QUARTER 1 | 2025

OIT ACCESS

STATE OF ALABAMA

OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

STREAMLINING IT IN ALABAMA STATE GOVERNMENT

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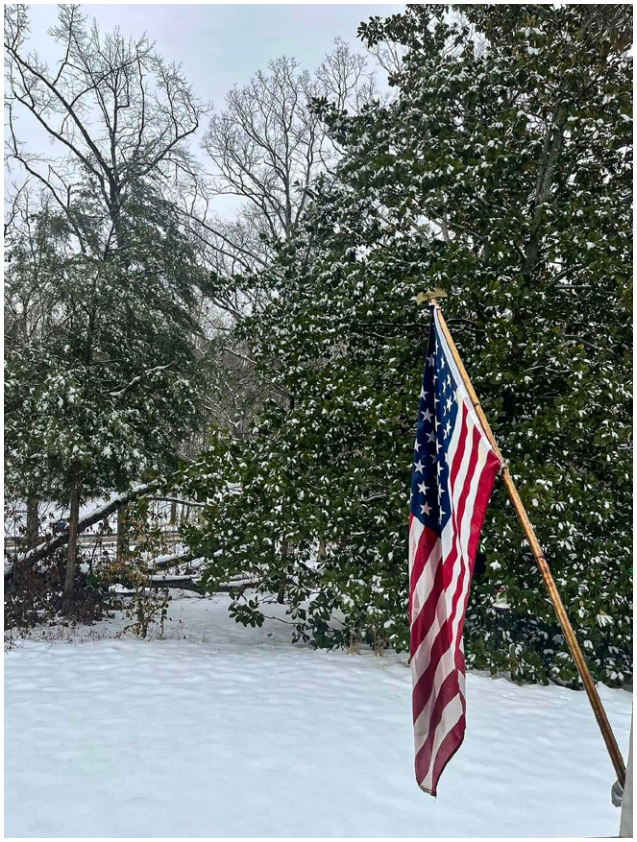


WELCOME to *OIT Access*, the Office of Information Technology's quarterly newsletter. This publication is intended to be a resource for the numerous Alabama state agencies that rely on OIT and its services to help carry out their important missions and more effectively serve the citizens of our great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

CHADWICK SMITH
Chief Information Security Officer

MARK CRAYMER
Executive Director
Shared Services

ROGER BOWMAN
Executive Director
Support Services

BROOKE COVINGTON
Executive Director
Finance and Procurement

KEITH COUSINS
Executive Director
Business Execution

UPDATED IT POLICIES

State IT Policy Refresh

What do generative artificial intelligence, personally identifiable information (PII), and your office workstation all have in common? They are each included among the numerous subjects addressed in the State's updated information technology (IT) policies!

Since the formation of the Office of Information Technology (OIT) as an executive-branch agency in 2013, it has been legislatively tasked with the promulgation of rules, regulations, and policies and the establishment of procedures and standards for the management and operation of IT by state agencies. These policies exist for the purpose of ensuring consistent data security, efficient operations, and privacy protection across Alabama's executive branch and they outline acceptable practices for employees when accessing and utilizing State IT systems and resources.

With many of the State's IT policies having been in place for several years, OIT began an effort in early 2024 to implement a complete policy refresh in order to establish a contemporary and relevant governance baseline that is applicable across all State executive-branch agencies, departments, offices, boards, commissions, bureaus, and authorities (excluding State entities which have been expressly exempted by statute).

OIT worked closely on this effort with governance and policy leaders from five Alabama state agencies and Templar Shield, a nationally leading cybersecurity, privacy, risk, and compliance technology professional services firm. The new amended policies are based on current technology and relevant software and applications to facilitate easier implementation of the policies and to safeguard against cyber threats.

Published on February 3, 2025, and in keeping with an earlier memorandum from OIT Secretary Daniel Urquhart adopting National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) frameworks into policy, the new policies have replaced the dated "legacy" (i.e., formerly published) policies and are available for review on the OIT website at oit.alabama.gov/governance-library/.

