Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Information Technology

Five Year Strategic Plan
2007–2011

Approved by the
Information Technology Investment Review Board

March 29, 2007

Contents

"Our information technology investments directly influence our ability to execute and fulfill our mission."

Roberto Salazar
Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

"Information is a critical asset that we must effectively use, manage, and protect to advance our Agency programs. We need to be sure that we plan wisely so that our investments in technology serve us well into the future."

Gloria Gutierrez
Deputy Administrator, Management

"We must continue to make decisions based on business data and prioritize investments that contribute the greatest value to achieve Agency missions, goals and objectives. That's what allows us to deliver cost effective services to our customers, businesses and government partners."

Thomas O'Connor
ITIRB Chair and Associate Deputy Administrator, Management

"We must instill modern business-quality solutions and rely on interagency cooperation and commercial solutions."

Dr. Eric Hentges
Executive Director, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
MyPyramid.gov Strategic Business Plan, 2007-2010

A Message from CIO Enrique Gomez

The strategic vision of the Food Nutrition and Consumer Services (FNCS) is to lead America in ending hunger and improving nutrition and health. Our mission is to administer the Federal domestic nutrition assistance programs, and to link scientific research to the nutrition needs of consumers through science-based dietary guidance, nutrition policy coordination, education and promotion.

Enrique Gomez

Information technology (IT) is integral to the Agency mission areas and is a vital enabler of mission success. Senior managers and regional leaders recognize the use of IT resources as a significant investment. These groups played a critical role in defining the mechanisms that were needed for strong IT governance. In July 2005, we reestablished an FNCS Information Technology Investment Review Board (ITIRB) and implemented a process-driven approach that provides senior management with the ability to make decisions based on business data, resulting in prioritized IT initiatives that closely align with the needs of those who carry out the Agency's mission. The strategic planning process provides an opportunity for clarifying and strengthening these alignments and to develop alignments for the broader framework provided by the Department, the President's Management Agenda, and relevant legislation.

This plan establishes the direction for FNCS mission areas to work together to ensure that the technology needs of the enterprise are addressed systematically and effectively. The strategies set forth represent the collective research and judgment of the FNCS senior managers including key members of their staff and members of the Information Technology Division (ITD). Through multiple planning sessions, the efforts of these individuals helped set the strategic direction for IT in the Agency. The insights gained from the planning sessions will allow us to better manage change, set priorities, and strive for excellence. The development of this plan has re-enforced our commitment to enterprise-wide coordination and collaboration in FNCS' IT operations.

We have established nine strategic objectives to support the four broad goals that have been established by the Department and are intended to guide our activities. The plan presents the objectives and actions that drive how we manage and deliver the Agency's IT resources. It also includes an examination of government and technology trends. This will help determine which tools and expertise are needed to enable us to deliver solutions to meet customer needs. You can read more about our planning process in Appendix B.

This plan is a living document and will be used by ITD and the ITIRB to guide the work and planning for fiscal 2007-2011. It integrates the business and IT visions and has been an important instrument in facilitating the dialogue with the program areas. We will revisit the plan on a regular basis and make adjustments to ensure that it remains a sound framework for guiding our activities.

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Authority and Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the IT Strategic Plan is to define the IT technical and organizational infrastructure components and directions necessary to support the mission requirements of the FNCS business community over the next five years. The Plan is developed and maintained by the ITD Portfolio Management Office (PMO), under the authority of the FNCS CIO and the ITIRB. The Plan is a requirement of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) as well as the USDA Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO), with whose enterprise-wide IT Strategic Plan this effort must align.

1.2 Methodology

During November and December 2006, ITD staff met with Senior Managers, Division Chiefs, and staff from FNCS. These sessions were focused on gathering an Agency-wide perspective about IT strengths and shortfalls, as well as business planning and external influences that will affect future IT support needs. The meetings were documented and the comments received were assessed for common themes that could lead to specific strategic objectives to guide FNCS IT planning over the next five years. You can read more about the discussion details in Appendix C.

1.3 Alignment with USDA IT Goals

The USDA IT Strategic Plan has identified four categories that define the breadth of IT service and management requirements to which the FNCS IT Strategic Plan is aligned. A description of the interrelated categories is as follows:

1. **IT Strategy and Business Alignment**

   Our goal is to ensure that IT support is aligned with business goals and objectives throughout the entire cycle of innovation, planning and delivery.

2. **IT Organization & Skills**

   Our goal is to ensure that the infrastructure of IT people, processes, policies and technologies support the mission needs of the Agency.

3. **IT Management & Governance**

   Our goal is to provide an IT governance model that encourages active collaboration and coordinated decision-making across the Agency.

4. **Technology and Architecture**

   Our goal is to ensure that underlying technical architecture, physical infrastructure and standards support effective mission management and policy formulation and enable the efficient collection, analysis and distribution of mission information.
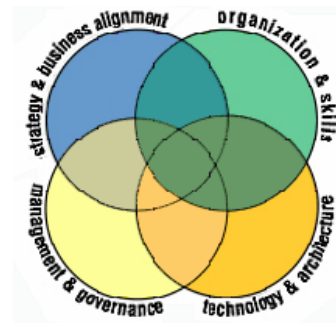
1.4 Summary of FNCS IT Strategic Objectives

The strategic planning sessions that were held with the various FNCS business areas generated a wide range of needs. An analysis of the input collected resulted in the identification of *nine* strategic objectives that are intended to guide IT planning over the next five years.

The FNCS IT Strategic Objectives are aligned to the four interrelated USDA IT goal categories.

IT Strategy and Business Alignment	IT Organization and Skills
❑ Develop Strategies in support of the USDA IT Plan and the FNCS Strategic Mission ❑ Cultivate Multi-Agency and Departmental Relationships	❑ Nurture a Customer-focused and Collaborative Environment ❑ Attract, Develop and Retain a Motivated, Competent and Diverse IT Workforce ❑ Provide an Effective and Efficient IT Organization
IT Management and Governance	**Technology and Architecture**
❑ Foster Proactive Leadership and Management of IT Projects ❑ Institutionalize the Role of the ITIRB	❑ Deliver Innovative, Cost-Effective Technology Solutions ❑ Establish a Resilient, Reliable, Secure IT Network

These objectives are intended to facilitate the continuous improvement efforts to provide the effective and cost-efficient infrastructure and technical support required for the success of the Agency mission programs and the USDA missions they support. A brief description of each objective is as follows:

Objective 1: Nurture a Customer-focused and Collaborative Environment
The culture of IT support must be based on a customer service model, projecting a competent, professional image and proactively addressing customer needs.

Objective 2: Foster Proactive Leadership and Management of IT Projects
As the Agency continues to plan, develop and implement new applications, we must collaborate with the business community to maximize information sharing, employ best practices and deliver effective technology solutions.

Objective 3: Cultivate Multi-Agency and Departmental Relationships
As USDA enterprise-wide initiatives are planned and implemented, we must strive to maintain strong and effective liaison with key Departmental staff. This provides smoother coordination with cross-agency activities and representation of mission staff to speak on behalf of FNCS.

Objective 4: Develop Strategies in Support of the USDA IT Plan and the FNCS Strategic Mission
As new oversight requirements proliferate for integration and consolidation along both technical and management directions, FNCS must continuously monitor, assess and align with internal strategic business directions as well as USDA-wide strategic directions.

Objective 5: Attract, Develop and Retain a Motivated, Competent and Diverse IT Workforce

The FNCS IT workforce must be adequately staffed and possess the necessary technical and management skills to effectively respond to the full range of services required by the business community.

Objective 6: Institutionalize the Role of the ITIRB

We must follow a practice of continual review and improvement of the role of the ITIRB. This requires monitoring full project life-cycle, promulgating funding guidelines and strategies, and improving overall portfolio management across all IT activities.

Objective 7: Provide an Effective and Efficient IT Organization

To ensure more effective customer service, we need to consolidate and standardize IT support functions across the branches. This requires us to establish a formal suite of IT standards, policies and procedures, including life cycle, security, network, data management, configuration management, and performance metrics.

Objective 8: Establish a Resilient, Reliable, Secure IT Infrastructure

We must provide effective electronic access to FNCS, Under Secretary's Office, and Departmental resources to support mission activities. To do this, FNCS must maintain an effective, robust and modern telecommunications network, a hardware and software upgrade program that is both functional and cost efficient; a flexible, efficient and manageable application platform configuration; and a robust IT security management and monitoring program to ensure smooth, uncompromised operation.

Objective 9:   Deliver Innovative, Cost-Effective Technology Solutions

We must effectively support a dynamic and uniform mission environment. To do this, requires continuous technical research, selection and implementation of a broad arsenal of online tools and resources; such as electronic document management capabilities, collaboration and workflow support tools.

1.5 Conclusion

The purpose of the IT Strategic Plan is to define the IT technical and organizational infrastructure components and directions necessary to enable accomplishment of the mission requirements of the FNCS business community over the next five years. Planning sessions with principals in each of the Agency business areas revealed a wide range of IT successes as well as several current and potential service gaps, potential projects and direction the programs were moving towards. The resulting IT Strategic Plan creates a framework to support those critical goals of the FNCS portion of the USDA Strategic Plan (Goal 5) and alignment to the USDA IT Strategic Plan. With the IT Strategic Plan as a blueprint, the Agency will be in a better position to enhance the quality and productivity of its support and deliver better service to its customers, businesses, and government partners. The Plan will be reviewed and updated regularly to

help the Agency navigate new technology options and leverage its breadth and depth to wisely and effectively manage its technical and fiscal resources.

2 Introduction

Our role is to provide the IT and management support required to enable achievement of the Agency mission. This strategic plan addresses the needs of both the FNS and the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion (CNPP), sister Agencies within the FNCS.

The intended audience for this plan is the entire FNCS management structure and operational staff, and the ITD staff.

2.1 FNCS Organization and Functions

The FNCS organization and program functions provide the context wherein IT requirements are developed and passed to FNS ITD for design and implementation. Understanding the specific functions and vision of the Agency enables effective planning and ensures that the technical support provided meets the user's needs, optimizes the application of individual systems, minimizes duplication of effort, and obtains maximum return on IT investments.

