

Streamlining the Business of Government

How Document-Driven Processes Produce
Business Value for the Public Sector



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The Challenge: Going Beyond “Do More with Less”

Work smarter, with tighter budgets and fewer people, but continue to deliver quality services to citizens and maintain records. That mandate, which the National League of Cities calls “doing less with less,” is a key business challenge facing government organizations at all levels.¹

More specifically, agencies must continually look for ways to reduce costs and redundancies in business processes, documents and data, applications and systems. Yet these savings and efficiencies must sustain an organization’s compliance with standards for information security, personal privacy, records retention and program operations.

To address these challenges, government IT departments are creating initiatives in three areas:

1. Maximizing the efficiency and value of every business process and IT investment.
2. Moving documents online for current use, required retention, and preservation of historical and archived paper records.
3. Supporting collaboration internally and externally to deliver services at the level of quality and responsiveness expected by citizens.

“Our members must fulfill more requests for public records, but with fewer staff and the need to reduce paperwork costs because of smaller city budgets,” says Ryan Draughn,

CIO for the North Carolina League of Municipalities. “This challenge is especially difficult for large cities with vast amounts of data and documents that are spread across many departments.”²

One way that forward-thinking government agencies are solving these business challenges is by implementing enterprise content management (ECM) systems.

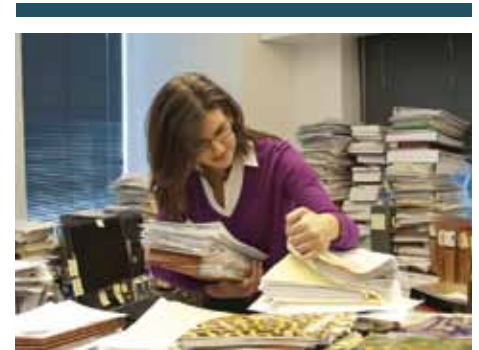
Conducting Business through Collaborative, Document-Driven Processes

Although government paperwork is a common target of public and political complaint, documents are in fact essential to a public agency’s ability to operate and deliver services. However, “paperwork” doesn’t always need actual paper. Electronic documents are increasingly replacing paper documents across the spectrum of government functions and services (see “Document-Driven Processes Provide Value Across Government Agencies” sidebar).

Reduced costs for paper and document handling, easier access to stored information, online search capabilities, and automated archiving and retention management are widely known benefits of electronic documents. What may not be immediately evident is the potential value to be gained from using electronic documents as the foundation for automating a government organization’s business processes.

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A process-oriented ECM system provides the foundation for document-driven workflows. Additionally, it allows government employees to better collaborate internally — and government agencies to collaborate externally to promote shared services. The ECM system and collaborative applications manage relationships among documents, records, processes and people.

For example, an automated case management process for social services records begins when the employee scans an intake document or opens the case using an online form. As the employee works on the case, the application tracks progress, sends alerts for needed actions and documentation,

and notifies other users about needed approvals. When the case is closed, the process can archive the file according to defined rules, which reduces confusion, saves processing time and improves compliance with reporting and record-keeping standards.

For other types of public records, an ECM system can automatically manage document classification, retention,

archiving and disposal, while providing user-friendly tools for tracking and auditing records management activities.

Today's ECM systems provide a core technology for:

- creating, scanning, storing, processing, searching and providing online access to public records and other documents;
- reducing costs and providing

simpler and more flexible access;

- automating workflows and application processes, based on document content, to allow more collaboration for improved government operations and service to citizens; and
- providing transparency through easier access to information and services by citizens and other stakeholders.

Document-Driven Processes Provide Value Across Government Agencies

Here are some of the ways public enterprise departments can make effective use of electronic documents and collaborative applications.

Clerk's Office: Offer citizens online access to public documents and data, vital records, legal notices, and agendas and minutes for councils and commissions.

Development: Create efficient workflows from project documents, retain electronic archives of documentation for permits and support easier access to GIS data.

Finance: Process invoices and tax receipts electronically to reduce handling costs, capture early payment discounts on invoices and gain additional days of earned interest on tax revenues. Protect current sources of state and federal funding by proving compliance with program and records requirements. Automate contract renewals and purchasing processes for reduced costs.

Fire and Emergency Services: Store and manage electronic records pertaining to permits and inspection reports.

Human Resources: Automate employment workflows such as tracking job applicants, maintaining personnel files and processing insurance claims.

Law Enforcement and Courts: Manage police reports and offender records electronically. Process electronic documents submitted for case hearings and publish court opinion and judgment documents online.

Public Health: Meet federal requirements for managing, storing and providing access to patients' electronic medical records.

Public Works: Help field-based employees save time, increase productivity and improve service delivery by using mobile devices to enter data, handle workflow tasks and access project documents. Manage electronic records and automate work activities for vehicle fleet management.

Records Management: Take advantage of records management processes to create online, off-site backups of documents that would be critical for disaster recovery, compliance or records requests across various public sector agencies and departments.

