



Enterprise Memorandum of Understanding (eMOU) for Inter-Agency Data Sharing

NASCIO Award Category
Cross-Boundary Collaboration & Partnerships
State of Illinois

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Health and human service programs are often hindered by a lack of information sharing. Too often citizens are forced to call multiple agencies to find information or sign up for services. This lack of communication in Illinois created redundancies, where citizens were required to provide the same information multiple times to receive assistance.

In April 2016, thirteen state agencies that are members of the state's health and human service enterprise signed an enterprise Memorandum of Understanding (eMOU) to encourage inter-agency data sharing. At the time of the signing, state agencies operated within a "siloed" data structure that only allowed agencies to view customer information related to their own agency-specific programs. Illinois realized that the most valuable insight comes from analyzing data across systems and programs, both at the aggregate level and during client processing.

Since the eMOU's inception, twenty-two agencies, boards and commissions have become parties to the agreement, opening opportunities to share data in an effort to better serve the people of Illinois, while identifying potential redundancies and cost savings to the taxpayers of Illinois.

CONCEPT

PROBLEM

Illinois operated under a “siloes” data structure for many decades, which prevented agencies from sharing data. This impeded the ability to aggregate and synthesize information or employ predictive analytics for early intervention and prevention. Under this model, data collected by the state was stored in separate agencies and sometimes in disconnected systems within agencies. Residents had to contact multiple agencies to find information or sign up for services. The process often required a client to complete a paper form, and then physically travel to the offices of another agency to fill out another paper form with identical information. This was an inefficient system that wasted the limited resources of the state and created a frustrating experience for residents.

ANALYSIS

To address this problem, a team from Illinois looked to other states for examples of how to encourage inter-agency data sharing. Indiana had implemented a new inter-agency data sharing model, but their approach was time-consuming. The team then looked to Virginia, which had implemented an enterprise-wide data sharing agreement. Illinois’ current version of the eMOU used the Virginia model as a platform to build upon. After several months of collaboration by the agency General Counsels, CIOs, and the Office of the State Chief Information Security Officer, the state was able to refine the model for Illinois.

SIGNIFICANCE

SOLUTION

In order to address these problems, Illinois built an enterprise wide data sharing agreement between Illinois agencies that was designed to:

- enable customer-centric service delivery, providing information tailored to a citizen's needs;
- assist effective strategic policymaking, offering executives and front-line staff trustworthy data to make informed decisions; and
- encourage efficient program management, leading to increased productivity of state employees.

This customer-centric, effective, and efficient service delivery model required a major shift in how the State of Illinois operate. Specifically, Illinois had to embrace a comprehensive effort to share data among agencies and state partners.

The agreement established an operational committee that facilitated data sharing requests among the agency partners. The committee is comprised of the state's Chief Data Officer and appointed senior staff from the original signatory agencies. The agreement was created and signed in the State of Illinois within seven months. The speed at which the agreement was completed can be attributed to the strong support from the Office of the Governor, Illinois Department of Innovation & Technology executive leadership, and agency directors. The agreement was viewed as instrumental in Illinois' ongoing IT transformation.

IMPACT

The creation and signing of this agreement was a positive step forward for the State of Illinois and highlighted the desire of the Governor's Office, state leaders and the agencies to improve the lives of Illinois residents. Since implementation, Illinois has seen five distinct benefits from the eMOU on data sharing. Specifically, the eMOU: (1) provides structure and consistency around data sharing; (2) increases the speed of information sharing; (3) creates an internal clearinghouse for data; (4) delineates timelines for sharing of information; and (5) uses National Institute for Standards and Testing (NIST) security standards to ensure the highest level of data protection.

The agreement provides a legal foundation by which participating agencies can easily share data across state programs. By signing the agreement agencies adopt the legal, security and data governance framework in advance of any data sharing requests. Unlike agency-to-agency data sharing agreements, once a data request is made, participating agencies can focus on the technical components of data sharing; as the legal components have already been agreed upon.

Agencies in Illinois realized that the most valuable insight comes from analyzing data across systems and programs, both at the aggregate level for policymaking and on the frontlines for immediate decision support. Establishment of the eMOU was a monumental step forward for health and human services data analytics at the State of Illinois. With this level of sharing among state agencies, Illinois could begin unlocking the wealth of data citizens entrust to the state to better serve their needs and support their successes.

Through the use of the eMOU, the operational committee has been able complete the agreement to share data between agencies in an average of 45 days, which is an improvement in the 6 to 12 month average utilizing the prior methodology.

IMPROVEMENTS

To ensure support for the agreement, educating the workforce and managing change is essential. Taking the time to educate all levels of staff before an agreement is signed helps lay the foundation for swift adoption from state and agency executive leaders to managers and front-line staff. Additionally, an implementation plan, creating a roadmap for how and when agencies will begin implementing this tool is critical.

The eMOU has a provision for being amended through the operational committee which allows clarifications and other changes to be made without the need for lengthy one on one legal discussions with twenty-two General Councils.

REFERENCES

Listed below are external and internal resources that were used to accomplish the data sharing agreement:

- The State of Indiana - [Article](#)
- The State of Virginia – [One Pager](#) - [Presentation](#)
- [The Illinois Department of Employment Security](#)
- [The State of Washington](#)