

Welcome And Guest Introductions

Julia McIlroy 0:04

Hi everyone and welcome to NASPO's Pulse, the podcast that focuses on current topics in public procurement. I'm your host, Julia McIlroy. Today I'm excited to say we have two guests from the great state of Utah. Windy a pirate is Utah's CPO and Alan Fuller is Utah's CIO. We'll discuss the special relationship between these two critical state agencies and how Windy and Alan make it work. Hi Alan. Hi Windy. Welcome to Pulse. Hi Julia.

Alan Fuller 0:36

Hi, Julia. Thank you.

Julia McIlroy 0:38

So let's start with some background information. What led you to work for the state of Utah? Windy, let's start with you.

Windy Aphayrath 0:46

So I've been in this role for about um four and a half years now. And what drives a lot of career changes for people is is sort of what drove me over to the public sector coming from corporate procurement, which is a different change of pace. Young family, missed seeing them, spent a lot of time on the road in the private sector, and uh the public sector was a new challenge and a new opportunity, and just kind of moved up through through the ranks here. That's great.

Julia McIlroy 1:22

It sounds like it was a perfect fit for you. And Alan?

Alan Fuller 1:26

Julie, I came from a technology background. I was working for 21 years at Oracle Corporation in a variety of product management and internal IT roles. Basically, a miracle occurred that brought me to the state. And I've been with the state uh about five and a half years. And my position is an appointed position. So uh through a through a mutual relationship, Governor Cox reached out and tapped me and asked me if I would take the position to help uh lead the IT organization for the state.

Why They Chose Public Service

Julia McIlroy 2:02

That's great, Alan. I'm sure they're very happy you're there. So when it comes to IT procurement, what does a strong CPO CIO strategy look like? Where do procurement and technology need to be aligned from the very beginning? We talk to each other.

Windy Aphayrath 2:20

Um I think there's there's so much value in the transparency between our organizations, but also the openness and approaching it through a collaborative effort and really understanding that we have the same mission to to deliver what we need, uh, what the agencies need, both the right way and with consideration for you know safety, security, and and helping to support those agencies in their missions.

Alan Fuller 2:53

Yeah, that's right. I I think, first of all, technology is now a kind of a foundational, fundamental part of every agency's business that they're transacting. And so because it's so foundational to the business, there there is a need to frequently procure new technology. And so we need a process that is uh fair, transparent, open. And unfortunately, we live in a litigious society, so we have to have rules and safeguards. And so for Windy and I, I think we've we've both realized that uh we need to work together uh to be successful in this space and and to help our agency partners to get the technology acquired or procured that they need, but also to do it in a way that that uh is in the state's best interest long term. So Windy and I meet frequently, uh not just around like a given procurement, but we meet regularly on a scheduled basis. And it's not at all unusual for me to pick up the phone and call Windy and say, hey, um, I've got a situation over here at this agency. We're looking to uh, you know, here's what's going on. They need to procure something for this type of business problem. And I'll I'll look for guidance from Windy on how we should proceed. And and often she can bring options to the table that I wasn't even aware of. And then on on the other side of the coin, when we're in the when uh when our teams are working with agencies, we have a we have a process that uh if if a procurement comes up and her procurement officer at an agency becomes aware of it, and it's a technology procurement, they will bring it to the technology team and make sure it goes through through our our process of review as well. And likewise, if our technology, our IT directors or our technology people at an agency are uh you know are working on a procurement, we insist, and we're working on this process to make sure they bring in the procurement people so that our teams are also working together. So we've tried hard to build a culture of working together uh with the technology purchases and procurement. And I and I will say, and and I know Windy will back me up on this, we there there is sometimes some tension. We don't always uh agree on the path forward or the way things should go. But I think the important thing is

we're we're committed to sitting down together and working through those things and and having kind of a process and flow to do that is really helpful.

