C!A
Change & Innovation Agency

State of Alaska
Department of Health and Social Services
Division of Public Assistance

Assessment Report

January 7, 2016

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1.0 Introduction

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services Division of Public Assistance (DHSS/DPA), in cooperation with the Change & Innovation Agency (C!A), has undertaken a Business Process Redesign (BPR) initiative consisting of five phases:

Phase 1: Assessment – How are local office operations conducted? While evaluating staffing, training, organizational structure, and existing processes, C!A looks for inconsistencies, gaps, best practices, and barriers to adoption and sustainment of new business practices.

Phase 2: Design – A statewide design team creates "As-Is" and "To-Be" process maps and learns the BPR principles; a workgroup develops consistency tools, readiness checklists, policy recommendations, and final recommendations for the BPR initiative for Leadership approval.

Phase 3: Planning/Training – Site specific training, train the trainer local leader events, development of site-specific readiness checklists, designation of responsible party and due dates for items identified in the checklists. Preparation for go-live includes local leaders training staff on new the business process and use of consistency tools, as well as PathOS training. C!A will conduct weekly readiness calls to confirm progress is made on the checklist items. The week prior to go-live, each office must have a go/no-go decision made.

Phase 4: Implementation/Go-Live – The week of go-live includes a Monday morning training and celebration of the coming changes, a Monday afternoon dry run to help staff become more comfortable in the process, test systems availability, and identify any issues/develop mitigation plans; Tuesday marks the official go-live date. During go-live, each office will work out the bugs and sustain the initiative with help from the central office and C!A.

Phase 5: Monitoring/Observation – During the weeks following go-live, C!A will conduct weekly calls with local leadership, monitor PathOS results, and provide coaching for success. If major gaps exist, C!A associates will return to the site to assist leadership with corrections.

1.1 Phase 1 Assessments

BPR assessments were conducted to provide an operational overview of service delivery within the DHSS/DPA. These assessments were conducted at an organizational and local level in the following offices:

1. Coastal: October 14-16 (assessment conducted by Leo Ribas and Brian Donohoe)
2. Kenai: October 14-16 (assessment conducted by Art Fredrickson)
3. Fairbanks: October 26-28 (assessment conducted by Leo Ribas, Brian Donohoe)

4. Ketchikan: October 26-28 (assessment conducted by Clint Brooks and Brian Donohoe)
5. Gambell: November 16-19 (assessment conducted by Clint Brooks, Arturo Serrano, and Brian Donohoe)
6. MatSu: November 16-19 (assessment conducted by Clint Brooks, Arturo Serrano, and Brian Donohoe)
7. Juneau District Office: December 22 (assessment conducted by Brian Donohoe)

No initial site assessments were conducted in Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Kodiak, Homer, Sitka, or Muldoon.

DPA is committed to improving services to families while finding the most efficient approach to service delivery. Alaska understands the importance of streamlining and coordinating efforts to reduce unnecessary costs and barriers to access despite large workload increases. DPA faces unique challenges operating a large and complex system, one that is designed to serve the most vulnerable and needy Alaska residents. A new set of business practices is essential to help the Division regain staffing capacity, standardize processes, and ensure efficient case processing.

Due to numerous factors, the Division continues to accrue a backlog of unprocessed work. DPA's operations and ability to execute strategic initiatives is negatively impacted by unnecessary demand being placed on the organization from redundant customer visits, calls, and mail. These unnecessary interactions also create a need for staff to rush through their work, thus threatening the quality of determinations.

C!A conducted office assessments to observe operations, review data, and interview staff and managers at the seven offices listed above. Interviews were also conducted with various leaders at DPA central office in Juneau, as well as at Field Services Support in Anchorage. This report will describe the pressures impacting the current service delivery model as well as strengths that may serve as building blocks for developing recommendations during the BPR design phase.

