
# 2024-25 GRAND JURY REPORT
# EL DORADO COUNTY
# MARCH 25, 2025 - CASE #25-05

# TIME TO REBOOT COUNTY TECHNOLOGY LEADERSHIP WITH A CHIEF INFO OFFICER

*The County is suffering from a long history of failed IT leadership and IT projects. Fearing more of the same, we recommend a CIO leader like a majority of counties.*

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*Cover Caption: "Old Ways Die Hard." AI-generated photo of a gold miner in a modern cloud data center, looking confused. The County can't continue to do things the way it always has. Generated 3/3/25 by Grok AI.*

# Summary

*"We are stuck with technology when what we really want is just stuff that works."*

- Douglas Adams, author, "The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy"

## HIGHLIGHTS

El Dorado County (EDC or County) faces significant challenges in managing Information Technology (IT) and overall County operations. In the absence of strategic vision, industry best practices, project management, and performance monitoring across the County, the role of a more visionary IT leader is needed. While the investigation primarily focused on IT procedures, the findings reveal systemic problems that extend to broader aspects of County operations enabled by technology.

We concluded that County leaders:

- Must leverage modern technology to handle the complexity and scale of EDCs operations
- Should improve project management procedures to avoid cost overruns and project delays
- Need to embrace training and cultural changes needed for successful implementations
- Should introduce Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure and create accountability for performance, leading to fiscal responsibility and improved efficiencies
- Should limit redundant efforts in IT across the County, reducing costs for taxpayers
- Should provide better fiscal oversight, including more frequent budget reviews and project tracking.

## RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

With the departure of another IT Director, there is an opportunity to improve the County approach to a more strategic IT leader. It is long overdue for a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead the organization and enable effective strategic planning and engagement with all stakeholders. Additionally, the Director of IT, Assistant Director of IT, and Chief Information Security Officer roles should be reimagined as part of this transformation. The current IT

# SUMMARY

Steering Committee should be reconfigured to drive engagement and IT strategic vision across all departments.

Separate sub-committees should be established to review data center strategies to leverage and consolidate key commodity infrastructure and services like desktop support. Finally, there should be metrics developed for the effectiveness of IT services and deployments across departments that are reviewed regularly by the Board of Supervisors (BOS).

# Background

The Grand Jury reviewed a prior year's investigation regarding the delays and increasing costs of the TRAKiT system and expanded the investigation into a broader view of IT and project management across the County. Several examples were raised that showed systemic problems affecting technological innovation and adoption. Grand Jury reports from the previous three years revealed a pattern of technology-related programs experiencing significant deployment issues, budgetary overages, and failures to deliver the anticipated services and savings. The Grand Jury identified at least three distinct Information Technology (IT) departments within the County. Leveraging over 200 years of combined IT leadership experience on the 2024/2025 Grand Jury, we undertook an in-depth investigation into the organizational, technical, management, and financial aspects of these distinct IT departments.

Most County services require some form of technology, making a reliable IT service partner essential for all County departments. There are substantial inefficiencies in the operation and deployment of technology across the County, characterized by insufficient communication and collaboration between IT departments and department leaders, inadequate training, and inability to impose cultural shifts required for success. The question is why.

Key concerns the Grand Jury investigated:

- The high turnover rate in County IT leadership.
- A history of deploying technology without thoroughly considering the transformation of departmental processes/culture.
- The lack of strategic vision or long-term planning across County departments.
- Low overall development and effectiveness (IT Maturity level) and alignment to business needs.
- The cost of IT across the County.
- The inability to meet key departmental business requirements, resulting in:
    - Separate IT departments with overlapping functions, not leveraging common purchasing contracts.

- Three distinct data centers.
- Isolation of systems and information, complicating interdepartmental information sharing.

From: https://www.govciooutlook.com/news/transforming-local-government-through-emerging-technologies--nid-2323.html

> *Emerging technologies are changing how local governments operate, offering new opportunities to enhance public services, improve efficiency, and foster greater community engagement. Local governments are increasingly adopting innovative solutions to streamline operations, improve transparency, and respond more effectively to their communities' needs. This shift towards technology-driven governance promises a future where local governments are more agile, data-driven, and responsive to the challenges of a rapidly changing world…*

At a time when County revenue appears to be declining and budgets are being scrutinized, it is imperative that the inefficiency in IT and technology adoption across the County be addressed immediately.

# Methodology

## INTERVIEWS

- Department Heads and Staff
- Board of Supervisors
- Tour of three data centers

## DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Budgets
- Project Documents
- Job Descriptions
- IT Documentation
- Previous Grand Jury Reports
- Organization charts
- Customer interviews
- Poll of other California counties
- Washoe County CIO Job Description

## SELECTED CIO ARTICLES FROM OTHER CITIES AND COUNTIES

- "Time to Redefine Local Government Technology Leadership," Gov CIO Outlook, Jack Belcher, Chief Innovation Technology Officer, Arlington County https://smart-city.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/time-to-redefine-local-government-technology-leadership-nid-1861.html (See Appendix)
- "Technology is All About Driving Value and End-User Experience," Gov CIO Outlook, Lynn Fyhrlund, CIO, Milwaukee County https://startups.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/technology-is-all-about-driving-value-and-enduser-experience--nid-1720.html (See Appendix)

# METHODOLOGY

- "Executing Seamless Transformation Strategies to Drive Value," Gov CIO Outlook, Rebecca Hascall, Chief Innovation and Information Officer, Jefferson County, CO https://startups.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/executing-seamless-transformation-strategies-to-drive-value-nid-1719.html
- "Transforming Local Government Through Technology", Gov CIO Outlook, 4/4/24 https://www.govciooutlook.com/news/transforming-local-government-through-emerging-technologies--nid-2323.html

# Discussion

## THE HISTORY OF IT LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE COUNTY

Since 2010, El Dorado County has had six IT Directors. The most recent one served five years, the longest to date. Most lacked the time or authority to develop a strategic plan, instead focusing on tactical issues and support requests. The IT Director job description places no emphasis on strategy – meaning they are expected to react to immediate needs rather than proactively shape long-term goals, drive innovation, or align initiatives with broader organizational objectives.

