



Stark County IT Department

Long-Range Strategic Plan

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Executive Summary

For Stark County to effectively serve its populous, each of its County agencies needs an optimal technology environment. To provide and support this need, the Stark County Information Technology Center (ITC), must continually reassess IT as a field. In the areas this has been accomplished, ITC has enabled the improvement of business operations through the use of technology. By expanding that approach to all core and tertiary processes, Stark County's government operations will gradually adjust its trajectory to support, or even lead, the desired growth of this community. By proactively leveraging the latest technology, ITC can ease the path for County agencies to provide higher-value, convenient, and easier to deliver services to Stark County residents and businesses.

This is no small feat. Nor is it simply an event. This strategic plan will lay the groundwork for a renewed vision within ITC; a process that will not only maximize the use of technology, but result in the optimal culture needed to exceed expectations for current and prospective residents/businesses. This plan will act as the framework to guide growth that is in the public's best interest and aid the collaborative initiative to turn Stark County into a more prosperous collection of communities, for now and years to come.

To maximize the impact of this drastic shift to better leveraging technology, ITC sought out a framework that can offer guidance. To further assist Stark County IT in providing the best service to its sister agencies, and in turn, the citizens of the county, ITC decided to reference COBIT 5: a business framework for the governance and management of enterprise IT. This framework will be referenced as ITC takes a deep look at a variety of functions within local government to ensure processes are ran optimally.

Business Context

There are a variety of approaches to building a strategic plan. One approach is to start with collecting County Department feedback. While that was ultimately the goal in the beginning of this endeavor, it quickly became important to right-size the approach. ITC was not in a position to meet with each agency it serves to solicit feedback on current and future initiatives – generally, this is done to align IT investments and initiatives with the needs of each department. Since ITC didn't have the resources to begin with that approach, they opted for a middle-out approach. Ideally, this will evolve into a system that requires annual meetings with stakeholders to step into the next iteration of effective IT; IT-business alignment. ITC needs to reduce the amount of budgetary decisions it makes independently. The next iteration of IT will be designed to decipher business needs by understanding the stakeholders' perspective and proactively aligning future spends with forecasted needs.

Whiles strides have been made in 2021, the business-driven approach will become more apparent throughout 2022. While the original plan involved in-person meetings with each agency to level-set the expectations moving forward, the pandemic required ITC to rethink that approach. During Q1 2022, ITC leadership will meet with IT-supported County departments to better understand department-specific challenges as well as introduce the Strategic Plan. Much of the conversation will involve identifying challenges and setting the expectations moving forward.

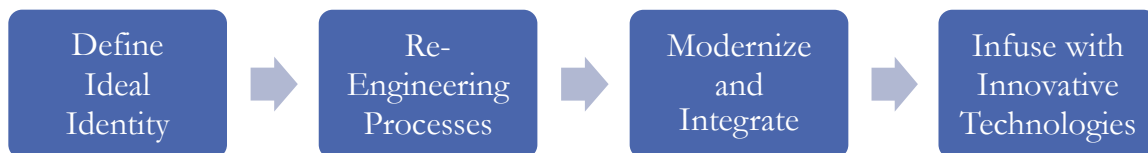
As the middle-out approach is built upon, the strategic plan will lead ITC to better understanding stakeholders' perspective and vision for how their agency could leverage technology. As the methodologies within the plan become institutionalized throughout the County, ITC's renewed vision will bring clarity to what IT priorities need to be, how they are defined, and how their success is measured. Rather than producing an endless list to add to a backlog, a tangible path to alignment will be cultivated along with its associated benefits. As these best practices are adopted, ITC will no longer be limited to only supporting the County, and can move to enabling and transforming it. By elevating the County's technology services and becoming a more innovative community, ITC will make a positive impact on the growth of Stark County.

Mission Statement

To provide applicable and cost-effective solutions to County agencies by aligning technology initiatives with department visions.

Vision Statement

A well-governed approach to technology that ensures the County's systems are integrated and provide a more seamless experience for Stark County constituents and businesses.



Target State

With the mission and vision defined, this section will dive deeper into the ideal target state. It is imperative to understand what the future-state will look like before ITC devises how to get there. By creating a concrete description of the target state, ITC can dive deeper and apply the same methodology to each subsequent focus area. To properly organize the scope of this plan, future initiatives have been organized into four categories: delivery excellence, public-access experience, employee experience, and operational excellence. Improving each of these areas will be the primary driver in achieving the desired target state. The need to have a clearly-defined target-state, to shorten any potential future setbacks, is more important than ever. More on these goals will be described throughout this plan's target-state section.

IT Guiding Principles

Local governments were presented with a unique opportunity in 2020; enable new technologies to help meet societal challenges. The need for self-isolation coaxed a lot of rather antiquated methodologies into the 21st century. By leveraging these needs appropriately, IT staff was able to efficiently and equitably provide essential services to all County agencies. The digitization of certain workflows perpetuated a sharp increase in the quantity and speed of data entry, regardless of location. The sudden disruption of many business processes offered substantial insight into system operations, and opened the door to improve communications, response times, and resiliency.

ITC's guiding principles will use technology and data to continue managing change and expanding capacities. This won't only enhance county operations and make maximal use of resources, it will have a positive impact on citizens and businesses throughout Stark County. To accomplish this, County leaders must continue working together toward a shared vision of their future. To drive success in this area, stakeholders must be aware of Stark County's technology roadmap and how it affects them. Rather than strictly relying on this document for advocacy, IT leadership must articulate their goals, aspirations, and implementation strategies. Future iterations of this plan will be informed by input from, and the cooperation of, all stakeholders. An inclusive process that gives both department heads and elected officials a voice in shaping technology utilization should be established. A smart master plan should first articulate the vision of the community. It should complement and take full advantage of improvement efforts currently underway, but also be an adaptable platform to integrate new technological advances as they become available and new common goals as they are adopted.

An audit of existing infrastructure and services will need to take place to identify disconnects between capabilities and core needs. Infrastructure and services include physical assets and available data, but also social constructs and values of the community. An effective, actionable, smart audit will do more than simply list the IT assets. It will bring to light opportunities to leverage data, streamline operations, and improve governance structures – further boosting those who are responsible for addressing Stark County's welfare in all its communities.

Finally, while advances in technology are the vehicle that makes improved coordination and integration of services possible, a smart county/community is first and foremost about people. All aspects of a smart county/community should be driven by the needs and desires of community inhabitants as they seek a better quality of life, easier access to information and the efficient delivery of services. If ITC fulfills its role effectively,

Stark County will be even more capable of providing a solid, smart county master plan to modernize services and benefit lives within the community.

