State of Arkansas Department of Information Systems (DIS)
State of Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS)

IBM Cúram Eligibility and Enrollment Framework (EEF)
Program Assessment and Go Forward Strategy and Recommendations

November 10, 2015

Background

The State of Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) selected IBM's Cúram in 2013 to be the engine for the Arkansas Eligibility and Enrollment Framework (EEF) to determine eligibility and manage benefits for DHS. EEF was to support the new Affordable Care Act Medicaid determination standards, which look at household income on tax filings, required by federal law.

But because Arkansas did not get the timely business functionality expected from the Cúram solution, DHS with the support of contractors other than IBM has had to heavily customize its software. As of July 2015, the EEF project faced unanticipated increasing costs and project delays which limited DHS's capacity to perform eligibility redeterminations.

DIS contracted in July 2015 with Gartner, Inc. to perform an assessment of the current state of the EEF at DHS. Gartner is a worldwide independent consultant on IT technology that does not promote or sell any vendors' offerings. The consulting team brought into Arkansas has performed similar reviews of human services technology in the states of Tennessee, Ohio, Florida, Vermont and Hawaii.

Summary Conclusion

Based on the assessment and analysis of alternatives available, the Cúram solution is seen as a viable option for meeting DHS needs. However, Arkansas in its Systems Integration RFP must be clear that vendors are welcome to propose alternate software engines besides Cúram. Whether or not Cúram is recommended by the Systems Integrator in their proposal response to the RFP, DHS should not move forward with any additional development work under the current approach and contracting vehicles. Additional State personnel and executive oversight outside of DHS are needed to implement these recommendations.

Go Forward Recommendation

Gartner recommends that the state take the following four actions:

1. DHS should not move forward with any further development under the current implementation approach until the Executive Agencies makes significant enhancements of capabilities, including:

    – Updating the Governor's and legislature's vision for health and human services. The vision can then determine the appropriate IT solution for its clients

    – Procuring the services of a Systems Integrator (SI) under a fixed price, deliverable based contract in a fair and open solicitation that considers alternate software engines

- – Enhancing IT program management across the whole of state government, not just at DHS.

    – Strengthening Enterprise Architecture requirements to make sure new EEF development is to state standards.

    – Enhancing strategic vendor management capabilities to make sure that vendors have the correct tools and meet goals

2. The Cúram solution can be a viable choice, however, to mitigate development risks:

    – There should be no further deployment of the Cúram solution

    – All development activities should be stopped

    – Only MAGI Medicaid Maintenance and Operations, critical issue resolution and prioritized enhancements to address CMS mandates should continue, until such time that a new Systems Integrator is selected

3. DHS should go to market for a Systems Integrator (SI). The new procurement effort must include a number of critical goals:

    – The SI RFP's scope would be for Traditional and MAGI Medicaid, CHIP, SNAP and TANF (Gartner is recommending that the State consider moving TANF into the solution for a variety of reasons), with options for other smaller social service programs

    – The procurement should be an open competitive process for a fixed price deliverable based approach allowing the market place to provide the State with a best value approach to SI services and technical solution for the software engine

    – The scope would also include full data conversion and retirement of the legacy systems

4. DHS needs to improve its ability to execute such a large and complex health and human services technology project by-

    – Promoting organizational change management in order to redesign DHS business processes that change with new technology

    – Revamping the governance process with identification of key stakeholders as well as defined focus and mandates. Governance of the project may to include Governor's Office representatives as well as personnel from key Executive Agencies

    – Enhancing the DHS Program Management Office with the right mix of internal and external resources to oversee implementation.

    – Defining technology standards across all program areas. While our analysis focused on DHS, these standards would likely apply to all state agencies.

Gartner has provided a detailed timeline, list of needed temporary and permanent resources to execute these recommendations, and schedule of actions. DHS has received materials that provide a detailed roadmap that will enable the State to move forward in a structured manner towards a comprehensive and effective eligibility and benefits system.

These recommendations are based on Gartner's independent review of documents related to the EEF project as well as interviews with multiple stakeholders. A more extensive PowerPoint slide deck detailing the findings, recommendations and roadmap is available for review by interested parties upon request.