

What You Need to Know



FIATRA

A GovLoop Guide

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Executive Summary

There are few things we do in our professional and personal lives today that aren't supported by technology.

We have devices and apps that track our appointments, our health and our happiness. At work, routine tasks are becoming automated, and government is working to adopt more modern technology to support its employees and the citizens they serve.

But what happens when it takes agencies years to buy new technologies? What happens when multi-year IT programs deliver little to no capabilities for the intended users? Unfortunately, there are multiple examples across government.

For instance, the Veterans Affairs Department began an initiative to replace its scheduling system in 2000 but terminated the project after spending \$127 million over nine years, according to the Government Accountability Office. The project was plagued by weaknesses in project management and a lack of effective oversight.

The VA isn't alone.

"These and other failed IT projects often suffered from a lack of disciplined and effective management, such as project planning, requirements definition and program oversight and governance," according to GAO. "In many instances, agencies had not consistently applied best practices that are critical to successfully acquiring IT investments."

In an effort to address these oversight shortfalls across government, Congress passed the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act in 2014. The law requires that department chief information officers (CIOs) be empowered to review and approve IT contracts, ensure projects are being developed in shorter increments and to root out waste and duplication in IT budgets.

FITARA isn't the first crack at improving federal IT. Over a six-year period, GAO has made about 800 [recommendations to the Office of Management and Budget and agencies](#) to improve IT acquisition and operations. As of October 2015, only about 32 percent of those recommendations had been implemented. "It will be critical for agencies to implement the remaining GAO recommendations and the requirements of FITARA to achieve improvements," GAO noted.

To ensure FITARA's success at your department, there must be a widespread understanding of what the law means, what's expected of various offices and divisions and how the law affects

everyone from senior officials to rank-and-file employees.

This GovLoop guide is meant to help you better understand these key issues and use FITARA requirements to improve the way your agency buys and manages IT.

The bulk of the guide is divided into four main challenge areas with tips to help you:

- 1. COMMUNICATE IT REFORM BEYOND THE OFFICE OF THE CIO**
- 2. IMPROVE CROSS-AGENCY COLLABORATION AROUND FITARA**
- 3. IMPLEMENT BEST PRACTICES**
- 4. HEED LESSONS LEARNED BY OTHER AGENCIES**

You'll hear directly from the experts who play a role in making FITARA implementation successful at their agencies and across government. We've also included a primer with background information about FITARA, and a timeline that puts today's IT reform efforts into perspective. Let's start with a brief history of the road to federal IT reform.

Federal IT Timeline

Then & Now

Federal IT has come a long way since 1960, when the government's computer inventory totaled a mere 121.

Nearly two decades later, that number climbed to 7,800, according to a GAO report from 1977. At the time, the government was spending about \$10 billion annually to install, operate and maintain computers, and IT systems were called automatic data-processing equipment.

Congress had just passed the Brooks Act a few years prior, and there was a growing need for standardization around how that equipment was managed.

Fast-forward to today: IT spending is hovering around \$90 billion annually, and the government's IT management challenges have grown more complex. To better understand this evolution, we compiled a list of key dates, laws, policies and initiatives that have shaped federal IT. This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it sets the stage before we dive into a primer on FITARA.

OCTOBER 1972

The Brooks Act becomes law, amending the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949. The law requires the government to select engineering and architecture firms based on their competency and experience — not price. In an effort to structure IT management and acquisition, the law consolidates IT management and purchasing authority within the General Services Administration.

DECEMBER 1985

Circular A-130 was first issued to meet information resource management requirements included in the Paperwork Reduction Act. The PRA tasked the OMB Director with developing and maintaining comprehensive information resources management policies for the federal government, and promoting the use of IT to improve how information is used and disseminated to operate federal programs.

FEBRUARY 1997

A year after Federal Acquisition Reform Act and ITMRA passed Congress, they were combined and renamed the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 in the 1997 Omnibus Consolidated Appropriations Act. Oftentimes, you'll hear the Clinger-Cohen Act cited as the law that created the CIO for the first time, along with specific roles and responsibilities.

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1972

2002

DECEMBER 1980

The Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) becomes law. It mandates that agencies perform information collection activities in an efficient, effective and economical manner. The law requires the OMB Director to develop and implement standards for reducing the burden of government paperwork on the public, records management activities and privacy of those records. The law was revised in 1995.

FEBRUARY 1996

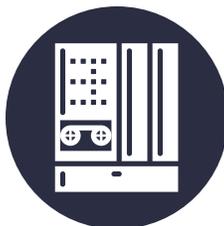
The Information Technology Management Reform Act (ITMRA) is signed into law as part of the 1996 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). ITMRA, championed by Sen. William Cohen, repeals a section of the Brooks Act by eliminating GSA's role as the primary agency for setting policy and regulations for federal information technology procurement. It also creates the role of the CIO and makes information resources management this executive's primary duty.

DECEMBER 2002

The E-Government Act is enacted. The law supports the use of IT to transform agency business into a more citizen-oriented and user-friendly process. It creates the Office of Electronic Government within OMB to coordinate IT policy, formalizes establishment of the CIO Council and permanently reauthorizes and amends agency information security requirements through the Federal Information Security Management Act (FISMA).

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Federal IT Timeline cont.

MARCH 2009

President Obama names Vivek Kundra Federal CIO, the first to have such a title. Kundra is charged with directing the policy and strategic planning of federal IT investments and overseeing federal technology spending.

JUNE 2009

OMB establishes a public website (referred to as the IT Dashboard) that provides detailed information on major IT investments at 27 federal agencies, including ratings of their performance against cost and schedule targets.

[Read More](#)

DECEMBER 2010

The Federal CIO establishes a 25-point IT Reform Plan to address challenges in IT acquisition, improve operational efficiencies and deliver more IT value to the American taxpayer. The plan set forth action items and required activities to consolidate the growing number of federal data centers, shift to increased use of cloud computing and promote the use of shared service solutions. To reduce the risk associated with IT acquisitions, the plan calls for federal IT programs to deploy capabilities or functionality in six- to 12-month increments.

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MAY 2012

OMB releases its Federal IT Shared Services Strategy. The strategy requires agencies to use shared IT services to increase return on investment, eliminate waste and duplication and improve the effectiveness of IT solutions.

[Read More](#)

2009

JANUARY 2010

The Federal CIO begins leading TechStat sessions — face-to-face meetings to terminate or turn around IT investments that are failing or not producing results.

[Read More](#)

FEBRUARY 2010

OMB establishes the Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative to shut down and consolidate under-performing data centers and better utilize remaining facilities. Data center consolidation is one of the main focuses of FITARA.

[Read More](#)

MARCH 2012

OMB creates the PortfolioStat process — a face-to-face, evidence-based review of an agency's IT portfolio that includes data on commodity IT investments, potential duplications within the agency, investments that do not appear to be well aligned to agency missions or business functions and other key considerations and data within an agency's IT portfolio. PortfolioStat takes TechStat a step further by focusing on the IT portfolio as opposed to single projects.

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JUNE 2012

FedRAMP launches operations when its governing body, the Joint Authorization Board (JAB), formally established baseline security authorization requirements for securing cloud products and services. FedRAMP is housed within GSA.



AUGUST 2014

The White House launches U.S. Digital Service. Also known as USDS, the organization works closely with agencies to improve high-profile digital services, such as the online tools veterans use to apply for benefits and interact with the government.

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JUNE 2015

OMB releases guidance on how agencies are to implement FITARA. OMB's guidance states that it is intended to, among other things, assist agencies in aligning their IT resources with statutory requirements; establish governmentwide IT management controls that will meet the law's requirements, while providing agencies with flexibility to adapt to unique agency processes and requirements; clarify the CIO's role and strengthen the relationship with agency CIOs and bureau CIOs and strengthen CIO accountability for IT cost, schedule and performance.

[Read More](#)

NOVEMBER 2015

Members of the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee release a scorecard assigning letter grades to federal agencies on their implementation of FITARA. The grades measure agency progress in key areas: data center consolidation, savings from conducting IT portfolio reviews, deploying IT capabilities in small increments and transparency around risks to IT projects.

[Read More](#)

2016

DECEMBER 2014

FITARA is enacted as an amendment to the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. The law makes clear that CIOs are responsible for reviewing and approving department IT contracts, and they must also play a more direct role in hiring bureau-level CIOs.