FNCS: The Under Secretary for FNCS is responsible for administering the USDA mission of ensuring access to nutritious, healthful diets for all Americans. Through food assistance and nutrition education for consumers, FNCS encourages consumers to make healthful food choices. The Agency has two operational units, CNPP and the FNS. The overall FNCS organization is depicted below.
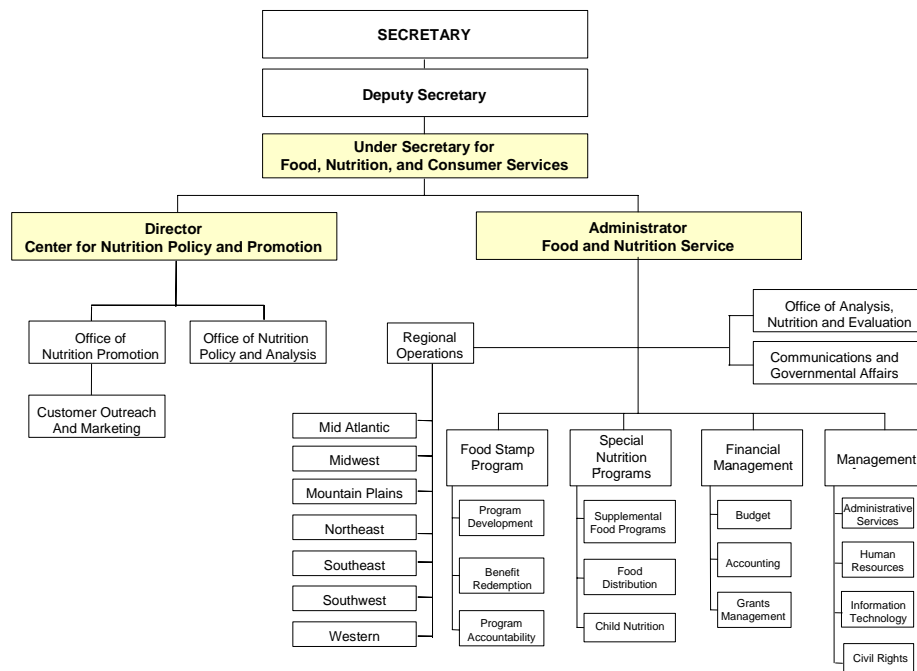

Figure 1: FNCS Organization Chart

CNPP: The mission of the CNPP is to improve the health of Americans by developing and promoting dietary guidance that links scientific research to the nutrition needs of the consumers. The Center develops integrated nutrition research, education and promotion programs and assists policy makers in devising strategies for cost-effective food assistance and nutrition intervention. It works with policy makers, academic professionals, media and others to develop and research standards, guidelines and policy for improving the diet and health of the American public. CNPP efforts are directed toward analysis of the consumption patterns and nutritional status of all Americans as well as understanding particular dietary and belief patterns of relevant population subgroups including low income and otherwise vulnerable consumers. CNPP also monitors consumer research to facilitate nutrition promotion and motivate healthy eating patterns. It is comprised of 25 professional staff, primarily nutritionists, nutrition scientists, economists and policy experts.

FNS: The mission of the FNS is to increase food security and reduce hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people access to food, a healthful diet, and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence. The Agency administers several nutrition assistance and food programs, distributing benefits of nearly $50 billion annually. The largest program is the Food Stamp Program (FSP). The FSP is the primary source of nutrition assistance for low-income Americans. It enables eligible households to improve their diet by increasing their food purchasing power. The States administer the program through a Federal-State partnership. The Federal government pays for the full cost of benefits and about one-half of the States' administrative costs. In Calendar 2006, the FSP provided benefits to nearly 27 million participants at a cost of $32.8 billion dollars in benefit and State administrative costs.[1] FNS' Special Nutrition Programs (SNP) works both individually and in concert with one another to alleviate food insecurity and promote healthier diets for children and low-income adults and improve nutritional knowledge among all Americans. While each program is targeted at populations with specific nutrition needs, many of these needs are related, resulting in individuals or households participating in more than one program. Taken together, these programs provide a nutrition safety net for low-income Americans. During Calendar 2006, the SNP provided benefits to nearly 55 million participants at a cost of $18 billion in benefit and State administrative costs.[2]

Headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, the FNS is additionally comprised of seven regional offices that oversee 56 field offices and 13 satellite and other offices. In addition, there are four Retailer Investigations Branches and four Administrative Review Offices strategically located across the United States.

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[1] Source: OANE Annual Summary of Food and Nutrition Service Programs (Advance Report Data as of December 22, 2006).
[2] Source: OANE Annual Summary of Food and Nutrition Service Programs (Data as of December 22, 2006).

2.2 Information Technology at FNCS

The ITD is, above all, a service organization whose purpose is to facilitate the success of Agency mission programs. ITD is a component of the FNS Office of Management and is comprised of 36 staff: 25 located in the National Office and 11 located in the Benefit Redemption Systems Branch (BRSB) in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The National Office provides technical guidance and oversight to the regions for software and hardware policies, purchases, and integration. The Regional Offices have an additional 5 to 13 IT staff members that, for the most part, report to the Financial Management Division of the Region. These staffs support the regional office computer technology requirements and perform the full range of technical services at the regional level. The ITD organization chart is listed in Figure 2 below.

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│      Deputy Administrator       │
│         Management              │
│       Gloria Gutierrez          │
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│  Associate Deputy Administrator │
│         Management              │
│        Thomas OConnor           │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  Information Technology Director and CIO     │
│     Information Technology Division          │
│            Enrique Gomez                     │
│                                              │
│  Deputy Information Technology Director and  │
│            Deputy CIO                        │
│     Information Technology Division          │
│           Jonathan Alboum                    │
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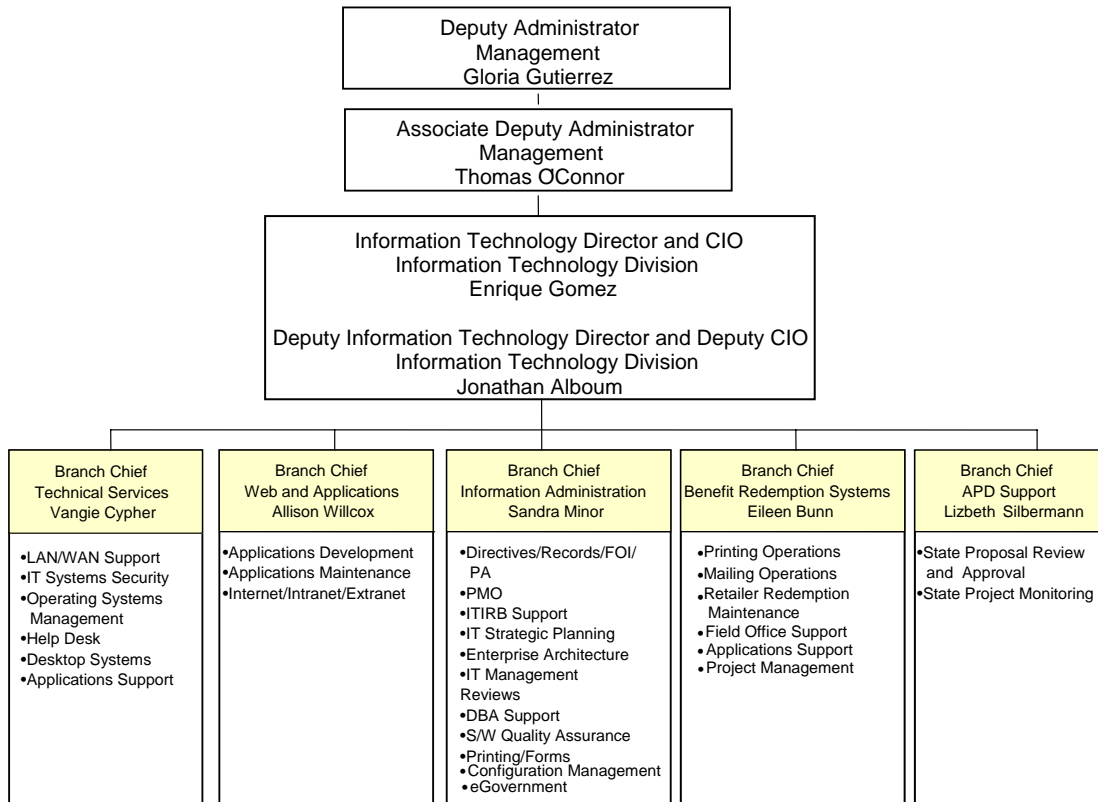| Branch Chief Technical Services Vangie Cypher	Branch Chief Web and Applications Allison Willcox	Branch Chief Information Administration Sandra Minor	Branch Chief Benefit Redemption Systems Eileen Bunn	Branch Chief APD Support Lizbeth Silbermann
•LAN/WAN Support •IT Systems Security •Operating Systems Management •Help Desk •Desktop Systems •Applications Support	•Applications Development •Applications Maintenance •Internet/Intranet/Extranet	•Directives/Records/FOI/PA •PMO •ITIRB Support •IT Strategic Planning •Enterprise Architecture •IT Management Reviews •DBA Support •S/W Quality Assurance •Printing/Forms •Configuration Management •eGovernment	•Printing Operations •Mailing Operations •Retailer Redemption Maintenance •Field Office Support •Applications Support •Project Management	•State Proposal Review and Approval •State Project Monitoring

Figure 2: ITD Organization Chart

2.3 Authority and Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of the IT Strategic Plan is to define the IT technical and organizational infrastructure components and directions necessary to support the mission requirements of the FNS business community over the next five years.   The Plan is developed and maintained by the ITD PMO, under the authority of the FNCS CIO and the ITIRB. The Plan is also a requirement of the OMB as well as the USDA OCIO, with whose enterprise-wide IT Strategic Plan this effort must align.

2.4 Methodology

During November and December 2006, we met with Senior Managers, Division Chiefs, and staff from FNCS. These sessions were focused on gathering an Agency-wide perspective about IT strengths and shortfalls, as well as business planning and external influences that will affect future IT support needs. The meetings were documented and the comments received were assessed for common themes that could lead to specific strategic objectives to guide FNCS IT planning over the next five years. You can read more about the discussion details in Appendix C.

2.5 ITD Vision, Mission and Values Statements

2.5.1 Our Vision

To be valued business partners delivering information technology services and solutions that directly contribute to mission accomplishments.

