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OIT ACCESS

STATE OF ALABAMA

OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

STREAMLINING IT IN ALABAMA STATE GOVERNMENT

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WELCOME to *OIT Access*, the Office of Information Technology's quarterly newsletter. This publication is intended to be a resource for the numerous Alabama state agencies that rely on OIT and its services to help carry out their important missions and more effectively serve the citizens of our great state.

In addition to sharing the latest OIT news and announcements, each issue will help to keep readers informed about the wide range of information technology (IT) products and services available to agencies through OIT's Service Catalog. *OIT Access* also aims to be a platform for sharing news about several of the exciting IT projects, initiatives, and programs taking place at agencies across Alabama state government.

OIT is firmly committed to meeting the continuously evolving IT demands of the agencies we serve. If we are successful in this effort, it is the people of Alabama who are the true beneficiaries. OIT thanks you for your partnership in this vital work and we hope you enjoy this issue of *OIT Access*!

Our Mission & Vision

MISSION

Through communication and collaboration, OIT aims to empower stakeholders with innovative services and technologies that reliably deliver highly available, secure, efficient, and cost-effective services for agencies, legislators, and citizens across all levels of Alabama state government.

VISION

OIT aspires to provide solutions and services that are standardized, implemented in a timely and high-quality manner, and designed to meet the operational needs of each agency, legislator, and citizen who depends on their services.

OIT Leadership

DANIEL URQUHART
Secretary
State Chief Information Officer

WILLIE FIELDS
Deputy Secretary

STEVE WALKER
Chief Information Security Officer

MARK CRAYMER
Executive Director
Shared Services

ROGER BOWMAN
Executive Director
Support Services

BROOKE COVINGTON
Executive Director
Finance and Procurement

Governor's Office | Hal Yeager

GEN AI TASK FORCE

Update: Secretary Urquhart Reveals GenAI Inventory Report

The Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Task Force continues to make significant progress toward the deliverables laid out in Governor Kay Ivey's Executive Order (EO) 738. To highlight a number of the key directives contained within EO 738, the Task Force was charged with exploring the current uses of GenAI in state executive-branch agencies, encouraging the responsible and effective use of GenAI, proposing policies and procedures related to the utilization of GenAI moving forward, and submitting a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor's Office by November 30, 2024.

To aid in the collection of data which demonstrates how state agencies presently utilize GenAI, the Task Force implemented a reporting tool on the GenAI Task Force website – aitaskforce.alabama.gov. Alabama executive-branch agencies were required to submit an inventory report of all instances of GenAI being developed, employed, or procured by May 1, 2024.

Daniel Urquhart, OIT Secretary and Chair of the GenAI Task Force, shared an update on the results of the GenAI inventory report at the Task Force meeting held on July 24, 2024. Among numerous insightful data points collected, the inventory report revealed that out of 139 responding agencies, most (104) reported using no GenAI products or services; however, the remaining agencies reported using 108 different products with 72 unique vendors. This and additional information discovered through the inventory report will be included in the GenAI Final Report that is submitted to Governor Ivey later this year.

OIT Secretary Daniel Urquhart, Chair of the GenAI Task Force, welcomes everyone in attendance and calls the July 24th meeting to order.

In addition to collecting and analyzing data for the inventory report, the Task Force's working groups have made enormous strides in fulfilling their individual missions as part of the overall Task Force. Collectively, these working groups have held 17 meetings as they continue their efforts to contribute to the Final Report.

GenAI is evolving at a rapid pace, with advancements and changes occurring daily. Alabama must do everything possible to ensure that our state's citizens and workforce are prepared and educated about this revolutionary technology. The GenAI Task Force and its working groups are focused on helping to meet those challenges and providing meaningful and actionable recommendations for Alabama's current and future use of GenAI.

