QUARTER 3 | 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

NEW MSP FOR HOURLY IT CONTRACT STAFFING

Flexible, Reliable, High-Quality Resources for Today and Tomorrow

The OIT 2024 Annual Report shared that almost 16% of the State of Alabama's IT merit staff could retire today, and 50% could retire within the coming 10 years. OIT and other agencies need to safeguard against an unstable workforce and ensure that the State's IT systems are maintained at an acceptable, reliable state by staff comprised of both merit and contracted labor. IT workforce development is an urgent matter, one that is crucial for the well-being of Alabama both now and in the years to come as it constantly evolves, matures, and engages with citizens. Simultaneously, emerging technologies and advancements in cloud computing are accelerating the demand for resources with advanced IT credentials, education, experience, and skills.

Agency Collaboration

Crafted in collaboration with multiple state agencies that utilize hourly IT staffing, OIT guided the State's transition from an expiring, single award IT staffing contract to a more secure multi-award solution that aligns with an elevated pair of managed service providers (MSP) under the existing awards by the National Association of State Procurement Officials' (NASPO) ValuePoint system. NASPO ValuePoint is a cooperative purchasing program that allows states to use pre-approved, competitively awarded contracts without the need for conducting their own bid/proposal process. This approach serves to protect against IT support interruptions and rapidly evolving technological demands that are shrinking the supply and availability of qualified IT resources.

On September 1, 2025, OIT, in partnership with the Alabama Department of Finance Division of Procurement, replaced the previous ACRO Service Corporation (Acro) contract and established new statewide NASPO contracts with two very experienced, proficient MSP – Computer Aid, Inc. (CAI) and Knowledge Services (KS) – to provide a broader set of capabilities and access to skilled IT personnel.

Each awarded MSP has over two decades of experience delivering IT personnel services to states and other government entities. Alabama's state agencies can use one or both as needed to achieve their desired level of flexibility, access, and superior service delivery. Each MSP is ready to ensure that our agencies are efficiently and continuously staffed with skilled IT personnel who meet their specific IT needs and missions.

State Benefit

The State's new MSP services are designed to strengthen the operational capacity of state agencies by providing access to flexible, reliable, and high-quality IT staffing support. By improving efficiency and ensuring access to skilled personnel, the new contracts enable agencies to focus on their core missions and adapt quickly to evolving technology needs, a positive step toward a more resilient IT workforce in the State of Alabama.

Each MSP provides in-state, local account managers as direct points of contact to respond quickly to questions, resolve issues, and coordinate staffing activities. Their localized support helps agencies save time, reduce administrative burden, and maintain smooth day-to-day operations.

This dual-MSP approach is novel, unique, and embedded with compelling advantages:

- **Elevates Competitive Performance** – creates a continuous level of competition that encourages service quality improvement, innovative solutions, and top-tier performance standards.
- **Promotes Business Continuity** – reduces/mitigates risk of service disruption. If one MSP encounters challenges such as staffing shortages or internal issues, the other can step in to maintain operations with minimal interruption.
- **Increases Supplier/Workforce Access** – promotes a layering effect of supplier networks, access to a pool of qualified candidates, and improved ability to efficiently fill hard-to-find or specialized IT roles.

While workforce development challenges affect every industry, both private and public, the State of Alabama can leverage these new, capable MSP to alleviate IT staffing hurdles and bolster operational effectiveness and service delivery.

AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Advancing Efficiency and Access Through Automation at ADMH

Alabama Department of Mental Health
connecting mind and wellness

The Alabama Department of Mental Health (ADMH) continues to prioritize modernization and innovation by streamlining key administrative and clinical functions through automation. These transformative efforts are already yielding increased efficiency and improved service delivery across the department.

To strengthen its human resources recruitment operations, ADMH automated its former manual process for handling job applications for exempt positions using Laserfiche, a robust enterprise content management platform. Prior to automation, the application review process was time-consuming and cumbersome due to the reliance on a paper-based system and manual applicant communications.

