

Government Sector:

7 Steps to Optimize IT Asset Management

By www.vizor.cloud



The Background

The Federal Government Budget for IT reached \$95.7 billion for 2018, an increase of 1.7 percent from 2017.¹ As technology becomes an intricate part of society, we can assume that organizations including Government Agencies will spend more on technology and will spend more protecting the data they contain.

Reliance on IT and the associated large spend are factors resulting in the US Government's introduction of legislation emphasizing cybersecurity and better management of IT budget. More specifically, the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act, the Making Electronic Government Accountable, and the Federal Information Security Management Act.

The three Acts impose regulations for technology on a Federal Level. However, the best practices from these legislations are becoming more common among cities and counties. Smaller Government institutions are following suit because the practices are being recognized as a necessity for transparency, accuracy and cost savings.

Many of these best practices are rooted in what is called IT Asset Management (ITAM). IT community leader IAITAM revealed that *"spending greater and greater sums without proper ITAM controls in place is a prescription for more breaches, risks posed by unauthorized devices, increases in lost and stolen hard drives, and major vulnerabilities."*

¹ https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/whitehouse.gov/files/omb/budget/fy2018/ap_16_it.pdf

Why ITAM?

The recent legislations outline best practices for tracking, managing and purchasing of technology and software licenses. It also emphasizes cost savings, reporting and the requirement for proper training.

A good portion of what government agencies need to either comply with the legislations or follow best practices is IT Asset Management (ITAM).

ITAM is more than an inventory of an organization's IT Assets (hardware and software). It is the concept of collecting IT asset information to better manage their overall value. It includes asset lifecycle management, cost management and contractual management.

Get our other eBook, *Starting with IT Asset Management* for a deeper dive into ITAM, its benefits, lifecycle processes and implementation. It's ideal if you are not familiar with ITAM.

For the purposes of this eBook, let's focus on the 7 steps you should take to optimize IT Asset Management.

The Legislations

The legislations will be referred to throughout the eBook. Therefore, here is a summary:

FITARA

The Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act requires agencies to understand the cost and performance of IT investments. FITARA gives CIOs the authority to address IT investment challenges and improve efficiencies.

MEGABYTE

The Making Electronic Government Accountable By Yielding Tangible Efficiencies Act requires CIOs to report financial savings or cost avoidance that results from software license management.

FISMA

The Federal Information Security Management Act defines a comprehensive framework to protect government information, operations and assets against natural or man-made threats.

Step 1: Check Inventory

Although the idea of knowing what you have is emphasized in FISMA, securing technology assets is best practice for any organization. *You need to know what you have in order to secure it.* Knowing what you have is also essential to define any of the following questions:

- What is the forecast for IT spend next year?
- How much is IT spending on computers?
- How many people are using the laptops that are out of warranty?
- Do you have any software in the cloud?

The solution is to use a discovery tool to identify the IT assets in your IT estate. The MEGABYTE Act requires to, “establish a comprehensive inventory, including 80 percent of software license spending and enterprise licenses in the executive agency, by identifying and collecting information about software license agreements using automated discovery and inventory tools.”²

There is a chance that you can leverage your existing IT infrastructure like the following tools:

- Lansweeper
- Microsoft System Center configuration Manager (SCCM)
- Google G Suite for Chromebooks
- Vector Discovery

However, if you do not already own a discovery tool, it is highly recommended to invest in one in order to properly assess your IT asset inventory, which is the first step to optimizing ITAM.



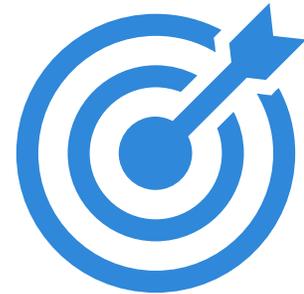
² <https://www.congress.gov/bill/114th-congress/house-bill/4904/text>

Step 2: Establish Goals

Federal agencies need to establish goals aligned with the legislations. For example, MEGABYTE states that agencies need to obtain “financial savings which have resulted from improved software license management.” Understanding these objectives is ideal to guide the development of your ITAM strategy.

However, government agencies also need to consider their organization’s IT goals. They may be similar to the following:

- Moving infrastructure to the cloud
- Hardware refresh
- EOL projects e.g...
 - Windows 7
 - Windows Server 2008 and 2008 R2
 - SharePoint 2010



Ensure the goals encompass both ITAM best practices and your agencies objectives.

Lastly, ensure your goals are realistic. This is why setting goals is the *second* step and not the first. You won’t be able to set realistic goals if you don’t know the current status of your IT estate. For example, it’s difficult to reduce your costs if you do not know:

- What licenses is installed on your premises
- What IT devices the organizations owns
- What been used and what is not being used
- How much you’ve spent so far

If you do not have enough licenses, your inventory check will reveal that your costs will in fact increase to become compliant.

To summarize, review the goals of the legislations, consider your agency’s goals and make your objectives realistic.

Step 3: Delegate Responsibilities

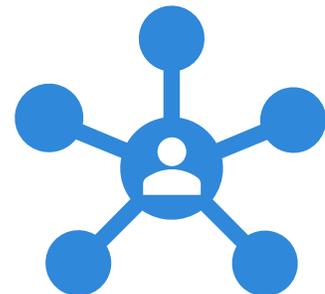
By this step, you have identified what IT assets you own or have access to. You have also set out realistic goals that comply with ITAM best practices and your organization’s objectives. Now, you need to make decisions on responsibilities. This means determining who is responsible for what parts of the ITAM strategy. One way to break down responsibilities is the following:

- Overseeing ITAM strategy
- Assets (e.g. hardware and software)
- Vendors / Suppliers (e.g. MS, Oracle, Adobe / Dell, HP)
- Applications (e.g. Office 365, Oracle etc)
- Services (e.g. LOB, ERP, Productivity)

The MEGABYTE legislation states that there must “central oversight authority within the executive agency for managing enterprise software license agreements and commercial software licenses.”² In other words, vendor management is very important. From our understanding, the legislation wants agencies to have better control over external contracts because there are many possible benefits.

