LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	GG-15
Title of Program	Social Services Mobile Application
Program Category	General Government
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County	Durham
Employee	Rebecca Hartigan
Employee title	Information Technology Manager
Email	rhartigan@dconc.gov
County Department	Social Services
Phone	919-560-8020
Address	414 E Main St Durham, NC 27701
County Manager	Wendell Davis
Supervisor	Richard Stegenga
Implementation Date	8/2/2016
FLSA Designation	Both (if applicable to a team)
Project Team Members	Steve Barden, Information Technology Manager, Applications "" County IS&T Mickey Mazarick, Sr. Applications Systems Analyst "" County IS&T Jerry Sawyer, Sr Applications Systems Analyst "" County IS&T Michael Becketts, Former Director of Social Services Catherine Williamson-Hardy, Interim Director of Social Services Rhonda Stevens, Assistant Director, DSS "" Family Economic Independence Richard Stegenga, Assistant Director, DSS - Business Operations Rebecca Hartigan, Information Technology Manager "" DSS Felecia Cameron, Technology Support Analyst - DSS Jeff Sidelinger, Technology Support Analyst - DSS Kim Cole, Technology Support Specialist - DSS

Description of Productivity Improvement

Durham County Social Services has received over 1,200 pages of scanned documentation from almost 550 clients since the mobile application's release. This is 550 clients that did not have to find transportation or take time away from their jobs to return to the agency during business hours. The creation of the mobile application affords clients easier and faster access to provide required eligibility documentation to the agency. They are able to submit documentation from wherever they are located, whenever it is most convenient for them. The mobile application was created for ease of use, utilizing either a smart phone or computer. The program helps our citizens achieve easy access in applying for and receiving social service benefits. This mobile application provides a significant increase in efficiency and productivity for our clients as well as staff.

Description of why this project was initiated

Durham County has a total population of 290,874 and on a monthly average, 6,000 clients come through the agency's lobbies seeking to apply, recertify or make changes to their status in the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), Medicaid, Work First or Crisis programs. The agency recognized the inefficiency of many clients being frequently sent away and required to return to meet with their caseworker due to missing critical documents. DSS, in evaluating methods to reduce case processing time, recognized the time it took to acquire additional information was a critical barrier. In addition, it was extremely taxing on client and staff time. An initial option was to look at utilizing self-service kiosks in the lobbies to assist clients with submitting documentation. However, it was recognized that kiosks were expensive, required significant maintenance and clients would still have to return to the building. A significantly more cost effective and accessible option was recognized, whereby county IT would develop the mobile app as a submission tool then leverage the current document management system to process the incoming information and transfer critical data from the client to the caseworker via the client case file.

Utilizing the mobile app, applicants can use any smart phone or computer to upload documents or take pictures of documents and send them directly to their caseworker. The mobile application reduces a significant documentation submission burden and the associated inconvenience citizens experience when applying, recertifying, or making changes to their benefits. Now, individuals served in various DSS programs are able to submit their documents to the agency more efficiently, reduce the wait time to receive benefits and helping relieve workload on staff.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service). Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

The mobile app has saved at least 550 staff hours thus far, assuming an hour per unique client use - staff time that would have otherwise been occupied with scheduling the appointment, speaking with the client and scanning the documents into the document management system. Now, the mobile app loads the client documents into the document management system and routes them to the appropriate worker for review, thereby enabling the caseworker to be more efficient in assisting other clients and schedule more appointments throughout the day.

Significantly, the application has been relatively inexpensive to develop, test and implement. County IT staff developed the app, rolled out the client testing environment and implemented the production

application including placing apps in Google Play and Apple App Store (pending). Approximately 140 hours of employee time was dedicated to the project. Other fees include a $10 per month PhoneGap subscription and a $100 per year Apple developer's license. In all, estimated cost is $5,000 for development plus annual expenses of $220. This cost will be significantly reduced for other counties to replicate the program as Durham County has committed to sharing the application through creation of a technical guide and will answer questions and provide source code if requested.

Other descriptive information

This is the first mobile app of its kind in the state and Durham County is already receiving requests from other jurisdictions to help them replicate it in their locations. The app uses the following technology components: Apache Cordova/PhoneGap, .NET/ASP.net, Secure file upload from the camera of any mobile device, and Laserfiche (County Document Management System). Critical is the capability to translate into Spanish via a language picker. An additional component is an associated public relations and social media campaign to inform clients about the availability of the application and how to use it.