Project Management Lapses and Planning Failures Delayed Court Technology Improvements

Summary

The Joint Legislative Program Evaluation Oversight Committee directed the Program Evaluation Division to evaluate the effectiveness of the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) management of information technology resources. Several anticipated projects with total expenditures of $18,683,201 (see table below) since Fiscal Year 2000-01 have been partially implemented or delayed for several years, frustrating court personnel and other stakeholders in need of the technology.

AOC Technology Project	Expenditures Through FY 2007-08	Initial Projected Implementation	Current Projected Implementation
NCAWARE	$ 13,002,895	7/2004	9/2010
CCIS-Clerk	2,578,268	6/2007	Underway
CCIS-DA	811,451	6/2009	10/2010
Discovery Automation	1,609,763	6/2007	Undetermined
eFiling	545,864	9/2008	Undetermined
ePayment	134,960	7/2009	Undetermined
Total Expenditures	**$ 18,683,201**		

Note: CCIS-Clerk is implementing in stages or iterations, and iteration 3 of 14 is implemented. Discovery Automation, eFiling, and ePayment are awaiting vendor process development.

Evaluation findings identified administrative shortcomings. The AOC Technology Services Division set priorities in a top-down manner and failed to obtain and incorporate early and sufficient input from the stakeholders most informed about technology needs and most dependent upon technology. Poor communication continues to hinder development of applications that support best business practices. Project management lapses and inadequate reporting hampered tracking of progress toward project goals. These shortcomings have contributed to project delays; for example, NCAWARE—a statewide warrant repository system—was slated for statewide implementation in July 2004 but was not introduced until June 2008, and then as only a pilot project in one county.

The North Carolina General Assembly should consider increasing AOC's accountability by requiring

- the Judicial Council to establish a more formal process for gathering stakeholder input on technology projects, to set priorities, and to report project progress in an annual report;
- AOC to submit bi-annual status reports on technology projects in development to the Legislative Information Technology Oversight Committee through project implementation; and
- AOC to consult with the State Office of Information Technology Services on future information technology projects.