In contrast, the District Attorney's (DA) office has been driving technology strategy for years as one of the first DA offices in the state to go paperless in 2008/09. They are a small department but have had only one IT leader since 2007 and have demonstrated a tremendous focus on improving departmental efficiencies through technology.

The El Dorado Sheriff's Office (EDSO) also has limited IT leadership staff and minimal turnover. They have a large workforce that fully leverages technology with an impressive lab and data center operation. While IT staff turnover is lower with the DA and EDSO, they do have challenges. These are much smaller IT departments with their leadership wearing multiple hats, some of which are not IT related. They are stretched thin, have very limited strategic focus, and in some cases are not even involved in the IT decision making process. There has been limited collaboration with County IT in recent years.

For a short time, up until 2019, the DAs office led County IT. A decision was made to change the organizational structure and drive an improved culture with a County IT department, with the DA and EDSO retaining limited IT staff, their own data centers, and control of their applications. At least that was the goal. Today we have operational siloes with less collaboration and reduced efficiency.

# DISCUSSION

## DEPARTMENTAL ISOLATION AND DUPLICATE SPENDING

The DA and EDSO, like many departments, have some very specific IT requirements that warrant some dedicated and specialized IT services. Unfortunately, the opportunity to create a more collaborative and strategic IT organization was lost.

For example, the DA staff frequently works within the Superior Court system relying heavily on their laptops in a near paperless environment. A laptop failure during court proceedings is something that requires immediate resolution that County IT was unable or unwilling to deliver.

Another County department requires a dedicated software platform to support business in their office space, outside of a data center environment. The software is no longer supported and has the potential for security issues. County IT demanded the department's application move off the system. This authoritarian approach led to conflict with the department's leadership, resulting in no change and an ongoing security risk. The department chose to rely on its own IT staff, which it is now seeking to grow.

Although each department may use governmental pricing contracts, there is no unified strategy for managing procurement or taking advantage of larger economies of scale. Each department manages their own IT projects and submits their spending to the BOS independently. Most of these expense requests will appear as consent items on the BOS agenda and lack any discussion of opportunities to leverage existing infrastructure or contracts.

These three IT departments operate their own data centers with limited coordination or shared resources, and at different levels of maturity. In some cases, efforts are being made to further isolate systems, which increases the lack of synergy. For example, EDSO will be installing their own dedicated internet service provider into their data center to separate from the existing County internet connection. The need for both political and operational control has driven this decision, as opposed to a technical strategy that could provide benefits to all departments as opposed to just one.

**Finding 1 – Lack of Expertise in Technology Application:** The County currently lacks expertise in leveraging technology to optimize processes, reduce costs, and deliver services more efficiently.

# DISCUSSION

County budget documents outline spending across the various IT departments. The table below summarizes previous years' actual spending and the 2024-25 adopted budget. The adopted budgets are all significantly higher than previous years' actuals. All three departments submit significant budgets then underspend and underdeliver, further highlighting poor execution to plans.

| | FY 2020-21 Actuals | FY 2021-22 Actuals | FY 2022-23 Actuals | FY 2023-24 Actuals | FY 2024-25 Adopted Budget |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| County IT | $ 2,545,326 | $ 3,609,311 | $ 2,999,078 | $ 3,650,864 | $ 4,865,590 |
| District Attorney IT | $ 142,407 | $ 160,771 | $ 332,113 | $ 272,555 | $ 443,656 |
| Sheriff IT | $ 1,414,307 | $ 2,237,021 | $ 1,972,283 | $ 1,818,251 | $ 3,017,500 |
| Grand Total | $ 4,102,040 | $ 6,007,103 | $ 5,303,474 | $ 5,741,671 | $ 8,326,746 |

*Figure - Data from County 5-year historical IT budget file*
https://www.eldoradocounty.ca.gov/files/assets/county/v/1/documents/government/cao/2024-2025-budget/fy-2024-25-budget-5-year-historical-budget-actuals.xlsx

## OPPORTUNITY FOR STORAGE OPTIMIZATION

The County requires a large amount of storage to retain files, videos, emails, etc. Storage is spread across County data centers and in the public cloud (at internet service providers). In many mature IT organizations, storage solutions have become commodity services that can be shared by multiple departments while providing strong security, keeping departmental data private. This is an area of IT business that can deliver substantial cost savings to a county if looked at strategically.

**Finding 2 – Wasteful IT Spending Across Departments:** The County fails to optimize IT resources, such as data storage, or leverage shared contracts for volume purchasing, leading to increased costs.

Currently, each of the IT departments use their own mix of on-premises hardware and cloud services, complicating data management and increasing costs. A unified County-wide storage

platform could simplify operations, cut expenses, and enhance data availability, disaster recovery, and scalability. During our investigation we learned that EDSO was approved to spend over $800k through the consent calendar to purchase additional storage for their projects. There was no discussion with either of the other IT departments to see if they could add on to an existing storage platform or help to build out a more robust storage platform for all IT departments.

## STRATEGIC PROGRAMS AND DELAYED RETURNS

The County has a track record of poorly implemented strategic programs, resulting in cost overruns, schedule delays, and poor/negative return on investment. Examples reviewed by the Grand Jury include FENIX, an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) financial solutions software, and the more recent TRAKiT project in the Planning and Building Department. TRAKiT is a permit application and process tracking software. It is used by internal County staff, coordinating agencies (e.g., Fire Districts), as well as residential homeowners and contractors.

