FCW

THE BUSINESS OF FEDERAL TECHNOLOGY

WHAT PROGRAM MANAGEMENT
REALLY MEANS

The challenges of keeping enterprise-level IT projects on track are nothing new, but forces are aligning to put new emphasis on doing PM right

Trending

New NGA CIO 'bullish' on IT deployment

The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is the latest member of the intelligence community — after the CIA, the National Security Agency and others — to merge its CIO and IT services. The man behind the merger said it will make NGA nimbler on IT acquisition and help it deliver better intelligence to its government customers.

"We are very bullish about being able to quickly deploy IT services and capabilities while we at the same time meet all the security requirements," said Douglas McGovern, NGA's new CIO and director of IT services.

NGA Director Robert Cardillo, who took over in October, has stressed the need to more quickly adopt advances in IT, McGovern said. Having the CIO and IT services functions in the same office will help the agency balance speed and security in acquisition, he added.

"Now there's no excuse for the programs and the technology developers trying to avoid or ignore the requirements for certification and accreditation" because the personnel is "all in one shop," McGovern said.

He said part of his plan for speeding NGA's deployment of IT services involves assessing which services need extensive help-desk support and which do not. Some applications and widgets, for example, do not need around-the-clock support. "If three people are using it, we don't need to spend a lot of money trying to support that," he said.

Before replacing David White as CIO last month, McGovern led NGA's research and development branch, which gave him a prime view of emerging geospatial technologies. He told FCW that automated analytics and open-source software are among the technologies on his radar as CIO.

"Open-source software capabilities out there are growing in power and use throughout the private sector," he said, adding that he would like to further incorporate those capabilities into classified environments.

NGA has signaled greater emphasis on open-source software recently. In October, the agency released open-source gamification software to GitHub, the collaborative software development environment.

Automated analytics is also high on McGovern's list of IT priorities. "Heretofore, we've never had the technology that could power those kinds of automated analytics," he said, citing as an example advanced behavior modeling to anticipate terrorist attacks. "So the automation area is an area that we're very excited about bringing into the real operations."

NGA is not the only federal agency to recently reorganize itself in an effort to

> "The automation area is an area that we're very excited about bringing into the real operations."
> — DOUGLAS McGOVERN, NGA

keep pace with technological advances. In January, the Defense Information Systems Agency overhauled it structure because of a perception that it was too slow to respond to industry demands.

McGovern said NGA's private-sector partners are "not shy about highlighting how fast the technology maturation cycles and refresh cycles occur, versus traditional acquisition approaches. So that's been a constant drumbeat from industry that we've heard for some time."

— *Sean Lyngaas*

FCW CALENDAR

4/22 **Small business**
ACT-IAC's 9th Annual Small Business Conference will feature a track dedicated to transformation technology. Washington, D.C.
is.gd/FCW_sbc15

4/29 **Cybersecurity**
Michael Garcia, deputy director of NIST's National Strategy for Trusted Identities in Cyberspace, is the keynote speaker at this FCW event on identity-driven federal enterprises. Washington, D.C.
fcw.com/cybersecurity2015

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IN A FASTER FORWARD WORLD

Akamai works with State and Local Agencies making the Internet experience for citizens fast, reliable and secure.

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Trending

SEWP V is live (sort of)

Despite delays in the launch of the fifth iteration of NASA's massive governmentwide acquisition contract, the program's manager said agencies are already benefiting from its more powerful capabilities.

On Oct. 1 and Oct. 15, NASA awarded 73 contracts in three categories based on company size for hardware, software and related services under Solutions for Enterprisewide Procurement V.

A series of bid protests followed soon after, and last November, NASA officials began re-evaluating those contracts as part of a "corrective action."

SEWP V contracts could not move forward until the protests were resolved. NASA officials wanted federal agencies to have access to SEWP V beginning in November 2014, but in October they extended SEWP IV for an additional six months, until April 2015.

SEWP Program Manager Joanne Woytek told FCW on March 16 that those conflicts have been resolved, and SEWP V is "well on track" to launch by the agency's May 1 target.

When SEWP V is implemented, it will include 80 vendors and offer a more comprehensive menu of products, Woytek said.

Some new capabilities that were tied to SEWP V's implementation, including an improved ability to track information flow, were included in SEWP IV enhancements instituted in March, she added.

Woytek said possible additions to SEWP V in the next fiscal year include a verification tool for quotes and information on cloud providers that have been approved under the governmentwide Federal Risk and Authorization Management Program.

— *Mark Rockwell*

OMB's Shaun Donovan to Congress: Data Act isn't free

Office of Management and Budget Director Shaun Donovan is seeking a funding boost from Congress to meet new demands placed on his agency, including those related to cybersecurity, IT delivery and implementation of the Data Act.

In testimony before a House appropriations subcommittee, Donovan said the Data Act, which mandates the publication of federal spending information in machine-readable form, "can lead to some real improvements in the way we account for government spending."

The law, however, does not have a funding mechanism, despite putting the burden of implementation on OMB and the Treasury Department.

Implementation is a "major undertaking," Donovan said.

Therefore, OMB is seeking additional staff and $1 million to spend on contractors who will help with implementation.

"OMB will need to develop software that can maximize data quality, minimize future workload and leverage existing processes to improve reporting," Donovan said. "This approach is necessary for addressing the unique challenges presented by Data Act requirements and current system limitations."

OMB is also seeking a $35 million for its Information Technology Oversight and Reform account — a $15 million increase. Among other things, the new funds will support expansion of the U.S. Digital Service, with 71 additional people expected to join the current staff of 41.

Rep. Ander Crenshaw (R-Fla.), chairman of the appropriations subcommittee that funds OMB, expressed concerns about both the size of the requested funding increase and OMB's ability to support the pace of hiring and integrating new IT experts.

"It might be difficult for us to provide you those funds," Crenshaw said.

— *Adam Mazmanian*

"AND THIS METRIC SHOWS HOW GOOD WE ARE AT TRACKING METRICS."

$107,937 was the average 2014 salary for private-sector workers with waterfall experience. Demand for those workers jumped 23 percent.

A silver lining to the Clinton email kerfuffle?

The specter of Hillary Clinton shadowed a federal records management conference in Washington in March, not least because a former litigator for the National Archives and Records Administration opted to open a slide deck with the iconic image of the former secretary of State consulting a BlackBerry from her seat in a C-17.

"The firestorm that's happening with recordkeeping policy, I think, is a dream come true," said Jason Baron, former director of litigation at NARA. He's been making the rounds on cable news in an attempt to explain the overlapping tangle of authorities that govern federal recordkeeping.

For feds who work in records management, Clinton's contretemps points to a key problem they face in doing their work: They lack meaningful authority to enforce the rules that apply to top agency officials governing what records to save and for how long. Also, there are no rules specifically prohibiting senior officials from using private or commercial email accounts.

A recently enacted law requires officials using private email accounts to forward copies to their agency within 20 days, but a lot of discretion is built into the law. Therefore, there does not seem to be any way to rein in a top official who is determined to work outside existing communications and records channels.

"The statute leaves it to the official in charge to make that determination of what is personal and what is official for transferring their records to an appropriate recordkeeping system," Baron said. "It is leaving it to the end user on his or her smartphone or device as to what to transfer."

Under a 2012 presidential directive, agencies are required to designate a senior agency official at the assistant secretary level or higher to ensure compliance with records policy. The goal is to have someone with enough stature to initiate a conversation with a top official whose records management practices might be less than optimal.

— *Adam Mazmanian*

EDITOR'S NOTE

Looking for future leaders

The past several weeks have seen plenty of personnel changes. There are new CIOs at the Energy Department and the Environmental Protection Agency; the Agriculture Department and General Services Administration are looking to replace Cheryl Cook and Sonny Hashmi, respectively; the Pentagon finally filled its deputy chief management officer slot; and the White House added both a director of IT and U.S. chief data scientist.

FCW, of course, covered each and every shuffle. Yet those senior positions are just a tiny slice of the IT workforce and hardly the only ones worth showcasing. Top leaders are important, but it's the rank-and-file talent that makes agencies run.

We'd like your help in finding individuals who are doing great things today and are likely to be filling the senior slots tomorrow so we can honor them through FCW's Rising Star awards.

