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## 2025-2026 Issue Paper

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### Service Desk Analyst - staff

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Issue Paper is to seek Council's approval for creation of a new full-time permanent Service Desk Analyst (SDA) position within the IT Department.

#### **Background**

The IT Helpdesk was established in 2018 as a crucial component of Northumberland County's IT infrastructure. The Helpdesk is the first point of contact for County staff in accessing comprehensive technical support and assistance, ensuring that staff can effectively use County IT hardware, software, processes, and systems.

Two County Service Desk Analysts (SDAs) triage an average of over 4,000 user requests for support annually by logging, prioritizing, assigning, and tracking requests using a Helpdesk ticketing system. They respond to inquiries, resolve problems, and address service requests related to software, hardware, network connectivity, and other IT-related concerns, responsible for user account management, troubleshooting and incident management, workstation additions and replacement, software installation, and other support functions.

SDAs serve as a critical bridge between end-users and the broader IT Department as tier one support. If a request cannot be resolved first by the SDAs, it is then escalated to higher-level support within the team, including Technical Support Analysts (TSAs) and Senior Technical Support Analysts (STSAs), for further investigation and resolution.

Currently, SDA support is limited to County staff. However, demand for this support is growing, with the increased dependence on technology to deliver services, and the growth of the County's IT Managed Services.

Four IT Managed Service partners are each supported by one-to-two dedicated Technical Support Analysts. Typically, these analysts provide all levels of service and support for a given partner, from basic break/fix resolutions to network and server projects.



As IT Managed Services expand, the IT Department is examining the current service delivery model for opportunities to improve efficiency and maximize use of skills sets within the team to ensure continued optimal service for County staff and all partners.

Deploying SDA resources for IT Managed Service partners has been identified as an initial high-impact opportunity.

With the onboarding of the Township of Alnwick/Haldimand in the late fall of 2023 as a fifth Managed Service Partner, the IT Department will pilot this new model of service delivery. SDAs will provide tier-one support for requests, managed through the Helpdesk, with escalation to more senior staff as required.

A Client Services student intern position has been proposed to Council for 2024 to enhance IT Department capacity to sustain service levels during this pilot phase. On the assumption that this model will improve IT service delivery, the department is planning to expand this model to additional Managed Service Partners in 2025, based on lessons learned from the 2024 pilot with the Township of Alnwick/Haldimand.

Staff is recommending recruitment of an additional Service Desk Analyst at that time to support this roll-out.

## Consultation/Options

**Option 1:** Hire a full-time Service Desk Analyst in 2025.

**Option 2:** Extend hours for the two current Service Desk Analysts to generate additional (though nevertheless insufficient) capacity.

**Option 3:** Adjust/reduce commitments with Managed Service Partners at term renewal, and halt onboarding of additional municipalities.

**Recommended:** Given Council's emphasis on shared services in developing the 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan, and to ensure sustainability of current staff resources, Option 1 is recommended to meet increasing demands, align IT operations, and provide centralized, efficient support to municipal partners.

## Financial Impact

Staff recommend the following budget – representing job rate, plus employer costs, plus anticipated Cost of Living Adjustment – be allocated for the retention of an additional Service Desk Analyst starting in the year 2025:

- **2024:** \$0
- **2025:** \$90,191
- **2026:** \$92,897



## **Risk Considerations**

Without this additional Service Desk Analyst position, there is minimal capacity to adjust department operations to support Managed Service Partners – and ultimately County staff – more efficiently, and align with innovation, technology, and service excellence goals in the County’s 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan.

## **Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners**

An additional Service Desk Analyst role will improve the IT Department’s capacity to provide Level 1 support for Managed Service Partners, enabling more technical IT staff to focus on project work and escalated incidents, leading to better value in alignment with the County’s 2023-2027 Community Strategic plan through innovation, technology, and service excellence.

