

# BUSINESS PROCESS REDESIGN IN RHODE ISLAND



92% of customers  
receive a determination  
same day



Staff processing 60%  
more cases monthly

## Client

State of Rhode Island, Department of Human Services (DHS)

## Timeframe

2013 to 2016

## Project Overview

Rhode Island was struggling economically due to the recession and downturn in manufacturing jobs. During the height of the economic downturn, the state's unemployment rate was the second highest in the nation. Like most states with expanded ACA coverage, Rhode Island DHS struggled with increased workloads, a new ACA IT system, and antiquated business processes that resulted in long wait times and many repeat visits before families received their benefits.

Other challenges faced by DHS included an FNS error rate that was among the highest in the United States and resulted in the state paying significant fines. The state had also initiated a significant change in pension rules for public employees, which led to significant turnover among DHS' more senior and experienced workers. Additionally, Rhode Island DHS' workforce is highly unionized with clerical and eligibility staff represented by one union and social case workers, supervisors, chiefs, and regional office managers represented by another union. This created an additional challenge for the state as it sought to manage its employees and increased workloads.

Rhode Island DHS wanted to improve their business processes prior to the planned 2016 implementation of a new eligibility system. They partnered with Change & Innovation Agency (CIA®) to design and implement a new and consistent business process for all six of the agency's field offices.

## Tasks

In conjunction with DHS staff, CIA assessed operations at the six field offices to understand both their standard operating practices as well as the areas where practices varied from office to office. Among other challenges, Rhode Island DHS had no scanning capability at the time. This led to the creation of complex paper flow processes that varied widely and resulted in the need for massive paper staging areas. These processes also made it difficult for the offices to implement DHS' No Wrong Door policy and limited their ability to complete cases when all verifications were received.

The main tasks performed during the lifecycle of the project included:

- + Assessment of each field office
- + Strategy sessions with leadership to develop a plan of action and approach
- + Design session with staff from all offices, all levels of workers and managers, and the policy team to design a BPR solution specific to DHS' unique structure
- + Blitz session with a smaller group of DHS team members to develop a BPR manual and consistency tools for use by eligibility staff

- + Pilot planning and preparation to implement the new processes and business model developed by the redesign team. Readiness plans were developed and planning sessions conducted with each field office in preparation for rollout
- + Crosstraining staff who were previously siloed in one eligibility program
- + Negotiations with management and union representatives to navigate worker changes with new BPR processes
- + Full implementation planning and support for rollout statewide of the new processes
- + Post-implementation reviews, assessment, and consultation, including weekly participation in BPR Steering Committee meetings
- + Extensive post-implementation support for field offices struggling with compliance to BPR model
- + Statewide implementation of a custom configured implementation of C!A's workload management solution

## Outcomes

Rhode Island DHS began transitioning in June 2014 to their new service delivery model. Outcomes of the project included:

- + Provided 92% of lobby customers with same-day service and on-demand interviewing/processing at all local offices. Rhode Island successfully eliminated the practice of scheduling appointments to conduct interviews for all new/initial applications and re-certifications from existing customers (walk-in and telephone). DHS began interviewing customers as they came in or called. In most cases, the applications and re-certifications were processed same day and customers left with completed eligibility determinations.
- + Consolidated eligibility determination or renewal actions required by a customer into a single transaction with one eligibility worker
- + Reduced the average time to process mailed in or dropped off paperwork from 35 days to five days
- + Eliminated backlog of pending actions (applications, re-certifications, changes, interim reports). All local offices processed incoming mail/work within five to six days of receipt.
- + Developed and implemented tools to bring consistency to the eligibility determination work, resulting in DHS winning FNS' Most Improved Quality Award. This allowed Rhode Island to move from paying large fines to receiving a large grant to fund further quality improvements.
- + At the end of Rhode Island's engagement with C!A, DHS' oldest case among those submitted by mail or online was five days old