NASCIO State IT Recognition Awards

Digital Government: Cross-Boundary Collaboration & Partnerships

Wisconsin Department of Transportation PARTNER Project

Project Initiation: 2018
Project Completion: 2019

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Executive Summary

Wisconsin DOT's new PARTNER Project replaced a decade old system used by WI dealers and lenders to electronically process titles, registrations and liens. PARTNER modernized the user experience while expanding processing capabilities and performance. PARTNER also opens the door for additional vendors to offer services in Wisconsin giving dealers and lenders additional options.

Wisconsin's public-private partnership allows businesses to process title and/or registration and update the state vehicle-driver database immediately, through both vendor and state web applications. With the expanded program, more consumers can receive their title and license plate products quickly, law enforcement can access more current information for vehicle registrations, and the state can reallocate resources toward other programs. The state's web applications for dealerships and financial institutions are free of charge to facilitate Wisconsin's legal mandate for these business types to process their own title transactions. Additional system restrictions, bond requirements and reports improve consumer protection from privacy violations and fraud. Over 4700 businesses process titles for the public, including motor vehicle dealerships inside and outside of Wisconsin, financial institutions, independent title processors, fleet owners, and municipal agencies. Over 1000 businesses process license plate renewals, including grocery stores, gas stations, vehicle emission test centers, and self-service kiosk machines.

Project Narrative (Concept, Significance and Impact)

Concept

For over twenty years Wisconsin has partnered with two vendors to provide title processing software services to dealers and third parties. During that time several new vendors expressed interest in offering services in Wisconsin but due to technical and support limitations Wisconsin was not able to onboard any new vendors. This duopoly was no longer sustainable and allowing additional vendors to offer services in Wisconsin was the impetus for the PARTNER project. Along with that objective, the PARTNER project also overhauled the state provided electronic titling software service which needed several enhancements.

The project was a collaboration between WisDOT and NIC Wisconsin, a wholly owned subsidiary of NIC USA. WIN uses a transaction-based funding model to provide digital solutions to government agencies. For over two and a half years Wisconsin and NIC Wisconsin developed a new interface to enforce third party title and registration processing rules and requirements. During the development WisDOT identified several opportunities to deter fraud and add integrity to the program. Two such opportunities were the creation of an on-demand electronic temp plate system and new certification process that requires all users to pass a proficiency exam before they are able to access the system.
Because many of our web services were changed for this project, the vendors currently offering services had to modify their coding to accommodate our updates. This was not an easy effort and required significant coordination between WisDOT, NIC Wisconsin and the vendor IT teams. NIC Wisconsin continues to host weekly technical support meetings for the vendors and WisDOT has regular contact with vendor managers for overall program support.

Prior to implementation WisDOT and WIN performed outreach to over 6000 businesses to notify them of the upcoming changes and requirement to sign up in the new system. When PARTNER rollout began in August 2019 over 75% of those organizations had signed up in the new system and were able to be

converted. The new electronic contracts and sign up process required the user to complete several steps which made a 75% sign up compliance an incredible achievement.

Significance and Impact

The implementation of PARTNER produced several efficiencies and cost reductions. The expanded transactions types that third parties can now process caused a reduction of applications mailed to WisDOT for manual processing. Furthermore, several new self-service options have greatly reduced the back-and-forth communication between users and WisDOT. The new certification requirements will ensure users are properly trained which will reduce the volume of corrections WisDOT processes.

The PARTNER system saves state labor costs in several areas. Increasing title and registration processing capabilities in the private sector reduces state title processing costs in that auditing and support require less resources than processing. An additional help desk at NIC Wisconsin that provides software support for the state's web applications diverts some phone calls and email messages previously answered by the state.

Expanded training resources and programming safeguards in the software decrease the number of agent processing errors for the state to correct. The state saves $50,000 annually in inventory costs by replacing cardboard temporary plates with print-on-demand temporary plates, as well as the labor and postage costs to ship them. New automatic collection of temporary license plate registration fees ensures that the state receives this revenue from businesses that did not all comply with the law previously.

Expanding the transactional capabilities increases the volume of transactions to be processed electronically by third parties. This expansion provides an immediate benefit to help WisDOT provide customers with the best services possible. All electronically processed transactions immediately begin the product issuance process which gets the product to the customer quicker. This also eliminates the wait-time they would have previously encountered while waiting for their transactions to be processed manually by WisDOT staff.

Current services that benefit from these changes are public facing renewal options such as Kiosks, walk-in based processing centers, Non-Wisconsin temporary plate issuance organizations, and Wisconsin dealers. While not yet known, the potential exists for new business types to participate in the program with the addition of new vendors.

Within 6 months, WisDOT successfully onboarded over 6000 organizations and 12,000 associated users. This consisted of the execution of electronic contracts, organization sign-up, user role assignments and successful completion of certification tests. Success was measured by the collaborative efforts of WisDOT and vendors to meet the agreed upon implementation deadline.

New system features and reporting tools have helped provide accountability to WisDOT and vendors by identifying trends so organizations can be contacted quickly for remedial training when necessary.

Within two months of completing the pilot and rollout, third parties were processing over 100,000 title and registrations transactions per month. WisDOT expects that number to grow as vendors continue to expand into new business markets and add customers.

When developing this system, a "Focus Forward" approach was always present. This approach ensured we prepared for future integration with other internal business areas, as well as integration with new vendors as they enter the marketplace and offer their software options. By controlling the flow of information and applying established business rules and requirements to new vendors, WisDOT reduces risk and support by ensuring each vendor is offering a uniform set of services.

The modern accessibility and implemented business rules included in eMV PARTNER provide for a more pleasant user experience. Such modern/responsive design features include required field labels, dropdown fields that auto-adjust to size, hover text/help bubbles, and color scheme. Also, several up-front data checks were placed throughout each screen so that any issues with the vehicle, customer, or registration will display any applicable detailed messages upon entering data.