The trick, of course, is knowing where to look. The true Rising Stars are often in the background, making their bosses look good.

Not sure what makes for a Rising Star? Here are five points to remember:

1. Anyone in the federal IT community is eligible: military and civilian, career and political, contractor, academic and association expert alike.

2. Winners go above and beyond, whatever their level or rank. A fancy job title is not required, and just doing one's job well is not enough.

3. You can make multiple nominations. Do so early and often.

4. Impact matters. The judges need to know not only what a nominee did but also what all that work accomplished.

5. Age does not matter, but nominees must be less than 10 years into their work in the federal community.

So if you know someone who should be considered — or several someones! — please be sure to nominate him or her at **FCW.com/2015risingstars**. And please spread the word to your colleagues so we can get the best possible batch of winners.

— *Troy K. Schneider*
tschneider@fcw.com
@troyschneider

1.37 billion

visits were made to government websites in the past 90 days, according to the new analytics.usa.gov

FCW Insider: People on the move

Laverne Horton Council is President Barack Obama's choice for assistant secretary for information and technology at the Department of Veterans Affairs. **Steph Warren** has held the top IT job at VA on an acting basis for two years.

Council served as a vice president and CIO at Johnson and Johnson and held several executive positions at Dell. She has led her own firm, Council Advisory Services, since 2012.

Steven Ashby will take over as director of the Energy Department's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory beginning April 1.

Ashby has been the lab's deputy director for science and technology since 2008. He will replace **Mike Kluse**, who is retiring.

Rear Adm. Nancy Norton, a 2015 Federal 100 winner, is leaving Pacific Command to be director of the Warfare Integration Directorate, where she will serve under the deputy chief of naval operations for information dominance.

Norton is currently director of command, control, communications and cyber at Pacific Command.

Greg Godbout, executive director of 18F, will be leaving the General Services Administration for another federal agency. **Aaron Snow**, the group's

Laverne Horton Council

principal deputy executive director, will take over as acting executive director.

In addition, Associate CIO **David Shive** will become GSA's acting CIO when **Sonny Hashmi** departs for a job as managing director for government at Box. (See our exit interview with Hashmi on Page 31.)

Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence **Michael Vickers** will retire April 30, ending a four-year run in the position.

Former Facebook Engineering Director **David Recordon** has been named to the new position of director of White House IT. His job will include collapsing overlapping IT systems, modernizing software and keeping the White House up-to-date on private-sector technology advances.

Steven VanRoekel has stepped down as chief innovation officer at the U.S. Agency for International Development. VanRoekel told FedScoop, which first reported his resignation, that he was leaving to spend more time with his family.

VanRoekel resigned as U.S. CIO in September 2014 to help USAID address the Ebola epidemic in West Africa. He won a Federal 100 award for his work.

— *FCW staff*

18F
@18F

Huge props to our Exec Dir Greg Godbout on being named to the @FCWnow #Fed100 (along with 6 others from @usgsa). http://fcw.com/articles/2015/...

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The private sector's role in cyber defense

The government's cybersecurity efforts should be applauded, but companies bear the lion's share of responsibility for protecting their own networks

The private sector has been hard hit by cyberattacks and data breaches in recent years and is now seeking help from the federal government.

As Congress contemplates various cybersecurity proposals, we should welcome initiatives that foster continued sharing of cyber threat information between the public and private sectors. However, it is important to understand that although legislative measures to expand prosecution and law enforcement authority against cybercriminals might deter some, they are not a panacea because hackers often go unidentified.

Attribution in forensic investigations is exceedingly difficult and resource intensive, and it is exacerbated by adversaries' adroit use of proxy servers, IP masking and other techniques.

When it comes to sharing information, the Obama administration's executive order calling for the establishment of sharing and assessment hubs reflects the growing urgency to defend U.S. economic interests. How the private sector accepts and makes use of those initiatives will be determined by the government's ability to protect the private sector, especially when the sharing of classified threat information is time-sensitive and essential.

Further complicating acceptance is the fact that more than one agency is responsible for hacking investigations. The panoply of overlapping organizations with concurrent jurisdiction includes the FBI, U.S. Secret Service and others. Furthermore, the lack of liability protection afforded to companies for sharing information that contains sensitive customer data leaves them exposed.

Given those realities, is it really reasonable for the private sector to rely on the government to improve or at least be an equitable partner in cybersecurity?

Federal programs should not be regarded as a replacement for corporate security investments and proactive postures.

Federal programs are undoubtedly important, and cybersecurity initiatives are instrumental in creating a taxonomy of standards, but they should not be regarded as a replacement for corporate security investments and proactive, preventive postures. Collaboration between the public and private sectors is important to the defense of U.S. economic ingenuity because they can complement each other's depth and breadth of skills, resources and relevant information to stem the tide of cyberattacks.

However, the extent of cyber victimhood will always be dependent on the maturity of an organization's internal cybersecurity culture, the implementation of holistic security safeguards, and the extent to which a company can prevent, detect and correct vulnerabilities, as well as recover from an attack.

In more and more examples, businesses are being penetrated not due to a lack of government involvement in their security but because they skimped on it themselves. The attack on retail giant Target occurred because the company ignored adequate and reasonable safeguards. Despite using a best-in-class intrusion-detection system, the retailer left myriad vectors undefended, including those associated with vendor access management, hardware encryption, training, awareness and other minimum defense-in-depth practices.

In the 16 months since that breach, countless other companies have fallen victim to cyberattacks, including Sony, JPMorgan Chase and Anthem. Many attacks have been linked to some of the same lax security practices that Target followed.

Although the administration should be praised for elevating the importance of cybersecurity and acknowledging the role the government can play, we should remember that government involvement will never replace risk management strategies that highlight proactive postures and mature cybersecurity practices within an enterprise. ■

Commentary | KRIS VAN RIPER AND LULIO VARGAS-COHEN

KRIS VAN RIPER is a senior director and **LULIO VARGAS-COHEN** is a senior analyst at CEB.
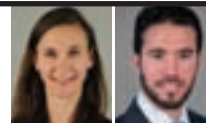
Building more agile project management offices

Delivering business outcomes with continuously changing IT portfolios requires project managers to have a more entrepreneurial skill set

While completing projects on time and on budget is a priority for federal project management offices (PMOs), business partner satisfaction often suffers. In fact, CEB research found that, in both the public and private sectors, 70 percent of projects are delivered according to the original budget and deadline, but only 38 percent meet stakeholders' expectations.

Furthermore, our research determined that most PMOs have a significant percentage of portfolio value that is at risk due to troubled projects. In addition, a Government Accountability Office audit determined that federal CIO risk ratings are often inconsistent with the actual risk profiles of their projects, suggesting that many "low-risk" federal projects are misclassified.

The key to overcoming those challenges lies with project managers (PMs); their performance is the largest driver of achieving business outcomes. However, PMOs have historically been staffed with people who are overly process-oriented. Such PMs struggle to meet the pressures of a more dynamic portfolio of projects, which include more diverse project types and increased stakeholder scrutiny.

Today's demands require moving from a workforce that is focused strictly on meeting requirements to one with a more entrepreneurial orientation. Such PMs possess a willingness to forge partnerships and approach scope change as an opportunity to deliver greater value.

They also possess key entrepreneurial skills in the areas of stakeholder partnership, judgment, risk management and team leadership. Those are precisely the types of skills needed to facilitate government's increasing adoption of agile development methods.

The most effective entrepreneurial PMs are nearly 1.5 times more successful at delivering business outcomes than the average PM. However, our research indicates

> ### Process-oriented project managers struggle to meet the pressures of a more dynamic portfolio of projects.

that fewer than 30 percent of PMs have that entrepreneurial skill set.

Although building such a workforce is not easy, there are strategies agencies can use that don't break the bank and don't require clearing their existing PM benches:

• **Structure job descriptions to attract better candidates.** PM job descriptions that focus on technical skills and certifications discourage candidates with entrepreneurial skills from applying. Progressive organizations write job descriptions that depict leadership opportunities with a broad scope and a strategic focus.

