WASHINGTON COURTS

Analysis of ITG Request 1355
Replace Appellate Court Case Management and e-File Systems

Request:
The Supreme Court and Court of Appeals rely on AOC to provide the IT solutions that enable them to record and track cases for direct review and appeal. Cases are primarily filed via two e-File systems , one for public, and one for Department of Corrections (DOC) incarcerated individuals. Case management tasks include entering case information (details, participants, events, etc.), into the case management system. Additionally, case files are created, stored, and routed using the document management system. Court staff also produce reports, create and manage court calendars, notify parties, display calendars on a public-facing website, and manage the confirmations that result from the notifications.

The case management system (CMS) used by the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals since 2003 is the Appellate Court Record and Data System (ACORDS). Modifications to this aging system are prohibitively risky, since changes are known to produce system instability. This risk prevents delivery of needed enhancements, resulting in the inability to meet current court needs. The CMS lacks the reporting capabilities needed by the courts. Additionally, the CMS lacks a modern court calendaring solution that would enable staff to schedule, conduct, and report on court hearings. These shortcomings require court staff to manually schedule, maintain, and report on all court hearings.

The e-File solutions are separate applications which require significant integration and support. They are built on a code base which is difficult to support due to a lack of qualified application developers familiar with it. The e-File solutions lack automated error handling and monitoring capabilities. This requires AOC staff to manually check for and correct issues with e-files on a daily basis.

Summary of Proposed Solution:
The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) would initiate a project to evaluate options and purchase a commercially available “off the shelf” (COTS) technology solution to replace ACORDS and the Appellate e-File Portal.

Sizing:
The following estimate is based upon the best available information and does not include cost or effort estimates for on-going maintenance of the enhancement.

This request would be accomplished by AOC’s internal resources and contracted vendor resources. The system(s) affected by the change would be: ACORDS – Appellate Court Record and Data System, OnBase, and both e-Filing solutions. If this request is recommended by the court level user group, it will proceed to the JISC for authorization.

AOC estimates that this project would will require three or more years to complete at an estimated cost of $2,000,000. This is an estimate of the duration of the project from the date work would begin on the project until final implementation.

Business Impacts:
This change will provide multiple benefits for Supreme Court, Court of Appeals, and AOC staff. For example:

- Reduce duplicate data entry by court staff
- Reduce complexity by enabling court users to create, track, and manage cases throughout lifecycle (e-File to disposition) from a singular system

- Simplify court user daily work with comprehensive views of case data and parties
- Enhance security with modern security access controls within the CMS
- Improve court user productivity with OnBase integration
- Improve user experience sending appellate court case data to the Enterprise Data Repository (EDR)
- Increase productivity through the use of modern, integrated calendar and scheduling capabilities
- Improve court user productivity by enabling them to configure hearing notices and printed calendars, as well as the ability to track and manage judicial recusals and hearing confirmations
- Simplify public's ability to see and understand their case status and information
- Improve court user productivity via user generated forms, letters, and reports
- Reduce time to locate information via modern search functions
- Improve customer experience with easy to follow e-File instructions for filers
- Improve court user productivity by simplifying the review, denial, or acceptance of e-Files

Proposed Solution:
AOC proposes to purchase a COTS technology solution to replace ACORDS and the Appellate e-File Portal. A project will be established, and an RFP executed to determine a viable solution. Once selected, the project would implement and transition/train AOC and the Supreme Court and Court of Appeals on the new technology.

Assumptions:
- This will be a multi-year project
- An all-in-one solution exists
- COTS solution will integrate with OnBase
- COTS solution will integrate with EDR
- Opinion tracking/management is separate from this effort

Risks:

This project entails the following risks:
- Potential learning curve for end users
- Transfer of old system data into new system
- Unknown how new authentication system may integrate
- Depending on project start date, could happen concurrently with M365 rollout
- COTS system may not integrate easily with OnBase
- COTS system may not integrate easily with EDR

Not doing this project entails the following risks:
- Continue using "brittle" ACORDS system
- Users continue to have to perform manual work
- Users continue performing duplicate data entry
- Legacy technology base for ACORDS presents security risks
- AOC continues being unable to modernize/enhance ACORDS