



Managing Outside the Work Plan

Part II: Managing External Expectations

Kathy Kuhmerker
Kathryn.Kuhmerker@acs-inc.com

August 15, 2007

MMIS Implementations: Planning and
Managing for Success
2007 MMIS Conference



Managing External Change

- Harder to control than internal because you don't have control!!
- Need to plan, communicate
- Be in a position where it is clear that you understand implications of change and took proactive steps to minimize disruption
- Plan for “the weakest link”
 - May be a county structure, an external system, telecom service provider, other

Using Your Steering Committee

- Think beyond the usual suspects
- Include a variety of stakeholders to help manage the project, who understand what needs to be balanced, can provide sound advice and carry messages to outside decision-makers:
 - External budget office
 - Auditing agency or oversight committee
 - Provider associations
 - Intra-agency staff (internal budget and IT staff)
 - Inter-agency staff (both program, e.g., DD, Mental Health) and other (e.g., welfare agency that does eligibility)
 - Statewide IT agency or Chief Information Officer
 - Other levels of government – major counties or cities if they participate in program

Working With Your Vendor

- Vendor and the State need to be partners
- State always wants more; vendor always wants to do less – that's business
- Need to understand your different positions; it isn't personal
- Especially important if vendor will be your fiscal agent – a long-term relationship
- Recognize that you both want a good outcome and a good system
- Success reflects well on everyone

Gaining External Buy-In

- Participants will be vested in the project and work to make it happen
 - might not be if not included early and often
- Helps to have consensus at steering committee on approach if/when there are major issues that need to be brought to other decision-makers

Preparing External Users

- Providers – large, small and in between – with different capabilities and levels of technical expertise
- Vendors to providers (e.g., clearinghouses, billing agents, practice management software vendors)
- QIOs, HMOs, DMOs, e-i-e-i-os
- Other agencies that use data (budget, audit, counties/cities, DD, mental health)
- Other parts of your agency that use data (AIDS, disaster preparedness, maternal-child health)
- Other agencies that feed data into the system (social services/welfare eligibility feeds)

Getting Them Ready

- Need to determine what information to give them, and when
- Tendency is to want to give them information when it is “complete” – that’s way too late
- Providers/other users and contributors need to determine what changes they need to make, get their own internal buy-in, get budget authorizations
- Clearinghouses/billing systems will need to make changes
- There may be competing changes at the same time: demand for technical change raises prices and extends time frames, and MMIS may not be first in line.

Building Community

- Will need to set up training, explain changes, explain dates – and do it again and again.
- Enlist early adopters and associations to help spread the word
- Consider a pilot project to work out the bugs with supportive early adopters
- Use every vehicle possible: remittance statements, newsletters, meetings, letters

Uncovering “Undefined” Areas

- Not all programs are prepared to run in a highly automated environment
- Will need to develop, refine, and document policies and rules – may cause programmatic disruptions and/or system disruptions
- Might you need a State Plan Amendment? A waiver? Legislation? – All these take lots of time.
- Minimize disruption by getting all involved organizations together as early and as frequently as possible

Managing Scope Creep

- Will occur because of length of modern projects from RFP to completion – technology changes, programs change, finances change
- Will occur as people really begin to see what a new system can do (externally and internally)
- Need to set up system to make decisions
 - what changes need to be made and when
 - what changes don't need to be made

Managing Trade-Offs

- Need to be clear with decision makers concerning what the trade-offs are for making changes as you near implementation: dollars, time, disruption.
 - No change is impossible to implement, but the costs may be extraordinarily high
 - Historical skepticism on whether the change list will ever be gotten to
- Minimizes difficulties caused when people hear different things from same words, because they respond within their own context OR don't understand the relationship with other parts

Surviving System Freeze

- Implications of short vs. long freeze
 - **Short:** better for policy makers; more work for programmers as they try to keep both systems current; more expensive
 - **Long:** makes it hard to respond to changing circumstances; frustrates participants if too long; simpler and cheaper to implement
- Can be minimized by telling stakeholders early and often when and how long a freeze will be (they get used to the idea)

A Smooth Transition

- Particularly important as you get close to “go-live” to minimize things slipping through cracks
- Need a process for solving on-going problems
 - Standardized meetings and attendees
 - Logs of issues
 - Who is going to resolve; who is going to verify
 - Sense of when things may need to be escalated and to where
- Goes into super high-gear at “go-live”
- Keep a high profile – attend meetings of provider associations, other stakeholders, as often as possible throughout the project and beyond

Transition Plans

- Do you need to/want to develop a transition plan for those providers/users who will not be ready on time? How long? Will they ever be ready if you do a transition plan? How much will it cost?
- Need to gauge state tolerance for this type of activity – how much noise will there be if you do one? If you don't do one? For how long do you do one?

A Few More Notes

- Political influence can modify – even derail – your project, regardless of the size of your state
- Don't change the payment rules immediately upon implementing a new system
 - have no way to determine if the change is because of the system or the rules
 - implement new rules once system has had time to stabilize
- Be honest about what is working and what isn't working – people probably know anyway. But try to have solutions to problems.

Changes You Can't Control

- 9/11-type of changes
- Federal changes: NPI, HIPAA
- Change of administration
- Change of decision-makers within or outside of agency
- Change in appropriation levels
- Change in state fiscal situation

Build the unlikely into your plan!



Questions and Answers



A C S