• **Use on-the-job learning to build skills.** CEB research shows that on-the-job learning is three times more effective in boosting performance than formal training programs. Therefore, 70 percent of PM development efforts should be geared toward experiential learning.

• **Develop criteria for assessing entrepreneurial performance management.** Aligning PM performance to specific guideposts that reflect entrepreneurial skills and business outcomes helps encourage PMs to develop those skills. For instance, one of our clients sought input from the PMO community in identifying specific behaviors related to a PM's ability to influence others. The feedback included ensuring fewer vocal stakeholder opinions were considered and setting and defending clear boundaries for project roles and responsibilities.

• **Define a PM career path.** At many organizations, unclear role progression stifles the ambition of talented PMs, who are forced to seek opportunities elsewhere inside (or outside) the agency. Developing a clear pathway for advancement within the PM space will help attract and retain talented professionals.

The demand for strong business outcomes is placing new and challenging conditions on federal PMOs. However, creating an environment that encourages and rewards entrepreneurial behavior will result in more effective PMs. ■

CHRIS STEEL is chief solutions architect at Software AG Government Solutions.

Test your IT portfolio IQ

By answering the questions in five core areas, IT leaders can see whether they are on the right path with their IT portfolio management practices

Today's government IT leaders must be top performers in multiple disciplines. While managing in a diverse IT landscape, they are still expected to both effectively lead change and control budgets. Inevitably, however, shrinking budgets, non-integrated systems, legacy applications, data silos and disparate decision-making bodies that affect IT investments can all get in the way.

By having accurate data about their application portfolios, IT leaders can more effectively minimize risk, costs and productivity drains. The challenge often becomes trusted visibility into one's IT environment.

According to Nucleus Research, most organizations are struggling to keep track of the ongoing changes in their IT portfolios, and IT decision-makers often rely on information that is, on average, 14 months old and only 55 percent accurate.

How does an agency determine whether it has the right application data to support its technology planning, control risk and stay within budget? If chief technology officers and their teams can confidently answer the five core questions below, they can be assured that they are on the right path with their portfolio management practices.

1. Which applications put your agency at risk?

How are you tackling IT risk management? Do you know the recovery times for your applications and how they might affect business continuity in the event of an IT failure? What about the cost per minute of downtime of your mission-critical apps? Do you have applications that are no longer under maintenance?

Tracking your IT assets and linking systems and applications to mission requirements are goals every IT manager should strive to achieve.

2. Is every application in line with your technology road map?

Technology life cycles play a critical role in choosing the right applica-

> ## Technology life cycles play a critical role in choosing the right applications for your organization.

tions for your organization. Do you know which technologies you'll be retiring and which commercial products are nearing their end of life? Are you properly planning migration projects by understanding all the dependencies between your IT assets?

3. How do you identify applications to retire?

Retiring legacy applications is a core component of any application rationalization strategy, and it can free up resources for investments in future technology. How would you identify which applications to retire and which are critical to your enter-

prise application strategy? Do you know where to cut, where to reuse and where to invest?

4. Does your strategy conflict with existing projects?

Your portfolio management decisions cannot be made in isolation; organizations are always running many simultaneous projects to enhance or modernize applications. Can you tell whether any of those projects will conflict with the overall application retirement strategy or how they will impact your budget? Can you connect the dots between technology stacks, project plans, mission goals and budgets?

5. Which application dependencies create risks?

Even if you know the status of a specific application, how do you visualize all its data dependencies — upstream and downstream? Can you identify the risks of those dependencies quickly and comprehensively? (How long did it take you to assess your exposure to the Heartbleed bug?) That insight and ability to make decisions in real time require the right enterprise architecture perspective.

If your team is able to confidently provide answers in all five question areas, your IT portfolio management is where it needs to be.

If your team can answer only some of the questions, you have valuable insights but dangerous blind spots, too. Improving your agency's knowledge of your IT ecosphere will pay off in performance and cost savings. ∎

AN INTERVIEW WITH

Stuart Fleagle,
Vice President,
Government Solutions,
Carpathia

Alan Boissy,
Product Manager, vCloud
Government Service,
VMware

Cloud Solutions and the One-Size-Fits-All Fallacy

While it may be tempting to make an all-or-nothing decision when it comes to the cloud, it's not that simple. Alan Boissy, VMware's Product Manager of vCloud Government Service, and Stuart Fleagle, Vice President of Carpathia Government Solutions, explain the differences between the different types of cloud and how federal agencies can best determine the right fit for their needs.

Q Are all federal applications and workloads suitable for a public cloud?

A Boissy: It's not that some clouds aren't appropriate. It's more about each workload and its requirements. You can't look at your IT landscape with a mono-lithic, homogenous approach. Most applications developed in the past several years are web-enabled and modular, so they can take advantage of the elasticity of the cloud, and they are usually the easiest to migrate. However, deciding which applications and workloads make sense for a public cloud requires an understanding of how each application works and what its requirements are. For example, some government systems have been around for decades and aren't designed to scale. That means that it is likely going to be either difficult or cost-prohibitive for them to move to the public cloud. Additionally, some applications may have to stay on premise because of security requirements. Because of the varied requirements, we believe that most government agencies will end up with some sort of hybrid, multi-cloud scenario where some workloads will stay on premise, some will have to be in specialized FedRAMP clouds to satisfy security requirements, and some will be a great fit for the public cloud.

Q How can an agency determine which applications are best-suited to the public cloud versus an on-premise or private cloud?

A Fleagle: It completely depends on the type of application or workload. For government agencies, there will be some data and applications, especially those deemed mission-critical, that will never find their way to a public or community cloud but will remain behind the fence in an on-premise environment. Then there are applications that can be hosted and managed by a secure cloud service provider. And finally, there are workloads that are appropriate for a multi-tenant, community cloud environment. The Department of Defense (DoD) is a good example of how that would work. In its guidance, DoD defined different categories of workloads based on security, impact levels and mission impact, and put those use cases in different categories. That's the upfront work agencies should do to guide them to the right kind of cloud for a particular workload.

Q It seems like many organizations are moving toward an enterprise cloud approach—essentially, a "cloud first" approach that steadily migrates as many data center functions and applications to the cloud as possible. What is the best way to achieve the enterprise cloud?

A Boissy: There isn't a single cloud provider that can check every box for the many different types of applications, workloads and data sets. That's why organizations are choosing a hybrid approach to enterprise cloud. The key is finding a vendor that offers that flexibility, because it allows agencies to slowly wean themselves off of managed hosting and legacy infrastructure when and as it makes sense. The hybrid approach also provides the most flexibility, because it enables agencies to move workloads to the cloud and back again as required.

Q Is it more cost-effective for agencies to take an enterprise approach to cloud?

A **Fleagle:** It depends. Take the example of an agency that experiences spikes of activity, which could happen during tax season, healthcare enrollment season, or during times of emergency or conflict at the Department of Homeland Security. During steady-state times, that agency might be running in a dedicated cloud environment where they know exactly what they are paying for on a monthly basis. However, when spikes occur, they can be easily switched to a multi-tenant cloud to take advantage of instant scalability and on-demand provisioning of additional resources. It's the concept of owning the base and renting the spike, which can be very cost-effective.

A **Boissy:** An enterprise approach to cloud also allows agencies to share resources more easily, which can save a lot of money. For example, an agency may have several divisions, each using its own email system, payroll system and SharePoint sites. With an enterprise approach and a shared services strategy, that agency can drive real efficiencies by eliminating duplication. The cloud helps achieve this because it allows all divisions to access resources from a central place. It also frees agencies from geographic constraints.

Q **What about the huge investments agencies have made in technology and the skills to implement and manage that technology? As we get deeper into the cloud era, does this mean that all of those investments are now obsolete?**

A **Fleagle:** Most agencies have made a significant investment in virtualization as a way to consolidate and automate data centers, and that is something that definitely isn't lost when moving to the cloud. Take the example of VMware. The vast majority of government has standardized on VMware, so migrating to the cloud using VMware vCloud® Government Service provided by Carpathia™ does a good job of leveraging an agency's existing technology investment. It can knock down cost hurdles and agency staff doesn't have to be retrained or learn new technology.

