

Call Center/Contact Center Support for States

A Framework and Reference Guide

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section	Page
TABLE OF CONTENTS	3
SNAP CONTACT/CALL CENTER ROLES AND SERVICES	7
SNAP Call Centers	7
SNAP Call Center Technical Advisory Group	8
SNAP Call Center Manual Overview.....	8
Decisions	9
Functionality/Services	10
Staffing and FNS Merit Pay Policy	17
Centralization vs. Decentralization.....	19
Conclusion	22
Lessons Learned	22
BUSINESS PROCESSES AND SCOPE	27
Scope of Programs	29
Range of Services.....	30
Call Center Business Processes.....	33
Interactive Voice Response	33
Authentication	34
Queues	34
Transfers and Escalations	34
Complaints	35
Outbound Calls	35
Reporting	35
Contact Center Options	35
Business Process Management.....	37
Continuity of Operations	38
Conclusion	41
Lessons Learned	41
TECHNOLOGY	52
Technology Solution Approaches	54
Open Standards Technology	58
Telephony Network	58
Data Network	60
Call Routing/ACD.....	61
Interactive Voice Response	62
Call Routing Strategy	63
Computer Telephony Integration.....	65
Outbound Calling	66
Translation Services	67
Call Center Reporting	68
Management Reporting	69
Call Monitoring and Recording.....	70
Access for Hearing Impaired Callers.....	71
Other Contact Center Modes of Client Interaction	72
Handset, Headsets and Workstations.....	83
Conclusion	85

Lessons Learned	86
STAFFING	95
Call Center Staffing – A Unique Challenge	95
Call Center Forecasting and Staff Planning Process	102
Conclusion	106
Lessons Learned	107
MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TO ENSURE CUSTOMER SERVICE	117
Knowledge Management	118
Knowledge Management System	120
Workforce Management.....	121
Workforce Management Systems	124
Quality Monitoring	125
MANAGING SERVICE LEVELS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION.....	132
Customer Service	132
Managing Client Expectations	132
Customer Satisfaction	135
Call Monitoring Measurement Tools	135
Customer Satisfaction Metrics that Matter Most	136
Managing Customer Satisfaction	140
Continuous Improvement.....	141
Security Management	142
Conclusion	143
Lessons Learned	143
TRANSITION.....	154
Developing the Foundation	154
Transition Plan	156
Project Management Office Tasks	159
Facility Business Structure.....	161
Transition Operation.....	167
Staffing.....	168
Training	171
System/Equipment Testing	177
System/Operations Readiness Assessment	180
Implementation	182
Coordination and Communication.....	185
Risk Management and Issue Resolution.....	187
Change Management	191
System Integration	192
Security Management	194
Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan (DR/BCP)	196
Lessons Learned	198
REFERENCES AND THE CALL CENTER COMMUNITY.....	200
APPENDIX A: CALL CENTER DEFINITIONS	201
APPENDIX B: PROCESS AND FUNCTIONALITY OF STATES' CALL CENTERS	209

LIST OF EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: State Experiences with Call Center Services.....	11
Exhibit 2: Multi-Channel Contact Center.....	15
Exhibit 3: Contact Center Services and Business Process/Technology Requirements.....	16
Exhibit 4: Seeking FNS Approval to use Vendor/Private Staff to Interact with Clients.....	18
Exhibit 5: Call Center Agent Resources Workload Distribution.....	20
Exhibit 6: Overview of Centralized and Decentralized Models.....	21
Exhibit 7: Lessons Learned—SNAP Call Center Roles and Services.....	22
Exhibit 8: Features and Benefits of Telecommunications Components.....	28
Exhibit 9: Determining Scope of Programs.....	29
Exhibit 10: Determining Services.....	30
Exhibit 11: Alternative Communication Tools.....	36
Exhibit 12: Disaster Recovery Objectives.....	39
Exhibit 13: Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies.....	39
Exhibit 14: Lessons Learned—Business Process and Scope.....	41
Exhibit 15: Average Allocation of Call Center Costs.....	52
Exhibit 16: Technology Integration.....	53
Exhibit 17: Traditional Call Center Components by Size of Call Center.....	55
Exhibit 18: Typical Call Center Architecture.....	56
Exhibit 19: Text Chat Window to Communicate with TDD/TTY.....	72
Exhibit 20: Lessons Learned—Technology.....	86
Exhibit 21: Common Service Levels Used in Call centers.....	99
Exhibit 22: The Effect of Service Levels on Customer Service.....	100
Exhibit 23: Call Center Staff Need with Different Call Volumes and Service Levels.....	100
Exhibit 24: Call Volume Across Days of the Week.....	101
Exhibit 25: Call Distribution by Hour.....	102
Exhibit 26: Lessons Learned—Staffing.....	107
Exhibit 27: Levels of Review and Approval Required for ISO 9001:2000.....	119
Exhibit 28: Quality Monitoring Process.....	126
Exhibit 29: Examples of Performance Measurement of QA Areas.....	128
Exhibit 30: QA Audit Instrument and Responses.....	129
Exhibit 31: Coaching Process Flow.....	130
Exhibit 32: Methods for Monitoring Performance.....	131
Exhibit 33: Primary and Secondary Service Level Measurements.....	134
Exhibit 34: Call Center Patience Curve.....	137
Exhibit 35: One-Call Resolution Comparison Report.....	139
Exhibit 36: Closed Loop Process for Improving Customer Service.....	140
Exhibit 37: Continuous Improvement Cycle.....	141
Exhibit 38: Lessons Learned—Management Practices and Customer Service.....	143
Exhibit 39: Transition Phase Components.....	156
Exhibit 40: Task Completion Guidelines.....	157
Exhibit 41: Project Plan vs. Non-Project Plan Agenda Items.....	157
Exhibit 42: Transition Phase Components – Top Level WBS.....	159
Exhibit 43: Work Plan – Project Management Office Tasks.....	161
Exhibit 44: Work Plan – Facility Business Structure Tasks.....	166
Exhibit 45: Work Plan – Transition Operation Tasks.....	168
Exhibit 47: Instructor-Led Training Analysis.....	172

Exhibit 48: Computer-Based Training Analysis.....	172
Exhibit 49: Work Plan -Training Tasks.....	176
Exhibit 50: Work Plan – System/Equipment Testing Tasks.....	180
Exhibit 51: Work Plan – Systems/Operations Readiness Assessment Tasks.....	181
Exhibit 52: Work Plan – Implementation Tasks.....	184
Exhibit 53: Work Plan – Project Coordination and Communication Tasks.....	187
Exhibit 54: Work Plan – Risk Management and Issue Resolution Tasks.....	190
Exhibit 55: Work Plan – Change Management Tasks.....	192
Exhibit 56: Work Plan – System Integration Tasks.....	194
Exhibit 57: Work Plan – Security Management Tasks.....	196
Exhibit 58: Work Plan – Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning Tasks.....	198
Exhibit 59: Lessons Learned—Transition.....	198
Exhibit 60: Organization References, Contacts, and Roles.....	200

SNAP CONTACT/CALL CENTER ROLES AND SERVICES

SNAP Call Centers

In an economy with a growing demand for services and heightened expectations for expedient and quality service delivery, States continue to look for administrative improvements to improve service delivery to their citizens. One of the most common forms of interaction with Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) clients is the telephone. In many States, these calls come directly to case workers who interrupt their work to serve clients. State officials are asking: Would a call center alleviate some of the pressures on local offices in my State? What do I need to have in place to provide good customer services in a call center?

While some local offices designate a worker or two to handle incoming calls (a mini-call center) for their office, this may be less efficient than a true call center. In other States, the calls are made to common 1-800 phone numbers, and the call is taken by dedicated call center workers who have the ability to answer the vast majority of calls as they have access to the case records electronically.

Approximately two-thirds of the States already have a call center operation that supports SNAP operations, and it is expected that States will continue to establish new call centers, expand existing call center operations, and/or replace older technologies. Call centers can provide support to the certification process in local offices by reducing the time local certification offices spend answering phone calls concerning:

- General SNAP information;
- Application and benefit status information;
- Application and recertification interviews;
- Customer complaints; and
- Processing changes.

In some States, call centers go beyond these functions to directly certify and re-certify households, thereby supplanting the local office for a portion of the application processing workload.

While it is the focus of this report, it is not possible to discuss call centers in isolation. They are frequently an important component of States' more general efforts to modernize the administration of their human service programs, including SNAP. States that have enjoyed the most success identified their business needs before determining the functions and services to be provided in their call centers. For example, in many States, the call center is not the only access channel in the service delivery model. States have taken a "hybrid" approach in which SNAP beneficiaries and applicants can access services through the call center, as well as through local offices or via the Web site. These call center services support and complement a State's overall service delivery model and goals. For more information on how to determine what services a call center should perform, refer to the *Business Processes and Scope* chapter.

Document imaging is generally a prerequisite, and telephonic signatures would facilitate application processing in call centers. Placing this functionality in call centers can provide a State with significantly increased flexibility in managing fluctuations in workload. While States' experiences over the last decade indicate that call centers can help improve the efficiency of their SNAP (and other program) operations, a number of factors need to be considered before deciding to implement a call center.

SNAP Call Center Technical Advisory Group

The SNAP Call Center Technical Advisory Group is a joint effort by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and States with extensive experience operating call centers. The group's primary goals are to:

- Facilitate sharing of information about designing and operating call centers for SNAP and other State-administered income support programs.
- Provide a framework for States to use in determining their need for call centers.
- Identify the critical factors surrounding the choices States make in determining the functions call centers perform in relation to local offices.

SNAP Call Center Manual Overview

This manual is offered as a guideline for States to use in planning the implementation of a call center. This manual refers to both call centers and contact centers, which are distinctly different:

- **Call Centers:** Call centers use phones as the primary means for how clients interface with their case workers.
- **Contact Centers:** Contact center utilize multiple avenues for clients to interface with their case worker, including one or more of the following: phones, e-mails, instant messaging, chat, and text.

This manual identifies the key factors State officials need to consider before implementing or modifying a call center. While this manual will not make decisions for State officials, it is intended to provide enough background to help inform decision makers as they make choices. Some of the most important considerations to factor into decisions regarding call center implementation include:

- Coordination of call center functions and responsibilities with local office operations;
- Level of investment in technology and staffing; and
- Impacts on customer service.

The primary focus of this manual is on call centers because States have established call centers and have less experience with contact centers. However, the manual does describe some of the services, channels, and related considerations for States moving towards a contact center.

There are several SNAP policies which need to be considered for waiver when moving to a call center environment, including:

- **Face-to-Face Interview:** If the call center will conduct interviews over the phone, States must request a waiver from SNAP in order to move forward with this over the phone service.
- **Scheduled Interview:** If the call center is going to conduct over-the-phone interviews, States should consider the impact of SNAP rules requiring a scheduled interview and request a waiver.

Throughout the manual different terms are used to refer to the staff answering phones in call centers (or responding to messages in contact centers.) These terms include "agent," "worker," "eligibility worker," "Subject Matter Expert (SME)," "Customer Service Representative (CSR)," and "Customer Care Representative (CCR)." All are used in different states based on the differing configurations and functions of their call centers. While all staff members need training in the SNAP and other programs handled by the call center, eligibility workers are the only staff authorized to make decisions to certify, recertify, or deny a household's eligibility. While eligibility workers may answer incoming calls, it is more common to have agents/workers/CSRs (i.e., administrative staff) answer calls, handle basic questions, and refer other issues to eligibility workers or SMEs. All of these staff members are merit staff working for the State unless FNS approves use of non-merit staff for certain tasks (see the *Staffing and FNS Merit Pay Policy* section of this chapter).

The manual also uses the terms: "client," "recipient," and "household" interchangeably for people participating in the SNAP and/or other programs. The term "applicant" is also used, but the reference is specific to households that are still within the application process. "Customer" includes all of the above and anyone calling a center.

Decisions

The decision to implement a SNAP (Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), etc.) call center or expand a current center's functionality are generally based upon two overriding considerations: **Improving Efficiency** and **Improving Customer Service**. Within these two "decision drivers" are a variety of factors and considerations that must be analyzed in detail to determine if a call center would improve a State's SNAP operation. Intertwined with and dependent upon this determination are the questions of the call center's functionality and its physical and telecommunication configurations. Questions to be considered include:

- What are the objectives and duties of the call center in context of the local offices' business process models?
- How will communication and coordination be established and maintained?
- Should the call center operation be centralized or decentralized? Should a decentralized operation be linked so that calls are seamlessly distributed between call centers (virtual)?
- What are the costs to start up and operate a call center? What are the service and cost implications of each alternative?
- What technology should be used? Can it be hosted, or should States own and maintain the technology? What are the benefits of each solution?
- How will clients be informed and educated on the functions and uses of the call centers?

Answering these types of questions will help move the decision process toward more concrete goals, as well as start the analysis of the various alternatives to get there. This analysis helps give management a picture of the benefits and risks of different alternatives. Identifying the gaps for each alternative between where the organization is and where it wants to be helps determine the relative costs, both for one-time expenses and for ongoing maintenance. Gap analysis provides a foundation for measuring the investment of time, money, and human resources required to achieve a particular outcome.

When performing alternatives analysis, it is important to identify and standardize cost and benefit factors for comparison between alternatives. The alternatives analysis should provide decision makers with all the pertinent information they need to take appropriate action.

Some examples of the types of call center decisions that can be facilitated by alternatives analysis include functionality requirements and whether to add employees, introduce a new technology, purchase equipment, change vendors, implement new procedures, or relocate facilities. This type of analysis can identify the "hard dollar" savings (actual, quantitative savings), "soft dollar" savings (less tangible qualitative savings, as in reduced processing time), and risks. For example, an inexpensive alternative to a "hard dollar" cost perspective may also require a significant investment in the time and effort required to deploy needed change management and, ultimately, get staff buy-in. It is important to not minimize the risks when making any significant change in business processes, and for SNAP, it is critical to be mindful of the potential impact of any new process on errors and application processing timeliness.

Functionality/Services

A critical decision is whether the call center is intended to support the local offices or to become the primary channel for all SNAP services. Current service delivery scenarios across States include a wide range of options. Beyond inquiry, the following services are included in State call centers:

- Accept and resolve complaints;
- Send alerts of reported changes to local offices;
- Accept reported changes;
- Process reported changes;
- Return calls made to local offices;
- Enter application data from applicant;
- Schedule interviews with local offices;
- Provide status of applications;
- Send requests for verification and/or verify with collateral contacts;
- Screen for eligibility;
- Process initial applications;
- Conduct interviews for initial certification and renewals; and
- Determine eligibility.

Exhibit 1 provides examples of State experiences surrounding the roles, benefits, technology needs and key considerations applied in several different call center service options.

Call Center Services Category	State Experiences	Technology Needed
<p>1. Data Entry Cost: \$</p>	<p>Intended role of the call center: The intended goal for this level of service is to support the local office staff by performing general data entry tasks such as appointment scheduling, complaints processing and data enter reported changes and to set tasks/alerts for eligibility staff to act on.</p> <p>Benefits: This option provides enough functionality to ease the burden on eligibility staff while providing a convenient channel for clients to access a wider range of services.</p> <p>Items to Consider: This level of service does not require eligibility staff to implement. Data entry can be done by clerical staff or office technicians. The technology must support the technician's ability to quickly access and input client information. Additionally, it should support the timely routing of tasks and information from the call center to the local offices. Any system delays or difficulties could affect handle times and caller satisfaction.</p> <p><u>Pro:</u> Enabling office technicians to perform clerical type functions frees up the eligibility staff time to work on determinations <u>Con:</u> Eligibility staff have no control over their schedules</p> <p>Keys to continued success: Develop standards for quality assurance and consistency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Appointment Scheduling System ■ Database to track complaints and resolution ■ Current Eligibility system(s) ■ Phone System <p><i>Note: If the state is operating in a decentralized model, the data entry technicians will need access / training in all eligibility systems being used in order to get tasks/alerts to eligibility staff timely.</i></p>
<p>2. Inquiries and Status Cost: \$</p>	<p>Intended role of the call center: The goal of an inquiry and status call center is to alleviate workload from staff by handling general inquiries and requests.</p> <p>Items to consider: This level of service does not require eligibility staff to implement. Data entry can be done by clerical staff or office technicians. The technology must support the technician's ability to quickly access and input client information.</p> <p>Benefits and risks: <u>Pro:</u> Alleviates workload from eligibility staff by answering client's general questions and inquiries. <u>Con:</u> In many instances, inquiries can escalate to action being required on a case. In this model, a hand off would be required to an eligibility worker if actions were necessary on the case. <u>Con:</u> Client questions could require more knowledge than the technicians skill set allows them to answer.</p> <p>Keys to continued success: To protect the initial investment, States could remain flexible and adapt to changing demands by understanding reason for call and client-preferred channels (e.g. Web, mail or local office).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Centralized Imaging ■ Single eligibility system ■ Phone System

Call Center Services Category	State Experiences	Technology Needed
<p>3. Change Reporting Cost: \$\$\$</p>	<p>Intended role of the call center: Under this category of service, call center agents are empowered to make decisions and take necessary action on case. Under this category of service, the call center is an equally viable access channel for SNAP services as opposed to the local offices.</p> <p>Items to consider: Given this model will have the most impact on technology, staffing and policy, states should conduct an in-depth feasibility study during the planning phase to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to the State's eligibility system and document management and imaging applications; ■ Appropriate skill sets for contact center workers; <p>This level of service requires eligibility staff to implement. Need to determine the parameters for the types of calls and service area for the call center (i.e. will they take calls for an entire state, certain geographic area, certain programs, all programs, are there certain populations that should be excluded from the call center).</p> <p>In order to provide consistent service to clients, states should have one policy and procedures manual for call center staff to utilize. Analysis of all offices where call center agents are located must be completed in order to ensure adequate lines are available for agents and volume.</p> <p>Benefits and risks: <u>Pro:</u> Allows for continuity of services and reduces hand-offs. <u>Pro:</u> Workers are given protected (uninterrupted) time to process cases. <u>Con:</u> Worker spends a high portion of their time answering phone calls and processing reported changes. <u>Con:</u> Process is split between application and ongoing open case.</p> <p>Keys to continued success: Discuss plans to move to a call center environment with key Federal agencies, community partners, and advocates to gain their support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Centralized Imaging ■ Single eligibility system ■ One policy and procedures manual for all service areas ■ Phone system with IVR capabilities ■ Phone system with call routing capabilities ■ Phone Lines
<p>4. Eligibility Determinations Cost: \$\$\$\$</p>	<p>Intended role of the call center: Under this category of services call center agents are empowered to act on changes, complete interviews and make case determinations. Under this category of service, the call center is an equally viable access channel for SNAP services as opposed to the local offices.</p> <p>Benefits and Risks: <u>Pro:</u> Through business process management, states have the ability to reach an extended population of clients and may also gain efficiencies in service delivery. <u>Pro:</u> The call center has flexibility to respond to growing caseloads or policy changes. <u>Pro:</u> Allows for workload portability, for example, staff in rural areas can be given equal workloads with staff in urban areas of the state. Thus maintaining rural jobs. <u>Pro:</u> Single access point for clients to call for interviewing, case status, and change reporting. <u>Con:</u> Staff spends a high percentage of their work week answering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Centralized Imaging ■ Single eligibility system ■ One policy and procedures manual for all service areas ■ Phone system with IVR capabilities ■ Phone system with call routing capabilities ■ Phone Lines

Call Center Services Category	State Experiences	Technology Needed
	<p>calls.</p> <p><u>Con:</u> If the call center is not adequately staffed, clients will endure long wait times</p> <p>Items to consider:</p> <p>Given this model will have the most impact on technology, staffing and policy, states should conduct an in-depth feasibility study during the planning phase to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Access to the State's eligibility system and document management and imaging applications; ■ The strong program skill sets needed for call center workers; ■ FNS approval to waive the requirement for in-person interviews ■ FNS approval to waive the requirement for a scheduled interview ■ Telephonic signatures <p>Duration of time spent on a single call must be considered for adding interviews to a call center.</p> <p>Analysis of all offices where call center agents are located must be completed in order to ensure adequate lines are available considering the number of agents, volume, and duration of calls.</p> <p>Consider implementing model to include telecommuting to reduce brick and mortar costs.</p> <p>Consider revising management structure to provide consistent expectations.</p> <p>Determine training strategies for implementation and ongoing needs.</p> <p>Keys to continued success:</p> <p>Given the shift in service delivery under this model, states should include an extensive stakeholder campaign during the planning phase to include Federal, State, and local representatives and assess the needs of the client population.</p>	
<p>5. Contact Center Cost: \$\$\$\$</p>	<p>Intended role of the contact center:</p> <p>The intent of the contact center is to give clients 24/7 access to their case information.</p> <p>Under this category, the center will increase access points for clients to view access and submit changes. The Web is an equally viable access channel for SNAP services as opposed to local offices or the call center.</p> <p>Benefits and Risks:</p> <p><u>Pro:</u> Clients can access case information 24/7</p> <p><u>Pro:</u> Clients can report changes 24/7</p> <p><u>Pro:</u> Reduce call volume to call center</p> <p><u>Pro:</u> Less hand-offs</p> <p><u>Con:</u> Clients can send questions and report changes 24/7, Monday workload must be well managed</p> <p>Items to consider:</p> <p>Given this model will have the most impact on technology, staffing and policy, states should conduct an in-depth feasibility study during the planning phase to consider the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ FNS approval to waive the requirement for paper notices ■ FNS approval to waive requirements for over the phone interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Secure Web site ■ Multi Media Platform ■ Centralized Imaging ■ Single eligibility system ■ One policy and procedures manual for all service areas ■ Phone system with IVR capabilities ■ Phone system with call routing capabilities ■ Phone Lines

Call Center Services Category	State Experiences	Technology Needed
	<p>With the introduction of the multimedia platform and Web site capabilities, states will need to consider the following for time management purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff time to act on client e-mails and act on reported changes ■ Staff time to act on changes reported online and act on reported changes <p>Consider what the Web site can offer to clients to reduce the need to talk / chat with a live worker.</p> <p>Determine training strategies for implementation and ongoing needs as staff in this model need a high skill set.</p> <p>Contact centers do not need to be the last phase of state evolution to virtual services; they can be implemented at any phase.</p> <p>Keys to continued success:</p> <p>Given the shift in service delivery under this model, states should include an extensive stakeholder campaign during the planning phase to include Federal, State, and local representatives and assess the needs of the client population.</p>	

Exhibit 1: State Experiences with Call Center Services.

The chapters that follow describe the significance of performing business process analysis prior to designing a call center or contact center. It is critical that States fully understand the various processes and touch points between a client and the State systems and processes. In general, however, there are certain aspects that need to be in place to enable an efficient call center or contact center.

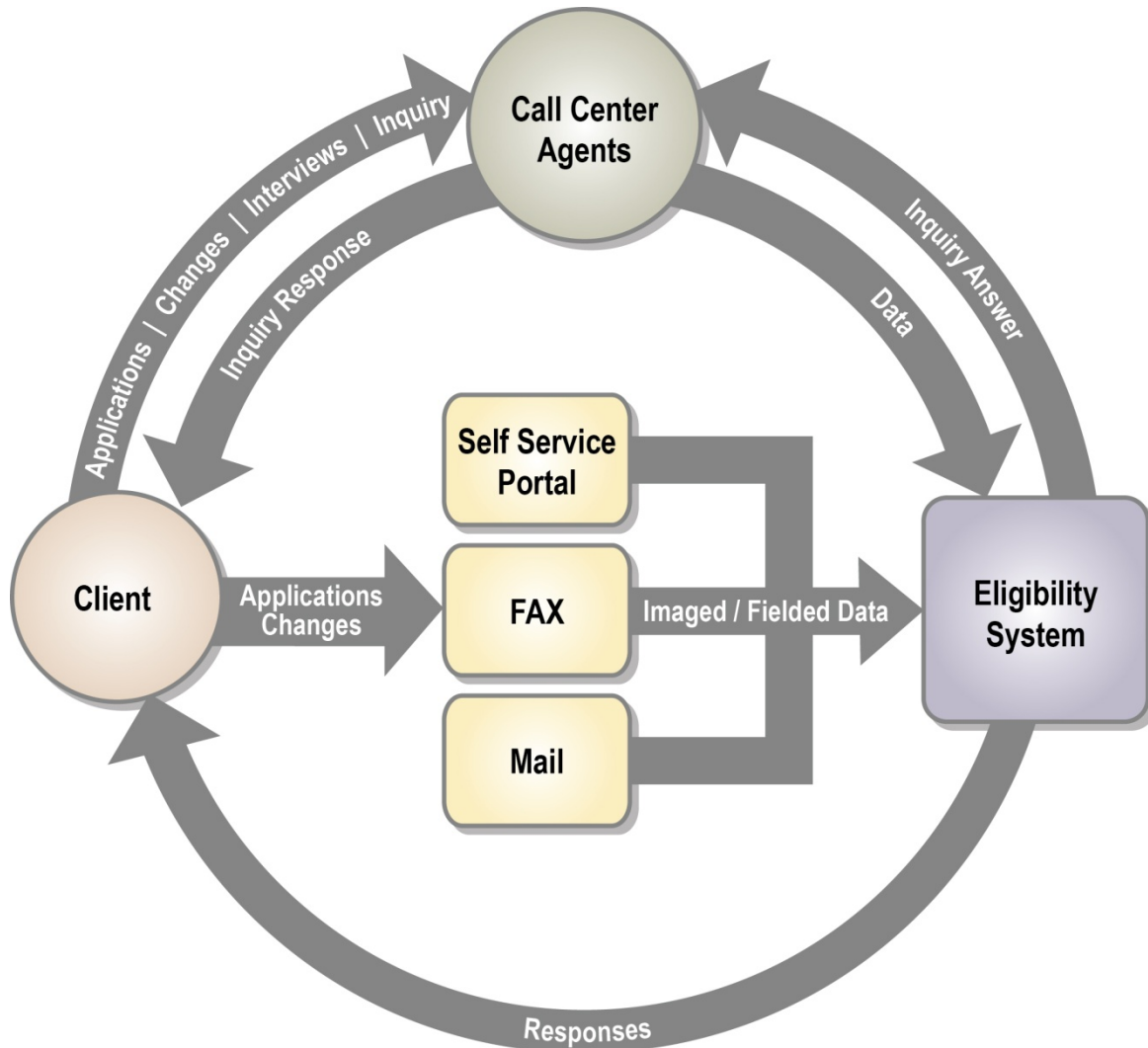


Exhibit 2: Multi-Channel Contact Center.

For all services listed in Exhibit 3 (with the exception of general program inquiries), workers will be required to perform an identification verification prior to releasing information. This is usually performed by asking for two to three separate pieces of information to confirm identification (i.e. case number, social security number, name, address).

Service	Information Needed	Enabling Business Process/Technology
General Program Information	Call workers will need complete knowledge of programs. In order to ensure consistent responses, work instructions and call scripts are recommended. The more consistent processes are for workers, the greater likelihood of managing timeliness, productivity and quality.	Knowledge management software is commonly used to help workers search a system for the right question/answer to speed up the delivery of responses. An intranet or Internet site accessible by call workers is needed. As described in the <i>Technology</i> chapter, telephony infrastructure and desktop computers with appropriate software is needed.
Application Status	To centralize the ability to respond to status questions, workers need access to the actual application's status. This may be enabled through a summary screen where workers enter in a client's case number or Social Security Number, and the system will generate either a summary screen or the actual case itself (in electronic format).	This normally means that documents are imaged and cases are Web-based so that they can be accessed by a remote center. This requires a repository for the cases and images. Note that to speed up the response time, it is advantageous to produce an application that retrieves key information from case files and presents it in a summary form. This enables workers to answer a variety of questions without paging through the actual application. It also means that call center agents can be less trained than workers and still provide accurate responses.
Inquiry or interaction through Interactive Voice Response (IVR)	The system is set up to allow a client to select different options to retrieve different information including: general information (recorded), appointment scheduling (which routes a person to an agent or has an automated scheduler featured), application status and/or benefit status, etc.	Normally Web services are set up to pull the answers from files and provide the answers electronically through the IVR system. Note that this system also requires the implementation of an automated identification verification step to ensure against Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) violations.
Benefit Status	As noted above, workers retrieve information through an electronic summary screen or through access to the case file.	See Application Status.
Apply by Phone	Workers accept applications by entering data into an online application on behalf of the calling client. This requires the client to provide authorization.	Workers need access to the Web-based system and then release it as if they were the client applying directly.
Make a change	Workers accept information by phone and enter into the system the new information. Workers require access to the system or must send the change information to local office workers.	This either requires access and permissions for call agents to enter information into case files, or requires an ability for agents to send tasks or e-mails to the specific queues or local office case workers to enter the change.
Schedule an Interview	As discussed in the inquiry by IVR. Note that an interview could be scheduled over the phone. The agent would have to have access to the calendars and time slots available with the workers performing the interviews. An appointment letter confirming the date and time selected would be required. This could be automated or waived.	The system needs to allow the agent to see calendars for appointments. To mail letters, the system needs to allow the agent to complete certain information so the letter can be mailed and scanned in for future reference.
Apply by Internet	As discussed above. Establish a Web-based application form available on a State portal. Enable the client to send it via Web for processing.	For best service, the system would enable the data to be automatically entered into the eligibility system off the Web-based application. Alternatively an image version of the application is sent to a centralized queue and workers pull the image and re-enter the data into the eligibility system.
Apply by Fax	As above; however, allow clients to fax in applications.	As above.

Exhibit 3: Contact Center Services and Business Process/Technology Requirements.

Staffing and FNS Merit Pay Policy

There are some key elements that make SNAP call centers unique. Callers who are seeking information about benefits have needs that represent wide ranges in call "talk-time" with workers. The callers' issues are typically complex and critical to their daily lives, and they expect the call center agent to know about their case and not require a lot of research while they are on the call. Many low income callers use cell phones with a limited number of "free" minutes. Depending upon the functions of the call center, agents may need deep knowledge about SNAP to provide assistance to callers.

- The level of expertise necessary for call center staff is directly related to the functions they will perform. Clearly, fully trained eligibility workers would be needed to conduct interviews and make eligibility determinations. However, it is important that any worker answering the phone have basic SNAP policy training to provide accurate information to callers, even when more difficult calls must be transferred to staff with greater expertise. Finding staff with call center experience may be desirable, but policy knowledge is critical.
- While the number of expected calls can and must be estimated to determine the number of lines and number of workers needed, contingency plans should be in place if the number of calls exceeds these estimates or spike during certain times of the month. Ideally, the system allows trained workers from other offices to be added to the phone queue as necessary.

States may consider using vendors to design and manage certain aspects of their call centers. The use of vendors may range from consulting on how to set up and staff call centers to contracting for technology. Some States have used vendor staff for the call center telephony infrastructure, as well as the staffing and operation of the center itself. There are pros and cons to outsourcing or vendor-staffed call centers, and Federal rules may prohibit the outsourcing of some functions. States considering using vendors in call center operations should consult with the appropriate Federal agencies and study experiences in other States that employ this model. There may be lessons learned and advice available from these States, which could help provide insight on the decision making process.

Section 11(e)(6) of the Food and Nutrition Act (the Act) restricts the SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State merit system personnel. Over the past few years, several States have used private contract staff to perform functions traditionally performed by merit system personnel such as providing application assistance, verifying information and answering case-specific questions. The outsourcing of these functions resulted in a more complex and difficult enrollment process, added complexity to the application process and confusion over the division of responsibilities between public and private employees. Based on the results of these projects, FNS further restricted tasks that involved any client contact to merit system personnel in our January 20, 2010 guidance "Federal Support for Enrollment and Application Processing Costs." States are required to seek approval from FNS to use non-merit system personnel in a limited capacity in order to ensure continued Federal Financial Participation (FFP) support.

Current statutes and Federal regulations restrict SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State-merit system personnel. Recent Federal guidance further restricts tasks that involve any client contact to merit system personnel. States may seek approval from FNS to use vendor/private staff to interact with clients in a limited capacity (see Exhibit 4). States who fail to receive FNS approval to use non-merit system personnel to interact with clients may risk losing Federal funding to support State SNAP operations.

SNAP intake and certification functions	
<p>Merit System Personnel Only <i>The following functions are reserved for State-merit system personnel only</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviews • Determining Eligibility • Screening for Eligibility • Handling Client Appeals Regarding Case Eligibility/Benefits • Handling Client Complaints Regarding Case Eligibility/Benefits • Providing Application Status • Providing Application Assistance • Providing Case Status • Pursuing Missing Information • Answer Client Questions About Missing Information • Recording Client Information or Accepting Reported Changes (that require client contact) 	<p>Vendor/Private Staff with Approval <i>The following functions are reserved for merit system personnel but may be performed by vendor/private staff with prior FNS approval. Approval is on a case-by-case basis.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Handling Complaints (Non-case specific) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ "Wait time is too long" ○ "I want a new case worker" • Taking Requests to replace Forms or Letters • Providing General Information such as <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Office Location ○ Contact Details ○ How to Receive an Application • Providing General Program Information • Provider Locations and Referrals • Responding to Requests for Blank Applications • Scheduling and Rescheduling of Appointments
<p>Vendor/Private Staff <i>The following functions can be performed by non-merit system personnel and do not require FNS approval</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data Entry (that does not require client contact) • Document Scanning • Data Matching (that does not include follow-up with clients) • Ancillary Support (i.e. building security, maintenance, technology support) 	

Exhibit 4: Seeking FNS Approval to use Vendor/Private Staff to Interact with Clients.

On a case-by-case basis, FNS may approve a State's request to use vendor/private staff to interact with clients in a call or contact center. To seek FNS approval, States must submit a formal request in writing to their FNS Regional Office. The State's request should include answers to the following questions*:

- Identify and describe, in detail, the specific function(s) vendor/private staff will perform.
- Provide the rationale/justification for hiring vendor/private staff instead of merit system.
- How many vendor/private staff will be working on the SNAP?

- Will the use of vendor/private staff result in a reduction in the number of merit staff working on the SNAP?
- Through what organizational structure will the vendor/private staff be employed (i.e. State, temporary staffing agency, contractor, etc.)?
- How long does the State expect to use the vendor/private staff?
- What level of expertise and/or training will the vendor/private staff have?
- Describe State oversight and supervision the vendor/private staff will receive. If performance of the vendor/private staff is less than satisfactory, what action(s) can the State take?
- What risks to customer service or SNAP program performance does the proposed use of vendor/private staffs create?
- How will the vendor/private staff be funded?

As each State's purpose for using vendor/private staff varies, additional information will likely be requested by the Regional Office after the initial formal request is submitted by the State.

**Note: Questions provided are subject to change.*

Centralization vs. Decentralization

The question of centralization versus decentralization requires the consideration of several key factors related to cost, performance, and future needs to sustain States through case volume growth, changes to policy, and unpredictable events such as natural disasters.

The benefits achieved from a consolidated model (centralized or "virtual") may include:

- Workload is more efficiently balanced across a centralized workforce, thus requiring fewer workers per work unit and allowing States to achieve cost efficiencies.
- Standards for consistent answer times, inquiry management, and quality can be more easily monitored and maintained.
- Staff resources can be more easily adjusted based upon call volumes and growth in demand.

States that may not be prepared to create large centralized facilities to house call center staff may instead establish "virtual" call centers. In this model, there may be dedicated call center workers, but they are located in two or more centers, and the lines are consolidated to enable seamless call routing and operational efficiencies. In a virtual model, with the proper tools and management controls in place, call center staff can work from any location, including their homes. The location of call centers is invisible to the callers. The criteria for comparing centralization vs. decentralization are as follows:

- **Staff Efficiency** – The number and skill level of staff required to complete the workload within the current service levels of the program.
- **Operational Control** – The ability of management to understand future demand, direct the organization's resources to satisfy this demand, understand what and how work is being completed, and affect changes in processing as part of continuous improvement or in response to outside forces such as policy changes or disasters.

- **Service Level** – The levels of service documented in contractual Key Performance Requirements, as well as presented in others operational performance measures, reflect client access, process integrity or efficiency.
- **Leverage of Existing Assets** – A description of how the operation uses existing capabilities, like telecommunications infrastructure and facilities, versus needing to reconfigure, build or buy new capabilities to execute the business process.
- **Disaster Preparedness** – The capability of the operation to address significant outages due to failures in critical components such as office facilities, workers' communities, networks, power systems and more.
- **Security** – The ability to meet security requirements associated with staff in various locations, including their homes, handling or accessing confidential information.

Much study in the field of operations research has been applied to the efficient allocation of call center agent resources across numerous call center locations. Essentially, what has been quantitatively proven is that staffing multiple locations with a lower number of resources per location decreases workforce productivity in terms of the number of calls that can be handled per worker. The following tables shows how distributing workers to multiple local offices to take phone calls results in a staffing model that is less efficient than a centralized or a virtual model.

Number of Call Centers	Hourly Arrival Rate Per Call Center	Workload Hours (Call Volume AHT)	Number of FTEs per Call Center	Agent Head Count per Call Center	Total Agent Head Count	Staff Workload Ratio
12	500	41.7	47.4	48	576	1.14
6	1000	83.3	90.1	91	546	1.08
3	2000	166.7	174.9	175	525	1.05
2	3000	250	258.9	259	518	1.04
1(or virtual)	6000	500	510.2	511	511	1.02

Exhibit 5: Call Center Agent Resources Workload Distribution.

When deciding whether to implement a centralized or decentralized call center model, there are a number of operational areas for consideration, including:

- **Management Controls** – Management controls can properly ensure that consistent standards and processes are employed by staff and enforced by State management. While it is possible to achieve these controls in both centralized and decentralized call centers, it can be more challenging in a decentralized environment.
- **Disaster Response** – A "virtual" model with several locations that have the ability to handle cases in any area of the State is the likely the model best able to respond to a disaster that shuts one or more facilities down, or results in a sudden increase in the need for interviews.
- **Facilities** - In a distributed model, each facility would require sufficient space, work areas, telephony connectivity, telephony equipment, and any other environmental requirements. Application of the same standards for security and privacy should be consistent at all

locations. Such requirements may be met using existing local offices or may require additional offices. In a centralized model, it is likely that a (large) new facility would have to be acquired.

- **Training** - Training may be delivered to all workers in centrally located facilities. With workers located throughout the State, training would potentially need to take place on a distributed basis, which may require additional training space outfitted for call handling education and/or additional travel costs. Additionally, distributed classes may have fewer participants per class, increasing the number of trainers required to train an equal amount of staff in a centralized model. If current facilities do not have the capacity (space, connectivity, computers, and telephony equipment) to hold classes, there would be either significant costs associated with build-out requirements or substantial travel/hotel/per-diem costs required to send employees to training centers. In-person training is more difficult to accommodate in a distributed model, so robust e-learning capabilities may need to be in place.
- **Staffing** - Using a decentralized or virtual model, States could enlist workers from local offices, but leave them in place rather than relocating them to a single center. Strategies would need to be developed to fill vacancies in order to meet workforce management requirements.
- **Procedures** – While each approach has, its challenges it is likely that spreading a call center operation would required additional attention to management controls and the development of procedures to promote uniformity in client services.

Approach	Staff Efficiency	Operational Control	Service Level
Centralized and Virtual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Overall fewer FTEs required ■ Workspace can be designed to facilitate high volume processing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Fewer workforce locations to manage the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Facilitates statewide workload queue management ■ Easier to manage consistency of management, execution and compliance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Dedicated workforce to service clients access via 1-800 number ■ Real-time monitoring of service levels ■ Single point of service level management for entire State workload ■ Consistent policy and procedure execution
Decentralized	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ May require more staff to complete: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Task workload • Operations management tasks • Configuration and management of local office telephony • Resource could be assigned to work on office tasks to offset unutilized time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Development and execution of new capabilities and procedures for distributed workload management such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management reporting • Performance monitoring • Workload forecasting • Workforce staffing and scheduling ■ Reduced visibility and control of statewide workload backlog ■ Local office management in direct control of local workload assignments ■ Recruiting, staffing, training are directed and managed across approximate many office locations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ KPR monitoring at each location ■ Statewide KPR reporting of Local office performance data ■ Policy and procedure execution may vary from office to office

Exhibit 6: Overview of Centralized and Decentralized Models.

Conclusion

SNAP call centers are present in the majority of States. Their popularity has provided a wealth of best practices and lessons learned knowledge. States that are considering implementing a call center or States with long-standing call centers should continue to evaluate their business needs to best determine the functionality of a SNAP call center. It is also important to recognize that States' goals to minimize costs while also meeting customer needs are a shared trend with the commercial industry. Remaining engaged with SNAP call center counterparts as well as the commercial industry will provide a helpful backdrop for State planners.

Lessons Learned

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Working with Federal partners.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Prior to submitting the telephone interview waiver and the unscheduled interview waiver, the team worked closely with the FNS Mountain Plains Regional Office. The team was therefore able to keep FNS informed of the planning process, as well as receive their input and feedback on what was needed in the waivers (i.e. business processes needed to ensure sufficient access to the SNAP program).
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Both waivers were initially approved and then later approved as amended.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	As a result of our upfront communication with Federal and local partners, the state was able to implement its waivers and new processes with few or no incidents.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	National & Regional FNS personnel made in-person visits to the state to see firsthand how our business processes and technology worked.
Lessons Learned:	Upfront communication is vital to the success of change.

Lesson Category:	Policy
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The department was implementing call centers and needed the ability to conduct telephone interviews rather than face-to-face. The department also needed the ability to conduct on-demand interviews rather than scheduled interviews. SNAP regulation requires face-to-face interviews and scheduled interviews.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Initially the call center was only in the central area of the state. The first telephone interview waiver and unscheduled interview waiver were for that area of the state. As SNAP was expanded to call centers statewide, the waivers were amended and expanded.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	All waivers were approved and unscheduled telephone interviews were implemented.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Unscheduled telephone interviews eliminated the need for several manual processes, including screening for expedited (all SNAP applicants are allowed to call within seven days for an unscheduled interview), scheduling and rescheduling interview appointments.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	It was difficult to have different processes in different parts of the state depending on the technology that area had available.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Washington
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Initial implementation of local call centers did not include customer feedback to develop business processes, scope, or policies. This led to a number of missteps related to customer expectations for call center services.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	During the transition from localized call center to a broader statewide model, several customer focus groups were conducted around the state to gather information related to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of services • Business practices, such as hours of operation • Procedures • Service levels
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The results of these customer focus groups were incorporated into business model and procedure development.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	There were fewer issues related to unmet customer expectations.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Whenever feasible, include the voice of the customer in development of call center operations and procedures.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Equalization of workload between Western (over-complement) and Eastern (under-complement) part of the state.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Utilization of existing experienced staff resources.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Creation of Customer Service Center (CSC).
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Added diversity of access for client to reach an eligibility worker. Offered relief for local Eastern Offices.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	There are various ways to get the job completed within resources already in existence to improve production and decrease workloads.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Learning the necessary components of starting a CSC.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Learning experiences of others: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive and negative. • Potential problems and how to avoid. • Identifying what worked best for others.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Visiting other State's call centers, including internal other department-run centers.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Gain of insight to situations, technologies, work-flow processes.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	This process is highly beneficial in gaining perspective and overall insight on managing and operation.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Gaining local office buy-in to CSC concept. Local office needed to release case-ownership belief.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	The more the CSC could help in relief of workload resulted in more buy-in and less case ownership.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Continuous communication of CSC capabilities and how they could relieve local office workload. Consistent messaging that CSC staff are eligibility workers, as in local office.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Local office began realizing the importance of detailed narratives and imaging – meant CSC could complete and/or lessen their workload.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Ongoing messaging.
Lessons Learned:	Highly important in building a team concept between local office and CSC. Naturally improves and enhances customer experience and service.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Organizing; Assessing possible needs, and operation of CSC.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Help from outside source, outside the box concepts, experience.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Hired consulting firm.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Additional resources provided with program management and scheduling of tasks for go live.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Helpful in planning, preparation, and implementation. Assurance that needs were met and work flow processes completely assessed.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Gaining client confidence that CSC can provide resolutions to questions and needs.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Breaking barriers of belief client must talk to or go into local office. Client lack of trust that anyone else can assist.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Brochures and advertisement of the benefits, such as not waiting in lines or accessing assistance from a phone call. Advancing trust by proving customer service and ability to assist with needs.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Took time and continuous assurances that CSC could provide and take necessary actions in resolving issues.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Local office buy-in is essential in the promotion of the CSC.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Indiana
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	In order to leverage staff and optimize efficiencies, department and vendor decided centralized contact center was best design option to meet the needs of department and clients. Using a central location, we expected to leverage infrastructure costs and leverage staff.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine location of centralized contact center • Determine infrastructure requirements • Determine staffing model <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centralized location for staff • One location to ease staff training and communication <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locating a building to house contact center <p>Cost of installing data/voice lines</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Department experienced poor customer experience with centralized model. Clients wanted face to face interaction with their case worker. Documents scanned to the centralized location were lost. Due to various reasons, contact center agent was not able to consistently answer client question without conversing with state eligibility worker. Clients experienced increased wait times.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Department redesigned delivery model to increase client interaction and client experience. Centralized contact center was dispersed to regional centers with direct linkage with local offices. This model allows clients to speak with employees locally to answer their questions in a timely manner.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Department and vendor monitor daily, weekly, and monthly call volumes along with wait times and time to answer. Based upon these inputs, continuous improvement efforts are initiated to streamline operations.
Lessons Learned:	Define and verify business processes align with operating model. Once the system was stable, it was determined that the operating and subsequent business processes did not meet the States goals. Moving from a centralized to local/virtual contact center was necessary to meet agency goals and objectives regarding client satisfaction, timeliness of applications, and quality.

Lesson Category:	Financial
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Staff housed in local office.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Pros: no increase financially with regard to housing</p> <p>Cons: CSC Culture can be conflicting with local office perception and rules.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Converted two local offices into main CSC sites with limited local office presence. One site has local county work distributed to other counties for processing. One site was a district office in which main county office took the caseloads.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Time for client acceptance. Initially and some ongoing increase of call volume to CSC as calls were automatically routed to CSC.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Rate of success in where site is housed is mainly dependant on attitude and buy-in of CSC site and local office.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Started on a very small scale.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Assessed ability to handle call volume and tasks in place. Afforded the ability to assess needs without immediate stress of being overwhelmed.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Initial implementation of one site with 20 workers and few local offices routing calls.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Flexibility to design as need arose.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Completed and used as ongoing model when adding sites and/or tasks.
Lessons Learned:	Necessary in assessing needs and impact.

Exhibit 7: Lessons Learned—SNAP Call Center Roles and Services.¹

¹ Section 11(e)(6) of the Food and Nutrition Act (the Act) restricts the SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State merit system personnel. Over the past few years, several States have used private contract staff to perform functions traditionally performed by merit system personnel such as providing application assistance, verifying information and answering case-specific questions. The outsourcing of these functions resulted in a more complex and difficult enrollment process, added complexity to the application process and confusion over the division of responsibilities between public and private employees. Based on the results of these projects, FNS further restricted tasks that involved any client contact to merit system personnel in our January 20, 2010 guidance “Federal Support for Enrollment and Application Processing Costs.” States are required to seek approval from FNS to use non-merit system personnel in a limited capacity in order to ensure continued Federal Financial Participation (FFP) support.

BUSINESS PROCESSES AND SCOPE

The primary activities of the call center approach for States to consider should include:

- Determining the scope of programs to be served by the call center.
- Determining the services to be provided within the programs served by the call center.
- Planning and mapping call center business processes and functions.
- Anticipating workload, staffing, as well as call center technology and infrastructure needs.
- Employing Business Process Management (BPM) practices.
- Ensuring plans are in place for continuity of operations and redundancy.

States should first determine the programs and services to be offered in their call center(s). Existing (and proven) call center methodologies, protocols, processes, and technologies should be identified, particularly in new or expanded call center operations. State and Federal program needs and requirements must be incorporated into this process. Data needs to be collected beforehand to determine appropriate call center system and infrastructure needs, as well as to estimate anticipated staffing needs. Agent scripts, guides, and templates associated with the call center's specific function need to be developed or leveraged from other proven call center operations.

States should consider working with other States that have similar call center operations. Vendors and Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) can also be accessed to confirm an understanding of the core call center business processes, to seek guidance if needed, and to take advantage of existing processes. Other States who have already developed what is needed would likely share their expertise and processes.

To determine the programs to be served, States should consider the information contained in the *Scope of Programs* section of this chapter. After determining the types of programs that could be served by a call center, States should determine the scope of services to be provided within those programs, as described in the section labeled *Range of Services*.

Exhibit 8 provides the features and benefits of various service components that are available to call centers. The technologies required to deliver these components are described in the *Technology* chapter of this manual.

Telecommunications Component	Features/Benefits in an Operations Environment
Interactive Voice Response (IVR)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Caller self-service provides updated client information 24/7. ■ Efficient call routing results in fewer abandoned calls.
Automated Call Distributor (ACD)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Real-time views of call center activity enable proactive management. ■ Skills-based routing capability.
Call Recording and Live Call Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Effective means to monitor calls for compliance and quality assurance.
Automated Outbound Dialing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Automatically places calls - frees up staff time for client interactions. ■ Enables greater call center agent productivity and more attempts at client contacts.
Bilingual call center agents and Translation Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Translation and bilingual services ensure that callers with limited or no English-speaking skills receive equal service.
Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/ Teletypewriter (TTY)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides equal access for hearing- and speech-impaired callers.
E-mail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensures client service e-mail interactions are handled according to a uniform set of business rules. ■ Increases worker productivity with tools that reduce response time for e-mail queries.
Web Chat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increases productivity by displaying multiple simultaneous chat interactions for the worker. ■ Improves the client experience by providing consistent service across all channels. ■ Routes chat to the best worker available to solve the client's problem. ■ Provides comprehensive reporting, including transcriptions of chat interactions saved in client history, for worker reference. ■ May be preferred by clients with hearing impairments.
Short Message Service (SMS) or Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Increases the effectiveness of client interactions. ■ Streamlines client communications.
Web Collaborative Browsing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Reduces Web form abandonment, increasing self-service containment. ■ Prevents frustrated clients from visiting local offices or calling the call center.
Social Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Agencies can publish messages directly to large client populations at once. ■ Allows agencies to react to negative feedback, answer clients' questions that might not have been addressed otherwise, and monitor the degree to which clients are succeeding in using social networking channels to augment their client service mix.
One 1-800 Number (Vanity Number)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ An easily remembered number on all materials. ■ Provides improved customer service because there is no need to try to find a different phone number for each of the various offices or departments.
Multiple Call Center Numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ability to route calls to a specialized queue without the use of an IVR. ■ Provides the flexibility to use different numbers on various forms and other printed material.
After Hours Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Provides services to callers after the normal hours of operation.
Updates on Wait Time for Callers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Helps distribute calls more evenly throughout the week by providing callers with the option to call back at a less busy time. ■ Provides better customer service by setting expectations with callers.
Virtual Queue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Allows callers to select the option of having a worker call them back once they are available or schedule a time to contact the call center at the caller's convenience. ■ Limits the time a caller is actually on hold with the call center.
Web Call-Back	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Allows an on-line customer to request a live voice call-back. ■ Reduces the time a client is on hold.

Exhibit 8: Features and Benefits of Telecommunications Components.

Scope of Programs

Once States have determined the main focus of their call center, as discussed in the *Introduction* chapter, they should consider the appropriate scope of work the call center should perform.

Several factors determine the optimal program scope of the call center, including the State agency's needs, the purpose of the call center, the types of programs to be served, the policy and procedural requirements of those programs, outsourcing options, and other factors unique to the State agency or the programs to be served by the call center. State or agency budget

considerations may be a factor in these determinations. Policy requirements must be taken into consideration, including those of the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) ombudsman, State or Federal legislation and policy, or by prior agreement with other entities. For example, if State policy requires finger imaging of applicants, it may be impractical to offer a call center related application process or interviews. Breaking the application/certification process into too many tasks performed in local offices and call centers could result in overlap, duplication and an inefficient process as well as misunderstandings of the services available through the call center.

The types of programs to include with the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) in the call center operation should be analyzed for similarities. The most efficient call center may include providing services for clients or programs that are similar in structure, eligibility support systems, and policy. For example, some programs may have similar processes and policies, where customers are supported by the same State eligibility system. It may be appropriate to include these in the call center scope of operations. Similarly, efficiencies may result if call centers handle a combination of programs that provide various program benefits to individual households.

Some call centers serve recipients of only one program while other call centers may provide services to customers receiving combinations of program services, including for example, SNAP, Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), child care, fuel assistance, women's health, and general assistance. If it is known that programs will be consolidated or streamlined in the future, it may be efficient to anticipate, and possibly include them into call center service provision.

A critical factor is the overall purpose of the call center as it relates to local offices. The purpose of the call center may be to:

- Phase in a replacement for local office processes;

Questions to Determine Scope of Programs
What are the policy requirements of each program?
Do any of the eligibility requirements require in-person office visits, including finger imaging, income verification or interviews?
What programs use the same system for determining eligibility or enrollment?
What programs are used by members of the same household?
Are there plans to streamline any programs in the future?
What is the proportion of clients that are enrolled or eligible in multi-programs?
Is the purpose of the call center to phase in a replacement of local offices or to reduce the burden on local offices?
What is the size of the programs?
What policy changes are expected in the future?
What are the most common inquiries or services received?

Exhibit 9: Determining Scope of Programs.

- Reduce the workload at local offices by assuming responsibility for portions of the local office workload; or
- Provide another channel for customers to seek assistance or make inquiries.

A fully consolidated call center should improve accessibility and customer service by providing an alternative for customers to receive services or make inquiries, rather than requiring customers to go in person to an office. This could reduce or eliminate barriers, including travel distance, office location, transportation issues, work schedules, daycare issues, crowds, and long wait times, which can prevent beneficiaries from visiting local offices. Additionally, local offices may not have adequate staff, which could result in both long wait times and phone issues. A call center can reduce the burden on local eligibility offices by absorbing workload, thereby freeing up local staff so they are able to focus on the needs of clients, and the associated casework. Both accuracy and timeliness could benefit.

Other unique factors may need to be considered when determining the scope of the call center. For example, it may be efficient to consolidate programs within some call centers, even if all of the call centers are not currently consolidated. This could help improve processing efficiency, streamline management, and reduce overhead costs. The consolidation of smaller programs in one location could provide efficiencies for economies of scale, as opposed to having or maintaining several smaller, individual operations for each program area. Similarly, the volume of calls per program will help to determine if a consolidated call center will bring about cost savings.

Management should always consider future policy changes when determining the scope of a call center. Programs that may be streamlined in the future could affect call center decisions and benefit from being included into call center processes.

The most common inquiries across program lines should also be evaluated. These commonalities could be a consideration when determining the scope of a call center. If the most common inquiries for several programs are similar, it may be most efficient to include those in the call center function.

Range of Services

After identifying the programs that will be handled by the call center, the range of services within those programs should be considered. The program requirements, population of callers, types of calls expected and the accessibility needs of the population will help determine the services offered by the call center.

Questions to Determine Services
What is the expected volume of calls?
Are there any staffing constraints?
What is the language need of the population?
What is the technological capacity of the population?
What telephone numbers are currently published and/or used by clients?

Exhibit 10: Determining Services

Considerations for language preference, education levels, and Internet access should also be taken into account when planning for and designing the call center. To achieve this, States should:

- Collect and analyze historical data based on needs and anticipated workloads.
- Evaluate whether and how program services can be effectively provided through a call center model.
- Determine if services might be unacceptably deteriorated or fragmented through a call center model.
- Seek insights and similar data from other States that utilize call centers.
- Seek feedback from key employees, partner agencies and service providers.
- Develop process simulation models.
- Conduct validation sessions for the process simulation models with key stakeholders and SMEs.
- Develop system redundancy and business continuity plans to ensure ongoing operations in the event of a business interruption, whether planned or as a result of a disaster or other emergency.

