

Governing For Results



**A progress
report on how state agencies
are improving the
quality, service and efficiency
of state government.**

December 9, 1997



Governing For Results



*“The people’s faith in public institutions
is the cornerstone on which democracy rests.”*

Governor Gary Locke
April 1997

Dear Fellow Citizens:

I am happy to report our state agencies are making progress in streamlining regulations, improving customer service and saving money.

- ★ State agencies have cut 591 pages of unneeded regulations and rewritten or updated another 489 sections in plain, easy-to-understand language. The result: People can more easily follow what Washington's rules and regulations require of them and our administrative code has become less cluttered. You can expect a lot more of these regulations to be cut or rewritten in the years ahead.
- ★ State agencies also have reported 192 quality improvements this year. Together, these small successes represent great strides in providing better, faster and more cost-effective service.



Inside this booklet, you can read about the tangible changes state agencies have undertaken. We still have much to do, but I want to thank the state workers who have made these improvements possible. They are showing the talent, creativity and will to transform state government.

I also commit to you that these efforts to improve the quality of state government and to make regulations sensible and useable will continue. Our goal is to make government work better, renew respect of public service and secure your trust.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Locke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Locke
Governor

Welcome to the first edition of *Governing for Results*

This booklet describes recent efforts by state agency workers to improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of their agency's service. These efforts come in response to Governor Locke's strong commitment to streamline government, improve customer service and save taxpayers money.

The successes reported on the following pages are in part a response to two Executive Orders issued by Governor Locke in the spring of 1997:

- ★ Executive Order 97-02, Regulatory Improvement, requires agencies to review regulations on an open and systematic basis and make certain they meet standards of need, reasonableness, effectiveness, clarity and fairness. Other standards include public involvement, coordination with other agencies and consistency with legislative intent and statutory authority.
- ★ Executive Order 97-03, Quality Improvement, requires each agency to develop and implement a plan to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the public services it provides.

In the first eight months after Governor Locke issued the first executive order, state agencies repealed 1,935 sections from the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), about 591 pages of outdated or unnecessary rules and regulations.

In the first quarterly report since the second executive order was issued, state agencies reported 192 completed quality projects. The quality improvements will save \$4,058,261 immediately and will have a projected saving of \$7,824,869 per year. About 27 state employees were redirected to other work as a result of efficiencies. The quality efforts also produced \$958,000 in additional revenues, with an additional \$200,000 generated by the end of 1997.

The projects in this booklet were selected from the quarterly quality reports and the examples submitted by agencies reporting on regulatory reform activities. Some projects save money, others provide quicker or better service to the public, and still others remove outdated regulations, eliminate red tape, save the agency time or provide a better work environment. Contact persons are listed if more information is needed.

Overview: Regulatory Improvement

Governor Gary Locke signed Executive Order 97-02, Regulatory Improvement on March 25, 1997. The executive order requires state agencies to review regulations on an open and systematic basis.

In the first eight months after Governor Locke signed the executive order, state agencies repealed 1,935 sections from the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), about 591 pages of outdated or unnecessary rules and regulations. Specifically:

- ★ Cabinet agencies that report directly to the governor repealed 1,697 sections of WAC, about 532 pages, and amended or updated 489 sections. For example:
 - The Washington State Lottery repealed 201 sections, about 110 pages, dealing with games that have closed and are no longer offered, and account for 10 percent of all the sections repealed.
 - The Department of Agriculture repealed 179 sections, about 46 pages, from the WAC.

Agencies on the Sub-Cabinet on Management Improvement and Results repealed 1,058 sections of WAC, about 317 pages, and account for 55 percent of all the sections repealed. For example:

- The Department of Labor and Industries repealed 514 sections, about 183 pages, and accounts for 27 percent of all the sections repealed.
 - The Department of Social and Health Services repealed 275 sections, about 64 pages, and accounts for 14 percent of all the sections repealed.
- ★ Non-cabinet agencies, including the Attorney General, Insurance Commissioner, University of Washington and Washington State University, repealed 238 sections of WAC. These agencies eliminated approximately 59 pages in the WAC.

Overview: Quality Improvement

Governor Gary Locke signed Executive Order 97-03, Quality Improvement on April 30, 1997. The executive order implements a major government-wide initiative that focuses on improving customer service and reducing costs.

The executive order required each agency by July 1 to develop and implement a plan to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of the public services it provides. The methods agencies are using include quality improvement techniques, business process design and employee involvement.

Each agency is being held accountable for developing effective service improvements. For instance, agencies are required to develop what are called performance measures. These measurements are used to assess customer satisfaction and to provide feedback on service improvement efforts.

Each agency submits a quarterly report describing the results of quality improvement activities. Agencies reported 192 quality initiatives in the first quarterly reports submitted in October.

The quality efforts are directed by the Governor's Office with oversight by the Subcabinet on Management Improvement and Results.

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Department of Agriculture

Jim Jesernig
Director

Pesticide license renewal is easier and more timely

When pesticide applicators want to renew their licenses, they must first find out if they have earned enough training (re-certification) credits to be eligible for license renewal, complete a license application, and wait to receive their new license. Prior to the 1996 license year some pesticide applicators received their license renewals as late as May or June. All licenses expire December 31.

WSDA's Pesticide Management Division, Certification and Training Section, with the help of the Department of Licensing, the State Printer, and Moore business forms, automated the licensing and certification processes with multiple positive results:

Results

- ★ The 1997-98 license applications were mailed by Sept. 30, 1997. The agency expects to issue all routine licenses before Jan. 1, 1998. The entire process for 25,000 licenses is to be completed by mid-January; significantly reducing the amount of time it took to renew a pesticide applicator's license from seven months to approximately three months.
- ★ Staff reduced time responding to telephone inquiries about delayed licenses-- instead of the process continuing into the spring and applicants calling to get a license number or to verify their eligibility to renew their license(s), the entire licensing process is completed by January. Re-allocate staff time saved to provide additional, responsive direct customer services.
- ★ License renewals were accomplished in one mass mailing of 25,000 pieces. Previously this required two mass mailings. Reduced postage by one-half, plus reduce FTE costs.

CONTACT: Margaret Tucker, (360) 902-2015

Customer Service

Department of Ecology

Tom Fitzsimmons
Director

Partnership reduces hazardous waste

Washington's largest electroplater, Industrial Plating Corporation of Seattle, produced 50,000 gallons of hazardous waste each day. Department of Ecology engineers teamed up with the company to identify ways to reduce hazardous waste and save the company money at the same time. The team has proposed some business process changes.