## **Included in 2023 Long Term Plan: YES/NO**

No, an additional Service Desk Analyst was not previously included in the County’s long-term financial plans.



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## 2024-2026 Issue Paper

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# SIEM (Security Information & Event Management) Solution

### Purpose

This Issue Paper is to seek Council's approval for investment in a Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) cybersecurity solution. SIEM solutions enable proactive monitoring of critical infrastructure to help detect, identify, and respond to cybersecurity threats.

### Background

Digital transformation of data has led to increased possibility of cybercrimes, data breaches, and heightened cybersecurity threats.

Northumberland County and municipal IT Managed Service Partners rely heavily on IT infrastructure (servers and networks) to host critical applications, data, and provide vital services that support business operations. Servers and infrastructure devices generate logs (audit logs, security logs, event logs, device health logs, and more). These logs are paramount, as they help to identify inconsistencies, security threats, and critical alerts that need to be actioned.

A SIEM tool will ingest logs from technologies like Microsoft 365, Microsoft Defender Endpoint, firewalls, wireless controllers, and other networking components, and detect, identify, and support response to cybersecurity threats. SIEM is an essential cybersecurity tool that will significantly improve County's security posture. This was validated through an April 2023 third-party assessment (Joseon Group) of the County's state of readiness for obtaining difficult-to-access cybersecurity insurance. This assessment identified implementation of a SIEM solution as one of the remaining critical steps for the County to address prior to application for insurance.

### Increasing cyber threats

Cyber incidents are at an all-time high. The Communications Security Establishment (CSE), a federal agency responsible for national information technology security and



foreign signals intelligence, presented to IT officials in September 2023, reporting on 259 incidents during a two-week period of September, alone.<sup>1</sup>

Specific to the municipal environment, there were over 100 cases of cyber threat activity targeting Canadian municipalities between 2020 and 2022, with consistent escalation in numbers.<sup>2</sup> Locally, in 2023, a County managed service partner experienced just such a cyber incident.

## Value proposition for SIEM solution

This is one of the first and most significant proposals coming forward related to the County's new IT Cybersecurity function. Implementation of a SIEM solution will be a critical step towards the goal of enhancing protection of the County's technological assets and confidential information, while proactively managing cyber risks.

The value of a SIEM solution to Northumberland County operations can be expressed on multiple fronts:

- **Threat detection and risk management:** Monitors real-time network traffic and system activities for anomalies, helping to protect organizational data and critical infrastructure.
- **Log management:** Collects and stores logs (audit logs, security logs, event logs, device health logs) used for threat identification and investigation, and for decision-making where system restoration from backups is required.
- **Threat intelligence:** Compares known indicators of compromise and threat feeds to identify threats within an organization's networks and systems.
- **Security incident response:** Outlines the recommended response to various security threats, minimizing the impact of a potential cyberattack or eliminating it altogether.
- **Cost savings and reputation:** Investment in a SIEM solution can be far less costly than the financial impact resulting from a data breach/loss, protecting the organization's reputation and the trust of residents & businesses.
- **Regulatory compliance:** Log retention will help meeting regulatory compliance requirements for audits and reporting.

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<sup>1</sup> Cyber Threat Brief community call, presentation on Sept 27, 2023 by the Communications Security Establishment.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. 'National Cyber Threat Assessment 2023-2024 - Critical infrastructure is increasingly at risk from cyber threat activity'. <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/national-cyber-threat-assessment-2023-2024>



- **Cyber insurance:** A SIEM solution was listed as one of the major recommendations towards the County obtaining cyber insurance during a 2023 cyber insurance readiness assessment.

## Consultation/Options

A 2023 third-party assessment of the County's state of readiness for obtaining cybersecurity insurance identified implementation of a SIEM solution as one of the remaining critical steps for the County to address prior to application for insurance.

