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TO: Agency Executives

FROM: Michael Cockrill, Chief Information Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Cockrill".

SUBJECT: ANNOUNCING NEW POLICIES AND STANDARDS

I wanted to let you know about several new policies and standards recently approved by the Technology Services Board. While these are technical policies, there are business impacts from each of the policies. You may wish to share this memo with others in your agency who may be impacted by the policies.

Open Data

The [Open Data Planning Policy](#) requires each executive branch agency to develop, implement and update a plan that improves the agency’s published, searchable and downloadable information offerings. Initial agency plans must be created by October 2016. Help is available from the Open Data guy, [Will Saunders](#), and [guidance](#) docs from Office of the CIO can make the planning process pretty simple. The policy requires specific, measured targets but is flexible about methods, topics and timelines. After initial creation, agencies are required to report at least annually on the progress of the plan. This policy does not require agencies to make public sensitive or protected data, and was designed to be achievable within existing resources. There is an advisory group of agency stakeholders that helps guide implementation of the policy – [email Will Saunders](#) if you are interested in having someone from your team participate.

Metadata (data that describes data) helps catalogue data to make it easier to find and use. The open data [Metadata Standard](#) draws on previous work in the geospatial (GIS) community, and requires agencies to use an industry standard set of metadata attributes in agency applications and data services. Consistent use of these metadata tags will make it easier to locate information within and across state government; and will improve user understanding of data published by agencies.

Commonly Used Software Retirement

Most software vendors and manufacturers maintain software versions for specific periods of time after which the product is retired in favor of more current versions of the product, or is discontinued entirely. In many cases, these product lifecycles are announced well in advance of end-of-support. Once software reaches end-of-support, issues within the software, including fixing known security vulnerabilities, are no longer corrected by the vendor. This presents a risk to both the agency and the state. In addition to any security risks, the agency may encounter difficulties interoperating with other agencies or applications or the software could stop working entirely.

The [Commonly Used Software Product Retirement Policy](#) is used in conjunction with the [Commonly Used Software Product Standard](#). The policy outlines the requirement to retire the software named in the standard before it reaches end of support. The standard notes only widely used products where the manufacturer has published end of support dates.

While technical staff are advised of software retirements by manufacturers, this information may not be routinely communicated to agency executives. For many of the products listed in the standard, migrating to the newer version is a 'heavy lift' that requires staffing resources at a minimum and often has financial impacts.

In all cases, testing needs to occur to understand how the new version of the software interacts with the agency environment and applications. Applications (including those maintained by 3rd parties) may need to be remediated or upgraded. In some cases, new or upgraded equipment may also be required to run newer versions of software.

It is critical that software retirement planning and mitigation activities be factored into funding and prioritization discussions and decisions. To support improved planning, a [three biennium view](#) of upcoming retirements is available. Within your agency, there is likely additional software in use that would benefit from internal visibility. I encourage you to discuss this with your IT staff so that timely migration to supported versions occurs.

You may also wish to confirm with your IT staff whether non-supported software is in use in your agency. If so, appropriate security mitigations should be in place to protect both agency and state operations. Any non-supported software listed within the standard must have an approved waiver to continue to use.

If you have questions about any of the information in this memo, please contact [Sue Langen](#), Senior Policy & Enterprise Systems Advisor, at 360-407-8686.

cc: Agency CIOs