

INFORMATION SYSTEMS COMMITTEE

Information Services General Review

Reason for the Report

The Grand Jury selected Information Services (IS) as one of its general reviews for 2002/03.

Scope of the Investigation

The members of the Grand Jury:

- Made an announced visit to the IS Department on December 4, 2002;
- Interviewed collectively the following IS representatives; IS Director, Information Technology (IT) Manager/Contracts; IT Manager/ PC; and the Fiscal Administrative Manager;
- Toured the IS facility;
- Was briefed on the various operations of the department;
- Interviewed countywide IT departmental personnel on a random basis;
- Reviewed the District Attorney Management Information Integrated Office Network (DAMION) Contract;
- Reviewed Purchasing Operating Practices;
- Attended the Information Technology Steering Committee (ITSC);
- Attended the Information Technology Standard Sub-Committee (ITSSC).

Background

The Information Services (IS) Department operates and maintains the County's communication systems and its various programs. There are many services IS provides to County departments, such as training, communications, repairs and technical advice. One of the main problems encountered by IS is the lack of use of its services. Varying departmental budgets and the inability or "refusal" of some departments to adopt the current standards for technology protocol cause unnecessary complexities. Segmented purchasing of technology by individual departments has tended to perpetuate a trend toward departmental independence and has reduced the County's ability to leverage its bulk purchasing power. While some departments replace equipment in three-year cycles, others are working with 10-12 year old technology. The high cost of repairs, technical support, and training encourages departments to avoid IS altogether, and therefore creates more incompatibility issues over the long term.

The County standards for operating systems and various database programs are established by the IS department. However, because some departments provide a unique and specialized public service it is not cost efficient for IS to design, create, and service this type of database software. In these cases the utilization of an outside vendor is encouraged. The only other exception to the countywide standard evolves out of a compliance issue with State-run programs. In these circumstances, the State supplies computers and software to departments involved with their programs. Some

departments have many computers from such State-run programs and therefore feel less dependent of IS.

There are two conduits for the exchange of email, one Internet-based (outside the County network) and the other intranet-based (inside the County network). Because email software varies from one department to another, IS must keep abreast of compatibility issues and bridge email software together for the many types in use. In addition, vendors of these email programs release patches, fixes, and updates that create more compatibility issues for IS to resolve. Thus, departmental preference of email, according to manufacturer-type, has created unnecessary complexities associated with maintaining the system.

The IS department is also charged with scheduling and organizing the Information Technology Steering Committee (ITSC). The Committee's function is required as part of the Countywide Strategic Plan and is an integral part of County Policies and Procedures A-10 (2) (b). However, only four of 32 invitees attended the most recent meeting in April. When the Committee cannot properly convene, there is no venue for the review and approval of multi-departmental and new systems development projects exceeding \$10,000. The current dysfunctional status of the Committee creates a flawed process, and invalidates the provision of Policy A-10.

The acquisition of the DAMION Software license and Maintenance Agreement by the District Attorney's Office (DA) further illustrates this problem. The DA received a contract for DAMION from Constellation Justice Systems in late 2000. The department was seeking solutions for case tracking, legal support, scheduling, and victim/witness issues. The contract did not go before the ITSC, but rather was submitted to IS on January 11, 2001. The DA provided IS with only six hours to review the contract, and thus prevented IS from referring the \$138,370 software purchase to the ITSC for proper review. In addition, the contract was signed by the DA on January 9, 2001 (before its submittal to IS or the ITSC) and was scheduled for approval by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on January 23, 2001. However, within the DA's six hour deadline, IS raised a very important countywide security issue i.e., the contractor was allowed dial-up and Internet access to all computers running the software. Apparently, the DA and/or the BOS did not consider these serious deficiencies, and the contract was subsequently signed on the scheduled date. Thus, recommendations and concerns of IS were ignored, and County Policies and Procedures were not followed.

Findings

- F1. Some departments encourage employees to cross-train into the field of Information Technology (IT) to avoid the costs associated with the Information Services (IS) department's programming, training, and PC support services.

Response to F1: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. While it may be true that some departments have encouraged employees to cross-train into the field of Information Technology, it is not known if this has been done solely to avoid costs associated with Information Services' programming, training, and PC support services. Having specialized systems and having enough work to keep an employee working full-time in the department have also been given as reasons to utilize department IT employees.

- F2. IT functions are handled independently by departments, so the total cost to the County for IT equipment and staff are unknown.

Response to F2: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. Information regarding staffing of IT positions in each department should be available in the County's financial management system as well as the County Payroll System. Information regarding purchases of IT equipment should be available in the budget records of each department as IT equipment and software purchases have separate sub-object codes from other purchases.

- F3. Since budgets of departments vary, some departments are able to keep current with technology, while others are incapable of upgrading.

Response to F3: The respondent agrees with the finding.

- F4. In some cases, IS cannot produce or replicate industry specific software and the related service and support, so that departments must utilize outside vendors.

Response to F4: The respondent agrees with the finding.

- F5. There are no industry-specific requirements found within County departments, which might justify the wide array of email programs in use.

Response to F5: The respondent agrees with the finding.

- F6. The Board of Supervisors (BOS), Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), IS, and other departments have no venue to which they may refer purchases of multi-department or new systems development projects exceeding \$10,000.

Response to F6: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding. The Information Technology Steering Committee is the venue to which the Board of Supervisors, the CAO, IS and other departments look to for review of multi-department or new systems development projects exceeding \$10,000. It is agreed that the Steering committee is not currently functioning at an oversight level and has been inadequate from time to time.