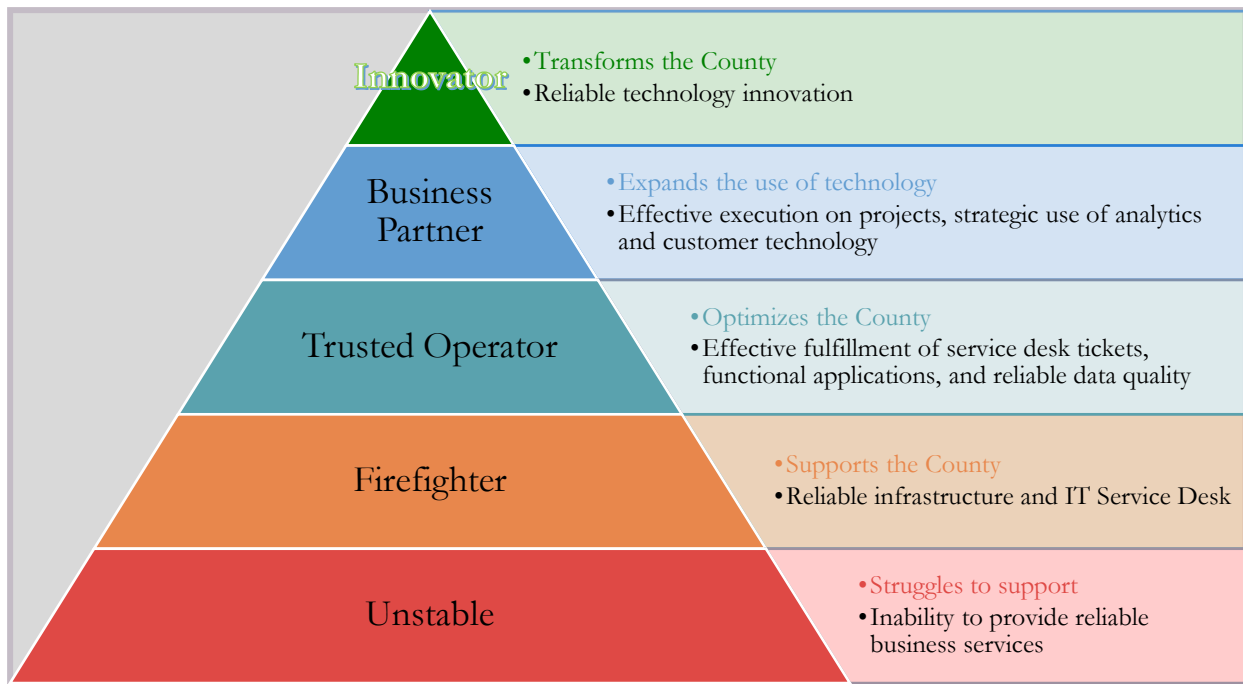
IT Capabilities

Fast-forward three years, ITC will be a much more capable IT Department. By referencing the COBIT 5 framework, ITC will become a more mature enterprise IT. This new venture takes 40+ core IT processes, identifies accountability for each process, and provides multiple approaches to improving each area of IT. The new approach lends itself well to an IT best practice; enhance, buy, build. Similar to other local governments, ITC cannot afford designing a new approach to enterprise IT; they must lean on industry experts to do the heavy lifting. This approach enables ITC to build on existing materials and advice to isolate the right-sized approach and improve IT in a tactical manner. By categorizing the core processes into ITC's four strategic objectives, one is able to identify how optimal execution of each process aligns well with target-state IT capabilities.



Target Maturity Ladder

Given the long history of Stark County IT, it's reasonable to assume the organization is fully matured. Unfortunately, age isn't an indicator of organizational maturity. Maturity is the organization's measurement of its ability for continuous improvement of core processes. Currently, ITC operates at the lower level of *Trusted Operator*, on the cusp of *Firefighter*. By the end of the current strategic plan, in 2025, the teams would like to move up the maturity ladder to *Business Partner*. It is important to note that ITC currently has processes and capabilities that operate higher in the ladder, but overall, functions as a *Trusted Operator*.



IT Strategy Scope

ITC's strategy over the next few years will be broken down into phases. Each phase will address slightly different areas of County IT, allowing for the scope to be limited in the initial phases and growing to encompass more as ITC staff becomes more versatile. The initial scope focused on defining the IT target state. The second phase involved assessing the current state of IT. Much of 2021 has been spent on the third phase; identifying gaps between the current and target state, and subsequently bridging that gap. With an elevated focus on optimizing the County and becoming a *Trusted Operator*, maturing into the *Business Partner* tier will happen organically as long as ITC strives to understand the business context of each individual County department.

IT Strategic Objectives

Defining future goals within this strategic plan has an extra layer of complexity due to the middle-out approach. Preferably, IT goals would be an extension of the County's business goals. Because that wasn't a reasonable approach, at scale, assumptions needed to be made to generate these goals. More importantly, the goals must be mutable if the intent is to expand the use of technology within Stark County government. Due to the high probability of change, generalizing these goals and then placing more narrowly-focused initiatives within the goals is a right-sized approach for Stark County. As briefly mentioned earlier, Stark County's guiding principles are:

Delivery Excellence

Goal: Provide predictable and resilient systems, services, and solutions that focus on delivering value.

Target State – A reliable, scalable, secure, and high-performing computing environment, including:

- A well-defined application portfolio strategy in alignment with the County's overall strategic objectives.
- Centralized governance of requirements processes will bring greater uniformity and cohesion when gathering requirements across projects.
- A stakeholder management process wherein ITC can identify, prioritize, and effectively manage key stakeholders.
- Advanced, sophisticated security technologies.
- A more resilient IT Department that can adapt to the changing needs of the County.

Approaches – The County is exploring, currently implementing, or already utilizing the following technologies to provide infrastructure services:

- Cloud infrastructure services such as IaaS and SaaS (infrastructure and software as a service).
- Multi-factor authentication to conduct confidential and private transactions with the highest levels of security, regardless of entry-point.
- IT performance and diagnostic tools.

Public-Access Experience

Goal: Anytime, anywhere services for residents, businesses, and employees through multiple, integrated channels.

Target State – An omni-channel approach for secure services that allows the public the flexibility to choose the best, and most convenient, ways to conduct business:

- Concierge style assistance crafted to help customers easily navigate County services.
- On-line self-service, including kiosks, remote access from homes and businesses via the internet, and support for voice, text, and chat interactions.
- In-person interactions between customers and County staff enabled by technology and databases to minimize time spent in lines and maximize efficient processing.

Approaches – The County is exploring, currently implementing, or already utilizing the following technologies to provide customer-centric services:

- Chatbots and other cognitive technologies that help provide an exceptional customer experience.

- Data-sharing and analytics that promote a one-stop shopping approach to services.
- Self-service solutions that can be accessed at any time.
- Redesigned website.

