

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

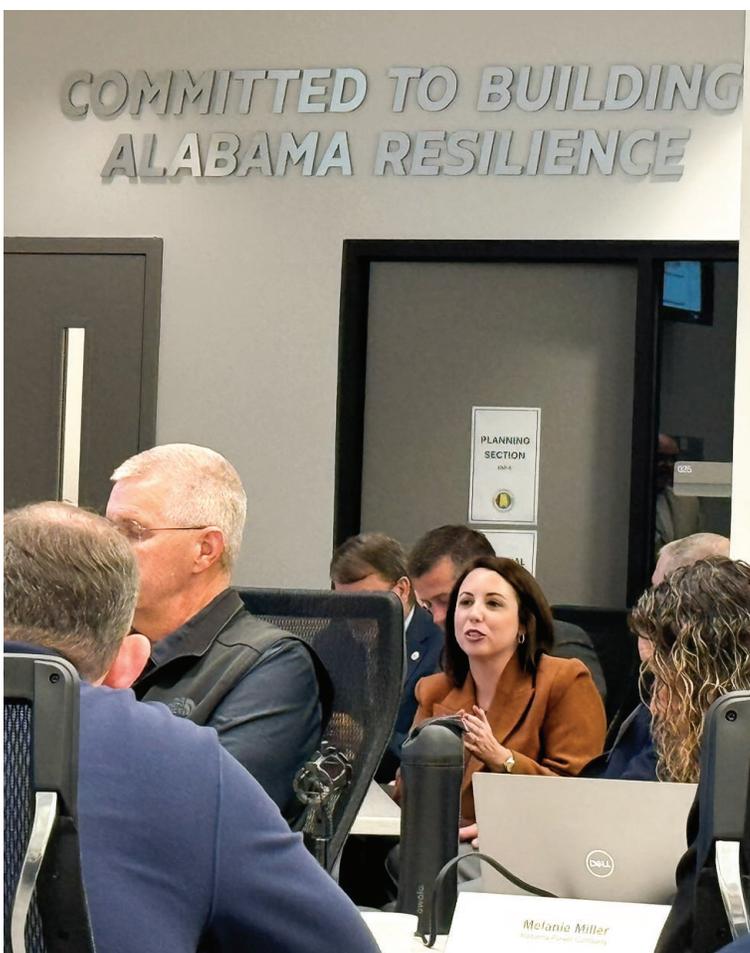
Executive Director
Finance and Procurement

KEITH COUSINS

Executive Director
Business Execution

SAFEGUARDING ALABAMA'S INFRASTRUCTURE

Cybersecurity Tabletop Exercise Prepares State for Grid Threats



Technology is advancing faster today than ever before. With its rapid development comes cyber threats which are no longer hypothetical; they are persistent, sophisticated, and increasingly targeted at critical infrastructure. From ransomware attacks on hospitals to coordinated disruptions of power grids, the risks are real and growing. For public agencies, preparation is not optional – it is essential. That is why Cybersecurity Tabletop Exercises (TTXs) have become a cornerstone of proactive defense, enabling organizations to rehearse their response strategies before a real crisis strikes.

On October 28, 2025, OIT, in partnership with the Alabama Emergency Management Agency (AEMA), hosted a high-impact TTX at AEMA headquarters in Clanton, Alabama. The event, titled "Grid Down," brought together leaders from federal, state, local, and private sector organizations to simulate a coordinated cyberattack on Alabama's power and water infrastructure.

The exercise immersed participants in a realistic scenario involving cascading cyber and physical disruptions – from phishing campaigns and ransomware outbreaks to operational technology

failures and social media misinformation. The primary goal of the TTX was to test communication protocols, decision-making under pressure, and interagency coordination in the face of a rapidly evolving crisis.

Attendees included representatives from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Transportation Security Agency (TSA), Auburn University's McCrary Institute for Cyber and Critical Infrastructure Security, Southern Company/Alabama Power, the Alabama National Guard, and numerous Alabama state agencies. Through structured injects and facilitated discussions, participants identified opportunities to bolster resilience, explored mitigation strategies, and collaborated on ways to help strengthen Alabama's collective preparedness posture.



“Today’s TTX was more than a drill. It was a proving ground for how the State of Alabama and its partners can and will respond when the stakes are highest,” said one participant during the after-action portion of the exercise. “It challenged us to think beyond our individual silos and act as one cooperative team.”

The event concluded with a working lunch and a debrief session, where attendees shared lessons learned and committed to refining their incident response plans. The TTX also served as a launchpad for future exercises and cross-sector collaboration, reinforcing Alabama’s commitment to protecting its critical infrastructure from emerging cyber threats.



