A mission support tool for

HEALTH and HUMAN SERVICES

UNDERWRITTEN BY

Contents

NPower is a network of independent, locally-based nonprofits providing accessible technology help that strengthens the work of other nonprofits. NPower's mission is to ensure all nonprofits can use technology to expand the reach and impact of their services. We envision a thriving nonprofit sector in which all organizations have access to the best technology resources and know-how, and can apply these tools in pursuit of healthy, vibrant communities. For more information, visit our website at ***www.NPower.org***

NPower
Putting technology know-how in the hands of Non-Profits

UNDERWRITTEN BY THE SBC FOUNDATION

Welcome to...

"NPower's Technology Guide for Nonprofit Leaders: A Mission Support Tool for Health and Human Services." This is one of four "Technology for Leaders" guides published by NPower, a national organization devoted to bringing free or low-cost technology help to nonprofits, and funded by a grant from the SBC Foundation, the philanthropic arm of SBC Communications Inc.

These papers highlight technology innovation in four nonprofit sectors: arts and culture, health and human services, education, and community development. The goal is to inspire nonprofits about ***the possibilities of technology as a service delivery tool***, and to provide nonprofit leaders with real-world examples that demonstrate that potential.

Each of these papers offers a roadmap for nonprofit leaders on how to integrate technology into their organizations ***confidently and fearlessly***. The roadmap covers the best-practice steps involved in deciding how technology can support and enhance direct service delivery, and how a nonprofit executive can evaluate and select the appropriate tools for the job and ***implement those tools successfully.*** It also provides examples of program-specific solutions, tools and resources that are available to expand the reach and impact of nonprofits' direct services.

Each paper is meant to be a stand-alone resource for the specific nonprofit sector mentioned. However, leaders in one sector may also find it beneficial to read the papers covering other sectors, as they contain many inspiring anecdotes and case studies.

There are a number of people to thank for their contributions to the health and human services guide. Joan Fanning, Executive Director for NPower, and Judy Davis, an independent consultant, collaborated extensively to blend their combined 40 years of experience in the field. In addition, NPower Seattle provided research on useful technology tools and real world examples for grappling with client tracking.

In summary, the information contained in these papers reflects the core of NPower's mission: to ensure all nonprofits can use technology to expand the reach and impact of their work. We hope that you find this information valuable, and we welcome any comments or questions you may have.

Sincerely,

The NPower Network

Human services organizations are our communities' last safety net.

They are the organizations that come face to face with the underserved and our disenfranchised neighbors. They provide services like counseling, foster care, elder care, substance abuse prevention, after-school programs, job training, and vocational rehabilitation. They provide information and referral services, give people facing tough times a little bit of hope, and advocate for change.

Like a juggler walking on a tightrope, human services organizations today face a challenging task: staying balanced while keeping many balls in the air. They are expected to provide client services in a low cost yet individualized manner; operate efficiently while meeting the expectations of all their regulators; and demonstrate that they are effectively solving social problems in addition to providing valuable services.

Nationwide, human services organizations are developing their own unique balancing act. With the resilience and innovation in service that characterizes this sector, many organizations are learning how to think about and use technology to meet their challenges.

We hope to help human services organizations in this endeavor. This guide was written as a cooperative effort, combining the experience

Human services organizations provide a range of services and activities, including childrens' programs.

and expertise of NPower staff and staff from the human services organizations with which we work. Our goal is to capture the lessons that human services organizations have learned as they use technology as a mission-enhancing tool.

This guide is not written as a scientific survey. Rather, it is a practical work aimed at sifting through experiences of human services organizations, noting relevant history, and learning lessons and success stories from people who have worked on technology adoption projects. We hope the mistakes and the successes of these early adopters will help other organizations as they begin the process of integrating technology into their service delivery.

In this paper, we first define the term "human services sector." Next, we present our perspective on where the human services sector stands now and how technology relates to the sector's unique challenges and opportunities. We provide an example of an organization that is currently using technology, tell you why the organization chose that particular technology, and explain how it managed the technology implementation.

We also focus on a challenge common to many human services organizations – choosing and implementing an automated case management or client tracking system – and give practical information to help your organization through this process.

Throughout this guide, you will find case studies and sample materials to provide both motivation and concrete examples that will help your organization apply technology as a mission-support tool.

NONPROFIT PROFILE:

Henry Street Settlement

www.henrystreet.org

The Henry Street Settlement is an excellent example of a human services provider that works on multiple levels to improve the lives of low-income individuals and families, as well as foster a healthy, vibrant community. Lillian Wald founded the Henry Street Settlement in 1893 to help build better lives for the inhabitants of Manhattan's Lower East Side. Today, the Henry Street Settlement includes a community mental health clinic; a battered women's shelter; transitional residences for homeless families and single women; three day-care centers; a senior center; programs and services for older adults; a multi-disciplinary arts center; arts-in-education programming; home care initiatives; and a broad spectrum of educational, employment, recreational, camping, community service, after-school, counseling, and leadership development programs for youth. The Henry Street Settlement is also an excellent example of how an organization, through its services, provides an additional benefit to the community by creating bridges between many community members.

Defining the human services sector

The National Center for Charitable Statistics defines the human services sector as: "*private nonprofit organizations whose primary purpose is to support the personal and social development of individuals and families; provide care, protection and supervision; and enhance the individual's independence and ability to manage his or her own resources.*"

Organizations in this sector range from primarily volunteer organizations with one paid staff to influential national organizations that employ large work forces, such as the YMCA, YWCA, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, and the Red Cross. They are IRS-registered organizations engaged in charity (501(c)(3)) or social welfare (501(c)(4)) work. Today there are 1.2 million such organizations, offering a wide range of services to their members and communities. "*The Independent Sector*" reports that human services groups make up about 45 percent of the entire nonprofit sector, or roughly 540,000 organizations.

Human services is also one of the fastest growing sectors, outstripping business, government and other nonprofit sectors. In fact, between 1987 and 1997, the charity and social welfare sector grew twice as fast as the business sector. Of all the tax-exempt organizations, human services organizations represent the most diverse constituency. While the range of work and size of these groups may vary, they play a similar collective role in our society.

According to "*The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America*," the human services sector contributes to our communities through five roles: services, community-building, advocacy, expressive, and values guardian. We define these five roles as follows:

Services

Human services organizations provide hot meals to a homeless person; the gift of a hand-made baby blanket to a new mother living in poverty; counseling to someone recovering from drug addiction, domestic violence or an experience of loss. They find mentors for high-risk teenagers, or a ride to the doctor for an elderly person. These services, which give people in need the means to survive and carry on, are as varied as the demand. Human services organizations have come to be known as a safety net – working to keep all people safe, included and valued.

Community-Building

Because human services organizations have invested in creating relationships with the citizens and institutions in their communities, they have become models of cooperative, collaborative efforts. Building trust among people to achieve particular goals has become a valuable asset in connecting individuals to communities. Bringing people together in meaningful associations strengthens communities.

Advocacy

The human services sector speaks on behalf of many groups of people, including refugees from numerous countries; those afflicted with AIDS; those affected by violence, especially violence in the family; victims of sexual assault; children and families; the homeless and the hungry. Communities have responded to this advocacy by creating networks and coalitions of concerned citizens and organizations.

Expressive

A traditional role of human services organizations is to help people express themselves in personally satisfying ways. Opportunities to discover new abilities or experience personal growth add richness to the lives of community members.

