

Innovation in Human Services Information Technology Recognized at ISM 2008

In 2005, the Information Technology Solutions Management for Human Services (ISM) started to formally recognize local and state government agencies which were forging ahead with innovative projects (risk be damned) by presenting an award in each of these three categories: Application of New Technologies, Collaboration Across Boundaries, and Innovation in Service Delivery.

There have been some worthy winners since 2005, but based purely on the number of nominations submitted – almost forty - none more so than those selected this year. The volume of nominations made the selection of the winners extremely difficult (so difficult that there was a tie in one category), but the selection committee, under the leadership of Darlene Thomas from West Virginia, did a superb job of coming up with these winners which were recognized as such at the ISM 2008 conference held August 24 through August 27, 2008 in San Francisco:

Application of New Technologies: This award recognizes the use of emerging information technologies in the arena of state and local human services. New technologies include technologies that have recently come on the market or ones that have not been widely used before in Human Services.

The 2008 award went to the Louisiana Department of Social Services, Child Welfare Division for their Leveraging Location Intelligence Initiative through the use of a Geographic Information System. This initiative enables the agency to visualize relationships, connections, and patterns in data allowing informed decisions to be made as well as increase efficiency throughout the Office of Community Services.

Collaboration Across Boundaries: This award recognizes the use of technology to support collaboration and/or integration that crosses traditional program or organizational boundaries. Increasingly, it is being recognized that, in order to be effective, human services programs must be coordinated with each other and with other programs, such as criminal justice, or K-12 education that serve specific populations. Often this coordination is not possible without the support of information technology.

The 2008 award went to the Oklahoma department of Human Services Debit MasterCard Program for the delivery of child support payments, temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled benefit programs. While the use of debit card programs to deliver government benefits is not new, the Oklahoma approach is unique in several ways.

Innovation in Service Delivery: This award recognizes the innovative use of technology to enhance and expand service delivery. Human services are increasingly being delivered in places or through organizations that are non-traditional. Many of these new forums for service delivery would not be possible without the intelligent application

of information technology. There was a tie in this category and two awards were presented.

An award went to the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare's Office of Income Maintenance Workload dashboard Initiative. Over the course of the past few months the OIM Workload Dashboard and related initiatives have set the stage to continue to revolutionize operations at the County Assistance Offices through a new and innovative approach to presenting caseload relevant data to the Income Maintenance Caseworkers.

An award went to the Indiana Family Services Administration Eligibility Project. Under its legacy approach to eligibility determination, FSSA's 107 county offices each used their own operating methodologies, hampering the State's ability to effectively determine eligibility. Recognizing a need for change to support its citizens, FSSA selected a coalition of eleven companies to manage and modernize the eligibility and intake process for key programs including TANF, Medicaid, and food stamps.

Space limitations in this magazine do not allow more detail on these very exciting projects. If you want more detail on any particular project, send an e-mail to michael.coulson@aphsa.org requesting the contact information for the project in which you are interested.