Windy Aphayrath 5:37

Yeah, and then just to add to that, um Alan and I definitely do not always agree. And um, and there it's okay to be transparent about that because you know we've got different backgrounds, different um perspectives and whatnot. Well, one of the things that I really appreciated is our ability to kind of keep it all on the table, right? It doesn't affect anything outside. If we have a disagreement, if we don't see eye to eye on one specific um issue or or whatnot that arises, we're gonna talk that through. There may be a little bit of tension as related to that, and then we move on, right? Once that we figure out how we resolve that, we move on. Nobody's holding on to that because we've got other things to do. And and that I think has really helped in that collaborative relationship, because once we can kind of close the door on something that we've been able to, however we get there, you know, we once once we can say that that's resolved, even if we're not necessarily both in agreement as to exactly the way that it went, but it it got it got both of us to that end goal, we kind of say, okay, let's move on. We definitely engage each other's teams as early as possible, uh, so that so that we all have the right people at the table. So we're not holding things up further down the line as well.

Building Alignment Between CPO And CIO

Julia McIlroy 7:06

You know, it's clear that both of you and your departments are mission-driven and that you care very much about the relationship, being transparent, and collaborating, which is great. So, Alan, the average state CIO's tenure is approximately 30 months. I remember when I went to a NASIO conference and heard that, I was quite surprised. So, how do you build the kind of long-term CIO-CPO partnership, an IT procurement strategy that can survive leadership transitions?

Alan Fuller 7:42

You know, that number is a little scary. And by the way, that's that number is up. It got as low as I think 24 months a couple years ago. Uh, we do see a lot of turnover in the state CIO ranks, and we're just coming into a year here uh coming up in November, where I think we have 35 gubernatorial elections. And when a governor changes, typically the CIO changes too. Not always, but uh frequently. So it's likely that that CIO tenure uh number is gonna go down uh with a with a lot of changing CIOs here uh over the next year. So, how do we how do we build for long term? Well, uh I I think another data point uh on the negative side of the ledger is that the budget cycles are so long. So when you're when you're mixing a short

tenure of a state CIO, a long budget cycle, and often long procurement cycles, you're kind of setting setting up the organization for a problem just with those kind of facts of life. And so I think what we have to do to be successful is to build relationships with the team and and build a culture uh of working together. Because even you know, when when I eventually leave or when Windy eventually leaves, our team still need to be working together, right? And so it's it's not just about one person, it's not just about me, for example, but it's about uh it's about putting in place an organization and a process so that we have a smooth transition from one leader to the next. I also think, you know, I want to say that this is an area where purchasing really helps IT is in kind of that longer view because we're we're always on the technology side, we're always under pressure to move fast. And uh, you know, we're always looking to buy the next technology or build something new. Or and and yet uh Windy and I have been through this together a couple of times now, where we've also seen kind of a cycle come where a vendor has come in and not delivered on their promise or not delivered on their contractual obligations. And so then we've been in a situation where as a state we've we're now like, okay, uh, how are we going to handle this? And then having those protections put in place by purchasing up front, you know, we don't want things to go to litigation or something like that, but sometimes in the real world they do. And when they do go to litigation, or when we do, I like to say when we have to get the lawyers involved, we have a strong ally in our purchasing department and in the rules, the legal uh uh contracts that they've put in place, the way we handle the contract up front, all of those things start to really matter a lot.

Windy Aphayrath 10:50

I think something that we we really have tried to spend a lot of time on um is something that that Alan did call out, which is which is the culture piece, right? We're not we're not all gonna be here forever and trying to figure out how we can build a culture where this is the norm, not the anomaly, right? Is that our teams work together, is that hey, if this is technology, somebody, you know, on the procurement side, we're gonna have somebody reach out. We're gonna have some contacts on that side, whether that's something specific to an IT term and condition that needs to be really, really narrow in scope for a specific procurement, or if it's about something general related to hosting. I say, and I've I know I've talked to Alan about this before, is that the the procurement team, we may know just enough about technology to be able to call things out, but we also know we're not the experts. We need to know who to reach out to, and building out that culture of talking to each other and recognizing that we are each other's resources is a huge, is a huge value. And it's definitely not necessarily something that is common in in government culture, I would say. There's a lot of times where and and Utah used to be one of those where things are really siloed and there was a lot less um collaboration.

