The journey to digital service delivery in HHS

A guide for navigating digital transformation
The journey to digital service delivery transformation

The pandemic and resulting economic crises may have taken the world by storm, but this is not the first-time state government, especially health and human services (HHS) and Labor agencies, have had to adapt to change and how they connect with and deliver services to the people they serve.

In these unprecedented times, HHS and labor leaders and their workforce are faced with record high volumes all while managing the pandemic and their workforce’s personal needs. Today, and as they look to the future, governments must lead and be able to reach, engage, and connect with their clients and members on a more personalized level to deliver critical services and information at the most important moments using digital service delivery.

Health and Human Services: The journey to digital service delivery transformation

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<td>2005</td>
<td>HHS agencies transitioned from siloed agencies to full seamless integration</td>
<td>HHS agencies transitioned to self-service and providing tools for citizens to be self-sufficient when applying and receiving benefits</td>
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<td>HHS agencies pivoted to future proofing their service delivery based on data driven analytics to achieve operational proficiency</td>
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Prior to the pandemic, HHS and labor agencies were at very different stages on their journey to digital transformation. The pandemic and resulting economic crisis have created an imperative for state HHS and labor agencies to rapidly respond to a myriad of challenges whether by expanding digital self-service capabilities to promote self-sufficiency and reduce stress on agencies or finding ways to engage with clients while managing social distancing. The path forward will be different for each state agency, but the foundation is the same. Understand policy and public health guidelines and use the available data to plot your path forward for your operations, workforce and systems to help better serve your customers.

Agencies are at various stages of their service delivery transformation journey and before the pandemic HHS and labor agencies were working towards digital transformation amid a variety of intertwined pressures. Health and human services agencies are working with finite and unprecedented budgetary constraints and cost pressures, so it is important that the journey to digital service delivery be driven by a clear and shared vision of what the process is meant to achieve. This focused approach puts a premium on both planning and transparent internal communications.

While there is no single path forward, a modular approach—choosing the right components and finding which steps deliver the biggest impact—may offer the most effective opportunity to achieve digital service delivery.
service delivery in a way that improves not only cost and operational efficiency, but also mission outcomes and customer satisfaction.

Developing a roadmap requires an understanding of the ways in which programs, operations, and outcomes align. Understanding of how policy, operations, workforce, and systems can independently and collectively impact your plan is essential. With the destination state established, planners can break the transformation into component steps and shifts to get there.

An outcome-focused delivery model centers on people, both workers and customers, and then provides workers with the tools and positions agency capabilities to improve the recipient’s experience and quality of service. This in turn promotes operational efficiency while working to improve an individual’s or family’s outcomes and quality of life during this difficult time. For some Americans this is the first time they need assistance so it important to understand where people are, their needs and use that to design your digital service delivery plan.

And, as technology and digital engagement expectations advance, it becomes more complex to reconcile access and transparency with privacy and confidentiality.

New technologies that empower customers to interact with agencies differently will likely change the demands and expectations those customers bring to each program. Technology will continue to be a critical factor in the way agencies attract and retain qualified staff, especially as the public sector workforce undergoes generational shifts.

As HHS and labor leaders think about the next normal and how to move toward digital service delivery, they should consider a myriad of factors from their agency’s mission and focus to how to engage with clients while addressing workers’ safety and well-being. As leaders chart the course for the next normal, they should focus on two human centric areas for transformation for digital service delivery:

- Operations transformation
- Customer transformation
States must adapt to changes brought by this pandemic and beyond as they are reimaging the future of their operations. HHS and labor agencies need to structure the future of their operations and workforce so they can continue to provide critical services while addressing budget constraints and workforce challenges. Rethinking an organization for a long-term shift to virtual first/telework offers opportunities to meet these challenges and provide superior customer service to an expanded customer base at a lower cost.

The process begins with understanding the current state of the organization and setting the goals for the future. Organizations that are prepared for a long-term shift to telework for all or some of their organization have likely assessed and addressed six components of telework readiness:

1. **Policy**
2. Telework platforms and tools
3. Budget and operations
4. Culture, collaboration, and performance management
5. Work responsibilities
6. Training and onboarding
Return to work decision support

Millions of organizations around the world are considering how they will support a physical return to work. Government agencies are grappling with the decision on which job functions cannot be done long-term in a virtual environment along with worker preferences on if their workers will thrive long-term in a virtual environment. Physical return to work will also be dependent on technology and how agencies can adjust technology and policies, enable enhanced cybersecurity controls, and implement collaborative tools to either support a totally virtual or hybrid workforce in the next 12—18 months.