Results

- ★ Waste generated was reduced from 50,000 gallons to 7,000 gallons per day.
- ★ After initially investing about \$40,000 the company has saved over \$100,000 to date and is projected to save about \$250,000 by the end of the first year.
- ★ Two other facilities have teamed up with Ecology to date and are achieving similar results.

CONTACT: Greg Sorlie, (360) 407-6702, or Michael Johnson, (360) 407-6338

Department of Employment Security

**Carver Gayton
Commissioner**

Filing by mail saves travel time, waiting and \$\$\$

Applicants filing an initial claim for unemployment benefits are required to file in-person at one of the 28 job service centers throughout the state. This creates some hardships in high-volume offices or in certain remote locations. These can include long waits to file (sometimes three to five hours) and personal costs for travel (such as ferry fares).

A work group involving agency staff and representatives from the Legislature, business and labor designed a regulatory reform pilot in which applicants in Pierce, Island and Kittitas Counties can file by mail.

Results

- ★ Applications can be mailed, saving a trip to the Job Service Center and three- to four-hour waits in Pierce County.
- ★ Island County residents save travel time and a \$15 to \$20 ferry fare.
- ★ Kittitas County residents (whose service center was closed) avoid traveling 30 miles or more to Yakima.
- ★ The application form is simpler and easier to fill out.

CONTACT: Juanita Myers, (360) 902-9665

Customer Service

Department of Employment Security

Carver Gayton
Director

Reduced waiting time for clients

Customers at the Cowlitz County Job Service Center were waiting an average of 39 minutes to see a staff person for a job referral.

A project team created a “Rapid Referral Desk” to specifically serve customers seeking job referrals.

Results

- ★ Waiting time was reduced by almost 50 percent to an average of 20 minutes.
- ★ The number of people seeking job referrals has increased.
- ★ The department has increased its ability to serve additional customers.

CONTACT: Erin Chambers, (360) 578-4220

Department of Employment Security

Carver Gayton
Director

Tapping telephone technology to improve service

About 80 percent of the people who collect unemployment insurance benefits in Washington use the department's Benefit Hotline to file weekly for benefits after establishing an initial claim. The automated phone system has over 700 lines available guaranteeing quick and easy access to service. While on the line, customers can also hear general information on unemployment insurance, find out if their check is in the mail or learn the location of their nearest Job Service Center.

Improvements and refinements were necessary to optimize the system. Needless staff time was being devoted to assisting callers who should have been able to get all the information they needed automatically.

A project team looked at the process and made several recommendations for improvement. They reprogrammed the computer so that it would ask appropriate questions, eliminated several questions, improved the clarity of the Spanish language script and introduced a "Helpful Hints" instruction sheet. They also completed and distributed Spanish and English language training videos on using the hotline.

Results

- ★ Better, more efficient self-service system, results in increased customer usage and satisfaction.
- ★ Customer service has improved.
- ★ Staff time is saved. About 52 percent of claims filed this way are being filed on Sunday.
- ★ Procedures have been simplified.
- ★ About \$19,000 has been saved through reduced telephone costs.

CONTACT: Patricia J. Remy, (360) 902-9701

Department of Employment Security

Carver Gayton
Director

Backlog of applications eliminated

Employment Security was not able to process unemployment insurance master applications as quickly as they were coming in due to staff reductions. At its worst, the backlog of master applications was 3,389 high.

That was until a new process was introduced – the backlogged master applications were distributed to staff based on territory.

Results

- ★ Backlog was reduced from 3,389 to 86 between May and August 1997.
- ★ The volume of telephone calls was reduced.
- ★ The relationship with employers was improved.
- ★ Potential late reports and penalties are avoided.

CONTACT: Brenda Westfall, (360) 902-9373

Department of Financial Institutions

John L. Bley
Director

Getting the word out to investors

The Securities section, charged with protecting consumers from fraud, kept hearing “we didn’t even know you existed” from consumers and other agencies. They realized they needed help in reaching the maximum number of investors and potential investors, but had a limited number of people available for investor education.

The section decided to begin working more with groups that have direct contact with people – especially senior citizens – to allow them to reach more people who need information about securities investments. They began contacting any agency, group or organization that has dealings with senior citizens or other potential investors. They sent out brochures, made people aware of the agency’s web site on the Internet and offered information at conferences and trade shows. This was accomplished with a minimum number of staff and the maximum use of visuals and brochures.

Results

- ★ The agency now receives calls every day from people who have seen its public service ads and they are checking out an investment.
- ★ They are getting more calls from people who report suspicious advertising as a result of seeing the agency’s public service announcements.
- ★ People come to see the division at trade shows with complaints or suspicious investments.
- ★ Staff get more reports from people who say they are using the information they have received.

CONTACT: Scott Jarvis, (360) 902-8794

Customer Service

Department of General Administration

Marsha Tadano Long
Director

E-mail allows parking sign up in 5 minutes

All requests for service once required new employees to make a trip to the Office of Parking Services to register for parking. Employees were often requested to show vehicle registration, a driver's license or sign payroll deduction forms, a time-consuming process.

To speed this service, the Office of Parking Services began a computer system that allows employees to register for parking via electronic mail by filling out a special form.

Result

- ★ Customers can sign up online for parking in just five minutes, instead of the 45 minutes once required to register and obtain a parking permit.

CONTACT: Rick Millburn, (360) 586-5950

Department of Health

Bruce Miyahara
Secretary

Health customers get better service

Customers who came to the Department of Health's headquarters building in Olympia complained of confusion, long waits for service and having to go to a second place for cashier service. Customers often were not able to figure out where to go for help.

Customers now are surveyed daily. As a result of survey and staff recommendations, the agency changed its phone system to allow the receptionist more time for walk-in customers. A numbering system was developed for customers to avoid confusion as to who is next for service. The reception area was refurbished and the cashier function was moved into the main reception area for improved security and customer response time.

Results

- ★ In the last six months, less than 5 percent of customers reported having to wait for more than 10 minutes, down from 12 percent in 1996.
- ★ Customers rated staff assistance as: 83 percent excellent, 16 percent satisfactory and only 1 percent unsatisfactory.

CONTACT: Sue Shoblom, (360) 586-5963

Department of Health

Bruce Miyahara
Secretary

Shellfish licenses renewed faster

About 350 commercial shellfish growers are required to obtain annual licenses. Prior to 1997, the license applications were stored on a desk pending an inspection of their operation. After the inspection was conducted, the paperwork was processed and a license issued. Licenses were sometimes issued two or three months after application. Minimal follow-up was conducted with companies who did not renew.

