

MEETING THE HEALTH CARE REFORM CHALLENGE BY 2014



A CIO PERSPECTIVE

The issue of health care reform has both captivated and polarized the nation. More than a year after the passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA), debate continues in Washington, in the media, and around kitchen tables across the nation. While the debate is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, implementation deadlines remain unchanged and loom large for the states, which are the primary custodians for reform initiatives. As states prepare for this uncharted journey, they will confront formidable challenges, but can also see unprecedented opportunities for modernization while maximizing ROI and mitigating risk.

As the debate moves from Washington to every state capital, CIOs from across the country are being tasked with meeting the aggressive timelines and overwhelming program and policy changes associated with the ACA. But, many are facing even more basic challenges: many of the rules and regulations have not been finalized at the federal level, lack of state legislation to fund or even authorize ACA program changes, and a lack of political support in some states to implement the program. But, the reality is that everyone must start somewhere and must start immediately. Further, CIOs recognize that federal funding available now may not be available if they wait until all of the issues are resolved.

Unprecedented federal support and funding for the modernization of eligibility systems and new health exchanges are turning the current state environment into a gold rush. Of course, CIOs should actively and aggressively seek out the earmarked funding. But, they need to have a clear understanding of where to safely begin and how to ensure they are investing in a platform for the future. They must start immediately due to the

“ACA is a made-to-order impetus for innovation across the span of health and human service programs... Its emphasis on designing integrated, consumer-friendly enrollment systems is driving change across the nation.”

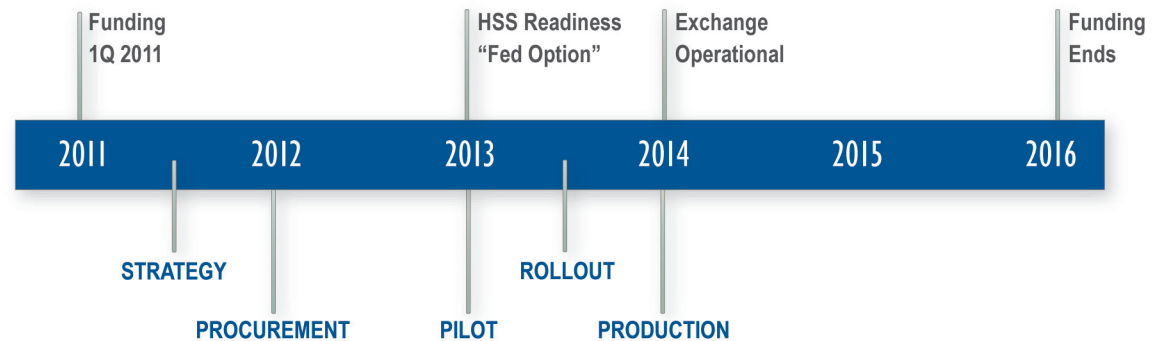
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Acting Assistant Secretary, Administration for Children and Families
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timeframe while balancing the uncertainties caused by lack of regulatory, legislative, and political clarity and leverage an opportunity to make an investment that supports all their HHS programs as defined in ACA. Every state

requires a common approach to be designed up front for both Health and Human Services programs. Having a flexible, agile and program agnostic platform will maximize ROI.

Given the uncertainty and lack of clear direction, many state CIOs are concluding that they need to move forward by laying a foundation for the future while simultaneously transforming and modernizing eligibility systems. Since an estimated fifty percent of health insurance exchange users will be seeking Medicaid and eighty percent will require a subsidy, it is clear that a majority of transactions will require eligibility determination. As such, when it comes to meeting the 2014 ACA mandates in a way that is sustainable, nothing is more vital than a state's enrollment and eligibility determination platform. Enrollment and eligibility determination systems support the most critical of processes – at a point where program access and cost are determined. In addition, they provide the greatest opportunity for improving the client experience, streamlining processes, and supporting cross-program collaboration. Flexibility is also critical because programs inherently change over time.

HEALTH CARE REFORM TIMELINE



By investing now in eligibility modernization and making sure it can support any future exchange strategy, states can leverage the federal funding streams with no strings attached to the ACA and allow the dust to settle on exchange organizations, regulations, and politics.

Further, CIOs must realize that like all human services, the ACA is a complex ecosystem. Fundamental to this ecosystem is the eligibility system because many of the people who will need to be enrolled in health care exchanges are already enrolled--or should be--in other human service delivery programs. The imperative must be to ensure that these enrollment processes work together, rather than in a fragmented or conflicting way. Building another program-specific silo is a huge mistake that would not only be costly overtime but would undermine all of their efforts to improve service delivery and implement a true outcomes-focused model across all human services programs.

Implementing a full health care reform solution is complex, with a wide array of systems and processes coming together to support broad sweeping reform. At the core of health care reform is eligibility and enrollment. This system will serve as the central hub for orchestrating all supporting processes. Health care reform introduces a number of new programs that will need to be managed through the eligibility and enrollment system.

As state CIOs navigate through this process, they'll find themselves focused on meeting federal requirements for health care reform, but by taking a step back and thinking about the future of all of their programs in a holistic way, they can invest in a flexible, client-centered eligibility platform that will pave the path for a larger modernization down the road.

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