Technology Services Board Portfolio/Policy Subcommittee Meeting Minutes

October 12, 2023
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
Attendees: Bill Kehoe, Dave Danner, Cami Feek, Tracy Guerin, Rep. Chipalo Street
Hybrid – 1500 Jefferson St SE, Olympia, WA; Presentation Rm and Virtual via Zoom

Link to Meeting Video

Link to Presentation Slides

Welcome, Agenda Review, 07/13 Minutes Review – Deanna Brocker

Deanna Brocker, WaTech Deputy Director for Strategy and Management and subcommittee Chair, reviewed the agenda for the day, which involved discussions to ensure these meetings continue to provide value to the members. She also reviewed the July 13 meeting minutes. Minutes were approved.

Kickoff – Deanna Brocker

Deanna highlighted how this subcommittee serves a critical role in shaping technology standards, policies, and project oversight in the state. This subcommittee, comprising various members including those from state agencies, private sector, and legislative bodies, acts as an advisory entity to the TSB. It holds delegated authority for approving technical standards and policies, as well as overseeing significant IT projects to ensure they align with the state's long-term technology strategies and are financially justifiable. The subcommittee provides insights on strategic IT investments, aiming to improve services and achieve cost efficiency. Additionally, it analyzes and consults on IT plans, policies, and standards, contributing valuable expertise to the TSB. The discussion also touched upon the possibility of developing a charter for the subcommittee, weighing its potential benefits in adding clarity and transparency against the sufficiency of existing statutory guidelines.

Members discussed the need for a charter, with opinions varying from reliance on existing statutes to the potential benefits of a charter for clarity and onboarding new members. The members agreed to consider a draft of a concise, simple charter for further review to determine its necessity and effectiveness.

Planning Ahead - Diana Martin, Amy Pearson

Oversight Overview
Diana Martin from WaTech facilitated a discussion on two key questions: the subcommittee's role in IT project oversight and the criteria for bringing projects under its review. The conversation highlighted varying perspectives on the value of subcommittee oversight, especially for large-scale projects (Tier 3) that already undergo extensive review processes. Members questioned the additional value the subcommittee could provide, noting potential risks of conflicting guidance and distraction from project execution. Cami Feek from ESD recognized the preparation for TSB presentations as valuable, helping project teams refine their focus and anticipate critical questions. The group grappled with finding a balance between valuable oversight and

the risk of overburdening project teams, leaning towards selective and strategic engagement based on project tiers and risks.

In the discussion about the Portfolio Policy Subcommittee's role in IT project oversight, Bill Kehoe from WaTech emphasized the importance of the subcommittee's involvement, especially in significant projects like One Washington, while suggesting a reduction in oversight frequency. He highlighted the subcommittee's value in providing expertise and insights to help steer challenging projects and suggested focusing presentations on high-risk areas for more effective engagement. Cami Feek from ESD agreed, advocating for showcasing successful projects to learn from their success and reinforce positive outcomes, thereby balancing focus between projects in distress and those excelling.

During the discussion on the Portfolio Policy Subcommittee's role in IT project oversight, Tracy Guerin from WA DRS emphasized the importance of supporting new leaders in executive roles, particularly those taking on project sponsorship for the first time. She suggested the subcommittee could act as a "phone-a-friend" resource, offering guidance and best practices to project teams, especially those with less experience. Bill Kehoe from WaTech agreed, highlighting the value of the subcommittee's diverse experience and the need for focused, actionable discussions rather than mere status updates. He also suggested that the subcommittee could serve as a preliminary forum for projects in trouble before escalating to the full TSB. Cami Feek from ESD supported these ideas, suggesting mentorship for new executive sponsors and advocating for visibility of the entire project portfolio to the subcommittee for better oversight and support.