Q **When you have different cloud solutions in different departments, doesn't management become tricky?**

A **Boissy:** Right now, it can be complicated because many solutions have their own monitoring tools and alerting tools, and different user populations use the data differently. Technical users just want to know how much a CPU is spiking or whether the SQL database is down, while the finance people want to see CapEx and OpEx data, and executives want to see all of that information at a higher level. Vendors are starting to work toward the "single pane of glass" approach where everybody will get the data they need from one dashboard, but it's taking some time. Vendors are also getting smarter about offering

APIs where they can have their data ported into other programs so it can be presented in a single view.

If you could offer a few pieces of advice to agencies about cloud computing, what would it be?

A **Fleagle**: Strongly consider a hybrid approach. It's the most flexible model for government. With this model, a cloud service operator can provide different cloud scenarios within the same data center, from private cloud and public cloud to a bare metal virtualized environment. A hybrid model can connect any combination of those over a Layer 2 connection at a nominal fee, with zero latency and maximum flexibility.

A **Boissy:** There are two reasons why cloud migrations fail. The first reason is if an agency leaves it solely to the IT department to make the decision. Instead, it should be a business decision that includes input from not only IT, but finance, legal, procurement and the executive team. The second reason for failure is not understanding your own environment. By understanding only what you have, you can get to the point where you have a clear agenda of what you are trying to accomplish. If you don't do that before starting on your cloud journey, you're less likely to be successful.

program management

The challenges of keeping enterprise-level IT projects on track are nothing new, but forces are aligning to put new emphasis on doing PM right

BY MARK ROCKWELL

If there's a poster child for the importance of program management, it's probably HealthCare.gov. The website's troubled rollout in 2013 revealed serious shortcomings in the coordinated, practical oversight that a complex IT initiative requires, and the Government Accountability Office concluded in a July 2014 report that the site's problems were due to "ineffective planning or oversight practices" during its development.

The challenges extend far beyond any one program, however. In February, federal IT acquisition was one of two additions to GAO's list of programs at high risk of fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement. The other addition was veterans' health care, where the problems also include a substantial IT program component.

GAO's 2014 report identifies big problems not only with HealthCare.gov but also with other massive federal IT projects. The Department of Homeland Security's now-abandoned $1 billion Secure Border Initiative, the Department of Veterans Affairs' failed $609 million Financial and Logistics Integrated Technology Enterprise program, the Office of Personnel Management's canceled $231 million Retirement Systems Modernization and other junked programs were all cited as evidence of shaky federal IT management.

If there's a bright side, however, it's that the queasiness brought on by such programs — along with the now-guaranteed GAO spotlight — are helping to spur the federal government to manage IT better. Experts in industry and government point to redoubled efforts to implement proven project management techniques and agile development practices, lure new digital thought leaders into the management ranks, and provide IT managers with more concrete models for steering large IT projects.

With such high-profile problems, program management experts say, the environment is ripe for new ways to approach an issue that has dogged the federal government for some time: how to manage big, complex IT systems that threaten to grow even larger as technology becomes more interconnected. Program management and its sister discipline, project management, involve having dedicated processes and managers who keep big, complex programs and projects on track.

The federal government has been trying to address both disciplines for some time, at least since the General Services Administration introduced its Trail Boss program in the 1980s. The effort has continued with the Obama administration's initiatives to instill the attitudes and practices

needed to effectively manage big IT projects, such as former federal CIO Vivek Kundra's 25-Point Implementation Plan to Reform Federal IT Management, released in 2010.

Now, it seems, there's new urgency. "We're at an inflection point for program and project management" to be more widely implemented in the federal government, said Craig Killough, the Project Management Institute's vice president of organization markets.

'Culture is the biggest issue'

The governments of other countries — including Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom — have been developing their own formalized ways to incorporate requirements

> **Program management and its sister discipline, project management, involve having dedicated processes and managers who keep big, complex programs and projects on track.**

into IT acquisition and project evaluation for some time.

"Acquisition reform is at the forefront worldwide," Killough said. "They're recognizing the need to spend money more effectively and measure how they're doing it."

"At the end of this administration and moving into the next, we should see improvement across the board," former Department of Homeland Security CIO Richard Spires said, with GAO's high-risk list providing the impetus that agencies sometimes need to start the long and arduous process of addressing the problems.

Spires, who served as CIO at the Internal Revenue Service before moving to DHS and is now CEO of Resilient Network Systems, said the IRS

How the U.K. is managing major projects

In 2011, the United Kingdom launched its Major Projects Authority, a partnership between the government's Cabinet Office and the Treasury. Under the authority of the country's prime minister, MPA oversees and directs management of all large-scale projects that are funded and delivered by the central government. MPA scrutinizes projects, ensures accountability and contributes to Treasury's decisions about which projects to approve.

When MPA launched, Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude said the authority would facilitate cross-government communications to establish budgets, business cases and delivery timetables for big projects across government.

"The MPA will work in collaboration with central government departments to help us get firmer control of our major projects both at an individual and portfolio level," he said.

Four years later, the British press has accused MPA of losing its momentum and its guiding light. The Independent newspaper noted on March 4 that MPA's first director, Australian developer David

Pitchford, had departed for his homeland and that MPA has not had a full-time leader since October 2014.

The report quotes government officials who consider MPA an ineffective "tick-box auditor" that adds a level of unneeded bureaucracy to large projects.

Program management officials in the U.S. say that adding a high-level oversight operation like MPA wouldn't work here, not least because of the government's scope. A nimbler approach, built on agency-based communities of interests, is a better model, said Richard Spires, former CIO at the Department of Homeland Security and now CEO of Resilient Network Systems.

"A centralized program management office in the U.S. government wouldn't work well," he said. "It would blunt collaboration."

He added that the ability to solicit input from industry is vital, but agencies must build local centers of excellence that could tap expertise across government for all agencies to use.

— *Mark Rockwell*
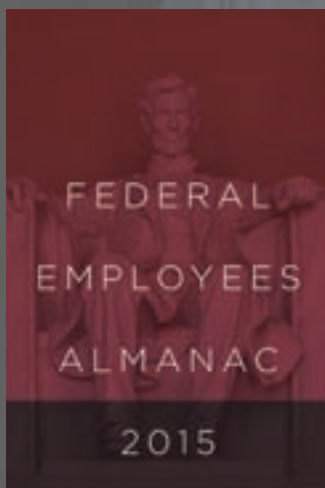
spent more than a decade maturing its acquisition and program management and its ability to deliver programs. Those efforts finally got the agency off GAO's high-risk list in 2014.

"This is not really a technology problem as much as a skill and cultural one," he said. "Culture is the biggest issue."

Even with the recent passage of the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act, which gives federal CIOs more authority and oversight of projects in their agencies, "it's hard to put these practices into place," Spires said.

FITARA should hold CIOs more accountable for large IT projects, but the legislation's effects will take some time and could possibly extend into the next presidential administration.

Quantifying performance

Rick Holgate, CIO at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, said efforts to quantify program management are bearing fruit, under initiatives such as the Office of Management and Budget's TechStat. Those evidence-based accountability reviews of IT investments

> ## "Acquisition reform is at the forefront worldwide. They're recognizing the need to spend money more effectively and measure how they're doing it."
>
> **CRAIG KILLOUGH,**
> **PROJECT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE**

allow the government to terminate failing IT projects. Holgate, who is also president of the American Council for Technology, said the program has become more efficient at providing measurable performance data on projects' tangible objectives.

However, more needs to be done. Softer, less measurable skills — intangibles such as knowing when a group or vendor involved in a big project is not completely committed to it or being able to deftly manage large groups of people and organizations — aren't as far along as more measurable parameters and practices, Holgate said.

Toward that end, last May ACT-IAC issued its "7-S for Success" Framework, which seeks to promote key success factors for major IT programs through a comprehensive management approach that addresses major sticking points in federal IT acquisition.

Even though the program is a year old, it has gotten traction, according to Holgate and Industry Advisory Council Executive Chairman Dan Chenok, who also directs the IBM Center for the Business of Government.