The FENIX implementation began in 2013 with a budget of $2.6 million for the software and $3 million for the staff and implementation. They overran the 2-year schedule by approximately 4 years. The vendor overran its budget by 35%, while the County overran its deployment costs by approximately 100%. The 2015-2016 Grand Jury report on this topic noted the County demonstrated poor project planning, and poor fiscal tracking, resulting in a grave concern regarding the County's ongoing failures to manage budgets by expense category and in real time.

TRAKiT demonstrates the County's failure to learn from their mistakes. TRAKiT's initial 18-month implementation schedule was approximately 6 years late and the project budget was overrun, by one estimate, as much as 650%. We were unable to get precise numbers regarding the cost of implementation because the County does not do a good job of tracking projects or managing costs. We have seen a lot of finger-pointing across teams and organizations regarding TRAKiT. That lack of accountability and an overarching project management for a program as large as TRAKiT, something that a CIO-level leader would provide, may have been the root cause of the project mishaps. For example:

# DISCUSSION

- The County failed to utilize industry proven processes and techniques to successfully manage complex systems implementation
- The County failed to appoint/hire a single, knowledgeable, accountable project leader with broad authority to lead cross-department efforts
- Implementation schedules were poorly communicated, not enforced, and not regularly updated
- Cost and schedule variances were not tracked or reported to the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) or the BOS
- No identifiable, effective, corrective actions were determined or taken until much later
- No sustainable cultural change was required, including encouraging new procedures by staff and adoption by technology-adverse users
- BOS canceled some much needed training
- No apparent consequence or accountability for failures

TRAKiT is a very visible example of a technology solution that did not map to the business needs and processes of the Planning and Building Department. A CIO's primary role is to bridge that gap from technology to efficiency and ensure successful outcomes. That leader was missing from this project. IT deployed the software as designed but could not ensure process improvements. The vendor was not in a position to modify the software to match what Permitting staff were actually doing in the field. Planning and Building staff were not consulted as to their needs, nor saw the improvements with TRAKiT for their day-to-day tasks. Requirements were not adequately gathered up-front. Everyone may have done their job as expected, but the County lacked the discipline and end-to-end perspective to ensure project success.

Similarly, management issues and lack of strategic vision and leadership led to the prolonged migration from Google Suite to Microsoft 365 which highlights the County's siloed IT approach and cost inefficiency. The licensing agreement enabling the migration to Microsoft 365 was approved by the BOS in September 2018. It wasn't until February 2021 that the Director of IT presented a migration strategy to the BOS, which was approved.

# DISCUSSION

The DAs Office had pressing needs for Microsoft 365 in their business environment that County IT was unable to meet with their delayed and slow deployment. This resulted in the DA establishing and deploying their own separate Microsoft 365 environment well before County IT.

The BOS has yet to receive a formal presentation on the outcomes of this prolonged and poorly administered transition. In contrast, the DAs office achieved efficiencies with a smaller, more mature Microsoft 365 deployment. An additional $250,000 was spent by the County on Google renewals in the FY2022–2023 budget, delaying any savings from Microsoft 365 deployment.

**Finding 3 – Delayed Rollout of Strategic Initiatives:** Strategic IT programs, including migration from Google Suite to Microsoft 365, FENIX, and TRAKiT, have experienced prolonged implementation delays and cost overruns. This has resulted in continued use of legacy systems, delayed returns on investment, and significantly increased County costs.

## ATTEMPTS AT COHESION ACROSS IT DEPARTMENTS

An IT Steering Committee is typically a forum for collaboration across departments on strategic and operational topics. The County's IT Steering Committee, historically led by the IT Director, was primarily focused on pushing policies from County IT to the other departments, rather than listening to their unique requirements. The Steering Committee didn't foster collaboration which diminished value and participation.

The Steering Committee can be repositioned for meaningful cooperation by involving the right stakeholders and focusing on collective decision making and strategic planning. This could eliminate departmental silos and optimize opportunities for savings, efficiency, and improved County services. The IT steering committee should be rechartered by the BOS and provide a monthly report of activity against the plans and KPIs.

## HIGH-LEVEL PERCEIVED MATURITY OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

County citizens deserve to have County-wide services that are easy to use and efficient. The current focus seems to be keeping old systems maintained with little strategic execution which highlights a lack of IT maturity. Most other counties are looking to leverage modern technologies

to increase access, efficiency, and reduce overhead costs. The intention to automate the permit tracking process is a perfect example that was not rolled out effectively and overran projected costs. The inability to map technology deployments to user needs and business requirements is a sign of low IT maturity.

IT maturity refers to the level of development and effectiveness of an organization's information technology processes, capabilities, and infrastructure. It measures how well an IT department can support and drive business objectives using technology. Figure 1 illustrates a sample model of IT maturity stages.