The anticipated size of the caller population, the volume of calls expected, and the nature of the anticipated calls are all critical factors when determining call center staffing levels, necessary agent skill sets, and call center self-service options. While it is not always possible to estimate the exact call volume or the type of call expected prior to implementing a call center, forecasts should be developed to determine the optimal staffing and training needs. States should also carefully determine their need as it relates to the technology necessary to support the call volume and routing, and usage of automated self-serve features for client access to routine information (that which does not necessarily require a live call agent's involvement). The forecasts will need to be continually refined to improve accuracy and accommodate changes in call volume, scope, call center service, or self-service options. Forecasting is discussed further in the *Staffing* chapter.

Some call centers find it most efficient to provide multiple self-service options, while others prefer offering live workers to all callers. While many callers prefer to talk to a "live person," others would rather secure accurate and timely information through a well-designed and user-friendly automated self-service option, without having to speak with an agent. Staffing availability and funding should also be taken into consideration. An effective Interactive Voice Response (IVR) could divert a significant percentage of calls away from live call agents, reducing labor costs and possibly freeing up limited staff for other purposes.

As further explained in the *Technology* chapter, some forms of technology, such as an IVR system, will help to determine which self-service channels can be offered. Any form of call center technology or system infrastructure can require a large front-end investment, but this could be offset in the long term by substantial cost savings and improved customer service. When deciding which self-service channels are most appropriate for expected callers, be aware that other States and vendors have experienced knowledge of call center products and operations, and can provide recommendations and solutions that are focused on customer service and cost effectiveness. States must also consider Federal and State policy limitations when identifying self-service options, as not all telephonic solutions available are allowable. Staffing may also be an issue.

For example, an increase in volume of calls and limited staff would increase the need for an IVR and other self-service options. Additionally, other program functions that can be provided through technology, such as Web chat or online self-service portals, may be suitable for a particular population.

As State agencies understand, it is a requirement of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to make accommodations to support persons with disabilities, including those who are visually impaired and those who are speech or hearing impaired. State agencies should review the various program services they wish to offer via the call center and determine what technology exists to accommodate persons with disabilities. Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDDs) and Teletypewriters (TTYs) are tools that help callers with hearing impairments communicate with call centers. Service providers are available in many areas to assist impaired callers in their navigation of call center processes. Other alternate forms of communication can also help accommodate clients with disabilities, including e-mail, Web chat, Short Message Service (SMS) or text, Web collaborative browsing, and social media applications, as further explained in the *Technology* chapter.

Removing language barriers, being sensitive to cultural differences and providing interpreting services at the initial point of encounter is critical to achieving accessibility. The type of bilingual and/or interpretation services to be offered and corresponding staffing levels should be determined with consideration of the language needs of the call center's target population. The proportion of callers speaking other languages will determine if bilingual call center staff are necessary, or if a translation service would be more appropriate. Language interpretation for callers can also be provided through a combination of hiring bilingual or multilingual staff, and contracting with translation services. Clients should generally not be required to provide their own interpreters. It is best to avoid using client family members as interpreters due to confidentiality restraints, including those related to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations. Utilizing State merit staff or certified private interpreters is recommended.

When considering a consolidated call center, it must be determined if a variety of telephone numbers will be used or if there will be one number for all callers. The numbers currently published and known to callers should be analyzed to determine how widely they are used and if there is an advantage to migrating to the use of one number. Management should exercise caution when modifying service numbers by implementing strategies for change that will minimize service disruptions and maintain customer satisfaction.

While considering the use of 1-800 numbers, States should take into account whether the numbers are shared by clients, similar programs, or specific client groups. While it may be least complicated to use one number, separate numbers may be most appropriate for client groups that do not need to enter the general IVR. For example, service providers may need to be connected directly to specialized staff, rather than have them access the call center IVR. Apart from possible caller wait time, call center staff may not be able to adequately address the specific needs of the caller.

The cost of multiple numbers, complexity of an IVR and volume of calls should dictate the 1-800 numbers used. Agencies should also consider that the cost of using a 1-800 number would increase with the length of time a caller is on hold.

States should develop system redundancy (restoration capability) and business continuity plans to ensure ongoing operations in the event of a system failure or business interruption, whether planned or as a result of a disaster or other emergency (see the *Continuity of Operations* section for more details).

Call Center Business Processes

The following processes are typically part of a call center. The level of integration and complexity with the following will depend upon the size and scope of the call center. When determining which processes to implement, call center management should strive to balance efficiency and good customer service with cost effectiveness.

For example, it may not be cost effective to have several queues or 1-800 numbers for a call center that is staffed by a few workers or answer only one type of call. Additionally, it will not be efficient to have one queue for a call center that handles calls for multiple program areas or a variety of skill types.

Once the scope and functionalities of the call center are determined, management, program, policy and technical teams need to work together to create an online manual for all staff to utilize. This comprehensive manual should include policy, procedure and best practices for handling various situations and processes that help guide the worker.

Interactive Voice Response

Incoming calls can be directed to an IVR, which may have the capability to authenticate the caller, direct the caller to a specialized queue, and provide the caller with self-service options.

An IVR can be configured to provide the following information to callers, which can improve customer service and reduce call volume:

- General information about programs.
- Eligibility application package request information.
- Hours of operation.
- Mailing addresses and fax numbers.
- Answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs).
- Eligibility screening tool to help clients understand the programs for which they may qualify.
- Application and benefits status.

The IVR should not be difficult for a caller to navigate. The fewer options given to a caller up front, the quicker they will get to a worker to conduct their business. Having educational and/or informational messages played while on hold is another means of getting information to callers quickly as the need arises.

Authentication

Depending upon the scope of the call center, nearly all callers will need to be authenticated before the worker can proceed with the call. Certain call types, such as requests for general information on programs and first time applicants should not require authentication initially. However, other call types, including application status, status of assistance and scheduling of appointments, require initial authentication to ensure that the caller's identity is properly validated and that he or she is permitted to receive the information requested.

Authentication processes should be clearly defined and rigorously audited to ensure that they are done in accordance with all program requirements, laws, and other regulations. The system that the worker would be authenticating the information against should be immediately available the second the call comes through. Generally, the confirmation of the beneficiary's name and social security number, date of birth, or case number should validate the identity of the caller and permit the worker to proceed with the call.

Queues

Call centers may find it most efficient to have dedicated queues for specialized programs or call types. For example, Spanish-speaking callers may be directed to a queue that is answered by Spanish-speaking workers, and callers inquiring about benefits for a program with a more complex application may be directed to a queue staffed by workers equipped to handle the inquiry. The need for a specialized queue may also come from callers, such as providers, that can route their calls to a specialized team trained to handle the complexity of the call. Although not all calls may need to be routed to a queue, the system should have the capability to transfer and release a call to a specific worker that is not part of a designated queue.

The complexity of the call center workflow will be determined by the scope, services, and skill level of call center workers. Workers should have a clear understanding of what management has set as the level of expectation of work that is required with each caller. Business processes should be designed so that the number of transfers is minimized to provide quality customer service and reduce costs.

Transfers and Escalations

If a worker is not able to assist the caller, the call should be escalated to a supervisor, more skilled worker or a specialized queue prepared to address such inquiries. In addition, transfers/escalations may be required to certain types of staff based on Federal policy requirements.

For example, if a non-merit system call center worker receives a SNAP benefit question, the call would need to be transferred to a merit system employee (for more information on the SNAP policy requirements for merit system personnel, please see Exhibit 4). The goal should be to avoid multiple transfers and/or escalations; however, escalations may be necessary to answer all inquiries. To expedite prompt customer service and avoid unnecessary transfers, it may be best to establish requirements for mandatory escalation and/or transfers.

Complaints

States should have a formal process for handling complaints from callers. Complaints may be regarding community-based organizations, civil rights, customer service, eligibility determination and benefit calculation, fraud referrals, and self-service systems. Call center workers can attempt to resolve the complaint or forward the complaint to an entity that is capable of resolving the issue.

Outbound Calls

Workers may have the need to make outbound calls to providers, employers, or other entities that assist in clarifying information provided by the client. These types of calls can be handled while the client is still on the line using conferencing calling or after the client call has ended. Workers should use discretion while making these types of calls. Management should communicate outbound process and policy so workers have a clear understanding of when an outbound call should or should not be made.

Reporting

The IVR should be able to provide reports that give detailed information and insight into current call center performance, which may be used by management to improve current business processes. The ways in which various reports can help to improve call center management are further discussed in the *Staffing and Management Practices to Ensure Customer Service* chapters.

Contact Center Options

States may want to consider whether to add other methods of communication to the call center. More advanced forms of technology can allow additional channels for reaching clients. For example, Web chat and social media may help to reach more clients.

Web chat allows clients to make inquiries via a computer rather than a telephone. Clients can access the Web chat feature through the organization's Web site and begin talking (typing) to a live worker without the use of special software. Workers are able to communicate with multiple clients at once. The skill sets and training required for Web chat workers may be different from those needed for traditional calls due to the interactive nature of the communication. For example, workers speaking with a client while searching for information to share verbally are interacting differently than a worker staff who is awaiting a typed response from the client in order to provide information.

Social media is growing increasingly popular and may be an alternative method of contact for a call center. Social media solutions offer low-cost, real-time communications strategies for reaching clients and connecting them to the right programs. Examples of social media include providing general information about programs, services, events, or emergency services to clients via Twitter, text messaging, Facebook, YouTube or smart phone applications (for more details on alternative media options, see the *Technology* chapter). Exhibit 11 provides examples of how States could utilize existing social networking tools to further reach clients.

Social Media	Media Design and Function	Features/Benefits in an Operations Environment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facebook 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An online Web site that provides a means for users to interact over the Internet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals can proactively "opt in" to participate and become a "fan" of a State or business page. States could provide information on programs, eligibility, on-line services, contact information, link to State Web sites, etc. States could also use as a forum or blog.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Blog (short for Web log) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A type of or part of a Web site, typically providing regular commentary and description of events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> States could use a blog to address programs, enrollment, choosing a health plan, and community meetings. Forums could be used to engage the public, address myths, explain the "why" of policies and procedures, or announce new initiatives.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Twitter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A micro-blogging service offering instantly updated information in posts of up to 140 characters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This may be a venue for disaster updates and announcements about program changes.

Exhibit 11: Alternative Communication Tools

These and other networking tools could act as an additional resource for information and provide an innovative way for States to connect clients or providers. The ideal outcome of the use of this type of media is a reduction in call volume (inbound and outbound), printed correspondence, and local office client traffic, without the need for clarifying phone calls from clients. It is important for States to select a strategy on multi-media communications that embraces integration of all channels into the same "system." What this means is that no matter which message medium is used, each interaction is saved, and thus available to be accessed at a later time.

If social media is used, it should be implemented with caution and States need to ensure that any sites used are secure. Factors to consider include privacy/HIPAA requirements, the appropriateness of each type of media and its uses and exposure. Social media, interactive media, and text messaging are extremely popular but may carry privacy and confidentiality risks that need to be managed. It is important to develop a full understanding of the risks of using multi-media contacts and to discuss specific plans with FNS regional offices.

While social media demonstrates significant potential for using technology to more effectively serve clients, as well as reduce inbound calls and office traffic, risks and constraints must be considered.

- HIPAA rules may limit the type of information communicated through public channels. Security concerns (chiefly due to loss of confidential information) are an important consideration to the implementation of social networking tools.
- States need to determine if (and how) content would need to be stored for audit, legal and open records reasons.
- States must allow clients an opportunity to "opt in" to alternative notification systems. Clients must also have the ability to "opt out" at any time.
- States need to consider the period of client and staff education and shift in expectations needed to change client and staff behavior to ensure maximum utilization while maintaining quality service levels.

- States should develop mitigation strategies for any risks to State agencies.
- States must ensure policy issues limiting alternative technology usage to provide SNAP services are approved. Where technology is used to supplant or supplement the duties of merit staff or where communication with applicants or participants changes the way applications are processed, changes reported or notices to participants are delivered, States should notify their FNS regional offices to ensure that the new processes are in compliance with SNAP policy or identify which waiver requests might be necessary.
- States must ensure all methods of communication meet accessibility standards and do not pose a barrier to clients with disabilities (e.g., ensure compatibility with screen reader software, etc.).
- States must also ensure system and information technology resources are available to perform the tasks (e.g., chat services may require a large amount of system resources and specialized software due to streaming bandwidth).

Business Process Management

After the scope, services, and methods of communication are determined; the business processes should be planned, mapped, and implemented. State planning methods must ensure consistency. Business Process Management provides the framework needed to define, record, automate, and manage business processes. BPM helps realize established goals at any stage of an organization's development and maturity. With BPM, processes are looked at holistically, i.e., as the client experiences them, rather than within the organization, department or other fragments.

The benefits to call center operations that come from well-implemented BPM strategies include:

- **Increased Improvement Opportunity Identification:** Knowing where to focus to achieve the next gain in efficiency most easily.
- **Agility:** Easier identification of specific business processes affected by policy changes and ability to respond to them quickly.
- **Risk Reduction:** Accurate determination of the impact of policy changes on underlying business process and systems.
- **Operational Efficiencies:** Effective staff instruction and process monitoring to ensure staff process an application or other task the same way.
- **Governance and Compliance:** Understanding of the processes that helps establish standards and ensure compliance.
- **Knowledge Sharing:** Transferability of business processes reduces the need to re-engineer for every organization.

BPM within a call center environment can involve implementation of complex systems or less robust tools, which have limited capabilities but may be more practical for smaller organizations with limited budgets. While it is not required, States may also consider consulting with a third party to establish process models and controls in order to design and implement the most efficient and cost-effective call center solution for the organization.

The use of BPM provides States with visibility into process performance and reduces the risk of issues resulting in a significant number of adversely affected clients. In addition to documenting and understanding the business process, the BPM identifies and documents: (1) How to monitor the business process so that problems are detected before they affect the caller; (2) Who fixes a problem when it occurs; and (3) How to fix problems.

Ideally, BPM should be completed prior to the implementation of the actual business process. The preliminary analysis greatly reduces risk of unintended consequences once a business process or change is implemented. The BPM should be efficient and allow flexibility without complexity. States should be able to apply BPM principles to any process.

The re-engineering of business processes may be necessary to integrate improved technology, incorporate efficiencies learned through modeling, make incremental improvements to continue gaining efficiencies, and improve customer satisfaction.

Continuity of Operations

After considering the scope of the call center operations, it is imperative for a call center to have a business continuity plan to ensure that the infrastructure and all staff are prepared to respond to a disaster or other business interruption and continue operations. The impacts to both business and operational processes will need to be evaluated relative to the severity of a service interruption. A proper business continuity plan should include appropriate escalation, activation of disaster recovery sites, timely recovery and a coordinated, well-planned response. The voice and data network architecture for the call center should be designed to ensure business continuity and system redundancy for mission-critical applications. It should also eliminate single points of failure, including ensuring that computers, servers and network equipment are deployed in a redundant manner. Exhibit 12 provides suggested approaches for meeting the objectives of a comprehensive business continuity plan. For additional details on disaster recovery and business continuity planning, please refer to the *Transition* chapter.

Objective	Approach
Appropriate Escalation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintain up-to-date escalation procedures, communication plans, and contact information for key personnel Project Disaster Response (DR) team members. ■ Maintain escalation policy identifying the specific steps taken in the event of a system interruption ■ Train employees on the DR plan procedures, roles, and responsibilities. ■ Ensure the plan includes comprehensive, detailed steps for resumption of business operations in the event that an operational location becomes unusable.
Activation of DR Backup Sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Maintain up-to-date communications plans, contact information, and documentation to implement the switch of certain activities or operations to the designated site for that function. ■ Cross-train employees on mission-critical functions to ensure continuity of key activities at the backup site.
Timely Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Establish Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs) and identify key personnel assigned to each area of recovery. ■ Clearly delineate roles and responsibility to ensure appropriate and timely response at critical times including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Detection and definition of the problem; ● Determination of the problem's impact; ● Facilities, hardware, software, or networks affected; and ● Steps for problem escalation and resolution. ■ Maintain a complete list of databases, files, and other elements that must be recovered and documentation of workstations and network hardware and software recovery steps, including source code, data files, and documentation housed on local file servers and at offsite storage locations.
Coordinated, Well-Planned Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Participate in joint disaster planning exercises with affiliated organizations to ensure smooth, effective performance if the need arises. ■ Revise and update risk assessment and responses in conjunction with changes in personnel, locations, functions, equipment, technology, and other operational factors.

Exhibit 12: Disaster Recovery Objectives.

Risk Mitigation

It is also important to perform risk analysis to identify potential risks associated with systems, technology, people, processes, facilities, natural events, and man-made incidents. A risk assessment helps identify existing and potential physical, environmental, and operational issues that could result in a service disruption or declaration of disaster. Exhibit 13 provides mitigation strategies for various potential risks to business continuity.

Potential Risks	Mitigation Strategies
Lack of Access to Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Carefully consider current and potential future needs for data prior to negotiating the contract with the hosted solution provider(s).
Delays in Desired Modifications to System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ In collaboration with the solution provider, develop and document a detailed change management plan prior to implementation.
Higher than Expected Cost	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Run analyses as part of the decision-making process for selecting the type of telephony solution; use historical and expected call volume and length of calls to determine the expected cost of services.
Concerns over Information Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Incorporate clearly defined security policies and procedures in all contracts, including personnel contracts; provide access to systems for remote workers via secure password-protected Internet connections; incorporate use of privacy screens for laptops used in non-secured areas as part of security policies and training.

Exhibit 13: Potential Risks and Mitigation Strategies.

Disaster Recovery

There are three classifications of a disaster providing a natural progression of response and relative degree of preparation. In each of these classifications, there are further degrees or levels that dictate the type of preventive action to take in an effort to reduce risk and loss of operations. Disasters should be classified when there is an interruption with data, hardware, or facilities that prevents normal activity. The three classifications are as follows:

- **Incident:** Anticipated downtime is less than one day. Damage could be to a file(s), software, hardware, mechanical equipment, electrical equipment, or the facility.
- **Disaster:** Estimated downtime is two to six days. This would include loss of all data, major damage to hardware or the loss of the facility due to localized problems.
- **Catastrophic Disaster:** Estimated downtime is more than one week. Damage is extensive including loss of facility, loss of computer room and all equipment. Restoration of services requires full plan execution.

The cycle from the occurrence of a disaster to the full restoration of normal operations has four phases. A comprehensive disaster recovery plan should include each of these phases:

- 1) Initial Response.
- 2) Preparation for Temporary Restoration of Business.
- 3) Temporary Backup of Business.
- 4) Restoration and Return to Permanent Operations.

Backup Plans

In order to ensure continuity of operations, it is essential to have a data backup plan, hardware backup plan and call center and telecommunications backup plan. This will help ensure that operations can continue despite an interruption resulting in loss of data or infrastructure.

The data backup plan should specify the procedures for the call center's data protection. The backup procedures should require that all servers be backed up on tape, CD or similar media, and stored at an off-site secure facility or backed up as part of a secure, online data vaulting process. It is recommended that backups should be executed on a daily, weekly and monthly schedule, with each version being retained in the active tape/CD library for a pre-determined period.

The hardware backup plan should specify the procedures for various levels of equipment failure, as well as the agreements that are in place with selected vendors to ensure rapid replacement of equipment, should it be necessary.

Another call center or backup equipment should be available to deploy on an emergency basis. Server, switch and router configuration information and files should be stored on secure, removable media for easy mobility.

For disaster recovery planning purposes, a toll-free redirect feature can help with redirecting calls in the event that the call center is not functional. This carrier-based service solution can quickly divert inbound toll-free calls to an alternate location, if necessary. Another call center

can be used to answer the rerouted calls. Alternatively, a recorded message can instruct individuals calling the primary number that there is a new number to call. If it is not possible to reroute calls or record a message for callers, an alternate number can be printed on materials so that callers can use in the event the first number is non-operational. In addition, Facebook and/or Twitter can also be a venue for disaster updates and announcements about program changes.

Conclusion

A call center is dependent upon many factors, and it is critical to adequately evaluate all factors before establishing the call center. The scope of programs and services should be determined based on customer need, efficiency and cost savings to the State. Next, successful business processes and BPM will help to further create efficiencies. All programs, services, and processes that comprise the call center should be re-evaluated regularly and modified as necessary to ensure that they meet the needs of clients, and are in line with policy requirements and future trends.

Lessons Learned

Lesson Category:	Transition
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Department was asked to streamline and standardize processes for eligibility determination while reducing the number of staff by 99. ■ The department was previously structured under five regions with five directors having oversight and different process/ procedural manuals. ■ Reduced call centers from five to one, giving customers one phone number to call statewide.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate the five procedure manuals into one for consistent processes statewide. • Move management of five regions under one governing body. • Set up phone system that would allow customers calls to route statewide. • Set up teams to allow for work load portability and keep rural jobs rural. • Determine method for training staff statewide. • Analysis required of all offices with call center workers to determine phone line and bandwidth capacity prior to implementation. • Early buy in from community partners and advocates. <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent processes throughout the state. Customers received the same message no matter which office, team or worker they talked to regarding department processes. • Management support in delivering consistent expectations. • Early buy in from management and staff allowed for an organized implementation. • IVR and web messages allow us to quickly notify customers of problems or changes to service. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the nature in which our department is set up, we were required to implement the move in a live environment.

Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	<p>Achieved reduction in staff without a RIF.</p> <p>One statewide call center with one local and one toll-free number for customer and consistent processes statewide.</p>
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Successfully implemented the statewide eligibility model and achieved a reduction in staffing despite growing caseload sizes.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Based on the current economy and caseload sizes, we have had to make adjustments to call routing, IVR, and team structures.
Lessons Learned:	<p>We learned that re-engineering processes for our Department takes coordination, analysis and planning.</p> <p>Customer education is vital to the success of business process changes. We found that by placing strategic messages on our IVR and web page could give customer additional information about our services and process changes that allows for easier access to services and directs them to correct avenue for communication with our department.</p>

Lesson Category:	Policy
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<p>In a face-to face office visit, multiple case worker-level staff members are available to answer clients' questions. In the call center setting, seconds count towards performance, so the need to have staff adequately trained to address callers' questions at the first level is critical.</p> <p>In instances when the first level Customer Care Representative (CCR) is unable to assist the caller, various levels of escalation need to be available to further assist the caller.</p>
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many calls are more complex than inquiring simple benefit amounts or directions to the local office. • CCRs experience complex policy questions, questions about how reported changes impact benefits and challenges on benefit amounts and agency actions. • Lack of adequate knowledge affects the caller's perception of the competence of CCR staff. • A visit to the local office may incur an unanticipated wait. <p>Established peer support during training and included an observation time of significant length to increase confidence levels. Often this is referred to as OJT. In our setting, the OJT occurred at two points in the training cycle; both included observation periods listening to live calls and recorded calls. When staff in training was "partnered" with tenured staff through OJT in an established unit, the trainee staff demonstrated significant improvements in performance and confidence levels upon completion of training and answering live calls.</p> <p>Ensured staff members were cross-trained with other programs supported and associated with the agency. Having cross-trained staff may reduce caller frustration when multiple programs are within a single household.</p> <p>Levels of Escalation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The escalation avenues the vendor utilized are: Quality Control queue; Supervisor queue; and Specialized Escalation queue. • The vendor has available a State Support Staff (SSS) queue to assist with policy clarifications. • Incorporate complaints into escalation unit to provide resolution

	rather than continue the complaint. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish Fair Hearings process within the escalation unit to ensure timely processing to state hearing officers.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	CCRs are able to better assist callers and resolve issues resulting in a reduced number of repeated callers.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The increased number of adequately trained staff has improved customer services, alleviating the need of traffic at the local office.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	None
Lessons Learned:	Adequate training allows the same level service as the local office to be effective and efficient, thereby removing burden from the local office.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Indiana
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Department and vendor determined existing centralized contact center model was not meeting client expectations. Therefore, department initiated an IVR redesign to route calls from centralized model to local offices based upon client zip code. We went to a virtual center model vs. centralized to ensure calls are quickly routed to the proper queue for resolution.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Decision Factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology did not match new business model Client experience was suffering due to long wait times and multiple transfers IVR too complex Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> IVR selection tree simplified Calls routed to local office for resolution Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> By adding additional local office staff to call queues, additional contact center software licenses were required Effort to train local office staff on phone technology
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	By making this change, Department is confident calls are quickly routed based upon a simplified IVR to local office agents for resolution.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Yes, the call wait times are lower and client experience is improved. However, simplifying the IVR call selection was time consuming and required extensive testing.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We monitor call metric reports and if necessary make adjustments.
Lessons Learned:	When selecting a technology solution for contact center, make sure software is flexible to allow for business model or legislative changes.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Adding tasks and/or actions.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Pulling workers off of calls to handle "back-end" work/actions resulting in the inability to handle call volume and increased wait times.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Limiting the amount of tasks as well as type of tasks, assessing the complication factor of a task. Need for additional Staff.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Review, research and piloting of any additional tasks.

Adjustment or Follow-up:	Ongoing analysis and follow up.
Lessons Learned:	Biggest asset to finding efficiencies and improved processes are from the workers doing the job. CSC workers determined there were certain tasks that did not increase processing time or affect local office procedures/workload.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Washington
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	60+ statewide call centers operated independently of one another with varying business models and processes. This resulted in an inconsistent customer experience, redundancy of services, inefficient service delivery and no consistent method to measure performance. It was not widely accepted that consistency was important between the 60+ independently run call centers.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	1) Division HQ held a traveling "road show" for all managers statewide to communicate the issues with the current state; demonstrate the benefits of consistency in business model and practices; propose possible solutions; and gather feedback and concerns. 2) Statewide management team made a consensus decision to move forward with a consistent business model and consistent processes. An implementation team, including line staff subject matter experts, was chartered to implement the new business model and develop consistent business processes.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	A single, statewide call center business model using consistent processes. These principles and processes are contained in a statewide call center procedural manual that is used by all agency staff.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The initial processes implemented were developed with the understanding that they were not perfect. Continual improvement would be necessary.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	A subsequent standing workgroup was chartered to develop and implement new procedures and improve existing procedures.
Lessons Learned:	It is important to get buy-in at all levels that consistency of process and business model is a goal that should be achieved. Include line staff in the development of processes.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	What services to provide.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Provide decreased phone interruptions to local office to increase productivity.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Providing general information regarding office location and hours, benefit programs, local agency resources, how to apply, alternative resources available via Web site, Medicaid category coverage, application and/or benefit status, verifications needed.
Result: Did you solve it?	See above.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Ongoing Analysis based on statistics for call to CSC.
Lessons Learned:	Found general information, IVR messaging highly useful to decrease queue volume not pertaining to case-specific information. Some general information services could be routed and handled by non-merit workers, reducing financial cost.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	What tasks, actions, eligibility determinations to provide.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Help relieve local office workload without hindering or adding work.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Limiting the amount of tasks as well as type of tasks, assessing the complication factor of a task. Need for additional staff.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Review, research, and piloting of any additional tasks.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Ongoing analysis and follow up.
Lessons Learned:	Time consuming tasks could have adverse effect on call handling ability. Possible need for additional staffing.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Washington
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Due to a lack of clear objectives, scope of services, business practices and processes, the first iteration of call center implementation resulted in 60+ call centers in silos across the state with no consistency in any of those key areas.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	A team was chartered to inventory all the various business models and practices occurring throughout the state and provide recommendations for a consistent future business model.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	A comprehensive call center report that included 40+ actionable recommendations to improve call center operations.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Nearly all recommendations have been implemented (only exceptions are the technology solutions that have just recently been funded).
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Develop a clear vision, objectives, scope of services and business processes prior to implementation of a call center.

Lesson Category:	Tactical/Policy
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The appeals unit was created 7-1-05 due to the TN Care Disenrollment that was taking place statewide. A new center was opened and was intended just to handle appeals. There was two to three week training for staff, and their only job was to register appeal requests for all programs that are administered through the Department of Human Services.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Management anticipated many appeals due to the disenrollment, and this was going to affect a large population in TN. By having this group of employees, it would prevent customers from calling the county offices or visiting the county offices for an appeal request.</p> <p><u>Pros:</u> Central location for all appeals. The group is specialized and trained specifically for only appeals. The correct procedures are followed and submitted timely.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> Staff is not able to go from appeals queue to other queues without additional training.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	All requests are completed timely and accurately. All requests have a recorded call if it becomes necessary in a dispute.
Result: Did you solve it? Other	The appeals queue has proven very beneficial and necessary. It is a

consequences good/bad	process where customers have a right to dispute an issue regarding the decision by a particular action on their Food Stamp, Medicaid, or Family First case.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	It is important for customers to know they have an avenue to voice their concerns or issues.
Lessons Learned:	Because this process is highly important, we need to ensure we have provided the most accurate training on policy and procedure. We also need the most efficient equipment and programs for the staff to complete the task. This is a very successful team and important part of our work.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Need for each site to have time off from calls for meetings and trainings.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Necessary for staff to keep up to date with policy changes, trainings, etc.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Each site receives 2 hours of time monthly to be off from calls on lower call volume days throughout the week. NEVER a Monday or day after a holiday.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Impact of call statistics dependant on if small or larger site off calls.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Completed and ongoing analysis. At times, due to urgent policy changes, extra time is needed an evaluated. Ongoing scheduling.
Lessons Learned:	At first this time was not built in, the importance of keeping staff up to date was recognized and a monthly meeting schedule was developed.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Added messaging of services available while callers on hold.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Callers tuning out and not recognizing when an agent answered the call.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Decreasing possible need to speak with agent from information gained by listening to messaging.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Added bits of music in between informational messaging.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	More callers able to take advantage of other services, how to apply, online services.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<p>The Data Warehouse reporting system collects and collates information about the content of each call based on the information the employee inputs in a "Work Order" at the end of each call. Much of the content information is entered via "codes" in order to facilitate the collation of information. The Date, Caller Name, Caller County, Case Number, and Worker Number (for County Worker and Call Counselor) are entered on each Work Order for tracking purposes. The Program, Reason for Call, and Action Taken are entered via code. A brief narrative and time spent on the call is also entered on each Work Order.</p> <p>At the time of the call, Work Orders are either "resolved" (caller's issues</p>

	were addressed and no follow up is required) or "unresolved" (the caller's issues could not be completed during the call and require follow up). "Unresolved" could mean the EC is awaiting verifications to complete a reported change, or they could be awaiting a response from another source to resolve the caller's issue.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports can be generated for the state, district, county, or individual worker detailing the reason for calls to the Service Center, and the action taken on those calls. This information can be used to monitor trends or possible problems. In many cases, subjects or geographic areas that require extra clarification or training can be identified through this information. This can range from policy training statewide to individual procedures in a particular county. • Reports can be generated based on timeliness. This allows a consolidation of work orders based on the date they were generated. This helps make sure issues are addressed and completed in a timely manner. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information is input to the Work Orders via code by individuals who are often hurrying to get to the next call. The information is only as good as the worker who input it. Errors can occur.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	It takes a long time to set up individual reports, because each column has to be added individually, and in a specific order. It is sometimes necessary to run multiple reports to obtain all the information available on a specific set of work orders.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Data Warehouse contains a wealth of helpful data concerning the content of the calls the FASC receives.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	This call content tracking system is complicated and not user friendly. It takes a lot of time initially to set up reports, and these often need to change as individuals in the group change. Very few of the authorized users of this system even attempt to access the information available.
Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Providing Service to non-English speaking callers.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Using a language line increases time spent on call and at times frustration for caller. Clients are more comfortable speaking directly to someone who speaks their language.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Created a Spanish-speaking site to address service to highest language need. Language service provider contracted to address other language needs.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	See above.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	English speaking callers have pressed the Spanish option in an effort to avoid possible longer wait times on English side.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Florida
Inputs: What was the problem, what	Out-of-State Inquiry Process: It was discovered that throughout our

were the assumptions / constraints	normal workday, hundreds of calls were attempted from agencies around the United States to verify case status of clients that relocated from Florida but were unsuccessful in reaching the call center or the local service centers.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Develop a single point of contact via e-mail for agencies throughout the U.S. to send their requests for case status information.</p> <p>Centralized this function in one location, which allowed better tracking and monitoring.</p> <p><u>Pros:</u> Agency received requested information in a timely manner that helps prevent overpayment or dual benefits being issued.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> A large workload that needs consistent monitoring that entails dedicating specific staff to ensure timely completion.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	An Out-of-State Inquiry e-mail was developed and centralized. The e-mail address was provided to all government agencies for contact when case status was needed for customers that relocated from Florida.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Implementing this procedure has successfully eliminated calls and provided timely and accurate responses on case status to other agencies (averaging more than 2,200 inquiries/requests monthly).
Adjustment or Follow-up:	This is an ongoing process that we continually monitor to ensure timely and accurate services are provided.
Lessons Learned:	Make sure to select the appropriate staff with the skills, knowledge, and ability to review and ensure policy and procedures are followed and correct service is provided.

Lesson Category:	Policy
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<p>Effective Date - June 2006</p> <p>The State was failing to complete the child support Non-Cooperation alerts for the Families First Program. This led the State to be sanctioned by the Federal government. The decision was made to task the Family Assistance Service Center with processing these alerts for the entire state. It was assumed if this one function were to be completed by a specialized unit, the chances of it being completed timely would be greatly improved. These alerts were divided among the three Service Center locations open at that time. It was decided in early 2007 to centralize the process at the Clarksville Center due to its proximity to the State Office. This would also keep the project in one location with one supervisor decreasing the chance of errors.</p>
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The process for working these alerts was developed, and a protocol manual was written. This ensures all alerts are worked appropriately, and the cases are documented in an organized and complete manner. After the first year of working these alerts at the Service Center, the percentage of alerts not worked was below the Federal tolerance level and the sanction against the State was removed. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having this unit of 12 people and one supervisor devoted to this project, removes this group from the Service Center's main task which is to answer calls from clients and to support the county workers by making changes to the clients' cases.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The number of workers in this unit has decreased from 18 to 12 over time. This has happened because the number of calls received by the main queue has increased each year. Consequently, it has been necessary to

	<p>reduce the number in the Non-Cooperation Unit and increase the number in the main queue. The unit has been able to absorb the increase to their workload up to this point. However, in July 2010, during a Federal audit, it was found that there were Non-Cooperation alerts being entered into the Tennessee Child Support Enforcement System (TCSES) that never crossed over to the ACCENT system. The state office provided a report to the Non-Cooperation unit of alerts that needed processing from an Infopac report. The belief was that all the Non-Cooperation alerts input into TCSES were crossing over to ACCENT properly and showing up on this report. The result of the audit showed this to be incorrect. Once this was identified, a joint effort was made among members of the Service Center staff, the state office staff, the Child Support Services staff, and OIR staff to correct the issue. It was found that almost one-half of the alerts entered into TCSES were not crossing over to the ACCENT reports. The decision was made to provide the TCSES reports to the Non-Cooperation unit for their use in processing Non-Cooperation alerts to ensure all alerts entered into that system were processed. This increased the workload for that unit, and it has led to the need for overtime. We have also had members of our staff not in the Non-Cooperation unit trained to help them with these alerts during overtime hours in order to keep up the workload. A report was run to identify any cases that had never been worked due to the computer issues and a "backlog" report was generated. The unit has also been responsible for working this backlog of cases to ensure there are no cases with alerts not worked when the next audit is done this fiscal year. Result: The backlog of cases will be completed by May 20, 2011. The list of alerts generated and sent to the Non-Cooperation unit to work each day is a complete list. The data continues to be monitored to ensure the accuracy of the report.</p>
<p>Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad</p>	<p>The relationship between DHS staff and the Child Support Enforcement staff has greatly improved as a result of this project. The staff of each entity understands the role the other plays in the process much better and they are able to communicate with each other in a more meaningful way. This will also help to ensure problems do not happen in the future.</p>
<p>Adjustment or Follow-up:</p>	<p>The supervisor of this unit constantly monitors to make sure that all alerts are received and processed. We have improved teamwork with other inter-office personnel to make sure that all work is accounted for.</p>
<p>Lessons Learned:</p>	<p>Since the Service Center has taken on this task, the procedures for completing the Non-Cooperation alerts have evolved. A Protocol Manual was written by FS1 for the unit, which outlines a very efficient method of working the alerts. This manual outlines the steps involved in working the alert and the required documentation required in the case record. Ongoing updates to the manual are made as new procedures are designed or as problems are solved.</p> <p>We have found that good communication between divisions is absolutely necessary. Not just communication between Family Assistance staff and Child Support staff but also the technical staff that effects the changes in the computer systems. If they understand the process better, it is easier for them to determine how to provide us with the information we need.</p>

<p>Lesson Category:</p>	<p>Strategic</p>
<p>State</p>	<p>Tennessee</p>
<p>Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints</p>	<p>Customers found they could call in to the FASC and choose the Appeals option and speak to a counselor faster than if they chose the option for the Main or Status Queues. This made the data for the Appeals group</p>

	<p>unusable in determining performance measures since a large majority of the calls they received had to be transferred out to another queue. It was decided on Friday May 1, 2009 that we would have an LVR (Live Voice Response) queue and that all calls that had selected the option for Appeals at the initial phone message would route through this group. The LVR group would determine the reason for the call and then route the call to the appropriate queue.</p>
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This would eliminate calls to the Appeals queue that were not truly asking for an appeal and would create more accurate data to be used in measuring performance for the Appeals team. • Customers would soon learn that choosing the Appeals option would not get them to a counselor any faster, and would result in them choosing the correct queue option at the initial greeting. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We would have to take counselors out of the main queue to staff the LVR queue.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	<p>Decided that we needed an LVR queue on 5/1/09, and it went operational on 5/6/09. Staff kept up with the number of calls they took, and to which queue or what type of call it was. It was found that basically only 25% of the calls actually wanted to file an appeal.</p>
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	<p>Developed performance standards for the Appeals group that were accurate based on "clean" data. The LVR group handles a huge volume of calls daily, but does have some time between calls. By not doing casework, this group could lose some of their policy skills. To offset this, some of the group does changes for their teams, allowing them to stay current on policies and procedures for casework, and also helping with the workloads.</p>
Adjustment or Follow-up:	<p>Management had this group to keep up with how many calls were actually Appeals calls when this queue was originally created, and it was found that only 25% were. This greatly improved the efficiency of the Appeals staff, since they could now focus on appeals and not have to transfer 75% of their calls to another queue.</p>
Lessons Learned:	<p>LVR queue can direct calls to the appropriate place, resulting in higher efficiency of specialized queues.</p>

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Started on a very small scale (one site and only a few local offices routing calls)
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Assessed ability to handle call volume and tasks in place.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Afforded the ability to assess needs without immediate stress of being overwhelmed.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Flexibility to design as needs arose.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Completed and used as ongoing model when adding sites and or tasks.
Lessons Learned:	Necessary in assessing needs and impact - could narrow down specifically to what impacted what.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Handling a disaster and CSC sites lose service.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	How to achieve continuous service when an emergency or disaster occurs.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Having multiple sites is a benefit when one or more sites lose service. Having a phone system to automatically recognize a site down and re-route calls. Web-based phone system means agents can log in anywhere and take calls if there is a need to relocate for an extended period of time.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Ability to add messages advising closure to affected county offices is a plus.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Completed
Lessons Learned:	Having an intelligent phone system is an important factor in providing an instantaneous solution to emergencies. Having multiple sites located in different areas of the state has been beneficial when weather patterns can be vastly different.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Area Structure vs. Statewide Structure (or Centralized vs. Virtual Structure).
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Pros: More knowledgeable of service area. Area Managers can move staff positions.</p> <p>Cons: Inconsistency to routines among all sites. Inefficiency as some areas have lower call volume than others.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Attempted both structures. Started statewide, went to Area Structure, and have now returned to Statewide Structure.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Statewide or "virtual" improved consistency of expectations, routines, and overall statistics. Able to handle more calls as one unit. Some areas were overtaxed while others waited for calls.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Ongoing analysis and dependant on state governing options.
Lessons Learned:	Pros and Cons to both structures: Overall Statewide Structure appears to encompass our needs and goals. Important value in consistency within multiple sites and ability to answer more calls.

Exhibit 16: Lessons Learned—Business Process and Scope.¹

¹ Section 11(e)(6) of the Food and Nutrition Act (the Act) restricts the SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State merit system personnel. Over the past few years, several States have used private contract staff to perform functions traditionally performed by merit system personnel such as providing application assistance, verifying information and answering case-specific questions. The outsourcing of these functions resulted in a more complex and difficult enrollment process, added complexity to the application process and confusion over the division of responsibilities between public and private employees. Based on the results of these projects, FNS further restricted tasks that involved any client contact to merit system personnel in our January 20, 2010 guidance "Federal Support for Enrollment and Application Processing Costs." States are required to seek approval from FNS to use non-merit system personnel in a limited capacity in order to ensure continued Federal Financial Participation (FFP) support.

TECHNOLOGY

The use of call centers and the development of call center specific technology have grown immensely since their beginning in the 1970s with the introduction of call routing devices called Automated Call Distributors (ACDs). Today, call centers can account for more than 10 percent of large companies' total operating expenses, running into the hundreds of millions annually. This large expense has motivated management to make sure that call centers run at peak efficiency and are accomplishing business goals. As depicted in Exhibit 15, technology, on average, accounts for only 25 percent of a call center's costs. However, technology directly impacts the quality of the caller's experience and how effectively the remaining 75 percent of cost, which is mostly associated with staff, is managed.

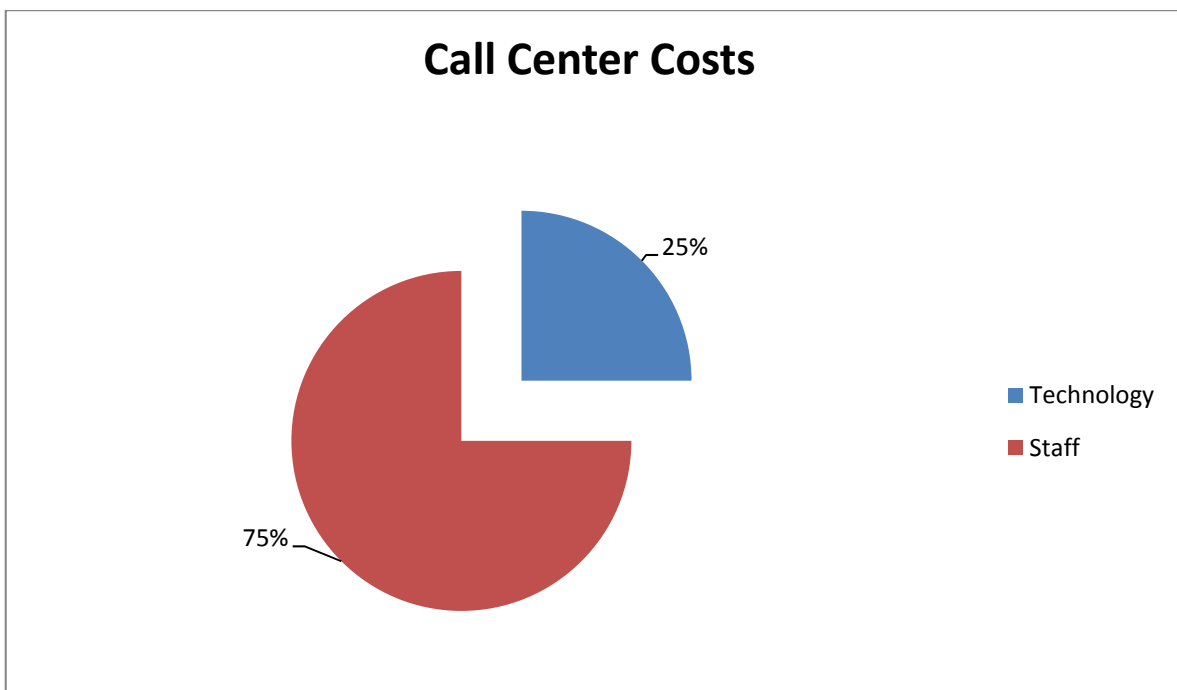


Exhibit 15: Average Allocation of Call Center Costs.

While this highlights the relative financial impact of call center technology, it does nothing to address how technology supports an organization's business objectives because technology is only a support function. The business objectives must guide the technology implementation in a call center by clearly defining what business goals and objectives it must support. Supporting technology should be used as a tool that can help the operation become efficient and effective relative to the identified business goals. Exhibit 16 illustrates how technology is integrated to support operations through telephony systems, departmental applications, business applications, and management reporting.

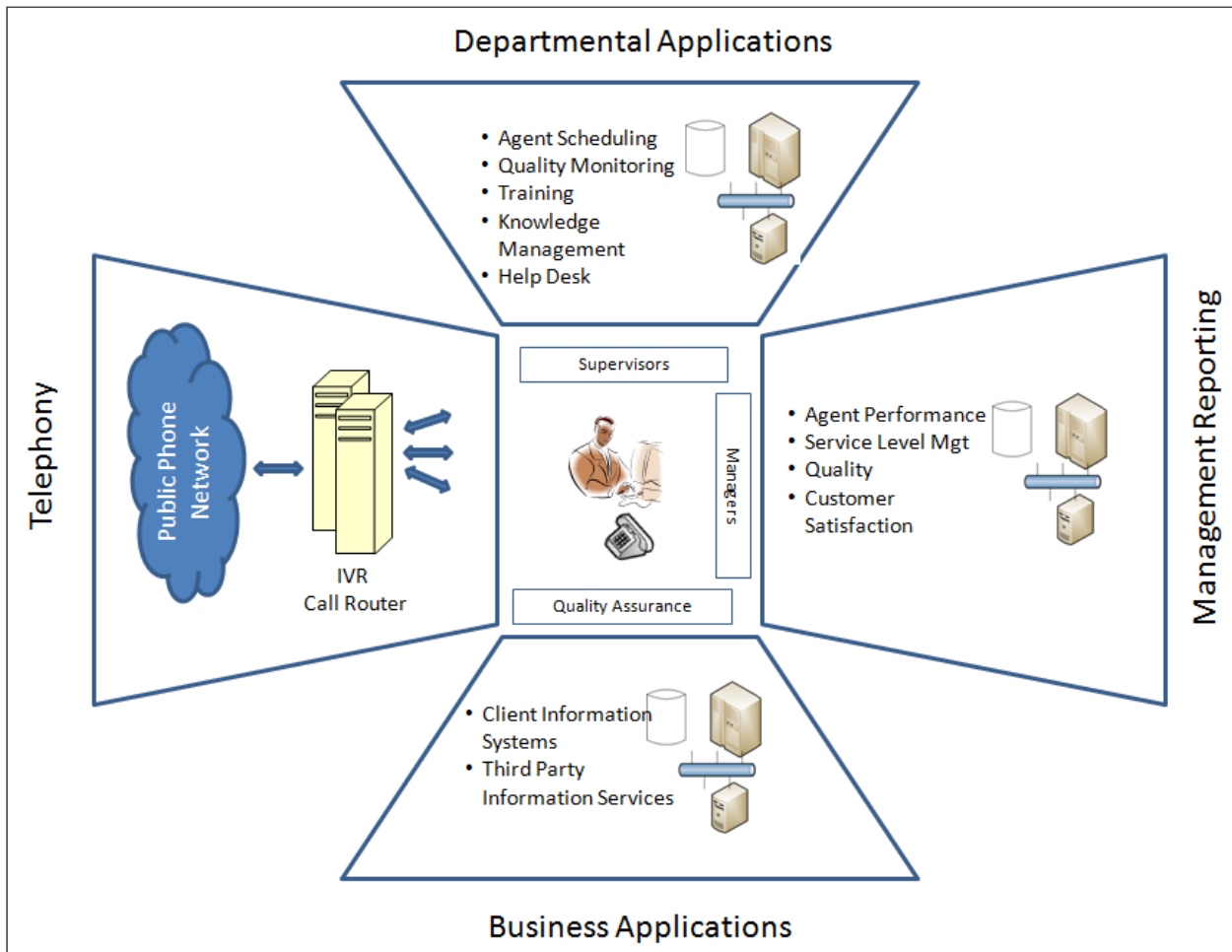


Exhibit 16: Technology Integration.

In addition to the need to define business objectives, the organization will need to develop operational requirements that impact the overall call center technology design. The following key operational considerations should be discussed and documented to help technology decision making:

- **Call Center Size** – The number of staff a center and its infrastructure must accommodate is a critical factor in planning for resources and costs. The call center staff calculation should be based upon expected call volume and duration, in addition other factors. As further explained in the *Staffing* chapter, this information can be input into staffing models that help determine how many agents, supervisors, managers, etc., will be required.
- **Number of Worker Locations** – The number of physical locations housing call center agents can have a significant impact on the overall call center technology design. The organization should decide if distributed workers will be used in the delivery model prior to making technology decisions. Internet-based technologies continue to evolve, making this factor less burdensome, but it is still a meaningful consideration when making design decisions.

- **Existing Infrastructure and Resources** – Because technology is an investment, careful consideration should be given to leveraging what already exists, when possible. For example, there may be ways to share call distribution switches and connections to the phone company's network with minimal impact to the current user. Lack of availability of components to leverage may impact the purchasing decision in terms of building on-site capability or purchasing a solution hosted by a service provider.
- **Availability and Reliability** – Call centers often rely upon a large number of components to work in concert. Consequently, the overall business requirements for business continuity should be clearly defined. The technology design should ensure that the availability and reliability requirements for each component are defined to support the overall business objectives for normal operations and recovery objectives in the case of business interruptions.
- **Service Levels** – Service levels, which are metrics that measure performance, such as Average Speed to Answer (ASA), call Abandonment Rate (AB Rate), Call Blockage Rate, Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Containment Rate, and many others, are critical to defining the architecture requirements of the call center. The level of service the call center is required to achieve, as defined by these metrics, will impact the center design, technical components, and performance levels of those components, disaster recovery planning, and other elements of the call center technical infrastructure.

Technology Solution Approaches

As technology requirements for a call center are defined, a variety of potential solutions will surface. The general components of a call center technology solution are largely the same for call centers. However, their scale, robustness, and sophistication vary greatly by call center operation size and unique business requirements. The technology supporting a call center is wide and deep. Numerous resources exist that help implement an appropriate solution. These include fellow agency staff experienced in implementing call centers, existing service providers, call center technology providers, consultants, and call center vendors. Exhibit 17 shows the technology components and some key characteristics generally found across small, medium, and large call centers.

Component	Less than 100 Agents	100 to 500 Agents	More than 500 Agents
Telephony Network	Shared or dedicated carrier connection	Shared or dedicated carrier connection	Dedicated carrier connection with redundancy
Data Network	Use existing connection to enterprise data network	Shared or dedicated connection to enterprise data network	Dedicated connection to enterprise data network
Call Routing/Automated Call Distributor (ACD)	PBX , PBX with ACD functionality, shared ACD or dedicated ACD	Dedicated ACD	Dedicated ACD
Interactive Voice Response System (IVR)	Automated attendant, Shared or dedicated IVR	Shared or dedicated IVR	Shared or dedicated IVR
Computer Telephony Integration (CTI)	None to limited integration of voice and data	Limited integration to full integration of voice and data	Limited integration to full integration of voice and data
Outbound Calling	None	Some outbound calling automation	Some to full outbound call automation
Translation Services	Used as a service except in very small centers	Purchased as a service	Purchased as a service
Call Monitoring and Recording	Business requirement dependent in very small centers	Implemented as part of a hosted or premise infrastructure	Implemented as part of the premise infrastructure
Call Center Reporting	Implemented with standard reporting	Implemented with customized reporting and shared reporting team	Implemented with customized reporting and a dedicated reporting group
Management Reporting	Simple reports derived manually from detailed call center system reports	Simple to complex reports derived both manually and automatically with reporting tools accessing detailed call center system reports	Simple to complex reports derived both manually and automatically with reporting tools accessing detailed call center system reports
Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD)/ Teletypewriters (TTYs)	Implemented with equipment or a third party service	Implemented with equipment or a third party service	Implemented with equipment or a third party service
Workforce Management System (WFM)	Manual or use simple office applications like Excel	Simple office applications or integrated system with a dedicated WFM administrator	Integrated with call center infrastructure technologies; dedicated WFM administrator and group director
Knowledge Management System (KMS)	Simple application with searchable text content	Simple application with searchable content or use a knowledge management tool.	Implement or leverage an existing knowledge management tool
Handsets and Headsets	Hardware based handset with agent headset	Hardware based handset with agent headset	Hardware based handset with agent headset
Workstations	Standard PCs with different applications for managers	Standard PCs with different application suites for supervisors and managers	Standard PCs with different application suites for supervisors and managers
Solution Approaches	Leverage Existing Infrastructure, Hosted, Carrier in-network	Build, Hosted, Outsourced custom solution	Build, Outsourced custom solution

Exhibit 17: Traditional Call Center Components by Size of Call Center.

As Exhibit 17 illustrates, there are various ways to configure a call center solution. As the scale of a call center changes, so, too, does the underlying technical architecture. While there is not a "one-size-fits-all" architecture, the following example (Exhibit 18) is representative of many call center implementations.

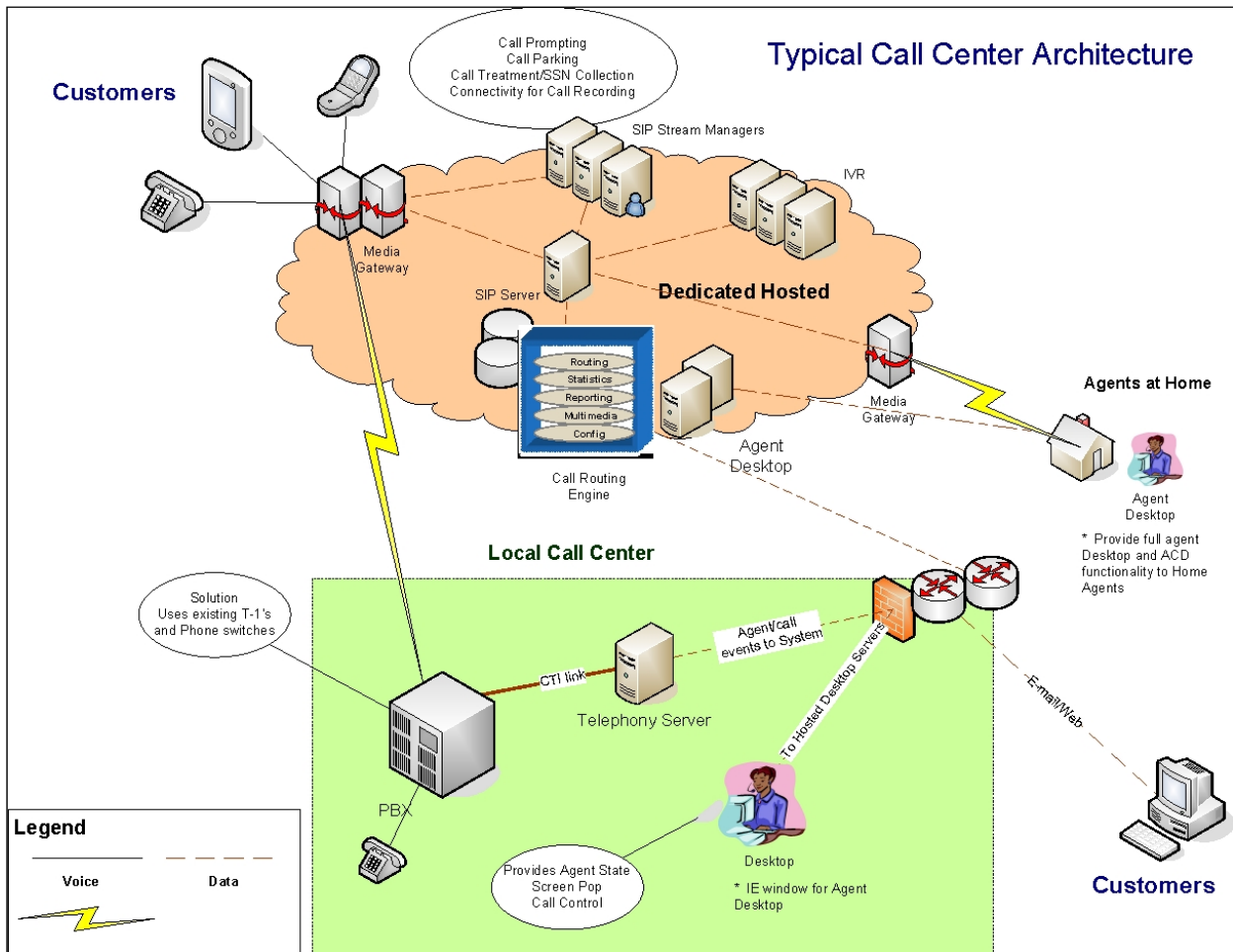


Exhibit 18: Typical Call Center Architecture.

