New US government website tracks IT spending

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This undated District of Columbia government handout photo shows Vivek Kundra. President Barack Obama's chief information officer unveiled a new website on Tuesday which tracks the more than 70 billion dollars in annual information technology (IT) spending by federal agencies.

President Barack Obama's chief information officer unveiled a new website on Tuesday which tracks the more than 70 billion dollars in annual information technology (IT) spending by federal agencies.

The IT Dashboard, as the online project is known, demonstrates the Obama administration's commitment to "transparency, accountability

and responsibility," said Vivek Kundra, the nation's first CIO.

Located at USAspending.gov, the IT Dashboard allows federal agencies and the public to "drill down" into the data and "provide us with feedback on specific projects," Kundra said in a conference call with reporters.

Members of the public can set up RSS feeds to receive specific data feeds or post the information on their Facebook page, he said.

IT Dashboard provides information about specific contracts and gives an assessment of their performance in terms of cost and whether they are on schedule.

At the Pentagon, for example, there are currently 62 ongoing major IT investment projects totaling 9.6 billion dollars.

Eighty-nine percent of the investments are "normal," in terms of cost, while five percent "need attention" and six percent show "significant concerns."

Seventy-one percent are "normal" in terms of schedule while 11 percent "need attention" and 18 percent show "significant concerns."

The IT Dashboard includes general information on more than 7,000 federal IT investments and detailed data for nearly 800 classified as "major."

Kundra said the IT Dashboard includes when a contract was awarded, the type of contract, how it was awarded, the start date and other information.

"All of that information is available there for the first time," he said.

"We've also provided the ability to do meaningful analysis," he said, in an effort to "democratize data."

Kundra said the IT Dashboard "reflects the importance of technology to this administration."

"This is the direction we're headed in," he said, adding that it represented a "culture change" for some government employees.

"Are there going to be people who have concerns? Absolutely," he said. "Are there going to be people who want to put more data out? Absolutely."

Obama ran the most technology-savvy political campaign in US history, leveraging social networks, email, text messages and other media to build a vast fundraising and political operation.

Besides revamping WhiteHouse.gov, the administration has created several other websites including recovery.gov to track the economic stimulus bill, and data.gov, which provides the public with access to raw government data.

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