

Six tips on managed services

1 Before awarding a contract, conduct a total cost of ownership study and set aside a period of discovery for vendors to inspect the agency's embedded IT base.

2 Know your requirements up front and communicate them clearly to the vendor.

3 Put enough flexibility in contracts to allow for unforeseen problems, because they will crop up.

4 Take an active role in managing the change among your work force, driving home the need for a project, what it will do and what the benefits will be.

5 Establish service-level agreements for running the managed-services environment.

6 Managed-services relationships are complex, so you need to develop a close, complementary and flexible relationship with the contractor. This includes having a clear idea of who does what, balancing two potentially conflicting aspects—a hands-off approach to letting the contractor do its job and careful in-house oversight.