Willie Fields delivers a report on the recent progress of the GenAI Task Force's Responsible and Ethical Use Working Group.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Alabama's New Payroll and Human Resources Management System: HRM

For a long time now, the State of Alabama has utilized the Government Human Resources System (GHRS) as its payroll and personnel management system. While GHRS has served Alabama and its numerous state employees well over the years, agency end users have oftentimes expressed frustration due to the fact that GHRS lacks many of the dynamic features and integration compatibilities found in more modern payroll/HR management systems.

A specialized team was formed to help facilitate the development and implementation of a new system that would better meet the needs of Alabama state agencies, both now and in the years ahead. This team is comprised of individuals from State Personnel, the State Comptroller's Office, and State Business Systems.

This multi-year effort ultimately led to the development of the new Human Resources Management System (HRM) to help ensure a smooth transition from GHRS. Read on for more information about HRM and its rollout to agencies.

What is the new HRM?

HRM is a modern web-based solution for payroll functionality such as employee classifications, distribution of pay, employee benefits, and tax reporting. The new system will be more streamlined and intuitive for the end user. In short, the new HRM accomplishes everything the outdated GHRS system does and more!

Improvements and features of HRM:

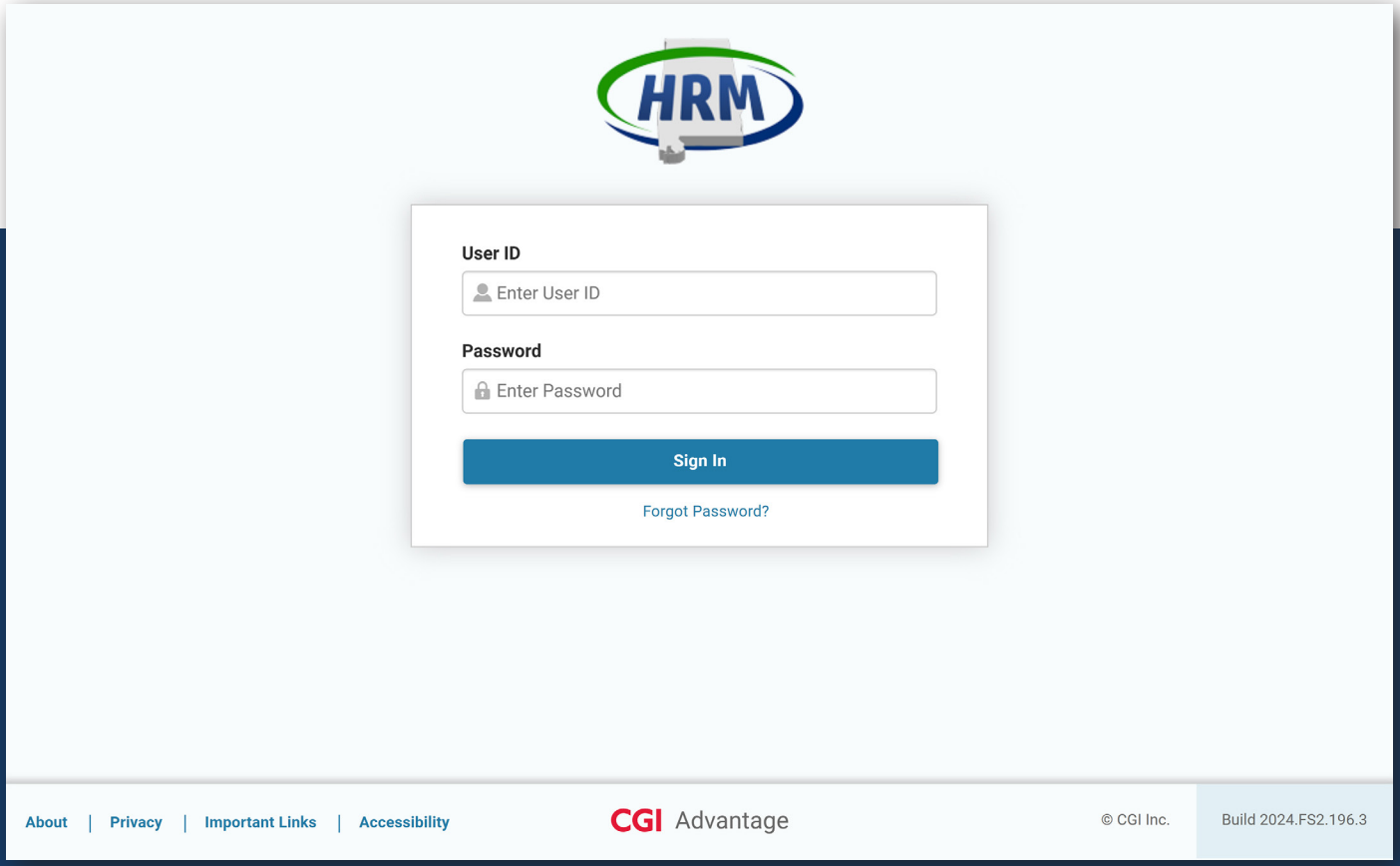
- Increased accessibility
- Seamless navigation and management
- Improved efficiency
- Greater security, tailored to role and agency
- Search options! (first and/or last name, employee ID, class code, location, etc.)
- Help guides on a range of topics
- Customizable page and grid layouts
- Most importantly, no more CPERS and PPERS!

