CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY OF SITSD

A Report Prepared for the
Legislative Finance Committee

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INTRODUCTION

House Bill No. 2 contained language which directed the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) to conduct a customer satisfaction survey to assess agency needs and challenges that may need to be addressed by the State Information Technology Services Division of the Department of Administration (SITSD). The 2019 Interim Work Plan adopted by the LFC instructed staff to create and conduct the survey, the results of which are summarized in this report.

The survey was created with assistance from the Office of Legislative Information Services (OLIS), Section C staff, and information technology experts. Primary goals of the survey were to include satisfaction with convergence, services provided, technology adoption, and effectiveness in comparison with private services in speed, cost, and service. A secondary goal was to identify information technology services warranting additional research and analysis. Staff conducted in-person interviews in order to ensure confidentiality and encourage maximum feedback from the agencies. The interviews were conducted in July and August 2017.

The following report is divided into the main categories of the survey and provides a summary of the responses, along with comments from the agencies that provide explanation for the results.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Survey Highlights:

- Agencies concur with the concept of convergence
  - Smaller agencies are more satisfied with convergence
  - Medium and larger agencies have more concerns and complications with the impacts of convergence
- Positive experiences with most areas of technical support within SITSD
- Agencies have concerns with the enterprise rate
- Need to improve internal and external communication

A major component of the survey was to evaluate the impact of convergence. In discussing convergence, the common theme was that it is a good concept, but when looking at the size of the agency there was a varying degree of satisfaction. Smaller agencies had overwhelming support of convergence and the positive impact it had for them. These agencies don't want or expect control over all aspects of their IT needs. In addition, they don't have the FTE to manage and analyze all IT solutions. By having SITSD, this gives the smaller agencies the ability to focus on internal needs while still providing for the business needs of their customers. SITSD for them becomes their expertise in areas they otherwise wouldn't be able to consider.

Medium and large agencies had a different perspective on the impact of convergence to them. These agencies are mainly concerned with the loss of control and accessibility in the event of system failures. Additionally, the process of implementation created unforeseen consequences to these agencies. These agencies felt a one-size-fits-all convergence package did not account for specialized applications used at different agencies, the procedures in place with their IT processes and business needs, and the overall impact to the customers the agency serves. Another major theme presented was the impact of the pricing. Agencies were told that a cost savings would occur, however many agencies stated their IT expenditures have increased.

The customer satisfaction survey provides insight into the interaction between SITSD and other state agencies. While concerns were identified, there were also positive takeaways. One aspect the agencies concurred on was regarding the support technicians at SITSD. Agency satisfaction with support technician interaction measured a median 7.5 out of ten. Agencies continually praised the technicians' response time, knowledge, and willingness to assist. While overall rated highly, agencies wanted to provide confidence ratings for each SITSD bureau individually.

The enterprise rate was a source of contention among the majority of the agencies. Of 24 agencies interviewed, 17 reported a concern with the enterprise rate. Agencies are uncomfortable with the manner in which rates are established and feel there is a lack of transparency when they are established. The rationale of an enterprise rate is understood, but agencies desire additional information about how the enterprise fund is used. For example, agencies don't feel that they have an accurate description of what they are paying for with the enterprise rate; what services are included and which are not, why are they being charged an additional consulting fee, and why is the fee so high. Agencies, comparing SITSD rates to the industry, feel they are being up-charged for the services from SITSD.

