



The Computerworld Honors Program

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Final Copy of Case Study

LOCATION:
Pittsburgh, PA, US

ORGANIZATION:
West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources

YEAR:
2011

ORGANIZATION URL:
<http://wvdhhr.org>

STATUS:
Laureate

PROJECT NAME:
eRAPIDS Work Programs

CATEGORY:
Human Services

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The eRAPIDS Work Programs project sought to develop a technology-driven business solution for West Virginia's Department of Health and Human Resources (WV-DHHR) cash assistance for needy families program, known as WV Works. The WV Works program is a state-managed, federally funded welfare-to-work program that enables low-income families to attain job skills training, supplemental cash assistance for work- and school-related needs, and monthly cash benefits ultimately intended to result in families' self-sufficiency and re-entry into the full-time workforce. To accomplish these goals, WV-DHHR staff had previously utilized a legacy computer application to manage these welfare cases; that is, record key demographic and skills-related data, determine if further assessments are needed, decide on the best course of action for the family, and carefully manage their participation in WV Works. This legacy application was an aging mainframe-based solution that met only the state's basic data capture and display needs. The eRAPIDS Work Programs solution was intended to not only improve upon dated technology with the latest in Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA) solutions, but also address the core business goals identified by the agency: ♣ Grow the Work Participation Rate (WPR). A low percentage of citizens in WV Works receiving cash assistance actually participated in the program's compulsory work activities needed to gain self-sufficiency – this is a federally reported metric known as the work participation rate. ♣ Improve customer service. County offices face customer service challenges, such as long interview times, data capture errors, and delays in receiving cash vouchers due to older technology and workers struggling to manage large numbers of cases. ♣ Attain insight into WV Works customers. Difficulty gaining insight into the nature of welfare cases due to a lack of decision-making data available to field staff, supervisors, and state executive management. With these challenges in mind, the eRAPIDS team created an innovative and first-of-its-kind solution, combining the latest in J2EE, SOA, and business intelligence technologies to Web-enable the previously mainframe-based WV Works application and deliver customized business intelligence reports to its diverse population of business users.



SOCIETAL BENEFITS

The project benefits society by allowing agency workers, supervisors and executive management to better manage the needs of West Virginia's low income families. The Work Programs solution gives workers an unprecedented understanding of and ability to provide better service for the over 13,000 needy clients the program serves.

Previous project updated/expanded? The project began in February, 2008, went to pilot in August, 2009 and was implemented statewide in every WV DHHR agency office November, 2009.

Project implementation complete? Yes

PROJECT BENEFIT EXAMPLE

eRAPIDS Work Programs benefits low-income families across the state. This project benefits individuals from the perspective of over 13,000 individuals that represent needy and low-income families across the state of West Virginia. The eRAPIDS solution delivers key demographic, job skills and work activity data in new and more accurate ways to the staff that handle the welfare cases for these families, offering them more accurate information and more efficient ways to manage these cases, whether it's scheduling an educational assessment, placing a family in training or employment activities, or issuing them a supplemental clothing payment to afford work clothes for their new job. eRAPIDS Work Programs delivers powerful workflow-based data management tools to state staff. From a day-to-day perspective, agency workers and supervisors benefit from eRAPIDS Work Programs in a number of ways. Local office workers and supervisors are able to better manage their WV Works families because they are freed of time-consuming tasks such as logging on to multiple systems to issue a supplemental payment, recapturing data already captured in the legacy solution, or trying to navigate cluttered mainframe screens in order to develop a strong understanding of each unique family's needs. In fact, the amount of time needed to issue a supplemental payment to a family was reduced by 80% after the implementation of the eRAPIDS Work Programs solution. These efficiency gains ultimately resulted in workers being able to focus more intensively on each family. eRAPIDS Work Programs offers insightful reporting capabilities to agency decision-makers. Finally, from the organizational perspective, WV DHHR's executive-level staff is afforded penetrating views into their worker and supervisor activities across the state. The business intelligence component of the eRAPIDS Work Programs solution offers comprehensive data aggregation and trending capabilities that let executives drill down into county- and even worker- level performance metrics, or assess the state's performance by its four overarching regions. This functionality provides executive staff with decision-making and management tools that had not been available in the past. Since the project has been implemented, there has been a 10% increase in the state's Work Participation Rate (WPR). This means that the number of WV citizens receiving cash assistance who are participating in training and employment activities which lead them to self-sufficiency is now 10% higher than prior to the eRAPIDS Work Programs solution being implemented. This statistic is even more impressive given that this rate increase has occurred during a tumultuous economic period that has seen state staff levels drop while welfare rolls continue to grow.

IS THIS PROJECT AN INNOVATION, BEST PRACTICE? Yes