Employee Experience

Goal: Foster a culture that succeeds through communication, execution, and leading by example

Target State – An empowered staff that gets necessary training and understands career trajectory:

- A well-defined staffing plan that accounts for the workforce landscape as well as external and internal trends.
- A well-defined and categorized list of services defined from the County Department's perspective, not IT's perspective.
- Reinforced project success with maximal benefits by addressing the emotional, behavioral, and cultural factors that foster stakeholder resistance and inhibit user adoption.

Approaches – The County is exploring, currently implementing, or already utilizing the following technologies to provide customer-centric services:

- An equitable funding stream to provide valuable training opportunities.
- Elevated security training.

Operational Excellence

Goal: Efficient and effective County services enabled by technology, data access, and streamlined processes.

Target State – Services provided at optimal efficiency, which translates into speed and convenience for customers:

- Consolidation and digitization of all County forms with intelligent workflows.
- Ahead of the curve and gain the ability to presell ideas.
- IT-business alignment that decreases decision-making cycle times, and increases IT's transparency and effectiveness in decisions around benefits realization, risks, and resources.
- A fully-secured environment that doesn't impede operations/progress.

Approaches – The County is exploring, currently implementing, or already utilizing the following technologies to provide operational efficiencies:

- Create a sound forecasting methodology that becomes a lasting asset which will aid future IT financial planning.
- A budget proposal that doubles as a planning tool that will help govern IT operations and be directly traceable to what staff will actually be doing.
- Budget that guides projects and operations, track cost-budget variance, and make ad hoc adjustments to spending.
- Security training for all County staff

Current State

With a greater understanding of what ITC is trying to attain, the natural next step in planning is understanding the current state. Assessing the current state of IT operations requires three distinct areas of focus: current IT capabilities, current IT budget, and IT current-state maturity.

Current Capabilities

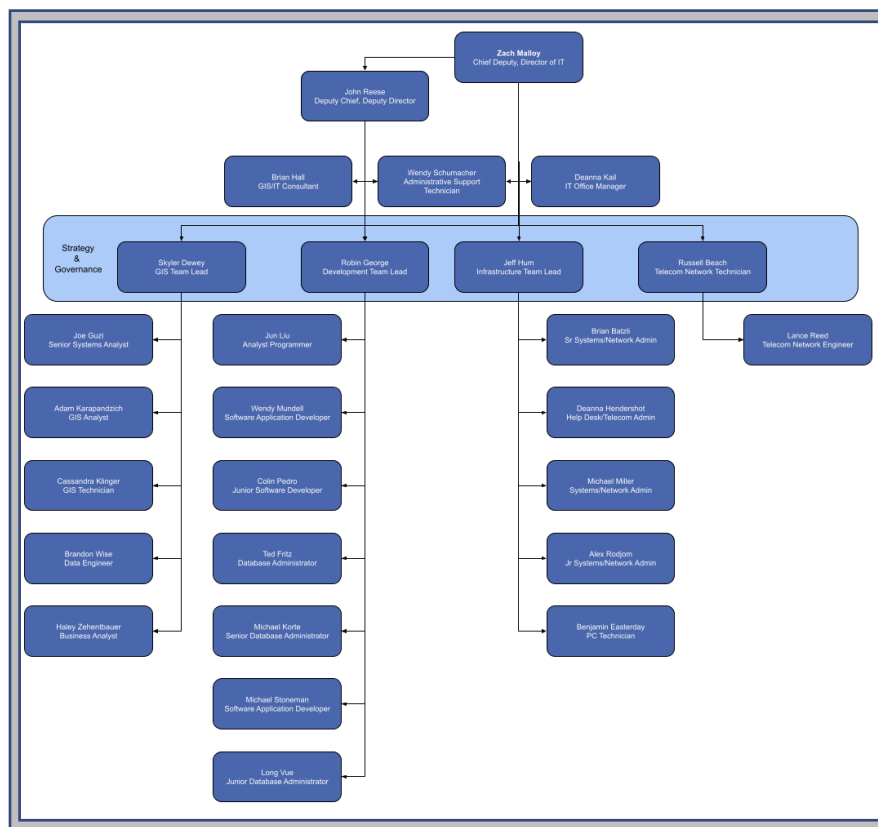
To kick off this revamped approach to strategic planning, ITC's staff completed a survey that organized work into 45 core IT processes. Rather than limiting the opinions to IT leadership, this survey solicited feedback from each ITC employee in hopes of representing multiple point-of-views at all levels of IT. This holistic approach values the perspective of everyone from desk-side support to management and was an important ingredient in understanding ITC's maturity. To accomplish this, leadership gained an understanding of each employee's perceived importance, for each core process. This "importance" was used to weight the severity of a core processes perceived effectiveness and aid in selecting which core processes were addressed first.

One other component of assessing the current capabilities was identifying for which core processes individuals felt responsible. It's hard to jump to conclusions about capabilities when there's a struggle to fully understand accountability. Two common issues in enterprise IT: duplicated efforts and lack of attention. ITC found that there was a lack of accountability in quite a few areas. This resulted in a lot of stagnation and unrecognized potential. Additionally, there were core processes that were receiving attention from multiple staff that, upon further inspection, wasn't warranted.

Current Staff

ITC consists of four distinct teams: Infrastructure, Telecom, Development, and GIS. At their inception, the teams primarily operated independently and exposure between the teams was infrequent. This approach served each respective team well, however, it hindered ITC's overall impact on the County, as a whole. Due to the ever-evolving nature of technology, it wasn't long before a single request from one department could be reasonably completed by any team within IT, using a variety of platforms. Over the past couple years, a concerted effort has been made to catalyze a more integrated approach across IT in hopes of avoiding duplicate efforts. While the team-specific tasks are still present, opportunities to conflate initiatives have been identified, resulting in a more organized department as a whole. Even though the original function of each team served its purpose well, ITC's operations must be reassessed on a recurring basis to ensure ITC continues adapting and becoming more service-oriented.

While the teams still exist as their own functioning groups, leadership from each group takes part in ITC's Governance Team. This was a key ingredient that was previously missing and has created a pipeline of communication between those with first-hand involvement in the day-to-day, and IT executives. Furthermore, this doesn't exist strictly for one-way communication; it was created to make sure that critical decisions at the top are inclusive of the insight from pertinent staff at all levels.

