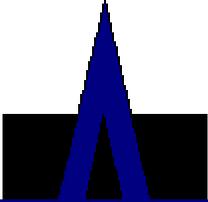


**Rhode Island
Information Resources Management Board**



**FOURTH ANNUAL
PROGRESS REPORT**

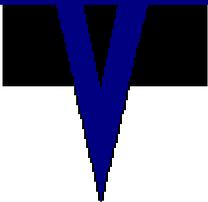
TO

GOVERNOR LINCOLN ALMOND

AND

THE RHODE ISLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JULY 2001



INFORMATION RESOURCES MANAGEMENT BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT TO GOVERNOR AND LEGISLATURE FISCAL YEAR 2001

Summary and Overview

The Information Resources Management Board (IRMB) was established in law during the 1996 session of the Rhode Island General Assembly, and conducted its first meeting in June 1997. The first year of its operation was primarily organizational and direction-setting, with the first five-year plan required by the law adopted in 1998.

Focus during the second year (1998-99) concentrated on assuring that the Y2K problem was resolved without undue disruption of state and local government services. Fortunately, because of dedicated staff and the small size of state government, Rhode Island was able to weather this potential storm relatively easily.

The third year (1999–2000) continued the Y2K alert, but after January 2000 the IRMB was able to return to priority items postponed or otherwise delayed during the Y2K crisis. Meanwhile, electronic information services and interactive government transactions became much more common, and it behooved Rhode Island to join other states in providing electronic on-line, real-time access to its government services.

Emphasis during the recently completed fourth year (2000–2001) has remained on issues relating to e-government, including policy direction for security, privacy, and confidentiality of individual records.

Although progress continues to be made in bringing state government up to twenty-first century standards, there is still a considerable lack of understanding by decision-makers in state government of the need to provide sufficient human and technological resources to allow the state to profit from advances in technology itself. As one state employee describes it, “We can’t afford to save money.” We need to invest in the infrastructure of state government—including the human infrastructure—in order to take advantage of economies that can result from use of modern technology. These economies can permit state government to offer better quality and quantity of services to its taxpayers.

Significant milestones during FY 2001 included:

- **State Portal Development**

In October 2000, the state issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for a self-funding portal to provide easy access to state services for Rhode Islanders, who would no longer need to know the intricacies of state government in order to conduct business with the state. Five vendors responded to the RFP, and New England

Interactive (NEI)—a subsidiary of National Information Consortium, Inc.—was chosen. A contract between NEI and the State of Rhode Island was signed on June 25, 2001, to develop and implement a self-funding portal. The IRMB is responsible for overseeing the portal development and approving both priority implementation of various functions and any fees to be charged to users of those functions. A major benefit of the current portal development contract is that, to the extent possible, services and information provided to individual residents of the state will be provided at no charge to the person, except for any statutory fees that are already in place, such as motor vehicle registration fees.

- **Find-It Rhode Island**

A portal-like search engine for state government information called Find-It Rhode Island was launched in October 2000. Find-It Rhode Island allows a person to find full text of documents published by many state government agencies simply by inputting a few key words. The person does not have to know the exact title of the document, nor the department that issued it. Most of the larger state departments have enthusiastically embraced participation in this activity and are entering all new documents. A link to Find-It Rhode Island is included on each state Web page for easy access.

- **RI-SAIL (New Statewide Financial Management System)**

Despite delays necessitated by insufficient funding to accomplish implementation within the original schedule, and by the fact that the Oracle software did not include a viable Purchasing module, implementation of this essential building block for efficient state government has moved forward relentlessly. Statewide implementation of four modules (general ledger, accounts payable, accounts receivable, and purchasing) are scheduled for July 2001, the beginning of the next fiscal year. The human resources module is being tested for implementation at the Department of Corrections, with statewide use expected to follow once satisfactory results have been achieved there.

- **E-Government Fund Proposal**

As part of the FY 2002 budget proposal, Governor Almond recommended \$8.4 million to begin the process of developing a stable fund for e-Government. The proposed budget also called for a percentage (to be raised each year until it reached 0.5 percent of the total state budget) of the annual state budget to be allocated specifically for e-Government investments. Unfortunately, the budget as finally adopted included less than half of the originally proposed FY 2002 funding (approximately \$3.9 million) and none of the provisions for infrastructure development or ongoing funding.

