
C-IV: Providing Californians Accurate and Efficient Access to Health and Social Service Benefits

Category
Digital Government:
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Nomination Submitted by:
Teri Takai
Chief Information Officer
State of California

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Executive Summary

Inflation, increasing unemployment rates, and the “worst financial crisis since the Great Depression” mean people are in need of public assistance programs now more than ever. At the same time, the administration and delivery these programs have consistently grown in scope and complexity. Prior to 2009, social service agencies in California’s 58 counties used 35 different systems to manage eligibility for Food Stamps, Medicaid, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and other health and human services programs. These systems were not only costly and inefficient to operate and maintain, but they undermined the state’s ability to effectively deliver essential services to individuals and families in need of assistance.

To address these issues, the California Statewide Automated Welfare Systems (SAWS) Consortium IV developed and implemented the C-IV System. Originally created for a four-county consortium, the C-IV System now streamlines eligibility determination and processing for more than 2 million state welfare recipients in 39 counties and it is a clear example of how leading-edge technology can help government serve individuals and families more effectively. C-IV is the first fully implemented, integrated Web-based eligibility and welfare-to-work system in the country to use technology based on flexible, open standards. The open standards supported the transfer of C-IV to the State of Idaho in 2009, with no licensing fees. This install was one of the most efficient transfers of a public assistance system ever at one of the lowest costs.

Following its initial success in four counties, 35 additional California counties have adopted the system and 30 legacy systems have been retired. In addition, through C4Yourself (www.c4yourself.com), a self-service portal, Californians can apply for Food Stamps, TANF and Medicaid benefits online. C-IV has brought about additional service improvements and efficiencies, including:

- Delivering more than \$200 million in benefits per month to Californians in need.
- Determining eligibility and calculating benefits clearly and consistently, speeding through thousands of eligibility criteria with an average response time of less than 4 seconds.
- Processing more than 4 million transactions per day with an average response time of less than 2 seconds.
- Ongoing savings of \$109 million annually.
- Streamlining work for caseworkers by offering leading-edge monitoring and ad-hoc reporting capabilities.
- Enabling the real-time sharing of information among caseworkers and administrators, and providing automated updates to caseworkers from sources such as the state’s child support and child welfare systems.

C-IV fosters better government, enhances and improves how California’s welfare caseworkers perform their duties by using the leading edge technology and provides individuals and families with simplified access to benefits online.

Description of Business Problem and Solution

Inflation, increasing unemployment rates, and the “worst financial crisis since the Great Depression” mean people are in need of public assistance programs now more than ever. At the same time, the administration and delivery of these programs have consistently grown in scope and complexity. Prior to 2009, social service agencies in California’s 58 counties used 35 different systems to manage eligibility for Food Stamps, Medicaid, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) and other health and human services programs. These systems were not only costly and inefficient to operate and maintain, but they undermined the state’s ability to effectively deliver essential services to individuals and families in need of assistance.

In addition, county social service administrators and caseworkers face the daunting challenging of administering 11 statewide welfare programs, some with more than 100 subprograms, and working through complex and constantly evolving eligibility criteria to carries a high potential for errors. The eligibility process alone can be slow and tedious for those in need of assistance. Beyond the challenges noted above, California has one of the most linguistically diverse populations in the country and has had historically lower rates of participation in the Food Stamps program.

Confronted by these challenges, California’s policymakers decided to invest in modernizing the processes and systems used to determine eligibility and benefits for health and human services programs in order to improve services to Californians and reduce costs. The first step was the development and implementation of new systems and processes in the four counties that make up the C-4 Consortium followed by the migration of 35 additional counties to the C-4 system. The C-IV System has been operational in four counties since 2004 before expanding to 39 counties in 2009. The system now is used to determine eligibility and calculate benefits for more than 2 million welfare recipients under 11 state programs and provides 2 million pages of correspondence per month in 13 languages.