Strategic Advisory Services
Bill Kehoe and Amy Pearson, WaTech's Chief of Staff, led a discussion focusing on the role of the CIO portfolio and strategic services in managing major projects and programs. Amy emphasized the portfolio's commitment to guiding agency leadership in the successful execution of significant, complex projects, like One Washington and others, which are high-risk and span multiple agencies. The portfolio, established under Bill's leadership, is designed to engage with agency and project leadership consistently to improve outcomes, processes, and performance. The strategic advisory services developed by Bill and Amy aim to bring multidisciplinary support to enhance oversight and project outcomes. This includes participating in executive steering committees, monitoring progress, issuing advisory memos, conducting deliverable reviews, and strong vendor and contract management. The goal is to stabilize projects, keep them moving forward healthily, and scale down from the CIO portfolio once stabilized. Amy detailed various aspects of this strategic support, highlighting the importance of thorough document reviews and active participation in vendor negotiations to ensure project success.

Bill and Amy also highlighted the crucial role of the CIO portfolio and strategic advisory services in enhancing oversight and supporting the success of major projects and programs within the state. Cami Feek from ESD expressed her approval of this model, noting the importance of clear, actionable direction provided by advisory letters to address risks in projects. Bill emphasized the necessity of project success for the state's progress and pointed out the changing role of a state CIO in this context, underlining the commitment to intervene and guide projects towards success. Amy focused on the significance of governance and sponsorship in project management, stressing that an engaged executive sponsor is vital for success. She elaborated on the attributes of an effective executive sponsor, including confidence, authority, action-orientation, commitment to change, resourcefulness, and endurance, underscoring that these roles are essential for steering long-term, high-profile projects to successful completion.

Members discussed the vital role of enterprise architecture and integration in the success of large-scale projects and programs. Bill highlighted the importance of a strong architectural blueprint, emphasized that projects often falter when they lack a clear architectural vision or rely too heavily on vendor-provided architectures that may not align with broader enterprise goals. He noted the significance of having an Architectural Review Board and encouraged projects to reflect technology and business decisions against a

well-defined architectural framework. Bill also touched upon the complexity of integrating new systems with legacy ones, using examples like the Integrated Eligibility program and the Washington Integrated Client Eligibility System (ACES). The discussion also covered the necessity of developing an enterprise integration layer to ensure cohesive and incremental development, avoiding a 'big bang' approach. Bill's insights illustrated the complexity and interdependencies in modernization efforts, underscoring the need for strategic architectural planning in ensuring project success.

Amy highlighted the criticality of schedule and vendor management for the success of large projects and programs. She pointed out that many projects struggle to develop a credible, integrated schedule, which is key for tracking milestones and adjusting to risks and issues. Without this, monitoring program performance and making necessary adjustments becomes challenging. Amy emphasized that this integrated schedule should be owned and managed by the State, not the vendor, to ensure it reflects the full program scope and not just the vendor's statement of work. She also highlighted the importance of strong vendor management, starting from the RFP process, and the need for clear acceptance criteria in contracts. Amy advocated for leveraging quality assurance to monitor the vendor's quality and timeliness and stressed that vendor management should be a shared responsibility across all levels. In conclusion, she urged the hiring of necessary resources like contract and vendor managers to maintain strong vendor relationships and ensure accountability.

What's Next? – Deanna Brocker

Deanna wrapped the meeting and outlined several key action items for the Portfolio Policy Subcommittee:

- Develop a Draft Charter: The team will create a draft charter for the subcommittee and bring it back for discussion. The charter will then be presented to the full board for adoption if the subcommittee decides to move forward with it.

- Plan updates from Projects Under Oversight: Based on the discussions, updates from projects under oversight will be planned. In the next meeting, Diana will present a list of projects under oversight, including their assigned tiers.

- CIO Portfolio Relation to Projects: Bill and Amy will provide insights into how the projects relate to what is being observed in the CIO portfolio. This will aid in determining which projects should be brought to the subcommittee versus the full board.

- Highlight Successes: A focus will be placed on bringing successful projects to the forefront, learning from both successes and challenges. This is aimed at ensuring intentional and meaningful discussions.

- Executive Sponsor Training: Options for executive sponsor training will be explored, potentially sponsored by the TSB, to enhance the capabilities of project leaders.

Public Comment

No public comment.