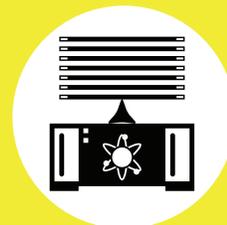
AUGUST 2015

Agencies are required to conduct a FITARA self-assessment and articulate a plan describing the changes they will make to ensure that common baseline responsibilities detailed in the OMB guidance are implemented by Dec. 31, 2015. Agencies are to submit their plans to OMB's Office of E-Government for review and approval and make the plans publicly available on agency websites no later than 30 days after approval.



APRIL 2016

Agencies are expected to update their self-assessment to identify any obstacles or incomplete implementation of common baseline responsibilities. The self-assessment is to be updated on an annual basis thereafter.





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The Role of Data Analytics in FITARA Implementation

An interview with Heather Gittings, Director, Public Sector Market Development, Qlik

Having access to timely and accurate data will be key to agencies embracing the vision lawmakers outlined in FITARA. The ultimate goal is to improve how the government buys and manages nearly \$90 billion worth of IT.

But part of the issue for many agencies is they are inundated with data and unable to parse through that information and glean insights about IT spending and cost savings across their organizations. The law requires that agencies, particularly CIOs, have an overall picture of the IT budget, which is not the case for many IT executives today.

“They’re trying to pull that information together,” said Heather Gittings, Director of Public Sector Market Development at Qlik, a visual analytics software company. “At the same time, they’re bombarded with data requests from other offices, and they’re not resourced properly to meet all of those requests.”

It doesn’t help that FITARA is an unfunded mandate, which means agencies have to pull from their limited budgets to fund IT transformation projects. The vast majority of government systems are legacy, and a number of the tools they use to analyze data are not robust enough to keep pace with growing demands. “When it comes to analytics, they’re often working with outdated business intelligence systems that aren’t nimble enough to empower them to answer key questions,” Gittings said.

Any delays in gathering that insight impacts the flow of information to other departments that need it. When those reports are finally delivered, the information is often outdated. Another issue is that too often the data is not trusted.

One of the main reasons is the source of the data isn’t reliable. Here’s why: When people search for information and they can’t get it from their agency’s enterprise reporting software, they collect it on their own from various data sources and store it in Excel documents and disparate databases. That’s an age old problem.

“What’s relatively new is that we’re seeing that same issue on a visualization scale as well,” Gittings said. “Everybody wants to see their data represented in a picture. To accomplish that, some are using these lightweight visualization tools that sit on the desktop. The problem is that as soon as they import the data, it becomes disconnected from its source. So now that data’s not centrally governed and you end up with multiple versions of the data.”

People are taking the data and dumping it into these stand-alone tools that are not connected to established data sources, so everyone’s looking at different versions of the data. They’re still able to manipulate the data into visually appealing displays, but those visualizations only provide a partial — and often inaccurate — version of the story.

“We call that visualization anarchy,” Gittings said. “Nobody trusts the data anymore, and you don’t have a single view of the truth.”

So how should agencies address this issue? For starters, Gittings recommends that agencies make data governance a priority and consider embedding those policies into the tools they use.

For example, the visual analytics software that Qlik provides is built around the principle of data governance and scalability. Although

the software is so easy to use that it empowers non-technical employees with self-service analytics, the IT department still has control over the underlying datasets to ensure they are accurate and updated.

“This way you don’t end up with visualization anarchy because everyone is using the same, centrally managed data,” Gittings said. “Because the data is governed, organizations have a curated data set that they can trust. So while everybody’s creating their own views, they’re built on the same underlying foundation.”

Agencies should also invest in tools that are scalable. Many of the lightweight tools on the market today don’t scale, Gittings noted. They’re great for developing nice pictures on the desktop, but if you need to connect multiple data sources or connect to something like Hadoop, then the tools break down.

“Qlik was built to address that challenge,” Gittings said. “We’re helping agencies gain insight into their operations through visual analytics. We help them reduce the burden on IT and ensure that IT has control of the data while also allowing end users to manipulate the data and get answers to their questions.”

As agencies continue to fully implement FITARA, strong data analytics tools can help them address requirements to catalog and track IT investments and access and share information across their organizations.

“CIOs need the ability to see cross-function investments and know, for example, what software HR is invested in and what procurement software is being used,” Gittings said. “Robust analytics that can dive into and extract meaning from all those different data sources is key to FITARA’s success.”

A Primer on FITARA

Nowadays, it seems many in the government community have an opinion about federal IT — how projects should be managed and whether CIOs have adequate authority to do their jobs. Lawmakers, White House policy officials, contractors, auditors and IT managers have voiced their thoughts and concerns.

The truth is that all CIOs are not empowered equally. Some have very little direct control over how technology dollars are spent at their agencies. Many argue the culprit is not the 20-year-old Clinger-Cohen Act that created the CIO role but rather inconsistent implementation of CIOs' authorities across departments and sub-agencies.

The good news, however, is that with FITARA, government has a second chance to get it right.

In an effort to elevate CIOs across government, Congress passed FITARA in December 2014 as an amendment to the 2015 National Defense Authorization Act. The law makes clear that CIOs are responsible for reviewing and approving department IT contracts, and they must also play a more direct role in hiring bureau-level CIOs. CIO authority is one of seven requirements areas addressed in FITARA :

1. Agency CIO authority enhancements
2. Enhanced transparency and improved risk management in IT investments
3. Portfolio review
4. Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative
5. Expansion of training and use of IT cadres
6. Maximizing the benefit of the Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative
7. Governmentwide software purchasing program

"FITARA is not asking us to do anything different

than what the Clinger-Cohen Act was asking," said Flip Anderson, Executive Director of FITARA Operations at USDA. "It's stuff that we should have been doing all along, but we weren't."

If you haven't already, we recommend giving the actual text of FITARA a read, or at least a quick skim. You'll notice that the initiatives in the law aren't new. Many see FITARA as a compilation of what had already been outlined in the 1996 Clinger-Cohen legislation concerning CIO authorities and IT initiatives spearheaded by OMB that needed new energy.

"What Congress saw was, we had good plans, but we didn't execute on those plans completely," said David Powner, Director of Information Technology Management Issues at GAO. "So they codified a lot of things in law."

In June 2015, OMB released guidance for implementing the law, based on extensive feedback from CIOs, executive councils of chief acquisition, finance and human capital officers, senior agency executives, industry, academia and others.

The guidance establishes common baseline roles, responsibilities and authorities for department CIOs and senior officers who manage IT. It also required agencies to complete a self-assessment and plan by mid-August that detailed how agencies would implement those roles and responsibilities by the end of the year. The assessments will be updated annually.

The guidance is extensive and worth reviewing, even if you don't work in IT. If your program relies on IT resources, then you should understand what FITARA could mean for you and your team. (Read the FAQs here.)

The 24 agencies subject to the Chief Financial Officers Act must comply with FITARA requirements. The Defense Department, Intelligence

Community and portions of other agencies that operate national security systems are subject to certain portions of FITARA. There are some smaller agencies that aren't required to adopt FITARA but want to because it's good for business.

For those directly and indirectly impacted by FITARA, the main question is whether FITARA will have a lasting impact. They want to know what successful FITARA implementation entails.

For some, successful implementation means a CIO can cancel a project that's underperforming and still keep their job — an indication that they have the authority outlined in FITARA. As a result of CIOs having greater authority, IT projects should be delivered faster and in smaller increments, Powner said. "Right now, we spend years and years on some of these big acquisitions, and we don't deliver quick enough."

The good news is CIOs are already reporting progress. Powner has heard from CIOs who have greater visibility of the IT budget, and that's what FITARA is all about. Some are starting to review IT contracts and approve them.

"I believe FITARA is one of the strongest and most important pieces of legislation to improve CIO involvement with the decision processes and policies related to managing information technology resources and increased government efficiencies and effectiveness," Commerce CIO Steve Cooper said at a May House subcommittee hearing about updated FITARA scorecards. "I am committed to its success."

Throughout the guide, you'll hear more from agency executives about their biggest challenges embracing FITARA and how they're working through them.

FITARA REQUIREMENTS

The law outlines specific requirements about:



Agency CIO Authority Enhancements

Among other things, agency CIOs are required to approve the IT budget requests of their respective agencies and certify that IT investments are adequately implementing the OMB's incremental development guidance.



Enhanced Transparency and Improved Risk Management in IT Investments

OMB and agencies must publicly release detailed information on federal IT investments, and agency CIOs are required to categorize IT investments by risk.



Portfolio Review

Agencies are required to review IT investment portfolios annually to increase efficiency and effectiveness and identify potential waste and duplication. OMB is required to develop standardized performance metrics and to submit quarterly reports to Congress on IT cost savings.



Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative

Agencies are required to provide OMB with a data center inventory, a strategy for consolidating and optimizing the data centers (to include planned cost savings) and quarterly progress updates.



