



# Establishing the Agency for State Technology

State of Florida  
Agency for State Technology

Category: State CIO Office

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## **Executive Summary**

As the nation's third largest state, Florida has an annual information technology (IT) expenditure conservatively reported at \$733 million. Cost effective management of IT resources can have a tremendous positive fiscal impact, as well as contribute to, Florida's ability to meet the challenges of today's rapidly changing IT landscape.

Within its first 18 months of being created, the Agency for State Technology (AST) has successfully demonstrated value through a long list of diverse accomplishments in enterprise security, project assurance, strategic planning, data center operations, technology architecture and IT procurement. This includes:

- Recruiting and filling 25 new positions; including executive management, strategic planning, and project assurance positions
- Championing legislative budget requests (LBR) for both AST and state agencies
- Establishing rules and standards for project management and drafting rules for security and State Data Center (SDC) operations
- Completing studies and reports (SDC Operational Assessment Report, Open Data / Interoperability Feasibility Report, Cloud Readiness study, Enterprise Security Risk Assessment Report, and State IT Security Plan)
- Conducting strategic planning by initiating and facilitating cross-agency collaboration activities: establishing working relationships and meeting regularly with agency CIOs and other IT, security and business staff, completing the review and assessment of approximately 150 agency IT LBRs submitted by over 25 agencies, and completed 29 agency interviews as the foundation for the IT Standardization and Consolidation Recommendations Report
- Commencing the logical consolidation of the state's two primary data centers
- Implementing project management oversight on projects >\$10M
- Improving the IT procurement processes by collaborating with the Florida Department of Management Services

Through its many accomplishments, AST has demonstrated its value and effectiveness, established credibility, and gained support at all levels of the enterprise.

## Concept

On July 1, 2014, the Agency for State Technology (AST) was established and hit the ground running.

When Florida Governor Rick Scott signed House Bill 7073, it may have been uneventful to those outside of state IT, however, to Florida state agencies, particularly IT staff, and interested technology stakeholders, it was far from uneventful. The state had made two prior attempts at establishing a central IT organization since 2000 and both failed due to incorrect scope of authority, unmanaged expectations, insufficient resources, governance complexity, and poor organizational change management.

What would it take to make AST successful?

First, a well thought out plan was vital. After the second centralized IT organization was defunded, stakeholders collaborated on the development of an organizational structure and scope of authority that would be effective yet avoid the problems of the past. Proper scope of authority was a critical success factor given the complexities of the strong cabinet-style governance of Florida's Executive Branch. Through legislation, a State CIO and leadership positions over IT security, planning, operations, and technology were established. AST was authorized to develop IT policy for the management of the state's IT resources, including standards for technology architecture, cybersecurity and project management and oversight. AST was tasked with management and oversight of the State Data Center system, collaboration on IT procurement, and producing a biennial report to identify opportunities for standardization and consolidation of IT services that support business functions and operations. The legislation also authorized AST to perform project oversight for IT projects undertaken by Governor's agencies with a total cost over \$10 million, and projects over \$25 million for those under the purview of Florida's three other constitutional officers. However, functions closest to the agencies' specific missions, such as application development and desktop support, were left under the authority of the agencies.

Several of AST's positions are established in law, including six Strategic Planning Coordinators (SPCs), one assigned to each of the following major program areas: health and human services, education, government operations, criminal and civil justice, agriculture and natural resources, and transportation and economic development. This innovative model aligns SPCs with the business verticals as well as the policy and budget areas of the Governor's Office and the Legislature. The SPCs work directly with state agencies, collaborate extensively as a team, and participate in a wide range of activities and initiatives; both within AST and beyond. Each SPCs' mission is to learn the business of their assigned agencies, foster collaboration within and across these

verticals and identify opportunities for improved data sharing, process streamlining, and cost efficiencies.

In addition to a well thought out scope and organizational structure, proper staffing and communication between AST and agencies were critical. AST leadership has promoted its collaborative philosophy with the slogan “Adding Value Wherever We Go.” Involvement with agency CIOs and appropriate business area stakeholders has fostered agency buy-in. Through strong executive and legislative support, dedicated staff resources, and agency-centric collaborative governance, AST has all of the critical success factors to learn from the past and have eyes on the future.

Since AST was created, it has succeeded in demonstrating value through a variety of diverse accomplishments.

First and foremost, Jason Allison was appointed as Executive Director and State CIO in December of 2014. He immediately began assembling a core leadership team followed by the establishment of executive direction staff which included strategic planning and project assurance positions.

