



Transforming Service Delivery: TIME TO FOCUS ON PEOPLE, NOT PROGRAMS

Enhancing Efficiency and Improving Service Delivery

For many governments, improving citizen services remains a top priority. Balancing the fiscal challenges that still face these jurisdictions impairs their ability to accomplish this goal. As new technology finally catches up to the vision of improved government service delivery, new opportunities to improve service, meet social responsibility and deliver on cost savings objectives may be closer than imagined.

Today's silo-based labor, health, human services, social security, and veterans benefits IT systems — and associated business processes — are rooted in strategies, legislation, funding models and IT developments that are universally program-centric. These systems and associated processes are the product of legacy computing myopia, inflexibility and parochial federal grant funding. Federal guidelines have prohibited states from utilizing program-specific earmarks across the entire social enterprise.

"Until recently, social enterprises were really building solutions that fit the need of the individual program for that particular time," said Amy Santenello, senior research analyst with the Gartner Group. "However, as the requirements of the citizens evolved and government mandates grew increasingly complex, existing social enterprises needed to adapt to the changing environment in order to become more citizen-

centric." This program-driven delivery model resulted in poor service for citizens and high delivery cost for taxpayers.

"The cost of delivering human services is a major problem for many states," said Cathilea Robinett, executive director of the Center for Digital Government. "Because most human service programs have been established, funded and managed separately, up to this point, states have not been able to combine program processes and systems to reduce costs in order to deliver better services to citizens. An integrated approach to eligibility determination could reduce the cost of operating human services programs, simplify business processes and improve the quality of service delivery."

Service delivery models typically contain many redundant processes. This duplication is very costly and results in inconsistent decisions. Silo-based systems require that each applicant register through separate systems to qualify for benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), food stamps and child care, even within a single agency. This redundancy is compounded by the fact that citizens may apply for a range of benefits and services not only within an agency, but also across organizational boundaries. The 2004 California Performance Review finds that eligibility determination of benefits for the state's three

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major assistance programs costs counties between \$308 and \$439 per individual applicant. These costs are incurred each time circumstances change for the citizen or the household, resulting in regular, expensive case reassessments.

The Cost of Disparity?

The secret to success is to think globally, but act locally. Too many IT infrastructure investments are massive, impersonal initiatives whose value is not immediately apparent to individual citizens and employers. As states have rolled out programs to automate their systems, the programs have become the center — and the citizen has been depersonalized, existing only as a series of disconnected case numbers in disparate, complex IT systems. Additionally program-centric systems have failed to consider the requirements of the caseworker, who is forced to navigate a maze of IT systems to obtain a complete picture of his or her customer.

Drilling down on the challenges of disparate IT social enterprise management approaches reveals complexity, redundancy and functionality shortfalls both among and within labor, health, human services and veterans benefit systems. We have already talked about the human costs in terms of poor citizen service and caseworker productivity. These challenges impact government directly. However, if you peel back the onion, a host of “mechanical” shortcomings conspire to subvert the quality of customer service, multiply IT overhead costs and limit the state’s flexibility to meet changing local and federal requirements.

The structure of program-specific IT systems, as well as rigid program and organizational boundaries, requires governments to re-engineer their installed, legacy, siloed social services systems to increase efficiency and flexibility to adapt to future requirements. By modernizing social infrastructure, states can increase the quality of service to their customers, enhance operating efficiencies, and importantly, identify fraud to ensure that every penny goes to support those who need support most.

Social Enterprise Management: Bringing the Customer Into Focus

Rather than fear change, forward-thinking governments are focusing on improving the quality of their social infrastructure as a strategic imperative to improve service delivery and cut costs. Throughout the world, innovative governments and state agencies are embracing new Social Enterprise Management (SEM) models to implement integrated service delivery models focused on achieving client outcomes. This new approach can deliver better service and help transform recipients into contributors. Many social enterprises also strive to transform service delivery by focusing on the people they serve, not the programs they administer.

SEM is a business model made possible by a new generation of integrated commercial-off-the-shelf (COTS) software designed to support the unique requirements of labor, health, human services, social security and veterans benefits programs. Built by program experts for professional caseworkers and engineered for IT, SEM provides functional capabilities to support caseworker requirements while



streamlining IT administration. SEM provides governments with a platform to break their dependence on silo-based, expensive and inflexible IT systems. For the first time, SEM empowers organizations to obtain their goal of an outcome-based approach that addresses the individual and family in totality.

Perhaps most powerfully, SEM provides a COTS platform for states to reinvent their service delivery approach. Because states can implement an SEM approach in any program modernization initiative — labor, human services, etc. — jurisdictions can transition incrementally to manage the social enterprise as one cohesive entity, rather than as a series of disconnected silos. This approach empowers states to serve citizens as people — not numbers — across multiple programs.