## Financial Impact

Implementation of a SIEM solution will require an annual levy investment as identified below, along with a \$50,000 draw annually from the County's IT Cybersecurity Fund:

**2024 (9 months) – \$120,000 (+\$50,000 for a total investment of \$170,000)**

**2025 – \$160,500 (+\$50,000 for a total investment of \$210,500)**

**2026 – \$170,500 (+\$50,000 for a total investment of \$220,500)**

## Risk Considerations

Risks in not moving forward with implementation of a SIEM solution include:

- **Delayed incident response:** Delayed detection of adversaries and delayed response to cyber threats resulting in higher impact/disruption to the County's services and operations.
- **Service/operational disruption:** Regular operational and essential service disruption.
- **Data breach:** High vulnerability to data breaches and inability to respond to such an event in a cost-effective manner.
- **Fear and panic:** Privacy breach of residents' personal information can lead to fear and panic.
- **Loss of public trust:** Reputational damage and negative publicity from data breaches.
- **Legal implications:** Residents, vendors, and other stakeholders can pursue legal action against the County in case of privacy data breach.
- **Regulatory non-compliance:** Non-compliance with audit log retention requirements (one year) to identify risk and threat actors on the network can result in regulatory fines.



- **Financial loss:** Expenses which could include but are not limited to incident response, data recovery, legal fees, regulatory fines, and loss of revenue.

## **Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners**

Investing in cybersecurity through implementation of a SIEM solution will not only benefit the County but also Managed Service Partners who rely on the County's secure and dependable IT systems. This investment also reflects the County's commitment to safeguarding shared digital assets and fostering a collaborative and secure environment.

Furthermore, with this infrastructure investment by the County, member municipalities would be in a position to leverage this SIEM solution for an approximate \$30-\$40,000 annually, rather than full investment being made by the County.

## **Included in 2023 Long Term Plan: YES/NO**

No, a SIEM solution has not previously been built into long-term financial plans.

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## 2024-2026 Issue Paper

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### Cybersecurity Analyst - staff

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this Issue Paper is to seek Council's approval for creation of a new Cybersecurity Analyst position within the IT Department. This position will assist in the technical implementation of cybersecurity tools, monitor critical alerts, address vulnerabilities, and support proactive education and awareness activities. The fundamental purpose of this position will be to enhance the security posture of the County's IT infrastructure, digital assets, and services, and to support the delivery of cybersecurity training, advice, and budget development initiatives for Managed Service Partners.

#### **Background**

In the first six months of 2023, Northumberland County averaged 425 cyber alerts per month from server and computer assets. With the increasingly vital need to reinforce protection of the County's digital assets in an era of digital transformation, County Council supported, in 2023, positioning cybersecurity at the forefront of IT operations. Council approved formation of a dedicated cybersecurity function in the IT Department, led by a Cybersecurity Manager.

The hiring of a Cybersecurity Analyst will complete this transition, enabling a holistic cybersecurity program for the corporation. This analyst will support the manager with:

- Technical implementation of cybersecurity alert monitoring tools such as the SIEM (Security Information & Event Management) solution.
- Managing daily security operations such as alert investigations and response to potential security threats.
- Addressing security vulnerabilities.
- Creating education, awareness, and testing campaigns for staff to ensure a strong defensive position.
- Supporting the delivery of cybersecurity initiatives for Managed Service Partners.



As business cases, and demand for, technology solutions continue to grow, so does the County's reliance on its digital infrastructure. These crown jewels must be secured to ensure sustained and effective municipal operations. This position will allow for timely response to increasing cybersecurity alerts, enabling the County to thwart security breaches and mitigate reputational, financial, and business continuity risks.

This recruitment will reflect a proactive approach to risk management, compliance, and securing County's digital future.

## Consultation/Options

In considering the establishment of a dedicated cybersecurity function, the County looked to leading authorities on the state of the national security environment.

