

Report to the 2008 Legislature on the Feasibility and Cost of Establishing a Team of Specialists to Assist Departments in the Review of Business Processes and Procedures That Could Benefit from the Application of Technological Enhancements

This report was prepared pursuant to Section 124, Act 213, SLH 2007, that states: Provided that for information processing services (AGS 131), the department of accounting and general services shall prepare a report on the feasibility and cost of establishing a team of specialists to assist departments in the review of business processes and procedures to identify areas that could benefit from the application of technological enhancements such as scanning and digitizing of records, conversion of manual forms to electronic forms, web-based distribution of forms, and database development; provided further that the specialists would be capable of viewing the needs of the department or program from a functional perspective as well as a technical perspective and possess experience in streamlining workflow processes; provided further that these specialists would conduct cost-benefit analysis to prioritize the use of technology to streamline government operations; and provided further that the department shall submit the report to the legislature no later than twenty days prior to the convening of the 2008 regular session.

Background Information

This report was prepared with information gathered through various sources such as the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO), Gartner, Inc., and experiences of the ICSD Administrator. The NASCIO represents state chief information officers and information technology executives and managers from state governments across the United States. Gartner, Inc. is an independent information, technology research, and advisory firm specializing in information technology.

For purposes of this report, the team of specialists to assist departments will be referred to as business analysts (BA).

Role and Function of the Business Analyst

The business analyst will maximize state government operations by focusing and enhancing the use of information technology to serve departments' business needs. While the existing Information Technology Specialist (ITS) focus on IT perspectives, and departments focus on their business processes and requirements, the business analyst will understand both areas, bridging both perspectives and provide business value by aligning and synergizing business goals with IT solutions.

By being knowledgeable about the business of the departments, the BA will assist in improving their business programs by reviewing existing business processes and procedures, translating business objectives to IT requirements, and interfacing with the IT staff such as staff from the Information and Communication Services Division (ICSD). Potential IT solutions could result in scanning and digitizing of records, conversion of manual forms to electronic forms, web-based distribution of forms, database

development, and streamlining workflow processes. The BA would use methodologies such as cost-benefit analysis to determine the business value of technology projects and to assist in prioritizing projects to streamline government operations. To develop practical and innovative IT solutions, the BA needs to demonstrate mastery of the functional business perspective and the technical IT perspective.

Practical and innovative IT solutions are important to meet State government's challenges with workforce issues, such as the aging workforce with increasing baby boomer retirements, the small pool of qualified applicants for State government jobs, and competition with private sector for employees. Improving business processes with electronic solutions will help State government continue to operate in light of the State's workforce issues.

Currently, the expertise of ITS positions are generally limited to computer programming, systems analysis and design, networking, database administration, internet technologies, and cyber security, to name a few. As the staff concentrates on the in-depth knowledge of their IT area, they are not as well-versed in State department business needs and operations. The added business knowledge requirements would help BA positions fill the gap between business and IT to effectively and efficiently identify and develop business solutions using information technology.

Feasibility of Establishing Business Analyst Positions

Being that the BA would be a new job classification, ICSD will work with the Department of Human Resources (DHRD) to establish these positions. Possible options to consider are to add these job functions to the existing Information Technology Specialist (ITS) class specifications, or create a new class specification. DHRD has recently converted the Data Processing Systems Analyst (DPSA) positions to the more current ITS positions, and ICSD worked closely with DHRD on this effort.

Cost of Establishing Business Analyst Positions

The ICSD would work with DHRD to ensure that the compensation structure of the BA is in line with State standards and market rate employment once the establishment of the BA positions is determined. As an example, should DHRD determine that the BA would be a part of the ITS class, then the current ITS pay structure would be used.

Summary

The business analyst position is a welcome and necessary resource for State government to utilize technology as a strategic tool to meet business objectives. With the rapid pace of technological advancements and with the added expertise of the business analyst, State departments can take advantage of technology to optimize budgets, increase business efficiencies, and to better serve the needs of the public.