

OIT ACCESS

STREAMLINING IT IN ALABAMA STATE GOVERNMENT

STATE OF ALABAMA

OFFICE OF

INFORMATION

TECHNOLOGY



IN THIS ISSUE

COPPER TO FIBER

Out with the Old and
In with the New

4

GEN AI TASK FORCE

Artificial Intelligence
In Alabama

5

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Medicaid

7

OIT SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

ServiceNow Refresh

9



CONTENTS

4 COPPER TO FIBER CONVERSION

How Alabama is paving the way to a pioneering and progressive future

5 GEN AI TASK FORCE

Governor Ivey's AI Task Force: Encouraging the responsible and effective use of GenAI in executive-branch agencies

7 AGENCY SPOTLIGHT | MEDICAID

Alabama Medicaid Enterprise Systems (MES) Modernization Program

9 OIT SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

ServiceNow User Experience Refresh - Easier, Faster, Better

10 OUT & ABOUT WITH OIT

Recognizing OIT employees' years of service, ADDR meeting, MS G5 meeting, and Product Management team members

11 DID YOU KNOW?

Recent / upcoming IT changes, updates, and announcements to keep you informed

WELCOME to *OIT Access*, the State of Alabama 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. With success 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 depend 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

COPPER TO FIBER CONVERSION

Copper network infrastructure (such as analog phone systems and modems) has existed since the 1800s, but it now comes with a host of problems and an abundance of costs. The outdated copper wiring system is susceptible to deterioration from flooding as well as signal disruptions and data errors from electromagnetic interference from nearby electrical devices.

To make matters worse, the maintenance costs for Primary Rate Interfaces (PRIs) and flat rate business lines (1FBs) are unsustainable. PRIs are traditional phone lines that carry multiple lines of phone and data, and 1FBs are telephone services that provide dial tone for voice, fax lines, credit card readers, elevators, fire alarms, among other services. Why pay more to use an outdated system?

Although Alabama state agencies have been utilizing the outdated legacy copper-wire networks for over three decades, the physical challenges, complete lack of facility support, and increasing costs have facilitated the need for an efficient and innovative solution: a new fiber network. It should also be noted that various telcos have abandoned the old system and embraced



the new fiber network, virtually requiring state agencies to migrate or pay hefty penalties for staying with the old (think moving from a physical filing system to a digital database).

The Alabama Office of Information Technology (OIT) has risen to the challenge, initiating a plan for the decommission of the old copper-based network to new alternative solutions. This migration will involve 22 state agencies, and OIT is actively working with these agencies in preparation for the upcoming deprecation of the legacy network.

OIT completed all preliminary agency site visits and surveys in September 2023, and has commenced the arduous process of converting agencies to the new fiber network platform. The conversion will take at least nine months to complete.

This initiative of converting from copper to fiber is vitally important because it provides a suitable replacement for PRIs and is cost-effective, eliminating the exorbitant fees of keeping a copper network, saving the state over \$600,000 annually. A fiber network also provides the added benefits of sturdier optic cables, faster speeds, more substantial bandwidth, and better reliability.

Agencies ready to begin the process must open and submit a ticket to the OIT Service Desk at Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov or call (334) 242-2222 as soon as possible.

Alabama is again paving the way to a pioneering and progressive future by investing in this important endeavor, and OIT needs your continued cooperation to bring it to fruition.

GEN AI TASK FORCE

Governor Ivey Establishes Task Force on Generative Artificial Intelligence



Governor Kay Ivey during the State of the State on February 6, 2024.
Credit: Governor's Office/Hal Yeager

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a branch of computer science in which systems use hardware, algorithms, and data to imitate intelligent human behavior to help carry out tasks involving decision-making, pattern discovery, or the performance of a specific action. While there are a number of different ways an AI system can be designed, the two most common are either through a rule-based system (wherein the rules used are provided by a human) or with machine learning algorithms.

Generative AI (GenAI) falls under the latter machine learning category, and is defined by Merriam-Webster as “artificial intelligence that is capable of generating new content

(such as images or text) in response to a submitted prompt (such as a query) by learning from a large reference database of examples.” Examples of GenAI include language models, image generators, AI music/code composition tools, and open-domain chatbots that can engage in freeform conversation and generate contextual responses.

Understanding how critically important it is to ensure that GenAI is used safely, responsibly, and effectively in Alabama state government, on February 8, 2024, Governor Kay Ivey issued an executive order to establish a GenAI Task Force. Among many points addressed in Executive Order 738, it highlights that fact that

“GenAI has the potential to catalyze innovation and the rapid development of a wide range of benefits for Alabamians, but must be deployed carefully to mitigate and guard against a new generation of risks.”