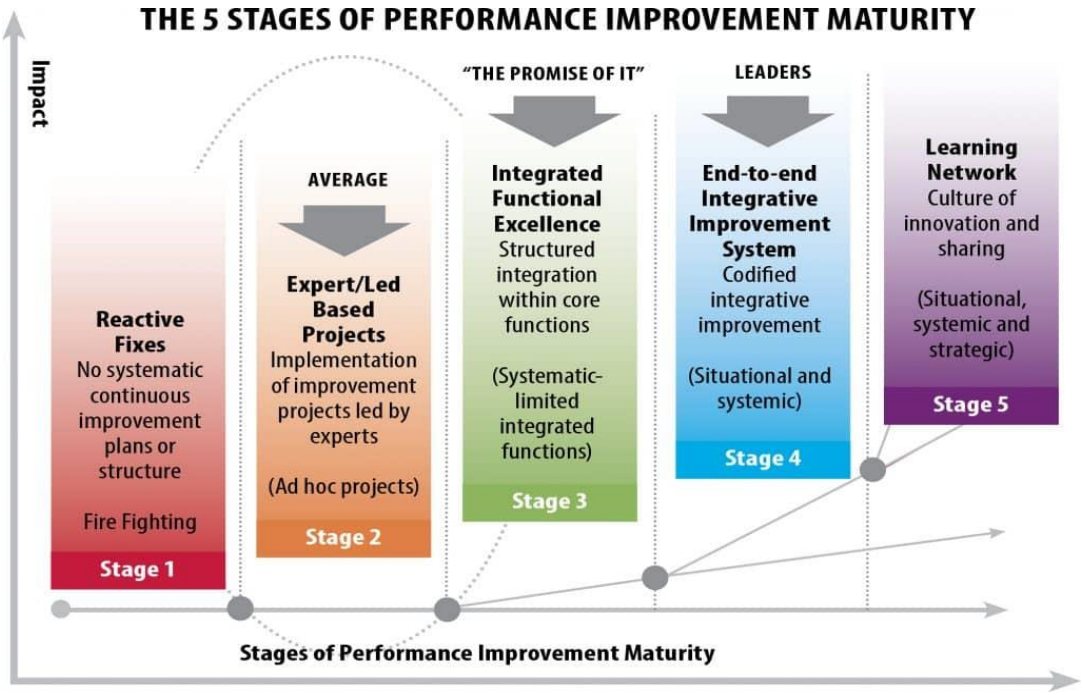


*Figure – The different stages of an IT Maturity Model*

Based on the extensive information and technology experience of the current Grand Jury, we conclude that none of the technology departments we met exhibit the characteristics of an efficient, mature, value-adding organization.

The contributing factors include:

- A history of sub-optimal project delivery.

- Duplication of effort across departments.
- Duplication of human resources.
- Duplication of purchase contracts.
- Duplication of Data Centers and hardware.
- Higher costs.

Signs of insufficient IT maturity at EDC include a lack of strategic focus, resistance to change, and inefficient work practices, stemming from a lack of strategic IT leadership. The current IT job description (for an IT Director, as of March 2025) is inadequate to attract the required level of leadership. Notably, "establishing a strategy," a cornerstone for effective use of technology, is not mentioned in the job description.

**Finding 4 – IT Maturity in El Dorado County:** The IT maturity level in El Dorado County is subpar due to the absence of appropriate IT leadership. The County remains one of only about a dozen in the state without a defined CIO-level role to drive technology strategy and align with varying department needs.

## A MODERN APPROACH TO IT USED BY A MAJORITY OF OTHER COUNTIES

Due to its lack of IT maturity, the County has not adopted new technologies or planned for future needs. The table below shows government ITs responsibilities under an old, outdated IT support model and what's required today in a modern IT-led organization. The following table was created by another county's CIO describing the evolution of their role and responsibilities to their county. (*Source: https://smart-city.govciooutlook.com/cioviewpoint/time-to-redefine-local-government-technology-leadership-nid-1861.html - See Appendix*)

| Area Of Responsibility | Yesterday | Today |
|---|---|---|
| **Community Engagement** | Anonymous, not visible or known to the community | Customer/Citizen focus |
| **Application Development** | Centralized, IT drives development | Collaborative |
| **Hosting and Server Management** | Own and manage all that is hosted | Partner / Outsource |

# DISCUSSION

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Network Management** | Own and manage everything within the firewalls. All secure access takes place within the 'walled garden' of the local network | Realization that remote access is here to stay, Secure anywhere, anytime access outside the perimeter |
| **Jurisdiction Specific Services** | Entrepreneurial and competitive | Collaborative shared services |
| **Procurement Practices** | Emphasis on safe unchallengeable purchases | Recognition that new ideas can come from unlikely sources |
| **Talent Recruitment** | Continue current HR classifications with traditional refreshment | Rationalize all new hires in terms of tomorrows needs |
| **Embracing New Disruptive Technology** | Too advanced for local government | Innovate for tomorrow with new technologies that offer better service for the County. |
| **IT Leadership** | Continuing traditional IT Recruitment | IT leadership that is focused on the future to improve customer/citizen services. |

*Table – The evolution of the IT Leader function in one county.*

**Finding 5 – Frequent Turnover in the IT Director Role:** Frequent changes in the IT Director position have hindered the establishment of a consistent long-term strategic vision, contributing to subpar IT maturity. Several IT directors did not have sufficient tenure or experience to develop or implement a cohesive strategy.

## DIRECTOR OF IT VERSUS A CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Prior to 10-15 years ago, IT departments functioned primarily as service organizations, offering technology support and services to broader business units. Business functions would request IT to install and manage applications (such as server farms and data centers) and support end-user systems like laptops. IT policies were typically limited to global security policies or centralized technology purchasing roles.

As technology advanced, the focus of applications and networking shifted toward process automation and delivering value to businesses through optimizing complex tasks, enabling more efficient information, and service delivery to users. This transition paralleled the increase in high-speed internet access and the proliferation of mobile devices as platforms for legitimate

business applications. Technology became integral to business, as process efficiency became a competitive advantage.

Consequently, technology leaders could no longer be excluded from strategic conversations fundamental to the business. Technology leadership now requires a sophisticated understanding of business needs, competitive differentiation, and process improvements. Technology has transformed into a strategic asset for every organization. The role of tech leadership evolved from an IT Director to a Chief Information Officer (CIO). The CIO role involves driving the strategic vision for technology several years ahead, aiming to enhance the competitiveness, efficiency, and improvement of all business functions. The CIO has become a strategic business leader, influencer, and visionary, comparable to the CEO, CFO, or Chief Technologists/Product Officers. The CIO is often more of a project manager than an IT engineer and may be less technical than their immediate staff.

