



# The power of performance management: Responsive and accessible social service

## Overview

Social services are designed to help the people who need them most. But many agencies struggle with case overload, lack of funding, antiquated systems, manual processes and paper-based information. All of these issues hamper staff's ability to respond quickly with the right kind of help—let alone anticipate problems and intervene early.

Many social services agencies are turning to business analytics technology and processes to help them in their mission. The ability to quickly generate reports, recognize patterns, see information across programs and regions, and understand the relationships among social issues is helping caseworkers offer more focused help.

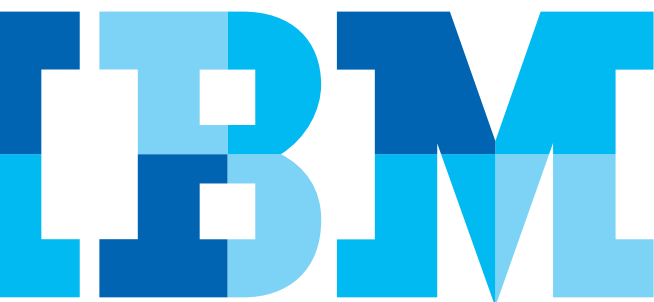
Instead of manually compiling data from multiple spreadsheets, staff can create scheduled or ad hoc reports from a single source of the truth. Through scorecards, staff can follow and influence metrics on open investigations, face-to-face contacts with clients, out-of-home placements, and so on. A unified view of financial metrics can help you decide where to spend budget to get the best outcomes for the client. Instead of debating the validity of information, staff can spend more time in the community, helping families and children. Better access to and control over the data your agency generates and stores is letting agencies:

- Weave a tighter social safety net by uniting information across programs
- Uncover patterns and take pre-emptive action
- Make operational and funding decisions that improve lives
- Demonstrate to stakeholders how targeted spending has improved metrics
- Identify and reduce fraud, error and abuse
- Comply with federal and state reporting requirements
- Analyze staff turnover and plan strategies for retention and development.

Read on to find out how three agencies are using IBM software to better protect vulnerable individuals and ensure services are more citizen-centric.

**The Clark County Family Services Department** chose IBM Cognos® BI to improve reporting and compliance and help them better understand the community they serve.

**AMS**, Austria's public employment service, turned to IBM for up-to-date, valid and accessible information on their clients and to inform employment market policy.



**Alameda County Social Services** teamed with IBM for a near-real-time view of cases and deeper insight, allowing better service, regulatory compliance and savings through fraud and waste reduction.

Through their example, other social services can make the most of limited funding by gaining deeper insight.

### Clark County Family Services

Clark County, Nevada—the United State’s 15th-largest county—is home to the world-famous Las Vegas Strip, heart of the entertainment capital of the world and site of 14 of the nation’s 15 largest hotels.

Providing regional services to its more than 2 million residents, Clark County employs more than 8,000 people in 38 departments. The county is known for its strong ending-fund balance, overall financial strength and investment-quality credit rating. A strong commitment to IT excellence helps the county achieve these accomplishments and meet its goal of providing a responsible, progressive and results-oriented government that is responsive, accessible and accountable to its citizens.

#### Challenges faced

Clark County Family Services Department is the local public agency whose role is to help keep children safe, as required by the federal Adoption and Safe Families Act. The department runs numerous services – from child protective services to foster care services to adoption services – all of which require a large amount of data input and access via a case management system. Executive management, Business Intelligence (BI) analysts and child welfare staff all use the system frequently to run ad hoc and daily reports.

Prior to 2004, Clark County operated on a system where the state was responsible for the back-end operations for child welfare, foster and adoption services. Front-end services, such as intake and investigation, were the responsibility of the county. However, in 2004, the Nevada legislature made all of those services the responsibility of the two largest counties in the state, one of which was Clark County. Through that significant change, the Family Services Department assumed responsibility and staff from the state to provide those new services. It was also mandated to start using the state-wide automated child welfare information system, in addition to the customized reporting system the department was already using.

#### Strategy followed

In order to select the best solution for the Family Services Department’s needs, Clark County invited several vendors to participate in a formal RFI process. The vendor responses were then ranked by an internal committee and narrowed down to four industry solutions. After seeing demonstrations of each product, IBM Cognos BI stood out as the clear winner.