The C-IV project demonstrates the value of leveraging best practices in IT project management, business process reengineering and systems development. As with any legacy system and process transformation effort, change management was of critical importance for C-IV. The project team developed and implemented a successful change management and communications plan that increased buy-in among project stakeholders and enhanced the level of understanding among end-users of the system throughout the life of the project. Implementing C-IV required converting more than 30 legacy systems to the new system. Each conversion had varying degrees of complexity and automation. The C-IV team conducted conversion dry-runs and dress rehearsals to verify the accuracy of the data and to validate the computing time required to perform the conversion. Other elements of the successful implementation included a phased release plan aimed at minimizing business disruptions and maximizing the ability of users to assimilate and adapt to the new system.

Also, a readiness assessment helped the C-IV team proactively identify and manage any gaps related to readiness. To meet the training needs of a diverse group of users, C-IV staff organized courses into modules that were delivered through a variety of instructional methods, including workshops, instructor-led and Web-based training.

The Web-based architecture of the C-IV system is hardware, operating system, application server, database server and browser independent. This approach provides the state and local jurisdictions the flexibility to choose from a number of different environments, makes deployment easier, and allows for the use of existing IT assets and technical standards. Demonstrating the benefits of this flexible approach, the State of Idaho adopted the C-IV System in 2009 (with no licensing fees) in one of the most efficient transfers of a public assistance system ever at one of the lowest costs.

The C-IV system also includes multiple components to safeguard the security and integrity of its telecommunications and computing infrastructure. Specific security measures, including authentication, monitoring, auditing, and encryption, have also been integrated into the design, implementation, and day-to-day practices of the entire C-IV operating environment as part of its continuing commitment to risk management.

Significance

As the first fully implemented, integrated Web-based welfare eligibility system in the country based on open standards, C-IV sets the bar for innovation in health and human services systems. California built the system as the primary means of doing business for more than 12,000 caseworkers and administrators who face the daily task of determining eligibility and calculating benefits for more than 2 million welfare recipients under 11 state programs. The system is user-friendly for caseworkers and robust enough to speed through thousands of eligibility criteria in seconds. It was designed to support more than 80,000 service providers, employers and other users within its resources database. Few states have truly integrated public assistance, Food Stamps, and Medicaid programs with employment services and childcare, while C-IV fully integrates these programs and services.

Considering the system's integrated imaging capability and integration with the C4Yourself self-service portal, the tools C-IV provides counties are unmatched by any similar system in the country. In addition, caseworkers have complete and accurate information for all the benefits an individual or family receives instantly available to them and individuals and families have easier access to the benefits they require. The holistic approach to case management and service delivery model inherent in C-IV helps caseworkers better understand the needs of individuals and families and how best to meet them. A secure collaboration platform linked to an integrated data model across all program areas allows caseworkers to share client and benefit information, and make relevant information accessible across functional areas to other caseworkers. This reduces errors, prevents duplicate aid and results in improved service for individuals and families in need of public assistance.

Due to frequent changes in client information and program policies, the C-IV System is designed to update these changes and provide convenient access to relevant historical client and benefit information. The system accommodates different local office policies and procedures and different levels of staff. C-IV also has many advanced features to detect and prevent both customer and staff fraud. For example, sophisticated file clearance and identification capabilities help prevent customers from receiving duplicate aid and analytic tools and processes to identify patterns that indicate fraudulent activities. The C-IV system also alerts caseworkers about potentially fraudulent cases.

The C-IV system addresses multiple NASCIO policy and technology priorities, including:

- *budget and cost control* by achieving significant cost reductions;
- *consolidation* and shared services through centralizing and consolidating services and operations across 39 California counties;
- *business intelligence and business analytics* applications are leveraged for fraud prevention and to enable county and statewide planning;
- identity and access management tools are utilized to secure C-IV and provide tiered access to system capabilities; and
- *social media and networking tools* are utilized to allow collaboration among caseworkers and across program areas.

