

# 4<sup>th</sup> Annual NCACDSS Best Practices Awards Nomination Form

Category: CSMIE#6 Tier 3  
Cost Savings Measures and/or Improvements in Efficiency

**Project Title: Tying Documentation to Consumers Through Electronic Imaging**

1. **Project/Program Summary:** Briefly summarize the project's history, purpose, timeline and budget. During the past 5 years the economy in Catawba County has shifted dramatically from a manufacturing hub to one of service. This has caused a dramatic increase in "business" for Social Services as citizens are moved from high paying manufacturing jobs to low paying positions in the service industry. One of the primary effects of this increase in "business" is the creation of large amounts of documentation. With more documentation comes the need for more storage space to house documents/records. Couple this with the fact that Federal and State departments increasingly demand these records are kept in tact for multiple years beyond the closing of records, and you have the recipe for major storage problems.

After many years of struggling to meet the storage needs of the Agency, in February 2005 the Agency created an Agency-wide Electronic Imaging program. This program was created to resolve two issues: 1) Reduce the storage needs by electronically housing all pertinent information on consumers and records and 2) increase the timeliness to respond to consumers while reducing staff time to locate documentation by linking the imaged record to our "Master Client Database".

When implemented the Agency budgeted \$125,000/year for this effort. This included equipment, software, maintenance, and staff.

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2. **Innovation:** Why is the program unique? How does your project differ from similar projects? The Catawba system differs from other systems in that it is fully integrated into the Agency's Master Client and Child Welfare systems. Unlike other systems which are stand alone, this system insures staff get accurate and timely information since they first locate the case/person in the Master Client Database and then they review the linked imaged documentation – all on their desktop. Additionally, this system was one of the first to be fully authorized by the State which means documents are destroyed after imaged and quality assured. Lastly it can be used by any staff at any time directly from their desktop.
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3. **Project Success and Impact:** What were the objectives? How well were they met? How widespread is the impact of the project/program? What is the anticipated long-term impact? Did the project involve collaboration with other agencies, non-profits, businesses, etc.? Describe the outcome of the collaboration. The main objectives were to reduce the need for physical storage space, link documentation to consumers/records, and reduce the time necessary for staff to find needed documentation.

So far the objectives have been met very well. We continue to have only two small warehouse units (with over 100% increase in Income maintenance caseloads), while

the time to locate documentation has been reduced by over 50%. An unintended benefits has been the use of the system to quality assure "old" information within our databases – this has allowed the IT staff to decrease the time spent on these activities by over 5%.

The impact of this system covers all service areas from child welfare to child support. We feel the impact of this system will only grow with time, as we are able to put more information in the system and begin to move toward real time imaging. Ultimately we would like to see all information that is reasonable to be in this system and for the Agency to not have any off site storage.

Catawba County collaborated with the State Archive department to have the system fully endorsed in addition to DTI, a Greensboro company who specializes in document imaging. This not only allowed us to have confidence in destroying documentation but also insured that we had a system with the latest technology that would integrate well into our existing system.

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4. **Project Effort and Difficulty:** How well did the program use limited resources? What obstacles or challenges did you overcome? How was this done? We realized rather quickly that we would not be able to budget enough dollars to outsource this system - as the quotes from private companies came in at over \$250,000 - just to do our outstanding records. Additionally, we knew that internal resources (personnel) were limited and would not be able to dedicate the time necessary to complete all needed parts of implementing imaging (record purging, file indexing, physical imaging of documents, Quality assurance, destroying of documents). So instead of further delaying the inevitable we collectively created a system that we could realize, both monetarily and resource wise, while meeting the overall desire of management.

The main part of this was completed through planning and strategic decision-making on the part of the DSS Business Office as well as the programmatic areas. First, we created a strategic plan for the equipment that fell into our existing budget. We then discussed options with the programmatic staff and asked them to decide what documents would be imaged / when. After we had the plan complete we then analyzed the options to man the system. From this we decided to purchase 4 machines of which one is dedicated to internal staff and the other three would be used by hourly employees hired specifically to do imaging/indexing. Our quality assurance is performed by supervisors or lead workers in the area imaged.

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5. **Ability to Replicate Project:** Can this project be duplicated in other counties? What could counties do to minimize obstacles and problems? This most certainly can be duplicated in other counties as long as they have a "Master Client Database" and have the monetary resources. To minimize obstacles, we would suggest, getting their county and departmental management's full backing. Fully analyze the internal needs of the Agency and plan well in advance for the monetary needs.