Values Guardian

"*The Resilient Sector: The State of Nonprofit America*," says that this sector gives institutional expression to individualism (the principle that people should have the freedom to act on matters that concern them) and solidarity (the notion that people have responsibilities not only to themselves but also to their fellow human beings and to the communities of which they are a part). Voluntary action on behalf of others is a significant value in our culture. Human services organizations often have volunteers as well as staff who are drawn to work that makes a positive difference for vulnerable members of their communities.

NONPROFIT PROFILE:

Volunteers of America

www.volunteersofamerica.org

Volunteers of America is a national, nonprofit, spiritually-based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement. From rural America to inner-city neighborhoods, Volunteers of America provides outreach programs that deal with today's most pressing social needs. Volunteers of America helps at-risk youth, frail elderly, abused and neglected children, people with disabilities, homeless individuals, the elderly, and many others.

Challenges and opportunities

While the demand for services is growing and public trust in them is high, most human services organizations are experiencing an uncomfortable business reality:

- Fewer resources to meet increasing demands
- More competition to provide those services
- Increased requirements from funders to provide outcome and other data reporting
- Increased regulatory mandates

Human services organizations, along with other nonprofits, are under pressure to reconsider how they do business in the face of decreased resources, increased accountability measures, new funding structures, and increased expectations to produce evidence of effectiveness.

Technology offers tools that can help human services organizations provide effective, efficient and low-cost services in an individualized manner, and meet the complex reporting requirements of regulators and funders. These tools can also assist organizations in finding innovative ways to provide services to their communities and expand the reach and the impact of those services.

Traditionally, however, most human services nonprofits have focused on maximizing the resources that go to direct services, with little left over for planning or implementing technology to support their work. Generally speaking, organizations that have been able to combine their dedication to mission with resources to build both their business and technological capacity are best positioned to meet current challenges.

Moving into the future, organizations are likely to adopt new technologies to sustain, manage, and improve their businesses. Preserving what is important and valuable about human services while taking advantage of what technology has to offer is a possibility with promise.

Moving into the future, organizations are likely to adopt new technologies to sustain, manage, and improve their businesses.

Information technology has the potential to transform how, and how well, nonprofit organizations provide these needed services to communities. For example:

- Databases increase the accuracy and timeliness with which agencies can identify and deliver services to clients
- Internet connectivity opens a doorway to quick, affordable communications
- Online tools, such as benefits calculators and interactive legal services guides, help low-income individuals and families in remote areas receive needed services.

CASE STUDY: Using technology for better services

In Bellingham, Washington, an outpatient mental health facility providing Medicaid-funded services to children began focusing on developing effective treatment plans using its standard treatment planning form. At the time, counselors were accustomed to doing their work individually and sharing treatment planning efforts with no one but their clinical supervisor. As counselors began to talk together about planning treatment, they recognized some common themes and began to see the treatment plan not as a document required to pass audits, but as a dynamic guide to achieving the client's goals.

Acting together to strengthen their service delivery system, they soon realized that their paper form no longer matched what they wanted to track. They changed the form, but were still limited by the fact that it wasn't a "living" document that clarified and supported the desired changes. As they piloted a case management system, they found they finally had the tool that could express their best practice.

With the software application they selected, they could add and drop interventions or objectives as the plan evolved through the efforts of the client and their support team. Creating a new treatment plan, which had been a laborious and repetitive undertaking in a paper system, was easily accomplished with the new application. The relevant parts of the plan were changed and the updated plan was printed so the client could use it, instead of just being maintained in the clinical record.

This new tool also allowed the counselors to document the resources and collaborations of the support team working on behalf of the client. Serendipitous occurrences — often pivotal contributions to the case's/client's overall success—could be included as part of the living document and not buried in the narrative of a case note somewhere in the file.

Having challenged themselves to articulate what worked for their clients and what did not, these practitioners gained confidence in their ability as a community of practice to assist clients in developing effective strategies for responding to difficulties. They can now evaluate the effectiveness of treatment planning at both the individual and program level because they have the means to track effort and progress consistently across particular issues and people.

In the human services sector, many organizations are turning to technology to help increase the reach and impact of their services. Technology is now being applied to increase service efficiency and effectiveness, to meet reporting requirements, and to break through old capacity or service barriers. These agencies are learning that technology tools, when combined with the passion and values of human service staff, can and do make a difference in their ability to serve their communities. Here are some examples of what technology can accomplish in the human services sector:

Provide effective client services in a low-cost yet individualized manner

Staff members at human services organizations are drawn to their work because they care deeply about creating positive change in the lives of individuals and families. A central component of their success is their ability to listen deeply and respond appropriately to the different needs facing those they serve. At the core, it is all about individualized services – helping a unique individual or family adapt to challenges or alter their particular situation.

As the people "on the ground," case managers, housing coordinators, family counselors and other types of human services staff are most familiar with what their clients really need on a daily basis to move toward self-sufficiency. Help could be something simple like bus tickets to go to a job interview, a word of encouragement to sign up for a GED class, or the knowledge of a resource in the community. It could be a safety plan for a family that recognizes violence as an issue, or the placement of an abandoned baby. The people who do the work are the experts on how it is done.

By observing and sharing the details of service delivery, providers define and refine their ideas about what works well and not so well, and under what circumstances. Using technology tools to identify, capture, and share these lessons throughout an organization helps providers analyze this data and then apply it in an individualized manner to their work with clients. It is theory and practice co-evolving in service of people. Technology tools such as automated case management systems (see the Technology Solution Close-up on page 20) now make the process of capturing, sharing and building on collective best practices feasible to an extent that was virtually impossible to do in a cost-effective manner absent the technology.

Using technology tools to identify, capture and share lessons throughout an organization helps providers analyze data and then apply it in an individualized manner to their work with clients.

Meet the data and reporting needs of regulators and funders

With no clear, sustainable public policy for providing human services, many people in all sectors of society are trying to work out ways to meet the needs of society's poorest and least advantaged individuals. People working on behalf of the general welfare come from government, business, foundations, religious organizations and the public. They are experimenting with many new types of funding structures, ranging from the traditional fee-for-service to a human services model that is similar to managed care. To discover which services develop into sound policy, all publicly-funded contracts and and many private contracts include accountability measures.

Technology tools can help agencies improve service delivery to individuals and families in need.

Organizations pull together funding streams to support clients who cannot pay for what they receive, creatively combining government contracts, private donations and foundation grants to provide services on a shoestring. As human services organizations shuffle services to match funding, maintaining adequate accountability for these complex and changing arrangements can become a time-consuming and labor-intensive task.

Collecting information about client demographics, services delivered, and compliance with regulations costs organizations time and money for which they are not directly reimbursed. The job is particularly onerous for organizations that capture information only on paper forms. When information can be electronically entered and tracked in a database during the process of service delivery, a win-win situation is possible. Information that helps funders and regulators check on the performance of an organization or program can also assist the organization in managing itself. It also leaves providers focused on service rather than reporting.

Find innovative ways to solve social service problems.

Once staff of human services organizations become comfortable using and experimenting with technology and understanding its potential, they start to view it as an enabling tool rather than a disabling tool. In the private sector, technology innovations have been driven by individuals with an understanding of technology's potential and an intimate understanding of a problem or challenge. Once we increase the technology fluency of individuals working for social change, we will have a similar marriage of knowledge that has lead to innovations in the private sector. In the human services sector, these innovations will create new technologies to tackle long-standing social problems.

One such example is the online order-of-protection system developed by the Fund for New York City in collaboration with the Coalition Against Domestic Violence. Through their efforts, an online "document assembly" tool was developed to guide women through the process of obtaining and then generating a court-ready order-of-protection. The development of this tool has broken through the once seemingly insurmountable capacity barrier between women and the help they need to get out of domestic violence situations—the long wait for pro-bono legal assistance. Furthermore, it educates and empowers women impacted by domestic violence and connects them to local resources.