Within five months, most of the agency organizational chart was filled, and enthusiastic staff were well underway on the initiatives that they would bring to fruition by the end of the 2015 calendar year; including but not limited to:

#### Administrative:

- Established agency rules in Florida Administrative Code, with proper public notice/hearing
- Established the budget structure, budget entities, fund codes
- Transferred all assets and rules from former entities
- Set up office space and developed basic policies and procedures
- Established and filled new positions including Deputy CIO, Chief of Staff, General Counsel, Chief Operating Office, Chief Information Security Officer, Chief Technology Officer, Chief Planning Officer, Strategic Planning Coordinators, Project Assurance Team, Research and Planning Administrators, External Affairs Manager and support staff
- Established and administered mandatory employee training

#### Agency Planning, Legislation and Budget:

- Developed an agency Long Range Program Plan
- Held a strategic planning retreat and established AST’s Guiding Principle to provide SERVICE - Strategic, Enterprise-focused, Reliable, Value-added, Innovative, Collaborative, and Efficient
- Worked with agencies and Governor’s Office in the development and review of Legislative Budget Requests in Fiscal Year 2015-16

### Enterprise Technology Strategy

- Completed a study and produced the Open Data / Interoperability Feasibility Report
- Completed the Cloud Readiness study

### State Data Center (SDC):

- Started the logical consolidation of the state's two primary data centers, including approximately 200 staff and two separate service catalogs
- Established standardized costs and service portfolios across the enterprise by combining all costs and services from the previously independent data centers into a single financial and service model.
- Completed a study and produced the SDC Operational Assessment Report
- Established SDC standards, standardized processes and tools
- Completed the Consolidated Backup project, eliminating 13 disparate backup systems
- Improved IT Service Management, implementing customer portal and dashboards
- Created a disaster recovery (DR) section in AST to create and manage DR services for state agencies. This group has developed a DR solution and has been working with agencies to conduct DR exercises, and integrate this solution into agencies' individual Continuity of Operations (COOP) and DR plans
- Recommended new or revised SDC offerings and future services

### Security:

- Completed a study and produced the Enterprise Security Risk Assessment Report
- Published a Security Strategic Plan and began drafting the Security Framework
- Drafted an enterprise security rule, aligned with NIST and SANS' critical security controls
- Completed annual strategic and operational security plans
- Facilitated enterprise collaboration of agency Information Security Managers and agency Inspectors General
- Hosted and provided various security training opportunities, including partnering with agencies and the Florida National Guard for cyber exercises
- Championed an LBR for enterprise security funding, to include managed services and training

### Project Assurance:

- Developed project management and project oversight standards
- Developed project performance measurement / metrics

- Established an enterprise project management rule in the Florida Administrative Code
- Implemented project oversight for projects >\$10M
- Produced quarterly reporting including Key Performance Indicator dashboards
- Facilitated collaboration and training for agency project management staff

#### Strategic Planning Coordinators:

- Established standardized approach for agency collaboration and documentation
- Scheduled and held approximately 200 regular agency meetings with agency CIOs and other IT and business area staff
- Completed the review and assessment of approximately 150 IT LBRs submitted by over 25 agencies
- Developed a sustainable and repeatable process for the review and assessment of IT LBRs
- Developed a sustainable and repeatable process for the assessment of candidates for a biennial report of IT Standardization and Consolidation Recommendations, interviewing all 29 state agencies, analyzing data and drafting recommendations
- Initiated and facilitated cross-agency collaboration within and across business “verticals”, including workgroups and workshops for various topics including Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Office 365, and Sharepoint
- Collaborated with Florida State University for the Florida Government Technology Conference and the development and publication of “Technology Florida,” highlighting agency IT success stories

#### IT Procurement:

- Began reviewing all IT purchases >\$250,000
- Evaluated state term contracts for commodities and services
- Partnered with the Department of Management Services in the development of state term IT contracts
- Collaborated with the Domestic Security Oversight Council on the establishment of cyber criteria for grant funding.
- Began development of IT Procurement ‘best practices’

## **Significance**

Through its many accomplishments in such a short time, AST has demonstrated its value and effectiveness, established credibility as the state’s IT ‘honest broker’, and gained support at all levels of the enterprise. Only through this support will state government IT in Florida reach its potential to ensure IT resources and funding are being used effectively to solve business challenges and opportunities.

In addition to the new structure of Florida's centralized IT organization, the unique role of AST's Strategic Planning Coordinators (SPCs) is significant. Industry has long recognized the value of strategically aligning with business verticals, but this model has not generally been adopted in state government at the enterprise level. Early observations and feedback indicate that this new model is very well-received by the agencies, fostering collaboration and support for AST's initiatives. The SPCs serve as AST ambassadors to the state agencies and liaisons for all policy areas providing knowledge and understanding around the core functions and mission of customer agencies and furthering AST communication with those agencies as well as cross-agency collaboration. Additionally, with the SPCs' alignment to the policy and budget areas in the Governor's Office and the Legislature, involvement with the review of IT budget requests is an additional benefit. Through the collaborative efforts of the SPCs, AST has been able to successfully establish enterprise standards and strategies, generate business cases, and implementation plans.

## **Impact**

As the nation's third largest state, Florida has an annual IT expenditure conservatively reported at \$733 million. IT projects under AST oversight represent hundreds of millions of dollars in total project costs. Cost effective management of IT resources can have a tremendous fiscal impact, but is especially challenging due to the historically decentralized IT organization and complex cabinet-style governance structure of the Executive Branch. Additionally, the ability for large states such as Florida to meet the challenges of the rapidly changing IT landscape is dependent on AST's ability to work collaboratively and optimize resources and information across and beyond the enterprise.