



Optimizing People, Processes and Technology to Speed Up Statewide IT Procurement

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Executive Summary

The N.C. Department of Information Technology's Statewide IT Procurement Office is responsible for approving contracts for the purchase of all IT goods and services exceeding \$100,000 for North Carolina's state agencies. These contracts are valued collectively at more than \$1 billion annually. The office also manages all types of statewide IT contracts. These large, multivendor agreements are used by all state agencies and can also be used by local government entities.

Because of the vast scope of this work combined with the complex nature of IT procurements, NCDIT faced multiple operational challenges that slowed the IT procurement process and caused delays for state agencies needing to implement technologies to provide crucial services to North Carolinians.

As a result, the Statewide IT Procurement Office set out to reinvent the IT procurement process to make all aspects of it more efficient, transparent and accountable. This has resulted in major initiatives that have driven tremendous operational improvements including:

- A structured 10-step process that enforces highly defined procedures and provides tracking
- System changes to streamline policies and procedures
- Intelligent automation to remove bottlenecks
- Informative dashboards to increase transparency and keep procurements on schedule
- Agency engagement and training to maximize efficiency
- Increased support resources to help resolve procurement issues quickly

These advances have helped ensure the procurement process moves more efficiently and that all stakeholders – from the agency's business owner requesting the procurement to the agency's CIO to NCDIT leadership – can monitor progress and identify potential issues that could cause delays. The department has also worked to make sure state agencies have the staff support and training they need to effectively navigate the process and quickly move through the steps.

In August 2024, NCDIT built a procurement dashboard to provide a visual depiction of where procurements are in the process. At first, the dashboard showed that a majority of IT procurements were behind schedule for every state agency. However, thanks to the success of the initiatives NCDIT has implemented, procurements for 15 of North Carolina's 17 state agencies are 100% on time, as of May 2025.

In just under two years, the Statewide IT Procurement Office has made tremendous strides in implementing and leveraging process and system improvements that enable state agencies to deliver services to the public faster.

These transformative changes have now positioned the department to set a strategic and ambitious goal of completing all statewide IT procurements within 90 days.

Idea

IT procurements are typically more complex than other purchases because these services and solutions must undergo thorough reviews to ensure they meet specific technological, cybersecurity and privacy standards as well as comply with state laws and policies.

The unique nature of these procurements has historically caused multiple operational challenges, including interruptions and delays for state agencies to efficiently and effectively implement the tools and technologies they need to best serve the people of North Carolina.

A big pain point was the state’s eProcurement system itself. State government agencies use the tool for both IT and non-IT procurements, but the system is not designed to efficiently support the in-depth reviews, approvals, processes and procedures necessary for IT procurements to ensure the state is protected from cybersecurity and privacy risks.

Due to the system’s intricacy and incompatibility with the purchasing of IT products, most agencies struggled to effectively manage their IT procurements in the eProcurement system because, for example:

- They had limited visibility into the status of procurements.
- There were many time-consuming manual and repetitive tasks.
- Procurement project managers did not know how to mark the steps as closed in the system after they were completed, resulting in inaccurate status reporting and assumptions.
- Procurement specialists delayed filling out several complex, time-consuming forms to start the procurement process.
- Users skipped steps because the system didn’t prevent them from doing so. As a result, incomplete information delayed the procurement.

A lack of training in how to use the eProcurement system effectively, for both agencies and Statewide IT Procurement staff, also slowed the procurement process.

In addition, the understaffed Statewide IT Procurement Office could not efficiently process the growing volume of procurements. The approval process required a significant expenditure of staff resources to conduct a detailed review of vendors’ terms and conditions in responses to procurement sourcing events.

To address these challenges in the IT procurement process, the Statewide IT Procurement Office embarked on a comprehensive overhaul aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency and accountability.

Implementation

In 2023, NCDIT conducted in-depth analysis that resulted in several key findings. The eProcurement system needed to be customized to support IT procurements. Manual steps needed to be replaced with efficient automation, and additional staff were required to help train and support the success of agencies in purchasing IT goods and services.

Re-Engineering the Process

In early 2024, with the help of Accenture, NCDIT re-engineered the IT procurement process into a repeatable workflow to ensure consistency in how procurements are reviewed.



The State IT Procurement Process consists of 10 steps to manage all required information, reviews and due dates.

The new 10-step process enforces highly defined procedures and provides tracking that starts with identifying and validating the business need, includes all reviews, approvals and vendor negotiations, and ends with executing the contract.

