

NASCIO 2017 State IT Recognition Award Nomination

Title: myCOMPASS PA Mobile App

Category: Government to Citizen

State: Pennsylvania

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Project Initiation and End Dates: 2016 – March 2017



pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



“...providing quality customer service while modernizing state government operations throughout the commonwealth.”

Executive Summary

Mobile apps and services offer an unparalleled channel for state governments to connect with their constituents. Pennsylvania analyzed their user population and determined that more than 80% of their target users already use smartphones regularly – a number that is progressively climbing with increased smartphone adoption. Furthermore, as of January 2017, Americans are more likely to have data-enabled smartphones than broadband lines coming into their primary place of residency¹. Mobile phones have become a lifeline for those with low income particularly when a stable home residence cannot be assumed. Uses for mobile phones are numerous:

- Researching health conditions and educational resources
- Job searching and employment opportunities
- Directions to health providers and assistance offices
- Obtain reminders on important benefits cycle due dates

Users of mobile phones can remain highly productive and connected to valuable information while going about their lives.

Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) honed in on its widely-adopted, “COMPASS”² web platform and enabled several new modules and components to support the coming mobile wave. In this nomination, we discuss the innovative approach to development and groundbreaking convenience features that found their

way into **myCOMPASS PA**, a suite of iOS and Android mobile “apps” that bring important Medicaid public assistance information to its citizens on the go. By harnessing the popularity of Apple iTunes App Store and Google Play App Store for app download, Pennsylvania is able to reach a wide audience using download destinations comfortable to most Americans.

myCOMPASS PA has improved customer service, reduced processing times, and increased efficiencies while maintaining a high level of quality in serving the department’s clients and the commonwealth’s taxpayers. The successful phased implementation of myCOMPASS PA has had tremendous success in driving home the mission for the Governor’s Office of Transformation, Innovation, Management and Efficiency (GO-TIME) by engaging the citizens and expanding access to quality health care using modern platforms.

*“Since the inception of GO-TIME, state agencies and employees have continued to develop new and exciting ways to make Pennsylvania’s government work more efficiently,” said Governor Wolf. “The myCOMPASS PA mobile app is another way in which my administration is providing quality customer service while modernizing state government operations throughout the commonwealth.”*³

By embracing a citizen-first design philosophy, Pennsylvania created a visually fresh set of new app experiences that are already improving case management compliance while reducing operational costs on a variety of dimensions that are discussed further in this nomination form.

¹ <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/12/evolution-of-technology/>

² <https://www.compass.state.pa.us/Compass.Web/public/cmphome>

³ <https://www.governor.pa.gov/go-time-department-of-human-services-launch-a-mobile-app-for-benefits/>



Concept

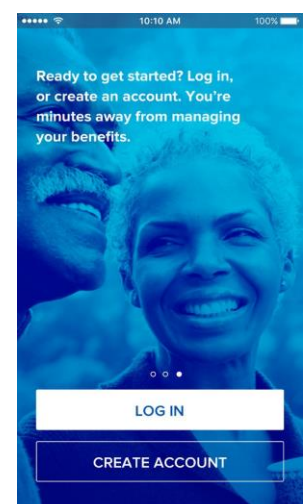
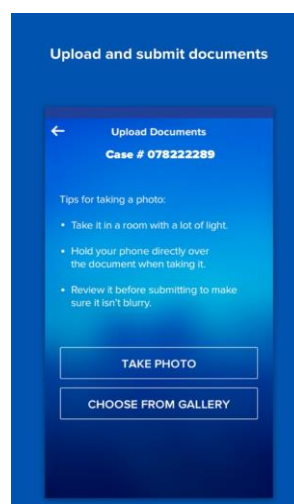
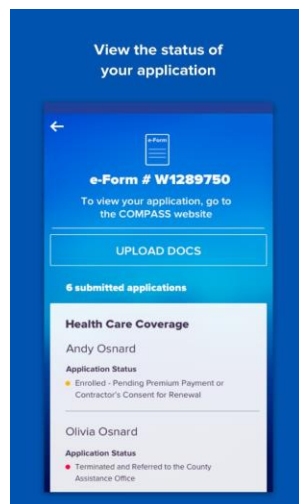
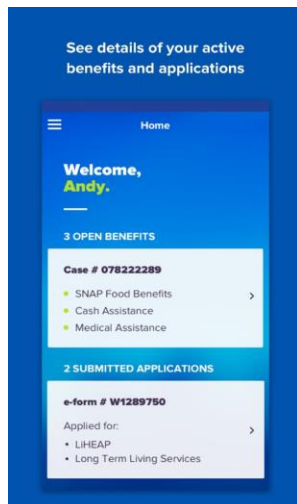
Process (Genesis, Design, and Implementation)

