State System Modernization Projects

Topics/Questions to Consider

PRE-PLANNING

1. Building the Business Case/Finance/Funding Discussion:
    a. Have you gathered the data and created the story of why modernization is needed, in order to convince your leadership and other key stakeholders?
    b. Have you taken steps to determine whether you have enough money to fund the project (e.g., state and federal match, federal incentive funds, state bond, etc.)?
    c. See the Decision Flow Chart on page 13 in OCSE's Streamlined Feasibility Study. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/policy-guidance/streamlined-feasibility-study-child-support-system-modernization
2. IT Pre-Plan:
    a. Have you begun to research and discuss your State's requirements for software/hardware, the Information Technology (IT) resources needed for planning and project, etc.?
    b. In particular, do you need a preliminary discussion with your IT agency on whether they have or are contemplating an enterprise project mandate, or any infrastructure, software, etc. mandates?
3. OCSE Discussion:
    a. Have you engaged OCSE to understand its requirements and expectations, including for Advance Planning Documents (APDs), procurements, contracts, and certification?
    b. Have you decided whether you will do a formal Planning Advance Planning Document (PAPD) to ensure FFP for the planning activities or will your state fund planning activities on its own?
4. Procurement Pre-Plan:
    a. Have you had a preliminary discussion with your procurement office to understand their processes and timelines?
    b. It's important that they understand how many procurements you may have going simultaneously, and you should know what other large system procurements may be happening in your state.
5. Discussions/Examples/Demonstrations from Other Jurisdictions:
    a. Do you need information/demonstrations from other states?
    b. If so, with whom, when, and virtual or on-site?
    c. What should be included in the decision-making rubric/criteria when you are looking at other state's systems?
6. Initial Planning for Federal Documentation:
    a. Do you need to procure vendor(s) or will you do your PAPD, Feasibility Study, and Implementation Advance Planning Document (IAPD) activities in house?
    b. Do you need separate vendors or just one?
    c. Does this work include mapping your current and desired system requirements?
7. Risk Management: Have you:
    a. Started your risk management discussions?

    b. Identified the high-level risks of the project, including any staffing (program & IT) constraints and/or major interdependencies (i.e., other projects, programs, systems, efforts not in scope that will impact this project)?
    c. Determined how much risk you are willing to take on yourselves vs. putting things out to bid?
8. Documentation of Current System/Program:
    a. What is the status of the business and technical documentation for the current system at this stage?
    b. Do you need to update any documents? If so, what will be the focus of your updates?
9. Resource Management Planning:
    a. What preliminary discussions have you had regarding how to balance operations with project work, whether staff augmentation is needed and what procurement vehicle you will use for it, level of time commitment from stakeholders, etc.?
    b. The base resource management plan is created during the pre-planning phase but must be reviewed and enhanced throughout the project. Have you planned for these updates?
    c. Have you started a preliminary Responsibility Assignment Matrix, often called a RACI or RASCI chart (Responsible, Accountable, Support, Consult, Informed)?
10. Organizational Change Management (OCM): What is your preliminary OCM planning strategy, including but not limited to:
    a. Anticipating and educating/preparing your team regarding the many changes that will occur as a result of the project?
    b. If and how to do preliminary business process reengineering work?
11. Project Management Office (PMO):
    a. Is this state staff or a vendor?
    b. What certifications/skill sets do you want your PMO staff to have [e.g., Project Management Institute (PMI), Agile, etc.]?
    c. Do you need a PMO vendor or PMO staff to come in early?
12. DDI Vendor Scope: In addition to the typical system solution requirements, have you considered what else you need from a Design, Development, and Implementation (DDI) vendor, including, but not limited to:
    a. Will you need training for your state IT staff on the new solution/technology/tools, or will your vendor be handling the bulk of the IT support post-implementation?
    b. Whether to do the user training for the new system in house or have a vendor? If a vendor, will it be part of the DDI vendor contract, or will you procure a separate training vendor?
    c. Whether to do the OCM work in house or have a vendor? If a vendor, will it be part of the DDI vendor contract, or will you procure a separate OCM vendor?
13. IV&V and QA Vendors: Have you:
    a. Made sure everyone is clear on the difference between Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V) and Quality Assurance (QA)?
    b. Determined and differentiated their roles for your project needs and decided whether to procure both (since IV&V is mandatory for system replacement projects, but QA is not)?
    c. Decided timing on the procurement(s) (e.g., do you need a QA vendor to come in early)?

