

**Quality and Productivity Commission**  
**27<sup>th</sup> 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: ECOMPLAINTS - ONLINE INTAKE AND CASE MANAGEMENT**

**DATE OF IMPLEMENTATION/ADOPTION:** JUNE 30, 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

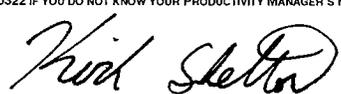
**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:** Describe the project in 15 lines or less using Arial 12 point font. Summarize the problem, solution, and benefits of the project in a clear and direct manner

1 Consumer Affairs (DCA) was struggling to maintain five legacy database systems to  
 2 manage about 5,000 consumer complaints, requests for mediations, and referrals from  
 3 other agencies the Department received each year. The aging databases were  
 4 unreliable, produced inconsistent reports, and required paper forms and hard copy case  
 5 files. DCA program supervisors and staff teamed up with ISD programmers to develop  
 6 a new online consumer complaint intake and case management system that replaced  
 7 all five legacy databases with a single integrated system. The new system included a  
 8 online submission feature allowing the public to quickly and easily submit questions,  
 9 complaints, and requests online (while still retaining the option of using paper forms).  
 10 The cases management features helped reduce processing time, consolidate caseload  
 11 information, and improve the analysis of complaint data. Implementation of the  
 12 eComplaints system resulted in reductions in the processing time of new complaints,  
 13 the average time to close a case, and the number of aging cases. It also led to  
 14 increases in the number of cases closed and the number of successful mediations. The  
 15 system enabled DCA to help more people, in less time, with improved results.

(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
\$	\$	\$	\$ 0	X

<b>SUBMITTING DEPARTMENT NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> Department of Consumer Affairs 500 W. Temple St. Room B-96 Los Angeles CA 90012	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 974-9750
---	---

<b>PROGRAM MANAGER'S NAME</b> Kirk Shelton	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 974-4615
	<b>EMAIL</b> kshelton@dca.lacounty.gov

<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> (PLEASE CALL (213) 893-0322 IF YOU DO NOT KNOW YOUR PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME) Kirk Shelton 	<b>DATE</b> 6/26/13	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 974-4615
		<b>EMAIL</b> kshelton@dca.lacounty.gov

<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> Brian Stiger 	<b>DATE</b> 6/26/13	<b>TELEPHONE NUMBER</b> (213) 974-9750
--	------------------------	---

Quality and Productivity Commission  
**27<sup>th</sup> 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: ECOMPLAINTS - ONLINE INTAKE AND CASE MANAGEMENT**

**FACT SHEET – LIMITED TO 3 PAGES ONLY:** Describe the **Challenge, Solution, and Benefits** of the project, written in plain language. Include a discussion of the technology and linkage to the County Strategic Plan. The description should identify Performance Measures.

**THE CHALLENGE**

January 2011 was a difficult time for the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA). The Department's primary complaint management database had crashed which seriously impacted program staff's ability to process new consumer complaints and resolve the disputes. After three weeks of struggling with a damaged system, the database was finally restored, but the Department knew that it needed a long term solution. Previously planned enhancements to the existing databases had been cancelled when the database designer retired and left the area. DCA could not continue its reliance on a set of five legacy databases that maintained the records for DCA's consumer complaints, requests for mediation, and referrals from other agencies.

Members of the public were also asking for an easier and faster way to submit complaints and requests. The paper forms the Department used required access to a scanner or fax machine to avoid paying to mail in the forms and related paperwork. Some low income consumers said that they needed an easier way to ask the Department for help.

DCA staff members were also asking for a system that would help them do their jobs more effectively. The separate databases could not be easily searched, generated inconsistent reports, and operated in different ways that required different sets of training. Someone adept with one database might struggle to complete basic functions in another database making it difficult to share workload. Intake staff were concerned that the process was inefficient and badly segmented. Supervisors also struggled to understand their staff's workload when it was spread between cases in different databases. Senior managers asked questions about data and trends that could not be answered by the separate systems. DCA had an incredible staff of eager Investigators, Mediators, and Counselors that were ready to assist consumers resolve their issues. They needed a system that would strengthen their efforts, not a series of clumsy databases that slowed them down. When DCA managers looked for help, they found just the partners they needed in ISD's Internet Development Division.

**THE SOLUTION**

ISD's Internet Development Division had been working on creating systems for other County departments with needs similar to DCA. After reviewing an analysis and proposal that DCA program staff had developed with a talented graduate student intern, ISD promised they could take DCA's ideas for a new system and make it into a reality. DCA formed the eComplaints workgroup made up of program supervisors and staff to work with ISD programmers to design, develop, and launch a new system that would

Quality and Productivity Commission  
**27<sup>th</sup> 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: ECOMPLAINTS - ONLINE INTAKE AND CASE MANAGEMENT**

give the public online access to file consumer complaints and replace DCA's legacy databases with a new integrated case management system.

By July 2011, the first portion of eComplaints launched with a new online intake portal for the public to submit complaints through the DCA website. By January 2012, the first part of the eComplaints case management database had been launched and the new system replaced the Department's primary case management database. Over next 18 months, ISD worked with the eComplaints workgroup to roll-out seven additional modules in the eComplaints system that revolutionized the workflow processes for the Department. By July 2013, the system had replaced all five legacy databases and had become a centralized case management system that handled consumer fraud investigations, counseling cases, consumer questions, Small Claims Advisor questions, homeowner counseling referrals from Community and Senior Services, Foster Youth ID Theft referrals from the Department of Children and Family Services/Probation, and elder financial abuse referrals from Community and Senior Services. By July 2013, 100% of DCA's casework was managed in the eComplaints system.

