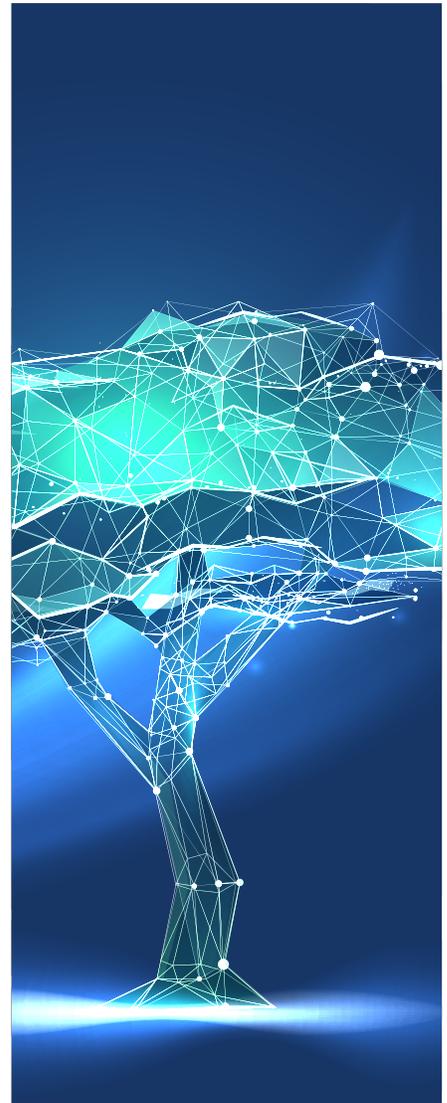


Building the Buy-In for Transformative Technology



State of Minnesota: Minnesota IT Services

Category: Cross-Boundary Collaboration and Partnerships

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Executive Summary

A major shift is underway in Minnesota's ability to meet the needs of the people we serve — largely due to a unique and broad partnership between state and local leaders, private sector technology experts, and the Minnesota Legislature. The Blue Ribbon Council of Information Technology (BRC-IT) and later the Technology Advisory Council (TAC), may have started because of technology challenges in 2019, but its work has grown to showcase the best the technology can be in state government.

Former iterations of this body have advised the State since the creation of MNIT and the initiation of the executive branch's technology consolidation in 2011. In 2019, with the issuance of [Executive Order 19-02](#), Governor Tim Walz found the key to success, expanding membership to include additional private and public sector technology experts and four legislative ex-officio members.

This Council became a meeting ground for a diverse membership to share ideas and make consensus-based decisions instead of voting. One of the important recommendations of the BRC-IT was to create the Technology Advisory Council. From 2019-2023 the BRC-IT and TAC [released recommendations](#) for improving the state of IT for Minnesotans. The

recommendations apply to all state agencies and are powered by MNIT. MNIT created the Office of Transformation Strategy and Delivery in July 2020, led by an Assistant Commissioner to implement recommendations from the BRC-IT and TAC.

The Office administered a large-scale modernization maturity assessment for all executive branch agencies and launched [Minnesota's Modernization Playbook](#) — a recommendation and a common, end-to-end outline for consistent roles, language, and activities to streamline and improve access to modern executive branch services. The assessment, administered in 2020 and 2022, has shown that BRC-IT recommendations have improved modernization across the executive branch. The success of BRC-IT enabled TAC to issue its most impactful report to-date in 2023, advancing a new, holistic way of approaching service delivery.

Why it matters: Collaboration between public sector leaders, legislators, and private sector technology experts have advanced recommendations that changed the way Minnesota owns, funds, develops, and manages technology.

Minnesota's IT Makeover: Born of a Crisis

The Minnesota Office of the Legislative Auditor [2019 report](#) on the Minnesota Licensing and Registration System (MNLARS) highlighted how policies and procedures shone a light on the need to provide strong requirement and modernize business processes. A 2019 Evaluation Report of the Office of Minnesota Information Technology Services by the Office of the Legislative Auditor also found that previous iterations of MNIT's advisory body were limited. Specifically, the report cited infrequent meetings as a reason for the limited impact. The committee met five times in 2012, and 11 times over the following six years.

The Walz administration set out to rectify the anomaly immediately. It saw an opportunity to strengthen IT infrastructure, make it an instrument of change, and enable state agencies to deliver digital

products to meet the needs of Minnesotans when they want it. The increased use of mobile devices by people, cloud computing, safe and secure data management, and new collaboration tools provided a new urgency to rethink solutions to old problems. The IT fix turned into a massive transformation to manage change, deliver services to residents and businesses, and enhance measurable customer service experience for all, including users within government agencies.

The State wanted to rethink the way Minnesotans interact with the government. This work focused not only on finding a solution to its public technology problem but also improving how IT and state agencies work together to make services easier — from annual tasks like paying your taxes or applying for a fishing license to benefits that help feed your family or find a job.