The Communications Security Establishment (CSE), a federal agency responsible for national information technology security and foreign signals intelligence, presented to IT officials in September 2023, advising that cyber incidents are at all-time high with 259 reported incidents in a two-week period of September, alone.<sup>1</sup>

Specific to the municipal environment, there were over 100 cases of cyber threat activity targeting Canadian municipalities between 2020 and 2022, with consistent escalation in numbers.<sup>2</sup> Locally, in 2023, a County managed service partner experienced just such a cyber incident.

To enhance County and Managed Service Partner security posture, urgent investment in cybersecurity tools and technical staff is required for effective and expert incident detection and response against cyber incidents.

## Financial Impact

Staff recommend the following budget – representing job rate, plus employer costs, plus anticipated Cost of Living Adjustment – be allocated for the retention of a Cybersecurity Analyst.

- **2024 (6 months):** \$67,889
- **2025:** \$139,851

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<sup>1</sup> Cyber Threat Brief community call, presentation on Sept 27, 2023 by the Communications Security Establishment.

<sup>2</sup> Canadian Centre for Cyber Security. 'National Cyber Threat Assessment 2023-2024 - Critical infrastructure is increasingly at risk from cyber threat activity'. <https://www.cyber.gc.ca/en/guidance/national-cyber-threat-assessment-2023-2024>



- **2026:** \$144,047

## Risk Considerations

Risks in not moving forward with this position include:

- **Capacity:** The absence of a dedicated Cybersecurity Analyst will impact program plans for early detection and response to cyber threats or potential breaches, staff and partner education and awareness training, along with regulatory compliance. In 2024, with Council approval, the County will implement a Security Information and Event Monitoring (SIEM) solution. A primary function of the Cybersecurity Analyst will be security alert monitoring using the SIEM solution – a meticulous process of reviewing logs and threat alerts and assessing risk - and then prioritizing and investigating response, to keep County assets secure. This position will also be responsible for developing an enhanced program of education and awareness activities for County staff, including quarterly phishing campaigns, annual cyber security training, and regular tips and updates provided by email and intranet.
- **Security:** Insufficient staffing to implement critical new technologies changes, or updates to security systems exposes the County to the increasing threat of cybersecurity attacks and data breaches, which can halt or stop County's major digital services & operations.

When County Council endorsed the creation of a dedicated cybersecurity function within the IT team, it was based on the view that the financial, reputational, and operational impacts associated with these risks represented a compelling case. Staff would submit that completing this transition with the recruitment of the Cybersecurity Analyst position will enable roll-out of the envisioned program to strengthen the County's security posture most effectively.

## Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners

The Cybersecurity Analyst will enhance the County's security posture and, ultimately, that of Managed Service Partners. This expertise could also benefit all municipal partners through consultation support.

## Included in 2023 Long Term Plan: YES/NO

This role has not previously been included in long-term financial plans.

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## 2024 - 2026 Issue Paper

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### IT Infrastructure Upgrades

#### Purpose

The purpose of this issue paper is to fulfill the infrastructure upgrade requirements as planned in the 10-year IT Infrastructure Lifecycle Refresh Plan for Northumberland County's IT infrastructure technology, based on anticipated life expectancy and industry standard refresh cycles.

#### Background

The Information Technology Department has developed a 10-year Lifecycle Refresh Plan for Northumberland County's IT infrastructure technology based on anticipated life expectancy and industry standard refresh cycles.

The lifecycle plan enables proactive replacement forecasting, safeguarding against security vulnerabilities, unplanned downtime, and performance degradation. When feasible, certain technology lifecycles may be extended to optimize investment value.

For 2024 through 2026, the plan reflects upgrades for the following IT infrastructure:

- **Wireless Access Points** – Wireless access points provide WiFi access to staff. Outdated access points at the County's 555 Courthouse Road, Cobourg and 600 William Street, Cobourg locations are failing due to hardware deterioration and support expiration that cannot be renewed and require replacement to ensure continued reliable provision of Wifi services for staff at these locations. Within the Lifecycle Refresh Plan, different County sites are upgraded over time based on priority for continuous WiFi coverage and support contract renewal. The IT Department will complete these locations in 2024, and then in 2026 will undertake upgrades to Wireless Access Points at POA offices at 860 William Street, Cobourg, as well as various County remote sites.
- **Extended Support for Firewalls** – Firewalls are the County's first line of defense for the routing of all network traffic. Existing firewall vendor support is expiring in 2024 and is required to be extended for another three years. This will enable the County to receive vendor support in case of hardware failures or software issues.