AGENCY SPOTLIGHT

Alabama Bureau of Pardons & Paroles



The Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles (ABPP) plays a crucial role in the State's criminal justice system. Established to provide a structured process for parole and pardon decisions, the agency's mission centers around public safety, offender accountability, and successful reintegration into society.

Operating under a framework of fairness and integrity, ABPP evaluates individuals who have served time in one of Alabama's correctional facilities and determines whether they are eligible for parole or a pardon. This responsibility carries tremendous weight; it requires the agency to balance the needs of victims, the community, and offenders while adhering to the law and upholding justice.

Photo: ABPP | Office of the Governor

ABPP's core responsibilities include:

- **Parole Considerations** – Reviewing cases to determine whether eligible inmates should be released under supervision before the completion of their sentence
- **Pardons and Clemency** – Processing applications from individuals seeking a full pardon for past convictions, often to restore civil rights or improve employment prospects
- **Supervision and Reentry** – Providing supervision for parolees and ensuring they receive resources to successfully reenter society, including employment support and substance abuse programs

In recent years, the agency has embraced modernization efforts, particularly in how it handles and communicates information related to parole hearings. A standout example of this is the **updated Docket System**, which has revolutionized how internal staff, legal representatives, families, and the public engage with the parole process.



The Evolution of the Docket System

For years, ABPP relied on a largely manual and sometimes fragmented system to manage dockets – essentially the schedules of parole and pardon hearings. While functional, the older system had several limitations:

- Limited transparency
- Slow updates and frequent delays
- Difficulty in tracking changes to hearing dates
- A cumbersome user experience for agency staff and the public alike

Recognizing the need for a more streamlined, transparent, and accessible system, ABPP invested in a major upgrade to its Docket System in early 2025. This initiative, part of a broader modernization push, aimed to bring the agency’s technology in line with contemporary needs and expectations.

The result is a digital-first platform that supports more efficient scheduling, clearer communication, and improved transparency – both internally and externally. The updated Docket System is now one of the cornerstones of ABPP’s public service and internal operations.

Cnt:	Date	AIS	NAME	TYPE	STATUS	VIC NOTIF REQ	CONT. REQ	RECONSIDERATION	CLASS A	Notes	Results
62	12/2/2025			Parole	Removed-Eligibility Date Change	No	No	No	No	Eligibility date change/disciplinary	
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	No	No	No	No	Completed Completed	Granted
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	No	No	No	No	In Progress	Denied-No Reset
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	No	No	No	No	In Progress	Denied-Reset
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	No	No	No	No	In Progress	Denied-Reset
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	No	No	No	No	Completed In Progress Next In	Granted
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	No	No	No	No	In Progress	Denied-No Reset
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	Yes	No	No	No		Denied-Reset
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	No	No	No	No	In Progress	Denied-Reset
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	Yes	No	No	No		Denied-No Reset
	12/2/2025			Parole	Completed	Yes	No	No	No	Completed Completed In	Denied-Reset



Key Features of the Updated Docket System

The revamped Docket System was built with input from agency staff, IT specialists, victims' advocates, and public stakeholders. The result is a system that is not only functional but highly user-friendly.

Some of its more notable features include:

1

Real-Time Updates

Users can now access up-to-the-minute information on hearing dates, locations, and outcomes. If a hearing is postponed or rescheduled, the system reflects that change instantly. This is especially important for victims and family members who may travel long distances to attend.

2

Enhanced Search Functionality

Previously, finding specific case information could be time-consuming. The new system allows users to search by inmate name, Alabama Department of Corrections (ADOC) number, date, or type of hearing. This saves time and ensures more accurate results.

3

Automated Notifications

One of the most praised features is the automated alert system. Users can receive email updates about a specific case. This ensures that no one is left in the dark regarding changes that may impact them directly.

4

Improved Visual Design

The interface is clean, simple, and easy to navigate – even for those with limited technical experience. Icons and filters help guide the user experience and important updates are flagged for attention.

5

Integration with Internal Systems

For agency staff, the system integrates with existing case management and scheduling software, reducing the need for duplicate data entry and minimizing human error. This streamlines internal workflows and enhances accuracy across departments.



ALABAMA BUREAU OF PARDONS & PAROLES

Impact and What It Means for the Future

The updated Docket System represents more than a technical upgrade. It is a commitment to transparency, efficiency, and service. Here's how it is making a difference:



For the Public: Families, legal representatives, and community advocates now have better access to critical information, fostering trust in the parole process.



For Victims: Time-friendly notifications and clearer scheduling make it easier for victims and their advocates to prepare for hearings and participate in the process.