There are many agencies that rely on SITSD for their services. Communication is presented in many forms and over a variety of topics. Agencies feel that communicating effectively to external and internal customers is lacking. Specifically, when policies are being created and implemented and when projects are taking place. A common concern is the breakdown of communication internally which impacts agencies. With multiple bureaus involved in the roll out of a project, multiple responses are often received and typically not in concurrence with one another. However, several agencies stated they have experienced some improvement. There has been multiple adjustments to SITSD's organizational structure recently, and it may be worthwhile to conduct a follow-up survey in one year after those changes have had a chance to settle.
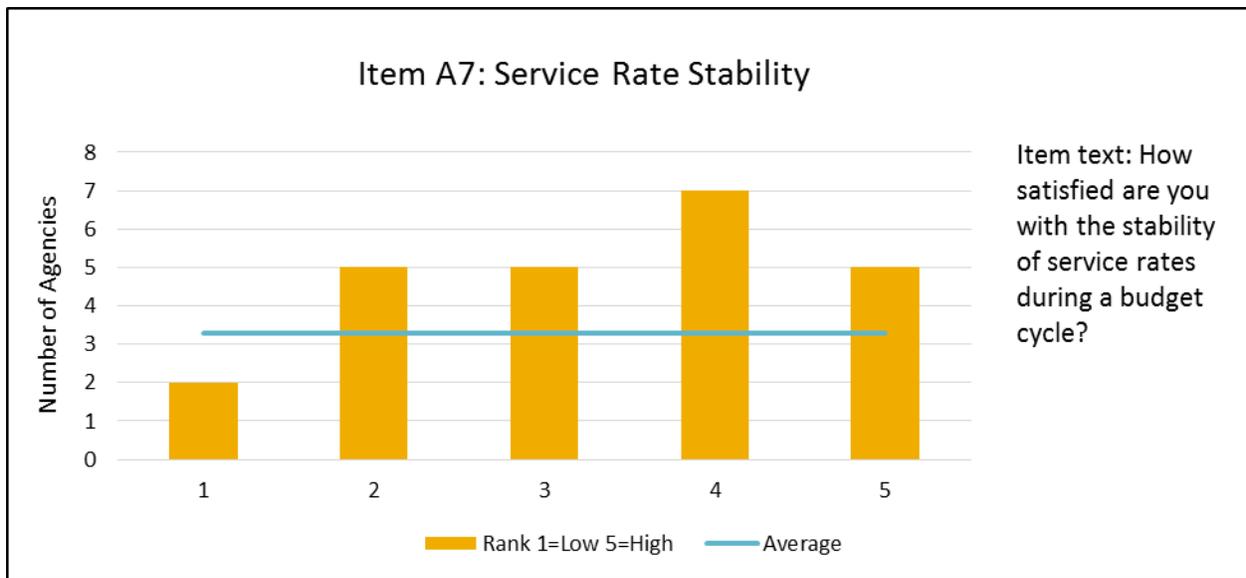
DETAILS OF SURVEY AREAS

Convergence Satisfaction

This section was to determine how many agencies have completed the process of convergence, overall satisfaction, and if enterprise requirements have hindered their business needs. It is important to note that a few agencies were not required to participate in the project due to statutory guidelines.
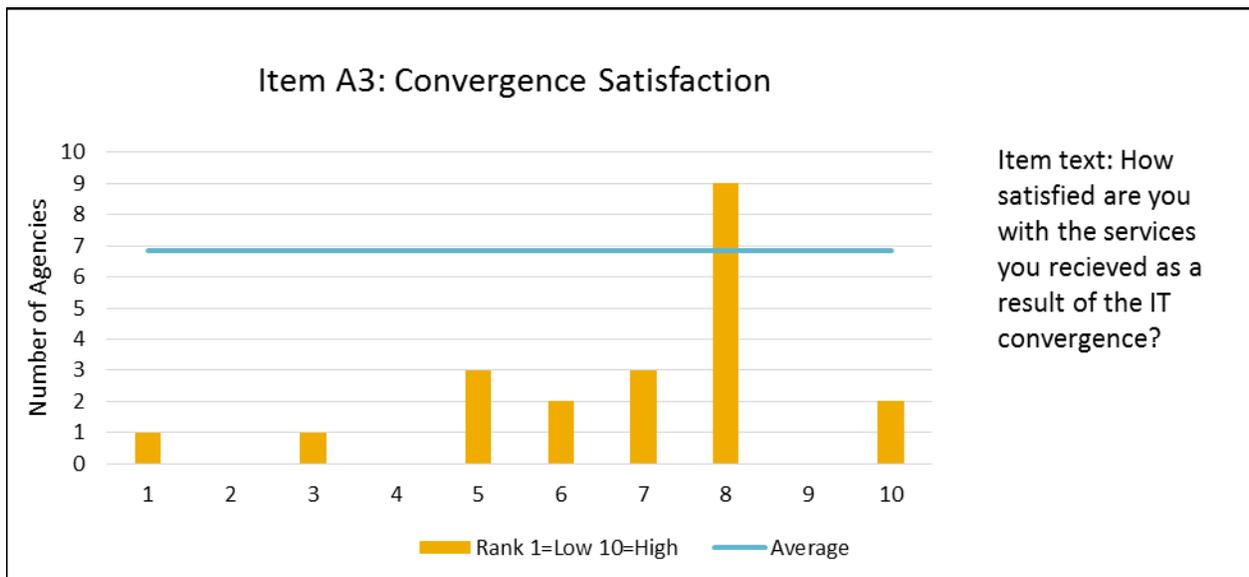
Overall, agencies expressed general satisfaction with convergence. The average among 21 agencies is 6.9 out of a ten-point scale. Many agencies expressed their belief in convergence, however were concerned that the outcomes initially presented did not occur with the process. Additionally, many agencies are concerned with the loss of control and ability to meet the business needs required of them. Since each agency is unique in their IT needs, some agencies felt the method of bringing convergence to the state agencies lacked the evaluation to ensure a one-size-fits-all approach was not mandated. Convergence is seen as a positive step forward for smaller agencies.

