FY2024

ANNUAL REPORT

OFFICE OF
**INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY**
STATE OF ALABAMA

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Just as the IT landscape is constantly evolving, OIT is continuously refining its business processes and improving its service delivery capabilities to ensure Alabama stays on the forefront of emerging trends, is properly safeguarding its IT resources and infrastructure, and is perpetually taking steps to help streamline IT statewide.

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Daniel Urquhart
Secretary of Information Technology

Letter to Governor Kay Ivey

Dear Governor Ivey,

I am pleased to share the Office of Information Technology's (OIT) Fiscal Year 2024 Annual Report with you, the Legislature, and the citizens of Alabama. This report features information and articles highlighting OIT's continuous efforts to support the Information Technology (IT) requirements of the State of Alabama and its many interconnected agencies.

As a state agency, OIT is committed to ensuring good IT governance across Alabama's executive branch, providing carefully measured and professionally executed IT strategic planning, and offering innovative services and technologies that deliver reliable, highly available, secure, efficient, and cost-effective solutions for our IT stakeholders. Our primary objective with each of these critical focus areas is to empower and enable state agencies with the resources and support needed to better serve the residents of our great state.

OIT remained extremely active over the past fiscal year as we concentrated on numerous ongoing and new State IT initiatives. A particular effort I would like to highlight is the Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Task Force. I was honored to be appointed by you to serve as Chair of the task force and work alongside such a distinguished group of dedicated men and women. The GenAI Task Force energetically dove into researching, exploring, and debating the potential risks and benefits of this revolutionary technology, as well as its possible implementation and usage in Alabama state government.

More broadly, OIT continued building upon its past successes and further devoted itself to aligning our agency's vision and priorities with those of the frontline agencies that strive daily to deliver essential services to Alabamians. Just as the IT landscape is constantly evolving, OIT is continuously refining its business processes and improving its service delivery capabilities to ensure Alabama stays on the forefront of emerging trends, is properly safeguarding its IT resources and infrastructure, and is perpetually taking steps to help streamline IT statewide.

Thank you for the opportunity to share this report about OIT's work and for the privilege of serving the State of Alabama, its hardworking agencies, and most importantly the people who call our state home.

Daniel Urquhart
Secretary of Information Technology

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Office of Information Technology's Purpose

W ithout question, technology has never been a more essential part of our everyday lives than it is in today's digital world. Almost everything that we encounter on a daily basis – our healthcare, education, work, shopping, travel, entertainment, and so much more – is impacted by IT systems and networks. Therefore, the need for these systems to function efficiently and safely is of the utmost importance. This is especially true for state government.

To effectively serve its citizens, Alabama must unify our state agency network and information systems while leveraging the capability and knowledge of industry leading partners and cutting-edge technology and communications.

The streamlining and consolidation of governmental functions is a crucial priority and of great significance to the economic well-being of the State of Alabama. In line with that goal, OIT was formed in 2013 to streamline information technology in the State. Responsible for establishing all IT policy for the State of Alabama and developing its IT strategic plan, OIT also strives to meet the IT service requirements of the numerous agencies statewide.

While effective IT utilization is paramount to reducing the cost of governmental operations, excellence in support of the IT needs of our state agencies – who directly serve the people of Alabama – is of equal importance.

Office of Information Technology's Purpose

IT GOVERNANCE

Establishes and administers a structured system for the review and approval of new IT initiatives and projects. Additionally, OIT promulgates rules, regulations and policies, and establishes procedures and standards for the management and operation of IT by state agencies to safeguard, protect, and build resilience.

IT STRATEGIC PLANNING

Develops a comprehensive strategic plan for Alabama's IT that is updated annually and submitted to the Governor. The strategic plan focuses on the acquisition, management, and use of IT by state agencies and coincides with the planning and budgeting processes for individual agencies.

IT RESOURCE UTILIZATION

Establishes and maintains a continuously evolving inventory of IT resources (such as personnel, data and data systems, software, hardware, and services) to promote improved asset management, utilization, and data sharing among the numerous state agencies.

Mission • Vision • Guiding Principles

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.

Guiding Principles

- Mature into a trusted advisor and business partner to agencies as they serve the citizens of Alabama

- Standardize the delivery of networks, security, and enterprise services

- Provide our customers visibility into their environment by implementing multi-tenant enterprise tools that facilitate delegated administration, compliance reporting, and control monitoring

- Deliver security monitoring and operational services to all agencies to protect State assets and services while mitigating risk

- Work within and across the agencies to gather requirements, assist them with meeting their strategic goals, and identify opportunities for shared innovation and improvement

- Develop consistent cost models for services, streamline the billing process, and clearly define and communicate the value provided for all agency fee-driven services

- Work toward establishing a Zero Trust Architecture (ZTA) for Alabama state government

Organizational Chart

Daniel Urquhart
Secretary of Information Technology
State Chief Information Officer

Willie Fields
Deputy Secretary of
Information Technology

Executive Support
Secretary Direct Reports

Mark Craymer
Executive Director
Shared Services

Roger Bowman
Executive Director
Shared Services

Brooke Covington
Executive Director
Finance & Procurement

Network Engineering	Client Services, Service Desk, NOC, and Desktop	Billing
Infrastructure	Change Management and PMO	Procurement
Information Security	Brokered Services	Asset Management
Service Strategy	Application Development	Financial Reporting and Accounts Payable
		Personnel

The organizational chart above displays OIT's leadership and operational structure during FY2024 (October 1, 2023 through September 30, 2024) and may not reflect the current organizational structure.

Overview of Services

OIT Services are organized into categories, with various processes and products available within each individual service category.

ACCESS

OIT's access services provide connectivity and access to essential state resources such as the State network, email, Internet, VoIP, and much more; all in a secure and controlled environment.

BUSINESS PROCESS AUTOMATION

OIT offers enabling technologies designed to satisfy learning, creating, collaborating, sharing, storing, and managing information, supported by product teams empowered to configure, customize, leverage, and extend product features.

COMMUNICATION

A broad and complete set of communication tools are offered by OIT to efficiently and dependably connect users with one another and their customers.

CORE COMPUTING

Whether you are in need of data center services, primary storage, hosted web service, or virtual server hosting, OIT is able to provide the fundamental core computing services that are central to IT organizations within our state.

Overview of Services

SUPPORT

Customer support is one of the most important services OIT can provide. Whatever your specific IT help needs might be (from a single, localized issue to a widespread service disruption), our professional support services are operationally available – continuously and around-the-clock.

IT PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

OIT deploys experienced IT professional services to partner, guide, design, and engage IT solutions and services in the most economical and efficient manner.

GOVERNANCE

OIT establishes policies, standards, guidelines, and procedures for IT departments to abide by, while incorporating the State IT strategy and overall business objectives. OIT governance promotes best practices, lowers risk, aids in improving ROI, affects long-term change, and implements statutory requirements of IT projects.

STORAGE

OIT provides logical storage of agency information in modern, state-of-the-art, regulatorily compliant facilities. Access to your information is guaranteed, and it is regularly backed up and can be restored as required.

SECURITY

Our security services offer protections for the confidentiality, integrity, and availability of state technology assets, commensurate with risks to infrastructure, communications, information, and information systems.

OIT Divisions

Office of the Secretary and Executive Support

OIT operates under the leadership and direction of the Secretary of Information Technology.