Julia McIlroy 12:31

Well, it sounds like both of you have made an effort to build a strong foundation for both of your teams that and as we know, secession planning is probably a big part of that. But when it comes a time where one of you are not in your position anymore, uh you still have that excellent foundation to rely on. I'm happy to report that uh the governor position in the state of Utah is not up for election this year. So at least for a time, we'll continue to have Alan in this position, right?

Alan Fuller 13:03

Let's hope. Yeah, Governor Cox is uh has two more years left in his term, and then he but he's announced he will not be running again. So we will have a uh leadership change coming up in two years to manage.

Making The Partnership Survive Turnover

Julia McIlroy 13:15

Okay. So we've already alluded to this, but technology moves incredibly fast while public procurement is designed at least in part to manage risk. How do you balance risk management with the flexibility and speed needed to acquire technology that Utah agencies and ultimately citizens need today?

Alan Fuller 13:36

We have a number of things that I think are helpful in trying to move fast while balancing risk. One is, and and I and I think our purchasing group help put this code in place, but we're we're able to work through things like NASPO contracts or state cooperative contracts. Um, you know, personally, I hate the RFP process. I feel like it's long and painful and often doesn't yield results that are best in the best interest of the state. I also know the vendors uh have a hard time with the cost and burden of the RFP process. And yet sometimes we do still do need to do an RFP process. Um, we also try to, so we try to um, one of the ways that we try to work together is to say, okay, well, you know, is there a state cooperative contract? Is there a NASPO contract that can come into play to help us uh solve a potential problem? And that helps helps speed us up a lot. We still want to be fair and competitive and and open and everything like that, but uh, if we can reduce the the time spent in in getting to the right answer, that really helps. We also want to be flexible in ways like doing some sometimes we can do a pilot of technology or we can work out a way to to to uh to test some uh some given technology before we have to go all the way to a full production deployment.

Windy Aphayrath 15:04

And and I think I would add to that also is is earlier engagement, right, to try to make all of this move faster. Is Alan mentioned it earlier around um if if procurement hears about something, so if somebody on my team hears about something that they're as they're working on uh projects with their agency that may have a technology component, they're reaching out to the IT group. The IT team, if they're hearing about something that may need to be a procurement, they're reaching out to the uh to the purchasing team. So that way we're we're at the table as early as possible. And we're you know, we're raising our hands to say, hang on, do we have the right people at the table to consider things that that we need to be considering up front? Like, you know, like the risks, or are there already is there already something that the state owns that can that can meet this business need? Are there cooperative contracts, whether that's at, you know, through one of our DASPO value point agreements, through a a state cooperative contract, or or is this something that we have to explore a little bit deeper? And you know, we have different procurement options that uh that do allow for our IT group to do things like the trial use to see if to see if they can actually make it work. Uh things like that that actually uh can expedite it's uh I'm obviously super shocked to hear Alan hates RFPs because one would never hear that from a CIO. Never. But um no, he's he's pretty transparent with that, uh, with that for me. But we do try to look at options and in a lot of in a lot of ways, uh, if there's no conversation with the procurement side, the technology folks aren't gonna necessarily know what other options that there are. And and sometimes it isn't a full-on RFP, and there are other options that are gonna expedite the process. But if somebody's trying to circumvent that or somebody's trying to figure out how to not have to run a procurement, sometimes figuring out what options procurement has for you actually is gonna be a much, much shorter process and much easier conversation than than you think it's going to be. You just kind of got to give it a chance.

Julia McIlroy 17:22

I completely agree. And yes, Alan, I've heard that from a few end users in my former life as a director of contracts and purchasing services. I tried to make it as painless as possible. And actually, because I was in such a small department, I looked to cooperatives as not just a time saver, but also to expedite things. So, but there are times we have to do an RFP, and I loved doing them.