Benefits

From the moment the C-IV System was first implemented it has been a success. It has made it possible for caseworkers to determine eligibility, calculate benefits and transmit customer information in just a few seconds, dramatically improved services to individuals and families, increased worker productivity and saved time and money for the state and counties.

California is realizing significant qualitative benefits from the C-IV system, including:

- Effective use Interactive Voice Response technology to reduce workload and enhance employee satisfaction.
- Streamlining work for caseworkers by offering leading-edge monitoring and ad-hoc reporting capabilities.
- Enabling the real-time sharing of information among caseworkers and administrators, and providing automated updates to caseworkers from sources such as the state's child support and child welfare systems.
- Improved access to timely information.
- Significantly reduced paperwork.
- Faster service for customers.
- Retained historical data.
- More comprehensive provider information.
- Enhanced program-specific data.
- Outcome-based reporting with online access.
- Fewer lost cases.

C-IV has brought about specific quantitative service improvements and efficiencies, including:

- Delivering more than \$200 million in benefits per month to Californians in need.
- Ongoing savings of \$109 million annually.
 - \$46 million in annual savings due to reductions in program errors;
 - \$37 million in annual savings due to retiring legacy systems; and
 - \$27 million in annual savings through reduced administrative costs.
- Enabling the automation of tax intercept functionality that has resulted in the collection of an additional \$26 million from previously uncollected overpayments.
- From August 2007 to February 2010, the percentage of applications for aid submitted online via the C4Yourself portal has increased from 15 percent to 25 percent.
- Determining eligibility and calculating benefits clearly and consistently, speeding through thousands of eligibility criteria with an average response time of less than 4 seconds.
- Processing more than 4 million transactions per day with an average response time of less than 2 seconds.

As of June 2010, the C-IV System:

- Receives more than 1,600 aid applications per week via the C4Yourself portal.
- Provides benefits to over 2 million customers.
- Has more than 12,000 users in more than 200 offices.
- Interfaces to more than 200 to county, state, and federal systems (e.g., child support, child welfare system, and fiscal systems) providing automated demographic and financial updates from and to external agencies.
- Provides 2 million pages of correspondence per month in 13 languages.

Due to the enhanced automation and optimized business processes inherent in C-IV, caseworkers have more time to spend face-to-face with individuals and families focusing on assisting them to achieve self-sufficiency rather than the mundane calculations required for eligibility determinations or completing burdensome paperwork.

- For example, the eligibility determination and benefit calculation (EDBC) component of C-IV uses a business rules engine to apply appropriate policies and calculate benefits accurately and consistently. More than 3,100 business rules have been coded into the business rules engine for Medicaid, TANF and Food Stamps in C-IV's reusable EDBC component. Workers review the results of the EDBC and authorize, deny or discontinue benefits. When a caseworker accepts the results, the system triggers alerts related to benefits issuance, correspondence and interface processes.

What's more, the system is easier to use and less expensive to operate and maintain than alternative systems and requires a shorter learning curve for developers. Updates to accommodate frequent changes in state or Federal policy are a fraction of the cost of alternative systems, and the system contains sophisticated capabilities for fraud detection and prevention.

- For example, it allowed for the implementation of significant policy changes for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Food Stamps enacted as part of California's fiscal year 2009-2010 budget at a fraction of the cost and time of the systems operating in California's other 19 counties.

The system enables more efficient research of case and benefits history with caseworkers receiving notifications of outstanding tasks that need to be completed, minimizing the probability of errors and/or incomplete information, and offers leading-edge monitoring and ad-hoc reporting capabilities. C-IV also offers multiple self-service features, in multiple languages, including C4Yourself for applicants and recipients, online access for service providers, job opportunity search capabilities, and online help.

C-IV's Web-based eligibility system is the first of its kind in the country—the first proven, fully implemented, integrated Web-based eligibility system based on flexible, open standards. It meets the needs of human services agencies and the individuals and families they serve faster, more completely, and more cost effectively than any other option and provides the most innovative self-service capabilities.