Standard Operating Procedure
DES SOP #: 109

Information Technology (IT) Project Prioritization

Disclaimer

The Department of Environmental Services' (DES) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are intended to guide employees in the performance of their responsibilities in the absence of atypical or extraordinary circumstances. Employees should discuss non-standard circumstances with their supervisors to decide whether any variance from these SOPs is warranted.

Purpose

To track IT projects and their status in an easy to use system which aids in prioritizing projects for pooled resources on an agency wide basis to ensure existing IT resources are expended on the highest priority projects. Project ideas may be generated by individual programs or through the Lean and strategic plan processes.

Applicability

All applicable IT projects (see table below) will be entered into the tracking system. Where a program has dedicated IT resources (business analyst and/or developer) to complete the project, the project will not be ranked and prioritized but it will be reviewed for consistency, compatibility, and efficiency and its status will be kept current in the tracking system. The program is responsible for prioritizing its own dedicated resources. When pooled IT resources are needed to complete a project, the project will be reviewed and assigned a ranking based on established criteria.

When the process of developing IT plans for programs at DES is implemented, projects will not be advanced in the process if an IT plan has not been filed by the originating program (if the project idea falls within the purview of the program). If the originating program has an idea that falls outside that program's scope (such as a DES wide project or suggestion for another application beyond their own), then an IT program plan would not be a prerequisite.

Examples of IT Projects to go into Tracking System	Examples of IT projects **not** to go into Tracking System
New application development or modifications to an existing application.	Help Desk/technical support types of requests (PC not working, network ID requests, quote requests, new computer set up, etc.)
New report requests.	Requests for assistance to use a piece of software (such as Word or Excel).
GIS application or development.	General web site updates, creation of conference registration forms, request to use new web site applications, blog or Survey Monkey requests (already a process for these or can see Tim Nowack directly.).
Modifications to applications to meet software upgrades.	A system/application is down. These situations need more immediate attention than entering into a database.
Items that require developer/analyst assistance.	Hardware/software requests.
Web requests that require support from a developer due to a database back end.	IT consultation requests. Instead, include IT person in meeting request instead.
IT items that require an IT vendor.	IT projects/applications not currently being worked on such as stable, older, or near obsolete applications. When need to update these applications, then add to the tracking system as a project.
Grant applications that include IT components – even before they are approved. See what is potentially coming forward as a project. If don't get grant, likely that project idea is still worthwhile.	
Projects currently being worked on by IT staff. Need as basis for determining what resources will be available in the future to work on projects.	
IT projects currently being worked on/programmed by non-IT staff. This could be useful for collaboration efforts and for not reinventing the wheel.	

Procedure Summary

1) IT project ideas and projects currently working on are entered into a tracking system (when applicable).

2) Project sifters evaluate unassigned ideas requesting pooled resources and determine which track the idea goes into:

- need more info to be able to evaluate
- item is tabled/on hold (not viable at all or not viable at this time)

- same as another item
- delete from system since not part of criteria for entering into system
- ready to rank and prioritize

Projects with dedicated resources are reviewed monthly or as needed by the IT Steering Committee to determine if there are duplicative or otherwise inefficient efforts and to ensure consistency and program integration.

3) Tracking system is updated with the decision.

4) Sifters generate prioritized list of projects based on ranking.

5) The chair of the sifters works with the DoIT DES liaison to further refine list based on likely developer/analyst to do the work (has the skill set) and when those resources will be available.

6) Idea proponents and other associated DES staff of high priority projects are contacted to see if ready to move forward with project.

7) List of priority projects ready to move forward with suggested developer/analyst/other DoIT resources (such as contract manager or contracted resources) are provided to the IT Steering Committee for review and comment.

8) List is sent to Senior Leadership Team for final review and approval.

9) Projects moving forward are updated in the tracking system to indicate the resources assigned and the new status of "Active-Assigned".

10) Idea proponents and developers are informed. Work begins on projects.

11) When projects are completed, the status is updated in the tracking system.

Procedure Details

Project Idea is Generated

1) Project idea generator contacts point person for group/program/bureau to discuss idea.

2) Point person determines whether idea should be entered into the tracking system. If idea is not already in the system and is remotely viable, the point person enters the idea into the system. If not entered, the reasons why are explained to the idea generator.

3) If idea generator is displeased with point person's decision, appeal is made to the program supervisor or other appropriate manager within the bureau/division.

Project Idea is Generated via a Grant Application Process

1) These projects must be vetted by the sifters prior to the application being submitted. If the project would not be deemed a high priority, submitting the application would be discouraged.