Helpful info for agencies

Agency Points of Contact (POC)

Each agency has two HRM Points of Contact (POCs) who have been tasked with helping to answer questions or resolve issues for users within their agency. Agencies were encouraged to choose one individual from their personnel staff and one from their payroll staff to serve as POCs.

In addition to agencies having two dedicated, familiar, and easily accessible HRM points of contact for their users, these POCs also help to prevent the HRM Help Desk from receiving numerous and/or duplicate messages from a single agency.



Training
All HRM administrators were required to register and complete important training sessions for the new HRM system. These courses, titled "HRM Overview & Navigation" and "Time/Leave & Employee Record Management," were designed to prepare agency users for utilizing the new HRM system in their daily business activities.

HRM Help Desk
The HRM Help Desk is designed to assist POCs in navigating the transition and addressing any HRM-related queries. It provides comprehensive information regarding security access, training questions, and agency-specific application concerns. Issues that may not have immediate resolutions will be logged as ServiceNow agency ticket requests to track resolution items and ensure the appropriate support staff (Personnel Office, Comptroller Office, or Tech Support) is contacted.

The HRM Help Desk is available for POC access at (334) 353-9700 (Mon-Fri) 8am-5pm CST or by emailing HRMSupport@finance.alabama.gov*.

***Note:** Only POCs have access to the HRM Help Desk.

HRM Rollout

The rollout for this effort has been designed in a way that will help to ensure information is correct across both the GHRS and HRM systems before the migration process is finalized and the new HRM system goes live. To that end, two separate rollout phases have been developed – a "Mock Parallel" and a "Go Live Parallel."

The **Mock Parallel** is the first payroll parallel phase and will be a **mock test** (currently underway at the time of this publication).

During Phase 1 of the Mock Parallel, agency HR staff will key **all** employee updates **(including ESMT, time/leave, deductions)** in **both the GHRS and the new HRM system** (eSTART time and leave files have been uploaded to both systems).

SPD, Comptroller, and SBS are in the process of reviewing both systems for payroll differences, documenting all lessons learned and providing appropriate resolutions to help assist everyone during the subsequent Go Live phase.

The **Go Live Parallel** is the second parallel phase.

During this upcoming phase, agencies will key **all** employee updates in **both GHRS and HRM** (eSTART time and leave files will be uploaded to both systems).

SPD, Comptroller, and SBS will review both systems for payroll differences, and after payroll verification, ALHRM is live as the official system of record.

