



Modernizing State Applications to Increase Efficiency and Accessibility

BACKGROUND



The Indiana Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), Division of Family Resources (DFR) is responsible for eligibility determination for Indiana Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary

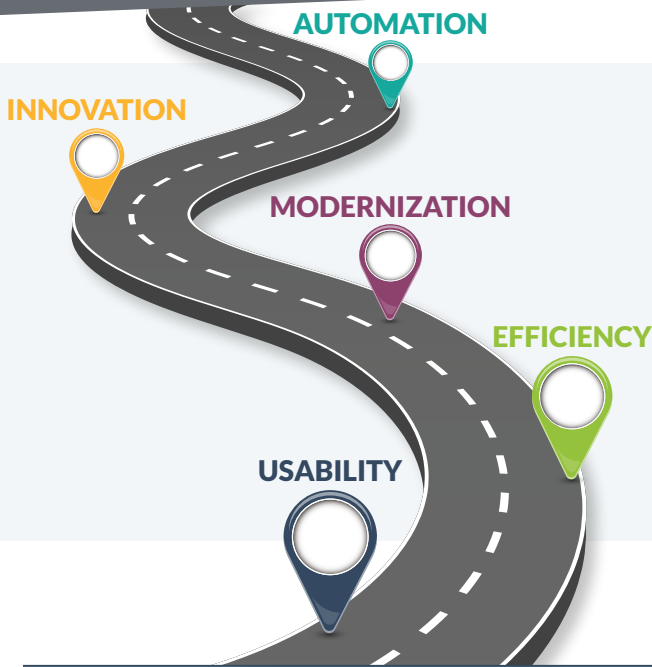
Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and Refugee Cash Assistance (RCA). Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF eligibility is all supported by the "FSSA Benefits Portal", located at <https://fssabenefits.in.gov>. The Benefits Portal is a major component of the Indiana DFR Application Services (AS) solution, for which Moser Consulting, Inc. (Moser) is the Prime supporting contractor. Moser is responsible for Maintenance and Operations (M&O) as well as Design, Development, and Implementation (DDI) of new or updated components for the AS solution. On this critical project, DFR collaborates with Moser to use automation, innovative technology and

streamlined processes to expedite eligibility decisions, ease the administrative burden placed upon clients, maintain federal compliance, and increase the cadence of system releases.

DFR and Moser are committed to modernizing applications to increase efficiency and accessibility of the AS solution by using a Hybrid Agile approach.

The Hybrid Agile methodology blends plan-driven principles while still taking an iterative approach to software development and helps deliver value faster and more efficiently. To ensure we are iteratively improving and keeping modernization top of mind for the AS solution, Moser utilizes a Product Roadmap to outline the vision and priorities of the solution and give a holistic view of the client's short and long-term goals.





As part of this collaborative commitment, Moser maintains and continually updates the Product Roadmap that effectively marries DFR's strategic vision for the project and its supporting components with Moser's recommendations for technology innovations and advancements. The Product Roadmap allows Moser and DFR to efficiently flag areas that can be improved upon to meet the needs of DFR and its clients by using innovative and advanced technologies.

NEED FOR CHANGE

The existing FSSA Benefits Portal was a candidate for redesign as part of the Product Roadmap. While it was federally compliant, it did not strategically use technology or effective modern approaches for design, usability, and accessibility, creating significant opportunities to streamline eligibility and enrollment processes.

Having a robust and modern site, which included more self-service capabilities for clients, became more pressing than ever with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic as offices were closed, in-person appointments were restricted, and many clients/members experienced significant impacts on the healthcare and food needs they had for their families during this Public Health Emergency (PHE).

With offices closed and mail being the only avenue for providing supporting documentation for an application for benefits, an electronic self-service alternative became an obvious need. Oftentimes, the physical mailing process could add up to six additional days – three (3) days for the mail to get from DFR to the client, and then another three (3) days may be added for the client to mail responses back to DFR, thereby increasing the amount of time it takes for clients to receive potentially life-saving benefits.

COLLABORATIVE MODERNIZATION

To meet the increasing need for a modern site with more self-service capabilities, Moser collaborated with DFR leadership and other key project stakeholders to redesign the existing Benefits Portal and implement a new and improved site. The goal of these planned improvements was not only to expedite processes for the Indiana clients, but also to alleviate any barriers to the most basic needs like food and healthcare using innovation and self-service.



To ensure optimal stakeholder buy-in and consensus, and to also maximize opportunities for accessibility, DFR worked with Moser to plan and execute two parallel initiatives, or workstreams, dedicated to the Benefits Portal redesign. The first was led by Moser's User Experience Team who provided mock-ups and wireframes to guide a series of design workshops and reviews. The goal of the workshops was to continue to iterate, improve and optimize the design, ensuring it incorporated all needed functionality, while still reflecting the desired and compliant look and feel of a new, modern website. Most importantly, the workshops solicited active participation and feedback from all stakeholders to confirm consensus and acceptance of the new site throughout the design journey.