Planning

1. Executive/Key Stakeholder Support:
    a. With an official Streamlined Feasibility Study submission, OCSE also wants assurances that the state has funding commitments and executive support for the entire project. Furthermore, given the cost and length of these projects, ensuring broad support is critical from the outset. What is your strategy for ensuring official support for the project from your Governor/Legislature/Fiscal/Other key agency executives?
    b. What statistics/presentation materials are needed for these groups?
    c. Make sure to understand the importance of who is involved in your IV&V or larger oversight process within your state (legislators, governor's office representatives, IT umbrella agency, etc.). Who will need to be part of meetings, who will receive reports?
2. IT Discussion:
    a. Are there changes required to the state's infrastructure to support your new system?
    b. Does the selected solution have to fit within the State's IT roadmap/plans?
    c. What is the plan for responding to technological changes throughout the project?
    d. How scalable do you need this new system to be?
3. OCSE Feasibility Study/Streamlined Feasibility Study. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/policy-guidance/streamlined-feasibility-study-child-support-system-modernization
    a. Current System Documentation
        i. Are you able to obtain all of the attachments you need for OCSE?
    b. Statement of Need/Problem Statement:
        i. What needs to be done behind the scenes to get the Statement of Need info you will be required to submit to OCSE?
    c. Desired Benefits and System Objectives
        i. Have you considered what to include in this section?
    d. Requirements Analysis
        i. Are you able to provide all of the items you need for OCSE?
    e. Alternatives Analysis: Have you considered:
        i. Whether you are willing to change any of your business processes to match possible new system transfer candidates or other solutions?
        ii. Since OCSE mandates consideration of a transfer system, which transfer system(s) to consider and whether to travel to evaluate these?
        iii. Which criteria to use to evaluate these alternatives?
    f. Cost Benefit Analysis:
        i. What needs to be done behind the scenes to get the cost and benefit info you will be required to submit to OCSE?
        ii. What supporting documentation do stakeholders other than OCSE (i.e., legislators, executive sponsors, etc.) want to see (e.g., Return on Investment (ROI) calculation, funding splits, etc.)?
    g. Risk Assessment
        i. Have you identified your risks and mitigation strategies in enough detail for OCSE?

4. Creating the IAPD: https://www.acf.hhs.gov/css/training-technical-assistance/state-systems-apd-guide
    a. Who will be charged with writing your IAPD?
    b. What are your OCSE analyst's expectations for both the IAPD and the Advance Planning Document Update ("APDU") documents for your existing system?
    c. How much time will be needed to write the IAPD, vet it internally, and receive approval from OCSE?
    d. Creating or updating all the plans (e.g., Resource, Project, Risk Management, etc.). When, how, and by whom?
    e. Have you gathered contacts in other states who have gone through the IAPD process that you can contact?
5. OCM Planning: What is your OCM strategy, including but not limited to:
    a. Anticipating and educating/preparing your team regarding the many changes that will occur as a result of the project?
    b. Which strategies to use to mitigate the resistance to and/or possible negative impacts of that change?
    c. Which of the several OCM methodologies to choose from and to whom OCM applies?
6. DDI Planning: When will you begin discussing DDI steps in more detail in preparation for your procurement documents? These items include:
    a. Implementation and rollout strategies - Big bang or incremental approach?
    b. If incremental, pilot system modules, regional rollout, etc.?
    c. Do you need to expand your office space for additional vendor or state project staff?
    d. Who is providing equipment (laptops, monitors, etc.)?
    e. Who provides and procures the tools (state, vendor, mixture)?
    f. The number of tools, licenses, software is in the dozens. Who does the security reviews for all of these services?
    g. Staff support and training approach during implementation?
    h. How will you determine and document any data quality issues so that potential vendors are aware of them?
    i. Data conversion – do you have a preference on how to conduct, (e.g., mock conversions, manual and automated conversion)?
    j. Testing – requirements for test plans, managing bugs and change requests identified during testing, monitoring progress. What about a Backout strategy?
7. Use Case Development:
    a. What level of use case development will you do? How detailed do they need to be prior to DDI?
    b. How will they be utilized throughout the project – will they be used for requirements gathering and traceability, design, QA, testing, etc.?