Several questions were asked in regard to any hindrance of enterprise requirements and enterprise security policies. The majority of the agencies did not state this was of concern. There were many comments that SITSD has been willing to be flexible during this time to ensure the agency can still provide IT solutions. The few outliers were more concerned with the amount of policies, the constant change, and the ability of the agency to get the requirements implemented in a timely manner.

Item A7: Service Rate Stability

Item text: How satisfied are you with the stability of service rates during a budget cycle?

Service rates billed by SITSD were discussed at length. The average score of satisfaction was slightly above neutral at 3.3 out of a five-point ranking. Many agencies stated they have recently experienced more stability and less changes. The greatest concern was re-budgeting mid-cycle when they plan and budget with the great unknown of imposed changes. A number of agencies expressed a concern that SITSD enterprise rates were greater than the cost of providing those services. Any misconception could be easily remedied through transparency and consistency of billing, rate setting, and services, and open communication with the agencies.

Enterprise Projects

This section of the interviews delves further into enterprise projects and the impacts of the convergence project. In terms of enterprise projects, agencies on average are pleased with the quality and frequency of communication they receive. There was no one method of communication when it came to the convergence project, it varied by agency.

Convergence has allowed some agencies to be able to focus on their business needs while SITSD manages the infrastructure. In addition, smaller agencies benefit from efficiencies gained. They do not have the resources to evaluate and be the experts in every aspect of IT.

Many agencies expressed concerns with convergence. While the common theme was that convergence could be a good practice for Montana, there was underlying doubt with the implementation and consideration of what is best for the agencies and to their customers; the citizens of Montana.
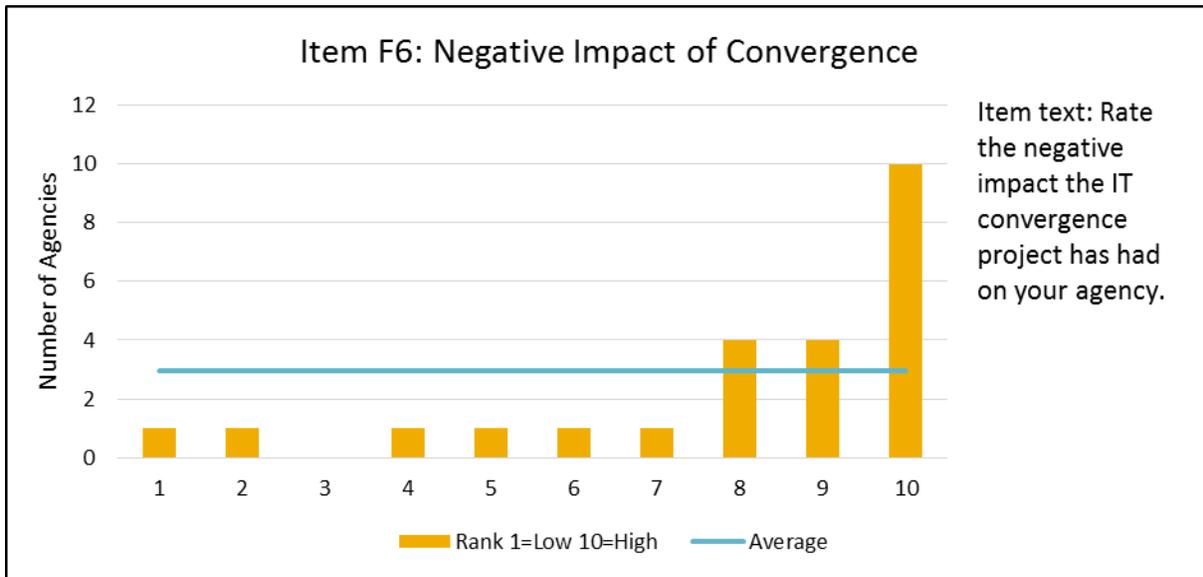
The executive order (E.O. 09-2016) for convergence explained the reason in part to be a potential $1.6 million savings for the state in IT. The majority of the agencies have anecdotally stated that their IT costs have increased. It is recommended that an analysis be conducted on a selected group of agencies in order to determine if expenditures have increased and for what reasons. Concern was also expressed regarding agency staff and the time it took them for the convergence while leaving important business needs unmet.

