

The IT Project Prioritization Process – what started it?

It seems like there have always been more IT project ideas generated at DES than IT resources available to do the work. This has become even more apparent through the Lean and strategic planning processes where lots more IT project ideas were generated.

Determining which IT project to work on next becomes difficult as one group gets to move forward and many others wait in line – not knowing when (or even if) their project will reach the top of the queue. The criteria for moving ahead projects was not documented or consistent. Anticipating when the project before your own would be completed was frustrating as scope creep, inaccurate time estimates, missing project requirements, lack of staff testing, and a host of other issues arose to bog the current project down.

As for a definitive queue of all IT project ideas, it didn't exist nor did standard protocols for all programs to follow when defining their IT project needs. Some groups created well defined business plans while others were hoping a few notes on the back of a napkin would suffice to spec out a new module or database. Some programs had clear ideas and plans for their IT direction while many others did not. Determining collaboration opportunities was hit or miss.

Then there was the issue of funding – the “haves” vs. the “have-nots.” Some programs have dedicated IT resources (positions) since they directly support the IT person's salary. Many programs did not and waited for pooled resources to become available.

It was a frustrating process (or lack of process) to say the least.

A Lean project was initiated in September 2010 to look at these issues and to create a better, more transparent process. After two charters, two implementation plans, five teams, and a lot of meetings, the following were created:

- An IT project tracking application to help manage the queue of projects.
- Criteria for rating and prioritizing the projects.
- Standard operating procedures (SOPs) for sifting the projects into various categories (active, on hold, need more info etc.).
- Business plan templates.
- Program IT plan template.
- SOPs to improve IT project time estimates and management.
- An “after-care” team to periodically monitor the new process to make sure it meets the basic requirements identified through the Lean discussions.
- DES oversight process which includes the tools and groups to help provide the checks and balances of the new system.

It is anticipated that this process and all of its related procedures and documents will need to be modified as experience advocates. It is hoped that this new process will not become overly burdensome or bureaucratic and that DES (and related DoIT development group) will become more efficient developing IT projects.

Who worked on this process?

Quite a lot of people across DES and in the DoIT development group for the agency participated in this process. We were fortunate to have a person from the Department of Transportation participate to give a “fresh eyes” perspective. Ideas and documents generated throughout the process were shared with team leads, the DES IT Steering Committee and the Senior Leadership Team. There were plenty of opportunities to participate and have a say in the new process. Please see the spreadsheet titled “[Staff Participation](#)” in this folder to see the staff effort involved in this large project.