
Issue Brief – Information Technology Projects

NUMBER CFAS-05-18

SUMMARY

Each year the Capital Facilities and Administrative Services Subcommittee reviews information technology capital budget requests. The subcommittee performs such a cross-cutting review to coordinate information technology acquisition across agencies and appropriations subcommittees. Following its review, the Capital Facilities subcommittee communicates in writing to other appropriations subcommittees whether or not it recommends a given IT project. A list of requested projects, as well as an indication of whether a project is recommended by the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst, is included below.

Electronic Resource and Eligibility Product (eREP) – Status Update

The Electronic Resource and Eligibility Product (eREP) project automates eligibility activities for Departments of Workforce Services, Health, and Human Services programs. It is subdivided into three different projects: 1.) Core Eligibility Functions that include the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF – FEP) and Child Care programs; 2.) Food Stamps and General Assistance programs; and 3.) Medical Services and SCHIP programs. During the 2004 Legislative Session, the Department of Workforce Services was appropriated one-time funding from the State General Fund in the amount of \$3,644,900, with intent language that would allow the Department to utilize an additional \$3,000,000 from its Special Administration Fund. It is anticipated that no additional funding will be needed from the Legislature this year, but there may be a small request to finish the project in the 2006 Legislative Session. When fully developed, the eREP solution will replace the PACMIS system and provide a comprehensive solution in the delivery of eligibility related services. The system should be implemented in late 2006.

Department of Health Medicaid Management Information System

The Department of Health's Division of Health Care Financing has requested funding from the General Fund to replace its antiquated Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS). The Department will use the \$4 million to draw-down an additional \$36 million in Federal Funds. It will implement MMIS over two years. It intends that MMIS will streamline eligibility, tracking, and reimbursement of clients and providers.

The Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst recommends \$4 million for MMIS. The Analyst further recommends that the Departments of Health and Workforce Services further investigate potential synergies between MMIS and the eRep system.

FINET Upgrade – Status Update

During the 2004 General Session, the Legislature allocated \$3 million to replace the state's financial system. The current system, FINET, will no longer be supported by its developer. The FINET upgrade continues on schedule. A scoping process is currently underway and intended to finish on January 28, 2005. Strategies for upgrading the FINET interface, converting data, training users, and testing will follow. The upgraded system will be in place July 1, 2006.

Statewide Budget Development and Implementation System

The Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (GOPB) requests \$1.4 million to purchase a new budget development and implementation system. The state's current system, Budget Prep, was developed in-house and uses an obsolete programming language and data base. GOPB plans to use the FINET upgrade as a spring-board for replacing its budget system. The new budget system would be integrated with an upgraded FINET, bringing all agencies onto a common platform and allowing the state to budget – from formulation to implementation – on a single platform.

The Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst recommends that GOPB use its nonlapsing balances to acquire its new budget system.

Utah College of Applied Technology Student Information System

The Utah College of Applied Technology (UCAT) has requested funds to acquire a centralized student information system. As each of the formerly separate Applied Technology Centers evolved into what is now UCAT, each center developed its own means of managing finances, personnel, purchases, and students. UCAT's Davis campus developed the Galaxy system in an effort to accommodate competency-based, open entry/open exit enrollments. In 2004, Galaxy was also installed at the Salt Lake-Tooele and Dixie UCAT campuses.

The Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst recommends a one-time appropriation of \$482,500 from the School Funds to implement Galaxy at all of UCAT's campuses.

Utah Education Network Capacity and Reliability

The Utah Education Network (UEN) has requested \$5,800,000 to bolster its statewide data network. UEN is currently increasing network bandwidth along the Wasatch Front and to other densely populated areas of the state. UEN hopes to expand this effort to reach schools serving less populous, rural areas. To do so, it must motivate telecommunications providers in rural Utah to build broadband infrastructure more rapidly.

The Analyst recommends \$2,500,000 in one-time General Fund appropriations for this project in FY 2006.

Higher Education Learning Management System

The Utah System of Higher Education and Utah Education Network jointly have requested appropriations for a Learning Management System. Learning Management Systems are Internet applications that allow students and faculty to complete most course tasks online, from any location, and at any time. Such systems are intended to aid professors and students in a transition to courses that leverage technology to reduce future investment in classroom space.

The Analyst recommends a \$500,000 ongoing appropriation and a \$1,830,000 one-time appropriation from the General Fund to the Utah Education Network, and a one-time \$1,000,000 appropriation to the Utah System of Higher Education, for this system.

Insurance Department Regulatory Database

The Insurance Department has requested ongoing funds to continue its support contract for the SIRCON-gov (formerly COSMOS) management information system. Insurance uses the Oracle database and associated management application to regulate insurance companies, agents, and agencies and to protect the public against illegal activities. The contract would provide database and application hosting, troubleshooting, and maintenance. Insurance does not currently have a database administrator on staff.

The Analyst recommends a \$57,500 ongoing appropriation for SIRCON-gov hosting. However, the Analyst is concerned that Insurance has not chosen to use the state's central information technology provider, ITS, as its host.

Utah Wireless Interagency Network

The Department of Administrative Services has requested \$755,000 to operate and maintain the Utah Wireless Interagency Network (UWIN). UWIN expands upon the concept of the Utah Communications Agency Network (UCAN), providing integrated public safety radio coverage not only along the Wasatch Front, but throughout Utah. UWIN uses bridging technology called OmniLink to connect the state's existing 150 and 450 MHz radio repeater system with UCAN's 800 MHz trunk, and with any of a number of communications networks, including cellular and terrestrial telephones. Former Governor Walker implemented UWIN, including the initial acquisition of capital, using federal grants.

While we agree with the concept and the architecture behind UWIN, the Office of the Legislative Fiscal Analyst recommends the Department of Administrative Services develop a cost recovery methodology under which users pay for the operation and maintenance of UWIN.