



Award Category: Operational Efficiency

State: State of Ohio

Agency: Ohio Department of Administrative Services, Ohio Department of Medicaid, Ohio Department of Job and Family Services and Ohio Department of Children and Youth

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Project Title: Change for the Better

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

Embracing change is essential for fostering growth and achieving improvement, leading to positive outcomes for all stakeholders. High performing human service agencies acknowledge the necessity of continuous innovation to enhance the experience of their customers and to improve case management, ultimately delivering more effective and efficient services.

To better support Ohio's benefit recipients and caseworkers, the state launched the groundbreaking **Change for the Better** project under the Ohio Benefits Program. This innovative initiative allows the Ohio Benefits system to seamlessly process reported changes through automation, eliminating the need for human intervention.



By expanding the No Touch Process, beyond initial applications to also include change applications, this project ensures **compliance with policy and timeliness by automatically processing household situation changes**. Impressively, it has freed caseworkers from the laborious task of manually processing **over 3.8 million reported household changes** since its inception.

The Ohio Benefits Program initiated a data-driven analysis to evaluate caseworker and beneficiary experiences in conjunction with policy guidelines from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services, and Administration for Children and Families. The analysis captured the number of changes reported across various application data areas, assisting in determining where automation would be the most impactful. A significant outcome of this analysis was the identification of opportunities to leverage existing No Touch automated processing for effective data reconciliation of reported changes and policies. As a result of the assessment, the team determined that the primary objective of the project would be to reduce the manual processing of household changes reported by applicants, ensuring timely processing and improving the No Touch success rate for essential benefits.

By harnessing the power of data-driven analysis, the program ensures that decisions are made based on accurate and comprehensive information. This approach aids in pinpointing trends and identifying areas for improvement, which ultimately leads to more informed and impactful policy decisions.



Change for the Better directly aligns with NASCIO's 2025 State CIO TOP 10 Priorities -- legacy modernization (priority #5) for business process improvement. This visionary perspective is grounded in an approach that prioritizes people and is guided by data.

IDEA



The Opportunity

Across the country counties faced a lot of challenges hurdles during the Public Health Emergency Unwinding process. Changes that were not mandated to be reported during the pandemic, became an important aspect of unwinding. Most notably, workers were inundated with various tasks. Surges in caseloads posed hurdles during the unwinding process. To alleviate stress on beneficiaries and caseworkers, Ohio initiated the **Change for the Better** program to improve the processing of changes that are reported by residents.



Why Does It Matter?

Change for the Better is not merely an aspiration but a powerful catalyst for both people and processes. When we embrace change, we empower individuals to adapt, grow, and elevate their skills, ultimately fostering a collective shift in mindset and behavior. This transformation paves the way for innovative processes that drive meaningful progress and effective leadership. By integrating task automation, we streamline operations, resulting in significant time and cost savings that further accelerate growth and enhance efficiency.

Ohio Benefits Program leadership is passionate about implementing solutions to ensure that Ohioans are enabled to receive continued assistance benefits, while remaining compliant with policy. The Ohio Benefits Program works collaboratively with county departments of job and family services and state workers to design and implement process innovations that help redirect caseworker attention to the tasks that require processing, consequently improving timeliness. Data reconciliation within No Touch helps to achieve these goals as well.

By using research and analysis, and focusing on incremental progress, the Ohio Benefits Program team evolved to get the right level of **Change!**



State of Ohio administers Medicaid to over **3 MILLION OHIOANS** and with the pandemic we did not have the most current information.



County Department of Job and Family Services workers are **INUNDATED WITH CALLS** on top of the heavy caseloads they are already working through.



THOUSANDS OF HOUSEHOLDS are looking for benefit information, seeking to not lose coverage, all being **FUNNELED THROUGH ONLY 88** County Department of Job and Family Services offices.

IDEA



What Makes It Different?

Our No Touch solution represents a significant step forward in utilizing an existing process and amplifying it. Without adding any additional overhead to workers or ongoing costs, we were able to improve our processing of No Touch to 18 percent of households through our Change for the Better program.