A great concern to the agencies is the loss of control of their systems. There are several agencies that rely solely on SITSD. For example, what would be SITSD's priority in resolving issues if multiple agencies were impacted with an outage or issue at any given time. At the agency level, staff are trained to be specialists on particular systems and it may be difficult for SITSD with their current level of FTE to be the specialists for every agency.

Convergence for several agencies created another layer of complexity and changed internal processes. It is the initial implementation that appears to be the issue. Since convergence has not been fully implemented, a follow-up survey on the impact in future years may provide different results.

Very few agencies believe they have influence in the selection of enterprise projects. And the vast majority do not believe agencies get representation on project teams. Several interviews provided feedback on suggestions for improvement to the way projects are managed (a full list is available upon request).

Enterprise Rate Services & IT Services Catalog

The majority of those interviewed do not believe they use the enterprise rate to the full extent, this is another area that agencies would like more transparency. These rates are non-discretionary and cannot be elected by the agency. The agencies were provided with the list of what services are part of the rate and the description as listed on SITSD's website. It was evident that the costs and services in the enterprise rate need to be more clearly defined. There were several requests for a detail of enterprise CIO activities and an understanding of how this correlates as a benefit to the agencies.

Some agencies provided recommendations of services to consider adding or removing from the enterprise rate (a full list is available upon request).

Customer and technical support of the enterprise services had varied responses. Fifteen of the 24 agencies interviewed state they receive adequate support in regards to enterprise services they purchase. A common response was that it depended upon which support technician they dealt with.

The navigation of the SITSD services catalog is frustrating for agencies. Agencies feel the catalog is not created in a user-friendly format and services and charges are not clearly defined. A recommendation that arose from the interviews would be to create the catalog based upon packaging services. The manner in which the catalog is currently formatted is difficult for an agency to ensure they are selecting all the needed items when adding a service.

Throughout the interviews, many agencies claimed that they are charged an additional consulting fee above and beyond the enterprise rate when assistance is needed from SITSD. This claim has not been verified, but would be important to understand why there is additional charges on the services purchased through the enterprises rate. In addition, it was stated that external consulting fees would be less than what SITSD is charging. In a survey to local vendors it appears this is not the case. However, to ensure the comparison of services is the same, it would be good to conduct an analysis of consulting fees.
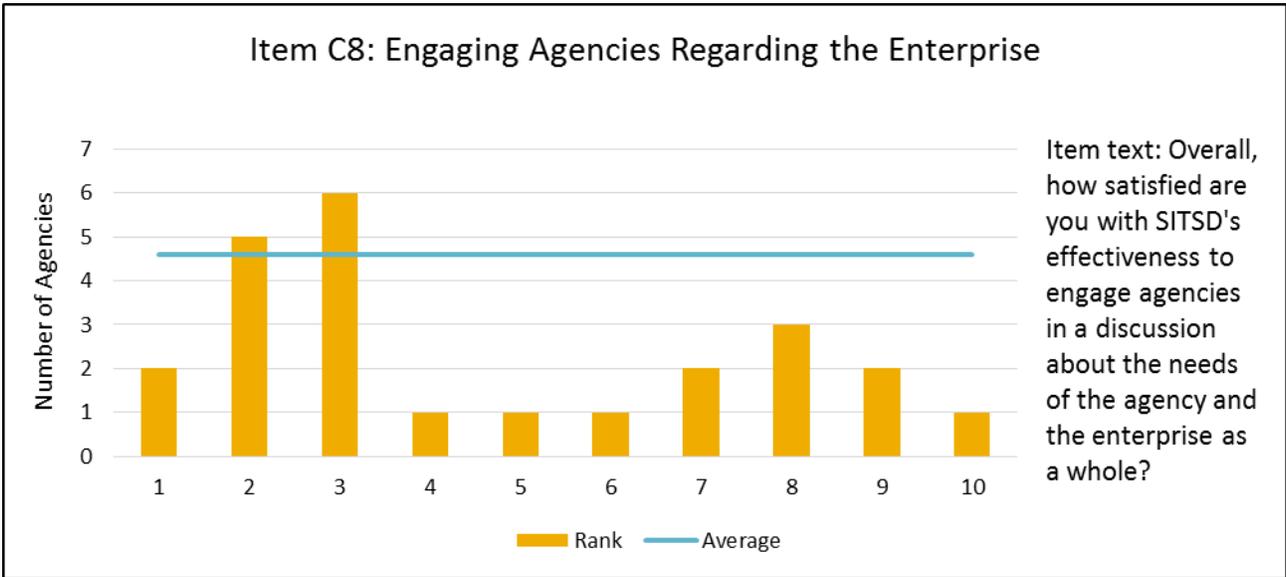
Communication

