

OIT ACCESS



STATE OF ALABAMA

OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

STREAMLINING IT IN ALABAMA STATE GOVERNMENT



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*Stock Cover Photo: Bridge at Bellingrath Gardens in
Mobile, Alabama in the spring.*



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*!

Leadership

Daniel Urquhart

Secretary
State Chief Information Officer

Willie Fields

Deputy Secretary

Chadwick Smith

Chief Information Security Officer

Mark Craymer

Executive Director of Shared Services

Roger Bowman

Executive Director of Support Services

Brooke Covington

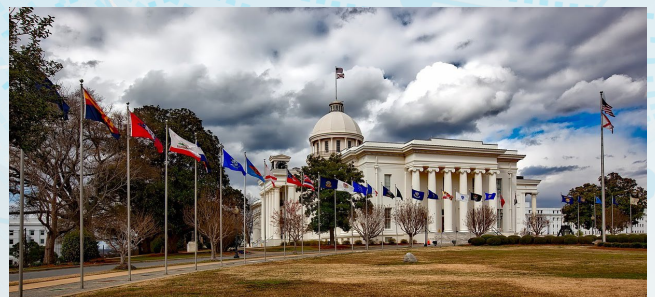
Executive Director of Finance and Procurement

Keith Cousins

Executive Director of Business Execution

Our Mission

Lead the strategic IT management of Alabama executive branch digital assets by centralizing agency telecommunications, data, and cybersecurity services with comprehensive governance, cost-effective infrastructure, and enforcement of rigorous policy and standards that enable compatibility, security, and operational excellence.



New Role to Lead Statewide AI

Aaron Wright Named Chief AI Officer



On April 27, 2026, Aaron Wright was named Chief Artificial Intelligence Officer (CAIO) by Secretary of Information Technology and State Chief Information Officer Daniel Urquhart. The newly established role represents an important step forward in Alabama's strategic, responsible, and secure use of artificial intelligence across state government.

Artificial intelligence is already influencing the way organizations work, make decisions, and deliver services. For Alabama's executive-branch agencies, the CAIO role will provide a dedicated point of focus for coordination, governance, and practical adoption. Rather than serving as a barrier to innovation, Aaron has described the role as one designed to help agencies collaborate, align, and move forward responsibly. That includes encouraging the use of vetted tools, strengthening data-driven decision-making, supporting workforce education, and helping agencies identify high-value use cases that can improve service delivery.

Experience Built for the Role

Aaron brings more than 25 years of technology experience in healthcare and state government, with a strong focus on enterprise systems, data strategy, and digital service delivery. He began his career at Baptist Health Care in Pensacola, Florida, supporting accounting and decision-support systems. In 2010, he joined the State of Alabama as a Data Warehouse Administrator for the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, where he later served as Software Development Manager and helped lead application initiatives supporting agency operations and services.

Aaron joined OIT in 2022 as Director of Application Development. In that role, he oversaw teams of developers, database administrators, and product specialists responsible for delivering enterprise solutions to agencies across the state. His work has included collaborating with agency and executive leadership, aligning technology initiatives with business priorities, and establishing standards and best

practices for enterprise applications and data use. He holds a master's degree in information technology from the University of West Florida.

Aaron has also been deeply involved in Alabama's broader AI efforts. Alongside Mason Tanaka of the Alabama Medicaid Agency, he co-led the Data Management and Ownership working group within the Governor's Generative Artificial Intelligence Task Force and serves as a co-chair of Alabama's AI Community of Practice. These efforts have helped to advance statewide conversations about responsible AI use, data governance, emerging technologies, and workforce readiness.

A Collaborative Approach to AI

As CAIO, Aaron will help Alabama agencies adopt AI in ways that are useful, secure, and aligned with public service needs. His early priorities include building a collaborative foundation across state government, expanding workforce education opportunities, advancing a statewide AI learning platform, continuing to enable approved AI tools, and working with agencies to identify use cases that can be scaled responsibly.