2.5.2 Our Mission

To support FNCS programs in accomplishing mission, goals and objectives through:
- A commitment to the success of our customers
- Proactive IT leadership in partnership with the programs
- Value-added technical expertise
- Cost-effective and efficient services and innovative solutions
- Protection and stability of information technology assets
- Expert guidance and assistance on managing Agency records and information

2.5.3 Our Values

- We are accountable to customers for commitments, results, and quality.
- We strive to serve customer needs through collaboration.
- We conduct ourselves at all times in a professional and ethical manner.
- We act with honesty, integrity and transparency in the conduct of our business.
- We are committed to being a meritocracy, and to developing, retaining, and attracting the best people.

2.6 SUMMARY OF AGENCY IT NEEDS

The participation and information provided by the program areas helped guide the development of actions to address current IT shortfalls and establish strategic initiatives to meet future IT needs. Through a series of structured planning sessions, we focused discussions on answering the following questions: *where are we today*; *where do we need to be in the future; and what are the IT management and support priorities*. The data was reviewed to identify common issues and grouped into four broad categories. A summary of this information is provided as follows:

IT Areas of Focus
⇒ Enhance Application and Technical Support
⇒ New Technology and Tools
⇒ Upgrade Infrastructure
⇒ IT Awareness and Training

2.6.1 Enhance Application and Technical Support

Program areas recognize initiatives are underway to implement USDA enterprise-wide solutions to enhance applications that are obsolete and do not adequately meet current demands. There is concern among some areas that implementation of USDA initiatives may have long transition periods that will require temporary or permanent workarounds and will not provide the same range of standard FNCS services. Many users continue to experience frequent problems accessing and using agency-wide systems. Program areas want to better understand the impacts and feasibility of expanding their current systems to incorporate new information into the data architecture. They would like to consider multiple approaches to upgrade and expand online services. The program areas expect to see the same level of project management support they currently receive and have a growing need for IT technical support services to assess the technical feasibility and standards compliance of contractor and state-developed documentation and proposals.

2.6.2 New Technology and Tools

Organizing and disseminating information is becoming increasingly critical to every area within the Agency. Users need to quickly access information and have the capability to interact at all times. With the continued loss of personnel, capturing institutional knowledge is a priority. Collaboration tools are needed for sharing, developing, editing and clearing documents. New technologies are needed to better support a geographically dispersed organization and provide increased flexibility to work virtually across the regions in a secure environment. Program areas are seeking effective implementation of a document management system and enhanced Internet search engine capabilities. As existing personnel absorb more responsibility, they are seeking leading-edge off-the-shelf products to automate processes and efficiently track and report data. Users expect us to continue to move forward and provide tools and technologies that are useful.

2.6.3 Upgrade Infrastructure

Program areas expressed the need to optimize access to Agency systems and provide "best fit" equipment and software. Adequate support is required to address network issues. With the projected expansion of online applications and interactive services, program areas emphasized the importance to ensure the network has the capacity to handle this expected growth. Many of the areas expressed the need for security requirements to be integrated into their applications in the easiest and most transparent way possible, with minimal impact on accomplishing mission-related objectives. Users expressed concern about security compliance and the protection of sensitive information.

2.6.4 IT Awareness and Training

Many of the program areas identified the need to enhance IT training. Users are not aware of the tools that are currently available. They suggested we explore new venues to communicate IT information. The program areas would like to see increased awareness of standards and requirements related to IT planning, funding, development and oversight, so we can avoid delays, budget shortfalls and better meet their needs. Users provided recommendations to enhance training which included some of the following: advanced training on some of the desktop office applications, learning formats other than classroom training, the availability of one-on-one assistance to take advantage of advanced features of some of the packages, conceptual training for business managers to obtain a more sophisticated understanding of technical options and future trends, use of common terms and definitions to resolve some of the confusion surrounding technical planning, and online training.

3   Development of FNCS IT Strategic Objectives

After documenting and reviewing the broad range of needs and expectations expressed by the business community, the planning team conducted working sessions with the ITD management team to develop a suite of strategic objectives that would set the stage and facilitate long term satisfaction of IT needs for the FNCS community. Nine objectives were developed and are as follows:

1. Nurture a Customer-focused and Collaborative Environment
2. Foster Proactive Leadership and Management of IT Projects
3. Cultivate Multi-Agency and Departmental Relationships
4. Develop Strategies in Support of the USDA IT Plan and the FNCS Strategic Mission
5. Attract, Develop and Retain a Motivated, Competent and Diverse IT Workforce
6. Institutionalize the Role of the ITIRB
7. Provide an Effective and Efficient IT Organization
8. Establish a Resilient, Reliable, Secure IT Infrastructure
9. Deliver Innovative, Cost-Effective Technology Solutions

3.1 Alignment with USDA IT Goals

The USDA IT Strategic Plan has identified four categories that define the breadth of IT service and management requirements to which the FNCS IT Strategic Objectives are aligned. A description of the interrelated categories is as follows:

1. IT Strategy and Business Alignment

The primary function of IT is to support the organization's mission, vision, goals, objectives and strategies. This function cannot be effectively achieved if business goals are not well-supported from the senior executives to the front-lines; if business units expect more from IT than the current infrastructure will allow; or if the IT organization fails to articulate its limitations to satisfying business needs. Therefore, the Agency's ability to meet its mission through the effective use of technology relies upon clear communication between the program areas and the IT organization. Our goal is to ensure the IT organization and technology is aligned with the Department's goals and objectives throughout the entire cycle of innovation, planning and delivery.
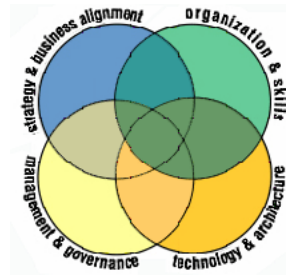
2. IT Organization & Skills

The IT organization must be a value-added provider of infrastructure, technology, information services, as well as transformational, customer-centric solutions. Our goal is to align the IT organization structure, skills and sourcing strategy with the needs of the business, while promoting employee learning and satisfaction.

3. IT Management & Governance

A coherent and collaborative process for approval and evaluation of projects must be in place to apply the proper controls over any potential expenditure. Once expenditures have been approved, checkpoints must be implemented and enforced to enable fiscal management and project accountability throughout the project lifecycle. Our goal is to manage IT resources and operations to ensure effective and efficient support of business and financial goals. In an environment characterized by doing more with less, fiscal prudence takes on a critical level of importance.

4. Technology & Architecture

Technology and architecture cover a broad spectrum of services, products, and telecommunications technologies. These include the major types of service areas that manage data and applications (distribution, utilization, and administration), as well as the infrastructure required to engineer and manage those applications and information. Our goal is to define and operate the technology solutions, underlying architecture and processes for IT long-term support of business capabilities.

3.2 USDA/FNCS IT Shared Vision, Mission, and Goals

USDA STRATEGIC PLAN VISION AND GOALS
To be a dynamic organization that is able to enhance agricultural trade, improve farm economies and quality of life in rural America, protect the Nation's food supply, improve the Nation's nutrition, and protect and enhance the Nation's natural resource base and environment

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3	Goal 4	Goal 5: Improve the Nation's health and nutrition			Goal 6
Enhance international competitiveness of American agriculture	Enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of rural farm economies	Support increased economic opportunities and improved quality of life in rural America	Enhance protection and safety of the Nation's agriculture and food supply	**FNCS VISION** To lead America in ending hunger and improving nutrition and health			Protect and enhance the Nation's natural resource base and environment.
				Goal 5.1 Ensure Access to Nutritious Food	**Goal 5.2 Promote Healthier Eating Habits and Lifestyles**	**Goal 5.3 Improve Nutritious Assistance Program Management and Customer Service**	

USDA IT VISION
To be a catalyst for change and a world class leader in delivering technology solutions and services that directly contribute to mission accomplishment; and an essential partner in business transformation, resulting in excellent customer service, strong partnerships, secure infrastructures, and cost efficient performance

USDA IT MISSION
We provide the information technology leadership and governance that enables the programs and operations of the Department to Deliver their respective missions in an efficient, effective, and secure manner through the use of information technology solutions and services.

FNS IT VISION
To be valued business partners delivering information technology services and solutions that directly contribute to mission accomplishments.

FNS IT MISSION
To support FNCS programs in accomplishing mission, goals and objectives through:

- A commitment to the success of our customers
- Proactive IT leadership in partnership with the programs
- Value-added technical expertise
- Cost-effective and efficient services and innovative solutions
- Protection and stability of information technology assets
- Expert guidance and assistance on managing Agency records and information

IT Shared Vision, Mission, Goals

USDA Goals and Objectives	FNCS Goals and Objectives
IT Strategy and Business Alignment Our goal is to ensure the IT organization and technology is aligned with the Department's goals and objectives throughout the entire cycle of innovation, planning and delivery.	
• Continue the alignment between IT and USDA's Strategic Plan • Position and utilize the enterprise architecture as a management and governance tool	• Develop Strategies in support of the USDA IT Plan and the FNCS Strategic Mission • Cultivate Multi-Agency and Departmental Relationships
IT Organization and Skills Our goal is to align the IT organization structure, skills and sourcing strategy with the needs of the Department, while promoting employee learning and satisfaction.	
• Manage the IT workforce to ensure consistency in skill levels and service delivery • Become a center of excellence & employer of choice • Emphasize customer-focused support • Implement Department efforts to streamline & cut costs • Close skill gaps	• Nurture a Collaborative, Customer-focused Environment • Provide an Effective and Efficient IT Organization • Attract, Develop and Retain a Motivated, Competent and Diverse IT Workforce
IT Management and Governance Our goal is to manage IT resources and operations to ensure effective and efficient support of business and financial goals.	
• Support the tracking, measurement and management of performance, and the performance with budget and investment decisions • Better manage IT-related contracts to maximize value and performance • Continue to improve IT portfolio management • Develop effective and efficient IT reporting processes	• Institutionalize the Role of the ITIRB • Foster Proactive Leadership and Management of IT Projects
Technology and Architecture Our goal is to define and operate the technology solutions, underlying architecture and processes for IT long-term support of business capabilities.	
• Implement tools and processes to utilize the enterprise architecture • Align infrastructure to directly support strategic business goals • Sustain a robust information security management program • Participate on government-wide IT solutions which support USDA strategic goals	• Establish a Resilient, Reliable, Secure IT Infrastructure • Deliver Innovative, Cost-Effective Technology Solutions

Figure 3. Alignment with USDA Vision, Goals and Strategic Objectives

4 FNCS IT Strategic Objectives

4.1 Nurture a Customer-focused and Collaborative Environment

Our customers are the agents by whom the Agency's mission functions are accomplished. We recognize that the effectiveness and efficiency of our operations can have a direct impact on our customers. We must regularly engage and work with our customers to better anticipate, understand and meet their needs. We must nurture a customer-centric environment to improve communications and collaboration between IT and the user community to maximize information sharing, ensure that the IT workforce, investments, policies and procedures, are customer-focused, results-oriented, cost-effective, and appropriately balanced to enable mission success.