- **Uninterruptible Power Supplies (UPS)** – UPS is required to provide backup power to IT servers and networking equipment in case of a power outage. These items cannot be without power for extended periods without significant disruption to operations due to reboot and troubleshooting processes. Current UPS hardware requires upgrading due to wear and tear on batteries, and obsolete equipment that has passed its average lifecycle of five years.
- **Meeting Room Audio/Visual Infrastructure** – Projectors in three County meeting rooms (Committee Room A, B, and Meeting Room 1) are end-of-life with diminished functionality and cannot be repaired. The County, along with broader industry, has embrace remote work and hybrid meetings, however these meeting rooms are currently incapable of supporting virtual meetings, along with in-person digital presentations. With the County's investment in an enterprise grade audio/video system, the IT Department will upgrade meeting room technology to create this capacity.
- **Security Card Reader Licensing** –Licensing for the County's base building door security system requires renewal bi-annually, including in 2024 and 2026.
- **Replace Server/Storage Area Network (SAN) hardware** - To strengthen the County's business continuity capabilities and reduce the business impacts of IT incidents, an additional cluster of servers/SANs is required. This change will bolster the design of the server and storage infrastructure, mitigating the impacts of unplanned server outages by increasing resiliency.
- **Replace DMZ hardware** – In computer networks, a DMZ, or demilitarized zone, acts as a protective area that separates the County's network (a local area network or LAN) from potentially unsafe networks, typically the public internet. A DMZ serves as a barrier that enhances network security. The County is using server/switch infrastructure in the DMZ which requires upgrading as it has passed its lifecycle of five years. Performance degradation has been noted and some of the operating system is no longer supported by Microsoft as it is obsolete. The new operating system installation requires the hardware to be upgraded for compatibility requirements.
- **Microsoft SA (software assurance) Licensing:** The County uses multiple Microsoft software solutions for staff, such as Microsoft Office Suite, Visio, and more, along with server infrastructure such as Windows Server 2022. Microsoft Software Assurance is a comprehensive licensing program that ensures the County remains up-to-date with current versions of Microsoft software. This is renewed on a three-year refresh cycle, with the next renewal in 2026.



## Consultation/Options

When considering various options for lifecycle refresh, the IT Department explores partial upgrades, staggered updates, and comprehensive systems overhaul. In consultation with IT experts, vendors, and an internal assessment of current infrastructure, a balanced approach is recommended, that aligns with both budgetary considerations and technological needs.

The County's IT Infrastructure Lifecycle Refresh Plan prioritizes critical upgrades while planning for future developments.

## Financial Impact

The financial impact for lifecycle refresh investments is to the County IT Reserves.

- **2024: \$121,750**
  - Wireless Access points: \$45,000
  - Extended Support for Firewalls: \$20,000
  - Uninterruptible Power Supplies \$10,000
  - Meeting Room A/V infrastructure: \$45,000
  - Security card reader licensing: \$1,750
- **2025: \$310,000**
  - Replace Server/SAN hardware: \$310,000 (+ \$110,000 carry-forward from 2023)
- **2026: \$164,320**
  - Replace DMZ hardware: \$50,000
  - WiFi Access Points: \$30,000
  - Microsoft licensing renewal: \$82,500
  - Security card reader licensing: \$1,820

## Risk Considerations

Technology software and equipment is core County infrastructure, with the possibility of failure posing significant risk to the organization.