*Note: GHRS will be available in view mode through March 2025.

Important Dates To Remember

Phase 1 Mock Parallel (Past):

9/11/2024	GHRS was down at 12:00 pm noon to run COLA.
9/13/2024	GHRS was online for users to key transactions.
9/19/2024	ALHRM was available for users to review employee data* and key transactions.
9/27/2024	GHRS and ALHRM was down at 10:00 am.

Phase 2 Go Live Parallel:

10/29/2024	GHRS will be down at 12:00 pm noon.
10/30/2024	GHRS will be online for users to key transactions.
11/05/2024	HRM will be available for users to review employee data* and key transactions. **ALL transactions must be keyed in both GHRS and HRM.**
11/12/2024	GHRS and HRM will be down at 10:00 am.

*State Business Systems (SBS) provided agencies with any payroll differences for review during the Phase 1 Mock Parallel and during the Phase 2 Go Live Parallel.

The HRM project team initiated the HRM Kick-off meetings at the State Capitol building in June 2024 announcing critical information about the much-anticipated upgrade and implementation preparation for Alabama's new personnel/payroll system – HRM.

HRM Resources

All users are encouraged to frequently check the HRM website (alhrm.alabama.gov) for training dates and other important information during the transition to HRM.

The HRM website includes the following links:

- Frequently Asked Questions (alhrm.alabama.gov/faqs)
- Recent HRM Communications (alhrm.alabama.gov/communications)
- HRM Calendar (alhrm.alabama.gov/calendar)
- HRM Help Desk (alhrm.alabama.gov/contacts)

Streamlining HR to Prioritize People

The implementation of the new HRM will bring about a much-needed change to the State's outdated GHRS payroll/HR system. In addition to streamlining these essential business functions, it will also help to save agencies time and allow users to focus more on what is truly important in HR: the people. In short, this upgrade will help the State to better serve its agency employees and the citizens of Alabama with innovation, integrity, and excellence.

Your continued collaboration and partnership in this effort is needed and greatly appreciated. If you have questions about the new HRM or its planned rollout, please contact your agency POCs for assistance. Lastly, don't forget to visit the HRM website often for information and updates!

Make Plans To Attend The 2024 Digital Government Summit

The 2024 Alabama Digital Government Summit is set to take place on Wednesday, November 13, 2024, at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa at the Convention Center.

Each year, the Alabama Digital Government Summit joins technology-focused public sector professionals with premier industry partners to engage in innovation, discover new advancements and technologies, collaborate and network with fellow IT professionals, and improve the future of tech in government together!

Alabama is once again partnering with Government Technology (GovTech) to host this exciting annual event. This year's Summit will feature a variety of speakers on topics including but not limited to:

- AI in government
- Data privacy and identity management
- IT workforce retention
- SaaS customization
- And more!

All state and local IT professionals will receive complimentary (free!) registration to the 2024 Alabama Digital Government Summit. Also, guest parking in the Renaissance parking deck will be comped so be sure to present your ticket at registration to have it marked.

To learn more about the 2024 Alabama Digital Government Summit and to register, visit GovTech's event page at events.govtech.com/Alabama-Digital-Government-Summit.

We look forward to seeing you on November 13th for what is sure to be another meaningful and informative Summit!

OIT SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

Webex Informational Sessions

The Office of Information Technology's (OIT) Voice Services team has begun hosting a quarterly series of informational sessions to keep Alabama state agencies in the know about the latest Webex features and capabilities. The first session was held on August 21, 2024, and highlighted tips and tricks to help agency users get the most out of the Webex Suite.

Some of the exciting new features presented during the session included:

Remember User Layout – Instead of wasting precious time configuring your screen for a grid, stack, or side-by-side layout while also trying to find the options to hide participants and names, you can now easily preset the layout selection to your settings for ease of use, eliminating the need for configuration or toggling, and making your experience more efficient.