The price of poor program management

Over the years, the Government Accountability Office's High Risk List has included big IT projects that were ultimately abandoned due to a lack of disciplined, effective management, including:

• **The Department of Homeland Security's $1 billion Secure Border Initiative**, a complex system involving many sensor and security technologies and a list of subcontractors. SBI was scrapped because it did not meet cost-effectiveness and viability standards. Along the way, members of the Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Commit-

tee and other federal officials had voiced mounting concerns about the program's hefty management challenges and technology misfires.

• **The Department of Veterans Affairs' $609 million Financial and Logistics Integrated Technology Enterprise program**. Intended for delivery by 2014, FLITE was terminated in October 2011 due to nagging management challenges. In 2009, a GAO report said the agency was "faced with significant challenges in implementing FLITE's pilot systems as planned, while simultaneously working to fully establish

program management capabilities."

• **The Office of Personnel Management's Retirement Systems Modernization.** The program was cancelled in 2011 after the agency had spent approximately $231 million on its third attempt to automate the processing of federal employees' retirement claims. GAO said the effort was weak in "key management practices such as project management, risk management, organizational change management, system testing, cost estimating and progress reporting."

— Mark Rockwell

Some of the concepts, for example, have been incorporated into the Digital Services Playbook issued by OMB's new U.S. Digital Service. USDS is led by Mikey Dickerson, a former Google engineer who served on the team that repaired HealthCare.gov after its 2013 launch.

Legislating better management

On Capitol Hill, Killough said, PMI is backing legislation by the three-year-old Government Efficiency Caucus. Led by Rep. Todd Young (R-Ind.), the group wants to establish formal job series and pathways for career program managers in the federal government. The legislation, which is being drafted by Young and Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-Va.), has not yet been introduced, but it aims to attract talented management professionals from industry with experience in handling large projects.

"The federal government must dramatically enhance its ability to conduct effective program and project management," said Connolly, who is the ranking member of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee's Government Operations Subcommittee and co-author of FITARA. "Conducting oversight of major federal IT failures, I have repeatedly found that when one begins peeling the onion back, the common underlying weakness running through a wide and diverse range of struggling programs is a serious deficiency in program and project management competencies."

ACT-IAC'S '7-S FOR SUCCESS' FRAMEWORK

1. Stakeholder commitment and collaborative governance.

2. Skilled program manager and team.

3. Systematic program reviews.

4. Shared technology and business architecture.

5. Strategic, modular and outcomes-focused acquisition strategy.

6. Software development that is agile.

7. Security and performance testing throughout.

Source: ACT-IAC

PM 101

The Project Management Institute's Program Management Body of Knowledge Guide recognizes 47 processes that fall into five basic process groups and 10 knowledge areas that are typical of most projects.

The five process groups are:

1. Initiating. Those processes performed to define a new project or a new phase of an existing project by obtaining authorization to start the project or phase.

2. Planning. Those processes required to establish the scope of the project, refine the objectives and define the course of action required to attain the objectives that the project was undertaken to achieve.

3. Executing. Those processes performed to complete the work defined in the project management plan to satisfy the project specifications.

4. Monitoring and controlling. Those processes required to track, review, and regulate the progress and performance of the project; identify any areas in which changes to the plan are required; and initiate the corresponding changes.

5. Closing. Those processes performed to finalize all activities across all process groups to formally close the project or phase.

Source: PMI

MORE ON PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

Richard Spires published a five-part series in FCW last year on strong program management, which covered:

- The fundamentals of IT program management
- The people factor
- Governance matters
- The importance of architecture
- The contractor's role

Read them all at http://is.gd/FCW_Spires_PM.

Management

Because of those repeated management gaps, Connolly said, legislators "were careful to explicitly require that program and project managers are key components of FITARA's specialized IT acquisition cadres." And those gaps also prompted him and Young to draft legislation that seeks to "institutionalize and strengthen program and project management improvement initiatives."

Industry's increasingly agile management and development techniques are adding pressure to inject more such programmatic approaches at federal agencies. The government has implemented its own nascent progressive development methods that Spires, Holgate, Chenok and Killough agreed will further spur agencies to adapt.

PROJECT VS. PROGRAM VS. PORTFOLIO MANAGEMENT

Portfolio management covers all of an organization's projects and programs, prioritized by business objectives.

Program management covers interrelated projects that support a particular business objective. Programs are made up of multiple projects, and an agency's portfolio usually covers multiple programs.

Project management covers smaller, more tactically oriented tasks. Projects can be independent of any larger program and simply part of an organization's portfolio.

GSA's 18F digital incubator, the Digital Services Playbook and USDS — along with increased budget authority for CIOs under FITARA — will give CIOs more accountability and a cohesive overview of how their agencies' IT operations fit together.

Those operations, however, are not getting any less complex or easier to manage, which means there probably is no end to efforts to get a handle on them.

"Technology evolves rapidly," Killough said. "Keeping an emphasis on the outcome is difficult." And even with the adoption of more programmatic management techniques, wrangling big IT projects "won't become easier. [But] it will become more effective." ■

Meet the Air Force's future cyber force

FCW visited the Air Force Academy outside Colorado Springs, where a team of 20 young cyber cadets is racking up medals and experience prized by Pentagon leaders

BY SEAN LYNGAAS

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO. — The young Air Force Academy cadets are glued to their computer screens, staring at jumbled lines of code. One is trying to hack a website in a competition sponsored by the Pentagon's research arm. Another is working on reverse-engineering problems generated by a Korean website.

A soft-spoken professor looks on, while his understudy, a man in his early 30s with a Ph.D. from Oxford University, helps cadets in another corner of the room.

The Pentagon's top leaders talk repeatedly about the need to build a cyber force to defend the country from a steady onslaught of online threats.

Here at the foot of the Rocky Mountains and 14 miles from downtown Colorado Springs is one of the places where that is happening.

This is the Air Force Academy's Cyber Competition Team, a group of 20 young computer virtuosos who have been racking up medals in interservice cyber contests. They meet for eight hours a week in the lab of Martin Carlisle, the computer science professor who founded the program.

"I largely run the team self-paced," Carlisle says. "I let the cadets figure out what they're interested in, find problems, work on them, then I try to help them out when they get stuck."

The cadets have thrived in that

Cybersecurity

hands-off structure. They call Carlisle "Doc" and pay close heed when he does offer advice.

"Doc doesn't want us banging our heads on the computer for days on end, so we'll ask him and he'll give us kind of a nudge in the right direction and we'll go back at it," says Cadet 2nd Class Josh Hayden, a junior at the academy.

He is working on a competition known as Cyber Stakes, which is sponsored by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency. He has a set of computer tasks to perform, ranging from binary exploitation to cryptography, that will help him infiltrate a website and capture a hidden digital "flag."

Hayden's screen displays the target website that is hosted on his server. He enters a URL, and the program retrieves the website data. It could be a couple more days before he is able to capture the flag, he says.

When he graduates from the academy next year, Hayden plans to go to graduate school in a computer science-related field or straight into the cyber career track offered by the Air Force.

Next to Hayden is Cadet 1st Class Bill Parks, co-captain of the team and a senior at the academy. Several months after he graduates, Parks will go to Keesler Air Force Base in Mississippi. In the meantime, he has a team of cyber cadets to lead.

Parks and Hayden were part of the Air Force Academy delegation that won three out of five team events at a DARPA cyber competition at Carnegie Mellon University in January. "I'm fairly happy with our performance," Parks says humbly. He won the gold medal in the "speed reverse engineering" competition.

Parks, who joined the cyber team in 2012 as a sophomore, says the hours in the lab have paid dividends in his other coursework. In a class on operating systems, for example, "I know a couple of things more in-depth than, say, some of my classmates know because I've worked problems dealing with that."

He spent last summer at MIT's Lincoln Laboratory, where he learned how to help train Air Force cyber protection teams, which are the key to the service's network defense. That hands-on training is what Pentagon leaders are counting on to boost the inchoate cyber workforce.

"We did not have this when I was a cadet, and I think this is so much better for the Air Force that they get a chance to prepare" for a career in cybersecurity, says Capt. Andrew Sellers.

He graduated from the academy in 2005 and has since done a tour in Iraq and received his doctorate from Oxford. Like Carlisle, Sellers sees his role as a mentor and facilitator. The two men set the broad agenda for the training, but it is up to the cadets to forge their own paths in cyberspace.

