



Information Technology Strategy Board Annual Report

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Background

Established in 2019 by the N.C. General Assembly ([§ 143B-1337](#)), the Information Technology Strategy Board (the Board) works closely with the N.C. Department of Information Technology (NCDIT) as an advisory body that helps to develop plans for some of the state's largest, most impactful initiatives.

The Board advises on the prioritization of those projects and identifies areas where funding adjustments might be needed. The Board also uses industry best practices to guide the [Statewide IT Strategic Plan](#).

The statute outlines [membership](#) of the Board as follows:

- (1) The State Chief Information Officer.
- (2) The State Budget Officer.
- (3) The President of The University of North Carolina.
- (4) The President of the North Carolina Community College System.
- (5) The Secretary of Administration.
- (6) Two citizens of this State with a background in and familiarity with business system technology, information systems, or telecommunications appointed by the Governor.
- (7) Two citizens of this State with a background in and familiarity with business system technology, information systems, or telecommunications appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate in accordance with G.S. 120-121.
- (8) Two citizens of this State with a background in and familiarity with business system technology, information systems, or telecommunications appointed by the General Assembly upon the recommendation of the Speaker of the House of Representatives in accordance with G.S. 120-121.
- (9) The State Auditor, who shall serve as a nonvoting member.

The Board meets quarterly to discuss topics of significance to the state, such as cybersecurity, broadband access, digital equity, and digital transformation.

This report provides an update on what the Board has focused on over the past year. It also provides recommendations for the General Assembly's consideration. The Board believes that, if implemented, these recommendations will have a significant impact on the state's security posture and its ability to effectively serve its constituents.

Board Activities

Secretary Weaver joined NCDIT in March 2021 and saw the potential the Board had for promoting IT in the state. He has taken an active role in leading the Board and is committed to engaging with and getting input from the various board members. Soon after his appointment by Governor Cooper, Secretary Weaver established his top three priorities for IT in the state – broadband, cybersecurity, and digital transformation. With these priorities in mind, the Board established two committees – one focused on cybersecurity and one focused on digital transformation. It also established a working group that focused on expansion criteria for IT expansion budget requests. These groups are chaired by members of the Board and comprised of additional members, delegates, and subject matter experts both internal and external to state government.

The committees and working group report back to the Board at its quarterly meetings. These groups developed the recommendations outlined later in this document.

Digital Transformation Committee

The Digital Transformation Committee is comprised of chief information officers and IT executives from private higher education, and private industry, as well as state government subject matter experts. These individuals represent different constituencies in the state and provide a variety of important perspectives. The committee has developed a digital transformation roadmap that helps the state prioritize initiatives that will enable the state to better engage and serve our constituents.

The committee's goals are to:

1. Promote enabling infrastructure and system integration
2. Stimulate inter-agency coordination and collaboration toward common solutions
3. Improve awareness of and easy access to secure state systems for all constituents

The committee's goals and strategies are designed to map to and be incorporated with existing and upcoming plans for NCDIT, so they complement and do not compete with NCDIT's overall strategic and operating goals. Further, the State Chief Information Officer (SCIO) will be a central figure in establishing the communication channels and trust building necessary to promote these changes together with agency chief information officers and IT staff, as well as state and local governing bodies.

While there are several areas within state government that could benefit from this transformation, the committee has focused on four key areas – identity, constituent portal, service transformation, and data – as several of these are foundational to the success of other areas.

Below are some highlights of recent activities in alignment with the committee's goals.

- NCDIT awarded a contract to implement a new constituent identity and access service. Work has already begun on this initiative. Key objectives of this implementation include having a single identity for a constituent and allowing that constituent to use other identity providers of their choice (e.g., Google, Facebook, state-run identity solutions) when accessing state services. NCDIT will focus on migrating existing identities first and then applications (approximately 120) to the new solution by the end of the calendar year, followed by enablement of multifactor authentication and identity proofing.