Expansion of Training and Use of IT Cadres

FITARA's requirements for developing IT acquisition cadres build on an existing OMB initiative with the same objectives. Under FITARA, agencies must report on several things, including whether they've developed a specialized team to handle IT acquisitions and how that team is being trained.



Maximizing the Benefit of the Federal Strategic Sourcing Initiative

Federal agencies are required to compare their purchases of services and supplies with what is offered under the Federal Strategic Sourcing initiative.



Governmentwide Software Purchasing Program

The General Services Administration, in collaboration with OMB, must create and give agencies access to governmentwide enterprise software licenses. This means agencies should have access to license agreements that are available for use by all executive agencies.

Sources: [OMB](#), [GAO](#)

IT'S TIME DATA MADE GOOD ON ITS PROMISE.

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It's time to transform data from freight into fuel.

To let it power decisions instead of impede them.

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To seize what's rightfully yours.

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Why Data Management Is Key to FITARA's Success

An interview with Tom Kennedy, Vice President of Public Sector at Veritas and Richard Beutel, Principal at Cyrrus Analytics

In many ways, FITARA represents a new era of accountability in government IT.

Among the law's major tenets is a provision that strengthens the role of department CIOs by giving them control over IT budgets and acquisition strategies. FITARA also requires that CIOs report directly to the agency head, the deputy secretary or a similar management executive.

"For the very first time, CIOs have a seat at the table, along with other executives in the C-suite," said Tom Kennedy, Vice President of Public Sector at Veritas. "They finally have the tools to run the operation as a modern and mature IT enterprise and manage their datasets, as well as meet transparency and interoperability goals, and migrate to the cloud."

The ability to not only access data but also glean insights from it is key to FITARA's success. CIOs need access to IT spending, performance and acquisition data to make sound decisions departmentwide.

As a market leader in information management solutions, Veritas has already partnered with a number of federal agencies to implement data backup and recovery services. "The other piece of what we do is around information analytics and giving agencies insight into the information they already have," Kennedy explained.

"The vision for FITARA is to ensure that government datasets can create an innovation ecosystem that will enable the sharing economy and new business opportunities, by putting data together in ways that no one had ever thought about," said Richard Beutel, Principal at Cyrrus Analytics, a government market strategy and legislative advisory firm and a Veritas partner.

Whether the data is hosted on-premise or in the cloud, Veritas can address the risks associated with downtime by providing disaster recovery capabilities for applications that are vital to running the agency.

Veritas is well positioned to support CIOs as they exercise their new authority under FITARA and align with administration requirements to do more with less and reduce cost and risk in their IT operating models. Specifically, Veritas is building relationships with CIOs and their appointed representatives to help them eliminate capital spending on hardware and reduce storage consumption, even as the amount of data they produce and collect grows exponentially. The first step in achieving that goal is working with agencies to gain visibility into what they currently own.

"The system is only as good as the data that's in it," Kennedy said. "Studies show that up to 70 percent of data does not have business value. Addressing that before you move your project to the cloud, or before you're migrating off of legacy systems, is really important."

Part of that process includes helping agencies purge their systems of redundant, obsolete and trivial information, or ROT data. Typically, about a third of the data organizations possess fits into the ROT category and adds little to no business value.

Agencies must settle these misconceptions before moving to the cloud if they want to take full advantage of what cloud computing has to offer, including reduced storage, backup and disaster recovery costs. Using Veritas technologies, agencies can expect further benefits in the cloud, such as the ability to uncover, understand, and correct the hidden weaknesses and blind spots hybrid cloud

environments often create as information flows across different private and public cloud systems.

Veritas also enables agency CIOs to better holistically protect, manage, and govern the data that flows through multi-vendor, hybrid cloud environments.

"We really look at ourselves as being a force-multiplier to the CIO community, to help them drive transformation and prevent FITARA from becoming a box-checking exercise," said Beutel, the former legislative manager for FITARA.

The FITARA legislation breathed new life into existing administration efforts, such as the Federal Data Center Consolidation Initiative (FDCCI). FITARA builds on FDCCI requirements and mandates that agencies submit annual reports that include comprehensive data center inventories; multi-year strategies to consolidate and optimize data centers; performance metrics and a timeline for agency activities; and yearly calculations of investment and cost savings.

Beutel is optimistic that IT reforms under FITARA will take hold because there is engagement at all levels of government, including oversight in Congress and engagement from the federal CIO. Even the president's 2017 budget request includes funding to help agencies migrate off legacy IT systems.

"That's a change in attitude and implementation, and that's a key factor to FITARA's success," Beutel said.

Your Questions Answered

Following the passage of any new law, it usually takes time for government employees to digest the legislation and guidance for implementing new requirements. FITARA is no different.

To help frame the discussion for this GovLoop guide, we asked government IT managers about their greatest challenges and concerns surrounding FITARA. On the next page are the common themes we heard.

We took those questions and grouped them into four key challenge areas:

CHALLENGE 1

Communicating IT Reform Beyond the Office of the CIO

CHALLENGE 2

Improving Intra-Agency Collaboration to Embrace FITARA

CHALLENGE 3

Implementing Best Practices

CHALLENGE 4

Gleaning Lessons Learned

To address each of these four challenge areas, we spoke with government leaders who are implementing FITARA or have an understanding of the common issues agencies face and solutions. Meet the experts:



JOYCE HUNTER

Deputy CIO for Policy and Planning, Department of Agriculture



FLIP ANDERSON

Executive Director of FITARA Operations, Department of Agriculture



ZACH GOLDSTEIN

CIO, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



JOANIE NEWHART

Associate Administrator, Office of Federal Procurement Policy, Executive Office of the President



DAVE POWNER

Director of Information Technology Management Issues, Government Accountability Office



RICHARD MCKINNEY

CIO, Department of Transportation

“

The biggest FITARA challenge is getting everyone in the organization informed and on board.

“

The biggest challenge that we have is socialization of FITARA to the more junior folks.

“

FITARA is sometimes presented with an ominous tone. The positive aspects of FITARA should be emphasized more.

“

Bringing everyone to the table and talking about the challenges in implementing FITARA is a challenge.

“

How does FITARA impact the federal budget community?

“

How do we support FITARA from a personnel and financial perspective to ensure long-term sustainability?

“

We need FITARA best practices and lessons learned.

“

How can we make FITARA a collaborative effort for all organizations within a bureau and not just the CIO?

Communicating IT Reform Beyond the Office of the CIO

*"FITARA is about CIOs building relationships up, across and down. That's a lot of relationships to build for these CIOs to really get the job done."
- Dave Powner, GAO*

Most conversations about FITARA focus on CIOs and the duties and authorities they have under the law. But the reality is IT reform cannot and will not succeed without every office and employee chipping in. Everyone has a role to play. That's why communicating IT reform and its impact beyond the Office of the CIO are vital. Here are the key points all employees must understand:

What's FITARA really about?

FITARA is about improving the way government buys and manages nearly \$90 billion worth of information technology resources.

It's no secret that agencies have wasted billions of dollars on failed projects that offer little to no value for government employees and citizens. The main issues are a lack of disciplined and effective management and the proper governance structure and policies to ensure ongoing success.

To address these chronic issues, FITARA makes clear that CIOs are responsible for overseeing the department's IT portfolio. This isn't about creating layers of bureaucracy but rather empowering strong leaders to review and approve IT budget requests and contracts, find areas of duplication and opportunities to consolidate, ensure modern IT solutions are delivered faster and address risks that could potentially sabotage a project (check out our [FITARA primer](#) in the beginning of the guide for a breakdown of FITARA's seven main sections).

Can you provide some examples of how FITARA affects employees?

If your office or program relies on IT, you will be impacted by FITARA in some way.

You may not feel the direct impact, depending on where you sit in an organization, but there will likely be changes in the way your office budgets for and acquires IT resources. The goal is to make spending details more transparent, so there's a consolidated view of what the agency is buying.

As we mentioned earlier, IT spending is happening outside the CIO office. Included in that spending is shadow IT — a broad term for the technologies that people are purchasing under the radar, or IT components that are embedded in larger systems and not being reported as IT spending, GAO's Powner said.

Chances are you've either been involved in or know of a hardware or software solution that rolled forward without the blessing of the IT department. Under FITARA, CIOs want to bring that spending out of the shadows. But what if you're not buying IT under the radar? Why should you care? Well, shadow IT can pose major security risks to everyone. "If you don't know it's being built, you can't ensure it's being secured," NOAA's Goldstein said.