The benefit of this evolution is that complex technology deployments have a much higher success rate. Off-the-shelf technology products can be customized to meet the specific needs of business users, providing the right services to users. The CIO ensures broad organizational buy-in for technology shifts and is accountable for successful deployments and associated process improvements, extending beyond traditional IT job descriptions. The CIO serves as a valued partner to County departments, ensuring success rather than obstructing progress with security requirements and delays, which was a common issue with traditional IT Directors.

Although more seasoned and experienced than an IT Director, the CIO generates significant savings through efficient and timely technological deployments that drive business value and efficiency with a forward-looking perspective, at reduced costs. With current advancements in cloud computing, quantum computing, and AI, having a technology strategist who understands how to apply rapidly emerging technologies to enhance business and process efficiency and

**Finding 6 – Potential Cost Savings:** The County could save a significant amount of money with a more strategic view of IT under the leadership of the CIO. Implementation of the recommendations of this report could be expected to result in an estimated annual savings of between $1,000,000 and $3,000,000 annually for the County.

ultimately deliver better services and products for end users is indispensable. The County cannot afford to delay funding this crucial role going forward.

## THE GRAND JURY TRIES TO INTERVENE

The Grand Jury met with several stakeholders prior to the release of the report to discuss changes in the IT Director hiring process and budget allocations. We felt this unprecedented intervention was necessary due to the timing of the IT Director departure and the importance of change needed in this area.


The Grand Jury began with a meeting with County staff involved in the hiring process. Findings were presented, and the need for a CIO to provide a more efficient and cost-effective IT department for the County was discussed. The County staff left the meeting to consider their options. A few days later, they informed the Grand Jury that they would continue with hiring an IT Director but appreciated the input. The Grand Jury provided the County interview questions with expected responses a qualified CIO would give.

The Grand Jury also met with two Board of Supervisors members to discuss the findings of our investigation. It was noted that most counties (42 out of 58) in California have a CIO as the top-level technology leader. Concerns from the Supervisors included cooperation among some departments, the independence of elected officials to set their own priorities, and the additional costs associated with hiring a CIO.

# DISCUSSION

The Grand Jury suggested the option to continue with the hiring of an IT Director but also hire a CIO contractor who could serve for roughly 12–18 months. During their tenure, the CIO would be responsible for the strategy of IT services across County departments and provide training to the IT Director to assume the role in the future. There is some risk that the new IT Director will not have sufficient skills to ever become a CIO which would require another hire in the future.

The Grand Jury also held a brief meeting with EDSO and provided the same materials shared with the County Supervisors. Preliminary support for a CIO was given by the Sheriff's Office, who believed a CIO could enhance the County's current IT, overcome prior communication challenges, and help reduce overall costs.

Similarly, the DAs Office, with their own IT staff, responded favorably to the idea of a County-wide CIO role. They appreciate the economies of scale that can be leveraged, a reduction in the duplication of efforts and costs, and the ability to collaborate on common objectives like security policies and the adoption of new technology. It was important to note that a CIO is a service role to elected leaders' offices like the DA and EDSO, rather than imposing requirements on them and hampering their needs to leverage technology, as was exhibited in the past from County IT. The Grand Jury felt that once the BOS members understood this key point, the idea was much more palatable.

**Finding 7 – Inability to Take a More Strategic View of IT Today:** Despite recurring failures in IT leadership, the County proceeded to replace the most recent IT Director with a person of similar job description and skill set, making it unlikely to attract candidates with sufficient skills to succeed in the role.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Appendix of this report includes a sample of recent articles from CIOs in other counties and how they view technology adoption to benefit their constituents. One article talks about the imperative to change the role of County technology leadership as we have described herein. The Grand Jury was greatly encouraged that leaders across the County appreciate this, and that the County can't continue business as usual.

# DISCUSSION

We have provided enough examples of the high costs of project failures and costly delays in the absence of a more mature technology model and leadership. Counties across the country are evolving, and so must we. We can't afford to be ineffective or inefficient any longer. Continuing to do the same thing expecting different results is the definition of insanity.

It won't be an overnight adjustment, and there will need to be a recognized transition period and perhaps missteps along the way. But the conviction to improve, with a collective eye on a more strategic IT vision, is the right place to start.

# Findings

**F1 – Lack of Expertise in Technology Application:** The County currently lacks expertise in leveraging technology to optimize processes, reduce costs, and deliver services more efficiently.

**F2 – Wasteful IT Spending Across Departments:** The County fails to optimize IT resources, such as data storage, or leverage shared contracts for volume purchasing, leading to increased costs.

**F3 – Delayed Rollout of Strategic Initiatives:** Strategic IT programs, including migration from Google Suite to Microsoft 365, FENIX, and TRAKiT, have experienced prolonged implementation delays and cost overruns. This has resulted in continued use of legacy systems, delayed returns on investment, and significantly increased County costs.

**F4 – IT Maturity in El Dorado County:** The IT maturity level in El Dorado County is subpar due to the absence of appropriate IT leadership. The County remains one of only about a dozen in the state without a defined CIO-level role to drive technology strategy and align with varying department needs.

**F5 – Frequent Turnover in the IT Director Role:** Frequent changes in the IT Director position have hindered the establishment of a consistent long-term strategic vision, contributing to subpar IT maturity. Several IT directors did not have sufficient tenure or experience to develop or implement a cohesive strategy.

**F6 – Potential Cost Savings:** The County could save a significant amount of money with a more strategic view of IT under the leadership of the CIO. Implementation of the recommendations of this report could be expected to result in an estimated annual savings of between $1,000,000 and $3,000,000 annually for the County.

**F7 – Inability to Take a More Strategic View of IT Today:** Despite recurring failures in IT leadership, the County proceeded to replace the most recent IT Director with a person of similar job description and skill set, making it unlikely to attract candidates with sufficient skills to succeed in the role.

