that can be leveraged for training registration or Computer-Based Training (CBT) hosting?
  - ? Are CBTs desired as a part of the training approach, should audio be included, and are there any accessibility requirements?
  - ? Are training materials required in any language aside from English?
  - ? Are training materials required for citizens or only state staff?
  - ? Are there existing training locations/rooms that can be leveraged; if so, what locations?
  - ? For Instructor-Led training, what approach is desired? For example:
    - ? Should the vendor train all end users? If so, what is the desired trainer-student ratio?
    - ? Should the vendor train state staff (a train-the-trainer setting) so that state staff can train end users? If so, how many staff will be trained as trainers?
- ✓ Identify if UAT scenarios should also be used as training scenarios
- ✓ Conduct thorough system user acceptance testing before training (which will start at least 4-8 weeks prior to go-live)

### 9

### Implementation and Go-Live Readiness

- ✓ Key questions to consider when creating RFP:
  - ? Is pre/post go-live onsite support desired?
  - ? Is there an existing help network or help desk that can support the system? If so, what support is needed for this help desk? If not, is one desired as a part of the RFP?
  - ? What communication avenues exist that could be used?
  - ? Will there be system experts for each local office identified to serve in support roles?
- ✓ Identify a system expert from each local office to provide support
- ✓ Create change agent networks so offices may learn from each other and share best practices both during system development and pre/post go-live