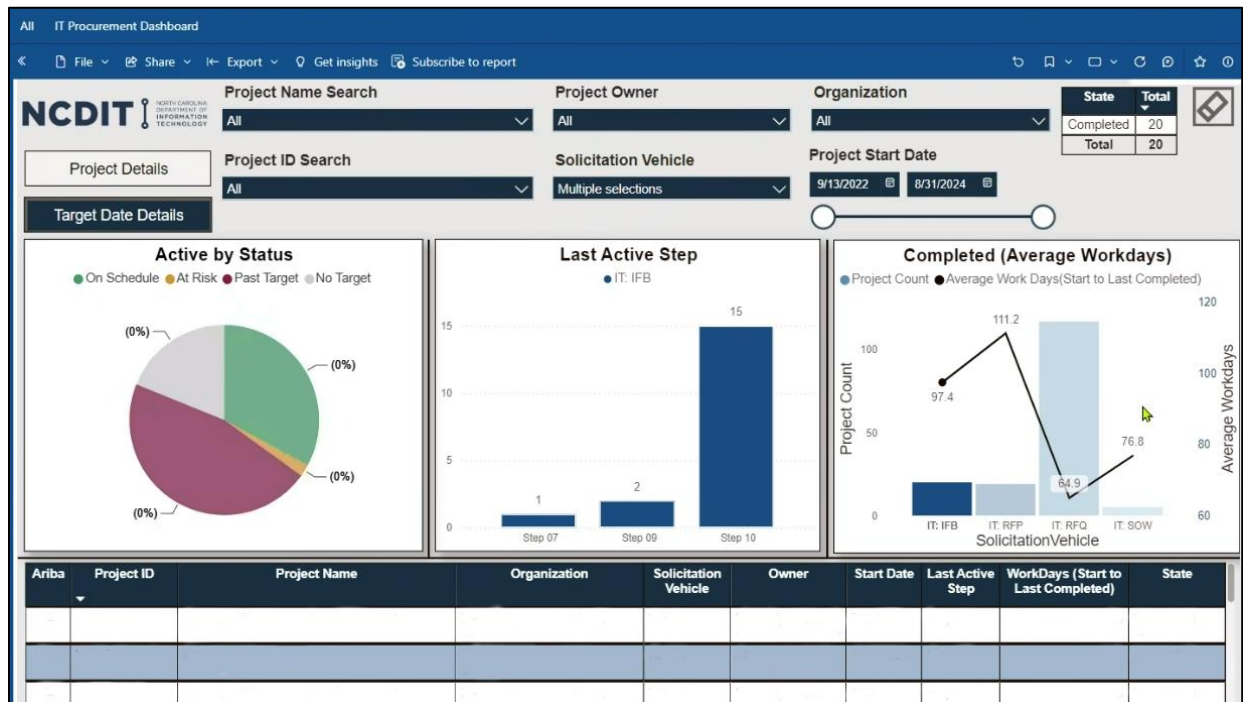
Introducing Automation

To further streamline the procurement process, NCDIT partnered with EY (Ernst & Young) to implement intelligent automation throughout the eProcurement system. Automation decreases processing time while increasing transaction volume and procurement status visibility. Examples of these automations include:

- Generating dates for each phase of the IT procurement process based on historic averages
- Sending emails to stakeholders advising them of deadlines and actions to take
- Sending alerts to project managers and CIOs when their procurement misses a target date
- Marking steps as “complete” and starting new steps in the eProcurement system
- Sending solicitations to the state’s electronic portal where vendors can view and bid on them

Improving Visibility

To remedy eProcurement’s limited reporting capability, NCDIT also developed a highly informative dashboard reporting that tightly integrates with the system for visibility and transparency throughout the entire 10-step procurement process.



Sample report from the IT procurement dashboard that shows the versatility to display information based on selected criteria.

The dashboard gives IT procurement specialists and managers from state agencies and Statewide IT Procurement valuable insight into all steps in their IT procurement process, allowing them to identify potential slowdowns and take immediate corrective action. The lack of such visibility had restricted proactive action.

Each Thursday, automation built into the eProcurement system checks the dashboard for action items past their target date and sends messages to stakeholders for immediate attention.

Fast-Tracking Procurements

NCDIT also partnered with EY to develop a significant innovation, called OneForm, that consolidates four required forms at different steps of the process into a single form at the beginning of the procurement process. Deployed in April 2025, OneForm eliminates redundancy, reduces the time and effort required to gather and input information, and allows for better visibility and transparency via integration with the eProcurement system.

This solution automatically starts all purchasing process functions, including project management, security, privacy and architecture, at the beginning of the process. Users can complete tasks concurrently, minimizing process time and improving efficiency.

OneForm also uses artificial intelligence to generate market research to help stakeholders develop a well-informed and effective procurement strategy without having to conduct extensive research themselves.

Expanding the IT Procurement Team

Along with system and reporting improvements, Statewide IT Procurement hired more staff to handle the volume of IT procurements and provide the necessary support to state agencies.