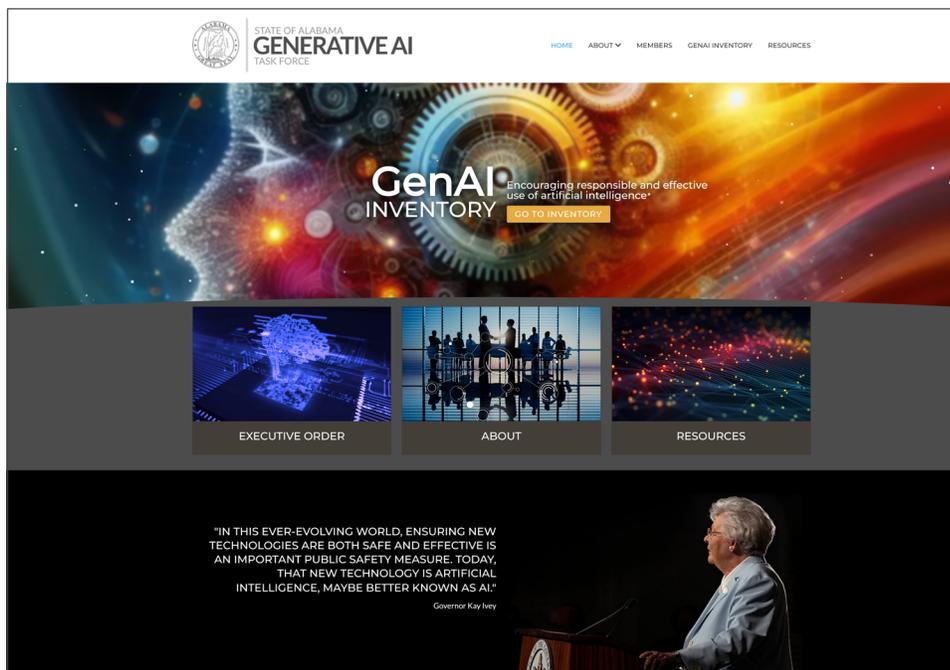
Governor Kay Ivey during the State of the State on February 6, 2024.
Credit: Governor’s Office/Hal Yeager

The stated purpose of the Task Force established by Governor Ivey is to understand current uses of GenAI in state executive-branch agencies, encourage the responsible and effective use of GenAI in executive-branch agencies, and recommend policies and procedures related to the use of GenAI in state executive-branch agencies going forward. The Task Force will be responsible for submitting a final report of its findings and recommendations by November 30, 2024.

Included within this report will be an inventory of all instances of GenAI being developed, employed, or procured by all executive-branch agencies.

Office of Information (OIT) Secretary Daniel Urquhart was appointed by Governor Ivey to serve as Chair of the GenAI Task Force. Also serving on the Task Force are other cabinet members, members of the Alabama State Legislature, and representatives from higher education institutions around the state.

OIT will be tasked with establishing the cloud infrastructure that will allow state agencies to conduct GenAI pilot projects safely and responsibly. These OIT-approved environments, or “sandboxes,” will be available to state agencies and departments to help evaluate GenAI tools and services, to further safe, ethical, and responsible implementations, and to inform decisions to use GenAI. Additionally, OIT will supply clerical, administrative, and other technical assistance as deemed appropriate by Secretary Urquhart.



A dedicated website has been created to help provide relevant information about the GenAI Task Force and its work. To learn more, please visit aitaskforce.alabama.gov.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

MEDICAID

Alabama Medicaid Enterprise Systems (MES) Modernization Program

By: Mason L. Tanaka

Deputy Commissioner and CIO, Alabama Medicaid Agency

In 2016, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) issued new technical architecture guidelines for all future state Medicaid system replacements - 42.CFR, Part 433.111 (h). This CFR mandates State Medicaid agencies move away from large single system solutions to a technology environment composed of modules, where a module from one vendor could be easily swapped for another vendor's module. State Medicaid Director's Letter #16-010 was issued that same year and provided additional sub-regulatory guidance to supplement CMS-2392-F, "Mechanized Claims Processing and Information Retrieval Systems." This letter mandates that all states and territories that maintain a Medicaid program must modularize their Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) and incorporate their Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system to continue receiving enhanced funding for the operation of their MMIS. By April 2027, the Alabama Medicaid Agency (Medicaid) plans to comply with CMS' modularity regulation by replacing its single MMIS with multiple modules and integrating its E&E system (CARES) and Electronic Visit Verification System (EVV).

Most states (including Alabama) currently use a single vendor to handle most of its major Medicaid system needs, to include claims processing, data warehouse, data analytics and reporting, pharmacy services, and provider management services—just to name a few. Alabama Medicaid's single vendor is also known as a Fiscal Agent. Gainwell Technologies, formerly DXC and EDS, has been Alabama's Fiscal Agent for 35+ years.