The next portion of the interviews focused on communication from SITSD on a variety of specific areas. The goal was to determine if SITSD was effectively communicating with agencies about policies, implementation, input, business needs, and the enterprise as a whole.
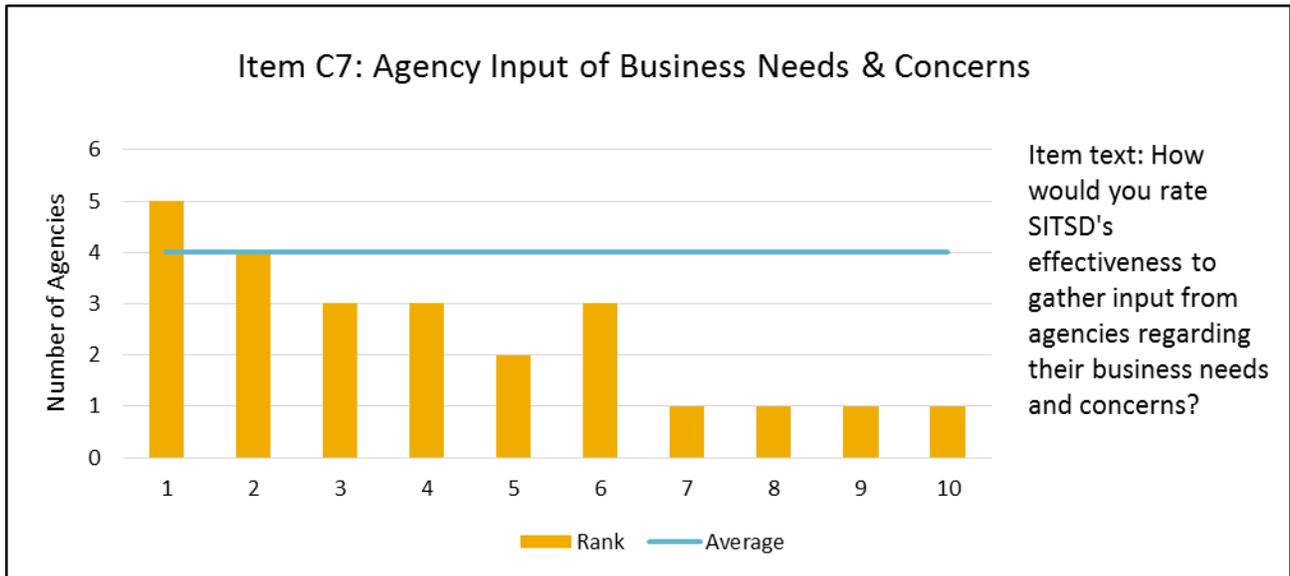
The rating for requesting input was slightly above average at 5.8 on a ten-point scale. Seven agencies were below average or stated they were rarely or never given the opportunity to provide input. It was consistently reported that SITSD will request the input from agencies but they don't utilize the input. The overall opinion is that SITSD only seeks input as part of a process to say they do but their decisions are made prior to the request.

