



MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Legislative Fiscal Division

Room 110 Capitol Building * P.O. Box 201711 * Helena, MT 59620-1711 * (406) 444-2986 * FAX (406) 444-3036

Director
AMY CARLSON

TO: Legislative Finance Committee
FROM: Katie Guenther and Ethan Bergen, Legislative Fiscal Division
RE: Update on Financial Analysis of Zero-Trust Architecture
DATE: September 19, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The State Information Technology Division (SITSD) is in the process of implementing zero-trust architecture as it relates to information technology for the Executive Branch. Zero-trust architecture is a model that has strict validation and verification of devices that are accessing a network. SITSD has entered into a contract with a vendor with the intention of enhanced security at endpoints (desktops, servers, etc.) within the state network. This is the first phase of a multi-phase project. SITSD is in the process of determining the plan for the next steps.

The Legislative Fiscal Division (LFD), in cooperation with the Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning is conducting a financial analysis related to the implementation of zero-trust architecture statewide. We have had initial discussions with the Legislative Branch, Judicial Branch, Department of Justice, and Department of Military Affairs. Additionally, we sent out a survey to Executive and Legislative Branch information technology directors in other states to better understand how these states navigate operating information technology networks and data accessibility between state agencies and branches of government.

PLAN AND TIMELINE

Because of the challenges that exist for certain agencies and branches with the implementation of zero-trust architecture, LFD will provide legislators with additional information and options to consider when they are deliberating the 2027 biennium information technology budget. This will include:

- Specific details related to the challenges that exist for specific agencies and branches including, but not limited to, constitutional independence and federal agency requirements
- Two options and costs estimates associated with these options, including:
 - A contract with a vendor that ensures the zero-trust architecture is implemented to allow seamless access to executive branch systems between all agencies of government while ensuring that systems that should not be accessed by staff from other branches are not accessed. After initial discussions with agencies, we anticipate providing estimates for a contractor that manages network and data relationships for the Legislative Branch, Judicial Branch, and the Department of Justice
 - Specific state agencies operating separate information technology networks and implementing zero-trust architecture on their individual networks. After initial

discussions with agencies, we anticipate providing estimates for separate networks for the Legislative Branch and the Department of Justice

The LFD will continue to work with the Legislative Branch, Judicial Branch, Department of Justice, Governor's Office of Budget and Program Planning, and State Information Technology Services Division to better understand the challenges that exist, the possible solutions to these challenges, and cost estimates for the options outlined above. The LFD anticipates completing this work by November 2024 and providing the Legislative Finance Committee with a full report, that includes general information and cost estimates for alternative options, at its meeting in December 2024. Additionally, the options and cost estimates will be provided to the General Government and Public Safety Joint Appropriations Subcommittees when they start considering the budget in January 2025.