

# NEWSBRIEFING

## IT planning evolves – again

### OMB focuses on architectures, security, planning

BY SARA MICHAEL

**E**-government? But of course. Consolidation? It's assumed. Business cases? They're important, but...

These buzzwords — which dominated the early part of the Bush administration's tenure — are receding as Office of Management and Budget officials work with agencies to take a more sophisticated approach to technology management.

Consolidation, business cases and e-government are still part of the discussion, but OMB officials want agencies to focus on architectures, security and collaboration along specific lines of business.

It's likely that nothing could get agencies more focused than the president's \$59.8 billion IT budget request, which represents a scant 1 percent increase over last year. Now, more than ever, departments will need to corral IT spending by emphasizing shared solutions not only within their organizations, but also across government.

"This really does reflect that agencies took to heart the guidance OMB gave them," said Karen Evans, OMB's administrator for e-government, information and technology policy.

E-government has permeated much of the government's activities. Now agencies are taking an architectural perspective by focusing on the lines of business shared governmentwide, said Dan Chenok, former OMB branch chief for information policy and technology and now vice president and director of policy and management strategies at SRA International Inc.

"Right there you've taken the [federal enterprise architecture] and made it operational," he said. "It's a union of program decision-making across agencies, architecture and e-government."

The budget language illustrates this attention to collaboration, officials said.

"There is a very clear focus on more partnerships between agencies so we ensure we are not duplicating investments," said William McVay, who led OMB's

business case oversight for two years before joining DigitalNet Government Solutions as vice president of e-government solutions. OMB makes "it very clear that those who do partner get credit for that collaboration."

OMB officials particularly emphasized the need to secure existing IT systems before investing in new ones by outlining the IT money available for security improvements. Money that some agencies were planning to spend on development, modernization and enhancement should first go to IT security, Evans said.

"Look at your IT portfolio. Look at your IT programs," Evans said. "How are you managing your department? What are your priorities? The priority of this administration is cybersecurity. Don't lay money on top of what you already have. Secure what you have, and if you do it efficiently, you have money to spend in other areas."

For example, the Treasury Department can use the rest of its \$594 million for modernization once it secures its systems. Treasury has \$62 million allocated for IT security. The move directly ties security improvement to agency spending.

OMB officials also detailed how much agencies were spending on development and modernization in the lines of the business of grants, financial management and human resources, giving a better understanding of how agencies are identifying areas of consolidation. OMB is also developing interagency task forces to create common solutions in each area and make recommendations for policy decisions. ■

## A new take on management

The Bush administration continues to scrutinize agencies' business cases, but this year there's a difference.

In fiscal 2005, Office of Management and Budget officials identified 621 major projects, representing \$22 billion, that needed improvement, mainly in the areas of performance measures, earned value management and security. This is down slightly from the more than 750 projects that were placed on an at-risk list in fiscal 2004.

OMB officials have put the projects on what they call a "management watch list."

Karen Evans,

OMB's administrator of e-government, information and technology policy, said agencies would be asked to look at their entire management approach, including security and performance, rather than go through the exercise of rewriting the business cases. The shift gives OMB more of a focus on management oversight rather than heavy-handed budgeting.

"It's never been about the business cases themselves," said William McVay, who led OMB's business case oversight for two years before joining DigitalNet Government Solutions as vice president of e-government solutions. "It's about the demonstration of management — or the lack there of."

— Sara Michael

