

BUSINESS PROCESS REDESIGN IN NEW MEXICO



98% timeliness for 30-day applications



Absorbed 39% caseload increase

Client

State of New Mexico, Department of Human Services (DHS)

Timeframe

2006 to 2008

Project Overview

In 2008 and 2009, New Mexico's SNAP caseload increased by 17% and 39%, respectively. SNAP error rates were also increasing, and the state was penalized by FNS in 2008. At the same time, DHS faced a staff shortage and a 57% turnover rate, but was unable to fill vacant positions due to a hiring freeze. Multiple categories of food, cash, and medical assistance types created additional work for staff and required them to multitask. DHS was also operating with a 25-year-old, paper-based eligibility system that lacked sufficient interfaces and data collection capabilities for efficient case processing.

New Mexico embarked on an effort to modernize the delivery of human services and public assistance programs. At the core of their modernization effort was a commitment to reengineer their processes and business practices. DHS selected Change & Innovation Agency (C!A®) to help design, develop, and deploy new eligibility and enrollment practices for its public assistance programs in an effort to realize process efficiencies. As such, C!A proposed solutions identified as part of an agency-wide redesign effort to bring improvements and increase efficiency.

Tasks

In conjunction with DHS staff and leadership, C!A analyzed the agency's most important eligibility practices to determine different strategies for processing the work. A Business Process Redesign effort consisting of eligibility line staff, team supervisors, office managers, and policy and administrative staff followed a structured approach for identifying opportunities and devising a new set of business practices. Every step and interaction was focused on evaluating the processes and systems in which staff do the eligibility work and developing/implementing a plan to bring improvements and increased efficiency. The major tasks performed during the lifecycle of the project included:

- + Assessment of local office operations and staff
- + Analysis and modification of state policies to ensure better alignment with FNS policy
- + Strategy sessions with leadership to develop a plan of action and approach
- + Redesign teams to create work processes that are faster, more accurate, flexible, and focused on using precious eligibility worker time only on value-added tasks. As-is process mapping was conducted, barriers and bottlenecks were identified, and new processes were developed.
- + Full implementation planning, preparation, rollout support to implement the new processes and business model developed by the redesign team
- + Post-implementation reviews, assessment, and consultation
- + Monitoring and oversight of operations

Outcomes

New Mexico worked with CIA to implement the new service delivery model in its five largest offices, including the four Albuquerque offices, in 2007. The new processes focus on freeing up administrative capacity and improving quality by streamlining the most important eligibility practices and processes: initial applications and interviews; verification and eligibility decisions; and maintenance and re-certification. DHS first tested the model in one pilot office. Outcomes in these five offices included:

- + Timeliness increased from 80% to 98% for 30-day applications; DHS received a bonus from FNS for most improved timeliness
- + The average time to process applications decreased from 20 or more days to 6.2 days
- + Negative accuracy rate improved from 10.2% to 4.5%
- + A 17% denial rate, compared to a 24% statewide average, demonstrating that workers were successfully obtaining verifications at the time of a client's eligibility interview
- + Ability to absorb a 39% caseload increase while shifting staff to support other offices
- + Reduction in office wait times and client complaints
- + Development of standardized documentation to ensure consistency in case processing