# Recommendations

The El Dorado County Grand Jury recommends that the Board of Supervisors:

**R1 –** Instruct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to deliver a Chief Information Officer (CIO) job description by September 1, 2025, ensure the job description includes measurable strategic responsibilities and specific authority for county-wide technology alignment. (Sample Job Description provided in appendix.)

**R2 –** Direct the CAO to hire a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead Information Technology (IT) by January 1, 2026.

**R3 –** Direct the future CIO to develop and present comprehensive storage and data center consolidation strategies by May 1, 2026.

**R4 –** Instruct the future CIO and CAO to reconfigure the IT Steering Committee into a collaborative body to evaluate projects, consolidate infrastructure needs, coordinate County-wide IT purchases and report results regularly by May 1, 2026.

**R5 –** Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure IT effectiveness and efficiency across county departments by July 1, 2026, and provide quarterly reports to the BOS.

# Request for Responses

A Civil Grand Jury report details a single investigation. Each report lists FINDINGS and RECOMMENDATIONS. The responsible organization is notified and is required to respond to the report.

The California Penal Code § 933(c) specifies response times.

- PUBLIC AGENCIES. The governing body of any public agency (also referring to a department) must respond within 90-days from the release of the report to the public.
- ELECTED OFFICERS OR AGENCY HEADS. All elected officers or heads of agencies/departments are required to respond within 60-days of the release of the report to the public.
- FAILURE TO RESPOND. Failure to respond to a Grand Jury report violates California Penal Code Section 933.05 and is subject to further action that may include additional investigation on the subject matter of the report by the Jury.

The following responses are required pursuant to Penal Code § 933 and § 933.05:

From the following governing board:

- El Dorado County Board of Supervisors
  - All Findings and Recommendations

The following responses are invited from the following elected officials and their staff:

- El Dorado County Sheriff's Office
  - Recommendations 1-4
- El Dorado County District Attorney's Office
  - Recommendations 1-4

For more information refer to *How to Respond to an El Dorado County Grand Jury Report* available on the El Dorado County Grand Jury webpage.

# Appendix

## SELECTED ARTICLES FROM OTHER COUNTY CIOS

### Time to Redefine Local Government Technology Leadership

Jack Belcher, FMR Chief Innovation Technology Officer, Arlington County Government



**Jack Belcher, FMR Chief Innovation Technology Officer, Arlington County Government**

Problem Statement

Today, we are at an inflection point for local government technology leadership. Ancritical moment, if not addressed, that will have a dramatic impact on us allwho depend on safety, maintenance, emergency support, health care, and housing from the local jurisdictions where we reside.

The era of government as usual, where we can accommodate new digital advances is over. it does not work for we who entrust our well-being to local public servants.

For a long as we can remember technology organizations in local government are for the most part back office, unassuming, and anonymous. That has worked, but it will shortly be realized that that is not sufficient to meet community needs.

The problem begins with the chief administrative officers of every jurisdiction. Their persona can be generalized as competent administrators who quietly believe that they are capable of handling any problem they meet, especially technology. But in truth they are to be surprised

**"I propose the solution is to create the position of an Chief Enablement Officer who is charged with setting the vision for the future. This position is a major upgrade of the current definitions of current technology leadership."**

They seek out IT Directors and Managers who can run the technology shop, make sure constituents receive the necessary technical support to pay their taxes, request service from the government, and engage, but not influence policy. In truth, they have done little more than to check the box to assure constituents and residents that these technologists have their ear and are at the table when important policy decisions affecting the jurisdiction are being considered.

Rarely is the technology leadership of the jurisdiction at the table when important decisions are being made. Why? Because, by definition, they are a distraction. In truth the technology leadership frequently does not have a sense of the pulse of the community and its recommendations commonly equate to cost and time to implement. The Administrative Officers simply do not have the time to deal with this unnecessary discussion.

How to Begin?

It begins with an awareness of what the roots of the problem are.

There is a 'ground shift' in how we approach technology enablement and resiliency. In the table below, I have laid out some of the significant changes that have taken place that require a reassessment of where local government is.

# APPENDIX

| Area of Responsibility | Yesterday | Today |
|---|---|---|
| Community Engagement | **Back office,** anonymous, not visible or known to the community | **Front Office** |
| Application Development | **Centralized**, IT drives development | Democratized |
| Hosting and Server Management | **Own and manage** all that is hosted | **Partner / Outsource** |
| Network Management | **Own and manage everything within the firewalls** All secure access takes place within the 'walled garden' of the local network | **Realization that Remote Access is here to stay, Secure Anywhere, Anytime Access** outside the perimeter. |
| Jurisdiction Specific Services | **Entrepreneurial and Competitive** | **Collaborative Shared Services** |
| Procurement Practices | **Emphasis on safe unchallengeable purchases** | **Recognition that new ideas can come from unlikely sources.** |
| Talent Recruitment | **Continue current HR Classifications** with traditional refreshment | **Rationalize All New Hires in terms of Tomorrow's Needs** |
| Embracing New Disruptive Technologies | **Too advanced for local government** | **Understand and accommodate** |
| IT Leadership | **Continue Traditional IT Leadership Recruitment.** | **Redefine the position that recognizes to drive organizational transformation.** |

What this table defines is that like it or not there has to be a 'rethinking by local government IT leadership as to their goals and priorities. That 'rethinking' needs to begin today.

Leadership Conundrum

The most important assessment has to do with Leadership.

Today and tomorrow's local leadership must begin with a reassessment and restatement of the IT Leader. The pace of technology introduction has grown at an exponential rate. Estimates are that what had taken a decade to realize will be compressed into the next 18 to 24 months. This begins with defining a new persona for the IT Leader. Yes, the persona.