ADMH was concerned there would be a loss of potential job applicants as a result of this antiquated application process, which required the submission of paper applications and did not allow applicants to save and update their applications for future opportunities. With Laserfiche, ADMH now has a centralized digital workflow and repository that standardizes the intake, routing, and review of employment applications which saves time and resources. This shift not only accelerates the hiring timeline—allowing departments to fill critical roles more efficiently—but also provides a better end-user experience, improves transparency, and ensures a consistent, auditable process. By digitizing and automating these key functions, ADMH is building a more agile, data-informed human resources system aligned with its broader goals of operational excellence and service continuity.

To improve the efficiency of another important process, Provider Certification, ADMH has adopted the Alabama Certification Automation Program, or ACAP for short. The ADMH Office of Certification, Life Safety, staff in Mental Health Substance Use (MHSU) and Developmental Disabilities (DD), along with the Division of Administration will all be working closely and more efficiently together through ACAP.

Laserfiche®

While ACAP keeps the structure of ADMH's current process, it removes many of the hassles that come with paper and possible delays due to routing documents through numerous offices and allows the department to respond more promptly to provider requests and applications. Here's how it helps:

- **Digital Signatures & Tracking:** No more waiting on mail. All approvals happen securely online with time-stamped records.
- **Team Collaboration:** Staff can easily share access, leave comments, and keep things moving — even if someone is out of the office.
- **Built-In Communication Tools:** Need input from another staff member? ACAP makes it simple to involve others in the review process.

ADMH aims to launch ACAP at the end of October this year.

On the clinical front, ADMH has successfully implemented a comprehensive Electronic Health Record (EHR) system across its three state hospitals—Bryce Hospital, Taylor Hardin Secure Medical Facility, and Mary Starke Harper Geriatric Psychiatry Center. This enterprise-wide transformation replaces traditional paper charts with a secure, centralized digital platform that gives authorized staff real-time access to critical patient data, including medical histories, treatment plans, medication orders, and progress notes.

Clinicians can now collaborate more effectively, make timely and informed decisions, and ensure continuity of care across departments and shifts. The EHR also streamlines documentation and reduces the risk of errors and duplication, while enabling faster audits and reporting for regulatory compliance. By harnessing technology to drive clinical efficiency, ADMH is not only elevating the standard of care but also reinforcing its mission to provide responsive, person-centered mental health services.

Additionally, the Advocacy Office has adopted Microsoft PowerApps to automate the tracking of calls and management of complaints. This powerful low-code platform has enabled staff to create customized apps that fit the unique needs of the department without requiring extensive programming expertise. The new system provides a centralized, user-friendly interface for recording and monitoring advocacy calls, tracking complaint resolution progress, and generating reports for leadership and compliance purposes.

By digitizing this process, the Advocacy Office has improved response times, ensured more accurate documentation, and enhanced visibility into trends and recurring issues. Most importantly, it reinforces ADMH's commitment to transparency, accountability, and responsiveness—ensuring that every concern raised by individuals, families, and advocates is handled with care and attention.

These initiatives mark a major step forward in ADMH's commitment to leveraging technology to support its workforce, empower clinical care, and protect the rights of the individuals it serves.

DIGITAL GOVERNMENT SUMMIT

Make Plans to Attend the 2025 Alabama Digital Government Summit

This year will mark the 10th anniversary of the Alabama Digital Government Summit! The Summit will take place on Thursday, November 13, 2025, at the Embassy Suites by Hilton in Montgomery, Alabama.

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

Alabama partners with Government Technology (GovTech) to host this exciting annual event. The 2025 Summit will feature a variety of speakers on topics including but not limited to:

- State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP)
- Supporting local Alabama government entities with the Alabama Cybersecurity Information Center
- State of Alabama Network Segmentation Project
- Creating a PowerPlatform Application Factory (low code)
- And so much more!

State and local IT professionals will receive complimentary registration, and guest parking for the Embassy Suites will be comped with presentation of your marked registration ticket.

To learn more about the 2025 Alabama Digital Government Summit and to register, please visit GovTech's event page at https://events.govtech.com/Alabama-Digital-Government-Summit.

We're excited to see you on November 13th for this amazing event that is sure to be another meaningful and informative Summit!

