

## **County of San Diego – 2025 CSAC Challenge Awards Executive Summary**

**TITLE OF THIS ENTRY:** Using Automation for Quick Customer Address Correction

**ISSUE AREA CATEGORY:** Government Finance, Administration & Technology

**POPULATION CATEGORY:** Urban County

### **OVERVIEW**

The County of San Diego developed a state-replicated Electronic Return Mail Notification process to reduce delays, manual workload and improve communication across all 58 counties.

### **CHALLENGE**

The County Health and Human Services Agency Self-Sufficiency Services faced a growing challenge with the high volume of returned mail daily, which required extensive manual processing and delayed outreach to customers. Previously, mail returned via United States Postal Services (USPS) had to be manually processed, delaying address updates by up to six weeks. These delays risked disruptions in benefit delivery and communication for vulnerable populations relying on CalFresh, Medi-Cal and CalWORKs. In addition, these inefficiencies prompted the need for a faster, more automated solution to ensure timely service and reduce operational strain.

### **SOLUTION**

On July 3, 2023, the County piloted the Electronic Return Mail Notification system in collaboration with Gainwell, Central Print and CalSAWS. Using National Change of Address (NCOA) and Coding Accuracy Support System (CASS) data, the system identifies undeliverable mail, generates next day digital notifications with case details and automatically creates task and journal entries in CalSAWS. This allows staff to act timely, preventing unnecessary mailings. By December 1, 2023, the process expanded to include secure destruction of undeliverable mail returned to Central Print as the data was captured electronically. To close the gap, in August 2024, the system was further enhanced to handle "Carrier Initiated Returns" (e.g., "Deceased," "Refused," "Unclaimed"). These envelopes are now scanned at Central Print and uploaded to CalSAWS, with corresponding tasks and journal entries automatically generated further eliminating manual processing.

### **INNOVATION**

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This Electronic Mail Notification process is a first of its kind solution designed to serve all 58 California counties, transforming how the returned mail is managed statewide. By leveraging USPS data, CalSAWS tasking and secure electronic communications to provide near real-time return mail insights, the system eliminates lengthy delays tied to physical mail, accelerates customer outreach, and reduces staffing burdens. The automation also reduces environmental impact by minimizing physical mail handling, an added benefit supporting County sustainability goals. Delayed or lost mail can result in serious consequences, including the disruption of CalFresh, Medi-Cal, or CalWORKs benefits. This innovative process ensures returned mail information is available the next business day, enabling staff to proactively engage customers and safeguard uninterrupted access to vital services.

### **RESULTS**

The Electronic Return Mail Notification process has significantly improved operational efficiency, allowing the County to reassign four to eight Full Time Equivalents (FTE) to other priorities and reduce its carbon footprint. Since December 2023, over 242,000 return mail tasks auto-generated (Dec 2023–Nov 2024), eliminating the burden of processing physical mail. The program has also expedited customer outreach and address updates contributing to a sharp reduction in churn rate (rate of individuals who cycle in and out of benefit programs) for CalWORKs (6.11% to 0.37%) and CalFresh (6.86% to 4.99%) from June 2023 to July 2024.

### **REPLICABILITY**

Because all California counties use CalSAWS, this process is highly replicable across California. Its flexible design allows counties to customize features based on operational capacity and funding. The County promotes the Electronic Return Mail Notification system as a best practice due to its proven ability to streamline mail processing, reduce staffing burdens, cut down on waste and emissions, and accelerate customer outreach, demonstrating both impact and adaptability for broader statewide implementation.

### **PROJECT/PROGRAM CONTACT**

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