2.0 Overall Observations

One of the most pressing challenges facing human services agencies in the United States is declining staff resources combined with increased demand for services. Like most states, Alaska is no exception to this harsh reality. Recent budgetary pressure due to declining oil revenue has impacted the state's ability to secure funds in support of additional staff, overtime, and long-term non-permanent DPA staff. These challenges are felt most acutely in local DPA offices where dedicated public servants determine eligibility and manage the existing public assistance workload and other much needed social services. Staffing has not been able to keep pace with demand, as evidenced by the fact that from January 2002 to June 2015, the statewide number of individuals receiving the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) grew by 92% (from 45,379 to 86,954 "eligibles", respectively).

Imagine the public assistance delivery system in DPA as a water pipe that was already flowing at full force in 2002, with applications flowing into the top and determinations flowing out the bottom. The continued pressures of the past few years have caused us to force more water into the top of the pipe, while restricting the size of the pipe.

The public assistance delivery pipeline is under an immense amount of pressure. As workload has increased, natural reactions to dealing with this challenge have only amplified the pressures and increased the amount of water flowing through the pipes. The result is that customers are interacting with DPA processes, either in person or virtually, no less than three to five times prior to workers making a determination for a regular SNAP and medical application, despite recent efforts to achieve eligibility determinations at the time of the initial interview with the customer.

> *Additional transactions with customers are being created unnecessarily.*

For example, in December of 2015, the MatSu office processed 791 initial SNAP applications and Gambell processed 891, for a total of 1,682 SNAP applications. But due to the multiple contacts with clients, staff were forced to manage an average of 5,046 to 8,410 customer interactions. The result of these compounded transactions, when viewed statewide, is that DPA is working close to deadlines or processing late.

When cases are close to deadline, customers call the office or walk in to ask the infamous question, “where’s my stuff?” Our natural response is to attempt to find out where the clients are in the system. However, in order to do that, we must dedicate resources to this “access” point or take somebody off the production line to research the case. While eligibility workers are researching cases, they can’t be interviewing, verifying, or processing. Eventually, agencies find themselves spending significant capacity and energy managing unfinished work and tracking down unfinished cases, or searching for paperwork pertaining to a particular case. As a result, backlogs develop, and, worse, customers begin to slip through the cracks, causing additional rework.

> *The agency spends significant resources answering customer questions.*

As we visited with DPA leadership and staff to learn about current strategies and organizational goals, we were very encouraged on two fronts. First, we truly believe that DPA’ goals will be achieved. The leadership team identified the need for change long before C!A entered the picture. DPA understands that capacity recovery is crucial to address the pressures facing the agency. We believe that the experience and expertise around process that C!A brings to the table, combined with the groundwork laid by leadership’s vision, will create the recipe for success in achieving DPA goals.

Second, there are great staff in Alaska to ensure these goals are met. While we visited with staff, it was clear that they are feeling the pressures. But it was also clear that staff are dedicated to helping those who need the services the Division provides. Their dedication was inspiring, and their willingness to continue to hope for a solution left the C!A team convinced that the Division will achieve greatness.

3.0 Organizational/Operational Strengths

DPA faces unique challenges operating a large and complex system designed to provide a safety net to the most vulnerable and needy residents in the state. Even so, DPA has continuously found ways to support the staff who care and do everything within their capability to help. In the following subsections, we describe the organizational and operational strengths observed in Alaska.

3.1 Basic Understanding of Task-Based Model from Former "LEAN" Initiative

As agencies begin to move toward a task-based model, the first traditional step is to move away from having workers manage caseloads and all associated elements for their assigned cases (from cradle to grave) to managing a case during the course of a single eligibility event (initial application, redetermination, reported change). While this practice is still considered a caseload management model (whether it is a caseload of active cases or a caseload of pended applications and pended redeterminations), managing events helps reduce the number of interruptions workers face in the traditional caseload management model resulting in added focus for workers, and improved timeliness and accuracy for the agency. However, in the upcoming BPR design phase, C!A will likely explore additional opportunities to bring increased focus to workers by fine-tuning the existing hybrid task-based and shared workload model we observed being employed in the DPA offices we visited.