For Staff: Administrative workloads are reduced, allowing staff to focus more on core responsibilities such as case evaluation and offender supervision.



For Leadership: The system offers robust data reporting capabilities that aid in decision-making, accountability, and policy development.

Looking Ahead

As ABPP continues to embrace technology, systems like the updated docket are paving the way for broader improvements. The next phase may include deeper integration with judicial data, enhancements in data analytics, and expanded access for external partners like attorneys and victim service providers.

Ultimately, the success of the updated Docket System shows that even in a complex and often sensitive area like pardons and paroles, thoughtful innovation can drive better outcomes for everyone involved.

By keeping the focus on accessibility, accuracy, and accountability, ABPP is setting a new standard, not just for Alabama but for parole boards across the country.

ALABAMA AI DAY

Embracing New Technology While Ensuring Security

Artificial intelligence (AI) burst onto the mainstream technology stage in early 2023. In what felt like an instant, the entire world became AI-aware. Adoption accelerated rapidly across numerous sectors and industries – that momentum has only increased over the past two years. Looking ahead, the AI industry is projected to grow from its current \$89 billion valuation to \$400 billion by 2027.

Many Alabama state agencies are eager to deploy AI across their IT infrastructures to increase productivity and streamline operations. Even without introducing entirely new AI platforms, a significant percentage of our existing tools have already begun incorporating AI in one form or another.



Simply put, AI is no longer a future consideration; it is a present reality. The State of Alabama and its executive-branch agencies must prepare now to better understand and utilize these tools to enhance business processes and improve citizen services. Just as importantly, we must ensure that this technology is integrated and used safely, ethically, and responsibly.

To further the discussion around AI and its future use in Alabama state government, OIT hosted its first-ever Alabama

AI Day on Thursday, November 20, 2025. This event brought together over 150 business and IT leaders from numerous state agencies and featured presentations from three leading AI companies: Microsoft, OpenAI, and Google.

Each company delivered an in-depth presentation on their platform, offering attendees insight into:

- Platform overviews and demonstrations of specific tool functionalities
- Common AI use cases illustrating platform capabilities
- Real-world success stories from state and local governments

Equal time was allotted to each company to showcase their platforms and demonstrate how their technologies can empower Alabama to serve its citizens effectively and securely.

Prior to the platform presentations, OIT Secretary Daniel Urquhart opened Alabama AI Day by welcoming attendees and sharing brief remarks. He helped set the stage by outlining:

Alabama's AI/GenAI Journey

- Governor Kay Ivey's Executive Order 738 and the formation of the GenAI Task Force in February 2024
- Submission of the Task Force's final report with GenAI recommendations to Governor Ivey in November 2024
- Adoption of NIST AI Risk Management Framework and publication of baseline AI policies by OIT in January 2025
- Current initiatives including:
 - ◊ Establishing AI training courses for state employees
 - ◊ Forming a Community of Practice to showcase real-world state use cases
 - ◊ Launching the Technology Quality Assurance Board to evaluate and recommend novel technologies like AI

Statewide Implementation Strategy

- A phased rollout beginning with agency-specific pilot programs before general availability
- While licenses are not yet available, OIT is working with the three AI Day vendors to:
 - ◊ Develop defined roadmaps
 - ◊ Finalize legal terms and conditions
 - ◊ Establish timelines for enterprise-wide implementation
- Alabama's strategic starting point will be with Microsoft, given the State's existing investment, to implement guardrails and establish baselines within the Shared GCC Tenant
- As legal and licensing models for OpenAI and Google are finalized, OIT will begin onboarding agencies that have requested these platforms
- OIT is also collaborating with each vendor to identify service delivery partners who will assist agencies with business process integration and staff training to ensure safe and effective platform use

Secretary Urquhart concluded by emphasizing AI's tremendous potential to improve business processes, reduce workloads, and enhance experiences across the enterprise. However, he also cautioned that the State must proceed thoughtfully and carefully due to the significant risks associated with deploying AI without proper guardrails, governance, and security.

Alabama AI Day was an informative and impactful event – one that underscored Alabama's strong commitment to embracing new technology, safeguarding citizen and State data, and improving the important work of state government to better serve its citizens.

OIT SERVICE SPOTLIGHT

Skillsoft Percipio: Helping Alabama's Workforce Grow, Learn & Lead

Alabama's public sector has been transforming rapidly. New digital tools, cybersecurity demands, modern platforms, and evolving citizen expectations mean the State's workforce must adapt faster than ever before, with consistent training and equal access to quality materials across state agencies.

