GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Fiscal Year 2023 & 2024 Performance Oversight Hearing

Testimony of
Stephen Miller, Interim Chief Technology Officer
Office of the Chief Technology Officer

Before the
Committee on Government Operations
The Honorable Brianne Nadeau, Chairperson
Council of the District of Columbia

February 13, 2024
Room 123
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20004

Good afternoon, Chairperson Nadeau, members of the Committee on Government Operations, and staff. I am Stephen Miller, the Interim Chief Technology Officer for DC Government. I am honored to testify today on behalf of Mayor Muriel Bowser and her Administration regarding the performance of the Office of the Chief Technology Officer (or OCTO) during Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024 to date.

Over the past year, I am proud to say that Team OCTO has not skipped a beat. In fact, we have had an extremely productive and innovative year with major product and policy launches, sweeping modernization and cybersecurity efforts, and are among national leaders in digital equity and connectivity efforts. I am excited to share many of those accomplishments with you today.

But before I get started, all of what I'll share with you today is only possible due to the dedication of our staff who work nonstop day and night and often through weekends to keep the machinery of DC Government churning. Much of the work isn't flashy and is often completed without fanfare, but it is critical work.

I'd also like to directly thank our executive team – several of whom are here today and others watching online – Carol Harrison, Henry Lofton, Tehsin Faruk, Todd Smith, Suneel Cherukuri, and Mike Rupert for their leadership and support. And I thank Mayor Bowser for her trust in me to keep our momentum going.

One of the reasons for our progress and focus is our adoption of the IT Strategic Plan – which anyone can explore at techplan.dc.gov. The plan was originally launched pre-pandemic and refreshed in early FY23, adding new milestones, and revamping how we engage our customers. The updated *Unleash the Possible* roadmap keeps OCTO laser-focused on the delivery of products and services as we continue to build our aspiring engagement culture of "The OCTO Way."

Business.dc.gov
One of our major product launches in FY23 was the business portal in a close partnership with the Department of Licensing and Consumer Protection (DLCP) and seven other agencies involved in the licensing process. In fact, tomorrow – Valentine's Day – will be the one-year anniversary of the portal.

The portal simplifies the business license application process with:
- Easy-to-follow, interactive checklist of requirements to start a new business or maintain an existing business that tracks your progress throughout the process.
- Transparent time and cost estimates for each license type without creating an account.
- Forms and requirements tailored to each business owner to start or maintain their business.
- Real-time approval status and timing updates via the portal, email, and SMS text messages.

Highlights from the first year include:

- Entrepreneurs and business owners have logged into business.dc.gov more than 13,500 times to start or manage their businesses.
- More than 1,450 entrepreneurs have followed their dreams by starting the business licensing process in the portal. More than 50 completed the licensing process and another 160 are more than 75 percent complete.
- Usage of the one-stop business.dc.gov grew an average of 22.3 percent a month in the first year of operation. That's a leap from 717 users in month one to more than 13,000 users in February 2024.
- As we promised at the kick-off with business leaders and advocates, we would continue to make improvements and share them as we go. We have had 5 major new feature releases which you can view at beta.business.dc.gov/releasenotes.

And the momentum is only picking up speed. We continue to work with DLCP to shift all 125 professional licensing application processes to the portal while we continue to add and expand new features to the existing options. I want to thank DLCP Director, Tiffany Crowe, for her support and leadership on this critical project to make it as easy as possible to start and maintain a business in the District.

We are also in the planning stages for a family and a resident portal and look forward to sharing those updates with the Committee in the coming months.

Tech Enablement & OCTOhelps.dc.gov
Another big milestone is our award-winning Tech Enablement team will celebrate its second year in April. As we have mentioned before, we were always pretty good at rolling out new technology but weren't always great at teaching people how to use it to improve the way they work. This team has changed all that.

In FY23, the team trained 5,200 staff via courses and webinars on how to better use Microsoft 365, QuickBase, SeamlessDocs, Box, and many more platforms. The team also conducted agency-specific, large-scale training to show how to use these tools with tasks specific to those agencies. And the best part is feedback from post-training surveys shows an average satisfaction score of 8.8 out of 10 in FY23.

The Tech Enablement team is also responsible for curating the self-help articles at octohelps.dc.gov, meant to empower staff to do simple things like reset their Peoplesoft or DC Network passwords without calling or submitting a ticket to OCTO. In FY23 and through Q1 in FY24, those articles have been viewed more than 30,800 times.

In addition to the self-help articles, octohelps.dc.gov –our IT management system (ITSM) platform – allows OCTO and a growing number of other DC agencies to track service requests, define and enforce service-level agreements, and follow up and receive feedback from customers.

Since implementation, the system has received and supported the management of more than 202,000 requests. These requests have included IT Service requests (the majority), security requests (related to international travel), onboarding requests, and other service catalog items.