With the LEAN initiative that began in 2010, DPA made an attempt to move to a more solid business process. Based on our recent assessments at the DPA sites, it is apparent that many of the original LEAN concepts may have been redefined by local management and staff in a manner that does not benefit the Division. However, these concepts are worthy of rescue. Redefining and rebranding some of these elements may be an effective approach and should save the agency time and energy in developing a new delivery model. However, demanding accountability through a clearly defined process will be necessary.

3.2 Attempts to Verify Eligibility at First Contact

The most effective strategy to eliminate unnecessary and repeat customer visits as a way to increase staffing capacity is to address customer needs at the onset of a request whenever possible. Strategies such as providing same-day service for SNAP expedited households, making collateral calls, and checking electronic interfaces to verify circumstances allow agencies to make determinations at first contact with the customer. Several workers in the offices we visited reported implementing process strategies to make determinations in this manner. While all workers consistently rely on electronic interfaces such as DOL, other strategies and efforts vary in application, consistency, and scope.

The key to regaining staffing capacity lies in the ability of offices to implement a practice of One and Done or First Contact Resolution for all access points and processes. Implementation of these strategies will allow for applications to be processed and disposed of on the same day, and ongoing determinations and benefits to be authorized near same day. This was a fundamental element of the initial DPA LEAN strategy of 2010, and was documented in the Statewide Process Management Guide (SPMG). However, local offices interpreted the activity in different ways, with some abandoning the practice altogether. Redefining the concept statewide and holding staff accountable for results will be imperative for success in the model.

3.3 Same-Day Interviews for Applicants with Emergent Needs

All of the local offices we visited strive to help SNAP expedited applicants same or next day. Local leadership reported various practices to serve walk-in applicants without scheduled appointments instead of sending customers away only to come back or call them on a different date. However, most offices scheduled all appointments. Offices finding success in same-day interviews were covertly doing so; due to the transient definition of "emergent", workers often coached clients to mention the correct buzzwords, thus prompting the agency to see them same day. The approach to same-day or next-day interviews was greatly dependent on the office and the individual worker.

3.4 Making Collateral Calls

Some workers have placed an emphasis on making collateral calls to verify household circumstances not available through electronic interfaces or the eligibility system as a means to help achieve determinations as quickly as possible. While this practice is not widespread in the offices we visited, we were encouraged to learn that some staff appreciate the benefits of reaching a determination as soon as possible to eliminate unnecessary future interactions with customers. This is a positive practice that not only helps reduce the number of "case touches," but also positively impacts the time cases spend in pending status for verification.

3.5 Efforts to Achieve High Completion Rates

Many workers stated that every attempt is made to achieve a determination at the time of interview or processing of a case (completion rate), but overwhelmingly the workers stated that approximately 50% of the time cases were pended.[1] Achieving high completion rates ensures the agency is eliminating repeat and unnecessary customer interactions as a way to increase staffing capacity.

3.6 Creation of Uninterrupted Time (Protected Time)

Protected time is also listed in the next section discussing DPA challenges, but the focus here will be on the benefits and strengths of this practice. Giving workers time to process cases is a quality concept. Protected time, whether in the form of making overtime available or identifying a specific day in the week (i.e. Wednesday afternoons) for workers to catch up on processing their cases without scheduled appointments, gives workers the ability to focus on the task at hand without interruptions. Eligibility staff with caseload management responsibilities (whether it is a caseload of active cases or a caseload of pended applications/redeterminations) are faced each day with multiple interruptions. These interruptions include a worker's individual "pend lists", a full schedule of back-to-back interviews, customer calls, or customers coming into the lobby wanting to know about the status of their cases. Additionally, emergent cases coming through the Director's Office, "Unacted Report" case actions, and Hospital Presumptive Eligibility (HPE) Medicaid cases are assigned ad hoc and have the highest priority. All workers report interruptions and a lack of "quiet" time as the primary reason for not keeping up with their ever-increasing workload. Competing priorities and demands make it very difficult to complete multiple tasks. Likewise, continuous interruptions impact the quality of work as it takes a

[1] Workers estimate that approximately 50% of new applications are pended; however, that percentage varies depending on whether the worker is newer or more tenured. Newer workers typically reported pending few cases. They are more likely to make collateral calls to get the verification they need to complete a case. More tenured staff prefer to communicate with the customer via mail, providing the "checklist" of items for the client to provide when they inevitably return.

significant amount of effort to return and finish a task previously started. Even the most diligent and focused workers and unable to remain in a "flow state" of work. The most common factors contributing to quality errors are rushing through a case and a lack of continuity. Providing processing time is intended to allow eligibility staff to focus, and such focus is key to success in an environment where organizations are trying to accomplish more with less.

3.7 Leveraging Staffing Resources Statewide

The combination of setting alerts in the eligibility system in conjunction with "Z-Drive" scanned document images is an excellent step in the right direction. Electronic case files/tasks and statewide access allow DPA to virtually share workload and leverage staffing resources statewide when needing to balance workload to staffing ratios in district offices. The traditional method of caseload balancing was well-intentioned, and, at the time, was perhaps the soundest solution to equitably spread the Division's work across the different sites. Ultimately, a statewide solution allowing workers from all sites to "pull" work will be the most effective direction. While use of the Z Drive presents its own set of challenges, it is a good first step without the benefit of a fully-implemented electronic document management (EDM) platform.

3.8 Efforts to Standardize Documentation and Verification Procedures

DPA has devoted significant time to developing a standardized documentation format. Again, holding workers accountable for appropriate documentation practices is key. Likewise, a verification matrix is available to all employees in the office handbook that is distributed during training. This matrix is meant to serve as a job aid for employees, and includes the required verifications for SNAP, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Medicaid. While these standardized tools may be available, workers are not consistently using them as a means to reduce rework, increase completion rates, and help reduce repeat and unnecessary customer contacts. We will address this issue in the Challenges and Opportunities sections of this report.

3.9 Management and Staff Who Truly Want to Make a Difference

We were prepared to meet managers and staff at the regional and local level who were not interested in changing their current direction. However, very few staff provided a resistant perspective. Those who expressed negative attitudes were candid in sharing frustration about a process that often doesn't function as intended in real life; additionally, many staff shared the multiple problems with processing cases in ARIES. But overall, what we found was a group of staff who truly care about making a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable citizens in Alaska. We found managers who want to create the best possible delivery system for their staff and customers. We found workers who just want to connect eligible customers with food, cash, medical, and critical supports in the most accurate and expeditious manner.

We were impressed by the professionalism, friendliness, and commitment of all the staff with whom we met. Although they are overwhelmed at times with the backlog, recent increased demand for services, transition into a MAGI/non-MAGI environment, Medicaid expansion, and the introduction of ARIES and HPE, they are eager for change that will make their workdays less complex.

4.0 Organizational/Operational Challenges

4.1 Too Many "Touches" to the Same Case

Despite current efforts to achieve eligibility determinations at the time of the initial interview with the customer or processing of a case, there are opportunities to reduce the number of customer interactions in the eligibility determination process.

Cases are being touched too many times in the current model of work. As a result, the system is facing challenges maintaining quality, determinations achieved at the 30th day, impatient customers, staff feeling overloaded, and diminishing staffing capacity from managing multiple unnecessary customer interactions. The following describes, in general terms, the number of "case touches" for a customer applying for SNAP in-person at a local office:

- ✓ A greeter/clerk assesses the reason for the visit – **touch 1**
- ✓ A second clerk registers the case and schedules an interview for a future date or same day if the customer is expedite eligible – **touch 2**
- ✓ Application goes to a "scheduler" who assigns the case to an eligibility worker by round robin – **touch 3**
- ✓ During the interview with the customer, workers pend approximately 50%[2] of applications (*expedited benefits are issued if necessary along with a letter for postponed verification*) – **touch 4**
- ✓ Customer returns the verification and it is and routed to the worker who conducted the initial interview – **touch 5**
- ✓ During this time the customer has also usually called or visited the office to inquire about the status of the pended application – **touch 6**
- ✓ Eligibility worker processes the verification and makes a determination – **touch 7**
- ✓ Staff authorize and issue an EBT Card **– touch 8**

When we examine DPA workload and processes from the perspective of regaining staffing capacity, the opportunities are significant. For example, from July through December 2015, DPA disposed of an average of 10,370 applications per month. Assuming the offices are conservatively interacting with each applicant five times (apply, come back for interview, 50% are pended, verification is returned, customer calls to find out status, worker processes pended verification) the 10,370 applications can very quickly become 31,110 customer transactions.