"They come in with so much better situational awareness," Sellers says, "and a fluency in the technology that we simply didn't have." ■

DrillDown

5 steps to truly client-centric metrics

IT departments can illustrate their value by customizing metrics to specific projects and linking their performance to the agency's mission

BY KEVIN C. DESOUZA AND ALISON SUTHERLAND

Metrics, analytics and dashboards are all the rage today. CIOs across the public sector are feverishly working to build dashboards that embed predictive analytics and track important organizational metrics, known as key performance indicators. And there is growing evidence that real-time data and predictive information are enabling managers to make evidence-based decisions.

While that is all good, we have uncovered a critical issue: CIOs struggle to build metrics that truly reflect the performance of their own unit — the IT department.

Most CIOs are comfortable capturing metrics on the technical infrastructure they manage, including the amount of uptime (or downtime) of servers and applications, the number of help-desk tickets resolved and the time it takes to resolve tickets. Those metrics are easily captured because of the automated nature by which they are reported and embedded in existing business processes.

Yet those metrics provide little value to stakeholders. Internal and external stakeholders expect IT systems to be reliable, secure and operational. Metrics on operations are only important when an agency has suffered a significant setback (i.e., sys-tems being down or compromised) because they show that the event was an aberration.

In most situations, those metrics do little to change the perception of the IT unit being akin to janitorial services or the department that orders chairs for the office.

In the past few months, we have interviewed more than two-dozen CIOs who work in public agencies at all three levels of government —

Our interviews have pointed us to an intriguing finding: Innovative CIOs are moving beyond a reliance on technical metrics and designing client-centric metrics.

local, state and federal. Our goal was to understand how those CIOs were using metrics to manage their own departments and communicate the value of investments in IT infrastructure, programs and personnel to stakeholders beyond the IT department.

Our interviews have pointed us to an intriguing finding: Innovative CIOs are moving beyond a reliance on technical metrics and designing client-centric metrics. The results have been significant; stakeholders at the agencies and beyond have a more positive view of IT's contribution to modernization, service delivery and engagement. Here is how they are doing it.

1. Involve clients from the beginning

In the early days of scoping a major IT project or redesigning an existing system, innovative CIOs ask clients to describe how they would evaluate the success (and failure) of the effort. The conversation about metrics helps the IT department focus on the issues that matter most to the client. The discussions also have the unintended, but welcome, consequence of encouraging clients to prioritize their needs and outcomes.

During those early conversations, a plan is created to collect data on the key metrics everyone will use to benchmark future performance. The CIOs we interviewed were quick to point out that data on key metrics does not exist in many cases, and significant effort might need to be expended to collect the data.

The goal of the conversations is to get clients to clearly specify the overall metrics they care about and articulate the process through which the performance and success of the IT project or system modernization will be linked to agency outcomes. Capturing that process over time allows CIOs to see trends and patterns that enable

the construction of maps linking IT performance to agency outcomes across a range of projects by type, system and client group.

2. Keep clients informed about progress

As the IT project gets underway, the client is kept informed about its progress, and data is collected about his or her experience with the project. That data is mostly gathered through regular meetings that address what is working well and what is not, how much disruption the project is causing, and what can be done to reduce that disruption. Those discussions are an important aspect of building advocates and evangelists for the value of IT within the agency.

Such conversations also allow clients to discuss and highlight the value of IT in the context that makes the most sense to them: their own business operations and the realization of their goals and objectives.

The IT team captures and reports metrics on a regular basis so that everyone affected by the project, both directly and indirectly, has situational awareness on its progress and the next key milestones. In addition, some of the unintended consequences of metrics are unearthed during those meetings, and adjustments are made.

For example, one CIO said his team tracked how quickly callers' issues were resolved by the agency's help desk. Unfortunately, the unintended consequence was that help-desk personnel were closing calls quickly to meet the target but not effectively resolving the problems, which increased the number of calls.

The IT team adjusted the metrics to measure the number of calls required to resolve an issue and the time spent on each call. A client survey was also initiated to capture information on the callers' experiences.

3. Report on the things that matter

Innovative CIOs are working with their peers to develop "top 10 lists" when it comes to metrics. Those efforts focus on ensuring that the IT department is reporting on the things that matter to the agency's key strategic objectives. Although many CIOs are just beginning such efforts, we applaud the approach.

Some of them are building indices that combine multiple indicators into meaningful overall metrics. For example, one CIO has integrated more than 10 indicators to come up with an overall score for IT security, while another is piloting an index to measure the IT department's innovation capacity and contribution.

Furthermore, CIOs are creating plans to measure their performance on key metrics and share that information with stakeholders on a regular basis.

4. Link IT's performance to the agency's mission

Leading CIOs are finding innovative ways to prove their value. Consider Results Minneapolis, a public dashboard that links 34 pages' worth of IT department performance measures to larger city values. One dashboard heading highlights the goal of having customer-focused and well-managed IT services and operations.

Metrics on the number of IT projects in flight, number of IT projects on budget and expenditure per full-time IT employee compared to other departmental employees are visualized as evidence of how well the IT team is performing. The department's goals strive to push larger city goals forward and establish its worth in concrete terms.

Other CIOs are looking into how to track the IT department's contribution to projects that are transforming an

agency, or how IT is fundamental to building new programs or implementing new policies. CIOs are comparing the percentages of their budgets and resources that are allocated for those efforts versus standard IT maintenance and provisioning of computing resources.

5. Avoid 'watermelon metrics'

The best CIOs keep searching for true causes of potential issues and avoid what one leader calls "watermelon metrics." Performance measures can look green on the outside but be red on the inside when they are split open for close examination. Smart leaders listen for hints from clients, employees and even automated technical metrics that signal a problem. Their trust in green light metrics is earned, not assumed.

For example, one CIO joined a department where server uptime looked strong but was measured in isolation. There were small flags from other infrastructure metrics, so she had her team design an end-to-end server-performance metric; her team was shocked by the poor results they received. If they had not dug deeper, she and her team would not have known they had a watermelon metric and that their client's experience was as poor as it was.

Carving out time to collaboratively design customized project metrics is a great business decision. Leading CIOs recognize that it is always worth leaving their comfort zone of technical metrics to design performance measures that illustrate the value of IT through others' eyes. That is how top CIOs garner trust, funding, and opportunities for growth and innovation.

When CIOs make a habit of customization (even if it comes at the expense of technical excellence), they create satisfied clients who become IT evangelists and sell others on the IT department's worth. Those evangelists make it easier for CIOs to acquire the resources they need to be even more successful next time and perform even more strongly. ■

Kevin C. Desouza is associate dean for research in the College of Public Programs and Alison Sutherland is a doctoral student at Arizona State University. More of their research can be found at kevindesouza.net.

What CIOs say about metrics

The comments below are excerpts from the interviews Kevin Desouza and Alison Sutherland conducted for this article. Their full report on metrics in the public sector will be released by the IBM Center for the Business of Government.

"Metrics come from the bottom up in this organization and are constantly evolving."

"We redevelop and reorganize metrics based on their usefulness. This re-evaluation process is always in play."

"If a metric is not informing decisions and enhancing government, we push it aside. For us, usefulness is everything."

"A lot can be accomplished with metrics. At budget time, department heads would request things like new hires with no supporting materials; however, I [submitted] evidence in the form of graphs that were comparative to other cities and challenged my city council to support my request. The ability to show things in black and white was a lesson to me early on."

"If I receive complaints about services, the metric helps me validate those claims and respond better. Metrics help identify where there are issues or problems in the system."

"One challenge I encounter with metrics is timeliness. They've got to be kept up-to-date in a timely manner. Having metrics that are infrequently examined puts you in an awfully reactive position. Frequently examined metrics enable course corrections as you're going along."

Can the Army build on ITES-2S' momentum?

The key to the ongoing success of the Army's IT contracting vehicle is incorporating cloud and cybersecurity solutions into the next iteration

BY SEAN LYNGAAS

The Army's massive procurement vehicle for IT services is gradually moving to a new phase.

Vendors say the IT Enterprise Solutions–2 Services (ITES-2S) contract has been effective because it gives agencies flexibility in the IT services they buy.