“Right away, we liked IBM® Cognos® BI’s intuitive interface and user-friendliness – we knew our staff would be able to learn the application as quickly as possible,” says Washington. “Also, from the IT perspective, it was easy to manage, had the ability to integrate with our existing systems and had the scalability potential for growth, not only in our department, but also across other county departments.”

In 2005, the Family Services Department, along with several other Clark County departments, went live with IBM Cognos BI scorecards. The following year, with the help of IBM partner PerformanceG2, Inc., the department’s IT team developed cubes that could be used to build data marts. In 2007, the last of the data marts were completed. The department also leveraged IBM Cognos training to bring employees up to speed on the new applications quickly and easily.

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*“IBM Cognos BI has been especially critical to our success with this project.”*

*Eboni Washington,  
Family Services Department, Clark County*

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#### Benefits realized

In addition to helping solve the Family Services Department’s initial problems around data access and reporting, IBM Cognos BI helped the department monitor caseworker compliance with state policies and legislation more easily, identify bottlenecks and improve business processes. For example, the IT team worked with department executives to design a series of reports for monitoring and measuring benchmarks. Using these reports, executives can look at a variety of measurements such as whether open investigations are being completed in a timely fashion, how many face-to-face contacts have taken place with victims of abuse and neglect, and the average length of stay for children in out-of-home placements. Furthermore, they can run reports on federal funding, as well as on net gains and losses with licensed foster homes.

“Targeted case management has been a huge benefit for our department,” says Washington. “The IBM Cognos solution has been instrumental in helping us identify more federal revenue sources. In fact, since September 2009, we’ve generated about \$4 million in new revenue – a significant amount that is especially needed in today’s economic climate.”

Additionally, using IBM Cognos BI, the department has been able to do away with multiple spreadsheets and hand counting of information – practices that often led to confusion and errors. Now, there is a single source of the truth. Staff no longer needs to keep track of all their case management system information and, instead, can devote time to going out in the community and providing services to families and children.

“This entire process has been quite exciting and we’re proud of our end results,” adds Washington. “With our management’s support and end user input, we’ve put controls in place and built a solid BI infrastructure for our department. IBM Cognos BI has been especially critical to our success with this project and we look forward to helping other Clark County departments achieve the same results.”

### AMS – Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich

Arbeitsmarktservice (AMS), Austria’s public employment service, helps job-seekers find employment and supports organizations in their recruitment efforts. To serve its stakeholders effectively, AMS Austria needed to control and optimize its use of resources and provide reliable data to support management decision-making.

#### Challenges faced

Prior to the establishment of AMS in 1994, Austria used a ‘program planning’ approach to managing the employment market: centrally setting detailed objectives, right through to the lowest levels of the hierarchy. AMS replaced this approach with a ‘management by objectives’ system. Austrian states receive about 850 million euros, which is allocated according to regional requirements. In this state-specific ‘funding mix,’ greater resources go to more ambitious plans. The employment market objectives are binding. If they hit the targets, AMS employees receive a bonus.

AMS needed up-to-date, valid, accessible, transparent, and traceable results for checking progress and monitoring employment market policy objectives.

“AMS is stepping up its efforts to improve efficiency and effectiveness in all areas of the employment service,” says Johannes Kopf, Managing Director of AMS. “We needed up-to-date IT systems in line with the guiding principle for our eServices: quick, easy, and uncomplicated. We implemented the NextJob system, which has helped to shorten job-hunting periods and save public money. And our data warehouse contains all the key data for strategic employment market policy decisions in Austria.”

#### Strategy followed

AMS was looking for a solution that met a range of criteria. A high level of flexibility was essential. AMS must amend employment market policy objectives every year in response to changing conditions. It is increasingly incorporating the customer’s viewpoint into its objectives and carrying out in-depth analyses such as sustainability reviews. AMS’s 30 or so technical criteria included simple generation of HTML formats, a Web version of the software, easy data storage, flexible parameters, and quick answers to networked queries. Other criteria included rapid user familiarization, positive references, and international operations. So it was crucial to find the best BI solution on the market, as the requirements were so ambitious.

IBM Cognos business intelligence software met the requirements most effectively. AMS converted to IBM Cognos BI to enjoy the full Web functionality of Analysis Studio and Report Studio.