4.1.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- Ability to more quickly and effectively address customer needs
- Build and maintain strong relationships of trust and sharing to foster mutual respect, understanding and better decision making
- Provide customers with a better understanding of IT roles and responsibilities
- Increase customer communication

4.1.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Define customer service standards
- Conduct customer service meetings
- Develop communication channels to increase coordination, communication, and collaboration within ITD and with the user community
- Solicit customer feedback
- Enhance information sources, such as NewsStand and the ITD website
- Become the leader at FNCS for IT education, training, and awareness

4.2 Foster Proactive Leadership and Management of IT Projects

As the Agency continues to plan and develop IT projects, we must regularly engage and work with customers to implement mutually beneficial service solutions that are cost-effective and help streamline processes. We must be a catalyst for leveraging collaboration, advancing FNCS IT interoperability, and employing project management principles. To do this requires broadening the scope of collaboration, tapping resident technical expertise and partnering with business leads to maximize information sharing, exchanging best practices and lessons learned, and delivering effective technology solutions. To realize results, our efforts must focus on consistent project planning, cost estimating, security planning, documenting and analyzing requirements, identifying impacts, and conducting technical reviews of FNCS and contractor-produced documentation.

4.2.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- Effective partnership between ITD and the business community
- Resource efficiencies in planning and deploying information solutions
- Greater protection of FNCS information and other IT assets
- Consistent planning and budgeting estimates for IT projects
- Standard analysis, development, and project management guidelines
- Consistent overall IT quality control
- Reliable compliance with oversight planning and reporting requirements

4.2.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Provide leadership regarding best pricing and value options for IT
- Serve as a resource for IT strategic planning, sharing IT experience and knowledge
- Develop and communicate guidelines, policies and procedures on IT issues
- Provide IT management, analysis, and oversight support
- Establish a Project Management Office to develop and communicate standard project management and implementation processes
- Become the leader at FNCS for IT education, training and awareness

4.3 Cultivate Multi-Agency and Departmental Relationships

To successfully plan and implement enterprise-wide applications, leadership at all levels must continue to commit and actively participate in opportunities that involve multi-agency and Department solutions, knowledge sharing and collaborative IT projects. We must foster open lines of communications to increase awareness of emerging and existing e-government and enterprise-wide initiatives. We must continue to seek opportunities to create and expand relationships, explore mutual opportunities for improving services and leveraging the IT infrastructure. To be successful, we must look for ways to consolidate, modernize and streamline.

4.3.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- Better information and support for the business community
- Common solutions across USDA Agencies to reduce costs
- Increased awareness of emerging and existing e-government and enterprise-wide initiatives
- Better assessment of the value of enterprise-wide ventures
- Better attention to gaps in and transition to emerging enterprise-wide initiatives

4.3.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Leverage Enterprise Shared Services to benefit FNCS
- Implement Web-Based Supply Chain Management System
- Financial Systems Consolidation and Standardization via FMMI
- Establish bi-directional access to Agency, Departmental and Under Secretary's Office resources
- Develop communication channels to increase coordination and communication

4.4 Develop Strategies in Support of USDA IT Plan and FNCS Strategic Mission

We must partner with our business customers to plan for the future and make smart decisions. We must develop and recommend strategies that make the best use of IT resources and support the FNCS mission, goals and objectives. We must continue to foster collaborative relationships with the Department to develop common solutions and participate in cross-cutting initiatives that will reduce duplication of labor and provide cost savings. We must become an effective advocate for resources that fulfill the initiatives of this plan.

4.4.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- Foster a closer, more collaborative relationship with the Department
- Shared and common solutions to reduce duplication of labor and effort
- Strategies to provide cost savings to the Agency when implemented
- Clear focus on supporting and furthering the FNCS business mission
- Efficient use of budget and staff resources

4.4.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Integrate the ITIRB process into all IT planning and decision-making
- Evaluate and promote the Enterprise Shared Services
- Develop IT strategies in support of the USDA IT Plan
- Develop IT strategies in support of the FNCS Strategic Mission

4.5 Attract, Develop and Retain a Motivated, Competent and Diverse IT Workforce

Our customers have a growing need for timely and accurate data to manage the increasing complexities of their programs. Expectations of and demands on the IT organization will continue to grow. To effectively meet expectations, we must ensure that customers are supported by a well-structured competent organization. To be successful, we must develop and retain an innovative forward-thinking workforce prepared to take on the challenges we face today and will face in the future. We must invest in employee training and development and nurture an environment where employees are empowered to contribute to their own success and are rewarded for their outstanding performance.

4.5.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- Better served customers
- Better prepared and more efficient information technology staff
- Better maintained and supported systems
- Improved pool of qualified information technology staff with better retention
- Increased opportunities for IT professional development
- Increased effectiveness of the IT organization by focusing and prioritizing resources and energies

4.5.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Review ITD skill mix and staffing levels to ensure they are commensurate with the scope of services required
- Review ITD's technical and management skills to ensure they remain current through training and certification where necessary
- Effective use of the Individual Development Plan (IDP)
- Create an environment that encourages "mentoring" and "coaching" others
- Promote career development
- Become a strategy-focused organization by using timely measurement tools and strategic planning
- Improve how we identify skills and strengths for current and future employees, and then match these skills with positions
- Develop a system to encourage and reward professional development efforts
- Use of Virtual Teams to ensure effective resource management

4.6 Institutionalize the Role of the ITIRB

As budget and staff resources continue to shrink, and as an array of new oversight controls and requirements emerge, it is critical that management at the highest levels in the Agency are not only aware of the full range of IT applications, services and support necessary to support the mission, but are actively involved in monitoring, approving and balancing the entire IT portfolio. As new and existing IT projects compete for a continually reduced resource pool, the ITIRB plays a critical role to set priorities and select those projects that are critical to support the Agency's mission. This requires monitoring the progress of new projects as well as monitoring the performance and return on investment for existing projects. This, in turn, requires ever more collaboration and consensus among senior management in order to achieve a successful IT program within the Agency.

4.6.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- A focus on the most important IT priorities
- Integration of IT planning with Agency-wide business planning
- Increased awareness and accountability for the IT portfolio
- Implementation of consistent ITIRB reporting standards for IT activities
- Increased attention to re-use existing functions and systems for new initiatives

4.6.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Expand the role of the ITIRB to include planning and execution of the Agency's entire IT portfolio
- Use of the Enterprise Architecture to make informed business decisions
- Development of funding strategies and guidelines

4.7 Provide an Effective and Efficient IT Organization

We face a great need to look at innovative ways to build and effectively manage a unified infrastructure. To do this requires a consistent, standardized environment and repeatable processes to help the Agency gain efficiencies and obtain cost savings. By deploying enterprise-wide IT management practices, tools, and applications, the Agency has the potential to gain economies of scale and provide a more powerful foundation for business productivity and effectiveness. Organizational redesign efforts must focus on headquarters as well as regional and field office environments. We must conduct business at an enterprise level and focus on platforms and operating systems to facilitate the reduction of redundant effort and enhance return on investment.

4.7.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- A consistent end-user experience throughout the Agency
- Better prepared, confident and engaged users
- Service level improvements from implementing standards across the Agency
- Coordinated planning and management of IT support across the Agency
- Cost savings through the elimination of duplicative efforts
- Enhanced ability to measure operational efficiency and effectiveness Agency-wide
- Ability to derive maximum business value from IT investments

4.7.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Continual review of systems, services, programs, and projects to optimize Agency IT resources
- Establish, track and utilize meaningful performance measures
- Organize the IT functions to provide more effective and efficient operations
- Effective use of an enterprise architecture to make informed business decisions
- Standards for project development and management
- Implement a Project Management Office
- Enhance information sources, such as NewsStand and the ITD website
- Become the leader at FNCS for IT education, training and awareness

4.8 Establish a Resilient, Reliable, Secure IT Infrastructure

Customer requirements are constantly changing, as are the supporting technologies and the choices available. As demands for IT support increase, the stress on the IT infrastructure increases and the expansion of the user base potentially exposes the infrastructure to errors and damage to the data either through carelessness or deliberate attack. We must continue to invest in technology infrastructure to enable the Agency to better manage and provide reliable, high performance, robust and secure access to information.

4.8.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- Availability of a robust and reliable IT network and infrastructure
- Minimized exposure to network interruption
- Avoidance of compromise or loss of critical or sensitive Agency data
- Cost savings through reuse of existing IT investments

4.8.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Promote security and privacy education, training and awareness
- Review, update and enforce IT policies and procedures
- A cost effective technology improvement and upgrade program
- Development of a common framework for application development like the FNS Application Systems Technology (FAST) and PartnerWeb Version 3
- A robust IT security management program to protect agency IT assets and to minimize the intrusiveness of controls while maximizing effectiveness
- Maintain a tested disaster recovery and continuity of operations program

4.9 Deliver Innovative, Cost-Effective Technology Solutions

The user community expects us to deliver technologies necessary to provide timely service and fulfill mission needs. The services must be accessible, convenient and delivered in a flexible, effective manner. In order to meet these expectations, we must effectively build upon our successes and utilize innovative information technologies to organize and provide information services to better meet the needs and concerns of the user community. This requires ongoing dialogue with all Agency divisions and regions in order to quickly identify service gaps and deficiencies that may be overcome through the effective employment of technological tools and procedures.