The private sector had no cause or inspiration to develop this tool. It required the creative vision of individuals intimately familiar with domestic violence prevention efforts who are also fluent in the potential of technology. Nonprofits around the country are creating similar technology tools to meet the needs of the most marginalized in our society and to work toward social justice.

NPower's belief is that technology, when applied in service to humanity, has the potential to transform how, and how well, we meet the needs of our communities. Our goal is to help human services staff better understand how technology can be applied to their work – and to assist them in feeling comfortable using and experimenting with technology tools.

CASE STUDY: Using technology for better reporting

A Seattle food bank partnered with NPower Seattle to create a database to track the demographic information of those they serve and information about services provided. With a database to do its reporting at the touch of a button, the food bank is able to stay open all month to provide service, instead of closing for two full days to produce hand-counted reports.

Furthermore, the food bank is using email as a "business-to-business" tool — enabling it to share and trade inventories with other food banks. One food bank was near a market that donated a lot of fresh produce. Another was located by a bakery. A third received donated canned goods. By sharing among themselves, they were able to offer more variety to their clients.

As food bank staff members used their new system, they discovered that technology helped them focus their time and attention on the important work of providing food to the hungry.

Tools to help you meet your goals

When you think of technology as a service tool, you can let your imagination go to new places. Technology can be a support tool for human service organizations in many ways – from increasing efficiency to supporting direct services to addressing social needs in new and innovative ways. Here are some possibilities to consider:

Providing effective client services

Challenges	Strategies	Possible Tools
Your staff members continually gather the same data – for example, name, address and phone number – from customers, either because that data is not easily accessible or is not stored each time a client or customer visits.	Track all mission-critical data so frontline staff can spend more time working with customers and clients and less time duplicating efforts.	▪ Create custom-built databases with relational database management systems such as Access, FileMaker Pro or open source databases built in MySQL. ▪ Acquire off-the-shelf client tracking software systems such as Social Solutions' Efforts To Outcomes or explore open source database tools. ▪ See Technology Close-up on page 20 for more guidance on taking steps to implement client tracking databases.
Your nonprofit has the tools to provide great service to the community, but people aren't aware of what you do.	▪ Create a website (or use your existing site) to publicize services, location and hours. Note: Potential clients may not yet use the Internet to look for assistance, but other nonprofits searching for resources often do. ▪ Ensure that your website is indexed so that search engines can easily find it. ▪ Create a newsletter or other marketing materials to spread the word about your agency mission and service.	▪ Create a website using web editing tools such as FrontPage or DreamWeaver or subscribe to a Web service like Groundspring.org's PublishNow that provides the tools and templates you need. ▪ Visit ***www.techsoup.org*** for articles on getting your website noticed by search engines. ▪ Include a free Yahoo or Google search tool on your website to help visitors find information. ▪ Use desktop publishing or word processing software to prepare a newsletter or mailing.
Your agency collects mission-critical data, but staff members can't access it while offsite, or it is only accessible by a single user at a time. Staff members have to take notes on paper and then transfer them later to the database, duplicating their efforts.	▪ Store your database on a computer or server that everyone can access. ▪ Arrange for a third party to host your database, maintaining and backing up your data – all you need is an Internet connection.	▪ Develop a simple peer-to-peer computer network. ▪ Acquire Apple, Linux or Microsoft server software. ▪ Secure a third-party vendor (Application Service Provider – ASP). See ***www.NonprofitMatrix.com*** for latest vendors.

Meeting data and reporting needs of regulators and funders	Challenges	Strategies	Possible Tools
	The agency checkbook shows the bottom line and how much money you have in the bank. But you have to report information to donors and funders in many different ways, so you are constantly re-adding the same numbers for different stakeholders.	Track your income, expense, grants, donations and other important financial information with nonprofit fund accounting software that allows you to generate the reports you need.	■ Use financial management tools such as QuickBooks, NonProfitBooks, SQL Ledger or Raiser's Edge. Check out NPower's website in the tools and resources section for the latest consumer guide on financial management tools.
	You can tell stakeholders about agency accomplishments, but have a difficult time capturing what your customers or clients think.	Implement a survey that asks your customers or clients to describe the service received from your agency. Use this information to hone your service delivery AND show stakeholders how you are making a difference in the community.	■ Create a survey with a word processor and mail it to your customers. ■ Create an online survey with tools such as ***www.SurveyMonkey.com***, PHPSurvey, or ***www.Zoomerang.com***.
	Your agency needs to keep track of CPR training, food handling permits, licensing, certification and other training information about your staff.	Use a spreadsheet or database that tracks employees' training and certification requirements, and has a "reminder" feature regarding expiration dates on certificates.	■ Start a spreadsheet using CALC, Excel or Lotus. ■ If tracking and reporting needs are more complex, create a database with Access, FileMaker Pro, or another tool that allows you to enter employee information and licensing/training requirements, then will print a report about the status of needs for each employee.

Finding innovative ways to solve social services problems

Challenges	Strategies	Possible Tools
Your organization provides the link between homeless men and women willing to perform work and people needing day labor services. But tracking the different people (and their skills) each day AND matching them with requests for help is an uphill struggle.	Perform a skills assessment with each possible worker, and track that information in a database. Give all workers a card so they can "check themselves in" by swiping the card when they arrive ready to work. Use the database to match available workers with customers needing work.	▪ Acquire a bar code scanner/reader. ▪ Develop a skills database.
You want to ensure that clients receive the services available to them, but some people do not like talking with staff members about finances, medical conditions, and other sensitive issues.	Use a third-party tool to perform an assessment. This allows your customers or clients to "help themselves" and removes a barrier to service.	See NPower's Technology Guide for Nonprofit Leaders: Community Development and also visit ***www.benefitscheckup.org***
Your agency works with at-risk populations, and staff members do not work from an office every day. Carrying a laptop is cumbersome and using pen and paper means they have to rewrite their notes when they return to the office.	Use a portable device (smaller than a laptop) that allows your staff to conduct surveys and assess physical or mental health. The data then syncs with your database at the office. A plus: Customers or clients do not have to interact with someone behind a desk with a computer.	Acquire mobile computing software for Pocket PC or Palm devices, such as ***www.Pendragon-software.com*** or ASI's Write-On Handheld POS System.
You just discovered that your organization has to be HIPAA compliant AND your major funder wants you to report your success rate based on inputs and outputs. There is not enough paper in the world to help.	Create a secure database that can protect private information and is also flexible enough to let you create inputs (i.e., we will serve 200 lunches a day) and measure outputs (our customers have improved medical checkups).	Obtain outcome tracking software such as ***www.Socialsolutionsonline.com***; Evolv by Defran; Factors by Peter Martin and Assoc.
Your agency provides interpreters for deaf and hard-of-hearing customers, but ASL interpreters can be expensive and are not always available.	Implement a video relay that allows customers to "make a call" using a computer, a high-speed Internet connection and a video camera. As a result, they can interact personally via ASL without having to use a third-party service.	Get started with a video camera, "network meeting" software and a high-speed Internet connection.

Getting started: a human-centered approach to technology solutions

Human services organizations tend to avoid technology because they believe it will distance them from the personalized service they provide to their clients. This pitfall can be avoided by taking a human-centered approach to implementing technology. Many organizations make the mistake of thinking that the success of technology depends on picking the right technology, the right consultant or the right software vendor. While those things are important, the success of an implementation depends upon the culture of the organization.

Your organization will need to become aware of how it uses information, what information is necessary to run the organization effectively, and the degree to which the people in your organization must share the same understanding of what particular information means.