Appointed by the Governor of Alabama, the Secretary of Information Technology is a cabinet-level position charged with ensuring good IT governance throughout the executive branch of Alabama state government, developing a comprehensive strategic plan for the State's IT, promoting responsible and efficient IT resource utilization, and facilitating the effective delivery of critical IT services and support for the numerous state agencies, boards, and commissions that depend on OIT to successfully carry out their respective organizational missions.

The Office of the Secretary includes the Deputy Secretary and a skilled team of Executive Directors who oversee three primary divisions within the agency – Shared Services, Support Services, and Finance and Procurement. Additionally, a number of specialized departments at OIT report directly to the Secretary and provide both executive and agency-wide support.

In addition to guiding the agency and serving as the primary advisor to the Governor on IT related matters as the Chief Information Officer (CIO) for the State of Alabama, the Secretary of Information Technology is also responsible for coordinating a multi-agency CIO Advisory Council, serving on multiple state task forces, committees, and boards, and working with the heads and leadership teams of agencies across state government to help meet their IT demands and interconnected business goals.

OIT Leadership

Daniel Urquhart
Secretary of Information Technology
State Chief Information Officer

Daniel Urquhart serves on Alabama Governor Kay Ivey's Cabinet as Secretary of Information Technology.

Prior to his appointment by Governor Ivey to lead the agency on July 1, 2023, Secretary Urquhart spent the previous three years as Deputy Secretary of OIT and has collectively served the State of Alabama for more than two decades.

Before joining OIT in 2020, Secretary Urquhart served as the CIO for the Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) where he played a vital role in working with industry partners to design, build, and implement a state-of-the-art criminal justice network that exceeded regulatory compliance requirements.

The first fifteen years of Secretary Urquhart's professional career were spent in the private sector. He held various technical and leadership positions in the banking and finance, drug/medical wholesale, childcare services, restaurant concepts, and consulting industries where he led and implemented various business and decision-making systems and platforms.

Secretary Urquhart attended Auburn University at Montgomery where he earned a BSBA in Management Information Systems.

OIT Divisions
Shared Services

The primary focus of OIT's Shared Services Division is to improve the security, connectivity, and stability of the State's network and infrastructure by providing a secure platform and solution for state agencies. Comprised of four main departments, the Shared Services Division contains Network Engineering, Systems Administration and Infrastructure, Information and Operational Security, and Service Strategy.

Collectively, these groups work with state agencies to strengthen business continuity between OIT and the agencies' technical teams. Additionally, the division works closely with vendors to organize and standardize technology products and services. This is essential to reducing cost and helps to minimize the magnitude of different platforms and services in use throughout state government.

The specific roles filled by each department within the Shared Services Division include:

Network Engineering: Ensures the delivery of Internet connectivity, voice services, provisioning of private network and voice circuits, network monitoring and support operations, and the installation and maintenance of various network equipment, physical connectivity, and monitoring devices throughout the Montgomery campus and WAN networks statewide.

System Administration and Infrastructure: Provides expertise related to Active Directory services and Identity Management, supports all Microsoft 365 environments and solutions, and delivers support for Azure and AWS applications in the form of resource creation, account management, subscription delegation, and administration of all application registrations for state agencies. This group also manages all shared computing platforms, including server administration, backups, file share, certificates, and load balancing for integrated services used by agencies.

Information and Operational Security: Reports and monitors events and security threats with the potential to impact the State's shared environment. Maintains a security program implementing industry best standards and operating procedures for Incident Response, Vulnerability Management, and Threat Management. This team also ensures internal and external security measures are enacted to provide controls for effective response and prevention of risk to the shared environment, including the network, infrastructure, identities, and services managed and operated within the State of Alabama.

Service Strategy: Establishes communication and alignment of technical teams around architectural and engineering solutions. Focuses on standardizing the processes and functions which touch the shared tenant and environment in order to establish a consolidated approach for the delivery of technologies to the State. Through appropriate management and development of the enterprise, this team helps agencies to understand the value and importance of aligning services and solutions to meet statewide business needs.

OIT Division Leadership

Mark Craymer, Executive Director Shared Services

Mark Craymer serves as Executive Director of Shared Services for OIT.

With more than twenty years of IT experience in state government, Mr. Craymer began his state service working for the Administrative Office of Courts (AOC). At AOC, he filled numerous critical System and Network Administration roles and helped to introduce multiple technology stacks which are utilized statewide by Alabama's judicial branch.

Prior to his career with the State, Mr. Craymer worked in various industries such as banking, finance, education, and commerce. In each of his previous roles, he was responsible for implementing and supporting technology improvements.

Mr. Craymer attended Troy University where he earned his BSBA and MBA in Accounting. Later, he attended Kaplan University and received a Graduate Certificate in Project Management.

OIT Divisions
Support Services

The Support Services Division of OIT is tasked with providing essential services such as technical solutions, teams, and systems to departments throughout OIT in order to support the overall mission of the agency. The individual sections within Support Services work across all levels of OIT to ensure that the organization is positioned to effectively meet the needs of its agency customers.

Many of Support Services' sections also provide services externally, working directly with state agencies to support their unique IT business demands so they are able to successfully serve the citizens of Alabama. A comprehensive list of the Support Services sections which enable OIT to carry out its daily work includes the following:

Project Management Office (PMO): Manages OIT's project portfolio and provides project management resources to the various divisions within OIT. The PMO supports the full project life cycle for OIT's key initiatives.

Change and Configuration Management: Maintains and documents OIT's hardware and software inventory while providing documentation, tracking, and communication around changes to these items for which OIT is responsible.

Application Development: Develops and maintains the applications, websites, and databases which support the departments within OIT. Application Development also provides development and maintenance support to the various agencies, boards, and commissions throughout the State.

Client Services: Provides OIT's customer-facing Service Desk, Desktop Support, and Quality Assurance services to both OIT internal staff and customer agencies.

Network Operations Center (NOC): Provides 24/7 monitoring support of OIT's network infrastructure while serving as OIT's point of contact to the network vendors.

Mainframe Support: Serves as the liaison between the customers, including OIT, who utilize the State's mainframe and the mainframe vendor. OIT's mainframe support team also provides mainframe print services for customer agencies as needed.

Product Management: Facilitates a governance committee for changes to the M365 platform, provides technical training solutions and resources, supports and coordinates Adobe and Laserfiche activities for the State, manages OIT's ServiceNow team and backlog, and negotiates with vendors to create bulk purchase contracts for products and services used by agencies to reduce overall cost.

OIT Division Leadership

Roger Bowman, Executive Director Support Services

Roger Bowman serves as the Executive Director of the OIT Support Services Division. Mr. Bowman has more than twenty-five years of experience in the field of information technology. He began his career in the private sector working in various software development roles, as well as on technical teams supporting software in the textile and apparel manufacturing space.

Over the past sixteen years, Mr. Bowman has served in multiple roles within state government including as a software architect, software development manager, and software development director. The experience Mr. Bowman gained in each of these previous roles prepared him well for his current position leading OIT's Support Services Division.

OIT Divisions
Finance and Procurement

The Finance and Procurement Division of OIT oversees the financial reporting, accounts payable, billing, procurement, asset management, and personnel functions of the agency.

These critical activities are coordinated across six departments within the division to help streamline the daily business operations of OIT. Finance and Procurement's departments and their specific areas of responsibility are as follows:

Financial Reporting: Responsible for the continuous tracking, review, and reporting of OIT's financial data to drive better business performance and results. The work of the Financial Reporting department is essential to maintaining transparency and compliance as a state agency.

Accounts Payable: Ensures goods and services are received by OIT before submitting accurate and timely payment for vendor invoices in compliance with State of Alabama Fiscal Policies and Procedures.