Agencies have been pleased with communication received in regard to infrastructure changes and service outages. With a ten-point scale, SITSD was scored at 6.2 and 6.8 average respectively. Some agencies also stated they have been experiencing improvements with communication. There was a significant group of interviewees that would appreciate additional communication after outages or changes in order to understand the impact of why and what happened. There is concern that internal communication at SITSD is lacking, causing projects to not go smoothly since the internal bureaus don't always appear to be on the same page.

SITSD may choose to engage more with agencies. It was the understanding of agencies that upon convergence, they would have the opportunity to still be flexible and adaptable with the needs of their agency to serve the citizens of Montana.

Item C8: Engaging Agencies Regarding the Enterprise

Item text: Overall, how satisfied are you with SITSD's effectiveness to engage agencies in a discussion about the needs of the agency and the enterprise as a whole?

(Chart: Number of Agencies vs Rank 1-10, with Rank bars and Average line)

It was stated often that there has been a restructure with how agencies are engaged. The previous model was to have a customer relationship manager (CRM) assigned to each agency and this individual worked with agencies on their needs and concerns. The new model utilizes business analysts attending bureau chief meetings. The new meeting methodology is being reported as less of a discussion with agencies of their needs or concerns and more of informational platform for SITSD.

Item C7: Agency Input of Business Needs & Concerns

Item text: How would you rate SITSD's effectiveness to gather input from agencies regarding their business needs and concerns?

(Chart: Number of Agencies vs Rank 1-10, with Rank bars and Average line)

Of the 24 agencies interviewed, the average rating of SITSD to gather input from the agency is 4 out of 10. The majority fell below the average threshold. Agencies expressed concern that SITSD is not taking the agency into consideration on how they would implement new requirements, such as the costs and fit to the needs of the agency. Agencies questioned whether SITSD understands their customers and the inherent culture shift with using SITSD that is not being overcome. The majority of this is due agency feelings of a lack of transparency and trust with SITSD.

IT Related Policy, Procedures, and Processes

Several agencies stated the policies implemented by SITSD provided assurance that the policy will be implemented and followed. In addition, agencies stated that IT best practices have improved on a state-wide basis.

Along with this, there have been some conflicts within the policies implemented. Too much room for interpretation and granted exceptions with policies concerns the agencies. The policies should be well thought out prior to implementing, positive and negative impacts need to be evaluated and consideration needs to be made as to whether the policy is applicable to every agency.

Overall, agencies are satisfied with the procurement process. Agencies would like to see changes to the process to adapt it from a one-size-fits-all approach.

Support

Overwhelming support and kudos were given to the support technicians throughout the interviews. It is recommended to conduct a follow-up support survey on the individual bureaus in SITSD. Some of the lower scores were based upon their interaction with a specific bureau, however there was not a confidence rating of lower than a four reported.