A team identified better ways to receive, track, review and issue licenses. Inspections are conducted before renewal applications are received. Licenses are issued promptly after inspections are completed. A second notice is sent to companies who have not submitted renewal applications.

Results

- ★ Shellfish license renewals are processed in as little as one day.
- ★ By late September 1997, the agency had renewed 216 licenses, compared with 23 renewals the year before, increasing the public's confidence in the safety of the shellfish sold at market.
- ★ Errors have been reduced and response to customer needs has increased.

CONTACT: Jennifer Tebaldi, (360) 664-3257

Department of Health

Bruce Miyahara
Secretary

No long waits for birth certificates

The Department of Health communicated with 33 local health departments and other local health jurisdictions through faxes, telephone calls and a dial-in bulletin board. This slow, cumbersome process lacked timeliness and delayed issuance of such things as birth certificates. It also prevented many local health officials from meaningful participation in issues and discussions that would directly impact them.

Health staff developed a state-of-the-art communications network connecting state and local health offices. Local health jurisdictions also installed their own local communications networks. Health staff trained 48 local health and county staff to maintain their own local systems.

Results

- ★ Birth certificates now are issued in some jurisdictions in as little as 15 minutes from the time a customer requests one. This compares with turnaround time of several days in the past.
- ★ Local staff were trained in maintaining their networks resulting in a cost avoidance of about \$1.5 million a year.
- ★ Local health officials have been able to participate in discussions and decisions regarding statewide issues such as Washington's response to the proposed tobacco settlement.
- ★ The network is also being used by other local and state agencies.

CONTACT: Ron Seymour, (360) 705-6333

Department of Labor and Industries

Gary Moore
Director

Better filing process unclogs backlog

Construction contractors would have to wait up to eight weeks for their annual registration to be renewed by Labor and Industries. Part of the blame was an archaic, 70,000-file filing system. The renewal process also called for staff to pull the contractor's file each time, contributing to significant delays. Untimely renewals can lead to inaccurate information on the contractor registration database, which is a consumer resource for people wanting to know if their prospective contractors are bonded and insured.

At the recommendation of an employee team, a new "Optimum Flow" system was put into place in August 1997. Now, rather than pulling the file each time, the renewals are processed by computer, with the actual paperwork going into the file later. Most of the files themselves were converted from an alphanumeric system to indexing by Uniform Business Identifier.

The department also began sending out letters with each contractor's renewal notice indicating the most common errors contributing to process delays.

Result

★ With full staffing, contractors now can have their registrations renewed on an average of five days.

CONTACT: Pam Bergman, (360) 902-5202

Department of Labor and Industries

Gary Moore
Director

Fees for firms not producing wastes eliminated

Certain types of new businesses likely to produce hazardous wastes are sent a bill by the Department of Labor and Industries. This fee funds worker and community right-to-know worker safety and health programs. If a business doesn't produce hazardous wastes, it can obtain an exemption from future fees, but under current regulations, the employer was obligated to pay its past bill.

Labor and Industries as part of its regulatory improvement effort identified this inequity and is adopting regulations that will wipe out the past bill amount for businesses that do not produce hazardous wastes, a common sense change for the better.

Result

- ★ Qualifying businesses no longer have to pay a fee.

CONTACT: Dave Pratt, (360) 902-6697

Department of Labor and Industries

Gary Moore
Director

Unnecessary second inspection eliminated

The Department of Labor and Industries performs electrical and other construction inspections for factory-built structures. Factory-built commercial structures had to be inspected and issued a temporary insignia when they were put on a sales lot. Then the structures had to be inspected again when they were placed at their permanent locations.

As part of its regulatory improvement efforts, the agency identified the chance to eliminate an unnecessary inspection. L&I is changing its regulations to provide that these structures will be inspected only once at the manufacturing facility.

Results

- ★ Factory-built commercial structure purchasers will save about \$5,000 per year.
- ★ L&I staff will be freed up to do other safety work.

CONTACT: Dave Pratt, (360) 902-6697

Department of Licensing

Evelyn P. Yenson
Director

Teen drivers round up licenses

More than 37,000 16-year-olds take drive tests each year to receive their first driver license. Typically, the scheduling peaks every eight to 10 weeks as teens complete their school driving courses. The teenagers would schedule for drive tests on a first-come, first-served basis. This periodically causes a backlog of eight or more days in drive testing schedules.

Licensing staff decided to pilot a new scheduling approach at the Kirkland, Bellevue and North Bend licensing service offices. Working with the area high schools, staff invited teens to a one-day “Teen Roadeo.” This day was dedicated to conducting drive tests in an event shared by the teens, their parents and Licensing staff.

Results

- ★ 221 teen drivers were tested during the two Roadeos held in June and August 1997, which reduced the district’s licensing office backlog by five days.
- ★ More drive tests were conducted in a shorter time period because the day was dedicated to drive testing without interruptions and there were fewer no-show applicants.

Department of Licensing

Evelyn P. Yenson
Director

A brighter picture for lost licenses

Everyone is familiar with having a picture taken for a driver license. About 50,000 people misplace or otherwise lose their licenses each year. Licensing staff must match their new photo with the photo on file before a final replacement license with their photo is mailed to them. Customers had to depend on a temporary license for six to eight weeks while waiting for the final replacement license.

A quality team found ways to deal with process inconsistencies. Several possible changes were identified and tested. Headquarters staff and field staff improved communications and unnecessary work was eliminated. Policies on application verification procedures were clarified and streamlined.

Result

★ Turnaround time was reduced from 52 days to 14 days.

CONTACT: Karen Fields, (360) 902-3844

Department of Natural Resources

Jennifer M. Belcher
Commissioner of Public Lands

Guide shows way to forest practices understanding

Many of the 95,000 owners of small forests have complained that the state forest practices rules were complicated and hard to understand.

The agency worked with landowners and other stakeholders from the state, Indian tribes and federal and private industries groups to address the problem: The result is a free, 64-page guide (“Forest Practices Illustrated”) that:

Results

- ★ Clearly explains the most commonly used rules for timber harvest, road construction, reforestation and uses of pesticides and fertilizers.
- ★ Contains an introductory question-and-answer section, glossary of technical terms, additional resources and “checklists for success.”
- ★ Provides regulatory and consultative outreach to landowners.

CONTACT: Ronn Schuttie, (360) 902-1391, or Sandy Rudnick, (360) 902-1121.