Governments should be gathering the data they need now to understand what jobs can continue to be done virtually and which cannot, so they can make intentional choices about specific positions. Below is a decision-making framework for answering these questions, balancing the feasibility of remote work against public health risks.

One way this change can take place is through workload management. Shifting work differently among people and locations can make an agency and its workers more responsive. Several states have included this consideration in their service delivery transformation efforts, using tools and methods such as process redesign, labs to “re-vision” customer experiences, and data-driven redesign of their physical spaces.

Agencies can also promote operational transformation by using the emerging principles of the workforce of the future—in which technology doesn’t replace people so much as it augments them, taking over rote tasks to free humans for higher-level uses of their time. The result is a new workforce strategy that gives agencies a greater degree of flexibility to put people where they can have the most impact, as well as an ability to respond in a more agile way.
How Deloitte can help:

WORKPLACE SOCIAL DISTANCING MANAGEMENT

Enables optimized telework planning, integrated workplace cleaning, and dynamic incident monitoring to achieve optimal safety and minimize disruption to mission delivery. Customizable to fit your needs whether that be full return to work or a blend of telework and physical space reopening.

- Radical distance measurement and visualization
- Safe-at-work scheduling and distancing
- Incident and mitigation monitoring
- Reintegration Scenario options: Full scale, voluntary, unknown

EMPLOYEE CONTACT TRACKER

Creates a network of information on mobility to trace contacts based on self-opt-in for employees, visitors and contractors. The solution also provides basic features for residents to receive information and self-report. At agency request and selection of proximity API, we provide support for integration and proximity tracking.

- Employee opt-in
- Employee enabled
- Optional proximity tracking
- Integration with case management tools
- Exposure notification
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**OPERATIONAL FORECASTING**

Goal to utilize analytics to understand impacts of policy and operational changes on applications and enrollments as well as workload and workforce processing. Develop Excel-based forecasting model and dashboards for applications, enrollment, and workforce impacts of COVID-19, with inputs based on assumptions and historical data.

- Time series analysis/statistical modeling
- Curve fitting and trending
- Assumption based/qualitative

**PROCESS AUTOMATION**

Intelligent Process Automation (IPA) uses three underlying Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies to automate and reduce the administrative burden on workers by acting as a “virtual assistant” and freeing up time to focus on more value-add work.

- Robotic Process Automation (RPA)
- Intelligent Optical Character Recognition (IOCR)
- Chatbots
Customer transformation

Relationships are a two-way street. While human services customers have grown accustomed to some level of digital interaction and more immediate customer service, state agencies are still working to deliver these capabilities. And the impact of that delay is great. For each opportunity lost to answer a question more quickly, respond quickly to a citizen’s needs, or provide the real-time support that digital and social media allows, government is losing an opportunity to reduce customer churn.

When agencies employ new resources such as the Internet of Things, mobile connectivity, artificially intelligent chatbots, and machine learning, they are embracing new ways to produce public value for a new kind of customer. Just as the agency’s program structure should offer “no wrong front door,” its customer interfaces should offer an analogous “no wrong channel”—which is why omni-channel technology is ultimately about more than technology.

Omni-channel approaches to service delivery can also help enlarge the customer’s role in the process, making it more two-way and less dependent on “push” to get things done. This can apply not only to transactional operations, but also to advice. Consider the way a popular electronics manufacturer uses customer-driven message boards as the first stop for consumers who might otherwise have dialed a call center; or the way a major online retailer offers customer reviews that many people consult before they even glance at the manufacturer’s information that lies directly above them.
Placing people at the center

A people centric approach: the worker view

A key step to establishing the path forward and your areas for focus to attain digital service delivery is understanding and prioritizing the most critical work, getting feedback from the workforce on how work is done, and conducting scenario planning for opening of workplaces. An important step to this is understanding and prioritizing the work focusing on the activities performed and technology applied to produce work outcomes and create value. There should be a priority focus on mission critical work that is impossible to deliver in a virtual environment.

A valuable tool in helping to assess your workforce skills and identify gaps is by pulsing your workers using short surveys and polls. By implementing pulse surveys, HHS and labor agency leaders will be able to better:

- Understand if people want to come back to an office or if they are more comfortable working remotely due to health risk factors or other reasons
- Identify who cannot work remotely due to space, technology access, or confidentiality concerns
- Engage in scenario planning for physical workplace to meet new social distancing guidelines

Pulsing will help HHS and labor leaders align on priorities and use other available data and guidelines to develop a roadmap for the future of operations and workforce. They will be able to plan their approach to implement digital service delivery and use continued pulsing to monitor impact of their actions. This agile approach will help leaders pivot as public health or economic conditions change.