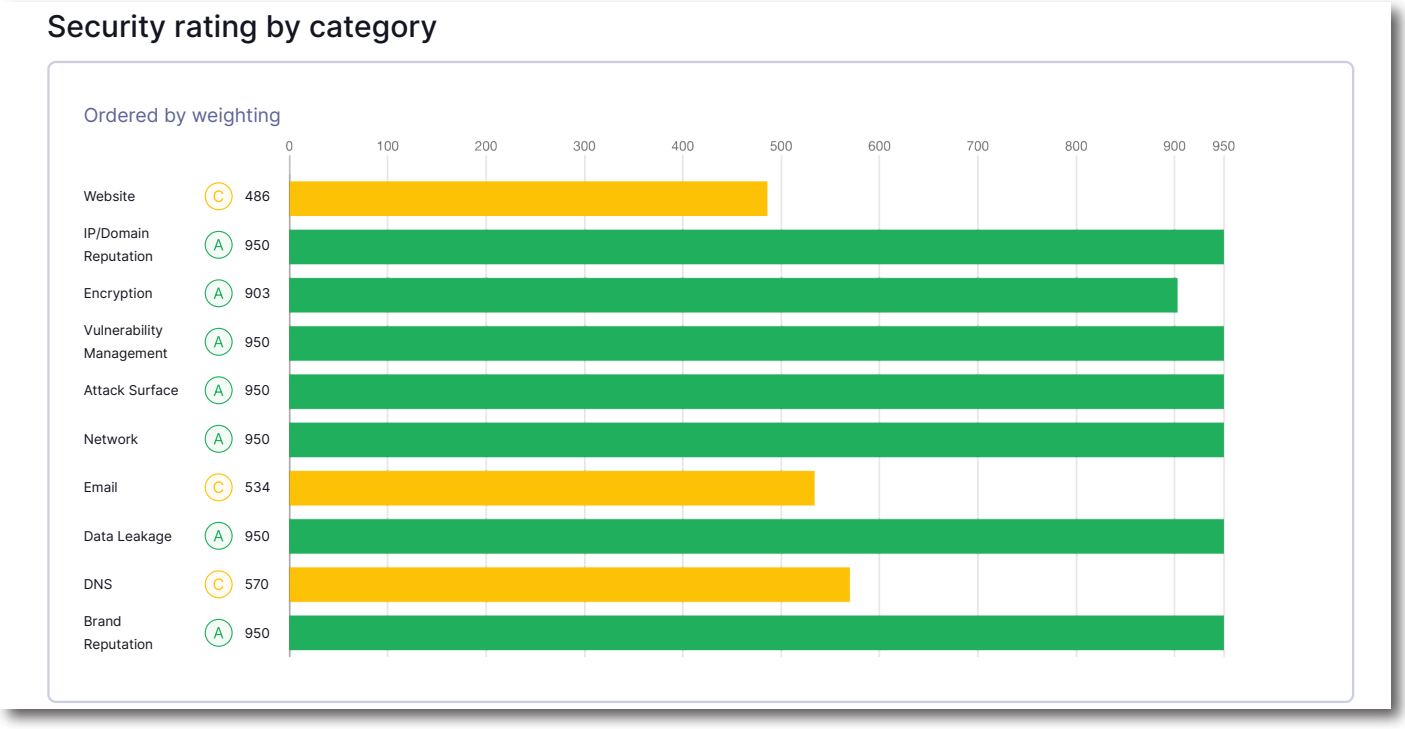
OIT SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

UpGuard

OIT is continuously working to strengthen and improve its overall security posture, both as an independent agency within the State's executive branch and as a provider of IT resources and support for numerous agencies statewide. To be successful in this effort, it is essential to ensure that the IT vendors with whom the State does business are properly vetted to safeguard against the introduction of unsecured or at-risk applications and software into the State network.

In recent months, OIT has begun utilizing information provided by UpGuard, a third-party risk and attack surface management platform, to gain improved insight into each vendor's security protocols and to better understand how vendors are protecting State data. The information received from UpGuard includes a comprehensive security posture rating based on common risk categories (e.g., encryption, vulnerability management, etc.).