The human services sector has an information-rich culture, with multiple perspectives on the work of the organization. The various parties are knowledge workers who contribute to the workplace with the information that they possess, have access to, and can make use of in carrying out their tasks. Front-line staff, middle managers, administrative support and senior executives have different bases of knowledge and responsibility that give each group its own perspective.

This information is not neutral, orderly or static. It begins as one thing, evolves into a different thing, and holds multiple meanings. It expands as the answer to a question leads to more questions with more answers.

Each context has its own buzzwords, primary issues and preferred methodologies or best practices.

The human services sector has an information-rich culture.

The complexity and richness of the service information handled by most human services organizations is impressive.

So how does information with this level of messiness get put into a database that is clear and orderly? Most human-centered technology folks would say that it does not. What happens instead is that organizations take on the task of bringing order and clarity to their own communication and thinking. Then that clarity is what gets codified in the culture that then adopts technology. The process of changing the culture is difficult, time-consuming and can be somewhat stressful. So why do it?

Organizations that take the time and expend the energy to articulate publicly how people share information and share learning are already participating in an information culture. They take seriously the values of technology and human service by understanding the complexity of how people in their organization use information long before they choose a technology. The isolated practitioner providing service using an idiosyncratic method is not the norm. The norm is effective teamwork where each participant knows his or her role and plays it, sharing the information needed to do the job. Teams depend upon each other to do their individual jobs so that together they can accomplish more.

Human services have several basic types of team structures. Here are some common ones:

Information and Referral Model: The team focuses on helping meet the immediate needs of clients, who do not usually require an in-depth relationship with an individual staff person. Food banks, emergency services and shelter programs are examples of this service model.

Sole Practitioner Model: Each team member self-manages his or her client interaction according to articulated best practices, with administrative and clinical oversight. Counseling services often adopt this type of service model, where clients are assigned to a particular provider for their service needs.

Team Collaboration Model: Each team member self-manages his or her collaboration in serving clients assigned to a sub-group of the team. Administrative and clinical oversight support effective self-management with clients and collaborations with colleagues. This model is often used with clients challenged by chronic or multiple problems. Team-based services may include experts like physicians and natural supports like friends, as well as human services providers who work together on behalf of the client. Each person has a specific, articulated role within the service collaboration. Many home-based mental health services use this model.

Team Practice Model: Each member plays an ongoing role with each client served by the team. Roles may vary from client to client, but roles are defined for each one. Administrative and clinical oversight includes the milieu, the daily activities, and relationships that support or challenge the client. Residential placements and intensive community-based services with wrap-around services may follow this model.

In these different models, how information is shared and with what frequency is determined by the experience of workers who find out what is most effective. To ask one group to adopt the strategies and organization of another group would undermine their ability to function. Yet, in looking for technology, some organizations do just that.

The rationale is that each group captures basically the same information, so there is very little difference in their information needs. There is often an assumption about underlying technology that says that complex circumstances can and should be made simple. But most human services workers know that when you reduce the complexity, you lose some aspect of the meaning. And reducing the meaning to oversimplifications is not useful in serving human beings. So technologies – and data systems in particular – that work for human services will preserve complexity and not work against the nature of information or the nature of human beings.

The team structures of human services organizations may vary, but the goal is the same: Find the best way to help clients.

Since information is so valuable for individuals and organizations in managing resources, it is essential for leadership to know specifically how the information culture of their organization works.

Leaders who are shifting their information culture will need to ask the following questions:

- What is the information that we need to have in order to manage our organization?
  - Do we have a shared understanding of how we use this information?
  - Have we identified the behavior we want to see regarding this information?
  - Have we trained staff to appropriate awareness and skill levels?
  - Are we monitoring for the desired behavior?
- When we see that our organization has multiple meanings for information – like identifying the client, a service, an intake, a discharge – can we agree to function with multiple meanings?

Since information is so valuable for individuals and organizations in managing resources, it is essential for leadership to know specifically how the information culture of their organization works.

- When we determine that information needs to be common, do our senior leaders help the organization reach agreement? If agreement cannot be reached, can they impose a standard?

Organizations that communicate well in the absence of technology will have a great foundation to begin implementing new technology. Those that have not achieved a strong foundation can begin strengthening their communication about how they use information. Human services organizations have a track record for being trustworthy and collaborative. By being clear about how information flows in informing administrative and service decision-making, human services organizations can make the best use of their assets in serving clients and communities.

NONPROFIT PROFILE:

HarlemLive

www.harlemlive.org

HarlemLive is an award-winning, critically acclaimed Web magazine produced by teens from throughout New York City. They research their own articles, interview sources, photograph news events and interact daily with their community. Through an ongoing "dialogue" with Harlem, they encourage accountability in their schools, political districts and neighborhoods. In the process, they develop specific skills including desktop publishing, database management, digital camera technology, electronic messaging, Web design and mass communications. The students who participate in HarlemLive may not ultimately become journalists, but because they are constantly unraveling complex issues of the day, they gain skills that are transferable into many arenas.

Technology solution close-up

The single most important reason for human services organizations to adopt current technologies – whether it be something as complex as computer databases or as seemingly simple as cell phones – is to better support those they serve and better understand the impact of their services. In this section, we'll consider in some detail one such technological tool: the automated client tracking system.

In a best-case scenario, automated case management systems support the work of front-line providers, enabling them to better serve their customers while providing the agency as a whole with important information about who it is serving and the impact of these services. Good automated case management systems will help human services organizations accomplish the following:

- **Organize information that needs to be captured.** Technology assists in organizing information and breaking down tasks, processes, or plans into component parts in a standardized way so that others can replicate them. This allows routine tasks to be tweaked instead of reinvented, saving time, energy, and money.
- **Capture information consistently.** Software applications that record information in a database create consistency in capturing data. Staff can be required to complete specific tasks within the application, assuring them and you that the important bases are covered. Most organizations would function better with easy access to legible and unambiguous information that is critical to their success in meeting the expectations of clients, staff, regulators, and funders.

Your organization's service philosophy should guide the choice of a data system.

- **Automate routine tasks and make good use of teamwork.** Information systems emphasize clear roles for various users who add their contribution to serving the organization's consumers. An intake worker records initial information about a client, typing the name once. That name is "recycled" within the system to appear on a variety of documents and reports. One or many providers offer additional service over time. Each addition builds on earlier work to document service delivery.
- **Assist analysis of capacity, effort and effectiveness.** Because the information is in electronic form, it can provide in-depth understanding of what is working and what is not. Calling out different aspects of information for analysis gives organizations what they need to put their effort where they think it will do the most good.
- **Enable easy communication and sharing of best practice service delivery processes.** Implementing an automated case management system requires that an organization codify its service delivery protocols and processes so that they can be represented in the actions of the software. This becomes a powerful tool to share best practices within an organization and among like organizations.

CASE STUDY: Technology supporting the sharing of best practices

An organization serving youth designs a Web-based case management system to automatically go through a series of actions once a "critical incident report" is filed. When a report is submitted into the system, an email is automatically sent to all team members who are working with the youth, notifying them of the critical incident. The case supervisor's email contains an urgent trigger reminding her/him to file the required state reports within 24 hours. The agency's director is sent an email message that includes a checklist of the key actions that must be taken to stay in compliance with state regulations.

Essentially, the best practice of what to do in this situation has been codified and automated. Once created, such service delivery best practices can then be made available as a "default" system set up for any subsequent youth service organization using the same tool. This creates an environment where agencies are building on the work of their peers and provides a powerful mechanism to share best practices.

