



Better requirements could help avoid cost overruns, schedule slips on Amtrak's IT projects

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WASHINGTON – Amtrak has implemented a process to more effectively identify its business departments' information technology projects, but it can do more to define a project's technology requirements, an Amtrak Office of Inspector General report released today found.

According to the report, improving the process to better gather and define clear and complete IT project requirements could have helped the company avoid schedule delays and increased project costs, such as \$17.9 million in cost overruns the OIG identified on four of 11 projects it reviewed. OIG auditors found—and Amtrak officials agreed—that three factors contributed to unclear or incomplete technology project requirements.

First, business department staff did not understand their responsibilities in working with the IT department to clearly define project requirements. Business and IT department staff also told the OIG of other areas where responsibilities between IT and business departments were unclear such as who was responsible for researching how emerging technologies could be used to improve operations, when IT should be involved on a project, and who should train employees on new systems.

Second, for some projects, Amtrak did not resource projects with sufficient IT staff, business staff, or both. While the IT department conducts annual resource assessments by project, it only focuses on technology projects the company is planning for the next year, the report said. The OIG found that the IT and business departments do not have a process to coordinate longer-term technology resource needs.

Third, project teams did not include staff from the appropriate business departments. In one case, a project team modernizing Amtrak's procurement system only included the Finance and Procurement departments in the initial process to gather requirements and select a vendor. Eight months into the project, the project team realized several other departments also had requirements for the new system and began incorporating them. This came after the IT department moved forward with initial requirements which resulted in cost overruns and delays of more than a year.

The OIG recommended Amtrak clarify roles to ensure that staff assigned to these projects understand their responsibilities and develop a process to identify and plan for the company's technology resource needs beyond the upcoming year. More information is included in the full report which can be downloaded on the OIG's website: <https://direc.to/hq73>.

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