

**2017 CSAC CHALLENGE AWARD SUBMISSION Alameda County**  
***One Touch: Customer Centric Distributed Work Model***

**I. OVERVIEW.** Alameda County SSA's *One-Touch Distributed Work Model* combines innovative staff utilization and process redesign with technology to deliver the highest quality customer service experience.

**II. CHALLENGES.** Alameda County is the 7<sup>th</sup> most populous county and serves the fourth largest annual social services caseload in the state of California. An internal assessment of the Department of Workforce and Benefits Administration revealed the need for substantive process redesign and innovative technology utilization to upgrade the customer service experience for our clients and optimize their long-term prospects for achieving economic self-sufficiency.

**Service Delivery.** The customer service experience for clients proved to be less than optimal with multiple hand-offs, waiting room times averaging almost 3 hours per visit and/or benefit application processing times nearing or exceeding processing guidelines. Our Intake clients had to see at least two different workers based on the specialization of those workers and hand-offs often resulted in delays in processing. Our client continuing cases were also subject to long wait times based on their worker's availability and hand-offs when they walked-in or called for service. Clients also requiring social worker support were often handed-off another time and asked to come back on separate days. The absence of a client-centered model of service diminished the satisfaction of the client and the morale of the staff on the front lines of providing service.

**Workload Management.** The absence of regular examinations of the patterns of client management, productivity across sites and the evaluation of internal best practices, impeded leadership's ability to both track incremental progress on case actions and to share the workload across available staff, resulting in delayed processing timeframes and difficulties for clients.

**III. INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS.** In response to these challenges, and in preparation for one of the most significant comprehensive systems changes in the department since the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, WBA began an initiative for a One-Touch Distributed Work Model. Within the design of this model were the objectives of: putting the customer first, opening channels of access to the customer, minimizing hand-offs, completing same day application processing and fully implementing "No Wrong Door." The innovative solutions needed to transition one of the largest eligibility staffs in the state were groundbreaking and the timeline in which these changes were made were unheard of for counties similar in size to Alameda County.

**All Aids generic Eligibility Workers:** We determined that the current specialized skill sets and expectations of our eligibility staff were making it harder for our workers to provide quick and efficient client service. The agency began negotiations with SEIU Local 1021 in January 2015, to reorganize the mostly specialized eligibility worker series into generic "all-aids" workers, thereby, allowing more flexibility to address increasingly high caseloads and a diminishing workforce, while concretely putting

the emphasis on customer service. To date, over 800 eligibility workers and supervisors have been cross-trained in all programmatic areas: CalWORKs, Medi-Cal, CalFresh, General Assistance, and Foster Care.

**Eligibility Workers available on the front lines of service:** The All-Aids worker concept enabled the movement of eligibility support to each point of access for the customer: phone calls and walk in service, along with the traditional intake and continuing case management. Clients can now reach a worker immediately with eliminated hand-offs or steps resulting in a significant increase in same day application processing for all programs.

**Social Worker accessibility to clients in need:** A more seamless experience has been created for clients facing multiple barriers to employment and / or in need of supportive services who are now capable of accessing a social worker on a far more expedited basis.

**Modernized Technology: Self-Scanning Technology** – Alameda County was the first CalWIN county to offer a CalWIN-integrated self-scanning kiosk to clients in waiting rooms to reduce processing time for client benefit applications; *QMatic* - a system of automated waiting-room check-in kiosks for clients to input their service needs for more accurate case worker appointments and shorter wait times; *Work Distribution Tool (WDT)* - a CalWIN-integrated tool was developed to increase staff capacity by eliminating work duplication, multiple email hand-offs and multiple client visits and equalizing the distribution of case work.

**IV. ORIGINALITY.** Our groundbreaking cross-training effort, elimination of hand-offs in all aspects of eligibility service and innovative technology such as the CalWIN-integrated Self Scanning Kiosk and WDT, put this project above others in the redesign of service delivery.

**V. COST EFFECTIVENESS.** Alameda County has invested approximately \$600,000 in the re-engineering of our business process. This investment is capable of yielding the following benefits: *economic* – reduced unit of service delivery costs due to less worker duplication of effort and higher worker productivity tied to the workload distribution tool; and, *social* – higher customer satisfaction, clients obtaining benefits faster, thereby, achieving a state of economic self-sufficiency sooner as well.

**VI. RESULTS.** Since the initial roll out of the project in April 2016, the following notable achievements have been recorded: ***client calls over queue*** (missed incoming calls): launch spike reduced from a high of 31,155 to 11,786; ***reduced client wait times***: pre-launch –2.5 hours/post-launch–25 minutes; ***intake application processing times***: same day processing for 50 percent of applicants, 60 percent for GA and 66 percent for CalFresh.

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