4.9.1 Benefits

The expected benefits from these efforts would include:
- Optimized exchange of ideas and products between Agency program organizations
- Audit trails of business activity for recovery, review, and constructive critique
- Efficiencies of labor through time saving and avoidance of duplication of effort
- Cost savings through reuse of existing IT investments

4.9.2 Supporting Initiatives

- Document management system capabilities
- Well-organized and up-to-date public and internal web services and content
- Development of a common framework for application development like the FNS Application Systems Technology (FAST) and PartnerWeb Version 3
- Proactively meet with users to solicit customer feedback and enhance training programs
- Fully utilize the help desk to seek the necessary expertise to provide user assistance
- Process automation
- Use of Collaboration tools such as Live Meeting and Sharepoint

5 Performance Scorecard

Performance measures for the IT Strategic Plan are presented below, organized by the overall goal categories to which they contribute.

	IT Strategy and Business Alignment	IT Organization and Skills
U S D A	❑ Percentage of IT strategies fully matched to Department strategies ❑ Percentage of Agencies with published IT Strategic Plans that link to the Department's IT Strategic Plan ❑ Percentage of USDA IT managers whose performance are linked to the Agency's and Department's IT Strategic Plan	❑ Percentage of IT staff who are professionally trained and/or certified ❑ Percentage of employee turnover in IT occupations ❑ Percentage of applicants per IT vacancy ❑ Return on investment on consolidation initiatives (i.e., EMessaging, Data Center Consolidation)
F N C S	❑ Currently Under Development	❑ Currently Under Development
	IT Management and Governance	**Technology and Architecture**
U S D A	❑ Percentage of eligible IT acquisitions as performance-based ❑ Number of changes considered by the Executive Change Control Board (ECCB) ❑ Percentage of major IT investments that comply with USDA's CPIC requirements and procedures	❑ Percentage of Agencies using the UTN for Internet usage ❑ Percentage of Agencies using the UTN for Wide Area Network (WAN) ❑ Percentage of government-wide initiatives that support USDA goals for which USDA is a participant
F N C S	❑ Currently Under Development	❑ Currently Under Development

6 Next Steps

Our next task as an Agency is to commit to the full implementation of the *nine* objectives of the IT Strategic Plan. This is a continual process that requires collaboration and communication across the Agency. We must weave the objectives into the very fabric of the Agency as an enterprise, and integrate them into the daily operations and policies of the Agency. The implementation involves these steps:

- Establish a five-year action plan to include performance indicators, milestones, key dates, and a corresponding scorecard to report and monitor progress. The action plan is a direct response to the specific problems or missed opportunities that were discovered through the planning process and will include The following enablers will directly impact our ability to bring the plan to life: **commitment** (promoting understanding and awareness, role definition, active participation); and **assessment** and **accountability** (progress indicators).

- Prioritize competing business and IT demands in a resource-constrained environment, which includes gaining agreement of priorities from key stakeholders and the ITIRB.

- Integrate those priorities into the IT governance processes.

- Report quarterly to the ITIRB Executive Committee on the progress toward our vision for IT at FNCS and adjust the implementation as needed. We will measure our success through a number of performance indicators. The PMO will also publish the results in an annual report to the ITIRB on the progress of implementing the action plan.

7 Appendix A: Project Participants

Functional Team: Current/Future States, Gap Analysis, and Strategic Objectives

Led and participated in the analysis of FNCS's current technology performance and the environment in which it operates, the process to develop a consensus around a vision for IT at the Agency, and the effort to identify the processes and resources to attain the IT vision.

- Portfolio Management Office
- ITD CIO, Deputy CIO, Branch Chiefs

Functional Team: Writing

Drafted the IT Strategic Plan and conducted the review process:

- Portfolio Management Office
- ITD CIO, Deputy CIO, Branch Chiefs

Groups Participating in Focused Discussions

Each of the focus groups represented a specific program area of FNCS and included key members of their staff.
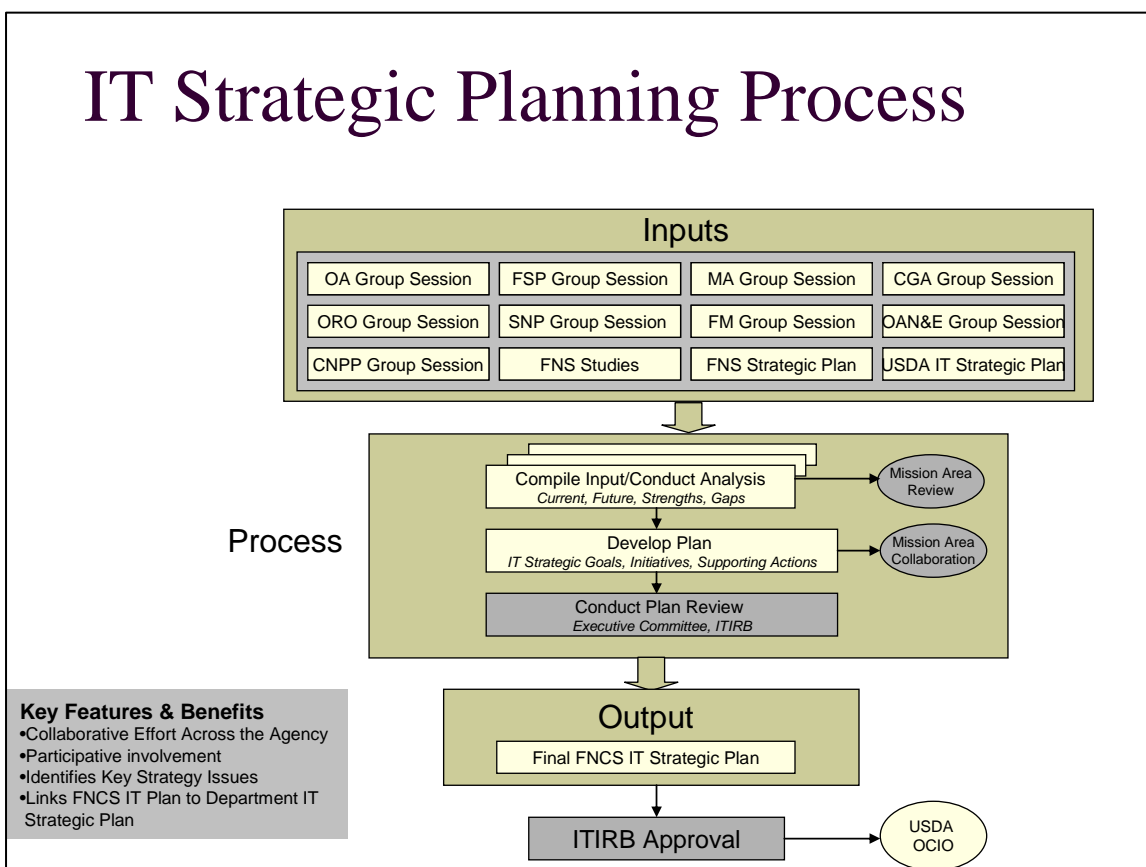
- Food Stamp Program
- Special Nutrition Program
- Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation
- Communications and Governmental Affairs
- Office of Financial Management
- Office of Management
- Office of Regional Operations
- Information Technology Division
- Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

8 Appendix B: The Planning Process

The CIO launched the planning process in response to an action requested by the members of the ITIRB and required by the Department OCIO.

Recognizing in the development of a strategic plan the "process" is as important as the "product," we used a structured process to gather information Agency-wide. A planning session was scheduled with each mission area. In preparation for the session, all members were provided with a read-ahead package containing the agenda, meeting objectives, timeline of key dates, and the planning templates.

IT Strategic Planning Process

Inputs

OA Group Session	FSP Group Session	MA Group Session	CGA Group Session
ORO Group Session	SNP Group Session	FM Group Session	OAN&E Group Session
CNPP Group Session	FNS Studies	FNS Strategic Plan	USDA IT Strategic Plan

Process

Compile Input/Conduct Analysis
Current, Future, Strengths, Gaps → Mission Area Review

Develop Plan
IT Strategic Goals, Initiatives, Supporting Actions → Mission Area Collaboration

Conduct Plan Review
Executive Committee, ITIRB

Output

Final FNCS IT Strategic Plan

ITIRB Approval → USDA OCIO

Key Features & Benefits
- Collaborative Effort Across the Agency
- Participative involvement
- Identifies Key Strategy Issues
- Links FNCS IT Plan to Department IT Strategic Plan

1. Where are we as an Agency?
   - List of Current IT Needs
   - Strengths
   - Weaknesses/Potential Gaps

2. Where do we want the Agency to be in five years?
   - List of Priorities - most important IT management and support needs

3. What do we need to do to achieve the vision?
   - Future Needs/Considerations
   - Legislative Changes
   - IT Management or Program Improvements
   - IT Technologies Useful to Mission Area
   - Technology Infrastructure Upgrades

We answered these questions by:
- Assessing the current state of the Agency's technology enterprises and applications in the area of food stamp, child nutrition, financial, analysis, management, and analysis business environments.
- Seeking input from all levels and stakeholders across the Agency
- Creating a vision for Information Technology at the Food Nutrition Service
- Identifying specific actions needed to achieve the vision
- Beginning to develop implementation strategies

ITD hosted nine focused group discussions to solicit comments and views across the Agency. This involved a variety of constituencies in designing the future of IT at FNCS and use of their input to create a vision.

Our resulting IT Strategic Plan is a living document that we intend to revisit annually to identify new initiatives or refine existing ones that will continue driving capabilities that the Agency needs to achieve its goals and objectives.

Our planning process has been a highly collaborative effort involving these interest groups, we call the stakeholders: senior managers, directors, branch chiefs, staff members, regional offices and consultants. These constituents participated through focus groups and interviews and by joining in activities of one or more of the planning sessions hosted by the IT Strategic Planning Team. Responsibility for overseeing the project rested with the CIO, the core project team and the program areas of the plan.

9 Appendix C: Focus Group Discussion Details

The ITD strategic planning team hosted nine focused planning sessions to gather comments and views Agency–wide. The goal was to involve a variety of constituencies in designing the future of information technology at FNCS and to provide detailed input on information technology over next five years. Throughout the planning process, each of the mission areas and key staff members participated in providing input, reviewing comments, and responding to drafts of the plan. The Mission Area Working Groups were as follows:

- Food Stamp Program
- Special Nutrition Program
- Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation
- Communications and Governmental Affairs
- Office of Financial Management
- Office of Management
- Office of Regional Operations
- Information Technology Division
- Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

The information provided by each working group is documented on the following pages.