Satisfaction with response time and resolution time for a request had varied response, again based upon which bureau agencies used. Overall, these areas received an above average rating.
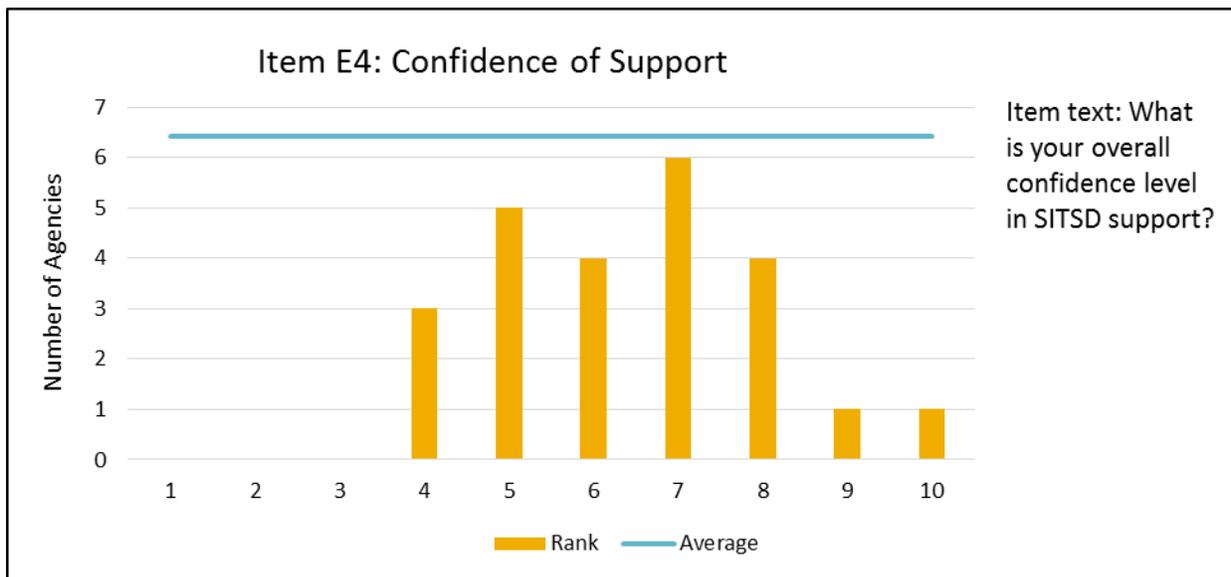
Confidence in SITSD varies by agency. As represented in the chart above, 6.4 out of 10 is the average ranking of confidence of this agency. It is important to note that agencies put a high value on support. When agencies have the opportunity to shop for services, support plays a major role in whether or not they would purchase from SITSD.

Data & Network

Overall, agencies are satisfied with network services and data storage services. It is understood that SITSD has little control over the local vendor for network services and that when an outage occurs they do communicate that out to the necessary agencies.

NEXT STEPS

The LFC may wish to consider the following next steps that were identified during the interviews and agency discussions:
- Develop a thorough understanding of the SITSD enterprise rate and service catalog

- o Presentation of SITSD enterprise rate and service catalog
        - o How enterprise rates are developed
        - o How agency input and communication is incorporated into development of rates
        - o Services included in enterprise rate versus options in service catalog
        - o Services in the enterprise rate utilized by all agencies versus those used by select agencies
        - o Breakdown of agency invoices
        - o How rates may change between budgeting cycles
- Have staff conduct a follow-up of survey upon completion of convergence
- Expand the technician support survey
- Develop an understanding of the SITSD strategic plan
    - o Presentation of the current strategic plan
    - o How the plan is developed (customer input, stakeholder input, etc.)
    - o How the plan evolves from pre-convergence, to a post-convergence environment
    - o How the plan is revised, and how often that occurs

A number of agencies expressed concern about enterprise rates. A thorough understanding of the enterprise rate would likely help the agencies to gain confidence in the service, including better understanding of the method in which the rate is established and opportunities for communication and input from agencies. In addition, agencies desire more transparent SITSD billing. A study exploring the many aspects of the enterprise rate from definitions, to costs, to how and when rates are adjusted, the billing process, and the plan for communicating changes would provide agencies with the ability to more accurately budget and hopefully improve overall satisfaction.

Regarding the survey in general, survey responses and confidence ratings varied by size of agency as well as between those who have completed convergence versus those who are in the process. Convergence of many larger agencies is still in progress and LFD staff believe a follow-up survey after full convergence, possibly as early as mid-2018, would be beneficial in determining agency confidence levels once the process is complete. Convergence was an executive order established in 2016 with an implementation deadline of December 31, 2017. According to SITSD's SharePoint tracking as of the date of this publication, eight agencies are not fully converged. By allowing agencies to have more time working with SITSD survey results should be more reflective of post-convergence confidence levels.

Satisfaction with SITSD support technicians was high overall, but at the same time agencies indicated their level of satisfaction varied by SITSD bureau. In order to understand the differences in satisfaction with support technicians at different bureaus an additional survey could be conducted that focuses on each of the bureaus. This would allow for a more accurate picture of satisfaction with support issues, and additionally provide SITSD with data to improve any specific areas that may be lacking.

Finally, providing an opportunity for SITSD to discuss their strategic plan would help increase legislative and agency understanding of the overall plan for information technology into the future. Included in this presentation could be the overall plan as it currently exists, discussion of the post-convergence IT environment, how the plan changes over time, and opportunities for agencies and stakeholders to become involved in the process.