



The Computerworld Honors Program

Honoring those who use Information Technology to benefit society

Final Copy of Case Study

YEAR:
2012

STATUS:
Laureate

Organization:
Colorado Governor's Office of Information Technology (OIT)

Organization URL:
<http://www.colorado.gov/cs/Satellite/OIT->

Project Name:
Colorado Program Eligibility and Application Kit (PEAK)

**What social/humanitarian issue was the project designed to address?
What specific metrics did you use to measure the project's success?**

The Colorado Benefits Management System (CBMS) is the eligibility determination system for Colorado, which incorporates Medicaid, food assistance, cash assistance, the Children's Basic Health Plan, and case management for work programs. Prior to PEAK, citizens generally had to apply in person, during normal business hours, at one of the 64 county office or 150+ medical assistance (MA) sites. Many applicants arrived at intake sites without proper paperwork and without knowledge of the programs for which they might be eligible. The citizens of Colorado needed better access and more options for determining their potential eligibility. PEAK allows citizens to screen themselves for potential program eligibility and apply for benefits. It also allows existing clients to check on their benefits and report changes to their public assistance data. PEAK was conceived and created, in part, to address the following statistics: Colorado ranks 48th for children's health coverage/1; Colorado ranks 48th for food assistance enrollment/2; Colorado ranks 30th for percentage of overall population living below federal poverty level/2; Colorado ranks 28th for child poverty/2; just 52% of eligible Coloradans are enrolled in food assistance/2; the child poverty rate in Colorado has grown by 72% since 2000/3. 1) Colorado Health Institute. Retrieved 11/25/2009: http://datacenter.coloradohealthinstitute.org/data_results.jsp?i=275&rt=3&p=2&c=2. 2) U.S. Census Bureau, 2007. American Community Survey. Retrieved 12/13/2008: <http://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/saipe/saipe.cgi>. 3) Colorado Children's Campaign 2010 Kids Count Annual Report. The goals of the PEAK project were to: create an Internet interface with CBMS,

including auto-upload of data from PEAK into CBMS (PEAK Inbox); create local access points for health, food and financial assistance; empower clients to screen and apply for benefits.

Please describe the technologies used and how those technologies were deployed in an innovative way. Also, please include any technical or other challenges that were overcome for the successful implementation of the project.

Colorado PEAK's architecture is a true three-tier/layer (logical and physical) object-oriented implementation. The presentation layer was developed using Java Server Pages (JSP) and HTML and is delivered to the end user through an Internet browser such as Internet Explorer. The business object layer contains the business logic for the application. It was developed using JEE technology and implemented using an IBM WebSphere application server. The data access layer was developed using the Oracle 10g relational database management system. The challenge of PEAK was how to engage the citizens of Colorado to use the system to increase participation in health and welfare programs by removing barriers and creating greater access. Collaboration was a stellar achievement of this project. The following organizations played major roles in the success of PEAK: Deloitte Consulting LLP, software customization vendor, Wisconsin, New York, Georgia, and New Mexico, contributed base system, enhancements, documentation; Office of Information Technology (OIT), oversight, sponsoring agency Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS), policy, sponsoring agency Colorado Dept. of HealthCare Policy & Finance (HCPF), sponsoring agency 64 Colorado Counties, application/case processing, testing, outreach; 150+ medical assistance sites, application/case processing, testing 200+; community-based organizations, outreach, assist with completion of online screenings, applications; PEAK Outreach Committee (Boulder), grant funded to recruit, train, coach CBOs; marketing toolkit, training materials. The participation of the PEAK Outreach Committee and the CBOs was critical to the introduction of PEAK to underserved populations in Colorado.

Please list the specific humanitarian benefits the project has yielded so far.

PEAK clearly met the objectives originally envisioned when the project was conceived. The advantages of PEAK to applicants and recipients in Colorado include: a self-service option for initiating an application for benefits; access for screening, application, checking benefits and reporting changes is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week; application drafts are saved for 30 days, allowing applicants to apply online at times convenient for them and allowing for interruptions without losing data, enabling clients to apply from a less stressful, more comfortable environment; access to multiple programs through a single application; empowers clients by allowing them to screen for potential eligibility, apply and make changes online; less overwhelming application process than a paper application, as applicants see just one web page at a time. PEAK is available in both English and Spanish. The most recent PEAK metrics, as of December 31, 2011, demonstrate the steady use of the system by the citizens of Colorado. The Self Assessments and MyBenefits accounts are cumulative since October 2009. The Applications and Change Reports are cumulative since May 2011. Self Assessments started to date: 135,118. Self Assessments completed to date: 86,135. Unique MyBenefits accounts created to date: 76,806. Unique Apply for Benefits accounts created to date: 31,663. Total Applications created to date: 29,368. Total Change Reports created to date: 13,965. The quality of PEAK is demonstrated by the fact that only 70 or so Help Desk tickets have been initiated since May 2011, primarily addressing the upload process and issues with how the system assigns applications to counties. An average of four calls per day are received from citizens who need their PEAK password reset.

Please provide the best example of how the project has benefited a specific individual, enterprise or organization. Feel free to include personal quotes from individuals who have directly benefited from the work.

Here are some examples, grouped by PEAK module, of how community partners and counties have collaborated and integrated PEAK into their current business processes to better serve clients. Am I Eligible: A transportation department worker assists a woman with bus tokens and hears her child coughing. He asks if they have health insurance and encourages them to screen themselves to see if they are potentially eligible for medical assistance. He directs them to use the PEAK kiosk in the county office lobby. Apply for Benefits: A rural high school opens its computer lab after hours for parents to use the computers to access the Internet. The computer lab displays posters and flyers about PEAK and online access to benefits. Check My Benefits: A family resource center working with a new family that is receiving benefits helps their client set up an account in PEAK. They use Check My Benefits to see what benefits the family is currently receiving so they can assess how best to meet the family's needs. Report My Changes: A homeless shelter staff member uses PEAK Report My Changes to assist their client in keeping their case information up to date. They help set up accounts for clients and work with them to make sure that their eligibility workers have the most current information.