This collaborative approach is especially important because AI will not affect only one program, office, or agency. It has the potential to influence nearly every area of government operations, from internal productivity to citizen-facing services. Aaron has emphasized the importance of a "one team" mindset, where agencies share lessons learned, align around best practices, and move beyond experimentation toward measurable results.

That work also requires the right guardrails. As AI tools continue to evolve, Alabama's approach must evolve with them. Ongoing evaluation, agency feedback, responsible data handling, human oversight, and alignment with best practices will be critical to ensuring AI is used in ways that are transparent, accountable, and beneficial to citizens of Alabama.

Looking Ahead

The creation of the CAIO role reflects Alabama's continued commitment to innovation, governance, and leadership in emerging technologies. It also supports OIT's mission to help agencies deliver secure, efficient, and cost-effective services. Over time, this work is designed to help move Alabama toward simpler, faster, and more reliable government services, including shorter wait times, more intuitive digital experiences, and better access to information.

OIT is proud to welcome Aaron into this new leadership role. His experience, collaborative mindset, and commitment to responsible innovation will be invaluable as Alabama continues to explore the possibilities of artificial intelligence while keeping security, trust, and public service at the forefront.

Alabama Cybersecurity Summit

Building Cyber Resilience Together



On June 4, 2026, OIT, in partnership with Government Technology (GovTech), a national publication and event partner focused on public-sector technology, hosted the inaugural Alabama Public Sector Cybersecurity Summit for over 170 attendees.

This cybersecurity conference was designed to give state and local government officials, federal partners, and industry partners an experience unlike any other. With engaging tabletop exercises, relevant, hands-on material, and focused resources addressing the many emerging cyber threats facing government and public entities, this first-of-its-kind event in Alabama was insightful and impactful, delivering practical strategies that

undergird Alabama's approach to improving cyber resilience, both at the executive-branch level and for communities across the State.

OIT Deputy Secretary Willie Fields and State Chief Information Security Officer (CISO) Chad Smith kicked the day off with opening remarks and a "Cybersecurity State of the State" address that focused heavily on collaboration. Both Fields and Smith emphasized that cybersecurity is a shared responsibility and encouraged Alabama government and business leaders to shift from siloed frameworks to strategic cooperatives.

After a rousing keynote presentation delivered by a pair of cybercrime experts – legendary former FBI Special Agent Chris Tarbell and his hacker nemesis-turned-ally, Hector Monsegur – attendees experienced expert-led breakout and general sessions exploring key issues such as incident response planning, governance, the link between data visibility and data loss prevention, the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLCGP), federal partnerships, and more.



Feedback from Summit participants was overwhelmingly positive, with attendees highlighting the quality of presenters, engaging panel discussions, valuable networking opportunities, interactive tabletop exercises, and the overall organization of the event. The response also demonstrated strong demand for future cybersecurity-focused gatherings, with 96.6% of survey respondents indicating they would be very interested in attending next year's Summit.

For State CISO Chad Smith, that level of engagement reflects the importance of bringing Alabama's public-sector cybersecurity community together around shared challenges and practical solutions.

"Public-sector security professionals must shoulder a seemingly endless range of responsibilities to ensure that our systems and data are as safe and secure as possible," Smith said. "Events like the Alabama Public Sector Cybersecurity Summit are invaluable because they equip security teams with practical knowledge, effective tools, and proven strategies that aid in the prevention of, response to, and recovery from cyber incidents."