Agencies in the OIT tenant can refer to the new policies for instructions on updating their own policies and procedures, and agencies outside of OIT's tenant may use them as a baseline resource to cover aspects of policy that may have been missed in their own authorship.

If you have questions pertaining to the new set of State IT policies or would like to request a copy of any of the legacy policies for historical context, please contact the OIT Governance, Risk, and Compliance team at GRC.Policy@oit.alabama.gov.

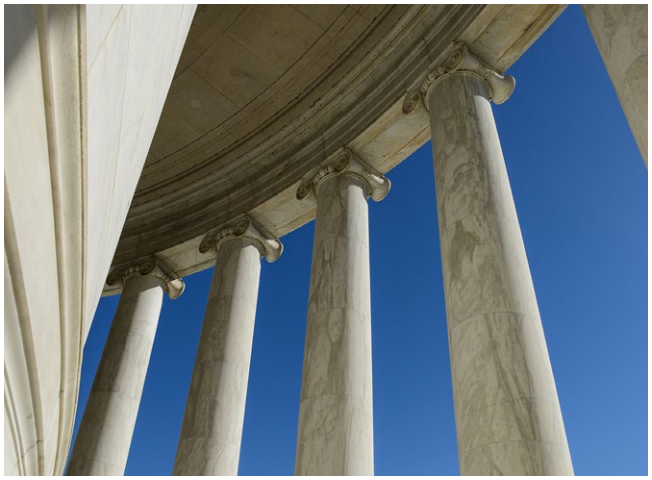
OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
STATE OF ALABAMA

ABOUT | SERVICES | CYBERSECURITY | CAREERS | RESOURCES | NEWS | CONTACT

STATE IT POLICY

Home > State IT Policy

In accordance with the *Articles 8 and 11 of Chapter 4 of Title 41, and Chapter 28 of Title 41, Code of Alabama 1975*, the Secretary of Information Technology has the authority to promulgate rules, regulations, and policies and to establish procedures and standards for the management and operation of information technology (IT) by state agencies.



The policies below are established as a baseline governance library applicable across all State executive-branch departments, agencies, offices, boards, commissions, bureaus, authorities, and providers of IT goods and services, except as expressly exempted by statute.

Information technology is intended to support agency missions and business needs. With this goal as a preconception, and in accordance with the authority and duties assigned to OIT by State of Alabama Legislation, OIT presents policies, standards, and guidelines for the management of state information resources.

Legacy IT policies (formerly published) can be provided for historical context by contacting GRC.policy@oit.alabama.gov.

Govern (GV)

Identify (ID)

Protect (PR)

Detect (DE)

Respond (RS)

Recover (RC)

Artificial Intelligence

NIST Frameworks

OIT Administrative Rules

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

ALDOT's Infrastructure Platform Services Team Provides IT Support to Enhance Agency's Drone Program

Rapid advancements in drone technology in recent years have led to dramatic increases in the practical uses and applications of these dynamic devices. Industries and governments alike now rely on drones more than ever to effectively and efficiently carry out specific tasks which, in the past, demanded considerably greater resources and man-hours.

Realizing the enormous potential held by this innovative technology, the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) operates an Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Section within the agency's Maintenance Bureau. ALDOT's UAS Section utilizes drones to conduct aerial surveys and to extract and process data on various projects throughout the State of Alabama for purposes such as determining the appropriate grade, drain, and construction requirements of new and relocated roadway routes and rights of way. This technology is further applied to evaluate State-owned structures like bridges, guardrails, and buildings. Upon request by individual bureaus in ALDOT's Central Office and across the agency's Regions/Areas, the UAS Section will also use drones to survey impacted areas after inclement weather events.

The UAS Section works closely with the State of Alabama UAS Working Group. This group focuses on State policy and procedures related to drone technology and includes the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) as participating member organizations. ALDOT's UAS Section trains continuously in all aspects of conceivable UAS missions. Training courses taken by UAS personnel include a Basic Operator Course, UAS for Survey/Photogrammetry Course, and advanced classes on rescue and recovery missions.