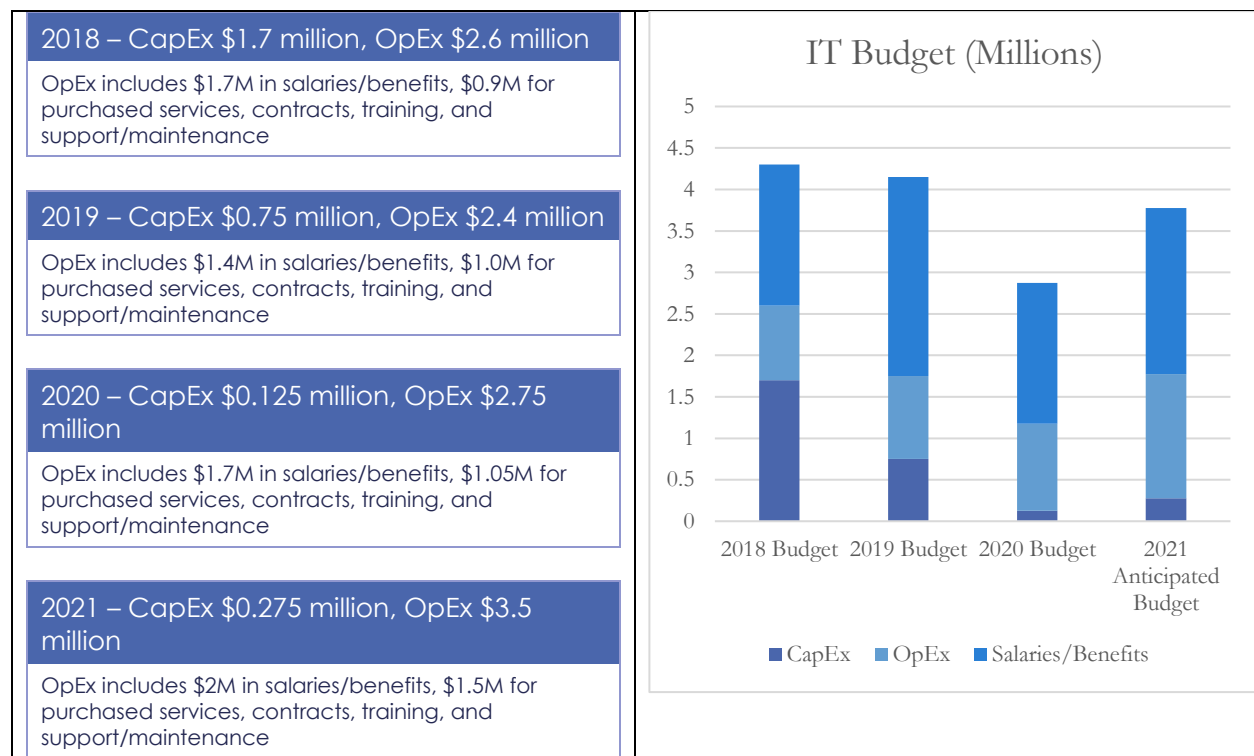


While the existing staff nearly meets today's needs, recent technology cycles foreshadow a heightened need for being agile. It is of the utmost importance to ensure the competencies of the staff continually meets the needs of the County. To gain an understanding of existing staff competencies, ITC will use a tool (see *Gap Assessment*) to identify where training might be needed. ITC will then cross-reference future projects with staff

competencies to determine which training opportunities are most applicable. Not only does this strengthen existing staff, it also paves the way for career development when talent recruitment is needed.

Current IT Budget

The current-state IT budget is critical to understanding the current state of the IT organization. Knowing where the IT budget stands today is also necessary for understanding the additional budget needed to reach the planned IT target state. Taking a look at recent years allows ITC to identify trends that could help forecast future spends. Furthermore, keeping a finger on the pulse of contracts that might be front-loaded is important in avoiding surprises. By performing this analysis, one noticeable trend is the shift from CapEx to OpEx. This was a common theme throughout the IT industry and has only recently become noticeable for ITC. As ITC continues to expand its cloud footprint and adopts the pay-as-you-go model, Stark County will be more equipped to stretch its budget regarding technology purchases.



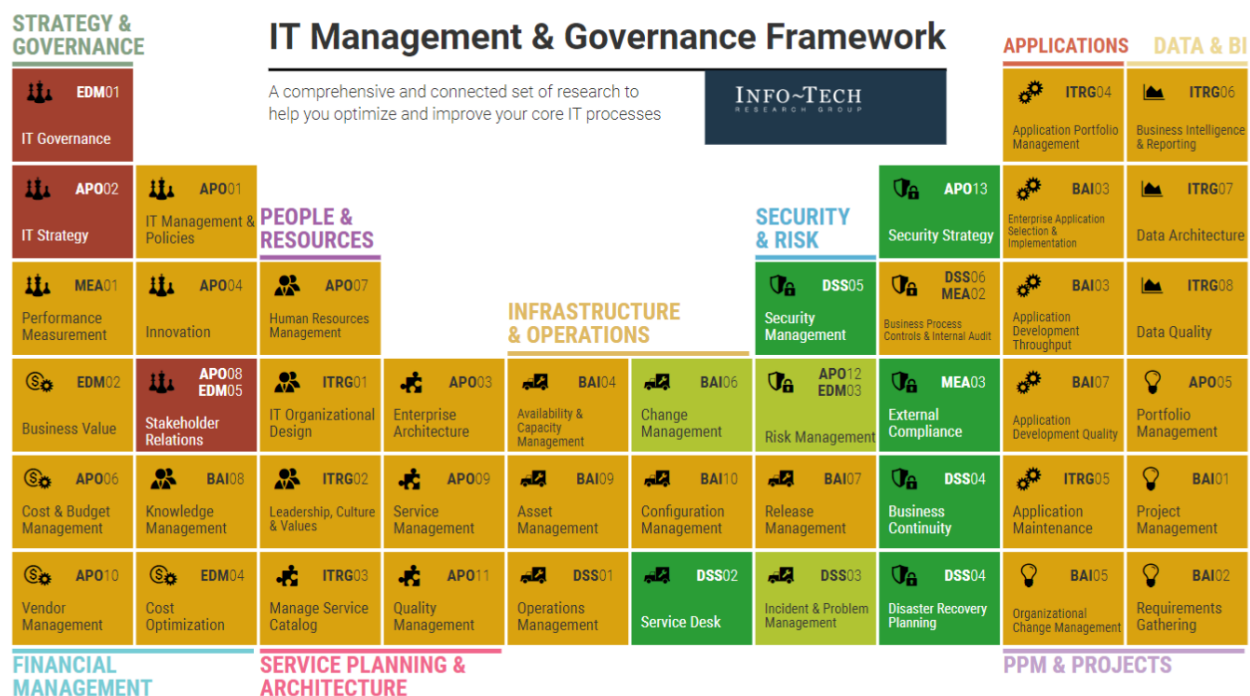
Current Maturity Ladder

As was briefly mentioned earlier in the plan, ITC are *trusted operators*. The current-state IT maturity was informed budget and current IT capabilities. For the budget, less mature IT organizations tend to have a lower proportion capital budget than more mature IT organizations; ITC tends to lean towards the former. Concerning IT capabilities, this iteration of the IT strategic plan seems to be the first foray, in quite some time, into assessing capabilities. There is not a firm handle on managing incoming projects and as a result, staff is constantly on a theoretical project treadmill without being afforded the opportunity to be proactive.

