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Transforming a County to Help People "Live Well"

By Nick Macchione

The County of San Diego is responsible for providing a wide array of services to its more than 3 million residents. Traditionally, county services have been organized to focus on a specific area of responsibility, such as child welfare, nutrition assistance, elder abuse prevention, veterans' services, marriage licenses, or land use. This administrative structure arises from the categorical nature of funding, policies, regulations, and professional training. The data systems that underlie and enable the services are typically quite discrete and not connected. However, people's needs are rarely isolated, and serving the same individual separately through multiple programs is costly and often ineffective. The landscape of public service delivery is changing. In the wake of a national economic crisis, operational efficiency and fiscal management are under more scrutiny than ever. New technologies are increasingly available. Customers are expecting more control, and more choice. This new environment presents an unparalleled opportunity to transform the county's model of service and vision for its role.

To get a step ahead of increasing demands, as well as address population-level health challenges, in 2010 county leadership called for major changes in philosophy and business models. With the ambitious goal of improving the overall wellness of the region, an extensive planning process that involved active participation by numerous community organizations, as well as staff across San Diego County government, created a comprehensive, 10-year initiative, called *Live Well, San Diego!* To provide the foundation for this transformation, the county formed the Knowledge Integration Program, which set about tackling a collection of issues, including implementing an electronic information exchange. Now in year three of *Live Well, San Diego!*, significant changes in philosophy and business models have already begun to show signs of promise.

Continuing Evolution

The County of San Diego has a long history of innovation: forming public/private partnerships, integrating population-based functions, and convening regional collaboratives to address key public issues. One of the most significant examples of this occurred in 1998, with the formation of the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency to integrate health and social services, bringing

together what are currently: Aging and Independence Services, Behavioral Health Services, Children's Services, Public Administrator/Public Guardian, Public Health Services, and Self-Sufficiency Programs.

The launch of *Live Well, San Diego!* represents another key phase in the evolution of the county enterprise. With an original intent to reduce deaths due to preventable chronic diseases, the initiative has evolved to focus on "wellness," encompassing physical health, safety, and economic vitality. The county is also addressing the challenges of high-frequency users of service, integrating behavioral health and physical health care, and leading efforts to link social services more effectively with health services. The county uses *Live Well, San Diego!* as a springboard to convene strategic partners to bring about changes in service delivery, policy, and culture.

Breaking Down Silos

As a starting point, the county is breaking down silos internally by working across departments to develop and realize *Live Well, San Diego!* The initiative is also building momentum and involving a growing number of partners across diverse sectors—including schools, law enforcement, health care providers, community- and faith-based organizations, the business community, the military and veterans'

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TARGET POPULATION/GEOGRAPHIC AREA

The County of San Diego, the fifth largest county in the country, covers 4,261 square miles (almost the size of Connecticut) and has a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual "majority minority" population of 3.2 million, one-third of whom speak a language other than English at home. The county includes 18 incorporated cities, 17 unincorporated communities, and 18 Indian reservations. Military bases include Navy facilities, Marine Corps bases, and Coast Guard stations, and approximately one-third of county residents have some military connection. Adjacent to Mexico, San Diego has the world's busiest border crossing (San Diego–Tijuana).

organizations, and other jurisdictions, including cities and tribal governments. True progress demands the involvement of local residents, who are essential to identifying priority needs and driving change. To maximize involvement, teams of community leaders and stakeholders are active in each of the county's five supervisorial districts. These localized teams have been involved in community improvement planning and will be working to address priority needs over the next few years to realize the *Live Well, San Diego!* vision.

How *Live Well, San Diego!* Is Driving Transformation

Live Well, San Diego! is bringing real change both in culture and in business models. Key innovations are:

- **Population-Based Wellness Approach:** Expanding focus from serving the clients in the county's traditional programs to promoting wellness for the entire population of the region.
- **Person-Centered Service Delivery:** Delivering services that address holistic needs of individuals, rather than providing one service at a time, in isolation.
- **Horizontal Integration of Services:** Dramatically increasing

how county programs work together, as well as with other public and privately provided health, social, and other services.