From project inception to first release, Pennsylvania and its technical services partner worked alongside real users: those who had to physically come to county offices to finish the application process because they lacked access to a computer for self-service portal access. A truly cross-functional team made up of user experience, design, copy, QA, business experience and engineering carefully studied the habits of target users to inform a more intuitive app design. By applying iterative, feedback-driven processes, the team moved quickly from designs to paper prototypes to functioning iOS and Android apps, all while repeatedly validating decisions with users. Pennsylvania used a rapid, agile process that took the product from conceptual screens -- through design and development -- to public app store availability in less than six months.

myCOMPASS PA has deployed commonly used functions that were requested by users. These functions were chosen from citizen-provided feedback and inputs from focus groups, community partners, and constituents throughout the commonwealth.

Background and Context

Pennsylvania has a unique challenge in its overall scale: over 2.8 million clients demand fast access to benefit information. In general, citizens were seeking fast, simple, and efficient interactions with state services but were often challenged by complex forms, logical follow-up and status change alerts, and transportation challenges in accessing county assistance offices. In particular, services for low-income individuals dealing with payments or income assistance -- where delays could result in families doing without proper nutrition or shelter -- were of significant importance and failed



to meet the expectations set by private industry experiences. Pennsylvania felt that mobile users, particularly those with a well-designed, highly usable smartphone app, could break through that stigma and have more satisfying exchanges with the department.

Selection

In late 2015, DHS proposed the myCOMPASS PA effort on the grounds that the DHS eligibility services mobile application would align with the Pennsylvania Governor's Office of Transformation, Innovation, Management and Efficiency (GO-TIME)⁴ mission as well as the secretary's vision of providing improved customer service.

Project Management Approach

As stated earlier, the myCOMPASS PA effort focused on user-centric design principles; to achieve this, the entire group of stakeholders and integrators followed an agile-based methodology that broke down requirements gathering, design, and implementation phases into 3-4 weeks, which converged with a comprehensive series of field usability tests as well as traditional end-user acceptance testing.

Benefit Assessment

DHS estimates that 30% of its benefit recipients will use the mobile application by the end of the first year of implementation. Once implemented, myCOMPASS PA is estimated to save an average of \$3.2 million per year in the years following implementation by reducing mail processing time, call center calls, postage, and printing. Specifically, the financial benefits and cost savings will be realized due to the following factors, all of which have a per-unit cost that has been submitted to the Governor under a program ROI justification:

- Reducing calls to the call center
- Gaining efficiencies at the county assistance offices (CAOs)
- Lowering the costs related to processing incoming and outgoing mail
- Lowering the costs of printing

Accessibility and Security

Throughout the implementation of myCOMPASS PA, we took utmost care in meeting – through ADA and WACG standard adherence – and then exceeding – by carefully studying user habits in field offices – the needs of those with visual or physical impairment. With the technology choice picked – downloadable app store apps – we thoroughly explored how users would use our apps using screen readers, text to speech functions enabled on their devices, and operate under low-lighting conditions. While browser-based mobile web experiences provide good accessibility control, as we learned during the myCOMPASS PA project, so-called “native apps” provide complete control over text, sound, and graphical components and so give end users a solution that works for the needs of all users, not just those with unaffected senses.