Department of Natural Resources

Jennifer M. Belcher
Commissioner of Public Lands

Applicants helped with complicated form

The Department of Natural Resources created a new assistance tool that makes it easier for people to do business with government, government to do business with government, speeds up a required process and benefits the state's environmental resources.

The SEPA Checklist Resource Guide helps people fill out the State Environmental Policy Act checklist – a sometimes hard-to-follow required government form that helps the state weigh environmental impacts resulting from proposed projects.

Results

- ★ Headaches and frustration are minimized when people are dealing with the agency.
- ★ Good decision-making is quicker by helping get the form filled out right the first time.
- ★ The public and other agencies know up front what information the agency needs to review the potential for environmental impacts.

CONTACT: Dave Dietzman, (360) 902-1633, or Sandy Rudnick, (360) 902-1121

Department of Retirement Systems

John F. Charles
Director

Customers speak; agency listens; costs avoided

The more than 77,000 persons retired from public service who are paid by electronic fund transfer received remittance advice statements each month, whether they wanted them or not. Many indicated they thought this was a waste of resources or introduced an unnecessary risk because these statements contain personal and financial information.

In response to client input, the department modified its procedures and information system.

Results

- ★ Only retirees who want the statements receive them monthly (about 21 percent).
- ★ The remaining 79 percent want them only when there is a change ... or don't want them at all.
- ★ Up to \$14,700 is saved each month. The savings will be used to establish a toll-free phone number requested by retirees.

CONTACT: Ann Risdon, (360) 709-4773

Department of Retirement Systems

John F. Charles
Director

Retired teachers are happy with agency efficiency

Teachers retiring at the end of the school year often had to wait until September or October to receive their first retirement check if they filed after May 31. The late payments were retroactive, but some retirees had to do without retirement checks for months.

An agency team attacked the late-check problem.

Results

- ★ This year, all 1,080 teachers who submitted completed retirement applications by July 18 had their first retirement check mailed by July 28.
- ★ There were far fewer phone calls asking: “When am I going to get my check?”
- ★ Retirement Processing’s work flow was ahead two months in August and September – allowing an estimated \$54,300 in staff time to be re-directed to other critical needs.

CONTACT: Margaret Wimmer, (360) 709-4710

Department of Retirement Systems

John F. Charles
Director

Timely death benefits ease grieving process

In the past, when a retiree from state service died, it could take up to four months to process claims for survivors under a new benefits and disbursements computer system.

A work team from the Death and Disabilities Unit and Information Services used total quality management techniques to design an approach for automating the processing of death and disability claims.

Results

- ★ In most cases, responding to the initial claim now takes only two weeks rather than up to four months, a 70 percent reduction.
- ★ Once all the information is received, payment is made to survivors within one week.
- ★ Survivors are able to settle their estates sooner.

CONTACT: Jack Bryant, (360) 709-4755

Department of Revenue

Frederick C. Kiga
Director

Return calls to taxpayers cut by almost 50 percent

Washington taxpayers who need to conduct business with the state Department of Revenue may come in person to district offices or make telephone calls. But during peak tax-filing periods, the department found that taxpayers making telephone inquiries faced delays as long as 10 minutes. Some callers simply hung up after being on hold too long. And taking time to answer phone calls caused delays in providing service to taxpayers who came in person to offices.

The Compliance Division selected three regional offices to test an automated telephone attendant. The division designed the attendant to provide five levels of basic information to callers. The attendant also directed more detailed questions to the voice-mail system of revenue agents and auditors.

Results

- ★ Calls that had to be returned by division staff were reduced by almost 50 percent – from 200 a day to 105. Much of this is the result of the automated attendant providing answers to the most common questions.
- ★ Callers no longer were put on hold.
- ★ Information is now available 24 hours a day.

CONTACT: Evelyn Czapiewski, (360) 586-5757

Department of Revenue

Frederick C. Kiga
Director

Callers get answers in 2 minutes or less

The Department of Revenue's Information Center offers state taxpayers a toll-free call center that provides answers through a variety of automated services. Although the automated responses serve many callers, others require personal assistance from representatives. Between 1990 and 1996, requests for one-on-one service grew from 150,000 to 207,000 annually. Increased demand meant callers had to wait longer for answers to their questions.

In 1994, 303,000 callers received busy signals. Another 43,000 callers abandoned their calls after being placed on hold. An automated answer service cut busy signals to callers by 97 percent. But although more callers were getting through, on-hold times increased, with 46 percent of all callers placed on hold for four minutes or longer before receiving assistance.

Beginning in July 1997, three additional representatives began answering questions full time with a new call-center performance goal of responding to 60 percent of all calls within two minutes or less between 1997 and 1999.

Result

- ★ The representatives have responded to 62 percent of all calls within two minutes or less during the third quarter of 1997.

CONTACT: Jeannie Staley, (360) 786-6110

Department of Revenue

Frederick C. Kiga
Director

Internet technology makes paying taxes easier

Tax returns from the more than 400,000 businesses in the state are filed with the department on paper. Many of the entries are handwritten and 15 to 20 percent contain errors. These cause both Revenue and the taxpayer time-consuming re-work on the returns.

A representative group of businesses formed a partnership with Revenue and the Department of Information Services to design improvements for the tax-filing process.

The result is the Internet-based Electronic Tax Filing System that calculates the business's tax liability. Using a proof-of-concept form, 10 businesses filed and paid their October taxes over the Internet.

The next step is a voluntary pilot involving a larger number of taxpayers.

Results

- ★ Businesses are given a tool to save time by "getting their taxes right the first time."
- ★ Taxes are calculated automatically using current tax rules, significantly reducing errors. Point-and-click software provides easy access to tax rules, helping taxpayers fill out their tax return correctly.
- ★ Data and funds are encrypted safely and transferred immediately.
- ★ Time-consuming paperwork is reduced or eliminated and user-friendly software allows easy calculation of taxes owed.

CONTACT: Ralph Osgood, (360) 902-7075

Department of Services for the Blind

Shirley A. Smith
Director

Visually impaired gain job experience

The development of work skills, as well as daily living skills, is a primary goal in providing services to blind and visually impaired high school students.

Last summer, in a cooperative effort between the agency and private and public sectors, a jobs program was developed for these students. The results:

Results

- ★ Twenty-one blind or visually impaired students from throughout the state received six weeks of paid work experience in private and public businesses in the Seattle area.
- ★ Two of those students were offered permanent, part-time work.
- ★ All the employers agreed to do it again next summer.

