# Analysis of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
## *Findings From New Mexico*

## Background

As of October 2022, New Mexico reported using six RPAs to improve customer service quality and consistency. UpdateBOT, the focus of this study, helps update the address or authorized representative listed on a case. Figure 1 illustrates the number of address changes UpdateBOT processed beginning with RPA implementation through November 2022.

**Figure 1. Number of Address Changes**

### What Is RPA?

*RPA is software, usually requiring little code, that can be used to automate repetitive, rule-based processes.*
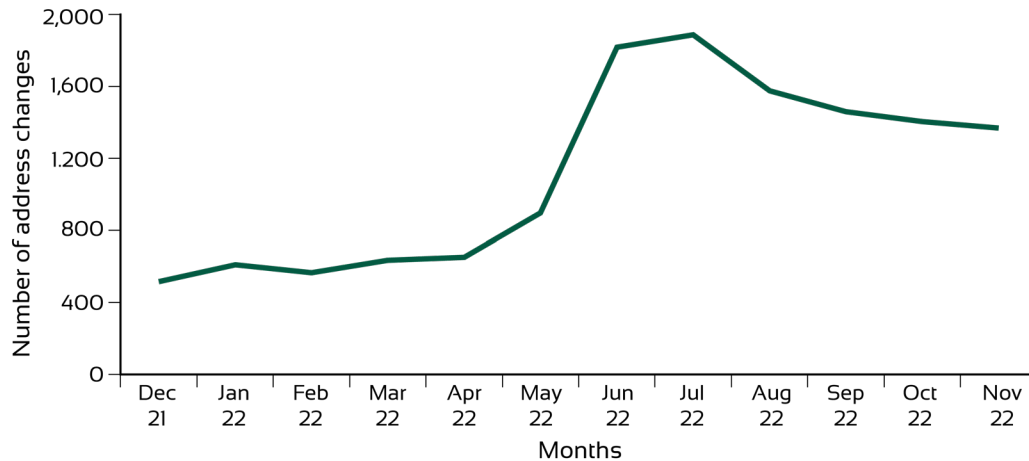
### Key Takeaways

- State agency staff shared that starting small helped the team become more familiar with the RPA, gain trust, and develop in-house competencies to enable the State to consider more complex projects.

- Staff suggested the UpdateBOT could be used to help update other case contact information (e.g., phone numbers).

- State agency staff emphasized the importance of additional guidance from FNS to support further RPA implementation.

## RPA Outcomes

New Mexico implemented its UpdateBOT to improve customer service, enable eligibility workers to spend time on more complex tasks, and improve accuracy. Interview and administrative data related to time spent on address update tasks after RPA implementation suggest possible time savings.
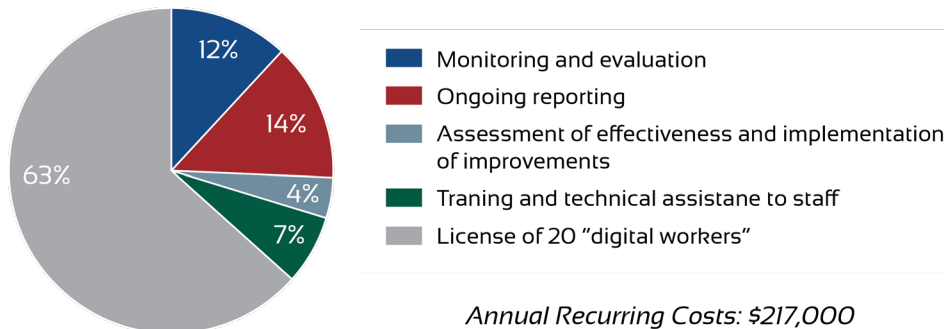
**10 min** In the past, clients may have had to wait over 2 hours to speak with an eligibility worker to update an address. With the RPA, clients can submit an address change via webchat on their own time; data shared by New Mexico indicate clients spend **an average of 10 minutes** in a live chat.

**4 min** It takes the RPA, **on average, only 4 minutes** to update the address within the eligibility system.

**Figure 2. Share of Annual Recurring Costs, by Activity**

- 12% Monitoring and evaluation
- 14% Ongoing reporting
- 4% Assessment of effectiveness and implementation of improvements
- 7% Traning and technical assistane to staff
- 63% License of 20 "digital workers"

*Annual Recurring Costs: $217,000*

## RPA Costs

New Mexico provided information on ongoing maintenance costs for all RPAs and chatbots, excluding contractor labor costs. These costs total approximately $217,000. The digital worker licenses account for the largest proportion of the ongoing costs (63 percent). Other ongoing costs include monitoring and evaluation, reporting, presentations, assessment of effectiveness and implementation of improvements, and ongoing staff training.

For further information, see Wroblewska, K., et al. (2023). Analysis of robotic process automation in SNAP: Three case studies. Prepared by Insight Policy Research. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis