Iterative Project Report for Programs & Multi-Year Phased Projects

Submitted to Project Oversight on 08/26/2024

GENERAL INFORMATION

Program/Project Name: Early Childhood Integrated Data Set (ECIDS)

Agency Name: Department of Health & Human Services

Project Sponsor: Jessica Thomasson

Project Manager: Ramya Mogili

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

An Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS) integrates, maintains, stores, and reports information from various early childhood programs across multiple organizations that serve children and families from birth through the age of five (and in some cases, birth to age 8).

North Dakota is pursuing an ECIDS to strengthen the quality, coordination, and alignment of its Early Childhood Experience (ECE) programs and services in ways that will ultimately inform policy that will improve child outcomes. With siloed data, providers find it difficult to coordinate their efforts, policymakers struggle to find answers, and families may encounter childcare related challenges. An ECIDS will help North Dakota address each of these challenges and better support its children and families.

Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) in 2023 that required the successful offeror to develop and implement the technical strategy for sharing child-level data between ECIDS-connected datasets, based on an analysis of constraints and opportunities.

The Phase 1 project began in September 2023 and is slated to be completed in August 2024. The Phases 2 & 3 project began in July 2024 and will end in Jan 2025.

BUSINESS NEEDS

The DHHS Early Childhood section needs to be able to access data from several disparate data collection systems to inform policy decisions and recommendations. A functioning ECIDS, combined with parallel data governance efforts underway within DHHS, will be a primary means of delivering on the business need. DHHS would like to solve the issues of:

1. policymakers struggling to find answers to key policy questions
2. families encountering childcare related challenges
3. providers struggling to successfully operate quality early childhood services at full capacity

PROGRAM/PROJECT FORMAT

Program/Project Start Date: 01/18/2022

Budget Allocation at Time of Initial Start Date: $1,000,000

How Many Phases Expected at Time of Initial Start Date: 1

Phase Approach Description:

    a. Phase 1 - Develop the integrations associated with inclusion of four data sets into the ECIDS using an agile methodology with production deployments throughout the life of the project.
        i. Vital Records (maintained by ND Department of Health)
        ii. Teaching Strategies (including Head Start and Best in Class programs)
        iii. New World Now (including workforce registry, professional development, quality rating and improvement system, as well as provider grants management), and
        iv. WorkLife System (resource and referral database)
    b. Phases 2 & 3 – Develop the integrations associated with inclusion of select elements from four data sets into the ECIDS using an agile methodology with production deployments throughout the life of the project.

     i.   Integrated Eligibility System (SPACES)
    ii.   ND Reference Tables
   iii.   ND Department of Public Instruction (STARS)
   iv.   ND Department of Public Instruction (TIENET)

Estimated End Date for All Phases Known at Time of Initial Start Date: August 2024

PROGRAM/PROJECT ROAD MAP

The program road map shows the high-level plan or vision for the program/projects/phases. It is intended to offer a picture of the lifespan of all the effort that is expected to be required to achieve the business objectives.

Project/ Phase	Title	Scope Statement	Estimated Months Duration	Estimated Budget
Project 1	Phase 1	Develop the integrations associated with inclusion of four data sets (Vital Records, Teaching Strategies, Insight/New World Now, WorkLife Systems) into the ECIDS using an agile methodology with production deployments throughout the life of the project.	30 months	$1,000,000
Project 2	Phases 2 & 3	Develop the integrations associated with inclusion of select elements from four data sets (SPACES, Reference Tables, STARS, TIENET) into the ECIDS using an agile methodology with production deployments throughout the life of the project.	6 months	$1,250,000

Notes:
Add text here, if necessary.

PROJECT BASELINES

The baselines below are entered for only those projects or phases that have been planned. At the completion of a project or phase a new planning effort will occur to baseline the next project/phase and any known actual finish dates and costs for completed projects/phases will be recorded. The iterative report will be submitted again with the new information.

Project/ Phase	Project/ Phase Start Date	Baseline End Date	Baseline Budget	Funding Source	Actual Finish Date	Schedule Variance	Actual Cost	Cost Variance
Phase 1	01/18/2022	7/30/2024	$975,500	General and Federal	8/22/2024	18 days	$920,168.42	5.6% under
Phases 2 & 3	04/24/2024	01/29/2025	$1,250,000	General and Federal				

Notes:

General Funds are $500,000, which is the DHHS budget; Federal Funds are $1,750,000, which is from the Preschool Development Grant and ARPA Early Childhood.

OBJECTIVES

Project/ Phase	Business Objective	Measurement Description	Met/ Not Met	Measurement Outcome
Phase 1	DHHS is able to answer at least one policy question that they were not able to answer before.	Within 6 months of implementation, DHS is able to use integrated data from at least two data sets in the system to understand a policy question DHS was previously unable to answer.	Met	ECIDS Child Care Capacity Dashboard integrated data from multiple sources to create an "at-a-glance" look at child care capacity, in a manner that was not previously possible. The measure shows licensed capacity, desired capacity, vacancy rates and enrollment, updated as per the frequency of the regular ECIDS data refresh.
Phase 1	DHHS is able to identify any necessary process improvements to better coordinate provider efforts and better assist families.	Within 6 months of implementation, DHS is able to use integrated data from at least two data sets in the system to understand process improvements for providers and families.	Met	Through the ECIDS work, HHS Early Childhood section was able to identify key gaps in data collection practices and begin implementing organization-level identifier practices across multiple data sets to better facilitate analysis and information sharing. The process improvements are being considered more broadly as the team works with existing data and considers new data collection opportunities.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED AND SUCCESS STORIES

A lessons learned effort is performed after each project or phase is completed. This process uses surveys and meetings to determine what happened in the project/phase and identifies actions for improvement going forward. Typical findings include, "What did we do well?" and "What didn't go well and how can we fix it the next time?"

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Project/ Phase	Key Lessons Learned and Success Stories
Phase 1	Lessons Learned: - Establishing a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities for key stakeholders, including data stewards and technical resources will help assure that project schedule estimates are achievable. - When source data systems are not well-prepared to establish connection between disparate datasets (i.e., data readiness), project timelines will be difficult to maintain. - Lack of pre-existing meta data for data elements in source systems will contribute to challenges in identifying necessary fields, creating required data sharing agreements, and establishing data extracts. - Detailed documentation of requirements and expectations, both for the data architecture/modeling and for the data visualization, are essential to keeping work and deliverables within scope and reviewable to specification. - Receipt of timely, constructive feedback to the vendor aids in their ability to respond to and refine approach and processes.
Phase 1	Success Stories: - Shifting to a collaborative approach where both the State and vendor teams have task assignments with target completion dates has been helpful to make efficient progress and meet deadlines. - Data access/sharing agreements have been put into place to define data specifications and establish appropriate use statements. - Incremental development and decision making helped to keep progress in motion and help project advancement. - Implementation of collaborative biweekly working sessions fostered opportunities for State and vendor teams to demonstrate thought partnership and leadership. - Creation of data governance policy manual that can guide teams through implementation and operation.

KEY CONSTRAINTS AND/OR RISKS

- Navigating NDIT security requirements can take time, causing delay in the timelines for each data source.
- Backlog for source system can affect their ability to respond to ECIDS-related requests within timeframes anticipated in the ECIDS schedule.

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