Additionally, the UAS Section processes 2D imagery into 3D imagery using Bentley Systems "iTwin Capture Modeler" software. Essentially, this allows drone photos and images captured by the UAS team to be converted to 3D representation for presentation and analysis.

Operating such a highly complex and technical program means that it is crucial to have a great information technology (IT) team in place to provide support when challenges are encountered. Fortunately for ALDOT, its Computer Services Bureau stands ready to respond to any IT needs that may arise across the agency.

This was the case when the UAS Section approached the Computer Services Bureau and its Infrastructure Platform Services (IPS) team about a technical concern which was causing significant delays in completing drone image processing tasks. Each individual imaging task was taking multiple days to accomplish, and the issue was beginning

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: ALDOT UAS

to create a serious backlog of important jobs waiting to be completed. The IPS team was engaged to help reduce the processing time of each imaging task in order to improve the UAS Section's task completion rate and overall efficiency.

After a thorough review and analysis of the request and its requirements, the IPS team designed and implemented a solution that helped the UAS Section to reduce its drone image processing time from days to mere hours. The following technology elements were incorporated into the IPS team's solution to address this problem:

- Dell servers as ESXi host with sufficiently abundant resources and multiple high-end Nvidia GPU cards
- Nimble flash storage array
- Storage array connected via Fiber Channel Brocade SAN Directors to the ESXi host
- VMware virtualization solution
- Omnissa Horizon using Nvidia Grid
- Horizon Windows virtual workstations
- Bentley Systems "iTwin Capture Modeler" software
- Microsoft Windows virtual file server for shared files

Photos used with permission from ALDOT.

The IPS team's solution continues to play an important role in the UAS Section's daily operations. It was such a success, in fact, that ALDOT was invited to present a case study on its implementation at a recent International Highway Engineering Exchange Program (IHEEP) conference. It should also be noted that this solution is simultaneously being used to support ALDOT's Environmental Systems Research, Inc. (ESRI) Artificial Intelligence (AI) initiative. ESRI is a leading developer of geographic

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: ALDOT UAS

information systems (GIS) software and ALDOT is using this platform and its geospatial AI capabilities to save time, drive value from vast amounts of data, make decisions faster, and help predict future outcomes on important projects that utilize drone technology.

The contributions of ALDOT's IPS team to the agency's drone program are particularly noteworthy because it serves as an excellent example of how Alabama state agencies benefit from having capable IT teams that are eager to collaborate and provide support to vital projects for the advancement of agencies' organizational objectives.

Right photo: A member of the ALDOT UAS team prepares a Wingtra drone for a demonstration at Troy University's GEO Day.

Bottom right photo: Wingtra drones are used to photograph various new construction or development projects for roadways and bridges throughout the State.

Bottom left photo: ALDOT Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) Command Center demonstration.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT: ALDOT UAS

Right photo: Utilizing the drone image processing solution developed by ALDOT's IPS team, the agency's UAS Section worked with ALEA to capture and process images of downtown Montgomery. The UAS team then used these images to create a 3D map for use in securing the area ahead of the inauguration of Alabama Governor Kay Ivey.

Photo: Bryan Carter, Alabama Inauguration; Office of the Governor

NEW BILLING PLATFORM

Modernizing the System, Streamlining the Process, and Transforming the Agency Experience

For years, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) has relied on the Monies platform to manage its complex and vast billing operations. OIT currently audits and processes over 1,700 invoices each year, with over 600 invoices from telecom vendors alone. In return, OIT generates over 11,000 invoices each year to state agencies for services and products such as telecom and Microsoft Office licenses amongst many others.

In partnership with Parsolvo LLC, OIT is in the process of updating to a new web-based system, BluLogix BluIQ platform. The new system will modernize the cost recovery process, ease the challenges of setting rates, and provide more transparency to agency users by providing a storefront for agencies to access their invoices and view reports.