Also, as a user of IT, you want to have access to modern, secure technology when you need it, not years down the road, right? That's what FITARA aims to do by encouraging incremental development and better IT acquisition, so you have the tools you need to do your job.



Does FITARA only pertain to CIOs?

The short answer: absolutely not.

Everyone has a role to play. It's about employees working together — program managers, business owners, HR specialists, acquisition professionals, finance professionals and every IT user — to ensure that technology is helping employees do their jobs better. Think about it: IT enables nearly everything we do nowadays.

But the CIO isn't the only one buying IT. There are a number of them who don't control the entire IT budget. Much of the spending is happening outside of their offices, which makes it harder to root out duplication and manage risk tied to those IT investments. FITARA was designed to rein in this kind of one-off spending by empowering the CIO to be accountable for IT purchasing and boosting collaboration and communication agencywide about what's being bought and who's responsible for managing it (we'll get into cross-agency collaboration in the [next section](#)). CIOs can also delegate certain responsibilities, such as ongoing engagement with program managers, to a representative who can help minimize the chance of bottlenecks. But CIOs are ultimately responsible for ensuring [tasks](#) are executed.

How can agencies better communicate the FITARA message?

You have to take this message on the road.

USDA's Hunter put it this way: "When I hear people say that they don't really understand what FITARA does, it worries me. We have people scratching their heads, which means that we haven't gone low enough. It starts at the CIO, but then it doesn't need to stop there."

There's a lot everyone can learn from USDA's approach going forward to keep everyone informed. The department has a dedicated Executive Director of FITARA Operations, Flip Anderson (see the [section on best practices](#) to learn more about USDA's FITARA operations team). His team is working with agency chief executives to solidify processes, procedures and policies for adopting FITARA. Once that's done, his team will go on a roadshow to meet with all employees at component agencies and staff offices.

"The policies are going to trickle down to them, and they want explanations as to what that means to them, what do they actually have to do," Anderson said. "We're not just talking about IT staff. The roadshow is for every employee who has questions."



GOVERNMENT SOLUTIONS

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How IT Portfolio Management Drives Better Outcomes

An interview with Bill Lochten, National Vice President, Software AG Government Solutions

CIOs across the federal government are settling into their newfound authority that came with the 2014 passage of FITARA.

Although provisions in the law empower CIOs at the department level, one thing the legislation cannot do through words alone is give CIOs a holistic view of the decisions being made throughout their organizations.

Even before FITARA, agencies began the difficult task of reviewing their IT portfolios departmentwide. The law renewed that effort by giving CIOs the authority to approve the IT budget and acquisitions across their departments' IT portfolio. For agencies that fully embrace this new way forward, there are numerous benefits.

"Good IT portfolio management is tactical and strategic in nature, helping agency leaders more easily answer complex questions, such as determining budget allocation for enhancing capabilities like application security in a given fiscal year or planning which IT assets should be phased out," said Bill Lochten, National Vice President for Software AG Government Solutions, an enterprise software company.

This holistic approach to IT management can help uncover and address redundancies across the IT portfolio as well as assist CIOs in answering strategic questions around topics like the departmentwide IT roadmap and how it correlates to IT roadmaps from sub-agencies.

But before agencies can answer these questions, they first need to understand what assets make up their IT inventory. There are various tools that help agencies create an IT inventory, but many of them only provide limited insights.

The IT planning and portfolio management tool that Software AG provides was built to address those challenges and also includes features that address key objectives of FITARA. The tool, known as Alfabet, was built with CIOs and chief enterprise architects in mind.

As it relates to FITARA, Alfabet helps agencies:

- ▲ Gain better visibility into their IT expenditures.
- ▲ Improve the risk management in IT investments.
- ▲ Provide a platform for collaboration among leaders in the organization and improve oversight of their IT investments.

Software AG launched a survey shortly after the FITARA legislation passed and discovered that government application portfolios are plagued with redundant functions and a lack of transparency, Lochten said, "A strong IT portfolio management tool can help agencies analyze their IT investments in multiple dimensions, including cost, risk, usage, security and how IT fits into their mission."

In order to align an agency's IT portfolio with high-level mission goals, a tool such as Alfabet will be essential because it was designed to capture all of the dependencies of the various dimensions of the IT portfolio. Some agencies have inventories of their various applications and the systems that they depend on, but they lack a centralized means to tie all the various dimensions of the applications together to properly analyze how they are aligned to the mission. These various dimensions may include financial management, resource planning, project and program priorities and system interdependencies. Often, these dimensions are captured independently of each other, making it difficult or impossible to reliably ascertain how they all tie together in the context of the mission.

"That is a process that all government agencies are going through today in coming up with their FITARA baselines," Lochten said. "What Alfabet does is automate some of that inventory and collection process. We have a very advanced integration capability that allows us to import information about applications, assets and artifacts that make up those applications. That way, we can streamline the process and help make it quicker and less onerous."

In essence, Alfabet provides a single pane of glass view of the mission that allows an agency to drill down into their applications and systems and see all of these interdependencies. It also provides the capability to perform what-if scenarios to find the best mix of these interrelated applications, projects and processes to fulfill the mission.

"The more you know about the asset, the more you can understand whether or not it should be a part of your strategy going forward," Lochten said. "Greater visibility also enables tighter alignment between IT and program leadership."

Agencies that stand to gain the most from FITARA implementation are those that combine a proper IT portfolio management with adoption of the FITARA IT Management Maturity Model, according to Lochten. This model encourages department-wide collaboration across six critical functions of IT management: governance, budget, acquisition, program management, organization and workforce.

This level of collaboration can lead to new discoveries around IT spending, including shadow IT. "Having a tool that can actually aggregate all that information and help agencies analyze their progress is key," Lochten said. "FITARA isn't going anywhere, so we're excited Alfabet can help agencies document iterative progress."

Promoting Intra-Agency Collaboration to Embrace FITARA

*"We're actually getting up out of our chairs and going downstairs or upstairs and having regularly scheduled meetings so that we can talk about what's going on in the agency, and we're not surprised by anything that goes on."
- Joyce Hunter, USDA*

"I'm struggling to wrap my head around the concept of: What doors do I knock on? Who do I go to? How do I get the support I need?" That's what we heard from an attendee at [our GovLoop FITARA Forum](#), and we know there are others who feel this way. If you're looking for insight on who's collaborating around FITARA and how they're doing it, this section is for you.

How has FITARA improved intra-agency collaboration?

People are talking more and developing relationships across their agencies.

"All the CXOs are now talking on a more regular basis," said USDA's Hunter. "We're actually getting up out of our chairs and going downstairs or upstairs and having regularly scheduled meetings so that we can talk about what's going on in the agency, and we're not surprised by anything that goes on."

How CIOs discuss IT in those conversations is also changing. "If you say, 'enterprise architecture,' people run the other way," Hunter said. "We have to talk with business [in mind] first, and then under girth with IT."



How do you bring all of those people to the table?

A great way to bring people together is through existing management councils or boards within your agency.

The goal is not to create new boards and bureaucracy but to figure out how to take advantage of current structures, identify the key players, find out their interests and build relationships among the group over time. FITARA implementation is about people-to-people interaction. Plus, collaboration isn't just good for business, it's required under the law.

At USDA, for example, the department uses a new integrated IT governance framework (read more about it on Pages 2 and 3 of the department's [FITARA Common Baseline Implementation Plan](#)). The department uses multi-disciplinary reviews at the agency, department and secretary levels to ensure IT investments align with USDA's overall goals, strategies, objectives and mission needs.

Consider this: "nearly 100,000 employees deliver more than \$144 billion in public services through the department's more than 300 programs worldwide," according to the agency's baseline implementation plan. IT enables these services, and "USDA needs to respond effectively to the challenges posed by the diversity, complexity, and volume of IT investment proposals brought forward by various stakeholders throughout the department."

That's where FITARA comes in. It brings everyone together for a single purpose: to buy IT better, said Newhart, with the Office of Federal Procurement Policy.

Which offices and executives are required to collaborate under FITARA?

In OMB's FITARA implementation guidance, you'll see references to CXOs, a casual term that has evolved to encompass senior agency officials, including chief human capital officers, chief financial officers, chief acquisition officers, chief operating officers (deputy secretary, undersecretary for management, assistant secretary for administration, or an equivalent), CIOs and bureau CIOs.

All of these executives and their respective offices and staff play important roles in making FITARA implementation successful. They must collaborate to strengthen the IT acquisition workforce; better track IT spending; improve budgeting and reporting; deliver IT projects in small increments; improve oversight of the department's IT portfolio as well as the health and management of major IT projects. These are tasks that cannot be accomplished by the CIO alone.