Given that multiple agencies have placed billions of dollars' worth of orders through the contracting vehicle to date, how ITES-3S pans out could have a big impact on the future of federal IT contracting.

The fundamentals

ITES-2S dates back to 2006, when the Army component in charge of the contracting vehicle — Computer Hardware, Enterprise Software and Solutions, or CHESS — awarded contracts to 19 firms, five of which were designated small businesses. That pool has since shrunk to 16 firms after three of the five small businesses were acquired.

Since then, agencies have issued about $10 billion in contracts through the vehicle, said Stephani Antona, a research analyst at Deltek.

One of the prime contractors is systems integrator Harris IT Services. The company's president, Wayne Lucernoni, said the Army has planned ahead and communicated proactively with industry in advance of the transition to ITES-3S. Other agencies would do well to emulate the Army's model of tapping vendors to help shape a procurement vehicle, added Lucernoni, who estimated his firm has generated about $500 million in revenue through ITES-2S since 2007.

ITES-3S at a glance

The Army's IT Enterprise Solutions-3 Services contract will allow federal agencies to buy:

- Cybersecurity services
- Information assurance and information systems security
- IT services
- Business process reengineering
- Enterprise design, integration and consolidation
- Network/system operation and maintenance
- Telecommunications/system operation and maintenance
- IT supply chain management
- IT education and training

And although the Army's Computer Hardware, Enterprise Software and Solutions office has stressed that nothing is final until the request for proposals is issued, ITES-3S is expected to include the following provisions:

- The contract will have a five-year base with one four-year extension option.
- It will feature a "restricted suite" of 14 small-business contractors and an "unrestricted suite" of the top 10 contractors regardless of size.
- All task orders under $150,000 will go to companies in the restricted suite.
- Contractors in the restricted suite must be allowed to submit a capability brief for all task orders under $5 million before those orders are issued as unrestricted.

Source: CHESS presentation, November 2014

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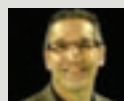
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Other companies also appreciate the contracting vehicle's flexibility. "The fact that it's totally decentralized in the Army means it's quite flexible…and we adjust to the particular contracting shop that's using the vehicle," said Mike Yocom, senior vice president and general manager at Pragmatics, one of two small-business prime contractors on ITES-2S.

The contract's flexibility, in fact, has made it a backup plan of sorts for agency contracting. For example, the Air Force switched to ITES-2S when it ran into delays on its own Network-Centric Solutions-2 group of contracts.

There is also no contracting fee for using ITES-2S, which the Army sees as a big incentive in tight fiscal times.

"As defense budgets are reduced across the [Future Years Defense Program], the ability for all of [the Defense Department] to use ITES-3S to compete task orders without having to budget for a contract access fee is a real differentiator," CHESS Project Director Thomas Neff said via email. He declined to be interviewed for this article and instead offered written responses to questions.

ITES-2S also avoids the bureaucratic speed bump of requiring agencies to coordinate contracting with an additional office, said Larry Smith, ITES-2S program manager at SAIC.

The program management office for ITES-2S "essentially delegates that responsibility down to the contracting officer to comply with all of the basic contracts and the [Federal Acquisition Regulation] clauses, and then they can use the CHESS portal to release it, which makes it a simpler and

> **As defense budgets are reduced, the ability for all of [DOD] to use ITES-3S to compete task orders without having to budget for a contract access fee is a real differentiator.**
>
> **THOMAS NEFF, ARMY**

easier way of getting [requests for proposals] on the street," he said.

Key hurdles

CHESS issued a request for information for ITES-3S in February 2013, and industry is waiting for the follow-up RFP.

CHESS is intent on attracting more small businesses, and "we believe the planned structure of ITES-3S will support that goal," Neff said. "We also want the scope to include IT services that enable the DOD to meet mission requirements in the areas of cyber and cloud."

Although cybersecurity and cloud computing were not designated service areas under ITES-2S, Neff said he wants ITES-3S to "enable application owners the ability to access highly qualified companies that can help migrate their applications to an approved cloud environment."

For ITES-3S, CHESS intends to define small businesses as those with annual revenue of $27.5 million or less. But Yocom said he is concerned that the expanded pool of small businesses will throw his midsize company in with much bigger firms.

Competing directly with industry heavyweights for task orders would be "very challenging for us, and so we're anxious to see how it sort of takes shape," Yocom said.

CHESS will also have to deal with any competitive tension that might come from expanding the number of companies using the new contracting vehicle. Handling that will put "a lot more pressure on the contracting side" of the small staff of CHESS, Antona said. ■

Next steps

In March, the Army extended the ordering period for the IT Enterprise Solutions–2 Services (ITES-2S) contract through April 2018, a move that will allow the Army's Computer Hardware, Enterprise Software and Solutions staff more time to draft the request for proposals for ITES-3S.

Wayne Lucernoni, president of Harris IT Services, said Army officials are wise to take it slow. "They've allowed themselves time to not rush something out that they have to go through the painful process of editing," he added.

Vendors said they hope ITES-3S will continue its predecessor's broad applicability across government.

Mike Yocom, senior vice president and general manager at Pragmatics, said ITES-3S can improve on the previous contract by offering a streamlined set of contracting reports.

"CHESS kind of has blinders on as far as what's happening with [ITES-2S], and so it depends very much on the prime contractors to report what's happening with the awards," he said.

— *Sean Lyngaas*

FirstPerson

Sonny Hashmi:
The exit interview

GSA's CIO talks about advice for new hires, key cloud takeaways and areas still in need of improvement

Sonny Hashmi is stepping down as CIO at the General Services Administration to become managing director for government at cloud collaboration firm Box. He recently spoke with FCW Editor-in-Chief Troy K. Schneider about his time at GSA and the government's progress on key initiatives. This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

First off, congratulations on the new job. Tell us a bit about it.
Thank you. I'm very excited to be joining Box, though obviously it's a bittersweet thing for me because I really will miss GSA.

At Box, I'm going to be starting up the Box for Government vertical. My whole career — either in the private-sector side or the public-sector side — has been focused on improving the health and wellness of government IT. Through this initiative and through this opportunity, I'm hoping to continue down that track.

I'm very excited about it — not only to build the brand and awareness of Box, but also to really continue the discussion around adoption of cloud and mobility into the federal government. That's something I've been doing at GSA for some time now.

GSA has often been tasked with making the White House's IT initiatives happen. Is there an area where you are proudest of the progress that's been made in the past three or four years?
If you think about four years ago, the discussion in the government IT circles was: Is this cloud thing going to stick around? Is it something that could ever work for government? I'm not sure how this works — is it mature?

And if you fast-forward to today, the conversation has changed dramatically to: How do we adopt it? How do we scale it? How do we get the most value out of it? That's a completely different discussion.

I'm also very proud of the work GSA has done in the area of mobility. Our new headquarters is a completely different model for how organizations run and operate. It's a sharing economy model, it's a democratized field space model — and a lot of

that is dependent on the technology platform that is required to enable all of that.

When it comes to mobility, when it comes to working in a secure and compliant environment, I think the work that we've done at GSA is pretty remarkable, and I'm proud to have been part of that conversation.

And then with the tools that we developed for our operations, we shifted the discussion, effectively, from building highly integrated vertical solutions to solve a single point problem to "Let's invest in common, extensible open platforms that can be reused and integrated in new ways to solve business problems across the board."

It's yielded remarkable results. Our applications cost a fraction of what they used to cost in the old model.

Are there initiatives or areas that you wish could have moved along faster?
This is really a governmentwide [and] industrywide comment because the same challenges exist elsewhere.

When you see smart organizations and smart companies, they have put a lot of effort and energy into figuring out how to leverage the data and content that they have and use it to drive business results. That's yielded amazing results for those companies.

I feel that same revolution has been hard to catch on in government. It's been challenging to really adopt that data science philosophy where you are constantly looking at enterprise data as an asset, putting it through the right science to really drive business decisions and make those decisions in real time.

There are many reasons for that. But I'm very enthusiastic about the work that is already going on.

We are seeing a trend of several chief data scientists or chief data officers going to federal agencies. GSA has had a chief data officer for the last year and a half, and the results that they have achieved are tremendous.