Importantly SEM provides for business process transparency across programs. Considering eligibility processing, SEM empowers citizens to submit a single application for one program and use the same information from that form when applying for other programs. In addition to driving significant increases in service levels, this approach promises to save states millions of dollars in redundant eligibility processing. Returning to the eligibility processing figures in the 2004 California Performance Review, an SEM approach can slash eligibility costs to a fraction of the estimated \$300-\$400 per application. Further, by empowering states to develop a single customer record within and across programs, SEM empowers states to reduce the cost of eligibility processing and cut the total number of applications they need to process. The cost savings associated with this

fundamental change even dwarf the cost savings in the California Performance Review model.

Considering the value proposition from the caseworker perspective, SEM significantly enhances productivity and job satisfaction. As SEM consolidates customer records and streamlines workflow, caseworkers no longer need to chase down multiple files to get a clear picture of the customer and juggle thousands of complex rules per program. Instead, these professionals are empowered to listen to the customer and driven to achieve desired client outcomes.

SEM in Action: New York, Louisiana and Utah

Innovative state governments in New York, Louisiana and Utah are embracing SEM to improve social program service delivery. In 2001, Utah undertook its largest information technology and business process re-engineering project, called the electronic Resource & Eligibility Product (eREP). An enterprise automation project, eREP integrates eligibility and calculation of benefits for TANF, food stamps, Medicaid, child care and other social programs. The program embraces an enterprise approach to service delivery, where the individual and family are the focus of all business processes regardless of program or delivery agency boundaries.

“Cúram’s Social Enterprise Management approach was consistent with the state’s vision for a comprehensive, fully integrated eligibility and benefits system,” said Gregory B. Gardner, director of administrative support with the Utah Department of Workforce Services. “Technology is finally catching up to the service delivery model envisioned by the state.

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“eREP allows us to promote and preserve agency cultures, but also exploit commonalities across agencies to drive operational efficiencies and increase service levels,” said Gardner. “eREP integrates systems from the Department of Workforce Services, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Health. The SEM approach delivers a scalable, expandable enterprise eligibility-related solution across agencies.”

“States are not only modernizing their IT infrastructure, but also reinventing their approach to providing service to citizens,” said Santenello at Gartner Group. “The goal is to demonstrate that enterprise management and integration is a viable option.”

Cúram Software: Making Social Enterprise Management a Reality

Ronan Rooney, Cúram’s chief technology officer, spent 15 years as a caseworker for the Department of Social Welfare in Dublin, Ireland. Based on that experience, he cofounded Cúram Software to give social enterprises tools to transform their business from one of program delivery to targeted citizen outcomes.

“In the U.S. and around the world, service delivery and program administration have not changed very much in 60 or 70 years,” explained Rooney. “We identified that as an issue and an opportunity. The SEM model is designed exclusively around addressing the needs and requirements of social enterprises. Our goal is to defeat IT complexity and return decision-making power to agency administrators.

“Outdated and inefficient technologies chew through budgets, while providing minimal client-centered service,” Rooney observed. “Program dollars often are spent

on maintaining the old systems instead of providing clients with programs they need to become contributing members of society. Cúram’s SEM-based solution combines business and technology to help agencies focus on their clients instead of their machines.”

In addition to providing cohesive infrastructure functionality, Cúram solutions provide advanced application modules to support specific program requirements. Cúram’s automated application modules guide caseworkers through the eligibility process to enhance productivity and reduce errors. The rules-based approach frees the caseworker from the complex task of eligibility determination. Using Cúram, caseworkers focus on listening to customers and driving successful outcomes rather than on the intricacies of administration — driving reduced caseworker training requirements, enhanced job satisfaction and lower staff turnover.

Looking into the crystal ball, the only certainty is change. The quality and efficiency of our social infrastructures will have an increasing impact on governments to deliver essential benefits and services, and maintain required fiscal responsibility. Already embraced by innovative states, SEM offers government the ability to break with the inefficiencies of silo-based, expensive and inflexible program management and administration models. It is time to renew our focus on the customer and recalibrate the benchmarks for success — measuring progress in terms of quality of citizen service as well as cost. “Ultimately the Cúram solution empowers social enterprises to change the way they operate,” said Rooney. “This innovative strategy cuts the cost of delivering services and benefits, and enables agencies to focus on people, not programs.”

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To learn how Cúram Software can help your agency achieve its strategic objectives, contact a Cúram Representative at 1-866-41-CÚRAM or info@curamssoftware.com

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