Moving Social Service Delivery and Business Transactions

into the 21st Century

Debra S McAlahney-Dodson

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the uncertainty of how the new Administration is planning to realign services and reduce budgets, state and local governments must now expect to deliver mandated services with reduced funding. The delivery of vital services to California cities and counties cannot afford to suffer because of dwindling budgets and hiring freezes.

Creating more program efficiencies within the Welfare to Work (WTW) programs could help save vital services and opportunities that move CalWORK's families toward self-sufficiency. This case study explores creating efficiencies which would:

- Evolve current service delivery via quality enhancements, not by expansion.

- Discover and use advanced and more efficient ways of communicating with customers, other agencies and branches, service providers, and the surrounding communities.

- Provide solutions to create innovative, efficient, and green electronic business processes that, in most cases, can take a document from creation to completion without printing.

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Introduction

The recent budgetary cuts made by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) provided counties with an opportunity to reexamine how efficiently they complete business transactions and how effectively they market, enhance, and deliver their services.[1]

The breakthroughs using cloud and digital technology, along with the blending of social media platforms, have allowed the private business industry to become more efficient while using fewer resources than ever before. Technological innovation has enabled companies to move towards a virtually paperless environment and has cut the time and costs associated with business transactions in half, if not more.

Although the private sector in California, and the world, have benefited by leaps and bounds from the new technologies produced in California, the State of California and local governments have barely started to take advantage of what has been created in their own front yards. Whether not moving forward is due to security concerns, the assumed costs associated with the transition to digital, or a workforce (including management) assumption that business transactions must be in person and on real paper to be valid, county governments are missing an opportunity to better serve their citizens.

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[1] http://www.nextgov.com/technology-news/tech-insider/2017/03/budget-opportunity-redefine-digital-service-delivery/136641/

With the introduction of self-serve websites, social media communication platforms, the newer digital transaction management, and e-signature, local governments need to rethink how they do business. Effective January 1, 2017, CA AB2296 clarified that a digital signature may be used to satisfy the requirements of an electronic signature under the Uniform Electronic Transactions Act.[2] This bill finally sets the record straight and clarifies that e-signatures have a place in the development of "smarter government."

Adopting electronic and digital solutions to create efficiencies, while increasing customer service, should be considered in these uncertain times. With the looming multi-year budget reductions, counties that administer WTW Programs should seize the moment and invest in developing:

- Social-media platforms to enhance communication with their customers and employers who are in partnership with California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) Employment Services (CWES).

- Self-Serve websites that allow customers, employers, and the community access to service information and commonly used forms without having to contact the agency.

- Going paperless, as much as possible, and using Digital Transaction Management (DTM) systems that utilize e-signature software.

- Enhanced service delivery within the WTW programs, specifically within the ESE program.

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[2] Bill Text - AB-2296 Digital signatures. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201520160AB2

Background

In Monterey County, CWES is housed within the Department of Social Services' (MCDSS) and administers the state mandated WTW and CalWORKs Child Care Programs. There are three CWES district offices each located within One-Stop Career Centers that are spread out and serve geographically diverse communities. CWES utilizes the [California Statewide Automated Welfare System (C-IV)](#) for the majority of the data storage, payment tasks, and narrative record keeping for the administration of CalWORKs.

C-IV is a powerful system that is integrated with a paperless filing system where documents can be printed and stored electronically to a customer's case file and, in some instances, without printing. CWES still retains hard copy paper cases and many labor intensive business practices that usually mean printing multiple documents for both the WTW and child care programs.

The goal is for MCDSS to become more efficient, evolve, and move many processes forward into the 21st century, especially in CWES.

Santa Clara County Design:

Santa Clara County (SCC) CWES administers the WTW program and is housed within the SCC [Department of Employment and Benefit Services (DEBS)](#). Among the many program services CWES offers, the agency also manages both the ESE program and the WTW Job Search component. SCC CWES manages the majority of ESE business and data collection transactions. The structure utilizes three different electronic data software systems; (1) an automated data tracking software called CalWIN, (2) a home-grown CalWIN slave system for collecting additional data, called the SCC Sub-System, and (3) DocuSign©; a DTM and e-signature

software to conduct business. The SCC CWES has established three distinct tiers within the ESE program.