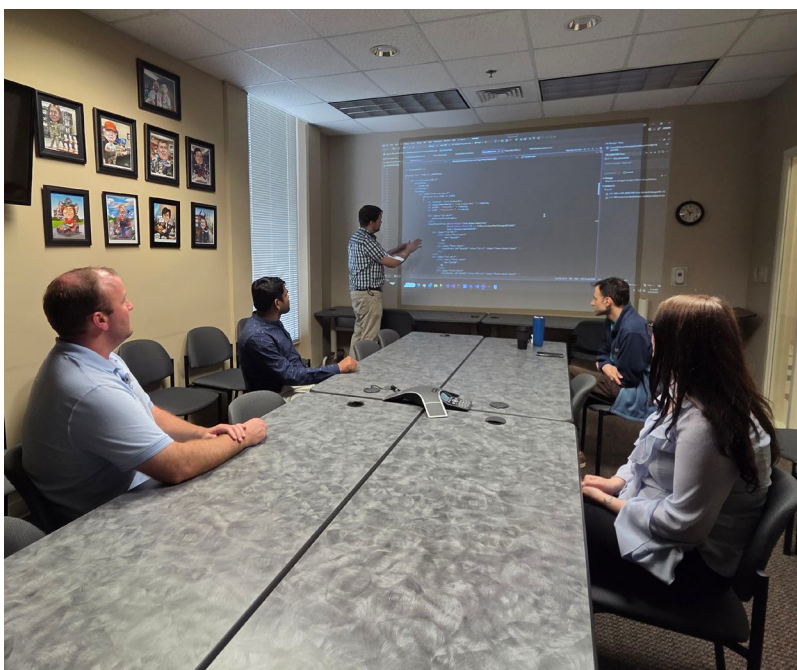
As cyber threats continue to evolve, events like this Summit help strengthen the partnerships, readiness, and shared resolve needed to protect Alabama's digital infrastructure. With a successful inaugural event complete, OIT looks forward to building on this momentum and continuing to support the cybersecurity professionals working every day to safeguard public services across the State.



Agency Spotlight



Alabama Department of **REHABILITATION SERVICES**



After a comprehensive rate study for Alabama's Early Intervention System, in use by the Early Intervention Division of the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services (ADRS), it became apparent that massive changes to the program's software would be needed. ADRS Commissioner Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw reached out to ADRS's Information Technology office for input. Chief Information Officer Beverly Floyd saw this as an opportunity to rewrite an antiquated software application that would not only meet the requirement changes of the Early Intervention Division but would also lay the groundwork for rewriting other outdated software applications utilized by ADRS divisions.

The ADRS Early Intervention System is a program that helps support families, infants and toddlers, birth to age 3, with developmental delays or diagnosed conditions. The software development effort would require at least a two-year effort, substantial cost, and lots of manpower, which ADRS did not have. With Commissioner Burdeshaw's blessing, Floyd and her team would create – from the ground up – a novel system that would quickly snowball into the IT framework for the services their agency provides as well as be the catalyst for enhanced automation in data sharing with several other agencies, creating business efficiencies that would have a lasting impact across state government.

One Device. Many Dilemmas.

Before 2025, Early Intervention providers, many of whom would travel to Alabamians' homes to evaluate and provide services for young children with developmental delays or diagnosed conditions, would have to manually log most of their information on paper or into a template that would only store data on the specific device in use by the provider. The antiquated case management system did not collect enough



data electronically as it related to the cost of a service, which made it difficult to calculate the true costs of services in real time along with making it extremely difficult to make cost-related data comparisons.

Similarly, if a provider lost his or her laptop/device or if it was stolen, the personally identifiable information (PII), personal health information (PHI) and other sensitive data, including the essential information needed for assessment and services rendered, would be potentially lost forever, or worse, fall into the hands of bad actors with ill intent. Anytime a device was lost or stolen, Floyd and other managers would notify clients, do extensive reporting to both state and federal entities, and try to recover the device and data. In most cases, this was a very tedious, lengthy, and sometimes unsuccessful process. ADRS takes the responsibility of protecting PII and PHI seriously.

During the Covid pandemic, when many state agencies, including ADRS, were limiting in-person services, Floyd realized the need for ramping up the deployment of virtual servers and virtual desktops. Floyd and her team were already piloting a few virtual servers and virtual desktops in an effort to help negate the loss of PII and PHI when devices were lost or stolen. She took notice of timely federal grant funding during the pandemic, worked with the ADRS Budgeting Office to acquire funds if the grant application was denied, and gained approval from Commissioner Burdeshaw to proceed with purchasing the infrastructure needed to advance the virtualization efforts. These efforts achieved the goal of protecting PII and PHI, enabling devices to connect securely to ADRS applications without storing any data on the device itself, while also providing the infrastructure that would be needed five years later to rewrite the state-of-the-art Early Intervention software application.