AI Codec – Don't let low bandwidth and poor audio quality ruin your important meeting. Now, with AI Codec, you can encode at low bitrates and increase redundancies (for those that don't speak IT, you can improve the quality of your video and add smoother playback, even in poor network conditions).

Saving a Whiteboard as a PDF – Have you ever had the most productive and collaborative meeting ever, when great ideas were shared on a collective whiteboard, and all you (and your participants) could do was take a fuzzy picture with your phone? Well, now, this new Webex feature allows you to save your whiteboard screen as a PDF and email it to participants (and those who couldn't make it) for continued teamwork and productivity.

Highlight to Call – The upgraded Webex puts you in control. You can now highlight a phone number from another application (say, Teams) and use a keyboard shortcut to make a call with Webex.

Schedule on Mobile App – The desktop feature you already enjoy, such as scheduling a meeting and sending an SMS text, is also now available using the Webex mobile app for iOS and Android.

The next Webex informational session is scheduled for November 20, 2024. OIT Communications will be reaching out soon to share more details with agencies. In the meantime, don't hesitate to contact OIT Voice Services to learn more about Webex or if you have any questions or issues that we can help you resolve.

webex by CISCO

DID YOU KNOW?

Cybersecurity Awareness Month Proclamation - October 2024

Governor Kay Ivey proclaimed October 2024 as Cybersecurity Awareness Month. In her proclamation, Governor Ivey highlighted the role the State of Alabama plays "in identifying and responding to cybersecurity threats and proactively protecting the security and privacy of its citizens from such risks." To view the full proclamation, visit https://governor.alabama.gov/newsroom/2024/08/cybersecurity-awareness-month-3/.

State Network Segmentation Initiative

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) has embarked on a multi-year initiative to implement extensive network segmentation aimed at enhancing security, performance, compliance, and overall management of the State of Alabama's network environments. This initiative focuses on improving existing protocols and services while transitioning to a more robust infrastructure.

Key Goals of the State Network Segmentation Effort

- Enhance Redundancy: Increase the reliability and availability of network services.
- Ensure Quality of Service: Maintain high performance and efficient traffic management.
- Implement Zero Trust Model for Users and Devices: Strengthen security by ensuring that no entity is trusted by default, regardless of whether it is inside or outside the network perimeter.

What Changes Are Expected?

- Virtual Private Network (VPN) Refactoring: Revamp the current VPN to strengthen security, improve performance, and simplify management processes.
- Secure Network Analytics (SNA) Restructuring: Provide greater visibility into network segments, improving traffic flow monitoring and overall analytics capabilities.
- Digital Network Architecture Center (DNAC) Refresh: Refresh DNAC to increase resiliency, automate processes, and optimize network performance.

State agencies will be engaged as new products and solutions are developed and deployed. These agency partnerships will be vital in achieving optimal outcomes throughout this initiative. The overall aim of the network segmentation effort is to maximize the effectiveness of each platform, enhance user experience, and create a more secure environment for the State of Alabama.

Did You Know?

- Network Segmentation and Security: By dividing the network into smaller, isolated segments, the spread of malware and unauthorized access can be significantly reduced.
- Improved Performance and Compliance: Network segmentation helps in managing traffic more efficiently, ensuring that critical services receive the necessary bandwidth and comply with regulatory requirements.
- Zero Trust Segmentation: This security approach ensures that every user and device is authenticated and authorized before gaining access to network resources, regardless of their location.
- VPN Refactoring: The initiative includes a complete overhaul of the VPN infrastructure to enhance security and streamline management.
- Advanced Network Analytics: With the restructuring of Secure Network Analytics, agencies will benefit from improved visibility and monitoring capabilities, leading to better decision-making and threat detection.
- Automated Processes: The refresh of the Digital Network Architecture Center (DNAC) will automate many network management tasks, increasing efficiency and reducing the potential for human error.