Fundamentally, the infrastructure will be provided by way of a variety of methods. Implementing organizations can:

- Build their own;
- Leverage existing resources;
- Obtain hosted services;
- Obtain carrier in-network services; or
- Seek out assistance.

Government organizations are faced with unique challenges given the amount of change and uncertainty surrounding many programs. This often makes it difficult to plan how to best implement the required infrastructure. The costs associated with the solution approaches should be carefully weighed against the value of flexibility. Some build-your-own solutions may initially appear to be cheaper but will commit the organization to certain capacities and capabilities. With so many call center technologies being provided as a service, agencies can

now evaluate systems that provide similar capabilities across the very different delivery models listed.

Build-your-own solutions are typically for large-scale solutions and/or for environments requiring a custom solution. Installations that will own their own equipment for a longer period of time (i.e., greater than 36 months) and possess the skills to maintain and support the environment may find it more economical and effective to build and own their own infrastructure.

Given the cost of call center infrastructure, leveraging what already exists or finding other organizations that could benefit from a shared capability often makes good business sense. Particularly for small- to medium-sized call center implementations, this can be an effective approach provided that the components can be appropriately segmented so that dependencies and cross-organizational business impacts are reduced.

Other options offered include "hosted" solutions. Hosted solutions are offered by vendors who provide all of the technology required. The solution is designed to be a service that is purchased by the client as a turn-key offering. Hosted services have gained in popularity as call center technology has shifted to being digitally based. This means that Internet technologies like Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) do not require the call center to go through the telephone company directly to connect with callers. Additionally, hosted service providers can offer all of the components of a call center infrastructure as a standard service provider. Agencies with these solutions are not required to have and manage large amounts of equipment that make up the call center infrastructure. The burden of maintaining staff with the most current skills and the latest technologies is the responsibility of the service provider. Thus, smaller organizations without infrastructure support capability may find this an attractive option. The economics and organization overhead of this solution need to be carefully weighed against the other methods discussed here due to what can be a high cost-per-agent-seat over the life of the call center.

Carrier in-network services have been provided by telephone companies for many years. These services were typically designed for very small call centers not requiring a great deal of features from the infrastructure. They have evolved over the years to where they now provide services comparable to the hosted infrastructure providers. For a very small call center, these services can be very appropriate. As more capability is required of the provider, the same decision factors discussed above for hosted services should be taken into account.

Open Standards Technology

Summary Overview

From a call center technology standpoint, this section describes the most prevalent pitfalls that are experienced within agencies that operate call centers.

Key Considerations

- Select technology that will provide the most flexibility in terms of maintenance, upgrades, integration.
- Cheapest is not always lowest cost, especially as a State or agency integrates systems into existing infrastructure.
- Avoid proprietary systems.

Detailed Description

One of the most relevant lessons learned by agencies related to call center technology is that of Open Standards. With today's Internet Protocol (IP) based systems, Internet access availability and modern software capabilities, a State is wise to consider setting open standards requirements for any technology selection criteria. Open standards call center technology products are built as an application layer that allows agencies to manage call centers/enterprises separate from their underlying infrastructure. Built to operate on virtually any underlying infrastructure, best-in-class contact center systems are truly software-only solutions that operate on industry-standard hardware. With open standards, an agency can operate call center systems on Solaris, MS Windows, AIX, HP-UX, and Linux (Red Hat) operating systems. A wide range of support for many Application Programming Interfaces (APIs) used to integrate with existing desktop applications through ActiveX, Java, .NET, Web services, and C/C++ libraries, along with a number of out-of-the box adapters to integrate to large Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems such as Siebel, SAP, Microsoft CRM and PeopleSoft, will lower an agency's total cost of ownership of call center systems. With this flexibility, States can use an open standards system to tie their existing infrastructure together. In summary, an open standards technology strategy in the call center will empower agencies to use existing enterprise standards for its underlying infrastructure without necessarily being locked in to proprietary systems dictated by proprietary vendor solutions.

Telephony Network

Summary Overview

Telephony, like all technology, has evolved significantly within the call center and within the telephone companies' infrastructure that carries voice calls. Most call center solutions will connect directly with the local carriers' telephony network via connections called trunks. The call center's technical infrastructure design will dictate type of connection needed. The business needs will most heavily weigh on the size and quality of connection needed. The advent of call center infrastructure solutions based on digital technology has introduced a new telephony connection options and new carriers that can connect callers to the call center.

Key Considerations

- **Client Access** – What number will the client use to call the call center?
- **Integration with Call Center Infrastructure** – Will the carrier support the type and size of digital or analog connection required by the call center infrastructure?
- **Call Quality** – Will calls get through the connection to the center reliably and with good voice quality?

Detailed Description

The decision for how to best connect the call center to the telephone network should be predicated on the needs of the business. The business owner of the client experience should decide how callers will reach the call center. Numerous phone number options exist for reaching a call center such as direct dial, long distance, toll free 1-800#, fee-based 1-900 #, or dedicated-network access like 3-1-1. The decision on which telephone number options to use is based on the desired client experience. If a 3-1-1 type access number is required, the carrier who provides the service currently would need to be involved in the connection of the call center to the telephony network. If this type of service is not provided, a dedicated network access solution would need to be developed with a carrier before connecting to the call center.

Generally speaking, most call center solutions connect to their telephone company's network called a Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). Regardless of whether the call center infrastructure is based on the newer digital technology like VoIP, or if it is an older analog solution, telephone carriers can usually interconnect the call center to their telephone network.

As technology has evolved rapidly, so have the telephone systems and how they connect telephone calls between two end points. With increasing frequency, solution providers other than local carriers play a primary role in connecting an operation to their callers since many call center technology solutions include the interconnection with carrier networks. In these cases, the telephone companies are typically involved, but only indirectly through the call center solution provider. Additionally, a voice connection would not be required—only a data network connection described in the following section would be needed.

Phone companies control the voice networks that carry calls from point A to point B. The objective is to connect the call center to the existing voice network, which connects calls to and from callers. There are several questions that must be addressed to achieve this objective:

- Can the carrier support connecting the desired type of call center technology? Call centers today are based on either analog, and now more commonly, digital based solutions using VoIP. Commonly, a voice line, called a trunk, is run directly to the center where the traffic is converted, if required, to the call center's technology designed to handle the calls.
- How much capacity would be required to handle the call center load? The call center operations team should consider how many calls they would receive at different times of the day. Working with the carrier, the connection's capacity can be set so that callers do not receive a busy signal or a dropped call during peak loads. Contingencies should be discussed for securing additional capacity should the call center be responsible for handling large volumes as in the case of an emergency situation.

- Will the call quality be good? Digital technologies have introduced quality issues into the call center world. Call center technologies rely upon the conversion of a voice so that it can be sent through a network. The result is that voice quality can suffer. Carriers have standards related to the Quality of Service (QOS) that should be matched to the call centers business and technical needs.
- What happens if a connection to the carrier is lost? Connections can be affected by natural disasters and other forces. More commonly, a part of the infrastructure fails, e.g., a utility worker damages a line outside of the building, which results in no calls getting through. Contingency planning relative to the needs of the business should be done to address this situation in advance. It is not uncommon for large call centers to use redundant carrier connections into the same facility from physically separate and opposite points of building entry with two different carriers.

Data Network

Summary Overview

Call centers require data networks for access to computer systems within the call center and outside of the call center. In cases where the call center solution requires a VoIP solution for carrying voice traffic, a data network transports the voice and data traffic in digital form on the same network. Data networking inside the call center is commonly designed and implemented by the organization's internal information technology staff since it involves common Local Area Network (LAN) technology. Connection to outside systems and the voice traffic carrier will require that resources from the telecommunications service provider be involved as well as the network resources responsible for access to the systems outside of the call center.

Key Considerations

- **Capacity** – Will the network be large and fast enough to handle the data requirements of the call center systems, agent systems, and potentially the voice traffic?
- **Quality** – Will the network be perceived by the users as performing well in terms of speed, security, and availability?
- **Cost** – Is the relationship between network costs and business requirements sufficiently understood and balanced so that the network solution is optimally designed from a cost performance perspective?

Detailed Description

In today's environment, a data network connection is commonplace. Agents require networks to access system information outside of the call center to answer callers' questions. Call center infrastructure components may require outside data networking connectivity. Data networking can also come into play when it is required to have the capability to link callers to their account record. This is a common function called Computer Telephony Integration (CTI) where the call and data stay linked. For example, if a caller entered an account number in the IVR application, the account record could appear on the agent's screen as the agent takes the call.

Data networking is filled with technical specifications that are best left to the technical professionals inside and outside of the organization. Most important is that the business users stay sufficiently involved to communicate the business requirements for the network and to understand how the network costs relate to those requirements. This is critical to helping ensure that the technical solution supports the business operation at the appropriate costs dictated by the business requirements. Connection size, availability, and levels of service quality all can have a significant impact on cost.

Just as with the telephony network, consideration and planning for a network outage is essential. As further explained in the *Business Process and Scope* chapter, redundancies, temporary work processes, and contingency services should be contemplated in a business continuity plan.

Call Routing/ACD

Summary Overview

In the simplest terms, call routing and Automated Call Distributor (ACD) technology will allow a call center to divide their agents into specialized work groups or queues so that calls with unique requirements (such a language, escalations, password reset) are routed appropriately. When a call center divides their work groups in this way, callers with unique needs can get the specialized help they need from a small, specially trained agent pool. As explained previously, 75 percent of the cost of a call center is the cost of people. Call routing can allow a call center to only staff a minimal number of specialized agents, so that not every agent is required to be fully trained on every possible call. Historically, call centers operated around a large, expensive telephone switch often referred to as an ACD. With the continuing evolution of IP-based systems and with the proliferation of low cost, high performance computer servers, more and more call centers are spending less money on large telephone switches and more on call routing software that integrates with any phone system to give call routing capabilities. Today, call centers can do much more in terms of productivity with less cost.

Key Considerations

- Open standard-based
- Support multiple communications channels
- Support IP-based platform

Detailed Description

Today's routing technology, sometimes still referred to as an ACD, will allow an agency to execute customer service strategies on open-standard IP infrastructure. As a result, agencies can reduce costs, improve agent performance, increase flexibility, and improve management control in their call centers. Best-in-class call routing technologies create a single virtual pool of skilled agents in the contact center, back office, and remote locations to simplify administration and the addition of staff during peak times. These systems enable the use of customer service applications such as workforce management, multi-media and quality monitoring and recording to provide higher levels of customer service.

Advantages and features include:

- Frees the agency from "lock-in," allowing management to choose the hardware and software that fit the business needs now and as they evolve.
- Allows the call center to fully utilize customer care professionals and experts in branch locations or remote offices, and easily adjust staff as workload peaks and ebbs.
- Simplifies upgrades and reduces maintenance costs.
- Leverages multiple communication channels.
- Enables migration to an IP-based system without ripping, replacing, or interrupting current service operations.
- Provides significant cost savings without compromising customer satisfaction.
- Provides complete call handling including call routing, queuing, third-party call control and agent state tracking to improve voice interaction management.
- Minimizes capital expenditures with the deployment of industry-standard, off-the-shelf IP endpoints such as Session Initiation Protocol (SIP) soft phone, SIP hard phone or analog phone with a VoIP gateway.
- Provides supervisor tools including silent voice monitoring, whisper coaching and supervisor intrusion.
- Provides remote monitoring from distant locations.
- Allows contact center system configuration and management to be delivered from a single point of control anywhere on the network.
- Provides a low-cost, easy option for dynamically adding agents with a zero-footprint desktop.

Interactive Voice Response

Summary Overview

In simplest terms, an IVR is a computerized system that answers incoming calls from clients that enter their case number, name, or other identifying information. The IVR will then open that the client's data file and give options for the client to access specific information such as account balance, or determination status. Banks and insurance companies have used IVRs for decades to lower the costs of providing basic information to clients. IVRs are deployed as virtual extensions of call center staff, enabling around-the-clock service, freeing agents from answering basic, repetitive questions, and allowing them to focus on higher value interactions where human involvement makes a substantial, positive impact.

Key Considerations

- Open standard-based
- Allows for integration with multiple different types of phone systems
- Programming accommodates call flow and end user logic

Detailed Description

By leveraging technology to gather data on the reasons clients contact the call center, State agencies can identify use drivers that could be reduced or eliminated through improved

business process, or enhanced self-service opportunities. IVR systems are the self-service systems that call centers use to give clients access to data and ability to make changes through their telephone. These systems can be touch-tone only or also incorporate voice recognition. Voice recognition technologies can support multiple spoken languages. IVR systems help re-direct basic information gathering and other minor tasks by clients. The use of IVRs lowers costs for agencies because they help free up call center agents, reduce hold times and free up telecommunications channels.

By using an IVR, agencies can reach more clients, offer consistent, high-quality customer care, and reduce the cost of customer service. It also allows agencies to conduct business interactions 24/7, transforming the phone into a powerful, anywhere/anytime information access tool.

IVR systems and applications ensure improved customer service and greatly reduce contact center costs. Self-service application examples include:

- Provide after hours messaging
- Account status/check account balance
- Reset passwords
- Check determination status
- Check payment status
- Outbound notification
- Request various application forms and/or direct clients to downloadable forms
- Informational announcements on new programs, extensions

Call Routing Strategy

Summary Overview

It is highly important that call center management first looks at customer service processes and then translates these requirements into a business-flow strategy. Agencies must first decide what the call center needs to do, then evaluate the technology options. A well thought out plan or strategy with bad technology will outperform a bad plan (or no plan) with expensive state-of-the-art technology. A call routing strategy serves as the agency's map in defining how customer service operations are conducted.

Key Considerations

- Determine business objectives and business processes first.
- Analyze technology options in light of the pre-determined business objectives and business processes.
- Consider a call routing strategy that allows for multiple client touch points (such as local offices, contact center, etc.) and multiple communications channels (phone, e-mail, Web site, text, etc).

Detailed Description

A proper call routing strategy is critical to ensuring that an agency gets the most out of the call center. Optimally, a well-designed call routing strategy will produce the best result for the lowest cost. As a result, the call center always aligns with agency business objectives and captures, processes, routes and reports on the entire lifecycle of client interactions, providing a universal view and management of every client contact. As the central control point of customer service, the call center will operate as a critical component of the agency. Key benefits of a call routing strategy include:

- Efficiently routes caller requests to the most qualified resource throughout the enterprise for faster issue resolution and improved service.
- Routes interactions across multiple communication channels, including voice, e-mail, Web, and work-items.
- Provides centralized creation, administration, and management of all interactions and call center resources, including real-time and historical management reporting.
- Interoperates with a broad range of telecom infrastructure components including premise and network-level telecom equipment, e-mail and Web servers, and voice self-service units at a single site or across multiple centers.
- Creates a unified customer service capability to allow call load balancing between call center locations, local offices, etc.
- Supports multiple communication channels including voice, e-mail, and chat.

Best in Class call routing strategies are characterized by supporting traditional Time-Division Multiplexing (TDM) and IP call center environments, and providing the freedom to select the hardware infrastructure and contact center applications that best meet today's business needs, while "future-proofing" the network. By supporting open-standard SIP or integration with differing TDM switches and IP and hybrid A Private Branch Exchanges (PBXs), good call routing strategies allow for migration to evolving technologies at a call center's own pace.

By starting with the business objectives first as a foundation to a call center call routing strategy, agencies will have:

- Freedom of choice to select the hardware infrastructure and call center applications that meet present needs and anticipated future needs.
- Integration with computer applications such as eligibility determination systems to provide more vendor choice, simplified upgrades, and reduced maintenance costs.
- Extend the contact center across the enterprise to include branch offices, experts, and remote agents, lowering costs with an extended agent pool.

Computer Telephony Integration

Summary Overview

This section describes what most readers have experienced when they call into their bank or credit card company. When the call is first answered, a computerized system asks the caller to key in or speak a name or account number. When the call is ultimately transferred to a live call center agent, that agent will know who the caller is and have his/her account pulled up on the computer screen. This marriage of the call center agent's computer screen and the call connection to the agent is called Computer Telephony Integration. These systems have been in place in many call centers for more than 15 years. Today's call centers enjoy the powerful benefits of modern computer databases and the Internet and are able to almost anything in terms of putting massive amounts of client information onto a computer screen. This section will describe important considerations of how call centers can integrate client data into an agent's computer screen (also referred to as "desktops" in the industry). The challenge to agency directors is to not overload the computer screen with too much data. In addition, agency directors face the challenge of being able to make changes to the types of data sent to call center agent's computer screens as government programs change over time. The more flexible and easy-to-change a computer screen or desktop is, the better. In summary, CTI allows client data from the telephone systems to be used as input data to query databases. This database query will usually contain client information and populate that data instantaneously in the call center agent's computer screen. The net effect is the agent already has the required screen on his/her terminal before speaking with the client. In addition to decisions about screen function and content, many State agencies equip their call center staff with two screens, to allow them to display the caller's account on one, while using the other to check databases, run verifications, and manage call center software on the other. Not having to toggle between multiple functions on the same screen allows faster work and reduces errors associated with accidentally toggling to the wrong place before keying.

Key Considerations

- Today's CTI systems provide a computer desktop that specifically integrates various databases and call scripting
- These integrated desktops combine several back-office databases to give the call center agent access into the product systems that allow for client data inputs
- In most call centers, there are specific desktops used by different agent skill groups and team supervisors

Detailed Description

CTI desktops give call center supervisors and call center agents tools that help ensure the delivery of consistent, quality service to clients. The supervisor desktop provides a unified display of the real-time status of call center agents and interactions from voice, e-mail, and chat channels, so that supervisors can monitor and improve the effectiveness of agents and the contact center. CTI desktops also allow call center planners to test hypothetical agent skill combinations, working rules, and skill prioritization without affecting current configurations or schedules.

CTI desktops provide visibility into client data and standard response information so call center agents can handle calls quickly and effectively. Typical features include client data screen pop, fully integrated soft phone, media-specific desktop screens, a searchable library of standard responses, support for SIP and a flexible scripting tool.

Advantages:

- Presents real-time client data
- Simplifies queue management and provides a view into agent productivity and quality
- Provides alerts and tools for dealing with changing contact center statistics

Features Include:

- Integration into agency databases and eligibility determination systems
- Searchable, unified display shows real-time status of agents and systems
- Agent scripting
- Real time whisper coaching for agents
- Call monitoring which improves agent effectiveness
- Supervisor hierarchy
- Visibility into items being routed and in queue including calls, chat requests, and e-mails
- Queue management including search, promote, and delete functions
- Configurable alarm threshold system
- Browser-based access simplifies installation, deployment, and use of existing security standards

Outbound Calling

Summary Overview

Outbound calling involves using a computerized system to do all the dialing and waiting until and once a live person is reached, transferring the live client into a call center agent as soon as they say "hello." This system can also transfer clients into a specific call queue, such as for scheduling an eligibility determination interview. By having a computer system do all of the dialing and transferring in the background, an agency's call center agents can spend their time talking to clients, rather than dialing phones. Many agencies leverage outbound calling to schedule activities with their citizens. Outbound calling can be automated so that call center agents are not required to dial out manually. Outbound calling systems perform the call work so that only active calls are passed to the call center agents.

Key Considerations

- Choose a system that can accommodate scheduled and unscheduled outbound calls
- Implement a system with call progress detection to filter out voicemail answer and keep truly answered calls
- Choose a system that will allow for same-day or same-week scheduling and allow for scheduling either though the phone or computer system

Detailed Description

For State agencies, anything that can be done to automate mundane and routine tasks provides a compelling return on investment. Outbound calling improves efficiency by automating the dialing and call progress detection so an agent is only required in the most critical part of the call – when a customer is connected. (Call progress detection is a portion of the technology that classifies if an answered call is a real person or just voicemail. If a real person answers, then the system transfers the call in less than a second to a call center agent).

Often, these outbound systems are used for proactive contact to help agencies schedule eligibility determination interviews or schedule transportation to Medicaid services providers for those citizens who lacking access to transportation.

Best in class systems will use existing client data to ensure that outbound calls are contacting the right clients, rather than just a large number of clients. In addition, some systems are able to anticipate client needs by contacting them proactively to obtain missing pieces of an eligibility application.

Outbound calling systems can also help call centers manage periods of high inbound call volume. They provide callers with the option to receive a callback when wait times are long, instead of waiting on hold for an agent. Clients can request a callback as soon as possible (holding their place in queue), or at a specific time convenient for them. This capability increases customer satisfaction, reduces telecommunications costs, and improves call center metrics and agent productivity. The experience is seamless to the agent. This transparency ensures that agents are most productive during the busiest times. Reducing long wait times during peak hours is the driving force for using outbound calling.

Translation Services

Summary Overview

Many call centers are required to support multiple languages. This poses significant staffing challenges in terms of being able to hire qualified candidates and staff efficiently to call volumes for languages that may not make up a significant percentage of calls. Interpreter services can help by providing a translator service "just in time" across hundreds of languages.

Key Considerations

- Service Standards - Can the caller and agent hear the interpreter clearly, and do they answer within a set amount of time?
- Privacy & Legal Compliance – Are the workers trained consistently, and it is possible to flow security and legal compliance requirements down to the service provider?
- Employment Practices – Are the workers employees of the translation entity?
- Cost – Can sufficient and legally compliant services be provided to your clients using demographically appropriate staff language skills?

Detailed Description

Call volumes for a certain language that is less than 10 percent of total calls, as a general rule, should consider the use of language interpreter services as opposed to staffing bilingual agents. Staffing agents with specific skills for a low percentage of calls is not typically efficient and conducive to maintenance of service levels. Language interpretation services are a frequently used tool to serve the small population of calls. For larger populations, contracted services may be too costly. It is often less expensive to use demographically appropriate staff if they are sufficiently available to meet client needs.

Services are commercially available that cover literally hundreds of languages. Generally, either the IVR or the agent determines that language assistance is required. In the IVR, the caller can provide sufficient information such that the system makes the determination. When the agent receives the call from the queue, the agent opens a conference line and dials the interpreter service phone number. The interpreter then joins the call as a third party to facilitate the conversation between the caller and the agent.

The nature of the service lends itself to outsourcing very well. Agencies of this service should make sure that the connection provides a clear and sufficiently loud experience for all. Additionally, many call centers are held to certain security and legal requirements that must be fulfilled. Translation services may hear private information during the translation session. Therefore, agencies should ensure that security and legal compliance requirements are appropriately adhered to by the translation service. Federal program access requirements must be met and equality of experience achieved, no matter how a State handles this decision. How interpreters are employed and where they are doing the work is also important. The ability to hold a firm and an individual accountable will depend on the nature of the employment arrangement and potentially where the call is being taken.

Call Center Reporting

Summary Overview

This section describes the different types of computerized reports a call center director will need to keep her or his call center operating effectively, using reports that measure the business of what the call center does. While some call center reports give statistics on how the phone switch is performing, directors should look not at phone switch reports, but rather call center agent productivity. Call centers can be measured historically and in real time. There are infinite choices in what statistics to measure and how to measure them. As with call routing strategy, agencies will best optimize their call center operations by looking at statistics that measure the call center in terms of the business objective of their programs.

Key Considerations

- Choose a reporting system that provides a complete business-oriented view, based on role, for call center managers, business users, supervisors and agents.
- Choose a reporting system that can also capture data outside the call center for visibility into previously "untrackable" business activities and processes.

- Choose a reporting system that will report statistics from any brand of phone switch, IVR or computer system.

Detailed Description

With modern call center reporting systems, the management can create a view of their business that is unique to them by tagging client interactions as they occur. Agencies can then measure outcomes based on their business, which expands their understanding of the client experience and agent performance. Call center reporting leverages the analytical power of modern databases using an intuitive, drag-and-drop tools that allows users to easily combine a set of dimensions, metrics and filters to create their own customized reports. This empowers a larger set of users both inside and outside the contact center to customize reports to their needs. Call center supervisors and managers typically measure their operations by call queues, virtual queues, agents, and agent groups. However, agency program managers are much more focused on the services delivered via the call center.

Call center reporting call also extend to message boards, which are prominently displayed in call centers. Call center operations will frequently foster a culture of service and performance by displaying real time queue and call statistics for all to see. This allows workers to see if performance is at an expected level. Supervisors and management can always keep tabs on current performance no matter where they are in the center. This allows better decision making throughout the day regarding staff breaks, training, meetings or anything that affects agent productivity.

Typical Reports Categories

- Agent Productivity Reports
- Incoming Queue Reports
- Call Volume Reports
- Interaction Detail Reports
- Performance Management Reports

Management Reporting

Summary Overview

From a technology perspective, data is everywhere in a typical call center. Combining the data into meaningful information simply and with accuracy and reliability is a challenge, even in this environment. The infrastructure required can vary greatly from call center to call center. Reporting tools that allow users to easily design and produce reports from diverse sets of data are common. Call centers use tools ranging from simple Microsoft Office Suite applications to report generators that access information in transactional data sets or data warehouses. What reporting is required strictly depends first on what the business needs to know about the operation.

Key Considerations

- Flexible reporting toolset that can represent data in a variety of combination and formats
- Easy to use through an intuitive user interface

- Supports multiple types of data sources such as spreadsheets and databases

Detailed Description

While there is much detailed description of specific reporting tools for operating the day-to-day activities of call centers, it is also important to consider longer term, high-level operations reporting. Call center managers need to see high level trends of how their call centers are meeting business demands. Resource allocations and program effectiveness needs to be clearly seen in a summary reporting system for management.

Best in class management reporting systems pull from the same core data that the detailed level reporting pulls from. This will allow for a "common version of the truth" to be achieved. Visual display images, such as dashboards and trend lines, can help management see the big picture of how their call center operations are meeting goals. Management level reporting should be based on the same system as detailed level reporting, yet distilled to show very quickly where the operation is going. Additional "views" of the call center operation can include geography, line of business or reporting unit. The closer the reporting system matches the business organization, the easier it will be to understand what the management report is telling the reader and quickly show what action needs to be taken. The ultimate goal of management level reporting is to have an easy to understand tool that matches the business organization and presents intuitively understood information.

Call Monitoring and Recording

Summary Overview

Modern technologies can be used to digitally record and save many or all call center calls. This section describes how those calls can also be monitored in real time by an agent's supervisor, which is particularly important in training new agents. It also describes how to archive client interaction calls and how to use those recordings to improve operations.

Key Considerations

- Include capability to start and stop recording.
- Include screen capture, including recording the telephone conversation and allowing supervisors to view agent computer activity.
- Include all portions of the call, even when a call is transferred in or out of IVR, up to a supervisor or to another skilled agent (cradle to grave recording of the whole call).

Detailed Description

In call centers, there is always a need to ensure agents perform well at their jobs. In addition, given some State laws, actual recorded copies of the interaction between the client and the State may be needed to adjudicate a benefits determination. Therefore, agencies should consider adding quality and recording systems to their call center solutions. Best-in-class systems are characterized by integration with the major call center technology components to audibly monitor agent telephone calls. A well-designed system will allow integration of supervisors/administrators with call takers and leverage data collected about each call, such as

service type, customer segment and customer profile, to set call recording and monitoring rules.

Additionally, agencies should consider a system that integrates screen capture of what the call taker is doing on their computer during the call with the client. A best-in-class system will capture phone conversations and computer entry at the same time so that the call quality coach is virtually sitting at the desk. Agencies should considering the following parameters in system choice:

- Start/stop call recording messages.
- On-demand, agent-triggered call recording.
- Attached data necessary for call recording and reporting.
- Include IVR entered data into the recording log.
- Include supervisor-escalated calls into the call recording system, so that a complete record from start to finish of the client interaction is maintained. These systems can also allow for remote monitoring by an offsite supervisor, if required.

Access for Hearing Impaired Callers

Summary Overview

Accommodations can be easily made for callers with hearing or speech disabilities. Many people with hearing disabilities prefer to use on-line chat whenever available, rather than assisted telephonic devices, because it does not require any special equipment, and can be done using computers or even hand-held devices that are readily available. (See the Web chat discussion presented later in this chapter). However, some call centers still rely on traditional methods. A Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD), also called a Teletypewriter (TTY) device, provides text communication via a regular phone line. A specialized resource or group can be set up to receive the calls and communicate with callers. Another alternative is for callers to be directed to a relay type service where the caller contacts a service that in turn calls the call center using the normal voice line.

Key Considerations

- Simple for callers and agents to use and interact.
- Equipment that is integrated into to the call center infrastructure.
- Reliable equipment that supports a quality client/agent exchange.

Detailed Description

TDD/TTY technologies are common place in call centers. When call centers do not have this equipment, callers contact a third party who acts as an intermediary to translate the voice to text on behalf the caller and agent. The relay service's representative calls the regular voice number for the call center. The service then communicates with the agent verbally and with the caller using text via their TDD/TTY equipment.

Call centers can also employ TDD/TTY equipment. Current implementations provide agents with software on their desktop personal computer, which provides a text chat window to communicate directly with the callers TDD/TTY device as shown in Exhibit 19.

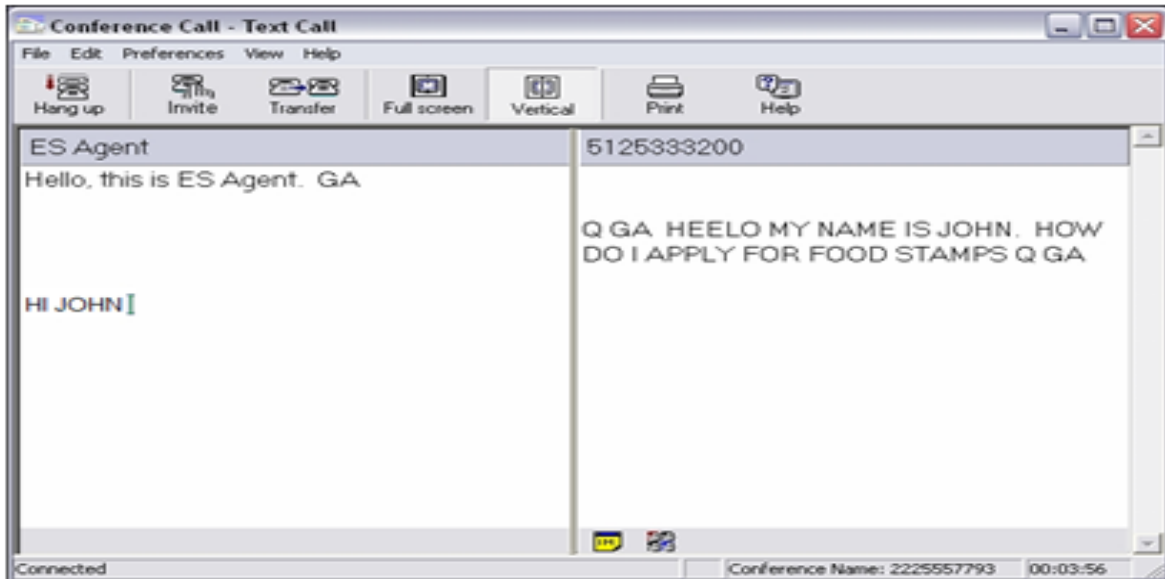


Exhibit 19: Text Chat Window to Communicate with TDD/TTY

The workflow is relatively seamless to the caller. The caller calls the normal voice line, which has an IVR that recognizes the TDD/TTY device. The IVR can interact with the caller in text mode through the callers TDD/TTY device. When the call is passed to an agent who is usually assigned to a specialized group that supports TDD/TTY calls, the agent gets a message on their voice line that a text call is coming. Their software application then opens a text chat TDD/TTY window where the caller and agent can transact their business. Hardware or software settings must ensure that systems do not "time out" too quickly, before a TTY/TDD user has enough time to type a statement or response and the translator has time to read it.

Other Contact Center Modes of Client Interaction

The key to streamlining communication of a contact center is being where the clients are and engaging them—anytime, anywhere. Agencies' clients already use e-mail, chat, and text messaging as primary forms of communication. An agency can tap into these "interaction" channels or modes to deliver a client experience that is convenient, valued, personalized, and proactive. Furthermore, clients can routinely use the Web to conduct research, resolve issues, and share opinions regarding their interactions a contact center via social networking. Agencies can capture this knowledge to improve operations, effectiveness, shorten enrollment and eligibility determination lead times, and even follow-on support. Different modes of communication may have different costs to clients, in terms of both time and money. Allowing them to choose provides greater client satisfaction. Note however, the use of some communication options requires a review of SNAP policy to ensure compliance and may require the State to request a waiver of current policy.

The difficulty is that, all too often, client service efforts are fragmented into "silos" scattered throughout various functional departments and lines of a business, with no visibility into previous client interactions across different channels. Because of this, the quality of client service delivery can be inconsistent. This is termed "agency amnesia."

Multi-channel client communications enable cross-channel conversations that deliver a consistent experience as clients transition to non-voice channels. By creating a single conversation over time (across phone, Web and mobile channels) States can more effectively engage clients and meet objectives more quickly at lower cost. Note however, the use of some communication options requires a review of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) policy to ensure compliance and may require the State to request a waiver of current policy

Primary reasons for using multi-channel client communications include:

- Reduces the cost of existing methods.
- Increased effectiveness of getting the job done quickly.
- Allows an agency to tap into a much wider range of clients and meet their needs easier.
- Enables States to increase the portfolio of offerings without expanding staff or infrastructure.
- Provides contact center agents with the information they need to quickly solve the client's inquiry on first contact.
- Increases client satisfaction with a consistently satisfying experience across all channels.

Best-in-class multi-channel client communications offer a comprehensive platform capable of handling all Internet multimedia client communication channels including e-mail, Web forms, text chat, and Short Message Service (SMS) while gaining the benefits of leveraging the routing environment. Building Internet capabilities into the existing call center creates a seamless, consistent environment for all client transactions, regardless of channel. In addition, these tools provide a consistent client experience across all media channels by unifying client data.

One of the challenges in managing multiple communication channels is how to ensure that clients receive the same level of service. Clients expect to be treated the same, no matter what channel they choose to use.

Key to realizing reduced costs starts with analyzing current processes to determine opportunities for lower cost service using alternative communication channels. Some methods, such as face-to-face processing, may be significantly more efficient or most appropriate for many business processes. However, opportunities to reduce costs may exist by identifying lower cost communication methods to augment the business process or potentially completely replace the process. These decisions should be made following careful business process analysis and cost modeling. For example, providing benefit status information via multiple communication channels, including Web, face-to-face, call center, postal letter, SMS text could be potential cost efficient options for executing a notification business process.

Because multi-channel client communications leverages the same client data for all interactions, agents know the client's entire history, and can personalize the interaction based on that information. Integrating multi-channel client communications with the screen pop, CTI link, or other desktop toolkit, agents have access to this historical data without the need to

search various applications. This approach can leverage the integration that has already been done with the agency backend systems that support the contact center.

Agencies want to reduce costs through simplified administration and management of media applications. Cost is a key driver for any agency, especially in today's economy. Multi-channel client communications provides the tools contact center managers need to reduce the handling cost per contact. Incorporating advanced content analysis tools, agencies can scan messages using automation before they ever reach an agent, and depending on the rules in place, auto reply to routine requests or prompt agents with the likely response, reducing the cost per contact.

Additionally, agencies can improve efficiency through agent productivity tools and intelligent automation. Another challenge is making sure that agents have the tools they need to efficiently perform their jobs. The ability to use pre-formatted responses can reduce the time it takes agents to respond to e-mail and Web chat queries, as well as improving the accuracy of those responses.

There are some business process considerations to keep in mind for multi-channel client communications. These include:

- **Agent Blending** – Flexibility to target client interactions, regardless of media type, to a single or multiple agent pools. What this means is to consider sending multi-channel communications to the same call queues of agents that phone calls go to and potentially no change in the business routing strategy. To illustrate, an agent may hang up a phone call and then a screen pop for an e-mail will come in. After working that e-mail, another screen pop may come in for a Web chat. The benefit here is the Agency does not need to create a new, specific work team just for e-mails or SMS texts.
- **Data-Driven Routing** – Uses client information to intelligently direct where interactions should go and attaches data in the form of a screen pop to assist the agent in knowing who the client is and what they need for faster service delivery.
- **Agent Profile/Skills-Based Routing** – Matches client needs with the appropriate available resource for optimal client service and resource utilization. This enables the most efficient use of resources for complex skills-based routing; enables segmenting clients and service accordingly. Skills can be defined by proficiency level: high, medium, or low; or by client language; or by type of program the client needs help with: SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), WIC, etc.
- **Last Agent/Relationship-Based Routing** – Offers personalization by ability to route a client to the last agent that assisted them. This is very helpful for clients because they feel the agency has personal familiarity with them. In addition, this assists the Agency with better compliance to scripting.
- **Service-Level Routing** – Service-level routing allows interactions to be routed according to specified service level for different service levels or clients. Since e-mail typically has a client response expectation of 12 to 24 hours, agents taking calls can be prioritized over agents working e-mail while agents can then work e-mail during times of lower call activity.

- **Business Priority Routing** –Automatically balances overall service objectives; reduces complex strategy development; balances over- and understaffed queues that share agents; avoids penalizing clients who have collaboration or transfer needs with longer wait times; reduces over-serving one client segment at the risk of under-serving others; and greatly improves the chance that all interactions are handled within their assigned service levels objectives.
- **Integrated Strategy Management and Monitoring** – Facilitates management/monitoring of production strategies where managers view real-time interaction distribution along the branches of a strategy to verify whether interactions are being routed as expected.
- **Capacity Rules** – Agencies should consider the ability to define what media types an agent can receive along with the quantity of each type of interaction an agent can handle before reaching a busy-state on that channel interrelations between media types can also be controlled so that, for example, a voice call can interrupt an e-mail but not a chat.
- **Reporting** – Reporting for e-mail, chat, SMS, and custom media interactions and business priority routing provides a centralized view into real- and non-real time interaction lifecycle history. Agencies should consider their need for business-level reporting for comparison of planned vs. actual for proactive improvement on interaction handling, and servicing according to segmentation.

The following communication modes are discussed below in this section:

- E-mail
- Web chat
- SMS or text
- Web collaborative browsing;
- Social media.

E-MAIL

Summary Overview

While e-mail is nothing new, there are some key components to consider when e-mail is implemented as a contact center channel. For example, client e-mails can be routed through a business process that identifies the content of the message, evaluates the business requirement, and determines the best resources or service activity to handle that interaction. The message content can be determined through key word searches ("reset password" "new application", etc.) or using advanced natural language processing. Once the content is identified, the message can be forwarded to an agent, queued for additional processing, or delivered to an external system. E-mail call center systems can also generate and send automated responses or acknowledgements based on the message content with a greater than 85 percent confidence level. Representatives or agents can collaborate with each other or their supervisors to improve the successful resolution of an issue on the first contact.

Key Considerations

- Clients can choose how to interact with the agency using their most appropriate channel.

- Collaboration between client service agents, Subject Matter Experts (SMEs), and supervisors improves first contact resolution.
- Automated client service responses and acknowledgements improve client satisfaction and reduce agent workload.
- Lower costs of customer service.
- Increases client satisfaction with consistent, personalized service.

Detailed Description

Technical factors to consider:

- Support for both the POP-3 and IMAP 4 e-mail protocols used by popular corporate e-mail servers including Microsoft Exchange, Lotus Notes, and Sun Messaging Server.
- Support for Web Form Post messages provides a pure Web-based messaging solution that supports standard HTTPS Web server security.
- Leverage intelligent routing and workflow capabilities to better meet service objectives. Consider a single platform for managing all communications channels and applications and leverages the same business rules across interactions, which reduces administration expenses, and ensures consistent client service.
- Agencies may need proactive queue management, which allows for dynamically managing e-mails in queue.

E-mail technologies can provide access to interaction history whether it is an e-mail thread, the transcript from a chat session, a telephone call or custom, third-party interactions. This gives managers and agents insight into the history for one client across multiple communication channels. E-mail technologies also use a desktop screen-pop for searching/retrieving historical e-mails based on address, contact name, contact phone number. Supervisor desktop screen-pops have advanced search capabilities for e-mails pending in queues, which are staged throughout a business process.

Some e-mail solutions can take advantage of routing strategies which allow call center supervisors the ability to implement business rules that intelligently route interactions to the best qualified, currently available agent to handle the client. This routing capability enables clients to route by business objective, and maximizes existing technology and people resources. Contact centers can segment and prioritize client interactions according to criteria. These criteria can include business value, desired service level, media type, required resources, current contact center traffic conditions, or other specific needs as determined by the center.

Call center supervisors need to be able to make inquiries and affect changes in the volume of e-mails coming into the call center. A desktop screen-pop for call center supervisors could be configured to allow for the following applications in the e-mail queue:

- Lock e-mails from further processing
- Terminate e-mails from queue
- Promote e-mail within a queue
- Move e-mails from one queue to another

- View all e-mails in queue within a queue
- Search, filter and sort e-mails and queues
- Set alarms for specific criteria based on statistics (i.e. e-mail sitting in queue with no action for too long)

WEB CHAT

Summary Overview

Chat allows agencies to integrate live chat capability into the channels that clients use to contact the center. The live client service chat is also an essential element in a contact center of the 21st century. Chat lets agents provide live assistance to clients via the agency Web site. A "chat client" can be located on the agency's Web site in a number of places, including "Contact Us" buttons and "Apply for New Benefits", and other areas. The chat interactions are managed by the same business rules that are applied to phone calls to the call center. After a client is authenticated, a Chat system also provides agents with access to the same client data that they have for voice calls using a screen pop on the agent's computer. This allows for the same personalized service for chat contacts as for phone calls.

Key Considerations

- Agencies should consider the value of interacting on the Web site with clients. This has shown to greatly increase the utilization of the Web channel to complete transactions via the Web.
- How the agent work organization should be changed to accommodate the Web chat workload needs careful consideration. Not all agents would be skilled in chat, but all may be able to handle calls.
- Determination of the supporting technology will factor in the value of a single integrated platform versus a platform comprised of different products.

Detailed Description

Technical factors that an agency should require:

- Multiple chat sessions for single agent
- Client and Agent typing notification
- Transcript stored in client history
- Transcript can be e-mailed to client for reference by agent or by workflow
- Chat transcript forwarding to Supervisor/Quality Assurance (QA) queue for review
- Workflow routing a third-party survey URL to the client
- Transfer, Conference capabilities
- Supervisor Silent Monitor, Coaching and Barge-in
- Implement of live chat via a pure HTML-based environment
- Integration with the agent computer "screen-pop" provides agents with a single interface for monitoring voice, e-mail, and chat interactions
- Ability to perform advanced skills-based routing functionality for Web chat, as well as voice interactions, in a separate or blended manner

Additional Factors:

Quality Control: Based on the definition of business process and routing strategies, managers can enable QA review of chat transcripts, automatically send the client a copy of the chat transcript, and engage in a conference session with one or more end clients and agents.

Chat "transfers": Agents may want to transfer a Chat session to a supervisor or another agent, in the same way they would with a phone call. Transferring agents may target a particular agent, agent group, or queue. Agents may also create a conference with the client given the same targets as listed above. When a chat is transferred, all attached data and client history is transferred with the interaction, along with any notes added by the original handling agent.

Call Center Supervisor Views: Supervisors can monitor agents who are enabled for chat interactions. Supervisors cannot monitor a chat interaction that is already in progress. If an agent is engaged in a chat interaction, the supervisor must wait until the interaction is complete and the agent accepts a new interaction before the selected agent can be monitored in a chat interaction.

Supervisors can engage in chat monitoring. Supervisors can silently monitor, or whisper coach. During "Silent Monitoring," the agent that the supervisor is monitoring cannot see anything that the supervisor types; however, the supervisor will be able to monitor the content of what both the agent and the contact type in the chat window. The supervisor can choose to monitor only one chat interaction for a specified agent, or all chat interactions for a specified agent. Also, give consideration to allowing a supervisor to switch from "Chat Silent Monitoring" or "Chat Whisper Coaching" to "Chat Intrusion (Barge-In)" and back to "Chat Silent Monitoring" or "Chat Whisper Coaching" again using the "Switch Chat to Barge-In" item in the "Monitoring" menu item of the "Actions" menu.

Short Message Service (SMS)/TEXT

Summary Overview

With 2.3 trillion text messages sent each year, SMS has become a mainstream communication channel for many clients. Adding SMS capabilities as a channel makes it possible to target clients how, when, and where they want to be contacted; provides an ideal platform for promoting new programs and can deflect incoming calls to call centers. SMS can lower agency costs by providing a low-cost method of delivering information of immediate value. SMS costs by comparison are significantly lower than other communication methods. The result will be a communications channel that will achieve a rapid return-on-investment, and will quickly become an effective method for interacting with clients.

SMS systems are available that support solutions ranging from no agent interaction required for such functions as inquiries, appointment schedule verifications, benefit approval notifications, office location and directions, and many more.

SMS-based interactions that do require agents benefit from a quality SMS system that makes managing a fast-moving channel much easier for Customer Service Representatives (CSRs).

Agents may need to easily track multiple SMS sessions, which can be managed in either paging mode (for a single one-way or two-way interaction) or chat mode (for an ongoing string of messages with a given client). In addition, support for Multimedia Messaging Service (MMS) messages may be valuable, making it possible for agents to receive and review photo, audio, and video files when necessary.

Reasons why an agency should include SMS/Text into their customer service operations:

- Increases the effectiveness of client interactions
- Streamlines client communications
- Transforms client service cost structure
- Creates a significant cost improvement for agency operations
- Provides rapid return on investment

Key Considerations

Such capabilities enable organizations to reach out to clients as never before, with a host of functions that streamline interactions. For example, text messages can be sent out as alerts to certain client profiles, or as personalized messages to individual clients. Clients can be informed regarding what key words to use, for example, for office locations text "Office" to 20222. This could initiate a text based discussion that is driven entirely without agent involvement. An embedded natural language engine can also be used to determine whether an incoming SMS message can be answered with an automated response. For interactions involving contact center agents, the following should be considered.

- **Multiple Sessions** — Contact center agents can easily track multiple SMS sessions, which can be managed in either paging mode (for single one-way or two-way interactions) or chat mode (for an ongoing string of messages with a given client).
- **MMS Support** — Contact center agents can receive and review photo, audio, and video files when necessary.
- **Streamlined Interactions** — Businesses can send messages to certain client profiles or personalized messages to individual clients.
- **Natural Language Engine** — This embedded feature determines whether an incoming SMS message can be answered with an automated response.
- **Built-in Rules Engine** — State agencies can easily give priority status to messages coming from appropriate categories of clients.

WEB CO-BROWSE

Summary Overview

Web collaboration enables call center agents to initiate co-browsing sessions that, in conjunction with a real-time chat or call, enable agents to provide more effective, and personalized, online assistance. From an agency standpoint, this can radically improve containment in self service by clients. Filling out government forms and applications is not easy or intuitive for the average citizen. Therefore, co-browse can automatically initiate a chat session between the citizen and a call center agent when a citizen takes too long to fill out an on-line form. Without the ability to co-browse, half of the clients may abandon their

application and Web form. By being able to view what online clients are seeing, the agent can help with everything from resolving screen navigation questions to completing forms and applications. Having the ability to co-browse solves issues quickly, prevents escalation of problems, and increases client satisfaction. Web co-browse radically enhances self-service containment.

Key Considerations

- Reduces Web form abandonment, increasing self-service containment.
- Prevents frustrated clients from visiting a local office or calling the call center.
- Improves the ROI of the agency's Web site
- Keeps costs down by improving first-contact resolution rates.

Detailed Description

- Web collaboration integrates into the call center ensuring that agents can easily assist clients and contain the interaction at the self service level
- No Download Required — No software download is required for clients to accept a co-browsing (collaborative browsing) invitation, removing a significant barrier to co-browsing success.
- Security — clients' private information remains safe. Account numbers, other sensitive data, and the site's "submit" button can be blocked from the agent's view, and there is no sharing of desktops or files. Built-in customization capabilities let States tailor co-browsing to security and privacy policies.
- Dynamic — Agents can pick things up right where the problem surfaces, without having to re-start a process when a client asks for help.
- Page and Form Sharing Capabilities — Agents see exactly what clients are seeing on the site, enabling them to view problem areas first hand. They can also help clients fill out online forms completely and with confidence.
- Proactive Co-Browsing — When it becomes apparent during a chat or call that co-browsing may be the best way to solve a problem, an agent can initiate the collaborative browsing session and invite the client to join.
- The Web collaboration enables clients to dramatically improve client interactions without dramatically changing their Web site in any way, and without adding expensive software and systems to their Internet infrastructure. With Web collaboration a new level of client communication is provided which can enable higher levels of sales and client satisfaction.

The actions that the client and the call center agent perform together are:

- Navigating Web sites.
- Conducting online transactions.
- Filling out Web forms.
- Interacting with Web-based software applications.
- Downloading files, playing audio, or watching video streams.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Summary Overview

Social media is a term often equated with particular tools such as Facebook or Twitter. While these particular tools are important and popular, social media is more accurately described as an array of Web and mobile-based interactive technologies that can be used as part of a comprehensive contact center communications strategy with the unifying purpose of facilitating effective client interactions. Integrating social media solutions with other customer support channels has become increasingly important particularly for government agencies as they not only serve as low-cost, instant, broadcasting services but also enable real-time consumer engagement and feedback (for additional information on social media, refer to the *Business Process and Scope* chapter).

Companies can use social media to record, track, and harness their clients' postings. In doing so, they can react to negative tides that are forming, answer clients' questions that might not have been addressed otherwise, and keep tabs on the degree to which they are successful in using social networking channels to augment their client service mix.

The beauty of tying Facebook and Twitter into an agency's client support environment is that it requires minimal technology investment beyond ownership. Organizations can configure their Facebook and Twitter accounts to generate incoming SMS messages when "friends" (Facebook) post status updates and "followers" (Twitter) publish tweets directed at the center. Direct messages from friends and followers can easily be replied to via SMS, creating a cost-effective channel for client interactions. Routing capabilities will ensure that each incoming message from a Facebook or Twitter user will be forwarded to an agent best equipped to address that user's issue or concern. Managing Facebook and Twitter interactions through a call center enables the agency to assign that task to pools of agents, as opposed to the common emerging practice of assigning an individual to be an agency's Twitter and/or Facebook voice. By creating a group dynamic in interacting with social networking sites, an agency is more likely to create an interactive relationship with a larger group of clients.

Outbound messages can also be sent through the same desktop interface, allowing agents to send marketing information, promotions, event updates and more to Twitter Followers or Facebook Friends.

Typical actions that an agency could take using social media:

Facebook:

- Post messages
- Receives a message
- "Likes" this site or service

Twitter:

- Send tweets
- Receive tweets

Key Considerations

- Determine business objectives and business processes to augment such as obtaining customer feedback, handling customer inquiries, general information distribution and more.
- Analyze various social media tools and choose the tools that support those business objectives and address any concerns with using them.
- Consider a social media strategy that is multi-modal, requires little deviation from current customer support processes, and measures interactions and feedback in real time.

Detailed Description

A multi-modal client service environment results in a variety of channels through which consumers are able to access the contact center. The beauty of tying social media technologies into an agency's customer support environment is that it requires minimal technology investment beyond ownership while providing more efficient and effective communications. There are several considerations the agency should take into account when deciding to move forward with social media solutions:

- The agency must concretely decide on the business objectives that social media will support within the context of a contact center. These objectives could be: providing a new channel for customer service, providing a channel for programmatic feedback, and more. Without defined objectives, a social media page may not achieve its desired result. Once the agency decides upon the key business objectives for using social media, a comprehensive social media strategy should be drafted outlining which tools, such as Facebook and Twitter, are best suited to support the business objectives and how they will be configured and operated to achieve the business goals.
- The agency should consider its stance on maintaining customer privacy and anonymity while encouraging two-way communication and customer engagement. Consider the types of inquiries that should be handled via social media posts, e-mail, chat, etc. The operational design of the social media pages should be secure by design and take into account any and all security and privacy concerns.
- The agency must consider the type of content they provide using these channels, the type of comments they solicit, search engine optimization and use of keywords, customer literacy levels and more. Given the interactive nature of social media, the initial content and context provided by the agency will set the tone for future client interactions. The tone, literacy-level, and use of social media specific terminology will enable effective use of these tools. An agency is able to designate a team of call center representatives cross-trained as social media specialists to create, monitor, and respond to the content on the agency's social media pages on a regular basis. Automated posting of content is also an option for agencies with limited resources to assign to social media initiatives.
- Ensuring that social media pages fit seamlessly into the existing Web-based tools within a contact center is critical to enabling its success. An agency's call center routing capabilities will ensure that each incoming message from the agency's social media pages such as, Facebook or Twitter, will be forwarded to a designated agent trained in the use of social

media, public relations, and best equipped to address that user's issue or concern. Managing Facebook and Twitter interactions through a call center enables the agency to assign that task to designated pool of agents, as opposed to the common emerging practice of assigning a single individual to be an agency's voice on these tools. By creating a team dynamic in interacting with social media sites, an agency is more likely to create an interactive relationship with a larger group of clients.

- Measuring the impact of social media communications provides enormous value to call center operators. Agencies are able to utilize Web analytics to identify trends in client demographics, geographic locations, popular content, resolved vs. unresolved issues, frequency of communications among social media platforms, and much more. From these data, dashboards, and reports, we fine-tune our messaging and are able to measure the impact of our work. In a call center environment, this complete picture of how clients access customer service enables the program operators to target messaging, plan staffing, and fine-tune issue resolution to make the contact center successful.
- Where technology is used to supplant or supplement the duties of merit staff or where communication with applicants or participants changes the way applications are processed, changes reported or notices to participants are delivered, States should notify their Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) regional offices to ensure that the new processes are in compliance with SNAP policy or identify what waiver requests might be necessary.

Handset, Headsets and Workstations

Summary Overview

Handset and headsets used in a call center are relatively straight forward and simple to select, install and configure. Both should be durable, since call center activities can be hard on telephony equipment. The sensitivity to the quality of the call makes it so that every component that plays a role in completing the call is able to do so time and again many times a day for years. Handsets can reside on the desktop PC as a soft phone or as a separate device. Most call centers prefer a separate handset device that can be also controlled from PC due to the quality of connection it can provide. Headsets should be comfortable for the wearer and engineered to help agents with ambient noise and provide a clear transmission of the agent's voice.

PC workstations are the norm in call center operations. Different roles, such as quality assurance staff, supervisors, and agents, will dictate whether different software applications are available. For the most part, however, only a few standard configurations would be required. If the software performance will impact the caller's experience, careful consideration should be made of components like processor, memory, interface cards, and device cards.

