

HUMAN SERVICES TECHNOLOGY: TRY IT BEFORE YOU BUY IT

Human services agencies want to modernize their technology to manage the ripple effects of COVID-19, but struggle to figure out how with revenue hits, budget cuts, and furloughs.

Here are three common options that can help you dip your toes in the water before committing to a full technology implementation to mitigate risk while laying the foundation for long-term success.

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Testing the technical, economical, and operational viability of a potential solution to inform your decision.

Establishes realistic expectations, success measures
—
Provides data to support your ROI/business case

Can take months to execute
—
May overlook practical problems that won't become apparent until the solution is in place

TECHNOLOGY CONSULTATION

Analyzing current technology and processes to provide recommendations on the best path to modernization.

More informed decisions
—
Allows your agency to set its own pace, budget

Problems could worsen the longer you maintain the status quo
—

Risk losing momentum if you aren't prepared to act on recommendations

PHASED PROJECT APPROACH

Implementing a small-scale project amongst a targeted group of users to work through roadblocks of a solution prior to a full roll out.

Limits unforeseen issues to a small group of staff and prevents problems from escalating
—
Provides a solid plan for moving forward once the first phase is successful

Complicates funding, justification, and approval processes
—

Results can be misleading if the project isn't set up appropriately

PHASED PILOT IMPLEMENTATION IN ACTION: Ventura County Human Services Agency

Ventura County Human Services Agency (HSA) partnered with Northwoods to take a version of this approach when implementing our child welfare solution, Traverse®.



Ventura County HSA started with a small pilot project tailored to a specific division that could benefit from the new tool right away.

Agency staff and leadership provided feedback throughout the first phase of the project to ensure the solution continued to evolve with their needs.

The agency validated that advancing child welfare services delivery requires access to case data from anywhere and is now rolling out Traverse to the rest of CFS.

TECHNOLOGY CONSULTING IN ACTION: Hubbard County Department of Social Services

Hubbard County Department of Social Services (DSS) engaged Northwoods to review and analyze the current state of their existing technology and processes.

Based on the recommendations provided by Northwoods, Hubbard County DSS first provided a centralized document management system anyone in the agency can access.

Next, Hubbard rolled out Traverse to adult social services and child protection social workers to provide greater insight into cases.

Later, they'll centralize the agency's calendar and implement additional work management tools to streamline communication and collaboration between programs.



HOW DO WE GET STARTED?

- 1 Have a solid problem statement and measurable project goals.** Use real-world scenarios and statistics to explain the problem and show how you'll measure the success of your goals.
- 2 Prioritize readiness.** Analyze your agency's readiness in terms of technical infrastructure, business processes, and culture to identify the key actions you'll need to take to sustain change.
- 3 Remove the risk factor.** Survey your staff to understand what types of technology they're comfortable using, what they struggle with, and how they view solutions they've been given in the past.
- 4 Build a meaningful partnership.** The right partner will have spent time learning your agency's problems and processes to configure their solutions around your specific needs.
- 5 Set yourself up for continued success.** Find out what resources a vendor provides to ensure high user adoption during the first phase of the project as well as identify areas for growth over time.