

Aitkin County Board of Commissioners
Request for County Board Action/Agenda Item Cover Sheet



To: Chairperson, Aitkin County Board of Commissioners Date: 7/18/12

Via: Patrick Wussow, County Administrator

From: Mike Dangers, County Assessor and Kirk Peysar, County Auditor

Title of Item:

Minnesota County Information Systems Strategic Planning Initiatives and Funding Request

Requested Meeting Date: 7/24/12 Estimated Presentation Time: 20 minutes

Presenter: Mike Dangers and Kirk Peysar

Type of Action Requested (check all that apply)

- For info only, no action requested
- For discussion only with possible future action
- Let/Award Bid or Quote (attach copy of basic bid/quote specs or summary of complex specs, each bid/quote received & bid/quote comparison)
- Approve/adopt proposal by motion
- Authorize filling vacant staff position
- Request to schedule public hearing or sale
- Request by member of the public to be heard
- Item should be addressed in closed session under MN Statute _____
- Approve under Consent Agenda
- Adopt Ordinance Revision
- Approve/adopt proposal by resolution (attach draft resolution)
- Other (please list) _____

Fiscal Impact (check all that apply)

- Is this item in the current approved budget? Yes _____ No (attach explanation)
- What type of expenditure is this? Operating Capital Other (attach explanation)
- Revenue line account # that funds this item is: _____
- Expenditure line account # for this item is: _____

Staffing Impact (Any yes answer requires a review by Human Resources Manager before going to the board)

- Duties of a department employee(s) may be materially affected. Yes No
- Applicable job description(s) may require revision. Yes No
- Item may impact a bargaining unit agreement or county work policy. Yes No
- Item may change the department's authorized staffing level. Yes No



Supporting Attachment(s)

- Memorandum Summary of Item
- Copy of applicable county policy and/or ordinance (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable state/federal statute/regulation (excerpts acceptable)
- Copy of applicable contract and/or agreement
- Original bid spec or quote request (excluding complex construction projects)
- Bids/quotes received (excluding complex construction projects, provide comparison worksheet)
- Bid/quote comparison worksheet
- Draft County Board resolution
- Plat approval check-list and supporting documents
- Copy of previous minutes related to this issue
- Other supporting document(s) (please list) _____

Provide (1) copy of supporting documentation NO LATER THAN Wednesday at Noon to make the Board's agenda for the following Tuesday. (If your packet contains colored copies, please provide (4) paper copies of supporting documentation as we do not have a color printer or copier.) Items WILL NOT



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MEMO

July 18, 2012

To: County Board of Commissioners

From: Mike Dangers, County Assessor and Kirk Peysar, County Auditor

Re: Minnesota County Information Systems Strategic Planning Initiatives and Funding Request

Minnesota Counties Information Systems or MCIS is the joint powers organization that provides the property tax system to Aitkin County. While this system works well and is reliable, it has reached a point where it is getting behind other comparable systems that utilize newer technology. If a new investment is not made to the system soon, we may find this system obsolete.

Please review the attached power point slides that will also be presented at the July 24 County Board meeting.

We are asking for your approval of the funding of the MCIS Strategic Planning Initiative. The total MCIS budget for this project is \$604,000 which amounts to \$50,835.93 per county spread over the next three years. We anticipate that the expenditure required to fund this initiative would come from the technology fund. The source of the technology fund are fees from the Recorder's Office and not property tax dollars.

Please contact us with any questions.



MN COUNTIES INFORMATION SYSTEMS FUNDING STRATEGIC PLANNING INITIATIVES

MCIS Board



Today's Agenda

- Provide a background of Strategic Planning
- Emerging Trends, Opportunities, Threats
- Overview of the Strategic Initiatives
- Status of Effort to Date
- Funding – what's that about?

Background on Strategic Planning

- MCIS holds the event in September of odd years.
- First strategic planning conference was held in 2001
- Attendees are personnel associated with auditor/treasurer, payroll, assessor and MIS user groups.
- On average, one person from each county attends
- Average attendance per event is 41 people
- Event is facilitated by GTS (Government Training Service) specialist

Background on Strategic Planning Explanation of the Process

- Review results of past strategic initiatives
- Perform a SWOT (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats) analysis
- Use SWOT to identify emerging trends / key issues
- Develop proposed strategic initiatives
- MCIS Board reviews strategic initiatives proposed
- MCIS Board approves actions to be taken

Highlight Emerging Trends, Strength, Opportunities, Threats

- Ever increasing financial constraints on counties
- Changing of the guard and staffing constraints results in:
 - Need to improve end user efficiencies
 - Newer personnel increases need for updated technology
 - Need to plan for and assist with staffing transitions
- Increasing complexity of MN tax system
- Manage membership cost increases
- Update technology or potential exists of losing members
- Competitors have already updated their technology:
 - IFS to IFSpi
 - ACS Highway Costing
 - ACS Tax
 - Manatron Tax
 - CSIS to SSIS.