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*Johannes Kopf, Managing Director of AMS*

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### Benefits realized

AMS implemented a data warehouse to consolidate high volumes of data stored on a variety of media and databases, including networked data from external sources. For example, in key areas such as reducing unemployment periods and distributing risk, AMS can check how many long-term unemployed are now back in the employment process, or how many vacant positions have been filled.

The AMS uses the data warehouse as a central management system. It contains data from all key areas, such as targets, AMS official unemployment figures, vacant positions, employment of foreigners, support activities, budget, European Social Fund data, unemployment benefits, and corporate customers. The warehouse also holds data from the AMS call centre, and data from SAMSOMAT self-service job-hunting kiosks.

The system allows analyses of AMS' self-service systems (eJob room at [www.ams.or.at](http://www.ams.or.at)), Internet-based customer assessment of AMS courses, and employment history evaluations. And in cooperation with the Austrian Ministry for the Economy and Employment, AMS set up an extranet for authorities and external bodies to access key employment market data through the whole IBM Cognos product range (<https://arbeitsmarktdatenbank.at>).

**Scorecard:** The AMS manages its targets through a scorecard. It gives a complete overview of employment market objectives, process goals, and customer targets. Decision makers and controllers at all management levels access the scorecard through their Web browser to check progress and run detailed analyses in the AMS data warehouse using IBM Cognos BI.

**Customer support:** Customer support is important because AMS is working hard to increase its market share. The data warehouse gives managers and administrators an up-to-date view of corporate customers by region, economic class, recruitment behavior, and other dimensions. AMS can segment customer groups and easily determine top customers

according to flexible criteria (the OLAP analysis options in Cognos cubes). The same applies to any changes to customer-driven data over time – the most important informational foundation for CRM.

**Budget control:** The AMS is using the reports from multiple parties for internal usage on how it spends its budget. These parties include the national office, nine state operations, 100 or so regional offices throughout Austria, and external bodies such as the federal computing centre, state welfare and disability agencies, and the PSK savings bank. In the past, reporting and controlling these funds proved highly complex. Now AMS uses an SAP application to control its funding budget, with SAP BW acting as a 'data pump' to ensure an efficient combination of budget and personal data in the warehouse.

**Monitoring career paths:** By aggregating employment information by region, economic sector, and socio-demographics, AMS can identify the areas in which job seekers have the greatest chance of finding work. This employment market analysis also contributes to forecasting the labour market and setting employment policy, allowing, for example, early identification of groups at risk of losing their jobs.

**Optimized resource use:** AMS uses external data and data from the warehouse to monitor support activities and customers and ensure funds are contributing to results. AMS measures success on the basis of employment rates or positions filled, and can assess the effectiveness of individual support activities for different target groups of stakeholders defined by relevant demographics such as gender, age, education, and region.

"IBM Cognos BI allows data comparisons, such as the details of employment for customers previous and subsequent to receiving AMS support," says the project head MIS in the AMS, Dr. Oberklammer.

After Austria presented these OLAP cross-section analyses at the EU Peer Review Program in 2004, the executive summary called the Austrian example out as being "in the vanguard ... because of its comprehensiveness and user-friendliness."

## Alameda County Social Services

Seeking to reduce costs while improving the performance of state social programs, the state of California passed a Deficit Reduction Act that included both performance targets and stiff penalties if the targets were not achieved. The Act required that the work participation rate (WPR) for welfare recipients reach 50 percent, and put the onus on county social service agencies to find a way to make that happen.

### Challenges faced

For Alameda County, reaching that goal would not be easy. A study showed that Alameda had a WPR of only 12 percent—last among California’s 58 counties and well below the state average of 22 percent. “We took that result as an indication that our business practices weren’t working,” says Don Edwards, assistant agency director of Alameda County Social Services. “Though we do a lot of good work it was clear we had some issues that were hampering our efforts. We were unable to tell where clients were in the social service system. We needed to give our caseworkers direct access to information about their own cases, at the individual case level. We needed faster, better reporting. We needed to give the workers the right information, on the spot.”

Another important factor in the need for better, more current information was a funding provision known as Title IV-E. Rather than providing money for individual social service programs directly, Title IV-E provides a block grant that allows Alameda and Los Angeles County agencies to more easily move funding from programs that don’t work to those that are more effective. In order to qualify for a IV-E waiver, however, agencies need to generate performance metrics on a daily basis to prove that the allocations are having the desired effect. Current and accurate information was also needed to satisfy philanthropic organizations, which provide a significant portion of the county’s funding.