Key Considerations

- **Reliable** – Will the handsets and headsets be up to the rigors of call center use and facilitate a reliable connection to the caller?

- **Ease of Use** – Will the equipment be easy to use and help agents in call center environments where volume and background noise can be an issue?
- **Quality** – Will the equipment degrade the quality of the call's clarity?

Detailed Description

Handsets

Handsets are rapidly evolving with the adoption of VoIP in call centers and the associated standards for making it easier to connect calls with various pieces of hardware and software in the call center environment. Generally, there are two options for handsets - hardware-based or software-based. The hardware-based handsets offer good reliability in that there is low risk that a handset will impact a call's quality. They can be simple or highly complex depending upon the configuration. Most call centers need the ability to receive a call, transfer a call, initiate a call, or place a call on hold. Handsets can be configured to address these functions and much more. Commonly handsets are provided by the same manufacturer of the call center's call switch/ACD since they can be an integral part of the overall phone system.

Handsets can also be controlled with software on the agent's PC. This provides workers with simple and easy to configure options on their screen while the hardware handset device serves as the industrial strength connection of the agent to the caller.

Handsets in a VoIP-based call center that are purely software-based, called soft phones, can provide the same control for the agent as mentioned above. The agent can connect the headset directly to the PC via a sound card connection. While this does allow for a smaller footprint in the work area and less equipment to manage, it does introduce a key risk to call quality. The PC in this configuration will act as the handset hardware. This is usually fine for controlling the call, but when the PC performance is interrupted or slows, the call quality can decline quite noticeably to the caller or drop the call entirely. The overall voice quality can be impacted as well by the quality of the interface card used in the PC.

There are some new products entering the market that provide a very small handset with a software client to control the device from the PC. These handsets are about the size of a mobile smart phone. These devices are designed to provide the quality of a traditional handset connection to the network while taking up significantly less desk space. These can also be used in at home agent environments which allows an at home agents environment to be a replica of the centralized call center agent environment.

Headsets

Call centers should use agent headsets that are durable, have either interchangeable parts or are disposable, and are engineered to help agents hear and speak clearly with ease in call center environments. Equipment not specifically engineered for call centers may not contain advanced technology that can, for example, prevent callers from hearing background noise. This can leave callers feeling uneasy about privacy and develop a sense of lack of personal attention paid to the caller.

When low quality equipment is used, call center agents are not able to adequately combat background noise in the call center environment. This causes hearing fatigue and leads to lower agent productivity. As agents increase their voices as a natural response to increased volume in their headset, the overall center environment grows louder, thus impacting the other agents and starting a vicious cycle of escalating call center noise.

There are several technical features that can be investigated when selecting a headset. Noise-canceling technology in the headsets helps block the unwanted background noise that reduces a call's clarity. Compression technology in the headset's amplifier processor can help avoid spikes in volume. Quick disconnect features allow agents to leave their workstations with the headset on without disconnecting the caller. This offers agents greater mobility and a better customer experience. Biaural headsets cover both ears. These headsets provide greater call clarity and reduce interference from ambient sound. Call center agents who need to converse with others frequently would likely prefer a monaural or one-sided headset.

PC Workstation

PCs are relatively standard. With VoIP installations, issues interfacing with call center hardware infrastructure components have mostly vanished. Previously, how telephones connected to PCs and the network and what redundancy was required to preserve the call had to be addressed. With less hardware integration required, a standard PC is usually sufficient.

There are some factors that impact the PC configuration. Additional consideration should also be given to security and presentation. Some call centers may require that no PCs have ports where an agent could insert a portable USB hard drive or flash drive. Screens may be required to have a privacy filter that prevents others from seeing the screen unless they are located directly in front of the monitor.

Flat screens have been adopted by call centers as well. They emit less intense light, which is easier on agents' eyes. Dual screens are frequently used since they offer agents more screen real estate, which reduces time incurred flipping between screens while on a call.

Conclusion

There are many decisions to make when implementing call center infrastructure that meets an organization's needs. With so many options, it is worth reiterating that technology itself is useless in a call center environment unless it fulfills the requirements of the business, which must therefore be clearly defined beforehand. Call centers have been around for years and can do a great job at meeting constituents' needs. While deploying a call center infrastructure it may seem daunting when considering all of the decisions that must be made, systems that must integrate, and diverse users that they must support. It is helpful to remember that there is a tremendous amount of experience around the industry that can help.

Lessons Learned

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<p>Data Brokering System: Negotiate and secure up-front agreements/MOUs for with whoever provides data, including costs, if needed, time frames for transmitting data, security, etc.</p> <p>We found that for some sources, definitions were not the same across agencies and needed to be clarified. In addition, some entities were hesitant when they found out it was a web-based system, and we needed to provide assurances about security; in the case of SSA, additional security measures were provided.</p> <p>We found that if we put the data in our database, staff would use it regardless of whether they needed it or not. We had to pull back information available to staff to only what was necessary to the program.</p>
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine required evidence for programs and what could be verified electronically. • Determine profile by program and evidence required for case determination, only show what is applicable to the program being reviewed / applied for. • Determine security profiles for persons accessing data. • Develop contracts with agencies with information that could be verified electronically. <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowed staff to verify some data without a time delay waiting for customers to return. • Shortened time frame to case determination. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff over verify case when they have availability to "ALL" electronic verifications.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Better partnerships developed from setting up expectations on both sides.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Project was successful but very time consuming. Suggest starting on process as soon as possible.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We have had to continually look at the data available and if it is necessary for making decisions.
Lessons Learned:	Sometimes too much information is simply too much. If we could go back and do it again, we would build our data brokering system directly into our eligibility determination system.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The department was implementing a statewide call center and expanding the placement of call center agents to rural areas. The locations where the agents resided had little to no bandwidth and did not have adequate phone line capacity to house call center agents.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine location and number of staff at each location. • Determine expected call volume for each agent: 1) # of calls (in and out bound); 2) Length of calls. • Determine phone line capacity for each office and needs to support new job functions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine bandwidth for each office and needs to support new job functions. Purchase and install additional phone lines, CLAN cards for offices. <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowed for work load portability. Kept jobs in the rural areas of the state. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Found that several offices did not have adequate capacity and had to spend a lot of money to increase capacity. Rural telephone companies do not have the technical expertise or technical capacity to support call center operations.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Implementing a statewide call center the option for workers to be located in rural locations allowed for us to keep jobs in the rural areas of the state.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	We were able to implement call center technology to all areas of the state; however, we continue to struggle with certain locations having a degradation of internet and phone service.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We are currently looking at removing call center functionality to certain areas of the state.
Lessons Learned:	In spite of our best efforts to ensure adequate bandwidth and phone service to all areas of the state, we have found that there are some areas that cannot perform call center type work. Had we known this in advance we would have structured our eligibility model differently.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Staff incorrectly dialed the emergency number 911 when trying to make outgoing long distance calls.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	N/A
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The telephone system was configured to dial a 9 to get an outside line.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The administration did not solve it and continue to get incorrect 911 visits from the police department.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We are working on it.
Lessons Learned:	The administration recommends using a number other than 9 to get an outside line when configuring your telephone system.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	When taking calls, automated status descriptions appear for busy workers in order to provide information to staff and supervisors regarding the worker's availability. Workers are also able to enter a manual status of "not ready for next call."
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	The statuses provide reasons why workers may not be available to take calls. However, limited status options sometimes require supervisors to personally inquire in order to understand the reason for unavailability.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Workers should have both automated and manual status options. Workers have the ability to put themselves in "Not Ready" status if additional time is needed to complete tasks beyond 60 seconds.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Status changes help to keep flow of calls moving and provide information about worker availability.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Manual use of the "Not Ready" status produces a more relaxed state in the completion of tasks. However, sometimes the supervisor is necessary to determine the true availability of a worker.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The new Call Center needed computer equipment for the agents. The administration made the assumption that existing thin client devices would transfer along with the staff and work in the new business.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The thin client devices were already owned by the administration. • The staff was familiar with using Citrix via the thin client devices.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	During the last month prior to implementation, it was discovered that the Call Center telephone screen pop software only worked on PCs.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The administration solved it by seeking assistance from the state surplus office. The administration purchased 200+ used computers for the Call Center.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	All parties interested in all call centers need to ensure they completely review the requirements and compatibility of the proposed telephone system and software.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Washington
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	When the call center first went operational, we still had paper files. Mail and fax-submitted work was batched for processing and then filed in individual customer files upon completion of the necessary case actions. It was discovered that a large amount of telephone volume was related to pending or recently processed paper work. While our automated eligibility system had the eligibility calculations and case notes, it did not provide access to documents submitted in writing. Without access to relevant documents, it was difficult for call agents to respond to inquiries, resolve mistakes, or provide clarifying details relating to them.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Implementing electronic document imaging, distribution, and storage was a large project that involved a significant investment in technology development, process re-engineering, and staff training.</p> <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Real time access to all case documents. • Real time data and reporting on outstanding and processed work. • The ability to leverage resources across the state. • Consistent assignment of incoming work based on objective criteria. • Decreased cost relating to document retention. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of technology including purchasing of specialized equipment such as scanners and sorters. • Cost of implementing the new business processes related to the system including training and auditing. • Security concerns relating to electronic documents including customer privacy and long range case file integrity.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Implementation of a statewide Document Management System and conversion of all case files to electronic format.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	See above.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We continually enhance our document mgmt system based on changes and suggestions but basic premise and functionality has remained consistent.
Lessons Learned:	Develop and implement an electronic system to image, assign, and store incoming work from the mail and other written formats such as fax, e-mail, and on-line submissions.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Washington
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	We implemented a statewide call center with geographically located telephone servers. Calls came in through a single toll-free number and were sorted with a zip code router. There was no ability to transfer a call from one server to another based on misrouting, complaint resolution, or the need for a specialized worker. We created an inefficient work around using a "tickler system" to essentially pass telephone messages when the call agent who answered the phone was unable to assist the caller for any reason. This caused frustration for our staff and customers because it hampered our ability to achieve first contact resolution.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	We explored the potential of moving all telephony onto a single server. <u>Pros:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to transfer calls. • A single data source for monitoring of calls and reporting performance. • Elimination of complex menus or routing systems. <u>Cons:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Server capacity. • Redundancy and emergency planning.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	We are in the process of transitioning all incoming telephone calls to the statewide toll free number to one telephone server.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	TBD
Adjustment or Follow-up:	TBD
Lessons Learned:	While building infrastructure, ensure there is the structural ability to transfer live calls throughout your user group as needed.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Strategic/Financial
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Lack of a robust IVR system initially. At implementation, the IVR system was not established and the improvements were implemented well after the call center was established.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<u>Pros:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the IVR is present and robust at implementation, the clients are trained to receive services using options that do not require them to speak with an agent. • If the callers are handled by the IVR, it reduces agent and facility needs. <u>Cons:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients do not have access to 24/7 service if the IVR is not present at implementation. • Required retraining of clients to use the automated systems after call center implementation.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Implemented improved IVR functionality.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Texas upgraded the IVR systems allowing clients to receive appointment status, benefit information, case status, and last document received.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Continue analysis to improve client experience in IVR and increase containment rates.
Lessons Learned:	Implementing the IVR when the call center is established will provide savings and increased customer service.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania

Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Determining number of queue slots in the phone system.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Too many slots and wait times increase. Too few slots available and the ability for clients to receive service is limited.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Ongoing assessment and adjustments needed. System auto-adjusts based on number of agents logged in.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Queue slots increasing and decreasing as agents log in and out provides better control of volume. Fixed number of queue slots can limit the ability to serve both overtaxed and underutilized.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Trends of call volume can be forecasted based on time of year, specific availability time frames of programs (LIHEAP), time of day, etc. Continuous ongoing assessment is needed.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Strategic
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Callers who have their immediate needs met by the IVR often have a need for other services from related programs and partners. How do we ensure customers are properly routed to other services and programs?
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Finding a way to directly route callers to partner agencies improves call efficiency by eliminating the need for a recorded message with a partner's phone number and improves customer satisfaction by eliminating the need for the customer to place a separate phone call.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Customers are directly routed to other services or programs without having to place a second phone call to a different organization.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	First, we identified other services that customers needed/wanted and worked with other programs, stakeholders, and business partners to provide those services. The IVR directly transfers a shared customer to a business partner's IVR, rather than giving a recorded message on how to contact the partner. We also provide the customer with the appropriate local and 800 numbers before transferring the call but always transfer the caller to a local number to reduce costs.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Directly routing calls benefits the customer, call center, and partner agencies by reducing the need for multiple phone calls.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	After taking calls that require a follow-up action (obtaining verification, adding a household member, etc.), call center staff or local office staff may be responsible for making the actual changes in the case. How do call center staff track these follow-up actions and alert other workers that may be responsible for completing case actions?
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>The State created a "ticket" system within the eligibility system. The system tracks the status of the ticket, the due date, whether CSC staff or local office staff are responsible for completion, and the number of days overdue.</p> <p>The client receives a ticket number for reference and feels like their needs have been met even if their case was referred to the local office for completion.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Tickets can be assigned with either the application number or the case record number. Workers have to be careful of which number they use to assign the ticket, as the case could end up going to a different worker than it should based on the way offices track cases (application vs. case

	numbers). In counties that are task-oriented without individual workers, the tickets are distributed according to task and according to what kind of worker handles that specific task.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	See above.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Tickets can be created via application number or ongoing case record number. This could mean ticket is routed to the wrong unit in a local office, so decisions should be made as to which number to use.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Strategic
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Information technology (IT) supporting the eligibility system and telephony systems must be fully functional and compatible to support the initial and on-going call load.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Development of an IT system that supports the eligibility system needs and allows for as much interface and information sharing as possible must be in place at implementation.</p> <p>Include telephony and technology that supports transferring eligibility information of the caller with the call. For example, when a Customer Care Representative (CCR) receives a call, the customer eligibility information in the CCR's computer is also passed along to the next person who will speak with the customer. The call and the eligibility information transfer simultaneously. Ease of access to data entry screens as well as pre-populated information decreases call and wait times for callers while a CCR performs data entry.</p> <p>Inquiry screen design is needed to present the most current information in a concise manner without requiring multiple inquiries or user tabs through pages. Speed of the IT systems is critical because every second counts in a call center.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Inquiry screens have been incorporated into one system to allow ease of access and flow for CCR navigation while assisting callers.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Upgrading technology has improved CCR delivery of information to the caller thus improving customer service.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Technological solutions can improve customer service if implemented prior to start up of call center. However, there are some clients who will always want to speak with a human no matter what technology you have in place.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	How to route calls.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Clients had local office number memorized. Limited call volume via 800 #.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Added option to local office auto-attendant routing calls to CSRs.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Ability to route calls in local office emergencies, office hour changes or closures.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Seamless to callers and built trust in CSC abilities so they would use service option more often.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Routing calls and gaining geographic user information.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Geographic user information was relevant in determining staffing for area structure.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	IVR implemented to obtain geographic information from callers and to route calls to the appropriate area.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	If unintelligible response, call would route round-robin to next available worker in any site, skewing statistical area information.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Area structure is unable to be clearly defined as they will receive calls from all areas, especially when disaster occurs and an area site goes down.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<p>The phone system allows quantitative measurement of virtually every aspect of every call, except for the content of the call. It also tracks each worker's timeliness and availability for the entire workday.</p> <p>Some of the most commonly used call measurements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calls per Day • Calls per Hour • Average Talk Time • Average Handle Time • After Call Wrap-Up Time <p>Some of the timeliness measurements are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Availability (arrival) • Mentoring/Coaching Time • Work Order Resolution Time • Lunch • Break • Log Out Time (departure)
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Level statistics on incoming calls and employee availability can be measured at every conceivable level of participation, from statewide service center totals as a whole, down to any individual counselor, and any possible combination in between. • The extensive statistics available generate data that can be dissected and studied in order to help individual workers maximize productivity, and thus maximize productivity for all centers statewide. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports are often difficult to run because each type of report requires different parameters to be input. Something as simple as the caller's phone number must be input as many as three different ways, depending on which report you are running. <p>Terminology and definitions are not consistent from report to report. For instance, on one report, HOLD TIME is the total hold time from the time the caller enters the queue until the call is disconnected; while HOLD TIME on another report only indicates the time the counselor put the caller on hold, after the counselor picked up the call.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	We have reports that can measure most of the data we find necessary at

	this time. We are still working to try to build a report that can produce meaningful calls per hour stats and first time resolution stats.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	See above.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	The design of all reports in the system needs to be under the supervision of one authority that can define metrics and terms, and use those terms consistently throughout the reports. Similarly, the parameters required for accessing the reports need to be consistent and as simplified as possible. Currently, the system is so complicated, that only a select few of the authorized users even attempt to use the reports available.

Lesson Category:	Financial/Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	ISDN or Analog Phones - cost and need
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Found Analog phones provided what was needed at a much cheaper rate than ISDN phones along with fewer daily problems.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Analog Phones
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Have fewer issues as far as clarity of call with Analog phones.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Added features from ISDN created ongoing problems for staff. Analog is simple; provides less feedback issues and better clarity. High tech is not always the solution.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Headsets or Handsets
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Headsets provide ability to access equipment, materials, etc. Handsets limit distance accessibility to certain needs but provide better audio quality and never battery failures.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	CSC Staff use headsets and find them necessary in completing the functions and duties of the job.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Headsets are more expensive but increase in multi-tasking production balances cost.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	CSC staff members prefer the flexibility headsets offer to the clarity and stability of handsets.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Florida
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	A significant number of interviews for the state were being completed in an independent call center, which was initially set up to handle interviews only. We began to see a high percentage of callers to this call center with issues not interview related. Customers who needed interviews had difficulty reaching an agent.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	An option for customers needing an interview was added to the main 800 number's automated system, to direct those calls to the other three call centers.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	This allowed customers additional options for resolving their interview needs.

Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	There was a geometric increase in the number of calls from an individual phone number, callers attempting both numbers repeatedly, negatively impacting our busy rate. This was counterbalanced by leveraging the additional resources of the other three call centers.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We directed the single call center number to the main 800 number initially, and eventually discontinued the independent call center number. This required changes in the automated system, as well as a review of all notices, Web sites, etc. We moved from geographically based call routing to next available line within the four centers.
Lessons Learned:	Multiple 800 numbers are going to generate multiple calls from an individual customer. Customers will learn very quickly what the shortest route is to your staff, even if the option does not pertain to their current need.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Network unable to handle capacity, system timing out impeding ability to handle call volume time and achieve stats.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Need for larger network and data capacity to improve efficiency in processing and call handling times.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Added larger data lines to handle network data capacity.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Installation had a short term effect on service.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Understanding the cause and effect of adding technology is essential.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Using codes to identify the reasons why people call.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Business codes are entered for every call with the reason for the call.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Develop and improve informational communication to divert calls to automated messages to increase call work flow and processing.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	This helps to define geographic need differences. However, we recently changed vendors and lost this ability. We can only obtain data about large geographic areas now (for example, Northeast PA).
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Make sure key management tools are independent of your vendor or are specified as retained requirements in any transition.

Exhibit 20: Lessons Learned—Technology.¹

¹ Section 11(e)(6) of the Food and Nutrition Act (the Act) restricts the SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State merit system personnel. Over the past few years, several States have used private contract staff to perform functions traditionally performed by merit system personnel such as providing application assistance, verifying information and answering case-specific questions. The outsourcing of these functions resulted in a more complex and difficult enrollment process, added complexity to the application process and confusion over the division of responsibilities between public and private employees. Based on the results of these projects, FNS further restricted tasks that involved any client contact to merit system personnel in our January 20, 2010 guidance “Federal Support for Enrollment and Application Processing Costs.” States are required to seek approval from FNS to use non-merit system personnel in a limited capacity in order to ensure continued Federal Financial Participation (FFP) support.

STAFFING

Call Center Staffing – A Unique Challenge

As States consider a client support model that emphasizes self-reliance and easier access to case status and other information, an efficient and effective call center will likely play a major role. When establishing an initial call center or designing improvements for an existing call center, the following areas related to staffing need to be carefully considered:

- Are the business processes of the call center well defined? Is it clear how operational processes such as mail-outs may affect the call center?
- Do agents and management staff have the necessary qualifications, skill sets, and training to establish a call center or transition to a call center environment from a traditional office environment? Do staff members understand how working with or directly in a call center environment will affect their job? How does a State help workers adjust to the culture change of a call center?
- What are the service level goals and how are they determined? Are the economic impacts of the desired service levels clearly understood?
- How will the correct level of staffing be determined? What are the risks associated with projecting staff need?

Management and Agent Skill

For States that are considering establishing a call center, the cultural change necessary to move from a traditional model to a multi-channel approach (including call centers) must not be overlooked. Fundamental shifts in skill sets, roles, and processes will be necessary in order for the call center to perform well. This impact will be felt the greatest by staff that will serve as agents and the associated management team. As with all forms of change, some workers will resist and may seek work elsewhere. While the majority will remain, management can ease the strain on staff by fostering open dialogue about the change, why it is necessary, how it will affect staff, and then listening to their concerns.

In many cases, existing merit staff may be retrained in call center processes and methodologies. This is the optimal outcome, as these workers may have years of program-specific experience in dealing with the served population's unique characteristics and requirements. However, prior to reassigning these workers, States should ensure that staff receive the proper training before they transition to the call center floor. Additionally, skills testing can be applied to ensure that workers possess the appropriate technical, customer service, and behavioral abilities to suit a call center environment.

For agents that are transitioning from the traditional model, the call center work can be stressful. The call center environment places emphasis on potentially unfamiliar interaction with clients on the phone, via e-mail or even through network "chat" sessions. While time limitations exist in both local offices and call centers, the call center environment often involves tasks that are broken down into much smaller increments of time than in other settings. Thus, call center workers must be particularly aware of serving customer needs while

completing tasks that are measured in seconds and minutes. Agents in the call center will require skills in:

- How to receive, manage and end phone calls;
- How to work efficiently in an environment operating at a faster pace;
- Understanding the importance of adherence to work schedules that frequently are defined in very short increments;
- The ability to switch focus often—potentially with each call—while providing a consistent customer experience; and
- Skill to work with telephony technology.

Extensive training in each of these important areas is a must, along with program-specific training with a focus on policy knowledge. Curriculum should be developed in a way that applies what these workers already know from on the job experience.

While reassignment of existing staff is optimal, not all positions can be expected to remain indefinitely filled by these reassigned workers. Call centers can expect annual attrition rates that are higher than normal industry. This is largely a result of the highly competitive nature of private industry call centers. Staffing "pipelines" are critical and may be established by internal recruiting departments or by partner staffing agencies. To maximize recruiting and training efficiencies, staff members are typically recruited in groups, often called "classes," so that multiple employees may be trained simultaneously.

Skills testing is paramount when recruiting outside the traditional merit staff pool. The business of the call center dictates the specifics being tested, but often includes customer service skills, call center "compatibility," technology skills and use of telephony equipment. Workers new to the program area need far more training, as they lack the traditional environment experience. In addition to the traits described above, curriculum developers must focus on conveying large amounts of program material in a manner that is easily understood and retained. Training "tests" are also recommended to ensure proper competence levels at multiple intervals during the training. A sufficient level of program-specific policy knowledge is necessary for workers to effectively meet customers' needs. The level of policy knowledge needed is dependent upon the functions the call center performs. Without sufficient policy knowledge call center cannot meet customer needs, may create a barrier to program access and can generate additional work when applicants and participants call back about the same issue several times.

For management staff, not only will new supervisory skills need to be developed, but also new management roles and duties will need to be incorporated. Roles and duties that are likely to be new when moving to the call center environment focus on two areas: 1) Workforce Management (WFM) and 2) Performance Management. Management staff in the call center will require skills in the following areas:

- Coaching and mentoring call center staff based on call monitoring and evaluation.
- Creating schedules utilizing WFM principles and system solutions.

- Setting and monitoring agent performance standards such as handle time, adherence, and shrinkage (a measure of how much time is lost in the call center to things like vacation, breaks, lunch, holidays, sick time, training, etc.)
- Using call center technologies to manage staff effectively.
- Understanding the trade-offs between higher service levels and cost.
- Defining escalation rules and procedures for agents.
- Using soft skills to defuse and resolve elevated calls.
- Understanding call center data for use in determining performance issues.
- Using "first-call resolution" skills to train staff to handle calls with as much up-front information as possible in order to limit repeat calls.

Given the breadth of new skills necessary for management moving to a multi-channel client access model, States should consider a combination of training and management skill development combined with providing experienced mentoring, especially in the areas of WFM and agent performance management. States should not attempt to establish new call centers with management staff that do not have direct experience and knowledge of running successful call centers.

Business Process Design

Without clear definition and understanding of the business processes of the call center, efficient operation and consistent client service is nearly impossible. Managing these processes is the key to the success of the call center. For example, for each type of client contact, the point of escalation to management or other skill groups needs to be standardized, documented, and incorporated into policies and training.

In order to identify and design business processes in the call center, States should consider the types of actions initiated by the client that are already being performed and treat the call center as a new "channel." From that perspective, call centers in the health and human services area typically handle the following types of transactions:

- General program inquiries
- Case or application status
- Application filing assistance
- Family situation change
- Appointment scheduling assistance
- Complaint or grievance handling

When designing the business processes in a call center, strong consideration should be given to the use of technologies and approaches that can reduce the number of calls that need to be handled by a live agent. Particularly important is to take full advantage of Interactive Voice Response (IVR) systems to provide information on the status of a case or application, request materials, answer FAQs, provide benefit level or denial reason explanation, or provide fair hearing information. When IVR systems are designed to answer real client questions by retrieving specific client information from program databases, call volumes to agents can be

reduced by 25 percent or more. Equally important in reducing call volumes is to ensure that capable self-service applications are available over the Internet.

In addition to understanding the processes in the call center, States should consider how processes outside the call center may drive call volumes and types of calls. This will be extremely helpful in forecasting call volume and ultimately achieving cost and service goals. Understanding the relationship of operational events on the call center and having early insight into non-routine events, such as special mailings, are critical to planning agent need. Call center representation in senior management is vital to understand the impact of operational events on call center performance early in the decision making process.

Developing business process knowledge will be easier and faster if a framework of methods and tools is adopted early on. Business Process Management (BPM) is a particularly well-suited approach and tool set (see the *Business Processes and Scope* chapter for additional discussion of BPM).

Setting the Service Level Goals

Setting appropriate service level goals can be the single most critical element of designing an effective call center. In call centers, service level refers to the achievement of specific goals for client handling. Different types of service levels are commonly used, including Average Speed of Answer, Abandonment Rate (AB Rate), and the Time Service Factor (TSF), which is the percentage of calls answered within a certain time (for example, 90 percent of calls answered within 45 seconds). All service level types measure the outputs or results of call center performance.

In most cases, the performance goals of a call center are structured very differently from other business areas, such as local offices. For this reason, it is critical that States ensure they have call center management knowledge available to them when determining service levels.

Selecting the type of service level and specific target(s) can dramatically impact consistency of the client experience and overall staffing costs. Exhibit 21 lists the most common types of service level goals together with the advantages and disadvantages of each. In general, the percentage of calls answered within a time frame is preferred as it relates most closely to the client experience and is the most controllable by call center management. This is contrasted with abandonment rate, which is directly related to client patience, which may change over time with call center performance.

Common Service Levels Used in Call Centers

Service Level Type	Example Thresholds	Advantages	Disadvantages
Time Service Factor (TSF): Percentage of calls answered within a specified time frame.	90% in 45 seconds for a day, week or month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be controlled by management actions in the call center • Ensures most consistent client experience • Staff estimation tools designed to handle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not intuitive, i.e., not easily understood without formal call center background
Abandonment Rate (AB Rate): Percentage of calls abandoned while waiting to be answered.	Less than 10% of call offered to agents over a week or month	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not fully controlled by call center performance – depends on the client • Higher thresholds cause unsustainable staff utilization • Most staff estimation tools cannot project AB • Subject to changing outcomes based on definitions
Average Speed to Answer (ASA): Average time it takes for the call to be answered by an agent.	Usually measured in seconds or minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to measure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measurement of success is dependent on what is acceptable to the client • ASA standards are difficult to determine

Exhibit 21: Common Service Levels Used in Call centers.

**Service types commonly used are listed with typical thresholds, advantages, and disadvantages.*

There are additional metrics to understand when determining the proper staffing levels needed to meet service level goals:

- **Wait Time** is the average time the customer waits before speaking with an agent.
- **Average Handle Time (AHT)** is the average length of time it takes for an agent to complete a call with a client. This is measured from the time the call is answered until the agents make themselves available to take the next call. Generally, the AHT is comprised of "talk time" and "hold time." (The exact calculation can vary slightly, but it should be the total amount spent with the customer).
- **Talk Time** is the total time the agent is speaking with the client.
- **Hold Time** is the total time the agent has the client on hold to conduct research or request help.
- **Call Quality** measures how well the call met the customer's needs, with the goal being first-call resolution. First-call resolution may save staff time by reducing callbacks and may be preferable over strict time frames for call length.

- **After Call Work (ACW)** is the total time the agent completed the transaction by adding notes to the case or finishing a task. The client does not need to remain on the phone during ACW.

Exhibit 22 shown below illustrates how a combination of service level goals contributes to the total customer experience.

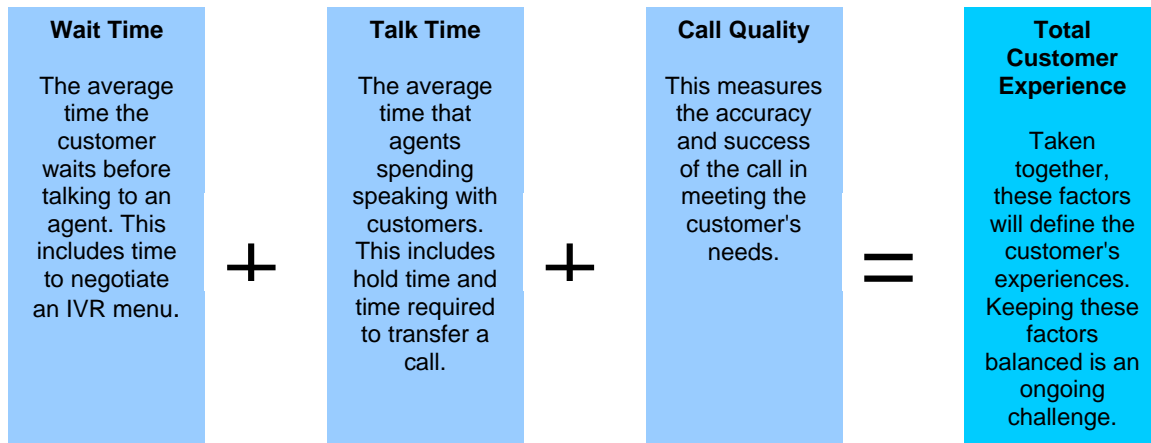


Exhibit 22: The Effect of Service Levels on Customer Service.

Setting poor service levels may drive staff costs up without meaningfully improving the client experience. States should carefully consider the impact of the type(s) of service goals, as well as the desired service level, on the overall staff cost. Exhibit 23 shows the agent need at varying call volumes for two TSF service levels.

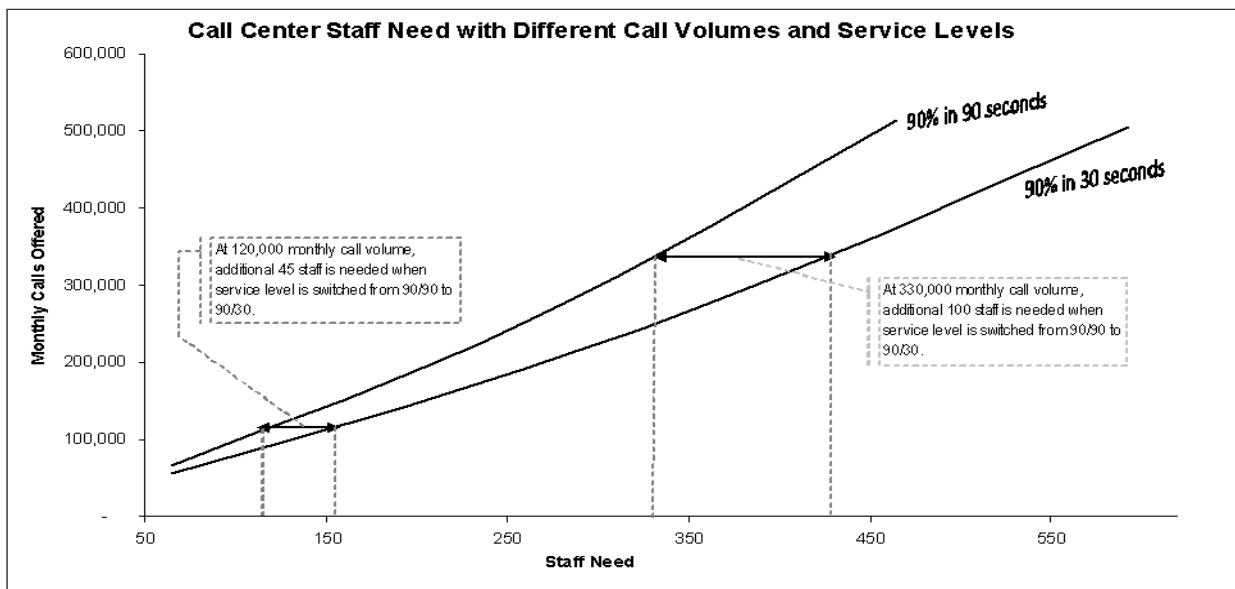


Exhibit 23: Call Center Staff Need with Different Call Volumes and Service Levels.

**The impact of service levels on call center agent need is compared at various call volumes.*

This analysis indicates that at a monthly volume of 350,000 calls (16,500 calls per business day) 100 more agents (31 percent) are needed if the service is changed from 90 percent in 90 seconds to 90 percent in 30 seconds. The measurement interval for service level goals is equally critical. For example, setting the measurement period to weekly vs. monthly will raise staff levels when call arrival patterns are non-uniformly distributed across the weeks in the month.

Call Volume Forecasting and Determination of Agent Need

A significant portion of the cost of operating a call center is related to staffing. Additionally, achieving desired service levels and the quality of the client experience are dependent on staffing levels. The goal of the staffing model is to match staff levels as closely as possible with call volumes, balancing staff need with client call demand.

Unfortunately, this can be challenging as call arrival patterns are not uniform across days of the week, hours of each day, or months of the year. Exhibit 24 shows a very common intraweek arrival pattern where call volumes peak on Monday (higher percentage of the weekly calls) and decline across the rest of the week. These peak days are often associated with operational events such as eligibility "cut-offs" for renewal periods or bulk mailings to clients that lead them to contact the agency.

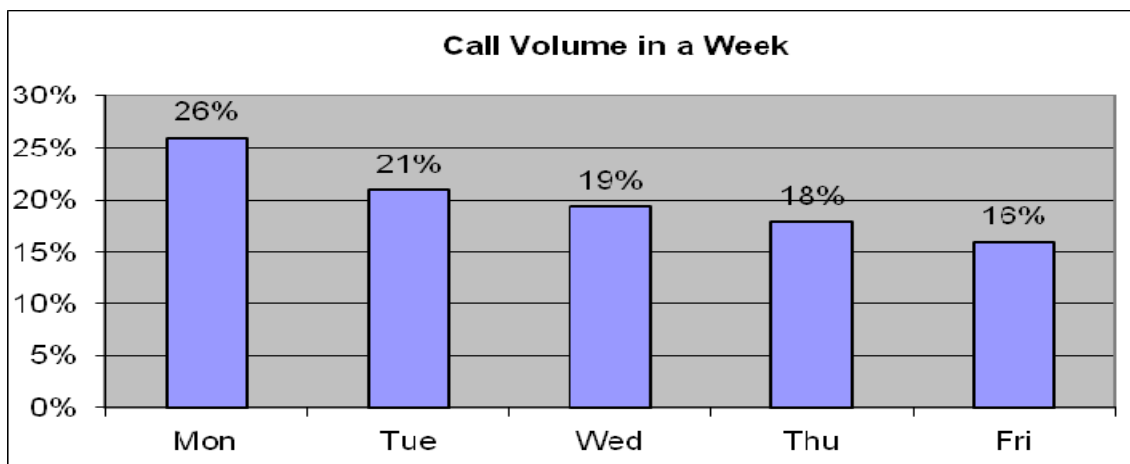


Exhibit 24: Call Volume Across Days of the Week.

**Call arrivals are typically higher on Monday than the rest of the week.*

Additionally, call volumes within a day show a very peaked arrival often around the lunch period (see Exhibit 25).

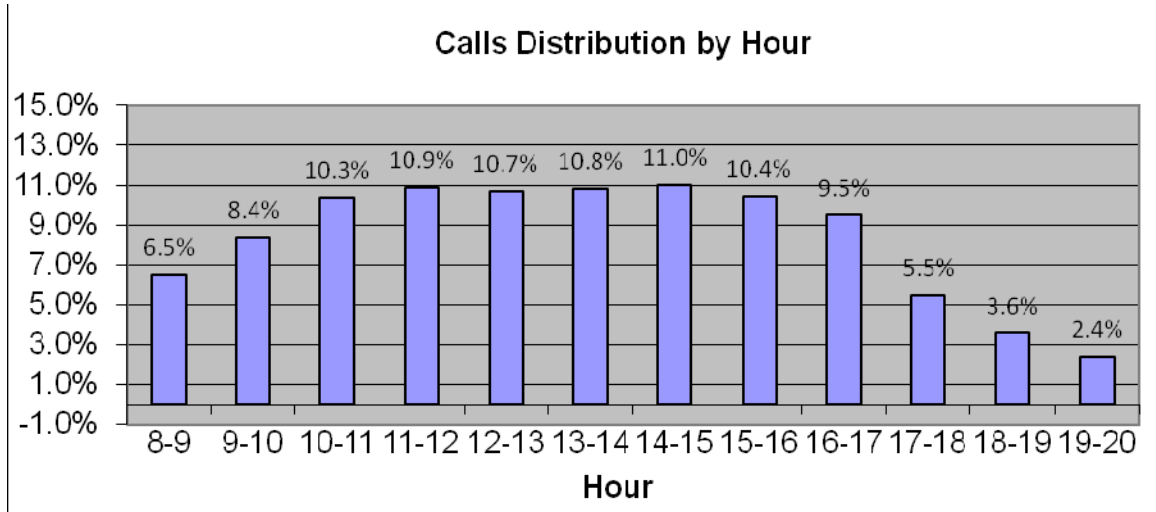


Exhibit 25: Call Distribution by Hour.

**Call arrivals are typically much higher during the lunch period than other times of the day.*

Consequently, a rigorous management process utilizing refined forecasting and planning methods and tools is necessary to maintain client service levels at minimum cost. The recommended management process for staff planning is outlined in the following section.

Call Center Forecasting and Staff Planning Process

Types of Forecasts

Predicting volume and arrival patterns of calls to agents may be the biggest challenge that States may face in effectively managing a call center. Volume forecasts are needed at several levels: yearly, monthly, weekly, daily, and hourly.

- Long-term forecasts, such as yearly and monthly predictions, are used for budgeting and staff planning, planning operational changes, training, and scheduling leave.
- Mid-term and short-term forecasts, such as weekly, daily and hourly, are needed for workforce scheduling.

States should ensure that strategic forecasting (month over month) and shorter-term forecasting logically follow each other and stay closely connected in a continuous "feedback loop." It is critical that front-line observations inform the strategic planning process. Strategic planners need to be engaged in day-to-day operational decisions and provide guidance on the suitability of tactical volumes and arrival patterns. This can be challenging, as long-term forecasting and shorter-term forecasting may be organizationally isolated. This can happen when strategic forecasting is influenced by budgetary functions and the WFM staff completes weekly and daily forecasting. In this situation, States should exercise care to make certain that methods used by each area are compatible and that the logical relationship, where strategic forecasts are developed first and then broken down into weekly, daily, and hourly predictions, is maintained.

Develop Volume Forecasts

Developing forecasts requires both science and art. The science involves the use of mathematical modeling approaches that take historical patterns and use them to predict future call volumes. The art is the application of judgment and experience. Only when these are brought together are the most useful forecasts generated. States need to be most concerned about a "mathematical modeling only" approach or an inappropriate modeling approach that often gets employed simply because it happens to be available in WFM solutions.

The recommended modeling approach for call center forecasting involves a mathematical process called time series analysis. This approach takes historical information and allows the isolation of the effects of trends (the rate of change), as well as seasonal or monthly differences. The basic assumption is that call volume is influenced by a variety of factors over time and that each of the factors can be isolated and used to predict the future.

The first step in a time series approach is to isolate the effect of seasonality or month-to-month variances. Without estimating the effects of seasonality, month-to-month variation can be mistaken for a trend. For example, the call volume changes from June through September could easily be interpreted as an upward trend when, in reality, it is a predictable rise in volumes due to higher activity each fall that is related to operational events, such as open enrollment periods or children going back to school.

Once seasonality effects have been determined, the next step is to isolate the effect of trend by removing the seasonal effect and analyze the remaining volume. Trend is simply the rate of change in the call volume over time and can be upward or downward. It is important to determine this rate as an annual trend rate, as well as a month-to-month change. Generally, simple approaches to determining trend are superior to more complex methods; in most cases, trend analysis should be limited to estimation using linear effects. For example, change (growing or shrinking) at a constant amount each period that can be represented by a straight line. Care must be taken not to force a trend when there is none present.

Monthly Call Volume with Seasonal Pattern Uncovered

There are a variety of methods that incorporate simple mathematical averaging, ranging from a simple average of the past several days, to a moving average where older data is eliminated when new numbers are available. These approaches do not aid in understanding the patterns of call volumes or the reason for calls; hence, methods that simply take historical volumes and average them should not be used.

Possibly more important than the appropriate use of mathematical methods is the integration of program knowledge, judgment, and experience. This often takes the form of estimating the impacts of known operational events or future program changes on call volume. If this judgment were not applied to results of the time series predictions, then large forecasting error would be likely to result.

Once monthly forecasts are in place, the next step involves breaking down the monthly forecast into a daily prediction, then into smaller increments, such as hours or half-hours. Most

call centers have a busier day on Monday than other days of week, and it is important to know what percentage of the week's workload is represented for each day.

Determine Minimum Agents Needed

Once the volume forecasts are developed for monthly, weekly, daily, and hourly periods, the process to determine minimum number of agents required can be initiated. The minimum number of agents represents the agents needed in each time interval, without considering the constraints associated with construction of schedules or accounting for other staff "shrinkage" factors such as absenteeism. The goal is to achieve a consistent client experience regardless of when they call.

In addition to volume forecasts, there are additional factors to be estimated in order to determine agent need. Most critical of these factors is the handle time distribution for various call types. Unlike handle times experienced in commercial call centers, States must be aware that program and client needs often create highly variable and relatively long service times. This often results in handle time distributions that are very asymmetrical with "tails" of longer handle time calls. In these situations, handle time distributions are not well represented by using average handle times and may cause significant calculation errors in staffing needs. Unfortunately, average handle time is the only supported method of most WFM systems and many other software solutions. Therefore, these tools are not recommended for determining agent need.

As previously discussed, the other major factor contributing to agent need is the desired service level. States should carefully consider the impact associated with the type(s) of service goal and service level to overall staff cost.

There are two major classes of modeling approaches that States can use to determine agent need: 1) Queuing Theory/Analytical Models, and 2) Simulation Modeling. Queuing models are the traditional approaches to WFM, but more call center operators are adopting the simulation modeling approach. Both approaches are discussed below.

Queuing Theory/Analytical Models

Most WFM software solutions incorporate one or more queuing models developed by A. K. Erlang. These models have been around since the early 1900s to study problems of telephone congestion. They predict how much the waiting times will be affected if the number of agents is altered. The Erlang-C model is the most commonly used model. This approach assumes:

- A predetermined way calls will arrive.
- All agents behave identically with the same handle time for all calls.
- Service is "First-Come-First Served" (FCFS); calls cannot be prioritized.
- No calls will be lost (abandoned).
- Unlimited queue length.

Many of these assumptions may be invalid in social service call centers and use of the Erlang-C model may result in considerable overstaffing. Moreover, with the movement towards skill-based routing of calls due to advances in technology, Erlang-C may be outdated since it

assumes that agents have a single skill (agents go to the same queue) and there is no call priority (FCFS). Additionally, Erlang-C cannot be used for most of the "what if" scenarios that address call handling strategies, call center design, and call routing options. A better approach is simulation modeling.

Simulation Modeling

Simulation modeling, which fully replicates the operations of a call center processes, is a superior modeling approach. Simulation overcomes many of the difficulties and assumptions of queuing/analytical models. The key to simulation modeling is to mimic reality as closely as possible. Simulation requires very few assumptions and provides extensive flexibility to accurately model distributions of key factors, like handle time. Another key advantage of simulation models for staffing estimation is that the models provide information on variability and extremes. Simulation can be used to experiment, understand uncertainty, and manage risk with new designs or policies without disruption to current operations, allowing call centers to evaluate and/or prepare for:

- Changes in call volumes
- Changes in policy
- Process improvements
- Revisions to service level goals

More detailed information on simulation modeling can be found online at <http://www.informs.org/>. The Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences is the largest professional society in the world for professionals in the field of operations research, management science and business analytics.

Optimize Shift Schedules

Once the minimum number of agents required per time period is determined, staff schedules need to be defined. The goal of this step is develop scheduling patterns that ensure minimum agent need is achieved in each time period while minimizing total staff need. The output of this activity is optimized schedules for staff breaks, lunches, and other "off-line" time needs.

Schedule development will require managerial targets for staff shrinkage. Staff shrinkage is defined as the percentage of time that employees are not available to handle calls and includes estimates for absenteeism and vacations.

Poorly planned staff scheduling can dramatically increase agent headcount without improving service to the client. Because of this, it is important to understand the scheduling impact on overall staffing need while separately determining the minimum agent need. States should be keenly aware of the impact of scheduling and shrinkage factors to overall staff need. It is recommended that the percentage staff increase over the minimum agent need be continually evaluated.

Another benefit of simulation-based approaches is that the same models used to determine the minimum agent requirements can also be used to test and optimize schedules. This is particularly important with skills-based routing. With skills-based scheduling, the types of

calls that an agent will handle are dependent upon other schedules and upon call routing rules. Different call routing rules may be used:

- To protect skill groups.
- For time of day or day of week business policies.
- To handle different call priorities.
- To escalate call priorities dependent on the time a call has been in queue.

Allocate Agents to Shifts

This activity is the main strength of Workforce Management systems. Given forecasts, desired service and staffing levels, and operating rules (shift schedules, breaks, lunch periods, meetings, vacations, productivity levels) agents are allocated to defined schedules. It is important that this step follow the rules developed in the previous steps. It is recommended that call centers create standardized shifts and allocate staff to these shifts.

Real-Time Monitoring and Continuous Improvement

The final component to successful staff planning is real-time monitoring that focuses on using information to drive continuous improvement in staff planning. States should focus on monitoring the **inputs**, such as handle time distribution and shrinkage factors, and not just the **outputs**, like achieving service levels, which is more often the focus. Key values established in the previous activities become the targets that management aims to achieve. These targets are compared with the actual observations to determine if meaningful deviation is occurring. The benefit is realized when inputs are successfully monitored and controlled to targeted values. It is then that the outputs become predictable and will "take care of themselves." With real-time monitoring, problems can be immediately identified and addressed before they impact the client.

Conclusion

Staffing will greatly impact a call center's operating costs and service levels, which are key priorities for call center operators today. A prerequisite for being able to determine staff need is an understanding of the business processes in the call center. The impact of processes external to the call center must also be clear. Before implementing the call center model, agents and management must have the necessary skill sets and fully understand how their jobs are changed once a call center is implemented. States should recognize the special skill sets needed and potential culture shock for State staff if they transition to call center roles.

States should devote considerable efforts to evaluating the forecasting and staffing models they will employ in call centers. A rigorous management process with refined forecasting and planning methods is necessary to maintain client service levels at minimum cost. Simulation modeling is the recommended forecasting and planning approach because it is dynamic and allows call center operators to assess, in real-time, the impacts of changes in policy, call volumes and other changes that are so prevalent in social service call centers. Successful staff planning also includes an ongoing commitment and real-time monitoring of staffing changes.

After the staffing needs are determined and the call center becomes a primary means of customer contact, States should be prepared to quickly react to increases in call volumes and

program participation. Management must continually strive to ensure that the call center supports program access and maintains an adequate level of staff to provide appropriate customer service.

Lessons Learned

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Indiana
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Department needed to staff the Call Center with knowledgeable employees. As part of the modernization efforts, state employees transferred to our third party vendor to staff the center thus keeping the business/policy knowledge within the project.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine staff who will transfer to vendor. • Determine which call center staff will work. • Knowledgeable staff supporting call center. <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve customer experience with knowledgeable staff. • Keep knowledgeable staff on the project. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all staff had a smooth transition to call center environment. • Local office vs. call center environment not similar. • High turnover of staff.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	For various reasons, department and vendor got mixed results during implementation. Staff knowledgeable in business and policy did not ensure success at call center. Some experienced staff struggled with technology introduced in call center.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Modified training curriculum to acclimate staff to the call center environment.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We continue to refine skills/experiences we are looking for when hiring new call center agents. Need to have a blend of business/policy skills while embracing technology.
Lessons Learned:	Department and vendor learned that not all experienced staff wants to work in a call center. Culture/environment between local offices and call centers are very different. Due to turnover of staff, training new staff is very critical.

Lesson Category:	Tactical/Strategic
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The new Call Center needed staffing. The administration made the assumption that the new business would be staffed by transferring existing field office employees.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff was already employed with the administration. • The staff was knowledgeable about the program. • The staff had interviewing experience. • The staff was some of the best and brightest. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff did not have Call Center experience. • Field Office staff dilution.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	About three months into the new business, many staff requested a transfer. The staff indicated that they were not accustomed to a telephone

	work environment, where minutes and seconds counted. We also learned that many of the offices that had lost the most talented staff began to have quality issues.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	We solved it by allowing staff that were not suited to the Call Center to transfer out and we began to hire new staff with Call Center experience. We determined that it would be less difficult to provide staff with program training.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	We learned that we needed to hire staff with Call Center experience.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	With the department facing budget cuts, we started to look at Telecommuting almost 10 years ago. Our goal was to decrease brick and mortar costs while maintaining our same staffing levels. Our assumption was that we could close offices with moving staff to telecommuting. With the initial pilot, we slowly moved staff to telecommuting and increased the number of staff that was allowed to telecommute. The expectations were such that a telecommuter was expected to produce more work than an employee located in the office.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine offices that could potentially close as a result of moving staff to tele-work. • Determine areas of state ideal for tele-work. • Determine expectations of technology for tele-work. • Determine workload expectations of telecommuters. <p>Pros:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer contact is seamless due to the fact they do not know if the worker is located in an office or home. • Allows for work load portability. • Monitoring of staff in a telecommuting environment is no different than staff in an office. • Keep jobs in the rural areas of the state. • Less use of leave from telecommuters. • Better for the environment, less driving. <p>Cons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for new computer system was difficult. • Some supervisors find it more difficult to manage staff that are off site. • Found that some staff were not producing the expected higher workload. • Rural Internet providers and telephone companies do not have the technical expertise or technical capacity to support telecommuting employees.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	<p>The department has not been able to realize the brick and mortar savings that we had expected to see, due to the demands with walk in traffic to our centers.</p> <p>The department feels that we have a successful telecommuting program but need to adjust some policies surrounding the expectations and required follow up to continue with positive outcomes. For various reasons (technical, personnel) we have had to bring some staff back in to the offices.</p>
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Tele-work staff members that continue to work in this environment continue to maintain higher workloads and have a positive effect on our workload.

Adjustment or Follow-up:	Currently looking at our allowable budget costs and capability to continue with our telecommuting program.
Lessons Learned:	Have very clear definitions of the technical requirements needed and ensure the employee's home ISP meets those requirements before allowing them to work from home. Well-defined workload expectations and plan outlined if not meeting them. Tools to assist supervisors in managing telecommuting staff. Decision up front regarding equipment and ISP expenses and who will be responsible for them before you start a telecommuting program.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Determining initial staffing need by starting on a small scale.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Controlled environment in both staffing and call volume.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	We initially opened one site with 20 workers and controlled the calls into this site by implementing a few select counties advertising and routing their calls to the center for one to two months.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Advantage in assessing ability to handle tasks and amount of call volume.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Advantageous for working out bugs in both system and processes. Currently use similar methodology when assessing impact of new concepts for tasks.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Florida
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Morale maintenance and improvement. Develop performance-based recognition reward and incentive processes and other morale and team building activities. Constraints are largely financial due to funding limitations.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Preferable option is to seek and obtain a funding source for performance based financial incentives. Develop clear and measurable criteria to provide financial incentives to reward exemplary staff performance. Hold team-related events and activities that are not necessarily performance based.</p> <p>Lacking funding, or in addition to funded incentives, develop activities and non-financial reward processes which recognize staff achievement and build or maintain staff morale. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition ceremonies • Certificates, achievement cards, daily written notes, "trinkets" or other inexpensive items • Job shadowing days (with supervisors, managers) • Alternate work (days off of casework or the phones) or leave days • Personal letters/visits from the boss • Agency newsletter articles <p>Establish a morale committee, hold holiday or themed events (hat day, dress downs, beach day, etc.).</p>

Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Given the lack of funding, usage of non-financial incentives have improved morale. Staff consistently views personal recognition and facility activities and events as a positive balance to stringent work expectations.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	<u>Pro:</u> Overall morale improves with an environment that balances the demands of the job with non-work activities/events and personal recognition. <u>Con:</u> Isolated grumbling regarding lack of financial incentives and the fairness of the recognition process.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Processes have to be perceived by staff as objective and fair, and they have to be consistently and regularly done. Involvement of line staff in development of processes increases the chances of success.

