

## Rising Software and Cybersecurity Costs Drive BIT's \$14.3 Million FY2027 Budget Request

Rupert Ross said BIT's \$14.3 million request reflects rising operating costs as 30 agencies use centralized IT services, while an \$8.8 million allocation would fund Microsoft licensing, public safety projects and cybersecurity needs across government.

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The Bureau of Information Technology is seeking a \$14,329,386 General Fund budget for fiscal year 2027, with Director Rupert Ross telling lawmakers that the agency has “reached a critical point in its evolution” amid rising software, licensing and cybersecurity costs.

The request represents a \$2 million increase over FY2026. According to Mr. Ross, the increase “reflects the reality of rising operating costs.”

Appearing before the Committee on Budget, Appropriations, and Finance, Mr. Ross said software and licensing “remain the largest and fastest-growing expense,” driven partly by the expansion of services across government agencies. Currently, 30 government agencies are connected to centralized IT services managed by BIT.

BIT is also expanding its cybersecurity investments as threats increase. Mr. Ross warned that without “continued investment,” the centralized system will face “increased strain” and “cybersecurity coverage gaps may persist...”

In addition to BIT’s General Fund request, Mr. Ross is seeking \$8,809,189 under the Miscellaneous General Fund. He described the separate allocation as “crucial” to support “essential expenditures.”

That amount includes \$4,516,332 to renew BIT’s Microsoft support contract and enterprise licensing agreement, along with \$2,803,525 to “support critical areas and initiatives.”

Mr. Ross said the funding supports maintenance of major projects such as the VIPD camera surveillance project and the public safety CAD/RMS project. A portion of the fund is also “earmarked for unforeseen public safety initiatives and other emerging needs throughout the fiscal year,” he said.

As BIT continues bringing more agencies under centralized services, Mr. Ross assured Senator Novelle Francis, chair of the committee, that the budget is sufficient.

“The budget is smart. The budget is expanding,” Mr. Ross said.

Still, lawmakers questioned BIT’s ability to absorb the cost of integrating more government entities into its system.

“This is why we’re here asking for the allocation,” Mr. Ross said. While he acknowledged there are “other methods to be able to fund the shared services,” he said requesting additional funding is “the most simple.”

Senator Francis suggested placing a line item in the budgets of participating agencies, “similar to the single-payer utility,” thereby “allowing for each of those 30 agencies to really contribute.” Mr. Ross said that approach brings BIT “closer to the target.”

Senator Kurt Vialet raised concerns about possible duplication of effort when agencies are not fully integrated into BIT’s system. His remarks were prompted by the fact that some agencies continue to operate independently of software components for which BIT spends millions.

“We need to just get a bang for the buck, and departments need to be forced to actually come online,” he said.

“If we could save a million dollars by spending \$250,000 extra to get everybody online, then it would be well worth this money,” Senator Vialet maintained.

Senator Clifford Joseph also supported consolidating software licenses. Mr. Ross agreed that “it would give us economies of scale.”

Senator Kenneth Gittens suggested that IT directors within government departments report to BIT, similar to the relationship between chief financial officers and the Department of Finance.

“This will be a bridge right there to ensure that your office knows exactly what's taking place in these other agencies,” he said, describing the idea as one way to avoid duplication.

“We want to invest in BIT; however, we want to make sure that we're not duplicating these services as well, or continuing to outsource,” Senator Gittens told Mr. Ross.

The Legislature is expected to support BIT's budget, but lawmakers appeared focused on ensuring that efforts are not duplicated as software and cybersecurity costs rise.

BIT's FY2027 budget breakdown includes \$2,242,462 for personnel costs, \$1,058,963 for associated fringe benefits and \$139,500 for General Fund supplies. The agency has also budgeted \$150,000 to replace two vehicles in its fleet, \$250,000 for utilities and \$1,584,272 for other services from the General Fund.