But it's inevitable that CIOs will play a key role because FITARA is all about IT reform. It's vital that CIOs not only have a seat at the table with other senior executives but also a voice at the table to discuss IT-related issues with their counterparts and higher-ups, such as the agency head or deputy secretary. For too long, CIOs have been viewed as IT service providers rather than strategic business partners, and that's why CIO empowerment under FITARA is a big deal. Any departmentwide effort of this magnitude requires strong leadership at all levels.

What are the challenges to implementing FITARA?

Change management is one of the greatest challenges agencies face.

FITARA requires adjustments to current budgeting, acquisition and HR processes, and these changes can make people uncomfortable. "We see some relationships improving [between bureau and department CIOs], and we see some agencies where the bureaus and components are not cooperating," Powner said. "Some CFOs are concerned about losing power. But it's not about losing power; it's about working as a team and accomplishing agency missions."

The other challenge: implementing FITARA with limited personnel and financial resources. USDA's Anderson estimated FITARA implementation for the first year would cost about \$3 million. As the Executive Director of FITARA Operations, Anderson's budget doesn't come anywhere close to that number, but he's hoping some funding will come through the president's fiscal 2017 budget request.

Working across offices to meet reporting requirements and deadlines has its challenges. Remember all the CXOs who are involved in making FITARA successful? They all have to report on their progress and complete required tasks in addition to their regular jobs. That can be a recipe for delays and incomplete responses to OMB requirements. Departments had until April 30, 2016, to update their FITARA self-assessments and identify any obstacles or shortfalls in complying with OMB's implementation guidance. In the future, these reports will be due annually.



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Embracing FITARA to Drive IT Visibility and Cybersecurity

An interview with Clark Campbell, Vice President for Public Sector at BDNA

At its core, FITARA is about creating transparency around how much agencies spend on IT and how that technology is acquired, secured and managed.

“What FITARA is designed to do is drive the IT transparency and visibility that organizations have struggled to achieve in previous years, and it allows department-level CIOs to have visibility into their components, their bureaus and their sub-agencies,” said Clark Campbell, Vice President for Public Sector at BDNA.

Under FITARA, the visibility and intelligence that CIOs are expected to have about their agency IT domains as they make critical spending and management decisions will also inform them and their CISOs about where critical assets exist that require better defenses and where vulnerabilities exist that require remediation.

When CIOs and their teams know in detail what IT assets are in use departmentwide, they can make better budgeting decisions and plan for future needs. That means they can make smarter decisions when it comes to prioritizing modernization spending; eliminating or consolidating duplicative IT resources; optimizing the management of software licenses; leveraging Category Management and Federal Strategic Sourcing initiatives for commodity IT; and optimizing data center consolidations, cloud migrations and shared service adoptions, among other things.

Moreover, with this greater visibility and intelligence of their enterprise IT environments, CIOs and their CISOs are better positioned to secure those assets and quickly address cyber vulnerabilities. Specifically, they can identify and remove cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the form of software and hardware assets that are at or approaching end of

service and end of life; identify and remove cybersecurity vulnerabilities in the form of unauthorized IT assets – or shadow IT – that are not approved; and enhance Information Security Continuous Monitoring (ISCM) activities to ensure that all IT assets are subject to an automated inventory, configuration, or vulnerability management capability.

Many agencies already have Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) tools in place to track and manage software installments, IT asset inventories, and IT configuration and patch requirements. But a big problem is that most of those tools operate within confined siloes and fail to cover the entire enterprise. Another problem is that those tools do not integrate with each other or use a standard language, which means it is impossible to gain a clear, actionable enterprise view of one’s IT environment in a single pane of glass.

“The ability to leverage existing tools to turn that insight into something useful is the challenge that departments are having,” Campbell said. “For example, if you don’t know the end of life of your hardware and software, it is a struggle to plan from a budgeting and cyber security standpoint.”

In addressing the challenge of poor IT visibility and intelligence, numerous agencies have turned to a suite of solutions developed by BDNA and anchored on BDNA’s Technopedia, a comprehensive repository of market intelligence on enterprise software and hardware. These solutions unify IT asset datasets and supplement that data with detailed and updated market information, including end-of life dates. This increased visibility keeps CIOs and CISOs informed as they play a larger role in steering procurement, budget and cyber security decisions.

“FITARA is a good overall framework to drive a lot of important efforts within the federal government,” Campbell said. “However, the underlying aspect that the federal government cares about is protecting its information. The cybersecurity component of that is the most critical piece of FITARA.”

Using BDNA solutions, agencies have up-to-date normalized data and market information on more than 1.2 million enterprise hardware and software products. Having consistent, accurate and relevant information about the technology in use at federal agencies enables the level of visibility required to implement FITARA, as well as IT Asset Management, ITSM, strategic sourcing, enterprise architecture, and other initiatives.

For example, the Defense Department is among the government agencies migrating to Microsoft’s Windows 10. That leaves a lot of older versions of various software that need to be phased out or terminated because they are not supported anymore. BDNA helps agencies sort through such challenges by providing detailed information on what software applications will no longer be supported by Windows 10.

One federal agency leverages BDNA to normalize 497,000 endpoints, servers, PCs and associated software applications each week in a matter of hours. This process allows that agency to see the IT assets in use that have been approved by IT and those that have not.

“It’s important not only to have that transparency, but also the intelligence and lexicon for all IT,” Campbell said. “BDNA provides a comprehensive, enterprise view of IT in a standard language, so that everyone is referring to the same thing.”

Implementing Best Practices

“The challenge is to incorporate [FITARA] into how an agency does business, so that when a leader moves on to other things, you don’t lose that momentum and lose all the headway that you’ve gained.”
– Dave Powner, GAO

Despite the massive size of government and its diverse makeup, there’s a lot agencies can learn from one another. While missions may vary, every agency can benefit from strong IT management, better budget tracking and robust data reporting. In this section, we explore some of the best practices agencies are adopting to make FITARA implementation successful.

Where do you start with FITARA implementation?

Approaches will vary, but one way agencies are responding to FITARA is through a PMO [program management office] structure, Newhart said.

This doesn't necessarily mean agencies stand up a new office. But this structure does involve a team of people who can address what needs to be done to implement FITARA, what gaps exist and work to build a coalition of like-minded people throughout the organization to embrace change.

That approach is working for USDA. The department has a FITARA operations team tasked with managing implementation of the IT reform law. Initially, USDA assembled a diverse team of 50 volunteers and divided them into teams by color — each assigned to specific areas called out in the OMB implementation guidance. “We all decided to approach it like we were responding to a federal RFP,” Hunter said.

Everyone would gather or call in every morning for the 15-minute standup meetings to ask questions and get their assignments for the day. “Talk about a true agile approach,” Hunter said. “It didn't take five or six months to get it done because we were doing something every day. It was less than a month.” (The operations team has evolved since this time, and we'll explore that more in this section.)

At the Commerce Department, bureau CIOs were asked to answer the same annual assessment questions OMB initially posed to the department CIO, said NOAA's Goldstein. "I had to answer the very same questions [as the department CIO did], but from the perspective of NOAA. If another CIO hasn't thought of that, it would be a pretty smart thing to do."

Your agency may not be the size of Commerce, but you can take a similar approach on a smaller scale. Rather than posing assessment questions to bureaus, you may direct them to smaller offices.

How do you keep the momentum going?

Having a committed team to keep everyone engaged and on task is vital.

But know that the amount of time each team member can dedicate to FITARA operations may vary. It's likely those volunteers still have to balance their regular job duties with new responsibilities under FITARA.

Take USDA, for example. The department started with 50 volunteers during the initial FITARA planning phase in 2015. That number has since dwindled to four team leaders, but Anderson and his small group make the most of the time they have. Leading up to the April 2016 deadline for turning in an updated annual FITARA self-assessment, the team reviewed the initial assessment the department submitted to OMB in November 2015. That document detailed current operations and how USDA would address gaps to fully meet FITARA implementation requirements.

"Now when we go in and meet with the CXOs, the team lead for budget is responsible for getting some answers on budget formulation," Anderson said. "Then the team lead for acquisition is responsible for those [requirements] associated with acquisition." Their job is to make sure that CXOs are following through on what they said they would accomplish in the November plan. They want to know if the target dates for meeting certain goals are still accurate, or need to be adjusted. The team leads also want accurate descriptions of everyone's current status in meeting FITARA implementation requirements.



How do you ensure future success, even after a change in leadership?

FITARA adoption must become more than a compliance exercise.

"The challenge is to incorporate that into how an agency does business, so that when a leader moves on to other things, you don't lose that momentum and lose all the headway that you've gained," Powner said.