Billing: Conducts a monthly audit of, and initiates payment for, the telecommunication invoices for the majority of Alabama's state agencies. OIT's billing activities support operational stability, collaborative telecom vendor relationships, and adherence to fiscally responsible processes.

Procurement: Ensures that access to IT products and services is available to meet the State's IT strategy and to provide competitive sourcing, lowest pricing, and favorable value and contract terms from awarded suppliers.

Asset Management: Supervises OIT's tangible assets to ensure they are accounted for, deployed, maintained, upgraded, and removed from use as needed.

Personnel: Oversees the onboarding of new employees, administers payroll and benefits, advises OIT staff on personnel matters, and ensures compliance with regulatory agencies and the State Personnel Board.

OIT Division Leadership

Brooke Covington, Executive Director Finance and Procurement

Brooke Covington serves as the Executive Director of Finance and Procurement for OIT. Ms. Covington has more than two decades of experience in the field of accounting and has been a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) since 2009.

Prior to joining OIT in 2018, Ms. Covington worked in banking for fifteen years and served as an Executive VP/Chief Operating Officer where she oversaw branch and financial operations. Before being promoted to Chief Operating Officer, Ms. Covington served as Chief Financial Officer.

Ms. Covington earned her Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Troy University, followed by a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Auburn University at Montgomery.

FY2024 Initiatives & Projects

CISCO Webex: Advancing Alabama Through Innovative Communications

OIT **is continuously working to meet the State of Alabama's demand for improved and innovative telecommunication services. In previous years, the State's phone infrastructure and services were on premises, limiting the support OIT could provide to various executive-branch agencies.**

Moving Forward onto the Cloud

A major step in innovation and efficiency included moving away from the outdated legacy phone platform and onto a cloud-driven solution.

In the previous fiscal year, OIT began the process of migrating to the Cisco Webex Cloud Calling platform, which provided simple management, efficient collaboration, and 24/7, on-the-go enhanced communications.

Webex also included no-additional cost features such as "Remember User Layout," a simple setting that allows users to easily preset the layout selection; "In-Meeting AI Assistant," a function that provides a summary of the last 15 minutes of a meeting or the entire meeting; and "Webex Events," an online platform and app that gives users the ability to host a variety of events, conferences, and trainings. By the end of FY 2024, approximately 75% of agencies (over 9,000 devices) were on the new Cloud platform.

Positioning the State for Success

The Webex application provided significant benefit to State IT operations. It reduced the State's expenditure on workforce, space, and associated costs and provided economical licensing that included bundled services, meetings, events, fax numbers, calling queues, and more. Full weekend planning and working hours became a problem of the past, and the need for agencies to manually update firmware was virtually eliminated with the Cisco Cloud automation.

As the State moves forward for the benefit and success of the agencies and citizens, OIT will continue to utilize new technology to ensure challenges with infrastructure are minimal and trust in OIT as a competent business partner is maximized.

webex
by **CISCO**

FY2024 Initiatives & Projects
Multi-Agency Election Tabletop Exercise

In an effort to ensure the safety of critical infrastructure and State government systems, OIT has begun the significant initiative of restructuring OIT's Incident Response Plan (IRP).

The IRP's purpose is to guide agency leadership in detecting, responding to, and recovering from cybersecurity incidents to minimize harm to operations, data, and reputation in the event of a threat or attack. In line with this strategy, OIT hosted an Election Tabletop Exercise (TTX) early in the fall of 2024 at the Alabama Army National Guard Headquarters in Montgomery, Alabama.

The TTX was a mock scenario designed to help prepare essential personnel on how to effectively respond should a cybersecurity incident occur on or around election day. Participants included representatives from the following state agencies:

- Alabama Secretary of State's Office
- Alabama National Guard
- Alabama Law Enforcement Agency
- Alabama Emergency Management Agency
- Alabama Administrative Office of Courts
- Alabama Office of Information Technology

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), and partners from private industry also participated in the TTX.

The event focused on a series of hypothetical election night disruptions that could also be part of a larger cyber attack. Personnel from each agency discussed the various protocols and other measures that would be followed should such an incident arise. Participants also took part in a debrief session, a crucial part of the TTX, emphasizing the positive aspects of the current plan while exploring additional options to mitigate or prevent incidents and further improve the response.

OIT Deputy Secretary Willie Fields concluded the exercise by stating, "This is the first of many tabletop exercises to come. Our incident response plan will continue to be refined as we document crucial processes, partnerships, and protections to put in place to help safeguard our great state and nation."
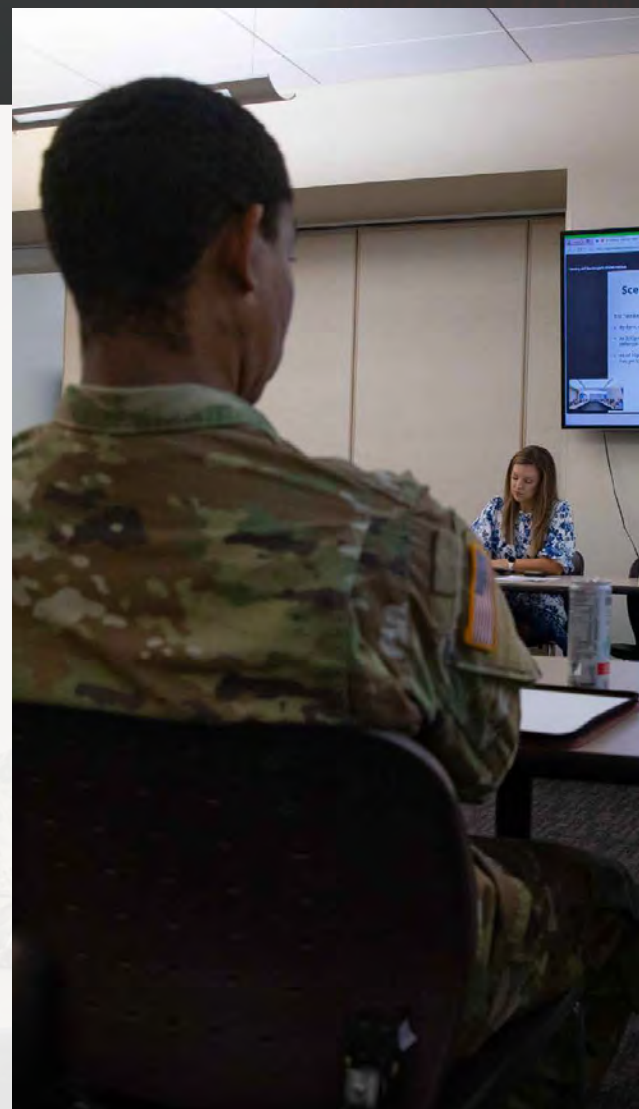
FY2024 Initiatives & Projects
Alabama Digital Government Summit

Each year, the Alabama Digital Government Summit brings together public sector IT professionals to promote best practices, learn about new and innovative developments in IT, and share ideas and interact with one another.

This annual event also connects attendees with leading industry partners who participate in leadership discussions, networking breaks, inspirational keynotes, and timely conversations to help advance the technology goals of state and local governments throughout Alabama.

OIT continued its longstanding partnership with Government Technology – a nationally leading data, media, and events company dedicated exclusively to state and local government and education – to host the 2023 Alabama Digital Government Summit at the Renaissance Montgomery Hotel and Spa on Monday, November 13, 2023. Over 350 attendees, vendors, and speakers participated in the 2023 event, making it one of the most successful Summits to date.