Security is something that all users are sensitive to, particularly as it pertains to user's privacy. The backend (COMPASS) infrastructure is secured using the department's enterprise security solution for single sign-on. This single login gives constituents access to a wide collection of other agency registries, making it a truly universal account. Within the app, we support the highest permissible levels of data encryption; no data is maintained between app sessions. For example, any images of documents that are taken inside of the app are kept only in memory so that when the app closes for any reason, that data is permanently wiped.

Communications Plan

A key benefit of offering myCOMPASS PA as a downloadable mobile app from Apple iTunes App Store and Google Play is an ability to broadly distribute in a manner consistent with citizens' other favorite smartphone tools, games, and services. Beyond the app stores, the department formulated a multi-channel communications plan combining a digital footprint with a phone and print approach. Digital avenues include social media and a clever redirection from COMPASS web to App Stores for smartphone users (for those using a supported device unaware of myCOMPASS PA but found the COMPASS website through a search engine). “Traditional” and physical outlets include partner outreach

⁴ <https://www.governor.pa.gov/go-time/>

meetings and town hall sessions, myCOMPASS PA highlight leaflets and renewal packet insertions for beneficiaries, and colorful posters and reminder cards provided inside assistance offices. When users have questions about the mobile app, a special line is available through a dedicated call center where trained professionals can help troubleshoot typical smartphone issues.

The department went one step further with myCOMPASS PA: it built in a key feedback loop. Users can submit feature requests or report issues through the app stores and receive a response from the state. Enhancement ideas are explored and prioritized through the agile process; many of these ideas are then promoted into the myCOMPASS PA product backlog and considered for future releases.

Pennsylvania conducted a comprehensive change management program that included both Office of Income Management (leadership and program management) staff as well as citizen-facing operations staff feedback to build a marketing and communication plan. The communications plan included live and recorded training sessions guiding staff in how to explain the benefits of the mobile program to prospective users and the power of social media like Facebook and Twitter. It included e-mail blasts from senior DHS leadership notifying staff of general availability and program importance. Additionally, a wave of attention-grabbing, myCOMPASS PA posters were hung in CAOs and inserts were included in citizen benefit renewal packets encouraging signing up for user name and password. This marketing push was driven and guided by inputs and suggestions from key mobile effort stakeholders that took place over a month of trials and focus groups.

It was by combining a digital and physical channel approach that the department could educate and inform the broadest audience possible with a benefits-first communications style. All told, thousands of state staff and tens of thousands of citizens became aware of the digital transformation underway in the DHS.

Significance

DHS believes the myCOMPASS PA effort will have three significant effects on the population:

1. myCOMPASS PA will save millions of dollars per year after once all functions are fully implemented by reducing mail processing time, manual

information entry, call center calls, postage, and printing.

2. myCOMPASS PA will allow individuals to enjoy a new level of self-sufficiency around case benefits management.
3. myCOMPASS PA shows the governor's commitment to modernizing state government operations in order to provide quality customer service.

Scope

Although myCOMPASS PA should be considered a multi-year, staged rollout of functionality and enhancements to enterprise IT services for Pennsylvania, at the time of this writing, Phase 1 (v1.0) is available for public consumption. What appears below is a synopsis of its key features:

- Create a **My COMPASS Account** and gain access to a variety of mobile- and non-mobile information gateways provided by Pennsylvania; this encourages greater digital channel access and less time in the CAO.
- My COMPASS Account assistance allows user to retrieve a **forgotten user name** or reset their password so as to reduce calls to the call center with login credential inquiries.
- View **application status** and benefit details along with important benefit lifecycle reminders if currently enrolled; both reducing phone inquiries.
- **Upload verification documents** allows users to take a picture of important identification materials or proof of income change documents. This seeks to reduce the #1 cause of CAO trips thereby reducing staff demand and wasted citizen travel costs and save citizens time.
- **Report demographic changes** to their case details, which reduces waste and errors associated with incorrect address or phone number information. Ability to modify utility-related costs or income will be available with Release 2 coming in August 2017.
- **Broadcasting messaging**, a section of the app that is available before logging in, displays pertinent DHS, geography-sensitive information to citizens and communicates alerts even when the main COMPASS system is unavailable.
- View a **concise, mobile-friendly directory** of pertinent department resources and program descriptions.

