



Standards: Not just 'one size fits all'



Creating standards for information systems no matter what the application can be challenging. Often there are various ways to achieve the end goal and a myriad of thoughts and opinions to consider along the way. Over the years, Iowa's state government has built a collection of agency-based computer systems developed to meet, in most cases, the requirements of each individual agency. With an eye on the future, the state began looking to establish information technology standards to provide a blueprint for migration toward

true enterprise-wide computing.

In doing so, members of the CIO Council and ITD found it necessary to balance the needs of individual agencies with the needs of the collective enterprise. For this reason the standards-setting process incorporates discussion and analysis from a standards subcommittee and comments from individual agencies to gain further insight into specific agency considerations. In addition, there is a waiver request process for agencies that may have specific reasons for not meeting compliance requirements for a standard. Such features help address the challenges of the standard setting process and make the standards program goal obtainable: Achieving an enterprise perspective when making standards decisions.

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Follow-up seminar with
Dr. Jerry Mechling is
scheduled for Feb. 15.

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Benefits of the effort are plentiful and promote a collective alignment of technical architectures, business objectives and service delivery. As a result, common needs are accommodated within state agencies and with Iowa's citizens, customers and partners. By addressing both fundamental business principles and technology performance, standards provide a level of assurance that state government can move in a unified direction while reducing risks and building economies of scale.

"Simply put, establishing standards promotes technologies that can be scaled up to serve a number of agencies simultaneously rather than having multiple agencies purchasing and deploying duplicate technological applications," says Doug Kern, IT Standards Coordinator, ITD. "A prime example is the ITD Data Warehouse System. The plan, from the technology's inception, was to make it capable of serving the needs of multiple agencies, with the ability to expand as user requirements increased. Providing services across the enterprise from a single platform leverages monetary and personnel resources that would otherwise be too cost prohibitive if replicated within each state agency. Furthermore, it provides opportunities for smaller agencies with few IT resources to have access to enterprise level technologies at a cost much lower than they would pay to implement a departmental system."

Establishing standards leads to another major initiative - alleviating the silos of technology and information existing within each agency. As Iowa continues its move toward digital government, the sharing of data and applications across agencies will become increasingly important. Systems and applications will need to target a variety of end users - citizens, benefit recipients, business clients and other governmental bodies. Since multiple agencies may have a common customer and the ultimate emphasis is serving the customer, it's crucial for systems to interact with one another to provide standardized access to information. Such efficiencies, process streamlining and closer access to government by citizens are also the foundation of Iowa's Accountable Government Act.

"While it's natural for there to be differing opinions (especially in an entity the size of state government), agencies have embraced the efforts in adopting IT standards," says Doug. "Since enhancing the process last spring, it's generally recognized that enterprise requirements may be greater than those of a single unit. And, overall, there's agreement that standards provide value by achieving compatibility and consistency beneficial to agencies and ultimately the enterprise as a whole and Iowa's citizens."

As the State implements Gov. Vilsack's recent directive to centralize email, Web hosting, storage area networks, data warehousing and server farms across departments, development of standards will be a pivotal part of that restructuring. More details on ITD's Standards division, including updates on standards processes under way or those that have been completed, can be found at <http://www.state.ia.us/itd/ITStandards/>. For more information on IT standards and how they might apply to an individual department, contact Doug Kern at 725-0369.

ANNUAL REPORT ONLINE

Find out all the news that's fit to print (or post) on IT and state government in ITD's 2001 Annual Report. [Click here](#) to access it, or go to ITD's web site at www.itd.state.ia.us. See a round-up of strategic developments and outlooks on security, e-government, identity authentication, and the latest enterprise-wide services supporting state departments.

Meet the new ITC Chair

When stepping up in November to lead the ITC, newly-elected chair **Diane Kolmer** clearly envisioned what the next twelve months would entail for her and the council – developing an enterprise-wide technology capability throughout all state government. In layperson's terms it means getting the most out of the State of Iowa's computer systems and the business processes they serve to enable the state of Iowa to deliver more of what Iowans want from their government.



“We need to establish a commonality of use and product throughout all agencies regarding information technology rather than each agency doing its own thing,” states Kolmer.

“As the ITC chair, my goal is to bring Iowa government and its services closer to Iowans thus making government more accessible. By maximizing the use of information technology to streamline government, Iowans will be able to perform tasks on-line such as obtain tax payment information; get a DNR permit; renew a drivers' license; research information on certified day care facilities; and look up the Dept. of Health's nursing home ratings. Whether Iowa's citizens are at home, in a public library, social services office or other public facility, access should be at their fingertips.”

While it may seem an overwhelming task, Kolmer is no stranger to

challenges. As the former USWest director of public affairs, Kolmer was responsible for state lobbying on numerous issues ranging from taxation, the environment, human resources and the regulation of telephone services and subsidiaries. She gained a statewide perspective on technology and the technological capabilities of private sector vendors through her lobbyist experience as she witnessed the advent of the Iowa Communications Network.

In looking at what lies ahead, Kolmer notes the most significant obstacle the council faces is overcoming the segregated information technology platforms built by each individual state agency. Such isolated structures have hindered business operations and communication between agencies and between Iowans and their government. By eliminating such stand-alone systems, a unified and fully interactive technology infrastructure across the entire enterprise can be developed. Although this objective is a major culture change within state government agencies and employees, Kolmer strongly believes employees have the expertise and institutional knowledge to implement the vision and goals.

“There's a tremendous opportunity to make significant improvements in how state government serves its citizens,” states Kolmer. “I'm honored to serve Governor Vilsack in this role and excited about government more effectively reaching its citizens.”

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Follow-up Seminar

February 15, 2002
Iowa State Historical Building Auditorium
600 East Locust Street

If you or any of your staff were involved in the Government Redesign workshop last July, plan to attend a follow-up session this month.

To register, just email name(s) of those attending, department, phone number and email address to *drampy@enterprisemidamerica.com*.

8:30 a.m. **Registration**

9:00 a.m. **Welcome**

9:15 a.m. **Overview of Process and The Iowa Method**

Department of Management and Information Technology Department staff will review the Government Redesign and Iowa effort.

Dr. Jerry Mechling of the John F. Kennedy School of Government will provide an overview of The Iowa Method, which was used by business process redesign (BPR) teams to develop proposals for redesigning selected State government services.

10:00 a.m. **What We Learned from This Process**

A panel of BPR team members will share their experiences and lessons learned through the process, as well as answer questions from seminar participants.

11:45 a.m. **How Do We Use The Iowa Method in the Future?**

Department of Management and Information Technology Department Staff will share with participants how The Iowa Method can be used by State agencies in future business process redesign efforts.