And best of all, 96 percent reported they were satisfied with their experience.

OCTO has worked with the Department of Human Resources (DCHR) to deploy a module specific to Human Resource functions for benefits, retirement, and more. Modules for asset management, configuration management, and other IT functions are actively being planned for deployment.

Tech Together & Community Internet Program
Our State Broadband and Digital Equity Office (SBDEO) has had an extremely busy past 18 months as they worked tirelessly to get residents connected to broadband, train residents – especially seniors – on how the internet can improve their lives, and also released DC's Five-Year Action Plan and State Digital Equity Draft Plans – the latter are critical requirements to begin to receive federal Broadband Equity Access and Deployment (BEAD) and State Digital Equity Planning (DE) grant funds.

A few highlights for FY23:
- DC achieved one of the country's highest rates of adoption – 56 percent – of the FCC's Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) which provides free internet access. The rate is 16 percent higher than the national average.
- OCTO held 56 Tech 101 courses to teach basic tech skills mainly targeting seniors.
- OCTO was awarded a $5 million grant to support the development of our Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program (BEAD) grant application from the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA).
- OCTO also received a $500,000 grant to support the development of our Digital Equity Plan.
- Directly engaged 300 residents and businesses to support the development of our Digital Equity Plan (online and in-person)
- OCTO's first Community Internet Program (CIP) partner, WeLink, tripled their serviceable area to include more than 10,000 households since March 2022.
- On May 4, 2023, OCTO held an Internet Service Provider (ISP)/Broadband Summit attended by more than 100 service providers and partners to learn more about the CIP program.

Artificial Intelligence
Artificial intelligence (AI) is poised to dramatically transform the landscape of every industry. OCTO is at the forefront of finding a safe way to harness the power of AI in government services and how DC Government – and the people we serve – can benefit from this new technology.

Just last week, I was proud to join Mayor Bowser at the Microsoft Innovation and Policy Center for the signing of a Mayor's Order to define the Artificial Intelligence Values Statement and Strategic Plan to make sure DC is at the forefront of using AI to deliver city services that are responsive, efficient, and proactive and that we are using it in a responsible way that aligns with our DC values. You can see the details at techplan.dc.gov/aivalues.

The order does the following:

- Defines DC's AI Values, which will serve as the cornerstone of implementing AI solutions in District government. These values will be weighed whenever AI solutions are proposed within District government, and only solutions congruent with all six values will be adopted. DC's AI Values are: Clear Benefit to the People, Safety & Equity, Accountability, Transparency, Sustainability, and Privacy & Cybersecurity.
- Establishes an Advisory Group on AI Values Alignment, comprised of public and government members to ensure public oversight of the District government's AI adoption efforts. The Advisory Group will monitor agency AI adoption efforts and advise the Mayor on how well District government has done in promoting and adhering to DC's AI Values.
- Convenes an AI Taskforce of government personnel to work with agencies to produce key governance policies, procedures, and documents throughout 2024, and to begin a three-year process of helping every agency develop specific AI strategic plans. The task force will be overseen and organized by OCTO.
- Sets AI Benchmarks for District Government by imposing a schedule of deadlines through Fiscal Year 2024 for the creation of core components and planning documents that will shape DC's AI Strategic Plan. These include plans for AI training at the agency level and processes for ensuring privacy and cybersecurity are preserved as AI technology is deployed by agencies.

We are among the first dozen states to implement such a plan nationally.

DC.Gov

Our partner, a long time DC-based *CBE*, has done extensive research using data from our public outreach efforts last Summer – which included 1,230 survey responses and 6 live feedback sessions – which include analytics, user testing, user journey mapping, resident and business interviews, and the review of other city websites nationwide. The research and analysis phases are complete, and we anticipate receiving 1.) design options 2.) a brand manual and 3.) key page wireframes within the next 45 days.

In anticipation of receiving the designs, we are getting a new statement of work prepared for 1.) an architect to begin working with our team to set up the new Drupal 10 environment based on the final deliverables, and 2.) a development firm to begin building in coordination with our team – the prototype(s) for additional feedback and eventual beta launch of the site.

FY25 will be focused on shifting more content from agency sites to the new DC.gov.

We anticipate having a working beta site ready by Q4 FY24.

Another exciting web project we are working on, in partnership with the Office of Advisory Neighborhood Commissions is building out a network of 47 websites – one for the office and 46 ANC websites – to bring equity to a smorgasbord of websites that currently make up this community. As the technical prowess and resources vary widely among the 46 ANC offices, the new network will bring equity and commonality across the board. We are proud to be partnering on this work.

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SUGGESTED CHANGE:

The DC.gov redesign is being designed by DC residents for DC residents.