Agency Spotlight



Alabama Department of **REHABILITATION SERVICES**



One Department. Two Months.

Due to the urgency of Commissioner Burdeshaw's request for revamping the Early Intervention service model, the ADRS IT team moved forward, choosing Microsoft's Blazor (prior to it being labeled Microsoft's flagship web UI framework) as a framework, writing code in C#, instead of relying on an outside vendor with no previous involvement or familiarity with the effort.

With Commissioner Burdeshaw's support, the work began on the app that would allow Early Intervention providers working in the field to enter data from any location into their non-state issued device that would automatically record data into an on-prem server in real-time, significantly limiting the possibility of lost work and devastating data breaches.

Floyd and her team took far less time than the two-year timeframe that was initially projected; it took them only two months to develop the application and less than one month for testing. The system was deployed on February 24, 2025, and has functioned without failure since the moment it was released into production. Floyd attributes this achievement to the staff at ADRS who believe in the agency's mission. The IT team at ADRS is ALL IN — a team that worked many long hours while never having a negative attitude because they all had one thought in mind: "we are doing this for the babies!" Together, with the support of Commissioner Burdeshaw, Accounting, and the Early Intervention Division, a goal that seemed impossible for any IT department to accomplish was achieved.

As a result of the system's GIFTS application (Giving Infants, Families, and Toddlers Support), ADRS has:

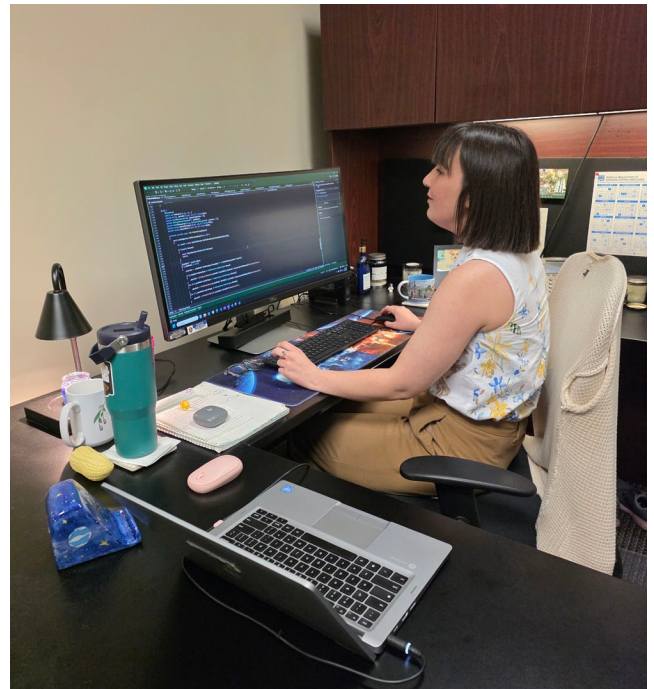
- Improved service efficiency
- Increased fiscal accountability
- Strengthened security
- Enhanced accessibility
- Better utilized automation, level access, and infrastructure

One Mission.

It was only a matter of time before other ADRS divisions, serving more than 72,000 Alabamians annually, took advantage of this new automation and efficiency. The framework for this custom-built software has already been used in-house for divisions such as the Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Program, State of Alabama Independent Living Program (SAIL), Adaptive Driver Training (ADT), Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Accounting, and several others.

ADRS has custom-built applications to convert manual inter-agency processes into modernized software applications. The State's annual Combined Campaign is one example where ADRS custom-built an application for ADRS staff to make contributions, track those contributions, and track the incentives granted for participating in the Campaign.

