Introduction

Good afternoon, Chairman Ervin, Vice Chair Lee, and members of the Committee. My name is Nick Lucius, and I am the City's Chief Information Officer. I am pleased to present the 2025 budget for the Department of Technology and Innovation.

Today I will lay out DTI's accomplishments from this past year and I will talk about what this budget will allow us to do next year. At DTI, we are living in two worlds: we are both a technology start-up building our chops, as well as the responsible team for maintaining existing, critical IT operations that support all City departments. As we wrap up our tenth month, I'm incredibly proud of our growth and grateful for each individual who contributes to our department's success.

We have nearly completed our first major project: transitioning our department to new, modern technology job titles. As we conclude this project, we are now staffed at about half of our full capacity, which positions us to focus on necessary maintenance and operations, security and protection, and prioritized modernization. This budget will allow DTI to continue and strengthen the ongoing IT modernization efforts across our city. When we finish our staffing plan in 2025, we will have a foundation to continue increasing the pace of modernization and efficiency.

Another immediate, major project of 2024 was to harden our cybersecurity posture to protect the City from an ever-increasing threat of global cyber warfare. Our award-winning cybersecurity team remains ever vigilant in maintaining a secure IT environment. We worked in close coordination with federal and local agencies around major events such as the Democratic National Convention and the election.

What the Department Does

DTI plays a critical role in maintaining the operational IT infrastructure for all City departments. DTI primarily manages what we call "enterprise" services, which include things like computers, phones, internet and email. We also manage apps and software like office and productivity apps, financial and budgeting software, and HR systems. If it's a system that all departments use, then we are responsible for managing it.

We also have a role in technology that individual departments buy for their unique operational needs. We ensure that certain standards apply to these purchases, such as cybersecurity protections, data protections, and ensuring efficiency and coordination in the collective buying power of city departments.

2024 Accomplishments

This year we also made strides in our ongoing modernization efforts. While modernization often takes time to achieve cost savings, we have recognized a return on our investment already. Our efforts will save $1.4 million annually by achieving efficiencies in our support desk as well as our telephone services. We also expect to see additional savings as a result of migrating to cloud infrastructure.

This year we have built a modern and professional contract management team, as our new department took on nearly 50 contracts used by all City departments. In that effort we are prioritizing quality and cost-effective services, MBE/WBE compliance, diverse supplier investment, and growing our local technology MBE/WBE firms for greater participation. DTI continues to host events that help connect our MBE/WBE partners to opportunities for networking with our prime contractors and education around how to learn of upcoming opportunities.

We have also taken steps to address equity in Chicago's technology workforce. We have used our contracts to drive investment in Chicago through novel approaches like an apprenticeship program in Greater Grand Crossing that provides tech training and connection to employment opportunities, and entry into technology careers. We removed traditional degree requirements from almost all our job descriptions, which removes a barrier to entry for non-traditional applicants and opens up our recruiting pipeline to a more diverse pool of candidates.

DTI continued our efforts in modernizing the City's "ERP" systems. This year we accomplished multiple major ERP-related modernizations. We moved our ERP backbone from city-managed data centers to modern, cloud-based infrastructure and in doing so upgraded our software. This is an important milestone in the City's ERP efforts because it stabilizes our system to allow for thoughtful planning and continued modernization of our business practices as we move forward with ERP replacement. We also modernized the Law Department's system for managing its work, moving from an aged, outdated system to a modern, cloud-based system that is now integration-ready for connection to our ERP systems.

Also, in 2024 we launched a modern portal for requesting IT services, which is another aspect of ERP modernization. Within this initiative, we made sure that we have a dedicated support service specifically for City Council. Your longtime liaison, Isaac Ferrer, started a new role this year leading DTI's network and telecommunications efforts. While we've made sure Isaac is always here for you even in his new role, we modernized your access to IT services with a dedicated phone number (4-ALDS) to ensure seamless service.

We have accomplished many other modernizations this year, including launch of a data platform for gaining data and insights on city operations, upgrade of a significant portion of our computer "fleet," improving our GIS infrastructure, modernizing DOB's IT system, website upgrades, enhanced accessibility and ADA improvements, new community engagement digital services, and dozens more examples of digital services for residents in partnership with City department's program staff. With so many departments now engaging with DTI to make their services more readily available through simple, intuitive digital forms, we are working to bridge the digital divide by reducing the burden of applying for government programs.

2025 Goals

Next year, we will continue hiring into vacancies, importantly, filling out the Delivery team within DTI. This is going to increase our capacity to deliver on the promise of DTI to better connect Chicagoans with access to city services. It will also enable us to be even better stewards of the significant amount of outsourced IT work that we do with our valued partners.

Next year we also plan to continue delivering ERP modernizations with specific outcomes like faster hiring, lower administrative burden on staff, reducing email and paper processes, and reduce bottlenecks in back-office functions. This is vitally important work to get done before we migrate our ERP software to make sure we do not embed outdated ways of doing business into a new system. This planned phase of ERP is already underway and will be a focus of 2025 for DTI.

We will also build on our data platform, launched this year. Departments now have access to cutting-edge data visualization tools with our launch of the platform. We will focus on adding features and available data to the platform as we build out a modern data "warehouse" that stiches together our IT systems and allow a holistic view to explore city departments and programs.

In addition, we will continue to make the city's IT work: through ongoing maintenance, replacement, and security. Thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.