

INFORMATION

TECHNOLOGY

Program Summary-- 2009

INFORMATION SYSTEMS UNIT PROGRAM SUMMARY

The Information Systems Unit consists of 14 staff members. The Unit exists to provide user-friendly, reliable office automation, legal research and information management so that the department can represent the client agencies and the State of Colorado in legal matters as competently and economically as possible. The Unit provides system design, programming, implementation, training and technical assistance in all phases of the automated systems operated by the Department. There are three workgroups in the Information Systems Unit.

E-Law Support:

This workgroup provides support to the Department of Law staff that uses multimedia and database applications in the fulfillment of their job tasks, particularly in the areas of litigation and education. As Colorado Courts continue to expand the use of technology in discovery and courtroom presentations, legal technology training and support for legal staff is a necessity that is often mandated. ISU staff members typically support the litigation teams, but Departmental presentations, training sessions and other presentations made either within the Department or to courts or other groups and organizations outside the Department are also supported. In addition, this workgroup exists to investigate the technological needs for legal staff within the Department, serve as liaison between professional and technical staff, analyze the depth to which technical assistance can be obtained within the Department and at which point they must be outsourced, maintain project control to meet deadlines/goals of the project, and educate professional staff on technologies and support services available.

User Support Services:

This workgroup provides operational and technical support to the Department's personal computer and local area network users by responding to user problems, and then through interviewing, investigating, diagnosing, and troubleshooting, take the appropriate action to resolve the situation. It includes Help Desk Support as well as computer training for all Department of Law staff. This group also designs and implements new hardware and software systems, makes decisions affecting how new and existing network hardware systems, computers printers and software must be configured to operate properly with these changing system requirements, determines resolution to problems involving the Department's Local Area Network servers, routers, gateways, controllers and hubs when any system component fails as well as monitoring and upkeep of the Department's on-line computer research systems.

Technical Support Group:

This workgroup consists of Senior Technical Staff and provides a broad base of technical support to other ISU staff which, in turn, affects every staff member in the Department. Services provided by this group include mainframe and PC programming;

database design, implementation and maintenance; software customization; and network security and administration. This group is responsible for generating technology standards, managing information security activities, web master activities, programming services, network administration and systems integration activities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Policy

The Department of Law relies on information technology to provide effective legal services at a rate that is considerably below the private sector rate. The primary areas of emphasis for the employment of information technology are Local Area Network applications to provide quality legal services. Nearly eighty-five percent (85%) of the information technology staff time is utilized in direct support of tasks that conform to the Departmental strategic plan. (See attached.) The Department has attributed some of the success in settling and/or winning cases to the technology and skills of the IT staff. By involving IT staff in early litigation planning, strategies can be mapped out which incorporate tools to be used in both preparation and presentation of the cases.

The Department is focused on browser-based technology within the Department as well as in its interactions with client agencies and citizens. This has been demonstrated in a number of instances: browser-based technology for the attorney time keeping application; the No-Call enforcement action; and other browser-based technology applications within the Department. The IT unit supports the development of standards by OIT through committee participation, and contributes to Departmental strategic planning.

The Department is among the largest law firms in the state. Privacy and security are required services. The Department requires annual review of privacy and security policies with each employee of the Department. Building security and Departmental security plans and procedures have been reviewed and modified as appropriate. The Department will ensure that the security plans and procedures are in compliance with the rules, policies and standards set forth by the State's Information Security Officer.

Possibly the most important trends in technology from the Department's point of view have been the availability of hardware at substantially lower prices and the availability of OTS software for the legal profession. These trends have made it possible for the Department to provide substantial gains in the delivery of technology that expands services or improves quality of service. The result is increased productivity within the Department which results in more effective representation for the client and the citizen.

Enterprise Architecture

All IT purchases and systems from cables to software to servers to litigation databases to web services and security are directed through the IT unit. This ensures uniformity and compatibility of products and systems throughout the Department.

We are very interested in the use of the Statewide Internet Portal particularly as it relates to the Department providing services to consumers. Two areas we anticipate utilizing first are the processing of payments for licenses and on-line form completion and submission for our Consumer Protection Section.

Portfolio Management

The Department's systems vary from near 'state-of-the-art' to those rapidly aging. Emphasis has been placed on acquisition of technology that will provide the most 'bang for the buck'. In other words, improve systems for the largest number of staff with technologies that have a long, useful life.