Assessing Your Current ECM Solution

You may already be using a system for managing electronic records. If so, you'll find value in assessing the strengths and weaknesses of that solution for moving your organization toward document-driven business processes.

For an ECM solution that is suited to the new, streamlined government operations model, essential capabilities are listed in Table 1.

- Legacy ECM systems may have significant limitations for moving to collaborative applications and document-driven processes, including:
- few if any capabilities for managing

collaboration that involves processes instead of documents;

- lack of flexibility for automating new processes and modifying existing processes to meet changing program or business requirements;
- complex, non-standardized user interfaces that make it difficult, confusing and time-consuming to access data and retrieve documents across departments or functions; and
- limited interoperability with other systems, data types and processes that hinders development of collaborative applications, shared documents and shared services.

Of course, an ECM solution alone can't move an organization to business-driven processes that substantially increase efficiencies and reduce costs. It's also important to review long-established assumptions for "how we do things." Your users may already be questioning some of these assumptions based on their experience with other business and consumer technologies.

How the Public Sector is Using Collaborative Applications

Public entities at the state, county and municipal levels are already using

Table 1: Essential Capabilities for a Government ECM Solution

Document Processing	Document Storage	Application Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Captures paper documents with different formats and sizes as well as electronic documents, emails and audio/video files▪ Automates document posting to an intranet or public website without HTML coding▪ Supports interoperability that allows data updates in one system to be automatically reflected in another▪ Automates managerial tasks such as approval routing and issue escalation▪ Audits user interactions at all steps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Manages digital archives for online or offline storage and automatically applies information management rules▪ Offers uniform data/document repository, auditing and compliance reporting functions▪ Provides standard and customizable security measures for documents, data, applications, departments and users▪ Supports full-text, image file and customizable search functions▪ Scales to serve large repositories, longer retention, and growth in document and data volumes▪ Allows use of a universal repository with customized access for each department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Acts as middleware for integrating with business systems such as GIS, CRM and ERP as well as legacy ECM systems▪ Supports independent applications and repeatable shared services▪ Allows development of applications with central control and local flexibility▪ Provides a flexible user interface for entering documents and data and receiving updates on system activity▪ Supports mobile devices with secure access for remotely accessing data, applications and workflows▪ Enables document searches across the ECM system and other online sources

document-driven processes and ECM solutions in a variety of transformative ways.

Arkansas Supreme Court

Waiting weeks for court opinions to be compiled and published in quarterly printed books is no longer acceptable in a society accustomed to immediate online access to information. Recognizing this shift in expectations among the public and attorneys it serves, the Arkansas Supreme Court now uses an ECM system to electronically publish opinions the day they are issued.

"Arkansas' Supreme Court was the first in the country to make its official opinions only available electronically," says Daron Frederick, the court's network administrator. "We were also one of the first courts to offer live webcasts of oral arguments. Once the opinions are handed down, they are linked to the archived arguments and made available to the public through our ECM system."³

Collin County, Texas

Taking an enterprise view, the IT managers for Collin County have been focused on document management for nearly every department. Transitioning to electronic document storage has been essential for keeping up with surging population growth and demand for public services. And using a standard ECM system has been essential for the county's central IT staff to deploy electronic document solutions for many county departments and functions.

Today, the ECM solution manages access, storage and retention for documents ranging from tax and land



Collin County, Texas

records in the County Clerk's Office to case records for the County Court to training manuals for the Sheriff's Department. The county has reduced costs for paper and storage facilities by using the ECM system for both primary and backup copies of each document. Yet paper and storage costs aren't the only factors to examine when calculating the return of an ECM investment, says Caren Skipworth, CIO for Collin County. "Our best payback is the faster and easier information access. It's also valuable to have audit capabilities that give us visibility and control over what users are doing with documents."

Although elected officials may recognize these benefits, Skipworth notes they may still have concerns about making a complete transition to electronic documents. "Because our elected officials make the decisions about which documents to keep for how long, we work with them to show how electronic document storage can

improve records access and retention management," she says.

With many of the planned document management projects complete, the Collin County IT team is now working with departments to identify suitable activities for originating documents electronically. This effort will also review workflows and processes for potential improvement through automation.⁴

North Carolina League of Municipalities

Although not a government entity itself, the league is very much attuned to the business and paperwork challenges of its more than 500 city and town members. "Our members know they need to reduce and avoid costs wherever they can because of declining public budgets," says Ryan Draughn, CIO. "They also need to work more effectively because they have fewer staff. And they need to consider how

they could continue to operate if a disaster destroys their paper records or makes them inaccessible.”

The league uses an ECM system to manage electronic claims documents for the insurance pool it runs for members. Claims are now completely paperless and electronic documents are integrated with the claims processing application. The insurance underwriting department is also transitioning its 1.2 million documents to electronic storage and management in the ECM system.⁵

Ramsey County, Minn.