Since 2025, ADRS has partnered with Alabama Law Enforcement Agency (ALEA) to develop an application to assist with permit testing for Alabamians with disabilities. ADRS has also partnered with the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE) to share data as it relates to consumers in the Vocational Rehabilitation program in order to enhance services. Other notable agencies that collaborate with ADRS are the State's Medicaid Agency, Human Resources, Commerce, Workforce, and Education departments.



ADRS, like so many Alabama agencies, has proven what one organization with a shared belief in its mission can accomplish. The agency always has and always will hold tightly to its mission to enable Alabama's children and adults with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential. ADRS has led by example, leveraging technology that benefits state agencies so they can ensure a brighter future for all Alabamians.

AI Training Partnership

The State of Alabama and InnovateUS Join Forces to Train Alabama's State Workforce

One of the recommendations included in the Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) Task Force's Final Report to Governor Ivey in November 2024 was clear: Alabama must prepare its workforce to use emerging technologies like artificial intelligence efficiently and responsibly by providing effective training resources.

In early April 2026, the Office of Information Technology (OIT) announced a statewide partnership with InnovateUS – a collaborative learning platform founded by national public-sector leaders to elevate digital and AI capacity across state and local governments. This initiative provides free, self-paced AI training for Alabama state employees, which supports Alabama's ongoing efforts to ensure the safe, secure, and effective use of AI across executive-branch agencies.

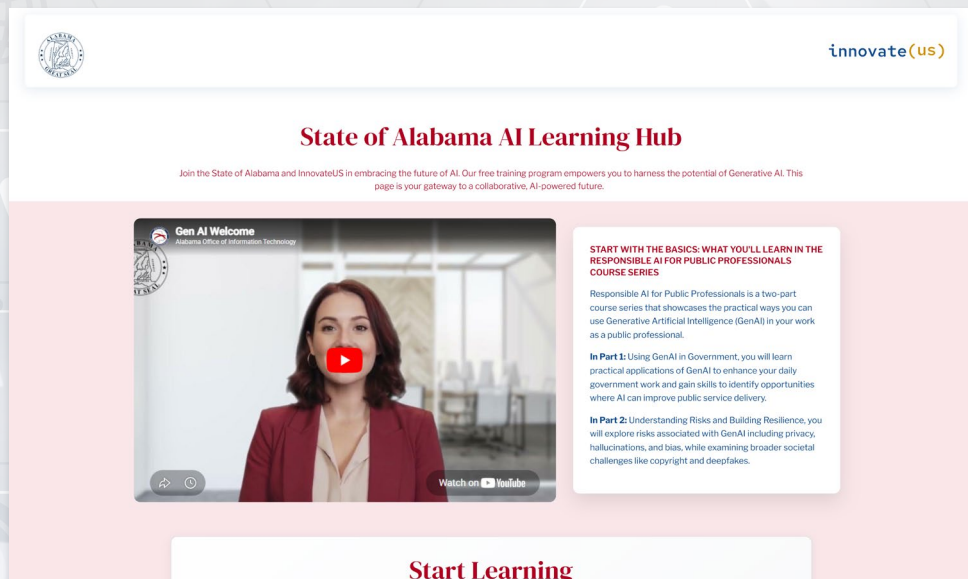
The State of Alabama and InnovateUS' co-branded website serves as a portal for agency users to access free training material.

Users begin with a course titled "Responsible AI for Public Professionals" that highlights the transformative potential of this emerging technology in the public sector and how AI can assist public professionals in their hands-on work activities and best practices operations. After completing this module, users are encouraged to take a second course – "Understanding Risks and Building Resilience" – to learn about the risks associated with AI, including privacy concerns, hallucinations, bias, copyright issues, and deepfakes.

Each course allows the user to determine their own personal pace and provides accessible course material tailored to the government sector as well as a certificate of completion.