OIT Secretary Daniel Urquhart started the day off with welcoming remarks and a brief update on current State IT initiatives and priorities. Following Secretary Urquhart's comments, Paralympic Games Silver Medalist, Persian Gulf War veteran, and TEDx speaker, John Register, provided the keynote address in which he encouraged attendees to transform adversity into advantage in order to conquer life's hurdles.

Numerous engaging topics were covered in both the morning and afternoon breakout sessions, touching on areas such as navigating cloud technologies and trends, keeping pace with the ever-changing landscape of workforce development, exploring the potential of low-code and no-code in application development, and navigating technology procurement in the State of Alabama. And of course, sessions focusing on cybersecurity-related topics remained highly relevant and well-attended.

OIT is committed to providing meaningful opportunities such as the Alabama Digital Summit to help bring together our state's government IT professionals. The more these individuals interface and share ideas, the stronger and more agile Alabama will become as a whole. Facilitating cross-functional collaboration is not just important, but essential to organizational growth and development and positions Alabama to better serve its citizens across all levels of government.

270
Attendees

85
Vendors

26
Speakers

10
Sessions

28
Sponsors
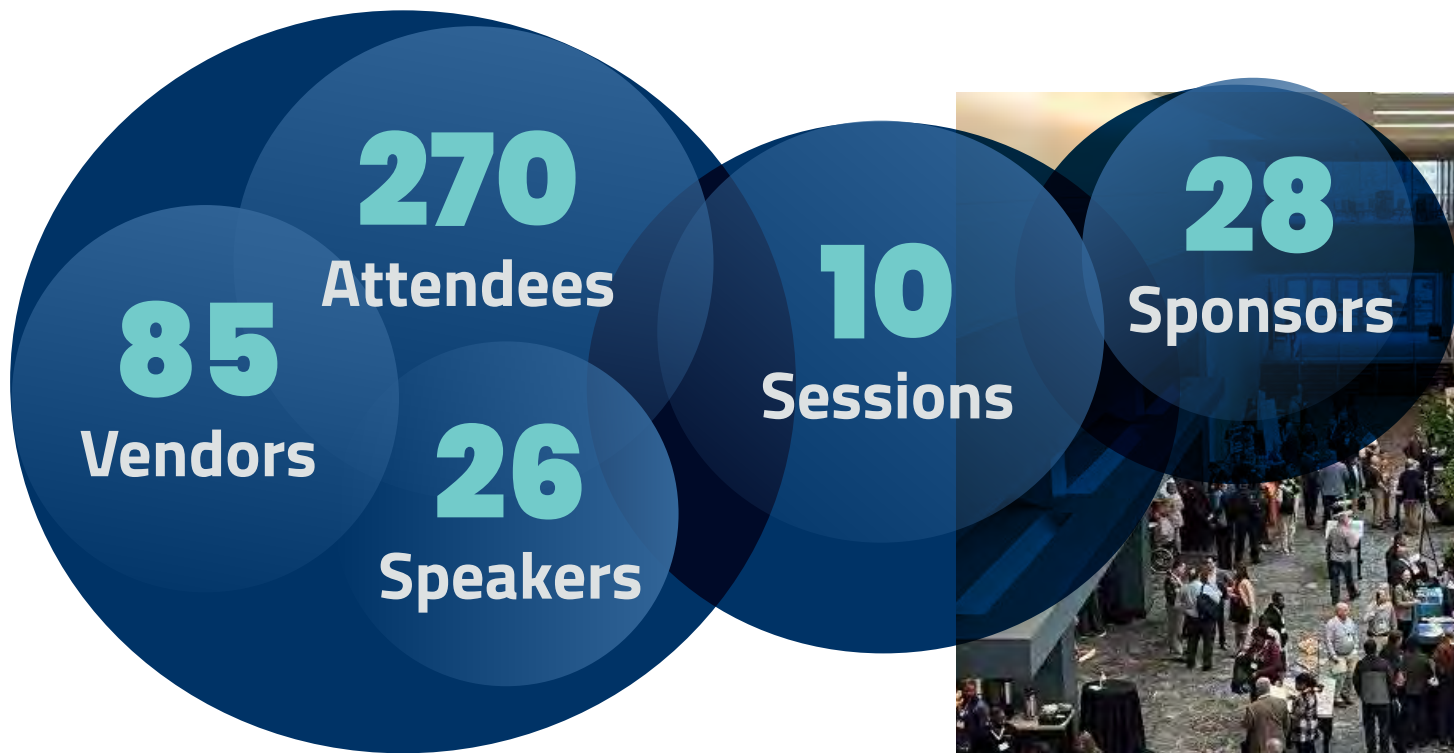
"There is immense value in collaborating and sharing ideas with our IT colleagues in the government sector throughout the State of Alabama. The Alabama Digital Government Summit provides an excellent opportunity to do just that by bringing together IT professionals from all across our state to hear from industry leaders and insiders, to promote best practices, and to network with one another."

~ Daniel Urquhart, Secretary of Information Technology,
   Chief Information Officer, State of Alabama

FY2024 Initiatives & Projects
2024 Digital States Survey

In early 2024, OIT partnered with the IT leadership of several executive-branch agencies to participate in the Digital States Survey, a biennial evaluation of the IT practices of all 50 states to recognize their achievements and publish a standard reference for improving the business practices of government IT.

The Center for Digital Government (CDG), a division of e.Republic, the nation's only state and local government and education media and research company, evaluates and scores each state's in-depth self-audit survey. The survey assesses states' use of technology to streamline operations, increase capacity, and improve service delivery by assigning a letter grade based on the quantifiable data and deep analysis of the following categories:

• Aligned Leadership
• Constituent Digital Experience
• Continuous Innovation
• Cyber Risk Management
• Data Governance and Use
• Workforce Planning
• IT Investment Management
• Resilience
• Enterprise Computing/Broadband Expansion
• Business Process Alignment

Scoring

The survey responses are scored based on CDG's evaluation of criteria such as a state's actions to support IT priorities and policies that enhance services and operations, cost savings, and innovative operations that benefit stakeholders and citizens. To receive an "A" score, states must demonstrate strong results across all criteria.

Deadline and Report Release

The online survey was submitted in May 2024, and the scores were released later in the fall.

The State of Alabama improved upon its previous score from 2022 and earned an overall score of "B" for focusing on citizen-centric technologies, enhanced cybersecurity, and the responsible and ethical use of generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) in state executive-branch agencies.

Impact for Alabama

Completing the 2024 Digital States Survey and improving upon Alabama's previous score has only elevated our state's IT priorities, operations, plans, and accomplishments moving forward. This improvement compliments OIT's commitment to facilitating meaningful communication and collaboration with stakeholders and advancing continuous improvement in IT for the State of Alabama.

As OIT looks ahead to 2025, it will continue to utilize innovative solutions and impactful strategies that enhance the work and services of Alabama state agencies with efficiency and excellence.

# FY2024 Initiatives & Projects
Copper-to-Fiber Conversion

Copper network infrastructure (such as analog phone systems and modems) has existed since the 1800s, which presents a host of modern problems. 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 rapidly increasing and will only continue to rise. PRIs are traditional phone lines that carry multiple lines of phone and data, and 1FBs are telephone services which provide dial tone for voice, fax lines, credit card readers, elevators, fire alarms, and numerous other systems and devices.