As modernization initiatives accelerated—Microsoft 365, cloud services, cybersecurity upgrades, Power Platform adoption—it became clear that employees needed a reliable, statewide way to build skills, and in 2022, OIT recognized that this shift required more than new tools—it required a new approach to learning.

OIT then launched a coordinated learning initiative and selected Skillsoft Percipio in early 2023 as Alabama's enterprise learning platform. The goal wasn't simply to provide training; it was to ensure that every state employee—regardless of agency size or role—had access to the resources needed to learn, grow, and confidently support Alabama's modernization efforts.

Centralized Platform for Uniform Training

OIT evaluated options, looking for a platform with a large content library, a strong reputation, decades of instructional experience, and the ability to support large, diverse public-sector organizations. Skillsoft met those needs.

Skillsoft has been a leader in workforce training for more than 30 years, delivering learning solutions to government agencies, higher education, and Fortune 500 companies worldwide.

Skillsoft Percipio offered exactly what Alabama needed: intuitive navigation, personalized recommendations, hands-on practice labs, Aspire career pathways, mobile learning, and continuous content updates. Just as importantly, the statewide contract ensured equitable pricing, consistent standards, and training access that smaller agencies could afford.

By moving to one unified platform, Alabama created a strong, shared foundation for professional development—leading to smoother technology rollouts, better collaboration, and a more confident workforce.

How Agencies Participate: Licensing and Environment Options

To meet a variety of workforce needs, Alabama's Percipio contract includes two licensing tiers.

Percipio – Advanced (\$78/user annually)

Provides access to business skills, leadership development, professional skills, and productivity tools such as Excel, Teams, and SharePoint.

Percipio – Expert (\$325/user annually)

Designed for specialized and technical roles. Includes everything in the Advanced tier plus books, audiobooks, Codecademy programming content, hands-on labs, technical deep dives, and bootcamps.

Agencies can mix and match these licenses so each employee receives the level of training appropriate for their role.

Agencies also have two options for how they access the platform.

OIT's Hosted Percipio Environment

This is the simplest and most cost-effective option, with a one-time setup fee of \$400. It includes seamless single sign-on (SSO) and centralized support.

Custom, Agency-Branded Percipio Environment

This option provides a fully branded portal with its own sub-domain, tailored channels, and SSO integration. The one-time setup fee is \$2,150.

Both models support secure SSO access using state credentials and ensure a smooth onboarding experience for employees.

Building Alabama's Future-Ready Workforce

OIT's decision in 2022 to unify statewide learning—and the rollout of Percipio in 2023—continues to strengthen Alabama's public workforce. Agencies now have a sustainable way to develop talent, close skill gaps, and prepare employees for the technology and services of tomorrow.

Percipio empowers staff to learn at their own pace, explore new topics, and advance their careers while supporting agency missions. As the platform continues to grow, Alabama's workforce grows with it.

If your agency would like help getting started, exploring licensing options, or adding custom content, feel free to put in an **OIT Service Desk Request** at Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov or by calling (334) 242-2222. We are here to help your agency make the most of this statewide learning opportunity.



DID YOU KNOW?



Azure ARC / MDC Training Sessions

Over the course of four interactive sessions held in October and November, OIT, in collaboration with Microsoft, delivered a comprehensive training series designed to empower agency IT teams with the tools and knowledge to manage and secure hybrid environments using Azure Arc and Microsoft Defender for Cloud (MDC).

Session Highlights

- **Session 1: Foundations**
Introduced Azure Arc and MDC, focusing on onboarding, baseline configurations, and extending Azure management to hybrid environments
- **Session 2: Advanced Features**
Covered secure score, compliance dashboards, policy enforcement, and role-based access control to strengthen visibility and governance
- **Session 3: Deployment at Scale**
Demonstrated onboarding across server types (including DMZ and workgroup machines), with automation tips and support from OIT
- **Session 4: Q&A and Next Steps**
Addressed licensing, GPO management, and ongoing support, while encouraging collaboration and feedback from agency teams



Dexter Avenue 7K Switch Upgrades

To modernize aging infrastructure and meet updated security and compliance standards, OIT recently completed a major upgrade of the 7K switches at the Dexter Avenue datacenter.

The project addressed risks associated with legacy hardware, including cybersecurity vulnerabilities, operational instability, and compatibility issues with modern applications. Planning began months in advance, with OIT coordinating closely with agency technical contacts to validate systems, prepare for downtime, and ensure a smooth recovery.

By scheduling the upgrade over the Thanksgiving holiday weekend, OIT minimized disruption while allowing time for post-upgrade testing. Thanks to careful planning and collaboration, the upgrades were successfully implemented without incident, strengthening the State's network backbone for years to come.