Possible benefits from vendor management:

- Reaching economies of scale reducing costs
- Identifying duplicated contracts within the agency, reduce costs
- Ensure license compliance and avoid penalty fines
- Build good rapport with vendor



The Homeland Security Department saved \$181 million in one year simply by renegotiating agreements.³ Delegating responsibilities empowers the agency to identify what part of the strategy is not working. It also holds employees accountable and gives the ITAM strategy a better chance at obtaining results.

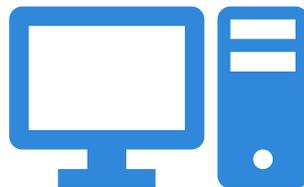
³ <https://www.gao.gov/>

Step 4: Analyze IT Asset Usage

Now that everyone knows who is doing what. The next step to optimize IT Asset Management is understanding asset utilization; knowing who is using what and who is not using assets that are in their possession. Software solutions can help identify which licenses are being used. However, this does not include an assessment of physical assets. Therefore, we recommend communicating with managers, heads of departments, heads of divisions about hardware *and* software assets. Here is a list of potential questions:

1. Do you use (insert software name)?
2. What do you use (same software name) for?
3. How many people are in your department?
4. Do they use the same software applications?
5. Do they use the same IT devices (laptop, desk, chair, cell phone)? If not, who is using what?

Some of the questions are beyond yes/no or numeric values. This is to determine where you can make cost effective decisions. For example, every employee in a department may have access to the Office Suite, but the manager tells you that they do not need anything but Outlook. As a result, you can save costs. In another scenario, you may realize that different departments have separate contracts with the same vendor. In this case, you can combine the contracts and reach a better economy of scale.



Step 5: Establish Processes in the ITAM Lifecycle

As mentioned before, IT Asset Management goes beyond IT asset inventory. It includes the management of the assets and their processes. This step is about reviewing the processes you currently have and how to improve them.

FITARA emphasizes the management of procurement, deployment, maintenance and retirement.

To better define your processes, here are the stages in the lifecycle and some questions you can ask:

Asset request: How do employees request a new asset? Is it a manual process?

Purchase: Is the IT department working closely with the procurement department? It is necessary to establish a line of communication?

Allocation: How will the employee receive the asset? How will you keep track of who has what?

Maintenance: How do you keep track of which devices have expired warranties?

License Recycling: Are you reusing licenses from when employees leave the organization?

Retiring: How do you know when to retire an asset?

Disposal: How will you dispose of a laptop responsibly?

Evidently, this section can be an eBook on its own. If you need more guidance, you can speak to a representative at VIZOR by emailing ask@vazor.cloud.

This brings us to the next step, which is to streamline as much of the lifecycle as possible.

Step 6: Streamline as Much as Possible

After reviewing the lifecycle processes in the previous section, you probably came up with dozens of more processes that need management. However, managing them manually is inefficient and prone to human error. As a result, we recommend using an ITAM tool, like VIZOR. It streamlines all of the processes listed in Step Number 5. Here is a list of *some* of the processes it can streamline:

1. Requesting new assets within the request portal
2. Keeping track of which employee is using which device
3. Knowing where the assets are located (geography or on which computer)
4. Getting approval from management for a new asset purchase
5. Identifying which assets are prone to failures
6. Recycling software assets when an employee changes department or leaves the agency
7. Tracking costs of IT assets based on vendor, employee or department
8. Storing contracts and agreements that can be connected to their respective asset
9. Having a central view of your IT estate
10. Onboarding new employees
11. Lending devices to employees and holding them accountable
12. Creating reports so you do not have to get the data and compile it yourself
13. Scheduling alerts for license renewals so you can better prepare for negotiations
14. Scheduling email alerts letting you know when warranties are about to expire

Again, highly recommend using a tool to streamline as many processes as possible.

Step 7: Keep Going

Let's summarize the steps to optimizing ITAM.

Step 1. We discussed the importance of understanding what your agency owns and has access to.

Step 2. Then, we went over goal-creation based on your inventory check, your agency's goals and ITAM best practices (from the legislations).

Step 3. The third step was to delegate responsibilities around ITAM including vendor management.

Step 4. We then recommended assessing IT Asset usage so you can make effective cost decisions.

Step 5 & 6. This was followed by establishing your ITAM lifecycle processes and automating as much of it as possible.

Step 7: That brings us to the last step which is Keep Going.

By Keep Going, we mean that ITAM is an ongoing process with no deadlines. To put it in perspective consider Department Managers. The managers do not only work on Mondays to set up the tasks for employees for the rest of the week. Employees need constant guidance to adapt to the agency's processes and goals. Just like employees, IT Asset Management cannot be set up once and forgotten. When taking on ITAM in your agency, treat it as an ongoing process that adapts to your agency's processes and goals. Plus, the legislations are only going to multiply!



VIZOR has helped many Government Agencies through the steps of optimizing ITAM. Let us know if you need help with your ITAM strategy.

Contact 1-770-622-2850

to find out how you can take advantage of ITAM

[Visit website here www.vizor.cloud](http://www.vizor.cloud)

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Email ask@vizor.cloud for with any questions