Food Stamp Program

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Food Stamp Program management team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Clarence H. Carter, Deputy Administrator, Food Stamp Program
Jessica Shahin, Associate Deputy Administrator, Food Stamp Program
Karen Walker, Director, Program Accountability Division, FSP
Art Foley, Director, Program Development Division, FSP
Suzan English, Funds Officer, FSP
Andrea Gold, Chief, Retailer Management Branch, FSP
Tim O'Connor, Associate Deputy Administrator, Management
Sandra Minor, Chief, Information Administration Branch, ITD
Vangie Cypher, Chief, Technical Services Branch, ITD
Allison Willcox, Chief, Web Application Branch, ITD
Eileen Bunn, Benefit Redemption Systems Branch, ITD
Kevin Russ, Manager, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

Food Stamp Team Input:
The participants identified the following priorities:

Protection of Sensitive Information
Develop effective and efficient ways to work virtually across the regions in a secure environment
- As we take more of a virtual approach to the work of the Agency, it's important to provide the greatest possible flexibility for cross-region work
- Quality control is an example of a function where there may be cross-regional work
- Provide capability to share and review case information across the regions
- Ensure security compliance and the protection of sensitive information
- When Travel Vouchers and T&As are printed only the last four digits of the social appear

Project Management Support
Provide additional staff to adequately support the projected growth of the BRSB areas of responsibilities.
- Minneapolis help desk and print shop support
- Projects approved by the ITIRB; ideally we would maintain the level and caliber of project management support we currently get from BRSB.

Document Management System
Resolve issues to enable implementation of documentation management systems
- E-signature authority for retailers as it relates to the online application
- DMS for managing retailer documentation.
- There is an immediate and on-going need for a records manager to work in concert with DMS requirements gathering and on-line initiatives

Universal Telecommunication Network (UTN)
Ensure UTN has the capacity to handle the projected growth
- Expansion of online applications and interactive services for retailers. We are predicting:
  - Potential of 30,000 on-line applications/year
  - Additional 35,000 on-line reauthorizations/year
  - Countless online changes
- Potentially providing online retailer training which might require video streaming
- Document management from the e-file storage location
- Instant messaging (which may include video cameras/messaging)

Technical Support
- Provide IT technical support services to assist with ad hoc needs for technical review of information (Ex. reviewing store visit contractor technical proposals, or consulting with RIB on hardware and software options for handheld devices for investigators)
- RIB needs technical and help desk support. Currently all 4 RIB area offices and 40 investigative staff are largely supported by a single national office staffer who is in the program area
- Provide support and training needs to effectively use AgLearn and like services

Tools
- RIB Investigators need equipment and software consultations in terms of "best fit"
- Need to optimize investigator access to Agency systems; DSL, Wireless Connectivity

Network Support
Provide adequate IT support to address network issues
- TSB currently has limited staff with the knowledge base to address network issues (Ex. recent STARS network issue resolution had to await the return of a TSB staffer who was the sole resource)

Enhance Web-based Training
- Agency continues to lose institutional knowledge
- States train case workers and have offered to share, we need to take advantage of that opportunity
- Vermont is an example – due to IT staffing issues, unable to capitalize on the opportunity

PartnerWeb
Continue to move forward to provide good support and a dynamic process
- States want that to be an area of focus
- Provide search capabilities, Version 3 is projected to provide that capability

FNS Internet Search Engine Capabilities
- Enhance the FNS website search engine to enable users to easily search/retrieve information
- Enhancing the searches would potentially reduce the volume of incoming emails and calls due to users inability to find the information on the internet
- Current search engine is not user friendly
- Impacts research, users unable to locate regulations, laws
- CGA has a work group, regions involved, they do not have the resources to resolve

Improve IT Relationship and Understanding of the Process for Project Development
- Example – FSQCS Project
  - Approved by ITIRB, however, still lacks funding
  - How do projects get moved along and how is the budget linked to the process
  - Not comfortable we are going to get to the finish line due to a lack of committed resources for the life of the project
- Funding integration into the ITIRB process

Enterprise-wide Paperless Environment
- Need to step back and take a corporate view, consider leading-edge off-the-shelf products - there are huge efficiencies to be gained
- Currently there is a tremendous amount of individualized filing mechanisms – if we conduct an inventory of our space, 25% are individual file cabinets – see no reason for that many cabinets
- The space could physically be re-engineered

Videoconference Capability
- Take advantage of the technology to be more efficient
- Individual video conferencing

Technology Presence in the APD Process
Need technical savvy as part of the process and the expertise to look at a system to provide program managers with a determination if it is the right direction
- Pushing forward for 10-20 years
- States doing significant overhaul of their systems
- There is an ability through APD to determine if program works effectively, technical applications make sense, not our call to design their systems
- We are partners and paying for systems
- Texas – we missed out on involving ourselves in the design phase

IT Awareness
- We have tools available, just are not aware of them and how to use them
- ITD to host Brown Bag lunch sessions
- Inform program areas of security requirements and/or other changes that IT is aware of that the program areas may have to react to.
- Provide conference room meeting support – ensure equipment is working

Technology Focus
- Focus on technology that meets the needs of the next generation

Quality Assurance (QA) Services
Provide efficient and effective, value-added QA services

Impact to Consider – Laws Need to Catch up with Technology
- Eligibility systems
- Physically signing the application (e-signature)
- States are replacing their systems
- Texas work – as an example
- Federal Government will need to pay a larger portion, pay more for systems
- Need more leadership
- Explore opportunities to have States work together in coalitions, as they did in the EBT arena (ex. NCS, WSEA) when building/upgrading MIS systems.

Special Nutrition Program

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Special Nutrition Program management team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Kate Houston, Deputy Administrator, Special Nutrition Program
Ron Vogel, Associate Deputy Administrator, SNP
Sandra Minor, Chief, Information Administration Branch, ITD
Vangie Cypher, Chief, Technical Services Branch, ITD
Eileen Bunn, Benefit Redemption Systems Branch, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

<u>Special Nutrition Program Team Input:</u>
The participants identified the following priorities:

Management of Information
- Need to pay attention to Web-based Supply Chain Management, this is a tri-agency effort, a solid governance strategy is needed

System Program Support
- WIC Food Package
  - Universal Product Code Database to support Electronic Benefit Transfer transactions must be able to handle the food package changes
  - Maintenance of the database is a major challenge with the expansion of the Universal Product Codes and Product Label Codes
  - Need strategic thinking on electronic commerce of cash value vouchers (part of the WIC food package) on existing FS platforms
    - Contract with State consortiums, piggyback on State systems

Videoconferencing Capability
- As we think about conducting more business on videoconferencing to reduce travel, we need to ensure that it works and is reliable. Need serious thinking on how to make improvements.

E-Gov
- E-authentication needs to reviewed. The impact to State partners, employees, and systems. The way it is being managed now is not user friendly
- E-travel and Time and Attendance, not working well
- HR move to Parkersburg, need systems in place that are easy to use and reliable
- Rollout of the Federal Document Management System, need to ensure server capacity for applications

Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation management team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Alberta Frost, Director, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation
Steve Carlson, Director, Family Program Staff, OAN&E
Judy Wilson, Nutrition Services Staff, OAN&E
Jay Hirschman, Director, Special Nutrition Staff, OAN&E
Jane Mandell, Senior Nutritionist, Nutrition Services Division, OAN&E
Rich Lucas, Assistant Director, OAN&E
Ted Macaluso, Chief, Evaluation Branch, Special Nutrition Program Staff, OAN&E
Cindy Long, Assistant to the Director, OAN&E
Tim O'Connor, Associate Deputy Administrator, Management
Enrique Gomez, Director, Information Technology Division
Sandra Minor, Chief, Information Administration Branch, ITD
Vangie Cypher, Chief, Technical Services Branch, ITD
Eileen Bunn, Benefit Redemption Systems Branch, ITD
Kevin Russ, Manager, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Gene Goodell, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation Team Input:
Where are we now? The participants identified the following priorities:

Internal Communications
- For the most part, system is working well (far better than at times in the past) Maintaining the stability of the current system is critical to Agency business
- Need to prevent Departmental changes from undermining progress
- Email works well – transferring files is sometimes a problem, especially large files
- Finding ways to share information across the organization – server space that can be accessed by the regions and across HQ – will help to improve communication

Using IT to Enhance Collaborative Work
- Need better capability to develop, edit and content with multiple contributors in real-time across the organization
- Need to develop electronic clearance process (perhaps integrated with e-mail?) to move work efficiently, facilitate adjustments through the process, and minimize unnecessary "document production" work
- E-signature to make clearance as it moves through the electronic process
- Focus staff years on content, not process - Better discussion – real-time

- Need server space -- working with Vangie Cypher to conduct pilot test of workspace features

Electronic Document Management
- Capability to share, store, retrieve content; need electronic system to provide optimum support
- Need to configure space where everyone has access, collaboration point
  - Example - Currently maintain separate mailing lists, need central place to organize data
  - Stove-piped environment gets in the way, processes must change
- Management of contracts – no way to integrate contracts and what OAN&E does
- Need to configure workspace; server space reflects out-dated organization from long ago

External Communication – External IT communication to further mission and get message out
- We do not see the interactive stuff
  - Do we have the capacity (technical)
  - Need to reconcile with policy – the look and feel, do we have to fit into the box or can we command attention
- Need to know – has FNS & USDA policy been defined

Technical Support
- Help Desk support better, but –
- Provide support and training to effectively use AgLearn and similar services

What are your critical needs?