InnovateUS also offers a wide range of additional training courses, workshops, and webinars for Alabama state agencies to take advantage of, featuring course titles such as "Power, Place, and AI: Energy, Environment, and AI Data Centers," "Invisible Barriers: Disability Rights and the Public Sector AI," and "What Responsive Government Looks Like: Designing Effective Public Contact Centers."

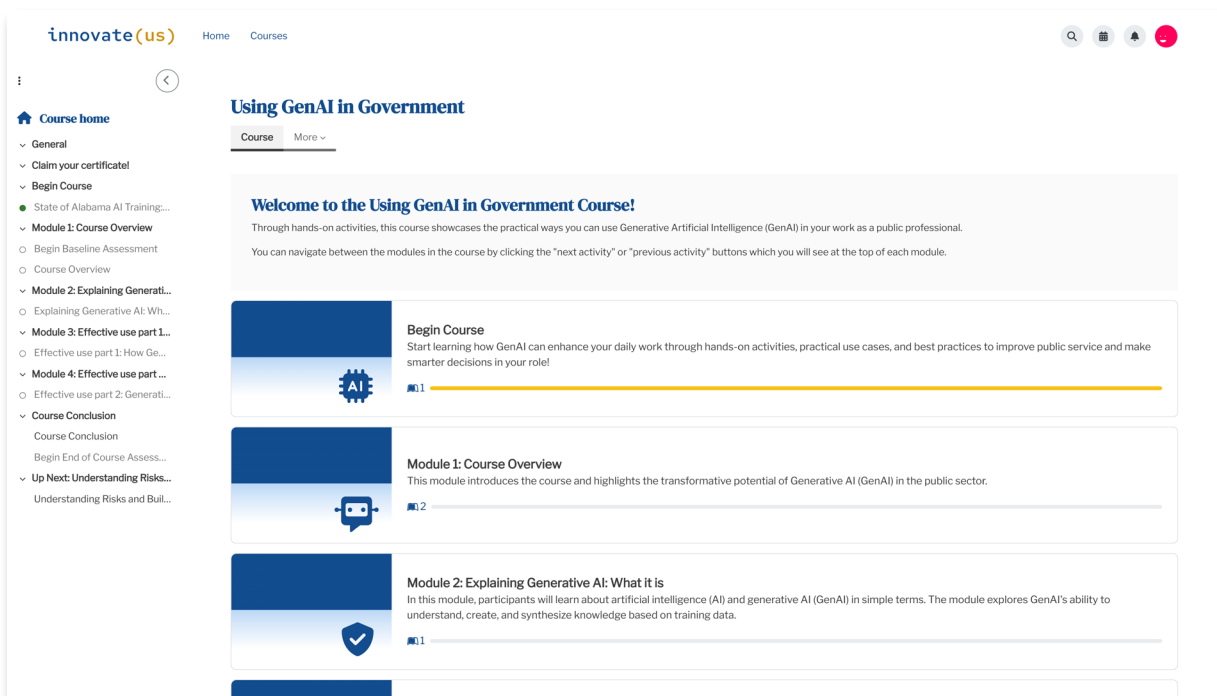
The launch of this training partnership expands access to high-quality professional development content and strengthens Alabama's capacity to apply modern AI tools while upholding strong standards for



privacy, security, human oversight, transparency, and content integrity. The key benefits of these free online courses include:

- Targeted and adaptive learning tailored to specific skill sets and career goals
- Cost efficiency as the State can train thousands of employees free from logistical constraints or scheduling burdens
- Career growth by preparing the State's workforce for high-demand technology, data, and automation roles
- Accessibility features such as real-time translation and text-to-speech

To access this free training resource, visit innovate-us.org/partner/alabama or contact the OIT Service Desk at service.desk@oit.alabama.gov or (334) 242-2222 for more details.



OIT Service Spotlight



OpenAI ChatGPT Shared Service Workspace



OIT is excited to introduce a new service offering for Alabama state agencies: OpenAI ChatGPT Shared Service Workspace. This launch marks an important step in enabling artificial intelligence (AI) across the executive branch in a way that is coordinated, secure, and focused on strengthening how agencies serve Alabama and its citizens.