Invoice processing to support an upgrade to the accounting system was one of the first big implementations for the ECM solution used by Ramsey County. Paper invoices are scanned and saved as electronic documents in the ECM, which also accepts invoices submitted in PDF and other electronic forms. The invoices are routed automatically for electronic approvals (the approvals are done in the accounting software, not ECM software), which

reduces processing costs and delays.

Another key application is automated workflow processes and electronic documents for managing child protection cases in the County Attorney’s Office. This application provides secure mobile access to case documents for attorneys while they work in court or at home, and improved workflow for all cases.

“All of our employees are trying to retrieve information more quickly, so now the departments are coming to our IT teams with requests for electronic document projects,” says Toyia Arvin, EDMS Business Analyst for Ramsey County.⁶

City of Riverside, Calif.

Electronic documents are now the standard operating procedure for Riverside, Calif., employees. An ECM system manages documents in a variety of departments, including the City Clerk, Human Resources, Finance, Public Works and Public Utilities. The Riverside Police Department also uses ECM to manage police reports, including integration with a computer-aided dispatch system. “The biggest benefit of our ECM system is having real-time, online access to documents, which means employees don’t spend as much time trying to find materials,” says Steve Reneker, City of Riverside CIO.

In most cases, electronic document project deployment has only taken a few months. The IT department allocates the cost of ECM user licenses and project support to the individual departments in a way that reflects actual usage.⁷

Table 2: Potential Investment Requirements for Migrating to Document-Driven Business Functions

Investment Area	Potential Investment Needs
ECM Solution	A new or upgraded software system for creating, storing and managing electronic documents
Computing and Network Technologies	Additional document scanners, mobile devices and data storage systems, especially when large volumes of historical documents are newly scanned for electronic archiving
Process Integration	Needs analysis and application design, development, testing and rollout to create automated workflows and document handling for each target business process
Personal Training	Online or in-person training resources for employees, citizens and other users about accessing electronic documents and participating in automated workflows
Shared Services	Realigning work functions that take advantage of the efficiencies and cost savings enabled by electronic documents and automated workflows

“We also found it helpful to form a cross-department governance committee to help prioritize requests. Because high-level department managers serve on this committee, it’s easier to reach agreement on funding decisions, resource allocations and which projects can be developed as shared services.”

– ROCHELLE WALDOCH, COMPLIANCE AND RECORDS MANAGER, RAMSEY COUNTY, MINN.

Making the Transition to Document-Driven Processes

Reaching the goal of more efficient processes for handling documents and improving workflows will necessarily be a gradual transition. For a time, it may be necessary to integrate with legacy ECM systems while applications and documents are migrated to a new ECM solution.

Capital and operational investments that may be needed for this new way of working are shown in Table 2. At first glance, these investments can seem daunting. They become less so by planning a gradual implementation and by considering the payback

of reduced costs and improvements in how business is done by your organization.

Conclusion: Migrating to ECM and Document-Driven Processes

For other public sector IT departments, Ramsey County’s Compliance and Records Manager Rochelle Waldoch recommends the following practices for implementing electronic documents and collaborative processes:

- Use a consultant to help identify the types of content management needed and potential applications and automation projects.
- Evaluate the readiness of departments and users for new ways of working and structuring information.
- Require that each department assign an employee to the project team and confirm support among department managers before beginning the project.
- Set realistic expectations for project timelines and deliverables.

“We also found it helpful to form a cross-department governance committee to help prioritize requests,” says Waldoch. “Because high-level department managers serve on this committee, it’s easier to

reach agreement on funding decisions, resource allocations and which projects can be developed as shared services.”⁸

For the IT team, the following analyses and development practices can help to deliver timely and targeted ECM projects:

- Identify ways to leverage legacy content and systems until the migration to a new ECM and processes is complete.
- Deploy applications from a functional perspective to support repeatable processes across programs, offices and departments.
- Consider how to meet common regulatory requirements on an enterprise level.
- Use a service-oriented architecture (SOA) approach to integrate other enterprise business systems with document-driven processes.
- Maintain central control of collaborative applications and process development while allowing department-level flexibility for application access and document management.

Together, all of these practices can help realize the benefits of ECM and automated, collaborative applications while using the resources and business approach that are right for your organization. ■

Resources

1. <http://www.laserfiche.com/SolutionExchange>

Endnotes

1. Emerging Issues: Doing Less with Less, and Beyond, National League of Cities: <http://nlc.org/news-center/nations-cities-weekly/articles/2011/december/emerging-issues-doing-less-with-less-and-beyond>
2. CDG interview with Ryan Draughn conducted on Feb. 28, 2012.
3. CDG interview with Daron Frederick conducted on Feb. 27, 2012.
4. CDG interview with Caren Skipworth conducted on Feb. 28, 2012.
5. CDG interview with Ryan Draughn conducted on Feb. 28, 2012.
6. CDG interview with Rochelle Waldoch and Toyia Arvin conducted on Feb. 29, 2012.
7. CDG interview with Steve Reneker conducted on March 5, 2012.
8. CDG interview with Rochelle Waldoch and Toyia Arvin conducted on Feb. 29, 2012.



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