The state launched a new [NC.gov](https://www.nc.gov) site in early February 2022. The site is based on a new information architecture that came out of an inventory of state government services, organizing those services into intuitive categories (living, working, learning, exploring, and your government). The categories were determined based on user personas (active military, jobseeker, new resident, parent, senior, small business owner, student, unemployed, veteran, and visitor). In addition, the site includes a more robust search capability along with a "How-To" content type, a feature that presents step-by-step instructions on how to access services (e.g., how to get a driver's license, Medicaid services or, a fishing license). The "How-To" content type will help standardize the look and feel for consuming government services, resources, and

information. The content is managed by individual agencies/state entities and syndicated to the NC.gov site. A couple of examples include how to [Apply for Food and Nutrition Services \(Food Stamps\) in N.C.](#) and [Purchase a North Carolina Coastal Recreational Fishing License](#).

- The state is forming cross-agency teams to scope and charter efforts, including a constituent portal platform with user profile data, service transformation, and data integration. The constituent portal is intended to allow individuals to see all the programs and services they are currently consuming, (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, driver’s license, fishing license) while also showcasing programs and services they may be eligible for based on their profile. Service transformation discussions are underway with several state business entities (N.C. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina, N.C. Small Business Administration, and Small Business Development Centers) to enable a business one-stop shop website.
- The state added a “Doing Business in NC” section on the [NC.gov](#) website, which serves as the beginnings of a business one-stop shop for the state and includes sections with aggregated resources for planning, starting, managing, and expanding a business in North Carolina.
- Additional service transformation efforts, including the next phase of the business one-stop shop, are being planned and will be prioritized based on criteria such as in-person visits, volume, and ability of state entity to participate (including business process re-engineering). This work will make these processes easier to navigate by removing uncertainty, waste, and friction.
- A cross-agency architecture team was established to focus on the key capabilities required in our IT ecosystem to support the constituent portal platform effort and related service transformations. Standardizing on solutions will enable economies of scale, a deeper bench of skilled staff, and an increased ability to transform more quickly and with quality.

The Digital Transformation Committee is working to promote this important work across state agencies. To better understand needs across state government, the committee invited representatives from agencies, including the N.C. Secretary of State and N.C. Division of Motor Vehicles, to represent different stakeholder groups. The committee has also incorporated projects from these domains into its roadmap.

Cybersecurity Committee

The Cybersecurity Committee is comprised of the State Chief Risk Officer, representatives from the University of North Carolina System, state agency chief information security officers, the N.C. Local Government Information Systems Association, the N.C. National Guard, and private organizations. The committee is tasked with prioritizing cyber needs, helping set the state’s cybersecurity strategies, and ensuring that the whole-of-state approach is comprehensive and effective. The committee meets monthly, working to:

- Advocate for legislative policies that will help promote statewide cybersecurity.
- Improve the cybersecurity maturity of local governments to increase trust.

- Increase education and awareness of cybersecurity and privacy threats for residents of the state in partnership with K-12 schools, community colleges, and university systems.
- Develop a workforce development/training and education framework for cybersecurity and privacy, which includes partnerships with educational institutions for training, support for incident response, and on-the-job training.
- Encourage programs to support education and awareness of cybersecurity and improve the pipeline and maturity of workforce development for this industry.

Recently, the committee has focused on two primary initiatives: contributing to the North Carolina’s whole-of-state approach to managing cybersecurity and education pathways for cybersecurity professionals.

Whole-of-State Approach

Cyber incidents are an increasing concern for state, local, and academic institutions. Ransomware, data exfiltration, extortion, and other types of cyberattacks have been on the rise for the last several years.

North Carolina has adopted a whole-of-state approach to cybersecurity to prevent and prepare for incidents and support affected entities when they occur. This approach has five main components:

1. Mandatory incident reporting for all state and local government entities
2. Prohibition of ransom payments by any state or local government entity
3. Data sharing through the N.C. Information Sharing and Analysis Center
4. Incident preparation and response through the N.C. Joint Cybersecurity Task Force (JCTF)
5. Cybersecurity strategy and planning assistance from the IT Strategy Board Cybersecurity Committee

This multi-pronged approach allows the state to maximize the impact of our monitoring, reporting, strategic prioritization, multi-jurisdictional collaboration, and long-term planning activities. Since 2019, the JCTF has supported more than 70 significant cybersecurity incidents. Seven of those incidents occurred in 2022, impacting the local and state government and the public education sectors.