This massive ERP-like system processes over 50 million Medicaid claims each year, representing over \$8 billion in total claims payments to Alabama healthcare providers. Alabama Medicaid's E&E system was custom developed by Medicaid, but it does not directly interface with the MMIS, other than through a nightly batch file. These applications are just two of the five major IT systems that comprise Alabama's Medicaid Enterprise Systems (MES). The Information Technology and Systems (IST) Division of Medicaid has responsibility over all systems under the MES umbrella.

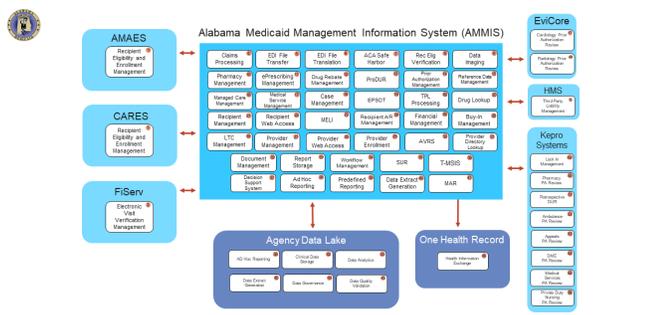
Since the Spring of 2020, the IST Division has planned and implemented a program to meet these federal mandates. While this effort does

involve replacing and integrating Information Technology systems, Medicaid is treating this as a Business Transformation program. Essentially, Medicaid views this effort as an opportunity to improve business processes where it makes sense, while ensuring there is no decline in services provided to the citizens of Alabama. From an IT standpoint, this is an opportunity to modernize legacy IT systems with leading edge solutions that are more efficient, secure, and maintainable. Alabama Medicaid has branded its massive effort as the Alabama MES Modernization Program (AMMP).

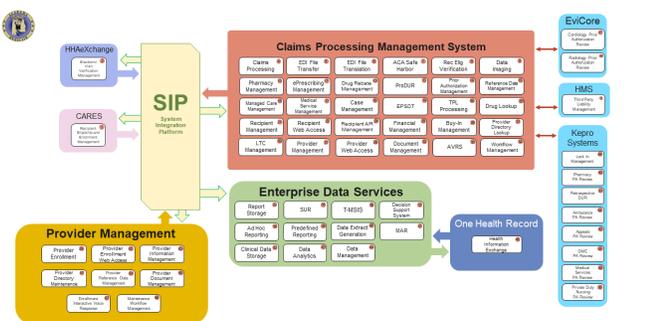
agency developed its strategic plan and roadmap that included developing the sequencing strategy for procuring and implementing the new modules. Business requirements were then developed and mapped to the To-Be business process models. These requirements were included in Medicaid’s Request For Proposals for each new module. From planning to final implementation, this effort will take seven years to complete.

Because this is a business transformation program, Medicaid will also pay special attention to the people side of the program. Organization Change Management (OCM) is incorporated in every step of the way to make sure those impacted by the changes, such as the Medicaid team and all of Medicaid’s external stakeholders, including providers and recipients, will get the support they need to successfully transition to the new business model. Throughout the entire life cycle of AMMP, OCM will play a vital role in contributing to the success of this effort.

Presently, Medicaid is four years into this effort and in the beginning stages of development and implementation. Its Systems Integration (SI) partner, General Dynamics Information Technology, began work in December 2023, and its Enterprise Data Services (EDS) partner, Optum, will begin work on May 1, 2024. The Provider Management module is currently in procurement, and the final module, Claims Processing and Management Services (CPMS), is still in the RFP development stage. Since all the modules will have some level of overlap, Alabama Medicaid is taking an agile approach to procurement, development, and implementation. Because of the amount of time and care Medicaid took in planning and preparing for this phase, the agency is very confident it will not only meet its deadline, but also exceed the major goal it set forth at the beginning of this effort: Transforming and improving the business of Medicaid.



Current State



Future State

Medicaid took a very deliberate path in preparation and planning of AMMP. The size and scope of this effort is unprecedented in state government, so the agency knew it had to build a strong foundation to be successful. This involved a comprehensive, agency-wide Enterprise Architecture and Business Process Modeling effort. Alabama Medicaid process modeled over 60 major business services used by the agency in an As-Is and To-Be format. Using these process models, the

OIT SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

ServiceNow User Experience Refresh – Easier, Faster, Better



The ServiceNow platform is a multi-purpose resource that allows agencies to submit tickets to resolve various issues, create requests through catalog, search the knowledge base, and review their agency's tickets. OIT resolved and closed 6,410 incidents (unplanned interruptions in service) and 13,204 tasks (agency requests) in the last year.