First and foremost, the new technology leader must understand and know the community they serve. To do so, these following criteria must be sought after.

- The role is no longer back office, but the front office.
- Involvement in all community engagement activities to continue to gain that necessary understanding of the community
- Access to the Chief Executive Officer of the Jurisdiction
- Ability to envision what might be.
- Emotional IQ to complement their Digital IQ
- They must be willing to 'get dirty', simply dive into the most detail and seemingly inconsequential details of any event affecting the community, from insufficient restrooms at a new community park, underserved k through 12 remote educational support, unprecedented storm water overflow, unexpected power outages, resident complaints as to residential parking preferences, to inefficient technology support for public safety response.

• On duty and ready to respond to any and all events where technology plays a role. Since Covid, I call these IT leaders our Digital First Responders.

**Where do you find such Digital First Responders?**

It be a significant challenge. The traditional sources of such talent from the federal, business or higher education disciplines are not appropriate. There needs to be a reformation of will who should assume this role. How to find the right fit and define the position appropriately. That will be the challenge.

I propose the solution is to create the position of an Chief Enablement Officer who is charged with setting the vision for the future. This position is a major upgrade of the current definitions of current technology leadership

It starts with senior leadership who must understand that there isa senseof urgency, the position is meaningless and left to the various department leads to consider and prioritize the importance.

In the absence of strong leadership by the County or City Executive it is difficult if not impossible for the Enablement Officer to succeed.

We have to recognize that Organizational Transformation will be driven by Technology, but to lead with this is fruitless. Organizational Transformation comes from a sense of urgency that what we are doing today may not work tomorrow.

The Enablement Officer must have a foundational knowledge of technology, its capabilities, and its potential, but they must also possess a sense of the needs of their community with untethered, unrestricted access to those bureaucratic administrators who manage the local government.

What will create that awareness in those jurisdictions where complaceny predominates, which I fear is the majority of local jurisdictions today.

• It will happen

• as the result of the exponential growth of disruptive technologies that will affect each and every one of us. Local Government leadership must be prepared to respond

• When your privacy is compromised without your knowledge.

• When policy decisions are made without necessary data to validate the policy recommendations

• When you are subject to unexpected natural environmental events that could have been avoided with predictive analysis

• When the community you are living in, is not where you prefer to live, work, learn, and play in a safe, secure environment.

That is why this discussion matters. Now let's go forward and recognize the urgent need to recruit and empower the Enablement Officer classification category in local government!

GOVERNMENT TECHNOLOGY

## Technology is all About Driving Value and End-user Experience

Lynn Fyhrlund, CIO, Milwaukee County



**Lynn Fyhrlund, CIO, Milwaukee County**

As the CIO of Milwaukee County, Lynn Fyhrlund provides strategic technology direction, planning, and execution of IT solutions and systems. He oversees the entire information management services division, including IT governance, project/portfolio management, finances, vendor negotiations, and operational improvements as well as the IT disaster recovery and continuity plans.

Fyhrlund started his career as a computer programmer and analyst. During his more than 27 years of experience in the industry, he took up different roles and leadership positions, including full stack developer and IT Director across manufacturing, logistics, and government sector.

Following is the conversation that we had with Fyhrlund.

**What trends and technological advancements have you observed in the government sector, and how does it impact the field?**

The government sector has changed dramatically over the last five years. The main reason behind this has been the adoption of current technologies such as cloud computing, data analytics, and cybersecurity for better service delivery. Especially after COVID, we are pushing ourselves to adopt technologies that ensure we serve citizens effectively.

We are ensuring that communities have broadband access and people are well trained to utilize devices. For example, ensuring whether people are able to easily leverage telehealth, banking, education and other facilities. CIOs, earlier, focused on keeping the infrastructure together and moving the business forward.

On the contrary, today, we engage with public leaders to ensure citizens have access to the services that government delivers. Our goal is to ensure nobody is left behind in technology and everybody has access to a high level of services online, even the population in remote areas.

**What are the current demands that have propelled these changes?**

People today proactively focus on data security and privacy and demand transparency in government processes. We need to ensure security posture and keep up with current cybersecurity. We have to keep the public's data safe from bad actors while guaranteeing access to data. To ensure transparency in the government sector, we are focusing on understanding the data better to augment our decision-making.

**"To ensure transparency in the government sector, we are focusing on understanding the data better to augment our decision-making"**

Moreover, these days, counties are focusing on bringing racial equity and uplifting communities. In our county, we have declared racism a public health crisis. Ensuring internet access and the ability to use devices is all about equity from a technology standpoint.

**What are the leadership strategies that you have in place to lead your team forward?**

When I took the role of the CIO at Milwaukee County, I built and deployed an IT strategy in order to support the county's mission and vision. We didn't ask businesses what they need but identify the technologies that they actually require to support and meet their objectives. The examination of the gaps using data analysis provides us with a clear direction to formulate an IT strategy for the next three years.

I always encourage my team to focus on end-user experience, be it employees or constituents. If employees have a great experience with technology while using computers, mobiles, or tablets, they can effectively deliver high-level services to citizens. Similarly, when constituents have a great experience with technology, they're more apt to come back for services. However, if any of them struggle with technology, it could hinder both the intake of services and the delivery of services. We partner with businesses to understand where we need to invest in terms of technology.

**What is a piece of advice to your fellow colleague?**

End-users experience is value-driven, and that's why we need to ensure we deliver value for people through the right technology implementation. This has been my mantra for years. When we implement technology, we must be cognizant of the people who won't be able to use that technology. We need to take significant steps to ensure that these people are engaged.

I would like my fellow professionals to understand that today, we don't implement technology for the sake of technology deployment but to improve processes and deliver efficient services. We need to remember that a portion of our population is not technically enabled. Therefore, we have to figure out how to make that population technologically literate, ensuring no one is left behind.

