

## Report on New IT Acquisition Process Released

The Department of Defense is committed to develop a new acquisition process that keeps “pace with the speed at which new IT capabilities are being introduced in today’s information age,” according to a Department of Defense report submitted to Congress on December 9, 2010. Efficiently supporting the diverse IT needs of the nation’s largest employer is a tremendous challenge that involves approximately 15,000 unclassified networks, and more than seven million computers and IT devices. Along with a 170,000-person information management/IT workforce, these IT capabilities constitute approximately 10 percent of the overall DoD acquisition budget.

The 804 report provides an update on the Department’s progress towards developing this new approach and highlights that “significant and fundamental” change is needed across the Department’s IT acquisition processes, with synchronized and risk-scaled requirements, resourcing, acquisition management and oversight in order to deliver rapid IT capabilities where they are needed most.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense has chartered and is chairing an IT Acquisition Task Force, which is led by the Department’s Deputy Chief Management Officer (DCMO), to make these changes. Beth McGrath, the Department’s DCMO, said “the proposed new acquisition approach will aim to deliver information capabilities in modular increments that are part of effectively managed portfolios. Our proposed improvements are ambitious, with a current average acquisition timeline of 81 months expected to be reduced to 18 months. Changes are expected across the Department, including the requirements process, the Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution process and the processes used to conduct acquisition and contracting as they relate to IT.”

The Department’s release of the report responds to a 2010 National Defense Authorization Act directive outlined in section 804, which called for the development of a new approach for acquiring information technology. The report, titled “A New Approach for Delivering Information Capabilities in the Department of Defense,” establishes five guiding principles:

1. Deliver early and often – aimed at changing the culture to embrace speed and responsiveness by deploying capabilities every 12-18 months.
2. Incremental and iterative development and testing – acknowledging these approaches will deliver better results than today’s “big bang”.
3. Rationalized requirements – recognizing user involvement as critical, but also noting that an enterprise focus, established standards and open modularity will drive and constrain designs.
4. Flexible/tailored processes – recognizing the variety of IT functions across the enterprise and providing multiple acquisition paths to address the differences.
5. Knowledgeable and experienced IT workforce – identifying that a cadre of highly trained professionals are a top priority.

The initial phases of the new approach are planned to focus on the Department's business systems and will leverage existing statutory authorities to accelerate information capability delivery. Included in the report is new IT acquisition guidance for defense business systems (DBS) issued on November 15, 2010 by Ashton Carter, Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics. As an early adopter of IT acquisition reform, the Business Capability Lifecycle (BCL) model provides a streamlined framework for structuring the definition, development, testing, production, deployment and support of defense business IT systems. This interim guidance, which establishes BCL as the acquisition process for DBS, is effective immediately.

The Deputy Secretary of Defense indicated that he considers information technology critical to accomplishing the Department's national security mission and is committed to working with Congress to build a process that matches the dynamic nature of today's IT environment and the evolving needs of our forces.