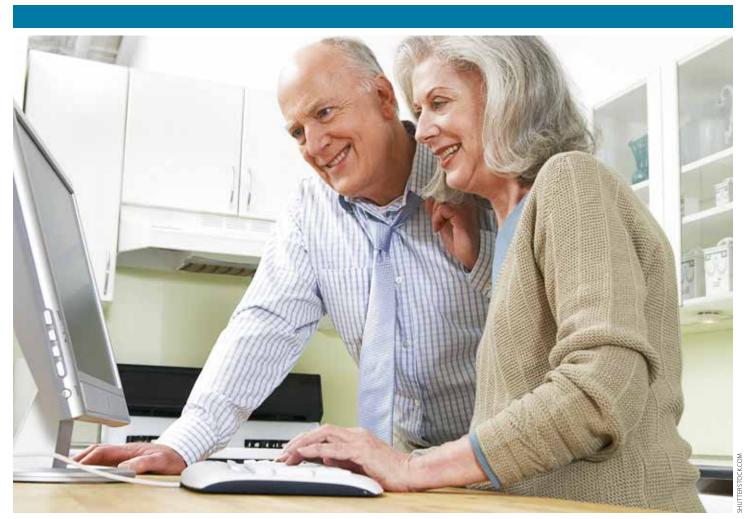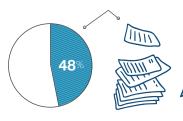## Issue Brief

Beyond Cost Savings

Next-generation document management applications improve citizen benefit delivery.

Government agencies, especially those that manage constituent benefits, are facing unprecedented volumes of documents and vast amounts of data today. Unfortunately, at the same time, they are contending with shrinking budgets, truncated staff and limited technology resources. Enter document management technology. By automating the document management process, this in-demand technology can help government agencies cope with growing workloads while reducing costs. In fact, 48 percent of health and human services (HHS) leaders said document management solutions have the largest potential value in improving the delivery of citizen services and benefits.[1]

And while cutting costs is critical, it's only part of the benefits delivered by document management technology — the flip side is the significant value brought to constituents. Following are the benefits your agency and the citizens you serve can gain when you transition to an automated document or content management system.

48%

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A Unified Approach to Citizen Benefits

Providing a single application for multiple sources of data, document management systems give public sector staff the ability to view the entire citizen-benefit life cycle and the family as a whole, from toddlers to seniors. Sophisticated enterprise content management (ECM) software can be integrated into existing agency systems where they work together. It not only captures and routes information automatically to staff, it has vast, dynamic case management capabilities, permitting a case worker to look only at one application to determine the services and benefits for which a family qualifies. These tools make a "no wrong door approach" easier for agencies to achieve and allows them to simplify access for constituents.
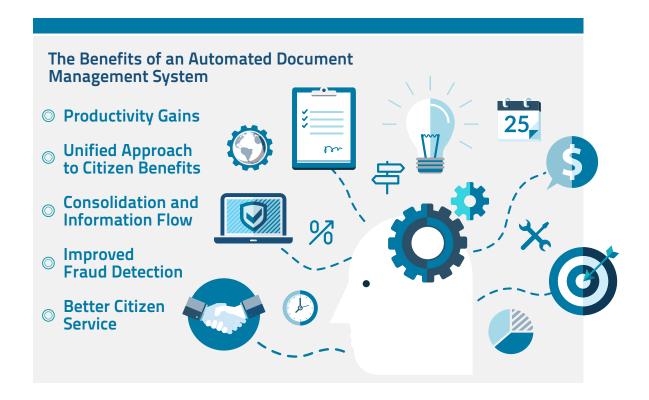
Consolidation and Information Flow

Virtualization and other computing advances have shrunk governments' needs for data center space and personnel. In an attempt to save funds, many government agencies have consolidated data centers over the last few years. Responding to the Obama administration's goal of shuttering 40 percent of data centers, plans are on track to close at least 1,200 of 3,100 data centers by the end of 2015. Former Federal CIO Steven VanRoekel said the remaining data centers will have to become more efficient. "Agencies will focus on computing power and density instead of capacity, taking advantage of current technologies that deliver more bang for the buck."[2]

The porous nature of document management platforms also help support consolidation efforts and eliminate siloed information that proves problematic among agencies' discrete realms of data that force constituents to navigate among many sources for information or services that are often related. An ECM system becomes a central repository for information so citizens and government employees can easily access the information they need when they need it.

Improved Fraud Detection

Such transparency has another side benefit: fraud detection. With comprehensive document management software that features open architecture, information that previously might have gone undetected can be revealed. For example, if a parent makes a request for financial assistance while failing to support his or her family, an agency can gain the full picture of what is owed from within that single system.

The Benefits of an Automated Document Management System

◎ **Productivity Gains**

◎ **Unified Approach to Citizen Benefits**

◎ **Consolidation and Information Flow**

◎ **Improved Fraud Detection**

◎ **Better Citizen Service**

Case Study: The Power of ECM is Realized in Ventura County, Calif.