Department of Social and Health Services

Lyle Quasim
Secretary

Foster care gets caring review

Historically, foster home records were reviewed only when an incident occurred and seldom reviewed for issues of cumulative harm. This resulted in some foster homes that presented a risk to the health and safety of children retaining their license.

The Division of Licensed Resources recruited temporary staff, primarily experienced child welfare retirees, and directed each region to review 100 percent of Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) foster home licensing records. The objectives were to identify homes that represented a risk to children and take appropriate action, and identify and provide recommendations for improvements. A checklist was developed to guide reviewers and maintain consistency.

Results

- ★ One hundred percent of licensed foster home records were reviewed.
- ★ Homes with serious infractions or safety concerns were served with letters revoking or suspending their license.
- ★ Foster homes that failed to maintain licensing standards or compromised a child's health or safety were placed on immediate corrective action with a time frame for compliance.

CONTACT: Jim Sherril, (360) 902-7967

Department of Social and Health Services

Lyle Quasim
Secretary

No long-term wait in application process

Clients seeking long-term care services waited up to 90 days for initial contact from a financial worker. The application was difficult to understand and took a long time to process.

A Home and Community Services, Region 5, Quality Improvement Team was launched to redesign the financial determination process and improve customer service. They found directions for completing the application packet were lacking and information was scattered. The program had no consistent method of tracking communication and often the clients were unaware which financial worker had been assigned to them.

Results

- ★ The application packet was revised into reader-friendly language and clients receive more staff assistance.
- ★ Combining the application screening and pending process reduced turnaround time from receipt of application to sending an initial letter to the applicant from 10-90 days to 24 hours.
- ★ The time a client waits for initial contact from a financial worker was reduced from 60-90 days to less than 5 days.
- ★ Clients know who their financial worker is and staff have more time to work with them.
- ★ Customers receive needed services and healthcare faster.

CONTACT: Deanna Rankos, (253) 593-2512, or Tom Williams, (360) 493-2551

Department of Veterans' Affairs

John King
Director

Change means same-day decision for veterans

Department of Veterans' Affairs helps veterans in their transition to civilian life by working with the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs and other organizations. A department review in 1996 showed that a veteran newly separated from active duty needed nine to 12 months to get a decision on various veteran benefits. The review also revealed that veterans denied benefits often went through a two- to three-year appeal process.

The state Veterans Affairs office worked with the federal government and the American Legion to establish a review of a veteran's medical records just prior to leaving service so that a quick determination could be made on applicable benefits.

Results

- ★ Since February 1997, more than 1,500 veterans have received a disability compensation award on the same day they ended active military service.
- ★ The new system has resulted in 99 percent of veterans receiving a favorable decision on claims submissions. Before the change, only 40 percent of veterans were awarded applicable benefits.

CONTACT: John King, (360) 709-5230

Liquor Control Board

Nate Ford
Chair

Snuffing out teen tobacco sales

The Liquor Control Board has been working for a number of years to reduce youths' access to tobacco products. In 1993, about 60 percent of tobacco-selling businesses were selling their product to minors. By 1996, the number of non-compliant businesses had dropped to an estimated 19 percent.

The Liquor Control Board, State Department of Health, local health districts, law enforcement and tobacco retailers joined together using integrated strategies aimed at reducing tobacco business noncompliance.

Results

- ★ The number of businesses selling tobacco products to minors was reduced to 5.5 percent in 1997 from the 1996 noncompliance level of 19 percent and the 1993 noncompliance rate of about 60 percent.
- ★ Washington was established as the most difficult state for persons under 18 to purchase tobacco products from licensed retailers.

CONTACT: Gary Gilbert, (360) 586-3052

Lottery Commission

Merritt Long
Director

Lottery hits jackpot in cutting sign-up time

Licensing a retailer to sell lottery tickets on average took 75 days. This was a period in which tickets could not be sold – lost sales and revenue for retailers and the state.

A Lottery team tackled the issue of reducing the number of days.

Results

- ★ The time to initially license a retailer has dropped from 75 days to about 45 days -- a 30-day improvement in how soon retailers can sell tickets increasing income for themselves and for the state.
- ★ Revenue flow comes sooner for the retailer and the state.

CONTACT: Vanessa Hogan, (360) 753-2197

Utilities and Transportation Commission

Anne Levinson
Chair

Change trims 70 days from registration time

To do business in Washington, telecommunication companies must gain approval from the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC). The process, however, required firms to file four applications and wait a minimum of 101 days for completing registration and classification.

UTC staff changed the process to better accommodate firms that do business in this highly competitive industry.

Results

- ★ Telecommunication companies now file only one application.
- ★ The time frame for completing registration and classification has been cut to 31 days.

CONTACT: Fred Ottavelli, (360) 664-1297

Utilities and Transportation Commission

Anne Levinson
Chair

New system cuts 6 days from complaint time

The Consumer Affairs Section annually receives about 20,000 calls from the public, of which 4,000 become informal complaints about utility services in Washington. Staff are assigned to investigate and resolve complaints between the caller and the utility in question.

An antiquated telephone system resulted in delays in responses to customers. The average response time in the first five months of 1997 was nine days. To improve service, Consumer Affairs installed a new system and changed its methods of handling calls.

Results

- ★ The new system and methods cut the average response time to callers to three days.
- ★ Callers get assistance from their first point of contact.

CONTACT: Vicki Elliott, (360) 664-1100

Washington State Patrol

Annette M. Sandberg
Chief

Employee hotline questions trigger law change

As part of a quality improvement plan, the Washington State Patrol began using a 1-800 toll-free number to get questions, comments and suggestions from employees regarding policy changes. Employees used the line to suggest several regulatory reform changes, including a new emergency communications procedure and proposed changes in the sergeants promotional examination.

Employees used the line to express concern about a state Supreme Court decision that limited checking of records for possible arrest warrants when a driver was stopped for a traffic infraction. The employees were concerned about possible risks to state troopers who wouldn't know that a driver was wanted for serious law violations.

Results

- ★ As a result of the calls, the decision was analyzed by the Attorney General's Office and an opinion was published.
- ★ Gov. Gary Locke and legislative leaders decided the law needed to be changed to allow such warrant checks and a one-day special legislative session was called to make the change on an emergency basis.

CONTACT: Captain Marshall Pugh, (360) 753-5299

Department of Ecology

Tom Fitzsimmons
Director

Waste effort generates savings

Businesses required to report annual hazardous waste generation and management information to Ecology always have filled out and submitted forms manually. The agency performed quality assurance checks before entering the reports into an information system.