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[2] Workers estimate that approximately 50% of new applications are pended, however, that percentage varies depending on whether the worker is newer or more tenured. Newer workers typically reported pending fewer cases. They are more likely to make collateral calls to get the verification they need to complete a case. More tenured staff prefer to communicate with the customer via mail.

These numbers assume that workers are achieving determinations in half of these cases at the time of the interview or processing of initial application when interviews are not required. Multiple touches are robbing Alaska of critical capacity.

When 10,000 applications become 31,000 interactions, the system is going to feel pressure. Workers will feel rushed, and burn out is imminent. Multiple touches also lead to cases in pending status, which leads to risk of error. When we wait until the end of the month to process cases, customer situations are sometimes different than they were at the time of application. When we are unaware of those changes, we run the risk of an error finding for that case. The fewer touches to a case, the lower the risk of error.

As more determinations are completed at first contact, the agency is able to recover staffing capacity by reducing the need to dedicate resources to finishing pending actions. For example, DPA could recover the capacity of 12 fully-trained staff going from a 50% to a 70% completion rate for the initial application workload alone.

Capacity Recovery Potential (Initial Applications Only)[3]

Transactions Avoided	Minutes Per Transaction	Capacity Recovered	Opportunity Cost
8,296 (assuming a 70% completion rate)	10 minutes	12 staff	2,400 to 2,880 more applications per month

As you can see, for DPA to feel like **they just hired 12 new staff** would most likely do wonders for both recovering from backlog and working today's work today. The bonus with this approach is that these 12 staff are already trained. The regained capacity provided by 12 staff would allow the agency to process an additional 2,400 to 2,880 applications monthly. The benefits are even greater when we factor in the redeterminations and changes workload.

4.2 Opportunity to Pend Less

Alaska's eligibility workers are pending (or not reaching disposition) approximately half of the cases at the time of interview or when first interacting/processing a case. Workers indicated that up to five out of 10 applications are being touched multiple times. As explained earlier in this report, high pend rates create repeat interactions with the customer, draining the agency of capacity that it does not have.

4.3 Appointments

The sites we visited schedule appointments anywhere between five to 16 days from the date of application. The practice of scheduling appointments delays the time to issue benefits and takes away staffing capacity to interview, verify, and process cases causing unnecessary interactions with customers. Our experience shows that 50% of scheduled appointments are no-shows. When a customer does not make their appointment, the organization spends precious time and resources re-scheduling appointments. Eligibility workers also lose capacity in the time spent waiting for the customer to start the interview. It is difficult to pick up another case while they are waiting because the customer could call or show up any minute, which would interrupt the

[3] Assumptions: Productivity time for staff members calculated at 120 hours per month to account for shrinkage.

worker from determination calculations, etc. In our experience, there are opportunities for DPA to avoid scheduling a significant number of appointments even in circumstances when the customer is applying via mail, online, or dropping off an application.

4.4 Lack of Standardization and Consistency

4.4.1 Lack Of Standardized Documentation

Case documentation is done differently at the district offices we visited depending on the individual worker's style. While significant effort has been expended on a standardized documentation method, the current system allows the worker to document via free-form text. Most of the workers we interviewed intend to document as they go during the interview, but many explained that they feel too rushed. As a result, they either document following the interview, the next day, or not until they work/finish the case when the verification is received from the customer. A delay in documenting the case means that the workers have to spend time recalling the interview.

For every 100 interviewers, there are 100 different documentation styles. Standardized documentation is one of the key elements in a successful task-based model. It is very important that when cases have to move between workers, the documentation is standardized. Our experience has been that when process/task-based models of work show mediocre results, the root cause is a lack of standardization of verification and documentation. When standard documentation is achieved, workers will not rework the cases, move much more quickly through the eligibility determination, and process cases with better accuracy.

4.4.2 Lack Of Standardization for Verification Practices

Verification practices are typically inconsistent between offices, and even between cubicles. The way people were trained and mentored early in their time at the agency has a significant impact on career-long practices. The fact that training around verifications has swung back and forth on both ends of the pendulum is also typically why we find inconsistencies. The bottom line is this: Half of DPA interviews are not ending with a determination, and consistent use of the agency's current verification policies would certainly reduce the percent of pending cases. As the number of pended cases decreases, so do repeat visits and phone calls.

As mentioned in the Strengths Section, a verification matrix summarizing required program verifications is available to serve as a job aid during the eligibility determination process, however, workers are not consistently using the tool to avoid over or under verification, increase completion rates, avoid unnecessary customer interactions, and help achieve consistency. The BPR Design Team will develop solutions to ensure consistency in verification practices.

4.5 Working to Deadline

Most workers in the sites we visited are currently working to deadline, meaning that they are processing eligibility close to the case becoming untimely. They often find themselves working off a "pending list", or processing verification close to the 30^{th} day. Depending on the site and the method of work assignment, this work list may be provided daily or at the beginning of the week. Workers also receive assignments ad hoc, based on "due today" status expressed in the Unacted Report. This method guarantees that cases are not worked until deadline.

The standard practice of scheduling appointments, high pending rate (50%+), and the need to carve out time to process returned verification is forcing workers to process cases close to deadline. The longer cases stay in pending status the greater the likelihood that customers will call or walk-in to inquire about the status of their cases, draining away valuable staffing capacity that could be directed to process additional work. Alaska, like many other states, finds itself in this cycle of chasing unfinished work.

The goal becomes operating at a level where "pend lists" are being checked only to act on cases where the customers failed to provide requested verification, as opposed to driving the work plan of all pending cases. DPA will achieve this goal when offices develop the appropriate processes to complete today's incoming work today.

4.6 Modified Task-based Process is the Most Prevalent Model for Organizing Workload

At all seven sites we visited, C!A discovered various methods of a task-based business process. This is encouraging, but will require refinement to establish a model that uncovers additional capacity.

The first traditional step for agencies moving to a task-based model is to transition away from having workers manage caseloads and all associated elements for their assigned cases (alpha assignments, all types of case actions, from cradle to grave) to managing a case only during the course of a single eligibility event (initial application, redetermination, reported change). This practice is still considered a caseload management model since workers end up managing a caseload of pended applications, redeterminations, or changes until determinations are made. While managing events helps reduce the number interruptions for staff, many of the same challenges workers face in the traditional caseload management model are still prevalent when managing a caseload of eligibility events, specifically the lack of focus for an extended period of time as workers find themselves switching back and forth from processing initial applications to handling redeterminations to acting on returned verification to managing pending lists. Also, the reliance on a single worker to process hundreds of case actions adds to the overall processing time—verification provided by a customer in response to a pended eligibility action (pended application, redetermination, change) often sits in worker queues in batches for many days until the worker has the time to process the returned verification.

In some locations, the method of work assignment is the primary culprit. Were supervisors able to assign "like" work, ETs would be able to remain in a flow state. Even with a push strategy, this might prove more productive. However, in a true task-based model, cases are triaged, ETs pull work requiring the same consistency tools, and thus are able to remain in flow. We will examine opportunities during the BPR design phase to provide additional focus to workers by fine-tuning the existing case/workload management model.