This risk in not addressing these upgrades in a timely manner is the failure of the core infrastructure which will have a direct impact on the respective infrastructure system-dependent services. These services (payroll, HR, network drives) are critical to the County's operation.



## **Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners**

Secure and dependable County IT systems assures the IT Department's capacity to direct resources externally in support of Managed Service Partners.

## **Included in 2023 Long Term Plan: YES/NO**

Yes, the IT Infrastructure 10-year Lifecycle Refresh Plan has been integrated into the County's long-term financial plans.

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## 2024 - 2026 Issue Paper

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### Client Services Intern - staff

#### **Purpose**

This Issue Paper is to seek approval to create an annual, year-round student intern position for the Information Technology (IT) Department beginning in 2024. The Client Services Intern will be an important IT Helpdesk resource, supporting the IT Department's two Service Desk Analysts to fulfill a key department mandate: to provide high-quality customer service and technical support. Creation of this position will also establish an opportunity to cultivate a pipeline of potential IT candidates interested in public service careers.

#### **Background**

The IT Helpdesk is a crucial component of Northumberland County's IT infrastructure. The Helpdesk is the first point of contact for County staff in accessing comprehensive technical support and assistance, ensuring that staff can effectively use and troubleshoot County IT hardware, software, processes, and systems.

Two County Service Desk Analysts (SDAs) triage an average of over 4,000 user requests for support annually by logging, prioritizing, assigning, and tracking requests using a Helpdesk ticketing system. They respond to inquiries, resolve problems, and address service requests related to software, hardware, network connectivity, and other IT-related concerns.

SDAs serve as a critical bridge between end-users and the broader IT Department as tier one support. If a request cannot be resolved first by the SDAs, it is then escalated to higher-level support within the team, including Technical Support Analysts (TSAs) and Senior Technical Support Analysts (STSAs), for further investigation and resolution.

Currently, SDA support is limited to County staff. Four IT Managed Service partners are each supported by one-to-two dedicated Technical Support Analysts. Typically, these analysts provide all levels of service and support for a given partner, from basic break/fix resolutions to network and server projects.

As IT Managed Services expand, the IT Department is examining the current service delivery model for opportunities to improve efficiency and maximize use of skills sets within the team to ensure continued optimal service for County staff and all partners.



Deploying SDA resources for IT Managed Service partners has been identified as an initial high-impact opportunity.

With the onboarding of the Township of Alnwick/Haldimand in the late fall of 2023 as a fifth Managed Service Partner, the IT Department will pilot this new model of service delivery. SDAs will provide tier-one support for requests, managed through the Helpdesk, with escalation to more senior staff as required.

The Client Services Intern position will enhance IT Department capacity to sustain service levels during this pilot phase by:

- **Improving response times:** increasing resources available for responding to Helpdesk tickets and addressing basic client services, enabling redeployment of more senior staff to tasks requiring more extensive expertise.
- **Improving coverage:** creating stability during periods of increased department activity/instances of vacation/illness.

For this reason, the department is seeking to build this annual year-round student resource into long-term plans. Specific duties would include:

- Engaging clients to elicit additional problem details to ensure Helpdesk ticket assignment to the proper resource.
- Ensuring courteous, timely, and effective resolution of basic end-user issues such as computer set-ups and password resets.
- Researching solutions through external knowledgebases.
- Performing hands-on fixes at the desktop level when remote tools are not appropriate, such as delivery of peripherals and new hardware set-ups.
- Supporting the provision of preventive maintenance on devices.
- Creating support documentation and help files by reviewing and updating existing support documentation, developing help sheets and FAQ lists for end users, and contributing to the development of technician knowledgebases.
- Rolling out and tracking replacement of new PC hardware and mobile devices.
- Provisioning accounts for new hires, especially in times of batch hiring such as summer student recruitment.
- Performing supportive tasks related to IT projects and County business unit initiatives.