- Ability to complete the **Semi-Annual Renewal process** – a state first for a mobile app – is coming in Release 2. This is expected to drastically reduce state time expended on manual form data entry and follow-ups. Also available in August 2017 via Release 2 will be the ability to modify utility-related costs or income.

Innovation

myCOMPASS PA is one of the very first design-first mobile app suites produced by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; it is also one of the first agile delivered technology efforts sponsored by DHS. State of the art usability testing protocols and methods were employed to bring about the most user-friendly app experience possible. The apps are optimized for modern as well as less capable smartphone hardware made available through the Lifeline program and are typical free or low cost handset options provided by local wireless carriers.

Strategy and Goal Alignment

The myCOMPASS PA project has enabled DHS to improve on three key areas boosting its operational efficiency and upholding its core principles:

1. Improving Customer Service

Applicants receive benefits sooner than they received them in the past because of the improved processing times. An applicant can easily see the status of an application on myCOMPASS PA and confirm the department received the submitted documents. Recipients now have a better understanding of the status of their benefits and the department can quickly process their changes. As a result, appeals due to lost documents will be reduced.

⁵ <http://www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/telephoneassistanceprograms/>

Quantitative Performance

myCOMPASS PA Activity (As of 4/3/2017)	Reduction to Date
Verification doc submission	27,454
Verification doc submission (postage)	10,901
Account or case assistance call	225,100
Total Savings to Date	\$910,000

2. Increasing Program Integrity

The household verification process is a core component to Human Service eligibility determination and myCOMPASS PA streamlines this process by enabling individuals to capture and upload their verification documents from their mobile phone. Additional electronic data exchanges are used for automatic verification of information. This helps to proactively avoid or uncover cases of fraud.

3. Increasing Staff Productivity

myCOMPASS PA has increased productivity of the workers allowing them to spend more time on their core mission of helping clients. The increase in applicant/recipient interactions with the DHS via myCOMPASS PA reduces the cost of handling paper submissions and sending out paper correspondence and notices.

Impact

Under the myCOMPASS PA project, the DHS Office of Income Management is making enhancements to business processes and strategic changes to the organization and its facilities. We've embraced tools like Splunk Enterprise and Google Analytics to anonymously monitor the success rates of key mobile app functions (submission of verification documents), system responsiveness, and user retention. Furthermore, our monitoring tools shed light on screens where users are able to zip through forms and fields once considered too complex without guidance from a state employee.

The results include improved customer service, reduced processing times; and increased efficiencies while maintaining a high level of quality in serving the department's clients and the commonwealth's taxpayers. The successful



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phased implementation of myCOMPASS PA is having tremendous success in driving home the mission for GO-TIME by engaging the citizens and expanding access to quality health care using modern computing platforms.

Conclusion

In just five months since its launch, myCOMPASS PA has had a significant effect on how DHS executes its technology projects, collaborates with its technical services partners to execute those projects, and use state of the art mobile capabilities to connect with its constituents.

Reduce CAO visits

Availability of functions commonly handled by CAOs – while citizens are on the go – has reduced the frequency of trips.

Reduce call center calls

Access to important DHS resource information and ability to perform case information inquiry and My COMPASS Account management has improved citizen self-sufficiency without having to call in.

Improve caseworker efficiency

High mobile adoption has decreased the time spent by state staff in scanning and uploading documentation and performing case-related inquiries, thus freeing up their time for higher priority tasks.

Improve case processing time

Citizens are able to easily capture, index, and upload documents, with automated validations and processing with minimal manual intervention. Faster processing of documents means faster benefits access.

Incorporate Green Practices

The department has become a green organization by reducing the use of paper, and reducing the energy needed to process and transport paper. This has allowed the department to leverage grant funding for green initiatives to help implement process and technology changes.