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Strategic Planning for Information Technology Management in State Governments

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The importance of having a formal strategic plan for managing the information architecture is analyzed in the context of state government. Necessary elements of a successful strategic plan are delineated. The dimensions of strategy and an articulation of a strategic stance are defined and analyzed. The value of information technology and the strategic management of the technology as a valuable organizational asset is assessed in a state government environment. Internal and external variables pertinent to state government are explored and developed with a focus on their import to strategic information technology planning. The strategic plans of three state governments are described and analyzed to provide exemplars of proactive and innovative management of information resources.

Information resources management (IRM) has been a part of the government landscape since the Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA) of 1980 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35). This law assigns the Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) the responsibility to maintain a comprehensive set of information resources management policies and to promote the implementation of information technology to improve the use and dissemination of information in the conduct of Federal programs. The PRA was reauthorized in 1986 with some changes, then revised again in 1995. The goals of productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of Federal programs, facilitated by the strategic management of

information resources, are at the heart of the PRA

To fulfill these responsibilities, OMB originally issued Circular No. A-130, Management of Federal Information Resources (52730-52751, 1985; revised 50 FR 52730, December, 1995). Circular A-130 provides the operational policy framework for Federal information resources management. The Circular is a strong message as to the value of information to the Federal government. It also places an emphasis on the need for Federal agencies to manage their information resources as economic assets and within a life-cycle framework. The intent and development of an IRM environment in these two policy pieces will be used to establish the context for strategic information technology planning in state government. States can and have borrowed heavily from the Federal initiatives in creating and nurturing their own versions of information resources management. Thus, an understanding of the basic concepts of these two Federal policies provides a beginning to this chapter.

The need to establish policy particular to information resources and the management thereof is clearly defined in Circular A-130.

Government information is a valuable national resource. It provides the public with knowledge of the government, society, and economy—past, present, and future. It is a means to ensure the accountability of government, to manage the government's operations, to maintain the healthy performance of the economy, and is itself a commodity in the marketplace. The free flow of information between the government and the public is essential to a democratic society.

The definitions and guidelines assigned by the Circular to key constructs of IRM will be used here to create a context and frame the analysis of state and local strategic planning for IRM. Circular A-130 defines the term *information* as “any communication or representation of knowledge such as facts, data, or opinions in any medium or form, including textual, numerical, graphic, cartographic, narrative, or audiovisual forms.” The concept of *information resources* includes the information technologies—computer and telecommunications hardware and software—and the actual government information. *Information management* is defined as the application of a life cycle approach the planning, budgeting, analyzing, dissemination, and controlling of an organization's information resources. The concept of *information resources management* is defined in the Circular as “the process of managing information resources to accomplish agency missions. The term encompasses both information itself and the related resources, such as personnel, equipment, funds, and information technology.” Finally, *strategic IRM planning* is designated as a management tool to aid organizations in the improvement of the operation of their programs.

OMB Circular A-130 clearly envisions information resources as a set of tools to be applied in support of an organization's mission. Thus, the development and use of information resources should be integrated fully into an organization's strategic plan. According to Circular A-130, strategic planning for information technology promotes the responsible use of information throughout its life cycle “to maximize the usefulness of information, minimize the burden on the public, and preserve the appropriate integrity, availability, and confidentiality of information.” Information resources are thus, accorded to management level status in an organization with all attendant management processes to be applied to them.

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