Unlike projects that just focus on one area, we took a comprehensive approach and looked at the entirety of case management. We performed research and analysis to come up with additional aspects that incrementally deliver value to both Ohioans and caseworkers. The team piloted the improvements using data reconciliation to gain confidence in the system’s ability to perform these tasks correctly and then expanded the scope further in the next phase.

This capability automates processing of changes submitted electronically by Ohio citizens (e-change applications) in a way that is convenient and assists caseworkers with front-end audit capabilities. It ensures policy-driven changes are delivered through a vetted system backed by data-driven outcomes.

What Makes It Universal?

Leveraging automation to eliminate the need for repetitive tasks and to improve experiences and outcomes, is a common objective in public service. The need for efficiency is universal!

The Ohio Benefits Program is proud of the results achieved to date. The team has shared the solution in multiple cross-state forums and directly with other states who were exploring or implementing this capability. Everyone is looking for opportunities to improve efficiency and allow workers to focus their attention on other important tasks.



IMPACT



What Did the Project Make Better?

The State of Ohio has achieved significant results in automating manual tasks, reaching an automation rate of over 30 percent through the enhancement of its No Touch process. This initiative is designed to enhance the application process for benefits, automate reported changes, and systematically reduce churn. The project resulted in substantial improvements in efficiency, saving thousands of caseworker hours and improving the timeliness of applications. The **Change for the Better** project positions Ohio among the nation's first states to automate change reporting, where possible.

CHALLENGES



High volumes of reported changes created an **unmanageable backlog**



Always requiring **human intervention for all reported changes**, even when they do not impact eligibility

OUTCOMES



Automating reported changes improved processing by **over 30%**



Saved caseworkers from manually processing over **3.8 million reported household changes**

Overall, agencies can confidently ensure continuous coverage for eligible Ohioans while allowing caseworkers to allocate more time to higher-value tasks. This results in enhanced satisfaction for our customers, reduced turnover, and improved timeliness in service delivery.

IMPACT



How Do We Know?

The Ohio Benefits Program was able to measure the success of the project in realistic numbers that are tracked and reviewed on monthly basis and reported to CMS. The adoption results and stakeholder feedback are extremely positive to date. This resulted in **compliance** and **saved case workers from manually processing over 3.8 million household reported changes** since the onset of **Change for the Better** project.

33%+ ↑

Tasks Automated

18%+ ↑

No Touch Rate

172,586

Cases Revived

3,843,695

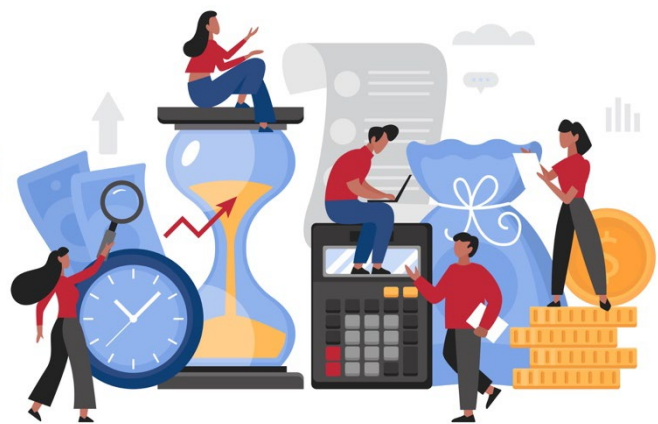
Data Changes Auto Processed



Caseworker Hours Saved

%+ ↑

Increase Application Timeliness



We have received **positive feedback from our stakeholders**, who were impressed with our recent achievements and conveyed appreciation for the team’s hard work. The positive responses highlight the impact of our efforts and motivate us to continue striving for excellence.

The population we serve has changes occur very often, processing these changes is additional work for the caseworkers. We focused on **WHAT WE CAN MAKE BETTER**, on **No Touch** with expansion and the results are amazing. **TRUE INNOVATION!**

– Roberta Schwamberger, Section Chief – Ohio Department of Medicaid, Ohio Benefits Systems

What Now?

To continue this trajectory of "**Change for the Better**," it is imperative to retrigger the No Touch process through a product upgrade feature – **Resume No Touch**. This involves resolving the remaining tasks that require human review and **retriggering automation** to further enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the No Touch Process. The Ohio Benefits Program is **EMBRACING MORE CHANGE!**