Tier 1 – The Employment Connection WORKS (EC WORKS) Program was started in 2013 and places CWES customers in full-time employment positions from three (3) to six (6) months. These customers usually have work skills but have been out of the workforce for awhile and need to reestablish a marketable history. Customers are hired by private employers who receive a 100% wage reimbursement as an incentive to hire and retain. All employer contracts and invoice submissions, including additional verification documents, are completed using DocuSign©.

Tier 2 – The Paid Work Experience program was started in 2014 and places CWES customers into a part-time subsidized employment work site with either a public or private non-profit agency. These positions help customers gain hard and soft work skills to assist them in obtaining and retaining unsubsidized employment. The agency agrees to mentor, train, and provide supervision in exchange for a temporary and free employee. Santa Clara County is the employer of record for Paid Work Experience sites. Signed agreements are put into place using DocuSign© as well as the managing and initial processing of timecards.

Tier 3 – The College Study Work Program was started in 2014 and provides on-campus work positions for students who are CWES customers. These students are placed into their worksites for up to twelve months, working twenty hours per week.

Using Modern Platforms - SCC EC Works developed an informative and easy-to-use self-serve website for job seekers, employers, and staff appropriately named the Employment Connection. The website lists upcoming current events, retains visible historical events for user reference,

lists current job openings, displays information about the services offered by EC Works, displays links and valuable "How-To" information regarding Job Search, and much more.

The website is updated daily by dedicated staff who receive job leads, event and community information, and informational updates from SCC staff. Anyone in the world can access the Employment Connection website from a computer or cell phone and the information can be emailed or printed. Additionally, SCC has a Twitter account that is used to notify the youth participating in ESE. SCC DEBS uses a Facebook page to send out a wide variety of useful community-based information from helpful health information to job leads.

Moving Forward with Technological Efficiencies:

Issues and Recommendations

1.   *Social media has emerged as an effective platform for reaching citizens in meaningful and engaging ways, keeping them informed about news and events in their communities.* Using Social Media platforms is in its infancy for the Monterey County offices. MCDSS has an active Facebook presence; however, it is not updated with positive community and agency information. Monterey County CWES has the basic design completed for a Facebook page, but has yet to launch due to competing priorities. There are also outdated Instagram and Twitter pages for CWES.

Recommendations:

Use Facebook to Market MCDSS & CWES Services – Dedicate CWES staff to finish and update, on an ongoing basis, the CWES and MCDSS Facebook pages. The Facebook pages can offer free up-to-date information to customers and the community at large. It can be used to

market job fairs, job openings, program opportunities, health information, food outreach, etc. **Costs** – Free for the service. The county would need to consider the cost of the dedicated staff based on the amount of hours it would take to initially update the pages and maintain them on an ongoing basis. Use policies would need to be adopted and procedures written utilizing Analyst time.   The free advertisement and positive marketing would far offset any costs associated with the update and ongoing maintenance of the Facebook pages.

Use Twitter and Instagram to Market Events -   Using these two platforms makes sense. There is no cost for the service and takes seconds to send messages out. Public service announcements, job openings, special recruitments or job fairs, health information, etc. can be sent out instantaneously. **Costs** – Free for the service. The staff costs would be marginal, and one person would suffice. Policies and procedures would be melded into an overall Social Media document. The free advertisement and positive marketing would far offset any costs associated with sending Instagram posts and Tweets.

2.   2. Self-Serve websites allow customers, employers, and the community to be in control of when and what they want to access.[3] *A survey commissioned by Nuance Enterprise found that 67 percent of respondents would prefer to self-service their needs, rather than speak to a representative. If citizen phone calls and walk-ins account for an unsustainable part of your work day, your municipal website may not be giving citizens the self-service tools they want and need.* The CWES website has some helpful information but is hard to find, lacking in specificity, and visually unappealing.

Recommendation:

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[3] 5 Must-Have Citizen Self-Service Features for Your .. Retrieved from https://www.civicplus.com/blog/5-must-have-citizen-self-service-features-for-you

Create an Informative Web Site for CWES – Community information, job fairs, job openings, calendar or events, workshop schedules, child care information, and more can all be housed in one convenient website. Customers can access a large amount of information (with hyperlinks to associated websites) and commonly used forms without having to contact the agency. It should be state of the art including sub-pages for different programs, easy clicking drop downs, messaging options, and the ability to create, attach, and download documents. **Costs** – The staff time required for creating the vision, developing the site, and the ongoing updates if done daily/weekly should be included in the costs. The reduced costs of staff not having to take frequent calls from customers and child care providers would offset the costs of developing and maintaining the website. Marketing CWES events and job openings would be instantaneous and a fraction of the costs of using other avenues. Savings would be realized due to a reduced need for printed marketing materials. Marketing information can be posted on the CWES website, Facebook page, Instagram page; Twitter; and emailed.

