



# Montana IT Session Systems Analysis

## Interim Report # 1 to Computer Systems Planning Council



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## Introduction / Nature of the Engagement

The STATE OF MONTANA (MT), Office of Legislative Information Technology (OLIT) engaged XMaLpha Technologies, a contractor with considerable experience in State Legislative systems analysis, design, programming, and implementation to analyze and document legislative session systems, (including pre and post session) related business processes and technologies. XMaLpha has worked on Legislative projects in several other states, including OR, MN, IA, KS, ID, NE, FL, and for various state agencies in TX, PA, NY, CA, as well as for a variety of federal and local agencies. Through its partnership with MTG Management Consultants, this exposure to legislative practices in other locales, extends even further.

The purpose of this study is to clearly and effectively document and analyze Montana's session systems and processes, so that the results may be used for budget planning, and as the foundation for future systems replacements or upgrades. During this investigation, the XMaLpha team is analyzing all Law Making Processes and the systems employed during the execution of those processes. Evaluation is primarily focusing on the identification of:

- sustainable investments (e.g., those which are not yet at the end of their practical lifecycle);
- technologies at risk (e.g., those which have a limited, supportable/maintainable, life remaining, or may, indeed be beyond their sustainable life);
- requirements for cost efficient enhancement, where warranted; and
- opportunities for cost reduction/accuracy or improvement.

Project deliverables also include the development of a strategy and operational plan for the efficient, cost effective, and manageable upgrade of obsolete technology.

## Early Findings

**Note:** Please regard these as very early findings and opinions that are subject to refinement and change as the



*project continues.*

- The MT Status tracking and Web reporting is strong. At this point we believe that the current system should be retained, and continue to be enhanced.
- The Legislative text processing for bill drafting, processing, & Law/Code/Anno publishing is based on old hardware and software technology, and needs to migrate to newer, supportable technologies. In addition to reducing the risk associated with continued operation and support of aging technology, it may be possible to eliminate or reengineer some process steps, consolidate public content on Websites, and make other improvements during the introduction of new technologies.
- A unique, somewhat layered, Systems Architecture has evolved out of necessity. An opportunity exists to establish a broad architecture strategy to coordinate future development & integration.
- An aspect of the current environment that requires additional investigation, is the use of WordPerfect/PerfectScripts. The creative, and very elegant ways in which these tools combine today offer adequate automation within the current environment. It may prove to be the case that this suite is not adequate for enhanced processes. (This is on our technology watch list, as our investigations continue.)
- We see opportunities for a considerable amount of manual verification work to be reduced or eliminated, thereby freeing people to focus on other tasks.
- Some processes can be streamlined/improved with better tools & techniques (e.g., editing, validation, auto-transforms, smart compare, etc.)
- With regard to new or refactored systems, XMaLpha is establishing plans that take into account the MT bi-annual legislative cycles. For instance, if a 2013 session "go live" for text-oriented drafting/publishing tools, is a viable option, then the steps required to make that happen are exacting and complex. XMaLpha has considerable experience in this regard, having assisted other Legislatures make this kind of change. Our library of lessons learned will be very useful.
- The kind of change that is needed in MT is not entirely unique. Most other states have shifted their legacy technologies, or are in the process of doing so. What may be unique in the case of MT is the elegance of the current working solutions, and the agility of OLIT and the rest of the Legislative personnel, in addressing needs with the tools at hand. A phased approach to change, along with further use of sustainable technologies, and a plan to only replace those components at the end of their practical lifecycle is expected to be amongst our strongest recommendations.
- Montana Legislature personnel at all levels are very professional, responsive to customers, and attentive to user needs.

#### ***Technical Investments Near the End of their Life Cycle***

- TextDBMS
- Access Databases

#### ***Technical Investments with Life Remaining***

- Oracle Infrastructure

#### ***Technical Investments that are Still Being Evaluated***

- Word Perfect/Scripts
- A/V Feeds and Archiving
- Public Web Site

## **Timeline for Future Deliverables**

- Legislative Process Review Due Date - June 1
- Systems Review Due Date - July 1
- Schedule and Work Plan Due Date - Sept. 1
- Recommended Fall 2010 Pilot Project [Proof of Concept]