State of Ohio Workflow and Knowledge Enterprise Solution (WAKE): Canton District Pilot

Governor's Office of Health Transformation and Department of Administrative Services

2017 NASCIO STATE IT RECOGNITION AWARD NOMINATION FOR CROSS-BOUNDARY COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

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Executive Summary

Ohio is the seventh largest state in the United States in population, operating with a biennial budget of $96.8 billion and serving more than 11.5 million+ citizens. In Ohio, administration of health and human services is spread across state and local county organizations and counties have significant autonomy in the way services are delivered to their consumers. As in many other states, Ohio faces various challenges across a changing health and human services landscape that reinforces the need to increase program efficiency, program accuracy, and work collaboratively across state and local agencies to deliver critical services to customers.

To address these challenges, the Governor's Office of Health Transformation (OHT) initiated a modernization project in 2013 to simplify state and local responsibility for eligibility determination, starting with updating its legacy eligibility systems. Throughout the Ohio Benefits technology project, the state successfully employed boundary-breaking approaches, which utilized cutting-edge tools and resources, encouraged partnerships among multiple state agency partners, and promoted cross-county collaboration to improve services, strengthen data security, and increase program efficacy. This included identifying and implementing innovative technology solutions in an effort to introduce business processes that streamline and standardize health and human services delivery across autonomous counties.

In 2016, the state developed and successfully launched the Ohio Workflow and Knowledge Enterprise (WAKE) solution across 20 counties that comprise Ohio's Canton District. This shared enterprise document management system is hosted and maintained by the state, and allows for seamless information sharing, document scanning and workflows across county lines. Consumers within those counties are now able to call into the same telephone line, regardless of residency, and submit verification and other critical documentation with ease, without having to walk into an office. Case workers from any of the 20 participating counties are able to retrieve and view those documents, and can process Medicaid intakes and renewals over the phone without the hassle of sending notices or waiting for additional documentation to be returned.

During the pilot, nearly 80,833 consumer calls were answered. This successful pilot is the first milestone in the state's journey and vision of bringing all 88 counties together to use one, unified enterprise workflow, data and document solution. Moreover, this solution allows for a more efficient county case worker experience. Through standardization and technology-enabled processes, WAKE has simplified and streamlined eligibility determination for Ohio's citizens. Furthermore, the counties achieved significant cost savings through the standardization and increased output of its staff from streamlined processes.

1. Concept

Business Problem

Ohio's ever-changing and challenging healthcare environment illuminates the state's need to improve the delivery of health and human services program benefits and implement an enterprise document management system (WAKE) to reduce costs, increase efficiency, and streamline service delivery.

Ohio operates in a state-supervised, county-administered system to deliver cash, food and medical assistance benefits. Each county has authority to manage these programs independently and the ways in which the programs are administered differ significantly from county to county. In the past, consumers were required to seek services only in the county in which they resided and county organizations were generally not able to share resources across county boundaries. Differing applications submitted by both clients and qualified entities, coupled with county case workers recording information in multiple systems, created data gaps that required painstaking and time-consuming resolution for accurate benefits to be paid. Consumers oftentimes had to endure long wait times to speak to a county case worker, and/or to have simple case processing actions completed. This led to confusion, delayed benefits, and additional work for county case workers who had to filter through multiple applications and backlogs created by consumers who did not receive timely service.

Moreover, not all counties had the same technologies and document imaging capabilities at their fingertips. Some counties had invested in sophisticated document imaging and workflow solutions, while other smaller counties still utilized paper applications and did not scan or maintain a digital repository of the massive amount of documentation that was sought and returned by consumers each day. Realistically, with 88 counties in Ohio, there were 88 different types of document management processes across the state. Counties also had their own classification or "taxonomies" that determined how documentation and information was stored. The lack of standardization made requesting case data, when a consumer transfer/moved across county lines, incredibly confusing and time-consuming.

With the onset of a new eligibility system, the need for streamlining and better collaboration and communication across county and state agencies to deliver services became critical to the overall success of the state's modernization project and effort. The state strongly believes that standardizing workflow, taxonomies, and utilizing innovative technology solutions best serves all county case workers and enables them to help one another achieve the same goals. The implementation of the WAKE solution provided an opportunity for the state to be creative and determine how best to address the problem of timely processing and providing a positive and productive experience for both consumers and workers alike.

Solution – Ohio Workflow and Knowledge Enterprise Solution (WAKE): Canton District Pilot

In an effort to streamline health and human services program delivery, standardize business processes, and improve client outcomes, several work groups of county directors and county case workers were formed to foster a collaborative approach for the development of Ohio's County Shared Service model. To begin, county leadership joined together to establish a collective vision and a set of guiding principles to lead the counties and the state through this effort. The program, known collectively as County Shared Services (CSS), and its work groups focused on the development of standards/best practices and the streamlining of business processes and supporting technology.

The Ohio model is a client-centered system that is responsive to the changing needs of its clients. Common methods, shared workload, and an integrated technology platform enable counties to improve operational efficiency and deliver a common client experience. Ohio, like many states has variability in the size of its counties, available resources, population mix, and the technology available to them. This variability has resulted in each county developing their own methods to serve their customers. CSS is a key initiative in Ohio's journey. Central to this journey, is the commitment from county leadership and the state to implement a shared vision and common business processes. Moreover, this also eases the burden on state trainers in creating multiple versions of the same training materials, since standardization would also assist in consistent training and faster onboarding of new case workers.