Alan Fuller 17:48

Well, let me add to let me add to that that we are uh I personally and my team, my organization, we are 100% committed to following the purchasing guidelines and the purchasing frameworks and rules that are put in place. We know those are there for our safety and benefit and for the good of the state, right? So I don't mean to to say that uh I I

think they're necessary. I think what what is important and Windy often helps me with this is in some cases it's like, hey, we really what we really need is to find out what's out there in the market, and then purchasing has guided us towards doing an RFI, a request for information. And you know, and then it turns out um that that opens up some options for us, and we continue to work with purchasing throughout the whole process, and and that helps uh that helps us stay within a safe framework and it and uh it gives us the guidance of purchasing all the way along. So that it helps if we're working together.

Windy Aphayrath 18:44

And and can I chime in right here? Uh I will say that that little um, you know, Alan kind of coming back to say, hey, we all recognize Alan, it's okay. I know that RFPs are not your favorite thing, but what I really appreciate about Alan coming back with um with what he just said is the advocacy on his part of supporting uh the procurement process and recognizing that we're not trying to make it more difficult. What we're trying to do is some sometimes it's a protect protect the state from itself, right? Protect an agency from itself because we're we're just trying to make sure that we're doing doing it the right way and that we're being fair and open, transparent. Things that are being done above board. And that's why those conversations matter. And so Alan's advocacy for us around, hey, look, we may not love these, but we are committed to doing the right thing to get to a solution that's going to meet the needs. That's that's of huge value for us as a state and as a procurement/slash IT team here, because we have to walk into these conversations with the agencies, and we have to walk in as a united front, understanding that we're also uh their partners to uh to get them what they need.

Julia McIlroy 20:10

You know, absolutely. And actually, the catalyst, the brainchild for this podcast was when I attended a NASIO conference last year. And uh, whenever procurement came up, there was always kind of a groan from both the suppliers and the CIOs. And I thought, wow, there's a real opportunity here to uh figure out what folks need and how to improve the process. Because as you said, we're expending public dollars and we have to do it in a certain way. So, how can we uh uh uh understand each other's needs better and uh ultimately strengthen the relationship?

Staying Fair Without Slowing Innovation

Julia McIlroy 20:50

So it's a good uh segue into uh speaking about transparency and fairness, which are both foundational principles of public procurement. How can Utah maintain those principles

while also avoiding processes that unintentionally slow down innovation or make it difficult for agencies to adopt new technology?

Windy Aphayrath 21:11

Just in talking about transparency and fairness, it's its cornerstones of the public procurement process, right? And and it is something that we have to keep at top of mind when we look across any industry, any procurement, and and this kind of goes back to what we talked about earlier around trying to do this right. We want to give everybody a fair opportunity. Sometimes in the space of technology, people get really excited when something new and shiny and sparkly comes up. There's a meeting, there's a phone call, there's a hey, we already know what we want, right? And and that's you know, before hopefully before we get to that point, we can pull in the IT. Group or vice versa, and we can kind of have the conversation of we understand what you want. Let's talk about what you actually need. Right? And a lot of the ways that we have tried to approach this is driving home the, well, what do you need? Now we're not on the technology side, so let's make sure that we've got the right technology people, and then let's explore what the needs are, and and we can help guide that process as best as possible. But there's definitely a huge, huge component to all of this in bringing in the right IT people to help drive that conversation who are at that table and who are aligned with with Alan in the strategy of, hey, yes, we know that uh new technology is coming, but we don't want to stand in the way of adoption or exploration, even. So, what are our options to get something on board that we can try or that we can evaluate or or whatnot? What's the shortest path to get there? But also understanding what's the longer term goal, right? That's kind of how we have to approach it from the procurement side. Because do you do a trial use and then have to go out for RFP? Or and and in statutes in the state of Utah, we've got a very short timeline on what a trial use uh contract can be. And it cannot be a sole source after that. It has to be a competitive procurement after that. So perhaps we don't want to go that path and we're gonna guide and say, you know what, let's just do an RFP up front and see. And then let's have a renewal option a couple of years down the road to see if you still want it. If you don't, you let the you let the contract end. But these are options that we want to talk to the IT experts about as well, so that they can really help to guide on the technology side what may make more sense and also wrap it into what's the overarching technology strategy for that agency, for the state as a whole, because that's not our role, right? Our role is to make sure that we're we're kind of keeping things in mind and pulling the right people to the table, but also trying to think through not just the right now, but what's going to happen in in two years, in five years, in ten years.