- F7. The Information Technology Steering Committee (ITSC) is controlled and directed by its members. These members are countywide Departmental Directors, and must abide by County Policies and Procedures A-10 (2) (b) when submitting approval requests for purchases of multi-departmental and new systems development projects exceeding \$10,000. By not attending the ITSC meetings, Departmental Directors invalidate the ITSC, and are thus incapable of enforcing decisions by the ITSC on themselves.

Response to F7: The respondent agrees with the finding. Per Policy A-10 The Chief Administrative Officer (or designee) serves as the chairman for the Information Technology Steering Committee. The chairman should take a lead roll in making sure that the committee meets on a regular basis; that Department Directors assign appropriate staff to

participate as committee members; and that those members are available on an on-going basis to ensure the level of participation necessary for the committee to be successful and serve its purpose.

- F8. In January 2001 and again in 2003, the BOS and the District Attorney's Office (DA) together signed both the DAMION Software License and Maintenance Agreement contracts without the endorsement of IS through the ITSC.

Response to F8: The respondent agrees with the finding.

- F9. The DAMION contract was signed in 2001 by the BOS and the DA with full knowledge of a potential security breach for the County.

Response to F9: The respondent agrees with the finding.

- F10. The DA signed the contract for the DAMION Software License and Maintenance Agreement, and scheduled its submission to the BOS before giving it to IS for their approval.

Response to F10: The respondent agrees with the finding.

- F11. IS was given insufficient time (6 hrs) to review the DAMION Contract.

Response to F11: The respondent agrees with the finding.

Recommendations

- R1. Since IS is in a position to provide the County with improved promotional decisions of IT workers, and provide ongoing testing and training of current technologies, departmental IT staff throughout the County should be trained and under the jurisdiction of the IS.

Response to R1: The recommendation requires further analysis. As part of the Interim Chief Administrative Officer's commitment to review structural issues throughout the County, it has been noted that there are a significant number of IT related staff that do not currently fall under the jurisdiction of Information Services. The Chief Administrative Office and Human Resources will be reviewing this situation as part of its recommendation on the County FY 2005 and FY 2006 budgets. If a reorganization of IT related positions is warranted, the recommendation will be presented by December 31, 2003. Implementation will be incorporated into the FY 2004/05 budget.

- R2. Since the County stands to benefit from bulk purchasing, the technology budget should be consolidated and shifted to IS.

Response to R2: The recommendation will not be implemented because it is unreasonable. The County's Purchasing department has mechanisms to purchase IT related hardware and software at bulk or reduced pricing which is similar to any number of other commodities that

are commonly used throughout the County (i.e. office supplies). This pricing is then available to all County departments.

- R3. In the event that the utilization of an outside vendor is required, IS should review hardware, software, and IT-related contracts before the departments go forward with purchases.

Response to R3: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Information Services is currently part of the review process for all hardware and software. This review of hardware and software is triggered through our Countywide Purchasing system (ADPICS).

In addition, IT related contracts are also reviewed by Information Services; however, the review is not triggered in the same way and is sometimes missed. In order to ensure that IT related contracts are reviewed, Information Services and the Chief Administrative office will review Policy A-10 and suggest amendments to the policy if necessary. Policy review will be completed by November 30, 2003 and any amendments to the policy will be completed by December 31, 2003.

- R4. IS should establish a countywide standard for both Internet and intranet email applications, along with standards for database and operating systems.

Response to R4: The recommendation has been implemented. Information Services has worked with the Information Technology Steering Committee and the Chief Administrative Office to implement the current County-standard email system. The County has established Microsoft products as the County standard for operating systems and databases; however, due to business requirements and/or fiscal resources, it may be necessary to deviate from this standard at times. In the event that a department requires the use of non-standard software, Information Services will review the request.

- R5. The Board of Supervisors should vote to amend Policy A-10 by either dissolving the Information Technology Steering Committee (ITSC) or include language to enforce its duties.

Response to R5: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The duties of the Information Technology Steering Committee are defined within the scope of Policy A-10; however, Information Services will work with the Chief Administrative Office and the Information Technology Steering Committee to more clearly define Policy A-10, specifically the Information Technology Steering Committee duties. Policy review will be completed by March 30, 2004.

- R6. The District Attorney's Office and the Board of Supervisors should work with IS to ensure the DAMION system is equipped with the proper security tools for protecting the County's IT data.

Response to R6: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. The District Attorney's Office and Information Services will work together to

review the current security issues surrounding DAMION. The review will be completed by March 30, 2004 with recommendations implemented as soon as possible.

- R7. The Board of Supervisors should take seriously the recommendations made by IS as they relate to contracts or purchasing decisions, and ensure that departments allow IS reasonable time for this review process.

Response to R7: The recommendation has not been implemented, but will be implemented in the future. Refer to Response to R3 above.

Commendations

The Information Technology Standard Sub-Committee (ITSSC) was well attended by departmental IT personnel and provided a useful format in the sharing of problems or information relevant to other County departments.

Responses Required for Findings

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| F1 through F11 | El Dorado County Chief Administrative Officer
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Director of Information Services |
| F6, F7, F8 | El Dorado County Director of General Services |
| F8 through F11 | El Dorado County District Attorney |

Responses Required for Recommendations

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| R1 through R7 | El Dorado County Chief Administrative Officer
El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
El Dorado County Director of Information Services |
| R2, R3 through R7 | El Dorado County Director of General Services |
| R6 | El Dorado County District Attorney |