Management & Governance Diagnostic

The survey mentioned earlier in this document is the IT Management and Governance Framework survey. The result of this survey is a snapshot of ITC's IT process landscape. The processes within the table have been color-coded based on ITC's importance and effectiveness scores for each IT process. Red signifies a high importance and low effectiveness, meaning ITC should improve this process immediately. Amber represents core processes that need evaluated; they have a relatively low importance and low effectiveness. The two shades of green represent areas with varied importance, but ultimately a high effectiveness. As ITC gradually matures as an organization they'll continue to maintain (light green) or leverage (dark green) these processes.

Moving forward, this diagnostic will be used to better understand the varied perceptions of ITC staff. In addition to importance and effectiveness, the diagnostic also sought to isolate accountabilities. This was broken down into six categories: accountable only, accountable and responsible, responsible only, involved: consulted, involved: informed, and not involved. As ITC cultivates more clearly-defined accountabilities, the teams will be in a better position to improve core IT processes. Once they've reviewed their process accountabilities, they'll be able to delegate or distribute where necessary in order to maximize the likelihood of success and to improve transparency and clarity.



Stark County IT has identified many items to address in order to more efficiently provide services to Stark County. Identifying strengths, affords ITC with the ability to adequately combat its weaknesses, and consequently, formulate a path forward for its organization: one that accounts for its shortcomings while continually striving to improve how it approaches and provides services for county government.

Current Initiatives

In 2020, ITC's slate of planned initiatives had to be fully reassessed. Some active projects were put on pause and some upcoming projects were either postponed indefinitely or accelerated. The pandemic was a great example of how nimble IT staff must be at any given moment. At the onset, there were no immediate plans to support a countywide shift to working remotely, but that suddenly became one of the most prominent initiatives as the Governor of Ohio instated a shelter in place order. This renewed need for agility and scaling will forever be present in IT. This is one of a few initiatives that will be briefly described below.

Program: Infrastructure

Initiative: Apps

Project: Application Modernization

Application modernization will involve refactoring the process, architecture and (in certain cases) replatforming the application. While it's possible to simply lift-and-shift applications without doing much of a substantial rewrite, the value is often found in restructuring the application to better take advantage of modern technology, i.e. the cloud.

The challenges with application modernization typically boil down to cost and complexity. Moving an application from on-premises to cloud with no thought to the ROI is 'moving applications just to move them.' Conversely, other applications might benefit meaningfully from replatforming or rearchitecting but are so heavily coupled to existing systems and infrastructure that the complexity of modernization might outweigh the upside. These complicated issues will be ironed out as the application modernization plan is created.

Program: Telecom

Initiative: Service Planning & Architecture

Project: New Telecom System

The existing telecom system is the result of a "project-only" view that resulted in lackluster technology investments. This resulted in some technical debt that will need to be addressed with the new system. By taking on a more agile approach, ITC can deploy a countywide system while also allowing opportunities to circle back and address some of the more unique circumstances. To ensure maximum return on value for a new telecom system, the focus must be on the holistic value of an overarching architecture.

Discussions have been taking place for the better part of a year regarding the build of the new system. Among the discussions have been where this system will reside: on prem or in the cloud? While there are still a handful of ways the system could come to fruition, the most likely scenario is a hybrid approach. This means that the

We need local survivability, which causes the need for a hybrid approach. This is the best of both worlds; it gives us the needed survivability but it augments the burden of maintaining the system moving forward.

Program: ITC**Initiative: Security & Risk****Project: Countywide Cybersecurity Awareness Training**

This project could very well be the most important for Stark County. To date, the majority of Stark County's cybersecurity posture has been dealt with inside of ITC. While we do have a rather mature Security & Risk framework, it could ultimately prove to be too centralized in its approach. Oftentimes, when a breach occurs, it's a result of social engineering that gained access via an end-user with access to County systems. While ITC leverages segmentation and continually reassesses the network to adhere to best practices, it only takes one wrong move.

To provide a more comprehensive security posture to all Stark County employees, ITC will begin administering a variety of techniques to better educate all organizational users with access to Stark County-managed system assets. In order to improve Stark County's security posture without an immense need for funding, two approaches were identified: an improved security policy and threat simulations. As those items are addressed over the coming months, ITC will assess the results/data to determine the best path forward.

Program: ITC**Initiative: Public-Access Experience****Project: Website Redesign**

In 2008, Stark County underwent a website redesign. Since then, the site has been largely untouched. In 2016 there was a migration of content to a new WebCMS to allow for a minimal amount of responsiveness, but it was still antiquated. The end of 2020 saw Stark County advertise an RFP for a Website Redesign and new WebCMS. After vetting the responses, the grading committee settled on Revize. Thus far, the relationship with Revize has been great and we are nearing the end of the project. All of the design work is complete. The content has been migrated. Training is nearly wrapped up and the go-live is imminent.

Once the new site is live, anyone that visits starkcountyohio.gov will have a much better experience. All of the web elements are structured to adapt to the screens resolution and present a navigable interface. The theme among the different agency sites will be just as much, if not more cohesive than the previous design. The interface that content editors will use is much simpler than the previous WebCMS. This redesign also aligns itself well with the digital-forward approach ITC has adopted. One of the more significant benefits is the ability to turn paper forms into web forms, thus allowing users to submit information in a more streamlined manner. It has a significant impact on Stark County's Public-Access Experience, further strengthening one of ITC's foundational pillars.

CIO Business Vision Diagnostic

By now you should be familiar with the Strategy and Governance diagnostic; another is the CIO Business Vision diagnostic. In ITC's current state, one of the more significant shortcomings is the lack of alignment with County leadership. How ITC spends money is largely a contained decision within IT that isn't informed by external agency needs. Historically, many decisions were impulses fueled by a captivating argument, with little to no follow-up on the value or impact of said decision. While ITC isn't currently mature enough to catapult themselves into the diagnostic, it is an ideal that merits striving towards.

By maturing the IT organization from the middle out, ITC anticipates performing this diagnostic within a couple years. Once ITC leadership has an opportunity to undertake training and become more familiar with core IT processes, they will be functionally capable of seeking out the true need of department heads and shifting operations to support and sustain their growth and success.

Initiatives Roadmap

In 2020, ITC took a deep look at the project pipeline and reassessed priorities. Some initiatives were accelerated while some were even delayed indefinitely. With an anticipated loss in overall tax revenue for Stark County, a wide variety of department cuts were made. With all purchases being held under even more scrutiny, the project pipeline needs to look different in order to avoid spending money where possible. While this is an unforeseen setback, it does present opportunities. In order to make the most of what ITC currently has, they will undergo a thorough assessment of their existing enterprise applications to determine if they can be extended, enhanced, OR if they're even necessary.