Overview of Strategic Initiatives

- **i-Series Platform Future**
 - Determine if the i-Series platform is a long-term approach for the MCIS.
- **Browser Based Interface**
 - Modernize the “user access/interface experience” to the i-Series applications that perform inquiry, maintenance and print/batch processing directives.
- **Improve Flexibility/Accessibility of i-Series Platform**
 - With the increase demand to improve public access to information and the need to access MCIS data from other platforms, we need to improve “ease of access” to/from 3rd party applications and platforms
- **Define MCIS Scope of Services**
 - Within the context of the Joint Powers agreement, how can MCIS achieve the goals of our mission statement while containing costs and continuing to meet member county needs.

Overview of Strategic Initiatives

- **Set up a Data Dictionary for MCIS Systems**
 - Simplify the ability to easily interpret/identify data elements, interrelationship of data/tables, and structure of the tables without the assistance of MCIS staff.
- **Develop i-Series Hosting Plan**
 - With MCIS development focused on the i-Series and limited staff at counties for the i-Series, assess feasibility and approach for MCIS hosting software products.
- **Shared Services**
 - With the demand to contain costs within member counties, there is a need to look at services that could be shared between counties that promote savings.

Status of Effort to Date

- **Administrative Setup/Planning**
 - Identified a steering committee to monitor, prioritize and allocate resources efficiently.
 - Steering Committee composed of members from user groups.
 - MCIS Board Action
 - Approved a budget of \$604,000 for the project.
 - Set aside temporary funds to keep initiatives moving forward in 2012
 - Invoked steps to work with County Boards on long term funding.
- **Determined i-Series Platform Future**
 - The member counties wish to stay with the i-Series platform to control costs
 - But continue to reassess impact of technology advances
- **Browser based interface**
 - Explored tools that potentially could "browser enable" the software without rewriting the product like other vendors have done.
 - Provide demonstrations to the user groups via webinars

Funding – what's that about?

- **To augment internal staff**
 - No longer acceptable to dabble in the technologies as time permits
 - MCIS must equalize the efforts of supporting the existing system, while pursuing new initiatives.
 - Reduce learning curve time of staff
- **Time is of the essence "Get it done sooner versus later"**
 - Members have requested a browser based solution since 2003
 - Members' staffs are changing and expecting browser based tools and flexibility to access data
 - Tools are needed to get results sooner versus redevelopment of everything.
- **Alternatives are not attractive**
 - Cost of procuring and implementing new software is more expensive
 - Risk and level of effort to deploy new software is high.

Funding – what's that about?

- **Budget Overview**
 - Set at \$604,000
 - Will be utilized over the next three (3) years (2013-2016)
 - Results of April 26, 2012 Board Meeting
 - ✓ MCIS Board approved the budget amount at
 - ✓ MCIS Board agreed on how to allocate the budget to the Joint Power Membership
 - ✓ MCIS Board had letters sent to each county requesting to have approvals for their portion finalized by July 1, 2012
- **Budget Breakdown**
 - Staff Augmentation \$ 470,000
 - Tools/Utilities - \$110,000
 - Miscellaneous Expenses / Unplanned Events - \$24,000

Funding – what's that about?

- How will external resource funding be used:
 - Assist in the development process to jump start projects
 - Provide staff development on tools/utilities to shorten the learning curve.
- How will tools/utilities funding be used
 - To purchase software/hardware products that improve delivery time and avoid reinventing the wheel.
 - View the purchase of tools and utilities this way:
 - Tradesmen have tools that allow them to get their jobs done cost effectively.
 - The same goes for software development. If you develop everything from the ground up, it becomes resource intensive, costly, and presents higher risks.
- How will miscellaneous funds be used
 - Handle unforeseen expense such as consultant travel, software and hardware taxes, meeting expenses, and so forth.
- How will the funds be administered
 - MCIS Board established a Strategic Planning Steering Committee
 - Steering committee responsibility
 - Monitor and guide progress
 - Approve expenditures
 - Keep the plans on track and help set priorities of all tasks within MCIS

Funding – what's that about?

- What if members do not fund the project
 - The systems as they exist today will continue on for better or worse depending on each Members' perspective.
 - Some members will leave, which could increase the financial burden on the remaining members to fund the Joint Powers organization.
 - It limits the potential to add new members to the Joint Powers organization to help offset costs to operate MCIS in the future.
- What do members see as advantages of executing the plan?
 - Improves intuitiveness and user friendliness of the system which helps streamline new hire training and acceptance
 - Improved efficiency of personnel with enabling the browser and use of features personnel have become accustomed to
 - Allow applications to be used in the field
 - Technology is ever changing and MCIS applications must keep pace. Otherwise, it gets harder and harder to utilize or incorporate the future technology changes.
 - Product has to stay current with technology to remain viable
 - Proper investment for the future