As AI continues to reshape how organizations work, OIT is offering agencies a practical way to explore its potential within a supported enterprise environment. The ChatGPT Shared

Service Workspace gives participating agencies access to a powerful AI assistant that can assist with everyday tasks such as drafting communications, summarizing content, brainstorming ideas, developing outlines, comparing options, preparing training materials, and refining internal documentation. For busy teams managing complex programs and public-facing responsibilities, ChatGPT can serve as a practical partner for getting from a blank page to a useful first draft more quickly.

Just as important, this offering is designed to support responsible adoption. Rather than leaving agencies to evaluate and manage AI tools independently, OIT is providing a shared approach that emphasizes governance, consistency, and alignment with enterprise security, compliance, and data protection standards. OIT will manage all ChatGPT licenses, similar to how the agency manages licenses with the Microsoft Consolidated Enterprise Agreement. Agencies will be billed monthly for the licenses they consume, giving them a straightforward way to add access as needs grow.



The launch also creates a foundation for future innovation. As agencies identify business use cases, they can better understand where AI can improve workflows, reduce repetitive effort, support faster analysis, and enhance the way agency users collaborate. Early use may begin with simple productivity gains, but the broader opportunity is much larger: equipping the executive branch with tools, guidance, and shared practices that prepare the State of Alabama for the next generation of digital service delivery.

Agencies interested in getting started may submit a ServiceNow request or open a ticket with the OIT Service Desk. OIT will coordinate onboarding and workspace provisioning, then work with agency partners to enable access for approved users. Questions may be directed to the OIT Service Desk at service.desk@oit.alabama.gov or (334) 242-2222.

This new offering represents more than another entry in the service catalog. It reflects OIT's commitment to helping Alabama agencies adopt modern technology thoughtfully and confidently. OIT looks forward to partnering with agencies as we take this exciting step toward enabling AI across Alabama's executive branch.



Did You Know?



Digital Accessibility Compliance Deadline Extended

The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) has extended the compliance deadline for website and digital content accessibility requirements under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The deadline, previously set for April 24, 2026, is now April 26, 2027, for applicable state and local government entities.

While this extension provides agencies with additional time, it should be viewed as an opportunity to continue meaningful progress – not a pause in accessibility efforts. Alabama state agencies, boards, commissions, and other public bodies that provide public-facing programs, services, information, forms, applications, digital documents, or online services should continue working toward full conformance with WCAG 2.1 Level AA standards.

Agencies are encouraged to keep reviewing and remediating websites, online services, documents, and forms; ensure new content is accessible when published; and coordinate with internal teams and vendors to integrate accessibility into standard workflows.

OIT will continue supporting agencies with guidance, tools, document remediation assistance, training opportunities, and agency-specific consultation. For questions about web content accessibility or the new deadline, please contact the OIT Service Desk at service.desk@oit.alabama.gov or (334) 242-2222.



Alabama AI Innovators Kickoff Meeting

Artificial intelligence is rapidly advancing, and Alabama leaders must understand how to leverage this technology effectively, responsibly, and securely.

The Alabama AI Innovators (a community of practice) held their first meeting on April 1, 2026, in the Gordon Persons Building in Montgomery, Alabama. This cross-agency group will address practical, real-world AI use cases within Alabama state government and collaborate on current AI tools, learning opportunities, and the statewide AI enablement efforts from OIT.

Their work and open discussion will focus on implementation, guardrails, and challenges that will help shape the future of AI innovation for a technologically advanced Alabama.



Digital States Survey

Every two years, OIT – on behalf of the State of Alabama – participates in the Digital States Survey, an IT self-assessment that evaluates and grades all 50 states on their use of technology to improve public services, streamline operations, and meet policy goals. The self-auditing survey is conducted by the Center for Digital Government, a national research and advisory institute focused on technology policy and best practices in state and local government.