The Department works with OIT, the National Association of Attorneys General (NAAG) and with current publications and committees to be aware of technological advances. The Department is able to interact with other state agencies. The Department has a web presence that is regularly maintained and is in ADA compliance. Asset management and replacement remain vital to the continued success of the legal staff. Security stability of the Departmental network and data stored on that network has always been a priority for IT staff. We are participating in the security initiatives and the continuance of government within the state.

Electronic filing of state district court materials is now available and is required in most jurisdictions. Electronic filing in the federal district court is available and required in civil cases. The Department is proceeding cautiously with electronic filing while developing the necessary office policies and determining the budgetary impact. The implementation of electronic filing will be more effective due to the increased availability of technical staff to train and support the electronic filers.

E-Law technologies focus on courtroom technologies, electronic discovery, improvements in preparations for presentations, image storage and retrieval, electronic filing and other facets of E-Law. The issues involve substantial initial and recurring training, technical support for E-Law, and new software to aid in organizing and developing electronic evidence for presentation. The Department has obtained 'off the shelf' software that assists in case organization and exhibit preparation. This software will be maintained and additional licenses purchased as need and growth necessitate.

IT Staffing Strategy

In general, the staffing effort is directed at customer support. The Department's Information Technology Unit focuses the work effort on web interfaces, office productivity suite, and office-wide legal technologies to aid in staff productivity. The Department's IT staff is grouped into two teams by function. Each team is led by a supervisor. In addition there is a third group of "technical consultants" who work across all the teams on database issues, programming, security, etc. The supervisors and "consultants," report directly to the CIO. The remaining seven staff-members report to the CIO through their supervisors.

The Department currently works to provide cross-training for tasks that are of an urgent and recurring nature. In many situations the Department arranges for consultants (outsources) when the skill is not available in the technical staff or in situations when the time demand does not allow for a technical staff member to provide the skill. Because of the small staff size, the Department relies heavily on communication among technical staff, regular communication with the legal staff, and teamwork to provide the equivalent of "competency centers".

The training effort is primarily a function of the project work that is in progress. Fortunately, the Department has had projects that involved current technologies and resulted in an opportunity for most of the staff to upgrade their technical skills. The rate of accommodation of new technologies in the legal profession has been effective in giving direction to training for the technical staff members.

Information Technology Goals

- Goal 1: Provide high quality, timely, effective legal services at reasonable costs to Colorado State Departments and Agencies.
- Goal 2 Improve the Department's abilities to collaborate with other Colorado state agencies, Colorado prosecutors, Attorneys General from other states, court systems and internally as that collaboration relates to the technology used.
- Goal 3 Provide adequate and ongoing training to lawyers on brief-writing, oral advocacy, and substantive and procedural matters
- Goal 4 Improve case management and docketing; improve the client billing system.
- Goal 5 Develop a litigation information management system that contains case summaries, due dates, and other key information necessary to manage cases; develop a centralized brief bank
- Goal 6 Assist in developing office information and database capabilities that can be used by legal assistants and attorneys to support litigation
- Goal 7 Maintain and upgrade Department information technology resources to increase productivity, especially with on-line research tools, litigation support software, and a document management system.

Objectives

The following objectives will be used to meet the goals:

- Objective 1: Provide support and standard software for preparation of written information, presentation materials, case information and Internet publications.

- Objective 2: Provide a network environment to allow electronic communication with all executive branch agencies of Colorado State Government, municipal attorneys, county attorneys, State court system, Federal court system, other AG offices across the nation, among Department of Law employees, educational institutions, State bar association, Local bar associations, other professional organizations, Federal Department of Justice, other Federal agencies, state legislature, the State's Congressional Delegation and public/private sector partners.
- Objective 3: Provide law office information for quality control of legal matters including bill review, appellate case oversight, status reports, and management reports.
- Objective 4: Provide a set of Information Technology tools and the staff training required to use said tools to enhance the ability of the legal staff to effectively represent their client base and to compete effectively with private sector legal services.
- Objective 5: Provide desktop legal research capabilities to enhance the quality of legal services while minimizing the hourly time required for research.
- Objective 6: Identify and support the unique needs of the different unit practice groups within the Department.
- Objective 7: Identify and support specialized applications for individual units within the Department.
- Objective 8: Provide a work environment and support for law clerks and interns in unit practice groups within the Department.
- Objective 9: Provide a work environment within the Information Systems Unit to allow for the retention of ISU employees by providing on-going training, a flexible work schedule, and an environment that facilitates teamwork and recognition.