3.   Santa Clara, Sonoma, Alameda, Palo Alto, and San Francisco Counties have boldly gone where few counties and cities have gone before using DTM (and e-signature software for everyday business.) In Contra Costa County, Family and Children Services has realized a 95% reduction in turnaround time for Court Reports using e-signature. In the contract signing process, the City of Palo Alto went from a fourteen (14) to a five (5) day turnaround time. In the future, Palo Alto is looking to expand the DTM and e-signature technology to their Human Resources department for new employee onboarding and benefits enrollment that is completed outside their systems. Since SCC has had remarkable success using DTM and e-signature with and within county departments, it is looking to expand it this year to other business practices and take it to the next level. This year, SCC has been evaluating other business practices that include

customers and plan on sending WTW Plans to customers for signature using DocuSign©. Currently, MC CWES uses some electronic storage tools, in particular, the imaging system in C-IV. The majority of CWES processes for customer signatures consist of printing a document then imaging it back into C-IV once signed. Within MCDSS, many usable electronic documents have been created only for printing signatures and forwarding hard copies to the respective departments. Many of our current manual or partially manual processes could easily transition to electronic processes with a fraction of the current turnaround time while using fewer resources.

Recommendations:

Analyze Business Processes and Utilize DocuSign© – Within the different branches in MCDSS, business practices that require a signature should be evaluated and transitioned to an electronic process from creation to completion. Potential processes for transition include but are not limited to:

- Signing of Service Provider Contracts, including revisions or adjustments;

- Training Requests; Requests for Training and Mileage Reimbursement Process;

- Signing of HR Documents;

- Declarations of Outside Employment; and,

- Training Verifications.

If a customer cannot come into the office to sign a document, such as a WTW Plan or a Penalty of Perjury Form, DocuSign© would be used to assist the customer in getting the benefits or supportive services they need. Additionally, the MCDSS would be able to obtain the necessary

signatures by using a secure and green business process. The goal is to build an integrated system that provides the ability to create, sign, and complete a document without printing.

Costs - Yearly cost for DocuSign© is approximately $13,500 compared to a very conservative estimated savings of $48,000 per year. This savings estimate does not include the savings related to: a reduced turnaround time for customers and staff, or the reduced usage of courier and USPS services.

CWES Transition to Paperless - CWES uses the C-IV system, which eliminates the need for paper cases. Currently CWES still retains hard paper cases. This recommendation has CWES transitioning to paperless by January 1, 2018 and will use a change management process that includes a workgroup that consists of at least one representative from each level and across the three district offices. This recommendation works cooperatively with DTM and e-signature. **Costs -** Monterey County would experience a significant reduction in costs due to reduced usage of paper, staff time, printing expenses, postage, etc. Even using a conservative estimate, the savings would be exponential.

4. The ESE program in Monterey County is robust, successful, and thriving. Since inception in January 2014, the Monterey County ESE program has provided approximately $1.9m in available wages to CWES customers employed in ESE activities. It has two types of employment sites: (1) placements within public or private non-profit agencies, and (2) placements Work Study sites on the two local community college campuses. Within the ESE program, the employment sites offer a diverse level of skill building, and there are approximately twenty-seven (27) non-profit employers. Most of the non-profit employers are usually not in a position

to hire the ESE participants. However, the placements do provide valuable job training and networking opportunities.

Recommendations:

Add Private Employers to ESE Employer List - The decision to use private employers (Tier 1) by SCC CWES gave the program depth and was easy marketing for CalWORKs customers. The effort resulted in more unsubsidized job placements and helped to continue to break down the barriers and labels of hiring and retaining employees who are or have been on CalWORKs. Adding private for-profit employers is the next step for ESE in MC CWES. Marketing the ESE program with private employers gives CalWORKs customers, who are frequently challenged with multiple barriers, an opportunity to sell themselves through their hard work. **Costs -** no additional costs to the existing ESE contract to incorporate private for-profit employers.

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