Chapter XVII

Bureau of Housing Services (BHS)

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Executive Summary

One of the main problems of information systems development in multi-agency, inter-organizational projects is sustaining willingness to participate across many different and differently organized entities with multiple, and in some cases, mutually exclusive operating assumptions. This case describes such an environment. The New York State Bureau of Housing Services faces the dilemma of using its authority to compel homeless service providers to share information needed to develop a new information system versus seeking providers’ support to develop the system through collaboration.

Introduction

We were driving back from New York City (NYC) to Albany, and as always, we were taking advantage of the ride to debrief from the morning’s presentation. We were coming
back from a presentation about the Homeless Information Management System (HIMS) to the New York City Homeless Providers Ad hoc Technology Committee. Unfortunately, this time the results were not very encouraging. Their skepticism was visible through their gestures and body language; “what’s in it for us” was the question they wanted answered. The frank questions asked made by John, a representative of Homeless Volunteers, kept repeating in the back of our heads.

*I can understand why it is helpful for the state to do this project, but I find it hard to understand why it would be helpful for our individual organizations—What benefit is it for my group and others to participate? How will client-specific information be protected? Who will have access to the data once we turn it over to you, even the sample data you are requesting for the pilot stage? What happens to it at the next level and how will it be stored and utilized? Who will have access to what data? For what purposes will the data be used? Will resource allocation and funding decisions be based on the data? Will we be ranked, judged, or otherwise evaluated through use of these data?*

Others in the committee were also concerned about how this system would benefit them and why should they participate. Only 5% of the homeless service providers in NYC were automated so committee members knew there would be costs to participation—“Who will bear the costs of the development, implementation, operation, and maintenance of the system? Will the confidentiality of our clients be violated? Will the same agreements that ensure confidentiality of data in traditional state systems be extended to this system?”

We needed “real” provider data to develop the HIMS prototype, so we had to find a way to obtain that data. Mary, one of the team members, thought we should not be so concerned about the providers’ concerns given that our office funds all their programs, and in some sense we owned their data, and could require them to give us what we needed to develop the prototype. Charles, on the other hand, felt that if we were to include the providers in the development process to ensure that the system had value both to the state and to them then they might give their data more willingly. The status of regulations related to the providers’ confidentiality and privacy concerns remained a concern—one that would need to be addressed if we were to move forward.

In short, we agreed—the committee had asked us for “a mission statement for the project and a statement from New York State specifying how any data provided by the homeless shelters to the Bureau of Housing Services (BHS) will be used, who will have access to it, and what protocols were being developed to monitor this use.” At that point, we all turned to Rod—the Bureau Director and the final decision maker on this questions; would we use the authority of BHS to require submission of the client data necessary to build the prototype, or should we prepare the mission and confidentiality statement to answer providers’ concerns as a first step in securing their voluntary participation and commitment to a collaborative effort?
Integration of Predated Notifications of Personal Actions for HR-Planning in ERP-Systems
www.igi-global.com/chapter/integration-predated-notifications-personal-actions/36476?camid=4v1a