Lesson Category:	Strategic/Technical
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The Performance Management Unit (PMU) in the state office looked at the performance standards and data for the FASC, and then presented it to us. Seeing all of this data indicated to our management that we needed to look at the performance measures we had in place; see if it needed any adjustment; be able to have an accurate view of our statistics and data; and be able to use this data in a manner to help us manage call times; call volumes, and other daily functions.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>The Executive Director worked diligently to develop a plan that would encompass the reports and data that we needed to look at in order to improve performance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New job plans for each job title were developed. The performance standards for each group were outlined in these plans. • A Schedule Adherence memo was issued to let the staff know what was expected of them. • A memo was sent that detailed all statuses and information about when that status was to be utilized. • A standard monthly conference form was developed to be used by all sites so that information imparted to the counselors is the same. • A tracking report for the FS1s was developed to keep track of their posting of reports, their monthly conferences, and the yearly performance info (interims, job plan discussions, yearly evaluations). <p>A stack-ranking report to take into consideration AHT (Average Handle Time), Avg. calls per hour, Schedule adherence, Customer service, Policy & procedural, Proper documentation, and then to stack the staff in order of their performance percentage.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	These have been initialized and put into place recently, so long-term effect cannot yet be measured. Short term has shown increased schedule adherence and greater awareness of status. Performance statistics are being posted in the office, which has annoyed some of the lower performers.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Long term outcomes are not available yet; but in looking at only latest data, the performance seems to be improving.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Performance will continue to be monitored to see if any of the standards in place need to be altered. The persons who consistently underperform will be held accountable, and given a performance improvement plan to assist them.
Lessons Learned:	Monitoring performance allows managers to assess the needs of the Service Center. Standards in performance can be more readily monitored, and changed if/when necessary. Performance Evaluations are more easily completed when monthly conferences based on the standards are completed, since all data is already in place, leaving no surprises for staff or managers.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	CSC staff members have same classification and job classification as local staff.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Call center staff may have different scheduling and performance expectations, but it is challenging to complete evaluations and to create standards in order to hold CSC staff to expectations when the classifications are the same.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Union contract and human relations issue.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Unresolved.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Remains in follow-up. Meeting with HR to develop a separate job description.
Lessons Learned:	Performance standards are necessary in growth, success, and accountability.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Staff must stay at the center for a required amount of time before transferring to a local office.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Putting a time frame on duration of stay in the CSC reduces the revolving door, the time and cost of training, and the possible lack of experience.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Initially extended 6 month requirement to 1 year.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Local union agreements became a factor. However, not that many staff requested a transfer after being stationed at the center.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Remains in follow-up. Ongoing analysis to find a balance.
Lessons Learned:	Time frames can also be counter-productive in efficiency as one who is unhappy with their job produces less.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Washington
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	We based our initial call center staffing decisions on incorrect assumptions. We used the old caseload staffing model as a baseline to estimate the number of staff that would be needed to process work that came in via the call center rather than strategically forecasting staffing requirements. Failure to adequately map processes and complete time studies of typical call interactions based on the set scope of services caused us to be inaccurate in handle time calculations and made it difficult to employ common industry staffing models effectively. As a result, our service level is not consistent and managers do not always have the information they need to strategically staff the call function.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Scope of services and business procedures must be clearly defined to develop a target handle time for each core function. A staffing model has been proposed based on time studies, historical data about incoming work, and service level requirements.</p> <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data based forecasting ensures staffing model is based on expected results • Having an accurate AHT baseline for your major functions within the scope of services ensures you are not aiming at an unrealistic target either in AHT or service level <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception that you are "taking staff" from other outcome producing

	functions in the organization to "answer the telephones" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The caseload model has been the historical staffing tool and it is hard to get buy-in for a new model
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	TBD
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	TBD
Adjustment or Follow-up:	TBD
Lessons Learned:	When determining the initial staffing level of your call center, ensure that your major processes are mapped and a time study is completed. Use this data to accurately estimate the necessary minimum AHT. This will facilitate the use of industry staffing tools and ensure that you are adequately staffing your core functions.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Financial
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Recognize in advance, performance ramp up is required whether State or vendor staff is answering customers' questions on the phone. There is a difference in speaking with a client face-to-face versus telephone. Call Center staff knowledge and skills will evolve as staff members learn their roles, enhance their skills, and increase confidence to respond to callers.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Ensuring opportunity for time to improve skills and confidence of the Customer Care Representative (CCR) will bring improved performance rather than retraining staff or losing them to attrition from frustration about their own performance. It may involve setting stakeholder expectations and enduring criticism until CCR has had time to acclimate and build skill levels.</p> <p>Establish goals in advance, for expected performance achievements and a point of stability. In our experience, staff wanted to do well and became extremely frustrated with their own performance; as a result, they sought other jobs. The initial investment in training was lost and improved performance and stakeholder satisfaction took even longer.</p> <p>Call centers experience high turnover in staff, hiring ahead is necessary to manage consistent staffing levels. Establish a "hiring ahead" provision in the budget to avoid any surprises when staffing numbers appear higher than predicted.</p> <p>Creating pay incentives and career ladders will help retain staff in a high turnover environment. Industry wide, call center staffing is challenging due to the pressures of the job. Staff retention is important to maintain required performance expectations. Utilizing a part-time staffing model can help to address peak call times. It may involve asking staff to work full-time until enough staff is available to establish a part-time option. Part time employees must complete a full training program. It is a significant upfront investment but well worth it to address peak call volume performance in the beginning of the week and lower call volumes at the end of the week.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Establish a time limit, in advance, internally by senior staff to expect performance improvement and stability.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Providing adequate training results in staff retention and maintaining performance expectations.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	It is a significant upfront investment to ensure staff is adequately trained and hiring ahead is necessary to manage consistent staffing levels, but it is worth it in the back end.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Worker Schedules
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Difficulty scheduling the optimum coverage for call volume times.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	CSC staff members are classified as eligibility workers and fall under same agreements as local office staff. CSC staff is not a separate unit.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Unable to achieve efficient phone coverage for call volume times.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Follow-up research and discussions continuing.
Lessons Learned:	Establishing job performance expectations and defining a centralized CSC unit prior to start-up.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Optimal shift scheduling to meet the incoming call demand.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	The administration did a more granular review of the number of incoming calls. Instead of looking at the daily totals. The numbers were broken out by hour and by language for the entire 7am to 6pm workday.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The administration found the following: The hours of 7am and 5pm needed about 50% less staff than scheduled. The 7:30am to 4:30pm hours needed the bulk of the staff. Lunch hours needed to be spread from 10:45am to 2:30am to reduce the impact of concurrent offline staff. The administration also learned that Monday through Wednesday were the busiest days. Calls dropped off Thursday and Friday. Meetings and vacation time were encouraged for Thursday and Friday and discouraged for Monday through Wednesday. The administration could also calculate the max number of vacation slots to approve for a particular workday based on the data.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The administration was able to make multiple shifts to meet the high and low volume demands throughout the hours in a day, day of week, and week of month.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	It is important to review call volume data more granularly, in order to make effective and efficient schedules.

Lesson Category:	Tactical/Financial
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Determining optimal call duration standards for processing a change, convincing staff that the goal of 15 minutes was attainable and meeting ROI requirements.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	The administration had a standard of 20 minutes for processing a paper or system generated change in a non-call center environment. The administration made a commitment to reduce the processing time to 15 minutes as part of the Call Center initiative. The difference in staff time savings from 20 to 15 minutes was a factor in determining the ROI of the Call Center. The Call Center was required to save \$900,000+ per year. The administration was expecting a savings of \$1,050,000 (5 minutes, time saved X 21 cents per minute, staff minute salary X 1,000,000 Changes per year).
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	A detailed review of the data revealed that the actual average call duration was 13 minutes instead of 15 minutes. This allowed the administration to report a greater staff time savings for ROI purposes of

	\$1,470,000 (7 minutes, time saved X 21 cents per minute, staff minute salary X 1,000,000).The administration also shared the data with call center staff to let them know that they were exceeding the quote, "unattainable goal of 15 minutes".
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	As a result of granular data collection and analysis, the administration was able to report greater staff time savings for the call center ROI and to create more accurate, attainable call duration standards.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	It is important to review actual call duration data, in order to validate or adjust standards and to be knowledgeable about call costs and staff time savings.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Limited flexibility in a site with a smaller number of staff.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	In small cities, there is limited scheduling ability, which is inefficient in handling call volume and handling "back-end" processing.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	There are as few as 6 workers at some sites and as many as 30 at others. Call center staff that are housed with local offices are considered to be part of that office and must adhere to standard local office schedules.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Due to union contracts and local agreements, we have been unable to address this discrepancy.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Remains in follow-up.
Lessons Learned:	Small number of staff in one site very challenging in the ability to handle call volume and scheduling for coverage.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Strategic
State	Florida
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Supervisors were not adapting to the new work environment, process, and demand of a call center setting. With implementation of modernization our entire work structure change from a local customer service center setting.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>To redirect the mindset of supervisors into our new way of doing business and how it would impact processes if implemented correctly. Develop materials and training for supervisors on new systems in the work place (Telephony, Workforce Management and policy and procedures). Empower them to engage in the performance of their state.</p> <p>Pros: Supervisors will be knowledgeable in all system processes, policies, and procedures, which will enable them to accurately monitor, mentor, coach, and train their staff to attain maximum performance levels.</p> <p>Cons: To effectively manage a call center environment, supervisor will have to closely manage staff to meet all levels, which they were not accustomed to.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Supervisors were trained on the many different systems. We engaged daily, policy and procedures, shared vision and goal of the call center. We also restructured and uniformed units with staff of all levels-beginners, intermediate and experienced-thus, enabling supervisors to effectively manage all levels.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	In Implementing this shared responsibility and revising duties, supervisors are allowed more time to manage staff, monitor their performance, walk the floors, assist staff with technical issues, coach and mentor to achieve our ultimate goal, which is, provide extraordinary customer service.

Adjustment or Follow-up:	This process is ongoing. We continually re-train, monitor, and regularly meet with supervisors to receive input and feedback on ways to continually improve our performance.
Lessons Learned:	When you actively challenge and empower supervisors to engage in the performance of their staff and to lead by example, it enables them to teach, train, and make the team ready to accomplish the demands of the call center environment.

Lesson Category:	Policy/Financial
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The Texas Eligibility Services Support Team has found that investing in the initial training of staff will provide rewards for customers in the end.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Pros: Investing in intensive training for CCRs up front offsets implementation impacts to callers and CCRs. Recommend creating mock training environments for potential CCRs to become better oriented to working on the phone with customers, including difficult caller population, the information systems, and applying policy to caller questions. Cons: Do not shorten training in the beginning. The price is paid when staff members have to return to training later and the impact of staff off the phones is felt.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	CCRs are able to better assist callers and resolve issues resulting in a reduced number of calls requiring further escalation to state staff.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	On the Job Training (OJT) in conjunction with in class training has proven effective.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Continue to monitor training needs and implement as needed.
Lessons Learned:	Shortening training negatively impacts call center performance, as the need for staff to attend remediation training impacts production.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	The ability to find, train, and retain good employees was impacting call volume and wait times. To expand the services we could offer, a decision was made to downsize the Memphis site and move some vacant positions from there to a new satellite site in the Cookeville area. This would make the Memphis site the same size as the original three sites. The office was placed in the Putnam County DHS office, and was the first site with a presence in an existing county/district office. The site was opened with 18 counselors and two field supervisors. All positions were moved from Memphis to Cookeville.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not have to ask for new positions, since we took existing positions and relocated them. • A new pool of people from which to hire. In a college town, this always seems to help the candidate pool. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being housed in an existing county/district office has been challenging since call center work is very different from the type of work they do. • Without having an administrative staff member, it falls on the supervisors to pick up and sort mail and do other administrative duties that supervisors do not have to do at the other sites.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Staff in the new site has been very successful. Turnover did occur due to the proximity of other state employment opportunities, but we have been able to replace them with equally good staff.

Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The outcome has been very positive, and the staff members there have contributed to making the call volume and wait times more efficient.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	The management team has been pleased with the progress and success of this site and has transferred three more full time positions to this location.
Lessons Learned:	It is strategic to determine where you have more resources to draw from and ability to retain staff.

Lesson Category:	<i>Tactical</i>
State	<i>Tennessee</i>
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<i>Effective date 2-5-2009 -- With call volume and wait times being very high, a decision was made to divide the DHS Service Center Main queue into Main and Status queues. The Appeals queue would remain intact. The expectation was that the longer more detailed calls would route to the Main queue and the shorter informational calls would go to the Status queue, thus freeing up the agents to go on to the next call. The anticipated result would be less wait time in both queues and a reduction of volume if the caller could choose the correct queue to answer their call.</i>
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><i>Pros:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If caller could select the correct queue to handle their immediate call issue, it would cut down on wait time in the queue and call could be handled quicker.</i> • <i>Counselors would become specialized in dealing with certain call issues and therefore be quicker in handling those issues. Result would be quicker call time and more accurate resolution.</i> <p><i>Cons:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Number of counselors available would be divided.</i> • <i>We had to use available data to determine how many counselors would be needed in each queue to adequately staff that queue.</i>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	<i>Estimate of how many counselors needed in Status queue was underestimated, resulting in Main queue not having calls holding and a large wait time in the Status queue. Counselors had to be moved to the Status queue in order to account for the volume of calls.</i>
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	<i>Estimated number of staff needed in each queue had to be readjusted. Callers quickly found out that by selecting Appeal status in the call menu, they would get to a counselor quicker and then be transferred to either Main or Status and not have to wait as long in either of those queues.</i>
Adjustment or Follow-up:	<i>Staff had to be moved in and out of Main Queue to cover the Status Queue. LVR queue was created to deter callers from selecting the Appeals option when they discovered it was a shorter hold time.</i>
Lessons Learned:	<i>Effective 1-1-11: This was not successful in achieving the desired result. The decision was made to go back to one Main queue and not have the two separate queues of Status and Main. The Appeals queue remains as separate since that function is different from the Main queue.</i>

Exhibit 26: Lessons Learned—Staffing.¹

¹ Section 11(e)(6) of the Food and Nutrition Act (the Act) restricts the SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State merit system personnel. Over the past few years, several States have used private contract staff to perform functions traditionally performed by merit system personnel such as providing application assistance, verifying information and answering case-specific questions. The outsourcing of these functions resulted in a more complex and difficult enrollment process, added complexity to the application process and confusion over the division of responsibilities between public and private employees. Based on the results of these projects, FNS further restricted tasks that involved any client contact to merit system personnel in our January 20, 2010 guidance “Federal Support for Enrollment and Application Processing Costs.” States are required to seek approval from FNS to use non-merit system personnel in a limited capacity in order to ensure continued Federal Financial Participation (FFP) support.

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TO ENSURE CUSTOMER SERVICE

Management practices are those methods or techniques found to be effective and practical means of achieving the objective of improving customer service while making optimum use of resources. In this context, these practices enable call centers to design, manage, and improve operational processes in order to achieve organizational success and sustainability. To improve operational processes successfully, management must first fully understand the processes and then establish performance metrics that can be rigorously monitored to ensure compliance. This effort can be achieved through management practices, driving effectiveness and efficiency in all of the work processes. Management practices establish performance metrics designed to answer the following:

- How well is the contact center performing?
- Are goals being met?
- Are customers satisfied?
- Are resources being maximized?
- Are improvements necessary?

Performance metrics are grouped into categories designed to meet an organization's goals aimed at achieving efficiency, quality, timeliness, and cost containment. These categories enable contact centers to plan for the future, take preventive or corrective measures, continuously improve processes, and control costs. Once performance metrics are established, proper reporting tools can identify deficiencies in processes, impacting services and products. Some reporting tool examples for monitoring and improving performance are:

- **Hourly, daily, and monthly reports** – measures contact service levels, i.e., call Abandonment Rate (AB Rate), Average Speed of Answer (ASA), etc.
- **Volume metrics reports** – measures the contact center optimization of resources per hour, day, and monthly.
- **Quality reports** – measures accuracy and consistency in services provided.
- **Financial reports** – provides financial health of the contact center.
- **Customer satisfaction surveys** – measures customer satisfaction.

These reports, combined with others, provide the following operational process components the ability to achieve quality, performance excellence in a contact center, increase efficiencies, and manage costs:

- Knowledge Management;
- Workforce Management;
- Performance Monitoring;
- Continuous Improvement; and
- Security Management.

For example, minute-by-minute data that a contact center generates on daily, monthly, or yearly basis can be used to yield greater efficiencies and reduce costs. Though contact centers typically use the information and data in a reactionary mode, it could be proactively utilized to

ensure performance metric goals are met. By taking the data a contact center generates, e.g., average handle time, and modifying the report to multiply by cost of agent per month, States can easily glean the business benefit or business value. Proper reporting tools can identify performance trends across time, personnel, and different workgroups – leading to process improvements and reducing costs over time.

Knowledge Management

Providing a high level of service to callers is the goal of any call center. Technology complements the customer service and program training by enhancing the agent's ability to respond to caller questions quickly and efficiently. For example, the center could use a desktop application that provides an agent with scripted questions to guide the agent through the call. Knowledge management is the foundation of operational success and should be comprehensive, innovative, efficient, and effective. An effective approach to knowledge management shortens call lengths, improves quality, and enhances staff efficiency, resulting in a cost savings and improved customer service for the callers.

Customers want a seamless service experience and States want to provide that experience without increasing costs. A hub approach to knowledge management in a contact center consolidates reference materials, including policies, procedures, work instructions, workflow descriptions, and other materials. This enables effective, efficient, and consistent service within and across channels.

The first step in establishing a knowledge management system is to understand the needs of the business environment. Understanding the role each department and staff member plays in the contact center is critical to achieving goals within the contact center. Process flows describing each business process enables contact centers to manage and improve critical components of a process. For example, a process flow describing the life cycle of a customer contact enables Customer Care Representatives (CCRs) to visualize the manner in which the client will be served – access the customer's case, refer to online reference materials to answer the customer's questions, escalate the call when appropriate to another department for resolution, and document the customer's case for historical purposes.

Establishing core policies, process procedures, work instructions, guides, process flows, etc., ensures CCRs are providing information in a consistent, accurate, and unbiased way. Maintaining comprehensive, accurate, and up-to-date documentation is essential in order for staff "to be on the same page." Utilizing a standardized document control process that defines the manner in which documentation is created, modified, distributed, and stored, can ensure consistency and quality in services provided across all departments. Doing so, allows easy access to information used by staff to deliver accurate services. Policy and procedure changes must be communicated through standardized reference documents, such as process procedures, work instructions, workflow documents, etc. These reference documents provide guidance and direction to staff in a uniform way to ensure consistency and accuracy in day-to-day operations. This approach includes using standardized templates for each type of reference documents, incorporating process flows as appropriate and cross-referencing documents for accuracy and consistency.

It is recommended that States establish and maintain a system for document creation and control within the call center. For example, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2000 documentation requirements employs a documentation hierarchy. Requirements for levels of review and approval are based on the type of document being created or revised, and they decrease as they move from Level 1 toward Level 4:

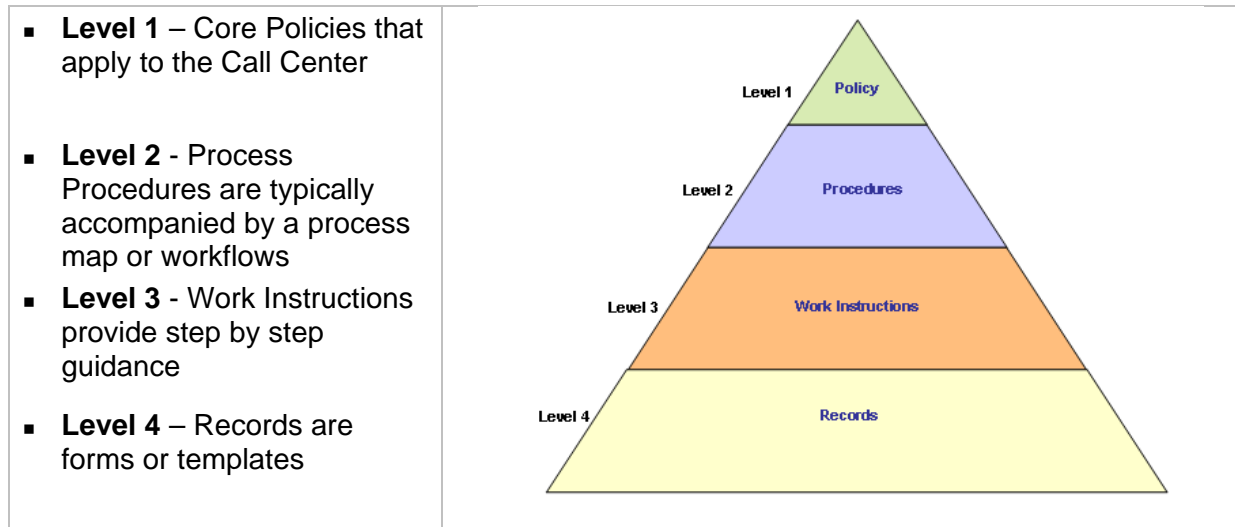


Exhibit 27: Levels of Review and Approval Required for ISO 9001:2000.

Not only are the documents a point of reference for staff, but also a set of living documents that establish growth and process improvement over time. Further, maintaining reference documents in locations easily accessible to staff permits tracking the currency of documents and updates to documents with minimal effort. When changes are made, staff must be promptly notified of the updates, which helps improve consistency and quality in the services provided. Depending on the degree that the change impacts the call center, agents can be updated through methods such as e-mail, electronic notices, staff meetings, training sessions, and written notices or memos. These methods have proven to be effective in notifying staff of important changes to policies and procedures.

Knowledge management gives contact centers the ability to learn about customer needs and preferences and understand how to improve content and processes through in-depth analysis of information accessed to respond to customer's concerns or issues. Analyzing the number of times documents are accessed by agents and comparing to other data (e.g. number of errors observed through quality audits, frequently asked questions by programs, identifying reasons for contacting the contact center) can aid in streamlining processes, improve overall services provided and reduces costs. Once information is revised and improved, analysis of customer contacts can provide insight to determine if revisions or improvements were successful.

The second step to knowledge management is having a strong, comprehensive training curriculum that provides the necessary knowledge and skills needed by the workforce. The curriculum comprised of established program policies and process procedures should be tailored for every skill-set level (i.e. new hire staff, existing staff, leadership, or staff requiring

remedial training). It should feature active learning to maximize retention through the student's participation in the learning process.

The curriculum should convey understanding of the policies that drive the call center, the procedures and processes that are followed to provide excellent customer service, the operational standards that provide structure and framework to daily operations, the systems and equipment that enable the call center to serve clients, and the emphasis on respect and privacy that governs the interactions with clients and with one another. Additionally, the curriculum should use one or more types of learning assessment, which can consist of a performance assessment in which the participant demonstrates the desired skill, or a knowledge-based written or online post-test.

The data captured from the learning assessments should be analyzed and utilized for staff development and curriculum enhancements - vital components in the continuous improvement cycle. Student records should be stored in a single location such, as in a Learning Management System (LMS) that will serve as the administration, documentation, tracking, and reporting of all training activities. The data retained in the LMS can be used for competency management, skills-gap analysis, succession planning, etc., enabling contact centers to continuously improve over time while reducing costs.

Knowledge Management System

Summary Overview

A Knowledge Management System (KMS) helps provide the right information to agents and subsequently callers in a timely fashion. A KMS is a searchable tool containing a range text and graphics based instructions, business procedures, policies, and potentially much more. A KMS is similar to a program-specific Frequently Asked Questions application with a Google-like search engine.

Key Considerations

- Flexible enough to allow for the use of a variety information presentation styles
- Easy information administration process to keep it up-to-date
- Effective search and browsing capabilities to help keep agents efficient

Detailed Description

In a call center environment, challenges resulting from agent turnover, increasing headcount to meet demand and communication of the latest changes in policies and procedures are ever present. A KMS can be part of the solution by helping management ensure that agents have timely information available to answer call questions or provide "authorized" direction that is consistent and approved or authorized by the organization's leadership.

A KMS is a repository, which contains structured business rules, instructions, and information that call center workers can access real time while taking a call. The tool helps agents provide the desired information to callers with accuracy and reliability. Where agents may be

developing their skill to handle certain types of calls, a KMS can provide the first level of support to the agent.

Before an a KMS can be deployed, a clear definition of business processes, work instructions, common caller issues, frequently asked questions and other information needs must be identified. The KMS provides management and workers with an easily searchable repository of this information in the form of text, graphics, documents, or other types of files that can be linked into the KMS.

A KMS is not a scripting engine. Many telemarketing firms use specialized scripting tools to help guide an agent's conversation. A KMS differs significantly in that it typically does not include decision logic that guides the agent to the next sentence to recite to the caller. It does guide an agent to different topics and areas of content based on user input. A KMS should meet the needs of the agent by being well organized through the application of good information architecture principles. Too often, a KMS is deployed with good content but not in easily accessible user interface design.

To help ensure that the KMS is being used effectively, monitoring of agent usage should be applied. Measuring what topics are accessed most often, trends of usage, and other usage statistics should be gathered to tune the KMS, identify call issues, improve training, and increase user productivity.

Selecting the appropriate system may require assistance from a Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who will help identify the needs of the call center. For example, how many courses, students, authors, and editors will the system support? Who will install and maintain the systems hardware or software? Who is responsible for the maintenance of the reference documents housed in the system? Answers to these questions are the beginning to determining the right system for the call center.

Workforce Management

Workforce Management (WFM) is essential in meeting the demands of a call center. Call center agents may arrive late, call-in sick, log in to the incorrect queue, take breaks at different times than originally planned, or get pulled away for an unexpected meeting. When this occurs, the center's service levels will suffer, as incoming calls will likely not be answered within the target time frame. This leads to abandoned calls, irritated customers, and an inability to meet service level agreements. Understanding schedule adherence is confusing or unclear for many CCRs, especially State case workers working in a call center for the first time. There are three basic reasons for non-compliance. Staff either: 1) “Don't know”; 2) “Can't”; or 3) “Won't”.

Agents may not know or understand what is expected in terms of schedule adherence. Most agents are perfectly capable of following their work schedules. However, occasionally there is a barrier preventing them from adherence (i.e. long phone call or complicated customer issue forcing them to vary from scheduled stop times). This is especially true for case workers who may not understand the call center scope of work. For example, a case worker can do whatever it takes to complete a case, i.e., research a case, contact the client to seek

clarification, escalate, etc. Case workers typically have a set number of cases per month, permitting some flexibility with their individual schedules. However, as a CCR, understanding the scope of work and staying within the scope may be more challenging and require a paradigm shift in order to be compliant with call center standards.

Most schedule adherence issues do not fall into the "can't" category. The issues tend to fall into the "won't" category. In most call centers, this is the reason for most adherence problems. Most employees with an adherence problem have willfully decided not to adhere to the schedule. The reason for this behavior is most often the lack of consequences. However, management can hold agents accountable by educating agents on the importance of schedule adherence and the consequences for failing to adhere to schedules. Real-time adherence monitoring enables management to compare staff schedules with staff actual activity. Real-time adherence monitoring can help detect problems requiring immediate corrective action and manage staff shrinkage (percentage of time staff are not available to handle calls). Additionally, real-time adherence monitoring helps agents understand the correlation between their daily behavior and the effects those behaviors have on service level goals.

It cannot be understated how critical the WFM function is to the call center. WFM ensures that agents are in the right place at the right time. Even the slightest variance from the planned schedules will have obvious impacts on the callers. For instance, if 2 percent of the agents are not correctly signed on and ready, the percentage of calls answered within the designated time frame will drop by 10 percent. If 10 percent of the agents are not ready to take calls, it can be expected that 50 percent of calls will miss the service targets. Callers will not tolerate this service for long, and it will lead to abandoned calls, customer complaints, and lower employee morale for those agents who are now carrying the added workload. The repercussions for poor WFM are immediate, long lasting, and severe.

Real-time adherence monitoring requires call center management to address to the following questions:

- How much adherence is reasonable?
- What are the adherence goals?
- How will real-time adherence monitoring data be used?

Setting realistic goals and measures are important. Though industry standards vary from industry to industry, adherence goals typically range somewhere between 90 and 95 percent. In other words, how closely an agent follows their schedules (breaks, lunch, meetings, trainings, coaching sessions, etc.) on hour-by-hour increments. Setting adherence targets allows staff some latitude for bathroom breaks or unforeseen circumstances. By closely monitoring scheduling adherence, management can quickly address issues before they become problematic.

During day-to-day call center operations, supervisors work closely with WFM to schedule time away from the phone for their staff to conduct routine meetings, coaching sessions, ad-hoc meetings, etc. In doing so, supervisors and WFM are active participants in scheduling adherence and maximizing staff productivity.

Real-time adherence monitoring data can be used in multiple ways to drive continuous improvement. Understanding staff behavior that impact service levels is the key for identifying solutions to recurring problems. For example, some WFM solutions offer the ability to view an agent's desktop activity during a call, providing insight to how agents navigate through a call. In doing so, management can identify potential gaps in workflow processes. Other solutions offer the ability to monitor and analyze key performance indicators and trends to reforecast, reschedule and adjust staffing. Some solutions will also send instant alerts to call center management when staff is out of adherence. These solution tools enable a call center to reduce shrinkage and increase the call center's productivity and performance.

Steps to effectively managing adherence include:

- **Educate staff.** It is critical that agents understand the importance and relevance of schedule adherence. Management should show agents what the impact is of just one person not being available to answer calls. Explain how it impacts the call centers results, financial results, and how it impacts the callers.
- **Ensure for employee understanding.** Management should make certain that everyone in the call center understands all of the functions of phone system and what each State means. They should be able to easily know if they are logged in properly.
- **Share the goals.** Everyone in the call center must know what the goals are and how they impact those goals. Results must be shared daily so everyone shares the success, as well as the failures.
- **Provide Feedback.** Feedback is critical. Each agent should receive daily feedback on his or her adherence including not just the overall result, but where the gaps were. This can be delivered in person by a Supervisor or automated through the phone system or supporting applications.
- **Reward reliable agents.** Acknowledging positive behavior will ensure for high customer satisfaction. It is also important to have proper consequences for staff that do not routinely adhere to their schedule.

Workforce Management Systems

Summary Overview

This section describes how to use a computerized system to analyze incoming call arrival patterns to schedule call center agent work shifts. In a large call center with 50 or more agents, it can be overwhelming for call center managers to manually schedule agents. This section describes how to use an automated system to do this task. By offloading this scheduling to a system, call center managers are able to spend more time managing and coaching their staff. A workforce management system is a sophisticated computer system that schedules work shifts of call center agents based on incoming call arrival patterns, work shift availability, labor rules, and other inputs. Whereas this type of scheduling is feasible using Excel spreadsheets for small call centers of 20 agents or less, larger call centers, typically 25 agents and larger, need a very powerful tool to work effectively.

Key Considerations

- Agencies will want to staff enough people to handle incoming call arrival demands to prevent excessive hold times, but not overstaff call centers with employees who will be idle. It is necessary to have just the right number of people, but not too many, and call arrival patterns tend to be "bursty."
- Choose a system that integrates easily into the call routing system.
- Choose a system that will let call center supervisors and manager work in leading their people, rather than becoming spreadsheet scheduling experts.

Detailed Description

In today's complex contact centers, optimizing people resources is extremely important to avoid the high costs of idle resources and/or lost opportunities. As multiple skill set queues are offered to customers, WFM applications become essential to ensure optimal staffing levels based on business requirements. Existing tools, such as Microsoft Excel, are not well suited for contact centers with more than 50 agents. Custom or home-grown solutions can help meet some requirements, but prove ineffective and expensive as business requirements and organizations grow.

Best in class workforce management systems support the most complex contact center environments, utilizing robust and scalable framework architecture for telephony and multimedia capabilities. These systems provide planning, forecasting, scheduling, and analytical capabilities in an easy-to-use Web-based application, allowing workforce planners to align workforce strategies with critical business objectives. Best practices in workforce planning allow for a combination of approaches. Based upon forecasts, simulation tools are used to determine the optimal staffing plans. Traditionally staffing methods used a formula called Erlang – C to determine staffing levels to meet targeted service levels in the call center. Workforce management systems can accept the output from simulation modeling while skipping the built-in Erlang-C computation method of many systems.

Benefits include savings in agent costs, improved agent and supervisor productivity, increased agent morale, reduced agent turnover and training requirements, reduced wait times for customers, and associated savings in telecommunication costs.

Agencies should consider a solution that has many capabilities to optimize the contact center workforce. These capabilities need to be independent of the infrastructure, and designed to scale and extend based on business needs.

- Support for a heterogeneous infrastructure
- Support for ensuring real-time scheduling adherence
- Flexible forecasting and strategic planning based on "what-if" analyses
- Employee-friendly optimized scheduling
- Adhere to union rules and seniority requirements
- Honor flexible business and fairness rules
- Consider employee preferences for schedules
- Balance between service goals and employee preferences
- Enable "open schedules" to allow employee bidding
- Support for a multi-channel (voice, e-mail and chat), multi-skilled and multi-site environment that is in place today
- Meet service goals with right number of skilled resources
- Web-based application for agents allowing access to schedules, schedule trading, shift preferences, availability preferences and time off planning
- Web-based application for supervisors, allowing decision-makers to edit schedules, time off, schedule trade, and preference requests, and view intra-day schedule adherence and key statistics and reports for analysis.
- Agent utilization reports that provide key statistics on agent performance
- Real-time and historical employee adherence reporting

Quality Monitoring

Business management requires the ongoing monitoring of performance to improve business processes successfully. It is through this approach in which opportunities for improvement are identified and addressed. Defining performance measures and standards is crucial to the quality process. To aid in this effort, a quality management plan (QMP) measures, reviews, and reports on overall levels of performance within each area of the call center responsibility. A QMP includes provisions for developing plans for monitoring, measuring, and improving performance, including a description of the tools and techniques that are used. The QMP is tightly integrated with the problem correction process, which is the framework for identifying and resolving problems and suggesting process and program improvements. The QMP identifies and describes the quality assurance controls for business processes and systems, process procedures for auditing, monitoring and measurement, as well as analysis methodologies used to meet goals and objectives in the call center. It describes how and when business processes and systems are audited, identifies the parties who are responsible for

conducting audits or monitoring systems, and addresses how nonconforming products and services are managed and reported.

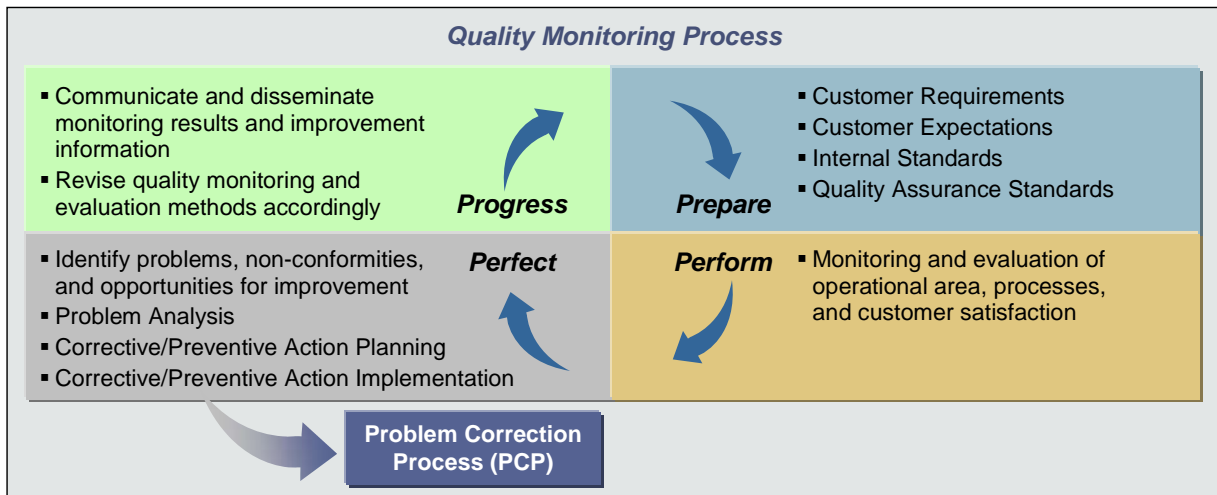


Exhibit 28: Quality Monitoring Process.

Key process indicators and services levels are used to evaluate the quality of products, services, and outcomes provided to customers. All areas of operation require monitoring, but may not require a defined Quality Assurance (QA) component. Understanding the necessary level of monitoring for an area and how to utilize resources for maximum value are essential elements for effective quality management.

To define the QA areas, it is important to understand why an area of operation requires a QA component. Areas of operation are selected for QA monitoring based on the following criteria:

- The area of operation is part of a process or a system that provides clients with services for which they are eligible.
- Opportunities exist for providing more reliable and efficient services to clients.
- Accuracy of services provided by the area of operation has a significant impact on another area of operation.
- They make sure that services provided meet client and program needs.

The data obtained from the QA monitoring of certain areas can help determine if goals are met, costs are decreasing, services are improving, etc. Through QA monitoring, call centers can identify non-conformances and improve products or services. QA monitoring can aid in the identification of gaps or loop holes in a process or a system. In doing so, a process or a system can be improved, reducing waste and increasing savings.

The QMP should include a performance measurement plan that describes continuous quality monitoring processes and QA audits, the standards and metrics against which performance is measured, and an approach to developing and tracking corrective action and continuous improvement activities. This component of the QMP plays an important role, as it clearly defines how a call center objectively reviews work performed in the areas of operation and how systems will be monitored for performance. For each key process, performance

measurement defines required measurements, identifies the frequency for which it is measured, identifies measurement and sampling methods, and assigns responsibilities. These components are measured through system reports or QA monitoring results. System reports and QA monitoring can be generated or conducted daily, weekly or monthly.

Contact Center				
QA Area or Evaluation Component	Activities, Tasks, Events, Processes, Systems Measured	Performance Standard	Applicable Metrics	Reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer Care Center 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls recorded during the sample month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that XX% of client call handling is accurate as determined in accordance with approved methodology, performance criteria in the quality management plan (QMP) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer authentication Information provided to the caller Actions performed on the case Documentation of case notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Monthly Data Source – Quality monitoring results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Application Processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applications processed during the sample month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that XX % of applications processed were accurate as determined in accordance with approved methodology, performance criteria in the QMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accuracy and completeness of data Generation of appropriate letters Documentation of case notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Monthly Data Source – Quality monitoring results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training sessions conducted during the sample month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure training session was effective when compared to audit findings as determined in accordance with approved methodology, performance criteria in the QMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effectiveness of training or retraining of staff on new process or existing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Monthly Data Source – Quality monitoring and Training participants results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outbound Mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outbound mail generated during the sample day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure outbound mailings are accurate and complete as determined in accordance with approved methodology, performance criteria in the QMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accuracy of outgoing mail Legibility of printed materials Appropriateness of the materials in a mail packet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Daily Data Source – Quality monitoring results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inbound Mail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inbound mail generated during the sample day 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure inbound mail is processed accurately as determined in accordance with approved methodology, performance criteria in the QMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accuracy of mail sorting Accuracy of return mail processing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Daily Data Source – Quality monitoring results
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Routing Calls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Calls recorded during the sample month 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure client calls were accurately escalated when appropriate as determined in accordance with approved methodology, performance criteria in the QMP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer authentication Information provided to the caller Actions performed on the case Documentation of case notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Monthly Data Source – Quality monitoring results

Contact Center				
QA Area or Evaluation Component	Activities, Tasks, Events, Processes, Systems Measured	Performance Standard	Applicable Metrics	Reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adherence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure daily schedule adherence average is XX% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Hourly, Daily, Monthly Data Source – Telephone Center Activity Report (System)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Occupancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure the occupancy rate is XX% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Hourly, Daily, Monthly Data Source – Telephone Center Activity Report (System)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volume 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Productivity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure daily agent calls per hour is within XX% average 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Hourly, Daily, Monthly Data Source – Telephone Center Activity Report (System)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost per contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operating costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost containment measure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Monthly Data Source – Call volume, staffing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staffing levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain attrition rate at or below X% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Efficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequency – Monthly Data Source – staffing levels

Exhibit 29: Examples of Performance Measurement of QA Areas.

For systems and business processes, the QMP should include assessment plans that explain how systems are inspected for quality control, how data is analyzed to develop actions and remedies to meet or achieve standards, and how trends are identified in system performance to prevent issues before they occur.

For business processes, activities include developing and revising QA audit tools, work instructions and training modules. Performance should be measured objectively.

Developing a uniform set of audit instruments is crucial for capturing the right data. The standards should be set by the QA program, working closely with stakeholders to ensure that all stakeholders understand the purpose and intention of the audit instruments. As displayed in the table below, the data should be in a form designed to be easily collected, summarized, and compiled as a report.

Call Center		
Operational Area	Questions/Elements Reviewed	Known Responses to Questions
Customer Care Center	■ Did the agent authenticate the customer?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Did the agent provide accurate program information as it related to the customer's benefits, services, and case status?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Did the agent take appropriate action(s) related to the purpose of the call?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Did the agent accurately document the call?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
Application Processing	■ Was the case data entered accurately?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Was the budget group determined accurately?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Was program eligibility determined accurately?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Were appropriate letters generated?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Was the outcome of the case accurate?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
Outbound Mail	■ Was the mailing packet complete and accurate?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Was the mailing packet legible?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
Inbound Mail	■ Was the mail sorted accurately?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A
	■ Was the returned mail processed accurately?	■ Yes ■ No ■ N/A

Exhibit 30: QA Audit Instrument and Responses.

The results of QA audits should be shared periodically with stakeholders. The information shared should include the following:

- Outcomes of assessments and the performance standard achieved;
- Status of continuous improvement activities implemented to prevent issues with quality and improve services provided;

- Status of corrective actions taken to improve and meet performance standards; and
- Early warning and detection information used in the development of continuous improvement activities.

Using a four-tiered approach and emphasizing immediate feedback to quality monitoring of work performed is essential in providing quality service. The four tiers of monitoring helps to improve quality from entry level monitoring and is conducted regularly by:

- QA Monitoring;
- Quality Control (QC) Monitoring;
- Supervisors; and
- Self-checks.

Coaching is an effective tool for improving individual quality. Prompt attention to errors helps supervisors to resolve problems before they become systemic, thereby preventing service quality problems. However, supervisors and agents should work closely with WFM to schedule time away from the phone to review findings. Doing so prevents impacts to service levels.

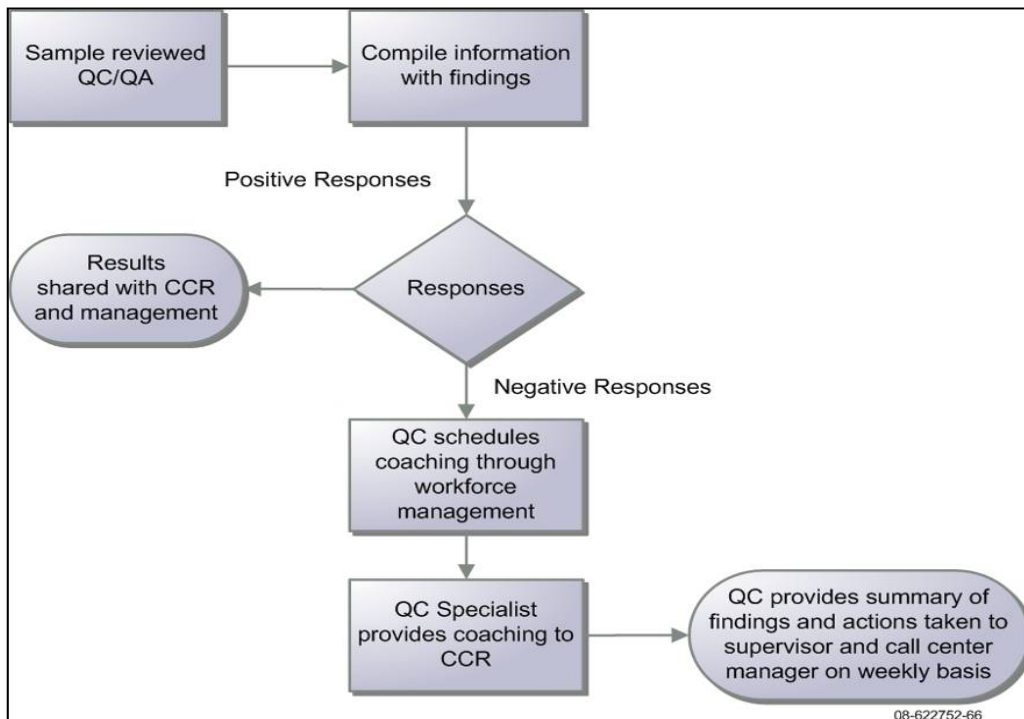


Exhibit 31: Coaching Process Flow.

By reviewing and analyzing weekly and monthly data generated from QA audits and the early detection and warning systems, trends in performance can be determined and causal factors can be identified for frequent errors. Additionally, recommendations for addressing opportunities for improvement can be developed. Data is collected and aggregated to identify trends in performance. The data is then used for trend analysis to test one or more components

and evaluate various aspects of a function relating to an independent variable, such as volume of work performed, and a dependent variable, such as the frequency of an error. Components are tested using specific comparisons. The linear component of a trend is used to test whether there is an overall change in the dependent variable as the independent variable increases. In other words, tests should be conducted to determine if agents are committing more errors (dependent variable) as they handle more calls (independent variable). A call center may notice more errors are committed on Mondays (a high-peak volume day).

Through proper reporting tools, call center management can make decisions to execute action plans that will improve productivity and performance. Thus, call center management has primary responsibility for report deliverables. There are a variety of methods in use to monitor, oversee, and continuously improve call center performance. Depending on the timing of the oversight, various methods are useful as described below.

Monitoring Tool	Description and Source	Timing and Impact
Monthly Monitoring Report	Average of calls handled during a sample month	Monthly, used to recommend enhancements to address any underperforming areas
Daily Monitoring Report	Daily call volume, inbound calls to better leverage Call Center resources to increase contact and customer service	Daily, provide summary of daily call volume activities
Intra-day Reports (i.e. Hourly)	Interval call volume of inbound calls	Interval, used to better leverage Call Center resources to increase contact and customer service
Quality Reports	Provides an independent quality assurance assessment of all functional areas over time	Monthly, used to recommend enhancements to address any underperforming areas
Dashboards	Provides access to daily reporting	Daily, used to access daily reporting
Monthly Forecasts against Actual	Provides comparisons between forecasted call volumes versus actual call volumes	Monthly, used for allocation of resources
Scheduling Actual against Forecasts	Provides comparisons between scheduling actual against forecast, including exception reporting	Hourly, used for allocation of resources
Problem Correction Process	Provides information about problem origination and the ability to minimize occurrences and resolve issues.	As needed, complete analysis of all problem Statements across operations, such as those initiated by beneficiaries, management, and other staff

Exhibit 32: Methods for Monitoring Performance.

MANAGING SERVICE LEVELS AND CLIENT SATISFACTION

The most important aspect of building any call center is instilling a culture of outstanding customer service. This is true for any organization establishing a call center, including government programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other social service programs. Customer service is not just how friendly the call center agents are, but how effectively they serve the client. In order to create satisfied customers, it is essential to understand customers' needs and how appropriate organizations or agencies can serve them. Customer satisfaction is based upon listening to the customers and developing a structure that meets or exceeds their expectations. Obtaining feedback from focus groups made up of SNAP participants and applicants can provide valuable information when planning to implement a call center or to get feedback about ongoing operations.

A top-down commitment to fulfilling the needs of SNAP participants is critical. The agency's leadership must ensure that their message and actions support the mission to deliver the highest quality of service. Call center leadership must include coaching that conveys clear objectives that support SNAP requirements and goals.

Customer Service

Managing Client Expectations

Many factors go into meeting client expectations and achieving superior customer service. The services performed, the clients preferred method of contact, convenience, and availability, and appropriate service levels will all affect the customer's experience.

It is critical to inform and educate program participants and potential applicants prior to and during implementation of a call or contact center. The State should develop a communications plan that includes contact and consultation with advocacy groups as well as publicizing the changes in the media. For many customers the changes will be welcome and provide improved access to benefits. For other customers the changes will represent a major cultural shift that they will need time to appreciate and to take full advantage of. Some may not have ready access to computers or even a phone (or have limited minutes available for calls). It is important to ensure that all applicants and participants know they can continue go to local offices to conduct program business.

It is recommended that the State's communications plan help create realistic expectations regarding the call or contact center. For example, if call waiting times are expected to be ten minutes this should be made known. However, to "sell" the new process it would be appropriate to compare 10 minutes to the time and effort required to visit an office.

Determining the scope of a social services/government call center is critical to the overall customer service. Decisions must be made regarding what information the call center agents will handle and what will remain with case workers. A clear delineation must be made and communicated to clients. For more information on how to determine the function of a call center, refer to the *Business Processes and Scope* chapter. To manage scope and client expectations, agencies should seek answers to a number of key questions:

What services will be provided and what tasks will be performed? Clients can tell the agent what they need when they call the center, what information they want access to and tasks they want to be able to complete. Once this is understood, it is critical to provide agents with the tools to complete these tasks, as well as empower them to make the decisions to assist the clients. The more functions that can be performed by the frontline agents, the better the results will be. Consider any technical requirements or constraints, security issues, the complexity of the tasks, and frequency when determining the functions of call center agents. Reducing referrals and transfers will make the call center more efficient and improve customer satisfaction results. The focus should be placed on enabling frontline agents to meet customer expectation on the first call and empowering them to make decisions that satisfy their customers.

How will clients connect with the agent? The primary contact channel is the phone. It is a basic expectation of nearly all clients and should be the first consideration for any contact center. However, many clients will prefer to conduct business with the agency via a different channel. As a contact center matures, consideration should be given to adding services such as:

- Interactive Voice Response (IVR)
- E-mail
- Web-Based Self-Service Site
- Web Chat
- Text Messaging
- Instant Messaging
- Voice to Text

One of the keys to customer service is letting clients use the contact method they prefer and having an integrated customer record that keeps track of all "conversations" regardless of the channel used. Today's clients are technically savvy and prefer alternate methods to phone contact with a live agent. The alternate methods will likely help with the efficiency and overall cost per contact. SNAP recipients are just as likely to use alternative media as the general population, especially in today's current economic crisis. The need for States to offer alternative media will continue to expand as health care reform is implemented (see the *Technology and Business Processes and Scope* chapters for more details).

When will the call center be available to clients? Clients want to be able to conduct business when it is convenient for them. Careful consideration should be given to the hours and days of operation. Alternate channels, mentioned above, will provide clients with greater flexibility. For instance, clients may be able to contact a live agent for a case status during normal business hours, but may be able to get that same information 24 hours a day via an IVR or Web site. One unintended consequence of alternative media allows for significant cost savings due to the fact that communications other than live voice are less expensive.

How will management measure service expectations/metrics? Based on feedback from clients and consideration of costs and infrastructure, the speed of response must be determined. This metric is the basis for determining required staffing needs to achieve and

maintain customer service. Traditionally, call centers measure responsiveness using a calculation called Service Level. Service level measures the percentage of calls answered within a specified length of time. Service level should be the primary indicator because it is controllable based on staffing effectiveness and is less impacted by client actions (refer to the *Staffing* chapter for an in-depth description). Secondary measurements for responsiveness, such as AB Rate and ASA, should also be tracked and analyzed. AB Rate measures the percentage of calls where the client hung up before the call could be answered. ASA measures the average length of time clients waited before their call was answered. These are secondary measurements because they are based on client behaviors and are not necessarily controllable.

Primary Measurements	Service Level Measures the percentage of calls answered within a specified length of time Example: 80%/30 sec – Expect 80% of calls answered to be waiting 30 seconds or less
Secondary Measurements	Abandon Rate The percentage of calls where the client hung up before their call could be answered Average Speed of Answer The average time clients waited before their call was answered

Exhibit 33: Primary and Secondary Service Level Measurements.

How will management measure quality expectations? Any customer service organization must establish standards for delivering service. These standards must meet the client expectations that are mentioned above. These standards should include all aspects of the client's interaction with a live agent, including the agent's use of customer service skills, delivering accurate information, navigation of appropriate systems, proper notation of case, etc. A process for inspecting each agent's ability to meet these expectations must be in place. These include:

- **Internal self-monitoring** – An internal team dedicated to monitoring calls and measuring the effectiveness of each agent. The process should include a matrix for scoring each call as well as minimum number of inspections for each agent. The process should be completed by providing feedback to the agent.
- **External monitoring** – External monitoring can augment the internal process and provide a benchmark for the accuracy and effectiveness of the internal process. External monitoring can be completed by the client organization for an outsourced program.

How does management prepare the agents? In order to provide outstanding customer service, agents must be properly trained. The following should be considered when developing a training program:

- **Program Training** – Agents must be fully trained on all of the details of a specific program.
- **Customer Service Skills Training** – This is the time to set expectations and ensure all agents understand the skills needed to deliver outstanding customer service. Special emphasis should be placed on understand the unique needs of the SNAP clients. Empathy is a key skill for this program.

- **Call Center Technical Training** – Agents must understand how to use all of the systems. This includes all applications as well as the phone system.
- **Ongoing Coaching** – Ongoing development for all staff to include remedial training to address performance gaps, process and program changes, and personal development.
- **Call Control Techniques**- An emphasis must be placed on having call center agents decrease AHT without compromising quality. Generally, the extra time is due to idle talk. How do we get callers to get to the point? This is a critical component of the agent training and should be measured via the QC processes.

Customer Satisfaction

The following discussion assumes that it is understood that the customer service aspect of a call center operation must be evaluated within the larger context of the State's overall SNAP operation. If a call center appears to be operating well and is handling calls efficiently, it is important to measure the effectiveness of the overall operation as well. This must be done within the context of the SNAP's primary performance measures including: program access, application processing time, and payment accuracy. It is difficult to isolate customer satisfaction relative to call centers when their experience with the local office and the program rules can also have significant influence. However, within the call center context, there are many tools that can be used to assess customer satisfaction. Whatever tools are used, it is critical that the organization use a formal process to evaluate what clients are saying, develop and implement solutions and continue to measure results.

Call Monitoring Measurement Tools

Perhaps the most critical way to measure customer satisfaction is through internal observations. Monitoring calls provides a good picture of how agents are servicing clients. It can also give a sense of how clients are reacting to the service.

Self Assessment

It is important to elicit feedback from employees since they are an excellent source of information for how processes impact the ability to meet customer expectations. They know what adds value and what frustrates the clients. States may choose to use feedback from their call center agents or include feedback from all employees that touch clients or support the call center operations. In addition, employees that know their ideas and opinions are important are more likely to be highly engaged, stay on the job, and deliver a higher level of customer satisfaction. However, it is important to keep in mind that self assessment must be balanced with more objective tools.

Customer Complaints

While individual complaints regarding call centers must be handled in accordance with SNAP rules, analysis of customer complaints are an excellent, cost effective way to assess customer satisfaction – in terms of both volume and substance of complaints. Complaints are a direct means of obtaining customer information. They provide insight into what is really happening

with service processes and how the customer is truly impacted. The complaint resolution process must include a mechanism for responding to the client. It is important to clients that their complaints and opinions are acknowledged.

Surveys

Another option for measuring customer satisfaction is the use of surveys. Voluntary customer surveys allow the organization to gain general impression of the service offerings or to pinpoint specific service areas of the process for in-depth analysis. There are a variety of methods that can be used to administer customer surveys, including:

Automated IVR Survey – Callers can be asked if they would be willing to participate in a survey once they complete their call with the agent. If they agree, they are transferred to the IVR to complete the survey. Basic functionality will provide response to Yes/No and multiple choice questions. The option for callers to leave additional comments via voice recording will add insight and clarification.

Agent-Delivered Surveys

- **Live Call** – Much like the automated survey above. The caller is asked to participate and then the agent completes the survey with the caller following the resolution of the caller's original call. The live call survey allows the agent to ask more open-ended questions and to clarify the caller's responses. There is an impact to AHT, which can impact other performance metrics. Therefore, careful planning must be done when using this method.
- **Outbound Call or Callback** – Identify recent callers and conduct outbound calls to clients to gather their feedback. This method is helpful for selecting respondents based on the original call types in order to target a specific business process. The risks with callbacks are response rates and additional costs for resources to complete the outbound calls.
- **Channel Specific** – Contact centers offering clients multiple service channels can utilize those channels to conduct surveys. E-mail or online surveys allow respondents to provide detailed responses.
- **Third-Party** – There are many options for having an outside organization deliver customer surveys and even complete the analysis of the results. They can bring some expertise to the development of the survey tools and the delivery of the survey questions, as well as provide detailed analysis of the results and recommendations.
- **Focus Groups** – Live meetings with selected clients to discuss service expectations and reactions.

Customer Satisfaction Metrics that Matter Most

While contact centers are usually expert in collecting data and measuring numerous performance variables, there are key metrics that have been shown to directly impact customer satisfaction. These should be well understood and measured constantly in order to stay on top of what matters most to the callers.

