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Quality and Productivity Commission
27th Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program
"Saluting County Excellence"

2013 APPLICATION

Title of Project (Limited to 50 characters, including spaces, using Arial 12 point font):

NAME OF PROJECT: AUTOMATED APPEALS AND STATE HEARINGS SYSTEM

DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION: JANUARY 12, 2010
 (Must have been implemented at least one year - on or before June 30, 2012)

PROJECT STATUS: Ongoing One-time only

HAS YOUR DEPARTMENT PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED THIS PROJECT? Yes No

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. Summarize the problem, solution, and benefits of the project in a clear and direct manner

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The Appeals and State Hearings (ASH) section is responsible for handling requests for a State hearing involving assistance programs and services administered by the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). This involves reviewing claimants' requests for hearings to determine the accuracy of the County's (DPSS) actions. It is estimated that the average cost of a State hearing is \$6,000. Therefore, ASH is challenged with resolving issues at the lowest possible level, thus avoiding costly and unnecessary State hearings. The ASH Tracking System (ATS) was developed to enable ASH staff to capture different data such as hearing request issues and requests by districts and by file number, thereby automating its records. This data can be used to identify training needs at the districts, which will result in a reduction of hearing requests. Additionally, ATS automates and enhances the efficiency of the clerical processes involved, and expedites the notifications related to actions between ASH and the case-carrying districts and the claimant/customer. Based on the success of this enhanced automation, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) State Hearings Division is exploring development of a similar system for State-wide use.

(1) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ESTIMATED/ACTUAL ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL ESTIMATED/ACTUAL BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
\$ N/A	\$ N/A	\$ N/A	\$ N/A	X
SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS Department of Public Social Services 12860 Crossroads Parkway South City of Industry, CA 91746			TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 908-8600	
PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME Cynthia Schmidt			TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 908-8486 EMAIL CynthiaSchmidt@dpss.lacounty.gov	
PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE <small>(PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME)</small> Nadia Mirzayans 		DATE 07/02/13	TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 908-6330 EMAIL NadiaMirzayans@dpss.lacounty.gov	
DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE Sheryl L. Spiller 		DATE 07/02/13	TELEPHONE NUMBER (562) 908-8600	

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CHALLENGE

The Appeals and State Hearings (ASH) section is tasked with resolving claimants' disputes without the need of a State hearing. ASH faced the challenge of manually processing most of the work that came into the office. Most of the communication between ASH and the district offices, such as documents associated with case corrections for negotiated conditional withdrawals, as well as the timely compliance with State hearings, was conducted by mail, which greatly slowed down the districts' response time, resulting in poor customer service and continued dependency on paper. One of the unintended consequences of the delayed response was the high volume of hearing requests that were reopened, resulting in costly hearings.

SOLUTION

ASH, in collaboration with DPSS' Information Technology Division (ITD) and the Internal Services Department (ISD), developed the ASH Tracking System (ATS), automating most of the actions in processing an appeal

ATS is in line with the Department's Strategic Goals of Technological Leadership, Program Excellence, Outreach and Partnership and Organizational Operations and Systems. It is a web-based tracking system which utilizes an Oracle-based platform. The ATS development team created a system that would satisfy the needs of staff but more importantly a system that would allow for an expedited processing of hearing requests, thus ensuring that customers'/clients' hearing rights are not violated. This system eliminates almost all manual tracking procedures utilized by ASH, and allows for equitable distribution of the workload of assigned requests for State hearings to all ASH staff. It eliminates potential backlogs by ensuring that every request received by ASH is promptly processed and assigned to staff. ATS allows for timely processing of Aid Paid Pending mandates required of the due process regulations, as assignments are made to staff the same day they are received. Also, ATS allows for the electronic transfer of documents to district offices, and it allows supervisors and managers to track the status of compliance with case corrections associated with negotiated (conditional) withdrawals for State hearings, as well as the timely compliance with State hearing decisions, thereby avoiding financial sanctions to the County by CDSS.

All ATS users received appropriate training on how to use the system to its full potential.

BENEFITS

The overall result is improved customer service, efficiency and enhanced delivery of services. ATS was fully implemented on January 12, 2010, and provides the following benefits:

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1. Allows for the uploading of documents which may be viewed by all authorized users.
2. Utilizes existing equipment and technologies which results in savings for the Department.
3. Increases productivity by eliminating the aforementioned outdated manual processes and streamlining operational ones.
4. Allows for instant access to information and historical documents within ASH. Additionally, ATS allows for instant communication and collaboration between ASH and our partners at the district and regional offices.
5. Increases workforce accountability and performance measures.
6. ATS tracks all appeals-related data in real time which allows for identification of departmental training needs and compliance with State time-frames for conditional withdrawals and State hearing decisions, and provides district and regional offices with any relevant data to identify customer service and overall service delivery needs.
7. Enables equal and transparent distribution of workload assignments among ASH staff.
8. Creates an automatic notification to district and regional offices on case record requests, correction memos for compliance with conditional withdrawals and State hearing decisions, thus expediting the timely delivery of services to our customers.
9. Provides ASH and district and regional office administration with easy access to pre-configured reports such as the number of filings by office, number of pending compliance with conditional withdrawals and State hearing decisions.
10. Allows for increased productivity and accountability for ASH's telecommuting staff.
11. Allows all users the ability to view pending work on a task list which allows prioritization of work.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN (DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS):

STRATEGIC PLAN GOAL

1. Operational Effectiveness: Maximize the effectiveness of the processes, structure, and operations to support timely delivery of customer-oriented and efficient public services.

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COST AVOIDANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND REVENUE GENERATED (ESTIMATED BENEFIT): If you are claiming cost benefits, include a calculation on this page. You must include an explanation of the County cost savings, cost avoidance or new revenue that matches the numbers in the box. Remember to keep your supporting documentation.

Cost Avoidance: Costs that are eliminated or not incurred as a result of program outcomes.

Cost Savings: A reduction or lessening of expenditures as a result of program outcomes.

Revenue: Increases in existing revenue streams or new revenue sources to the County as a result of program outcomes.

(1) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST AVOIDANCE	(2) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL COST SAVINGS	(3) ACTUAL/ESTIMATED ANNUAL REVENUE	(1) + (2) + (3) TOTAL ANNUAL ACTUAL/ESTIMATED BENEFIT	SERVICE ENHANCEMENT PROJECT
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	X

ANNUAL= 12 MONTHS ONLY