Cybersecurity Education Pathways

Recruitment and retention of cybersecurity professionals for the public sector is challenging, with competition and demand for talented employees extremely high. Additionally, resource gaps are widening by the day, with tens of thousands of cybersecurity position vacancies identified across North Carolina.

The purpose of the Cybersecurity Education Pathways initiative is to identify, educate, develop, train, employ, and retain aspiring cybersecurity practitioners for apprenticeship or internship programs for local governments, state government, the North Carolina Community College System (NCCCS), and the University of North Carolina System (UNC System). The goal of the initiative is to develop a sustainable cybersecurity human capital pipeline, which serves to attract the best and brightest North Carolina has to offer into public service cybersecurity roles.

Stakeholder engagement across state and local governments, the UNC System and the NCCCS is a foundational element of this initiative. Activities would involve creating an inventory of existing certificate programs, responsive curriculum development, removal of obstacles with public-sector

employment guidelines and policies, identification of recruitment pools (transitioning military, high school/community college students, and career-changing professionals) and funding support through centralization or via private-sector partnerships.

IT Expansion Budget Working Group

The Board has been working closely with NCDIT and the N.C. Office of State Budget and Management (OSBM) as they work to update the IT expansion budget request process. Specifically, the Board established a working group to assist in creating criteria by which NCDIT and OSBM can prioritize requests made by state agencies.

Analysts from both OSBM and NCDIT work closely to recommend items to be considered for inclusion in the Governor's recommended budget. There are many aspects of these technology requests to consider when determining priorities to best invest limited IT funding across multiple agencies.

The working group worked with analysts from both NCDIT and OSBM to better understand the budgeting process, particularly around IT budget expansion items. Together with the analysts, the working group developed the following four lenses through which recommendations could be assessed:

- 1) Strategic alignment – The Governor, SCIO, and agencies all have goals they are working toward. Analysts review each IT expansion request to determine whether it is aligned with any of these goals. The requests most closely aligned with documented goals would be prioritized through this lens.
- 2) Risk – There are many types of risk associated with IT (e.g., cybersecurity, privacy, disruption of service). Analysts review each IT expansion request to determine whether it will mitigate existing risk or prevent additional risk. The most impactful requests would be prioritized through this lens.
- 3) Constituent impact – state government is here to serve its constituents. Analysts review each IT expansion request to determine how impactful it will be to the state's constituents. The most impactful requests would be prioritized through this lens.
- 4) Internal government efficiencies and/or cost savings – Resources are limited, so it is essential that government find ways to continue to provide effective services while reducing costs. Analysts review each IT expansion request to determine whether it will improve the way in which government operates. Those requests that will result in the greatest increase in efficiency and/or the highest cost savings would be prioritized through this lens.

NCDIT and OSBM developed a list of IT-specific questions to be asked during the budget development process. These questions allow both IT and budget subject matter experts to properly assess the requests and make recommendations regarding which should be considered for funding. The questions are designed with the four lenses in mind and the responses will allow the analysts to prioritize requests accordingly.

Recommendations for IT Expansion and Legislative Changes for the 2023-2025 Biennial Budget

The Board recommends several enterprise initiatives that are foundational to functional IT in the state or to enhancing the way we serve our constituents. Some of these recommendations require changes in legislation. These recommendations are listed below in no particular order.

Implement a Single Digital Identity for the State's Constituents

To give constituents more control over their data and reduce the risk of stolen identities and related cybersecurity breaches, Governor Cooper has formed the Digital Identity Working Group, led by NCDIT and the NC Division of Motor Vehicles (NCDMV), to establish a digital identity roadmap. The roadmap will take into account the state's identity ecosystem, which includes traditional authentication (NCID username and password and multifactor authentication) and coarse grain authorization (enabling access to an application with granular authorization handled by the application). There are cybersecurity and privacy risks inherent in these authentication methods.