Mass Communication Email Platform Replacement

For the past several years, Campaign Intelligence has served as many state agencies' primary platform for sending mass communications such as agency newsletters, press releases, and internal updates. While the platform has supported a wide range of agency needs, its limitations have become more apparent in recent years. Recognizing that it was time to modernize, OIT initiated a statewide effort to find a more flexible and future-ready solution.

To guide this transition, OIT formed a cross-agency working group in May 2025. The group included representatives from twelve agencies, each bringing unique communication needs and perspectives to the table. The working group's mission was to evaluate potential replacements that could support both internal and external messaging, improve user experience, and meet evolving security and compliance standards.

After a series of vendor demonstrations, technical evaluations, and scoring exercises, the group selected Regroup Mass Notification as the preferred replacement solution. The platform stood out for its robust features, ease of use, and alignment with the State's communication and cybersecurity goals. OIT is now moving forward with procurement and implementation planning. More details about Regroup and how to utilize this service will be shared in early 2026 – stay tuned!



International Mobile Phone Recycling Day

Did you know your phone likely carries more germs than a toilet handle? How about that discarded mobile devices contain millions of dollars' worth of precious metals? Crazy, right?! Did you also know that your old mobile phone can (and should) be recycled just like paper, plastic, and aluminum?

Observed in January each year, International Mobile Phone Recycling Day is a global effort to reduce the harmful effects of electronic waste (E-waste). With over 150 million phones discarded annually, less than 16% are recycled, contributing to pollution and health risks worldwide.

What We Can Do About It

- **Recycle your old phones** through local retailers or certified collection programs.
- **Spread the word** by encouraging friends and family to participate and consider organizing a community collection drive.

By taking part, you help reduce toxic landfill waste, conserve natural resources, and support a healthier planet for all.

OUT & ABOUT WITH OIT



Above - NASCIO 2025 Annual Conference: OIT Secretary Daniel Urquhart poses for a photo with other state CIOs during the National Association of State Chief Information Officers (NASCIO) 2025 Annual Conference in October.

This yearly conference brings together senior information technology leaders from across the country to focus on advancing state government IT through collaboration, peer learning, and strategic discussion. Key themes at the 2025 conference included artificial intelligence, digital transformation in government, cybersecurity, enterprise architecture, and increasing emphasis on web accessibility.



Above - National Cybersecurity Awareness Month: OIT Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) Chad Smith prepares to give a series of "LinkedIn talks" to commemorate October as National Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Topics covered in the videos included "Cybersecurity is Everyone's Responsibility" and "How AI is Shaping our Future, and How Alabama is Making Sure We're Ready."



Above - AUM CPM Program: OIT's Becca Estes participated in AUM's Certified Public Manager (CPM) Program, a training program for state managers to develop and enhance their skills. This event exhibited her group's research with the Dave Thomas Foundation, a non-profit organization, dedicated to promoting adoption of children lingering in the foster system.



Left - OIT's Annual Holiday Luncheon: On December 16, OIT staff came together to celebrate the holiday season with some good food and great fellowship. Secretary Urquhart and his leadership team expressed their deep appreciation for each team member and their many contributions to OIT over the past year.





Above - State Combined Campaign: OIT employees turned generosity into an art form, literally. Team members collectively donated over 1,000 pounds of canned goods to the Heart of Alabama Food Bank while designing creative structures in the Annual OIT CanStruct IT Food Drive and Competition, all for a great cause!

Continuing their efforts of “fun” raising, OIT also held a bake sale (top right) and an S-C-C (Soup, Chili, & Chowder) Cook-Off to benefit the SCC. The event was delicious and generous, helping the Agency surpass its donation goal for the year and proving that OIT’s skills extend beyond IT to charitable giving.



Alabama Digital Government Summit: In November, OIT, in partnership with Government Technology, hosted the Alabama Digital Government Summit in Montgomery, Alabama. 2025 marked the Summit’s 10th anniversary and this year’s event drew approximately 400 registered attendees.

Each year, the Alabama Digital Government Summit brings together technology focused public-sector professionals with leading industry partners to connect on innovative approaches and new technology discoveries.



OFFICE OF
**INFORMATION
TECHNOLOGY**
STATE OF ALABAMA

Streamlining IT in Alabama State Government

GET IN TOUCH

Address

64 North Union Street,
Montgomery, AL 36130

Contact

Main Phone: (334) 242-3800
Service Desk: (334) 242-2222

Email | Website

Service.Desk@oit.alabama.gov
OIT.ALABAMA.GOV