Steps to choosing and implementing an automated case management system

Designing and implementing a client or consumer tracking database can seem overwhelming, especially if you are a human services organization that provides multiple services. When consulting with nonprofits about database needs, one of NPower's guiding principles is to first understand the mission and services of the agency, and then recommend using technology where it makes sense. After all, a database should help, rather than hinder, your service delivery, allowing you to provide the clients you serve with the best possible care. With that mission in mind, we recommend that agencies take the following six steps as they start the process of choosing and implementing an automated case management system:

1. Create a detailed model of your ideal service delivery, incorporating all of what you consider to be your agency's best practices.
2. Identify the specific information the database must manage, how it will flow among the people providing services, and the outcomes that your agency tracks (or wants to track).
3. Develop the "functional requirements" of a client tracking database that would support your agency's best practice service delivery model. Functional requirements are simply the functions you want a database or software tool to do or to track.
4. Evaluate and select a software vendor that can provide a product matching your agency's information and functional requirements.
5. Pilot the top system with a small user group of your employees.
6. If your pilot project succeeds, develop an implementation plan and roll out the system agency-wide.

What follows is more information about each of the six steps. In addition, the appendices at the end of this chapter will provide you with sample guides relevant to each step.

STEP 1 Create a detailed model of your agency's best practice service delivery process

A service delivery system is the process of how a client accesses and makes use of the services your organization offers, from first contact until the completion of services. Before you start to look at automated case management systems, you should map out

Before you start to look at automated case management systems, you should map out what your organization's best practice service delivery system looks like. Find a gigantic whiteboard and outline the entire service delivery process.

what your organization's best practice service delivery system looks like. Find a gigantic whiteboard and outline the entire service delivery process. To help your agency do this, create a typical consumer scenario (e.g., profile a typical consumer coming to your organization for assistance) and then walk through the process this consumer must follow to receive services from start to finish. (See Appendix A for an example of a client scenario and Appendix B for a list of sample questions that a multi-service human services provider may want to consider.)

An agency's mission and services are critical factors in deciding how to use technology.

Specify your methods for intake and assessment; for case planning; for linking clients to a service or services; for monitoring, reassessing and evaluating progress and case closure; and for tracking outcomes. If you have one intake process for typical situations and a different process for consumers in other situations – for example, a crisis or a referral from local child protective services – map all the steps required for consumers to use your services. If your current process is not your best practice process, identify what the best practice process would look like and use this as a guide for identifying an automated case management system.

If you have a relatively small organization with only one service area, identifying and mapping your best practice service delivery process might be accomplished in one or two meetings. If you have a large multi-service organization, expect to spend a bit more time on it. (See Appendix C for a description of creating a flowchart of your service delivery process and Appendix D for an example of a mapped service delivery process.)

Do your best thinking and write down what you came up with. Once you have a workable model, test it. One easy test is to go back to your typical consumer scenario and take this fictitious individual or family through the system you created. You want to look for the places that are not quite complete and make any necessary changes. Share the model with others in the organization and use their feedback for further refinement.

If your agency offers multiple services to clients, you need to address a critical question: Do you want one automated case management system throughout your agency? If the answer is yes, the system will need to accommodate services that are very different – like foster care and emergency services. At this stage, do not worry about how the system will accomplish that. It is enough to know that you are using an integrated service delivery model. On the other hand, you may feel that separate systems tailored to individual programs are a better fit for how you want to do business. In that case, use a program-specific service delivery model to satisfy the needs of your organization.

STEP 2 ***Identify the specific information the database must manage, how that information will flow among the people providing services, and the outcomes your agency tracks (or wants to track.)***

Now that you have created a model describing your ideal, best practice service delivery, turn your attention to the specific information the system will need to include. Look at all phases of the service process, from initial contact, to intake and assessment, to case closure.

Effective information systems depend on detail. The more details that you address during the system's planning, the more likely it is that the system will meet the real, day-to-day needs of case managers, clinicians, program managers and other users. In working out who needs what information when, it is the people doing the work who have the best ideas about what is useful.

Document how this information will flow among the people participating in the case. For example, if you are operating within an integrated service delivery model, will there be one master client file used across all programs? If particular pieces of information need to be exchanged among different providers, how will this work, and what procedures will govern access to information that is sensitive or confidential? How will each provider's observations and notes be made available to others?

At the same time, consider what service outcomes your agency tracks (or wants to begin tracking). By determining at this early stage what data elements you need to evaluate outcomes, you can see if the client information you plan to gather is sufficient. If it is not sufficient, you can add to it.

STEP 3 ***Determine the "functional requirements" of the system***

After you have identified the information requirements of an automated case management system, you will want to identify the "functional requirements." Functional requirements are simply the things you want a database or software tool to be able to do. For example, you may want a database that has a quick search feature to easily determine if a client has received services from your agency before; or you may want a database to be able to link individuals with other family members so that your agency can get a count of both individuals served and families served.

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Here are other examples of functional requirements:

- You want to document each client's strengths and resources, as well as their needs.
- You want the organization to use different assessment forms for different programs, yet capture and report on common information among all assessment.
- You require role-based security. For example, you want to give access to all parts of the record to certain people – for example, service providers – or in some cases you may want to expand access to support staff and agency providers in other programs.
- You need the system to provide audit functionality so that you can trace who changed what data when. This requires you to decide if you want to trace all data entered and edited, or just certain data.

To identify these types of functional requirements, we recommend that you involve all prospective users in a brainstorming session. The sky's the limit during this discussion; encourage all ideas and keep the creativity flowing. To make the list more useful, break your ideas down into single, unambiguous statements that describe what you want the system to be able to do to support your agency's work.

Once you've completed your wish list, it's time to decide what's a priority by placing each desired component into one of three categories:

- **Non-negotiable.** "If it can't do this, why bother?"
- **Value-added.** "This would be useful, but let's take a look at the benefit versus the cost."
- **Luxury.** "This would make us the envy of our colleagues, but it probably isn't essential to our best practices."

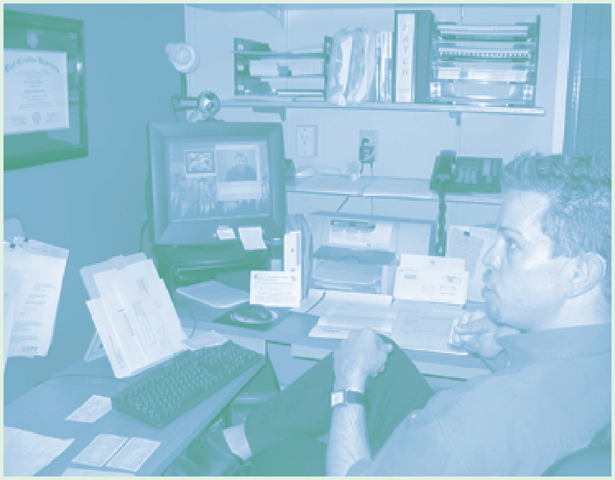
You can use these prioritized functional requirements as the criteria to evaluate off-the-shelf database packages and/or system design proposals. (See Appendix E for an example of functional requirements for an automated case management system that does initial contact and screening for a multi-service human service organization.)

STEP 4 Evaluate and select a software package

Once you have determined the scope of the information you want to gather and the functions you desire in a system, it's time to evaluate and select a software vendor that

Functional requirements are simply the things you want a database or software tool to be able to do.

can provide a product that matches your requirements. Guided by your prioritized wish list, identify candidate software packages. Then get an on-site demonstration.



The long-term rewards of a case management database are well worth the effort.

Approach this demonstration warily. Stay focused on the essential functional requirements you have identified, and use a uniform scorecard to assess where each product excels or falls short. Do not be swayed by extra technological features that you don't need or whiz-bang sound effects.

