



Key considerations for modernizing your state's legacy system with precision

Are you on the lookout for a solution to modernize your state's eligibility system or grappling with outdated technology? Modernizing these systems and enhancing maintenance and operations (M&O) is a substantial endeavor. It demands significant investment in terms of money, time and resources, and it can sometimes lead to disruptions. That's why it's crucial to adopt the right strategies and support to keep your current operations running smoothly, comply with monitoring standards, meet policy and regulatory requirements, safeguard the integrity of your information systems, and prevent security breaches. As you begin this journey of M&O modernization, let's explore how these 9 best practices can be your guide to success.

01 More than just technology

This is a business improvement initiative, not just a tech upgrade. It involves a focus on improving and enhancing the way program benefits and services are provided by collaborating with all stakeholders to make strategic modernization investments. That includes developing efficient features and interfaces, providing management with tools for better oversight and performance evaluation, and improving customer access to benefits. The goal is to elevate the delivery of program benefits and services, ensuring they reach citizens efficiently, accurately and with the fewest possible barriers. A collaborative plan from your vendor should address system priorities, policy requirements, existing operations and technologies. It should also incorporate elements of organizational change management (OCM). This includes considering both internal and external end-user impacts, accommodating release planning, meeting stakeholder requirements, and ensuring comprehensive user training. This approach will help maintain productivity levels when the system enhancements are implemented.

Pro tip: Include beneficiaries in your advisory board to gain insights directly from the users.

02 Choosing the right partner

Select a vendor with deep knowledge in health and human services, federal requirements systems knowledge, and a strong technical background. Experience with maintaining, operating and enhancing state H/HS systems will help ensure the vendor:

- Understands federal and state policy guidelines and requirements
- Designs a system that adheres to those guidelines while also helping you be more efficient in your compliance and performance
- Focuses on maintaining and enhancing a solution that continually focuses on the end-user experience and needs

03 Evolution over revolution

Opt for incremental enhancements rather than a complete overhaul. Modernization and innovation do not require a complete rebuild or replacement of existing systems. Adopt an evolutionary path that enhances your solutions in a modular fashion, allowing for continuous modernization of your overall ecosystem. This approach can reduce overall project risk and potential costs while minimizing disruptions to the agencies that rely on the system.

04 Avoid surprises – keep everyone in the loop

Keep all stakeholders apprised of your development process and don't wait for the "big reveal." Maintain transparency with regular updates and demos to allow for feedback and stakeholder alignment throughout the project. This can help minimize user resistance to the solution changes and avoid surprises at the end of the implementation.

05 IT security is paramount

IT security is crucial in any state government organization, especially given the sensitive nature of the data involved. Partnering with a vendor who understands state and federal guidelines and has experience integrating evolving standards is vital. Such a vendor should proactively mitigate risks to protect data integrity and confidentiality. A thorough internal security assessment prepares for federal audits and protects sensitive information. With the rise of digital medical records, the stakes are higher than ever. A security breach could lead to dire consequences, such as identity theft, financial loss and damage to the organization's reputation. Robust IT security ensures the continuous availability of health services, critical in preventing life-threatening disruptions. Thus, robust IT security measures are essential for compliance and maintaining trust.

06 Embrace analytics and emerging technologies

Advanced analytics can help states better understand their population, network, operations and the larger state ecosystem. Data assets across health and human services provide insights to validate and support your decisions so you can take action to improve program initiatives while meeting reform and regulatory change demands. Furthermore, emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) can significantly enhance your modernization efforts. They have the potential to improve public service delivery through:

- Smarter policymaking
- Reimagined service delivery
- More efficient operations
- Data-driven insights

However, as these technologies emerge, state governments will likely encounter challenges in adoption. Selecting a knowledgeable vendor who understands the policy and regulatory implications is crucial for successful implementation.

07 Customer-centric design

Make sure you are designing a system that meets the needs of your customers, not just technology specifications. Align business, operations and technology from the start. With these 3 areas in lockstep, you can minimize or avoid internal struggles and create an interface that is efficient from both a technology and human perspective.

08 Don't rush, test thoroughly

Moving too quickly without proper planning and testing of modernization efforts is a common M&O pitfall. Allocate sufficient time for planning and testing to ensure the system meets quality standards and prevents leaked defects – including business users beyond the technology team – so that your system functions smoothly upon rollout.

09 Migration to the cloud

Shifting from traditional legacy systems to cloud-based solutions provides state governments with enhanced flexibility and operational efficiency. Cloud computing allows for scalable resources that adjust to fluctuating demands, ensuring cost-effectiveness by charging only for utilized services. Additionally, cloud service providers manage server maintenance and upgrades, allowing government agencies to concentrate on their primary functions without the burden of technical upkeep.

Modernizing your state's legacy systems is a complex but vital endeavor. By adopting a holistic approach that views modernization as an ongoing business improvement initiative rather than a mere technology upgrade, states can ensure that their systems not only meet current compliance and functionality standards but are also poised for future challenges. Remember, the goal is to create a responsive, efficient and user-focused ecosystem that enhances service delivery without disrupting existing operations. With these best practices, your state can successfully navigate the complexities of modernization, leading to better services and greater satisfaction for all stakeholders.

About Optum

For more than 25 years, Optum has helped state governments simplify access to care, improve program operations, empower individuals, and promote healthier outcomes. With extensive health and human services and federal knowledge from an enterprise-wide perspective, we develop automated, user-friendly solutions for state agencies to streamline eligibility and enrollment. Many at Optum have worked in state government, and we bring a balanced team with expertise in technology, security, policy and business implementation. Our collaborative approach helps states have all stakeholders represented in an M&O modernization effort, guided by a common set of goals that will ultimately improve the health and well-being of individuals and the population as a whole.

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