This security-related information is solicited in the form of a questionnaire administered through UpGuard and is now a required annual exercise for all of OIT's vendors. We are excited about how this new process will further enable the State to protect our shared environment. Without question, Alabama values and relies on its many vendors to effectively support our state agencies and the citizens they serve. By partnering with UpGuard, we can continue these partnerships more securely and with greater visibility into their internal security practices.



How are UpGuard's security ratings calculated?

UpGuard uses advanced algorithms to determine the security posture of millions of organizations every day. As noted above, we use threat signals gathered from trusted commercial, open-source, and proprietary sources. We also support the use of targeted security questionnaires to more deeply assess the posture of an organization. These signals are grouped together to identify threats and issues in an attack surface that could result in a security incident. Signals we pay attention to include things like open ports, DNS configuration, known data breaches, and hundreds of other vectors including:

- Susceptibility to man-in-the-middle attacks
- Insecure SSL/TLS certificates
- SPF, DKIM and DMARC settings
- HTTP Strict Transport Security (HSTS)
- Email spoofing and phishing risk
- Vulnerabilities
- Malware susceptibility
- Open admin, database, and file sharing ports
- Exposure to known data breaches and data leaks
- Secure cookie configuration

Our ability to combine these signals in real-time is what makes UpGuard so effective: cybersecurity is a domain where small improvements can make a big difference. By following our suggestions you can reduce the risk of sensitive data exposures, leaked credentials, and other security incidents.

When assessing your security performance, we recommend beginning with your overall security rating. As a general rule of thumb, here is how our A-F ratings correspond to your security posture:

Our security ratings range from A to F:

- A — **801-950**
  Organization has a robust security posture and good attack surface management.
- B — **601-800**
  Organization has basic security controls in place but could have large gaps in their security posture.
- C — **401-600**
  Organization has poor security controls and has serious issues that need to be addressed.
- D — **201-400**
  Organization has severe security issues and should not process any sensitive data.
- F — **0-200**
  Organization has not invested in basic security controls and should not be used.

Any risks we find are given a severity rating from low to critical:

- !!!! — **Critical risks**
  Critical risks or vulnerabilities that place the business at immediate risk of data breaches.
- !!! — **High risks**
  Severe risks that should be addressed immediately to protect the business.
- !! — **Medium risks**
  Unnecessary security risks that could lead to more serious vulnerabilities.
- ! — **Low risks**
  Areas of improvement to reduce risks and improve the business' security rating.

To learn more about UpGuard or to find out how your agency can begin utilizing this service in its vendor selection process, contact OIT's Governance, Risk, and Compliance team at grc.policy@oit.alabama.gov.

DID YOU KNOW?

Application Consent Permissions Change

In a recent Orange Bar notification, OIT shared details about an upcoming change (CHG0043971) that will prevent users in the OIT tenant from providing consent for any applications not developed by a verified publisher or with permissions classified as greater than "low risk" (per Microsoft recommendations).

Prior to this change, any user was able to allow applications to access an agency's data on their behalf. This presented a scenario in which there was an elevated risk of data exposure, shadow IT, and compliance issues – even unintentionally.

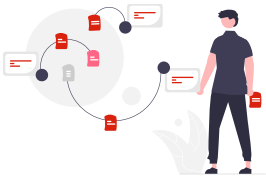
With proper controls in place (i.e., requiring admin approval for app permissions classified as greater than "low risk"), exposure of an organization's sensitive data is limited as only vetted apps can access corporate resources. Additionally, restricting application consent enforces least privilege principles and aligns with zero trust models.

This change should not impact existing applications as consent has already been granted and OIT is not revoking those consents or changing their access permissions.

SMS Authentication Removal

SMS (text messaging) has been removed as a multi-factor authentication (MFA) method for all users in the OIT tenant. This change was implemented in response to security recommendations from Microsoft and the deprecation of SMS as a Microsoft-supported authentication method.

Users who relied solely on SMS for MFA should have been prompted to register a new authentication method (e.g., Microsoft Authenticator, phone call, FIDO2 key, etc.). If you believe any of your agency users are having difficulty authenticating as a result of this change, please contact the OIT Service Desk at Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov or (334) 242-2222 for support.