Digital identities (including a mobile driver's license) and credentials offer constituents the flexibility to choose what information to share, when, and with whom. Digital credentials are also simpler to issue and verify, helping streamline processes and protecting against fraud. A constituent can receive services and programs from our state government using the same trusted credential, streamlining complex processes, improving the customer experience, and leveraging leading practice privacy and security safeguards.

The NCDMV is working toward a mobile driver's licenses. Implementing a true digital identity will require adequate funding and significant collaboration across state entities, expanding beyond driver licenses to include changes to legislation, policy, and processes.

Remove Wet Signature Requirements in Statute

To implement digital transformation across state government and improve the ways in which we interact with our constituents, we need to facilitate online transactions as much as possible. To do this, we need to remove the requirement for a wet signature from legislation in as many places as possible. We recommend a review of current statutes to determine where this requirement can be eliminated.

Establish a Business One-Stop-Shop

New business creation has been on a record-setting pace, up more than 40% from 2020 in 2021. Creating a business one-stop shop would provide easy access to the state government services, resources, and information needed to start, maintain, and grow a business in North Carolina. We recommend that the state consider funding two key initiatives to make this happen.

First, organizing and consolidating the existing services, information, and resources related to the creation, sustainment, and growth of a business a single site. The site would serve as a gateway for potential, new, or existing business owners.

Second, implementing an engagement platform to create constituent profiles that represent common use cases. The platform would streamline complex workflows that involve multiple agencies. For example, potential business owners interact with multiple agencies, such as the N.C. Secretary of State, local county Register of Deeds offices, and the N.C. Department of Revenue, to start their businesses.

Constituent profiles would allow users to establish an account and enter information once. Their information could then be shared with all relevant entities, simplifying the process, and ensuring more reliable data.

We recommend that this effort be piloted by the N.C. Secretary of State. The engagement platform would further transform the way the state provides services, gathers information, and shares resources across state government and with local governments.

Procurement and implementation of the platform and the costs to pilot the state's business one-stop shop could be covered by non-recurring funds. Recurring funds would be needed to maintain the portal, subscription/licensing costs, and on-boarding additional services.

Statewide Adoption of the Constituent Portal

To optimize the benefits of the one-stop shop or the constituent portal full statewide adoption is critical. This may require changes to N.C.G.S.143B-1338.

Develop an Education Pathways Program

The demand for talented IT professionals has dramatically increased with the growth of business in the state. The number of qualified professionals has not kept up with this demand. With the state's robust university and community college systems, there is an opportunity to create the pipeline necessary to provide state government, local entities, and businesses with the technical resources they need.

Recruitment and retention of cybersecurity professionals for the public sector is particularly challenging, with competition and demand for human resources extremely high. Resource gaps persist and continue to grow, with about 21,000 open cyber-related positions in North Carolina (source: [CyberSeek.org](https://www.cyberseek.org/)). Management of evolving cybersecurity risks is essential to the security of the state. We recommend establishing a sustainable cybersecurity human capital pipeline to identify, educate, develop, train, employ, and retain aspiring cybersecurity practitioners. This pipeline will put the state on better footing to protect our infrastructure, our systems, and the data they house.

This should be a collaborative effort between key stakeholders such as the SCIO, N.C. Department of Public Instruction, UNC System, NCCCS, N.C. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, N.C. Office of State Human Resources (OSHR), N.C. Department of Commerce, and local government and business communities. The established pathway should be multi-pronged and broadly shared to increase the number and quality of people pursuing public-sector cybersecurity work in North Carolina. The Board believes this program should:

- Empower OSHR, in coordination with NCDIT, to develop apprenticeship, internship, and mentoring programs and create a Cyber Fellows program. This could be modeled after the Teaching Fellows Program and should include developing a path for interns to move to full-time employment.
- Identify job opportunities in state, local, and education system positions and identify private sector partnerships.
- Engage the UNC System and NCCCS to inventory existing certificate programs and develop curriculum to evolve with industry needs, including the alignment of existing programs (e.g., Carolina Cyber Center at Montreat College, 13 total Centers for Academic Excellence).