2) Grant project ideas must be presented to the sifters well before (at least 1 week prior to but 2-3 weeks is preferred) the application deadline to allow time for the group to review it.

3) If a quick turn around time is required to vet the application, the review/sifting of the project may occur via email instead of during a meeting.

Project Idea is Sifted and Ranked

1) Project sifters meet periodically to discuss the status of ideas in the tracking system that are not actively assigned resources or completed. A report has been created to list these projects. The meeting frequency is anticipated to be monthly after the initial round of projects is evaluated. Sometimes additional meetings may be necessary to process an influx of ideas or to be responsive to requests that need to be turned around quickly.

2) Project proponents and their point people briefly present info (if desired) on project and answer any questions.

3) Sifters determine whether they have enough info and project materials to rank project.

4) If have all materials necessary for a project (including business plan if applicable), rank project using pre-specified criteria. All point people participate in ranking with values of 0, 1, 5, or 10 allowed, depending on the criterion. Only a single collective ranking value for a criterion is allowed. Final value for each criterion is decided based on majority vote.

5) Projects can be evaluated for worthiness prior to all business plan materials being submitted. The project will not get assigned to the priority list and move forward in the project until all applicable materials are submitted.

6) Ranking values are entered into tracking system.

7) If the project is not ready to be ranked, the sifters explain the reasons why to the idea proponent and point person and enter the reasons into the tracking system.

8) The sifters update the project status in the tracking system. The application automatically notifies via email the idea generator and point person of the revised status.

Develop List of Prioritized Projects and Circulate for Review and Approval

1) A list of the highest ranked projects not assigned an IT resource is generated from the tracking system. Consideration is also given to those projects that are anticipated to take very little time to complete or those projects that are needed immediately. These latter projects may not necessarily be the highest ranked projects but should be factored into the priority list – particularly if they score favorably.

2) The list is reviewed in conjunction with the DoIT DES liaison to determine likely developer resources based on skill set needed and schedule availability, estimated timeframes to complete the project, and when the developer would be available to start work on the project. Estimated timeframes are generated by the likely developer for the project.

3) List is revised and refined with information from previous step. The goal would be to assign a small project or 2 (anticipated to take less than a couple days each) along with a

high priority project that may be of longer duration to each pooled resource. This would allow the developer to have a project to fall back on if the other was stalled for whatever reason. Also, it will allow small projects that may not rank high due to limited impact to move forward.

4) Point people and idea proponents are contacted to make sure they are still ready to move forward on the projects. If they are not ready to work on project, the project is removed from the priority list for the time being.

5) List is sent to the DES IT Steering Committee for review and comment.

6) List is sent with any IT Steering Committee comments to SLT for final review and approval.

7) Projects moving forward are updated in the tracking system to reflect the new status and the resources assigned.

8) Idea proponents, point people, and developers are notified of change in project status and given go-ahead to work on project.

9) When project is completed, the associated point person will update the status in the application.

10) If a project assigned resources is not progressing smoothly (e.g., taking significantly more time than estimated to complete project, project scope creep, business process poorly defined, staff not devoting sufficient time to work on it, etc.), the project will be reviewed by the IT Steering Committee and the Senior Leadership Team (if needed) to see if the allocated resources should be freed up to work on another project until the issues are worked out or if more resources need to be made available to complete the project.

Related Documents and Resources

Document Name (Click on document name to link to document.)	Description of Document
Point People, Sifter, and Sifter Chair Responsibilities	Describes the roles and responsibilities that point people, sifters, and the chair of the sifters will play.
IT Plan Template	Template to be used by an organizational unit to describe current IT applications used and future IT tools, resources, and projects needed for the next 2 years.
IT Business Plan Template	Template to be used in developing a business plan for modifying or creating a new application. Includes descriptions of each section to help guide development.
IT Business Plan Checklist	Checklist of what is required in the business plan document. Includes prompts for items to consider when developing a plan.
IT Business Plan Shell	This is the same as the IT Business plan Template document but without the section descriptions. This makes it easier to copy the document and start typing the plan.
IT Project Management Guidance	Describes the roles and responsibilities for DES and DoIT staff during IT project development.
IT Project Timeline Guidance	Describes how IT project time estimates will be developed and a methodology for keeping projects on track time-wise.
DES IT Project Prioritization Process Oversight	This graphic shows all the people/groups involved in overseeing the process and the tools available to make the process work.

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Commissioner