Updated Inform Website

The State of Alabama's information website – inform.alabama.gov – has recently been updated after many years of remaining static. The new Inform site has been streamlined to enhance the most utilized features from the previous site while eliminating elements that were outdated or not as functionally efficient as they once were.

Visitors to the new site will find an interactive directory of Alabama state agencies that simplifies the search process for users and provides organizational details and contact information for each agency included in the listing. There is also a link to a media portal which aggregates numerous state agencies' news feeds into one central location.

Browse the new Inform site when you have a chance, and if you spot an agency that isn't currently listed in the directory, be sure to let OIT know so we can add them to the listing (a link to submit an add request is provided on the Agency Directory page)!

2025 IT Professionals Day

On September 16, 2025, the nation recognized IT Professionals Day – observed annually on the third Tuesday in September – a day dedicated to honoring the essential work of IT experts across every industry.

Though the day has come and gone, the impact of our IT professionals continues every single day. From keeping systems secure and operational to solving problems before most of us even notice them, IT teams are the backbone of today's digital workplace.

Keep the appreciation going by taking a moment to recognize the dedication, skill, and resilience of our IT colleagues – not just on one day, but all year long.

OUT & ABOUT WITH OIT

Above - NASCIO Emerging Leaders Conference: OIT Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) Chad Smith, Secretary Daniel Urquhart, Director of Infrastructure Jordan Golson, and Deputy Secretary Willie Fields attended the 2025 CISO State Leadership Summit last month in Tampa, Florida. Golson is enrolled in the NASCIO-sponsored Emerging Leaders program, which provides year-long training for rising chief privacy officers, chief data officers, CIOs, and the like.

Above - OIT Service Pins: In August, OIT celebrated several deserving team members by presenting them with longevity service pins in recognition of their years of dedicated service to the State of Alabama. Left to Right: Zachary Holmes, Taren Robinson, Courtney Lawery, Tina Smith, Otis Moore, and Aaron Wright.

Above - College Colors Day: OIT staff participated in the Governor's Proclamation of College Colors Day promoting higher education on August 29th.

Left - Recent NASTD Events: Willie Fields and Executive Director of Shared Services Mark Craymer recently attended two National Association of State Technology Directors (NASTD) events. Earlier this summer, they presented on Alabama's technology initiatives at the 2025 South-West Regional Seminar in Salt Lake City, Utah, and then in August participated in NASTD's Annual Conference & Tech Showcase in Nashville, Tennessee.

Above - Huntsville Water Cyber Summit: OIT was honored to participate in a summit hosted by Auburn's McCrary Institute for Cyber & Critical Infrastructure Security focusing on protecting Alabama's water systems. Chad Smith was a keynote speaker for the event and offered guidance to utility leaders on protecting their people, preserving their reputation, and securing their finances.

Above - ServiceNow Conference: OIT's ServiceNow support team recently attended the ServiceNow Summit in Atlanta, Georgia. This free event provides the opportunity for attendees to experience the latest updates to the ServiceNow platform via hands-on workshops and breakout sessions. Some of the learning labs in this year's event focused on Driving Operational Excellence and Accelerating Business Automation via upcoming AI tools in the platform. The event also promotes networking and idea exchange with other ServiceNow customers.

Above - State Combined Campaign 2025 Kick-Off Brunch: Sierra Smith, Kenyatta Fishoe, Melanie Talley, and Rachel Mayer attended the 2025 State Combined Campaign Kickoff. OIT received the "Early Bird Award" for already submitting a pledge card for this year's campaign. Let's go, OIT!

Above - Cybersecurity Coordination Meeting: On August 14th, OIT hosted a meeting for agencies' CISO Council members and Active Directory Domain Remediation working group members to discuss several topics related to cybersecurity and the State's continuing efforts to enhance its collective posture.

Above - Alabama League of Municipalities Meeting: OIT was invited to speak at the Alabama League of Municipalities' annual Standing Committee Meeting on September 3rd. Chad Smith presented to the Committee on Public Safety and encouraged city leaders to consider cybersecurity every bit as critical as other essential municipal services like police and fire departments.

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