USDA is addressing that issue by developing a concept of operations for FITARA. "And what that concept of operations will do is basically be the playbook for how we do FITARA at USDA," Anderson said.

The playbook will address several areas, including how each of the FITARA operations team members are supposed to coordinate with the CXOs, the expectations coming out of that coordination and the development of a risk-management plan that explains what happens if certain tasks don't get done and how to mitigate those issues.



What are best practices for aligning the budget process with FITARA requirements?

CIOs must have the opportunity to review the portfolio of potential IT investments early on, so they can identify similar requests and opportunities for departmentwide purchasing.

For NOAA, that means adjusting internal budgeting processes.

Consider this, within NOAA there are various line offices. In many respects, those line offices function much like bureaus in the department. As part of NOAA's budget formulation process, the CFO would see proposals from line offices either before or at the same time as the CIO office.

"We've always known it was a shortfall, but FITARA means we've got to devote the time to fixing it," Goldstein said. "What fixing it means is that I need to always see [the budget] no later than the CFO sees it, and ideally before the CFO sees it, so that if there's an enterprisewide opportunity, I get to construct that before it goes to the CFO."

From there, the CIO and CFO will work collaboratively on the budget to ensure IT and non-IT requests are meeting the bureau's needs. For example, a new research project may require time on NOAA's supercomputers, and that has to be addressed in the budget.

The new change to ensure the CIO sees IT requests before the CFO will take effect for the fiscal year 2019 budget because NOAA is well into planning for the 2018 budget. The opportunity to view budget requests early on is huge for Goldstein because less than 10 percent of NOAA's IT budget is under his direct control.

"FITARA gives us the wherewithal to say, 'Not only is this a good idea, but the law requires it,'" Goldstein said. "So if I get pushback, I'm in a much better position to advocate this improvement."

Are you ready for FITARA?

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Improving IT Management with Technology Business Management

An interview with Suzanne Chartol, Customer Success Advisor at Apptio

FITARA is changing the way agencies and their CIOs relate to IT investments. While the law is meant to help reform the technology acquisition process, it also addresses ongoing budget challenges, as CIOs now have to manage IT spending across the agency.

GovLoop sat down with Suzanne Chartol, Customer Success Advisor at [Apptio](#), a leading provider of cloud-based software for managing the business of IT, to talk about what challenges CIOs face with FITARA and how Technology Business Management (TBM) and Apptio can help.

Chartol noted that FITARA has changed the responsibilities of federal CIOs. “They’ve now been given the authority to manage IT spending across the entire agency, and that’s not something they had before,” she said. “Many federal CIOs see this as an advantage because it gives them the authority to do the right thing for government and for taxpayers in general.”

Making the most of that authority requires CIOs to understand more about what is driving IT spending. But figuring out what is being purchased and how much it costs the agency is challenging because IT funding is embedded in appropriations for various program offices, and it’s muddled by government accounting systems. “These issues make it difficult for them to really get a handle on spending, and you can’t control, change or, more importantly, improve what you don’t know you have,” Chartol said.

The key to working through these challenges is collaboration and communication around IT spending. This collaboration includes a va-

riety of stakeholders, including the CIO, CFO, business units and cross-agency partners.

However, there are different ways of framing the value of IT that can inhibit collaboration and communication. For example, while the IT department may see the value and opportunity in networks and circuits, people on the business side may not know what that means and how it benefits the agency.

“Cost transparency is really about being able to unify the cost structure in a way that can be interpreted by those different stakeholders,” she said. The IT, business and finance departments need to be speaking the same language.

TBM offers agencies a solution to that challenge.

TBM is a framework for translating cost, value, and quality between different IT stakeholders. This decision-making framework helps maximize the business value of IT spending by giving IT leaders the facts needed to collaborate on business objectives.

The framework is a set of best practices that unifies IT, mission areas and finance, by helping those groups communicate and collaborate. “These three areas have overlapping but distinct goals, and having TBM in the middle to translate can help them speak a similar language,” Chartol said.

With TBM, CIOs will have a standard method for measuring the cost, efficiency, and value of their IT investments. It arms CIOs with standard data about the total cost and unit costs of delivering technologies, applications

and services. As a result, waste and inefficient spending can be easily identified and then eliminated.

Apptio helps agencies implement TBM by having the standard taxonomy integrated into its suite of applications. In addition, Apptio has a standard technique for applying TBM’s taxonomy based on experience and a deep understanding of what data sources to look for, how those sources relate to one another, and how they drive the calculation of costs.

The company also serves as a technical advisor to the [TBM Council](#), a global non-profit organization of more than 2,500 IT leaders. The Council developed the [IT COST Commission](#), which is looking to adopt a taxonomy of cost across the federal government. “It’s essentially taking a taxonomy and determining if this will be useful for federal government and then building a standard around it,” Chartol said.

Harnessing the power of the TBM taxonomy, Apptio can provide CIOs with a business management system that provides a significant advantage in their FITARA implementation.

“The advantage of leveraging Apptio and TBM is having the ability to drive a greater understanding for each set of stakeholders in the decisions that they’re trying to make and being able to classify cost in those decisions,” Chartol said.

Rather than various IT stakeholders approaching investments from different perspectives, the unified TBM approach enables them to use cost information to drive IT reforms.

Gleaning Lessons Learned

"If this is going to work, it can't be the CIOs trying to elbow their way into their colleague's space. It helps to have a CEO who says that, 'this is really good for the organization.'"
- Zach Goldstein, NOAA

No one individual or agency has all the answers to solving IT reform. That's why there's power in sharing knowledge, challenges and lessons learned. Let's explore what government officials have learned during their FITARA implementation journey.

FITARA implementation is a team effort.

FITARA is not the responsibility of one person or a single office.

But the CIO does play a key role in spreading the good news and getting others to share the same message about the benefits of IT reform and how that translates into better business departmentwide.

An attendee at our GovLoop FITARA Forum shared that sometimes FITARA is presented with an ominous tone. The positive aspects of FITARA should be emphasized more, and that takes teamwork.

"If this is going to work, it can't be the CIOs trying to elbow their way into their colleagues' space," Goldstein said. "It helps to have a CEO who says, 'This is really good for the organization, because Mr. CFO, you won't waste money, Mr. CAO, you don't want to waste your time, and you really can't do your job without the help of the CIO, so he's here to help you.'"

"I'm very fortunate that I have an undersecretary who has a vision for doing things at the enterprise level in NOAA, from an IT perspective. And that's very helpful."

You have to build professional relationships.

“It’s not just about what the paper says, it’s about the [actual] relationships you have with your CXO buddies,” Goldstein said.

“Once a month I’m meeting with the head of acquisition, the chief financial officer and the chief human capital officer. We discuss our shared interests.”

For example, Goldstein’s conversations with the CHCO focus on shaping the IT workforce. With the CFO, he discusses how they can improve the budget and spending plan processes. Both Goldstein and the chief acquisition officer share a common interest in improving acquisition. “Those kinds of personal relationships are really important.”

FITARA should enable agencies to further examine existing contracts to better understand the work involved.

One of the big challenges agencies face is tracking IT work happening under existing contracts.

“From a software perspective, it’s really easy to just generate new systems, and from a hardware perspective, it’s really easy to call something tech refresh that is in fact an expansion,” Goldstein said.

FITARA calls for greater oversight of all IT spending, including shadow IT, to address this kind of under-the-radar spending. CIOs and their staff should be asking more specifics around existing operations and maintenance contracts, and whether new applications, software or hardware will be added to the program. It’s not enough to track only new development programs because shadow IT can crop up in existing programs.

There isn’t a standard way to address this issue, but your agency may decide to do quarterly reviews or enforce better oversight of operations and maintenance programs to identify any areas of new spending.



Explore ways to improve data reporting.

FITARA requires agencies to collect and report on a lot of data, which will be challenging for agencies to sustain using manual reporting processes.

Agencies have monthly and quarterly reporting requirements on IT risks, performance metrics, project activity, cost savings and more. To keep pace with that schedule, USDA is eyeing an automated process that would enable the department to input data from its internal system directly into OMB’s reporting portal, Max.gov.

The tool is called AgMax, and USDA has already figured out what it would take to enable this level of automated reporting. But there’s one roadblock standing in the way: funding. “We’ve identified requirements, we’ve presented those requirements to our vendor, but we don’t have the money to do it,” Anderson said.

That’s not the only reporting project the department wants to improve. Anderson is working with USDA’s enterprise architecture organization to identify all the other systems that support or are affected by FITARA. Here’s why that’s a big deal: The law requires the CFO and CIO to agree on some level of visibility into IT expenditures. USDA has a system for tracking that information but not everyone is putting data into the system. Some agencies within USDA have their own budget execution systems.

