

# **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

## **GJ04-026**

### **Reason for the Report**

The Grand Jury chose to do a general investigation of the use of information technology in the county.

### **Scope of Investigation**

#### **People Interviewed**

- Director of Information Technologies (IT) Department
- Various Department Directors and their information technology (IT) staff
- County Chief Administrative Officer

#### **Documents Reviewed**

- El Dorado County Information Technologies Strategic Plan, updated July 2004
- El Dorado County Information Technologies Tactical Plans, updated October 2004
- El Dorado County computer and Network Resource Usage Policies and Standards Guide, revised June 2004
- County of El Dorado Board of Supervisors Policy A-10 Information Technology Steering Committee and Information Technology Acquisition Procedures, revised November 1999
- IT Department draft revision of County of El Dorado Board of Supervisors Policy A-10
- Draft report “The Future of El Dorado County Information Technologies and the Information Technologies Department” prepared by the Information Technologies Department dated November 1, 2003.

### **Background**

The Grand Jury was interested in the progress the County was making in incorporating the use of information technology and the use of computers in their business plan.

### **Facts**

1. Twenty-one of the 32 county departments depend on the IT Department for desktop and departmental application support. The IT Department has twenty-seven (27) staff supporting those departments.
2. The IT Department additionally supports all large enterprise applications, such as, payroll, property, FAMIS, BPrep, etc. and county-wide computer systems including the mainframe and network.
3. The IT Department staff occasionally supports the other eleven departments or develops multi-departmental “enterprise” applications.

4. The eleven departments not supported by IT have 31 employees dedicated to IT functions.
5. The industry standard for personal computer tech support is approximately 75 personal computers (PCs) per tech support employee.
6. IT Department PC tech support is at the 150-200 PCs per tech support employee. The average for the eleven departments with their own PC tech support staff is approximately 30 PCs per tech support employee.
7. Not all IT staff in the eleven departments with their own IT section is supervised by an information technologist or someone with specialized training in the IT field. IT requires a specialized knowledge base and an on-going need to acquire information about emerging technologies.
8. The County has adopted a county-wide IT Strategic Plan.
9. The county has adopted IT standards.
10. The county has implemented centralized purchasing of some hardware through the IT Department.
11. The county has an Information Technology Steering Committee to advise the IT Department, Board of Supervisors and the County Administration Officer.

### **Findings/Recommendations**

**1a. Finding:** IT staff county-wide is not being used as effectively or as efficiently as they could be. Some departments like the Assessor and District Attorney Offices have excellent IT staff and appear to be far ahead in their use and integration of computers in their daily routines. Other departments are lagging. The IT draft document “The Future of El Dorado County Information Technologies and the Information Technologies Department” states that the county could **save \$650,000 per year** if the IT functions were more centralized with the IT Department in a “federated” or multi-tiered IT personnel configuration model. **The Grand Jury believes the savings could be well over \$1,000,000 per year.**

**Response to Finding 1a.: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.** Since the document referenced in the finding as “The Future of El Dorado County Information Technologies and the Information Technologies Department, Draft” was written, IT has reduced its workforce by a net of 17 positions. This has resulted in a net county cost reduction of \$1.2 million in salary saving per year (FY05/06 dollars). While these reductions were forced by budget constraints they have resulted in greater efficiencies as departments and central IS have had to work more collaboratively to insure vital services continued. Any additional resource reductions (saving) would result in reduced service levels. Additional efficiencies leading to increased service levels continue to be a central priority for IT.

**1b. Recommendation:** Conduct a review of the delivery of IT services in the county with an eye towards reduction in the cost and an increase in efficiency and upgrading of services. Alternatives should include 1) outsourcing all or some IT services, 2) centralizing IT services within the IT Department and 3) implementing a federated or multi-tiered model as proposed in the IT Department’s November 1, 2003 draft report. The county should seriously think about a review by an outside agency.

***Response to Recommendation 1b.: The recommendation has been implemented.*** The Interim IT Director, appointed February 2005 conducted a review of the delivery of IT services in the county. All three alternatives listed in the recommendation were considered. Outsourcing remains a valuable tool for IT. IT will continue to seek and implement outsourcing contracts for various types of service. Equipment maintenance is an example of one outsource contract currently in place. Discussions with outsourcing vendors indicated a direction of gradual “service by service” outsourcing as a more cost effective strategy rather than a “wholesale” outsourcing of county existing IT services. Certain segments of the IT operation are not cost effective to outsource according to the vendors due to their custom and complex nature (most of the mainframe environment). Undoubtedly the new IT Director will continue to review outsourcing as a possible strategy to improve service and leverage limited resources.

A recently adopted collaborative structure within IT that embraces and partners with distributed IT resources has begun to yield efficiencies without eliminating individual department control of IT support. While this “federated” model is not formally supported on an organization chart with dotted or solid lines, it does attempt to address the efficiency issues relating to a distributed IT support staff.

**2a. Finding:** IT staff recommendations per County Policy A-10 on the purchase of either software or hardware are routinely ignored. The policy A-10 as written states that all purchase requests dealing with information processing shall be reviewed by Information Services for analysis and recommendation prior to purchase. It does not require their approval before software or hardware is purchased.

***Response to Finding 2a.: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.*** It is agreed that the policy does not currently “require” IT approval prior to a department purchase of particular software or hardware. It is not accurate to characterize IT’s review and recommendation relating to all IT purchases as “routinely ignored”. The vast majority of all IT purchases (98%+) are reviewed by IT. When IT has raised an objection to a purchase nearly every case (an exception can not be recalled) was resolved by mutual agreement between IT and the department. This has been true for at least the past 2 years.

**2b. Recommendation:** Revise Policy A-10 to require that all software and hardware purchases be approved by the IT Department. Exceptions from established county IT standards would have to be approved by the IT Steering Committee.

***Response to Recommendation 2b.: The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be in the future.*** Within 3months IT will seek Board approval to revise Policy A-10 to require IT approval of all software and hardware purchases. Exceptions will have to be approved by the IT Steering Committee.

**3a. Finding:** Departments acquiring or producing information or data that could be used by other county departments are sometimes reluctant to freely share that information or data. The public is not served well by these reluctant departments. As an example, the Building Department could better coordinate with the Assessor’s Office when blueprint information is scanned and made available so that the Assessor’s staff can complete their work in a timely manner.

***Response to Finding 3a.: The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.*** The respondent cannot comment on the generality that “departments are sometimes reluctant to freely share that information”. However, with regard to the example of the Building Department (now a part of the Development Services Department), the respondent disagrees that past lack of information sharing was due to reluctance on the part of the Development Services Department. The department’s digital images have been available for several years on a networked server for viewing by any county agency with the OTG software used to index these images and required for accessing the records. The Assessor’s office has chosen not to invest in the software, thereby limiting that office’s ability to access these records. The Development Services Department has been actively participating in efforts by the Information Technologies Department to unify the agencies currently utilizing the OTG software in their scanning processes with the goal of pooling licenses to make participation by other agencies more economical.

**3b. Recommendation:** The Board of Supervisors, elected officials and the CAO shall empower an individual (IT Director?) to assure that all departments are sharing data and information between departments. This will help foster inter-departmental communication and help eliminate any duplication of data collection.

***Response to Recommendation 3b.: The recommendation requires further analysis.*** The Information Technologies Director will assist the CAO in identifying additional areas where a cost effective method of information sharing between departments will help foster inter-departmental communication and help eliminate any duplication of data collection. This analysis will require approximately six months.