Tech Risk And A Real AI Example

Julia McIlroy 24:31

So software is no longer a commodity purchase. It can affect security, data, operations, and the citizen's experience. How are the CIO and CPO thinking differently about evaluating technology risk? And where does that shared responsibility begin and end?

Alan Fuller 24:50

I'll maybe highlight my answer with a real use case that we made that we dealt with. We had an agency that wanted to buy some software, and oh, guess what? It was an AI tool that they had developed. And it used data, but then uh we have a process to review uh technology purchases uh for a number of uh security, uh, you know, security and other things. And you know what we found is that this application had uh HIPAA data for those in the government will know that health data has very specific requirements around it. It also had sieges data, criminal justice data. It had loads of personally identifiable information. And so those who are familiar with these government types are saying, like, oh, well, of course, this any software that has all this highly confidential uh protected data would surely have a lot of um um controls and safety and uh you know, FedRAMP certification or government certification. And the answer is no, it didn't have any of those safety certifications. So in our review, we you know we we paused or rejected the software and said, hey, you you need to buy, if you're going to buy software that is that has all of this highly confidential data with uh requirements around how that data is treated, you know, this you need to have these software uh reviews and structures in place. And of course, the agency uh felt like we were saying, oh, you're just being bureaucratic, you're just saying no. And and you know, we weren't being bureaucratic. We were trying to uh protect the state's interests. And, you know, in fact, in speaking with the governor and his chief of staff about this particular incident, they were certainly very much on the side of like, why would some agency be making some risky decision like this? They need to get on board with uh the rules, right? And so this is where um I think it's also important for IT and the procurement team, the purchasing team to work together because there are there are procurement rules, or you know, did we do this procurement in a way that was fair, open, transparent, all the principles uh of procuring something that are important? But then there's also now additional rules, if you will, that that we have to bring to the table from a uh governance perspective on the technology side to say, is this software secure with with people's data? Does this software create a risk for the the state overall? And so we it's important that we work together to uh evaluate and manage those risks as a team.

Windy Aphayrath 27:44

And to add to what Ellen's saying as well, uh one of the things that is really beneficial in Utah is that we are a centralized procurement unit, but IT is also fair centralized, right? Executive branch agencies must go through, go through both of us for for the relevant uh needs that we've got oversight for. And one of the hugely valuable things that we can we can also do is we can hit pause, right? We can hit pause on either side as we're going through things, as we're going through the procurement process, we can hit pause and say, hang on, let's make sure we've got IT at the table to review some of these things. Security, when we're talking about things like HIPAA and CGIS data, that's that's huge. The data risk there is enormous, right? We want to make sure that we're really well aligned on that. And then um on the flip side, once we're kind of through the procurement during the procurement process, if there's a concern with a response during evaluation, if there's something that comes up in like a vendor presentation or something like that, we've got the right IT experts there to be able to kind of say, hold on, pause, we need some more clarification here. But then into the contracting space, we can make sure as well that, hey, is IT all on board on everything that's coming in through this contract? Are they protecting our data? Is the cybersecurity right? So it really is that partnership of kind of this passing it back and forth to say, do we have the right oversight and are we really uh considering all the necessary uh all the necessary concerns and and risks for for the state as a whole?

