



Developing SNAP E&T IT Systems

Lessons Learned from Two State Approaches

Speakers

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Purpose

SNAP E&T Systems are a necessity

This session will provide practical information about approaching the development and implementation of a dedicated SNAP E&T IT system from the perspective of two States, Illinois and South Carolina.

Panelists



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System Basics

- **From Best Practice to a Necessity**
 - Maximizing administrative capacity,
 - Streamlining processes,
 - Facilitate program referrals,
 - Improves case management, communication, tracking and reporting, and
 - Automates tasks
- **Basic System features include:**
 - SNAP eligibility confirmation and appropriate SNAP E&T referrals,
 - Component enrollment and tracking,
 - Participant reimbursement issuances,
 - Case management,
 - Data reporting, and
 - Billing

State Options

Typical options include:

- Modify an existing system (TANF),
- Utilize, modify or integrate a system in use by a State Department of Labor or similar,
- Purchase an off-the-shelf solution,
- Build a system from the ground up
 - Procure a vendor
 - Build one in-house

South Carolina



South Carolina Department of Social Services

- The South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) is the administering agency for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- South Carolina operates a voluntary state administered E&T program.
- It is a hybrid program where the state agency provides services as well as contracts with providers who also serve the clients.
- Providers include community-based organizations, state agencies, non-profits and for-profit organizations in order to provide services for SNAP program recipients.



South Carolina Comprehensive Employment & Training System (SCCETS)

Why did South Carolina need to develop an E&T database?

- Generate custom reports
- Verify eligibility in real time (partner agencies)
- FNS report data (583 and annual report)
- Participation tracking
- Invoicing/budgeting
- Contracts
- Management Evaluation reviews

Why Building SCCETS In-House

Why did we decide to build a system in-house?

- Data security
- SCDSS has a robust, knowledgeable development team
- Funding (less cost)
- Subject matter experts (communication)
- Scalability and maintainability (changes to FNS policies)
- Leverage DSS resources
- No procurement process

State Requirements to Build In-House

South Carolina needed:

Program Area:

- Buy-in from top management
- Understanding of the policy and regulations governing the SNAP E&T program.
- Program processes/operation
- Understanding of the FNS reports

Development Area:

- Constant collaboration with program area to understand E&T
- Strong technical architect/manager
- Quality business analyst, testers, and developers
- Interface with eligibility system & the state's labor agency
- In-house infrastructure (application/database servers)

