



WIC MIS/EBT Implementation Subproject

November 2013 Update

The official project Kick-Off was held in Burlington on November 13th. It was attended by over 50 individuals involved in the project, including participants from our contractors Ciber (MIS transfer and implementation), JPM Chase (EBT implementation and hosting), and DRC (quality assurance), as well as state folks including VDH IT, VDH WIC, AHS IT, DII IT, and VDH District Office WIC staff (who are members of our Readiness Coordinator Network). Presentations were given by Ciber, JPM, DRC, VDH IT, and the project managers from DII, VDH IT and VDH WIC. (FNS representatives from the Boston regional office were unable to attend due to the federal government "shut down" and sequester limiting their ability to travel.)

Everyone appreciated the opportunity to put faces to names, to share information about approaches, experiences and hopes for the project, and to begin discussions on how simultaneous implementation of MIS and EBT can be best coordinated.

Dr. Harry Chen, Commissioner of the Department of Health, opened the meeting with a welcome and expressed strong support for the implementation project, calling it one of the more important VDH initiatives for the coming years. State Project Manager Nancy Rowell, PMP, and Project Sponsor Donna Bister (WIC Director) expressed their vision that this project will serve as a successful example for other States and FNS. The contractors all congratulated the Vermont team for what they felt is the best project planning they had witnessed in their WIC experience.

November 14th saw the contractors and key implementation stakeholders from VDH IT, AHS IT and DII meeting to discuss specific project issues. Attention was focused immediately on the need for Ciber and JPMC to work together on the interface between the MIS and EBT systems, as the Vermont project will be the first time the Mountain Plains States Consortium MIS will be used in conjunction with online (instead of offline) EBT. (Several other states have indicated their desire to transfer the MPSC system and implement online EBT, so our experience will be instructive as well as facilitate the projects in those states.)

December will see the development and adoption of the numerous plans being created for different aspects of the project, such as the detailed work breakdown schedules for each contractor (which are being compiled, along with state tasks, into a single MS Project Plan for the project.). There are plans for Schedule Management, Hardware, Data Conversion, Clinic Enablement, and so on. (The SharePoint folder containing draft plans contains at least 30 separate plans.) Some plans will direct the work of one contractor, others both contractors, and others the contractors as well as include the state's role.

In addition to these implementation plans for contractors and state IT personnel, our project has identified 26 "subprojects" to be carried out by the WIC program itself. These include dealing with "legacy" issues such as closing out the Home Deliver program. Others involve the establishment of our EBT retail vendor network, developing new policy and regulations driven by the move to EBT, redesigning WIC clinic flow in light of the MIS implementation, etc. These "subprojects" are coordinated by a separate project manager, providing focused

support and direction to the already busy WIC staff, and a “bright line” between work the WIC program must complete, versus work the contractors must complete.

Early recognition of the complexity of this simultaneous implementation, and embracing “lessons learned” from other WIC programs as well as in-state IT projects, has informed this project’s insistence on solid and robust project management tools.

All the parties are also planning now for a two week “Joint Application Review” session in January, where we will get into the nitty gritty of configuring the systems to Vermont’s requirements. This planning phase is on schedule to conclude by January 31, 2014, at which point the Design/Configuration/Design phases will commence. We still intend to start pilot operations (MIS and online EBT) in May 2015, with roll-out completed by March of 2016.

Vermont WIC was the first state agency to be granted permission from FNS for a simultaneous implementation of a new MIS and WIC EBT. This reflected their confidence in our project’s early pre-planning work, which all of the contractors and the state’s own IT project external reviewer have also praised. It’s our intention to carry on the rigorous project management model we’ve used in the past to oversee and coordinate the work of the contractors, and the preparation by WIC personnel to adopt these new technologies.

The Implementation planning phase for the project commenced in earnest in October. The Kick-Off Meeting for the project was scheduled for November 13th and 14th in Burlington. Our scheduled pilot kick-off in May 2015 may seem like a long time from now, but there is much to accomplish by then. The State Project Manager has already identified over 3000 discreet tasks to be accomplished, and over 200 stakeholders to be engaged in this project.

If you have questions about the project, please be in touch with us by email at wic@state.vt.us.