Our vendor, a CBE-certified, DC-based company, *Taoti Creative,*

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Data Initiatives

Washington, DC is committed to harnessing the power of our data to be a data-driven decision-making city. Through strategic collaboration with a focus on people, processes, and technology in our government, data will inform us to ensure we continue to make equitable progress across gender, race, ethnicity, and ward.

In FY23, OCTO added 40 additional data sets to its Enterprise Open Data Inventory bringing the total to 2,204 enterprise datasets up from 2,164 datasets in FY22.

In FY23, OCTO added racial/ethnic data to dozens of critical datasets to support the work of the Mayor's Office on Racial Equality.

Cybersecurity

In FY23, our cybersecurity team continued to expand and improve our cyber security hygiene – especially by reducing the number of spam and phishing emails that reach end users' inboxes using new filtering software. Phishing is well known to be the main reason for cyber incidents.

But it's not just software and emails, we also retired more than 540 servers that were at the end of life and were no longer secure. We have also improved security by more aggressively curating email inboxes, laptops, and mobile devices that are no longer used.

OCTO has also streamlined endpoint management to create and implement a more secure provisioning process for new devices and dramatically improved the time from device provisioning to staff productivity. What used to take hours is now done in minutes.

In Q1 FY24, OCTO, using the State and Local Cybersecurity Grant Program (SLGCP) grant from the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) and the DC Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA), launched the DC Cybersecurity Planning Committee which is developing plans to implement a technology cybersecurity risk management framework which will help DC be better prepared to detect and respond to cyber incidents and allow us to be more proactive in implementing new technologies more efficiently and securely.

Internal Services

Within the Internal Services Cluster, we supported several key internal policies and priorities including:

- In partnership with the Department of Human Resources (DCHR) and the Mayor's Office of Innovation (MOI), we launched a new careers.dc.gov to improve the jobseeker's experience in searching for careers in DC Government. The new site highlights high-priority positions, upcoming hiring events, and makes the process more transparent.
- We also worked closely with DCHR on the rollout of both the sexual harassment and telework policies to track acknowledgments, disclosures, and more.
- In FY2023, OCTO's Central Licensing and Contracts Team focused on engaging agency CIOs to gain awareness of new and large technology solutions in the ideation phase and

assist with the planning and support of the procurement process effectively and efficiently. These efforts assist in the collaboration with agencies to leverage existing contract vehicles to acquire products timely, navigate supply chain challenges, and maximize available discounts. Currently, we are working on issuing a city-wide device leasing contract that agencies can utilize to lease devices that will standardize technology, reduce out-of-compliant hardware, and improve security.

Tech Talent Pipeline
One of the things we're most proud of is our continued focus on developing a sustainable tech talent pipeline and creating paths for our entry-level technicians to grow and thrive in their careers.

In FY23, we launched our OCTOworld program which gave our help desk tier one technicians the opportunity to be detailed to other OCTO programs including cybersecurity, server operations, network operations, and email management to get exposed to new, higher-level technologies and processes.

Based on these experiences, the technicians were motivated to seek certifications and education to make themselves viable candidates should positions become available. Based on the extremely positive feedback from both managers and participants, we plan to do this again in Q3-Q4 of FY24. The program runs during the summer months due to a dip in help desk demand while students are out of school.

Another exciting program is OCTO and the Department of Employment Services (DOES) partnered to give the opportunity for up to 5 graduates – all DC residents – of the DC Infrastructure Academy (DCIA) to gain real-world, on-the-job experience at OCTO.

The internship consists of 16 weeks of paid hands-on training for five Cisco Certified Network Administrator (CCNA) program graduates. Over the course of the internship, trainees gain valuable field experience focused on the District's DC-Net network, Voice-Over IP (VOIP), and wireless infrastructure.

This is a win-win partnership for DC residents and DC Government. Our DC-Net network traverses more than 750 miles throughout the District, connecting nearly 400 District facilities across neighborhoods in all 8 Wards. We want more and more of our staff to come from these same neighborhoods.

We will host the graduation of the first cohort of interns this week on Thursday at our DC-Net location. You are welcome to join us, Chairperson. The second cohort will begin on March 11, and they will intern as tier-two help desk technicians. In the future, we will seek to expand the program, but we're very proud to have made this happen.

In FY24, we will be participating in the new HBCU Public Service Program – a groundbreaking partnership with Howard University (HU) and the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). The program will create a seamless pipeline for HBCU graduates to enter public service roles,

ensuring DC government benefits from the brightest and most passionate talent. We have dedicated 3 full-time cybersecurity positions to this innovative program.

With these new programs, along with our dedication and commitment to the Marion Barry Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), we will have a year-round cycle of new talent moving throughout OCTO.

Conclusion
Thank you for the opportunity to share our accomplishments, Chairperson. As I hope you can see, we have been busy and that's exactly how we like to be. I am happy to answer any questions.