

\$170 million in failed IT projects – Seeking efficiency and accountability

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Wisconsin Assembly Speaker, Mike Huebsh (R) created the Speaker's Task Force on State Information Technology Failures, charged with investigating more than \$170 million in recent failed/troubled state IT projects. However, the Task Force's **final recommendations** have gained mixed reviews regarding what should be the leading factor of a reform plan for the state.

Despite conflicting arguments, the recommendations echo positive attempts to effectively and efficiently improve all steps involved in a state IT project lifecycle. Nearly all Task Force members support long-term improvements in project development, procurement and oversight. Acclaimed suggestions include a statewide implementation of uniform IT procedures for projects over \$1 million; clear-cut project requirements; smaller project sizes to best manage scope and identify problems earlier; use of off-the-shelf systems when possible; project completion in time and within budget; revision of the procurement process to ensure successful project delivery; and partnership with other states to share information and techniques on IT projects.

With \$170 million in failed IT projects, the Task Force recommends the creation of an Executive CIO having oversight, accountability and enforcement powers. Enforcement is a daunting task for all states but, as seen in the case of **Arkansas**, it does not appear to be effective if solely rested under the power of a CIO. If we think of CIO's sitting in a three-legged enterprise IT stool, where enforcement often has the shortest leg, Arkansas CIO sat on a "wobbly stool" until it consolidated and centralized its IT enterprise by eliminating its Executive CIO. Wisconsin could sit on a balanced stool if instead of creating an Executive CIO it only directs oversight and enforcement of IT standards to its Department of Administration and develops long-term improvements in project development, management and oversight.

GovWin's Take

- Over the next couple of weeks, the Wisconsin Legislative Council will develop a report largely reflecting the Task Force recommendations. The report will serve to draft future legislation.
- Vendors should watch closely developments in both reform plans implemented by Arkansas and Wisconsin, which at this point, appear to be taking different approaches to effectively use tax-payer's money.