To resolve this issue, the enterprise architecture team is starting by identifying each of the areas FITARA addresses — such as budgeting, acquisition and project management — and mapping those reporting requirements to the systems used to support those areas. Anderson wants to know how many different systems are collecting data and if they are communicating with one another.

Under FITARA, CIO empowerment is exercised differently across agencies.

In an effort to get a better handle on IT spending at the Transportation Department, CIO Richard McKinney put the breaks on tech purchases for 120 days, or until component CIOs shared with him a comprehensive spending plan for the year.

Some of them already had plans. But for those who didn’t, McKinney made clear that his goal was not to hinder them. If they had good ideas about what they wanted to buy and could show that it aligned with DoT’s larger IT plans, McKinney said he would not try to impede them.

As you can imagine, “that generated quite a conversation, [but] it’s a good conversation,” McKinney said. “We’ve got to be more deliberative about what we’re doing,” he said. “I’m trying to get more to the cloud, and I don’t want to be buying more storage units and more servers.”

DoT is migrating to cloud-based email, which McKinney expects will free up 400 terabytes of storage. Having better visibility of what the department is spending on technology will be central to accomplishing the department’s IT goals, including cloud adoption.

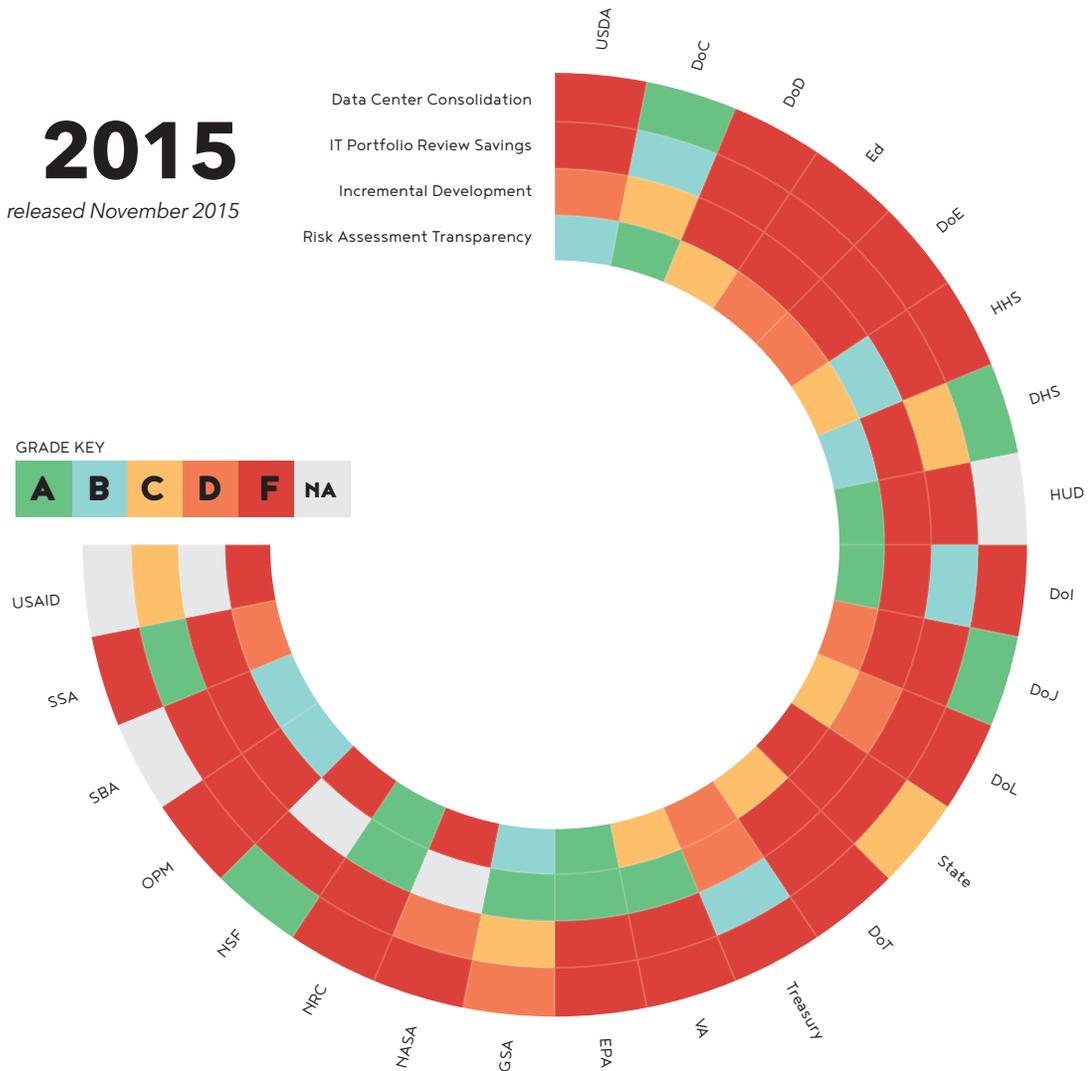
At Commerce, the department’s Office of Acquisition Management “has revised the Commerce acquisition manual so that the CIO now participates in the review and approval of all acquisitions above \$10 million, whether or not a program was initially determined to be IT,” said Cooper, who serves as Commerce CIO. “This is a significant change. Previous policy only required my office’s participation on acquisitions over \$75 million.”