The student employment period will typically run in four-month intervals in alignment with the term systems of post-secondary institutions - periods of approximately 16 – 17 weeks. However, some co-op and internship programs are structured around longer periods of 8 months to a year, and the County would also be interested in exploring these opportunities.

On the assumption that this model will improve IT service delivery, the department is planning to expand this model to additional Managed Service Partners in 2025, based on lessons learned from the 2024 pilot with the Township of Alnwick/Haldimand. An



Issue Paper for the 2025 budget identifies the recommendation for recruitment of an additional Service Desk Analyst at that time to support this roll-out.

With continued support of the Client Services Intern providing basic levels of IT Helpdesk assistance, the department anticipates sufficient capacity to roll out this enhanced model of IT service delivery.

## Consultation/Options

The piloting of a new model of service delivery is based on feedback from County department heads and Managed Service Partners, who have universally positive feedback about the quality of work delivered by IT staff, however, have noted impacts to timelines for issue resolution/project completion based on the current resource deployment model as well as capacity within the department. Additionally, IT staff have noted capacity challenges and service delivery impacts under the current model.

In consultation with all members of the IT team, deploying Helpdesk services across all internal and external clients as a first point of contact for issue resolution, with streamlined workflow for ticket escalation, is the recommended approach. The onboarding of the Township of Alnwick/Haldimand, with a relatively small user base, presents the opportunity to pilot this service delivery model for lessons learned prior to roll-out across all partners.

## Financial Impact

Staff recommend the following budget – representing job rate, plus employer costs, plus anticipated Cost of Living Adjustment – be allocated for the retention of an annual, year-round Client Services Intern for the IT Department:

- **2024 (8 months):** \$40,667
- **2025:** \$62,830
- **2026:** \$64,715

Funding will be sought from the Canada Summer Jobs program to further offset student employment costs. This program offers a subsidy to employers hiring summer students ages 15 to 30.

## Risk Considerations

The absence of an additional front-line resource during this pilot phase to mitigate Helpdesk capacity gaps presents the risk of reduced service levels across all clients, resulting in extended timelines for technical support and project delivery.



## **Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners**

Strengthening IT Department capacity will support strengthened IT service delivery for member municipal IT Managed Service partners.

## **Included in 2023 Long Term Plan: YES/NO**

No.

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## 2024 - 2026 Issue Paper

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### Technical Support Analyst - staff

#### Purpose

The purpose of this Issue Paper is to seek Council's approval for creation of a new Technical Support Analyst (TSA) position within the IT Department. With a focus on network services, this position will support delivery of critical infrastructure supports and projects, including technology roll-out for the new Golden Plough Lodge & Northumberland County Archives and Museum redevelopment.

#### Background

The County and municipal Managed Service Partners rely heavily on IT infrastructure to host organizational data and physical assets, operate critical business applications, and enable vital services that underpin operations.

Currently, the County employs **one** Senior Technical Support Analyst (STSA) responsible for the administration of network systems. This includes installing, maintaining, configuring, securing, and troubleshooting infrastructure such as routers, switches, cables, wireless systems and more.

This role is responsible for the technical implementation of an increasing number of critical projects spanning the County and four municipal Managed Service Partners, with a fifth partner onboarding in the fall of 2023. This includes support for capital builds such as the GPL & NCAM redevelopment, and upcoming technology deployments such as the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) and upgrades to the Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) for the Community & Social Services Department, and court and phone server migrations for the Provincial Offences division.

As the IT Managed Services model expands and the County's own IT infrastructure requirements become more complex, an adjustment is required to the current staffing model in the IT Department. This new TSA role will be imperative to ensure:

- **Service levels:** As demand for IT services grows, additional capacity will be required to ensure acceptable response times and quality.