Procurement

1. Procurement Approach for Each Vendor:
    a. How will you procure each type of vendor that you have determined will be needed in earlier planning stages (e.g., use the State's Pre-Approved Vendor list, do a Request for Information (RFI) or go straight to a Request for Proposals (RFP), separate RFPs for each phase/module or a single integrator RFP, etc.)? Vendors include, but are not limited to:
        i. Project Management Office (PMO)
        ii. Quality Assurance (QA)
        iii. Independent Verification and Validation (IV&V)
        iv. Design, Development, and Implementation (DDI)
        v. Training
        vi. Organizational Change Management ("OCM")
        vii. Staff Augmentation
2. Procurement Management Plan:
    a. Who needs to be involved (OCSE, State project, budget, IT staff, other State stakeholders)?
    b. How will you determine the allocation and availability of each resource (especially if concurrent procurements)?
    c. How will you ensure compliance with both state and OCSE procurement requirements?
    d. Make sure you are considering post implementation contract monitoring, amendments, licenses, tools, clarifications - planning, timeframe, resources, even at this early stage.
3. Researching competition for vendor availability to respond
    a. Have you researched what other states might be issuing simultaneous procurement documents?
    b. It's important to understand that vendors have limited resources to respond, so timing your procurements can be important to ensure that you receive enough bids from qualified vendors.
4. OCSE Approval of RFPs, Contracts, etc.:
    a. When and how will you plan for the OCSE approval requirements and time frames (pages I-12 and I-13 in the 2010 State Systems APD Guide)?
    b. What is your strategy for involving OCSE early and often?
5. Setting Realistic Timeframes for All of the Procurements:
    a. Doing the research and developing milestone timelines to calculate the duration and sequence of each of the various procurements is critical. So is building in time for the unexpected and for resources where there are overlapping multiple procurements. When, how and by whom will this be done?
    b. Are there other key groups that have to do separate reviews, e.g. does your Enterprise IT agency need to do security reviews on the top potential vendors? This may add extra time.
6. Procurement Document Development:
    a. Have you begun to familiarize yourself with your state's procurement rules regarding document format, proposal evaluation and the BAFO process? Whose responsibility is this?

b. Have you developed your scoring methodology? For your DDI scoring, have you considered trying to have a lower percentage for the cost proposal versus the technical proposal (in order to avoid the possibility of a less qualified vendor winning your project with an unreasonably low cost)?
c. Are you going to ask other states for examples of their RFPs? If so, be careful to also ask what ended up being a problem in their RFP and potentially led to change orders/contract amendments.
d. Doing the writing: resources, review process, scoring rubrics, etc. When, how and by whom will this be done?
e. How will you determine what your Cost Proposal will look like and how the vendors are to propose costs (e.g., Time & Materials, Firm Fixed Price, combination, etc.)?
f. Are there rules around whether your development vendor staff can work off-site? Off-Shore? If so, who is required to be on-site and for what periods of time?
g. What reference documents do you need the respondents to complete?
h. Will you use a vendor to assist in the procurement writing process also?
i. Decide early on who on the project team needs to be intimately aware of the SOW, Appendix, Vendor Responses. This is critical for later contract management, when you get to the Change Request process and need to know what is in scope and is not in scope.

7. Evaluation of Responses/Proposals; Best and Final Offer (BAFO) Strategy:
    a. How will you conduct and evaluate the reference checks?
    b. Will you use a vendor to assist in the procurement evaluation process also?
    c. Will you require solution demonstrations from finalists?
    d. How does your state's BAFO strategy impact the evaluation process?
8. Contract Development and Negotiation: Have you familiarized yourself with your state's procurement rules regarding contract negotiations? Whose responsibility is this?
    a. When and how will you identify your resources and establish great communication among them for this effort (legal, finance, IT oversight, subject matter experts ("SMEs"), and other contract signatories and/or approvers, etc.)? Whose responsibility is this?
    b. What are the key components to make sure to include in the contract (e.g., OCSE, IRS, and state standard language, whether or not to include penalties in the contract, etc.)?
    c. Who will manage these contracts once done and what skill sets are needed to do so?