FITARA Scorecards

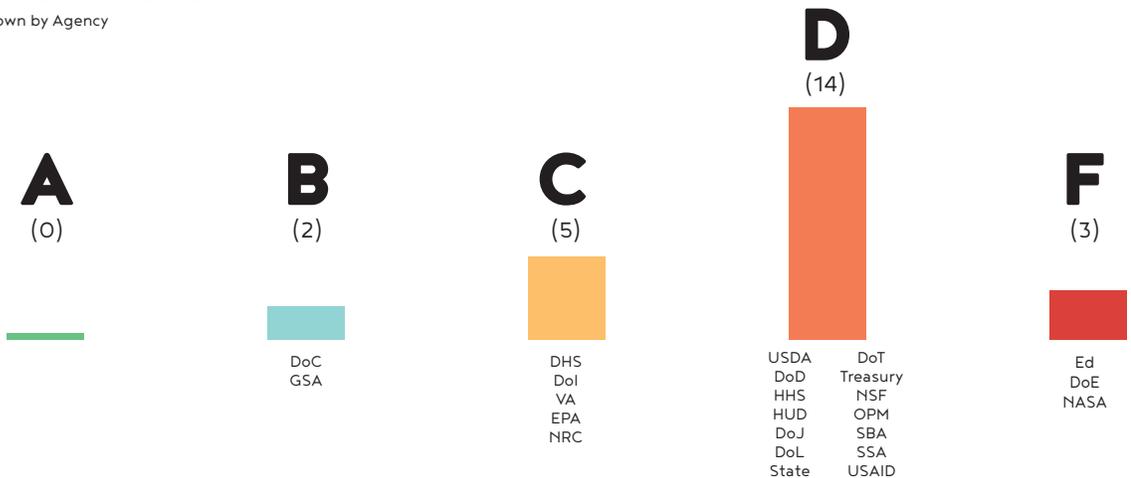
2015

released November 2015



Overall Grade

Breakdown by Agency

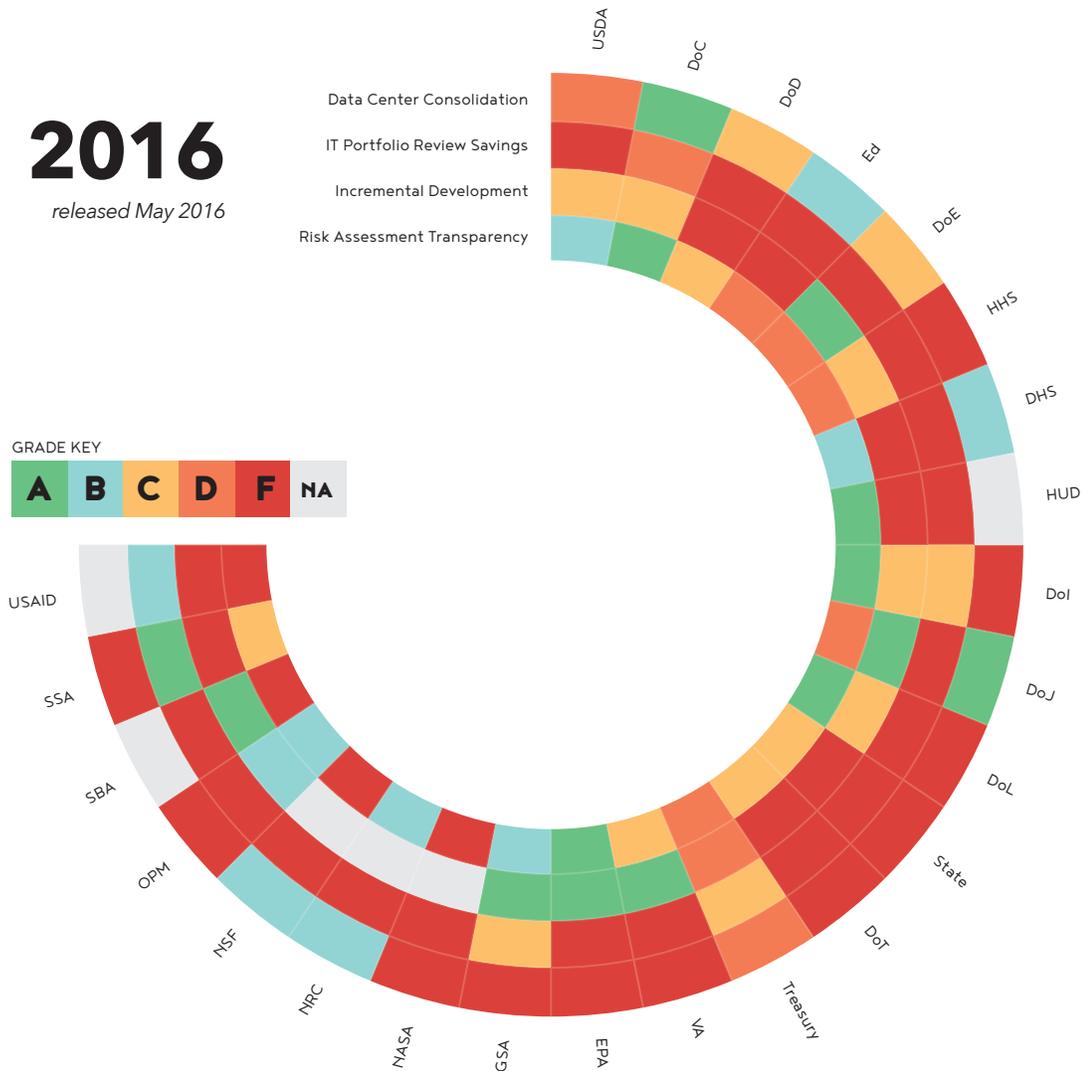


In 2015, the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee partnered with GAO to develop a scorecard that assesses agencies' FITARA implementation efforts.

Agencies have made progress over the last six months. On the most recent scorecards released in May 2016, seven agencies improved their overall scores, 16 had no change and one received a lower score.

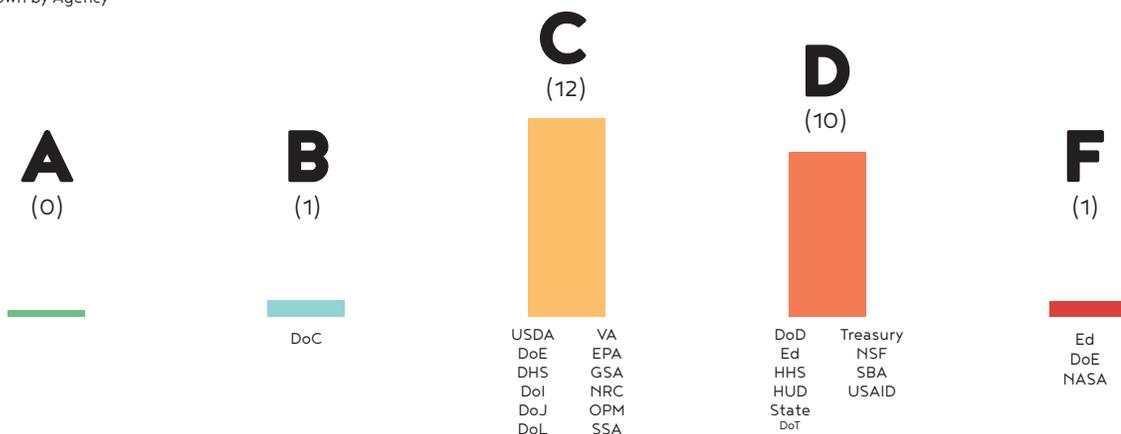
The first scorecard was released in November 2015, and the results weren't great. However, lawmakers have made clear that the scorecards are not intended to punish agencies but instead help them to identify areas for improvement.

The four categories included in the scorecards are directly tied to provisions in FITARA, and they represent areas where reforms are needed and agencies already had data showing their progress.



Overall Grade

Breakdown by Agency



The Future of FITARA

When asked about governmentwide progress under FITARA, Federal CIO Tony Scott said we will know whether the law is working fairly soon if agencies start reporting a lot more than \$80 billion in IT spending.

That's not because agencies are spending more. Instead, it's because they are categorizing IT appropriately. Scott isn't the only one who defines success this way. USDA's Anderson and other IT executives in government shared similar thoughts.

"Success is when the budget formulation exercise is done, and what we submit in OCIO matches what the budget director submitted to the Office of Budget Planning and Analysis," Anderson said. "It's when the agencies are out there buying stuff, and all contracts have been approved by the CIO before those contracts are [awarded], and before any CIO is hired down at the component level the department CIO is aware, has been involved, and approved that hiring.

"So if we have a CIO council meeting, and there's a new guy sitting there that [our department CIO] has never seen before, something didn't work," he said.

For NOAA's Goldstein, "I would love to get a call from a program manager who says, 'Hey, I looked at FITARA, and it says we should all be consolidating data centers, do you have a central data center where I can move my stuff?' That would be music to my ears."

But the concern expressed by many in the federal IT community is that the upcoming presidential election and subsequent transitions at the senior levels will affect FITARA's momentum. In anticipation of potential changes, USDA is developing a playbook that defines FITARA operations at the department and how new leaders are impacted. The goal is to make IT reform a way of doing business, so reforms can withstand any political transitions.

"If we solidify the process and procedures through a departmental manual, and we solidify the policies through our directive process, and we get that trickled down to the agencies, then it becomes embedded in our day-to-day activities," Anderson said.

FITARA implementation is not something agency leaders can force on people if they want to see lasting change that becomes part of the agency's culture. Newhart recommended that agencies build a "coalition of the willing," who are onboard with change. This team of people should include some career employees who plan to stick around and see the changes through.

"I think the important part is having a sense for what your coalition of the willing is, and what their concerns are, and not neglecting those resisters to change," Newhart said. "Their feelings, and whatever those underlying causes are, are real and probably reflective of a greater audience. So you have to listen."

Additional Resources

FITARA SELF-ASSESSMENTS

Agencies are required to complete an annual [self-assessment](#) that identifies their progress in implementing FITARA and what obstacles they face. Below is a copy of the self-assessment document. Agencies were asked to rate themselves and explain their overall ratings (1- Incomplete, 2- Partially addressed, 3- Fully implemented). If you want more insight on how agencies are implementing FITARA, check out these links to several agency plans.

[USDA](#)
[DOI](#)

[DOT](#)
[GSA](#)

[DHS](#)

Overall Rating (1-3)	Agency Explanation for Overall Rating	Agency Action Plans (provide for ratings of 1 & 2)	Agency Evidence of Complete Implementation (provide for ratings of 3)
	Budget Formulation and Planning, FITARA: "The CIO has a significant role in the decision processes for all annual and multi-year planning, programming, budgeting, and execution decisions."		
	Acquisition and Execution, FITARA: "The CIO has a significant role in the decision processes for all annual and multi-year planning, programming, budgeting, and executive decisions; management, governance and oversight processes related to IT; and certifies that IT investments are adequately implementing incremental development as defined in OMB capital planning guidance."		
	Organization and Workforce, FITARA: "The CIO reports to the agency head (or deputy/COO) and assesses the requirements established for agency personnel regarding knowledge and skill in information resources management and the adequacy of those requirements for facilitating the achievement of the established IRM performance goals; and assesses the extent to which the positions and personnel at the executive and management levels meet those requirements."		

About GovLoop & Acknowledgments

GovLoop's mission is to "connect government to improve government." We aim to inspire public-sector professionals by serving as the knowledge network for government. GovLoop connects more than 250,000 members, fostering cross-government collaboration, solving common problems and advancing government careers. GovLoop is headquartered in Washington, D.C., with a team of dedicated professionals who share a commitment to connect and improve government.

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