Additionally, many leading telco companies are gradually abandoning copper network infrastructure in favor of new fiber networks, essentially requiring customers to migrate or pay hefty penalties for staying with the old (think moving from a physical filing system to a digital database). When considering the multitude of limiting factors associated with a legacy system such as traditional copper-wire networks, there is an obvious question that must be answered – Why pay more to use an outdated system?

Although Alabama state agencies have successfully utilized copper-wire networks for over three decades, the physical challenges, lack of facility support, and increasing costs emphasized the need for an efficient and innovative replacement solution: a new fiber network.

In FY2024, OIT initiated an extensive plan to decommission the State's legacy copper-based network and migrate executive-branch agencies to a modern fiber solution. Over the course of several months, OIT technicians conducted numerous agency site visits and surveys to collect the information needed to implement a replacement solution for agencies' PRIs and 1FBs. Once all of the preliminary site visits and surveys were complete, OIT started the arduous process of converting agencies to the new fiber network.
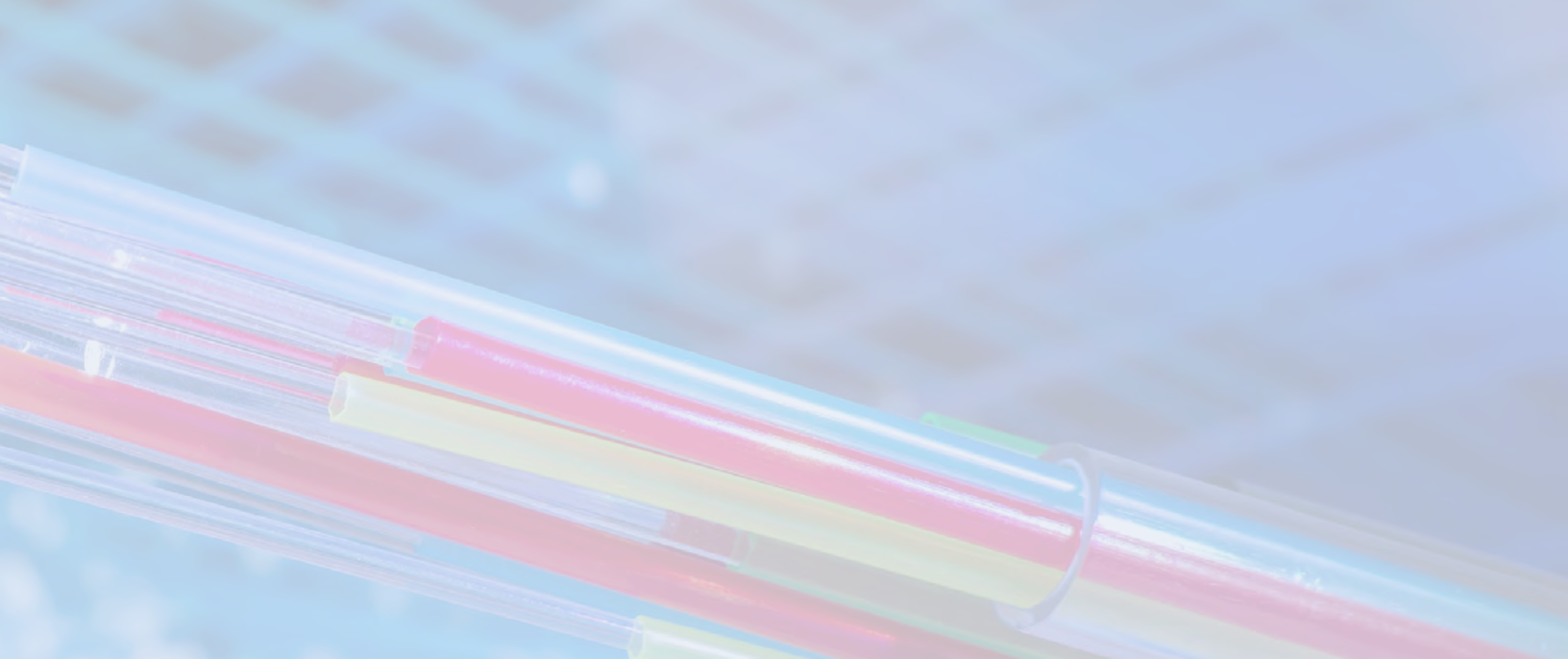
This initiative of converting from copper to fiber was vitally important because it provided a suitable replacement for PRIs and is cost-effective, eliminating the exorbitant fees of keeping a copper network and saving the State of Alabama over $600,000 annually. A fiber network also provides the added benefits of sturdier optic cables, faster speeds, more substantial bandwidth, and better reliability.

The majority of conversions occurred in FY2024 and the few agencies which remain on the old copper network are anticipated to be migrated to the new fiber network early in FY2025. Through this effort, Alabama continues to pave the way to a pioneering and productive future by investing in its critical infrastructure.

More than

$600,000

Annual Savings for the State of Alabama

FY2024 Initiatives & Projects
GenAI Task Force

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 plethora 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 the 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."

The stated purpose of the task force established by Governor Ivey is to understand how state executive-branch agencies are currently using GenAI, to encourage the responsible and effective use of the technology, and to recommend policies and procedures for its use in the executive branch going forward.

OIT Secretary Daniel Urquhart was appointed by Governor Ivey to serve as Chair of the GenAI Task Force, and its members include Governor's Cabinet officials, members of the Alabama State Legislature, and representatives from higher education institutions around the state. The task force held its inaugural meeting on April 3, 2024. At this meeting, Secretary Urquhart announced that working groups would also be created to help meet the task force's goals satisfactorily and efficiently.

"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

Photo: Governor Kay Ivey | 2024 State of the State Address | Billy Pope

The following working groups were established:

Policies and Governance
Recommend policies and procedures related to the use of GenAI in state executive-branch agencies. Develop a governance framework that outlines the policies, procedures, and processes for developing, deploying, and using GenAI.

Workforce Education and Training
Determine how to educate and train current and future workers in using GenAI as the technology matures and as worker knowledge increases.

Responsible and Ethical Use of GenAI
Establish principles for responsible AI use, identify ethical challenges specific to Generative AI, and propose guidelines for ethical decision-making in AI development.

Data Management and Ownership
Define, document, and provide governance on how data in GenAI systems will be collected, used, stored, and shared.

To help gain a better understanding of the current usage and implementation of GenAI across Alabama's executive branch, an inventory of all instances of GenAI being developed, employed, or procured by state agencies was recorded by OIT. Executive-branch agencies were required to submit a report detailing all such instances through the GenAI Task Force website – aitaskforce.alabama.gov – by May 1, 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 will be submitted to Governor Ivey by November 30, 2024.

To date, the GenAI Task Force has held three official meetings, and an additional 17 working group meetings have occurred. Enormous strides continue to be made in collecting and analyzing data for the GenAI Task Force Final Report.

GenAI is evolving at a rapid pace, with advancements and changes occurring daily. Alabama will 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.

FY2024 Plans and Reports

State IT Spend

Statistics based on information obtained through STAARS and State Personnel.

