

**Department of Technology & Innovation**  
**2024 Budget Statement to the City Council**  
**Committee on Budget and Government Operations**  
**Chief Information Office Nick Lucius**

**Introduction**

Good afternoon Chairman Ervin, Vice Chairman Lee, and members of the Committee. My name is Nick Lucius and I am the City's Chief Information Officer.

**Department Purpose**

I am pleased to present and answer your questions on the 2024 budget for a new Department of Technology and Innovation. I am grateful to Mayor Johnson for evaluating and deciding on this important issue and for trusting me with carrying the vision forward. Why do we need a new department? We are the only city among our peers without a free-standing technology agency. First and foremost, a Department of Technology and Innovation will send a strong signal of the importance of technology, underlying all the work we do.

Most city programs and services have an online component, and even services that are wholly in person must be tracked with software to ensure empathetic, equitable service. No one likes filling out forms over and over again, spending minutes and hours copying the same data, but some do not have the time or resources to do it.

Also important is the signal this department will send to potential recruits. Future city technology employees will understand that the City of Chicago recognizes the vital role of innovation and technology. And staff will be enabled for impact while working across agencies with a commissioner dedicated 100% to technology and innovation.

Another important consideration: launching this department means that Alderman Villegas would no longer have to explain what kind of windows he's calling about. In all seriousness, Alderman Villegas, thank you for your advocacy, engagement and vision in calling for a new department for technology and innovation.

**Transition Planning**

Commissioner Blakemore and her team are providing tremendous support in planning a transition. AIS's stewardship of the IT team the past few years sets the city up for success in launching a new department for technology and innovation. AIS's IT Modernization effort has led to important progress, including 1) the beginning of a journey toward modernizing decades-old IT systems for running the city (this is called an ERP system), 2) the creation of a citywide tech leadership council called the Technology Strategy Group, and 3) a complete modernization and reorganization of the IT team, resulting in job descriptions and a team structure that will serve us well in recruiting our future tech workforce and retaining our current staff.

**2024 Initiatives**

Standing up a new department is no small task. 2024 will be a year that we cement a vision for technology and innovation and begin delivering tangible results. One way that will start is by embracing the progress made by our peers outside the city. Some well-known government technology projects have led to remarkable innovations, and we will intentionally seek the advice and guidance of the people outside city hall who work on them. We will learn from the people who made Healthcare.gov a top-notch website after its initial failed launch, and we will consult those who were deployed to fix unemployment systems that struggled to help people who lost their income suddenly in 2020. We will seek the guidance of those called in from private industry, nonprofits, academia, and open-source communities to put these projects on the path toward being excellent technology services.

In 2024, DTI will convene its contracted IT consultants as well as local firms, tech companies big and small, and nationally respected non-profits to ask for input on how to improve the city's technology services. Our embrace of external guidance will continue beyond initial convenings and become embedded into our regular business. Technology is complex and always advancing, and we will never be done modernizing. Including the input of our external partners will help us embrace continual improvement as a legacy. This will help us reduce reliance on old systems and change the mindset that technology can be left alone after it is launched.

Our team's first order of business will be to set up our organization, which is unlike past IT teams. The structure enables modern digital delivery practices, organized by divisions that "Design," "Deliver," and "Support." Also in 2024, DTI will heavily recruit to fill vacancies to add new employees to the current team. Recruiting for technology roles is always difficult, but can be harder for government due to salary constraints. A new department with a bold mission to better serve residents will be an important recruitment tool for our hiring surge.

The day has come in Chicago to acknowledge what IT has become in today's world: critical infrastructure demand investment and care. DTI will be the stewards of investment that leads to better, more efficient service delivery for Chicago.

People—often called "users" in technology speak—are our north star when we build technology. Our investments will include enhancing the way we connect with people. Think of all the ways we use technology to connect with residents: the 11s (211, 311, 811, 911), the apps (311, OEMC, My Chi My Future, Library, Parks), the websites (311, Chicago.gov, endless microsites, dashboards and department pages). We will commit to investing in modern digital platforms and to putting the "customer," i.e. the resident or the alderman or the employee, first.

In 2024, the new department will invest in a data platform to deliver information as a service. Currently, the city has no front door for requesting data. People are left to make phone calls, send emails, and schedule meetings to find data owners, data experts, and request reports. Vice Chairman Lee, when I was preparing for today I watched a video of a previous budget hearing where I heard you express frustration with receiving reports in a PDF attachment to an email. The new data platform will resolve that issue, allowing the departments to have a consolidated process for requesting and receiving data via modern reporting and visualization software. We will have to work together with the departments, the Mayor's Office, and all of you to determine what goes on that platform and how to make it work for all of its users. That will conclude my prepared statement. Thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.