To better explain the approach to categorizing initiatives, a brief example is provided within each objective/goal. For *delivery excellence*, the applications side of IT will perform a review and analysis of Stark County's application lifecycle management. An initiative that falls under *public-access experience*, potentially the most daunting initiative, will be the website redesign – bringing a more modern aesthetic to the County website by providing a more intuitive and straightforward user-experience. Under *employee experience*, the plan is to fast-track the creation and management of a service catalog. As County employees (including leadership) get a better understanding of what it is ITC offers as a service, ITC will be better prepared to climb the maturity ladder and reach their goal of becoming a trusted business partner by the end of this strategic plan cycle. An initiative worth highlighting in the *operational excellence* category is aggregating all vendors and contracts into a singular system for a more efficient management of expenditures. While ITC's initiatives will be malleable moving forward, the four guiding principles bettering Stark County's technology utilization will be everlasting.

While there will be initiatives that are wholly contained within one guiding principle, many initiatives will exist within more than one. An example of an initiative that will fall into each guiding principle is security. Cybersecurity is one of the founding tenants of information technology; something that impacts not only ITC staff or County staff, it is something that also impacts all those living or working in Stark County. Because of the significant overlap between guiding principles, this also requires ITC staff to work collaboratively between teams to leverage skillsets in multiple areas. More will be explained regarding this, in the next section.

Gap Assessment

In its current state, ITC isn't mature enough to tackle all of these initiatives. As it's better understood what skillsets are needed to mature the organization, they will be able to align the appropriate staff to particular tasks. There are expected to be skills gaps that will complicate the ability to succeed. To identify those gaps, ITC leveraged a tool called the Workforce Planning Workbook. This tool is a spreadsheet that identifies the competencies and proficiencies required to be successful for all designated jobs within ITC. After completion, the assessment will be performed for each staff-member, helping to understand respective strengths and identifying areas where upskilling would be beneficial.

This will enable ITC to not only increase the value of its teams, but ensure they are performing optimally. While the majority of work will continue to be project-driven, some of the work will be core-process-driven. This work will initially be limited to the Strategy and Governance group. In roughly a year, ITC will have a more refined frame of reference of its untapped potential. Identifying the gaps between what's expected of staff and of what they're capable, puts ITC in a position to leverage previously underutilized staff skills and hasten progress in areas that were previously informally accomplished, or even worse, ignored. Not only will this help mature Stark County IT, this will also provide opportunity for growth to the majority of IT staff.

Prioritized Core Processes

With forty-five IT core processes that weren't previously formally recognized in this manner, it can be difficult to decide where to start. Another byproduct of the IT Management & Governance Framework is a set of recommended high-priority core processes. The six core processes that are included in this set are as follows:

IT Strategy

Previous IT Strategic Plans were created to solely satisfy State Auditor requirements; because of this the IT strategy is less than adequate. Some existing factors which limit the full impact of an IT strategy are: the limited amount of time for IT leadership to consider county department business plans, the lack of clarity to understand the implications of those plans, and being

afforded the time and guidance to adapt as necessary. The County continues to spend large amounts of money on IT but cannot clearly see its ROI or the value that IT adds to the organization.

AP002	
IT Strategy	
Criticality Rankings 1	9th Most Important Process (out of 45) Average Importance score 9.1
	34th Most Effective Process (out of 45) Average Effectiveness score 5.1

The previous strategy was based on intuition; it didn't solicit input from core IT staff or external departments that rely on technology for their success. ITC lacked a clear visual of the target state as well. This iteration of Stark County's IT Strategic Plan is an early step to improving this core process. ITC expects the impact and result to be an informed, well-adopted IT strategy based on the business context with well-aligned initiatives. And most importantly, a more resilient IT Department that can adapt to the changing needs of the County at a faster pace.

IT Governance

In years' past, ITC lacked governance. They struggled to organize proper channels of communication which ensure the County is getting top value out of their IT Department. Throughout 2020, some subtle governance methodologies were inserted to address shifting goals (internal and external), risks, or even context of the organization. As a result, IT spend is not easily linked to value. When

there is a lack of governance, the right people are generally not included in the decision-making process. While certain governance processes did exist, they were often inadequate, making the time to decisions too long and driving non-compliance.

Starting in 2021, ITC's approach to governance was two-fold; internally focused by way of a Strategy and Governance Team and outward-facing by way of the Stark County Information Technology Advisory Group (SCITAG). With a dedicated effort of addressing both ends of the spectrum, ITC created a governance framework that opens the door for optimally aligning IT with the business objectives and overall direction of the County. By cultivating involvement of key stakeholders throughout the County, they will gradually, if not rapidly, begin to see IT's value as it relates to their respective strategy.

After experiencing a year of elevated governance throughout IT, there have been glimpses of IT-business alignment, decreases in decision-making cycle times, and an overall increase in IT's transparency and effectiveness in decisions around benefits realization, risks, and resources. As they enter their second year with broadening this approach, ITC fully expects the trend to continue and the successful completion of an IT governance implementation/redesign to result in a County that can become a leader in technology.

Stakeholder Relations

Leadership within ITC is responsible for addressing a wide variety of competing demands from many different stakeholders. Understanding which requests are most important and determining the best way to address the needs of each one can be complex and time consuming. There isn't a simple answer to prioritization when each partner is of the upmost importance in their own right. The current system of managing the ever-shifting state of stakeholder demands is reactionary. How they treat their relationships is one of the primary factors in current IT maturity. They don't proactively and perpetually engage with stakeholders – nor do they update their plan and approach on an ongoing basis.

The goal is to create a stakeholder management process wherein ITC can identify, prioritize, and effectively manage all stakeholders in an equitable fashion. Developing strong relationships with stakeholders garners easier buy-in and support for current and future initiatives. This will become one of the primary components

EDM01	IT Governance
	
Criticality Rankings	7th Most Important Process (out of 45)
2	Average Importance score 9.2
	30th Most Effective Process (out of 45)
	Average Effectiveness score 5.4

APO08 EDM05	Stakeholder Relations
	
Criticality Rankings	5th Most Important Process (out of 45)
3	Average Importance score 9.5
	15th Most Effective Process (out of 45)
	Average Effectiveness score 6.4

of strengthening all IT core processes. As stated above, ITC leadership has begun meeting with IT liaisons in some County departments (via SCITAG); the intention is to grow that into a more direct, top-down approach with those agencies' respective stakeholders, to fully understand core challenges for each agency. The assumption is that multiple agencies will have similar challenges and ITC will be able to conflate the tasks in order to align the IT budget with the most crucial, highest reward projects.

