

Event Brief

2026 IT Strategic Planning Conference

Purpose

The 2026 IT Strategic Planning Conference brings state IT leaders together to move the 2026–28 State IT Strategic Plan from strategy to execution. Building on the objectives and initiatives established through the 2025 strategic planning process, the conference will provide a shared view of progress, create space to address barriers and dependencies, and establish clear priorities for the year ahead.

Through focused discussions and working sessions, attendees will assess progress across the State IT Strategic Plan's four strategic perspectives, develop 12-month milestones and ownership for initiatives, address issues requiring executive direction, and establish the reporting cadence needed to maintain accountability through the remainder of the biennium.

The conference is designed to strengthen statewide alignment and turn strategic priorities into coordinated action across SITSD and agency IT organizations.

Goals and Objectives

The 2026 IT Strategic Planning Conference has five goals. By the end of the conference, attendees will:

Establish a shared understanding of progress

Review progress across the State IT Strategic Plan's four strategic perspectives, 10 objectives, and 15 initiatives, including accomplishments, current status, changes, and areas requiring attention.

Translate strategic priorities into an actionable 12-month plan

Use Initiative Labs to identify milestones, agency contributions and dependencies, barriers, and designated owners for advancing initiatives through the next year.

Address issues requiring executive direction

Identify priority issues and decision points that may be preventing progress, and document executive decisions, owners, and follow-up actions in a shared action register.

Strengthen alignment around technology investments

Build shared understanding of portfolio rationalization, procurement alignment, and vendor management practices that support the State IT Strategic Plan and maximize the value of technology investments.

Establish a consistent approach to tracking execution

Align on the reporting cadence, including Balanced Scorecard dashboards, Quarterly Business Reviews, and quarterly initiative reporting, to maintain visibility and accountability through the remainder of the 2026–28 planning period.

Event Overview

The 2026 IT Strategic Planning Conference brings Agency CIOs, IT leaders, and the SITSD Executive Team together for two days of focused discussion and working sessions centered on executing the 2026–28 State IT Strategic Plan.

The conference begins with a shared review of the State IT Plan, including progress across its four strategic perspectives, 10 objectives, and 15 initiatives. Attendees will then work through initiatives in facilitated labs to identify current barriers and dependencies, define 12-month milestones, establish ownership, and identify issues requiring executive direction.

The agenda also addresses how the state will maximize the value of technology investments through portfolio rationalization, procurement alignment, and vendor management. The conference concludes with agreement on the reporting and accountability practices to track execution, including Balanced Scorecard dashboards, Quarterly Business Reviews, and quarterly initiative reporting.

An optional, invitation-based Product Management Workshop will be offered on Thursday for agencies actively adopting the product management model and SITSD product leads. The workshop will provide hands-on opportunities to apply the product model to agency systems and develop practical next steps.

Agenda Highlights

Day 1 — Strategy and Initiative Discovery

- Conference kickoff and expectations for the two days
- Governor's keynote
- State of Strategy: progress, status, and discussion across the 10 objectives and 15 initiatives
- New Era in Agency Experience: Quarterly Business Reviews, relationship health, and ownership
- Legislative perspective on state IT priorities, spending, oversight, and return on investment
- Initiative Labs: current state, agency contributions and dependencies, and barriers

Day 2 — Execution, Decisions, and Accountability

- Future of AI and the AI-first Software Development Life Cycle
- Initiative Labs: 12-month milestones, designated owners, and executive decision requests
- Executive report-out and decisions
- Maximizing Return on Technology Investments: portfolio rationalization, procurement alignment, and vendor management
- Adopting a Product Management Mindset
- Tracking Execution: Balanced Scorecard dashboards, Quarterly Business Reviews, quarterly initiative reporting, and the action register

Day 3 — Optional Product Management Workshop (by invitation)

- Product management fundamentals
- Applying the product model to agency systems
- Defining product ownership and roadmaps
- Developing practical 90-day next steps

Keynote and Guest Speaker

The conference will feature remarks from **Governor Greg Gianforte**, providing a statewide perspective on the role of technology in delivering effective government services and advancing Montana's priorities.

Representative Luke Muszkiewicz will share a legislative perspective on state IT, including the importance of responsible technology spending, oversight, and demonstrating value to Montana citizens.

Together, these perspectives will help connect the State IT Strategic Plan to the broader expectations and priorities surrounding state government technology.

Logistics

- **Dates:** November 17–19, 2026
- **Location:** Montana Heritage Center, Big Sky Hall
- **Participants:** Agency CIOs, IT leaders, and the SITSD Executive Team
- **Meals Provided:**
 - **Breakfast, each day**
 - **Lunch, Tuesday and Wednesday**
 - **Hor'dourves, beer, and wine at the Networking Social Tuesday evening**
- **Questions:** Karen Vanni, karen.vanni@mt.gov or 406.799.1792

The main conference takes place November 17–18. Thursday, November 19, is reserved for an optional, invitation-based Product Management Workshop for agencies actively adopting the product management model and designated SITSD product leads.

Pre-Event Preparations

To get the most from the conference, attendees are encouraged to:

- Review the 2026–28 State IT Strategic Plan and Balanced Scorecard to refresh their understanding of the statewide objectives, measures, and initiatives.
- Consider progress within their agency related to the State IT Plan, including accomplishments, challenges, dependencies, and areas where agency participation may be needed.
- Identify barriers or issues that may be affecting progress on initiatives relevant to their agency.
- Come prepared to discuss priorities and opportunities for the next 12 months, including potential milestones, ownership, and agency contributions.
- Bring questions or issues requiring executive direction that could benefit from discussion during the Initiative Labs and executive decision sessions.

Attendees participating in the Thursday Product Management Workshop should also come prepared to identify key systems within their agency that may benefit from a product management approach.

Post-Event Actions

Following the conference, SITSD will:

- Publish the conference action register, documenting decisions, action items, owners, and target dates established during the conference.

- Publish a post-conference report, summarizing key discussions, decisions, and agreed-upon next steps.
- Begin the established reporting cadence, including Balanced Scorecard updates, Quarterly Business Reviews, and quarterly initiative reporting.
- Track progress on initiative milestones and commitments through the established reporting and accountability processes.
- Continue to address unresolved issues and dependencies identified during the conference and elevate matters requiring additional executive direction.
- Use the 2027 conference as a formal checkpoint to review progress against the commitments and milestones established in 2026.

Conclusion

The 2026 IT Strategic Planning Conference marks a shift from setting statewide technology strategy to executing it. Come ready to work: the milestones, owners, and decisions we set in November are what we'll measure ourselves against at the 2027 conference.