In an effort to create an easier, faster, and better agency experience, OIT implemented several in-house discovery sessions with a new vendor, Provalus, to ascertain the primary issues impeding ticket resolution and compile a list of factors that would improve the ServiceNow platform. Feedback from the top-level division heads assisted OIT in making decisions on how to refresh ServiceNow.

The ServiceNow team and Provalus are working to address current challenges and provide agencies with a more efficient and customizable user experience. The updates should be completed by the end of 2024.

Some of the user benefits of the new and improved ServiceNow will include:

- **Faster turnaround times** – One platform for streamlined communication will enable agency contacts and OIT to send communications, submit requests, and review correspondence in real-time.
- **Self-service articles for common issues** – Agencies will be able to access OIT-generated knowledge articles that provide general information and step-by-step guides for resolving frequent and recurring issues. A search bar will enable users to find answers to their specific concerns, reducing open ticket submissions and improving user experience. To submit suggestions for knowledge article topics, please contact the Director of Product Management, Bonnie Traphan, at Bonnie.Traphan@oit.alabama.gov.
- **Transparent and precise options** – The new comprehensive Service Catalog will provide clear options for service requests, allowing immediate self-service or specific assistance an IT technician provides.
- **Right-now help** – Updated licensing will permit the use of virtual agents to assist users with everyday work tasks. The virtual agents will be available via the homepage Chat and will soon feature AI capabilities.

The team at OIT is diligently working to ensure ServiceNow is accurate to the name. Agencies will soon have 24/7 access to help with everything from minor questions about new software to significant issues concerning server or network outages. We welcome agency feedback on OIT's new and improved ServiceNow platform. For more information on these vital updates, do not hesitate to contact the OIT Service Desk at Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov or (334) 242-2222.

OUT & ABOUT WITH OIT

In January, 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.



OIT Shared Services Executive Director, Mark Craymer, presents to agencies at an Active Directory Domain Remediation meeting held on January 23rd.

OIT shared updates and progress on the implementation of the new Microsoft G5 Consolidated Enterprise Agreement and Standardized Licensing Model on March 7th.



Bonnie Traphan, Director of Product Management, with ServiceNow Developer, Abdul Khan, and IT Systems Specialist, Taren Robinson

DID YOU KNOW?



Everbridge Updates

You undoubtedly have received notifications from OIT labeled as Orange, Green, Yellow, or Redbars. These messages contain important and timely IT information, announcements, and updates that agencies need to know.

OIT is planning to initiate a new quarterly review process whereby we will begin reaching out to request notification of any changes regarding IT directors, managers, and other authorized contacts to ensure accurate and timely communications to the appropriate persons within each agency.

OIT will be in touch soon, or you can contact the OIT Service Desk any time at (334) 242-2222 or Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov to review and report changes to your agency's IT personnel.

March 31, 2024, was World Backup Day!

Did you know 113 phones are lost or stolen every minute?! Did you know one small accident or failure could destroy all the important digital "stuff" you care about? Now, more than ever, having a data backup plan can help preserve precious memories at home or vital information at work. Here are some tips to consider for backing up important data:

- Create at least one backup in the cloud with an online backup service provider, such as OneDrive.
- Store your info on an external hard drive (not on your regular computer or phone) that you update frequently.
- For personal use at home, utilize alternative backup methods, such as a USB stick, an online app, or a secure encrypted backup solution.

Following these steps can help to prevent losing the digital information you care about.

New Teams Client

On **March 20, 2024**, a new Teams client became available for users still utilizing the classic version of Microsoft Teams. The user experience for the new Teams is similar to Classic Teams, so you will not need further training. Users will, however, experience faster performance and less memory use.

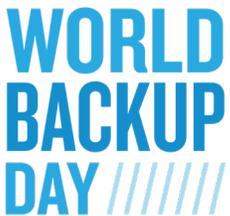
Users can enable the new Teams by clicking on the toggle in the Classic Teams app. After the update, Classic Teams will no longer be available. More information can be found on Microsoft's website: <https://learn.microsoft.com/en-us/microsoftteams/new-teams-desktop-admin>

Integrated Risk Management Updates

The State has relied on the same legacy enterprise IT policy and governance library for over a decade. It is time for a much-needed refresh.

OIT has partnered with Templar Shield, a ServiceNow Elite Partner and expert, to analyze current policies, governance, risk and compliance, and processes for repair, replacement, or removal of policies in order to align with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) information security frameworks and control families.

To date, OIT has documented over 300 policy user stories and is evaluating an automated version of the policy lifecycle review process. The policy update process will be extensive but is planned for completion by the close of Fiscal Year 2026.





OFFICE OF
**INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY**
STATE OF ALABAMA
OIT.ALABAMA.GOV

OIT SERVICE DESK

Service Desk: (334) 242-2222

Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov

64 North Union Street

Montgomery, AL 36130

Main Office: (334) 242-3800