MONTANA LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

Legislative Fiscal Division

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Director
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TO: Information Technology Planning Council
FROM: Katie Guenther, Legislative Fiscal Division
RE: Financial Analysis of Zero-Trust Architecture
DATE: June 4, 2024

INTRODUCTION

The State Information Technology Division (SITSD) is in the process of implementing zero-trust architecture as it relates to information technology for the Executive Branch. Zero-trust architecture is a model that has strict validation and verification of devices that are accessing a network. SITSD has entered into a contract with a vendor that is intended to enhance security at endpoints (desktops, servers, etc.) within the state network. This is the first phase of a multi-phase project. SITSD is in the process of determining the plan for the next steps.

Currently, the impact on different branches of government and potentially certain state agencies is undefined and challenges are likely to exist with implementation zero-trust architecture with these agencies without certain sideboards.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The Legislative Fiscal Division will be conducting a financial analysis related to the implementation of zero-trust architecture as it relates to the Legislative and Judicial Branches as well as specific Executive Branch agencies. This analysis will examine how to implement zero-trust architecture at the lowest cost possible, while respecting constitutional and statutory boundaries between branches of government and specific state agencies and ensuring the data managed by the State of Montana remains secure. The analysis is anticipated to include cost estimates and feasibility of the following options:

- Specific state agencies and the State Information Technology Services Division have separate contracts, under an umbrella contract, with a vendor. The vendor would ensure the zero-trust architecture is implemented to allow seamless access to executive branch systems between all agencies and branches of government while ensuring that systems that should not be accessed are not accessed
- Specific state agencies are operating separate networks and individually implement zero-trust architecture. This would limit seamless access between state agencies and different branches of government but ensures there is not access that should not occur

This analysis will include:

- Meeting with financial and information technology staff at state agencies from the Legislative Branch, Judicial Branch, Department of Justice, Department of Military Affairs, Governor's Office (Office of Budget and Program Planning), and State Information Technology Services Division
- Understanding the impact of zero-trust architecture on each of these agencies
- Discussing thoughts these agencies may have related to implementing zero-trust architecture in an efficient and effective manner that respects their individual missions
- Developing cost estimates for an umbrella contract and implementing separate networks