CREATING COLORADO DIGITAL SERVICE
Reforming and Improving the Delivery of Information Technology Projects

Governor Polis proposes implementing a Colorado Digital Service (CDS) to reform and improve the delivery of Information Technology (IT) projects in Colorado in an effective, cost-contained, and end-user focused way.

The Polis Administration is keenly aware of the challenges with current major government technology projects that need immediate solutions. Several changes have already been instituted: (1) internal administrative directives to agencies around roles/responsibilities and procedures; (2) the creation of an IT Steering Committee focused on project management; as well as, (3) updated budget instructions for IT projects requiring inclusion of change management in the project plan. CDS would be the next step in this reform effort.

What is Colorado Digital Service?
CDS would be a new team within the Office of Information Technology (OIT) that recruits the top product managers, designers, and engineers to support the delivery of citizen-facing digital services. The talent would be brought on using a term-limited hiring authority and provide these individuals the opportunity to serve their state in high-impact strike teams addressing top priority projects.

CDS would be structured after similar successful programs deployed on the Federal level and in other countries over the last decade and would work in tandem with OIT and other agency personnel to:

- Combine the best private sector design, engineering and product management talent who understands how to design, build and deliver digital services with the best government talent who has the policy knowledge, deep subject matter expertise and understanding to navigate complicated systems and programs.
- Bring great engineers to the table alongside state agency teams to assist with the procurement process and technology decisions. Use technical evaluation panels for procurements and vendor evaluation processes like prototypes and code reviews to evaluate expertise.
- Incorporate most current IT approaches - open source, plain language, playbooks, scorecards, bug bounties, agile procurement, APIs - into project plans in Colorado.

How will CDS be Deployed?
Using the "unclassified" hiring authority and collaborating with the OIT talent team, a cohort of term-limited "digital service experts" will be housed administratively under the leadership of OIT, maintaining its own brand, office and team culture.

These new "digital service experts" will deploy into state agencies and work in tandem with agency personnel to analyze and provide guidance and expertise on critical IT projects to deliver wins and demonstrate the behaviors outlined above. Their focus would be to engage on state priority projects around modernization efforts like HRWorks or data interoperability initiatives, citizen-facing digital services alongside Colorado Interactive, bug bounties with our cybersecurity team, procurement reform with agencies, firefighting in cases of breach or data and much more.

Measuring Impact
The vision for CDS is to deliver a substantial return on investment for the state with a small team of top talent working within OIT. The impact of such programs on the Federal level and in other countries has been quantified in many ways - from labor hours saved, net promoter score as a proxy for citizen-satisfaction, and cost avoidance.

**IMPACT EXAMPLES**
- **Cost Avoidance:** The US Digital Service laid the groundwork for the VA cloud strategy which could potentially save an estimated $100 million over the next 10 years.
- Labor Hours Saved: The US Digital Service streamlined the VA Appeals process leading to a 40% decrease in claims with mismatched documents and 17 labor years redirected annually.

- Intangible: The US Digital Service created a security program within the Department of Defense to identify vulnerabilities in both public-facing and internal assets - known as a “bug bounty.”

  - Bug bounties are a crowd-sourced security model that allows private citizens to offer their diverse range of talent to contribute and strengthen our nation’s security in exchange for a monetary reward for finding security issues. The Pentagon has now held 9 bug bounties resulting in 3,600+ vulnerabilities reported to DoD with contributions from 600+ global security researchers.

More examples of US Digital Service projects can be found here: https://www.usds.gov/projects

**Why is it Important to Fund this New Program Immediately?**
The problems experienced with current major government technology projects need immediate solutions. Several technology projects that serve citizens are failing to meet our expectations as a state. Implementing this top talent team should be a priority to address these challenges immediately - databases that don’t work, preventing the state from reporting on outcomes and effectively seeking federal grant dollars; interoperability issues with child education and welfare data leave our school systems and social workers shortchanged on tools to do their jobs; and HR upgrades that are stuck with the results of a procurement gone awry.

The momentum is strong now, with:

1. a significant number of volunteer hours and expertise invested to evaluate some of our most problematic projects and have provided solid guidance and roadmaps to a successful turnaround;
2. a pipeline of 100 candidates have been recruited across top engineering, product management, and design talent - this team needs to be implemented while the energy and momentum for a new approach is here;
3. business and policy leaders and impact has already been demonstrated; and
4. private match funding for additional team members to complement state investment.

Waiting until the next fiscal year risks losing this momentum and the pipeline of individuals in the queue to participate.

**Sustainability**
The concept of a digital service has been successfully implemented on the Federal level, as well as in a number of other countries - with the first being the Government Digital Service in the UK, founded in 2011, followed by the United States Digital Service in 2014 and the Canadian Digital Service in 2016. Each of these programs is thriving.

The goal in Colorado is to build a lasting interface to government that attracts the best engineering, design, and product management talent in our state to public service.

**What is the Funding Request?**
An initial investment of $1.13m and 6.2 FTE for FY 2019-20 is requested to get this program off the ground, with an ongoing annual commitment for the life of the program. Private matching funding has been secured to further support this proposal, if state fund is able to be secured.

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For more information or any questions, please contact

Kachina Weaver - Deputy Legislative Director, Office of the Governor

(303) 883-7076 or kachina.weaver@state.co.us