What The Partnership Looks Like Daily

Julia McIlroy 29:28

So you've both made a commitment to work together, as we've discussed, rather than operating in separate lanes. So, what does that partnership look like in practice? And how does having the CPO and the CIO at the table together change the outcome of an IT procurement?

Alan Fuller 29:46

So, well, well, first of all, we meet together regularly. Um, we sit down, what is it, Windy, every three weeks or at least once a month?

Windy Aphayrath 29:53

Uh yeah, we try to do, I think, every every two to three weeks. And we do one of the things I will appreciate is that we both have prioritized these meetings to make sure that we do have that if we're traveling or whatnot, we try to get things rescheduled.

Alan Fuller 30:08

So we sit down together and talk on a regular basis. And that's kind of our formal touch-base time, but be even between those times, we don't hesitate to reach out to each other.

We've also tried to build relationships with our teams. Uh, my uh Windy also feels comfortable talking with my deputies. And uh, you know, we have a project that we're working on with uh with Windy and her team where we've uh helped uh move to a contract system into place. That that project didn't go as smoothly as we would have liked, but we're working together to resolve the issues with that. And and so it's we're we're trying to build uh ties within the organization as well. And I I think frequent communication and uh and just kind of a commitment to that, uh to continuing that communication has been a big help. What else, Windy?

Windy Aphayrath 30:59

Um, I would I would also say helping to facilitate the the conversations between our teams. We're not necessarily just an escalation path for us to come in and you know, for somebody to say, hey, I need you to go fix this. Will you go talk to Alan and and tell him to, you know, have his people get out of our way or uh or vice versa, right? It's it's about facilitating the conversations between them so that they can also resolve whatever may be going on. And I think that's something to be um to be considered as well, because that's part of establishing that culture of hey, we may not agree, but let's make sure that we're we're continuing to foster this culture of working together.

Julia McIlroy 31:47

So at the end of the day, the goal isn't just to buy technology, it's to deliver better services to the citizens of Utah. How do you keep them at the center of procurement and technology's decisions, particularly when you're balancing cost, risk, compliance, speed, and innovation?

Windy Aphayrath 32:06

At the end of the day, the technology that is delivered to agencies, to the end citizens, the way that we get that technology, it's all intermingled. We have to make sure that we're not only getting the best technology that we're able to for the needs, but that we're doing it the right way with the considerations around both cost and what the services actually are. And when we do it in partnership between procurement and IT, it makes it so that both components are prioritized, that we're thinking about both did we make sure that we're doing it right as we are the stewards of the public funding, in addition to our is the technology right? Right? We're we're each gonna approach this from our area of expertise, you know, with our teams coming to the table with what they've got and what they know, so that way jointly we can have that uh top of mind to really rely on each other and make sure that we are thinking about all those particular points.

Alan Fuller 33:21

I think every purchasing process really needs to have the best interests of the citizens of Utah in mind. We we try to keep a long-term perspective there as well. There's we run into these situations sometimes in working with an agency where, hey, somebody's you know, brother-in-law has this um AI startup and they can do really great things for the state. And usually not. Usually it's more um, we need something enterprise and something that will scale and be secure. And so we we always want to follow our procurement practices to make sure that we've done a uh an open, balanced, uh fair process to try to weigh these things. You know, first of all, we want to get great technology to to help solve business problems, but also balancing, you know, the cost, the risk, uh balancing the the uh all of the factors that come into play for these purchases. So I think it's important that uh procurement and the IT team work together to get that balance right.

AI Procurement And The Promise Peril

Julia McIlroy 34:35

And then there's AI, which is changing the technology landscape in an extraordinary pace. How is AI changing the conversation between Utah's CIO and CPO? From what the state buys to how it evaluates suppliers to how quickly it needs to move. And what does this partnership need to look like five years from now?

