

NCCSD Systems Workgroup Vendor Forums – Q&A related to “Low Code/COTS”

Vendor Name: Deloitte Consulting

Please enter your responses into this document, but feel free to send any other attachments as well.

Questions:

1. Since there is not yet a consistent term or definition for this approach, please give your company's description, including your terminology and definitions. How is this approach different from a "custom" build of a child support system? If you choose to do a quick demo or screen shots that would be welcome.

Answer: The market is trending towards leveraging cloud-based low code/COTS application development platforms for human services programs, minimizing custom development. For example, the low code/COTS platform would provide certain out-of-the-box features such as security, audit logging and error handling, avoiding the need for coding. These features can be enabled through configuration using drag-and-drop components and model driven logic through a graphic user interface. Low-code platforms abstract tedious plumbing and infrastructure tasks normally required in custom application development.

2. With reference to the "core" functionality required by the OCSE Systems Certification Guide (Case Initiation, Locate, Establishment, Case Management, Enforcement, and Financial Management), how does this approach handle each area? In particular, since Child Support requires complicated financial processing, e.g. distribution rules and arrears calculations, please address how these are handled with this approach.

Answer: Low code/COTS solutions support standard case management functions including account, participant and workflow management. These capabilities can be integrated with core functions much faster with less errors thereby also reducing testing time. COTS solutions offer easy integration with Business Rules Engine tools. Complicated business rules such as financial distribution and arrears calculation can be extracted and built as rulesets, which also result in increased maintainability of the overall solution.

3. What COTS or other products are used in conjunction with this approach to give a state a fully functional system?

Answer: There are a few COTS products that can be used with this approach. Currently, the State of Florida uses a system that is built on SAP. We are also seeing Salesforce quickly becoming a platform of choice for health and human services solution due to its ability to scale, ease of use, configurability and maintainability. Microsoft Dynamics is a similar, less flexible platform in the market place that some states are considering for this approach.

In addition to the core platforms on which systems are built, the following products are being used for specific functions.

- Correspondence generation – Adobe, OpenText Exstream or other Doc Gen products
- Rules Engine – Corticon, IBM ODM, Oracle OPA etc.,
- Content Management – Filenet, IBM Content Manager or other ECM products
- Security – Active Directory
- Monitoring – Splunk or similar products

4. Under what circumstances does it make the best sense for a state child support agency to consider this new approach versus other possible means of modernizing its child support system? Are there any characteristics of either a state's IT system or its business processes that lend themselves more to this approach?

Answer: This is a viable option for a state that is looking to modernize their child support system. If the state is looking for a cloud enabled, highly scalable, highly secure and easily maintainable solution, then this approach is worth considering. If the state is looking for a completely mobile enabled solution that takes advantage of all the advancements in technology, a COTS based solution is the best option to consider. It also allows the state to off-load all the mundane operational activities such as upgrades, application of patches, keeping up with security certifications etc., and focus on serving the customer.

Questions to consider include:

- a) Are you going to leverage existing technology and resources?
 - b) Are you completely open to any approach?
 - c) Do you want to reduce development and maintenance costs?
 - d) Is your State looking for an enterprise solution that provides an integrated view of the customer?
 - e) Are you looking for better customer service options?
5. Generally speaking, what should a state expect on the following: project timeframe, project cost, time to rollout statewide?

Answer: This depends on the level of customization, the implementation approach (pilot and regional rollouts vs big-bang), number of deliverables, development approach (agile or waterfall) etc., We would need to discuss these in detail to be able to provide an accurate range.

6. The states don't want to again face the major system build and cost challenges once they have modernized. If they choose this approach, what is the continuous improvement model for the platform? Will the states benefit from the vendor efforts without major costs?

Answer: We believe that this approach will reduce the Total Cost of Ownership. There are several reasons for our view:

- a) Ongoing development/enhancement – Since several features are configured, the changes to be made in the future can be distributed between technical and business staff, thereby

- reducing development time and reducing the need to hire temporary short term or long-term technical staff to implement changes
- b) Reduced operational costs – COTS product vendors provide support on a regular basis to implement product upgrades which includes feature upgrades, security patches, operating system compatibility upgrades etc. This support comes at no additional charge as it is part of the regular ongoing maintenance cost. It is also “backward compatible,” meaning that all the functionality currently in use by the client will continue to work without any changes. The state can decide if they want to use the new features or stay with what they have
 - c) Built in Disaster Recovery – Certain COTS platform solutions such as Salesforce, which is built on the cloud, offers Disaster Recovery along with the platform
 - d) Continuous improvements – COTS platforms offer continuous version upgrades which the states can benefit from and take advantage of. This includes updates to the user interface which keeps the system from looking “dated”. For Salesforce, upgrades are part of licensing cost and these are also backward compatible

7. What are the most important things that a state should do to prepare for this approach?

Answer: State IT and Program Staff should consider getting training in agile methodology. Engage in conversation with other states that have embarked on a COTS based implementation in child support and other HHS programs. Engage in conversation with CRM product vendors and implementors to learn about trends in this space. Narrow down choices and select the best fit. Determine if there are other HHS programs within the state that are embarking on this approach.

8. How does this type of child support system fit with states who need to have an enterprise approach? Many of the platforms seem to be creating the same old silos on a new platform. Is it possible to have one casefile for each person/family across the systems (child support, SNAP, TANF, family services, etc.)?

Answer: It is not only possible to have an enterprise system with this approach, it is easier to build an enterprise solution using this approach. The most critical aspect of information sharing across the enterprise is Master Data Management. A COTS based implementation provides a better way of handling master data by abstracting the technology implementation and providing a meaningful business view of the data. Thus, it simplifies the management of data such as Person, Family, Accounts, and associated information, and provides the power to the appropriate business entities to govern the data attributes and its associated privileges.

Furthermore, this approach helps unify the case worker view and the client view across programs since the underlying technology is the same. This results in a unified user experience promoting consistency in user behavior, better staff retention, and better user adoption.

9. What haven't we asked that we should have?

Answer: Questions to consider are:

- a) Is a Cloud based solution secure? The answer to this question is yes, because providers like Salesforce offer out-of-the box encryption for classification communication in-transit using Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) and Transportation Layer Security (TLS) to adhere with Federal Information Processing Standard (FIPS) 140-2. Similarly, Cloud providers offer robust security. A number of HHS programs across the country have implemented or are implementing new systems in the Cloud.
- b) Are there any other HHS solutions in production using a platform-based solution?
Answer: The general trend across the programs is toward a consideration of platform-based solutions to support agile, nimble environments. There are many examples across all HHS programs, including Florida's SAP-based child support system.
- c) Can this approach be an incremental approach? Answer: Yes, depending on what your roadmap is.