Governor Tim Walz kickstarted the transformation work with Executive Order 19-02, establishing the Blue Ribbon Council on IT (BRC-IT) as the second executive order of his administration. It states that “Minnesotans expect reliable, secure, and accurate information technology services when they interact with the state.” BRC-IT was tasked with reviewing and clarifying the role of MNIT, serving as a consultant for MNIT and state agencies, and reviewing legislation, policies, and practices related to IT.

The council included business and technology leaders from some of the nation’s leading private companies and four legislators to advise the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and State CIO on the most effective ways to provide effective, efficient, and

impactful digital services to Minnesotans. The council established subcommittees focused on cybersecurity, modernization, and data privacy to deliver on its mandate.

The appointment of Tarek Tames as Minnesota’s Chief Information Officer in 2019 complemented the deliberations at the council and resulted in the development of a new innovative model for MNIT and its agency business partners. Together, they outlined a possible roadmap for the IT systems and government programs to work together efficiently to deliver value: the Modernization Playbook. It meant drawing up a new framework to align priorities across agencies and improve end-user access, laying the foundation of true digital governance in Minnesota.

BRC-IT Recommendations

Minnesota’s BRC-IT, unique compared to advisory bodies in other states, became a strategic and a tactical partner through its direct engagement with state agencies relying on the consistent, bold, and visionary leadership from some of the most successful executives in private sector companies, as well IT legislator caucus, and dedicated state agency business leaders.

How it Developed Recommendations

Early on, **BRC-IT was established as a consensus-driven body.** No votes would be taken, and all recommendations would have to be unanimous. The BRC-IT structure and overall support allowed it to become influential and effective. Three key items contributed to this improvement:

- The inclusion of more CIOs from Minnesota’s leading companies.
- The Governor’s mandate to the new state CIO to work with and use BRC-IT to help transform IT in the State.
- The inclusion of the four legislators.

Membership in BRC-IT was key. The addition of five CIOs from Minnesota companies helped transform the body, adding new ideas and advice from the private sector. These IT leaders have undergone cybersecurity, recruiting, modernization, and privacy challenges at their own companies and brought those outlooks to BRC-IT. Although the Governor selected five, in the end, more than four times as many applied to be part of the council. They paired well with the six agency leaders and broadened the perspective of the group.

BRC-IT (2019-2021)	TAC (2021-present)
4 Legislators	4 Legislators
8 State Agency Officials	6 State Agency Officials
2 County Representatives	2 County Representatives
9 Private Sector Leaders	6 Private Sector Leaders
2 Union Representatives	1 Union Representative
25 Different Perspective	19 Different Perspectives

Finally, the appointment of four legislators, one from each chamber and each party, was a critical element. They provided sharp focus and practicality in terms of steps toward the formalization of recommendations, especially those that require statutory changes. BRC-IT was a perfect combination of state and local and private and public representatives, all with a commitment to improving the state of IT for Minnesota.

Enabling Success in State Government

One of the issues identified by BRC-IT and through a special audit of the MNLARS roll-out was the lack of consistent processes for technology projects. There are twenty-two individual agencies within Minnesota’s executive branch. Before the introduction of the Modernization Playbook, each agency managed its IT project portfolio by standards internal to that agency. IT projects were selected, planned, and executed inconsistently. This made it difficult to report on key strategic projects at an executive level or to readily monitor the risks and dependencies of inter-agency projects. The inconsistency is amplified when applied to IT modernization.

In 2020, MNIT established the Office of Transformation and Strategy Delivery to lead this work. The subsequent launch of Minnesota’s Modernization Playbook has powered the State’s ability to transform how we deliver value through Minnesota’s programs and services by consistently using stakeholder engagement, project management best practices, and IT modernization principles to ensure that Minnesota has the business processes and procedures in place to streamline access to the executive branch’s systems, services, and programs. In 2021, the Minnesota legislature appropriated an additional \$2 million per year to MNIT to fund the execution of this work.