While it's safe to say the economic downturn of the last half-decade impacted the budget and capability of nearly every public sector agency in the country, it's perhaps more meaningful to say it affected the lives of millions of Americans who came to need public sector services like never before.

In Ventura County, Calif., a growing need for benefits and services led to a sharp uptick in workload demands for the county's Human Services Agency (HSA). While 1 in every 10 citizens received support services in 2006, today that number has risen to 1 in 5. From handling requests for food, financial, employment, medical and housing assistance to overseeing issues affecting children, veterans and vulnerable adults, agency staff struggled to keep pace with the mounting paper-based, manually input caseload and to deliver critical services to constituents.

Steve Nelles, head of the county's General Services Agency document services department, says, "The county only has so many staff resources — like any business, we couldn't just keep throwing labor at the problem. We had to reengineer how we were doing things."[3]

Out of an unprecedented need to meet service demands came innovation — in this case, the decision to move to an automated solution that greatly unburdened the county of its massive paper chase. The IT and document services staff tapped a nuanced ECM system to develop a centralized mailroom that eliminates the need to courier mail to a dozen off-site county campuses, including HSA's. Now, when paper mail arrives at the revamped intake facility, it is scanned by document services staff and ingested by the new system, which indexes, classifies and routes each piece to appropriate recipients downstream — handling from 350,000 to nearly 500,000 images per month and slashing input time from days to hours.

Another smart move was a business reply process improvement. Business reply mail is part of client response, one with substantial costs in material, postage and fees. "A large enterprise client over time develops a lot of envelope templates," Nelles says. "When we moved to the digital mailroom, we surveyed those documents and eliminated over 40 underutilized envelopes and permits linked to off-campus locations. This consolidation resulted in higher volume for our digital mailroom and less transportation and material handling of physical mail. About 80 percent of HSA's mail requiring a business reply now qualifies for the lowest discounted postage rate."

The larger digital infrastructure and business reply process allows teams to do more with fewer people, eliminating the need for HSA's skilled workforce to manually handle, route and input documents themselves. With fewer hands touching documents along the way, accuracy and security increase, too. "There's always a need for confidentiality," Nelles says, "and while people don't usually think of it this way, when you centralize and automate these services, speed equals security."

Freed from many administrative tasks, as well as from paper case files, workers have more capacity to respond to clients and can service requests electronically, regardless of location. Multiple workers can collaborate on client cases and view the same documents simultaneously, and security is role-based, with compliance ensured.

> "We're here to move documents and data so the county can make better decisions and conduct its business. The main benefit of this solution is that it has opened our eyes about how to improve processes ... we're able to respond, inform and communicate better with the public, and ultimately, that's our mission."
> — Steve Nelles, Director of the General Services Agency Document Services Department, Ventura County, Calif.

HSA Manager of Application Development Patty Sanchez says, "Providing clients with a standard and timely benefit approval and distribution process while managing a decreasing or flat budget are key factors for us. In addition to supporting a 'no wrong door' approach, the solution integrates with other agency tools for an efficient virtual environment."[4]

In 2014, Ventura County won the California State Association of Counties (CSAC) Challenge Award for its highly successful digitized business reply mail process. By retooling processes in a way that reduced staffing time and cost, the county has demonstrated it can provide greater value to its people.

"We're here to move documents and data so the county can make better decisions and conduct its business," Nelles says. "The main benefit of this solution is that it has opened our eyes about how to improve processes — and not just by eliminating paper. How do we make your day more efficient? How can we be more relevant? We're able to respond, inform and communicate better with the public, and ultimately, that's our mission."

Productivity Gains and Better Citizen Service

In less digital days, application forms with missing information might sit on someone's desk or float around an agency, waiting for resolution. The strength of a document management system is not only its ability to capture, identify and route documents correctly, it also checks to make sure all necessary information has been provided, holding the document in suspension until any missing information is obtained and then connecting it with the original form.

This host of efficiencies means many administrative tasks are handled by the time forms reach agency staff — allowing them to focus the majority of their time and attention on serving constituents.

> **A standardized platform for document management can increase operational efficiency and be used for a wide variety of business processes — enhancing internal control, relieving staff from time-consuming administrative handling, saving taxpayer dollars, and ultimately improving service quality to constituents through a swifter, more flexible response to their needs.**

Improving External Services by Improving Internal Processes

Automating the agency mailroom is just one solution that document management technologies can provide to government. A standardized platform can increase operational efficiency and be used for a wide variety of business processes — enhancing internal control, relieving staff from time-consuming administrative handling, saving taxpayer dollars, and ultimately improving service quality to constituents through a swifter, more flexible response to their needs.

Endnotes

1. www.governing.com/papers/Health-Care-Policies-and-Practices-that-Work.html
2. www.govtech.com/pcio/articles/Federal-CIO-1200-Data-Centers-to-Close-by-2015.html
3. All information from interview with Steve Nelles, conducted on Dec. 17, 2014.
4. All information from interview with Patty Sanchez, conducted on Jan. 7, 2015.

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