**THE BENEFITS**

Prior to implementation, the department had identified many benefits that the new system would bring. Two years into the process, DCA has been able to identify even more benefits from the new system and new opportunities that arose for improvement during the design process.

***Easier complaint and mediation filing process:*** Consumers can file complaints online at any time and any place where they have internet access. Hard copies of complaint forms are still accepted too. Consumers can check the status of their case online and receive email notifications. Intelligence built into the system helps consumers understand the best way for DCA to help them with their dispute or complaint. Efficiencies in the intake process allowed intake staff to spend less time on data entry and more time helping consumers.

***Integrated case management system:*** By integrating five legacy databases into a single system, the Department made it much easier for staff to search for files, catch duplicate cases, identify fraud trends, analyze data, generate reports, and manage their caseload. Supervisors report that it is much easier to manage staff workload because they can see all of their cases in one system.

***Digital files replaced paper files:*** With all materials digitized and available to staff in the case management system, the Department was able to greatly reduce the use of paper, toner, and postage. Digital files could also be easily accessed from any department computer so staff did not need to carry around paper files. Supervisors could quickly review cases while they were still in progress. Data security measures

Quality and Productivity Commission  
**27<sup>th</sup> 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: ECOMPLAINTS - ONLINE INTAKE AND CASE MANAGEMENT**

protect all of the files from outside intrusion and make the digital files more secure than the previous hard copy system.

**Data sharing with the national consumer database:** Utilizing the enhanced technology of the new system, complaints filed in L.A. County are automatically shared with the Federal Trade Commission's national consumer complaint database used by law enforcement to investigate consumer fraud. This improved data sharing helps consumers locally and nationally.

**Superior system performance for staff:** Department staff love the new database. They have reported that it is easy to use, helps them do their jobs more effectively, runs faster, and is more reliable. Program staff regularly provides feedback with suggestions for enhancements. Many of these suggestions have led to upgrades and new features.

**Improved Customer Service:** The eComplaints system helps department staff provide superior service to consumers. We can respond more quickly to consumers, resolve consumer complaints and disputes more quickly, achieve more positive outcomes, and help more people.

One of the most far reaching impacts of the new system is that it enabled structural change within DCA to improve our operations. New centralized groups could be created that could process work more quickly and act as back-ups to avoid delays caused by staffing changes or absences. The new system has helped the department reorganize operations, improve workflows, assist more consumers, and provide assistance in a more timely fashion. Some of the benefits included:

- The number of cases closed by investigators and counselors **increased by 53%**
- Intake processing time of complaints/mediation requests was **reduced by 85%**
- The number of successfully resolved mediation disputes **increased by 40%**
- The average time needed to resolve a case **decreased by 17%**
- The number of aging cases **decreased by 31%**

During this same period, Department staffing was actually reduced due to budget constraints. The new eComplaints system is on track to handle **over 7,000** consumer complaints, mediation cases, referrals from other agencies, and consumer questions in 2013. The system has greatly enhanced the way DCA serves consumers.

LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY STRATEGIC PLAN (DETAIL IS REQUIRED FOR COUNTY DEPARTMENTS): This project supports County Strategic Goal 1: *Operational Effectiveness* by improving DCA workflow and service model and Goal 3: *Integrated Service Delivery* by improving information sharing.

Quality and Productivity Commission  
**27<sup>th</sup> 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: ECOMPLAINTS - ONLINE INTAKE AND CASE MANAGEMENT**

**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
\$	\$	\$	\$	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

**ANNUAL= 12 MONTHS ONLY**

This was a service enhancement project.

The project was completed at the same time during which the Department was implementing a series of other efficiency initiatives to reduce the costs on paper, fax machines, toner, postage costs, and document storage. Although the savings impact of this particular project cannot be determined, it played a role with other projects to reduce costs in these areas by \$5,000 annually.

Quality and Productivity Commission  
**27<sup>th</sup> Annual Productivity and Quality Awards Program**  
*"Saluting County Excellence"*

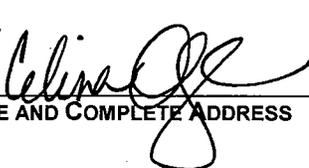
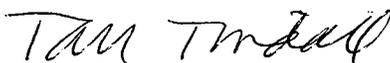
**2013 APPLICATION**

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

**NAME OF PROJECT: ECOMPLAINTS - ONLINE INTAKE AND CASE MANAGEMENT**

**FOR COLLABORATING DEPARTMENTS ONLY**

*(For single department submissions, do not include this page)*

<b>DEPARTMENT NO. 2 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b> INTERNAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT 1100 N. EASTERN AVE. LOS ANGELES, CA 90063	
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> CELINA ORTIZ 	<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b> TAM TINDAL 
<b>DEPARTMENT NO. 3 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b>	
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT NO. 4 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b>	
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT NO. 5 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b>	
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT NO. 6 NAME AND COMPLETE ADDRESS</b>	
<b>PRODUCTIVITY MANAGER'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>	<b>DEPARTMENT HEAD'S NAME AND SIGNATURE</b>