SCCETS Project Plan

Phase 1
Feb 2018-Oct 2018

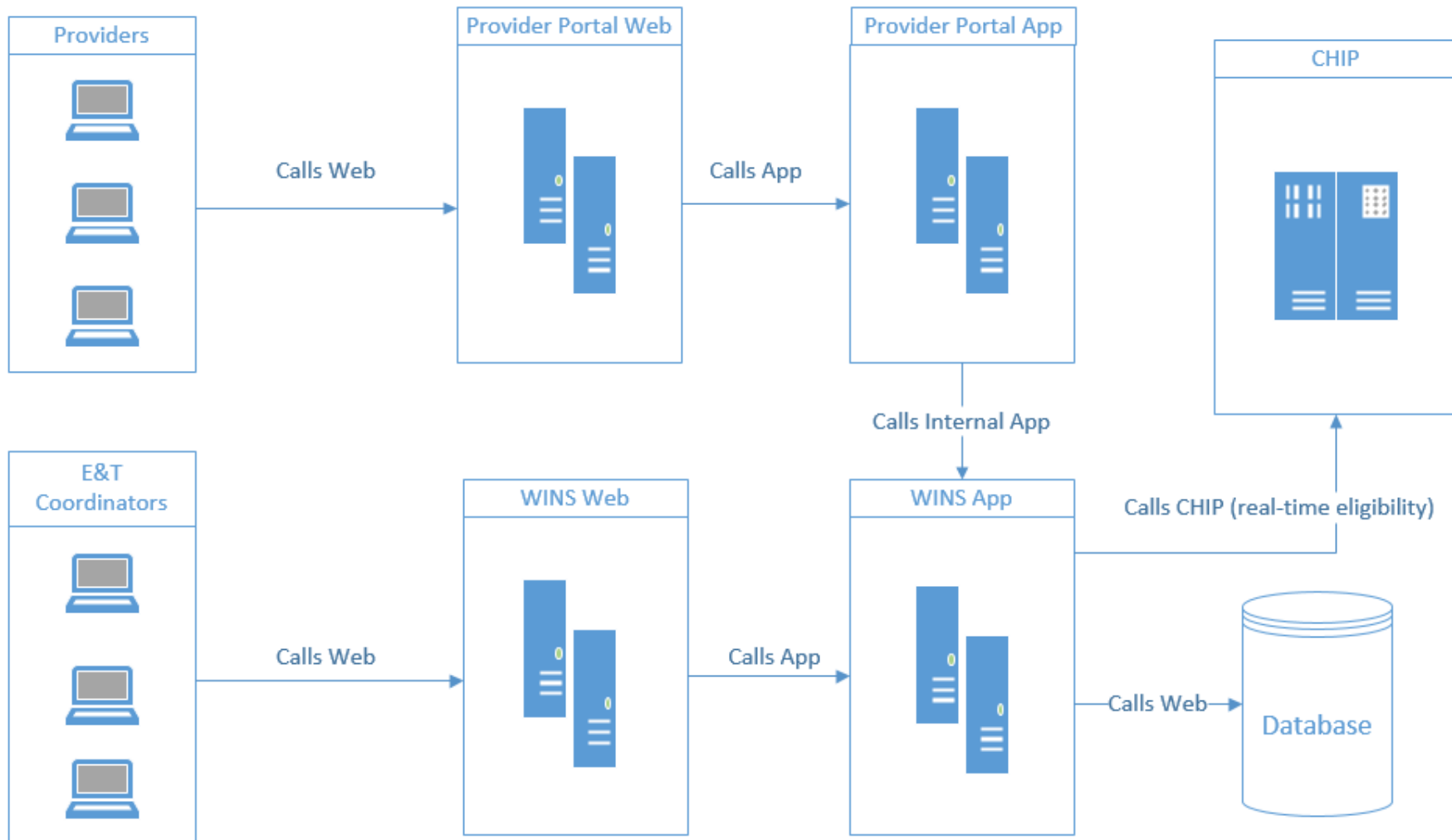
Phase 2
Sep 2018-Jan 2019

Phase 3
Mar 2019-Dec 2019

Phase 4
Feb 2020-Dec 2020

	SCCETS	SCCETS - Reporting	SCCETS - Budgeting	SCCETS - Management Evaluations
Activities	Eligibility Determination	Quarterly Report	Provider Contracts Management	Schedule Review
	Assessments	Annual Report	Admin Contract Review and Approval	Provider Questionnaire
	Employment Plans	Customized program reports	Provider Invoice Management	Review Provider Questionnaire
	Referrals	Interface with DEW wage data	Admin Invoice Review and Approval	Conduct Reviews
	Participation Tracking		Pathways Scholarship	Generate Final Report
	Notations and Outcome Data	Additional Enhancements		
	Support Services	Training module	Case Management	Edit Contract Budgets
	Admin module (managing providers, roles, etc.)	User Manual	Provider Determination	
		Support Services	Reverse Referral	

SCCETS Application Architecture



SCCETS Capabilities

- Provider portal access
- Develop and manage contracts/budgeting
- Check client eligibility
- Case management (assessments, employment plans, tracking participation, outcome data, notes, etc.)
- Referral management (direct & reverse referrals, provider determinations)
- Invoicing
- Management Evaluation reviews
- Track SC E&T Pathways Scholarships
- Support services
- Develop reports (FNS reports/customized program reports)



Advantages of Building In-House

If you have the resources, a system built in-house can:

- Save money
- Allow for continual enhancements
- Help you spend less time on project management and allow concentration on application enhancements
- Allow changes to be made timely and with less overhead cost
- Allow better communication with the program area/subject matter expert
- Provide better control over release management
- **At the end of the project, you own the system.**

Illinois



Illinois SNAP E&T System (ISETS) Background

- The Illinois Department of Human Services' Division of Family and Community Services administers the SNAP program to approximately 478,000 Work Registrants through 72 local offices throughout the state. Illinois is currently exempt from work requirements and SNAP E&T is 100% voluntary.
- Illinois contracts with Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to provide services to participants. Each Provider performs assessments, intake, case management, activity enrollment, instruction, referrals to other agencies/services, and supportive services (wrap-around supports) directly to participants.
- Illinois DHS uses an Integrated Eligibility System (IES) to process applications for benefits and to track eligibility for SNAP, TANF, and medical benefits. IDHS was previously using an Adobe Flex system (Work Verification System or WVS) to track employment and training activities for TANF but because of the age and difficulty in using this system most SNAP E&T activities of program participants are maintained manually by the State's E&T casework staff and Providers.