Ecology recognized the need to electronically automate the system to improve data quality and reduce costs. With help from the U.S. Navy and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the agency developed Turbo Waste, a software program that companies could use to enter and submit required reports. Companies representing 85 percent of data reporting have begun using the electronic system.

Results

- ★ Ecology review time is reduced since files are screened through the software's data validation feature.
- ★ Data entry costs are reduced by up to 50 percent (\$15,000 per year).
- ★ Information is retrievable within three months compared to the 12 months it took using the manual process.

CONTACT: Greg Sorlie, (360) 407-6702, or Dan Kruger, (360) 407-6728

Efficiency Gains

Department of Ecology

Tom Fitzsimmons
Director

New process simplifies water quality grant application

Local governments seeking water quality financial assistance through the Department of Ecology had to apply for three separate grant and loan programs using three different processes in the past. The agency combined the three application processes into one.

Results

- ★ The application process is easier, less time-consuming and more convenient.
- ★ Administrative costs are reduced for the agency and grant and loan applicants.
- ★ Prioritization of grant/loan funding is improved.

CONTACT: Megan White, (360) 407-6405, or Steve Carley, (360) 407-6572

Department of Ecology

Tom Fitzsimmons
Director

Data cleaned, more easily tracked

Ecology programs historically stored information about regulated facilities and sites independently without cross program coordination. Information relating to a single site may have resided in eight different systems using eight different data versions.

The department evaluated what information was critical and of cross-agency importance. A system was built to house the data, and consolidation has begun.

Results

- ★ Data is being cleaned improving accuracy and eliminating redundancy.
- ★ Efficiency has been improved in meeting the needs of the agency and tracking the regulated community.
- ★ The system eliminates keying duplicate information.
- ★ Information is easier to retrieve and accessible to the public on Ecology's web-site.

CONTACT: Lynn Singleton, (360) 407-6610

Efficiency Gains

Department of Ecology

Tom Fitzsimmons
Director

Youths to collect triple the trash

The amount of garbage collected by the Ecology Youth Corps has been declining over the last five years. In 1996, about 20,000 bags of litter were collected compared to almost 60,000 bags per year collected in the late 1980s.

Additional funds were directed to the litter pick up program. The money will maximize use of equipment and crews and allow collection to begin earlier in the spring and go later in the fall.

Results

- ★ Close to 60,000 bags of litter will be collected in the 1997 season, triple the amount collected in 1996.
- ★ The more efficient use of equipment and crews results in cleaner roadways.
- ★ The cost per bag of garbage is reduced, saving about \$600,000 per year.

CONTACT: Cullen Stephenson, (425) 649-7056

Efficiency Gains

Department of Employment Security

Carver Gayton
Director

Better collections through better processes

Monthly collections increased by 50 percent, more than 1,600 hours of staff time was saved and mailing costs were trimmed substantially by improving a cumbersome process to collect overpaid unemployment insurance benefits.

By automating tracking and payment processes, empowering employees to make key decisions and eliminating unnecessary tasks, the agency's garnishment section is now able to collect an average of \$128,100 a month. Over the same period for the prior year, the section had collected \$85,284 per month. Approximately \$450,000 in increased collections is anticipated in 1997.

Results

- ★ A two- to three-day wait time to initiate the process was eliminated.
- ★ Mailing costs were reduced by \$6,500 by reducing the amount of certified mail.
- ★ 1,610 hours per year of staff time was saved.
- ★ Process mail time was cut by 15 days per account.

CONTACT: Dave Butler, (360) 902-9779

Department of Fish and Wildlife

Bern Shanks
Director

Fish and Wildlife combines groups and saves

Because the agency's divisions of Public Affairs and Outreach and Education share compatible goals and provide similar services to different audiences, their consolidation under one program manager provided numerous advantages and benefits to the agency and the public. These included:

- Better internal crossover and coordination among program staff.
- Multi-discipline work teams for major agency outreach efforts.
- Agency constituents receive a variety of information and services from one point of contact within the agency.

Results

- ★ The reallocation of one senior management position to another program allows the agency to better meet customer service and agency needs.
- ★ Permits the agency to embark on new outreach initiatives without hiring additional staff.
- ★ Saves time and cost to the public as well as the department, eliminating duplication of effort.

CONTACT: Sandi Snell (360) 902-2229

Efficiency Gains

Department of Fish and Wildlife

**Bern Shanks
Director**

Fish and Wildlife goes fishing for private sector help

With public demand for catch-and-release trout in freshwater lowland lakes at an all-time high and hatchery production already at capacity, the department is looking to the private sector for cooperation.

The department currently is reviewing the number of trout brood stocks maintained for this popular program with an eye to the possibility of having private sector vendors supply eggs and fry for rearing programs.

Results

- ★ Although still in the exploratory stages, this initiative would provide increased product to meet increased public demand for catch-and-release opportunities.
- ★ Opportunities to forge partnerships with private industry – while increasing service to Washington fishers – are expected.

CONTACT: John Kerwin, (360) 902-2623

Efficiency Gains

Department of General Administration

Marsha Tadano Long
Director

GA's master database to speed reports

It currently requires the risk management section of General Administration up to 11 months to provide agencies with the information they need to prepare budget requests for insurance needs. The primary reason is that the information must be manually compiled from several documents. The development of a master database will reduce this time frame to 30 days while increasing accuracy and reducing the time spent resolving discrepancies.

Results

- ★ Agencies will have more accurate information and additional time to develop and make more informed budgetary decisions.
- ★ It is expected that this improvement will reduce the staff time needed to prepare these annual reports from the 658 hours needed under the old system to 260 hours using the master database.
- ★ The more timely delivery of information to state agencies will enable better budgetary decisions, improving budget projections.
- ★ Improvement will be fully implemented by January 1, 1998.

CONTACT: Claudia Schmitz, (360) 902-7306

Department of Information Services

Steve Kolodney
Director

State ‘checks’ have right number

When Information Services received shipment of blank warrants (state checks) to be printed, the first and last numbers of each shipment were entered into a log. Before a warrant could be printed, the log had to be searched manually for the number, which then had to be entered into the system manually. This took time and left too much room for human error. If a mistake occurred, the bad batch of warrants had to be shredded, warrant number invalidated and the process restarted.

Information Services staff worked with customer agencies to develop an automated warrant assignment process that all warrant issuers agreed to support. This new system assigns warrant numbers and ensures that necessary safeguards are in place. It frees production staff to work on other jobs requiring computer resources.

