

IT/Telecommunications Subcommittee - Recommendations -

3.1 Phones/Lines/etc.

Several areas of potential savings surfaced from information provided by CIT and discussions amongst the subcommittee members regarding areas within IC's where IT/Telecommunications costs could be addressed. These included:

3.1.1 Management oversight of renovations; use and procurement of telephones and phone lines

Recommendation: Work closely with CIT to plan telephones and line changes so that time frames allow low cost installation, reuse of phones as appropriate and removal of old lines no longer used. Savings at IC Level (1).

CIT: CIT will work with ICs to help establish and promulgate the use of standard installation services when high cost priority services are not needed.

3.1.2 Periodic reviews of existing phones and lines.

Recommendation: Due to the high cost per line, a periodic review of all phone lines should be completed. Depending on the size of the IC this may be semi-annual or annual. This will make sure that an IC is not paying for lines not in use or lines used by other ICs. Savings at IC Level (1).

CIT: CIT will work with ICs to review their existing lines. This is currently a service available for a minor cost to the ICs.

3.1.3 Training and procedural reviews concerning the authorization of Moves/Adds/Changes (MAC's), as they relate to IT/Telecommunications' costs.

Recommendation : AOs involved in telecom or network ordering should take advantage of training provided by CIT to inform the AO of how telecom charges are calculated and how urgency of moves/adds/changes can affect charges. This will make sure that any orders placed for telecom services are informed decisions. The current course is being reviewed to be included in the AO Competency Model as an Operations Course and to make sure AO needs are met particularly in financial tracking and other costs. Savings at IC Level (1).

3.1.4 Phone lines enabled for direct international calling cost more.

Recommendation: Work with CIT to identify which lines have direct international calling capability and remove that feature where not necessary. Savings at IC Level (1).

CIT: CIT agrees this is a worthwhile effort and will help the ICs to accomplish this recommendation.

3.2 Networking

3.2.1 Several areas surfaced from information provided by CIT and discussions amongst the subcommittee members regarding existing networks and networking in renovations or in new buildings where costs could be addressed by considering a "consolidation of services".

Recommendation: ICs should work closely with CIT and other ICs within the building affected by the renovations or in the new building to consider cost savings due to consolidating network hardware and fiber installation across ICs. Savings at Multiple IC level (2).

CIT: CIT will work with the ICs to study how this costs savings process can be established and become part of the construction process.

3.2.2 Institutes are paying large amounts of money for network support with difficulty in maintaining federal or contractor staff with the necessary expertise.

Recommendation: ICs should investigate creating a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with CIT to provide IC specific network support at a lower cost. Savings at IC Level (1)

3.3 Blackberries/Cell Phones

Potential savings in the procurement and use of blackberries and cell phones emerged from discussion between the subcommittee members and several IC AO's. The discussion included the following:

3.3.1 Fragmented acquisition of cell phones and Blackberry's results in high per item costs and expensive ongoing contracts.

Recommendations: Consolidate the purchase and ongoing service contracts of cell phones, Blackberry's or combination cell phone/Blackberry's so that economies of scale result in lower costs and more coordination among users and IC purchasers. Savings at IC Level (1).

Consolidation across ICs could result in even larger savings. One IC could become a service center for cell phone and or Blackberry purchases, contracts, and billing. Companies now exist to coordinate these functions on a fee-for-service basis. Saving could result at multiple ICs Level (2).

CIT: CIT has piloted a project consolidating purchases. They can disseminate this information as well as HHS OPDIVS efforts in this regard.

3.3.2 Due to a mismatch between cell and Blackberry usage plans (minutes per month) and actual usage, bills can be hard to estimate and can be extremely high from month to month.

Recommendation: Establish ongoing monthly review of all phone and Blackberry bills to constantly monitor usage vs. plan allowances so that necessary adjustments can be made immediately. Review and update policies on use of cell phones for government business. Savings at IC Level (1).

3.3.3 Users are unaware of what plans they are enrolled in and how to monitor usage to stay within established plan limits.

Recommendations: ICs should establish training or orientations for each cell and Blackberry user so that each user becomes a knowledgeable consumer. Savings at IC Level (1).

3.4 Applications

Applications were divided into two main categories – *Administrative* and *Scientific*.

3.4.1 In many cases there are administrative (commercial) software packages used by multiple ICs where the costs are not based on the volume of sales at the NIH.

Recommendation: ICs work together to negotiate lower costs with the vendor or work with the NIH OD procurement office to negotiate lower costs. Savings at multiple IC level (2).

3.4.2 Proprietary software, both administrative and scientific in nature, developed by the ICs is not publicized or shared across ICs resulting in lost opportunities for improved efficiencies or higher costs due to duplication of the software.

Recommendation: Information on IC developed software should be shared in a central repository with a standard format for explaining functionality and implementation requirements. Savings at the multiple IC Level (2).