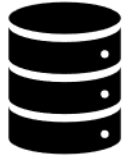
Why did Illinois Need a SNAP E&T Data System



Existing difficulties without a SNAP E&T data system:

- Incomplete or inaccurate coding for work registrant status,
- Incomplete documentation of activities,
- Incomplete documentation of supportive services and sanctions (when applicable),
- Incomplete referral and change information,
- Few case notes documenting any actions taken on cases,
- Inaccurate reporting to inform decision-making for operational improvement and policy changes.
- Without a data system dedicated to the needs of the SNAP E&T program, it is difficult to track stakeholders' activities, progress, and outcomes.
- This made data-driven policy making impossible.

Proposed Solution & Procurement



- Our proposed approach to address this problem was the development of a new system (ISETS) to track SNAP E&T activities.



- We decided to re-use and further develop an existing database called EPIC housed in Illinois Worknet as the foundation. This required a Data Sharing Agreement and an Intragovernmental Agreement with our vendor, Southern Illinois University.



- This strategy saved time and money by using an existing vendor who was already familiar with Illinois workforce programming and had previously developed EPIC.



- It has allowed the state to better report outcome measures for SNAP E&T participants, meet reporting expectations, and, thereby, support improved, data-driven programs.

Build: Project Goals

The new system has a direct impact on Illinois' capacity to accurately and efficiently track outcomes for SNAP E&T participants; increases understanding of effective strategies to improve employment and earnings outcomes for SNAP E&T participants; and/or increases the State's ability to use outcomes data to continuously improve its SNAP E&T programs including:



Higher engagement of customers in E&T activities



Better fit between customer skills/interest and E&T opportunities



Lower administration costs and error rates in re-determining customers (especially ABAWDS) for benefits



Better understanding of effective strategies to improve employment and earnings outcomes

Development Requirements (2020-2021)

1 – Universal Assessment

One intake assessment used by IDHS and its providers

2 – Universal Employment Plan

One Individualized Employment Plan based on assessment answers. Visible and editable to all providers across geography and time.

3 – Provider Referral System

A way to send, receive, reply and track referrals and reverse referrals over time.

Requirements:

- Thorough assessment of the individual's skills, interests, and needs.
- Link the assessment to a referral recommendation tool to match the individual based on their interests and needs.
- Anyone working with a customer be able to view and collaboratively create and revise an IEP.
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- Electronic referrals created, sent, and history documented to protect PII and increase speed.
- Enable IDHS and Provider to interact with one another and with the customer to coordinate.



Development Requirements (2020-2021)

4 – Attendance and Activity Reporting

Accurately track which activities a customer is enrolled in and how many hours they spend in those activities.

5 – Case Management

Best practices in Case Management guided by the system as well as training.