DATA SECURITY | CLOUD COMPUTING | LOGISTICS | DISASTER RECOVERY

# APPENDIX

## SAMPLE CIO JOB DESCRIPTION EXCERPTS

### Chief Information Officer – Montgomery County, MD

**Summary:**

Montgomery County, Maryland, seeks a visionary Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead the Office of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions. This strategic leadership role involves driving digital transformation, enhancing cybersecurity, and improving service delivery to a diverse population of over 1 million residents. The CIO will report to the County Executive and oversee a team of 150 IT professionals, managing an annual IT budget of approximately $100 million.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Develop and implement a county-wide IT strategic plan to modernize infrastructure, enhance digital services (e.g., online permitting, e-government portals), and support smart county initiatives using technologies like AI and IoT.
- Lead cybersecurity efforts to protect critical infrastructure, including election systems, public safety networks, and health data, ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations.
- Foster innovation by partnering with external stakeholders, such as technology vendors and regional governments, to implement scalable, cost-effective solutions.
- Champion data analytics and open data initiatives to improve transparency and decision making across county departments.

**Strategic Focus:**

This posting emphasizes innovation and digital transformation, aligning with the first strategic description from my previous response. It highlights the CIO's role in leveraging emerging technologies to improve resident services, making it ideal for a candidate focused on cutting-edge IT solutions.

**Application Details:**

- Salary Range: $180,000 – $250,000 annually, depending on experience.

- Application Deadline: April 15, 2025 (verify on the official site).
- Requirements: Bachelor's degree in IT, business administration, or related field; 10+ years of IT leadership experience, with at least 5 years in a senior management role, preferably in government.

### Chief Information Officer – Orange County, CA

**Summary:**

Orange County, California, is recruiting a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to oversee enterprise IT governance and ensure alignment between technology investments and county priorities. This role involves managing IT operations across 25 county departments, serving a population of over 3 million residents, and reporting to the County Administrator. The CIO will lead a team of 200 IT staff and manage a $120 million IT budget, focusing on risk management, compliance, and interdepartmental collaboration.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Develop and implement an enterprise IT governance framework to prioritize IT projects, manage risks, and ensure compliance with regulations such as HIPAA, CJIS, and California data privacy laws.
- Collaborate with department heads to streamline processes and integrate systems, enhancing service delivery in areas like public safety, health services, and social services.
- Oversee the county's cybersecurity program, including risk assessments, incident response planning, and staff training to mitigate cyber threats.
- Manage IT workforce development, including training programs to build a future-ready IT team capable of supporting digital transformation.
- Provide strategic guidance to the County Administrator and Board of Supervisors on technology trends and their impact on county operations.

**Strategic Focus:**

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This posting aligns with the second strategic description from my previous response, emphasizing enterprise governance and collaboration. It is suited for a candidate with strong skills in IT governance, risk management, and stakeholder engagement.

**Application Details:**

- Salary Range: $200,000 – $275,000 annually, plus benefits.
- Application Deadline: March 31, 2025 (verify on the official site).
- Requirements: Master's degree in IT, public administration, or related field preferred; 12+ years of IT experience, with at least 7 years in a leadership role, ideally in a large government organization.

### Chief Information Officer – King County, WA

**Summary:**

King County, Washington, is seeking a Chief Information Officer (CIO) to lead technology initiatives that enhance community engagement, improve public services, and promote digital equity. This role involves working with county leadership, community stakeholders, and technology partners to address the needs of a diverse population of over 2 million residents, with a focus on underserved communities. The CIO will report to the County Executive and manage a team of 180 IT professionals, overseeing a $150 million IT budget.

**Key Responsibilities:**

- Develop a technology vision that prioritizes resident-centric services, such as online portals, mobile apps, and digital equity programs to bridge the digital divide.
- Lead the adoption of smart county technologies (e.g., GIS, IoT, data analytics) to improve public safety, infrastructure management, and environmental sustainability.
- Collaborate with community organizations, schools, and libraries to expand broadband access and digital literacy programs for underserved populations.
- Oversee secure, scalable IT systems to support critical functions, including elections, public health, and emergency management.
- Develop KPIs to assess the impact of IT initiatives on community outcomes and operational efficiency.

- Advocate for funding and resources to support county IT priorities at regional and state levels.

**Strategic Focus:**

This posting aligns with the third strategic description from my previous response, emphasizing community impact and digital equity. It is ideal for a candidate passionate about using technology to address social and economic challenges while enhancing public trust.

**Application Details:**

- Salary Range: $190,000 – $260,000 annually, plus comprehensive benefits.
- Application Deadline: April 10, 2025 (verify on the official site).
- Requirements: Bachelor's degree in IT, public policy, or related field; 10+ years of IT leadership experience, with a demonstrated focus on community engagement and equity initiatives, preferably in government.

### How to Find More Postings

To find additional specific, real-world job postings, consider the following steps:

- **Government Job Boards:** Visit GovernmentJobs.com, USAJobs.gov (for federal insights that may inform county roles), or county-specific career portals (e.g., www.montgomerycountymd.gov/jobs, www.ocgov.com, www.kingcounty.gov/jobs). Search for "Chief Information Officer" or "CIO" in the job title field.
- **Professional Networks:** Use LinkedIn to search for "County Government CIO" jobs and set up job alerts. Join groups like the National Association of Counties (NACo) Career Center or follow @NACoTweets on X for updates on county government opportunities.
- **General Job Boards:** Check Indeed.com and SimplyHired.com, filtering for "Chief Information Officer" in the public sector or government category. Use location filters to narrow down to specific counties or regions.
- **Direct County Websites:** Many counties post CIO roles directly on their websites, especially for senior leadership positions. Identify counties of interest and check their "Careers" or "Employment" sections.