Arizona Public Education Department

Information Technology Study
Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

Scope

The charge for this work was to provide the Arizona Office of Economic Recovery (OER) an analysis of the Data Collection and Public Reporting Plan of the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund (SFSF) Phase II application related to the ability of the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) to accomplish the activities that had been identified. In addition there was a necessity to review the work plans that are currently contained in the application as to their viability given the current status of the ADE data system(s) and for recommendations to be developed for the next steps that the State will need to accomplish in order to meet all of the federal requirements and guidelines. Finally there was a need to review the existing data systems within the ADE to determine if they are commensurate with current and future customer and state needs.

The Arizona OER has identified four major areas of focus for the study of Infrastructure Support and Data Collection and Reporting. Summarized responses follow each question with additional information in the report. Due to the fact that three of the questions address the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Phase II Application while the last question is more general in nature and addresses the future collection of data, the report is divided into two sections. The first section is the review of the SFSF Application and the second section is the review of the ADE IT Program and its ability to deliver contemporary services including the collection and reporting of student data.

Section One:
1. **Are the data collection and public reporting plan assurances for monitoring and reporting the data accurate and feasible based on the current ADE data systems?**
   Of the 49 indicators and descriptors identified in the SFSF Phase II Application, 29 or 59% were found to be accurate and feasible. In this list of 29 indicators and descriptors, 8 indicators require some minor modifications or linked web sites.
2. **Are the work plans identified in the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Phase II Application viable to meet the required indicators**?
   Of the 49 indicators and descriptors there were 20 that required a review and revision of the timelines and activities. This will be the time consuming component of the project as it will require a review of current priorities, open communications with internal ADE staff, review of pilot projects, and communications with representatives from higher education and the Arizona Board of Charter Schools.
3. **In the work plans that are not viable, what are the recommended next steps to meet all of the federal requirements and guidelines as addressed in the State Fiscal Stabilization Fund Phase II Application?**
   When the work plans are revised and timelines reestablished and implemented, monitored, and concluded, the work plans that needed corrections should be able to provide the required evidence.

Section Two
1. **Are the existing data systems within the Arizona Department of Education commensurate with current and future state needs?**
    The current system used for the collection of student data, SAIS, is not capable of handling either the amount of data or the complexity of the business rules required by state and federal legislation. The system needs to be revised or replaced to make it commensurate with current and future needs. The state needs to invest in a system that can be used by the programs in the Arizona Department of Education for assessment, student and school performance reporting, and school finance. In addition, there is a need for a contemporary student longitudinal data system with an expanded capacity and the flexibility to provide individual student data to the appropriate personnel and parents without violating the student's privacy as well as the capacity to provide aggregated data and reports for decision-making by stakeholders.

Overview of Current Program
Of special note to this report: when the project was initiated, there was a different leadership team in place at the Arizona Department of Education. All of the information that was gathered through the interviews and document review related to the work of the prior administration. With the election of a new Superintendent of Public Instruction and a change in the leadership of the ADE Information Technology (IT) Program, there appears to be a new energy, leadership and management style, and a collaborative, open, and transparent willingness to address historical shortcomings of the services from the IT Program.

The ADE IT Program provides software, infrastructure, and project management support to the ADE's Programs and Arizona's 222 school districts and 505 charter schools. Much of that support comes in the form of Student Accountability and Information System (SAIS) and support for many databases and applications used throughout the ADE including content and document management systems as well as legacy transactional systems for programs as diverse as teacher licensure and school nutrition. An organization chart of the ADE IT Program from December, 2010 is found in Appendix 2. As indicated above, a new leadership team has been in place since January 1, 2011. There have already been some modifications in the organizational structure and responsibilities within the IT Program.

Report on the Status of the State Fiscal Stabilization Funding Phase II Application
The SFSF Phase II application had 49 indicators and descriptors. Of the 49 indicators and descriptors, 29 or 59% were found to be accurate and feasible. In this list of 29 indicators and descriptors, 8 indicators require some minor modifications or linked web sites. In addition, there were 20 indicators or descriptors that required a review and revision of their timelines and activities. This will be the time consuming component of the project as it will require a review of current priorities, open communications with internal ADE staff, review of pilot projects, and communications with representatives from higher education and the Arizona Board of Charter Schools.

It is or paramount importance that at the conclusion of the project individuals from the ADE review all the indicators and descriptors to insure that they are accurate and attuned to the activities and mission of the ADE.

Considerations for Improving the ADE IT Program

The considerations for this report are provided for the improvement of the ADE IT Program. The considerations identified in this section are designed to assist the ADE IT Program to provide timely, more accurate data; improve the internal relationships within the IT Program; and, establish partnerships. Specifically the recommendations are:

- Either rebuild the Student Accountability and Information System (SAIS), design an RFP to purchase a replacement for SAIS, or provide a combination of revision and purchase modules for SAIS
- Provide leadership for the development and implementation of a statewide student longitudinal data system (SLDS) that is based on a K-20 platform and meets the information needs of the stakeholders
- Establish a variety of internal and external communication techniques. This model would include methodologies for the delivery of both one-way and two-way messaging of written, verbal, face-to-face and electronic information
- Develop and implement training and professional development activities for staff members to support the integration software applications and to provide training on collaboration, communications, and team building
- Establish collaborative relationships with a variety of institutions and associations to create a synergetic arena in which to develop a contemporary student longitudinal data system
- Additional considerations include reviewing the leadership attributes needed to move the division forward, replacing the network equipment, identifying problems with the complexity of educational legislation, and reviewing techniques for improving customer service

These recommendations are those that are most apparent after the review of the information and interviews. There may be other areas that need to be addressed after greater examination by the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Future Steps

The next step that should be considered is the review of the recommendations by the Superintendent of Public Instruction. After this review, action plans should be developed and implemented for those recommendations that are considered.