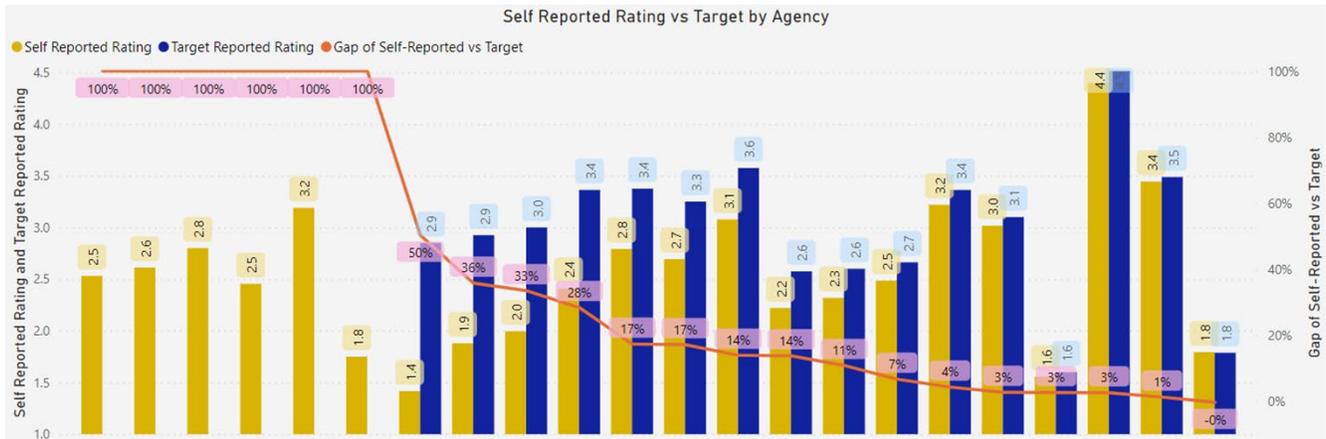
The Playbook improves business processes along the way, ensuring that state agencies align priorities across the executive branch, realize cost savings and efficiencies, and streamline access to systems, services, and programs.

The Office of Transformation and Strategy Delivery is using a change network to train all state employees who touch technology projects to use the Modernization Playbook. A team of project management professionals, including technical and non-technical staff across Minnesota’s executive branch, are helping agencies to incorporate the Playbook framework into new and existing business and project management processes. This network creates a space to manage change and report progress on adoption or barriers to progress from within agencies.



Measuring Maturity

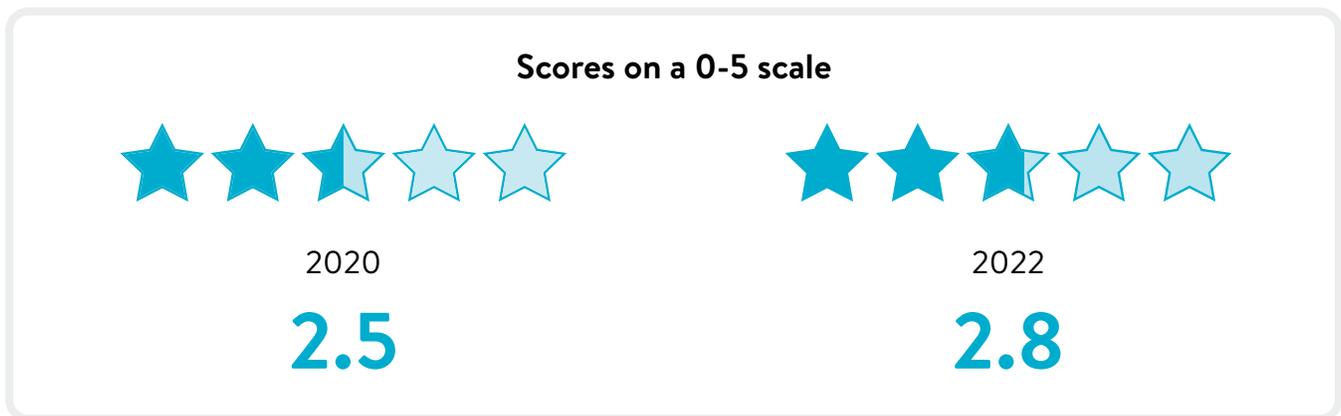
To start implementation, the Office of Transformation and Strategy Delivery created and administered a large-scale modernization maturity assessment survey to all executive branch agencies. This created a maturity baseline, measured against Minnesota’s Modernization Playbook, from which state agencies set maturity targets and annual objectives.



Baseline maturity assessment scores for each state agency (names removed for privacy). The gold bar represents the baseline score and the blue bar represents the target score for the 2022 reporting period.

With the understanding of the maturity needs of the executive branch, MNIT focused its efforts to create a collective knowledge base for the Modernization Playbook – the language, materials, and processes around each phase (Select, Plan, Run, and Close). Using survey data, MNIT identified the Select phase as the area with the most opportunity for improving the outcomes and value of IT investments. MNIT used the TPT and subject matter experts within the Office of Transformation and Strategy Delivery to develop templates, training, and resources to promote consistent implementation of the Select phase.

The survey was administered again in 2022. It showed the State continues to mature, particularly in the Select phase. In a post-assessment survey, MNIT received feedback that the survey was helpful, insightful, and one that agencies are using to continue to grow and mature.