- Focus recruitment for these programs on transitioning military veterans, university students, community college students, and high school students.

Populate the Existing IT Portfolio Management Tool with Updated Information on the State's Application Portfolio, Enterprise Architecture and Related Procurements

To enable more informed decision-making about IT in the state, we need a comprehensive accounting of the state's IT portfolio. This requires each agency to provide details about their applications, including where they reside, their age, and the platforms on which they run. We recommend that each agency participate in this data collection effort, including providing information about their associated IT contracts and all related documents in the state's purchasing and contracts solution.

In addition, we recommend legislative updates to require NCDIT to work with agencies to leverage code optimization tools. Running these tools against all in-house custom development and vendor custom development should be required. This will help ensure that the state's custom solutions are developed with quality source code and meet security requirements.

Inventory, Classify and Map the State's Data Assets

The state must know what data it has before it can adequately protect it. Recent activities highlight the importance of having an inventory and knowing what data resides in which systems and who has access to it. Procuring tools that identify, classify, map, and track this data will help the state better understand what we have, and how we can use it and help us better protect it. The state can more quickly identify threats to data by monitoring unusual usage or movement of data. This is a necessary step that is vital to maturing the state's data privacy and security. This inventory will also make it easier for the N.C. Government Data Analysis Center to provide the data analytics state agencies need.

Appropriate Adequate Funding for the Office of Privacy and Data Protection

The Board recognizes that the state needs more focus on privacy and data protection for both the state and its constituents. Secretary Weaver hired the state's first Chief Privacy Officer, but additional resources are needed to adequately staff this organization. Privacy and data protection will become more critical as we move toward digital transformation and cybersecurity threats implicating privacy continue to grow.

We recommend appropriating adequate funding for the Office of Privacy and Data Protection to focus on privacy awareness, training, policies, processes, and technical controls that will ensure data is collected and used fairly and responsibly, and in accordance with legal requirements. We recommend that this office be staffed to:

- Create, review and update privacy policies and guidelines.
- Provide specific guidance for agencies to address privacy issues, review of agency privacy maturity, advising, outreach, and risk assessment, focusing on implementing fair information practices in the handling of personally identifiable information (PII).
- Review and update procurements, memorandums of understanding and contracts including insertion of operational privacy provision provisions, specification requirements, and privacy risk assessment of proposed initiatives, technology, and services.
- Create and review privacy assessments of agencies and departments, and support automation of privacy assessments to more quickly complete and review for the examination of privacy

- compliance, risk review, and risk mitigation.
- Work with security and privacy officers to formulate, develop, and implement strategies, standards, and guidelines consistent with Fair Information Practice Principles and privacy risk management in IT environments.
 - Create and facilitate data breach exercises involving PII.

Enterprise Projects Currently Underway

The state currently has multiple large-scale projects underway. These initiatives vary widely in scope. Some of these projects are essential to the state's internal operations, while others are constituent facing. Below is a list of some of the largest, most impactful IT projects currently in process.

N.C. Department of Environmental Quality (NCDEQ) 21st Century Program (License and Permitting Transformation)

The Permitting Transformation Program will update permit processes and provide a single point of entry to track, pay, search, and apply for NCDEQ permits. NCDEQ issues or renews about 20,000 permit applications annually. Each division uses its own system and database. This project will centralize the system to provide more efficient permit application processing and more timely and accurate data to the department and related divisions. Goals include: a web-based portal permitting system for applying, tracking, and paying for applications; a web-based searchable data warehouse for permit tracking, compliance matters, and enforcement actions to ensure a consistent and efficient permitting process throughout NCDEQ; improving processes, identifying efficiencies, and increasing resources when applicable; creating public-facing dashboards; and developing outreach efforts to involve NCDEQ and all stakeholders.

