

**2001 NASIRE RECOGNITION AWARDS  
STATE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES  
VIRGINIA COUNCIL ON TECHNOLOGY SERVICES:  
CREATING SEAMLESS EGOVERNMENT**

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**Category:** State Planning and Management Initiatives

**Title of Nomination:** Virginia Council on Technology Services – Creating Seamless eGovernment

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **Project Description**

Recognizing the power of electronic government (eGovernment) in Virginia to replace the “government as usual” mindset with a new level of service to, interaction with, and accountability to citizens, Virginia Governor James S. Gilmore formed the Council on Technology Services (COTS). Chaired by the nation’s first cabinet-level CIO, Secretary of Technology Donald W. Upson, COTS is a stakeholder group comprised of 22 representatives from state agencies, local government, and education.

In creating COTS, Governor Gilmore recognized the need to marry the technical aspects of eGovernment initiatives with business needs. COTS members are technical experts and business leaders working together to ensure eGovernment initiatives are driven by business priorities, have support from non-technical decision-makers, and employ state-of-the-art technology.

COTS convenes semi-monthly to prioritize eGovernment initiatives, develop strategies for implementing those initiatives, remove obstacles, seek opportunities for collaboration, and share best practices. COTS provides a forum for exploring technological innovation across the enterprise and multiple levels of government.

### **Improvement to State Operations and Benefits**

Prior to COTS, state agencies, institutions, and localities made significant technology-related decisions in “silos”—without input from or dialogue with each other. As a result, eGovernment efforts were uneven, uncoordinated, often duplicative, and not always replicable across agency or government boundaries. COTS provides the forum for bringing to light obstacles and opportunities, collaborating on solutions and cross-level government initiatives, and coordinating eGovernment efforts to break down the barriers among agencies and levels of government.

The strategic eGovernment initiatives that provide the infrastructure for eGovernment to succeed and flourish lacked ownership. Because seat management, digital signatures, and electronic procurement benefit and impact all Commonwealth agencies, there was no single, logical owner. COTS not only “owns” these initiatives and helps implement them—it actively promotes them across the Commonwealth.

Prior to COTS, eGovernment initiatives were treated as technology projects, which resulted in two problems. First, the projects were technology-driven and often failed to gain support from business decision-makers. Second, the projects did not necessarily achieve the vision or mission of the organization or of the enterprise. eGovernment initiatives are highly complex and involve rapidly changing requirements, evolving technologies, business process reengineering, and organizational change. COTS provides an enterprise context that marries the business and technical aspects of eGovernment initiatives.

### **Return on Investment**

COTS has formed workgroups comprised of COTS members and subject matter experts to provide in-depth exploration into and ownership of eGovernment initiatives. COTS and COTS Workgroups are powered entirely by volunteers. All costs are absorbed by participating members and the vendor community. COTS has received national recognition from NASIRE and the Innovations in American Government Awards Program, and consistently receives attention from other states and nations looking to replicate the program.

# PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## Introduction

Recognizing the power of electronic government (eGovernment) in Virginia to replace the “government as usual” mindset with a new level of service to, interaction with, and accountability to citizens, Virginia Governor James S. Gilmore created “The Digital Dominion”—a framework for governance in the information age. To generate support and collaboration on eGovernment initiatives, Governor Gilmore formed the Council on Technology Services (COTS). Chaired by the nation’s first cabinet-level CIO, Secretary of Technology Donald W. Upson, COTS is a stakeholder group comprised of 22 representatives from state agencies, local government, and education. Participants include representatives from:

City of Virginia Beach	General Assembly, Division of Legislative Automated Services
County of Chesterfield	George Mason University
County of Fairfax	Office of the Secretary of Technology
Department of Accounts	State Corporation Commission
Department of Education	Supreme Court of Virginia
Department of Game and Inland Fisheries	University of Virginia
Department of General Services	Virginia Commonwealth University
Department of Information Technology	Virginia Employment Commission
Department of Motor Vehicles	Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University
Department of Social Services	Virginia State Police
Department of Taxation	
Department of Transportation	

In creating COTS, Governor Gilmore recognized the need to marry the technical aspects of eGovernment initiatives with business needs. The enabling legislation for COTS, therefore, requires representation of technical experts and business leaders to ensure eGovernment initiatives are driven by business priorities, have support from non-technical decision-makers, and employ state-of-the-art technology.

## Structure and Function

COTS convenes semi-monthly to prioritize eGovernment initiatives, develop strategies for implementing those initiatives, remove obstacles, seek opportunities for collaboration, and share best practices. COTS provides a forum for exploring technological innovation across the enterprise and multiple levels of government.

COTS has formed workgroups comprised of COTS members and subject matter experts to provide in-depth exploration into and ownership of eGovernment initiatives. The Digital Signature Initiative Workgroup, for example, has explored and recommended using digital signatures in the Commonwealth. Digital signatures are electronic signatures that are tied to specific individuals, are legally binding, and ensure that information during an electronic transaction has not been tampered with. Other workgroups include:

- **Communications**—creates strategies for promoting awareness and widespread adoption of eGovernment initiatives.