Project Highlight: The Best of BRC-IT In Action

MNIT partnered with the Department of Human Services and Code for America to create [MNbenefits](#), launched in Nov. 2020. The benefits portal used a human-centered design and involved proper stakeholder management to improve access to human service programs for constituents while simultaneously improving the system for county administrators, all reflected in BRC-IT recommendations. MNbenefits used an agile approach to push over 30 releases before public launch. It has saved Minnesotans 16 million minutes by reducing application time from over an hour to 13 minutes.

Proving Success

MNIT leveraged BRC-IT recommendations to increase its ability to accurately assess the progress and risks of IT projects and initiatives across the executive branch. It created executive-level portfolio reporting dashboards that provide transparency. All IT projects in Minnesota are tracked in a single reporting tool, and the data from that tool has been standardized to create multiple executive reporting dashboards:

- **Technology Portfolio Health Dashboard:** total projects, portfolio health, status, go-live dates, major risks and mitigation strategies, alignment to goals and objectives.
- **Statewide Key Initiatives Dashboard:** alignment to IT drivers, Governor’s One Minnesota plan, scope, schedule, and budget, risks and mitigation strategies. The dashboard is reviewed monthly with the Governor’s Office to identify upcoming go-lives and discuss their status to allow the Governor to participate in appropriate go/no-go decisions.



The dashboard institutionalized an end-to-end lifecycle that includes an idea intake, prioritization based on alignment to agency goals and objectives, and metrics that show ROI.

IT projects with a total expected project cost in excess of \$5 million may be subject to independent audits, while all IT projects with projected costs in excess of \$10 million must receive annual independent audits. In other cases, TAC brings in external IT leaders from Minnesota’s private sector to [conduct independent reviews](#). Most recently, these reviews have focused on service delivery optimization for a leading vendor product.

Permanent Advisors

A crucial element of Minnesota’s IT transformation was BRC-IT’s call (September 2019) to amend the statute authorizing the previous Technology Advisory Committee and replace it with the current Technology Advisory Council. In June 2020, Governor Walz issued Executive Order 20-77, which extended BRC-IT for another year, and allowed for the Minnesota Legislature to create TAC as the permanent advisory body of MNIT in 2021.

Technology Advisory Council

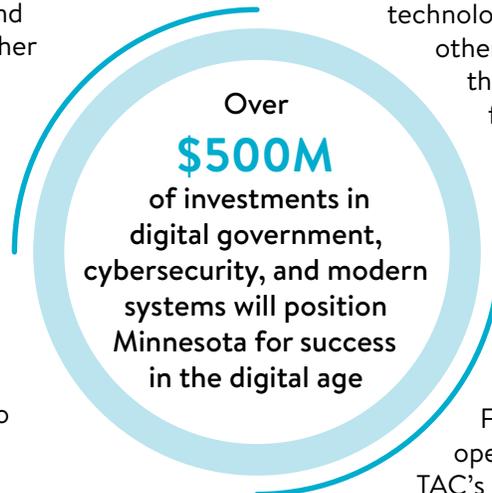
TAC was established to help agencies meet that challenge. When TAC began meeting in 2021, they heard from several government and private-sector technology and security experts and consultants. They explored how other states and organizations approach the many opportunities – and some challenges – presented by today’s fast-moving technology landscape. Based on these presentations and research, combined with the efforts of BRC-IT, the TAC report, released on January 9, 2023, will have an impact on technology and the way we deliver services for years to come.

The report advanced recommendations that focus on:

- Adopting human-centered design thinking to improve the user experience for customers served by the Minnesota government.
- Moving from a project mindset to a product model to allow more efficient, customer-focused IT development that is managed for the long term by joint business and technology teams.
- Embedding strong change leadership in a team of top agency leaders and commissioners to help drive this core shift in operations across state government.

- Moving Minnesota toward more sustainable IT funding to develop, and maintain, technology assets and digital products that live well beyond the State’s two-year budget cycle.
- Improving protection of technology assets through long-term planning that includes cybersecurity funding, and expanded partnerships to develop – and retain – a skilled, cyberaware workforce.

TAC subcommittees and the full council discussed, formulated, and refined these recommendations over 15 months. MNIT leaders and staff, including Commissioner Tarek Tomez, took part in these discussions, along with senior leaders and technology or program experts from other state agencies. Together, these recommendations provide a framework to modernize Minnesota agency operating models and place state IT on a solid funding and security foundation.



Where This Change Leads

Far more than a change to MNIT operations, the changes based on TAC’s recommendations represent a core shift in how the State of Minnesota owns, funds, develops, and manages its technology assets to deliver services to Minnesotans. The ability to collaborate across sectors, and involve legislators in the beginning, shows the transformative nature of this advisory body.

In the 2023 legislative session, this advisory body supported the largest investment in technology in state government history – \$500 million. Across the executive branch, the Minnesota Legislature funded technology proposals that enhance the services that are delivered to the people of Minnesota. Many of these proposals reflect recommendations provided by the Blue Ribbon Council of Information Technology, and its successor TAC.