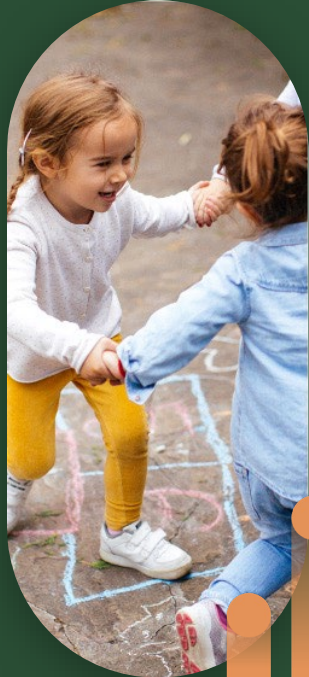


What you've always wanted to know about working with IT vendors, but were too afraid to ask



BUILD Conference Session
Thursday, Dec 1, 2023
8:00-9:30am PST



Session Description

IT projects are integral to accelerated innovations in the early childhood system. Join our conversation with three former State Administrators who, over their career trajectory have led IT projects as both a state employee and as a vendor.

We highly encourage an open and bold atmosphere. Let's ask tough questions and actively listen from both perspectives – the state and the IT vendor.

Panel

Melanie Brizzi, Leigh Bolick, Michelle Thomas

Facilitator

Tameika Leslie



Introductions and Audience Check In

Meet the Panel

Rules of Engagement

- Information from this session may be summarized and disseminated for educational purposes. Names of people, states and IT vendors will not be shared.
- Encourage open, honest and constructive dialogue.

Audience Poll

Show of hands. How many of you represent:

- State staff
- State partner staff
- Federal staff
- Technical Assistance staff
- IT Vendor staff
- Other





Participant Experience

It is only failure when you fail to learn from it.

- Have you been part of an IT project that failed?
- What lessons did you learn that can inform future strategies to increase likelihood of state IT project success?





When you took your current role, what expectations did you have about the skills, knowledge and time you would need to lead or support IT projects?



Panelist Discussion

What surprised you the most when you were a state employee working with IT vendors?

If you could go back in time and give your state self advice about working on IT projects, what would you say?



Audience Reaction

Share your reaction to the Panel Discussion.

- What resonated with you?
- What surprised you?
- What do you want to talk more about during this session?



Audience Insights

What are some key factors that contribute to the complexity of state IT projects?



Small Group Discussion and Report Out #1

At your table, please discuss and be prepared to report out the following:

Share success stories, best practices and lessons learned about successful partnerships between States and IT vendors.

- What made the collaborations successful?
- What has to happen to foster positive partnerships and outcomes?



Small Group Discussion and Report Out #2

At your table, please discuss and be prepared to report out the following:

What are the critical skills, knowledge and qualities State leaders need to navigate the complexities of state IT projects?

- Are they the same skills needed by IT vendor leaders?
- Could professional development and training play a role in mitigating the complexities of state IT projects? How?



Call to Action

From your experience and from the information discussed in this exploratory conversation, *what actions can be taken to promote successful State and IT vendor relationships?*

- Think broadly about the variety of groups that could contribute to solutions, such as:
 - State Agencies
 - IT Vendor Industry
 - Subject Matter Experts
 - Technical Assistance Consultants
 - Advocates



Supporting Resources

1. Coffey, M., Sirinides, P., Dabbs, E., and Havrilla, A. (2023). *Building Capacity to Implement ECIDS: Leadership Staffing*. ECE Dataworks. Taken from: <https://repository.upenn.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/9929736e-cade-4ec0-85bb-9dd0a338679e/content>
2. Opportunities Exchange. (2022). *ECE Tech Definitions and FAQs*. Taken from https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5f4d7a7ef6c82325c5ec80c0/t/638a6fe223d4a57fe0c26523/1670016994494/OppEx_2022_ECE+Tech+Definitions+and+FAQs.pdf
3. DaSy (2016). *What does it take to create a good RFP for a new data system?* Taken from: <https://dasycenter.org/what-does-it-take-to-create-a-good-rfp-for-a-new-data-system/>
4. 18F. (2020). *De-risking government technology: federal agency field guide*. Taken from: <https://derisking-guide.18f.gov/assets/federal-field-guide-1181ce6978abaf2cbfe3111a2455504cec7a84e3504abad100b71b1b50c6c23f.pdf>





Leadership Lessons

Establish good relationships with the IT staff in your agency as well as in the state agency with overall IT responsibility.

Embrace failure, as these rich learning experiences will inform future projects.

Involve stakeholders in the project and rely on the expertise of those working with the system.

Define what success looks like before initiating the procurement process.

Manage staff expectations by incorporating industry- standard organizational management principles.

Vendor Challenges and Barriers

IT project terminology is like learning a new language and vendors can be difficult to understand; they sometimes use this to their advantage.

Collaboration between vendors can be difficult when linking data or ensuring knowledge transfer.

Some vendors overpromise solutions that actually increase costs as well as the project timeline.

Limited internal agency resources may impact the ability to negotiate agency projects; this can negatively affect data systems and state policies and procedures.

Opportunities and Success Stories

Good vendor experiences establish trust and inform future project management and vendor selection.

Choosing a team of IT, policy, and user experts will provide the greatest chance of success.

Prior to development of procurements, learn project management terms and work on system documentation so the system requirements are clear to potential vendors.

Design systems that are easily modified and ensure that knowledge transfer is thoroughly addressed.

Building Leadership Capacity

Be a leader who invites participation; involve stakeholders to inform strategy.

Learn project management language and concepts (including knowledge transfer and change management) and keep asking questions until you completely understand.

Be clear on how future system improvements will be made, who owns the code, and how licenses transfer (including costs) prior to selecting a vendor.

Establish success metrics and measure them rigorously.

Key Discussion Take-Aways from Session