4.7 Lack of Multi-Program Staff

Staff who are trained in multiple programs add value to the agency and customers. Without cross-trained staff, two things happen: (1) wait times increase for those "specialty" customers who require services from multiple programs, and (2) customers are forced into dealing with multiple workers. DPA has done a good job ramping up ARIES MAGI workers, but this has come at the expense of EIS training. While C!A recognizes the pressure DPA Staff Development and Training (SD&T) faces in delivering the needed training, we are concerned that after July 2016 there will be fewer ARIES long-term non-permanent workers, and fewer overtime hours devoted to EIS supported programs. The result may be quite challenging, especially when considering the SNAP volume of case actions.

4.8 Lack of Real-time Data to Manage Staffing Resources and Outcomes

A new approach to delivering services requires a meaningful way to measure how efficiently and timely DPA conducts its work. This includes defining Process Measures to determine effectiveness. These measures need to be meaningful and universal, in that they can apply to all staff and offices, and be easy to implement (i.e. electronic reporting where available versus manual reporting). Measuring in **real-time** (minute by minute, day by day) the amount of work reaching the offices via lobby and non-lobby sources (online, mail, drop-off, fax), the type of work and/or reasons for office visits, the number of determinations completed at first contact, and transaction times to measure consistency, just to name a few, will allow DPA operations to better manage their limited manpower through fluid staff assignments. This will in turn allow operations to deploy worker efforts to areas that are experiencing increased need to avoid backlogs and situations that would result in untimely processing.

The goal is to manage the workload and staffing capacity with real-time data instead of reacting to some of the current operational reports (i.e. timeliness, accuracy, etc.) that provide only historic data.

4.9 IT Challenges

Though staff are eager and willing to transition to more automated processes, there are challenges that they encounter daily that are a continual source of frustration. Below are some of the IT challenges staff currently encounter.

4.9.1 Document Images

C!A is greatly encouraged by the use of the Z-Drive for imaging purposes. While this is an interim solution, it is far better than no imaging at all. Furthermore, it is key in leveraging statewide resources. The greatest challenge faced by DPA clerical staff is living in both a paper and an image world. Due to the great variation in clerical process around the state, as well as the staffing challenges faced by certain locations, scanning backlogs exist. This directly impacts timely registration, as well as a worker's ability to search and find documents in the drive. The most frustrating part of an ET's job is attempting to locate documents that are sitting in the filing area while they await scanning. Often, this process takes hours and rarely ends with a determination.

IT concerns about storage and maintenance requirements for supporting the Z-Drive and the latency issues faced by ETs when searching a scanned document are significant. C!A believes that part of the solution will be to scan documents to .tif rather than .pdf, to reduce file size, but this will require discussion with the vendor of the Division's scanners, as well as Department IT management.

4.9.2 *EIS and ARIES*

<u>ARIES Processing</u>
Across the board, ARIES users indicated that completing or "wrapping" cases was most frustrating. Success for ETs was sporadic, but most workers agreed that the system was improving.

<u>Disposing MAGI Combo Cases</u>
Cases requiring work in both systems creates a significant issue for the agency. C!A is quite aware that this is an interim solution, but currently the only answer is to cross-train staff or work in silos. C!A will be discussing this during the the design phase, but it appears that cross training will benefit the Division greatly until food and cash programs are processed in ARIES.

5.0 Summary

The strengths and challenges described in this report will provide the framework to help the BPR Design Team identify potential opportunities and develop recommendations. We will ensure the team is discussing and addressing these areas as they work through the process mapping and analysis phases.

We are confident the DPA staff selected to participate in the BPR effort will identify opportunities to recover staffing capacity and develop process strategies to help the agency address today's challenges. The very core of this effort will allow DPA to:

- Re-brand many of the 2010 LEAN concepts developed in the Kaizen events
- Rescue BPR fundamentals that have lost traction
- Revisit First Contact Resolution as a primary building block for BPR
- Provide workers with the ability to focus on the work of interviewing, verifying, and processing instead of focusing on chasing the unfinished work
- Eliminate unnecessary customer interactions
- Achieve consistency and reduce rework
- Bring added fluidity to respond to workload demands real-time
- Uncover hidden capacity
- Reduce cycle time for all transactions

We applaud you for your vision and direction. Our team is excited and honored to be your partner as we move forward to make this entire project a success.