If you have not found an ideal system, it may be time to consider finding a software developer to create a custom application. However, be aware that depending on the sophistication of your needs, developing a database from scratch can be a very costly and time-consuming project.

STEP 5 *Pilot the top system with a small user group of your employees.*

Assuming you have found a package that looks like an excellent choice, you still need to complete one more important step: a test drive, so to speak, of potential users.

For this test, identify a group of agency employees who will pilot the case management system in a real-world setting so that you can determine exactly how well it fits with your agency and your service delivery model. Plan for the trial run to take approximately three months, and before you start, develop a detailed set of evaluation criteria so you will know what constitutes success or failure. It is equally essential to prepare your staff by taking the following steps:

- **Create a learning environment:** The software is going to force people to do things differently, and this may create anxiety, confusion, and the dreaded learning curve. Help them relax and know that this is the time you want to make every mistake you can. You have got training wheels (your vendor) and learning involves error. It helps a lot if you can have fun while learning.

Use a uniform scorecard to assess where each product excels or falls short. Don't be swayed by extra technological features that you don't need or whiz-bang sound effects.

- **Plan in detail and share the plan**: Taking a modular approach – doing one small thing and seeing how that goes before you do another – will ultimately make things go faster. People need time and repetition of activities to metabolize change. Make a step-by-step plan for what you are going to do, but do not make a timeline. Forced marching does not work well even for armies.

- **Facilitate learning:** Encourage people to practice by having them work with real data on real consumers, since that will make sense to them. Offer two kinds of assistance: (1) Written documents with step-by-step instructions to guide them in completing tasks in the software. (2) Your expectations for specific goal accomplishments. People need a method to manage the frustration of learning something new. Goals like "log on to the system three different times today" are easier than "learn to log on to the system".

STEP 6 If your pilot project has succeeded, develop an implementation plan and roll out the system agency-wide.

If the pilot project meets your expectations, it's time to implement the system throughout your organization. But remember that there is a world of difference between a successful pilot project and a successful agency-wide implementation. A case management system has the potential to upend your organization culture because it goes to your agency's heart and soul – the way you deliver direct services. As a result, you are likely to face resistance and setbacks.

You will greatly improve your chances for ultimate success if you handle the rollout in a modular fashion, perhaps by introducing the full system on a program-by-program basis. Or you may want to consider implementing individual components of the system one-by-one agency wide. (For example, start with the phone intake process, then add program enrollment, and so on.)

Introducing a case management database is not an easy task, but the long-term rewards – greater efficiency, improved client care and demonstrable results to funders – are well worth the effort.

Conclusion: managing your change effort

Technology is both a creator of change, with its demands for new learning, and the tool to help adapt to changes of old patterns. Many organizations are in an ironic position: As institutions that offer hope and support for change to others, human services now need to pay attention to their *own* pressures for change. Integrating technology into the life of human services organizations requires resiliency; you must hang on to everything that buoys your spirit and supports your intentions during a challenging experience.

Give yourself and your organization reasonable expectations. The best technology adoption projects have several things in common. For starters, they anticipate the time it will take from the beginning of the project to the end of the implementation. Giving yourself time to deal with the complexity of changing fundamental business and practice processes will allow change to happen at a do-able pace.

In addition, successful projects have the support of senior management and the Board of Directors. Significant resources in both staff time and money are required to make a successful shift, and strong leadership can mitigate some of the inevitable frustrations. They are also based on careful planning done by a team representing different areas of expertise: the business, service and the technical arenas.

Finally, provide planning group members with the resources they need to carry out their task, including the time needed for this project, by relieving them of a portion of their other duties.

A case management system has the potential to upend your organization culture because it goes to your agency's heart and soul – the way you deliver direct services.

To prepare for the conversations about why the organization must adapt to the current sector reality, nonprofit leaders might benefit from assistance from various sources. Professional colleagues, educational materials, conferences, and discussion groups all will help leaders get a grasp of the issues.

People handle change better when they are involved in the planning and implementation process.

Most important, leaders should think about how challenges will be addressed in their organization at this time. Here are some perspectives that can help:

- **Affirm the reality and learn from past actions or inactions.** Few of us are gifted with prescience, but nearly everyone can make use of hindsight. Looking back at events, what mistakes can be identified? What alternative strategies might have been employed? Was there a conclusion that nothing could be done too soon? Too late? Leaders can find support through encouraging themselves and their organizations to learn from experience.
- **Each key leader can share in articulating and clarifying your organizational strengths and weaknesses,** both of which are equally important in an assessment. To only know what your organization is good at leaves you vulnerable in situations where what you are *not* good at is the very quality that will create a successful adaptation.
- **Help your organization meet uncertainty with an interest in growth.** By remaining confident about the organization's ability to adapt to changing pressures, leaders can foster needed conversations with an optimistic, learning-oriented perspective.

As we have examined organizations that have gone through the process of bringing technology into their services, consistent themes appear:

- You won't do everything right.
- You won't do everything wrong.
- You will learn from your mistakes.
- Pilot tests help you make smaller mistakes sooner, so you can do more things right later.
- Change is stressful and exciting.
- If people are prepared to accept the challenge of changing, they will find personal and organizational rewards.
- Change happens more slowly than you might wish.
- People can metabolize change better when they are included in the process of planning and implementing that change. That's what gets everybody over the finish line together.

Resources and additional information

To help you successfully implement technology in your organization, we have include some sample scenarios and resources for creating process flow charts and mapping how clients receive your services, plus a list of additional resources:

APPENDIX A – Mapping your agency's best practice service delivery model

APPENDIX B – Sample questions for a multi-service human services agency to consider

APPENDIX C – Using flow charts to map a service delivery process

APPENDIX D – Examples of a mapped service delivery process

APPENDIX E – Functional requirements for A Service Center's information system

APPENDIX A
Mapping your agency's best practice service delivery model

Overview

The goal of this exercise is to develop a clear, detailed description of the process by which a client receives services in your program area. Make sure to reflect any additional processes that may not be identified in the following questions but that a client goes through to receive your services. The outcome of this exercise will be a service delivery process flowchart that clearly describes all the steps of the service delivery process.

Materials provided to help you complete this exercise

1. A client scenario that represents a "typical client" who comes to your program for services.
2. Guide for developing a flowchart
3. Example of one service delivery process flowchart

Assumptions made for the purpose of this exercise

Providing services to a client usually involves a series of steps or discreet components – from initial contact to assessment to developing a treatment plan to closing out the case. For the purpose of this exercise, we are asking that each program area use the same terminology as you chart out your program's service delivery process. If you do not take a client through a particular step (e.g., developing a treatment plan) then list this as not applicable.

We will be using the following terms to describe the typical steps in providing services to a client:

- Initial contact and program enrollment (may include referral to other services)
- Intake and assessment (may include referral to other services)
- Service planning (or treatment plan development)
- Tracking of services provided, reassessment and review
- Service closure and reporting
- Client accounting

CLIENT SCENARIO An example from A Service Center

A Pacific Islander family of three consisting of Clarissa, 34, her 13-year-old son, Bill, and her 4-year-old son, Jamie, are referred to A Service Center by the state department of Child and Family Services for the following reasons:

Bill has just been placed in foster care for physically abusing his younger brother, Jamie. Child Protective Services (CPS) was brought in, Bill was removed from the home, and the family was referred to counseling. In addition to acting out aggressively, there is good evidence that Bill is a substance abuser as he has been found sniffing paint several times by a teacher at his school. Clarissa wants the family to be reunited and is willing to take parenting classes as well as enter into other services required by the state; however, she is worried about putting Jamie in more danger.