The e-Government fund proposal also included provisions to expand the responsibilities of the IRMB (and consequently those of the Chief Information

Officer) to include not only the functions of the Executive Branch that are directly under the Governor but also those functions that relate to the Legislative and Judiciary Branches of state government. These provisions also were not enacted.

- **Policy Development**

The Policy Development Committee of the IRMB recommended to the Board—and the Board adopted—a policy statement relating to Internet access and use by state employees. This policy was promulgated to all state departments and agencies with the proviso that an individual agency could make its own policy more stringent if it felt this was desirable, but that the overall policy statement was the minimum required of all agencies.

- **Information Technology Operations Center**

The state computer center in Johnston badly needs attention both in its layout and in its purpose and overall functions. Over the years the operations in Johnston have expanded while the space that the computer equipment requires has contracted. The central mailing operations have expanded dramatically as implementation of centralization has been accomplished department by department. Meanwhile, the physical facility has had little or no attention. The building is not handicapped accessible, nor is it arranged for good workflow.

During FY 2001, the firm of Newport Collaborative Architects was engaged to do a feasibility study of the existing computer center to determine whether the functions should remain in the existing building or be transferred to another location to be determined. The report resulting from this study strongly recommended that the state continue to conduct its computer operations at this site, but that significant work would be needed to improve workflow, make the facility handicapped accessible, and rearrange equipment and staff to provide a true twenty-first century Information Technology Operations Center. Again, the FY 2002 budget document proposed by Governor Almond included some funding to begin the process of modifying the building to accommodate this goal; however, only a small fraction of the funding was provided in the budget as adopted. Staff in the Office of Library and Information Services are working with the Budget Office to determine how this impasse can be resolved.

- **New Five-Year Plan**

As mentioned above, the current five-year plan was adopted in 1998, to be effective through FY 2002. In March 2001, the IRMB conducted an all-day retreat to consider whether the elements of the original plan were still appropriate, and to discuss what the focus should be for the next plan.

At the retreat, the participants confirmed that the Vision and Mission statements in the original plan continued to be viable, and they recommended a slight rearrange-

ment of the original goal areas. At the April meeting of the Board, the IRMB voted to adopt six goal areas as follows:

Goal 1: Implement Statewide Financial Management System (RI-SAIL)

Goal 2: Build a Statewide Infrastructure for State Agencies and Residents

Goal 3: Develop and Implement a Policy Framework for Security, Privacy and Confidentiality

Goal 4: Assure Convenient Public Access to Government Information and Services

Goal 5: Consolidate and Coordinate all Telecommunications Functions in State Government, including Voice, Data and Video

Goal 6: Safeguard Current Level of Essential State Government Services

The Board also instructed the Chief Information Officer to develop a specific list of activities, together with benchmarks and evaluation criteria for each of the goal areas, for each of the five years. These were prepared and distributed to the IRMB members in preparation for the June meeting of the Board; however, the June meeting was cancelled, so approval of the detailed plan occurred at the July 2001 meeting. The entire plan is available on the IRMB Website, www.irmb.state.ri.us.

The Board noted that the new five-year plan is essentially a plan for activities that relate to the OLIS responsibilities relating to central information technology services and its services provided to other agencies. There was no attempt to include an overall picture of activities performed by individual departments with their own resources, nor to include any discussion of functions performed by agencies other than Executive Branch agencies under the purview of the Governor. In order to begin the process of developing a true strategic plan for the state, the IRMB will be establishing a new Planning Committee during FY 2002, whose charge will include developing recommendations for a statewide plan for information resource management that will include all areas of state government—Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches—together with projections of costs and benefits of various methods of providing state services. The Committee's responsibility will also include recommendations concerning ways in which the priority functions of state government can and should be performed (whether by state government itself or through partial or full outsourcing) as electronic government becomes more commonplace.

▪ **IRMB Meetings**

The IRMB met a total of eight times during this fiscal year. Several of the large departments in the Executive Branch of state government made presentations to

the Board concerning their needs and plans for information technology projects for FY 2002. Unfortunately, the Board has little direct input into the budget allocation process. This is an area where the law states that the Board should have oversight of recommendations concerning the information technology budget proposals, but it has been difficult to influence the existing bureaucratic process.