Human Resources Management

When an agency is beholden to putting out fires, its ability to ensure adequate growth of its most important resource, its people, is brittle at best. This has impacted ITC negatively, but the intent is to increase the focus in this space to aid the staff in growing along with the maturation of the department. One of the primary challenges is attracting new talent. The public sector does not pay comparably to the private sector; because of this, ITC is often at a disadvantage when looking for new hires. To make matters more complicated, many processes or applications the County uses are antiquated and require an elevated degree of experience, which generally comes at a higher cost. To reverse this trend, ITC either needs to pay higher salaries for staff and new hires, meet broader workforce demands (i.e. telework), or they must find other cost-effective approaches to upskilling current staff.



The approach ITC has settled on is two-fold. One method involves a well-defined strategic workforce plan (SWP). While this is described in greater detail elsewhere in the document, this is an attempt at removing the hypothetical skills deficiencies hindering future initiatives. The new approach will leverage a workforce plan to prepare for the future by actually basing it on data. The workforce planning workbook will be used to ensure incoming work matches staff's competencies. While this could result in advising partners to occasionally seek help elsewhere, it affords the staff with the ability to churn out higher value work. The key to succeeding here is committing to a right-sized approach. The planning process doesn't need to be onerous; once the workforce competency needs have been assessed, ITC can begin maximizing the value of training initiatives, which will have a positive impact on staff and impending projects.

The second method requires shifting ITC's portfolios and service catalogs to offering more modern solutions. This is a robust initiative that will happen in multiple phases, but ultimately harkens back to a new guideline: **enhance, buy, build**. By modernizing the platforms and technologies ITC staff needs to support, i.e. SaaS and/or IaaS, the average IT employee's workload is alleviated by creating a narrower focus. Having a more precise focus will strengthen staff skills in higher value areas. This also paves the way for acquiring more affordable new hires; by leveraging technology that is being taught in post-secondary education, ITC can expect to be aligned with the new-hire-market for the foreseeable future.

Portfolio Management

ITC currently has a project environment in which the organizational demand for new products, services, and enhancements far outweighs the resource capacity to adequately deliver on everything. This prevents ITC from taking a proactive approach to gather input from partners and forecast work. Because of this, project throughput suffers and many of the time-consuming projects don't provide clearly-defined value to the County.



ITC tends to limit its focus to project management. While the tactical focus of project management can help ensure that individual projects are effectively planned, executed, and closed, it is no supplement for the insight into “the big picture” that a project and portfolio management (PPM) strategy can provide. Even though ITC now has a formal strategic plan, they are halfway to effecting the strategy. They currently rely on a set of processes to ensure progress. While processes are no doubt important, without an end in mind – such as that provided by a deliberate strategy – they inevitably devolve into inertia or confusion. Effective communication from ITC leadership is a critical prerequisite for the success of a PPM strategy. Without two-way communication, dedicated efforts to reconcile supply and demand, and improve the strategic value of ITC’s project activity, could be diminished by inconsistent leadership. A strategy that is informed by county agencies lends itself well to being adopted by county agencies. Ultimately, this approach will help bring order to project activity.

ITC will begin managing the portfolio as more than just the sum of its parts (projects). The future ITC service catalog won’t simply be a collection of individual projects, rather a collection of portfolios: an infrastructure portfolio, an application portfolio, and a project portfolio. The ultimate goal is to create a coherent strategy and maximize the sum of values that projects deliver as a whole. By translating this methodology into articulate value upfront, acquiring buy-in from stakeholders becomes easier. Furthermore, this simplifies the path to implementation and is much more sustainable.

By leveraging the “Develop a Project Portfolio Management Strategy” blueprint, ITC will be able to drive a higher value and performance in this area. With the right PPM strategy, there is a higher probability of driving the throughput of the best projects and maximizing stakeholder satisfaction with IT. As ITC builds out their portfolios and adjusts the work to match the needs of Stark County’s government, ITC will have transcended the ability to not only do projects the right way (i.e. project management), but they’ll finally be executing the right projects (i.e. portfolio management).

Manage Service Catalog

As a result of constantly trying to keep up, IT tends to be an afterthought when it comes to system acquisitions or needs assessments. Because of this, County agencies don't know what breadth of services are available to them. Furthermore, it is difficult for County agencies to obtain useful information regarding services because they are often described in technical

language. On the contrary, there are occasionally County agencies that have unrealistic expectations of what IT can do for them. Because of this inconsistency, there is no defined agreement on what is available, ergo County agencies make assumptions.

ITRG03	
Manage Service Catalog	
Criticality Rankings 6	45th Most Important Process (out of 45) Average Importance score 7.5
	45th Most Effective Process (out of 45) Average Effectiveness score 3.0

ITC enterprise services aren't clearly separated from Line of Business (LOB) services. By clearly defining their difference and documenting service definitions, it will be easier for users to navigate a service catalog, which will lead to a higher chance of user acceptance. While that is something ITC could start now, there is a process to determining which services currently offered are relevant to County agencies. Additionally, ITC isn't certain if there are desired services for which are NOT currently planned.

The plan is to continue leveraging SCITAG to better understand which services are most important and whether ITC currently supplies them or not. As ITC gains insight into those needs, the services must be defined from the business user's perspective, not IT's perspective. A service catalog is of no use if a user looks at it and sees a significant amount of information that doesn't apply to them. A well-defined and categorized list of services ensures the service catalog remains a living document. If successful, ITC will have built a formal bridge between IT and county agencies. ITC can then begin transforming the perception of IT within the organization by communicating the benefits of the service catalog. This will be a critical step in moving up the IT maturity ladder and becoming a trusted business partner.

Communication Plan

No matter how effectively ITC accomplishes the tasks throughout this plan, much of it will fall short of its potential if it's not communicated well. It is important to recognize there are multiple audiences which each require a different level of detail. To ensure that Stark County's IT strategic plan is clearly communicated across both IT and county departments, the following rollout strategy was developed:

Audience	Channel	Level of Detail	Description	Timing
IT Management Team	Email, Meetings	All	- Distribute plan; solicit feedback - Address manager questions to equip them to answer employee questions	Q3 2021, (before entire IT team)
IT Team	Email, Q&A sessions following	IT summary deck	- Roll out after corporate strategy, in same form of communication - Solicit feedback, address questions	Q3 2021 (after IT management team)
Select Business Stakeholders	Presentations	Executive deck	Pilot test for feedback prior to Executive engagement	Q4 2021
Executive Team	Email, Briefing	Executive deck	- Distribute plan - Distribute Executive Brief	Q4 2021 (followed by being published on County website)

Future IT Initiatives

With such a wide range of areas to improve, ITC won't be able to make a concerted effort in all spaces within the span of this Strategic Plan. The IT core processes are broken down into nine categories. Of those, ITC only has immediate plans to formally address portions of Strategy & Governance, People & Resources, Service Planning & Architecture, and PPM & Projects. As ITC continues to accomplish some of the self-assigned prerequisites throughout this strategic plan, ITC will gradually mature as an organization so they have the resources needed to venture into the remaining core processes.