In 2024, Alabama earned a “B,” improving upon its former grade of “B-” from the 2022 survey. This improvement was thanks to the invaluable input and enthusiastic collaboration of agency IT leaders on categories such as aligned leadership, constituent digital experience, artificial intelligence, data management and use, among many others.

The 2026 survey has been officially completed and submitted with the goal of improving once again, solidifying Alabama’s reputation as a national leader in IT innovation and constituent engagement.



System Administrator Appreciation Day

Friday, July 31st is System Administrator (SysAdmin) Appreciation Day!

Let’s take time to celebrate and appreciate all the IT professionals that do everything from fixing our printers and managing our cloud servers to configuring our firewalls and optimizing our data loss prevention.

Thank you, System Administrators, for all you do in keeping Alabama’s infrastructure running and secure!

Out & About with OIT



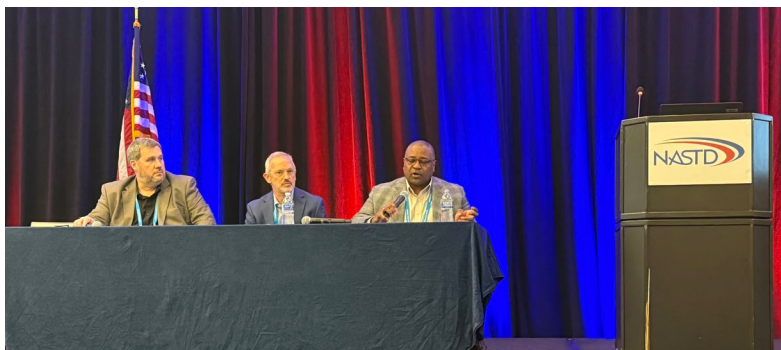
Above — Administrative Professionals Day: OIT was excited to celebrate our wonderful administrative professionals, (L to R) Sierra Smith, Melanie Talley, Pam Boykins, Michelle Garrett, and Onekia Brown.



Above — Laserfiche Empower Conference: In April, Bonnie Traphan and Michael Bowen (not pictured) attended the Laserfiche Empower Conference which provided valuable opportunities for collaboration and education about the Laserfiche platform and its future.



Above — OIT Gives AI Update to the Alabama Board of Medical Examiners (ALBME): In May, Chief AI Officer Aaron Wright and Chief Information Security Officer Chad Smith provided a presentation on AI to the ALBME.



Above — 2026 NASTD Midwest-South Seminar: Mark Craymer, Aaron Wright, and Willie Fields provided Alabama's State Report during the National Association of State Technology Directors (NASTD) Midwest-South Seminar in June.



Above — Birmingham AI and Harmony Venture Labs "What's Next" Fireside Chat: On June 23rd, Aaron Wright represented OIT and the State of Alabama in an engaging discussion on all things AI with Birmingham AI's Austin Senseman.



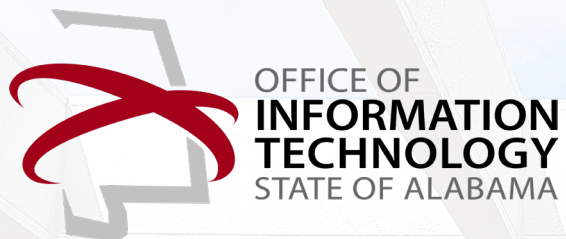
Above — State Employee Recognition Week: On May 5th, the OIT team enjoyed Taco Tuesday with delicious food from El Taco Shop, refreshing limeade, and fun outdoor games on the top floor of the Kelly Butler Parking Deck to celebrate State Employee Recognition Week.

Right — Business Alabama Recognizes Women in Tech

2026: OIT's Ali Fisher was among 22 women recognized by Business Alabama as "trailblazers whose expertise, vision and commitment are helping drive the state, and the world, forward."



Above — Alabama Boys State Visit: OIT welcomed high schoolers from Alabama Boys State (a unique summer program that provides young men with hands-on experience in model state government) to provide a glimpse of what a career in information technology might look like.



Streamlining IT in Alabama State Government

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