The conversion will take place in several phases in early 2025. For the first phase of the BluLogix BluIQ platform rollout, agencies will receive training and have access to their invoices. Future phases will allow agencies to review staged invoices before they are processed and finalized and will include enhancements to the agencies' storefront experiences, particularly in the reporting area.

The updated billing system will improve OIT's operations by streamlining its billing process, while also empowering agencies with enhanced visibility to assist with their accounts payable and budgeting efforts.

OIT SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

State of Alabama Wireless Connectivity

Get Connected!

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) offers three helpful connectivity options designed to provide your agency with a wide range of wireless connectivity possibilities. These options enable Alabama state agencies to determine who should be granted access to agency or State resources and which access level is appropriate.

Learn more about the different Wi-Fi options and how your agency can take advantage of these to wirelessly connect employees and guests.

AL_Public

This network is available to any wireless user, including non-State personnel. It provides access only to the internet—access to internal State of Alabama resources is not permitted.

GuestALWifi

This network is available to guests requiring limited access to the State Wi-Fi network. Guest users must be approved by an agency sponsor who will request access credentials on their behalf. It provides access to the internet and an individual agency's internal resources, mirroring the wired connectivity of that agency's employees.

ALWifi

This network is available to State of Alabama employees with appropriate Active Directory profiles. Users of this network will have access to both the internet and State resources. Once logged in and authenticated, the user's internal connectivity and access will mirror that of their wired connection.

Connecting your state agency to a wireless network is just a click or call away. Contact the OIT Service Desk at Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov or (334) 242-2222 to get more information about our flexible connectivity options.

DID YOU KNOW?

Network Segmentation

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) is pleased to report that the recent migration from the State's legacy virtual private network (VPN) solution, Ivanti, to Cisco Secure Client was successfully completed in March. In line with the State Network Segmentation Initiative, this VPN upgrade was especially critical due to the decommissioning of Ivanti in February 2025.

The new Cisco Secure Client VPN solution is a robust, cloud-based platform designed to ensure safe, encrypted access to an organization's network from any location. Additionally, it delivers multiple benefits for the State and its agency users such as enhanced security, improved user experience, unified connectivity, and scalability.

This significant undertaking could not have been accomplished without the close partnership and collaboration of the numerous state agencies which rely on OIT for this important service. Thank you to each agency that participated in this effort for all of your diligence and hard work. Your committed involvement was vital to the success of this migration.

Revamped State CISO Council

The State Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) Council is set to undergo a significant transformation in how it conducts its meetings, aiming for a more collaborative and informative environment. The revamped meetings will prioritize cooperation over traditional hierarchical briefings, with each department participating in open dialogue and inclusive polls, allowing opportunity for gauging opinions, gathering feedback, deciding on immediate actions, keeping all members updated and engaged for the benefit of collective improvement.

The meetings will also include sessions on tools that have proven effective in mitigating risks, promoting the adoption of best practices across the board and leading to a more dynamic, informed, and responsive security framework for the State.

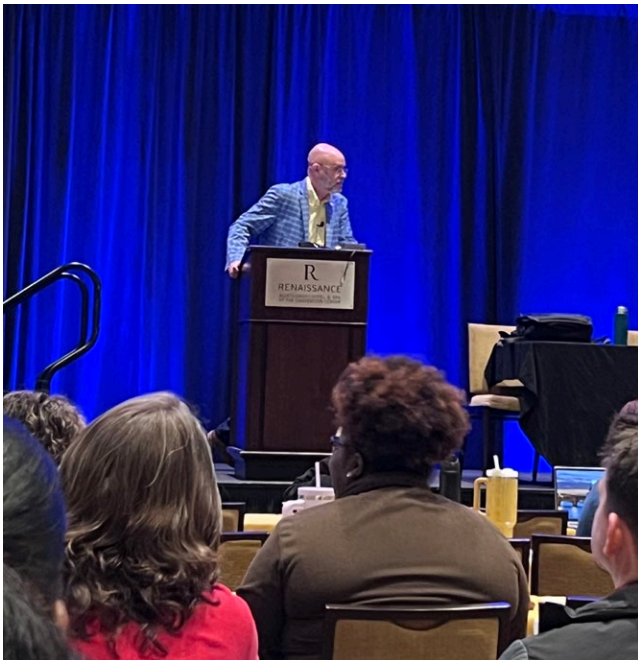
National Clean Up Your Computer Month – January

