

County of Ventura
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER
MEMORANDUM

To: Mike Pettit, Chief Information Officer,
Information Technology Services Department

Date: March 30, 2015

From:  Jeffrey S. Burgh

Subject: **AUDIT OF THE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES DEPARTMENT'S ROLE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY GOVERNANCE**

We have completed our audit of the Information Technology Services Department's ("ITSD's") role in information technology governance. The results of our audit are summarized below.

BACKGROUND

Information technology ("IT") governance consists of the leadership, organizational structures, and processes that ensure that the organization's IT supports the achievement of the organization's strategies and objectives. In the County's decentralized IT environment, ITSD's role in IT governance on a Countywide basis, as defined within the County's Information Technology Strategy, includes: "drafting standards, recommending policies and guidelines, determining technological direction and strategies, Countywide network security, and ensuring that departmental systems are implemented in accordance with the intent and direction of the CEO [County Executive Office] and the Board of Supervisors."

ITSD consists of two internal service funds ("ISFs"): Information Systems and Network Services. The Information Systems ISF plans, analyzes, develops, operates, and maintains computer-assisted systems to support the information processing requirements of the County. The Network Services ISF is responsible for the design, implementation, and maintenance of the County voice and data network for all online systems and applications. ITSD serves the more than 20 County departments, as well as a number of local governments and branches of federal and state offices. For fiscal year 2014-15, ITSD was authorized 204 positions and a combined budget of over \$56 million.

SCOPE

Our overall audit objective was to determine whether ITSD has fulfilled responsibilities defined within the County Information Technology Strategy to facilitate proper IT governance. Specifically, we:

- determined whether ITSD processes are adequate to ensure that Countywide technology standards and policies are identified, drafted, and updated as needed;
- evaluated ITSD's fulfillment of responsibilities in determining technological direction and strategies;
- determined whether ITSD processes promote Countywide network security and availability; and
- determined whether ITSD provides appropriate resources to help ensure that departmental systems are implemented in accordance with the intent and direction of the CEO and Board of Supervisors.

The audit was performed in conformance with the *International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing* promulgated by The Institute of Internal Auditors using documents from August 1998 through February 2015.

FINDINGS

Overall, we found that ITSD fulfilled the responsibilities defined in the County Information Technology Strategy to facilitate proper IT governance. Specifically, we verified that ITSD has processes in place to:

- Develop policies as requested by the County's Information Technology Committee ("ITC") on topics important to IT governance, including IT quality, security, confidentiality, internal controls, and ethics.
- Assist in the determination of technological direction and strategies in furtherance of County strategic goals, including monitoring and evaluating developments in IT for potential Countywide use.
- Promote Countywide network security and availability, including maintenance of a system that actively monitors and prevents threats to County IT networks, with staffing around the clock to respond to any identified network threats.
- Provide appropriate resources to facilitate successful implementation of departmental information systems, including making project management templates available on the County intranet for all departments to use and offering project management services.

Following are details of two areas where improvement was needed to ensure timely review, revision, and issuance of Countywide IT policies. ITSD management initiated corrective action as noted.

1. **Frequency of Policy Review.** Countywide IT policies were not always reviewed and updated on a regular basis. We noted that 20 (74%) of 27 IT policies on the County's intranet are at least 5 years old, with 4 of those policies over 10 years old. One policy in particular, *Personal Computer Standards and Management Guidelines*, has not been updated since 1998 and includes outdated technological references such as reference to Windows 95 as "the preferred desktop operating system." COBIT (Control Objectives for Information and related Technology), an internationally accepted framework for IT governance and control, states that the relevance of IT policies should be confirmed and approved regularly. Regular review, update, and approval of policies helps to ensure that policies keep pace with technological change, meet legal and regulatory obligations, and support strategic objectives.

Recommendation. ITSD should set a regular review schedule to ensure that County IT policies are up-to-date and address current operating needs.

Management Action. ITSD Management stated: "IT Services agrees with this finding and is working with the Business Technology Committee and Information Technology Committee to establish set review/refresh periods associated with each technology policy in order to implement an ever-green approach to policy management. IT Services enlisted the Business Technology Committee (BTC) in the review of a revised and consolidated version of all technology policies at their March 2015 meeting with

the goal of presenting revised and consolidated technology use policies to the Information Technology Committee in July 2015.”

2. **Delays in Implementing New Policies.** New policies were not always implemented in a timely manner due to delays after ITSD was directed by the ITC to create a new IT policy. For both of the policies we reviewed, which addressed time-sensitive topics regarding social media and mobile devices, the time from identification of the policy need to the policy release was over 2 years. Currently, policies are drafted by ITSD, then reviewed and approved by the ITC, County Counsel (as appropriate based on the policy topic), and the CEO. While ITSD was not fully responsible for the delays in policy issuance, ITSD could recommend improvements to the policy approval process that could promote timeliness in policies reaching County departments. In the absence of approved policies, the County is at risk that IT practices will be out of alignment with County strategic goals and objectives.

Recommendation. ITSD should propose a new system for the drafting and approval of IT policies to promote more timely release of the policies to County departments.

Management Action. ITSD management stated: “IT Services agrees that a system and/or process that supports timely review and adoption of new or revised policies is needed. A revised approach has been identified and will be presented to the Information Technology Committee (ITC) in July 2015 for their consideration.”

AUDITOR'S EVALUATION OF MANAGEMENT ACTION

We believe that management actions taken or planned were responsive to the audit findings. Management planned to complete corrective actions by July 2015.

We appreciate the cooperation and assistance extended by you and your staff during this audit.

cc: Honorable Kathy I. Long, Chair, Board of Supervisors
Honorable Linda Parks, Vice Chair, Board of Supervisors
Honorable Steve Bennett, Board of Supervisors
Honorable Peter C. Foy, Board of Supervisors
Honorable John C. Zaragoza, Board of Supervisors
Michael Powers, County Executive Officer