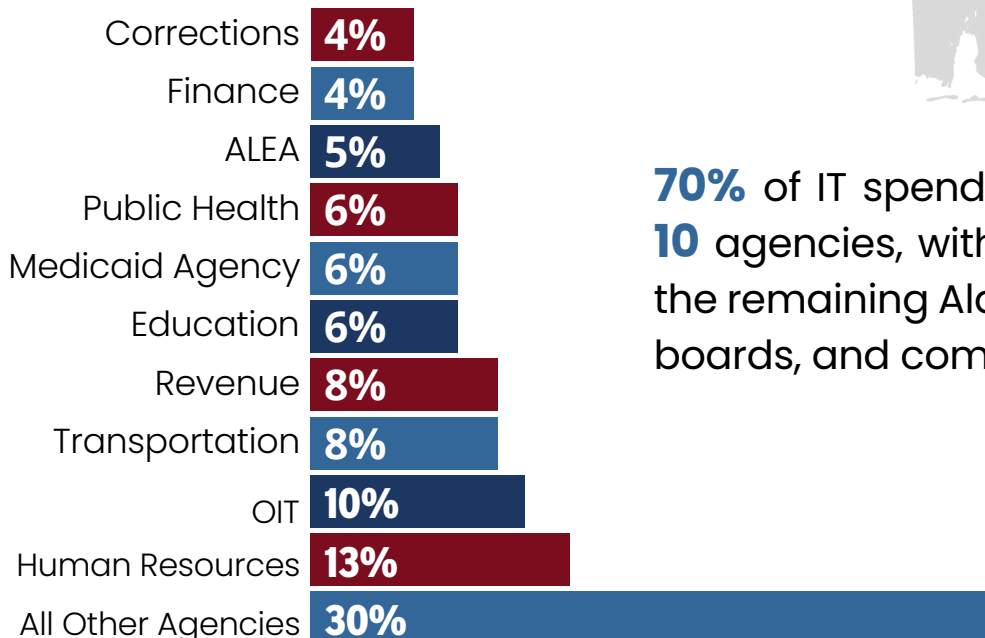**ALABAMA STATE BUDGET
VS. STATE IT SPEND**

Only **1.46%** of Alabama's state budget was spent on IT

$714.6 Million spent on IT

OIT accounts for **10%** of the State's IT spend and *every dollar spent by OIT on delivery of IT products and services is recovered through billing other state agencies.*
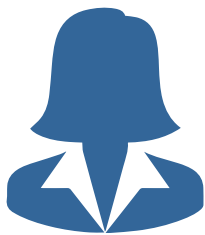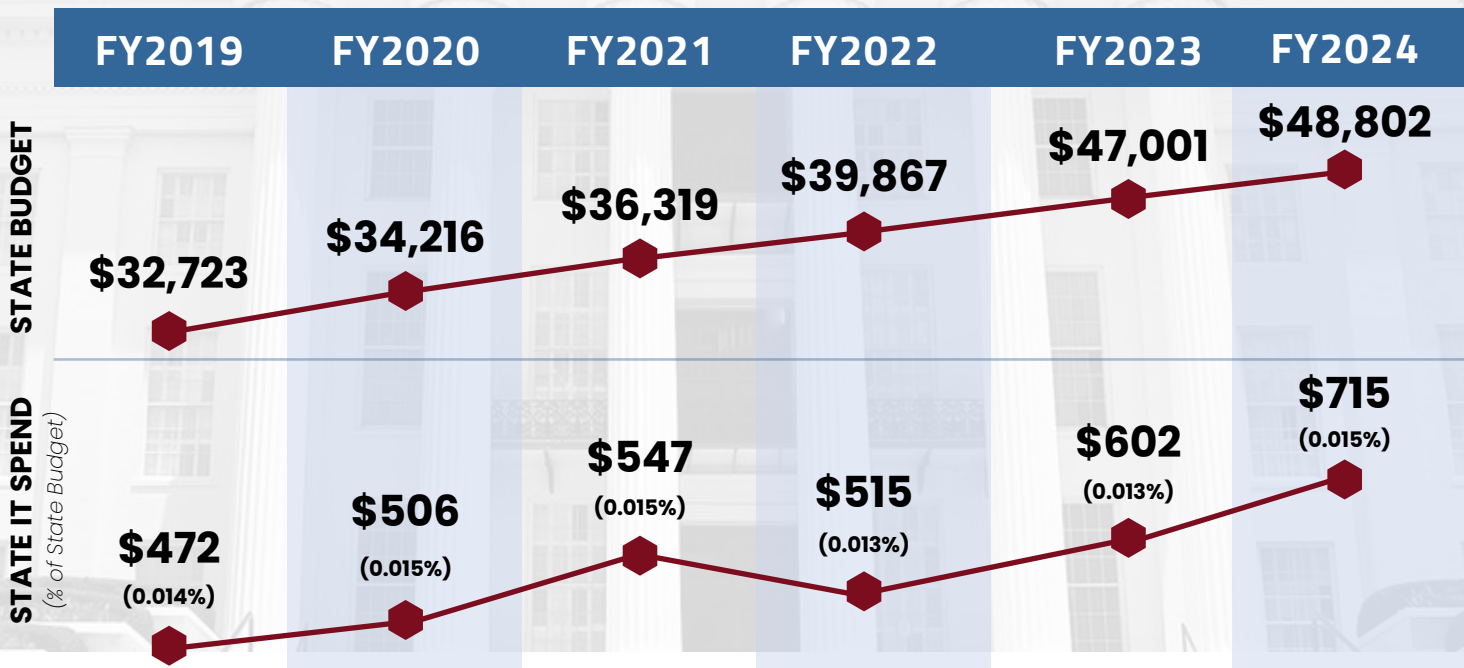
$48.8 Billion

FY2024 State Budget

Agency	Percentage
Corrections	**4%**
Finance	**4%**
ALEA	**5%**
Public Health	**6%**
Medicaid Agency	**6%**
Education	**6%**
Revenue	**8%**
Transportation	**8%**
OIT	**10%**
Human Resources	**13%**
All Other Agencies	**30%**

70% of IT spend in FY2024 came from **10** agencies, with **30%** divided among the remaining Alabama state agencies, boards, and commissions

FY2024 Plans and Reports

State IT Spend Overview

STATE IT SPEND: 6-YEAR SNAPSHOT
Expenditures by Fiscal Year (in Millions $)

	FY2019	FY2020	FY2021	FY2022	FY2023	FY2024
STATE BUDGET	$32,723	$34,216	$36,319	$39,867	$47,001	$48,802
STATE IT SPEND *(% of State Budget)*	$472 (0.014%)	$506 (0.015%)	$547 (0.015%)	$515 (0.013%)	$602 (0.013%)	$715 (0.015%)

Over **27%** of the State of Alabama IT spend was on IT staff

State agencies' hardware and software expenditures counted for **25%** of Alabama's FY2024 IT spend

Alabama spent more on IT in FY2024 than in previous **5** fiscal years

FY2024 Plans and Reports

State IT Staff Quick Facts

The Cost of Alabama's IT Workforce

STAFF		Agency		COST
525		All Other Agencies	$65.23	
183		Transportation	$20.56	
146		Medicaid Agency	$22.59	
145		Public Health	$18.42	
139		OIT	$15.67	
101		Human Resources	$13.14	
99		Revenue	$10.41	
68		ALEA	$7.49	
58		Finance	$7.49	
45		Retirement Systems	$6.74	
45		Corrections	$5.47	

IT Staff
(Merit and Contractor Staff as of September 2024)