Results

- ★ More than three hours per week were saved in staff time previously spent assigning warrant numbers.
- ★ Errors in the warrant control log were eliminated. This means fewer warrant job reruns and eliminates need to shred warrants because of number assigning errors.
- ★ Customer and Information Services staff use time more efficiently, thus reducing overtime hours.

CONTACT: Mike Curtright, (360) 902-3289

Efficiency Gains

Department of Labor and Industries

Gary Moore
Director

Analysis pays off with lower publishing costs

More and more, rising postage costs make printed information an expensive way to communicate with large audiences. Labor and Industries evaluated new electronic and printing technologies and re-assessed distribution options to find different ways to communicate effectively, but less expensively. The analysis uncovered avoidable costs of \$201,601.

Results

- ★ Eliminated three newsletters with low readership and avoided costs of \$27,478.
- ★ Re-designed publications to reduce printing costs; used more economical printing technology; discontinued out-of-date publications. Avoided costs: \$43,002.
- ★ Removed optional materials from a “new employer packet” mailed to businesses obtaining a UBI (Uniform Business Identifier) number or Industrial Insurance account. Replaced them with an ordering form customers can use to specify the materials they want to receive. Estimated cost avoidance: \$46,121.
- ★ Changed a quarterly newsletter to an “annual rates notification” flier and avoided costs of \$85,000.

CONTACT: Kim Contris, (360) 902-5417

Department of Licensing

Evelyn P. Yenson
Director

Paychecks issued faster and cheaper

An important part of completing paychecks at the Department of Licensing twice a month was accounting for changes in about 400 employees' checks for such things as overtime, call back, leave without pay and temporary supervisory pay. Payroll staff typically spent more than 51 hours a month processing those changes.

A team recommended reorganizing the payroll files, assigning groups of employees to each payroll technician, reducing auditing redundancies and developing a time reporting form and training employees in its use.

Results

- ★ Processing time for each payroll change was cut from 7.6 minutes average to 2.2 minutes — thus saving payroll staff more than 36 hours a month.
- ★ Processing of extra pay warrants was reduced by 60 percent, saving \$210 per month.
- ★ Errors were reduced, allowing payroll employees to address other workloads and avoid overtime.

CONTACT: Doug Thomas, (360) 586-3416

Efficiency Gains

Department of Social and Health Services

Lyle Quasim
Secretary

Family home fair pays dividends

A large number of adult family homes were being licensed every month. In Region II, Home and Community Services (HCS) contracts with about 135 of the 800 licensed homes. Caregivers who didn't have contracts with HCS were contacting multiple HCS staff to share information on their homes and ask for client referrals.

HCS realized the information sharing was important but taking a considerable amount of staff time. An adult family home fair was held for all adult family homes in King County with an interest in serving HCS clients. Caregivers were able to meet directly with social workers and case managers from their local area. A process also was set up for the adult family homes to send updated information to one location.

Results

- ★ Staff time is reduced by roughly 80 percent, or from 1.5 FTE staff to .33 FTE staff.
- ★ Client placement is better matched to homes.
- ★ Social workers and adult family homes have a better understanding of each other's services.

CONTACT: Greg Heartburg, (206) 389-2997

Health Care Authority

Gary L. Christenson
Director

Basic Health Plan tightens up eligibility accuracy

One of the primary eligibility criteria for subsidized Basic Health Plan coverage is income. A random audit of 295 archived files disclosed that only 82 percent met the income qualifications for subsidized Basic Health Plan coverage.

Based on these audit findings, the agency instituted a number of operational changes to insure only qualified individuals were receiving eligible coverage. These changes included more refined residency documentation, specific Internal Revenue Service documentation and addition of a comprehensive income worksheet for enrollees.

Results

- ★ The agency has improved its income eligibility accuracy by 15 percent – to an overall level of 94 percent accuracy.
- ★ The agency expects to maintain or exceed this level in the future.

Efficiency Gains

Washington State University

Samuel H. Smith
President

Alcohol use reduced at sports events

What may or may not be brought into a spectator event at Washington State University has been an issue – primarily at Martin Stadium. In the past, the university has maintained a watchful eye regarding what fans carry to their seats, particularly containers that could contain alcoholic beverages.

Results

- ★ At the Cougars' football game against Stanford this fall, a record crowd produced just three incident reports, only one of which was for alcohol use.
- ★ Large bags or bulky parcels that could block aisles and seating areas also are prohibited.
- ★ What was past practice now is in rule – in line with the governor's executive order on regulatory reform.

CONTACT: Richard L. Hutchinson, (509) 335-5524

Department of Corrections

Joseph D. Lehman
Secretary

Getting injured workers back on the job saves money

In 1994, Department of Corrections employees lost an average of 51 days from work-related injuries. This resulted in a substantial cost to the state for workers' compensation benefits as well as reduced income and lost benefits for the injured workers.

A team of employees discovered that the agency's return-to-work program was not well understood by managers or staff. This program provides guidelines for returning an industrially injured employee to work in a less physically demanding position. The agency began an educational program and identified specific staff to be responsible for the program implementation. The outcome has been a more efficient operation with workers returning to work faster.

Results

- ★ The average number of time-loss days per claim dropped to eight days – a 63 percent reduction.
- ★ Corrections received enough workers' compensation refunds to support the salaries of 14.5 safety staff members.

CONTACT: Kathy Gastreich, (360) 664-0380

Cost Savings

Department of Corrections

Joseph D. Lehman
Secretary

Avoiding cost of unnecessary medical treatment

The Department of Corrections furnishes health care services to offenders. Until early this year, decisions about appropriateness of care were made without standard definition of what is medically appropriate. This resulted in inconsistency in the care provided. Delivering medically unnecessary care contributes to high health care costs.

A team of Corrections staff, representatives of other state agencies, a representative from an offender-related public interest group and providers drafted a statewide Offender Health Plan. Like any insurance plan, it defines the health services an offender may receive while incarcerated and specifically lists those services which are excluded or have limitations. It also stipulates services that must be pre-authorized through a Central Utilization Review Committee. A statewide training videoconference was conducted to educate department health care staff.

Results

- ★ The level of care provided at each facility is consistent.
- ★ Three procedures were not approved by the review committee, resulting in a cost avoidance of \$400,000 in the second quarter of 1997.
- ★ Offenders receive only medically necessary care.

CONTACT: Gail Kreiger, (360) 753-4105

Department of Employment Security

Carver Gayton
Director

Telecommuting reduces lease costs

A small tax office in Wenatchee was losing its lease, and the new office space in the area was expensive. The office found an easy solution by setting up home offices for four of its six staff.