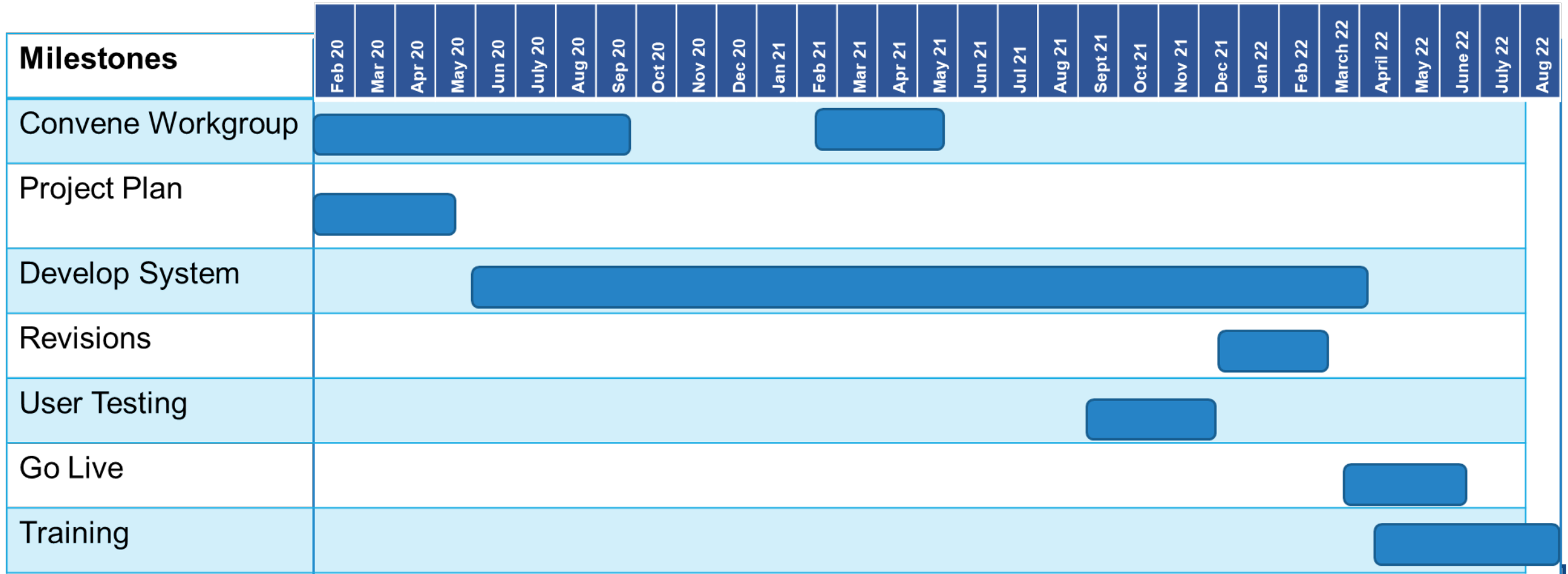
6 – Performance Monitoring

A consistent way to assess and monitor the performance of providers, programs and outcomes of customers.

Requirements:

- Ability to document activities and attendance individually or by class electronically.
- Staffings (monthly progress meetings) informed by accurate data and able to review remotely.
- All Service Providers able to document case notes, contact and appointment information, follow-ups and reminders, progress toward goals, and supportive services in one place.
- Changes over time are informed by data and real-time status is available to IDHS and Providers working with a customer.
- Outcomes for customers and the performance of Providers done through dashboards, transparent data, and reporting.
- Allows IDHS contract, billing, and program staff to make data-driven decisions on operations, contracts, and policy changes.

Build: Project Timeline



If You Had to Do it All Over Again...

Lessons Learned

South Carolina: Lessons Learned

- Constant communication (developers/program area/stakeholders)
- Healthy working relationship (program area/developers)
- Gather system requirements
- Proper project planning
- Phased development
- Testing (system & universal acceptance testing)
- Provide training (providers & employees)
- Have a dedicated development team
- Minimize the number of team members (developers/program staff & stakeholders)

Illinois: Lessons Learned

- Use an external vendor we had used before on a similar project.
- Convene stakeholder groups to assist with requirements gathering, testing, and rollout.
- Decide on data/reporting requirements in advance and design with the future state in mind while informing & reiterating requirements before the system rollout.
- Define an efficient change management & user management process before rollout.
- Integrate OCM into your project plan from the beginning. Initiate, plan, and communicate process/procedure changes prior to system rollout and keep communicating after rollout.

What to do...

- Evaluate the State's need based on the program's status and expected development.
- Get input from partners / stakeholders (pain points, processes, and improvements).
- Design systems with the end user in mind.
- Research other State approaches and solutions.
- Ensure State capacity to manage the project and collaborate with internal business units (IT).
- Build in time for setbacks or delays.
- Consider only vendors with positive State results (ask the State they worked for).
- Follow State procurement rules and don't cut corners (procure directly).
- Conduct regular communications with stakeholders about the status of the system.
- Develop role-based training for staff and stakeholders prior and after roll-out.
- Develop processes to maintain data security and allowable use of participant data.
- Plan and execute Data Sharing Agreements well in advance.
- Expect policy changes mid-build and prepare users that a new system will need changes / fixes.
- Offer a phased/gradual rollout.

What to do... Continued

- Dedicate IT support staff to help administer, change, and maintain system in line the program's vision.
- Build in invoicing and other financial applications so programmatic information (monthly participation lists) reconcile with invoicing documentation.
- Design a flexible system that allows for program changes (mandatory to voluntary and vice versa).
- Design a system that automates as much of the work and administration for partners.

What NOT to do...

- Don't start the project without a full understanding of the project, and the desired deliverable.
- Don't procure a system vendor through existing SNAP E&T contracts (Intermediaries),
- Don't contract with vendors that have little or no experience building State systems.
- Don't proceed to contract without full knowledge, agreement, consent, and approval of all relevant State units (leadership, contracting, IT and SNAP policy).
- Don't assign Project Management to staff without the skillset and decision-making authority.
- Don't make decisions on system capabilities without agreement from all stakeholders.
- Don't pay vendors for systems that are not done or products that are partially finished.
- Don't roll out systems to users with known errors.
- Don't design systems that simply automate redundant or unnecessary processes.
- Don't over-promise and under-deliver.
- Don't immediately eliminate manual/old ways of working.

What NOT to do... Continued

- Don't let slow adopters/resisters deter or delay your plans.
- Don't offer only one training method.
- Don't be afraid to gather feedback or share changes/fixes. Negative feedback is useful.
- Don't build entire system all at once.
- Don't start an in-house system without a subject matter expert.
- Don't start an in-house system without the proper development team in place.
- Don't start the project without full understanding of the project.

Q&A

- Please ask questions of our panelists
- Technical questions may require follow-up after the session. Contact information will be shared on the next slide

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