

Department of Internal Services: Information Access and Privacy Information Technology Projects



Overall Conclusion

- Weak risk management and poor overall project management contributed to an environment where vulnerabilities were left in place. One vulnerability was exploited undetected and resulted in the unauthorized disclosure of personal information.

Lack of Effective Information Technology Risk Management

The Department of Internal Services' IT risk management process was inadequate

- Limited risk assessment was completed; many relatively obvious risks were not identified
- Some identified risks did not have mitigation strategies
- Critical risks related to using cloud-based services were not fully considered. For example, data stored in the cloud is not protected by the Province's corporate network.
- Key project management documents for managing risks were either incomplete or not completed at all
- Neither threat risk assessments nor security assessments were performed or required prior to implementation

The Department assessed the implementation of the new projects as low risk despite the following:

- Nova Scotia was the first organization to implement Accesspro on AMANDA 7
- Nova Scotia was the first organization worldwide to implement the FOIA website
- The Department and the Information Access and Privacy Division were in a state of organizational change

An expert group within the Department was not adequately consulted on potential risks or mitigation strategies

- The Department's expert group approved a six-month pilot for Accesspro, but did not follow up
- The Accesspro and FOIA website projects were completed and implemented without further consultation from the experts
- Current responsibilities of the group do not include changes to existing systems; a gap in oversight still exists

Inadequate Project Management

Both projects were impacted by inadequate project management

- The Department did not address the risk that the project sponsor had limited IT experience or expertise
- There was no government project manager for the Accesspro project
- There was a project manager for the FOIA website project, but numerous key steps were incomplete
- An inappropriate level of reliance was placed on the vendor to ensure the security of the product
- Key contract components, including financial obligations related to the FOIA website project, were not documented