- **Coverage:** There is currently no capacity within the IT team to effectively absorb vacation and illness-related absences for this specialized role, directly impacting contract commitments, project work, maintenance, and incident response times across all partners.
- **Business Continuity:** There is currently no redundancy within the IT team for this specialized role. A departure or long-term absence would have immediate impact to network management across all partners, and the loss of corporate knowledge would be significant.
- **Security:** Increasing demands of the single resource with this expertise will ultimately impact the County's ability to implement critical technology changes and updates in a timely fashion, increasing cybersecurity risks.

This role would also enable cross-training as technical support for server management in addition to network management, enhancing overall department capacity.

## Consultation/Options

Managed Service Partners concur that the quality of work delivered by County IT staff is superior, however, many have also noted that current capacity is creating response times and coverage gaps that impact service delivery. County IT staff have also noted capacity challenges and related service delivery impacts.

By investing in the role of Technical Support Analyst, the County is taking a critical step toward aligning resources to needs and addressing a key bottleneck in the IT Department.

Moreover, strengthening IT team capacity aligns with 2023-2027 Community Strategic Plan commitments to:

- Expand voluntary shared services with member municipalities, and
- Integrate leading-edge technologies into IT operations to increase efficiency, improve County services, and create improved resident experiences.

## Financial Impact

Staff recommend the following budget – representing job rate, plus employer costs, plus anticipated Cost of Living Adjustment – be allocated for the retention of Technical Support Analyst (TSA):

- **2024 (9 months):** \$88,435
- **2025:** \$121,451
- **2026:** \$125,095



New annual revenue of \$44,971 in 2024, generated through the onboarding of the Township of Alnwick/Haldimand to IT Managed Services, will serve to off-set this levy investment.

### **Risk Considerations**

The risk in not moving forward with this position is that the identified issues of service levels, coverage, business continuity, security, and cross-training will remain unresolved, and capacity to address County and partner requirements will become increasingly stretched.

### **Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners**

Strengthening IT Department capacity will support strengthened IT service delivery for member municipal IT Managed Service partners.

### **Included in 2023 Long Term Plan: YES/NO**

No.



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## 2025 Issue Paper

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### Information Management Strategy

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this issue paper is to seek approval for one-time funding to support the development of an information management strategy.

#### **Background**

In 2022, the County transitioned the records management portfolio from the Corporate Services Department to the Information Technology Department and recruited an Information Management Coordinator to oversee a broad Information Management program for the organization.

Recognizing information as a vital strategic asset – critical for cost containment, client service, and strategic decision-making – the County seeks to develop a comprehensive Information Management Strategy to guide the development of a robust, modern, and effective information management program.

This strategy will assess the County's records and information management program and practices using the industry standard Information Governance Maturity Model, ensuring strategic governance and management of the County's information assets.

This initiative aligns with the County's Community Strategic Plan through Pillar 1 – Innovate for Service Excellence, helping the County to achieve its commitment to design an Open Government Framework to maximize digital and data resources. An effective Information Management program will also improve collaboration, identify opportunities to maximize the use of information assets for more efficient and effective service delivery, and enhance the County's transparency and accountability.

#### **Consultation/Options**

This recommendation has been informed by the County's research into best practices for municipal information management leadership, participation in intermunicipal records and information management groups, and membership in the Association of Records



Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International, an association for information professionals and the creator of the Information Governance Maturity Model.

## **Financial Impact**

The development of the Information Management Strategy will require one-time levy funding of \$50,000 in the year 2025.

## **Risk Considerations**

An information management strategy will help ensure that the County can meet legal and regulatory obligations with respect to information management, including those related to access to information, protection of privacy, and the retention and disposition of records.

The strategy will also ensure that the County is positioned to capitalize on opportunities to streamline processes, reduce costs, improve service, and engage in open government and business transformation initiatives.

## **Impacts to Member Municipalities/Partners**

An Information Management Strategy will provide for enhanced collaboration, transparency, and consistency, and will create a framework that can be leveraged by member municipalities

## **Included in 2023 Long Term Plan: YES/NO**

No, an Information Management Strategy was not previously built into the County's long-term financial plans.