Concurrently, Moser formed a fruitful and bi-directional partnership with the Indiana School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ISBVI) with the primary goal of understanding the challenges that public-facing websites potentially pose for visually impaired or low vision users, and to understand how technology can mitigate these challenges. To do so, Moser conducted a series of workshops and interviews with ISBVI volunteers during which the volunteers interacted with the Benefits Portal, reviewed DFR's new design options, and shared feedback on websites that were both highly accessible and not accessible so that Moser could consider including characteristics and behaviors of the highly accessible sites, while avoiding designs and features that hamper or limit accessibility.

DFR and Moser consolidated feedback from both initiatives to create and implement a newly designed Benefits Portal that incorporates four essential design principles:



1
Mobile-friendly and scalable pages



2
Simple and efficient design



3
Minimal complex graphics and clear Alt-Text



4
In addition to all aspects of applicable ADA Compliance, fully complies with WCAG 2.1 Standards

To support self-service for clients, the new Benefits Portal also includes Document Upload functionality. This functionality creates a fully electronic platform to submit required documentation in support of eligibility and determination processes. This new initiative supplements paper-based, manual processes with fully electronic alternatives, saving time and money and accelerating eligibility determination decisions. Between e-Notices and Document Upload improvements, up to six (6) days of process time can be eliminated, with a response possible in less than a day. This feature reduces the need for clients or Authorized Representatives (ARs) to print documentation as they can simply upload documents they downloaded elsewhere, such as medical records and paystubs. Since the Document Upload is done via Benefits Portal credentials, the documents are directly attached to a case, without the need for workers to manually determine case association. Further, it reduces the risk of clients losing their benefits due to delays in returning eligibility documentation.



The Solution: A Modern Benefits Portal



To see a video about the Indiana School for the Blind Partnership and some more details about this DFR project, scan the QR code.

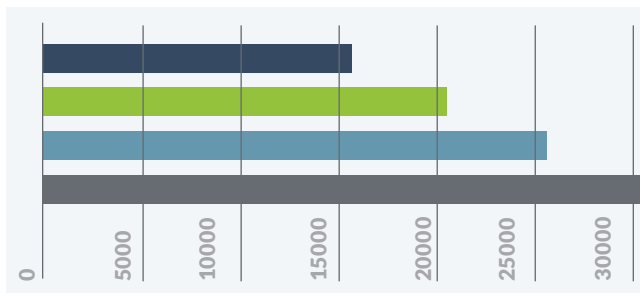


RESULTS

With the redesigned Benefits Portal, Indiana residents and clients, including those with accessibility concerns, can easily access information and resources or apply for benefits online. The portal presents users with a well-organized, accessible, and intuitive interface, and a process that reduces the amount of time and effort required to learn about available benefits and eligibility and complete the application process.

An early indicator of the level of satisfaction with the newly designed site among Indiana advocacy groups has been overwhelmingly positive. Further, early data indicates that Indiana clients are taking advantage of the newly designed Benefits Portal. As indicated by the data below, the number of documents being uploaded, as opposed to sending and/or receiving physical documents and visiting brick-and-mortar DFR offices, has steadily increased over the first four months of implementation and is continuing to trend upwards.

- **April: 15,683 document uploads**
- **May: 21,783 document uploads**
- **June: 25,464 document uploads**
- **July: 30,690 document uploads**



While the data continues to mature, the execution of the beginning phases of our Strategic Product Roadmap tells a compelling story of how modern usability best practices can be leveraged for a wide variety of applications—and how a strong collaboration between the State (DFR) and their vendor (Moser) helps identify and address the most pressing needs through the use of innovative technology to enhance and expand external service delivery to those we serve – the Indiana clients and caseworkers.

Building off our success from the redesigned Benefits Portal and continuing our significant transformation efforts, DFR will continue to execute critical items on the Strategic Product Roadmap, which includes, but is not limited to, the below feature development:

- **Additional mechanisms** to support electronic interaction throughout eligibility processes (e.g., Automate forms with effective User Interface (UI) best practices to provide more electronic alternatives for clients and ARs to use for interaction with DFR)
- **Online Chat Tech Support**

These efforts will ultimately use automation, innovative technology, improved infrastructure, and streamlined processes to expedite eligibility decisions, ease the administrative burden placed upon clients, and increase the cadence of system releases.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER TO YOU?

As an organization, Moser is dedicated to a collaborative partnership that marries a client's strategic vision for projects with Moser's expertise for technology innovations and advancements. Through its successful partnership with DFR, Moser has streamlined and expedited processes, maintained federal compliance, and increased the cadence of system releases with a Hybrid Agile approach and a comprehensive Strategic Product Roadmap. If you're interested in learning more about this project or how we can help you meet your goals, please feel free to contact us at moserit.com/contact. Additionally, feel free to reach out to the following:

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