Although the family is currently in crisis, they have several areas of strength to draw upon: 1) The family has strong ties to the local Pacific Islander community; 2) Bill is extremely bright and well-liked by many of his peers; 3) Clarissa has recently finished her MA degree and is applying for jobs at a local hospital; and 4) Jamie is a playful, gregarious boy who has a very close connection to his mother.

In the referral from the state department of Child and Family Services, the following identified needs are recorded:

- **Mental health counseling to address Bill's aggressive behavior. In addition to abusing his younger brother, Bill has been suspended from school for attempting to stab a schoolmate.**
- **Substance abuse counseling for Bill.**
- **Parenting classes for Clarissa.**
- **Mental health counseling for Jamie.**
- **Legal assistance to avoid eviction. The apartment management has sent Clarissa a letter of intent to evict, stating that several residents have complained about feeling fearful around Bill as well as the noise during family arguments.**
- **Emergency assistance to buy groceries. Although Clarissa has hopes of getting a job soon, she is currently unemployed and is having difficulty making the rent payments and buying sufficient food for her family.**

APPENDIX B
Sample questions for a multi-service human services agency to consider

OBJECTIVE

For each component of the service delivery process, develop a detailed description of how Clarissa and her family would be connected to the appropriate services in your agency's service delivery process. Develop this description by answering the following questions AND creating a flowchart of the process.

GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. What services will Clarissa and her family receive from your agency?
2. During the service delivery process for Clarissa and her family, will there be one master consumer file from which all service providers work? Or will each service provider keep a separate record for her or himself?

INITIAL CONTACT

1. Who does Clarissa initially speak to when she calls your agency?
2. Where does this usually take place (e.g., via phone contact, in person at office/out of office, etc.)?
3. What information does this initial contact person gather? (In general – do not detail the specifics.)
4. If Clarissa and her family have multiple needs that may be addressed by more than one program in your agency, how will this be identified?
5. If multiple needs are identified, how will Clarissa and her family be connected to the different programs?
6. After the initial contact information is gathered, where does it go and who has access to it?

INTAKE AND ASSESSMENT
(If separate processes, please answer the questions for each process.)

1. Who will do the intake/assessment interview with Clarissa?
2. How is this person notified that she/he is to do this?
3. Where does this usually take place?
4. Does the person conducting the intake/assessment interview have access to the initial contact information previously gathered? If so, how does she/he get this information?
5. What information is gathered during the intake/assessment process (in general terms)?

6. After the intake/assessment interview process is completed, where does the information go and who has access to it?

7. If Clarissa and her family need to go through more than one intake and assessment, how is the intake process coordinated, and information shared, among the different programs?

SERVICE REFERRAL AND SERVICE PLANNING

Service referral

1. How will Clarissa and her family be linked to the multiple services they need?

2. How is the formal information (case file) about Clarissa and her family shared among the different service providers?

3. If additional information is needed to provide a particular service, who gathers this information and is it included in the case file? If so, how is the family's case file updated to reflect this additional information (e.g., is there one master file, are multiple copies of the case file made for the use of each service area, etc.?)

Service planning

1. Who does the service planning with Clarissa and her family?

2. How do all individuals working with Clarissa and her family access the information gathered during the initial contact and intake/assessment?

3. Where does the service planning process usually take place? Are Clarissa and her family involved in this process?

4. How is the service planning process coordinated among the different programs providing services to Clarissa and her family?

5. Is there one service plan developed for Clarissa and her family? If so, where is it located and how are updates/changes reflected in the service plan? If there are multiple service plans, how do the different program areas coordinate services?

6. What information is gathered/developed during this process?

SERVICE TRACKING

1. When an individual provides services outlined on the service plan, where does he/she track this information?

2. How are important progress notes and service updates formally communicated to the rest of the service team?

SERVICE MONITORING, REASSESSMENT AND REVIEW

1. Where is the information about service monitoring, reassessment and review kept (e.g., in the one master consumer file, separate files for separate services, etc.)?
2. How are updates/changes to this information tracked and who has access to this information?
3. How often are changes made? How is this information communicated to Clarissa and her family?
4. If a critical incident happens, how are all providers who are working with Clarissa and her family made aware of this?

CLOSURE OF SERVICE

1. If Clarissa and her family are receiving multiple services, when does “case closure” take place? How are all providers notified when a service has ended or case closure has taken place?
2. Who does the “case closure” process?
3. What information is gathered during this process?
4. Does additional/different service closure information need to be gathered for each service that was provided to Clarissa and her family? If so, how is this done?
5. After all case closure information is gathered, where does it go? (For example, is it put into a “final master consumer file” for all subsequent references, or are there multiple copies made for each service area’s individual consumer file?)

APPENDIX C
Using flowcharts to map a service delivery process

Flowcharts are graphic representations of a process. They show a systematic sequence of steps to take in completing a task or process.

Usually, a process is charted by first starting with the big picture that shows the entire process from start to finish on one page. Then, each discreet component of the big-picture process is broken down into more detail in a separate flowchart. A rule of thumb is to try to keep each separate flowchart to no more than 8 to 10 steps.

Usefulness of flowcharts:

Flowcharts are useful in the following ways:

- Documenting or describing an existing process.
- Developing modifications to an existing process.
- Investigating where problems might occur in a process.
- Designing an entirely new process.

Common flowchart symbols:

There are four basic symbols to use when constructing a flowchart:

○.....The Circle .... The circle indicates the beginning or end of a process

□ .....The Box .... The box represents a distinct step within the process. The step must be described in a statement. The step should describe one activity or event.

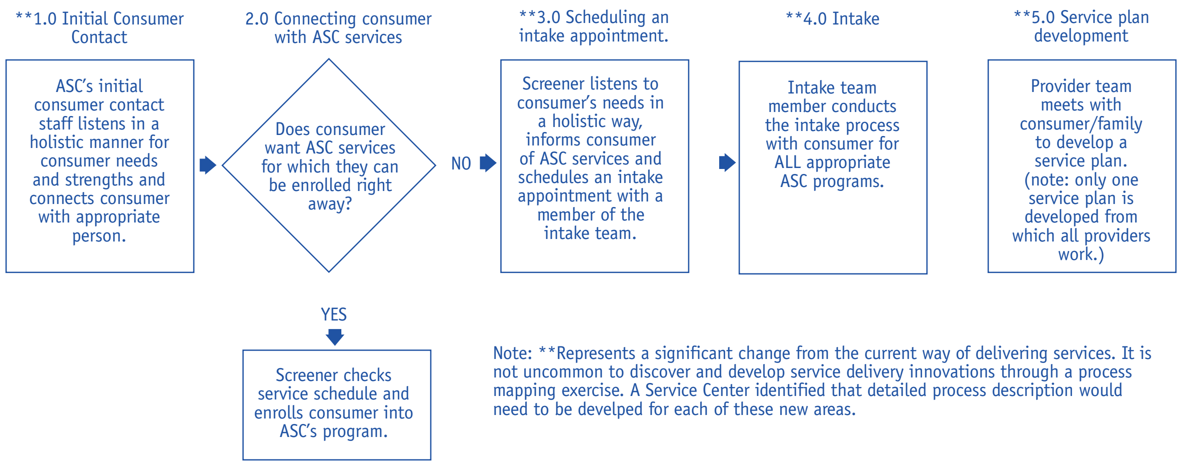
◊.....The Diamond ... The diamond indicates where decisions are required and the outcome of the decisions. The description must be in the form of a yes/no question.

➧.....The Arrow .... The arrow is used to show the direction of flow from one activity to the next in a sequence.