Several foundational technology solutions are utilized to support the CSS program. These include a centralized enterprise document management system that is tightly integrated with the Ohio Benefits system platform. By providing a single platform that will automate the secure collection, retrieval, sharing, and storing of statewide case/client data and providing transparency into key business processes, counties can deliver services to clients more quickly and help ensure that federal mandates for timeliness, accuracy, and participation are met. With this initiative came the standardization of taxonomies, and a recognition of shared terms and classifications to help make searching and sorting documentation much faster and more efficient. Additionally, a single telephone line with robust Interactive Voice Response (IVR) also streamlines client accessibility and reduces wait times for case processing and the distribution of notices. By sharing these services, county offices have experienced faster application processing times and increased productivity from their staff.

In 2016, the state developed and successfully launched the Ohio Workflow and Knowledge Enterprise (WAKE) solution across the 20 counties that comprise the Canton District within Ohio. Consumers within those counties were able to call into the same telephone line and county case workers, within the Canton District, are able to work collaboratively across county lines to streamline case processing and deliver cost-effective, high quality services to all clients. To support this effort, a targeted communications strategy and messaging campaign was employed to educate both case

workers and clients about the new system, and to encourage faster adoption and buy-in by showcasing the various benefits. Consumers were informed and impressed by the ability to get a live case worker on the phone who is able to resolve their issue and/or answer their question in real-time. The ability for WAKE to view case data across county lines was also helpful for the more complex situations when you have household members living in nursing facilities or homes that are in different jurisdictions. The successful pilot of the new, standardized WAKE's solution could be replicated in the future to ultimately include all 88 counties. Two additional virtual Shared Services Groups are slated to "go live" in the near term and utilize the same solution.

2. Significance of WAKE

The cross-county partnerships and state collaboration forged as part of the state's WAKE pilot and overall health and human services transformation initiative has demonstrated the state's ability to adapt and try new processes to help address complex health and human services challenges. Public assistance consumers are a variable and dynamic population, and the state should be nimble and ready to adapt to their clients' needs.

While it may have initially been easier for individual counties to create and manage their own business procedures, the CSS collaboration effort demonstrates the significant benefits that synergies provide by sharing resources and simplifying where and how case processing is managed. With the implementation of WAKE, significant cost savings were realized through process optimization and standardization. Moreover, CSS has been fundamental in setting the standard for business process efficiency in Ohio. For example, one of the counties in the pilot had a technology incident wherein all of their public assistance systems were down. However, due to the boundary-crossing nature of WAKE, no consumers were impacted by the outage and they were still able to apply for and receive benefits without any disruption in service. WAKE makes it possible for other counties to assist and complete business processes. It was a seamless adjustment for a situation that ordinarily would have caused significant, negative outcomes.

County case workers from the Canton District Pilot indicate that processing Medicaid applications and renewals on the phone was much easier than paper applications. Of the nearly 80,833 calls that were answered, with only an average five minute wait time, 50% of calls were able to have real-time eligibility completed as well as real-time eligibility renewals. Case workers appreciate being able to complete cases without having to wait for verification documents, which previously increased the consumers wait time for benefits.

Intakes and renewals comprise the bulk of county case workers' tasks, and normally require a lot of time and diligence to complete. CSS has assisted with these efforts and has made it much easier to complete these tasks in a timely manner. County directors have also become more open to sharing resources (case workers) and leveraging help when backlogs are created during times of increased applications. Counties can commit

more staff members to assist on the telephones or other workflows to augment staffing that had to be re-routed for other tasks to maintain attentive consumer service.

3. Impact of WAKE

Amidst a broader health services transformation, Ohio strategically demonstrates cross-boundary partnerships and inter-agency collaboration to streamline health and human services program implementation and better serve consumers. As part of these collaborative efforts, WAKE has benefited the state in the following ways:

- Reduction of siloed service delivery and differing experiences and communication between state, county, and consumers for intakes and renewals
- Improved avenues for customer data sharing and communication across counties and agencies, especially during open enrollment or emergencies
- Leveraging technology to improve access to care for specific, under-served populations
- Greater collaboration and resource-sharing among county directors and leadership, which helps drive timeliness metrics across the entire state

The CSS model and the Canton District Pilot, utilizing centralized technology and county resource sharing, has resulted in improved customer service, efficient application processing and increased staff productivity. Other benefits of this IT optimization are cost savings through standardization and associated reduction in excess resource costs due to workload sharing across counties. WAKE can also provide a launching pad for other technology and business process initiatives aimed at improving efficiencies and improving client experiences in other program areas. Counties are able to develop and implement standardized taxonomies and workflows with a singular focus on a common client experience. Other states have reached out to Ohio leadership with questions about their approach and implementation journey.

As a result of WAKE and its pilot, county workers have more time to focus on helping clients and their families realize improved outcomes and self-sustainability, and are no longer sifting through documentation and using outdated technology. As of early 2017, nearly 52 counties have committed to this new "shared services" model and the state looks forward to implementing more pilots in the future.