The office also established the Procurement Guidance Team – a group of procurement specialists who help navigate agencies through the IT procurement process. The team proactively contacts agencies at risk of falling behind schedule when they have not completed required action items. Automation sends alerts to the team to follow up with agency contacts should a delay occur.

Improving Collaboration & Training

NCDIT has also worked to foster a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration by providing ongoing education and emphasizing the essential role state agencies play in the procurement process.

The Statewide IT Procurement Office ensures state agencies' IT procurement specialists are well equipped to successfully navigate the latest procurement processes and improvements through a quarterly newsletter, ongoing website updates, monthly webinars, and frequent in-person and online training sessions.

Impact

On-Time IT Sourcing Projects

As of May 27, 2025, IT procurements for 15 of the 17 state agencies are 100% on time. The remaining two agencies' sourcing projects are above 80%.

Agency	On Schedule	Past Target	% On Time
N.C. Department of Agriculture	2	0	100.00%
N.C. Community College System Office	17	0	100.00%
Central Regional Hospital	1	0	100.00%
N.C. Department of Environmental Quality	3	0	100.00%
N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission	1	0	100.00%
N.C. Division of Child and Family Well-Being	1	0	100.00%
N.C. Department of Health and Human Services	10	0	100.00%
NCDIT Purchasing	9	0	100.00%
N.C. Division of Central Administration	2	0	100.00%
N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources	3	0	100.00%

Agency	On Schedule	Past Target	% On Time
N.C. Department of Administration	1	0	100.00%
N.C. Department of Revenue	1	0	100.00%
N.C. Department of Public Safety	2	0	100.00%
N.C. Division of Workforce Solutions	1	0	100.00%
N.C. Department of State Treasurer	3	0	100.00%
N.C. Department of Public Instruction	5	1	83.33%
N.C. Department of Adult Correction	4	1	80.00%
Total	67	2	97.10%

The new dashboard reporting has resulted in a significantly improved, customer-friendly, transparent and timely process that allows procurements to progress more smoothly while receiving all the required reviews.

IT procurement staff, CIOs and leadership at state agencies can see where their requests are within the IT procurement process. NCDIT staff can view the number of active, completed and canceled IT procurements; more granular information, such as the steps needing approval; and the target and actual dates for completing each step. With this insight, users can proactively identify potential issues and get procurements behind schedule back on track.

As a result, customer and employee experience has improved significantly, and the number of days required to progress through the steps in the process has been reduced by 48%.

Days in Each Step to Perform the Task

Steps	2023	2025	% Change
1 & 2	7	8	+14%
3	3	2	-33%
4	37	21	-43%
5	N/A	N/A	-
6	22	11	-50%
7	20	17	-15%
8	16	5	-69%
9	12	5	-58%
10	N/A	N/A	-

Note: A decrease in days indicates improved efficiency.

Automations to the eProcurement system enhance accuracy and visibility and reduce errors and risk. Efficiency has increased, and processing time has been reduced:

- Overall completion time has decreased by about 15%, which allows for faster delivery of IT services.
- An estimated 415 hours have been saved per year due to the Procurement Guidance Team eliminating daily follow-ups, research on procurement status or identifying delays in hand-offs.

These automations, along with the other improvements, help remove human error, improve data accuracy, save time for all users and allow the procurement team to focus on addressing any bottlenecks.

Days to Complete Each Type of Solicitation

Solicitation Type	2023	2025	% Change
Invitation for Bid	124	62	-50%
Request for Proposal	126	66	-48%
Request for Quote	75	66	-12%
Statement of Work	77	61	-21%

Note: A decrease in the number of days to complete a solicitation indicates improved efficiency.

Next Steps

Building on the success of the implemented initiatives, NCDIT is currently pursuing several other improvements that will further streamline the IT procurement process and help achieve the goal of completing procurements within 90 days.

A new solution powered by generative AI, available in June 2025, will facilitate the succinct analysis of vendor agreements and provide a summary of terms and conditions. The solution will:

- Reduce overall time by an additional 5-10% to complete IT contracts more quickly and deliver solutions to the people of North Carolina sooner
- Save the public and state money by reducing potential breaches and legal risks in IT contracts
- Improve employee satisfaction by up to 10-20% by addressing the lengthy vendor agreement review process

In addition, NCDIT partnered with students at N.C. State University to develop a proof-of-concept for an IT procurement tracker. Different than the in-depth procurement dashboard, the tracker provides a quick and simple visual that agency IT procurement specialists, business managers and CIOs can use to see where a procurement is in the 10-step process, if there are delays and how much time remains before completion.

The department is now evaluating the feasibility of turning it into an app that will provide agencies with simplified visibility into the status of their IT procurements.

As these initiatives progress and North Carolina's IT landscape and needs further evolve, NCDIT is continually looking for more ways to enhance the IT procurement process so that agencies can implement the tools and technologies to best serve the state's people, businesses and communities.