Estimated project cost: \$30.5 million

Estimated completion date: December 2027

Enterprise Resource Planning System (ERP) Implementation for the North Carolina Community College System

During the 2016 legislative session, the North Carolina Community College System Office (System Office), in consultation with NCDIT, was tasked to begin planning and designing a modernized ERP for the state's 58 community colleges. The ERP system is required to address, at a minimum, student information systems, core financial management, grants, human resource management, and payroll.

The purpose of this phase one effort is to implement only the System Office components of the ERP implementation, with the Banner SaaS ERP implementation at the 58 community colleges coming in a later phase. The new components of the System Office implementation will be compatible with the current template and the future Banner implementation.

Estimated project cost: \$31.75 million

Estimated completion date: Fall 2024

Financial Backbone Replacement

The Financial Backbone Replacement program will replace the North Carolina Accounting System (NCAS), and the Cash Management Control System (CMCS) and enable the ability to produce an Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). Both NCAS and CMCS present risks to the state's financial operations as they age and are no longer supported, and the state personnel who maintain them retire. At this time, the CMCS capability has been replaced, along with the ability to produce the ACFR. The last release – Release 3 – General Ledger capability is due to go live fall of 2023. Project costs are estimated to be \$80.9 million, with \$52 million spent as of October 31, 2022.

Estimated project cost: \$80.9 million

Estimated completion date: Fall 2023

Human Capital Management System (HCM) Digital Transformation

OSHR is partnering with NCDIT and other stakeholders to transition from multiple disparate HR solutions to a cloud-based, integrated HCM solution that is user-friendly, agile, scalable, maintainable, and regularly updated. This solution will allow the state to streamline processes, centralize information, reduce costs, and provide consistency along with an improved user experience.

Estimated project cost: \$58 million

Estimated end date: April 2026

K-12 Student Information System (PowerSchool) Replacement

The project is intended to deliver an integrated, next-generation, comprehensive, multi-module student information system (SIS) that strategically serves the educational needs of the state, with statewide availability by June 30, 2024. All users of the SIS will have the appropriate level of access and useable functionality extended to them to accomplish, communicate, be informed, and interact to the fullness of their role.

Estimated project cost: \$20.4 million

Estimated completion date: June 2024

Medicaid Enterprise Systems (MES)

The MES program will implement a series of interrelated modules consisting of functionality designated by the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Management Services (CMS) to replace the current legacy system. System modularity will allow for replacement and enhancement of specific functions in a more cost-effective manner than making changes to a legacy system. The current program consists of 14 projects/modules. Four projects are active, and two projects are complete.

Estimated project cost: \$351.7 million

Estimated completion date: No firm date; program end date may extend to 2028

NCFAST (Child Welfare Services and Application and Infrastructure Modernization)

N.C. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) NC FAST P4 Child Services

DHHS is implementing a statewide technology system that all counties use for both intake and assessment (initial reports made to and investigations by Child Protective Services) and ongoing case management (the life of a child's case once a report is substantiated). The system will also support the business operations and management of the child welfare program. This project covers the development of the Child Welfare System's future state architecture and the resumption of implementation plans for the existing Child Welfare System.

Estimated project cost: \$189 million

Estimated completion date: December 2024

DHHS NC FAST P15 Application and Infrastructure Modernization

This project will migrate NC FAST applications, databases, and supporting utilities from on-premises to an Amazon Web Services cloud platform. As part of this phase 1 effort, NC FAST will leverage the cloud capabilities to scale up and scale down resources as and when required based on capacity and demand and thereby reduce operational costs.

Estimated project cost: \$20.6 million

Estimated completion date: December 2023

Statewide Election Information Management System (SEIMS) Replacement

SEIMS is used by the State Board of Elections and the 100 county boards of elections to perform various election-related tasks and facilitate the administration of elections in this state. Currently, the application is decentralized, requiring the state to maintain hardware and infrastructure in all 100 counties. The new SEIMS application will automate manual business processes for six major components: voter registration, voting, election event management, voting site management, board administration, and systems functions. It will also consolidate the 13 separate applications into one core application, which will result in leaner elections administration.

Estimated project cost: \$9.6 million

Estimated completion date: January 2027