



Internet Association



Cybersecurity Coalition

April 15, 2020

Mr. Russell T. Vought
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Ms. Suzette K. Kent
Federal Chief Information Officer
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Mr. Michael J. Rigas
Deputy Director for Management
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

Re: Support for IT Modernization to Improve COVID-19 Pandemic Response and Relief Efforts

Dear Acting Director Vought, Mr. Rigas, and Ms. Kent:

The undersigned organizations seek your support for stimulus relief funding for information technology (IT) modernization efforts to enable and enhance federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments' ability to carry out coronavirus-related missions, maximize productivity, improve service delivery to citizens, and enhance cybersecurity protections for critical systems. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) is the primary agency responsible for identifying critical agency needs and coordinating outreach to Congress to ensure funding for key programs and initiatives. OMB has been incredibly thoughtful and forward thinking on IT modernization efforts, including through the President's Management Agenda and the publication of numerous technology and cybersecurity memorandums that have enabled Departments and agencies to more effectively, securely improve their networks, embrace commercial innovation, and upskill the Federal workforce to better deliver citizen services.

Your commitment to Federal agencies on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic is vital at this present time and we strongly encourage OMB to support additional resources and flexibilities for Departments and agencies to help them better deliver vital government services during this critical moment in our country's history.

Outdated government IT systems and processes already hinder some federal and state agencies' ability to deliver aid to new applicants for small business loans and unemployment insurance.¹ The COVID-19 pandemic also exposes the need to redouble efforts to digitize federal forms and reduce reliance on hand-processing paperwork for high priority response and relief efforts.² In addition, the rapid transition to remote telework during the pandemic has also created new challenges for many government agencies, including increased cybersecurity threats, an inability to leverage commercial capabilities (which reduces program effectiveness), and important continuity of government operations.³

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, OMB and Congress worked closely together to improve the inadequate state of federal IT and enacted several laws to improve the management and oversight of federal technology systems.⁴ Yet, despite significant support in recent years, including funding for agency telework and remote operations in the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the current national emergency continues to highlight the need for additional IT investments to ensure our nation is able to effectively respond to this crisis. This includes IT investments to support telework and telemedicine, dramatic improvements citizen-facing services such as loan programs, state unemployment application processing and call centers, and to ensure that agencies at the Federal, state, and local level have modern technology capabilities and infrastructure that can scale to address exigent circumstances. To address these critical gaps, we recommend that any additional pandemic legislative relief package:

1. Provide adequate funds to modernize IT systems used by agencies working on the front lines of this pandemic and future emergency responses. Such funding should be made available for expenditure over multiple years;
2. Establish and fund a mechanism that provides federal financial support to state and local government agencies in need of IT modernization and upgrades that, in turn, will enhance the speed and effect of relief efforts for citizens, business, hospitals, and organizations in direct need during the COVID-19 and subsequent emergencies;
3. Support the Technology Modernization Fund (TMF) at an appropriations level that would allow for meaningful investment in cross-agency IT modernization initiatives; and
4. Ensure that IT modernization efforts include focused attention and investment on strengthening cybersecurity, workforce training, and process transformation.

In this new era of remote collaboration, government must take advantage of the opportunities created to modernize processes for efficiency, security, and cost savings - but must also act to reduce inherent risks associated with an increased reliance on connected technology that leaves agency networks and information vulnerable without appropriate safeguards. OMB and Congress have already made it clear that improving our digital infrastructure is a critical priority for America, and

¹ *see*: Warmbrodt, Zachary. "Small business loan program stumbles as SBA system crashes." Politico. Apr. 6, 2020. *available at*: <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/06/small-business-loan-program-system-crashes-169614> and Palmer, Ewan. "Hundreds of Florida Residents Line Up for Unemployment Benefits as Electronic Systems Crash." Newsweek. Apr. 8, 2020. *available at*: <https://www.newsweek.com/coronavirus-florida-unemployment-apply-benefits-1496794>

² *see*: Faler, Brian. "IRS official: Virus outbreak making it hard to implement key business tax provision." Politico. Apr. 2, 2020. *available at*: <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/02/irs-coronavirus-tax-refund-162244> and CDC. "Information for Health Departments on Reporting Cases of COVID-19." Website. *available at*: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/reporting-pui.html>, *accessed*: Apr. 8, 2020.

³ *see*: Mazmanian, Adam "Legacy systems crumble under high demand." FCW.com. Apr. 5, 2020. *available at*: <https://fcw.com/articles/2020/04/05/legacy-tech-hinders-gov-covid19.aspx> and Mersol, James "The Cybersecurity Challenges in Government-wide Move to Telework." GovernmentCIO. March 25, 2020. *available at*: <https://www.governmentciomedia.com/cybersecurity-challenges-government-wide-move-telework>

⁴ For example, the *Modernizing Government Technology (MGT) Act* (PL 115-91) and the *21st Century Integrated Digital Experience Act* (PL 115-336).

we urge you to ensure funding of the appropriate size and scope to address these obvious needs is included in any subsequent relief package.

We have attached a document which provides additional details and recommendations.⁵ These recommendations have also been sent to Congressional leadership. We look forward to working with you and your teams on this matter that directly impacts pandemic response efforts and the delivery of relief to the public during this unprecedented time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Digital Innovation (ADI)
Center for Procurement Advocacy (CPA)
CompTIA
Cybersecurity Coalition
Information Technology Industry Council (ITI)
Internet Association (IA)

⁵ "Principles for Federal IT Modernization in Response to the Covid-19 Outbreak"