Average Speed of Answer (ASA) – This is the measurement of how long callers are held in a queue before their call is answered. Callers make decisions about service by how long it takes

to make contact. Most callers, obviously, prefer to have their calls answered immediately. This may not always be possible or practical. The primary tool for controlling the ASA is staffing levels and scheduling. Higher staffing levels can reduce ASA, but at what cost? Budget for labor will play a key role in how quickly calls are answered. Regardless of staffing levels, it is critical to have an effective scheduling process (usually supported by one of many software programs available). This process involves measuring historic data for the number of calls received by time of day and producing a staffing line that quantifies the number of staff needed to answer the anticipated volume within a predetermined ASA. ASA historic data can help project AB Rates. By plotting actual ASA and AB Rate trends over time, a pattern (referred to as a patience curve) will emerge that shows how AB Rates rise as the ASA moves higher.

The patience curve shown in Exhibit 34 below displays trending for same type calls received in separate English and Spanish queues. The data shows that the Spanish callers are more patient and less likely to abandon, which is important to know when determining staffing levels.

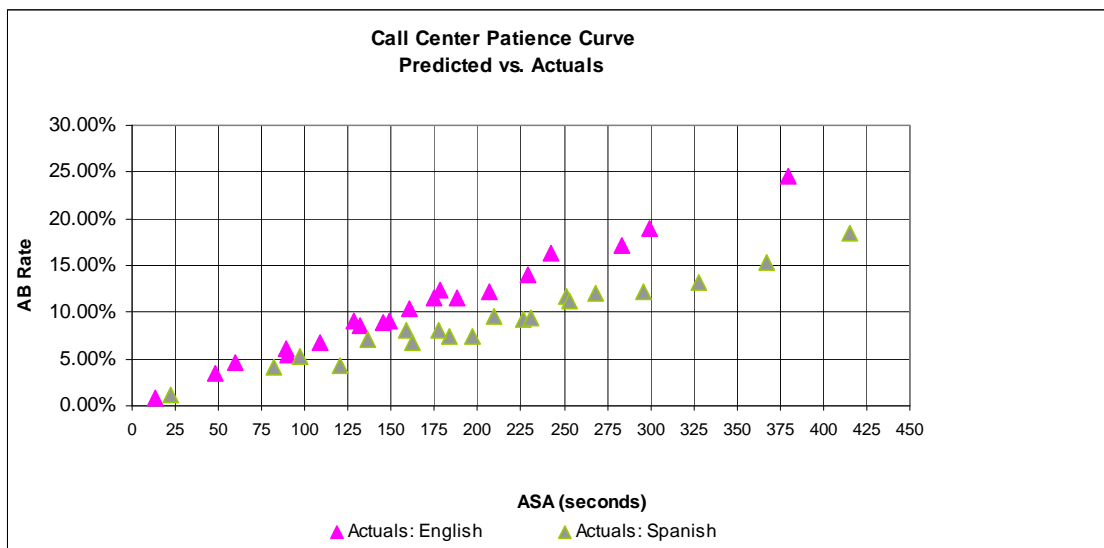


Exhibit 34: Call Center Patience Curve.

In addition, there are tools that can help the center control ASA. One of these tools is Virtual Hold. Virtual Hold allows callers to opt out of the queue and request a callback. Callbacks can be scheduled by the callers from choices given to them or they can be scheduled for the caller, usually within the hour or when staff will be available. Virtual Hold provides greater flexibility for limited staff and gives callers peace of mind in knowing that their issue will be addressed. (Please refer the *Technology* chapter for more information on Virtual Hold.)

Average Handle Time (AHT) – As discussed earlier, AHT measures the length of time the agents typically spend handling a caller's requests. After the time it takes to have their call answered, callers want their issue to be understood and addressed efficiently. AHT is not something that should be shortened simply for purposes of going faster. AHT is something that should be measured and assessed for an optimum outcome. Faster is not necessarily better

if the issue is not resolved completely or the caller goes away confused and unsure of the outcome. Initially, it is critical to develop a measurement of AHT for all calls combined. Over time, it will benefit the contact center to know AHT by call type. By understanding the individual impact of call types, the schedulers can adjust AHT plans if one call type is increased for a period of time due to mailings and conditions that will drive specific call types. By understanding proper AHT expectations, the contact center can control labor costs. Without targets for AHT, there is no way to project the size of the staff necessary to meet service level expectations.

Call Quality – Not only do callers want to feel like they are not having their time wasted by holding for too long, they want to feel like the people they are working with understand their needs and have the knowledge to handle all of their concerns. Callers place a great deal of importance in the quality of their interactions. The primary measurement for quality is internal measurements based on predetermined expectations around customer service skills, system navigation, listening and problem resolution, etc. Staff must be trained to listen to recorded or live calls and measure the effectiveness of the agent against management's criteria. With the data collected, reporting can be developed to identify individual and organizational strengths and opportunities. This enables the management team to develop plans to improve customer satisfaction.

First Call Resolution (FCR) – Many call centers are unsure of how to define and measure FCR. For the purposes of this manual, FCR occurs when the caller's inquiry or issue is resolved in one call—there is no transfer or callback. Organizations can create efficiency and customer satisfaction by enabling the frontline agents to handle as many operations as possible without transfer. Callers want to have the confidence that whomever they reach will be able to resolve all of their issues and answer all of their questions.

When measuring FCR, it is critical that the caller is the one to determine FCR, not the call center management team. While there are several internal processes and measures for FCR, they are typically less reliable and tend to skew the results higher than those reported by the callers. Typical internal measures for identifying repeat calls involve tracking the originating call number and the time between calls. Some will add the reason for the call. Internal measures require assumptions about where the caller is calling from and how long they will wait to callback if they are not satisfied, as well as accurately tracking the call reasons. While repeat calls can offer some sense of FCR, they will most likely give a skewed representation, as they are subject to applied assumptions and internal tracking limitations. Some studies claim that these measures overstate FCR by as much as 20 percent. This type of measurement may be best used to trend FCR over time. Once the FCR parameters and measurements are established, they can show how a center has improved or might be facing some challenges.

The preferred method to accurately measure FCR is to survey the callers and ask them if their issue was resolved in one call. This can be accomplished with post call surveys while the customer is still on the line, or by callbacks. Post call surveys can be administered by the agent once the caller's issue is resolved or the caller can be transferred to an automated system to ask the questions and record responses. Post call surveys can also be accomplished via outbound calls to recent callers. This can also be done with live agents or through automated services.

While surveying callers is more labor intensive and most likely a costlier option, it will ultimately result in the most accurate measurement of FCR and customer satisfaction.

Generally, a score of 80% FCR is considered world class.

A continuous challenge faced by call center managers is balancing performance standards and customer service quality. Both are important in the success of the call center. Florida has developed a unique way of evaluating agents' performance and effectiveness by closely looking at data and developing realistic assumptions. Exhibit 35 illustrates that by using assumptions and data readily available from internal systems, an agent's performance and effectiveness can be compared to those of other agents. This information can then be used to identify agents that need further professional development to strengthen the whole organization and client experiences.

One Call Resolution Report				Tue. 03/22/11					
Agents	Calls Ans	Failed One Call Resolution	% of Failed One Call Resolutions	Avg Talk (In) Time	Total Time on Duty	Scale	# of Agents	Avg # of Calls	Average Talk Time
Jacob	16	3	19%	0:09:26	3:06:15	0-4%	42	42	0:08:56
Ethan	40	7	18%	0:08:33	8:54:54	5-9%	52	47	0:07:45
Michael	38	6	16%	0:07:53	9:00:19	10-14%	16	45	0:07:53
Alexander	38	6	16%	0:08:30	9:00:42	15-19%	6	34	0:07:52
William	40	6	15%	0:07:05	9:03:16	20-24%	0	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Joshua	34	5	15%	0:05:45	4:45:41	25-29%	0	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Daniel	42	6	14%	0:09:38	9:30:59	30-100%	0	#DIV/0!	#DIV/0!
Jayden	50	7	14%	0:06:20	8:34:06				
Noah	62	8	13%	0:05:47	9:18:28				
Anthony	40	5	13%	0:07:25	9:25:39				
Christopher	32	4	13%	0:09:50	9:16:20				
Aiden	51	6	12%	0:05:57	9:07:45				
Matthew	44	5	11%	0:06:58	8:56:22				
David	62	7	11%	0:06:08	9:34:42				
Andrew	27	3	11%	0:08:52	8:50:03				
Joseph	56	6	11%	0:06:30	9:40:00				
Logan	47	5	11%	0:08:55	9:04:03				
James	39	4	10%	0:09:40	9:05:40				
Ryan	49	5	10%	0:06:40	9:00:45				
Benjamin	30	3	10%	0:11:43	8:55:13				
Elijah	62	6	10%	0:05:11	9:24:49				
Gabriel	31	3	10%	0:10:39	8:55:02				
Christian	53	5	9%	0:06:34	9:00:33				
Nathan	65	6	9%	0:06:25	9:19:44				
Jackson	44	4	9%	0:08:19	9:34:24				
John	33	3	9%	0:10:57	8:56:42				
Samuel	33	3	9%	0:11:04	9:38:14				
Tyler	22	2	9%	0:10:38	7:03:57				
Dylan	67	6	9%	0:04:41	8:55:17				
Total							116		
Total (Test)							116		

Distribution of Agents

% of Failed One Call Resolution	# of Agents
0-4%	42
5-9%	52
10-14%	16
15-19%	6
20-24%	0
25-29%	0
30-100%	0

Exhibit 35: One-Call Resolution Comparison Report.

Managing Customer Satisfaction

Regardless of the methodology for gathering customer feedback and opinions, the process for improving customer satisfaction is constant. It must be a closed loop process that incorporates the following:

Collecting Feedback and Data – Call Monitoring, Complaints, Client Surveys, Client Focus Groups, Employee Focus Groups, etc.

Analyzing Results – What are clients saying they like? What are the clients saying they would like to see changed or improved? What is the root cause? It may not be call center performance related.

Developing/Implementing Solutions – How will the call center change to meet, or exceed, customer expectations? Focus on those things that are mission critical and will deliver measurable change for the customers.

- **Measuring Results** – Gather feedback on changes to determine success or potential modifications to the plan.
- **Beginning process again.**

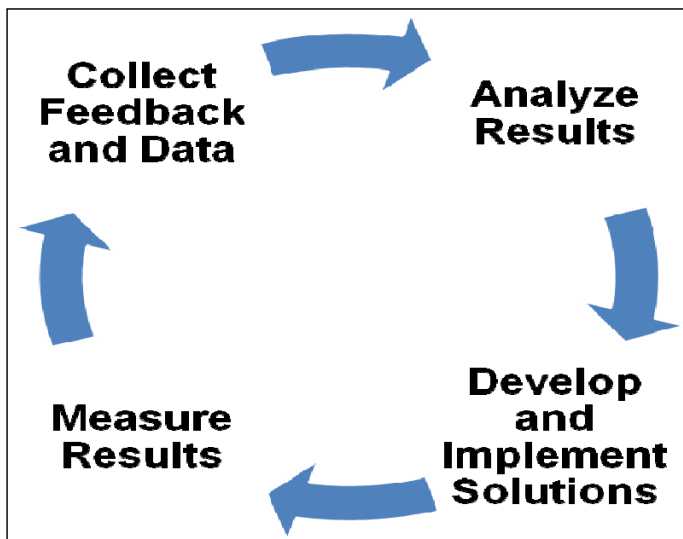


Exhibit 36: Closed Loop Process for Improving Customer Service.

SNAP Management Evaluation Review – This process is required under SNAP regulations and used by State and Federal staff to assess how effective and efficient the program is operating. Information is collected from SNAP participants and agency staff to identify best practices and/ or deficiencies. If deficiencies are identified, the State agency is required to develop a corrective action plan.

Continuous Improvement

The recurring theme through management practices is driving continuous improvement in the call center. Continuous improvement is based on understanding business processes well enough to reduce variance and achieve repeatable processes that ultimately enhance efficiencies and reduce costs. Total Quality Management (TQM) is one tool that can maximize process performance across organizational margins. It is important to understand the continuous improvement cycle approach to process improvement. As feedback comes back into this cycle from a variety of sources including QC/QA audits, key process monitoring, critical control point monitoring, client feedback, or program changes, the cycle begins anew, with the plan stage initiating a modified process that goes through the cycle yet again. The iterative phases of this approach include:

- **Plan - Define Repeatable Processes:** In this phase, the process is defined to achieve a common understanding of the process to ensure it is being followed consistently. A key part of defining the process is to understand how the process can be monitored and what data needs to be collected to identify when the process is operating successfully. By defining appropriate analytics, variability in processes can be reduced. Having well-defined process maps makes it easy for staff to understand how processes should flow. These maps provide the foundation for process optimization. In a continuous improvement environment, when feedback is received that necessitates a change in a process, it is in this phase that the modifications necessary to respond to this feedback are planned.
- **Do – Identify Proactive Business Process Controls:** In this phase, performance metrics or other process controls to monitor how successfully the process is operating in real time is defined. It enables stakeholders to more easily audit the process and understand that small problems do not become major issues nor do they result in significant client impact. It is important to define controls proactively, to identify early on in the business process when bottlenecks may occur. By providing early warning, management can avoid process breakdown to avoid adverse effects on the client. In an iterative cycle, it is in this phase that management can modify and refine the process to respond to feedback.

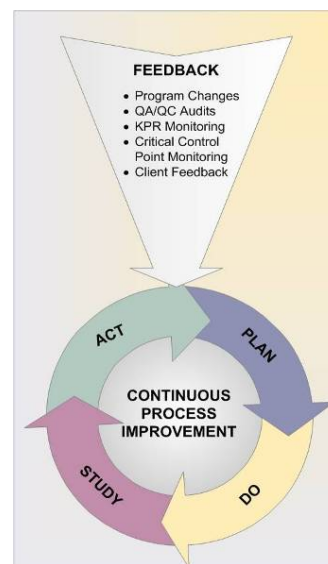


Exhibit 37: Continuous Improvement Cycle

- **Study - Monitor the Process:** In this phase, the process compares outcomes against specific targets to ensure that desired outputs are achieved. The goal is to reduce the variability of outputs to make the process more efficient and cost effective. Another goal is to detect problems early enough to address in real time and prevent client impact.

- **Act - Control and Sustain Improvements:** Once a business process is improved, it remains important to "sustain the gain." The process must have its own internal control mechanism to sustain improvement once the process is no longer the subject of focus.

As a collaborative effort, TQM touches all levels of an organization. People get processes "in control" and repeatable by working with other employees and managers to identify process problems and eliminating them. Managers and supervisors work on processes by providing training and tool resources, measuring and reviewing performance metrics and improving performance with the help of those who use the process.

Security Management

A final and important aspect of management practices is security management. Physical security and access control requirements are required to protect sensitive information, resources, and staff. Call center staff must be aware of all security policies (e.g., building and system access, protecting confidential information, incident reporting, emergency action plan, etc).

All employees should be required to take mandatory training courses consistent with Federal and State regulations to ensure basic understanding and consistent level of knowledge of compliance policies. Below are examples of compliance training that may be required during the first five days of employment:

- Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Privacy
- Security
- Civil Rights
- Fraud, Waste and Abuse
- Federal Tax Information (FTI)
- Standards of Business Ethics
- Code of Conduct and Ethics
- Sexual Harassment Prevention
- HIPAA Compliance

Agents are exposed to Protected Health Information (PHI) and other personal or sensitive information when speaking to callers. Before discussing or releasing information about a case or application, agents must be 100 percent certain they are speaking to an authorized person. Agents must authenticate each caller to verify that caller is authorized to receive or discuss case specific information. Release of PHI may only be provided to authorized individuals in accordance with established procedures, utilizing the approved number of qualifying questions with the correct answers provided by the requesting individual. The specific requirements for qualifying questions and other authorization procedures are documented in work instructions. These qualifying questions include unique identity information of caller (i.e. first and last name, address zip code, State, phone number, case number, case ID, date of birth, social security number, etc).

When it is discovered a breach in confidentiality policy has occurred, call center staff should have easy access to an incident reporting policy. The policy should guide staff in reporting the incident to the security manager for prompt attention and investigation.

The same rules of confidentiality apply whether staff is in a traditional office setting or part of a call center, and an individual's access within the system should be limited to what is necessary to do their particular function. Confidentiality breaches can occur in many ways. For example, releasing case information to an unauthorized caller, exposing computer screens to windows, improper storage or destruction of paper documents, and employee conversations regarding client information in an open environment (break room, outside of work, etc). All of these breaches require immediate and proper attention.

Another component of security management includes building evacuation planning for the call center. This is covered in the *Transition* chapter under the section titled *Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan*.

Security management, like other processes, requires all policies remain current and aligned with Federal and State regulations. To do so, the security manager works closely with all levels of management, as well as local, State, and Federal law enforcement agencies.

Conclusion

Through proper management practices, the call center will thrive, provide quality services, and drive continuous improvement throughout the organization. The tools and resources available through knowledge management, WFM, performance management, continuous improvement, and security management, enable the call center to drive effectiveness and efficiency in all of the work processes. Each of these components builds a robust, sustainable organization.

Lessons Learned

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Indiana
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Our Department was tasked with how to effectively manage the outsourced call center from a State perspective. Contractually, service level agreements were in place but roles and responsibilities were not clear.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine staffing levels • Determine how to allocate additional staff to call queues • Determine escalation procedures • Determine roles and responsibilities for vendor and state teams <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ability to add virtual resources to call queues • Customer contact is seamless • Improve customer satisfaction <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confused line of authority
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Department worked with third party vendor to document management practice and roles/responsibilities. In addition, escalation procedures and management protocol was established and communicated with team.

	Department has final decision on staffing levels and flexibility to virtually reassign staff
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Department has an agreement with the vendor that customer service agents can be allocated to alternate queues based upon call volume
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Department and vendor monitor call metric report to manage staff.
Lessons Learned:	Outsourcing call center function does not remove Department from managing this function. Department and vendor need tight governance and clear lines of authority to effectively manage this activity on a daily basis.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Working with the advocacy community.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	For the past several years, DWS has met monthly with our advocacy community. At the time we were planning to implement call centers, they were kept apprised of our plans and were given the opportunity to provide input.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The advocacy community understands our business processes.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Advocates continue to voice their opinions on call wait times, navigating the IVR system, and working with the person that answers the phone rather than an assigned case worker.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Communication and training of the advocacy community is key to success.

Lesson Category:	Transition
State	Utah
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Our Department was asked to streamline and standardize processes for eligibility determination while reducing the number of staff by 99. The Department was previously structured under five regions with five Directors having oversight and different process/ procedural manuals. Reduce call centers from 5 to 1 giving customers one phone number to call statewide.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Decision Factors: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consolidate the five procedure manuals to one, for consistent processes statewide. • Move management of five regions under one governing body • Set up phone system that would allow customers calls to route statewide. • Set up teams to allow for work load portability and keep rural jobs rural. • Determine method for training staff statewide. • Analysis required of all offices with call center workers to determine phone line and bandwidth capacity prior to implementation. • Early buy in from community partners and advocates. Pros: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistent processes throughout the state. Customers received the same message no matter which office, team or worker they talked to regarding Department processes. • Management support in delivering consistent expectations. • Early buy in from management and staff allowed for an organized

	<p>implementation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IVR and web messages allow us to quickly notify customers of problems or changes to service. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to the nature in which our Department is set up, the move from five call centers to one required us to implement in a live environment.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	<p>Achieved reduction in staff without a RIF.</p> <p>One statewide call center with 1 local and 1 toll free number for customer.</p> <p>Consistent processes statewide.</p>
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	<p>We successfully implemented the statewide eligibility model and achieved a reduction in staffing, with our growing caseload sizes.</p>
Adjustment or Follow-up:	<p>Based on the current economy and caseload sizes we have had to make adjustments to call routing, IVR and team structures.</p>
Lessons Learned:	<p>We learned that re-engineering processes for our Department requires coordination, analysis and planning.</p> <p>Customer education is vital to the success of business process changes. We found that by placing strategic messages on our IVR and web page could give customer additional information about our services and process changes that allows for easier access to services and directs them to correct avenue for communication with our Department.</p>

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Washington
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<p>When our call centers began we operated under the historical axiom that we should work incoming documents in the order they were received to be "fair" to all customers. When customers called to check the status of their submitted documents and they were asked to be patient and wait their turn for their document to be worked. This caused several negative repercussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A net increase in number of calls- customers who were anxious to know the outcome of their case action called multiple times about the same action. • Reduction in customer satisfaction- each time a customer contacted us and was told to wait their turn, it caused an unsatisfactory service outcome and customers reported they felt powerless and frustrated. • Wasted staff time-staff spent several minutes per call without contributing any work to the required process or necessary outcome.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Enacting a policy allowing the customer to determine if a case action is high priority by ensuring that their case actions are completed at the point of contact.</p> <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced phone calls • Increased customer service • Targets staff time toward case outcomes <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of fairness (e.g. why should the passive customers have to wait longer than the ones who call right away?) • Potential increase to average handle time to complete case actions on the phone
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	<p>Enact a procedure requiring 70% of calls be resolved at the first contact</p>
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	<p>The problem was not solved entirely because some calls cannot be resolved at first contact. Also, in order to mitigate the negative impact to completing all case actions at the point of contact we attempted to do a back-end tier and send more complicated case actions to a "paper</p>

	processor" off the phone with a promise that the case action would be complete within one business day. This caused more repeat calls to determine the outcome. In addition, the one business day time frame was difficult to meet when workload spiked and this caused another decrease in customer satisfaction.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	We are currently implementing a live call transfer system to send more complex case actions to a second-tier worker for real-time completion.
Lessons Learned:	First contact resolution saves staff time, decreases calls, and improves customer satisfaction.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Tactical/Strategic/Financial
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Ensure strong monitoring tools and processes are in place in order for the call center to operate within Key Performance Requirements (KPR) and provide the metrics needed to allow decisions related to the scope of work within the call center. The performance of the call center is designed to complement the eligibility process and not hinder it.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>At the onset of the call center model the vendor was responsible for a larger scope of responsibility, which included data entry of information for the client up to disposition, which was performed by merit state staff.</p> <p>It was determined through QA monitoring and feedback from field staff error reporting, the vendor was not performing well in the data entry area. The responsibility was removed from the vendor and placed back with state staff and the contract amended.</p> <p>Later it was determined that performance could be improved in the area of alerts and scheduling appointments. The responsibility was removed from the vendor and placed back with state staff and the contract amended.</p> <p>If the vendor is not performing well, it increases the workload on the state staff to correct errors and may impact customer service.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Amended scope of work for vendor.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Texas scaled back the vendor's responsibility and scope related to case processing and handling once it was determined the performance was not within standards and/or cost effective.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Do not be afraid to make adjustments to scope of the call center processes when it is determined the model does work or is not effective. Be flexible and do not try and make a square peg fit in a round hole.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Strategic
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Texas Eligibility Support shares the 2-1-1 number with Texas Information and Referral (I & R) Network. Callers must select the correct option from the IVR system to enter into the Eligibility Support (ES) menu allowing access to the ES IVR options and call center staff. It was assumed that the clients currently using 2-1-1 were the same clients seeking to use ES.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The populations served by the 2-1-1 Information and Referral network are commonly eligibility support clients and leveraging existing resources appears to be a cost effective and efficient approach. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During 2-1-1 Information and Referral peak volume times (e.g., Disaster evacuations and information, Health Alerts such as Swine

	<p>Flu) the ES area is adversely impacted because the number of call trunks are the same and do not increase; therefore, blocking access to the ES information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Misdirected calls continue to be an issue for clients. • Changes made on the eligibility side require close coordination with 2-1-1 Information and Referral to avoid unintended impacts to clients.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Texas implemented the call center in 2006 utilizing the shared 2-1-1 platform.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The issue continues today and was not a lesson learned until after the decision was made to utilize the 2-1-1 Information and Referral. Areas work closely with one another and the Telephony contractor to ensure clients and services are not adversely impacted.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	While one-stop shopping is appealing when considering client services, states should consider the call volumes, client populations, and whether sharing a number with other entities or agencies could have an adverse impact on the clients or the state staff.

Lesson Category:	Technical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Assessing training needs and overall quality of service.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Identifying training needs in policy, use of computer and phone system, and customer service.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Monitoring of calls in both real-time and recorded via phone system.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Real-time enables exact moment coaching and correction. Recorded allows for worker to hear their voice tone and inflection.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Monitoring is a great tool not only in assessing training needs but also in providing clues on improving overall efficiencies in call statistics and work flow processes.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Determining customer satisfaction with the automated IVR and the call center agents.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	The administration installed two surveys with fairly similar questions for the call center. One was for agent assisted and one was for the IVR. The administration did a monthly review of the data to gauge customer satisfaction. The data was also compared between the two types of calls. There was also data about where the customer left the IVR and took the survey.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The feedback from a customer at the end of their transactions was very important. The administration reviewed the data regularly as part of the management reports. The IVR handles approximately 150,000 calls per month. If each of those calls took 5 minutes you would need 78 FTE to handle them (5 minutes x 150,000/9600minutes-{1 FTE @ 480minutes x 20 days}). The administration was able to document that four out of five customers had their needs met by the automated IVR, could see the numbers of customers that transferred from the IVR to a live agent, and use the data to supplement the skills of any agent with lower scores, and

	praise those with good scores. The IVR could also be tweaked based on customer responses to continue to improve service.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	As a result of the review of the IVR and Call Agent survey data the administration could report outcomes, make technical IVR adjustments, and identify and correct deficiencies to improve Customer Satisfaction.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Surveying customer satisfaction for each of the modes of access allows for adjusts that optimize all access modes.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Handling high Volume of voicemails.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	How to return the volume of voicemails when daily call volume exceeds staffing ability.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Removed ability to leave voicemails for return call. Kept ability to leave voicemail for application requests.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Relieved the additional stress of returning calls when unable to handle current daily call volume.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	We found that in majority of voicemail returns, the client already received assistance from another worker or the client was unable to be reached prompting continuous revolving callbacks.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Unnecessary talk time and/or time spent on call.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Workers need to have control of the call to reach calls per hour goal; unnecessary chat and sometimes long silences observed.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	We are working with staff development to address Control of Call need.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Had telephone communication training, but the need for specifically addressing control was recognized.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Remains in follow-up stage; Training is being researched and planned.
Lessons Learned:	Can never have too much training, also recognizing the need for handling difficult calls. This will help overall statistic achievements and customer satisfaction.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Natural Disaster Occurrences: Hurricane Katrina Evacuees, 2009 Shelby County Mass Power Outage, 2010 Davidson County Flood Victims, and 2011 West Tennessee Flood Victims. During each of the natural disasters, the FASC was called upon to provide support services for the victims of the disasters. Due to the high impact on all citizens, DHS was placed in a precarious situation of having to assist several fold more clients and ensure the issuance of assistance benefits from multiple State and Federal agencies.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	During the disasters, a team of FASC counselors had been called upon to provide more than verbal support. During the Davidson County Flood, the impact on residents was so large that it placed a strain on the local office

	<p>to be able to process all of the assistance requests that clients turned in. A team of counselors from across the FASC centers went to Nashville and processed each manual request. This allowed the county partners to provide emotional or medical support to clients in person; while behind the scenes, FASC was processing the financial support expeditiously. During the Shelby County Power Outage, all FASC centers were called on to assist with financial, emotional, and verbal support. The hours of operation were extended and an electronic form of verification was put into place to reduce the time assistance was provided for the clients. In this disaster, only current clients were assisted which allowed our FASC to assist on a localized area from centers across the state. MLGW reported the address and name of every location that was affected by the outage. FASC and our County Partners were then able to assist the clients immediately upon request as we were able to make immediate verification of need based on the list provided.</p> <p><u>Pros:</u> Relates directly to the fact that with a partnership between FASC, County Partners, and the Community, those affected by the disaster were assisted in a timelier manner.</p> <p><u>Cons:</u> Each disaster could be seen when clients that were not affected by the disaster received a less personal level of support or assistance with their ongoing situation. The impact of each disaster created a bottleneck effect on DHS as well.</p>
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The results in each disaster were positive for the client, FASC and the County Partner. The people who lost any aspect of the basic needs of life were able to come to DHS for provisions of those needs. DHS solidified its role in each community as being a department that can rise above adversity within itself and support those in our community during their most vulnerable moments.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	In each disaster we learn more about how to better use our resources to provide a more timely benefit and assistance to those impacted. We have recognized other sources of assistance to aid in our support of the client in need. We learned of ways to make better use of the FASC so that those in the local impact zones can stay the face of DHS while FASC can continue to support in a vital behind the scenes role whether at their individual offices or in the impact areas or in the State Office.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	FASC became known as a mobile and versatile resource of support for the communities, citizens impacted, our County Partners and State Office Leaders. We learned that as a resource we are capable of doing more than providing verbal emotional support via the telephone. We learned that the expanded use of small teams of FASC counselors can prevent reduction of support in the localized affected areas and minimize the negative effect on volume of calls answered.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Florida
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	We did not fully understand our clients' satisfaction with respect to the automated system (IVR) and customer service agents and with regularly implemented changes.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Decision Factors:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a reporting tool that would gather customer specific data. • Develop a process to contact customers on a daily basis to get input from them with respect to their experience with the automated system and our call agents. <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowed call center managers to customize the automated system

	<p>for customer convenience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical and customer service issues are discovered in a timely manner. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is some difficulty in deciding what data to collect and where to allocate the resources that are used in the process.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	A report was developed and is in the second iteration. This report provides customer contact information. We are able to see what options a specific number has selected in the automated response system.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Using this reporting tool, we are able to contact our customers and elicit information necessary to improve technology and customer service.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	This is an ongoing process we review on a regular basis to determine what part of the call experience is most important to review.
Lessons Learned:	Make sure you select the appropriate staff to contact the customers, make sure they are trained sufficiently to resolve complex issues and are curious enough to ask the probing and difficult questions.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Multiple calls regarding same case/issue. Some callers have urgent needs that require local office resolution.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Improved customer service.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	We have liaison contacts in each local office (usually a supervisor). The call center supervisor will contact the local office supervisor, who will oversee the immediate resolution of a specific, urgent problem.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	See above
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Completed with ongoing assessment
Lessons Learned:	The need for a local office contact is essential in resolving sensitive or timely issues, as well as providing a continuum of excellence in customer service.

Lesson Category:	Technical/Tactical
State	Florida
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Reduce call volume and the corresponding need for staff by providing an on-line informational Web site for customer needs.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Develop (in advance) an automated and comprehensive on-line web site component, which provides a substantive mechanism for customers to obtain maximum pertinent information via the internet, reducing the necessity of a phone call, office visit, or inquiry to eligibility or CC staff. A classic example of total success would be on-line banking.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	In many instances, Florida's "My ACCESS Account" web site is a successful alternative to phone calls or the need for direct customer contact with staff.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	<p>It is a work in progress. Since Florida's My ACCESS Account was developed after Florida public assistance modernization, a transition of customers to on-line processes was necessary.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pros: Consistently increasing customer usage of My Accounts, and increasingly improved available data and information for users. • Cons: Breaking traditional customer habits, migrating customers over time to on- line alternatives, and dealing with customer learning curves associated with the on-line process.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Continued aggressive marketing of My ACCESS Account to customers,

	and increased improvement of available information based on customer needs. This improves customer service and eventually reduces the workload for the limited numbers of available eligibility staff. Currently the state has a 67% penetration rate of its current caseload.
Lessons Learned:	Develop online features early, and plan for the level of information necessary to meet customer needs, so that the need for communication with staff is minimized.

Lesson Category:	Tactical
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	<p>Effective 1-1-2007</p> <p>Due to the number of calls generated from counties with large populations who received benefits from DHS, a decision was made to take 12 counselors at McKenzie FASC to form a processing group. This group worked specifically with Davidson County in processing monthly review applications. The expectation was that case reviews would be processed timely, getting benefits to recipients and thus decreasing the need for recipients to call inquiring about when benefits would be available. The anticipated result would be a lower call volume by alleviating the need for some recipients in Davidson County to call.</p>
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>Thought was given to the process at both the Davidson County office and McKenzie FASC. Through discussion between the two locations, the course of action was worked out including expectations of responsibility for the case work, how the work would be delivered to FASC, how FASC would report completion of work to the county, who would be point of contact at the county office for questions from FASC, and how the quality of the work would be accessed. At FASC, more detailed training in eligibility determination was given to add to the overall Department of Human Services training that was originally given to the counselors.</p> <p><u>Pros:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Davidson County recipients would receive their benefits in a timely manner. • FASC counselors would develop a better understanding of how ACCENT (eligibility determination system) works; and how information entered in the information screens affect the outcome of benefits. The better familiarity of the system would allow counselors to assist recipients more quickly when the counselors returned to telephone work. • Atmosphere of cooperation would develop between county employees and FASC employees. • FASC counselors would learn firsthand about the case management issues DHS counselors at the county office deal with daily. <p><u>Cons:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer FASC counselors would be available to answer telephone calls.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	The team of 12 FASC counselors processed between 208 and 1103 cases a month for 10 months, or an average of 672 review cases. The assistance given to the county allowed the county time to reorganize their process, and to set up a totally separate processing center. Many of the procedures developed between Davidson County and FASC were incorporated in the initial procedures set up for the processing center.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	In a year's time, the number of work orders created from calls generated from Davidson County decreased by over 2,500 a month. In December, 2006, FASC created 14,962 work orders from Davidson County recipient calls for the month. By December, 2007, only 12,345 work orders were created for the month. In addition to decreasing the call volume from

	Davidson County, FASC had a core group of counselors that could, with little notice, assist in processing applications when needed. Since this project in 2007, FASC counselors have assisted in processing review applications for Davidson County two more times and for Shelby County once.
Lessons Learned:	Although the primary responsibility of the Family Assistance Service Center is to assist recipients with inquiries through telephone calls, counselors can be utilized in different functions that ultimately lower call volume for the center and assist county partners.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Pennsylvania
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Determining client satisfaction
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Effective in improving the quality of service. Determining training needs.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Callbacks to recently serviced callers are performed by headquarters staff to assess overall service and satisfaction. Monitoring of calls, both real-time and recorded, is also used in assessment.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	Callbacks provide caller the opportunity to provide positive or negative feedback.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Ongoing Analysis
Lessons Learned:	Random sampling of client callbacks gives a basic overview of quality, but it is not statistically accurate in the determination of overall satisfaction and quality.

Lesson Category:	Policy
State	Tennessee
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	Service Centers are housed throughout the state of Tennessee. As such, the ability to have full management meetings is extremely limited. The staff at each site was having team meetings, but the content varied from site to site. The FASC has four distinct methods to ensure all staff receives the same message at the same time.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<p>The Management Staff discussed the need for a way to streamline the information that was given to staff regarding FASC policy and procedure and how information received from State Office was delivered. The FASC developed a Protocol Manual that did not add to or take away from any existing DHS policy manual. Rather provided a clear explanation of how DHS policy and procedure affected the FASC and how specific issues should be handled on the phones. The Protocol Manual is now in its 9th Edition, and it is available on the Intranet not only for FASC staff but also for county office staff to view. The Protocol Manual is a very informative and transparent guide that allows anyone to see why the FASC takes a specific action. The counselors refer to this guide frequently when resolving issues for their customers. This guide is also used in the Quality Audit process to make sure staff is following Protocol.</p> <p>The FASC also uses Shared Agendas. The same Agenda is used for all team meetings at all five sites. The delivery of the same information at the same time enhances our ability to provide top notch customer service while keeping abreast of any DHS policy changes. All sites can request that clarifications or issues be put on the Shared Agenda that they are seeing. This document is also used in the QA process to ensure that proper policy and procedures are being used. The Shared Agendas are a way for all sites to remain connected.</p> <p>The FASC also has an Electronic Frequently Asked Questions data base</p>

	<p>(EFAQ) that can be updated in real time for instant corrections to a process when something changes. The Protocol Manual is not officially updated every time something changes. It is generally updated once a quarter with several changes at once. In the interim, these changes are addressed on Shared Agendas. When something changes and needs to be updated instantly, EFAQ is where that change can be made for all sites to see in real time. Information housed in EFAQ consists of the names of agencies that the FASC refers customer to, TennCare Notices, County Contacts, etc. Basically, EFAC eliminates the need for a lot of cheat sheets and sticky notes we all use as a quick reference. This tool is web based and easy to navigate. If you need the number for Medicare, go to EFAQ, type in "Medicare number" and your answer is there within seconds. We have stopped making cheat sheets and contact lists for our staff and asked that EFAQ be their place of reference.</p> <p>The fourth item is the training that is used for our new employees. This training is the same training used by the county office staff. TOPNET (Tennessee Online Policy New Employee Training) is used for all Eligibility Counselors. Using the same training for our staff ensures that our staff is learning the same policy and procedure as the county staff. This ensures that the FASC and the Eligibility Counselors do parallel one another and lends an extra layer of credibility to our staff.</p>
<p>Outputs: Result or outcome/decision</p>	<p>We have received positive feedback from all sites about the Protocol Manual, Shared Agenda, EFAQ, and TOPNET resources. The positive feedback comes from managers as well as counselors. We will continue to utilize these resources in an effort to enhance our staff's ability to receive current and streamlined information.</p>
<p>Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad</p>	<p>The logistic barrier has been solved for the FASC as a result of streamlining communication on policy and protocol. All sites have a central location from which to obtain information. In addition to being a valuable resource for our front line staff, this process facilitates management teamwork as these resources are a joint effort. There have not been any negative results.</p>
<p>Adjustment or Follow-up:</p>	<p>These resources are routinely being updated to reflect changes in policy and procedure.</p>
<p>Lessons Learned:</p>	<p>Streamlined communication and training yields a better worker and results in improved service delivery.</p>

Exhibit 38: Lessons Learned—Management Practices and Customer Service.¹

¹ Section 11(e)(6) of the Food and Nutrition Act (the Act) restricts the SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State merit system personnel. Over the past few years, several States have used private contract staff to perform functions traditionally performed by merit system personnel such as providing application assistance, verifying information and answering case-specific questions. The outsourcing of these functions resulted in a more complex and difficult enrollment process, added complexity to the application process and confusion over the division of responsibilities between public and private employees. Based on the results of these projects, FNS further restricted tasks that involved any client contact to merit system personnel in our January 20, 2010 guidance "Federal Support for Enrollment and Application Processing Costs." States are required to seek approval from FNS to use non-merit system personnel in a limited capacity in order to ensure continued Federal Financial Participation (FFP) support.

TRANSITION

Whether States are establishing a call center for the first time or modifying scope, service levels, technology, or business processes, managing the transition carefully is a critical success. Every project must be properly planned and monitored to help ensure that project execution is conducted in accordance with State standards.

Developing the Foundation

In order to fully plan for the components of transition, it is recommended that States begin by mapping out the current business processes and client channels. A clear picture of the "as is", including such areas as people, processes, technology, return on investment, and client metrics (such as volume, call arrival patterns and call types) will help ensure that all current or desired components are included in the analysis phase. As budgets continue to fall under intense scrutiny, understanding the return on investment (benefit of project minus cost of project divided by cost of project) is important to determine during this phase of the project. Similarly, a complete "desired state" picture is necessary in order to ensure the end result meets all of the objectives of the project and provides the appropriate call center to meet the business needs. Planning a transition using these two basic ends of the project spectrum will help to ensure no task is missed and will allow the transition to progress as seamlessly as possible.

This "as is" statement is critical to the success of the transition, as it sets the foundation of the effort and, as such, must be expanded to include every aspect of the existing business structure supporting the scope of work. The following is paragraph is an example of an "as is" statement:

"The current infrastructure of the (Project/Program Name) call center network consists of four stand-alone facilities located throughout the State in (provide the complete addresses of each facility). Each of these facilities houses a stand-alone Nortel Option 61 PBX as detailed below. (After this descriptive paragraph, provide an inventory of each of the systems to include all components and number of desk sets included in the system). There is no Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system at any one of the sites. Only one of the sites (name the site) has bilingual staff and provides services in both English and Spanish. One of the other sites (name the location) only provides Spanish-speaking services. All of the sites use the language service line for all other non-English speaking languages. There are four separate toll-free lines, one for each location. These numbers are all provisioned through AT&T. They are: (site name one) – 800-785-0898, (site name two) – 800-562-3356, (site name three) – 800-676-8788, and (site name four) – 800-876-8242. None of the sites has the capability to record a call for quality review. The hours of operation at each site are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m. Reporting of call statistics are limited to the calls for a particular site. There is no consolidated or aggregate reporting of data." (Note: It is important to include as much factual information/data points as possible, as this will facilitate the transition. For purposes of brevity, not all areas have been included in this "as is" statement)

In some cases, the transition may be from no established call center to a new call center operation. In those situations, the "as is" statement would reflect the existing operations (client calls to a local office), including the aspects of the local office operations that are common to the majority. However, it will be important to capture all of the affected tasks in each of the offices to ensure that operation is addressed in the transition plan. In this case it may be best to have a general "as is" statement that captures the common operational tasks and then lists each office as a separate item in the "as is" statement, detailing the tasks that will be changed or deleted as part of the transition process.

The following paragraph is an example of a "**desired state**" statement for the same project that used the "as is" statement referenced before. It is equally important to be as factual and descriptive in this statement regarding measurable deliverables and as many milestones as possible:

"The new infrastructure of the (project/program name) call center network will consist of a single toll free number that needs to be procured in a competitive manner providing these best rates for local, toll-free in-State and toll-free out-of-State (inbound and outbound) services. The hours of operations at the sites will be 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Monday through Friday, and alternating sites will provide services on Saturdays from 8 a.m. to noon. The existing numbers must be provisioned in such a manner as to automatically transfer to this new number as of the go live date and remain in effect in this manner for no less than three months from the go-live date. Outreach efforts and notices (notation on all correspondence and as part of a greeting message) must be in place one month prior to "go live" with the new phone numbers. With the new technology to be in place at the go live date and the existing available space at (name the two sites), the transition will include a consolidation to the existing locations into a new primary facility and a selection of one of the existing facilities as a secondary site. This will provide a built-in disaster recovery/business continuity package providing State-wide services in the event of an interruption of services at either site. A Voice-over-IP (VoIP) telephony infrastructure is to be established with services provided from the (name the site) data center. Both centers are to be staffed with bilingual (English-Spanish) call center representatives. Other language requirements are to be provided through a contract with the best value language line service provider. Should, at any time, the percentage of clients served by the two centers include a population whose language is not English or Spanish exceed 5 percent, those services must begin to transition to bilingual staff who speak that additional language. An Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system is to be developed that will contain inbound calls in the range of 30 to 35 percent by the end of year one of operation. An outbound dialer will be included that is to be used for outbound call campaigns. The two centers will be serviced by the new processing system, which will provide consolidated call statistics including "cradle to grave" data. Call groups will be established to handle calls based on a skills-based assessment of each representative. Ongoing maintenance and support of the call center will be established to ensure solution meets client expectations now and in the future." (Note: For purposes of brevity, not all areas have been included in this "desired state" statement.)

Transition Plan

Once the "as is" and "desired state" statements are drafted, the next step to a successful transition of any size is to create a solid transition plan with realistic time frames and various milestones to monitor progress and determine whether or not the implementation is on schedule. The transition plan provides all stakeholders with the project execution blueprint, by laying out all required tasks, dependencies, task durations, and required resources.

Effective and efficient management and monitoring tools are essential to the success of the transition. Transition plans can be developed using a number of Commercial Off-the-Shelf Solutions (COTS), a spreadsheet or even a word processing document. Tracking transition activities in a plan helps maintain a designated schedule of deliverables and monitor critical tasks necessary to call center implementation. A transition plan typically includes time frames for each task and subtask, and can also include the name of the person or position responsible for completing each task.

Popular COTS offerings, such as Microsoft Project, provide Gantt chart formats to delineate and schedule tasks, task dependencies, milestones, resources, and deliverables for the transition phase work plan. These outputs are often accompanied by narrative text that provides additional detail regarding task descriptions, methodologies used, required resources and deliverable formats. Exhibit 39 calls out the key pieces of a Gantt chart that can be provided in a well constructed transition work plan.

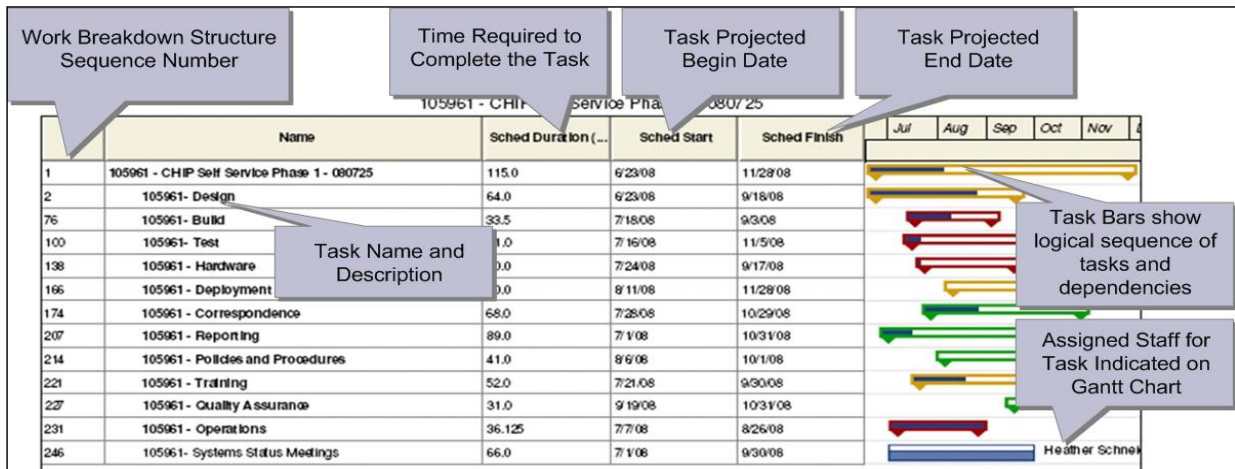


Exhibit 39: Transition Phase Components.

**A combination of effective project management, planning, communication and monitoring are needed to ensure for a smooth transition.*

To effectively manage the schedule, transition leadership must build a common understanding of the definition of task completion. Exhibit 40 provides a suggested definition for task completion, which is commonly adopted by transition managers.

Percent Complete	Short Description	General Guideline
100	Complete	No further work is needed on this task.
75	Wrap-up Stage	This task is almost done; wrap-up is the only thing needed; this task will be done by next week at the latest.
50	Substantial Progress	This task is well along, substantial progress has been made; the target date definitely looks like it will be met.
25	In-Progress	This task is in progress, but substantial progress has not been made; it is too early to tell whether the target date will be met.
5	Started	This task has just started; at least some effort has been put into it.
0	Not Started	Not started or a very large task and little time has been spent on it.

Exhibit 40: Task Completion Guidelines.

**Established standards and clear guidelines for task completion allow the transition plan to serve as a meaningful, effective management tool.*

Not everyone who embarks on a transition is necessarily versed in the use of project planning, work breakdown schedules, Gantt charts, phases, timelines and so on. If this is the case, one can take the "project plan" concept out of the process and substitute the following alternative components:

Project Plan Item	Alternative/Non-Project Plan Item
Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)	Task Number (sequential numbering)
Name	Description of Task
Schedule Duration	Length of Time to Complete the Task
Start Date	Start Date
Scheduled Finish	Project End (stop) Date of the Task
Task Bar/Dependencies	Task can only be done after the previous task

Exhibit 41: Project Plan vs. Non-Project Plan Agenda Items.

Best practice models suggest that in order to be a successful tool, a transition plan usually contain a number of detailed categories. The bullets below illustrate category examples.

Variations to the make-up of each category are likely dependent on the scope of work. If, for instance, multiple call centers are being consolidated into a new, centralized call center, the *Facility Business Structure* section will differ significantly (contain multiple tasks, each relating to a specific location) from this section if no call center exists in the current "as is" state. These variations are discussed in each of the following sub-sections, which define the categories of a good transition plan based on best practice models:

- Project Management Office (PMO) Tasks
- Facility Business Structure
- Transition Operation
- Staffing
- Training
- System Equipment/Testing
- System/Operations Readiness Assessment

- Implementation
- Coordination and Communication
- Risk Management and Issue Resolution
- Change Management
- System Integration
- Security Management
- Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity
- Integration of Business Operations

These categories are discussed in this section in a manner that responds to the "as is" and "desired state" model previously mentioned. Following the premise that the project work plan is the foundation of a good transition and each of these categories becomes the high-level Work Breakdown Structure (WBS). Whether one uses a formal project management software package, a spreadsheet, or a simple document to list the tasks to be completed, a WBS format is recommended. The following *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia* definition for WBS is provided to create a better understanding of the rationale for this statement:

***Work Breakdown Structure (WBS)** - A work breakdown structure (WBS) in project management is a tool used to define and group a project's discrete work elements in a way that helps organize and define the total work scope of the project.*

A work breakdown structure element may be a product, data, a service product, data, a service, or any combination. A WBS also provides the necessary framework for detailed cost estimating and control along with providing guidance for schedule development and control. Additionally the WBS is a dynamic tool and can be revised and updated as needed by the project manager.

The Work Breakdown Structure is a tree structure, which shows a subdivision of effort required to achieve an objective; for example a program, project, and contract. In a project or contract, the WBS is developed by starting with the end objective and successively subdividing it into manageable components in terms of size, duration, and responsibility (e.g., systems, subsystems, components, tasks, subtasks, and work packages) which include all steps necessary to achieve the objective.

The Work Breakdown Structure provides a common framework for the natural development of the overall planning and control of a contract and is the basis for dividing work into definable increments from which the statement of work can be developed and technical, schedule, cost, and labor hour reporting can be established."

To help create an understanding of the transition planning process, the mock work plan below (Exhibit 42) is developed and exhibited for each category as it discussed in throughout this section. (**Note:** the exhibits that follow showing the breakdown of tasks are meant to demonstrate the task necessary for a successful transition. The time frames in these exhibits have not been established and are only shown as an example of the work plan components).

WBS	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Nov 14, '10							Nov 28, '10								
					S	T	T	S	M	W	F	S	T	T	S	M	W			
1	Project Management Office Tasks	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
2	Facility Business Structure	9 days	Wed 11/17/10	Mon 11/29/10																
3	Transition Operation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
4	Staffing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
5	Training	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
6	System and Equipment Testing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
7	System and Operations Readiness Assessment	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
8	Implementation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
9	Coordination and Communication	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
10	Risk Management and Issue Resolution	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
11	Change Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
12	System Integration	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
13	Security Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																
14	Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning	1 day?	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10																



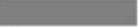






Project: Transition Project Plan-comp.1 Date: Mon 12/6/10	Task 	Milestone 	External Tasks 
	Split 	Summary 	External Milestone 
	Progress 	Project Summary 	Deadline 

Exhibit 42: Transition Phase Components – Top Level WBS.

The foundation of an effective transition plan is built on the foundation of the initial 15 key WBS categories.

Project Management Office Tasks

It is not enough to put together a detailed and comprehensive work plan without the ability to manage the plan and ensure it remains the vehicle that sets the direction of the transition. The Project Management Office (PMO) is the functioning group responsible for this oversight. The makeup of the PMO group depends primarily on the magnitude of the transition/project itself. This group cannot be staffed entirely with junior staff.

Many organizations already have a PMO type of organization in place as part of their day-to-day operations. If this is not the case, it is imperative that it be established no later than the beginning of the transition period. Ideally, a PMO group is in place and operational for some period of time (certainly during all of the preliminary discussions and project plan formulation) prior to the actual start of the transition.

The PMO leader must have very strong project management skills, equally strong interpersonal skills (verbal and written) and, ideally, a substantial knowledge of the existing and/or "desired state" of the project after the transition. The project management skill is somewhat obvious considering the tasks that need to be accomplished, diversity of the team members who represent different work units, and types of work effort required to be successful. Interpersonal skills, particularly verbal communications, are also essential, as this person will often be the negotiator, mediator, and recorder of differing opinions as the transition proceeds.

The basic PMO tasks required for a successful transition are defined as:

Establish PMO –The PMO Team dedicated to the transition should be in place as early as possible. Many offices have administrative groups, contract groups and perhaps even a PMO already in existence as the project (transition) is formulated and they may be involved in development of the scope of the work. When possible, assuming the appropriate skills area available, the PMO for the transition should come from one or more of these groups. The time to establish the PMO is at the initial meeting that is called to outline the project and scope of work. If this can be accomplished, the initial documents (work plan, risk and issue process, complaint and dispute process, etc.) can start developing and be in place in time for the transition.

Staff PMO – The size of the PMO group has a direct correlation to the size of the transition itself. If, for instance, the transition is merely an upgrade of hardware and software, it is entirely possible that an individual strong in project management and communication skills can either complete most of the PMO tasks themselves or complete the tasks with part-time help from other areas as necessary. During the actual transition, it may be necessary for some of these staff to actually split up and be at the locations reporting in directly to the PMO lead.

Develop Risk and Issue Process –A sub-section of this chapter actually deals specifically with the Risk Management and Issue Resolution process. At this point, it is only necessary to establish the fact that this function, by its very nature, must be centralized at the PMO. Further, the tasks outlined in the specific section for this topic must be completed in time for the transition commencement or earlier. Risks and issues do not wait for an official start date to begin to surface. In fact, quite a few of these will more than likely surface during the development of the "as is," "desired state" and/or work plan development.

Develop Reporting Process – A process for collecting and distributing the status updates for tasks listed in the transition work plan needs to be established so stakeholders can review pending/completed steps, address project hold ups, raise concerns and identify how to best allocate resources to meet schedule requirements. Details and best practices for reporting on transition status are further outlined in the *Transition Operation* section.

Develop Complaint and Dispute Process – This task speaks for itself. Whenever a project with the complexity of the transition outlined in mock scenarios is launched, it is natural for differences of opinion, variations of tactics and individual preferences to arise. If not held in check, these can fester into challenges that may significantly hamper the timely progress of the transition. The PMO acts as a focal point and mediator for team member "complaints" and "disputes," ensuring that they are systematically, logically and thoroughly addressed by the various department leaders and transition staff. As with nearly everything handled by the PMO, the starting point is to gather the information, record all of the data and options, and track the progress of the dispute through resolution.

WBS	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Nov 14, '10							Nov 28, '10						
					S	T	T	S	M	W	F	S	T	T	S	M		
1	Project Management Office Tasks	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
1.1	Establish PMO	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■													
1.2	Staff PMO	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■													
1.3	Develop Risk and Issue Process	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■													
1.4	Develop Reporting Process	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■													
1.5	Develop Complaint and Dispute Process	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■													
2	Facility Business Structure	9 days	Wed 11/17/10	Mon 11/29/10	▶													
3	Transition Operation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
4	Staffing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
5	Training	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
6	System and Equipment Testing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
7	System and Operations Readiness Assessment	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
8	Implementation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
9	Coordination and Communication	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
10	Risk Management and Issue Resolution	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
11	Change Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
12	System Integration	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
13	Security Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													
14	Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning	1 day?	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼													



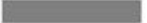




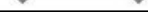

Project: Transition Project Plan-comp.1 Date: Mon 12/6/10	Task 	Milestone 	External Tasks 
	Split 	Summary 	External Milestone 
	Progress 	Project Summary 	Deadline 

Exhibit 43: Work Plan – Project Management Office Tasks.

**The PMO group is the keeper of the work plan and performs the key function of administrative oversight for the entire transition team.*

Facility Business Structure

If the transition is one that does not require a consolidation of buildings, a new building, or a major renovation of an existing building, tasks associated with the facility business structure would be "optional." For example, if a system infrastructure and/or system software migration is the only purpose of a transition, many of the processes outlined in the facility business structure task would be reduced or eliminated from the project work plan.

For the purpose of this manual, the following discussion of facility business structure is based on the "as is" and "desired state" statements previously outlined under the *Developing the Foundation* section.