Allowing the four tax specialists to telecommute meant the remaining staff could be based at another Employment Security office in the city - the Wenatchee Job Service Center.

Results

- ★ Substantially decreased the space required for a base office. The cost to collocate with the Wenatchee Job Service center was \$6,600 a year, while a new leased facility was projected to cost \$31,656. So the telecommuting arrangement saved \$25,000 the first year.
- ★ The audit rate by the tax specialists increased to 4 percent because the specialists are closer to employers and spend more time with their own employer accounts.
- ★ The agency should realize an overall savings of \$110,000 over a five-year period, while maintaining the same staffing levels.

CONTACT: Kathy Mertes, (509) 665-3729

Cost Savings

Department of General Administration

Marsha Tadano Long
Director

Purchasing card saves small transaction dollars

Although transactions of \$1,000 or less account for 60 percent of state government's transaction volumes, they only represent five percent of the dollars being spent. This means that a disproportionate amount of staff, energy, paperwork and other resources in the procurement process is being employed for a tiny fraction of the money being spent.

The department has developed a purchase card program that can reduce a purchasing process of up to 21 steps to four or five simple steps. One monthly billing for all transactions reduces the number of warrants processed because the payment to the purchasing card provider replaces the many separate payments made to vendors.

Results

- ★ A state of California study demonstrated that the average processing cost of a typical small dollar transaction dropped from \$62.88 to \$38.39, a 39 percent reduction in administrative costs.
- ★ The federal General Accounting Office reports savings of \$54 per transaction.
- ★ The program will eliminate the control concerns that auditors have related to petty cash funds.

CONTACT: Bill Joplin, (360) 902-7417

Department of General Administration

Marsha Tadano Long
Director

Cooperative procurement means big money savings

Up until now, Washington and Oregon have operated separate procurement systems – this despite needing and procuring similar and identical services and products from the same regional pool of vendors. As each state determined a contract need, it would go out to bid, evaluating and awarding contracts independently. Political sub-divisions of each state have historically enjoyed access to both states’ contracts, providing appropriate fees were paid and interlocal cooperative purchasing agreements were in place. This initiative will eliminate those fees and the need for interlocal agreements as well as provide joint access to existing contracts in both states.

After first establishing similar administrative processes and policies, and adopting the same funding and business model, the states developed a strategic purchasing plan for certain goods and services on a test basis.

Results

- ★ Under a joint contract for fluorescent lights, the states obtained a contract that is 20 percent less than the previous one. The result is that Washington will realize savings of \$800,000 during the next two years.
- ★ A similar joint contract for copiers will result in cost savings for users in both states estimated at \$150,000 per year.
- ★ Currently, the states are developing a joint contract for a purchase card system for motor pool fleet management services.

CONTACT: Bill Joplin, (360) 902-7417

Cost Savings

Department of Health

Bruce Miyahara
Secretary

‘Have nots’ now have good service

Maintenance of computer systems at the Department of Health was accomplished in various ways, with varying levels of service. Some agency staff were able to obtain quick help in dealing with computer challenges. Others had less service. The lack of a coordinated effort also resulted in higher computing costs within the agency.

Computer support staff were reorganized into three geographical teams for the Olympia area and Seattle. The types of services are clearly defined and each program pays a fee for their computer services.

Results

- ★ Costs have been leveled throughout the department to an average of \$125 per computer per month – a 37 percent decrease for some.
- ★ The agency no longer has “haves” with good computer services and “have nots” with lesser service. This results in more efficient use of agency resources and better expenditure of tax dollars.
- ★ Computer support has been increased within existing staffing levels.

CONTACT: Tom Martin, (360) 705-6110

Department of Labor and Industries

Gary Moore
Director

Change in public hearing notices reduces costs

When a safety rule change was proposed, the Department of Labor and Industries had been sending copies of the current rule along with proposed changes to a very large list of interested persons. Because many of the rules are complex, this involved very large printing and mailing costs. Notification of customers was delayed awaiting the printing and mailing.

An agency team discussed the information needs with customers, then developed a new method of sending out public hearing notices and hearing results. A flier with general information is mailed to interested parties. Those wanting a full package are furnished with copies of the rule and proposed changes either on paper or a computer disk.

Results

- ★ The agency avoids about \$10,000 in printing and mailing costs per rule change.
- ★ L&I customers receive earlier notice of rule change proposals.

CONTACT: Dave Pratt, (360) 902-6697

Cost Savings

Department of Personnel

Dennis Karras
Director

Less paper, reduced costs, faster delivery

The distribution of printed recruitment notices, publications and minutes and notices of the Washington Personnel Resources Board results in costly printing, mailing and handling for the more than 1 million “impressions” monthly.

A team from the Department of Personnel developed an alternative using the agency’s Internet web site and electronic distribution lists.

Results

- ★ An initial 7 percent reduction in printing and related costs for part of the project, with the goal of 15 to 20 percent for the entire effort.
- ★ A goal of a 10 to 15 percent reduction in postage costs for recruitment announcements.
- ★ Reduced delivery time and increased accessibility across the state.

CONTACT: Donna Bogumill, (360) 586-0402

Department of Social and Health Services

Lyle Quasim
Secretary

Leased circuits eliminated, redirecting \$1.1 million

About 300 leased circuits remained throughout Social and Health Services offices after the agency's data communication conversion to a Wide Area Network (WAN). The WAN enables offices around the state to communicate with each other and mainframe or server systems. The leased equipment was costing about \$1.4 million per year.

Network Engineering staff developed a process to find alternatives and eliminate the leased circuits.

Result

★ So far, \$1.1 million has been redirected to other program needs.

CONTACT: Bob Hamilton, (360) 902-0899, or Charlie Johnson, (360) 902-7503

Cost Savings

Health Care Authority

Gary L. Christenson
Director

Bill consolidation saves time and money

Washington Basic Health Plan members are mailed a bill each month for their health insurance. Delinquent members also would receive a bill for past due coverage a few days before the regular billing. This confused members and many times resulted in members paying one bill and ignoring the other. Sending out the delinquency bills took considerable time and additional postal costs.

Staff developed a plan for a new bill that consolidates both current charges and delinquent amounts, if any. That eliminated a separate mailing to delinquent accounts. The bill includes an information return card for a member to report income or status changes and a bar code that allowed electronic processing and saves 19 keystrokes per returned card.

Results

- ★ Eliminating the separate delinquent billing saved \$4,419 per month in postage.
- ★ One day was cut between processing the bills and delivery to members. It also increased the account detail available to members on their bill statements.

CONTACT: Nikki Woehl, (360) 923-2805