Windy Aphayrath 34:58

AI, it's everybody's best and worst friend right now, right? And from the CPO perspective, I would say uh every conversation that Alan and I sit down and have together, AI is woven in there in some way, shape, or form. We have to pay attention to what's out there as far as you know, what's going on in the media, the as you called it out, just the speed at which things are changing just on a day-to-day. And and it's one of those things that we both at the strategic level as well as rolling it down into our teams and have having them think things through, is are we considering all of the different aspects? From I'm I'm gonna let Alan answer on the on the CIO and the technology side. From the from the procurement side and the contracting side, I'm going to to give an example of like the NASPAL value point cloud contracts, for example. We've just uh we've just kind of been wrapping up uh executing some of those Last Master agreements. I know a lot of a lot of states and and other entities are working through their participating addendums there, but there are things that we have to we have had to adjust and reconsider in our terms and conditions with those contracts that 10 years ago when the last version, the last iteration of these contracts were put into place, the technology didn't exist. Right? And and now we're having to look at things that are a right now, but we're really having to also keep in mind the future aspects of these contracts because of just what we've experienced in the this last 10 years, because

the terms and conditions that were in the contracts that were put into place 10 years ago coming up to now, there are terms and conditions that have no applicability to some of the technology. Uh, some of that technology's gone obsolete and new technologies come into place where none of our terms actually really work to protect any of the public entities. And from the procurement side, that's something that we really have to work closely with the technology group on to make sure that contracting-wise, we are aligned and we understand what those risks are, because we need to make sure that we are identifying how we can either currently mitigate or plan to mitigate in the future.

Julia McIlroy 37:50

And especially when it comes to AI, it's so hard to think of five years from now. Really, we're looking at five months from now, what is it going to look like, right? And so what should the what terms and conditions should the contract have, etc.

Alan Fuller 38:03

So artificial intelligence is a generational change in the technology space. And it's kind of interesting, just in the last couple of weeks, there's been some pretty amazing things happening in AI space where the CEOs of leading uh AI companies like uh Dario Amodei from Anthropic and Sam Altman from um OpenAI have come out publicly making statements about the need for greater regulation with AI. Just Monday of this week, uh our Utah governor, Governor Cox, put out a statement, uh, an open letter, uh calling for the federal government to step in and regulate and calling for AI companies to be careful with the development of their frontier AI models. And so um I don't recall things happening like this with technology in the past, where uh it's really now a part of the political discourse for our country, uh what's uh the the pace and the development of this technology. So so that you know, when you boil down to like what we're doing here on the ground uh for for Windy and I, for purchasing and for IT in the state of Utah, we we want to be uh we want to be open-minded, we want to be proactive, we want to help the state make good and wise choices. Um, but also a part of this conversation is kind of the dark side of AI, which is these advanced AI models like Mythos and GPT-5.5 and other models that are out there, so-called frontier AI models, they're extraordinarily good at finding and exploiting, exploiting in an automated way, finding vulnerabilities and exploiting those vulnerabilities in an automated way. And so um we we have to um defend our enterprise aggressively, and the cybersecurity risks today are much higher and bigger than cybersecurity risks were six months ago or for sure more than a year ago. And so we have to really lean in together to help uh protect the state, to defend the state from the risk that AI brings, but also uh help take advantage of the benefits that AI can bring. And we've had, I think, over a hundred different AI projects go live in the state. We've had uh we've rolled out uh Google's Gemini

AI to all of our state employees, and we're seeing you know tens of thousands of hours of productivity gained through these tools. And so we have to kind of balance the promise and the peril.

Julia McIlroy 41:08

Well said, Alan. I like that idea of the promise and the peril, and balancing both of those. Alan, Windy, thanks so much for joining me today. It's been a pleasure spending time with you, and I appreciate this valuable conversation. Thank you, Julia. It's been great.

Alan Fuller 41:32

Thank you, Julia, really appreciate it.

Final Takeaways And Sign Off

Julia McIlroy 41:35

Until next time, keep asking questions, improving processes, and moving procurement forward. And remember, we work in the sunshine. Bye for now.