Some of the considerations to be reviewed when determining the facility business structure depend on the overall decision of a distributed or centralized environment. Distributed processing of these services would require facilities that are sufficient to accommodate the work being handled at each local office. Each facility would require sufficient space, work areas, telephony connectivity, telephony equipment, and any other environmental requirements resulting from a distribution of work at multiple locations. Application of the same standards for security and privacy used at multiple facilities is more challenging. In addition to expanding existing facilities throughout the State, there could be significant

penalties incurred due to early lease terminations at existing facilities. Contracts for leased equipment (copiers for example) would need to be transferred to the new locations.

Other critical considerations for a successful call center include the location and facility itself. States should consider working collaboratively to determine the optimal location and specifications for the call center facilities. States should consider working with their own facilities and workforce development agencies as well as professional services firms who specialize in demographic analysis and real estate site location services.

If it is a call center, the vendor who has a successful history in call center facility acquisition, renovation and remodeling should work with the State to develop the requirements that guide site selection, as well as execute the process to select locations. The collaborative planning for the facility readiness will be strengthened with team members who have knowledge of and/or who have worked with industry leaders in commercial real estate, building engineering and facility renovations to complete major facility acquisitions/renovations on behalf of government entities.

States should consider gathering call center facility requirements using a proven methodology for evaluating project needs and identifying key considerations, some of which may include:

- Potential for economically feasible renovation or build-out
- Positive work environment
- Low-crime area
- Proximity to public transportation
- Adequate, safe parking
- Building exterior lighting
- Building security alarm system
- Building fire alarm system
- Main building entrance or main office entrance allowing for initial security check-in of visitors
- Ability to lock entrance and secure the call center, if other tenants are in the same building
- Security key card or similar system to limit access to certain areas
- Space for equipment, such as a data room, and/or Telco closet that is cooled to accommodate sensitive network and telecommunications equipment
- Adequate restrooms and break areas
- Adequate power
- Availability of fire, ambulance, and police emergency response services
- ADA-compliance/accessibility
- Eco-conscious building operations and management

The tasks associated with the *Facility Business Structure* section are often the "long pole in the tent." Unless existing buildings are being used or require little to no change, the tasks are numerous and cannot be minimized or short-circuited to accelerate the transition. Generally speaking, given the scenarios established for this transition discussion, there would be no less

than nine critical components (tasks) in the transition work plan under the topic of facility business structure. They are:

Put Lease(s) in Place – Best practices would strongly recommend this task be completed by a person or persons intimately familiar with commercial real estate terms, conditions, and practices. Before a lease can be "put in place", the building(s) must be identified. In order to find the best possible building(s), it is imperative that a full scope and requirements document be established. This document should include, at a minimum, information such as the number of staff (see staffing model), size of offices and cubicles, number of common rooms (training rooms, conference rooms, etc.), hours of operation, need for specialty rooms (data centers, server rooms, etc.), parking and public transportation requirements and proximity to such things as eating establishments and similar "people comfort" requirements. Once these have been defined, and the budget determined/understood, the search for a building can begin. If the building is meant to answer, as part of its development, a disaster recovery/business continuity requirement, other considerations also come in to play. These are discussed in the *Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning* section. Once a particular building has been located, the lease negotiations begin and leases documents initiated. It is important to understand, for planning purposes, this single task can take upwards of three months to complete.

Equip Facility - This task typically requires multiple sub-tasks in order to be successful. Experience, as told by those who have performed many transitions, teaches that the need for very specific and detailed tasks relating to the procurement, delivery/receipt, as well as the installation and testing of these components is critical. For each of the following "shopping list" of items needed there should be sub-tasks of product review, product selection, procurement (including competitive pricing), shipping (delay) times, receipt (recording against purchase order), installation and stand alone testing to ensure operability:

- Office furniture and cubicle components
- Common area furniture – conference rooms, cafeterias, training rooms, etc.
- Audio-visual equipment for training rooms and conference rooms
- Copiers/multifunction machines/faxes (States may want to consider leasing as the lease includes maintenance and technology refresh)
- There is another set of items for procurement that are covered in the System and Equipment Testing task set later in this chapter.
- UPS systems (also see the Disaster recovery and Business Continuity tasks)
- Refrigerators
- Microwaves
- First Aide boxes
- Security systems (Proximity card reader systems, intrusion alert systems, closed circuit television systems and security guards should be included in this section if not included as either part of the lease or under the umbrella of the Facility Maintenance Contract)

(**Note:** The interoperability of system components is tested under the *System Operations Readiness Assessment* section).

Establish Facilities Maintenance Process – the need for a full maintenance staff depends on the type of lease provided by the landlord. Today, most landlords provide a "triple net" lease, which requires the tenant to provide all of the maintenance and day-to-day services for the facility with the exception of the exterior of the building, the parking lot and the air handlers. Therefore, the decision that needs to be made as the first part of this task is whether to hire an outside maintenance company to perform the necessary facilities maintenance or to hire staff to accomplish the same tasks. One key consideration in this decision is the issues around the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the need for sensitivity to business conducted at the facility. It is difficult to control the personnel switching that is often necessary in contracted maintenance staff models.

Also included for this purpose would be contracts for document destruction. There are a number of firms that will supply the "locked" bins and provide regularly scheduled services that destroy the documents on site and provide clear "chain of evident" documentation of the destruction. A search of the Internet under "document destruction firms" will provide a starting point for these services.

Often, the day-to-day expendable supply provisioning is included as part of the Facility Maintenance contract. This would include provisioning of paper, toner cartridges, pencils, pens, and other similar items.

Finally, daily record keeping of assets (furniture) is a function typically provided by the facility maintenance organization. Since the maintenance staff/contractor is aware of all furniture moves, reconfigurations and damage repair/replacement requirements, this is the logical place for this initial and ongoing task.

Reconfigure Facility Space – Rarely is a building set up exactly as desired whether it is a remodeling of an existing building or the renovation of a "new" (used) facility. This task set is used to detail the steps necessary to bring the building up to the required/desired configuration. The range of tasks will vary based on the amount of change necessary. For a successful transition, it is critical that each building to have its own set of tasks. Depending on the extent of the renovations required, the following needs to be considered:

- Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing drawings (required for construction permits)
- Architectural drawings
- Space Planning and design
- Building permits
- Hiring construction team (all trades as required)
- Demolition
- Wall construction
- Flooring (carpeting and/or tiling)
- Finish Work (painting, cabinetry)

Negotiate Contract for Asset Management – As discussed previously, assets fall into two major categories: furniture and technology. Depending on the organization and methods used for services, this step may or may not be required. Many agencies already have staff at their

locations who handle asset management for technology as part of ongoing add-move-change operations for the technology components. Other agencies have asset management included as part of their accounting systems in order to maintain appropriate records for depreciation. Still others maintain their asset management through a contract with their technology providers like IBM or Dell. Regardless of the method used, it is a critical transition task and ongoing maintenance task to maintain accurate asset records. In addition, ongoing maintenance and support of the call center needs to be defined. Areas to consider include hardware and software maintenance (license fees), telecommunication lines, and staffing. It is imperative these yearly costs are understood and forecasted in the appropriate budgets.

Negotiate Contract for Help Desk – This task is also one that, once set up, will continue through the life of the project, and not end with the conclusion of the transition. The task is labeled as "contract for help desk" but it could just as easily say hire/transfer staff into the help desk organization. If transitioning to a new location, this task ensures a help desk is ready and operational when the transition is complete. If the transition is one where the facility location is not changing, this task ensures that the help desk is maintained. More than likely, the help desk staff will require upgrade training or all new training in order to be able to support the new technology components and systems. This training needs to be accomplished in a "just in time" manner to ensure the knowledge, if attained too early, is not lost while waiting for the transition to be completed.

Negotiate Configuration Management – The functionality of configuration management often goes hand-in-hand with a combined service packages, including help desk, configuration management and asset management. In essence, they all serve a similar purpose of keeping track of what is located where (the configuration of the asset). This topic is discussed in greater detail in the *Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity* section. The intent of this task in a transition phase is to ensure a record is made of what software (type and version) is resident on each piece of equipment. As with asset management, this is an ongoing task well beyond the transition phase.

Install and Configure Asset Management System –The sooner this task is accomplished in the transition phase, the easier it will be later on to assess the readiness of the project and account for all purchases/expenditures. It may not be possible to actually install the software in the project site initially due to construction, so this operation may need to be temporarily completed in one location (existing building) and moved to the new location once construction is completed. This risk can be mitigated through the purchase of a "hosted" solution in which the service is provided from a remote location through "the cloud" (Internet service).

Perform Inventory – Once the assets are in place (completed as part of the "Equip Facility" task), one very important task remains – taking inventory of the assets (including furniture and technology). These tasks are not necessarily linear in that one must follow the other. In fact, if the asset management system is procured early in the transition, the inventory (physical accounting) and inventory tracking (entry into the asset management system) could also begin early. Either way, this task reflects the actual accounting of the assets and recording of these assets into the system.

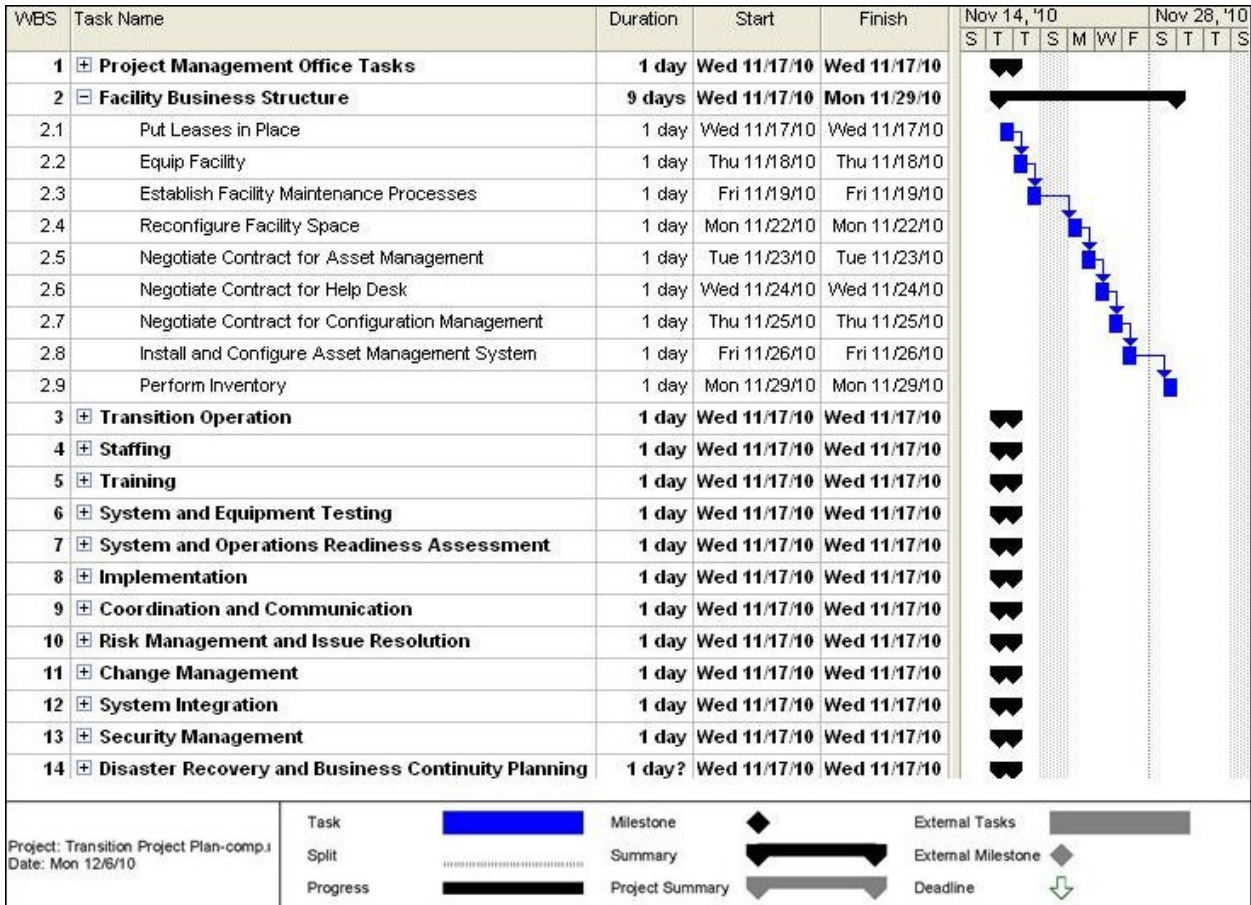


Exhibit 44: Work Plan – Facility Business Structure Tasks.

**There are nine key tasks for each facility to be established in the transition. These nine tasks have the potential of expanding to more than one hundred depending on the scope of the project.*

Transition Operation

The Transition Operation process discussed below may be considered one of the most critical factors of the overall success of a transition. In these four very basic tasks, the structure of the transition operation is established, guidance for oversight is provided, roles and responsibilities are defined, and reporting structure is outlined.

Create Transition Governance Structure – Governance and oversight should not get in the way of progress but it must be established, communicated, and practiced throughout the transition. Failure to do so could cause serious problems to the transition efforts. The best method for a governance structure is to adopt a very open and candid environment in which everyone feels comfortable with the structure and understands that it will take the entire team working together in order for the transition to be successful. Egos must be checked at the door. The transition team leader will be the central person responsible to the executive team and must be held responsible for progress while being given the authority to get the job done.

The process and structure of meetings, reporting and change management must be in place and agreed to by the executive management team, the transition leader and the PMO senior staff person, and the functional leads.

Identify Transition Personnel and Roles/Responsibilities – This is another one of those tasks that must be completed prior to the start of the transition and it must be documented and distributed to the transition team members, stakeholders, and executive oversight personnel. It is also a task that is not really completed until the transition is completed and the "go live" date is met. As with any personnel staffing model, there is always the possibility of a last minute need for change, an interim need for augmentation or a permanent addition to the team to meet additional requirements of the transition.

Develop Transition Plan – This task has been the underlying foundation for all transition discussions. It should be understood that what is presented in this manual is a model. It is not the only model and certainly can be modified to meet the needs of the transition. There is an axiom in the project management world that has a particularly strong message for project planning experts and it certainly holds true in a transition – "Plan the Work and Work the Plan."

Provide Transition Status Reports – The best method for assessing progress on a transition is a weekly status meeting in which every functional lead reports on the progress of their area. This verbal progress must be tracked in the project plan tracking system, as well as reported in written format, highlighting not only what has been accomplished but also what the critical steps are in the next reporting period (week), what challenges (risks and issues) have been encountered, and what decisions (changes in scope, redirection or additional work efforts) have been made. This report is not meant to detail the status of every single task, rather it is meant to provide an executive overview of those things that were expected to happen or were completed, and provide a detailed accounting of other items. It is critical that the distribution of this weekly report provides copies to all of the stakeholders and the executive oversight team. The list of these individuals will be maintained as outlined in the *Coordination and Communication* section.

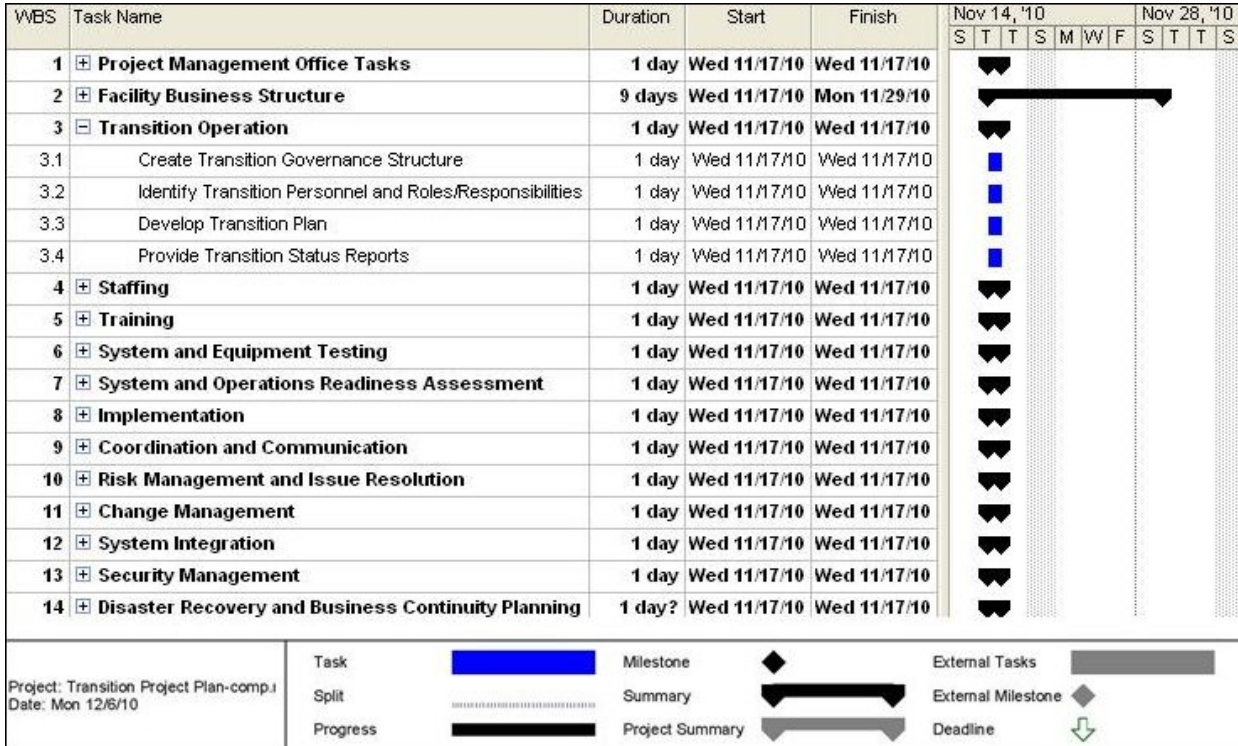


Exhibit 45: Work Plan – Transition Operation Tasks.

These tasks set the business structure in place for the operations during the transition.

Staffing

For a model transient plan, eight major tasks are required for a successful transition, including:

Project Required Staffing – There are a number of staffing models used to project the staffing requirements for call centers. These are driven by operation factors such as hours of operation, Abandonment Rates (AB Rates), Average Speed of Answer (ASA), etc., that should be outlined in the "desired state" statement. If this is a transition that is a consolidation of existing call centers, many of these staffing considerations may already be known. However, as new requirements are added or previous operational parameters are modified, the model more than likely will change, and the staffing model will need to reflect these changes. If the transition involves outsourcing this staffing requirement, this will more than likely have already been negotiated as part of the contract/pricing models. As discussed earlier, the scope of work performed in the call center will directly affect the type of staff that can be hired, as many of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) functions are limited to State-merit system personnel.

What is critical to this task is a plain statement that outlines what is and is not included in the model. For instance, if the staffing model only exhibits the actual Customer Care Representative (CCRs), the projected staffing statement must allow for other staff (typically a ratio-related model or 1 to “n” CCRs) such as supervisors, quality control/quality assurance, workforce management and "fixed" staff (management, training, etc.).

Develop job descriptions – This task does not have to be one that "reinvents the wheel." If the transition is from existing services, this task is more of an update or consolidation task, which will take existing job descriptions and formulate new ones, capturing the portions of the existing description into the new one.

If this is a new call center operation, the job descriptions should be established. Some of the typical duties and responsibilities of call center agents include (note that many of these job duties are a function of the type of business the call center is processing):

- Provide callers with unbiased information about the project's programs;
- Researching and responding to client/customer phone inquiries in a prompt and courteous manner;
- Provide callers with information about office locations, hours of business and similar general information;
- Providing status of an existing application, claim, case or similar status;
- Provide callers with assistance completing forms, applications, etc;
- Conducting the eligibility interview
- Accepting and data entering change of address and similar demographic changes;
- Assist callers with screening, applying for benefits, and reporting changes;
- Assisting the client/customer in registering a complaint;
- Assisting the client/customer in filing an appeal;
- Assisting the client/customer in scheduling/rescheduling an interview or appointment;
- Determine client/customer eligibility
- Accessing, reading and informing clients about their case information as found in the project systems; and
- Documenting all client/customer encounters in a clear and concise manner.

Often, when transitioning to new technology and/or software, new elements may need to be added to the job description. Depending on the format of the existing job description, it may be necessary to change some of the boilerplate type data points (locations, hours of operation and so on).

Develop organizational charts – A natural progression of the project staffing model exercise is the formation of an organization chart (there may be multiple organization charts –one for each location) depicting the hierarchical structure and reporting structure of the organization. A combination of this and the project staffing model is required early on in the transition to facilitate the "Facility Business Structure" tasks.

Develop staffing plan – Either prior to the start of the transition or shortly after the development of the project staffing model and the organizational charts, the lead Human Resource staff member will need to develop a staffing plan or road map of how the staff will be hired. This road map will address the use of current staff, temporary staff, staffing agencies, job fairs and similar recruiting methodology to ensure sufficient staff is in place in time for training and "go live" operations.

Transfer staff from existing call centers– Typically, the strongest employees for a newly transitioned staff are those from the previous project(s)/location(s). Refer to the *Staffing* section to ensure transition staff members meet the skill-set requirements. These individuals are already Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) who will require little or no training depending on the introduction of new technology/software. Once the staff has been selected, it is imperative the training documentation includes policy knowledge as well as operational instructions to alleviate risks associated during staff turnover.

Recruit staff – The parameters outlined in the "desired state" statement will result in changes in staffing requirements, the organization chart, and staffing models. The fulfillment of these needs is outlined in the "road map" developed in the staffing plan. This task will now be the execution of the plans and models into the actual recruiting process. The results of this task will be a pool of eligible candidates that have met the initial screening process (knowledgeable in program and policy) and are ready for the final interviews and hiring process. The deliverable from this task will be a list of candidates together with their demographical information (bilingual, prior experience, etc.) and full contact information. A file will have been established for each individual with copies of their resumes and appropriate additional papers typically produced during the interviewing and hiring process.

Hire staff – Once the recruiting efforts have resulted in a pool of eligible candidates that have met the initial screening requirements, the next step will be to conduct background checks and final screening step(s) before "on boarding" the members. This task will be used to complete the background checks, produce formal offer letters, and establish start dates and training class requirements (see the *Training* section that follows).

Develop language access plan – This plan will ensure that equipment and/or contracts are in place to handle any and all language barriers. This will include:

- Having bilingual staff answering the phones (see *System and Equipment Testing* section for call routing and skills queues);
- Phone services for the hearing impaired Telecommunications Devices for the Deaf (TDDs) /Teletypewriters (TTYs), or similar services; and
- Contracting with a service for all languages not provided with call center staff. This is handled by outsourced companies that provide toll free three-way calls that offer interpretation between the caller (client) and the CCR.

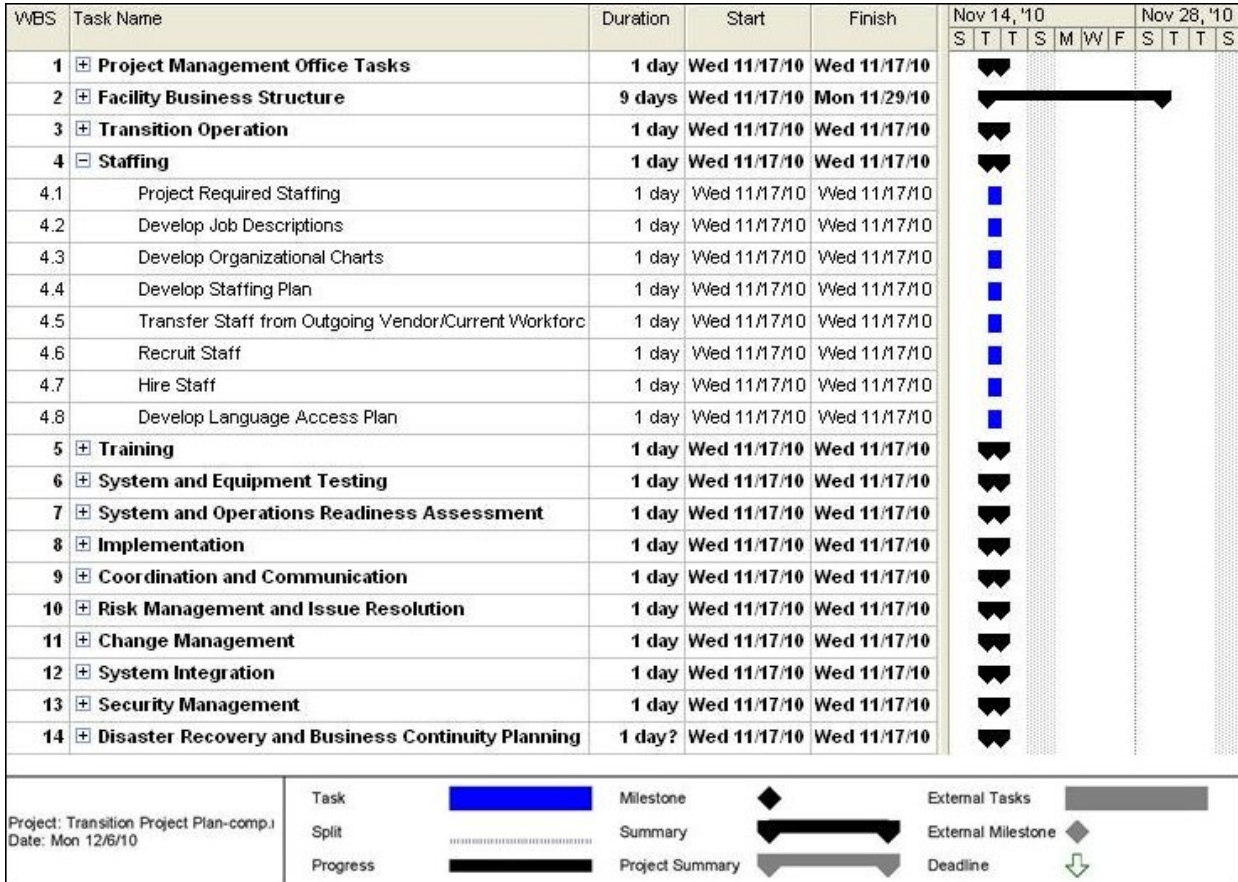


Exhibit 46: Work Plan – Staffing Tasks.

These eight tasks categories provide the infrastructure for staffing the transitioned space.

Training

Training, both during a transition and once the new operation is running, can be challenging in many ways. One of the greatest challenges for training, especially during a transition, is related to the centralized/decentralized model of services.

Optimally, the initial training is best delivered to all workers in a facility located at a centralized location. However, if workers are located throughout State and local offices, training needs to take place on a distributed basis at each of the offices. Some of the advantages of a centralized training are:

- Dedicated training room with appropriate technology infrastructure;
- Fewer training classes required;
- Fewer training staff required (depending on how rapidly the training needs to be delivered; and
- Training advantages achieved with larger classes (fewer than 25 students) such as synergistic discussions.

Decentralized training does provide a less costly (minimal travel, hotel, per diem) delivery, but it has the disadvantage of potentially taking longer unless additional trainers with appropriate skill sets can be detailed to the various locations. Distributed training also has the potential for extending the "go live" date to coincide with completion of the training if a single, statewide start date is desired, or a need to establish a staggered start date to coincide with the completion of training.

During the course of normal business operations and growth, it will be necessary to provide more than just new employee training. There will be situations when it may be necessary to revisit some of the previously provided training, called "refresher training," for certain topics. Additionally, there will be occasional changes to the supporting software systems that will require training on new features, called "build training." These trainings are typically scheduled and conducted in a "just-in-time" method so the call center agents have the new features/methods/operations fresh on their minds when they actually begin to use the new software. The average length of these trainings is about three hours per staff member.

When designing a training course, States should consider that instructor-led (or in-person) training is more difficult to accommodate in a distributed call center model, so robust computer-based (e-learning) capabilities may need to be in place. The charts below outline some of the advantages and disadvantages of the two delivery options.

Instructor-Led Training	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Ability to study/learn away from the office with time set aside for learning a new course. Fewer interruptions during the training.	Costs of travel, accommodations, and other expenses.
Participants have access to a trainer for the duration of the course and sometimes after the course. Useful when material covered is more in-depth and participants benefit from direct question and answer sessions.	May require more time depending on the material covered.
Participants have access to other participants during the course. This is a great learning networking opportunity.	May not be the best option if learning lends itself to the personal training style preference of the participant

Exhibit 47: Instructor-Led Training Analysis.

Computer-Based Training	
Advantages	Disadvantages
Individuals can study at their own time and pace thereby learning at a rate in which they are comfortable. Useful when material covered is for refresher and/or compliance related training.	Participants may not have immediate access to trainers for questions
Lower costs – CBTs are much more cost effective than classroom training. Multi-user options allow an entity to train more than one person with the same budget or less than spending on an instructor led classroom course.	Technical issues may delay availability of the training.
Can combine instructor led videos with examples through simulations, test questions and interactive sections in CBTs. thereby using more than one learning method, which greatly enhances both the student's interest and retention level.	May not be the best option if learning lends itself to the personal training style preference of the participant

Exhibit 48: Computer-Based Training Analysis.

It is evident from the challenges listed in the above tables that the training model is directly affected by the operational model. Therefore, while there are some common training components required in most transitions, each transition must be analyzed and customized individually. There are nine major tasks associated with the training functions to be delivered during and after the transition (**Note:** the deliverables and methods developed to manage the training tasks during transition will continue beyond the "go live" date). These training tasks include:

Assess Training Needs – When planning for transition, the training team should first assess the number of staff (see the *Staffing Plan* section) that will be transferred, transitioned and/or hired and then develop a model that outlines the training needs for the transition. It will be critical that the training lead not only understand the staffing model, but also the differences in the technology infrastructure (hardware and software) and operational changes (if any). Each of these components will require training development and delivery.

Project Training Class Requirements – A key component of the training process is the establishment of schedule, identifying the classes needed by type, duration, location, and frequency. This schedule can be established as a basic deliverable independent of staff modeling and hiring, or may be a by-product of some of the COTS software packages employed in start-up operations/transition activities.

Whether using a software tool or manual process to develop a schedule with limitation constraints applied (for example: physical size of the class room), the training team will need to consider the following questions:

- What is the maximum classroom size (training pundits will advise this to be 24)?
- Is there sufficient technology available for the classroom or are there further limitations due to the availability (or lack of) of technology?
- What are the various types (subject matter) classes required?
- Can any of the classes be completed with computer-based training or do they all require instructor-led models?
- What is the lapsed time from the start date of an employee until they are "ready" to be on the phone answering calls?

Some of the more sophisticated COTS staff modeling software offer components that prompt the user for information that establishes the constraints inherent in the hiring process (paperwork, background checks, on-boarding, orientation, and training) before a new employee can be ready to answer a call. These same constraints may be applicable in a transition. In these software packages, the end-user enters in information such as length of course, classroom size, etc., and the software system provides a schedule which "backs up" the start date point necessary to complete all of the training in time for the staff member to be available to take phone calls (i.e. "just-in-time" training).

Implement a Learning Management System – One of the key components of a model training department is an effective methodology for tracking the training statistics and effectiveness. The items tracked include data on: Individual data – course taken, scores for

tests, dates of completion, etc.; Course material – copies of the training materials and tests, test results and frequency of errors for a particular question, which can potentially suggest a need for improving the training); and Data on the instructors. Data elements can be tracked on a simple spreadsheet, word processing document or a COTS offering from a number of software vendors. The COTS offerings are usually available under the heading of Learning Management System (LMS). An LMS is a standard set of data that houses training materials, training records and training scheduling modules, as well as possible assessment tools and online training capabilities. Whether a simple solution (spreadsheet or word processing document) is used or a commercial offering is selected, there are certain data elements that should be captured. These include, but are not limited to, the following types of data:

- Individual
- Name, Employee Number, Hire Date
- Course Name
 - Date Taken
 - Completion Scores
- Curricula
- Course Name
 - Course Contents (copies of slides and Instructor Notes)
 - Date Last Updated/Modified
 - Course Tests and Answer Sheet
 - Dates/Locations Delivered
 - Most Frequently Missed Questions
- Instructor
- Course Taught
 - Date Taught
 - Average score form all students (by delivery date)
 - Number of times each exam question was missed

Develop a Training Plan – The development of a comprehensive training plan must be accomplished in time for delivery of the developed curricula during the later part of the transition and as a guiding document for the operation phase of the project. A well-developed training plan will be used to establish the parameters and expectations of the training department and its everyday operations. The components of a training plan should include the following sections/topics:

- Statement of work for the project (initially the transition phase)
- Training delivery of new team members
- Training delivery for existing (transferred/transitioned) team members
- Curriculum
- Core Training (security, HIPAA, sexual harassment, etc.)
- Initial Operations Training
- Technical Build Training
- Refresher Training

- GAP Training
- Remediation Training
- Leadership Training
- Training organization and staffing
- Training roles and responsibilities
- Curriculum development methodologies
- Sample training materials
- Learning Management System
- Training assessment
- Training reporting
- Training environment

Develop Training Curricula –The intent of this task is to take the general design concepts outlined in the training plan and expand them to the actual development of the courses defined in the plan, including the course materials, instructor book, test materials and slides/online tools to be used in the delivery of the materials. This task is a continuation and enhancement of the "Develop a Training Plan" task.

Develop Training Materials – Once the training curriculum is developed, the next step is to develop the necessary training materials for each class. This task would also include the revision of materials based on feedback from previous training deliveries and assessments. Version control of the documents is critical for ensuring that the latest materials are used for delivery.

Conduct Ongoing Training – In the introductory comments to this section, there was some discussion about these tasks being continued beyond the transition period. This task ensures this training planning and scheduling is set in place prior to the "go live" date.

Develop Training Assessment Vehicle – In order to assess the accuracy of the materials and quality of delivered training, it is essential to have a system available for assessing the delivered training. Some of the LMS options available today include this critical software component. Whether this is accomplished through a manual process (e.g. post training evaluation score sheets completed by the trainees) or as an electronic result (based on end-of-score completion tests), it is essential that this task be incorporated into the transition and subsequently into the operational phases.

Train Staff on Systems – The curricula developed for the call center operations (both during transition and during the operational phase) is often specific to the operational requirements (e.g. eligibility rules, documentation requirements, etc.) and does not include the system components. This task ensures, by outlining the curricula and course contents, the system components are also covered. Some of the topics that may be covered under this task are:

- Logging in to the system (user name and password requirements);
- Changing a user logon/password (when prompted or if it is believed that the data has been compromised);

- How to navigate through the system (use of drop down menus, radio button selections, etc.);
- Directions on the use of pre-assigned Function Keys; and
- How to "toggle" (switch) between screens or sub-systems.

In some cases, the transition does not allow actual training on the systems until later in the training schedule due to the timing of the hardware/software installation. When this happens, the timing of this task should be established to allow for the operational processing portion of the curricula to be delivered just prior to the installation of the hardware/software. This should follow with a training that offers hands-on experience once the systems are in place.

WBS	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Nov 14, '10							Nov 28, '10						
					S	T	T	S	M	W	F	S	T	T	S			
1	Project Management Office Tasks	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
2	Facility Business Structure	9 days	Wed 11/17/10	Mon 11/29/10														
3	Transition Operation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
4	Staffing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5	Training	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.1	Assess Training Needs	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.2	Project training Class Requirements	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.3	Implement a Learning Management System	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.4	Develop Training Plan	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.5	Develop training Curricula	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.6	Develop Training Materials	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.7	Conduct Ongoing Training	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.8	Develop Training Assessment Vehicle	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5.9	Train Staff on Systems	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
6	System and Equipment Testing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
7	System and Operations Readiness Assessment	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
8	Implementation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
9	Coordination and Communication	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
10	Risk Management and Issue Resolution	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
11	Change Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
12	System Integration	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
13	Security Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
14	Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning	1 day?	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														

Project: Transition Project Plan-comp.1 Date: Mon 12/6/10	Task	Milestone	External Tasks
	Split	Summary	External Milestone
	Progress	Project Summary	Deadline

Exhibit 49: Work Plan -Training Tasks.

Most of the tasks associated with training during the transition continue on throughout the operational phases.

System/Equipment Testing

The steps outlined below are needed to successfully transition system equipment and testing areas (**Note:** These steps will require hours of preparation, planning, and work effort in order to be ready for a "go live" date):

Procure Network Links to Data Center – This ensures the communication lines (T1, etc.) have been established (provisioned), the LAN/WAN lines have been installed and are operational, and the necessary paperwork has been sent to the phone carrier(s) in order to transfer existing toll free numbers, consolidate call center toll-free numbers or establish new numbers. These tasks, particularly getting new lines, can take anywhere from 45 to 90 days to accomplish, so it is critical that this task is executed early in the transition.

Procure Hardware – If a project requires a significant amount of system upgrades, procurements, installations and testing throughout the transition phase, it is important to note that many of the providers of this equipment no longer manufacture large quantities of these items and stock them on shelves. With rapidly changing technology cycles, this would leave too much outdated product on the shelves. Therefore, it is imperative that the make/model selection process is completed early, competitive bids are received and reviewed rapidly, and the procurement cycle is initiated in a timely manner so the items are available as needed during the transition phase. Some of these items can take weeks or even months to manufacture, ship, install, and configure.

Test Network Linkages – As discussed in the *Facility Business Structure* section, the internal network of system connectivity is established as part of the office build or the cubicle construction. These wires will connect back to the data center (possibly through intermediary staging areas) and provide access to the LAN and WAN. These lines can and must be independently tested as they are installed. Once the servers are in place and the final connectivity is made to the host systems, further testing can be accomplished. This second level of testing will be discussed again in the *System and Operations Readiness Assessment* section.

Transition of the telephony infrastructure will address how callers will reach the call center and where the call will be routed within the center. The following activities would need to be completed for an effective telephony transition:

- Acquire and install telecommunications infrastructure per the telecommunications infrastructure design
- Implement new business procedures that address how to direct customers to access the call center and how the current operations will be engaged with the call center telephonically in the new model
- Configure call routing strategy per the operations organization requirements
- Test infrastructure components end to end, including but not limited to the following:
 - **Call routing** – directing the call to the right local office or service location;
 - **Call queue management** – managing the flow of calls within desired answer rates and hold times;

- **Call recording** – live call recording for use in coaching, Quality Control (QC), and for researching issues or complaints; and
- **Service level monitoring** – reporting performance at detailed and summarized levels for all in bound calls.

If moving from a centralized to a decentralized structure, support of a decentralized telephony infrastructure would require changes to the current IT management functions, capabilities and skill sets. IT staff with skills to manage a distributed call center work environment would be needed. These staff members would require tools that monitor and remotely manage the telephony connections, functions and performance at all office locations. Call recording systems and screen-capture systems may be required at office locations.

Managing incoming calls at local offices is difficult due to the loss of economies of scale. Maintaining call coverage with fewer workers per location is more difficult and less efficient. States would need to develop workforce staffing strategies to address call volume peaks and long call hold times, which can arise in any operation from time to time. The telephony infrastructure would need to be integrated statewide so that calls can be routed calls from one office to another when necessary to meet service levels. In addition, should State staff require visibility into overall 1-800 call volumes, call abandonment rates, handle times and other such currently available management information, performance reporting capability would need to be developed to support distributed call handling.

Acquire Desktop PCs and Handsets for Staff - This task is simply reminder to competitively bid and procure the necessary hardware and software for the agent and other staff member desks/offices. However, in order to ensure a smooth transition, this step should be extended to cover all system components, including printers and the necessary patch cables to hook the piece of equipment into the LAN/WAN network.

Develop Configuration Management Process – This is intended to establish a process by which every piece of equipment is tagged in a system and the components of the individual hardware piece are recorded (brand, model, and version). As with the Asset Management System (outlined in the *Facility Business Structure* section), the earlier in the transition phase that this task is accomplished, the easier it will be to assess the readiness of the project and account for all purchases/expenditures. It may not be possible to actually install the software initially due to construction so this operation may need to be temporarily completed in one location (existing building) and moved to the new server room once construction is completed. This risk can be mitigated through the purchase of a "hosted" solution in which the service is provided from a remote location through "the cloud" (Internet service). Some equipment providers offer an extended service that will actually establish a database of this information at the time of purchase. One drawback of this service is the inability to keep up with changes to the configuration if items are procured outside of the initial purchase or not through the original procurement provider.

Develop Incident Tracking Process – The purpose of this task is to ensure a process is in place to receive and log help desk calls and other hardware/software issues. As mentioned earlier, the sooner this task is accomplished in the transition phase the easier it will be later on

to assess the readiness of the project and account for all purchases/expenditures. It may not be possible to actually install the software in the project site initially due to construction so this operation may need to be temporarily completed in one location (existing building) and moved to the new server room once construction is completed. This risk can be mitigated through the purchase of a "hosted" solution in which the service is provided from a remote location through "the cloud" (Internet service). There are a number of COTS incident tracking software systems available. Many systems/information technology departments already have an incident tracking system in place that can be expanded and/or shared for this purpose. If there is no existing incident tracking system, a search of the Internet will provide a listing of the COTS incident tracking systems available.

Install and Test All Systems –This task covers the installation and initial testing of any system components that have not been covered under another topic. It is best to create a complete list of systems (e.g. using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet) and annotate as to whether its purchase, configuration, installation, and testing is accomplished (tasked) somewhere else in the transition plan or it is in this task. The testing in this section is a stand-alone test to provide the first indication that the system has been installed and is operable. The final testing requirements can be viewed in the *System Operations Readiness Assessment* section that follows.

Procure, Install and Test Knowledge Management System – One of the most beneficial systems for the operational phase is an online Knowledge Management System (KMS) that contains policies, procedures, work instructions, job aides, and system notes in concise organized documents that are searchable by key words and/or phrases. There are a number of these systems available for either a hosted solution by the vendor or to be housed on State servers. During this phase, the procurement, installation, and implementation (including document development and posting) of KMS software should be completed. Like many other system solutions, the sooner this task is begun in the transition phase, the more likely it will be ready on the "go live" date. Having these documents available online is one of the key efficiency factors that feed into the staffing model. (Additional information on KMS can be found later in the *Implementation* section).

WBS	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Nov 14, '10							Nov 28, '10				
					S	T	T	S	M	W	F	S	T	S		
1	⊕ Project Management Office Tasks	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
2	⊕ Facility Business Structure	9 days	Wed 11/17/10	Mon 11/29/10												
3	⊕ Transition Operation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
4	⊕ Staffing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
5	⊕ Training	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6	⊖ System and Equipment Testing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.1	Procure Network Links to Data Center	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.2	Procure Hardware	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.3	Test Network Linkages	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.4	Acquire Desktop PCs and Handsets for Staff	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.5	Develop Configuration Management Process	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.6	Develop Incident Tracking Process	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.7	Install and Test All Systems	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
6.8	Procure, Install and Test Knowledge Management System	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
7	⊕ System and Operations Readiness Assessment	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
8	⊕ Implementation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
9	⊕ Coordination and Communication	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
10	⊕ Risk Management and Issue Resolution	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
11	⊕ Change Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
12	⊕ System Integration	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
13	⊕ Security Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												
14	⊕ Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning	1 day?	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10												










Project: Transition Project Plan-comp.1 Date: Mon 12/6/10	Task		Milestone		External Tasks	
	Split		Summary		External Milestone	
	Progress		Project Summary		Deadline	

Exhibit 50: Work Plan – System/Equipment Testing Tasks.
**These tasks establish the technological infrastructure for the new facilities.*

System/Operations Readiness Assessment

The Systems/Operations Readiness Assessment process will evaluate every piece of equipment, connectivity point, system (software), documentation (work instructions, training materials, etc.), and operation to ensure everything is ready for the "go live" status. The ideal process requires each functional head to be available during the entire readiness evaluation of their area and any area their service/function touches. In order to ensure for a complete and unbiased review, it is recommended that the person/team conducting the readiness assessment inspection are not be part of the transition team. The primary steps needed to assess the readiness of a project include:

Develop Readiness Assessment Checklist – This task will require the development of the checklist (one for each facility and service area – data center) that lists every item, process, procedure, and function to be tested. In order to facilitate the readiness review, it is recommended that the checklist be divided into sections reflecting the areas outlined in this transition plan.

Develop Readiness Assessment Process – Readiness Assessment is a scheduled procedure that must be accomplished before the final approval to "go live" is granted. The best method to follow is to evaluate the operation in a mock production mode and evaluate each component

according to the checklist. If an item fails to meet the desired standards but can be fixed on the spot, then it can be immediately retested. If the item cannot be fixed immediately or if it fails after the immediate fix was applied, then the item is documented as a "needs improvement" item in the Readiness Assessment Report and a cure period is assigned to the item. The readiness assessment lead, in concert with the transition lead and project executive, will determine if any of the items marked as "needs improvement" are critical to the operation and require remediation prior to a go-live decision.

Perform Readiness Assessment – This step should be scheduled as part of the work plan and, unless the date is changed by the appropriate management, conducted in sufficient time to allow remediation of "needs improvement" items prior to the "go live" date.

Submit Readiness Assessment Test Results – A formal communication from the readiness inspection leader to the transition leader and project leader is required as the deliverable from the readiness assessment. The format of this report is typically a cover memo with an attached copy of the readiness assessment checklist and a detailed description of the items tagged "needs improvement," annotating if the item was corrected immediately and retested, as well as the retest results.

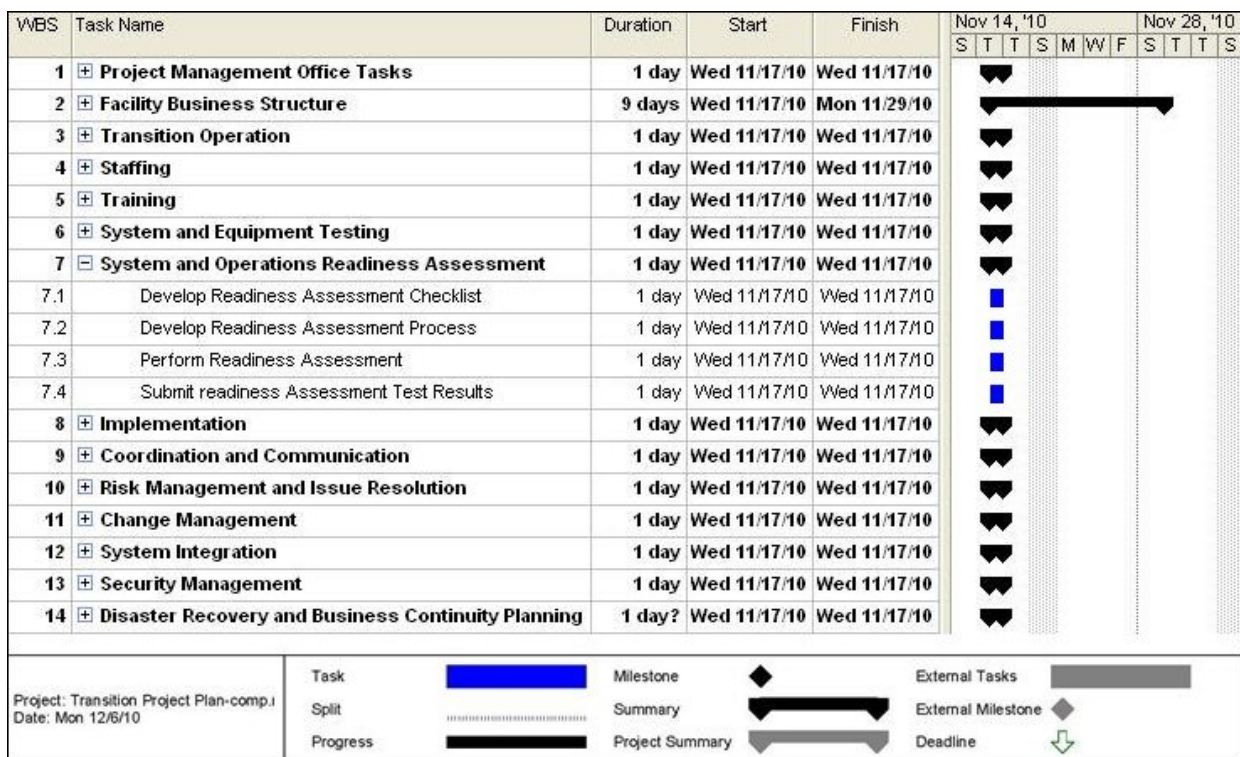


Exhibit 51: Work Plan – Systems/Operations Readiness Assessment Tasks.

**These tasks will provide the document readiness and completion of transition tasks.*

Implementation

The key components of the Implementation tasking is the creation and communication of many of the major supporting areas such as QC, Quality Assurance (QA), Policies & Procedures for Training, and the methods to be employed for handling calls. During this step, a project will need to:

Develop Work Instructions – The completion of the development of work instructions is contingent on the final system (screens, output), operation decisions, and development of process flows. Because of these dependencies, the development of the work instructions is typically just in time for training delivery.

Develop Knowledgebase Management System Content – One of the typical "tools" provided to workers over time has been a single reference book or a series of manuals that provide all of the required reference materials for use in answering clients' questions and performing their everyday job functions. With the use of computers at the work place now a common practice, these written documents are being put into electronic form as time and budgets allow. To facilitate this process and provide better software solutions, vendors have developed KMS to replace the volumes of written documents, job aides posted to cubicle/office walls and quick reference guides sitting on the worker's desk.

The development of the KMS content is an ongoing process that begins in the transition phase and never really ends. The KMS is typically used as a single source (online) for all staff to view the content of policies & procedures, work instructions, job aides, course materials and any other documents that provide guidance and/or policy related to the business process. These systems typically have powerful search engines (inquiry capabilities) that allow the user to enter single words or phrases and have "returned" all of the documents/portions of documents or references in documents that discuss any aspect of those word/words. As processes are added, improved, altered, or eliminated, the associated documents in the KMS are also added, improved, altered, or stored into an historical/archive space on the system.

Develop Quality Control Process – In order to provide QC measures, calls would need to be recorded at each location with screen capture locally. This imposes new technical requirements on the technical infrastructure and network. New process would be required for sampling, coaching, and feedback. Please note, QC process described in this section is related directly to the call center environment, not the SNAP QC procedures found in the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) 301 handbook.

A QC staff process might audit a specified number of calls per agent per month. Coaching sessions should also be performed with each agent as necessary based on the results of quality reviews. QC staff should also receive one weekly coaching session. At least one QC worker would be required per office (or possibly assigned to multiple offices) in order to ensure audits are performed and coaching occurs. Some models suggest that one QA analyst is required for every 15 to 18 call center agents in order to appropriately review calls, coach staff and analyze QC results with other departments (training, for example) to develop improvement steps. (Note: that a QC department working for distributed workforce is inherently challenged to

provide ongoing guidance without strong practices, controls and measure in place to ensure consistency).

Develop Quality Assurance Process – The QA process is developed as an independent oversight of operations to ensure compliance with policies and procedures, adherence to timeliness standards and appropriate documentation of findings.

In order to avoid confusion it is important to understand that there are two entities that perform quality review of processing and projects. One of these entities is discussed under the term "Quality Control" and the other is discussed under the term "Quality Assurance." The difference essentially comes down to the timing of both the quality review and the reporting of the findings. QC is accomplished during the action being reviewed (in the case of call centers, this would be the phone call). QC reviews are accomplished through techniques such as call monitoring. Reporting typically offers immediate feedback to the CCR. QA is accomplished as part of a random, statistically significant, sampling from a defined period of time. As such, a QA review could take place as much as a month after the actual call. The call is reviewed against a predefined set of quality tests, which are not necessarily under the same criteria as the QC reviews. The results of the calls are aggregated into a report for the entire period under review. It is strongly recommended that the QA staff not report to anyone in the call center operations organization, but rather to the project lead as an independent review staff.

There are regimented standards that should be employed in the sampling sizes, algorithms, and testing processes. As an example: Call Center Operations is audited on a monthly retrospective period. Each month, the calls that were recorded during the sample month are processed through a random number generator, so that the sample is randomized. There is an online tool (<http://www.surveysystem.com/sscalc.htm>) that can be used to determine the sample size based on the number of calls, confidence level, and confidence interval. This tool uses a random sample selection process that maximizes sample validity and prevents sampling bias (sample size is a function of population size). For example, a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval of no more than five percent 5 percent with a sample of 150,000 monthly calls would dictate a sample size of 383 calls.

Develop Quality Assurance Plan – The QA plan will be developed throughout the transition period and should be tested for accuracy and appropriateness. The final document should be ready and tested (first in a table-top exercise and then as part of the "User Acceptance Phase") as part of the Readiness Assessment preparation.

Develop Forecasting Models – Similar to the forecasting model used to facilitate appropriate staffing requirements (see the *Staffing* section), model systems need to be in place to help determine (forecast) call volumes, calls by language and call arrival patterns. There are a variety of forecasting tools/systems available for this process, and a quick online search will produce a number of vendor Web sites, which include online demonstrations of their system capabilities. In order for a forecasting tool to be effective, it is essential that it be parameter driven and include such call center requirements as average length of call, average speed to answer and similar call center performance measurements. These forecasting tools, along with

a strong workforce management tool, will be used in ongoing determinations to ensure the right number of staff members is available to answer calls.

Develop Inquiry and Call Handling Report – In order to assess success of the call center, it is critical that a standard suite of reports be produced each week and compared (forecast to actual) week over week. At a minimum, these reports should provide statistics on each of the measurements used to assess the call center operation, such as AB Rate, ASA, number of calls handled by the IVR, etc.

Develop Work Instructions and Organizational Structure for Subcontractors – Subcontractors/vendors employed on any part of the operation need to have a clear understanding of what their role is, how they are to complete their tasks, what templates will be used to report on the operation and the frequency of reporting. These governance tools and an approved organization chart must be documented and finalized prior to the completion of the transition phase.

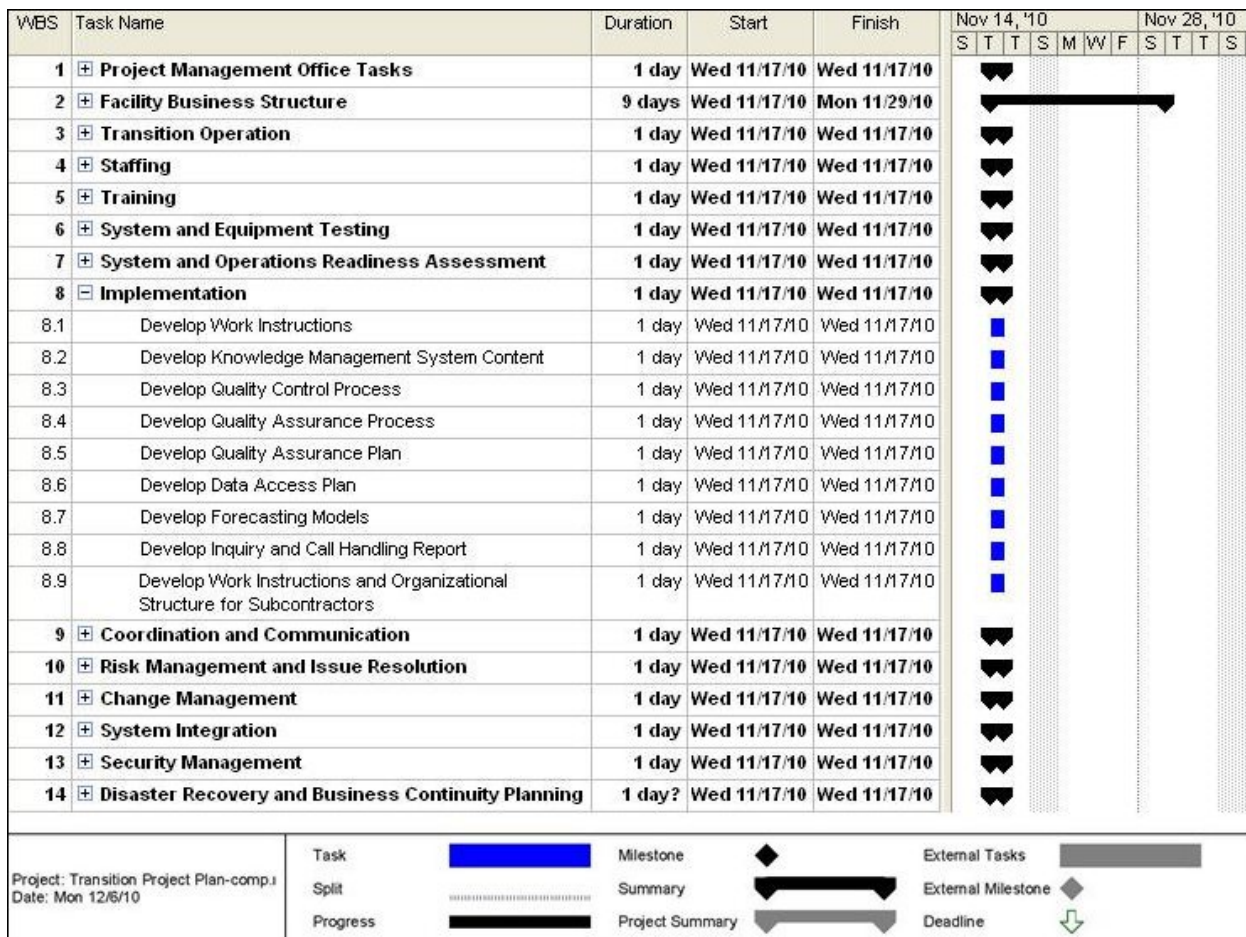


Exhibit 52: Work Plan – Implementation Tasks.