To truly enable residents and customers to make choices about their lives that will lead to wellness, county programs need a holistic view of the individual customer with whom they are working. A major initiative of *Live Well, San Diego!* is the development of an electronic information exchange system to be implemented by the county's Knowledge Integration Program (KIP). KIP is both a service delivery initiative and a major change in technology. Flipping a switch to turn on a new information exchange will not automatically result in integration of the service delivery system. A critical component of KIP, therefore, is the development of a person-centered service delivery model and pertinent changes to workflows.

With the electronic information exchange, county staff will be able to unlock a wealth of information and resources that they can offer their customers, whether it is a resident seeking benefits, or a manager seeking data. They will have access, when appropriate, to information on the array of services a customer has used and the results achieved. Acting as a navigator

of that information and applying further analytics, the staff will be able to share the power of informed decision-making with the customer.

What will this transformation look to the customer? For the parolee visiting his probation officer, it might be a screening that indicates he could benefit from mental health treatment, along with a referral to a "medical home" in a Federally Qualified Health Center that has linked primary care and behavioral health in its service delivery model. For the pregnant teenager applying for nutrition assistance, it might be enrollment with the Nurse Family Partnership to assure comprehensive prenatal care. For parents looking for financial support, it might be a conversation about their military background leading to a referral to Veterans' Services.

Tapping Into Technology

The KIP team worked with a consultant to define exactly which service transactions could be improved by the use of technology. Five functional capabilities key to collaborative service delivery that an electronic information exchange would support were identified:

1. **Look-up, Search, and View Query Results:** Capability to search for client information across programs and services, access to shared information such as client demographics, case notes, messages, and analytics
2. **Referral Management:** Electronic creation and routing of referrals, acknowledgement and acceptance of referrals, access to a shared resource calendar and tracking of referral status
3. **Collaborative Service Delivery:** Capability for providers to communicate through secure messaging and share case notes
4. **Notifications and Alerts:** Automated notifications and alerts

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PREPARED FOR IMPROVEMENT

The County of San Diego has a long-standing commitment to continuous quality improvement. Building on basic project management principles, the county has trained staff in business process re-engineering, quality improvement practices, Lean Six Sigma efficiency techniques, and other management skills. The current push is to move toward a data-driven decision-making culture, to reinforce the breadth of experience with solid numbers. The workforce draws upon these professional development experiences, along with hands-on work in their given department, to tackle large-scale projects. The county's Knowledge Integration Program is being planned and implemented using work teams that cross division and department lines to apply project management and continuous improvement skills at the enterprise level.

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for users to provide client- or population-specific information
5. **Population-Based Shared Analytics:** Access to cross-program reports and analytics that will improve decision support capabilities and provide trend-based analysis and predictive reports

Working with subject matter experts from the programs over a period of several months, the team then identified 27 specific transactions, or "use cases," for the five key functional capabilities. A few examples—search to see if a client exists in an existing database, create a referral to another service, receive alerts, and read a shared case note about a client. These use cases will be the basis for mapping today's multiple "as is" workflows and then creating improved "to-be" processes.

The information gathered during the use case study informed the initial stages of the project. Because business need must drive technology design, the county is also conducting a series of pilots that will serve to define processes and establish procedures. Conducting pilots will enable county staff to further outline

detailed workflows and identify and address gaps in collaborative service delivery, plus identify opportunities for automation and other time-saving functionality. Once a referral sequence is developed manually, for instance, the technology to support it can be built and put into play and then refined and streamlined. Furthermore, KIP will make possible certain transactions that are prohibitively time-consuming without the benefit of technology, such as instant access to collective data across systems. In short, electronic information exchange will allow:

- Easier access to customer information;
- Easier teamwork across programs; and
- Earlier intervention to improve quality of life and reduce costs of services.