APPENDIX D
Examples of a mapped service delivery process

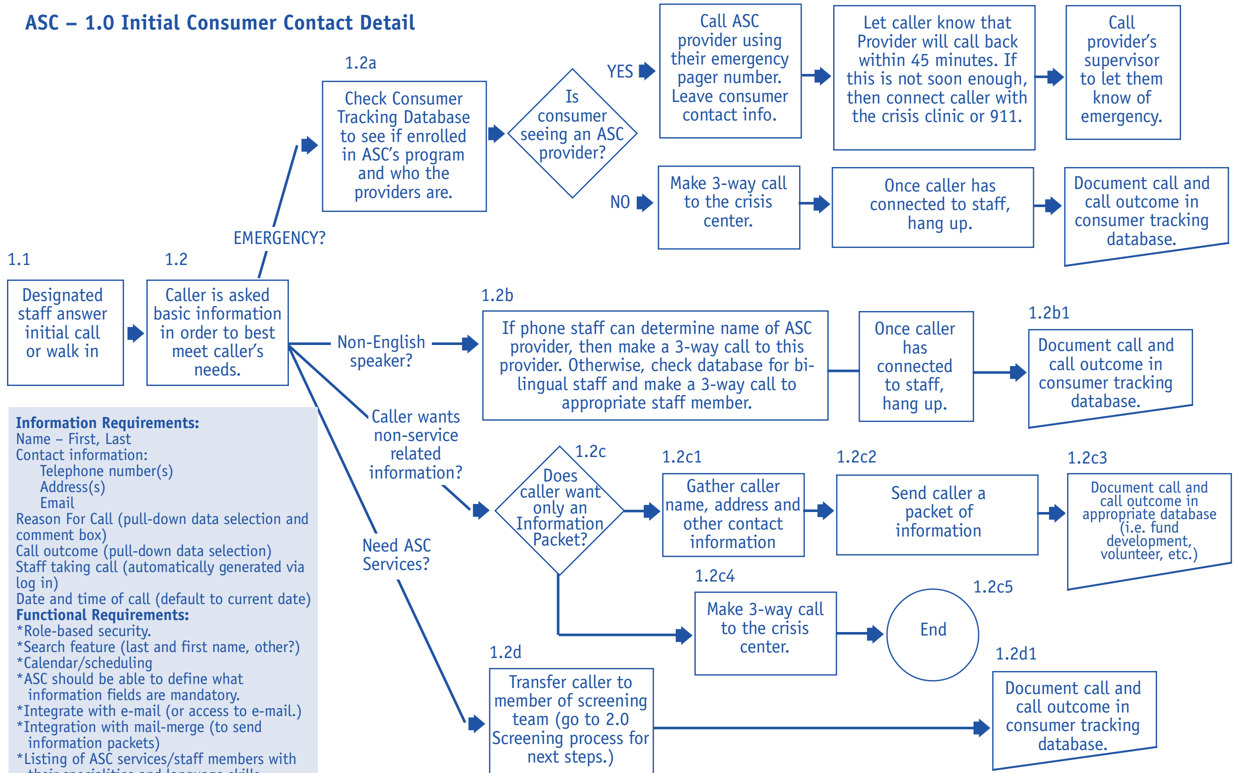
A Service Center (ASC) – Integrated Service Delivery Model

Extracted from a seven page flowchart of A Service Center's Integrated Service Delivery Model.
To view the complete example visit www.NPower.org/tools/MissionSpecific.htm



Note: **Represents a significant change from the current way of delivering services. It is not uncommon to discover and develop service delivery innovations through a process mapping exercise. A Service Center identified that detailed process description would need to be develped for each of these new areas.

ASC – 1.0 Initial Consumer Contact Detail



Information Requirements:
Name – First, Last
Contact information:
- Telephone number(s)
- Address(s)
- Email

Reason For Call (pull-down data selection and comment box)
Call outcome (pull-down data selection)
Staff taking call (automatically generated via log in)
Date and time of call (default to current date)
Functional Requirements:
*Role-based security.
*Search feature (last and first name, other?)
*Calendar/scheduling
*ASC should be able to define what information fields are mandatory.
*Integrate with e-mail (or access to e-mail.)
*Integration with mail-merge (to send information packets)
*Listing of ASC services/staff members with their specialities and language skills.
*Ability to search ASC staff list on identified criteria: language skills, location, job, specialities, other???

APPENDIX E
Excerpt from functional requirements for A Service Center's information system

For full document visit ***www.NPower.org/tools/MissionSpecific.htm***

Initial Consumer Contact and Screening

This initial contact will serve as the point of entry for A Service Center's clients. The automated case management system will assist A Service Center screening staff to identify consumer needs and assess eligibility for all needed services.

The automated system should allow screening staff to enter basic individual and family demographic data. Once this information has been entered, other service providers should be able to access it as they conduct their own detailed assessments.

Functional Requirements for Initial Contact and Screening:

1. Users should be able to search all previously entered consumers and their families. Search should be by last and first name, Social Security number, and other identifying number.

2. Users should be able to enter a minimum of two addresses and phone numbers for each client. The system should also allow for the capture of a user-defined contact field (e.g., email, cell phone).

3. The system should provide automatic validation tables and pull-down option menus (where appropriate) to facilitate accurate data entry. The system should also automatically calculate common dates and ages. All forced or required fields should be identified by A Service Center.

4. Users should be able to skip fields and enter data in the most convenient way possible. The user should be able to move between fields in an unrestricted way, thereby facilitating natural dialog with clients.

5. The system should provide default values for selected fields. Wherever possible, fields should be automatically filled in with appropriate values and then be edited, if necessary, by the user. These fields include: date, county, and the name of the A Service Center staff person who is logged in to the system and entering client data.

6. The system should allow A Service Center to specify different eligibility criteria for different program groups. Ideally, each program group should have a drop-down list of eligibility criteria. A Service Center must be able to change these criteria without relying upon the vendor.

7. Users must be able to specify the reason for a client's referral to A Service Center. These reasons should be listed in a drop-down box and A Service Center should be able to edit the list.

8. Users should be able to enter unrestricted amounts of narrative information describing the consumers' needs and their comments.

9. The system should allow users to view the members of a client's family and access the family member's information (on a need-to-know basis) if the family member is an A Service Center client.

10. The system should provide an audit trail (where appropriate) that displays historical data, the names of users who changed client information, and those data items that have been changed.
11. The system should indicate if there is a consumer signature on file and for what document the signature will be used (e.g., consent to treatment, consent to share information among treatment team).
12. The system should be able to connect to standard email systems. Users should be able to send information collected during the initial contact to other A Service Center staff for program enrollment or for assessment scheduling.
13. The system should provide reporting capabilities after initial contact and screening is complete. The system should be able to generate reports on any and all of the information gathered during the initial consumer contact process. Possible examples include: number of program referrals by program, number of clients referred to outside providers, a list of A Service Center follow-up actions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to acknowledge the following individuals and organizations for their assistance and support in the development of **NPower's Technology Guide for Nonprofit Leaders: A Mission Support Tool for Health and Human Services**.

Authors and Researchers

Judy Davis, *Independent Consultant*
Joan Fanning, *Executive Director, NPower*
John Smith, *Director of Consulting Services, NPower Seattle*
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Teresa Wippel, *Independent Consultant*

Graphic Design

Betty Hageman Graphic Design

A special thanks to Wallace Medical Concern for the photograph on page 11.

Stephanie Yao, *Photographer*
David Jaffee, *Consultant*

Support for this guide was provided through a grant from the SBC Foundation, the philanthropic giving arm of SBC Communications Inc.

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