In order to continue reducing the amount of application sprawl, ITC will expand its focus on cloud-provided solutions. Two platforms that will gain elevated attention will be Microsoft Office365 and the County's telecommunications system. Stepping into Office365 will present its own unique challenges. While some County staff is most likely familiar with the suite of interconnected apps and collaboration capabilities, ITC recognizes that might not be the case for all staff. ITC will need to explore how to best deploy this new technology without missing an opportunity to help County employees refresh processes leveraging Microsoft products. By continuing to offset some of the application administration by leveraging Office365, staff will gradually gain more time and begin making a larger dent into the many legacy applications that are at or near their end of life. Each of these platforms present their own unique challenges.

In regards to the County's telecom system, ITC will take an evolved approach to acquiring a new system. Rather than repeating the process of buying equipment past its half-life, the County will step into a subscription-based approach that aids in remaining consistent and current. The previous approach has trapped ITC in a cycle of using antiquated equipment that prevents adoption of modern features. Another common theme is that the importance of scalability and adaptability has become paramount. With a significant number of outlets reporting that telework is here to stay, it is of the utmost importance to ensure ITC can support a hybrid workforce. A next generation telecom system is paramount in supporting Stark County's current and future employees.

Security will continue to play a role in each guiding principle. Its impact on future initiatives will be everlasting and ITC's approach with security must remain dynamic. Today's cybersecurity threat landscape is incredibly volatile and requires constant reassessment. Since governmental network assets are deemed as high priorities for cybercriminals, ITC leadership must be able to cope with the changing threats. Moving to the cloud doesn't simply solve the issue; at best it augments the responsibility. As long as Stark County continues to manage devices locally, this will consume a lot of focus from each ITC team. One way to reduce the capacity required to ensure a secure environment is to begin moving certain platforms to the cloud. This process has already begun and will continue throughout the remainder of this strategic plan cycle. While cloud isn't always the answer, it merits consideration with any significant shift in work.

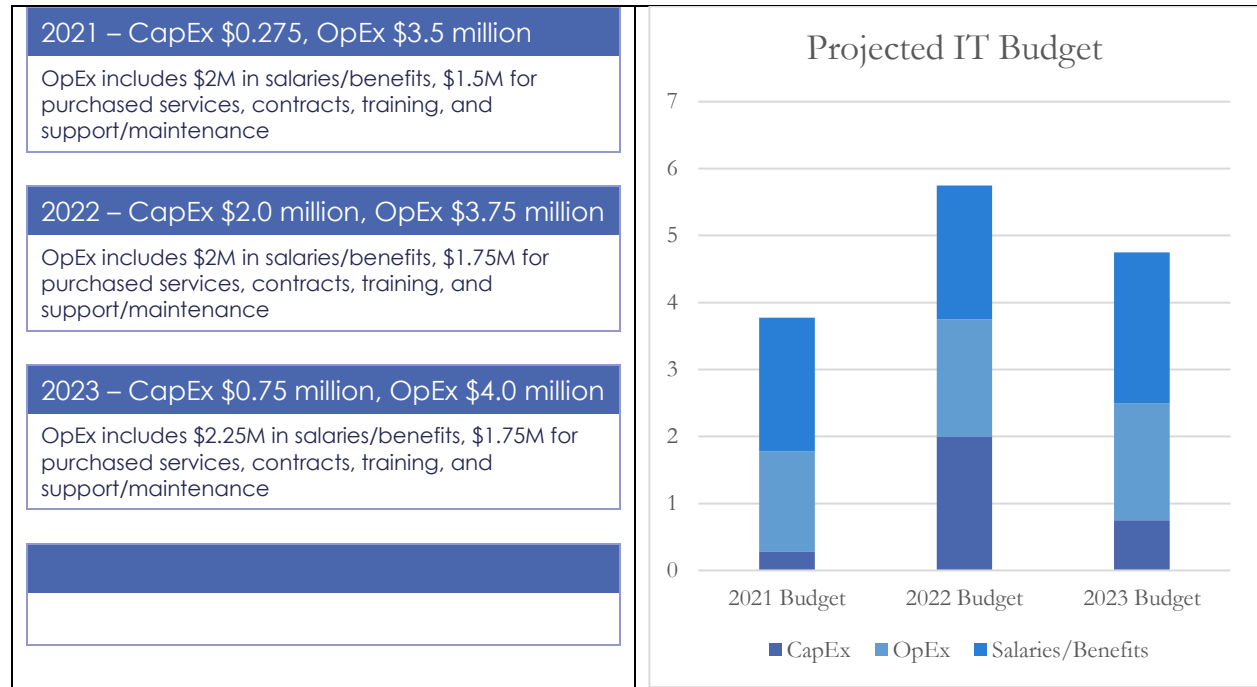
Refresh Plan

Stark County's IT strategic plan is not meant to be a static one-time review, rather an evolving roadmap that continues to align with business and industry needs. To this end, the following refresh plan was established.

Strategically, the refresh cycle can be broken down into three time-units of measure; quarterly, annually, and every three years. On a quarterly basis, the emphasis will be on the IT management team. Internally, this is the team within IT that focuses on strategy and governance and is made up of leaders from the divisions within County IT. The items refreshed on a quarterly basis will include: initiatives status updates, business updates, new projects, risks/constraints, changes in priorities, updates. On an annual basis, there will be an internal and external effort made. Internally, ITC leadership will gauge progress relating to IT core processes. Furthermore, the findings will be reviewed and will act as a means to validate strategy. Externally, these efforts will be well-communicated to elected officials to ensure their visions are considered and ideally met.

The refresh cycle for hardware is currently not as regimented and is more heavily dependent on the County's fiscal health. Historically, the refresh of hardware has been reliant on capital dollars being available, not necessarily because it needs refreshed. Over the past six years ITC has been very fortunate to address all hardware replacement needs. In order to adjust to what will likely be a drastic shift in how county staff operates, ITC created a goal: design and support a continuously evolving robust and resilient IT infrastructure that supports remote workers in a variety of networks. This will involve designing and supporting a continuously evolving, robust, and resilient IT infrastructure through the use of emerging technologies (i.e. cloud technologies) and timely replacement and upgrades. The Infrastructure team will work towards developing and maintaining a roadmap for the next seven years to meet anticipated growth and rapidly evolving business needs. Roughly, the plan will involve stepping into a hybrid infrastructure approach. Hardware or solutions that are reaching their end of life will be assessed to determine the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of migrating said content to SaaS or IaaS. As ITC begins to morph the infrastructure, they will be more capable of responding not only to day-to-day requests, but also much more resilient and capable of quickly responding to disasters.

Projected IT Budget



Executive Level Involvement

To truly capitalize on the content addressed in this strategic plan, it will need to be formally presented to the Automatic Data Processing Board on an annual basis. Any content that changes annually will be highlighted to ensure ITC's scope of work is continually aligned with the business needs of Stark County agencies.