FY2024 Cost
(In Millions $)
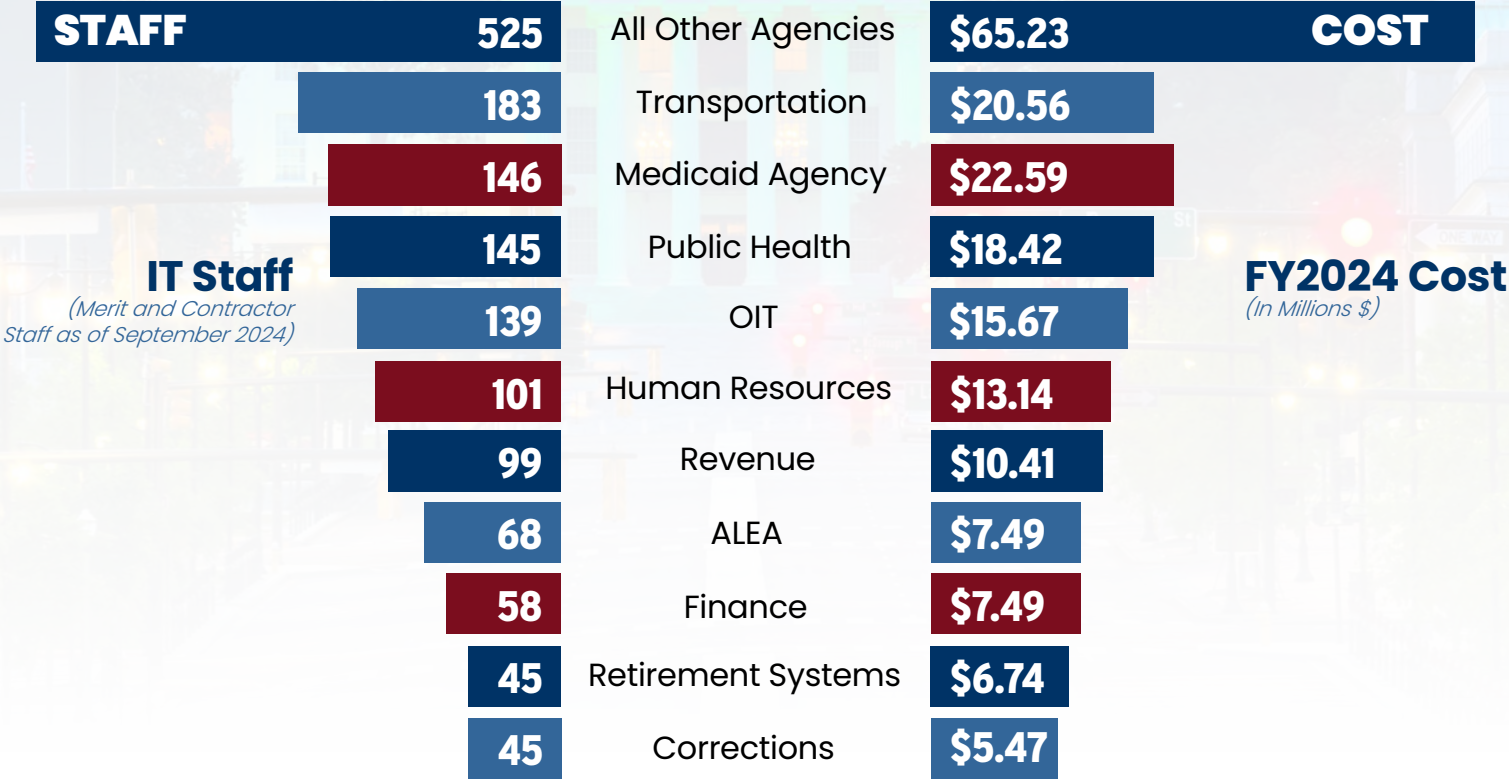
IT MERIT STAFF

As of September 2024, Alabama's IT workforce was comprised of **1,322** merit employees

From FY2023 to FY2024, Alabama's IT merit staff total **increased by 91**

Over the past fiscal year, **45** IT merit staff left state service and **136** new merit employees were hired

IT CONTRACTOR STAFF

In FY2024, **232** IT contractors were engaged by Alabama state agencies

In FY2024, more than **$34 Million** was spent on IT contractor staff, compared to **$158 million** for merit staff

5% of the State of Alabama's total IT spend for FY2024 was used on contractor staff

Alabama's IT Workforce

Almost **16%** of the State of Alabama's IT Merit Staff Could **Retire TODAY**

This increasing rate of retirement eligibility poses a serious issue for succession planning and compromises the long-term stability of Alabama's IT workforce. IT is constantly evolving, and new advancements in the field often require different levels of education, experience, and skills. To avoid the risk of losing valuable institutional knowledge and productivity due to Alabama's IT merit staff leaving, the State must prioritize filling these vital roles with qualified and capable professionals. As Alabama's reliance on technology grows in today's digital world, this is an issue that will become increasingly urgent and crucial for the well-being of our state.

NUMBER OF STATE IT MERIT STAFF

ELIGIBLE RETIREMENT DATE	Staff	Percent
TODAY	208	16%
3 YEARS	307	23%
5 YEARS	383	29%
7 YEARS	519	39%
10 YEARS	656	50%
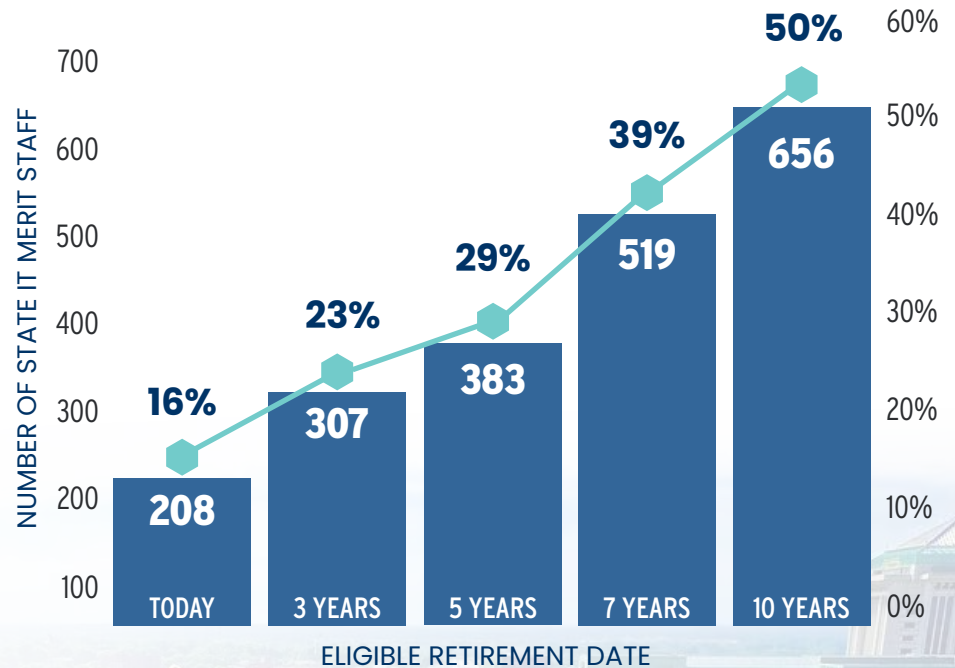
Who will fill their shoes?

More than **200** IT merit staff are eligible for retirement today

Over **16%** of OIT merit staff eligible for retirement today
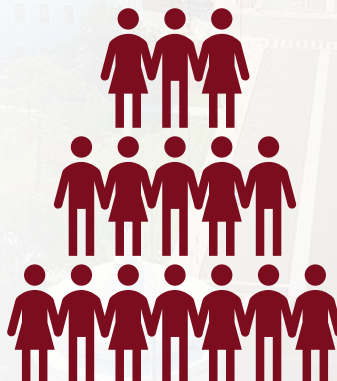
The 10 largest state agencies account for **61%** of Alabama's total IT merit staff – of those employees, **14%** could retire today

FY2024 Plans and Reports
OIT Business Vision Survey

Understanding the business needs of customers and how effectively those needs are being met is essential for organizations across all industries. The same holds true for state government IT.