How Deloitte can help

WORKFORCE & WORKPLACE INSIGHTS SURVEY

Designed to facilitate data collection and allows an HHS and labor organization to understand and consider the voice of your workforce as they manage changes in their personal and professional lives in this unprecedented climate. The survey helps agencies understand their workforce’s greatest fears and challenges, allowing you to demonstrate action to your employees while obtaining impactful data to inform your strategy and decisions.
A strategy focused on your people is essential to effectively lead your workforce. Thinking about the Future of Work presents an opportunity to consider how your organization can elevate communications, create a more resilient workforce, and enhance the culture. Working successfully in a virtual environment means new ways of communicating with employees, a new reliance on better, more visual collaborative tools, and solutions for in-person meetings as well as in-office hoteling and capabilities.

- Communication toolkit
- Collaborative meetings
- Employee mobile app

Fosters learning in an “environment” and as an experience to allow employees to engage based on their individual needs. To meet the workforce’s needs, training options should consist of:

- System training (IE, HIX)
- Diversity and Inclusion Trainings
- Third Party System Trainings
- Post COVID-19 Transition Training

Elevating the Human Experience
Elevate the Human Experience (EHX) is an approach to pulling the thread of the human experience throughout the entire lifecycle of public sector transformation projects and reimagine how we deliver services to clients. The immediate need for safety has driven a wave of new touchless experiences in every aspect of life and is spurring the reimagining of service delivery. As we move beyond our initial response, to recovery, and ultimately to thrive, we need to be more purposeful in how we design experiences for the future.

In-Person Experience: Curbside & Lobby
Reimaging the in-person customer experience should be data-driven and tied to a vision. Clients are looking for innovative in-person experiences from new curbside services to a efficient lobby. It should be a standardized yet actionable approach that is agile.

Bringing all the elements of new operational requirements for intake and ongoing case management together to improve service delivery, focus on safety, and develop a blueprint for implementation across offices.
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Client Interactions and Engagements
States with more robust digital channels can leverage these tools during this COVID-19 crisis, have seen strong results, and are more prepared to accommodate the continued stress on agency systems.

Virtual Appointments
Enables virtual, HIPAA compliant engagement with clients utilizing smart device technologies in a variety of settings to conduct real time “face-to-face” interactions, secure SMS messaging, and secure exchange of documents.

Human Experience Management
What’s important is to develop a response and action-oriented strategy across channels. This ensures cohesive and consistent messaging and updates to increase engagement through social activity.

Agencies must remember that within the scope of their transformation programs, digital service delivery is a goal. But within the larger scope of their missions, digital service delivery is a means to an end. With digital transformation, an agency can be more effective in pursuing measurable outcomes for the people it services while fostering development and measuring the impact of its workforce.
Hitting the road

Talking about change is easy, and planning it takes time, but for HHS and labor agencies in the present environment, it’s already past time to act. Thanks to the consumer economy, the customers whom agencies serve already expect the level of engagement a transformation can make possible. And as the network of federal and state public services continues to change, it becomes more important to implement using a system that is flexible and comprehensive.

The trip may be challenging. On one hand, it’s worth it; but on the other, the cost of failure may be great given the pressure on resources and budget. We can start small to mitigate risk or engage in a full-scale transformation. Now matter the path, using service delivery transformation to improve service to health and human services and labor customers can lead to improvements from almost everyone’s point of view—more efficient use of resources, more rewarding and engaging work for the people who dedicate their careers to public service, and better outcomes for our health and human services and labor customers.
About Deloitte’s HHS and Labor Nerve Center

Consistent with Deloitte’s commitment to combating the impacts of COVID-19 to our clients with resilience and supporting our clients in this extraordinary time, we have established an interactive HHS and labor Nerve Center for internal operational coordination across all our state health and human service projects. We collect and disseminate information throughout our HHS and labor community, in real time, supporting our teams and clients, as the impacts from COVID-19 evolve. To that end, the HHS and labor Nerve Center works to anticipate, track, collect and share information about issues impacting all our HST projects and programs; new relevant federal legislation, policies, and regulations coming from regulatory agencies such as Congress, CMS, FNS, ACF, and USDOL; new solutions and innovations addressing emerging trends, policy shifts, and the complex challenges our clients are facing; and operational responsiveness strategies and best practices being employed by our teams.

We are also driving innovation and rapidly standing up new solutions based on identified client needs (e.g., new food assistance programs, UI system stabilization, virtual case management) etc.
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