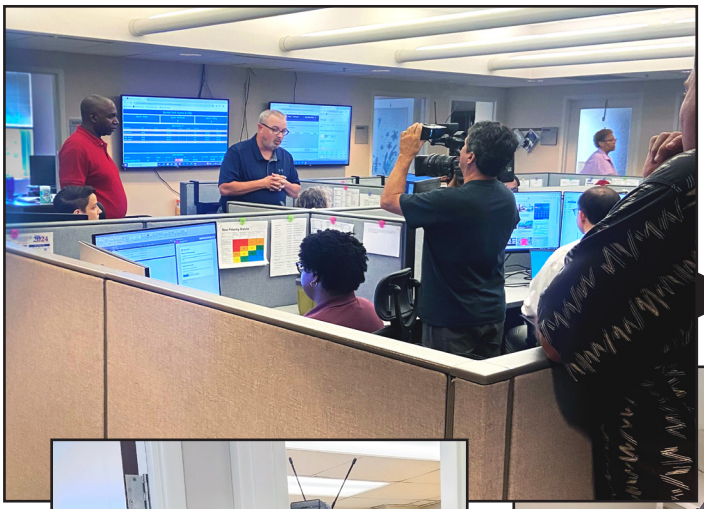
Stay tuned for more updates as we continue to enhance the State of Alabama's network infrastructure!

OUT & ABOUT WITH OIT

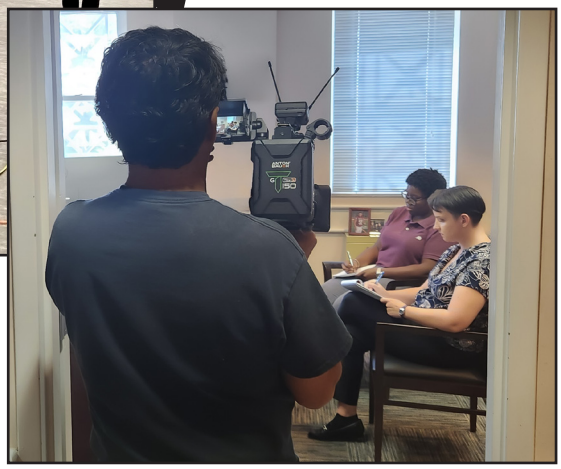
2024 State Combined Campaign (SCC)

OIT is proud to continue its annual participation in the SCC. In early August, several OIT staff members toured the facilities of local charities which receive financial support from the SCC. And on August 28th, OIT's SCC organizers attended the official kickoff event held at the RSA Activity Center.

OUT & ABOUT WITH OIT



Promo Video
Through a collaborative effort with the State Personnel Department, OIT filmed a promotional video in early September to help drive interest in employment opportunities across Alabama's numerous state agencies. OIT's video will appear on Alabama Public Television's *Alabama Career Connection* show later this fall.



State of Alabama Service Pins & Awards
In August, OIT celebrated several deserving team members by presenting them with longevity service pins in recognition of their years of dedicated service to the State of Alabama.

College Colors Day Proclamation
OIT employees show their support for their favorite colleges and universities in honor of Governor Ivey's proclamation of Friday, August 30th as College Colors Day in the State of Alabama.

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Showcase Alabama's Beauty in Pictures!

We want to hear from you!

Send us your captivating images* of sweet home Alabama!
This is a unique opportunity to show off the beauty and wonder of Alabama state parks, beaches, landmarks, State buildings, historical markers, and more! Your image may be the exclusive feature on the cover of our next newsletter– along with a credit to you! Please send your high-quality, high-resolution images with the subject line, "**Alabama Pics**," to **communications@oit.alabama.gov**.

***Note:** Only images of places (no people or pets) will be considered.
Be sure to include your name, description, and location of your photograph.

"Calm Before the Storm"
The Grand Hotel, Point Clear, Alabama
Photo: Rachel A. Mayer

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