National Clean Up Your Computer Month is observed every January as a way to remind businesses and individuals alike of the importance of being proactive in the cleaning and securing of our computers. Computer maintenance is vital in enhancing performance, decreasing virus vulnerability, prolonging duration, and securing data.

Organizing files, updating software, clearing cache and cookies, and uninstalling unused programs are just a few ways that you can "clean up your computer" and prevent malware, identify theft, and other security breaches.

Even though it is only one month a year, experts suggest that most computer maintenance be completed every few months if not monthly or weekly.

OUT & ABOUT WITH OIT



Above - Government Finance Officers Association of AL Conference (GFOAA): The State's Chief Information Security Officer, Chad Smith, recently attended the Government Finance Officers Association of Alabama Conference and led a session on how strategic use of technology not only meets audit requirements but also drives organizational efficiency and security.

Above - Service Pins & Awards: In February, 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. Left to Right: Ann Bailey, Dianne Caffey, Susan Bohannon, Becca Estes, Phillip Sprayberry, Adam Nichols, and Joel Cook.

Above - Cisco Secure Client Prep Meeting: OIT hosted an informational session on Wednesday, February 3, 2025, to help prepare agencies for the upcoming transition from the legacy VPN solution (Ivanti) to the new Cisco Secure Client.

Left - OIT Promo Video #2: Continuing its collaborative partnership with the State Personnel Department and Alabama Public Television (APT), OIT filmed a second promotional video in February to help drive interest in employment opportunities within the agency. OIT was one of several Alabama state agencies to film promo videos for inclusion in upcoming episodes of APT's *Alabama Career Connections* television show.

REMEMBERING GARY HOOD

A Selfless Servant and a Great Friend

Gary C. Hood, Jr., a beloved and respected team member of the Office of Information Technology (OIT), passed away on Saturday, February 1, 2025. Gary first joined OIT as a contractor and served the agency in that capacity for several years before officially becoming a merit employee in 2017. Over the course of his time at OIT, he made a name for himself as a dedicated, hardworking colleague who was always eager to share a warm smile and a kind word with others. This served Gary well in his role as Director of Client Services, where he was constantly interacting with and providing support to the numerous executive-branch agencies that OIT serves.

Gary possessed an earnest desire to treat everyone as if they were the most important person in the room, and their issues or challenges – work-related or otherwise – were as significant to him as they were to the individuals who were sharing them with him. As such, it comes as no surprise that people within OIT and across the State held Gary in the highest regard and counted him as a great friend, both professionally and personally.

Outside of his career at OIT, Gary was a tireless community servant and mentor, serving in leadership positions for several youth organizations over the years. His commitment to these roles reflected his passion for helping young people develop confidence, discipline, and character. However, the thing Gary was most proud of was his family. He and his loving wife Amber celebrated 25 joyous years of marriage together and raised two wonderful sons, Gary III and James.

Gary was a genuinely sincere person who made people feel like they were lifelong friends even if they had only known him for a short time. While his sharp wit, infectious laughter, and eternal optimism will surely be missed around the hallways of the Folsom building, his memory and the countless positive contributions he made to OIT and the State as a whole will live on in perpetuity. He was both an asset and a credit to OIT, but more importantly Gary was a gracious and caring friend who always went out of his way to help brighten the day of everyone around him.

GET "THE WORKS" FREE!
AUTO
GOODYEAR

OIT's
Toys for Tots

Top left photo: Bo Holt, Gulf Shores Snow | Top right: WWLTV.com, Snowman on Orange Beach
Bottom photo: Alander Rocha, Alabama Reflector, Snow at the State Capitol on January 21, 2025

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