National Audit Office

The Cabinet Office

Implementing the Government ICT
Strategy: six-month review of progress

Detailed methodology

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1   This document provides a description of the methods we used for our report, *Implementing the Government ICT Strategy: six-month review of progress*. A summary of the methods is available in Appendix One of the main report.

2   The report is an early review of the progress the Government has made in implementing its ICT Strategy (the Strategy), since it was launched in March 2011. The Committee of Public Accounts was concerned that the Strategy would deliver no greater benefit than its predecessors. We therefore assessed: the leadership and incentives to comply with the Strategy, planning to deliver business change and measure benefits, communication and engagement with stakeholders; and whether deadlines have been met.

3   The main elements of our fieldwork took place between July and September 2011. The following research methods were used during the course of this study:

- Semi-structured interviews

- Focus groups

- International comparisons

- Document review and analysis of data

Semi-structured interviews with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) Delivery Board

4   We conducted a number of face-to-face interviews with the senior responsible owners of the delivery areas of the Strategy. These staff work for the Cabinet Office and the six lead departments: Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Health, HM Revenue & Customs, Home Office, Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Defence.

5   To understand what leadership and governance processes were operating, how the implementation was being managed and what progress had been achieved, we discussed:

- how the delivery model differs from previous arrangements to implement strategies and whether the CIO Delivery Board is effective;

- what planning for business change and measuring benefits is being undertaken;

- how the contents of the Strategy are being communicated to the rest of government;

- what skills and resources government has to implement the Strategy;

- what is being achieved in the delivery areas for which they are responsible;

- which delivery areas are at risk and what mitigating actions are being taken; and

- how the Board members were planning to implement the Strategy in their own department.

Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders

6   We interviewed staff from the Major Projects Authority, the Crown Representatives, the Office of Cyber Security and Information Assurance and the Commercial Portfolio in the Cabinet Office. These interviews enabled us to establish how their work is contributing to the implementation of the Strategy.

7   The CIOs from the Department for Education, Department of Energy and Climate Change and the Department for International Development contributed to our review. They are not on the CIO Delivery Board and we interviewed them to understand whether the needs and perspectives of smaller departments are being catered for in the Strategy solutions being devised by the senior responsible owners.

8   We conducted a number of interviews via telephone or video conference with CIOs, chief technology officers and other senior staff in a selection of executive agencies. The organisations we included had a business model which relies significantly on ICT systems:

- Animal Health and Veterinary Laboratories Agency

- Defence Vetting Agency

- Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency

- Highways Agency

- Job Centre Plus

- Met Office

- National Savings and Investments

- Ofcom

- Office for National Statistics

- UK Border Agency

9 These discussions enabled us to understand what affect the Strategy is having on their organisation, how they are engaging with the CIO Delivery Board and which solutions are they using/planning to use. The issues discussed included:

● How the Strategy fits with the needs and goals of the organisation and what benefits it will bring.

● What type and level of communication they are receiving on the Strategy and the technical solutions they will be expected to use.

● Whether they have the skills and resources within the organisation to implement the Strategy.

● What work are they doing in the 19 delivery areas and where they perceive the risks to lie.

Industry Consultation

10 We held focus groups with 30 suppliers to government from the ICT industry. Intellect, the trade association for the UK technology sector, hosted the event on 25 July 2011. Representatives came from both large companies and small- and medium-sized enterprises and were either already supplying products and services to departments and agencies or looking to expand into the government market.

11 To understand the effect of the Strategy on suppliers and their responses to it, we explored three main issues:

● How ICT-enabled business change can be improved.

● Whether the implications of consolidation and standardisation of ICT infrastructure are being addressed.

● How issues in government procurement and contracting are being tackled.

International comparators

12 We reviewed the national government ICT strategies and any associated strategies of Australia, Denmark, the Netherlands and the United States of America. We also used the ICT-related reports of the Supreme Audit Institutions of these countries and other organisations commissioned to report on progress in implementing government ICT in these countries.

13 The documents we reviewed included:

- Vivek Kundra U.S. Chief Information Officer, *25 Point Implementation Plan to reform Federal Information Technology Management*, December 2010.

- United States Government Accountability Office, *Testimony Information Security: Governmentwide Guidance Needed to Assist Agencies in Implementing Cloud Computing*, GAO-10-855T, July 2010.

- United States Government Accountability Office, *Testimony Information Technology: Continued Improvements in Investment Oversight and Management Can Yield Billions in Savings*, GAO-11-511T, April 2011.

- United States Government Accountability Office, *Data Center Consolidation: Agencies need to complete inventories and plans to achieve expected saving*, GAO-11-565, July 2011.

- Australian Government Information Management Office, *Draft: Strategic Vision for the Australian Government's use of ICT*, April 2011.

- Sir Peter Gershon CBE FREng, *Review of the Australian Government's use of Information and Communication Technology*, August 2008.

- Australian Government, *Whole-of-government ICT strategic workforce plan 2010-2013*, April 2010.

- Dr Ian Reinecke, *Independent Review of Implementation of the ICT Reform Program*, Australian Government, June 2010.

- Algemene Rekenkamer, *Lessons Learned from Government ICT Projects*, 29 November 2007.

- Ministry of Finance, Local Government Denmark and Danish Regions, *The Digital Road to future prosperity – Joint Public Digitization Strategy 2011-2015*, August 2011.

14　To check our findings from our Internet research we interviewed staff from the offices of the Government CIO (or equivalent) in Denmark and the Netherlands. The Supreme Audit Institutions in Denmark, the Netherlands and the United States of America also contributed to our study. We carried out these interviews by telephone or video-conferencing.

Document review and analysis of data

15　To complement our interviews, we reviewed a range of documents provided by the departments and agencies to establish the history and development of the implementation of the Strategy. We also took into account NAO work from the past three years.

16　Key documents included:

- the *Government ICT Strategy*, published in March 2011 and the associated *Strategic Implementation Plan*, published in October 2011;

- strategies (published and draft), presentations, communications, Board papers and minutes, business cases, benefits forecasts and other documents relating to the implementation of the actions outlined in the Strategy;

- curriculum vitae of the CIOs of the lead delivery departments and key staff in the Cabinet Office responsible for implementing the Strategy; and

- department and agency ICT strategies.

17　We requested data on the costs and resourcing of the cross-government work to implement the Strategy. All teams from the Cabinet Office and the lead departments were able to provide estimates of the amount of resource used from 1 April to 30 September 2011. Some teams were able to provide forecast estimates for the remaining 18 months of the Strategy implementation.

18　The estimates provided for the first six months and the forecast estimate for the remaining 18 months included only the activities needed to deliver the actions in the Strategy. They did not include the resources departments and agencies needed to align their own ICT strategies to the Strategy or make the necessary changes to implement the Strategy solutions within each individual organisation.