These tasks are critical to the management of the call center and evaluation of the effectiveness of the staff actions.

Coordination and Communication

Call center transitions require effective communication with internal and external stakeholders, including program consumers. Effective communication among team members, program stakeholders, and advocacy groups is a crucial component for a successful project start-up. Procedures should be established for adding, changing, or eliminating:

- Conference calls
- E-mails and e-mail distribution lists
- Internet and intranet sites
- Official "public facing" messaging (procedure for clearing any new releases)
- Answering inquiries from the press
- "Instant messaging"
- "Text message" notifications
- Collaboration workspaces
- Online meetings
- Video conferencing

Transition management should be responsible for establishing contact methods, communication protocols, and team meeting schedules, as well as remaining aware of the status of all aspects of the transition. Other communication protocols, such as distributing cell phone numbers, tracking issues, and updating and reporting status on the work plan, are also established.

Frequently, there are changes resulting from a transition that effect external clients. These changes must be communicated in ways sufficient to reach the clients in a timely manner. For instance, if public-facing phone numbers are changed, planning is needed regarding written communications and electronic messaging to ensure that clients know where to call and have time to learn the new channels without losing service.

A poor transition in call centers can damage trust with clients indefinitely and create unintended consequences. There are three key components identified as minimum coordination and communication requirements for a call center transition. These are:

- Put a change management process (defined below as a State Action Request(SAR)/Service Request Initiation (SRI) Process) in place
- Develop Communications Plan
- Implement an Informal Communications Plan

Put SAR/SRI Process in Place – The initial scope that defines the transition is the best set of business needs defined at a point in time. As the transition progresses it is entirely possible that the scope of the transition may need to be changed to some degree. These changes must be formally documented.

The SAR/SRI refers to a very specific label used by one entity but could just as easily be called any other document type that conveys the intent of the document. This is a formal

communication from the business owner of the process to the project/transition team. It is meant to establish a formal change request to the existing scope of work with very specific components.

Each project and/or transition will have its own format, components and distribution techniques. In order to avoid confusion and chaos, it is strongly suggested that all such communications be filtered from the issuing agency/workgroup through the PMO. This will allow complete record keeping, tracking, and archiving of these critical documents. Typically, during a transition, these documents are minimized only those determined essential to the success and outcome of the transition. Most often, the content of these documents is discussed at a transition team meeting with all key section leads agreeing the components (issues description, alternative solutions, recommended solution, responsibility, and timeline) and the issuance of the formal document.

Develop Communication Plan – Although this step may seem somewhat obvious, the lack of a written communications plan has caused more than one transition to encounter significant challenges. Similar to most of the "administrative" functions of the transition, the development, maintenance and distribution of the communication plan lies solely with the PMO. Certainly, the magnitude of the transition dictates the complexity of the communication plan, but a basic plan will include both formal and informal communications to the project stakeholders (internal and external partners). The formal portion will be quite prescriptive and contain the minimum requirements for weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual progress reports. The plan will also provide insight into the employed governance model, key personnel and staff directives for dealing with the press and other public facing agencies.

Implement Informal Communications Plan – The informal communications plan reflects those items that are quite fluid and frequently change without the requirement of approvals or a committee decision process. One very typical informal communication item is the distribution list for ad-hoc meeting agendas and meeting minutes.

WBS	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Nov 14, '10							Nov 28, '10						
					S	T	T	S	M	W	F	S	T	T	S			
1	⊕ Project Management Office Tasks	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
2	⊕ Facility Business Structure	9 days	Wed 11/17/10	Mon 11/29/10														
3	⊕ Transition Operation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
4	⊕ Staffing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
5	⊕ Training	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
6	⊕ System and Equipment Testing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
7	⊕ System and Operations Readiness Assessment	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
8	⊕ Implementation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
9	⊖ Coordination and Communication	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
9.1	Put SAR/SRI Process in Place	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
9.2	Develop Communications Plan	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
9.3	Implement Informal Communications Plan	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
10	⊕ Risk Management and Issue Resolution	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
11	⊕ Change Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
12	⊕ System Integration	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
13	⊕ Security Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														
14	⊕ Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning	1 day?	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10														










Project: Transition Project Plan-comp.1 Date: Mon 12/6/10	Task 	Milestone 	External Tasks 
	Split 	Summary 	External Milestone 
	Progress 	Project Summary 	Deadline 

Exhibit 53: Work Plan – Project Coordination and Communication Tasks.

**Communication requirements, both internally and externally are captured in this section of the project plan.*

Risk Management and Issue Resolution

The risks and issues management process identifies, assesses, manages, monitors, mitigates, and resolves risks and issues during the transition. The overall goal of this process is to progressively reduce exposure to events that threaten the accomplishment of transitional objectives. To do this properly, it is best to establish a risk management and issues resolution plan and adopt a tool to track the risks and issues as they are identified.

To many, the terms "risk" and "issue" are often used interchangeably. While the two terms are related, they are not synonymous. A risk describes a situation that could occur. Risks capture the probability of an undesirable event occurring and the significance of the consequences of the occurrence. An issue refers to a problem involving a significant choice between two or more alternatives for a problem that is happening now. Once a risk is realized, it becomes an issue, which will be managed through the project's adopted tracking (tool) method. An issue might adversely affect a requested component of the transition, project budget, quality, schedule, performance, system service, or system design. To help clarify the difference between a "risk" and an "issue" the following examples are provided:

Risk: Of the clients that will be serviced under the transitioned services, approximately one out of every three will require bilingual services in Spanish. Given the demographics of the job force within the commuting distance of the new call center location, there is a probability (risk) that there will not be enough bilingual CCRs to serve the Spanish-speaking clients.

Issue: The hiring process has been completed and only 20 percent (20 out of 100) of the CCRs are bilingual with sufficient skills to answer the Spanish-speaking calls. If, based on an equal distribution of calls the call center exceeds 100 calls in a given period, there is a very high probability that 13 of the calls in Spanish will not be able to be answered by a Spanish-speaking agent.

There are, as shown in the sample project work plan two key tasks in the risk management and issue resolution area. They are:

- Develop risk management and issue resolution process, and
- Implement risk management tracking tool.

Develop Risk Management and Issue Resolution Process - It is important to develop a strategy to identify, analyze, track, control, and communicate risks early during the transition period. A well-defined transition plan anticipates risks and builds in steps to address them, promoting adherence to agreed-upon timelines.

Steps in this strategy should include:

- **Identifying Risks:** Before risks can be managed, they must be identified. Once the risk is identified, risk analysis and planning should be facilitated, tracking and monitoring issues through to resolution.
- **Analyzing Risks:** Analysis is the process of converting risk data into risk decision-making information. Analysis provides the basis for the managers to work on the “right” risks.
- **Monitoring Risks:** Personnel must monitor risk on an ongoing basis during the transition. Through a continuous, disciplined risk management process, all stakeholders' interests are protected. Tracking consists of monitoring the status of risks and actions taken to ameliorate them.
- **Controlling Risks:** Risk control corrects for deviations from planned risk actions. Once risk metrics and triggering events have been agreed upon, there is nothing unique about risk control. Rather, risk control melds into project management and relies on project management processes to control risk action plans, correct for variations from plans, respond to triggering events, and improve management processes.
- **Communicating Risks:** Risk communication lies at the center of the model to emphasize both its pervasiveness and its criticality. Effective communication is vital to risk management, particularly in the transition period.

In order to appropriately manage the risks and issues transition in a uniform and timely manner, the "rules of engagement" outlined below should be agreed upon by all parties working on the transition. Failure to achieve this collaborative spirit could easily result in chaos, missed deliverables and transition delays. The following are the assumptions associated with a well-grounded risks and issues management plan:

- All parties will use the same tracking tool to record, manage, and report on risks and issues. (**Note:** A common tool, although quite costly, for this is Hewlett-Packard's Project and Portfolio Management Center software package – formerly known as Mercury ITG; however, a "home grown" solution can be developed in MS Office Excel).

- The PMO team has sole responsibility for recording and managing all risks and issues. Members of the transition team will filter their identified risks and issues to the assigned PMO staff member.
- Prioritization of risks and issues as well as initial determination and/or changing of the criticality of the risks and issues are collaborative processes made by key transition team members.
- Software "bugs" are not maintained in the risk and issues management tool.
- Changes in scope or alterations of the methodology for achieving the "desired state" may result from identified risks and issues. However, once these have been translated into a scope change and agreed to by all team members, the item is "closed" in the risk and issues management tool with an annotation to refer to a number "change document."

Often transition teams are tempted to minimize "overhead" processes such as Risk Management and Issues Resolution or, at a minimum, reduce this to a less formal approach. There are very specific objectives of the resolution process that should be recognized and addressed, such as:

Risk management objectives:

- Escalating risks as needed, in real time;
- Monitoring risk status to determine need of mitigations step and contingency step execution;
- Developing proactive and contingent response actions to identified risks; and
- Implementing risk responses promptly based on timely identification of a risk occurrence.

Issue management objectives:

- Escalating issues as needed, in real time;
- Conducting a Root Cause Analysis of issues;
- Identifying the issue source while providing direction to the correct resources;
- Identifying approaches to resolve the issue and to provide management with an estimate of the situation;
- Applying lessons learned in order to address process improvements to prevent a recurrence of the same issue; and
- Reporting to ensure that information to management keeps stakeholders informed of the issue and resolution.

Implement Risk Management and Issue Resolution Tracking Tool –. At a minimum, the tracking solution should capture the follow data elements:

Risk Management

- Request Type: Risk
- Request Title: Short but complete description of the risk
- Control: Level of influence the transition team/project has on mitigating the risk
- Risk Area: Probability: The likelihood that the risk will be realized
- Consequence: The impact of this risk if it is realized
- Risk Phase: Transition

- Operations/Functional Area: Program or project area affected by the risk (include multiple areas if necessary)
- Risk/Impact Descriptions: Detailed descriptions including risk area, probabilities, consequences and potential impacts
- Risk Mitigation/Contingency Plans: Required for all critical priority risks and are encouraged for all risks
- Notes: Additional details and updates
- References: Attachments or references to other risks and/or issues

Issue Resolution

- Request Type: Issue
- Priority: Low, minor, medium, high or critical
- Title: Short but complete description of the issue
- Due Date: Date by which the issue is expected to be resolved
- Operation/Functional Area: Transition Team/Operation area
- Issue Description: Detailed description including circumstances and known impacts
- Root Cause: Description of the facts known about the cause of the problem
- Notes: Additional details and updates
- References: Attachments or references to other risks and/or issues

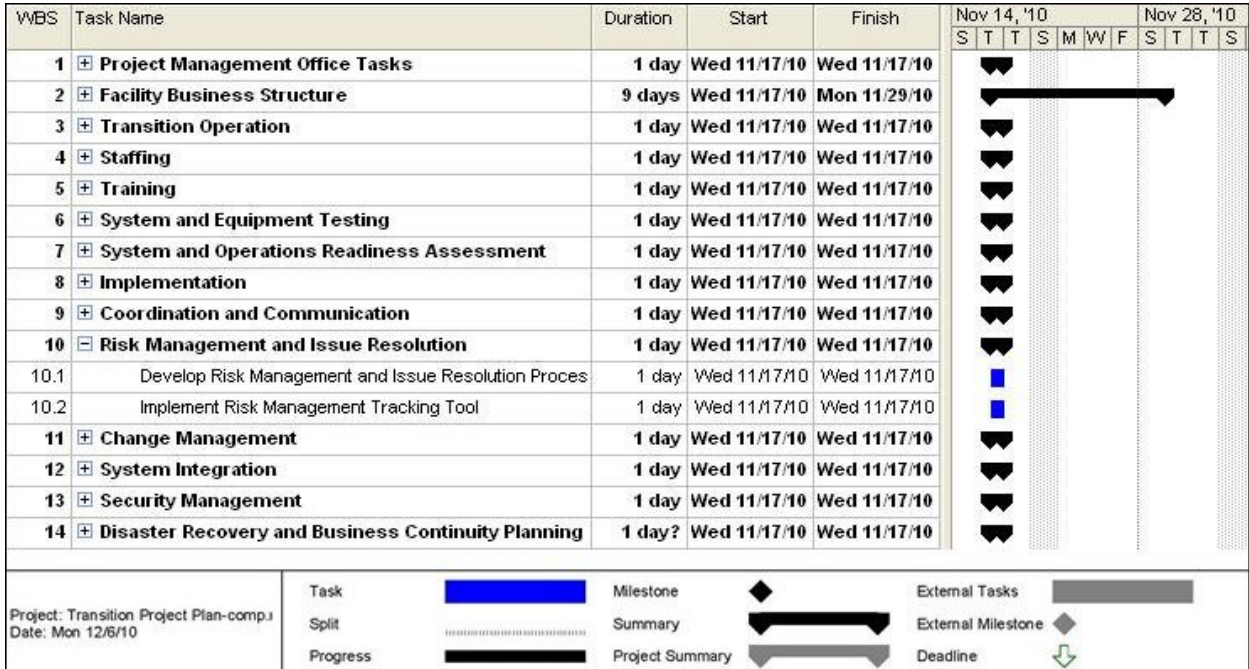


Exhibit 54: Work Plan – Risk Management and Issue Resolution Tasks.

**There are two key components of the transition plan that address risk and issue management.*

Change Management

Change to any process, even one as clearly defined as a transition plan's scope of work, is highly likely to occur on any given project. The primary purpose of the Change Management step is to ensure change is systematically handled and documented.

There are only two major tasks associated with the Change Management: Develop the change management process and implement change management tools. These are, however, probably the most important tasks to be monitored by the PMO staff. If not properly controlled, change can cause serious delays, scope creep, and insert unwanted failure points in the transition process.

Develop Change Management Process – The task will establish a very rigid procedure for documenting a recommended change (including why the change is needed, what are the alternatives and why this is the recommended approach), presenting it for review in advance of the meeting to discuss the suggested change, and providing an assessment of the impact on time, materials, personnel, schedule and budgetary considerations.

The change management process will be the tool used to:

- Initiate corrective actions;
- Institute preventive action; and
- Repair defects

The procedures developed in preparation for the change control process during the transition phase will include:

- Steps to change the scope of the transition;
- Steps to change policy and procedures;
- Steps to document change requests, change actions and rejected/denied changes; and
- Methodology for documenting how changes will be approved, validated, and implemented.

Implement Change Management Tools – There are a number of methods used to manage change some requiring extensive documentation and very formal processes. The primary purpose of this step is to establish a single tool to be used universally by the entire transition team to document the change from its inception as an idea/improvement/mitigation to a discovered problem through the assessment process, ending with the results of the change management meeting.

It is not necessary that a COTS tool be purchased to control the submission, tracking, approval, and evaluation processes associated with change management. It is important to establish, in writing, a formal policy and procedure detailing the change control process. This policy must be accepted by all transition team members and participants in the transition. The documented process must establish a standard format, required attachments/artifacts, and submission process to ensure all participants are clear on the requirements for requesting a change. It is equally important that the approval/denial process, including how it will be

reviewed, validated and measured (during and after implementation), is thoroughly documented.

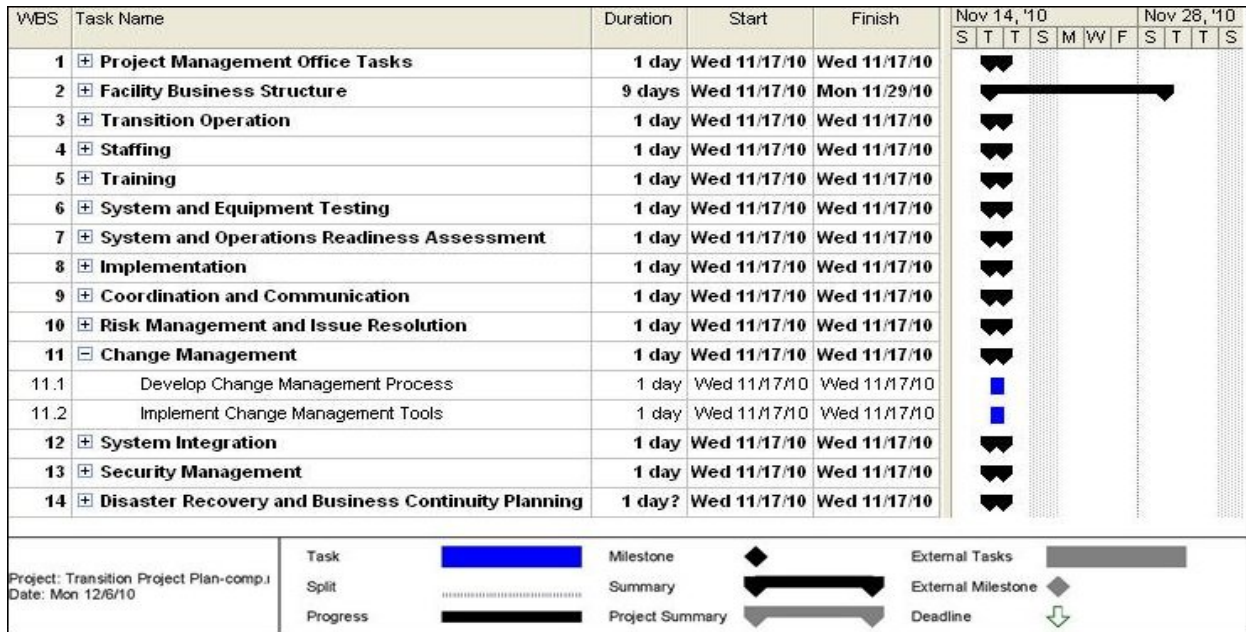


Exhibit 55: Work Plan – Change Management Tasks.

**Establishing a formal change management process provides a standard process required in order to alter any part of the transition plan.*

System Integration

An integral part of the system preparations during transition requires the efforts necessary to utilize data captured by other systems and ensure for the interoperability of the systems the feed each other data elements. These functions must be in place and operationally ready (tested) as part of the overall preparation for a "go live" date. The following tasks are required as part of this system integration process:

Convert Data from Current Systems – The completion of this task is necessary prior to the System and Operations Readiness Assessment tasks. Since conversion of the data can be completed independent of many of the other system tasks, it is given its own place in the transition plan. This task will use sub-tasks to obtain existing data elements, record layouts, and data conversion cross walks and conversion algorithms as necessary. It is recommended that States run test conversions of the data long before the actual transition in order to test the program for conversion errors, identify data irregularities and allow time for cleanup, filtering, re-testing, etc.

Implement Networking to Access State (Other) Systems – Even though the systems developed for the transition and operation phases will have detailed requirements identified to respond to access other systems the ability to "communicate" with these systems needs to be established through physical and logical connectivity protocols. Additionally, users must have their logon rights provisioned to show whether or not they are "allowed" to access these other

systems. This task ensures those connectivity points are established. The System and Operations Readiness Assessment task will test the abilities provisioned in this set of tasks.

Select and Procure New Systems – Throughout this section, a number of new systems including a LMS (Training), Asset and Configuration Management Systems, etc. have been suggested solutions. This task will be developed to list all of these new systems ensuring they have been procured and installed. The System and Operations Readiness Assessment task will test the abilities provisioned in this set of tasks.

Integration of Business Operations – In many transitions, the project is launched to upgrade software systems, refresh technology, and merge staff to gain some economies of scale. There is also the possibility that the purpose of the transition is to integrate operation "a" and operation "b" for efficiency. Sometimes this is a byproduct of a major system enhancement and other times it is in direct response to a change in scope or operations processing due to legislated changes. No matter what the root cause of the integration, careful planning must occur for this type of a task in a transition plan. The integration of one or more operations into a single enhanced operation can require another full set of tasks already dedicated to other scope changes (e.g. develop work instructions). This merging of tasks needs to be carefully evaluated to ensure the scope of the task responds to all areas affected by the merge process.

Areas to consider:

- Business Process Flows;
- Technology Impact (System Interfaces, database structure);
- Training Documentation;
- Updating Knowledge Management System; and
- User and System Testing.

WBS	Task Name	Duration	Start	Finish	Nov 14, '10							Nov 28, '10				
					S	T	T	S	M	W	F	S	T	S		
1	Project Management Office Tasks	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
2	Facility Business Structure	9 days	Wed 11/17/10	Mon 11/29/10	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
3	Transition Operation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
4	Staffing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
5	Training	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
6	System and Equipment Testing	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
7	System and Operations Readiness Assessment	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
8	Implementation	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
9	Coordination and Communication	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
10	Risk Management and Issue Resolution	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
11	Change Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
12	System Integration	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
12.1	Convert Data From Current Systems	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■											
12.2	Implement Networking to Access State (Other) Systems	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■											
12.3	Select and Procure New Systems	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■											
12.4	Integration of Business Operations	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	■											
13	Security Management	1 day	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											
14	Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning	1 day?	Wed 11/17/10	Wed 11/17/10	▼											










Project: Transition Project Plan-comp.1 Date: Mon 12/6/10	Task		Milestone		External Tasks	
	Split		Summary		External Milestone	
	Progress		Project Summary		Deadline	

Exhibit 56: Work Plan – System Integration Tasks.

**These tasks provide the business critical data continuity and access to the new project. Integration of existing operations into a new operation can require a transition plan in and of itself.*

Security Management

It is critical that the assets purchased during the transition for the operation phase be available when the "go live" date is reached. Therefore, during the early stages of the *Facility Business Structure* steps it is important to ensure physical security measures are in place, tested and operational prior to the arrival of the assets.

There are four primary tasks included in the transition phase that provide the appropriate security measures. These are:

Implement Security Systems – Compliance with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 suggests in its framework for "Physical Access Controls" (paraphrased and condensed version) that equipment control (into and out of facility) must be included in the physical access to patient (client) information. Since the systems supporting call centers has access to systems containing client data, it follows that a physically secured facility is essential to HIPAA compliance.

There are four variations to this task that are often considered in the establishment of physical security for call centers providing health and human service operations. One or more of these measures listed below may be employed:

- **Proximity card (access badge) system** – includes a plastic swipe card required for access to the building and then internally to the various functional areas of the operation. Certain internal areas, such as human resources and the server room, require limited access and therefore are typically set up as a separate reader zone in the proximity card system. In lieu of a security card system, facilities may be equipped with a cipher code (requiring digital entry of an individual access code) system.
- **Closed circuit television system** – monitors, at a minimum, all external doors and records all movement in and out of the facility.
- **Intrusion alert system** – this physical security system option only becomes critical when the facility is at ground level and includes windows. This system will emit a loud piercing alarm if a window is broken and/or a door is opened anytime other than during normal business hours.
- **Security guard** –while not a "system," another level of physical security that is often employed is the presence of a security guard at the front lobby helping control access to the facility. These individuals can be contracted from a security agency, provided as part of the facilities services or a full time staff position.

Implement Security Processes – After implementation, the security measures noted above will still need to have some directives surrounding them that provide order and standardization. These would include such elements as:

- Creation and issuance of security badges, hours of operation and access rights (by day of week and hour of day);
- Confidentiality and Security compliance;
- Confidentiality of Federal Tax Information;
- HIPAA compliance and handling of Protected Health Information (PHI);
- Reporting of Fraud;
- Security Incident Reporting;
- Escalation Call Tree Procedures;
- Control of access for visitors, vendors and maintenance staff;
- Inclement Weather Policy;
- Front desk sign-in log utilization;
- Package delivery and receipt logs processes;;
- Confidential document destruction policy; and
- Clean desk and closed blinds policy.

Develop Materials and Train Staff on Security –For each of the items outlined in the implementation of security processes, particularly HIPAA compliance, reporting of fraud and confidentiality and security compliance, corresponding curricula must also be developed. During this stage, the security and training departments (see *Training* section) will need to coordinate to develop and plan for the delivery of the materials that define these policies.

Develop Security Plan –Developing a formal security plan that defines security processes, including the security measures associated with the system components (password and logon requirements, etc.), is highly recommended. This plan should be compiled early in the transition phase in order to have it available for reference during the hiring and training of staff.

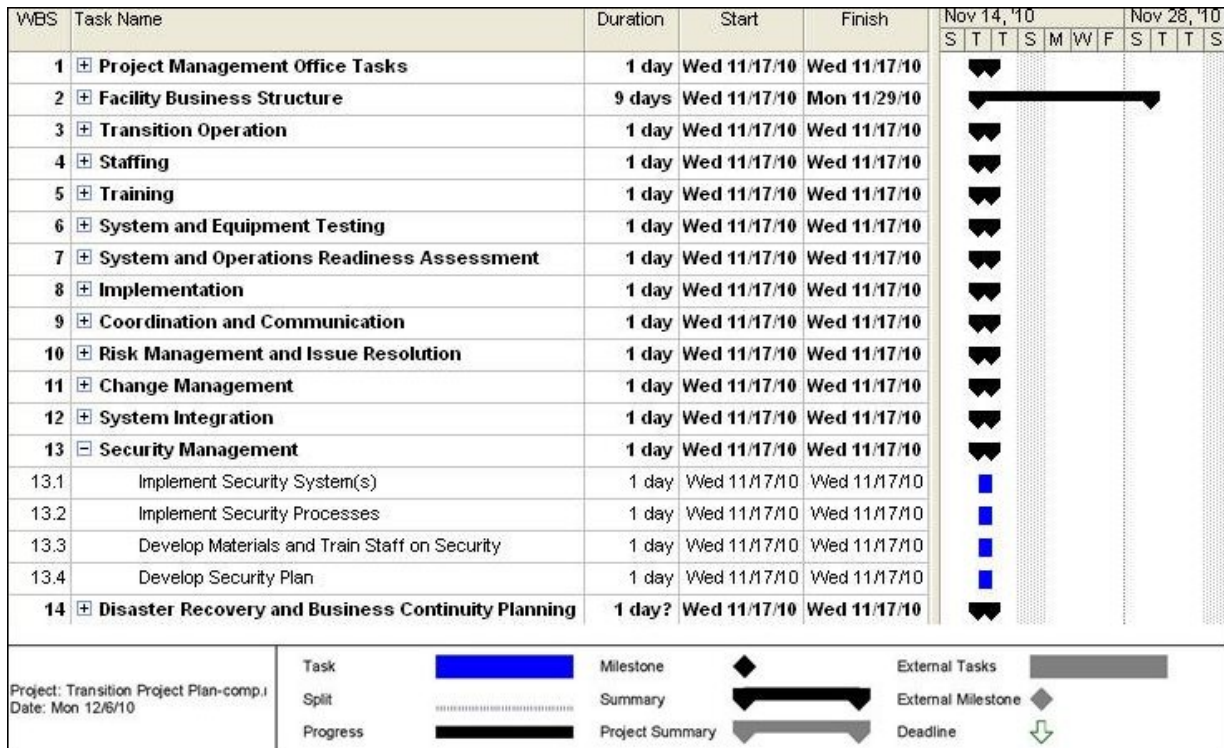


Exhibit 57: Work Plan – Security Management Tasks.

**These tasks establish the foundation of all security matters during transition that provide a secure environment during both the transient period and the operational phases.*

Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Plan (DR/BCP)

When a project is designed to operate at a single location, the planning for a disaster takes on a very large price tag that often prevents the implementation of a true disaster recovery and/or business continuity model. Distributed work locations require the ability to serve local clients from multiple work locations. While these work locations need ample space and similar equipment to allow business to proceed in a dual-operating mode, they also provide for built-in continuity of operations if planned appropriately. For instance, telephone systems would need to have the ability to route calls from one place to another.

Disaster recovery and business continuity planning (DR/BCP) will establish the need for a comprehensive plan to be executed in the event of a "disaster" (loss of service in one of the buildings) which could be as simple as a temporary electrical spike or a weather condition (ice

storm) preventing employees from getting to the work space or, in the worse case, the total loss of a building.

As discussed earlier, the risk of a disaster cutting off all service is significantly reduced through the use of two locations with full redundancy and operational capability. However, having dual (or more) locations is not, in itself, a disaster recovery plan. The ability to roll all incoming calls to the unaffected area is not enough if that location is not prepared to handle the increased volume. The work effort for a disaster recovery/business continuity process associated with a transition may seem small with only three tasks identified. However, these tasks represent significant work effort in order to be fully compliant with the industry-accepted components of a DR/BCP. These tasks are:

Develop Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity Plan– A well developed DR/BCP can be very extensive but it must address a very small (in size or duration but not necessarily in the disruption of service) incident such as a temporary loss (an hour or two) of phone lines to the ultimate disaster experienced in the loss of an entire facility. This task will develop the actual plan that provides the infrastructure, governance and conditions under which a disaster is declared, a building is evacuated, how staff are notified of incidents and the steps to be taken by senior management in the event of an incident. There are a number of industry-standard models available in white papers and public documents that can be used as a template for creating a plan. There are also a number of government agencies, Web sites, and non-profit organizations that have sample models that can be used as the foundation of a DR/BC plan. These include FEMA, the Department of Homeland Security, the National Fire Protection Association, www.ready.gov, www.disasterassistance.gov, The Institute for Continuity Management (www.drii.org) and The Disaster Recovery Journal (www.drj.com). There are also a number of for-profit entities that will provide (on a fee basis) analysis and assessment of risks, disaster recovery plans and business continuity services.

Test DR/BCP – There have been a number of DR/BCP efforts completed and put on a shelf in the appropriate office(s). This defeats the purpose of the DR/BCP and minimizes its effectiveness. At a minimum, a DR/BCP needs to be exercised at least once a year. The call center environment presents a unique problem to this testing need. Most call centers have performance standards that would be seriously hampered if a full exercise of the DR/BCP were executed. In order to minimize these issues, a common practice for the DR/BCP test in call centers is to use the "table top" exercise during which a mock emergency is presented in a scenario and the participants work through the steps that would be exercised in the event of a real incident similar to the mock scenario.

Implement DR Center – Using a dual call center scenario developed in the beginning of this section, the business continuity position (multiple buildings accomplishing the same work effort that are geographically separated), would be considered to provide a strong potential for survivability. This portion of the scenario covers the BCP aspect of this task. The DR aspect is typically a reference to data center redundancy, both internally when designing and standing up the hardware (servers) and a fail over location that provides complete system redundancy and operability in the event the primary center experiences an outage. This task, and those in the *Systems Operations Readiness Assessment* section, would address these issues.

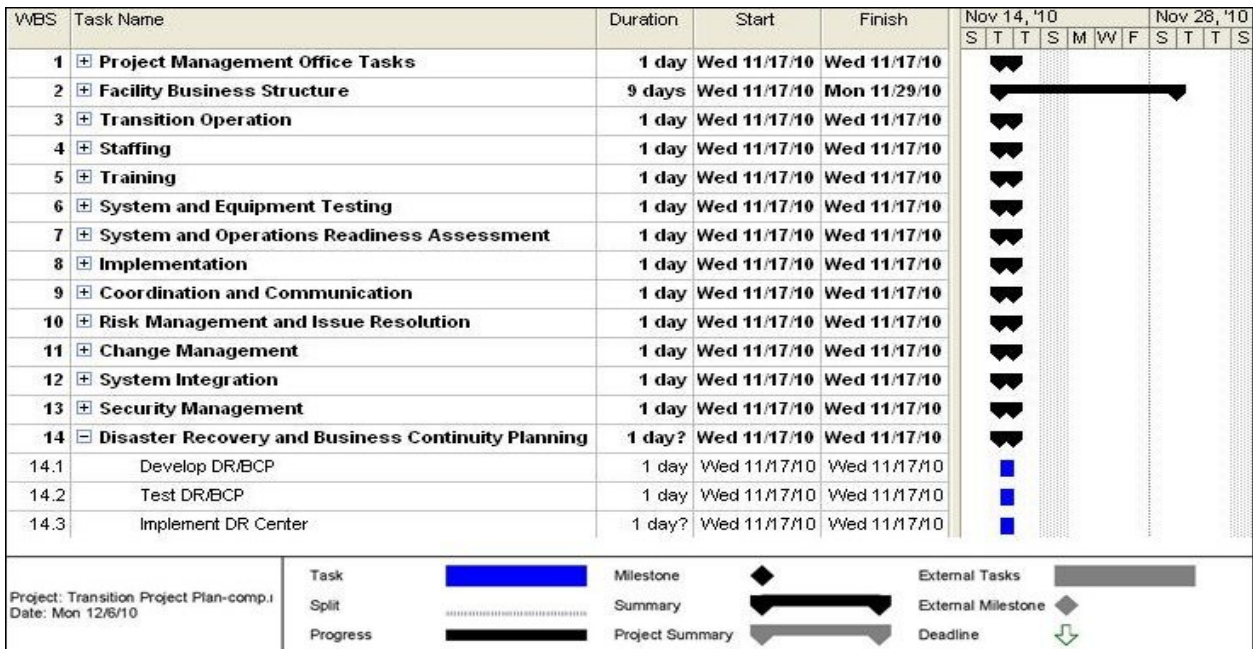


Exhibit 58: Work Plan – Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity Planning Tasks.
**This task set is the major risk mitigation process developed during the transition phase.*

Lessons Learned

Lesson Category:	Policy/Training
State	Arizona
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	There was a lack of understanding and knowledge about the IVR and Call Center processes by the training department in the development of their training.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	Cons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ineffective training due to not understanding the process. • Staff confusion.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	Staff was incorrectly trained and often sent back by supervisors for retraining.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	The training team was invited to Call Center to redevelop their training while partnering with Call Center Management staff.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	N/A
Lessons Learned:	Involve the training department in the development and testing of the Call Center and IVR. This will assist them in developing dynamic training for staff.

Lesson Category:	Strategic
State	Texas
Inputs: What was the problem, what were the assumptions / constraints	A lack of awareness and education of the Call Center and vendor process/functions. Ensure field staff is aware of the call center process and job function assignment.
Process: Decision factors, pros/cons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failure to educate field staff in advance of implementation on the specific functions and performance expectations of the CCR and the call centers staff results in staff confusion, misinformation, and client frustration. • Lack of education results in incorrect information being relayed to the client, causing frustration. It is important for the new process to be supported by all staff, including field staff. • Revisit CCR and retained eligibility functions frequently, and evaluate for ongoing business development enhancements to the business process. • The evaluations can be completed through either "field visits" or staff meetings to ensure staff continue to understand the role of the CCR. • It is important to educate stakeholders and advocates early on how the call center works and what information is available from the IVR and a CCR. • Provide safety nets until performance levels are met. • It is an up-front investment activity but a better long-term investment for performance and can eventually be scaled down.
Outputs: Result or outcome/decision	State processes and other education documents were created to provide a detailed breakdown of vendor functions for field staff.
Result: Did you solve it? Other consequences good/bad	State processes are updated as enhancements are made to the system.
Adjustment or Follow-up:	Developed a more detailed PowerPoint for educating field staff as the call center functions rolled out across the state.
Lessons Learned:	Upfront invest in the education of the field staff and stakeholders will ensure successful coordination of the eligibility process.

Exhibit 59: Lessons Learned—Transition.¹

¹ Section 11(e)(6) of the Food and Nutrition Act (the Act) restricts the SNAP certification interviews and final decision on eligibility determination to State merit system personnel. Over the past few years, several States have used private contract staff to perform functions traditionally performed by merit system personnel such as providing application assistance, verifying information and answering case-specific questions. The outsourcing of these functions resulted in a more complex and difficult enrollment process, added complexity to the application process and confusion over the division of responsibilities between public and private employees. Based on the results of these projects, FNS further restricted tasks that involved any client contact to merit system personnel in our January 20, 2010 guidance “Federal Support for Enrollment and Application Processing Costs.” States are required to seek approval from FNS to use non-merit system personnel in a limited capacity in order to ensure continued Federal Financial Participation (FFP) support.

REFERENCES AND THE CALL CENTER COMMUNITY

Organization	Contact and Email
FNS	Please contact your regional office
Pennsylvania	Lourdes Padilla (lpadilla@state.pa.us)
Tennessee	Kent Stevenson (Kent.Stevenson@tn.gov)
Indiana	Mike Settle (mike.settle@fssa.in.gov)
Florida	Kara O'Brien (kara_o'brien@dcf.state.fl.us)
Utah	Tricia Cox (tcox@utah.gov)
Washington	Shawn Hartline (Shawn.hartline@dshs.wa.gov)
Texas	Elisa Garza (Elisa.garza2@hhsc.state.tx.us)
Arizona	David Martinez (DavidMartinez@azdes.gov)

Exhibit 60: Organization References, Contacts, and Roles.

APPENDIX A: CALL CENTER DEFINITIONS

Definitions

The Incoming Calls Management Institute publishes a valuable definition guide: "ICMI's Pocket Guide to Call Center Management Terms." In addition, "Call Center Management On Fast Forward" by Brad Cleveland and Julia Mayben, also provides specific call center terminology definitions. Here are some of the commonly used terms as defined in these references:

- **Abandoned Call (AB):** Also referred to as a lost call. The caller hangs up before reaching an agent. Abandoned calls are available directly from Automated Call Distributor (ACD) reports. Abandonment Rate (AB Rate), though often a primary objective, is not a concrete measure of call center performance because it is driven by caller behavior, which cannot be directly controlled; it should be of secondary importance to service level. *Related terms: Abandonment Rate, Caller Tolerance, Service Level.*
- **Adherence to Schedule:** A general term that refers to how well agents adhere to their schedules. The measure is independent of whether the call center actually has the staff necessary to achieve a targeted service level and/or response time; it is simply a comparison of how closely agents adhere to schedules. *The two terms most often associated with adherence include:*
 - 1) *Availability – The amount of time agents were available.*
 - 2) *Compliance – When agents were available to take calls.**Other related terms: Occupancy, Real-Time Adherence Software.*
- **After Call Work (ACW):** Also called Wrap-Up and Post Call Processing (PCP). Work that is necessitated by and immediately follows an inbound transaction. Often includes entering data, filling out forms and making outbound calls necessary to complete the transaction. The agent is available to receive another inbound call while in this mode.
- **Agent:** The person who handles incoming or outgoing calls. Also referred to as a Customer Service Representative (CSR), Telephone Sales or Service Representative (TSR), rep, associate, consultant, team member, customer service professional, staff member, attendant, or specialist.
- **Agent Group:** Also called Split, Gate, Queue, or Skills Group. A collection of agents that share a common set of skills, such as being able to handle customer complaints.
- **Agent Status:** The mode an agent is in (e.g., talk time, after-call work, unavailable, etc.).
- **Answered Call:** When referring to an agent group, a call is counted as answered when it reaches an agent. *Related terms: Handled Call, Offered Call, Received Call.*
- **Auto Available:** An ACD feature whereby the ACD is programmed to automatically put agents into Available after they finish Talk Time and disconnect calls. If they need to go into ACW mode, they have to put themselves there manually.
- **Auto Wrap-up:** An ACD feature whereby the ACD is programmed to automatically put agents into ACW mode after they finish or are disconnected from a call. When they have completed any after-call work required, agents put themselves back into Available mode.
- **Automated Attendant:** A voice processing capability that automates the attendant function. The system prompts callers to respond to choices (e.g., press one for this, two for that) and then coordinates with the ACD to send callers to specific destinations. This function can reside in an on-site system or in the network.
- **Automated Call Distributor (ACD):** The specialized telephone system – or more specifically, a software application – that is used in incoming call centers.
 - **Basic ACD capabilities:** routing calls; sequencing calls; queuing calls; encouraging callers to wait (by playing delay announcements and, in some cases, predicting and announcing wait times); distributing calls among agents; capturing planning and performance data,

both real-time and historical; and integrating with other systems (the ACD has become just one of many systems in a comprehensive solution). *Related terms: Agent Group, Conditional Routing, Pooling Principle, Skills-Based Routing.*

- Types of ACDs: PBX-based ACD (the ACD is a function on a PBX system); standalone ACD (ACD is the sole function); hybrid ACD (via CTI or an add-on server); key systems; centrex (Central Office-based ACD); third-party managed/hosted ACD services; and IP Telephony (IP infrastructure with ACD functionality).
- **Availability:** The time agents spend handling calls or waiting for calls to arrive. See Adherence to Schedule.
- **Average Handle Time (AHT):** The sum of average talk time plus average time for after-call work. Data on AHT is available from ACD reports for incoming calls, and from ERMS and Web servers for e-mail and Web contacts. AHT may also be available from a workforce management system. *Related terms: Talk Time, After-Call Work.*
- **Average Speed of Answer (ASA):** A measure that reflects the average delay of all calls, including those that receive an immediate answer. It is available from the ACD. Also called Average Delay.
- **Average Time to Abandonment:** The average time that callers wait in queue before abandoning. The calculation considers only the calls that abandon.
- **Benchmark:** A term historically referred to as a standardized task to test the capabilities of devices against each other. In quality terms, benchmarking is comparing products, services, and processes with those of other organizations, to identify new ideas and improvement opportunities.
- **Blocked Call:** A call that cannot be connected immediately because: A) no circuit is available at the time the call arrives, or B) the ACD is programmed to block calls from entering the queue when the queue backs up beyond a defined threshold. Consequently, data on blocked calls may come from the ACD, local telephone company, or long-distance provider. When a call is blocked, the caller hears a busy signal. *NOTE: Agencies can have their carriers play a message to avoid clients hearing a busy signal. (See *Controlled Buses*).
- **Call Center:** ICMCI defines call center as "A coordinated system of people, processes, technologies, and strategies that provides access to organizational resources through appropriate channels of communication to enable interactions that create value for the customer and organization." Essentially, call center has evolved into an umbrella term that generally refers to groups of agents handling reservations, help desks, order functions, information lines, or customer services, regardless of how they are organized or what type of transactions they handle.

Characteristics of a call center generally include:

- Calls (contacts) go to a group of people, not a specific person--agents are cross-trained to handle a variety of contacts;
- Routing and distribution systems (e.g., ACD systems and/or e-mail response management systems) are generally used to distribute contacts among agents, put calls in queue when all agents are occupied and provide essential management reports;
- Many centers use advanced network services (e.g., 800 service, DNIS, ANI) and interactive voice response capabilities; and
- Agents have real-time access to current information via specialized database programs (e.g., status of customer accounts, products, services and other information).

Management challenges include:

- Forecasting calls, calculating staffing requirements and organizing sensible schedules; and

- Managing the environment in real-time and getting the right people in the right places at the right times, doing the right things.

As organizations everywhere transition telephone-centric centers into multichannel environments, many are questioning the term call center. *Related terms: contact center, interaction center, customer care center, customer support center, customer communications center, customer services center, sales and service center, technical support center, and help desk.* Additionally, industry-related terms, such as *reservations center (the travel industry), hotline (emergency services) and trading desk (financial services)*, are commonly found in specific types of organizations. The jury is still out on which terms will emerge as front-runners in coming years.

***NOTE:** This guide uses the term call center to refer to *any customer contact/customer interaction environment.* (See *Call Center Value Proposition*).

- **Call Quality (Contact Quality):** Typically, a measure that assigns a value to the quality of individual contacts. The following are components of a quality call when viewed at an organization wide level:
 - Customer does not get a busy signal (when using telephone) or “no response” (from Web site)
 - Customer is not placed in queue for too long
 - Agent provides correct response
 - All data entry is correct
 - Agent captures all needed/useful information
 - Agent has “pride in workmanship”
 - Contact is necessary in the first place
 - Customer receives correct information
 - Customer has confidence contact was effective
 - Customer does not feel it necessary to check-up, verify or repeat
 - People “down the line” can correctly interpret the order
 - Customer is not transferred around
 - Customer is not rushed
 - Customer is satisfied
 - Unsolicited marketplace feedback is detected and documented
 - Call center's mission is accomplished

Related terms: Monitoring, System of Causes

- **Call Recording:** A type of monitoring in which the supervisor or automated system records a sampling of calls. The person conducting the monitoring then randomly selects calls for evaluation of agent performance. (See *Quality Monitoring System*).
- **Calls In Queue:** A real-time report that refers to the number of calls received by the ACD system but not yet connected to an agent.
- **Computer Simulation:** A computer-based simulator program that predicts the outcome of various events in the future, given many variables. In call centers, it is most often used to determine staff required to meet service levels and response times in complex routing environments.
- **Computer Telephony Integration (CTI):** CTI integrates the functions of telephone networks, voice switching, data switching, computer applications, databases, voice processing, and alternative media. With this comes the ability to exchange commands and messages between systems. This results in the ability to monitor and control calls, events, applications, information, and endpoints. CTI can add or enhance functionality in a number of areas: coordinating voice and

data, intelligent routing, integrated reporting, desktop soft phone, and outbound dialing.
(*Vanguard*)

- **Cost Per Call:** Total costs (fixed and variable) divided by total calls for a given period of time.
- **Customer Relationship Management (CRM):** The process of holistically developing the customer's relationship with the organization. It takes into account their history as a customer, the depth and breadth of their business with the organization, as well as other factors. Customer relationship management generally uses applications and database systems that include elements of data mining, contact management and enterprise resource planning, enabling agents and analysts to know and anticipate customer behavior. *Related terms: Business Rules, Customer Loyalty, Customer Satisfaction, Customer Retention Rate.*
- **Dialed Number Identification Service (DNIS):** A string of digits that the telephone network passes to the ACD, VRU, or other device to indicate which number the caller dialed. The ACD can then process and report on that type of call according to user-defined criteria. One trunk group can have many DNIS numbers.
- **Erlang:** One hour of telephone traffic in an hour of time. For example, if circuits carry 120 minutes of traffic in an hour, that equals two Erlangs. *Related terms: Erlang B, Erlang C, A.K. Erlang (listed as Erlang, A.K.), Queue Dynamics.*
- **External monitoring** – External monitoring can augment the internal process and provide a benchmark for the accuracy and effectiveness of the internal process. External monitoring can be completed by the client organization for an outsourced program.
- **First Call Resolution (FCR)** – Many contact centers are unsure of how to define and measure FCR. For our purposes, First Call Resolution occurs when the caller's inquiry or issue is resolved in one call. There is no transfer or callback. Organizations can create efficiency and customer satisfaction by enabling the frontline agents to handle as many operations as possible without transfer. Callers want to have the confidence that whomever they reach will be able to resolve all of their issues and answer all of their questions.
- **Forecasting:** The process of predicting call center workload and other activities. (See *Forecasted call Load vs. Actual and Forecasting Methodologies*).
- **Handled Calls:** The number of calls received and handled by agents or peripheral equipment. Handled calls do not include calls that abandon or receive busy signals.
- **Hold Time:** The average time that agents put callers on hold to conduct research, get help, or transfer the call.
- **Incoming Call Center Management:** The art of having the right number of skilled people and supporting resources in place at the tight times to handle an accurately forecasted workload, at service level and with quality.
- **Internal self-monitoring:** An internal team dedicated to monitoring calls and measuring the effectiveness of each agent. The process should include a matrix for scoring each call as well as minimum number of inspections for each agent. The process should be completed by providing feedback to the agent.
- **Interactive Voice Response (IVR):** A system that enables callers to use their keypad (or spoken commands if speech recognition is used) to access a company's computer system for the purpose of retrieving or updating information, conducting a business transaction or routing their call. Also referred to as a voice response unit. (*Vanguard*)
- **Load Balancing:** Balancing traffic between two or more destinations.
- **Local Area Network (LAN):** The connection of multiple computers within a building, so that they can share information, applications and peripherals.

- **Logged On:** A State in which agents have signed on to a system (made their presence know), but may or may not be ready to receive calls.
- **Longest Available Agent:** A method of distributing calls to the agent who has been sitting idle the longest. With a queue, Longest Available Agent becomes "Next Available Agent."
- **Manual Wrap-up:** An ACD feature where the agent elects to put himself or herself in wrap-up status.
- **Non ACD In Calls:** Inbound calls that are directed to an agent's extension, rather than to a general group. These may be personal calls or calls from customers who dial the agent's extension numbers.
- **Occupancy:** Also referred to as an agent utilization or percent utilization. The percentage of time agents handle calls versus wait for calls to arrive; the inverse of occupancy is idle time. For a half-hour, the typical calculation is: $(\text{Call volume} \times \text{average handling time in seconds}) / (\text{number of agents} \times 1,800 \text{ seconds})$. The terms adherence to schedule and occupancy are often incorrectly used interchangeably. They not only mean different things, they move in opposite directions. When adherence to schedule improves (goes up), occupancy goes down. Further, adherence to schedule is within the control of individuals, whereas occupancy is determined by the laws of nature, which are outside of an individual's control. *Related terms: Adherence to Schedule, Idle Time, Queue Dynamics, True Calls Per Agent.*
- **Offered Calls:** All of the attempts callers make to reach the call center. There are three possibilities for offered calls. (1) They can get busy signals; (2) They can be answered by the system, but hang up before reaching an agent; (3) They can be answered by an agent. Offered call reports in ACDs usually refer only to the calls that the system receives.
- **Outsourcing:** Contracting some or all call center services to an outside company.
- **Overflow:** Calls that flow from one group or site to another. More specifically, intra-flow happens when calls flow between agent groups and Interflow is when calls flow out of the ACD to another site.
- **Peaked Call Arrival:** A surge of traffic beyond random variation. It is a spike within a short period of time.
- **Predictive Dialer (defined under Dialer):** Dialers are technologies (hardware/software) for automating the process of making outbound calls to lists of people. In addition to placing outbound calls, dialers may provide campaign management and scripting functionality, track the disposition of calls, and provide detailed real-time and historical reporting. Predictive dialing is an application that instructs the switch to dial multiple simultaneous calls from a preloaded list of phone numbers. It seeks to match the number of completed calls with the number of available agents so that completed calls are immediately handled by an agent. Agents also receive a data screen about the call. The system classifies all calls launched (e.g., connect, busy, no answer, answering machine, network tones) and updates the database accordingly. *Related terms: Abandoned Rate (Outbound), Completed Call.*
- **Private Branch Exchange (PBX):** A telephone system located at a customer's site that handles incoming and outgoing calls. ACD software can provide PBXs with ACD functionality. Also called Private Automatic Branch Exchange (PABX).
- **Queue:** Holds callers until an agent becomes available. Queue can also refer to a line or list of items in a system waiting to be processed (e.g., e-mail messages).
- **Random Call Arrival:** The normal, random variation in how incoming calls arrive.
- **Real-Time Data:** Information on current conditions. Some "real-time" information is real-time in the strictest sense (e.g., calls in queue and current longest wait). Some real-time reports require

some history (e.g., the last x calls or x minutes) in order to make a calculation (e.g., service level and average speed of answer).

- **Response Time:** The time it takes the call center to respond to transactions that do not have to be handled when they arrive (e.g., correspondence or e-mail).
- **Rostered Staff Factor (RSF):** Alternatively called an Overly, Shrink Factor or Shrinkage. RSF is a numerical factor that leads to the minimum staff needed on schedule over and above base staff required to achieve service level and response time objectives. It is calculated after base staffing is determined and before schedules are organized, and it accounts for things like breaks, absenteeism, and ongoing training.
- **Scheduling Exception:** When an agent is involved in an activity outside of the normal, planned schedule.
- **Screen Monitoring:** A system capability that enables a supervisor or manager to remotely monitor the activity on agent's computer terminals.
- **Service Level:** Also called Telephone Service Factor (TSF). The percentage of incoming calls that are answered within a specified threshold: (X percent of calls answered in Y seconds.)
- **Service Level Agreement:** Performance objectives reached by consensus between the user and the provider of a service, or between an outsourcer and an organization. A service level agreement specifies a variety of performance standards that may or may not include "service level."
- **Skill-Based Routing:** An ACD capability that matches a caller's specific needs with an agent that has the skills to handle that call, on a real-time basis.
- **Schedule:** A plan that specifies when employees will be on duty, and which may indicate specific activities that they are to handle at specific times. A schedule includes the days worked, start times and stop times, breaks, paid and unpaid status, etc.
- **Talk Time:** The time an agent spends with a caller during a transaction. Includes everything from "hello" to "goodbye."
- **Telecommuting:** Using telecommunications to work from home or other locations instead of at the organization's premises.
- **Threshold:** The point at which an action, change or process takes place.
- **True Calls Per Hour:** Actual calls an individual or group handled divided by Occupancy for that period of time.
- **Trunk:** A telephone circuit linking two switching systems. Also called a Line, Exchange Line, or Circuit.
- **Trunk Group:** A collection of trunks associated with a single peripheral and usually used for a common purpose.
- **Trunk Load:** The load that trunks carry. Includes both Delay and Talk Time.
- **Unavailable Work State:** An agent work State used to identify a mode not associated with handling telephone calls.
- **Visible Queue:** When callers know how long the queue that they just entered is, and how fast it is moving (e.g., they hear a system announcement that relays the expected wait time).
- **Voice Response Unit (VRU):** Also called IVR or Audio Response Unit (ARU). A VRU responds to caller entered digits or speech recognition in much the same way that a conventional computer responds to keystrokes or clicks of a mouse. When the VRU is integrated with database computers, callers can interact with databases to check current information (e.g., account balances) and complete transactions (e.g., make transfers between accounts).
- **Workforce Management (WFM) System:** Software systems that, depending on available modules, forecast call load, calculate staffing requirements, organize schedules, and track real-time

performance of individuals and groups. Workforce management can be performed for a single site or for networked sites. In a multisite environment, forecasting and scheduling may be performed at a central site or in a decentralized fashion at each site. Tracking and adherence monitoring is generally a local function. *Related terms: Computer Simulation, Erlang B, Erlang C, Forecasting Methodologies, Queue Dynamics.*

- **Workload:** Often used interchangeably with Call Load. Workload can also refer to non-call activities.
- **Wrap-Up Codes:** Codes agents enter into the ACD to identify the types of calls they are handling. The ACD can then generate reports on call types, by handling time, time of day, etc.

APPENDIX B: PROCESS AND FUNCTIONALITY OF STATES' CALL CENTERS

**A SURVEY OF STATES SNAP CALL CENTERS (CCs) WAS
CONDUCTED THROUGH THE USDA REGIONAL OFFICES. THE
RESULTS CAN BE ACCESSED THROUGH THE FNS WEBSITE AT
THE FOLLOWING LINK:**

**[HTTP://WWW.FNS.USDA.GOV/SNAP/RULES/MEMO/2011/CALL_
CENTER_SUMMARY.PDF](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/memo/2011/call_center_summary.pdf)**