Information Technology Investment Review Board (ITIRB)

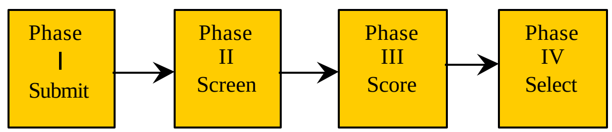
The Information Technology Investment Review Board (ITIRB) Process has been established to oversee and facilitate the review of major IHS information technology (IT) investments. The process will ensure that these investments achieve defined performance goals, which support the IHS mission, and are compliant with standards defined by the IHS information technology architecture (ITA) plan.

An ITIRB process is an integrated approach to managing IT investments that provides for the continuous identification, selection, control, life-cycle management, and evaluation of IT investments. This structured process provides a systematic method for the IHS to minimize risks while maximizing the return of IT investments.

IHS has developed its ITIRB to become more accountable for the economic and efficient management of IT and to implement a sound and integrated ITA plan. This process is consistent with Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) policies requiring an investment and review process at the department and operating division (OPDIV) level. This process is also compliant with relevant legislation such as the Clinger-Cohen Act (CCA) and the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA).

The central goal of the ITIRB is to assess IHS IT investments with regard to the security and technical soundness of the investment, the consistency of the IT solution with the IHS ITA, and the potential redundancy of the investment with other IHS efforts.

The table below, briefly outlines the selection phase of the ITIRB process:



Submit - IT proposals sent to DIR

Screen - Threshold acceptance criteria

Score - IT proposals evaluated

Select - IT portfolio selected

Background

Investments in information technology can have a significant impact on an organization's performance. Well-managed IT investments that are carefully selected and focused on meeting mission needs can propel an organization forward, considerably improving performance while lowering costs. Likewise, poor investments, those that are inadequately justified or whose costs, risks, and benefits are poorly managed, can hinder an organization's performance.

LEGISLATIVE REQUIREMENTS

Over the last decade, several pieces of legislation have been passed that have required federal agencies to examine and change their current operations and management practices in order to improve performance and achieve greater mission outcomes. The following diagram shows the key legislation and is followed by a brief description of these major management reforms.

Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA) (Public Law 103-62)

GPRA requires agencies to set goals, measure performance, and report on their accomplishments. A key tenet of GPRA is that agencies will develop strategic plans, as well as annual performance plans that are linked to the strategic plans, that establish the organization's goals and objectives as well as strategies for achieving these goals. With these plans in place, an agency can begin to assess whether its activities, core processes, and resources are aligned to support its mission and achieve desired outcomes. GPRA also requires agencies to establish performance measures and benchmarks in order to begin identifying gaps between actual and desired performance levels and mission outcomes.

The Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 (formally the Information Technology Management Reform Act, Division E of Public Law 104-106)

The Clinger-Cohen Act requires federal agencies to focus on the results they are achieving through IT investments. Specifically, the act introduces much more rigor and structure into how agencies approach the selection and management of IT projects. Among other things, the head of each agency is required to implement a process for maximizing the value and assessing and managing the risks of the agency's IT acquisitions.

The Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act of 1994 (FASA) (Public Law 103-355)

Title V of FASA requires agencies to define cost, schedule, and performance goals for federal acquisition programs (including IT projects) and to monitor these programs to ensure that they remain within prescribed tolerances. If a program falls out of tolerance (failure to meet 90 percent of cost, schedule, and performance goals), FASA gives the agency head the authority to review, and if necessary terminate, the program.

Chief Financial Officers Act of 1990 (CFO) (Public Law 101-576)

The CFO Act focuses on the need to significantly improve the financial management and reporting practices of the federal government. Having accurate financial data is critical to understanding the costs and assessing the returns on IT investments.

Critical Success Factors

The following elements are just a few of the management processes needed to facilitate successful IT investment:

- Appropriate level of resources must be made available for participating organizations to succeed in effectively implementing the ITIRB process.
- Key organizational decision makers are committed to the process and are involved throughout each project's life cycle.
- Projects are assessed jointly by program, financial, and IT managers.
- The investment management process is repeatable, efficient, and conducted uniformly and completely across the organization.
- The process includes provisions for continually selecting, managing, and evaluating projects in the investment portfolio.
- Decisions are made consistently throughout the organization.
- Decisions at any level of the organization are made using uniform decision criteria.

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