- **Enterprise Architecture**—creates a common and cohesive framework for enabling the priority business activities of state government and facilitating the adaptation of technology to the changing business-driven needs of the Commonwealth. The enterprise architecture is divided into nine domains (network, middleware, security, platform, database, cost allocation, systems management, information, and application.)
  - **EProcurement**—encourages electronic procurement and assists in developing a statewide, web-based procurement system that enables government to purchase goods and services more accurately and efficiently.
  - **IT Recruitment and Retention**—identifies issues and promotes recommendations for recruiting and retaining world-class IT workers in the Commonwealth.
  - **Privacy, Security, and Access**—identifies issues and develops solutions for keeping the public trust—respecting the privacy of citizens and securing the information citizens share with us—and ensuring accessibility.
  - **Seat Management**—assists in placing state-of-the-art technology on every desktop, or “seat”, in government. Seat management provides for the full range of desktop services, relieving the burden placed on each agency and institution for acquiring, configuring, testing, maintaining, repairing, upgrading, and disposing of equipment. Seat Management helps the Commonwealth effectively manage its technology investment, shifting it from a political environment to an operational one.
  - **State and Local Application and Network Integration**—seeks to create a single statewide network to transport data, voice, and video among state agencies, educational institutions and its local governments.
- Telecommunications/Voice-Over IP**— identifies telecommunications priorities and methods of acquiring telecommunications equipment and services.

### **Resources**

COTS and COTS Workgroups are powered entirely by volunteers. All costs are absorbed by participating members and the vendor community. Vendors have been involved in all appropriate COTS activities, providing expertise and services at no cost to the Commonwealth.

### **Recognition**

The COTS Telecommunications Workgroup successfully submitted a nomination for NASIRE’s 2000 Outstanding Achievements award for The Advanced Network Deployment Model it helped develop. COTS was also cited as noteworthy and placed among the top 25% of the applicant pool by the 2001 Innovations in American Government Awards Program.

Several states and a number of nations have expressed interest in COTS, including England, Scotland, Ireland, and Egypt. Korea sent a delegation of technology and policy experts to Virginia to examine eGovernment efforts. COTS has also been featured in several national venues, including conferences in North Carolina and the Aspen Institute.

## **IMPROVEMENT TO STATE OPERATIONS**

### **Improving Collaboration and Communication**

Prior to COTS, state agencies, institutions, and localities made significant technology-related decisions in “silos”—without input from or dialogue with each other. As a result, eGovernment efforts were uneven, uncoordinated, often duplicative, and not always replicable across agency or government boundaries. Achieving true eGovernment requires enterprise-wide collaboration and effort. Because of the lack of dialogue among technology professionals horizontally and vertically, Virginia government entities could not always benefit from best practices and lessons learned, and enterprise-wide initiatives were not possible.

COTS provides the forum for bringing to light obstacles and opportunities, collaborating on solutions and cross-level government initiatives, and coordinating eGovernment efforts to break down the barriers among agencies and levels of government.

### **Providing Ownership and Leadership**

The strategic eGovernment initiatives that provide the infrastructure for eGovernment to succeed and flourish lacked ownership. Because seat management, digital signatures, and electronic procurement benefit and impact all Commonwealth agencies, there was no single, logical owner. COTS not only “owns” these initiatives and helps implement them—it actively promotes them across the Commonwealth.

### **Marrying Business and Technical Drivers**

Prior to COTS, eGovernment initiatives were treated as technology projects, which resulted in two problems. First, the projects were technology-driven and often failed to gain support from business decision-makers. Second, the projects did not necessarily achieve the vision or mission of the organization or of the enterprise. eGovernment initiatives are highly complex and involve rapidly changing requirements, evolving technologies, business process reengineering, and organizational change. COTS provides an enterprise context that marries the business and technical aspects of eGovernment initiatives.

## **BENEFITS**

Over the last 30 months, COTS has made significant strides in implementing eGovernment initiatives in the Commonwealth, specifically:

- A contract was awarded for eVA, Virginia’s eProcurement solution, which was launched in March 2001.
- The Digital Signatures Initiative Workgroup is finalizing an RFP to obtain digital signatures products and services, and will launch seven “Early Adopter” applications in Fall 2001.
- The nation’s first state-level seat management contract was awarded in October, and a multi-vendor total cost of ownership (TCO) study contract was awarded in December.
- The Privacy, Security, and Access Workgroup has developed and promulgated guidelines for Internet Privacy Policies and Internet Privacy Policy Statements for all government websites.

- COVANET, Virginia's telecommunications network, was put into place in June 2000, which significantly decreases the costs of telecommunications services and increases bandwidth.

State employees benefit because they have current, state-of-the-art technology and tools with which to work. State and local governments benefit from working together to leverage buying power, share best practices, and begin to erase the boundaries between state and local government. All Virginia citizens will benefit from a more streamlined government and eGovernment services that are efficient, cost-effective, tailored to their needs, and convenient.

## **RETURN ON INVESTMENT**

### **Investments**

COTS relies on participation and contributions from its stakeholder members and the vendor community. Although COTS is established in the Code of Virginia, it does not have, nor does it require, an appropriation in the state budget. Instead, the member agencies and institutions of higher education have consistently provided the volunteer staff and other support needed for COTS and its several workgroups to function effectively. We believe this sets COTS apart from its peer organizations.

COTS has achieved a number of significant accomplishments, as enumerated in responses to previous questions, that have placed Virginia on the leading edge of eGovernment implementation in the nation. We believe the success of COTS hinges on its stakeholder focus, and the willingness of its member organizations to participate and contribute to building and promoting an eGovernment infrastructure and related deliverables for the Commonwealth.

### **Relevancy to Others**

COTS is replicable in any state or nation, and is flexible in structure so that it can be adapted easily to fit within the unique contexts and environments of other large enterprises. One of the most critical success factors is the support and advocacy of high-level leadership, including the governor and chief technology officer.