It's amazing to see that happen, but there's a long way to go before it's really baked into our DNA. That's an area that I think is ripe for innovation, and there is a lot of skill there that needs to be built in government.

There's also the challenge that federal acquisition approaches are sometimes not congruent with the way the most innovative, the most aggressive cloud providers are looking to engage, right?

If you're willing to buy something with a very strict mandate, a strict requirement for a long period of time when the world, the products and solutions are changing literally on a three- to six-month basis, it's always going to be a conflict.

That's the challenge that exists today, and I hope GSA solves that challenge.

The last thing is one of the biggest challenges across the board in government and is one of the areas that I am very passionate about: the bringing back or in-sourcing of technical expertise to a certain extent within the government.

I believe pretty strongly that, for many years, for a lot of reasons that are neither here nor there, government agencies have worked to perfect the compliance posture within technology.

We have people who know how to accurately and appropriately process the invoice, issue an RFP, do an award. We have all these people who can make sure all the oversight responsibilities are fulfilled. But in the process of that, somehow we have weakened the muscles we had...to actually have hands-on techies who understand tech deeply.

That's caused a situation, I believe, where many governing agencies struggle with really understanding what they buy, what they do with it, what they need.

That leads to a lot of duplication, a lot of wasted energy, and this leads to negative outcomes that can be avoided if we really focused on bringing the right technology skills back into government.

We have already seen that happen and had amazing results. 18F is really one of the models where we can accelerate it, but there are other models as well.

That push to in-source talent has certainly picked up speed. What advice would you give to those new hires? What do you wish you knew when you first moved into the federal space?
There are all these processes and policies. Sometimes those policies are real, based on legislation or executive [directives] and things like that.

Other times, those policies are just common-law policies, as I like to call them. They're just processes that have evolved because that's always the way we have done it, and now people think that that should be a law somewhere.

My advice to anybody coming in in any capacity would be — and it's the same advice that I've given my deputy who's going to be taking over for me as the acting CIO — you should always question the status quo, but be aware of where the hard and soft boundaries are.

Question and probe, really get a better understanding of what the landscape looks like and then decide which areas you want to push on. It would be unfortunate if you just take the landscape as it is and decide that it's the only play you can make. ■

FCW Index

People

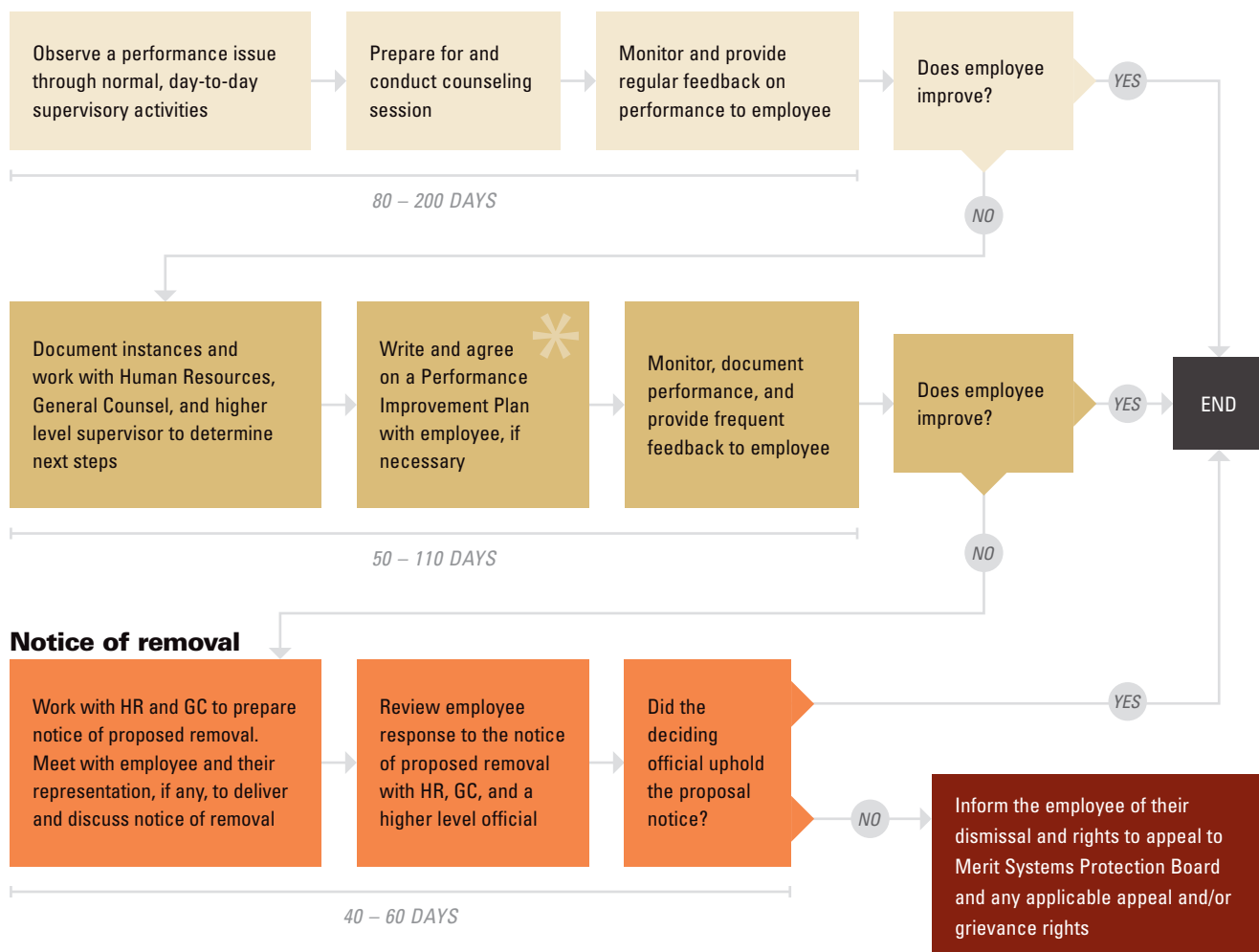## Agencies/Organizations

Advertisers

BackStory

How do you fire a fed? Very, very slowly.

The time it takes to hire is a common complaint for agency IT leaders, but getting rid of a poor performer takes even longer.

Dismissals are relatively straightforward during a new hire's one-year probationary period; **70 percent** of performance dismissals take place during that phase.

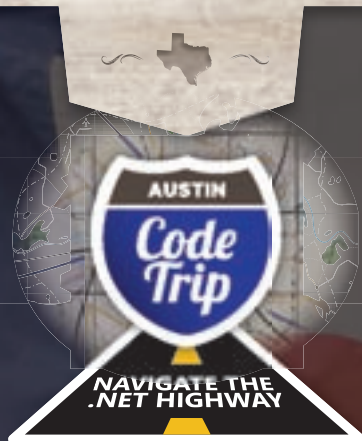After that, an agency must usually work through a formal, multistep process:

Dismissal process under Chapter 43 (of Title 5 of the U.S. Code):

Observe a performance issue through normal, day-to-day supervisory activities → Prepare for and conduct counseling session → Monitor and provide regular feedback on performance to employee → Does employee improve? — YES

80 – 200 DAYS

NO

Document instances and work with Human Resources, General Counsel, and higher level supervisor to determine next steps → Write and agree on a Performance Improvement Plan with employee, if necessary ∗ → Monitor, document performance, and provide frequent feedback to employee → Does employee improve? — YES → END

50 – 110 DAYS

NO

Notice of removal

Work with HR and GC to prepare notice of proposed removal. Meet with employee and their representation, if any, to deliver and discuss notice of removal → Review employee response to the notice of proposed removal with HR, GC, and a higher level official → Did the deciding official uphold the proposal notice? — YES → END

NO → Inform the employee of their dismissal and rights to appeal to Merit Systems Protection Board and any applicable appeal and/or grievance rights

40 – 60 DAYS

∗ The Chapter 75 process, which does not require a formal improvement period, can also be used, but the burden of proof for sustaining a dismissal is much higher.

The total time? Anywhere from **170 to 370 days.**

And once dismissed, an employee can file an appeal. In 2013, the Merit Systems Protection Board took an average of **243 days** to adjudicate such complaints.

Source: Government Accountability Office

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