### Strategy followed

With an extensive background in information technology, Don Edwards knew what was required, but was having difficulty finding the right tools. When he learned of a proof-of-concept system developed by IBM to serve foster children in San Francisco, though, he was intrigued. “I was excited by the fact that it could not only track people as they move through the system—our basic requirement—but that it also provided analytics that could help my staff make critical decisions on the spot. That business intelligence was an important capability, because it would give us a better understanding of the effects of our actions.”

To bring the goal of the system into clear focus, Edwards put it very simply. “I wanted to give my caseworkers and managers a ‘how am I doing?’ button. I wanted them to walk in every morning, be able to press that button and have the system tell them what’s really going on with their cases. It seems straightforward, but it’s something we couldn’t do and it was important to our success.”

Alameda County engaged IBM to develop the system that came to be known as the Social Services Integrated Reporting System (SSIRS). It combines IBM InfoSphere Identity Insight Solutions with IBM Cognos business intelligence software and an IBM InfoSphere Warehouse - Enterprise Edition database delivered on a preconfigured IBM InfoSphere Balanced Warehouse – D5000, to create a powerful data warehouse.

InfoSphere Identity Insight is the heart of the system. Alameda County Social Services can not only track benefit recipients, but also recognize and understand the complex relationships between clients and programs—telling workers who knows who and how they’re being served. It gives Alameda, for the first time, a complete understanding of each individual’s situation, all in one place. This helps the agency ensure that clients are not being over-served and also enables caseworkers to identify programs that might work better for them—both key requirements of Title IV-E.

Cognos gives SSIRS a powerful dashboard capability—the “how am I doing?” button that Edwards described—and also provides an unprecedented level of flexibility and immediacy to reporting. Reports that once took weeks or even months to generate now happen in minutes. This allows the agency to drive waste out of the system very quickly and control fraud much better. Workers know right away if someone has moved or is not complying with program rules.

Money is always an issue for social service agencies, so cost-effectiveness and time to value were critical requirements for SSIRS. “What I was looking for was something prebuilt and essentially off the shelf, where we could put a basic capability in place and get instant value on day one,” says Edwards. “Then we could start adding capability to it. I didn’t need an end-to-end plug-and-play solution, but I did need to be able to shortcut development.”

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*“SSIRS is showing us how we can change the way social services are provided for the better.”*

*Don Edwards, Alameda County Social Services*

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#### **Benefits realized**

It wasn’t until after the system was already up and running that Edwards gained a true appreciation for its potential. “The synergy between InfoSphere Identity Insight and Cognos is fantastic. One gives us the brains, while the other gives us a smart interface to tap into all that information,” he says.

“There’s a tremendous amount of ad hoc capability. That gives our caseworkers the tools they need to actually bring their expertise to bear in a timely manner, rather than having to rely on outdated information that no longer reflects the real situation. They know the assistance programs, and they

know their clients. Now, they can see how everything fits together and understand all the relationships clearly. For the first time, they can run ‘what-if’ scenarios on the spot and see if there’s a better way to handle that case.”

A demonstration of the solution resulted in a major source of funding from The Casey Foundation, a private philanthropic organization with an interest in child welfare and the effect that the Title IV-E waiver would have on outcomes. “Once the Foundation saw for itself how good SSIRS was going to be, it provided the other half of our funding requirements,” Edwards says.

Immediate gains from the reduction of waste in welfare-to-work and child care programs came to approximately US\$11 million. The bulk of this came from elimination of general assistance benefits to ineligible recipients. “Having near-real-time information is tremendous,” Edwards says. “Now, we know when someone has moved or gotten a job so we know right away if they’re still eligible.”

Still more waste reduction and efficiency improvements will come as the system is developed further. For example, there are plans to connect the InfoSphere Identity Insight engine to the agency’s integrated voice response (IVR) telephone system. If a client has not reported in, the IVR will automatically call with a warning to respond or have benefits automatically suspended.

“SSIRS is showing us how we can change the way social services are provided for the better,” Edwards says. “It’s not just about making us more efficient, though it’s certainly doing that. It’s helping us reach out to those who need us, making sure they don’t fall through the cracks. It’s about using our resources wisely and effectively to improve people’s lives, better than we ever could before.”



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