Design, Development, and Implementation (DDI)

1. Ongoing Executive/Key Stakeholder Support:
    a. What will you do to keep the Governor/Legislature/Other key agency executives in the loop as the project progresses?
    b. Have you set expectations with key stakeholders that federal performance measures (and therefore incentives) may temporarily decline during the system project and possibly after initial implementation?
    c. Are you prepared for the fact that ongoing communication of both the good and bad may be key to preventing a negative reaction when/if major problems arise?
2. DDI Readiness:
    a. What DDI readiness activities (that are the state's responsibility) for the technical aspects are needed prior to the DDI vendor starting?
    b. What could fall through the cracks and/or cause delays (data quality issues, current system documentation, office space or equipment issues, etc.)?
    c. Will you be able to provide the number of state subject matter experts (SMEs) you expect, or will you have to contract for those resources?
    d. There needs to be time in the schedule to determine DDI approach *prior* to beginning Requirements Validation & Verification activities.
3. OCM:
    a. During the project, who will communicate what to whom among your system users?
    b. How will you handle communication internally for project members vs. for child support state central staff vs. local staff?
    c. What is your plan for communicating delays or bad news?
    d. If there are challenges to user acceptance and adoption that are identified in advance, what will you do to mitigate them?
    e. What have you done to ensure that IT Staff are not ignored in OCM?
4. Requirements Review, Design and Development:
    a. If the system solution or approach change from Feasibility Study to procurement to actual project start (e.g., new technology or tools become available), in which areas might adjustments need to be made (e.g., will you need any business process reengineering work because your new system will have significant workflow or process changes)?
    b. How will your Software Development Life Cycle (SDLC) approach work if there are differences in what the vendor proposed versus what you end up doing (e.g., you start with waterfall and end up with agile, or vice versa)? How does this impact the participation of local users or SMEs?
5. Testing:
    a. Are you prepared if your testing approach needs to change during the project?
    b. What standards will you set for issues that need to be fixed prior to rollout vs. those that can wait until post-implementation?
    c. Are the defect level descriptions clear?
    d. How will you negotiate "works as designed" disagreements with your vendor?
    e. Are you aware of tools that will be particularly valuable?
    f. How will you ready your staff for User Acceptance Testing (UAT); what roadblocks do you anticipate during UAT?
    g. Will your local users or SMEs be able to participate?

6. Data Conversion:
    a. What conversion approach(es) will you use (manual vs. automated, mock conversions, etc.)?
    b. Are you prepared if your data cleansing/conversion approach needs to change during the project?
    c. Are you already prepared to start this process and is it early enough given other states' experiences?
    d. What if you run into more data quality issues than expected, either during conversion or post-implementation? How will users react?
7. Training:
    a. What training approach(es) will you use (in-person, virtual, guided courses, train-the-trainer, etc.)?
    b. What documents will you use?
    c. Will you divide up the functionality into courses?
    d. Will your training documentation writers be the same as your training delivery staff?
    e. Is the training staff prepared for roadblocks that may arise when keeping materials up to date with any system changes that may occur as training delivery approaches?
    f. What will the timing of your training delivery be in relation to rollout/go-live?
8. Rollout/Go-Live:
    a. For rollout/go-live, are you prepared for your approach to change (e.g., from big bang to geographic or otherwise incremental rollout)?
    b. Over what timeframe will rollout occur?
    c. Have you prepared your users for any changes in system functionality or performance from what they originally thought would occur?
    d. Are you prepared for media coverage or public relations issues? What can you do to foresee and mitigate those issues?

Certification

1. Timing and Process of Certification:
    a. At what point will you start focusing on the Certification Guide's Appendix A *Guidance in Preparing for Certification Reviews* and discussing the certification process with OCSE?
    b. How will your implementation and rollout approach integrate with certification (e.g., if you are taking an agile approach, will OCSE review modules incrementally also, or will they just do a full Phase 1 review at implementation)?
    c. When will the Phase 1 vs. Phase 2 visits occur?
    d. What steps will you take to prepare the local offices, state disbursement unit, and/or your data center?
2. Preparing Certification Documentation:
    a. At what point will you begin to focus on understanding the certification requirements and how they trace to federal regulation and law?
    b. Are there any certification requirements that create issues with state law or practice and how will they be resolved? When will you discuss with OCSE?
    c. Have you determined the best ways to trace the system functionality to the Certification Requirements?
    d. Have you prepared for and run the Financial Distribution Test Deck? Are there any Test Deck scenarios where you expect issues because of state specific options, etc.? When will you discuss with OCSE?
    e. Who (state or vendor) is responsible for writing the Certification response document and gathering any supporting documentation? Have you determined when document preparation should start?
    f. Have you talked to other states to see if there was anything OCSE required that was a surprise? For example, were there any variations from what the Certification Guide's Appendix A *Guidance in Preparing for Certification Reviews* said?
3. IRS and SSA Compliance:
    a. How will the timing of your IRS and SSA reviews fit with your system implementation and certification timing?
    b. What are those agencies' expectations for documentation, etc.?