Data Collection and Analysis Tools
- Data Mining - Need to be informed on the tools and techniques that are available
- Web-based surveys, both internal and external
  - Purchased software, not compatible with FNS security requirements
  - Need to explore off-the-shelf products
- Optimize States ability to get information to us
  - States continue to ask for easier ways to get information to FNS
- Use web-based technology for reporting – We are currently behind in this area Database tools to pull data together and analyze
  - Example –Review all electronic certification records in WIC state agency database to identify errors (replaces small sampling of paper records and reduces need for on site work in state agencies.)
- Agency Business Intelligent tools to provide improved reporting of management evaluation findings; create nationwide database to draw stronger conclusions

FNS Internet Search Engine Capabilities
- Establish better ways to use internal/external websites
- Enhance the FNS website search engine to enable users to easily search/retrieve information, navigate, get messages out

On-line Training Modules
- External and Internal
- Policies, Regulations, Rules
- State Cooperators

Protection of Confidential Information
- Policy confidentiality of records is a huge issue

- **Off- Site Access**
    - Portability – external access, ability to get into our files
    - Critical element of providing flexible work environment which helps to attract and retain staff
    - Potentially increases productivity
    - Security and privacy concerns likely to be the major barrier

PartnerWeb
- Need to understand the applications so we can take full advantage of the capability
    - Currently not using as much as we could be using
- Need collaborative tools to disseminate information to states

IT Awareness
- Need to make better use of the tools currently available
- Not aware of them and how to use them – Use 10% of capacity, Unaware of 90% of the features and what they do
- Training needs to be integrated
- Helpful if is in the context of what the individual is doing
- Need to understand how to apply what is learned
- Cannot be all classroom; for example – Microsoft knowledge bank

Impacts to Consider
- Confidentiality of records may be impediment to use tools in the future
- Thought to legislative changes to get to electronic

What are your future needs?
See Critical Needs, above, plus:

Geo mapping capability -- Need 1) underlying data and 2) staff capacity

Understanding nutrition content:

- Linking the EBT system to purchases and scanner of what is being purchased Tailor nutrition information to identify what FS participant is buying
- Junk food issue -- Restrict Food Stamp participants from certain foods. May arise in the Farm Bill and pressure is rising for the future, big issue
    - How will it be identified - good list, bad list
    - Establish a process to identify – link UPC and Nutrition Facts

Office of Financial Management

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with Financial Management to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Rich Platt, Associate Deputy Administrator, Financial Management
Kevin Russ, Manager, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

<u>Financial Management Input:</u>
The participant identified the following priorities:

Technical Support
- Help desk support meets current needs
- Serious concern with the current tape backup and recovery situation, COOP
  - Largely related to IPAS system
  - Tape process is unreliable – creating back-ups, shipping them out
  - Not enough for a production system
  - Hardware issues
  - IT has been working on the issues, no fixes in place to date
- The systems - ROAP, IPAS, NDB are working well

Infrastructure
- The infrastructure not the best, but does the job
- Telecommunications service has been good
  - File servers may be reaching capacity

Tools
- Desktop capabilities such as Microsoft Office and e-mail (Outlook) are fine

Improve IT Relationship and Understanding of the Process for Project Development
- Funding integration into the ITIRB process

IT Awareness
- Workforce issues are becoming more important. The agency is losing personnel slots and institutional knowledge to retirement, and there is no money or staff to resolve the problem.
  - The agency needs to re-introduce the proper mix of IT skills and management training.
  - Adequate staffing, funding and training of IT are critical for FNS to succeed.

Technology Focus

- IPAS servers upgraded as part of the normal 2-3 year update/upgrade cycle and should not require further upgrades prior to the FMMI cutover.
- FMM
  - o Proposals are due to the Department in December with an award expected in the March - April timeframe. Completion is expected about 2 years after work starts.
  - o The primary impact on FNS will be the conversion of IPAS data to the new system requirements, which will be done by contract.
- Enterprise-wide Lines of Business, including FMMI.
- FNS has expended a lot of effort in recent years to fully integrate its systems, such as IPAS, NDB, FPRS, etc.
- The Department is building enterprise-wide projects as "stove pipes"
  - o Real danger that the successful integration that has been achieved within FNS will be lost as the Enterprise-wide initiatives are implemented - Example - FNS merged program, budget, financial and grants application into one system, IPAS, while USDA is now breaking them out into separate initiatives

Office of Management

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Management team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Gloria Gutierrez, Deputy Administrator, Management
Michael Watts, Director, Civil Rights Division, MA
Patsy Palmer, Chief, Contract Management Branch, MA
Mark Rucker, Chief, Property Management Division, MA
Venita Clark, Staff Assistant, Human Resources, MA
Lorena Carrasco, Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, MA
Lorri Phelan, Assistant to the Deputy Administrator, MA
Lisha Dorman, Administrative Officer, MA
Enrique Gomez, Director, Information Technology Division
Sandra Minor, Chief, Information Administration Branch, ITD
Vangie Cypher, Chief, Technical Services Branch, ITD
Eileen Bunn, Benefit Redemption Systems Branch, ITD
Kevin Russ, Manager, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Gene Goodell, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

Management Team Input:
The participants identified the following priorities:

Current Technology
- Contracts Automated Reporting System (CARS)
    - Effective tool to show what is coming, what is here, generates reports
    - System; however, has reached its end of life and we no longer retain consultant that developed the software
    - System needs enhancements to continue to meet reporting requirements
        - Example - Category changes
- Integrated Acquisition System (IAS)
    - Department system – required to use
    - Boggs down desktop system
    - Doesn't generate the required reports
    - Doesn't track cradle to grave

- Civil Rights Enterprise System (CRES), Department system
    - Program Complaints is the next enhancement with the Department
    - Manual process at this time
    - Regions unable to fully use
    - Need capability to manage, track, and report program employment complaints to customers

      o Need tools to track day day-to-day operations and activities – for example track reasonable accommodations, status of disabilities

- EMPower, EVersit, Department system
  - o Need to address with the transition to Parkersburg

Future Technology Focus
- Tracking System for Contracts
  - o Generate required reports
    - Outstanding balances
    - Award status
    - Small business awards
  - o Handle end-of-year work
    - Capability to determine what we are not doing, what we need to do
    - What will be internal vs. contracted

- Tracking System for Personnel Actions
  - o Provide individuals with the capability to see the status of the action
  - o Automate 52 tracking
    - Retirement tracking
      - Planned to move to Parkersburg

- Automated Help Desk
  - o Streamline the handling of incoming calls
    - Diminishing resources, inability to backfill vacant positions, need effective way to handle workload
      - Geoffrey Gay currently working with Chicago to determine return on investment

- Tracking System for Property Management
  - o Capability to manage property, maintenance, and buildings across the country
  - o Provide the customer with the capability to submit requests via the Internet
    - Floor plan changes, building maintenance
  - o Explore off-the-shelf products
    - To be used by the regions as well

- Centralize FedEx
  - o Customers use central point to send/track packages
    - Currently it is all over the place

- SMART ID Card Implementation
  - o Identify Hardware/Software Requirement
  - o Need a compatible feed to SMARTCARD – explore EMPower

- Document Management System
  - Capture knowledge and information of those retiring - SOP's
  - Searchable Database

- Software to conduct the Human Capital Survey
  - Other areas may have a need – CNPP, OANE
  - mrInterview should be explored

- Implementation of the Department Travel System

- Training Database to track the systems employees have completed training

- Automate the A-11 Process
  - Start to finish – all the way to the Department
  - Bring more in line with the budget process
  - Link to FFIS
  - Eliminate re-keying of information

FNS Internet/Intranet Links and Search Engine Capabilities

- Enhance the FNS website search engine to enable users to easily search/retrieve pertinent information quickly
  - GSA Contractors
  - Travel information
  - Per Diem rates
- Recommendation to post IT Strategic Plan on the website
- Update the Management website

Information Collaboration

Develop effective and efficient ways to communicate and provide information across the organization
- Capability to review acquisition plans and discuss procurement plans with all the areas

IT Awareness

- Training to use required systems
- AgLearn
- Unable to get into the system
- Password problems
- Point-of-contact unable to resolve problem
- Need to raise awareness of Newsstand and information provided on the hall monitors
- Need training on how to setup and use access and excel files

Videoconferencing Capability

Provide technologies to enhance communication and the dissemination of information

- Individual conferencing capability
- Need to conduct series of meetings to provide critical information
    - Live meeting

Technical Support

IT Help Desk provides good service, very responsive

Tools

- Need docking stations
- Statistical Software License
    - Determine if there may be other users in the Agency – Enterprise License

Office of Regional Operations

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Office of Regional Operations management team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Fran Zorn, Deputy Associate Administrator, Office of Regional Operations
Allen Ng, Regional Administrator, Western Region
Chuck Hendricks, Chief, Information Technology, Western Region
Darlene Barnes, Regional Administrator, Mountain Plains Region
Rebecca Hobbs, Management Analyst, Office of Regional Operations
Tim O'Connor, Associate Deputy Administrator, Management
Enrique Gomez, Director, Information Technology Division
Jonathan Alboum, Deputy Director, Information Technology Division
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Gene Goodell, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

Office of Regional Operations Team Input:
Where are we now? The participants identified the following priorities:

List of Current Needs
DMS Pilot (WRO)
- Improve Teleconference Capability to include Video (Move from ISDN to IP Technology now that UTN has been implemented)
- Need to provide training on how to use the technology
- Notebook Encryption (in addition, ACE, Citrix)
- Utilize Wireless Capability with Notebooks
- Finalize Configuration Management Board [include department requirements; such as, AgLearn (Flash, Java, etc.)]
- Notebook Docking Stations
- T&A (end-user submits T&A)
- E-Government Travel

Strengths
- DMS Pilot – Efficiency, easy retrieval, and backups
- Improve Teleconference - Cost-effective, saves travel dollars, and saves usage fees associated with ISDN, easier to use
- Notebook Encryption - Increases security, adds Notebook safeguards
- Utilize Wireless Capability with Notebooks
- Finalize Configuration Management Board - no additional costs, wireless adaptor built-in, can save telecom dollars
- Flexible for training - Standardize images

- Notebook Docking Stations – Mobility, cost-effectiveness, only need 1 computer
- T&A (end-user submits T&A) - Reduces redundancy, no longer need dedicated staff
- E-Government Travel - Efficiency

Weakness/Potential Gaps
- DMS Pilot - time consuming to develop, staff commitment, folder structure / test / implement / train
- Improve Teleconference Capability - less customer oriented (no human to human contact, cost prohibited (current ISDN System), must be on same network (700) or require MCI (Verizon) operator extra expense
- Notebook Encryption – additional costs, not 100% guaranteed
- Utilize Wireless Capability with Notebooks – increased security risk
- Finalize Configuration Management – differences among regions
- Notebook Docking Stations - security
- T&A - timeliness
- E-Government – resolving software issues
- Intranet needs to be improved, currently it is underutilized and not meeting needs, unable to navigate, content is outdated

What are your critical needs?