As a local provider of state and federal programs, the county must ensure compliance with privacy and consent requirements. KIP includes careful investigation into, and analysis of, relevant laws and regulations. The work team will then develop a

annual Fatherhood Conference imports fresh ideas and the latest innovations in the fatherhood movement from national-level experts. These events are not limited to HSA clients; they are open to the entire community, to promote the value "every person matters."

A key factor that keeps HSA in a positive relationship with other agencies and organizations in the community is allowing upcoming leaders from outside the agency to participate in supervisory and leadership programs. Attending classes with HSA staff builds relationships among participants across organizational lines. "Transparency is important," says HSA Director Ana Pagan. "I want people to know who we are and how we operate. We are always open to work with other agencies. We serve the same people."

The question for any management style, approach, or theory is "How do I know it is working?" While positive feedback from employees, clients, and community are good indicators, a broader perspective is useful. Over the years HSA has received awards for quality service and accuracy in its eligibility programs. The California State Association of Counties has given HSA its Challenge Award three times in the last five years, and in 2012 Pagan was chosen from more than 7,500 entries as a winner of the Hines Award, presented by the National Child Labor Committee for outstanding contributions to children's welfare.

Although terms and names change, skillful leadership that nurtures, expects, and demands the best from others will always be the key to successful innovation, adaptation to changing attitudes, creative responses to resource limitations, and escalating public expectations. Infrastructure such as automation, accurate metrics, and strategic budgeting are important, but transformative leadership in a chaotic world requires the hearts and minds of employees, clients, and communities engaged in working together for mutual benefit. Values are the center that binds people together and creates the energy for transformation. 🅟

consent process that staff can use with customers, providing choices for what information to share and with which county programs to share it. Recognizing that not all clients will need all services, the goal is to connect those in need with appropriate services. This approach supports one of the major objectives of *Live Well, San Diego!* by empowering residents to have an active role in their own wellness. KIP is also transforming the county's service culture from a view of "program client" to the more holistic "county client."

Beyond IT

The transformation goes beyond data and workflows. Moving to a more collaborative service delivery approach is also changing how the county manages policy areas that horizontally cross the traditional vertical program silos. KIP is exploring integrated, multi-disciplinary governance approaches to oversee such broad realms as data management, privacy and confidentiality, and service delivery practice and policy. All of these changes call for a parallel change management campaign to foster positive and effective staff development. To succeed in the new work environment ahead, staff will need information, training, and support from leadership.

The Road Ahead

Moving forward, the County of San Diego will continue to use *Live Well, San Diego!* as the framework to help set priorities and the Knowledge Integration Program to provide good information to guide decision-making. Together, these will help ensure efficient, effective service delivery. Over the coming months, KIP will conduct service delivery pilots to guide updated processes. A technology vendor will be selected to install and activate new systems over the course of two to three years. An overarching *Live Well, San Diego!* Evaluation Framework has been developed to measure progress and illustrate connections between actions and community improvements. The county's goal is compelling: improve the overall wellness of the region. It motivates and sustains the complex transformation now underway.

For more information, please visit *www.sdcounty.ca.gov/hhsa* 🅟

STARTING SMALL TO ESTABLISH A FUNCTIONAL MODEL

Because the County of San Diego operates more than 465 core services, the best way to test new methodologies is to focus on a small target population. In the case of the Knowledge Integration Program, it is vital to explore the implications and test the realities of working across the operational lines within the county. In 2012, under AB109, California transferred responsibility for non-violent, non-serious, and non-sexual criminals from the state to counties, so that these offenders now serve their sentences locally under the jurisdiction of county government. This new population provided an ideal pilot group for the Knowledge Integration Program, as most of these individuals qualify for and use multiple county services. To pilot this model, the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) established a formal agreement with the Public Safety Group and began an active partnership with the Probation Office. A revealing data analysis provided a point-in-time snapshot of the many HHSA services the offenders used, and were not yet accessing. KIP's technical capabilities will make this type of analysis quick and routine, enabling the county to link eligible individuals with services sooner, thereby reducing costs while increasing quality of life.