

BUSINESS PROCESS REDESIGN IN HAWAII

“When we met C!A, we were in a tailspin. Our caseloads increased by 35 percent, we had a massive reduction in our workforce, we were under a hiring freeze, our timeliness rates were atrocious – in some offices they were down to 28 percent. We had no resources to meet the increased demand. They came in, calm and peaceful, and gave us control over that chaos. And that office with the abysmal timeliness rates, it’s operating at 98.2 percent.”

Pankaj Bhanot, Director, Benefit, Employment & Support Services Division

Client

State of Hawaii, Department of Human Services (DHS), Benefit, Employment & Support Services Division (BESSD)

Timeframe

Summer 2011 to Present

Project Overview

Hawaii’s economy, which relies heavily on revenue from tourism, was one of the hardest hit by the 2007-2009 recession. The state also boasts one of the most culturally diverse populations in the United States with the highest percentage of Asian Americans and multiracial Americans in the country.

From 2009 to 2011, Hawaii’s public assistance caseload increases ranged from 15% to 115%, depending on program. During this time, the DHS-BESSD staffing level was reduced by 50% due to budget cuts. Consequently, the state was facing sanctions from USDA, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), and a court injunction due to timeliness. As an example, SNAP timeliness in the Maui Section was 29%. In other words, only 29% of applicants were receiving a determination within 30 days.

Hawaii 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.

Tasks

Beginning in the summer of 2011, C!A worked closely with DHS to analyze the agency’s most important eligibility practices to determine different strategies for processing the work. We then implemented the new processes statewide with the support of a custom configured implementation of our workload, workflow, and workforce management solution, PathOS, to assist with ongoing monitoring and management of workload and office performance to ensure continued adherence to the new processes.

The major tasks performed during the lifecycle of the project to date include:

- + Assessment of local office operations and staff
- + Strategy sessions with leadership to develop a plan of action and approach
- + Leading 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.
- + Pilot planning and preparation to implement the new processes and business model developed by the redesign team in the Maui Section. This phase included implementing service strategies needed to ensure a successful statewide rollout of the full model at all local offices. Readiness plans were developed and planning sessions conducted.
- + Full implementation planning and support for rollout statewide of the new processes

- + Working hand-in-hand with state staff to provide daily and ongoing performance monitoring and oversight of operations at the local offices. Our experts worked side-by-side with local leaders co-managing the states' service delivery model. C!A staff:
 - o Provided direction of/support of workflow and staffing decisions to meet cyclical workload demands
 - o Notified leadership of issues, proposed solutions, and supported these solutions, including having an onsite presence in field offices when necessary
- + Statewide implementation of PathOS beginning in August 2013

Outcomes

Before engaging C!A, Hawaii was facing a federal class action lawsuit and penalties for not providing benefits in a timely manner. Due to our redesign of DHS' processes, the state is no longer being sued and avoided federal penalties. DHS-BESSD has also successfully mitigated the effects of increased caseload across all programs and staffing losses of 50%. Additionally, the development of new tools has brought consistency to DHS-BESSD's eligibility work.

The new processes have enabled DHS-BESSD to provide increased access to – and participation in – SNAP while maintaining a high rate of accuracy in the calculation and issuance of SNAP benefits. The agency was also successful in reducing the per case cost to determine SNAP eligibility.

Hawaii has achieved a statewide timeliness rate of 97% (an increase from 67% before process redesign began) and now offers same-day service to seven out of every 10 families who visit an office (previously, families had to wait three months for an initial benefits decision). DHS now provides on-demand interviews and processing at all local offices, as well as for non-lobby work.