List of Priorities (most important IT management and support needs)
- Encryption software for Notebooks (in addition Citrix, ACE)
- Expand UTN Capability (i.e., teleconferencing using IP verses ISDN, VOIP)
- T&A (end-user submits T&A)
- E-Government Travel
- Roll out DMS throughout the region and field offices (Agency?)
- Train all regional / field staff on DMS
- Enhance Internet site for all policy, documents and other materials for distribution including adding a search engine
- Wireless expansion (notebooks, training room, etc.)

What are your future needs?

Legislative Changes
- Security Related Government Information Security Act of 2000), FISMA, NIST, etc.
- E-Gov (eAuth, e-travel, Security, HSPD-12, e-records management)
- Clinger-Cohen Act 1996 (acquisition, user disposal of IT resources, etc.), OMB A-119 – reduction of government agency unique standards, OMB A-11 – capital planning, OMB A-130 – management life cycle

IT Management or Process Improvements
- SMS agency-wide (patch mgt)

- Rollout of Jetform replacement (Adobe)
- Project Management / COTR
- Improve PMO Process (inventory of projects, status of each project, etc.)
- Implement Joint Application Development (JAD Sessions)

IT Technologies Useful to Mission Area
- Enhance UTN Capability (IP conferencing will allow easier partnership Collaboration)
- DMS rollout (signature usage standard)
- Electronic Records Management
- Wireless Technology Expansion
- ROWS and TRIPS (in addition need system for all other, resource tracking, resource utilization and Agency-wide work plan tracking system)

Technology Infrastructure Upgrades
- Maintain Industry Standards (Gartner Group evaluation)
- USDA Messaging System (email) – March 2007
- Increase Wireless Technology
- Expand UTN Capabilities (IP Conferencing, VOIP)
- IPv6
- All equipment must be compatible

Communications and Government Affairs

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Communications and Government Affairs management team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Steven Savage, Director, Communications and Governmental Affairs
Yenie Tran, Special Assistant to the Director, CGA
Kathie Klass, Deputy Director, CGA
Glenn Kaup, Webmaster, CGA
Pam Phillips, Director, Consumer and Community Affairs Staff
Enrique Gomez, Director, Information Technology Division
Sandra Minor, Chief, Information Administration Branch, ITD
Vangie Cypher, Chief, Technical Services Branch, ITD
Allison Willcox, Chief, Web Application Branch, ITD
Eileen Bunn, Benefit Redemption Systems Branch, ITD
Kevin Russ, Manager, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

Communications and Governmental Affairs Team Input:
The participants identified the following priorities:

Tools
- Central communication and collaboration tool
  - Senior Management Demo Library (currently in progress)
    - Information is quickly accessible
    - Provides consistency of message
    - Talking points, news clips
    - Electronically available to regions
    - Labor saved
  - CGA needs to design rules and regulations, nomenclature on how speeches are to be used
- Ability to access information quickly
  - 24/7 access of information through our servers is critical
  - Accessibility to email is critical whether it is 3:00 am or Saturday afternoon
  - CGA plays a role in disasters
- Database Management Development
  - Access to the regions
  - Compile calendars, task information

Communication Service
- Need the ability to interact at all times
- Priority - seamless communications with the FNCS Under Secretary's Office

- OWA and Treo is key to everyone, Treo web-based is a big improvement
- Under Secretary's Office needs access to our intranet
  - Input on current documents and need to get involved in speeches
  - This is a challenge for us right now

Online Training
- Challenges accessing the systems
- Need training sessions on how to efficiently use the system and get immediate attention
  - Aglearn – required to use the system more and more
- Treo – need better information and training
- New systems, should have mandatory training
- Explore additional training, one-on-one, and refresher training

FNS Public Website
- Keeping public website up-to-date technologically, user friendly, prompt, so people are able to get in and easily access the information they need
- Need consistent content and delivery tailored to needs and information retrieval
- FSP is examining its website
- May need the expertise of a vendor to assist with the usability testing
- Need web streaming
- Message, video, audio
  - Conduct cost benefit analysis
- Look at the internet and the intranet

E-Gov Requirements
- Rollout of the Federal Document Management System

Information Technology Division

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Information Technology Division management team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Enrique Gomez, Director, Information Technology Division
Jonathan Alboum, Deputy Director, Information Technology Division
Sandra Minor, Chief, Information Administration Branch, ITD
Vangie Cypher, Chief, Technical Services Branch, ITD
Allison Willcox, Chief, Web Application Branch, ITD
Eileen Bunn, Benefit Redemption Systems Branch, ITD
Lizbeth Silbermann, APD Support Branch, ITD
Sara Bradshaw, Freedom of Information Act Manager, ITD
Dawn Wolfgang, Information Clearance Officer, ITD
Regina Ryder, Internet Manager, ITD
Kevin Russ, Manager, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Gene Goodell, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

Information Technology Division Team Input:
The participants identified the following priorities:

Strengths
- Most of the mission areas are pleased with the current day-to-day support and services
- ITIRB is a step forward

ITD Needs
- Knowledgeable, project managers - Project Managers need to be readily available to assist all areas of FNCS
- Need to Staff the PMO
- Better full life cycle support for IT projects
- Need to establish a way to be proactive instead of reactive
- Need to look at how new technology is surveyed
- Better venues to communicate with the program areas
- Greatest problem is the placement of IT in the organization
    - Viewed as an obstacle, too many rules/regulations
- Need to evaluate better ways to partner with customers
- Program areas going out and getting things that are incompatible and do not meet standards
- Lack of resources to staff new projects, not positioned to do what we need to do

- Need technical person to manage projects
- Hire more people and provide adequate training
- Look at the processes within ITD – need to document Standard Operating Procedures
- Better communications within ITD - Better communications when changes happen, for example, when TSB does server updates etc., sometimes I'll have a problem accessing information from off-site and the help desk will say "oh yea" you need to do this, this and this…. Need to be more proactive in providing information to everyone
- With all this talk of Document Management systems, IT needs someone skilled in the area of Records Management
- Data standardization needs to occur across all platforms, hire a DataBase Analyst to oversee DBAs and implement data & database standards
- Assist agency in making all major systems web based

IT Awareness
- Educate Senior Management and Staff
- Use the ITIRB for education and communication to reach more folks across the organization
- Every project must go through the ITIRB, procedures are in place, we need to follow the process – walk people through the process
- Websites (Intranet, Internet,) current information updated and maintained on a regular basis
- Need to educate employees on security requirements and what needs to be implemented
- Provide understanding of the process for new projects – why/what needs to be done

Document ITD Processes and Procedures
- Starting with Guidelines
- Standard Operating Procedures
- Automate on the Web, Accessible to All
  - Project Life Cycle and How to Manage IT Projects
- Need to follow the ITIRB process
- Review of I T policies, instructions and procedures on an on-going basis (current, updated and maintained)
- All software, hardware standards need to be finalized and published and kept updated.

Tracking Systems
- Collect, Track, Report FOIA to OMB
- Sara Bradshaw to submit business case
- Workflow system, Web enabled with interface to Sharepoint
- Ways to disseminate information, share what we are doing
- Use of Linux, Unix
- Use of Open Source to reduce cost to clients

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion

The IT strategic planning team hosted a focused planning session with the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion team to gather detailed input on their IT needs over the next five years.

Participants:
Dr. Eric J. Hentges, Executive Director, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
Jackie Haven, Director, Customer Outreach and Marketing, CNPP
Enrique Gomez, Director, Information Technology Division (ITD)
Jonathan Alboum, Deputy Director, ITD
Sandra Minor, Chief, Information Administration Branch, ITD
Allison Willcox, Chief, Web Applications Branch, ITD
Eileen Bunn, Benefit Redemption Systems Branch, ITD
Kevin Russ, Manager, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Paul Linz, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Gene Goodell, Portfolio Management Office, ITD
Liz Dugger, Portfolio Management Office, ITD

Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion Team Input:
The participants identified the following priorities:

Current IT Needs
- Hosting of MyPyramid.gov and CNPP website, long-term hosting is a huge issue, Scale-up capacity
- Maintenance and Operations of MyPyramid.gov and CNPP website
- Continuation of Akamai services
- Hardware and software upgrades – code/software for Tracker needs to be redone
- Updating/upgrading content on MyPyramid.gov website
  - Adding nutrition information for pregnant and lactating women
  - Adding content on moving to a healthier weight
  - Updating/upgrading MyPyramid interactive tools
  - Adding option for height and weight input to MyPyramid Plan
  - Adding MyPyramid Planner as an additional interactive tool
  - Updating MyPyramid Tracker database
  - Adding Interactive Healthy Index to Tracker
  - Updating feedback messages for various BMI categories on Tracker
  - Identifying and integrating a better search engine for Tracker database
  - Improve look and feel of Tracker – to brand with MyPyramid
  - Add recipe and food label functionality to Tracker
- Customer evaluation of web services (Foresee on-line survey)
- Additional customer service support
- New technology – webcasts, podcasts, PDA version, etc.

Strengths

- Very popular website offering nutrition advice based on the Dietary Guidelines
- Offers interactive tools to help consumers track their diet and exercise habits and
- compare them to the Dietary Guidelines
- Widely used by educators and students

Weaknesses/Potential Gaps

- Resources
  - Not enough server capacity to run the Tracker
  - No ability to run new interactive tool, MyPyramid Planner
  - No real ability to modify/add/delete information
  - No real ability to keep up with technology changes – Tracker code needs to be rewritten, instead of constantly patching
  - Current software environment
  - Not enough resources (money, people)

List of Priorities (most important IT management and support needs)

- Add more server capacity to meet customer demand for interactive tools
- Add MyPyramid Planner interactive tool (Increased server capacity should allow for its hosting)
- Need improved search engine to make database more user-friendly and to decrease load on server
- Need ability to change/modify/delete/add content on MyPyramid.gov

Future Needs and Considerations

- Legislative/regulatory
  - 2010 Dietary Guidelines will necessitate changes in MyPyramid.gov
- **IT Technologies Useful to Mission Area**
  - PDA's
  - Podcasting
  - Webcasting
  - Search engine
- **IT Management or Process Improvements**
  - Better communication with NITC

- **Technology Infrastructure Upgrades**
  - Web and database servers – increased capacity