An ongoing feedback loop must be in place to ensure the IT requirements of Alabama state agencies are continually being fulfilled in a way that empowers stakeholders to better provide for the citizens who rely on their vital services.

In the fall of each year, OIT conducts an Annual Business Vision Survey with numerous Alabama state agencies. This survey affords OIT a year-to-year benchmark comparison on the current level of satisfaction with OIT and the value it provides to agencies.

The benefits of the Annual Business Vision Survey are numerous and multifaceted:

- Provides an objective annual measurement on OIT's performance as a service providing agency

- Allows OIT to solicit feedback and recommendations for enhancement from the agencies it serves

- Acts as a catalyst for deeper, more meaningful dialogue with key stakeholders

- Offers a yearly snapshot of how OIT is maturing as an agency as it strives to become a more effective and trusted business partner to Alabama state agencies

OIT is steadfast in its commitment to continual improvement and enhancing the quality of service it provides to agencies across Alabama state government. The Annual Business Vision Survey is an important tool that allows OIT to assess how the agency is currently performing, how it can innovate and improve, and how to do so in a way that embraces collaboration and partnership with the agencies it serves.
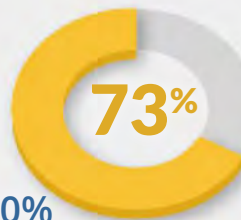
FY2024 Plans and Reports

OIT Business Vision Survey Results
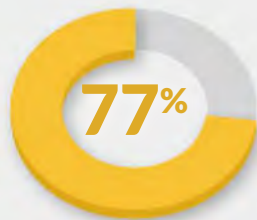
77% **IT Satisfaction**
Satisfaction with OIT and its ability to support agencies' needs

FY2025 Goal: 80%

73% **IT Value**
Satisfaction that OIT provides high value relative to agencies' perception of cost and staffing

FY2025 Goal: 80%

Relationship

82% **Understands Needs**
Satisfaction with OIT's understanding of agencies' needs

FY2025 Goal: 80% or >

78% **Executes Requests**
Satisfaction with the way OIT executes agencies' requests and needs

FY2025 Goal: 80%

78% **Communicates Effectively**
Satisfaction with how OIT communicates with agencies

FY2025 Goal: 80%

76% **Trains Effectively**
Satisfaction with OIT's training quality and timing

FY2025 Goal: 80%

OIT programs and projects will support and improve the delivery of products and services to agency stakeholders and will further OIT's efforts to become a trusted business partner.
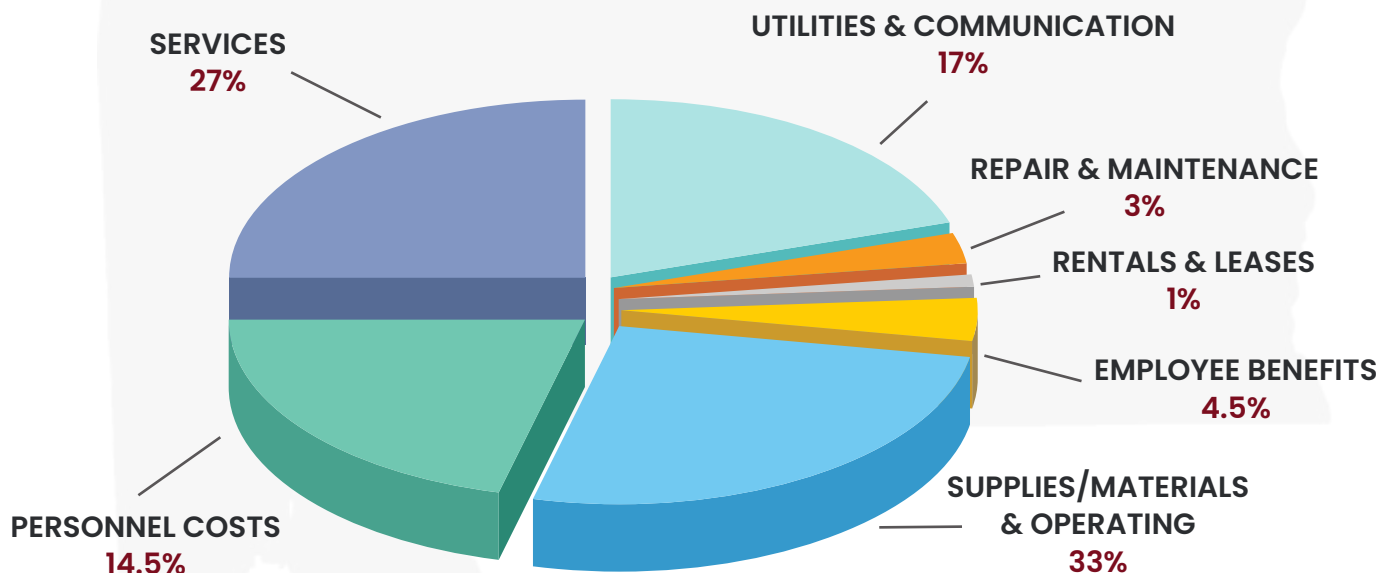
Target: 80%
Now: 77%
Start: 64%

Innovator
Business Partner
Trusted Operator
Firefighter
Unstable
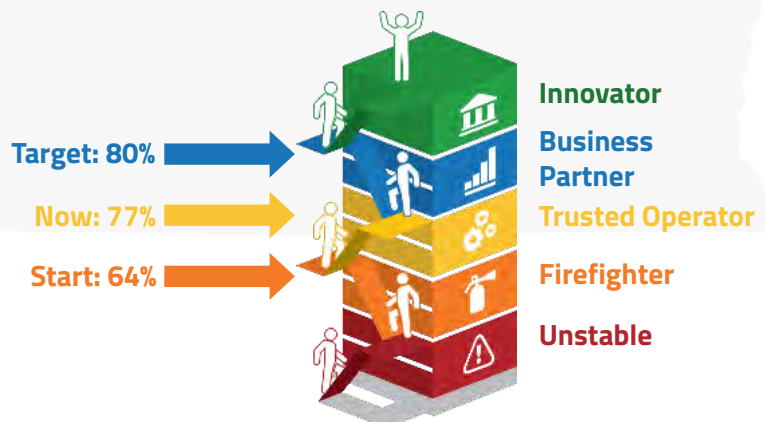
FY2024 Plans and Reports

OIT Financial Report

FY2024 Expenditures

Expenditures	Amount
Personnel Costs	$9,980,859
Employee Benefits	$3,089,093
Travel	$37,453
Repair and Maintenance	$1,973,827
Rentals and Leases	$807,559
Utilities and Communication	$11,983,719
Services	$18,503,726
Supplies / Materials and Operating	$23,013,067
Transportation Equip Operation	$5,770
	$69,395,073

Unaudited. Does not include depreciation expense.
Includes expenditures made with State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF)

SERVICES 27%
UTILITIES & COMMUNICATION 17%
REPAIR & MAINTENANCE 3%
RENTALS & LEASES 1%
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS 4.5%
SUPPLIES/MATERIALS & OPERATING 33%
PERSONNEL COSTS 14.5%

When the IT requirements of our state and its many interconnected agencies are successfully fulfilled, the people of Alabama are the true beneficiaries.

OIT stands ready to meet that important need both now and in the future.

GET IN TOUCH

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