

North Dakota State Government

Lightning-fast information delivery helps speed response to citizens and deliver big cost savings

Overview

The need

North Dakota State Government found it costly and challenging to manage growing stores of paper records, with slow information access negatively impacting staff productivity and service to citizens.

The solution

The state has replaced paper-based processes with a central electronic content management system that speeds information access across departments, including the Office of the State Tax Commissioner.

The benefit

Reduces time to respond to citizen inquiries from days to seconds. Tax returns can be processed up to 75 percent faster. Drives cost savings and frees up months of staff time for higher-value work.

As state governments grapple with budget cuts and hiring freezes, public officials need to find ways to work more productively if they are to improve citizen services while reducing costs.

The North Dakota State Government offers a prime example—it has transformed mountains of paper files into useful digital content, and is bringing together information, people and processes across departments to manage services more effectively.

Near-instant access to information enables the North Dakota State Government to respond to citizen inquiries in seconds, not days. Improved operational efficiencies are driving big cost savings, helping the state make the most of a tight budget.

Taking control of growing volumes of records

While North Dakota's population of 650,000 is smaller than that of most other states, it is dispersed over a vast geographical area, creating unique challenges when it comes to the delivery of public services.

Improved content management offers a solid foundation for optimizing the delivery of state services. "One of our next steps will be to introduce content analytics to help staff better determine citizen eligibility for services, so we can deliver benefits faster and stamp out fraud," says Chuck Picard, Enterprise Electronic Document Management System Coordinator, North Dakota State Government.



Solution components

Software

- IBM® Case Foundation
 - IBM Content Collector for File Systems
 - IBM Daeja ViewONE
 - IBM FileNet® Content Manager
 - IBM FileNet eForms
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Previously, most of North Dakota’s state departments used paper-based methods to store a range of information on citizens, businesses and more, along with internal government records. As these collections of paper files grew over the years, officials found it increasingly difficult to manage and retrieve information.

Chuck Picard, Enterprise Electronic Document Management System Coordinator, North Dakota State Government, elaborates: “Relying on paper records presented a significant challenge for state departments. For example, the Office of the State Tax Commissioner used to store records in the basement of the capitol building while the people who needed them worked on the 16th floor. There was a team that worked from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. managing these paper records.

“If an employee needed a certain document, he or she would have to submit a request to this records retrieval team, who would then locate the original record and have it sent up to the 16th floor. Records were delivered in batches, twice daily, so it could sometimes take up to 24 hours before our frontline staff received the documents they needed to do their jobs and respond to requests for information.

“This was not an isolated problem—we had a number of other departments reporting similar issues. We knew that there had to be a better way to manage information, one that could save staff the time and effort of locating paper files, and allow them to work more productively.”

Transforming content management

North Dakota State Government embarked on an ambitious project to modernize the way it stored and managed information. The state sought to move from paper-based filing systems to a single, electronic content management platform, which could provide easy access to records from multiple departments and locations.

As North Dakota State Government reviewed its options, it first looked internally at agencies that had already deployed document management systems, ultimately selecting IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions—part of the IBM® Watson™ Foundations family of products.

Starting with the Office of the State Tax Commissioner, North Dakota State Government worked to scan huge volumes of paper documents and store the newly digitized files in a centralized IBM FileNet® Content Manger repository. The state takes advantage of IBM Case Foundation to automate and optimize a number of key business processes, helping staff work faster and more productively.

“With IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions, we can bring together content and processes across departments and counties, giving staff and citizens access to information when and where they need it.”

— Chuck Picard, Enterprise Electronic Document Management System Coordinator, North Dakota State Government

To provide employees with an easier way to view the information held in the FileNet Content Manager repository, North Dakota State Government uses IBM Daeja ViewONE Professional—a web-based document viewer that provides a single, consistent view of documents and images. Employees can take advantage of the solution’s built-in PDF module to annotate PDF files, adding highlights, sticky notes and custom stamps.

Chuck Picard states: “With IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions we can bring together content and processes across departments and counties, giving staff and citizens access to information when and where they need it. Content can be shared quickly and easily, without the requirement for additional systems integration. For example, the tax department has direct access to Department of Motor Vehicle records to help ensure compliance with sales tax requirements.”

Bringing more departments on board

Today, IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions act as the enterprise standard for document management across the entire State of North Dakota. Currently deployed at 22 departments, the solutions are used by more than 2,000 employees to manage a wide variety of information, ranging from unemployment applications and vehicle registrations to tax filings and benefit records.

The number of users is expected to increase significantly as more state departments come online and as the state provides county employees with access to the system. This move will enable critical information to be shared between agencies at both the state and local government levels, further improving efficiency.

Chuck Picard explains: “Electronic document management is helping us overcome the unique challenges posed by the wide geographical dispersal of different departments and agencies. In the future, all departments will be able to store and retrieve information using the same central repository, eliminating the need for each county to store its own records and helping us work more effectively on a state-wide level.”

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— Chuck Picard, Enterprise Electronic Document Management System Coordinator, North Dakota State Government

Saving time and money

Making the move to digitized content has eliminated the expense and effort of managing paper files, saving valuable dollars and releasing staff to focus on more productive work.

“In the past, we had one staff member whose sole job was to get records in the door and catalogued in our paper filing systems—a process that took up to six months to complete,” notes Chuck Picard. “With the IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions, we have cut this process down to less than two months. This means that we save four months of that staff member’s time, which can be used for higher-value tasks. In addition, we no longer need a dedicated team to manage manual document search and retrieval, which has freed up even more staff members for other work.”

The introduction of a centralized electronic document repository and improved business process management has accelerated information access. In the tax department, this has helped to significantly reduce the amount of time required to respond to requests for information and process tax returns.

Chuck Picard says: “IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions enable staff to access information online in seconds, not hours. Now, if a taxpayer calls and asks for an update on the status of their return, that request can be fulfilled in less than a minute. The actual tax return process is also much faster—refunds can be issued in around one week on average, compared to the four weeks it took in the past.”

“IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions have paved the way for a much more efficient and productive way of working across our state departments.”

— Chuck Picard, Enterprise Electronic Document Management System Coordinator, North Dakota State Government

Rehabilitating offenders

In the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, IBM solutions are helping to streamline the sex offender review process, saving valuable taxpayer dollars and helping staff make smarter decisions about how to best rehabilitate offenders.

By eliminating the need to locate and compile the paperwork required for processing sex offenders slated for release, staff can more quickly access the information they need to shape rehabilitation plans.

“All people involved in the sex offender review process have as much time as they need to review the relevant documents,” comments Chuck Picard. “This means that they can focus on developing the best rehabilitation plan for each individual, helping to reintroduce offenders into society and deter them from future offending.”

Reaping the benefits

As the IBM solutions are extended to more departments, North Dakota State Government expects that the benefits will continue to multiply.

Chuck Picard concludes: “IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions have paved the way for a much more efficient and productive way of working across our state departments. Faster, more reliable access to information helps the state of North Dakota manage its operations more effectively, guaranteeing a higher quality service to citizens.”

About North Dakota State Government

Admitted to the Union in 1889, North Dakota is located in the upper Midwestern region of the United States. The North Dakota State Government is responsible for coordinating the delivery of public services to the state’s 650,000 residents.

To learn more, visit: www.nd.gov

For more information

To learn more about IBM Enterprise Content Management solutions, contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/software/ecm



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